

**Sariah Cameron**

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**From:** UNISON [efocus@unison.co.uk]

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**To:** Sariah Cameron

**Subject:** UNISON eFocus - Labour's views on public sector pay are a 'slap in the face'



18 January 2011

## **Labour's views on public sector pay are a 'slap in the face'**

UNISON condemns the Labour Party's suggestion that public service workers should accept more pay freezes and pay cuts as "a slap in the face".

Labour's misguided statement comes at a time when it is predicted that 700,000 jobs will be lost in the public sector by 2017, two thirds of whose workers are women.

"I've been a Labour party member for many years and this has come as a slap in the face" said Wendy Nichols, joint vice-chair of UNISON's Labour Link.

Ms Nichols, a Labour councillor in Selby and a member of the Labour party since 1984, added: "I remember canvassing for Labour at the age of nine with my parents. And this has really shocked me."

She was joined in her anger by Margaret Wilkinson, also joint vice-chair and a longtime member of the Labour Party, who commented: "Many hundreds of thousands of low-paid women working as carers, classroom assistants and in other local government jobs have already suffered two years of pay freeze - and none of us got the £250 that Osborne promised to help the lower paid.

"Now we have our own Labour leaders saying they would support even further pay freezes. Not only are UNISON members shocked by this, but so are Labour party members.

"The two Eds need to be out there arguing for fairness, not following in the tracks of the Tories. We will make sure the party leaders get the message loud and clear."

UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis said that in the past year, Labour has struggled to get its message across and show that there is an alternative to the coalition's savage cuts in public services.

"Our members need hope and a reason to vote Labour. These have been snatched away," he said.

"We were told by Ed Miliband to be patient, to prepare for the long haul, that their

economic plans needed to be careful, cautious.

"We hoped that as the economy worsened, Labour's voice would get louder, more strident, more forceful, and that Ed Miliband would step up and speak out against the tearing apart of communities and families as they face insecurity and uncertainty.

"But at a time when our members needed him most, he panicked and ditched overnight a policy that challenged the coalition. Instead, he has decided to embrace a Tory pay policy that hits millions of public service workers, particularly low-paid women."

Accusing the Opposition leader of "breathtaking naivety", Mr Prentis added: "His comments will have unintended consequences. At a time when hard working families are struggling to make ends meet, the very party which they want to stand by them, has chosen instead to play cheap politics with their lives."

UNISON's relationship with Labour is governed by our democratically elected national affiliated political committee. They will meet to determine the best way to ensure that the Labour Party leadership properly reflects the views of UNISON members, the wider Labour Party membership and those who support Labour.

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