**The North East Needs a Pay Rise**

TUC General Secretary Frances O’Grady launched a poster campaign in several North East constituencies this week, including Middlesbrough South, Hartlepool and Stockton South; calling on all parties to “give Britain a pay rise”.

Her visit coincided with new TUC research which showed that workers in the North East are over £400 a year worse off in real terms than they were before the financial crash. The analysis revealed that real wages in the region are 2% lower, on average, than they were in 2008.

The TUC fears that things could get worse, with the Bank of England warning that real earnings will fall for the rest of 2017.

During her visit Ms O’Grady spoke about how North East workers were still paying the price for the crash.

“Wages in the North East still haven’t recovered from the financial crisis. Working people are still suffering a decade on. And it is very important that politicians from all parties explain to voters how they’ll create decent jobs that people can make a living and raise a family on.

The TUC says a key factor behind the North East’s wage squeeze has been the rise of precarious work in the region.

Two out of three (67%) jobs created in the North East since 2011 have been in insecure work. The TUC estimates that 124,000 people now work in insecure jobs in the region – up from 84,000 in 2011. That represents 1 in 9 workers in the North East.

“These are jobs where people don’t have the basic rights many of us take for granted,” O’Grady explained, “Where there is no guarantee of work from one week to a next. Where you can be let go in an instant.”

The issue of pay in the public sector was another big issue raised with Frances:

“Everyone in the UK has bills to pay, and it’s only fair that wages should at least keep up with rising living costs. But workers in the public sector are having their pay held down,” O’Grady said.

“Pay restrictions have really hurt staff in overstretched public services, and make it even harder to recruit good people.

“Public sector pay will continue to drop by thousands of pounds in real terms by the end of the decade unless the next government softens its stance on public sector salaries. It can’t be right that in the world’s fifth largest economy nurses are having to use food banks to get by. ”

Frances was joined on her North East tour by TUC regional secretary Beth Farhat.

“It has been great having Frances here and seeing the way people have responded to her. We’ve had lots of really interesting conversations with voters,” said Farhat

“The TUC is not affiliated to any political party. But we make no apology about trying to put living standards at the heart of this election. The North East needs a pay rise.”

**Jessie Joe Jacobs**

**Policy & Campaigns Officer**

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