

## Pension campaign: Is the end in sight?

It has been a long and hard fight for justice for those Community members formerly employed at Allied Steel and Wire (ASW) in Cardiff and Sheerness who lost their expected pensions in 2002 when the Company went into insolvency. Nearly five and half years down the track there is real hope that the campaign – which also affects Community members formerly employed at Kaye Aluminium in Doncaster, Totectors shoes in Northants and UNSCO Steel in Sheffield – could at last be near an end.

In March of this year, primarily as a result of campaigning by Community and, in particular, the victory against the UK Government in the European Court of Justice in January of this year, the Government announced that the Financial Assistance Scheme (FAS) would be increased from £2.3 billion to £8 billion. This, they said, would provide around 80% of 'core pension' to all those who lost their expected pension due to employer insolvency prior to May 2004.

Whilst welcoming the extra money, Community said that it was not enough and that nothing less than the equivalent of the Pension Protection Fund (PPF) – which was set up as a result of the Union's campaign and which protects anyone from May 2004 onwards by

providing 90% of their expected pension – was good enough. Following further pressure from the Union, the Government agreed to set up a review of the FAS by Andrew Young, the Deputy Government Actuary, which would report before the end of this year.

Community has always argued that the assets in the FAS qualifying-schemes could produce better returns if invested differently. Looking at alternatives to simply buying annuities, for instance by following a similar investment strategy to that pursued by the PPF, would definitely produce a better return. With the Government committing to match pound for pound any extra returns that the Young Review recommends, Community believes that the PPF-level benefits for its members – and the whole 125,000 people similarly affected – can be achieved.

We are awaiting the publication of this Report as we go to press. Community and its ASW, Kaye Aluminium, Totectors and UNSCO Steel members hope that the Government seizes the opportunity to draw this sad saga to an end. Should it not, then the Union will continue its legal and political campaign to ensure that its members receive the minimum acceptable pension they need and deserve, the equivalent of the PPF.

## New appointments to boost communication and staff services



Duncan Harrod (pictured) has been appointed as the union's new communications officer. 'I'm absolutely delighted because there is so much scope here,' he says. 'I want to make sure that members get the information they need when they need it, not a week or a month later.' A priority for Duncan is the union website, which he is developing. 'I'm particularly pleased about the new Members' Service Centre. This fantastic resource will give us two-way communication with members.'

Duncan's earlier career was spent in Australia, where he worked with national union the Australian Federal Police Association and with Labour shadow ministers.

In a bid to ensure that members receive the highest standards of service from Community staff, the union has also appointed a new personnel and staff development officer, Tristan Thompson. 'I was immediately attracted to the vision that Community has,' he says, 'and I'm delighted to be able to play a part in delivering that vision.'

Tristan has a solid track record in training and staff development, and he believes that good training results in increased motivation and this in turn leads to better quality services. 'I am keen to engage with our staff as soon as possible and am so pleased to have joined a great team.'

## Community NEC members

Dean Cox (left) and John Tetsill (right) have been elected as new members to the Community National Executive Committee.

Dean, who works at Brintons carpets in Kidderminster, represents members from the West Midlands. John, who works at Corus Port Talbot steelworks, represents members from South Wales and South West England.



## Union supports local sporting events

In October Community sponsored the Sandal RUFC mini Rugby Festival in Wakefield. The event attracted more than 1,300 six to 12-year olds, and included teams from all over the country as well as a crowd of union members, families and branch officials from Corus Aldwarke.

Andrew Wilkinson, a Community member and Manufacturing Manager at Corus Engineering Steels, was instrumental in organising the event. 'It's was great to see so many children from all social backgrounds playing rugby union to high standards in safety and in a spirit of sportsmanship,' adds Andrew.'

The newly-formed Rumney Whites AFC under-nines (pictured right) also benefited from Community support. The Celsa Cardiff Branch, via Branch Secretary Vince Buckmaster, donated £200 towards their kit and equipment and the boys matched that donation with a series of fundraising events..

If you know of, or are involved with, a local community group who could benefit from Community's support, let us know.



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## Making your voice heard at TUC and Labour Party Conference

On the eve of this year's Labour Party Conference in Bournemouth, Community's conference delegation hosted a reception at which Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who is a Community member himself, said he was delighted with the work that our union is doing up and down the country. The Prime Minister and his wife mingled with the delegation and posed for a photograph with them. Other Ministers and MPs also attended.

One of the key conference issues was extending and strengthening Labour Party membership. Community's Joe Mann spoke for Labour's National Executive Committee, of which he is a member, and challenged delegates to go out and build for the future.

The Community delegation was disappointed, however, that our union's motion on Private Equity firms and the taxation of non-domiciled business people was not selected as one of the contemporary motions for debate. 'The party seems to discuss many of the same issues every year,' said Community delegate Michael Ross from Lanarkshire in his conference report to Community's National Executive Council.

However, Community delegate Pat Donnelly was able to raise these taxation issues in a question-and-answer session with the Prime Minister during the conference. The Prime Minister and the conference were left in no doubt as to Community's distaste for the tax advantages that private equity firms and others receive.

Community sponsored two more successful receptions, one on diversity at which Joe Mann and former actor, now MEP Michael Cashman spoke - and one for business people. 'The business reception was exactly the kind of event Community should be involved in and I hope it is replicated,' Michael Ross said.

Meanwhile at this year's TUC Congress in Brighton, Community led the way again this year, when General Secretary Michael Leahy raised the serious continuing decline of Britain's manufacturing industry. A Community motion that 'manufacturing is vital to Britain's future and needs government intervention' was carried unanimously. 'All Community wants is to be able to compete with the rest of the world on a fair and equal basis,' Michael said.

In another debate, Community's President Tracy Clarke welcomed the European Court's decision confirming the right of British trade unions to have freedom of association and to exclude members who expressed views contrary to their constitution, as train drivers' union ASLEF had done to a member who was also a member of the racist British National Party.

A Community motion on peace, security and social justice called attention to the crucial role of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which should be better supported by the British government, Community Assistant General Secretary Roy Rickhuss declared. Conference agreed.

Community, through Joe Mann, was a lone voice in opposing a referendum on the new European Union treaty. Joe asked delegates to consider who would gain if there is a referendum - it would be those who opposed the EU. Some companies were already holding back from investing in Britain because we are not fully in the EU and a campaign against the EU treaty could result in other businesses going elsewhere. The conference heeded Joe's words and voted against the TUC joining a referendum campaign.



## Community members are gaining through training



Community members employed by the Stirling Group have taken up the chance to learn while at work.

The Stirling Group's Distribution Centre in Altrincham has entered into a learning partnership with Community, Communitas, Skillfast (a Sector Skills Council) and two local colleges to provide training and upskilling for the workforce. The partnership is government-funded through the Train to Gain initiative, a scheme allowing employers

free access to training in return for providing learners with time off to learn.

'Workers have always had skills for work but rarely the opportunity to convert these skills into a qualification,' explains Mick Brightman, Senior Project Officer at Communitas. 'Staff at the Stirling Group's Distribution Centre now have the chance to engage in paid NVQ training, via a bespoke course set up through Skillfast and Blackburn College, which will lead to a full level 2 qualification in Warehousing and Distribution Skills. The company has also agreed to release learners to attend an onsite literacy course provided by Stockport College and is looking at provision for employees requiring English language training.'

'Learning at work is a key objective of Community and encouraging a proactive response from employers, like Stirling, can have many beneficial outcomes for employees and employer alike, and for local communities.'

**To find out more about Train to Gain, contact Mick Brightman on 01604 813 502 or email [mickbrightman@communitas.eu.com](mailto:mickbrightman@communitas.eu.com)**

## Breaking down barriers for migrant workers



Building on their initiatives with migrant workers, colleagues from Region 5 spent a productive day in November learning how to help them join and progress through the workforce.

Terry Meakin (pictured) and two colleagues joined other trade unionists at the Routes to Integration and Inclusion conference in London. The conference focused on new approaches developed by unionlearn and Progress GB (an Equal Development

Partnership led by the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education) to help migrant workers and refugees in the UK overcome barriers to employment.

Through 11 separate projects, working with 650 beneficiaries, the partnership has found that the employability of refugee and migrant workers can be significantly enhanced.



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## Remploy Learning Rep joins Communitas team

Joining the Communitas Union Learning Fund team as a full-time project officer is Colin Daws. Colin was a Union Learning Rep (ULR) for four years at Remploy Pinxton, where he managed the on-site learning centre, helped workers, including those with disabilities, to access courses and supported their learning.

Colin, one of the union's most committed and successful ULRs over the last few years, was awarded the 2005 Remploy ULR of the Year award.

'Looking back over my time as a ULR, I never thought I'd become a project officer,' he says. 'It's thanks to the union and Communitas for their support and confidence in me. This new position is an exciting opportunity for me to support other ULRs to develop skills and learning.'

Colin will be based in Communitas' Rotherham office and can be contacted at colindaws@communitas.eu.com.



## IMF Mexico Delegation

Community recently hosted a delegation of Canadian, Mexican and US trade unionists who were in the UK to raise awareness of the plight of Mexican trade union leader Napoleon Gomez Urrutia. Napoleon is currently in political asylum in Canada after false charges of corruption were made against him by the Mexican Government.

For more information please see the Community website.



## Region 2 member scoops prestigious training award

Ex-Corus employee and Community member, Keith Sedgwick has won a Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVE) award for outstanding commitment to catering and hospitality.

Keith was made redundant in March 2006 after 27 years of working at Corus' Lackenby site. Before joining Corus Keith spent 10 years as a chef in the Merchant Navy. When made redundant, he was keen to pursue his previous career as a chef and contacted Communitas who helped him to look at different training opportunities and find him a place at Middlesbrough College. With Communitas' support, Keith completed courses in food preparation and catering, and is currently taking courses in food hygiene, pastry, professional cookery, and health and safety. Keith has also spent time volunteering his skills to help schoolchildren learn how to cook.

'If it hadn't been for Communitas I wouldn't have been able to go back to cheffing,' explains Keith. 'They've been marvellous, whenever I've needed help or support they've been there.'



## Zero tolerance for bullying in the UK Footwear Industry

Community and the British Footwear Association (BFA) have launched a campaign to combat bullying at work in UK footwear companies. The campaign follows the development of a comprehensive strategy by Community health and safety representatives from footwear companies and the Andrea Adams Trust, the leading anti-bullying charity. See page 24.

Rob Sneddon, Community's National Health and Safety Officer, said: 'Community members employed in UK footwear factories are delighted that the British Footwear Association have recognised that there should be no place for bullying at work and are joining us in this campaign. I hope that other industries follow their lead.'

Adding support to the campaign Niall Campbell, Chief Executive of the BFA, said: 'We are pleased to support a campaign to increase awareness of the seriousness of the impact of bullying both on victims and on any onlookers who see it go unpunished.'

## Corus coffee morning

Community members from Corus joined in the World's Biggest Coffee Morning and raised £1,500 for Macmillan Cancer Support. Around 700 employees, contractors and union officials attended the event at St David's Hall, Cardiff, in October, and raised £500 which was matched by Community and Corus Strip Products Ltd.

# Uncovering injustice in Colombia

## Community Vice President Keren Bender reports back on her recent trip to Colombia as a member of the British delegation of Justice for Colombia.

Colombia is the most dangerous country in the world to be a trade unionist. Thousands have been killed in recent years by its army and paramilitary death squads. As the union's Vice President, I travelled to the country with Justice for Colombia (JFC), the TUC-backed coalition that supports the Colombian people and trade union movement in their struggle for peace and social justice. The delegation was made up of senior trade unionists, human rights lawyers and Labour Party people keen to learn at first hand what is really going on there.

From landing in the capital Bogotá, we were accompanied by armed police everywhere we went until we boarded a plane to fly up country. Many hours later after taking a coach and local bus we reached a remote mountain village. There we met locals, mostly peasant farmers and indigenous people, who wanted to tell us what was happening. It was a secret meeting as they feared reprisals if it became known they had spoken to us.

It felt surreal at times, sitting in the open air among that beautiful scenery, hearing one horror story after another. We struggled to hold back tears as the people told their stories with dignity and thanked us for coming to listen to them. Their message was clear, 'Tell the world what's going on'.

Before returning to Bogotá that night, we visited a shantytown, home to some 1.4 million displaced people. Among all this filth and degradation, the hundreds of children who followed us were all spotlessly clean. Here we heard many stories of abuse and hardship but the one I remember most was told by a 12-year-old boy whose mother had been shot dead in her shack only a few days before by the police who 'apparently' were looking for someone else. As the eldest of six children, he now has to fend for them. The police will never be brought to book for his mother's murder.

When we returned to Bogotá that night we were all emotionally drained but we couldn't have been prepared for what was still to come. Everywhere we went we heard the most horrific accounts of human rights abuses, from intimidation to torture to assassinations, from those who had suffered the abuses or those speaking on behalf of loved ones who had 'disappeared' or been murdered.

The ones who suffer are people like you and I, - teachers, health and public service workers, farmers, students and trade unionists. And it will be pressure from people like us that puts an end to this abuse of human rights.

**If you would like to find out more about Justice for Colombia's work and how you can support it, visit [www.justiceforcolombia.org](http://www.justiceforcolombia.org)**

Keren (second left) with a group of Colombian women healthworkers who had suffered abuse and intimidation.



The colourful but rickety local bus was the only way to reach the remote village.



Delegates take a breather from listening to stories of human rights abuse.