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## WHO WE ARE

We are a new socialist group committed to revolutionary change, and to thinking through how socialists should address the relationships between capitalism and oppression, the changing nature of 21st century capitalism, and how socialists should best organise. This bulletin has been written by rs21 members in UNISON for UNISON NDC - all writers write in their personal capacity. If you would like to know more about us, chat to one of the people giving out the bulletin, or check us out at <http://rs21.org.uk>

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# NOW IS THE TIME TO FIGHT THE CUTS

(Adapted from a leaflet handed out to Leeds City Council workers by Leeds rs21)

In 2010 Cameron said, "There is no alternative to austerity", but there is if you're super-rich.

In 2004 there were 30 billionaires with a total stolen wealth of over £65 billion. Today 104 billionaires have a stolen-wealth greater than £301 billion. The stolen-wealth of these super-rich parasites has increased by £56 billion since the Tories cut the top rate of tax from 50p to 42p. Britain has more billionaires per head of population than any other country. Cameron's London is a tax-thieves haven for billionaires.

In 2010 Cameron said, "We are all in it together." Today, 13 million people live in Tory-induced poverty, 6.7m of them in a family with at least one adult who is working. None of these people believe him. More than five million people are paid below the living wage, half of working families in poverty have an adult paid below the Living Wage. 400,000 families are hit by the Bedroom Tax and cuts in council tax benefit. Two thirds of these families were already in poverty.

This is the experience of many of our members, and what more will face if we don't fight the cuts. The Tories are destroying the Social Security safety net, and victimising the victims of their austerity. At the same time, UKIP uses racism to try divert attention from the cause of the recession to scapegoating immigrants.

The rich are enjoying the recession at our expense. Their stolen-wealth shows that cuts

are not necessary — we need to take their money off them. The council should be demanding more money from Cameron, rather than wringing their hands in despair and attacking us. If we did accept the changes the council wants to introduce, none of them would offset the effect of the cuts or prevent the introduction of compulsory redundancies in Leeds.

Locally, it is Labour that is attacking us rather than resisting the Tories. Nationally, Moribund has committed Labour to Tory austerity if they win the next election. We can't rely on Labour to help us.

There is an alternative, though. Unison and Unite's leaders are considering calling action if we vote for strikes over pay. More than one million of us could strike together on Thursday 10 July against the Tories' assault on our living standards. If we strike, workers in the NUT, PCS, FBU, GMB and others could join us on that day. We can enthuse that strike with our own local fight over the cuts.

**The RMT, Hovis workers and others have recently shown that fighting wins. We can do the same, but that means we have to argue in our workplaces with our members that fighting is the answer, and that we have to be serious about it. We have to build that resistance to Tory austerity. Now is the time to do it. Now is the time to fight!**

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UNISON conference bulletin

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## UKIP—A THREAT TO US ALL

UKIP's vote in the recent European and English council elections should alarm every trade unionist and anti-racist. The council elections showed a major advance in the areas they had targeted, and in the Euros they topped the poll in most regions of England, as well as getting 10% in Scotland, which almost no-one predicted.

Their success is driven above all by the stream of racist, Islamophobic and anti-immigrant stories in the much of the mainstream press, backed up by politicians of all parties making concession after concession to what's seen as a 'common-sense' view of migration as simply a problem.

So you get Ed Miliband telling voters in Essex that he 'understands their concerns', and worse the letter from Frank Field, Katy Hoey and others calls for more curbs on migration. This does nothing to stop UKIP — it feeds them. It's great to see left MPs like Diane Abbott, Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell taking a hard line against racism, but they are clearly minority voices.

UKIP also feeds on a general anger against all politicians as being corrupt and out of touch. When all three major parties look and sound the same, it's easier for people who look like mavericks to pick up support. In this they fit the wider pattern across Europe, where the impact of the economic crisis and the failure of mainstream parties has seen the rise of both the far right (as in France) and new left formations (as in Spain).

In essence the UKIP vote is a right-wing, little-Englander, one, encouraged by the wider atmosphere of anti-migrant racism pumped out by all mainstream parties. UKIP is not a fascist party, but that's where the BNP's former voters went, and a great many of the voters the Tories lost too. Their success will drive official politics even further to the right, and deepen official racism.

But while we need to be concerned about UKIP, we should also note the limits of their appeal. Theirs is an old vote — one opinion poll showed the Greens having three times as many supporters among 18-25 year olds. That's a real weakness for them, and in stark contrast to previous rises in support for fascist parties like the BNP.

And the UKIP spokeswoman's admission that they don't do well among the 'young, cultured and educated' shows their limitations in many big cities, not just London. In Manchester, Liverpool,



Anti-UKIP demonstration in Portsmouth

Bradford, Glasgow and a number of other places, their vote was much poorer than average. Despite what the commentators say, it's not a mostly working-class vote.

And one recent opinion poll suggested that one-third of the electorate see them as a racist party. These are all strengths to build an opposition from. But that opposition needs to be confidently anti-racist and pro-migrant, and stressing that UKIP are at heart another bosses party.

Unions can be at the heart of this opposition, as organisations that pull together million of workers whether black, white, Filipino or eastern European, gay or straight, male or female. The People's Assembly demonstration against austerity on June 21, and even more the mass strike for higher pay on July 10, will be opportunities to show our strength and our unity against both the government and the bosses. But we also need to make them explicitly anti-racist demonstrations that take on the lies about migration and racism that UKIP feeds on.

At the moment UKIP have a momentum driving them on, but that has also provoked an anti-racist backlash. The media and the mainstream parties have given them an easy ride up to now — we have to make sure that stops, and that we bring together everyone who wants to fight UKIP, and oppose them head-on. Initiatives like Stand Up To UKIP are welcome, but it would be foolish to think that we can simply re-run the tactics of the past. UKIP are something new, and we need new movements and new thinking to fight them.

**Charlie**  
(Community and Voluntary Organisations)



## Lessons from the Higher Education Pay Strikes

UNISON members in higher education have taken three days of national strike action in the last year, striking alongside colleagues in Unite and the academic unions UCU and the EIS in Scotland. We struck against the offer of a 1% pay rise, coming after four years of below-inflation rises that have seen wages cut by 13% in real terms. At the same time, surpluses in HE institutions have increased to an all-time high and management salaries have ballooned.

Pay is just one of the issues currently facing HE workers. Under this government the neoliberal drive towards privatisation and profit has gathered pace, with more job losses and growing casualisation across the sector. Reorganisations worsen conditions and increase workloads, and a number of universities are outsourcing services to the detriment of workers and students.

When it came to the strikes, there was a lot of unevenness. Well-organised branches saw large numbers on picket lines, good coordination between the unions, and very high participation. In some areas the picket lines were bigger and the strikes better observed than the 2011 pensions strike. But a number of universities had very little organisation, or pessimistic branch leaderships who didn't want to fight or didn't believe their members would.

Despite the weaknesses, the employers were far from united. Many were clearly scared by the action and worried about escalation. We saw this when the UCU called a series of 2-hour strikes before the third full day of action. A number of universities also threatened to dock full pay in response to the planned UCU marking boycott, a tactic which clearly rattled them.

In the end, it didn't come to that, as all further action was called off in response to an improved offer. The employers offered 2% on next year's pay deal plus implementing the living wage for the lowest paid, provided we call no further action on the previous year's dispute. This was overwhelmingly accepted across all unions.

A number of reasons led to such high votes for accepting the deal. Members were worried about losing more money and weren't sure if the

dispute was going anywhere. By the third day of action it was becoming harder to mobilise members and many activists were concerned about waning enthusiasm, because of the tactic of one day strikes separated by a month or two. A more serious strategy of escalating action could have squeezed more from the employers much quicker. There are obvious lessons here for colleagues in health and local government.

There was also very little visible campaigning for a reject vote. The left on the service group executive (HESGE) didn't manage to win recommending a rejection of the offer, so activists who wanted to reject faced a dual struggle against the feelings of members and the union's leadership.

2% isn't good enough for our members. Prices are still rising fast, and it doesn't do anything to make up for what we've lost over the years. But it is a marked improvement on what was

offered initially, and it breaks the government's public sector pay limits. Winning the Living Wage across all employers is also a real breakthrough. For now, we have also staved off worse attacks from the employers on incremental progression and sick pay.

Over the last few years the left have made gains on the HESGE. This has enabled us to develop arguments about the need to fight back at the top of the union as well as in our branches. A loose but well-coordinated and, most importantly, unsectarian approach has helped the left to intervene at conferences and push for action. Without this, the dispute couldn't have happened. The right wing within the bureaucracy have tried for years to curtail struggle - from the pensions fight in 2011 to pay this year where they tried to stifle the dispute, which the left stopped.

We need to build on the relationships we've formed on the left in HE over the last few years and develop a strategy to win further gains. We also need to use this experience to strengthen the left in the union as a whole as we face coming battles over pay in local government and in the NHS, and especially as we head towards the next general election.

“A loose but well-coordinated and, most importantly, unsectarian approach has helped the left to intervene at conferences and push for action”

## YOUNG MEMBERS ARE DOING IT FOR THEMSELVES U<27



The current generation of young workers who grew up under New Labour are often labelled as “politically indifferent” or “apathetic”, yet the student protests and London Riots showed that young people are angry with what is happening to them and their communities.

Without a new generation of trade unionists our union will not be sustainable. But to recruit young people UNISON has to take a strong stance on the issues which affect them - issues like zero hour contracts, low wages, job insecurity, the higher risk of death or serious injury at work, unaffordable housing attacks on benefits and the rise of racism. Just over a month ago over 100 young members got together in Glasgow for the annual young members weekend to raise issues affecting young members and discuss how young members can get involved in campaigning for public services.

Out of this weekend young members across each region have launched their own campaigns

with the Southeast launching #U<27 aiming to reach out to young members through social media and social events.

We have launched a Youtube channel and are looking for young members to upload their own content, alongside “how to” videos and posts. Young members fed back through the weekend that it's important that our work doesn't stop at recruiting them - we also need to inspire them to get involved in UNISON at work and within the branch.

Young Members have a lot to offer our union and our workplaces, so it is important that we continue to defend and represent young people at work and in the community, as well as recruit and engage with young members to continue to develop the next generation. And of course this has to be done in the spirit that the union has as much to learn from young members as to teach them!

Becky (Portsmouth City)

## HUNT IS JUST TOO MUCH TO STOMACH

The Pay Review Body's recommendations of a one percent increase across the board for health workers, at an estimated cost of £500m, was too much for Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt to stomach.

He wants to cancel this measly rise across the board for all health workers and is insisting only those who are on the top of their pay scale will be receiving this. And he wants to stop even them having this included in their pension contributions or future percentage pay calculations. This will mean in reality approximately 70% of nurses will not receive the promised one percent increase, according to the Health Service Journal.

This Increase is yet another pay cut in real terms. The planned rise is already below inflation. It follows a below-inflation one percent rise last year and a two-year pay freeze before that.

The reality of these measures means that health workers will have had their pay docked by almost

11 percent in real terms under this government. That's before counting local attacks such as the “down-banding” of senior staff to lower pay grades.

Health workers are outraged not just by the scale of the attack, but also by the lie Hunt used to justify it. He claimed that patient care would suffer if workers got even their small rise. Hunt has also blamed incremental pay—the small annual increases that reflect a worker's experience and training—for pressure on NHS budgets.

The banks and the City can hand out millions in bonuses, but when it comes to our wages, they have to watch every penny. Health workers contribute far more to society than these parasites, yet we are expected to tighten our belts so that they can carry on raking it in. Well, we've had enough.

At Health Conference in April we voted unanimously

to take industrial action up to and including strike action. Conference also threatened a year of unrest in the NHS. Delegate after delegate spoke out about feeling under siege with attacks on pay, working conditions and cuts to the NHS.

Mark, a single parent and delegate from Devon, won a standing ovation when he spoke about having to use

payday loan company Wonga to feed his kids, “I can't afford to go on strike but I will strike,” he said.

We now need to turn these words into action. Since April the GMB and Unite have also said they will consider striking over the pay insult. This means there is the real potential of three major unions and more than 600,000 health workers going on strike over pay. The government has seen health service unions as weak, because of the concessions our leaders have made in previous years. We need to show them they are wrong.

We also need to link this campaign with members in local government, and with the teachers, civil servants, firefighters and others who are kicking back against pay restraint. The best reply to Hunt would be to make July 10 the biggest possible day of strike action against pay restraint and austerity, and have big, united demonstrations in every town and city. Let's kick out the pay curbs and fight for the rise we deserve!

