

WHAT IS THE IDC?

Most people in Goodmans will have heard of the IDC – Indian Development Centre – but it's been a bit unclear what is actually happening out there. Certainly, when Stephen Brannan told us it was going to be expanding, to house about 1200 staff, this came as a surprise to many.

A lot of staff have come to us in the Union and expressed concerns about all aspects of the Bank's Indian expansion.

To try to get some answers, Andrew Hall (Chair of the Union's GT Committee), Alison Maclean (Negotiating Officer for RBS) and Jan Koszuta (Chair of Goodmans Fields Branch) met with Gary Strain (Director of S&A and responsible for the IDC) together with Elsa Critchley and Nigel Jones of HR.

Is it offshoring?

We first asked if the IDC was compatible with Sir Fred Goodwin's constant assertion that RBS Group does not support offshoring. Nigel Jones stated that this policy has not changed.

What's it for?

Gary Strain told us that the purpose of the IDC is to develop capacity and reduce the numbers of contractors currently employed

in the UK. The Bank wants to use the difference of time zone to help support of live systems without affecting the work-life balance of its staff by asking them to work unsocial hours. It's also there to increase the total capacity for GT and GBM IT to support and deliver IT systems.

Will GT in the UK be cut back?

We were told that there is no planned reduction in permanent staff numbers in the UK as a direct consequence of the growth of the IDC.

Might technical staff in the UK be made redundant?

Other than some live support functions, there will not be any transfer of specific types of work to India. We were told most emphatically that the IDC is not meant to be some kind of software factory with only



The current IDC building in Gurgaon

management, QA and design left in the UK. The intention is to have a mix of skills in both the UK and in India. We were told that there is no linkage between the ITD Strategy and the IDC Strategy.

Tell us what you think.

Does all the above square with your experience? Are you satisfied by what we are being told? Come along to our stand in Goodmans foyer on 10 July or one of our branch meetings (see www.amicustheunion.org/rbs/goodmans for details).

New Union - Unite

Over the last ten years or so it has been difficult for many members to keep up with what their union is known as. BIFU merged with Staff Associations in Barclays and NatWest and became UNIFI and then, after four years or so, UNIFI merged with Amicus and now Amicus has joined with another union. The new union, Unite, over two million members strong, was formed in May this year by the merger of Amicus with the Transport and General Workers Union, following a ballot of the two memberships in March.

We are currently in a transitional period, which will end in November 2008, during which Amicus and the T&G will operate in parallel. Also in November next year, new

rules, drawn up by the existing Joint Executive Committee, will be voted on in a ballot of the membership.

Unite's first Policy Conference will be held in November, 2009 and its first Rules Revision Conference in November 2010. In May 2011 the new Executive Committee will take office under the new rules. The two existing General Secretaries will retire before the new General Secretary takes office in January 2012, Derek Simpson in December 2010 and Tony Woodley in January 2012.

Successfully merging two unions of the size of Amicus and the T&G is no five minute task, not least because of the

difficulties in blending two different cultures and two different ways of operating. The human reaction to such change can be to attack every perceived shortcoming in the process rather than to look for opportunities to influence the course of events.

The Finance Sector is the largest industry grouping in the new union, consists very largely of former UNIFI members and has experience of two previous mergers under its belt. We will be letting ourselves down badly if we simply moan about how we perceive things to be instead of using our influence in the development of the new union.

German Trade Unionist, Jörg Reinbrecht, from ver.di,

GUEST AT GOODMANS FIELDS BRANCH

Jörg Reinbrecht, Head of Finance Sector, ver.di, (pictured right) was guest at the Goodmans Fields Branch meeting on 22nd May, part of a month's visit to Britain hosted by Amicus. Ver.di is a similar union to ours in that it represents some 2.4 million members across many industries. Jörg is also vice-president of UNI-Europa Finance. UNI is the largest international grouping of individual trade unions. It brings together over 900 unions representing over 15 million members.

Though Jörg had come to find out first hand how Amicus operates in the finance sector, a visit to a Branch being part of the process, he took time out to give us a basic insight into how trade unions operate in Germany and employment law there. A number of things stood out as being noticeably different in comparison to what we are used to.

After an accelerating process of mergers over recent years there are now effectively only eight trade unions, all sector based and affiliated to the DGB, the German equivalent of the TUC. Collective bargaining is enshrined in German law. Every firm that employs five staff or more, eligible to vote, is legally obliged to have a Works Council. Unlike British companies, German companies operate with two boards, a board of management (executive), and a supervisory board (non-executive), half the members of which are employee representatives.

German employment and company law recognise the role of the trade unions in a more positive way than in Britain giving the unions a legally underwritten part in the social development of their country. Rather than focussing on improving terms and conditions for members on a piecemeal basis, through negotiations with a huge range of different companies, the German unions look to exert influence on the employers in their sectors as a group, to establish and improve common standards across the sector each union organises in.

In return members at the meeting outlined to Jörg how the Branch operated, what the current issues were and what we were looking to do up to the end of the year. Pay negotiations, very different from Jörg's experience, needed quite a lot of explaining, in particular the Bank's pay matrix and its working, and that there was a whole series of negotiations involving separate groups of RBS Group staff.



We would normally only have expected to see such a senior figure from an overseas trade union as Jörg on the platform at a national conference, rather than at a small branch meeting. However his informal and relaxed approach resulted in the greater part of the meeting being conducted as a thoroughly enjoyable questions and answers session, which could easily have run a further hour without retracing its steps. We would like to thank Jörg again for the time he spent with us.



And a bit about ver.di and DGB

Ver.di (Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft) has approximately 2.4 million members, making it one of the largest trade unions in the world and looks after people employed in over 1,000 different trades and professions in the services sector. It was formed in 2001 when the German Salaried Employees Union (DAG) merged with four unions of the German Confederation of Trade Unions (DGB).

DGB, founded in Munich in October, 1949, is an umbrella organisation for eight German trade unions, in total representing more than 7 million people. It is a member of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and is broadly equivalent to our own TUC.

Something about UNI

UNI (Union Network International) was created on 1 January 2000 following a merger of four Internationals, the International Federation of Commercial, Clerical, Professional and Technical Employees (FIET), the Communications International (CI), the International Graphical Federation (IGF) and the Media and Entertainment International (MEI). Union Network International (UNI) has 15 million members from 900 affiliates in 150 countries.

The creation of UNI is in response to globalisation and the need to build stronger global links between affiliates. In a global economy it is vital to build new forms of global union action. International union activity has become an integral part of national union work.

UNI has developed a wide-ranging plan of action focussed around ten key strategic objectives. This covers how to bring a social dimension to globalisation, building stronger unions by reaching out to professionals and managers, improving the recruitment of young people and women into unions, targeted organising campaigns, establishing a global dialogue with employers, campaigning for improved corporate social responsibility, developing global solidarity action and ensuring that all affiliates are on-line.

In a world economy characterised by regional integration, dominated by multinationals and linked by technology, UNI has a global, regional and sectoral structure with staff and offices in all continents. With over 200 agreements in multinationals, UNI will develop union co-operation in these enterprises.



UNI-Europa, with seven million members in Europe, is a major trade union player based in Brussels. Its aim is to be relevant to affiliates and members and effective at the heart of Europe - through social dialogue in a range of industries, in contacts and lobbying with the European Commission and, increasingly, taking issues and campaigns to Members of the European Parliament.

UNI-Europa is contributing to the development of a fair, social Europe. A network of European Works Councils already exists and UNI-Europa is campaigning for unions to have a much more clearly defined role in the operations of those councils. UNI-Europa also has an important and active role to play in the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC).

UNI Finance, is the global union for finance workers and represents some 3 million employees in 237 trade unions world wide.

The UNI Finance Programme sets out what UNI Finance is about. It defines the key sector-specific policies as well as the roles of affiliates and the Secretariat in implementing them. The main aim is to address the challenges of globalisation and multinationals. UNI Finance's overall purpose is to pool the strengths of affiliates and organise joint action at global, regional, national and local level.

The UNI Finance Rules provide an integrated structure for UNI Finance at global level and in the four regions: UNI Africa, Americas, Asia Pacific and Europa.

APPRAISALS PEER GROUP RELATIVITY

The changes proposed by the Bank, and implemented earlier this year, have generated a great deal of comment, not least that staff who fully meet their objectives and behaviours for the year can now be given a Level 2 rating if it is considered they performed less well than others in their peer group.

This radically alters the definition of a Level 2 rating, removes the concept of fulfilling the year's 'contract' and makes challenging the assessment very difficult. It is unlikely that the Bank will provide details of other peer group members' appraisals if a 2 rating is challenged, or that the individuals concerned will want the confidentiality of their appraisals set aside. These are not insignificant concerns regarding the impact of Peer Group Relativity on the appraisal process.

We would welcome feedback on how well you feel the change has been rolled out, and on whether or not your objectives for 2007 have been set, 1:1's are taking place and if anyone has been advised that, should their performance at this stage continue unchanged in relation to their peers, this would result in a Level 2 assessment at year end.

Easter Raffle - Prize Winners

The winners of our Easter raffle for visitors to our foyer stand were:

1. Derek Lees (non member)
2. Pam Dickens (member)
3. Richard St Hilaire (member)
4. Jenny Parr (member)
5. David Pearlman (member)
6. Cheryl Longa (member)
7. Peter Scott (non member)

BRANCH MEETINGS SCHEDULE FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2007

24th July; 25th September;
23rd October and 27th November.

The meetings are all in Goodmans Fields, Conference Room 1, A/2 Core, on the fourth Tuesday of the month, 12:30 - 13:30

Members are advised to check with the Branch Secretary, Bob Morton, 07961 811012, that meetings are going ahead as scheduled: particular circumstances may mean that dates have to be changed.

OUR WEBSITE

Our branch website, www.amicusthe-union.org/rbs/goodmans, gives you the names and numbers of all the main union contacts in Goodmans, details of branch meetings etc.

If you have any comments or suggestions for improvements, please contact the Branch Secretary. You can e-mail him at Robert_86_Morton@yahoo.co.uk.

OUR SECONDED REPS AND JARS

Included in the 'Contacts' section of our website, www.amicustheunion.org/rbs/goodmans, are the Secoded Representatives and Jointly Accredited Representatives (JARs). We tend to take for granted that everyone knows all about them and the roles they undertake. In case this isn't so, the following provides a bit more information.

Amicus currently has five Secoded Representatives in RBS who cover the whole of England, Scotland and Wales. When a vacancy arises, this is advertised to Amicus members in the RBS Group and applicants are interviewed by a special panel of lay and full time officials from the Union. Successful candidates are appointed to the position for a two year period, and if they want to, and the Bank agrees, they can normally extend this for a further year.

The Secoded Reps operate under an agreement between Amicus and the Bank and work on behalf of Amicus members in RBS, providing advice and guidance on work-related problems as well as representation at grievance and disciplinary hearings. Amicus pays half their salaries, the Bank the other half.

The Secoded Representatives, as serving members of staff, are familiar with the Bank's policies and procedures and the latest changes to them. They also keep up to date with changes in employment law and the impact these have, as well as working with, and providing support for, our Jointly Accredited Representatives (JARs).

Nearly all the Secoded Reps' work comes to them through members who have rung the Amicus RBS Helpline, 0870 241 4425. Ringing this number puts the member through to Membership Department who confirm the caller is in membership. Membership Department will take details of the problem and tell the member that these



are being passed to the caller's Secoded Representatives. They then ring the RBS Reps' voicemail box and leave a message including the member's details, contact number and an outline of what the query concerns.

Every day, a number of our Secoded Reps are on 'phones', that is it is their priority to monitor their voicemail box for the messages left by Membership Department. The Secoded Rep who picks up the message will contact the member concerned, answer their question, give advice or organise representation. If representation is required, the Secoded Rep will give the member contact details for any local JARs. If there is no JAR available to represent the member or the case is particularly complex, the Secoded Rep may end up taking it on. Individually, they may deal with as many as twenty five members a day who have rung the Helpline, and the most complex issues can sometimes take the best part of an hour to deal with. Should there be no outstanding messages from the Helpline, the Secoded Reps on 'phones' will be following up ongoing cases with members or dealing with the range of Union officials and members who contact them direct every day by phone or e-mail.

Jointly Accredited Representatives are members who have volunteered to take on the job. They have undergone special training by the Union and their role is officially recognised by the Bank. They may represent members at grievance and disciplinary hearings, carry out Health and Safety inspections, raise any issue arising from these with the Bank and though they are allowed time off work to perform their role, carry it out in addition to their normal bank work. JARs are, effectively, your local 'Secoded Reps'.

Our Secoded Reps are kept extremely busy and may not always be able to provide the level of service they would wish to members. Sharing the workload, where possible, with our JARs helps alleviate the problem, as does increasing JAR numbers, but JARs, despite the existence of the agreement with the Bank under which they operate, cannot always step into the breach.

Finally, resources are finite. Members can help in making these go further. A significant number of the questions that the Secoded Reps (and JAR's) field can be answered by accessing the Bank's intranet, in particular the Human Resources pages which contain all the Bank's employment policies and procedures, together with any associated guidelines.

MyAmicus

A recurring complaint from members is that the Union doesn't keep in touch with them or sends communications, such as ballot papers, to the wrong address. Additionally, your Branch can have difficulty keeping track of where its members are.

To help reduce the incidence of members' complaints, and to help improve communication, members who have not already done so are recommended to sign up with MyAmicus which allows individuals to update the personal information the Union holds on them and also provides basic details of their Branch.

Registration is through the Amicus home page <http://www.amicustheunion.org> and is a straightforward, three step process which includes setting up a password to give you secure access to, and/or to edit, your details.

Help your union help you improve the contact you have with us.