



National Convenor's Report October 2010

Pay.

We met with the Company as a full consortium, way back on the 17th of July where we presented the claim as decided by the 2010 Remploy conference. As yet the Remploy Trade Union Consortium has not had a date from the Company to commence negotiations. Phil Davies has written on several occasions and asked for a date to start the process off but every time the Company in the guise of Sue Butcher claims that they cannot start the process off until the remit has been agreed by the Treasury. This is not quite true. Whilst negotiations cannot be concluded, there is scope within the Treasury guidelines that talks can start at any time. In fact the guidelines actively encourage the two parties to start talks.

The more cynical of us would therefore think, there hangs the problem, since the so called Modernisation and the old guard of Ann Jessopp and Bob Warner have left and the new kids on the block have taken over, consultation, negotiation and good old fashioned plain talking to one another has flown out the window. I have sat on the Consortium for best part of seventeen years and I cannot recall a time when the Trade Union Consortium was treated with such disdain and contempt. I can never remember meetings cancelled at literally less than 24 hours notice, which has happened recently. I can never remember a time when accredited Trade Union Shop Stewards were not allowed time off for attending Labour Party Conferences, in fact I can recall a time when we were encouraged to attend such events to promote the Company and the factory network.

The contempt that the Company shows at the highest level (who by the way are mostly non disabled!!), for the likes of us on the shop floor is well illustrated by the notice that have posted on the Intranet warning trade union members off attending party conferences. This, in my opinion, is nothing less than a concerted attack on the Trade Union membership and a cynical attempt to gag the membership on the way that Remploy is being seriously miss-managed. The fact that it contravenes the National Accord which provides for time off for trade Union sponsored events which the Labour Party is and may for ever be so, has not apparently dawned on our so called leaders who frequent the hallowed corridors of power in Leicester.

Phil Davies has written to the Company advising them of the need to meet as quickly as possible and has set a date for the 26 of October. Hopefully the Company will see sense and arrange to meet us. In any event the Trade Unions will reconvene on that day.

Pensions.

After the change in Government and concerns over pension schemes, we met the Company on the 12th July. At the moment the actuaries are considering the actuarial review which will not be available until July 2011. Sue Butcher did confirm however that there were no plans at that time to change the benefits of the scheme.

Work Loading.

The low level of work in the majority of our factories is causing great concern for the Consortium. Whilst it is true that we are going through the worst economic crisis since before the Second World War that still doesn't account for the lack of imagination and commercial nous that is prevalent in the Company. We still have too much waste, too many managers, too much duplication between businesses.

You would have been forgiven for thinking that the mistakes by the Company that led to the closure of 29 factories in 2008 would have been learned from but alas they were not. Whilst the shop floor workers and staff paid the ultimate price for the inefficiencies in the Company with their jobs after being shamelessly bribed with large amounts of money to sell their jobs, the population of senior managers has increased. That increase will inevitably result in a rise to costs and a rise to the operating deficit per head of disabled people in the factories. Remploy as a fertile feeding ground for inept management is still as alive and well as what it was before modernisation.

York Disabled Workers Cooperative.

The York Disabled Workers Cooperative is up and running and has gone into production. Whilst it is supported by the Trade Unions who form the Remploy trade Union Consortium, it must be remembered that this is not Remploy by another name. It is a Workers Cooperative and is set up under the Cooperative and Provident Societies Rules.

And Finally

The next Consortium meeting as reported earlier will be late October. There will be another Convener's report straight after or sooner if we have developments.

Les Woodward
National Convenor