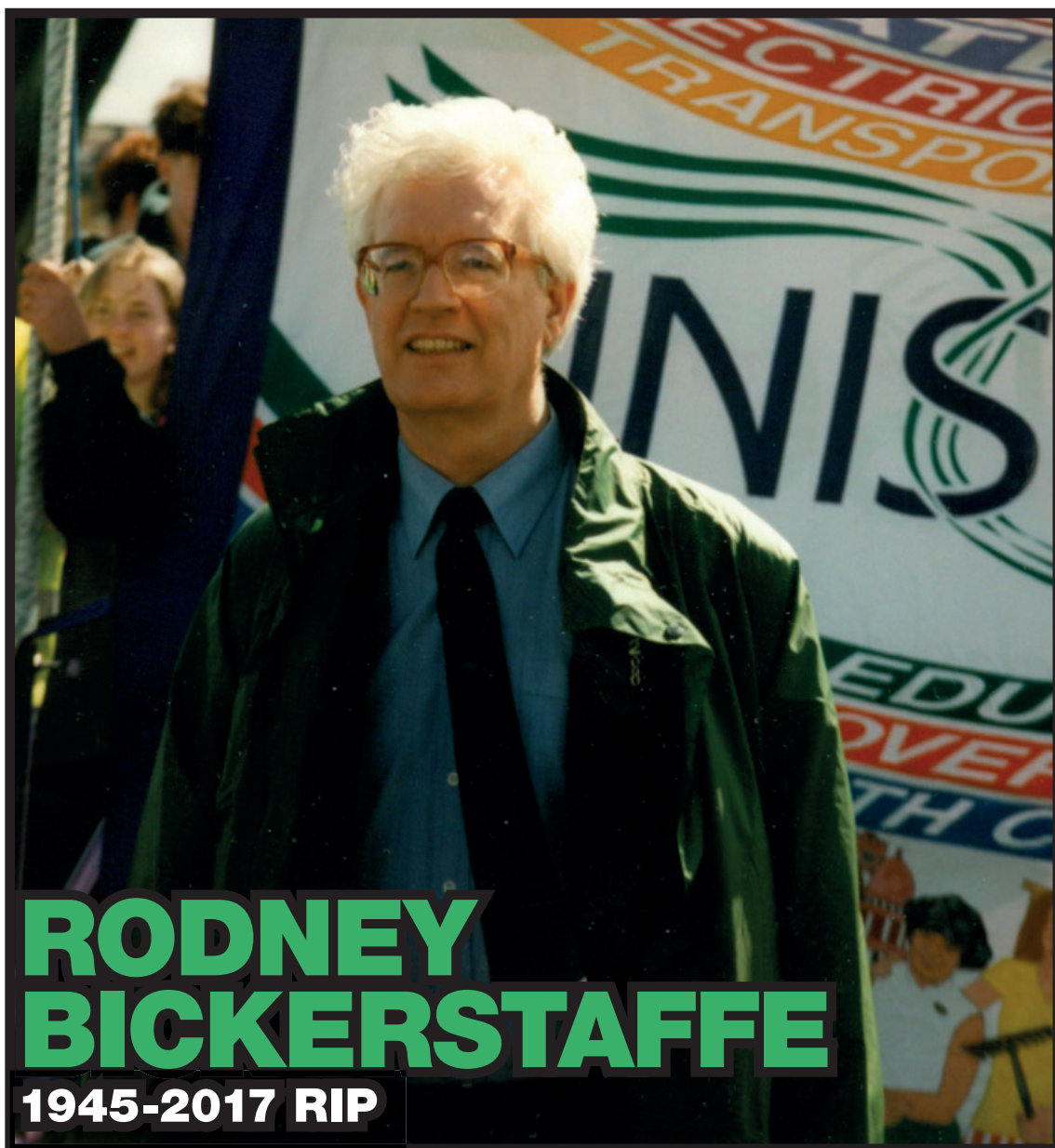


# UNISON ACTIVE!

THE MAGAZINE FOR MEMBERS IN YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE



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**RODNEY  
BICKERSTAFFE**

**1945-2017 RIP**

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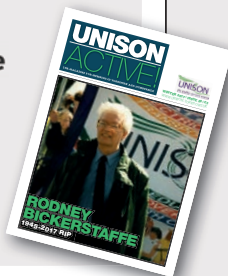
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**DAVE PRENTIS**  
**GENERAL**  
**SECRETARY**

*Dave Prentis*

## A FITTING TRIBUTE

Recently our Union lost a true giant of our movement. Rodney Bickerstaffe, our former general secretary and a proud Yorkshireman, died on October 3. Rodney was the very best of us – a special man and a special friend to so many of us – and I will miss him. Our thoughts are with Rodney's family, especially his wife Pat who was an ever present support to him in all his work and was the love of his life.

When asked what he believed his greatest achievements were, he would respond: the national minimum wage

and the creation of UNISON. I'm sure many of us recall the powerful advocacy he provided to deliver these goals.

It is fitting then, that the union Rodney helped to build is currently taking the fight to the Government on pay, through our Pay Up Now! campaign.

I know that for many UNISON members, there is no more pressing issue.

More than three-quarters of you have told us you're buying less food to cut costs, while one in ten miss entire meals to make sure your children can eat.

We already know the Government will seek to divide public servants, setting one group against each other as ministers cherry pick their preferred recipients for pay rises. That's why it's so important that we stay united as a union. I've been clear from the outset – we don't want a pay rise just for those in uniforms, we want a uniform pay rise for everyone.



**WENDY NICHOLS**  
**REGIONAL**  
**CONVENOR**

*W. Nichols*

## Our message is getting through

There is no doubt now that politicians are finally listening to what UNISON has been saying for years – austerity has been a disaster.

It has been a tragedy for hundreds of thousands of people who have lost their jobs, and for the communities in which they live and work. And as we said would happen from the start, it has damaged the economy and created widespread financial insecurity.

So the fact that the Tory Government is publicly trying to distance itself from austerity shows they are worried that the public mood has shifted decisively in

favour of well-funded public services, with fair pay and conditions for staff.

But their savage cuts continue across the NHS and local government. The Government talks of 'flexibility' on lifting the public sector pay cap, meaning they can pick and choose who benefits and by how much.

They have, at least, been forced to accept there is a massive funding problem in public services. Their political problem is that this crisis is a direct result of their own policies.

Our message is getting heard. People realise how vital their public services are, and how dedicated staff are being driven away because of the pay cuts imposed on them by this government.

## NEWS



## We lead the way on energy pay

UNISON has led the way in securing substantial pay awards for our members in the energy sector in the region.

Awards as high as 3.4 per cent plus £250 bonus have been achieved in Northern Gas Networks under a three-year deal which will match RPI but not fall under 1.75 per cent in the next two years. Members at npower are to get 1.9 per cent – almost

double an earlier offer.

As Active! went to press, talks were under-way with Northern Powergrid and British Gas.

Across the energy sector the negotiations have been strengthened by active steward involvement, and an organising approach to engage members.

Pay surveys were undertaken to establish what awards staff were

looking for, but also their conditions of work. Many members are adapting to what management describes as agile working (where employees supposedly choose where, when and how they work) or in pressured call centre environments. Some have performance related allowances and see their colleagues awarded different salaries as personal

contractors or on agency contracts.

Regional organiser Leonie Sharp said, "UNISON members in energy are working hard and should be rewarded, whether their employer is in recovery or celebrating its profits.

"The message is getting out that we are stronger if we pull together and that collective bargaining is important and effective."

### ACTIVIST TRAINING

COURSE TITLE	COURSE DATES	CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS	RESIDENTIAL DETAILS	VENUE
Organising Steward	29, 30 November, 4, 5, 6 December 2017	November 2017	Non-Residential	Commerce House
Organising Steward	5, 6, 7, 8, 9 February 2018	8 January 2018	Non-Residential	Commerce House
Health & Safety Reps	19, 20, 21, 22, 23 February 2018	19 January 2018	Non-Residential	Commerce House
Representation Skills	1, 2 March 2018	1 February 2018	Non-Residential	Commerce House
Organising Steward	12, 13, 14, 15, 16 March 2018	12 February 2018	4 Nights Residential	Northern College
Introduction to Employment Law	19 March 2018	16 February 2018	Non-Residential	Commerce House
Introduction to Contracts of Employment	20 March 2018	16 February 2018	Non-Residential	Commerce House
Introduction to Work Life Balance (law)	21 March 2018	16 February 2018	Non-Residential	Commerce House

To apply, please complete an application form and send it to your branch for approval. For more information about all courses (including more general ones for non-activists) please contact our education administrator on 0113 218 2330 or email [t.shearer@unison.co.uk](mailto:t.shearer@unison.co.uk)



# True socialist and great union leader



It was a sad day for UNISON and for the trade union and labour movement when our former general secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe, died recently after a short illness, writes *Wendy Nichols*.

Rodney, or Bick as he was known by his friends was a great trade unionist, a true socialist, an internationalist, champion of the down-trodden and a great general secretary both of NUPE and UNISON.

A Doncaster lad, Rodney was proud of his Yorkshire roots and Yorkshire was proud of him. He started working for NUPE in 1966 in the region, ending up as general secretary first of NUPE, and then UNISON. And he was proud to champion the cause of our members throughout those years. He retired in 2001.

I say retired, but he was far from retiring, ever. Rodney continued to campaign wherever

he saw an injustice. He became president of the National Pensioners' Convention, president of War on Want, and chair of Global Network, the Ken Gill Memorial Fund, and patron and trustee of the International Brigades Memorial Trust.

He was a wonderful orator and no-one who heard him could help but be impressed by his passion and commitment to ending poverty and suffering. Rodney was the man who unremittingly, and often single-handedly, campaigned for the statutory national minimum wage that gave millions of workers a pay rise.

Our union has lost a true friend and champion. Our thoughts and condolences are with Rodney's family, particularly his wife Pat, the love of his life, always at his side, always his greatest support.

● P20: One of the greats

## Privatisation threat to NHS pay

UNISON is leading a campaign against a damaging privatisation plan involving West Yorkshire trusts which could spread further through the region.

The trusts are planning to set up a private company to provide services which could lead to cuts to pay and conditions for already low-paid staff.

The privatisation plan

would create 'a wholly owned' company to which NHS staff would be transferred as part of a drive to share services and save money.

But UNISON's regional head of health Tony Pearson, has written to chief executives and senior managers in West

Yorkshire warning that the union would use "all available legal, political and industrial strategies to protect our members' pay and conditions".



Tony Pearson

Tony said that while the union understood the NHS was a victim of massive funding cuts, he was deeply sceptical of the financial benefits of the scheme.

UNISON understands that some trusts are considering transferring all facilities management services as well as pathology and portering services into the new company.

FEATURE MEDIA REVIEW

# BREXIT STORM NEXT

**Mary Maguire** on how the press reported the catastrophic hurricanes in the West Indies and the British political hurricane which will make the headlines next

The headline in the Yorkshire Post ran: "Yorkshire hampered by rain in bid to pull clear of trouble." Really? What an alarming thought. Had Yorkshire folk gone soft? Closer inspection revealed it was the cricket team, not the county. All those mud splashes just ruin one's whites and who wants to play with soggy bats and balls?

Two lessons to be learnt from that: 1. Never trust a headline and 2. The weather is always news.

Editors soon tire of the 'Phew! What a scorcher' or 'mostly cloudy with outbreaks of rain' and cry out for a break from the silly season.

Abroad always helps, especially if there's a local angle. Take Hurricane Gert. The Press, Telegraph and Argus, Calendar News, BBC North, reported Gert would drench Yorkshire, adding to the north-south divide by sweeping in to soak the north.

One jovial joker interviewed by a BBC reporter in Grimsby in the midst of a deluge, said: "It were just a bit of drizzle. I don't know what folk are goin on abaat ...." The rest of the interview was drowned out by a huge clap of thunder.

Tragically, though, abroad was then battered mercilessly by more hurricanes, each one being worse than the last. Hurricane Harvey arrived, followed by Irma, and Jose. The impact in some places was catastrophic.

Swathes of islands in the Atlantic, the Caribbean and parts of the USA were battered and devastated by Irma, the 'most powerful hurricane ever recorded', (Guardian). Our TV screens and front pages awash with dramatic, distressing images. Death and destruction followed. An epic disaster and worthy of saturation coverage, everywhere.

The British response was 'found wanting' according to the Telegraph as the Royal Navy turned up late to bring relief to the British Virgin Islands, Barbuda,

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Anguilla and others savaged by Irma.

It reignited the climate change debate as boffins were brought out of mothballs to explain in detail how hurricanes are formed. Sunday political programmes discussed the impact on the economies of the countries affected. Satellite images showed the scale and strength of the developing storms.

We learnt how hurricanes are named, how a hurricane name can be 'retired'. It's when a storm has been deadly (Wakefield Advertiser, YEP). Others informed us how you could lobby to get a name retired.

Jose virtually caught up with Irma and, according to the Independent, more records were smashed as they topped speeds of 150mph.

People in the deadly paths followed official advice, mostly, to evacuate their homes. But, not all. As the Independent, Whitby Gazette and BBC told us, one exasperated Florida sheriff had to plead with citizens not to shoot at hurricane Irma, saying they 'won't turn it around'.

The New York Times gave us the story of Harvey and Irma, married 75 years, who were marvelling at the storms bearing their names.

Here in Yorkshire, local newshounds found a Huddersfield woman who was stuck in Florida to describe the evacuation ahead of Irma.

And the Hull Daily Mail discovered a Hull mum stranded in Cuba who 'thought her family would die' in hurricane Irma. She graphically described their terror as they were trapped in a hotel bathroom for 22 hours.

Now, we must brace ourselves for Hurricane Brexit. ■



Mary Maguire

## HowToHelp

There are many charities helping hurricane and disaster victims. The Disasters Emergency Committee [dec.org.uk](http://dec.org.uk) (covering 15 charities) or the British Red Cross [www.redcross.org.uk](http://www.redcross.org.uk) are just two.



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# WHO SAYS I'M NOT UP TO IT?



UNISON member Beverley Bell overcame racism to get her degree. Now she's determined to help others get a good education. **Ryan Fletcher** reports

Photo: Robert Boardman

Beverley Bell grew up in the kind of place most of us dream of visiting. St Ann's Bay in Jamaica is where British tourists travel long-haul for a once in a life time holiday.

UNISON member Beverley, who now lives in Bradford, spent her entire childhood there. It might not have been

a perfect life – Beverley's parents left her with her maternal grandparents, after they made the difficult decision to work in the UK in order to provide their children with more opportunities. Nevertheless she was surrounded by a close-knit family who loved her, unspoilt tropical countryside and a dynamic culture.

"I was brought up on a farm. When the birds used to fall out of the trees, especially baby birds, I used to tend to them and keep them in the chicken coop until they got better," Beverley said.

"Recently I was thinking about how I wanted to become a vet. Sometimes you have to make a side turn in terms of what you want to

“IT'S ABOUT NOT GIVING UP AND FOLLOWING YOUR HEART”



do in life but it's about not giving up and following your heart."

Beverley, 58, has never backed down, even when she faced the most disheartening experiences. Nor has she ever given up on her calling to help others.

Sadly, Beverley's grandparents passed away and she made the move from Jamaica to Bradford when she was 14. Despite the obvious delight at being reunited with a family she knew primarily through photographs, including British-born siblings she'd never met, moving to a foreign land brought its own set of problems.

### ADVANCED

The biggest challenge was school.

When Beverley began school in Bradford in 1973, her deputy-headmaster was incapable of believing that she was a good student.

In fact, although Beverley's curriculum in Jamaica was more advanced than her new school's, the deputy-head insisted she was moved out of English lessons – against the advice of her teachers – and into a class with children who were just beginning to learn the language.

"It was pure and simple institutional racism. I was already repeating stuff I'd learned in Jamaica in the normal English class. I was moved from there into remedial lessons, even though I wrote well and was able to speak the language," Beverley said.

"It was awful and very frustrating. My dad tried to explain I could speak English

and there were three of four tutors who knew I was good at my studies and they fought for me, but it was to no avail.

"I made a promise to myself then that I was going to get a degree."

Further obstacles faced Beverley when she wanted to move into sixth form. Again the leadership of the school stood in her way, by trying to keep her down a year, so she left to find work.

### PROMISE

After eight years as an auxiliary nurse, Beverley took a foundation diploma at Bradford College and went on to graduate with a youth and community work degree at Lancaster University.

"I was elated when I graduated and I was proud that I kept my promise," she said.

Since then Beverley has worked and volunteered in the social care sector. She joined her current employer Creative Support in 2008 – the same time as she joined UNISON – as a support worker for adults with complex needs in assisted housing around West Yorkshire.

As with many public service jobs, the work is under-funded, under-appreciated and comes with risks. After being attacked by a service user and suffering a hairline fracture to her skull, Beverley said UNISON made sure her employer was held to account.

Beverley said: "There was nothing in his file to say he could get physical, but we found out later on that someone else had also been attacked.



I MADE  
A PROMISE  
TO MYSELF  
THAT I WAS  
GOING  
TO GET A  
DEGREE



"The union was very thorough and I had a really good representative."

Recently, Beverley has taken the union's Return to Learn course and has also trained to be a mentor. She plans to use her new mentoring skills to help young people at schools and colleges.

"Considering what I've been through I would like to help young people up the ladder. I want to help them do something with their lives that's constructive. I want to encourage them to do what they really want to do and just go for it," Beverley explained.

### CREATIVE

Despite an established life and career in Yorkshire and the expanse of the Atlantic, Beverley's Jamaican roots have never dissipated. In 1999 she returned to the island for the first time since she left as a girl.

"It was lovely. The family home wasn't quite the same but they still grew their own vegetables and the open space was the same. I find Kingston very hot but it's cooler in the country and in St Ann's," Beverley said.

"There's a group of us going next year for a family reunion and I'm really looking forward to it. We'll get together again and be as a family."

In the future Beverley plans to take a creative writing course. With perspectives shaped by both the UK and Jamaica and such an interesting family history, her work should make for compelling reading. ■



# READY FOR POWER

The Tories are panicking, but root and branch reform won't happen until Labour is back in government, says Daily Mirror columnist **Paul Routledge**

**L**abour has surged ahead of the Tories in the latest opinion polls.

If there was an election tomorrow, Jeremy Corbyn would be leader of the largest party at Westminster.

"We remain in Opposition for now, but we have become a government in waiting," he told cheering delegates at the Brighton conference. "And our message to the country could not be clearer: Labour is ready."

Survation, the pollster who got the June 8 result right, puts Labour on 41.5 per cent, with Theresa May's faltering Conservatives on less than 39 per cent. Other polls tell a similar story

Translated into votes and seats, this would be a net gain of 33 constituencies for Jeremy, putting him in striking distance of Downing Street.

He couldn't form a government on his own, but with around 40 Scots and Welsh nationalists he could easily muster a Commons

majority over the Tories and their allies

June 8 "changed politics in this country," said Jeremy. "We are the mainstream now, the common sense party of British politics. We are ready for an election."

And the trend is inexorably in Labour's favour as Mrs May's botched attempt to unite her Cabinet over Brexit lies in ruins. Top Tories are in open revolt, and there is talk of getting rid of her by Christmas. Treacherous Boris Johnson is ready to strike.

All of which put heart into

“  
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REVOLT  
”

delegates attending the conference in Brighton. Deep divisions among MPs and rank and file members were submerged in a tide of support for Jeremy Corbyn, who is now the 'strong and stable' leader that Mrs May wanted to be.

Along with Labour's plans for a massive investment in the NHS, pay for public service workers has moved up the political agenda.

The Corbyn Revolution has already claimed its first success – over the hated Tory pay cap. It's only a partial victory, but it opens the door to a campaign for all who work in the public services.

The battle is now under way to win justice for five million workers, after Chancellor Philip Hammond buckled under intense pressure to dismantle curbs imposed by George Osborne.

Police officers and prison staff were the first to break through the seven-year-long freeze, and UNISON is at the forefront of demands to secure equal treatment for everybody.

In the NHS, all 14 unions have submitted a joint pay claim for 3.9 per cent - matching the Retail Price Index of inflation -



## **PAY FOR PUBLIC SERVICE WORKERS HAS MOVED UP THE AGENDA**



plus £800 lost during the austerity era.

All eyes are now on the November 22 Budget, when 'Spreadsheet Phil' will have to show how far he will go to meet union demands.

The police and prison deal was a bit of a con. With RPI running at 3.9 per cent, police officers got only one per cent plus a one-off one per cent bonus, which doesn't feed into premium rates. Prison officers got 1.7 per cent - way short of RPI.

It's been a hectic autumn. At the Trades Union Congress, also in Brighton, UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis announced plans to target 27 parliamentary constituencies where the union has more members than the sitting Tory MP's margin of victory in June.

In Yorkshire, three Tories are in UNISON's sights: Stuart Andrew, whose majority of 331 in Pudsey is dwarfed by our tally of 2,087 members; Craig Whittaker, majority 609, is up against 2,684 members and In Outwood and Morley, Andrea Jenkyns defends a majority of 2,104 in a seat with 2,964 members.

In the run up to a parliamentary vote on wage curbs, the 'guilty 27'

were lobbied by UNISON constituents. But they voted against Labour's bid to 'Scrap The Cap' for every public service worker. They have been warned!

With the clear aim of spiking Labour's guns, Hammond announced the first steps towards ending the cap on the very day that Jeremy and Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell forced the Commons vote.

This is almost certainly only the beginning of Tory concessions to the Corbyn agenda, driven by political panic. After Labour championed the cause of students to great electoral effect, the government is now planning possible cuts in university tuition fees and lower interest rates for loans, currently running at an extortionate 6 per cent.

But best not to expect too much from this coalition government. They're still Tories and hard-line Ulster Unionists. Some reforms will only come when Labour is back in power.

John McDonnell has pledged to scrap David Cameron's anti-Trade Union Act, which outlaws certain public service disputes and makes all industrial action more difficult, within 100 days of a Labour government taking office. ■

## **OneYorkshire**

Away from the national stage, a fierce battle of wills is taking place between Tory ministers and local politicians over devolution for Yorkshire, *Paul Routledge writes*. Communities Secretary Sajid Javid has ordered council leaders to accept his plan for city regions run by a directly-elected mayor. Regional council leaders and the unions want a county-wide deal – known as One Yorkshire – with an elected Mayor working with existing local authorities. The Tories want to split Yorkshire into competing city regions because they might have a better chance of winning mayoral elections, as they did on Teeside and in Birmingham. But council leaders – mostly Labour – are sticking to their guns. This is another issue that could figure in next month's Budget, when Chancellor Hammond has to announce funding for local authorities.



# STILL MORE TO DO

There are now more Labour women MPs than men in Yorkshire and Humberside – 19 out of 36. But women with political ambitions still face more obstacles, fewer opportunities and lower expectations, says consulting editor **Mary Maguire**

As that icon of post-20th century feminism, Dolly Parton, breathtakingly sang: “Sometimes it’s hard to be a woman”.

Well, I don’t know whether it’s any harder being a woman than being a man, but it’s hard to be a woman in public life, and hardest of all to be a Member of Parliament. There are more obstacles; fewer opportunities and lower expectations. There still persists the notion that

women should be judged by how they look or what they wear. And, cardinal sin, they are often described by their relationship with a man – the married mother of two, the grandmother, the wife, the daughter, the sister, spinster of this parish. Or a “Babe”.

Who could forget the glorious ‘new dawn’ in May 1997, almost 70 years after the passing of the Equal Franchise Act, that ushered in a record number of women MPs – 120 in total. An increase of 173 per cent. Between 1945 and 1997,

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THIS  
REGION  
IS FAMED  
FOR ITS  
STRONG  
WOMEN  
”

women’s representation in Parliament had wavered between a little under three per cent and nine per cent. But it seemed that women were at last beginning to storm this most exclusive boy’s club. So, it was, indeed, a breakthrough and 101 of those MPs were Labour. But oh how the heart sank when they were dubbed ‘Blair’s Babes’.

These women, many of whom were trade unionists, councillors, workers, who had fought in many election campaigns on the same footing as men, were reduced to a decorative status. They were no longer women with brains who thought about politics, who engaged in political debate and discussion, who thought about the world around them, about poverty, injustice and inequality and wanted to do something about it.

But they showed what they were made of, helped change some of the old-fashioned practices in Parliament and influenced many of the socially progressive measures introduced during that time. They collectively brought a new dimension to Parliament.

Importantly, though, their very presence changed public perceptions; it became normal for women to be at the centre of power, not some fairground spectacle to be gawped at.



Emma Hardy

Melanie Onn



Tracey Brabin

Twenty years later, we now have 208 women MPs elected in June – 32 per cent of the total – with 45 per cent amongst Labour's ranks. Here in Yorkshire and Humberside, there are now more Labour women MPs than men – 19 out of 36.

This region is famed for its strong women. Its first woman MP, Alice Bacon, a miner's daughter, elected in 1945 to represent Leeds, was a Home Office and then education minister, responsible for bringing in comprehensive schools across the country.

And who can fail to admire Yorkshire-born Betty Boothroyd who made the interesting transition from being a tiller girl to become the first female speaker of the House of Commons? An incredibly tough act to follow.

Today, newly-elected MP for Hull West & Hessle, Emma Hardy, has taken up the cudgels on behalf of good state education. Her maiden speech energised the House of Commons chamber, as she blasted schools as 'learning factories' that cut out creative subjects such as art, drama and music.

Stephanie Peacock, elected the first woman MP for Barnsley East, spoke in the Grenfell Tower fire debate. She said: "Many people will know about Barnsley's history, and there is so much to be proud of, but still I have

constituents waiting for justice for what happened to them at Orgreave in 1984. We must ensure that the Grenfell victims do not wait as long."

They join a list of determined and dedicated Yorkshire and Humberside women MPs. Women such as Rachael Maskell, York Central, shadow environment secretary; Sarah Champion, Rotherham, shadow women and equalities secretary; Tracy Brabin, Batley & Spen, shadow minister for early years; our own Melanie Onn, Great Grimsby, now shadow housing minister and Louise Haigh, Sheffield Heeley, shadow police minister.

There are many too, who have experience in Government including Rachel Reeves, Leeds West; Caroline Flint, Don Valley; Mary Creagh, Wakefield; Yvette Cooper, Normanton, Castleford & Pontefract, and Angela Smith, Penistone & Stocklands.

Of course, there are women MPs from other parties, and the Tories have produced their second female Prime Minister, but progress is still slow. It was only in 2015 that the total number of women

ever elected exceeded the number of male MPs in a single Parliament.

Both the Fawcett Society and the Commons women & equalities select committee, are calling for all parties to ensure that at least 45 per cent of Parliamentary candidates are women.

For more than 25 years, the political parties have constantly repeated the mantra that they want to increase the number of female MPs. And at election time, there is always a pitch to get the 'women's vote'. In between, however, little action is taken.

Labour has achieved 45 per cent women MPs through a mixture of sometimes controversial initiatives, including women-only short lists. Trade unionists have played a huge role in bringing about equal representation. The Labour Women's Network and the new Jo Cox Women in Leadership Scheme run in memory of the late MP, are helping potential candidates.

Until Parliament looks like the people it represents, democracy is an illusion. ■

“THERE STILL PERSISTS THE NOTION THAT WOMEN SHOULD BE JUDGED BY HOW THEY LOOK”

# JUSTICE NOT FOR SALE

UNISON'S ground-breaking tribunal fees victory could lead to further breakthroughs, says **Rakesh Patel**, head of employment rights strategy at Thompsons Solicitors



**Rakesh Patel**

With UNISON's recent tribunal fees victory beginning to sink in, it is clear that it has been an historic landmark for workers' rights.

While UNISON has stood by its members over the last four years and ensured

that access to employment tribunals has remained free, the coalition government's attack on workers in 2013 through the introduction of fees was as symbolic as it was harsh.

The introduction of fees of up to £1,200 resulted in a cliff-edge decline in the number of tribunal cases being brought

by workers. Around 70 per cent fewer cases were taken to employment tribunals. The biggest impact was felt by low paid women.

The Government's 'justification' that the fees were aimed at deterring large numbers of false or unjustified claims, was undermined when senior



minister Matthew Hancock, crowded before a business audience that 'our tribunal reforms are working. Jobs are up and the number of cases taken to tribunal is down 80 per cent. The only work being hit by our tribunal reform is the workload of employment lawyers.' And with little to no meaningful consultation with unions or the workers who would be hit before their introduction, the collapse of cases across the board was as predictable as it was avoidable.

This was a wholly unfair policy which ran completely counter to the basic principle that the justice system should be equally open to all, regardless of wealth or status.

### SIGNIFICANT

UNISON has led the way for the movement on this issue, but it is worth remembering that the Government fought all the way to the Supreme Court before they were forced to listen. Of course the next step if they wanted to appeal, would have been to the European Court which they can't wait to get out of!

While this is a significant victory, the wider battle continues. The truth is that the Tories' approach to legal

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IMPACT  
WAS FELT  
BY LOW-  
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'reform' is to turn the justice system into an income-generator for the exchequer. And if it's ordinary people that suffer, ministers think that's a price worth paying.

The annual report for the courts and tribunals service (HMCTS) was released at the end of July. It shows that from breaking even or making a loss HMCTS generated fee income of nearly £800m, with £186m from family justice fees and more than £602m from civil justice fees.

### EXPENSIVE

The civil courts service is actually generating a profit for the Government - of £102m from fees for the 2016-2017 financial year. The Tories are turning access to justice into a profit-making machine. Court fees, (often increasing at rates far in excess of inflation) are putting the burden of responsibility squarely on the wrong shoulders. Having a theoretical right to pursue a case through the justice system when expensive fees have coincided with a public sector pay squeeze, means something entirely different in reality.

And with the threatened change to the small claims

limit still on the horizon, the Government is unashamedly loading the dice against those who have suffered an injury (in or out of work).

Despite raking in money from fees, the Government has also made ruthless cuts to the courts and tribunals staff. Some 940 full-time posts were destroyed last year, replaced by contracted agency workers.

Public sector unions, including UNISON, have raised the alarm on the Government's recent decisions to privatise the collection of court fines. As Labour's shadow justice secretary Richard Burgon recently commented: "privatisation is at the expense of delivering a fair system of justice for all."

UNISON's important victory shows that change is possible. We must keep the pressure on to make it clear that access to justice is not a commodity up for sale, but a basic and essential democratic right, and any attempt to reduce those rights will be fought at every turn. ■



### GetAccess

Commenting on the judgement of the Supreme Court, regional convenor Wendy Nichols (right) said: "It's difficult to overestimate the importance of UNISON's victory over employment tribunal fees, both in terms of the basic human rights of working people and the boost the judgement gives the union movement as a whole which is continuing to suffer from mindless prejudice at the hands of this Government." If you are a UNISON member and you or a relative has been injured or involved in an accident, call the union legal service on 0800 0857 857. You will get access to leading legal expertise with the promise that you will keep 100 per cent of any compensation. To find out more information about Thompsons' work with UNISON visit: [www.thompsonstradeunion.law/trade-unions/unison](http://www.thompsonstradeunion.law/trade-unions/unison).

# FEEL THE FORCE

North Yorkshire police service is among the least diverse in England and Wales, but the dynamic UNISON branch is on the case.

**Peter Carroll** meets the activists



The activists

Members of the UNISON Branch at North Yorkshire Police are on a mission to encourage people from all sections of the community to come to work for the service - and to join the union.

North Yorkshire Police - which serves a population of 602,000 across the largest county in England and

Wales - is currently the least diverse force in the country in terms of minority group employees.

But the UNISON branch is out to change that with a positive drive to attract a more diverse intake of employees, including black, disabled, the young and LGBT people.

John Mackfall, branch secretary for more than 30 years, said: "We are

working closely with the North Yorkshire black police association.

"It is a support network within the police force and police staff and we work closely with them and North Yorkshire Police to support recruitment and retention of staff from all groups of people, to make North Yorkshire Police truly representative of the people they serve.

"We also want to increase the number of younger people coming into the service.

"We want to offer apprenticeships so that young people will see the police service as a career option."

Back in 2012, the service lost a third of its workforce as a result of central government cuts, and in common with other police forces was under great pressure to maintain service standards.

In total 500 posts went, although almost all of the

John Mackfall explains a point to reporter Peter Carroll



STAFF MEMBERS ARE THE FIRST POINT OF CONTACT FOR THE PUBLIC SEEKING POLICE HELP





Photos: Robert Boardman

individuals affected were re-deployed within the service and there were 138 voluntary redundancies.

Five years on and North Yorkshire Police is now more financially stable and recruitment of both police officers and PCSOs is being enthusiastically pursued.

Most authorities in the rest of the country made the decision to cut PCSO jobs but North Yorkshire decided to save them.

With a 73 per cent UNISON membership among the 1,000 police staff employed, the branch has widespread support.

The list of vital jobs police staff are responsible for is long and the 1,500 police officers in the county depend on their work to do their own jobs effectively.

Answering 999 calls is a highly skilled and responsible job and, like the work of PCSOs, these staff members are the first point of contact for the public seeking police help.

Communications officers and radio despatch staff send the police to incidents and they also run the automatic number plate car recognition system to fight crime.

UNISON members also run the front office and act as crime scene investigators and custody officers.

The branch has elected a committee of members with responsibility for the self-organised groups (SOGs) so they can raise pressing issues, discuss what needs to be done to tackle problems and promote more diverse recruitment policies.

Ginny Oche-Hewson chairs the black members' SOG. Ginny is the only black African employed by the service and believes the self-organised groups in North Yorkshire are crucial to the future of the service.

She said: "I have been with the force for 14 years and there is a clear need to get more people like me into the service.

"Black people have applied

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GINNY IS  
THE ONLY  
BLACK  
AFRICAN  
EMPLOYED  
BY THE  
SERVICE  
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to work here in the past but many have not even got interviews.

"So we try to give applicants help and support to get to the stage where they can go forward and actually get a job. We want to go out to communities we wouldn't usually reach.

"And we can do that through UNISON's organisations. We can advertise job opportunities in hospitals and throughout the NHS, in local government and other public services."

The support system involves practical help with filling in CVs and preparing for interviews.

Mentoring people and pointing them in the direction of UNISON lifelong learning opportunities is a key part of the recruitment strategy.

Ginny said: "We have all these ways to help people get a career here, but we have to get them to apply to come here first, and that is what we have set out to do." ►



## FEATURE

Abid Khan was a founding member of the North Yorkshire black police association when it started in 1999 after the Stephen Lawrence inquiry into the murder of the black teenager by racist thugs in London.

The association's task was to break down historic mistrust within minority communities about the police in general and, specifically, hostility to joining the police service.

Abid said: "We wanted to influence the policies and procedures of North Yorkshire Police and introduce positive action to recruit and retain staff from minority communities.

"We feel it is important to make the service aware of cultural differences and how they can be barriers to people wanting to work here.

"Simple things like changing shifts for people during Ramadan for example. That is part of encouraging people to join and help to change the culture of the service as a whole.

"These measures do not amount to positive discrimination. We just set out to provide support through the sometimes challenging process of getting a job.

"At the end of the day, candidates must succeed at interview. It is up to them at that stage, but we want to help people at least to get to that stage."

Branch welfare officer Karen Brittan is fighting another battle for equality – in her case to achieve parity with the rights and facilities provided for police officers.

She said: "The police get

what they are entitled to but we have to fight for everything.

"We have also recently had a 'Good to Talk' campaign encouraging people suffering from stress and mental health issues to speak up about their struggles.

"We want to break down barriers between people and reach those who need our help."

Every SOG representative shares a common aim. Whether it is on behalf of disabled, black, women or LGBT workers – they want the service to truly reflect all the communities it serves.

UNISON regional manager Steve Torrance said: "Equality for all is at the heart of everything that UNISON believes in and the North Yorkshire police branch is a good example of how branches can use their equalities groups to reach out and attract more members to join the union.

"For the branch to have succeeded in having all equalities groups fully functioning in one of the least representative geographical areas in terms of minorities is a testament to their excellent work in this respect.

"They have developed an inclusive agenda that benefits members and



strengthens us at local, regional and national levels. They are succeeding, and providing a very positive and progressive example to other branches in this region and beyond."

Branch secretary John Mackfall is proud of his branch and the commitment they share to change the culture of the police service for the better.

After 32 years as branch secretary he has seen huge changes in the way the service is run.

But he is convinced that active recruitment of staff from all backgrounds in society is the only way to proceed in the years to come.

"We have a long way to go towards achieving our vision of a genuinely representative workforce in this vital public service," said John.

"We are going against the trends because we have a very active committee of members who care deeply about equality in the workplace.

"Everybody should be treated the same, without any threat of bullying or harassment.

"We have gone a long way towards this goal and I understand there is still a long way to go. But I think we have gone further than many other branches." ■

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WE WANT  
TO BREAK  
DOWN  
BARRIERS  
BETWEEN  
PEOPLE  
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# there for you

supporting UNISON members  
when life gets tough

- Financial assistance
- Debt advice
- Wellbeing breaks
- Support & information

Please make sure our members  
are aware of the help that is  
available in these difficult times.

UNISON members struggling  
through an unexpected crisis can  
get help from 'there for you' by:-

- ☑ Contacting their  
Branch Welfare Officer
- ☑ Calling us on 020 7121 5620

You can also find out more  
information by visiting our website

[www.unison.org.uk/get-help/  
help-with-problems-at-home/  
there-for-you/](http://www.unison.org.uk/get-help/help-with-problems-at-home/there-for-you/)

Registered charity number 1023552

  
**UNISON**  
*the public service union*





# ONE OF THE GREATS

Brought up in Doncaster, Rodney Bickerstaffe was one of us, but he was also an exceptional and much-loved general secretary of both NUPE and UNISON. **Mary Maguire**, who worked closely for many years with 'Bick' as his press officer, pays tribute to the father of the national minimum wage who died on October 3

Rodney Bickerstaffe could be downright awkward at times. He'd never give up. He'd keep coming back to the argument and worry away at his opponents, like a dog at a bone.

It was that tenacity that gave millions of workers a pay rise in 1998 with the introduction of the statutory national minimum wage. It was no easy achievement. But, Bick, as he was known, knew he was right – all he had to do was convince the rest of the world.

It took years. From an ideal, to addressing an adoring crowd of three in a hall in Blackpool, to

confronting and persuading the mighty T&GWU, AEU and GMB, unions opposed to a minimum wage, to persuading a Labour Government to do the right thing. That took bottle and determination.

Bick's mum Elizabeth was a nurse, unmarried when he was born in 1945, viewed as scandalous in those days. Brought up in Doncaster, his upbringing shaped his outlook on life. At 21 he became an organiser in Yorkshire for NUPE, one of UNISON's founder unions. He had found his calling.

Bick told how he had to travel the region by bus, until a colleague died and

he was told "you can have a car now". "So, that's the way of the union", he replied taking the car.

Bick was a union man to his core. And his dream of one public service union, to stop bosses driving a wedge between workers, was realised in UNISON.

As general secretary of NUPE and UNISON, he used his considerable talents to fight for the downtrodden, low paid, vulnerable and elderly. He always put people before principles as he put it - and he was an internationalist, a champion of Travellers' rights. And he battled to retain and build a decent NHS and public

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BICK  
JUST  
TOLD IT  
LIKE  
IT WAS  
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services. He later rejected a peerage.

Bick waged a, sometimes one-man, crusade against poverty pay and pensioner poverty. He believed in the dignity of work, of the individual and of the elderly. In favour of universality, opposed to means-testing, Bick's line that no-one should have to "parade their poverty" struck a nerve with even the most hardened.

A great orator, in the old-style, Bick admitted freely that he could play to the gallery with the best of them and he delivered some barn-storming speeches that electrified any conference hall. His style direct, passionate, eloquent.

When John Edmonds of GMB tried to lecture him at the TUC conference on the rate of the minimum wage Bick's right of reply delighted delegates:

"I've been campaigning (on this) for more than 30 years, sometimes in lonely isolation, I don't need lectures from any Johnny-come-latelies to the concept."

A consummate communicator, Bick knew the power of an image. He knew the power of keeping the message simple. As when he delivered a plea at the Labour Party conference, holding up three one pound coins and three twenty pence pieces, saying: "Could you Cheri or Tony live on this?" A reference to the minimum wage initially set at £3.60 for over-21s.

He knew the power of repetition. No lectures, no economic essays. Bick just told it like it was. If abolishing poverty pay and

pensioner poverty was his crusade, redistribution was his mission. Memorably, he would say: "we live in the fourth richest nation on this spinning planet of ours. If someone takes more than their fair share, someone else gets less".

Thankfully, his tenacity came to the fore time and again. At Party conference in 2000, Bick pushed through the UNISON motion to restore the pensions link to earnings, despite the most ferocious and constant pressure from the then Labour Government. Gordon Brown flew in from an international finance meeting to try to persuade him to drop it, but failed.

Bick was a professional, he knew his stuff. He kept stacks of newspaper cuttings about the things he cared for. His mum, too, had her own newspaper cuttings collection from the time of the Spanish civil war. A few years back, Bick published the collection in a book – A Spanish Civil War Scrapbook, proceeds to the International Brigades Memorial Trust of which he is a trustee.

Broadcasters liked his forthright style. He would often meet celebrities from all walks of life in the green room, introduce himself and chat to them about UNISON.

When he discovered his father's identity and three Irish brothers to join the one he already knew, he was thrilled. His good luck story led to an invite onto TV to announce national lottery winners. He made the most of his 39 seconds to talk about a living wage.

“MEMBERS  
LOVED  
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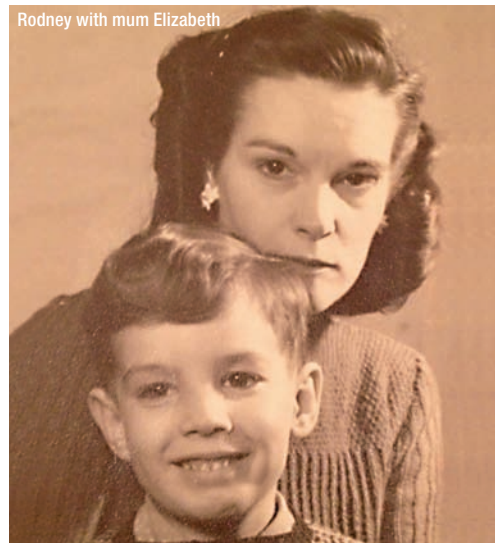
And, along with opera singer Leslie Garrett, he was given the freedom of Doncaster.

Bick may have rubbed shoulders with the rich and famous, but it didn't turn his head. When he walked into a room, he greeted everyone equally. When working late at night on a speech or letter, he would ask whoever was around to read it for sense, whether it was a cleaner or an organiser.

When he retired (from UNISON), Nelson Mandela recorded a tribute to him for his support during the Robben Island years. Actor Tony Robinson, famous as Baldrick and for his presentation of the Time Team history programme, was the MC at Bick's final UNISON conference. There wasn't a dry eye in the house as Bick paid tribute to Pat his wife, saying: "still besotted after all these years".

The members loved Bick. He was their voice. And what a voice. ■

Rodney with mum Elizabeth



# WE NEED EVERY PENNY



Highly-paid Hull University bosses have introduced a pensions apartheid with the lowest paid losing on average £1,000 a year. **Ryan Fletcher** reports

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THE  
PENSION  
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UNISON has vowed to fight changes to pension schemes at the University of Hull that treat lower paid workers like ‘second class citizens’.

The reforms targeted administrative and support staff while pensions for academics and senior management were left unscathed.

“It’s unfair, especially when academics are on a different system and will benefit much more than support staff. This is clearly a two-tier system,” said a UNISON member, who asked not to be identified to avoid reprisals.

Staff - including administrators, student

support personnel, mailroom and grounds workers - will lose an average £1,000 a year in retirement, after the university’s final salary scheme was closed because of a rising deficit.

Under the new scheme, their pensions will depend on how much money is available to buy an annuity when they retire – and the state of the market at the time.

The pension scheme for lecturers and executives, however, remains guaranteed.

UNISON regional organiser Leonie Sharp said, “All the staff on campus – academic staff, support staff and administrative staff – are there to deliver excellent services for students and are

all equally passionate and committed to the university.

“Therefore they should be treated with parity across the campus – pension parity and parity of terms and conditions. They should not be treated like second class citizens.”

Under the old scheme, which was replaced in June, workers received employer pension contributions of 16.4 percent. These have now been slashed to between 7 and 9 percent.

Meanwhile, employer contributions for senior staff continue at 18 per cent. Former University of Hull vice chancellor Calie Pistorius, who stepped down in January, received £42,000 in employer pension contributions last

changes worry me.”

Another, who also spoke on the condition of anonymity, said: “I am a single parent. I get no financial support from my ex-husband. I have no living parents.

“I dedicated 13 years of service to the University of Hull and feel it only right that more appreciation and financial reward is given to support staff. Pensions are included in this. I need every penny.”

UNISON regional organiser Leonie Sharp described the changes as a ‘fait accompli’ that were pushed through without proper consultation with the union.

“From the start the language of the university was that the scheme would close. They didn’t share information with us to have a full and proper consultation,” she said.

“The university will still have to fund the deficit and unless they are going to pay it all off in one hit, will have to keep funding it until it is cleared away.

“The pension trustees just went ahead and closed the scheme, despite their obligations to look at amending it to make it more viable. It was a fait accompli right from the very beginning.”

The union has lodged a complaint with the Pensions Regulator and is advising members to initiate individual grievance proceedings through the university’s internal system so that they can be taken to the Pension Ombudsman.

UNISON has also launched a joint campaign with the Unite and UCU unions

demanding University of Hull leaders begin negotiations for a fairer pensions scheme. In July, around 60 staff staged a demonstration outside a university senate meeting to protest against the changes.

UNISON University of Hull members have voted in favour of continuing demonstrations and are considering a formal strike ballot if their demands are not met.

Leonie said: “We have strong support for a strike and are keeping a formal industrial action ballot in our back pocket.

“It’s not right or fair that those who earn the least should be barred from entering the same pension scheme that academics and senior management receive.

“We won’t be satisfied until every member of staff at the University of Hull has a quality pension for their retirement.”

In response to the campaign, the university released a statement saying: “The University of Hull operates a range of good quality pension schemes for its staff – one of a number of reasons why we are regarded as an attractive employer in this region.

“Our pension schemes are comparable with those of other universities and the broader education sector.

“While our pension schemes do differ slightly from one another, all of them meet and exceed the national Pensions Quality Mark, which demonstrate they have been independently ranked as top quality.” The staff beg to differ. ■



**WE HAVE STRONG SUPPORT FOR A STRIKE AND ARE KEEPING A FORMAL INDUSTRIAL ACTION BALLOT IN OUR BACK POCKET**



year. The figure was not part of Pistorius’s £249,000 annual salary and £11,000 worth of benefits.

The pension reductions have caused dismay to staff members, many of whom have worked at the university for decades and have already seen their pensions downgraded.

“I think it is totally disgraceful that the university has closed the pension scheme, thus creating a two tier system,” said a staff member who did not wish to be named.

“I have been employed by the university for over 32 years and my pension has already been changed once in the past, reducing what I will get at retirement.

“Now I will get even less. I am 51 years of age and am now thinking about my future retirement and these





# NOW YOU SEE IT, NOW YOU DON'T

UNISON's Rich Crowther played a blinder in 'the case of the disappearing travel time payments'. Active! reporter **Helen Hague** on a key battle for care workers

It sounds like a script from a nineteen seventies sitcom, or a case study in how not to motivate staff. First – give low paid care workers who work in the community money to cover travel time at the start and end of shifts. Then, a few months later, say it was all a mix-up and stop the payments.

This is what happened at charity Autism Plus, where, until eight months ago, Richard Crowther was a team leader and UNISON shop steward in Sheffield. In May, he switched from workplace activist to working for the union full time as a local fighting fund organiser for the region.

Richard - known as 'Rich' to colleagues, spent a lot of time on the case of the disappearing travel time payments. Working with the legal team, he gathered information and a test case for an employment tribunal to get the payments reinstated. It was the right move.

During the July hearing, Autism Plus, which refuses to recognise UNISON, conceded on most points. Employment Judge Rostant said he would have been 'minded' to find in the union's favour if it hadn't.

Autism Plus was ordered to pay care workers who support clients in the community for time spent travelling to and from their first and last appointments, including back pay and holiday pay.

## LANDMARK

So how did this all come about? The story starts with a landmark ruling from the European Court of Justice two years ago. It found that time spent travelling to and from first and last appointments by workers without a fixed office should be treated as working time. It became known as the TYCO ruling, after the Spanish company was ordered to pay wages for travel time.

Reacting to the ruling, Autism Plus took advice from HR advisors Moorepay and started to pay staff with no fixed workplace travel time for appointments at the beginning and end of shifts. But then Moorepay said they'd got it wrong: the organisation did not have to pay for travel time after all. They consulted with the workforce about removing the payments and then the payments stopped without agreement with staff.

UNISON was swift to act. Rich identified a

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test case for the employment tribunal, working with regional organiser Sue Cookman and UNISON's national legal team. A further 25 UNISON members at Autism Plus were also included in the union's submission.

This is an important outcome for members in Autism Plus and work is now underway to recover the arrears they are owed.

At the July hearing, Autism Plus also admitted that they had been breaching the law on how holiday pay is calculated, so UNISON is now collating further legal claims for members for unpaid holiday pay and the thorny issue of how people are paid for sleep-ins.

Rich relished being involved in the ET. "There was a lot to take in at first. Familiarising yourself with employment law is one thing, but how EU law and UK law



Sue Cookman

Rich Crowther

intersected and the fact legal minds were in dispute about this, meant there were lots of tricky details to get into. But I really enjoyed it, it was a new challenge and that really gave me a taste for it.

### AMAZING

Sue Cookman has been working with Rich to try and get UNISON recognised.

"Rich was an amazing rep, he grasped all the complex concepts quickly and quietly made his point to Autism Plus, calmly running rings round them. Once I had put him in touch with Kate Ewing from the national legal team he basically ran things from this end. He is continuing to organise the follow-up claims now that he

THERE  
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is part of the regional team. We are lucky to have such a great colleague."

Rich, 35, believes unions are "absolutely vital" for working people – and is keen to see more get involved at the workplace. It certainly worked for him. "I was lucky to have colleagues who were already active and encouraging. But I felt I should really put the work in myself. I had an employer that would try to get away with reducing terms and conditions without consultation if they could, so I wanted to keep a close eye on them myself."

"We need to stick together and the expertise and organisation of UNISON will help you if you step forward

and get involved."

Rich believes that actions speak louder than words. "Unions get more members by showing people what they can do. But it's ultimately a battle of ideas. Thatcher's 'I'm alright Jack' attitude of individualism became part of mainstream culture. A big counter-movement like Labour is undertaking now, could help push things back towards thinking in terms of working together and not competing in isolation."

Rich will be out there, doing his bit to get the message across. An immediate priority is ensuring that the Autism Plus workers supporting clients out in the field, get properly paid. Just as the judge ordered... ■



# THIRST PAST THE POST

Sometimes you've got to get away from it all – and what better than a day at the gee-gees and a drop of what you fancy in the sun? UNISON's raceday at Doncaster on August 5 went down a treat

Photography: Louise Pollard



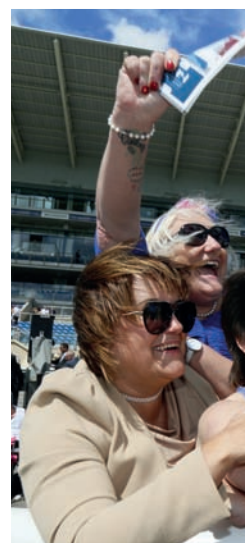
Ready for the off - Carol Irwin, Wakefield local government and colleagues



Give us the money - Laura and Hazel Plunkett, Hull local government



Gee up! - Ruth Askwith, Rotherham local government







Going for the double - Barbara and Sandra Oxley, Wakefield health



Wish you were here - Dawn Ridges and family, Sheffield health



We've won! - Sharon Bent and chums - Halifax local government



Studying the horseflesh - Simone Wilson, Goole local government



Fun in the sun - Mid-Yorkshire health





Liz Mawson

# EDGE OF DISASTER

**Ryan Fletcher** reports on a health service suffering a ‘perfect storm’ with trusts failing to recruit and retain skilled staff amid a pay freeze and funding cuts. It is made worse by the replacement of NHS bursaries for student nurses with £50,000 loans and the threat of Brexit leading to much-needed European migrants quitting the service. If that was not bad enough, demand from patients is rocketing

One evening this August, Gail Carpenter found herself at ‘the back of a very long queue’ at a McDonalds in Ripon. Gail noticed a paramedic, who was also in line, check her pager and leave to respond to a call before she had a chance to order her dinner.

The scene prompted Gail to write a Facebook post calling for harried ambulance crews in the area to be allowed to queue jump. Her post was shared hundreds of times and soon a number of local businesses signed up to the campaign.

The news was an isolated

ray of sunshine in an otherwise cloudy outlook for overworked NHS staff. Unfortunately, Gail’s chance observation of a medical professional skipping a meal is common across the whole of the embattled health service. Such conditions are one of the reasons why the NHS is buckling under the pressure of a recruitment and retention crisis.

Official figures showed NHS positions advertised by NHS England increased from 26,424 to 30,613 in the year to March 2017 – around 40 per cent of which were for nursing or midwifery roles. The Royal College of Nursing says the number of unfilled

“PEOPLE ARE GOING ON LONG TERM SICK BECAUSE OF THE STRESS – IT’S AWFUL”

health service jobs is closer to 40,000.

UNISON lead steward at Barnsley Hospital, Liz Mawson, has worked in the NHS for 20 years. She says the staffing crisis at the hospital is unprecedented.

“There’s too many pressures and it’s causing people to leave – especially nursing staff. We literally can’t keep them at all. The pressure in A&E is unbearable. The management are coming down on staff to meet the four-hour target but it’s impossible,” Liz explained.

“Staff are going home late and they’re not getting breaks. People are going on

long-term sick because of the stress – it's awful. A lot of people are struggling financially as well because of the pay freeze. They're having to work as bank nurses in addition to their full time jobs, which just makes them more tired."

Massive NHS funding cuts – including plans to find £22bn of 'efficiency savings' by 2020 – coupled with a continuing seven-year pay freeze that has reduced the annual wage of a nurse by around £3,000 in real terms, does little to boost flagging staff morale.

The situation is being made worse because demands on the health service are increasing as people live longer and the population grows.

In August, NHS performance statistics showed that four million patients in England were waiting to go to hospital for surgery, the highest figure for 10 years. The NHS Confederation, which represents hospital bosses, said the waiting list, along with a litany of missed targets for cancer care and A&E, demonstrated the health service could not cope with the unprecedented rise in demand.

Two other factors are exacerbating the staffing crisis: the replacement of NHS bursaries with student loans and Brexit.

Now the Tories have ended the £6,000 a year NHS bursary, student nurses, along with a range of other prospective healthcare professionals, have to take out loans averaging £47,712 in order to train.

“  
THIS ISN'T  
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IT'S A HUGE  
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”

The scrapping of the bursary led to a 19 percent drop in the number of applications for nursing courses compared to last year.

"The wage isn't attractive and it's a career that requires a lot of dedication and sacrifice. Who's going to want to pay £50,000 to train on top of all that? When the current generation of nurses retire they'll be left with a skeleton staff," said nurse and UNISON member Kerrie Hall.

Meanwhile, the number of EU nurses applying to work in the UK has dwindled to almost nothing since the Brexit vote. Statistics from the Nursing and Midwifery Council showed just 46 EU nurses applied to work in the UK in April 2017, a 96 per cent drop on the 1,304 nurses who applied in July 2016 – one month after the referendum.

The numbers of EU NHS staff leaving the country are also stark. Around 60,000 EU nationals work in the health service. A total of 17,197 EU staff left their jobs in 2016, according to NHS Digital

figures, compared to 13,321 in 2015. A survey of NHS trusts by Channel Four's Dispatches in March, found 42 percent of European NHS staff were thinking of leaving within five years of Brexit.

"We need an urgent guarantee on EU workers' right to stay and work in Britain. If they continue leaving and deciding not to come to the UK at the rate they are doing, we're looking at a public health disaster," said UNISON regional head of health, Tony Pearson.

Tony also called for an end to the pay cap, a move away from austerity to proper funding for NHS and social care services and the return of nursing bursaries. In the long term he said there is a need for more teaching hospitals, in order to boost staff development and prevent vital personnel gravitating towards regions where there are more career opportunities.

"This isn't just an issue for workers, it's a huge issue for society – it affects everyone," said Tony. ■

Kerrie Hall







# NO THANKS BROTHER

Out of the blue **Peter Carroll** received an invitation to join a Bradford lodge of the Freemasons. Here he explains why he declined to bare his breast...

**L**isten, do you want to know a secret? Strictly between us, I have been invited to join the Freemasons!

An envelope came through the post containing a leaflet from the Shakespeare and Equity Lodge in Bradford asking if I was interested in Freemasonry.

Apparently the ancient brotherhood is keen to enter a new phase of openness, actively promoting their core values of 'integrity, kindness and charity' and opening their lodges to curious visitors.

The leaflet explains that Freemasons are drawn from

all walks of life and meet as equals - regardless of their race, occupation or religion.

On the back of the glossy leaflet is a picture of two middle-aged men clinking their foaming pints and beaming at each other.

But, like many outsiders to the organisation, I have read accounts of Masonic activities which paint a much darker picture of 'The Craft' than my leaflet suggests.

Stories abound of systematic collusion between Freemasons in the police, the judiciary, national and local government and politicians of all stripes.

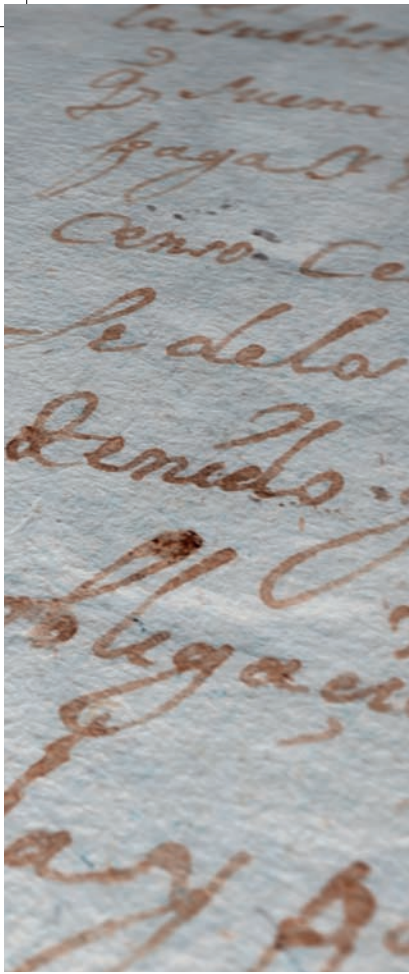
Claims that criminals have

walked free from court because they have secretly signalled their membership of the Brotherhood to a judge have been documented.

And evidence of preferential treatment for fellow Masons when lucrative building contracts are awarded have dogged local government since the Poulson and T. Dan Smith scandal, which shocked the nation more than 40 years ago.

But in an interview with the BBC, Nigel Brown, grand secretary of the United Grand Lodge of England (a grand title, you have to admit) said this image was a distortion of the truth.

“CLAIMS THAT CRIMINALS HAVE WALKED FREE FROM COURT”



The BBC reporter announced that: "Conspiracy theories have dogged the Freemasons throughout their existence, fuelled by their secretive image, but for some they are just a gentleman's club devoted to charitable giving."

Grand secretary Brown flatly rejected the suggestion from one caller on the show that Freemasons would 'stretch' the rules if another Freemason broke the law.

"Absolutely not", he declared. "Networking within Freemasonry and trying to use it for personal gain is completely forbidden."

There are six million Freemasons worldwide with an estimated 250,000 in England.

Famous members from the past include Churchill, Benjamin Franklin, George Washington and, traditionally, most of the British Royal Household.

The Duke of Kent is the grand master of the United Grand Lodge of England. He is at the very top of a very big hierarchy.

So if I joined, I would be part of an esteemed group of people, I'd be low down the hierarchy I know, but still!

The mysteries of their ancient historical origins in Egypt would be fully revealed to me after a long period of studying.

I would grasp the spiritual significance of the lost Temple of Solomon and become expert in the meaning of symbols like the 'All Seeing Eye' and the square and compasses.

And I would share secret knowledge with other Brothers (a very few female Masons have their own lodges but mixed ones are forbidden) which would make us all, secretly, superior to everybody else.

And that is how all hierarchies attract willing acolytes. They entice people with the prospect of social self-betterment, and being in the proximity of power.

Legendary Coronation Street butcher Fred Elliot once launched his own secret society in the Rovers called the Square Dealers.

The members – small business men and self-employed traders – had their own secret sign, a square made by joining the thumb and forefinger of each hand.

It was very funny and also controversial because it was an obvious parody of Freemasonry and depicted a far more self-serving image than real Freemasonry wants to project.

Formally organised in 1717

“  
I WON'T  
BE  
JOINING  
THEM,  
EVEN  
THOUGH  
I KNOW  
THERE  
ARE SOME  
GOOD  
PEOPLE  
WHO HAVE

in London, after many years of violent persecution by the Catholic Church and the dreaded Spanish Inquisition, Freemasonry espouses equality in its formal rituals.

One of its key doctrines is: "Meet upon the level of equality, act by the plumb of your uprightness and part upon the square of virtue."

Their often parodied initiation ceremony – where the newcomer has his left breast bared, trouser leg rolled up while wearing a blindfold and a noose around the neck – has dark origins.

It was to show the initiate that they were now at risk of execution by the Inquisition for their pagan heresy.

All very interesting. But it was a long time ago, and one wonders why these arcane rituals are preserved into the 21st century.

If you want to do good deeds and have a pint with your mates, why not just go to the pub and support their fundraisers as best you can.

So I won't be joining them, even though I know there are some good people who have done so.

I am mindful of Groucho Marx's quip: "I wouldn't join any club that wanted me as a member."

In my view, trade unions are the true upholders of justice and fair treatment for all – and they have that most important distinction: they are democratic.

And I'm not stupid. I am aware that I might be targeted in the New Year's Honours list as well as this.

Well don't waste your time. That's a NO from me as well. ■



**Peter Carroll**



# PAUL ROUTLEDGE

Mirror political columnist

## Private hospitals' £50m tax scam

Fat cat Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt is allowing private health care tycoons to cheat British taxpayers. Profit-making hospitals are registering as charities and their highly-paid bosses are trousering millions in business rate relief. Now's the time for the Labour party to challenge a massive scandal

**M**ulti-millionaire Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt knows a lot about making money. He's the richest politician in Theresa May's Tory cabinet of millionaires. But he's clearly oblivious to the parlous financial state of the NHS, for which he is responsible.

If Hunt was doing his job properly, he'd do something about the scandal of private, profit-making hospitals getting away with tax scams.

By registering as charities, as more than one in four do, the privateers are given mandatory business rate relief of up to 80 per cent. They don't even have to ask for it.

They'll benefit to the tune of an estimated £52 million over the next five years – slashing the £241 million bill they would otherwise pay.

This Tory largesse to the private health sector, which gives them so many lucrative directorships when they retire or get sacked by the voters, contrasts sharply with the treatment meted out to the under-funded health service.

NHS hospitals in England and Wales will have to pay business rates totalling £1.83 BILLION over the next five years, after the Government changed the system in April and hiked up the bill by a whopping 21 per cent over the same period.

So, the NHS, a not-for-profit public body funded by the taxpayer and in desperate financial straits, is taken to the cleaners, while the profiteering private sector, in large part also funded by the taxpayer, is given a gigantic hand-out.

Hospitals in Yorkshire and Humberside are all hit by this crazy state of affairs, and some

NHS Trusts across the country are joining forces to demand that the Government brings all hospitals into the business rate discount scheme.

Fat cat Hunt faces a challenge to this public-private anomaly in appeals against huge bills faced by cash-strapped hospitals, an issue that he doesn't want to talk about but which won't go away.

Getting the Government to face up to the financial crisis in the health service is notoriously difficult, because ministers retreat behind a mantra of "we're giving more money to the NHS than ever before".

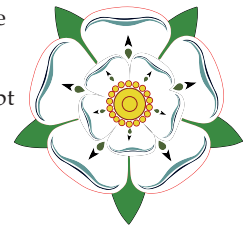
But on a specific issue like this crooked business rates fix, health unions and Labour's Shadow Health Secretary Jon Ashworth can win public support for a change of policy. It's certainly worth trying.

### KILLED AS SHE SLEPT

Lest we forget : Nellie Spindler, a nurse from Wakefield who lied about her age to get into front-line trauma surgery in the trenches, was the only woman to die in the 1917 battle of Passchendaele which claimed the lives of 325,000 Allied soldiers.

Nellie, 24 when she enlisted (you were supposed to be 25 to serve as a military nurse) was killed by a German bomb as she slept in her tent, dying in the arms of fellow Wakefield nurse Minnie Wood.

It's people like her we should remember, not the stupid politicians or the gung-ho generals.



IF HUNT WAS DOING HIS JOB PROPERLY, HE'D DO SOMETHING ABOUT THE SCANDAL







## PRIVATE HEALTH CARE

### SOFT IN T'ED

Callers to Radio Leeds suggested that Big Ben's silenced bongos could be replaced by Eyup! Or Eebygum! Thawat?

### HE'S A LEG END

Cricket legend Geoffrey Boycott has wanted a knighthood for longer than he held a county bat.

He rather likes friends calling him 'Sir Geoffrey', even if he has nothing more royal than an OBE.

He's been turned down twice, presumably on the grounds of a criminal conviction in a French court for assaulting his ex, Margaret Moore.

If he ever was going to become genuinely Sir Geoffrey, he certainly isn't going to be now, after a racist outburst.

In fact, he's lucky to be hanging on to his job as a Test match commentator for the BBC.

Boycott said he might stand a better chance of his 'K' if he 'blackened up' - a clear reference to the seven West Indian cricketers who have been knighted.

He thought he could get away with this slur because he was in 'a private meeting' - a £300-a-head hospitality dinner. He should know that in the age of the iPhone, nowhere is private any more.

Boycott was clean bowled by the Daily Mirror, and was forced to apologise. Would he have done so if the Beeb and his lawyers had not advised it?

That lingering doubt tells me faux Sir G is not fit for the public honour he so embarrassingly craves.

### TOO TAXING

Prince George, third in line to the throne, has started to attend a private prep school in Battersea. The fees are £17,604 a year, payable from our taxes.

Well, bully for him, but I doubt if he'll

get a better educational start than I got at All Saints Junior Mixed and Infants, Normanton And if he turns out like his father and grandfather, academic prowess will not be his forte.

### SLOW DOWN!

HS2, the high-speed rail link due to open long after many of us are pushing up the daisies, should be scrapped, says think-tank Policy North.

It should be replaced by Hyperloop, in which pods travel up to 740 mph through sealed tubes in a vacuum, cutting the journey time from Yorkshire to London to thirty minutes.

Dunno about you, but I'd rather it was extended to thirty hours in that direction, such is my diminishing appetite for the capital.

### BUTTY OUTRAGE

The perfect bacon sandwich, according to Leeds-born (on the same date as me, but very much later) chef-star Marco Pierre White, is four rashers of bacon, microwaved, between two slices of crusty white bread.

No butter, or sauce, brown or ketchup. None of your fancy cobs, or rolls or barmcakes or Scottish bridies.

And the pig probably once lived around Humberside, too. Great swine country, that. But microwaved bacon?

### EARWIGGING

Overheard a remark by an elderly lady on the bus to Airedale hospital: "An old woman is a young woman who can't understand what's happened!"

### SAME OLD SYSTEM

Archaeologists searching for a treadmill in former Northallerton prison need look no further than the nearest hospital to find that the system is still fully operational. ■

## NO GUNS HERE

West Yorkshire police chiefs were right to ask the public, and their own officers, if bobbies should be armed.

Whether or not they like the answer is another matter.

Two thirds of the force and members of the public don't want officers to carry guns routinely.

But nine out of ten officers and almost the same number of the public do want front-line law enforcers to be armed with Taser electro-shock weapons - stun guns, in plain words.

This is a reassuring outcome. Armed cops kill too frequently - up to a thousand times a year in the USA.

I don't want to live in a Trump-style society, and neither, it seems do our police or our citizens.



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

# ANOTHER VICTORY



UNISON has won a major breakthrough on bargaining rights, says **Paul Shevlin**, an employments rights lawyer in Thompsons Solicitors' Leeds office

UNISON hit the headlines again with another landmark case which reached the Court of Appeal only a week after their major tribunal fees victory (page 14). This time, the union was championing the ability of unions to demand consultation over changes that affect particular workers. In winning the case, UNISON secured an important extension to workers' rights, reverberating far beyond the particulars of the case.

The case concerned police park officers, who are traditionally excluded from collective consultation obligations. The employer's exclusion from these obligations usually means that the officers' bosses escape the need to consult with representatives of employees when making potential redundancies, but the decision from the Court of Appeal could change things for good.

UNISON's case was against the London Borough of Wandsworth. It centered on two park police constables who had been made redundant. A key issue was whether UNISON

should have been consulted, despite UK law excluding officers in the police service, and their representatives, from these rights. The union argued that the borough's failure to consult breached the right to freedom of association under the European Convention of Human Rights.

## SIGNIFICANT

The Court of Appeal acknowledged that 'the right to bargain collectively with the employer has, in principle, become one of the essential elements' of the right to freedom of association. The court said UNISON could continue with their battle for a protective award claim, which would compensate the workers for the employer's failure to consult.

The judgment has significant wider implications for workers. It could enable trade unions to argue that other exclusions

from collective consultation rights is a breach of the European Convention of Human Rights, making it harder for employers to neglect staff in the process of making changes to their workplaces.

While the case is a victory for collective rights and should send a message to employers that they will have to treat their staff with more consideration and consistently consult with their representatives in a meaningful way, the detail of this decision means there is still an uphill battle to ensure that its principles can be applied to other cases.

As UNISON has proved yet again, unions will fight to protect members' fundamental freedoms and push the boundaries of laws to ensure collective consultation when bosses seek to impose changes on their workforce. Another good reason to be a UNISON member! ■

“ANOTHER GOOD REASON TO BE A UNISON MEMBER”

## FreeAdvice

UNISON members and their families can access free legal advice, delivered by Thompsons, as part of their union membership. For advice or support call 0800 0 857 857 or visit [www.thompsonstradeunion.law/trade-unions/unison](http://www.thompsonstradeunion.law/trade-unions/unison) for more information.



Significant Implications  
- Paul Shevlin



## Public services need a pay rise

For years now public service workers have seen their pay held back by government in the name of austerity. First a freeze then a cap, resulting in public sector pay rising by just 4.4% between 2010 and 2016 while the cost of living rose by 22%.

That's no way to treat people like you, hardworking people who play such a vital role in looking after us and holding our communities together – keeping us safe, healthy, educated, and cared for. Find out more [www.unison.org.uk/payupnow](http://www.unison.org.uk/payupnow)

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