



Bridging the North-South divide - traffic on the M6

# Rebalancing the economy: New thinking on Britain's regional inequalities

THE NEXT government must give a higher priority to rebalancing the economy, said 65% of the respondents to a new Unions21 poll across all voter groups and regions.

Almost half of the respondents (48%) said Britain's economy is more divided than it was 30 years ago.

The polling accompanies a new Unions21 report, edited by Diana Johnson MP, which includes contributions from political figures, think tank specialists and trade unionists.

Some contributors explore specific dimensions to the inequality between regions – whether in health, housing, skills, transport or the creative economy.

Others seek to answer questions or appraise specific policies – such as:

- the Coalition's impact in rebalancing the economy
- how to deliver devolution to local government
- what lessons can be learnt from Labour's record on regional regeneration.

Diana Johnson said: "This is not a case of North versus South, or even London versus the rest. This report shows that regional inequality, and unbalanced growth, hurts everyone.



Diana Johnson MP: Unbalanced growth hurts everyone

"The North's problems, Wales's problems and the South West's problems are not narrow, regional issues. They are Britain's problems. Only by tackling these issues together, as one nation, can every corner of the UK benefit from growth and opportunity."

The report focuses on five core arguments:

- 1 Regional inequalities are re-asserting themselves.
- 2 Britain is more regionally-divided than it was thirty years ago.
- 3 The need for re-balancing: investment in a high-skilled, technically-minded workforce.
- 4 Tackling other regional inequalities – pay, culture, housing.
- 5 The regions' problems are Britain's problems.

Sue Ferns, chair of Unions 21, said: "There is nothing inevitable about the divisions that beset Britain. Our publication shows that there are better approaches that are achievable.

"All political candidates should prioritise these issues and commit to working with unions and other stakeholders to make a positive difference to the lives of working people."

UnionHome

Keep up-to-date on union matters – read UnionHome, the Unions21 blog: [www.UnionHome.org.uk](http://www.UnionHome.org.uk)

## IDEAS

We want your proposals and ideas for events, publications, research, news.

Twitter: @Unions21

Email: [dwhittle@atl.org.uk](mailto:dwhittle@atl.org.uk)

# Lessons for the next generation

Unions21 general secretaries outline their priorities for the next government

## A collective voice for UK workplaces

**Mike Clancy Prospect**

ALL ELECTIONS are important, but the outcome of this general election is the most significant in a generation for the future of UK employee relations.

As the parties ramp up campaigns, unions and the workplace largely feature in negative messaging around strikes and future restrictions. As ever, this misses the real issues.

We are at a tipping point. We either continue a journey to United States' levels of inequality and decline in collective voice or we change course. Sustainable societies need workplaces where employees have independent means of expressing collective opinion and can negotiate for their share of corporate success.

The new workplace, with its myriad forms of increasingly diffuse employment patterns, is still redolent of master and servant.

Current narratives about the reality of self-employment, lauded as freedom from the bounds of old-style work, show how power relations are alive and well in 2015.

The decline of countervailing collective voice means that exploitation is always around the corner – however you are employed.

The real reason we have a UK productivity problem is not strikes but the hidden dissent of those otherwise apparently on message. Many workers meet the corporate line, but never truly give their utmost because they know they are expendable.

So if any of the political parties are listening, here are three bold steps to address the tipping point:

- a system of statutory collective voice to operate in every UK company with more than say 30 employees, with rights to consultation with a view to agreement across a range of collective labour rights
- a complete overhaul of the tribunal system that addresses managerial prerogative in the underlying labour laws, reinstates tripartite arrangements and deals with the dreadful

access to justice challenge resulting from the fee system

- enhanced resourcing for key labour market institutions such as ACAS, which should be given a renewed duty to promote collective employee relations across the spectrum of UK businesses.

We can but dream. But does anyone really believe that rehashing the prescriptions of the last 20 years or more will give us workplaces that make a difference to the global success of the UK and citizens who are confident about their future?

## Aviation priorities

**Jim McAuslan Balpa**

CHANGES IN flight safety rules, the increase of casual labour and the emergence of new drone technology mean that the aviation landscape could see drastic changes in the coming years. Balpa is calling for a government that will not only acknowledge these issues, but stand with us in effecting change.

In early 2016, changes to flight time limitations could see pilots flying for longer than ever before. We believe this is a real threat to the safety of the travelling public. We would like to see the government commit to working closely with the Civil Aviation Authority to monitor the results of these changes and tackle the flight safety issues we feel will inevitably arise.

We are also calling for our leaders to start taking action on matters affecting the success of the UK aviation industry. The dithering over airport expansion has gone on long enough. Without a swift decision, there will be damaging consequences for the whole economy as we fall behind other European countries in terms of connectivity with the rest of the world.

Another issue we believe is putting unnecessary pressure on our industry is Air Passenger Duty. It has become a talking point since the Scottish referendum and we'd like to see this conversation continued, with a significant



decrease in APD across the UK.

Casual labour and zero-hours contracts are as much of a concern in the professional world we inhabit as in others. We would like to see these abolished, especially in safety-critical industries where pressure to pay the bills may be so great that people are coming to work when they shouldn't.

This is especially relevant when you take into account the huge debts that those new to the industry face after training fees of up to £100,000. We would like to see VAT on pilot training abolished, bringing it into line with other professions.

## A clear vision for the modern workplace

**Roy Rickhuss Community**

COMMUNITY WANTS the next government to set out a clear vision for the modern workplace. That should include acknowledging and supporting good industrial relations as the key to improved productivity and sustainable economic growth, while ensuring that workers are recognised and fairly rewarded for their part in organisational or business success.

Government already has many of the levers to do this at its disposal, not least procurement. With that level of spending power, the government has the opportunity to effect some significant cultural change at work by:

- driving up standards
- rewarding organisations that value their employees
- investing in skills and
- bringing benefits to the wider communities in which they operate.



sector-specific advice to employers in the creative industries making it clear that performers working for them must be paid properly.

## Redress damage to music education

### John Smith Musicians' Union

THE PERIOD since 2010 has been traumatic and difficult, not least for those who work in arts and culture. There have been savage cuts to arts funding and the privatisation of local music services with the creation of hubs.

We've had a couple of successes, most notably the Live Music Act (thanks to Lib-Dem Peer Lord Tim Clement-Jones) and a favourable decision regarding national insurance for entertainers, but we have gained precious little else.

At the MU, we will be hoping for a Labour victory in May and that some of the most damaging cuts might eventually be reversed.

We hope a Labour government would reaffirm the importance of centralised arts funding and formally recognise the limitations of philanthropy as a form of funding – its precariousness (as demonstrated in America) and its poor geographic spread (most philanthropic giving is centred on London).

We will also be hoping for a refocusing of the Intellectual Property Office so that it protects intellectual property rights, which are so vital to performers and creators, as well as focusing on business interests.

There have been numerous attempts at copyright reform over the past few years but none of them have been assessed from the performer's point of view – for example the recent copyright consultation contained not a single reference to performers.

We also hope a Labour government will seek to redress the damage that has been done to the music education sector – particularly the terms and conditions of instrumental music teachers.

The privatisation of music education through the introduction of hubs has led to a postcode lottery in the availability of affordable music tuition and will inevitably result in fewer opportunities for disadvantaged children to learn an instrument.

The coalition has missed those opportunities. We have had five years of ministers championing achievements in employment creation without questioning what kind of jobs are being created.

Trade unions know the importance of the quality of work. We also know that employment figures mask a high level of under-employment, which needs to be addressed to resolve the cost of living crisis.

If the UK is to improve on its low standing in terms of productivity, government intervention is required – not the hands-off approach favoured by the coalition.

In particular, Community wants to see government driving industrial strategies, especially for foundation industries such as steel.

Like many other UK sectors, steel needs government action to give it the chance to compete against countries like France and Germany which have had no reservations about intervening in energy markets or making procurement decisions that support their home producers.

The only way any of this will happen is through a change of government. Trade unions will also need to change too if we are to be relevant to the constantly evolving nature of work and the needs and aspirations of workers in a modern economy.

workers and are well-documented by the joint entertainment unions' Lost Arts campaign ([www.lost-arts.org](http://www.lost-arts.org)).

Given the ability of the creative industries to create jobs and growth for the UK economy, indeed often at a higher rate than other sectors, the policy of austerity for the arts should end and funding restored to a level that can create decent jobs.

2015 has already been dubbed a 'high risk' year for the BBC with Charter renewal following close behind this year's general election. Equity and other members of the Federation of Entertainment Unions have called for a better settlement for the BBC and no repeat of 2010's hasty (and behind closed doors) agreement on the licence fee freeze which led to a 16% shortfall in funding, huge job cuts and the closure of services.

The next government must also take action to tackle the UK's low pay culture. Low pay and unpaid work is a serious issue in the creative sectors. In 2015, Equity's 'Professionally Made, Professionally Paid' campaign will seek to increase the number of creative workplaces using Equity agreements and fair rates of pay.

We will be calling for the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to issue

## Sustainable societies need workplaces where employees have independent means of expressing collective opinion and can negotiate for their share of corporate success

## Investment in the arts

### Christine Payne Equity

THE IMPACT of funding cuts since the government came into office have been widely and deeply felt by arts organisations and

# Unions21

## UNIONS21 AT THE SCOTTISH TUC

**The rebalancing act: How should we tackle inequality?**

Debate and publication launch

**Lunchtime, 20 April**

**Ayr Racecourse • lunch provided**

Speakers include:

**Mick Whelan, ASLEF general secretary**

**Richard Baker, MSP**

**Ann Henderson, STUC Assistant Secretary**

**For all events see**

**Unions21.org.uk/events**

# Ruskin: In a class of its own

RUSKIN COLLEGE was established in 1899 in Oxford, to provide education and learning to working class people who had previously been denied such an opportunity.

Students were supported and sponsored by trades unions and workers' organisations. They often went on to work for these types of

organisations after completing their studies.

The college continues to be at the heart of the labour and trade union movement, working to educate current and future labour activists, organisers and officers.

Ruskin's education and training is at the very heart of helping to:

- build the industrial and intellectual strength of the trade union and labour movement
- challenge attacks on workers' rights globally, and
- develop political, economic and social alternatives that re-balance the economy in favour of working people.

In 2015, the challenges facing Ruskin College are like those of 100 years ago. Funding cuts and ever-increasing tuition fees make it even more difficult to recruit students with working class backgrounds.

In the International Labour and Trade Union Studies (ILTUS) department, our students come from the UK and international labour movement. Most work full-time as reps in their workplaces, or as activists and trade union officers.

The ILTUS BA is a practitioner's degree linking the experiences of labour and trade union activists and officers to wider political, economic and social theories. Students develop their critical analytical skills to explore responses and alternatives for the labour movement which they take away and embed in their practice as activists.

The ILTUS MA focuses on the dominant global challenges to the labour movement and its capacity to respond to these challenges.

The programme recruits from the international labour movement. The presence of overseas trade unionists provides a particular rigour and dynamic to the international orientation of the MA.

■ To find out more about how you can support Ruskin's work, or to make a donation, please contact Caroline Holmes: [cholmes@ruskin.ac.uk](mailto:cholmes@ruskin.ac.uk).

## The bank for trades unions

Your union owned, socially responsible, community focused bank.



**Unity was set up more than 30 years ago as the UK's first trades union bank. We really understand the needs of trades unions and their members.**

Today the majority of the Bank is owned by over 30 trades unions and we continue to provide banking related facilities to around 85% of TUC affiliated trades unions. Not only this, but as a specialist

bank for social organisations and through our lending into the social economy, we can work together to enable social change, social benefit, and improve the lives of workers and communities across the UK.

Unity can provide the following benefits to your union:

- ✓ Dedicated relationship manager
- ✓ Day-to-day banking services
- ✓ Internet banking with dual or triple authority and same day payments
- ✓ Online statements
- ✓ ALTO Prepaid Mastercard® for your office expenses
- ✓ Bacs facility for collecting subscriptions and to pay salaries/suppliers/expenses

To find out more, speak to one of our trade union relationship managers:



**Kevin Moran**

t: 0121 616 4142  
m: 07711 412 868  
e: [kevin.moran@unity.co.uk](mailto:kevin.moran@unity.co.uk)



**Laurie Bell**

t: 0207 637 1236  
m: 07711 412 869  
e: [laurie.bell@unity.co.uk](mailto:laurie.bell@unity.co.uk)

0345 155 3355 [us@unity.co.uk](mailto:us@unity.co.uk) [www.unity.co.uk](http://www.unity.co.uk) [@unitytrustbank](https://twitter.com/unitytrustbank)

Unity Trust Bank plc is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority. Unity Trust Bank is entered in the Financial Conduct Authority's register under number 204570. Registered Office: Nine Brindleyplace, Birmingham, B1 2HB. Registered in England and Wales no. 1713124. Calls are recorded and may be monitored for security, quality and monitoring purposes. UTB 433 / August 2014