

# SUPPORT CALL FOR ENQUIRY - NO MORE SHREWSBURY'S!



A campaign has been launched calling for a national open public enquiry into the building employer / state conspiracy against striking site workers after the 1972 national strike in the building industry. Which led to 24 pickets being sentenced and the worst of these being the two years served by Ricky Tomlinson [of TV fame today] and three years by Des Warren. Des died about a year ago from advanced Parkinson's disease he contracted after a 'liquid cosh' i.e. powerful tranquilliser drugs, was forcibly administered to him while in prison, to attempt to silence his political protests against these jailings and for their release. He was horribly let down by left union officials and labour politicians. We fully support this call. But add the most effective way to honour the 1972 strike and the Shrewsbury Pickets, and the memory of Des Warren, is to ensure nothing like this ever happens again. If it did, especially as UK R&F BWs Cttee has a national strike as one of its main objectives, then pickets should be mounted and strikes called and they should not be called off until anyone jailed as a result of strike action and picketing was released and all legal action stopped. Contact: Mike Abbot (Sec Enquiry) Tel. 0501 7099948

**PHOTOS:** Left - The late Des Warren - Truly great working class hero!  
Below Mass picket in 1972 strike..Demand was for £30 a week!

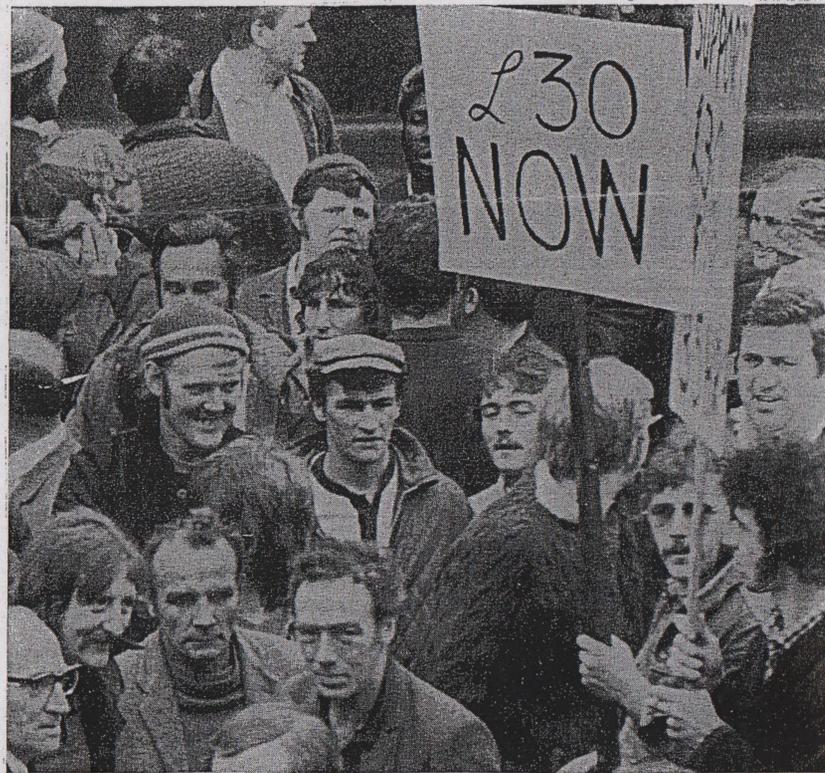
## MEETING IN MANCHESTER - WORD SPREADING!

A meeting of the UK R&F BWs Cttee was held in Manchester on February 17<sup>th</sup>. Electricians in TGWU / EPIU who've been on strike against the Blacklist for over two years were there in force. Some UCATT members came through from Liverpool. Steve Kelly addressed the meeting and there was a lively discussion. Particular concerns were expressed about the poisonous and grossly undemocratic practice of the appointment of Stooze Convener Stewards. And how this completely undermined and removed the ability of site workers to democratically organise a site and leaves building employers and fulltime union officials in total control and site workers at their mercy. One spark angrily condemned 'These Stoozes with their flash BMW's, fat pay cheques and doing nothing for the members.' This vile practise must and will be opposed!

**NEW UNION?** It was also suggested maybe the solution to the destruction of democracy in the unions and the division of site workers with different unions should be to form a new building union run by workers with all stewards and lay and fulltime officials elected and if they don't perform then they can be voted out. Now, that's workers' democracy!

**SHREWSBURY.** Mike Abbot of the Justice 4 Pickets Campaign spoke really well and passionately about the 1972 strike and the pickets who were framed and jailed after the strike. He also emphasised 34 years later we're still fighting for a 35-hour week and the killing and maiming is just as bad.

The meeting gives the R&F Cttee a presence in Manchester. We also hope to have meetings in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Liverpool in the not too distant future as well as our regular London meetings. Also any other cities or towns in Britain where we can do this. Contact us if you want one and we'll do our best to organise this.



## THE UK RANK & FILE BW'S CTTEE

Will help site workers who get in touch with us about any problems you have on site [in confidence].

We have meetings in London and will bring these to other parts of the UK in the near future.

**CALL STEVE ON MOBILE 07749 517074** if you want any help on site or organising a meeting nearby. Hopefully you will not be killed or seriously injured before this!!

Contact: **BUILDING WORKER** c/o The Blackcurrent Centre, 24 St. Michael's Avenue, Northampton NN1 4JQ. **Scotland:** Box 447, 4 Falcon Road West, Edinburgh EH10 4AB. **email:** romfordreds@hotmail.co.uk

# Building Worker

## STOP THIS BLOODY CARNAGE! WHAT AN INDUSTRY WE WORK IN!

Not knowing if a worker will come home safely to see his loved ones, family or friends at the end of the day. And 2006/7 is going to be the worst on record for years with scores killed and countless numbers seriously injured. Some crippled in wheelchairs never to work again.

decent changing rooms and canteens and never again for site workers to be forced to sleep, like dogs, in a container on site. You won't find site agents or foremen on any job in the UK suffering the conditions the workers have to put up with. Oh no, they've got their lovely clean offices and canteens. But then our lives are dirt-cheap and site workers ten a penny in the building industry!!

### NIGHTMARE IN READING

2006 ended with the tragic deaths we know of in Reading. Three young men, Manjit Singh Diop, Kirpal Singh and his cousin Girdip Singh, all from Southall in SW London, died nightmarishly from generator fumes while trying to keep warm in a container on site. Our sympathies go to their families, friends and workmates.

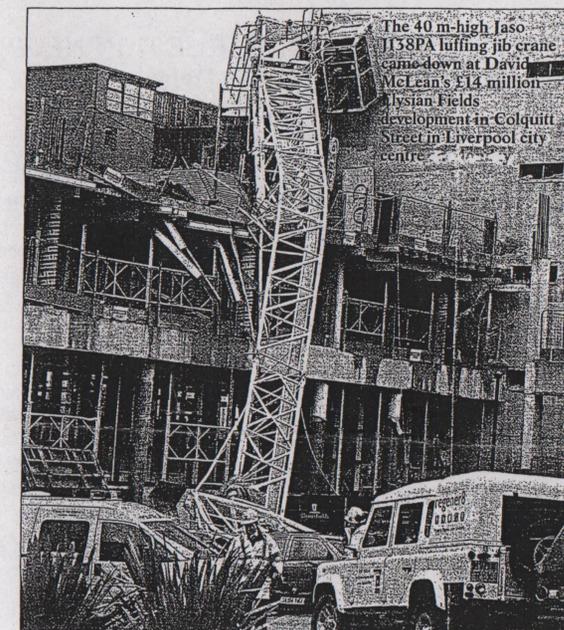
Why were they sleeping overnight on site in a container and not in digs, or their own beds at home like all other building workers in the UK? After all, these containers are designed to store materials, e.g. cement, bricks, wheelbarrows and shovels, and certainly not to be used as canteens or changing rooms and most definitely not to sleep in overnight or at anytime.

It looks like some greedy contractor or sub contractor the men worked for didn't want to pay for a hotel or B&B and the workers could have been under pressure to finish something before Xmas and didn't want to lose their jobs just before a two week shutdown of the industry. We can only guess the exact reason at this point. Whatever this was, someone in site management must have known this was going on and some employer or other is responsible for these horrific deaths. But if it is left to the bosses and HSE no one in management will ever be legally called or held to account or responsible for this. That's why site workers must do something!!

### ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

We have all experienced the sort of absolute contempt and callous disregard building employers have for the lives of site workers. We've all been there! It's now time to tell these heartless bosses to stick their bonus schemes and stupid pricework jobs up their well-padded arses!!

We must call and fight for Direct Employment with good basic pay and health and safety on site. Also



## DEATH AND MAIMING STARTS 2007 FOR SITE WORKERS

2007 had hardly started when we heard a crane had collapsed on a site in Liverpool. We don't know the names of the workers yet. Miraculously the crane driver survived but a worker below the crane was killed. This crane was put up by the same company, Falcon Crane Hire, as the site in London's Battersea where a crane collapsed and killed the driver and a member of the public below in 2006.

Surely it's time for crane drivers and other site workers to consider striking until all cranes and sites in general are made safe. And all facilities and machinery on site are inspected and passed 'fit for purpose', to coin a political phrase!

Steve Kelly -Secretary UK R&F BW's Cttee

P2 The UK Rank & File Building Worker's Committee has arrived!  
P3 UCATT - 'Cinderella' Union / P4 No More Shrewsbury's!

## ONE AGREEMENT – ONE UNION – ONE MOVEMENT! UK R&F BW'S CTTEE HAS ARRIVED!

In the last *Building Worker* we reported on the formation of a new rank & file organisation for site workers called the UK Rank & File Building Workers Committee and that a steering committee has been elected to run the organisation. We now report back on the meeting for site workers held in London on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2006, as advertised in *Building Worker*.

### OUTCOME EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS!

The meeting room was full and there were members, including site stewards and branch secretaries, from GMB, TGWU / AMICUS and UCATT present. Chippies, brickies, general workers, steel erectors and electricians from sites all over London, including Terminal 5. Some were not in a union but were equally welcome. There was also a representative from sparks in Manchester striking against the Blacklist and for the JIB regards direct employment and the right to belong to and organise a recognised trade union on site. He delivered a message of support to the meeting and a collection was taken for them as well as messages of solidarity.

### SO SUCCESSFUL CONSTRUCTION NEWS COVERED MEETING

It's true to write the Nov 28<sup>th</sup> meeting announced the arrival of the UK R&F BW's Cttee. Any doubts about this were expelled when the building employers' paper *Construction News* reported our arrival in a prominent article on 7.12.06 which referred to the meeting with quotes from Steve Kelly, Secretary of the organisation, and Brian Higgins a UCATT member speaking from the platform. The Con News article was an out and out political attack on, and also alerted building employers and others UK wide about, the R&F Cttee. Huge recognition nonetheless and it showed how worried they are, as will be Union General and National Secretaries and full-time union officials everywhere. Speaker after speaker from the floor spoke out against the deteriorating conditions in the industry and attack upon attack on their wages and working conditions. Steel erectors told how their employers were trying to do away with their national agreement, Naeci, particularly the direct employment guaranteed in this, while bringing in and exploiting cheap migrant labour. Sparks said their employers were doing the same to JIB. All said this will be fought and the meeting and the UK R&F BW's Cttee agreed to fully support this.

### THE BLACKLIST

Quite a few at the meeting angrily said this was being stepped up, with Olympics in mind but also UK wide, and used against union activists and militants [like the Manchester Sparks] to keep them off the sites and stop them organising and passing on the experience gained in previous battles [like the sparks on the Jubilee Line in the 1990's and brickies and hods in the Laing Lock Out in 85/86] There was general agreement the only successful way to fight the Blacklist, i.e. win the right to work and organise, is by taking strike action to stop it.

### SUPPORT FOR MIGRANT WORKERS UNITY IS STRENGTH!

It was particularly encouraging and significant when contributors from all trades and sections spoke of how we must not allow the bosses and politicians, and even some union officials, to use migrant workers to divide and rule by scapegoating and blaming them for poor wages and conditions or undermining the national agreements of sparks and erectors. All agreed full-time union officials are to blame for the wages and conditions they negotiate. We should call on migrant workers to join us in the struggle for much better basic rates and safer and better working conditions for all site workers on the basis of 'Unity is Strength'. We'll never achieve anything with a divided workforce!

**SO PLEASE JOIN US. AND WHEN WE ALL UNITE IN ONE BIG RANK & FILE MOVEMENT THE KILLING AND MAIMING AND DEGRADATION WILL STOP!**

**Word spreading! ....meeting in Manchester – see back page**

### PIECE DE RESISTANCE ONE AGREEMENT!!

Sparks and steel erectors have always understandably guarded their respective national agreements which have been a bit better than the Working Rule Agreement covering the majority of site workers in the UK. Those not covered by the JIB and Naeci at the meeting were delighted when the theme and spirit of unity was continued by a striking Manchester electrician who suggested the UK R&F BW's Cttee should adopt a policy of ONE [BETTER!] AGREEMENT for all site, including migrant, workers. This would end the division created by separate agreements for different groups of site workers and would also counter employers ripping up JIB and Naeci. The suggestion was enthusiastically agreed and the UK R&F BW's Cttee is now committed to working for ONE AGREEMENT.

### WHY NOT ONE UNION – ONE MOVEMENT AS WELL?

Because of the complete lack of faith, expressed by all at the meeting, in full-time union officials and how often they sell out, it was also suggested we should go for ONE UNION and ONE MOVEMENT as well as one agreement. And we don't mean one One Super Union Bureaucracy like TGWU / AMICUS which removes officials even further from and makes them even less accountable to the rank and file who they're SUPPOSED to represent! We mean one big fully democratic and accountable industrial union for all site workers! Steve Kelly added that full-time officials were cutting out rank and file workers and TU members from having any say Olympic Construction Projects in particular and wages and conditions negotiations/deals in general [e.g. with TGWU Asst Gen Sec and TUC rep on Olympic Delivery Authority Barry Camfield meeting Ken Livingstone and then its done and dusted with workers knowing nothing!] The UK R&F BW's Cttee is here to make sure rank and file workers and trade unionists have a say and real influence in these matters in future.

### NEED ANOTHER NATIONAL STRIKE LIKE 1972!

Brian Higgins spoke from the platform about the 1972 national building workers' strike and how it would take another national strike to get the basic wages and good and safe working conditions all site workers need and deserve today. With £20ph and a 35 hour week what we should be going for at present. The meeting agreed and this and the action it will take to get it will become one of the major objectives of the UK R&F BW's Cttee. No wonder they're worried!

He also mentioned the UK R&F BW's Cttee wasn't asking site workers to do things they were not prepared to do themselves as this would be immoral. Sparks and steel erectors have been in a few battles and no doubt will be in a few more. And the Laing Lock Out Committee, in 1986 successfully defied a High Court Injunction brought against them by John Laing under the 1982 anti-union laws to stop them picketing, meeting, even speaking over a dispute they had about being blacklisted and sacked. In response, they stepped up picketing, meeting and speaking. Brian Higgins was chair of the Lock Out Cttee and all on the Cttee were BWG supporters!!

### LAST BUT NOT LEAST STOP THE KILLING AND MAIMING!

Real anger was expressed by all about the wanton killing and maiming of site workers in so called site accidents and the grief, pain and suffering it causes for the families, friends and workmates of all those affected by this. The main objective of the UK R&F BW's Cttee, above all, will be to stop this. If we cant do that, what else?

## UNION LEADERS TAKE ASTAND ON DIRECT EMPLOYMENT - WHO'RE THEY KIDDING?

National officials of UCATT and other unions with construction sections appear to be taking a stand on Direct Employment by refusing to sign an Industrial Relations Agreement for Olympic construction projects. This unless employers in the Olympic Construction Consortium, led by Laing O'Rourke, are prepared to guarantee Direct Employment in this agreement.

### CHECK OFF INVOLVED!

It's reported in UCATT's scab official paper 'Building Worker' [for which they stole our title] this apparent stand is also linked to Check Off deals, with union subscriptions deducted from wages, being part of the Olympic Agreement. So we now know the income check off guarantees the biggest single union in construction UCATT [and we also know how check off promotes Self Employment and Lump Labour and many workers on it don't even know they're in a union] has much more to do with this official stance on Direct Employment than the wages, health and safety or working conditions of site workers. Nothing's changed there then!

### WHAT IS THIS OLYMPIC AGREEMENT AND T5 ONE?

It's also very significant union members and site workers, who these fulltime union officials are SUPPOSED to represent, know absolutely nothing about what this so-called Olympic Agreement entails. And if it was about the interests of union members and site workers they'd've been made aware off and consulted about such an agreement and...god, the employers and fulltime union officials forbid!.....even allowed a vote on it! None of this happened of course.

It's also been reported union [mis] leaders are pushing for a Heathrow 'T5 Plus' type of agreement. What is this 'Plus' T5 Agreement when workers don't know what the original one was/is? It is not the direct employment and good wages paradise they'd have the world believe it was. There is self employment and some super exploited lump labour on T5, which is common practise on sites 'cos it suits employers!

## NOT SO CHARMING!

On hearing Amicus and the TGWU are planning a very aggressive recruitment campaign in construction, assuming members vote for a merger, and when asked about UCATT's attitude to this and if they would consider joining such a merger, UCATT General Secretary Alan Ritchie was quoted as saying: *'There is a real danger of becoming a Cinderella section because you are fighting for resources with all the other industries.'* [covered by other unions]. Resources and conditions for fulltime officials and not those for site workers or union members he means of course!

**THE THREE UGLY BROTHERS!** We think a much more realistic literary analogy with that particular fairytale would be comparing the UCATT, TGWU and AMICUS General Secretaries with the three ugly members of Cinderella's family. For all the good these three do their own members in particular and site workers in general with their three year deals, allowing employers a free hand to attack wage and conditions and doing virtually nothing to stop the killing and maiming of site workers. One fully Democratic, with ALL officials ELECTED, and Accountable Industrial Union for ALL site workers and not some fairytale about any fulltime officials caring about the rights, wages and working conditions of site workers [as opposed to feathering their own fulltime nests] is what is needed! A Pumpkin Carriage to UCATT House anyone?

Union officials are forever banging on about something they call bogus self employment. However it's obvious these same officials have no problem whatsoever with Bogus Agreements which suit Building Employers and fulltime officials and most certainly not rank and file trade union members.

### R&F ANGER ALSO A FACTOR!

It is also of considerable significance steel erectors and electricians are up in arms and threatening strike action if their respective employers do away with their respective national agreements, Naeci and the JIB, and the Direct Employment guaranteed in these. So of course national fulltime union officials have to appear to take a stand on this in Olympic Projects to try to deflect some of this anger away from FTO's [Fulltime Officials] who rank and file union members do not trust one little bit!

### AND THESE FTO'S GIVE US THE WRA! WE SHOULD GIVE THEM W.A.R!!

Don't forget these are the same GMB, UCATT and TGWU officials who give us those truly pathetic three year deals, which are so piss-weak they actually encourage casualisation, self employment and Lump Labour, and they effect a large majority of site workers in the industry. Now today this is spilling over into steel erectors' and electricians' occupations and conditions. Construction News reports 'if no deal is agreed, the Olympic sites will be run under the WRA with local pay negotiations.' Let battle commence!

### ALSO ONE EYE ON UK R&F BW'S CTTEE!

Neither do we think it is a coincidence they seem to be taking this stance, sabre rattling, just as the R&F BW's Cttee appears on the scene and one of our main policy planks is for Direct Employment and also the Pension and Sick Pay Schemes, safety and good basic wages for all site workers which should go with DE!!

So if you want real Direct Employment and all that should go with it, then go with us in fighting for this and all the other policy objectives we have. We'll only ever get! and keep! what we fight for!!



*Ritchie the 'Cinderella Man'  
- talking Balls!*