

# HOPE

COUNTY DURHAM DOES **NOT** TOLERATE RACISM

# HATE

BE ANTI-RACISM AWARE FOR A WEEK  
BE ANTI-RACISM ACTIVE FOR LIFE  
STAMP OUT RACISM FOR GOOD

COUNTY DURHAM AGAINST RACISM

13-20 OCTOBER 2007





## EMBRACING NEW PEOPLE

The scale and nature of recent migration is changing the face and shape of our communities, as areas where migrants have traditionally settled have become more diverse than ever, while areas like the North East have received relatively large numbers of newcomers. In many ways this is a positive development for the region as we aspire to become more diverse in our make up and outward looking.

Successful regions are those that embrace new people. They are more attractive places by virtue of their diversity, tolerance, openness and commitment to ensure equality is integral to and characteristic of a region in which everyone is supported to achieve their potential. Yet where there are opportunities, migration also presents us with a number of challenges.

Globalisation, EU enlargement and deregulation have led to increased population movement. Technological advances and the mobility of industry, combined with rising demand for highly skilled labour has seen workers travel further than ever before to acquire employment. Governments have been quick to capitalise on this trend, recognising

that migrant workers can play a valuable role in fuelling economic growth and prosperity.

However the recent wave of migration into the UK has been accompanied by minority views in the host population, which are at best ill informed and at worst racist. Trade unions are alive to this threat and its ability to undermine the quality of employment in our workplaces and corrode cohesion in our communities.

**Trade unionists share a set of core values and act collectively to create a world in which all workers can live lives free from poverty, prejudice and exploitation. Therefore we support the freedom of people to move around the world as a fundamental right and believe migration can improve all of our lives.**

The TUC campaigns for all workers to be treated fairly, equally and with respect. Working with Government and employers we have a duty to ensure that people who come to Britain to work are not exploited and are able to do a fair day's work in return for a fair day's pay. If migrant workers are treated fairly and paid a decent wage, they represent no threat to the livelihoods of people who are already living and working



in the UK. It is not migrant workers but employers that undercut standards and wage levels.

Migrant workers are vital to the continued economic and social regeneration of the North East. There are more people leaving the region than want to remain or move here to settle in the long term. For several years the region's population was in decline, ageing, with fewer people of working age to support those in retirement. This pattern was impeding economic performance and holding back development. However increased migration to the North East has helped to arrest this decline and drive improved productivity in the economy. It is imperative that the North East continues to attract highly skilled workers if we are to sustain the resurgence of our region.

Despite these changes however, the North East remains in some respects less diverse than other regions in England. There are fewer BME people, migrants and asylum seekers than in the rest of the country. Attitudes also give cause for concern. In a national survey 25% of people in the North East expressed negative views about BME communities compared to 18% in England. Also in a poll conducted by

MORI 23% of people in the North East disagreed with the statement "it is a good thing that Britain is a multi-racial society". It is no surprise that trade unions face major challenges in dealing with race discrimination in the workplace.

It is time we asserted the strength of the trade union movement; recognising and rewarding the contribution of workers, championing equality, uniting to celebrate the cultural vibrancy of our communities and striving to achieve a better standard of life for us all.

The presence of migrant workers in the region has compelled the North East to become less insular, examine and challenge prejudicial thinking and discriminatory practice.

To improve the condition of our workplaces and our communities we must eradicate racism wherever it exists. Instead of retreating from migration in fear and ignorance, trade unionists can ensure we build a region that extends a warm welcome to new people, displaying the hospitality for which the North East is famous.

Trade unions must tackle the myths peddled about BME groups, migrant



workers, asylum seekers and refugees. In this guide you will find we have marshalled the facts and resources to help you do just that.

## MIGRANT WORKERS

Migrant workers occupy hard to fill vacancies at both ends of the labour market, but have generally occupied low skilled, low paid service occupations unpopular with indigenous workers due to poor terms and conditions. As the region ages there will be greater demand for this type of work and as people become more educated it is unlikely we will meet the demand for low skilled workers domestically. These jobs are unattractive in terms of working conditions and hours and it is less likely the local workforce will fill the jobs on offer. Therefore migration is necessary in order to maintain our economy and quality of life.

## TACKLING THE MYTHS

**Do migrant workers just take from the economy?**

**NO :** In this country the overall economic impact of migration is positive. Migrant workers contribute more in taxes than they receive in services and migration leads to

slightly higher levels of employment and wages for native workers. There is anecdotal evidence that jobs may be lost and wages depressed in certain, specific sectors of the economy. As trade unionists we must take real examples of this seriously. But the response should be to demand equal rights for migrant and native workers alike. These problems usually occur because unscrupulous employers take advantage by exploiting poorly informed and unorganised workers to undercut those employing indigenous or organised labour.

**They come over here and take our jobs**

**NO :** This is simply not true. Such a limited argument is based on an assumption that there is a fixed amount of work to be done in the economy at any one time and that if migrant workers gain employment there will be fewer jobs for existing workers. The amount of work available depends on the level of demand in the economy – how much employers are able to buy. In times of prosperity the demand for skilled workers is high and there are often short-term labour shortages. Understandably these places become attractive destinations for people seeking work and the labour

market can absorb this increased supply of labour. In times of recession the demand for labour decreases, consequently the desire for migration lessens. And as we have seen in the UK, the employment rate continues to grow despite the influx of migrant workers.

Government research has found **“no discernible statistical evidence to suggest the latest wave of migration has been a contributor to unemployment in the UK.”**

While net immigration has been rising since 1997, the unemployment rate fell between January 1998 and August 2005, from 6.4% to 4.7%. Immigration has also raised GDP by 3.1% since 1998 and in 2004/05 on its own contributed 1% GDP.

### **Migrant labour depresses wages**




**NO :** It is not migrant workers that are responsible for depressing wages but a minority of unscrupulous employers and low levels of union organisation allow them to. Trade unions campaign for effective policing of rogue employers.

It is, by definition, hard to estimate the impact of undocumented migration on wages. However, it is likely that workers who are unable

to enforce their employment rights, at constant risk of being reported to the authorities by their employers, are more vulnerable than any other group, reinforcing the case for better enforcement of employment rights and minimum wage regulations.

### **Don't immigrants cost the taxpayer millions?**

**NO :** Immigrants pay more in taxes than they receive in services. A study by the Home Office found that in 1999-2000 migrants in the UK ...

-  Paid £31.2 billion in taxes
-  Received £28.8 billion in public goods and services
-  Made a net contribution of around £2.5 billion – worth about 1p on the basic rate of income tax.

In 2005 the Institute of Public Policy Research updated this work and discovered migrants consistently made a higher net fiscal contribution than British born people. This is because migrant workers tend to be in the prime of their working lives and so are less reliant on the state to fund costs of childhood or old age.

**Migrant workers are a drain on public services**

**NO** : Inadequate planning can result in pressure on housing, schools and other public services. Yet this is not the fault of migrant workers. Grant funding for local service provision does not take into account changes in population, or allow for a learning curve to meet the needs of new groups. These difficulties arise from poor planning on the part of Government and migrant workers should not be blamed for problems that are not of their making.

**Migrant workers are vulnerable workers**

Many migrants have high-level qualifications from overseas that aren't recognised or used in their job causing high levels of underemployment. As a result of this 'brain waste' we are failing to capitalise on the advantage of having greater numbers educated to a higher level. Employers have little awareness of the qualifications, skills and experience their migrant workforce possessed before arriving in the North East. Many migrant workers are keen to develop and adapt their skills to settle in the UK and integrate in the labour market.

**Migrant workers' health, safety and welfare is often at risk due to language barriers, lack of protective clothing and equipment, poor working and living environment and ignorance of cultural diversity and the reception received by new migrant communities.**

In a survey recently carried out by the TUC a quarter of migrant workers reported problems with payment and unauthorised deductions, and concluded migrant workers are being systematically abused. Long hours, little or no pay, threats and intimidation are common.

The old accusations that migrants take native workers' jobs or are a drain on the welfare state are as false as they have ever been. Migrant workers continue to be vulnerable and at risk of exploitation. Whilst migration is not problem-free, trade unionists need to be able to distinguish the real challenges from racist myths.

For further information please see the TUC Report "**Economics of Migration: Managing the Impacts**". The full report, including references, can be downloaded from [www.tuc.org.uk/international/tuc-13542-fo.cfm](http://www.tuc.org.uk/international/tuc-13542-fo.cfm)



## WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?

### Promoting a balanced labour policy

Ensuring migrants are positioned to fill critical vacancies at both the high and low end of the skills spectrum, matched to their knowledge and experience. At the same time we need to improve access to employment for unemployed, hard to reach and under-represented groups by setting aside the fiscal contribution migrant workers make to fund an improved social wage and programmes to support the long term unemployed or economically inactive. We also need to increase the number of jobs available to all workers.

### Improving public services

Rather than criticising local service providers, councils should be supported by Government to develop the capacity to respond to rapid changes in population, achieved through, and informed by, the public sector workforce with the experience of working alongside and providing services to migrant workers.

### Maximising migrant workers contribution

Trade unionists should advocate training and development opportunities for migrant workers, particularly language provision to maximise migrants, skills, knowledge, ability and enthusiasm to work.

Trade Unions can also help migrant workers gain recognition for skills obtained abroad. Support for provision of English for speakers of other languages is helpful too. Better knowledge of the language reduces worker vulnerability.

### Co-ordinated policy response

Policy makers, practitioners and stakeholders must work together to promote integration and community cohesion based on interaction, representation, participation and equality.

### Enforcing employment standards

Trade unions should press for effective enforcement of employment standards and make sure migrant workers benefit from their rights to minimum wages, sick pay, holiday and social security contributions.



## Organising

Efforts should continue to organise migrant workers, extending union rates and conditions of employment to vulnerable workers thus helping to ensure current standards are not undercut.

## REFUGEES & ASYLUM SEEKERS

### What's the difference between a refugee and an asylum seeker?

A refugee is anyone fleeing their country of origin. Refugees are described as asylum seekers while they are waiting for official recognition of their right to refugee status. The Home Office may not grant refugee status to some asylum seekers, or may grant the right to stay in this country for a limited time. At the end of this time the Home Office will look at their case again. If the Home Office believes it is safe for them to return to their country they have to go home. If it is still not safe, the Home Office may allow them to stay for a further period.

Most refugees come from countries that have witnessed serious conflict and human rights abuses. The majority of people are fleeing for their lives from harsh and oppressive regimes. You only need to look at the

top nationalities of people seeking asylum to see there is a connection between people's plight in the home countries of those who come to the UK for refuge. In the North East the top 10 nationalities of people applying for asylum in the UK include Iraq, Iran, Somalia, Afghanistan and Sudan.

**Britain hosts less than 3.2% of the world's refugees and asylum seekers. There are about 9 million refugees around the world, the majority of whom are living in less developed countries (providing asylum to 74.3% of the global refugee population, leaving the wealthier countries to help just 25.7%)**

A high proportion of asylum seekers have substantial educational and work related qualifications and were employed as professionals in their home country. Research has shown that asylum seekers would prefer to support themselves rather than be supported by Government, yet the law prevents them from doing so. The UK does not allow asylum seekers to work.

Asylum seekers are not allowed to claim mainstream welfare benefits. If they are destitute, the only option



for some is to apply for support with the National Asylum Support Service (NASS), the Government department responsible for supporting destitute asylum applicants.

There is no such thing as an illegal asylum seeker. By law, anyone has the right to apply for asylum in the UK and remain until a final decision on their asylum application has been made.

90% of employers want to take on refugees. 9 out of 10 employers want to take on refugees to meet skills shortages, but don't because of ignorance of the law and confusing paperwork, according to research by Personnel Today.

Many asylum seekers live in poverty:



85% of asylum seekers experience hunger



95% cannot afford to buy clothes or shoes



80% are not able to maintain good health

## EXPOSING THE MYTHS

### They take our homes

**NONSENSE :** When asylum seekers are given a house or flat they get the ones that are empty; the properties landlords find difficult to let.

### We pay more council tax because of asylum seekers

**NONSENSE :** The Government looks after asylum seekers, not local councils.

### They commit more crimes

**NONSENSE :** There is no evidence that asylum seekers commit more crime than anyone else. They are more likely to be the victims of violent crime, even murder, because of who they are.

## ANTI-RACISM CHECKLIST

This checklist is for reps combating racism in the workplace. The key to preventing racist behaviour is that an act of racism should be perceived as an attack on the culture of the organisation.



## IDENTIFYING RACIST BEHAVIOUR

- Do all workers know there is a union in the workplace regardless of whether they can speak and read English?
- Do safety reps involve all workers when undertaking workplace inspections? And do they include in the inspections the attitudes and characteristics of certain workers that may make them vulnerable?
- Are safety reps involved in Risk Assessments with the employer? Do they consider risks to workers vulnerable to physical and verbal abuse?
- What is the ethnic spread of workers in the organisation and how is it distributed? Does the composition of the organisation reflect the local community?
- Does the trade union reflect the ethnic spread across the organisation – if not then how has the union worked with ethnic groups to bring them into the union, build trust and ensure their voices are heard?

- Do union reps have the knowledge and skills to detect and deal with racist behaviour in the workplace?
- What is the attitude of the employer towards reps undergoing TU education and training to develop skills and knowledge?
- Are learning opportunities available to all workers equally?

## WORKPLACE POLICIES TO PREVENT RACIST BEHAVIOUR

- Does your employer have an equalities or anti-racism policy?
- If they do, is it formal and written, or is it an understanding - a few words in the disciplinary procedures?
- Are all employees and people who come into contact with the business aware of the policy and the consequences of not abiding by it?
- Are supervisory staff and management trained to develop skills to deal with issues related to racist behaviour?



- Is the policy understood?
- How do staff feel about the policy and what is the attitude towards it by workers and by the various levels of management?
- Is the policy embedded in the culture and beliefs of the organisation?
- How is the policy enforced – by all staff or by management and is this consistent across the organisation?
- How is it implemented: via disciplinary procedures to punish those in breach of the policy, or as an opportunity to educate and change behaviour before taking disciplinary action?
- Is the policy enforced meaningfully and is this consistent across the organisation?

## MONITORING THE POLICY

- Does this happen?
- If so, how and who is involved?
- Is there meaningful consultation between the employer and the trade unions to develop systems and procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of the policy?
- If so, is this at the senior level of the organisation or by all who implement the policy and trade union workplace representatives?
- Does the organisation have named members of staff responsible for the implementation of the policy?
- Is there guidance to employees and users of the organisation on how the policy is monitored and how they can contribute to the improvement of this?
- When undertaking or reviewing risk assessments, do risk assessors include identifying risks associated with racist behaviour and groups of workers who are most vulnerable?



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## CONCLUDING REMARKS

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All over the world societies are struggling to manage difference. Too often communities are divided by ethnicity and race. It is essential we find a way for very different kinds of people to share the same space and resources to prosper...because an integrated society isn't a dream. It's a condition for survival.

Trevor Phillips : Foreword to the Commission for Racial Equality Website

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