

REVIEW

Flexible Working Time; A guide for trade unionists.

Flexible working time can give workers more control over their work situation and lead to increased leisure time. But too often it is simply imposed by management and is purely intended to serve the 'needs of business'.

Flexible working time arrangements are not necessarily new, but they have gained added impetus in recent years from the drive by government and employers to create a more casualised workforce.

You may ask in whose interest is flexibility? This, the latest LRD booklet as well as covering the various areas of flexibility from Annualized hours to Zero hour contracts, also gives examples of agreements by trade unions. This booklet is an invaluable guide and introduction to what is fast becoming a key issue for shop stewards.

Copies are available at £2.35 from LRD, 78 Blackfriars Road, London. SE1 8HF.

FURTHER BOYCOTT NEWS

In Issue No. 1 we carried a boycott list on Page 1. Since then we have heard of several cases where individual action has spread the boycott. The following is the text of a letter from Dale Campbell-Savours, MP for Workington:

Can I alert your readers to the national boycott of Campbell tinned soups and their associated brand Fray Bentos corned beef. My appeal is, don't buy these products. Earlier this month, I called a debate in Parliament into their activities in the U.K. On August 4th this year, U.S. food giant Campbell soups bought the Homepride factory in my constituency for £58.6 million. Netting £4 million in profits last year, Homepride was an extremely profitable company with huge potential in an expanding market-place. Eleven weeks later they announced its closure. The community of Maryport in North West England and home of the Homepride factory was devastated.

Readers may ask why the closure? The company claims "greater efficiency". The true answer is that Campbells wanted the famous Homepride brand name for themselves and needed to destroy an advanced technology food plant which was competing with their own factories. This takeover and closure is an outrage. We all know that loss making factories can close, but shutting down a highly profitable factory that commands the loyalty of a workforce that has never been on strike in living memory is a gross injustice. American companies cannot be allowed to wreak havoc on areas of high unemployment while destroying peoples livelihood.

This is a beastly affair. It has taken me from Downing Street and a meeting with the Prime

Minister to New York to lobby the American shareholders of Campbells. All to no avail. I am now appealing throughout the country, whoever and wherever you are, whatever your politics, to help us to stop this appalling closure by boycotting Campbell Soups and own-label equivalents made by this company. Campbells argue that this is a "free market" decision. I say to your readers, please search your conscience. Exercise your consumer power by boycotting these products in the same market-place. Perhaps then they will change their minds.

BOYCOTT LIST

Pepsi-Cola - KFC - Walkers
Crisps - Planters - All French
Products - Shell - Esso - P&O
McDonalds - Trent FM -
Campbells Soups - Fray Bentos

If you think work has made your ill,
you need

**Nottinghamshire Trade
Union Safety Committee**
We offer **FREE** testing for Hearing,
Vibration White Finger, Lung
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compensation claims and Health and
Safety information.
Call us at 2 Beech Avenue Mansfield
(01623) 424720 and ask for Tony



*"Aiming
to keep
you safe"*

CONTACTS LIST

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NEWS FROM CATUC

As you may have guessed from the last issue, Notts TU News is not only about informing the Trade Union movement in Nottinghamshire. We are also about promoting locally based TU activity. In particular the work and activities of local Trades Union Councils.

We hope to carry reports on this work in future issues.

NEWS FROM MANSFIELD AND DISTRICT

Mansfield and District TUC, which meets on the 1st Wednesday of the month at the Mansfield Unemployed Workers Centre has identified two priorities for 1996.

First of all by building support locally for the work of MUWC by promoting One Fund For All (OFFA)

The second main priority to be an ongoing Unions Yes 96 campaign aimed at raising the profile of trade unionism in the area and at recruiting unorganised workers.

For more information contact the Secretary
Jon O'Neill on (01623) 424720 (w)

NEWS FROM NOTTINGHAM

Nottingham TUC, which meets on the 3rd Wednesday of each month at the International Community Centre on Mansfield Road in Nottingham, is aiming at 100% affiliation of all local Trade Union branches in Nottingham and District. It also want to get as many delegates going along as possible, especially for its A.G.M. on Wednesday 20th March.

Recent work has included the holding of a Public Meeting on Low Pay and The Minimum Wage in January; Actively supporting the Campaign Against the Immigration and Asylum Bill in Nottingham; supporting efforts to build support for the Merseyside dockers in this area; and sponsoring the Banner Theatre production "Criminal Justice" in Nottingham.

The May Day March and Rally is to be held in Nottingham on Saturday 4th May. Anyone interested in actively getting involved in the organization of this is invited to contact the Secretary, Ian Juniper, on 0115 9582369 (w)

JSA? Job Seekers Allowance

DOLE SCRAPPED!

**Do you want to see wages
drop as the unemployed are
forced into low paid jobs? Do
you realise that as of October
1996 the unemployed can be
forced to work for their
benefits?**

In fact the Child Poverty Action Group recently described JSA as the biggest assault on the Welfare State since it's inception.

In October the dole will be scrapped and replaced by the Jobseeker's Allowance. JSA will take money from those least able to afford it to pay for the tax cuts the Government hopes will save it at the next election.

Jobseeker's Allowance is being introduced at a time when people in work are more worried than ever before that they might soon have to rely on social security. Millions of people are worrying about redundancy, and the Government's response is to take away half of the Unemployment Benefit which they've paid for through their National Insurance Contributions.

We pay National Insurance Contributions to fund benefits everyone can call on when they are unable to earn an income from employment for one reason or another. One of these is Unemployment Benefit, which lasts for up to one year.

The part of Jobseeker's Allowance which replaces Unemployment Benefit will only last for six months. After that, unemployed people will face a means-test. In the 1930s millions of people learnt to hate the means-test: the soldiers who fought the second world war came back determined to banish it forever.

Not only will JSA mean that many more people will face the means-test. JSA also means that a benefit workers have paid for for years is being halved. And your National Insurance Contributions will not be cut to compensate. On the contrary, since 1979, Contributions have been raised by more than half!

The TUC is working with trade unionists and politicians up and down the country to make sure that everyone knows just what Jobseeker's Allowance means. That is why the Declaration against JSA has been launched. If you sign the Declaration you commit yourself to telling your friends and family and people at work about JSA, and why you are opposed to it.

If you would like more information on the campaign, please contact
Notts Jobs not JSA,

% MUWC, 2 Beech Ave,
Mansfield, Notts. NG18 1EY Tel:
(01623) 424720.

Copies of the Declaration, and Issue 2 of the Notts Jobs not JSA newsletter are available from the above address.



NO WAY!

EDITORIAL

We continue to be amazed at where Notts TU News turns up. Issue 3 resulted in enquiries from Cardiff and Southampton. We always welcome any feedback positive or negative, as we always encourage articles and donations.

In this issue, JSA turns up again!! Yes, it is that important a change. We are also carrying a few articles on what help, assistance and resources are available to the movement in Notts.

We hope to publish Issue 5 in time for May Day, and if enough of you take up our greetings offer we will be able to expand the number of pages in Issue 5. The deadline for greetings is April 19th and for articles April 22nd.

Lastly may I convey a big thanks to Unison - Notts County No.1 Branch and Apex - Nottm No.1 Branch for their donations.

Jon O'Neill
On Behalf of Notts TU News

Midlands TUC and North Nottinghamshire TEC

Project Outline

A Trade Union Liaison Officer is employed by North Nottinghamshire TEC and the TUC Regional Council to provide information on education and training and increase training opportunities for employees in the area. The project aims to encourage unions to identify training as a negotiating issue and to develop partnerships on training.

The project aims to become a regional TUC-TEC training project and has the support of the TEC National Council and Investors in People UK. 3,000 union representatives in the Midlands will be helped to negotiate on training. The TUC education service will be used to deliver courses on NVQs, Investors in People, Modern Apprenticeships and the National Targets for Education and Training. Funding will come from participating TECs.

Activities

Two conferences - one on training for unions and one on Investors in People. Core/basic skills course for manual workers, funded and run in partnership with local colleges of further education, trade unions and district councils. Communications and confidence building course for women trade union members accredited through the Open College Network.

A trade union guide on NVQs. Briefings for trade union representatives delivered by the TUC education service on NVQs, Investors in People, Modern Apprenticeships, the National Targets and training as a negotiating issue.

Workplace briefings.

Work with unions, employers and the TEC to set up a workplace nursery. Investors in People advisors' training for union officers.

Outcomes

80 union officers briefed

100 union representatives briefed.

200 union officers and representatives attended conferences.

92 district council workers took part in core/basic skills courses.

40 women trade union members attended communications course.

Contact: **Karen Chapman**
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Tel 01623 827905
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Mansfield Unemployed Workers Centre.

MUWC opened in January 1994. Originally conceived as an idea by Mansfield and District TUC, the centre rapidly gained the support of Mansfield District Council, Notts County Council and the Regional TUC.

MUWC is modelled on the highly successful TUC Unemployed Workers Centre network of 117 centres. Since opening, MUWC have helped over 5000 people with a wide range of services, including Welfare Rights, Career Guidance and Employment Rights. Users are predominately from the Mansfield/Ashfield area - 85%, although 10% of users are from Nottingham.

As a TUC registered centre, MUWC is proud of its record of supporting the trade union movement. Desk top publishing facilities have been used by a wide range of TU branches to produce newsletters, leaflets and posters. MUWC have recently run dayschools on the Jobseekers Allowance for the GMB. MUWC also provided practical support to the CWU 'Stand by your Post' campaign.

MUWC is a clear, practical demonstration of how trade unionists, local authorities and communities can organize and work against the scourges of unemployment and low pay.

For further information, to arrange a speaker at your branch, or to visit MUWC, please phone Jon O'Neill

MAY DAY GREETINGS

Through fortuitous good timing, not planning and foresight, our next issue will be published to coincide with May Day.

As Notts TU News is always begging for money it seems pretty obvious that this good timing allows us to earn some money.

So for £25 we will carry a 1/8th of a page MayDay greeting from yourself in Issue 5. Who said we wouldn't get the hang of this capitalist thing?

Please send your greetings (artwork if possible) to Notts TU News, % 2 Beech Ave, Mansfield, Notts. NG18 1EY by APRIL 19TH.

SAFE Europe

In the European Union 8,000 workers die as a result of accidents at work; 10 million workers are the victims of work accidents or industrial diseases.

This has a huge cost in terms of human tragedy and economic terms, with the direct costs alone estimated at about £22.5 billion.

Since 1988 Europe has been setting minimum standards in health and safety areas as part of the drive towards the completion of the internal market and the freedom of movement of workers. It also assured workers that increased European integration would have a social as well as an economic dimension.

Now the new SAFE (Safety Actions for Europe) programme aims to take that legislation one step further - by ensuring that companies both large and small are aware of their obligations and that best practice is promoted.

Moves are also afoot to persuade the Council of Ministers to adopt outstanding draft directives on physical agents, chemical agents and transport.

The SAFE programme itself will support projects aimed at improving the working environment - especially in small and medium sized firms -

and at identifying methods for reducing accidents at work and the incidence of occupational diseases.

And action will be taken by the European Commission against any member state found not to be enforcing EU legislation on health and safety, helped by the establishment of two new committees.

However there are worries that these will only prove to be fine words and will not be enforced, because resources are being diverted to other areas.

The head of the Health & Safety Unit in Luxembourg admitted last summer that he could not properly monitor the implementation and enforcement of directives already in place; and that resources were being moved away from Health and safety into the Public Health Unit.

I will be lobbying hard with fellow Socialist MEPs to make sure that adequate resources are set aside to tackle these issues: to help empower people on the shop floor in small and medium sized enterprises.

Further details of the SAFE programme can be obtained from: Ronald Haigh, Head of Occupational Health and Hygiene, DGV Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs, Rue de la Loi 200, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium.

Arlene McCarthy MEP

UNION LAW

HAVE YOU HEARD OF THE UNION LAW SCHEME?

The Union Law Scheme was set up jointly by the Law Society and the TUC in 1987. This scheme with the intention of expanding the legal services available to members of TUC affiliated unions through their union. The aim is to encourage union members to seek help on personal and domestic matters so ensuring greater protection of their legal rights.

Legal help to union members on all employment related matters would continue in the normal way through separate arrangements that individual unions would have with their own in-house lawyers and/or law firms.

The services provided under Union Law are as follows:-

*Free initial diagnostic interview on any legal problem (except work related matters);

*A written estimate for the cost of further work or a Legal Aid assessment where appropriate. If a firm estimate is not possible, an indication of the hourly rate for that type of work and of the likely number of hours of work required will be given;

*A fixed price Conveyance with the overall cost being notified at the outset of the matter and the Law Society's Domestic Conveyancing estimate;

*A fixed price for drawing up a Will, to be agreed in advance with the client.

When the scheme was launched, a number of local law firms signed up but only one appears to have actively promoted the scheme. That firm is Freeth Cartwright Hunt Dickinson of Willoughby House, 20 Low Pavement, Nottingham (Telephone 0115 936 9369).

Since 1992 FCHD's Union Law contact has been Terry Oldham. He has actively promoted closer links between FCHD and the Trade Union movement in the

East Midlands area. This has led to increased use of the Union Law Scheme by members of Unison, NASUWT and the GPMU amongst others.

Any trade unionist who would like to take part in the Scheme should contact their Shop Floor Representative or Branch Organiser to ascertain whether or not their Union participates in the Scheme. If that Union does, then the union member need only simply telephone FCHD and speak to Terry Oldham. He will then ensure that a free initial interview is arranged with the relevant department.

An advantage for members is that FCHD can offer the complete range of legal services on all non-employment related matters under the Union Law Scheme. As FCHD is a general practice it has experienced lawyers in all areas from Criminal and Matrimonial through to Immigration, Nationality and Housing problems.

At the free initial interview an initial assessment of the member's problem will be made. The initial interview is not intended to be long but the usual time is between 30 - 45 minutes.

At the end of the interview the member will be advised as to how the lawyer sees the issues; the options' if any, for dealing with them; what the next step would be on the part of the solicitor and the client; how the case may be financed i.e., an explanation of Legal Aid availability or an estimate (confirmed in writing) for further work if the member is ineligible for Legal Aid.

In addition to the Union Law package, FCHD also can be contacted 24 hours a day in the event of any emergencies.

For further details of the Union Law Scheme and/or promotion material, please do not hesitate to contact Terry Oldham on 0115 936 9369.

Terry Oldham

Freeth, Cartwright, Hunt, Dickinson

