

Their proposals: the truth

Unite has been told that employers are spinning their proposals as the best thing since sliced bread. Their so called 'Building Engineering Services National Agreement' (BESNA) is a dangerous attack. Don't listen to their fiction – here are the facts. This is an employer's charter NOT an agreement:

- The core driver behind BESNA is to de-skill the workforce by introducing multi-disciplined "assistants" and "installers". The make up of work teams will be dictated solely by the employer. Unite has learnt that future integrated working teams would consist of having **ONE Craftsman**, working with **EIGHT Installers**.
- Employers will own and run the BESNA skill card and grading structure, undermining the existing respected and independent procedures of the Joint Industry Boards. These are the firms responsible for the blacklisting of workers and trade unionists. **Would you trust these people?**
- Casualised agency labour will replace directly employed workers, as under BESNA there will be no insistence on direct labour as per the existing agreements.
- Employers have recently stated that BESNA contains no reference to short-time working or lay off, however paragraph 5.4 (a) makes a clear reference to this provision insofar as it will impact on pay.
- Despite what the bosses say, BESNA paragraphs 6.4 and 6.5 clearly allows for the rest and meal breaks to be combined at the 'discretion' of the employer. We all know what that means – removal of the paid 15 minute morning rest break.
- Unlike the JIB, BESNA fails to define the working day as 7.5 hours and clearly states in paragraph 6.3 that "the length of the working day and the hours of attendance shall be determined by the employer", this undermines your defined working week and the chance for overtime payments and an afternoon break.
- BESNA undermines existing JIBs' travel allowances, and gives the employer "absolute discretion" to determine what constitutes the 'shop' and reimburse the cheapest possible fare (paragraph 7.3), avoiding existing travel cost allowances without even guaranteeing a standard second class rail fare.
- The Employers see travel time and accommodation allowances as a prohibitive cost to their business, their intention is that **the cost of your time, mileage and fuel to get to and from jobs over 25 miles will be out of your own pocket.**
- Employers will impose **BELL to BELL** working which means clocking facilities will be located as close to where you work as practicable instead of at the site offices. This means any time you spend walking to and from your work area will not be paid and will result in your working day being extended by up to 1.5 hours without pay.
- Employer's insistence that workers could have to undergo medical examination could have potential sinister implications. The JIB combined benefits scheme including ECIBA and BUPA benefits, does not discriminate against anyone joining, regardless of their medical history or state of health. Furthermore, the life insurance element is for "death by any cause". In contrast BESNA looks like it will have the ability to pick and choose who and what they cover.

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Negotiations not imposition

Unite has made it clear to the seven majors it wants:

- o Removal of the threat to our members with the sack if they do not accept BESNA
- o Removal of the HVCA application to CSCS to issue cards to Electrical and Plumbing operatives within their Mechanical SKILLcard scheme.
- o Removal of BEST as the proposed apprenticeships provider and training agent
- o Removal of BESNA and HVCA from the discussions, and to then commence meaningful and transparent negotiations, including the setting up of working groups to find a way forward for all stakeholders in the industry.

Unfortunately, the employers have refused to respond or withdraw the threat of dismissal. **Their first available date to meet with Unite is 23rd November.**

You did not complete your apprenticeship, studies and training in your trade to be treated with such contempt.

Remember don't sign

DON'T SIGN a new contract until your union officer gives the go-ahead. 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.

Contact your regional officer to provide you with a legally worded protest letter prepared by the union's solicitors to give to your employer. This 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.

Get organised on site and make sure everyone is in membership of Unite.

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