

unionsouthwest

e-newsletter of the South West TUC

October 2016

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Real wages still not recovered

Workers in the South West are still £32 a week worse off than they were before the financial crash. ONS figures show that in 2016 real wages in the region were 5.9% below their 2008 level.

With inflation predicted to overtake wage growth in 2017, the South West TUC is worried that another living standards crisis is on the horizon.

South West TUC Regional Secretary Nigel Costley said: "Many families in our region still haven't recovered from the financial crash. The last thing they need is another hit to their pay packets. But with inflation set to outstrip wages next year, we are on the cusp of another living standards crisis.

"The government must do all it can to prevent this by investing in our roads, railways and homes. This will help create the kind of decent jobs that people can live on. The government must boost skills and the Chancellor must protect low-paid workers by continuing to increase the minimum wage."

Big rise in wages below minimum wage

The ONS figures also show a 73% increase in people paid below the minimum wage.

The South West TUC estimates this affects 30,000 people in the region.

Nigel Costley said: "These figures are very worrying. The government must use next month's Autumn Statement to beef-up minimum wage enforcement. There should be no hiding place for bosses who try to cheat their workers out of a fair day's pay. Failing to pay the minimum wage squeezes those who have the least."

Hands off our health and social care services!

Saturday 29th October 12 noon

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Assemble: Queen Square, Bath

Demonstration called by B&NES Protect Our NHS, supported by Unison and Bath Trades Council to highlight and oppose the current plans by the local CCG and Council to hand over all community health and social care services to Virgin Care for the next seven years...public money should not be used for private gain.

Read more: groupsaces.com/38DegreesBathGroup

Fully Fund our NHS

The TUC is working in partnership with health unions and the NHS Support Federation to raise awareness of the impact of the government's spending squeeze on the NHS in England and to call for a fair and sustainable funding settlement.

As part of this campaign, the TUC is running a short and sharp action in the run up to the Autumn Statement on 23rd November calling on Chancellor Philip Hammond to use the opportunity to provide a new NHS funding settlement. This will include [A petition circulated through social media](#)

South Devon meeting debates local NHS future

Some 50 people attended a lively meeting organised by Torbay and South Devon TUC on 12th October in Paignton. Kevin Dixon, Health Watch Torbay, Nick Roberts, Clinical Lead, Torbay and South Devon CCG. Mairead MacAlinden, CEO Torbay and South Devon NHS Trust, Vic Ellery Torbay Councilor and Paul Raybould, Secretary Torbay TUC spoke at the meeting about the crisis in local health care.

Welcome U-turn on HSE board

Last month the Government appointed an employer to represent workers on the HSE board. The decision caused uproar, with unions, politicians and a lot of outside observers roundly condemning it. There was even an emergency motion at TUC Congress. After a meeting with TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady, the Government has done a U-turn. The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions has said that he will be advertising a new seat for a workers representative, and will "welcome the active engagement" of the TUC.

Save jobs at GKN

221 redundancy notices have been issued at GKN's Yeovil site effectively meaning the closure of the site. The GKN workers make airframes for Italian-owned Leonardo Helicopters, which is on the same site.

Martin Bailey, President of Yeovil Trades Union Council and senior Unite union official at Yeovil's helicopter factory Leonardo (formerly AgustaWestland) said: "The threat to these highly skilled jobs makes the need for a robust, coherent and sustainable long-term industrial strategy to protect the UK's manufacturing base an urgent priority for the government".

Cuts to civil service compensation scheme

The government is seeking to make further swingeing cuts to civil servants' redundancy provisions. This could see staff faced with redundancy losing between 25-60% of what they're currently entitled to. It comes at a time when thousands of civil service jobs are already at risk, effectively meaning that the government is attempting to sack staff on the cheap.

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PCS represents the vast majority of civil servants, and we are asking people to support our campaign by [emailing your MP](#) urging them to oppose the changes.

Cornish Communist Manifesto to be launched

Saturday 29 October 7pm

Railway Tavern, Truro

A Cornish language translation of the Communist Manifesto is to be launched. A Cornish communist, who uses the pen-name Redruth, has translated the booklet first published in German in 1848. The *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, contains the first and most complete summary of the theoretical principles of Marxism and of the strategy and tactics of Communism.

The 30-page booklet will be on sale at £2. Further details from Ken Keable at 01935 823121 or southwest@communist-party.org.uk

South West Pensioners meet

The Annual gathering of trade union pensioners took place in Weston-super-Mare on 20th October. Delegates heard some great speakers and received updates on recent pension changes, the value of the State Pension, access to public transport, elderly social care and updates from the South West TUC.

Motions were carried expressing concern at digital exclusion of older people not online, NHS cuts and pensioner poverty.

In it together

Bridgwater Senior Citizens' Forum has just finished a short film about unity between young and older generations. This is part of the NPC's Generations United campaign.

[In It Together](#)

Groundswell Rising

Tuesday 1st November 7pm

Trinity Centre, Trinity Road, Bristol BS2 0NW

Wednesday 2nd November 7pm

Christ Church, Montpelier, Weston-super-Mare BS23 2RG

An opportunity to find out more about fracking and hear Mark Lichty from Pennsylvania in the USA, the film's executive producer, who has lived side by side with the industry and has documented people defending their communities against its inherent dangers. [Groundswell Rising](#)

Free Admission - Donations Welcome - no need to book

Dare Devil Rides to Jarama

Dare Devil Rides to Jarama is a new play from Townsend productions (the ones who made *We will be Free*, the wonderful play about the Tolpuddle Martyrs, and *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*).

The play tells the amazing story of Wall of Death motorcycle rider Clem 'Dare Devil' Beckett and Marxist writer and poet Christopher Caudwell, at first sight two unlikely friends and comrades, who were thrown together by their shared determination to defend the Spanish republic against Franco's rising fascist tide.

Both were volunteers for the International Brigade and died in February 1937 at the machine-gun post they shared on the first day of the momentous Battle of Jarama.

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The national tour is sponsored by the International Brigade Memorial Trust.

Tour dates in the South West:

3rd November: The Plough Arts Centre, Gt Torrington 01805624624

www.theploughartscentre.org.uk

4th November: Dorchester Arts Centre 01305 266926; www.dorchesterarts.org.uk

5th November: Bridport Arts Centre www.bridport-arts.com; 01308 424204

[For further information Review in the Morning Star](#)

Social Care in Crisis

Tuesday 8th November 1-3pm

Tony Benn House, Victoria Street, Bristol BS1 6AY

National Pensioners Convention consider the crisis in the care system for clients and workerrrs. Let's sort it out together! With Tanya Palmer, UNISON and Neil Duncan-Jordan NPC National Officer.

Jobs and training open day

Wednesday 9th November, 10am - 3pm

Tony Benn House, Victoria St, Bristol, BS1 6AY

Unite South West is to launch its first Jobs and Training Open Day in Bristol. It will be a great opportunity for anyone looking for a job, training, advice and guidance. Unite members and general public all welcome! On the day there will be an array of employers from different industries, the National Careers Advisory Service, Learn with Unite team, Financial Support Services, IT Skills Taster sessions and more.

In Association with Tomorrow's People.

Register your attendance with katie.llewellin@unitetheunion.org 0117 244 3391

Unions make the difference on training

More than three in four (77%) employers say union-led training programmes have a positive effect in their workplaces. The independent evaluation of union-led training and learning - by academics at Leeds University Business School and the University of Exeter - found that both bosses and staff gained from union involvement in training at work.

The review found that:

- Over two-thirds (68%) of employers said unions were particularly effective at inspiring reluctant learners to engage in training and development.
- Half (47%) said their staff were more committed as a result of unions facilitating training and development opportunities.
- Four in five (80%) employees said they had developed skills that they could transfer to a new job, while two in three (62%) said the new skills they acquired made them more effective in their current job.
- One in five (19%) said they had gained a promotion or increased responsibility and one in 10 (11%) gained a pay rise.
- Nearly half (46%) of non-union members that took up the union offer of training and development later joined.
- Union-led training delivers an estimated net contribution to the economy of more than £1.4 billion as a result of a boost to jobs, wages and productivity.

Behind closed doors

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Friday 11th November 2016 12.30-4.30pm

The Station, Silver Street, Bristol BS1 2AG

Bristol Zero Tolerance and The Hollie Gazzard Trust host a conference raising awareness of the impact of domestic abuse and stalking on the workplace and how to provide appropriate support to staff. With: Police and Crime Commissioner Sue Mountstevens; Superintendent Andy Bennett, Avon and Somerset Police; Shonagh Dillon, Paladin; Nicki Norman, Women's Aid; and Nick Gazzard, The Hollie Gazzard Trust. There will also be a theatre piece from Alter Ego Creative Solutions of *'Behind Closed Doors'* a hard-hitting applied theatre production to raise awareness of the issues surrounding domestic abuse and violence. [Book a place here](#)

Somerset Solidarity Festival launch

Friday 4th November 7.30pm

The Greenbank, Easton, Bristol BS5 6DP

Under the Stars Events is a group of volunteers who have come together to create a **Solidarity Festival** to take place 12-13th in Somerset. All profits from the festival will go to the Refugee Solidarity Bristol group. The project is using the crowdfunding platform *Fundsurfer* and welcomes donations of all sizes. The target for the festival is £5,000.

They are looking for sponsorship, publicity, donations in kind **and** volunteers. At the crowdfunding launch party there will be a short talk about the campaign, a showing of our video followed by live Chilean music, cake and dancing!

[Facebook](#) [Fundsurfer](#) (To go live November 3rd) [Neighbourly](#)

Afrika Eye

11-13th November

Afrika Eye - the South West's biggest celebration of African cinema and culture - returns in November with a packed weekend of new films, discussions, family workshops plus live music featuring Abass Doodoo, the Ghanaian master drummer best known for his collaborations with the legendary Ginger Baker.

Screenings include features and documentaries from or about Mali, Nigeria, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia. And to open the festival, a very special preview of *A United Kingdom*. [Click here for details](#)

Women and Parliament

Monday 14th November 6.30pm - 9.00 pm

Queens LT2 University of Exeter The Queen's Drive Exeter EX4 4QH

We still have a long way to go before it is 50:50. This event will hear from the Parliamentary Outreach Service about the role women can play in Parliament. Find out how the seat of our democracy works for women and how we can make this truly representative of women. To reserve your free place go to [Event Brite](#)

We Shall Overcome

We Shall Overcome Fundraiser in Bridport raised nearly £800 for the town's Cupboard Love Food Bank. Other events happened across the South West including Crewkerne, Glastonbury, Bristol and Stroud.

Tolpuddle Old Chapel wins Lottery support

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Tolpuddle Old Chapel Trust (TOCT) has received initial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for its renovation project. The project aims to renovate the two hundred year old Grade II* former Methodist chapel in Tolpuddle.

Development funding of £63,700 has been awarded to help TOCT progress their plans to apply for a full grant at a later date.

Thanks to the support from National Lottery players, the project will 'renovate and extend the former chapel that was used by the Tolpuddle Martyrs to provide a 'quiet place in the heart of the village for visitors, and to provide the location for activities, exhibitions and community use.

The property's significance is linked to its development and use by the Tolpuddle Martyrs and its role as a central focus of the early 19th century Methodist circuit in rural Dorset. Research suggests that the original cob structure was built by two of the Tolpuddle Martyrs and their families. It is on Historic England's At Risk Register. Andrew McCarthy, Chairman of TOCT said: "This highly significant development funding from HLF will help the Trust move forward to develop our existing proposals to renovate and extend the former chapel and secure match funding. We hope our project will reconnect people with the harsh living and working conditions, faith, humility and simple building techniques of the Tolpuddle Martyrs, as well as ensuring this wonderful legacy is saved for future generations".

Tolpuddle trial online

[Trade Union Martyrs: Save Our History](#)

The Liberty Tree project

A fund-raising campaign has been launched to raise money to release the [Liberty Tree](#) play as an education pack for 16-25 year olds. This is a non-profit, activist, initiative. Check out the web site for more information and how your union can help.

Terry Grist

Trade unionists who remember Terry Grist will be sad to learn of his death recently. Terry was a staunch trade unionist and during the 1970s and 80s was TGWU Branch Chairman and later a Branch Chairman for the office workers union (ATCC). He led the union at Ushers for many years and after he was made redundant became a self-employed benefits adviser, as well as advising the unemployed he helped set up Workout and Melksham workspace. He went on to have a successful career for the last ten years of his working life as an adviser and in that time helped over 2,000 people, many union members, with benefits and representing them at tribunals.

George Massey

George joined his father at the Small Street sorting office in 1930, a boy messenger. Later George became a Sorting Clerk and a Post and Telegraph Officer, UPW Section Secretary and delegate to Bristol Trades Union Council. George, a proud Bristolian and honorary member of the Bristol Branch of the UPW since 1959, was the oldest surviving member of the UPW executive council. During World War 2 George was an army battery sergeant, manning guns on Portland, in India and Burma.

A card-carrying - if often dissident - member of the Communist Party for most of his adult life, George Massey, with other Bristol communists and socialists, met in secret from 1935 but, after the war, transformed the Bristol UPW into a prominent left-wing branch. In 1959 George became a supervisor and activist in their trade union until he

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retired in 1976, at which time George was a member of the CMA Executive Council and full-time secretary of Bristol Council of Post Office Unions.

During the epic UPW strike of 1971 George held a high profile, collecting solidarity subscriptions from sympathetic managers, appearing on picket lines and speaking at meetings-actions unheard of from a supervisor! George was secretary of the Post Office Pensioners Federation for a dozen years. His CPGB membership had lapsed but he remained a CND member until his death.

Dave Chapples's full-length biography of George, *Grasshoppers, Stonkers and Straight Eights*, published in 2008 is available via abebooks.com