

the **future**



for **unions**



Tom Wilson




Unions21



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Debate

Unions 21 exists to provide an 'open space' for discussion on the future of the trade union movement and help build tomorrow's unions in the UK.

We are mainly resourced by contributions from trade unions and others who work with trade unions that recognise we need to keep the movement evolving in an ever changing world. We encourage discussion on tomorrow's unions through publications, conferences, seminars and similar activities.

The *Debate* series of publications present opinions upon the challenges trade unions are facing, solutions they may consider and best practice they may adopt. These opinions are not endorsed by Unions 21, but are published by us to encourage the much needed, sensible and realistic debate that is required if the trade union movement is going to prosper.

Please read and consider this publication, forward it to others connected to the trade union movement and debate the content within your own organisation.

Sue Ferns

Chair of the Steering Committee

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Biography

Tom Wilson

Tom was appointed Head of the Organisation and Services Department at the TUC in July 2003.

Tom was previously head of NATFHE's universities department for five years until July 2003, having previously been Head of Research and then Assistant General Secretary at the Association of University Teachers for 10 years (1988–97). Tom's other experience includes two years in employment research with Incomes Data Services (a publishing house specialising in employment publications) and then five years with the GMB (the UK's fourth largest trade union). Tom was also the National Trade Union Liaison Officer for the Labour Party (1986–88).

Tom has an MA in Industrial Relations from Warwick University (1978–79) and a Diploma in Social Administration from York University. Tom's first degree was in Philosophy from St Andrews University. In 1996 Tom gained a postgraduate Certificate in Employment Law from Middlesex University.

Tom is a Fellow of the Institute of Personnel and Development, the professional institute for Management involved in Personnel and Staff Development.

Tom has written on unions, education and industrial relations for newspapers, magazines, campaigning organisations and academic publications.

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Union membership has stopped declining and may be growing. Union members are increasingly professionals or associate professionals and likely to be better educated than the rest of the workforce. Those trends are widespread and not due to greater union membership in the public sector. Smaller unions and those with strong occupational identity seem to fare better than others.

Associates and professionals are no less prepared than others to take strike action or campaign assertively. All unions are becoming more professional and businesslike, and are becoming active across a much wider range of issues, particularly skills, equality and the environment.

There are many challenges ahead; vulnerable workers cannot be left behind. Much work and further changes will be needed. But unions are in a strong position: the great majority are growing and they are growing fast among the key group of working people who are the core of the knowledge economy.

Collectivism at work is alive and well¹.

Summary

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¹ Too many people, including many TUC and union colleagues, have helped with comments and advice for it to be easy to list people individually but I would like to express special thanks to Paul Mackney and to Paul Sellers and Matt Sheldon for their help with the statistics which are the foundation of the paper.

Introduction

The future for unions

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² David Metcalfe, Unions: Resurgence or Perdition, the Work Foundation, 2005; David Coates, Raising Lazarus, Fabian Society, 2005; Kevin Curran, Trade Union Renewal, Compass, 2006.

³ While there have been relatively few uses of the new right to statutory recognition, the fact of its existence will have encouraged many more employers to negotiate agreements, rather than use the legal route.

⁴ WERS 2004, published autumn 2006, DTI.

⁵ Speech to the Sixth Form Colleges' annual conference, 30 Nov 2006.

This is a discussion paper. It includes a lot of figures because they are the evidence on which informed discussion should be based. In particular I am grateful for the assistance of the Certification Office who provided access to membership data used in this paper. Those data show, on a comparable basis adjusted for mergers and transfers, which unions are growing and which are not. Those figures alone contain many pointers to the characteristics of successful unions. Other figures set the broader context and outline the current and future state of the labour market, union members' educational level, gender and occupational category.

This is an optimistic paper in contrast to some recent others². Reports of the death of unions have been much exaggerated. Overall union membership has stopped falling and is broadly holding level, the great majority of unions are in fact growing. But they are changing fast, like UK working people in general. The typical union member is no longer a male manual worker wearing overalls. Today's typical member is a graduate woman professional wearing office clothes. Two main factors explain the turnaround: a rapidly changing labour market employing far more professionals who are much more likely to be union members; and determined action by unions themselves to revitalise their structures and organisation. The turnaround has defied those who said that collective organisation has no place in a society dominated by individualism, that unions will only survive by offering individual insurance services like the old friendly societies, that unions can only succeed by adopting a more employer-compliant outlook, and that unions should keep out of wider societal issues and focus just on job-related issues – in effect, that union survival depended on becoming less like unions. The reverse has proved true. Unions have survived by sticking to old fashioned union virtues of solidarity and collective activism, but coupled with a new found professionalism. The new labour government after 1997 and new rights (e.g. on union recognition³) have also helped, much as many might have liked there to have been more government support. Union growth is partly influenced by employer and government attitudes, which, though of course variable, are a great deal less hostile in the UK than in many other countries. There is growing recognition among employers of the value unions can bring and the importance of mechanisms to give employees a voice in high performance workplaces.

Union members are changing fast. They are now much more likely to be well qualified and to be women. Union internal organisation is getting much more businesslike. The latest Workplace Employment Relations Survey⁴ shows that union staff and reps are more likely to be trained. Unions are taking up new causes in the workplace such as environmental issues and seeking to broaden the collective bargaining agenda beyond pay and conditions into newer areas such as training and professional development, equality, family friendly policies and flexible working. Many unions are trying to change their style and image, seeking to make it harder for the media to portray them as negative and aggressive. Of course arresting the decline is only the beginning. Unions have a long way to go in rebuilding their former influence as a major socially progressive force in society. But there are now clear signs that this change could be happening and that unions will be well placed to meet the future, described for example by Alan Johnson, Secretary of State for Education and former union General Secretary, "40% of jobs will be filled by graduates and the number of unskilled jobs will reduce to 600,000 across our entire economy; that is the labour market we will face in 2020"⁵. This paper looks at some of these changes in unions and the labour market and asks wider questions. Will the union revival continue? Are unions becoming middle class? Or does the unionisation of the professionals mean today's middle class are becoming the new working class?

Union membership

There are no accurate figures on union membership in the UK. The Certification Officer's (CO) Report for 2005–06 gives a total of 7,467,000; the Labour Force Survey yielded a figure of 6,681,000 for autumn 2005 and a small drop to 6,571,000 (provisional figure) for autumn 2006. However the TUC has been arguing strongly that the survey on which the data are based is increasingly flawed. The survey had been treating non-responses as non-members; a more accurate system would be to allocate non-responses in the same proportion of members/non-members as responses. The latest figures available⁶ accept this criticism and publish two series of figures from 1995 to 2006. The first gives the 'standard' view that membership has declined from 7.070M to 6.568M. The second (which prorates non responses) shows membership starting higher at 7.335M and falling far less, to 7.205M. The gap between that 7.205M figure and the 7.467M in the CO report is due to non-employed union members e.g. students, retired or the unemployed. Using 'standard' LFS data, total employed union membership fell sharply from the peak of 13M in 1980 to 6.8M in 1995⁷. It then fell, but much more slowly, to 6.4M in 2005, then rose slightly, from 2004 to 2005. Using the more accurate second series, after the fall to the mid 90s it has remained pretty stable – 7.267M in 1996 and 7.205M in 2006.

It is true that union membership as a proportion of employees (density) has declined from 31.7% in 1996 to 28.4% in 2006. However, as is evident from the fact that total membership remained broadly stable, the decline in density is due to the growth of total employment. Averaging the annual decline in density over the whole of the 1995–2005 decade and projecting it forward to 2010 would have suggested that actual membership would also decline. But the evidence shows that is not happening, membership on the standard series is only falling very slowly and on the second more accurate series is stable. Closer analysis explains why the decline of previous decades has been halted.

Analysis of what? Many factors might explain changes in union membership. Age, region, ethnicity, gender, pay, industry or educational level are all factors. The evidence suggests that the biggest influence seems to be occupation, though gender, race and other factors are also important. Analysis by occupational level shows that over the last decade there have been major changes within the overall membership total with fewer members among elementary and unskilled occupations, but more members among professional and managerial employees. Until recently losses have slightly outweighed gains. In the last year or two gains have outweighed losses, resulting in the recent overall small gain.

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⁶ Trade Union Membership 2006, Grainger and Crowther, DTI and ONS.

⁷ Figures are from the DTI, which in turn are drawn from the Labour Force Survey. See TUC Membership 2005, published March 2006 by the DTI. LFS figures are variable +/- 30,000.

Like recruits like: the importance of occupation

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8 Try this test; at a party when introducing yourself which would you say first: what industry you work in, who your employer is or what you do? The less skilled, such as cleaners or catering staff, might put less emphasis on occupation and more on employer or sector, perhaps.

9 Jim Mortimer's *History of the Boilermakers Society* (Allen and Unwin, 1973), one of the elite Craft unions, describes their fierce attachment to occupation, resistance even to neighbour trades (such as the equally skilled shipwrights who often worked in wood, rather than metal), and describes the same features in the wave of new unions in the late nineteenth century organising the less skilled e.g. dockers who fiercely distinguished themselves from other river-workers. Both Craft and many new unions were initially based on occupation, only later did many of the unskilled/semi-skilled merge to form more general unions.

10 An interesting experiment of a different model is the reinvention of the previous ISTC (the UK steel union) and Knitwear and Footwear union, which have merged to form Community, a union aiming to organise around communities (such as in Swales or Leicester) rather than occupation. So far the evidence of success for this model is inconclusive.

11 *Selected Poems*, Walt Whitman, Penguin popular classics p 77.

It is an axiom of successful recruitment that like recruits like. Engineers are best at persuading other engineers to join their union. Occupation is a likely candidate for being the best factor to explain union membership changes simply because most (not all) jobs are defined in terms of occupation rather than e.g. employer. The more people have invested in their own jobs, e.g. through training (which they may often have wholly or partly paid for themselves in time and/or money), the stronger the identification⁸. UK unions (unlike those in other countries) have in general organised initially around occupation e.g. *Trade* (hence the name) and today's professions can be seen as simply the equivalent of yesterday's crafts or trades – both describe occupations. (It may be no accident that relatively few trade unions are now called unions. Far more common is either a general brand name (e.g. AMICUS or PROSPECT) or 'Association', with echoes of Professional Associations, see Tables 8 and 9, which is perfectly sensible since many trade unions are now associations of professionals, associate professionals and managers). Stressing the importance of occupation of course does not mean other factors are irrelevant. For many workers their ethnicity or sexual orientation, for example, will be very important and they will be unlikely to join a union that does not recognise that and campaign forcibly against discrimination.

Labour historians and others may challenge this emphasis on occupation as the basis of UK unionism. Certainly it is true that after the early mid nineteenth century craft unions, the late nineteenth century saw a wave of unions for the unskilled but many of these initially also sought to organise specific low paid occupations (not industries, sectors or regions) such as gas-lighters, dockers or match girls, and then went on to merge together to form general unions of many such trades within which occupations retained a strong identity. Some unions based on race or gender were attempted but almost all either failed or merged into general unions. Sectoral unionism has had more success but covers a minority of union members, there are today few sectors for which there is a single union and few unions which cover just a single sector unless they do so as a result of occupational specialisation⁹, though it is also true that many large general unions are organised sectorally. Whether described as a craft, a trade or a profession, occupation has always been and remains a major basis of UK trade unions¹⁰. Interestingly, occupation is much less important elsewhere. In the USA the role of industrial or sector unions (e.g. the auto workers or steel workers) is more important. In Europe religion or political allegiance is often the major factor in union identity, partly reflecting the post war settlement. The fact that UK union membership is holding up better than most may tell us something.

There is a deeper reason to emphasise the importance of occupation. Walt Whitman describes it in his *Song for Occupations*, "Were I to you as the boss employing and paying you, would that satisfy you?...neither a servant nor master am I...if you are a workman or workwoman I stand as nigh as the highest that works in the same shop"¹¹. The poem is a celebration of the importance of occupation as a means of giving people pride and independence, affirming their humanity in the face of an otherwise impersonal and subservient employment relationship. To describe and defend an occupation (craft, trade or profession) is precisely why many unions have been created. An occupation is the body of skill and knowledge which is owned by the worker. Unions (or in exactly the same way today's professional associations) were (and are still being) formed to recognise and defend the importance of that body. A recognised occupation gives both pride and an independence from being seen simply as (defined as) employed by a particular employer. Which is why from time immemorial

working people have fought to have their skill and knowledge independently recognised, and why employers have often been so reluctant to do so or to recognise their union.

All occupations are divided into nine categories by the annual Labour Force Survey. Table 1 shows how union membership has changed within these occupational categories. It includes a forecast to 2010 for each level based on assuming that the changes in occupational employment and density from 1995 to 2005 will continue for the next five years at the same average annual rate as over the past ten years, with the exception that total public sector employment is assumed to stay at the 2005 rate, with no further growth. Forecasting beyond 2010 is hazardous, not only because the political climate may change but because the economy may be radically affected by climate change, globalisation, migration, growth of the 'third sector', energy prices and so forth. This forecast, based on a ten-year set of figures, is admittedly crude, looking only at occupational factors, but nonetheless reasonably robust. Looking at occupations explains the recent change.

Table 1 Union membership and density by occupation 1995–2010¹²

Level	Union members 1995	Total workforce 1995	Density	Union members 2005	Total workforce 2005	Density	Union Members 2010	Total workforce 2010	Density
1 Managers and senior officials	648,868	2,995,486	22%	602,704	3,204,959	19%	570,570	3,309,697	17%
2 Professional occupations	1,144,455	2,187,380	52%	1,389,123	2,819,177	49%	1,486,653	3,135,076	47%
3 Associate professional and technical	920,057	1,922,956	48%	1,302,902	3,133,032	42%	1,449,846	3,738,071	39%
4 Administrative and secretarial	944,832	3,477,505	27%	752,293	3,030,881	25%	697,716	2,807,570	25%
5 Skilled trades occupations	796,016	2,117,579	38%	466,509	1,884,108	25%	361,109	1,767,373	20%
6 Personal service occupations	690,147	2,424,867	28%	538,530	1,804,736	30%	440,072	1,494,671	29%
7 Sales and customer service occupations	205,800	1,761,561	12%	218,747	1,885,865	12%	225,833	1,948,018	12%
8 Process plant and machine operatives	907,744	2,099,416	43%	564,146	1,645,269	34%	449,631	1,418,197	32%
9 Elementary occupations	506,242	1,792,802	28%	553,933	2,642,351	21%	639,872	3,067,126	21%
Total/average	6,764,161	20,779,552	33%	6,388,887	22,050,378	29%	6,321,302	22,685,799	27%

Although membership density in almost all categories shows a decline, density often stays high, particularly among levels 2 and 3, which are the professional and associate professional categories where there is also biggest job growth.

Total union membership is forecast to remain roughly the same at around 6.3M. In other words occupational changes (job growth among associate professionals) will prevent the loss of a further half million union members (which would have been the trend based on the previous decade) over the next five years.

Union membership is growing among professionals and associate professionals and technical staff; among sales and customer service operations; and in elementary

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¹² Data supplied by LFS, based on a sample survey and reliable to +/- 30,000 so all the LFS figures in this paper should not be treated as precise. Basis of projection from 2005 to 2010 as follows: the change in size of occupational category as a % of the total workforce projected forward to 2010 based on average change 1995–2005; change in density 1995–2005 projected forward and applied to this 2010 figure. Public sector total for 2010 frozen at 2005 figure but redistributed within that total among occupational categories to follow 1995–2005 trend.

¹³ McJobs and MacJobs; The growing polarisation of jobs in the UK, Maarten Goos and Alan Manning, in *The Labour Market under New Labour*, eds Dickens, Gregg and Wadsworth, Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. This and similar studies have been rebutted by more recent research outlined by Grant Fitzner of the DTI in *How have employees fared? Recent UK trends, DTI employment relations research series no 56*, March 2006 which concludes: "Our analysis shows that since 1998, the share of low paid UK jobs has shrunk and the proportion of high paid jobs has increased....the proportion of jobs paying around median earnings has remained relatively unchanged. Contrary to the thesis of the "disappearing middle."

¹⁴ See Leitch final report or *Skills and Economic Performance*, ed. Sam Porter and Mike Campbell, published in *Skills for Business*, 2006.

occupations. Because jobs in all those occupational categories are growing even faster, union density is falling but still remains high, particularly among professional and associate professional and technical staff who already comprise almost half all union members.

Among admin and secretarial staff, skilled trades, and process plant and machine operatives a combination of low density and fewer jobs means that union membership is projected to fall sharply; almost outweighing the gains among professional staff.

The overall composition of the total workforce will change. Until recently it was thought the UK would be facing increasing polarisation into an hourglass shaped economy¹³, with shrinking numbers of middle skill jobs being balanced by more high and low skill jobs. Later forecasts shown in Table 2 have radically revised that picture. All higher level jobs are now expected to rise; most others (except elementary and to a small extent sales and customer service) will not. Overall there are forecast to be a net gain of higher level jobs. Table 2 shows that the top third of jobs is now forecast to grow by 3.1M while the bottom third grows by only 0.8M and the middle third remains broadly unchanged. Indeed the most recent forecasts of UK skills needs¹⁴ go further and suggest that by 2020 the bottom third will shrink, only 2.5% of UK employment will require no qualifications, down from 12% in 2004. Conversely, over two thirds of all jobs will require the equivalent of 'A' Level or more qualifications. The 'knowledge economy' is taking root and knowledge based jobs (such as those in levels 2 and 3) are becoming the norm. It is surely a sign of future union strength that it is among these knowledge economy workers, likely to become the bulk of the future workforce on current trends, that union membership is strongest.

Table 2 Expansion demand by occupation, 2004–2020

	Employment shares 1984	Employment shares 1994	Employment shares 2004	Projected employment shares 2020	Expansion demand 2004-2020 (thousands)
Managers and senior officials	12%	14%	15%	17%	890
Professional occupations	8%	10%	12%	14%	980
Associate professionals and technical	10%	12%	14%	15%	680
Administrative and secretarial	15%	15%	13%	11%	-360
Skilled trade occupations	16%	14%	11%	10%	-180
Personal service occupations	4%	6%	8%	9%	640
Sales and customer service occupations	6%	7%	8%	9%	560
Machine and transport operatives	12%	10%	8%	7%	-130
Elementary occupations	16%	14%	11%	8%	-850
Total (percent)	100%	100%	100%	100%	2,230

Source: CE/IER employment projections, Table 3.1, page 63 of The 2006 Interim Report of the Leitch Review, HM Treasury.

Public versus private

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Is the rise of the professional and associate professional job simply a result of the growth in public sector jobs such as teaching or nursing, which tend to be more highly unionised? In other words are more level 2 and 3 staff joining unions because they are in the public sector (which has been growing) rather than because they are professionals/associate professionals? There are two responses to this argument.

First, how do we know what is the direction of causation? Perhaps there have historically been high levels of unionisation in the public sector because it employs many professionals and associate professionals? There are high levels of unionisation among private sector teachers and nurses, which suggests it is their occupation, not their sector that is the major influence.

Second, while it is true that unionisation overall is lower in the private sector, membership has nonetheless also been growing among private sector professional/associate professionals. Tables 3 and 4 split the figures in Table 1 between private and public sector.

Table 3 Private sector union membership and density by occupational level 1995–2010¹⁵

Private sector	Members 1995	Density 1995	Members 2005	Density 2005	Members 2010	Density 2010
1 Managers and senior officials	312,406	13%	335,629	12%	348,104	12%
2 Professional occupations	200,654	22%	279,173	22%	333,795	23%
3 Associate professional and technical	269,181	26%	322,269	20%	354,048	18%
4 Administrative and secretarial	481,849	20%	240,035	13%	179,805	11%
5 Skilled trades occupations	674,784	35%	395,826	23%	314,008	19%
6 Personal service occupations	105,225	8%	106,165	11%	106,639	14%
7 Sales and customer service occupations	196,234	11%	196,099	11%	196,032	10%
8 Process plant and machine operatives	807,128	41%	510,323	33%	416,493	31%
9 Elementary occupations	173,310	14%	316,616	15%	447,517	18%
Total/average	3,220,771	21%	2,702,135	18%	2,696,441	17%

Table 4 Public sector union membership and density by occupational level 1995–2010¹⁶

Public sector	Members 1995	Density 1995	Members 2005	Density 2005	Members 2010	Density 2010
1 Managers and senior officials	336,462	57%	267,075	54%	222,467	52%
2 Professional occupations	943,801	73%	1,109,950	72%	1,152,858	71%
3 Associate professional and technical	650,876	73%	980,633	66%	1,095,798	62%
4 Administrative and secretarial	462,983	46%	512,258	46%	517,911	45%
5 Skilled trades occupations	121,232	68%	70,683	57%	47,101	52%
6 Personal service occupations	584,922	50%	432,365	50%	333,433	49%
7 Sales and customer service occupations	9,566	38%	22,648	43%	29,802	45%
8 Process plant and machine operatives	100,616	74%	53,823	60%	33,139	55%
9 Elementary occupations	332,932	57%	237,317	44%	192,355	38%
Total/average	3,543,390	60%	3,686,752	55%	3,624,864	52%

The two tables do admittedly show that public sector associate/professional union membership is, overall, far higher than private sector membership and that there are

¹⁵ All data supplied by LFS, basis of projection to 2010 as in Table 1 above.

¹⁶ Source of data LFS as in Table 1. Basis of projection no growth in overall size of public sector from 2005 to 2010 as follows: total 2005 taken as the total for 2010, the change in size of occupational category as a percentage of the total workforce projected forward to 2010 based on average change 1995–2005; change in density 1995–2005 projected forward and applied to this 2010 figure.

far more associate/professional jobs in the public sector. But an alleged public sector effect cannot explain why union membership (admittedly not density) rose between 1995 and 2005 in all three managerial/professional/associate professional categories in the *private* sector. And rose sharply, up by 40% (from 200,654 to 279,173) among professionals and 20% (from 269,181 to 322,269) among associate professionals. Membership even rose by 11% among private sector managers, the very group assumed to be most hostile to trade unionism. So there seems little evidence that this occupational explanation is just a by-product of public sector jobs growth.

On the other hand there clearly are major differences between public and private sectors. Private sector membership among elementary jobs almost doubled between 1995 and 2005 but nearly halved in the public sector, changes that were probably connected with privatisation and contracting out. Other changes reflect manufacturing job losses and technological change. However it is important to remember that while total manufacturing employment has fallen sharply (not necessarily the same as manufacturing output incidentally; the UK produces more cars than ever before) the composition of the remaining manufacturing jobs is reflecting the same shift as elsewhere towards more professional/ associate professional and managerial jobs and fewer craft, semi or unskilled jobs. In both sectors skilled trades (craft) membership halved. In the private sector admin jobs and membership more than halved while in the public sector admin membership and jobs rose slightly. But while all these different forces were at work in non-associate/professional jobs, the broad overall trend towards more associate/professional jobs and membership (albeit not necessarily density) is evident in both sectors.

Equality and gender: the feminisation of the unions

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Hand in hand with this increased membership among associate/professionals has gone the increase in women membership. Around 2003, for the first time, female UK density at 30% outstripped male density, which fell to 28%. And In 2005 women members for the first time outstripped men; 3,346,000 women to 3,331,000 men. Much of that increase in women membership is clearly associated with the occupational changes discussed above. Many associate/professionals of course are women, particularly in the public sector such as teachers, social workers or nurses. But there are also growing numbers of private sector women professionals such as journalists, accountants and lawyers. Table 5 shows the differences in more detail. On the whole, density is broadly similar between men and women in the same sector and in the same occupational category, indicating that occupational level rather than gender is the most powerful determinant of likelihood of membership. It seems that, for example, teachers or nurses are as likely to join unions whether they are men or women. But gender is hardly unimportant, density is generally slightly higher among women in associate/professionals jobs than among their male counterparts and lower than for men in all other occupational levels, except in sales and customer service. Part of the explanation may be that there are often more men (e.g. head teachers) at the most senior levels in many associate/professional jobs where union membership may be lower. There is no evidence that women are less likely to join unions than men. If anything the reverse is true. Women have helped maintain and increase high levels of union membership in many associate/professions where the proportion of women has grown, for example in journalism or academia.

Other areas of inequality are also becoming increasingly important as, for example, more black workers or older workers enter the labour market and as campaigning grows stronger to end discrimination against, for example, older workers or workers with disabilities or lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender workers. This new equality agenda has been partly driven by unions who can claim substantial credit for the recent changes in legislation and public attitudes. Respect for 'diversity' is now seen as a hallmark of professional HR management and de rigueur for modern employment practices. The growth in the associate professional workforce is likely to strengthen the drive for equality, helping and being helped by associate professional unions. Many of the unions at the forefront of this wider equality campaigning are precisely those that represent associate/professional workers such as NATFHE (now UCU) and Unison. As with vulnerable workers (see below) the challenge for all unions is to widen the impact of this campaigning to ensure that it reaches all workers, including the low skilled who are less likely to be members but, if anything, more likely to suffer discrimination.

Table 5 Union membership and density in the public and private sectors by occupational level and gender 2005¹⁷

	Private Male	Female	Public Male	Female
1 Managers and senior officials Percent	208,227 12	127,402 14	142,237 56	124,431 55
2 Professional occupations Percent	186,107 20	93,066 27	407,749 67	702,201 75
3 Associate professional and technical Percent	170,940 19	151,329 20	358,883 64	618,452 70
4 Administrative and secretarial Percent	69,209 18	170,826 11	127,361 54	384,897 43
5 Skilled trades occupations Percent	375,403 23	20,423 16	52,247 57	18,436 56
6 Personal service occupations Percent	34,729 24	71,436 9	68,002 53	364,363 49
7 Sales and customer service occupations Percent	43,213 8	152,886 12	5,793 37	16,855 45
8 Process, plant and machine operatives Percent	461,362 34	48,961 23	46,113 62	7,710 53
9 Elementary occupations Percent	227,444 19	89,172 10	131,146 62	106,171 32
Total	1,776,634	925,501	1,339,531	2,343,516
Percent	20	16	57	53

¹⁷ LFS data supplied to TUC.

Education

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As union membership among associate professionals has grown, so has the average level of members' qualifications. In 2005 43% of union members had a degree or other HE qualification, almost double the 27% of non-members with such qualifications. A decade earlier the figures were 32% and 20%. Only 7% of union members were unqualified in 2005, much lower than the 10% of non-members. A decade earlier the figures were 14% and 16%. See Table 6.

Table 6 Highest qualification by union membership 2005 (%)

	Union members	Non-members
Degree or equivalent	27.9	18.8
Higher education	15.2	8.2
GCE 'A' Level or equivalent	21.6	25.3
GCSE grades A-C or equivalent	18.8	25.0
Other qualifications	9.8	13.0
No qualification	6.7	9.6
Total	100.0	100.0

LFS autumn 2005

Highest qualification by union membership 2000 (%)

	Union members	Non-members
Degree or equivalent	22.3	15.6
Higher education	14.8	8.2
GCE 'A' Level or equivalent	23.1	24.9
GCSE grades A-C or equivalent	18.4	25.0
Other qualifications	12.0	14.3
No qualification	9.4	12.1
Total	100.0	100.0

LFS autumn 2000

Highest qualification by union membership 1995 (%)

	Union members	Non-members
Degree or equivalent	17.8	12.6
Higher education	14.8	7.3
GCE 'A' level or equivalent	23.7	22.8
GCSE grade A-C or equivalent	16.0	24.3
Other qualification	13.9	16.6
No qualification	13.8	16.4
Total	100.0	100.0

LFS autumn 1995

The changing shape of the union movement

The future for unions

Tom Wilson

These changes pose some big challenges:

Table 7 Proportion of all union members in occupational categories 1995–2010

	1995	2005	2010
Occupational categories 1, 2 and 3	40%	51.4%	55.4%
Occupational categories 4,5, and 6	36%	27.4%	23.7%
Occupational categories 7,8,and 9	23.9%	20.8%	20.8%
	100%	100%	100%

Over half of all union members are already associate professionals and managers. That would probably come as a surprise to the woman in the street. It stands in stark contrast to the usual picture of unions portrayed in the media as yesterday's organisations representing yesterday's workers.

There has been a sharp drop in membership within the middle band of jobs, which historically have been a mainstay of the UK union movement: admin jobs and skilled and semi-skilled trades. That decline as a proportion of all union members is at least partly due to the fall in the number of such jobs. However, arguably, what is also happening is that such skilled and semi-skilled trades are becoming professionalised or being replaced by professional/semi-professional jobs. Both jobs and members may be moving from e.g. category 4 to category 3 as yesterday's trades become today's professions. A typical secretary today may be expected to handle, for example, spreadsheets, databases, desktop publishing and web uploading as well as working with a small team of managers, not just being PA to one. Teaching and healthcare assistants are fast becoming seen as professionals in their own right and Unison is successfully recruiting them precisely by recognising and championing that. Other examples of trades becoming professions include journalism, bookkeeping, train driving, horticulture, childcare and security.

The growth of associate/professional unions does not mean the movement as a whole is likely to become more "moderate". There has been a long-term decline in strike action affecting all unions but there is no evidence that associate/professional unions are any less prepared to take action than others. Figures for strike action are, unfortunately, not collected by occupation but by industry group, nonetheless it may be illustrative that in 2005, for example, almost half the workers involved in stoppages were from education where most union members are associate professionals¹⁸.

Moreover, many of the unions associated with a move to a more radical, sometimes left, agenda¹⁹ such as the NUJ, PCS, FBU, CWU, NATFHE, RMT, or NAPO are unions with associate/professional members which has certainly not prevented them from leading some high profile campaigning and often industrial action. Equally, there are many other associate/professional unions which are not generally associated with the left but which have also been involved in high profile campaigning, sometimes including industrial action, such as ATL, BALPA, Connect, NASUWT or PROSPECT. This is not, of course, to argue that associate/professional unions have a monopoly of activism; merely to point out that they are certainly no less likely than others to be radical, campaigning and active; and no less likely to be involved in political organisation and lobbying, though less likely to be affiliated to the Labour Party.

¹⁸ See Table 3. Labour Disputes in 2005 in Labour Market Trends, ONS, June 2006. Of the 92,600 workers involved in disputes, 43,400 were from Education.

¹⁹ There was a loose grouping of some of these unions and others known as the 'Fed up with losing' group who shared organisational ideas and support which helped in their growth and revitalisation. They were later sometimes called the 'Orchid' (rather than Awkward) squad.

Vulnerable workers

The future for unions
Tom Wilson

Among the least skilled band (7, 8 and 9) membership look set to stay at roughly one in five of all union members, again a far cry from the days when manual and unskilled workers were a dominant force within the movement. Plainly, there is a major challenge in recruiting and organising such workers who are highly likely to be poorly qualified, low paid and in vulnerable employment, sometimes migrants. In effect, the membership subscriptions of the better off members may, rightly, be subsidising the work that the movement as a whole undertakes on behalf of the poorest workers in society. Campaigning and lobbying work on their behalf (for example, union and TUC submissions to the Low Pay commission) is of course essential, but it would be a major change in the ethos of the movement if that, in practice, became a substitute for the ability of such workers to organise and take action themselves.

This is a vital challenge to unions. Standing up in solidarity with the most vulnerable is at the heart of the movement. If unions drift into (or are perceived to be) just representing the relatively better off the movement would lose much of its credibility. The unions claim to a moral dimension, the sword of justice against unfairness, is a major part of unions' attraction to all employees. And (see above) those likely to be the most vulnerable (not the same as unskilled) are not a dwindling number. They will, for example, grow sharply if the future for public services is that government and private sector providers employ only a small core directly, with the great majority on short-term contracts, quasi self employed or supplied via agencies. For example DHL, which was handed the NHS logistics contract in October 2005, have said they wish to move to 30% employed staff and 70% self-employed/temporary etc. The TUC estimates that one in five workers is, in different ways, vulnerable. Many unions use their strength among managers and professionals to help those more vulnerable, for example by urging employers to give the less skilled more chance of training or by seeking to include fair pay and conditions clauses in procurement contracts. Many unions, Trades Councils and Regional TUC's are also active in e.g. local community or church groups helping to organise migrants and other vulnerable workers.

More is needed. The setting up of the Low Pay Commission itself reflected a shift in union policy. Many unions and most of the big general unions representing low paid workers had been opposed to a statutory minimum wage until the 1980s, arguing that the UK's voluntarist tradition was a better route to fighting low pay than reliance on the law. That changed with a recognition that unions, frankly, were not succeeding in ending low pay and that a SMW could be an aid to union organisation, not a threat. In the same way, what is now needed is a further strategic shift aiming to give the low paid not just *pay rights* but *union organisation rights*. Employment rights are little use without unions to help enforce them. The characteristics of low paid work, i.e. it is often temporary, using fixed-term contracts and agency workers, make union organisation doubly hard. Employers

²⁰ See Success at Work; Protecting Vulnerable Employees, March 2006, DTI consultation paper, which accepted that there remained major employment concerns among vulnerable workers.

who pay the minimum wage should be required to give employees information on unions and facilitate union efforts to organise, the argument being that unions play a valuable role in helping inspect and enforce such rights so workers who need those rights also need help to join the union. Tax relief should be made available for all union subscriptions and particularly for the low paid, not, as now, just for the 'professional' element of union services which effectively limits tax relief to certain relatively well paid professionals in professionals' unions. That alone would raise by 25% the subscription income of vulnerable workers' unions, allowing, for example, the employment of 25% more organisers. The Temporary and Agency Workers Directive should be fully implemented and the opt-out (which disproportionately affects the low paid) from the Shorter Working Time Directive should be ended. The movement as a whole cannot sit back and allow the drift of membership away from the most vulnerable to go unchallenged. Collective high profile campaigning on vulnerable employment (such as the recently launched TUC Commission on vulnerable employment) is essential, responding to government's acknowledgement²⁰ of the problem and demonstrating that there remains a powerful sense of the union movement as a unified socially progressive force, not just a collection of disparate interest groups.

Students and young workers

The future for unions
Tom Wilson

One of the biggest changes in the labour market has been the growth in students who now comprise *one in ten* of all workers. It is not just the 2M university students but also the 3M FE students who need employment to pay fees and survive. At any one time around 60% of students are in paid work. Indeed entire new sectors of the economy such as fast food, call centres, or 24-hour retail outlets could not survive without student labour. It is often claimed that young workers have a consumerist, individual outlook which is why they do not join unions. In fact there is little evidence that, within higher density groups such as teachers, nurses or journalists young people are less likely to join. It is far more likely that young people have lower membership because they are overwhelmingly likely to be on short-term contracts or in temporary or agency work; are employed in sectors such as retail, services and catering which have historically had low density; and have low skill levels. Where unions do have recognition and higher membership within retail, e.g. USDAW in TESCO, there is little evidence that, where they are on the same contract, younger workers are less likely to join than older workers. Many unions are now concentrating on recruiting students undergoing their occupational training (sometimes postgraduates), often with subsidised subscription offers, with great success. NUJ student membership has, for example, doubled in the past five years. All the teacher unions have offered student membership for many years and they have the highest density of any occupational group. Many more unions will undoubtedly be looking to recruit in the rapidly widening range of vocational courses feeding the knowledge economy. At the 2006 Congress the TUC launched a groundbreaking partnership arrangement with the NUS to bring greater awareness of unions and employment rights to working students of all kinds and help unions understand student concerns.

The unions themselves

The future for unions

Tom Wilson

²¹ Some might also say a better measure of success is winning strikes or other campaigns, raising members' pay and improving their prospects. However strong unions with high density are much better placed to win; density is either directly or indirectly an important success measure.

To what extent is the broad picture described above borne out by looking at unions' individually? Which unions are growing? Which declining? Tables 8 and 9 below give the figures, based on CO data (not TUC or Labour Party affiliation figures) and adjusted to take account of mergers. Some caveats are needed. It is far easier to recruit in some sectors than others. For example, short-term or temporary contract workers are the norm in hotels, catering and retail and may see little point in joining (especially as subscriptions are inevitably more of a problem where wages are very low) when they may be gone in a few months. Another problem is that in declining industries, such as the print trade, even the best-organised union will be losing members. Conversely, where jobs are growing, even a poorly organised union may be able to gain members. Gaining or losing members is only a rough guide to union success²¹.

The CO figures include all unions, even those which are not affiliated to the TUC. They are the most reliable source of information on union membership – not wholly reliable since the CO cannot easily check them but the best there is and probably reasonably accurate. The figures, kindly supplied by the CO to the TUC, show membership at 1997 and 2004 and are adjusted as far as is possible, to take account of mergers and transfers of engagements over the period. In other words the 1997 figure includes the 1997 membership of any unions which had joined the union by 2004. One further caveat: some unions include all members in their annual return to the CO, including e.g. retired, student, unemployed or associate members. Others include only paying members.

There are over 280 unions listed by the CO. The great majority are very small, with fewer than 10,000 members. Looking at the big unions first, there were 15 with over 100,000 members. These are listed in Table 8 below:

Table 8 Membership of unions with over 100,000 members 1997–2004

Union	Members 2004	Total membership of component unions 1997	Actual change	Percentage change
AMICUS	1,159,755	1,143,702	+16,053	+1.40%
ATL ²²	195,511	153,343	+42,168	+27.50%
BMA	133,160	104,344	+28,816	+27.62%
CWU	241,849	273,814	-31,965	-11.67%
GMB	571,690	720,524	-148,834	-20.66%
GPMU	93,198	204,822	-111,624	-54.50%
NASUWT	327,953	245,932	+82,021	+33.35%
NUT	330,709	276,819	+53,890	+19.47%
PCS	311,249	265,902	+45,347	+17.05%
PROSPECT	104,749	104,146	+603	+0.58%
TGWU	806,938	882,012	-75,074	-8.51%
UCATT	113,280	113,555	-275	-0.24%
UNIFI	136,947	199,445	-62,498	-31.34%
UNISON	1,310,000	1,300,451	+9,549	+0.73%
USDAW	340,201	293,470	+46,731	+15.92%
Total	6,177,189	6,282,281	-105,092	-1.7%

²² Includes (like the other teacher unions) many students and retired members, ATL affiliated to TUC in 2004 on 108,730 members which excludes their approx 40,000 student members.

Source: CO and TUC analysis, RCN not included as data not available.

Although total membership fell 1.7%, nine of these unions grew, more than half the total. The teaching unions (ATL, NASUWT and NUT) were obviously recruiting public sector professionals. CWU was hit by reorganisation (privatisation and massive technological change) in telecommunications, so was Prospect but it held up nonetheless, recruiting public and private (energy) professionals. On the whole it seems that unions with a strong occupational identity (such as teachers, the BMA, PCS or USDAW) did well, as did, broadly, white collar/professional unions. Those that fared less well were the bigger general unions. It is arguable whether this is due to less strong occupational identity or because the sectors and occupations in which they are organised often tend to be in decline, Amicus for example has been hit by the decline in manufacturing. UNIFI and GPMU were badly hit by the slump in private sector skilled trades and administrative jobs. Both GPMU and PCS invested heavily in organising. Clearly that helps but cannot turn around a union in an industry in steep decline. The TGWU began investing very substantially in organising in 2005 and there are recent signs of a turnaround. Many factors are at work but it is possible to discern the effect of the occupational analysis discussed above, broadly speaking the unions with more professional/associate professional members have fared best.

The same trend is reasonably clear among the smaller unions. Table 9 lists the 86 unions with over 1,000 and under 100,000 members.

Table 9 Membership of unions with 1,000–100,000 members 1997–2004

Union	Members 2004	Total membership of component unions 1997	Actual change	Percentage change	Union name in full
ANGU	8,952	7,612	1,340	17.60%	Abbey National Group Union
Accord	25,759	26,217	-458	-1.75%	Accord
AEGIS	2,518	0	2,518	100.00%	AEGIS The Aegon UK Staff Association
ALGUS	3,290	2,577	713	27.67%	Alliance and Leicester Group Union of Staff
AGSA	1,220	0	1,220	100.00%	Anchor Group Staff Association
Aspect	3,785	2,422	1,363	56.28%	Aspect (Education Inspectors et al)
ASLEF	18,274	14,426	3,848	26.67%	Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
ACB	1,769	2,168	-399	-18.40%	Association for Clinical Biochemistry
ACM	3,660	3,221	439	13.63%	Association for College Management
AEP	2,941	2,194	747	34.05%	Association of Educational Psychologists
AHTS	1,343	1,446	-103	-7.12%	Association of Head Teachers in Scotland
ALAE	1,862	1,604	258	16.08%	Association of Licensed Aircraft Engineers (1981)
AMO	7,363	5,675	1,688	29.74%	Association of Magisterial Officers
AMPS	2,098	0	2,098	100.00%	Association of Management and Professional Staffs
APAP	3,120	2,685	435	16.20%	Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel
ARC	2,370	2,295	75	3.27%	Association of Revenue and Customs
AUT	48,355	37,604	10,751	28.59%	Association of University Teachers
BFAWU	27,442	30,488	-3,046	-9.99%	Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union
BBGSA	2,002	1740	262	15.06%	Balfour Beatty Group Staff Association

Union	Members 2004	Total membership of component unions 1997	Actual change	Percentage change	Union name in full
BSU	2,337	2,184	153	7.01%	Britannia Staff Union
BALPA	8,032	6,005	2,027	33.76%	British Air Line Pilots Association
BACM	3,340	4,313	-973	-22.56%	British Association of Colliery Management
BADN	5,535	2,865	2,670	93.19%	British Association of Dental Nurses
BAOT	26,721	15,367	11,354	73.89%	British Association of Occupational Therapists Ltd
BDA	18,602	15,435	3,167	20.52%	British Dental Association
BOS	1,086	864	222	25.69%	British Orthoptic Society
BUSWE	1,174	0	1,174	100.00%	British Union of Social Work Employees
BECTU	26,285	29,243	-2,958	-10.12%	Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union
CSP	50,052	43,748	6,304	12.59%	Chartered Society of Physiotherapy
CWU	4,800	2,478	2,322	93.70%	Community & Youth Workers Union
Connect	19,761	16,962	2,799	16.50%	Connect; The Union for Professionals in Communications
EIS	57,073	50,807	6,266	12.33%	Educational Institute of Scotland
Equity	36,668	34,502	2,166	6.28%	Equity (Incorporating the Variety Artistes' Federation)
FDA	12,765	9,206	3,559	38.66%	FDA (for Civil Servants)
FBU	49,544	56,943	-7,399	-12.99%	Fire Brigades Union
G4S	1,322	0	1322	100.00%	G4S Justice Services Staff Association
GDPA	1,219	2,000	-781	-39.05%	General Dental Practitioners Association
HCSA	2,951	2,264	687	30.34%	Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association
ISU	3,946	2,166	1,780	82.18%	Immigration Service Union
IFNS	1,172	546	626	114.65%	Independent Federation of Nursing in Scotland
IoJ	1,017	917	100	10.91%	Institute of Journalists (Trade Union)
IBOA	18,240	14,217	4,023	28.30%	Irish Bank Officials Association
LTGU	43,848	28,340	15,508	54.72%	Lloyds TSB Group Union
LDA	1,010	0	1,010	100.00%	Locum Doctors Association
MU	30,382	30,480	-98	-0.32%	Musicians Union
NAPO	8,432	6,378	2,054	32.20%	NAPO – The Trade Union and Professional Association for Family Court and Probation Staff
NACO	2,532	3,169	-637	-20.10%	National Association of Co-operative Officials
NAHT	40,524	44,164	-3,640	-8.24%	National Association of Head Teachers
NATFHE	67,523	65,266	2,257	3.46%	National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education
NFSP	10,094	13,449	-3,355	-24.95%	National Federation of Sub-Postmasters
NSED	2,115	2,365	-250	-10.57%	National Society for Education in Art and Design
NUDAGO	1,628	2,250	-622	-27.64%	National Union of Domestic Appliances and General Operatives

Union	Members 2004	Total membership of component unions 1997	Actual change	Percentage change	Union name in full
NUJ	35,844	31,786	4,058	12.77%	National Union of Journalists
NUKFAT	9,741	38,075	-28,334	-74.42%	National Union of Knitwear Footwear and Apparel Trades
NULM	2,967	4,199	-1,232	-29.34%	National Union of Lock and Metal Workers
NUMAST	18,719	18,516	203	1.10%	National Union of Marine Aviation and Shipping Transport Officers
NUM	15,320	8,665	6,655	76.80%	National Union of Mineworkers
RMT	71,544	56,337	15,207	26.99%	National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers
NGSU	12,078	9,659	2,419	25.04%	Nationwide Group Staff Union
NISA	2,147	0	2,147	100.00%	NISA
OILC	1,738	1,358	380	27.98%	Offshore Industry Liaison Committee
POA	34,458	32,004	2,454	7.67%	Prison Officers Association
PGA	1,137	924	213	23.05%	Prison Governors Association
PSU	4,769	2,316	2,453	105.92%	Prison Service Union
PAT	34,104	35,739	-1,635	-4.57%	Professional Association of Teachers
PFA	3,918	0	3,918	100.00%	Professional Footballers Association
RBSATEA	3,985	4,678	-693	-14.81%	Retail Book Stationery and Allied Trades Employees Association
RFU	4,210	4,175	35	0.84%	Retained Firefighters Union
ROA	1,253	0	1,253	100.00%	Retired Officers Association
RCM	37,007	34,842	2,165	6.21%	Royal College of Midwives
SSTA	8,225	6,923	1,302	18.81%	Scottish Secondary Teachers Association
SSA	1,337	637	700	109.89%	Skipton Staff Association
SoA	7,811	6,273	1,538	24.52%	Society of Authors Ltd
SCP	8,108	6,976	1,132	16.23%	Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists
SLCC	3,039	2,250	789	35.07%	Society of Local Council Clerks
SoR	17,383	13,771	3,612	26.23%	Society of Radiographers
TSSA	32,426	31,132	1,294	4.16%	Transport Salaried Staffs Association
UBAC	1,813	2,662	-849	-31.89%	UBAC
UCAC	4,051	3,641	410	11.26%	Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (The National Association of the Teachers of Wales)
UCSW	4,497	0	4,497	100.00%	Union of Country Sports Workers
UDM	2,741	2,483	258	10.39%	Union of Democratic Mineworkers
UFS	4,343	4,509	-166	-3.68%	Union of Finance Staff
URTU	16,839	16,600	239	1.44%	United Road Transport Union
Unity	9,166	20,478	-11,312	-55.24%	Unity (was Ceramic Workers Union)
WGGB	2,140	1,871	269	14.38%	Writers Guild of Great Britain
YISA	1,442	1,148	294	25.61%	Yorkshire Independent Staff Association
Total	1,150,153	1,057,894	92,259	8.7%	

Again, as with the larger unions, the great majority, 65 out of the 86, are growing. Overall there is a respectable 8.7% membership increase. The figures for those showing a 100% increase (i.e. the union did not exist in 1997) should perhaps be treated with caution.

Again, strong occupational identity is generally associated with strong growth. For example, unions solely of train drivers, teachers, airline pilots, occupational therapists, actors, senior civil servants, journalists, prison and probation officers, footballers, midwives, authors and health professionals all grew. Unions with less of an occupational identity and more of an industrial or company identity fared less well, such as Accord (all Halifax staff), the Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union, BECTU the general media union, or NUKFAT the general textile and footwear union. The sectorally specific Fire Brigades Union was affected by the 2002 strike and job losses, the NUM and BACM figures reflect both massive job loss, nominal membership gain among ex-miners seeking compensation and big consolidation. There are also some smaller private sector unions which recruit on an industry or company basis, rather than occupationally, and which have done well – such as the rail and maritime union RMT or specialist finance unions like ANGU, Alliance and Leicester, Lloyds TSB, or the rail union, TSSA. Many of the small but company-based finance unions (which are perhaps more like Staff Associations than unions) have grown, unlike the more general finance union UNIFI. Several unions which recruit very senior professionals have grown sharply such as ASPECT (school inspectors), the Hospital Consultants and Prison Governors.

Another factor that emerges is leadership. It is plain that unions operating in very similar territory and with similar structures can fare very differently. Witness the contrast between PAT and the other teaching unions. Among the larger unions it is interesting to note that the RMT and PCS, which have taken a radical stance on many issues, have been highly successful despite both recruiting among skilled trades and administrative staff which are not, as described above, necessarily fertile ground, though they also organise among some associate professionals. It may be no accident that the RMT and PCS, as well as having active radical leadership, also invest a great deal in organising *and* offer members a strong occupational identity *within* the union.

Finally it is worth adding that many of the smaller but flourishing unions have higher subscriptions, partly (but by no means wholly) because their members have higher pay than those of the bigger general unions.

Size: to merge or not to merge?

The future for unions

Tom Wilson

The tables show that smaller unions, on the whole, grow faster than big unions. However it would be paradoxical simply to conclude that small is beautiful when growth is a measure of success. Big unions undoubtedly have more clout with employers, the media and government. They have far more resources to effect change. Mergers can bring simpler and more effective bargaining structures. Unions merge seeking to become stronger. But there is clearly a challenge in marrying the benefits of size with the benefits of strong occupational identity. One answer is to maintain a clear offer to particular occupations or sectors *within* the overall umbrella of a larger union. Many large unions, such as the GMB; AMICUS and TGWU (now Unite) have specialist conferences and structures for decision making on occupationally specific issues such as bargaining strategy. The GMB recognised the importance of occupation by experimentally setting up a dedicated branch for an extremely occupationally distinct group, tattooists²³, rather than the normal practice of recruiting members into more general branches, which has worked well. Going further down the road of such occupational identity or segmentation within unions could reap dividends in greater solidarity with the union for some groups of members. This approach would need to be tested and explored and there are many different models depending on the degree and nature of segmentation. Members of course also want the reassurance of knowing that when it matters they can call on the whole union to stand with them.

Another, more radical answer is to set up semi or wholly autonomous sections or even new unions. For example, UNISON has a contractual arrangement providing trade union functions to the British Association of Occupational Therapists. UNISON and the FDA have also launched a new union, Managers in Partnership, for senior NHS managers which has its own identity, wholly distinct from the parent unions. A third approach is for groups of unions to form confederations, such as the Council of Civil Service Unions, The Alliance of Health Professionals or the Entertainment Unions Alliance which pool certain functions such as research and lobbying while retaining independence and thus their strong occupational identity. It seems likely that more of these kinds of imaginative new structures will be needed to promote the strong occupational identity which professionals, associate professionals and other union members clearly want.

Neither big nor small is necessarily beautiful. Those who are sceptical about mergers will point out that mergers are not in themselves the answer to declining membership, they can simply mask decline. In the corporate world it is estimated that four out of five takeovers fail to add value for shareholders. The success rate for some union mergers may also be questionable. Many union mergers have failed to reap the promised benefits and studies²⁴ have shown that they can, for example, lead not to ending duplication but to 'triplication' as a new structure is created but the previous structures are not removed. There is a danger of a long period of 'planning blight' as energy and attention is focussed inwards on a drawn-out merger process, rather than outwards on members. There are few examples of mergers where financial difficulties were not a major factor behind the merger, though more positive reasons are of course also important. The ratio of officers to members is often better in smaller unions, admittedly in part because they tend to have relatively fewer staff in head office functions such as research, communications or campaigning but also because they will have fewer staff in intermediate and/or management layers. Many smaller unions prize the ease of contact and immediate sense of accountability between member and union which can be lost in a bigger union. Almost all unions

23 The GMB has also recently set up a dedicated branch for Polish Migrants in Southampton, an example of organisation on national not occupational lines. Previous national unions or union organisations such as The Indian Workers Association (IWA) have had less success (though the IWA did dominate many union branches in the Midlands in e.g. Foundry work).

24 See The Trade Union merger process in Europe: defensive adjustment or structural reform? Jeremy Waddington, *Industrial Relations Journal*, Vol 37, 2006; and for a more general discussion on union organisation, structures and finances: *Union Organisation and Activity*, John Kelly and Paul Willman, Routledge 2004.

25 Health and safety has of course long been a major union area of activity but stress is a good example of an issue which is now of epidemic proportions (see Willing Slaves by Madeleine Bunting, Harper Collins 2004) but was low on the health and safety radar until recently. There is also a new interest in happiness or rather 'well-being' at work, (see Changing Job Quality in Great Britain 1982-2004 Brown, Charlwood, Forde and Spencer, DTI Employment Relations Research Series no 70, Dec 2006) which would have invited derision over the bargaining table until recently.

began life seeking to organise a particular occupation, very few unions set out to become general or even sectoral.

However against all those points is the undoubted fact that bigger unions do have more clout. They can deliver major gains for their members using their size and influence.

Perhaps a more useful debate than on the merits of size is on what *kind* of big (or small) union could work best in the twenty-first Century. From a broader perspective it is arguable that while big general unions *can* of course be successful, this is becoming increasingly difficult unless traditional union structures change. The traditional big general union, as a type, flourished in the mid to late twentieth century in an age of national industry-wide collective bargaining with detailed national agreements applying to large numbers of workers. The job of the union official was to advise members on their rights under the national agreement and to organise collective action within a comparatively simpler and more adversarial structure. That model did not need either high subscriptions (since relatively few officials were needed) or a high degree of member engagement with the union, other than for individual's casework, which was conducted almost entirely by activists, outside periods of collective action. Today's context is very different. There are far fewer national agreements; pay and conditions vary much more widely; employment issues are more complex as legislation has widened to cover entire new areas such as equality, parental leave or part-time working; the framework of employment relations is more complex as bargaining ranges across wider terrain (issues such as family friendly working, stress²⁵, age discrimination, skills agreements, or the environment were rarely discussed until the 1990s) and success often depends on building (from strength) a relationship with the employer. In short, twenty-first century unions need much more active member engagement, higher subs, more and more professionally trained officers and activists, and more skilled internal management to deliver benefits for members.

The challenge for big general unions in the early twenty-first century is therefore to create a structure (or if described in commercial terms, a business model) which generates enough subscription income to maintain an organisation capable of generating the services and collective action which today's members want and will support. More income per member (i.e. higher subscriptions) will be needed to employ the professional union officers and organisers and provide the professional support to union activists which is needed in today's more complex and demanding environment. Yet it may be hard to persuade members to pay higher subscriptions without the close identity of member and union which goes with occupationally based unions. Moreover, general unions of lower paid members will have more difficulty raising subs income than those representing better paid associate/professionals. Today's general union members will probably have less homogeneous needs and aspirations (reflecting their greater diversity) meaning that bigger general unions' will need varying or highly flexible 'business models' able to cater for different groups of members. Today's general union may well potentially have more power than a smaller union but may also need higher subscriptions and more sophisticated internal management to function most effectively.

There is perhaps a natural tendency in the union movement towards thinking of merger as, in principle, a good thing. Mergers reflect the value attached to collectivism, rather than competition; to a belief that bigger is inherently stronger and,

perhaps a desire for a rational order, rather than what sometimes appears to be the current messy pattern of bargaining and unionisation. But the evidence of union growth in the tables above should give us pause for thought. Where there is strong competition (e.g. between the teacher unions) density is actually very high. Density is often higher within smaller unions than larger ones. Moreover a more apparently rational pattern of unionisation might quickly become overtaken by changes in the economy and labour force. Perhaps having many vigorous smaller unions is a strength of UK trade unionism, a reflection of dynamic grass roots collectivism. The best way to confront giant multinational corporations may not necessarily involve copying their structures. Rather than seeking always to grow, there may be an optimal size for some unions where, given the constraints on possible structural models, they are most effective. A better way to articulate the urge for more effective and collective action may be to create stronger inter-union structures which, as with the TUC's Disputes Principles and Procedures, regulate but do not necessarily seek to remove competition and encourage different unions to work together (either in confederations or in issue based campaign groupings) wherever that is most effective. To some extent this is already the emerging pattern. If the trends evident in Tables 8 and 9 continue then the larger unions will have a smaller share of total union membership. The recent trend towards fewer and larger unions may slow with a decline in the aggregate size of the largest general unions (even if there are some further mergers between them) and a growth in the aggregate size of the smaller and middle-sized unions.



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What makes a successful union?

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26 Difficult, not impossible, but of dubious value. It would theoretically be possible to categorise all the unions by e.g. size, sector, occupational identity, leadership, investment in organising, occupational level of membership, their gender, age and so forth and then run a regression analysis to find which factors, or combinations of factors, were associated with membership growth or decline. However, when thinking of questions such as why, for example, can the Irish unions apparently organise bar workers better than the English? It seems obvious that any explanations would also need to involve e.g. history, culture, employer attitudes and of course legal frameworks – in other words massive complexity. This is surely right. Organisations of thousands of working people are necessarily complex, sets of statistics can only help ask some of the right questions and point to some broad trends.

Very broadly, Tables 8 and 9 show what kinds of unions are growing. Are there characteristics shared by growing unions from which we can deduce the secret of success? It would be very difficult to construct an objective scientific analysis to identify the factors that make for successful unions²⁶. The world of work is infinitely complex and changeable; so are unions. There is no simple read-off from the tables. But these are four reasonably robust observations:

- 1** Unions with professionals and associate professionals in membership generally do well.
- 2** Unions that have strong occupational identity generally do well.
- 3** General unions fare less well, they are either not growing or growing very little.
- 4** Size is strongly correlated with growth. On the whole smaller unions do better, which may be related to the fact that smaller unions tend to have stronger occupational identity.

More tentatively, and adding to the tables other knowledge about the unions listed, it could be argued that the evidence of the figures also shows that newer, younger unions do well; that a change of leadership often helps a union to revitalise itself (new leadership being both cause and effect); and that unions which have high proportions of women and/or are active on equality issues have also grown. Many unions (large and small) that have grown have turned themselves around after a radical shake up of internal structures and services involving close attention to members' needs, and shifting resources into organising. Examples would include ATL, USDAW, PCS, CONNECT, BALPA and many others. Equally, many unions have grown by continuing to do what they do well.

A 9-point plan for growth

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Looking both at the figures and, more broadly, at other sources of information on union growth suggests the following as the key issues which growing unions are tackling. Taken together they form a recipe or checklist for growth.

1 A new image for the movement

The fact that most union members are now professionals or associate professionals poses some difficult questions for the union movement as a whole. Do unions offer these new kinds of members the kinds of services, communications, image and organisation that they want? Do unions as a whole have the style and character such members would expect? Surveys of the public²⁷ show that unions in general are still seen as associated with the past e.g. the miners strike even while members have a very different and much more positive view of *their own* union. Updating the image of the movement is one of biggest union challenges. Most of the union world's typical features (e.g. the annual TUC Congress by the seaside, branch structures, terminology such as 'bosses') have not changed in over 100 years even though the pattern of unionisation beneath this apparently unaltered surface is radically different. A more accurate, updated picture would bring dividends in added credibility, authority and influence – and in turn help foster further growth. Polling evidence suggests that, to be most credible, unions should aim to be seen as calmly persuasive, focus on the practical benefits of membership²⁸, be realistic in their campaigning aims and reassert the basic value of collective solidarity. Many companies would pay millions for the 'brand' values and recognition which unions and the TUC have, but they would also ensure the brand was fully up-to-date and working effectively. There has been a quiet cultural revolution in many unions and the 'brand' should reflect the new culture.

2 Listen to members

Many unions have turned themselves around by an internal shake-up which included paying close attention to what members felt and wanted from their union. Democratic structures are of course one way in which members' voice can be heard, provided the structures work well. Unions are also using e.g. surveys, polling (e-surveys if members have email) member panels and group discussion as effective ways of supplementing and checking democratic structures. It is standard good practice in other successful membership organisations such as Oxfam or the National Trust to devote substantial, sustained and systematic resources to 'member relations'. Unions could learn from their success. Many unions are already regularly phoning, texting or emailing members just to maintain contact. Unlike e.g. double-glazing cold calling the evidence is overwhelmingly positive, members are delighted to hear from their union. Most never do. The Union Modernisation Fund requires unions to have strategic plans and it is striking how many plans now pay explicit attention and devote major resources to member relations.

3 Support activists

Unions have around 250,000 representatives²⁹ working unpaid for members in their workplaces. That makes unions the biggest voluntary force in the UK, with, for example, more reps than any political party has members. Reps are becoming more representative of members (though they always tend to be older) and union learning reps (ULRs) in particular are more likely to be younger, women and black or from ethnic minorities. The newly developing concept of equality reps will also help improve reps' profile. Successful unions put great effort and care into nurturing their activists; supporting them with training, advice, information; giving warm recognition

²⁷ Opinion Leader Research outlined at a TUC/Unions 21 Seminar on 29 January 2006. Polling shows the four main barriers to people joining are: lack of awareness of what unions are; cost versus evidence of benefit; outdated and militant image (the general public think the typical union member is a miserable middle-aged man) and fear of isolation/victimisation.

²⁸ Compared to non-members, on average, union members are half as likely to be injured, gain 14% more pay, are one third as likely to be low paid, twice as likely to have an equal opportunities policy, 30% more likely to be trained and almost twice as likely to be in a reasonable occupational pension scheme, as well as the 'sword of justice' effect i.e. that members have a voice to stand up for themselves so are less likely to be treated unfairly.

²⁹ See the DTI consultation document on Union Facilities, January 2007.

and regular encouragement. Education and training for reps is crucial. TUC Education (now part of *unionlearn*) trained over 42,000 reps in 2005, a higher figure than when union membership was twice as big in 1979, which reflects the greater complexity and need for training of the reps' job today. A recent joint TUC/Management survey³⁰ found that although the majority of managers welcomed reps and thought they did a good job, the great majority of reps felt they paid a high price for their voluntary activity with a much reduced chance of promotion. Many unions are now seeking agreements to improve their reps facilities and get better support from management. Government is at last consulting on updating the ACAS Code of Practice on Time Off and Facilities, long overdue as the Code says almost nothing about ICT or about the need to reduce workloads, often reps biggest problem.

4 Occupational identity

Doing more to retain a strong identity for members' distinct occupations is clearly vital, particularly for the bigger general unions. New organisational structures may be needed to increase the profile and autonomy of occupational groups *within* larger and general unions. This will not be easy. Activists may feel less strongly about occupational identity than members or potential members. Strong centralised unions may find it hard to allow more autonomy to different internal groups. One way to analyse the issue might be for general unions which organise particular occupations (e.g. nurses or drivers) to compare their success with that of other unions which organise only those occupations. Using member relations' techniques to survey members and potential members might also be illuminating. Sophisticated internal membership data would also be needed to ensure occupationally specific communications got to the right members. Choices could of course also be offered, not all members might necessarily want their occupationally specific journals, emails, training, conferences, voting rights etc and activists might well have a wider identity with the union. Unions could also do more to help emerging occupations self-organise; for example childminders, doormen, or web designers. Many already have their own professional associations, which might 'twin' with unions to provide a union function.

5 Invest in organising

Putting more resources into recruiting and organising, as the most successful unions are doing, is essential. For example, recruiting among students on postgraduate and/or vocational (at university and college) courses will be of growing importance as more and more working people raise their level of skill. As a rough rule of thumb, the 2006 TUC Congress agreed that unions should devote at least 10% of their income to organising. Organising does not just mean handing out union leaflets outside factory gates or trying to make members' hostile to their managers. Good organising is a lot more sophisticated than that and there is certainly no single model. Each union will develop its own appropriate mix of many approaches, all united in the aim of building an active, growing, confident membership and understanding that will not just happen by itself, it takes careful planning and serious resources. There has been a rather sterile debate about 'organising versus servicing', prompted by the need to emphasise that 'servicing' alone was not sustainable but few unions would now seek to organise without at the same time ensuring that new and existing members can be properly 'serviced'. Equally, there is little point in improving services if there are few activists and less activity. Different balances need to be struck between, for example, individual casework and collective action; or between organising and servicing; or between

recruitment and consolidation. Organising strategies all require careful planning, adequate resourcing and some flexibility; they will vary considerably depending on circumstances in the workplace and the nature of unions' membership.

Successful unions also take care to be very clear about what work they expect of different levels of activist and what work officers should undertake, and this too will vary. Every union seeks to use casework for organising (and many members have become activists through their own case) but not every kind of case can be 'collectivised' and used as the basis for organising. More professional/associate professional members' may be less willing to be activists and expect a higher level of servicing but at the same time want more accountability and involvement in developing union policy on professional issues. For some unions it may be more appropriate to train existing staff in organising, rather than leave the work to a separate organising department. The TUC's organising academy now does far more in-service training than training in organising for new staff; there is room for both. For some unions a central call centre staffed by highly trained activists or officers, leaving the local activists to concentrate on collective and organising issues, might be the best way to provide a professional casework service. Whatever the mix, successful unions devote a lot of time, money and attention to organising.

6 Skills, learning and continuing professional development

Union members will more than ever need to learn throughout their lives, as technology and work organisation change. Both in the UK and the USA³¹, unions and professional associations are increasingly offering continuing professional development (CPD) and training as a benefit of membership. Unions are also seeking to press employers to invest more (and more fairly) in training, though employers are resistant, preferring to 'consult' rather than negotiate. The phenomenal rise in ULRs, up from 5,000 in 2003 to 15,000 in 2007, shows the appetite among members for learning. Many of the most successful and growing unions are placing much more emphasis on CPD and skills, either by direct delivery³² or by campaigning for better employer provision³³. The creation of unionlearn by the TUC is a reflection of this new importance. Although the majority of ULR activity involves the less skilled e.g. provision of 'skills for life' and basic skills, a growing number are involved in higher level training. TUC surveys³⁴ of specialist managerial and professional unions have shown that their members' rate CPD as highly as pay. All union members know that skills, as much as industrial muscle, are the key to higher pay or a better job. Successful unions invest substantially in skills and training for members.

7 Invest in management

Using members' money most effectively means professional management. Unions are complex organisations, operating in a difficult legislative, business, media and political environment. They need professional committed managers and that in turn requires a culture and structures which recognise the importance of good management. Many unions are doing exactly this by, for example, seeking the Investors in People (IIP) standard; twice as many unions have achieved IIP as the average among small businesses. People management is the key. Establishing internal recruitment, career and succession planning will become ever more important, including encouragement for activists and staff to develop by moving between unions and more openness to job sharing, sabbaticals, job exchanges and open recruitment of talented managers from e.g. business or the third sector. Resource and asset management is also crucial. Surveys³⁵ of union internal financial

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³¹ The 21st Century at Work, Karoly and Panis, Rand Corporation for the US Dept of Labor, 2004; pp 204 – 20.

³² The NUJ has recently quadrupled the number of courses for journalists on keyboard inputting; provision of such CPD is a big factor in recent NUJ growth.

³³ The teacher unions have been waging a campaign for in-service training to be more sensitive to teachers' working hours.

³⁴ TUC/ACM sample survey of 12 SMP unions, conducted in 2005.

³⁵ Kelly and Willman, op cit.

management have shown wide variations between comparable unions in member/officer or income/assets or salary/total expenditure ratios. There has often been little correlation between union size and the degree of professional internal management expertise in areas such as payroll, estates, pensions, finance, ICT, member relations or HR. However all unions are steadily improving and this greater investment in professional union management will pay dividends in greater effectiveness.

8 Equality

For unions, equality cannot be an optional extra. It is a rallying call to take action against unfairness and ranges far more widely than equal pay for women, important though that is. A strong sense of fairness is what motivates most members and activists. Unfair discrimination is often about pay but also about conditions, contracts, access to jobs and promotion. Those cannot be systematically tackled without putting equality at the centre of all union activity. In general, unions seen as dynamic and growing are those that prioritise and talk the language of equality. Almost always, unions seen as conservative and in decline do not. Equality is fundamental because it helps challenge the dominant way of thinking about the organisation of work. For example, the campaign for equal rights for part-time workers helps the fight for more family-friendly working which in turn helps the campaign to organise work round the needs of people, not the other way round. The fight against race or sex discrimination at work helps the wider fight for civil liberties, for a fairer education and training system and for an end to the occupational segregation which still blights many industries. Unions' campaigns against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation have helped the remarkable recent change in public attitudes, for example towards Civil Partnerships. More equal societies are happier societies and unionised workplaces are more equal with narrower gender differentials and twice the likelihood of equal opportunities policies and agreements. Work has become more intense (arguably less happy for many) throughout the 1990s, with a major increase in stress³⁶. Many union campaigns are now as much about better quality of work as pay, often driven by a concern to improve both work and family life. Putting equality at the centre of union activity vividly demonstrates that fairness, not self interest, is what drives unions. It keeps unions in close touch with members, helps in organising, inspires activists and staff and improves unions' media profile. It should be the central touchstone for successful unions.

9 Unions in society

Historically, unions used to be a strong part of society. They were prominent in the media and in popular culture. Trades Councils were active in local towns and cities. Unions were an accepted part of society's landscape. Much of that has gone; unions have until recently often been represented, to put it bluntly, as old fashioned dinosaurs and for losers. Or else just ignored; few films, magazines, radio or TV programmes (such as soaps) even mention them. Yet, paradoxically, union membership is higher now than in 1946, perhaps the highest point of union influence after the war. Unions are airbrushed out of the landscape, despite their continued strength at work, not because of a media conspiracy but partly because unions have become seen as just about work and disengaged from wider social movements and organisations. Young people passionate about social justice have been more likely to get involved in single-issue organisations. Unions were seen to care only about their members' jobs and pay, less about wider social issues.

³⁶ See Changing job quality in Great Britain, 1998–2004; op cit. Overall, job quality declined in the 1990s and has not risen since. Employees' sense of satisfaction with their work has improved but work intensity has risen substantially with a marked increase (particularly in new workplaces) in worry about work outside working hours. ICT such as the Blackberry, (AKA Crackberry), routinisation, permanent reorganisation, longer travelling time to (and for some at) work and a culture change towards performance driven by targets and inspection are the scourges of modern life.

All that is changing. The image of unions is slowly shifting away from “I’m all right Jack” to being associated with ‘sword of justice’³⁷ campaigning for fair treatment at work and on broader issues connected with work. It may be no accident that many of the most successful unions are also those which have campaigned hardest against the BNP and racism, against cuts in public services in local communities, have lobbied to keep open post offices and college courses, engaged shareholder support against corporate greed, worked with local religious groups to help migrant workers, or negotiated a better deal for pensioners. All of these kinds of campaigns are seen to re-engage unions with local communities, wider society and social justice. Members do not join unions just for instrumental reasons but, to varying degrees, to be part of an organisation (like a charity), which cares about social justice. For activists this side of union activity is probably even more important. Employers and government find it more difficult to be hostile to, in fact often wish to be seen to support, unions that are winning popular support and campaigning for socially just causes. Investing resources in such wider campaigns will rarely bring instant rewards but in the long run is essential, both for individual union’s long-term growth and the de-airbrushing of the wider union movement in media portrayal of everyday life.

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37 ‘I’m All Right Jack’ was a popular 1960s comedy film which portrayed unions and management as equally lazy and selfish. There are no equivalent films today because unions are much less visible in popular culture; however, there are many union-friendly small circulation films made by directors such as Ken Loach, which is perhaps a sign of unions’ lower but more positive

Appendix 1

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UK union membership 1997–2004 adjusted for mergers and transfers

(Figures compiled from CO reports and union records, compiled with the help of Matt Sheldon to whom grateful thanks are due)

Name of the union	Members Dec 1997	Ajusted Members Dec 1997	Members Dec 2004	Actual change in members 1997–2004	% Change in members 1997–2004	Nohgtes ET: engagements transferred fr: from
Abbey National Group Union	7,612	7,612	8,952	1,340	17.60%	
Accord	26,217	26,217	25,759	-458	-1.75%	
The Aegon UK Staff Association	0		2,518	2,518	100.00%	
Alliance and Leicester Group Union of Staff	3,290	3,413	2,454	-959	-28.10%	ET fr Girobank Senior Managers Assoc 15.11.01
Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union	720,296	725,045		-725,045	-100.00%	ET fr Cabin Crew 89 19/3/99; ET fr AMU 7/3/01; ET fr *British Aerospace Senior S Ass 29/9/00; Amalg w. MSFU to form Amicus 1/1/02
Alliance for Finance				0		Created 00/01
Ambulance Service Union			1,818	1,818	100.00%	Created in 99/00
Amicus		1,143,702	1,159,755	16,053	1.40%	Created by amalg of AEEU and MSFU 1/1/02; ET fr CGNU Staff Assoc 9/1/03; ET fr UTW 13/11/02
Anchor Group Staff Association			1,220	1,220	100.00%	
Aspect	2,422	2,422	3,785	1,363	56.28%	
Associated Chiropodists and Podiatrists Union	352	352	358	6	1.70%	Created 02/03
Associated Metalworkers Union	815	815		-815	-100.00%	ET to AEEU 7/3/01
Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen	14,426	14,426	18,274	3,848	26.67%	
Association for Clinical Biochemistry	2,168	2,168	1,769	-399	-18.40%	
Association for College Management	3,221	3,221	3,660	439	13.63%	
Association of Cambridge University Assistants	1,085	1,085	430	-655	-60.37%	
Association of Educational Psychologists	2,194	2,194	2,941	747	34.05%	
Association of Flight Attendants (Council 07)	844	844		-844	-100.00%	
Association of Head Teachers in Scotland	1,446	1,446	1,343	-103	-7.12%	
Association of Licensed Aircraft Engineers (1981)	1,604	1,604	1,862	258	16.08%	
Association of Local Authority Chief Executives	338	338	328	-10	-2.96%	
Association of Magisterial Officers	5,675	5,675	7,363	1,688	29.74%	
Association of Management and Professional Staffs			2,098	2,098	100.00%	

Name of the union	Members Dec 1997	Ajusted Members Dec 1997	Members Dec 2004	Actual change in members 1997–2004	% Change in members 1997–2004	Notes
Association of Plastic Operatives and Engineers	109	109	145	36	33.03%	Ceased to exist in 1997
Association of Premier League and Football League Referees and Linesmen	677	677		-677	-100.00%	Ceased to exist in 1997
Association of Principal Fire Officers			500	500	100.00%	
Association of Professional Ambulance Personnel	2,685	2,685	3,120	435	16.20%	
Association of Professional Music Therapists in Great Britain	380	380	574	194	51.05%	
Association of Public Service Finance Officers	967	967		-967	-100.00%	Ceased to exist 00/01
Association of Revenue and Customs	2,295	2,295	2,370	75	3.27%	
Association of School and College Leaders	8,708	8,708		-8,708	-100.00%	
Association of Somerset Inseminators	18	18	14	-4	-22.22%	
Association of Teachers and Lecturers	153,343	153,343	195,511	42,168	27.50%	
Association of Theatre Personnel Nationwide	108	108		-108	-100.00%	Ceased to exist 01/02
Association of University Teachers	34,575	37,604	48,355	10,751	28.59%	ET fr AUCL 1/9/97
Association of University and College Lecturers	3,029	3,029		-3,029	-100.00%	ET fr AUCL 1/9/97
Audit Commission Staff Association	625	625	783	158	25.28%	
AXIS The AXA Sun Life Staff Association	2,106	2,106		-2,106	-100.00%	ET to UNIFI 23/10/00
Bakers, Food and Allied Workers' Union	30,488	30,488	27,442	-3,046	-9.99%	
Balfour Beatty Group Staff Association	1,740	1,740	2,002	262	15.06%	
Banking Insurance and Finance Union	112,972	112,972		-112,972	-100.00%	Amalg w. UNIFI & NSA to form UNIFI 11/5/99
Basketball Players Association	105	105		-105	-100.00%	
Benefits Agency Sessional Doctors Association	54	54		-54	-100.00%	Ceased to exist 00/01
Birmingham Union of Club Stewards	108	108	36	-72	-66.67%	
Boots Pharmacists' Association	636	636	481	-155	-24.37%	
Britannia Staff Union	2,184	2,184	2,337	153	7.01%	
Britannic Field Staff Association	1,663	1,663		-1,663	-100.00%	Ceased to exist 01/02
British Air Line Pilots Association	6,005	6,005	8,032	2,027	33.76%	
British Association of Advisers and Lecturers in Physical Education			520	520	100.00%	
British Association of Colliery Management	4,313	4,313	3,340	-973	-22.56%	
British Association of Dental Nurses	2,865	2,865	5,535	2,670	93.19%	
British Association of Journalists	591	591	920	329	55.67%	
British Association of Occupational Therapists Ltd	15,367	15,367	26,721	11,354	73.89%	
British Dental Association	15,435	15,435	18,602	3,167	20.52%	

Name of the union	Members Dec 1997	Ajusted Members Dec 1997	Members Dec 2004	Actual change in members 1997-2004	% Change in members 1997-2004	Notes
British Dietetic Association			5,748	5,748	100.00%	
British Medical Association	104,344	104,344	133,160	28,816	27.62%	
British Orthoptic Society	864	864	1,086	222	25.69%	
British Union of Social Work Employees			1,174	1,174	100.00%	
Broadcasting Entertainment Cinematograph and Theatre Union	29,243	29,243	26,285	-2,958	-10.12%	
Cabin Crew 89	3,934	3,934		-3,934	-100.00%	ET to AEEU 19/3/99
Card Setting Machine Tenters Society	88	88		-88	-100.00%	
CGNU Staff Association	5,217	5,217		-5,217	-100.00%	ET to Amicus 9/1/03
CGU Managers Association	256	256		-256	-100.00%	
Chartered Society of Physiotherapy	35,000	35,000	43,748	-8,748	-24.99 %	
Cheshire Building Society Staff Association	347	347	411	64	18.44%	
Church and Oswaldtwistle Power Loom Overlookers Society	13	13		-13	-100.00%	Ceased to exist 04/05
City Screen Staff Forum			0			Created 03/04
Civil and Public Services Association	111,657	111,657		-111,657	-100.00%	Amalg w.PSTCU to from PCS Union 10/3/98
Communication Managers Association	13,708	13,708		-13,708	-100.00%	T of E to MSFU 8/5/98
Communication Workers Union	273,814	273,814	241,849	-31,965	-11.67%	
Community & Youth Workers Union	2,478	2,478	4,800	2,322	93.70%	
Confederation of Shipbuilding and Engineering Unions	0	0		0		
Connect; The Union for Professionals in Communications	16,962	16,962	19,761	2,799	16.50%	
Council of Civil Service Unions				0		
Derbyshire Group Staff Union	554	554	477	-77	-13.90%	
Dexion Staff Association	195	195		-195	-100.00%	
Diageo Staff Association	562	562	510	-52	-9.25%	
Diplomatic Service Association	665	665	788	123	18.50%	
Directors Guild of Great Britain	832	832	863	31	3.73%	
Dunfermline Building Society Staff Association	240	240	236	-4	-1.67%	
Eagle Star Managers' Association	327	327		-327	-100.00%	
Educational Institute of Scotland	50,807	50,807	57,073	6,266	12.33%	ET fr *Scottish Further and Higher Education Assoc 3/11/03 (no figures for 1997 membership)
Ellington Branch of the North East Area of the National Union of Mineworkers	230	230	226	-4	-1.74%	
Engineering Craft and Technicians Association	183	183		-183	-100.00%	Ceased to exist 02/03
Engineering and Fasteners Trade Union	245	245	47	-198	-80.82%	

Name of the union	Members Dec 1997	Ajusted Members Dec 1997	Members Dec 2004	Actual change in members 1997–2004	% Change in members 1997–2004	Notes
Engineers and Managers Association	29,562	29,562		-29,562	-100.00%	Amalg w. IPMS to form Prospect 1/11/01
Engineering Officers Technical Association	440	440	199	-241	-54.77%	
Equity (Incorporating the Variety Artistes' Federation)	34,502	34,502	36,668	2,166	6.28%	
FDA	9,206	9,206	12,765	3,559	38.66%	
Federation of Entertainment Unions	0	0	0	0		
Federation of Professional Railway Staff	600	600	200	-400	-66.67%	
Fire Brigades Union	56,943	56,943	49,544	-7,399	-12.99%	
Fire Officers' Association	640	640	867	227	35.47%	
Friends Provident Line Managers Association	107	107	37	-70	-65.42%	
G4S Justice Services Staff Association			1,322	1,322	100.00%	
Gallaher Sales Staff Association	175	175	182	7	4.00%	
Gas Managers Association	656	656		-656	-100.00%	ET to GMB 29/10/98
General Dental Practitioners Association	2,000	2000	1,219	-781	-39.05%	
General Federation of Trade Unions			30	30	100.00%	
General Practitioners Union			63	63	100.00%	Created 02/03
General Union of Loom Overlookers	350	350	211	-139	-39.71%	Transf of Eng from United Association of Power Loom Overlookers 26/3/97, Amalgamated Power Loom Overlookers Association 26/3/97
Girobank Senior Managers Association	123	123		-123	-100.00%	ET to ALGUS 15/11/02
GMB	709,708	709,524	571,690	-148,834	-20.66%	ET fr GMA 29/10/98; ET fr MPOU 31/1/01
Government Communications Staff Federation	2,199	2,199		-2,199	-100.00%	Eng transf to Public Services Tax & Commerce Union 4/9/97
Graphical Paper and Media Union	204,822	204,822	93,198	-111,624	-54.50%	
Guild of Professional Teachers of Dancing	1,049	1,049	823	-226	-21.54%	
Hambro Staff Association	250	250		-250	-100.00%	ET to NGSU 14/8/00
Harrods Staff Union	9	9	5	-4	-44.44%	
Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference			327	327	100.00%	
Hongkong Bank Group UK Staff Association	121	121		-121	-100.00%	Ceased to exist 04/05
Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association	2,264	2.264	2,951	687	30.34%	
Hyde and District Textile (Technicians and Operatives) Association	51	51	10	-41	-80.39%	
Ice Hockey Players Association (Great Britain)			546	546	100.00%	Created 99/00

Name of the union	Members Dec 1997	Ajusted Members Dec 1997	Members Dec 2004	Actual change in members 1997-2004	% Change in members 1997-2004	Notes
Immigration and Nationality Workers' Union			0	0		
Immigration Service Union	2,166	2,166	3,946	1,780	82.18%	
Independent Federation of Nursing in Scotland	546	546	1,172	626	114.65%	
Independent Pilots Federation			399	399	100.00%	Created 01/02
Institute of Football Management and Administration	710	710	715	5	0.70%	
Institute of Professional Driving Examiners	153	153		-153	-100.00%	Ceased to exist 00/01
Institution of Professionals Managers and Specialists	74,584	74,584		-74,584	-100.00%	Amalg w. EMA to form Prospect 1/11/01
Institute of Journalists (Trade Union)	917	917	1017	100	10.91%	
International Federation of Actors			104	104	100.00%	
International Transport Workers Federation			0	0		
Irish Bank Officials Association	14,217	14,217	18,240	4,023	28.30%	
Iron and Steel Trades Confederation	32,299	35,854	27,661	-8,193	-22.85%	ET fr NLBD 8/2/00; ET fr PLCWTWU 17/8/00
Joint Committee of Light Metal Trades Unions (1992)	0	0		0		
Jones & Shipman Administrative Staff Association	51	51		-51	-100.00%	Ceased to exist 03/04
Lawson Mardon Star Ltd Managerial Staff Association	63	63	33	-30	-47.62%	
Lecturers Employment Advice and Action Fellowship	184	184	371	187	101.63%	
Leeds and Holbeck Building Society Staff Association	303	303	451	148	48.84%	
Leek United Building Society Staff Association			126	126	100.00%	
Leicestershire Overmen Deputies and Shotfirers Association			76	76	100.00%	
Lloyds Register (UK) Staff Association	1,068	1,068		-1,068	-100.00%	ET to MSFU 18/10/00
Lloyds TSB Group Union	28,340	28,340	43,848	15,508	54.72%	
Locum Doctors Association			1,010	1,010	100.00%	Created 04/05
Lufthansa Staff Association United Kingdom	181	181		-181	-100.00%	ET to MSFU 28/9/99
Managerial and Professional Officers Union	10,160	10,160		-10,160	-100.00%	ET fr *Society of Chief Officers of Probation 3/4/00; ET to GMB 31/1/01

Name of the union	Members Dec 1997	Ajusted Members Dec 1997	Members Dec 2004	Actual change in members 1997–2004	% Change in members 1997–2004	Notes
Manufacturing Science and Finance Union	416,000	446,935		-446,935	-100.00%	Eng tr fr College of Health Care Chaplains 22/4/97; ET fr CMA 8/5/98; ET fr *Corp of London S Ass 4/11/99; ET fr LSAUK 28/9/99; ET fr Nielson S Ass 11/5/99; ET fr URSAS 26/4/99; ET fr UFAA 16/11/99; ET fr BSU 30/11/99; ET fr NUIW 29/12/99; ET fr LR(UK) S Ass 18/10/00; ET fr *Leicester Housing Assoc Staff Assoc 6/6/01; Amalg w. AEEU to form Amicus 1/1/02
Midland Area Association of Colliery Officials	320	320		-320	-100.00%	ET to NACODS 12.8.03
Military and Orchestral Musical Instrument Makers Trade Society	66	66		-66	-100.00%	Ceased to exist 01/02
Musicians Union	30,480	30,480	30,382	-98	-0.32%	
NAPO – The Trade Union and Professional Association for Family Court and Probation Staff	6,378	6,378	8,432	2,054	32.20%	
National Association of Colliery Overmen Deputies and Shotfirers (Scottish Area)	75	75		-75	-100.00%	
National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers	783	783	450	-333	-42.53%	ET fr MAACO 12/8/03; ET fr NACODS (Yorkshire)
National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers (Northumberland)	13	13		-13	-100.00%	Ceased to exist 01/02
National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers (South Wales Area)	45	45	833	788	1751.11%	
National Association of Colliery Overmen, Deputies and Shotfirers (Yorkshire Area)	1,321	1,321		-1,321	-100.00%	ET to NACODS 12/8/03
National Association of Co-operative Officials	3,169	3,169	2,532	-637	-20.10%	
National Association of Head Teachers	44,164	44,164	40,524	-3,640	-8.24%	
National Association of Licensed House Managers	5,690	5,690		-5,690	-100.00%	Eng transf (w.6,127 members) to TGWU 28/1/97
National Association of NFU Group Secretaries	739	739	593	-146	-19.76%	
National Association of Schoolmasters and the Union of Women Teachers	245,932	245,932	327,953	82,021	33.35%	
National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education	65,266	65,266	67,523	2,257	3.46%	
National Farmers' Union Staff Association			143	143	100.00%	
National Federation of Sub-Postmasters	13,449	13,449	10,094	-3,355	-24.95%	
National House Building Council Staff Association	504	504	526	22	4.37%	
National League of the Blind and Disabled	2,142	2,142		-2,142	-100.00%	ET to ISTC 8/2/00

Name of the union	Members Dec 1997	Ajusted Members Dec 1997	Members Dec 2004	Actual change in members 1997–2004	% Change in members 1997–2004	Notes
National Society for Education in Art and Design	2,365	2,365	2,115	-250	-10.57%	
National Union of Club Stewards	980	980		-980	-100.00%	Ceased to exist 01/02
National Union of Domestic Appliances and General Operatives	2,250	2,250	1,628	-622	-27.64%	
National Union of Flint Glassworkers	612	612	149	-463	-75.65%	
National Union of Insurance Workers	10,347	10,347		-10,347	-100.00%	ET to MSFU 29/12/99
National Union of Journalists	31,786	31,786	35,844	4,058	12.77%	
National Union of Knitwear Footwear and Apparel Trades	38,075	38,075	9,741	-28,334	-74.42%	ET fr Amalgamated Association of Beamers Twisters and Drawers 23/1/98
National Union of Lock and Metal Workers	4,199	4,199	2,967	-1,232	-29.34%	
National Union of Marine Aviation and Shipping Transport Officers	18,516	18,516	18,719	203	1.10%	
National Union of Mineworkers	8,665	8,665	15,320	6,655	76.80%	
National Union of Mineworkers (Cokemen's Area)	234	234	18	-216	-92.31%	
National Union of Mineworkers (Colliery Officials and Staffs Area)	515	515		-515	-100.00%	
National Union of Mineworkers (Colliery Officials and Staffs Area) Region No 4	243	243	162	-81	-33.33%	
National Union of Mineworkers (Colliery Officials and Staffs Area) Region No.2	152	152		-152	-100.00%	Ceased to exist 03/04
National Union of Mineworkers (Colliery Officials and Staffs Area) Scottish Region Number 8	120	120	39	-81	-67.50%	
National Union of Mineworkers (Derbyshire Area)	18	18	8,768	8,750	48611.11%	
National Union of Mineworkers (Durham Area)	16,533	16,533	15,565	-968	-5.85%	
National Union of Mineworkers (Leicester Area)	104	104	43	-61	-58.65%	
National Union of Mineworkers (Midlands Area)	251	251	1	-250	-99.60%	
National Union of Mineworkers (North East Area)	272	272	195	-77	-28.31%	
National Union of Mineworkers (North Wales Area)	49	49	3	-46	-93.88%	
National Union of Mineworkers (Northumberland Area)	290	290	240	-50	-17.24%	
National Union of Mineworkers (Powergroup Area)	21	21		-21	-100.00%	Ceased to exist 00/01
National Union of Mineworkers (Scotland Area)	1,294	1,294	120	-1174	-90.73%	
National Union of Mineworkers (South Wales Area)	2,390	2,390	798	-1,592	-66.61%	

Name of the union	Members Dec 1997	Ajusted Members Dec 1997	Members Dec 2004	Actual change in members 1997–2004	% Change in members 1997–2004	Notes
National Union of Mineworkers North Stafford Federation (Midlands Area)	226	226	1	-225	-99.56%	
National Union of Mineworkers North Western, Cheshire and Cumbria Miners' Association	16	16	14	-2	-12.50%	
National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers	56,337	56,337	71,544	15,207	26.99%	
National Union of Teachers	276,819	276,819	330,709	53,890	19.47%	
Nationwide Group Staff Union	9,409	9,659	12,078	2,419	25.04%	ET fr Hambro S Ass 14/8/00
NatWest Staff Association	35,806	35,806		-35,806	-100.00%	Amalg w. BIFU & UNIFI to form UNIFI 11/5/99
NCH Marketing Services Ltd Staff Association	272	272		-272	-100.00%	Ceased to exist 04/05
Neilson Staff Association	397	397		-397	-100.00%	ET to MSFU 11/5/99
Nestle Field Sales Staff Association				0		
NISA			2,147	2,147	100.00%	
Northern Carpet Trades Union	655	655		-655	-100.00%	ET to TGWU 2/5/00
Offshore Industry Liaison Committee	1,358	1,358	1,738	380	27.98%	
Organisation of CPL Technicians	107	107		-107	-100.00%	Ceased to exist 02/03
Pattern Weavers Association	46	46		-46	-100.00%	Ceased to exist 00/01
POA	28,699	32,004	34,458	2,454	7.67%	ET fr SPOA 25/4/00
Portman Group Staff Association	536	536	741	205	38.25%	
Power Loom Carpet Weavers and Textile Workers' Union	1,413	1,413		-1,413	-100.00%	ET to ISTC 17/8/00
Prison Governors Association	924	924	1,137	213	23.05%	
Prison Service Union	2,316	2,316	4,769	2,453	105.92%	
Prison Staff Association			143	143	100.00%	Created in 1998
Professional Association of Cabin Crew Employees			35	35	100.00%	
Professional Association of Teachers	35,739	35,739	34,104	-1,635	-4.57%	
Professional Cricketers Association			380	380	100.00%	Created in 1997
Professional Flight Instructors Association	91	91		-91	-100.00%	
Professional Footballers Association			3,918	3,918	100.00%	
Professional Rugby Players Association			460	460	100.00%	
Prospect		104,146	104,749	104,749	0.58%	Created by amalg of EMA and IPMS 1/11/01
Public and Commercial Services Union		167,953	311,249	143,296	85.32%	Formed by amalg of PSTCU and CPSA 10/3/98
Public Services Tax and Commerce Union	154,245	154,245		-154,245	-100.00%	ET fr Government Communications Staff Fed 4/9/97; Amalg w. CPSA 10/3/98 to form PCS Union

Name of the union	Members Dec 1997	Ajusted Members Dec 1997	Members Dec 2004	Actual change in members 1997-2004	% Change in members 1997-2004	Notes
Public Transport (Staff) Consortium	270	270		-270	-100.00%	
Retail Book Stationery and Allied Trades Employees Association	4,678	4,678	3,985	-693	-14.81%	
Retained Firefighters Union	4,175	4,175	4,210	35	0.84%	
Retired Officers Association			1,253	1,253	100.00%	
Royal College of Midwives	34,842	34,842	37,007	2,165	6.21%	
Royal College of Nursing of the United Kingdom			382,141	382,141	100.00%	
Royal Lancaster Hotel Staff Association	28	28		-28	-100.00%	Ceased to exist 00/01
Royal London and District Managers Association	106	106		-106	-100.00%	Ceased to exist in 1997
Royal Society of Chemistry Staff Association	59	59		-59	-100.00%	Ceased to exist in 99/00
RSPB Staff Association			731	731	100.00%	
Scarborough Building Society Staff Association	100	100	188	88	88.00%	
Scottish Artists Union			173	173	100.00%	Created 03/04
Scottish Carpet Workers Union	620	620	145	-475	-76.61%	
Scottish Prison Officers Association	3,305	3,305		-3,305	-100.00%	ET to POA 25/4/00
Scottish Secondary Teachers Association	6,923	6,923	8,225	1,302	18.81%	
Scottish Union of Power Loom Technicians	42	42		-42	-100.00%	Ceased to exist 00/01
Self Employed and Employed Electricians Association	57	57		-57	-100.00%	Ceased to exist 00/01
Sheffield Wool Shear Workers Trade Union	11	11	9	-2	-18.18%	
Shield Guarding Staff Association			394	394	100.00%	Created 03/04
Skipton Staff Association	637	637	1337	700	109.89%	
Skipton and District Power Loom Overlookers Association	47	47		-47	-100.00%	Ceased to exist in 1998
Society of Authors Ltd	6,273	6,273	7,811	1,538	24.52%	
Society of Chiropodists and Podiatrists	6,976	6,976	8,108	1,132	16.23%	
Society of Local Council Clerks	2,250	2,250	3,039	789	35.07%	
Society of Radiographers	13,771	13,771	17,383	3,612	26.23%	
Society of Registration Officers (Births, Deaths and Marriages)	401	401	265	-136	-33.92%	
Society of Union Employees (UNISON)	227	227	304	77	33.92%	
Stable Lads Association	354	354	685	331	93.50%	
Staff Association of Bank of Baroda (UK Region)	112	112	90	-22	-19.64%	
Staff Union West Bromwich Building Society	377	377	493	116	30.77%	
Staffordshire Building Society Staff Association	305	305	8	-297	-97.38%	

Name of the union	Members Dec 1997	Ajusted Members Dec 1997	Members Dec 2004	Actual change in members 1997–2004	% Change in members 1997–2004	Notes
Teston Independent Society of Cricket Ball Makers	18	18	8	-10	-55.56%	
Trades Union Congress				0		
Transport and General Workers Union	881,357	882,012	806,938	-75,074	-8.51%	ET fr NALHM (6,127) 28/10/97; ET fr NCTU 2/5/00
Transport Salaried Staffs Association	31,132	31,132	32,426	1,294	4.16%	
Twenty-first Century Aircrew			10	10	100.00%	Created 03/04
UBAC	2,662	2,662	1,813	-849	-31.89%	
Undeb Cenedlaethol Athrawon Cymru (The National Association of the Teachers of Wales)	3,641	3,641	4,051	410	11.26%	
UNIFI	42,729	199,445	136,947	62,498	31.34%	Formed by amalg of UNIFI, BIFU & NSA 11/5/99; ET fr AXIS 23/10/00; ET fr WISA 1/6/02
Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians	113,555	113,555	113,280	-275	-0.24%	
Union of Country Sports Workers			4,497	4,497	100.00%	
Union of Democratic Mineworkers	2,483	2,483	2,741	258	10.39%	
Union of Dexion Workers	153	153		-153	-100.00%	Ceased to exist 03/04
Union of Federation of Employed Door Supervisors and Security				0		Created 02/03
Union of Finance Staff	4,509	4,509	4,343	-166	-3.68%	
Union of General & Volunteer Workers			93	93	100.00%	
Union of Royal and Sun Alliance Staff	4,225	4,225		-4,225	-100.00%	ET to MSFU 26/4/99
Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers	293,470	293,470	340,201	46,731	15.92%	
Union of Textile Workers	1,559	1,559		-1,559	-100.00%	ET to Amicus 13/11/02
UNISON: The Public Service Union	1,300,451	1,300,451	1,310,000	9,549	0.73%	
United Friendly Agents Association	1,009	1,009		-1,009	-100.00%	ET to MSFU 16/11/99
United Friendly Head Office Management Association	0	0		0		Ceased to exist in 1997
United Road Transport Union	16,600	16,600	16,839	239	1.44%	
Unity	20,478	20,478	9,166	-11,312	-55.24%	
Warwick International Staff Association			166	166	100.00%	Created 03/04
Welsh Rugby Players Association			120	120	100.00%	Created 02/03
Whatman Staff Association	93	93	106	13	13.98%	
WISA – The Union for Woolwich Staff	5,832	5,832		-5,832	-100.00%	ET to UNIFI 1/6/02
Writers Guild of Great Britain	1,871	1,871	2,140	269	14.38%	
Yorkshire Independent Staff Association	1,148	1,148	1,442	294	25.61%	

Sponsor's ad to follow