



Photo of demonstration outside harrow civic centre



PENSIONS ATTACK- ENOUGH IS ENOUGH- SUPPORT STRIKE ACTION

Across the UK, UNISON is balloting 1.1 million members for industrial action over the proposed changes to pensions, which would make public sector employees work longer, pay more and get less when they retire. This is on top of the unprecedented attack by the Coalition on your terms and conditions and cuts in financial livelihoods.

The ballot opened on 11 October and closes on 3 November. We need a big **YES** vote and a high turnout from Harrow UNISON members to send a clear and united message to ministers that **"enough is enough"**, that will help persuade them to withdraw their current unfair and unjustified attacks on pensions.

Headed by the General Secretary, UNISON has tried to negotiate for the past 8 months in good faith for secure and affordable pensions – but it is clear the Conservative led Coalition are not listening.

They wish to use the 'savings' or extra contributions generated by the pension plans to pay off the debts created by the banking crisis. It is important to remember that **this is nothing more than a tax on public sector workers because the changes will not go towards improving anyone's pension.** UNISON is still committed to talks, but the union needs to make progress. UNISON are balloting for strike action initially to start on 30 November and are also working with other trade unions and community groups to organise local and national protests in support of public sector pensions.

In short Coalition changes to our pensions mean that most people

- **will pay more out of their salary every year** - Increased contributions will be phased over 3 years, anyone earning over £15k will see their rates go up which could see contributions go up by hundreds of pounds each year
- **work longer before they can claim their full pension** – Retirement

Organize!



Continued from page 1>>

- **and get less pension income when they are retired** – The shift from ‘final salary’ to ‘career average’ will mean less on retirement. Also, ‘accrual rates’ will change meaning pensions could be as much as 25% lower each year and the change from RPI to CPI could reduce the real value of pensionable income by another 10 or 15 per cent

Please spread the word so that your colleagues in UNISON vote YES in the ballot and support the strike on the 30th November 2011.

Add your voice to the groundswell of opposition and say loud and clear – Enough is Enough.

Vote Yes and come out in support on the 30th November 2011 to save your future.



UNISON is asking its members to **vote YES** in the ballot for industrial action to protect public sector pensions.

Current proposals mean that most people will pay more and work longer to get a pension that will be worth less.

UNISON has tried to negotiate in good faith for secure and affordable pensions - but ministers won't listen.

We are balloting for strike action initially to start on 30 November. We are also working with other trade unions and community groups to organise local and national protests in support of public sector pensions.

We need a big **YES** vote and a high turnout to send a clear and united message to ministers that "enough is enough", that will help persuade them to withdraw their current unfair and unjustified attacks on pensions.

The ballot opens on 11 October and closes on 3 November.

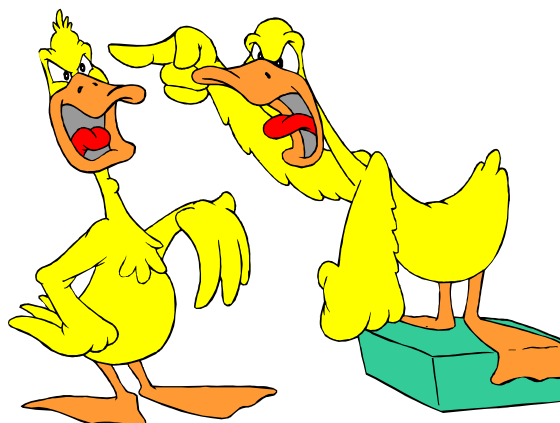
You will be receiving your ballot paper from 11 October onwards - be sure to fill it in and return it as soon as you get it.

Please spread the word so that your colleagues in UNISON vote YES in the ballot.

Please vote YES to protect your pension.

Queries about the pensions dispute - pensionsdispute@unison.co.uk

DUCK MANAGEMENT



The principles of Duck Management are based on greed. One only has to watch a group of ducks when bread is thrown into the water. They cannot get to the bread quick enough and every floating crumb is devoured in a frenzy of ducking and diving, loud quacking, and flapping wings. Further observation of the ducks shows that there is always a leading duck that quacks the loudest and leads the other ducks around the pond or stream that they inhabit.

The main purpose of these excursions is to find more food and to maintain territorial control and pecking order. As the ducks spend a fair amount of time in the water, much of their waste products – crude regurgitated amounts of precipitate (crap) is deposited in the water and sinks down onto the fish that are swimming below them. The fish don't have a lot of choice in the matter due to the 'pecking order' i.e. ducks swim on the top and fish swim on the bottom.

The eco and socio economic equilibrium of the pond is dependant on the amount of food the ducks take from the pond and the amount of crap they deposit within it. A top heavy number of ducks will consume all of the available food and deposit massive amounts of crap. The pond will become stagnant and polluted. The crap will remove all of the oxygen from the pond and the fish will die. In a balanced pond (not too many ducks in relation to fish) there is enough food to go around and the small amount of duck crap is at a tolerable level that can be absorbed by the eco (and economic) system and dispersed by the fish. Why ducks fail to either understand this basic premise or just decide to duck it, is not completely understood. It could be associated with the nature and size of their brains (bird brain mentality) or just simply that too many of the wrong types of duck end up in the same pond. (see duck types below)

Duck types

'Mandarin duck' – Brightly marked crested duck. A duck of position and influence. A Leading Social duck that quacks the loudest and who the other ducks follow.

'CD' – **Credible Duck**, A duck that attempts to swim in a straight line.

'DEAP'- **Duck Employed in Advisory Position**, complete opposite to above, incapable of swimming in a straight line. DEAP ducks are often found swimming around in ever decreasing circles in an attempt to avoid engagement. Employed to sort out deep water situations and therefore excellent duckers and divers. Often end up out of their depth though.

'DEAD' – **Duck Employed Advising Directorates**- very similar to above in many respects but DEAD ducks much slower and more inept. The name is a bit of a give away as these ducks usually end up as Roast ducks.

'Lame duck' -A duck that quacks loudly but fails to deliver satisfactory outcomes due to peer pressure from the flock– this duck is often a senior or leading duck in poorly managed ponds.

Continued from Page 3 >>

'Sitting duck'

A duck that is not comfortable with being a duck and as such it presents an easy target for all pond life. Takes flight in the face of confrontation.

'Quack'

An impostor duck. A duck that quacks the quack but can't swim the swim. A duck that fails to deliver or manage its own nest. Often identified by its erratic swimming it soon becomes a 'duck out of water'.

'Duck out of Water'

A duck that is no longer in touch with 'the Pond' and consequently vulnerable to attack, shunned by the other ducks due to its remoteness. Often found in the hills.

'Roast Duck'

The worst thing that can happen to a duck. Occurs when any of the above ducks are caught out of their depth and end up in the oven to save the other ducks.

'Peking duck'

Notable for its Bright red complexion. However its brightness is limited to its colour only, although on occasion it displays striped feathers. Found ready processed and hung out to dry due to its tendency for error and easy capture.

'Bombay Duck'

A strange phenomenon in the duck world as this is actually a fish and not a duck. Many Ducks are like this as although they have the characteristics of ducks they would sooner be fish. They are uncomfortable with the ethos of greed and ducking and diving that whole ducks exhibit but haven't got the moral fibre to remove themselves from the flock.

'Beak'

A duck with some legal knowledge, a rarity in most flocks. They often have a conflict of interest between loyalty to the flock and the impartiality that their position demands.

'A Rare bird'

Almost impossible to find. A duck that actually understands the fundamentals of successful pond management.

'Daffy Duck'

A cartoon character duck, a duck bereft of common sense, a duck that cannot see the wood from the trees. A duck that would be happier in the woods. A duck that really doesn't get it.



Continued from Page 4 >>

Duck terminology

'Feathering their nests'

This is the main interest of most ducks in order that they acquire a nice little nest egg when they retire from pond life.

'Ducking and Diving'

One of the main activities that ducks are engaged in – avoiding getting into deep water and doing what is best for them, predominantly to feather their own nests.

'Out for a duck'

A situation where a duck avoids engagement in pond activities.

'Out on a wing'

A duck that is shunned by the other ducks due to its inability to perform.

'Keeping your head above water'

A duck that becomes waterlogged due to its inability to swim out of trouble.

'Out of your depth'

A situation that many inept or incompetent ducks find themselves in often due to a failure to understand the bigger pond concept and to appreciate the role that the fish have in maintaining the pond equilibrium.

'Feathered friend'

A pond dweller (could be a fish) that supports Duck Management systems to feather their own nest.

'Pecking order'

The system employed by ducks to maintain their perceived self importance and position.

'Fowl play'

The questionable antics that ducks get up to. Often employed to get their own way.

'Ruffled feathers'

A dishevelled appearance often accompanied by loud irrational quacking when ducks have been caught ducking and diving or engaged in fowl play. Often seen in 'ducks out of water' and DEAP ducks.

'The glorious twelfth'

A once a year event associated with the culling of ducks and other fowl through what is known as the IPAD –(Individual Performance Affecting Ducks). Although this is a duck led process it is rarely (if at all) applied to senior ducks and therefore is viewed by the other pond dwellers very much as a missed opportunity to manage the flock.

Problems and issues with Duck Management regimes

In most of these regimes the ducks all swim in the same direction and 'go with the flow'. They will rarely go against the flow as this would confuse and upset the other ducks. Also there is a tendency to ignore poor practice through protectionism based on a 'bill fits' culture and the precept that 'birds of a feather flock together'. The major problem with this Duck Management regime and culture happens when they encounter something out of the ordinary such as the presence of strong currents, whirlpools, waterfalls or perhaps a large fish such as a pike. As the ducks are so used to going with the flow, they really do not know what to do when they encounter the unusual. Much quacking, flapping of wings and indiscriminate pecking results and generally they all swim around in circles to avoid dealing with the issue. (Often led by the DEAP ducks). Consequently, due to this flawed and corrupt ideology they all invariably end up in deep water (up the creek and out of their depth).

Continued from Page 5 >>

This behaviour coupled with the amount of crap the ducks produce (see introduction) results in poor pond management.

Fish however are different; they don't always go with the flow and will often swim up tide, up current, and up waterfalls (e.g. salmon) to achieve their goals. Also, as a different species to the duck they do not share the same birdbrain mentality of ducks and are thus open to 'out of the pond' thinking.

On the subject of fish, account should be taken of the common pike or freshwater shark as it is known. This fish can grow to a credible size and will become a serious problem for ducks in general, since it will actively engage with and devour ducks which are not up to speed. The other salient point of note regarding the pike is its complete unpredictability. In a well managed pond the pike is seen as a friend and ally to all parties as it is instrumental in removing lame and weak ducks that by their very nature upset the equilibrium of the pond.

Solutions to poor pond management

Stage 1. Easy, all you have to do is reduce the duck population, don't forget to get rid of all of the Lame ducks, Sitting ducks, Quacks, H R ducks and Daffy ducks -since everybody in the pond knows who they are. This will reduce the amount of duck crap, instil confidence and respect in all pond dwellers and lead to a healthier pond environment.

Stage 2. Not so easy. This requires a change in duck culture in order to eliminate the ducking and diving that goes on and to share the available food in a fair and agreed way. Means 'going against the flow'. Requires a flock made up of Credible ducks and Rare birds led by a strong Mandarin duck

Stage 3. Easy, once the above has been done all you need to do is maintain good working relations between ducks and fish as it is plain to see that both are entitled to live in the pond and both have a shared role to play in the wellbeing of the pond.

Any resemblance to employer management structures in this or any other employer is purely coincidental!

Health and Safety Report Oct 2011 Bob Thomas

I retired in August this year and was informed by the Director HR that I could no longer represent as I would be party to confidential information. I resented the implication I could no longer be trusted. Also we are in the middle of negotiating over important outstanding issues plus reviewing major safety policies. The Council could not have chosen a worse time to challenge my credentials. Sadly this is not the action of a confident professional management but a panic reaction against opposition to poor health and safety practices.

John Royle valiantly stepped in as Interim Health and Safety Officer and to attend meetings with management. Unison NEC intervened and the Council has quite rightly removed the ban. However I only have special dispensation to represent during the rest of my elected term up to the next branch annual general meeting March 2012.

After asbestos incidents an external audit report into safety management was highly critical and we are commenting on the Councils plans to put things right.

It is not clear what health and safety professional support the new Academies have arranged. Council's Health and Safety Department believe that no longer involved. This is so serious so we will be asking for urgent confirmation whether arrangements are in place.

We have written to the new Academies asking for them to set up union attended health and safety meetings. We will follow up this process with all the remaining schools in the Borough.

been under represented so you will be welcomed if you take an interest. If you know of any health or safety issues at the workplace, please also contact us in confidence on 0208 424 1795.

Continued from page 6>>

We have not yet received credible answers about why the previous changes to the bomb scare procedure made us all less safe. We hope to involve the local police and facilities management in talks on current plans as we still have some serious concerns.

We insist on being included in accident or incident investigations so we are able to ensure that there are transparent processes adopted to ensure that the numbers reflect a true record of incidents.

We would invite people to come forward to represent the workforce on safety committees so if you have an interest in health and safety please contact the branch. Staffs in schools especially have been under represented so you will be welcomed if you take an interest. If you know of any health or safety issues at the workplace, please also contact us in confidence on 0208 424 1795.

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT

The Council expects employees to maintain good relationship with colleagues and members of the public and is committed to the belief that every employee has the right to be treated **fairly** and with **dignity** and **respect at work**, without fear of discrimination, bullying or harassment.

This is what the first paragraph of the DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY statement says.

The Council encourages anyone who considers that they have been the subject of any unfair or unjustified treatment to bring this to the notice of the management.

This is the advice offered by the second paragraph.

The Council will investigate all complaints thoroughly and take appropriate action where necessary.

This is the assurance promised by the third paragraph.

Is the D@W actually worth any thing more than the paper it's written on or is it just the Council playing lip service to placate this union and its members?
How many times do you have to put up with?

- Derogatory or degrading comments
- Personal insults/name calling
- Subtle methods of coercion such as intimidation
- Making threats or comments about job security
- Unfair treatment
- Overbearing supervision or other misuse of power or position

In the last three weeks all of the above have been brought to my attention by members working at the depot. Regrettably none of the people concerned wanted to take the matter any further but they just wanted me aware of the situation. Even more regrettably some of the allegations were against Managers and Team Leaders consequently the reluctance to make their complaints official for fear of some sort of 'payback' in the future.

Is this the type of culture or environment we have to look forward to now as frontline staff at the depot? This is not the conduct of an employer hoping to gain Investors In People accreditation. Then again if all was well you wouldn't be expecting Operation Managers to have to coach their staff on what to or not to say if approached by representatives from the I I P board. I most defiantly will be telling them how it is and how it has been, I'll be leaving the how it should be to those of a significant pay grade to make a difference and paint the proverbial rose tinted picture.
This union will fully support any members who feel they are been subjected to bullying and harassment in what ever form it may raise its ugly head.

Davis Searles Equalities Officer

A QUESTION OF ACCOUNTABILITY ?

Today many of our largest public authorities have become so complacent, unaccountable and bureaucratic that a 'less than satisfactory performance' seems to be the order of the day. Outwardly they tick all the governance boxes, but the reality is that their managements barely answer to anybody. Duly elected members of these 'officers led authorities' often have their own political agendas and in the main do not have the knowledge, ability or confidence to challenge decisions made by the senior officers that they employ. Often the perceived kudos of being a councillor and the often over generous expenses they receive for the role is deemed as sufficient *raison d'etre*.

Those supposed to check on abuse and poor performance-auditors, senior directors etc lack any real independence. Senior management consequently operate within a '*carte blanche*' culture where the extended use of external consultants to do the work for which these senior officers are paid salaries that the private sector would be jealous of is now common practice in these public authorities. Vince cable revealed in a recently published paper the extent of the problem. It shows the remuneration of many Chief Executives to have risen more than 400 percent in the last 12 years. But there is no correlation between pay and performance, add to this the cost of employing various consultants due to the 'lack of expertise in house'. In this authority alone (Harrow) it transpires that £12 million pounds seems to be the annual figure. The reader would be forgiven for asking the question-'what do we actually get for our money'? and 'why exactly is there no expertise in house?'. With senior directors on salaries approaching £200,000 PA you would expect them to have adequate knowledge and expertise to do their jobs. And why has very little improvement taken place with the day to day front line operational arm of the council. We have virtually lost the trade waste contract (and the considerable income that this used to bring in) to the private sector. Nobody has investigated the real reasons behind this and nobody has been taken to task for these losses.

Instead, one of the remedies being considered to make up this and other shortfalls is the 'modernisation of staff terms and conditions'. Some will be fooled by the survey put out by the council with questions along the lines of-'would you like more flexibility in your working hours' and 'would you be prepared to work any five days from seven' etc etc. Read between these lines and you will see an erosion of the hard won terms and conditions that the unions have fought for over the years. Consider working any 5 from 7 days. This means that you could end up working the weekend without the overtime enhancement that is currently in place-a loss to you but a significant gain to the employer. Consider how this will affect the time you have available for your family. Children do not attend school at the weekend-it therefore is the one time the whole family have a chance to be together! Consider the fact that Sunday is a mandatory day of rest in many Christian based religions and consider also the fact that some cynical individuals might say that this survey is a means to circumnavigate full consultation with the unions. Consider now the business case for 24/7 working- guess what there isn't one. Consider also whether the CEO, main board directors or other senior staff will be working weekends? Yes you've guessed it- they won't. Now, at this stage, you may begin to start wondering about the true motives behind 'modernisation' and the hidden agenda behind some of these proposals.

Once again, the issue of ECU (essential car user allowance) is raised. Not happy with the savings already made in this area some 3 years ago, they want another bite at the cherry! Again, those that rely on it and actively use their cars for council business will be penalised for those that are given it purely on status grounds. Rather than address the poor management issues surrounding the abuses that occur at predominantly at senior levels, the council prefer the easier option of applying the usual 'one size fits all' solution based on statistics allegedly showing that there is only some 490 or so actual essential car users claiming mileage. Absolute rubbish. The fact that staff often don't submit a mileage claim for 6 months or so and that some do not claim the allowance due to the over complicated process in making a claim has not been factored in. If the council can get away with removing ESU fixed sum allowance and applying the much cheaper option of casual car user which has no fixed sum attached to it- it will.



Continued from Page 8 >>

Other spin includes attaining IIP (investors in people) accreditation to obscure some of these poor employment practices-but only for selective staff groups.

Those directorates employing senior professionals and other office based staff provided with computers can take full advantage of 'on line' training and the training deemed as necessary to meet their CPD (continuing professional development) requirements. But those directorates employing front line staff such as street scene operatives, special needs transport staff, cleaners, loaders, grounds maintenance staff etc get very little in the way of 'personal development' since they do not have access to 'on line' training during their working day and have difficulty in being released for training due to 'the service demands' associated with their jobs. Of course, the visiting IIP assessor is not told about this during the pre selected and arranged interviews. Who is accountable for the unequal training opportunities? Attempts to set up a learning agreement to address this elitist situation between this council and Unison have failed dismally, yet the council proudly boasts an equal opportunities policy. When anything contentious is being driven through it will be followed by a statement along the lines that 'full negotiations are ongoing or progressing with the unions'. Often, this is not the case. The union only finds out about an issue at the implementation stage or through leakage of information when there is little or no time left to research the full implications and to formulate an informed response on behalf of affected staff and members.

This council has recently been reported to ACAS for not adhering to its own employment policies and procedures, ACAS determined that there was a case to answer and the council has promised to adhere to its own policies and procedures. One has to ask the question- if the council cannot comply with its existing suite of employment policies and procedures due to what can only be described as a '*laissez faire*' attitude to employment law and practices, what chance is there with any new policies introduced under the broad umbrella statement of 'modernising terms and conditions'.

Local authority workers have already done their bit in accepting the 2 year pay freeze (which is in fact a pay cut) in times of increased austerity and rising fuel and rent charges. This has caused considerable hardship to workers, yet brought considerable savings to councils. This council received more money from the central government coffers to cover pay rises of approx. £1.628 million over 2 years. So in fact they have had a double win-win windfall. It is about time similar savings were reciprocated by the employer in cutting back on the generous remuneration packages that senior executives enjoy and the top heavy management structures coupled with the excessive use of consultants which is endemic throughout poorly managed councils. In the recent council published paper 'Modernising terms and conditions- Staff forum- August 2011' freely available on the council's website the council makes the following statement "Progression through the grades is dependant on satisfactory performance". In the very next sentence they say- "However, in reality, everybody progresses regardless of how well they perform"! What a damning indictment, not only does it admit to a complete failure in managing the process over many years, but furthermore highlights the complete inadequacy of the IPAD system(individual performance and development) which is meant to achieve satisfactory individual performance. These are blatant and obvious management failures which have resulted in increased wage costs. Yet, here we go again; staff conditions and benefits have to be sacrificed to make up the shortfall due to a failure to manage. Once again the question is posed-'Who is accountable?'

This country has had enough of the greed, elitism and divisive culture now evident and clearly portrayed by the so called captains of industry and government. We have seen it with the bankers and we have seen it with MP's expenses and now we are seeing it with many Local Authority employers.

Enough is enough!!!!!!



Free IT Courses for Beginners



- How to operate a computer safely.
- Set up and use simple file structure
- Send and receive emails
- Accessing information on the internet
- Understanding safety and security issues
- Create a multi slide presentation on an agreed topic

(Please call the number below for an application form.)

****Homework will be set each week****

Level 2 IT courses are also available

Please note spaces are limited and will be allocated on a first come first serve basis. To register please call the branch for an application form.



To Play the monthly prize draw go to www.unison.org.uk/octopus



For bookings to UNISON Croyde Bay go to www.croydeunison.co.uk

The **UNISON** Office is staffed by:-

Office administrator: Varsha Patel (Full time)
Admin assistant: Teresa Stanley (Part time)

Please remember to contact your workplace rep: in the first instance and let them deal with any issues at the grass roots level.

Contact Unison via:

**Unison Office
Central Depot
Forward Drive
Harrow, HA3 8NT
Telephone: 020 8424 1795**

OR

Via E-mail: info@harrow-unison.org.uk

This news letter was produced and edited by Charlie Sumner with contributions from UNISON members.

Printed &Published by Harrow UNISON LG Branch, the views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily the views of the Harrow UNISON LG Branch Executive Committee.