

Keep up the pressure in 2012



2011 has been a remarkable year for Unite's construction members in the mechanical and electrical engineering sector. We have seen an unprecedented attack on skills and terms and conditions by a group of seven rogue employers who want to maximise their profits by taking money directly out of the pay packets of their workers.

But in response to this attack, there has been a tremendous campaign by members to defend their livelihoods. Thousands of workers have been present at protests all over the country. Unite's membership has grown significantly in the sector, as workers turn to the union to fight de-skilling. We now have new shop stewards elected on many sites where we had no organisation before and we have also recruited in all areas of construction.

We have seen an overwhelming majority voting for industrial action in our ballot with Balfour Beatty Engineering Services, with over 80 per cent voting 'yes' to strike. But instead of accepting this powerful mandate, the company used draconian anti-union balloting laws to challenge the ballot.

Despite this, the result had a huge impact. Within hours of Unite announcing the result, the employer's association behind the attack, the HVCA, contacted Unite to request talks with the assistance of the conciliation service, Acas.

Employers reject Unite's peaceful solution

Unite attended the Acas talks in good faith. The union offered employers the opportunity to withdraw the ultimatum to sign the new contracts or be sacked, so that negotiations could start in a constructive and conciliatory

environment. The offer was roundly rejected. These employers appear hell-bent on continuing their bullying approach to industrial relations that will undermine the stability within the sector.

Unite BBES ballot continues

Unfortunately, because of the employers' failure to compromise in any way, Unite will press on with our re-ballot of BBES members, which is the ring-leader company in this break-away.

Unite also wants to prepare our data in the other six companies for future balloting purposes: NG Bailey Building Services; Crown House Technologies; Gratte Brothers; Spie Matthew Hall; Shepherd Engineering Services (SES); and T. Clarke Plc.

Make sure you get a chance to vote

The union has spent many weeks now ensuring our records are updated so that the next ballot of BBES complies with the deliberately complex balloting laws.

We still have members where we need to update details. If you have not very recently updated your employment and workplace details please fill in the short questionnaire and return in the envelope provided to: **Freepost Plus RSCC-JGAL-GRJA, Nick Drysdale, Unite, 128 Theobalds Rd, London WC1X 8TN** by January 4th 2012.

If you want to ensure you have the right to be included in a ballot please contact us with your up-to-date details. You can email nick.drysdale@unitetheunion.org your details as per the questionnaire: e.g. your current address, phone numbers, employer, occupation and the site you are working on.

Newsletter December 2011

Protesting makes a difference

Unite has been contacted by several major clients who do not want to see the sort of industrial unrest at sites we have seen over the last few months. The employers involved in the break-away from the JIBs have been in left in no doubt about the anger felt by workers at this attack. Every worker who stood together and attended protests should be congratulated for using the collective strength to send a loud message of deviance – **NO to de-skilling, NO to pay cuts.**

The fight-back continues

We now need to increase our efforts if we are going to successfully defend the skills and terms

and conditions that have been won over many years. Unite members should continue the recruitment drive – ask your work mates who are not already members to join us.

We know that the employers are considering by-passing the union. With high levels of union membership, we can stop your employer from ignoring your voice.

Legal advice on signing new contract

Before you sign the new contracts, it is important that you contact your Unite regional construction officer for advice (numbers below). Unite has prepared legal letters that will assist in any future potential claim with your employer.

Unite construction Regional officer contact details

North East, Yorkshire & Humber

Leeds office: Bernard McAulay
(National Officer) 0113 236 4830
bernard.mcaulay@unitetheunion.org

Newcastle upon Tyne office:
Bill Green 0191 300 2107 or
0845 604 6390
bill.green@unitetheunion.org

Sheffield office: John Allott
(National Officer) 0114 321 9702
john.allott@unitetheunion.org
Chris Weldon
0114 321 0702 or 0845 604 1399
chris.weldon@unitetheunion.org

North West
Whitehaven office: John Fallows,
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john.fallows@unitetheunion.org

Liverpool office:
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Manchester office: Mike Gaskell
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London and Eastern

Dagenham office: Vince Passfield,
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Guy Langston, 020 8596 9966
guy.langston@unitetheunion.org
Harry Cowap, 0208 596 9966
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Heathrow office: Neil Willoughby,
020 3004 3440
neil.willoughby@unitetheunion.org

South East

Crawley office: Malcolm Bonnett
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South West

Bournemouth office: Colin Rose
01202 294 333
Email: colin.rose@unitetheunion.org

Bristol office: Jerry Pickford
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East Midlands

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West Midlands

West Bromwich office: Mick Tuff
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Glasgow office: Willy McGonigle
and Billy Parker 0141 404 5424
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