



## AMICUS THE UNION FOR YOU IN HFC BANK

# HFC BIRMINGHAM NEWS UPDATE

**Membership of Amicus continues to grow at Camden House and at Edmund Street. This is a fantastic achievement, especially given our lack of access to staff.**

Amicus was allowed into these buildings for one day with a recruitment stall – back in February 2006. We were not allowed to approach staff or to visit work station areas. It is unclear at the moment if and when a further visit will be permitted. Numerous emails on this issue have been exchanged between Amicus and both HFC and HSBC HR during 2006. The Bank is aware that we regard as unacceptable the fact that most HFC staff do not know about their right to join Amicus. Nor have the vast majority of staff seen any Amicus publicity or application forms.

### **One way or another, these difficulties will be overcome in 2007**

The basis of UK law is that employees get to choose if they want union recognition or not. Amicus will not continue to allow HFC to actively prevent this choice from being made.

### **Workplace activity**

Several members have expressed an interest in becoming an Amicus workplace Rep

Denise Frankham – Cards Department, has now undertaken training to become an Amicus Rep, this means that Denise can accompany members to any meeting with management or HR. If you need any advice or wish for her to accompany you to a meeting please contact her on: 0772 581 6043

Departments other than Cards have not transferred to HSBC. We have advised HFC that we know of 5 members who also want to train to become Amicus Representatives.

A clear answer of "NO" has been received. If Amicus can secure formal recognition, we will have a statutory right to train workplace representatives. HFC will then have to pay for time off for training, and also paid time off for ongoing Union duties.

Our Reps spend their time supporting and advising colleagues. They help ensure employees are treated fairly and properly. HFC employees will be asking themselves why their employer does not want them to have this independent facility.

In the meantime, HFC are actively denying members the freedom to organise themselves – a right contained in the Geneva Convention of Human Rights.

### **Getting involved**

Amicus will need the active support of a network of committed members if we are to secure recognition for this and future generations of HFC employees. We would again like to hear from those of you who have previously expressed an interest in getting involved or becoming a Rep.

Please email [Helen.camp@amicustheunion.org](mailto:Helen.camp@amicustheunion.org) or [rick.coyle@amicustheunion.org](mailto:rick.coyle@amicustheunion.org)

or telephone Helen on 0207 780 4066 or Rick on 0121 569 8900.

We are hoping to be able to arrange a meeting of members soon – but it is unlikely that we will be able to hold the meeting during working hours or onsite!

### **What would it mean if Amicus were recognised at HFC?**

If Amicus achieved recognition at HFC it would mean that:

- You have a voice in your workplace
- Amicus would negotiate on your behalf on issues such as pay, shift allowances, discipline and grievance procedures, sickness absence policy, terms and conditions, target changes and procedures.

Being a member of Amicus now not only brings us a step closer to recognition, but also means that you have:

- Access to experienced advice and representation in discipline and grievance situations.
- Support if you encounter any issues.
- Access to a range of benefits.

### **Not a member?**

**Join on line at [www.amicustheunion.org](http://www.amicustheunion.org)**

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# Q&A

**We've had lots of questions lately about "recognition" and related matters, so here's more:**

**Q. HFC won't give me release to train as a Rep – am I right that Amicus are powerless to stop this?**

A. There are in fact some ways around this problem – and we ask any interested member to speak to Rick Coyle on 0121 569 8900

**Q. I have heard about Union Learning Reps (ULR's) – what are they?**

A. A ULR is a new type of Union Rep. They check out what the learning wants and needs of the workforce are. If say 8 staff want to learn guitar, they work to get funding to ensure that course is delivered for those colleagues.

**Q. But why should HFC be bothered about what staff want rather than need?**

A. A happy workforce is a productive one. When ULRs were introduced into HSBC, the HSBC ER Director said that productivity had increased by 5%, delivering a "staggering" increase in Bank profits.

**Q. When will Amicus advertise these exciting opportunities for lifelong learning?**

A. Unfortunately, our legal right to appoint ULR's depends on us being a "recognised" union. We can't roll this out until HFC "recognise" Amicus.

**Q. Will Amicus ever become "recognised" by HFC?**

A. If over 50% of staff join, then yes "recognition" is then automatic.

**Q. What if we can't get 50% to join? It's not like they are making it easy for us?**

A. We need just 10% of the workforce (in any "bargaining unit") to trigger a legally-binding ballot of staff. We'd then need a ballot turnout of at least 40% - but are confident we'd win any ballot. There can be many problems of defining "bargaining unit" – and we anticipate HFC Solicitors challenging us every step of the way. We'd prefer to go for the 50% route – but can't hope to achieve that without the strong support of a network of active members.

On a positive note, HFC have said that if we win sufficient support for recognition, they will at that point sit down with us and make sure the new system works effectively.

**Q. When Amicus leaflets landed on the desks at Camden House, they were collected up minutes later. What happened?**

A. HFC advised that the 500 leaflets were collected as the leaflet was not "authorised". We were also advised that management instead placed one leaflet on a notice-board to "assist" us. Such kindness - had Christmas come early?!

To clarify, once a leaflet is given to you it becomes your property, and HFC are committing theft if they remove it without your consent. Members are entitled to give Amicus information to other colleagues, but to protect you we advise that this is done before or after working hours, or during a paid break.

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