



WORKERS MARCH TO SAY GOODBYE TO SHAW BAKERY

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EDITOR'S NOTES



Back in the late 70s and the time of the so-called 'Winter of Discontent', trade unions were castigated for taking industrial action against companies in an effort to enhance the terms and conditions of their members. Now, I believe we are seeing an increase in that same type of action in an effort to defend long-standing, negotiated working conditions.

We're all in it...

Working people are being attacked from all sides – from the most right wing government this country has ever seen and from their own employers who seek to decimate their standard of living whilst they continue to enjoy the fat cat wages, immoral bonuses and opulent life style. Where did this phrase '*we're all in it together*' come from? No doubt from those seeking to take the chance to plunder wages, benefits and employment rights at a time of optimum uncertainty. Some would call them chancers, I just call them *greedy*.

All men are born equal but in this time of corporate greed and radical right wing politics, it is clear that the minority are born more equal than the majority.

Cameron and his ragtag party are pursuing the same failed policies adopted by Thatcher – creating a massive pool of unemployed labour to use as a threat to the employment status of those in work. The main difference this time is that Cameron no longer has the family silver (Nationalised Industries), to sell off.

When Thatcher and Major departed we were in deficit, despite the revenues from selling off of everything from the water that falls from the sky to the gas

produced naturally in the earth's core. They plundered the North Sea Oil profits and fuelled the growing dole queues. They gave exorbitant tax breaks to their rich friends whilst those at the bottom of the earnings chain struggled to make ends meet.

Work experience or free labour?

Now we see new policies brought in that will make Thatcher seem like Mother Theresa. Policies such as the work experience schemes or *Workfare* as they have come to be known. A constant stream of unemployed labour, free to the employer – but not to the tax payer.

Young people, in particular, are threatened with the withdrawal of their unemployment benefit if they fail to complete the full term placement.

Don't get me wrong, I am not against young people in their last year at school or college, taking a look at what the world of work is about and doing a work placement. After all, it is quite a leap from education to employment. But someone needs to sit me down and make me understand why a school leaver or a long term unemployed person needs work experience to stack shelves, butter bread or sweep the floor.

Many large companies have jumped on the passing bandwagon of free labour and, as we have heard, some have jumped straight back off because of outside pressures. Some may feel that they are genuinely helping these young people to gain the relevant workplace experience, but in the main people view it as exploitation and another way around the **Agency Workers Directive**.

If the Police, the armed forces and many other professional bodies don't need work experience, why do supermarkets or high street retailers?

The government's only response is to brand any critic of the scheme as a member of the Socialist Workers Party or a unionist. Well I for one have never had anything to do with the SWP and as a lifelong member of the Labour Party, never will. As for being a trade unionist we should be loud and proud of the work we do to expose exploitation at every turn.

One more step to division

The proposed reforms to the NHS equally demonstrate the government's arrogance and indifference to the wishes of the electorate. Despite resistance from the British Medical Association and nearly all the Royal Colleges, they still head single-mindedly towards change.

Those who promised that the NHS was safe in their hands are now guiding it towards competition and privatisation. Private medical providers and suppliers who share the same trough as their rich friends in Whitehall, but user beware. If these changes are allowed to go through, then the two tier standards that plague society will become rife in our levels of healthcare.

The profitable (but relatively simple) procedures will go to private suppliers whilst the lengthy and more complex ones will come under the NHS hospitals and whilst the rich will be able to exercise their right to go private, the rest will wait or go without.

Conference facing the challenge

The delegates to this year's Annual Conference will definitely earn their corn with 98 motions on the agenda. You name the subject and there is a motion to cover it. But with delegateship comes responsibility – representing your branch goes way beyond just putting your hand up in favour or against the issue. It is about being prepared to live with and explain the consequences of voting in a particular way. We have to be prepared to stand up to oppression and to support each other's struggles against it because the alternative does not bear thinking about.

We have many challenges on the rocky road ahead, but it is a challenge we have to embrace.

Ronnie Draper @ronniebfawu

Any thoughts of things getting better in 2012 have been quickly dampened as the country slides back into recession. BFAWU members suffered badly in 2011 and this year looks to be just as severe.

Working people will not only face the further undermining of their terms and conditions by employers looking to improve profit margins, but the government wading in to remove legal protection. It's amazing how Cameron refused to involve himself in the bosses' bonus scandal but has no problem removing rights from normal workers.

Changes to unfair dismissal rules

The qualifying period for an employee to bring an unfair dismissal claim will increase from one year to two years from April 6th. This policy failed to create a single job under the last Tory government but despite that, here it is again. The only thing it does is provide employers with the ability to make workers vulnerable for a further 12 months. They won't have to give a permanent position for at least 2 years.

Redundancy and occupational health

The next target for this government is redundancy rights and the removal of the 90 day consultation period. My personal experience tells me that when a consultation lasts 90 days, a better way to avoid job losses often becomes apparent during discussions. When you link the two year qualifying and the redundancy rights issues together, you can easily determine the type of society the government is intending to build. It is one built on fear and removal of all worker involvement. This is further confirmed by the gradual removal of health and safety protection.

I attended a cancer presentation in recent weeks, where the statistics clearly demonstrated that at least 8000 working people will fall victims to occupational cancer. This will be due to employers failing to implement current regulative requirements. The facts show that if employers were forced to implement regulations, 90% of those potential victims would be protected. Despite the government spin, the Löfstedt Report stated that health & safety in the UK struck 'a fair balance'. You would never have guessed that with the comments of our spinning prime minister.

Stand up and fight!

As I have attended our regional councils, I have seen for myself the commitment of our activists to build our union membership base. Full time officials, branch secretaries and shop stewards are working together to strengthen our membership in both their workplaces and communities. Workers now more than ever, can't afford not to be in a union. There is a need to ensure that workers come together in order to fight against the unnecessary changes being forced on them. Recent weeks have seen an increase in applications to join our union. People are joining because they know we will stand up and fight for them.

"...this debate has been provoked to cause a division between those with little and those with less"

The Government has recently proposed a benefits cap of £26,000.00 which, incredibly, 72% of the UK population agree with. On investigation, it appears that this debate has been provoked to cause a division between those with little and those with less. It is nothing more than a blatant attempt to further

divide not just rich and poor, working and non-working, but the disabled and children too. When you look how many of our friends and colleagues have lost their jobs, the truth of life on the dole and their entitlement is *how much?* I'll tell you:

- *Single people, aged under 25:* £53.45 a week
- *Single people aged 25 or over:* £67.50 a week
- *Couples and civil partnerships (both aged 18 or over):* £105.95 a week
- *Lone parents (aged 18 or under):* £53.45 a week
- *Lone parents (aged 18 or over):* £67.50 a week

These are *maximum* amounts. You will more than likely get less once household income and savings have been taken into account.

Pay a living wage!

If the government really wants to reduce benefits and reliance on benefits, it should insist that employers pay a living wage, so that work truly pays. It's amazing how many employers look at what benefits their workers can get in order to maintain their pay at levels that mean state benefits are available to them. If employers were made to pay workers a decent wage rather than just the bosses or pile money into shareholders' accounts, then maybe the benefits system would be used to help those in need, and stop employers trying to avoid paying their workers fairly.

In addition to the benefits issue, a limit will be introduced so that the Local Housing Allowance does not exceed:

- £250 a week for a one bedroom property (including shared accommodation)
- £290 a week for a two bedroom property
- £340 a week for a three bedroom property
- £400 a week for a four bedroom property
- The maximum rate of Housing Benefit will be limited to the rate for a four bedroom property.

Why is it that the cap is being placed on those that require a place to live and not on those who are renting property? If the government limited the amount that landlords could charge, that would have a positive effect of reducing the rents that people need to claim.

Ian Hodson



**NATIONAL PRESIDENT
IAN HODSON WRITES**

FIGHTING BACK ON LONDON CUTS

KEN LIVINGSTONE'S CAMPAIGN FOR RE-ELECTION AS LONDON'S MAYOR



Life is tough for ordinary Londoners at the moment. Soaring living costs, big fares increases, and rapidly rising unemployment – with London youth unemployment at 23% – alongside the Tory attacks on education and our NHS – difficult times indeed.

During times like these, BFAWU members in London need a Mayor who will stand up for them, and do everything in his power to make things easier. Londoners unequivocally do not need a part-time, out of touch Mayor who refers to the £250,000 second salary he receives as a Telegraph columnist as 'chickenfeed' and who has prioritised lobbying for a tax cut which will benefit only the richest 1%.

So my priorities are clear: put money back in people's pockets so that they can spend it in the London economy, protecting jobs and driving growth rather than cuts.

That is why at the heart of my campaign is my **Fare Deal** pledge: to cut transport fares by 7%, and a cut in the price of a bus ticket from £1.35 to £1.20.

I will immediately cut the fares, freeze them for a year, and then allow them to rise by no more than inflation. This will save the average Londoner £1000 over the next four years. If I have not cut the fares on or by the 7th October 2012, I will resign.

As well as transport fares, trade unionists in London have told me that one of the most prohibitive costs is housing. In more than half of London boroughs, Londoners are paying on average 50% of their income on rent in the private sector. This is neither fair nor good for the London economy. People need to be able to afford to live in our capital. It is wrong when Londoners are priced out of our city. I will campaign for a **London Living Rent** so that no one has to pay more than a third of their income on rent. I will also set up a Mayor's letting agency to rein in rogue landlords and rip-off agents.

Of course, my commitment to tackling London's housing crisis extends beyond the private sector. Under Boris Johnson, too many Londoners have been allowed

to languish on waiting lists, stuck in unsuitable overcrowded accommodation. Central to improving housing for all is the need for action on London's chronic shortage of homes, including council homes, and increase housing supply.

"If I have not cut fares on or by the 7th October 2012, I will resign"

The Living Rent will build on the London Living Wage that I introduced, and I will ensure that it continues to rise with living costs and that we use the procurement power of the Greater London Authority to get a fairer deal for workers across London. I value the positive contribution of unions on behalf of hard-working members in London. On these and other areas I will continue a constructive dialogue with Unions.

Londoners need a city they can afford to live in; they also need to feel safe in. Robbery, burglary and knife crime are going up in London. Despite this, Tory Mayor Johnson has cut 1,700 police over the last 2 years. I am committed to making the world's greatest city one of the safest. That is why I have set out my policing pledge – to reverse Boris Johnson's cuts to 1700 police officers; and reinstate sergeants to all 600 Safer Neighbourhood Teams, after 300 of them were cut by Boris Johnson. I believe that the very least Londoners can expect is to feel safe in their own city and in their own streets.

Trade unionists across London are coming out to help us beat this Tory Mayor and you can too. Please sign up to my volunteer website (www.yourken.org) to get updates from the campaign or come along to my regular phonebanks at 39 Victoria Street, London SW1H 0HA, Monday – Thursday, 6–8pm.

The London Mayoral election is the biggest electoral battleground this year and the difference between myself and Conservative Mayor Boris Johnson could not be starker.

It is time for a Mayor who will lead a fight-back against attacks on public services by this Tory-led government, and put ordinary Londoners first.

Ken Livingstone

HAPPY 80TH BIRTHDAY, DICK!



BFAWU National President Ian Hodson presents Dick Punshon with a suitable gift!

Regional Council seemed to be the perfect opportunity to celebrate **Dick Punshon's 80th Birthday**. As lots of our activists will already know, Dick is a loyal member of our union and has represented Region 5 on the Executive Council for several years, eventually becoming the Vice President of the union. And, as anyone who has met Dick will be aware, he is a real character – he always has a story to tell, or a word of advice, and offers help and support to everyone.

...a big thank you to Dick from all of us in Region 5!

I remember when Dick decided to retire from the Executive Council and I was nominated as his replacement. I was very worried – *how could I possibly follow such strong representative?* Dick, however, was a tower of strength, offering me all the help and advice that I might need. Nothing was too much trouble and it made such a difference to me to know I had his support.

Marilyn French

BAKERS UNION SIGNS RECOGNITION AGREEMENT WITH ALDREDS THE BAKERS

On the 20th December 2011 Regional Officer Tony Lewis and Regional Organiser George Atwall signed the recognition agreement with Aldreds, bringing to a close a short but very successful campaign. Elections are due to take place soon at Aldreds and I am sure we will soon have another solid Branch.



Shaking on it! Tony Lewis clinches the deal with David Love, the Factory Manager at Aldreds. Also in the picture are George Atwall and Richard Wainwright.

Aldreds (who recently have had a number of redundancies) have been supplying Ilkeston and Derbyshire with premium sliced bread and baked rolls since being established in 1887.

In 2010 they were acquired by **Frank Roberts** and they are now hoping to receive some investment.

This brings Frank Roberts total employees to around eight hundred and a good percentage are Bakers Union Members.

I would like to thank Tony Lewis and George Atwall for all their hard work campaigning.

Finally, I would also like to say a big Welcome to all our new Bakers Union Members at Aldreds.

Richard Wainwright
Branch Secretary
Lay Organiser

WORKERS ATTEND BAKERS UNION MEETING IN THEIR HUNDREDS TO JOIN THE FIGHT AGAINST COMPANY OPPRESSION

On the 15th of December around two hundred struggling **Solway Foods** workers attended a special Bakers Union meeting. The special meeting was arranged by George Atwall as part of his Solway Foods campaign and the meeting was led by John Higgins and Tony Lewis, with additional support from Thompsons Solicitors. George, who has been campaigning at Solway Foods for some time realised that due to the severity of the attacks the company is making on the workforce more urgent action was required.

A function room at a local hotel was booked and advertisements were placed in the local press.

The recent actions of the senior Management team at Solway Foods have demonstrated a frightening modus operandi. The attacks that have been made on the workers have been nothing short of a disgraceful attempt at oppressing their terms and conditions and it was a privilege to see the workers starting to rise against the tyranny. However, it is imperative that we show solidarity to them and continue to support the campaign.

I would like to thank and congratulate George, Tony and John for all their hard work on this campaign and for their professionalism on the day. Region 3 is struggling with limited resources, but the region's 3 FTOs valiantly march on.

Richard Wainwright
Branch Secretary/Lay Organiser



John Higgins and Tony Lewis address the concerned Solway Foods workers.

George brought Security and as it turned out he was much needed! So a big thank you to Mr Paul Montgomery!



Dear Ian...

A letter here from **Yasmin Qureshi**, MP for Bolton South East, about the successful resolution of the **Park Cakes** dispute.



Dear Mr Hodson

Park Cake Bakeries dispute

At the meeting of Bolton South East Labour Party on Monday 12th December Geoff Atkinson, North West Region BWAUFU representative, kindly gave a report on the outcome of the dispute with Park Cake Bakeries.

I wanted to write to you to add my congratulations on a well-fought campaign by BWAUFU members on behalf of workers at the Bolton site. Together with my Labour Party colleagues I'm very pleased at the positive outcome which was achieved. The creation of new, permanent positions with an agreement which means all employees will have the same negotiated terms and conditions after a probationary period is an excellent result considering the initial management proposal.

As you may know, I attended a meeting in my constituency with BWAUFU members in October to give my full support in their dispute. I also added my signature to EDM 2179 condemning the introduction of new contracts. If I can be of any further help in the future please get in touch.



LET'S GIVE PEOPLE HOPE ONCE AGAIN



John McDonnell MP
Chair of BFAWU
Parliamentary Group

We knew it would be bad if the Tories got back but I don't think anyone thought it would be as bad as this.

By the end of the year we will have 3 million unemployed. Already there are 1 million young people unemployed and nearly 2 million on short-time working.

In most areas of the country there are at least 5 and usually 10 to 20 people chasing every job vacancy.

If you lose your job you are treated like a scrounger in the media and by the benefits system. The slightest slip up in the claims paperwork and you are at risk of three months suspension from benefit.

People are now forced onto workfare schemes where you have to work for no wages for your benefits or face having your benefits cut.

Mums and Dads who are working the 16 hours to qualify for family tax credits are now being told that they have to work 24 hours but the companies they work for cannot find them the extra hours to enable them to keep their benefits.

People with disabilities are now forced to have a new medical assessment of their disability by a private company called ATOS. Large numbers of people with serious disabilities are losing their benefits and are being forced onto workfare schemes, working for free. If they refuse they lose their benefits completely.

The 5th richest country in the world...

The result is that in Britain in 2012, the 5th richest country in the world, many families are now surviving on food parcels handed out by food banks set up by local charities, churches and community organisations.

In housing we are facing the most severe housing crisis since the Second World War. The last government is partly to blame for not building council house but it stems from Margaret Thatcher's decision to sell off council houses without then using the income to build new ones.

We now have millions on council waiting lists and tens of thousands homeless. The Government's response has been to bring in new legislation to effectively end council housing once and for all.

Under the Government's new laws all councils can now refuse to give families permanent homes. Instead they can offer temporary lettings or what they ironically call "flexible tenancies" for 2 year or 4 years and then reassess the family income. If the family's wages have gone up they can be forced out of their home.

In the meantime any family in a council property or housing association property that has a spare bedroom will have their housing benefit cut by £13.00 each week.

Housing benefit is also being cut and a cap on all benefits being introduced of £26,000 a year. There has been a lot of rubbish published in the media about this which is inaccurate and often downright lies.

Barely any families get £26,000 a year. If they do it is usually because they rents are high and as a result their housing benefit is high. The housing benefit goes to the landlord.

The reason rents are high in many city areas is because there is shortage of housing and landlords are able to exploit this shortage by putting up rents to an extortionate level.

The reason there is a shortage of housing is because successive governments have failed to build council houses. It's a vicious circle caused by politicians, many of whom should have known better.

Move where rents are cheaper – but don't expect to work!

The Government is advising people to move to areas where the rents are lower. The problem with this argument is that the areas where the rents are lower are the areas where there are no jobs. It's another vicious circle.

At the same time as people are losing their jobs and losing their homes, the greed of the rich corporations, the super rich and the bankers never fails to astound us all. We now know from the independent and expert research of the accountants and tax experts of the Tax Justice Campaign that between £120 billion and £150 billion each year is lost as a result of tax avoidance and tax evasion. This month, Barclays bank alone was caught out in creating a tax avoidance scheme of £500 million and this is only the tip of the iceberg.

This Coalition Government is making it clear with every policy it introduces that it has made the decision that this economic crisis will be paid for not by the rich banks and corporations that caused it but by ordinary people who are least able to afford to.

There is an obvious solution to this crisis. First tackle the tax avoidance and tax evasion in order to solve the deficit. Second tax all those that made themselves super rich during the boom years.

"... this crisis will be paid for not by the rich banks and corporations that caused it but by ordinary people who are least able to afford to"

Professor Greg Philo has put forward a detailed scheme for a 20% wealth tax on the assets of the richest 10%. This would bring in £800 billion to resolve our country's debt problem and kick-start out economy to put people back to work.

Every one of us should become advocates for this economic alternative. Let's tell this government straight that we're not taking it anymore and there is an alternative to their cuts. **Let's give people hope once again.**

John McDonnell

GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION AIMS TO REDUCE EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS EVEN MORE



Iain Birrell of Thompsons Solicitors explains how the government is further weakening employment rights in favour of employers

The government has embarked on a frenzy of changes intended to help businesses by reducing the obligations they owe their workers. Most will significantly weaken working people's rights in favour of employers.

Work longer to gain employment rights

One of the first of these reforms has been the extension of the qualification period for an employee to be able to take an unfair dismissal claim, from one to two years continuous employment with their employer from this April.

Then business Secretary Vince Cable announced that the government will consult on introducing 'protected conversations' into workplaces.

These conversations will allow employers to avoid liability for what they say to staff.

In addition, a business department consultation on reducing the amount of time employers must consult with their workforce or its representatives when the firm intends to make collective redundancies has recently ended.

Call for evidence on 'protection'

There has also been a 'call for evidence' about the protections that workers have when their jobs are transferred to different employers – the TUPE regulations – with the government apparently considering weakening those safeguards so that employers have fewer obligations to staff who are transferring.

There is no evidence that either the collective redundancy consultation provisions or the TUPE regulations are causing employers any difficulties. In fact they make it easier for all sides to understand the processes.

And now there's a consultation on introducing fees of up to £1,750 in employment tribunals from as soon as April 2013, *just to start a claim*. Upfront fees will make it more difficult for employees who have been done an injustice to pursue a claim against an employer.

Businesses 'terrified to take people on'

Behind these reforms are powerful employer organisations which have convinced ministers that they are being inundated with vexatious claims and that businesses are so terrified of hiring people that it is paralysing the UK economy. They base these claims on anecdote, not evidence.

Also being considered are 'no fault' dismissals in firms employing less than 10 people, weakening rights for British employees under the Working Time Directive, limiting discrimination compensation, restricting facility time for union reps and making it even more difficult for unions to ballot for industrial action.

A blizzard of proposals

How does this blizzard of proposals sit with the government's claimed commitment to fairness and social justice?

Employment tribunal fees do not distinguish between genuine and unmeritorious claims, they just prevent the claims of people unable to pay – the most vulnerable workers, many of whom will have lost their jobs or are owed money by their employers.

Many employers simply refuse to pay unpaid holiday wages until they receive

an ET claim form. Fees will encourage unscrupulous employers to break the law.

Beecroft claims 'sackings at will' can improve growth

The 'protected conversations' proposal came out of a report by venture capitalist and Tory donor, Adrian Beecroft. He recommended that employers should be allowed to sack workers at will and without explanation in return for a compensation payment. This would, he claimed, promote economic growth.

Although the Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg appeared to block the plan saying (as the trade unions always have) that making people scared for their jobs would stop them spending, the 'no fault' dismissals for small firms and the protected conversations proposal were inspired by the Beecroft report.

No level playing field

The government cannot (it seems) accept there is not a level playing field between workers and their bosses.

Cameron says that he wants to make it *"so a boss and an employee feel able to sit down together and have a frank conversation – at either's request"*.

This implies that managers cannot manage effectively if they can be held to account for what they say to staff, and how they say it.

If protected conversations effectively rip up the rules about discrimination and consultation, they will be a rogues charter for managers looking to bully, cajole and abuse. Responsible employers may not use them to deliberately deny employees their legal rights, but there are plenty of employers who will.

The industrial relations and union rights consequences of protected conversations with no or ineffective safeguards are far reaching. Any number of individual and collective rights might be hobbled.

Proposals – economically illiterate

At a time when those in employment in the UK need confidence in their future, driving employment rights down to the level of developing economies will create massive job insecurity.

The proposals are economically illiterate.

The **International Labour Rights Forum** are one of the many freedom fighters around the world standing up to challenge such injustice for workers worldwide. This article, from **Andy Law**, highlights the advocacy organization's campaign for Freedom At Work.

Freedom at Work to use collective bargaining rights and organise in the workplace gives workers a working voice, enabling them to strive towards a better life. In their bid to organise, workers worldwide face intimidation and outrageous acts of violence.

UNION PERSECUTION WORLDWIDE

Despite freedom of association and collective bargaining rights forming part of the International Labour Organization's core Labour standards and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, these rights are still regularly violated.

Tactics frequently used by governments and employers to bust Unions worldwide include:

Hiring paramilitary groups or conspiring with local police or military forces to intimidate with violent acts against union leaders, activists and their families.

From *physical and verbal harassment to false arrests, death threats and assassinations*, the International Trade Union Confederation's Annual Survey reported 76 unionists killed in 2008. Worst offenders include **Colombia** – still a union leader's most dangerous place – and the **Philippines**, where the military methodically commit acts of violence and intimidation against unionists.

Contracting workers out to temporary employment agencies, labour 'cooperatives', or moving workers to short-term contracts, disabling them from joining unions and bargaining



Search: Turkish workers fired for attempts to unionise

collectively. Even when contract workers can legally unionise, they are less likely to risk being fired for unionising when their jobs are so precarious.

Search: Pakistani Lipton workers' struggle to organise and become permanent employees.

Firing workers – Whether organising or already existing Union members, in countries where it is illegal to fire workers without just cause, firings are used under the age old tactic of layoffs. Many workers are told to leave – with only non-union members offered return.

Search: Blacklisting workers – fired for organising within a particular region or industry, demonstrating that employers will not allow workers to form organizations of their choice.

Search: Pineapple workers blacklisted for unionising in **Costa Rica**.

Benefiting from Export Processing Zones (EPZs) that are often exempt from laws establishing freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining and other labour laws.

It is almost always illegal to strike in EPZs, workers protesting against conditions – often some of the worst in the country – are often arrested, or subjected to violence.

An estimated 63 million people are employed in EPZs worldwide, with **China** alone accounting for 40 million.

Search: Violence against workers in EPZs in the **Philippines**

Factory and farm closings, re-organizations and re-locations – specifically designed to rid of union presence or send a message that 'unions force factories to close'. Non-union

employees are often re-hired in the same reopened facility miles away.

Search: Russell workers in **Honduras**.

Independent unions replaced with company-dominated unions or company-run 'committees' and workers hand-picked by management. Some countries allow legally-binding collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) to be replaced by company negotiated 'pacts' and other non-binding 'agreements'. Rarely democratically negotiated by workers, these tactics – often promoted by employer-funded anti-union schools – are intent on spreading discriminatory Union messages to workers from a young age

Search: Dole cut-flower workers' struggle in **Colombia** to battle a company-dominated union and the **Liberian** Firestone workers' independent union.

Union registration or collective bargaining process interference and manipulating workers into revoking their union memberships. Often occurring at government labour department level, besides interference in the union process, common company practice includes refusal to bargain a contract (CBA) with workers for years on end, even if the union is legally registered – frustrating workers and weakening the union.

Search: Truckers in **U.S.A.** denied the right to collectively bargain.

Exploiting children and migrants and recruiting them to replace union workers or serve as 'strikebreakers'. Such shameful ploys are used repeatedly by companies to generate xenophobic resentment while decreasing workers solidarity. Migrants are often legally barred from unionising: employers often threaten to deport migrant workers who try to organise. Children are also illegally employed as another tactic to undermine adult union organising efforts.

Criminalising labour activists – through defamation charges, false arrests, arrests of striking or protesting workers or illegal detentions. In countries with strong counter-terrorism efforts to target rebel groups, union activists have been accused of been terrorists by military forces.

Search: Criminalisation of unionists in the **Philippines**.

If your union is facing repression or violence because of your organising, please contact ILRF at:

laborrigh@ilrf.org

BAKERY PAYS COMPENSATION AFTER BAKER FALLS IN FREEZER

A bakery worker who was injured after he slipped in the workplace has received compensation after help from his trade union.

The 44 year old, from Farnley in Leeds, was left with tissue damage to his wrist, shoulder and neck after he slipped on ice which had built up on the floor of a walk-in freezer at the bakery in Leeds.

Staff had complained to management about the problem which had been caused by a poor cleaning system inside the freezer, but nothing had been done to fix the problem.

The accident meant the BFAWU member had to take ten weeks off sick from his job as a team manager for the bakers. When he returned to work he was put on light duties meaning he could only work for a few hours a day for five months, leaving him with significantly reduced wages.

Following the accident he contacted his trade union, which instructed its lawyers Thompsons Solicitors to pursue a claim for compensation.

Thompsons argued that the problem of ice developing on the floor should have been addressed as soon as it was highlighted.

The bakery settled the claim out of court for £8,400. Efforts have been made by the bakery to resolve the problem, including replacing the freezer door.

The member said, "For the five months I was on light duties I was on much less pay than I'd usually receive. It meant I was finding it difficult to pay my mortgage and other bills. I decided to contact the union because I felt the accident would never have happened if the door had been replaced earlier."

Ian Wood from the BFAWU added, "This bakery should have reacted to staff complaints about this freezer straight away. If they had done so our member would not have faced several months of pain and loss of wages. We are pleased to hear that the health and safety problem has now been fixed but it should never have taken an accident like this to make it happen."

Andrew Gray from Thompsons Solicitors said:

"This client was put in considerable financial difficulty by this accident. We have been able to recover damages to allow him to get his affairs back in order and to compensate him from the pain he endured from his injuries."



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JOHN CARTAIN'S RETIREMENT PARTY

John Cartain, of Thompsons Solicitors, is semi-retiring and so some of us from Region 4 decided to commemorate this occasion. (We don't often need an excuse for a party!).

We met up at the *Ox Noble* for a few cheeky drinks, before heading off to *Akhbars* for a lovely meal. There, John was presented with a gift by Ronnie Draper. He was "gobsmacked", and it is the first time I have ever seen a solicitor absolutely speechless!

The biggest decision of the evening was... *what to eat?* After a healthy debate, we opted to go 'a la carte'. With the Cobra flowing, and fantastic food, it didn't take long to feel euphoric. We left *Akhbars* and returned to the *Ox Noble*.

Slowly but surely, everyone started drifting off home and, at one point, John was being coerced to leave for Bolton with the General Secretary, National

President, FTO and Admin (in the shape of Pauline Worsnop).

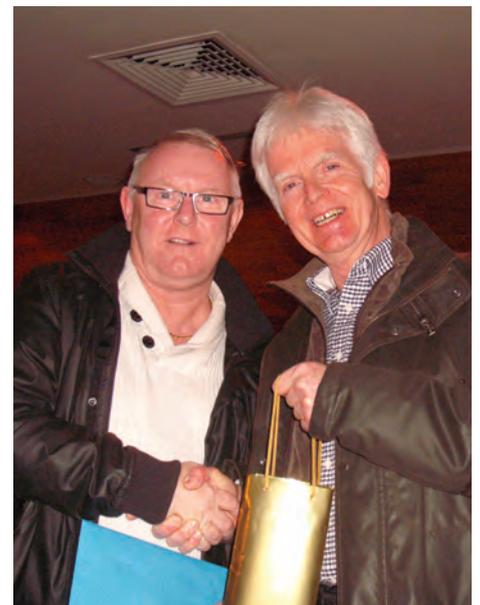
Note to Jan – you should be proud of John, he remained solid and wouldn't leave Manchester!

With only 3 of us remaining, we continued the party. I'm pleased to say that Paul White (Greggs Branch Secretary) and I finished what we started, and sent John home rather merry, and a good time was had by all.

John tells us he is still going to be working exclusively with the BFAWU as a Consultant, at which point Pauline Nazir asked if she would be able to give him her shopping list.

Note to John: If everyone from Region 4 does this, you will never be out of the supermarkets!

Julie Summersgill
Branch Secretary



John receives his retirement gift (or is it a takeaway?) from Ronnie Draper



CAMERON REVS UP THE RHETORIC TO KILL MORE WORKERS



Ian Hodson asks why current occupational health legislation is being ignored

David Cameron hates health and safety. He hates working people too and by his own admission, his New Year's resolution is to end the so-called *health and safety culture*. That's easy for him to say when it's not his family at risk. They are not likely to work for bad or incompetent employers. Health and safety is there to protect working people and not one solitary business has been put at risk from the legislation involved. Companies and employers are only at risk when they kill or injure workers through their own negligence and ignorance of the regulations that are designed to protect not only people but, ironically, employers as well.

Recent studies have shown that if employers met current legislative requirements, then occupational cancer rates could be cut by as much as 90%. Occupational cancer is reported as currently claiming around 8000 victims a year. This is totally unacceptable in a civilised society in the 21st century. Instead of cutting health and safety, the government should be forcing employers to comply. They talk about reducing the burden on taxpayers, yet simply by stopping employers breaching their responsibilities, this burden could be reduced significantly and the state wouldn't have to pick up the bill for their neglect.

Recent research suggests:

- With modest intervention over 2,000 cancers can be avoided by 2060 (including 376 lung, 928 breast cancers, 432 NMSC).
- With stronger interventions nearly 8,500 can be avoided by 2060 (including 1,732 lung, 3,062 breast and 3,287 NMSC)

Source: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrpdf/rr800.pdf>

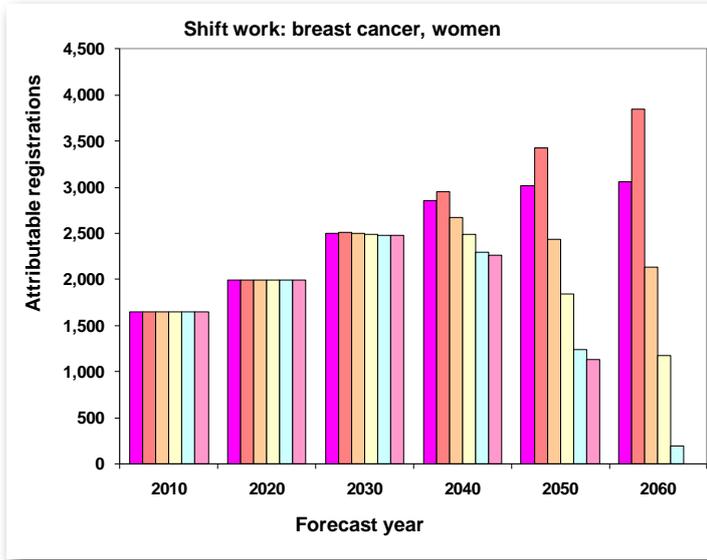
Shift-working breast cancer risk

The BFAWU has argued long and hard over the years for the abolition of night work and statistics have finally shown that our position on this issue was and is correct. The aim has always been to protect not just employees' family units, work/life balance and health, but to tackle the overall issue of working unsociable hours. When you look at some of the recent research carried out, it confirms the risks that our members are facing:

- If current employment levels are maintained, 30% of night shift workers will be working 5 years, 40% will be working 5–14 years and 30% will be working 15+ years night shift work
- Forecasters predict that the numbers will only reach zero by 2060 if no workers are employed on night shifts for five or more years from 2010 onwards, as there is zero excess risk indicated for this duration of employment.
- Cancers reduced by 94% by 2060 if 90% rather than the current 30% are restricted to less than 5 years on night shifts.

Source: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrpdf/rr800.pdf>

Recent studies show that women are more at risk of developing breast cancer when working night shifts. This has led to the Danish government paying compensation to women who had developed breast cancer after long spells of working nights. So far, almost 40 Danish women have won compensation. However, not every case was successful. Women who had a family history of breast cancer were among the ones whose claims were rejected. These claims were made following a ruling by a United Nations agency that night shifts *probably increase* the risk of developing cancer.



For years there has been growing evidence that night shifts are bad for you. Among the symptoms are disturbed sleep, fatigue and digestive problems. There is also a greater risk of accidents at work.

Dr Vincent Cogliano of the IARC (The International Agency for Research on Cancer <http://www.iarc.fr>) said that they reached their conclusion after looking at a wide number of studies of both humans and animals.

One of the reports, published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, showed a 36% greater risk of breast cancer for women who had worked night shifts for more than 30 years, compared with women who had never worked nights.

He said there was evidence to support the hypothesis that alterations in sleep patterns could suppress the production of melatonin in the body. "Melatonin has some beneficial effects in preventing some of the steps leading to cancer" he said. "The level of evidence is really no different than it might be for an industrial chemical". In the UK, unions estimate that around 20% of the national workforce is involved in night shifts. That number is significantly higher in the food industry.

We must ensure that the findings of these highly-regarded people are raised with employers. We must also demand that before forcing changes to employees' shift working arrangements, there are safeguards in place such as regular health checks in order to ensure that workers are not put at risk. Women should be supported and made aware of the risks in relation to night working. A serious discussion needs to take place in regard to what employers actually require and alternatives to unhealthy shift working need to be considered. The evidence is now becoming more apparent, more real and more frightening.

Employers must stop playing roulette with our members' lives.

LINK BETWEEN NIGHT SHIFT WORK AND BREAST CANCER RISK

Years on night shift

Relative risk of breast cancer*



* Note: Figures from Nurses' Health Study
Risk adjusted for age and other contributory factors

SOURCE: JNCI (2001)

CONSERVATIVES UNVEIL NEW PLANS TO CUT HEALTH AND SAFETY RED TAPE

New measures for 2012 designed to prevent trivial compensation claims being taken against businesses and freeing SMEs (Small & Medium Enterprises) from the 'stranglehold' of unnecessary health and safety red tape, have been announced by PM, David Cameron. The measures include:

- Moves to ensure insurance companies do not force businesses to go beyond what is actually required by health and safety law when obtaining insurance cover.
- Tackling the 'compensation culture' by extending an existing scheme capping the amount lawyers can earn from small value insurance claims and reducing overall costs in personal injury compensation claims funded by 'no win, no fee' deals.
- Changing the law surrounding strict liability for civil compensation claims relating to breaches of health and safety law so that businesses are no longer automatically at fault if something goes wrong.
- Speeding up the process of consolidating and removing health and safety regulations proposed by the Löfstedt report so that unnecessary regulations are scrapped by the end of 2012.

Farcical and Marginal?

Announcing the measures for small businesses, Cameron said: "Talk of 'Health and Safety' can too often sound farcical or marginal. But for British businesses – especially the smaller ones that are so vital to the future of our economy this is a massively important issue".

Quotes are also bandied out like, "So this coalition has a clear New Year's resolution: to kill off the health and safety culture for good.

Steve Greatwood, Chairman of National H&S Committee warns against reforms of H&S law

I want 2012 to go down in history not just as Olympics year or Diamond Jubilee year, but the year we get a lot of this pointless time-wasting out of the British economy and British life once and for all."

H&S 'well down the list of priorities'

However, the H&S professionals that I have spoken to say that the bulk of the worst accidents come from SMEs – they cannot afford to train staff and/or are not trained in risk assessment. H&S to SMEs is also well down the list of priorities, as in these economic times it is harder to keep their businesses afloat.

All this arises out of the Löfstedt Report that recommends simplifying and making H&S more practical in application. Whereas there are some very useful elements to the report, it does introduce a lot of retrograde steps which would increase the risks to people at work.

If this reduces the burden on SMEs by reducing insurance premiums and filling in paperwork, H&S will go even further down the priority lists. The previous Lord Young report, 'H&S

– Common Sense', was a similar attempt to undermine H&S and was luckily discredited by the man himself.

The establishment of a 'Challenge Panel' (Quango) was recommended by Professor Ragnar Löfstedt, who called on the government to introduce a mechanism that allows for cases (back to 30th June 2011) of incorrect, over-application of H&S legislation to be addressed. This is an attack on the enforcement agencies and allows corporate industries to avoid their responsibilities – because they have the funds to fight off prosecutions. This is like Tesco's going to the higher courts to appeal against failed planning applications.

Insurance companies

Meanwhile, as part of the new measures, the government will also investigate the demands made by insurance companies on businesses to ensure that levels of compliance do not force employers to go far beyond what is actually required by the law to secure their insurance cover. The government will be writing to the chief executives of all the major UK insurance companies, asking them to set out what they will do to deal with this problem, and they will be invited to a meeting at Downing Street in February to set out their plans.

[cont'd next page]



However, the TUC dismissed government claims that UK businesses are in a 'stranglehold' of health and safety red tape and compensation claims.

TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber said, "It is clear that Downing Street does not have a clue about what life is like for the millions of ordinary people who work in shops, offices, schools, factories, call centres and other workplaces across the UK. Instead it is making policy in response to grumbles from elements of the small business lobby and the risible rantings of right-wing commentators."

Further details of the government's initiative can be found here:

<http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/business-boosting-measures-announced/>

Details of the Independent Regulatory Challenge Panel are available at:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/contact/challenge-panel.htm>

Union lawyers have also been included in their target to reduce business burden, by restricting their powers to represent members through introducing onerous costs.

Union lawyers will have to be more selective in who they represent and pro-bono cases, support and advice may be cut back severely in future due to this.

In summary...

The future of H&S with the Conservatives at the helm is that the slow drip, drip, drips to undermine a burden to industry will inevitably continue.

We are already seeing in our industry the emergence of 'highest quality – lowest price' companies that are ripping into long-established terms and conditions.

The removal of shift pay, the introduction of zero hour contracts and not paying sick pay are all back with us already. The health of workers is just as important as their safety and the obvious lack of worker respect is adding insult to this injury.

Steve Greatwood,

Chairman of National Health and Safety Committee.

Source material from British Safety Council

THE LAW REGARDING WORKPLACE TEMPERATURES



Sadiq Vohra
is an employment
law specialist at
MWR Solicitors

The wrong temperature in a working environment can prove uncomfortable for workers. Workplaces that are too cold or too hot can affect our stress levels, productivity and it could contribute to or cause symptoms of ill health.

So what is the law surrounding temperature in the workplace?

Although legally there is no minimum or maximum temperature, the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 state that during working hours, temperature should be reasonable. While this will vary, dependent on the nature of the workplace, the temperature should normally be at least 16° Celsius, unless the work involves severe physical effort, in which case it should be at least 13° Celsius.

The regulations also stipulate that a sufficient number of thermometers should be provided to enable people to determine the temperature and ensure it is reasonable.

Staff should also feel no need to wear specialist clothing to keep warm and a heating system should be provided when a comfortable temperature cannot be achieved.

It is often the case that in extremely hot weather a workroom becomes too stuffy – the space should

therefore become well ventilated, especially when the work space is enclosed. Additional ventilation systems may be required in workplaces with a lot of hot air. Employees should also be allowed adequate breaks in a well-ventilated place.

In some working environments, staff are required to wear personal protective equipment and employers have been urged to assess whether all this equipment is needed in hot weather.

Some employees who need to wear this equipment to prevent injury should be given longer breaks or more frequent breaks in a comfortable environment.

While failing to comply with the code of practice is not a criminal offence, employers who do not recognise the guidelines could face court proceedings if an employee's safety has been contravened.

The Trades Union Congress (TUC) recently hit out at Prime Minister David Cameron who, in January 2012, announced a 'War against excessive health and safety.'

A **Day of Action** to defend health and safety has been organised by the TUC for April 28th 2012. This is also **Workers Memorial Day**, an event which MWR continues to support each year.

NORTH WEST LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE

5th/6th November 2011



Peter Fox reports

It was a honour to be asked to represent the Union at this conference.

I arrived at the Imperial Hotel at 8:50 am, and the foyer was bustling with delegates from all the large unions and trades councils. I picked up my pack from the desk and registered in. I asked someone where the organiser, Lucy Smith, was as I needed to find out if the emergency motion I was putting forward had been accepted.

When I found her I introduced myself and she was a great help in assisting me with the protocol that I should follow.

I went to the conference hall and met David Savage from Chorley Trades Council. He is on the Preston Workers Memorial Day Committee, which we sit on together. He asked about speakers for the 2012 event. We took our seats and I joined an old friend of the union, Justin Madders, who is now a councillor, in addition to his day job as a solicitor.

Welcome to Conference

Simon Blackburn, leader of Blackpool Council opened and welcomed everyone to the conference. There was a short video, which linked into the Introduction of Ed Milliband. Ed spoke of the 5 point plan to create jobs and growth. Ed then gave a short question and answer session after his speech, but I couldn't get my question in on why he doesn't put his name behind any early day motion and put weight behind it.

Labour in the North West

There was a debate on labour in the North West. Some good topics came up on Credit Unions in the community and delegates attacked the high street money lenders.

Another topic was debated on front line police cuts, with over 8000 officers being lost in the North West.

Stephen Twigg spoke on schools, education and getting more 16–18 year olds into higher education, and building new schools which has been scrapped by the Tories. Questions that came after were on University fees and Free Schools.

MPs Q&A

An MP question and answer session began with Maria Eagle, Stephen Twigg, Kate Green and Tony Lloyd, hosted by Lisa Nandy. This was also televised live on the internet, and people could ask questions through twitter from home with questions on a range of different topics. Again I didn't get picked to ask a question after I heard Stephen Twigg say that they need to engage with the unions.

As this finished and we went to the policy forums I found myself next to Tony Lloyd, so I asked him the question I was going to ask about the engaging with the unions – “*When we get back into power and to engage with the unions, will we rescind the anti-trade union laws?*”. He spoke honestly to me and said that he didn't think that all of them would be, but the cost to unions through the postal ballots where ludicrous and could bankrupt some small unions.

Justin Madders introduced me to Andrew Miller MP and he wanted to know more about the emergency motion I had put in. He said he would like to speak on it. I also explained about our Parliamentary group and would he like to join. He said he would have a look at it.

European Report

We had a European report from Arlene McCarthy who told us about the Greek Monetary collapse and the problem it has caused for Italy and Spain. Another short question and answer session began. I found that they need a lot longer for these and so a lot of questions were not asked.

The Motions

Next was the emergency motions of which our union's motion was the third of the four put forward.

Angela Eagle MP finished the day off with her speech and the day closed at 6 in the evening.

This is what the motion said:

Park Cakes: BFAWU

Since the 16th October our members at Park Cakes have had a ballot for industrial action which was carried with a large majority.

So we urge the Labour Party to condemn Park Cakes and other employers who are trying to avoid their obligation under the Agency Workers Directive, in relation to paying their agency workers the same pay after a qualifying period of 12 weeks.

Networking with the National President

I met up with our National President later that night, and we went to the reception in the Imperial Hotel. Networking with the different unions, CWS, Unison and Unite to name a few. Justin Madders introduced two young councillors, Ben Powell (24) and Amy Mercer-Bailey (20), to myself and Ian. One looks after Frank Roberts Bakery in Northwich and the other an Allied Bakeries Depot in Chester. These two are our up and coming MPs of the future.

Conference Second Day

Conference opened at 10am the next day. Helen Jones MP spoke about local government. She had to decline a place in our parliamentary group through her large portfolio on local government, but said that she would be happy for us to send what we have going on within the union, and what campaigns we have running – maybe she will help get the local councils involved.

A few long service presentations were given out.

Closing the Conference

The Rt Hon Jim Murphy MP Shadow Secretary of State for Defence closed conference with a speech on the cuts to the armed forces.

- He spoke of the aircraft carriers mothballed and with no aircraft on them.
- When the soldiers came back from Afghanistan they received their medal in one hand and their P45 in the other – that's how the Tories have treated them.

Conference closed at 1:30pm

Peter Fox

SHAW BAKERY WORKERS MARCH

February 11th, 2012



*“This is
not about
Warburtons.*

*This is about the
workers and the
people who have
given their time
and dedication
to the company
to make it the
brand name it
has become.*

*It is also a
way of saying
thank you to
all the people of
Shaw for their
support.”*

Billy Clegg



The Oldham Scottish Pipe Band led the way



... taking the scenic route

almost there!



Saturday 11th February, 2012 was one of the most memorable days I have experienced for a long time.

The gathering of people outside the bakery, started at about 12:15, with people from the immediate locality, employees together with some ex-employees.

The sound of pipers and drummers warming up filled the air with excitement, as did the tooting of car horns in support as they drove by and waved or stopped to say good luck.

After meeting and greeting everyone, I had a discussion with the local press, followed by a briefing with members of Shaw Parish Council who helped to marshal the event.

These people would be playing a key role in guiding us on route, and keeping us, and the traffic flowing smoothly.

The photo shoots were taken and the show was ready to roll.

At last the big drum sounded, BOOM-BOOM... then the pipers played, and the side drummers completed the sound we all loved to hear and follow, and the march had begun.

This was 'Lift Off' and very quickly people soon found their step and were walking to the pace of the band.

All along the route there were people stood at their doors, gates, and on the footpaths waving, clapping, and showing support.

Every step of the route, pedestrians stopped with their mobile phones to video or take pictures.

Additionally, the atmosphere was enhanced with the flashlights of the professional photographers.

Our Trade Union Banner certainly got a good viewing and was taken for a decent walk!

The main part of the route which went through the shopping centre was again filled with residents, shoppers, and in spite of the cold chill, even the locals came out of the pubs to support us.

People stood clapping, and cheering, even the older residents who would have been better indoors being warm. Bless 'em!

But then again, the older ones would be the ones who would have seen the demise of Shaw, and would have remembered the bakery as one of the community's main employers.

Arriving at the pre-planned destination, the band finished playing and to everyone's surprise, they called for applause for all the bakers, and we returned the compliment to these talented and wonderful people.



Billy receives his surprise gift – recognising some 35 years service to the union, both locally and nationally

"All along the route there were people stood at their doors, gates, and on the footpaths – waving, clapping, and showing support."

At this point there was a video shoot to establish how well the day had gone and to air our thoughts about the event.

It was a very emotional moment because it wasn't until then, that I realised just what a success it had all been, and just how much support there was and, most importantly, who had really given the support they promised.

Just when I thought it was over, Ron asked the video guy, Nigel, if he could just say a few words, and as we waited to hear comments about the event, Ron then made reference to all the years I had served the union members both locally and nationally (almost 35 years) and to my surprise did an open air presentation to me by presenting me with a gift of a pewter baker in recognition of my work.

I was humbled by this gesture, and will always be grateful for being rewarded on such a special day.

Councillor Howard Sykes, spoke about all aspects of the event, and from the outset of this event has been available for help or advice, and given 100% support, along with his colleagues from Shaw Parish Council.

The BFAWU General Secretary, Ronnie Draper (National Officer), was also right behind this event along with our Manchester District Organising Officer, Roy Streeter, who also got behind this event with support locally.

After the march we all gathered in Crompton Central Working Men's Club (Cartshaft) for a free buffet. All the excellent food was kindly donated by businesses in the community, and this just shows what can be achieved when people work together. **A BIG THANK YOU TO THEM ALL!**

Accompanying the event was our local Dr Kershaw's Hospice who also provided support to the event. Our Union Branch of the BFAWU and the **Oldham Scottish Pipe Band** both made donations.

All in all it was a brilliant day, and this was reflected when we all relaxed over a drink or two – good food, good company, and we still managed to watch the match!

On the day, "A team of people worked together for a common cause and recognised a common loss to the community, and also appreciated the thankfulness of those who once worked at **THE SHAW BAKERY.**"

Billy Clegg

GM Wheat: Not Worth the Risk

A UK GM wheat trial is planned for Spring 2012

Rothamsted Research has been given the go ahead by Defra to plant a publicly-funded, open air trial of a new genetically modified (GM) wheat in Hertfordshire commencing in Spring 2012.

Wheat is the major crop for UK farmers who grew an area equivalent to 90% of Wales in 2010 to use for bread making, other bakery products and animal feed.

GM wheat is a solution without a problem, and it comes with big risks.

Many businesses and consumer groups are joining the *GM Wheat No Thanks* campaign because GM wheat isn't worth the risk, especially as it will help give biotech companies more control over (and *profit* from) our food.

The new GM wheat could have serious consequences for food businesses, even if it is never commercialised. It hasn't been tested for food safety so if it gets into the food chain it would disrupt markets. Unauthorised GM crops are not allowed in food at any level.

The risk is real!

A US trial of GM rice contaminated global supplies in 2006, destroying export markets for years.

Wheat intolerance is already a problem for many people, but we don't know how the GM wheat will affect them.

If it ever is commercialised, the GM wheat could also cause big problems for non-GM farmers and businesses, for example:

- Aphids may be displaced onto neighbouring non-GM wheat crops – a disaster for farmers working to control aphids *with* nature instead of *against* it.
- There will always be a chance of the GM wheat getting mixed into harvested crops during transport, storage or milling and processing of food or animal feed – causing massive disruption and costs.
- Keeping GM out of wheat seed would be very difficult if GM wheat is grown. The wind will always blow pollen, and people will always make mistakes.

- In 2010 the very first planting of GM Amflora potato in Sweden had to be destroyed because another, unauthorised GM potato was accidentally (and illegally) mixed into the seed tubers, but 'no-one knows how this happened'.

Cereal farmers traditionally save seed from their crop to sow for the next one. This practice is not tolerated by biotech companies who insist that farmers buy more expensive, patented GM seeds every year.



GM Freeze is a campaign supported by an alliance of organisations sharing the public's deep concern about the speed at which genetic engineering is being introduced into food and farming.

The alliance is united by a belief that we must stop and think about the huge implications of this new technology and the questions that remain to be answered about its safety and impact.

Help us keep GM wheat out of food, farming and your business now at:

gmfreeze.org/gmwheatnothanks
or call 0845 217 8992.

No legal protection from GM 'accidents'

There is no liability regime in the EU for damage caused by GM crops – and the main insurer for UK farmers will not provide cover against contamination for growing GM crops. This means the supply chain, farmers and food companies are likely to pick up the bill for testing, tracing and product recall, not the GM company making the profit from the crop.

GM food 'fundamentally unnatural'

Consumers remain very sceptical about GM food. The official 2010 EU poll Eurobarometer showed 70% of EU citizens think GM food is 'fundamentally unnatural'.

Mandatory GM labels may impact on sales of staple wheat-based foods. Very few foods in Europe currently contain GM ingredients. Companies know they have to respond to market demands and removed GM ingredients in the late 1990s.

No GM wheat is approved anywhere in the world. Many countries, including Japan, Australia and Canada, are opposed to any kind of GM wheat because the market rejects it. For example the Australians won't grow GM wheat because the Japanese won't buy it. Just last year Western Australia Premier Colin Barnett assured Japanese flour millers saying, "I said we did not have a policy for, and would not be having, GM wheat."

The GM wheat is genetically modified to repel aphids by giving off an alarm chemical that the insects give out when they are attacked by their natural enemies. Rothamsted hopes the chemical will drive aphids off the crop and draw aphid predators to the area.

Once tax payers have paid for the initial field trials, the GM wheat is expected to be privately developed for commercial sale.

But does it even work?

Doubts already exist about whether the new GM wheat will work as research shows aphids may get used to the alarm chemical and ignore it.

In the UK the Spring wheat crop is only 1% of the total grown, and aphids are not a major pest and are often controlled by their natural predators, so the GM is not needed.

The fact is, encouraging aphid predators and parasites which naturally control them, such as ladybirds, already works without the risks of GM and without further concentration of control and profits in agriculture and the food industry.

We just don't need it, and precious research money would be better spent elsewhere.

Bakers and food manufacturers need to be alerted to the threat, and members of your branch should raise the issue within your company.

JUST SAY 'NO' TO INSURERS OFFERING COMPENSATION

When a BFAWU member suffered a serious accident at work he was quickly contacted by his employer's insurer who offered him compensation.

His life had been changed forever when he was reversing a roller truck on the flat bed of an articulated lorry, moving baskets of bread as part of his job for Premier Foods. The lorry driver suddenly drove off, causing the member's truck to fall five feet to the floor. His hip bone was forced up into his pelvis, shattering both.

The member was in traction for seven of eight weeks in hospital. When he was finally discharged he needed a zimmer frame and crutches. He later needed surgery to insert a metal plate into his hip and has a permanent limp.

Because he cannot stand for long periods of time and is unable to undertake heavy manual work, the member has been unable to return to his old job. He now works as a security guard.

The Royal and Sun Alliance (RSA) said they would pay him £69,000 to settle his claim. They also made him a number of payments to cover the costs of medication, travel and lost wages, which made him feel that they were looking after him.

But the member, who has been left permanently disabled after the horrific incident, could have no way of knowing if £69,000 was a fair offer for his injuries. Only after he sought advice through the BFAWU's free legal service did he discover that RSA were trying to get him to accept far less money than his claim was really worth.

Union lawyers Thompsons Solicitors secured him £211,000 – three times more than the insurer offer.

Never accept an offer without getting advice first!

This case highlights why it is vital that members who are injured at or away from work should never accept insurance company offers to settle their claim without getting independent legal advice through the BFAWU.

Proper procedures

The union's lawyers will obtain expert medical reports to establish the full extent of the injuries, how long recovery is likely to take and whether there will any permanent disability.



They will also calculate how much the injured person has lost financially as a result of the accident and will never settle a claim for less than it is really worth.

When my employer's insurers offered me £69,000 I had no idea if that was a fair amount for my injuries and sought advice from my trade union.

The member said: "Initially I didn't realise how complicated the claims procedure could be. When my employer's insurers offered me £69,000 I had no idea if that was a fair amount for my injuries and sought advice from my trade union.

I'm so glad that they told me to instruct Thompsons Solicitors because they managed to secure me more than three times the original offer."

He added: "This accident has left me unable to do many of the things I took for granted before the accident. It has taken me a long time to come to terms with my injuries and to build my strength up to be able to return to work.

Unfortunately I've had to take a job which pays less but I'm grateful that I'm finally able to earn a living again."

Settle for what your worth

The member's branch secretary Haroon Rashid said: "This case proves how important it is for members to receive independent advice from legal experts when claiming compensation.

Premier Foods' insurers were willing to settle this case for a third of its value which, considering the financial and physical impact of the injuries caused at work to an employee, is almost unbelievable."

We act for claimants – not insurers

Warinder Juss, the member's solicitor at Thompsons Solicitors said: "This was a tricky case particularly medically but it's what we do and what we are experts in. Thompsons only act for claimants, never for insurers, and we know how to get the maximum amount of compensation quickly. BFAWU members get this service for free.

Sadly, for all their cuddly TV adverts, this member's case shows insurers will try and take advantage of those who are acting on their own. This would have meant this losing out on more than £140,000 in damages.

The insurers of employers are increasingly contacting injured workers direct to try to put them off getting proper legal advice. These approaches should always be resisted because an insurer cannot possibly know how much an injury is really worth without proper medical investigations. What they are trying to do is save themselves money by cutting out lawyers. They certainly don't have the best interests of the injured person in mind when they do this."



Warinder Juss is the members' solicitor at Thompsons Solicitors

<http://www.thompsons.law.co.uk>

LRC AND THE UNITE THE RESISTANCE CONFERENCES

19TH NOVEMBER 2011

Peter Fox reports on two conferences!

On the 19th November I went to the Labour Representative Committee in the morning which was standing room only. **Andrew Fisher** (Chair) welcomed and opened the proceedings, then invited **John McDonnell** to the podium. He spoke about the bankers and the mess that they have put us in, and that it could cause us to go into a depression.

Debates were carried out on the motions that had been submitted and then we voted on them – all carried unanimously.

The **Workfare** scheme was raised – where the government requires a person to do work experience to get their benefits. Companies with billions in profits get employees at no cost. Tesco and Sainsbury's were named as participating in this. If there is a job, then it should be filled and paid the appropriate rate. If the person does not go to the job they could have their benefits stopped – another reason to fight to stop our terms and conditions from being eroded away.

Katy Clarke MP spoke before lunch on organising the Labour Representative Committee. She hoped she wouldn't know as many people at the next conference to show that it had indeed grown.

At this point I left the conference and headed to the Unite the Resistance Convention. Over 2000 people attended this throughout the day.

John McDonnell spoke at this conference as well. He challenged all General Secretaries to stand up and be counted on every issue.

The motions were:

- Fairness Commission – **Islington North CLP**
- Organising in the LRC – **Greater London LRC**
- Libya – **New Communist Party**
- Labour Governments – **Labour Party Marxists**
- Defend Civil Liberties: Political Status for Irish Republican Prisoners, repeal the imprisonment for Public Protection powers – **Irish Republican Prisoners Support Group**
- Cuts to Adult Social Care – **Hampshire LRC**
- Tasks of the Labour Representation Committee – **Hackney LRC**
- Foreign Policy – **Labour CND**
- Capitalism in Crisis and Women – **Northern Region LRC**
- Banking Crisis – **Ealing & Hounslow LRC**
- LRC Commitment to the Labour Party – **Sussex LRC**
- Public and Common Ownership – **CWU Greater London Combined Branch**
- Economic Crisis, Riots and Labour Leadership – **Lambeth & Southwark LRC**
- Further Industrial Action against the Government's Austerity Measures – **PCS Labour Left**
- Against British Nationalism –for a Workers' United Europe – **Alliance for Workers Liberty**
- Building a Socialist Alternative – **Unite Croydon & Crystal Palace Branch**
- Labour Party Foreign Policy – **LRC National Committee (International Sub-Committee)**
- Emergency Motion
E1:- Iran – **Unite Liverpool 0538**

Nikos Fotopoulos, the Greek Power Workers' General Secretary spoke on the Greek Monetary Collapse and how no one had had a pay increase for over two years. He added that no-one should be denied power to use and it should be kept in public ownership.

Jonathon Silberman, a BFAWU member from Allied Bakeries in Walthamstow was invited from the floor to speak. He told of our Brothers and Sisters in the Bakery, Confectionary, Tobacco Workers and Grain Millers Union in the United States and the plight of their members. They are being locked out of their place of work through a dispute with American Crystal Sugar over their union-busting contract demands and their tactics of using scab labour. These members are also being refused unemployment benefits even though they have been locked out of their workplace.

Jonathon also spoke of the **Cuban five**. In Mexico a conference was held to demand the release of these five people.

Our own National President **Ian Hodson** was a speaker at this event and he rallied the hall, giving our solidarity and support.

He asked about the consequences if we didn't have doctors and nurses to treat us when we are ill, the fire service and police to protect us, and the other public services that we require in our day to day lives. He told of our pensions and how the cuts affected everyone. On each point he raised he received rapturous applause.

The conference closed at 5:00pm.

Peter Fox

OCCUPY LEICESTER!

In mid November, 2011, George Atwall asked me to join him in showing our support for the 'Occupy Leicester' movement. We presented the 'occupants' with food and moral support.

George is a full time officer in region three. He campaigns tirelessly for new members not only at new sites (ones which he has usually identified), but also at existing ones.

The Occupy movements have been commonplace across the country and across the world – predominantly in America. The common thread is a peaceful protest against bankers and corporate greed.

Anti-capitalists, equality campaigners and generally disaffected people lent their presence to the cause.

Unfortunately the movement ran aground due to a court order. There are plans in place however for the occupation to resume before the end of January.



Nicky Sheemar

SIX BOOK CHALLENGE AT MANOR BAKERIES, CARLTON



and the winner is... Lucy presents the certificate and £50 voucher to **Liz Taylor**

Every year Manor Bakeries take on the *Six Book Challenge*.

There is always a good response to the challenge and, on completion, the names are placed into a draw and a winner is selected.

The winner received a voucher for £50, but *everyone* was a winner as they were all presented with a tin of Fox's biscuits when they received their certificates.

Well done to everyone who completed the challenge!



Dot Bell receiving her certificate and biscuits



Lee Tallant receiving his certificate and biscuits

Pictured are all those who completed the challenge, being presented with their certificates by **Lucy Dunn** and **Pauline McCarthy**.

Lucy presented the winner of the Six Book Challenge, **Liz Taylor**, with her certificate and a £50 voucher.

She presented certificates and biscuits to:

- Sue Costella
- Lee Tallant
- Elizabeth Dunn
- Bryan Coe



Debbie Firth receiving her certificate and biscuits



Bryan Coe receiving his certificate and biscuits

The remainder of the presentations were made by Pauline McCarthy:

- Dot Bell
- Debbie Firth
- William Bates

and, finally...

- A set of disembodied arms (also known as Joy Noakes)



William Bates receiving his certificate and biscuits



Sue Costella receiving her certificate and biscuits



Elizabeth Dunn with her certificate and biscuits



Joy Noakes (*yes, really!*) receiving her certificate and biscuits

LONG SERVICE AWARDS AT PARK CAKES



Ronnie with Susan



... with Helen

... and with Lee



Park Cake Bakeries holds a long service award presentation annually, for employees to celebrate 20/30/or 40 years service with the Company. The Union also joins in the celebrations and presents union badges. Some members missed the presentation due to holiday commitments and sickness.

The General Secretary, Ronnie Draper, attended site Friday 20th January to catch up with Susan May, Helen Kelly, and Lee Pritchard. On being summoned to the Learning Centre, Lee piped up, "What have I done now?" So it was a nice surprise to find out he wasn't in any bother!

Helen and Lee had earned 20 year badges, and Susan had achieved the big one – 40. Susan must love working with us all, as she asked "What do you get for 50 years?" I think she's going for a record! The visit was well received, and Ronnie thanked the members for their support of the BFAWU and achievements, and the members thanked him for taking the time out to visit.

Helen was upset when the camera came out, "Why didn't you tell me I was being photographed, I'd have put a nicer top on?" The camera then malfunctioned at the thought of us not having any 'lippy' on! I personally thought it was down to everyone's smiles – we dazzled the photographer. Thanks to Ian Pickstone for doing his David Bailey bit, it was appreciated.

Julie Summersgill

Branch Secretary, Branch 452 – Park Cakes, Oldham.



SCHOOL'S OUT – BUT IT'S NEVER TOO LATE TO LEARN!



Marilyn French

Region 5 Executive Council

Do you remember the *good* (or should I say the *bad*) *old days*? School days! The fear, the dread of having to go to school every day still remains with me: the fear of being told that I was slow, stupid, thick or just plain ignorant.

Being made to stand in the corridor, the blackboard duster being thrown at me, the belt coming out of the teacher's desk, or being sent to the headmaster's office and, of course, that dreaded letter that you had to take home to your parents to tell them how useless and how bad you were – so they could feel the same shame, anger, and embarrassment you felt. *Well, how times have changed!*

I can tell you that the fantastic training course that the union provides for our members will give you the most positive learning experience ever, and I should know because I have had the pleasure of attending several, starting with **stage one shop stewards course**, then **public speaking**, **desktop publishing**, and many more. I have also achieved a Pass in a two year course in higher education for trade union studies I just hope that anyone who reads this will feel confident enough to try one of our training courses – it really can make a difference to the way you look at learning, and if I can do it, *you definitely can!*

Being a member of the BFAWU trade union offers lots of benefits and the training courses provided through the GFTU are free to members. Just contact your union representative or General Federation of Trade Unions:

Tel 0207 520 8340 or visit <http://www.gftu.org.uk>



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BFAWU OFFICERS AND REGIONAL ADDRESSES

Head Office (email: info@bfawu.org)

Mr. R. Draper, General Secretary
email: ronnie.draper@bfawu.org
Mr. Ian Hodson, National President
email: ian.hodson@bfawu.org

Stanborough House, Great North Road,
Stanborough, Welwyn Garden City,
Hertfordshire AL8 7TA
Tel: 01707 260150/259450

No.1 Region (email: region1@bfawu.org)

Mr. S. Finn – Regional Officer
Mobile: 07739 326001
email: steve.finn@bfawu.org
Mr. F. Loveday – Organising Regional Secretary
Mobile: 07739 326002
email: frank.loveday@bfawu.org
Mr D Hunt – Organising Regional Secretary
Mobile: 07793 911326
email: dave.hunt@bfawu.org

“Sinclair House”
Unit 9, 66 Willoughby Lane
Tottenham
London N17 0SQ
Tel: 0208 801 0980

No.2 Region (email: region2@bfawu.org)

Mr. D. Dash – Regional Officer
Mobile: 07739 326003
email: dave.dash@bfawu.org

Mr. G. Johnston – Organising Regional Secretary
Mobile: 07739 326005
email: gary.johnston@bfawu.org
Mr. J. James – Organising Regional Secretary
Mobile: 07739 326004
email: john.james@bfawu.org
19a West Bute Street
(Rear) The Courtyard, The Docks
Cardiff
CF10 5EP
Tel: 02920 481518

No.3 Region (email: region3@bfawu.org)

Mr. A. D. Lewis – Regional Officer
Mobile: 07739 326006
email: tony.lewis@bfawu.org
Mr. G. Atwall – Organising Regional Secretary
Mobile: 07739 326009
email: george.atwall@bfawu.org
Mr. J. Higgins – Organising Regional Secretary
Mobile: 07739 326012
email: john.higgins@bfawu.org
c/o Thompson’s Solicitors
McLaren Building
35 Dale End
Birmingham B4 7LF
Tel: 0121 237 3720

No.4 Region (email: region4@bfawu.org)

Mr. R. Streeter – Regional Officer
Mobile: 07739 326011
email: roy.streeter@bfawu.org

Mrs. P. Nazir – Organising Regional Secretary
Mobile: 07739 326013
email: pauline.nazir@bfawu.org
Mr G Atkinson – Organising Regional Secretary
Mobile: 07834 930002
email: geoff.atkinson@bfawu.org

348 Chester Road
Cornbrook
Manchester
M16 9EZ
Tel: 0161 872 6621

No.5 Region (email: region5@bfawu.org)

Mr. A. Milne – Regional Officer
Mobile: 07739 326014
email: alan.milne@bfawu.org
Mr. I. Wood – Organising Regional Secretary
Mobile: 07739 326016
email: ian.wood@bfawu.org
Mr. J. Vickers – Organising Regional Secretary
Mobile: 07739 326015
email: john.vickers@bfawu.org
Mr. S. Vickers – Organising Regional Secretary
Mobile: 07739 326017
email: sam.vickers@bfawu.org
10 Greenside
Pudsey
West Yorkshire
LS28 8PU
Tel: 01132 565925 Fax: 01132 360702

Mr. J. McLelland – Organising Regional Secretary
Mobile: 07739 326018
email: jim.mcllland@bfawu.org
c/o ISTC
102 Hamilton Road
Motherwell ML1 3DG

No.6 Region (email: region6@bfawu.org)

Mr. M. Hanlon – Regional Officer
email: martin.hanlon@bfawu.org
Mr. J. Martin – Organising Regional Secretary
email: john.martin@bfawu.org
2 Tower Road
Clondalkin Village
Clondalkin
Dublin 2

No.7 Region (email: region7@bfawu.org)

Mr. W. Gallagher – Regional Officer
Mobile: 07739 326020
email: billie.gallagher@bfawu.org
1st and 2nd Floor
157 Bloomfield Avenue
Belfast BT5 5AB
Tel: 02890 454242

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Occupation

Signature Date

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