



## GRAPHICAL, PAPER & MEDIA SECTOR AMICUS

### **BALLOT ON TERMS OF NEW NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN AMICUS GPM SECTOR AND BPIF**

October 2005

In November 2003 the BPIF and Amicus GPM Sector (formerly GPMU) began work on a joint Partnership at Work initiative to modernise the National Agreement in the printing industry. This followed DTI funding approval for a major project to 'improve the printing industry's productivity and working environment through a new partnership between employers and unions at national level'.

The project was led by a BPIF/Amicus GPM Sector Joint Review Body, which comprised senior executives from BPIF member companies and senior Amicus GPM Sector officials. The Joint Review Body was chaired by Frank Burchill, Emeritus Professor of Industrial Relations and Director of the Centre for the Study of the Avoidance and Resolution of Employment Disputes at Keele University.

The BPIF and Amicus GPM Sector have a long history of collective bargaining at local and national level. The National Agreement has, over the years, not only addressed issues relating to pay and benefits, but has also put in place provisions covering areas that are crucial to improving the working conditions of Amicus GPM Sector members.

Both parties have however recognised that there were increasing signs that the National Agreement was in need of a major overhaul if it is to address adequately the challenges the industry and our members face in coming years.

In particular it needed to address issues relating to skills development and the work-life balance of members working in the industry, as well as enabling companies to respond to increasing competition arising from the development of new media and the sourcing of print overseas.

The new National Agreement also needed to provide scope for negotiations between the parties in relation to the implementation of new employment legislation.

#### **Developing the new National Agreement and Code of Practice**

One of the Joint Review Body's first tasks was to commission research among both BPIF member companies and Amicus GPM Sector members working under the National Agreement to ascertain their needs and concerns and expectations of a national agreement, and to establish attitudes to possible changes. The aim was to bring objectivity and fresh ideas to the Review Body's discussions and to generate greater involvement, from those who will ultimately have to implement the agreement.

The research was conducted in two strands:

- (a) A full survey of all BPIF, SPEF and Amicus GPM Sector members - in order to enable all affected by the outcome of the Review to make an input
- (b) A series of focus groups held with employers and with employees, at which attendees were invited to share their thinking on the changes they believed needed to be made to existing agreements and practices and how those could best be taken forward.

The survey questionnaire was distributed to all BPIF and SPEF member companies, and to all Amicus GPM Sector members working under the BPIF/Amicus GPM Sector (or SPEF/Amicus GPM Sector) National Agreement.

The survey was supported by a series of 23 focus groups facilitated by ACAS officials and held in locations throughout the UK, at which attendees were invited to share their views on the changes they believed need to be made to existing agreements and practices and how these could best be taken forward.

Having examined the results of this joint research, the next task was to decide how the new National Agreement should be reshaped in the light of the findings.

Following lengthy and detailed talks, a basis of agreement was reached on the terms of a New Partnership Document – comprising a National Agreement and an associated Code of Practice – which set out best practice for the industry.

## **A new National Agreement and Code of Practice**

The new National Agreement contains substantial revisions to the current Agreement between BPIF and Amicus GPM Sector. In all, there are fifteen sets of provisions contained in the current Agreement, and seven new ones. Eleven sets of provisions remain unchanged, and four are proposed for deletion.

Appended to the National Agreement is a BPIF/Amicus GPM Sector Code of Practice, which seeks to set out best practice in employment conditions rather than minimum entitlements.

The introduction of the Code reflects the view of both the union and the employers that companies and chapels must work together to achieve the best possible standards of employment relations, and the purpose of the Code is to supplement the National Agreement by setting out the standards that the parties consider all BPIF member companies should be seeking to achieve in these areas.

The Code will be kept under review by a new joint BPIF/Amicus GPM Sector Partnership Committee and will be augmented in the light of future developments affecting the industry. The BPIF and Amicus GPM Sector are committed to assisting their members to achieve the standards set out in the Code of Practice.

## **Objectives of the new Agreement and Code of Practice**

The new National Agreement and Code of Practice seeks to address twelve key objectives that the Joint Review Body's research has shown are significant to both employers and employees. These are:

- Increasing dialogue and co-operation between employers, employees and employee representatives
- Building an effective partnership between the BPIF and Amicus GPM Sector that recognises and seeks to address their mutual and separate interests
- Improving productivity and profitability
- Reducing excessive overtime working
- Ensuring fairness of treatment in the workplace
- Protecting the health and welfare of employees
- Assisting employees to adapt to changes affecting their employment
- Enabling employee representatives to represent their members effectively and to acquire the skills they need to work in partnership with employers
- Providing a means for resolving disputes and differences
- Ensuring implementation of workplace legislation and /or good employment practice
- Enabling effective recruitment and development of people
- Simplifying and modernising the National Agreement

## Benefits of the New National Agreement

- A new national sick pay scheme providing decent minimum benefits for members
- A new Working Time Regulations Agreement, protecting our members
- A new clause and Code Of Practice in relation to the use of Temporary and Agency workers
- Stronger rights for Amicus chapel officers to carry out their duties
- A model clause on rights to Information and Consultation under the new legislation
- Modernisation of the Machine Classification Agreement
- A new agreement on Training, Learning & Skills to benefit our members
- Agreement on flexible working and shift patterns that provide for guaranteed shift premiums and holidays as well as other clauses on other benefits for our members.

As indicated above a great deal of time and effort has been put into updating the national agreement and every effort has been made to include as many Amicus GPM Sector members as possible in the consultation process, including Regional union reps' meetings and a full briefing for all full-time branch officials.

**Consequently, the National Sector Committee Recommends Members to Vote in Favour of this new agreement, to modernise the agreement, protect and improve our members' basic conditions and secure the future of the National Agreement in the printing industry.**

**Tony Burke, Assistant General Secretary Amicus**

### Voting Regulations

Branches must not add anything to the Voting Paper when submitting it to members.

Members employed by companies who operate 'stand-alone' and 'sovereign' house agreements, where the BPIF/Amicus GPM Sector National Agreement does not directly affect their terms and conditions of employment, will not be entitled to vote in the ballot.

Only those members employed in BPIF member companies and in non-BPIF member companies, who positively follow and are directly affected by the Agreement and normally make the BPIF pay award, at whatever date during the period of the Agreement, are entitled to vote in this ballot.

No member will be entitled to vote who was not clear on the books on Amicus GPM Sector or Chapel account at the close of the last quarter, or who is under suspension for any offences against Amicus Rules. Out of trade members, retired members, self-employed members and ordinary members not working at the trade (including unemployed members) are not entitled to vote.

## BALLOT ON TERMS OF THE NEW NATIONAL AGREEMENT BETWEEN AMICUS GPM SECTOR AND BPIF 2005

### BALLOT PAPER

Please place an 'x' in the box of your choice

**Are you in favour of the changes to the Amicus GPM/BPIF National Agreement as detailed in the ballot statement and the explanatory booklet entitled 'Partnership at Work - A New National Agreement'?**

YES

NO

Please place your ballot paper in the envelope provided, complete the details required on the envelope and return to the Branch Secretary to arrive no later than **first post Friday 21 October 2005.**

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