

# YEOVIL & DISTRICT TRADES UNION COUNCIL



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**Minutes** of the **Meeting** held Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> July 2009 at Unity Hall Yeovil BA20 1JL

**Present:** Joe Conway, Unite/TGWU; Dave Symington, Unite/TGWU; David Kingdon, Unite/Amicus; Vivian Willis, Unite/Amicus; Rex Brown, Unite/Amicus; Bill Byrd, Unite/Amicus; Brian Wadsworth, Unite/Amicus; Dave Osborne, Unite/Amicus; Andy Dowland, Unison; Mark Hoskins, PCS and Ken Keable, Prospect (Visitor). Lee Skevington, (Visitor)

**1. Apologies:** Chris Dennett, Unite/Amicus; Bryan Macrae, Unite/Amicus; and Neal Ware, Unite/TGWU.

**2. Minutes:** The minutes were read. In item 4, SWTUC Pensioners delegates report includes "From Brian Wadsworth's report, the meeting discussed the right for people to work beyond retirement age"

In item 6, Local matters "PCS at HMRC are balloting for industrial action against job cuts" delete "job cuts" insert "on pay"

After these corrections, the minutes are accepted as a correct and true record.

**3. Matters arising:** Press release, Tolpuddle event; Mark Hoskins, our press officer reported that he issued a press release to the Western Gazette, but the feature that appeared in the paper did not come from us.

The coach to Tolpuddle is a 57 seater, starting from Barnstaple. It is fully booked and leaves The Labour Club Yeovil at 10:30am.

**4. Officers reports:** The **President** that Agusta/Westland have offered a 0% pay rise. The Puma helicopters are not performing very well in Afghanistan, there is the possibility of £330m worth of refurbishment. Agusta/Westland are bidding to offer 16 Merlin helicopters as a better alternative, given the Pumas are thirty years old – after 40 years they would come out of service, and therefore would not get the necessary airworthy certificates; the French have the intellectual property rights to them. Another advantage is the Merlins would standardise the fleet.

The **Secretary** proposed we upgrade and update the website, and had been in contact with Lee Skevington, who agreed to do the work on it at the cost of £70, the meeting agreed.

He informed the meeting that the rules of Yeovil TUC need to be typed out and bringing up to date.

Presented to the meeting leaflets of the "People's Charter" after further discussion, the meeting agreed we hold a meeting with a speaker from the PC and a speaker from those Unions that oppose it (Unite – though Joint GS Tony Woodley supports it. Unison and GMB oppose it). The date would be determined by the availability of the two speakers ideally from the end of September 2009. Dave Osborne agreed to chase up a speaker opposing it and the secretary would contact the PC for a speaker.

The **Treasurer** reported, the current account is £1154:06 in credit,

**Delegates:** Dave also reported on the SWTUC Regional Council.

Concern was raised about the future of Devonport dockyard. Future ship refits will be done in Portsmouth or Rosyth, leaving Plymouth to be used for scrapping nuclear reactors. Delegates from Devon Trades Unions Councils spoke about the dangers of this trade to workers and local residents, and the danger that jobs are being lost abroad because of weak legislation protecting the UK workforce. Terry Keefe for Unite said that it was a complex situation as the area desperately needs jobs.

There was a debate about the anti-BNP campaign in the recent elections; even sitting BNP councillors came last in elections where they stood. Delegates spoke of how important their union's political fund had been to their campaign. Dave Chapple (Bridgwater TUC) spoke about the terrific campaign in the town and thanked those unions that had supported it. John Drake (FBU) said that Searchlight are organising seminars throughout the

country over coming weeks. One delegate thought we should concentrate on fighting the Tories as they will probably form the next government and this will inevitably lead to a worsening of conditions for working people. The consensus of the meeting was that we must prevent the BNP from accessing the publicity and funding that comes with election success; teaching unions are particularly concerned about BNP influence on schools. In the absence of other CWU delegates, Dave Chapple applauded the cancellation of plans to privatise Royal Mail but warned that the industry is in turmoil because of the number of jobs being given over to casual labour. The NUT is campaigning to end SATs and want unions to write to their MPs seeking support, there will be a petition at the Tolpuddle festival.

Lord Adonis is taking parts of the East Coast main line service back into public service because the operator does not want the bits that are not making a profit. The RMT report lots of issues around outsourcing of cleaners, etc.

### Speakers

Fred Cotterill (from the UK Youth Parliament for Bath & North East Somerset) spoke about the Youth Fight for Jobs. This campaign is to get better treatment of young people in redundancies, etc. Unemployment in under 25s is two to three times higher than it is in other age groups. Recruitment freezes and 'last in first out' policies act against them. Lots of young people are also in casual labour where union organisation is weak. We must avoid a lost generation scarred by unemployment.

Scarlett Harris (TUC Apprenticeships Policy and Campaigns Officer) talked about the problem of apprenticeship schemes that use young people to provide cheap labour with no real job at the end. There are 5 million people with no real skills. The TUC is campaigning for an increase in pay for apprentices and end to exemption from the minimum wage; they are looking for examples where apprentices have *good* pay and conditions as well as bad. In questions I said that AW offers good quality apprenticeships but HR report they could not fill all the vacancies last year.

There was a debate about exam conditions. Andy Wooley (NUT) challenged those who think exams are easier these days to sit the exams for themselves. Improvements are down to a number of factors including increased funding and greater commitment from students. Meanwhile, 50% of this year's graduates are likely to be unemployed.

Dave Chapple was concerned that the Youth Fight for Justice was too critical of the Labour Party because, despite its failings, most unions remain affiliated and this could affect their willingness to support the campaign. Fred Cotterill said he understood that viewpoint but young people look at this government and are opposed to the war in Iraq, failure to repeal anti-union laws, forcing young people to take low paid jobs, etc.

Nigel Costly (TUC Regional Secretary) said the union movement never came to terms with changes in apprenticeships and the rise in numbers going to university. Once new employees were only *invited* to join the union IF they made the grade, now we have to fight to recruit them during induction procedures. The TUC is campaigning for short spells of casual work to be disregarded when it comes to claiming benefits under the Youth Jobs fund.

The meeting concluded that apprenticeships must be employer led and should result in permanent employment. Union involvement in induction is important. We must not allow age discrimination laws and pension deficits to keep older people in work at the expense of the young. We also need an end to student loans.

### Motions

The only motion was from the UCU opposing cuts in funding for modern language degrees (French, Spanish, Chinese) at the University of the West of England. This was a huge shock for staff and students and the students have already set up a Facebook campaign to oppose the cuts during the summer recess. The meeting was concerned that the cuts had been introduced without consultation; finances must be weighed against academic standards and the need for specialist communicators. Emy Castaleo (Taunton TUC) expressed concerns as a Spanish national living in the UK. I expressed concern that British people are continually criticised for not learning other languages and such pointed to the growing demand for Italian language course at Agusta Westland. The motion was carried unanimously.

**5. Local matters:** none

**6. Press release:** on the Tolpuddle event.

**7. Correspondence:** Received from the Labour Research Department re-affiliation £74:75, the meeting decided not to re-affiliate.

From the TUC, "Making Life better for women at work" A SWTUC women's Committee Conference, Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2009 10am – 15:30 Genesis Centre, Somerset College of Art and Technology, Wellington Road, Taunton TA1 5AX. The meeting noted that we have no women delegates.

From the Campaign for a New Workers Party, a letter giving a brief analysis of the European Elections explaining the need to "popularise" the idea of a new party representing workers. CNWP was part of the "one off" left anti-EU coalition that formed No2EU- yes to democracy slate at the European Elections

From the TUC document about apprentices.

**8. Any other business:** The meeting expresses support and solidarity for CWU who will be taking industrial action at the Royal Mail, over Pay, jobs, pensions and against any privatisation of it.

Dave Osborne proposed we have at a future meeting the topic of Climate change, with a speaker, maybe, from the Green Party.

Lee Skevington announced that he is a member of the National Committee of the recently reformed Labour Friends of Palestine.

Standing orders were lifted for a time extension, the meeting closed at 21:15.