

## TUSC: AN ELECTORAL ALTERNATIVE TO AUSTERITY

**On May 7, 2015 Unite members and their families will finally get chance to pass judgement on 5 years of the Tory-led Coalition.**

5 years in which living standards and jobs have been axed. 5 years in which pensions have cost more for less, and retirement dates got further away. 5 years in which the only real growth industries in Britain are food banks, zero-hour contracts and bankers' bonuses.

Unite will campaign for, and fund, the Labour Party in that election arguing, as Len did in The Guardian on June 15 "there are an awful lot of people with scores to settle with this Government, we must persuade them that voting Labour is the vehicle for that retribution".

**But voting Labour won't bring retribution as Labour is not fundamentally different from the coalition:**

- Labour's Treasury spokesperson, Chris Leslie, says a new government would not reverse public spending cuts, and Ed Balls has promised to match the already announced, extra planned cuts in 2015/16 £ for £;
- Labour's welfare spokesperson, Rachel Reeves, promises to be "tougher on welfare than the Tories";
- Labour's business spokesperson, Chuka Umunna, is developing a fast track for business candidates to become MPs.

In fact, the spending cuts in the next Parliament are widely predicted (and not challenged by Labour) to be more severe than those of the last 4 years. Labour plans to tackle the government deficit (of expenditure over income) of £80 billion a year, and the total national debt of £1.5 trillion, not by restructuring the economy through public ownership and planning of banks,

energy companies, rail and post etc, but by another parliament dominated by cuts.

**Our members urgently need an alternative to the 'business as usual' policies of Labour.**

The Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) was co-founded 4 years ago by the late Bob Crow, and received the unanimous backing of the RMT annual conference in June. TUSC is also backed by many leading, national trade unionists from unions including FBU, POA, NUT and PCS. In May, in the local council elections, TUSC stood 560 candidates, the biggest left of Labour challenge in 60 years, and received 68,000 votes. 130 of those candidates were Unite members. Whilst modest, at 3.5% of the votes cast in the seats contested, TUSC's average results were comparable to the early years of the Labour Party itself and twice the average results gained in by-elections in the first 10 years that UKIP existed.

That achievement, of carrying an electoral alternative to the policies of austerity to 86 of the largest towns, cities and boroughs in England, is delivered on a shoestring. TUSC receives around £10,000 a year nationally - compared, for example, to the £70,000 given over the last year alone to the People's Assembly, including by our union. Until recently our union was giving the Labour Party £3 million a year - with a fraction of that financial support TUSC could achieve so much more.

Our candidates stood on simple demands, for example:

- Stop the cuts.
- Stop rip-off landlords. For rent controls and council house building.
- Axe the bedroom tax, now. No evictions.
- For a minimum wage you can live on - £10 an hour now.



**TUSC candidates on an RMT picket line**

All policies in the mainstream of Unite itself, but not of Labour.

In Southampton 'rebel councillor' and Unite member, Keith Morrell, was re-elected to his council seat in Coxford Ward as part of a citywide TUSC challenge. Keith's victory was a vindication of the bold stand that he, and fellow rebel councillor Don Thomas, made against the Southampton Labour council's cuts.

**TUSC opposes all cuts - whether carried out enthusiastically by Tories, or with a 'heavy heart' by Labour.** Disaffection with the big parties, and their overlapping austerity policies, is what lies at the heart of the growth of UKIP. Giving a serious, electoral alternative to those policies could undercut UKIP's growth.

**TUSC believes it is vital to challenge austerity at the ballot box as well as by determined union action and support for community campaigns.**

Len has forecast (Guardian,

**TUSC PUBLIC FRINGE MEETING**  
Weds 2nd July, 5.45pm start (doors open 5.30pm)  
At the Jury's Inn, Suite One

April 1) that the 2015 election will bring defeat for Labour if the party campaigns on what he called "a pale shade of austerity", and that a rival party could be created to challenge Labour if it does not win next year.

TUSC is campaigning to stand over 1000 candidates in the local elections in 2015, fighting against cuts in jobs and services, as part of the building of a national alternative to the establishment parties' austerity.

Join us in the building of that alternative now.

**Dave Nellist, national chair TUSC (and member of Unite, or component unions, since January 1974, personal capacity)**

## Unite policy conference: NO LET UP IN THE FIGHT AGAINST AUSTERITY

**Socialist Party Fringe meeting: AFTER FALKIRK AND COLLINS, TIME FOR A NEW WORKERS' PARTY**  
Tuesday 1st July at 6pm, Jury's Inn

**Kevin Parslow**  
Delegate, LE Not for Profit RISC (personal capacity)

**A**round 700 delegates and 100 youth observers will attend Unite's policy conference that begins on 30 June. The policy conference will set the union's agenda for the next two years.

There are many resolutions calling for campaigns against the cuts, for nationalisation of industries, and socialist policies in general, which should be supported. In general, Unite has pursued left policies in recent years. These include a policy of fighting all cuts. Some of the few Labour councillors who have voted against cuts have been Unite members. Unite has also recently launched a campaign against the privatisation and destruction of the NHS.

Unite members in local government are now voting for pre-strike action on pay and join over a million other workers in

co-ordinated action on 10 July. Unite general secretary Len McCluskey has often said he is in favour of a general strike but has said consciousness is low and most workers do not understand the need for one. However, union leaders have a responsibility to raise support for mass action. Unite could start this at conference by urging meetings throughout the union to explain the need for a 24-hour general strike against austerity.

Working closely with other unions will build effective action. Unite has gone further and is in discussion with civil service union PCS over an effective merger. However, the resolution passed at PCS conference will mean serious discussions are necessary and a joint union will not be in existence before the general election. Socialists in Unite would welcome a merger as long as the democratic structures and processes of PCS could be preserved. A merged union would consolidate Unite's move to

the left. For these reasons, delegates should oppose the resolutions which would slow down or scupper merger talks.

### The Labour link

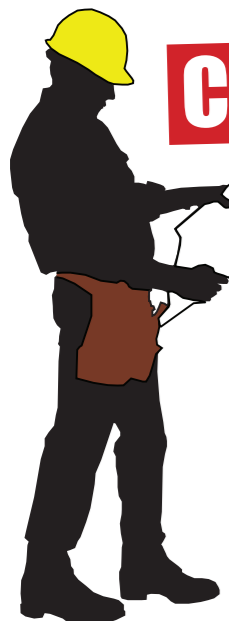
Undoubtedly, political questions have dominated discussion in Unite in recent months. The events around the attempt to get a Unite-backed candidate selected for Labour in Falkirk ended with Ed Miliband and New Labour calling in the police against the union. Then Ineos, the employers at the Grangemouth refinery, took the opportunity opened by New Labour's attacks on Unite to force changes in terms and conditions on the workforce and sack the two convenors in the plant. Disappointingly, Unite accepted the conclusions of the Collins Inquiry set up after the Falkirk events and voted for the constitutional changes that altered unions' relationship with New Labour for the worse.

Delegates at policy confer-

ence will have a chance to vote on proposals to discuss an alternative to New Labour. A composite supported by LE1111 and LE1228 proposes debate on the union's political links throughout the union and ask Unite's leadership to organise an open conference of trade unionists to discuss political representation for the working class. Disaffiliation cannot be discussed at policy conference but will no doubt be an issue at next year's rules conference.

Unite faces big challenges in the next two years; the general election in 2015 will see the big parties offer only 'more of the same', continuing austerity. The union must lead the fight against falling living standards and the political tool for that has to be the establishment of a new mass workers' party. This will become increasingly apparent to Unite members. Unite has the strength and resources to found such a party, with other fighting unions; this conference must ensure it has the tools to carry out these tasks.





# CONSTRUCTION: NATIONAL ACTION TO FIGHT THE UMBRELLA SCAM!

## A national demonstration can give workers confidence to fight

- Stop bogus self-employment! Stop the payroll/umbrella companies!
- Direct employment on the cards on JIB nationally industry agreed pay and terms & conditions!
- Stop BESNA mark 2!

Hundreds of construction workers took part in protests on the national day of action on May 23rd. Whitechapel tube station was blocked, Cramlington Hospital in the North East was targeted and Balfour Beatty took workers on direct as a result of a protest outside Morrision Hospital in Swansea.

In April, 37 Agency electricians walked off a job at AWE Aldermaston on a Shepherds Engineering Services job and the workers demanded to be taken on directly by Shepherds. Under the pressure of the walkout, Shepherds agreed to a meeting which a Unite construction officer attended.

Also that month, 30 agency construction workers downed tools at a NG Bailey job at Three Bridges in Sussex. They were demanding to be employed directly for the duration of the job. They won this battle and they are now 'on the cards' with full construction industry/trade union agreed JIB terms and conditions. There are many other reports of workers stopping the job - now we must give all workers facing huge cuts in their wages the confidence to fight back as well.

On April 16th, the London Unite construction branch had to hold their monthly meeting in a park outside Conway Hall because 120 workers turned up and the normal room was too small! Many of these workers had horrific stories about losing £80-£100 a week while some hadn't been paid for a fortnight or more. Many of them weren't in the union but can be recruited as they are angry at this latest attack on their living standards and the continuing pressure to undermine health

and safety which has seen more accidents recently with workers dying or suffering serious injuries.

This followed the change in rules about self-employment which came into action on 6 April. Some construction firms have been trying to circumvent the new tax regulations by forcing workers into 'umbrella payment companies'. This would allow the bosses to cut holiday pay and shift employer and employee national insurance contributions onto the worker. Being told that they will have to pay Employers NI and their own holiday has outraged thousands of Agency workers across the whole UK and further action is likely.

This is the biggest struggle of construction workers since 'The Sparks' construction electricians defeated the BESNA contract in 2011-12. This 6 month campaign of unofficial walkouts and protests by rank and file workers culminated in an official Unite strike ballot in Balfour Beatty, which along with Unite's leverage campaign forced the bosses to capitulate.

### Huge victory

But these workers always wanted to deal with a whole list of injustices in the industry - particularly blacklisting and the bogus self-employment of the massive construction companies using the payroll companies. A huge victory was gained against the blacklists when Frank Morris won reinstatement on Crossrail after a 12 month struggle by him personally and protests of the rank and file, backed by Unite's leverage campaign.

Along with the incredible victory of the contractors at the Lindsey Oil Refinery workers in 2009,



whose wild-cat action defended the NAECI national agreement from the bosses' attack, these successful struggles should show workers that they win a famous victory and start to win direct employment. The battles for NAECI and the JIB and against BESNA and blacklisting were all about the same thing - the 'Race to the Bottom', attacking workers' pay, terms & conditions to shore up the bosses' profits.

The wild-cat action taking place is winning victories. The construction unions should organise a national demonstration, with the threat of national strike action to send a message to the bosses and their government that the self-employment rules are changed but more than that, agency workers are brought 'in-house' and put on the books with nationally agreed JIB pay, terms & conditions. It would also give workers confidence to take the action necessary to win and overcome any feeling that they

are isolated on each site. This is particularly important as in the new pay talks, the employers are lining up a new BESNA de-skilling 'Entrant Grade'.

### Build support

The construction unions should also reach out to all other workers for support. These new tax changes could affect millions of workers outside the building trade who have been forced into bogus self-employment. Well over a million council workers, teachers, civil servants and firefighters could strike together on July 10th against the ConDem pay freeze. This action could then link up with all those fighting to defend their standard of living in the private sector. Already this year, 15,000 striking London tube workers have forced the Tory bully Boris Johnson to the negotiating table. Think what 6.5 million trade union members, striking together could achieve!

# UNITE & PCS: TAKING JOINT ACTION FORWARD

As Unite conference meets, over a million public sector workers are preparing for the July 10 pay strike. It will be the biggest co-ordinated strike since the N30 2011 action to fight off the government's attack on public sector pensions. That day is still the high point of the resistance against the ConDem austerity offensive, following on from the mammoth 750,000 plus strong TUC demonstration on March 26th that year. Over 2 million workers walked out together on N30 in arguably the biggest single day of strike action since the 1926 General Strike. It could and should have been the platform for the type of mass action that could have forced Cameron and Clegg back by being continued into 2012 and escalated for more days as well as reaching out to the millions of workers in the private sector who have also been hammered by this Tory-led government as well as their employers. However, it was demobilised by the right-wing union leaders, particularly in Unison and the GMB in local government under the approval of the TUC and (now Sir) Brendan Barber.

Despite being the biggest union in the TUC, Unite was and still is a minority union in the public sector and wasn't able to effectively challenge the other main unions and maintain the pension strike. This is the context behind the PCS potentially joining with Unite. A merged union could create a public sector group of up to half a million workers. There are those on the right-wing of the union movement who unfortunately have echoes within Unite that fear the prospect of PCS joining with Unite. The two motions in the agenda (P1 and P2) could be an attempt to de-rail a move that should be welcomed by all members and activists in Unite

that want the union to be at the forefront of the struggle against austerity. Since the left defeated the previous right-wing leadership in 2002, PCS has been transformed into a militant fighting force which has shown that it is capable of defending members' jobs, pay, pensions and terms & conditions when the civil service has been under continual attack by successive governments.

### Democracy

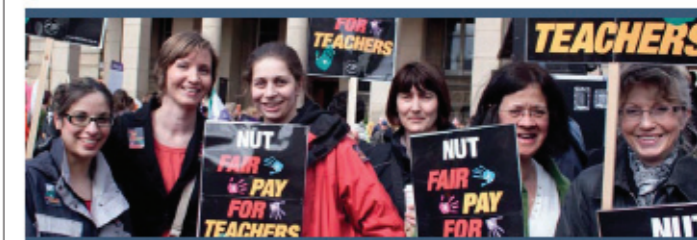
At the recent PCS annual conference, delegates rejected a motion to abort a merger, signalling that in this extremely difficult period, they understood the benefits of joining with Unite. But understandably, they also showed that they want to defend the democratic gains that have been won under the left. Therefore, in any formal talks that take place, Unite members should insist that the union takes the most open, democratic and encouraging approach with PCS to overcome any doubts and concerns. This should include a flexible position on the Political Fund which reflects the history of PCS as a non-Labour affiliated union. There are precedents in the unions that came together to form Unite of maintaining structures and arrangements if necessary.

Since the merger, Unite has given glimpses of the union it could become. Our members are on strike virtually every week across most of our sectors. Incredible victories have been won in construction against the BESNA contact and blacklisting. The addition of PCS would represent a further step in the direction of a fighting militant union that can be the core of resistance to this government and the employers. It is Unite that must adopt the necessary encouraging approach that can make it a possibility.

## nationalshopstewardsnetwork

# What recovery? We want our share! Strike Together for a Pay Rise!

Break the pay freeze, fight for a real living wage, oppose zero-hour contracts, fight for PAYE



**NSSN 8th Annual Conference Saturday 5th July**  
11-5, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL - delegate/visitor fee £6  
**Speakers include: Ronnie Draper, BFAWU bakers' union General Secretary, Steve Gillan, POA General Secretary, Janice Godrich, PCS President and Peter Pinkney, RMT President.**

Plus a speaker from the victorious Seattle \$15Now campaign

The NSSN is supported by the following national unions:



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