



a

NO SWEAT

£1.50

publication



**solidarity
with
migrant
workers**

facts * experiences * debate

INTRODUCTION

Over 190 million people are living as migrants around the world. Poverty, much of it caused by the economic policies of rich capitalist countries, is driving people to look for work abroad.

Migrant workers in the UK do jobs that are often unpleasant and sometimes tough. But these jobs — from cleaning on the Underground, to caring for the sick and elderly — are all essential.

Some migrant workers are forbidden by law from working and are forced into the black economy, where they are prey to ruthless gangmasters and agencies. But even when migrant workers are working in the UK legally, plugging the gaps where there are labour shortages in agriculture or construction, they still suffer extremely low rates of pay, poor health and safety standards, long hours, excessive workload and bullying.

The trade union movement is now beginning to take on the essential task of organising migrant workers, using strength, numbers and experience to unionise and demand strong legal rights for all migrant workers.

They face a complex organising job — overcoming language barriers, building trust, allaying fears of reprisal from bullying

employers, working in areas where there is a complete lack of legal rights. That is why the self-organisation of migrant workers is so key. That is why our solidarity is so essential.

This No Sweat pamphlet is aimed at anti-sweatshop activists, trade unionists, student unionists who want to help. It makes the political case for solidarity with migrant workers as well as providing basic information and ideas for organising.

We need to stop this 21st century slavery! We say:

- Unity between workers.
- The right to work and full labour rights for all, independent of migration status.
- Equal treatment for agency and temporary workers.
- Unions should not merely recruit migrant workers, but help them organise and define their own demands.
- Benefit rights for all, independent of migration status.
- Solidarity with all migrants worldwide.
- No one is illegal!

NO SWEAT

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BY MARTIN SMITH, GMB HEAD OF ORGANISING

Workers first - migrants second

Many of the pioneers who formed the first modern trade unions — out of which would come the GMB and others — were migrant labourers, notably from Ireland. The trade union movement can claim to have been organising migrant workers for over 100 years.

Back then it was received wisdom among employers and unions alike that low paid, invisible, insecure, migrant workers could not form unions and win against their much more powerful bosses. The cynics were proved wrong. But it took a completely new direction and breed of trade unionism — “New Unionism”, as it came to be known, with its radical approach to organising.

A slogan of the National Union of Gas and General Labourers (the forerunner of the GMB) was, “no benefit but strike benefit”. What the union’s leader Will Thorne meant by this was that, unlike the existing “craft” unions, the “new” union was not about providing mutual benefits but fighting for an improvement of conditions at work collectively, through radical confrontation with the employers — primarily through the weapon of the strike.

Today we may face a similar dilemma. Most unions agree that we want to organise migrant workers, particularly those newly arrived in the UK. At conference after conference of unions and academics the position has been stated clearly: that they should be welcomed into our ranks and their cause championed. But if we want to remain true to our principles we need to consider the implications of this for our organising work and decide what it actually means in practice. It’s time to get serious.

Do we want to organise migrant workers because it is “the right thing to do”? Partly. And this is probably the main motivation for the push from politicians and academics for us to do so. These workers face often appalling levels of exploitation even in the “legal” sector. They are brought in by employers precisely because they are easier to exploit and sometimes with the clear intention of forcing overall wages down. But our challenge is to build solidarity between exploited migrant workers and our existing members — making sure everyone understands that it’s the employers’ casualisation of work that drives down conditions, not the migrant workers themselves.

If the union movement cannot support these workers, build solidarity with UK workers and end this exploitation, then we must ask ourselves what our role is in the globalising economy of the 21st century.

But to take a serious approach to building a movement with newly arrived migrant workers we must not lose sight of the key organising principles we must apply to every group of workers irrespective of their language, their trade or the stamp on their passport:

- The workplace is the key building block of our unions. It is where workers can best gain power over their lives. We do migrant workers no favours if we are drawn down a cul-de-sac of community organising as an end in itself.
- Self-organisation must be central to our work, helping workers become dependent upon each other for support, not a remote union office or legal advisor. If all we do is offer advice and

representation to individuals we cannot build a movement of migrant workers able to stand on its own feet and make collective demands.

- Organising must be sustainable — building structures in each workplace for the long term, integrating different migrant communities with each other and with existing groups of workers.

So there are some really challenging questions that should be put to all who now seek column inches and photo-opportunities for their migrant organising work:

- Are we serious about building a migrant workers' movement to challenge employers and trade union structures?
- Is the drive to organising migrant workers a strategy for reviving the union movement?
- Can we build the solidarity we need between migrant workers and our members, integrating migrant workers into our structures?
- Are we leading on this issue or following someone else's agenda?
- Is this challenge for the long term or just another flash in the pan?
- Will we have the discipline of Thorne and Tillet and build around those most able to organise and fightback first, or be led into noble defeat after noble defeat?

A serious turn to organising migrant workers may mean major adaptations to our structures, to overcome language and cultural barriers and to allow for workers to get involved much more quickly and flexibly than our current rulebooks and traditions allow. But we must tailor our organising principles to the needs of migrant workers not abandon them. Migrant workers are workers first and migrants second.

The GMB has wrestled with many of these issues for some time, and most particularly with the potential conflict between autonomous self-organisation for migrant workers and integration into the union. This is by no means a new issue and cannot be solved through dogma but through a practical application of our trade union principles.

Polish, Lithuanian and Portugese migrant workers have taught us that integration and the construction of solidarity needs careful and painstaking management and education in the face of a racist media and deep seated misconceptions on all sides.

Where migrant workers have joined us individually through community organising, integration requires new branches to be set up

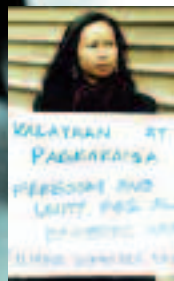
specifically for their community as a starting point. Where we organise migrant workers in dispute in their workplace, integration requires a workplace committee combining all groups in solidarity and the branch is less important. Both strategies, working flexibly in tandem, have served us well so far and helped achieve the solidarity required to win major victories for migrant workers.

But organising migrant workers also requires a shift in campaigning tactics. Often the will to organise is stronger than the capacity to build power in the workplace within groups of migrant workers.

“Follow the money” tactics developed over the last decades between our union, No Sweat and others now come into their own, as we take the case of migrant workers to the Venture Capitalists in the City, and to the supermarkets in the high streets. And as we picket employment agencies and exploit new laws that hold them to account for their exploitation.

All this requires real resources, big changes and serious planning. And a serious assessment within each union of what our real intentions and goals are. Headlines are easy, gaining quick numbers of recruits is simple. Building a movement and urging them to challenge our structures and stand against exploitation presents a whole other set of problems. But dabbling in this issue to make ourselves and our critics feel good, to gain a few headlines or a great conference speech, is worse than useless to migrant workers and does nothing to reverse our long term decline.

Migrant workers can again play a central role in reinvigorating our movement but we must do this with our eyes open to the potential pitfalls, the difficulties and the requirements for change that it necessitates. If we fail to do this or if we see this as just another “sexy issue” we are bound to fail.



Under 2006 government proposals protection for migrant domestic workers will be ended. Campaign group Kalayaan is working with the TGWU to stop this.
www.kalayaan.org.uk

Underpaid, overworked and over here

Between 1993 and 2003 the number of foreign workers in the UK increased by 61%. By 2003, even before the expansion of the EU, there were an estimated 1,400,000 foreign workers legally employed in the UK, representing over 4% of the workforce. 40% of them came from the then 15 member-states of the European Union.

In May 2004 ten more states joined the European Union. Eight of these were the so-called “A8” states from ex-Stalinist Eastern Europe. Since then, around 470,000 workers from the A8 states have entered the UK workforce. Last year 137,000 non-EU nationals were issued with work permits, a 10% increase on the previous year.

Certain branches of the UK economy now employ overwhelmingly non-UK workers. The health service is heavily dependent on recruiting employees abroad.

Migrant workers are entering a workforce where there is already a high level of casualisation and deregulation.

EU WORKERS

- 43% of the A8 nationals now working in the UK are aged between 18 and 24. 39% of them are aged between 25 and 34. 82% of them have no dependants.
- 97% of them work full-time. 80% of them earn between £4.50 and £5.99 an hour.
- Unless they have worked continuously for a year, A8 workers have no entitlement to benefits.

- Overall, 48% of A8 workers are in temporary jobs.

In other words, A8 workers are predominantly young single people working full-time in temporary low-paid jobs, and are denied access to benefits.

Surveys suggest that a large proportion of A8 workers intend working only short-term in the UK.

The TUC has initiated a series of regional projects to promote trade unionism amongst migrant workers. It has also produced a series of leaflets on workplace rights and health and safety laws in the languages of the A8 states.


NON EU LEGAL WORKERS

Foreign workers who are not EU-nationals are also predominantly in temporary jobs and on temporary visas.

Until the introduction of a new points-based scheme (2008) there were about eighty different ways in which, depending on the kind of work which they want to do, foreign nationals could apply for permission to work in the UK.

Workers in the so-called “Sectors-Based Scheme” were allowed to remain for a maximum of a year. Workers in the “Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme” can stay for just six months.

These workers are vulnerable to much abuse and super-exploitation because their immigration status (i.e. their right to stay in the UK, even temporarily) is dependent on remaining in employment — and, in many cases, on remaining in employment in the same job with the same employer.

They are in a worse situation than EU/A8 workers, who, as citizens of member-states of the European Union, have the right to remain in the UK if they lose their jobs and are free to look for another job. 

BY STAN CROOKE

NO
BORDER
NO
NATION

"ILLEGAL WORKERS"

Although no-one knows for sure, there are probably around half a million people in the UK with an irregular immigration status, many of whom have been here for several years. Some of them work illegally. They suffer the worst working conditions of all. These workers are mainly asylum-seekers, illegal entrants into the UK, overstayers, and those whose visa conditions do not include permission to work. In the most extreme cases, they are victims of trafficking whose working conditions in the UK amount to forced labour.

A motion passed at the 2005 UNISON national conference highlighted their situation:

"Trade unions in the UK have found a number of employers with up to a quarter of their workforce without papers or legal status, employed directly or via gangmasters and agencies. These workers are mostly paid cash-in-hand, at rates as low as £2.50 an hour, and made to work 80 hours per week without weekends or holidays, often under threat of deportation."

As employers know full well, the illegal status of such workers makes them particularly difficult to recruit into unions.

When London UNISON ran a pay campaign in 2003 targeted at ancillary staff working for a private contractor in a London hospital, the employer demanded that staff produce documentation showing that they had the right to work in the UK. Some workers were sacked for failing to produce documentation, while others suddenly disappeared.

In January 2005 the TGWU ran a recruitment campaign in a south London supermarket with a workforce of 300. When union membership had more than quadrupled, management announced a check of immigration papers and called in the Immigration Service. One worker was arrested, and sixty others quit their work or simply disappeared.

These workers have no legal rights at all in the workplace. Even where a contract of employment is issued, it is legally null and void: because the employee has no right to work, the contract cannot be enforced.

Recent imaginative interpretations of the Proceeds of Crime Act have also resulted in the police and other authorities refusing to pursue employers who withhold pay from employees who do not have the right to work: since working illegally is a crime, the worker

should not be allowed to enjoy the proceeds of the crime. By way of contrast, no employer has ever had a share of their profits confiscated on the grounds that they are the proceeds of the same crime.

GLOBAL MIGRATION

The growth, expansion and greater integration of world capitalism has brought with it new and increased inequalities: between rich and poor people, between developed, developing countries and countries which have scarcely seen any new capitalist development.

Huge slums get built around the cities of the world; farmers, peasants and small traders lose their livelihoods in the drive to higher-priced, world-market cash crops; workers lose jobs in economies hit by IMF-dictated austerity policies — privatisations and cuts. The poor of the world migrate in search of a better life.

War, environmental disaster and national oppression also drive people away from home.

191 million people, 3 per cent of the world population, live outside the country of their birth. (In 1960 it was 2.5%).

One in 10 people in more developed countries is a migrant. **One in 70** in less developing regions.

13.5 million people are refugees. 2.7 million refugees live in developed countries, 10.8 million in developing countries.

64 million migrants live in Europe. **53 million** live in Asia. **45 million** live in North America. The United Arab Emirates — with its boom city Dubai — has the highest percentage of migrant workers.

Net migration to the developed regions of the world was **13.1 million** from 2000-2005.

Remittances from migrants to less developed regions were estimated in 2004 as **US\$ 145 billion**. On the other hand less developed countries suffer from the loss of skilled people — doctors, teachers, engineers.

An estimated 1.5 million people will emigrate each year permanently.

RACIST ABUSE

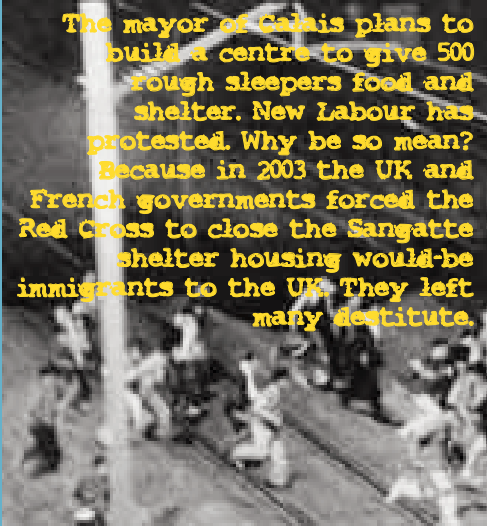
Increasing numbers of migrants around Europe has given rise to new forms of racism and xenophobia. This hostility to migrants is not largely directed against people who have dark skins but against Albanians, Poles, Portugese, and Bulgarians.

The outright political hostility of the far right to all “strangers” helps fuel the racism. But so too do the “managed migration” policies of the government; when they talk about “bogus asylum seekers” etc, their language serves to dehumanise people. It is a general, insidious, even respectable cultural phenomena. It’s okay for newspapers to complain about Polish plumbers. It’s okay for anyone to denigrate Roma people.

Inevitably this hostility leads to a climate of fear and hatred. And physical attacks on migrants are increasing.

From recent local news papers:

- “Two Iraqi men reversed over by a lorry driver.”
- “Chinese man dies in hospital twelve days after a totally unprovoked attack.”
- “The goalie for Celtic intervned in a brutal attack on a heavily pregnant Polish woman.”
- “Slovakian man was stabbed in the face with a broken wine bottle.”



The mayor of Calais plans to build a centre to give 500 rough sleepers food and shelter. New Labour has protested. Why be so mean? Because in 2003 the UK and French governments forced the Red Cross to close the Sangatte shelter housing would-be immigrants to the UK. They left many destitute.

Migrant workers are employed in six main employment areas: hospitality, cleaning, agriculture, food-processing, nursing and care homes and construction. Conditions vary a great deal in these sectors and whether or not you are an EU citizen. Nonetheless being a migrant worker in the UK can mean the following:

- Long hours on pay equal to or less than the national minimum wage;
- Working well below your skill level;
- Compulsory overtime, sometimes unpaid or at the same rate and double shifts;
- Unsociable hours;
- Lack of knowledge about rights and no proper contracts;
- No breaks or no regular breaks;
- The statutory minimum of holidays;
- No sick leave entitlement;
- NI and tax deductions being pocketed by your employer;
- “Self employment” status to avoid tax payments and benefits;
- Personal documents such as passports confiscated by employer;
- Arbitrary and excessive deductions (e.g. for uniform, accommodation or “poor performance”);
- Arbitrary pay rates and hours of work;
- Poor on job training;
- Information given in English only;
- Put at risk because of poor English (e.g. construction);
- Temporary jobs;
- No health and safety training or proper procedures;
- No proper first aid facilities;
- Injuries caused by hard physical labour e.g. to backs and limbs;
- High levels of accidents such as cuts, falls, slips, especially because of fatigue;
- Working more than one job;
- Excessive workload;
- Bullying and racial discrimination;
- Having your migration status used to make threats;
- No adjustments for pregnancy;
- Poor accommodation (if provided);
- Extreme temperatures;
- Inadequate or absent protective clothing;
- Excessive noise levels;
- Working with hazardous chemicals/hazardous waste;
- Just in time production — extremely stressful speed-ups combined with unpredictable work;
- Absent or invisible trade union/worker representation.

EXTREME EXPLOITATION

MANAGED MIGRATION

From 1997 New Labour continued the repressive attacks made on refugees by the previous Tory government. But this became part of a broader approach, termed “managed migration”. New Labour was even harder on certain categories of would-be migrants (epitomised, above all, by the “bogus asylum-seeker”), whilst simultaneously meeting the needs of big business, facilitating the migration of both skilled and unskilled workers.

“Managed migration” has resulted in the introduction of new schemes for migrant labour. The latest is a “points based” system for people wanting to come and work in the UK.

New Labour’s “managed migration” policies are, in many ways, a re-run of the political debates of the early 1960s. At that time it was argued that immigration controls were required in order to promote good race relations: white people would live harmoniously with black people, safe in the knowledge that they were not about to be overwhelmed by the latter. Today, the government says, UK workers can welcome foreign workers with open arms, safe in the knowledge that their numbers are controlled by “managed migration”.

THE POINTS SCHEME

Citizens of European Union (EU) member states, apart from Romania and Bulgaria, have an automatic right to migrate to and work in the UK. That will continue.

Under the current system unskilled workers from non-EU states have little or no chance of gaining admission to the UK. And the various schemes under which they have previously been able to enter the UK are being phased out, as migrant labour from the EU “A8” states is now sufficient to fill the vacancies.

For skilled workers gaining admission to the UK, or remaining in the UK after completion of a university course, is more straightforward. And the more skilled you are, the easier it is. Being white and well-off helps as well.

Under the Science and Engineering Graduates

Scheme a foreign national who has gained any science or engineering degree higher than second-class honours at a UK university can stay and work in the UK. The scheme has now been extended to cover anyone who obtains a Masters Degree or a PhD, irrespective of the subject.

Under a looser scheme in Scotland, called “Fresh Talent: Working in Scotland”, anyone awarded any qualification higher than a HND or any kind of degree at a Scottish educational institution can stay and work in Scotland after having graduated.

The broader Highly Skilled Migrants Programme (HSMP) is a points-based system, under which anyone who scores 75 points or higher can come and work in the UK or, if here already, remain in the UK and work. Points are awarded according to qualifications, past earnings (varied according to country of origin), age and “UK experience” (i.e. having previously worked or studied here).

In 2008 the principles behind the HSMP will be extended to cover all schemes for working in the UK for anything other than the shortest periods of time.

There will be five tiers in the new scheme. To achieve entry under tiers one or two, the foreign national will need to score enough points. Tier one involves the most skilled professionals, who will not even need a job offer before being admitted to the UK. Tier two is for skilled workers who already have a job offer in a “shortage area” in the UK.

Tier three covers unskilled workers who will be allowed into the UK on a temporary basis if there is a particular shortage in a given sector of industry. The employer will have responsibility for ensuring that workers leave on expiry of their visa.

Tier four covers students, and tier five covers very short-term workers, such as foreign sports people and professional musicians.

Workers in what the government classifies as “sectors prone to abuse” will have to pay a financial bond before entering the UK. And employers will be liable to a fine of up to £2,000 for each employee who breaches the conditions of their admission to the UK.

The new system may, or may not, be a simplification of the current eighty or so schemes in operation. Politically the new system reinforces the essential elements of the existing schemes.

The more skilled a person is, the easier it is for them to gain admission. In government language: the British economy can benefit from their skills. The less skilled a person is, the more difficult it is for them to gain admission, and the greater the degree of control over them after their admission.

The Harvard Business School graduate will still be able to walk into the UK. The unemployed of the 'Third World' will still be kept out. Immigration controls will still be about the colour of your skin, or the colour of your money.

CRACKDOWN ON THE UNDOCUMENTED

The other side of "managed migration" is the crackdown on asylum-seekers, and increased use of detention for immigration offenders, an expansion of Immigration Service "sweep and search" operations in pursuit of immigration offenders, and tighter controls on those who are given permission to work in the UK.

Under a "new" strategy the Immigration Department, Inland Revenue, local authorities, the NHS, benefits agencies, the police and employers, will cooperate in order to "progressively deny work, benefits and services to those here illegally."

In fact, there is nothing in the least bit new about such



"co-operation." Far more than under the Tories, a central element of Labour's immigration policies since 1997 has been to transform agencies such as schools, universities, hospitals, Jobcentres and employers into an auxiliary Immigration Service, by requiring them to check the immigration status of their client groups and employees.

A "watch list" of illegal immigrants is to be compiled by the Immigration Department. The list will be circulated to other government departments and local authorities so that they deny services to anyone named on the list and bring them to the attention of the immigration authorities. Compulsory ID cards are also to be introduced for foreign nationals.

Joint regional teams involving staff from Inland Revenue, the Department of Works and Pensions and the DTI are to crack down on illegal working.

A further element in this "new strategy" involves local authorities being empowered to impose fines of up to £20,000 on private sector landlords who rent out overcrowded accommodation.

The fact that a crackdown on overcrowded accommodation is part of a crackdown on illegal immigrants tells you something about "the benefits" which the latter actually enjoy from being in Britain illegally.

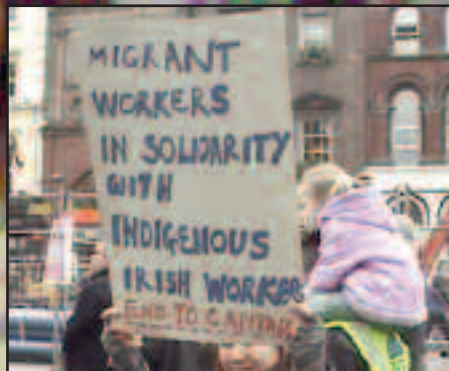
But migrants to the UK are not interested in claiming poverty-level benefits. What they want to do is work, even if for only rock-bottom wages — but which are a lot higher than anything they could find in their own countries. They should have the right to work here — and with decent wages!

dublin, polish agency

workers strike joined

by their irish co-workers

april 2007



Strawberry pickers standing up for their rights

By Natalia Wardle

I am a Polish TGWU organiser in the Midlands. I became a member of the union in 2003 when I worked for SRM, a chemical company in West Yorkshire. My colleagues elected me to become a shop steward in July 2004.

In May 2004 I started to hear about the way Eastern European workers were being exploited by employers. That is when I started helping the union with issues about migrant workers.

In June 2006 I was asked to attend meetings with S&A strawberry workers in Herefordshire. They told us how bad their situation was.

These were seasonal workers brought to England by agencies for 6-12 weeks contracts. All of them were told they didn't need English language skills as interpreters will be available to help at all times (this did not happen). Most of workers paid the agencies £2-300 to get a placement.

The first three weeks were the hardest, getting used to the very low pay for a very hard job. Each worker had their Home Office money, accommodation money, entertainment club and doctors fees taken out of their wages. All were receiving £30-50 a week for a full time job in extremely hot conditions.

They had been promised work for good pay in a holiday like, fully equipped camp. The reality was a sort of concentration camp with security "protecting" them from outside world. Each evening they had to be back on the camp by 10pm. They had to wear identification cards.

The "excellent" medical centre with doctors and dentist turned out to be a small container with a nurse available for a few hours a day recording their visit and sending them to their containers to rest. Ambulances were not allowed to access the camp even in cases of miscarriage, concussion or serious accident.

Working 3am to 5 pm (some days) in red-hot temperatures, they had no supplies of drinking water, a 30 minute break throughout the shift. The supervisors and team leaders gave them no

respect, treating them like animals without any rights or say. This is not the full story.

It was very hard to convince them that they had rights and that the union could help. The union leaders had to be motivated constantly, a lot were terrified. They had a big job supporting the 4000 people working at S&A.

My strategy was to teach the workers what they can do, show them that they had a right to stand up for themselves.

We managed to organise a protest outside of the camp, about 500 workers came out of the camp.

The next step was to get them to unite on one issue — this was the need for respect. The petition was signed by over 600 workers.

Next was making individual grievances: medical services, camp problems, work related etc. These were all delivered to the company on the same day. We collected over 200 copies of payslips proving that the workers were paid below the minimum wage.

The last collective action was a petition over charges for the accommodation and the state of the caravans and container. This again was signed by over 600 workers.



The most important thing was to be able to connect with workers, listening to their problems, letting them tell me what they going through. I made them realise that together they can change the situation.

The company didn't want to talk to the T&G. After two months of collecting evidence and all the collective actions we involved the local BBC radio and television, ITV Midlands, the *Guardian* and the *Independent*. We put pressure on Tesco and Sainsburys Trading Standards Officers to bring S&A to the table for constructive talks.

But I never got a lot of members. The bottom line is that most people could not afford the dues and the length of contracts stopped some from committing financially; but people came together and by their actions, supported by the union, we managed to change things.

The medical charges have been cancelled, supervisors receive training in equality and respect at work, the disciplinary system is being restructured. In February 2007 the company signed a recognition agreement.

The T&G is now well known through out the Midlands migrant community and still gets members on the back of the S&A campaign.

JUSTICE FOR CLEANERS

The TGWU is organising a “Justice for Cleaners” campaign as part of an international alliance of unions representing migrant workers. The campaign began in London and has won increases in pay and conditions at the Houses of Parliament and companies operating at Canary Wharf and the City of London. At the end of 2006 the TGWU participated in a series of global actions against multinational building services company ISS; the majority of their workers are migrants with many on the minimum wage. ISS Cleaning Services are part owned by the global investment bank, Goldman Sachs.

cleaners@tguw.org.uk

2007: After workers at Sportsworld Depot, Shirebrook, Mansfield complained to the TGWU about abuses, the union started a campaign to win decent conditions for the mostly migrant workforce. The union has recruited workers at the depot and produced a petition targeted at shoppers.

The GMB has a regional migrant workers’ project, based at their Nottingham Office, with two Eastern European organisers.

X TALK

The X:talk project co-ordinates and delivers free English classes for workers in the sex industry in London. It is an attempt to build political alliances and strengthen migrant sex worker networks.

The x:talk project is being organised by a network of sex workers, sex workers rights’, and migrants’ rights activists, and is supported by the International Union of Sex Workers (GMB/IUSW). IUSW believes that governmental policies against traffick-



ing which see women purely as victims of organised crime or of cruel men actually produces abuse; they increase the criminalisation and exploitation of migrants in the sex industry and of sex workers in general. The project hopes that language skills will help sex workers directly challenge and change the conditions of their work and life.

The International Union of Sex Workers has a branch linked to the GMB in the UK.

www.xtalkproject.net

MIGRANT HEALTH WORKERS

The international union body Public Services International runs a campaign on Migrant and Women Health Workers which is supported by Unison. The campaign looks at how migration of health workers can have a negative effect on developing countries.

www.world-psi.org/migration

Unison has set up overseas nurses’ networks. The most established one is in Scotland.

www.unison-scotland.org.uk

OTHER SUPPORT

The TUC and other union organisations run courses and produce literature about migrant workers around the UK. In some areas they support advice projects. These initiatives run alongside similar projects run by welfare rights agencies in some UK towns (e.g. Wisbech). Migrant Workers North West is a charity set up by the unions as a partnership between education providers, unions and employers. (www.migrantworkersnorthwest.org)

These projects are useful but they are not aimed at organising.

The Latin American Workers’ Association organises within Latin American communities around the migrant worker issues, working closely with the unions, especially the TGWU.

latinamericanworkers@hotmail.com
c/o TGWU, 218 Green Lanes, London, N4 2BR. 0208 800 4281.

projects

support

pay battles

language classes

we just ask that we are t

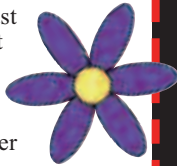


World Flowers imports cut flowers from around the world, Spain, Morocco and especially Kenya. The company has an annual turnover of over £100 million, delivering 1.5 billion flowers a year, trading with Tesco, Sainsbury and Waitrose. The fast-growing company recently switched to employing migrant workers.

Based near Southampton, World Flowers employs around 400 people; it is one of many companies in the area which employs migrant workers. Recruited through an agency, the workers are mainly Polish, but many other nationalities.

Being part of the Ethical Trade Initiative means the company is supposed to adhere to a Code of Conduct. However they pay migrant workers the minimum wage, to work in damp and cold conditions, with limited health and safety systems.

After a six month campaign by the GMB the union won access to the workplace and the workforce. At the end of last year the GMB set up a migrant workers' branch in the Southampton area (see page 12). The branch organises the World Flower workers and other migrant workers.

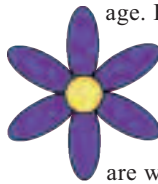
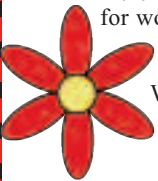


World Flower Polish migrant workers Jolanta P and married couple Stanislaw and Jolanta S describe how they came to be "part of the union".

Question: What are conditions like in the factory?

JP/SS: We work 37 and a half hours, five days a week and for the minimum wage.

There are no increases in the wages for working there longer, this is not fair. We don't know what the English workers are paid. When a man or woman work for themselves alone, the wage is okay, they can man-



age. But when you have to have the money for a family, for a house and bills, it is hard.

SS/JS: It is really cold and dirty in the factory and when you come home you are wet. Some people have allergies from the flowers.

JS: There is a lot of sickness. Sometimes when people get sick they call the sick line and then when they go back to work they are told they aren't allowed to work. It is like they are being punished for being sick. No one has been dismissed for being sick, but some people are coming close to that.

JP: Most people try to work hard because they need the job.

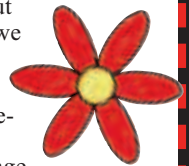
SS: You get a bonus if you don't call the sick line.

Q: What are the bosses and supervisors like?

JP: The supervisors are Polish and don't really have much to do. They are pushed by the managers, who are in charge. They treat us like we are animals in a zoo. They go up to their office and look down on us.

SS: Sometimes they call downstairs to say that we have to go faster, but they don't speak to us like we are human beings.

SS: We would like to be treated with respect. If someone works for three or five years they should have a wage increase.



reated like human beings



Q: How did the union get going?

JP: We put posters up in the factory, to advertise a meeting at a pub. Many people came. We had follow up meetings.

After a while we decided to do something. I realised that we could not go to the police or someone like that with our problems. I knew we needed a union. I knew how unions worked in Poland... We wanted higher wages, cheaper wages, the equipment we needed, things that should be given to us (the workers had to buy their own company jumpers).

Q: What did you do then?

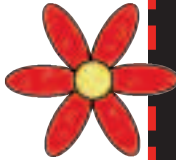
JP: The managers saw me put up the poster and asked me what I was doing. I spoke to (the Managing Director) Jim Floor about what was wrong. He said this was the first time he had heard people were unhappy. The GMB organised flyers, a place to meet and helped with the law. Demonstrations with other GMB members were organised at the factory.

JS: I was fired because I was seen with GMB flyers. The GMB rang the company and got my job back. And the company paid me for the two days I wasn't at work.

For a long time Jim Floor stalled on the issue of recognising the union. In February 2007 the union decided to put in a large number of grievances on health and safety issues. 55 grievances were collected.

Q: How well organised is the union?

JP, JS, SS: Some people don't join the union because they are scared. But we have recruited and many changes have been made. We have been given equipment. There is a medical room. We have time at the end of the job to "clean up". We haven't yet got to the issue



of wages. We first needed to deal with health and safety issues.

JS, SS: Polish workers are told by the managers that if the union is recognised in the factory they will lose their jobs. And this is what happened to some people in Poland.

SS: Before Poland joined the European Union Polish people had to stay quiet, because they were working illegally. Their bosses got used to this.

Q: It is mainly women that are running this campaign. Why is that?

JP: Maybe that is because women are interested in making a home and getting a better life here and now; men think they can always move on, go somewhere else to find work. A woman knows that after she has finished fighting she will have a calm life.

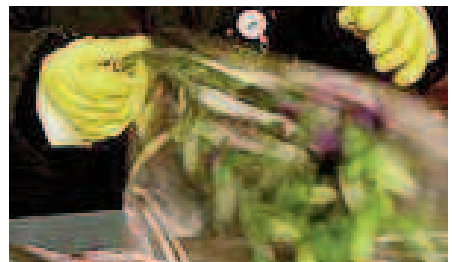


The union has given us the opportunity to learn English, which many people are doing.

Q: You have to convince them that the union is strong enough to save their jobs and stop the factory from closing?

JS, SS: Yes. We have approached a lot of people, and some people have joined.

JP: Immigrant workers really have to have someone looking out for them. We understand that we have to work hard but it is not us that decided we should be paid low wages. And we pay our taxes. We just ask that we are treated like human beings.



By Alan Fraser, Regional Education / Health & Safety Officer, GMB Southern Region, (in a personal capacity).

On 6 October 2006 the GMB Southern Region made trade union history by setting up the first post-war migrant workers trade union branch in Britain. Seventy migrant workers attended the inauguration meeting in Southampton.

The setting up of the branch came after six months of hard work.

In 2006 the GMB's Southern Region Education Department came into contact with Polish workers in the Southampton area. We had learned that 30,000 Polish people were resident in the area. After several meetings with members of the Polish community we began to assist with English language classes. This was, and still is, the major barrier that many migrant workers face.

In August we decided to organise a public meeting for the Polish community and 120 Polish workers turned up. We heard about a multitude of abuses by employers, agencies, gangmasters and landlords who are providing inadequate accommodation.

The union needed to put together a comprehensive, thoughtful, considered and strategic policy if we were going to embark on serious work with migrant workers. This strategy could not just focus around recruiting people in workplaces. We also had to build trust and respect within the migrant workers' communities around a whole series of other issues that affect them outside of the workplace.

The language barrier is being deliberately encouraged by some employers. The Government's announcement about restrictions to access to ESOL compounds the situation, excluding many migrant workers in Britain from being able to function as equal citizens. It is a piece of xenophobic legislation that the whole trade union movement should campaign against.

In October 2006 we were able to organise an open day for the Polish workers around rights at work; between 70 and 100 workers turned up. Another practical initiative was, working with other groups, to get 10 Polish workers onto a training course to get the Security Licence to

work in the security industry. We have also been able to help get four Polish welders jobs in Vosper Thornycroft, the ship building company in Portsmouth. Polish workers joined the GMB as a result of this initiative.

We have set up a website for Polish workers which will enable them to share information and network with each other, as well as providing a useful organising tool. We have several leaflets translated, including the membership form and a leaflet on who the GMB is and what we stand for.

We have identified several key workplaces to organise.

The model is based on self-organising and is not a servicing approach. A dedicated organiser is working closely with the migrant workers' branch. The key is for migrant workers to gain the confidence, skills and knowledge and to get to know the union and then to be able, at an appropriate stage, to organise themselves and to integrate into the mainstream of the GMB.

The first principle is to recognise that the issues that migrant workers face are one of exploitation by employers and not of taking British workers' jobs. Migrant workers are our workers and their place is in our union; and therefore they should be represented and defended.

The second principle is to recognise that we don't differentiate between workers, that all workers, regardless of where they come from or who they are, deserve to be defended, represented and treated with respect and dignity, both at work and in society at large.

The third principle is that we seek to organise and unite all workers; black, white, women, young, migrants, and disabled. We unite them around their exploitation as workers and, as internationalists, seek to campaign and organise against employers who carry out the exploitation of workers.

The experience of how migrant workers are being treated runs a coach and horses through the concept of social partnership. It is time that we get back to what we stand for: for equality and rights for all workers.

The full text of this article can be found at www.nosweat.org.uk

EXPERIENCES... BUILDING A MIGRANT WORKERS BRANCH

ORGANISING THE UNDERGROUND

By an RMT member

With privatisation on the London Underground (LU), cleaning which was once done by station staff was contracted out to cleaning companies. Five years ago, a group of cleaners and their colleagues set up group called “Friends of Cleaners” to recruit cleaners and inform them about the RMT union.

Contractors were using the legal minimum wage as an excuse to entrench low pay. The minimum wage is not and has never been enough to cover rent, bills and travel in London. Mayor Ken Livingstone’s system of contracting and subcontracting parts of the network has led to a squeeze on wages, as each contractor tries to cream off a share of the profit by cutting wages. It is hypocrisy for Livingstone to back the “London Living Wage” while presiding over this system. The only people who can turn the “London Living Wage” into a reality are workers in a union, fighting for a decent wage.

The union saw the companies were taking advantage of the fact the majority of cleaners were migrants and were unaware of their rights. The RMT told the companies they could not get away with sacking and suspending people at whim.

Even now, cleaners are routinely asked to bring their passports and documents to their company’s head office. The companies use the fact that some workers have “illegal” status as an excuse for shedding jobs and creating fear among the workforce. The union has organised non-compliance with these checks, promising to back up cleaners who refuse to participate. This shows how unions can empower vulnerable and exploited workers to fight a vicious and divisive immigration system.

Cleaners have been trained up as cleaners’ representatives and there is now a network of local and health and safety representatives. Faced with 200 job cuts from their employer, multinational ISS, the cleaners were balloted for a strike in February 2007. Drivers, station staff and other grades promised not to take out trains, and to close stations on health and safety grounds if the cleaners struck. The company backed down. The RMT’s strength lies in it being an “all grades” union — every grade in the industry works together to make the workers stronger against the bosses.

The RMT organised vibrant demonstrations outside the Mayor’s Office and has launched a “cleaners’ charter” of demands.

The RMT have produced a Rail Cleaner’s Charter. A link to this can be found on the home page of www.rmt.org.uk

FIGHT THE RACISM

The way the cleaners are treated is both racist and dehumanising. The cleaners are mostly non-white workers. You don’t see white workers being asked to bring their passport into work. I use the word dehumanising because it goes along with the concept of enslavement that we are all talking about at the minute.

The union’s response is to deal with this treatment as an industrial issue, to prove instances of discrimination at work.

But the industrial response doesn’t deal with the racism, the fact that employers use the ethnicity of the majority of workers (whether they are African or Bulgarian) as an excuse to discriminate against them.

We have a responsibility to fight racism. This campaign is about empowerment of the cleaners. We hope that these things will follow on from the work we are doing now.

Glenroy Watson, RMT rep

46% of London's elementary jobs (cleaners, builders, hotel staff) are filled by migrants.

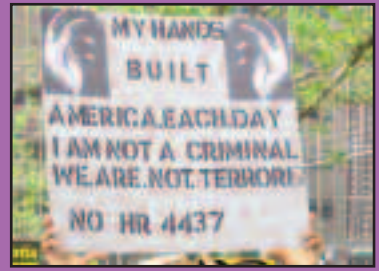


London's migrants earn on average less than a third of the capital's average salary.

London's migrants live in the poorest boroughs.

invisible no more

by Valery Alzaga, Service
Employees International Union



More than 1.5 million people took the streets in the USA on 1 May 2006 to protest legislative attacks against migrants and to demand legalisation.

The proposed law would have limited 12 million undocumented migrants' ability to work and live by merging the police and migration authorities as well as denying basic social services. Upon deportation, migrants' property would be confiscated by the government to pay for the new programme. Undocumented migrants would have been driven into greater seclusion and exploitation.

For a country built on migrant labour and an economy that continues to depend on migrant workers to run its cities, fields, industries and homes, this legislative attack became a call to arms. A broad array of civic organisations — unions, churches, migrant groups, civil rights organisations, Spanish language radio stations, college and school students and others — took to the streets to fight the proposal. African-American civil rights leaders called this action the next phase of the US's civil rights movement.

Through their protests, migrants and their allies reclaimed 1 May as a day for labour and legalisation rights, calling attention to the economic forces that are rapidly changing our world.

US capital continues to penetrate markets and industries south of its border and has used regional trade regimes like the North American Free Trade Agreement to accelerate this process. The resulting collapse of Mexican farm communities and small and mid-sized businesses has caused millions of Mexicans to migrate to the US. The migrants' movement across borders represents "globalization from below."

1 May 2007 was another opportunity for migrants and their allies to make their

voices heard in the ongoing legislative debate. Political forces are pushing for a path to unconditional legalisation on one side, and for harsher regulation and enforcement on the other (including a border wall, guest worker programs, criminalisation of undocumented migrants, penalties against employers.) Our challenge will be to overcome internal fragmentation in order to collectively oppose the new White House proposal.

A right wing initiative proposes legalisation through a merit system that will favour the rich and well-connected, but will create a bar to entry for the millions of hard-working janitors, child care providers and construction workers whom the US depends on. The proposed guest worker programme would further stratify the US labor force, create a disturbing loophole to long-established labour protections and eliminate visas to reunite close family members.

If we are to fix the US's broken system, we need legislation that creates a path to citizenship for all undocumented migrants. We must reject exploitative guest worker programs and instead should create a new system that

guarantees immigrant workers long-term visas, full labor and civil rights protections, and a way to citizenship. This more just path will break the

cycle of border deaths, worker abuse and economic exploitation.

man protests for

migrants rights

los angeles, 2006



Right wing anti-immigration arguments are remarkably widespread, cropping up in one form or another — and sometimes phrased euphemistically — across the media and mainstream political parties. The right-wing group “Migration Watch” has even been presented as neutral experts.

What are their arguments?

BRITAIN IS FULL UP

The argument that the UK is “full-up”, or could soon become so, is strange. It rests on a “common sense” idea about things filling up. It is true that train carriages, football grounds and cinemas can become “full up”. They run out of seats, get uncomfortable and become dangerous places if they become too crowded.

But can a country of 250,000 square kilometres become full up in the same way? No. Even if the UK’s population doubles we’ll all still “find a seat”.

If everyone in the world moved to, say, Watford, or Exeter, tomorrow, life would be made impossible in those towns. There would be an absolute housing and jobs crisis. Nothing would move. These towns would be “full up”, many times over.

Such an overwhelming population in-flow is inconceivable, it is a risible idea.

But the right doesn’t claim such a vast, implausible movement could happen. They object to quite small movements of people. Migration Watch quotes figures that estimate a 10% (6 million) increase in the UK’s population over the next thirty years. And such an increase (and it is just one estimate) is, relatively, tiny.

In principle houses could be built and servic-

es expanded to cope with a much bigger population increase. In the past — as the population grew — more homes were built. There was a massive house building programme in the UK during the 1950s and 60s, peaking in 1968 with 414,000 homes built.

But will decent housing and services actually be provided to accommodate new migrants? Or will rents go up and waiting lists increase?

That depends on what we do.

Generally provision for workers such as housing, the NHS and other services is forced on capitalism by working class action. The welfare state was demanded, fought for and won by the working class movement after the Second World War.

But when our movement retreats, provision is cut.

Migration Watch’s real concern is not so much with absolute numbers but with the types of people that are migrating (foreign, brown skinned and people “culturally different” from “us”), and what they believe will be the terrible social consequences of inward migration.

GOOD OR BAD FOR THE ECONOMY

Migration Watch: “The economic benefit from this inflow is very limited.” This ignores the facts.

For example, migrants pay a lot of tax. According to the BBC (April 2005): “Immigrants are contributing proportionately more in tax than UK-born workers... migrants [are] now paying some £41 billion

ISSUES FOR THE MOVEMENT

solidarity not hate

by No Sweat



in taxes despite a perception they were a drain... Ministers have previously argued that migrants contribute £2.5 billion more to the economy than they take in benefits — a figure in a Home Office report.”

But there is a problem with the idea embedded in the question “Good or bad for the economy?” It implies immigration has one impact, and only one, across a single entity, “the economy”. It implies that “we”, the British, are all in it together; we have one set of interests, against the interests of “the immigrants”.

Britain is not one homogeneous whole. Britain is divided by class. And our concern is not with the bosses that run the agro-businesses that benefit from exploiting migrant labour.

Our concern is entirely with the workers: how can both “native” and immigrant workers unite to benefit from this by-product of capitalist globalisation — mass migration.

IMMIGRATION DRIVES DOWN WAGES

Does immigration drive down wages? Sometimes it does. **Again it depends on us.** Migrant workers need unions to protect them. And unity between migrants and native-born UK workers is the best guarantee we have that wages and conditions will be levelled up, not driven down.

Short of some massive war, or ecological meltdown and collective ruination, or the coming to power of fascism in Britain, the increased movement of people, to and from the UK, is a fact. Modern information and transport systems are not going to disappear even if we wanted them to — and we don’t.

The knitting together of the global economy is, in many ways, positive. The problem is that this is capitalist globalisation, carried out by bosses, in their own interests. We want to avoid negative impacts on workers and avoid workers turning on each other. Such unity is not inevitable, but is perfectly possible.

QUEUE JUMPERS

According to media scare stories about “health tourism”, asylum seekers and immigrants come to the UK to “abuse” the health

system (by using it!). Sometimes asylum seekers are accused of jumping the housing queues.

Such stories are designed to appeal to the mean and selfish streak in us all and to push away the impulse towards sympathy and solidarity. They generate anxiety and hatred by playing on two fears:

- if immigrants take resources, there won’t be adequate facilities for everyone else;
- hard-stretched British people will have to pay extra taxes so that migrants can get NHS treatment.

Such stories strike a chord when there is a lot of poverty and lack of financial security. In such conditions scapegoating and division can grow.

The numbers of migrants are relatively small and cannot explain the basic cause of the NHS’s problems, or the lack of affordable housing. That is the fault of government and the capitalist system that rations housing on the basis of ability to pay and increasingly regulates health provision according to the law of the market. Agitation against immigrants on these questions lets the people who really are to blame off the hook.

Let us assume there is a financial cost to providing health and education for migrants, above and beyond what they pay in taxes (although this is not the case). Who should pay the cost? Surely not other workers... why not demand the bosses (who profit enormously from migrant labour) pay. Tax the rich to fund health and education for all!

Will we be able to achieve this, as we have in the past? **Again, that depends on what we, trade unionists, campaigners, activists do.**

A QUESTION OF CULTURE

“The natural tendency of some immigrants to join their own communities... is leading to the formation of parallel communities,” claims Migration Watch. There is nothing “natural” about this process at all.

In some towns in north west England Asian people have been deliberately placed in particular council wards. It is the result of racist housing policy.

The “natural tendency” of human beings is in fact to be social, to mix together as we work

together, live next to each other and go to school together.

Earlier migrations of Huguenots, Flemings, Jews and Irish people have all led to the substantial integration of the newcomers. We want to facilitate this process by fighting for immigrants' rights and by encouraging the labour movement to push aside barriers to integration, to confront racism and xenophobia.

The government, for its own reasons (social engineering which can promote capitalist stability), probably wants to see this process happen too. But they manage integration brutally and arbitrarily, and from above. They talk about "national cohesion" while systematically increasing inequality and deprivation. They demand immigrants "integrate" while cutting English language provision for those that speak other languages.

LOSING OUR CULTURE

Migration Watch: "A majority of the population feel that Britain is losing its own culture."

As the world's economies and people are brought closer together, different national cultures merge, synthesise and change. This process has been going on for decades and it is speeding up. It is unstoppable; an attempt to stop it is utopian.

The fascist BNP claims: "Our culture is a combination of our history, our temperament, our sporting, artistic, literary and musical heritage, our environment, our interests and aspirations, our language, our religion and our form of government. Only the BNP values and wants to preserve our traditional culture."

Of course nations are real and such a thing as national culture does exist. But the British "national culture" is the result of centuries of outside influence, not least waves of inward migration. Why should "British culture" be defended against further outside influences, now, in the 21st century?

And what about our "artistic, literary and musical heritage"? Isn't a good thing we can now listen to rap music and Beethoven, read Australian novels and watch US films, see foreign players in our football teams? Why

would anyone expect us to listen and read without also being influenced and somewhat changed by the experience of these "outsiders"?"

Not all foreign culture is good, and not all "British" bad. And vice versa. Culture should be assessed critically, from the standpoint of what promotes equality between people world wide. If there is something oppressive or violent in a national culture (domestic violence, female genital mutilation, "gay bashing" etc) it should be challenged head-on.

WORKING CLASS VIEWPOINT

History needs to be assessed critically, from a class viewpoint. There is a British working class tradition of internationalism and solidarity which includes the fight for votes for women, and the 1926 General Strike. That is a very different to the history to that of, say, British colonialism, Thatcher's government, or Tony Blair's adventure in Iraq.

Class differences between workers and bosses mean that we have much more in common with migrant workers than we do with our "own" bosses. There are poor, vulnerable and politically uneducated people in the UK who are not racists but are still uneasy about the fast changes that globalisation is bringing.

Activists and trade unionists who understand the arguments need to explain to those people the choices they face. Either we unite with migrants or allow migrant workers to be used to undermine wages and conditions, to the benefit of our bosses and to the detriment of all workers.

Racism is a major reason that some people oppose migrants: "whites will soon be a minority" in some British towns, says Migration Watch.

The question of "culture" morphs into another — the issue of skin colour. With a sleight of hand, British "culture" becomes "white culture".

We have to confront these issues, make the arguments.

Our slogans are old, but true: black and white unite and fight! Workers of the world, unite!

Will such things happen? **It is down to us, and what we do.**

ISSUES FOR THE MOVEMENT

Amnesty?

Some sections of the labour movement, in alliance with community faith groups and refugee rights organisations have put forward the idea of an “amnesty” or “regularisation” for undocumented workers. There is a debate about whether this is the right demand and what it would mean in practice.

Those who advocate an amnesty point to need to do something about the vulnerability and exploitation of undocumented workers. They also say that it would be unrealistic, as well as unjust, for the government to deport all “illegals”. They say there needs to be certainty about who can and cannot work in this country.

Critics of the amnesty campaign say it is inevitably unjust. There will be some kind of eligibility criteria. Who will get to stay? People who have been here for seven years or five years or three years? Why are some migrant workers welcome, and not others? The amnesty may be limited and conditional. In Spain the undocumented received a one year permit, renewable if they managed to prove they had worked six months in the year in question. Very many migrants did not try to renew their permits.



at the march for amnesty in london 2007, the demand was for regularisation for only some migrants

The critics also say amnesties can be used as a way of enticing people to apply those who do not fulfil the eligibility criteria. Those people will be deported.

Amnesty would still leave in place the immigration controls which deny people the right to move around the world in search of work and a better life.

Such problems have led many activists to conclude that the only just demands are such things as “open borders for all”, the right to work for all, “papers for all” and “no one is illegal”.

Smuggling and trafficking

Many migrants are forced to rely on smugglers to get them to another country. The service may come at an exorbitant price and expose the migrant to serious dangers in the course of their journey. Those workers should not be further traumatised by being deported.

Trafficking where it involves migrants being transported to jobs abroad where they are forced to do work they did not want, or under conditions to which they did not agree, is a form of kidnapping. Sex trafficking has received a lot of publicity, but, say the International Union of Sex Workers, this is not the main form of trafficking.

What is the best way to tackle the exploitation that is involved when workers enter the UK under any of these conditions. Surely not by tightening immigration controls? That will only increase the profitability of smuggling and trafficking and make matters worse.

In January 2007 the UK government (finally) signed the European Convention on Action Against Trafficking in Human Beings. The protocol allows for the victims of traffickers to have some respite time in which they will not be deported.

The provision does not go far enough. These migrants, both adults and children, should have the right to stay here indefinitely.



**NO SWEAT
CAMPAIGN**

Stop Agency Abuse

After 23 Chinese cockle pickers were killed at Morecambe Bay in 2004 the government backed legislation requiring “labour providers” (gangmasters and agencies) in agriculture, shell fishing and food processing to be licensed. These gangmasters have to follow a code of practice requiring them to pay National Insurance, provide a contract, pay the minimum wage etc.

However abuses still go on, not least because the legislation does not cover all kinds of work and all agencies. Many migrants find work through UK-based agencies. And many bosses are using “natural wastage” to increase temporary staffing levels.

Polish cleaners at Stansted Airport in 2007 were set up by their agency as individual businesses (given self-employed employment status). Consequently they receive no sick or holiday pay, are paid less than their UK colleagues and if they try to get taken on directly during or following their contract, the agency insists on taking 20% of their wages for up to a year!

These workers have organised themselves to fight this exploitation, with the support of their union. But this is the tip of the iceberg.

In spring 2007, Labour MP Paul Farrelly sponsored a Parliamentary bill to establish the basic principles of equal treatment for agency workers. The Temporary and Agency Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) was talked out by “Labour” MPs.

We need to stop agency abuse!

We will work with trade unions, solidarity and direct action groups and individuals to apply pressure on the government, to support attempts by migrant, temporary and agency workers to organise and to take direct action against employment agencies. Many agencies will be hostile to unions. Nonetheless some

unions such as the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union have managed to win some union recognition.

Join our campaign!

We want:

- The legal right to work and full labour rights for all, independent of migration status.
- Laws to enforce the equal treatment of agency and temporary workers — why should two workers, doing the same job, in the same workplace be paid and treated differently?
- Prosecute the bosses of exploitative and rogue agencies.
- End the anti-union laws which mean regular workers cannot take solidarity action in support of agency workers because their employer is an agency rather than the direct boss.



UK

Anti-slavery international
www.antislavery.org/

Barbed Wire Britain Network: campaign to shut down detention centres:
www.barbedwirebritain.org.uk

Campaign to close down Campsfield
www.closecampsfield.org.uk

Coalition to stop deportations to Iraq:
www.csdiraq.com

Congo Support Project
esp_london@yahoo.co.uk

ESOL: The government has cut funding for adult education courses with the effect that “English as a Second or Other Language Courses” for over-19s will no longer be free. Most migrants will not be able to afford to learn English.
www.ucu.org.uk/esolsignup

International Union of Sex Workers:
www.iusw.org

Labour Start: trade union and strike news:
www.labourstart.org/

Migrant Rights Network
migrantsrights@yahoo.co.uk

National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns:
www.ncadc.org.uk

No One is Illegal: campaigns against all immigration control. Has produced a booklet to stimulate debate about this issue in the trade union movement — Workers Control Not Immigration Controls — which can be downloaded from their site.
<http://www.noii.org.uk>

Searchlight: the anti-fascist group also campaigns for migrant workers’ rights.
www.searchlight.com

International

Crossing Borders: transnational newsletter about international migration
www.noborder.org/crossing_borders/

Thai Labour Campaign:
www.thailabour.org/

Tenaganita: Malaysian based NGO working with women migrant and sweatshop workers: <http://tenaganita.disagrees.net.info>

US Immigrant Solidarity Network:
www.immigrantsolidarity.org

Pambazuka: social justice forum in Africa:
www.pambazuka.org/en

Reading

Forced Labour and Migration to the UK, Bridget Anderson and Ben Bogaly

International Labour Migration — Unison discussion paper.

Making the City Work: Low Paid Employment in London. Yara Evas et al, Queen Mary College, University of London.

Migrant workers in England and Wales. An assessment of migrant worker health and safety risks by Dr Sonia McKay, Marc Craw and Deepta Chopra (Working Lives Research Institute, London Metropolitan University)

Sex Workers Organising, International Union Rights, Volume 12 number 4

Working in the UK (Polish workers), Ian Fitzgerald, University of Northumbria

News from the TUC and other advice leaflets in different languages can also be at www.tuc.org/international

Rail Cleaners’ Charter
 A link — “Fair Deal for Cleaners” can be found on the home page of the RMT website: www.rmt.org.uk

Building student solidarity

Many students at universities and colleges across the country are migrants. The immigration laws, which college management are usually complicit in, have repeatedly meant students are threatened with deportation. Students and students' unions have run impressive anti-deportation campaigns, for instance in the case of Lambeth College Students' Union fighting the deportation of its activist Sadiq Abakar to Darfur (www.savesadiq.t83.net).



sadiq is a victim of torture

And increasingly it is migrant workers who work as the cleaners, security guards, caterers and other support staff in colleges. More often than not they are employed by private contractors, paid poverty wages and forced to work longer and harder than directly employed staff.

Taking inspiration from successful living wage campaigns in the USA, students at many UK institutions — including Queen Mary London, London School of Economics, Oxford, SOAS and Sheffield — have started to organise in solidarity with these workers. They have started to build campaigns demanding a living wage, better conditions and union rights for all workers on campus.

For more information or to get involved in students living wage or anti-deportation campaigning, get in touch with sofie.buckland@nus.org.uk.

No One Is Illegal has produced a briefing on immigration controls and the education sector. email info@noii.org.uk.

What you can do in your trade union branch

- Invite a trade union organiser/migrant worker campaign/political campaign/ No Sweat to speak at a meeting about the politics and organising issues.



- Identify workplaces where there are significant number of migrant workers in your town or district.

- Contact relevant community groups and discuss how you can work together.

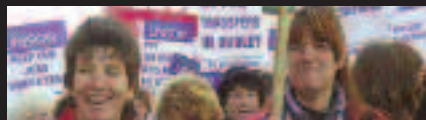
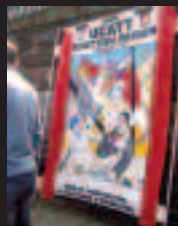
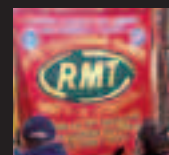


- Organise an open meeting/event with inter-preters about “rights for migrants”. Get publicity down in different and appropriate languages. Talk to migrant workers. Develop a strategy based on their needs and grievances.

- Are your members being asked to implement immigration regulations? Discuss and pass policy for non-compliance.

- Use the TUC general leaflets on rights for migrant workers, which are available in different languages.

www.tuc.org/international



No Sweat is an activist, campaigning organisation, fighting sweatshop bosses, in solidarity with workers worldwide. Sweatshop labour is modern, global capitalism stripped bare. Around Europe bosses are creating sweatshops by employing migrant workers on poverty wages, in unsafe conditions, denying them basic rights as workers. That is why No Sweat wants to organise campaigning, solidarity work around migrant workers' struggles.

No Sweat is an open broad based campaign. We look to the social justice movement and to the international workers' movement. We seek to build common, united campaigning action against exploitation.

No Sweat is backed by seven national trade unions, the National Union of Students and many local union organisations.

GET INVOLVED



Join No Sweat

Annual membership costs £5 for individuals, £50 for local organisations and £500 for national bodies.

Individuals can join by sending £5 to our PO Box address (above), making cheques payable to "No Sweat" or online at our web-site.

Donate

Help us by making donations to our work. Contact No Sweat and we will send you a standing order form to make regular contributions to help our work.

Invite a speaker

Why not invite a speaker to your next union meeting? Invite us to your college or school. We can show a film and introduce a discussion.

Visit our site

www.nosweat.org.uk
And find sweatshop briefings, the latest news and listings. You can also buy No Sweat t-shirts, pamphlets and badges.

Contact us:

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