

Yeovil & District TUC Newsletter



A campaigning publication for local Trade Unionists: issue #2



More jobs lost in the South West

French materials producer Imerys has reneged on a commitment made two years ago to British workers. The promise, made in 2004 when the company moved some jobs from Southwest England to Brazil, guaranteed that 800 other jobs would remain.

However, in early July, Imerys dropped a proposed restructuring plan on all former English China Clay mining and manufacturing operations, which Imerys bought in 1999, near Cornwall and Devon, telling the communities that all 800 jobs would be gone and production will move to Brazil by 2008. With Imerys being the region's largest private employer, such a scenario would be fatal to the economic lifeblood of the Southwest. The Transport & General Workers' Union (TGWU), and two other UK trade unions representing Imerys workers, will resist the company's destructive restructuring plan.

Early in 2005, Cornwall and Devon workers, together with their unions, fiercely resisted Imerys insistence on closing the final pension scheme and downgrading benefit levels for existing workers and retirees. That fight was waged to retain the spending power that thousands of workers and retirees had rightfully earned due to years on the job. Now the fight is survival.

Since the proposed plan was uncovered just a week ago, TGWU has already organised a general stewards' meeting and demanded from Imerys an immediate and preliminary meeting. In addition, an MP from the area, Matthew Taylor, representing Truro and St Austell, has scheduled an emergency debate on the economic consequences to the region in Parliament.

Support the NHS on Nov 1st

Unions are mobilising to demonstrate against the governments drive for the greater involvement of the private sector

See details back page

Europe's Pay Attack

How the European Union's single internal market is being used to force down wages. Following the accession of eastern European states to the European Union in May 2004, Ireland, Britain and Sweden allowed unrestricted access to their labour markets. As a result, migrant labour has been rapidly moving west, while east European countries are experiencing population falls and an inevitable brain drain.

A Swedish case that is currently before the EU European Court of Justice (ECJ), highlights how EU diktats use cheap foreign labour to batter down national standards. Latvian company Laval was refurbishing a school in Vaxholm, outside Stockholm, using its own workers. The Swedish Building Workers Union (SBWU) demanded a collective agreement with exactly the same conditions as those that Swedish building firms normally sign. Laval refused and referred to a Latvian collective agreement instead. Latvian workers were being paid about a third of the Swedish wage without adequate insurance. As this was a clear case of social dumping, the SBWU, with the support of other unions, began industrial action. Laval argued that this action was not in compliance with EU law and brought the case to the Swedish labour court, which decided to ask for a preliminary ruling by the ardently eurofederalist European Court of Justice. The court is to decide if industrial action in support of demands for a collective agreement is in compliance with European law, notably Article 49 on freedom of movement to provide services as well as the posting of workers directive. While visiting Stockholm, EU internal market Commissioner Charlie McCreevy made clear that the Commission fully backed the Latvian company and the "social dumping" that it had created. "If member states continue to shield themselves from foreign company takeovers and competition, then I fear that the internal market will begin to dissolve.

The question whether or not Sweden has implemented Article 49 in the treaty on free movement," he said.

It seems that the Article 49 can tare up any collective agreement in favour of the employer.

.Hundreds of hospital staff in Cornwall are to be balloted over strike action. It follows the revelation that the Royal Cornwall Hospitals Trust is to electronically outsource typing work to India, while local workers are facing redundancies. Hundreds of Unison union members will be asked to vote on whether to start a campaign of industrial action. A union spokesman said the trust had issued the letters whilst an outsourcing trial was carried out by the US-owned company Dictate IT. A union official [said the Trust had misled the unions and betrayed](#) the workers.



HM Revenue & Customs (National)

Excuses, excuses... ten 'reasons' employers give for not paying the National Minimum Wage

The excuses used by employers who avoid paying the National Minimum Wage are laid bare as HM Revenue & Customs publishes a top 10 of some of the more unusual or outlandish reasons given to its enforcement teams.

The top ten worst excuses for not paying the minimum wage are:

10. I only took him on as a favour
9. The workers can't speak English
8. He's over 65, so the national minimum wage doesn't apply
7. She's on benefits - if you add those to her pay, it totals the NMW
6. They can't cope on their own and it's more than they would get in their own country
5. He's disabled

4. I didn't think it applied to small employers
3. I didn't think the workers were worth NMW
2. But she only wanted £3 an hour
1. He doesn't deserve it - he's a total waste of space

1. **The DTI has responsibility for National Minimum Wage policy. HM Revenue & Customs enforce the policy.**
 - * **The main rate for workers aged 22 and over is currently set at £5.05 an hour. On 1 October 2006 this will increase to £5.35.**
 - * **The rate for 18-21 year olds is currently set at £4.25 an hour. This will increase to £4.45 on 1 October 2006.**
 - * **The rate for 16-17 years olds is £3.00 an hour. This will increase on 1 October 2006 to £3.30 an hour.**

Bureaucrats at a Yorkshire health authority have been awarded performance bonuses worth £260,000 as front-line NHS staff face redundancy in drastic cuts to save cash. Angry union chiefs and MPs condemned awards to all 90 staff at the former West Yorkshire Strategic Health Authority (SHA). The payouts come as 93 workers including nurses and midwives at four hospitals in the area were given 30 days' notice yesterday. Managers [pocketed up to £9,000 in bonuses yet made no direct contribution](#) to achieving government targets.



Tribunal rules employee sacked after being diagnosed with MS

17/08/06. A tribunal has ruled that a council employee was unfairly dismissed and discriminated against after being diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. Calderdale Council in Halifax dismissed Syria Akram from her job as a community

safety officer in September 2005. The Council said she had been sacked for gross misconduct over alleged discrepancies in her time keeping. Akram claims that she was sacked five months after she was diagnosed with MS. The discrepancies in her time keeping occurred because [her condition left her tired and forgetful](#) meaning she would sometimes forget to sign in when she got to the office.

UK chief executive pay and benefits continue to soar out of all proportion

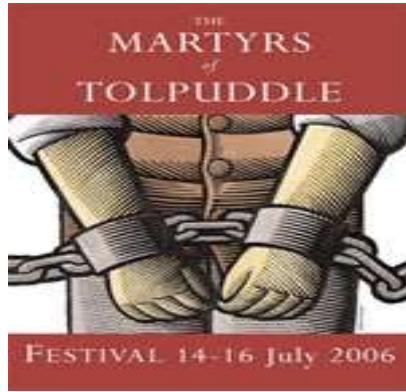
04/08/06. Pay and benefits of chief executives of the 100 biggest UK firms continued to "soar out of all proportion" to the rest of the workforce, according to a report by Labour Research. The independent research organisation said the UK's top executives received average pay rises of 10% last year, more than twice as high as increases across UK industry. Leading [chief executives received an average of £1.6m in pay and benefits last year](#) – but still a fraction of the money earned by their boardroom counterparts in the US, the report said.

Changes in Redundancy Payments

Alongside the new age discrimination regulations that came into force from 1 October, the upper and lower age limits for redundancy pay have been changed.

The upper age limit and lower age limits on redundancy have now been removed, and statutory redundancy is now calculated on the following basis:

- Up to the age of 21 - 0.5 week's pay for each completed year of service
- 22 - 40 years of age - 1 week's pay for each completed year of service
- 41+ years of age - 1.5 weeks' pay for each completed year of service.



Tolpuddle is a village near Dorchester in Dorset where in 1833 - 4 a great wave of Trade Union activity took place and a lodge of the Friendly Society of Agricultural Labourers was established. Entry into the union involved a payment of a shilling (5p), and swearing before a picture of a skeleton never to tell anyone the union's secrets.

[Lord Melbourne](#) was Prime Minister at this time and he was bitterly opposed to the Trade Union Movement, so when six English farm labourers were sentenced in March 1834 to 7 years transportation to a penal colony in Australia for Trade Union activities, Lord Melbourne did not dispute the sentence.

The Whig government had become alarmed at the working class discontent in the country at this time. The government and the landowners, led by James Frampton, were determined to squash the union and to control increasing outbreaks of dissent.

Six of the Tolpuddle labourers were arrested: George and James Loveless, James Brine, James Hammett, Thomas Stansfield and his son John. It was George Loveless who had established the Friendly Society of Agricultural Workers in Tolpuddle.

At their trial the judge and jury were hostile, and the six were sentenced to 7 years transportation to Australia. After the trial many public protest

meetings were held and there was uproar throughout the country at this sentence, so the prisoners were hastily transported to Australia without delay.

The people were incensed at this treatment and after 250,000 people signed a petition and a procession of 30,000 people marched down Whitehall in support of the labourers, the sentences were remitted. After some delay, the six were given a free passage home from Australia. When finally home and free, some of the 'martyrs' settled on farms in England and four emigrated to Canada.

Footnote Richard Rendell the Convener at Westland Eng. Is a direct descendent of Thomas Stanfield one of the Martyrs, his mother was a Stanfield. Richard tells us that his great great great aunt married into the Loveless family. Making him a direct descendent of two Tolpuddle Martyrs. Little wonder he is a trade unionist proud of his heritage.

Yeovil & Dist. TUC are planning for next years Tolpuddle festival.

We aim to have a stall and hopefully raise money for our work for the coming year.

If you want to help please come along to our meeting

We hold them on the third Wednesday of the month

At the Labour Club up stairs. 7.30p.m.

All members are welcome

The Yeovil TUC at Tolpuddle



Members of Yeovil TUC with thousands of trade unionists from all over Britain marched through the village commemorating the Tolpuddle Martyrs. **Seen here are Joe Conway and Bill Byrd carrying the banner.**



Part of the crowd at Tolpuddle waiting for the proceedings to start

Boardroom pay rises twice as fast as share prices

02/10/06. The average director now earns more than a hundred times as much as a worker. Britain's boardroom bosses took home a total of £753m in 2005, up from £590m a year earlier. The 28% rise came in a year in which the FTSE 100 index rose 15%. An average chief executive is paid the equivalent of just over 100 workers on average pay. However, some are rated far more highly. Mick Davis, [chief executive of Xstrata, for instance, took home nearly £15m](#) last year, equal to the salaries of 544 average workers at the mining group.

Defend the NHS!

The NHS has been getting better. Yet progress is under threat:

- * Sudden budget cuts threaten patients and jobs
- * Rapid, top-down change has hit morale
- * NHS values are threatened by the dash to the private sector which will lead to the de-socialisation of the NHS to a USA model.

NHS staff wants to see a better NHS – partners in change for the better. This is our chance to tell MPs and ministers that the better NHS we all want is under threat. And that the best way to improve the NHS is to work with staff, not against them.

NHS together is the new campaign alliance of all the NHS trade unions together with the TUC. www.nhstogether.org.uk

How to join the lobby locally

Contact by email Secretary@unioneastsomerset.org.uk

By phone Daytime 01935 384583

By phone Evening 01935 478869

The coach leaves Yeovil General Hospital at 8.30am sharp! On Nov 1st 2006

Health unions express concern on consultation and privatisation

A delegation of health unions led by the TUC has today met the Secretary of State for Health. The health unions told the Secretary of State that plans to outsource and privatise parts of the NHS (including NHS Logistics) will not deliver the improvements to health services that both unions and government want to see.

The delegation told the Secretary of State that the breakneck pace of change within the NHS and lack of meaningful consultation with staff through their unions threatened a complete collapse of morale.

Health unions are now committed to a major joint campaign to press these issues. The campaign includes fringe meetings at the September TUC Congress and Labour Party Conference. Unions are considering a lobby of Parliament and regional and national demonstrations if progress is not made.

General Secretary, Brendan Barber said: 'We welcome this opportunity to put our deep concerns directly to the Secretary of State. We are pleased that she recognised that present consultation arrangements need to be reviewed urgently.

'But our prime concerns remain. The pace and direction of reform have not won the support of those who are supposed to implement change. Health unions support reform that delivers better patient care, but too many current changes seem to be driven by an ideological preference for the private sector and will not benefit patients.

'There can be no doubt that there have been big improvements in the NHS under this government. But the government's relentless changes and preference for privatisation is causing growing frustration among staff who want the NHS to succeed but think their views have not been taken into account. Unless ministers listen to those working in the frontline and work in partnership with those they rely on to deliver change, they risk undermining the principles on which the NHS has been built and they throw away the chance to take the credit that is due to them for extra funding and better patient care. '