

UNITE IN HFC BANK

"CONCERN OVER JOB LOSSES"

Unite has raised concerns with HSBC about the treatment of the HFC Regional Collectors. All ten Regional Collectors were called to three meetings, York, Cardiff and Harlow. Some were told to expect a days training on the DPA, and for staff to bring all training paperwork with them. The long-serving employees attended this meeting in good faith - only to be told that the Regional Collector role is to be made redundant from the end of October. (Colleagues in HSBC can expect a minimum of four months notice of possible redundancy.)

Unfortunately, the deep shock of this news was further compounded : our members say they they were told they were now "a security risk" and were now on "gardening leave" with immediate effect. In other words, they were unable to return to their workplaces, or say goodbye to workmates without supervision.

Special instructions were given for staff who wanted to return to collect personal belongings (management would now have to be present in this event). One staff member was extremely upset to find her work diary and other items moved to a waste paper basket.

As one member put it, ***"Yesterday I was a loyal employee, and today I'm a security risk"***

HFC HR have apologised for the dishonesty surrounding the reason for the meeting. HR were not responsible for the deceit, which had been a regional management initiative.

Although discussions will continue, HSBC have advised Unite that nobody was told they are a "security risk". Unite are struggling to comprehend this, given that all of our members insist this is precisely what was said.

Interestingly, the redundancy payments offered by HFC this time are significantly better than the legal minimum. This is encouraging, but the payments are still much lower than standard HSBC Group policy.

COMPULSORY REDUNDANCY

Largely due to agreements between Unite and HSBC, compulsory redundancies are very rare across the HSBC Group. Unfortunately, compulsory redundancy remains all too common within the HFC part of the HSBC Group.

Unite accepts the sad reality that many of the Banks employees would like nothing better than to be made redundant.

However, we think it is morally wrong that anybody in HFC should face compulsory redundancy. HSBC employ many tens of thousands of workers in the UK, and a job can always be found for somebody - when there is the will to do so.

In the case of the Regional Collectors, we have not stood in the way of those members who are content to accept redundancy.

However, we have been individually representing those others who have decided to fight compulsory redundancy or otherwise have issues with the handling of these matters.

Our position is clear - Unite believes that compulsory redundancies in HFC are morally wrong, and wholly avoidable.

Continued overleaf

CONSULTATION

Staff are questioning the Banks business case for the demise of the Regional Collector role.

In particular, questions are being asked about the Banks main reason, which is it's "inability to monitor telephone calls made remotely"

Many branch staff have told us that new software is being "rolled out" to the branches in 2008 that specifically enables the business to monitor remote telephone calls. We have asked if this process can be brought forward to save jobs. The Bank deny any such plans are in place.

By law, HFC have had to give our members a "consultation meeting". The letter states this is to "discuss possible re-deployment or redundancy".

The letter is supposed to invite comments, input and questions into the business rationale itself. That HFC have not done so, confirms the sad reality that this business makes it's decisions before it "consults".

Within HSBC, proposed business re-organisations formally go through Unite for proper consultation. This saves many jobs, and prevents many compulsory redundancies.

It is so very, very sad that long-standing, loyal HFC employees can find themselves facing such abrupt and indignified ends to their careers. It is especially sad when we consider that it is so easily avoided. The system of consultation that works as part of Union Recognition within HSBC would work equally well if extended to the HFC parts of the same business.

CONCLUSIONS

We believe the Union is slowly but surely changing HFC culture for the good.

It is frustrating and sad to see the archaic practice of compulsory redundancy from a Bank still continue in 2007 - but we are confident that more and more staff are beginning to see the sense of Union Recognition.

Even without Union agreements, many HFC Unite members have already found that membership increases job security.

But the fact remains that Union Recognition would improve collectively the job security of everyone within the business.

HSBC have told us that in this instance they cannot comment on the business rationale for these job losses, as it is "a matter for HFC". This means HFC staff cannot rely upon Unite's agreements with HSBC – it means new agreements with HFC are a necessity.

Membership within HFC continues to steadily grow. When the time is right and our support is strong, we will force the issue of union recognition through the statutory procedure. In the meantime, we continue to hold dialogue with the Bank and are encouraging the voluntary approach.

More members in HFC makes us stronger. Help us to help you - join Unite today, or recommend us to a colleague if you are already a member

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Join on line on www.unitetheunion.com