

UNITED FOR JOBS



GENERAL SECRETARY

WE ARE READY TO DEFEND THE

SINCE the last edition of Firefighter we have, hopefully, begun to resolve major problems on Merseyside resulting from the heavy handed attitude of Management who seem to be doing everything they can to force us into a dispute!

The patience and sense of reasonableness shown by our members on Merseyside has been quite staggering in the face of, at times, considerable obstructiveness and ignorance. Hopefully a constructive way forward is in place as I pen this editorial, but I have to make clear it really is the last chance saloon for the Authority in terms of treating our members and their elected representatives with respect.

There are cuts in the pipeline in Region 5 and rumbling on is the wish list of merging Control Rooms and making Firefighters first responders.

Our response to all these challenges is based on two principles:

- **FIRST** – the well-being of our members and the public we serve.
- **SECOND** – the need to advance a modern, democratic, high quality Fire Service, which respects those who provide and those who need this essential emergency service.

Sadly, too many of those 'leaders' in the Service are still locked into a quasi-militaristic regime where bawling, shouting and dictat are the norm. This is unacceptable. It is a "culture" whose time has passed. The jobs of Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Operators are becoming increasingly technical and more and more skilled. Our jobs are changing and referring back to last month's editorial on our pay formula, this should be reflected in our pay packets.

We are now waiting for the Minister's White Paper in which he intends to set out his vision for the Service. There are several major strands to this; the Fire Cover Review, Community Fire Safety, Equality Targets, the Leadership Review, Best Value, the Fire Service Implementation Group ... Big changes are afoot and as a Union we must face up to them. We will look carefully at this 'Vision'. We have been consulted in the preparatory stages and those elements of the published vision that weld increased safety of the public to recognition of the value of those delivering it, will receive our commitment and support.

This should be our response to the progressive challenges of the 'Vision'. However we will still stand in readiness to defend the



We will support positive change, which brings benefits to the public and our members. We will support fair change, which takes care of the many and not an elite few.

Service in the interests of the public or if the advancement of our members interests is threatened. We do not and must not apologise for this. Change simply for the sake of it is foolish. But we will support positive change, which brings benefits to the public and our members. We will support fair change, which takes care of the many and not an elite few. Also we will beware of time honoured attempts to implement cuts by another name or to create divisions



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SERVICE

in our Union – the tactics of divide and rule.

Most of all we will be ensuring an open and honest debate throughout the Union, involving as many members as possible, to assist the parliament of our Union, the representatives you elect to Annual Conference, in reaching decisions about our future strategy and tactics.

As a Union we are also embarking on our own review of our structures and communications in order to improve the service we can give members. It is essential that all members participate in this process.

THE FBU IS YOUR UNION.

STOP PRESS

If you ever doubted it, it's official! The Tories have confirmed precisely what will happen to legislation on trade union recognition if they win the forthcoming election.

"The next Conservative Government will repeal this unnecessary piece of red tape ... one of the pieces of red tape that are together costing business £5 billion a year."

Source: Tory Daily Bulletin 15.01.2001

YUSEF ALAN

We are all shocked and saddened at the death of our dear comrade, Yousef Alan. He fought tirelessly for freedom and justice for the Palestinian people. Yousef was a great friend of the FBU. He educated us, he inspired us. We were privileged to enjoy his comradeship. His loss will be keenly felt in the international trade union and labour movement. We pledge that his legacy will be our continuing commitment to his work.

Our thoughts are with his partner Jane and his family in Palestine.

The Executive Council and all Yousef's comrades in the Fire Brigades Union.

ANDY GILCHRIST
General Secretary



EDUCATION

PUBLISHED below are some of the educational opportunities available to Fire Brigades Union members.

Should qualifying members wish to attend any of the Schools, they should apply for an application form to their Regional Education Officer or Regional Secretary.

- | | |
|--------------------|--|
| 9-11 MARCH | WOMEN'S SCHOOL
(Any FBU Women members entitled to apply) |
| 20-22 MARCH | INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(Limited places available) |
| 3-5 APRIL | POLITICAL SCHOOL
(All members eligible to apply) |
| 24-26 APRIL | INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(Limited places available) |
| 17-19 JULY | INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
(Limited places available) |



FBU CONFIDENTIAL FREEPHONE HELPLINE

0 8 0 0 7 8 3 4 7 7 8

FAIRNESS AT WORK is about treating others as we would wish to be treated ourselves – with respect

VICTORY IN MERSEYSIDE

We remain determined



Ian Foulkes
Merseyside Brigade Chair

OVER the Christmas and New Year period FBU members on Merseyside took part in a ballot for all out strike action. In response to a complete breakdown in industrial relations between management and the Union the membership recorded an impressive 68.5% vote in favour of a walkout.

The issues on the ballot paper included staffing levels in the control room, acting up payments, reduced attendances at automatic fire alarms and the use of postings as a disciplinary tool.

In meetings brokered by the Joint Secretaries of the National Joint Council (NJC), Andy Gilchrist and Phil White, a proposal for the resolution of the dispute was arrived at over two days of talks with the Chief Fire Officer and the Fire Authority.

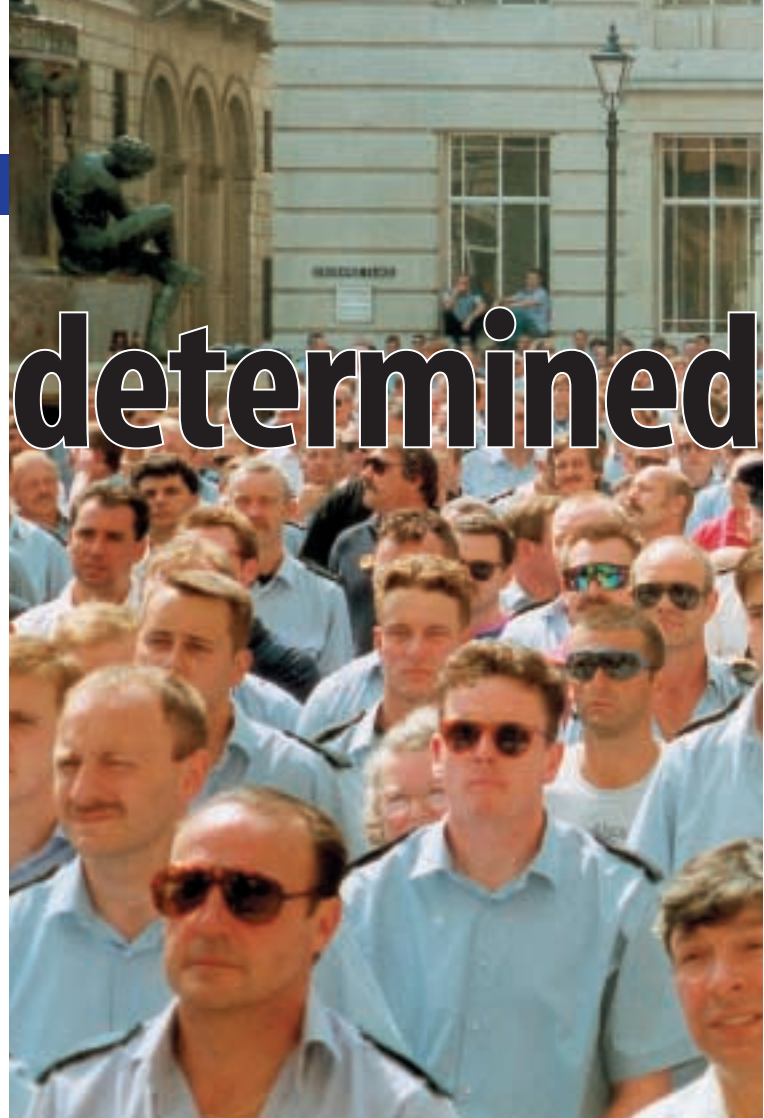
The proposal was the subject of Branch Meetings throughout the Brigade and resulted in the Brigade Committee voting by a substantial majority to accept.

In accepting this offer, the Firefighters and Fire Control Staff are under no illusion that all problems are now solved. However, a machinery for dealing with all industrial relation problems in Merseyside is finally in place and sets up a line of communication with management that has been missing for some considerable time.

This dispute has been won by FBU members on Merseyside determined to use all means necessary to protect their conditions and the service to the public.

Throughout the dispute a large number of letters of support and encouragement have arrived at both the Union office and at individual Branches.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who sent these messages and assure them that the knowledge of the solidarity of their brothers and sisters throughout the country played a vital part in reassuring our members that they would not be alone in the event of a strike.



AGREEMENT BETWEEN

This agreement represents the outcome of positive and constructive discussions between the Chief Fire Officer, Fire Brigades Union officials and the NJC Joint Secretaries at Fire Service Headquarters on 8th and 9th January 2001. It will, if accepted by the parties, provide a resolution to the trade dispute that has been the subject of a ballot for strike action, which closed on 10th January.

CONTROL ROOM STAFFING

It was recognised during the discussions that the Best Value review of MACC has created some uncertainties for Control Staff and that there is also discontent with aspects of current working arrangements. It has therefore been agreed that a working group comprising four MACC staff/FBU officials and two nominees of the Chief Fire Officer will examine present and future job content and workload; develop proposals for whatever new Control arrangements arise out of the Best Value review; and develop proposals on the best way of meeting interim requirements in the best interests of all staff.

ATTENDANCES ON AUTOMATIC FIRE ALARM CALLS

It was recognised during the discussions that there are concerns about the new policy on responding to AFAs. It has therefore been agreed that FBU Health and Safety Officials and Fire Service management will review the matter in the light of the risk assess-



to protect the service

MERSEYSIDE FIRE SERVICE AND THE FBU

ment process that has been used in formulating that policy.

PROCEDURE FOR POSTINGS

It became clear during the discussions that Merseyside Fire Service and the Fire Brigades Union both share a vision of creating a working environment that is free from bullying or harassment. It has been agreed that a joint agreement on fairness and equality issues should be developed in discussions between Fire Service management and the Fire Brigades Union. This should include an agreed investigation protocol that clarifies the process to be applied in cases where a complaint has been made. In terms of resolving the issue that is part of the current trade dispute, such a protocol should include an agreed method of dealing with any postings that may be required during the investigation process.

ACTING UP PAYMENTS FOR SUB-OFFICERS

It has been agreed that, on all fire stations where a Watch Commander is absent for a minimum of one shift, acting up shall take place. Paragraph 1.25 of Brigade Order ADM-42-1 will be amended accordingly. All other guidance in this Brigade Order would remain unchanged. This agreement is backdated to 3rd October 2000.

Fire Service management and the Fire Brigades Union believe that this agreement provides a positive and constructive resolu-

tion to the four matters that are the subject of the trade dispute. However, in the unlikely event that it does not ultimately provide a basis for settlement, pursuit of any of the four individual issues by either party shall be through the Local and National Stages of the NJC disputes procedure.

Both Fire Service management and the Fire Brigades Union have expressed a commitment to dealing with matters on a partnership basis through consultation and negotiation. It was agreed that this approach would be greatly assisted through the reinstatement of the Local Joint Secretarial arrangements that were introduced in July 2000 (and that the operation of these arrangements be reviewed by the NJC Joint Secretaries in six months time). Where issues cannot be resolved through consultation and negotiation either side would have access to the Local and National stages of the NJC disputes procedure. Both parties agree that this is a sensible and constructive way of dealing with such issues.

Though not part of the trade dispute, the question of annual leave was also raised during the discussions. The respective sides are now clear about each other's position on this matter and may wish to hold further local discussions before it is determined by arbitration.

Any points of clarification or interpretation of this agreement should be referred (by either side) to the NJC Joint Secretaries.

THE SCOTTISH CONCORDAT



Left to Right; Colin Cranston (CFO Lothian & Borders) on behalf of CACFOA; John McGhee (Executive Council Member Scotland) on behalf of the Fire Brigades Union; Pat Waters (Chair of COSLA) on behalf of the Confederation of Scottish Local Authorities; Iain Gray (Deputy Justice Minister) on behalf of the Scottish Executive; Dennis Davis HMI Scotland.

Back on track after three years

Alan Campbell
Regional Chair, Region 1

WELL, it has taken almost three years to finally get back on track. Three years ago the then HMI for the Fire Services in Scotland, Mr N Morrison, published his thematic report into equal opportunities. The report was subsequently withdrawn. This had never happened before with a report, which had been published, circulated and was then withdrawn, such was the anger of all the constituent members of the Scottish Central Fire Brigades Advisory Council. Very soon afterwards a new HMI arrives; HMI D Davis, one of his tasks to try to move forward this issue.

A small sub group of the SCFBAC was established, a fairness and diversity forum. Its task was to draw together all the best practices and to produce guidance for the Scottish Fire Service. This was launched at a reception at the Scottish Executive

Building in Leith (Edinburgh) mid December 2000. The guidance will be distributed to all stations along with the concordat, which was signed at the reception.

CONCORDAT: AGREEMENT

You may remember that not so long ago the Union signed a concordat with the Home Secretary for the UK Fire Service, so why the need for Scotland to have its own? Part of the reason is above; part of the reason is the need for Scotland to establish itself following the formation of the Parliament. It should not be forgotten that the Parliament has control over the primary legislation in relation to the Fire Services Act. Another reason, of course, is the good men and women committed to bringing respect and dignity to the workplace and who wish to move logically towards fairness and diversity in the Scottish Fire Service.

Unions win £320m compensation

UNIONS won £320 million in compensation for their members who were victims of illness and injury last year, according to a TUC survey. But, the survey says, a busy Union legal department is a sign of failure – many workplace accidents could be prevented if employers ensured their staff's environment was safe.

The TUC's annual Trade Union Trends survey, *Focus on services to injury victims*, gives an overview of changing trends in Union legal services and shows:

- Unions took on 54,655 new cases in 1999 and concluded 51,936 during the year. The majority of cases are civil, but a small percentage are criminal cases;
- there were 2,705 new criminal cases and 1,558 criminal cases resolved in 1999;
- the £320 million payout is the second highest reported in Trade Union Trends – working out at an average of £6,150 per case;
- thirty-three of the 37 Unions responding said they now offer

non work-related legal services, from claiming social security benefits to representation in road traffic accidents;

- hundreds of different types of injury or illness cases are being handled by Unions but they specifically cite stress as an issue with 516 new stress cases in 1999;
- trends reported include an increase in RSI cases, asbestosis and vibration white finger; and
- legal services continue to be good value for money with Unions spending an average of £6 a year per member.

John Monks, General Secretary of the TUC, said: "This survey shows it definitely pays to be in a Union. Union legal services remain the best and often only source of help when things go wrong. But Unions don't want as many cases as they are getting. The cases are a sign that too often there are inadequate health and safety checks. And in too many cases, victims are offered no rehabilitation to get them back to fitness and back to work."

LRD Fact Service

Doctors and paramedics, firefighters and ambulance crews attend a construction worker injured while working on a building site.



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JOBS

Vauxhall unions condemn UK's 'soft' labour laws

UNIONS representing workers at Vauxhall, which has announced it is to end car production at Luton, have said the UK's "soft" labour legislation is partly to blame with weak requirements to consult and inform workers.

Vauxhall stunned the car industry in early December by its announcement which means the loss of 2,000 jobs – a fifth of its workforce – apart from any knock-on effects on component factories supplying the Bedfordshire plant.

The decision, taken at the European headquarters of General Motors in Zurich, Switzerland, was necessary to retain competitive manufacturing in the UK, according to Vauxhall chairman Nick Reilly. It comes in the wake of Ford's decision to end car production at Dagenham and uncertainty at other car manufacturers.

The company, part of the US multinational GM, blames "rapidly changing" European market conditions and over-capacity for the decision. It says the jobs will go over the next 15 months and workers will be offered a "very reasonable" package.

But Unions reject this. Tony Woodley, National Officer of the T&G said there was "absolutely no need for the decision. There is no valid reason for there to be any talk of this plant closing. It is yet another example of how companies see the UK as an easy place to sack workers."

Mick Longley, AEEU convenor at the plant said: "If Vauxhall follows Ford it'll be the death knell for the British motor industry."

He said workers were angry at the UK's "soft legislation" and the Government, which is not opposing the closure plan but concentrating on measures to provide new work. The announcement was met with walkouts at nearly all the company's UK plants.

The T&G estimates that a further 8,000 jobs will go in the component industry. Unions say up to 6,000 jobs are at risk at General Motors plants in other countries and a further 3,000 in the UK. The company's German employees are seeking legal redress over the lack of consultation, but UK employees do not have the same rights.

The TUC General Council said the projected closure had sent shockwaves through manufacturing. It followed heavy job losses in textiles, printing, packaging and other vulnerable sectors. Further bad news from closures in the steel industry was expected. "Major investment decisions have been put on hold across manufacturing," said the TUC. "Workers in these sectors will start their Christmas break with higher levels of job insecurity than for many years."

The TUC said that multinational companies, when faced with a fall in profits "see large scale redundancies in the UK as the easiest option. British labour law makes it quicker, cheaper and easier to

fire UK workers – and many companies – including GM – show crass insensitivity by announcing massive job losses through the media rather than directly to their own loyal workforce. Elsewhere in Europe laws ensure that employers are forced to inform and consult with the workforce on any planned closures or mergers in advance of final decisions being made

"The TUC General Council today calls on GM to reconsider its decision to close the Luton plant. The plant is a good one with an adaptable and skilled labour force. There should be urgent talks about possible alternatives. The General Council congratulates the recognised unions for not accepting closure as a fait accompli and urges the Luton workers to take heart from workers experiences at Rover, Longbridge and Raytheon, Broughton, where successful campaigns persuaded multinational companies to change course and reverse previous decisions.

"The UK Government must be prepared to help and to engage in consultation with General Motors about what can now be done to secure the future of General Motors in the UK including a future for the Luton Assembly plant. The need for an overall strategy for manufacturing in the UK, along the lines of the TUC's *Britain Can Make It*, is now essential. The Government desperately needs a strategy for manufacturing if staple industries are not to be lost. We call on the Government to develop with the utmost urgency a coherent and strategic industrial policy, which includes strong proposals for the future protection of manufacturing across all sectors.

"The General Council also strongly urges the UK Government to end its opposition to the EU Information and Consultation Directive which would put British workers on a level playing-field with their European colleagues and force employers to think at least twice before declaring British workers redundant.

"The TUC is heartened by the support of the ETUC who recently lobbied the Council of Ministers regarding the Information and Consultation Directive and we welcome the ETUC statement calling on the French Presidency and the EU to enact this Directive. The TUC further welcomes the new Swedish Government's work programme for its Presidency which includes positive proposals to pursue this Directive."

RIGHT: On the line at Vauxhall Luton.

COVER PICTURE: Members of the German Engineering Union IG Metall from Bochum brought international solidarity to the Vauxhall workers' rally against the closure of the Luton car plant. 10,000 protesters marched from the factory to the town centre.



Automatic module

312 91F68 R UECTRA HATCH

66L 801 LD1 MG1

X22 CUB X02 T6D ZJ1

812 JE

DL CR DU DM HP DOM 16 01 01

86 PE APD FH AU 961 EP N33 ZS FP XXX

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U07 2F4 WBX HY M90 D09

CG W64 BOX AG5 AK5 2T J7D U2P

D.A ER PR YB AY5 AY3 ATD ZE 89

HC DE6 NC9 WAB RS BY DC GO

LD1 MG1

FP

ENVIRONMENT

The environment: a role for unions?

**Peter Ibbotson, OBE**

WHAT is environmental management? This is difficult to define, since the perception of “the environment” differs from group to group. Governments may see it as a political issue, businesses see it as a profit-loss situation and environmental activists see it as a social issue. Each group focuses on the issues which affect them most, but trades unions are different: they see the environment as all these and also as an employment-related issue.

Poor environmental performance leads to pollution and waste. At a local level, it affects health and safety at work and this brings it into the regulatory systems. Further away from the workplace, pollution affects the health of everyone and becomes a social issue. When environmental pollution reaches a global level, weather and climate patterns change resulting in devastating floods and droughts. It then becomes a political issue.

Trade unions can play a key role in improving environmental performance. One shop steward suggested that unions provide the “social conscience” in environmental management. Experience in the UK has shown that the trade union is more than a “social conscience” – it can enable environmental best practice in the workplace. Without this, waste at the workplace leads to higher operating costs, which reduces profitability and threatens everyone’s job security.

Good environmental management is becoming ever more important. The Government has an internationally binding agreement to cut emissions of a range of greenhouse gases, widely accepted as the major cause of climate change. In particular the UK Government has set its own target for carbon dioxide (produced largely by burning fossil fuels). In April 2001 the Climate Change Levy will come into effect. This tax on energy use

will affect all non-domestic organisations (with the exception of charities). To offset the effects of the levy there is a rebate on employers’ National Insurance contributions of 0.3%. Businesses are also being encouraged to invest in energy efficient technology through an Enhanced Capital Allowances scheme (ECA).

High energy users in industrial sectors are negotiating with the Government for an 80% reduction in the levy, in return for meeting agreed energy reduction targets. Even for those companies not in negotiated agreements and signed up to targets, it still makes sense to reduce energy consumption, since any company which does not, will end up paying an extra 10% on its fuel bills.

THE NEED FOR A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN UNIONS AND EMPLOYERS

Although the introduction of Climate Change Levy will be a cost to business, many organisations are unaware of just how much energy they are currently wasting. They are also missing the huge potential that exists for saving energy and money by involving their workforce in energy saving activities.

The best person to spot environmental problems is the person doing the work. It is impossible for a manager or a specialist working alone to find all the environmental problems in the same way that a team can spread throughout a site. As a result, big savings in energy use can be made without the need for large capital investment in new technology, by everyone making their own contribution. Typical savings resulting from such energy and waste saving initiatives more than offset the cost of the levy. Such savings are made year on year, contributing straight to the company’s bottom line profit.

This is where trade unions can play their enabling role, by developing channels where these issues are discussed and solved in a partnership between the employers, workforce and unions. A company may decide to embark on an energy or environmental management programme and if a union is a partner, then everyone will feel comfortable that the issues have been discussed and agreement achieved between all the interested parties. Otherwise many top-down initiatives are greeted with cynicism (“What’s the hidden agenda?”), consultants are met with scepticism (“What do they know? They don’t work here”), or are seen as a threat to jobs.



JOHN HARRIS/REPORTAGE DIGITAL.CO.UK

Recent gales brought down this tree near a petrol station. Fossil fuels are blamed for extreme weather. The Government's Climate Change Levy – designed to encourage investment in energy efficient technology – comes into force in April.

Trade unions have been active in engaging the Government on environmental issues. The Trade Union Sustainable Development Advisory Committee (TUSDAC), which meets three times a year, is chaired jointly between Michael Meacher, Minister for the Environment and John Edmonds, General Secretary of the GMB. This is the primary forum of trade union discussion with Government on the environment.

TUSDAC has recently commissioned a report on environment and jobs as well as organising awareness-building workshops. A broad range of trades unions are represented at TUSDAC, both at General Secretary level and the working level group. The latter has been formed to generate and carry forward ideas, as well as to work on issues arising from the TUSDAC meetings.

The Government's Energy Efficiency Best Practice Programme (EEBPP) together with The Institute of Energy and TUSDAC has developed a range of training materials – the Learning Toolkit. This includes handbooks and guidance on environmental best practice in the workplace, with supporting workshops. The aim is to encourage everyone at their workplace, no matter what their level or experience, to take part in energy saving and waste reducing activities.

If you would like to find out more about energy saving, environmental issues and how you can get started, get in touch with one of the organisations below.

USEFUL CONTACTS

For advice and assistance on any energy efficiency or environmental

query, call the Government's Environment and Energy Helpline: 0800 585 794. This is the point of contact for both the Government's Energy Efficiency Best Practice Programme and the Envirowise Programme, which both provide free, independent advice.

TUSDAC: David Collins at the DETR 020 7890 6566;

david_collins@detr.gsi.gov.uk or:

Maggie Dwyer at the TUC 020 7467 1201,

e-mail: mdwyer@tuc.org.uk

For more information on the Learning Toolkit and workplace qualifications, contact Rob Wall at The Institute of Energy: 020 7580 7142; e-mail: rob@instenergy.org.uk

Climate Change Levy help desk: 0161 827 0332

Useful web sites:

<http://www.energy-efficiency.gov.uk>

<http://www.envirowise.gov.uk>

<http://www.detr.gov.uk>

<http://www.environment.detr.gov.uk/tusdac/index.htm>

<http://www.environment.detr.gov.uk/climatechange/index.htm>

<http://www.eca.gov.uk>

■ Peter Ibbotson is a director of Union Energy (a TUC initiative supplying gas and electricity to trade union members) and an independent member of the Government's Energy Efficiency Programme Committee.

TRADE UNION INVOLVEMENT IN LEARNING

Fund shows unions in a more confident mood

Warren Ellison**Divisional Secretary Halifax FBU
Secretary, Calderdale Trades Council**

IN MAY 1996 the TUC commissioned NOP to carry out a public opinion survey of attitudes to Trade Unionism. (*Trade Unions, The Popular Verdict* – TUC; Peter Kellner).

The results showed that public rating of Trade Unions was continuing its steady rate of improvement since the 1980s. Specifically it showed that Trade Union leaders – as opposed to journalists, politicians and directors of large companies – understood the difficulties of working life in Britain. That Trade Union leaders came top amongst trade unionists surveyed is perhaps not surprising, but they were also rated top by “non-unionists” and “non-workers” as well. Again not unsurprisingly, Politicians came bottom in all groups when it came to their understanding of working life.

It was clear that neither trade union members nor trade union critics felt that the movement was remote from the rest of the nation.

In 1997 the TUC began to put in place a new partnership approach in its relationship to Government and Employers alike.

A key instrument was and is, the Union Learning Fund. Established in 1998 it provided £2 million for investment in demonstrating projects by Trade Unions in partnership with employers to develop and extend the important role that Trade Unions play in lifelong learning at the workplace.

In its first year 45 projects were set up involving 21 Trade Unions, 20 learning centres and 2000+ trainees. At the Conference – Learning with the Unions (June 1999), it was announced that the budget would be expanded to £8.5 million for the period up to March 2002.

Through the local Trades Council in Calderdale I became aware that a small Union, the Northern Carpets Trade Union, had

formed a partnership with Interface Europe Ltd, Bradford Trade Union Studies Centre and the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional TUC to establish a Workplace Learning Centre at Shelf in Halifax.

In its first six months of operation it has established a valuable example of the role Trade Unions play in extending wider benefits of Trade Union action through opportunities in education and training to members.

Around 100 workers have begun courses in information technology and computing, 14 members (mostly, but not all existing shop stewards) have been trained by the TUC as “Front Line Advice and Guidance” representatives. Most of these workers have not

been in contact with formal education since leaving school up to decades before.

A new role in the workplace and a new partnership for learning have begun the process of changing the culture and role of Trade Unions, in this specific company, from passive to active in regard to non-work related education.

What it offers is not simply a change in what people do in their spare time, but a concrete opportunity to gain qualifications that mean greater self esteem and better job security. In the longer term it points to a need for a stronger role by

Trade Unions in bargaining on education and training needs for members. In the short term it means that Trade Unions are seen to be directly relevant and concerned with real problems of all employees.

For Trade Unions locally and nationally, whatever their industrial sector, TULIP (Trade Union Learning Interface Project) is a valuable example of Trade Unionism in a more confident mood – delivering improved services to members, offering good reasons for Trade Union membership and strengthening the capacity of the Trade Union movement to service its members.

I would like to thank Joe Mitchell of Calderdale Trades Council for his help in preparing this article.



The Union Learning Fund has been used to kickstart basic skills activity in the workplace. Chandar Parmer of the knitwear union KFAT visited factories to speak to Asian workers. They wanted to improve their reading and writing of English and have taken part in ULF courses.

JOHN HARRIS/REPORTAGE.CO.UK



ACTSA SCOTLAND DELEGATION TO SOUTH AFRICA

Region 1 Executive Council Member John McGhee visited South Africa last year on behalf of ACTSA – Action for Southern Africa, the successor organisation to the Anti-Apartheid Movement. This is his report.

SATURDAY 21st of October saw the beginning of what turned out to be for me one of the most memorable trips I have ever made.

Our Regional Chair Alan Campbell and myself were going to South Africa as part of a delegation from ACTSA Scotland.

The delegation was primarily made up of trade unionists from within ACTSA and included officials from Unison, EIS, FBU and the General Council of the STUC. Thompsons (Scotland), Community Heart, LACTSA and ACTSA also had representatives on the delegation.

The aims of the delegation were to consolidate and strengthen trade union links with our comrades in South Africa and to discuss the impact of several tiers of Government on public services.

At the end of the apartheid regime many people thought that the struggle was over. The Anti Apartheid movement recognised that this was a new beginning and that there would be major reconstruction work to be done not only South Africa, but the whole of Southern Africa. It was then that Anti Apartheid renamed itself as ACTSA (Action for Southern Africa).

Several projects in the field of health and education have been given support by ACTSA and Community Heart and these would be some of the places we would visit.

DAY ONE

After an all night flight we had time to dump our bags before being whisked of to Cape Town Waterfront and a boat to Robben Island, which is now a National Heritage site.

We were privileged to have the services of Ahmed Kathrada as our guide for the visit. Kathy (as he prefers to be known) was among those sent to Prison for treason at the “Rivonia Trial” along with Nelson Mandela and six other comrades.



Ahmed ‘Kathy’ Kathrada in the prison courtyard on Robben Island

His decision to act as our guide was no doubt influenced by the fact that one of his comrades from that trial, Dennis Goldberg, was among our delegation in his role as Director of Community Heart.

Stronger links with South African comrades

Kathy spent 18 years of his 22 years imprisonment on Robben Island before being moved to the mainland while Dennis, due to the fact he was a white man, was sent to Pretoria Prison (where he spent almost 26 years).



The delegation arrives at Robben Island Prison

The tour of Robben Island begins with a boat journey of about 40 minutes, on boats, which are far more up to date with safety equipment and facilities than those that were used to ferry prisoners to and from the Island.

Arriving on the Island was very strange for most of our delegation as here we were in a place, which over a number of years had been a symbol of all that was wrong with apartheid. A place where we had tried to send letters of support to Mandela and the other political prisoners who were held here in what were appalling conditions. The sense of isolation on the Island was immediate even though we were still within sight of Cape Town.

The Island is now a National Trust site with the Prison being developed into a museum and the remainder of the Island being a nature reserve.

ACTSA SCOTLAND DELEGATION TO SOUTH AFRICA

The people of South Africa are very keen that the Prison and Island become a positive symbol in their struggle.

Kathy explained in detail the conditions they were held in, the clothing they were issued, the fact that they had no beds for 14 years, the poor quality food, the solitary confinement, the work routines, the medical care (or lack of it) and many methods used by the authorities to try and break the will of the political prisoners.

He explained to us some of the methods used by the prisoners to communicate with each other and with the outside world.

He told us how attendance at church services was encouraged as these were normally held outside and gave opportunities for communication.

He told us of a catholic priest who would, while saying mass, close his eyes for extraordinarily long periods of time in order that the prisoners could take a newspaper from his bag without him seeing. An act that could have put the priest in great danger.

Kathy is one of the most remarkable men I have ever met; he does not seem to harbour any bitterness towards anybody for what he suffered. It seemed to me that he totally accepted his part in the struggle for freedom in South Africa.

While in the courtyard of the Prison we witnessed a meeting of two former political prisoners who had never previously met, the mutual respect was immense.

While we listened to Kathy's history of the Prison a woman, who is now one of the administrators of the museum, approached our group. Kathy turned to her and said, "this is comrade Goldberg" her reaction was one of amazement she hugged Dennis and she thanked him for his part in the struggle. This was a woman who herself had spent eight years in prison for her own role in fighting apartheid.

The tour of the Island was concluded by visiting the quarry where much of the prisoner's time was spent digging and breaking limestone.

It was hard to believe how beautiful a place Robben Island was and the feeling and attitude of the people we met there was incredible, they gave a real sense of humanity and a level of understanding of what had to be done to rebuild this country that was to be evident throughout the trip.

DAY TWO

Monday began with a "breakfast meeting" (7.30am) with Naledi Mathews who is the current Chair of The House of Provinces (i.e. the upper house).

Naledi gave us an overview of the political development in South Africa explaining some of the difficulties being faced by the ANC.

It was evident from this meeting that the "Triple Alliance" which was formed before the first ever democratic elections was now under some strain.

The alliance involves ANC, The South African Communist Party and COSATU and clearly now there are some differences of opinion in how to meet the demands of the people. (A fact that

was confirmed at meetings held later that week).

Following this meeting we met with Sharif Pandor the Director of an organisation called KERIC (Khayelitsha Education Resource & Information Centre). KERIC is one of the projects that ACTSA Scotland and Community Heart have been supporting for a number of years. Sharif gave us an up-date on the situation within Khayelitsha, a township of about 1 million people on the outskirts of Cape Town.

The people of Khayelitsha were forced to go and live there during the apartheid years. It has very little in the way of infrastructure and most families still live without water or electricity. The site is on the Cape Flats, which is exposed to extremes of weather on all sides, has a very high water table and is therefore prone to flooding.

After speaking with Sharif we visited Khayelitsha.

Khayelitsha came as a shock; the levels of deprivation were the worst that most of the delegation had ever witnessed. We met with some of the workers from KERIC who took us on a tour.

The project tries to assist in providing access to education and information particularly to young people. We visited Yomelela Primary School where we saw a class with 40 computers fully functioning with printers etc, which had been supplied by Community Heart. It was a joy to see the children using the computers and gaining skills that will equip them economically for the future.



Information technology class at Yomelela Primary School in Khayelitsha

Speaking to the staff at the school, who are all resident of Khayelitsha, helped us to understand what these opportunities for the children meant to them.

One of the teachers explained that in South Africa there is no benefits system and that unless you or someone in your family has work, you beg to eat or you die.

The view of the teacher was that the children who were benefiting from the education opportunities would almost be guaranteed employment in the future. One nursery school we visited has a garden where they are trying to grow crops, to feed the children.



Dennis Goldberg with staff and children at Khayelitsha Nursery School

Following our visit to Khayelitsha along with the UNISON officials we met with Roger Ronnie, General Secretary of SAMWU (South African Municipal Workers Union). SAMWU represents most Firefighters and Control Staff in South Africa.

Roger emphasised the need for the sharing of information and for solidarity. He outlined some of the campaigns SAMWU are involved in at the moment like water privatisation, attacks on conditions of service, pension protection amalgamations and HIV/Aids (Sound familiar?).

HIV/Aids is a problem of epidemic proportions for the whole of the African continent and one that unions are trying hard to tackle. It was an issue that would be raised throughout our visit.

DAY THREE

Another early morning meeting with Andre Odendaal, the Director of Robben Island Museum who discussed how he envisaged that Robben Island should be developed as a World Heritage Site. Dennis Goldberg compared many of the museums he had visited in Germany, dedicated to the memory of the Holocaust.

It was then on to the Parliament buildings in Cape Town where we were taken on a guided tour. The Parliament buildings are a throwback to Dutch colonialism with recent extensions added. We visited the main chamber where Mandela was sworn in as the first democratically elected President.

It was then on to the Airport where the delegation divided into three groups and headed for the Eastern Cape, Kwazulu-Natal and Northern Province.

I was part of the group to visit Northern Province ("The Home of Peace"). We had a flight to Johannesburg then a connecting flight to Petersburg where we were invited to a reception hosted by the Premier of the Northern Province, Ngoako Ramatlhodi.

At the reception we met with representatives from the Provincial Government, NUM, SAMWU, NEHAWU, Asbestos Action Committee and representatives of Mathabatha Health and Asbestos Action Committee.

The main purpose of our visit to Northern Province was to meet with the people involved with the asbestos action against Cape PLC.

Cape was responsible for many of the asbestos mines in South Africa and has left a legacy of death and deprivation in the mining communities.

DAY FOUR

We went with representatives of the Provincial Government and the NUM to a town called Burgersfort. We met with the legal team from Leigh Day and Co. who are dealing with the legal case against Cape PLC. Frank McGuire and Lawrence Lumsden from Thompsons exchanged information and set up direct lines with Leigh Day in order to assist the process in the UK courts.

We were invited to attend a public meeting of around 100 ex-miners who are suffering from asbestos related illnesses. Bill Spiers (the General Secretary of the STUC) and Frank McGuire addressed the meeting and offered solidarity from workers in Scotland. They explained that while we could not guarantee them compensation we would do what we could in solidarity to put pressure on Cape to take responsibility for the damage caused by them.



Public meeting at Burgersfort

We visited the site of the now closed Penge mine that at its peak had 14,000 miners.

What we found was frightening! Asbestos is evident in large lumps lying on the open ground while children played in these areas and people walked to the nearby, polluted river to collect water for cooking. The devastation caused in this region is immense and companies like Cape must be held accountable and made to set about repairing the damage.



With Bill Spiers (STUC) looking on, Jonas Maepa of the NUM displays a lump of raw asbestos picked from the ground

DAY FIVE

Most of the group in Northern Province stayed to meet with more local groups and have further talks with the NUM officials. Myself

ACTSA SCOTLAND DELEGATION TO SOUTH AFRICA

and Mike Kirby, UNISON, left for Johannesburg where we met with the President of COSATU and representatives of the South African Communist Party

That night we were invited to a Braai at the house of Mara Louw's. Mara is a famous South African singer and was involved in the struggle for freedom. The hospitality offered us was outstanding.

DAY SIX

We spent the morning visiting Soweto schools and meeting teachers, which again was a great experience. Talking with the teachers it was evident that despite the deprivation surrounding them they realise the importance of education in the rebuilding of South Africa.

After visiting the schools our driver for the day took us on a tour, pointing out Mandela's old house and many other famous and some infamous sites.

Later we met with Mendi Msimang, Treasurer General of the ANC. Mendi gave us his views on the current political situation and what he envisaged for the future.



Alan Campbell with Mendi Msimang, Treasurer General of the ANC

On the final night we had a full delegation dinner at an African Restaurant in Johannesburg, which was attended by NEHAWU, SAMWU and members of the ANC.

FINAL DAY

An invitation was extended to meet with Gwende Mentage, the

General Secretary of the NUM. Myself and two others from the delegation, Lawrence Lumsden and Laura Fisher, went along to this meeting. As it happened, we had been invited to what was the inaugural NUM women's conference. I would have to say that it was quite a different experience to any other conference we had attended. On arrival we could hear what we took to be a choir practising somewhere close only to discover it was the delegates "warming up". It was a very moving experience and one we were very proud to have been invited to share.

Gwende opened the conference by warning the delegates not to wait for the men in the union to invite them into positions but to get organised and stand for positions outwith women's committees. He emphasised and paid tribute to all women within the union and the role they had played in its history. He finished by calling the delegates to sing the national anthem, which they did brilliantly without any coaxing.

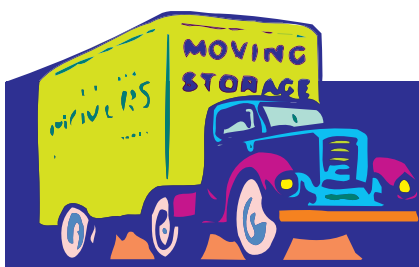


Delegates get warmed up for the NUM's inaugural women's conference in Johannesburg

We then spent the final afternoon at a local market before heading for the airport and the flight back home.

The delegation had visited many different areas and met with all sorts of people but apart from being very tired were all feeling very encouraged. The overwhelming feeling we got from those we met was that they were now in control of their own future and that they would continue to work to eradicate poverty and build a country for all of its people.

■ For more information on ACTSA or Community Heart contact the Scottish Regional Office.



ON THE MOVE?

Members are reminded to advise their Brigade Membership Secretary of any change of address. Head Office should be advised of any changes of next of kin or nominations for benefits.



Take a step to stamp out torture

TORTURE did not end in the Middle Ages, it did not end with the cold war – it remains a major human rights problem. Research by Amnesty International has found torture still being used in more than 150 countries around the world in the last three years.

WHAT IS TORTURE?

This is the United Nations definition of torture: “The deliberate inflicting of severe physical or mental pain or suffering by public officials in order to intimidate, punish or obtain a confession or information from the victim.”

Torture is deliberately inflicting pain on someone – to punish them, frighten them, get information from them. The most common method of torture today is still perhaps the oldest known – vicious, sustained beating with any available weapon. Such abuses were found in Western democracies such as France and the United States as well as one-party states. Other torture methods around the world include the use of rape and electric shocks in India, mutilations in Colombia, canings in Singapore and Kenya, positional tortures in China and Israel and amputations in Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan. Suffocation, mock executions and prolonged solitary confinement are also common.

But it's not just about extracting information. People suffer torture because of their identity – their race, gender or sexual identity. The victims of torture are no longer mainly political prisoners, but the poor, members of despised minorities and people suspected or convicted of crimes. Almost all victims of torture are “guilty” of being on the margins of society. Most are “guilty” of belonging to an ethnic minority or being homeless, or having unpopular religious or political views. Many are suspected, rightly or wrongly, of being criminals. Some have been convicted.

WHO ARE THE TORTURERS?

Torturers are people with power. Amnesty International's research has shown that in most countries torturers are policemen. Even in countries where torture is not the norm, police officers often protect their colleagues from prosecution for torture. In New York City, three officers were found guilty of perjury in 1999 after lying to protect an officer who had thrust a broken broomstick into the rectum of a Haitian immigrant.

Although no country in the world publicly condones torture,

some seek to justify abuses that amount to torture. Many countries refuse to fully sign up to the UN Convention Against Torture, an international agreement which is supposed to prevent torture. Some countries have effectively “legalised” torture. The Israeli High Court only overturned the “right” of police to use brutal interrogation techniques in September 1999. Judicial canings and amputations are common in Saudi Arabia.

HOW CAN WE END TORTURE?

Torture can be stopped if we all demand that our Governments acknowledge that no one should be beneath the law's protection or beyond its reach. This is just as important in countries where torture is rare as it is in those where it is common. Ending it requires more than action by the individual nations where torture is routine. Ending torture requires that all countries take steps to end the trade in torture equipment, to hold torturers to account and to use their influence with nations where torture is common. The world therefore needs countries where torture is not common to act as models and as leaders in helping to stamp out torture.

THE UK'S ROLE

“It is vital that we do all in our power to tackle the appalling practice of torture, which remains depressingly widespread even in the modern world.”

Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, March 2000.

The UK Government has already indicated a willingness to play a role in ending torture by launching a handbook in March 2000 to assist in documenting torture worldwide and by increasing support for international and local groups working to prevent torture and to assist torture survivors. There are also a number of further steps the UK Government could take to enhance its position as a country leading the fight to stamp out torture.

END UK INVOLVEMENT IN THE TORTURE TRADE

The flawed and outdated legislation controlling UK arms deals is in desperate need of an overhaul. One of the main loopholes is the lack of any controls over deals brokered in the UK under which equipment is sent to a country where it may be misused, but never touches British soil.

TORTURE

BRINGING TORTURERS TO JUSTICE

The decision by the British House of Lords to deny Augusto Pinochet immunity from prosecution for torture in March 1999 was a landmark in international human rights law. The Pinochet precedent sent the message to torturers and their political masters everywhere that the nations of the world meant what they said when they outlawed torture and promised to bring those responsible to account. Pinochet's eventual return to Chile on grounds of ill health did nothing to diminish the power of that message.

There is still more the UK can do, however, to reinforce its leading role in holding torturers to account. Firstly, it can move quickly to ratify the treaty that will create a new International Criminal Court that will put torturers on trial

where nations are unwilling or unable to do so. Secondly, the UK can bolster the authority of the UN Torture Commission, a body of experts who monitor countries' compliance with the UN Convention Against Torture. It could do this by permitting the Committee to consider complaints from individuals in the UK that UK officials have committed or allowed torture with impunity.

USE ITS INFLUENCE

The UK can use its influence to help prevent torture by convincing countries such as India and Iran to ratify the UN Convention Against Torture. Once the UK itself has agreed to let individual complaints from the UK go to the UN Torture Commission, it can also lobby other countries to do the same. As well as India and Iran, other countries it could effectively lobby to let the Committee hear complaints would include Columbia, Kenya and Saudi Arabia. A second important step is for the Government to be prepared to criticise the use of torture by any state, not simply those that are politically powerless or hostile to the UK.

"The worst time was when the police took me to hear a girl being tortured in another room. She was screaming for her parents."

Fatma, survivor of torture

STAMP OUT TORTURE MOTION

At the beginning of the 21st Century, torture remains a major human rights problem. Research by Amnesty International has found torture still being used in more than 150 countries around the world in the last three years.

Torture is absolutely prohibited under international law. Article 2 of The United National Convention against Torture (UNCAT) states: "No exceptional circumstances whatsoever ... may be invoked as a justification for torture."

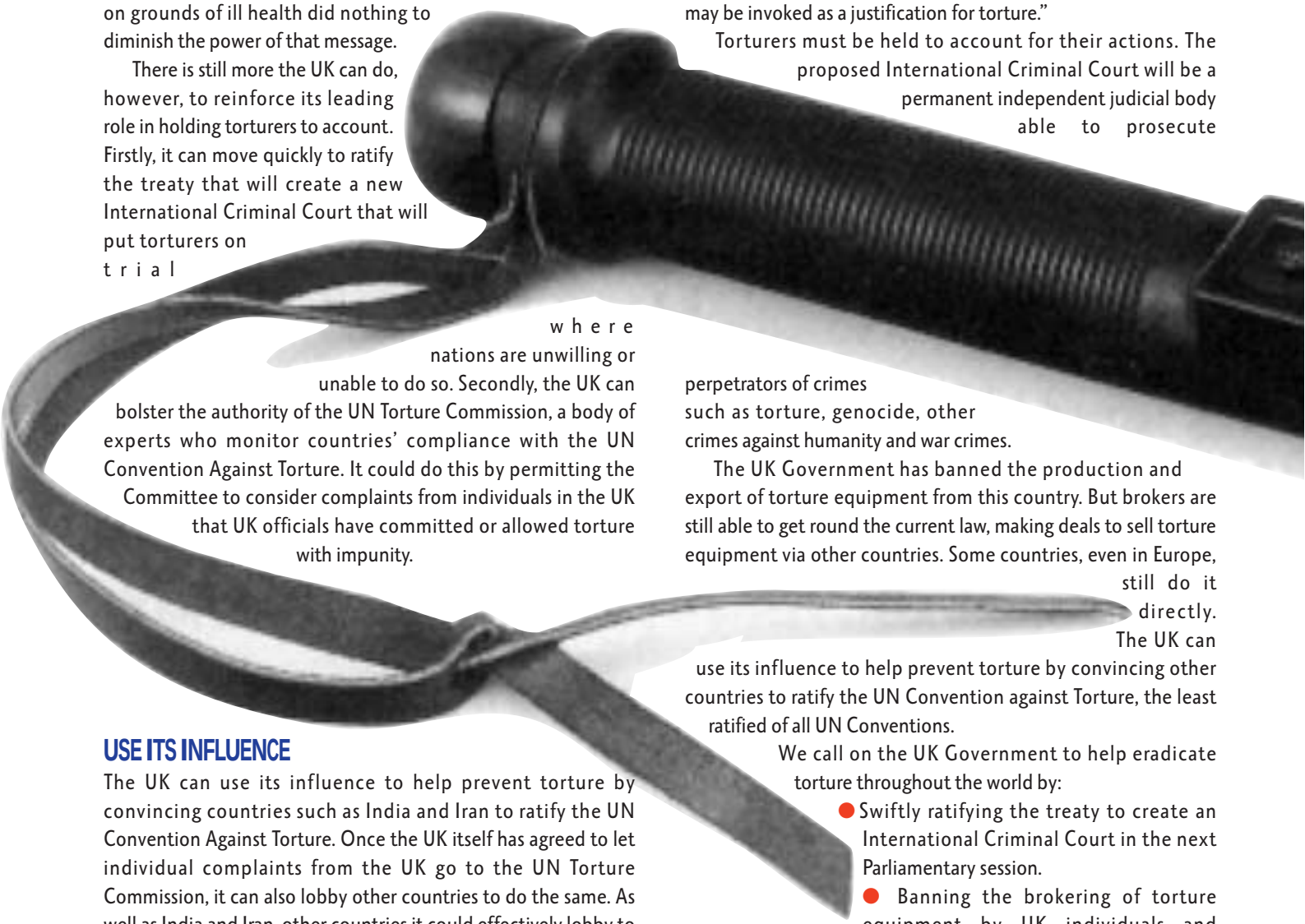
Torturers must be held to account for their actions. The proposed International Criminal Court will be a permanent independent judicial body able to prosecute

perpetrators of crimes such as torture, genocide, other crimes against humanity and war crimes.

The UK Government has banned the production and export of torture equipment from this country. But brokers are still able to get round the current law, making deals to sell torture equipment via other countries. Some countries, even in Europe, still do it directly. The UK can use its influence to help prevent torture by convincing other countries to ratify the UN Convention against Torture, the least ratified of all UN Conventions.

We call on the UK Government to help eradicate torture throughout the world by:

- Swiftly ratifying the treaty to create an International Criminal Court in the next Parliamentary session.
- Banning the brokering of torture equipment by UK individuals and companies and pressing for similar action from all EU countries.
- Removing its reservation to the UN Convention Against Torture, which currently denies UK citizens the right to individually petition the UN if they are tortured in the UK. Removing the reservation would put the UK Government in a stronger position to promote wider international ratification of the UN Convention against Torture.



THE UK TRADE IN TORTURE

"This time they worked on me again with the electric baton on the nape of the neck and it hurt so much that even now when I speak it is difficult to keep my head still as the back of my neck hurts very much ... This type of weapon ... I could really call it something really horrible – immoral – because those people who make it for torture, they don't test it on their own bodies and they don't know the pain it causes. They do it to make other people suffer quite simply to make money."

"Roberto", a 50-year-old university professor arrested and tortured in Zaire, 1991

ARMING THE TORTURERS

Electroshock weapons

Through his pain, "Roberto" speaks of what has become a disturbing phenomenon across the globe in the 1990s and into the 21st Century. As torturers continue their barbaric practices, modern high-voltage electroshock "stun" weapons are increasingly

among the instruments they use.

The portability and ease with which electroshock weapons can be concealed and the difficulty in detection of their misuse, means that such weapons are attractive to unscrupulous security, police and prison officers.

Leg irons

Leg irons are designed to severely restrict a prisoner's movement, making the wearer unstable and liable to overbalance and often causing chafing of the skin. Welts and sores appear on the ankles of prisoners restrained in leg irons after approximately 24 hours. They can also be used to facilitate torture.

"They tied electric wires on the irons...so the iron was a contact between the flesh and the electric device."

Sipho Pityana, a former prisoner in South Africa describes how leg irons were used to torture him. Sipho also described how his captors used the leg irons to hold him upside down in the sea for long periods of time.

BUT WHAT'S THIS GOT TO DO WITH THE UK?

Believe it or not, it is still legal in this country to broker deals of leg irons or electroshock weapons between suppliers and buyers, as long as the equipment doesn't touch UK soil. In fact, you don't even need a licence to do it!

On Sunday 10 September 2000, the Observer newspaper ran an article on how UK companies are still exploiting legal loopholes to broker the export of torture equipment. In the case highlighted, a UK firm offered to broker a deal between a Spanish based company and a private security firm in Rwanda. The deal included leg irons and CS gas, both of which have been used in the past to commit serious human rights violations in Rwanda.

At a recent International Police & Security Expo at the National Exhibition Centre in Birmingham (in association with an Association of Chief Police Officers Conference), a company was advertising leg cuffs in its catalogue. Whilst the company would need a licence to export leg cuffs, it would not need one to broker a deal such as the one mentioned in the Observer article.

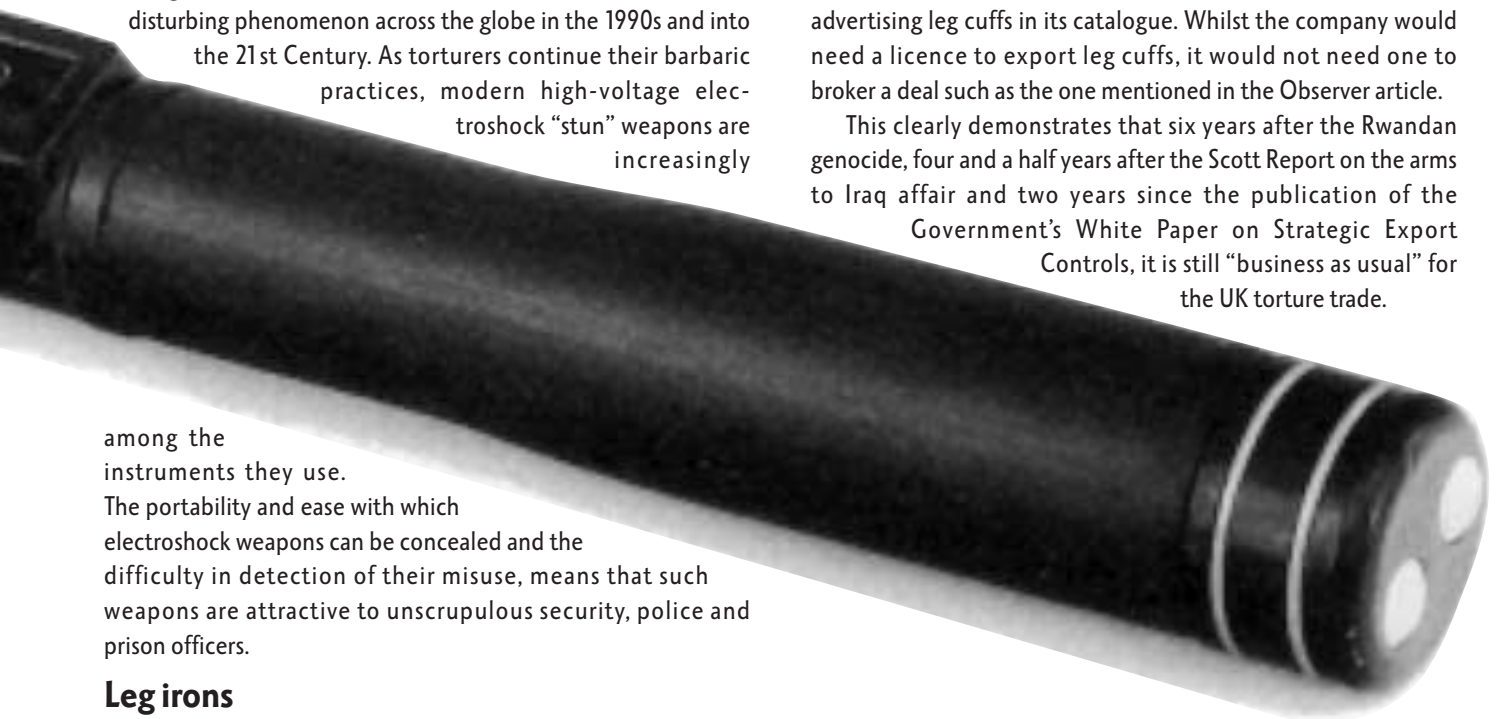
This clearly demonstrates that six years after the Rwandan genocide, four and a half years after the Scott Report on the arms to Iraq affair and two years since the publication of the Government's White Paper on Strategic Export Controls, it is still "business as usual" for the UK torture trade.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Amnesty International has recently launched a worldwide campaign to Stamp Out Torture. One of the aims is to achieve a UK ban on the brokering of torture equipment such as leg irons and electroshock weapons.

You can join thousands of other Amnesty supporters around the world in taking a step to Stamp out Torture! You can order postcards by calling Amnesty International's Trade Union Office on 020 7417 6373 and send them to the Prime Minister. Add your voice and that of your Union and show you are concerned that torture remains widespread and that people still get away with it.

Pass the Stamp Out Torture Resolution at your Branch, Brigade or Regional Committee. Inform your local MP(s) and enlist their support to stamp out torture.



© ROYAL ARMOURIES

Picture shows electroshock baton

LETTERS

SINCERE THANKS

Dear Firefighter,

Through your pages I would like to pass on my sincere thanks to the FBU and Thompsons for securing a claim for an injury, which resulted in my having to retire early. Mr. Peter Mulhern's professionalism has to be singled out. Thanks to Mr. Mulhern.

It is very important to emphasise the FBU is for you and embrace it, never let it go. The Service is what it is today because of it.

Mr S Denver
Hereford & Worcester

TRY COMPASSION

Dear Firefighter,

Ghada Razuki's poignant letter (November) gives the lie to the mess table bigots and others who opine asylum seekers are lazy scum in search of an easy life living off our backs.

Rather they are people driven by oppression, conflict and poverty who have often taken desperate risks to try to obtain for their families the security that we take for granted. A truly civilised society would, at the very least, ensure dignified and fair treatment for these people whilst waiting for decisions on their applications, instead of demonising and imprisoning them.

In a so called caring occupation, a little compassion would not go amiss.

D B Hull

MORNING STAR

Dear Firefighter,

The Morning Star is 70 years old. We have published on a daily basis since 1930. Unlike the other daily papers, The Morning Star relies entirely on its circulation and the financial support of its readers and supporters for survival.

There has to be a rapid increase in circulation if the paper is to fulfil its role as the champion of the trade union and labour movement. Although the number of daily readers is rising slowly, there are still too few for the Morning Star to be as effective as we should be in this task. Other titles are able to spend millions on promoting their product. We are unable to do this as we have no big business financial backing. We rely on trying to build a regular daily readership amongst trade unionists and other progressive sections of society. The key to increasing circulation is to persuade activists to buy the Morning Star every day, become shareholders in the co-operative which owns the paper and support fundraising efforts like the £15,000 monthly appeal and the 501 Club Lottery which sustain our financial health.

The Morning Star can be bought from any retailer that sells newspapers. We are party to the same distribution arrangements as the other national dailies. However the misconception exists in the trade that the Morning Star is an order only title and that it

should not be displayed for general sale in the shops. Other titles use their financial muscle to keep the Morning Star off the shelves and this makes it very hard to win new readers or to provide the paper for those many people who remark that they would buy it if only they knew where to get it.

A free press is the cornerstone of a democratic society. In Britain, I believe that the Morning Star is an important contributor to that ideal. We have always sought to champion the struggles of working people both here and abroad and to provide a platform for the views of your members to be expressed without hindrance from the bosses. I believe that the existence of an alternative newspaper should be advertised as widely as possible amongst our potential readership and I hope that you feel able to help us to do this.

May I take this opportunity to express our thanks to your Union for all of the support that your members and officials have given to the Morning Star over the years.

Ian Beavis, Circulation Manager

ANTI NAZI LEAGUE

Dear Firefighter,

Thank you for your affiliation of £50 to the Anti Nazi League for 2000. Your support will help us to continue to campaign against the Nazi British National Party, National Front and National Democrats in the coming months.

The BNP, NF and the ND are inspired by the success that Nazis like Jorg Haider have employed across Europe. In the recent London Assembly elections the BNP received over 40,000 votes. In Bexley in a bi-election in July they came second with 26%. Much of this is due to the vicious scapegoating of refugees by William Hague and the right-wing press. As Nick Griffin, leader of the BNP states, "The asylum issue has been great for us. This issue legitimises us." The BNP now has a Councillor in Hereford.

Alongside the electoral policies of the BNP the NF have been trying to organise on the streets. This year they have attempted to march in Worcester, the West Midlands, Hastings, Wisbech and Norfolk, Leicester and Nottingham.

However, the ANL have been successful in curtailing their activities, as Terry Blackham, NF National Activities Organiser states, "The Anti Nazi League have said they will turn up wherever we go and we have decided to change our tactics."

How you can help – We are asking supporters to:

- Make a regular financial commitment to the Anti Nazi League by setting up a standing order
- Ask others to join the Anti Nazi League
- Please inform us of any Nazi activity in your area.

With your help we will be able to build on the black and white unity in the Unions, workplaces and local communities that is the most effective and formidable barrier to the Nazis. We are sure that with your continued support we can meet the challenges ahead.

Anti Nazi League

HELP FOR WORKING PARENTS

Government unveils new approach to supporting working parents

GROUND-BREAKING proposals to give more help to new parents and greater support to the businesses employing them were announced recently by Trade and Industry Secretary Stephen Byers.

He published the *Work and Parents: Competitiveness and Choice* Green Paper which follows the most comprehensive review of work and parents ever undertaken by a Government in Britain.

The Green Paper sets out a range of options for consultation over the next three months. Everyone will be able to state their priorities and preferences before the Government decides which proposals to take forward. Options in the Green Paper include:

- two weeks paid paternity leave for fathers;
- lengthening the period maternity leave is paid to six months;
- extending unpaid maternity leave so a woman could stay at home for a year;
- sharing any increase on existing unpaid maternity leave equally between the mother and father;
- increasing the flat rate of maternity pay – currently £60.20 per week;
- allowing an adoptive parent – either male or female – to take paid leave similar to maternity leave when adopting a child; and
- increasing the amount of parental leave available to the parents of disabled children, currently 13 weeks.

The Green Paper also includes several options on flexible working either through legislation or incentives to business including:

- giving mothers who return early from maternity leave the right to work reduced hours for the rest of that time;
- giving fathers the right to work reduced hours until the end of maternity leave;
- allowing both parents the right to opt to work reduced hours for as long as they wish, when the maternity leave period ends;



FBU / THOMPSONS

LEGAL ADVICE LINE



Freephone
0808 100 6061

In conjunction with our solicitors, you can now contact our free legal advice line for initial legal advice on any **non-duty** matter.

The advice line will deal with any matter not relating to your employment with the Fire Service. This would include, for example, preliminary advice on:

- neighbour disputes
- debt claims
- defective consumer goods and services
- holiday complaints
- matrimonial and divorce disputes etc

The service will be open to all members between 9am - 5pm on weekdays except Bank Holidays.

We will of course continue to provide legal advice, representation and assistance in relation to any matter arising out of your employment in the Fire Service. In such cases the procedure will continue as normal, ie members should submit a Legal Aid Application Form.

HELP FOR WORKING PARENTS

- giving all employers the right to refuse a request to work reduced hours if it would harm the business; and
- exempting employers with a certain number of employees from granting any request to work reduced hours, except for mothers for a short time;
- a kitemark that organisations committed to an appropriate code might display with a mechanism for taking the kitemark away if opportunities for flexible working are removed. This would be backed up with a challenge fund for small businesses to meet some of the up front costs of providing more flexible working opportunities.

Mr Byers said: "Working patterns have changed dramatically over the last 25 years. But help for working parents has largely gone unchanged. Too many parents are struggling under the heavy demands of coping with children and trying to hold down a job.

"I am convinced that we need to do more to help them. Simply doing nothing is not an option.

"As standards of living improve, quality of life becomes an issue for us all.

"I don't want mothers to drop out of the labour market because they feel they don't have enough support or flexibility. We need to retain their valuable skills and experience.

"We also need to answer the calls from fathers who can't afford to take time off to be with their new baby.

"But concerns of business cannot be ignored, particularly the small firms which energise our economy. Our proposals take these concerns into account.

"They will also provide more help for business partly by simplifying existing legislation, by providing more targeted support and better advice and guidance.

"I don't believe we need to make a choice between either helping families or helping businesses. The right policies will not only support parents but also enable business to recruit and retain skilled staff thereby increasing productivity and helping the UK to remain competitive.

"It's not possible to take away all the strains from being a busy

working parent but we do need a much more flexible culture. We need to know what working parents and employers would find most useful so that we can create a better balance.

"A society where being a good parent and good employee are not in conflict is a prize for us all and one which I believe we can achieve.

"This is a real step along the path towards achieving a fair and lasting deal for parents working in a modern society."

Minister for Women, Margaret Jay said: "It is vital that people

can fulfil their potential both as employees and parents. By consulting and therefore getting the measures we introduce right, we will benefit everyone – families and business alike. Women now make up almost half of the workforce, so maintaining their attachment to the labour market is crucial to the economic success of our country.

"Employers are increasingly realising the competitive edge to be gained from offering flexible work packages – savings of millions in recruitment and retention, increased loyalty and reduction of sickness and absenteeism. This is a package for families and strong family life and it is a package for successful business."

The Government has also listened to calls from business for greater support and believes that the existing rules on maternity rights can be radically simplified. Other

measures being proposed include:

- more SMEs to qualify for compensation for the money they pay out in maternity pay;
- encouraging small employers to make use of their right to seek maternity payments in advance from the Inland Revenue, thereby aiding cash flow problems;
- the Employment Service and private recruitment agencies working with employers from an earlier stage to help with managing absences; and
- better guidance and advice for employers including through the Internet and packs to help employers and employees draw up a maternity leave contract.



JOHN HARRIS/REPORTAGE/ITALY

25 YEAR BADGES

FIREFIGHTER FEBRUARY 2001 23



Bill Souter receives his 25 year badge from Grampian Brigade Vice Chair Ted Thomson



Brian McCranor receives his 25 year badge from Isle of Wight Brigade Vice Secretary at Newport Fire Station



Robin Carter receives his 25 year badge from Isle of Wight Brigade Chair Mark Newland at Newport Fire Station. In attendance are (l to r) Mark Deacon, Dean Haward, Kevin Ellis, Jeff Walls, Bill Gee and Dave Grundy



John Henry receives his 25 year badge from Greater Manchester Officers Branch Chair Ian Fensom



Ronnie Robertson receives his 25 year badge from Dyce Branch Official Raymond Neil



Fred Murray receives his 25 year badge from Grampian Brigade Vice Chair Ted Thomson, FBU Aberdeen



Raymond Neil, Dyce Branch Rep receives his 25 year badge from Grampian Brigade Vice Chair Ted Thomson



Bill Brown receives his 25 year badge from Dyce Branch Official Raymond Neil



Dougie Esson receives his 25 year badge from Dyce Branch Official Raymond Neil

25 YEAR BADGES



Brigade Secretary Bro Davies presents Bro Jones with his 25 year badge at Ellesmere Port, Cheshire



Brigade Secretary Bro Davies presents Bro Towns with his 25 year badge at Ellesmere Port, Cheshire



Brigade Secretary Bro Davies presents Bro Healing with his 25 year badge at Ellesmere Port, Cheshire



Bro Allan Nicholls, East Sussex Brigade HQ, receives his 25 year badge from former Brigade Sec John Peck (L), Gordon Ottway (R) Membership Sec and colleagues look on



Harrold Gatenby receives his 25 year badge from Cumbria Brigade Membership Secretary Steve Hunter at Egremont Fire Station



Donny McInnes of Red Watch, Polmadie Fire Station, receives his 25 year badge from Strathclyde Brigade Chair John McDonald



Martin Roters receives his 25 year badge from Membership Sec Tony Cavanagh at Skelmersdale station, Lancashire.
Editor's apologies from previous error



Eddie Cassidy of the Lothian and Borders Brigade receives his 25 year badge from FBU Branch Official Alan Horberry



Tam Russell of Cambuslang Fire Station receives his 25 year badge from Strathclyde Brigade Official Kenny Ross with Blue Watch looking on



Malcolm Eastwood receives his 25 year badge from Hamworthy, Dorset, Branch Secretary Alan St Quintin