

Ministry of Defence and Government Departments

Unite and other trade unions

Unite represents approximately 20,000 members in this sector. The Unite National Officer is **Kevin Coyne**, and he can be contacted at Kevin.Coyne@unitetheunion.org

Other trade unions in this sector are the GMB, PCS, Prospect, FDA, UCATT and the POA (the Prison Officers Association).

The MoD and Government Department's Industrial Sector in Unite

Within this sector Unite represents a wide range of members. This includes; industrial workers in the MoD centrally and its agencies, including the former Army Based Repair Organisation (ABRO) and the Defence Aviation Repair Agency (DARA) which have now merged to form the Defence Support Group (DSG); Defence Storage and Distribution Agency (DSDA), the Defence Equipment and Supplies agency (DE&S); Vehicle and Operator Services Agency (VOSA); Royal Mint; DG Log Fleet/Nuclear; industrial and agricultural workers in HM Prisons; Environment Agency; Commonwealth War Graves and Forestry Commission.

Unite also represents former civil servants who have been transferred to, or are employed by, the private sector. Companies that Unite has an extensive membership in, and recognition rights with, include; Serco, Babcock (formerly VT), Corrilian, Holdfast and BAe amongst many others.

Unite recognises that privatisation has been a Government agenda for many years and under the ConDem government the threat of privatisation will increase. Outsourcing can divide workforces and lead to a driving down of terms and conditions, which is why Unite are determined to keep privatised members, public sector contractors and public sector workers organising and campaigning together, in the same industrial sector. This approach puts Unite best placed in the fight to maintain and improve pay, terms and conditions in the private sector.

Current issues and activities

Unite and our members are actively building the campaign against the public spending cuts threatened by the ConDem government. It is not just about defending our members jobs – although our members perform vital roles that society needs. We believe that spending cuts will push us back into recession and puts all our jobs at risk.

As mentioned above, like much of the public sector, there has been a relentless process of transferring work from the public to the private sector across Government departments. The impact of this agenda has been pronounced within the MoD, with an outsourcing of industrial staff such as caterers and cleaners, and larger scale privatisations such as the selling off of whole MoD agencies.

Members have been detrimentally affected over the past few years by the 2% cap imposed on much of the public sector, and now the imposition of a pay cut in real terms for those earning above £21,000 and the possibility of at least a £250 uplift for those earning below. Unite is totally opposed to the ConDem pay policy which has ridden roughshod over agreed national collective negotiating structures, wrongly penalises public sector workers for the economic recession and perpetuates the myth that public sector workers experience 'gold plated' pay and pension arrangements.

Unite has been campaigning against the ConDem proposals to drastically limit the entitlements of workers covered by the Civil Service Compensation Scheme (CSCS). Under the previous government all the trade unions acknowledged that some changes to the CSCS needed to be negotiated. But in contrast to the proclamations of the Daily Mail and their image of a civil servant in a bowler hat and pinstripe suit with a 'gold plated pension', the reality is shockingly different. Our members are skilled industrial workers, often only paid around £21,000 a year – the average wage in the economy – and many others receive much less. Pension and redundancy rights should therefore be seen as 'compensatory' for these low wages for skilled roles. But rather than enter meaningful negotiations to try and reach a settlement that is fair the actions of the coalition government so seemed simply about trying to make it as cheap as possible to make public servants unemployed. The government have even tabled legislation which seeks to cap payments to a maximum of 12 months pay for compulsory severance and 15 months for voluntary severance. This is a shameful tactic to try and bounce trade unions into reducing our rights at a time when many public servants are fearful over their job security.

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