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## 1. UCU Congress 2009

The health & safety stand in the exhibition area was shared with environment issues and staffed from Wednesday lunchtime until mid-Thursday afternoon. The stand was busy, and we held around 30 different conversations and discussions with delegates and some UCU officials. Delegates took away a considerable number of copies of the updated Safety Representatives Regulations booklet (the new guidance); a number of UCU Health and Safety Representative Badges; the bullying guidance, the current newsletter and the new violence at work posters and factsheet. It was well worth the effort!

The Thursday lunchtime fringe meeting on bullying at work was chaired by NEC member John Murphy. About 60 delegates attended. Stephen Court spoke on the results of the recent UCU bullying survey, and John Bamford spoke about the need to ensure that bullying is treated as a collective issue, and that Branches and LA's need to organise an active body of safety representatives and negotiate effective policies, agreements and procedures with employers to deal with bullying. Over half-an-hours lively and considered discussion followed.

Three motions on health and safety matters were debated and carried by Congress. The full text of all three is at <http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3893>. Motion 40 called for the further development of UCU organisation for health, safety and welfare, and calls on UCU to establish a small national committee to drive forward the union's H&S work; raise awareness among our members on H&S; encourage the establishment of safety reps' networks at workplace and regional levels, and use the opportunities afforded by the SRSC Regulations to build the union. Motions 41 and 42, on Bullying and Stress respectively call for further practical action to tackle the problems at workplace level.



## 2. Ban Bullying at Work day

To follow-up the e-mail that we circulated to the list on 15th April about the Andrea Adams Trust withdrawing from the organisation of Ban Bullying at Work day, we have to report two further developments. First, at the last meeting of the Union Health & Safety Specialists group, the TUC was asked to investigate the possibility of another organisation assuming the lead responsibility so the day could continue.

We will report what happens to this initiative when we have more information. Secondly, it now appears that the Andrea Adams Trust is closing down as a centre where bullied workers and their reps can get help and advice.

Charlotte Rayner of Portsmouth University and president of the International Association on Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace circulated an e-mail at the end of May to confirm this. Charlotte says:

"For 15 years the Andrea Adams Trust (AAT) has been providing help and assistance to organizations and targets of bullying. They operate a help-line for targets, and provide materials used by targets across the world on their website."

"It is with regret that due to ill health the CEO, Lyn Witheridge, is having to step down. The Trust Board and Andrea Adams' family have decided to close the help-line and the charitable side of the organization. The consultancy and training arm will continue under 'Andrea Adams Consultancy Limited'".

The AAT charitable services will cease all activity at the end of June 2009.

### **3. Latest HSE Strategy**

Following consultation in which UCU participated, the HSE has issued its new 5-year strategy document, The Health & Safety of Great Britain, which sets 10 broad goals. These include reinforcing worker involvement and increasing competence, leadership and sensible risk management in the workplace. Useful aims in the FE and HE sectors, although we remain unsure about what "sensible risk management" means. It also includes a phrase about the need to build understanding risk into the schools curriculum.

The consultation exercise resulted in some minor changes to the original draft, one of which causes a little concern for some of us. Under the heading "Involving the Workforce", the draft said there was "overwhelming evidence that unionised workplaces and those with health and safety representatives are safer and healthier as a result" The final strategy has downgraded "overwhelming" to "strong". (Page 11, first paragraph) They have also retained the concept of "commonsense" (Page 3) – some of the consultees did question this, referring to both Gramsci and Einstein as authorities. [www.hse.gov.uk/strategy/strategy.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/strategy/strategy.htm) for the full document.

The HSE has also launched a 'pledge' alongside the strategy, inviting employers, employees and other 'stakeholders' to sign-up to help it achieve its aims. Amongst other things, the 'pledge' commits the stakeholder to "Agree to play our part in reducing the numbers of work-related deaths, injuries and ill-health in Great Britain" and "Call on employers to put health and safety at the heart of what they do and to take a common sense approach to health and safety"

Some sceptics and malcontents have already suggested that there is little point in signing a pledge to do what you are already supposed to be doing to meet your statutory obligations anyway. If the HSE cannot enforce H&S effectively, and has to continue to issue improvement and prohibition notices and initiate prosecutions to make employers observe the law, then what chance do they have to enforce a pledge? Find the pledge at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/strategy/pledge.htm> with a list of the employers that have so far signed. One big employer that promoted the new HSE strategy at its launch, and who rushed to sign up to the pledge is steelmaker Corus.

To review the Corus record in relation to occupational safety, injury and death over the past few years, see <http://www.hazards.org:80/corus/>

The following 3 HE institutions have so far (as at 16th June) signed up: MMU; University of Wolverhampton and Southampton University Estates. Did they consult with UCU and other union representatives about this?

The pledge doesn't specifically commit them to work more closely with union representatives, so perhaps someone from these three universities could let us know.

It would also be informative if our local safety reps could let us know what difference signing the pledge makes to the employer's performance. E-mail John Bamford at [jbamford@ucu.org.uk](mailto:jbamford@ucu.org.uk)

If you want to hear what a real enforcer sounds like, listen to Paul Whitehouse, chair of the Gang masters Licensing Authority being interviewed on the Today programme on Saturday 9th May, and admitting to being proud of being draconian and "in the face" of gang-masters who break the law.

[http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid\\_8041000/8041437.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/today/newsid_8041000/8041437.stm)

#### **4. Every little helps**

Even the biggest and highest-profile organisations get it wrong. The current issue of Health & Safety at Work magazine, the official journal of the International Institute of Risk & Safety Management reports four prosecutions of the UK's largest retailer over the past year for injuries caused to workers. Two involved a lack of training. In total, the company was fined £87,000 plus costs. Tesco is, of course, regulated by environmental health officers employed by the local authority in which their stores are located. Such fines are small beer set against their billions in annual profits, so the slogan remains true.

#### **5. HSE highlights importance of training and risk assessments following the death of employee**

The Health and Safety Executive has called on employers to ensure they undertake appropriate risk assessments and protect their employees through proper training, following the tragic death of a young father from Hertfordshire. SF (UK) Ltd, trading as British Gas, of Millstream, Maidenhead Road in Windsor, was fined £35,000 with £65,000 costs at St Albans Crown Court on 10th June.

Engineer Ricky Cronin was attending a residential call-out. While repairing a washing machine motor fault, Mr Cronin made contact with live parts after removing the back panel and was electrocuted as the power was left on. Mr Cronin was only in his fifth week of employment with the company, although he did have previous experience. As part of the induction programme he was accompanied on the job by a more experienced colleague.

The HSE investigation found that the induction training provided by the employer was insufficient, and there was a lack of adequate risk assessment. The Inspector concerned drew attention to the fact that a number of people were injured or killed at work every year by electricity, and made it clear the HSE will take action against employers who fall short of the law.

#### **6. What IS a workers life worth?**

On 8th June 2009 a Scottish construction company and one of its directors was convicted of failing to ensure proper health & safety standards after the death of one of its workers who fell 3 metres down a shaft in a block of flats being built in Dundee on 29th May 2008, and later died of his injuries.

On the same day, Steven Appleton appeared for sentencing before Caerphilly Magistrates, following his earlier conviction for causing unnecessary suffering to a pet rabbit that he had stamped to death.

Discovery Homes (Scotland) Ltd of High Street, Kinross, were fined £5,000 for breaching Section 2(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act.

A director of the company, Richard Lionel Pratt, who was also the site manager, was fined £4,000 after being convicted of breaching Section 37(1) of the Health and Safety at Work Act. See HSE press release at

<http://nds.coi.gov.uk/Content/Detail.asp?ReleaseID=402977&NewsAreaID=2>

Steven Appleton got a 6 month custodial sentence for causing the death of the rabbit. See <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/8089576.stm>

The campaigning organisation Families Against Corporate Killers (FACK) was outraged at the fact that in our society the killing of a rabbit attracts a more severe sentence than killing a human being. They have written to the Prime Minister to protest that a rabbit killer should have been sentenced more harshly than the killer of a man who went to work and who died because his employer was negligent. The plain fact is that there are more custodial sentences for animal cruelty annually than there are for causing the death of an employee. For more information about FACK's campaigning activities around work-related death visit [www.fack.org.uk](http://www.fack.org.uk).

## 7. Occupational health matters

1) A recent report led by private healthcare provider Bupa in partnership with The Work Foundation claims that the worsening health of the workforce will damage the long-term productivity of British companies large and small. By 2030, an ageing workforce and higher rates of chronic disease among employees will pose a serious threat to business success unless action is taken to address the problems. The report brings together for the first time more than 200 pieces of research to provide in-depth insight into how the health of British workers will change over the next 20 years. It argues that work – and in particular good work – must be placed at the centre of efforts to improve health. Amongst other things, the report suggests that musculoskeletal conditions could rise by 8%; cases of mental illness could increase by 5%, and coronary heart disease rise by 11%. Mental illness and heart disease are both known to be human responses to stress, a serious and growing work-related health problem for teachers and lecturers.

[http://www.theworkfoundation.com/assets/docs/publications/216\\_Bupa\\_report.pdf](http://www.theworkfoundation.com/assets/docs/publications/216_Bupa_report.pdf)

2) On the 15th June, the BBC Radio 4 programme Today reported that research undertaken by Cancer Research UK has discovered that men suffer a greater incidence of non-gender specific cancers than women. Among cancers which affect both sexes, men are 60% more likely to develop the disease and 70% more likely to die from it, the report says. The researchers admit they were unable to hypothesise any specific factors that could be responsible for this.

Professor David Forman, information lead for the National Cancer Intelligence Network, which helped carry out the research, said: "For many of the types of cancer we looked at that affect both sexes, there's no known biological reason why men should be at a greater risk than women, so we were surprised to see such consistent differences. Men have a reputation for having a 'stiff upper lip' and not being as health conscious as women. What we see from this report could be a reflection of this attitude, meaning men are less likely to make lifestyle changes that could reduce their risk of the disease and less likely to go to their doctor with cancer symptoms."

Nowhere in the report is work, and what happens to people at work, considered as a potential factor in creating this difference. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/8097639.stm>

## 8. 98th Session of the International Labour Organisation

Thanks largely to the influence of global trade unions, the tri-partite International Labour Organisation includes workers health, safety and welfare in a holistic way, influencing and being influenced by other bargaining and related issues.

Gender equality is growing in importance on the international workers agenda, and in this session the ILO Gender Equality Committee has reported to the conference on the global economic crisis, gender and decent work, export processing zones, occupational safety and health, unequal pay, maternity protection, and social dialogue.

Women are disproportionately present in low-paying jobs with poor working conditions. Gender-based violence is rampant, and HIV/AIDS affects more women and the poor in particular. Globalization has often created jobs for women that have low pay, little or no access to social security, no access to benefits of collective bargaining, and or to protection of workers' rights. Rather, efforts must continue to ensure that gender equality is at the heart of decent work. This is a central tenet at this year's ILO Conference.

The current financial crisis should not be used to undermine women's rights and achievements. The Global Employment Agenda has to be monitored to promote gender equality as a core element. Occupational safety and health once only focused on dangerous jobs done by men, but more work must be done on work-related hazards and how they affect women and men differently. Reproductive health is equally an issue that affects both women and men. Social dialogue is an essential tool for achieving gender equality at work, but in order for it to be effective, more women must be involved in it at all levels.

The conclusions at the ILO include wording to eliminate job segregation. That alone will be a large step to equal pay. Women can only fully participate in working life if they are assured of measures to provide for their children. The sharing of parental responsibilities is key to breaking down barriers.

## 9. UCU's H&S Training is the best!

***'The H&S course was the best training course I have ever done. As a result of attending that course I have gained an incredible amount of H&S knowledge, have access to the legal information to back up that knowledge.'***

***'If a H&S issue is raised I can now put my hands on the appropriate legislation and quote from it – very useful.'***

***'I also met a whole bunch of really brilliant people – we are still in touch and supporting each other.'***

**Patricia Hulme, University of Nottingham**

The UCU safety reps training programme for the new academic year will be circulated in the July newsletter. Safety reps are reminded to give notice to their employers before the summer break for any training courses they intend to apply for that start in the earlier part of the new academic year.

## 10. Events



### **WorkStress Network Annual Conference 2009**

This year's conference takes place on Saturday and Sunday, November 21st and 22nd at the NASUWT Hillscourt Conference Centre, Rednall, Birmingham.

The conference theme is "Stress – the 21st Century Epidemic". Work-related stress remains one of the most common workplace hazards, with significant numbers of workers and trade union safety representatives reporting the problem in surveys by the Samaritans and the TUC. Recent UCU research confirms the prevalence of the issue in both further and higher education.

UCU sponsors 4 delegates to the conference. To secure one of these places, ask your Branch or LA secretary to e-mail Janet Pantland at [jpantland@ucu.org.uk](mailto:jpantland@ucu.org.uk) giving your details, and confirming that the local organisation supports your nomination as a UCU delegate. UCU will pay the conference delegate fee and reasonable travel.

Applications will be accepted on a first come – first served basis. Local organisations can send delegates at the Branch or LA expense, or even seek employer support.

**See <http://www.workstress.net/> for more information and a report from the 2008 conference.**

The 2009 conference information and booking form can be downloaded from <http://www.workstress.net/downloads/networkconference2009.pdf> Please do not send the form off until you have received confirmation from Janet.



## **HSE Safety Conference: The Health Workplace**

South East Region TUC will be holding its HSE Safety Conference 'The Healthy Workplace' on Friday 20 November 2009 at TUC Congress House.

The conference will include a national speaker from ACAS and a Public Health Director as well as leading Health and Safety speakers. To register and for further details visit:

[http://www.tuc.org.uk/h\\_and\\_s/tuc-16487-f0.cfm?regional=7](http://www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/tuc-16487-f0.cfm?regional=7)

You should note that this event is primarily for those in the South East Region. To find out about events in your region, visit the TUC website at

[http://www.tuc.org.uk/tuc/regions\\_main.cfm](http://www.tuc.org.uk/tuc/regions_main.cfm)

## **11. Advice line details**

We would like to extend a warm welcome to **Janet Pantland** as the newest member of the health and safety team. Janet joins UCU as an administrator and can be reached at [jpantland@ucu.org.uk](mailto:jpantland@ucu.org.uk) and on **020 7756 2539**.

UCU's Health and Safety Advice Line for safety reps and branch officers offers information about health and safety legal standards, and how they can be applied and advice on dealing with health and safety issues/problems.

The Health and Safety Advice Line is for branch officers and safety reps only, not for individual members. The advice line will be staffed three days a week only. When you phone the advice line you may be asked to leave a message. You will then be contacted as soon as possible.

Telephone 0161 636 7558

Email [healthandsafety@ucu.org.uk](mailto:healthandsafety@ucu.org.uk)

Postal John Bamford

UCU Health and Safety Advice Line

Greater Manchester Hazards Centre, Windrush Millennium Centre

70 Alexandra Road, Manchester M16 7WD

Don't forget to visit the [UCU Health and Safety web page](#)