Welcome to the first edition of the brand new e-magazine for the Yorkshire and Humber TUC. This magazine will provide news, information and an update of the work done by ourselves and trade unions in the region. We are witnessing huge, widespread negative changes across society, which are affecting millions of people, in particular low paid workers and the most vulnerable members of society.

Workers across the country are facing further attacks on their employment rights including changes to unfair dismissal law, introduction of fees to take a case to tribunal, and the threat of more privatisation and different regional pay rates. These proposed changes to conditions of employment means it is more vital than ever to be a union member. Union workplaces mean better pay, improved conditions and safer workplaces. I hope you enjoy this first edition and many more to come. We encourage members to submit articles for this new venture and pass on the magazine to your friends and family.

Bill Adams

Decent Pensions For All!

The Yorkshire and Humber TUC Day of Action, over cuts to public sector pensions, was a big success.
No book could ever capture the spirit of Durham Miners’ Gala.

The shared pride in being part of the greatest demonstration of working class solidarity in the world, the reverence felt for the banners with our history emblazoned on both sides, the tangible warmth among the crowds in the streets of the old city, the way the brass bands find an echo in the pit of the stomach.

No book could ever capture all that — or could it? David Temple comes as close as it is possible to get with his comprehensive new book, The Big Meeting – A history of the Durham Miners’ Gala. For those poor souls who have never been, he paints a vivid picture of what they have been missing and for the rest of us, he rekindles memories of Galas we attended and tells the story of Galas long ago.

The Big Meeting consists of 244 pages, 148 photographs and illustrations.

The Big Meeting is not available in book shops and can only be obtained from the Durham Miners’ Association. To purchase a copy please fill in the form below and send it to:

The Durham Miners’ Association, PO Box 6, Red Hill, Durham, DH1 4BB.

For further information email: dmapress@aol.com

Hard back £19.50 + £4 p&p (£23.50) • Soft back £14.50 + £3 p&p (£17.50)

I would like to buy the following copy/copies of the The Big Meeting:

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I enclose a cheque/postal order for £.............. made out to: Durham Miners’ Gala Book Project

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Organising and Supporting Young People

By Matthew Meehan

Never has our generation’s future been so threatened.

Youth unemployment is at an all time high and the government’s only plan of action appears to be advising young people to take unpaid work stacking shelves.

Less young people than ever are applying to university due to the monumental debts this attracts. Where they do, once graduated, they find a job market that very rarely holds any sort of career in the area they’ve studied.

As a result, recent months have seen more and more young people taking to the streets and getting their voices heard through campaigns and organisations such as The Jarrow March, Local Anti-Cuts groups, Trade Unions and Youth Fight For Jobs.

It is issues and groups like those above which the Yorkshire & The Humber TUC Youth Forum are actively getting involved with to try and combat the exploitation of young workers.

Over the past year we’ve gone from having an inactive network with very little support to having an active network of young union reps who have organised a number of events to both raise the profile of the forum and protest at the government cuts which are having such a detrimental effect on our generation.

The Y&H TUC Youth Forum has put together a plan of action to make sure the voice of young trade unionists is heard as well as making sure that young workers facing attacks on their employment conditions are supported and get the help they need. This plan is constantly changing and evolving thanks to the input of the young trade unionists and anti cuts groups that we work with.

The Y&H TUC Youth Forum is a place for young workers to come together, discuss the issues they face, share what is happening about them and provide support for one another. That can be through raising the profile of campaigns, discussing best tactics to combat oppression or even by coming together to launch a cross-union, TUC-backed campaign or event of our own.

We want to bring the issues young people are facing to the forefront, expose them to a wider audience and make sure they are tackled so we’re not being put at a disadvantage. However, we can only do this with your help and input. This is why we’re asking young people from trade unions and local anti-cuts groups to get involved, make their voices and issues heard and help us tackle the continual barrage of attacks our generation face.

If you want to know more please feel free to contact Matthew Meehan, the Y&H TUC Youth Forum convenor on 07766303407 or at matt_meehan68@hotmail.com
The attendance at this year’s Yorkshire and Humber TUC AGM was the biggest in many years with 199 delegates present for the two-day event held at the Hilton Hotel in the centre of Leeds.

After being welcomed by Leeds Central MP Hilary Benn, the regional chair, Tim Roache, established the tone for the discussions that followed when he said:

“This government is unashamedly against working men and women. On the ground we understand the economy is in recession and that government borrowing and the deficit is up on previous years. Yet the deficit isn’t as high as it was in the past, for example after the war, when it was still possible to come up with innovatory ideas such as developing the NHS and building social housing.

“The government knows what they are doing and under the Tories unemployment always rises. That’s because it helps the employers to push down wages and conditions, forces worker to compete with worker and leads to a weakening of employment rights.

“We — the trade unions — have to organise people. If we don’t then who will?”
The AGM, which was sponsored by THOMPSONS Solicitors, passed motions defending public services including transport, housing and probation, Remploy, Workers' employment rights, the BBC, Educational Access for all, Building workers' pay and conditions and trade union freedoms. Campaigns against the public welfare bill and the Big Society were backed.

Speakers throughout the day included Sarah Veale of the TUC’s Equality and Employment Rights Department, Ann Pettifor (see interview elsewhere) and Paul Nowak, Head of the Organisation and Services Department at the TUC.

On Saturday evening guest speaker, Owen Jones, author of “Chavs: the Demonization of the Working Class” was in fine form as he ruthlessly exposed the new brand of anti-working class hatred made popular by the right-wing press and neo-liberal politicians.
An economist who predicted the financial crisis used her speech at the AGM to attack Chancellor George Osborne for failing to learn the lessons of history.

Ann Pettifor, who led the Jubilee 2000 campaign aimed at cancelling approximately $100 billion of debts of 42 of the poorest nations, also unveiled figures showing that when government’s cut spending, debt rises, thus destroying the basis for the coalition government’s current austerity drive that is hitting so many sections of society.

As Director of Policy Research in Macroeconomics (PRIME), Pettifor is happy to defend the political legacy of John Maynard Keynes, whose policies did much to revive the world economy in the 1930s and after the Second World War.

She condemns economists who fail to see that in addition to arguing for governments to borrow and spend money to boost economic activity that Keynes “urged the need to properly regulate the financial monetary system.”

It was this failure, by governments worldwide, to do so that led Pettifor to write her book *The Coming First World Debt Crisis* in 2006 that showed clearly the unsustainable structure and dynamics of the global debt-based financial systems, how Third World countries were already enslaved by it and how, unless there was swift and decisive action, developed economies would be next.

As we now know, Pettifor was right.

**Government spending reduces debt**

Which surely should be enough to get George Osborne to read her paper, co-written with Professor Victoria Chick, titled *The Economic Consequences of Mr Osborne*.

Utilising statistics from the Office of National Statistics this shows, outside the two World Wars, when much of what was produced was unproductive, that when government’s spend, the debt and government deficits fall. Conversely when governments spend less the debt and deficit rises.

She accuses the government of deliberately confusing the public by “pretending the economy should be run like a private household, such that individuals cut back on their spending when in debt. We have a nationalised Bank of England that can create money and Osborne did that recently when he creatively eased £50 billion into the economy, which incidentally also proved that we are not at the mercy of capital markets or foreign bankers.”

**Public investment needed**

Pettifor wants to see “the deficit cut by increasing investment in sound projects such as public transport, schools and the NHS” and she believes that even the senior executives of some of Britain’s biggest companies – especially in construction - are coming round to her way of thinking. Thousands of building workers sitting idly on the unemployment register would clearly also agree.

She condemns the government for focusing on public debt, which at 62% of Gross Domestic Product is a quarter of what it was at the end of the Second World War, and ignoring “the huge volume of private debt at 500%, composed of financial, household and corporate debt and which, as it will never be re-paid, will have to be written down and needs doing so in an orderly fashion through the Financial Services Authority.”

With bad debts on their balance sheets Pettifor believes the banks “are in no position to lend money.” As a result “the restructuring needed under quantitative easing must include the creation of a public investment bank.” The question now is, are you listening George Osborne or will you continue to send Britain headlong into another economic crisis?
Picket lines were largely respected and the rallies in Bradford, Sheffield, Hull and Leeds, as well as eight in smaller towns, drew close to 40,000 to listen to a range of speakers from the 29 striking unions.

Picketing started early. At Kirklees Building Services the atmosphere was lively with Jan Grabowski, Unite deputy convenor reporting that from a total staff of 600 “less than 20 had gone into work.”

Nearby, members of UNISON and NAPO danced up and down and urged passing motorists to honk their horns in support. Plenty did so, as Natalie Atkinson, NAPO steward, explained they, “Wanted to highlight we are not just against pension cuts but are for good public services that everyone needs and relies upon. A crisis caused by unregulated financial banking should be not be paid for by working people.”

In nearby Leeds some pickets were on strike for the first time ever. At St James Hospital these were multi-union and later they joined thousands converging on Leeds City Centre. With the Leeds Trades Union Council and University and College Union banners at the front a demonstration led the way. By the time the rally started there were 9,000 people present.

The speakers drew warm applause with the PCS’s Hugh Lanning, saying, “It has been a great day. If the government thought the public services were a soft touch they probably don’t now. But make no mistake the Tories never had a plan B and are using the financial recession as a cover for what has always been their political and ideological objectives.”

Kate Mayer, a GMB education steward said “all pension funds are in surplus and tax
avoidance loopholes should be closed in order to raise an annual £123 billion to fund decent pensions for everyone in the public and private sector.” She was proud to have participated in the largest public sector strike since 1926.

Karen Reay, Unite Regional Secretary asked, “What about young people if we force those who want to take a deserved break to work much longer? How can nurses work into their sixties, it will damage their own health and affect the service the public can expect.”

Celia Foote, NAS/UWT said it “was the government which wanted to put children’s education at risk, not teachers.” Noting it was the unions who had forced the Government to the negotiating table she called on “people to stick together in a battle we must win.”

At the end Bill Adams, secretary of Yorkshire and the Humber TUC, summed up the day’s events saying, “this great turnout has been matched elsewhere across the region and we should all be proud of our efforts.”
On 5 January 2012, speaking to an invitation-only audience of ‘small businesses and entrepreneurs’, the prime minister David Cameron said UK businesses are in a “stranglehold” of health and safety “red tape” and compensation claims.

His government was “waging war against the excessive health and safety culture that has become an albatross around the neck of British businesses.”

Try telling that to the Keighley family of Steven Allen, whose case features below and which only reached a criminal prosecution because they received advice and support from the campaign group Families Against Corporate Killers (FACK) — thus enabling them to pressurise the Health and Safety Executive to act.

Yorkshire & Humberside

Immingham 10.00am
At the Workers Memorial in the Grounds of the War Memorial, Pelham Road, Immingham. Service Conducted By Rev Daniel Haylett.

Grimsby 1.00pm
At the Workers Memorial in the Grounds of the War Memorial, Nunn’s Corner, Grimsby.

Cleethorpes 3.00pm
At the Workers Memorial in the Pier Gardens, Alexandra Road, Cleethorpes. Service Conducted By Rev Paul Hunter.

Further memorials on page 17
Firm Guilty after Worker’s Head is Crushed!

A construction worker died from massive crush injuries when his head became trapped in the jaws of a grab machine being wrongly used to move a pallet of cement bags.

Steven Allen, 23, was part of a team working for contractor JN Bentley on the construction of a recycling centre for Bradford Council in March 2007. Moving the 30 or so cement bags was the last job before the weekend.

Bradford Crown Court heard that workers used a block grab attached to an excavator to move the load. As they did, the bags fell two metres to the ground, but the pallet remained in the jaws of the block grab. The pallet pivoted and Steven took hold of it to pull it free. As the pallet came away, the jaws dropped and clamped on his head, causing severe injuries. He died the following day.

The court was told that the grab was being used against manufacturer’s instructions and was not suitable for the job. The company had also failed to implement a safe system for lifting and transporting the bags of cement. JN Bentley had pleaded guilty to safety breaches at an earlier hearing.

The firm was fined £106,250 and ordered to pay costs of £90,000.

HSE principal inspector Dave Redman said: ‘The firm made a fundamental error by using a block grab to lift and move pallets and this resulted in the tragic death of a young man. This use was very clearly advised against by the manufacturers and the risks should have been understood by the company.’ He added: ‘No assessment was made regarding the use of the grab and no instructions were given to the men who were operating it.’

Various risk assessments had been carried out at the site — even for the removal of Japanese knotweed — but not for lifting or moving supplies on palettes and no ‘method statement’ had been prepared to show how the work should be carried out, the court heard.

Steven’s mother Judith Allen said after the hearing:

‘This may be the end as far as prosecutions go, but our lives are blighted forever. The only consolation will be if it stops something like this happening again, and makes workers and the public far more aware than I was before Steven died, of the risks employers take with workers’ lives in trying to save money.’
If you’re unsure about becoming a union rep then it may help to know that TUC Education provides training for more than 57,000 workplace, health and safety and learning representatives each year.

It’s legally recognised that reps need paid release for union training, and you can be assured of a warm welcome on accredited courses that will equip you with the skills to represent your fellow workplace members.

The Health and Safety Stage 1 Certificate is a 12-day course that provides a thorough grounding in health and safety issues and gives new reps from a multitude of workplaces an opportunity to discuss issues around health and safety at work.

Elected CWU rep Colin Coxey, who has worked at the Royal Mail for 17 years, completed the course earlier this year. Having done very little training since leaving school he admits, “It can be intimidating coming back into the classroom. You find though that others are in the same boat and that the tutors themselves were once students on the courses and can identify with your experiences.”

In addition, says fellow student Paul Grant, an elected RMT safety rep at Northern Rail, “you quickly learn that other reps have the same issues and you soon get to know, and share ideas, with each other through the group exercises that form such a big part of the course.”

Both men agreed that the facilities were first-class at the Faculty of Trade Union Studies, which forms part of the Horsforth site at Leeds City College.

The latest I.T facilities have helped give Paul the “skills to type and save letters, whilst I can now follow a web trail to find information that I can pass on to members and use in meetings with management.”

The latter are now taking place more regularly after the knowledge learnt on the courses’ mock workplace inspections, were utilised back at Paul’s workplace as he pushes to make sure management create a safe workplace. He’s especially keen to get the heating system fixed in the staff locker room and canteen, but is also finding that, “now I’ve done the course members are raising other issues that concern them. I know to keep them informed as I try to progress matters.”

Meantime, says Colin, “discovering my legal rights as a rep has led to a safety committee being established with reps from different shifts all involved.”

Good news, therefore, not only for the 40 drivers he represents at the Royal Mail’s Distribution Centre in Normanton, but all 250 who work there.

“I am glad that Paul and Colin have found the course useful. Twelve days, in which they get to know their role in the workplace, and develop the skills to effectively carry it out, is just a starter,” says tutor Paul Wyatt, a former coachbuilder for two decades who is now curriculum area manager for the trade union studies department at Leeds.

For more details on the courses — held in Leeds, Bradford, Castleford, Sheffield, Northern College Barnsley, Hull — ring 0113 242 9296 or email eyorkshire@tuc.org.uk

See also www.unionlearn.org.uk/extraUL/Education/TUEDbrochures/Yorks.pdf
Can a third-party help resolve disputes at work?

By Richard Saundry and Tony Bennett

Over the last five years there has been increased interest in workplace mediation. While it has a long history in family and civil legal matters, its use to resolve employee grievances and other issues has been limited in the UK.

However, in 2007, the Labour government commissioned the Gibbons Review into the UK's system of employment dispute resolution. Gibbons concluded that there was a need for a 'much simpler and more flexible' approach regulating employment disputes.

However, Gibbons also called on government, employers and trade unions to promote the use of workplace mediation as 'a pragmatic, flexible and informal way of providing both parties with positive outcomes'.

In the wake of this, there is some evidence that the use of workplace mediation has increased. Over the last five years, the annual number of individual mediations conducted by ACAS has risen from just 35 in 2004/5 to over 200 today.

At the same time, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) 2011 survey of their members found that 57% reported using mediation compared to less than half in 2008.

Interestingly, it is more likely to be used in larger organisations and those in the public sector. In-house mediation schemes are now relatively common within higher education and are increasingly found in the NHS and local authorities, and some large private sector organisations.

What is mediation?

ACAS/CIPD define mediation as “where an impartial third party, the mediator, helps two or more people in dispute to attempt to reach an agreement”

Mediation can be provided through an 'in-house' service whereby staff are trained and act as mediators or purchased from an external provider, such as ACAS.

While there is different mediation 'styles', the most widely used in UK workplaces is facilitative mediation — through which the mediator encourages recognition of the needs and interests of the participants in an attempt to identify areas for agreement.

In this way, it is argued that the participants take ownership over both the dispute and its solution. It is seen as being particularly useful in resolving inter-personal issues that may be more difficult to deal with through conventional grievance and disciplinary procedures.

It's also important to remember that mediation is both confidential and voluntary, but participants are not normally represented. The ACAS/TUC guide on mediation explains that this is because 'the focus of mediation is the resolution of the dispute by participants themselves and to maintain as much informality for the process as possible.'

Not surprisingly, some trade unionists have, in the past, been sceptical about the implications of mediation. After all it means disputes being removed from procedures in which union representatives can challenge managers and their decisions. In addition, union representatives are often concerned that acting as mediators may lead to a conflict of interest.

Benefits

However, our own research suggests that where union reps are not only involved as mediators but in the organisation and administration of in house mediation schemes, then it can deliver very real benefits for members and the union as a whole.

When used for inter-personal disputes, mediation is more likely to lead to a sustainable resolution than conventional procedures. It takes less time and is generally argued to be less stressful than more formal approaches. We also found examples of mediation being used successfully in long-term absence cases.

Mediation has traditionally been sceptical about the use of workplace mediation. However research conducted by Richard Saundry and Tony Bennett at the University of Central Lancashire suggests that in the right circumstances it can be beneficial for members and trade unions.
Agreeing to go to mediation does not then prevent the member from using formal procedures if they are not happy with the outcome. In short, mediation should not remove the need for disciplinary and grievance procedures.

While representation is not normally encouraged, it should be remembered that unlike a formal grievance procedure where the employer makes the final decision, mediation gives this responsibility to the individuals involved. Therefore it gives members a chance to shape their own resolutions.

The rules of most schemes ensure that mediators can only handle cases in which they have no involvement. So a trade union representative would never be asked to mediate in a case in which there was a potential conflict of interest.

Where trade union representatives are actively involved, the introduction of in-house mediation can help to rebuild informal processes of resolution. In one case we examined*, the introduction of a mediation scheme improved employment relations and re-established informal discussions between unions and management over disciplinary and grievance issues.

Of course, much depends on the way that mediation is introduced and used. There is a danger that mediation is introduced with little or no consultation with local union reps. However, we would argue that where unions shape the development of mediation in their organisations it offers an opportunity to deliver positive outcomes for members, increase union profile and extend influence.

*For further details of research see www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/k/8/ Transforming_Conflict_Management_in_the_Public_Sector_Mediation_Trade_Unions_and_Partnerships_in_a.pdf.

The ACAS/TUC guide on mediation can also be found at www.acas.org.uk/media/pdf/m/7/ Acas_TUC_Mediation_Guide_AUGUST_2010_(Final).pdf.

Richard and Tony would be more than happy to discuss their research and would be more than happy to talk to any trade unionists that are faced with mediation being introduced in their organisation. They are also keen to hear from any trade unionists that have experienced workplace mediation. You can contact Richard at rasaundry@uclan.ac.uk

The biographical film, The Iron Lady, about former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, played by Meryl Streep, is a pretty dull depiction of a remarkable woman who changed — for the worse — the direction of British politics.

By focusing on Thatcher as a woman in a man’s world, allocating too much time to her rise to power and using her current senility as the base to look back, the film struggles to properly capture the conviction, neo-liberal politician that the Tory leader was.

Consequently, the multi-faceted fightbacks that eventually led to her own political demise, but not the politics she spawned, are inadequately represented on screen.

We learn that she stood up to the unions — particularly the Miners. Yet there’s no depiction of their leader, Arthur Scargill, or the largest movement of working class women in British history, Women Against Pit Closures. They wanted to protect the communities that she aimed to destroy.

She imposed a hated Poll Tax, whereby the rich and poor all paid the same for their local services. Yet there’s nothing about how, after it was first introduced there, it helped create the initial stirrings for Scottish Independence and left the Tories dependent on their support in southern England.

We learn that she stood up for Britain in Europe, but we have no idea that it was in order to ensure the Tories can continue to drive back the social welfare gains made at the end of the second world war, a policy that today’s Tories and Liberals are all too happy to continue.

In the film Thatcher is quoted as saying she didn’t, “want to manage the decline of this great nation” and the implication is that she didn’t. As such, and despite enjoying the benefits of massive North Sea Oil revenues, we find out little about her Government’s economic policies that were so destructive to British manufacturing with huge swathes of industry, especially across the north, swept away rather than provided with political and economic support.

Love or like me, loathe Thatcher it should be possible to make a great film on her. This is certainly not it.
Recently the Regional TUC was honoured to host two leading trade unionists from the Venezuelan Graphic, Print and Paper Workers’ Union at a packed meeting chaired by Unite Regional Secretary, Karen Reay.

Union General Secretary Eglé Sanchez and Union President Nelson Sanz gave a fascinating and inspiring insight into how the Venezuelan United Socialist Party, led by President Hugo Chavez, is governing in the interests of the many, not the privileged few.

Eglé and Nelson explained how their government has responded to the global economic crisis by defending the majority, not punishing the poorest and has expanded public services despite the global recession.

Since the election of Hugo Chavez as President in 1998, Venezuela’s oil wealth has been used to serve the needs of the population rather than multi-nationals and Venezuela’s financial elite.

This has seen massive social investment with over $400 billion going into creating a vast range of social programs akin to the Welfare State in Britain. 5 million Venezuelans have been lifted out of poverty since 1998 and general poverty has been reduced from 44% of households in 1998 to 27% of households in 2011, with extreme poverty reduced from 17% to 7%.

Millions of Venezuelans have been given free access to a doctor for the first time and 13,000 new public health centres have been opened, including a state-of-the-art children’s heart hospital. Free vaccinations have helped reduce infant mortality from 21.4 deaths per 1000 in 1998 to 13.9. Access to clean drinking water has been provided to an additional 8 million Venezuelans. In 1998, 20% of the population did not have access to clean drinking water. It is now 4%.

State supermarkets offer high quality subsidized food and are used by 12 million Venezuelans. Five million people have access to free daily food via free school meals and thousands of ‘food houses’.

Illiteracy has been eradicated after 1.6 million adults (two thirds of them women) learnt to read and write. Venezuela has attained the fifth highest rate of university enrolment in the world.

Venezuela now has one of the highest minimum wages in Latin America. The number of people receiving pensions is now almost 2 million, compared to just 191,000 in 1998. Pensions are now constitutionally required to be at least as high as the minimum wage. Unemployment has fallen from 14.5% in 1998 to 8%.

Eglé, Nelson and Unite EC member Dave Mathieson, fresh from a delegation to Venezuela, finished with a stirring call for solidarity with working people in Venezuela whose inspiring advances are under constant threat from an anti-democratic financial and media elite at home and abroad.

Why not start by joining www.venezuelasolidarity.org.uk today and then asking your union branch to affiliate?

www.venezuelasolidarity.org.uk
As the region’s TUCJCC rep you’ll often as not find me harping on to anyone who will listen about how important the trades union councils are to the labour movement — but are comrades aware just how long they’ve been around?

The trades union councils actually precede the TUC — formed in 1868 — with one of the first, Sheffield, established in 1858. Around this time, the councils were also involved in some of the most important campaigns of the day both nationally and locally: against the Master and Servant Act and the Sheffield Outrages for example.

And the trades union councils remain as relevant and crucial today as demonstrated by the role they’ve played as hubs for activism around anti-cuts campaigning. It’s worrying therefore when we hear that some in our region are in trouble: York and District — founded in 1890 — is in danger of closing (indeed they might have closed already as this goes to press).

This raises two issues: firstly, the importance of trade union branches supporting their local trades union councils through affiliation and sending delegates, and secondly trade union activists from those branches not only getting involved in the campaigns and work of trades union councils generally but also taking on the (thankless) tasks of being secretaries and treasurers.

If your branch also wants to (re) connect to your local community you need to connect to a local trade union council — they are after all the “trade unions in the community”.

One issue is the way that the ConDems are busy building discourses around “localism” and “The Big Society” and effectively hijacking the language of progressive community politics.

The trade unions therefore need to be part of a process of re-engaging with communities, and the trades union councils are crucial to this. As states the (snappily titled) “Model rules and Standing Orders for Trades Union Councils and County Associations of Trades Union Councils” trades union councils, “act as the voice of trade union branches in the local community” and that:

“the proper role of trade union councils is, therefore, to bring together unions to campaign around issues affecting working people in their workplaces and to promote the trade union movement locally and to help drive local organising”

Comrades, the trades union councils are the only body recognised by the TUC in which the trade unions can collectively come together to campaign on local issues and for local people.

Let’s use them not lose them.

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Unity in Action
– Trades Union Councils

By Kevin Donnelly, UNITE

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Saturday
5th May
LEEDS May Day March & Rally
Assemble at 11.00am at Victoria Gardens,
March to start at noon
1. Why did you write this book?
I had wanted to write it after I ‘ran away’ from England in the 1990s. I wanted to explain my actions but I realised I did not know enough about myself, or what I had done. I also think it was necessary given what’s happening in society today and hope it can be used to help direct young people away from joining far right groups.

2. Why do white working class lads join groups like the National Front or BNP?
Because it would appear to many such lads that nobody speaks for or to them. This is the main problem with the lack of class politics in this country. I used to be the exception but now sadly, I don’t think it is such an exceptional thing to do. Obviously there is racism and there is also still an enormous political vacuum in communities where progressive politics just do not have currency at the moment. For me, it filled a gap in my life for a while.

3. Why is much of the book taken up with describing violent incidents?
Because that is what it was like! There was a street war, especially in London, in the late 1980s between the left and the extreme right that went largely unnoticed by civil society. But it was bloody and violent. The far right lost that battle, but there is a lot more in the book [I hope!] than just violent confrontations.

4. What made you decide to quit the far right?
To a large extent I grew up, looked around at the miserable and dangerous men around me and thought ‘fck this.’ Racism and fascism do not address poverty and only create divisions and violence. I felt the fascists had lied to me and that to a large degree they were only actually interested in destroying this country. They really do not care for the people they tried to recruit. I’m a patriot now, but that is not because of my colour or religion. How dare the BNP etc, etc try to deny that right to people because they pray differently or do not have the same colour skin as them?

5. You seem to feel it’s hypocritical of far right groups such as the BNP to stand in elections – why?
Because they do not believe in the political process, know they will never obtain power through it and their ideology means they would prevent any future elections if they became the majority party. I think it is therefore hypocritical of them to try and legitimise themselves by abusing the democratic process.

6. Why did you move to Australia for over ten years?
Knowing I was disillusioned with the far right I was persuaded to work undercover for the magazine Searchlight [better known now as Hope Not Hate] for three years, passing them information. After a World in Action TV expose of the group Combat 18 in 1993 the police warned me that I was suspected of being a ‘mole’ and my life was in danger. I only intended being away for a year but life was good out there and I stayed for over a decade.

7. Why are you concerned that the issues of identity and religion appear now to be more important than class?
Because I don’t believe the issues of class and poverty have been resolved. Why do we have to focus on religion – which can point to noticeable differences in communities – and not class? This is ostensibly a secular country of many cultures and languages and it works better when we focus on our commonality. Tony Blair is to blame for the focus on faith and not community. He thought he was God himself, in fact.

Hope Not Hate
The BNP is on the back foot in Yorkshire and nationally, following concerted campaigning by trade unionists and other anti-fascists. But it’s still trying to peddle hatred as the answer to the crisis facing working people. And as it falls apart its members are appearing in other far-right parties. Hope Not Hate has been central to the campaign over the last few years. We’re now campaigning to make sure no fascists are elected on May 3, and building towards kicking them out of the European seat. You can sign up for the campaign or affiliate to Trade Union Friends of Hope Not Hate at www.hopenothate.org.uk
Affiliation to Trade Union Friends of HOPE not hate is £50 p.a. for branches, regions and TUC’s. This entitles you to the magazine and other Searchlight publications, training and regular email updates.

NAME OF UNION/TUC

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WORKERS’ MEMORIAL DAY EVENTS IN YORKSHIRE & THE HUMBER
SATURDAY 28TH APRIL 2012

BRADFORD

12 noon Workers’ Memorial Plaque, around the back of Bradford City Hall
A minute’s silence followed by speakers, laying of wreaths and a street performance.

SHEFFIELD

12.30pm Sheffield Town Hall
“Remember the dead but fight for the living”
Sheffield TUC is organising an international Workers’ Memorial Day Ceremony at the Workers’ Memorial Tree, situated in front of Sheffield Town Hall.

SUNDAY 22ND APRIL 2012

ROtherHAM

“Cuts Cost Lives. Remember the Dead, Fight for the Living”
10.30am Memorial Service at All Saints Church
The abandonment late last year of a carbon capture project at a Scottish power station could finish coal mining in the north, increase unemployment, create chaos in energy supplies and make it more difficult to cut CO2 emissions. That's the view of Bill Adams, regional secretary for the Yorkshire and Humber TUC.

Longannet, in Fife, was set to trial technology aimed at removing or capturing emissions in coal or gas burning power plants. After processing they would then be transported by pipeline for sub-sea rock burial.

One £1 billion of public money, through the Department of Energy and Climate Change [DECC] was available, but according to Keith Anderson, chief corporate officer at Scottish Power — one of three companies behind the project — they required a sum 50% greater for the trial, which the government was unwilling to advance.

The decision is a further blow to any hopes of developing clean coal technology in a long-running saga that stretches back to the 1980s. At that time the National Coal Board's Coal Research Establishment [CRE] was, “the world leader in developing clean coal technology, particularly the pressurised fluidised bed power plant at Grimethorpe”, says Dave Feickert, head of research for the NUM between 1984 and 1993.

“Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and then John Major, shut them down and made everyone redundant. Many went to work abroad.”
No one knows for sure — and in 1987 New Scientist magazine was already casting doubt on whether coal could ever be made ‘clean’ — what might have been achieved if research had continued.

What is thought certain is that Britain, like much of the rest of the world, currently still needs a significant amount of coal to keep ‘the lights on.’ Around 30% of the nation’s electricity is generated from 19 coal-fired stations and five are due to close by 2015 as a result of European legislation aimed at cutting CO2 emissions.

Reserves

With coal mines across the north having been closed after the miners’ year-long strike in 84-85, 70% of the 51 million tons of coal currently used in power stations comes from abroad. Meanwhile there are billions of tons of coal reserves underground in the UK.

Adams was hoping to see a lot more of them being used in the future. Like Feickert he accepts that carbon capture and storage “is not a proven technology.” That’s why he was keen to see established, a project aimed at de-carbonising one-sixth of the output at Longannet, the UK’s second largest coal power plant.

But despite Anderson calling the engineering study already undertaken, at an estimated cost of in excess of 20 million pounds “a huge success” it has been abandoned.

“It’s very disappointing,” says Adams. “If we can’t develop this technology then the jobs of miners such as the 800 or so at Kellingley are under threat. We could also extract the coal we have beneath our feet. A successful test could also see new power stations being built, bringing contracts for local suppliers and creating skilled, well-paid work.”

Bill is pleased that David Cameron has promised that £1 billion is still available for new projects. Peterhead gas-fired power station in Aberdeenshire is believed to be the most likely site for any future project — Shell and Scottish and Southern Energy having joined forces to apply for funding — but Bill is “disappointed that six months after Longannet was abandoned we are still waiting to hear any news.”

Cutting emissions

According to the World Wide Fund for Nature [WWF], Peterhead would avoid trialling the new technology on a newly built coal plant currently being proposed at Hunterston in Scotland. Its spokesperson said, “The work at Longannet has significantly improved our understanding of the technology. It’s testing should continue, but at an already existing site where we can, at the very least, know that during testing it will reduce our green house gas emissions.”

The UK is committed to reducing such emissions by 80% by 2050. Bill Adams believes that it can only achieve its target and keep the lights on by pushing ahead on carbon capture and storage. “The development of renewable energy isn’t going to be quick enough, especially in the next decade or so, to prevent energy shortages and simply switching from coal to gas powered stations — as proposed by Cameron and Energy Secretary Ed Davey just before the March budget — isn’t going to reduce emissions.”

The WWF is also keen not to see a switch but believes that much more has to be done to push ahead on renewable sources of energy, which it argues could create 4.4 million jobs across Europe.

Its report ‘Positive Energy’ argues that the 60-90% of the UK’s 2030 electricity demand could be met by renewables, but only if the government ‘set its target at no less than 60% for renewable energy generation to provide certainty for investors.’ Failure to do so, argues the WWF, would mean ‘dangerous levels of climate change and high energy prices.’

“Both of which I’d like to see avoided” says Adams “but in a world where coal production is expected to jump from today’s seven billion tonnes to ten by 2030 then I’d like to think we can push ahead on getting this technology right so that we can protect and create jobs here, before exploiting what would be a valuable export market.”

New pamphlet out now:
CLEAN COAL TECHNOLOGY, CLIMATE CHANGE
by Dave Douglass, NUM
ISBN 0953734706
Published by Mining Communities Advice Service • www.minersadvice.co.uk
Thanks for reading this first issue of CLOCKING OFF!
Letters, comments and ideas for future articles are all welcome and should be sent to Mark Metcalf at MMetcalf@tuc.org.uk

Mark Metcalf is a member of the NUJ, and writes for the Big Issue in the North magazine, UNITE, the PCS and Tribune magazine. Mark is also author of a number of football books and can be contacted on 07952801783 • www.markwrite.co.uk/archive.htm

TRADES UNION CONGRESS

The Trades Union Congress is the voice of Britain at work, representing 6.2 million working people within 58 affiliated unions.
See website for more details at www.tuc.org.uk where you can register for email alerts, access work rights information and find out about forthcoming events. Just out is a Workplace Manual handbook for all union reps. See also: www.tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk www.unionhistory.info/britainatwork/about/about.php

REGIONAL TUC

The TUC has officers in eight locations in England, Wales and Scotland who service Regional Councils and the Wales TUC. The TUCs regional staff represent the TUC by supporting TUC campaigns and objectives and seeking the views of trade unions in the regions.
TUC regional education officers organise a programme of accredited courses for stewards, safety representatives, pension scheme trustees and other trade union representatives.

YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER TUC

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Forthcoming executive committee meetings – all at 10am to 12.30pm
Tuesday 17 April, Tuesday 29 May, Tuesday 10 July,
Tuesday 18 September, Tuesday 6 November,
and Tuesday 15 January 2013

A copy of this newsletter will appear at www.tuc.org.uk/tuc/regions_info_yandh.cfm

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