

RepZone

Visit RepZone on page 4
Full of information for Unite workplace reps

Welcome to the electronic, interactive edition of
Getting Organised
the newsletter for the members of the
South of England Region – GPM Sector



Page 2

Page 2

Page 3

Page 3

Page 4

NHS Demo

Christmas in Cuba

Quick Reads

Remploy

RepZone

Click on the pages illustrated above to view items
or use the arrows below to turn the pages

The next issue of *Getting Organised* will be published in the Summer
All copy and photographs should be supplied by June 2008

Please email contributions to don@gettingorganised.info or send them to
GPM-Sector South of England, CMA House, Ruscombe Business Park, Twyford, Reading, Berkshire RG10 9JD

If you need further information please telephone Don Dolby on 07803 413343

Brigadista!

Nick Ellis reports on his
experiences with the
48 Contingent Nordic
Brigade working in Cuba





From the office . . .

The New Year has only just started but we are already leading up to two important events. The first is the election of a new National Executive Committee for Unite commencing at the beginning of March. The new Executive will be made up from equal numbers of lay members from the former Amicus and Transport & General sections. The Graphical, Paper and Media Sector are guaranteed two seats on this new body. There will also be the opportunity to vote for national women seats and a South East regional delegate.

Equally important is the forthcoming national ballot for the principle industrial agreement in our sector the BPIF. This agreement effectively sets the bench mark for our industry and other company level agreements. Negotiations have commenced in what is going to be an extremely difficult set of talks given the gathering of dark economic clouds.

However, the credibility of both of these ballots is based on members exercising their vote and collectively maximising voter turnout at chapel level. Therefore any member who has either recently changed home address or company should contact our office immediately to update their personal details. Without this you are unlikely to receive a ballot paper thereby disenfranchising yourself. This will undermine the mandate that arises from the ballot result if voter turnout is low.

The membership of this branch has had a better record than many for its participation in national ballots which is a credit to our chapel officers and members. This feeds directly into the self confidence of those you elected to represent you and as a consequence they do a better job for you.

Make sure you get your membership details updated. If in doubt contact the office on 0118 346030.

Steve Attwill
Sectoral Region Secretary



Steve Attwill presents a cheque to the Tolpuddle fund on behalf the GPM Sector

Through the chair . . .

With Christmas now a distant memory, life in print in 2008 is upon us. The spate of recent closures throughout the trade, has meant a worrying start for many and a sign of a tough year ahead. This however does not mean we should allow employers to play on that.

The annual BPIF pay agreement is at present being negotiated. This is supposed to set minimum standards for the industry – not the maximum. The full cost recovery clause is used by many employers to try and attack our long held agreements. Surely after more than 20 years of this clause, management should be able to manage cost efficiently! So if your employer says they can't, or won't, pay this year's award, please contact the branch office.

Our members are also feeling the financial squeeze with necessities like food, petrol, council tax and energy prices rising. A

number of our members find themselves on benefits, as we find the value of our labour being eroded. The work done by Unite on



agency and temporary workers to protect this vulnerable group will also lead to a shoring up of our own rates. Despite a third term Labour government we are still on the defensive. After 30 years of anti-union legislation surely it is time to fight back.

New Union – New Optimism

On a more optimistic note, this year sees our new union Unite takes its first steps. The new NEC takes office in May. With your support, I may have a chance of being elected to be your representative on it.

The new union gives us greater influence industrially, politically and internationally. The international agenda should help bring about more global agreements. As well as ensuring union recognition in firms here and abroad, these agreements help combat the use of child and forced labour in the third world countries.

The talks with the United Steel Workers of America are going well, which will see us form far closer links across the pond. This could be the catalyst for other unions around the world to work more closely with us. We should also look to support unions worldwide that are less fortunate than ourselves. In this way we can negate a lot of the damaging effects of globalisation.

Closer to home, our branch AGM brought forward a glut of motions. With only two going forward to this year's conference, other avenues for many are being explored. This enthusiasm shows the desire amongst our branch membership for change. By getting more involved in the Region and on the various committees within Unite, we can lead, not only the sector, but also our union, on to bigger and better things.

Dave Lovelidge
South of England Chair



Brigadista!

Nick Ellis, South of England committee member, spent Christmas working in Cuba with the 48 Contingent Nordic Brigade – these are the highlights of his experiences – full diary and photo gallery on www.gettingorganised.info

I had always wished to visit Cuba – but not in a hotel and beaches type way. Then I heard about the brigades run by the Cuban Solidarity Campaign – just what I was looking for.

I applied, arranged the necessary time off work at relatively short notice, (so my thanks to management!), and after a brief get together with the other eight members of our contingent, Gladys, the ICAP manager at the camp, and Dean, the brigade organiser, set about readying myself for my time in Cuba.

On the 15th December 2007, I flew to Cuba to join the 48th Nordic Brigade which consisted of contingents from Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland, Russia, Finland, Ireland and the UK. We arrived at camp at midnight and after a welcome drink and snack were shown to our dorms.

Saturday 16th December: The camp officially begins tomorrow, so today we spend getting to know each other and meeting some of the other groups that have arrived.

Monday 17th: We are welcomed to the camp by a delegation which included Ramon Castro, whom we join on a procession to lay a wreath at a memorial to Julio A Mella, to whom the camp is dedicated. In the afternoon we travel to Havana, which is about 30 minutes from the camp, and visit the Museum of the Revolution.

Tuesday 18th: Our first day at work. The Brits and Irish are separated from the rest of the Brigade and put into Ernesto's Machete Brigade hacking away anything Ernesto tells us to. Although the working day lasted only three hours, this one was hard, but we wore our blisters like badges of honour when we returned to camp.

Wednesday 19th: Today I went bean picking, and got to chat to Lenia and Monica, two of our translators and discover that they are English teachers who are looking to move into translation work. Salsa lessons during the evening – fortunately I am not the only one whose body looked as though it was being pulled by strings. Help is at hand in the form of the translators who make it their mission to try and teach me.

Thursday 20th: Today we begin by watching 'The Trial', a documentary about the Cuban Five, and the incredible injustice brought upon them by holding their trial in Miami, thus denying them any opportunity of an impartial hearing. Later we meet relatives of the Five, who explain how they are denied visas to visit them by the U.S. Authorities



Above: The Brigade visiting the monument at the site of Columbus landing in Bariay, Holguin Province
Left: The Brigade visiting the Revolutionary Square monuments in the city of Holguin

Photographs by Paulina Raento

Friday 21st: Today I went to a rehabilitation centre for people who have lost their eyesight as adults – and am amazed. I am shown how they are taught to live independently, not only learning skills like cooking and cleaning, but these incredible teachers were teaching their students Braille, Pottery, Weaving, Basic Carpentry, Plumbing and Household Electrics. I also heard from a prosthetic maker about how the embargo affects the Health System in Cuba, by denying them materials, and increasing the cost of the materials they can source.

Monday 24th: Back to work, and today we prune the orange groves. I then join a trip to an art project in a suburb of Havana and saw how, through involving the whole neighbourhood, it had come alive with art.

Back in Havana, Emilia insists on trying the dark beer which comes in a six pint chilled dispenser and I get to pour (at last something I'm good at – thank you Workers Beer Company!).

Tuesday 25th: Christmas Day is not celebrated nationally in Cuba, but driving about we have seen many houses with lights up.

Wednesday 26th: I go to a talk about the Cuban Confederation of Trades Unions and hear how they get to influence government policy.

Friday 28th: Today we make our group banner. Afterwards we attend a talk by Cuban doctors discussing the International Humanitarian missions they carry out.

Sunday 30th: Travel to Holguin. We stop off on route at the Che Guevara memorial in Santa Clara. It is a very impressive site and we also walk through the mausoleum that houses the remains of the Bolivian revolutionaries including Che.

Monday 31st: New Years' Eve. We begin by taking a tour of Holguin visiting Revolution Square, Ioma de la Cruz, Marqueta Square, Periquera Museum and Calixto Garcia's House. New Year is the big celebration in Cuba and it is also the date by which the years of the Revolution are counted – at midnight the Revolution is 49 years old.

Friday 4th: It is a very sad time as we say goodbye to the friends we have made throughout the Brigade and then our Cuban Comrades.

I have found out so much about myself, my nationality, and those of others, about Cuba, its people, about life and aspiration, whilst at the same time truly having the time of my life.

I hope many of you will wish to find out more about the brigade and – to any that go next year – I very much hope to be celebrating the 50th year of the Revolution with you.

For more information on the Brigades email the Cuban Solidarity Campaign at office@cuba-solidarity.org.uk



Harvesting black beans in a co-op in Caimito, province of Havana
Photograph by Paula Tommila

Create a Book Shelf in your Chapel – support World Book Day

The South of England Sectoral Region is proud to continue to support World Book Day and the Quick Reads programme. Chapels are being encouraged to create a Book Shelf for their chapel and encourage Book Swaps amongst members.

New for 2008

On World Book Day, 6th March 2008, ten brand-new Quick Reads will be published. They are priced at £1.99 each.

Titles are:

- Humble Pie* by Gordon Ramsey
by Josephine Cox
- One Good Turn* by Chris Ryan
- Life's New Hurdles* by Colin Jackson
- Happy Families* by Adele Parks
- The Hardest Test* by Scott Quinnell
- East End Tales* by Gilda O'Neill
- RaW Voices of Hardship and Hope*
edited by Vanessa Feltz
- The Ten Keys to Success* John Bird
- Doctor Who: Revenge of the Judoon* by Terrance Dicks



UNITE YOUNG MEMBERS' SEMINAR

16-18 November 2007 at the Bonnington Hotel, London

by Luke Igo, St Ives

Having attended the Young Members' Seminar at The Bonnington Hotel in London, I was very surprised at how little young members of Unite actually know about the union. The purpose of the seminar was to educate young members on the structure of the union and how it benefits its members.

The weekend was very informative with various talks from organisations, including Viewpoint and Justice For Columbia. These talks gave me great insight into these organisations which, prior to the seminar, I had never even heard of. The talk from the Viewpoint representative was very eye opening and educational on the issues around fascism and anti-racism. The seminar also included various role plays which gave myself a better understanding of how team work and uniting as groups give you more power in the workplace.

I would like to thank the organisers for making the weekend happen, and for making it run so smoothly. I personally found the whole weekend very enjoyable and would highly recommend the seminar to any young member who wishes to explore the many aspects of Unite the Union.

World Book Day grows every year as more and more partners join the activity. The core activity will continue – covering schools and pre-schools, and their attending children, with schools packs, display material and World Book Day £1 or £1.50 Book Tokens. If members would like their local schools to participate, please visit www.worldbookday.com for information.

About Quick Reads

Quick Reads are fast-paced, bite-sized books by bestselling writers and celebrities for adults who have lost, or never had, the reading habit, or avid readers wanting a short, fast read.

Hard to believe under a Labour government . . .

Agency Workers Directive Sunk

A new EU directive on agency workers, which would have given agency and temporary workers in the UK the right to equal treatment with permanent employees on issues such as pay, working time and holidays, was put on ice after the UK government intervened to stop the legislation going through. The legislation will be discussed again this year.

Most EU states support these proposals, but the UK government, in a minority with others, caved in to pressure from employers and blocked progress on the directive claiming it would damage the country's "flexible" labour market and hit jobs.

The government's decision to sink the legislation was slammed by Tony Dubbins, Unite Deputy General Secretary and Chair of TULO, who said: "The UK government is looking increasingly isolated on this issue both at home and abroad. Its blocking position is neither sustainable or excusable."

"There is simply no justification for a Labour government to deny agency and temporary workers the same rights as directly employed staff. By opposing this directive, when most European countries already have day one rights, the UK government is yet again making UK workers second class citizens in Europe."

Unite Joint General Secretary, Tony Woodley, said: "Thanks to the UK government the European door is now firmly closed to agency workers. The only way for us to get justice for temporary and agency workers and the UK government to honour its pledge to act, is through UK legislation. Unite will now step up our campaign for UK statute that will give agency workers the same rights as directly employed staff and we will start by backing the Private Member's Bill being brought by Andrew Miller MP."

SoE Regional Sector Conference

This year's conference was held on Saturday, 26th January, at the University of London Union.

A number of members attended to participate in a very good meeting with a packed agenda. The meeting was opened by Dave Lovelidge, South of England chair and member of the National Executive Committee. He welcomed everyone and introduced Ann Field, GPM Sector National Officer who was making a presentation to the meeting later in the agenda.

The conference was supported by a visual presentation which included photographs of many activities that South of England members had been involved in during the previous twelve months.

Delegate Reports

Reports were given by delegates to the National Executive Council, National Sector Committee and the South East Regional Council. Dave Lovelidge, Alan Ritchie and Don Dolby answered a number of questions on the reports.

Motions and Delegates

Steve Attwill announced that there were a number of vacancies on the South of England Committee. Some nominations were accepted at the meeting but a number of vacancies still exist. If you, or any members of your chapel, are interested in joining the Committee please contact 01189 346030.

Nine motions were debated and approved by the meeting (see details in panel and on the website). The motions on Election of Officers and State Funding of Political Parties stimulating some lively debate.



MOTIONS PASSED BY CONFERENCE

Nine motions were put before the Regional Sector Conference. All were overwhelmingly passed and will be on the agenda at the GPM Sector National Conference in June or will be sent to the Sector NEC for consideration.

The subjects of the motions adopted were as follows:

1. Industrial Service to Members
2. Industrial Action Ballots
3. Statutory Redundancy Pay
4. Election of Officers
5. Victimisation of Activists
6. GPM Sector Branches
7. Defence of Fundamental Freedoms
8. Private Equity Investment Companies
9. State Funding of Political Parties

The full motions can be seen on the *GettingOrganised* website.

visit www.gettingorganised.info

Ann Field

National Officer Ann Field (above) presented a well-received report giving an overview of Unite's recent work from a national perspective. A lively debate ensued before Dave Lovelidge closed the meeting.

REMPLOY – "WE WILL DEFEND MEMBERS"

Unite members working in Remploy factories reacted with anger and bitter disappointment at the latest announcement by the Work and Pensions Secretary, Peter Hain, that the government is to press ahead with the axing of 28 Remploy sites and other administrative centres.

Although 15 sites earmarked for closure have been saved due to the campaign run by Unite, GMB and Community, over 2,000 jobs are to be lost under the revised plan.

Peter Hain also announced a 25% cut in managers at Remploy (many of whom are Unite members) plus changes in working practices.

The unions have presented their costed plan to save all the Remploy factories, and put the company on a steady footing for the long term, to the government. But, despite campaigning by the trade unions alongside thousands of other supporters, the decision is a bitter blow.

Remploy workers, many of them in tears when they heard the announcement, said they felt "betrayed" by the government.

Unite Assistant General Secretary, Tony Burke said, "We will do whatever we can to defend the Remploy workers. They cannot and must not be left to fend for themselves. We will not abandon them."

Remploy factories were set up after the Second World War to provide employment to injured service men and women and provide decent and stable employment for workers with disabilities.



There are many resources available for Workplace Reps, both online and printed. This page is intended to direct you towards that information. FOCs, MOCs, Safety, Equality and Union Learning Reps will find invaluable support for their roles on the shopfloor.

contact your union
www.amicustheunion.org

amicus legal services:

24-hour legal helpline: 0870 240 4545
Member helpline UK: 0845 850 4242

membership/subscription queries:
Telephone: 0208 462 7755

GPM SECTOR – SOUTH OF ENGLAND

branch office:

Email: niki.stroud@amicustheunion.org

Telephone: 01189 346030

Facsimile: 01189 342087

or write to

GPM Sector – South of England,
CMA House, Ruscombe Business Park,
Twyford, Reading, Berkshire RG10 9JD

joint editors:

Steve Attwill, Sectoral Region Secretary
Don Dolby, Production Editor

ARTICLES WELCOME

We are keen to receive more contributions from members – IT IS YOUR JOURNAL AFTER ALL. Please make a note of the deadlines for the next issue of *Getting Organised* and encourage your chapel and members to make their views known.

We would also like to have a regular correspondence page so if you have any views to share, please send them in using the contact details below.

Please email all contributions to
don@gettingorganised.info
or send them to

GPM-Sector South of England,
CMA House, Ruscombe Business Park,
Twyford, Reading, Berkshire RG10 9JD
If you need further information please
telephone Don Dolby on
07803 413343

The next issue of *Getting Organised*
will be published in June.

All copy and photographs should
be supplied by 31 May 2008.

Produced by Don Dolby (TU) 07803 413343



Father/Mother of the Chapel

Forthcoming events from



The South East Region of the TUC has organised a number of seminars over the next few weeks.

Saturday, 23rd February, 2008:

Mobilising to defeat fascism in London, the South East and the East of England

Saturday, 8th March, 2008:

Academies – The Marketisation of Education

Saturday, 15th March, 2008:

Getting Better Public Transport for Rural & Urban Areas

Saturday, 5th April, 2008:

Supporting and Building Successful Trades Councils

These seminars all take place at Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS. They will provide an opportunity for workplace reps to debate and learn about various issues of relevance to the members in their workplace.

For more information, and to register your intention to attend, please visit the TUC website at www.tuc.org.uk



Women around the world will be celebrating International Women's Day on 8th March. Many events will be taking place which your members can be involved in. These include a rally organised by the TUC taking place on 12th March 2008.

Visit www.internationalwomensday.com or www.tuc.org.uk for more information

Reps guide to the internet

Workplace representatives guide to the web is a useful publication from Unite for all FOCs and MOCs.

Not everyone is familiar with the use of the internet and how to research and find much of the valuable information contained there. This guide shows you how to make the most of a valuable resource.

This guide can be downloaded as a pdf from www.amicustheunion.org or can be ordered through the South of England Office.

Amicus Guides from www.amicustheunion.org

Health & Safety Rep

Unite Health & Safety Essentials



The new edition of *Unite Health and Safety Essentials* now available.

Essentials is a comprehensive guide to health and safety advice.

Printed copies of this guide will be available on all

Unite safety training courses, so make sure you enrol on one soon.

To download the pdf version visit the Health & Safety pages at www.amicustheunion.org

Health and Safety Law 2007

An essential guide for all Health & Safety Reps: *Health and Safety Law 2007*, as you would expect, is packed full of detailed and very useful information on current Health and Safety Law.

Reps can order their copy from www.lrd.org.uk



Safety Reps: Have you been accredited?

Safety reps have been proven to effectively promote health and safety messages in

the workplace and it is a well established fact that unionised workplaces with active safety reps are safer workplaces.

Safety reps have considerable rights to carry out their functions. Full details can be found in *Safety Representatives and Safety Committees*, also known as the *Brown Book*, which can be downloaded here, or ordered in print by emailing Ray Cawley or calling him on 020 7780 4014.

If you have not yet been accredited please inform your Regional Office of your appointment.



Equality Rep

Equal Rights: Useful Links

The Equal Rights section of the Amicus website contains many useful links to organisations which can provide information for Equality Reps at work.

They include:

www.drc-gb.org/usingyourrights – the Disability Rights Commission.

www.direct.gov.uk/DisabledPeople – single point of access to government information and services on disability

www.eoc.org.uk – the Equal Opportunities Commission website has information for anyone who has an equal opportunities concern

www.eoc-law.org.uk – the Equal Opportunities Commission website for information and advice on equality law in relation to women

www.womens-unit.gov.uk – the government website for the women's agenda

www.cre.gov.uk – the Commission for Racial Equality website has information on issues relating to Black and ethnic minorities

www.srrc.org – Show Racism the Red Card and be a real supporter

www.dti.gov.uk/workingparents – the Working Parents section of the Government's Dti site

www.tuc.org.uk/changingtimes – the TUC site has a range of information about the work-life balance campaign.

www.childcarelink.gov.uk – part of the National Childcare Strategy to help people back into the workplace by removing the childcare barrier

www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/taxcredits – information about your entitlements to tax credits

www.oneparentfamilies.org.uk – this site offers support and advice for lone parents.

Visit www.amicustheunion.org for many more useful links to valuable information.

Equality and Diversity Courses

Six types of equality and diversity training courses are available from the Amicus Education Department.

- Equality and diversity at work
- Discrimination and disability
- Leadership for black and ethnic minority representatives
- Leadership for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender members
- Stress, harassment and bullying
- Women's week

For further information visit the Education & Training pages at www.amicustheunion.org

For more information on any of the Unite courses mentioned on this page please contact:
Education Department, Hayes Court, West Common Road, Hayes, Bromley BR2 7AU.
Tel: 020 8462 7755. Fax: 020 8315 8524. Email: education@unitetheunion.com

Union Learner Rep

Kate and Umar's Incredible Learning Journey



Kate and Umar's Incredible Learning Journey is a 10-minute animated film that brings the values of trade unionism alive for potential and current trade union members.

The film provides trade union reps with a tool to recruit and encourage newcomers and current members to get involved with learning in the workplace.

For more information and to order a copy of the DVD and other promotional materials visit www.unionlearn.org.uk

Unite Bursaries Available

The Unite Education and Training Department provides funding for members and activists to increase their vocational skills and gain additional qualifications. These bursaries will enable a number of people to take their training and Lifelong Learning to a further level.

To download an application form visit www.amicustheunion.org

Learning and Skills

An invaluable regular publication for Learner Reps is available from the Amicus Education Department. Many other publications are produced by the Learning and Skills Department.



To download the latest issue visit:
www.amicustheunion.org