



Green Workplaces News

15 April 2009

Welcome to the first issue of the TUC's online newsletter on environmental issues. It will be published monthly, rounding up stories on environment, energy and climate, as they impact on work, your workplace and the economy.

Green Growth - sign up for the TUC's 2009 Climate Change Conference!

The next big event after the G20 March Putting People First is the TUC's annual climate change conference on Monday 27 April, at Congress House, London. Green Growth is the theme of this year's conference.

Register online at: www.tuc.org.uk/greengrowth

We've a keynote address from Bob Baugh, Executive Director of the AFL-CIO Industrial Council. The American labour movement campaigned hard for an Obama victory to rebuild the US economy. The Presidents' plans for economic recovery owes much to union calls for Green and Decent Jobs, which are now a key part of the President's recovery programme.

Activities include a Green New Deal Panel of leading trade unionists, climate and energy experts. And we've keynote speeches from DECC Minister Mike O'Brien MP and Frances O'Grady.

Six workshops lay the ground for a green industrial transformation in the UK – debating green jobs, green skills, greening the workplace, green energy, how to ensure environmentally-friendly investment, and Copenhagen – what does a new climate deal mean for labour, and how can we make it happen?

2009 is a crucial year for the globe – economic recovery and climate change go hand in hand. Everything about a new climate deal affects trade unions, North and South, in terms of jobs, skills, investment and ensuring a Just Transition to a low carbon future.

So we hope that you will sign up for Green Growth – please email Emma Hendy (ehendy@tuc.org.uk) for details, or register at: www.tuc.org.uk/greengrowth

On the road to Copenhagen

While the G20 people marched in London for Jobs, Justice and Climate, their voices were missed in Bonn that weekend, where the UN opened its last 'talks about talks' before the serious negotiations begin in June. Even so, our voice was heard in Bonn – through the International Trade Unions Confederation's small but vocal delegation.

For the ITUC, Anabella Rosemberg reported back that, "This meeting was the first one since the negotiations were declared open (in Poznan) and the first were the new US administration was represented. These elements provided with some sense of urgency the first days of the meeting, but did not allow a real progress in the negotiations. But interesting proposals begun to take shape - on finance and on the mechanism for developing countries to report their emission reduction actions. But little happened on the crucial issue of emission reduction commitments for developed countries.

Regarding our trade union priorities, our main objectives were to introduce the Just Transition framework formally to the process, to present it to as much delegates as possible, and to

introduce employment aspects in the discussions on the social and economic consequences of climate change policies. Both objectives were accomplished.”

For unions, Just Transition includes consultation between stakeholders – governments, unions, industry, communities - at global and national level. It means massive investment in green jobs and skills. Change through consent. Environmental rights at work. Social protection for the most vulnerable. And a massive transfer of funds to the South for climate impacts we can't avoid. This is why we are calling for a Just Transition Article in the new climate agreement. Because this can no longer be left to governments alone.

In effect, it's about Jobs, Justice and Climate.

In Bonn, the Association of Small Island States (AOSIS) also raised the bar for a new agreement. Hadn't scientists just last week in Copenhagen challenged the UN's 2 degrees comfort zone? Sea levels are rising faster than predicted. Hurricane damage is endemic. By 2100, what would be left of the Bahamas, the Maldives, let alone Tuvalu, or any major city on an estuary, would no longer be viable.

We agree with AOSIS that new tougher objectives are needed. One is policy based on evidence. Another is about putting people first, a message the UN has to heed. As it shifts into “full negotiating mode” it's a just transition or nothing. We have until December in Copenhagen to get that message across.

Union Modernisation Fund - Greenworkplaces Project

The TUC is currently running a national GreenWorkplace project with funding from BERR via the Union Modernisation Fund. The project aims to work with unions in 10 – 15 workplaces, across the private and public sector, to provide training, tailored materials and project officer support for environmental reps.

The project sets out to show how trade union members can champion environmental issues in the workplace and how green reps can form the

link between staff and management to encourage change through the workforce. The aim is to secure lasting changes to union-management relations by promoting the workplace as a focus of action on climate change.

Look out for a new TUC Environmental Workbook being launched shortly as part of the project and aimed at providing guidance and practical help with running courses for TU reps.

For more information on the project contact Sarah Pearce spearce@tuc.org.uk

Go Green at Work – TUC handbook for green reps.

A 3-part handbook with practical guide to taking action in the workplace has been published by the TUC.

- Taking action gives guidance on researching the environmental performance of your workplace and negotiating for improvements, and includes a list of suggested workplace activities.
- Understanding the issues covers tips on specific issues (like heating, electricity, water use or transport).
- Resources include: a model agreement; terms of reference for a Joint Environmental Committee and the union green rep role; a jargon buster; guidance on measuring carbon and energy; and putting on green events at work.

Download: go Green at Work at www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-15236-f0.cfm

Up to 20 printed copies can be ordered from TUC publications for free.

TUC Trade unions and the Environment – Courses in 2009

This course will help union reps to:

- Identify environmental changes affecting the workplace

- Research and identify appropriate environmental legislation, policies and information Identify environmental problems and opportunities for trade union action.

Start dates and venues for the classroom based courses are:

- 22 April (Bristol)
- 22 May (Liverpool)
- 5 June (Plymouth)
- 9 September (Taunton)
- 12 November (Cheltenham)

For further info visit:

www.unionlearn.org.uk/courses/index.cfm/ty/3/sb/14/pg/1/citem/3267

This course is also available online.

Union reps working on environmental issues will also find the TUC's online support network for reps www.unionreps.org.uk useful, where a dedicated bulletin board for environmental reps helps people network and share tips and good practice.

Climate change for trade unionists - evening workshops in London

PCS is hosting courses on climate change, created especially for trade unionists by the Climate Outreach and Information Network (COIN) working with Ruskin College.

- Climate Change Condensed: Thursday 23 April, 5 p.m.
- How to win the climate change argument in a 15 minute tea break: Thursday 7 May 5.p.m.
- Climate Change Negotiation: Mon 8 June 5 p.m.
- A Green New Deal?: Thurs 21 May 5 p.m.

COIN are experts in how to communicate around climate change. And Ruskin is recognised nationally for its track record of education for trade unionists.

For more info on these courses visit <http://coinet.org.uk>