

NEWS BULLETIN

Public & Private Sector

Will the summer be warm and bright or are the storm clouds gathering? (apologies to Winston)

Let's face it, the signs are ominous. Shortly, and many would say regrettably, there will be a new Government (sadly M.P.'s are bound to be involved again).

Whichever party is elected or re-elected, swingeing cuts in public spending are much more than likely to at least control the spiralling national debt. Already, Prime Minister Brown (good ol' Gord) has announced a pay freeze for many senior public servants (except M.P.'s of course) All Party leaders are nervous about spelling-out the reality of the dire state of the economy. No politician, including Gord, Dave or old Nick, will risk losing your vote by telling you exactly how much pain they are about to inflict upon you. After all, most M.P.'s still think that transparency is a little plastic thing with a photo stuck in it. Yet it's obvious to all that either of the aforementioned three musketeers would delight in removing your skin with a Stanley knife and turning it into posh wellies. As if that wasn't enough, wives are now being kitted-out to fight the battle for them. Desperation? Stupidity more like! Can you imagine their lives around the breakfast table - the conversations?

Sam!

What Dave?

Shall we tell 'em about about that Iranian aircraft circling the UK every night?

What Iranian aircraft?

The one with the nuclear bomb slung underneath it of course.

Oh! that one. Say nowt Dave, it might cause panic- frighten the horses and things.

What if Gord spills the beans?

Beans? Look at that bloody tie again. Gord and Sar won't say nowt, Dave. Sar says they can't hear the plane in London anyway. Sar said that Gord rang the Ayatollah and asked him to send the plane to Scotland.

Sam!

What now?

What about Nick?

Nick who?

The problem for any Government is the inherent risks in the gambles they must take - cut public spending? slash taxes? the former may stimulate strikes again, whilst the latter may destroy any remaining confidence the rest of the world has in our economy. Look at the Greeks (no, not the Chippy, I'm talking about them from Greece, the place with the old buildings that were seemingly never finished), cuts in public spending coupled with enormous pay reductions have led to widespread and damaging industrial unrest, leading to further economic chaos. Should we worry? Not really, why should we lose sleep over people who got the hump because we

nicked their marbles. Elgin's in Scotland anyway. Apart from that, marbles are only 99p a bag in WH Smiths. We'll fight 'em on the beaches (sorry! getting confused with the Germans) Closer to home there is already more unrest than we've seen for a decade or more. The Post Office strike, British Airways threatened strike (no airmail then)? Civil Servants strike and ballots for industrial action being organised or threatened by workers across Britain. All of this is happening now, before the real cuts

and whippings (no, from Government, not the woman in Gas Street - but there again, perhaps it's the same person) have even started. The national debt soars like an out-of-control, accelerating Toyota - all of that and a war to fund as well. So perhaps we shouldn't upset the Greeks, we can ill-afford another bloody war.

So, as the election draws closer and the weirdos start knocking on your door, play 'em at their own game. When they say "Good Evening Sir/ Madam!" Reply by saying "Depends how you define evening." They'll soon get bored and sod-off to bother someone else.

Will you vote? We should do, but be careful though, politicians may repay your vote by crossing your moat (surely everyone's got one?) skinning you and nicking your ducks. ■



Pay Increases (Or Not) 2010

Members will have seen our Pay Bulletin issued in February. Pessimism or reality? On the front page we look at the forthcoming General Election. Somewhere in that article lies the reality. And the reality is that the nation is skint. The financial experts (bankers) have done for us all - globally. Whatever politicians say in the run-up to an election is very iffy indeed.

Certainly and whatever the election outcome, public sector pay and conditions will suffer. Sure, we'll all argue and fight our respective corners. In the private sector, creative thinking might benefit us - offering better value and greater efficiencies to the employer is probably the most sensible way forward. For sure, no employer will be impressed by us arguing for decent pay increases just because that's how it should be.

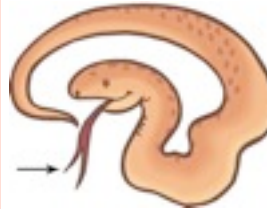
Would that approach be effective in the public sector? Probably not! Politicians of all persuasions and the all-powerful media have a 'down' on the public sector and the Civil Service in particular. The signals are already there, public sector pensions being the prime target for cost-cutting.

So, what do you think? Tell us, send us an Email through the PSU website (www.psunion.org.uk) or to general@psu.org.uk or, if you're like some of us and very old-fashioned, send us a letter - remember, the things you stuck stamps on?

Unbelievable!

As reported last year, the Scottish Prison Service (SPS), when responding to the petition presented by our HMP Kilmarnock members to the Public Petitions

Committee of the Scottish Parliament, robustly asserted that they never interfere or become involved with matters of internal discipline within the private sector custodial contracts. Certainly they appear to have convinced



the Petitions Committee of that and why not? A publicly funded body like the SPS would never mislead their Government, would they?

Glad to hear there is no interference, we thought. We wonder however, just how they will explain the actions of one of their monitors on the Escorting contract who gave evidence (such as it was) to Reliance Custodial Service in order to assist Reliance in sacking two of our members? Perhaps we misjudge the Scottish Prison Service - maybe they think that the provision of evidence is not interference. Maybe they think that committees of the Scottish Parliament are fair game to deceive? Maybe their monitor, the lad that assisted in getting our members the sack, is just a loose cannon?

So Where Does Robust Management End & Bullying Begin?

Consider this in the light of our bulletin in February last, where we alluded to those employers who expect you to work for nothing: Following quite justifiable complaints about the deduction of 30 minutes of working hours on Saturdays for people that work more than 4 hours (regardless of whether they were able to take a meal break or not) from our members in the West Midlands area, a manager published the following: *"Dear All, Can you all please stop arbitrating 'no lunch taken' for Saturdays. I do not know if you are aware but Court & Escort staff have 30 minutes deducted if they work over 4 hours, this is automatically done."*

One of our (fair-minded) members responded: *"Hello, If this is the case then the Company are breaking employment law by deducting a break that is not taken. This will only apply to Premier contract staff as Reliance contract staff get paid for their breaks. I will contact, to confirm this practice then I will contact the Union Secretary to sort this out. Thanks,"*

Clearly feeling vulnerable after publishing such a silly note to staff, the manager concerned resorts to a bit of bullying with this outrageous response: *"Dear, Bear in mind you are a manager not a Union rep, understand where your bread is buttered, up to you. Regards"*

Can't beat a bit of bully, particularly when you're feeling sad and downright stupid. Must be good to have that sort of power? We wonder if the so-called manager is big enough or brave enough to apologise. We'll see!