

Unite mechanical and electrical construction workers –

Employer threat: sign or be sacked



Workers in the eight breakaway companies have been given a stark choice, either agree to sign new contracts on much worse pay and terms and conditions or face the sack on December 7 and be re-engaged on the reduced terms and conditions.

Unite's advice to you is: DON'T SIGN

If your employer pulls you in for a one to one don't be bullied and don't sign a new contract. It's vital that individuals don't sign up and that we fight this attack collectively.

Legal advice

Unite is taking legal advice and what we advise you is don't sign a new contract until your union officer or rep gives the go-ahead. This is because if you agree to the new terms and conditions the employer may not have to consult with Unite about its proposals and you will give up the right to pursue any potential individual claims. Unite will provide you with a letter to give to your employer which will keep open your ability to take legal action against your employer. Unite will provide you with this letter close to the date of the threatened dismissal. But the reality is this battle won't be won in the courts, it will be down to the collective will of the membership.

Unite negotiations with the eight

When the employers put their new deal on the table they made it clear the new agreement was non-negotiable. We therefore withdrew from talks making it absolutely clear that we would return to the table when the employers were prepared for meaningful negotiations. Unite has had informal talks with a few of the eight who are uncomfortable with these hard-line tactics.

But instead of talks Balfour Beatty, Crown House Technologies, Spie WHS/Matthew Hall, Shepherd Engineering Services and NG Bailey have issued Unite with legal notice of their intentions to dismiss with notice thousands of employees before re-engaging all employees on new inferior contracts.

We know that the industry has changed and Unite is prepared to talk about updating our agreements. But this has to be within the 50-50 partnership arrangements that has provided workers with a proper voice in the industry. The employers want to dictate all the shots - what you get paid, your holiday entitlement, whether you get overtime and at what rate, what constitutes away work. No longer will you, through your union have a say about your working life.

MYTH – existing employees won't be effected

You will of heard from your employer that these new changes will not effect existing employees. **DON'T BE FOOLED.** Even if you hang on to your skilled grade, you lose out considerably under the new contracts. And how long before your existing job ends and you only get offered work on the new semi-skilled grades? The new semi-skilled grades will decimate this industry. Employers will be getting jobs done for 35 per cent less money. Big profits for the directors and shareholders and a huge pay cut for you.

Industrial unrest

This attack on the skills base of M&E workers is not the first. Employers tried it in the late nineties which led to massive industrial unrest. Projects like the Jubilee Line and Royal Opera House ended up going way over time and budget as a result of the anger displayed by workers at the time. Is this sensible industrial relations?

This time around Unite members up and down the country have reacted with similar anger. Unite has told employers to pull back from the precipice and engage in meaningful discussions.

Get 100 per cent organised

We can only successfully defeat this attack if we are well organised. Make sure that ALL your fellow workers are in the union. If there is no rep at your site then become one yourself. If you don't fight for your future, you won't have one. Contact your regional officer and they will tell you how you can become a rep.

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**For more information on Unite's campaign to defend your agreements,
visit www.unitetheunion.org/mecampaign**