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# Yeovil & District Trades Union Council

[www.yeoviltuc.org.uk](http://www.yeoviltuc.org.uk)

A campaigning publication for local trade unionists: *Got a boss? Get a union!*



## Battle Lines in Somerset after the County Council Election

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After 16 years a Tory administration is back at the helm in Somerset. The 4th June County Council election saw the Liberal Democrats squarely defeated, as the electorate returned a right-wing Tory administration. The Tories picked up 11 extra seats to secure a commanding majority group of 35, of a total of 58 members. The Liberals lost 9 seats and Labour 2 of its 4. Although the result should have come as no surprise, it nevertheless shocked the labour movement across the sub-region, given the huge significance for both Council workers and the people of Somerset.

This significance becomes clear when we consider that the County Council is responsible for major services such as school education, social care and the environment (including roads). The Council oversees an annual budget of £825m and is responsible for the education of 67,000 pupils, lends over 3.4 million items from public libraries and maintains 6,612km of highways.

Now a right-wing, bitter and inexperienced Tory administration is set to reverse the gains of the movement over previous years, both in terms of policy commitment to environmental protection and investment in improving public services. Unlike the Lib Dem administration, the new County Council is to be run on a cabinet model with all power concentrated on the leader. With this "dictatorial model" in place, it is feared that the very accountability of local authority in Somerset is being put at risk. It is an open secret that the leader of the Council, Ken Maddock, and his 'lieutenant', Cabinet Member Harvey Siggs, responsible for Human Resources, are intent on driving down costs by reducing the workforce. Bearing in mind the hatchet job the duo did at Mendip District Council, where they have been in power in recent years, decimation of jobs and services are surely on the cards.

The first casualty of the new administration was Alan Jones, the controversial chief executive of the Council. After six years in post, during which he championed a number of major strategic plans, including Somerset's

bid for a unitary authority, which was bitterly opposed by the Tories, Mr Jones negotiated an early retirement after the election. Until a new chief executive is appointed, David Taylor, the current deputy chief executive, has taken on the role on an acting basis.

Wasting no time, Ken Maddock, the new Council leader, has announced that his administration is looking for a change in direction with a new set of priorities. He has openly stated that the Tory administration is only interested in allocating sufficient resources to fulfil the Council's statutory duties. Other services are "luxuries" that can be cut to save money. At the first Full Council since the election, the Conservative administration set out how it intends to make cuts to meet its election promise of stand-still council tax.

Already a job recruitment freeze is in place, initially for six months, to be followed by a review and potential "pay cuts". Although frontline social workers and teachers are exempt from the recruitment freeze, the impact for jobs and services will be enormous. The new administration has also let it be known that it is to look at a wide range of other potential "initiatives", including a pay freeze.

In effect the administration has saved no time in declaring all-out war on staff. A powerful campaign of misinformation is underway to hoodwink employees into compliance with Council plans. Senior officers of the Council have proposed that the staff volunteer for part-time working, unpaid holidays, and other similar schemes. This is clearly a ploy to start identifying jobs that in future can be considered 'surfeit to requirement'. Senior managers have even indicated that salary cuts could be on the agenda. Trade unions have been alarmed at the speed of these developments and are drawing up plans for resisting any worsening of pay and conditions and to protect jobs and services in Somerset.

**Defend services, defend jobs!  
Fight the cuts!**

## Vestas Wind Turbines

### 600 face the sack at turbine plant

The government says it plans to create a million "green jobs". Meanwhile, in the real world, Britain's only wind turbine factory is being closed down.

All 600 workers at the Vestas factory on the Isle of Wight are facing redundancy.

The factory is the largest employer on the island.

Mark, a Vestas worker, said, "I've been here seven years. Getting another job will mean moving my family off the island."

Vestas blames the closure on a fall in demand caused by the recession – even though its profits increased by 70 percent last year to £50 million. It had pledged to upgrade the factory but then suddenly pulled out, even though the company had just raised another £700 million in a share issue.

Mark says, "People should join us and stand up for themselves and their jobs – and the environment, the planet. This is about the future for our kids."

- From Socialist Worker, issue 2159, 11 July 2009

### What we're fighting for

Vestas Blades UK made production workers at their factories on the Isle of Wight redundant on 12 August. 600 jobs have been or will soon be lost. Many more jobs that depend on Vestas will follow. This makes no sense from a green or a labour perspective!

The government has just announced a major expansion of renewable energy including wind power. We are calling on Vestas to keep the factories open, saving jobs and offering those who want to leave a better redundancy deal.

We are calling on the government to intervene to save jobs at Vestas - through nationalisation if that is what it takes - to show that it is serious about saving the planet.

### What you can do

\* Contact energy minister Ed Miliband. His phone number in his Doncaster constituency is 01302 875 462, and at Westminster, 020 7219 4778. Flood him with calls for the Government to take over the Vestas factory and keep it producing, under new management.

\* Sign our petition on the 10 Downing Street website: <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/SaveVestas/>.

Come to the protest outside the main Vestas factory – Monks Brook, St Cross Industrial Estate, Newport, Isle of Wight.

\* Organise a visible demonstration of solidarity, especially on the national day of action, Thursday 17 September. Take a photo with a placard that reads "Save Vestas Jobs" and email it to [savevestas@gmail.com](mailto:savevestas@gmail.com).

\* Send a donation from your trade union or other organisation, or make a personal donation. Cheques payable to RMT IOW 2 VESTAS HARDSHIP & DEFENCE FUND, and send to Keith Murphy, 57 Well Street, Ryde, IOW PO33 2RY. Or donate online at <http://savevestas.wordpress.com>.

\* Send a motion to your union leadership demanding they actively back the Vestas workers and their demands.

\* Keep in touch with the Vestas workers' campaign. You can phone the Vestas workers at the picket line on 07756 659234 or email them at [savevestascampaign@yahoo.com](mailto:savevestascampaign@yahoo.com)

\* Contact local Labour Parties, and ask them to follow the Isle of Wight Labour Party in backing the workers. Ask them to demand Ed Miliband come to the Isle of Wight to meet the workers

\* Lobby your MP and get her or him to sign "Early Day Motion" 1925, put down by John McDonnell MP in support of the Vestas workers

\* If the MP is Labour, contact local Labour Party activists and Labour-affiliated unions, and urge them to put pressure on their MP

\* *NATIONWIDE* "Save Vestas" National Day of Action Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> September. There will be actions all around the country in support of the campaign to Save Vestas and for Green Jobs

\* A protest outside the Southampton Vestas plant at 5pm, is called by the RMT union and a meeting in the Dockers' Club at 7pm.

## Labour movement history – Whiggery at work

### Who were the men that persecuted the Tolpuddle Martyrs?

Who were the men that persecuted the Tolpuddle Martyrs?

The story of these men is virtually unknown and their lives and connections remain largely unexplored.

Certainly, there are details in the history books, but an understanding of why they did what they did is lacking.

The martyrs combined into a trade union because they could not live on their existing wages.

A subsidiary but important factor was that they knew this technique had been successfully adopted in the past and without legal challenge in London.

This was the labour movement that gave rise to the brief life of the Grand National Consolidated Trade Union in 1834.

Some sections of the local ruling class did not have a huge problem with reviewing the wages of agricultural labourers. But others, such as James Frampton, did.

Frampton was born in 1769 at Moreton House near Tolpuddle. He was an educated country gentleman who spoke French and spent three months in London every three years.

He had been in France during the early period of the revolution and was a firm supporter of the politics of king, country and constitution.

Frampton had been very active in opposing the Captain Swing movement of agricultural labourers, which was another reaction to poverty conditions and had focused on direct action such as crop burning.

Then there was Lord Digby, the Lord Lieutenant of Dorset who was in frequent correspondence with Frampton in 1834.

It was Digby who wrote to then Home Secretary Lord Melbourne querying what action could be taken against the Tolpuddle trade unionists as the Combination Laws, which outlawed trade unionism, had been partially repealed in 1824-5.

Lord Melbourne, who the Australian city was named after, was born William Lamb in 1779 and educated at Eton and Cambridge.

He married society lady Caroline Ponsonby in 1805 and had been Whig MP for Leominster since 1806.

As Home Secretary, he had played a key role in breaking the Captain Swing movement. He was also responsible for ordering the execution of Dic Penderyn, one of the leaders of the 1831 Merthyr Rising.

He responded to Digby by suggesting a prosecution under laws which banned the making of oaths for seditious purposes.

In 1834, oaths were made out of deep religious conviction and in terms of union organisation, were feared by the government as a powerful and secret authority system.

Frampton set out to prove that the Tolpuddle trade unionists had made oaths and found a labourer who agreed to testify under pressure.

A grand jury met on March 15 1834 to establish whether there was a case against the Tolpuddle men. It consisted of Frampton, his son Henry Frampton and his step-brother Charles Wollaston.

The foreman of the jury was William Ponsonby who was to be MP for Dorset in 1836 and who was also Lord Melbourne's brother-in-law. It found that the Tolpuddle men had a case to answer and the case proceeded to trial.

At the trial, the judge was Baron Williams who had only been appointed on February 28 1834 and clearly owed his advancement to the Whigs.

The final piece in this jigsaw of ruling-class political activism was the Dorset County Chronicle, the local paper read by all these men. On March 13 1834, it published an editorial labelling trade unionism as a "criminal activity."

What happened at Tolpuddle was not a conspiracy but a section of the ruling class acting to defend what it viewed as its interests.

As the successful campaign to free the martyrs suggests, the pressure of organised labour caused this policy of persecution to be reconsidered.

This article by Keith Flett appeared in the Morning Star Friday 17<sup>th</sup> July [www.morningstaronline.co.uk](http://www.morningstaronline.co.uk)

## Introducing Lee Skevington as your New Parliamentary Candidate

As your new Labour Party candidate for the next general election I wanted to take the opportunity to introduce myself and to let you know a little more about me and what my priorities are should I become your MP. I want you to know that I am not like the other candidates - I never went to an Oxbridge University and I was not sent here to simply get elected by a political party.

I was born here and I have lived in Yeovil all my life. I grew up in Yeovil's east ward in a single parent family. I understand what the problems are here in Yeovil because they are my problems too. I strongly believe a Yeovil MP must come from Yeovil; not from Kingston like Kevin Davis of the Conservative Party or David Laws who comes from Surrey.

And more importantly, I am working class; I have worked for a Member of Parliament and government Minister and I now work for myself as a web-designer. However I also know what it is to work for minimum wage. Over the years I have worked in restaurants, call-centres, garages and shops. Aside from being a member of the Labour Party I am a dedicated trade unionist (GMB member) - dedicated to improving the deal we working people have to put up with.

As your candidate I have been working hard for you since being selected a few months ago. I have launched campaigns for better street lighting in our parks, fairer fares on Yeovil bus services and I have been working against Conservative Party cuts at County Hall.

Every week I go out on our streets in Yeovil and I speak to people in their communities about the problems they face. It is all too easy to forget that politicians are here to serve working people, not to profit from them.

I encourage you to get in touch with me should you need my help or want to get involved with my campaigns. You can find out more about me from my website at [www.leeskevington.co.uk](http://www.leeskevington.co.uk).

Best Wishes,  
Lee Skevington

### **Vestas Wind Turbines – footnote:**

**Yeovil TUC has donated £100 towards the campaign to save jobs at Vestas Wind Turbines.**

## Jobs Education & Peace

### **Demand a new direction**

A coalition of Trade Unions – UCU, NUT PCS & NUJ and pressure groups, Right to Work [www.righttowork.org.uk](http://www.righttowork.org.uk), Stop-the-War Coalition and Unite against Fascism – have teamed up to lobby the Labour Party Conference and call for a change in direction over proposals to cut public expenditure.

The Government has announced that public spending growth will be cut from 1.1% next year to 0.7% in 2011-12. Alongside this real term spending cut, the Government also announced further “efficiency savings” of £9Bn across the public sector in addition to the £5Bn announced in last November. Past so-called “efficiency programmes” have had a disastrous impact on all public services.

It is against this back drop that the media and some politicians are trying to create divisions between the public and private sectors. Divisive myths about job security, pay and pensions in civil and public services have been voiced in an attempt to portray the public sector as “having it easy” compared to the private sector.

We oppose false divisions between public and private sector workers. The real issue is the injustice of making the low paid, wherever they work, pay for the crisis not of their making.

We call on the Government to defend both public and private sector jobs and invest in public services, not cut them.

### **Lobby the Labour Party Conference, Brighton Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> September from 12:30. Assemble Madeira Drive.**

Transport details. **Bristol:** Unite the Union Coach departs 8am, Anchor Road, contact 07989 105449  
SW Region Plymouth/Exeter coach departs 6:30am Bretonside bus station, Plymouth Tickets £20/£10 Contact 07803 620390

Yeovil TUC meets every third Wednesday of the month @ the address below. All union members welcome (though only delegates may vote). Meetings start @ 19:30hrs. Is your branch affiliated? Contact us for an application form.

Want copies of this newsletter? What's going on in your workplace? Do have any comments? Please contact us:

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