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EDITORS: GREENWOOD & WILKINSON

UNIONS - COMPANY JOINT STATEMENT -- THE INSIDE STORY

HARD TARGET

In an effort to defuse a confrontation between Network Owners (NOs) and local Network Managers over leakage targets and work rotas, UNISON, GMB and AMICUS joined UU to agree and issue a joint statement announcing our shared goals.

In some areas, managers have told their NOs to do full weeks of leakage detection work, specifically 'box-bashing' (or 'open sounding', which involves walking through areas sounding mains apparatus and listening for leaks).

Meanwhile NOs are arguing that, in effect, their role is being changed to merely that of a Leakage Contractor. They contest that when the NO role was developed only part of the duties where leakage, and much of that would be 'intelligent' (or system-based) leakage analysis. At an early stage, 40% of NO activities became the accepted commitment to leakage in the majority of areas.

With demanding DWI (Drinking Water Inspectorate) targets on DG2 (poor pressure) and DG3 (unplanned no waters) as well as network integrity, rehab and site maintenance it is hardly surprising the NOs feel pulled in all directions.

Not too long ago, NOs and Customer Liaison Officers (CLOs) were one role, and many believe the two split roles represent a reduction in the skills and responsibilities

of the old Network Controller position. A move to ostensibly a Leakage Controller role is a further denigration. NCs who took the new NO role did soon the guarantee that it was not going to be a Leakage Controller job. The Unions appreciate these concerns and have made this clear to management.

Equally, the Unions understand the importance to the business (and therefore to us all) of hitting leakage targets. To fail this important OFWAT target has a massive financial impact on UU. The need to hit the rolling average is paramount for the Company's well-being; it is expected to be only a temporary emphasis on leakage and the two sides have agreed to discuss a future strategy for leakage.

In the spirit of co-operation, the Unions-Company joint statement states our shared goals, while recognising the differences we have. It has been agreed that, through local discussion and agreement, NOs can do more leakage activities per week *on a voluntary basis* to help the company hit these difficult targets.

Leakage at record low and work continues

It is heartening that the latest results released by Ofwat show that leakage in England and Wales fell by 127 million litres per day in 2007-08 to its lowest ever level. This is part of an overall pattern which has shown reduction by more than a third since privatisation in 1989.

All companies have met or bettered their leakage targets, the result of significant investment and effort in this area and demonstration of a real commitment by the water industry to play its role in using water wisely. It will never be possible to reduce leakage to zero, and levels will always be too high for some, but managing leakage in a sustainable way is where the industry is and should continue to be.

(Press release Water UK July 2008)

European Week Of Health & Safety

RISKY BUSINESS

This year's European Week Of Health & Safety, starting on 20 October, is part of a two-year campaign on Risk Assessment.

While Risk Assessment may lack the sparkle of previous safety campaigns, it is true to say that it is the fundamental safety activity we can carry out each day. Assessing risks is the foundation to **Health and Safety At Work**. Without it, the whole of our safety culture collapses like a house of cards.

The campaign, fully supported by UNISON, is aimed at a wide range of stakeholders such as employers, workers and safety reps, and is intended to promote the benefits of completing and implementing risk assessments.

Also, the campaign seeks to demystify the process of conducting risk assessments to show that it is not complicated, bureaucratic or a task only for experts.

If you wish to get involved in the campaign or feel you have something to contribute, then why not speak to your local UNISON Safety, Health & Environment Rep?

Alternatively, if you just want to find out more about this very important campaign visit hse.gov.uk/campaigns/euroweek or osha.europa.eu/en/campaigns/hw2008

A VIRTUAL BRANCH...

in a real world

Our Branch has been selected as the Regional representative in UNISON's experimental 'virtual branch' programme.

Adapted from an Australian prototype, where union members are brought together across vast distances on a union website, UNISON has selected 12 branches, one from each of its regions, to trial this new initiative.

United Utilities Branch was selected because of the wide geographical area it covers, with its spread of members from as far afield as Inverness (Forres) and London (Westminster) and although its not quite the Australian outback it's still rather vast on the UK scale of things! There are also numerous remote sites in the North West region, in the Lake District, the Peak Forest and so on, where workers carry out isolated UU activities.

The website will act as a focal point, and, quite literally, a forum for

members who fell distant from the main body of the Branch, located in the urban centres of the North West; there will be the opportunity to ask and get answers to more straightforward union queries, plus a Frequently-Asked-Questions section. Appropriate Branch Officers will respond to the more in-depth enquiries.

There will be separate links to the different companies and businesses under the UU Branch umbrella, but it is hoped that when it's fully up and running it will allow members across the different sectors to share ideas and help one another.

In these difficult times of division and diversification we hope the virtual branch will create union in our disparate membership. Check it out...

A Reader Writes...

Our features in U3 issue 43 highlighting the failure of site maintenance and grass cutting at UU sites struck a chord with a reader.

Sirs,

I thought you might like to know about what used to be a flagship site in the good old days. The number of friends and relatives that visit us say they can't believe how far down the grounds have gone.

I'm also amazed at the number of officials visiting the site over the years who have not mentioned it when back in their plush offices in Warrington or wherever.

Risk Assessment used to play a part – does it no longer?

The state of this site should shame the company into doing something but I won't hold my breath.

Fred O'Neill, retired member



VERTEX PAY FIASCO

PAY RISE? WHAT PAY RISE?

UNISON is becoming frustrated with Vertex's prevarication over this year's pay negotiations. Despite your UNISON Reps best efforts to get Vertex to the pay table, for one reason or another management have been unable or unwilling to meet with us. We understand how this must seem to you, our members, but please be assured UNISON is doing everything it can to move this along to a successful conclusion.

On Pathways, Vertex has delayed meeting with us, initially, it said, to see the end of year financial results. That date passed and many other dates for meetings have also passed. At last we can tell you meetings should now have taken place in London, at the end of September and early October. Breath held.

And we are able (if not a little surprised) to report that on the

Tiger 2 contract, after some stern letter-writing from UNISON's Regional Officer, Norman Walker, a meeting took place in September with more to follow.

Both these negotiating groups have settlement dates that are now long gone. Now, nothing short of a speedy resolution and a decent percentage pay rise would satisfy a much beleaguered workforce.

Losing In The Percentage Game

For non-collectively bargained staff in Vertex things couldn't be any grimmer, for this year a group of them received no pay increase at all, at the same time discovering that their employer considered them poor performers.

In a year that began with 80% of staff no even getting a share of the annual bonus because the company failed to hit financial targets, this comes as a second cruel blow. Bonus payments are non-contractual so the unfairness of awarding a partial bonus to only the top 20% of 'performers' was outside UNISON's area of influence. Nevertheless, staff were resentful of a scheme that failed the many but through *discretionary* payments reward a select few.

Then, to hit staff when they were down, the lowest 20% of performers were awarded a nil pay rise for the year. While a declining system of rewards is expected with these Performance-Related Pay schemes, what wasn't expected was

that our members didn't even know they were in the lowest 20%. They went through the year with no issue being raised about the standard of their work.

But such is the reasoning behind Vertex's "Forced Distribution" scheme: no matter how good all the staff are, there always has to be a bottom 20% and these will always be financially disadvantaged.

It is the perfect breeding ground for a backbiting, divisive, ruthless, dispiriting work environment. Now how motivating is *that*?

If you feel you have been given an inappropriate performance rating raise it with your manager or your manager's manager. If you are still not satisfied ask your Rep about lodging a Formal Grievance.

AND SOME GOOD VERTEX NEWS

BOLTON & FORRES H&S COMMITTEES RELAUNCHED

UNISON representatives and Vertex Health & Safety management have been speaking constructively on how to make Health & Safety Committees work effectively again, and to encourage our members to actively take on the Health & Safety role.

Where we now have union-appointed Safety reps, specifically Bolton and Forres, it is pleasing to report that we have also successfully relaunched the **Safety Committees** there.

With this positive development, UNISON would now like to see this happening on a far wider basis, and encourage members to take up the Health & Safety role at the following locations: **Gemini; Hale Court; Pegasus House; Phoenix House; Dawson House (especially the Vertex-occupied areas such as Grove House, Bridge, Data Centre).**

If you feel you can help in this important area then contact **Dave Faulkner** (mobile 07811-778258) who will help in co-ordinating with Vertex Health & Safety management. UNISON has the best trained and well supported Safety Reps so why not give it a go?

The Third Eye TUC SURVEY

From the Top... In recent outings of this august column, The Eye had noted a marked increase in disciplinaries and sackings for what would normally be considered minor offences. From a well placed source The Eye now understands that this is a concerted effort, instigated in the upper echelons of UU, to order managers to discipline workers more often because, in the words of the High Command, "it keeps them on their toes!" And there are workers out there who still aren't in a union...

seeing through the spin...

down during an appraisal for having the temerity to castigate managers for booking their holidays online...during work time!!...

Groundhog Day... It is customary that once a year a Chief Executive of a large company pops his head out of his burrow to check the current climate in the business. And this is how Philip Green found himself at Franklaw Treatment Works meeting with the Process and Network Controllers there. And it would be fair to say the climate was chilly. Wantonly off-message, some controllers displayed ambivalence to the whole Employee Engagement initiative and expressed in no uncertain terms that the Company's business activities alienated rather than engaged the workforce. Philip was left ashen by some accounts. Time to get back into the burrow and wait until this Winter of Discontent has passed...

Live at the Witch Trials... An inevitable by-product of the performance culture that now holds UU in a vice-like grip is the concept of humiliation before your peers. This is prevalent in Water, where managers have solemnly informed staff that those found not completing daily scheduling sheets, checking the Real Time Dashboard twice daily, or using the Lone Worker system will be "named and shamed."

It can only be a matter of time before a ducking stool is installed in the grounds of Lingley Mere...

A cheap holiday in other people's misery... We hear much of what you should and shouldn't do on company PCs in relation to the internet, and UU management are swift enough to come down on staff should they contravene. The Eye hears a tale of a Vertex employee who was constantly being told off for internet use during working hours. It is alleged that said employee was then marked

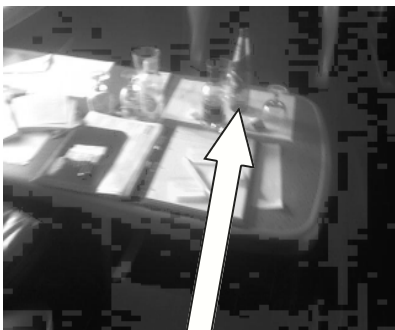
Talk Is (not so) Cheap... Good to see the business lobby are still keeping themselves very much onside with New Labour. Indeed, United Utilities were one of the companies in attendance at the Party's September conference in Manchester, where they funded a *New Statesman* fringe meeting with environment minister Phil Woolas – who was joined by UU director, Clive Elphick.

The topic at the get-together was "What price clean water?" Given the announcement of recent water price hikes and further misery for the beleaguered consumer, that'll be quite a high one, thanks...

WHERE'S YOUR BOTTLE?

It's mid-August and the Eye is contacted by a spy from a Virgin Rail train hurtling toward London...

Said spy is in the first class compartment and has just been amazed to see none other than UU's main man, Phil Green, board the train at Crewe and hunker down



The train table and the bottle of water

in an adjacent pew with a copy of *The Times*. However, the spy was even more amazed to see Mr Green – chief of one of the UK's largest water utilities and a man who fronts UU's *Tap Into Water*

campaign – order a bottle of still water (Harrogate Spring, to be exact) to whet his whistle. Now, the Eye wouldn't expect anyone to drink water from a tap in a train, but *surely* someone could provide our leader with one of those customised UU water bottles so recently publicised in

One+ so he can carry a supply of his own company's finest when on his travels? The Eye also hears that Mr G had words with Virgin staff about the lack of complimentary tea and coffee on offer...

What Workers Really Want

Increased workload, pay, and stress are the biggest issues facing people at work according to a TUC report.

What Do Workers Want?, based on a You Gov poll of more than 2500 workers, shows that:
 > Nearly half (46%) complained they had a heavier workload than before;
 > 42% said their pay has not kept pace with the cost of living;
 > Over a third (39%) are facing increased levels of stress.

Other key complaints include not getting the same pay as people doing similar jobs in other organisations (31%), poor promotion



prospects (30%), lack of training (27%), unfair pay structures (26%), boring or repetitive work (24%) and longer hours (23%).

A significant number of those interviewed complained of serious problems at work. There were concerns about bullying (14%), cuts in pension provision or inadequate pensions (10%), and an unsafe working environment (10%).

The most commonly reported discrimination was that of age (3%), ahead of gender (2%) and sexuality and race (1%).

Six out of ten workers, both union members and those not in a union, believe unions do a vital job – with only one in five saying unions are no longer relevant

The top issue workers want unions to raise with government is more protection for the low paid against exploitation by employers (81%) followed by compulsory employer contributions to pensions (70%) and closing the pay divide between men and women (67%).

The big issues workers want unions to raise with employers are pay (86%), pensions (80%), and safety (77%), followed by excessive workload (72%), stress (69%) and training (69%).

Clean Water Review Round-Up

The Process Controller Review now has figures on the table for standby, equating to just about £50 (with £11 pensionable) for weekdays, and about £75 (£16 pensionable) for weekend days. A first year incentive (inducement?) payment will make weekend payments worth about £85 for twelve months. Controllers will have their home broadband paid for, to facilitate home working, especially out of hours and on standby. 22 new R7 roles will come from the main body of Process Controllers.

PMV Teams: Remarkably, UU are TUPEing workers into the company! 8 RPS PMV engineers, from 6 Oct, became United Utilities PMV engineers. Welcome aboard. And join UNISON.

Regulatory Controllers (Water Fittings) are awaiting the completion of the review before they find out if all the unfilled vacancies are to be filled. The calibre of applicants, we hear, was high; let's just hope that financial considerations don't get in the way of filling these important posts.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Domestic Violence & The Law Seminar -

8th November, 1 to 4.30pm at UNISON Regional Office, Manchester. (Women members, please)

National Women's Conference -

19th /21st February 2009, Southport

Should you wish to attend any of the above events, contact Diane at Branch office on 01925 838577

E.On: AN APOLOGY

The recent unfortunate remark by one of our executives, Mark Owen-Lloyd, that higher gas and electricity bills would mean "more money for us" may have mistakenly given our customers and members of the general public the impression that E.On directors are a pack of greedy, profit-crazed hyenas, who hold consumers in utter contempt, and that our corporate gatherings are little more than orgies of self-congratulation; where board members rub fifty pound notes against their exposed flesh and brag about the size of their Caribbean villas.

We apologise unreservedly for this comment that was clearly inappropriate. We completely understand, and have great concern for, the difficulties facing UK consumers in terms of high energy bills and wish to stress that in no way is this the company's view of the very serious issue of fuel poverty.

We have launched an investigation into the context of the comment, because "It will make more money for us" is clearly loaded with ambiguity when given in response to a question on how gas and oil prices could be affected by a harsh winter.

Should our investigation reveal culpability, Mr Owen Lloyd may well be punished with a higher bonus payment in the fiscal year ahead, and further humiliated by the provision of a top-of-the-range Audi.

Dr Paul Gollum
E. On Chief Executive

PG TIPS

In U3's regular column, Phil Green, the main man at UU, gives helpful advice to staff...

Phil, I recently took your advice about popping into the pub for a pint after work, whilst wearing my United Utilities uniform. After purchasing my drink I was verbally abused by a group of villagers, furious about the closure of the local Post Office and by a pensioner who was angry at the rise in water bills. Upon leaving the pub I discovered my van propped-up on bricks; its wheels missing and obscenities daubed all over it in red paint. This unfortunate episode resulted in me getting a final written warning for gross misconduct. Must you offer tips like this to your staff?

Steve Diggle, Network Ops

Steve, words fail me. But on the positive side, it will keep you on your toes!

Phil

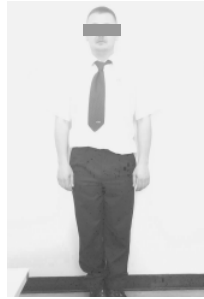
ARE YOU A PENSIONS CHAMPION?

Following countless years of unstinting service, Mighty Joe Deggen (above) is to stand down as the Electricity Service Pension Scheme (for Water Employees) Pensions Trustee Director in December this year. Which means we'll have a vacancy. If you are a member of the ESPS and have an interest in pensions (and UNISON offer training courses and excellent support), and you want to make sure your pensions and your colleagues' pensions are managed safely, then give Joe a call on 07919 334762 or via Branch Office.



The Other "Other" Phillip Green's Fashion Extravaganza!

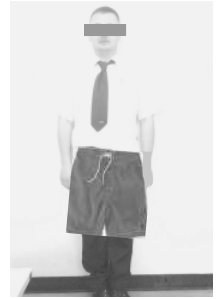
Welcome to the Exclusive Preview of the 2008 UU Fashion Spectacular. U3 is honoured to host this preview featuring all the latest designs in smart, casual pub wear—here is the full range of clothes you can be proud to wear...



Evening wear



Leisure wear



Beach wear

Next Issue...

Kate Moss models United Utilities PPE catalogue.



PHONE-A-PHOBIA

If you have a phobia but are reluctant to tell your private occupational health provider, you can now call the all-new U3 Phone-A-Phobia line!!!!

Simply TEXT "U3" followed by the number...



FEAR OF TENNIS	6-1 6-3 6-4
FEAR OF NEW FOOTBALL SEASON	0-0 0-0 0-0
FEAR OF THE DEVIL	666
FEAR OF THE DEVIL'S NEIGHBOURS	665 OR 667
FEAR OF TELLING PRIVATE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH COMPANIES ABOUT YOUR PHOBIA IN CASE THEY PASS IT ON TO THEIR INSURANCE DEPARTMENTS!	THIS LINE HAS BEEN CLOSED DOWN

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*Calls may be recorded or monitored for training purposes or to improve our quality of service.

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