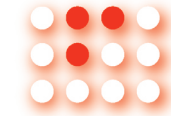


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Annual Subscription £72.00 (£61.00 for LRD affiliates)

Volume 72, Issue 5, 4 February 2010

Memorial Day gets official recognition

The UK is to officially recognise Workers' Memorial Day, and this recognition will take formal effect this year on 28 April, the international day of action for safety and health at work, work and pensions secretary Yvette Cooper has announced.

The day is already widely commemorated in the UK and official recognition will reinforce its significance and raise awareness of the workers who are killed, disabled, injured or made ill each year by their work.

Commemorations will continue to be led by individuals, trade unions and safety campaigners.

Workers' Memorial Day, which originated in Canada in 1984, is now recognised as a national day in 19 countries.

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber, welcoming the news, said: "This special day commemorates the many thousands of people who have died as a result of their work and we're pleased the government has taken the step of recognising it.

"Workers' Memorial Day has been an important date in the trade union calendar for many years

and we look forward to working with ministers to increase its profile.

"Workers' Memorial Day is when workers around the world remember the dead and campaign for improved workplace safety to protect the living. To mark the day this year, the TUC is calling for a minute's silence in workplaces up and down the country at noon on Wednesday, 28 April."

<http://nds.coi.gov.uk/content/detail.aspx?NewsAreaId=2&ReleaseID=410673&SubjectId=2>

www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/tuc-17502-f0.cfm

Lib Dem call to scrap national pay bargaining

An attack on collective bargaining and national pay structures in the public sector has been outlined by an academic in a report for Centre Forum, a "liberal" think tank

Alison Wolf, professor of public sector management at King's College, London, has called for sweeping reforms in pay bargaining arrangements in the public sector.

She attacks national pay systems that "ignore local differences, handicap struggling regional economies", and "make it impossible for public sector managers and institutions to cope sensibly with our fiscal crisis".

LABOUR RESEARCH DEPARTMENT

Published weekly by LRD Publications Ltd, 78 Blackfriars Road, London SE1 8HF. 020 7928 3649 www.lrd.org.uk

Wolf's solution is that five million people employed in England's public services should receive individual contracts from their employers, instead of pay and conditions set at national level. Otherwise, high profile reforms, such as the "pupil premium", which would give extra money to schools with disadvantaged pupils, will achieve little. If these schools could pay significantly more to attract the best teachers, their pupils' prospects could be transformed. National wage bargaining prevents this, says Wolf.

Dave Prentis, general secretary of the public sector union UNISON, said: "Breaking up national pay bargaining in the public sector and introducing different pay rates for different areas, would be a recipe for chaos – as well as a bureaucratic nightmare.

"Instead of hospitals, schools and councils getting on with delivering services to the public they would have to set up separate bargaining machinery, train extra staff and hold long and potentially damaging negotiating meetings. They would then have to deal with the fall-out of a divided workforce leading to shortages, as staff move to where the pay rates are higher.

"The fact is that a nurse in Cumbria should be paid the same as a nurse in Cornwall or Colchester, for doing the same job."

Centre Forum is not so much "liberal" as in effect pushing the Liberal Democrat's cause and its various bodies are jam-packed with Lib Dems from both Houses of Parliament. Its advisory board includes the party's leader Nick Clegg and shadow chancellor Vince Cable, while former party leader Paddy Ashdown is one of 11 peers on the advisory board.

www.centreforum.org/publications/more-than-we-bargained-for.html

www.centreforum.org/assets/pubs/more-than-we-bargained-for.pdf

www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=1718

A £15m golden hello

One of the most famous names on the High Street – Marks and Spencer or M&S – has brandished its cheque book to get its new chief executive. Marc Bolland moves from supermarket group Morrisons to M&S from 1 May.

Bolland's remuneration package will comprise a £975,000 salary, annual bonus potential of up to 250% of salary (or £2.44 million) and an annual award of shares under the company's performance share plan. In 2010-11, this award will be an exceptional award worth 400% of salary or £3.9 million.

Additionally, M&S is to compensate Bolland for a number of share awards forfeited by his departure from Morrisons. This comprises £1.6 million in cash and £1 million worth of shares to compensate for loss of bonus and shares that would have vested in 2010; and a restricted share award worth £1 million and a performance share plan worth £3.9 million to compensate for shares that he would have received in 2011 and 2012. In total the whole pay and share package comes to £14.8 million.

Such a huge golden hello has come under attack. Tom Powdrill of PIRC, which advises shareholders on corporate governance issues, said: "We are opposed to this sort of golden hello. It distorts the market for executives and compensating directors for the loss of bonuses and incentives at their previous company makes a mockery of the idea that the already high levels of remuneration act to retain key people."

http://corporate.marksandspencer.com/investors/press_releases/company/MarcBolland

www.guardian.co.uk/business/2010/feb/01/marks-spencer-marc-bolland-pay1

Civil service should look within for skills

Outside recruitment has been used to fill skills shortages and to bring new perspectives to the civil service, according to a House of Commons committee. But it has also been criticised for potentially diluting core civil service values and for being poor value for money.

The public affairs select committee (PASC) concludes that the senior civil service has depended too heavily on external recruitment in recent years, and should now take steps to reduce its reliance on outside appointments.

PASC also found that external recruits do not appear to perform better than career civil servants – despite being paid more, on average – and many leave civil service employment relatively quickly. Nonetheless, given the existence of skills gaps and the other benefits that external recruits can bring, the committee believes that there will continue to be a place for outside appointments in civil service recruitment.

The extent of recent external recruitment is symptomatic of a wider concern: the ability of the civil service to identify its current and future skills needs, and to plan effectively to meet those needs. Accordingly, the PASC recommends that the em-

phasis of civil service employment policy should be on developing its own people and skills, rather than seeking to draw these in from outside.

Jonathan Baume, general secretary of the FDA senior civil servants' union, said: "We welcome the PASC's call for action on the two-tier pay system, which at the moment operates to disadvantage successful internal candidates for senior civil service posts when compared to external recruits.

"The playing field is currently far from level. It is clearly unfair that those appointed from outside should be paid often tens of thousands of pounds more than those promoted from within.

The FDA also backs the PASC's recommendation that measures to grow talent internally need to be supported and protected from the fiscal squeeze.

www.parliament.uk/parliamentary_committees/public_administration_select_committee/pasc0910pn13.cfm
www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200910/cmselect/cmpubadm/241/241.pdf

Revised fit note is set for debut in April

Fit notes, which are set to replace doctors' sick notes for employees from April, will include a tick list of options on how employers can help a patient return to work, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has confirmed. The "fit for work" option has been dropped.

The latest version of the fit note has been drawn up after a widespread consultation.

The revised fit note will include two options for doctors to choose from: "not fit for work" and "may be fit for some work, taking account of the following advice". The DWP said it had taken advice from the Association of British Insurers on this issue, because of the implications for employers' liability insurance.

This is an acknowledgement that it is not the doctor, but the employer, in consultation with their employee, who is best-placed to make the decision as to whether they can accommodate any changes to facilitate a return to work.

"The doctor is giving advice on what an individual can or cannot do based on the patient's health condition. It encourages employers to initiate discussions with their employee, to consider what could help to achieve an early return to work, and

whether or not any changes can be made. In the event of an employer not being able to facilitate a change or an adjustment, the advice given on the statement will be evidence that an individual has a health condition which prevents them carrying out their current role."

There are then four options that, "if available, and with your employer's agreement" the person may benefit from: a phased return to work; amended duties; altered hours; and workplace adaptations. More space is provided for a GP's comments.

The DWP's response to the consultation recognised that the options listed were "not exhaustive" and may not be suitable for certain health conditions or job roles. But, it said, a more detailed list would overcomplicate the process of completing the fit note.

The list is intended to encourage discussions between the doctor and patients, as well as between employee and employer, about the best course for getting back to work, the DWP said.

Doctors will not be able to recommend an option for "occupational health assessment", the DWP says, because of fears that this would become a "default" option and simply defer decisions being made. In some circumstances such a further assessment could be suggested as beneficial in the space provided for GP's comments.

www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/reform-med-stat-govt-response-29jan10.pdf

Pay pressure is still tight in manufacturing

The average level of pay settlements in manufacturing has risen very slightly, but still remains at a historically low level, according to the EEF manufacturers' organisation.

However, the EEF adds the rider that this figure is based on a relatively small sample. The next figure released, covering the key settlement month for manufacturers of January, will give a clearer indication of future pay trends in the sector.

The EEF's pay data for the three months to December 2009 shows that the average pay settlement has risen very slightly to 0.5% from the revised figure of 0.4% for the previous three-month period.

The number of manufacturers freezing pay fell slightly to just over two-thirds of reported settlements during the latest three-month period.

In contrast, the number of companies deferring their pay settlement rose slightly to just over 30% of all reported settlements.

Whole economy While pay freezes were still part of the economic picture for a third of staff at the end of 2009, some pay increases continued to be awarded.

Incomes Data Service's survey for the three months to the end of January found the median (midpoint) pay increase was 2.0%.

Most new deals in 2010 so far were reached when the economy was still in recession and inflation was low or negative. But this backdrop is now changing. Inflation has returned to 2.4% on the all-items Retail Prices Index measure in December 2009, the measure most commonly used by pay setters in the private sector.

www.eef.org.uk/policy-media/releases/uk/2010/Pay-pressures-remain-tight-in-manufacturing.htm

www.humanresourcesmagazine.com/news/981515/Companies-returning-awarding-small-pay-increases/

UK has become more unequal since 1980s

The richest 10% of the population are more than 100 times as wealthy as the poorest 10% of society, according to an analysis of how unequal Britain has become by the government-appointed National Equality Panel.

An anatomy of economic inequality in the UK analyses the degree to which the country has become more unequal over the past 30 years. Although the paper points the finger at the Tories, who presided over the dramatic divisions of the 1980s and early 1990s, Labour can take no comfort from the report. On one measure, by 2007-08 Britain had reached the highest level of income inequality since shortly after World War II.

The top 10%, led by higher professionals, amass wealth of £2.2 million, including property and pension assets, by the time they come close to retirement, while the bottom 10% of households, led by manual workers, have assets of less than £8,000, the report says.

When the highest-paid workers, such as bankers and chief executives, are added to the equation, the division in wealth is even more stark, with individuals in the top 1% of the population each possessing total household wealth of £2.6 million or more.

The report says that the government has failed to bridge the gulf that existed between the poorest and richest in society in the 1980s. "Over the most recent decade, earnings inequality has narrowed a little and income inequality has stabilised on some measures, but the large inequality growth of the 1980s has not been reversed," it says.

A central theme of the report is the profound, life-long negative impact that being born poor, and into a disadvantaged social class, has on a child. These inequalities build up over a person's life, according to the report.

Other findings are:

- divisions between social groups are no longer as significant as the inequalities between individuals from the same social group; inequality growth of the last 40 years is mostly attributable to gaps within groups rather than between them;
- nearly half of Bangladeshi and Pakistani households are in poverty;
- white British pupils with GCSE results around or below the national median are less likely to go on to higher education than those from minority ethnic groups. Pakistani, Black African and Black Caribbean boys have exam results at the age of 16 well below the median in England; and
- girls have better educational outcomes than boys at school and are more likely to enter higher education and achieve good degrees, but women's median hourly pay is 21% less than men's.

The significance of where you live is another theme with "profound and startling differences" between areas. The report says the government is a "very long way" from fulfilling its vision, set out in 2001, that "within 10 to 20 years no one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live".

Median hourly wages in the most deprived 10th of areas are 40% lower than in the least deprived areas, according to the report.

TUC general secretary Brendan Barber said the report describes in graphic detail "just how unfair and unequal our society has become thanks to 'market knows best' policies.

"We have now tested to destruction the theory that wealth trickles down – it doesn't."

www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/NEP%20Report%20bookmarkednew.pdf

www.equalities.gov.uk/pdf/Findings%20final.pdf

www.tuc.org.uk/equality/tuc-17486-f0.cfm

www.guardian.co.uk/society/2010/jan/27/unequal-britain-report