

## HEALTH & SAFETY AT WORK

### Unite Commitment to Health & Safety

Conference notes that deaths in the workplace are on the increase. In 2010/2011 171 people were killed while at work which represented a 16% increase on 2009/2010.

The General Secretary in recognising this alarming trend said “Health and Safety regulations are not burdensome bureaucracy but essential protection”, and “effective enforcement of health & safety legislation is vital, not the cuts and deregulatory agenda being pursued by the government.”

Conference is therefore extremely concerned that at a time when we as a union should be defending and supporting front line Health & Safety activities, the union has embarked on a path of cutting the Health & Safety unit numbers to such an extent that its’ ability to function and offer support to Health & Safety activists as effectively as it has done in the past is placed in serious question.

Conference therefore calls upon the EC to take the following steps to ensure that Health & Safety remains a key priority throughout the union and that is able to function effectively:

- Carry out a thorough review of the Health & Safety department;
- Establish a Union policy on Health & Safety Unit;
- Ensure adequate frontline resources and support is available to Health & Safety reps;
- Establish a national biennial Health & Safety Conference;
- Establish annual regional Health & Safety Conferences;
- Establish an EC subcommittee to take care of all Union Health & Safety matters

Conference calls upon the EC to implement the above proposals as a matter of urgency and no later than 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012.

**GPM RISC – East Midlands**  
**GPM RISC – South East**  
**37N Branch – West Midlands**

### DEFENDING HEALTH AND SAFETY FOR MEMBERS

This Conference deplores the Con Dem’s Government action in slashing funding of the Health and Safety Executive, by 35 per cent over the next four years.

We believe that this will lead to the further watering down of health & safety.

A weaker enforcement regime will inevitably lead to increased deaths, injuries and sickness arising from work.

We further deplore the continuing Government policy to reduce health and safety regulation and health and safety standards. This strategy, built on myth and dogma, puts workers at greater risk.

We call on the Unite at **all** levels:

- To mount a vigorous campaign to oppose cuts in public spending in the agencies responsible for the enforcement of health and safety within the workplace

- To **oppose** Government moves to reduce health and safety standards in the workplace

### **Furthermore, we call on Unite**

1. To continue the campaign for effective corporate manslaughter laws including imprisonment of directors.
2. To campaign with other sectors, trade unions & TUC for a **maximum working temperature** that covers all workplaces. A legal maximum temperature should be pursued for those doing strenuous work, where once the temperature reaches the maximum limit, then control measures must be implemented to reduce the heat and/or the effect on the employee.
3. To continue to press for greater rights for union safety representatives
4. To challenge the use by employers of “blame the worker” initiatives, and other so-called “Behavioural Safety” programmes in the workplace.

### **GPM RISC, NORTH EAST YORKSHIRE & HUMBER**

### **LONG HOURS CULTURE**

Conference notes that working excessively long hours:

1. Has a major impact on the physical and mental health of workers
2. Is inefficient because fatigue slows physical and mental capacity leading to lower output, lower quality, poor workplace relations and increased accident levels.
3. Prevents workers playing a full role in family, community and wider society.
4. Worsens unemployment
5. As a consequence of all of the above places major costs on a wide variety of state and semi-state departments and agencies.
- 6.

We recognise that the gains made industrially and politically over the last two hundred years are now under serious attack by an employer’s offensive on existing industrial agreements and a lack of zeal in state enforcement of legislation.

Conference calls on the executive to ensure that:

1. Our lay and full time officials are properly trained in these issues and do not enter into agreements that undermine our union’s national policies or our members’ statutory rights.
2. The resources of the legal and political departments will be mobilised to defend our members when necessary
3. We make working time legislation a key issue in our dealings with the Labour Party

### **Passenger RISC – South East Region**

### **HEALTH & SAFETY**

Conference condemns the proposals of the Con-Dem government to drastically cut the budget of the Health & Safety Executive leading to:

- A reduction in the number of HSE inspections
- Job losses among HSE staff
- The removal of the HSE info line service
- The restriction of reporting of incidents
- The removal of the right to health & safety training for workers in SMEs

Conference is particularly concerned that the number of inspections in particularly dangerous industries such as agriculture, construction and docks is to be massively reduced.

Conference believes that health & safety standards would be further detrimentally affected if the government progresses with plans to reduce trade union facility time, affecting the ability to organise on health & safety at work through trade union health & safety reps who, since the Health & Safety at Work Act, have proven to be a particularly effective means of addressing health & safety concerns.

Conference recognises that the actions of the government on health & safety are part of a wider agenda of public sector cuts, privatisation and attacks on trade union and employment rights.

Conference, therefore, calls on the General Executive Council to organise campaigning events, including protest events and demonstrations against the government's anti-health & safety at work agenda and to argue that the case to defend and improve health & safety rights must be an integral part of the movements wider campaigns against government cuts.

## **RURAL & AGRICULTURAL RISC - SCOTTISH REGION**

### **WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY**

This conference deplores the attacks of this coalition government upon workplace Health and Safety through a variety of means including the dismantling of Health and Safety Law, reductions to Health and Safety inspections, abolition of Health and Safety helpline and the changes to RIDDOR reporting, and thereby the concealment of the true extent of workplace sickness and injury.

This conference instructs the NEC to vigorously campaign throughout the trade union movement to reverse this insidious destruction of workers protection.

**Northampton 0283 Branch**