

# **CUTS ARE NOT THE ANSWER**

## **ORGANISING AND FIGHTING FOR THE ALTERNATIVE**

Unite's Executive Council unanimously confirms its opposition to all Government spending cuts. We commit ourselves to fight this ideologically driven assault on our much valued public services and welfare state.

This assault on our class is designed to shift the blame for the economic crisis to the public sector and make working people pay for a crisis not of our making but caused by the negligent and irresponsible behaviour of financial institutions, gambling for profits in an unregulated market for financial products.

The consequences of these actions, coupled with the failure of both national and international regulators to prevent even the worst excesses of the free market and their promotion of self regulation, are now being felt by workers across the globe. Further, the economic crisis has given government the opportunity to promote and further its ideological attack on collective trade unionism, social and employment protection and the wider social fabric of our society.

### **Of course there is an alternative;**

- collect the missing tax billions from the banks, multinationals, rich and powerful in our society and close the loopholes and avoidance scams that enable them to opt out of making their fair and proper contribution.
- introduce a Robin Hood tax to collect revenue from all financial transactions, bonuses and share options and raise tax rates at the top to ensure a fairer contribution from those most able to make one.
- maintain public spending and invest in our future, keeping people in jobs and growing our economy to create new ones. Supporting public services as well as our private sector, construction, manufacturing and support services is vital to rebalancing our economy.

We congratulate our General Secretary and this Executive Council in promoting our position of opposing all Government's cuts and the call for co-ordinated industrial action, but much more needs to be done:

1. Unite's position on the cuts must be effectively communicated to our officers and staff, our constitutional committees, shop stewards and activists, within our political structures and to Unite MPs and councillors as well as within our wider communities.

We have to end confusing messages being communicated within certain sections of our union sympathetic to the Labour leadership's message of "cuts too far, too fast" – the so-called "dented shield approach".

2. We must do more to inform, inspire and engage with our lay representatives, shop stewards and activists across all sectors of our Union. We must equip them with the arguments they need to engage our members at work and within local communities if

the fight back against the cuts is to be effective. This campaign requires leadership from the top but also grassroots activity at local level.

3. We encourage all workplaces, branches and constitutional committees to send resolutions to their Regional and National Industrial Sector Committees as well as to this Executive Council supporting actions for consideration.
4. We firmly believe coordinated industrial action is an essential tool in the fight before us and ask the General Secretary to write urgently to all officers, branches and constitutional committees with a strong message of encouragement to take up the fight and to initiate a series of communications and promotional materials to support our activists in developing the arguments for action. While decisions on industrial action will of course be taken by our members in democratic ballots, they must be confident in an alternative and know that they have their Union's full support in taking action.

When members of any union are taking industrial action against cuts Unite members in workplaces not taking industrial action are encouraged to protest and show solidarity as far as they can.

5. Industrially, it must be clear that we will support all members fighting back. Unite recognises the importance of advancing our members interests by fighting for improved pay and conditions even in these difficult times, while in our public services specifically our full resources must be given to those fighting against job losses and compulsory redundancy, pay cuts and/or freezes and the privatisation or outsourcing of work.
6. We support the initiative in developing training for our activists. It is critical that we up-skill our officers and activists in preparation for delivering our fight back strategy. Providing evidence to support the fact that we are not 'all in this together' such as the fact provided by recent evidence from the High Pay Commission that chief executives of FTSE 100 companies earn an average of £3.7 million which is 145 times the average wage.
7. We are seeing an employers' offensive unleashing itself against all workers - on their pay and conditions, their pensions and their collective bargaining rights. If workers vote to take strike action, they should be encouraged to co-ordinate strike dates with others in dispute to maximise their effect. We ask the General Secretary to ensure that mechanisms are put in place to enable such coordination to develop.
8. We particularly urge the General Secretary to ensure that this union immediately engages with other like minded public and private sector unions with a view to our working together on an urgent programme of co-ordinated strikes over pensions and pay cuts, redundancy, privatisation and outsourcing of work. This should however not stand in the way of Unite taking a lead or acting alone in the defence of our members interests wherever necessary.
9. We believe we must communicate our position within the Labour Party at all levels and make it clear that Unite cannot support a position based on government cuts being "too far, too fast". We must seek urgent dialogue with elected councillors on ways in which, by working together, we can reach agreement on alternatives to cutting, outsourcing or privatising services and jobs. We are very clear that we will

reject and fight any attempt by councils to use the economic crisis in an opportunistic way to attack and/or undermine trade unionism, our agreements or facilities.

10. We must ensure that Labour MPs and councillors receive an unequivocal message from our union supporting our policy of opposing all cuts. Elected councillors must know they will receive the full support of this union if they face disciplinary or other action for supporting union policy. We must ensure Unite fully supports councillors who oppose cuts to local services.

Finally, we are determined that Unite will never abandon those who face the most serious cuts of all; the poor and vulnerable in our society including the disabled, the unemployed and those on low incomes who are now beginning to suffer real hardship as the first £18 billion of Welfare Benefit cuts begin to bite.

Some are our members but many are not, our success in fighting the cuts will require us to stand shoulder to shoulder with those at the sharp end. We recognise that the most vicious cuts of all are hitting those who often have no voice.

We urge and encourage our activists, shop stewards and members to get involved in the fight back, linking up trade unionists with groups coordinating actions locally and nationally such as UK Uncut and the Coalition of Resistance, as well as students, pensioners, tenants associations, community groups, the unemployed and welfare claimants.

This is a fight to defend our class. We must redouble our efforts to ensure we will win that fight. This Executive Council and our unions leadership is fully committed to this strategy and must now ensure that this message runs through our union, at all levels and in everything we do.

**Adopted by the Unite Executive 19<sup>th</sup> May 2011**