

Working together in the Norwich region

Welcome...

Issue 8, October 2007

Welcome to the latest addition of the Norwich General Branch Newsletter, the first under the secretarial appointment of Keith Rowley. Keith was voted in as Branch Secretary at the June AGM and would like to take this opportunity to highlight some successes which have been brought about due to the direct support of our branch, its committee and members.

Remploy News

Below are extracts from a letter to branches from Phil Davies and Jennie Formby, respectively Secretary and Chair of the Remploy Consortium of Trade Unions, dated 25/9/07:



“The trade unions are very encouraged by the events at yesterday’s Labour Party Conference. The Secretary of State, Peter Hain, publicly removed any power or authority from the Remploy Board of Directors to close any Remploy factory site. [He] said in his speech that the composite motion moved by the GMB and supported by Unite would now become the Government’s policy. The composite motion called on the Government to allow ... people with disabilities to choose where they wanted to work, either in factory-supported employment or to work where appropriate in open employment. [He]... also gave a very clear commitment to the awarding of public procurement contracts to Remploy, therefore bringing in additional work.

The trade unions are now preparing for a series of meetings with the company and the Department of Work and Pensions chaired by Roger Poole, the independent government-appointed Chairperson. The trade unions are confident that they will maintain factory employment for those disabled people who require it, and the company must now enter into meaningful negotiations to improve the prospects of Remploy manufacturing.

We expect the usual propaganda from the Chief executive, Bob Warner, and his other directors, but our members and supporters should be in no doubt that this is a significant change in policy. ... The trade unions and the Government have an understanding on what is needed to be done to modernize Remploy and the trade unions will never accept the need for factory closures.

We need and expect your continued support...to get to ... [a] satisfactory conclusion.”

Our recent donation to the Remploy Fighting Fund – the maximum allowable under Branch Rules (500 pounds) – is being well spent!

Banana Link News

Norwich general branch supports Banana Link, a small and dynamic not-for-profit co-operative, founded in 1996 that campaigns for a fair and sustainable banana trade. They work in close partnership with Latin American banana workers trade unions, small Caribbean farmers and civil society organisations in Europe and the U.S.



On 4/10/07 I received the latest edition of Banana Link’s **Union-to-Union** magazine. Under the headline **“First Collective Agreement in Over 20 Years”**, it reports success for the GMB London Region-supported Costa Rican trade union, **SITRAP**, in its battle to get a collective bargaining agreement with the **Ecoturismo Bananero** plantation. In addition there is a provision that all workers will be directly employed, as well as clauses on H&S, sexual harassment and fair trade.

The Union’s General Secretary, Gilbert Bermudez, says **“We have a special respect for the companeras and companeros of the GMB who have shown us that practical solidarity knows no boundaries and that language barriers can be overcome. We thank them from the bottom of our hearts and can assure them that what they are doing is seen, is felt, and is palpable for our members in the banana and pineapple plantations of Costa Rica.”**

If you would like more information about your union branch, contact Keith Rowley for details.
secretary@norwichgmb.com or call 07979 684494

Please have your say... Next Branch Meeting:
5th December 2007, 7:30pm, Angel Gardens PH, Angel Road, Norwich