

GRAPHICAL, PAPER AND MEDIA SECTOR

TRADE UNIONS PREPARE TO FIGHT ATTACK ON EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS IN EUROPE

“Europe is seeing an unprecedented neo liberal attack on labour and employment standards and on terms and conditions of European workers”, Tony Burke, Unite AGS said at the European Mining, Chemical and Energy Federation Congress held in Prague in May.

“Employment rights that were won through the work and sacrifices of our members over decades across the European Union are now under real threat.” he added.

“The recent decisions of the European Court of Justice in regard to the Lavel, Viking and Rueffert cases could create a climate that could lead to worker being pitted against worker and create “a race to the bottom.” Unite told the Congress.



“If the ECJ judgement stands we could see national agreements undermined, therefore we have now to campaign to overturn the judgements and pursue and defend progressive social policies in Europe.

The European Commission and the European Parliament now needs to stand up to European Government who are intent on blocking the progress of social employment standards in Europe that have been developed over the past 60 years.”

John Monks, General Secretary of the European TUC (ETUC) told the congress the ECJ judgements are already having an adverse effect on Union power. **“They have already turned some trade unionists against the Lisbon Treaty and they are leading many trade unionists to question whether there really is a Social Europe if the free market can ride roughshod over collective agreements.”**

John Monks announced that the ETUC would be seeking a social progress protocol to be attached to the treaties of the European Union making clear that fundamental rights are not secondary to the single market.

“This will be a big fight, a tough campaign, but is one that we must win.” he added.

**DEREK SIMPSON,
JOINT GENERAL SECRETARY,
ON THE RECENT
ECJ JUDGEMENTS:**

“The European Court of Justice has made a number of decisions that we believe threaten EU countries with being forced to use cheaper agency labour, the undercutting of our industry agreements and the ability of trade unions to defend them. This judgement is by far the most damaging.

“This decision effectively means that foreign companies working here in the UK, or any other European country, can flout domestic laws and collective agreements with regard to pay.

This is a recipe for disaster and, if applied here in the UK, will cause massive industrial unrest and threaten the delivery of major infrastructure projects including the Olympics site.”



SCOTTISH PRINT MEMBERS VOTE YES TO PAY DEAL

Unite members working in the printing industry in Scotland have voted by 3 -1 to accept a pay deal which equates to a 3.37% increase on basic rates.

The agreement was reached with the Scottish Print Employers Federation and is payable from July 1st.

Commenting on the pay deal Unite Assistant General Secretary Tony Burke said: **"The printing industry in Scotland has been going through a very tough time, with company closures and job losses. Print (notably for the finance industry) and packaging work traditionally produced in Scotland is being produced either in the rest of the UK or in the rest of the EU."**

"We have proposed that Unite sits down with SPEF and their member companies to discuss how best we can address this issue including looking at how we can seek joint help or assistance for the industry and how best we can jointly promote the industry in Scotland."

For information on the SPEF Agreement contact Willie.Wallace@unitetheunion.com

UNITE ARTISTS AT YELLOW PAGES TO BALLOT ON NEW PAY DEAL

At the time of going to press Unite was planning ballot artists and designers working under the Art Studio Directories Agreement and producing advertisements for Yellow Pages Directories, on a new pay offer negotiated by Unite Officials and representatives this week.

The proposed new pay deal provides for a 4.2% increase on minimum wages from 1st July 2008.

Commenting on the pay deal, Tony Burke, Assistant General Secretary said **"The majority of artists and designers working under the agreement will get a £15 per week increase. Given the difficult situation within the Directories industry and in particular the ongoing move over to electronic information, our negotiating panel which includes representatives from the Slough and Manchester Studios are recommending the pay deal as the best achievable under all the circumstances."**

UNITE AND POLESTAR SIGN LEARNING AGREEMENT AT PETTY'S

Unite and Polestar Petty have signed a Local Learning Agreement to create a learning culture across the Leeds based print company. The agreement, which applies to all 435 employees of Polestar Petty, part of the UK's biggest print group, will follow the ProSkills Skills Pledge as well as support the government's personal development initiatives.

Union Learning Representative (ULR) Darren

Stallan, a printer at Polestar Petty, was elected last year to be first ULR on the site and has been actively generating support for the agreement through a Learning Needs Analysis programme on site.

The first programme being planned is an Internet/Digital camera course. Further courses will be driven by the interests of the employees, with IT and languages being likely future options.

CONSERVATIVES WANT TO SQUASH UNIONS

In a feature aired on Union TV screened at 10.30am and 7pm on Monday 30th June on RED TV, channel 186 on Sky Digital, Richard O'Brien, Unite's Director of Communications warned that the **"Tories are intent on turning their guns on the unions again if they get back into government."**

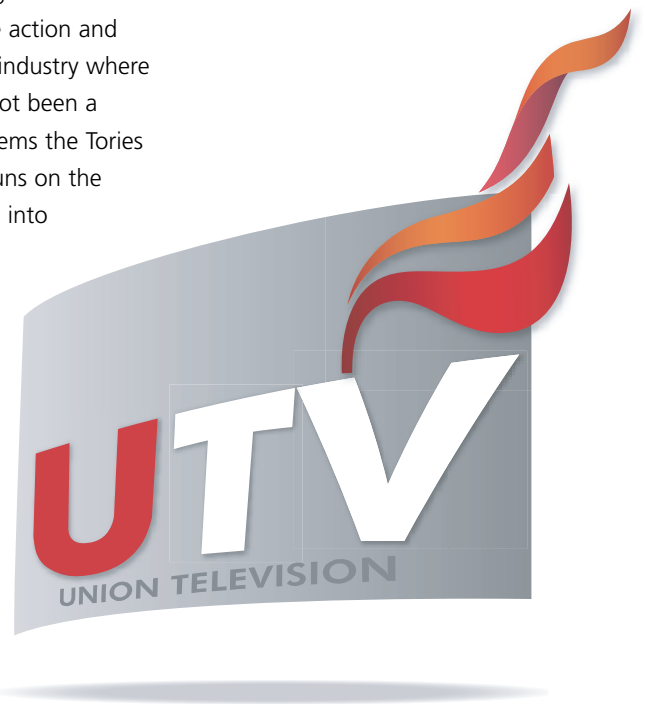
George Osborne the Tory spokesman on industry has threatened to reign in union power. His response to the Grangemouth strike and the teacher's one day strike was to indicate that the Tories intend to weaken employment laws and confront the workers 'willingness' to take strike action. The workers at Grangemouth were ordinary people struggling to protect their pension scheme.

Trade unions took a battering in the 80s and 90s as the conservative government imposed restrictions on strike action and shut down great swathes of industry where unions were organised. Its not been a picnic under Labour but it seems the Tories are intent on turning their guns on the unions again if they get back into government.

Union TV also exposed the courage of union activists in Colombia who faced death on a daily basis. To be a trade unionist in Colombia – organising for better wages and working conditions for your colleagues – can cost you your life: more are murdered there than in the rest of the world combined.

Between them, violent wings have killed more than 30,000 people and driven three million people from their homes.

Richard O'Brien, Unite's Director of Communications says, **"Working people across the globe face challenges from the right in differing extremes. Our aim with this programme is to provide a trade union perspective on all the major industrial and political issues. This is an uncensored view from working people on what's happening to them and their families today whether its attacks on their pensions, or threats from the Tories to strip away their rights. Then there are the horrifying extremes of workers in Colombia who face death just because they are organising for better working conditions."**



RECOGNITION AGREEMENT SUCCESS AT RR DONNELLY LEICESTER

Unite members have gained a union recognition agreement with leading printing and publishing company RR Donnelley at their Leicester site.

About 100 people work at the site and the agreement will cover workers in the open, sort and dispatch department which makes up the majority of the employees at this location.

The Unite campaign for recognition started in September 2007 and a voluntary agreement was signed after membership density reached two thirds of the workforce.

Keith Cowen, Unite Steward and FoC, said: **"We have wanted this for a long time**

and have worked hard to get it. Having union recognition will have a positive impact on our members working lives."

Steve Sibbald, Unite National Officer, commented: **"On the whole we have a good working relationship with RR Donnelley and once we reached a good level of membership the company were more than willing to sit down and talk. Our members are well on their way to developing strong union structures and having a real say on the issues that matter to them. They have made a great start and if they pursue issues with the same tenacity they pursued recognition, I'm sure they will be very successful."**

PAY DEAL FOR FINNISH WHITE COLLAR PAPERWORKERS

Last-ditch efforts averted a strike by white collar workers across Finland's pulp and paper sector with Toimihenkilöunioni TU white collar union and the Finnish Forest Industries Federation agreeing to a 21-month deal. The two sides had agreed on a pay increase of 5.3% over the life of the agreement. Effective 1st July 2008, salaried staff will receive an increase of not less than 2.7%, or €60-per-month. In addition to that, pay hikes of 1.3% and a one-off bonus of €110 per worker will be paid out on local levels. A 0.4% increase is scheduled for distribution on the local level in March 2009. Also, a national pay increase of 0.9% will take effect in March 2009. Both parties retain the right to terminate the agreement in March 2009.

EARNING & LEARNING AT NAMPACK – LEEDS

A joint initiative by Unite and multi-national packaging company Nampak Cartons has seen the opening of a learning centre for workers at Nampak's Leeds factory.

The initiative comes as a result of Unite asking major employers to provide support and facilities to establish continuous learning centres inside workplaces. The learning centre, will be the venue and focus for a range of vocational, health and safety and individual development courses.

The centre will run work related courses as well as being used by the union to run courses for its members with the long term aim that the facilities will be made available to staff who want to further their skills by taking courses in IT and other subjects such as languages.

Glenn Jackson, Unite's FOC who is also a Unite NEC member said: **"Many people have put a lot of time and effort into making this achievement possible. This learning and training agenda, in conjunction with a working partnership between Nampak and Unite, bodes well for the company. All employees will be able to enhance existing skills and develop new ones**

that will influence, shape and strengthen the future of our industry."

Steve Campbell, site director at Nampak Cartons, said: **"We take training very seriously. First of all, it is the key factor in making sure we have a safe workplace.**

DICK BARKER

It is sad to report the death of Dick Barker, who died in May. Dick had previously worked as a printer at Benham Goodhead Print in Colchester. After being made redundant he took a job as a transport driver.

Dick served the GPMU as president of the East of England Branch, a member of the GPMU NEC, Vice President of the GPMU, and went on to serve in Amicus as an NEC member and a member of the Amicus F&GP Committee and as Chair of the Amicus GPM National Sector Committee, before leaving the industry.

Dick was always a union man who worked hard for the membership. Unite members and friends from all over the UK and Ireland attended Dick's funeral in Harwich. Attendees included former GPMU President Ray Williams, Unite DGS Tony Dubbins, Unite National and Regional Officers, NEC members plus lay reps from the East of England. Our condolences go to Dick's partner Jan and his family.

Secondly, it means that our people are developed to their full potential, whatever their current job. This partnership with Unite is a really positive one and will enable more people to access more training."



Picture: Left to Right – Unite NEC member, Glenn Jackson, Cllr. Angela Gabriel, Steve Campbell MD at Nampak Leeds at the opening of the new Nampak learning centre



Unite AGS Tony Burke addresses the USW Paper and Pulp Bargaining Conference in Pittsburgh



Unite reps attending the recent national paper bargaining conference of the United Steelworkers of America in Pittsburgh, USA said the problems USW paper and packaging workers are the same as those being faced by Unite members in the UK including health and safety, dealing with global companies, pay and conditions and handling the changing nature of the paper industry.

"We work at the same companies with the same machinery and the same problems," said Clive Bell, senior Unite representative at the SCA Hygiene Products

UK Limited Prudhoe. Bell said he also was impressed with the conference and that it was "inspirational." But there are also differences. Unite Assistant General Secretary Tony Burke reported on Unite's national agreements in paper and packaging to over 600 delegates.

He said Unite had not encountered the level of anti-union behaviour experienced by American paper workers and pointed out the same companies who are anti-union in the USA have to have European Works Councils, with worker representation in EU countries.

Burke said the reception his delegation received at the conference was "phenomenal." **"We learned a lot from the USW,"** he said. **"The close relationship between Unite and the USW in the paper sector will mean that the merger is built on a solid foundation."**

Craig Foster, Unite deputy convener of a Georgia-Pacific facility in the North West UK said he met some strong contacts from other GP facilities in the U.S. which will be invaluable in the future. **"I think the merger of the two unions will be fantastic for both unions,"** he said.

PAY DEAL IN GERMANY FOR PACKAGING INDUSTRY

Ver.di the German union which covers the packaging sector reports that they have agreed a 3.9 per cent pay deal from May 1st this year followed by a 2.9 per cent deal from April 2009 - a 25 month agreement covering 75,000 workers.

PRINTING IS ALIVE!

Take a look at this YouTube clip.

For many printing workers it says it all!

<http://youtube.com/watch?v=VpAuDrs5ocg>

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SCA/SAICA SELL OFF DEAL

SCA is to sell some of its UK corrugated packaging operations to Spain's Sociedad Anónima Industrias Celulosa Aragonesa (SAICA) for £100m and close the New Hythe containerboard mill in Kent. The corrugated business to be sold to SAICA includes 20 plants in the UK and Ireland, with annual sales of about £240m.

SAICA also has 20 factories and a turnover of £1.1m. They employ around 1,400 people and produce "highly profitable" litho-printed, double-layer containers for transporting car parts, and motorbikes, audio speakers and other specialist products.

SAICA is a privately owned Spanish paper and packaging company with sales of €1.6bn (£1.6bn). It operates paper mills and corrugated facilities in a number of European countries, including two corrugated box plants in the UK and one in Ireland, and has around 7,000 employees.