

CLR-GB

Newsletter 1/2006

The CLR-GB Office is a platform linking CLR activities at EU and GB levels as well as trade union and academic work in GB in the field of Construction Labour Research. It will support related initiatives specific to GB.

Introductory Note:

We have not had a newsletter since November 2005. Instead two Extra-Mails concerning the process of drafting a 'Services Directive' have been distributed. This is a subject which deserves more thorough treatment and will be an item in the next CLR-GB Newsletter. Everybody who would like to contribute to this hot issue should contact me as soon as possible.

At the moment the debate about working conditions in the British construction industry, taking off from Terminal 5, seems to become an Olympic discipline. What about the other sites up and down the country? What about the 'Trade Union Freedom Bill'? This will be the other item for the next CLR-GB Newsletter. We would really welcome contributions from our readers.

Both the 'Services Directive' and the 'Trade Union Freedom Bill' have been on the programme of the Institute for Employment Rights'. We were surprised that nobody from the UCATT head office participated in the seminar on the 'Services Directive' which has a special importance for the construction industry. Jan Cremers and Charles Woolfson gave papers at this seminar.

This CLR-GB Newsletter focuses on the campaign on working conditions and training building up around the expected boom for the British

construction industry. Let us hope that this campaign has an effect beyond the Olympic site and 2012.

Joern Janssen/CLR-GB

TELCO – has it importance for the future of the construction industry in East London?

TELCO (The East London Communities Organisation) is a community-based organisation. Its membership consists of churches, mosques, schools, and union branches – mainly UNISON. It has a record of effectively campaigning for workers rights and promoting community harmony.

At Whipps Cross hospital, TELCO, in cooperation with UNISON, waged a successful campaign in support of workers employed by contract cleaning firms who went on strike for parity with cleaners directly employed by NHS. At Canary Wharf it exposed the poverty wages of cleaners in the offices of global banks and held negotiations with the corporate bosses. This assisted the T&G union in its efforts to organise these workers. During the last general election TELCO organised an election forum that facilitated that facilitated politics and eased tensions between Respect and Labour candidates' supporters.

On May 2nd '06 more than 2,000 illegal and legal migrants attended a May Day migrant workers' mass celebrated by Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor in Westminster Cathedral. After the mass Cardinal O'Connor and other bishops joined a London Citizens' (TELCO is an affiliate) rally and shared platform with deputy general secretary of the T&G, Jack Dromey to call for a "living wage" for London's

workers based on the Mayor of London's Living Wage unit's recommendation of £6.70 an hour to ensure a minimum standard of living in the capital.

TELCO's campaigning secured pledges of support from Mayor of London Ken Livingston, London 2012 chairman Sebastian Coe, London Development Agency Deputy Chair John Biggs, and SERTUC secretary Mick Connelly for an 'Ethical Olympics'. This sees employment and skills training for locals, 'decency level' wages, affordable housing, and community health and education as integral both to the construction project and as a legacy of the Olympic site for the people of East London

A resolution concerning the Olympic site, passed at UCATT's recent biannual delegate conference outlined some of the union's basic demands including: direct employment of all workers, no 'social dumping': migrant workers must be employed on 'country of destination' wages, right to trade union representation, trade union safety reps and safety committees on all parts of the Olympic site – and much more. (see below)

The UCATT conference resolution also recognised the needs in terms of jobs and skills training for the ethnically diverse community, living with high levels of unemployment, adjacent to the Olympic site. It saw building co-operative relationships between the union and the elected democratic institutions: the Greater London Authority, local councils and community organisations like TELCO as a way forward, not only for the Olympic site but also for other large projects – including Stratford City and Thames Gateway.

The experience of Terminal 5, with large-scale direct employment of the labour-force by the main contractor, plus site trade organisation, was seen – despite limitations – as a big step forward for the building industry that could be built on at the Olympic site and elsewhere.

George Fuller/July 2006

Motion on Olympic Games UCATT National Delegate Conference 19th-23rd June 2006

Conference welcomes the decision to award the Olympics to Britain. Conference congratulates all those who played a part in London's successful bid for the 2012 Olympic Games.

The union must now strive to not only make the construction of these games a showpiece for our industry but make sure that workers rights are also protected. Conference calls upon the Executive

Council to secure an industrial relations agreement on the Olympic site that will serve as a template and a model for other large upcoming projects such as the Stratford Village and the Thames Gateway.

Conference recognises that in order to host the games a large amount of construction work is required, in respect of the infrastructure and a number of major projects. As the premier union for construction UCATT will be at the forefront of the Trade Union movement and organisation at the enabling and procurement stages and also during the main construction and development phases.

Conference is aware of the disastrous health and safety record, along with the disregard for employment rights during the construction phase of the Athens 2004 Olympic Games.

Conference recognises that the development of the Olympic Village and the magnificent Olympic Stadium, capable of holding 90,000 spectators, will set new standards of construction. Conference believes that the construction work required for this project must also set the highest standards in employment and health and safety.

Conference is fully aware of the ethnic diversity in the area where the Olympic developments will take place and believes it is essential that all communities within this area have the opportunity to benefit from construction work that will take place.

Conference believes that this can best be achieved through a comprehensive project-wide agreement that incorporates the following minimum standards:

1. All operatives to be directly employed.
2. No social dumping whereby labour suppliers recruit and import migrant labour at exploitive undercutting pay-rates. All must be paid at established 'country of destination' rates.
3. Balance between local and incoming labour recruitment (including from other parts of the UK) in this area of high unemployment
4. All operatives to be automatically enrolled into the industry Stakeholder Pension (Easybuild).
5. Workers have passed a CSCS Safety Test before commencing work in site and be registered for the appropriate NVQ within 4 weeks of the commencement of employment.
6. The highest level of Health and Safety including Olympic Occupational Health Scheme.
7. Access to apprenticeship training for the local community.
8. Access to substantial, high quality, building trades skills training programmes, for all construction workers, with strict scrutiny of trainer organisations to prevent financial abuse.

9. Establishment of Safety Representatives and Safety Committees on all Olympic sites.
10. Recognition of the CIJC Working Rule Agreement as underpinning all project specific agreements.
11. Minimum rates of pay to be agreed covering all projects that ensure that we retain a highly motivated, highly skilled and dedicated workforce.
12. Right for workers to be collectively represented by recognised Trade Unions.
13. Full client and employer recognition of UCATT's right to recruit and represent workforce.
14. An agreed Industrial Relations Policy between recognised Trade Unions, main Contractors and the Client to cover all Olympic projects.
15. trade Union/Employers Consultation Committee for each project.
16. A client employer Trade Union forum to monitor industrial relations and safety on Olympic Games projects.

Securing such an agreement, one that carries over into large projects, is likely to involve working in co-operation with elected democratic institutions such as the Greater London Authority, local councils and community organisations such as TELCO.

Conference recognises that the construction work required for the Olympics is of national importance and therefore instructs the Executive Council in consultation with the London and South East Region to exercise all possible influence both politically and industrially to achieve these aims.

Reports:

The Association of Researchers in Construction Management (ARCOM) 2nd doctoral workshop 30th November 2005, Northumbria University.

The workshop provided doctoral candidates the opportunity to present their work, exchange ideas on research methodology and network with other researchers researching in the area of skills, training and development in the construction industry. For the first time, guest presenters were also invited from academic experts and industrial practitioners.

Papers presented ranged from knowledge management to career development to the definition of skills and its relationship with productivity. The importance of human resources management (HRM) was highlighted, not only in terms of tackling the issues of skills, training and development in the construction industry, but also in securing the long-term future of the sector. The growing emphasis of HRM in construction management research is a welcomed move, albeit a late one! In particular, there was the recognition of the need to move away from

traditional "command and control" HRM systems, in favour of softer approaches to recruit and retain high quality employees. Joseph Kappia from Loughborough University even reminded us of considering career development of craft labour as he suggested a more qualitative approach in research.

The use of qualitative research to balance the dominance of quantitative methods certainly emerged in Simon Murray's (from ConstructionSkills Northeast) update of the skills and productivity observatories. Linda Clarke from Westminster University expressed her concerns that focussing on statistics might resonate with political propaganda, but do little to deliver real improvements in the skills agenda. Linda, in her keynote presentation, provided insights into the different ways of defining skills, as she urged the participants to move away from task-based skills definition to a more holistic, socially constructed approach that addresses skills at the industry level.

Paul Chan/University of Northumbria, December 2005

CLR-GB, Annual General Meeting

5th December 2005, 5 p.m.

University of Westminster

35 Marylebone Road, London NW.

The main activities since the previous annual meeting were the ESRC/CLR Seminars. The most important contributions to these seminars will be published as a book in CLR-Studies. The final seminar on 17th March 2006 in Brussels summarises the results of the series under the title 'The Future of Construction Labour in Europe' (see below).

A number of new CLR projects were presented:

- A comparative study of different concepts of skills in Britain, France, Germany, and The Netherlands (Linda Clarke et al.)
- An empirical survey on migrants in the British construction industry (Linda Clarke/George Fuller)
- A research project of CLR about 'undeclared labour' in 10 EU countries (Jan Cremers et al.)

The future of construction labour in Europe

March 17th 2006, ESRC/CLR Seminar, Brussels

Charles Woolfson/Lithuania showed how the new EU member states have become the Trojan horse of neo-liberalism by aggressively undermining the 'social acquis'.

Gerhard Bosch/Germany emphasised the importance of statutory labour standards for the performance of the construction industry.

Jan Cremers/Netherlands pointed to the rising importance of company regulations in the absence of European labour standards.

Ernst-Ludwig Laux/Germany referred to the failure of enforcement of the posting directive and the pressure on national/regional collective agreements and the loss of trade union bargaining power.

Linda Clarke/CLR-GB argued that in the construction industry higher, in particular mental skills, are required and unskilled labour has become virtually redundant.

Harry Bijen/EFBWW summarised the perspectives of construction unions in Europe and the continued need for collective agreements for the maintenance of labour standards

Peter Andrews/FIEC concluded the seminar advocating the social dialogue as an important instrument in the future development of the construction industry.

The seminar had a wide ranging international attendance. As a result the discussions following the individual papers provided an interesting overview of debates in different European countries and exhibited Britain's insularity concerning issues such as training, workers' rights, binding collective agreements, (bogus-self-) employment. We should all be looking forward to the book.

Joern Janssen/CLR-GB

IER Olympic Games

On 17th May the Institute of Employment Rights organised a conference on 'Global Rights in Global Companies, going for Gold at the UK Olympics', held in a Committee Room of the House of Commons and an occasion to launch the Institute's latest booklet on the theme, written by Professor Keith Ewing of Kings College London.

The Olympics offers a golden opportunity to try and improve training and employment conditions in the construction industry, not only through the over £2bn budget of the Olympic Development Agency but through its role as statutory planning authority and the standards which can be laid down in contracts. The conference was an opportunity to discuss the principles on which standards should be based - a London living wage, employee representation, diversity, training, and the use of local labour – and to give these political backing, especially through the presence of John Cruddas MP.

Barry Camfield, Associate General Secretary of the TGWU and the only trade union representative on the ODA reiterated this, emphasising the need for an active client status and that lessons be learnt from the Australian experience, both with the Sidney Olympics and the Melbourne Commonwealth Games – an experience which was later detailed by the Australian trade unionist Peter Gahan. Barry supported the

proposal for a Memorandum of Understanding between the Mayor, the Secretary of State, the ODA and the London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games, laying down fair labour standards, direct employment, good health and safety conditions and ensuring national collective agreements are recognised.

As well as learning from the Australian experience, Heathrow Terminal 5 was held up by Keith Ewing as the model to follow, with its collective agreement, direct employment, enforcement of skill standards, active client role, employee representation, and good health and safety conditions. But no mention was made of the exceedingly long hours at T5, the heavy reliance on travellers and caravan camps, the poor apprentice training levels and limited use of local labour – all of which militate against bringing in, training and integrating the East London labour force into the Olympic schemes, as promised when the Games were won. There is much to be done if this golden opportunity is really to be grasped!

Linda Clarke/University of Westminster

To Our Readers:

The CLR-GB Newsletter is the organ of exchange for CLR in Great Britain. This function depends on the co-operation of its readers. The editors ask everybody who is interested in construction labour to contribute with information and commentaries. Please send your suggestions, articles, information, letters, etc. to

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