



The Union for the 21st Century

# NEWS BULLETIN

## Public & Private Sector

### BREATHTAKING!

Who would have thought it - the Tories in bed with the Lib Dems?

Well, like it or not, we've got it and let's all hope it can get us out of the mess that we are certainly in. Will it affect you? Of course it will - big style too! Public sector colleagues will, inevitably, be the first to suffer. We can realistically expect quite unparalleled and savage cuts. In the Private sector economies are likely to occur in a gentler and more subtle way. Yet again we must be realistic in our outlook if we are to avoid anything similar to the current Greek tragedy. By allowing spending to spiral out of control for many years, the Greek Government were forced to seek help from the European Community and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in order to avoid bankruptcy (where pensions, pay increases and benefits would be the least of our worries). The Greeks got the help they needed, but on the conditions imposed by the IMF and the EC. The result? Many Greeks believe those terms are too tough and have consequently rioted against them.

So how will our members react when things become even more difficult than they are at present? How will our industry effect the cost savings that will, inevitably, be demanded?

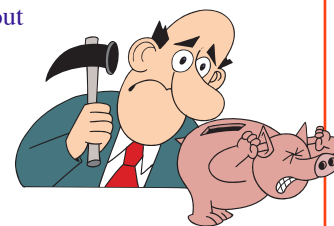
How can such necessary economies be effected without damaging the 'front-line services' that our members provide?

Most, but not all of our members, deal with prisoners. During this last

election campaign, there were significant calls for prisoners to be allowed a vote. Presumably that call was led or initiated by prisoners, we may take it therefore that prisoners want to be part of British politics and, like the rest of us, will accept 'the rough with the smooth.' Prisoners should not therefore be immune from cuts - cuts that may make their lifestyle a little less comfortable too. No, we're certainly not advocating a return to the old Number 1 diet (how many remember that?), but real savings could be made without causing too much hardship. With a strong will and imagination, the Justice Department and NOMS could save £millions by sharing the cuts with prisoners.



Will the new Justice Minister freeze the pay of prison staff? Prison officers are loyal, hardworking, Crown servants who have tolerated the imposition of real pay restraint for far too long. Their morale is probably as low as it's ever been. The current media frenzy regarding the prospect of further staffing cuts throughout the civil service simply accelerates this plummeting morale. Like many of their police officer counterparts, prison officers deal with the very worst dregs in our society. Thankfully, these brave men and women rarely complain about that role.



There are lots of things that can be done without the necessity to gnaw-away at the already meagre living standards of front-line prison professionals. Professionals who perform this onerous and often obnoxious job on our behalf.

Our hope is that the new Justice Minister, Ken Clarke, will view our industry justly, equitably and sympathetically. □

### MORE BREATHTAKING

At first glance you might be forgiven for thinking that things are looking-up. **Serco boss Chris Hyman saw his pay packet boosted by a whopping 33%+ last year, taking his salary to well over £1.5million. Additionally, dividends paid to Serco shareholders also increased by around 25%! Remember, this was the year when you were limited to a paltry 1% increase. But stand-by folks, surely you'll get something similar?** Or perhaps you missed-out by not being invited to the party where it was all dished-out?

Mr Hyman doubtless does a great job for Serco. He may well be worth his enormous salary. But But, what about those peculiar things called principles? Even the new Cabinet in Downing Street have agreed to cut their salaries by 5%. Why? A principle we guess - how could the Government ask us all to become fiscal realists whilst not making sacrifices

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themselves? Similarly, why did Serco ask their loyal staff to draw their horns in whilst carrying-on at the top as if nothing has happened? Perhaps the Serco

*'Chris Hyman saw his pay packet boosted by a whopping 33%+ last year'*

Board and Chief Executive believe that they are insulated from the harsh realities of life. Why was the 1% limit imposed on other Serco employees? They may not have the

high visibility of Mr Hyman but without them, there would be no Serco for Mr Hyman and his colleagues to get fat on! **So there you are Mr Hyman, what about some answers - go on, we dare you!**

Sadly, the above is quite typical of the double-standards that we have all become accus-

tomed to these days. Chris Hyman is not alone of course, many Companies will, in these extraordinarily difficult times, adopt the *'do as I say, not as I do'* attitude. Is it any wonder that industrial relations in Britain continues to exhibit signs of real strain? Who knows, with behaviour like that described above, perhaps those extremely taut threads will tighten no further and may soon snap!



## Obituary - The Late Brian Jones

All of us were saddened to learn of the death, following a long illness, of our friend and colleague Brian Jones on the 29th March. Brian was a valued and highly respected employee of Reliance in South Wales, as well as being a PSU local official (for whom so many had cause to thank for his help and wise counsel) and a member of the PSU Executive Council. No one ever taught Brian about trade unionism. He naturally disliked bullies. He understood real justice and his commitment to others came from deep in his heart. Those are the qualities that so many trade unionists talk about, but few actually possess.

Brian really was a larger-than-life character who was never happier than when he was relating tales of his life and travels with his family and dear wife Julie.

Brian, you really will be sorely missed by so many.

R.I.P.

## Apathy is our Enemy

Persuading members to use their vote is a constant battle throughout the private sector. Why?

When all is said and done, the PSU belongs to members. Despite that, founders of the trade union movement would cringe and turn in their now ancient graves, if they knew just how many votes are wasted during PSU ballots. We've examined nine sets of ballots across the business and, on average, only 40% of members exercise their vote when they are balloted. In some cases, incredibly, less than 20% of members bother to vote.

So why is this and does it matter? Damn right it matters! What an awful situation it is when, both locally and nationally, there are attempts to broker deals on your behalf in an effort to gain improvements to your working lives. Where do we go when we say to the employer things like "your pay offer is miserable and insulting," only to get the (usually off-the-record) response "but your members rarely vote against whatever we offer, in fact, if we were to cut the offer in half, all that would happen is that your members will blame you, their Union."

Regrettably, almost always, they're right. Only this week, one local official has resigned his position because 70% of his members didn't bother to vote on a recent pay offer. He quite rightly says that both he and other local committee members were wasting their time and effort. He adds that he knows that the now imposed deal will result in those non-voting members blaming and leaving the Union - indeed and incredibly, some already have. A bit of advice for the non-voter **"every trade union (no exceptions) needs your vote, one way or another, when you are being asked to judge a pay offer or any other deal proposed by your employer."**

Regrettably our resigning local official is probably right! There really is no excuse (illness aside) for not using the vote you have been given. To do so is a negative, dispiriting and quite depressing sign of apathy that impacts badly on your colleagues and sends the wrong signals to your employer. How on earth can you complain about anything when you are the destructive author of your own misfortune? It matters not what is on the table - whether it be some kind of deal or a local or a general election. **Your vote is the most fundamental of all the building blocks upon which a democracy or democratic organisation is founded. Again, there really is no honest excuse for failing to use that vote. Is there?**