

Workers in Saltend dispute gain support

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Yorkshire Socialist Party

The 400 Redhall construction workers, locked out for two months by BP/Vivergo from the bioethanol plant at Saltend, Hull, received two big boosts to their campaign for reinstatement last week.

On 26 April the scaffolders and electricians, employed by contractors for Vivergo, voted by about 90% to walk out again in support of the locked out Redhall workers.

This act of solidarity sends a clear message to BP/Vivergo that they cannot divide and rule. So if any scaff or spark is sacked as a result of their stand, construction workers around the country must be asked for solidarity strike action.

With the scaffolders and electricians joining the protest, now is the time for the repair and maintenance workers at BP to rejoin the action and bring this dispute to a head.

All trade union members should boycott the site until the Redhall workers are guaranteed re-employment with TUPE transfer rights.

The next day, 27 April, the industry national shop stewards' forum



Lobbying BP photo Sarah Wrack

unanimously agreed to call for a national day of action if no settlement is reached in this dispute by the time of the next stewards' forum which will be held on 9-10 May.

Stewards agreed to organise levies and collections to finance the hardship fund.

Redhall workers should visit sites covered by the construction work-

ers' NAECI agreement over the next week with explanatory leaflets appealing for support so that a national day of action, which needs to be a one-day national strike, is called as soon as possible from the next stewards' forum.

Later that day, another meeting was held with Vivergo at its request. Despite the Redhall workers' rejection of a £1 million pay-off, Vivergo was still not prepared to talk about jobs.

In fact one of the bosses actually said: "Redhalls employees do not fit into my business plan". This is the clearest admission yet that BP/Vivergo ended the Redhall contract to get rid of what they regard as a militant workforce, to break the trade unions and to be able to pick and choose who they take back.

Vivergo needs to understand that there is no business plan without the Redhall workers because no union members will take their jobs or work with scab labour.

The Redhall workers are not interested in selling their jobs. They are fighting for re-employment on TUPE terms and conditions and protecting the NAECI national agreement.

Building support in Notts

Jon Dale

"I am absolutely disgusted about the way we've been treated," locked-out Unite member Ian McPike told the Socialist outside British Sugar's plant in Newark, Nottinghamshire on 26 April. A coachload of construction engineering workers travelled down from Middlesbrough to protest at their seven-week lock-out.

The Newark plant refines sugar beet and is part of the huge Associated British Food Group, which also owns many well-known food brands and agricultural products as well as Primark.

Its British Sugar subsidiary made £240 million profit in 2010 - a 42% increase on 2009. It has a 40% stake in the Vivergo biofuel plant, along with 40% owned by BP and 20% by American chemical giant Du Pont.

"We've seen what BP allowed to happen last year in the Gulf of

Mexico," said Ian. "They've cast 400 of us out and all they want to do is take us back on their terms. If we don't accept their terms they say we can't go back."

"It seems employment law is only for the employers. BP has a total disregard for the law and for human beings. If TUPE [transfer regulations that protect terms and conditions] is the law, why isn't it protecting us?"

"If we don't go national with this we've got no chance against a national company like BP. We've had support from regional GMB and Unite officials but we've never heard from our national union leaders, like Len McCluskey. I'm disappointed he's not yet been to see us or been on TV arguing our case."

"Our jobs are not for sale" is the mood of the workers. GMB and Unite must throw their full weight behind them to defend NAECI 'Blue Book' gains from past struggles and the existence of trade unionism in the industry.

More teachers vote for pensions strike ballot



Part of the NUT contingent on 26 March photo Suzanne Beishon

Headteachers have voted overwhelmingly to ballot for strike action over pension cuts. At the annual conference of the National Association of Head Teachers 99.6% voted for a ballot, while 0.4% abstained.

They join other teaching unions NUT and ATL, who are likely to strike at the end of June over the same issue, probably with the lecturers' union UCU and civil service union PCS.

NASUWT members should be demanding a strike ballot as well, so they can prepare to join the action.

Mike, a young teacher and NUT member from east London explains

why strike action is necessary: "I'll be £230,000 worse off under the proposed scheme if I have taken my pension for 25 years, and will no doubt have to use a Zimmer frame while teaching at the grand old age of 68, if I can reach the chalkboard or control a class of highly energetic 16 year olds."

"I will be paying an extra £84 each month in contributions (this amounts to over £33,000 over 38 years) which will not help me to pay off my student debt, nor get a deposit for a flat. Pay much more, work more, get much less, I won't pay for the bankers' profligacy with my pension!"

Socialists elected to leading positions in Greenwich Unite

Greenwich Socialist Party members

On 26 April Unite union members working for Greenwich council, south London, elected Socialist Party members Onay Kasab and Chris Slater into the positions of branch secretary and treasurer respectively.

In addition two other lefts were elected into the positions of assistant secretary and chair, making it a clean sweep against a slate of candidates that represented a tired and out-of-date right-wing tradition that previously existed in the former ACTS branch.

The election took place as a result of the merging of the ACTS branch with the ex-TGWU branch to form the new Greenwich Unite 2050 branch.

A packed meeting of around 150 came to hear the candidates speak. Onay's opponent announced that she had no desire to address the meeting as her election material said all she wished to say.

It was certainly the case that her campaign had issued a large number of glossy leaflets over just a few weeks. Even council lifts were plastered with her posters.

She also took the opportunity to



Anti-cuts demo in Greenwich photo L Dardis

use her position as an incumbent to hog trade union notice boards and mail out to stewards.

In one leaflet, she implied that she had no political affiliation, asking members to vote for her if they put their employment before politics. This came across as an attack on the Socialist Party.

On the night, campaigners not employed by Greenwich but wearing Unite tabards handed out yet another leaflet on her behalf. In this they referred to her opponents as 'mavericks' who would lose jobs and highlighted her connections with the local Labour Party.

Onay and Chris chose not to make any complaint about what looked

like a breach of election rules nor did they attack their opponents. Instead they emphasised their own record including winning pay rises, preventing pay cuts and redundancies, stopping library cuts and winning one of the best 'single status' deals in the country.

Onay's opponent was not able to give one example of a gain she had won for Unite members. On the night Onay won by a majority of 120, 132 to 12. When the result was announced virtually the whole room cheered.

Workers do not forget a fighting record, no matter the slurs or slanders. This result sent a clear message to the Unison leadership witch-hunters who used undemocratic methods to impose their administration on to the Greenwich Unison branch and who have expelled Onay.

Rebuilding Unite in Greenwich is now an urgent task. This will be done in the teeth of the battle against the cuts.

What is clear from the campaign is that there are hundreds of workers who will now be joining Unite very quickly as a result of this election. One worker said after the meeting: "Now we know the union is in safe hands - now we know we have a chance against the cuts."

Rotherham teachers strike again to defend their union rep

Over 30 members of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) at Rawmarsh Community School in Rotherham went on strike again on 4-5 May against compulsory redundancies.

The only member of the NUT being forced out is union representative Ralph Dyson, who led nine days of strikes earlier this year to stop 25 jobs being axed.

One NUT member said: "We're not going to abandon Ralph to sink when he held the lifeboats for the rest of us to get in."

The dispute started when new head teacher Dr Stuart Wilson announced that 25 teachers and nine support workers were being

made redundant at the end of the spring term due to financial difficulties.

But after solid and determined strike action, the number of enforced redundancies among teachers was reduced to just one.

Some teachers left for other jobs, went part-time, shared jobs or took voluntary redundancy. But the one left, Ralph, is a clear case of victimisation of the union rep.

John Dalton, Rotherham NUT branch secretary said: "Management expected the NUT to call off action but the members voted overwhelmingly to continue action until the number of NUT redundancies is zero."



Ralph Dyson photo A Tice

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The 2011 NSSN conference will be held on 11 June at the South Camden Community School, London NW1 1RG.

The themes are:

- Strike to defend jobs and pensions
- Fight the anti-trade union laws
- Save our NHS

Registration begins at 10.30am.

Email info@shopstewards.net to register. See also www.stopcuts.net and www.shopstewards.net