


2 months on -

national strike action needed to defend the JIB agreement



 JOIN THE NSSN - NATIONAL SHOP STEWARDS NETWORK



The NSSN resolves to rebuild the strength of our working-class movement from the bottom up by creating local, regional and national networks to put elected reps and shop stewards from different unions in permanent contact with each other.

We organise solidarity when trade unions are in dispute. We will also share information to develop ways of successfully resisting attacks on our union rights, jobs, pay, conditions and pensions. We aim to build a movement that can help sweep the anti-union laws off the books and make them inoperable in the meantime.

www.shopstewards.net

Rank and file electricians in the construction industry have been meeting in Scotland, Manchester and now London over the last two weeks as this magnificent campaign of defiance enters its second month. Inevitably after a tremendous series of protests, meetings, rallies and most notably walkouts at West Burton and Saltend, workers will be reviewing what has happened and debating the next stage of defending the JIB agreement that seven of the biggest construction companies want to withdraw from. They then want to impose new contracts, which will see many electricians losing up to 35% in their wages and see other terms and conditions attacked.

The response from thousands of these workers has been incredible. Initially, with little support from Unite, the action has been organised by a handful of union activists, many of them blacklisted. The pressure from this campaign has seen Unite moved into action, with full-time officials now present on the protests. Construction workers will

welcome this and Unite's involvement has raised confidence but now these workers will want the union to act with a sense of urgency. At the Farringdon protest, Unite Assistant General Secretary Gail Cartmail promised a strike ballot but that was 3 weeks ago!

It is crucial that the momentum that has been built up isn't dissipated. The series of protests nationally including in Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle, Lindsey, Scotland, London and now the Ratcliffe-on-Soar power station in Nottinghamshire last Friday (where 100 electricians were involved) have raised the stakes with the employers and the union. Already one of the original 'Big 8' construction employers MJN Coulston have stepped back from withdrawing from the JIB. They have also played a crucial role in informing electricians of the employers' attacks and raised the idea of fighting back to thousands of workers. But a clear lead has to be given by Unite. A national ballot of all electricians working for the 7 companies

should be organised immediately. Even a ballot at one of the companies would be a step forward, which would focus the national campaign.

Whatever happens, rather than going to a different site every week, one of the sites of the now 'Big 7' could be targeted with the workers discussed with consistently. Whether there is an official ballot or not, this could give the electricians on the targeted site the confidence to walk out with a view to spread this action nationally. This would increase the pressure on the Unite officials who would be worried about losing control of the dispute. The successful dispute at Lindsey Oil Refinery in 2009 showed that if the numbers are there, if the union officials deliberately drag their feet, unofficial action spread to other sites nationally can defeat the employers' plans.

See SP and NSSN websites www.shopstewards.net for up to the minute reports of protests. Send us your reports and views

LAST WEEK

A protest by around 100 construction electricians at Ratcliffe on Soar Power Station in Notts on Friday, 7 October, had a big impact. As workers in their cars stopped to talk to protesters, who were there to explain what their dispute is about, a backlog of traffic developed on to the main road all the way to the M1 junction, three miles away and caused delays on the Motorway itself!

Ratcliffe was chosen as one of the contractors there, SPIE is among the seven firms who want to tear up their agreed conditions.

Steve Score spoke to some of the workers, UNITE members, involved:

“There was a union demonstration already planned for this morning and our shop on this site voted to walk out today. There are 7 companies who want to pull out of the JIB (Joint Industry Board agreement), they want to introduce a lower grade for electricians to do our work. It could put skilled workers out of work, or we accept a big pay cut. But this will affect lots of other workers, not just electricians.”

“These young lads have been told over years if you get these qualifications, taking lower pay while you serve your time getting their qualifications, you will get decent pay in the end. Now they are being told that these are not worth the paper they are written on and anyone can do your job. Like typical capitalists they want to make money by taking it out of your pocket. If I was to do that I would be arrested!

We travel all over the country, working long hours. Now they won't even give you a tea break!

These companies are not doing it because they aren't making profits. They want to cut the pay in advance of new contracts that are in the pipeline. This is a rolling tour of protests and we won't stop until we win. If they get away with attacking this agreement then all the others will follow. It will escalate and it will get bigger.”

See Website for further reports.



THIS WEEK

PROTESTS AT TATE MODERN IN LONDON,

CARRINGTON PAPER MILL SITE IN TRAFFORD BOROUGH IN GREATER MANCHESTER ,

GOVAN SHIPYARD IN GLASGOW

TOMORROW - SITE NEXT TO WALKERGATE METRO CENTRE IN NEWCASTLE

Support the:

MARCH FOR JOBS!

This October Youth Fight for Jobs are recreating the Jarrow March to demand:

- A massive government scheme to create jobs which are socially useful and apprenticeships which offer guaranteed jobs at the end - both paying at least the minimum wage, with no youth exemptions.
- The immediate reinstatement of EMA payments, expanding them to be available to all 16-19 year olds.
- The immediate re-opening of all youth services that have been closed, including reinstating sacked staff.
- The scrapping of 'workfare' schemes - benefits should be based on need not forced slave labour.
- A massive building programme of environmentally sound, cheap social housing.



5 November

ASSEMBLE 12.00 noon Temple Embankment to march to Trafalgar Square



www.youthfightforjobs.com

www.jarrowmarch11.com

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