

CATALYST

CATALYST COMMUNICATING CHANGE

A PUBLICATION FOR
AMICUS RBS MEMBERS

JANUARY 2007

PAY 2007

Severance Terms

Justice For Columbia

A Day in the Life



Catalyst (kat'a list) n. A condition, agent, event, or person that is the cause of an important change or provokes significant change or action.

CATALYST



Rob MacGregor
Amicus' national secretary

NEWSLETTERS

Many of the issues in this edition of Catalyst have been in Amicus newsletters. If you do not see Amicus newsletters in your workplace then please contact the union and we can make arrangements to make sure you get them.

AMICUS IN RBS CONTACT DETAILS:

Helpline Number:

0870 2414425 (Monday to
thursday 9 -5, Friday 9-4)

Email Address:

rbsinfo@amicustheunion.org

Fax Number:

0141-221-3898

Postal Address:

**John Smith House
145/165 West Regent
Street, Glasgow G2 4RZ**

www.amicustheunion.org

Welcome

Welcome to the 2007 edition of Catalyst, the Amicus journal for union members in the RBS Group.

We had an incredible amount of feedback to articles featured in the last edition and we hope the areas covered in this new edition are equally useful and thought provoking.

We have a feature on the implementation of the new Age Regulations and its impact on RBS employees. The pay bargaining round is also upon us and Pay 2007 is featured. There are also a range of articles that include information advice and guidance to members.

There was strong interest in our article about bank workers in Columbia so we have asked the Justice For Columbia campaign to provide our members in the RBS Group with more information.

I hope you find this edition of Catalyst interesting. If you have any comments please let us know at rbsinfo@amicustheunion.org

Enjoy this edition of Catalyst.

AMICUS 2007

Pay claim

Pay 2007 – Members have their say

Amicus has received extensive feedback from its members in the Royal Bank of Scotland Group following the recent consultative exercise on Pay 2007.

RBS employees from across the country and from every business division have been writing, calling and e-mailing the union with their views on pay.

What you told us

The union will continue to analyse the opinions of its members over the next few months in advance of negotiations with the employer. However, it is evident that there are clear issues and principles that employees of the group wish to see addressed during those pay talks.

There is continued support for the Amicus campaign of 'zero tolerance of zero pay' across the finance sector. Members believe that they deserve rises in pay that tackle the real increase in the cost of living that is faced by all workers. RBS employees back the call for a guaranteed minimum salary for all staff who work for the Group. They also support the maintenance and upkeep of the final salary pension scheme for existing employees and safeguards for the pensions of future workers.

The Pay Timetable

Amicus will be submitting its pay claim for RBS employees prior to the commencement of negotiations with the Group in December. Talks will continue through January and will be concluded in time to ensure bonuses are paid in March with implementation of any settlement on 1st April 2007. Members will be updated on developments throughout this time.

Your right to reply-your chance to get involved

Are there other issues you believe the union should be addressing in this year's pay round? If so, let us hear from you-get in touch with your union.

For campaigns to be successful they need the wholehearted support and participation of those directly affected. If you want to get more involved then contact us, if you're not yet a member-come and join us!

Members can contact the union in writing to the RBS Amicus Glasgow office at

John Smith House

145/165 West Regent Street

Glasgow G2 4RZ

Or by fax on 0141-221-3898

Alternatively you can e-mail us your views at

rbsinfo@amicustheunion.org

A Day In The Life

By Donna Williams Amicus RBS JAR



My name is Donna and I am a JAR for The Royal Bank of Scotland Group and work in a busy NatWest Branch. I completed my JAR training several years ago, but am kept up to date with meetings held every six months; we also receive regular email and newsletters. The Full Time Officers and Seconded Representatives are also always on the end of the phone to provide support and guidance.

I receive calls for advice from members either directly or following referrals from the AMICUS Helpdesk. Calls can be a general query or requests for help on an issue they have within their unit, they can also relate to requests for representations.

When I am representing a member I meet up with them before the meeting to discuss the case in detail, it's important to find out what result the member is hoping for and ensure that objective is realistic. During the meeting I am there to support the member and ensure Bank Policy is being adhered to.

After the meeting, whenever possible, I check that AMICUS is represented on the notice board and always take a supply of leaflets and application forms for the recruitment of new members and to highlight membership benefits to existing members.

Another responsibility of the JAR is conducting Health and Safety reviews. This is a great support to the Manager of the unit and the staff based there to ensure working conditions comply with government legislation.

Being a JAR has helped me develop my communication and influencing skills. It's fantastic to be able to support my colleagues and really make a difference. If you enjoy helping people, fancy developing your interpersonal skills and want to make The Royal Bank of Scotland Group the best place to work, then contact the union at rbsinfo@amicustheunion.org



**A message from Joe
Espener, Chair, Royal
Bank of Scotland Group
National Committee**

Dear colleagues,

In the last edition of Catalyst, Elizabeth Shenton, my predecessor as Chair bid farewell to you all as she left the employment of the Bank and stood down from her position within the NCC. The first thing I would like to do is put on record my heartfelt thanks to Elizabeth for her outstanding efforts in representing our members for so many years. The drive, determination, and conscientious approach which she displayed in all aspects of her involvement with Amicus and before that Unifi, is an example to us all and one that I will endeavour to follow.

I joined The Royal Bank of Scotland seventeen years ago in Glasgow Cash Centre, and BIFU, our then trade union, on the same day and have been involved in some capacity with BIFU, Unifi, and now Amicus ever since. I have been a Jointly Accredited Representative for approximately nine years and on the NCC for seven. I have taken part in several campaigns and been a part of many negotiating teams for the union, from small restructuring business cases to major policy and procedural changes as well as annual pay negotiations.

I currently work in the Byres Road branch of the Royal Bank and have been in branch banking within RBS for the last sixteen years. I am therefore aware on a daily basis of the pressures being placed on our members, eg. hotdesking, Saturday rotas in branches, getting time off in lieu of hours worked, "stretching" targets, and unpaid overtime, to name but a few.

Along with the Vice-Chair, Gill Lewis, and all the members of the NCC, I will continue to campaign for your rights in negotiations with the bank on a wide range of issues, but we need your input to ensure that the concerns of all members are being addressed. Contact details of your NCC members were in the last Catalyst, or if you prefer you can contact a local Jointly Accredited Representative or one of our full time officials who will be happy to help.

I fully support the Royal Bank Group in its aim to be "the best bank to work for" and through the representations we can make on your behalf I hope we can assist the Group in genuinely achieving that aim.

Yours,

Joe Espener

EQUAL PAY CHARTER. AN UPDATE...

Amicus Officers are continuing to negotiate with employers to gain their commitment to the 'Charter for Equal Pay and the End to Career Discrimination for Women Workers'. This charter seeks to address the 41% pay gap in the financial services sector. At the launch of the Charter in June Amicus sent a clear signal to employers that we simply will not tolerate the inertia that currently exists in dealing with the unacceptably large gender pay gap in the sector. This campaign has already been overwhelmingly successful; the response from many employers has exceeded our expectations. Progress continues, with a number of companies signing the charter. These include: AXA, First Direct, HBoS, Legal and General and Barclays. It is anticipated that a number of other companies will sign before the six month deadline. A strategy meeting will take place later this month in order to plan the next steps of this campaign.

THE ROYAL BANK OF SCOTLAND
GROUP STAFF AMICUS HELPLINE
0870 241 4425

If you are a member of the RBS & Amicus, then make a note of the above number. Subject to a membership check (so please ideally have your membership number when you ring), your issue will be passed on to an Amicus Seconded Representative.

The Helpline is covered by 3 Seconded Representatives daily (Monday to Thursday 9.00 a.m. until 5.00 p.m. and closes Friday at 4.00 p.m.). The Representatives are actually RBS employees seconded to the Union. Consequently they are conversant with RBS procedures and policies.

What can you expect when you ring? Once your initial concern has been logged, you should expect a call back certainly within 24 hours, but more often well before. Your call will of course be dealt with in utmost confidence.

What issues are covered? We primarily deal with work based issues but can also point you in the direction of other services available via Amicus. We give telephone advice on all aspects of working within the RBS, but particularly in relation to Policy, Disciplinary, Grievance and Health & Safety advice. The Helpline is also the first call you should make if you need a representative in a formal meeting convened by the group.

Often we do no more than just listen and talk to members about their concerns and frustrations, without direct action ensuing. This is an important part of the service. As people who appreciate the day to day issues affecting those working within the group, we can guide and re-assure staff. This often helps take the burden off you and your family – because we do understand what you may be going through.

WANTED

Jointly Accredited Reps (JAR'S) - SCOTLAND

Members may recall that in the last edition of Catalyst we ran a feature on the role of the JAR. We had a very encouraging response and a number of individuals will be receiving training in the role in early January 2007. This is great news, however our existing JAR's and Seconded Representatives have never been busier offering support and advice to members and representing them at Disciplinary and Grievance Hearings. We therefore still need more JAR's throughout the RBSG, especially in Scotland.

During the first quarter of 2007, a JAR Campaign will be launched in Scotland. Officers and Representatives from your union will be visiting workplaces to provide further information on the role and signing up interested Amicus members for this exciting challenge.

What do JAR's Do:

- Support and Advise Members.
- Represent Members with Individual Problems.
- Promote Amicus in the Workplace
- Resolve Local Issues with Management.

If you are particularly interested in the role and would like a visit to your workplace then please contact Alison Maclean or Paul Neilson at the Amicus Glasgow Office on 0141 248 7131 or e-mail rbsinfo@amicustheunion.org and we will make the necessary arrangements.

We look forward to meeting our Scottish based members during our campaigning and to working with many new JAR's in the future.

ACHIEVING EQUALITY FOR LGBT WORKERS

Since December 2003, when the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations came into force, it has been unlawful to discriminate against workers because of their sexual orientation.

Although attitudes to LGBT people have changed significantly in recent years, unfortunately prejudice and discrimination still remains. Research has revealed that one in five lesbian and gay workers still feel unable to reveal their sexual orientation at work with one of the commonest problems faced being bullying and harassment. Amicus is committed to ensuring all employers provide a positive working environment for LGBT workers, free from harassment and discrimination. Members can then be confident that if discrimination occurs Amicus will support them and it will be dealt with effectively by RBS.

Amicus has regular dialogue with the bank focusing on the many equality and diversity issues employees face at work. These negotiations include ensuring equal opportunity and harassment policies are up to date, and that the necessary training is in place in order that these policies are effectively implemented within the workplace.

How can I become more involved?

If you are interested in finding out more about the Equality Structures within Amicus including signing up to the Amicus LGBT Network or becoming a delegate on a Regional LGBT Equality Forum then visit the Amicus website at www.amicustheunion.org where we have dedicated pages for LGBT members. You may also contact your local Amicus Office, full details of which are on our website, and ask to speak to your Regional Equality Officer. In 2005, a few RBS employees, with the support of the bank, decided to set up a LGBT Network in RBSG. The Group was named the "Rainbow Network" and now has in excess of 200 members worldwide. The group also have a dedicated page on the intranet and you can find out further information at:

http://www.group.rbs.co.uk/Grphr1/You_and_Your_Job/Diversity_and_Inclusion/default.htm

Have you suffered discrimination or harassment at work on the grounds of sexual orientation?

If the answer to this question is "yes" then members should contact the Amicus Helpline on 0870 241 4425 in the first instance. Many issues can be resolved locally within the workplace but where this is not possible our Helpline Representatives will be able to offer you support and guidance on the next steps.

MATERNITY

The Amicus helpline has been receiving an increased amount of calls from members encountering difficulties when returning to work after maternity leave within the RBS Group. The issues are varied and individual to each member depending on their own circumstances and needs and their jobs. However the main concerns stem from the lack of support and knowledge of maternity rights from line managers. In lots of cases managers are giving incorrect information to staff and seldom take advice from HR until they are challenged. If you need further advice about your maternity rights at work visit our website.

7 Good reasons to join Amicus

1. Pay

Union members are paid 6% higher wages than non-union members in Britain. Amicus negotiates your pay, makes sure members' views are taken into account in negotiations and presses for the best possible increases.

2. Holidays

Union members have five days more leave than non-members. Amicus is committed to negotiating shorter working time for our members.

3. Safety

Workplaces where trade unions are organised have 50% fewer accidents recorded. Amicus train all our Health & Safety reps to a high standard and is committed to eliminating workplace accidents.

4. Job Security

Amicus negotiates your terms and conditions and fights hard to get the improvements members want. Amicus gives you advice and support, and represents you if you have problems at work, including in grievance and disciplinary hearings. Amicus supports you if your job is threatened and has negotiated a good security of employment and redundancy provisions agreement with your Company

5. Individual Representation

Amicus train our workplace reps to deal with a whole range of problems members may experience in their jobs. Experienced, professional, full time officers support the workplace reps.

6. Free Legal Advice

Amicus members have access to free legal advice and support through a network of trade union solicitors as well as a 24 hour helpline. Amicus gives you support outside of work as well. We win millions every year for members who are treated unfairly at work.

7. Safety in Numbers

It pays to be in a team. Amicus has a team of one million members. We have 110 members in the House of Commons, including one cabinet minister, 8 European MPs and representation in the House of Lords. Amicus has a full complement of regional officials, organisers, researchers and three education colleges to support our members.

**YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE
A MEMBER OF AMICUS
BUT....**

WITHOUT AMICUS, management would decide terms and conditions on their own and wouldn't need to listen to your views.

WITHOUT AMICUS, you are on your own if you have problems at work. Lawyers can't even represent you at disciplinary hearings. Good luck!

WITHOUT AMICUS, you could spend more on 30 minutes' advice from a solicitor than on a year's professional and legal support from the union.

WOMENS CONFERENCE 2006

REPORT FROM ANGELA FOORD, AMICUS SECONDED

The women's conference was held this year in Blackpool on the 2nd November. There were around 120 attendees including a delegation from the finance sector. Amicus general secretary Derek Simpson opened the conference with his report and made reference to the forthcoming merger with the T&G.

Head of equalities Siobhan Endean welcomed delegates and Jane Stuart was elected to chair. There was a full agenda of motions for consideration on women's issues related to the gender pay gap,

equal pay audits, pensions, violence against women and people trafficking to name just a few.

A motion that generated a lot of debate was abortion and the request for conference to instruct the National Women's Committee to defend the current upper time limit for abortion and to work with abortion rights vigorously and support a women's right to choose. A selection of eight motions were selected for the agenda to the Amicus Policy conference 2007, there

The ability to award 'Technical Rises'

Local management has the ability to award salary increases that fall outside the annual review process. These are also not related to promotions or a change of contract. Such increases can take place at any time of the year, apart from during the Annual review.

Should members feel that they have a justified reason for requesting such an increase they would need to present a detailed case to their local management. Members can contact the AMICUS helpline for advice.

The Appraisal Mark and the relationship to Pay

The Royal Bank of Scotland has three key principles that underpin the Group's approach to reward and to the management of salary and bonus. These are Rewarding Excellence, Being Market competitive and Allowing for Customisation. The latter two relate, respectively, to comparison with other financial institutions and relating reward to a specific group business.

The main determinate for assessing individual remuneration is the principle of Rewarding Excellence. Employees are assessed on individual performance against clearly defined objectives. This Annual assessment produces a Performance Rating based on a 0 to 5 score. The score is compared to the salary matrix for the particular business; this then produces the individual percentage increase.

REPRESENTATIVE

were also elections to TUC, TUC Women's committee and national women's committee took place.

The conference ended with RT Hon Ruth Kelly MP (Secretary of state for communities and local government and minister for women) as guest speaker. She spoke about flexible working and improvements to the home/work life balance for working women. A very worthwhile conference I felt privileged to attend and support our women member's views. Rock on sisters!

Clearly the higher the individual mark then the higher the potential increase. In most cases the award of a 1 or 2 rating can lead to a reward not being given. The importance of the Annual Appraisal cannot, therefore, be underrated. Members should ensure that the mark awarded is fair and justified. Should any member believe that their score is incorrect then this should be challenged with your line manager.



Campaigning for Colombia's

In an attempt to destroy the trade union movement, the Colombian Government is increasingly jailing union activists without charge.

Amicus in the RBS Group received very strong and positive feedback to the article we published from the Justice for Columbia campaign.

As a result the campaign has provided the union with a follow-up article.

There are currently hundreds of political prisoners living in Colombia's jails. Many of them are trade unionists; others are peasant leaders, student leaders, human rights workers, indigenous activists, and other civil society activists. They are almost always accused of 'rebellion', a blanket charge used against anyone who is opposing the government's policies.

Many are leaders who have been specifically targeted as a strategy to dismantle an organisation. For example, FENSUAGRO, the agricultural workers' union has been repeatedly targeted in this way – last year, a leading member from their human rights department, Hernando Hernandez Tapasco, was detained without trial for 6 months, and in May 2006 of this year, a member of their NEC, Miguel Angel Bobadilla was detained.

Miguel Angel remains in prison today, as do his wife, Nieves Mayusa and sister-in-law, Carmen Mayusa – a regional leader of ANTHOC (the health workers' union) – who were both arrested at the same time as him. These detentions came only months after the FENSUAGRO General Secretary, Luz Perly Cordoba, was released from jail after being held for over a year without charge. After her release she was forced into exile by death threats. Some of the political prisoners are also people who live in areas of conflict, and have been rounded up by the army during mass detention operations. Because they may live in areas where the guerrilla insurgency operates, they too are

accused of 'rebellion'. A growing number of Colombia's political prisoners are women. Testimonies given by prisoners at the Buen Pastor Women's Prison in Bogotá often speak of being subjected to extreme and brutal torture upon arrest. Many tell of how they were 'disappeared' for days upon arrest.

JFC's most recent delegation to Colombia heard chilling stories of torture. One prisoner told us how she was hung on a crucifix and tortured for five days. Raquel Castro, a teacher and active trade unionist, told us of how, after witnessing the murder of three colleagues at the hands of the army, she was moved to a military base where she was psychologically tortured and then put in a helicopter. The bodies of her colleagues were thrown on the floor of the helicopter next to her.

The majority of women political prisoners have never been brought to trial. One woman in Buen Pastor has been there for seven years without ever being taken to court. Upon release, many women face more death threats and persecution and some have been assassinated.

Political prisoners are also often put in prisons far away from their homes to isolate them from their families, who can seldom afford to travel to visit them. When their loved ones do visit, they are often followed and go on to be targeted by assassins themselves.

Many of the women are single mothers

political prisoners

and the only providers for their children. In some cases the children have been left abandoned whilst the luckier ones are living with relatives or friends. Others have been taken into the inadequate custody services of the state. Infants younger than three are imprisoned alongside their mothers. They share their mothers' terrible living conditions and are not officially recognised by the prison service so do not receive separate food rations. Cells are overcrowded, sanitation services are inadequate, and medical care is extremely limited. Prisoners complained to JFC that whatever their health problem, they only ever receive ibuprofen.

In spite of the terrible conditions that they are subjected to, they have not succumbed to their surroundings. Women have organised educational workshops, reading groups, human rights committees, and still campaign for their rights, knowing all the risks that this entails. JFC has launched a project to support these women, working with the backing of Amicus and other unions to provide them with political solidarity, as well as legal and humanitarian assistance. Many unions cannot afford to provide legal aid to their members who are detained, so this project assists them with lawyers, and also provides necessities which are lacking such as baby-milk, baby food, toiletries, medication, nappies, books etc. If you would like to donate to this project please contact the JFC office – info@justiceforcolombia.org

CAMPAIGN TO FREE POLITICAL PRISONERS:

JFC is currently conducting a campaign to free Colombian trade unionists, students, human rights defenders and social activists. Below are some specific cases that we are campaigning on.

- **Maria Cabrera** – a 72-year-old former trade union leader detained by the army on 11 February 2006 in Putumayo region. The army accused her of leading a terrorist attack on a local military base but could not provide any evidence.
- **Mayra Lopez Ceveriche** – leader of the students' union at the University of Sincelejo, an active member of the Colombian Women's Movement and a candidate for the youth wing of the 'Polo Democratico' political opposition movement. Detained on 5 May 2006.
- **Miguel Angel Bobadilla** – a member of the NEC of the agricultural workers trade union FENSUAGRO. Miguel, head of the union's education department, was detained on 11 May 2006.
- **Nieves Mayusa** – an active member of the agricultural workers trade union FENSUAGRO and the wife of the above. Also detained 11 May 2006.
- **Carmen Mayusa** – a regional leader of the health workers trade union ANTHOC who is also a sister of the above. Also detained 11 May 2006.
- **Victor Oime** – a community leader in the town of Cartagena del Chaira, active trade unionist and member of the Colombian Communist Party detained on 6 August 2006 .

To take action now on one of the above cases please write to the Colombian Ambassador in London. Ask him to explain why none of those listed have been charged and why they are being held in such appalling conditions. Demand that the Colombian Government either bring their cases to trial or release them immediately.

Ambassador Alfonso López Caballero

Colombian Embassy

3 Hans Crescent

London

SW1X 0LN

Please send a copy of your letter to the JFC office at:

Justice for Colombia

9 Arkwright Road

London

NW3 6AB

Getting the Balance

• Is there more women returning to work after maternity leave today - **YES.**

• Are people living longer - **YES**

• Are there more single parent families - **YES.**

This means more family responsibilities for employees to consider alongside increasing target and performance related issues in the workplace. Judging from the number of calls the Amicus RBS Helpline receives there are a lot of employees within RBS Group fulfilling unpaid carer roles and these members find it increasingly difficult to juggle the competing demands of their family and working lives.

What is often most confusing is what legislation is there to protect their rights and what is dependent solely on the commitment of the employer to “family friendly” policies and on the flexibility/ interpretation of management implementing these policies in the workplace. This article will attempt to clarify a few areas of concern re family issues highlighted by calls to the RBS Helpline and support given to members addressing these issues in the workplace. Leaving aside Maternity/ Paternity Rights which have been covered under previous Catalyst Articles lets look the main points of a few others:

Parental Leave : If you have worked for employer for at least 1 year you have the right to take a total of 13 weeks’ unpaid parental leave to care for a child up to 5 years of age. (This allowance is per child under 5 years of age) – Other limits apply if child is disabled.

- 21 days notice must be given to employer of your intention to take leave.
- You must take the leave in blocks of 1 week with no more than 4 weeks per year. (each year commencing on the anniversary of your start day with company)

- The employer can postpone the leave if it would unduly disrupt the business however for no longer than 6 months after the day you originally gave. The reasons must be given to employee in writing within 7 days of requesting leave.
- There is no statutory right to payment during parental leave.

Time off for Dependents: All

employees are entitled to reasonable time off to deal with an emergency involving a dependant; for example if a dependant falls ill or is injured or dies, if care arrangements break down, or to deal with an instance occurring unexpectedly at an educational establishment their child attends.

- A dependent is defined as being spouse, child, parent or person living in same household (not employee tenant or lodger) or includes anyone who “reasonably” relies on the employee for the provision of care
- However there is no definition in law to what “reasonable” time off means. This element of consideration relies on the commitment of employer to the Family Friendly policies. Neither is there any legal right to paid time off. However, RBS are committed to best practice in their policy and will initially pay the time off required. Management discretion is a factor however if extended leave is required to be considered and if it is to be paid.

Please note this leave is for emergencies or unexpected incidents rather than events that can be predicted.

Right

Compassionate Leave: Not a right in law unless a dependent. However RBS policy is to permit paid leave in following circumstances:

- Serious family illness
- Death of close relative
- Other serious misfortune

Flexible Working: The law states that if you have 26 weeks continuous service with your employer workers with a child under the age of 6 (or 18 if disabled) have the right to request to work "flexibly". This can include for example - job sharing, term-time working, compressed hours, staggered hours. You must comply with the following when making request.

- Apply in writing (paper or electronically) date request.
- Confirm relationship to child
- Set out proposed change to working pattern and explain effect change may have on business and how this could be dealt with

What is important to remember with the Flexible Working Rights is that your "right" is confined to the right to request. There is no legal requirement for employer to comply with your request. However, if request not granted immediately the employer must arrange meeting to discuss within 28 days and notify you of their decision within 14 days of that meeting.

As with all of these rights or policies you have the right to appeal any

decision you are unhappy with through the Group Grievance process.

You may be able to complain to an Employment Tribunal if discriminated or treated unfairly for having exercised your legal rights or if you are prevented from doing so. If in doubt seek advice of your union rep.

Further topic info:

- There is no right in law for the parents of school age children to have their annual holidays entitlement in school holiday period. However in line with best practice RBS policy is to endeavour to allow employees in this category at least 2 weeks of their entitlement in school holiday period preferably in summer months.
- There is no right in law to time off for dentist/doctor appointments however again in line with best practice RBS have given managers discretion to allow this paid time off. You should not be required to make this time up. Neither should it be unreasonably withheld. However business needs should be considered when making appointments.

This can only be a brief overview of what are very important issues for members if you require further support or advice on these issues call the RBS Amicus Helpline.



WIMBLEDON CLC TO CLOSE

RBS have recently announced the closure of Wimbledon CLC (effective 23 March 2007) which impacts upon circa 130 staff. In May the bank transferred a number of Manufacturing Roles out of Wimbledon CLC to other Manufacturing sites to facilitate the introduction of circa 70 Retail Telephony Secondments, positions which Retail has now confirmed will become permanent.

The bank has stated that following a full review of the future of Wimbledon CLC, it was felt that a Manufacturing operation of circa 60 staff at Wimbledon was not as viable as utilising existing capacity in other Manufacturing sites and as a result intends to close Wimbledon CLC with effect from next March. The bank has committed to seek suitable alternative employment opportunities for all affected staff, which is a position welcomed by Amicus, providing the opportunities are genuinely suitable.

Initial re-deployment opportunities will exist in the 67 Retail Telephony Roles within Wimbledon which will be available to both the existing secondees and those staff who are currently undertaking roles within the CLC subject to the appropriate selection process. The bank is also exploring re-deployment opportunities within other business divisions including the Retail Branch Network, Wealth Management as well as other areas within Manufacturing.

Clearly Amicus are disappointed at the announcement to close a long standing site such as Wimbledon CLC. As stated the union does however welcome the bank's commitment to redeploy affected staff into Suitable Alternative Roles and Amicus will be ensuring that members are supported in securing genuinely Suitable Alternative Roles. Any members affected by the closure requiring assistance should either contact the helpline on 08702 414425 or e-mail at rbsinfo@amicustheunion.org.

Action Contracts

The Amicus helpline receives a high number of calls from its members who are concerned over the use of Action Contracts. It is clear that many managers use these contracts as a threat, despite Amicus receiving assurances from the Bank that the purpose of the process is to assist. Not to threaten. If you find yourself being placed on such a contract by your manager, the advice from Amicus on this is as follows –

ACHIEVABLE

Always ensure that the action contract is achievable. The action contract is supposed to be a 2 way process. Your manager should be working with you to agree a plan of action that you can both believe in. If you feel that you are being forced into an action contract that is clearly not achievable then you should state as such in writing to your manager at the outset. This also needs to state what action your manager needs to take in order to make it achievable.

YOUR MANAGER'S RESPONSIBILITY

Your manager should be offering assistance as required to ensure that the Action Contract is effective. This might be for example providing extra training or arranging for you to shadow a colleague.

Your manager should ensure that the action contract is reviewed regularly throughout & also carries out whatever it is that they agreed to do to assist you. Remember, an action contract is a 2 way process. Your manager is jointly responsible in ensuring its success. Don't allow your manager to put the whole responsibility solely onto your shoulders.

Finally, if you feel that nobody in your place of work is achieving what you are now being placed on an action contract for then always insist that your manager can demonstrate a specific colleague who is achieving it – in normal contracted hours of work. Also, request that your action contract includes the ability to spend some time shadowing that person. If it isn't possible for your manager to locate such a colleague then this might in itself bring into question the reasonableness of the target & the action contract being set.

As always, please do call into the helpline if you are having difficulties with your manager on this issue.

PAY 2007: PERFORMANCE RATINGS AND THE 'BELL CURVE'S

As the pay negotiations over the award for 2007 get set to commence, the Amicus RBS employment helpline receives its annual round of calls from members complaining that they have been 'short changed' by the appraisal process. In particular a significant number of members level the accusation that they have been denied a higher rating because their team or unit has been given a 'cap' over its ratings and that these same ratings must fit a performance 'bell curve'.

A number of line managers are also now coming forward to confirm that they have been told to ensure that their ratings fit a particular curve or pattern, irrespective of business unit, team or individual performance.

WHAT IS A BELL CURVE?

Sir Fred Goodwin, RBS Chief Executive once provided the best description of the bell curve by regarding it as a "... statistical phenomenon.... established over time". It is supposed to illustrate in a general way the likely pattern and distribution of (in this case) performance ratings for the Group as a whole. It is not supposed to be set in stone, nor is it designed to reflect the distribution of ratings across smaller units of organisation and certainly not individual teams.

WHAT WE SAY...

The bank's Total Reward philosophy and an employee's annual appraisal rating are inextricably linked. If the integrity of one is called into doubt the other is equally undermined. Staff need to have confidence that, as far as is reasonably possible, the rating they receive, which dictates the bonus and pay rise they are to get, has been arrived at using a fair and robust system. For too many employees, this system is being called into question. Amicus intends to make this issue remain a feature of our on going campaign for a fair deal for all.

WHAT YOU SHOULD DO...

If you are dissatisfied with your performance rating and believe that the bell curve has been used as the excuse we want to hear from you. Equally if you are a line manager and have been told to allocate ratings to fit a distribution curve, please contact Amicus - discretion assured.

Get in touch with Amicus at rbs.info@amicustheunion.org



FINANCE SECTOR RECRUITMENT WEEK IN LONDON

by Sue Lawrence Regional Organiser

A busy week in London in the Royal Bank of Scotland branches and NatWest retail branches. I was made most welcome by Management and the staff – no hostility or rejection – the opposite – “come in and hear our news and issues”! Members joined eagerly and in some branches queued to join! Unanimously they all felt they were joining for protection – protection from the employer who they felt could discipline them. A number of Amicus members did not realise they could have representation at fact find meetings. They also took comfort that by joining Amicus they could if bullied, discriminated against or harassed invoke the grievance procedure.

The most common issues were unpaid overtime, unachievable targets and staff shortages – staff shortages were more noticeable in Nat/West branches than Royal Bank of Scotland. It is the loyalty of staff that is carrying the majority of branches in London – but for how long? The most common reason why some staff had not joined Amicus is because they had never been asked! I asked and they joined all levels – Managers, Cashiers and part-time staff. Even if they didn't join on the day I am sure that after discussion with other colleagues they signed up. Most people joined up as a form of security in case things go wrong. Having peace of mind knowing you belong to an organisation that will support and improve your working life is the only way forward. So where do we go from here? Ideally we would like every JAR or member to recruit a colleague in their workplace – just ask. Together we will become a stronger union representing your interests at work.

If you need any information application forms just telephone your Regional Office or JAR and information will be sent to you – don't delay – join TO-DAY!

AMICUS CAMPAIGN

As more employers within the financial services sector continue to export UK jobs to locations throughout the world, offshoring is at the heart of Amicus' campaigning activity.

WHAT IS OFFSHORING?

Offshoring is where jobs in the UK are made redundant and transferred abroad. 15,000 UK based jobs have been off shored in the last 3 years and industry experts predict that 2 million jobs could leave Europe by 2008.

Only recently Aviva Norwich Union announced 4000 job losses, including 2000 compulsory redundancies. This news came as a major blow to both the union and to NU's loyal employees who have helped to make the company massive profits in the UK.

WHAT DOES AMICUS THINK?

Amicus welcomes the social economic and social benefits that offshoring brings to many economies and recognises that employers have a right to choose how and where they make a profit. However, we are increasingly concerned that employer's business arguments around the huge cost savings and improved customer service on offer from moving their business overseas is fundamentally flawed.

We also believe that employers have a responsibility to the people who work

for them both in the UK and abroad and to their customers. Here in the UK many thousands of workers are being made redundant which leads to a shortage of skills and can often have a devastating impact on families and local communities. Employers should stop putting profit before people.

Overseas UK companies are denying their employees the right to join a trade union and adopt working practices which breach an individual's dignity at work such as forcing Indian employees to use a British name when dealing with customers.

WHAT ABOUT RBS?

The good news is that many companies, including RBS have taken the decision not to offshore. RBS have given Amicus a commitment that it will not be offshoring UK based jobs to low wage economies, a position, which has been, welcomed By Amicus. RBS recognise that employment costs are only one of the many factors that employers need to consider when offshoring. Staff morale and employment implications for the whole community have been key issues in determining the Group's policy of "no offshoring".

HOW CAN AMICUS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Amicus is working with the Government and finance based companies to develop a Best Practice Offshoring Charter.

AGAINST OFFSHORING

THE CHARTER WILL COMMIT EMPLOYERS TO:

- Consult with Amicus at an early stage.
- Provide clear business arguments on the rationale for offshoring
- No compulsory redundancies.
- A pledge to no site closures.
- Explore redeployment opportunities for all affected employees.
- Provide funding to ensure training and support for displaced staff
- Provide outplacement support and training for all affected employees.
- Ensure the highest employment standards for all overseas employees

We have successfully negotiated offshoring agreements with LTSB, AXA, Royal & Sun Alliance and Prudential and have made a difference for many finance sector employees affected by offshoring. Amicus is calling on the UK Government to develop a best practice benchmark. We will continue to campaign for employers to acknowledge their responsibilities, to engage on the training and development of their UK based employees and to ensure that employees in the UK and overseas benefit from advances in the workplace, instead of becoming victims of it.

Accredited Reps Update- Organising Regional Meetings with Nat/West Retail

Nat West Retail South East Region is working with Amicus to promote and build the number of region.

We have been given the opportunity to provide a document for DOFT/Huddle meetings and these meetings will be flagged by supporting comments from the RMD in his weekly newsletter. We aim to recruit 20 Reps – one in each area.

They will be trained initially to undertake Health & Safety visits in the workplace. Each JAR will visit one unit each month. These visits will take place during normal working hours, and time off will be given to undertake these duties.

Reps must be members of Amicus and will be permanent members of staff with at least 1 year's service in the RBS group; they may be full-time or part-time. They will be trained on a wide variety of work related issues.

This will help grow the union to ensure that the views of fellow members in the work place are heard from across the RBSG.

A Health and Safety course (2 days) has been booked in London for the second week – January 2007.

If you think you have the qualities and feel you want to play a key role and make a difference in your workplace than contact us on this number 020 7505 3000 and ask for Sue Lawrence who will answer any further questions you may have.

Appraisal process

Each year, the Amicus RBS employment helpline receives a large number of calls from members with queries regarding the staff appraisal process. This section of Catalyst is designed to deal with some of the problems that may arise.

Performance Management

The Bank believes that a successful business can only continue to grow if its employees are also able to deliver continual improvement in their performance. This is why it places great importance on Performance Management. This ensures that all employees know what is required of them and how that contributes to the business. The interim and annual appraisal is the method used to assess an employee's performance. This assessment directly links to employees' Total Reward package in the form of bonus payments and salary increases.

The time of year

For the majority of employees their business objectives should be set at the start of the calendar year (January) with the final performance assessment completed by the end of the year (December). Between these times, interim reviews should be conducted with the final assessment reflecting the previous discussions held during the year.

Dual Responsibility

The responsibility for ensuring the performance management policy is delivered rests both with managers and employees. Amicus members need to ensure that they have interim reviews and, most critically, that they have an end of year assessment. To assist this process, self-review forms can be found on Insite in the Policy and Guidelines section of the Human Resources site.

At the end of the year

At the close of the performance year a full review should take place that identifies achievements and successes, considers difficulties or shortfalls and provides the opportunity to discuss any issues with a member of staff's line manager. Finally, a performance assessment rating mark should be given. This rating is critical as it can determine the level of any bonus payment as well as any pay rise an individual is entitled to.

A "2" rating

A "2" performance is given where an individual has not met the key objectives that have been agreed between them and their manager. The "2" rating indicates that

the person's performance is less than satisfactory, but it is believed that the performance may become satisfactory within the next 12 months with the appropriate support and development.

The bank expects line managers to exercise objectivity when assessing if an individual has not met the key objectives that have been agreed between them and their line manager. Managers are required to make it clear when communicating the performance rating to the employee that the employee's performance is less than satisfactory.

As managers should manage performance issues during the course of a year, an employee who is awarded a "2" rating should have had a number of ongoing discussions about their performance during that year, as well as receiving direction and support from their manager. It is important that the bank treats all employees equally when evaluating their performance rating. This is necessary in order to ensure that the employer does not discriminate in how it rewards its staff and that it continues to encourage and motivate its employees.

Feeling Aggrieved

The year-end rating is not only important for an employee's pay and reward. Where the performance rating is less than 3, this could lead to individuals being subject to 'under performance' procedures and disciplinary action.

Should any Amicus member believe that the interim and in the particular the final assessment is unfair then they should firstly challenge this with their line manager. Where this issue remains unresolved then consideration should be given to referring the matter to the banks internal grievance procedure.

Your trade union will provide guidance and advice throughout the appraisal process. Where members believe they need union assistance they can contact Amicus on the RBS employment helpline on 0870 241 4425.



WANTED

UNION LEARNING REPS (ULR'S)

Amicus and the Royal Bank of Scotland have a Learning Agreement, whereby the bank has agreed to recognise 150 ULR's throughout the Group. Both Amicus and RBS have a common interest in ensuring the success of the Group for the benefit of all stakeholders and the activity of the ULR complements the support, development and training of RBSG employees.

WHAT DO ULR'S DO?

If you are interested in broadening your skills and are looking for a new and exciting career challenge then this could be just the role for you! The basic role of a ULR is to act as a "learning signpost", so that if an employee wants to improve their skills or study a course, the ULR will be able to advise them on how to progress. ULR's also work within a broader framework, which aims to bring together unions, employers and learning providers to improve basic skills levels in the workplace. The aims of the programme are to eradicate skills gaps, improve the employability and career prospects of our members and improve life outside work..

ULR's are also trained to spot and refer anyone with a difficulty in basic skills such as literacy, numeracy, IT etc, and will confidentially arrange appropriate courses for such people.

Typically ULR's will carry out a workplace Learning Needs Survey to find out where the greatest need is, very often it is for IT training. ULR's where possible will then arrange a course in the workplace which is designed to complement existing training given by the bank.

WHO CAN BECOME A ULR?

The Role is open to Amicus members with at least one year's service within the RBSG and Amicus will provide the necessary training to undertake the role. ULR's will be appointed by Amicus and will work within their own area of representation. The bank have also agreed to provide reasonable time off to

undertake the duties of the role, including adjustment to individual targets where appropriate. Facilities such as access to a private phone, use of notice boards etc has also been agreed.

Nikki Simpson has been a ULR at the Southend Cards Centre for over 2 years and says "I really enjoy my role. ULR's work to organise learning opportunities for staff based on the theory that a learning mind is an open mind.

We have had some great successes in Southend, from running lunchtime Spanish classes to interior design and salsa. Amicus has provided me with support, advice and training relating to my ULR activities. They also recently nominated me for the prestigious TUC Learning Rep of the Year Award – which I won! I recently collected my award from Tony Blair, which was a once in a lifetime experience for me. Patrick New, Head of CCO at Southend said, "Well done on receiving the award, this is a great example of how businesses and unions should and can work together extremely effectively".

Amicus have now established themselves on the learning agenda, adding to the valuable service they already offer to their members.

If you are an Amicus member and would like more information on becoming a ULR then please contact the Amicus Glasgow Office on 0141 248 7131 or e-mail rbsinfo@amicustheunion.org

Health and Safety in Royal Bank of Scotland Group

A number of the calls received by the Amicus RBS Helpline relate to Health and Safety Issues within the Royal Bank of Scotland Group and their impact upon staff in their working environment.

Amicus meets with representatives from the RBS Health and Safety, Group Security and Occupational Health communities on a regular basis and those issues that have been raised on regular and consistent basis by members were discussed at the latest meeting.

WORKING TEMPERATURE

Although it now seems a distant memory, the helpline received huge volumes of calls from members relating to excessively hot workplaces during the warm summer. Whilst the summer just gone was unusually and consistently hot, in particular July, it was apparent from a number of the calls that were being received that the Group's policy around working temperature was not always being adhered to.

The Group's policy, which appears on 'Insite' under "Working Temperature" details the actions that the bank should undertake in the event of an excessively hot working environment. Measures that should be taken include, but are not restricted to, improving ventilation, providing fans or temporary air conditioning units, providing cold drinks to staff and allowing either natural breaks or rotation away from particular tasks being conducted in uncomfortable conditions.

Whilst an uncomfortable working environment in many cases will be apparent, staff should in the first instance raise issues with their line manager and as well as implementing the measures above, managers should be giving consideration to also relaxing dress codes where appropriate.

Amicus will be issuing more detailed advice to members regarding excessive working temperatures prior to the summer period, but it is clear that common sense needs to be applied to tackle seasonally uncomfortable conditions within the workplace, for the ultimate benefit of both staff and customers.

Whilst the few months of glorious sunshine experienced this summer in the UK gradually fades from all our memories, it is also worth remembering that the RBS Working Temperature Policy exists to not only tackle excessively hot workplaces, but also where the working temperature is too cold.

If members experience uncomfortably cold working environments this winter, please refer to the Group's policy and if problems persist, contact the helpline.

WORKPLACE EQUIPMENT – MAINTENANCE AND REMOVAL

Members regularly contact the helpline as they have been asked to either move office equipment i.e. printers, monitors etc or asked to undertake "straightforward" maintenance on this type of equipment.

The Group's policy is that staff, other than those trained or authorised to do so, should not be undertaking any maintenance of office equipment or moving heavy or bulky office equipment around the workplace.

Clearly operational tasks such as changing printer or photocopier toners should continue, but for many, if not all, the other tasks around the office, the bank employs contractors and RBS staff that have the skills and authorisation to fulfil these functions and should not be undertaken by staff.

HOT-DESKING

Most members will be aware of the concept of hot-desking, where often staff will not occupy the same workstation on a week to week, or even day to day basis.

Amicus receives calls from members querying the potential Health and Safety impacts of regularly moving desks, given that often members have adjusted their workstations to fit their particular posture etc.

Where staff are being moved from desk to desk, individuals are encouraged to spend a couple of minutes ensuring that the chair, keyboard, monitor etc are all adjusted to suit your posture, size and so on.

If individuals have work aids such as arm rests, foot rests, specialist chairs, clearly these should follow an individual from work station to work station, however if an individual member has had extensive adjustments to a workstation to accommodate a particular issue or disability it is unlikely that this individual will hot-desk and there may be occasions where the workstation cannot be used by other individuals

If any members have any concerns regarding the suitability of their workstation, these concerns should be raised in the first instance with your line manager or then with the helpline if these concerns are not resolved satisfactorily.

HEALTH AND SAFETY ISSUES

If any members wish to raise any Health and Safety issues or have any questions relating to Health and Safety, please contact either the helpline on 08702 414425 or e-mail at

Age Discrimination:

Normal Retirement

The RBS Group has consulted with Amicus over the impact of The Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006, which come into force on 1 October 2006.

The Regulations apply to many aspects of employment and vocational training. They prohibit unjustified direct and indirect age discrimination, and all harassment and victimisation on grounds of age, of people of any age, young or old.

As well as applying to retirement where a national default retirement age of 65 has been introduced, they:

- remove the upper age limit for unfair dismissal and redundancy rights, giving older workers the same rights to claim unfair dismissal or receive a redundancy payment as younger workers, unless there is a genuine retirement;
- allow pay and non-pay benefits to continue which depend on length of service requirements of 5 years or less or which recognise and reward loyalty and experience and motivate staff;
- remove the age limits for Statutory Sick Pay, Statutory Maternity Pay, Statutory Adoption Pay and Statutory Paternity Pay, so that the legislation for all four statutory payments applies in exactly the same way to all;
- remove the lower and upper age limits in the statutory redundancy scheme,
- provide exemptions for many age-based rules in occupational pension schemes

Two primary areas of impact of the regulations for the RBS Group are Normal Retirement Age (NRA) and severance.

RBS GROUP NORMAL RETIREMENT AGE (NRA)

From the beginning of October 2006 the Normal Retirement Age will be increased to 65 but existing Group employees (i.e. those employed before October 2006) will still be able to draw down their pension from age 60. Employees wishing to work beyond the new NRA will be able to apply to do so. The wind down to retirement policy is being amended to reflect this changed position.

SEVERANCE TERMS

The RBS Group have advised Amicus that in their view a number of their existing redundancy and voluntary early retirement schemes, (e.g. NatWest Appendix 14, Coutts Scheme, RBS SERPA – referred to as “the Existing Schemes”) which contain enhanced age related benefits, are rendered unlawful as a consequence of the change in legislation. Amicus does not agree with the Group on this and considers that employees are contractually entitled to receive the benefits provided for under the existing schemes. The Group proposes to apply the following severance terms

Age and Severance Arrangements

with effect from 1 October 2006 to all employees in all divisions in England, Scotland, Wales, Channel Islands and Gibraltar ("the RBS New Terms"). The Group has however agreed that for the period up to 31st March 2007, employees facing redundancy and who have a termination date during this period will receive either their benefits under the existing schemes or the terms set out below if better. A three month notice period, where appropriate, will also apply during this period.

3.5 weeks pay per year of service capped at 104 weeks for all employees irrespective of division or date they joined the group.

Employees who are eligible for an undiscounted pension will have the following options:

A discounted pension and a severance payment based on 3.5 weeks per year of service capped at 104 weeks, or

An undiscounted pension and a severance payment based on 2 weeks pay per year of service capped at 80 weeks.

NOTICE PERIODS

A minimum notice period of 2 months will apply for all employees in a redundancy situation (or the employee's contractual notice if greater)

HERE TO HELP

You may be better or worse off under The Existing Schemes rather than the RBS New Terms depending on which Scheme you are in, your age, service and likely time left to retirement or possible redundancy. You need to consider your own circumstances carefully and if you consider you would be worse off under the RBS New Terms you should object to their imposition without delay otherwise you may be taken to have accepted them.

Members can object by copying and send the letter shown here (right column). It should be signed and dated and sent to:

**Group Human Resources,
Business House A,
PO Box 1000,
Gogarburn,
Edinburgh EH12 1HQ**

LETTER OF OBJECTION

Dear Sirs

I understand that you wish to introduce amendments to the existing redundancy terms, which are contained in the collective agreement relevant to my employment.

The existing terms are incorporated into my contract of employment and I do not wish to accept any variation to them.

I consider that I am entitled to retain these conditions pursuant to Schedule 5 of the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006.

I intend to pursue my existing redundancy entitlements in full.

Yours sincerely

[NAME of member]



Are You Giving the Bank "Your Time" For Free?

A common question to our Helpline is "do I have to work unpaid overtime?" The answer is invariably "no", it should be paid or commensurate time off in lieu (TOIL) provided.

However, we constantly hear that managers have no budget or can't provide TOIL because staff resources don't allow. The facts are that the Bank does have a budget, but a business case has to be made by Line Managers, and it is not the fault of staff that resources are low. Too often, bad managers prefer to put the burden on staff, rather than disclose their problems to higher management. They then create a feeling of guilt amongst staff implying dissenters are "negative" or "poor team players" etc.

Our stance is clear. The bank already makes massive profits each year through the hard work of its staff. If units are constantly under staffed, management should take a hard look at the reasons why. They should find long term solutions to this perennial problem; not paper over the cracks by pressurising loyal staff to cover for their own inadequacies. So, by way of example, if as a full timer, you are constantly asked to arrive at 8.45 a.m. for a "Huddle", you should finish at 4.45 p.m. Thereafter, if you are still at work at 5.15 p.m., in accordance with overtime policy, you are due half hour overtime or corresponding TOIL. Similar treatment should be applied to worked lunch breaks. The same principles apply to prime timers and "additional hours".

In relation to TOIL, you should establish when it will be taken, i.e. in the foreseeable future. If you prefer to have this rolled-up into say an afternoon/day slot, then fine, but do not run the risk of it getting to an undeliverable level. You could refuse further TOIL if the Bank unreasonably reneges on a commitment to provide previously earned time off. We know that in a good team, there will be times when we all step up to "go that extra mile", but when it becomes an extra weekly marathon it has to stop! Persistent long hours are not good for the individual, their family or even customers, and run counter to the Bank's "Your Time" and "work:life" balance ethos.

Think – half an hour a day over a year equates to you giving the bank back over 3 weeks of your holiday entitlement! Imagine how much that comes to across the whole work force! Is this right for a company that makes billions of profits each year and yet doesn't even pay a cost of living rise to a sizeable proportion of it's work-force in return?

We think not.