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## Heard about the Peoples Charter?

You wouldn't know it from the mainstream media, but in September the Trades Union Congress voted to campaign for a radical and inspiring set of reforms which has the potential to get Britain out of its current economic mess and benefit all workers, pensioners, students, children, and people with small and medium sized businesses. If the government were to adopt these proposals, and start implementing them, it would transform the political atmosphere, get Labour's core supporters out to vote and hugely improve Labour's chances of getting re-elected. It's called the People's Charter for Change, and Yeovil and District Trade Union Council is supporting the campaign to get a million people to sign it.

Congress voted for a Unite amendment calling on the TUC to "build support for the principles outlined in the Charter in workplaces and communities to help promote progressive policies in the Labour Party". We want you, our readers (whether you are a Labour Party supporter or not) to help us do just that.

The top TUC officials aren't doing all they should to publicise and campaign for the Charter. This is because they are mostly New Labour supporters who didn't really want it. Some union leaders are paralysed by their unconditional support for New Labour and so it is up to the rank and file, together with those unions and organisations which support the Charter, to campaign for it in our workplaces, in the streets and shopping centres.

Lee Skevington, the prospective Labour candidate for Yeovil, supports the People's Charter.

**Not a banker's bail out, but a  
People's Charter!**

1. Take the financial industries fully into democratic public ownership run for the benefit of all. Tightly regulate the city markets and restructure the tax system so big business and the wealthy pay more and ordinary people less.

2. Existing jobs must be protected and investment made to create new jobs paying decent money, building toward full employment. Raise the minimum wage and end the lower rate for younger workers. More jobs means more spending power to stimulate the economy and increase tax revenue with fewer people reliant on benefits.

3. Decent homes for all, stop repossessions and keep people in their homes with 'no-interest loans'. Three million homes are needed. Give local government the power and money to build and renovate affordable quality homes, ending the housing shortage and creating much needed jobs.

4. Save public money. Bring energy, transport, water and telecommunications back into public ownership. End corporate profiteering in health, education, social and other public services. Stop the EU privatisation directives.

5. Fairness and justice. Free transport and heating for every pensioner. Link state pensions and benefits to average earnings. Increase child benefits and tax credits to end child poverty. Enforce equal pay for women. End racism and discrimination in all its forms. Invest in facilities and training for young people. Guarantee training, apprenticeships and education with grants for everyone and no fees. Restore trade union rights to allow them the freedom to fight the crisis and to protect workers.

6. Build a secure and sustainable future for all. End the cost of war in blood and money. Bring our troops home. Abandon plans to waste billions of pounds on a new generation of nuclear weapons. A massive investment for a greener safer world. Get rid of the debt economy in Britain and cancel the debts of the poor of the planet for a better future for all the people of the world.

**For the full text and further info see  
[www.thepeoplescharter.com](http://www.thepeoplescharter.com)**

## Around the Town & District

### Government plan to cut Jobs on the cheap

Proposals have been made by the Cabinet Office to slash redundancy payments for Civil Servants by unilaterally tearing up an agreement which has been in place since 1987. The Public and Commercial Services union, (PCS) are currently challenging the legality of these proposals and are holding consultation meetings with PCS members across all government departments. This comes at a time when the prospect of job cuts is becoming increasingly likely. HMRC in Maltravers House in Yeovil is one of 200 offices nationally that have been earmarked for closure due to the present government's obsession with centralising as much work as possible. This has already meant that within the last 18 months two thirds of those working in the Yeovil office have left under the existing severance or early retirement packages with the loss of a great deal of experienced staff affecting the service available to taxpayers. The Government argue that the current cost of getting rid of its staff is more costly compared to that in the private sector. Although this may be true for senior civil servants in Whitehall it is not the case for the vast majority of often poorly paid staff working for the various government departments. PCS members are quite rightly angry and the prospect of industrial action early in 2010 is a very real one.

Mark Hoskins – PCS Office Secretary, HMRC Yeovil.

### Solidarity with Royal Mail and CWU

Yeovil TUC expressed solidarity and support for CWU members on strike over job cuts, speed ups and pensions etc. by showing up, with the Yeovil TUC banner, on the picket line at the Royal Mail sorting office at Huish during the days of strike-action last year.

### Bidding war

Political parties have been urged to use the new year to claw back some of the £130 billion lost in uncollected and evaded taxes rather than make "savage" cuts to public services.

General union PCS has warned against a "bidding war" between political parties in the run-up to the general election over which could make the most cuts.

£70bn is being lost through tax evasion, £25bn disappears into tax havens and uncollected tax has increased by £2.7bn to £27.7bn this year, the union argued.

This falling recovery rate coincides with plans for 25,000 job losses and 200 office closures at Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) by 2011.

PCS general secretary Mark Serwotka said: "The end of this year has been characterised by the main political parties engaging in a bidding war over who can cut the most." To close the public deficit, they need to make it a New Year resolution to start focusing on the £130bn worth of taxes which is either lost to tax cheats or simply goes uncollected due to a lack of resources."

He said that job losses in HMRC illustrate the short-sightedness of crude cuts where staff chasing tax has been axed even though they recoup £600,000 each after staff costs.

**"The people who caused this crisis should be made to pay their fair share rather than public services and the people who rely on them."**

A recent study by the TUC showed that 3.1 per cent of taxpayers received 31 per cent of all tax relief.

The TUC pressed for a limit on the tax relief that those earning more than £100,000 a year could claim, saying that this would raise up to £10 billion a year.

### A May Day event on the themes of youth unemployment and the environment

is currently being organised by Yeovil & District Trades Union Council for this year's May Day – International Workers Day. Watch this space for further details.

## Why we all need the public sector

### More than a million South West jobs are reliant on the public sector.

One in four employees in the South West work in the public sector, so cutting the region's public spending would devastate the local economy and store up major financial problems for the future, the South West TUC has warned.

Figures show 957,949 people (28.4% of the region's workforce) is employed in the public sector, working in schools, swimming pools, libraries, benefit offices etc., while a further 390,700 work for private firms dependent on public sector contracts and spin-offs.

Nigel Costley, Regional Secretary of the South West TUC, said: "Any public sector job losses would also send shock waves throughout the wider community.

"We need the public sector more than ever in a recession. Sharp cuts in public spending would not only hit the most vulnerable but would also hamper the chances of growth, increase the incidence of long-term unemployment and cause widespread job losses in the private sector as well."

Nigel Costley added: "Slash-and-burn public spending cuts will do irreparable harm to the South West's economy and society. Our vital services are necessary to help individuals, communities and businesses out of the recession and prepare for recovery.

"Our public services have undoubtedly improved over the last decade or so, thanks to extra investment in infrastructure, services and people. We cannot let this progress be damaged by knee-jerk calls for spending cuts, pay freezes and privatisation. Our public services are too important for that."

Thousands of jobs at private firms could be lost if politicians continue to chase massive public sector cuts, trade unions have warned.

A study by the TUC found that every £1 of public money invested directly in services generated a further 64p in local economies.

And TUC general secretary Brendan Barber warned that proposed spending cuts risked plunging wider society into an era of crisis not seen since the Thatcher government. "Cutting back on public spending would put thousands of workers at risk of permanent worklessness, risking a repeat of the

enormous social and economic costs of the 1980s," he said.

He emphasised the essential role played by the public sector in dealing with the fallout from the recession - a position backed up by a TUC survey of public employees.

Most of the 2,000 workers surveyed had seen increased demand for services such as jobseeking, debt advice and training since the financial crisis began.

"We need the public sector more than ever," said Mr Barber. "Unemployment is now increasing at a slower rate than many were predicting, but long-term unemployment is likely to continue rising sharply for many months to come."

The TUC report, released in November, warned that the recession and rising unemployment were a "major source" of increasing poverty.

Association of Public Service Excellence chief executive Paul O'Brien, whose organisation helped with the research, said: "Whilst the public sector may seem a fashionable target for cuts, there is a real danger that slashing public expenditure when the economy is on a fragile road to recovery would lead to a double dip in a post-recession environment.

"Far from being a drain on finances, public service investment over the last 10 years appears to have paid off, with service improvements and value-for-money gains.

"Public services can provide a steely local resilience in terms of jobs, skills and anti-poverty strategies."

### GCSE success masks poorer rural results

A report in the *Guardian* 16-12-09 has it that "A breakdown of this year's GCSE results by local authority, ethnicity, gender and class reveals a rapid increase in the proportion of 16 year old pupils getting 5 good GCSE's \*, up from 57.3 in 2006 to 69.8% this year."

"But a new gap has emerged: pupils from disadvantaged rural areas are among the lowest scoring in the country. Head teachers said the Government's funding method was missing pupils in poorer parts of the countryside, leaving schools struggling to provide the same one-to-one tuition,

catch-up classes and Easter revision sessions available to urban pupils”

Rural areas have the lowest rates of teenagers finishing with basic qualifications. In Somerset, only 28% get 5 good GCSE's \*, and in Devon and Norfolk only 36%. John Dunford, General Secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders said “Rural schools are missing out in several ways. The funding of mainly rural authorities is much lower for historical reasons. There is no recognition in the formula of disadvantaged schools in advantaged areas.”

\* Editor's note – Grade C minimum (presumably)

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## **Banksters – one year later.**

In the midst of the greatest economic and social crisis since the Great Depression, the major US banks are about to announce multimillion-dollar year-end bonuses for their top executives and traders. Bankers are able to resume full tilt their mad pursuit of personal enrichment due to the plundering of the treasury carried out for the sole purpose of bailing out the “masters of the universe” whose speculative practices precipitated the crisis.

This is a global phenomenon. In all the major centres of world capitalism, the financial elites are emerging from the economic wreckage stronger and more powerful than ever, and are dictating the terms of their own enrichment to servile governments.

In the US, Goldman Sachs is expected to announce bonuses totalling more than \$20 billion, about the same amount as California's state budget deficit. One analyst estimates that the average Goldman bonus will approach \$600,000, and that some executives may take home more than \$10 million. It is anticipated that Goldman Sachs, Bank of America, Citibank, JPMorgan Chase and Morgan Stanley will together pay out \$90 billion in 2009 executive compensation, with more than half in the form of bonuses.

Here in Britain, according to the *Guardian* 09.01.10, the worlds biggest investment banks are expected to pay out salaries and bonuses worth \$65 bn (£40 bn) in the next two weeks.

These are people who produce nothing of value. Unlike the captains of industry of an earlier period— associated with names such as Carnegie, Rockefeller, Edison and Ford—whose enormous personal wealth was bound up with the creation of vast industrial empires, today's robber barons have made their

fortunes through parasitic financial operations bound up with the destruction of industry and a relentless attack on the living standards of the working class.

In the midst of job losses, closures, repossessions and growing hunger and poverty, the financial elite flaunts its wealth. “As traders and investment bankers near the finish line of what looks like a boom year for pay, some are spending money like the financial crisis never happened,” the Wall Street Journal recently reported. “From \$15,000-a-week Caribbean getaways to art auctions to \$200,000 platinum wrist watches...signs of the good life are returning.” New York's elite real estate brokers are “outright giddy” over the bonuses, which will “boost sales, particularly in the \$2 million to \$5 million range.”

More than a year after the near-collapse of the US and world economy at the hands of the bankers, nothing has been done to reform the financial system. Nobody has been held accountable. On the contrary, the banks have exploited the crisis of their own making to make more money than ever, and the government, the courts and the media have revealed themselves as mere handmaidens of what can rightly be called a financial aristocracy.

This year a General Election will be held, at a time of profound market failure and neo- liberalism in crisis, with the three main parties and the media focusing on cuts of every kind, in jobs, pensions, benefits and public services. Here is something ***you*** can do:

**A National demonstration is called by the National Pensioners Convention and many TUC affiliated Unions: “Defend the Welfare State” – Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2010 Central London.**

**Defend the welfare state – no cuts!**

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:

Printed & Published by Yeovil TUC [yeoviltuc.org.uk](http://yeoviltuc.org.uk)  
Unity Hall, Central Road, Yeovil Somerset BA20 1JL

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