

- Unite MPs pushed successfully for the extension of the Working Time Regulations to cover off shore oil and gas workers.
- The intervention of the Unite Parliamentary Group led to implementation of the salary revision due to local staff at the Bank of Ceylon following a dispute that had been ongoing for a substantial length of time.
- Unite has pushed the government to close the loopholes in the law in order to ensure that unscrupulous employers in the hospitality industry are not able to top up employees' wages to minimum wage level through tips left by customers. Unite MPs were active in the campaign, making use of the pack of materials produced to assist them in campaigning with local establishments, press and groups in their constituencies.



Unite: Working in Westminster

A guide to the work of the Union in parliament and Whitehall



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At the heart of Parliament – past, present and future

The Labour Party was created by the trade unions over 100 years ago to give a political voice to the values and aspirations of trade union members. Nine of the first 29 Labour MPs elected to Parliament were supported by the constituent unions that now make up Unite.

Today, the Unite Parliamentary Group is the largest working trade union group in Westminster and aims to fully represent our membership in the political arena. With around 100 MPs Unite retains a strong level of influence within the Parliamentary Labour Party enabling the union to make a direct difference on behalf of our members.

The Unite Parliamentary Group – representing workers in Westminster

The Unite Parliamentary Group was created in May 2008 after the merger of the Amicus and TGWU Parliamentary Groups.

Unite does not solely have representation in the House of Commons, there are currently around 25 Unite Peers in the House of Lords. Unite Peers are part of the Parliamentary Group and also meet as a separate group. They have been instrumental in speaking up for union members as key pieces of legislation, such as the Corporate Manslaughter Bill, pass through the Lords.

Over a third of the Parliamentary Group are in the shadow cabinet and many are active in the group's work. The group meets in its entirety approximately every two months, with the Unite Joint General Secretaries often joining MPs and Peers for the full meeting. In addition, full group meetings provide a principal opportunity for parliamentarians to be briefed on union campaigns and their support garnered.

Outside of these meetings, members of the group work on a daily basis in Parliament in the interest of Unite members, on legislative, policy and industrial matters. Unite MPs are in regular contact with senior officers of the union and the Political Department acts as a link between the industrial arm of the union and the world of Westminster.



Unite Parliamentary Group Officers

The Unite Parliamentary Group Officers are key in taking the lead on the work of the group in Westminster. As of the 2010 general election the officers are:

Chair: Jim Sheridan MP & David Crausby MP
Secretary: Lindsay Hoyle MP

Making a difference for members:

The combined forces of Unite and the Parliamentary Group work to ensure the union's political agenda is heard loud and clear within the corridors of power. Unite have a proven reputation in making a difference for members, on diverse demands and through many means, and with the previous Labour Government delivered on many areas for union members.

Campaigning and lobbying for change

The union organises and is involved with many mass lobbies. During each lobby a formal meeting is set up in the House of Commons between union members and Unite MPs. The Unite Parliamentary Group is known for having a strong showing at such lobbies. As part of our political campaigning, the union also co-ordinates events such as demonstrations, stunts and press interviews directly outside Parliament, where we are joined in support by members of the parliamentary group.

Communicating with parliamentarians

Unite gets out regular updates and briefings to Labour MPs and Peers in line with union policy and our members' concerns. The union is both pro-active and reactive – briefing and lobbying on important legislation as well as pushing for change on key legislation and/or issues. In addition, weekly notifications are distributed electronically via the Parliamentary Group.

Leading the push to shape legislation

The union works to adapt and introduce legislation that will benefit its members, ensuring that the interests of our workers influence policy. The key pieces of legislation that the Unite Parliamentary Group and Political Department have done considerable work on in the recent past include: the Corporate Manslaughter Act; the Pensions Bill; the Temporary and Agency Workers Private Member's Bill; the Compensation Bill and the Offender Management Bill.

Members of the Unite Parliamentary Group use the mechanisms and procedures of Parliament to ensure union members get a better deal. The MPs do this through tabling amendments to legislation, sitting on committees overseeing new legislation, speaking up in key debates, bringing in Private Member's Bills, putting in for their own debates and raising issues with relevant select committees.

Bringing in a **Corporate Manslaughter Bill** was a union priority in the Warwick manifesto policy discussions in 2004. Since then, the union has worked tirelessly to get key asks included in the Bill and a significant number of improvements made were due to pressure from Unite, the TUC and other unions. It is thanks largely to the work of the unions that a last minute compromise was reached between MPs and Peers, resulting in the UK finally getting a law on corporate killing. This was only possible with a Labour Government.

Although the new law as it stands does not include Individual Director's Responsibilities, it was essential that the legislation was enacted in order to clamp down in the catalogue of avoidable workplace deaths in recent years.

In addition, Unite was instrumental in the setting up of the **Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS)** to compensate workers whose employer has become insolvent, leaving the pension scheme under funded. The FAS was established following pressure from the union, with Unite MPs having a direct input. It was through the work of union and the Parliamentary Group that the level of pension awarded in such circumstances will now be nearly 90%.

Applying political pressure to get results

The Parliamentary Group works with the Unite Political Department in taking up a whole host of industrial issues on behalf of the union and its members. Unite MPs, aided by the union, have a strong track record in succeeding on important issues for trade union members.

Here is a brief breakdown of just some of the successes:

- Unite led the campaign on equal treatment for agency workers. Much of the pressure on the UK government to sign up to the European Directive came from the MPs support for the Private Members Bills in 2007 and 2008, both of which were put forward by Unite MPs. Nearly 140 MPs voted to support the bill in 2008, with a large number of them members of the Unite Parliamentary group.
- Unite Group Officer Terry Rooney MP successfully negotiated with the Government on behalf of former employees of Turner and Newell and their claims to compensation for asbestos related diseases. The Government's Compensation Reclaim Unit agreed that it would not claim back any benefits paid to former employees – a decision that was worth £40million to claimants collectively.
- The union prepared briefings, meetings and organised lobbies to ensure that the government and other Labour MPs backed our members' jobs and futures in the aviation and other dependent industries by going ahead with Heathrow expansion, therefore 'Backing Heathrow, Backing Britain'.
- Unite worked with key MPs in the Parliamentary Group to press the government to introduce the vehicle scrappage scheme and is now doing the same on short time working compensation schemes.
- Unite joined forces with other unions and the TUC to get enough MPs to back the passage of the Statutory Redundancy (Amendment) Private Members' Bill through to committee stage in Parliament. The union will now work with group secretary Lindsay Hoyle, whose Bill it is, to brief and lobby committee members and others.
- Gained new agreements covering union recognition, redundancy and redeployment rights, pay and benefits for Fujitsu workers in Manchester.