

**TIGMOO.co.uk**



# **GUIDE TO UNION BLOGGING 2008**

Published by **TIGMOO.co.uk**  
The network for UK union blogs and bloggers

## What is TIGMOO?

TIGMOO.co.uk is an aggregator service for blogs about unions and unionism in the UK. Over 90 blogs have joined the network, which scans them for new content every hour and publishes a feed of links directly into their stories. By visiting one site, you can stay up to date with over 90 different opinions on union matters.

'TIGMOO' is affectionate insider slang for the labour movement "This Great Movement Of Ours", and the site hopes to contribute to the labour movement by creating an environment where more people are encouraged to talk publicly on the web about their union involvement.

## The top 10 union blogs

This guide is a play on Iain Dale's Total Politics Guide to Political Blogs, which ranks 200 blogs from across the political spectrum. A few blogs from our network figure in it, but union blogs have yet to see the kind of acceptance and growth that political blogging has made in the last year.

The 94 blogs in the TIGMOO network were ranked according to four equally weighted factors: Traffic ratings from Alexa.com, number of posts in the last 8 weeks, number of comments in that time, and the number of inbound links found by Google.

Of course, these technical measures have a huge margin of error, especially when dealing with smaller sites, and quantity doesn't always predict quality. So here, with a considerable pinch of salt, are this year's top 10 trade union blogs, as predicted by TIGMOO.co.uk

### 1: John's Labour blog

Unison convenor reporting on his work as an elected official and union issues in general, with a strong focus on Labour party activism through the Unison Labour Link, and on developments in pensions policy.

[grayee.blogspot.com](http://grayee.blogspot.com)

### 2: The WGGB Blog

The only official national union blog in our top 10, this frequently updated site from the Writers' Guild of Great Britain discusses news and gossip for writers, and gives the union's comment on professional issues, as well as linking liberally to WGGB members' blogs.

[writersguild.blogspot.com](http://writersguild.blogspot.com)

### 3: Union Futures

One of the longest running union blogs, this is a group blog, edited by a Unison activist and co-chair of the Socialist Youth Network. Regular and opinionated news on union and political activism.

[unionfutures.blogspot.com](http://unionfutures.blogspot.com)

### 4: Action Without Theory

Manchester union activist writing on unions, politics and popular culture with a regional slant - and a heavy preference for punk rock.

[action-without-theory.blogspot.com](http://action-without-theory.blogspot.com)

### 5: Labour and capital

Former union staffer turned investment analyst writing on the potential links between the labour movement and high finance. Behavioural economics, corporate social responsibility and developments in pensions are recurring themes.

[labourandcapital.blogspot.com](http://labourandcapital.blogspot.com)



**6: Jon's union blog**

Another long-running union blogger. This Unison NEC member reports back on his work as an elected official and activism with the Labour Representation Committee, as well as discussing Unison developments and wider union and political issues. [jonrogers1963.blogspot.com](http://jonrogers1963.blogspot.com)

**7: Johnninit**

"Scrapbook of a labor geek" - Union staffer's personal comments on international unions' growing use of new media in communications and organising, especially Web 2.0 technologies. [www.johnninit.co.uk](http://www.johnninit.co.uk)

**8: Eric Lee**

Internet consultant and Labourstart.org founder writes about unions and communications technology, union solidarity campaigns and international relations issues from the viewpoint of the worldwide labour movement. [www.ericlee.me.uk](http://www.ericlee.me.uk)

**9: Iansredlog**

"For Workers' Unity and Socialism" - A Southampton Unite and Labour Party activist comments on current affairs and politics from a Labour left viewpoint. [ian1961.blogspot.com](http://ian1961.blogspot.com)

**10: John McD's union blog**

This Unison convenor and NEC member reports back on his activities and opinions. Focus on building trade union militancy. Not to be confused with the other John McD who ran a union blog in the TIGMOO network last year whilst challenging for the Labour leadership. [johnmcdsunionblog.blogspot.com](http://johnmcdsunionblog.blogspot.com)

## Who blogs?

11% of internet users (about 50million people worldwide) are regular blog readers. Blog network Technorati.com last year estimated there were around 84 million blogs in the world, with 175,000 new blogs starting every day (though nearly half as many closing too).

Most blogs around the world are very small traffic sites, with the more popular ones counting their users in the tens of thousands, (except for some US megablogs - like the million visitors a day that the political blog Daily Kos receives). However, many blogs focus on topics or professions, where they are more widely read by people interested and influential within that community. For example some of the UK's bigger political blogs are still small in audience compared to news services, but are read extensively by politicians, journalists and activists.

And it's not just individuals and pundits who run blogs. Companies are finding that openness pays dividends. Software giant Microsoft had serious image problems as an evil corporate monolith, but this has been partly changed by the fact that thousands of their product managers and developers have been empowered to write personalised blogs, and can respond directly and honestly to comments from important stakeholders. This has made some of their key customer groups feel much more involved and positive to the company.

## Why should unions blog?

There are as many reasons for blogging as there are blogs themselves. Here are a few situations where unions could gain an advantage by engaging with blogging:

**Insight** - Judy McKnight, the former General Secretary of NAPO, maintained a blog during a lengthy review of the Government's offender management systems. As the consultation and legislation had profound implications for their profession, her blog was keenly followed by members, and Judy could post immediate updates herself, giving members a view directly into the process and the union's work.

**Profile** - SEIU's Andy Stern blogs at popular US group blog Huffington Post. This gains him an instant audience of people who are interested in politics, and means he is being seen in the same place as other influential political commentators. One caution though is that he loses control over comments, and has to rely on HP to moderate his blog. In the UK, union leaders such as Brendan Barber, Tony Woodley and Mark Serwotka have taken a similar approach with the Guardian's comment blog CommentsFree, but an interesting example comes from Unite AGS Tony Burke, who blogs on trade magazine PrintWeek's own group blog. Tony represents the printing section of Unite, and this is an ideal way for him to get the union's message unmediated onto a site well used by members and potential members.

**Co-ordination** - During the campaign to stop luxury clothing firm Burberry from

moving production from Wales to China, local GMB officers and activists used a blog (Keep Burberry British) as a focal point to keep people up to date with the dispute. The diary format meant that anyone who wanted to stay up to date with the fast moving campaign had one bookmark to visit, for updates, photos, videos, events and actions from a number of activists.

**Sharing** - BuyoutWatch is a blog from the International Union of Foodworkers, tracking private equity buyouts. They list and link to influential articles and research to keep people in the union movement up to date with an important new area for them.

**Engagement** - AFL-CIO now is a very ambitious project from the US union federation. It was launched because a hostile US media seldom takes notice of union news. The AFL-CIO have identified the burgeoning US political blog scene as an area of media where they can potentially have significant influence. The project is as much about engaging with other bloggers as about writing their own blog, and the staff read and comment on many more pieces than they actually write. They build relationships with friendly bloggers, and have had a lot of success in getting some very popular sites to cover union stories and opinions, and come to the AFL-CIO for comment.

**Collaboration** - The GM Workers' Blog is run by the European Metalworkers' Federation. It's an open group blog linking workers in different GM plants, to help grassroots activists be better informed about developments in other parts of the company.

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For comment and news from over 90 union blogs, 24 hours a day, visit [www.tigmoo.co.uk](http://www.tigmoo.co.uk)