



BAKERS' UNION PARLIAMENTARY GROUP

Chair: John McDonnell MP

Vice-Chairs: David Crausby MP, Linda Riordan MP

ANNUAL REPORT 2008 - 2009

INTRODUCTION

This report documents the work of the Bakers' Union Parliamentary Group during 2008 – 2009.

The 2007-08 parliamentary session ran until 27th November 2008, with the new 2008-09 parliamentary session beginning with the Queen's Speech on 3rd December 2008.

The Bakers' Union Parliamentary Group was launched on the 28th October 2008 to enable the union to bring together a number of supportive and interested MPs to work in a concerted and effective way with the union to increase awareness in Parliament and beyond on our issues of concern and ultimately to influence Government policy.

The Group has continued to grow in membership, with around 30 Labour MPs now members of the Group (*see Annex One for a full list*). The Group has held regular meetings for member MPs – approximately every six to eight weeks, while Parliament is sitting.

The Group has co-ordinated campaigns in Parliament on a range of issues for the union, tabling several EDMs and submitting over 20 written questions.

CAMPAIGNS

The Group has campaigned on a number of issues on behalf of BFAWU members working across the food sector. Below is a brief report on some of the major campaigns on which the Group has focused in 2008-09.

Workers' Memorial Day

Since January 2009 the Group has focussed on raising the profile of the trade union movement's long standing campaign to get Workers' Memorial Day recognised as a national remembrance day by distributing briefing material from BFAWU and writing to the Prime Minister, Pat McFadden MP, Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform and Lord McKenzie of Luton, Department for Work and Pensions.

On behalf of the Group, John McDonnell MP has asked a number written questions and tabled EDM 695 Workers' Memorial Day (67 signatories). In addition, Bakers Union Parliamentary Group members Michael Clapham MP and Austin Mitchell MP, tabled EDM 1359 WORKERS' MEMORIAL DAY (NO. 2) (82 signatories) and EDM 1032 WORKERS' MEMORIAL DAY (No. 2) (57 signatories).

The Bakers Union Parliamentary Group, on behalf of the Trade Union Co-ordinating Group, hosted a successful parliamentary reception (sponsored by Lancashire law firm MWR Solicitors) to commemorate Workers' Memorial Day on 28th April 2009. The event was attended by over 26 MPs and included speeches by Ronnie Draper (National President, BFAWU), Mike McClelland (National Official for Health and Safety, Napo), Hilda Palmer (Acting chair of the Hazards Campaign) and Linda Wheelan (Founding member of Family Against Corporate Killers and mother of Craig Wheelan who died whilst working as a steeplejack aged 23 in 2002). There was also a minute of silence to honour the people who have died or been injured simply as a

result of carrying out their day to day employment – invariably as a result of failings by employers to ensure adequate health and safety measures.

On the same day the Government responded positively to the campaigning of the trade union movement by issuing a statement recognising the day and indicating their plan to *'consult with stakeholders on how (to) can recognise and commemorate Workers Memorial Day in a more official way in the future.'*

We have subsequently received a letter (10th May) from James Purnell as Secretary of State with responsibility for Health and Safety thanking the BFAWU Parliamentary Group for all its work to increase the profile of this campaign and build support amongst parliamentarians so that it is firmly on the Government's political agenda. Purnell also confirmed that the Government is keen to explore the idea of establishing a permanent memorial to those killed or harmed at work.

Although there have been calls for official recognition of Workers Memorial Day for some years, it is clear that this year the campaign has taken a significant step forward and that is due in no small part to the work of our Parliamentary Group.

Working Temperature

The campaign regarding maximum working temperatures has been a concern of the Group since its inception being major factor determining comfort and safety in the workplace – particularly in bakeries.

The Group has worked to raise the profile of arguments around the implementation of maximum working temperature by distributing and preparing a detailed briefing note and writing to government ministers including Lord McKenzie of Luton (Department for Work and Pensions) and James Purnell MP, Secretary of State, Department for Work and Pensions.

The Group has organised numerous written questions to be asked regarding workplace temperatures and Kevin Hopkins MPs tabled EDM 482 MAXIMUM WORKPLACE TEMPERATURE (44 signatures).

Reflecting the positive political momentum built up by the Group regarding this issue, on the 8th February 2009 James Purnell MP wrote to MPs stating that he was *'impressed by the strong show of support for the Early Day Motion'* and that he shared *'concerns over ensuring appropriate safeguards for those working in high temperatures.'* He also informed MPs that he had *'recently written to the Chair of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) requesting that they review the existing legislation and guidance – and to revisit, in particular, the reasons for and against setting a maximum workplace temperature limit.'*

The Group is in the process of organising a meeting with Lord McKenzie of Luton (Department for Work and Pensions) in the coming period and will seek to engage in whatever way possible with the forthcoming Health and Safety Executive Review of workplace temperatures.

In particular, the Group is considering the possibility of hosting a strategy meeting between MPs and representatives from other supportive unions and stakeholders (including USDAW, UNITE, GMB) to discuss how to build a united platform to argue for legislative.

Below Cost Selling

The practice of persistent below cost selling by large retailers has been one of the key areas of concern for the Group.

Therefore, the Group has worked to raise the profile of arguments regarding persistent below cost selling and the power of supermarkets, by writing to Government ministers and distributing a detailed briefing note to MPs.

Jeremy Corbyn MP, tabled EDM 483 Below Cost Selling calling for greater regulation and has already gathered 49 cross-party signatures reflecting a sizable body of MPs interested in the issue.

The Group is in the process of organising a meeting with The Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP, Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs to discuss this issue further and is considering the possibility of hosting a strategy meeting between MPs and representatives from other supportive unions and stakeholders (including USDAW, UNITE, GMB) to discuss how to build a united platform to argue for legislative change.

The Lyndale Dispute

Over the last year, the Lyndale dispute (where the redundancies of 450 bakery workers in the North West, formerly employed by Lyndale Group, which went into liquidation on 9th June 2008) has continued to be on the Parliamentary Group's agenda, raising concerns about the propriety of the directors involved and wider issues about loopholes in company law

The Group has distributed and prepared detailed briefing notes, organised ministerial meetings and planned parliamentary interventions. There is widespread support for the BFAWU members affected and many MPs have been extremely concerned that an employer has been able to plan a company restructure without consultation with the trade unions and lay off hundreds of workers whilst avoiding its primary responsibilities such as redundancy payments.

The re-writing of Company law is likely to be a long term campaign for the group meanwhile we have continued to follow the specifics of the dispute as it has unfolded seeking to intervene positively where possible. Most recently the Group written to Pat McFadden MP, Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform 28th January 2009 to keep up pressure but has yet to receive a response.

A Statutory Redundancy Payments Bill was moved by Lindsay Hoyle MP as a Private Members Bill on 13th March which called for the Government to at least commit to a review of redundancy pay. However the Government opposed even this limited measure and although the Bill passed its 2nd Reading no further parliamentary time has so far been allocated.

Bakers Asthma

In May 2009, the Health Safety Executive issued a press release reporting that those working in the baking industry are about 80 times more likely to develop occupational asthma than the average British worker.

The Group is in the process of tabling an EDM urging employers to work with health and safety trade union representatives and the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union to implement appropriate control measures to protect bakers from developing asthma and calling for a reduction in the maximum exposure limit.

GENERAL CAMPAIGNS

Trade Union Coordinating Group (TUCG)

The TUCG was launched in September at the TUC Congress 2008 and currently comprises BFAWU, FBU, NAPO, NUJ, PCS, POA, RMT, URTU, representing a total of over half a million trade union members, with the objective of co-ordinating campaigning activities on many of the key issues facing our members and giving unions a new and stronger representative voice in Parliament to supplement the work of existing individual union parliamentary groups.

Following the announcement of this year's Budget, it is clear that the TUCG will have a crucial role to play over the next few years in providing a focus of opposition within the trade union movement to what will be a massive attack upon public services, the livelihoods of the workers who deliver them and their families, and the most vulnerable in our communities. To pay for the banking crisis and the huge sums of taxpayers money invested to prop up the system we now face well over £30 billion of cuts and privatisations, with inevitable consequences for job cuts, wages, pensions, and terms and conditions, whatever the complexion of the Government after the next election.

The TUCG was launched in Parliament at a reception on the 21st January 2009, which was attended by around 25 MPs, as well as all General Secretaries and representatives from the unions concerned. Joe Marino spoke on behalf of the BFAWU.

A constitution and working arrangements have been agreed. The TUCG Executive Council comprising General Secretary and elected representative of each member union will meet in Parliament on a quarterly basis to plan a united campaigning strategy. The Chair of the TUCG will rotate annually between member unions in alphabetical order so this year BFAWU take on the role of Chair.

In addition to regular fringe events at TUC conferences, the TUCG will also play an active role in supporting local meetings of campaigns it supports, such as The People's Charter and the Public Services Not Private Profit Campaign.

Parliamentary work so far has included helping coordinate opposition to the Government's programme for welfare reform, as well as coordinating support for Workers Memorial Day and the Rail Unions' lobby for a People's Railway, and setting out a Trade Union perspective on the Queens Speech and the Budget. Further agreed parliamentary campaigns for 2009 include:

- Opposition to privatisation
- The promotion of trade union rights
- The promotion of equalities legislation
- The setting of a new legislative framework for health and safety

Trade Union Freedom Bill

BFAWU and its parliamentary group have been prominent in the campaign to promote the Trade Union Freedom Bill and the campaign for the restoration of trade union rights. EDM 1604 'Trade Union Freedom Bill Campaign' was tabled by John McDonnell in May 2008, and by the end of the 2007/08 session was supported by 145 MPs.

The Employment Bill opened up the opportunity for some limited amendments drawn from the Trade Union Freedom Bill to be tabled. In the event 55 MPs voted for New Clause 2 regarding employer's duties in relation to industrial action ballots - including 45 Labour MPs which makes it the biggest rebellion under Brown to date.

The BFAWU Group will do everything in its power to advance the campaign against the anti-trade union laws, working in liaison with other unions, in particular through the Trade Union Coordinating Group.

Public Service Not Private Profit Campaign

The BFAWU is an important part of the Public Service Not Private Profit Campaign (PSNPP), which brings together sixteen public sector trade unions and a number of campaigning organisations to defend public services in the face of the increasing threat of privatisation and commercialisation.

The PSNPP Campaign's continues to develop at a grassroots level - with numerous '*Public Services Not Private Profit*' local rallies serving as a means of connecting up local concerns and ad-hoc community campaigns about local privatisations and job cuts with a co-ordinated national trade union led campaign against privatisation.

The campaign has also worked to support the campaigns led by CWU and PCS against the privatisation of Royal Mail and the Welfare Reform Bill respectively – attempting to build cross union solidarity and support at national, regional and local levels by advertising events and distributing campaign materials to trade union contacts.

Since April last year, as well as public meetings in Parliament and at a number of trade union conferences, PSNPP has organised or supported events in: Liverpool, Manchester, Lambeth, Coventry, Swansea, Barrow, Bristol, Nottingham, Norwich, London, Bolton, Hatfield, Southampton, Wolverhampton

ANNEX ONE

Membership of the Bakers' Union Parliamentary Group

	NAME		CONSTITUENCY
Chair	John	McDonnell MP	Hayes and Harlington
Vice-chairs:	David	Crausby MP	Bolton North East
	Linda	Riordan MP	Halifax
	David	Anderson MP	Blaydon
	John	Austin MP	Erith & Thamesmead
	Joe	Benton MP	Bootle
	Colin	Burgon MP	Elmet
	Mick	Clapham MP	Barnsley West & Penistone
	Katy	Clark MP	Ayrshire North & Arran
	Harry	Cohen MP	Leyton & Wanstead
	Frank	Cook MP	Stockton North
	Jeremy	Corbyn MP	Islington North
	Mary	Creagh MP	Wakefield
	Ann	Cryer MP	Keighley
	Andrew	Dismore MP	Hendon
	David	Drew MP	Stroud
	Neil	Gerrard MP	Walthamstow
	David	Hamilton MP	Midlothian
	Kate	Hoey MP	Vauxhall
	Kelvin	Hopkins MP	Luton North
	Joan	Humble MP	Blackpool North & Fleetwood
	Gordon	Marsden MP	Blackpool South
	Eric	Martlew MP	Carlisle
	John	McDonnell MP	Hayes & Harlington
	Austin	Mitchell MP	Great Grimsby
	Julie	Morgan MP	Cardiff North
	Gordon	Prentice MP	Pendle
	Ken	Purchase MP	Wolverhampton North East
	David	Taylor MP	Leicestershire North West
	Paul	Truswell MP	Pudsey
	Robert	Wareing MP	Liverpool West Derby
	Mike	Wood MP	Batley & Spen

ANNEX TWO

Parliamentary Glossary

Early Day Motions (EDMs) are motions that are never debated or voted upon but are open and available for other MPs to sign up to in support. They are a barometer of opinion in the House and are the traditional means by which backbench MPs are able to draw the attention of other MPs to their concerns. They also provide an invaluable focus for extra-parliamentary campaigning activity and lobbying for parliamentary support.

Written Parliamentary Questions are a means of ensuring that detailed information is formally placed in the public domain and the answers can form part of the unions' subsequent briefing and campaigning material.

Oral Parliamentary Questions are taken approximately every month by every Government department for up to an hour at most on the floor of the House (while the House is sitting). A backbench MP is able to submit a question for oral answer.

Adjournment Debates are 30 or 90 minute debates granted to backbenchers who submit in advance to the Speaker a request and title of an issue for debate. A ballot is then conducted by the Speaker and the result announced every Thursday while the House is sitting. No more than 15 MPs from the whole House are selected.

Ministerial Statements are often made with very little advance warning, often as little as two hours and increasingly the practice of written statements is being employed, both of which present the Parliamentary Group with a difficult task in organising a response. However whenever possible we try to ensure that those MPs available to respond on behalf of the group, whether in the Chamber or to the media, are alerted to the forthcoming statement and are fully briefed and up to speed on the union's concerns.

Private Members Bills are allocated as the result of a ballot by the Speaker following the Queen's Speech each year. The MPs drawn as the top names are subsequently entitled to bring forward a Bill of their own choosing. Although there is the opportunity to present the Bill for debate, without Government support it is very unlikely to progress further.