

YORK DISABLED WORKERS COOPERATIVE

MY NAME IS JAMES STRIBLEY AND I AM A YORKSHIRE MAN AND A PROUD REMPLOY WORKER. I HAVE BEEN A UNION MEMBER FOR 24 YEARS OF THE GMB, AND MY ROOTS ARE TRADE UNION.

I HAVE WORKED FOR REMPLOY FOR THE SAME ABOUT OF TIME

I HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN THE UNION MOVEMENT FOR 12 YEARS HOLDING VARIOUS POSITIONS, INCLUDING SHOP STEWARD BRANCH SECRETARY AND A MEMBER OF THE REGION'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

ONE OF THE BIG PARTS I HAVE PLAYED IN THE UNION MOVEMENT IS DEFENDING VULNERABLE WORKERS. I HAVE BEEN INVOLVED REGIONALLY IN THE LEEDS BIN DISPUTE AND THE DERECOGNITION OF THE GMB BY THE COOP FUNERAL, WHERE THIS IS STILL ON GOING, DEFENDING PUBLIC SERVICES AND PART OF THE FREE SCHOOL MEALS CAMPAIGN.

I AM AN ACTIVE MEMBER OF THE LABOUR PARTY AND THE LOCAL TRADES COUNCIL. ONLY YESTERDAY I MET DAVID MILLIBAND AT A LOCAL WORKING MENS' CLUB

I PLAYED A LARGE PART AGAINST UNJUSTNESS TOWARDS REMPLOY WORKERS, IN PARTICULAR THE CLOSING OF 29 REMPOY SITES, LOBBYING THE GOVERNMENT IN TRYING TO STOP THE CLOSURES.

JUST DOWN THE ROAD FROM HERE WE HELD A 24 HOUR VIGIL. MANY SITES TOOK THE REDUNDANCY

IN MARCH 2008, AFTER A LONG DISPUTE WHICH INCLUDED SEVERAL TWO DAY STOPPAGES, AND THE MOST VULNERABLE PEOPLE IN SOCIETY HAVING TO TAKE STRIKE ACTION TO TRY AND SECURE THERE FUTURE AT THE YORK SITE, REMPLOY FINALLY CLOSED THE FACTORY IN YORK WITH THE LOSS OF 56 JOBS.

REMPLOY MANAGEMENT HAVE BLED THE COMPANY - LAST YEAR COMPANY DIRECTORS PAID THEMSELVES 1.75 M IN BOUNCES

37 WORKERS TOOK REDUNDANCY AND 19 REFUSED THE VERY HIGH CASH PAYMENTS BEING OFFERED. THESE PEOPLE STAYED ON REMPLOY TERMS AND CONDITIONS.

OVER THE LAST YEAR THESE 19 PEOPLE HAVE BEEN MOVED FROM JOB TO JOB BUT MOST HAVE BEEN GIVEN AS FREE LABOUR TO CHARITY SHOPS. OF THE OTHER 37 DISABLED PEOPLE WHO TOOK

REDUNDANCY MOST ARE UNEMPLOYED WITH VERY FEW SECURING FULL JOBS.

GORDON BROWN MADE A COMMITMENT OVER YORK THAT WAS NOT FULFILLED. A SMALL NUMBER WERE DETERMINED TO REOPEN A FACTORY FOR DISABLED PEOPLE IN YORK. A STEERING GROUP WAS SET UP, INCLUDING A GMB NATIONAL OFFICER, PHIL DAVIES, UNITE REGIONAL OFFICER, MYSELF, LES WOODWARD, STEVE SARGENT AND TONY GLEDHILL ALL REMPLOY WORKERS AND SENIOR LAY MEMBERS OF THE UNION.

AFTER TWO YEARS OF INVESTIGATION, HARD WORK AND SHEER DETERMINATION, A STRATEGY TO OPEN A DISABLED WORKERS CO-OPERATIVE WAS WORKED OUT AND FINANCIAL INVESTMENT CAME FROM GMB FUNDS FROM A REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEVEL

ON THE 13TH MAY 2010, THE DREAM BECAME A REALITY! THE YORK DISABLED WORKERS' COOPERATIVE WAS REGISTERED WITH 6 FOUNDER MEMBERS.

ON THE 24TH MAY 2010, THE COOPERATIVE BECAME A LEGAL COMPANY AND WILL BE RUN UNDER THE MODEL RULES OF THE CO-OPERATIVE AND PROVIDENT SOCIETIES.

GMB HAS AGREED TO ACT AS GUARANTORS FOR THE PREMISES. THIS HAS BEEN UNDERWRITTEN AND I HAVE BECOME ONE OF THE FOUNDER MEMBERS.

IN APRIL 2010, WE LAUNCHED A FINANCIAL APPEAL IN ORDER TO SET UP THE CO-OPERATIVE. BOTH GMB AND UNITE HAVE SO FAR RAISED OVER £20,000 BUT WE STILL NEED ANOTHER £40,000.

ONLY TWO WEEKS AGO WE RAISED £11,000 POUNDS AT GMB CONFERENCE. WE ARE RECEIVING TREMENDOUS SUPPORT FROM ALL PARTS OF THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT.

AT THE START OF JULY 2010, PREMISES WILL BE SECURED IN YORK AND 3 DISABLED WORKERS WILL BE EMPLOYED WITH ANOTHER 5 BY THE END OF 2010.

THE PRODUCTS OF THE CO-OPERATIVE WILL BE GOOD QUALITY GARDEN FURNITURE MADE FROM RECYCLED TIMBER AND DONATIONS OF TIMBER ARE ALREADY IN THE PIPELINE.

THE REALITY OF THIS IS THAT THERE WILL BE A MANUFACTURING UNIT IN YORK FOR DISABLED PEOPLE, RUN BY DISABLED PEOPLE.

IMAGINE – A SMALL GROUP OF DISABLED PEOPLE WILL BE ABLE TO SAY WHAT THEY WANT, WORK HOW THEY WANT AND BE ABLE TO PRODUCE THE WORK THEY WANT TO.

NO EXPENSIVE COMPANY DIRECTORS JUST DISABLED PEOPLE WORKING TOGETHER FOR THE BENEFIT OF THEMSELVES, THEIR FAMILY MEMBERS AND FUTURE DISABLED PEOPLE.

THIS PROVIDES QUALITY WORK FOR QUALITY PEOPLE

THIS IS WHAT THE UNION CAN DO FOR PEOPLE IN THE LOCAL COMMUNITY.

I WOULD LIKE TO PAY TRIBUTE TO PHIL DAVIES, MY NATIONAL SECRETARY, AND MY REGIONAL SECRETARY, TIM ROACHE, AND THE REGIONAL EXEC WHO HAVE MADE THIS AT ALL POSSIBLE

AND TO THE TITLE WORKING FOR A COMMON END - EVEN IF ITS WORKING FOR AN EMPLOYER WE ALL COME TO WORK FOR PAY AND TO BE TREATED WITH RESPECT AND AS EQUALS

THANK YOU FOR LISTENING.

WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO CONSIDER DONATIONS