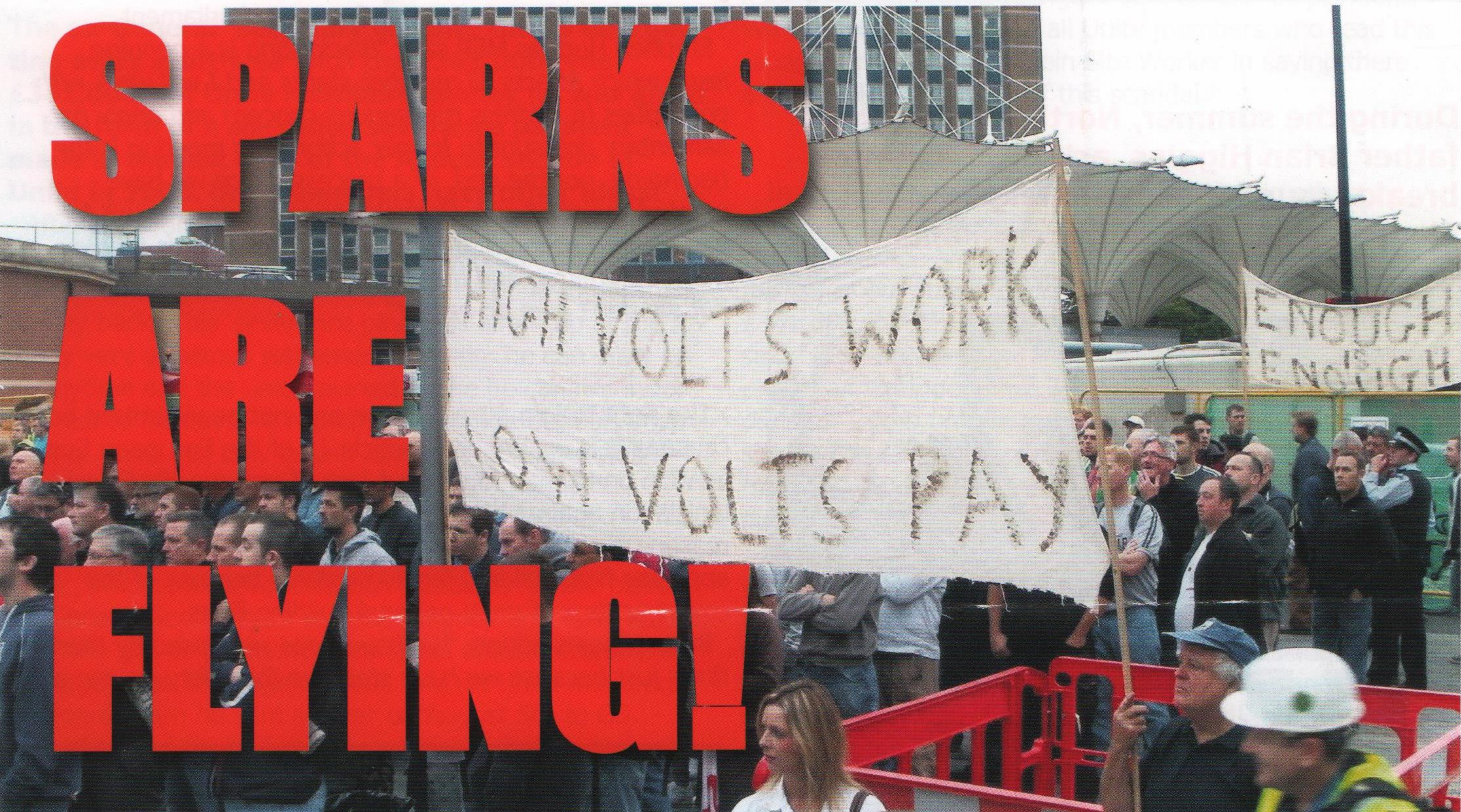


# SITE WORKER

Autumn 2011

## 35% PAY CUT? WE SAY NO WAY!



**Our fight must now be against the planned JIB deskilling and up to 35% pay cuts proposed for March 2012 by 8 big electrical contractors who just happen to have huge construction projects in the pipeline for the coming years.**

NG Bailey, Crown House, T Clarke, Spie Matthew Hall, Grattes, W Smith MJN, BBES and Shepherd have pulled out of the JIB agreement and announced their own derisory and insulting new hourly rates and therefore intend to downgrade most Sparks in the process. The result? £10.50 for tray and trunking etc, £12 for wiring and £14 for terminating. We kid you not!

**500 SPARKS & PIPEFITTERS & OTHER TRADES SAY NO!**

In response to this unprecedented and vicious attack on the JIB, 500 very angry Unite Construction section members and other site workers attended a Rank and File meeting at the Conway Hall in London in August. They let the two fulltime Unite Construction Officers on the platform know in no uncertain manner they will not accept this attack. Jerry Hicks and Steve Acheson, a blacklisted

Spark, received thunderous applause when they spoke to the meeting. Steve Kelly who chaired the meeting said this showed how we all feel about the issue.

A National Rank and File Action Committee was elected (yes ELECTED!) by a show of hands. This is what workers' trade union democracy really is. A motion was passed, again by a democratic vote, calling on Unite to organise a ballot of all rank and file construction section members and to set up a campaign to fight these attacks.

**LEEDS UNITE MEETING A LOAD OF WAFFLE AND HOT AIR!**

Two of the newly formed national committee went to a Unite Construction meeting in Leeds on August 17th called by Bernard McAuley. We have never heard such waffle and twaddle in our lives said the two committee members afterwards. Mr. McAuley, the National Construction Officer for Unite, called our R&F group, which is supported by many Unite construction members, a splinter group and said we must all pull together to fight these attacks. But then said, to our total disbelief, this would have to wait till next January! **(Continued on back page)**

# Brussels result!

**During the summer, Northampton grandfather Brian Higgins achieved a major breakthrough in his campaign against the illegal blacklisting of trade unionists.**



K.Ewing, Brian, S.Hughes, Laszlo Andor, S. Acheson

Brian Higgins explains: "When Northampton Ucatt Branch initiated a campaign for an EU Law against industrial blacklisting to try to counter dreadful performances of Ucatt and Unite General Secretaries and lawyers after the discovery of the Consulting Association Blacklist and contacted Glenis Willmott MEP. They could never imagine their secretary would end up with other blacklisted trade unionists and the Blacklist Support Group, a law professor and Stephen Hughes MEP at a meeting with Lazlo Andor the EU Commissioner in Brussels - see pic above - and get his sympathy in return. The genuinely positive response from Commissioner Andor exceeded all our expectations - It is truly amazing."

The construction companies identified as participating in the blacklisting operation include household names based and operating across Europe including: Skanska (Sweden), Bam (Netherlands), Vinci (France), Laing O'Rourke (Ireland), Sir Robert McAlpine, Balfour Beatty, Kier, Costain, Carillion (UK) to name but a few.

### Options

Also attending the meeting was Professor Keith Ewing from Kings College London (a leading academic in international law and human rights issues) who presented possible legislative options open to the European Union highlighting the fact that many of the companies involved

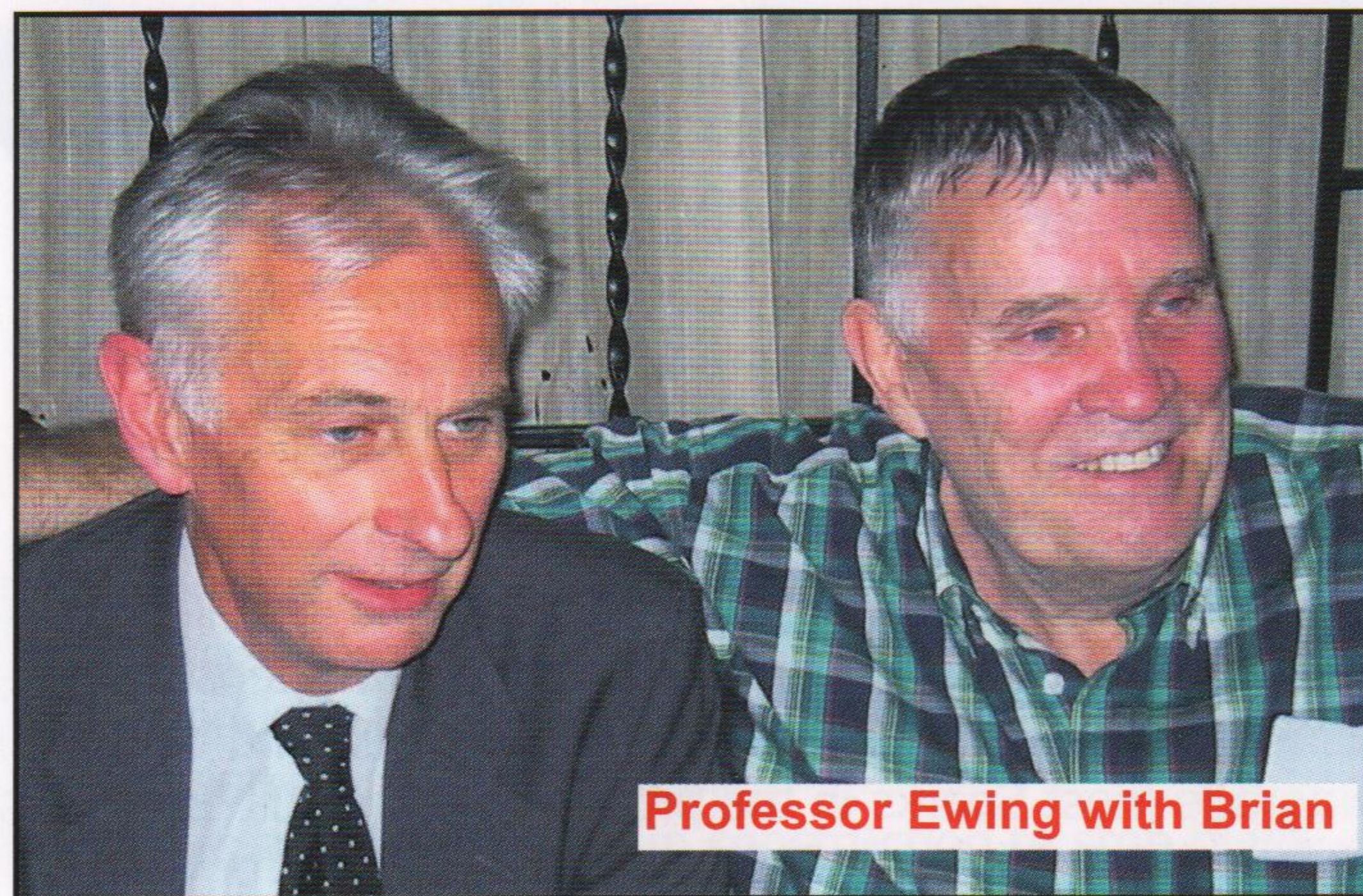
in the blacklist were European based. He also drew attention to the fact that blacklisting violates many provisions of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and that the EU had the authority and responsibility to respond to this major violation of health and safety standards. After Keith had spoken, Steve, a blacklisted spark from Manchester along with Brian addressed Mr Andor and presented him with copies of their blacklist files. The meeting was arranged by Stephen Hughes MEP and Glenis Willmott MEP (Labour's Leader in Europe Parliament) who are taking up the issue in the European Parliament.

Stephen Hughes MEP said: "Blacklisting is a genuine issue which affects all member states and I will work with colleagues to address this serious concern and apply parliamentary pressure to trigger action. This meeting is the beginning, not the end, of a process. Once we have planted the seed with Commissioner Andors, we will follow up with action in the European Parliament's Employment Committee and the full Parliament. It will take time but we don't give up easily!"

### Covert action

The right to join a trade union and not be victimised because of it is enshrined in Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights but lack of any specific EU wide legislation against blacklisting of individuals for safety reasons means that thousands of workers have suffered appalling financial and family hardship because of the covert actions of multi-national building firms.

Brian Higgins added: "We have been victimised by these firms just because we have stood up for safety issues; a



Professor Ewing with Brian

cabin to dry wet clothes, asbestos, holiday pay. For many of us this conspiracy has meant years on the dole and family strains. But we are not just fighting for ourselves. This evil practice is almost certainly taking place in other industries and across Europe. I refuse to stop campaigning for the trade union rights on safety, working conditions and wages the 'blacklist' is meant to prevent us doing. Now we're taking the fight to Europe on behalf of workers here and the likes of Poland, Spain, Ireland and Greece. In fact anywhere blacklisting is going on."

# Daylight Robbery

**The ex-General Secretary of Unite thinks he's getting away scott-free with the £361,000 (yes £361,000!) of Unite members' money he was given in the form of a so-called severance payment made in the last days of the Amicus section of Unite in 2008. Unite members have other ideas!**

After they found out about this quite recently many Unite branches and members were extremely angry and are demanding that something must be done to get their money back. This 'severance payment' is on top of the already very generous retirement pension he can draw on at anytime and the union owned house he can live in for the rest of his days - a retirement package ordinary members of Unite can only dream about. It obviously wasn't performance related!

## JERRY HICKS TAKES ISSUE

Jerry, who came second to Len McLuskey in the election for General Secretary to replace Simpson and Tony Woodley [who got no payment extra to his official retirement package] took the anger of rank and file unite members on board when he sent a letter on August 5th to GS McLuskey and the National Executive Council on the subject of Simpson's pay off and then issued a press release

about the matter on August 15th. Jerry has had no reply to his letter to date.

In his letter to GS McLuskey, Jerry wrote that the severance payment appears to be a breach of union rules and added he is concerned the payment might be unlawful. He mentioned he was also concerned to hear about ex-Unite Assistant General Secretary Bayliss being involved with Mr Simpson's payment given his past involvement in other financial scandals and he believes Bayliss himself left the union with a six figure sum severance payment. We're absolutely positive all Unite members who read this (apart from FTOs!) will join Site Worker in saying there must be NO COVER UP of this scandal.

## THE PRESS RELEASE.

In this, Jerry was quoted as saying, among other things, that *"The severance payment of £361,000 has caused outrage among members at what they see as a misuse of our subscriptions in the obscene payment of £361,000 to retired General Secretary Simpson."* He also said *"I do not see how Mr Simpson who retired at the end of an extended term of office and was not made redundant would be entitled to a severance payment. It stinks. The £361,000 of members' money must be returned to whom it belongs, that being the members. I aim for this to happen by whatever means."*

Thousands of Unite members, Jerry Hicks and now Site Worker are calling for the opening of the books and for this £361,000 to be given back to Unite members to whom it belongs. No ifs, no buts. No one's asking for the very generous retirement package and union house you've already got, though never earned!, but we are asking for our money back.

**Do the honourable thing for once, Mr Simpson!**

## NEWS IN BRIEF... WORKERS UNITE AND FIGHT!

### Are you on the blacklist?

There are over 3,200 building workers on the blacklist but only 350 blacklist files have been released.

If you want to check whether you were on the Consulting Association blacklist you need to call the Information Commissioners Office (who have now got copies of the entire blacklist database) on either: 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745

When you get through ask about the building industry blacklist and they will take your details and send you a form in the post.

You need to complete it with name, National In-

surance number, jobs you worked on etc... and if you have a file, they will send it to you in the post.



### Tribunal

Blacklist victim Dave Smith recently won his pre-hearing review against Carillion. he is suing them for £175,000 for breaching his human rights. His case will now go to a full tribunal in January 2012.

Dave said: " I was blacklisted for 10 years. My pay went down from £36,000 to £12,000 a year - my kids were on milk tokens and it caused immense stress to all my family, nearly bankrupting me "

We say: Good luck Dave in your fight!

**SPARKS ARE FLYING! RANK AND FILE FIGHT BACK AGAINST PAY CUT (Continued from front page)**

Why should we wait till January? Why can't we take on these firms now we asked? We can't do that said the bold Mr. McAuley as we need more meetings [like the handful at Leeds meeting?] and a recruitment drive first. What a joke. Recruit workers while employers are dismantling union/employer agreement and cutting wages? Some officials must live in a parallel universe.

**R&F DEMAND ACTION NOW & SHOW HOW TO DO IT!**

On the same evening as the meeting in Leeds, a report back was given to the London Unite Construction Section Branch meeting. About 200 attended and they were rightly furious on hearing about waiting till January. It was then democratically decided to set up a R&F led campaign in London. The first protest demo against the attack on JIB was held at Blackfriars Station BBES site on August 24th with over 200 turning up. Then another 200 plus turned up at the Stratford Westfield site on 31st August. Further protests and demos will be held in London. Manchester Sparks are doing the same where there are sites the employers' splinter group have contracts on. Action has also taken place in Newcastle with plans being laid for Scotland and Hull.

**NO SIGN OF UNITE OFFICIALS BUT R&F CPN BUILDS AND GOES ON!**

The campaign and momentum is really building quite quickly but so far Unite officials have been conspicuous by their absence. Why? We have been called a splinter group, Trotskyists, "wreckers," anti-union and trouble-makers by the Unite bureaucracy. These appointed Unite officials should be directing their attacks at the 8 firms who are currently in the process of wrecking our national union/employer agreement and cutting our hourly wage rate and working conditions to pieces in the process! They should be concentrating their anger and vitriol on the real wreckers and splinter merchants. Not on the rank and file of the union who are taking these firms on before it is too late. This is what these finger pointing name calling officials should be doing alongside us! We say to these officials, there are only two sides in a struggle of this nature - ours and theirs. i.e. The workers versus the bosses. Time for you to join us in this "do or die" fight.

We add that there must be NO SELL OUT as has happened in the past and we demand the right to vote on all employers' offers and proposals. The only thing we will accept is that the JIB stays as it is but we'll also accept a pay rise if it is offered!

We intend to carry on until the employers completely withdraw this outrageous attack and also know we will need strike action if employers do not pull back. We are prepared to do this if employers don't back off. In the

past, elected sparks' stewards on site would have called mass meetings and a vote would have been taken and no doubt strike action would've followed on an issue like this. But, disgracefully, we don't have elected stewards as they've been replaced by people who often are just union/employer appointed stooge convenors. But if mass meetings are denied on site we just have to call them off site if this proves necessary. Again we ask: where's the ballot?

**WE ASK ALL TRADES & OCCUPATIONS TO UNITE WITH US.**

We would be naïve if we were not aware that the giant general construction companies, who run and absolutely control the industry, must have given their approval and support to this breakaway group of electrical contractors. They couldn't have done this and provoked the response they have if they didn't already have this. It is equally obvious the water is being severely tested by them so if they beat the traditionally well organised and quite militant JIB trades then the construction giants will cut loose on the wages of the more numerical trades like brickies and chippies and they will deskill your trades just as they are attempting to do to ours. They'll also come for semi-skilled workers like concreters and groundworkers and also general workers on the sites.

**FRONT LINE WILL NEED REINFORCEMENTS!**

We JIB trades have been placed in the frontline to defend our wages and conditions and if this threat is not withdrawn we can only succeed with other trades and occupations reinforcing our ranks and standing alongside us in working class industrial solidarity, in a union or not, in common cause and purpose.

If it takes a national strike in construction to stop building employers turning this industry into a low wage, cheap labour economy with all trades and occupations regraded and downgraded to achieve this. Where the only thing that matters is PROFIT no matter what this costs the workers, without who there would be no industry, in it. Then we must surely be prepared and prepare for this. Let us all stand together and make sure we stop what's happening before it's too late.

**UNITED WE STAND – DIVIDED THEY WIN!**

Allan Keys



Contact us at [siteworkers@virginmedia.com](mailto:siteworkers@virginmedia.com)

# SITEWORKER

By supporters of the national Rank & File... Get involved: details below

## £7500 slashed from YOUR wages!

### This is what we are fighting to stop!

If we don't fight, we will lose ten times more than we would

**WE CONDEMN THE** companies which walked away from the JIB agreement, but we condemn the others still sitting round the table while sticking the boot in.

**ALL the companies** are trying to slash pay and deskill the job. This is an industry-wide attack.

Sparks on Naeci sites are JIB-graded. If employers get away with this on our sites, what chance do Blue Book sites stand then?

**We MUST stand together.** The employers are doing this to make mega-profits across the construction industry. Those are coming out of YOUR wages.

Mass industrial action can defend our rates. There is no room for negotiation and talking at the expense of workers' pay and conditions.

Once massed together, we should stay together. We need site committees on every site bringing together all trades, defending our rates and jobs, and standing to improve them!

#### JOIN THE UNION

You need to be a member of the union.

We have no illusions in the officials who sold us out so often.

But we need to organise to defend ourselves, and the way to do that is as union members.

**Join the union, support the Rank & File, back our demand for election of all stewards and officials.**

by going on strike.

**We have to fight: we have no choice**

**This concerted effort by the employers to smash our Agreement needs to be met with a concerted response of mass industrial action!**

- NO pay cuts
- NO deskilling
- DEFEND rates & jobs
- ACTION NOW—no delay!

#### JOIN THE PROTESTS

**THERE ARE DEMONSTRATIONS AT SITES EVERY WEEK, IN MANCHESTER, LIVERPOOL, NEWCASTLE, GLASGOW, LONDON...**

Contact us at the details below for north-west info, or at the email on the back for anywhere else.

**This needs to escalate to every town and city.** No protest in your area? Get in touch and we'll help you organise one!

Protests are leading to unofficial strike action at some sites. Unite is promising to ballot for official strikes. The companies are getting nervous. **ACTION GETS RESULTS!**

#### Blacklisting

**We cannot separate this from the historic and ongoing injustice of mass blacklisting.**

Over 3,300 of our best activists have been singled out by the employers purely because they are good trade unionists.

These men have been systematically denied work, some for decades, and we need these activists back on site to lead us in struggle!

**Fighting the latest attacks and demanding justice for the blacklisted men are two sides of the same coin.**

Help the Blacklist Support Group to support blacklisted workers, [blacklistsg@googlemail.com](mailto:blacklistsg@googlemail.com), [www.hazards.org/blacklistblog](http://www.hazards.org/blacklistblog), facebook 'Blacklist Support Group'

#### NATIONAL SHOP STEWARDS NETWORK

The Network (NSSN) was set up in 2007 by Bob Crow, leader of the RMT trade union.

It brings together trade unionists from all trade unions, as a democratic campaigning organisation standing up for workers.

**The NSSN fully supports our fight against pay cuts and deskilling.**

**You should support the NSSN.** Find out more and get your union branch / site to affiliate, [www.shopstewards.net](http://www.shopstewards.net) or 07952 283 558.

#### CONTACT THE RANK & FILE IN THE NORTH-WEST

For more copies of this leaflet, more information, to help out or to ask questions, contact us care of Steve Acheson, national steering committee member. Ring Steve on 07949 335 390, or send an email to [stevenacheson53@googlemail.com](mailto:stevenacheson53@googlemail.com), or write to 13 Thompson Close, Denton, M34 2PQ

**MASS INDUSTRIAL ACTION WINS — THE TIME TO STRIKE IS NOW!**

This leaflet was issued by Siteworker supporters in September. Since then, MJN decided to stay in the JIB. Everything else here is accurate. We urge all sparks to read what the employers' attacks mean for you!

# SITEWORKER

SPECIAL

## IF WE LET THEM DESKILL US - THEY WILL DESTROY US

In the current issue of **Site Worker** we say: things could get worse, with the total lack of democracy and accountability in the unions. Things like the sacking of 430 rank and file trade unionists on the BP site in Hull could become commonplace. Building employers are now coming for contracting electricians.

**JIB & HOURLY RATES NOW UNDER SERIOUS THREAT.** 8 firms have pulled out of the JIB Agreement including T. Clarke, SES, Crown House, Balfour Kilpatrick, NG Bailey so far with others planning to do the same. Who's to say they won't all follow? It has also been mentioned there could be 3 new hourly rates, £10.50 for tray, conduit and trunking - £12 for wiring and £14 for terminating. This is the SMA grade we have been fighting to avoid in recent years and have kept at bay, but this time it's different. W. Smith Ltd, BK and NG Bailey have written to their employees and told them new rates will start in March next year.

### **THIS IS A DECLARATION OF CLASS WAR.**

These firms will decide who gets allocated certain work on site. So an approved spark who currently gets £16.25ph will now get £10.50 if he or she is installing conduit. The other sparks on the same site will get £12 and £14 respectively. Will they share the work around from week to week so everyone gets a share of the pie or will it be decided on who is the biggest arse licker or the foreman's mate? Perhaps you could bribe the foreman or bring him an apple every week or get him a bottle of plonk at Xmas. It is outrageous and doesn't bear thinking about. What it does is scream out DIVIDE & RULE!

### **PROFIT BEFORE ALL ELSE & TO HELL WITH THE WORKERS? NO WAY WE SAY!**

It is clearly all about profit for these big firms like BK and NG Bailey. This is blatant exploitation and naked unbridled profiteering by the obscenely greedy and rich bosses and directors who own these firms. It is Capitalism gone mad and we must not allow this.

### **UNITE TALKING TO EMPLOYERS. WE KNOW WHERE THAT CAN LEAD!**

We believe unite are talking to our employers about these proposals. Why, what is there to talk about? Unite Officials should just say NO and tell employers there will be industrial action if they do not honour existing JIB Agreements. But of course we all know we cannot always just trust Unite Officials in construction. They have sold out and let us down very badly in the past. We should let Unite and employers know we reject these scandalous proposals out of hand and will not tolerate them under any circumstances.

### **TIME TO GET OFF OUR KNEES AND FIGHT.**

The time has come for the rank and file to get off our knees and take the bosses on. We must not stand by and let JIB rates be sabotaged in such a scandalous and outrageous manner. We deserve to be treated with respect and be paid accordingly. We need a pay rise not pay cuts! We should call on the union to ballot for industrial action now. If they don't act quickly we should down tools anyway and this will force them round the table. And we have got to ensure some rank and file sparks are round that table and there's no sell outs! Some sparks might decide to act now and if they do we must support them and build on this.

Solidarity action must follow any moves by our fellow/sister sparks and we should target and try to shut down all major sites. Pickets should be put on site gates and occupations can take place where necessary. R&F action committees must be set up in all localities where possible and a National R&F action committee should be set up to coordinate strike action and flying pickets. All action committees must regularly report back to mass meetings of sparks. There should be no return to work unless ALL the proposed changes to come into force in March next year are withdrawn. Mass meetings must vote on all offers. Please raise these things at your branch and on site. Arrange meetings in your areas to discuss and plan things.

Finally we say to site workers in other occupations: Employers are targetting the best organised sections and ones with most militant records first - if they get away with cutting our wages so savagely, indeed at all, they will come for you next. We ask you to support our fight and if you decide to we will support you in your struggle. If it takes a national strike in the building industry to protect all of our wages and conditions and improve them where possible, which is what unions are supposed to be about, then so be it.

**500 workers attended a rank and file meeting in London in August to agree a call for action on all sites and for the union to mobilize now. Join us in this struggle!**

contact us at [siteworkers@virginmedia.com](mailto:siteworkers@virginmedia.com)

**REMEMBER THE MINIMUM WAGE IS THE LEAST YOU CAN GET**

UPTO 9 CONSTRUCTION COMPANIES ARE IN THE PROCESS OF WITHDRAWING FROM A NUMBER OF INDUSTRIAL NATIONAL AGREEMENTS.

SOME EMPLOYERS HAVE ALREADY SERVED 90 DAY NOTICE OF NEW CONTRACTS OF EMPLOYMENT TO ITS WORKERS ON A TAKE IT OR SACK YOUR SELF BASIS.

THESE NEW CONTRACTS ARE NOT FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE COMPANIES WORKFORCE BUT TO EXPLOIT ITS WORKERS INTO ACCEPTING LOWER WAGES, TERMS AND CONDITIONS.

WORKERS WILL BE **REGRADED** THIS LEADING TO POSSIBLE WAGES REDUCTIONS ALONG WITH OTHER PAYMENTS I.E. EXPENSES, PENSIONS.

ELECTRICAL WORK WILL BE SPLIT INTO DIFFERENT COMPONENTS I.E. CONTAINMENT, WIRING AND GLANDING, CONNECTING AND COMMISIONING.

THE AGREEMENT WISHES TO INTRODUCE THE GRADE OF INSTALLER TO DO WORK THAT OF THE TRADITONAL SKILLED WORKERS AT A FRACTION OF THE PRICE.

MANY OF OUR PRESENT SKILLED WORKERS WILL HAVE TO ACCEPT TO A DOWN GRADE OF THEIR SKILLS AND LOSS OF PAY.

GRADING OF OPERATIVES WILL BE DONE IN HOUSE BY COMPANIES AS WILL APPEALS AND IF NOT SATISFIED IT WILL REQUIRE A FURTHER APPEAL TO A GRADING COMMITTEE.

WILL THIS PROPOSED AGREEMENT IMPROVE SITE SAFETY AND MAKE FOR A MORE STABLE INDUSTRY.

WHILE AT WORK WILL OPERATIVES BE EXPECTED TO INTERCHANGE FROM ONE GRADE TO ANOTHER ALONG WITH THE VARIOUS RATES OF PAY AND EXPENSES ETC.

WILL THIS AGREEMENT ENCOURAGE SHORT TERM EMPLOYMENT AND FREQUENT LAY OFFS.

WHAT CRITERIA WILL BE USED FOR HIRING AND FIRING OF THE VARIOUS GRADED WORKERS AT SITE LEVEL.

WILL THE COMPANIES ATTITUDE TO THE USE OF AGENCY/ SELF EMPLOYMENT BE ANY DIFFERENT THAN AT PRESENT.

WILL COMPANIES RESPECT OUR SITE REPS. ANY BETTER THAN AT PRESENT OR OUR UNION.

WILL THE BLACKLISTING OF WORKERS BE IMPROVED BECAUSE OF THIS PROPOSED AGREEMENT?

WHAT IS THE ATTITUDE OF THE 9 COMPANIES TO THE INTRODUCTION OF GOVERNMENT EQUAL RIGHTS LEGISLATION REGARDING AGENCY WORKERS.

**IF THIS PROPOSED AGREEMENT GOES AHEAD THE KNOCK ON AFFECT WILL BE FELT THROUGH OUT ALL ELECTRICAL, MECHANICAL AND ALL CONSTRUCTION WORKERS IN THE INDUSTRY. IT'S TIME TO JOIN WITH UNITE THE UNION IN THE FIGHT BACK AND STOP THIS RACE TO THE BOTTOM BEFORE IT'S BECOMES TO LATE. IF WE ALL STAND TOGETHER NOW THEN VICTORY IS OURS.**