

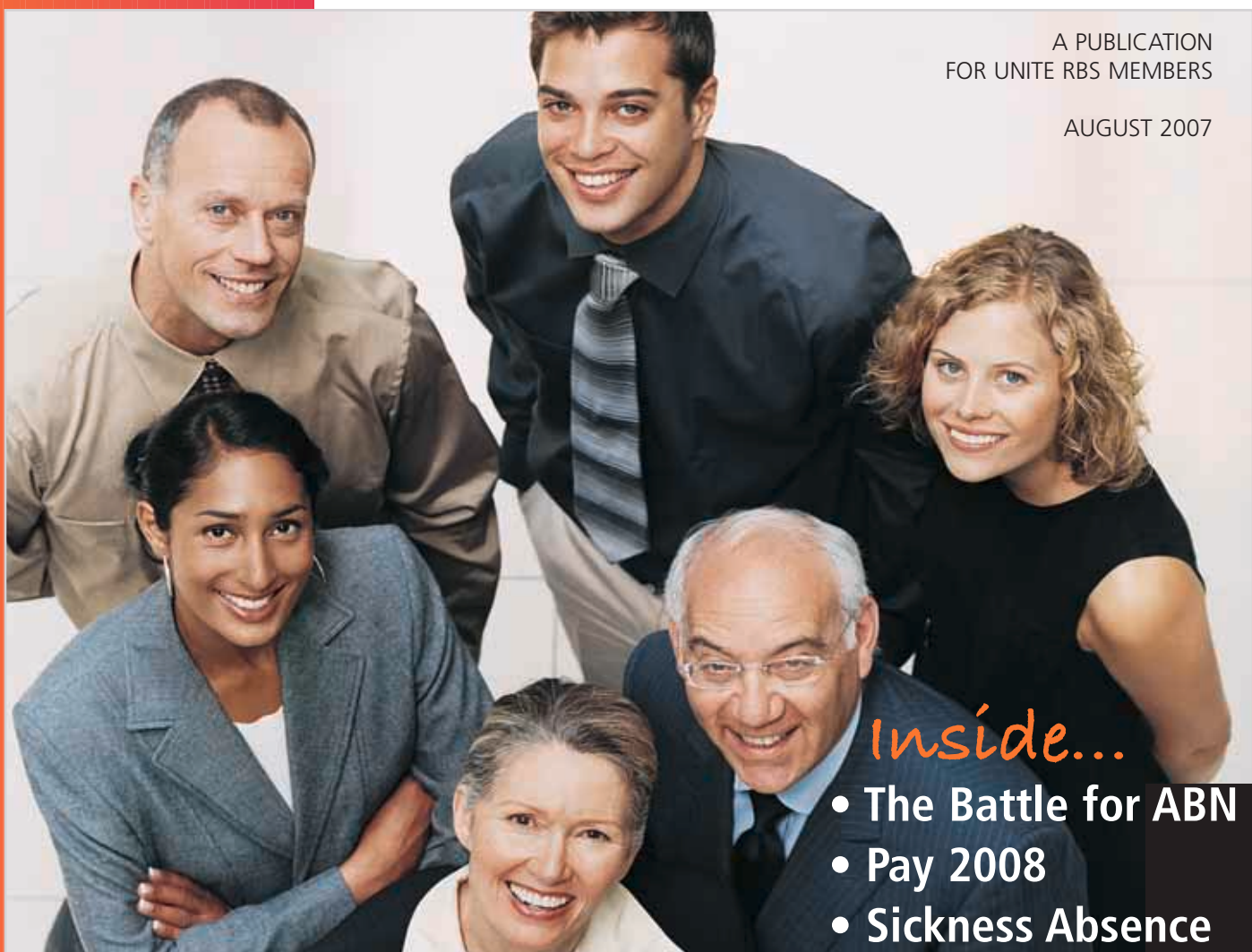
CATALYST

CATALYST COMMUNICATING CHANGE



A PUBLICATION
FOR UNITE RBS MEMBERS

AUGUST 2007



Inside...

- The Battle for ABN
- Pay 2008
- Sickness Absence

Catalyst (kat'a list) n. A condition, agent, event, or person that is the cause of an important change or provokes significant change or action.

CATALYST



Rob MacGregor
Unite's national secretary

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Welcome

Welcome to the Summer 2007 edition of Catalyst, the journal for Unite members in the RBS Group.

We had an incredible amount of feedback to articles featured in the last edition and we hope the areas covered in this new issue are equally useful and thought provoking.

We have a feature on the battle to takeover the Dutch bank ABN-Amro between a consortium led by the Royal Bank of Scotland and Barclays-the biggest takeover in global banking history.

There is also a feature on our Africa Matters campaign and how you as a union member can get involved.

On the domestic front concerns about the management of sickness absence, stress at work and changes to performance management guidelines also feature

There are also a range of other articles that include information advice and guidance to members.

I hope you find this edition of Catalyst interesting.

If you have any comments please let us know at **rbsinfo@unitetheunion.com**

A message from Graham Goddard, Head of the Finance Sector



“ It is a great honour to have been given the role of Head of Finance as part of my Deputy General Secretary responsibilities. My predecessor Ed Sweeney is a great example for me to follow.

My role is to work hard and to listen to our members concerns. I intend to work closely with the National Sector Committee and develop the lay activist & representative structures.

The challenges within the sector are great with business mergers and takeovers taking place practically on a daily basis plus the continued threat of offshoring. The union will keep raising awareness and campaigning within the sector to defend our members jobs and terms & conditions.

The opportunities to build the sector are also great for membership growth and activist involvement, including the participation within the sector structures for women & young members. As the largest sector in UNITE the potential is massive.

I look forward to working closely with Full Time Officers and representatives within the sector of which the RBS team play an integral and influential role.

I also look forward to meeting many of you in the near future and for all of us delivering for the sector and UNITE.

”

Graham Goddard, Deputy General Secretary

Policy Conference Report **Bournemouth**

UNITE THE UNION FIGHTING GLOBAL EXPLOITATION

June 18 – 20 saw in excess of 800 delegates from the Amicus section of Unite attend the Policy Conference at the Bournemouth International Centre. The conference gave delegates from the various sectors represented by Unite the opportunity to vote on motions that will shape the future policy of the union.

Derek Simpson, Joint General Secretary gave the opening address, reviewing campaigns since UNIFI and Amicus merged including campaigns on pensions, equal pay audits, and dignity at work. He reassured delegates that Unite will main individual sectors going forward and advised that there will be exploratory talks regarding international mergers to make Unite a truly global union.

Day One concluded with speech followed by Q&A's with Gordon Brown. He gave an impassioned speech focusing on justice and dignity for all and that working together with the unions these objectives are achievable. He explained his aspiration that our generation will be responsible for the eradication of pensioner and child poverty.

On Day Two the key speaker was Brendan Barber, the TUC General Secretary whose speech bought delegates to their feet. He reinforced the union role of supporting ordinary working people and how the work of Amicus has progressed positive legislation around subjects as diverse as the learning agenda and pensions.

Feedback from other delegates indicated that this conference was a success and an opportunity to empathise with other industries and it also reaffirmed it doesn't matter where your work or who you work for there are always issues to be resolved and battles to be fought and together we are stronger.



RBSG PLANS TO EXPAND ITS INDIAN DEVELOPMENT CENTRE (IDC)



Many staff, particularly those working in Group Technology, will have heard of the RBS Indian Development Centre (IDC). However, it's been somewhat unclear as to what's happening out in India. A recent announcement that the IDC would be expanding to house around 1200 staff came as a surprise to many and Unite members have raised concerns about all aspects of the Bank's Indian expansion. To try to get some answers Unite recently met with the bank and posed a number of questions.

Is it Offshoring?

We asked if the IDC was compatible with Sir Fred Goodwin's constant assertion that RBS Group does not support offshoring. Unite received clear assurances from RBS that the proposed growth of staff numbers in the IDC did not represent offshoring. RBS confirmed that there had been no change in its previously advised position on offshoring:

"...Our preference is to achieve additional operational efficiencies from pursuing our current operating model, rather than the location of operations offshore. We have concluded therefore, that the best outcome for our staff, shareholders and customers is to continue to employ people in countries in which we operate provided that the fiscal and regulatory climate is supportive to our business."

What happens at the IDC?

Bank representatives advised that the purpose of the IDC is to provide systems/technology development support to the Group. The bank wants to use the differing time zones to help support live systems without having an impact on the work-life balance of staff.

Will Group Technology Staff Numbers in the UK be Cut Back?

The bank advised that whilst contractor numbers had reduced, there is no planned reduction in permanent staff numbers in the UK as a direct consequence of the growth of the IDC. Other than some live support functions there will not be any transfer of specific types of work to India.

UNITE COMMENT

Alison MacLean, Unite Negotiating Officer for RBS Group Technology Division commented:

"I welcome the bank's reassurances on its no offshoring policy. The bank has committed to ongoing future dialogue with the trade union on its plans for the IDC and we will be keeping a close eye on developments".

What do you think?

Are you satisfied with what the bank is telling us?

We would welcome your comments to rbsinfo@unitetheunion.com

PAY 2008

Unite has received feedback from its members in the Royal Bank of Scotland Group following the implementation of the 2007 pay settlement.

RBS employees from across the country and from every business division have been writing, calling and e-mailing the union with their views on pay.

Pay 2007 revisited

The 2007 pay deal included the introduction of new local salary bands for clerical employees and the consolidation of regional allowances into Value accounts for all staff. Combined with the base salary award the deal was worth the equivalent of 4.1% of the bank's base salary bill.

Local Bands

Previously clerical staff were segmented in one of three bands (National, Outer London and Inner London). From April 2007 this was increased to five. These new local bands will be subject to periodic and annual review with any changes discussed as part of the pay process. For employees at Appointed and Managerial levels three location bands of National, Outer London and Central London were maintained.

Consolidation of Allowances

The new arrangements meant that from April 2007 employees no longer received a separate Regional Allowance. Instead it was incorporated into the member of staff's salary element and therefore will now be taken into account when profit share and benefit funding are calculated with extra cash available ranging from £45 for those in receipt of the Bristol Allowance up to £518 for staff working in Central London. The consolidation of allowances also impacts the calculation of overtime rates, performance bonuses and the calculation of sick pay and maternity pay.

The 2008 Pay Timetable

Unite will be submitting its pay claim for RBS employees prior to the commencement of negotiations with the Group in December. Talks will continue through January and will be concluded in time to ensure bonuses are paid in March with implementation of any settlement on 1st April 2008. Members will be updated on developments throughout this time.

YOUR RIGHT TO REPLY - YOUR CHANCE TO GET INVOLVED

What did you think of the 2007 pay settlement? Do you agree with the introduction of local bands and the consolidation of allowances? Are there other issues you believe the union should be addressing in this year's pay round? If so, let us hear from you-get in touch with your union.

For campaigns to be successful they need the wholehearted support and participation of those directly affected. If you want to get more involved then contact us, if you're not yet a member-come and join us!

Members can contact the union in writing to the RBS Unite Glasgow office at

John Smith House
145/165 West Regent Street
Glasgow G2 4RZ

Or by fax on 0141 221 3898

Alternatively you can e-mail us your views at
rbsinfo@unitetheunion.com

SICKNESS ABSENCE

The Unite RBS Helpline and Unite Reps have been receiving high volumes of calls and queries from members regarding sickness absence and the RBS sickness procedure.

Members are raising concerns that regardless of genuine sickness absence, sickness absence covered by the Disability Discrimination Act, sickness with an underlying medical reason or improving attendance, they are being subjected to disciplinary hearings and in many cases disciplinary action.

Unite has been robustly representing members in their sickness cases, both internally and externally and will continue to do so, but has also been raising the union's issues and concerns with the bank.

Unite is due to meet the bank to discuss the sickness procedure and issues that have arisen out of the application of the policy, as we believe that the current operation of the policy benefits neither staff nor the bank.

Unite will communicate with members more fully on this issue later in the summer, however in the meantime if any members are being disciplined for their sickness absence or have issues regarding the way their attendance is being managed, please contact the Unite RBS Helpline, your local JAR or e-mail rbsinfo@unitetheunion.com.the group.

Within the Bank's sickness absence policy there are 'trigger' points which mean when hit, employees can fall foul of the Group's disciplinary procedure. However Neil Roden RBSG HR Director stated at a recent Open Air event ...'the trigger points were meant to actually start a conversation, they're not meant to start the disciplinary process...'

The trigger points are:

- Frequent absence – more than 4 occasions of any length or a total of 14 working days or more in any rolling 12 month period.
- Long term absence – more than 14 continuous calendar days

Where a member of staff reaches either of these trigger points then disciplinary action may be taken with a potential outcome of up to a 12 month written warning, withdrawal of sick pay and removal of self certification.

There are certain guidelines around what absences can count towards the trigger points. For example, if pregnancy related then these cannot be counted. The same applies if the absences are the result of one underlying medical condition or a medical condition covered by the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). In this case the line manager should be contacting Group Occupational Health to request an assessment. This should be done rather than going down the disciplinary route, the result of which may be for reasonable adjustments to be implemented to enable the employee to continue to do their job.

Sick Pay

Sick pay in the Royal Bank Group is discretionary; however there are guidelines for sick pay which should be followed and advice should be gained from Unite if these are not adhered to.

Sick pay is based on a sliding scale depending on length of service:

Up to 1 year's service – 4 weeks pay

1 to 4 years service – 12 weeks pay

Over 5 year's service – 26 weeks pay



Stressed out

With ever increasing pressure to work long hours and achieve stretching performance targets, in the UK today as many as one in five people are suffering from high levels of work related stress.

Stress can cause misery, both at work and at home for the individuals affected, but it can also affect the whole workplace. Low morale and productivity, increased levels of absenteeism and high attrition rates are a few of the "workplace" symptoms that stress can give rise to.

Stress affects people in different ways, a level of pressure which one person might find stimulating may cause a serious problem to another. What is of real concern is the extent of the reaction that an individual has to stress and this can manifest itself in many ways.

THE SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

Symptoms of stress are evident from physical, mental or behavioural changes and can fall into both short term effects such as anxiety, fatigue, irritability and difficulty sleeping, or longer term effects such as neurosis, hypertension and insomnia, to name a few.

TACKLING THE PROBLEM

A stress policy can be a useful mechanism to reduce and prevent occupational stress and undertaking a Risk Assessment is the most favoured way of tackling stress. Unite has fully trained Jointly Accredited Reps (JARs) who work with management at local level on health and safety issues. Unite officers also meet the bank on a regular basis to raise and resolve areas of concern and to ensure that the bank's Health and Safety policies are managed and developed.

WHAT ARE RBSG'S OBLIGATIONS?

The Health and Safety At Work Act (1974) places a general duty on all employers to ensure, as far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees.

If you are experiencing work related stress, RBSG should offer support and care to assist your wellbeing. This may take the form of helping you to recognise the early signs of stress and coping skills to putting a rehabilitation programme in place. This will ensure that individuals affected by stress, can get back into the workplace, carry out their role confidently and continue to contribute to the success of RBSG.

If you are experiencing stress in the workplace and would like some support and advice then contact our Helpline on 0870 241 4425.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT: PEER GROUP COMPARISON

Earlier this year Unite met the bank to discuss the introduction of "Peer Group Relativity" as a key measure in Managing Performance.

This involves comparing your performance against your co-workers and potentially may result in some individuals who fully meet their objectives and behaviours receiving a "2" rating if it is considered that they have performed less favourably than others in their Peer Group. Your Peer Group refers to the widest possible definition within that Group, eg CSO's across a Region.

The bank commented that this change merely reflects existing practice and believes that this approach will help Line Management hold honest and transparent conversations with their teams whilst ensuring staff deliver ongoing improvements in their performance. The bank also stated that this change would be rolled out with robust communications across all business divisions.

On the other hand your trade union has serious concerns about the impact of these changes not least the definition of a Level 2 performer that has radically changed and that members who want to challenge their rating will find it very difficult to do so as the bank will not provide information relating to the performance of others in the Peer Group.

We would welcome feedback from members on how effective the roll out of this change in Performance Management has been communicated, whether your objectives have been set for 2007, whether 1:1's are taking place and if you have been advised that should your performance at year end compare less favourably to that of your Peers then you may be rated as a Level 2 Performer.

Please email us your views at rbsinfo@unitetheunion.com



EXERCISE YOUR RIGHT TO A FREE WILL

If you are a member of Unite, we can use our network of solicitors to draft your will – free of charge – as part of our comprehensive package of legal services.

WHY IS UNITE OFFERING FREE WILLS?

We believe that it is important for everyone to make a will in order to protect themselves and their families.

Unite has been able to negotiate free wills as part of a comprehensive package of legal services for members which includes advice on any legal issue and representation if you are unfairly dismissed from your job or suffer an accident at work.

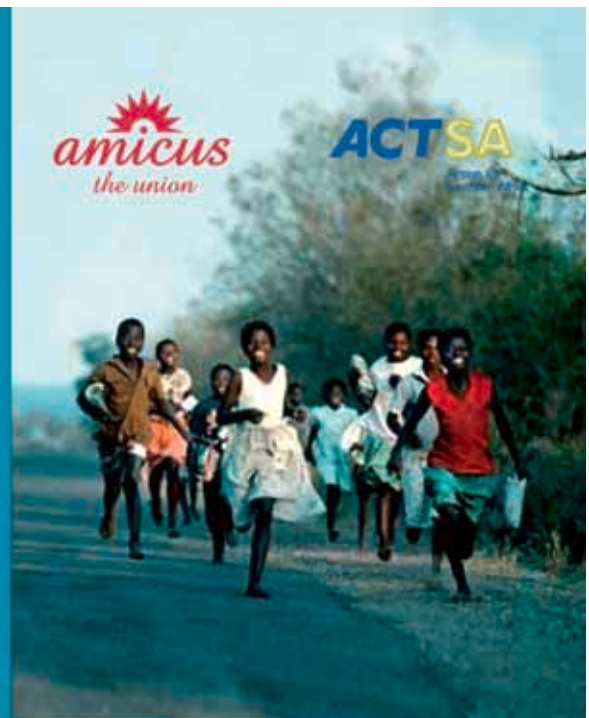
Having someone draw up your will which could cost hundreds of pounds on the High Street is a free benefit of Unite membership. It couldn't be easier simply contact our Legal Services Team on 020 8462 7755 or visit www.unitetheunion.com for more details.

AFRICA MATTERS MODULE

A learning opportunity for you which has been developed by Amicus in partnership with the University of Leeds and Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA).

It is funded by the Department for International Development through the TUC.

The primary aim of this learning opportunity is to provide you and your colleagues with the knowledge and resources to become actively involved in Amicus' Africa Matters Campaign.



The Africa Matters Campaign seeks to raise awareness about aid, trade, debt, HIV/Aids and human rights in Africa. You are encouraged to get involved:

As an individual:

- Supporting campaigns run by Amicus and Actsa and campaign groups about the situation in Africa.
- Informing yourself on issues affecting Africa.

Through your union:

- Finding out what Amicus is doing nationally and getting involved.
- Finding out what the global federation representing your sector is doing and getting involved in supporting their campaigns.
- Finding out if Amicus has links with any of its sister unions in Africa, and thinking about setting up a formal link between your branch and one in an African country.

At work:

- Finding out about the organisation you work for and, if it has African operations, building links with the African unions representing your co-workers.
- Spreading the message about Africa in your workplace.
- Taking up direct practical links with sister unions in Africa.
- Encouraging your workplace group to get involved in specific campaigns about Africa.
- Persuading your branch to affiliate to Action for Southern Africa to provide ongoing support and be kept up to date.

2005 was a critical year for Africa. Following the Commission for Africa, the G8 and last year's Make Poverty History activities, it is time for the talking to stop and the action to start. Africa should not be poor - it has been made poor. Africa doesn't want charity; it wants justice.

Since Africa Matters was launched by the Rt. Hon. Gordon Brown in May 2004, visiting African trade unionists have met with Amicus members in their work places and shared with them first hand what is happening in Africa. As part of this campaign Amicus members are urged to sign up for the Africa Matters module - through this I hope that Amicus members will learn more about Africa and begin to set up practical relationships with their sister trade unions in Africa which will benefit all workers.

Derek Simpson, General Secretary





Who are the partners?

Amicus has 1.2 million members working in the public and private sectors in such areas as Manufacturing, Finance, Health, Graphic/Print and Media, Higher Education and the Voluntary Sector. Amicus has links with unions across the globe and campaigns vigorously for international solidarity.

The University of Leeds has been providing learning opportunities for Amicus members for many years. The University of Leeds has worked with Amicus in developing accredited courses and pathways into further learning opportunities for union members such as the new Building Bridges into Higher Education initiative.

Action for South Africa (ACTSA), is a partner with Amicus in the Africa Matters campaign. ACTSA campaigns with the people of Southern Africa as they strive to build a better future. ACTSA influences decision-makers in Britain and Europe on policies that affect Southern Africa through lobbying, the publication of reports, briefings and media work.

Who are the potential Learners?

The Africa Matters module is designed for Amicus members who want to learn more about the issues affecting Africa in an accessible way and who want to do more as individuals or as a workplace group on Africa.

Regional Seminars

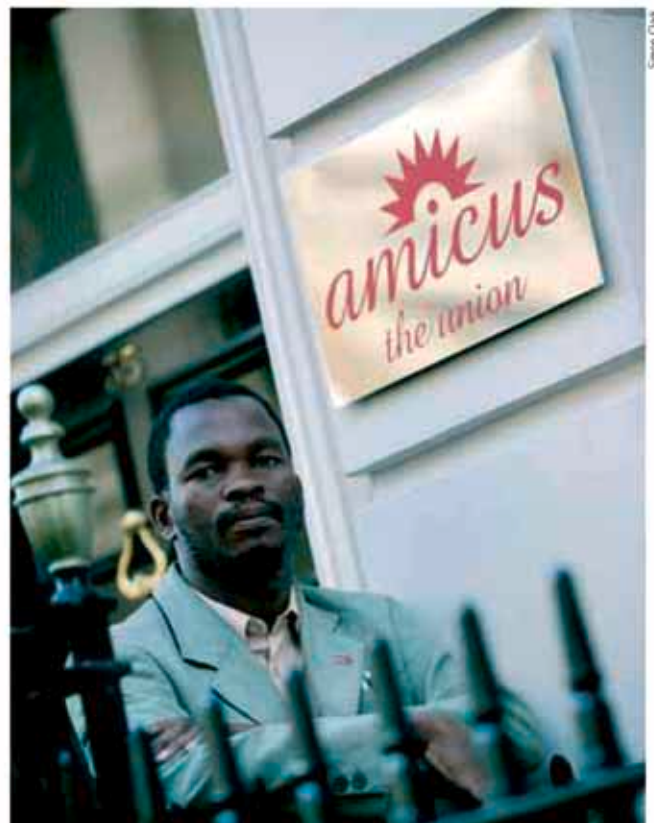
You will be given the opportunity of attending a half day Regional Seminar. These seminars will introduce you to the module and give you an opportunity to find out more about studying at a distance. But more than this you will hear firsthand from a visiting African trade unionist about what is happening in Africa.

“

I have had the opportunity to visit Amicus members in their workplace on more than one occasion. Such meetings have been crucial in getting word out to our sisters and brothers in Amicus in the UK about what is happening here in Zimbabwe. Through such exchanges we have been able to get real support from British trade unionists.

”

Collen Gwiyo, President Zimbabwean Banking and Allied Workers Union and Deputy General Secretary of the Zimbabwean Congress for Trade Unions (pictured right)



What will the Africa Matters Module cover?

The Africa Matters module will:

- Provide a short historical introduction to the contexts that have shaped African countries.
- introduce Amicus members to a number of key issues facing the peoples and countries of Africa today. These include issues such as health (aids), economic development (trade, aid, poverty) and security (trade unions, democracy).
- encourage Amicus members to design and implement initiatives that develop links and solidarity activities between trade unionists here and in southern Africa.

Aims of Africa Matters module

The Africa Matters module seeks to equip you to:

- Understand the current African context within a global and divided world and the role African trade unions play.
- Promote the involvement of members in your workplace in Development matters within Amicus.
- Explore and practice concrete measures of support and solidarity involving the workplace, trade union and the wider community including organising across borders in multinational companies.
- Identify and involve other trade unions, agencies and groups in the Africa Matters and ACTSA campaigns.
- Be familiar with the wider policy framework and initiatives involving Africa and poverty reduction and the role of trade unions in developing the policy agenda.
- Understand the trade union role in poverty reduction around the world and their contribution to meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

Is the Africa Matters module accredited?

The Africa Matters module will be accredited by the Open College Network. This will enable you to claim credits at Levels 1, 2 and 3 on successful completion of the module. These nationally recognised credits can be used, along with other credits awarded through other Amicus education courses, to access further learning opportunities through Amicus and through Further and Higher Education institutions.



Gerry McCann

How can I study?

You will be able to choose the way in which you wish to study in a flexible manner and at your own pace. Therefore the module will be offered as a distance learning opportunity in both paper-based and on-line forms. The module will require you to carry out some research and involves some written tasks. It is hoped that you will be able to enjoy using the module to develop networks of Amicus members who can participate in joint campaigns in support of African trade unionists.

How will I be supported in my studies?

On registration you will be allocated an experienced tutor who will help you develop your understanding of southern Africa and your solidarity plans.

How much will it cost?

If you apply to study this module you will not be required to pay any fee. The union will review any cost applying to this module after this date.



SPENCER LANE

“

Amicus has a long history of international solidarity and I applaud the work Amicus members have been doing to increase awareness about Africa. I commend the Africa Matters module as an effective way of building practical links with southern African trade unionists.

Rt. Hon. Hilary Benn MP, Secretary of State for International Development (pictured left)

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Further learning opportunities available through Amicus

It is hoped that you will use your credits from this module to access further learning opportunities offered by Amicus. Full details of the residential, regional and distance learning opportunities made available by Amicus can be obtained from the Education Department at Hayes Court. To find out more contact Joanne Ferry on 0208 462 7755 or at joanne.ferry@amicustheunion.org

www.amicustheunion.org/africamattersmodule

Next steps

If you are interested in finding out more about the Africa Matters module you can contact Andy Murray, Amicus Education Officer, on 07768 931290 or andrew.murray@amicustheunion.org. To find out details regarding your local Africa Matters Regional Seminar contact your Regional Secretary.



Picture: Gerry McCann

APPLICATION FORM FOR CAMPAIGN INFORMATION PACK

Please fill in this form if you would like us to send you a Campaign Information Pack which includes an application form for the Africa Matters module.

Once you enrol, you will be informed of arrangements for your course.

Name:

Address:

Telephone Number: Email:

Membership Number: Workplace or Branch:

Return this slip to: Harriet Eisner, International Department, Amicus, 35 Kings Street, Covent Garden, London, WC2E 8JG

RBS Insurance Pension Arrangements

RBS has announced improvements to pension arrangements within the Insurance Division and the bank will be introducing a new RBS Insurance Retirement Savings Plan (RSP), available for all existing and new staff from 1st October 2007.

The new plan will provide an employer contribution of 11% which can be used to contribute into the RSP or taken as cash. All existing staff can opt to retain their existing pension arrangements, including all staff with legacy pension arrangements.

Currently staff starting with RBSI have an employer pension contribution of 7%, rising to 9% after three years service and then to 11% at 5 years, with managers receiving 9% on entry and then rising to 11% after 2 years. The company proposes to contribute 11% for all staff from day one, regardless of grade or service.

Almost 11,000 staff within RBSI currently receive either less than 11% contributions or are not in the pension scheme (circa 1,000 staff) due to the six month waiting period, which will also be abolished.

If existing staff opt out of the current scheme or their legacy terms to take the contribution as cash, although they can opt back into the scheme at a later date, they would be opting into the new retirement savings plan, not the existing scheme or their legacy terms.

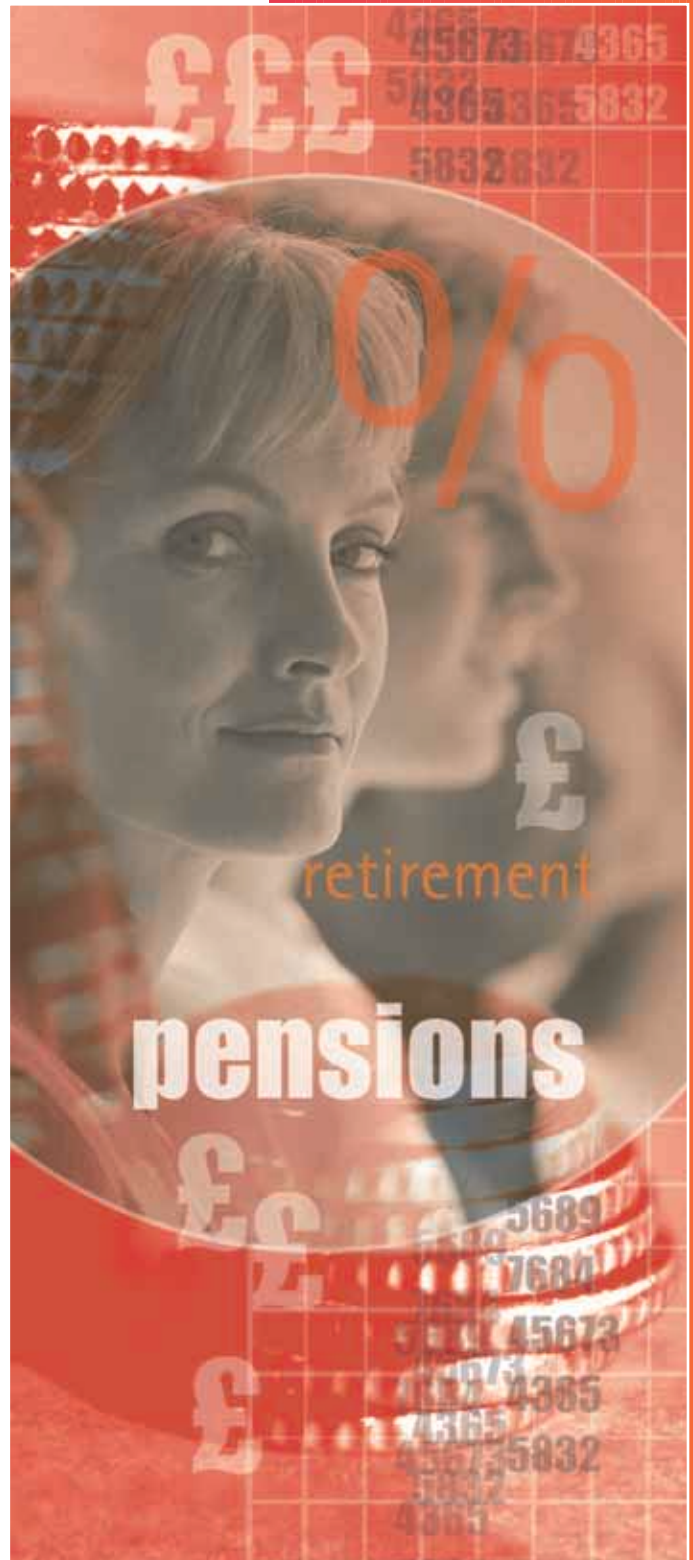
In addition acceptance of the new arrangements would require those staff who are not currently on the standard RBS contract and who do not hold a Group bank account, to sign a new contract and/or open a Group bank account to which salary would be paid.

Whilst the improvements were welcomed, Unite feels that the improvements did not go far enough and issues were raised regarding the contribution rate of 11% as opposed to the RBS Group RSP contributions of 15%. The bank responded that 11% was felt to be competitive in the insurance industry.

Unite also raised concerns that new staff joining RBS Insurance had to opt into the RSP, rather than opting out to take part or all of the 11% in cash. Unite fears that this could have a detrimental affect on staff saving for their future retirement by opting to take the cash, rather than contributing towards their pension.

The bank responded that opting new staff in to the RSP when joining RBS could be construed as financial advice and thus were unable and unwilling to undertake this action.

The union will continue to press the bank on these issues.



BANK PUTS PRESSURE TO OPEN GROUP BANK

Members may remember the media frenzy back in March when the bank was criticised for sending letters to members of staff asking them to open a Group Bank Account for the payment of salary or face disciplinary action.

The union's Helpline number was jammed with calls from worried members, many of whom had worked for the bank for years with an exemplary employee record.

Understandably your trade union felt the bank's approach was heavy handed and unnecessary, particularly when it had not consulted with the trade union in advance.

So why the fuss?

The bank advises that it is a contractual obligation for employees to open a Group Bank Account for the payment of salary as defined in the Group's Financial Code of Conduct and that employees are advised of this when they are offered a position with RBSG.

The union accepts that for the vast majority of employees opening a Group Bank Account will not cause a problem,

however a significant number of those affected had joined the RBSG from other constituent organisations or historically had operated an alternative banking arrangement for many years without question.

Where are we now?

Unite believes there are some 14,000 employees Group wide who do not hold a Group Bank Account. The bank's



E ON STAFF K ACCOUNT

approach will no doubt have seen a steady stream of employees opening the account for fear of reprisals, however to our knowledge no one has yet been disciplined for failure to do so.

The union's position remains unchanged, we will offer support and representation (including legal advice) to any member who faces disciplinary action for failure to open a Group Bank Account.

Recently the bank has further tightened its approach by telling employees that they must open a Group Bank Account if they want to continue to enjoy the benefits of a Season Ticket Loan.

If you have been affected for failure to open a Group Bank Account or want to put your views forward on this issue then we would welcome your feedback to rbsinfo@unitetheunion.com



Unite's Political Work

A number of people in the finance sector have asked about the reasons the union has a political fund. The answer to this is that there are many reasons, and all of them are about how we can deliver protection and improvements for our members in every sector of the union, including the finance sector.

The day to day experience members have of Unite is through the union in the workplace - through the local representative, campaigns on workplace issues or magazines such as this one. However, Unite does so much more that sometimes goes unreported on.

Every day Unite is working in the UK parliament, the Scottish parliament, the Welsh Assembly and councils up and down the country to deliver political changes, large and small, that will benefit our members. Sometimes this is on individual workplace issues, particularly where members might be facing redundancy or other problems, other times we are working on larger scale issues such as the law on pensions, individual employment issues or providing equal treatment for agency workers across the economy.

There are many specific examples of the union's political work on finance sector issues. There is a group of Unite MPs who form our Parliamentary Finance Sector sub-group and who work actively on large difficult areas, such as globalisation, and on more specific issues, such as ensuring Bank of Ceylon members got their negotiated pay rise. Equally the work that Unite MPs do on wider areas, such as those mentioned above or others including equal pay, apply as much to finance sector members as other Unite members – indeed as the finance sector has the largest equal pay gap in the economy this matters more to members in this area.

The political fund is also used for our affiliation to the Labour party. Unite, and its constituent unions, have a long history with the Labour party going back to when the unions founded it over a century ago. But there is more to the relationship than history. Unite and other affiliated unions have a constitutional role in the Labour party, giving us a voice in the party's policy making process. This delivered many manifesto commitments, collectively known as the Warwick Agreement, that are delivering benefits for working people such as the increased level of maternity pay that is now being introduced.

The union is now building up to "Warwick 2" and we want as many members as possible to be involved in this process. There will be policy forums across the country and in every sector to discuss areas of concern to working members and it is important that the finance sector has a say in this as well.

If you want to get involved in the union's political work or would like to join the Labour party then contact clare.moody@unitetheunion.com

The battle for ABN

The battle for ABN-Amro between the banking consortium led by RBS and Barclays Bank has significantly increased the levels of international communication and cooperation between trade unions across the world.

Unions from Belgium, Brazil, Greece, France, Italy, Netherlands, Panama, Spain, Switzerland, UK and USA discussed the proposed take-over bids for ABN Amro by Barclays as well as by Royal Bank of Scotland, Santander and Fortis in London in June this year.

Mergers and take-overs in banking are seeing a very rapid acceleration with the emergence of cross-European and indeed global players. This requires enhanced international co-operation between all organisations that represent working people.

The two take-over bids for ABN Amro are the largest in the finance industry so far. Barclays and ABN Amro essentially propose a merger of the two banks' operations. The joint bid of Royal Bank of Scotland, Santander and Fortis, by contrast, aims at dividing up ABN Amro among the three companies.

Either plan means major changes to the operations of the respective banks in many countries in Europe and other parts of the world – and thus for the employees. Already now, plans to cut or outsource thousands of jobs have been announced.

Unions from across the world representing employees in all the companies caught up in this merger/takeover agreed to intensify cooperation with a view to a common policy in order to represent effectively the interests of employees in the affected countries.

A network for exchanging information and coordinating actions has been established. The global unions are now demanding the following:

- That the management of Barclays, ABN Amro, Royal Bank of Scotland, Santander and Fortis enter an on going dialogue with employee representatives immediately. Key issues for discussions are the future strategy after either bid succeeds as well as the policies for managing the integration of ABN Amro. With a view to good corporate governance and social dialogue, management must take account of the view of staff as represented by the unions.
- No compulsory redundancies.
- All collective agreements and working conditions must be preserved and honoured.
- The observance of core labour standards must be safeguarded, in particular the right of workers to form and belong to trade unions, to collective bargaining as well as to information and consultation.
- Protection of the best practice of the existing European works councils and negotiations of the integration of the ABN Amro EWC into the respective EWCs of the company taking-over.
- The approach of the managements and shareholders involved must ensure the long-term sustainability and profitability of each company. Either take-over must be beneficial for customers and employees, consistent with the interests of the national economies and societies affected, as well as in line with current policies of social sponsorship. It cannot be solely based on the economic interests of the shareholder; in particular it must not aim primarily at increasing profits by reducing personnel costs

The trade unions, through their international confederation UNI have held talks with both Barclays and the consortium. Further talks are expected as the battle for ABN-Amro rages on.

3RD GENERATION OPERATIONS: AN UPDATE

Unite (Amicus Section) communicated with members in January 2007 newsletter entitled "3rd Generation Operations: The Future" (copy available at www.unitetheunion.com), regarding the bank's plans to introduce the 3G model across Manufacturing Operations sites on a planned and structured basis.

A number of sites have now had the 3G model rolled out including Chatham, Enfield, Southampton, Manchester and Glasgow, which has resulted in a number of calls and queries from members.

The 3G principles are around introducing both greater role flexibility and greater time flexibility across staff and the jobs that they undertake.

The bank cited the predicted decline in pure processing work and a desire to have multi-skilled staff as a driver behind greater role flexibility, where staff currently undertaking processing work would train on contact/telephony work and vice versa.

Members have contacted the union to ascertain how much time they would be expected to spend on the alternative discipline once trained. Whilst this varies from site to site, it would be expected that members, unless they volunteer otherwise, would spend the majority of their time undertaking their current role, whilst switching across to work on and manage peaks in either contact or processing volumes.

In addition, whilst the extra training and the flex nature of roles is not voluntary, if there are members who are uncomfortable with the prospect of training on a different role and flexing between different disciplines, these issues should be discussed with your line manager in the first instance and then referred to the union if the issues remain unresolved.

Members have also raised concerns with Unite regarding the increased time flexibility required ie working weekends or evenings.

The bank stated that some sites were taking the brunt of weekend and evening working, therefore in an attempt to both "share the load" and keep the working of weekends and evenings to a minimum, time flexibility was being rolled out across all Manufacturing Operations sites.

Whilst the majority of staff hold contracts which support the working of weekends and evenings, any proposed change to working days and hours has to be undertaken whilst taking into account personal circumstances such as caring responsibilities or travel arrangements.

In addition, where a member suggests an alternative flexible working pattern to the one proposed by the bank, this should be considered by the business, again taking into account personal circumstances.

Members have also queried the number of weekends that they would be required to work. Again this currently varies from site to site, however staff should not be expected to work more than 1 in 3 weekends, ie either a Saturday or Sunday, every third weekend.

If any members are experiencing difficulties with the changes resulting out of 3G or have any questions or queries, you should either contact the RBS helpline or e-mail rbsinfo@unitetheunion.com

amicus the union
AMICUS THE UNION FOR YOU IN RBS
DECEMBER 2006

3rd GENERATION OPERATIONS: the future

Amicus recently met with Senior Management from Manufacturing Operations including Richard Hemsley, Managing Director, to discuss the planned further development of the 3rd Generation model across Operations.

The bank stressed that the plans shared with Amicus would be implemented within Manufacturing Operations as a phased programme, based upon individual centre requirements.

Ongoing development and investment in UK-based manufacturing operations

The bank stated that they recognised the value of its UK based Manufacturing sites, but highlighted the need to continually develop the existing UK operation to deliver improved efficiencies. Whilst a small number of displacements could possibly result from the changes outlined, it was stressed that the plans were broadly headcount neutral.

RBS' vision

The bank outlined a position that as technology advanced, this presented greater impacts upon processing roles and the amount of time that staff would spend undertaking processing work. The bank outlined an aspiration that roles within Manufacturing would become more "customer service" focused, with staff being supported to perform multi-skilled roles.

In addition the bank detailed customer contact patterns and the increase in customer demand outside traditional core hours and the need to respond to this.

Role flexibility

In recognising the predicted decline in pure processing roles and the desire to have staff multi-skilled, the bank intend to extend the flex team concept, that currently operates within many Manufacturing Sites, across a greater number of Manufacturing roles.

What is Flex?

Flex is essentially about enabling staff to undertake a variety of different tasks (for example, by combining elements of contact and processing duties or by flexing between different processes) thus enabling staff to "flex" between the roles to better manage peaks in work volumes.

The bank argues that this enables the business to better manage workflow, as well as providing greater employee engagement and development as a result of task variety.

Amicus recognises that many staff will embrace this change and will view the variety of duties positively. However Amicus voiced concerns that some members could feel uncomfortable regarding the prospect of "flexing" and Amicus sought and received assurances that any changes within individual Centres would be managed sensitively, taking account of individual circumstances, skills and experience, wherever possible.

The bank also committed that staff would be supported fully with appropriate training wherever necessary and that the principles around Suitable Alternative Employment would apply when managing and implementing Role Flexibility.

Stuart Davies - Regional Officer
HELPLINE: 08702 414425



IS THE CLOCK TICKING...

Work! Rest! Play!

In every area of life we are constantly aware of the impact of time when managing the demands of our busy lives.

It comes as no surprise then that it also has a bearing on issues affecting your workplace rights and that it is very important that you are aware of what the consequences of ignoring time restraints are.

The union's RBS Helpline frequently receives calls from members who are seeking union support in taking forward a legal challenge on a workplace issue. The nature of the issue may very well be worthy of the support of the union – for example if there is evidence which supports an act of discrimination or unfair dismissal has taken place. Unfortunately in a number of these cases the member is "Time Barred" in taking a case to a Tribunal and therefore UNITE cannot pursue a challenge against the employer on behalf of the member.

This short article is provided to alert you to some important deadlines to remember and the procedures which must be exhausted before a legal challenge can be initiated. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list but to illustrate how crucial it is to be aware of cut off dates.

Personal Injury: There is a 3 year statute of limitations on these claims. The time is counted from the date of accident. Or in the case of a progressive effect (a repetitive strain injury for example) the date of diagnosis or symptom awareness which would be supported by medical evidence. This is called the date of knowledge.

Unfair Dismissal: An ET1 form must be submitted to an Employment Tribunal Office within a period of 3 months – minus 1 day – from the date of dismissal. Within that time you must also show that you have exhausted the internal procedures i.e. you must have submitted an appeal against the dismissal to your employer. It is not necessary for that appeal to have been heard by the employer within that time – it is however important that you can provide evidence of appeal letter submission.

Discrimination or Harassment: In a scenario of any discrimination/harassment whether sexual, racial or disability to name but a few, a claim to a Tribunal must be lodged within 3 months - minus 1 day of the "act of discrimination" or if multiple incidents 3 months from the "last" incident. It is also a requirement that you have attempted to resolve the issue with the employer in the first instance through the internal grievance process. If you have submitted a grievance to the employer within the 3 month deadline an automatic extension of a further 3 months will be triggered to allow time for the dispute to be resolved.

Unlawful deduction of wages (or other Statutory Rights): If you are still in employment with the employer there is no time limitations in pursuing legal challenge however if you have left your employment there is a 3 month time limit.

What this brief article hopes to illustrate is that there is almost no chance of a Tribunal Office offering any "extension" to a claim which fails to be submitted within the applicable time limits therefore it is very important that you seek advice from your representative at the earliest opportunity.

Time really does matter. So don't waste a second – Be an ACTIVE member NOW! Take a minute out of your day to think about becoming a Jointly Accredited Rep (JAR)! Talk to a colleague about joining TODAY!

JOINTLY ACCREDITED REP (JAR) CAMPAIGN - SCOTLAND

THANKS

FOR YOUR ENTHUSIASM & SUPPORT

In the last edition of Catalyst we appealed for members to come forward for this exciting and challenging role and we had an encouraging response. We then launched a campaign of branch visits in Scotland which were very well received and supported by branch staff, Regional and Area Managers.

Many Scottish members have now applied for the JAR role, some of whom received their training in Glasgow at the end of May. The next phase of our Scottish campaign will see us visit members in the North of Scotland with a further training course planned for the autumn.

What do JARs do?

- **Support and Advise Members**
- **Represent Members with Individual Problems**
- **Promote Unite in the Workplace**
- **Resolve Local Issues with Management.**

Our existing JARs and Seconded Reps have never been busier dealing with members' problems at work. We therefore need more members right across the bank to come forward for this role.

If you are interested then please contact Alison Maclean at the union's Glasgow Office on 0141 248 7131 or email us at rbsinfo@unitetheunion.com.

WHY NOT VISIT OUR WEBSITE by clicking on www.unitetheunion.com

Our Website is jam packed with useful member information including news and events, details of campaigns in the finance sector and the wider work of our ever growing union.

You can also access information about the work of Unite in RBSG including copies of newsletters and a Who's Who of the Unite RBS Team, simply visit our website and click on Sectors, Finance Sector and Unite in your Organisation.

CHANGED YOU NAME, ADDRESS, WORK LOCATION OR EMPLOYER? Don't forget to let us know

It's vital that you keep us up to date of any personal changes. Also if you're an existing Unite member who has joined RBSG from another employer then please do let us know and we can ensure that you receive a copy of Catalyst direct to your home address.

For those of you with internet access the quickest and easiest way to keep us up to date is to go the "My Unite" section of our website where you change your personal details.

THE ROYAL BANK OF SCOTLAND GROUP STAFF UNITE HELPLINE

0870 241 4425

If you are a member of the RBS & Unite, then make a note of the above number. Subject to a membership check (so please ideally have your membership number when you ring), your issue will be passed on to a Unite Seconded Representative.

The Helpline is covered by 3 Seconded Representatives daily (Monday to Thursday 9.00 a.m. until 5.00 p.m. and closes Friday at 4.00 p.m.). The Representatives are actually RBS employees seconded to the Union. Consequently they are conversant with RBS procedures and policies.

What can you expect when you ring? Once your initial concern has been logged, you should expect a call back certainly within 24 hours, but more often well before. Your call will of course be dealt with in utmost confidence.

What issues are covered? We primarily deal with work based issues but can also point you in the direction of other services available via Unite. We give telephone advice on all aspects of working within the RBS, but particularly in relation to Policy, Disciplinary, Grievance and Health & Safety advice. The Helpline is also the first call you should make if you need a representative in a formal meeting convened by the group.

Often we do no more than just listen and talk to members about their concerns and frustrations, without direct action ensuing. This is an important part of the service. As people who appreciate the day to day issues affecting those working within the group, we can guide and re-assure staff. This often helps take the burden off you and your family – because we do understand what you may be going through.

MARCH WITH A MESSAGE FOR LABOUR

Join the Unite demonstration at the Labour Party Conference in Bournemouth. Sunday 23rd September at 1.00pm.

Finance and IT sector

- ▶ Employment rights to protect jobs from offshoring
- ▶ Build affordable housing for working people
- ▶ End the privatisation of public services



www.amicustheunion.org/marchwithamessage



Finance and IT sector

My message to Labour:

- ▶ **Employment rights to protect jobs from offshoring**
The financial services sector in the UK is under threat because of offshoring. Every day jobs are being exported out of the UK to locations around the world.

Unite Amicus Section is demanding:

- ▶ that UK companies inform their customers that their details may be accessed abroad;
- ▶ that companies inform customers of the measures they have implemented to ensure their personal data is protected.

To help achieve this Unite Amicus Section wants:

- ▶ job protection equal to those enjoyed by workers in Europe;
- ▶ improved information and consultation in restructuring;
- ▶ improved redundancy pay;
- ▶ obligations on employers to provide a social plan as part of major redundancy proposals.

- ▶ **Build affordable housing for working people**

Workers can no longer afford a modest home in seven out of ten British towns. A major investment in a new housing agenda is required, with local authorities able to build the homes they need.

- ▶ **End the privatisation of public services**

Public service means access for all. This requires financial and political investment. Privatisation (including PFI/PPP) is fragmenting public services and not delivering value for money.