



In ToUCh

Issue 3 2009/10

Date of issue 4 December 2009



[Welcome](#)

[TUC News](#)

[Events](#)

[Links](#)

[Tell us what you think](#)

[Next issue:](#)

Go to: [Editorial](#) [TUC News](#) [Events](#) [Links](#) [Feedback](#)

Welcome

Welcome to *In ToUCh* e-bulletin from the TUC, the bite-size round up of our news and views.

This issue features the latest on the TUC's campaign to resist savage cuts in public spending, a review of the economic situation and details of a new tax on the City that could raise billions.

Let us know what you think about the issues reported here by emailing

editor@tuc.org.uk.

Copies of *In ToUCH* are archived at www.tuc.org.uk/intouch

TUC News

Cuts threaten downward spiral

The TUC warned last month that attempts to cut Britain's deficit too soon could plunge the economy back into deep recession.

The warning came as revised GDP figures showed the economy has yet to emerge from this year's downturn. The TUC cited comments made by IMF head Dominique Strauss-Kahn at the CBI conference, who argued that the danger the UK faced was stopping its stimulus too soon, not too late.

Earlier in the month, at the 'Beyond Crisis' conference, TUC general secretary Brendan Barber warned that a 'slash and burn' approach to public spending would leave Britain with a 'zombie economy'.

More on this @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-17283-f0.cfm>

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-17279-f0.cfm>

Read Brendan Barber speech @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-17254-f0.cfm>

Speaking up for public services

The value to the UK economy of a strong public sector was underlined by a TUC Touchstone pamphlet published at the beginning of November.

According to the study, for every £1 of public money spent in public services through direct employment and procurement of goods and services, a further 64 pence is generated in the local economy. Cuts would not only lead to job losses in the public sector, but see thousands of private sector workers made redundant too.

The research also includes the results of a survey of 2,000 public employees, 92 per cent of whom said that there had been increased demand for the services they provided as a result of the recession.

Summary details @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/publicsector/tuc-17221-f0.cfm>

Read the full report @

www.tuc.org.uk/extras/speakingupforpublicservices.pdf

Unemployment: signs of hope

November's labour market figures, which showed a smaller than expected rise in the jobless tally, showed that the Government's strategy of investing in jobs and growth was paying off, the TUC said in response.

But it warned that continued investment 'was vital' as the figures also showed that the number of people in temporary work or facing long-term unemployment was rising. Over one in four unemployed people have now been out of work for over a year.

TUC reaction in full @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/welfare/tuc-17229-f0.cfm>

Green jobs for future

Last month also saw some positive news on the jobs front for the longer term, with the Government publishing its energy plans. These included proposals to build several new nuclear power stations, alongside funding for the development of clean coal technology.

The TUC said the blueprint showed ministers were committed to speeding up the shift to a low carbon economy, which would create up to half a million new jobs. The launch of a new 'composites' strategy was also welcomed as another milestone towards the development of an active industrial policy.

Meanwhile, the TUC has welcomed the Government's announcement that it is to set up a Just Transition Forum, including unions, to look at the opportunities and challenges posed by the transition to a low-carbon economy.

TUC on energy plans @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-17224-f0.cfm>

TUC on composites strategy @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-17295-f0.cfm>

TUC on Just Transition Forum @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-17256-f0.cfm>

More to do to stop dodgers

Tax avoidance measures implemented by the Government since April 2008 have raised nearly £1 billion, but more could be done with tougher measures and more staff at HM Revenue & Customs, a new TUC study says.

The Touchstone Extra pamphlet, written by tax expert Richard Murphy, sets out a series of measures the Chancellor could take in his forthcoming Pre-Budget Report to protect tax revenues (see stories below).

Find out more @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-17311-f0.cfm>

CHAPS tax could raise billions

The Chancellor should introduce a 0.05 per cent transaction tax on instant sterling transfers between UK financial institutions, so that the finance sector makes a major contribution to repairing the damage done to public finances by the credit crunch, the TUC said last month.

The TUC is proposing a transaction tax on the money that goes through the Clearing House Automated Payments System (CHAPS), which could raise as much as £30 billion a year.

Full details @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-17226-f0.cfm>

Limit tax relief for high earners

In another move on the tax front during November, the TUC told the Chancellor that he should raise £10 billion a year by capping the amount of tax relief that can be claimed by those earning more than £100,000 a year at £5,000.

Rather than cuts in public services or tax rises that hit poorer households - such as a VAT increase - the TUC said the Government should repair the public finances by making those who did best from the boom pay a fairer share of tax.

More on this story @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-17250-f0.cfm>

Stamp out bonus culture

The beginning of December saw the TUC responding angrily to the threat by the board of the Royal Bank of Scotland to resign if their bonus pool was vetoed by the

government.

The TUC said the Chancellor had to act to prevent a return to the disastrous City bonus culture, adding that bankers should remember that were it not for huge taxpayer bailouts, they would be drawing dole not bonuses this year.

Read more @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-17314-f0.cfm>

Walker Review: business as usual

The final report of the Walker Review, which looked at corporate governance in UK banks and financial institutions, attracted strong criticism from the TUC when it was published at the end of last month.

Although some of its proposals represented an advance, the review came across as the financial establishment putting forward 'the minimum proposals they think will head off root and branch reform,' the TUC said. The City would be 'sighing with relief and uncorking the vintage champagne'.

Read TUC response in full @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-17294-f0.cfm>

Reform global finance

Earlier in the month, as G20 finance ministers gathered in St Andrews, the TUC sponsored an alternative conference looking at the future of international finance.

Designed to set out how proper regulation of finance could deliver a global economy that genuinely puts people and planet first, the event heard from a range of NGO, academic and union speakers.

In his address, Brendan Barber said there had to be proper regulation of both the banks and shadow banking system, a fair tax system in which the financial services industry paid its proper share, and a new regime for international financial institutions.

Further details @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/international/tuc-17202-f0.cfm>

Shrinking wages caused crisis

The growing pay gap between low and middle earners and the super rich was a crucial ingredient of the financial crisis, according to the latest TUC Touchstone

pamphlet published last month.

The share of national wealth accounted for by wages has been in sharp decline, falling from 65 per cent in 1975 to just 53 per cent now, with a greater share enjoyed by the super rich and professional middle classes.

The new publication - *Unfair to Middling: How Britain's Shrinking Wages Fuelled the Crash and Threaten Recovery* - explains how ordinary people were forced to borrow more than they could afford, contributing to the credit crunch. Average household debt as a proportion of annual income rose from 45 per cent in 1980 to 157 per cent in 2007.

Summary details @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/newsroom/tuc-17227-f0.cfm>

Read study in full @

www.tuc.org.uk/extras/unfairtomiddling.pdf

Half a million lose overtime

A half million drop in the number of workers doing paid overtime in the past year represents a significant hidden cost of the recession, the TUC said in a report published last month.

Between summer 2008 and the middle of this year, the number of workers doing paid overtime dropped from 4.5 million to 4 million, resulting in a total loss of earnings of £1 billion.

Find out more @

http://www.tuc.org.uk/work_life/tuc-17293-f0.cfm

Battling against racism

The UK has reached a defining moment in the battle against racism, TUC deputy general secretary Frances O'Grady told a conference held at the end of November to mark the tenth anniversary of the Macpherson Report into the death of Stephen Lawrence.

With the media continuing to peddle myths about immigration, the Far Right gaining two MEPs and the recession impacting disproportionately on black workers, she said we needed to do even more to tackle institutional discrimination.

More on this @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality/tuc-17301-f0.cfm>

Wrong message

November's Queen's Speech received a mixed response from the TUC, which said there were crucial issues that needed to be resolved, particularly the completion of the Equality Bill.

The proposed National Care Service and commitment to support carbon capture and storage technology were both welcomed, and the TUC urged the Government to put the Agency Work Regulations in place before the end of the current Parliament.

But the TUC described the Deficit Reduction Bill as 'a mistake', arguing that cutting public debt depended on the economy growing again. The Bill represented 'poor economics' and 'poor politics', the TUC said.

More on this @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/law/tuc-17263-f0.cfm>

Don't undermine safety consensus

Political parties should not undermine progress on health and safety in the run up to the election, the TUC said as David Cameron used a series of newspaper headlines to propagate myths about safety regulation in the UK.

The TUC reminded politicians that there are 246,000 workplace injuries each year. Disasters such as the Herald of Free Enterprise and Piper Alpha, alongside deaths from occupational cancers, underlined the need for continued vigilance.

Read full TUC response @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/newsroom/tuc-17303-f0.cfm>

Commuting burden exposed

British workers spend more than a quarter of a billion pounds worth of working time travelling to and from work each day, according to a TUC analysis of official figures published in November.

Labour Force Survey figures show that workers spend an average of 53 minutes getting to and from work each day, with those in London having the longest commutes (72 minutes).

More information @

http://www.tuc.org.uk/work_life/tuc-17223-f0.cfm

Apprenticeships boost

Last month's Skills White Paper put apprenticeships at the heart of the education system, the TUC said in response.

The plans provide extra funding for advanced apprenticeships and to help trainees go on to university. The TUC said apprenticeships had come a long way since the decline of the 1980s and 1990s.

Read more @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/skills/tuc-17234-f0.cfm>

Help for organisers

Two new TUC publications are aimed at boosting unions' organising efforts.

The Union Advantage analyses the practical benefits which unions bring for members in the form of higher pay, better sickness and pensions benefits, more flexible working, better training, reduced accident rates, and longer holidays.

The second publication is an innovatively designed pocket sized brochure setting out in straightforward language why people should join a union. It is being distributed through trades union councils, TUC unemployed workers centres, and other outlets such as Citizen Advice Centres.

Details @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/organisation/tuc-17317-f0.cfm>

Housing: good news

Government plans to establish the Tenant Services Authority to ensure improved standards for the UK's eight million tenants in social housing were described as 'good news' by the TUC last month.

Meanwhile, figures published in November showing fewer than expected repossessions were evidence that the Government's intervention in the housing crisis was delivering results, the TUC said in response.

More on this @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/publicsector/tuc-17233-f0.cfm>

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/newsroom/tuc-17238-f0.cfm>

The gap is too big

Official figures showing the gender pay gap had narrowed were welcomed by the TUC last month, but the gulf between men and women's pay was still 'unacceptably high'.

On a more positive note, news that the Government is to provide extra free childcare places to low-income families was welcomed by the TUC. But requiring parents to be means-tested before they could get a place would put many off applying, and the TUC added that new places should not be financed by cutting support for existing childcare vouchers.

TUC on gender pay gap @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality/tuc-17237-f0.cfm>

TUC on childcare @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/welfare/tuc-17230-f0.cfm>

AIDS is workplace issue

Thirty million people of working age across the world are living with AIDS, TUC assistant general secretary Kay Carberry told a seminar held on 1 December to mark World AIDS Day.

More on this @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/newsroom/tuc-17307-f0.cfm>

Pensions milestones

A consultation published last month by the Personal Accounts Delivery Authority (PADA) was welcomed by the TUC as 'another milestone on the road to the new pensions settlement'.

The TUC said PADA was right to focus on the needs and attitudes of low to medium earners who are not well served by the pensions industry at the moment. PADA's thorough work was 'a challenge to other pension providers to ask hard questions about their own default funds'.

In other pensions news, the TUC has welcomed the Pensions Regulator's campaign to encourage good governance and administration of pension schemes. The TUC said that trustees played a vital role in the governance of scheme assets, and the initiative would help to support trustees fulfil this role effectively.

TUC on PADA consultation @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/pensions/tuc-17284-f0.cfm>

TUC on Regulator's campaign @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/pensions/tuc-17280-f0.cfm>

Anti-violence strategy

The launch by Home Secretary Alan Johnson of a government strategy to address violence against women and girls has been welcomed by the TUC.

Designed to coincide with International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, the strategy recognised the far-reaching and devastating effects of violence on vulnerable women. The TUC said that long term, secure funding had to be put in place to provide joined-up services to make the strategy effective.

More on this @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/newsroom/tuc-17281-f0.cfm>

Stamping out harassment

The TUC has teamed up with the CBI and the public sector employers' organisation PPE to launch joint guidance on preventing workplace harassment and violence, implementing an EU social partners agreement signed in 2007.

Access the new guidance @

<http://www.workplaceharassment.org.uk/>

View original EU social partners agreement @

www.erc-online.eu/content/default.asp?PageName=OpenFile&DocID=18774

LGBT rights must be protected

November saw the TUC supporting a meeting at the House of Commons on the religious exemptions to the Equality Bill.

Organised by the Cutting Edge Consortium - a forum for progressive secular and faith organisations - the meeting looked at how the exemptions could disadvantage members of the LGBT community.

Meanwhile, the TUC used the occasion of Trans Memorial Day on 20 November to call on employers to stop discriminating against transgender people at work. In the first half of this year, at least 83 transgender people were murdered across the world for no reason other than the fact they were different.

More on these stories @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality/tuc-17273-f0.cfm>

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/newsroom/tuc-17265-f0.cfm>

Seafarers' SOS

Trade unionists are being asked to back a postcard campaign being run jointly by the maritime unions RMT and Nautilus International in support of more training for seafarers. The campaign was the subject of a resolution at this year's TUC Congress.

Visit the RMT and Nautilus websites @

<http://www.rmt.org.uk/HomePage.asp?NodeId=89718>

<http://www.nautilusint.org/Campaigns/pages/ACT%20NOW!%20Seafarers%20Deliver.aspx>

Neil Kearney

One of the world's leading campaigners for workers' rights in the textile industry died suddenly last month whilst on a working visit to Bangladesh. Neil Kearney, 59, had been general secretary of the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation since 1988.

Read tribute @

<http://www.itglwf.org/Default.aspx?langue=2>

Events

9 December TUC social policy forum

16 February TUC/IDS pay bargaining conference

10-12 March TUC women's conference

26-28 March TUC young members' conference

More info on TUC events @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/events/index.cfm>

New this month

Hazards at Work - new edition of the definitive health and safety guide for union safety reps - cover price £45, or £18 for unions ordering in bulk - from Publications.

Working for Learners - revised handbook for unions, learning reps and other union reps with an interest in accessing training for members - from unionlearn.

The Learning Rep - latest edition of the magazine for everyone with an interest in the world of union learning - from unionlearn.

Trading Away Human Rights - the case against the free trade agreement between the EU and Colombia - produced jointly by the TUC, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Justice for Colombia, Unite and Workers Uniting - from European Union and International Relations Department.

An Alternative Vision of the Welfare State - report of the 2009 Poverty Conference held at Congress House - from Economic and Social Affairs department.

Building for 2012 - details of the UK companies that have won contracts for work on the London Olympic and Paralympic Games - from Secretary's Department.

Details of TUC publications @

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/publications/index.cfm>

Links

Visit the website of the Working Class Movement Library @ www.wcml.org.uk

Please email editor@tuc.org.uk if you wish to suggest a new link for the TUC website.

Tell us what you think

The TUC would like to encourage feedback from this e-bulletin. Email your comments [here](#)

Next issue

The next edition of *In ToUCh* will be emailed directly to you in January.

[How to Unsubscribe](#)

If you would like to unsubscribe from this e-bulletin, please visit the link above, log in and change your subscription status.

Visit the address below to view the document in full, in print format or in text-only format.

http://www.tuc.org.uk/the_tuc/tuc-17325-f0.cfm

The person responsible for the e-bulletin is:

Mike Smith
Tel 0207467 1228
Email msmith@tuc.org.uk

You are receiving this email because you chose to subscribe to the TUC e-bulletin. To unsubscribe from this e-bulletin, please go to:

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/newsroom/change.cfm>

and enter your username and password. Alternatively, please contact the TUC web site team:

Tel 020 7636 4030
Fax 020 7636 0632
Email alerts@tuc.org.uk

Copyright material presented in TUC e-bulletins is owned by the TUC, unless otherwise stated.

Recipients are permitted to print and download extracts for their own personal or union use, provided the source and TUC's copyright is acknowledged.