



## WELCOME

from National Officer Tom Hardacre



*Welcome to our first newsletter for construction. Unite is the premier union in construction that fights for direct employment under the terms of national collective agreements.*

*Following our successful lobby of Parliament last March that saw 1,200 construction workers in Westminster, the Trade and Industry Select Committee announced a wide-ranging inquiry into the state of the UK construction industry.*

*Unite provided the Committee with an extensive overview of the industry, making the clear case for direct employment under the terms of the national collective agreements.*

*Further to this comprehensive report I was summoned by the newly named Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform Committee to provide oral evidence on the 27th November.*

*I made it clear to the Committee that the move away from direct employment and the increasing reliance of the industry on agencies would do nothing to contribute to the long term sustainable growth of the industry.*

*We as a Union are increasingly aware of the growing influence multi national business has on Government decisions, which is why Unite is seeking to establish further links with our international Trade Union colleagues in order to influence the global decision making process.*



## UNITE HOLDS RALLY FOR DIGNITY IN CONSTRUCTION

More than 100 North West region construction and contracting members turned up in to support the call for direct employment at a rally in Manchester on 2nd January 2008.

Unite fears that there will be social unrest unless employers and government take action to stop the exploitation of agency workers. Employers are increasingly turning to agency labour that is employed on inferior terms and conditions than directly employed workers. This is causing division and unrest among construction workers. Unite is leading the fight for stronger employment protection at work and to ensure that all construction workers are covered by UK National Agreements.

# CONSTRUCTION BOOMING IN THE NORTH EAST

The Teesside area of the North East is currently seeing a mini boom in Engineering Construction.

2007 saw the successful completion of two Category 1 Projects with few industrial relations issues – Managing Contractors for these projects were Costain and Foster Wheeler.

During 2007 Mammoet Cranes agreed a union recognition agreement with Unite.

2008 through to 2010 will be an extremely busy period completing current work and the possibility of an 800 MW clean-coal fired power station and a £2bn refinery on Wilton International.

Discussions are currently ongoing with regard to a £400m Bio Fuels Plant which will be under NAECI Category 1 as are probable other chemical associated new builds.

A £75m NHS Project has been agreed for Middlesbrough and attempts will be made to ensure that work is undertaken with a major projects agreement.

What may be regarded as 'rogue' companies are operating with their own terms and conditions of employment which in some instances undermine National Agreements. The recruitment of employees in those organisations will be a priority to ensure a "balanced playing field" is in place.

The lack of members prepared to take a representative's role does cause problems as "individual" representation is becoming the norm. This situation can only be resolved by ensuring that members and employers have a degree of understanding that it is in the best interests of all parties to recognise accredited shop stewards and health and safety representatives.



## UNITE CALLS FOR UK JOBS FROM NEW NUCLEAR PLANT CONTRACTS

More than 10,000 UK jobs could be created if the government required all bidders for new nuclear reactor contracts to source the construction and manufacturing work from UK companies.

In a letter to the Secretary of State for BERR, John Hutton, Unite is calling on the government to require all bidders for the new build nuclear reactor sites to match a commitment already made by one of the potential bidders to source the maximum amount of the new build contracts from companies based in the UK.

Unite believes that nuclear new build

represents one of the most significant opportunities for British jobs and skills over the next decade and we want to make sure that the maximum benefit is received by the UK manufacturing and skills base.

Unite National Officer Tom Hardacre said "We welcome the Government's commitment to further develop the UK's power generation infrastructure, which will create more employment prospects for the Engineering Construction industry." But he also warned that "this will not be delivered without a commitment from all stakeholders to the application of the National Agreements".



## BUMPER PAY DEAL IN THE PIPELINE FOR PLUMBERS

Unite, Britain's biggest union, has negotiated a bumper pay increase for thousands of plumbers across Scotland and Northern Ireland. A massive 93% of union members voted to accept the two year deal.

The deal covers up to 10,000 plumbers working in the private sector. The deal was struck between Unite and the Scottish and Northern Ireland Joint Industrial Board for the Plumbing industry (SNIJIB).

From June 2008, plumbers covered by the agreement will get a 4.6% increase followed by a further increase in 2009 of 4.6%. Significantly, the threshold for the application of overtime will be reduced from 45 hours to 43 hours (overtime equates to time and a half from Monday to Fri and double time on Sunday) and an introduction of 25p mileage allowance.



## LEGAL VICTORY FOR SACKED ELECTRICIANS

Unite members are celebrating a legal victory following their successful claim in a Norwich Employment Tribunal.

Electricians who used to be employed at Fishers Electrical (Norwich) Ltd., an established local electrical contractor and longstanding JIB member firm were made redundant with no notice or consultation as a result of the company going into administration.

In a recent tribunal decision, the 14 members are celebrating a share of compensation exceeding £120,000.

The outcome of this case demonstrates that the union will take action against all employers who fail to undertake their legal obligations.

## UNITE WANTS 'SKILLS BANK' SOLUTION

Unite is calling for a 'skills bank' to be established as an alternative to agencies.

An increasing number of Unite construction members are voicing their concerns about the negative effect of agencies within the industry. Electrical contracting has seen a drop of trainees from 5,000 in the 1980s to only 2,800 taken on in 2007.

Under the 'skills bank' proposals Unite recognises that most contractors will continue to maintain a nucleus of permanently employed workers and top up the supply in periods of high workload demand.

Those workers supplied to the industry

via the pool system would be directly employed, in accordance with the terms and conditions of national agreements. Meetings with the employers association are scheduled to take place early in the February.

The union hopes that apprentices could be trained within this structure, with employers providing sufficient work experience to complete training.

The union believes the initiative will interest Government in terms of regulating the industry and securing a stable skills base to deliver projects, and address the growing number of tax avoidance schemes.

## CORPORATE MANSLAUGHTER

Following years of campaigning by Unite, the Corporate Manslaughter and Corporate Homicide Act 2007 has finally been passed, after various attempts over a number of years dating back to such disasters as the sinking of the Herald of Free Enterprise in 1987 and Piper Alpha disaster in 1988. The Act introduces an offence of Corporate Manslaughter (Corporate Homicide in Scotland) which is committed where a failure in the way a company is managed leads to the death of a person to whom the relevant duty of care was owed. This will include the duty of care under the Health & Safety at Work Act and other statutes as well as the common law duty of care. The Act will come into force in 2008.

## OLYMPICS PROJECT

Unite is concerned about the lack of movement on behalf of the ODA/CLM on a site agreement for the project. Despite repeated warnings, National Officer Tom Hardacre said "They must be mad if they think a job of this magnitude can be done without a properly constituted site agreement." The whole industry is watching.



## UNITE REMEMBERS FORMER CEU GENERAL SECRETARY JOHN BALDWIN

A giant of the Engineering Construction industry, Brother John Baldwin, the former leader of the Constructional Engineering Union (CEU), and one of the architects of the NAECI agreement, has recently passed away. The union sends its commiserations to his family and friends.

The NAECI brought together the Outside Steel Erection Agreement, the Steam Generating Agreement, The Standard Site Agreement for Oil and Petrochemical industries and several other site and company level national agreements which operated throughout the industry.

As a shop steward going onto General Secretary, he had a tremendous personality and powers of persuasion. He represented key trades in the construction process and had a membership of formidable character.

John was a lifelong member of the Labour Party but lived and worked for the union, its members and the construction industry in general. He was appointed OBE in 1978. He retired in 1988. Asbestosis, a disease that has affected many of his colleagues, manifested itself in 2006.

John Baldwin, OBE, trade unionist, was born on August 16, 1923. He died on November 28, 2007, aged 84.



# JIB FUNDING FOR FURTHER EDUCATION OR TRAINING

*The JIB is now inviting applications for financial support to those wanting to take further training or education in the electrical contracting industry in 2008.*

Applicants must be JIB graded operatives participating in the JIB Combined Benefits Scheme or JIB registered apprentices. Funding will be provided for:

- People training for advanced positions in the industry
- Courses in subjects related to the industry.

The JIB will also consider funding for individuals who are undertaking research for the benefit of the industry as a whole. Where an application meets the criteria and is successfully accepted, the JIB will fund 50 per cent of any course fees to a maximum of £500.

Funding is limited and will be given on a first come first served basis for 2008.

See JIB website: [www.jib.org.uk/comm7.htm](http://www.jib.org.uk/comm7.htm) or by contacting: Secretary to the Further Education Fund JIB, Kingswood House, 47/51 Sidcup Hill, Sidcup, Kent DA14 6HP.

## UNITE SECURES COMPENSATION FOR ASBESTOS VICTIM

The widow of a Unite member has won a substantial compensation payment after her husband was exposed to lethal asbestos dust in the workplace. David Hines from Birkenhead was 73 when he died just two months after he was diagnosed with cancer of the lining of the lung mesothelioma.

Between 1965 and 1993 he worked as a plumber including VSEL Birkenhead/Cammell Lairds where he was exposed to asbestos.

His widow, Anne, 67, said David always feared he would die from an asbestos related disease after a friend he used to work with contracted asbestosis. She said when he became ill he attempted to pursue compensation to ensure his family were cared for following his death.

She added that he would be delighted that his case had finally been won.

"When he was diagnosed he got in touch with the union to find out what his options were but he was too ill to finish off his claim. He wanted me to carry it on for him" she said.

Unite regional secretary Laurence Faircloth said: "It is important for victims of asbestos related diseases and their family members to claim compensation from the insurers of their former employers to achieve a sense of justice.

## UNITE LEGAL SERVICES

**Unite membership provides you with significant legal benefits, which are essential when working in a difficult industry like construction.**

**Last year we recovered nearly £130 million in compensation for our members.**

### Personal injury claims

We work with specialist personal injury law firms to provide free legal assistance to any Unite member, and any member of their family, who wants to bring a personal injury claim for damages for any accident (outside of their own home) in the UK or Republic of Ireland.

The assistance includes, (but is not limited to):

- Accidents at work
- Occupational diseases
- Occupational deafness
- Road traffic accidents
- Tripping and slipping accidents
- Asbestos Register

Our lawyers and their firms ensure a high quality legal service and commitment to the trade union.