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# Midlands TUC Annual Report 2008





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## Section One

# From the Chair



- John Freeman, Chair Midlands TUC

### Economic downturn

The latter part of the year became dominated by the economy. As serious faults in the world banking system created catastrophic impact on just about everyone. What seemed to begin as a problem with mortgages in the United States of America quickly turned into a fully fledged world financial crisis. With just about every bank declaring their exposure to the errors of unregulated bad investment and borrowing decisions, it was maybe a matter of time before the real economy began to suffer.

We are now all well aware of the problems. Despite people needing houses, house building was the first sector to grind to a halt, followed by a slowdown across construction as demand and confidence have waned. Ucat have battled against redundancies.

We have witnessed the demise of retail stores with MFI and Woolworths probably being the

most high profile high street names to disappear so far. Further redundancies are expected in the new-year as the recession bites into the retail sector.



- The closed Woolworths store in Birmingham where even the shelving had been sold off.

Whilst the Midlands TUC and our affiliates in the sector have been campaigning for support to manufacturing industry for many years, we now face a situation where large parts of the sector are in dire need of support. Motor manufacturers and their supply chain colleagues are particularly challenged by the current situation. With traditional brands like Spode, Royal Worcester and Wedgewood going into administration, the Potteries will soon no longer be recognised as the centre of Britain's skilled crafts. We know the significance of the manufacturing sector in both the east and west midlands to the still large numbers of our members who rely on this sector for their employment. We also know that it is not just those directly employed by the sector that are affected but also surrounding shops and services that are to a greater or lesser degree dependent.

Only where companies are focused on exports do we sense any real sense of optimism as the value of the pound falls against other currencies.

Neither should we forget the sector's contribution to research and development as a percentage of all midlands R & D. Significant amounts of money are spent, year in, year out, on research which has – and will again – drive our economic growth and provide high quality well paid jobs to the region. Similarly, training – it will be the skills of our workforce that will rebuild our regional economy and so we resist all moves by employers to cut back on training and apprenticeships.

The Midlands TUC has continued to campaign and lobby the region's MPs to ensure continuing and increased support to protect jobs and earnings, and we have welcomed the Labour government's huge financial investment to protect jobs, first in the financial sector and in parts of manufacturing and construction. And I am delighted that our regional secretary, Roger McKenzie, has been able to represent those demands in the influential economic forums set up by our two regional ministers.

As with any recession it will be the public services which will take the brunt of the fallout. The huge cost of government measures today to reflate the economy will curb public spending in the future. Public services will be hit. Civil servants, local government and health workers will all be expected to pick up the pieces and pay with their jobs and cuts in their earnings.

So, as ever, the outgoing year sets our agenda for the next – 2009 will be a year when all our campaigning and activity must be directed at ensuring we protect jobs and earnings and build for the future.

### Campaign against the BNP

The ongoing campaign to prevent the advance of the BNP had many victories in 2008 but also some setbacks along the way. The massive increase in councillors predicted by the BNP in

advance of the May elections failed to materialise, largely down to some expert and well planned campaigning by unions and local anti fascist groups. I would like to congratulate all those individuals and groups who helped to see off the BNP threat in many areas.

However, we were not successful in preventing a number of BNP gains in Stoke on Trent, Nuneaton and Bedworth, Amber Valley, North West Leicestershire, Broxtowe and Charnwood. Late in the year we also saw a BNP councillor elected in Boston. In many parts of the region the BNP now have a toe hold and will be using this in their bid to get County Councillors and even an MEP at the scheduled June 2009 elections. To prevent this we have been planning a joint campaign with Searchlight aimed at turning out the vote against the BNP in what will be a hugely significant round of elections.



I would like to single out the particular threat posed by the BNP in Stoke on Trent. Despite the huge efforts of Norscarf to beat back the BNP they now have nine councillors and were expecting to make a strong run for the Mayor of Stoke on Trent next summer. This possibility ended when the referendum abolished the post of Mayor, but there is still the possibility of significant BNP gains under the newly established electoral system which comes into play from next year, with all forty seats up for election. We should, as a movement, ensure no

effort is spared to ensure that the BNP is beaten back in Stoke on Trent.

### **Women Chainmakers Festival**

The fourth Women Chainmakers festival took place at the Black Country Living Museum on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September, attracting more people than ever before. This festival has become a key event in the TUC diary, both as celebration of past achievements but also as a beacon of hope for the future. The Women Chainmakers festival is an occasion when we can celebrate together an important moment in history, where 800 women won a dispute for insisting on their right to a minimum wage for their labour, and I look forward to welcoming even more trade unionists to the 2009 festival on Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September.

### **Thanks**

2008 has been a busy year and I would like to record my thanks to union activists across the Midlands whose unstinting voluntary efforts on behalf of their work colleagues have helped boost union numbers. I want to thank all unions that have played a part in the Midlands TUC, who have brought fresh ideas and perspectives, and helped inspire us to move forward. I would like to thank members of the Regional Council, those who have contributed through our various forums, networks and sub-committees, and members of the Executive. I would also like to thank the staff of the Midlands TUC for their support they have given me as Chair, and all of us, to help realise our aspirations and make the Midlands TUC the effective influential organisation it is today. It is all of your work that convinces me that together we will provide the leadership and support needed for working people across the Midlands during the challenging year ahead.

**John Freeman**  
Chair, Midlands TUC

## **Section Two**

# From the Regional Secretary

Welcome to the annual report of the Midlands TUC for the year covering 2008. As in every other year the trade union movement in the region has had to face up to some enormous challenges. The pages of this report set out some of the ways that trade unionists in the region have tried to meet these challenges while, at the same time, trying to renew our movement so that we are better placed to represent the interests of our members and their families and, in doing so, to stand up for social justice in the workplace and beyond.

The new format of this annual report allows us to provide more detail of the work that we are doing in the region as well as to uphold our commitment to develop much more carbon neutral working practices and environment in our office.

I think that it is right to begin this report by saying thank you to all trade unionists who work so tirelessly within the region to stand up for working people at work and in wider societies. They are far too long a list to mention and when we lose one of our number the passing should be greatly mourned, their lives celebrated and the causes they held most dear continued to be fought for.

While I salute the number of very active trade unionists in the region who have passed away I want to just mention one. Joe Godward was active in Derby and District Trades Union Council for around 50 years and secretary for much of that time. Joe passed away in January of 2009 while doing what Joe did – organising

something. Joe wasn't just a really dedicated trade unionist and community activist – he was also just a great guy and will be greatly missed by all of us.



- Joe, left, at the Engineering Centre for Vocational Excellence at Derby College during a visit by TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber.

One of the things that Joe held most dear, along with many in the region, was manufacturing. I remember him speaking passionately at regional council meetings about the way that the manufacturing sector was being decimated. Even when the economy was supposedly doing well Joe joined with many of us in trying to pressure the Government to do much more to support manufacturing. I write much more in later pages of the Annual Report about the trade union response to the recession but it is instructive to know that according to official figures even though all sectors of the economy are being hit it is still manufacturing that has lost around 70% of the jobs that have gone in the region since April of last year.

The losses in manufacturing illustrate the dependence of the region, East and West, on the sector but also underline the lack of support given to it by Governments of both persuasions over the last two decades. A region that once proudly boasted that we were the workshop of



the world and the cradle of the industrial revolution has become a pale shadow of our former industrial existence.

We do not expect things to stand still economically or industrially. In fact, contrary to the belief in some quarters, trade unionists have always been at the forefront of innovation. We have had to be to ensure that the interests of workers were fore-grounded rather than ignored by the more unscrupulous employers out there. However, we do expect that our Governments should be much more committed to having a country that actually makes things rather than one that puts together things made elsewhere in the World.

As the economy continues to slowdown the social consequences of unemployment and the pressure of harder time begins to bite. With big job losses announced every day across this and every other region, workers are fearful for their jobs. Workers across the region are understandably and rightly angry at employers who deny opportunities to local workers. Employers who do such things are clearly in breach of the law if they restrict any future vacancies to workers of a particular nationality or location.

Any anger should be directed at employers who seek to divide workers against other workers because of their nationality, skin colour, gender or some other arbitrary measure, and not at migrant workers.

The more distasteful elements in our regions towns and cities have already begun to try to use the fears of workers to stir up hatred and xenophobia. However, I do hope that union members will not fall for this cheap age-old trick. Throughout history there have been “chancers” that have sought to undercut the hard won wages, conditions and union representation of existing staff whenever the economic times get tougher. One of the reasons

our movement was born in the first place was to stand up collectively against these people.

Unions in the region have continued to fight hard for decent conditions for migrant workers and we back the free movement of labour within the EU, but that is entirely compatible with wanting to see new jobs recruited fairly, with everyone given the chance to apply and be judged on the basis of their skills. That is why we have continued to work hard within the region to win the trust of migrant workers, bring them into the trade union family and secure for them the basic rights at work and in society that all workers should enjoy.

Our work against the forces of the far right remains a priority area of our work. This is not only for the reasons set out above but also because equality and social justice are part of the fabric of trade unionism.

Our commitment is to work with all anti-fascist organisations on campaigns and initiatives and to try, where possible, to maximise trade union support. During 2008 we worked with Unite Against Fascism to make sure that a successful demonstration took place in Codnor, Derbyshire in opposition to a BNP national weekend gathering. The office has also worked with Searchlight and Rewind on initiatives to develop more on the ground trade union activity against the far right across the region. We have been fortunate in securing the services of Ben Singleton and Matthew Collins as volunteers to help us to drive this work forward.

We believe that union work against the fascists is most effective when conducted as locally as possible. The efforts from the office are directed towards building trade union support for such local initiatives. The work of trades union councils against racism and fascism across the region is a very clear indication of the vitally important role that they still play in bringing trade unionists together to campaign for change.

I am a firm supporter of trades union councils and believe that they are vital bodies on which our movement can be renewed. In my view this does not necessarily mean trades union councils operating in the same way as they have done historically. One lesson from the local campaigns against fascism could be that having the building of community alliances for social justice at their heart may be one of the ways of reinvigorating trades union councils.

Much has been said about how our public services will help to drive the economy out of recession. I think this is far too simplistic a view. Anyone working or organising in the public sector will tell you about the enormous budgetary pressures that exist. A number of local authorities are proposing to cut jobs and some, no doubt, will be trying to worsen the pay, terms and conditions of workers in the sector. These moves will, I am sure be resisted by unions within the sector and should be supported by all other unions. Without a strong public sector many of the weakest in society will continue to suffer hardship across a range of different indicators. It seems all too easy for some to forget why public services are so important to our society and why public need must always trump private greed.

One example of the mutuality that exists between the public and private sector is in procurement policy. The public sector has enormous purchasing power and spends millions of pounds a year in procuring goods and services. The TUC has worked hard at a national and local level to try to get this purchasing power to support British manufacturing. I sit on the national manufacturing task group of the TUC. The task group has met with senior politicians and officials during the course of the year to press for more use of the procurement levers that are available to public sector purchasers. As a direct result of one of these meetings with Liam Byrne MP (then the regional minister for the West Midlands) a procurement

policy group was established under the auspices of the regional development agency Advantage West Midlands (AWM).

This procurement policy group in the West Midlands brings together key agencies such as AWM, the Learning and Skills Council (LSC), Government Office, Strategic Health Authority and local government leaders, to develop a unified regional approach for procurement. This initiative, which is widely recognised in the region as being led by the Midlands TUC, should bring about some meaningful steps towards objectives identified by unions within manufacturing. We are working to see this initiative rolled out in the East Midlands and other regions over the coming period.

A proper use of procurement policy to support local jobs can make a major contribution towards helping to move the region and nation as a whole out of recession. It can also make a significant contribution towards putting our economy on a stronger footing than before the recession.

As we eventually move out of recession we have to ensure that the Midlands does not become a stopping off point on the way to the more affluent areas in the North West or South East. One of the ways of achieving this goal is to prioritise employment rights and ensuring that the region is highly skilled. That is why the regional TUC continues to support wider employment protection at work as well as the call for a Trade Union Freedom Bill to unshackle unions so that we are free to carry out legitimate steps to represent the interests of our members.

The high value economy that the region must aim to achieve must rest on increasing skills levels. The East and West Midlands remain at or near the bottom of the regional skills charts. Unless we can significantly improve this performance we are destined to become a “sink” region – only useful for the least valuable (and paying) kinds of jobs. That is why I serve on the

West Midlands Regional Council of the LSC with Mary Alys, the Unionlearn regional manager, on the East Midlands equivalent. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mary and all of her colleagues in Unionlearn in the region. They have done a great job in supporting the learning of thousands of working people in the region.

While we have sought to address the many challenges we face in the region we have had to deal with what I regard as the distraction of a changing regional infrastructure. The decision by the Government to abolish Regional Assemblies in England has led to much discussion about the type of structures that will replace them and how best trade unions and our environmental and social partners can continue to influence the decision making by local government and the regional development agencies in particular.



- Roger McKenzie (centre) with Terry Hodgkinson, left and Brendan Barber, signing the TUC Memorandum of Understanding with the Regional Development Agencies.

We are committed to continuing to find practical ways of influencing the regional agenda alongside the partners that we have worked hard to develop good working relationships with over the years.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Valerie Broom for continuing to support me in

our work on the West Midlands Assembly. I also want to thank John Freeman, Unison; Adrian Axtell, Unite – the union; and Graham Murray, PCS, for the work that they do for us on the East Midlands Assembly. Thanks also to Gerard Coyne for his continued service as the trade union representative on AWM and to Nev Jackson who retired in December 2008 from the equivalent position on the East Midlands Development Agency (AWM). Congratulations to Elizabeth Donnelly who was recently appointed to take the seat vacated by Nev.

I believe that the challenges that we face are profound but certainly not insurmountable. I think that they are particularly achievable if we accept that we cannot meet these challenges alone. There are a large number of groups and organisations across this region that share the same values as we do, work for many of the same things as us but work separately from us. Our aim, as it has been for the last four years, is to put these organisations alongside the trade union movement. We have the opportunity to be an even bigger voice for social justice than we already are when we put ourselves at the collective heart a vibrant wider movement that encompasses campaigns for equality, peace and the environment. Taking these issues on is not an additional part of our work but says a lot about who we are and what we see trade unionism as being for.

I am very pleased that I can point to the election of Barack Obama as the first African American president of the United States of America. It was an historic night in November when he was declared the winner – a night many of us thought we would never live to see. While I do not agree with President Obama on everything his election was a message of hope and a desire for radical change. It also showed that innovative organising strategies that utilise the latest technology can bring about amazing success. That's one of the reasons why the Midlands TUC is developing our own online

presence through blogging as well as video and radio podcasting. We are also investing time to develop the next layer of leaders in the region – an important step if we are to grow stronger in the future.

I would like to Alan Weaver and Veronica Davis in my office who work so hard to keep things moving. They are both dedicated trade unionists who have given years of service to our movement. I learn a great deal from both of them.



Roger McKenzie  
Regional Secretary

## Section Three

# The Economy

### Introduction

The world economy is now in recession. The roots of the crisis do not lie in the UK, but we are clearly not immune to its impact. Ordinary working people in the Midlands are losing their jobs, paying higher energy and food prices, and, if they manage to stay in work, are finding their wages are not keeping up with the cost of living.

The Government's top priority must be to mitigate the impact of the worldwide recession. This means giving priority to growth and rebuilding confidence in the future of the economy so that we do not deepen and prolong the recession deeper than is necessary.

There are two main causes for this recession.

First the lack of proper regulation of the finance sector has had the inevitable consequence of an unsustainable boom and subsequent bust. This has led to the world-wide credit crunch in which banks no longer trust even each other. The Government itself has acknowledged this problem through its current review of financial sector regulation and the Midlands TUC looks forward to rigorous and comprehensive proposals arising from this.

Second the growth of demand for oil and other natural resources, aided by speculation, has led to substantial price rises particularly for everyday essentials.

It is important to understand this inflationary threat. Getting this wrong will lead to policy errors that will make the slowdown longer and deeper.

Trade unions are not soft on inflation. We do not want to see hard-won pay settlements wiped out by price rises. Living standards are already

being eroded by inflation, and inflation rates are higher for those on low and middle incomes as essentials such as food and energy make up a greater proportion of their household bills. High petrol and diesel prices, in particular, are significantly raising the cost of getting to and from work. Those who use their vehicles for work are finding this price rise particularly difficult to accommodate. While this trend has now started to reverse it is important to remember that any such future price hikes will again disproportionately affect those on low wages and other already vulnerable workers.

But current inflationary pressures are external. Most experts expect them to ease over the next two years. Depressing the UK economy needlessly to eliminate non-existent domestic inflationary pressures would be economic masochism.

### Pay

There is no evidence, as some commentators have tried to suggest, that UK pay increases are driving UK inflation. Indeed neither public nor private sector pay rises are keeping up with the cost of living, and the consequent depressed demand will do nothing to counter the downturn. This is particularly the case in the West Midlands where wages are consistently amongst the lowest in the country.

The Government's two per cent target for public sector pay increases does not help deal with inflation. Public sector pay is not driving inflation, nor will holding it back reduce it. Forcing a nurse in Worcester or a driving test examiner in Nottingham to suffer a cut in their standard of living will not reduce the price of a barrel of oil, but will slow the economy at a time that we need growth. In addition, public sector pay restraint is leading to a widening gap between private and public sector earnings while damaging recruitment, retention and staff morale. The policy threatens relations between the Government, staff and trade unions, impairs the independence of pay review bodies and

prevents constructive negotiations on pay awards and pay structures. It is important to respect the integrity of pay determination machinery, including the need to pay proper attention to equalities and the need for realistic pay structures. These should provide for appropriate recognition and reward as set out in the public sector pay principles agreed between the Government and unions through the Public Services Forum.

Low inflation is undoubtedly desirable, but so is growth and employment. Attempting the impossible - dampening external inflation by driving the UK economy into recession - would be an approach driven by economic dogma, not today's economic imperatives.

While we cannot insulate ourselves from the world economy, the major challenge for the Government must be to show that it is on the side of ordinary working people by ensuring the costs of the slowdown are borne by those who can most afford it. This is a fundamental test of the Government's commitment to fairness. It must protect those least able to bear the costs of the slowdown. And it must make those who have done best from the boom years make a fair contribution to the cost of recovery from a recession at least partly caused by the bonus-driven risk taking that lies behind the credit.

### **The Union Response to the Recession**

The trade union movement in the Midlands has actively engaged with the various bodies that have been set up to try to mitigate the effects of the recession. Unions have worked closely with employers to try to find alternatives to job losses and, where these cannot be avoided have provided support, alongside partners such as Unionlearn, Job Centre Plus (JCP) and the Learning and Skills Council (LSC).

The Government has established bodies within each region to bring partners together to co-ordinate activity in handling the impact of the recession on jobs and communities. In the East

Midlands the Government has set up an Economic Cabinet of regional partners. The regional secretary represents unions on this Cabinet which is chaired by the regional minister Phil Hope.

In the West Midlands two bodies have been established. Firstly, there is a Council of Economic Advisors. This advisory body, chaired by regional minister Ian Austin, has a range of employer interests plus the regional secretary and Gerard Coyne from Unite – the union. This body is developing into a forum that can advise on the future direction of the West Midlands economy as well as providing intelligence to the regional minister on the impact of the recession.

The West Midlands also has an Economic Task Force which brings together organisations that can deliver specific help to mitigate the impact of the recession. The task force includes representatives from the LSC and JCP, Advantage West Midlands (the regional development agency, local government and trade unions (with the same representation as on the Economic Advisors Council). The work of the task group is carried out through six work streams: workforce support, business support, community support, infrastructure, data and intelligence, and communications.

### **A New Economic Programme**

A new economic programme is required. It needs to be made up of short, medium and long term elements that provide immediate help to those most affected by the recession, action to ensure the slowdown is no deeper or longer than necessary and helps to build the future strength of the UK economy, and within this, the economy of both sides of the Midlands.

In the short term we need a package to help those facing most difficulty from the recession - particularly the growing numbers losing their jobs, those facing fuel poverty, including pensioners, and those suffering from the

difficulties in the housing market and construction sectors.

The TUC calls for the following.

- Mandatory social tariffs for energy providers - it cannot be right that the poorest, who pay for their energy via pre-pay meters are faced with higher bills than those who can afford to pay by direct debit.
- An increase in the Winter Fuel Allowance to bring it up to one third of the average fuel bill, as was the case when it was first introduced. The Government must step in and ensure that the profits of the energy companies are used for long-term investment in skills and energy infrastructure and to help those most at need rather than being directed into the pockets of shareholders through higher dividends.
- Ministers to scrap the arbitrary public sector pay target which is imposing real terms pay cuts on millions of low and middle income workers delivering vital public services. The TUC calls for genuine dialogue to secure fair pay and good employment conditions for all public sector staff.
- The Government and Financial Services Authority to ensure that repossessions are kept to an absolute minimum.
- A significant cut in VAT on property renovation to boost the home improvement market and provide greater job opportunities for those facing job loss in the construction sector. This would be of particular significance in the Midlands where the housing construction sector is suffering from significant job losses. These job losses are depriving this important sector of many of its most skilled craftsmen and women. So too,

this would provide support to companies producing goods and services for this sector, from brick production to double glazing, from sanitary ware to wallpaper.

In the medium term the Government needs a determinedly pro-growth strategy which should be reinforced by the Bank of England in line with its mandate to 'support the Government's economic objectives including those for growth and employment'.

### Conclusion

In the long term the Government must do more to build the strength of the UK economy. This will require it to intensify some of its existing activities such as investment in skills, but also rethink some other aspects of its economic approach.

The UK has privileged City financial institutions at the expense of the rest of the economy through a lenient tax regime and light regulation. Yet we cannot rely on the next City or asset bubble to drive growth.

Instead, the Government must identify the sectors, whether in manufacturing, services or other parts of the economy, that are able to generate growth in the next decade. These will be the sectors that will lift us out of the current slowdown in a sustainable fashion, in every sense of that word. The Government's role is to provide the right policy and legislative framework and the right incentives and supports to allow those sectors to flourish. In particular, the Government must learn from countries such as Germany and Denmark where environmental enterprise has been positively encouraged leading the 'green economy' in those nations to become highly profitable sectors that employ thousands massively outstripping the UK's much smaller efforts in this area.

The economy across the Midlands has seen many of our historically important sectors decline in recent years, with car manufacturing and auto parts as well as coal mining and

ceramics being the most high profile victims, not only in terms of the volume of jobs lost but also in terms of the damage inflicted on local communities.

It would be wrong, however, to ignore the many world renowned companies that still operate in the manufacturing and engineering sectors and which still employ considerable numbers of workers in the region. These sectors still contribute a large proportion of the GDP of the region and, therefore, these sectors remain vital to the future economic health of the Midlands. The government should provide further resources to both AWM and the East Midlands Development Agency as well as the well respected Manufacturing Advisory Service.

There should be no attempts to pick winning companies and favour those over others, but a sensible assessment of the sectors in which the UK already does well but could do even better. Yet even this common sense approach remains anathema to the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) and it is increasingly clear that the creation of this new department with its distinctive built-in neo-liberal approach was a substantial mistake. Far from the dangers of excessive regulation, the world economy is facing a damaging recession because of a lack of effective regulation.

After a decade of economic success in which the UK economy has proved more resilient than many to external shocks, we now face very different circumstances and require a different kind of response from the Government. If it is to show that it is on the side of ordinary working people and committed to fairness it needs to adopt the kind of realistic pro-growth strategy detailed here. This will ensure that the recession is no deeper, nor longer, than necessary and that the UK emerges as a stronger and fairer country.

For unions our challenge remains the same as it always has. We have to make sure that organising remains at the top of our list of

priorities. Without a strong and active union membership the truth is that our voice will not be strong enough to counter the siren voices coming from some parts of the business community and from some politicians. In short, we must renew our efforts to make the trade union movement an even bigger champion of social justice.



## Section Four

# Learning and Skills

unionlearn in the Midlands has been making excellent progress against our strategic plan and annual targets. At the end of our reporting year in March 2008, 23,283 learners had chosen the union route for their learning, exceeding our anticipated target by 500.

The challenging times that we face within the region means that we need to continue to develop these learning opportunities to support workers across the region to be in the best possible position to minimize the impact of the current economic downturn.

Our current progress on our yearly targets, which run from April 2008 – March 2009, is as follows and highlights that we are well on course to meet these by early next year.

	Targets April 2008 – March 2009	Achieved April – Sept 2008
ULRS recruited/trained	478	186
Learners via TU Education	5,575	2,886
Learners via union route	27,876	16,188

In line with our national strategic plan we have delivered the following:

### 1. A growing training and development programme for reps and officers

During 2008 the TUC programme continued to grow. A particular feature of that in the midlands meant that more union learning reps were recruited and the core programme of day-release courses began to enjoy a renaissance.

The TUC core programme raises other issues. It consists of 10 or 12 day Stage 1 and Stage 2 course for union reps; Stage 1 and Stage 2 for health and safety reps and the 5 day ULR introductory course. Since the late 1970's the programme has set the standard for the amount of time required for union rep training. The need hasn't changed. Despite that over the last few years a definite imbalance in trade union education programmes has developed in favour of shorter courses of 3, 2 and 1-day duration.

A major reason for this is probably the perceived difficulties associated with negotiating time-off for union rep training. So while the number of enrolments on trade union courses has risen the effect has been an actual decline in the number of hours many union reps actually have available to commit to training. This is a serious issue because it means that the breadth and depth of rep training is not what it needs to be. In turn trade union front line activists are not necessarily as informed as they could be, with a detrimental roll-on effect on our organising and representation abilities.

It is therefore pleasing to say that during 2008 there were some signs of that trend ending, as enrolments on the TUC core programme began to improve. During 2009 we will work to try to keep that momentum going.

During 2008 there have been several new developments:

#### Union Reps Stage 1 course

The TUC union reps Stage 1 10-day course was rewritten. The new course places more emphasis on union rep organisation and team working across all of the reps roles. There is also a

renewed vigour in terms of the importance of communication and negotiation skills. Rather than reacting to change the course also asks reps to take a much more forward-looking approach to their relationship with their employer. Since TUC Reps 1 is, for many reps, the entry point into trade union education the new course will help them begin to see their role within an economic and political framework.

### Qualifications and Credit framework

During 2008 the test and trial year for TUC Education and the new Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) came to a successful conclusion. Thanks must go to all those college and WEA staff who worked to try and overcome the difficulties of applying what is a major government initiative to trade union education work. This means that, with the exception of one Midland TUC college provider, all reps within the accredited TUC programme are now able to work towards the substantial qualifications of Certificates and Diplomas. The programme now provides clear progression routes for trade union learners to begin aiming as high as they want.

### Equality reps

The project to establish the role of the trade union equality rep got off to a successful launch during 2008. Workshops and a well-attended course took place in the West Midlands, moving that on in the East Midlands is now a priority. Equality reps courses will now be a regular part of the programme as we seek to supply the specialist training that is needed.

### Union Professional Development programme

This unionlearn programme is aimed at officers and other professionals among trade union staff. During 2008 a number of successful courses took place but there is room to expand our work in this area. To facilitate course management and pool resources we began to offer the Midlands element of the programme in partnership with unionlearn in Wales and unionlearn South West region. Courses venues

are now in Birmingham, Derby, Bridgend and Bristol.

The programme consists of 10 two or three day regional courses covering topics such as Reading Financial Accounts and Handling Casework. There are also London-based courses such as the Women Professionals Summer School and the exciting 2-day Lights! Camera! Action! Introduced in 2008 this is intended to enable film to be used to support organising and campaigning work. The 2009 programme, including details of TUC Organising Academy events is available from TUC Regional office.

### Activist Academy

Congress 2008 saw the launch of the Activist Academy. This is a 6-day course programme intended to provide union activists with the opportunity to develop high level organising skills. The 2 day modules are linked to practical organising projects approved by the participants unions. In the midlands our first group of Activist Academy reps is in Nottingham but during 2009 we should look for a programme to develop in Birmingham too.

### Schools and Employment Rights

During 2008 the TUC work on the government funded vulnerable workers project came to the Midlands. The unionlearn contribution was to support the dissemination of understanding of employment rights to students at Birmingham inner-city schools. This was done by taking part in classroom discussion about rights and the role of unions but also through a theatre production based on the TUC publication 'A Better Way to Work'. For this we worked in partnership with Marketing Birmingham, Birmingham and Solihull Education Business Link and Raw Nerve Theatre. Thanks to all those trade unionists who volunteered to get involved with a special mention for the TUC Midland Black Workers Forum.

## 2. Good progress towards our national target of 22,000 Union Learning Reps by 2010.

This last year in the there were more than 300 new ULRs trained and we have improved our recruitment processes enabling more courses to enrol the required numbers. We have run some local initiatives to support ULRs such as the Stoke ULR Forums and the IAG ULR Forums in Nottingham. As long as workplace ULRs stay active many more working people will gain access to learning and training opportunities than might otherwise have been the case.

## 3. Links have been further developed between union learning and union recruitment, retention and organising strategies.

Successful “Adding value to the union card” events were held in Birmingham and Daventry, which highlighted the benefits of learning and organising through presentations from Unite, CWU, USDAW and Unison. Briefings have also been delivered to courses and in workplaces aimed at building union capacity around the learning and organising agenda.

## 4. An increasing number of Union Learning Reps are being recognised for their role in providing Information, Advice and Guidance in the workplace

unionlearn have been able to support nearly 50 ULRs across the region gain their NVQs in Advice and Guidance. In the West Midlands we are working with two Lifelong Learning Networks to raise awareness through ULRs of the potential benefits that the higher level learning agenda can offers union members.

5. Unions are reporting increasing numbers of learning agreements and joint learning committees in place.

In the East Midlands we have been running a pilot project to test out the role of collective learning funds in workforce development. Learning agreements and committees are integral to all these ten pilots. This is part of an 18

month national pilot TUC project which will inform future policy developments.

## 6. Provision of support for Union Learning Fund projects.

This key role we play in the region has continued. During 2008 we have formalised procedures and been able to support unions to meet the demands of ULF project management. We have provided support to individual unions as well as holding networking meetings to enable briefing on new developments and sharing of best practice.

## 7. Good progress has been made on increasing the number of providers gaining the unionlearn quality award.

To date the following providers in the region hold the award:

ACTD(Stoke): Skills for Life

Gilfillan Associates: Level 3 Management Skills

Leicester College: Skills for Life

Tresham Institute: Skills for Life

Warwickshire College: Skills for Life

Stoke on Trent College: Skills for Life

Solihull College: TUC Education

Several more providers are currently progressing their applications.

## 8. Relationships with external partners have continued to develop:

Advantage West Midlands (AWM), East Midlands Development Agency (EMDA), Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs), Sector Skills Councils (SSCs), Next Step providers, local Lifelong Learning Networks (LLNs), Further and Higher Education institutions. The impact of union learning has not been missed by key supporting agencies and both regionally the Learning and Skills Councils and the Regional Development Agencies have engaged more than ever with the trade union approach to supporting workplace skills development. Our

work with voluntary and community organisations has brought the vital role played by unions in the workplace to a wider audience. For example in Leicester, engagement with Leicestherday's Alice Hawkins project and in Birmingham our schools work with a theatre group has brought trade unions to new audiences. We have developed protocols with Castle College Nottingham and North Warwickshire and Hinckley College around apprentices, enabling unions to brief learners on rights at work and the role of trade unions. We aim to discuss similar with other colleges in the coming year. Our migrant workers project has also enabled increased partnership working with many more community organisations across the East Midlands.

### 9. Unionlearn has been able to negotiate with regional bodies to bring in funding providing opportunities for increased union learning activities.

During this past year this has included an East Midlands ESF project to support the recruitment of ULRs, an EMDA funded project, enabling union engagement with migrant workers and continuation funding for our EMDA Management Skills Project. In the West Midlands unions have been benefiting from funding from AWM.

In addition, unionlearn funding for events to mark Learning at Work Day in May enabled just over 7,300 learners to take up opportunities.

### 10. Access to e-learning and learning centres has grown throughout the year.

unionlearn in partnership with Advantage West Midlands have been distributing capital funding via unions for the establishment of workplace learning centres. With a focus on engaging partnership between ULRs and employers, the learning centres are a catalyst to enhance both individuals potential progression routes and up skill the region, impacting positively on the economy. There are currently twelve established learning centres' in diverse sectors from

engineering through to transport and logistics which have been delivering Skills for Life, Level 2, 3 and 4 qualifications, paying particular attention to first-line management and supervisory qualifications.

Our learndirect offer was re-launched as Unet in March, and in the region Derby College Trade Union Education Centre was successful in bidding for a Digital Divide project to develop the learndirect offer to regional workplaces. Trade union education centres have been opening up to a growing number of people who are now accessing other types of learning beyond rep training through cross college links.

New electronic online tools have been developed and promoted to assist unions in their activities such as the union learning Climbing Frame, a one-stop-shop of learning and skills resources and a tool to enable ULRs support learners in developing individual learning plans.

Online Learning is becoming more popular and courses are free for union reps from unions affiliated to the TUC. Online courses available:

- Countering the Far Right
- Disability Champions @ Work
- Going Global: Trade Unions and International Development
- Health and Safety Stage 1
- Introduction to Occupational Pensions
- Next Steps for Safety Reps Stage 2
- Organise! A voice in every workplace
- Tackling Racism
- Trade Unions and the Environment

- TUC Diploma in Occupational Health and Safety
- Union Learning Reps
- Union Reps Stage 1
- Work/Life Balance

### 11. We are able to demonstrate take up of learning across a range of levels.

Trade unions have made a massive contribution within the region to developing skills in the workplace and have supported members across all sectors to gain development opportunities from literacy and numeracy qualifications right through to members going onto degree courses. We were able to report the following figures for the 6 months from April to Sept 08 which highlight that unions are making good progress particularly in progressing people beyond level 2.

	Targets April 2008 – March 2009	Achieved April – Sept 2008
Skills for Life Learners	3,982	1,744
Level 2 NVQ Learners	796	745
Learners Progressing from Level 2	319	628

We have developed our regional offer around access to higher level learning through our Memorandum of Understanding with the Open University, partnership working with Lifelong Learning Networks and our Trade union Education programme, which now includes a Foundation Degree offer at South Birmingham College.

We are just completing a West Midlands OU project which will have provided opportunities

for more than 40 people to take up Open University (OU) Openings Courses, part of our strategy to encourage working people to access higher education. Universities historically have not been accessed by most working class people for many reasons from confidence to cost right through to time and commitment. By building partnerships we are trying to develop cost and time effective ways for workers to access higher education that fits in to peoples work life balance and is affordable by paying in bite size chunks. For example we brokered an arrangement with Derby University which is supporting the rail unions from East Midland Trains to pilot a project called Learning through Work. This supports the work that unions will be doing to open up these higher level opportunities and build aspirations amongst members. We are currently delivering a LLN research project to focus on learner needs and aspirations in part of the East Midlands.

We have facilitated several learning opportunities that have had a capacity building impact for trade unions, amongst them workshops to support women into trade union and representative roles in public life at the International Women's Day Conference in March as well as courses brokered via partners enabling union reps and officers to develop their skills around mentoring, coaching and project management.

### 12. We have run several successful regional projects which have enabled a specific focus on Management Skills, Migrant workers and Apprenticeships.

The Management skills project which supported trade unions to deliver management skills training across the East Midlands has been so successful with the affiliates, with those who have participated and the funder East Midlands Development Agency that it has been extended for two years. With the changing economy the emphasis of the project will be changing but within this project we will continue to develop



our commitment to equalities by building on the good work of the groundbreaking women into management programme which was attended by more than 100 participants. Over the next 12 months we hope to support up to 20 unions and 250 individuals to develop skills at level 3 and above.

Closely working with the management skills project will be our migrant workers project which supports migrants in the workplace to develop skills and help those workers to utilize skills that were developed outside of the UK. Within the region we are still hearing that some migrant workers are suffering high levels of exploitation we hope that this project which has already worked with over 200 workers can contribute to ending this level of abuse by cascading knowledge and skills through communities.

Unionlearn is working very closely with Unite, GMB, community and Unison to develop support for apprentices. Over the last six months unionlearn through the Trade union Education centres have developed a short course for union reps to get an understanding of the government's commitment to apprentices. Some unions have also facilitated the taking on of apprentices by working with management and in a local authority UCATT have been instrumental in apprentices being taken on for the first time in almost a decade. Unions can and have been at the forefront of developing workplace apprentice strategies and also campaigning for fair pay and a guaranteed job for those who complete the apprenticeship. This work delivers opportunities for unions to engage with those new to the workplace and a great chance to show the support that can be accessed from a rep.

### 13. Raising the profile of union learning.

As part of a national campaign to raise awareness of the value of union learning amongst MPs of all parties, we have been organising visits to local workplaces for local MPs who have requested them. We were able to

arrange the following during the year and must record thanks to all those involved in setting up these very successful visits.

Patricia Hewitt, Leicester West met Taxi Drivers (RMT)

Vernon Coaker, Gedling, Findel Education (USDAW)

David Taylor, NW Leics. Kuehne & Nagel (Unite)

Jim Cunningham, Coventry South Travel Coventry (Unite)



Phil Hope, (above) Corby, RS Components (USDAW)

Sion Simon, Erdington, Erdington Fire Station (FBU, Unison)

Richard Burden, Northfield, Northfield Fire Station (FBU, Unison)

Steve McCabe, Hall Green met ULRs at his local South Birmingham College campus.



David Kidney , (above) Stafford Royal Mail  
(CWU)

Additionally we have raised the profile of unionlearn through the publication of 3 update magazines annually as well as contributing success stories to the national unionlearn website. We are currently working on a workplace learning case study booklet to be published later in the year.

Thanks must be recorded to those members of the TUC Regional Executive who have supported unionlearn throughout the year either by their involvement in unionlearn regional reference group or by speaking at our events.

In 2009 we aim to continue to open up further opportunities for unions and their members through our Trade Union Education offer, expanding our work in the region with partners and our continuing support for unions and their regional ULF projects around developing workplace learning.

Mary Alys  
Regional Manager

Pete Try  
Regional Education Officer

Gary O'Donnell  
Development Co-ordinator

Section Five

# Equalities

## **Womens Committee**

One more year has passed and the Midlands Women's Committee continues to meet regularly and be as active as ever.

At the National Women's Conference we are quoted for the work and campaigning that we are involved in on the issues of Domestic Abuse. I am delighted to report that this year has seen some new faces join us and even more important some of the younger element. We were beginning to become concerned that we were a Committee of oldies but not quite "twoearlies".

### **International Women's Day**

We held a very successful one day educational event at the T.G.W.U. Section of Unite the Union's offices in Broad Street, Birmingham. May I thank them for allowing us the use of their building at no cost. The event was also attended by a speaker from Zimbabwe. Miriam Chikamba opened our eyes to the enormous problems faced by Women in her country under the rule of Robert Mugabi. The dictatorship and threats to lives were bad enough but to be told of no food available in the shops even if, by some miracle, Women had enough money to purchase the food, bought the full extent of their plight to us.

Also Sarah Veale, Head of Equalities and Employment Rights Department, attended and spoke of the issues and campaigns within the T.U.C., while Dr Lynn Sinclair from the Black Country living Museum spoke on the Women Chainmakers dispute of 1910.



- International Women's day speakers, Dr Lynn Sinclair, from the Black Country Living Museum, and Miriam Chikamba from the Zimbabwean Congress of Trade Unions.

We then spent the afternoon on different workshops which were arranged by Mary Alys and her team and our thanks go to Mary for her support towards the day, including a little funding. The final scene became extremely interesting when a delegated Granddaughter, aged 12 did a takeover for the Chair. Her Grandmothers face had to be seen to be believed and even more so when her Granddaughter gave the vote of thanks and presented a gift to our Sister from Zimbabwe.

### **White Ribbon Event**

Once again we led our country in participating in two events one at Wolverhampton Football Ground and a second at Walsall Football Ground. A number of us plus four children and the Mayor of Walsall released 120 black balloons in memory of those Women murdered by a partner each year from Domestic Abuse. We also had large Red Cards with "NO TO



DOMESTIC ABUSE” and held them for the crowds to see quite clearly our message of sending the Red Card to all football fans supporting, not only our local teams but also those they were playing against on the day. We hope that the National T.U.C. will be able to arrange for this to become a National event throughout the whole country.

### Abortion

Again on several occasions during the year we campaigned with the post card company and writing to M.P’s against proposed changes to the Abortion Act.

Once again it is not a question of whether we agree or disagree with Abortion but the absolute right for a Woman to have a fair choice.

### Privatisation

This year we have also complained and made our views heard where our Schools have become privatised in the form of academies owned by such groups as Ormiston Trust etc. We saw the threat to Members terms and conditions and only time will show as to whether they start “cherry picking” the pupils they want to attend.

The latest in this line is that a number of Doctors Surgery’s, some even unknown to the patients, are now run by private groups, set up in the main by G.P.’s.

We hope that the Women’s Committee will continue in its strength and look forward to our next event, the International Women’s on Saturday 14th March 2009.

Caroline Crolley

Secretary to the Women’s Advisory Committee

### LGB & T Network

The Midlands TUC has a network for trade union nominated representatives, which meets four times a year to plan campaign activities. These include a TUC presence at as many

midlands Pride events as possible and for the first time this year, support for IDAHO, the International Day Against Homophobia. This took place in Chamberlain Square, Birmingham, to commemorate the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people who have been killed by regimes throughout the world.

There are 77 countries in the world today where it is a criminal offence to be gay. In seven countries women, men and children are punished for their sexuality with death sentences.

While unions have campaigned for equal rights for LGBT people with much success in the UK, around the world the situation is far worse. In many countries LGBT people face harassment, intimidation, violence, ostracism, hate crimes and even death, simply because of their sexuality.

International Day Against Homophobia is an opportunity for unions to highlight the suffering of LGBT people all around the world, and demand that the way they are treated is improved – both in the workplace and in the wider community.

The TUC event included songs and speakers and also provided a time for quiet contemplation.



- Exhibiting at the Women Chainmakers Festival

### TUC National LGB & T Conference report

The TUC National LGB & T conference held on 3 – 4 July 2008 was the largest to date, with more than 200 delegates and numerous observers and visitors. The main debates were on the necessity of a radical change to the way that LGBT issues are covered across the education system – lit up by an inspiring presentation from an East London teacher who has achieved just that – the continued failure to secure genuine equality for trans people, and continued campaigning to win full equality from the new Equality Bill and the promised European Horizontal Directive. The conference backed a call for the removal of the former head of the Evangelical Alliance, Joel Edwards, as a Commissioner for the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Delegates also welcomed the work of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in encouraging the promotion of LGBT rights abroad, while condemning the Home Office for its disregard for the safety of LGBT asylum seekers in the UK.

### Black Members Forum

The Black Workers Forum continues to consolidate its position as a key part of the infrastructure within the region. The forum, unique in the country, is a space where black workers can meet with black community activists to identify and then work on joint campaigns. Black workers do not have to be nominated by a union or trades union council to come along. The aim is to increase activity of black workers. The only qualifications are that the person who comes along is able to accept the term black as a political definition, not a description, and that they are prepared to work with black community representatives.

The forum brings together black trade unionists and black community representatives in a common space within which joint campaigns can be organised.

One of the most successful areas of work during this year has been the participation of many forum members in facilitating sessions in schools in Birmingham. This ground-breaking work, unique in the country, is part of the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) funded pilot project on vulnerable workers in the hospitality sector in Birmingham. These sessions have given the school students, from highly diverse ethnic backgrounds, a taste of the reality that they can expect if they decide to work in hospitality as well as their basic employment rights and the benefits of joining a trade union.

Forum members were, of course, delighted to see the election of Barack Obama as the first African American president of the United States. We see this as a sign that things are changing across the world and that black people can achieve the highest positions. We are under no illusions, however, that we have a very long way to go in this country. There are very few signs that anything similar could happen in the UK in the foreseeable future – but things do change very quickly. A glance around our own trade unions shows the long road that we still have to travel within our own movement.

We were very pleased to use one of our meeting dates to invite a wider audience to join us to watch the landmark film *At The River I Stand*. This film is the moving and, ultimately victorious story of the Memphis Sanitation Workers strike of 1968. This was the strike that The Reverend Dr Martin Luther King Jr. was supporting when he was tragically assassinated. Nearly a hundred people turned up to watch the film and hear an analysis of the importance of the dispute by Wilf Sullivan, the TUC Race Equality Officer. The dispute showed the success that can come from trade unions building wider alliances into the community. We hope to host similar events during the forthcoming year.

Black workers are still subjected to high levels of race discrimination in the workplace and across

the rest of society. If, as Trevor Phillips of the Equality and Human Rights Commission suggested recently, that the UK is the most ‘tolerant’ nation in Europe, we have major problems that extend beyond the campaigns against fascism. The analysis offered by Trevor would be hard for many black workers to recognise even though it’s possibly true.

The priority given to challenging the rise of the fascist far right is undoubtedly correct but the same effort must be directed towards tackling the racism that many black workers experience in the workplace. Tackling institutional racism is no less a priority now than when the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report validated the things that black activists had been saying for many years.

Over the next year the aim is to grow the forum. We are also aiming to help unions to reach deeper into our community with some practical organising campaigns. We think that this is even more important at the recession takes hold. Many black workers were already finding things hard, even before the recession. The accepted wisdom is that black workers will suffer harshly during the recession. This is tremendously bad news given that unemployment levels amongst black workers were already proportionately higher than our white counterparts – a fact regularly reported by the TUC nationally. It is also a challenge to the trade union movement as a whole to redouble its efforts to tackle racism wherever it rears its ugly head.

**Harpal Singh Jandhu - GMB**  
**Convenor Black Workers Forum**

### **Pensioners Forum**

The Network has had three meetings in 2008. All of the meetings were held at the Spot Conference Centre in Derby.

The first meeting, which was the inaugural one, was held on 14th March 2008. This meeting agreed terms of reference, elected three officers and generally set out the format of future meetings. An important decision was to operate as one entity across the Midlands as a whole. The officers elected were David Kippest as Chairperson, Michael McLoughlin as Vice Chairperson and Sheena Gordon as Secretary.

The second meeting held on 4th July 2008 was concerned with both structure and policy matters. The meeting considered finance and agreed to open a bank account and to raise funds. Michael McLoughlin was elected as Treasurer.

The third meeting held on 24th October 2008 agreed to have a written constitution and requested the Officers to meet and prepare one for the Annual meeting which will be held on 27th March 2009. It is hoped that the Network will be given Observer status at meeting of the Regional Council.

The network was instrumental in organising a March and Rally in Nottingham on 20th September 2008 as part of the Centenary celebrations of the state pension.

The network has considered the implications arising from the Government green paper on “The care of Older People”.

Arrangements for the 2008 National Lobby of Parliament held on 22nd October 2008 were also discussed. This lobby was different in that, for the first time, working as well as retired Trades Unionists were encouraged to participate.

A paper presented showing the difference in payment of pensions in the republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom. The Irish pension is almost double that of the British one. In addition Irish pensioners get free public transport throughout the Island of Ireland.

A motion calling for the introduction of price controls and a reduction in energy costs was

carried at the July meeting and a letter has been sent to the Government.

The Network has also called for the date on which pension increases are agreed, to be moved from September to February and for an increase in the winter fuel payments to £500 for every pensioner, irrespective of age

## Section Six

# Community

### Women Chainmakers Festival

Over 3,000 people attended the fourth annual festival celebrating the achievements of the Cradley Heath Chainmakers' – and basked in warm sunshine as events unfolded. Roger McKenzie, Midlands TUC Regional Secretary and compere for the day said "this festival is growing each year and is gaining a reputation as one not to be missed. This year we attracted more families, which is particularly pleasing.



- TUC Regional Secretary Roger McKenzie on the main stage.

The fact that we are able to show young people what it meant – and indeed still means - to be a trade unionist is key to the success of the festival."

Many leading trade unionists and MP's were in attendance at the festival including Festival Patron Sylvia Heal and Wolverhampton MP Rob Maris. "As the reputation of the festival grows we are finding that people are travelling from further afield to attend", said Mr McKenzie.

"We know people come from the South West and from as far as Scotland which shows that this is becoming a national event, not just a Midlands festival".

### In the Leftfield



There was an expanded programme of speeches and debate in the Leftfield Marquee this year. Each debate was chaired by one of the festival sponsors with Lee Baron, Regional Secretary of the CWU introducing the first debate on the Women Chainmakers' story.



- Unite's Diana Holland (centre) with the speakers from the International debate

Diana Holland, Assistant General Secretary of Unite, hosted the International debate while Joe Morgan of the GMB introduced the session on organising young people.

### On the stage





The Nottingham Clarion Choir provided entertainment on the stage prior to Roger McKenzie introducing the days' speakers, Mary Davis from the TUC's Womens Committee, and Baroness Margaret Prosser, (pictured below) currently vice chair of the Equalities and Human Rights Commission.



- Baroness Margaret Prosser

After a moving rendition of the Chainmakers song by Stacey Blythe, the story of the Chainmakers was told by two costumed actors playing the roles of the Reverend Fletcher and Mary Macarthur, leader of the 1910 dispute.

Post banner procession entertainment was provided by headline act Chumbawamba who performed a brilliant, thoughtful acoustic set. New to the festival this year was Eric Faulkner, late of the Bay City Rollers. An acclaimed songwriter and acoustic guitarist, Eric revisited his trade union roots as he played songs from the trade union movement.



- Chumbawamba

### Banner procession

Over twenty trade union banners were on this years' victory march around the museum site – including the new CWU Midlands banner which includes the Chainmakers' logo. Led by the Highley Colliery Band, the procession marched past the newly completed Workers Institute, built from the surplus of the 1910 strike fund.

Other new banners to take the eye included the Prison Officers Association and Shrewsbury trade union education centre banners.

### Theatre and music

One of the unique aspects of the festival is the use of theatre groups to tell the chainmakers' story. Fizzog Theatre Company, a Black Country based professional theatre group, enlivens the proceedings with their particular brand of direct and combative acting.



While Fizzog provide the bare-knuckle theatre of working class survival in 1910, The Black Country Players bring sophistication and erudition to re-enactments of key points of the dispute. The Black Country Players provided key performances including the employers, cinematographers, police, and the key figure of the local parish priest.

The Women Chainmakers' Festival would be incomplete without the brilliant interpretation of strike leader Mary Macarthur by Lynn Morris. Lynn (pictured above) performed the set piece speeches on the main stage both before and after the banner procession, bringing passion and energy to the depiction of one of the most important female figures in trade union history.

The Women Chainmakers' festival has made a particular point of promoting local Black Country Artists since the first festival in 2005. This year we were pleased to welcome back artists promoted by RoosterSpake Entertainments including Lozz Hipkiss and Billy Spakemon.

Lozz and Billy provided a top line up of local artists who performed in the village throughout the day, as well as between the NUJ sponsored debates in the Leftfield, which took place throughout the morning in the marquee.

### **Thanks to the sponsors and museum**

Once again we are indebted to Ian Walden; Director of the Black Country Living Museum, for the support that he and his staff give to ensure the Women Chainmakers' Festival gets better every year.

So too, the festival sponsors and supporters ensure that the festival can take place by their generous donations – thanks to you all!

- GMB and UNISON for sponsoring the stage
- CWU and Thompsons Solicitors for the Leftfield

- NUJ for sponsoring the Leftfield Debates
- Rowley Ashworths for sponsoring the improved festival programme
- Thompsons for sponsoring the tickets
- NASUWT for sponsoring the Highley Colliery band
- Community and Unite for sponsoring Fizzog Theatre and The Black Country Players
- PCS for sponsoring the Nottingham Clarion Choir

### **Review of the year from Chesterfield and District Trades Union Council**

The Chesterfield & District Trades Union Council meets Every 1st Monday for the Executive and every Second Monday for the General Council.

The DAST/TRUST reports are made at the General Council meeting.

The Chesterfield 'Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centre calls meetings bimonthly.

The year started with the DWP announcing redundancies by threatening to close several offices. The PCS workers went on several 2-day stoppages, while later in the year we also saw Chesterfield Borough Council announce a planned £44,000 cuts to services.

As usual, preparations for the Trades Council's Bank Holiday May Day event went ahead. As did plans for TRUST Construction Workers Day on 21st Feb aimed at the number killed at work. This was closely followed by Action Mesothelioma day 27th February with better coverage this year by the local press. An appeal on behalf of the Asbestos Support Group Forum raised a staggering £4,000.

The often-threatened closure of DUWC Chesterfield was announced by Chesterfield Borough Council. This time they meant it and

DAST and TRUST were moved out to a Shirebrook office while the DUWC took Trust's town centre office.

Delegates went down to join the Lobby at Ripley Council office and demonstrations against the BNP at Heanor where they applied to hold their annual Red, White & Blue festival.

Another BNP meeting in the Bolsover area found J Eden got a team out and leafleted about 50 – 70 attendees in Whalley.

We had a visit from Yvonne Washbourne to talk to us on LGB & T issues at work.

DUWC provided refreshments for Local Government strikers in July.

The Secretary was a delegate at the GMB conference in Plymouth speaking on Plural Plaques. Following a Banner Theatre show he recommended "They Give Free Mobiles Don't They?" Show to the Trades council and they were booked for November at the Winding Wheel to a full house.

More redundancies announced in the Amber Valley with the threatened closures of the DUWC led to a campaign by Colin Hampton. This decision was reversed.

The Chesterfield DUWC held its annual End Child Poverty stall at the TUC Congress and Colin Hampton chaired a fringe meeting with the GMB President.

Tony Benn, former MP for Chesterfield, was a keynote speaker at a meeting for local trade unionists organised by the Chesterfield & District Trades Union Council and held in the Winding Wheel Conference Centre.

Plans for early 2009 are Workers Memorial Day, Action mesothelioma Day and May Day.

Shay Boyle

Secretary Chesterfield Trades Union Council

### Vulnerable Workers

Our work supporting vulnerable workers has included our contribution to the Department of Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform pilot supporting hospitality workers in Birmingham. Essentially, the project is about ensuring that workers in this sector are aware of their employment rights.

The second year of this project has seen continuing support for the polish migrant community via the welfare and employment rights sessions run at the Birmingham Polish Club. The sessions are run by Birmingham Centre for the Unemployed who provide advice workers and organise translators. This initiative has also been supported by Unite – the Union who have sent full time officers to advise on employment related cases.

As part of this project we have also run advice sessions in both the University of Birmingham and Aston University, supporting students who have raised a range of issues from non payment of wages to dismissal by text message.



- TUC stall at the University of Birmingham Jobs fair.

We have also been able to give general "know your rights" information to students attending jobs fairs at the University of Birmingham. Many of the students attending these sessions are international students who have little idea of



what rights they have should they get work to support themselves through their studies.

The unionlearn team have supported the BERR initiative to engage Birmingham school students in learning about their rights via theatre performances in schools. This is reported fully in the unionlearn section of this report.

Section Seven

# Making our voice heard

## Influencing Government

This past year has been particularly difficult given the strains on the Midlands economy. The TUC has sought to bring to Parliament the concerns of working people, and indeed, increasingly those who are unemployed. Our regular meetings with MPs have continued but we have also had special meetings with MPs on a number of issues.

The TUC organised a meeting with the Stoke-on-Trent MPs to raise concerns from the unions about the introduction of Academies. Teaching union representatives outlined the potential problems for staff and students should the proposals become reality.

The TUC has built good working relationships with the Ministers for the regions – Phil Hope in the east midlands and Liam Byrne and latterly Ian Austin in the west midlands. Visits have been organised to each minister to discuss issues including regional development and skills. These were good opportunities to discuss the wider implications of government policy for working people as well as the aspirations of trade union members in securing a future for themselves and their families.

The TUC has also been able to support the “Fairness and Respect” campaign being driven by Phil Hope in his Corby constituency. This campaign is aimed at ensuring that temporary workers get better conditions of employment and fair treatment from employers and employment agencies. The TUC is part of the steering group that includes trade unions and

community groups as well as local employers and agencies. We have been able to provide practical support in publicising the campaign, but more importantly in ensuring that the interests of working people are represented in a practical way at the point where we can make a real difference.

## From the Regional Ministers

### East Midlands

It is almost a year since the Prime Minister appointed me as Minister for the East Midlands and I have been proud to be the a strong voice for the region in Whitehall.

In recent months my priority has been to ensure that businesses in the region are given the advice and the support they need to weather the global economic down turn. And to ensure that individuals at work and their families get the help they need if they face redundancy or have difficulties in paying their mortgages.



- Phil Hope MP, and Minister for the East Midlands

To help achieve these goals I have created a regional economic cabinet (REC), which includes business representatives, public sector bodies and the TUC. We are working together to ensure that organisations in the region are getting the support they need to meet the challenges we are experiencing. Trade unions in the East Midlands are playing a vital role in this through helping to

promote and deliver training and up-skilling of people at work, giving early warning of potential problems in different sectors, by working with employers to find creative solutions to the economic pressures they face and through providing potential and personal support to individuals facing redundancies.

It is important that we take action now to help people in the region to get through the year ahead. Doing nothing and just letting the recession take its course is not an option. And my regional economic cabinet is doing everything possible to get people back to work.

**Phil Hope, Minister for the East Midlands**

### West Midlands

I am delighted to be able to contribute to the Midlands TUC Annual Report, because it gives me the opportunity to thank colleagues from the trades unions for the valuable contribution you make to our region's economy.

As the Prime Minister has made clear, the Government's number one priority has to be to take real action to help businesses, their employees and families through the downturn.

Gerard Coyne and Roger McKenzie are both making a huge contribution to this work through the Council of Regional Economic Advisors and the West Midlands Task Force that I have established to support the region's companies and their workforces.

Along with Gerard and Roger, the Council of Regional Economic Advisors has members from Advantage West Midlands, local authorities and regional business organisations, as well as my Ministerial colleagues Pat McFadden from BERR, Ian Pearson from the Treasury and skills minister Sion Simon.

Additionally I wanted to be able to respond with urgent, practical and co-ordinated help to workers facing redundancy and so I set in place the West Midlands Task Force which includes

representatives from the Learning and Skills Council, Job Centre Plus and Homes and Communities Agency as well as the TUC.

Both these groups have made an enormous difference in helping me inform Whitehall departments about the state of the economy in the west midlands and develop credible and robust solutions to specific issues.

So far we have responded with a £9m loan fund administered through AWM to help firms in crisis. We are also bringing forward major infrastructure projects to create new jobs and save others. Others will follow shortly.

On the skills side, the TUC both nationally and regionally has played a key role in developing training policies, especially improving levels of literacy and numeracy and promoting Apprenticeships.

Key to this has been the work of Union Learning Representatives who operate through a network of employers to support employees. This demonstrates for me how unions can play an important role in reaching those employees that employers cannot; for example reaching people who are afraid that by admitting they need training, jeopardise their work prospects.

The TUC has demonstrated real innovation by establishing Unionlearn; its own training arm supported directly by Government funding.

In particular I pay tribute to the way the TUC has campaigned for:

- Minimum wage fates for Apprentices
- Health and Safety Apprentices
- Using Government procurement to increase training by contractors
- More training in public services
- And the joint work with the LSC to promote Apprenticeships



- Ian Austin MP, and Minister for the West Midlands

Finally I want to thank the TUC for the contribution colleagues from the trades union movement are making to the long term work to strengthen our economy with improved skills, investment in transport infrastructure and better public services, for example.

Ian Austin MP, and Minister for the West Midlands

### Midlands TUC in the media

2008 saw an increased profile for the Midlands TUC in the media, with some 80 press releases issued throughout the year. TUC releases continue to get good coverage. All media releases are reproduced on the Midlands region pages of the TUC website – [www.tuc.org.uk/midlands](http://www.tuc.org.uk/midlands) - as both html and pdf files.

The year saw just over 100 radio interviews and journalist briefings on issues raised in our media releases.

The Regional Secretary continues to write a bi – weekly column in the Birmingham Mail, which is reproduced on his blog, details below.

Internet searches show that the TUC message is covered in a host of publications and indeed on the internet itself, with hits from as far away as China. We also get quoted internationally on non UK based websites, noticeably on economic issues. This includes on individual blog sites, the furthest away being in China.

We have also made strides to expanding our media output on the internet through the two blogspots:

<http://midlandsorganisers.blogspot.com/>

and

<http://rogermckenzie.blogspot.com/>

In December we started a third blog specifically for our media output:

<http://midlandstucmedia.blogspot.com/>

This blog will include all our media releases and other media focused work. We will endeavour to make full use of this facility in future so as to reach more people, particularly to spread the trade union message to a new generation.

### Publications

The TUC published 11 regional electronic newsletters in 2008 including special editions for three Pride events and the Women Chainmakers festival. These electronic newsletters appear on the Midlands TUC website but were also printed for the Pride and Chainmakers events. We also published a newsletter which was distributed to students at the University of Birmingham, via the students union Job Shop.

The 2008 Annual Report was published for the Annual Meeting in February 2008, followed by a new Midlands Trade Union directory in May.

## Section Eight

# Financial Report

The TUC Regional Office is funded to run the office, staff and infrastructure of the TUC in the midlands. Any other monies used by the office come either from the TUC Development Fund, for instance for the Women Chainmakers' Festival, or from individual unions and firms of union friendly solicitors. These monies are raised via sponsorship or donations to fund particular projects, events or publications. The financial report for the Midlands TUC reflects these income streams and associated expenditure.

## Midlands TUC Annual Report 2008

### Statement of Receipts & Payments - 31 December 2008

ITEM	INCOME	EXPENDITURE	BALANCE
Annual Report	£5,000.00	Printing	£4,950.00
TU Directory	£5,000.00	Printing	£4,375.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£10,000.00</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£9,325.00</b>
<b>DEPARTMENTAL EXPENSES</b>			
Stationery	£3,500.00	Stationery	£1,820.15
Photocopier lease & charges	£2,150.00	Photocopier lease & charges	£289.79
Journal & technical updates	£240.00	Journal & technical updates	£277.00
Postage	£9,500.00	Postage	£2,374.00
Telephone calls & charges	£3,600.00	Telephone calls & charges	£2,566.00
Venue hire & related charges	£5,000.00	Int. Women's Day grant	£236.00
		Regional Council/EC meetings	£2,576.35
		Women's conf. Expenses	£229.80
		Disability conf. Expenses	£204.10
		LGBT conf. Expenses	£87.75
		Pensioners Network expenses	£1,253.46
		LGBT equip. hire charges	£222.46
		Non-TUC Staff travel expenses	£216.30
Catering	£800.00	Catering	£382.06
Office equipment maintenance	£400.00	Office equipment maintenance	£333.00
		Office equipment sundries	£1,773.00
		Computer equipment sundries	£268.00
Membership fees	£100.00	Membership fees	£143.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£25,790.00</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£15,252.22</b>
		<b>BALANCE</b>	<b>£10,537.78</b>
<b>DEVELOPMENT FUNDS</b>			
Chainmakers Festival	£8,974.00	Grant & Gift Aid	£8,974.36
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£8,974.00</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£8,974.36</b>
International (Zimbabwe Visitor)	£2,223.00	Air travel	£878.70
		Inland Travel	£226.50
		Accommodation	£1,009.00
		Expenses allowance	£140.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£2,223.00</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£2,254.20</b>
<b>NETWORK ACCOUNTS</b>			
Women's Committee	£1,781.99	White Ribbon Day	£632.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£1,781.99</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£632.00</b>
<b>LGBT Network</b>	<b>£984.42</b>		
		Equip hire, printing, travel	£163.10
		LGBT Promotional item	£220.31
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£984.42</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£383.41</b>
			<b>£601.01</b>





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