

Northumberland County Branch Bulletin 1

October 2015



Welcome to our new Bulletin

Welcome to The Northumberland County Branch's first e-bulletin, it is the intention to use this newsletter to update members on live issues across Northumberland and those which are relevant to the workplace.

The Branch covers a wide geographical area with over 200 plus employers, Northumberland County Council being the largest of the employers.

As the workplace becomes more fragmented it's never been more important to find new ways to stay in touch and get information quickly to all members. In addition to this bulletin we have a website and a following on Facebook and Twitter.

Over the next few months, Trade Unions face the biggest threat since the Thatcher era, The Trade Union Bill and within this newsletter you will find more information about this overleaf.

As a union we need to organise, if you currently don't have a Workplace Rep or Steward within your workplace/department then elect one today! Contact the Branch for more details.

If we don't fight back then we will be subjected to some of the worst changes in the working environment, the like of which most of us have never seen within our working life.

Don't sit back, get involved, get active and recruit new members!

Joyce M Guthrie
Branch Secretary



Jean Whisson, Cath Davis, Michelle Darragh and Joyce Guthrie at the Austerity demo in Manchester on 4 October

Proud to be in UNISON



UNISON benefits should the worst happen....

Death benefit – Payment ranging from £123 to £494 to a deceased member's partner, dependant(s) or estate, depending on length of membership at the time of death. The deceased must have had at least four weeks paid membership before death.

Accident – Payment of up to £20.25 a week for the period in which you are unable to work because of an accident (subject to maximum of £121.50 a year). You must have had at least four week's paid membership prior to the date of the accident.

Fatal accident – payment ranging from £2,165 to £8,660 to a deceased member's partner or dependant(s), depending on length of membership at the time of death. The deceased must have had at least four week's paid membership before death.

Thinking of joining, contact us in the branch or you can
join on line at www.joinunison.org

The Trade Union Bill—What does it mean and how will it affect me and my trade union...?

The government plan to introduce a Bill intended to strike at the heart of your security in the workplace; to remove rights and to remove the ability of trade unions to negotiate and represent members successfully. This is called the Trade Union Bill.

This Bill, if imposed, will require union ballots to have a 50% turnout before authorising a strike. Plus for 'essential' services at least 40% of the **entire** balloted membership has to agree to it. Using this criteria, if this test had been applied to MP's elected in the General Election in May, most would have fallen short, and even David Cameron himself would not have qualified after only polling 36% of the vote.

What is the Trade Union Bill and why does it matter?

The Trade Union Bill is a new set of laws that will severely restrict working peoples' ability to organise for their own rights. It will go through Parliament this Autumn and could be law by February 2016 and will apply in England, Scotland and Wales.

Some facts about the Trade Union Bill:

- **The Trade Union Bill undermines the right to strike**
- **The Trade Union Bill will allow employers to use agency workers to break strikes** (this is currently not allowed as it prevents the quick resolution of industrial disputes and meaningful negotiation)
- **The Trade Union Bill would undermine the right to peaceful protest on picket lines**—by reducing the ability of citizens to exercise free speech and involving the police in peaceful protests (this is not an exaggeration)
- **The Trade Union Bill will restrict facility time**—reducing the ability of our branch to negotiate and support our members in the workplace
- **The Trade Union Bill will attack the ability of employers to pay union subs from salary at source** - for which employers can collect a fee. Making payment of trade union membership more difficult for our members.

Trade Union Fact

- 20 times more days are lost through stress and depression than on strikes in the UK. Recently, the average number of working days lost through strikes were at an historic low (barely 9% of the period 1980-1989) and of that low number, the vast majority last only 1 or 2 days.

So why are they doing it?

Because this government is fundamentally opposed to the ability of ordinary working people (not lefty radicals as labelled in the press) to stand up for themselves against bad and oppressive employers.

Why are we campaigning against the Bill?

UNISON is campaigning against the Trade Union Bill because we believe MP's should be focussing on the real problems our country faces and working with everyone, including trade unions, to solve them, rather than taking away peoples right to be supported at work.

What can you do as a UNISON member?

1. Sign up to receive up-dates on the campaign here <https://unison.org.uk/TradeUnionBill>
2. Take part in UNISON's survey now to give us your thoughts on the right to strike: <https://goo.gl/STZngm>
3. Sign the TUC's petition against agency staff being used during strikes. <https://Campaign.goingtowork.org.uk/petitions/let-us-vote-allow-unions-to-ballot-members-online>
4. Contact your MP and tell them what you think of this Tory bill (template letter is available).

I'm proud
to be in a
**TRADE
UNION**

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