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To comment on
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write to:

mail@pcs-southend.org.uk

FROM THE EDITOR

Third issue already...how time flies! I wonder if the logo has managed to turn itself into colour yet...? (pauses to look up) Hmmm, can't quite see - fingers crossed!

This month sees both Local and National elections. Whatever you do, please take an interest and vote! When the candidates come to your door, ask them how they intend to vote when it comes to your job. Make it clear to them that slamming "bloated civil servants with their index-linked gold-plated pensions" is NOT going to be a vote-winner in this area.

But enough about how you're GOING to vote, and a few words on the voting that's just gone. The GEC elections closed last week, and the NEC elections close.....any second now really! Our Reps have been buzzing around the estate getting your brown GEC packs to you, and for the last few days wandered the floors with the ballot boxes. We know that there are some members we just didn't manage to get to, and we apologise - anyone who got missed should have received an email inviting them to collect their ballot pack from the office. Though I suspect that with all the ash around, many people just didn't make it back into the country in time!

In the end, just under 1,000 ballot packs were handed out, with 220 ballots cast in the boxes - I know from talking to members that a similar number were posted direct, so that's an excellent turnout! All we have to do now is wait for the results to come in.....

I'd still like feedback on Branch Communications, whether it be this Newsletter, the website, SEE Here, No Limits, the online Forum, the noticeboards, leafletting, member emails, member's meeting.....anything! Do we do enough? Do we do it in the right way? Do we do it at the right time? Please let us know - feedback is the only way we can be sure that we're communicating the way you want it.

I just hope nobody shares the feelings of poor Asok in the cartoon below about the new Branch website.....!

Stuart Holttum, e-Luminations Editor and Assistant Branch Secretary



MEET THE REP: MARTYN MELLIS

This month the Tin of Terror is opened on Martyn Mellis, and the unusual things he does with his food....

When was the last time you had a taste in your mouth you couldn't identify?

(laughs) Oh blimey...I don't seem to have any taste buds of anything, I'd be hopeless on one of those cookery programmes...I don't really go in for hot Indian foods, so I suppose it would be when I go to a Chinese restaurant and just dive into the stir-fry. (pause). Okra! *What?* Lady's fingers, I think it's called, so it'd be that - I had a Lady's Finger in my mouth and I couldn't identify it! (laughs)



Okra, known by many other names, is a flowering plant in the mallow family (along with such species as cotton, cocoa, and hibiscus), valued for its edible green fruits. So now you know!

Have you ever had a nickname?

At school I was called Mel, which was short for Mellis...I was called Smelly Mellie, Farty Marty... I've been called Big Tits, and most people that I worked with at Colchester called me Beard - I've not shaved since 1994.

Why should someone join the Union?

TO have a voice really, even if they feel the Union can't influence the big negotiations. I think the climate we're in, where so many people seem ready to "dob other people in", people need to be in the Union for personal protection. An insurance policy against other people making allegations against you. *Some people say "why don't I just join when I get a problem?"* I wouldn't...that just doesn't seem fair - it's not fair to join the Union just to get them to sort out a problem. It kind of feels a bit immoral really, it just feels wrong.

What is the first thing you do in the morning?

Try to find my glasses - they move about during the night! (laughs) I'm not organised enough to put them in the same place every night, and sometimes I fall asleep with them on, so when I wake up I can't find them because they're under the pillow or one of the

cats has moved them. I'm short sighted, I can't see further than the end of my nose! I did try contacts once, but one of my colleagues said I looked like I'd just sat on a courgette because I'd just got this surprised look all the time! Glasses also cover up a few wrinkles! (laughs)

What would you do if you won the lottery?

That's the question my wife asks every Wednesday and Saturday night! At the moment, I'm really worried about redundancy, as they're outsourcing welfare, and if we're outsourced there's a strong chance we'll be made redundant. The outsource company has to take us all on, but has confirmed they only want to keep 5 out of the 25 so the rest will be made redundant. I don't really want to work for that company anyway, so if I won the lottery it would just be giving me some sort of security. I can't really think any further than that at the moment. Pay off my debts, pay off the mortgage, give my mum and my god-child and my friends money - it would be really nice to be able to give money to the people I'm close to so they don't have to worry either.

What is your most treasured possession?

(Thinks for a while). I think it would be the memory of my daughter's birth. How I felt when she was born...I remember getting into my car, driving away from seeing her for the first time, and saying to myself out loud "I'm a dad".

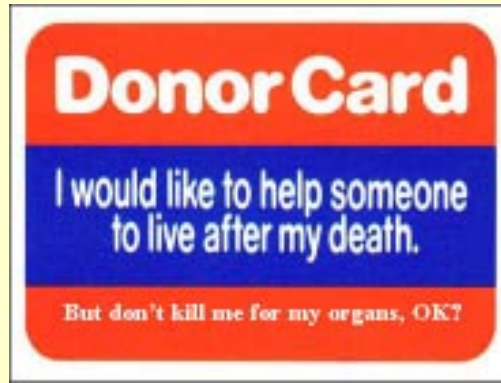
What has the Union ever done for us?

The Union recently has given me a lot of support, fighting to keep Welfare in house and then to get the best deal for me if it's outsourced and to try to find me another job in the Department. I focus on what the Union can do for individuals rather than globally, it's given me the sense of being part of a club, a sense of belonging....a feeling of camaraderie.

If you could choose the manner of your death, what would it be?

I'd like to die doing something heroic...I can't imagine it happening, but that's what I'd like....diving into the River Orwell and trying to save someone...which

would be kind of difficult as I can't swim, but something like that! (laughs) So that afterwards when I'm sitting on my little cloud I can look down and see people thinking "wow, I didn't think he had it in him!" (laughs) I suppose in all seriousness its to feel as if my death wasn't a wasted thing, to save someone.... so even donating parts of my body to help others after my death. Though not my eyes! (laughs)



I love fried bread - I do miss the Phoenix 'cos their fried bread was cracking! I have a picture on my mobile phone of the last breakfast I ate in the Phoenix - that's a treasured possession. I do actually take quite a lot of pictures of food! Some people collect beer mats, I collect photos of food! I took a picture of some pancakes in a Little

Chef...I did ask the waitress to take a picture of me with the pancakes, but she just gave me a strange look....! (laughs) My favourite picture is of a pint of cockles....it's really nicely framed! Perhaps I'll submit it for the Cap 'n' Snap competition!

Have you ever woken up and not known where you were?

Every day, without my glasses! In the Welfare job I used to do quite a lot of travelling, hotels and that, so I'd sometimes wake in the night and not know where I was. I was doing mediations about twice a month, all over the country, Ireland as well, which was interesting. Quite exciting first off all getting paid to go to these places, but after a while I did miss my

family and my allotment. Funnily enough I used to sleep really well....best thing about staying away though was the cooked breakfasts!



For £1,000,000, would you go without washing, brushing your teeth, or deoderant for a month?
Definitely! I would do anything for a million pounds...I'd do anything for a thousand pounds! Apart from anything illegal, I'm a good boy at heart, and you can have a lot of fun doing legal things!

Martyn Cockle-Snapper, thank you very much!



DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE!

by Sonic Truth

Election Fever Grips The Media... None Of The Rest Of Us Care.

So Gordon Brown has called a General Election. Deep joy!!! It has been bad for us under the present regime with savage cuts to staffing levels, poor pay deals and the erosion of working conditions. In fact Comrade Generalissimo Serwotka hailed this government as "the worst in the history of the country" and even though I was a civil servant through the long dark days Oberggruppenfurer Thatcher I have to agree with him.

We, the public sector, have been LEANed, Pacesettered and even worse contracted into the ground. We have seen Chairmen and Board members being shipped in from outside industry without any idea how the civil service works and have then tried to run it like the unsuccessful companies that they left. They have been given huge wages and bonuses (and even knighthoods) that are three times that of an AO wage and for what? Nothing more than the wholesale destruction of two government departments and not only the lowest morale amongst staff in departmental history but in the whole civil service.

The spin doctoring of New Labour has been taken up by the Executive Committee and we are fed the lines like "20% of our staff think we are doing a good job" on our intranet pages. Well what about the 80% of us that think you are ruining us? Although the staff survey is supposedly about 'staff engagement' it seems that so long as you agree that the department is marvellous you'll be listened to. If you dare to criticise you are not following the 'Behavioural Framework' and are not 'part of the team'.

So what does the future hold? Well I am afraid that it will only get worse. All three main parties



have agreed that the only way out of the pickle that private industry and the bankers got us into is to attack the public sector. Not it seems to make greedy bankers and executives pay but people who don't even get the UK's average wage.

Whoever wins on May 6 I think it is going to be bad, very bad. The Tories hate the civil service and if David Cameron becomes Prime Minister I think we can expect deeper cuts and even privatisation to many of our functions. If Brown wins he will continue with the office closure and the attack on our conditions and if er...you know the fella... looks like David Cameron but isn't... Nick someone... Clegg that's it...if he wins... well I'm not entirely sure but they seem to agree with both Labour and the Tories so we are all going to hell in a hand cart.

**Whoever wins on May 6 I think
it is going to be bad, very bad.**

This article started out as a short three line affair about the forth coming election but I sort of got carried away. All I can say is that if you are pre-surplus or your work area is under threat, I wish you the very best of luck.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Kerry Fairless

Red and Yellow and Pink and Blue.....

May 6th is Election Day. As I write this Messrs Brown and Cameron are attempting to smear Clegg and denigrate his policies. This after Clegg and Brown tried to rubbish Cameroon and everyone has had a go at Brown. It's not very positive is it? I am not that old, but even I remember a time when politics had some substance about it. Something that could capture your imagination and give you something to believe in or get angry about. But today, its all negativity, spin and scandal. And it is in that backdrop that the 2010 Election will be held. Depressing isn't it?

PCS is a non-affiliated Trade Union. In the current climate of horrendous job cuts, office closures, pay freezes and a very uncertain future, we would be foolish to recommend any of the parties. We live in a free democracy and whoever you vote for should be your choice. That is how it should be.

One of the on-going debates we are hearing concerns the system by which we elect our MPs. It's as hold as the hills and has been the basis of our Parliamentary democracy since the very beginning. In a nutshell it means that you can only vote for people standing in your constituency. As a result you end up with safe seats, both Southend seats can be considered to fall into that bracket. I stand to be corrected (or at least Wikipedia does) but Southend has only ever returned Conservative MPs to Parliament. In other words, if it wears a blue rosette, it wins. It is very similar to the old Rotten Boroughs, where the winner was known in advance because the election was brought or there was an electorate of about five. Maybe this is the reason so many people feel disenfranchised.

When the candidates knock on your door, ask them about cuts in public services and where they stand on the issue.

Anyhow, I think it fair that I provide you with a quick update on what our two local MPs have done for PCS Members in the last five years.

David Amess has stood on our picket line. He has met us in Parliament. He has raised questions directly to the PM. He has shown us some support.



James Duddridge did not meet us in Parliament when we lobbied him. Did not meet us at his surgery. Did not return my calls about making an appointment. He did however attend the Workforce Change Parliamentary Debate, sadly, providing an out of date update from Southend. I gather he did visit Shoebury, and openly supported privatisation. Others may have had a better experience.....

<<Stop Press: Since writing this article, we have received a letter from Mr. Duddridge - see [Write Here](#), [Write Now](#) for more info.>>

We have received messages of support from the two local Labour Candidates and Lib Dems.

Over in Castle Point, Bob Spink has been supportive, even raising an Early Day Motion. The Labour Candidate, Julian Ware-Lane, is fully supportive (and an ex member of HM C&E). I am not sure of the views of the others.

When the candidates knock on your door, ask them about cuts in public services and where they stand on the issue. Ask them if they know about the £110bn Tax Gap. If they look at you agog, they've not been reading what we've been sending them!

There is also another reason to vote in this election, and that is rise of the BNP. The BNP are very clever at portraying themselves as something they are not, ie respectable. Their glossy leaflets hide the fact they preach a doctrine of hate. This is a party whose leader freely admitted on Question Time that he shared a platform with the Klu Klux Klan. Here is a party whose view on rape is that is acceptable because women like sex in a same way that they like chocolate. Here is a party who will discriminate against you if you are black, gay, disabled, female, left wing.....

Whilst it is extremely unlikely that the BNP will gain any seats, it is important that people understand what they are, what they do and what they are about. Every vote the BNP gain will be heralded as a success and give their movement momentum. Every vote the BNP doesn't get, could mean a lost deposit.

If you do nothing else on 6th May, cost the BNP their deposit.

Write Here, Write Now!

Not too many letters from the membership yet, so this month the letters page features a response from Peter Welch (Lib Dem candidate for Southend West) to a letter the Branch sent to all candidates - you may be interested to know that he was the ONLY candidate to respond - perhaps he is the only one who thinks our jobs are important? Also below are extracts from a letter from James Duddridge to the Branch - the full letter is available on the News page of the Branch Website.



As always, letters and comments and PayPal payments should be sent to mail@pcs-southend.org.uk - letters can be published anonymously but the editor must know who you are!

Candidates Views - Part One

I strongly support Civil Service employment in Southend, and believe that we need tougher action to reduce tax avoidance and the tax gap.

The Government's proposal on CSCS, goes beyond the agreements reached with teachers and NHS staff. Under the current CSCS scheme, managers can allow an employee early access to their pension and add to the pension the notional extra years of service the employee would have given if their job had continued. Under the proposed scheme this would not be possible for those workers who reach five years of their pension age after 31st March 2010.

The changes would make voluntary redundancy less attractive to older workers, potentially leading to more forced redundancies, which ultimately cost the Government more.

I am also concerned about the Government's projections savings for the public purse. The Cabinet Office claimed the original proposals would save £500 million and still say they will save this figure, despite the changes that have been made for those earning under £20,000 a year. In order to save the same amount, the Government will need to make more people redundant than previously expected.

I will work with local civil service staff to lobby for a better deal.

Peter Welch, Liberal Democrat candidate for Southend West

Candidates Views - Part Two

As David Cameron has explained: *"instead of using public servants as scapegoats we should acknowledge their successes. Instead of constantly beating up on the public sector and telling it to be more like the private sector, let's be more reasonable and constructive"*

Conservatives have always focused, rightly, on giving taxpayers value for money. But we also recognise the important role played by the dedicated public sector

professionals who work hard to improve the quality of people's lives. Conservatives value that commitment, and trust their professional responsibility. Turning to the specific points in your email, Of course we plan to ensure that public services are properly resourced. However, due to the strains on the public finances, whichever party wins the next election, public spending will have to be cut. For example, we are calling for a pay freeze in 2011 for the entire public sector barring the million lowest paid employees. This will generate savings equivalent to protecting 100,000 public sector jobs. We should not include public servants earning less than £18,000, because we do not believe in balancing the budget on the backs of the poorest. We will respect pay deals which have already been announced. Freezing pay will help to protect public sector jobs.

....It is important to stress that any change should reflect the principle that existing benefits accrued by staff must be protected. The Government should also consider the appropriate process for working with the relevant representative groups to implement this policy.

James Duddridge, Conservative MP for Rochford and Southend East

Redundancy wef 1st July 2010

At the time of writing this is what I am facing.

It is not known whether HMRC will join forces with the DWP and a number of other government departments and outsource its Welfare Service.

If the service is outsourced from July all the Welfare (Business & People Support staff) will be transferred to the external provider – it is then up to this external provider whether to keep us or make us immediately redundant.

People mistaking believe we have to be kept on for two years by the new employer – we don't they can make us redundant immediately. There is also the misapprehension HMRC will simply keep us in a 'pre surplus' pool – they won't – we have to transfer with the work or resign.

Martyn Mellis

Meet The Rep

Claire King on Killer Whales, Cheesy Bears, and the pleasures of being a King.....

Are there any ambitions you have yet to fulfil?

I have always wanted to see a killer Whale (I think it was the 'Free willy' films that did it to me). I would love to see them in the ocean swimming free and jumping about, must be fantastic!



Why should someone join the Union?

I think it is important to get your voice heard and also to make sure you don't get discriminated against. If you get support from your local reps you will hopefully not feel alone in the workplace either. I think it is also particularly important that if you have any concerns/problems with managers, that you have someone to talk to, for example to have someone there who can tell you your rights, and to make sure things are fair.

Which historical character would you most like to have been?

If I was a bloke, it'd be Henry the Eighth, I think that'd be a good idea - you'd get to have lots of wives, and eat lots of food! Yeah, that sounds like a good one! The Tudor time interests me, I'd like to see what it was really like in that time compared to what we have now. I wouldn't like to think I'd be as harsh as Henry was, so I'd divorce rather than behead!
(laughs)



When was the last time you went too far?

That's a tough question? Well I tend to keep things to myself, and think them rather than say them - I don't overstep that line, and I'm the same in work and personal life. Whatever I say, I always try to say it diplomatically, to talk to others the way I'd like to be spoken to. There's not many times when I've had regrets about what I've said.

What has the Union ever done for us?

I think most people would say that we fight the battles over pay. Although, at the moment we're obviously doing a lot more (that I think people can see, because of the strike action), the fight over the Civil Service Compensation Scheme (CSCS) and redundancies is still ongoing. I think it is also important that we all need to remember that we need to stand together and that we can't do it this on our own, and that we're stronger together than we are apart.

It also comes back to the fact that nobody knows when they might have problems in work, you never know when you'll need someone to stand up for you. There's also different

incentives we've got for people to join...there's always something that can relate to you. There's an awful lot we can offer people!

What is the first thing you do in the morning?

I turn off the alarm! Then try and work out what I am going to wear and then start with the whole girl regime of making myself look respectable lol. I only live across the road so at least I don't have to think of travelling time to work as well!

Have you ever had a nickname?

Recent ones are Tinky, TinkerbellI think they're all related to my height!...I used to get called Rebel at school, because I was such a good girl....(giggles). Little Un of course is my forum name, as well as what some seem to call me on the 4th floor.

For one million pound, would you go without washing, brushing your teeth, or deodorant for a month?

Yeah! (laughs). For a million pounds, there's not a lot I wouldn't do, so I think that would be quite easy, especially if I could just stay in the house! If I had to continue living my life normally.....no, I don't think I could do that, but i don't think i could give an honest answer until someone seriously ask me!? Money's tight at the moment and a million pounds coulddefinitely help me out!



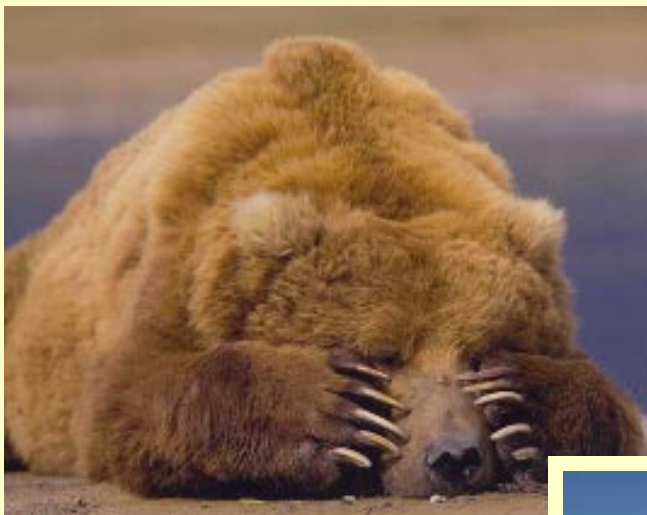
When was the last time you had a taste in your mouth you couldn't identify

My friend offered me a chocolate from an assorted tray but there was no sheet telling me 'what was what', so I just picked a pretty one and I think it turned out to be coffee or something like that, it was horrible (so I just quickly swallowed it, Urgh!)

What's the best joke you know?

I'm terrible at doing jokes, but i do love hearing them! I'll have to think to make sure I say it right.....okay... what cheese would you use to lure a bear from a tree?

Camembert (Come-on-bear)



The Holocaust Rehearsed

by Mark Lancaster

In 1939 Adolf Hitler authorised **Aktion-T4** a programme of mass-murder targeting disabled people. Although Aktion-T4 killed more than 250 000 people this portion of history is often overlooked if not completely forgotten.

Under the T4 disabled people were transported to 'Killing Centres' in 'Death Buses' in their thousands, so why isn't more known about what became a rehearsal for the Nazi's 'Final Solution?'

Speaking to the online magazine Disability Now Dr David Bolt of the Centre for Disability Research at Lancaster University says "I wouldn't say that little is known about T4, rather than the knowledge is too frequently ignored and too infrequently disseminated. Why? Disturbingly, because the lives of disabled people are sometimes deemed less valid, so the twisted logic is that the lack of representation makes perfect sense, as though there would be little interest in any such history."

In the autumn a touring installation called '**Resistance**' created by artist Liz Crow will be touring the country. It comprises of a dual screen which will be showing two films about the T4 programme. The first is called 'Resistance and centres on the story of Elise who escapes the Killing Centre where she is a 'patient'. The other '**Conversations**' is a documentary about the making of Resistance where actors discuss how the project has affected them personally. Liz Crow has commented "All of the disabled people involved felt it personally. It's our community's history."

It seems that Crow found that one of the reasons so little is known about the T4 programme is down to the ambivalence of some museums. She said "Museums ask: "Where's the first-hand testimony? We'll be interested when we see that." Unfortunately due to the nature of T4 the majority of people transported to Killing Centres were murdered on the same day of arrival so there were very few survivors.

It was a small act of resistance by disabled people in the town of Absberg that seemingly brought an end to T4. The night before their removal to a killing centre the disabled people of the Absberg holding centre, who had socialised with the townsfolk, knocked on doors to say good-bye. Unfortunately they were unable to prevent their own murders but the residents were so outraged at what had happened it led to the intervention of Bishop Van Galen and ultimately to the cancellation of T4. Although the systematic killings finished the Nazi's still carried out 'wild euthanasia' until three weeks after the end of the war. We do not know how many victims of there were.

At the Nuremberg trials there were very few prosecutions of medical staff who carried out the experiments and murders of thousands of disabled people. This was surely down to the assumption that disabled people were far less valid than non-disabled people. In fact the notion of the 'mercy killing' of disabled people was sympathised with in some circles. It wasn't just the Nazi's that took the debate about who was valid or non-valid in society to an extreme level. Both Sweden and Switzerland has policies of enforced sterilisation for those deemed 'mentally deficient'. In the Swiss case a study published in 1991 showed that between 1980 and 1987 there were 24 sterilisations of young woman with mental health issues. Only one of these took place at the young woman's request.

Through Liz Crow and her work we can hope that this shameful episode in history gains wider recognition and that the plight of disabled people under the Nazis is finally recognised and more importantly that we understand that the threat of the far right extends not only to black, Asian and 'foreign' people, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people but to disabled people as well.

Journey's End

Ian Chesterton



As I write this, the skies are full of dust, and many of our colleagues are marooned in far-off places. Let's be clear - in the vast majority of cases this will NOT be an extension of their holiday. Many will have used up all but the last few coins of their foreign money, and will now be relying on credit cards at a phenomenal rate of interest - particularly if they are having to use them to withdraw cash. If they had hired a car, it will have been returned. Their accommodation will have been vacated, and all the clothes they have will be dirty - it was the end of their holiday, remember? They are stranded, perhaps with no money, perhaps with kids who should be back at school. In most cases, they will be spending days camped out in the airport departure lounge just waiting....waiting to get back home.

And what do they have to look forward to on their return? They will in ALL cases have spent money they had not budgeted for, but the caring, sharing Department will perhaps have docked their pay for the days they missed - indeed, has been encouraging managers to ensure that Pay Section are notified well in advance to make sure the pay gets taken THIS month. Yep, the Department wants to make sure that the people who have just experienced a nightmare few days and run themselves far further into debt than they would like, will start the next month with a significantly shortened paypacket - all for something completely beyond their control.

Let's pause, just briefly, and try to match this action up with a Department that claims to be concerned about staff morale...

But here's the important point: what happens to the work that built up over those few days the Department will not be paying them? I sincerely hope that they will NOT be expected to work harder and faster to catch up - because that work is WORK THEY HAVE NOT BEEN PAID TO DO. But what are the chances that those poor souls, who have run up huge bills, who will see hundreds of pounds cut from their pay, who have lost ALL benefit from their holiday having spent the last week sleeping in a noisy airport terminal with a fractious 6-year old.....what is the betting that on their return they will be pushed to work through lunchbreaks to catch up with the work they missed?

What a wonderful, caring, compassionate Department we have. I just hope that no member of staff is so inconsiderate as to get kidnapped while they are on holiday - chances are they would come back to face dismissal for poor attendance.

It's like I always say....to judge a person, look at what they DO, not what they SAY. Excom claim to want to improve staff morale. Their actions show that they simply don't give a stuff.

Just a few words before I go about the coming elections. This Thursday, every single one of us has the chance to make a difference. A difference to our Terms and Conditions, to our chance of having a job in a year's time, to the way in which the country will be run for the next 4 or 5 years.

Please, please, PLEASE think extremely carefully about who you vote for. Don't just vote the way you always have. And please don't decide not to vote just because you are in a "safe" seat that you are sure will never fall. Go and vote - at the very worst, the guy who gets the seat will see his majority slashed, which might wake him up a little if he feels less secure. At best, the guy you vote for will get in - and wouldn't that be fantastic!

Equally, if you like the woman who always gets the big majority, vote for her! If she's been doing things that you like, show her your support and give her that vote! But please, please vote. Take the time to make your voice heard, have your say in the next four years of your life.

Because sometimes even one vote can make a difference:

In 1839, Marcus "Landslide" Morton was indeed elected governor of Massachusetts by one vote. Of the 102,066 votes cast by the good people of that state, he received exactly 51,034 - just one more than half. Had his count been 51,033, the election would have been thrown into the Legislature, where he probably would not have won.

And in 18 January 1961, in Zanzibar (now part of Tanzania), the Afro-Shirazi Party won the general elections by a single seat, after the seat of Chake-Chake on Pemba Island was won by a single vote.

So Vote - because maybe YOUR vote will be the one that makes the difference.