

london hazards

Pollution hotspots exceed annual legal limits in first week of 2016



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London breached annual air pollution limits by the end of the first week of January 2016 - that's the shocking news reported in the national media on the 8th January.

Deadly levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) from diesel vehicle emissions are now regularly recorded at monitoring stations across London. London's flagship shopping destination, Oxford Street, broke hourly legal limits over a thousand times last year. This year Oxford Street broke the annual limit on the 4th January. Researchers from Kings College London and the campaign group Clean Air in London broke the news.

Air pollution in the UK's biggest cities is much worse than was realised. It averages well over twice World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines and legal limits near

many of London's busiest streets.

The London Mayor's Air Quality Strategy, designed to meet legally binding EU air quality limits, falls way short of what is necessary to clean-up London's air. Critics of the Mayor's Ultra Low Emission Zone by 2020 say it is weak, too little and too late.

Nearly 9,500 Londoners die each year as a result of long term exposure to killer air in the capital. Both the government and Conservative London Mayor Boris Johnson do not have a credible plan to cut diesel engine emissions. As a result people living and working in London will continue to breathe air that increases the risk of lung cancer and impairs child lung development (British Lung Foundation)

In Paris they plan to ban diesel cars from the streets of the city by 2020. In London the

Mayor tinkers with congestion charges.

A new London Mayor will be elected in May. London's air pollution is going to be a hot topic for each of the candidates. Labour's candidate, Sadiq Khan, said "the Tories and Boris Johnson have stood by as London has become dangerously polluted. We are now facing a health crisis".

We need to begin banning cancer causing diesel exhaust emissions from the most heavily polluted parts of London now, with a total ban in place by 2020. A start could be made by checking the emissions of diesel vehicles in London and taking off the road any that do not meet legal limits. We need to put the health of people living and working in London first.

For more information go to Clean Air in London <http://cleanair.london> and London Air Quality Network <http://www.londonair.org.uk>

Affiliate and help keep us going

We are asking you to affiliate to the London Hazards Centre so that we can continue the work we were set up to do in 1985 – provide advice, information and training to make London a safer place in which to live and work.

Arguably the work of the London Hazards Centre has never been more important as a result of huge cuts in the Health & Safety Executive's budget and the scrapping of key pieces of health and safety legislation by the Conservative led government.

The London Hazards Centre is also a campaigning organisation that takes a lead on issues like safety reps rights, as well as working closely with trade unions and other organisations, for example, to fight against blacklisting.

We need your support. We are asking individuals, trade union branches and regions, along with community organisations – to affiliate to us. The annual affiliation fees set out below remain the lifeblood of the London Hazards Centre.

Affiliation rates

Community groups, tenants and residents associations	£20
Trades Councils, law centres and advice/resource centres,	£30
Tenants federations	
Trade union branches (up to 300 members)	£40
Trade union branches (more than 300 members)	£75
Regional trade union or voluntary organisations	£120
National trade union or voluntary organisations	£240
Subscription rates	
Unwaged individuals	£10
Employed individuals	£20
Commercial organisations	£300

Address to affiliate:
London Hazards Centre,
225 - 229 Seven Sisters Road,
Finsbury Park, London, N4 2DA.
Telephone: 0207 527 5107.
Website: www.lhc.org.uk

Registered Charity No: 29367
Registered Company No: 01981088

Why not volunteer?

The London Hazards Centre, is looking for volunteers to help run and organise some of our activities. Perhaps you have skills and knowledge that could help organise events, produce promotional material, train others or assist in our campaigning work? If you are interested in volunteering at the London Hazards Centre why not call 0207 527 5107 or email mail@lhc.org.uk. We'd like to hear from you.


Trust for London
Tackling poverty and inequality

How we view TTIP

Removing trade barriers between the European Union (EU) and the USA, to improve conditions for companies to invest in each others economy is the stated aim of the Transatlantic Trade & Investment Partnership (TTIP). Viewed from a class perspective TTIP is clearly all about freedom of capital.

TTIP is about protecting those interests while simultaneously expanding market access for American goods and services

The negotiators would have us believe that they are locked into tough negotiations, like a dogfight between on the one hand, American state and businesses, and, on the other, representatives of the EU Commission and European businesses. But on what premise?

None of them are friends of the working class. And most important of all, labour rights are a dependent sub-issue here! The main issue is 'trade' and 'removing barriers'. Any union or worker intervention into the labour market, any social regulation, any health and safety measure demanded by workers or their trade unions is obviously creating a "barrier to free trade". Remember back in January 2012 when Prime Minister David Cameron said his New Year's resolution was to "kill off the health and safety culture for good".

There is no reason to believe that the USA's attitude to working class rights in the EU is essentially any different from Prime Minister Cameron's views on health and safety. The American 'hire and fire at will' culture will not and cannot demand anything else than tearing to ribbons labour rights in the European Union.

This extreme ideological dislike of regulation can be traced back to Thatcher when she was Prime Minister in the 1980s and the free market

thinking of US economist Milton Friedman who advised her. The Thatcher period has paved the way for the 'American Way!' The negative changes brought to EU industrial relations since those times – especially after the collapse of the USSR – has created the conditions under which deregulation, privatisation and removing barriers to trade can flourish.

In America it is the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) that is responsible for developing and coordinating U.S. international trade and leads on the TTIP negotiations with Europe. Their website (<https://ustr.gov/issue-areas/labor>) very clearly shows how they see things:

"We seek to obtain appropriate commitments by the EU with respect to internationally recognized labour rights and effective enforcement of labour laws concerning those rights, consistent with U.S. priorities and objectives U.S. businesses can't compete fairly if their foreign competitors aren't required to provide their workers the same levels of protection afforded to workers in the United States."

So the level playing field of workers' rights advanced by the US would involve a levelling-down for European workers. We say no! No to the dismal levels of workers' rights in America, they are not enough for us. The European working class has won a lot over the last century and these

hard won rights are not for sale as part of any trade deal.

Workers' organisations should demand full union rights with all the related social regulations, collective agreements included, deeper and stronger health and safety protection, workers' representation in any capitalist enterprise and workers councils included.

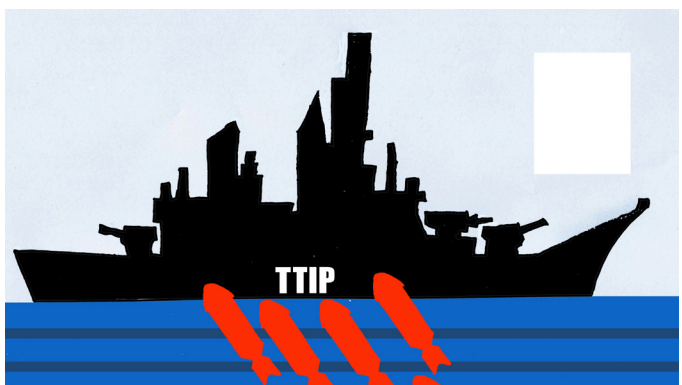
That is to say, European workers' organisations should essentially bring forward the demand to raise labour rights in the USA at least to European Union standards. A recent TUC statement states that: "The TUC is calling for a TTIP that creates a gold standard for workers' rights - we want American workers to have the kinds of rights protection and worker representation found in Europe." (Sally Hunt's speech at ITUC World Congress, 'TIP threats and opportunities')

This is not possible without waging a hard fight on every front. As Sally Hunt of the TUC puts it, workers organisations strongly need "to build workers power across the EU and USA by coordinating our mobilising and campaigning".

The internationalisation of working class struggle on every front! That is the agenda!

There is no escape; even defending our health and safety standards are dependent on that.

Ismail Buyukakan, LHC



GRAPHIC: © EVE BARKER



Couriers are getting unionised

Couriers from across the capital will be celebrating their Union Branch's first birthday this February having already seen some major successes through their vigorous campaigning.

The Couriers and Logistics Branch (CLB) of the Independent Workers Union of Great Britain (IWGB) was established in February 2015 by a small group of cycle couriers who were fed up with their bad pay and treatment. From the beginning, there were three broad demands:

1. Higher Rates,
2. No more fees, and
3. No victimisation of trade union members.

It may come as a surprise that couriers were not unionised already. Indeed, there have been

a handful of attempts over the years, however couriers often felt powerless and fearful to protest given their self-employed status. To the companies, couriers are disposable and replaceable and as such, there is a culture among couriers to just shut up and get on with it despite the hardship.

Many couriers work 10 and 11 hour days in all weathers just to make ends meet and even those who have been in the game for decades will watch as their payslips shrink year by year. Ruthlessly, the firms continue to hire more and more couriers to cover the workload, even when there's not enough work to feed everyone. The precariousness couriers experience at work inevitably seeps into the rest of their life. Coupled with rocketing rent, couriers end up working harder and harder, rarely taking time off for holidays and normally only as a result of injury and illness, or forced by exhaustion.

The courier industry is completely unregulated and companies have free reign to cut conditions in a race to the bottom'. Smaller firms don't last long before they

get bought up by the larger companies who compete with one another to offer their clients the cheapest service. Through these means of undercutting, their profits grow substantially, yet it is the courier who takes the hit as their wages are slashed without remorse. In the 80s and 90s it could be a profitable hustle doing courier work, but as of 2016, wages are at an all time low.

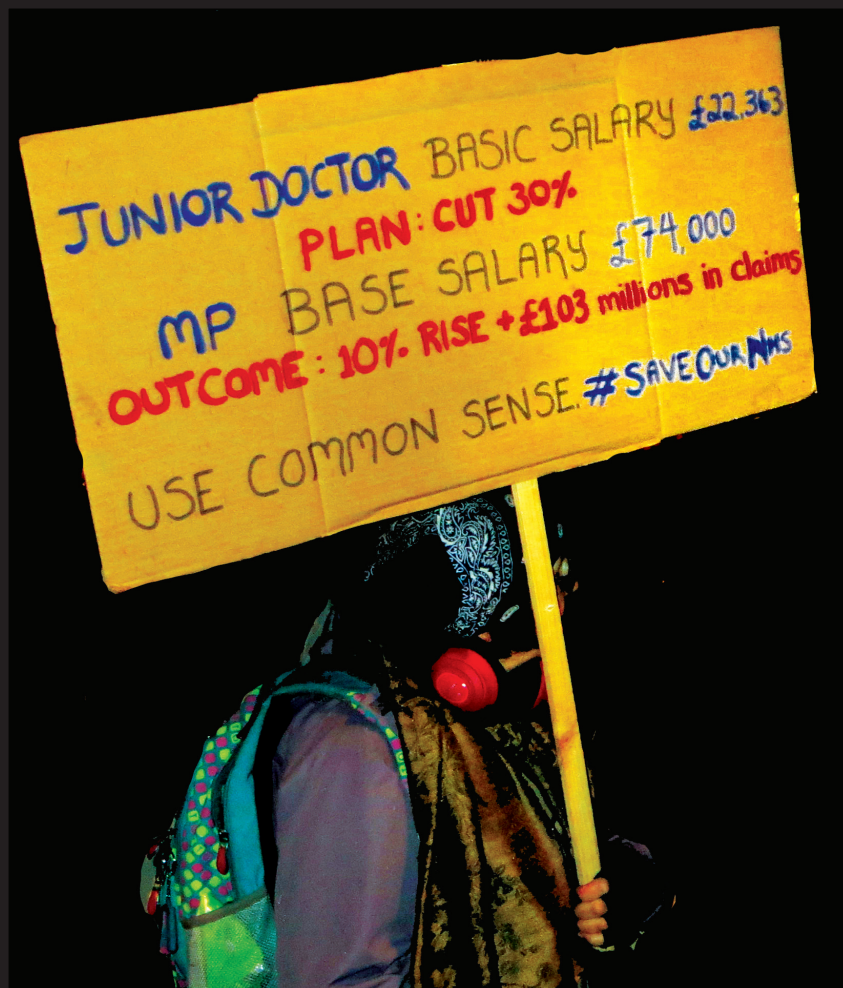
Clients are equally to blame – ironically many are Living Wage accredited employers, yet continue to outsource their deliveries to exploitative companies like CitySprint, eCourier, AddisonLee, Mach 1 and Excel.

On top of the financial pressures, the job itself never gets any easier. Cycle couriers perhaps face the most danger – cycling at high speed across the city, frequently dodging death to meet client deadlines. Road hazards are numerous as anyone who cycles in London will testify. Private hire cabs, taxis, pedestrians, motor vehicles, HGV's and even other cyclists can cause couriers to

end up in hospital and with no income.

For couriers it felt like they were enduring a downward spiral for the last decade. However after a 9 month campaign against the industry leader, CitySprint UK Ltd., cycle couriers working there saw their first pay rise in 15 years – of an astonishing 16% - in addition to numerous smaller concessions.

This grassroots and autonomous form of unionism is proving itself to be an effective way that we can support each other in and outside of the workplace during this relentless period of austerity, brutally inflicted by the Tory government. So the future of the union looks bright as it continues to expand and receive external support. The aim is to sweep across the whole industry improving pay and conditions for all couriers, at all companies. To start with, Members are currently preparing to campaign against eCourier in February, if the company do not implement an immediate pay rise as well. Independent Workers Union of Great Britain (IWGB) - <http://iwgb.org.uk/>



Back Story

'Junior doctors' are the main medical workforce in hospitals.

They are more correctly 'doctors in training' ranging from newly qualified to fully trained doctors ready to become consultants in their late 30's or early 40's - not so junior. There are about 45,000 of these doctors, 35,000 are members of the BMA - a registered, non-TUC trade union - which has sole negotiating rights for all national, doctor contracts. In the juniors' ballot 75% of BMA members took part and 98% voted for strike action.

The dispute has arisen after two years negotiations for a new contract. The current contract needs modernising and a general review. Negotiations stalled in 2015 and the BMA team walked out saying that the government's negotiators (called NHS Employers) were refusing to negotiate key, major disputed areas.

Government's response to the BMA's walk out from negotiations was to aim to impose a new contract by August 2016 with or without the BMA's agreement. The juniors' committee decided to ballot for industrial action and

the BMA backed them. Many consultants came out publicly in support of the juniors and said they would make sure no patient suffered as a result of the strikes.

Strikes called for December were called off by the BMA after the government agreed to talks under ACAS - a concession as the Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt, had said he would not negotiate further, preferring imposition. Over Christmas talks evidently made little progress and further strikes were called for January with emergency cover and February with no emergency cover. The first strike of junior doctors since 1975 took place on 12th January

Safety of patients

The dispute is about patient safety and excessive hours of work not directly about pay. The contract would make doctors cheaper to employ by increasing 'normal hours' from 7am-7pm to 7am till 10pm and including Saturdays as normal hours. The current enhanced rate for 'unsocial hours' would be reduced so paying doctors for the same hours they work now would become cheaper. It would also be cheaper to get them to work more Saturdays and longer hours in general.

The Government's attack on NHS

Doctors fear that Trusts will make them work longer hours overall both as a result of the lower unsocial hours pay rates and because current safeguards to prevent this are being watered down. This would have an effect on both patient safety - tired doctors make poor decisions - and on the wellbeing of the doctors themselves.

The government says that a rise in the normal hours rate by 11% would compensate for the cut in unsocial hours pay and that the NHS needs to move to a 7 day a week service. Junior doctors feel insulted both by the trumpeting of an 11% rise without mentioning the unsocial hours cut and the implication that the NHS shuts down at weekends - they feel invisible and undervalued.

The government also uses the patient safety argument by citing misleadingly research about increased deaths at weekends. Patients admitted at weekends are emergencies and at more risk of dying than patients admitted for routine operations.

The NHS is already in serious financial trouble - a complex situation made worse by the government's draconian 'austerity' policy. The answer to underfunding cannot be to fight doctors and other staff. If the doctors lose all staff contracts will be changed with resultant reduced pay and deteriorating conditions of work. A fully working 7 day a week NHS would involve all staff groups, not just doctors. But the current NHS budget could not afford this. The government says it wants a world class NHS comparing it with France or Germany - countries that spend 25% more on health and obviously obtains better results in some areas. We spend less on our health service than other similar countries and have less doctors and nurses

How people can Help

The doctors naturally feel somewhat deflated. Most understand that negotiations are complex but their unity and determination seems preserved. Certainly the dispute is not over. The government is equally determined to undermine pay throughout the NHS. Many believe this is in preparation for further privatisation of chunks of the NHS - run the service down by under-funding; undermine confidence in the NHS; bring in the private sector to 'rescue the NHS'.

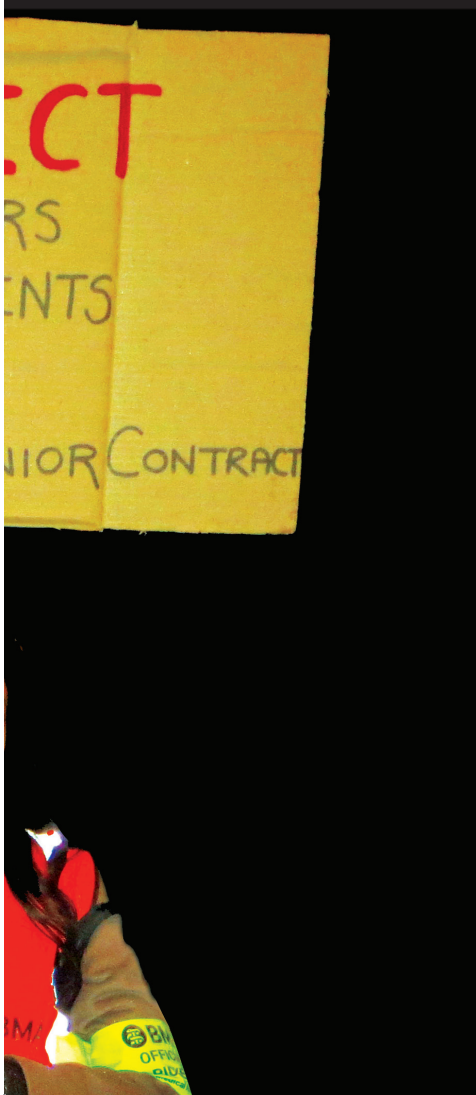
Support for the doctors must therefore continue and be visible. You can write to your MP, send messages of support to junior doctor reps or via a local NHS



Junior Doctors

support group (see www.KeepOurNHSpublic.com), sign petitions and so on. Most important is to tell your friends and family about the dispute and why they too should support the whole NHS by supporting the doctors.

Doctors in Unite and the whole of Unite fully support the junior doctors campaign. The government thought the doctors were weak and would not defend the NHS. It was wrong. Our doctors have the courage to go on strike for a safe, fair contract. They have highlighted the poor state of the NHS and must win otherwise all staff wages will be cut and the service to patients will get worse. Dr Ron Singer, retired GP and chair of 'Doctors in Unite'.



Patient safety and the health of junior doctors are the real issues

Sarah is in her final year training to be a junior doctor working in London. We interviewed her to find out what the implications are for patient safety and the wellbeing of junior doctors if the Conservative government gets its way.

LHC: Will patient safety be affected if the government imposes the new contract on Junior Doctors?

Sarah: "The real issue, and the one that will affect everyone, is patient safety – and changes to pay are entangled with this. Under the new contract, doctors will supposedly earn the same but be forced to work more antisocial hours. Additionally, the current system of banding, which safeguards doctors from being overworked, is to be scrapped. Doctors already routinely work beyond paid hours, so this will create unsafe working conditions, fostering an environment in which mistakes may be made".

LHC: The government talks about introducing a 7-day NHS which is popular with the public. Isn't this a reasonable objective?

Sarah: "This is something that already exists in practice for all emergency requirements. If the government refuses to invest in the NHS and continues simply to try to reshuffle resources and spread staff thinner, it risks seriously compromising the safety of patient care".

LHC: Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt described the strike by junior doctors on the 12 January as "completely unnecessary". How do you see it?

Sarah: "Talks over a new contract for junior doctors have been going on for over two years and affects all those below consultant and GP level. Recent industrial action has been taken following several breakdowns in negotiations and growing concern from doctors over the proposed contract. On the surface it may seem that money is the central issue as there has been an attempt to dismiss concerns and to manipulate the situation to look as though doctors only worry is the size of their pay cheques".

LHC: The ongoing dispute and the Health Secretary's efforts to impose the new contract must be affecting morale in the NHS. And what about the health of doctors themselves?

Sarah: "There are already serious shortages in A&E and GP training programmes which this contract is likely to worsen by further decreasing the desirability of these careers. Staff morale in the NHS is low and sadly junior doctors are already known to have some of the highest levels of depression and suicide of any profession. Whilst doctors have a duty to their patients regardless of their own state, they are only human and, if this contract goes ahead, we may see more doctors cracking under the strains or even packing it in for their own mental health".

Migrant worker deaths in construction



Demonstrating at the xrail site where Romanian building worker Rene Tkacik was killed

Construction remains a dangerous industry to work in because of the serious injuries and deaths that occur each year.

Coroners continue to return verdicts of accidental death when clear evidence exists that companies were at fault and should be prosecuted under the Corporate Manslaughter Act 2007.

For migrant workers in the industry construction is particularly hazardous because of a number of factors including limited knowledge of the UK's health and safety system, language difficulties and lack of health & safety training. HSE statistics for foreign born construction workers show that they now make up 37% of the workforce in Greater London. That's a lot of workers at risk to themselves and others unless they access health & safety training and gain knowledge of their rights.

Construction union UCATT has drawn attention to the disproportionately high number of migrant worker fatalities in London and has demanded action over their deaths. Critically, UCATT is demanding that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) urgently reviews its reporting methods following new evidence on migrant worker deaths.

During the year spanning 2014- 2015 UCATT discovered

that five out of the seven deaths in London were migrant workers. That's no accident. UCATT discovered this by analysing and researching the names of the deceased workers because the HSE does not record the nationality of workers who suffer a fatal accident.

Jerry Swain, Regional Secretary for London and the South East, said: "Each of these deaths was an individual tragedy. It is essential that issues such as different safety standards and methods of working in countries, language issues and whether the deceased were new to the construction industry are properly considered in order to prevent future fatalities. "This is simply not going to happen if the HSE continues to fail to address and record the nationality of workers who suffer a fatal accident"

Who can doubt that migrant workers are not facing exploitation and unsafe working conditions in an industry where companies have in the past blacklisted workers for raising safety concerns? The best protection for migrant workers and all workers is to be a member of a trade union. For more information on how to join go to:

www.ucatt.org.uk
www.unitetheunion.org
www.gmbunion.org

Blacklisted workers still fighting for justice

The ongoing case being fought by the blacklisted building workers and their trade unions is making steady progress in the High Court.

Over 3,000 building workers were blacklisted by major UK construction companies and their details held on an illegal database. Workers who were prepared to stand up for the right to work in safe conditions were prevented from working and as a consequence thousands of people's lives were affected.

The long battle for justice has been a remarkable insight into how the state conspired with industry over decades to stop trade union reps and activists getting a job. Along the way it was revealed that Police Special Branches around the country were involved in providing information that kept blacklisted individuals out of work.

And now, as recently as the 21 January 2016, the High Court heard how construction companies had destroyed evidence and failed to disclose information.

In October 2015 eight of the top UK construction employers admitted that they were guilty of blacklisting. So the struggle now is to secure compensation that reflects the loss of earnings, breaches of human rights and defamation.

At a two day hearing in December, John Hendy QC told the court that the estimated total damages for the 600 claimants is in the region of £60-70million. Lawyers on behalf of blacklisted workers had applied to use the expertise of Dr Victoria Wass from Cardiff Business School. She is one of the leading labour market economists in the UK and has acted as an expert witness in numerous high profile cases in the past.

The companies' legal team argued against the use of Dr. Wass because the 'regression analysis' she was using was 'too complicated' and could not be fully understood by the court (even though virtually every university student in the world is taught regression analysis as a standard statistical tool nowadays).

Dr Wass is able to provide a high level of precision in her estimates of loss because she has restricted access to micro data from the Office of National Statistics labour market database. Without an ounce of irony, lawyers for the blacklisting companies told the court that having access to ONS personal sensitive information could potentially be a breach of human rights and data protection!

In the end, Lord Supperstone and Master Leslie refused the claimants submission - once again, judges finding in favour of big business and against the interests of blacklisted workers. This may be a minor setback in a small skirmish but we are still going to win the war. The next provisional hearing date is 1st February 2016. Full trial is set to start in May 2016 and will last 10 weeks. (Source: blacklist Support Group)

International Workers Memorial Day Thursday 28 April 2016

The final arrangements for this year's event to mark International Workers Memorial Day (IWMD) in London are soon to be announced and will be posted on the London Hazards Centre and TUC websites.

The theme for the day is "Strong Laws - Strong enforcement - Strong Unions" because across the world we are seeing growing attacks on health and safety protection, including in Britain where the Government have removed protection from millions of self-employed workers.

The purpose behind Workers' Memorial Day has always been to "remember the dead: fight for the living". This can best be done by building trade union organisation, and campaigning for stricter enforcement with higher penalties for breaches of health & safety law.

There will be a rally and vigil around the statue of the building worker at Tower Hill (opposite the tube station and on the same side as the Tower of London). This is expected to start at 10:30 am. Francis O'Grady, General Secretary of the TUC will be leading the speakers.

Support IWMD in London and fight for strong laws, strong enforcement and strong unions. Find out more once the details of the final arrangements are available on 15 March 2016. Check the London Hazards Centre www.lhc.org.uk and TUC www.tuc.org.uk/WMD2016 websites.



UNION REPS – SWORDS OF CLIMATE JUSTICE

ment. It is a global phenomenon and a strategy for union renewal. Activity has continued despite the economic downturn and Tory governments. I've described some of these initiatives in my book, *Workers and Unions for Climate Solidarity* (Routledge 2015)

Some union reps have promoted substantial energy efficiency measures, such as the installation of solar panels and wind turbines, modifications to heating and ventilation systems, changes to IT and lighting use, as well as other energy consumption measures at work. Similarly, union reps have negotiated workplace green travel plans, cycle to work schemes and public transport subsidies.

Apart from workplace committees discussing climate-related matters, a small number of union reps in both the private and public sectors have negotiated agreements with their employers on climate matters. Unions within energy firm EDF have negotiated an international agreement on corporate responsibility, which includes commitments to tackle climate change.

Unions at Western Power Distribution expanded the remit of their safety committee to include environmental matters and to allow union environment reps to sit on the body. These reps get time off for training. Unions negotiated an agreement at South Thames College on environment reps. Union reps at Bristol City Council negotiated a full formal green reps agreement with facility time – with councils from Stockport to Plymouth subsequently following.

Health and safety has already had an important influence on union reps engaging with climate change. Just transition

was originally developed in the 1970s by the US trade unionist Tony Mazzocchi, who sought to find a solution for workers in hazardous sunset industries, often treated “worse than dirt” when it came to their working lives. He generalised the idea of a superfund to climate matters in the late 1980s. Now even the UN climate agreement refers to the idea, thanks to union pressure.

Many safety reps use their role in workplaces to take up climate issues. When climate change first came on the scene, the discussion involved “green stewards” demanding similar sorts of powers to safety reps. Although legal rights to act on climate change at work have not been enacted in the UK, trade unionists have still used their skills, expertise and sometimes their facility time to engage with the issues.

There are some efforts to organise rank-and-file networks across the unions on climate change. The “One Million Climate Jobs” campaign organised by the Campaign against Climate Change Trade Union Committee is a good example that has resonated widely. Climate activists in the unions could learn a great deal from the Hazards campaign, which has set the safety agenda and campaigned effectively over many years.

For the sake of our members and for working class people everywhere, trade unionists should take up climate change with renewed vigour. We have a planet to lose and a world to win. Paul Hampton, FBU head of research and policy.

To find out more about ‘One million climate jobs’ and the ‘Campaign against Climate Change Trade Union Committee’ go to www.campaigncc.org/unions.shtml

Climate change represents one of the greatest long term challenges facing working people over the next century.

Workers are among the first to experience the impacts of climate change, through floods and other extreme weather, adverse health impacts, food and energy price hikes, migration and the built environment changes. Workers are also expected to pay for climate mitigation and adaptation measures adopted by governments and business.

Given these imperatives, it is no surprise that trade unions have long taken an interest in climate change. Some 300 trade unionists took part in the recent UN climate talks in Paris, lobbying for the idea of a “just transition”

to be included in the agreement. Just transition sums up the idea that for the transition to a low-carbon economy to be fair, it must address the impacts on workers, including on employment, wages, taxes and social benefits.

Trade unionists across the globe have engaged with climate change for decades. Delegates at the TUC Congress have discussed it almost every years since the late 1980s. Workplace union reps have taken up climate change, with surveys indicating thousands of unionised workplaces involved in emissions reduction activities over the past decade.

This is one of the most positive developments in the recent history of the trade union move-

PHOTO: © MICK HOLDER

CSCS card fraud puts lives at risk

News that some training centres running courses for the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) were involved in organised cheating and widespread falsifying of test results, shook the industry last October.

The BBC investigation revealed that "a string of test centres were caught rigging health and safety exams".

CSCS cards are supposed to provide proof that individuals working on construction sites have the necessary training and qualifications to carry out their work. Most CSCS cards are valid for 3-5 years and there are 15 types of cards covering labourers and apprentices through to skilled workers, supervisory staff and those with academic qualifications. An essential element of being issued with a CSCS card is the completion of a health and safety test.

Since the BBC exposé several training centres were suspended and arrangements made for candidates to retake tests. But is this enough. The health & safety part of the scheme is fairly basic, but gives an introduction to the principles of working safely and safety law. The test has to be taken in English. This is so that non-English speaking workers learn how to communicate effectively and understand health and safety matters. Being able to understand what is going on around you in construction is essential. The inquest into the death of Renee Tkacik, from falling concrete on Crossrail, heard that as a Slovak speaker, he had to ask fellow workers in Spanish about

the safety procedures on site.

False and fraudulently obtained CSCS cards will lead to more accidents on sites. More workers injured and possibly killed. And what about the quality of work if these cards are forgeries or have been fraudulently obtained. With building companies desperate for skilled workers, a dangerous situation has to be averted now or the current reputation of the construction industry could be worsened

Based on the evidenced gathered by the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB), 6,000 individuals were notified in November that they will be required to re-sit their Health, Safety and Environment Test. The CSCS and CITB have so far revoked 4,615 fraudulent safety certificates. UCATT's Acting General Secretary, Brian Rye, said he welcomed this "decisive action ... and supports the action of the CSCS and CITB". The GMB has demanded that "those who issued the fraudulent cards be arrested and charged with serious criminal offences and jailed".

Meanwhile, the CSCS is urging employers to check the validity of all cards by either electronically reading the CSCS SmartCard or by using Card Checker via the CITB website, to make sure that invalid cards are not permitted on site.

The London Hazards Centre is concerned that damage limitation is the main issue for both the CSCS and CITB. Five test centres were involved in falsifying test results, but so far no news from the CITB/CSCS on anyone being prosecuted. As the GMB said "this could be the tip of the iceberg with many more service providers cheating the system".

Sleeping on the job

Forty-eight building workers were found to be sleeping in a Basildon office block being converted into 384 flats.

Essex Fire and Rescue Services contacted the Health & Safety Executive (HSE) in May 2015 to raise concerns over the safety of men sleeping in the former Fords offices.

The HSE inspected the site with Essex Fire and Rescue and concluded that there was a significant risk to life should there be a fire and issued a prohibition notice stopping workers from sleeping on the site. The forty-eight workers were subsequently found suitable sleeping accommodation away from the site.

Around 120 workers were on site when the inspection took place. The building was Ford's European headquarters until they moved out in 2010. The entire site was closed after a second prohibition notice was issued by

the HSE to protect all workers from fire hazards endangering their lives.

RGB (Plastering & Construction) Limited of Shrewsbury was fined for specific breaches of the Construction (Design & Management) Regulations 2015 covering risks from fire. They were fined £8,000 and ordered to pay £6,130 costs.

The Construction (Design & Management) Regulations apply to the whole of a construction project from conception to completion and requires companies to comply with the law to prevent risk of injury to workers.

After the hearing HSE Inspector Adam Hills said: "This case highlights the importance of ensuring those who undertake construction work have the relevant skills, knowledge, training and experience to do so. "There doesn't have to be an injury or incident for HSE to take action. If you irresponsibly endanger the lives of those who are simply trying to earn a living then HSE can and will take proactive action to protect them."

Source: Construction Enquirer December 2015

London Hazards Asbestos Group

The asbestos group has been established with the twin aims:

- To campaign to eradicate asbestos throughout London and support families seeking to get it removed.
- To work with victim support groups, victims and families of victims offering support, advice and assistance with welfare benefits and compensation claims

Three legal firms will be able to offer specialist advice independent of the London Hazards Centre. They will be able to provide advice on possible legal action and give advice and assistance in making an application for benefits.

Leigh Day
solicitors
Priory House
25 St John's Lane
London EC1M 4LB
Tel: 0207 650 1200

Pattinson & Brewer
solicitors
4th Floor
11 Pilgrim Street
London EC4V 6RN
Tel: 0845 567 1890

Thompsons
solicitors
Congress House
Great Russell Street
London WC1B 3LW
Tel: 0800 022 4224

Want free and confidential advice on health & safety?

Are you worried about a health and safety issue at work or at home? If you are, give the London Hazards Centre a call on our confidential telephone advice line for up-to-date information to help you sort out your problem.

Call 0207 527 5107 on a Monday or Tuesday between 10:30 am – 3:30 pm. If the advisers are busy, please leave a message and they will call you back.