

FEBRUARY 2010

## Tory health pledge to help poor exposed as sham



David Cameron's pledge to divert health resources to poorer areas has been exposed as a sham – which will actually do the opposite! Cameron launched his NHS manifesto at the start of the year with the headline-catching claim that the Tories would “weight public health funding so that extra resources go to the poorest areas with the worst health outcomes through a new ‘health premium.’”

John Appleby, chief economist at the independent health think tank the King's Fund, says that primary care trusts (PCTs) in deprived areas already get more money than those in more affluent areas. He points out that PCTs get 80% of the NHS budget, while public health accounts for around 3%. It is only this 3% that the Tories want to redirect on the basis of deprivation – for the rest of the NHS budget they want to stop using deprivation in the funding formula, which Labour introduced, and go back to allocation by age as done by the previous Tory government.

The result of using age rather than deprivation in the funding formula would be a massive shift of resources from poorer areas in the North, to wealthy shire areas in the South, where people live longer because they are better off.

Vice Chair of UNISON Labour Link Rachel Voller says that it is a

deliberate attempt to mislead people: “Many people will have seen the headline and been puzzled – it seemed odd that the Tories would be helping poorer people. But scratch the surface and the truth is revealed. This is a shameless attempt to mislead people.”

### **Cameron's poster campaign fools no one**

Dave Prentis, General Secretary of UNISON has slammed a Conservative poster campaign where David Cameron claims they are the “party of the NHS”:

“It is a bit rich to see the Tories steal a slogan from the Obama election campaign when the likes of Tory MEP Daniel Hannan publicly attacked the NHS as a “mistake”. In doing that he lined up the Tories with those in the States opposed to Obama extending healthcare to the 50 million people who couldn't afford it. That shows the true Tory thinking.”

“Cameron uses the slogan of “change” mimicking Barack Obama, but with Cameron it's all style and no substance. The Tories' track record is one of allowing our hospitals and schools to crumble, of tax breaks for the rich and letting the free market ruin people's lives.

The public won't be fooled by Cameron's poster posing. They know that it is not about what you say, but about what you do.”

### **Tories bankrolled by bankers**

An investigation by the Daily Mirror has revealed that almost half of donations to Cameron's Conservatives have come from City fatcats. In the first nine months of 2009 they gave £5.9 million – at the same time as the financial sector was being bailed out by taxpayers. At 44% of donations to the Conservatives, this was the highest proportion since Cameron became party leader.

Hedge-fund boss Stanley Fink gave £1 million, while Michael Hintze, who controls £4.5 billion through the CQS hedge fund, has donated almost £1 million. The proportion of money donated by bankers and financiers has risen substantially during Cameron's leadership.

# Government responds on Concessionary Bus Fares



Chair of UNISON Labour Link Steve Warwick has welcomed a government announcement that significant changes are being made to the way grant is being distributed to councils to pay for free bus travel for pensioners. In a speech to Labour Party Conference in September, he had explained how he and other staff in Exeter were facing redundancy because the council had been so hard hit by extra costs. He said that the same was happening in other urban centres across the country, with neighbouring districts getting a cash windfall as the cities picked up the cost of the scheme. Steve is pleased that Transport Minister Sadiq Khan, himself a UNISON member, has responded to the call: "We all support the scheme, which is really successful and popular. But the way the grant was distributed was causing real problems. Now the Government has suggested revisions which will help considerably."

## More help with housing costs for working families

More than 200,000 working families will gain about £1000 a year, thanks to new rules around Housing and Council Tax Benefits, making them an average of £20 a week better off.

Income from Child Benefit will no longer be taken into account when calculating entitlement to Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. This will mean more money for families already getting these benefits and other low income families becoming eligible for the first time.

Secretary of State Yvette Cooper said:

"We want to do more to help families who are working hard to get by during the recession. Already tax credits make sure families are better off in work, but this extra cash is a practical way to make sure the benefits from working are even stronger. And it will help cut child poverty too."

Both Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit can be claimed by customers who are working and this change will be an extra

incentive to getting back to work. Currently, the average Housing Benefit award is £80 a week and the average Council Tax Benefit award is £15 per week.

The Child Benefit disregard for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit is one of a series of measures taken since the Budget 2007 that will see around a further 500,000 children lifted out of poverty – part of the Government's commitment to eradicate child poverty by 2020.



## David Taylor

David Taylor, MP for North West Leicestershire died suddenly and unexpectedly from a heart attack on Boxing Day. Tributes have poured in from constituents and people who worked with David, who was a key member of the UNISON group of MPs at Westminster. Before being elected in 1997, David had worked for Leicestershire County Council and had served on parish and District Councils – his extensive knowledge of local government proved extremely valuable, and David worked particularly hard for UNISON members in lobbying government ministers over the future of the Local Government Pension Scheme. He was a strong defender of council housing, consistently supporting UNISON's campaigns against stock transfers. Co-convenor of the UNISON group Judy Mallaber says: "David was such a kind and sincere man with staunch socialist principles who worked tirelessly for his constituents and others. He was highly respected by other MPs for his thoughtful and determined campaigning and popular in his constituency where he had always lived. As fellow East Midlands UNISON MPs there were few days when we did not speak – maybe on the latest union campaign or on other local issues we had in common like our campaigns against opencast mining and our opposition to the despicable BNP. And his work leading campaigns against smoking and for cancer services was outstanding. We all miss him and the union has lost a great friend."

# Further push to secure Equality Bill improvements

UNISON have joined forces with the Fawcett Society to push for key improvements to the Equality Bill as it reaches a key stage in Parliament. The Bill is in Committee stage in the House of Lords, and UNISON are urging peers to back some key amendments:

Groups of employees should be able to take actions in discrimination cases, so that trade unions or the Equality and Human Rights Commission can bring a claim on behalf of groups of women. At the moment women have to bring claims individually – representative actions would ensure that individual women would be less likely to be victimised. It would also make the process quicker and cheaper for all parties and would apply to all women affected, not just those able to take the case.

At present in equal pay claims women have to point to an actual male colleague who is being paid a higher rate to prove they are being discriminated against. This is particularly difficult in female dominated occupations or in small organisations. Part of the cause of unequal pay is the low value assigned to occupations with high

concentrations of women (plumbers are paid more than child carers), so the absence of a male counterpart can prevent some women from making legitimate claims. The Bill should bring equal pay law into line with other discrimination law and allow the use of hypothetical comparators in discrimination cases where no actual comparator exists.

Mandatory pay audits should be introduced for all employers to identify any disparity in pay between men and women doing work of equal value and produce action plans to rectify anomalies. UNISON believes that the current limited proposals for pay audits will prove ineffective.

Liane Venner from UNISON says: “The Equality Bill is a once in a generation opportunity to ensure that equality legislation around equal pay is fit for purpose. We are worried that the Bill in its current form will fail to deliver the changes that are so desperately needed. Labour should strengthen it now, by supporting these key amendments.”

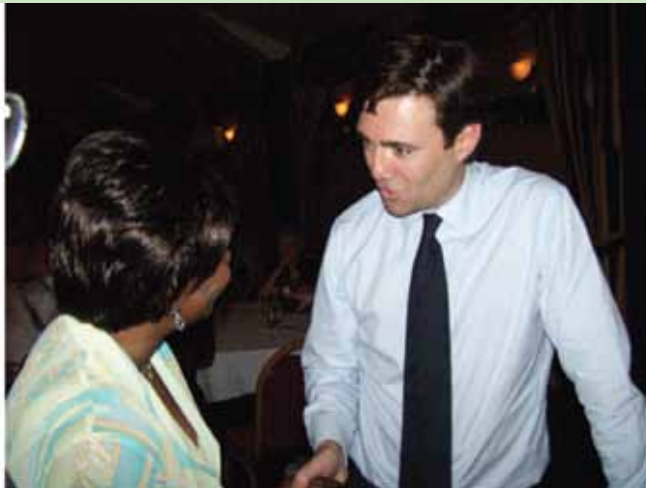
## Brown pushes for LGBT rights in Europe

**Gordon Brown has told LGBT campaigners that he wants to see UK civil partnerships to be recognised across the European Union. In a major interview with Attitude magazine he said: “I’m fighting to get all the countries in Europe to recognise civil partnerships carried out in Britain. We want countries where that hasn’t been the case – especially in Eastern Europe – to recognise them. We’re negotiating agreements with France and then with Spain. But I think we can actually go further than that. And if we could show Eastern Europe as well as Western Europe, that this respect for gay people is due, that would be really important.” The Prime Minister has also called for Parliament to be available to celebrate civil partnerships, as the number of partnerships celebrated in British embassies around the world topped 500.**



# Burnham backs Liverpool Workers

UNISON's campaign on behalf of contracted-out workers at Liverpool Women's Hospital was boosted when the Secretary of State for Health, Andy Burnham and local MP's met with workers and their UNISON representatives recently.



The UNISON campaign, to ensure that back payments and implementation of full Agenda for Change conditions were received in pay packets received full support from the Health Secretary, after being told how the continued delayed payments had left support staff at

Liverpool Women's Hospital frustrated and anxious in the lead up to Christmas.

UNISON was determined to ensure that members received the monies they had earned and were entitled to, and this was clearly reinforced by the support given by the Minister and local MP's who were dismayed to hear that

this situation had been allowed to develop at the hospital. The Minister spoke to Michael Cushion and representatives from the Sefton Health Branch, and local MP's pledged their support.

Peter Ballard, Sefton Health Branch Secretary, said "It is a tremendous boost for our campaign to have such high level support. The workers at Liverpool Women's Hospital are the very backbone of essential services and it is outrageous that they waited so long for payments due to them that other workers throughout the NHS have been receiving for the last few years".

UNISON Regional Secretary, Frank Hont said, "The pressure we were able to put on the employer ensured that the payments were finally made before Christmas, allowing our members to enjoy the festive period free from worry and financial hardship".



## Victory for transferred Ambulance Workers

UNISON members are celebrating victory after a protracted dispute when ambulance workers were transferred from Parkwood Healthcare to West Midlands Ambulance Service.

Following intervention by UNISON member and Stoke Labour MP Joan Walley, the Health Minister Ann Keen has intervened. UNISON have negotiated a Workforce Code of Practice with the Government, and these procedures have now been followed, so that staff are paid according to the code, including entitlement to back pay.

National UNISON Labour Link committee member for the West Midlands, Barry Russell says: "this shows what can be achieved when the industrial and political parts of the union work together. Our regional staff have done a great job, but it has needed the political input from a Labour MP to get the issue finally resolved. This is a very clear example of how UNISON members gain from our being part of the Labour Party."

**Send your stories to [labourlink@unison.co.uk](mailto:labourlink@unison.co.uk)**

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