

Tanker Drivers Newsletter



December 2011/January 2012

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

Unite to fight major attacks on job security

As we go into 2012, our members continue to face sustained attacks to their pay, terms and conditions and pensions, as the oil giants and contractors pursue a damaging and draconian cost-down agenda.

In an industry worth billions of pounds, the scale of the cuts to the livelihoods of over 3,000 Unite tanker driver members is truly shocking. Drivers face pay cuts of up to 20 per cent and a lack of job security, with many working on multiple contracts over the course of their employment on worsening terms and conditions that is creating massive and unnecessary instability.

Despite this, Unite's repeated attempts to get the major players to introduce minimum standards on pensions, health and safety, terms and conditions and pay, the oil companies and their contractors have been pressing ahead with plans to slash the pay, terms and condition of workers in the industry. Given this renewed attack, **Unite's membership details are being**

updated, ready to ballot on minimum standards and industry bargaining in the New Year should your employers refuse to step back from the brink.

Wincanton ballot begins

One of the union's flagship agreements has already seen its terms and conditions attacked. This has left Unite with no option but to ballot more than 120 oil tanker members working on the contract for oil giant, ConocoPhillips, run by Wincanton. The ballot opens on Friday, 23 December and will close on Wednesday, 11 January 2012.

The dispute at Wincanton is over the firm's plans to 'buy out' the drivers current terms and establish a 'white fleet' arrangement, bringing us ever closer to the casualisation of the workforce throughout the whole industry.

Unite entered into talks with Wincanton a number of months ago, to discuss what the company described as 'proposals to secure the job security of members for five years'. But agreement could not be reached and the

proposals were rejected out of hand by the drivers as it was major cost down.

Since then, Wincanton has upped the ante with veiled threats of dismissal if workers do not sign the new contracts. Drivers have been told that if they don't accept the new terms, ConocoPhillips will proceed to tender which will lead to the contract being broken up. We have been told that if this happens TUPE will not apply.

An industry-wide attack

As you are well aware, the Wincanton dispute is symptomatic of the wider problems in the industry which is becoming increasingly unstable as global firms, such as ConocoPhillips, force down contracts costs to the detriment of loyal drivers who are reporting increasingly stressful working conditions.

Oil Trades Forum

Unite had hoped to achieve genuine minimum standards for the industry without the need for industrial action. The creation of the Oil Trades Forum back in the summer which Unite entered into in good faith to discuss minimum standards on pensions, health & safety, trading and holidays was widely welcomed as a positive step in the right direction.

Unfortunately, outside of the room employers are pursuing an utterly ruthless cost down agenda and Unite now believes that we are being paid nothing more than lip service which was not the spirit of the original agreement. Instead of bringing the stability we believed it would, the industry is being attacked.

Yet, instead of bringing the stability we believed it would, the industry is being rocked by the spread of renewed attacks on the pay, terms and conditions of workers across the sector.

Unite says this has to stop. Although we want the forum to succeed, we won't sit back and let

the employers bypass the forum with their own set of cost-down minimum standards, particularly as these are the very same employers who have refused to discuss terms and conditions up to this point.

Unite is pleased to report that the Oil Company Greenergy had joined the Oil Trades Forum, while many other big oil companies and major retailers have been invited but so far refused to take part.

Unite sees Greenergy as a key stakeholder and welcomes their input, however, all but one of the employers have objected to their involvement. It is frustrating that the employers are looking to shut them out.

I ask that you remain patient with your union as we work to stop the persistent cost down agenda. I can assure you that you when the time comes, you will have Unite's full backing as we strive to get the stability we all want in the sector. Be aware there is commonality in the employers' attacks.

Get ready to defend your jobs and future – make sure your voice is heard

The union has been working flat out to ensure that our records are updated so that we comply with the deliberately complex balloting laws. Any discrepancies in our data could be challenged by the employers and we can't let that happen.

We need your help. Make sure Unite has your updated details: If you want to ensure that you have the right to be included in the ballot, make sure you talk with your shop steward or please contact us. You can email corrine.ramm@unitetheunion.org.

Matt Draper,
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Unite – the union for **TANKER DRIVERS**

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