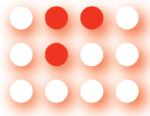


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## Trade Union Bill receives Royal Assent

The *Trade Union Bill* has become law after receiving Royal Assent. It follows an eight-month battle to block it in and outside Parliament.

“The Bill’s progress today is simply a dark day for workers and for those who speak up in their defence when power is misused,” said Unite general secretary Len McCluskey.

But he praised the “dogged” scrutiny by MPs and Lords who helped unions to win “significant concessions” from the government on some of the worst aspects.

For example, the government has been forced into a review of electronic strike ballots, while the opt-in system for unions’ political funds will only be imposed on new members.

Despite the victories, TUC general secretary Frances O’Grady said the new Act posed “a serious threat to good industrial relations and is completely unnecessary.

“The history books will show that the government’s first major Act of this Parliament has been to attack the right to strike – a fundamental British liberty.”

The Act does not come into force immediately, but it will be brought into force by a statutory instrument in due course.

A summary of the key elements of the new Act will be published in the June issue of *Fact Service’s* sister publication *Labour Research*.

[www.morningstaronline.co.uk/a-0926-Workers-dark-day-as-Trade-Union-Act-is-made-law](http://www.morningstaronline.co.uk/a-0926-Workers-dark-day-as-Trade-Union-Act-is-made-law)

## Losers in the move to Universal Credit

Work and pensions secretary Stephen Crabb should restate and reclaim the role of Universal Credit in supporting more people into work and then boosting earnings, rather than being a source of savings for the Treasury to meet fiscal targets, a Resolution Foundation reports says.

Even when considered alongside policies designed to boost incomes, including the introduction of the National Living Wage and income tax cuts, relative to the current system without those measures in place, families are being hit hard.

The key findings of *Universal challenge: making a success of Universal Credit*, written by David Finch, are:

- three million working families entitled to support in the tax credit system will no longer be entitled

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to any in-work support, leaving them £42 a week worse off on average;

- a further 1.2 million are set to receive Universal Credit, but be an average of £41 a week worse off;
- 1.7 million still in receipt of Universal Credit will be better off by an average of £38 a week, in part due to the more generous treatment of housing costs; and
- only around 200,000 families – a mix of those without children and couple parents – who are no longer entitled to Universal Credit at all will be overall better off following cuts to in-work support and boosts to income from the National Living Wage and income tax cuts.

The report sets out a three-point plan for Crabb designed both ensure that Universal Credit will provide the support needed for families moving into and progressing in work in the future and to make implementation as simple as possible.

Firstly, he should ensure that the incentives Universal Credit creates are focused on those most likely to respond to and be in most need of support. With the employment picture vastly improved over recent years and levels of worklessness in households dropping dramatically, Universal Credit must be refocused to meet the living standards challenge of the future rather than the past.

Secondly, he should embrace the challenge of tackling low pay and progression. Despite the welcome strides taken forward with the implementation of the National Living Wage, in-work poverty and low pay look set to remain key challenges in the coming years – Universal Credit must be ready to meet them.

Finally, he should take the chance to reassess the way in which the Universal Credit system functions and the processes people must go through when making their claim. As currently designed Universal Credit piles extra burdens on recipients – these could be eased. Making people's lives more difficult may make them resistant to the change Universal Credit brings. And requiring recipients to provide complex information so the system can calculate entitlements risks creating errors and mistakes that could cause implementation to stumble.

Shopworkers' union Usdaw has welcomed the call by the foundation for major reforms.

The union's general secretary, John Hannett, said: "The government has allowed severe cost cutting to turn the initial intentions of Universal Credit to simplify benefits and improve incentives to work,

which we support in principle, into a real threat to the incomes of low-paid working families."

Udaw's own analysis reveals that a parent couple, both working in retail, earning just above the so-called National Living Wage, one working full-time and one part-time, would be £1,866 worse off on Universal Credit.

[www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/universal-challenge-making-a-success-of-universal-credit/](http://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/universal-challenge-making-a-success-of-universal-credit/)

[www.usdaw.org.uk/About-Us/News/2016/May/Universal-Credit-is-a-ticking-time-bomb-for-many-1](http://www.usdaw.org.uk/About-Us/News/2016/May/Universal-Credit-is-a-ticking-time-bomb-for-many-1)

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## Compensation win for blacklisted workers

Hundreds of workers who were blacklisted by large construction firms have won compensation following a long-running lawsuit.

Approximately 420 trade unionists have secured damages from major construction firms in out-of-court settlements after launching legal action four years ago.

The amount of compensation has not been disclosed but, according to campaigners, could reach £50 million. It has been previously disclosed that some blacklisted workers have been awarded damages ranging from £25,000 to £200,000.

The legal action was taken against 30 firms and four executives, including Balfour Beatty, Carillion, Costain, Kier, Laing O'Rourke, Sir Robert McAlpine, Skanska UK and Vinci.

In a short statement, the blacklisted workers represented by the UCATT construction union and GMB general union and the law firm Guney, Clark & Ryan, said the construction companies had offered financial settlements which had been "accepted as fair and reasonable".

The construction firms will also pay the workers' legal costs, which have not been disclosed.

Another group of approximately 90 workers, members of Unite, have yet to settle and are scheduled to have their case heard in the High Court in London on 9 May.

Steve Acheson, chair of the Blacklist Support Group, said: "What has already been achieved is a massive victory for the trade union movement, but the fight is not over yet.

“Until such time that the full conspiracy is exposed and those responsible for the human rights abuse are called to account in a court of law, we will never stop fighting.”

[www.theguardian.com/business/2016/apr/29/blacklisted-workers-secure-compensation-construction-firms](http://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/apr/29/blacklisted-workers-secure-compensation-construction-firms)  
[www.gmb.org.uk/newsroom/gmb-settle-outstanding-construction-claims](http://www.gmb.org.uk/newsroom/gmb-settle-outstanding-construction-claims)

## Effects of shift work on women and their health

The adverse effects of shift work on women are highlighted in two recent studies.

The first – a study of nurses from Brigham and Women’s Hospital and Harvard Medical School – found that women who work rotating night shifts face a higher risk of heart disease.

Researchers examined data from about 190,000 women who were tracked for more than 24 years. Rotating night shift work was characterised as at least three night shifts a month, in addition to day and evening shifts.

Researchers found that more than 10,000 cases of coronary heart disease (CHD) were reported throughout the course of the study period. CHD cases included non-fatal heart attacks, stents and angioplasty.

Increasing years of rotating night shift work was connected to “a statistically significant but small absolute increase in CHD risk,” the study states. The connection between duration of shift work and CHD was stronger during the first period of follow-up, which researchers said may indicate declining risk after shift work ended. Researchers also found that the longer the length of time after quitting shift work, the lower the risk of CHD among nurses who were tracked every two to four years in the second study.

Women are more likely than men to be affected by the adverse ramifications of shift work, according to researchers from the University of Surrey’s sleep centre.

Researchers placed 16 men and 18 women on 28-hour days to desynchronise them from the brain’s typical 24-hour circadian clock. Participants then performed several tasks every three hours when they were awake.

The sleep cycle simulated the effects that shift work or jetlag may have on workers. Researchers

found that the desynchronised circadian clock affected sleepiness, mood and effort, as well as working memory and temporal processing to a smaller degree.

In 11 of the 39 performance measures, women were more impaired in the early morning hours. This finding correlates with real-world data that shows women are at increased risk of occupational injuries during extended work shifts, non-standard shifts and changing shifts, according to the study.

“We show for the first time that challenging the circadian clock affects the performance of men and women differently,” study co-author Nayantara Santhi said. “Our research findings are significant in view of shift work-related cognitive deficits and changes in mood. Extrapolation of these results would suggest that women may be more affected by nightshift work than men.”

[www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/14028-study-links-rotating-night-shift-to-higher-risk-of-heart-disease](http://www.safetyandhealthmagazine.com/articles/14028-study-links-rotating-night-shift-to-higher-risk-of-heart-disease)

[www.surrey.ac.uk/mediacentre/press/2016/shifted-sleep-wake-cycles-affect-women-more-men-new-study-finds](http://www.surrey.ac.uk/mediacentre/press/2016/shifted-sleep-wake-cycles-affect-women-more-men-new-study-finds)

[www.pnas.org/content/early/2016/04/13/1521637113.full](http://www.pnas.org/content/early/2016/04/13/1521637113.full)

## Union wants end to confusion over tips

Plans to end unfair tipping practices and increase transparency for consumers and employees have been announced by the government.

Following a call for evidence on the tipping practices in the hospitality, leisure and service industry last year, the government has launched a consultation on its proposals to secure a fairer deal for workers.

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills consultation paper reflects the evidence received from consumer, worker and employer groups, and sets out the government’s proposals for the handling of tips and service charges. They include:

- updating the current voluntary code of practice and putting it on a statutory footing to increase employer compliance;
- increasing transparency for consumers to make it clearer that suggested discretionary payments for service are discretionary and that consumers are free to choose; and
- preventing or limiting any employer deduction from discretionary payments for service, except for those required under tax law.

Business secretary Sajid Javid said like many others, he was “disappointed by the tipping prac-

tices of some of our well-known chains. This has to change”.

Dave Turnbull, Unite’s officer for the hospitality sector, said it was a “massive and rightful victory for all those waiting staff who have worked tirelessly to expose sharp practices in the hospitality industry”.

“All they want is what any worker wants – to take home what they have earned,” he said.

The surest way to eliminate confusion about tips is to state it clearly in law that money left by customers for waiting staff must go to waiting staff, said the union.

Last summer, Unite, under the weight of the revelations about what was happening across the industry, forced the business minister to announce that he would conduct a review of tipping practices.

However, restaurants like Jamie’s Italian continue to deduct a percentage of sales from credit card tips, while Prezzo and Strada still deduct an administration fee for handling the tips and Bill’s Restaurant has been accused of pocketing a large proportion of the service charge automatically added to diners’ bills.

Unite is currently campaigning to stop hotel chain Melia from using practices which prevent staff from receiving an equitable and fair share of the tips left for them.

[www.gov.uk/government/news/government-takes-action-on-tipping-practices-to-secure-a-fair-deal-for-workers](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-takes-action-on-tipping-practices-to-secure-a-fair-deal-for-workers)  
[www.unitetheunion.org/news/tips-victory-must-be-honoured-in-law-to-ensure-employers-accept-it-unite-warns/](http://www.unitetheunion.org/news/tips-victory-must-be-honoured-in-law-to-ensure-employers-accept-it-unite-warns/)

## School assistants struggle to cope

A crisis in health and well-being is engulfing schools, which could lead to a mass exodus of hardworking, dedicated staff unless urgent action is taken by the government, says the public sector union UNISON.

More than half (52%) of school support staff across the UK have experienced stress, anxiety or depression as they struggle to cope with their workloads, according to a UNISON survey.

At least two-fifths (42%) of those who took part in the survey said they had difficulty in completing their work, and around one in eight (13%) said they

found it impossible to manage all that was being asked of them.

Almost half of support staff (47%) said they are considering leaving their jobs, citing issues like low pay, stress and huge workloads.

Many said it was difficult to talk about the pressures of their jobs, with two-fifths (40%) saying they felt unable to report concerns about the size of their workload to managers.

UNISON’s head of education Jon Richards said: “It’s shocking that more than half the UK’s school support staff are now experiencing stress, anxiety or depression because they are being given way too much to do. These are dedicated professionals, but with too few of them employed for the amount of work that has to be done, schools are increasingly relying on the goodwill of staff.”

[www.unison.org.uk/news/press-release/2016/05/schools-face-exodus-of-support-staff-over-workload-stress-says-unison-survey/](http://www.unison.org.uk/news/press-release/2016/05/schools-face-exodus-of-support-staff-over-workload-stress-says-unison-survey/)

## UK growth slows in early 2016

The initial estimate for economic growth at the start of 2016 shows a slowing down.

The preliminary GDP estimate from the Office for National Statistics indicated that the UK economy grew by 0.4% in the first quarter of 2016 compared with the final quarter on 2015. That’s slightly slower than during the previous quarter (0.6%) and below the quarterly average of the past three years (0.6%) when GDP growth became more established.

The only industrial group to show growth was services where output was up by 0.6% in first quarter 2016 compared with the previous quarter. The other three main industrial groupings within the economy saw output decrease, with production falling by 0.4%, construction output by 0.9% and agriculture by 0.1%.

Within the production grouping, manufacturing output decreased by 0.4% following a rise of 0.1% in final quarter of 2015.

GDP was 2.1% higher in first quarter 2016 on the same quarter a year ago.

[www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/bulletins/grossdomesticproductpreliminaryestimate/januarytomarch2016](http://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/bulletins/grossdomesticproductpreliminaryestimate/januarytomarch2016)