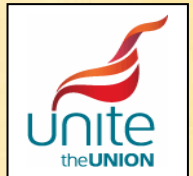




Consortium Tribune

The Official Newsletter of the Remploy Trade Union.



Consortium



Report from Consortium

The Sayce Report

The Sayce Report is the biggest threat to Remploy factories that we have seen to date. It was launched at a press conference in front of invited guests on the 9th of June. To put in a nutshell, the report recommends that Remploy factories and the Employment Services be either privatised or closed in the case of the factories, or privatised in the case of ES. There is something familiar about this concept, don't you think? Cast your mind back to the New Year blog from Tim Matthews;

"My personal view on this is very clear -from my perspective moving out of government ownership presents a really exciting opportunity for our employment services business and one that we should seize."

Just like every other facet of industrial relations in Remploy, the Trade Unions were kept in the dark about the launch on the 9th June.

We had only got to know about the launch from a Press Release given to the GMB, Press Office in their Annual Congress in Brighton and decided that there was going to be "Nothing About Us, Without Us" as the well known disability slogan goes.

Liz Sayce, the author of the Report was accompanied by Maria Miller, the Minister for Disabled People and a few of her acolytes from the DWP. It was obvious right from the start that we were not welcome.

They obviously did not want actual Remploy workers there, to hear about the recommendations for their future

Sayce's contribution was filled with the same old rhetoric about Remploy factories being out of date, not fulfilling their role, not being sustainable and she actually used the word Ghettoes again and the report uses the phrase "Workhouse Employment" in reference to Remploy factories. That is extremely offensive to Remploy factory workers.

The offensive attitudes to Remploy are not really surprising as right through the report references are made to work produced by *The Leonard Cheshire Foundation, Mind, Scope, Mencap and Mind*. All organisations who signed the open the letter to the Guardian in May 2007 which supported the closure of Remploy factories under the so called "modernisation" programme in 2008, along with RADAR. Liz Sayce is the Chief Executive of RADAR, making this report as independent as a report by the Vegetarian Society on the ethics and morality of Beef Farming.

The Report presents some real challenges to us if we are to stop the further demise of the factories, but things are far from set in stone and we do have an opportunity to influence the final decisions that are made.

The workers in the factories are the people who have rejected the VR Scheme and who see their future in the factories.

If we all develop a "can do" attitude then we will change Remploy factories for the better not lose them.

Eternal Vigilance is the Price of Freedom

The Next Steps

Over the last few weeks we have had resolutions passed at various conferences that commit to supporting us in our fight to keep factories open.

The Trades Council Conference in Peterborough unanimously passed a resolution by Swansea Trades Council pledging to support the fight as well as the TUC Disability Conference, the GMB and the recent National Shop Stewards Network Conference also resolved to support us in our fight.

The Trades Councils are the very hub of the Anti-Cuts campaign, throughout the country. A list of factories and their local Trades Councils will be distributed shortly.

The local trade's council can provide support for local campaigns, advice on publicity and even help to arrange demos. Trades Councils are mini TUCs and comprise of delegates from local trade union branches, who meet regularly to coordinate Trade Union campaigns and activity on a local basis.

We need to double our efforts with MPs MSPs MEPs Welsh Assembly Members, local councilors, in fact every mover and shaker in the community. We also need to get in touch with local radio, press and TV.

There is no dubiety now we know exactly what is in front of us. We have only two choices of action; we do everything in our power to save our factories and we have a chance, a good chance, of saving our sites or we throw our hands up in the air, yell surrender and Remploy will not exist in less than two years.

The Remploy Consortium of Trade Unions will not give up, but for us to be successful then we have to have 100% commitment from everyone. Over the next few weeks the Consortium will arrange shop stewards meetings and public meetings in every region.

The Consortium of Trade Unions are also commissioning a survey of all trainees in the factories.

The Sayce Report makes a big play on the aspirations of young people. Apparently they do not want to work in Remploy factories. We do not get that impression from trainees who pass through the factories; they would give their eye teeth for a job.

Are We Organised?

The VR Programme would have left holes in our organization that need to be plugged. As a minimum every factory should at least have a Shop Steward, Health and Safety Representatives, Learning Reps and Diversity Reps.

The elections of positions will take place under the rules of the individual trade unions. If the factory has no organization then the full time officer should be brought in to support. Over the next week or so the consortium members will undertake a review of the organization in each of the 54 sites and will support their factories in rebuilding the organization.

We have a lot of work to do and not a lot of time to do it in, so we will have to pull together, like never before. The consortium believes the factories are worth fighting for. We are not employed in ghettos or workhouses; we produced and can produce again, top quality goods. It is not our fault that the factories have been miss managed for years.

Over the next few weeks, the Consortium will develop a strategy for defending our factories. We will expect a 100% commitment from everyone. We have one last chance to win this fight, we cannot afford to sit back and let other people fight for us, we will have to put ourselves out, we will have to step up to the plate and pull together. We have no choice.

To down load the full report visit the website below;

<http://www.dwp.gov.uk/policy/welfare-reform/specialist-disability-employment/>