

YEOVIL & DISTRICT TRADES UNION COUNCIL

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Minutes of the the Annual General Meeting held Wednesday 20th January 2010 at Unity Hall Central Road Yeovil BA20 1JL

Present: Neil Ware, Unite/TGWU; Joe Conway, Unite/TGWU; Viv Willis, Unite/Amicus; Dave Osborne, Unite/Amicus; Bill Byrd, Unite/Amicus; Brian Wadsworth, Unite/Amicus; Brian Macrae, Unite/Amicus; Andy Dowland, Unison; Pete Joyce, Unison; and Ken Keable, Prospect (Visitor).

1. Apologies: David Kingdon, Unite/Amicus; Rex Brown, Unite/Amicus; David Symington, Unite/TGWU and Lee Skevington PPC.

2. Officers reports: The **President** reported that we had a very active year with well attended meetings. The **Secretary** circulated to delegates a written report highlighting: the events we organised last year, the Fiftieth Anniversary night of the Cuban Revolution, the May Day 'Hope not Hate' event, both events held at the Labour Club main hall; our part in anti-fascist campaign against the BNP in the European and County Council elections; the banking crisis which is still inflicting disastrous consequences – the results of over 30 years of neo-liberal policies.

3. Presentation of audited account: The **Treasurer** presented a final and audited financial report which was approved and accepted by the AGM; and expressed thanks to the auditors, Andy Dowland and Colin Silman.

4. Election of Officers, Delegates and Executive: President, Joe Conway; Vice-President, Pete Joyce; Secretary, Viv Willis; Treasurer and Assistant Secretary, Dave Osborn; Press Officer, Mark Hoskins (In absentia) Auditors, Andy Dowland and Colin Silman;

Delegates: To South West Regional TUC Council, Dave Osborne; to SWTUC Pensioners, Bill Byrd and David Kingdon. To CAB, vacant; To South Somerset Development Committee – 2, Brian Macrae to investigate and report back on what this really entails; and Somerset County Association of Trades Union Council, Viv Willis, Dave Osborne and Joe Conway. Dave to Contact Dave Chapple details of the next meeting.

The **Executive**, comprising 8: **the** three officers, Mark Hoskins and Peter Joyce – 3 positions vacant.

5. Affiliations: The meeting decided to continue affiliation to The United Campaign of anti-union laws, and Cuba Solidarity Campaign.

6. Delegates reports: See January 2010 monthly meeting.

7. Correspondence: See January 2010 monthly meeting.

8. Any other Business: none.

Regular meeting held immediately after the AGM 20.01.2010.

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2. Minutes: the last meeting, after the following correction on item 6, delete "Jim Knight" and insert "Schools Minister, Ed Balls" of, accepted as a correct and true record.

3. Matters arising: Somerset Racial Equality Council "Gig" at The Royal George, was very well attended and we held a small stall, with leaflets and the Banner. It was worth doing and contact was established with Kira McCoy – organiser of the event.

The sub-committee met about the May Day event, at the time, The Orange Box was designated to be a suitable venue given that a band called the "Bluetones" are appearing on Sat May 1st, Mark was to contact them. The meeting decided that in the light of experience of the SREC event, we could get in touch with the bands to appeared there; Joe to book the big room down stairs for Friday 30th April 2010.

People's Charter: the leaflets are being circulated in the workplaces etc. Thanks to Joe for getting 50 signatures.

4. Officers reports: The **President** reported that there are no placements for apprentices completing their time at Agusta-Westland, only if they sign up to one year contracts. The company is expanding "out sourcing" e.g. the stores are likely to be put out to a third party provider, that "Core helicopter business" is likely to be what is left. The issue of the pension scheme could effect production, TUPE regulations do not cover pensions and the Agusta-Westland scheme is not transferable. The MOD has cancelled the medium term order, and there may well be no "new build" over the next ten years, with the Puma being phased out by 2020; with only four models being manufactured, the Lynx, Apache, Chinook and Wildcat-lynx.

Secretary's report: latest newsletter is ready for distribution and topics covered in matters arising. Presented to the meeting a copy of an advertisement by then, Yeovil Trades Council in the first home match programme of Yeovil Town FC circa Saturday 26th August 1939. The **Treasurer's** report: as AGM. As **SWTUC Delegate** Dave has circulated a written report (see attached).

5. Local matters: Somerset County Council due to announce its budget cuts programme, meaning staffing and services. We appeal to local government TU's from the locality to be involved in any campaigns that may emerge.

GKN has reduced the redundancies from 130 to about 70, but there may be 15 to 20 compulsory.

6. Press release: None.

7. Correspondence: from Tom Mellish of the TUC/JCC receipt of registration for 2010.

A covering letter and leaflets from the Campaign for a New Workers Party highlighting that which ever party wins the General Election working people will be made to pay the price of the banking crisis through job losses and cuts in public services, with leaflets giving more details.

8. Any other business: The meeting timed out.

President _____

TUC Regional Council, 9th January 2010

Despite the icy conditions the meeting went ahead and was reasonably well attended.

Issues from previous minutes

The **CWU** said that talks are dragging on to try to resolve their dispute. A document on the Future of Royal Mail is due out later this month.

A **Tolpuddle** coordination meeting takes place on 21st January. Rising demand for space means more planning is required to accommodate everyone, they are also considering a nominal entrance fee to control numbers. They are also considering adding an extra day on Radical History (e.g. a group of bricklayers in Exeter were arrested at the same time as the Martyrs, charged with the same offence. They were let off with a caution - the union organisers from London were banned from the town).

Speakers

Gaza

John Drake (FBU) gave a presentation on his recent trip to Gaza. John had visited Gaza before as part of an FBU delegation. The FBU has been training Palestinian fire-fighters and have attempted to send fire-fighting equipment to Palestine where 70 plus firefighters share 20 sets. Equipment is available and ready to go but previous shipments have been blocked.

While in Palestine with the FBU John met delegates from the International Solidarity Movement (ISM), he promised to return to work with them and last year he used a month of his annual leave to fulfil that pledge. The ISM was founded in 2001 to provide an international voice to those involved in non-violent resistance to the occupation. Activities include:

- Stopping forced eviction of Palestinians and demolition of houses to make way for Israeli Settlers
- Campaigning to de-arrest Palestinians detained on trumped up charges
- Monitoring and de-escalating conflict between Palestinians and Israelis.

John's presentation showed many examples of the constant harassment suffered by Palestinian people, 1,400 of whom were killed in Israeli bombardments. One example was of a sheep farmer in Susiya, near Hebron who was accused of attacking two Settlers armed with automatic weapons. Palestinians are also barred from using "Settler only" roads, creating an effective apartheid system in a supposedly independent state.

In Bilin demonstrations have taken place every Friday for 5 years and protestors are regularly attacked with tear gas, etc. Palestinians often "harvest" tear gas canisters because they cannot harvest their olives. John showed us photos of the huge pile of canisters that had been harvested after just one such protest.

The Israelis have confiscated or destroyed half a million olive trees since the occupation, on which many families depend for their livelihood. Even where they remain, Palestinians are not allowed free access to their land. They are only allowed to tend their land at times and dates set by the Israelis, these are often changed at the last minute and even then other obstacles are placed in their way like limits on the number of people that can work the land or restricted vehicle access. The land needs constant attention to produce a good harvest so harvests are poor.

ISM volunteers are subject to civil law but Palestinians are subject to military law. This allows them to be arrested without charge and detained indefinitely. The presence of ISM volunteers means Settlers are less likely to shoot at Palestinians and Israeli forces are less likely to arrest them.

John spoke about the TUC support for a boycott of Israeli goods and said that the Palestinian people are well aware of this decision. In a survey all but one Palestinian asked supported a boycott (just that one favouring armed struggle). John said you cannot rely on labels saying "from the West Bank" because the goods could have been produced by Settlers, avoid bar codes starting with 729. We should also lobby employers and local governments to disinvest in Israel.

Sodexo dispute

John Gray (Unison) led an appeal on behalf of Sodexu workers in North Devon. The Agenda for Change in the NHS promised fair pay to all workers but was not recognised by private companies. The government put up money so that private companies could bring employees in line with public sector workers but the money was not ring-fenced and Sodexu used it to balance their books.

Unison has been trying for three years to talk to Sodexu but without success. Sodexu workers are on minimum pay and conditions; they get no sick pay and several were forced to take annual leave for operations at their own hospital. The workers have lost patience and have been picketing for days in arctic conditions (having survived three days picketing in the snow and ice the member due to attend the meeting fell on the way to the meeting and broke a leg). The strike has overwhelming support but they desperately need contributions to their strike fund, details available on request.

(Since this meeting the strike action has proved successful and the members have returned to work)

Speak Up for Public Services

Rachel McIlroy is the TUC Project Worker on this issue and works primarily with the Public Services Liaison Group (PSLG) and the Public Services Forum (PSF). The PSLG includes all public sector unions and meets every two months to discuss issues of concern. The PSF is a forum for unions to talk to the government to promote good practice; the PSF tries to avoid redundancy where possible. The PSF also discusses issues such as training, flexible working, etc. Rachel circulated a TUC document exploring some of the myths about Public Sector pensions, this is just one of the documents produced by her department that are available on request.

Justice for Columbia South West

Following the main meeting there was a short meeting of JfC South West. Andy Woolley (NUT) gave an update on what has been happening since the meeting in Plymouth last October. Andy has set up a Facebook site for the group and I've joined it. Membership of the Facebook site is by invitation to try to prevent access by Colombian embassy staff but union members are encouraged to apply (search for JfC South West).

Branches and union organisations are encouraged to affiliate to JfC nationally and asked for donations to the appeal to fund care packages for imprisoned FENSUAGRO members. Members were particularly asked to write to their MPs about the imprisonment of Alirio Garcia.

The meeting also heard that a Colombian student leader, currently in exile in Scandinavia, has been invited to talk to the Students union in Bristol on 4th March and will then address a public meeting, details to follow.

I reported on the reply I had from Julie Girling MEP saying she would "look into" the issues raised about the EU's proposed trade agreement with Colombia. Members were asked to follow up such letters and send in copies so the group can also follow them up.

Dave Osborne