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Union of
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Building Worker



Summer 2010

Election aftermath

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UCATT Building Worker

Summer 2010/No.46

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● UCATT protesters outside Conservative Party HQ in London (above) led by General Secretary Alan Ritchie (with tie), and in Weston-super-Mare (below).

Election blues

UCATT fears that the formation of a Conservative-led coalition Government following the general election on 6 May will be a massive blow for efforts to improve safety in construction. Moves to stamp out bogus self-employment and the denial of basic employment rights to tens of thousands of workers in the industry may also have suffered a severe setback, say union officials.

UCATT intervened in the election campaign with a demonstration outside Conservative Party HQ in London against Tory plans to allow companies to undertake independent safety audits. Bosses would then be able to bar Health and Safety Executive inspectors from entering their sites, unless there was an emergency. Despite UCATT warning that the policy would increase workplace deaths, the Conservatives confirmed in March this year that, if elected, they would press ahead with the scheme.

Alan Ritchie, UCATT General Secretary, accused the Conservatives of playing politics with workers' lives. "By privatising safety inspections the Tories are endangering the lives of construction workers."

UCATT members also took the protest to the Conservative Party's offices in Weston-super-Mare, where John Penrose is the Tory MP. As Shadow Business Secretary, Penrose had been one of the architects of the scheme to privatise safety inspections.

The outcome of the general election was the backdrop to the UCATT National Delegate Conference later in May, with delegates anxious about the implications of the Con-Dem coalition Government not just for safety but for jobs and workplace rights.

Delegates gave Michael Clapham a standing ovation in thanks for his work for the past 12 years as the chair of UCATT's Parliamentary Group of Labour MPs. The former MP for Barnsley West & Penistone, who stood down at the election, listed the successes achieved by the group and urged the union to continue its campaigning.

On pleural plaques, he said the decision to withdraw compensation for sufferers was "an attack on the working class".

The ex-miner said that, with the Liberal Democrats now showing their true colours, Labour needed to get back to its "fundamental values" and "take forward socialist principles into our communities".

Up and down the country, UCATT members played their part in ensuring that the media-backed challenge by the Liberal Democrats to overtake Labour was beaten off. Each UCATT region "adopted" a marginal constituency to help with the campaigning.

● "Savage cuts expose true face of the Tories": Alan Ritchie writes overleaf.



● Michael Clapham tells the UCATT conference that Labour must return to its "fundamental values".

● In Dudley North, UCATT convener Charlie Honeyman (centre) helps out in the canvassing with Labour candidate Ian Austin (left) and the then Business Secretary Peter (Lord) Mandelson. Austin held on to the seat on 6 May with a reduced majority of 649.



Privatisation gone mad

...in the Probation Service
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By Alan Ritchie
UCATT General Secretary

The savage cuts announced by Chancellor Gideon ("George") Osborne in his Emergency Budget were brutal and entirely unnecessary. At best they will mean the fragile economic recovery will be slowed; at worst they will force the country into a second recession.

What is certain is that hundreds of thousands of workers will lose their jobs.

The best way to reduce the Government's debt is to generate more taxes. The Government could start by taxing the non-domiciles, the people who gave David Cameron's Conservatives so much backing during the general election. These people claim not to live in this country but make millions here – while not paying the proper rate of tax.

In the press for instance, the pro-Tory *Daily Telegraph* is owned by the Barclay brothers, both of them tax exiles. The Chairman of the Daily Mail Group, which includes the *Daily Mail*, *Mail on Sunday* and the *Metro*, is Viscount Harmsworth, another non-dom; they too supported the Tories. While Rupert Murdoch, whose News Corporation owns *The Sun*, *News of the World*, *The Times* and *Sunday Times*, is a foreign citizen. In 2010 all his papers backed the Tories.



● George Osborne and David Cameron, as depicted on the cover of our pre-election issue.

In some countries this would be illegal, as the influence of people in the electoral system that do not live here or pay proper taxes is considered to be unacceptable in a democracy.

Cameron and Osborne say we are all in this together – a statement that should be treated with the contempt it deserves. They come from millionaire families; they represent the privileged.

Their tactics are to scare people, by exaggerating the problems facing the country, into meekly accepting the cuts.

No-one can deny that something needs to be done to tackle the financial deficit, which was

...and it's work till you drop
Moves by the Con-Dem Government to increase the retirement age to 66 by 2016, with the expectation that it will soon rise to 70, are despicable – and an attack on manual workers in particular.
The fact is that the life expectancy of male manual workers is increasing more slowly than that of any other group. Indeed, most construction workers are forced to retire before the age of 65 due to ill health or injury.
The announcement amounts to a cruel punishment for construction workers, as it will mean that many will die before reaching retirement age. And even if they do live long enough to draw a pension, they are unlikely to enjoy their later years in good health.

Savage cuts expose true face of the Tories



● Same old Tories: cartoon in response to the Budget in 1931, when the Conservatives and Liberals were also in coalition.

caused, let us not forget, by rich bankers, not ordinary working people. The question is: how it is tackled and who pays? The Con-Dems keep on saying cut public spending and the private sector will grow to drive the economy. But they provide no statistics to show how this would happen.

Our members in housebuilding and maintenance depend on public spending. Shipbuilding and engineering rely mainly on public contracts.

Even in the private sector of construction, 50 per cent of all contracts depend on public money. That is why it was a nonsense for the UK Contractors Group to join the CBI in putting out a statement supporting the Conservatives' economic policy, with the last sentence (which was largely ignored, of course) urging that construction investment should be protected. Talk about turkeys voting for Christmas!

Workers will be made redundant because of these cuts, increasing unemployment. That means less tax collected, less spending in the economy, plunging the country into a deeper recession. More people will be claiming benefits and then the Tories will complain that the benefit

system is too expensive and is being abused – and will slash benefit payments.

This will suit the right of the Conservative Party as people will start being forced to take jobs with lower wages, creating a low-wage economy. The pressure then goes on the minimum wage and we head for a race to the bottom. Remember the security guards in the last Tory administration being paid just £1.75 an hour?

The ideological hostility of the Conservative Party against the National Health Service will also come to the fore. Statements like: "The deficit is far worse than we thought" will give them an excuse to breach the principle of free health provision. It will be done subtly of course, using weasel words such as: "Those who can pay should pay."

Link such a policy to encouraging the private health sector by tax incentives and you can see how subtly the party of privilege operates.

The Tories want less public spending as they do not use local schools, the NHS or depend on social services. They represent the privileged in society with the money to pay for their own needs and hence their desire for lower taxes.

There is an alternative. As our economy begins to strengthen, Government revenues pick up. We are then able to pay off the deficit. Most sensible economic advisers will tell you that this would be the best way to deal with the problem. That means not just making workers pay for the bankers' crisis but ensuring that the well-off in our society are forced to pay their dues – including the correct levels of tax. Currently the very rich pay less per pound in tax than ordinary workers.

Cameron tries to portray his ideas as being radical, but it is the same old nasty Tory policies, supported this time by the Liberals, desperate for power. Do not mistake these cuts for radical politics. The Tories haven't changed.

“The Tories want less public spending as they do not use local schools, the NHS or depend on social services. They represent the privileged in society with the money to pay for their own needs and hence their desire for lower taxes.”



Youngsters lead the way in Lincoln

A new wave of apprentices (pictured above with their mentors) has been taken on by Lincoln City Council. UCATT is delighted that the success achieved in 2008 with the reintroduction of craft apprentices is now being consolidated.

The apprenticeships were reinstated after an absence of some 18 years. This followed negotiations led by Mick Nelson for the union and Director of Housing John Bibby.

Says UCATT's senior shop

steward Kev Clarke: "These talks were unusual due to the fact they were built on trust between both parties. This trust is demonstrated by the fact the unions are included and play an active role in all aspects of the apprenticeship scheme."

Very early on in the successful negotiations, the union was told that the first apprentice to be needed would be a flat felt roofer, thus enabling the roofing work to stay in-house.

Danny Murphy was appointed. He says: "Coming out of the army,

I didn't have many opportunities open to me. I am thankful for UCATT for pushing the issue at the council."

UCATT has insisted all along on delivering quality apprenticeships. The council has also agreed that the apprentices must fall under the terms of the Red Book agreement. Most of them will stay on for the extra year to obtain their level 3 qualification.

Clarke adds: "Overall this scheme shows what can be achieved by working together."

● Three UCATT union learning reps—from left: Jo Bentley, Kev Clarke and Pat South—celebrate after Lincoln City Council signed the Skills Pledge. The pledge is a commitment to train staff to NVQ level 2. This has been the focus of union efforts over the past few years, says Kev Clarke. See [<https://skillspledge.broadssystem.com>] for information about the Skills Pledge.



● The TUC has produced a "toolkit" resource for union reps and union learning reps who are negotiating with employers on apprenticeships. The factsheets provide concise information on a range of topics related to apprenticeships and are intended to be used as a reference and

information resource for reps. Factsheets can be taken out and given directly to an employer if information on a specific topic is required. See [www.unionlearn.org.uk/initiatives/learn-3338-fo.cfm].

New right to request training from your boss

A third of people who do not receive training from their employers have said that they are likely to use a new right to request training, according to a poll published by Unionlearn, the learning and skills arm of the TUC.

Since 6 April, 11 million employees in Great Britain have the new right to ask for time away from work to undertake training to improve their performance and be beneficial to the business. Employers can turn down requests only when there is a sound business reason to do so.

The right applies to workers in businesses employing 250 or more people. Only those who have worked for 26 weeks are eligible to make a request under the new right. The right will be extended to cover employees in businesses of all sizes in April 2011.

The Unionlearn poll found:
● 42 per cent of workers said that they were likely to use the new right to ask for more training;
● 32 per cent of employees who currently receive no training

from their employer say that they are likely to use the new right to ask for training;

● younger employees aged 18-34 are most likely to use the new right.

The poll accompanies a new TUC report, "Right to Training is on the Right Track", which finds that the people most in need of help to improve their skills are usually the least likely to get it.

Using the latest data from the Government's Labour Force Survey to analyse trends in workplace training, the report found that fewer than one in 10 employees without a qualification is offered regular training. This trend has actually deteriorated slightly over the past decade.

● "Right to Request Time off for Training: A Guide for Trade Unions and Union Representatives" can be obtained from [www.unionlearn.org.uk/righttorrequesttraining].

● "Right to Training is on the Right Track" can be downloaded from [www.unionlearn.org.uk/extrasul/policy/RightToTraining_report.doc].

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Andrew Ward

LONDON: Workers in Stratford, east London, stop work to remember the dead.



Workers' Memorial Day:

Thousands of UCATT members up and down the country marked this year's Workers' Memorial Day to remember their dead workmates and colleagues – and to vow to fight for a safe construction industry.

This was the first 28 April commemoration in the UK to have a Government stamp of approval and was accompanied by a ringing endorsement for union safety reps from the then Prime Minister Gordon Brown. He said he was proud a Labour Government had given the day official recognition. "It is fitting that this year's theme for Workers' Memorial Day is 'Unions make work safer.' Union health and safety reps work every day in this country to enforce the laws that are in place to protect people, ensuring that workers and their families are spared the dreadful consequences of deaths and injuries at work. I pay tribute to their tireless efforts on behalf of us all."

In London, construction workers from throughout the capital gathered at the Building Worker statute at Tower Hill for a memorial meeting. Following speeches, the laying of wreaths and a minute's silence, black balloons – one for each of last year's 53 fatalities in construction – were released.

Later in the day, memorial meetings were held in Stratford for Harry Sheridan (see photo on facing page) and for Shaun Scurry outside the Westfield shopping centre site where he was killed in December last year. In attendance were relatives from Kirkby, Merseyside. Shaun was reportedly trapped between a steel beam and an industrial lift. He was employed by Firesafe Installations. UCATT convener Dave Allen read out a statement from the Scurry family in which they said: "In December our lives changed forever and it will never be the same. He will never see his son grow up and get married He will never cel-

brate another birthday. He will be missed terribly by all our family and everybody who knew him and loved him. Until we find out exactly what happened all we can do is carry on the best we can."

In UCATT's Eastern Region, there were ceremonies at **Norwich** (see below) and **Harlow**, where there was a minute's silence by members at Kier Harlow. Workers on the multiple sites of the **M25** road widening project received joint union/management messages.

In **Mansfield** over 350 construction workers and office staff at the Skanska Kings Mill Hospital site attended the unveiling of a commemorative plaque and held a two-minute silence (see photo above). Among the speakers were UCATT General Secretary Alan Ritchie and Midlands Regional Secretary Steve Murphy.

Elsewhere in the Midlands, Neil Vernon, UCATT Executive Council member, spoke at a service held at St Phillip's churchyard **Birm-**



LIVERPOOL: The event at UCATT's memorial in Liverpool was attended by approximately 90 people, with UCATT President John Thompson (above) the main speaker. Children from the Faith Primary School, Liverpool, laid a wreath.



WALSALL: There was a 95 per cent turn-out of workers at the Skanska Walsall Hospital site, where a two-minute silence was observed.

Archant Newspapers



NORWICH: At the RG Carter War Memorial site (from left): UCATT Eastern Regional Secretary Brian Rye, Norfolk County Council Chaplain Christine Copsey, RG Carter Managing Director Saul Humphries and Safety Manager Mark Howson.



MANSFIELD: UCATT General Secretary Alan Ritchie speaks to workers at Skanska's Kings Mill Hospital site before unveiling a commemorative plaque.



SELLAFIELD: Workers assemble at the site in Cumbria, where Northern Regional Organiser John Cosgrove addressed the meeting.

United in remembrance

ingham. Regional Organiser Wayne Dickens addressed workers at two Building Schools for the Future sites in Birmingham. Shaun Lee, another Regional Organiser, spoke at an event at Shirebrook Market, **Shirebrook**.

In the North West, UCATT organised a service at the union's building worker memorial in Hunter Street, **Liverpool** (see photo on facing page). UCATT members also took part in a meeting in **Manchester** for safety reps at the Mechanics Institute, followed by a march to the Peace Gardens and a one-minute silence.

In Scotland, the main event took place in George Square, **Glasgow**, where Harry Frew, Regional Secretary, represented UCATT. Wreaths were also laid in West Princes Street Gardens, **Edinburgh** and UCATT members participated in ceremonies in **Alloa, Aberdeen, Dundee** and other towns and cities.

Yorkshire Regional Organiser Rob Morris spoke at a memorial

gathering at **Sheffield** Town Hall. Elsewhere in the region, UCATT officials and activists took part in events at **Hull, Bradford** and **Cleethorpes**.

Around the world too

Workers' Memorial Day is also marked around the world. In Ukraine and Poland, where the Eurocup-2012 football tournament is to be held in June and July 2012, building workers' unions highlighted the often lax working conditions on the project. The Ukrainian union said that four workers had died at Eurocup-2012 sites in the past two years. The Polish union reported that two workers were killed at the end of 2009 at the site of the new stadium in Warsaw.

According to the International Trade Union Confederation, there are almost 360,000 fatal occupational accidents globally in any year, and almost 2 million fatal work-related diseases. Every day, more than 960,000 workers get hurt because of accidents.



NEWCASTLE: UCATT Northern Regional Secretary John Scott (second from left) lays a wreath by the memorial plaque at the junction of the A1(M) and A69 in Newcastle to Joe Willis, a member who was killed at the site in April 1989.



BONNYRIGG: Midlothian MP and member of the UCATT Parliamentary Group David Hamilton (fourth from left) attended the ceremony organised by UCATT and other unions at the memorial to Scottish mineworkers' union leader Mick McGahey in Bonnyrigg.

Andrew Ward



LONDON: Regional Secretary Jerry Swain (right) with relatives of Harry Sheridan, from Luton. Sheridan, 58, was killed in December 2008 when an excavator bucket fell on him while working for Lorclon on the Olympics rail extension at West Ham.

Apprentice grant cuts 'will damage industry'

UCATT officials have voiced bitter disappointment at the news that the grants available for construction apprenticeships are to be cut by nearly 10 per cent.

From August 2010 the level of grant payable over three years to a company training a construction apprentice will be reduced from £9,820 to £9,000.

The decision has been made by the Construction Sector Skills Council (CSSC), which is responsible for paying grants to companies for apprenticeships and training. ConstructionSkills, which operates the CSSC, is claiming that the cut in grants was necessary due to a reduction in the training levy being generated during the recession.

However, UCATT argued that, due to the ongoing problems of too few apprentices

being recruited into the industry, the level of grants should not be reduced and other grants and cost-cutting measures should instead be implemented.

The lack of apprentice training has created skills shortages, say union officials. This in turn has resulted in lower levels of productivity. It is also feared that further skills shortages could slow the pace of future growth in the industry.

UCATT General Secretary Alan Ritchie said: "The decision to reduce the grants for apprenticeships is short-sighted, unnecessary and will harm construction. Most employers already have to be virtually dragged kicking and screaming to employ apprentices."

The number of apprentices being trained in construction has been falling for decades,

though the industry currently needs 40,000 new entrants each year in order to maintain manpower and skills. Prior to the recession the number of apprentices being trained annually was only around 20,000 and numbers have subsequently fallen.

In 2009 the Labour Government gave construction apprenticeships a major boost by announcing that all future Government procurement projects must include apprentices. This move would create an additional 7,000 construction apprentice places.

Ritchie added: "The cuts in grants undermine the good work of the previous Government in promoting apprentice numbers and runs directly counter to the warm words from the new coalition Government about encouraging apprenticeships."

Quarter of sites failed latest HSE blitz

There has been a 20 per cent increase in the number of construction sites requiring enforcement action after Health and Safety Executive inspection blitzes. Nearly one in four of the construction sites visited by the HSE during March 2010 failed safety checks, compared with one in five in an equivalent blitz last year.

In the latest inspection push, HSE inspectors carried out checks at 2,014 sites and on the work of 2,414 contractors across Britain.

A total of 691 enforcement notices were issued at 470 sites, with inspectors giving orders for work to be stopped immediately in 359 instances for either unsafe work being undertaken at height or where sites lacked "good order".

Commenting on the 2010 blitz, Philip White, the HSE's chief inspector for construction, said: "While it is encouraging that many small construction firms have got their act together and are giving health and safety the priority it needs, the fact that our inspectors needed to take enforcement action on almost a quarter of sites, and on a similar proportion of contractors, is a matter of serious concern."

Progress on Donaghy Report

But doubts over attitude of the Con-Dem coalition

UCATT has welcomed the outgoing Labour Government's response to the Donaghy Report into construction fatalities, "One Death is Too Many".

There was satisfaction that Labour ministers supported the vast majority of the recommendations made by Rita Donaghy – the former Chair of the conciliation service Acas – in her report published last year. But union officials were disappointed that the Government could not be more decisive on the issue of statutory duties on safety for company directors, nor on extending the Gangmasters (Licensing) Act to the construction industry.

It is not clear how the new Con-Dem coalition Government will respond to the report, which was commissioned by the Labour Government in response to concerns about the continuing high levels of fatalities in construction.

On directors' duties, the Labour Government's response clearly identified the failure of the existing voluntary guidance issued by the Health and Safety Executive and Institute of Directors on improving safety.

As far as gangmaster legislation was concerned, the Government said that further work needed to be undertaken to see whether the law should be extended to construction. Concern was voiced that over



200,000 construction businesses could be required to be licensed under the proposals.

However, in its general election manifesto published a few weeks after the formal response to the Donaghy Report, Labour made a commitment to extend the Gangmasters (Licensing) Act to construction.

The manifesto, "A Future Fair For All", stated: "We will extend the licensing approach to labour providers in the construction industry if the evidence shows that is the best way to enforce employment rights." Labour also committed a future Government to a crack-down on exploitative gangmasters.

In addition, Labour pledged itself to increasing apprentice numbers in the construction industry, with a

commitment that by 2013 all suitably qualified 18-20-year-olds who wished to undertake an apprenticeship would be given a place.

Among the recommendations of the Donaghy Report accepted by the outgoing Government were that:

- construction workers should join their union;
- companies should do more to work with unions on safety;
- there should be more worker participation in the industry;
- The CSCS skills card scheme should be strengthened;
- Safety matters should be considered in planning applications.

In total, the Labour Government accepted all but five of Rita Donaghy's 28 recommendations.

Given the union-friendly nature of many of the recommendations, there are doubts among UCATT officials about whether the new Government – many of whose members are ideologically hostile to unions – will implement Donaghy's findings.

In the 12 months to April this year, there were 53 deaths on building sites – a decrease of 19 over the previous year, though this is largely due to the downturn in construction activity.

Rita Donaghy's report, "One Death is Too Many: Inquiry into the Underlying Causes of Construction Fatal Accidents" can be downloaded at: [www.dwp.gov.uk/publications/policypublications/fatal-accidents-inquiry.shtml].



● Inside the Grand Hall of the Hotel de France, St Helier, Jersey: venue for UCATT's 20th National Delegate Conference from 17-21 May.

NDC photos: Stuart Abraham

Delegates set UCATT's course for next two years

Union in good shape to face political and economic challenges for construction workers

UCATT's "parliament" – the National Delegate Conference (NDC) – met in Jersey in May to set the union's course for the next two years. Delegates from around the British Isles came together against a backdrop of change and uncertainty. With the newly formed Con-Dem coalition Government in office for barely a week, delegates remained unsure of its implications for construction workers and trade unionists. But they feared – and prepared – for the worst.

The good news reported to the conference was that UCATT is in good shape, both financially and organisationally, to face the coming challenges posed by public spending cuts and a Government at best merely tolerant of unions in the workplace. As TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber told them: "The next few years are set to be the toughest we have faced in a generation and they demand a strong, organised trade union response."

Not that things have been easy since the last NDC two years ago. From the North West,

George Guy set the tone of most of the reports presented by his fellow Regional Secretaries when he told delegates that they had been the toughest two years of his 12 years as Regional Secretary. The global financial crisis had swept around the world like an economic tsunami. Construction employers were now using the crisis to try to reverse many of the gains made by the union in more stable times.

As General Secretary Alan Ritchie spelt out: "This crisis was caused by greedy bankers and friends of the Conservatives. The crisis was not started by working class people. But the Tories and their allies the Lib-Dems are going to try to make working class people pay."

Change was in the air in another important sense at the conference. Now entering retirement is a generation of stalwarts who lived through the creation of UCATT in 1971 and whose trade unionism was forged in the great industrial battles of those years against lump labour, low pay and piecework.

Some of these individuals were in Jersey and were honoured accordingly. More sadly, others were remembered when delegates stood in silence to pay tribute to those activists who had died since the last NDC.

But, as many speakers also pointed out. The union remains in good hands and a new generation of union youngsters are coming to the fore, not least through UCATT's new Activists' Academy and other training initiatives. Several of them were at this year's NDC and played their part in making it such a successful event.

**Eight pages
of reports
from Jersey**

Decisions

BLACKLISTING: The union will continue the campaign to end blacklisting and bring to justice those construction employers who used the services of blacklisting company the Consulting Association.

FALSE SELF-EMPLOYMENT: All UCATT officials and activists will work towards the eradication of bogus self-employment from construction and will help those workers gain their full employment rights. The union will also campaign for the scrapping of the CIS tax scheme, for a crackdown on employers who don't provide rights such as holiday, redundancy and sick pay and for companies who casualise employment to be named and shamed. The Executive Council will introduce methods to accurately record levels of bogus self-employment and seek expert advice on whether the UK construction industry is in receipt of a hidden state subsidy as a consequence of the Government's ineffectiveness in curbing the practice.

GANGMASTERS, MIGRANT WORKERS AND EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES: The union reaffirmed its commitment to the "unity of working people irrespective of race, religion, language and nationality". The Executive Council will continue to press the Government to ensure that temporary workers are treated the same as directly employed workers. The union will continue the campaign to name and shame companies that operate in this way, with Government procuring departments made aware of such companies, and will demand that CIJC terms are the minimum acceptable on publicly funded contracts.

PAYROLL COMPANIES: The Executive Council will oppose payroll companies, which exploit workers by stripping them of employment rights and denying them holiday pay, and campaign to have them outlawed.

COUNCIL HOUSING: The UCATT leadership will press the Government to provide much needed

social housing through a massive programme of council housebuilding. The programme should be on the basis of requiring direct employment and craft-based apprentices.

HOUSING: Recognising that housebuilding companies are often responsible for the worst employment and health and safety practices in construction, the Executive Council will make representations to the Government on the matter.

CRAFT-BASED APPRENTICES: Concerned by attempts by employers and ConstructionSkills to reduce skills levels by moving towards bespoke training, the Executive Council will resist any moves to dilute craft apprenticeships.

APPRENTICE PAY: Employers will be urged to pay apprentices not covered by the National Working Rule agreement at least the national minimum wage appropriate for the age of the apprentice.

APPRENTICE TRAINING: The Executive Council is to campaign for the roll-out nationally of the apprenticeship training scheme undertaken by the apprenticeship council in Scotland, where between 20 and 30 per cent of apprentices in the UK are being trained.

BULLYING: UCATT will make efforts to raise awareness of the problem of bullying and harassment at work.

COMPENSATION PAYMENTS: The Executive Council is urged to seek a four-fold increase in maximum levels of compensation given by employment tribunals for accident victims.

RECRUITMENT: The Executive Council will require all UCATT regions to submit six-monthly reports on recruitment on major construction sites.

BEREAVEMENT: UCATT leaders are asked to seek time off for bereavement leave by amending the current guidance note in the CIJC agreement.



'Arrogance' of the Tories cost them dear

What UCATT President John Thompson (above) had to say about the new political landscape in his opening address to delegates...

"We saw a historic general election. It was historic for a number of reasons, not least that just a few months ago the Tories were over 20 per cent ahead in the polls.

"Their arrogance saw them take the British electorate for granted. Despite tens of millions of pounds ploughed into the key marginal seats – mainly through tax exile Lord Ashcroft – there was no breakthrough for them. They failed to gain an overall majority. And the TV-generated hype of the LibDem resurgence petered out to nothing.

"So we now enter into a significant time for the labour movement. And I firmly believe that the general election result and subsequent events have created an opportunity for us as a union. We are well placed politically to influence the future for our members. Our links and influence within the Labour Party continue to get stronger."

Conference in numbers

- 122 delegates
- 18 Executive and General Council members
- 9 full-time officials
- 10 international visitors
- 18 staff, stewards, exhibitors and press
- 64 visitors

Elected

Elected to the Standing Orders Committee for the 2012 National Delegate Conference were delegates Neil Hodgkinson (Midlands), Lol Hunt (North West) and Paul Mooney (Scotland). The Standing Orders Committee has the complex task of managing the business of the conference.

In another election in Jersey, Mark Lynch of Glasgow North West Branch was elected as the union's Referee for the next two years. Mark, who works for City Building in Glasgow is a joiner by trade. He is also vice-chair of the Scottish TUC's youth committee.



Standing up for building workers in this new era of uncertainty

Part of **ALAN RITCHIE'S** keynote speech to conference delegates...

Cameron and Clegg may appear on TV to be a comedy duo, but, behind that veneer, construction workers' lives are under threat. Under the Tories' plans, construction companies will be able to purchase private safety audits. Once in place, the HSE would be barred from entering all of a company's sites unless an emergency occurred.

In our industry an emergency means a worker being maimed or killed. This extreme policy will be deadly. And it will also lead to huge cuts in the already chronically underfunded Health and Safety Executive, endangering the lives of even more construction workers.

While safety is the greatest cause of UCATT, the right to be treated fairly and properly at work will never be forgotten.

Our campaigns for private sector workers to receive basic employment rights will continue. Even the most basic rights such as the right to a pay slip and a contract of employment are regularly flouted in the construction industry.

Meanwhile the bogus self-employment culture, which has become a multi-billion pound industry, means that workers are denied holiday pay, sick pay, pensions and other benefits. Every week, they fear being told on the Friday: "Don't come back on Monday."

In the new political climate we will have to fight our campaign for construction workers' rights on two fronts. Firstly we most continue to campaign to end the construction industry being seen as a special interest group – where it is considered acceptable that workers do not have the same rights as in other industries.

With the huge deficit in the economy, any political support for bogus self-employment – which costs the Treasury billions a year – is the politics of madness.

But in the new political situation we will have to be prepared to fight to ensure that the limited rights that workers have already won are not lost. The siren calls for flexibility must be resisted.

We will have to show what flexibility means for construction workers. It means exploitation through long hours, low pay and a lack of safe working. Working conditions will become "nasty, brutish and short".



It's not just in the private sector where challenges will occur. UCATT members in the public sector also face uncertainty. We have endured the constant outsourcing of housing maintenance and DLO departments. It is essential that we ensure that our members who are "Tuped" do not lose their rights or suffer lower pay and conditions.

Councils must not be allowed to simply opt for the cheapest bid, with no regard for quality of service or treatment of workers. The race to the bottom must be resisted. Councils need to realise that there are no advantages, no improvement in services and no benefits for tenants from outsourcing services.

A battle is set for public sector pensions. Both the Lib-Dems and the Tories claim that public sector pensions are unaffordable. They will base their arguments on the tiny number of chief executives who receive huge golden handshakes and massive pension pots.

“The biggest challenges will come from the Tory Government with Liberal Democrat support. They will try to attack workers' wages and conditions. They will use the excuse of the financial crisis to bring forward proposals to attack working class people.”

The truth for our members in local government, the NHS and the Prison Service is entirely different. Our skilled members face a lifetime of being paid below market rates.

The benefits which made the work worthwhile were stability and a pension. Stability has disappeared with the constant outsourcing agenda. Now pensions are threatened.

Pensions are not a bonus. The Tories have got it mixed up. They must think pensions are like bankers' bonuses. Pensions are not a luxury. They are a right. Pure and simple, they are deferred pay.

Most public sector workers' pensions are just a few thousand pounds. How on earth in the 21st century can that not be afforded?

Then there is housing. There are over one and half million people in substandard housing. Inadequate housing affects a person's life chances from the day they are born.

Yet we have had 30 years of failure on housing. Political parties thought that the market could provide the answer, that the not-for-profit sector would act as a safety net.

Those policies were an abject failure. That failure has led to a society becoming less tolerant, with increased social segregation, and in some areas caused greater racial tension.

These are just some of the challenges facing our union in the new political climate. Everyone needs to play a role. In workplaces where we already have a presence and membership, we need to expand that further to ensure 100 per cent union membership.

This is the best way of protecting workers from the challenges that they face from the Tory Government both in the public and private sector.

We all know that the biggest challenges will come from the Tory Government with Liberal Democrat support. They will try to attack workers' wages and conditions. They will use the excuse of the financial crisis to bring forward proposals to attack working class people.

Let's make this clear. This crisis was caused by greedy bankers and friends of the Conservatives. The crisis was not started by working class people. But the Tories and their allies the Lib-Dems are going to try to make working class people pay.

UCATT will defend our members in every way possible. Let's get on and do the job.

Decisions

B&CE: The union opposes any change to the make-up of the B&CE Benefits Scheme governing board and supports a 50:50 split between unions and employers.

PRICE-FIXING: The Executive Council and General Secretary are urged to campaign to bar firms found guilty of price-fixing from being able to tender for local authority contracts.

SHIPBUILDING: The union will support the UK shipbuilding industry through further Ministry of Defence contracts.

SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION: UCATT is committed to supporting the green construction agenda and ensure that there will be no skills gap as a result of the transition to a low/zero carbon industry.

TUPE REGULATIONS: The Executive Council will press the Government to strengthen the TUPE (Transfer of Undertakings: Protection of Employment) Regulations so that they do not simply apply at the point of transfer.

NHS PAY: The union is urged to continue the campaign to secure RRP (recruitment and retention) premia for craft workers in the NHS.

TEMPORARY LAY-OFF: The union will campaign against the abuse of temporary lay-off legislation by construction employers in order to deprive workers of notice and redundancy pay.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY FREEZE AND THE RED BOOK: UCATT condemns the pay freeze announced by local government employers. The union will seek the maximum possible pay increase, defend craft skills and oppose all job evaluation schemes that belittle craft skills.

FATALITIES AND THE HEALTH AND SAFETY EXECUTIVE: The Executive Council will lobby the HSE to amend its training and guidance for inspectors to ensure that union safety reps are properly consulted during site visits. Concerned that deaths in construction remain far too high, the union will also seek greater powers for safety reps.

DONAGHY REPORT: The Government is called upon to implement last year's report on

construction deaths by Rita Donaghy in its entirety, including recommendations to extend gangmasters' licensing legislation and the introduction of statutory safety duties for directors.

MOTHBALLED SITES: The Executive Council will call for a review of the procedures for reopening mothballed sites that have a poor safety history, especially as this is sometimes done by a different developer rather than the original one.

PLEURAL PLAQUES: UCATT condemns the actions of the insurance industry in attempting to throw out the new law in Scotland on compensation for pleural plaques and will redouble its campaign to restore the right to compensation for victims of pleural plaques throughout the UK.

ASBESTOS: The union will encourage members to take industrial action when employers fail to safeguard them from exposure to asbestos. The union also supports the setting up of a National Centre for Asbestos Related Diseases and calls for a global ban on the substance.

WORKERS' SAFETY ADVISERS: The Health and Safety Executive will be pressed to provide resources to support workers' safety advisers in construction.

STATUTORY CRANE REGISTER: The Executive Council is urged to continue the campaign to strengthen the new statutory tower crane register, in particular so that the register covers all cranes and so that employers are given three rather than 14 days to register a crane.

INCLEMENT WEATHER: UCATT should put pressure on the Government, Health and Safety Executive and TUC for legislation on work-breaks and maximum working hours when temperatures reach less than minus 3 degrees centigrade or more than 32 degrees.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICE: The union demands a proactive occupational health service for construction workers, in which all workers sustaining injury or ill-health would be entitled to compensation, rehabilitation and, if necessary, retraining.



● Among the international guests was Jorge Gamboa, from Colombia, who held up a list of trade unionists murdered in his country. See report on page 17.

Rogue gangmasters 'operating in construction'



At least two rogue gangmasters whose licence has been withdrawn by the Gangmasters Licensing Authority are operating in the construction industry, the head of the authority, Paul Whitehouse (left), told UCATT delegates.

However, the GLA's remit does not extend to construction, the authority's chief confirmed, with its work confined to agriculture, food processing and shellfish harvesting.

In the past five years, 115 licences for gangmasters supplying labour to these sectors had been revoked, said Whitehouse. In some cases, the firms were employing staff in debt bondage – in other words, virtual slavery.

Pressed by delegates on whether the GLA would be able to cover construction – as demanded by UCATT – Whitehouse said: "We would accept that challenge and rise to it."

Absent Donaghy thanked

A high-profile casualty of the volcano ash that cut flights from London's Gatwick Airport to Jersey early during conference week was Rita Donaghy, author of the hard-hitting "One Death Is Too Many" report on construction fatalities.

The former head of the Acas arbitration service had been invited to address the conference, but was prevented from doing so when her flight was cancelled. Published last year, her Government-commissioned report contains 28 recommendations, all but five of which were accepted by the outgoing Labour Government. In Jersey, delegates, agreed that the union should send her a letter of appreciation.

UCATT President John Thompson also pledged that UCATT would continue to press for the implementation of all the report's recommendations.

Fears over training cuts

Mark Farrar, Chief Executive of Construction-Skills, admitted to delegates that he was concerned about the impact that cutbacks in public sector finances by the new Government would



What they said

HOUSING

"I have been a member of the Labour Party since 1974, so it saddens me to say that it is the biggest indictment of the Labour Government we've just had that they did nothing for social housing."

– Terry Renshaw (North West)

"Traditionally and ideologically the Conservatives hate council housing. It is they who first tried to undermine it. They hate the idea that people collectively provide homes for each other."

– Dennis Doody (Executive Council)

BLACKLISTING

"Listen to some of the comments posted against trade unionists' names in the blacklist discovered last year: 'UCATT – very bad news'; 'Becoming an anarchist'; 'ex communist'; 'At present behaving himself'; and 'Union safety rep – do not touch'. This last one is clear evidence of crocodile tears for the

53 construction workers killed last year."

– Lol Hunt (North West)

"A blacklist was found with some 3,213 names on it and it included 40 major construction companies subscribing to the list. They contributed £3,000 each year to be members and paid £2.20 per search. We all took pride in serving our apprenticeships. Yet for a measly £2.20 these major companies were allowed to steal people's trades and steal the food out of their children's mouths and forced them to look elsewhere for work. This is nothing short of despicable."

– Graham Farquar (Scotland)

GANGMASTERS

"Some payroll companies even have the audacity to boast in their adverts that, by using their services, workers will be denied their employment rights and holiday pay. The worker has to pay for this privilege of being

denied employment rights, holiday pay, sick pay or other benefits, as the payroll company takes money directly from their earnings when they process their payments. This can either be a set amount, often £20 or £30, or a percentage of earnings, often 2 or 3 per cent of earnings."

– John Cronin (Wales & South West)

"Employers are exploiting migrant workers coming into the country. This enables them to drive down wages and deprive the workers of employment rights and protection. Employers want migrant workers – and employment agencies have sprung up everywhere to provide them."

– Peter Wright (Midlands)

BOGUS SELF-EMPLOYMENT

"My colleagues in the PCS union [representing HM Revenue & Customs workers] inform me that wrongly-classed self-employed workers in the construction industry

cost the Government about £1½ billion pounds a year in lost taxes and National Insurance payments. How many new hospitals, schools or homes would that build, giving our members much needed work?"

– Paul Mooney (Scotland)

"An agency found me work as a joiner, telling me the rate was £10.50 an hour and to turn up to the site on Monday morning. On Tuesday morning I get a call from the agency, a payroll company, stating that the £10.50 rate is for self-employment. They will be dealing with my wages and, by the way, there is a £15 administration fee. I reluctantly said OK. A few days later through the post I was sent a contract for services to sign, but when I read the conditions... I refused to sign it. I was then informed by the agency that I was now on the books for a rate of £8.25 per hour."

– John McIntyre (Yorkshire)

have on construction training. Apprentice numbers had dropped moderately in the past years, but he was pleased that, unlike in the previous recession, employers were making greater efforts to retain trainees.

HSE sets priorities

The list of construction sectors to be targeted in the coming year by the Health and Safety Executive will be headed by asbestos-handling, small companies and refurbishments, said the HSE's Chief Inspector Philip White. Silica dust and dust in general were also areas of concern, he told the conference.

White faced hostile questioning by several

delegates about the HSE's activities. But he countered by pointing out that the underlying trend of fatal accidents in construction had halved in the past ten years when allowance is made for fluctuations due to economic activity.

When pressed on why it takes on average four years for a prosecution for a workplace death, Whitehouse pointed the finger at slow coroner's court procedures.

Don't forget construction's 'silent victims'

Trevor Walker, Chair of the Constructing Better Health (CGH) project, urged delegates to support moves to improve occupational health for construction workers.

While the number of deaths in construction made the headlines, virtually unreported went the 1,500 deaths each year from work-related illness in construction, while a further 13,000 suffer health problems as a result of their work. These were the "silent victims" of construction, said Walker, though the vast majority of these illnesses were all avoidable.

He went on to thank UCATT General Secretary Alan Ritchie, one of CBH's board members, for his support and urged all delegates to back the CBH project at site level.

Films and songs as well as speeches

Conference was very much a multimedia event, with a film about the Shrewsbury Pickets one of the highlights of the week. Made in 1974, the 17-minute film explained the background to the 1972 national building workers'

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We will work with you, pledges TUC chief



Construction is a part of the economy that has been bruised and battered by the recession, TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber (left) told UCATT delegates. The industry had long been characterised by casualisation, poor

employment and in the past decade a huge influx of cheap migrant labour, he said.

"The TUC will continue to work alongside UCATT to address the union's key priorities," Barber pledged. "We will make the case for equal treatment for migrant and indigenous workers, so those new to these shores are not exploited by unscrupulous employers and agencies, and those born and bred here are not undercut. Whether they are from Warrington or Warsaw, workers should be paid the rate for the job."

Bogus self-employment was costing the Exchequer around £1.7 billion a year in lost revenues, he added. "This is a huge sum of money at a time when the public purse is in such dire shape and tens of thousands of workers are losing out as a result – missing out on basic employment rights the rest of us take for granted."

He went on: "The TUC also wants to work with you to secure fairness for your union. While better legislation and regulation are both needed to improve employment conditions, ultimately the best protection any construction worker can have is a union card in their pocket."

Steve says it in verse

Extract of a much longer poem, called "The Phoenix", which was written and read out by Steve Dillon (Scotland) during the debate on construction deaths:

The union UCATT has fought so hard
Protecting you life
For your kids and your wife.
To Number 10 and Westminster too
They have fought the fight for me and for you.
They have fought and fought as best they can
Trying to protect you from the man.
But it's sad to say
That since that day
234 souls have passed away:
Fathers, sons and sisters to some
Best friends to me and you.
Last year's figures, they cried out,
Have reduced in number, there's no doubt.
But I'm sorry to tell you, this I must say
The recession may have saved the day.



Among the speakers at the podium...

● **Top row, from left:** Alan Reach (London & South East), Nicola Doughty (Midlands), Tony Sakowicz (Yorkshire), Andy Bostock (Midlands), Andy Murphy (Scotland), Karl Stephenson (Yorkshire) and Steve Dillon (Scotland).

● **Second row:** Terry Renshaw (North West), Bill Hutt (Eastern), Mark Wilkins (London & South East), Bill Parry (North West), Charlie Honeyman (Midlands), Terry Egan (North West) and Terry Duff (Ireland).

● **Third row:** Chris Clarke (North West), Terry Clark (Northern), Steve Geekie (Scotland), Tony O'Brien (London & South East), Dai Wright (Yorkshire), Craig Guthrie (Scotland) and Olly Hunt (North West).

● **Fourth row:** Roger Punt (Eastern), Ian Weglarsky (Yorkshire), David Hitchcock (Midlands), Frank Wilson (Scotland), John Hunt (Midlands), Gary Fairclough (North West) and Paul Mooney (Scotland).

● **Bottom row:** Peter Brady (Scotland), Dave Allen (London & South East), John McIntyre (Yorkshire), Neil Hodgkinson (Midlands), John Wynne (London & South East), Paul Christopherson (North West) and John Cronin (Wales & South West).

What they said

APPRENTICESHIPS

"With advancing technology and rising environmental and safety standards it's not less training we need, it's more."

– Dai Wright (Yorkshire)

"In 2008, 7,637 apprentices were being trained in Scotland. This was reduced to 6,462 last year."

– Peter Brady (Scotland)

TEMPORARY LAY-OFF

Employers in construction often choose temporary lay-offs to limit employment costs. Sometimes this is the correct thing to do, when there is a short gap in work and if the employment contract allows for a lay-off period. However, many companies use it when there may be no legal right to do so. And it's clear in law that no UCATT member should be laid off where a genuine redundancy situation exists or to evade statutory obligations."

– Neil Vernon (Executive Council)

BEREAVEMENT LEAVE

"Heartless bosses who force workers to still come into work during these periods are actually endangering workers' lives and it is entirely counter-productive. Forcing workers to have unpaid time off simply causes resentment throughout the workforce. Workers experiencing intense grief are unlikely to be able to concentrate on their work."

– Jim Gamble (Executive Council)

PENSIONS

"Realistically the only pension that most private construction workers are likely to have access to is the Easybuild pension operated by the B&CE."

– Neil Andrews (Executive Council)

BULLYING

"I plucked up the courage to phone my manager – even my hands were sweating. While explaining to him how I felt about his behaviour, he began yelling again and I began to shake... He didn't seem to like it, but I got my message across and surprisingly for me it seems to have worked. When talking to others about my experiences it was clear that I was not alone and bullying was present in most workplaces and happening to every kind of person."

– Nicola Doughty (Midlands)

DLOs AND PRIVATISATION

"Inviting unions for consultations about privatisation is like inviting round the turkey before Christmas to ask about which stuffing it prefers."

– Terry Egan (North West)

HOUSEBUILDING SECTOR

"Whilst 34 per cent of workers in the construction sector work for businesses with between one and 49 employees, 51 per cent of the deaths occurred in this category of business."

– Wilf Flynn (Executive Council)



● Chris Murphy (left) thanks delegates, while (from right) Jim McDonald, Tom Lannon and Jonsen Green wait their turn to do likewise.

Four stalwarts bow out

A quartet of UCATT veterans attending their last conference before retirement were given a rousing send-off. Delegates rose to their feet to say thanks to Jonsen Green, Tom Lannon, Chris Murphy and Jim McDonald.

Green has chaired the key Standing Orders Committee that manages the business of conference since the 2000 National Delegate Conference in Killarney. He is the Dalkeith Branch Secretary and has also

served as the union's Referee, as well as campaigning tirelessly for Palestinian rights.

Lannon is the London & South East Regional Chair and a well known activist in the capital, where he has been Westminster Branch Secretary for many years.

Murphy is the Executive Council representative for the London & South East Region, while McDonald is Ireland's rep. Both have attended the UCATT conference since the 1970s.

The Scottish Region also got together to pay their own tribute to Glasgow-born Tom Lannon, who moved south in 1972, and

Jonsen Green. Both were presented with a tankard and bottle of whisky at a social evening at the Town House pub in St Helier – where Chris Murphy was also fêted by the London & South East Region.

Giving thanks, Tom stressed his gratitude to the union for giving him the opportunity to meet many giants of the labour movement over the years. Singling out the International Brigaders who fought in the Spanish Civil War of 1936-39, he finished off with the slogan of the anti-fascist defenders of Madrid: "¡No pasarán!" ("They shall not pass!")

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strike and the subsequent prosecution of 24 union activists from Liverpool and North Wales.

The film featured leading militants of the day, including UCATT notables Alan Tatton, Jack Henry, Bill Jones, Barry Scragg. North West Region delegate Terry Renshaw, one of the pickets who only escaped prosecution because of incorrect details on his police charge-sheet, was given a copy of the unknown film on a VHS tape in April.

Delegates also watched a video co-produced by UCATT on mesothelioma sufferers before the debate on the campaign against asbestos dangers. It movingly ended with the testimony of building worker Alan Clark just weeks before he died.

The Health and Safety Executive's Chief Inspector Philip White projected the HSE's statistics and plans on the conference screen, where UCATT slogans and messages also appeared.

And in between conference sessions, the music of Billy Bragg, the "Bard of Barking", and Scottish folk balladeer Ian Davison was played over the loudspeakers. Even the delegates burst into song at the close of the conference, singing the Labour anthem, "The Red Flag".

For the Morning Star and Palestine

A collection among delegates for the daily left-wing newspaper, the *Morning Star* ("For Peace and Socialism") raised £215. And a raffle in aid of Medical Aid for Palestine yielded £250 at a social evening before the last day of conference.

Caravan makers fight back

Two caravan manufacturers in the Hull area had gone out of business as a result of the economic crisis, Steve Murphy, the Yorkshire Region's acting Secretary reported to delegates. However, UCATT campaigning had secured pledges of Government help from outgoing Business Secretary Lord Mandelson. The union also had a fine team of shop stewards and safety reps and was hopeful that the industry could now bounce back.

Was it UCATT wot won it?

Did UCATT's intervention in the 6 May general election contest in several key marginal Labour seats ensure victories on 6 May?

Judging from what the NDC was told about the Hampstead & Kilburn constituency, this might well be true.

As part of a national initiative, all UCATT regions were allotted a marginal constituency, and for the London & South East Region this was the north London seat of former actress Glenda Jackson, Regional Secretary Jerry Swain informed delegates in his report to the conference.

Leading a team of enthusiastic volunteers, Swain pinpointed a key housing estate which the union then canvassed and leafleted more than three times.

Jackson held the seat for Labour in a tight three-way fight with the Conservatives and Lib-Dems – by just 42 votes! Clearly another case of UCATT getting results.

Success was also achieved in Halifax, Gedling, Dumfries & Galloway and Tynemouth.

Decisions

CSCS CARDS: CSCS and SCATS cards should be accepted both on construction and power station/refinery sites. The union should also press for mandatory safety training for the CSCS card.

PROSTATE PROBLEMS: The NHS should set up walk-in screening centres for men with prostate problems.

TORY SAFETY POLICY: The union denounces plans by the Conservative Party to allow employers to conduct their own safety audits and will campaign nationally to ensure such proposals never become law.

MDF AND FORMALDEHYDE: The Health and Safety Executive will be urged to undertake a comprehensive review of the controls needed to avert the hazards of working with MDF, which emits formaldehyde, and is a known carcinogen, along with glasswool and rockwool.

RETIREMENT AGE: The union is committed to campaigning for a reduction in the retirement age of building and construction workers and to oppose any move by the Government to increase the state pension age beyond 65. This opposition is to be based on the evidence that arduous work results in premature physical deterioration.

LABOUR PARTY AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS: UCATT must remain affiliated to the Labour Party. The Executive Council will initiate a programme to encourage more UCATT branches to affiliate to their local CLP (constituency Labour Party), ensure that regions participate in regional Labour parties and set up a list of parliamentary candidates who are UCATT members.

REGIONAL TUCs: The Executive Council is mandated to ensure that UCATT regions become fully involved in the work of the TUC regions.

SHOP STEWARDS: The Executive Council is to mount a campaign to defend facility time arrangements that allow shop stewards to perform their roles.

TRIDENT: Britain should cancel the Trident nuclear weapon programme and use the savings to boost the country's manufacturing industry.

SHREWSBURY PICKETS: The Government should release all papers in connection with the police investigation, including MI5 involvement, and prosecution of the Shrewsbury Pickets in 1973/4.

TORY/LIBDEM GOVERNMENT: The union deplores the decision of the Liberal Democrats to forge an alliance with the Conservative Party to form the Government. This shows there is only one alternative to a Tory Government: the Labour Party.

TORIES AND THE NHS: The union will continue to campaign vigorously in favour of the NHS and against any attempt by the new Government to

cut or privatise public services and the welfare state.

BNP, EDLAND ANTI-FASCISM: The union pledges to fight racism and oppose far-right groups such as the BNP and English Defence League. The Executive Council will continue to support anti-fascist organisations and activities, with the union's regions working with bodies such as Searchlight and Unite Against Fascism.

PEOPLE'S CHARTER: The union supports the People's Charter adopted by the 2009 Trades Union Congress, setting out a programme for challenging the economic crisis and for creating a fairer society.

BRANCH STRUCTURE: With action needed to stimulate branch activity, the Executive Council will ensure that all members are in future placed in a branch closest to their home address. Existing workplace branches will be subject to review and members will be able to request a change of branch.

GENERAL SECRETARY ELECTION AND FINANCES: The policy of keeping UCATT as a financially strong and independent union is reaffirmed and the General Secretary is congratulated on his re-election.

ACTIVISTS' ACADEMY AND ACTIVIST TRAINING: The setting-up of the UCATT Activists' Academy is welcomed and the Executive Council is urged to rebuild the union's activist base.

INTERNATIONAL: The union should continue to affiliate to the Cuba Solidarity Campaign and Justice for Colombia.

HONDURAS AND LATIN AMERICA: UCATT condemns the military coup against the democratically elected president of Honduras. The Executive Council will work with the TUC to strengthen democracy in the region.

PALESTINE: UCATT backs Palestinian self-determination and an end to the Israeli occupation. The Executive Council supports the boycott and sanctions campaign against Israel and calls on branches to affiliate to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign.

HAITI: Following the devastating earthquake suffered by Haiti, the union wants the International Monetary Fund to cancel all the country's debts.

COLOMBIA: Disturbed by continuing human rights abuses in Colombia, in particular, the assassination of trade unionists, the Executive Council will work with the Justice for Colombia campaign group to forge stronger links with the Sutimac construction workers' union, demand the release of all political prisoners and oppose the signing of a free trade agreement between Colombia and the European Union.

NB: *The above is a summary of key decisions. The full text of all the decisions will appear in our next issue.*

Thoughts of a first-time speaker

By Scott Walker
(Midlands Region)



I attended my first conference in Jersey after being put forward by my branch, Lincoln 1st Branch. The whole experience broadened my understanding of the workings and the structure of a forward-thinking union such as UCATT.

Being a first-time speaker, I was, to say the least, a little nervous about getting up to the stage. However, from the first day of meetings, my fellow delegates from the Midlands Region all helped me feel at ease and feel a part of the group. I was overwhelmed by the support and comradeship of all the delegates shown towards me at the conference.

The venue was brilliant and from the start of the conference to the end, I believe the delegates showed how much of a positive union we are.

I listened to the views of delegates and was very interested in learning the history of the union and other events relating to the labour movement.

The insight into the past of the union made me proud to be a UCATT member and has only increased my feelings towards fighting for the rights of workers and ensuring that our members get the rights and representation that they deserve.

On the fringe

The formal business of conference may have taken place inside the Grand Hall of the Hotel de France in St Helier, but there were also several lively and well-attended fringe meetings organised by campaign groups. Chief among them were the Construction Safety Campaign, Cuba Solidarity Campaign, Justice for the Shrewsbury Pickets and Justice for Colombia.

These same groups had stalls outside the conference hall. So too did UCATT's solicitors in England and Wales, OH Parsons, who gave out to delegates free computer memory sticks containing essential information on employment rights.

OH Parsons also sponsored the conference dinner for delegates and a raffle for a holiday for two in Cuba, which raised nearly £1,000 for the Cuba Solidarity Campaign.

UCATT's Scottish solicitors Dallas McMillan also had a stall, with a t-shirt featuring the union's logo proving a big hit, as did the free builder's tools made out of Belgian chocolate which were given out by tax consultants Rift on their stall.

What they said

RETIREMENTAGE

"Shortening the working life is as important as our long commitment to shortening the working day."

– Roger Punt (Eastern)

HEALTH AND SAFETY

"The average person in the street has no idea about the construction industry's plight regarding accidents, death, disease, disability and work-related upper limb disorders, not to mention gangmasters, blacklisting, unemployment and stress."

– Chris Clarke (North West)

"If as many nurses, police officers, supermarket workers or Members of Parliament died at work, would they accept this? No, of course not. So why is it accepted for construction workers?"

– Lee Dove (London & South East)

"How do we achieve zero harm and zero tolerance in the construction industry? It's not going to be achieved by the imminent HSE cutbacks by our new coalition Government with Bill and Ben at the helm."

– Paul Christopherson (North West)

ASBESTOS

"There are still thousands of tons of asbestos throughout the country in our houses, schools and hospitals, where our brothers, sisters and children have potential exposure. We have a legacy of death."

– Trevor Simpson (London & South East)

"UCATT's continuing pleural plaques campaign was instrumental in achieving Jack Straw's [the Justice Secretary's] proposal to create a National Centre for Asbestos Related Diseases."

– Neil Hodgkinson (Midlands)

"If I go out tonight and get mugged and fight back and end up getting slashed across my face, and when the stitches come out and I'm left with a scar, do I get compensation for my disfigurement, even though it's not life-threatening? Of course I do..."

So why is this different to pleural plaques?"

– Paul Mooney (Scotland)

FORMALDEHYDE

"Formaldehyde is a carcinogenic substance and will be the next asbestos-like workplace illness."

– David Hitchcock (Midlands)

"There is an alternative called Medite ZF – the ZF is for zero formaldehyde. It is slightly more expensive, but far less of a hazard to your health."

– Clive Greenfield (North West)

SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION

"At Wakefield District Housing our apprentices are already working on cutting-edge technology such as solar panel and groundsource heating systems so that, when the move to low carbon technology comes, our workforce will be prepared with the necessary skills."

– Phillip Lee (Yorkshire)



LABOUR PARTY

"The Labour Party can still become an engine for social reform – as long as the organic link with the unions remains."

– Terry Clarke (Northern)

"It was the unions that set up the Labour Party, not the other way around. It's our party and doesn't belong to the shabby deal-doers seeking to gain financially who have heaped shame on the party. We need MPs of the calibre of the late Eric Heffer, not the Oxbridge phonies we now have."

– Karl Stephenson (Yorkshire)

"Revitalising the bond between the unions and the Labour Party is key to strengthening both the future political and employment base. The gulf now seen and felt between unions and the Labour party is starting to become a void."

– Paul Hunt (Midlands)

TRIDENT

"The biggest waste of money probably in our nation's history... £76 billion to finance a weapon of mass destruction."

– Tony Sakowicz (Yorkshire)

INTERNATIONAL

"Fighting for freedom is not in the interests of one single country or nation. When you uphold democracy in one country you also uphold the democracy of all states and for all humankind."

– Peter Redmond (Ireland)

"Freedom and justice were finally achieved for the South African people through mass campaigns, economic sanctions and boycotts... We must do the same for the Palestinians, so I urge you to get your UCATT branch to affiliate to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign."

– Jonsen Green (Scotland)

International speakers

EFBWW: "Your problem is now our problem," said Werner Buelen of the Brussels-based European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW), referring to what was once known as the "British disease" of bogus self-employment. There was a particular problem in Europe of cross-border bogus self-employment in construction, he added. Unions would jointly have to press governments to tackle the issue, though this would be difficult because of the preponderance of right-wing governments in Europe.

Italy: Claudio Sottile of the CISL union federation likened the activities of many gangmasters to the Mafia. That was why it was important for construction unions to work together in Europe and globally to tackle the menace and on issues such as migrant labour and bogus self-employment.

Cuba: A standing ovation greeted a speech by Roberto Pérez García, a bricklayer and leader of the construction workers' union of the CTC

Cuban trade union confederation. He said that the support from UCATT and other unions was essential in the campaign against the US's economic embargo of Cuba.

Australia: The two representatives of the CFMEU construction workers' union brought delegates to their feet with an uncompromising message of union militancy and struggle. "We have a policy that bad laws should be broken," said National Officer Bill Oliver, adding: "We collect writs like other people collect stamps." His colleague, Joe McDonald, deplored the fact that the labour government had failed to honour its pledge to scrap the anti-union Australian Building Control Commission.

Colombia: Some 2,700 trade unionists have been assassinated in Colombia since 1986, delegates were told by Jorge Gamboa, leader of the CUT Colombian trade union federation. To a standing ovation, he urged UCATT and other unions to put pressure on the UK Government to stop the European Union signing a free trade agreement with the South American country until it showed proper respect for human and

trade union rights. Sutimac, the Colombian construction workers' union had suffered as a result of the repressive actions of supporters of Colombia's right-wing ruling class and now had just 2,000 members, a tenth of what it had 20 years ago. Gamboa, who himself survived a murder attempt in 2008, went on to deplore the fact that the US was now establishing seven military bases in the country in order to threaten progressive regimes in Venezuela, Ecuador and Bolivia.

Vietnam: In his fraternal address, Nyugen Van Binh, president of the Vietnamese construction workers' union, thanked those older delegates who campaigned more than 30 years ago to oppose the US war against Vietnam.

Egypt: Mohamed Ibrahim M El Sorogy brought fraternal greetings from the Egyptian construction workers' union. More and more multinational construction companies were now active in his country, presenting new problems – as well as opportunities – for the union. These developments were also underlining the importance of unions working together globally in solidarity, he added.

Summary of financial information for the year ended 31 December 2009

As required by Section 32A of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992

Income and expenditure

The total income of the union for the period was £7,173,000. This amount included payments of £6,639,000 in respect of membership of the union. The union's total expenditure for the period was £6,871,000. The union does maintain a political fund. In respect of the union's political fund, its total income was £244,000 and total expenditure was £210,000.

Salaries and benefits

- Alan Ritchie, General Secretary:
 - Salary £70,843
 - Pension contributions £13,297
 - Benefits £2,099
 - Total £86,239
 - Employer's NIC £8,345.
- The President and each other member of the Executive Council received no remuneration.

Independent auditor's report to members of UCATT

We have audited the financial statements of the Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians for the year ended 31 December 2009 which comprise the Consolidated Income and Expenditure Account, Consolidated Balance Sheet, Cash Flow Statement and the related notes. These financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention as modified by the revaluation of certain properties and quoted investments, and the accounting policies set out therein.

This report is made solely to the union's members, as a body, in accordance with the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the union and the union's members as a body for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Respective responsibilities of the Executive Council and auditors

The Executive Council's

responsibilities for preparing the Annual Report and the Financial Statements in accordance with applicable law and relevant United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice) are set out in the Statement of the Executive Council's Responsibilities.

Our responsibility is to audit the financial statements in accordance with relevant legal and regulatory requirements and International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland).

We report to you our opinion as to whether the financial statements give a true and fair view and are properly prepared in accordance with the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992. We also report to you if, in our opinion, the information given in the Annual Report 2009 is consistent with the financial statements and if the union has not kept proper accounting records or if we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit.

We read the Annual Report 2009 and consider the implications for our report if we become aware of any apparent mis-statements within it.

Basis of audit opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with the International Standards on Auditing (UK and Ireland) issued by the Accounting Practices Board. An audit includes examination, on a test basis, of evidence relevant to the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. It also includes an assessment of the significant estimates and judgments made by the Executive Council in the preparation of the financial statements, and of whether the accounting policies are appropriate to the union's circumstances, consistently applied and adequately disclosed.

We planned and performed our audit so as to obtain all the information and explanations which we considered necessary in order to provide us with sufficient evidence to give reasonable assurance that the financial statements are free from material mis-statement, whether caused by

fraud or other irregularity or error. In forming our opinion we also evaluated the overall adequacy of the presentation of information in the financial statements.

Opinion

In our opinion the financial statements give a true and fair view, in accordance with the relevant United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice, of the state of the union's affairs as at 31 December 2009 and of its consolidated surplus for the year then ended and have been properly prepared in accordance with the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 and the information given in the Annual Report 2009 is consistent with the financial statements.

Hard Dowdy
(A trading style of Chantrey Vellacott DFK LLP, Chartered Accountants)
Registered Auditors
23/28 Great Russell Street
London WC1B 3NG
27 May 2010

Irregularity statement

A member who is concerned that some irregularity may be occurring or have occurred in the conduct of the financial affairs of the union may take steps with a view to investigating further, obtaining clarification and, if necessary, securing regularisation of that conduct.

The member may raise any such concern with such one or more of the following as it seems appropriate to raise it with: the officials of the union, the trustees of the property of the union, the auditor or auditors of the union, the Certification Officer (who is an independent officer appointed by the Secretary of State) and the police.

Where a member believes that the financial affairs of the union have been or are being conducted in breach of the law or in breach of the rules of the union and contemplates bringing civil proceedings against the union or responsible officials or trustees, he should consider obtaining independent legal advice.

EDDIE NASH

It is with great sadness that I must advise of the death of Eddie Nash on 17 July 2009. Eddie attended several National Delegate Conferences, not least Blackpool 1988: his last conference where he was a first-class chairman of the Standing Orders Committee.

He was an outstanding trade unionist, a bricklayer who joined the AUBTW in November 1959 and was a member and officer of the Walton Branch, later being elected to the district committee.

The amalgamation that created UCATT saw Eddie as a prime mover in the merging of the Walton and Aintree Branches.

He would have achieved 50 years of membership by the end of 2009.

He was a very principled man, whose thoughts and endeavours were about progressing the aspirations of working class people. He dedicated his life to these aspirations and, in turn, to the trade union movement.

His role in the 1972 national building workers' strike and its enduring aftermath was one to be justly proud of. Eddie ended his career at Liverpool DLO, where ill-health forced him into retirement.

Eddie undertook many roles – shop steward, convener, secretary of the Building Workers' Charter, a member of Aintree Branch and, latterly, Everton Branch, where he was the much respected Branch Chairman – supported always by his late wife, Pat.

JOHN WINSTANLEY
Everton Branch Secretary

RON SAUNDERS

Ron Saunders sadly passed away, aged 87, on the 21 May after an illness.

Ron was a member of UCATT for 55 years and was Branch Secretary of Hillingdon & Uxbridge Branch for many years, working tirelessly for workers' rights and employing his left-wing politics wherever he had a presence.

In his spare time he loved painting. Also, using his trade (carpenter), he made a part of the set used in the original Chitty Chitty Bang Bang film.

JONATHAN DAVIES
Hillingdon & Uxbridge Branch
Chairman

Privatisation gone mad in the Probation Service

Millions of pounds are being wasted by the National Probation Service (NPS) because of incompetent building maintenance contracts, says a report published in January by Napo, the probation officers' union.

Two years ago NPS's National Offender Management Service maintenance contracts were centralised and privatised. The union's report cites numerous examples of contractors travelling hundreds of miles to fulfill simple tasks where previously the job would have been done locally. Among the examples are:

- A hostel in Norwich needed a toilet seat repairing and a plumber travelled from Birmingham to do the job. This was a round trip of 320 miles.
- Staff in Winchester needed strip lighting changing. The electrician came from Wembley which was a round trip of over 150 miles.
- A hostel needed an electrical switch mending and a new cover to an entrance light and

“ It is now costing four to five times more than it did when contractors were hired from round the corner. This is the price of centralisation and privatisation.”

an electrician travelled to the West Midlands from Newmarket, a two-and-a-half hour drive each way and a round trip of over 200 miles.

- Workers travelled from London to Wrexham to fit a new bathroom in a hostel.
- Electricians from Manchester travelled all the way to Aberystwyth to change light fittings.
- Other staff report that the window cleaners in Leicester came from Preston and were involved in an overnight stay before going on to Lincoln for the next job. This involved over seven hours of travelling.

Harry Fletcher, Assistant General Secretary of Napo, said it was clear that millions were being wasted on incompetent maintenance contracts. “It is now costing four to five times more than it did when contractors were hired from round the corner. This is the price of centralisation and privatisation.”

TUC guide

The TUC has produced an “Exploding Privatisation Myths” briefing paper challenging misconceptions about privatisation and showing that it would cause more problems than solutions. See:

[www.tuc.org.uk/extras/speakupprivatisation.pdf].



ON THE ROOF: A Merseyside builder (pictured) has been fined £1,500 plus £1,000 costs for breaking the Work at Height Regulations 2005 after he and another man were seen working

without safety equipment. The Health and Safety Executive prosecuted Charles Molloy from Molloy Building Contractors after an inspector spotted him on the roof of the

Black Horse pub in June last year. Neither Molloy nor his employee wore harnesses. They had also failed to put up scaffolding and ignored safety advice from a council officer.

UCATT wants Hull death probe

An urgent inquiry into the death of a worker in Hull is being demanded by UCATT.

Raymond Jessop, 53, died on 8 December last year after falling from a ladder while engaged in painting a council property in Cranswick Grove. He was employed by Kier Building Maintenance, which is responsible for the maintenance of 10,000 council properties in the city.

Inquiries by UCATT have discovered that Jessop was working on a major project repainting 170 properties. A union official visited the site and noted that there was sufficient room for scaffolding to be erected or a mobile platform to have been used.

The use of ladders for this project was at odds with the advice provided by the Health and Safety Executive. This states that ladders should only be used “for low risk, short duration work”.

UCATT officials have also obtained minutes of a meeting in which a safety manager from Kier originally recommended that the painting be performed using scaffolding – but it was eventually decided to use ladders because the workers were not trained in using tower scaffolding units and “cost was an issue”.

UCATT has raised concerns that workers were being pressured to finish the project in the belief that delays would lead to a loss of pay.

FEWER FATALITIES: UCATT has welcomed the Health and Safety Executive's latest fatality figures showing a decrease in construction deaths. In the 12 months to April this year, 41 workers lost their lives in accidents – 21 per cent fewer than in 2009/10, when 52 workers were killed. The reduction across all industries was 15 per cent: from 178 to 151 deaths.

Following a meeting with HSE Chief Inspector Philip White on 30 June, the day the new statistics were released, UCATT General Secretary Alan Ritchie said: “Each death is an individual tragedy. The reduction last year is primarily due to the economic downturn, which has not only meant that fewer people are working on construction sites but has reduced time pressures and working hours and cut the number of inexperienced workers, all of which are major factors in accidents.”

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) estimates that on average 12 workers are killed every year after falling from ladders. In 2008/9, falls were the most common type of fatality, causing 21 out of the 54 deaths in construction.



REOPENED: After a two-and-a-half-year closure for a £12.5 million rebuilding and refurbishment, the People's History Museum (see artist's impression above) reopened in March. The museum – the only national museum in Manchester – tells the story of over 200 years of working class and trade union history. It includes the Labour Party archive, along with collections of the TUC, Communist Party, suffragettes and the Cooperative movement.

The first public building in Britain to be built with a Cor-Ten metal shell known as “weathering steel”, the museum is situated to the north west of the city centre bordered by the River Irwell. Its new extension takes the form of a five-storey building, built into the site's sloping, riverbank location near the original Pump House building (pictured left) that housed the museum.

Some recent cases settled by UCATT

● A painter working on the Wembley Stadium site who was on ground level under two large metal beams suffered injuries to his ribs, neck and shoulders when the beams collapsed on top of him. The injuries prevented him from returning to work as a painter. Liability was admitted by his employers and eventually settled for £180,000 after court proceedings had been started by the union.

● A Liverpool bricklayer was drilling ties into block work and was wearing gloves in accordance with site rules, despite the risk of them catching in the drill bit. His left index finger got caught in the drill bit causing injury and leaving him with ongoing symptoms. A claim was made against the main contractors, whose insurers accepted liability. A medical report was obtained and the matter settled for £5,800 including £1,500 for loss of earnings.

● An out-of-court settlement of over £255,000 was secured for a Glasgow area painter shortly prior to trial. The member contracted the fatal asbestos-related cancer mesothelioma as a result of inhaling asbestos material working in a Clydeside shipyard and also working for the Ministry of Defence.

● A Manchester member working as a telescopic handler was instructed to climb up a bank to move items out of the way so that he could pick up a pallet of scrap metal on the forks of his machine. There was no designated path up or down the bank, which consisted of shale. On descending the bank, the ground started to give way, resulting in him sliding down and fracturing and dislocating his right ankle. Liability was admitted in full by the defendant and the matter settled by way of negotiation for the sum of £55,000.

Industrial action and the law

by **STEVE COTTINGHAM**, of UCATT's London-based solicitors, **OH Parsons**

Trade unions have rightly been suspicious of the involvement of the courts in industrial disputes. We all know the long history of court judgments and hostile legislation going back to the Tolpuddle Martyrs and beyond. The Trades Dispute Act 1906 gave unions protection from legal action when taking industrial action "in the course or furtherance of a trade dispute".

These words became known as the Golden Formula. They were observed by employers and the courts throughout most of the 20th century.

After 1979, successive Conservative Governments attacked the Golden Formula. Thatcher and her ministers tried to portray this limited legal protection as somehow placing the unions above the law. Successive Tory Governments attacked unions by passing legislation restricting their ability to take effective industrial action.

This legislation took industrial action out of the industrial arena, where unions were strong, and put it into the legal arena, where the courts were hostile. Tory legislation required unions to hold a postal ballot, give detailed notices and observe strict time limits. Failure on one single point would result in the employer being granted an injunction. This would force the union to start the balloting process all over again.

Injunctions are potent weapons for employers. Courts often grant injunctions based upon an arguable case rather than an overwhelming one. They apply a balance of convenience test which favours employers.

Following the election of a Labour Government in

1997, the trade union movement hoped that the worst of these anti-trade union laws would be swept away. Sadly these laws have remained largely in place.

Last year, British Airways' cabin crew voted by a huge majority to take industrial action. Nevertheless the court granted an injunction preventing action from going ahead on a legal technicality. Recently courts have given similar decisions relating to railways and the press. Just as it looked as though the law on this issue was being brought into disrepute, the Court of Appeal granted an appeal by Unite against another injunction given to BA.

Unfair

These laws are unfair to working people and their unions. The UN's International Labour Organisation agrees. The ILO Committee of Experts has condemned the British legal system for failing to allow lawful industrial action. The European Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights has also criticised the British Government's failure to allow a legal right to strike.

Unions have campaigned for years to repeal these anti-trade union laws. They are not asking for special favours. The law should be brought in to line with other countries where there is a legal right to strike.

The current Government is planning an unprecedented series of cuts which will affect workers in the public sector and elsewhere. Without an effective right to strike, unions will not be able to defend their members to the fullest extent. The need for an effective right to organise, bargain collectively and take industrial action has never been greater.

See back cover advert and website: [www.ohparsons.co.uk].

Temporary lay-off and short-time working

by **GORDON BELL**, of UCATT's Scottish solicitors, **Dallas McMillan**

In these difficult economic times, members may unfortunately find themselves temporarily laid-off (not working at all) or placed on short-time working (restricted weekly hours) by their employers. In either situation, they should consult with their UCATT rep as soon as possible to discuss their situation and their rights. A brief summary of the technical rules is as follows:

In certain circumstances, a member on lay-off or short-time working can resign and claim a redundancy payment.

● You do not have a right to a redundancy payment unless you are an employee (rather than self-employed or a worker only) and have completed two years' continuous service.

● You need to resign when you claim the redundancy payment – you cannot stay with the employer and claim the payment. ● You can

resign and claim the redundancy payment if you have been on lay-off or short-time for either a period of four successive weeks or for six out of a 13-week period. You must start the procedures within four weeks of the end of the period in question.

● You must first write to your employer giving a specific form of notice indicating that if your employer does not give you full work you may seek the redundancy payment.

● Your employer has seven days to decide if he accepts your notice or not. If he does not he must give you a written counter-notice within seven days of your notice.

● If you receive no counter-notice within the seven-day period, to claim under the scheme you must then resign in writing within three weeks. In the letter you must give your employer your contractual period of notice (at least one week) and indicate that you will be claiming redundancy. At the end of the notice period you will have resigned

your employment but will be due your redundancy payment from the employer. If he fails to give you this you can go to an employment tribunal.

● If you do receive a counter-notice from your employer you can still go to a tribunal to challenge the counter-notice and ask them to decide if you are due a redundancy payment if you resign under the scheme.

● The redundancy payment will be your normal gross weekly pay (to a maximum of £380) multiplied by the number of years of completed continuous employment, with an increase for each such year while aged over 41.

Seek advice from your UCATT official before resigning, as if you fail to follow the correct procedures, you will not be entitled to any payment.

NB: Our office freephone number for members has now changed to 0303-303 1606. Do not use the previous number 0800-652 7646.



MEMORIAL: Delegates from the Kenkouro Japanese construction workers' union pay respects at the memorial at Canary Wharf, London, to steel fixer Kieron Deeney who was killed at a Laing O'Rourke site there in 2004 when a hatch cover gave way. The inquest jury delivered a verdict of "unlawful killing". The Japanese were guests of UCATT for much of their visit early in June.

In brief

New housing rules welcomed

The scrapping of Housing Revenue Accounts has been welcomed by UCATT, as the move will mean that local councils will have 10 per cent more money to provide better housing. In an announcement in March, then Housing Minister John Healey said that the new self-financing system for councils would allow them to keep all rent receipts and monies received from the right to buy scheme. UCATT has long campaigned against existing funding rules, saying they were unfair because some of the income generated from council housing was diverted to central Government. However, it is not known whether the incoming Con-Dem coalition Government will honour this new move.

Protest over Gaza attack

UCATT has written to the Israeli ambassador in London condemning the deadly attack launched by Israeli armed forces against the fleet of six ships carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza on 31 May. The union also called on Israel to immediately and unconditionally lift its blockade of the Palestinian territory.

Victory Housing protest

Members of UCATT and Unite held a joint protest on 25 March against the refusal by Victory Housing Trust to include craft workers' pension entitlement as part of their terms and conditions of employment, effectively ripping up their pension rights. Ahead of the

protest outside the firm's HQ in North Walsham, Norfolk, UCATT Regional Secretary Brian Rye accused the company of ignoring regulations put in place to protect employees' pension rights.

Asbestos support group

A new organisation has been launched to support victims of asbestos and their families in the North East and Cumbria. The Northern Asbestos Support & Campaign Group, under the auspices of Northern TUC, is the first of its kind aimed at delivering professional support to people affected by asbestos disease in the area. Services include a drop-in centre, a telephone helpline, advice on benefit entitlements, home visits on request and support for family members at coroner's inquests. The drop-in centre is based at Wallsend People's Centre on Frank Street, Wallsend, Tyne & Wear; tel: 0191-200 7198.

Did asbestos kill punk legend?

The former Sex Pistols manager Malcolm McLaren may have been exposed to the asbestos that killed him while smashing up Sex, his King's Road punk design shop, his partner Young Kim has said. She told *The Independent on Sunday* that the 64-year-old rock and roll legend, who died on 8 April of the asbestos-related cancer mesothelioma, was exposed to the deadly material when he shattered the ceiling of the London boutique he shared with his then partner, designer Vivienne Westwood. After a routine chest scan in 2008 a doctor noticed "benign" spots on McLaren's lungs which looked like pleural plaques from asbestos exposure.

Probe tax-dodging agencies, UCATT urges Revenue

UCATT has written to Lesley Strathie, Chief Executive of HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC), requesting an urgent investigation into the conduct of construction employment agencies who are deliberately avoiding paying millions of pounds in taxation.

The union's approach has been made after evidence was collected that in many cases agencies offer two rates for the same job: a higher rate paid for workers on CIS "self-employed" terms and a lower rate for those on PAYE.

Under the CIS construction industry tax scheme, agencies and gangmasters do not have to pay employer's National Insurance contributions of 12.8 per cent of a worker's earnings. This translates into millions of pounds of lost revenue each year.

The HMRC has clear rules about whether workers should be paid directly or via the CIS tax scheme, such as whether a worker can choose their hours, decline work, disobey orders and set their own prices for work.

Confederation

Meanwhile, the Recruitment and Employment Confederation (REC), the largest trade association for employment agencies, is backing a national campaign to block Treasury plans to stamp out bogus self-employment.

The campaign is an alliance of housebuilders and some other construction companies who oppose proposals to "deem" the majority of bogusly self-employed workers to be employees for taxation purposes.

Anne Fairweather, REC's Head of Public Policy, commented: "Many people in all sectors of business, in both the public and private sector, want freedom and flexibility offered by self-employment."

Alan Ritchie, General Secretary of UCATT, responded: "The comments by REC demonstrate a blinding ignorance of the construction industry and are deeply worrying. Workers don't freely choose to be bogusly self-employed so that they can be stripped of holiday pay, sick pay and basic employment rights. They have to accept these employment conditions in order to find work and feed their families."

“Workers don't freely choose to be bogusly self-employed so that they can be stripped of holiday pay, sick pay and basic employment rights.”

Union's warning on Birmingham job cuts

UCATT is calling on Birmingham council bosses to act urgently to prevent the loss of one third of council housing maintenance jobs.

The union has learned that two housing contractors, Willmott Dixon and Mears, both of whom hold housing maintenance contracts with the council, are planning to make large-scale job cuts.

UCATT understands that Willmott Dixon intends to make 151 staff redundant, while the figure for Mears is 51. The job losses are on top of 50 workers recently made redundant from capital projects.

The cuts will lead to the long-term deterioration of the properties, the union is warning. The modernisation and upgrading of the properties will also be seriously affected.

UCATT Midlands Regional Secretary Steve Murphy said: "Tenants will suffer. Repairs times will increase and the quality of the service will decrease."

Would you buy



If the label says 'Produce of West Bank (Israeli settlements produce)' — don't buy it.

It's from stolen land.

Did you know?

- Many British supermarkets sell produce grown in Israeli settlements on stolen Palestinian land
- Such settlements are on occupied Palestinian land, in the West Bank, and are illegal under international law*

Why this matters to you as an ethical shopper:

- Palestinian farmers have lost their land to these illegal Israeli settlements (over 40 per cent of the West Bank)
- Palestinian workers in the settlements are exploited and child labour is used
- The Israeli occupying power prevents the export of nearly all Palestinian goods
- Scarce water resources are frequently confiscated by the Israelis and then used to irrigate settlement produce for export to the UK
- Settlements have a detrimental impact on the daily lives of Palestinians. Movement is restricted through a system of separate roads for Israelis and Palestinians, hundreds of checkpoints, and the illegal wall. Palestinians also endure violence at the hands of settlers
- The settlements and their continuing expansion are recognised internationally as one of the main obstacles to resuming peace negotiations

*The Geneva Convention states that the transfer of a civilian population into occupied territory is a war crime

**Don't buy settlement goods.
Write to the Foreign Secretary calling for
settlement goods to be banned.**

www.tuc.org.uk • www.palestinecampaign.org • info@palestinecampaign.org • 020 7700 6192

Adviceline

 **Topical tips on an issue that has been raised on UCATT's
0800-262 467 freephone adviceline for members.**

Holidays—your rights

As we enter the traditional holiday season, the time is right for the *Building Worker* adviceline to identify UCATT members' rights to holidays.

Firstly, let's be clear: holidays are a statutory right; all workers have a right to paid holidays. By law every worker should receive 5.6 working weeks of holiday per year. For a person working a five-day week this equates to 28 days. This is inclusive of public or bank holidays. Some employers may offer more paid holidays than the minimum and at all times UCATT members should check with their employer and refer to their employment contract and terms and conditions to find out their holiday entitlement.

You should give notice of your intention to take a holiday to your employer. Notice has to be twice the length of time as the holiday, so two weeks' notice of your intention to take one week's holiday. Similarly, your employer also must give notice of any refusal of a holiday, a notice period of the same length as the holiday requested, for instance, one week's notice of refusal of one week's holiday.

The number of paid holidays you are due in a year accrue from the first day that you start work in any job. This means that should you start a new job then you build up the right to paid holiday concurrently with service. You may find that if you have recently started a new job you will not have built up enough service to be paid for a holiday period. Alternatively the company may pay you,

“Bylaw every worker should receive 5.6 working weeks of holiday per year. For a person working a five-day week this equates to 28 days. This is inclusive of public or bank holidays.”

on the basis that, should you leave before you have accrued enough service to be paid holiday, you pay back monies at an agreeable rate.

Companies may have a specific policy regarding holidays, where the company operates shut-downs or adheres to local area holiday dates, and they can exercise control of the taking of holidays. For example, UCATT members that work in the private sector, under the Construction Industry Joint Council Agreement, have the right to 21 days' annual holiday and eight paid public holidays. These holidays

are often regularly split into certain holiday periods: two weeks (10 days) taken during the summer period; seven days to be taken with three public holidays to account for the Christmas and New Year break. While this is not prescriptive, and companies will alter dates, it provides a useful example of how holiday dates can be set.

In construction, where the amount of pay varies week to week because of piecework or bonus payments, then holiday pay should be an average of the previous 12 weeks' pay. Please note that overtime cannot be included in holiday pay and that where work does not vary then holiday pay should be paid for hours normally worked as per the employment contract.

Any UCATT member with any enquiries regarding holidays should contact their local regional office for further advice.

This article is for your information but you should always seek the advice of an accredited UCATT official or legal advice before pursuing any course of action to ensure that your rights are fully enforced. See facing page for contact details of your nearest regional office.

UNION OF CONSTRUCTION, ALLIED TRADES & TECHNICIANS
 FREEPOST, 177 Abbeville Road, Clapham, London SW4 9DR



Join your union

the union for all workers in the construction and building trades

Application for membership of Britain's specialist construction union



Personal details		Employment details (please fill in all accounts)	
Name	Job title	Employer	Employment start date
Address		Address	
Postcode		Employer's address	
Mobile		Employer's telephone	
Home		Employer's fax	
Work e-mail		Employer's e-mail	
Home e-mail		Employer's website	
Other		Employer's SIC code	
<input type="checkbox"/> I am a UCATT member and my details are covered by my current contract.		Former union details Are you or have you recently been covered by another union?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		If yes, please give details of the former union.	
Approved by UCATT on:		Approved by you on:	

I, the undersigned, agree to abide by UCATT rules and affirm that I am not debarred by UCATT rules.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

(NB: Full membership and UCATT membership is subject to approval by UCATT members)

For UCATT office use only				
Section	Branch	Employment Code	Account Code	Rate



UNION OF CONSTRUCTION, ALLIED TRADES & TECHNICIANS
 FREEPOST, 177 Abbeville Road, Clapham, London SW4 9DR

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit

Name of the account holder (your name or name of your company): _____

Direct Debit number: **8 7 1 5 1 9**

Reference Number (to be completed by UCATT): _____

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society
 Please pay UCATT Direct Debit (G) £ _____ per month on the _____ day of each month. I understand that this instruction may be given with UCATT and that details will be provided to my bank or building society.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

The Direct Debit Guarantee

This Guarantee is provided by all banks & building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits. It guarantees that you will not be charged if the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit payment is not as you instructed. If you have not authorised a payment, you will be repaid. If you have authorised a payment, you will be repaid if you have not authorised it. If you have authorised a payment, you will be repaid if you have not authorised it. If you have authorised a payment, you will be repaid if you have not authorised it. If you have authorised a payment, you will be repaid if you have not authorised it.

Weekly contribution rates

● Craft £2.66 ● General £2.41 ● Apprentice £1.68

Applicants in Northern Ireland/Republic of Ireland should contact the Belfast/Dublin office (see right) for contribution details

Union of Construction, Allied Trades & Technicians

Website
www.ucatt.org.uk

Freephone advice line
 0800-262 467

Building Worker
buildingworker@ucatt.org.uk

General Office
 ● 177 Abbeville Road, London SW4 9RL
 Tel: 020-7622 2442
 Fax: 020-7720 4081
 Email: info@ucatt.org.uk

Scotland
 ● 53 Morrison Street, Glasgow G5 8LB
 Tel: 0141-420 2880
 Fax: 0141-420 2881

Northern
 ● Seymour House, 10 Brenkley Way, Newcastle upon Tyne NE13 6DT
 Tel: 0191-236 2636
 Fax: 0191-236 2653

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 ● 64/66 Cross Gates Road, Leeds LS15 7NN
 Tel: 0113-264 0211
 Fax: 0113-260 2908

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 ● 56 Derwent Road East, Liverpool L13 6QR
 Tel: 0151-228 8455
 Fax: 0151-228 7735

Midlands
 ● 2 Wentworth House, Vernon Gate, Derby DE1 1UR
 Tel: 01332-203 656
 Fax: 01332-203 858

Eastern
 ● Goodwin House, Willie Snaith Road, Newmarket CB8 7SQ
 Tel: 01638-565 830
 Fax: 01638-565 836

London & South East
 ● 177 Abbeville Road, London SW4 9RL
 Tel: 020-7622 2362
 Fax: 020-7498 5272

Wales & South West
 ● 199 Newport Road, Cardiff CF2 1AJ
 Tel: 029-2049 8664
 Fax: 029-2048 1166

Ireland
 ● 56 Parnell Square West, Dublin 1
 Tel: (+353) (0)1-873 1599
 Fax: (+353) (0)1-873 1403

FREE representation on accident claims for you and your family

If you or any member of your family has had an accident, we can deal with the claim through UCATT's Legal Aid scheme. We also offer the following services:

- Advice and representation on clinical negligence claims
- Reduced rates for buying or selling your house
- Reduced rates for Probate
- Wills for each member

Call FREE for advice on 0800 526368

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