

unionsouthwest

e-newsletter of the South West TUC

November 2008

Stimulate economy with tax cuts

The TUC is calling on the Chancellor to use the Pre-Budget Report to make tax cuts for low and middle income earners to stimulate the economy. In a letter to Alistair Darling, the TUC says that putting extra money into the pockets of low paid workers and the unemployed is the most effective economic stimulus because they are likely to spend their money quickly.

The TUC has also urged the Government to help the victims of recession through suspending housing repossessions, higher benefits and better redundancy pay.

Other measures backed by the TUC include:

- An extra £10,000 tax free allowance for redundancy pay spent on training.
- Bring forward planned infrastructure spending, increasing funds into social housing and investment to make the UK a leading low carbon economy.
- An industrial strategy which supports sectors that are already outperforming the rest of economy and have the potential to do better.
- More investment in skills.

Recession Report

The first issue of a new TUC *Recession Report* is at:

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-15628-f0.cfm>

At present the picture for unemployment and redundancies is not as bad as it was in the early 1990s, let alone the early 80s, but the picture to become much bleaker next year.

The seasonally adjusted claimant count in the South West increased for the 8th month running, now standing at 52,600. This is up 2,800 on the previous month and up 12,800 on the figure for October 2007.

The monthly increase of 5.6% compares with a national rise of 3.9%.

The workplace based claimant count rate (unadjusted) in the region now stands at 1.9%, compared with 3.0% nationally.

New claims averaged 4,301 per week in October 2008 compared with 2,937 a year before, an increase of 46.4%.

New claims during the quarter Aug-Oct 2008 were 34.6% higher than for the same period in 2007. Nationally the increase was 28.6%.

The pace of people finding new jobs is still good and increased by 5.4% in the Aug-Oct 2008 quarter when compared with the same period last year. And vacancies are holding up at

92,467 in the region during the quarter from Aug-Oct 2008 just slightly down (0.3%) on the previous quarter.

During Aug-Oct 2008 Jobcentre Plus were notified of 7,576 redundancies. This is 8.4 % up on the previous quarter but up a huge 216% on the same period in 2007. Sectors reporting job losses include construction, car sales, vehicle hire and related automotive industry, engineering and warehousing/distribution.

Devon and Cornwall District has the highest number of redundancies for the quarter but Gloucestershire, Wiltshire and Swindon recorded the largest number of job losses in October

Source: Jobcentre Plus

Young and older workers worst hit by unemployment

Longer term unemployment among young and older workers is growing sharply. TUC analysis shows that it is increasingly difficult for the under 24s and over 50s to find work once they lose their jobs. Key findings include:

- The numbers of young people aged 18-24 unemployed for up to 6 months, and for 6-12 months, are rising more sharply than for the general population.
- There was a 12.8% quarterly increase in the number of young people unemployed for up to 6 months (390,000 young workers), and a 6% increase in the number of young people unemployed for 6-12 months (80,000 young workers).
- There are also signs of likely increases in long-term unemployment among older workers, with a quarterly increase of 29.7% in the number of workers over 50 who are unemployed for 6-12 months.

Celebrate the State Pension

Saturday, 22nd November 11 am to 1pm
Council House, College Green, Bristol

Neil Duncan-Jordan, the National Officer of the NPC, is the key speaker. Other speakers include Kerry McCarthy MP and Tim Lezard, Chair of the South West TUC. Contact: **Bob Jones** Secretary NPC South Central and West bobjones@waitrose.com

Employment Studies

The *Centre for Employment Studies Research (CESR)* at the *University of the West of England, Bristol* publishes the *CESR Review* online twice per year. It is aimed at employment relations and human resource management practitioners, trade unionists, researchers, lecturers and students in these and related fields.

<http://www.uwe.ac.uk/bbs/research/cesr/review.shtml>

The November 2008 CESR Review contains:

- Community Unionism and trades union councils
- An interview with Nigel Costley from South West TUC

- Details of, and links to, the major journals and other web-sites useful to those working in these fields

Making Life Better for Women at Work

A South West TUC Women's Committee Conference

February 6th, 2009

Exeter Riverside Centre

An event is for working women, union activists, employers or agencies who want to explore how women's working lives can be improved.

We want it to be full of examples of how union activists, working women and others are making big or small steps towards: more flexible work availability; increased women's pay; less segregation of women into low paid work or apprenticeships; supporting vulnerable women workers (eg migrants); better access (eg public transport) to decent jobs; use of the public authority gender equality duty to promote better opportunities for women; any other examples of good practice (eg from other countries).

We would like to showcase examples of success in workshops and wall posters, so please let us know of any examples you have, and whether or not you can attend in person, before mid-December please.

We will have a few keynote speakers, but most of the day will be discussing what works and how practically we can "make it better for women at work" - getting beyond policy to actual change in the workplace.

We are hoping to offer places free to delegates and to help us do this would welcome offers of sponsorship or donations from unions and agencies.

To express an interest in attending and/or presenting please email **Gill Foxtton** G.foxtton@hefce.ac.uk with the following information:

Name & union/organisation; whether you can offer a case study for a workshop or poster; whether you can offer a donation or sponsorship; whether you hope to attend and if so if you have any access, dietary or other support requirements.

Gender, Globalisation and Poverty Reduction

TUC Education is holding a two-day course in London on January 14 and 15 2009 as part of a broader project that seeks to build trade union capacity to act on international development issues. The course suits those interested in understanding how they can contribute to this issue, either through their trade union or workplace. More details from jhotray@tuc.org.uk.

Activist Academy comes to Plymouth

The TUC Activist Academy is a new training programme supported by unionlearn that aims to increase the numbers of reps and activists getting specialist campaigning, organising and recruitment training and build the capacity of unions to organise and win for members .It's coming to City College, Plymouth in February and March. More details from jterry@cityply.ac.uk

TUC seminar on European Court judgements

The TUC is organising a seminar examining the implications for UK trade unions and social policy of the recent judgements in the Viking and Laval line of cases. The event takes place in London on December 4. More details from cferguson@tuc.org.uk

Workplace surveillance and monitoring

The TUC is seeking case studies that highlight examples of good practice amongst individual unions and employers. A questionnaire is available from abalchin@tuc.org.uk.

Stress, overwork and office hazards top safety concerns

Stress or overwork, injuries and illnesses caused by the poor use of display screen equipment and repetitive strain injuries (RSI) top the list of workers' safety concerns, according to the TUC's biennial survey of safety reps.

Concerns about stress are most common in the public sector and in large workplaces, with the highest instances in central government, education and health services.

Stress was also cited as the biggest concern in ten of the 14 sectors covered by the survey.

Manufacturing (noise), construction, distribution and hotels (back strains) and voluntary organisations (display screen equipment) reported other top hazards at work.

Nigel Costley, Regional Secretary of the South West TUC, said: "Stress casts a gloomy shadow over far too many workplaces in the South West. And as the current economic crisis creates more anxiety over job security, stress is likely to increase. Unions and employers must work together to combat this as it can have a huge personal cost to workers and a damaging cost to businesses."

Nano help

The TUC is seeking more information on where workers are likely to be exposed to nanoparticles through work.

Please let the TUC know if you have an occupational exposure to any form of nanotechnology. This might be in the production of nanoparticles, exposure to them during other manufacturing or work processes, the use of materials which include nanoparticles, or the disposal or recycling of products containing nanoparticles.

Let **Hugh Roberston** know at hrobertson@tuc.org.uk

The weak link in your work's web defences

The TUC is launching a new toolkit to help improve workers' internet security awareness and skills. The TUC is concerned that while employers are improving their internet security systems, their good work could be undermined if they fail to ensure that their staff's skills are up-to-date.

The 2008 *Get Safe Online Report*, revealed that 66% of internet users admitted to using the same password for multiple websites, 23% had posted confidential or personal information online, and 17% had opened email attachments from an unknown source, potentially putting themselves at risk from viruses.

In response, the TUC has teamed up with GetSafeOnline.org and the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills to produce *Not Safe For Work?* – a free online toolkit for staff. The toolkit brings together video interviews from industry experts, quizzes and reading lists, and offers a personalised prescription on Internet security issues that is tailored to an individual's Internet usage.

The toolkit can be found at www.worksmart.org.uk/nsfw

A comedy animation highlighting some of the dangers is available at www.worksmart.org.uk/fun/nsfw

Get Safe Online visit www.getsafeonline.org for more information.

TUC welcomes minimum wage road show

Wednesday 4 February, Frankford Gate, Plymouth

The new campaign will see the 'It's Your Call' road show launched at Downing Street touring the country for three months and stopping at 28 towns and cities to explain to the public their entitlements.

The campaign launch comes as new tough penalties were put through Parliament with the Employment Act allowing authorities to further punish firms that underpay their staff.

The TUC's online Minimum Wagecalculator is at:
http://www.worksmart.org.uk/minwage_calc.php

GMB wins equal pay for Plymouth members

GMB has secured an equal pay victory for 24 of its members at Derriford Hospital in Plymouth. The housekeepers have won equal pay to the male porters from their employer ISS Mediclean Limited. The 24 women now stand to receive substantial payments by way of back pay and the total sum could be well in excess of six figures.

Stuart Fegan, senior organiser for the GMB, said: "This is a fantastic victory for our members working in the NHS for its contractors. I would like to thank our senior shop steward, Maureen Reid, for her relentless hard work in pursuing these claims and solicitors Rowley Ashworth."

Cliff Ridges

Trade union and pensioner activist Cliff Ridges sadly passed away on Sunday 9 November at age of 93 years. He always enjoyed the times he attended the pensioners meetings. His daughter said that Cliff used to say if the political parties were as well organised as the TUC this country would be in a much better shape!

Unions Out West AGM

The Lesbian Gay Bisexual group, Unions Out West AGM will be held on Thursday 27 November 12.30-15.30

at Equality South West, East Reach, Taunton

Lindsey Ward Secretary Unions Out West l.ward25@btinternet.com

Invitation to traditional Polish party . . .

The Polish community in Tiverton has organised an event to celebrate Andrzejki – a festival before Advent based on ancient folk traditions of food, fun and fortune telling. The event is at Moorhayes Community Centre in Lea Road on Friday, November 28. Details from Caroline (in English) on 07891239 997 or Agnieszka (in Polish) on 07854 288 256.

. . . and to the launch of new Polish group

To celebrate the launch of the Exeter Polish Association, the group is having a party at the Maltsters Arms pub, Greenway, Woodbury, Exeter from 7pm on November 29th. Tickets are available from Polish Shop on Bartholemew Street, Exeter.

Jobs in short supply

The Migration Advisory Committee's Shortage Occupation List has now been approved <http://www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk/sitecontent/newsarticles/migrantworkers>)

The list includes those occupations for which the government believes it would be 'sensible' to recruit non-EU workers to fill.

BME Weekend

Training weekend for Black and Minority Ethnic trade union activists

Saturday 31st January to Sunday 1st February 2009

The Holiday Inn, Newport, South Wales

Places are now available on this residential training weekend which aims to develop new black and minority ethnic trade union activists in confidence, knowledge and skills. The event is aimed at developing new BME activists but experienced BME activists are also welcome and are encouraged to bring a newer activist with them if they can! The event will include an opportunity to take part in activities relating to:

- Organising
- Tackling Racial Discrimination
- Leadership
- The Equalities and Human Rights Commission

Last year's event was very popular so please register your interest early to avoid missing out on a place. For further information about the training weekend and details of how to apply please contact **Jo Rees** on 0117 947 0521 or email jrees@tuc.org.uk

Make a difference in your community

Do you have an interest in local issues? Have you got the skills and commitment to make change and champion issues in your area. Local councillors play a vital role in their communities and we want to encourage more women, especially those from ethnic minority backgrounds to get involved.

Find out more about how you can get involved at our free event. Hear from **Baroness Uddin**, Chair of the government's Taskforce and other public figures about how they got involved in public life and what it means to them.

Gloucester – 19 February 2009

For further information: visit www.equalities.gov.uk

email: Womencouncillorstaskforce@geo.gsi.gov.uk or Telephone enquiries: 020 7944 0615

Vernon Bartlett, Bridgwater

November 2008 is the 70th Anniversary of the Bridgwater bi-election in 1938 which saw the victory of **Vernon Bartlett** – a popular journalist and broadcaster of the day and the country's only successful Popular Front candidate. The result paved the way to the ending of the disastrous policy of Appeasement pursued by the Chamberlain Government. The event deserves a proud place in the town's history and in the story against fascism.

Wednesday 26th November 2008 8pm

The Engine Room, High Street, Bridgwater

A talk and a presentation on the Bi-election by **Cllr Brian Smedley**.

The event and project have been sponsored by *Bridgwater Town Council*.

Brian Smedley is also offering to repeat this presentation for schools, colleges and to other interest groups.

Email smedlo@globalnet.co.uk web www.bridgwaterinternational.co.uk

<http://bridgwaterinternational.piczo.com/the1938vernonbartlettelection?cr=5&linkvar=000044>

Scientists sought

The South West Regional Development Agency is seeking to appoint new members to the South West Science and Industry Council, which advises SWRDA on its strategy for science and innovation, and its major investments in this area. Applications are particularly sought from the following industries: aerospace and defence, creative, business services and environmental and sustainable technologies. The closing date for applications is 1st December. More details from richard.male@southwestrda.org.uk

Go Green

The TUC has urged the Government to follow Barak Obama's lead and launch a 'green industrial revolution', as part of a long-term strategy for a more balanced, sustainable economy.

Nigel Costley, Regional Secretary of the South West TUC, said: "The government needs a long-term strategy to ensure that the UK emerges from the recession with a more equal and sustainable economy. At the core of the government's strategy should be a green industrial revolution to make our economy more sustainable and competitive in the long term. Investing in areas such as renewables and micro-generation will create jobs and give our manufacturing industry a much-needed boost. It would also help the UK to meet our ambitious target to cut CO2 emissions by 80 per cent by the middle of this century.

Barak Obama's economic strategy is to create a green industrial revolution. He plans to invest 150 billion dollars over the next decade for renewable energy to create five million new jobs in the US.

Germany's renewable energy sector employs half a million people and has a turnover of 24 billion euros. In contrast, the UK employs just 7,000 in renewable energy, generating 360 million euros.

Unite wins incapacity victory

Unite has secured a win in the Employment Appeal Tribunal which makes it clear that dismissed employees can be awarded future loss of earnings when they are receiving incapacity benefit.

A company, which had fired one of its employees because of absence due to sickness, claimed that as the employee was receiving incapacity benefit since losing his job, he was incapable of work.

But the tribunal threw the case out after Unite successfully argued the company had failed to make reasonable adjustments and had failed to follow its own procedures.

Question Time for asylum seekers

Students at the City Academy, Russell Town Avenue, Bristol have organised an event to highlight the plight of young asylum seekers and refugees. Taking place on December 2nd, the aim is to stimulate debate amongst MPs and councillors, students and community members. The evening session between 6 and 8pm is open to all.

Prevent *Casualty* becoming a casualty

Trade unionists in the South West are being encouraged to sign a petition to keep *Casualty* in Bristol. The BBC is keen to move the popular show to Cardiff, despite its history in Bristol and the fact that majority of people who work on the show live in the city. The campaign is supported by **Kerry McCarthy MP**, Equity and BECTU whose official **David Donovan** said: "*Casualty* is a success in great part because of the technical and production expertise which has supported the programme for some 22 years. This expertise has everything to do with Bristol and its people and we look to the BBC to restate its commitment to *Casualty* in Bristol."

A petition has been set up at www.ipetitions.com/petition/keepCasualtyinBristol

TUC unites with RDAs

The TUC is to sign an official Memorandum of Understanding with England's Regional Development Agencies. The document formalises the relationship between the two bodies, and provides a clear framework for how the organisations can best work together to increase the economic development of each region.

The document is to be signed by TUC General Secretary **Brendan Barber** and Chair of Yorkshire Forward and RDA lead role for the TUC **Terry Hodgkinson** in a ceremony at Congress House, attended by all TUC Regional Secretaries and RDA union board members.

Skills and Learning

The latest edition of the South West's Skills and Learning Newsletter is now available at: <http://www.swslim.org.uk/news/swskills/newsletterb.asp?EditionDateID=16>

FRIENDS OF SUBURBAN BRISTOL RAILWAYS

Portishead and North Bristol Rail Rally

Transport campaigners will celebrate the progress of the Portishead and North Bristol Rail Campaign at a rally outside Wilder House, Wilder Street (off Stokes Croft) Bristol on Friday 21 November at 12 noon.

severnbeach@hotmail.co.uk www.fosbr.org.uk

South West Churches Regional Forum

The church, economic uncertainty and the South West

A half-day conference for everyone interested in the economic future of the south west, particularly in the light of the current economic climate

Tuesday 13th January 2009 10.15 a.m. – 2.00 p.m.

The Catholic Centre, The Mount, Taunton TA1 3NR

Conference fee: £10 to include refreshments and lunch

www.stgeorgestaunton.org.uk

Diploma in Labour Studies

at Northern College

Have you done lots of trade union or activist courses? Are you wondering what else there is to do? Do you want to get some qualifications to help you progress in your work? Do you want to get the skills you need to go on to university or on to higher education? Do you want to study part time so you can carry on with your job and your campaigning?

The Labour Studies Diploma covers Contemporary Labour Studies, Politics, the Changing World of Work, Economics, Social Policy, International Studies, ICT skills as well as developing your study skills and essay writing.

There are no compulsory exams, your work is assessed as you go along. It's part time and runs over two years. You attend classes at the college over nine weekends each year and for summer schools – you do the rest in your own time. There aren't any entry requirements – just determination to succeed!

Who is it for?

Adults from 19 years upwards who are active in their trade union or in the wider labour movement.

Contact **Lisa Purcell** in Registry for an application form today – phone 01226 776010, minicom 01226 776026, email l.purcell@northern.ac.uk or look on our website www.northern.ac.uk for 'Labour Studies'.

Employment Relations Seminars

26 November: 2.00- 4.00 p.m.

Unorganised Workers: Individualised Industrial Relations and Grievances at Work
Anna Pollert, CESR

4 March: 2.00-4.00 p.m.

Smoke, mirrors and magic numbers: immigration controls and low wage labour
Bridget Anderson, Centre for Migration Policy and Society, Oxford University

18 March: 2.00-4.00 p.m.

Information and consultation in practice: results from a longitudinal research project
Mark Hall, Sue Hutchinson, John Purcell and Mike Terry, Warwick University and UWE

1 April: 2.00-4.00 p.m.

Burden on Business - or Promoter of Performance?
Regulation and the Small Enterprise.

John Kitching, Small Business Research Centre, Kingston University, London

All seminars will be in room 2D74 Frenchay Campus, University of the West of England
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If you have news that you want to share with the trade union movement in the South West - let the South West TUC know about it.