



REMEMBER . . .

**WORKERS
MEMORIAL
DAY**

28 APRIL 2009

See page 11

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE: WORKING BEYOND RETIREMENT P2 EDITOR'S NOTES P3
NATIONAL PRESIDENT WRITES P4 ULF UPDATE PP5 – 9 LETTERS P10
HEALTH AND SAFETY PP11 – 14 ISRAEL AND PALESTINE DELEGATION REPORT P16
TEN DAYS THAT SHOOK NEW LABOUR P21 TRADE UNIONS WITHIN
VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES P22 LABOUR REPRESENTATION COMMITTEE
REPORT P23 LAUNCH OF TU COORDINATING GROUP P23**

WORKING BEYOND RETIREMENT

By Jessica Bowman (right)
MWR Solicitors

Due to the current economic climate, panel solicitors are receiving an increasing number of queries from union members on the current laws that are in place to support an employee who wishes to work beyond age 65.

The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006 (EEAR 2006) is the piece of legislation that lays down a procedure to be followed where an employee who is coming up the age of 65 can request to work beyond that age. Below is a very brief overview of the current procedure involved.

PROCEDURE FOR REQUESTING TO WORK BEYOND RETIREMENT AGE

STEP 1

12 – 6 months before the date of retirement, an employer is under a duty to advise an employee, in writing, of their right to request not to retire.

STEP 2

Following receipt of this notice from an employer, if an employee wishes to work beyond retirement age, they should make a request to their employer. This request must:-

- Be in writing
- Be made at least 3 months but no more than 6 months before retirement age
- State how long they intend to continue working for e.g. indefinitely, for a specific period of time or until a specified date.

STEP 3

After receiving a request from an employee, an employer is under a duty to consider the request by inviting the employee to a meeting. The meeting must be convened within a reasonable time period and employees do have the right to be accompanied to the meeting.

STEP 4

Following this first meeting, the employer must make a decision whether they are going to grant the employees request. They must convey this decision to the employee as soon as reasonably practicable.

STEP 5

If an employer accepts an employee's request to continue working, they must inform the employee of this along with how long the employee's employment will continue for e.g. indefinitely, for a specified period or until a certain date.



If an employer refuses an employee's request to work beyond retirement age; an employee has a right to appeal this decision.

Further to the EEAR 2006, ACAS have also provided guidance for good practice procedures when it comes to retirement. Full details of this guidance can be found on the ACAS website and they include recommendations such as an employer giving reasons for refusing to grant a request. Further information in this regard can be found at the ACAS website at www.acas.org.uk

It should be noted that although employers are under a legal duty to follow the correct procedure and to *consider* any request to work beyond retirement age, they are under *no* obligation to actually grant a request. If however an employer does not adhere to the procedures set down by the regulations, there may be grounds for an employment tribunal claim.

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EDITOR'S NOTES



Whose protection?

"We are all facing the effects of the global financial crisis both at home and at work."

That was the introduction to my last notes and, if anything, things are getting a lot worse. There is no doubt that the 'financial crises' caused by light or non-existent regulation and the gambling of the international banks has now reached the 'real' economy and jobs are at increasing risk. Government plans to boost employment whilst welcome are long in the making.

The decision to relook at releasing councils to build more houses is long overdue but welcome. As a union we have long argued that the restraints on councils building houses have a negative effect and are a major problem in the housing market. We used to be called 'Old Labour' and dinosaurs from the past. Now it seems we were right all along.

We can all understand the frustration of workers in the construction and engineering industry at the antics of employers deliberately overlooking home grown workers in favour of those from outside the UK. If it was simply an issue of skills that may well be understandable. And the Governments emphasis on re-skilling, although long term, are welcome. But it is difficult to get away from another reason that seems more likely. As the International Labour Organisation statistics in 2005 showed the disparity of monthly pay for UK construction workers and those in the rest of Europe are quite significant. For example, many of the workers employed at Lindsey oil refinery are from Italy where the pay differential over UK workers was quoted at some £774 a month (UK £2,160; Italy £1,386-source 'Observer' 01.02.09 p8). No

wonder there is a suspicion that this is jobs on the cheap and that skill deficiencies are in fact a red herring.

This is yet another example of British workers being treated in an inferior way to their European Union counterparts. And in reality the blame here must fall on successive UK Governments who have sought to weaken European Union legislation by bringing it in at the lowest level, protecting employers at the expense of workers. Thus the target in this dispute-which will simmer until the law is changed- is UK implementation of European law and the lack of support for British trade unions in Government. The problem here is that of lack of protection under European Union law-not the law itself. In other EU countries workers are protected by national or regional rates of pay and terms and conditions of employment agreed between the social partners- the employers, unions and governments. Workers employed under the posted workers agreement must be paid those rates. Thus there is transparency and no fears of undercutting agreed terms and conditions in the locality. Under the guise of fairness to business-what the Tories call red tape- this part of the legalisation was not transposed to UK law. Thus companies are free to pay whatever they like-as long as the minimum wage is respected-and that is where the concern lies.

These problems also show the sham of the 'Warwick Agreement' up for what it always has been. Is it not about time that the trade union movement realises there are no favours from this Government? Cosy deals have solved nothing in the past 12 years and will solve nothing in the future. Warnings about the lack of protection for UK workers-perfectly legal under EU laws-have been ignored by this Government. We are now seeing another consequence of this deliberate ratchet down of EU legislation to the detriment of workers. When will we ever learn?

Until we ask the right questions we will never get the right answer. We hear that Government Ministers are looking at new restrictions on the use of skilled foreign workers. That is simply not the issue here. The issue is one of ensuring equal protection for all workers irrespective of country of origin. And that will not be possible until Government returns to the kind of protective legislation on terms and conditions of employment that were swept away by the

Tories under Thatcher. Rather than seeking to restrict the rights of workers from the rest of the EU the Government should be looking to provide the same protection for UK workers that are prevalent in the rest of the EU. That, at a stroke, would undermine those employers seeking to use the weak legislation in this country to cut terms and conditions of employment to boost profits.

But we must guard against the misuse of this issue by the far right. This is not an anti foreigner issue. There are many workers from the European Union and outside working in Britain and making a great contribution to the country and our movement. We must not allow the fascists to divide us. The problem is clearly the practice of the employer in seeking cheap labour and the failure of our Government to build in protection against exploitation that every other EU country has. We have a duty to make that clear and place the blame where it rightfully belongs.

No fix.

Following the furore of who works where, we now see that the issue of the agency workers directive has not been fixed. Again this is an area where many employers use agency workers on the often spurious argument of short term flexibility. In reality it is in many cases an excuse to undercut local terms and conditions of employment. The agency workers directive was supposed to give protection in this area but once more the way this government has transposed into UK legislation is at the lowest common point. So agency workers are left exposed and some employers can abuse the system by attacking recognised agreements. The Mini fiasco shows exactly the outcome of such poor protective legislation. The shameful treatment of these car workers highlights three issues. Firstly unions need to organise agency workers- and agency workers have a self interest in joining unions- to give at least some protection to what a clearly vulnerable workers at the edges of the labour market. Secondly the movement needs to recognise that the transposition of the directive is inadequate and needs strengthening. And lastly, here is yet another example of the vulnerability of workers in the UK-no matter where they originate from- being left exposed by a legal system that gives less protection to workers here than anywhere in the rest of the industrialised world. That needs organised political activity to change the system and give union back the ability, free from legal restrictions that do not apply to the employer, to protect their members.

Hope to hear from you.
joe.marino@bfawu.org



NATIONAL PRESIDENT RONNIE DRAPER WRITES

May I start by wishing you all a happy and peaceful new year? Let us hope that, despite the glut of global bad news we seem to be surrounded by, we can come out the other side as unscathed as is humanly possible?

Conflicts

We hope that peaceful solutions can be found for the ongoing conflicts in Israel and Palestine, Afghanistan and Iraq and the BFAWU will continue to support those people who live their lives with the aim of improving the lives of ordinary working people.

Having visited both Israel and Palestine on a number of occasions, I feel desperately sorry for those people on both sides of the divide, who are suffering from the actions of the few. I have many friends in both Israel and Palestine and have met many fellow trade unionists who work well together and demand peace. They and the people that they represent are the people that I despair for. It is not about taking sides nor is it about a pro-Israeli or pro-Palestinian stance. It is about being pro-peace, pro-workers and pro-rational thought. I wish them all the success in the world in their quest for a better more peaceful life.

Recession

The other major influence in people's lives is the talk of global recession and how it is going to affect us all. Unfortunately it is a reality and we have to do all we can to manage it as best we can. The question of who is to blame rages on. Is it the fault of greedy Bankers, irresponsible lending policies, inept governments or just a global

phenomena? The answer is probably a cocktail of all four with a few other unnamed ingredients thrown in for good measure?

The thing that really hacks me off is that despite measures being put in place to help alleviate the economic problems, nothing seems to kick start the economy and I believe much of the blame for this falls at the feet of the press. Yes, we need a free and independent press and I will always support that view, but the constant bombardment of bad news is actually talking us deeper into recession.

The government cut interest rates to help indebted borrowers and to encourage banks to start lending to each other. The aim was to get people to start spending again to help stimulate the economy but it would appear that people are saving for the impending doom peddled by the papers?

The other negative that comes shining through is the petty politics played by the opposition party. My mother talks of the wartime spirit when people pulled together in times of adversity, but at a time when our elected members of parliament should be looking at every option to soften the impact that the recession is having on the economy, business and working people, we get the Tories taking cheap political shots at the government.

On January 8th, the Bank of England cut 0.5% from interest rates. Within 30 minutes George Osborne the shadow chancellor was appearing on our television screens castigating the government's fiscal policy, saying that the problems were as a direct

result of 10 years of imprudence by Labour, failing to save when the sun was shining. Of course we never had a recession in 19 years of Tory rule, they were a very prudent party who ensured that we never needed to borrow, interest rates were always low, we had zero unemployment, Labour never inherited a national debt and the sun always shone under the Tories. What a load of tosh? George Osborne and his puppet leader need to understand that they never had the answers in the past and I doubt that they have the answers now?

The week before David Cameron was talking of helping savers who pay basic rates of tax by abolishing tax on interest earned. The more you have the more interest you would earn, the more tax you would pay and therefore the greater the savings you

Yes it will be of micro proportions as a benefit, but like all past Tory policies it aims to benefit those who have most. Wake up and smell the coffee, most basic rate tax payers don't have the amount of savings that generate enough interest to pay tax. We need cross party support for investment in job protection and training.

We need stimulation of labour intensive industries like construction and we need a concerted drive to get banks lending to each other and to potential borrowers. We don't need petty politics, sticking plaster solutions or concentrated doses of bad news through the media.

So let's start looking for the positives in life and a better 2009 than predicted.

Conference 2009

And finally. As we draw towards the time for electing our delegates to this year's conference it is important to remind everyone that they must be elected at a branch meeting. Last year there were accusations of delegates attending conference who were in essence self-appointed and clearly that is against the rule book and cannot be tolerated.

This year's conference will be one of the most important of our long and varied history and full representation will clearly be of benefit to our organisation, so long as they are legally elected. So let's get it right, legitimately called and minuted branch meeting with nominated and correctly elected delegates.

Ronnie Draper

ULF UPDATE

by Dorban Ippoma, National ULF Project Manager

DIVERSITY SUPPORTING LEARNING

Over the past five years the BFAWU National ULF Project has worked hard in introducing a diversity program to support workplace learning and enhance mainstream learning across the sites we currently support. It therefore gives me a lot of pleasure to see this section of the projects development be raised to a higher level not see or experienced to my knowledge across workplace learning. The Diversity workshop at the ULR Conference will illustrate what can be achieved when you embed two different learning methods together with a creative and innovative outlook. It will be interesting to see the feedback from the delegation on this new innovative introduction to workplace learning supporting the e-learning dyslexia awareness course. I believe the introduction of using new technology to project the course material will give the ULRs a new experience they have not seen before. It will communicate the course work in a way best describe as a Disney experience and allow the course to be more visually informative and

unlike any other course anywhere across workplace learning. The technology we are incorporating into the dyslexia course is not new to many of us but it is new in how we embed it into the dyslexia course. Hope I've somewhat intrigued you all and not to spoil the diversity workshop for the many delegates attending conference all will be revealed soon. The injection of new Workplace Learning Centres picks up pace and we currently have 35 active centres and 14 centres pending, there has been 17 new centres brought online since 1 April 2008, which is a great achievement for the BFAWU. This could not have been achieved without the assistance, enthusiasm, self-motivation and dedication of our ULRs who have become an integral part of the National ULF Project in the work they perform. I sincerely thank you all for your much appreciated commitment and you all should be proud of what has been achieved to date and this holds us well for the future. The ULR National Conference Working in Partnership held in London 20-22 February 2009 is once again a



celebration of what we have achieved over the last year and I look forward in meeting and chatting to many ULRs over the weekend. We currently have 170 to 180 delegates and guests attending and 120 of attendees will be ULRs, which is excellent and illustrates to all the commitment from our ULRs is unrivalled across the TU movement. It must be noted that the conference is once again attended by employers, which clearly indicates that Working in Partnership is working.

PREMIER FOODS, HOVIS, ERITH CENTRE OPENING DECEMBER 4TH 2008

The Learning Centre at Premier Foods, Hovis, Erith was opened on 4th December 2008. It was well attended with a mixture of people from: Premier Hovis, BFAWU, ULRs and partners.

The Mayor, Nick O'Hare was pleased to open an Adult Learning Centre, being of Turkish origin, he feels education is necessary and through his experience workplace learning is an excellent way of reaching out and offering many employees educational opportunities. All credit must go to the management team and the enthusiasm of the ULRs at Erith by working in partnership to move this project forward. It was decided by all that the Centre should be called the 'Hovis Brown' Centre in recognition of all the hard work by ULR Stan Brown. National Project Manager Dorban Ippoma said. "Stan Brown is a great example to all ULRs in what you can achieve by never giving up in reaching the goals set out by the site. The Learning Services acknowledges the work of all ULRs and will utilise and make available to Erith all the support we have in place and wish the centre and learners well in their learning"



From left to right: Brian Davis WEA, Gerry Malone ULR, Rod Fletcher ULR, Pat Kelly ULR, Nigel Dalmon Site Manufacturing Manager Erith, Richard Lygo Area HR Manager for Premier Hovis, Mayoress & Mayor Nick O'Hare, Baljeet Singh Gill ULR, Margaret O'Neill Councilor for Erith, Carol Hillaby Project Worker South East, Teresa Ridgway ULR, Ronnie Draper National President for BFAWU, Steve Finn Regional Officer BFAWU, Stan Brown Lead ULR.

PREMIER FOODS OPEN NEW LEARNING CENTRES



Scott Quinnell & Les Flowerdew Training Coordinator

HOVIS BAKERY, LEICESTER

Former Welsh rugby captain, Scott Quinnell, officially opened a new Learning Centre in Leicester for employees of Premier Foods on 27th January. After working closely with the Bakers' union BFAWU Learning Services, Premier Foods has installed a number of computers at Leicester, enabling staff to do online courses and achieve nationally recognised certificates. There are plans for the future to also open up the learning centre to employees' families. Along with leading representatives from the Hovis union, Scott Quinnell, who works closely with the dyslexia association and other learning services, will officially open the centre. Les Flowerdew, Training Coordinator for the Hovis Bakery in Leicester, said: *"The opening of the centre demonstrates Premier Food's positive attitude towards its employees and its employees' opportunities to improve, even in an economic downturn, where training is normally decreased."* Dorban Ippoma, BFAWU National Project Manager, said: *"The learning centre at Leicester will offer the business unit a facility of learning that reaches out to all employees regardless of employment or union status and enable employees to obtain a recognised IT qualification at their place of work, which is excellent and unique."*



Management, ULRs, BFAWU Officials & Learning Services Working in Partnership

HOVIS BAKERY, AVONMOUTH

Well done to everyone involved in making this learning centre happen and it is excellent to see the learning agenda reaching across Hovis Bakeries with such a productive outlook. The learning centre facility has been supported by the ULRs and management in working together with the BFAWU Learning Services over a duration of time and many meetings. How the centre was discussed, prepared and implemented was very constructive in reaching the sites objective. The HR Department Manager Mark Van Rooyen and Lisa Dawson along with ULRs will address the BFAWU National ULR Conference in London with a short presentation, which illustrates the working partnership across the learning agenda is alive and active at Avonmouth. This is a great achievement and one that will be shared by all the employees at Premier Foods, Hovis, Avonmouth.

FIRST BFAWU N.IRELAND WORKPLACE LEARNING CENTRE AT O'KANES IN BALLYMENA

On Thursday 6th November we held a small official open day of the learning centre in O'Kanes. Sir Reg Empey, Minister for the Department of Employment and Learning, attended this event and it was a proud day for everyone involved in the set up of the centre. The minister had the chance to speak first hand with learners that are currently on the essential skills classes and get feedback from them. The open



The Team at O'Kanes

day was featured on the local evening news and learners got a chance to be interviewed, it was great to have their involvement. In November we started up our essential skills ICT class and most of the learners on this course are doing the

ICT to better their skills for the purposes of work, something which the company will find very beneficial in the long term. For people who feel they need a basic insight to ICT, the company have agreed to paid release for them to attend a 2 hour

introduction class provided by the project coordinator. This will be set up early in the New Year. In the last quarter a new ULR was trained at O'Kanes and she has now completed her stage one course. Simona Cornea has the added bonus of being able to communicate and engage learners that do not have English as their first language. This is a great achievement for the company and union and the work carried out by Laura Graham BFAWU Project Coordinator should be mentioned as the driving force behind this project. It must be acknowledged that the role of the employer O'Kanes is very forward thinking in seeing the benefits this facility

will offer its employees. Dorban Ippoma BFAWU National Project Manager said. "The learning agenda across the BFAWU sites in Northern Ireland has just begun and the projects work to date is well received by the Education Department, ICTU and other ULF projects. This centre is the first for us in N.Ireland and hopefully will pave the way forward for many more employers to come on board" Laura Graham said. "Over the last three months in O'Kanes we have made great progress. In October we started Literacy and Numeracy classes. The learners are released from their shifts for 2 hours per week to attend classes and the company

pay their time off. To date we have assessed 21 learners for ESOL classes and after meeting with the company have decided to run the first round of ESOL classes on the night shift. We needed to fully engage these employees so the company provided an interpreter to assist. This enabled us to recruit 85 new learners for ESOL and we are now in the process of setting up dates and times for more assessments to be undertaken. Once this is completed classes will be up and running with the ESOL there is a small fee towards the exam costs, and after talks with the company, they have agreed to pay this fee" Well done to everyone involved.

PARK CAKES OPENS THEIR LEARNING CENTRE IN THE BAKERY AT BOLTON

A business has put a dash of improvement and a dollop of cash into the community. Park Cakes Bakery working in Partnership with the BFAWU to fund a workplace learning centre for employees. Bolton South East MP, Brian Iddon officially opened the new centre, which will be supported by the BFAWU Learning Services, ULRs and Bolton Community College. It is designed to give the 350-strong workforce access to learning resources including a computer suite, a library and a classroom. In 1997 Park Cakes on Bella Street was the first bakery in the area to offer on-site learning for its staff. The partnership between the BFAWU and the bakery was forged when the Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union became involved with the North West Learning

Agenda twelve years ago with the brief to tackle any skills gaps. Bolton Community College's business development unit started delivering skills lessons to Park Cakes and bosses say the partnership has gone from strength to strength. Pauline Worsnop, BFAWU Learning Services Project Worker for the North West, said: "We hope the centre will encourage more employees to get a taste for learning and enrol on one of the skills courses available to them." Louise Blackhurst, the college's curriculum manager for the Skills for Life and Work added: "The College has been proud to deliver learning provision to Park Cakes Bakery employees over the past decade. The partnership will be enhanced by the new facilities, enabling learning on site to flourish."



Bolton MP Brian Iddon with Parwati Mistry and Kashmira Soni

AVANA BAKERY LEARNING CENTRE OPENING

On Wednesday 4th February, the Deputy Minister for Skills Mr. John Griffiths AM officially opened the Learning Centre at Avana Bakeries. The Deputy Minister unveiled a plaque and cut a specially designed cake to mark the opening. In opening the Centre, the Deputy Minister gave a speech on the success of the Wales Union Learning Fund and paid tribute to those involved in the success of the BFAWU project. The opening of the centre made it a hat trick for the company with the success of the first learning centre in RF Brookes Rogerstone Park and the opening of the learning centre at RF Brookes Leicester. Mr. Tony Knowles HR Director responsible for Avana Bakeries, RF Brookes Rogerstone Park and RF Brookes Leicester was instrumental in ensuring the Learning Centre at Avana went ahead after the original room set aside for the learning centre was changed. Rhian Keane the trainer and ULR at Avana and Louise Downey BFAWU Project Coordinator were tasked with ensuring the learning centre was equipped and ready for



Ronnie Draper BFAWU National President, Deputy Minister for Skills Mr. John Griffiths & John James Regional District Secretary & ULF Project Manager for Wales

the official opening. Due to adverse weather conditions, some guests were unable to make the launch, but the project was pleased that the National President Ronnie Draper was able to attend. Phil Coles Director welcomed all present and spoke of the benefits of working in partnership and the positivity of the learning agenda. John James District Secretary introduced the Deputy Minister. As well as the opening of the learning centre, an open day was held with a lot of positive requests for learning. As well as computer training, a lot of members were enquiring to learn Welsh and it is expected that a Welsh class will be up and running shortly. The BFAWU in Wales offers

a range of courses including all of the Learndirect courses, holistic courses, all Open University courses with some courses free and other courses at reduced rates. John James District Secretary and WULF project Manager stated that the slogan learning for one, learning for all is a must in Wales. All members whatever their educational background has the opportunity to extend their learning experience. If you are a member and live in Wales and are interested in increasing your knowledge through the learning agenda, please do not hesitate to contact either a Union Learning Representative or Louise Downey on 02920481518 option 4 for further information.

HOUSE OF COMMONS RECEPTION

HOST NATASCHA ENGLE MP

The launch of the Four ULF projects across the UK at the House of Commons Reception was enjoyed by all participants and the stroll through the old parliament building to get to the reception area was an added bonus for many attendees. The event was held in the pavilion terrace and was the premier for the first public showing of the new BFAWU promotional DVD, which incorporates the progress of a ULR Paul Lague and how Paul has benefited and helped others by utilising the learning agenda at his place of work. These events are not only to launch and raise the profile of the various ULF projects but a celebration of where we are today in leading the way forward across the TU movement in supporting workplace learning.



Above: Natascha Engle MP

Left: ULR Awards

Left (below): Learning Centre Award to Pennines Foods

Right (below): ULR Paul Lague & David Kendal from Quick Reads



BOOKS & BISCUITS BY DAVID KENDAL: FOXES ULRS JOIN FORCES WITH BATLEY LIBRARY TO PROMOTE FAMILY LEARNING



Top: Yorkshire Project Worker Janet Goodwin, Mary Graham, and Stan Dakin ULRs. Bottom: ULR Ash MacDaid with son Bailey

Families had a great day at Batley Library thanks to the partnership between Union Learning Reps (ULRs) at Foxes Biscuits and staff at Kirklees libraries. Both libraries and ULRs, Stan Dakin, Ash MacDaid, Mary Graham, wanted to promote reading for pleasure and learning to staff at Foxes Biscuits, and hit upon the idea of supporting adults reading with their children as their starting point. Batley library organised a Family Learning Day and the ULRs promoted this heavily to staff at Foxes. On the day they were there with a stall that showed old photographs of the factory, which proved a real talking point for people. In all at least 60 families from Foxes attended the day. As well as the Foxes stall there was a storyteller for the younger children and henna tattoos and necklace making for the older. They could also see what else the library had to offer. The storytelling was great, said Ash MacDaid My son, Bailey loved it.” For many it wasn’t their first ever visit to a library but their first for a while, and many were pleased to see the changes and the wide selection of books for children and adults on offer. Talking of wide selections, library staff were equally pleased to see the great selection of biscuits that the ULRs had brought with them. The library were delighted to have such a successful event with over 1000 people through their doors on a Saturday – where normally there would be just over 600. The event showed people what their libraries could offer and cemented the partnership, which will enter the next phase with the launch of the Six Book Challenge. This is a reading initiative, which promotes reading for pleasure to adults. www.sixbookchallenge.org “We’re looking forward to working with the Union Learning Reps on the Six Book Challenge. With this event we’ve proved that we can really reach out to working families” said Judith Robinson, Library Support Coordinator at Kirklees Libraries.

A PASSION FOR READING PAYS OFF: Nationwide hunt for Year of Reading ‘Heroes’ sees Sheffield residents invited to Downing Street

ULRs Alan Oakes and Mick Neville (right) from Sheffield have both won the accolade of ‘Reading Hero’ for their outstanding contribution to reading in the community following a nationwide hunt to seek out and reward some exceptional unsung heroes. The awards will be presented by the Prime Minister’s wife, Sarah Brown, who described the winners as a ‘credit to our country’. The special ceremony will take place at No 10 on Thursday 26th February marking the culmination of The National Year of Reading – a testament to the significance of their achievements. Local union learning reps Alan and Mick have been awarded the accolade of Reading Heroes for their work to inspire colleagues at Fletchers Bakeries to rediscover reading. One of their converts is now an avid reader having not picked up a book for 20 years – a real change of heart! Alan Oakes said: “Being acknowledged at Downing Street for helping others to enjoy and benefit from reading is an unexpected honour. We both love reading. It really can make a difference to your life, it opens so many doors. Books are my real passion but reading can take so many forms; from song lyrics to film scripts, magazines and online articles too. The main thing is to enjoy what you read. It really is fun and you can learn loads too!” Mick Neville said: “Doing the Six Book Challenge has positively encouraged lots of Fletchers employees to rekindle a long lost love for reading. Reading can take your imagination to unbelievable places where you can lose yourself for a while. Reading can sometimes be put to the bottom of your list of priorities when there are always so many other things to do, but lots of our colleagues really enjoyed completing the Six Book Challenge and now enjoy reading on a more regular basis. I know I do!” Sarah Brown said: “I will be proud to welcome the Reading Heroes to Number 10. I have



been moved and inspired to hear the stories of how they, despite frequently adverse circumstances, have developed and used their reading skills to help others. They are living demonstration that the ability to read and enjoy books is not just something which benefits each of us, but also a gift we can pass on. The Reading Heroes are a credit to our country, and I’m looking forward to meeting them and celebrating their achievements.” BFAWU National Project Manager Dorban Ippoma Said. “The award to Alan and Mick is well deserved and clearly shows the work that ULRs are performing in workplaces up and down the country is recognised, appreciated and awarded for their efforts. This award is for all those ULRs out there that engage many employees back into learning and reading, well done to you all” Alan and Mick will be accompanied by Dorban Ippoma and Janet Goodwin from the BFAWU Learning Services.



LETTERS

ATTRACTING NEW MEMBERS

The trade union movement is dependent on new members and workers rely on trade unions to improve working conditions and pay. The facts clearly point to union workplaces being on average 8% higher paid than non-unionised workplaces and a high membership improves that to above 10% on average. The industry we work in has seen many changes. Most recently employers have tried to drive terms and conditions down and where we have stood firm against these demands many turned to agencies to undermine agreements and to avoid paying the agreed, recognised rates of pay, causing resentment in the core workforce and a breakdown in industrial relations not just in our industry but across the country in all walks of working life. This has resulted in unions putting pressure both in the workplace and on government resulting in legislation which means these workers can no longer be exploited for more than 12 weeks and that after 12 weeks the company must pay the same rates as other employees doing the same job are entitled to. **The trade union movement standing up for fairness.**

Our union has had to adapt to these new challenges and with the introduction of agency workers we saw a large influx of migrant workers – new challenges for the union and its organisers as we have had to try to identify the nationalities, languages and the type of information that was needed to inform them about the BFAWU. We had improve our resources and, in a large part through the hard work carried out by our colleagues in Northern Ireland and more recently with the recruitment of new reps from within these new eastern European communities in our Regions 3 and 5 and the successful learning project run in No4, we have been able to adapt and we have found that many to whom we have given information, advice and



Ian Hodson

support have joined, recognising the importance of the BFAWU. This was further supported by the successful UMF bid that has helped map our workplaces and will in time enable us to communicate with our members better through the new membership system.

Now although we have always encouraged young workers to join I feel it is time to look at the policies of the BFAWU and encourage the development of policies that will attract young workers into the union – working alongside the student union for example, sitting down at a national level and talking to connexions on putting trade unions literature in the information packs supplied to teenagers and looking at the best ways to engage with young people and developing links with schools and colleges. Many young people entering the workforce for the first time have very little understanding of their rights in the workplace and many are exploited by employers. **These are our kids, our future.**

Many young people do not know what trade unions are; also young people appear not interested in unions because they do not understand how they can benefit from trade union membership. That's why young people should be provided with information about the fact that their problems to do with

work and education, are areas where trade unions do undertake actions and do provide support. Improving the working conditions or wages of young people, the introduction of the minimum wage and the inclusion of young workers, for example, were campaigned for by the union movement. Also, young workers' rights, not only when they are already working, but also when they are ready to enter the labour market. Young people shouldn't have to dream about a better future. Trade union membership can do that now.

Ian Hodson
Organising District Secretary
Preston

20 YEAR BADGE AWARD AT FOX'S BATLEY

Congratulations to the following Members, on completing 20 Years Membership of our Union, at 568 Fox's Biscuits Batley Branch, and receiving their Silver Badge.

Sis V. Roberts 15.1.08 110005
Sis M. Stanley 15.1.08 105123
Bro J. Gora 16.2.08 123955
Sis C. Ford 17.3.08 129258
Sis Rosalind Wilkinson 18.3.08 109725
Bro K.R. Berry 26.3.08 109752
Bro G. Marsden 30.6.08 110406
Sis P. Marsden 4.7.08 109574
Bro K. Dokrat 5.7.08 109927
Sis D. Proctor 9.7.08 109778
Sis D. Wadsworth 23.8.08 109855
Bro B. Ravat 28.8.08 109877
Bro N. Armitage 15.11.08 110046
Sis J.L. Brentnall 15.11.08 109899
Bro K. Doyle 22.11.08 110013
Sis S. Cooper 13.12.08 109788
Bro S Cooper 27.01.09
Sis L Pickering 30.01.09
Sis S. McKinnon 31.01.09

On behalf of the Batley Branch, and the Union on a national level I would like to thank you for your support and loyalty over those years. It is very much appreciated, and long may it continue. A trade union's best assets are its members without them there is no Union. So once again congratulations and thank you.

Yours Fraternally
Helena England
Branch Secretary



Health and Safety BULLETIN

By Ronnie Draper Spring 2009

WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY – 28 APRIL 2009

Most people today see the initials WMD as an abbreviation for Weapons of Mass Destruction, but in global trade union speak it stands for Workers Memorial Day.

The sad fact is that every year more people are killed at work than in wars. The vast majority don't die of some mystery ailment, or in tragic "accidents". They die because an employer did not take enough care or decided their safety just wasn't that important a priority. Workers' Memorial Day commemorates those workers.

Worker's Memorial Day is a global event held on 28th April every year, where workers and their representatives conduct events, demonstrations, vigils and many other activities to mark the day.

The day is also intended to serve as a rallying cry to "remember the dead, but to fight for the living", remembering that the vast majority of workplace fatalities are not only preventable, but are also preceded by a series of near misses. Vigilance, good H&S culture, training and commitment to health, safety and welfare can help ensure that our members and fellow workers do not become part of the shameful statistic of workplace deaths.

The BFAWU have a proud tradition of being involved in the Workers Memorial Day commemorations. For many years we have actively campaigned for WMD to become a bank holiday culminating with motions to the TUC conference last year.

So the question this year is what is your branch doing this year? Whether it is holding a minutes silence at work, planting a commemorative tree, taking



part in a rally or flying the company flag at half mast, it is important that we do not forget what the day is about?

One of the favoured ways of commemorating WMD is to carry out workplace inspections and to update risk assessments. These are practical ways of ensuring workplace standards are not allowed to drift and show the value of robust health and safety practices on the shop floor. Complacency and ignorance can breed extremely dangerous practices and these practices can lead to serious injury and fatalities.

The BFAWU will be pursuing the recognition of WMD through our parliamentary committee and will be looking for widespread support throughout the country.

So let's make sure that the BFAWU and its members play a full part in this year's commemorations. There will be many rallies around the country (most will take place on Saturday 25th April) around the country, with many cities participating, so why not spend a couple of hours in recognition of those who lost their lives at work?

Whatever you or your branch is planning why not send an article and some photographs and we will look to publish them on the BFAWU website and in this magazine?

The TUC coordinates activities across the country, publishing a comprehensive listing of events and suggestions on www.tuc.org

For more information contact head office.

FIT FOR WORK – FIT FOR PLAY

As we move into a new year many of us are still dealing with the excesses of the festive season. The annual diet and the promise to do more exercise are on many wish lists, but do we need more encouragement? Well help might be at hand from an unusual source?

In the summer of 2008 NICE (the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence), produced guidance aimed at assisting employers to get the message across to their employees on the benefits of increasing their physical exercise.

Obesity is becoming prevalent amongst our society primarily because of our changing habits. Fast foods, sugary drinks, transport changes and sedentary lifestyle all conspire to increase weight and reduce fitness.

Past generations would eat fatty foods and drink sugary drinks without the obesity epidemic now gripping society and the secret was exercise. They did not have cars so they walked. Children did not have computer games and multimedia centres that children today sit in front of for hour after hour. Instead they played outdoor games that burnt off excess calories.

Today living standards and technology have improved dramatically but fitness has declined tremendously. It is estimated that approximately 65% of men and 76% of women do not reach the levels of physical exercise needed to maintain good health. It is recommended that we all take exercise such as a half hour brisk walk at least 5 days a week.

The guidance offered by NICE recommends that employers look to introduce measures aimed at building awareness and involvement in physical exercise. It says that employers should develop a plan in consultation with their employees, to encourage them to become more active, introduce and monitor a physical activity programme based on this plan and should offer information on ways of improving fitness levels in the workplace, e.g. using the stairs instead of the lift, walking or cycling to work as opposed to driving.

Like all health, safety and welfare issues, lack of physical activity has a cost, not only to the individual but to business and society.

It is estimated that in England alone the lack of physical exercise and its consequences cost around £8.2billion each and every year. This takes into account days lost in absence from work as well as the cost of medical treatment for illnesses and diseases related to obesity and physical inactivity, including heart problems and diabetes.

Further information is available from NICE at www.nice.org.uk

BFAWU PARLIAMENTARY GROUP SWINGS INTO ACTION

The newly formed BFAWU Parliamentary group has already started to demonstrate its value to our health and safety campaigns. Early Day Motions have already been put forward on the recognition of Workers Memorial Day as a national day of commemoration and the old chestnut of the setting of a Maximum Working Temperature.

Chaired by John McDonnell and supported by many other Members of Parliament, the parliamentary group will give us a direct link to the decision makers within the House and given the background of many of the MP's who support us, we can be assured of a determined input.

Of course not all members of parliament are members of our parliamentary group and it is important that branches and individual members keep up the pressure on their own MP's to support our campaigns.

We are also liaising with other unions in a concerted effort to have the HSE adequately funded from central government. This follows a round table discussion with MP's held at the House of Commons in January where all 3 health and safety issues were given a good airing.

If we are to bring about legislative change for the good of our members then we have to be involved at all steps of the process and with the inception of our parliamentary group we have some political big hitters batting for our side.

If you or your branch believes that there are specific issues that could benefit from a wider political debate then do not hesitate to contact head office with details.

THE EMPLOYMENT ACT 2008: A CRITICAL OVERVIEW

A seminar to be held on Wednesday 29th April 2009
9:30am – 4:00pm at the Clore Lecture Theatre,
Birkbeck College, 25 Torrington Square,
London WC1E 7JL

Organised by The Institute of Employment Rights

Speakers include: John Hendy QC and John McDonnell MP giving critical appraisals of the Act; Prof Keith Ewing, Paul Statham and John Usher on Trade Union Autonomy; Georgina Hirsch, Steve Cottingham and Iain Birrell on Dispute Resolutions and Tribunal Procedures; and Paul Sellers on Enforcing Employment Rights.

For the full programme go to: <http://www.ier.org.uk/node/261>

Phelim Mac Cafferty
Projects and Events Officer
Institute of Employment Rights
179 Preston Road
Brighton East Sussex
BN1 6AG
t: 01273 330819
e: phelim@ier.org.uk
www.ier.org.uk

TUC LAUNCH NEW GUIDE ON WORKPLACE CANCERS AND . . .

The TUC has launched a new guide for safety representatives to assist them to prevent workers being exposed to carcinogenic substances in the workplace.

It is estimated that approximately 250,000 people in the UK are diagnosed with cancer every year, but how many of these cases are directly attributable to their work? Whilst it is impossible to be definitive about numbers the TUC have estimated that work is to blame for around 18,000 cases of cancer.

Like the effects of noise on the ability to hear or flour as a cause of asthma, working with a cancer causing substance does not need prolonged periods of exposure to cause cancer. The fact is that the smallest exposure can lead to their health being severely impaired almost immediately or in years to come.

Because some cancers only develop many years later there is often a reluctance to associate the illness with the work carried out in the past and therefore less pressure on the employer to take action to remove the risks.

So far as control measures go, the aim should be to eradicate the risk all together either by substitution for safer

substance, segregation of the worker from the product or effective ventilation. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) may not be a suitable answer and even if it is, it should be considered as a last resort?

Clearly the safest way of dealing with cancer causing substances is not to use them at all and every effort should be made to replace them. This may be one of the instances where an employer could use the "reasonably practicable" card, where cost is put before risk. Well that is not a relevant plea when it comes to the dramatic effects that they can have on their employees lives. We need to ensure that none of our members come into contact with cancer causing substances and that employers who expose our members to life threatening products face the wrath of the law.

The TUC guide will provide information on the employer's legal duties, WEL's (Workplace Exposure Limits), control measures and effective monitoring.

The guide can be viewed at www.tuc.org.uk/extras/occupationalcancer.pdf an abridged version can be found on our own website www.bfawu.org

. . . ANOTHER NEW TUC GUIDE LOOKS AT SAFETY FOOTWEAR

The old Frank and Nancy Sinatra song "these boots were made for walking" was a big hit record, but when the boots are made for working are they so popular? Probably not given the responses we have had from passed surveys and branch health and safety reports?

Well a new guide launched by the TUC is hoping to prevent some of the problems being experienced and to give pointers towards the correct allocation of the correct footwear.

The guide says that workers footwear should be appropriate to their occupation, the environment in which they are working and off course their feet. It is not rocket science and indeed many will be thinking that it is stating the blindingly obvious, but the reality is that whilst some employers risk assess the job and may well take into account the working environment, not all look at the likely effect on the individuals feet.

There are a number of questions that are often asked were the answer is just as frequently misinterpreted one of which is that of who should pay? Well if special

or safety footwear is needed according to the risk assessment, then it is the employer who should supply them free of charge. Another bone of contention in some branches is that the employer picks the shoes and it's Hobson's choice after that. Clearly that is not correct, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is exactly that, it is personal. A once size fits all approach to footwear is not allowable or acceptable. The PPE should fit the person not the person fit the PPE. It should be suitable and sufficient for purpose should be comfortable and of course should not present its own risks. Ill fitting shoes are not only uncomfortable but can cause long term problems for the feet and back.

The scales of economy need to be assessed far beyond financial cost. The cheapest option from a financial point of view could end up being the dearest if the wearer suffers detriment to their health. Workers cannot demand designer brands as right, but they do have the right to demand comfortable footwear.

If you need further information on the provision of safety or special footwear contact head office.

LONG AWAITED LEGISLATION COMES INTO FORCE



From 16th January 2009 Employers in Britain will face potential imprisonment for nearly all health and safety offences, when the Health and Safety (Offences) Act comes into force. Besides the possibility of losing their freedom there is also the extension of the maximum fines available to magistrates up to £20,000 for most types of convictions.

The Act, which applies throughout the UK, was introduced as a Private Member's Bill by Keith Hill MP, and received royal assent on 16 October. Ironically at a time when the power to maximum fines comes into effect, twelve days later, the HSE revealed that average fines imposed by courts were significantly lower in 2007/08 than in 2006/07. In fact the average amount declined to £12,896 from £15,370 per offence prosecuted by the HSE. An even worse picture is painted if all the fines of £100,000 and over are excluded from the total which gives a more realistic account of everyday sentencing – the average then falls to £7,809 from £8,723.

There are 17 main types of offences under the Health and Safety at Work Act, and the Health and Safety (Offences) Act will:

- allow magistrates to imprison offenders for 13 types of offence as opposed to only 3 prior to its inception;
- increase the maximum prison term available to magistrates from six to 12 months (although this provision will not take effect until ss.154(1) and 281(5) of the Criminal Justice Act 2003 come into force, and no date has been set for that yet);
- allow magistrates to impose a maximum penalty of £20,000 for 13 types of offences (currently all but three offences are limited to £5,000);
- increase the number of offences that can carry a prison sentence on conviction (in the higher courts) from three to 12 (although the maximum sentence remains two years);
- allow two of the five offences that are currently triable only in

magistrates' courts to be tried on indictment.

However welcome the Act; it is unlikely to increase either the number or length of imprisonments significantly. At present magistrates can use prison sentences for the more serious health and safety breaches such as Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 general duties or contravening a prohibition notice, but the reality is that like judges they have been reluctant to do so.

So the probability is that we will not see our prisons filled with employers who fail to meet their obligations to health and safety, but we may find a few with empty pockets. This because the Act is more likely to be felt in increased fine. Employers will face potential imprisonment for nearly all health and safety offences from 16 January 2009, when the Health and Safety (Offences) Act comes into force.

So hopefully we will see a greater concentration of the mind towards preventative, proactive health and safety rather than reactive responses and punitive actions?

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JASON WALLEY RECEIVES 20-YEAR BADGE

At the No.4 Regional Council, Bro Joe Marino presented Bro Jason Walley with his 20 year service badge. Jason has been a member at Burtons Foods (423) Branch and has held a number of positions during his time; Jason is currently the Branch Secretary and has been heavily involved in a project aimed at improving Learning on Site.

On behalf of the Preston District, and all No.4 Regional Delegates we would like to thank Jason for his membership, commitment and service to the BFAWU.

Ian Hodson
Preston District Secretary

ISRAEL AND PALESTINE DELEGATION REPORT

The delegation from our union comprised: Ronnie Draper, National President; Kevin Flood, Vice-President; Pauline McCarthy, Executive Council, and Marylin French, Executive Council.

The purpose of our visit was:

- to try understand the problems faced by our fellow trade union workers in Israel and Palestine
- to strengthen the links between the British trade unions, the Histadrut, and the Palestinian general federation of trade unions
- and, by working together with them, to support and promote efforts towards finding a fair and lasting peace settlement for both Israelis and Palestinians.

Israel is one of the most controversial and misunderstood countries, its short history being often clouded with conflict. Both the Israelis and Palestinians Unions were very interested in our views of how the conflict had been reported outside of the country! And they expressed concern at the way the media reports often gave a negative view on what was happening in Israel.

Mon 10th November: Jerusalem

The first day started at 7.45am. We travelled to the old city of Jerusalem. This visit included the church of Gethsemane, Mount Olive, the Jewish Quarter, Via Dolorosa, and the Western Wall, at which the delegation were able to write a prayer and leave it in the wall. Next came lunch, hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The delegation then visited Yad Vashem, the national Holocaust Memorial Centre, where we were shown the background to the Nazi genocide and the work the centre does to preserve and catalogue the testimony and memory of all who perished or survived the horror of the Holocaust.

Later we were invited to a dinner hosted by the Government Employees Union.

Tuesday 11th

We drove towards the Kalandia Checkpoint in the West Bank where we were greeted by a PGFTU representative, who took us through the Checkpoint. We met with PGFTU General Secretary Shaher Sa'ed and other senior representatives in Ramallah. We

discussed the problems faced by the people in not being able to work because they could not get work permits, then we had a tour of the refugee camps which are at best very basic, certainly not ideal, and some families sadly have lived here for up to 60 years. Next we travelled to Tel-Aviv and met representatives from the Employee Committee of Bank who hosted the dinner.

Wednesday 12th

Departed to drive to the security fence at the surrounding area of Jerusalem, where we met and were accompanied by a representative of the Israel Defence Force Spokesman's Unit. Then we went to the Dead Sea to meet with the Jerusalem Municipality Employees Committee. The next meeting of the day was at the Minister of Welfare at Histadrut Headquarters with Yitzhak Herzog MK. Finally we went to a dinner hosted by the Union of Clerks and Public Service Employees.

Thursday 13th

We left early to go to the Histadrut Headquarters and had a meeting with Mr Hertzal Yaka, General Secretary of the Food Workers Union, Mr Eliezer Belo, Deputy General Secretary of the Food Workers Union and Mr Ori Strassberg, International Department Histadrut. Next we visited the Angel Bakery in Lod, we had a tour of the bakery and meet with the owner, Mr Danny Angel, a real character, nearly 90 years old and still working hard in the family business.

Then it was off to the Logistic centre of Osem in Shoham to see the Distribution Centre. Finally we had a farewell dinner in Jaffa with guest speaker Gil Shanny, Executive Director of One Voice Peace Movement.

The whole experience of this visit has been a positive one. We can't change the past, but we can make a difference in the future! And as a direct outcome of last year's visit, The Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union brought Hertzal Yaka, General Secretary of the Food Workers Union of the Histadrut, and Ibrahim Thweib, General Secretary of the Food Workers Section PGFTU – the leaders of the respective Israel and Palestinian food workers unions – to address our Annual Conference in Bridlington in June 2008.

Marylin French



&



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EGYPTIAN TRADE UNION MEMBERS VISIT HOVIS, WIGAN

On the 21st August 2008 there was a visit to the Bakery by Ronnie Draper and a contingent of Egyptian Trade Union Members.

During their visit they met Steve Borland (Site Manufacturing Manager) Geoff Atkinson (BFAWU Branch Sec) Tony Sedgwick and Kathy Alder (BFAWU Shop Stewards).

On the day, the Egyptians were given a guided tour of the site and sampled some of the products made here. They also swapped experiences of how things are done in their own Bakeries including things such as Pest Control.

Gifts were exchanged in front of Wigan Bakery, these included football scarves from the Site Manager, Egyptian paintings and Kathy receiving an Egyptian dress

Later on in the day they were taken out shopping by Ronnie and John before meeting up at the Quality Hotel in Wigan and having a meal with Steve Borland and the BFAWU Reps.

The whole day was enjoyed by myself, Geoff and my Stewards and also our Site Manager Steve who hopes the experience can be repeated.

Geoff Atkinson



From left to right: Lizzie Dunning, Keith Hutchinson, Oscar O'Clifford, Ruth Marsh, Ronnie Draper, Frank Loveday, David Hindmarsh, Ian Wood, Pauline Nazir, Alan Milne, Anita Gibbons, Dorothy Shuttleworth, Gary Johnston, Linda Gambarini. Picture taken by Marilyn French.

GREGGS AGM JANUARY 2009: ANOTHER VERY SUCCESSFUL MEETING

Year on year the Greggs A.G.M. has become an asset to the Union Members and Greggs. This meeting enables the Union National President (Ronnie Draper) Union Full time Officials (Frank Loveday, Ian Wood, Pauline Nazir, Alan Milne & Gary Johnston) & Union stewards to enter into communications with a senior member of the Greggs Management team. This meeting helps to highlight the areas of concern from both sides and possible solutions. It is also about looking at what is good and what has been achieved, along with forward planning to sustain and improve all aspects to ensure the continued success of Greggs and maintaining a harmonious relationship with the workers. Greggs have always openly encouraged workers to become Union Members, because they acknowledge the good we do for the member and the company. We have a good relationship, which continues to get better, but it is

important that everyone understands the many different benefits of being a member of The Bakers Food & Allied Workers Union has to offer from Representation, Education, use of Solicitors, Impartial Advice, and Friendship. You are never alone when you join our independent Union.

Our thanks to Kazia for last year's meeting and her efforts to deliver through 2008 were greatly appreciated and recognised. We all wish to thank David Hindmarsh for doing the honours of attending this year. We believe David will also continue to help improve and develop a consistent relationship throughout the Greggs management structure with the Union. David outlined the changes and the challenges and a hopeful outlook in spite of the recession which was welcomed by all.

Frank Loveday No: 1 Regional Organiser

FACT!

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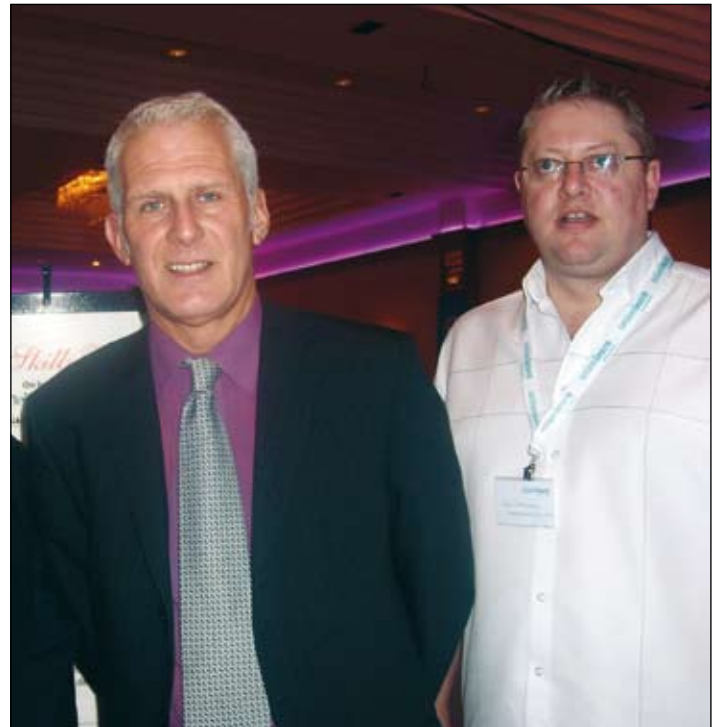
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SIGNING THE PLEDGE AT WARBURTON'S

Pictures of David Warburton, Jean Harris, Gordon Rowbottom, Ian Gregory, and Gordon Marsden, MP Blackpool South signing the skills pledge at a recent Unionlearn event held in the Hilton Hotel, Blackpool. This signing cements the learning agenda that has been embarked on as a partnership between Warburton's two Bolton sites and the BFAWU. We welcome the signing and look forward to a strong and productive learning partnership.

LOCAL LEARNING AGREEMENT SIGNED BY ALLIED BAKERIES, STEVENAGE 7th OCTOBER 2008.

The signing of the learning agreement at Allied Bakeries, Stevenage is a great step forward and one that is welcome by the branch and business unit in how they address learning issues in the future. This illustrates to all that by working in partnership can be very productive for both union and employer and enable the site to begin the process of structuring a local learning agenda that will benefit all Allied employees at Stevenage.

Frank Loveday Regional Organiser said. "It is encouraging for all employees across Allied Bakeries to explore taking the learning agenda to a wider audience across Allied. Well done to Vince Payne Branch Secretary and Carol Hillaby Regional Project Worker for their support and all involved at Allied in signing their first learning agreement. The BFAWU learning services will begin the process of supporting the site in building a learning agenda that utilises the learning services project facilities of support. Steve Finn



From left to right: Frank Loveday Regional Organiser BFAWU, Mick Lythgoe General Manager, Anne Anderson Regional HR Manager Allied Bakeries, Vince Payne Branch Secretary & Union Learning Representative (ULR)

Regional Officer said. "This is a step in the right direction that will need further commitment in developing a modern day workplace learning agreement"

Dorban Ippoma BFAWU National

Project Manager said. "Well done to all involved this is a very positive document that will begin the process of addressing important learning issues to enhance the skills of many employees"

TEN DAYS THAT SHOOK NEW LABOUR: LESSONS OF THE DISPUTE SO FAR

John McDonnell MP

Large numbers of workers taking spontaneous direct action have not only shocked this New Labour Government but have also disoriented some sections of the Left.

I have been off the scene largely because of the 3rd Runway announcement two weeks ago. When the Government announces that 10,000 members of your community are about to lose their homes and you are their MP you have a responsibility to focus your attention on their deep felt cares and concerns. So in the last couple of weeks I have thrown myself into organising meeting after meeting in my constituency, speaking to over 1500 people and contacting by various means nearly 20,000. Their response has been feelings of fear, insecurity, anxiety, anger and sheer determination to fight back.

It is these same feelings of insecurity, turning to anger and determination to resist that has motivated the workers involved in the strikes at the energy companies around the country. No worker can feel safe in their jobs as the recession slips into a depression. People are inevitably fearful for their futures.

They also have no confidence in the existing political structures and process being able or willing to do anything to protect them. The party that they voted into power has turned out to be the very Government that has promoted the privatisation, contracting out, outsourcing, and off-shoring, which have stripped away their basic protections at work, undermined their employment security, intensified their exploitation, cut their wages and forced them into debt dependency.

People have also learnt that working through the official structures of their trade union has been rendered largely ineffective by the persistence of Thatcher's anti trade union laws under this Government. Increasingly they have also come to know that they cannot rely upon many of their trade union leaderships who have delivered up their unions in support of New Labour and who less than 2 years ago installed Brown as Labour leader, the evangelist for globalisation, free markets and flexible labour.

Without political representation and with limited potential to mobilise through official

union channels there is no other route but to take but direct action when fear for jobs turns to anger.

Every member of the Labour and trade union movement should welcome the energy workers getting off their knees, standing up and fighting back. It's called solidarity.

In any dispute or struggle this doesn't mean blindly accepting either the analysis or demands of those directly engaged in the dispute. It certainly doesn't mean accepting without question the media's representation of their demands. Disputes are at times chaotic with goals sometimes ill defined and often quickly evolving.

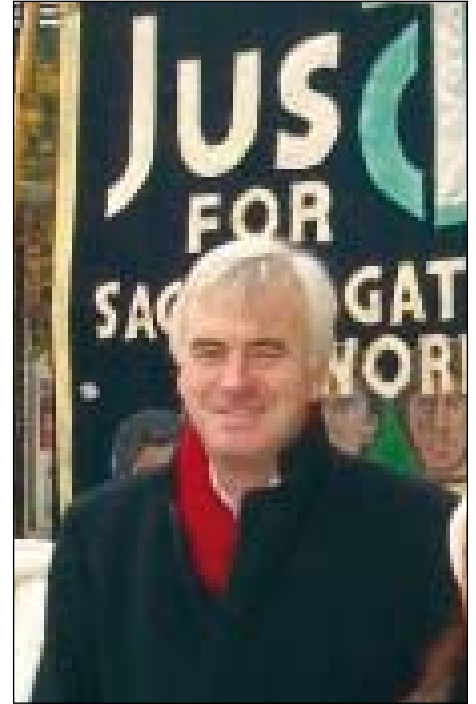
This latest round of disputes, like many more to come, has been about the right to work. As this latest crisis of capitalism unfolds many more workers will be demanding the right to work and we must support them.

If we are provide effective support we can learn from some of the lessons of this dispute so far.

First, as the Government has refused to abolish the anti trade union laws the lesson is that if workers are sufficiently determined they can just ignore them. Using unofficial structures has been successful in mobilising this time but by their nature they are difficult to maintain. If the TUC and the general secretaries of major unions showed the same determination and solidarity of the workers in this dispute and stood together to challenge the legal restrictions on trade union rights in Britain we could destroy them once and for all. Future disputes should be made official to bring this issue to a head.

Second, if cheap labour is being used by employers to undermine wages and conditions, its country of origin is irrelevant. Similarly, "British jobs for British workers" was designed to divide us to compete for increasingly scarce jobs, forcing down wages and eroding job security. Just as many of the stewards in this dispute have made clear, we should never allow the bosses or the media to divide us on grounds of nationality or race. Our demand is the right to work for all.

Third, because the EU legislation and court rulings associated with the open market are being used to divide worker from



worker the onus is upon us to build urgently the links of solidarity with European unions to enable joint action to protect jobs, wages and conditions. Where the TUC has failed the newly formed TUCG of radical unions could succeed by launching a series of talks and measures to construct these international alliances.

Fourth, as the depression forces more workers onto the dole queue industrial action alone will not be enough to protect jobs and living standards. The question of who will pay for this crisis will be determined by the answer to the question who controls our economy. The battle for control of our economy needs to be fought out politically as well as industrially, and nationally as well as at the level of the firm and industrial sector. Our demand is for a national economic strategy aimed at protecting and creating jobs, investing in public services, ending privatisation and promoting public ownership, tackling poverty and inequality and creating a sustainable environment. The launch of the People's Charter campaign presents us with an opportunity to mobilise for this change.

Fifth, the depression is likely to present the Left with ever new situations and challenge us to respond swiftly and effectively. Very quickly we need to decide the best mechanisms for the faster flow of information and for the co-ordination of solidarity action. The TUCG, the LRC, the Convention of the Left, union broad lefts and the emerging People's Charter network of activists, all have a critical role to play. Putting this together quickly over the coming period will be a central task for us all.

NIKKI SHARPE OF THOMPSONS SOLICITORS LOOKS AT THE POSITION OF TRADE UNIONS WITHIN VULNERABLE COMMUNITIES

Nikki Sharpe (right) is a personal injury specialist solicitor at the Sheffield Office of Thompsons. Nikki has worked for Thompsons for more than 25 years and has a particular interest in human rights, social and youth justice, issues of equality and diversity and amongst other things working with trade unions to increase their profile within diverse and vulnerable communities. She is a member of Black Solicitors Network North (Joint Chair), Pitsmoor CAB, South Yorkshire Womens Development Trust, Sheffield Hallam University - contributor to Law Clinic, Mosborough Primary School, School Governor, Sheffield University and Sheffield Hallam University Enterprise Centre - mentor, The Centre for Research into the Diversity in the Professions, Leeds Metropolitan University.



Two years ago Nikki decided to look at practical approaches to organising techniques within communities and how to break through barriers which exist in relation to religion, language and cultural issues. This involved going out into vulnerable communities within the Sheffield areas and forging links/bases wherefrom trade unions could use them as a platform to engage and work collectively on issues affecting community groups.

Nikki is working with the Yorkshire & Humber TUC on an initiative which secures access to the presence of trade unions for vulnerable communities. Research done on behalf of the TUC has shown that relationships with community groups need to develop over time and do not happen quickly. For this reason it was necessary for Nikki to set down a foundation by way of contact bases from already existing community advice centres whereby then the trade union movement could engage, work with and form a cohesive relationship with all. This was phase 1 of the initiative. Phase 2 is for the unions to engage through the centres with the community by way of joined up campaigning, learning agendas, seminars or otherwise. Vulnerable communities tend to organise and operate outside the workplace and therefore it is imperative that trade unions start to work outside of the general workplace too.

She recently went on a regional TUC study tour to New York with the sole purpose of forging links with community groups over there which work closely with the trade union movement. Relations have been maintained and information in relation to organising techniques retained. Nikki is keen to impart this information to the Union to assist with community organising; identifying and stimulating already existing members within the communities of which it is essential to engage for a fairer society.

To promote the work of the initiative it is recommended that the union set up working committees to address the areas where engagement with communities is deemed necessary and do work plans in relation to the identification of objectives required for furtherance of the work.

From the work to date Nikki is confident that inroads can be made; that the union will be welcomed within communities and that there is scope to develop and expand within the region. This initiative will not happen overnight but with sustained effort results will be obtained.

If you want to know more about this work and how it might assist the Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union please contact Julie Blackburn on 0113 205 6319 or Nikki Sharpe on 0114 270 3311.

THOMPSONS CASE STUDIES

1. Client was employed as a delivery driver for a baked goods firm. Was delivering goods to shops in metal cages. Whilst pushing a metal cage back into his wagon up the tail lift, the wheels of the cage went down into a gap at the edge of the flaps on the tail lift and recoiled, striking him in the face. He suffered a cut to the face and broke his glasses. A claim was notified to his employers, who denied liability, on the basis that there was nothing wrong with the tail flaps and he should have been pulling the cage, not pushing it. We obtained evidence that there had been no proper training or instruction when the metal cages were introduced, and that this incident was not an isolated one. Despite this evidence, his employers continued to deny liability, and then tried to introduce fresh witness evidence at the last minute, just weeks before trial. The case eventually settled the day before trial, and the client received damages of £2000.
2. Client worked in Greggs shop. Was making sandwiches – had to get tin of pease pudding off top shelf in storage area. Tins were packed in cellophane – as she went to remove tin from top shelf, reaching up, was struck in face by falling tins, which should have been removed from packaging. Suffered cut to upper lip, left with minor but permanent scar. Liability initially denied, but employers insurers eventually agreed to negotiate settlement. Client eventually received settlement of £1300.
3. Client had to pass back and forth beneath a low but wide conveyor during the course of his shift at a bakery. No head protection provided, area not covered with foam and no other measures taken to prevent injury. On emerging from beneath conveyor, struck his head, suffering a cut to the scalp, resulting in headaches. . No time off work and no medical treatment. Employers admitted primary liability, but alleged he should bear part of the blame. His case was eventually settled for £1000.

LABOUR REPRESENTATION COMMITTEE FEEDBACK REPORT, DECEMBER 2008

TONY RICHARDSON, LRC NATIONAL COMMITTEE DELEGATE

Approximately 3 years ago at the TUC congress a number of Trade Union leaders on the left re-launched the Labour Representation Committee. The organisation was intended as a counter balance to the lurch to the right of the Blair Labour Government and also as a rallying point for activists on the left from Trade unions and the Labour party. Over this time the LRC has been very active and built a large national organisation the National organisation is headed up by John Mc Donnell MP & Tony Benn and other leading Labour Activists (including our own Joe Marino having a high profile) there have been 3 National conferences, membership has increased significantly to approx 1500 nationally, 6 National Unions have affiliated including the Bakers Union, many Regional LRC committees have been formed, many Union branches have affiliated (including Rathbones 558), sister organisations outside the Labour party have affiliated and the LRC have started a full programme of campaigning on behalf of the Labour movement and started to begin the process of influencing Labour party policy on behalf

of working people in an effort to reclaim the Labour party for its roots.

I sit on the National Executive along with Joe as one of the 2 Bakers Union delegates, and I am active in the West Yorkshire LRC. I have reported previously on the LRC but we are now growing into a formidable political organisation gaining in influence across the left in Britain.

LRC AGM 2008

This years AGM was held on the 15th Nov at Conway hall in London, It was opened by Tony Benn & John McDonnell MP, there were 200+ delegates, the conference ran for a full day and we debated 20+ resolutions ranging from policy matters through to current events and electoral issues. The motions were from National Unions, sister organisations and Union branches, our branch Rathbones 558 raised a motion on the European Court Rulings, the debates were stimulating and ran to time, the motion that caused the most controversy was one from the Alliance for Workers Liberty calling for the LRC to support Left candidates against Blairite Labour party candidates in elections, but this was

soundly beaten. We had two International speakers, one from Iceland and one from Norway both spoke concisely on the issues of the day and were very supportive of the LRC, there was a discussion on the very successful "Convention of the Left" that was held throughout this years Labour Party conference in Manchester and the LRC voted to continue our support.

The day was excellent we discussed many important political issues and once again put the LRC firmly on the political map.

AFFILIATION

We at Rathbones 558 have affiliated our branch and I want to encourage others to do the same. You can do this by going onto the LRC website www.l-r-c.org.uk or contact me at tonyrich44@aol.com and I will assist you in affiliating. The LRC is an exciting opportunity for the Labour Movement to begin the fight back and reclaim the ground lost through the Thatcher and Blair years, an opportunity too good to miss.

Tony Richardson, Rathbones 558
LRC National Committee Delegate,
BFAWU

LAUNCH OF TRADE UNION COORDINATING GROUP

The Trade Union Coordinating Group is made up of Trade Unions, many like ours with Parliamentary groups, aimed at coordinating activity of those groups and other affiliated unions. It is a recognition that many of the issues facing working people and their unions cross industrial boundaries and there is a need to ensure a collective approach to those issues, thus saving on overlap by separate unions. The Group aims to bring together and coordinate campaigning activities of many of the key issues facing our collective membership, giving unions a new and stronger representative voice in Parliament. The unions involved are the Public & Commercial Services Union (PCS) with over 300,000 members in the civil service and government agencies; Fire Brigades Union which represents over 85% of the uniformed staff of UK fire service and frontline public service workers; The Trade Union and Professional Association for Family Court and Probation Staff with more than 9,000 members throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland; National Union of Journalists, amongst the biggest and best established journalists' union in the world with 38,000 members; Prison Officers Association with over 35,000 members in both the public and private sector; Rail, Maritime and Transport Union with over 80,000 members from almost every sector of the transport industry; United Road Transport Union with 15,000 members in the transport, warehousing, logistics and food sectors; and, of course, our own union. The launch of the Trade Union Coordinating Group is seen by all affiliated unions as



Pictured at the group's inaugural meeting, left to right: Mark Serwotka, General Secretary PCS; Joe Marino, General Secretary BFAWU; Matt Wrack, General Secretary FBU; Neil Gerrard MP; Jeremy Dear, General Secretary NUJ; Bob Crow, General Secretary RMT; Jonathan Ledger, General Secretary, Napo.

Photo: PCS/Photo Fusion

an important arm in our collective struggle to protect workers' terms and conditions of employment – to highlight the shortcomings in legislation that hampers collective bargaining and unions' abilities to protect workers and to be a vehicle to proactively pursue those policies unions and their members see as of importance to themselves. We look forward to working thorough The Trade Union Coordinating Group to achieve those aims.

Joe Marino

BFAWU OFFICERS AND REGIONAL ADDRESSES

Head Office

Mr. J. Marino, General Secretary
 Mr. R. Draper, National President
 Stanborough House, Great North Road,
 Stanborough, Welwyn Garden City,
 Hertfordshire AL8 7TA
 Tel: 01707 260150/259450
 Fax: 01707 261570
 email: bfawuho@aol.com

No.1 Region

London & Home Counties
 Mr. S. Finn – Regional Officer
 Mobile: 07739 326001
 Mr. F. Loveday – Regional Organiser
 Mobile: 07739 326002

Anglia & Kent/ Southern Counties
 Mr D Hunt – Organising District Secretary
 Mobile: 07793 911326

“Sinclair House”
 Unit 9, 66 Willoughby Lane
 Tottenham
 London N17 0SQ
 Tel: 0208 801 0980
 Fax: 0208 808 1572
 email: bfawulon@aol.com

No.2 Region

South Western
 Mr. D. Dash – Regional Officer
 Mobile: 07739 326003
 Mr. G. Johnston – Regional Organiser
 Mobile: 07739 326005

South Wales

Mr. J. James – Organising District Secretary
 Mobile: 07739 326004
 19a West Bute Street
 (Rear) The Courtyard
 The Docks
 Cardiff
 CF10 5EP
 Tel: 02920 481518
 Fax: 02920 460296
 email: bfawucar@aol.com

No.3 Region

Midlands
 Mr. A. D. Lewis – Regional Officer
 Mobile: 07739 326006
 Birmingham/West Midlands
 Mr. G. Atwall – Regional Organiser
 Mobile: 07739 326009
 Nottingham & East Midlands
 Mrs M Bryan-Hilton – Organising District Secretary
 Mobile: 07739 326007
 Four Oaks House
 Lichfield Road
 Sutton Coldfield B74 2TZ
 Tel: 0121 323 5409
 Fax: 0121 308 7461
 email: bfawubirm@aol.com

No.4 Region

Manchester
 Mr. R. Streeter – Regional Officer
 Mobile: 07739 326011

Mrs. P. Nazir – Regional Organiser

Mobile: 07739 326013
 348 Chester Road
 Cornbrook
 Manchester M16 9EZ
 Tel: 0161 872 6621
 Fax: 0161 873 8434
 email: bfawumanchester@aol.com
 Preston
 Mr I Hodson – Organising District Secretary
 Mobile: 07739 326010
 5,6,7 Cannon Street
 Preston
 Lancashire PR1 3PY
 Tel: 01772 556794
 Fax: 01772 254201
 email: bfawupres@aol.com
 Merseyside
 Mr. J. Higgins – Organising District Secretary
 Mobile: 07739 326012

No.5 Region

Northumberland & Co. Durham
 Mr. A. Milne – Regional Officer
 Mobile: 07739 326014
 West Yorkshire
 Mr. I. Wood – Organising District Secretary
 Mobile: 07739 326016
 South Yorkshire
 Mr. J. Vickers – Organising District Secretary
 Mobile: 07739 326015

Mr. S. Vickers – Regional Organiser

Mobile: 07739 326017
 Scotland
 Mr. J. McLelland – Organising District Secretary
 Mobile: 07739 326018
 10 Greenside
 Pudsey
 West Yorkshire LS28 8PU
 Tel: 01132 565925 Fax: 01132 360702
 email: bfawupudsey@aol.com

No.6 Region

Republic of Ireland
 Mr. M. Hanlon – Regional Officer
 Mr. J. Martin – Regional Organiser
 143 Lower Drumcondra Road
 Dublin 9
 Tel: 003531 8844811/8844817
 Fax: 003531 8844817
 email: bfawudublin@iol.ie

No.7 Region

Northern Ireland
 Mr. J. Holliday – Regional Officer
 Mobile: 07739 326019
 Mr. W. Gallagher – Regional Organiser
 Mobile: 07739 326020
 1st and 2nd Floor
 157 Bloomfield Avenue
 Belfast BT5 5AB
 Tel: 02890 454242
 Fax: 02890 451554
 email: bfawubel@aol.com

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Head Office
 Stanborough House, Great North Road, Stanborough,
 Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire AL8 7TA

I, the undersigned, would like to know more about the benefits of membership of the above Union:

Name (Block letters)

Address

..... Postcode

Where at present employed

Occupation

Signature Date

Please complete details above and hand to your local representative, Branch Official, Regional Office
 (for addresses see above) or send to Head Office.