

ROCHDALE

PIONEER

Members Newsletter from ROCHDALE UNISON

August 2011



RIGHTTOWORK
Save jobs • Stop the cuts • Defend public services

**Manchester for the Alternative:
Jobs • Growth • Justice
Sunday Oct 2nd**

The Tory Party Conference is coming to Manchester in October. The Trades Union Congress (TUC), the North West TUC and the Right to Work Campaign have organised a National protest on Sunday 2nd October to call for an alternative to the Government's programme of cuts.

At a time when 2.5 Million people are unemployed the Government are determined to carry on regardless with massive cuts in Public Services. Young people in particular are feeling the brunt of these cuts. Over 900,000 young people are unemployed. Youth services, community centres and education funding have all been cut back. University tuition fees have been put up to between £7000 and £9000 a year and the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) has been taken away (in Rochdale 70% of students relied on EMA to pay for bus fares and books).

Unemployment amongst women has also risen to its highest level in 23 years with over 1 million now out of work.

This Autumn the Government plans to plough on with its NHS Bill that will lead to privatisation of whole swathes of our health service. Our pensions will be under attack (see page 2). Our wages will still be frozen while inflation is at 5%. Meanwhile the Bankers who plunged us into this mess will be enjoying their huge bonuses as if nothing ever happened.

The Public and Commercial Services Union estimate that £120 billion could be collected from tax avoiding corporations if all unpaid and avoided taxes were pursued. This money could be used to invest in jobs and services to protect ordinary people from the crisis.

We don't have to stand for it. The protest in Manchester is likely to be very large. Coaches have already been booked from as far away as Southampton and Glasgow. The last TUC protest on 26th March saw 500,000 people march for an alternative to austerity in London. The organisers of the Manchester march are expecting thousands of people to demonstrate. Join in, bring your friends and family. The march will assemble at 12 noon in Liverpool Road, Manchester city centre (off Deansgate) on Sunday, October 2nd.

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Public sector pension talks jeopardised by naive playground tactics

UNISON General Secretary, Dave Prentis, today rounded on Government ministers for putting public sector pension talks in "jeopardy" by their "naive tactics" and apparent lack of negotiating skills. And called on them to abandon the playground games and get serious.

He said:

"We entered into the scheme specific talks on public sector pensions in good faith and we genuinely believe we are making progress, albeit slowly. But these talks are being put in jeopardy by the crude and naive tactics of Government ministers who don't seem to understand the word negotiate.

"The government must take its responsibilities seriously, and stop treating these talks like some kind of playground game.

"Let's not forget that these talks are about real people, hard-working individuals who signed up to, and pay into, a pension scheme that is supposed to cushion them against poverty in old age. Extra contributions won't go back into the pension schemes, but straight to the Treasury to pay off the country's deficit effectively a tax on public sector workers to pay for the bankers' mess. That is totally unjust.

"It is totally unhelpful to the progress of these talks to release their bargaining position as though it is set in stone. If it is set in stone, then there is no point in having a single further meeting."

The union insists that any changes should be based on evidence and not political ideology. Average pension in local government is £4,000, but for women its just £2,800 (£56 a week) and in health its just £7,500, and £3,000 for women. Members of those schemes pay in between 5.5% and 7.5% of their salaries to save for their retirement. If they did not save, they would end up on means-tested benefits at a cost to taxpayers.

Both the local government and the health schemes are cash rich and were renegotiated a few years ago to make them sustainable and affordable longevity costs would be paid by the employee not the employer.

The union argues that making people pay more, work longer for a smaller pension is unnecessary, unjust and unworkable. People will leave the schemes, if they become too expensive, and they will collapse.

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Update your details online:

If you are a UNISON member you can now update most of your details online using the address below:

www.unison.org.uk/membership/update.asp

If you are reading this and you are not a member but would like to join please contact Rochdale UNISON 01706 925952.

We currently represent over 4,900 members in Rochdale Council, IMPACT, RBH, Link4Life, Hopwood Hall College and other employers. We have supported hundreds of our members through formal procedures, the Pay and Grading process and the Efficiencies Programme. We will go on supporting our members affected by redundancies and any other issues.

Together we are stronger



The EDL – an organisation of racist and fascist thugs – is threatening to march through the east London borough of Tower Hamlets on 3rd September. This is the planned culmination of the EDL's summer of hate.

But its attempts to stir up racist hatred against Muslims in the multicultural, multiracial East End of London have been met with a wave of condemnation from across Tower Hamlets' diverse community and beyond.

Tower Hamlets UNISON, East London NUT and Tower Hamlets College UCU support the national demonstration organised by UAF and the United East End coalition and backed by One Tower Hamlets – No Place for Hate.

The event is also backed by community leaders and campaigners including Hanif Osmani, Chief Executive Officer, Council of Mosques (Tower Hamlets); Sirajul Islam, East London Mosque and London Muslim Centre; Dilowar Khan, director East London Mosque and London Muslim Centre; Denis Fernando, One Society Many Cultures; Rev Alan Green, chair Tower Hamlets Inter Faith Forum; Azad Ali, Islamic Forum of Europe; Muhammad Rabbani, Aasha Gang Mediation Project; Glyn Robbins, secretary United East End; Sabby Dhalu, joint secretary UAF, secretary One Society Many Cultures; Weyman Bennett joint secretary UAF; John McLoughlin, Tower Hamlets Unison; Alex Kenny, branch secretary East London NUT; Richard McEwan, Tower Hamlets College UCU; Sarah Creagh, Tower Hamlets UAF.

As the recent massacre in Norway showed the hatred that groups like the EDL encourage can have deadly consequences. It is important that wherever racists and fascists rear their ugly heads they are opposed.

For transport to the demonstration from Manchester call 07903 586 191.