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UNISON ACTIVE!

MAGAZINE FOR MEMBERS IN YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE



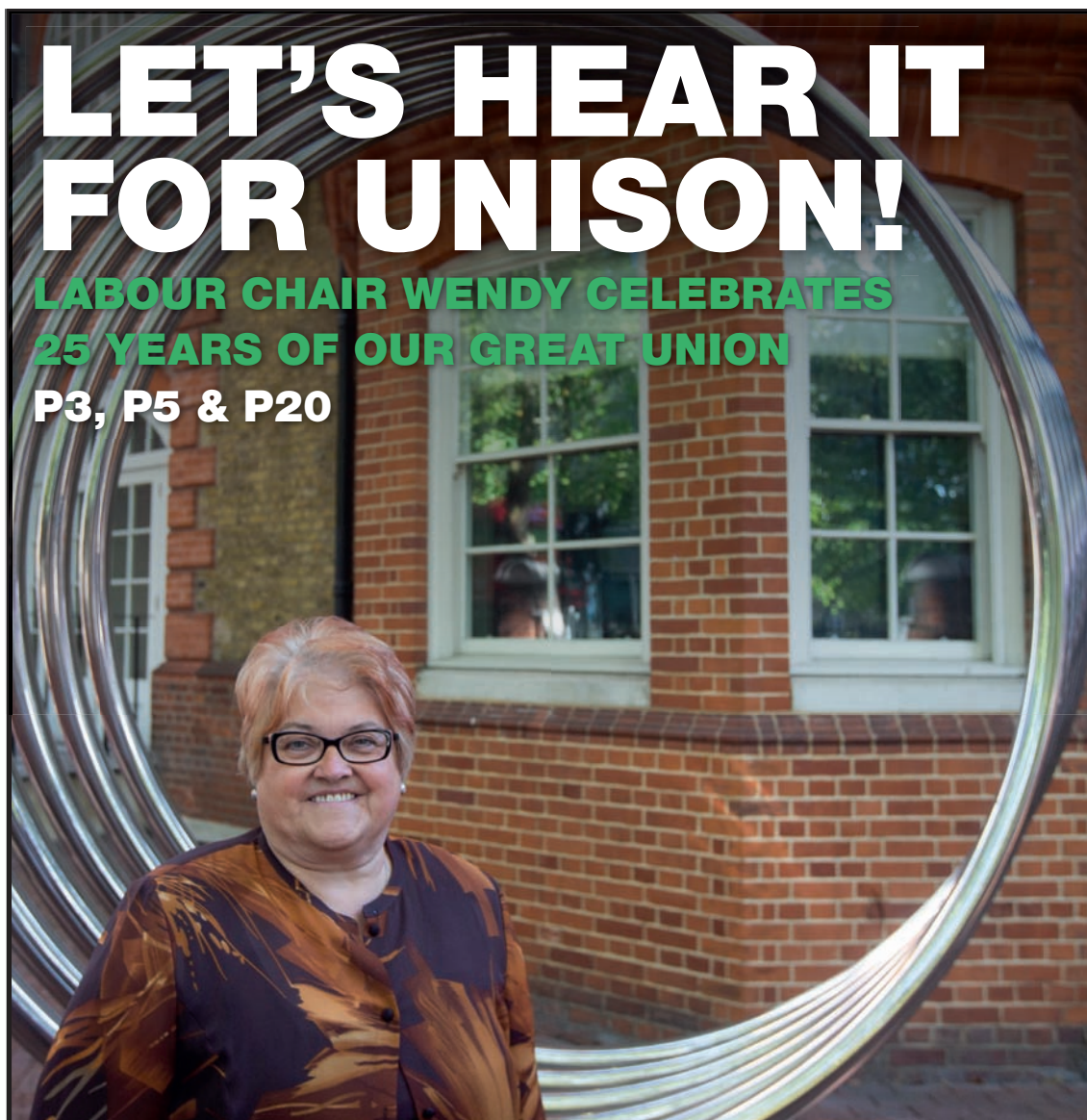
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**LABOUR CHAIR WENDY CELEBRATES
25 YEARS OF OUR GREAT UNION**

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The UNISON logo features the word "UNISON" in a bold, purple, sans-serif font. Above the letters "I" and "S" are three green, wavy lines that sweep upwards and to the right. Below the word "UNISON" is the tagline "the public service union" in a smaller, italicized, purple font.

UNISON
the public service union

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**DAVE PRENTIS**
**GENERAL
SECRETARY***Dave Prentis*

FIT FOR THE FUTURE

Our union's successes have always been built on strong foundations – the values we hold that define our union. Equality, fairness and decency. For the past 25 years we have always fought for what's right – standing with the Hillsborough families, the Lawrence family and survivors of the Grenfell Tower disaster.

Of course, our priority will always be our members. Yet all too often, especially in the austerity years, our

members have been victims of grave injustice.

In the weeks and months ahead, we're going to be ramping up our work to grow our union for the long term. That's because a union with our values also has a moral obligation to bring more people into the fold, and extend the support, protection and collective strength we have to even more public sector workers.

I can't think of a better way to celebrate our

union's first quarter of a century than to grow our union – now officially the nation's biggest – into an even bigger, better and bolder union fit for the next 25 years.

I know this is a challenge that all of you in Yorkshire and Humberside are ready to face. Ours is a region that has never been afraid of the hard work necessary to make our union stronger still.

It's what the future of our union needs. And it's what our proud history demands.

We'll keep fighting for justice

Even as the Tory Government shatters into bitter, warring factions there is one thing they all agree on: more public sector austerity.

Despite claims to the contrary by Theresa May, they intend to make even more savage cuts to our public services.

Their ideological commitment to inflicting needless misery and hardship on working people remains their shared project, despite all their divisions on Brexit.

But UNISON will always lead the fight for public sector workers.

In Yorkshire and Humberside, we have vigorously campaigned against "wholly-owned subsidiary companies" in our hospitals.

Our efforts have seen a number of NHS trusts shelve plans for the new companies after big public campaigns led by UNISON piled

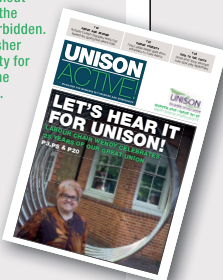
the pressure on trusts and the Government alike.

And I am very pleased and proud to have been elected chair of the Labour Party's national executive committee.

It means I can play a wider role in helping to get a Labour Government elected, and that I can ensure the concerns of our members are heard at the highest level.

Because there is no doubt that without a Labour Government, the Tories will continue to bring severe hardship to the many, while the billions owned by the few remain hidden away in tax havens.

I know UNISON members will continue to fight for fairness and justice until we achieve real and lasting change to this rotten system.

**WENDY
NICHOLS**
**REGIONAL
CONVENOR***W. Nichols*

A man you can always rely on



David Pickersgill
(left) with regional
head of health
Tony Pearson

Long-standing activist and mental health nurse David Pickersgill, who retired in August, was one of those people who made UNISON tick.

In the words of regional organiser Rob Demaine, “he is one of those guys who you can totally rely on, who cared about his members and went the extra mile to support them”.

Active as a union rep since 1987, David delayed his retirement so he could chalk up 25 years as secretary of what is now South West Yorkshire Partnership Health branch.

He started in the NHS in 1985 and qualified as a mental health nurse in 1988, the year in which he “found his feet” as a rep during the clinical nurse grading dispute.

He worked mainly on adult acute inpatient wards until 1999, then as a community psychiatric nurse with a crisis team. In 2002 he gained a first class honours degree in community mental health nursing at what is now Leeds Beckett University.

Recently awarded honorary life membership of the union, David

represented health branches on the regional committee for 18 years. He had been chair of the regional health committee for five years, having previously been vice chair.

Said Rob: “David was a person who showed true leadership both at the branch as joint secretary and in his role as health service group chair.

“He also has a fondness for good curry and beer, and he’s a knowledgeable historian. I am sure he will continue to enjoy all these in retirement.”

Done Deal?

UNISON and Kirklees council thrashed out an agreement to end industrial action by refuse workers. They were protesting against bullying, harassment, unachievable workloads and major problems in taking annual leave entitlement.

Employees had voted unanimously to take strike action and walked out from July 3 to July 9.

Following the action proposals to suspend the dispute were accepted by the membership. The council was given until the end of September to implement changes to address members’ concerns.

On September 26, UNISON, the employer and the joint secretaries reconvened for an update and a new agreement was endorsed by the membership on September 28. The deal ensures there will be no further industrial action until December 31, when an assessment will be made of whether management has honoured the agreement.

Taskforce ‘out and about’ in workplaces

UNISON has launched a campaign to recruit new members and sign up new activists at academies, schools and in social care across the region.

Area organiser Jack Hemingway said developing the union was a vital task to ensure

that UNISON was able to represent members effectively and challenge bad employment practices.

He said union organisers were “out and about” in various workplaces as part of the initiative and were gathering important feedback from members

who needed UNISON’s assistance.

“Members are our eyes and ears on the ground and we need them to keep us informed of developments, especially with more difficult employers.

“Already our visits have

led to significant results and enabled us to organise members to challenge their employers on pay, workplace bullying and other key issues. The union is only as strong as its membership and the more members we have the stronger voice we have.”



Wendy elected chair of Labour's NEC

Yorkshire and Humberside regional convenor, Wendy Nichols (above centre), was elected chair of the Labour party's ruling national executive committee (NEC) at the end of the party conference in September.

Wendy takes over from outgoing chair, Andy Kerr of the Communication Workers Union and will hold the role for a year. Wendy has represented UNISON on the Labour Party NEC for a number of years and is also a Labour

councillor.

The NEC includes representatives from affiliated trade unions, socialist societies, BAME Labour, constituency parties, councillors, MPs, MEPs, young Labour, Scottish Labour and Welsh Labour. It is the governing body of the party, setting its overall strategic direction and guiding it through policy development.

Wendy said she was "delighted" that she "as a

UNISON representative" has been elected chair. It's a crucial, challenging time for the party and the UK, believes Wendy, whose driving aim will be to ensure the NEC works closely with the party leadership and shadow cabinet to drive through consistent, coherent policies that will resonate with the electorate.

Wendy said: "The Tories are in turmoil with their Brexit strategy and we have to show the electorate

that the Labour party is a government in waiting.

"Our members working in the NHS and public services know only too well the damage inflicted by the Tories' failed policies of privatisation and austerity. A Labour government will offer hope to our members, to our young people, our elderly and our sick. And I will continue to take UNISON policies into the Labour Party to make sure that happens."



CHEERS!

Kelly and Janine of mid-Yorkshire health branch toast the 25th anniversary of the union. They joined thousands of other UNISON members at the Doncaster races in August. It's an annual fixture aimed at giving members a day out – away from the troubles and tribulations of public services. And the sun never fails to shine...



FOR YES, READ NO

Newspaper leader columns may have been made redundant by social media, but they're still as strident as ever, says Active! consulting editor **Mary Maguire**

Newspaper editorials can sometimes make your blood boil – at least, the ones you don't agree with. Those leader writers who hide behind the cloak of anonymity and churn out personal or proprietorial opinions, like demi-gods, guardians of our morals, telling us mere mortals what to think.

When the late Rodney Bickerstaffe encountered one at a meeting, he got his retaliation in. Matthew Symonds, one of the founders of The Independent and a leader writer, was particularly fond of his own opinions and was proud of his well-crafted pontifications. Bick was having none of it, in his best Donny drawl, he pointed at him and said:

"Why is it you get to write your own opinions in the leader columns? Have you got to have special qualifications?" Fair point, well made. But Mr Symonds could only splutter and then fall silent.

Some years later, on hearing UNISON was backing a national campaign that a certain newspaper opposed, guess who wrote? "This raises the questions ... First concerns the propriety of trade unions lining up behind one campaign or other. Should trade unions be permitted to use their resources to influence opinion one way or another?" Yep, ironically, it was The Independent.

Unions have always been considered fair game. The newspaper reader must be warned of the evils of the trade unionist. During the 1926 general strike, the Daily Mail's production was halted when print workers downed tools because they objected to an editorial headed "For King and Country" that was critical of the unions. Other papers huffed and puffed about freedom of the press. It was all downhill from there.

Over the years, strike action has led to the

chorus of "get back to work" or accusations of "holding the country to ransom" or "unions trying to run the country" being trotted out by the usual suspects (Mail, Sun, Telegraph, Express, Times). We do have allies in the Mirror and Morning Star, but even the Guardian can sometimes have a go.

Hunting in packs just like other journalists, when leader writers scent blood, there's no mercy, as many a politician, "celebrity" and union leader has found to their cost.

But, with our new-found ability to engage in guerrilla tactics by writing our own editorials and unleashing them on twitter, blogposts, podcasts, facebook and instaword, is the leader writer's ability to tell us what to think on the wane?

Brexit is a case in point, where if you didn't know what to think - and relied on leader writers to tell you what to think - you wouldn't know what to think!

The Yorkshire Post thoughtfully says: "Without (EU migrants) Yorkshire would be poorer economically, socially and culturally", and accuses politicians demanding tougher immigration as headline-grabbing.

But the Telegraph argues: "Brexit Britain is escaping the sinking EU ship – Remainers who insist Brexit Britain is on the edge of Armageddon need to take a second look at their beloved EU."

The Guardian counters with: "A minority of fanatical Brexiters has skewed political debate to the point where the most dangerous ideas are treated by ministers as normal".

Voice of the Mirror, declares: "Theresa May's bungled handling of our departure from the EU is putting tens of thousands of jobs at risk".

But the Sun says: "The EU is a cesspit of waste, inflated salaries and expense accounts, sickening cronyism and sniggering contempt for citizens."

Measured as ever. I rest my case. ■

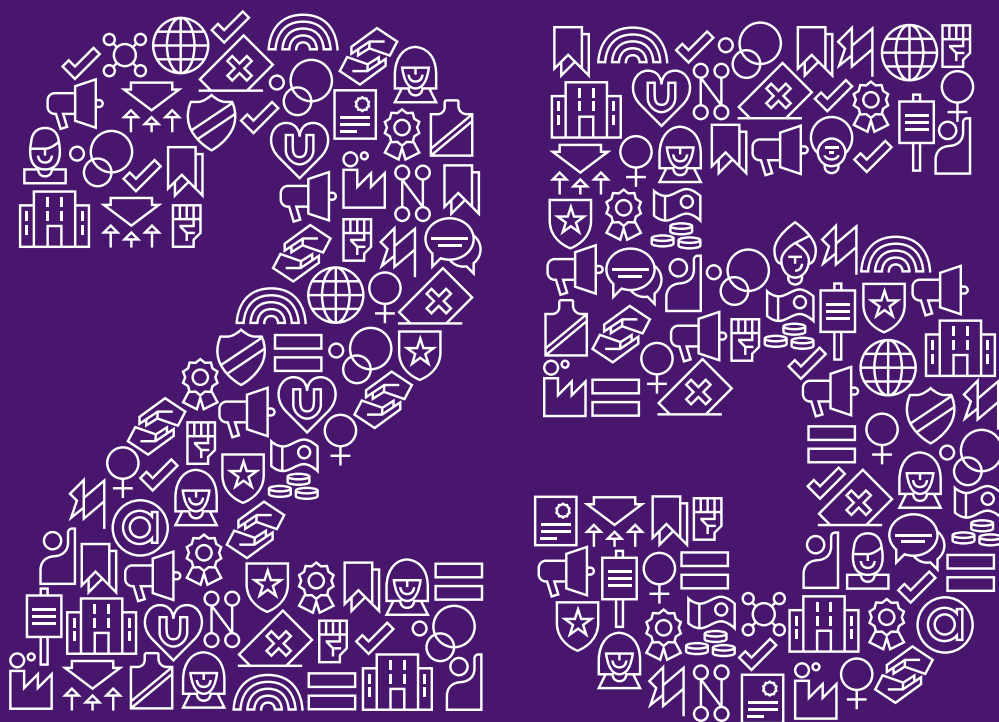


WHY IS IT
YOU GET
TO WRITE
YOUR
OWN
OPINIONS
IN THE
LEADER
COLUMNS?

- asked Rodney
Bickerstaffe

Mary Maguire





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THIS IS CROOKED!

With an early general election looming, Labour stands to lose three MPs in Yorkshire and Humberside under a cynical Tory carve-up, says Mirror man **Paul Routledge**

The Tories call it reducing the cost of politics. I call it deliberate manipulation of the electorate to stay in power.

Under proposed constituency boundary changes, Labour stands to lose 30 seats at Westminster.

Three of those Labour seats are in Yorkshire and Humberside, where the total regional presence in the House of Commons will

be cut from 54 MPs to 50, to serve 3,722,035 registered voters.

All-Labour Bradford will lose a seat. And at risk are MPs Jon Trickett (Hemsworth), former UNISON official Melanie Onn (Great Grimsby), Holly Lynch (Halifax) and John Grogan (Keighley).

If this proposed allocation had operated in England and Wales at the last election, polling experts say the Conservatives would have

won a working majority of 23. That's what they aim for now.

With breathtaking cynicism, Theresa May has promised the ten Tory MPs whose seats would also be abolished a safe constituency somewhere else – by kicking the sitting MP upstairs into the Lords.

MPs will vote on the changes, once the Government is assured of winning it. Overall, Parliament would be



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OR BY
CROOK

reduced from 650 members to 600. The hardest hit would be Labour heartlands: the North-West (six seats gone), the North East (four), the West Midlands (four), East Midlands (three), Wales (four) and London (three).

David Davis, the former Brexit Secretary who is now a thorn in Mrs May's side, would be the only Tory loss in Yorkshire. She can do without him.

But the electoral carnage in strong Labour areas will weaken the ability of Jeremy Corbyn, and all of his successors, to win a working majority at Westminster.

That's what this exercise, originally inspired by failed premier David Cameron, is all about. With the Tories it's about winning and keeping power, by hook or by crook.

And this is crooked – gerrymandering in the name of democracy.

It takes no account of recent shifts in population. More than two million new voters have come on to the electoral roll since 2015, the date on which these changes are based. And thousands of voters, especially students, don't register until just before an election.

Jon Trickett, MP for Hemsworth, calls it "a Tory stitch-up." He's right.

They say all politics is local, and right now a mayor for Yorkshire is the goal of most of the county's political leaders.

He or she would be in a powerful position to direct the fortunes of 5.4 million people – more than the population of Scotland.

The plan is to have an election in 2020, to choose

what I call a "First Tyke" on the model of first ministers in Edinburgh and Cardiff.

Eighteen of the 20 councils in our region back the idea. So does the TUC and the bosses' organisation CBI – who rarely agree on anything – and UNISON, and the Tory-leaning Yorkshire Post and the chambers of commerce.

And not forgetting Dr John Sentamu, the outspoken Archbishop of York, who's given his blessing to the One Yorkshire concept.

So, what's stopping the march to partial "home rule"? The Tories, who want to impose their solution of city regions on every part of the country. They know they can't win the councils, so they want to put in Tory mayors to drive through policies directed from London.

Government ministers, who fear our region could become "England's Catalonia", are stalling in the hope that our local politicians will get tired of waiting for the cash that comes with devolution and cave in.

Some hope. They've obviously never heard the expression "Tha can always tell a Yorkshireman, but tha' can't tell him much."

Communities Secretary James Brokenshire thinks he can break Yorkshire. He refuses to discuss One Yorkshire if it includes any of the authorities that make up the City Region. Barnsley and Doncaster want no part of it.

Detailed proposals for making a success of One Yorkshire are about to be published. They will give the lie to Tory propaganda that this radical reform of local



**PEOPLE
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STANDING**

government has not been thought through.

As the Duke of Wellington (who had a Yorkshire regiment), said at the Battle of Waterloo: "Hard pounding, this gentlemen. Let's see who will pound the longest."

Talking about taking a pounding, it must be admitted that politics can be a cruel business. All careers end in failure, said none other than Enoch Powell. His did.

I can beat that. Mine ended before it began. Skipton and Ripon Labour Party stood me as candidate for Glusburn in the May elections for Craven District Council.

I polled 158 votes, coming in third after the Tory and the winning Independent. I generally find that "independents" are just Tories spelt differently, but let that pass.

As my fellow-members consoled, people can't vote Labour if there is no candidate, so it's always worth standing.

But, "we won Kirklees, well done Kirklees!" Jeremy Corbyn said in his barnstorming speech to Labour's conference in Liverpool.

He might have added that apart from the Huddersfield-based council, Labour also won in Hull, Sheffield, Bradford, Wakefield and Leeds. The map of Yorkshire is mostly red after the May local elections.

"We are the new political mainstream" declared Jeremy, calling for a general election to put his words to the test.

And I think we might get one long before it's scheduled in 2022. ■

Paul Routledge





HERE WE GO AGAIN!

Despite intimidation, striking 'dinner ladies' at a Grimethorpe primary school are determined to save their jobs. **Peter Carroll** finds there is growing support for them

The people of Grimethorpe in Barnsley are once again engaged in a bitter struggle to protect workers facing the sack.

The famous 1996 film "Brassed Off", filmed in Grimethorpe, dealt with the Thatcher Government's destruction of the coal mining industry and its devastating effect on workers' lives.

But this time public sector workers rather than miners are standing

on the picket line - at Grimethorpe's Ladywood Primary School.

The school announced in June that it intended to make all nine of its school meals supervisory assistants redundant.

Many of the staff (who proudly refer to themselves as dinner ladies) have worked at the school for 20 years.

Their battle has attracted widespread support from those people in Grimethorpe who have personally benefited from



THERE ARE
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dinner ladies' support when they, and later their children, went to the school.

UNISON balloted the members and they overwhelmingly voted to take industrial action to stop the redundancies.

They have already taken six days of strike action spread over three weeks.

As UNISON Active! goes to press, they voted for continuous strike action and are determined to see the battle through.

But Barnsley branch

secretary Ben Harvey is under no illusions. He points out that management at the school seem prepared to use any tactics they can to discredit the strikers and their arguments.

Said Ben: "There are definitely some dirty tactics going on. The head teacher has claimed that our members on the picket line have intimidated people working at the school.

"But that is all lies and people can see those lies for what they are. People in Grimethorpe have long memories, and they remember the miners' strike. They recognise that school management is deliberately setting out to be divisive.

"If lunchtime supervisors can be treated like this in Grimethorpe, it could easily trigger similar action in other schools. This is the first school we know of which wants to get rid of all its dinner ladies.

"But it is an extremely important role in schools and parents are very supportive of these members because they know how valuable they are to the well-being of their children."

That is a point which Sally Clarke is making great efforts to get across to people in Grimethorpe and beyond.

Her three children went to Ladywood and she is battling hard to make the school realise how important dinner ladies are to the smooth running of the school.

Said Sally: "They want

“ WE HAVE GRAVE CONCERNS ABOUT HOW THE SCHOOL IS BEING RUN

teaching assistants to take on the role which their colleagues currently do. This will have a negative effect on our children. Teaching staff and children both need a break from the teaching environment at lunch time and the dinner ladies have always been there to ensure that happens.

"My daughter, who is quite shy, told me that if she has any worries she can talk to a dinner lady because they are more approachable.

"Children understandably see teaching staff as more formal authority figures, but dinner ladies are supervising them at play and that is a different relationship."

Sally has gathered a 130-signature petition from the public objecting to the proposed redundancies, and she says support is growing.

"Even on the bus the other day, the driver said to me that these women do a fantastic job and if he wasn't working he would join us on the picket line," she said.

But the action is causing bitterness and division which is even affecting the children.

Sally's nine-year-old daughter was told by a teacher that she couldn't wave to her mother from the playground when she was on the picket line.

Sally said: "I told her that she was my daughter and she could wave to me whenever she wanted. But this is part of the school's attempts to depict the strikers as intimidating people and discredit them.

"That's a nine-year-old

child being told she cannot wave to her mum. We have grave concerns about how the school is being run."

Teaching assistant and UNISON steward Jade Nippers said strike action was a last resort, but members felt they had no alternative.

She said: "Pulling teaching staff away from teaching to do the jobs of these members inevitably means the children will suffer. But these redundancies are simply not necessary. The savings they say they need to make, could be found through people retiring or being offered voluntary redundancy.

"Staff who have agreed to cover the work the dinner ladies do have been rewarded by the head teacher with cards and chocolates. The atmosphere in the school has completely changed, like it has been separated in half.

"These dinner ladies are paid a very small amount of money and yet play such a big role in making sure the school runs properly. Claims of intimidation are simply lies. One group of staff is being targeted and cherry-picked.

"Morale in the school has plummeted but our members are determined to carry on until they win this dispute. And with the people of Grimethorpe on their side, I believe our efforts will persuade the school to keep our vital dinner ladies and seek other less damaging ways to save money." ■



VICTIMS GAGGED?

Ministers are planning to avoid legal challenges as part of a fast-track Windrush compensation scheme and trying to prevent victims speaking out. **Gerrard Stiliard** reports

The Government has launched a consultation on its proposed compensation scheme for those from the Windrush generation whose lives were ruined by the Home Office's attacks on their right to live and work in the UK. The consultation seeks to address who should be entitled to compensation,

what losses will be compensated and how the scheme will operate.

We welcome plans to implement such a scheme. The Windrush generation were the victims of a shocking injustice and have suffered real harm as a result of a deliberate Government policy to create a "hostile environment" for all immigrants. The idea that



THIS IS ABOUT PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN WRONGED BY THE STATE

those who worked, paid taxes and contributed to UK society for all their adult lives should be treated in this way is an appalling indictment of the Home Office and of the Prime Minister who was personally responsible for instituting this policy as Home Secretary.

When Theresa May first became Prime Minister, she pledged to fight the



“burning injustices” of our society. Now her government has begun to accept its responsibility for creating and not fighting such injustices, ministers must learn the lessons of similar schemes in the past and ensure that every applicant receives their due compensation fully, fairly and without delay.

Our concerns about the Windrush scheme were validated when media reports in August revealed that the Home Office is fast-tracking compensation packages to avoid legal challenges, as well as imposing non-disclosure agreements to prevent victims from speaking out.

This is the opposite of what any compensation scheme should be about. This behaviour will only result in yet further injustice for those whose lives were severely affected by the Home Office’s actions.

It is imperative that this scheme becomes flexible and comprehensive enough to accommodate the complex and varied ways in which people have been mistreated by the Home Office. The impacts range from the shock of forced detainment, emotional distress at separation from family and friends, anxiety and harm caused by refusal of access to medical treatment, homelessness, the humiliation of loss of work and serious financial loss, right down to matters such as the inability to access bank accounts. The scheme must be able to

**“
WE WILL
FIGHT FOR
THE RIGHT
OF ALL
WINDRUSH
VICTIMS
TO MAKE
A CLAIM**

compensate all these forms of loss.

The proposals put together in the Government’s consultation do not make it clear that those seeking compensation will have their legal costs covered by the scheme. Such costs must be included for two main reasons: to guarantee the victims a level playing field in the administration of the scheme and to help to restore their trust in British justice.

By the same token, the scheme must be a genuine, fair alternative to civil claims for damages in the courts. In similar compensation schemes in the past that we have been involved in, tariff systems have often been put in place. There are of course advantages to such systems, primarily certainty, speed and ease of administration. However, if set too low and too inflexibly, a tariff system will not resolve this injustice.

It is important to stress that this is not merely an immigration issue. This is about people who have been wronged by the state and are seeking damages for that wrong. We have a team of experts – who have successfully led legal challenges for groups of citizens who have suffered injustice – working on test cases to set a precedent for anyone affected to be able to make a claim.

We have worked on similar compensation schemes in the past, such as the Miners Compensation Scheme (where from among

more than 500 law firms we recovered the highest average compensation for our clients) and we know that for such schemes to succeed, individuals must have access to independent, professional legal representation. Driving victims into the clutches of claims companies who undersettle and focus on profit rather than service should be prevented by banning them from being involved in the scheme at all. Sensible, proportionate costs should be recoverable by independent law firms with experience in scheme claims.

We have been very clear in our response to the scheme: we will fight for the right of all Windrush victims to make a claim if they choose to and make sure those who do are offered fair and proper compensation from a government that so badly let them down. ■

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Stilliard -
Head of
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injury strategy
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ABOVE AND BEYOND

Single mum Evelyn Beckley is a credit to UNISON, to the NHS and to her two children. **Christine Buckley** on the worthy winner of a top NHS Windrush award

Evelyn Beckley knows all about going the extra mile in her work. In recently nominating her for a major award, her NHS employers said of the patient affairs officer: “Evelyn is an inspirational member of staff. Over her 25 years’ service she has continuously gone beyond the call of duty to make a positive difference to service users.”

So it’s gratifying that Evelyn, who works for the South West Yorkshire mental health trust, went on to win a national NHS 70 Windrush award (see panel opposite page) at a glittering ceremony in Manchester.

The Windrush awards mark excellence in health work and are open to black and ethnic minority workers in recognition of the many workers from the Windrush generation and later migrations who came to work in

the NHS.

And it’s fitting too that Evelyn’s mum was one of those workers, coming from Barbados in the 1960s to work as a nursing assistant in Wakefield.

INDEPENDENT

Evelyn’s award, for operational service excellence, was achieved for helping mental health patients at the Yorkshire Centre for Forensic Psychiatry manage their money. At the Wakefield unit where she works, a successor hospital to the one in which her mum worked, she helps guide patients through the benefits system and enables them to manage their money in preparation for leading a more independent life when they leave medical care.

She says: “I find it quite rewarding, I like being able to talk to the patients and to help them. And believe me

when it comes to money, they’re not silly.”

Mum of two Evelyn is a self-starter who guided herself through the sometimes complex benefits system in order to help the patients. When she first started work at the centre she operated a bank and administered allowances made to the patients by the hospital.

When the law changed to allow in-patients to receive benefits she changed the service so that they could access their own money and use it to pay for toiletries and some extras such as takeaway meals during their stay.

They may also need help paying other bills, such as utilities for their homes.

To boost financial inclusion for the patients she went on to open a second bank facility, a move that also improved safety



I LIKE
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TO THE
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AND TO
HELP THEM



Photo: Vicky Matthers



recognition."

Evelyn says she also felt strongly that as a black worker in a largely white environment that it was important that she should have some acknowledgement of her achievements.

"It is a fairly white environment at home and at work with only really some Asians and I think it's important to acknowledge the work of those people like me on the lower levels."

Evelyn's initiative got her the nomination but the final decision was down to a vote and she had no idea that she'd won the prestigious award until the announcement at the gala ceremony.

Evelyn may be working in a largely white culture in her work and home environments but happily she says she's never encountered any racism in her life. "I can honestly say that I haven't come across any racist attitudes. I'm a member of UNISON's black members' group and I've heard people at national conferences speak about it, particularly in areas where it is mixed. But I've never experienced it myself"

Evelyn is as busy going the extra mile for UNISON as she is in her day job. She was chair of the South West Yorkshire health branch for 10 years and is now its treasurer. She is on the regional committee of the black members group and regularly attends regional and national

conferences.

Her involvement was sparked by labour principles rather than encountering any trouble at work. And although she loves the cut and thrust of UNISON conferences and other activities, Evelyn's biggest satisfaction comes from personal representation. "I do like taking cases on behalf of UNISON members and I enjoy representing them and helping people who have trouble at work, it gives me a lot of satisfaction."

Outside work, Evelyn is enormously proud of her children who she has raised single handedly while working in her demanding job. She also secured independent education for them - Narelle, 28, who is an English teacher in Dubai, and Dylan, 18, who is doing his A-levels and wants to do biochemistry at university. "Whatever I do in life I make sure my kids get the best I can provide."

On the odd occasions that Evelyn can take a break from work, UNISON and family, she likes to play bingo. She believes she's one of life's lucky players, recently netting £8000 in winnings in two weeks.

But there was no luck about her NHS 70 Windrush award, just hard work, dedication and a well-placed self-belief. Fittingly, Evelyn's award came in the category sponsored by her union. ■



**I DO LIKE
TAKING
CASES ON
BEHALF
OF UNISON
MEMBERS**

as staff no longer needed to escort patients across the site to the original banking point.

Her other duties include looking after personal property while patients stay at the hospital and organising funerals for those patients who die with no next of kin.

Evelyn is understandably proud of her work, suggesting to her bosses that they put her forward for the award. She says: "I thought after all the years I've put in and the work I've done I deserve some

GoodHealth!

The Windrush 70 awards celebrated the arrival at Tilbury docks of cruise liner Empire Windrush which carried 492 passengers from the West Indies on June 22, 1948.

The 70th anniversary of Windrush takes place as the NHS as a whole marked its 70th year during 2018.

Many passengers were among the first to go and work in the newly-formed National Health Service which launched just two weeks later. To date, the NHS remains the largest employer of black and minority ethnic (BME) staff, who make up a fifth of the workforce.

Windrush 70 celebrated the contributions of BME people to the NHS, from the Windrush generation of 1948, the south Asian arrivals in the 1960s and 70s, to today's workforce, currently represented by 202 nationalities.



HEATHER WAGES WAR

Activist Heather Briggs is leading a campaign to win fair pay for younger colleagues under 25... but the Prime Minister clearly isn't interested. **Barrie Clement** reports

UNISON activist Heather Briggs has a bee in her bonnet – and quite rightly so.

Why are bosses allowed – in fact encouraged – to practise discrimination against one huge group of workers?

Why does that discrimination enjoy the

explicit backing of the law?

Heather, formerly a young members' convenor for UNISON in Yorkshire and Humberside, points out that the national minimum wage legislation is unjust, unfair and discriminatory towards younger workers.

Although the full adult minimum is



A HIGHER
WAGE
WOULD
ENABLE ME
TO PAY
MY BILLS

woefully inadequate, it is substantially more than the other rates. Under the law those over the age of 24 must be paid at least £7.83 an hour, but employers are allowed to pay those aged between 21 and 24 just £7.38. Between 18 and 20 the minimum is £5.90, while 16-17 year-olds have

out that older workers are thought to have responsibilities while younger ones are assumed to be single, living at home and "partying the night away".

Megan was one of the case studies compiled at the instigation of Heather and her colleagues to provide ammunition for Holly Lynch, Labour MP for Halifax, who tabled a private members bill in the summer aimed at ensuring that all workers over the age of 18 are paid the Living Wage.

UNISON's drive to compile case studies started in Yorkshire and Humberside but went national, eventually drawing 563 responses.

Unfortunately there was insufficient parliamentary time for it to be properly considered then, but it is due to be come forward again on November 23.

APPRENTICE

Megan says she "can't complain too much" because she is paid more than the £5.90 minimum for her age, but she is paid less than those with comparable jobs and recently had to get rid of her 15-year-old car because it kept breaking down and she couldn't afford to keep fixing it. If she had kept it, the insurance would have cost her anything between £900 and £1500.

Unfortunately she needed the vehicle to get from her home in Sherburn in Elmet to the Co-operative Academy in

“
IT'S NOT
JUST
PEOPLE
AGED 25
AND OVER
WHO OWN
A HOME

Leeds, a secondary school where she is enrolled as an apprentice in the attendance department while completing her level four business administration certificate.

Megan is also a home owner with a mortgage which comes with plenty of bills to pay. "I am saving everything I can as well as paying my mortgage and the bills. I refuse to take out loans as I don't want to put myself in the position where I may end up in debt and not be able to pay my way.

FULL-TIME

"A higher wage would enable me to pay my bills, get a more reliable and more energy efficient car, pay my insurance and be able to treat my partner and myself occasionally." Not a lot to ask.

A 23 year old UNISON member who also lives in the region but who preferred not to reveal her name has been in rented accommodation since she was 18: "I have always worked full-time, however I've always struggled financially due to the amount per hour I have been getting paid.

"It's not just people aged 25 and over who own a home or have a home to run. I left home very early on due to certain circumstances beyond my control and it has taken me a long time to work my way to where I am now, due to the poor pay."

She says her older colleagues in the NHS are

to put up with as little as £4.20. The legal minimum for apprentices - the traineeships can be of variable quality - is a paltry £3.70.

Analysis by the House of Commons Library shows that a person aged 25, working 37.5 hours a week at the minimum wage will earn £3,774 a year more than an 18-year-old colleague working the same hours - that's 33 per cent more.

Like most discrimination, it is based on stereotypes. UNISON member Megan McCollin Smith, 19, points

Photo: Vicky Matthers

paid a lot more although she undertakes the same tasks such as taking blood samples, dressing wounds and removing plaster casts.

"I also do extra duties which other colleagues opted not to do. I work just as hard as my colleagues who have been here for years and who are lot older than me. I am always taking on extra duties and wanting to learn and progress so that I can better myself."

UNFAIR

The NHS worker is continuously looking for other jobs with higher pay.

"I have a household to run, as well as trying to save for a deposit so that I can buy my own home, I am always left with nothing by the end of the month."

She can't afford to run a car so she has to rely on public transport which isn't cheap and takes more than an hour to get to work rather than the 20 minutes it would take by car.

"I can't really afford to go away on holidays and haven't been abroad since a young child as I literally just cannot

afford it. My monthly pay just won't stretch as far as it should. I work full time just to cover my rent and bills. I feel like I can't have any luxuries. I feel that it is unfair that people get paid different rates for carrying out the same job role and it has affected me personally"

A 26-year-old who had not long qualified for the full adult rate, said younger people working for Leeds council were doing the same or more difficult jobs, had the same responsibilities, but got paid less. "Age doesn't define ability and capability," the UNISON member said.

Another under 25 in the region was working overtime and desperately trying to save money to go back to university to earn a better wage, although another had been to university but still couldn't afford a house or a car. One young woman with a 15-month-old baby is living with her parents so she and her partner can save enough for a mortgage. Another spoke of a "mental battle", struggling to pay bills each month and knowing she is paid less than older colleagues but expected to work more. Sometimes young people found they had more experience than older colleagues, but still got paid less.

Activist Heather Briggs, who works as a project officer for West Yorkshire Combined Authority based



I AM
ALWAYS
LEFT WITH
NOTHING
BY THE
END OF
THE
MONTH

in Leeds and chairs UNISON's regional disabled members group, decided to go to the very top in her campaign for fairness for young people and wrote to the Prime Minister. The joint letter from UNISON and the National Union of Students was sent last September, but remains unanswered. Heather has not given up and another letter is winging its way to Number Ten. Don't hold your breath.

ESSENTIALS

Said Holly Lynch: "It's appalling that this government has continued with a policy to keep pay low for younger workers, leaving them thousands of pounds a year worse off than older colleagues.

"Rent is so costly for many young people, food and utilities are no cheaper and many are falling into debt. Yet the government are happy for them to receive a wage which will barely cover the essentials." ■



BareMinimum

Age Group	April 2018
National Living Wage (25+)	£7.83 p.h.
NMW (21-24)	£7.38 p.h.
NMW (18-20)	£5.90 p.h.
NMW (16-17)	£4.20 p.h.
Apprentice NMW	£3.70 p.h.
Accommodation Offset*	£7.00 per day

*Daily deduction from wages where accommodation is provided by the employer

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In these uncertain times there's never been a better time to join UNISON.

For as little as £1.30 a month our members get:

- advice, support and help at work
- a helpline that is open until midnight
- legal help for you at work and your family at home
- plus a wide range of exclusive member discounts

Annual salary	Monthly cost
Up to £2,000	£1.30
£2,001–£5,000	£3.50
£5,001–£8,000	£5.30
£8,001–£11,000	£6.60
£11,001–£14,000	£7.85
£14,001–£17,000	£9.70
£17,001–£20,000	£11.50
£20,001–£25,000	£14.00
£25,001–£30,000	£17.25
£30,001–£35,000	£20.30
over £35,000	£22.50

Join online at **joinunison.org**
or call free on **0800 0 857 857**

LET'S CELEBRATE!



Photo: Mark Thomas

Yorkshire convenor and new Labour party chair **Wendy Nichols** celebrates UNISON's quarter of a century as the champion of more than 1.3 million public service workers

When I look back on 25 years of UNISON, the logistics and difficulties of merging three culturally different trade unions and all the challenges we have faced, I think it's been a remarkable achievement.

Despite attacks on public services, spending cuts, job cuts, we are the biggest union with 1.3 million members - and the best. The fact that we recruit 160,000 members each year - people who want to be part of our union - is testimony to our success.

In July 1993, I was working

in residential care and a shop steward in Selby local government branch of NUPE (National Union of Public Employees). Like many activists in NUPE, NALGO (National and Local Government Officers Association) and COHSE (Confederation of Health Service Employees), I was unsure about that leap into the unknown.

Although all three unions organised in the public sector, they were different. One union's members would negotiate with managers who were members of one of the other unions. At that time in



WITH MORE THAN ONE MILLION WOMEN, MANY LOW PAID, UNISON LED THE DRIVE FOR EQUAL PAY

Selby we were in the middle of tough pay talks. Two of the unions were affiliated to the Labour Party, one wasn't.

But I bought into the ideal of one union organising across the public services, with a common, united purpose. The ideal of collective strength and unity that would make it more difficult for employers and the Government to divide and rule. And the ideal of something bigger, that might result in a better deal at work and for those who rely on public services.

In the regions, branches took a lot longer to come together. In 1994 I was elected

to our fledgling regional council. I met some great people—Rosie Kett, Steve Hoyland, Barbara Hudson – all trying to get it right. I recall being sat in a room in Wakefield council with one NALGO and 10 NUPE branch secretaries trying to thrash out a branch merger. Eventually Ron Todd, the respected former Transport & General Workers' Union general secretary (now Unite), was brought in to arbitrate.

It went much better than I thought. It gave our members, the people who rely on public services and our society generally, more benefits than many give us credit for.

RESPECT

Equal opportunities and fair representation were enshrined in our rules, at the very heart of the union – not tacked on as an after-thought. It continued the strong culture of empowering self-organised groups of members, whether LGBT, BME, disabled, or women.

And that empowerment and our campaigning on the issues that matter to them, pushed into the public arena rights and respect for disabled people.

It promoted a climate for equal marriage rights for lesbian and gay people. And it campaigned against racism and discrimination, including on the football pitch, where UNISON was the first union sponsor of Show Racism the Red Card.

With more than one million women, many low paid, we led the drive for

equal pay, pension rights, better maternity leave. I'm so proud our union delivered the minimum wage.

SUCCESS

Former general secretary, Doncaster-bred, Rodney Bickerstaffe, made the minimum wage his crusade. UNISON drove it through the TUC, the Labour Party and the Labour Government, despite initial opposition, and despite the doom-laden predictions of the Tories and big business. Now our general secretary, Leeds lad Dave Prentis, is pressing on with the Living Wage campaign.

Our union has been a success because of the people who believe in it, members, activists and staff, people such as Cliff Williams, Irene Stacey, Eric Roberts.

And I'm proud of former Yorkshire & Humberside organisers now in key positions as regional secretaries - John Cafferty, Chris Jenkinson now in eastern , Steve Torrance acting up in the south-east and, of course, Margaret Thomas, who went to Wales and is now assistant general secretary.

It was UNISON staff, using every argument possible, including the Magna Carta, who took on the Government to get employment tribunal fees abolished. Our staff, who work in partnership with us lay members to fight campaigns, go that extra mile.

All this benefits not just our members in Yorkshire & Humberside and our members nationally, but the whole of our society.



THE
UNISON
FAMILY
HAS
GIVEN
ME SO
MUCH TOO

None of any of this would, I believe, have been possible without the strength, influence and organising power of UNISON.

We've been through some good times, but also periods of austerity, cuts, challenges to our ability to organise and had to find new ways of doing things. The first union to advertise on TV and the first union to use music festivals to reach young people with our message.

UNISON's voice, our campaigning reputation, our purple and green suffragette-inspired colours, have been a force for good and will continue to be so.

The UNISON family has given me so much, too, personally. Support when I needed it, the opportunity to represent members and serve as president.

So, when I go to our fantastic UNISON Centre in London, which we now own, where we unveiled a plaque to Nelson Mandela, where we held civil rights leader Jesse Jackson's birthday party and where countless activists have gathered, I think what a marvellous union we have created. Long may it continue. ■

JoinUp

Annual salary	Monthly subs
p to £2,000	£1.30
£2,001 - £5,000	£3.50
£5,001 - £8,000	£5.30
£8,001 - £11,000	£6.60
£11,001 - £14,000	£7.85
£14,001 - £17,000	£9.70
£17,001 - £20,000	£11.50
£20,001 - £25,000	£14.00
£25,001 - £30,000	£17.25
£30,001 - £35,000	£20.30
Over £35,000	£22.50



GIRLS USE
COW
DUNG,
BITS OF
EMBERS,
RAGS,
ROOTS,
GRAIN
HUSKS...

At the age of 11, Tina Leslie was on a school exchange trip when disaster struck - she started her period in the middle of the English Channel. She didn't know what was happening, but stuffed toilet paper down her pants. Tina spoke little French and when she arrived in France, she found there were three boys and no girls in her French host family.

Tina spent the week sleeping on the floor in her bedroom as she "didn't want to soil the sheets", and used toilet paper as sanitary towels. "It was", she said, "the worst week in the world".

Forty years later, that experience, that she "remembered like it was yesterday", drove her to set up a project - freedom4girls - to help girls and young women in Kenya who couldn't afford proper

menstrual protection. And, later, finding the same problem in her native Leeds, helping, fund-raising and campaigning for local girls.

Tina is a health improvement professional at Leeds council whose work involves tackling health inequalities in deprived areas of the city. She was a regular visitor to Kenya to help a friend with a community midwifery support service,

particularly for HIV positive pregnant mothers.

It was there, in Mombasa, that she found a staggering 60 per cent of Kenyan girls and women don't have access to safe, hygienic menstrual products. As Tina recalled:

"I had to deal with the trauma for one week, 60 per cent of girls in Kenya have to deal with this every month. That is terrible. I knew I had to do something.

"There was no point in just fund-raising to buy disposables. So I got 16 friends together in a church hall who dusted off their old sewing machines, ripped up old sheets and towels to make re-usables. That didn't work well. I posted on Facebook and, as a result, I got £5000 from a charitable trust to continue the project."

TABOO

Tina found the pattern for a washable pad that lasted for three years. "Then I toddled off to Kenya and set up the project with a couple of sewing machines and overlockers and found local seamstresses to make them. We used local materials, employing local women to help them out of poverty."

Tina found the stigma and taboo worse than she had imagined. Girls used cow dung, bits of embers, rags, roots, grain husks, anything they could find. One used hot ash and burnt herself because she didn't want to miss her exams. Girls miss school each month, many drop out of school altogether because



IF YOU
CAN'T
AFFORD
FOOD,
YOU
CAN'T
AFFORD
MENSTRUAL
PRODUCTS

of the emotional problems attached to not being able to manage their periods.

Visiting local villages and schools and running workshops to help educate girls about their periods, Tina said: "Headteachers told me how girls missed school, slept with boys for money to buy products, got pregnant, ending in poverty. A village elder, who, when I explained what I was doing, exclaimed: 'You've come from heaven'. No, I said, I've come from Leeds."

AUSTERITY

Her project has so far delivered 5000 boxes of washable pads and helped 8,000 young girls.

Tina found her help was needed nearer home. Hearing of schoolgirls in Leeds facing similar problems, she took action.

"If you can't afford food, you can't afford menstrual products," said Tina. "It's not just the unemployed, but those on zero hours contracts, on benefits, it's the price of austerity. Why do we have period poverty in this country? Why do we have a tax on menstrual products, when we don't have a tax on Jaffa cakes, men's shaving equipment or caviar?"

Tina used the inevitable media attention to highlight the issue. A firm offered 50 pallet loads of sanitary products, but they were in the north-east and Tina had to get them to Leeds. Not a problem for Tina. She phoned haulage firm Eddie Stobart and asked could they deliver them. They did.

Tina wasn't always so assertive. When she left school, the youth opportunity scheme sent her to work in the Leeds tax office. She spent the next 25 years in call centres – selling sewing machine needles, steel girders, insurance, then bank accounts. She wasn't a fan of unions, because the union she joined at the call centre was "rubbish" when she needed help.

At the age of 40, Tina decided to change her life. She met an "amazing aerobics instructor" at the gym who inspired her to go to night school to qualify as an aerobics, pilates and personal trainer. Tina went on to run community classes. She then changed her job, and eventually ended up working in public health in Leeds council.

And it was there she became a convert to UNISON. Through the union, Tina took a women's assertiveness course and, when she was bullied at work, she was helped by her UNISON rep "who was brilliant."

Well, I'm sure that young girls in Mombasa, Leeds and around the world, will agree that Tina is "brilliant" – one of UNISON's public service champions. ■

To Donate

If you want to donate to Freedom for Girls – raising money for girls around the world to have access to safe, hygienic sanitary protection Tina's fund-raising page is at: <https://uk.gofundme.com/freedom4girls>

SICK PAY APARTHEID



Photo: John Jones

Tony Smith (left) and Russ Bowering led a successful strike after their firm refused sick pay to a cancer sufferer because he wasn't a manager. Now activists are making sure they don't renege on a deal to end the dispute. **Ryan Fletcher** reports

On the morning of the first day of industrial action over sick pay against Hull City Council contractor FCC Environment, 20 striking waste workers braved some of the worst weather in years to man the picket line.

"It was when the 'Beast from the East' hit and it was minus seven. After an hour we all thought 'what the hell are we doing out

here?' but we all stuck together. There was no way we could let it go," explained FCC employee and UNISON safety rep Tony Smith, who helped organise the strike.

The action by a handful of workers – which eventually led to FCC improving its sick pay policy for around 2,500 workers nationwide – had been sparked after the firm refused to pay driver Hans Kleijn sick pay when he

“
HE'S A
LOVELY
GUY AND
IT WAS
JUST
HORRIBLE
TO SEE HIM
CRYING

was diagnosed with cancer.

If Hans, originally from the Netherlands, had been a manager at the firm, he would have been able to take time off to recover. But as it was, the severely ill man was unable to pay his mortgage and was forced to remain at work during his chemotherapy: First as a driver and then, when Hans told his bosses it was too dangerous for him to drive, as a meeter and greeter at a waste processing plant.

Safety rep Tony said: "I went with a work colleague to see Hans in hospital when he was getting his treatment. He's a lovely guy and it was just horrible to see him crying his eyes out, worrying about paying his bills when he should have been worrying about getting better.

CONCERNS

"When we went back to work the next day we discussed it with the other lads and that's when things started to move. We'd just had enough. Everyone knew it wasn't right. Why shouldn't he get sick pay when a new manager who could start tomorrow gets it?"

Fortunately Hans' cancer went into remission and he eventually returned to work, but not before the injustice of the situation had angered the workforce and raised major concerns about how staff were being treated by the Spanish-based firm.

"When Hans was ill quite a few of us had said we were willing to chip some money in from our attendance bonuses," said senior FCC steward Russ Bowering, who also played a pivotal role in organising action against the company.

"The company said we didn't have to do that because they'd look after him. But they didn't look after him and then everybody thought 'well what if I get in that position?' So in the 2017

“
YOUNG
KIDS
WHO'VE
JUST
JOINED
LABOUR
CAME
TO SHOW
SUPPORT
”

pay negotiations we put down that we wanted sick pay for people. They wouldn't budge and we balloted for strike action and moved from there."

The refuse workers went on strike for five weeks between March and July this year, receiving an outpouring of solidarity and support from sister unions at home and abroad as well as local and national politicians and members of the public.

Refuse workers from other depots refused to cross the picket line and delegates from a National Education Union conference donated £700 for the workers' strike fund with local construction workers at a nearby site raising a further £300.

A number of other trade union branches donated funds as well and the strikers were also supported by a Spanish student union, which held solidarity protests outside FCC's main offices in Madrid and Barcelona.

DISGUSTING

On April 7 the strikers and their supporters gathered for a rally in which local musicians Joe Solo and the Hillbilly Troupe performed. The rally was attended by local Labour councillors and MP Emma Hardy, who slammed FCC's actions as "disgusting" and went on to raise the workers' campaign for sick pay in Parliament.

Tony said: "One bloke

turned up to the picket line and said 'here you are, there's £15 towards your strike fund. I think what you're doing is great'. Young kids who've just joined Labour came to show support and we even had £45 donated from a group of recent immigrants to the city – clearly they didn't have a lot of money but they'd all chipped in. It was unbelievable the support that came through."

In July, after months of doggedly standing their ground and generating widespread support for their cause, the strikers won out. Making the victory even sweeter was the fact that FCC's decision to introduce a sick pay scheme benefited not just its Hull workers but the firms' entire 2,500 strong UK workforce.

Despite the success, Tony and Russ said the dispute isn't completely done and dusted just yet. UNISON is monitoring whether the sickness scheme is being implemented properly to ensure the firm sticks to its word. If not, then the union has vowed to initiate legal proceedings against FCC and resume industrial action.

Tony said: "We've suspended the strike and have given them the chance to put the policy in place – we'll see how that goes. More broadly, we don't believe that council contracts should be procured by companies that won't pay basic sick pay. Councils should be ensuring that their contractors treat their staff with dignity and respect." ■



CHILLING ENCOUNTER

Senior child protection officer Sandra Shaw's life changed for ever after a brush with the notorious Yorkshire Ripper in the Mecca ballroom in Bradford. **Peter Carroll** reports

Sandra Shaw has devoted her career to protecting vulnerable children and their families: she firmly believes in the motto "There but for the grace of God go I".

For her that guiding principle is based on more than just received wisdom.

In 1980 Sandra was 17 and about to take a job as a nanny in Sicily. So she went out to celebrate with her friends

at the Mecca ballroom in Bradford.

"We had been dancing and I was sitting down when this man came up and asked me if I wanted to dance," Sandra says.

"I said no thank you. Then he asked me if I would like a drink and I said no thanks again.

"I saw him throughout the evening and he was very polite.



HE CAME
UP TO ME
AGAIN
AND ASKED
IF I WOULD
LIKE A
LIFT HOME

"At the end of the night I was standing in the foyer holding my friends' coats and he came up to me again and asked if I would like a lift home. I said we always pre-booked our taxi because it was safer than standing outside in a queue and I of course said no again.

"He said to me that 'you can't be too careful out there at the minute' and that I must make sure I was safe."

Sandra soon went off to Sicily and thought no more about it.

But when she came home for a holiday her mum had kept all the newspaper cuttings about the arrest of Peter Sutcliffe, the notorious Yorkshire Ripper.

Sutcliffe killed 13 women and tried to kill seven others in and around Bradford and Leeds throughout the 1970s up to his arrest in 1980.

Sandra said: "My mother showed me the clippings and I thought, I recognise that man but I don't know how I know him.

"My cousin said that I recognised him because he was that bloke in the Mecca where we had been out together.

"I went hot and cold. It could have been me.

"Partly because of this experience, my view is that in so many parts of life it is a question of 'There but for the grace of God go I'.

"And I often think that about people who are struggling.

"We don't know what people go through, and which straw broke the camel's back. We might be OK ourselves but others are not and we need to help people in every way we can because, one day, that could be us."

VULNERABLE

Sandra is the Kirklees local government branch lead steward for children's services and is a committed UNISON activist.

She is a qualified social worker and an independent reviewing officer in child protection, ensuring that all

“WE DON'T KNOW WHAT PEOPLE GO THROUGH

the professionals involved are doing what they should be doing to look after vulnerable children who need protection.

But Sandra, like so many of her UNISON colleagues, sees every day how brutal central government budget cuts are piling poverty and despair on ordinary families.

She said: "There is a very clear link that identifies austerity-caused poverty in cases of child protection.

"Nationally we are seeing an increase in the number of cases we have to deal with because parents no longer have anywhere to go to for support.

"Austerity means councils are getting less money and having to make decisions about what services to cut. Preventative services across the country are disappearing.

EXCELLENT

"I don't think members of this Government even recognise the problems they have caused and yet continue to claim that they are putting more money into public services than ever before.

"But I am very hopeful that there will be a Labour Government and I think that is in part because of the way young people are starting to say 'what about us?'.

"They can't afford houses, are forced into zero hours contracts, have student debt and are working three and four jobs at once just to survive.

"I think Jeremy Corbyn will be an excellent prime minister and I believe the things he and those around him say will definitely be

done. They sincerely mean what they say."

Re-nationalisation of the rail network, the water and energy companies and ending NHS privatisation are all on Labour's agenda, says Sandra.

And as a party member herself, she has trust in the new leadership of the party to deliver on their promises.

She sees a clear break with the consensus politics of the New Labour years. She said: "When everything blew up with the banks we taxpayers were called on to sort out the mess, while at the same time seeing communities and their public services destroyed by central government austerity.

"Yet those same bankers are still awarding themselves astronomical salaries and bonuses. Even now we see Labour politicians who don't want to change this grossly unfair and damaging system.

"They want another Tony Blair to keep these policies in place. But people are saying no to that, and that we cannot carry on like this.

"We need to get a Labour Government in to protect ordinary people from the greed of banks and corporations and I am doing all I can to help that happen." ■

SERIALKILLER

Peter William Coonan (born Peter William Sutcliffe; June 2, 1946) is a serial killer who was dubbed the "Yorkshire Ripper" by the press. In 1981, Sutcliffe was convicted of murdering 13 women and attempting to murder seven others. He is serving 20 concurrent sentences of life imprisonment.



THE BEST OF PALS

Steven Robinson combines fund-raising for the Guide Dog charity with his day to day work at British Gas and various roles as a UNISON activist. **Helen Hague** reports

“THERE'S NOTHING LIKE A GUIDE DOG TO HELP BREAK THE ICE WITH NEW MEMBERS

When UNISON workplace rep Steven Robinson first met Guss the guide dog they hit it off instantly.

The sturdy Labrador Retriever “sat in front of me, tilted his head to one side, held a paw out and we’ve been pals ever since”, Steven recalls.

That was three and a half years ago. After that first meeting, Guss went back to the Guide Dogs charity for “intensive training on buses and trains” – returning with skills that would help forge a “life-transforming” partnership.

“Before I had Guss I used a long stick and didn’t get out much by myself – just work and hospital appointments,” says

Steven, who works for British Gas in Newbridge House, Leeds. “He’s changed my life immeasurably and given me the confidence to get out and about much more.”

Soon after the pair teamed up, Steven wanted to “make sure I could give something back” to the “fantastic charity that had brought us together.”

By early 2016, he was spearheading a two-year fundraising drive with colleagues at British Gas to name five Guide Dog puppies and fund them for the first year of their lives. Earlier this year, the team hit the target, raising an astonishing £25,000 - £5,000 per puppy - to do just that. Which means five blind and visually impaired people will be getting help from a

canny, highly-trained and loyal guide dog sometime soon. Step forward Gilby, Daxi, Wilbur, Smarty and Connie.

Steven is keen to spread the word – and encourage more companies and organisations in the area to name and fund guide dog puppies, through schemes set up by the Guide Dogs charity. The deal includes a meeting with the puppy – just the once, they have busy lives – and “pupdates” on how life as a guide dog is shaping up.

Steven has been happily sharing his story about just how much of a positive impact Guss has had on his life at meetings in Leeds and beyond. The idea is to whet people’s appetites and maybe get them signing up to the scheme and raising much-needed cash. Firms are

picking up the challenge. Guss comes along too, of course.

He has, on occasion, even helped Steven in his role as UNISON workplace rep - there's nothing like a guide dog to help break the ice with new members and would-be members, he confides.

Steven works in the bereavement and priority service department, which supports vulnerable customers and is full of praise for British Gas as an employer. "They saw beyond the white stick, through to what I, as an individual, could bring to the business. They've supported me all the way as my sight got progressively worse, including going on the list for a guide dog and being matched with Guss". He wishes all employers were as well versed in equality and diversity - and believes too many take a "tick-box" approach.

Steven was born with Glaucoma, an eye condition that damages the optic nerve, and became registered blind in 2005. He inherited the condition from his maternal grandfather Alan, who helped raise him.

Grandad had a huge impact on the young Steven. He'd lost his sight completely by the time Steven was born in 1972, walking to work at a factory for disabled people with a long



GROWING
UP WITH
A FATHER
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metal "symbol" cane, signalling to others that he could not see. "Grandad was clever, mentally tough and very inspiring. Growing up with a father figure who was blind, I'm quite well adjusted to it. It's the norm for me".

He served as regional secretary for the TUC-affiliated National League for the Blind and Disabled, and Steven recalls he was "very left wing, an activist intent on getting a better deal for visually impaired people". Steven went to his first "union" meeting at four.

But it wasn't until he joined British Gas twelve years ago that he joined a union - signing up to UNISON in the first week. He's been a workplace rep in the Yorkshire gas branch for over six years, supports branch members with disabilities and represents the branch on the Yorkshire gas board equalities committee. And then there's UNISON's regional energy services group committee.

But that's not all. British Gas is owned by Centrica. And Steven has been chosen to "champion" those with visual

impairment on the company's Disability and Wellbeing Network (DAWN).

Steven relishes the independence Guss has given him. He can now, for instance, meet his partner Anita after work in a nearby city without having to ask a friend, or his son Calum to help out.

Fundraising can take many guises. Stephen has driven round a racetrack with double amputee turned racing driver David Birrell, who lost his legs on military service in Afghanistan. The sponsorship money went, of course, to fund guide dogs.

Steven's activist grandad continues to inspire - challenging negative stereotypes of disability. "I remember him saying 'why does a disabled person have to be limited in what they do?'" With his newfound confidence after teaming up with Guss, Steven's fundraising skills have certainly taken off... as he champions the cause of the dogs that change lives. Whatever next? Watch this space. ■

Life-changing

The Guide Dogs for the blind charity says:

- Every hour, another person in the UK goes blind
- 180,000 people with sight loss rarely leave home alone
- Almost two million people in the UK are living with sight loss. By 2050, there could be nearly four million
- We rely on donations to continue our life-changing work. Every pound raised makes a difference to people in the UK living with sight loss.



There's nothing new about fake news. Active! reporter **Peter Carroll** trawls through history and comes up with a few accomplished liars and cynical, epoch-making fibs

Thanks to Donald Trump, the world seems to have been suddenly alerted to the dire threat to democracy posed by "fake news".

But there is nothing new about fake news. Like the poor, it is always with us, and to describe it as a new phenomenon is in itself fake news.

I remember the chill I got going into a newsagent one morning in 2003 to see every national title splashing on almost identical headlines: We were just forty minutes away from being bombed by Saddam Hussein.

It was fake news, of course, and many people at the time furiously dismissed it as such.

But it did the job it was meant to do - recruiting public opinion for war - and no heads rolled because of the "dodgy dossier".

Hundreds of thousands of deaths later, accompanied by the wholly predictable spread of terrorism across the world, it's as if we have all developed collective amnesia.

Who remembers now the Zinoviev letter? It was a gigantic piece of fake news which helped to bring down the first Labour Government under Ramsay Macdonald.

Ardent Tories and friends of Churchill in MI5 and MI6 forged a letter, which they sent to the Daily Mail,

supposedly written by a senior Communist Party official in Russia.

It called on British Communists to mobilise "sympathetic forces" in the Labour Party to support an Anglo-Soviet treaty - including a loan to the Bolshevik government - and to encourage "agitation-propaganda" in the armed forces.

The headline in the Daily Mail on October 25 1924 (four days before the General Election, which Labour lost by a landslide) read: Civil War Plot by Socialists' Masters: Moscow Orders to Our Reds; Great Plot Disclosed.

These examples are at the high and dangerous end of the fake news spectrum.



WE WERE JUST FORTY MINUTES AWAY FROM BEING BOMBED BY SADDAM HUSSEIN. IT WAS FAKE NEWS, OF COURSE

Such lies result in grotesque impoverishment, inequality, persecution and slaughter for millions of human beings.

And the evil godfather of modern propaganda and media manipulation, the Nazi Joseph Goebbels, was more than happy to lay bare the simple techniques of fake news way back in the 1930's.

He wrote: "It would not be impossible to prove with sufficient repetition and a psychological understanding of the people concerned that a square is in fact a circle. They are mere words, and words can be moulded until they clothe ideas and disguise."

PROPAGANDA

See how he delights in his superiority, his technical mastery of social psychology and his contempt for the sheep-like idiots he brainwashes!

Fake news is in fact a very straight forward business, and we witness our own politicians demonstrating this fact every day of the week.

Remember the period when Tory MPs opened their every statement with: "Of course we have inherited Labour's financial mess, caused by overspending on public services and we must tackle the deficit....etc"?

Here's Goebbels again, outlining the "just keep saying the same thing endlessly" technique.

"The most brilliant propagandist technique will yield no success unless one fundamental principle is borne in mind constantly

– it must confine itself to a few points and repeat them over and over."

But such lying political propaganda is not the only example of how sections of the media have always rejoiced in toying with our minds.

Nearly 40 years ago I was a young reporter in Worcestershire and wrote a story about a young woman, dogged by addiction and mental illness, who committed suicide by laying her head on a railway track to be severed by a train.

She had left her four-year-old daughter, called Astra, in a hotel room. She and her friends believed in "numerology" and she thought the stars had predicted she must end her life.

A youngish reporter from the Sunday Mirror called Nick Ferrari (now famous as a right-wing media "shock Jock") came to town with his cheque book and asked me to give him the background and contacts for the story.

He didn't quote me by name, he attributed my account to "a self-professed high priest of the Occult, who would give his name only as David".

SMEAR

When I saw it I laughed, but also realised that tabloid newspapers were in the entertainment business: a crude mix of fact and fiction, untroubled by any concerns about accuracy.

I also covered the



ARDENT
 TORIES
 AND
 FRIENDS
 OF
 CHURCHILL
 IN MI5
 AND MI6
 FORGED
 A LETTER



Professional liar - Joseph Goebbels

Bradford City fire in 1985, in which 56 people died, and the subsequent inquiry by Justice Popplewell.

One of the witnesses called was a young Daily Star reporter who had been moonlighting a shift for the News of the World.

He decided he would make a name for himself by claiming he saw a smoke bomb thrown by hooligans into the stand which caused the tragedy.

It was a complete lie, as the Judge pointed out to the reporter, but it didn't stop the News of the World leading on the story that the fire was caused by violence. As we all know, the Sun launched a similar campaign to smear Liverpool fans after the Hillsborough disaster.

So we must always stay vigilant against lies.

That means seeking out authentic, reliable sources for information (dare I say, like UNISON Active!?) and always reading between the lines. ■

Peter Carroll





PAUL ROUTLEDGE

Mirror political columnist

Members fight against NHS Lite

Cash-strapped hospital bosses are starting up wholly-owned subsidiary companies so they can pay low-paid cleaners, gardeners, IT workers and other non-medical staff even less. But UNISON members in a number of hospitals in Yorkshire and Humberside have successfully resisted the scam

“
OUR
MEMBERS
DON'T
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THEIR
NHS
STATUS

Natalie
Ratcliffe

UNISON is fighting “privatisation by stealth” in the region’s hospitals. Health bosses are seeking to drive low-paid workers out of direct NHS employment into a wholly-owned subsidiary company, acronym WOS.

Cleaners, gardeners, IT workers and other non-medical staff will be transferred into these outfits to save money for cash-strapped hospital trusts.

Airedale General, Barnsley and the Calderdale and Huddersfield Trust succeeded in this strategy, but the big Mid Yorks and Leeds Teaching groups back-tracked after UNISON members said “No.”

Staff at Mid-Yorks, at Pinderfields, Deswbury and Pontefract hospitals, voted for a three-day strike, and management abandoned plans for a WOS.

Leeds Teaching also backed down in the face of membership backlash.

In Bradford, a ballot for action just failed to reach the Tory government’s 50 per cent turnout threshold, but it was enough to get local management to negotiate a better deal.

Across the region, it’s a bit of a stalemate, but where members have polled enough support for action, it’s been enough to make NHS bosses think twice.

Regional health officer Natalie Ratcliffe, at the sharp end of this campaign, explains: “Our members don’t want to lose their NHS status. They joined the health service for secure, direct employment – not being shunted into a subsidiary company.”

The initial objective is to save millions in VAT, and the trusts say terms and conditions remain the same for staff transferred over. But new workers can be engaged on worse (maybe that should be WOS) terms and conditions, impacting pay, hours, holidays and pensions.

“It’s bound to create friction in the workplace when new employees come in on inferior wages,” says Natalie. “It’s bad for morale, and for patients. Our members don’t want privatisation by the back door, absolutely they don’t.”

While they deny it in public, managers admit in private that this scam is money-motivated. Across Yorkshire, seven trusts posted a combined £160 million deficit last year. But Leeds Teaching made a handsome profit of nearly £19 million – so there is no need for a WOS.

This is a “reform” sweeping across the country, as hospitals desperately seek to make the savings demanded by the Tories in the face of rising demand for services.

But UNISON is fighting the

underhand imposition of a new burden on the backs of those in the NHS least able to bear it.

PROPER JOB

Statistic: More than 10,000 people are officially estimated to be on zero-hours contracts in Leeds.

Nobody knows how many would prefer to have a proper job, but I bet a pint of bitter to a dandelion and burdock that it’s most of them.

STRONG WOMEN

Women in the North express their femininity through “strength and aggression”, said Open University academic Meg-John Barker.

The assertion was soundly slapped down, but I reckon there is some truth in the view.

Women have been on the forefront of progress, from the suffragettes, through the strikers in Leeds clothing factories in the 1970s, the Women Against Pit Closures right through to the Doncaster care workers of this century.

And long may it continue. Women of this generation learned it from their mothers and grandmothers, who worked in the mills, the factories – even the mines.

Femininity is about being yourself and standing up for yourself. That’s why women make good trade unionists.



IT'S A WINNER

To Doncaster on UNISON Race Day, another brilliant excursion. And Mrs Reven showed a small profit on her equine speculation (I daren't accuse her of gambling).

I know other unions sponsor sporting events, but none do it as well as this much-loved, and well-attended, event. And how do they get the sun to shine every year?

WALK OF SHAME

What a kerfuffle! Pro and anti-petitions followed suggestions to put night-club tycoon Peter Stringfellow in Sheffield's Walk of Fame for his contribution to music in the city.

The council neatly side-stepped the issue, ruling that only live celebs could feature alongside such luminaries as Sean Bean and Dame Jessica Ennis. Why didn't they just simply say we don't want to celebrate the careers of men who exploit women.

MOUTHY MACAW

Public service can be unrewarding. Firefighters called by the RSPCA to rescue escaped parrot Jessie in north London were told to gain the bird's trust by saying "I love you."

The mouthy macaw replied "F*** Off!" and flew away.

YORKSHIRE'S OWN

I'm the original soccerseptic, but even I was caught up in the hope around England's World Cup run.

We don't do winning very well in this country of understated

pride, so it was probably right to be almost-victorious.

Team manager Gareth Southgate lives in Harrogate, in a mansion by Fewston reservoir, I believe. Not much soccer talent in the posh spa town. The good 'uns come from parts of God's own county where life is tougher.

So, Walker, Vardy and Maguire are from Sheffield, Stones from Barnsley (his great-uncle, also John, was NUM delegate at Frickley colliery, South Elmsall), Rose from Doncaster and Delph is a Bradford boy.

Southerners, eat your heart out.

SPIT IN THIS!

Scientists in Russia have identified bear saliva as a potent antidote to hospital bug MRSA.

All very well, as long as you're not the NHS porter sent to collect the stuff.

CASH ON TAP

Bosses in the privatised water industry beat the drought with a deluge of money into their bank accounts.

The average package for top executives was more than £1.2 million last year, with Richard Flint, CEO of Yorkshire Water, trousering a whopping £1,328,000 – seven times the Prime Minister's pay.

That brings his income from salary, bonuses, pension and other benefits to a total of £5.9 million over five years - for running a privatised monopoly. You can't switch supplier to another tap.

Nationally, bills have risen

by over 40 per cent more than inflation since privatisation in 1979. Flint is making a mint ... at our expense.

HYPOCRITE HANCOCK

After six years of crippling austerity under Jeremy Hunt, the NHS has a new Secretary of State: ambitious motormouth Matt Hancock, who claims: "When I say I love the NHS, I really mean it."

He loves our health service because Bristol hospital staff saved his sister's life after she fell off her horse at the Badminton Trials

Private-school and Oxford-educated Hancock worked for daddy's software company before becoming chief of staff for Chancellor George Osborne, godfather of spending cuts.

He took donations of £32,000 from the boss of the Institute of Economic Affairs, a hard-Right think-tank that favours NHS privatisation. As an MP he voted to make it easier for private firms to win big health contracts.

Smug Hancock laments "heartbreaking" low morale among health staff – as if he hadn't been an enthusiastic party to causing it.

He threatens that Theresa May's extra £20 billion a year for the NHS is "contingent" on adopting the latest labour-saving technology, of which he is a slobbering fan. He even has his own app.

I thought you'd like to know the real story of the politician who has the future of our NHS in his hands. ■

HAND-BAGGED

Council chiefs in Grantham, Lincs, couldn't persuade local people to pay for a statue of the town's most famous daughter - Maggie Thatcher.

So they're over the moon at getting free a ten-foot-high £300,000 idol of their idol.

It's mouldered in a shed somewhere since Tory-controlled Westminster Council refused permission for Parliament Square, for fear of vandalism and public disorder.

The stone version of the Iron Lady will go on a ten-foot-high plinth in her native Grantham, well out of reach of protesters.

Daughter Carol Thatcher doesn't like it because Maggie's not holding her trademark handbag. Presumably she lost it beating the sculptor down in price.

The views expressed in this column are not necessarily those of UNISON

CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER



Although asbestos was banned in the late 1990s, the number of people to be diagnosed with asbestos-related illnesses has yet to peak, says **Lorna Webster** of Thompsons

Asbestos has left a devastating legacy – it is the greatest single cause of work-related deaths in the UK.

Employers want to hide their track record of exposing workers – and those around them – to what can be a highly dangerous material.

They want it to be consigned to the history books. But at Thompsons, we know that for thousands of families every year, forgetting about asbestos is not an option.

IMPORTANT

It would be wrong to think of asbestos-related illness as a thing of the past. In fact, the number of people being diagnosed has not yet reached its peak. And while not everyone who has been exposed to asbestos will become ill as a result, it is important that all members are aware of the dangers posed by the material, and what to do if they are worried about any potential exposure.

Asbestos is a natural fibre, which up to the 1980s was commonly used in construction. Due to its fire-retardant and heat insulating qualities, it was used in a huge variety of building materials

from floor and ceiling tiles to boiler lagging.

Despite the fact that the link between asbestos exposure and ill health was known as long ago as the early 1900s, and without doubt from the 1960s, the use of asbestos in the UK was not completely banned until the late 1990s. Its highly friable nature – meaning it easily reduces to a powder and can become airborne – makes it a particular hazard to anyone inhaling the microscopic fibres.

While your employer should, in buildings where asbestos may still be present, be providing personal protective equipment, asbestos exposure can still occur.

Members who have been working for many years, including retired members, would not always have had access to the right equipment to minimise the risk of exposure.

It is normally a long time after exposure, somewhere between 10 to 50 years, that people who are going to develop an asbestos disease begin to develop the symptoms – but the nature of the fibres means not all members who have been exposed will develop a condition. This means that concerns about developing an asbestos related condition in later life can be

significant and prolonged for those who have been exposed to it.

Thompsons Solicitors ran the first successful asbestos disease case in the UK and have unrivalled experience of representing members suffering with asbestos-related illnesses, such as mesothelioma, pleural thickening, lung cancer and asbestosis.

GUIDANCE

UNISON members have access to our legal expertise. Our specialists are just that, experts in their field, experienced at working to protect and assist members who have been affected by asbestos related illnesses.

Our #PastButPresent campaign aims to give a voice to sufferers, their families, communities and industries that continue to be affected by asbestos-related diseases, ensuring their stories continue to be told.

If you or a loved one think you may be suffering as a result of previous asbestos exposure, our experts can help you. They can provide legal guidance and signpost you to a number of support services and medical professionals in your area. ■



UNISON
MEMBERS
HAVE
ACCESS
TO OUR
LEGAL
EXPERTISE



Lorna Webster -
Senior asbestos
solicitor at
Thompsons

To learn more about our #PastButPresent campaign, go to <https://www.thompsons.tradeunion.law/news/campaigns/asbestos-past-but-present>.

The team is happy to assist branches with recruitment activity and support recruitment events. We can also arrange:-

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- Offer a presentation to or 'exhibit' at a branch meeting
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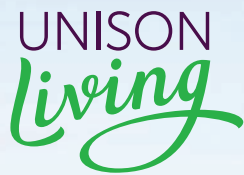
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