

Link Up

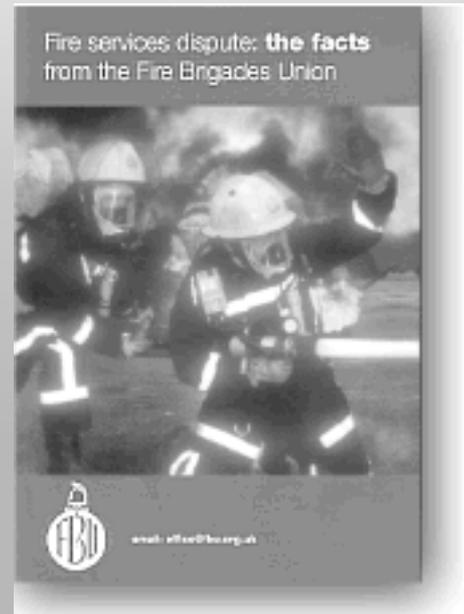
The Voice of the York & District Trades Union Council

Firefighters Dispute

TUC wants restrictions on the use of mobile phones for drivers

York Central Development

York TUC would like to wish everyone a Safe and Happy Christmas & New Year



Comment

A fresh start for 2003

This issue has been produced in support of the firefighters in their claim for a salary befitting their job.

York TUC has been concerned that there has been a break down of relations between the trade union movement and the Labour government.

We sincerely hope that by the time you will read this edition of Link Up that the firefighters will be successful in their claim.

Just as important is that the New Year will perhaps bring a fresh start and harmonious relationship between Tony Blair's government and the trade union movement

York and District Trades Union Council and Link Up wishes all our supporters a Happy Christmas and New Year.

Tim Short, Editor.

Link Up is published three to four times a year and is available through TUC affiliated branches and a small number of copies can be obtained from public libraries in and around York.

Trade union members of affiliated branches are welcome to attend Delegate meetings, provided that they make themselves known to the President or Secretary before the start of the meeting.

Meetings are held on the first thursday in each month at the TGWU offices, Nunnery Lane, York. Meetings start at 19.30 hours.

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NOTICE

If your branch wants the Trades Union Council to assist in anyway, phone one of the numbers on the back page.

Link Up welcomes any articles from affiliated branches. The articles should be not more than 300 words. the Editor reserves the right to shorten articles because of space. Articles should be submitted by the branch secretary and on official paper.

No exemptions for mobiles -

TUC reply to consultation document

The TUC has supported a ban on the use of mobile phones whilst driving.

In their response to the Department of Transport's consultation paper, *Mobile Phones and Driving - Proposal for an offence of using a hand-held mobile phone while driving*, the TUC has said that the ban should also include text messaging and the use of hands free equipment.

They believe that there should not any exemptions as this would be confusing.

The prohibition should include causing or permitting use of phones and should also cover employers who expect their employees to use phones or be available for use while driving.

In support of their decision, the TUC says that there is sufficient evidence that the distractions of using a mobile phone whilst driving is potentially hazardous to warrant a ban. In some cases these distractions are

physical and cognitive, e.g. texting, dialling and concentrating on what the other person is saying. In some cases unions have reported that drivers have had to participate in a conference call. Voice activation dialling is no answer to

ban should also include text messaging and the use of hands free equipment
TUC

minimize the distraction. Hands free equipment can also cause problems as people still need to see their figures to dial.

The danger comes from operating the equipment rather than being the driver. The TUC, however, say that it would be permissible to use mobile phones if the vehicle is stationary, such as in a traffic jam or parked at the side of the road.

Enforcement of any ban will be a problem say the TUC, but this will be no different to other areas of road traffic law where abuses occur. They expect that such enforcement should be by self-regulation either by individual drivers or their employers. The TUC is of the opinion that where the employer encourages or permits the use of mobile phones any action should be against the employer, but such action would not absolve the driver of any responsibility. although this

Although the TUC has said that exemptions would cause confusion, they recognize that some workers use telephony for their work whilst driving, e.g. emergency services.

Among other measures for the implementation of a ban, the TUC would like the Health and Safety Commission to produce an Approved Code of Practice or Guidance.

We are becoming a sickie nation says TUC

Commenting on the workplace health and safety statistics released early December, TUC General Secretary John Monks said:

"Britain is becoming a 'sickie nation' because of the stresses and strains of the modern workplace. If strikes were causing the loss of 40 million days a year, there would be howls of outrage and immediate legislation. But justi-

fied outrage about work-related illness and injury seems to come only from trade unions.

Employers need to wake up and take action to make the working environment safer and less stressful, and the Government needs to deliver the resources to help employers prevent injuries and ill health and get people back to fitness and back to work, with more money for the HSE a top priority."



John Monks, General Secretary TUC, "We are becoming a sicker nation."

Firefighters deserve better

YTUC is extremely saddened by the treatment that the firefighters are receiving from a Labour government

The York and District Trades Union Council (YTUC) is wholeheartedly supporting the Fire Brigades Union in their dispute to obtain professional pay.

At the YTUC December meeting, delegates heard the FBU local branch chairman outline the background to the dispute and how negotiations have been affected by government intervention.

He stressed that all the firefighters were doing was to gain recognition that, since the last national strike in 1977, their wages had slipped behind.

He emphasized that the FBU had not initially mentioned a 40% rise. This was a figure that had been based on research studies, Labour Research Department and an independent employment consultants, who Link Up believes to be business consultants Ernst Young.

The FBU have carried out extensive research and have concluded that £30,000 is the going rate for the job.

The government now classifies the firefighter as profession-

als, but their pay is still linked to that of manual workers.

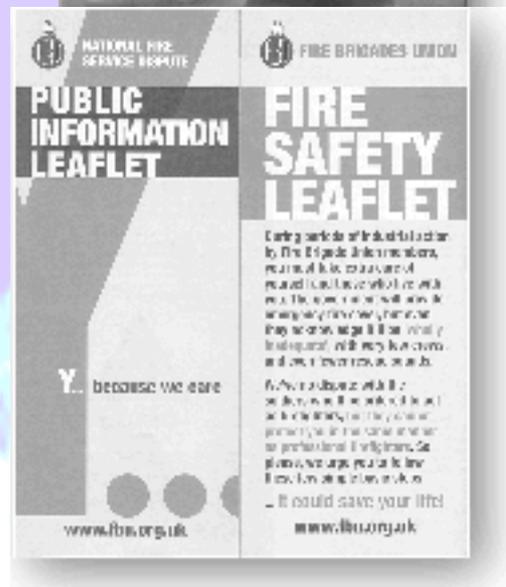
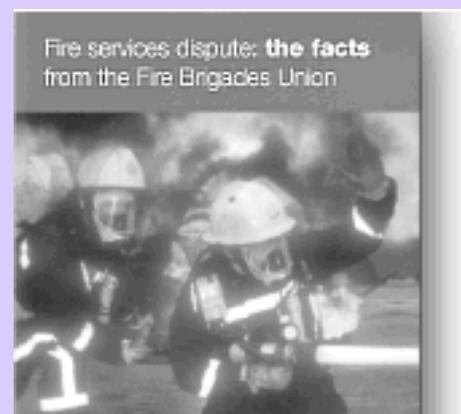
A professional firefighter is paid £21,531 after a four year training. There is no provision in the annual salary for shift allowance and allowances for having to sleep at the station because of being on-call. There is no paid increments until after 15 years service when a firefighter gets an additional £960 per year.

"It was absurd that the government should be pressing for further job cuts under the modernization proposals when the fire service was already suffering from manpower cuts." The FBU claims that in 2000 there was a shortage of 20% in the establishment for retained firefighters.

The government say that as part of the modernization package joint emergency control centres should be established. The FBU have said that

these would be unworkable as fire control staff are trained in advising the public on the action to be taken until the firefighters arrive.

The government has maintained that the FBU should take part in the Bain review, however,



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the FBU has over the years participated in many reviews, but the findings have been rejected by the Fire Service Management and the government have argued against the findings.

The negotiations have been knocked off course more than once

**Agreement.....was
robust and practical ap-
proach.**
Link Up
John Monks

by government interference.

The TUC has been instrumental in constructing a draft pay and modernization agreement with the employers, Fire Service Employers. The TUC General Secretary, John Monks, at the TUC Organize 2002 conference said, "In my view this (draft agreement)

was a robust and practical approach. The employers liked it and we assumed that the government did too."

Sadly, the government did not like it and ACAS are now assisting in trying to resolve this dispute.

YTUC is extremely saddened by the treatment that the firefighters are receiving from a Labour government that it believes are carrying out Thatcherite trade union policies.

The *family row* referred to by John Monks may take a long time to be forgotten by the trade union movement. The government appears to be able to set aside money for a war with Iraq and for bailing

out train operators, but not for those people on whom we depend for our safety and welfare.

Hugh Bayley to Meet Trade Unions

The York and District Trades Union Council is to meet Hugh Bayley MP in the New Year to discuss trade union and Labour Party relations.

YTUC has been concerned for some time about the apparent alienation of the trade union movement from Labour Party policy.

Some government legislation has been welcomed by trade unions, however, it is generally felt that the movement generally is being ignored.

The invitation to meet was an initiative from Hugh Bayley

See next page for Hugh Bayley's article.

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Why I Left the RMT.....

Hugh Bayley MP for York

I have been a trade union member all my working life and a full-time official negotiating for nurses, ambulance officers and NHS clerical staff for seven years. So it is with sadness that I resign from RMT.

I joined RMT when it offered to sponsor York Labour Party shortly after I was first elected as the city's MP. I have worked closely with rail unions – TSSA and ASLEF as well as RMT – opposing rail privatisation and fighting to keep York carriage works open. Together with other Labour MPs I stopped the Tories seizing the assets of the British Rail pension funds.

I shall continue to work with York's rail union despite RMT's decision to stop funding York Labour Party.

When Bob Crow was elected General Secretary of RMT this spring he wrote to tell the RMT MPs that the union had decided to make support for Labour Party constituency development plans conditional upon the MPs supporting four policies – public ownership of the railways; increased employment of British seafarers; repeal of anti-trade union legislation; and opposition to the government's plans for a public pri-

vate partnership on the London underground.

Two of the policies – public ownership and London underground – were put to the Labour Party Conference but not supported, so they could not be backed by RMT MPs in the government, including John Prescott and Robin Cook. But even if the RMT MPs had supported the policies, we decided as a matter of principle that we could not accept donations to the Labour Party if strings were attached, requiring us to raise questions or pursue specific policies in Parliament. That would be just like Tory MPs taking cash for questions. We met the RMT leadership to explain our position and RMT subsequently terminated their funding for our constituency Labour parties.

These developments do not affect other unions, or the long-standing links between Labour and the trade union movement. Other Labour-affiliated unions make donations to the party because they want a Labour government. They lobby for particular policies (the minimum wage, employment rights, etc) but they do not pay money to the party in return for favours in Parliament.

I understand why many RMT

members want the government to renationalise the railways, but the union will have less influence now that it has broken its links with Prescott, Cook, Frank Dobson and the rest of us. But, it is up to them to decide what to do with the union's money.

Trade unions are as important as ever. They protect people's rights at work and they give them a voice. I remain a committed trade unionist and I have rejoined my old union, BECTU, the television technicians union.

The RMT has been invited to produce an article giving their view.

Link Up occasionally invites someone to write an article for Link Up. The subject is of their choosing and the article is published unedited.

Hugh Bayley has in the past written for Link Up.

YTUC to Discuss Teardrop Plans

Delegates to the York and District Trades Union Council are to consider the City of York Council's proposals for the area land bounded by the railway and Lee-man Road, known as the Tear Drop or York site, at their meeting in January.

The City of York Council is currently holding a series of exhibition around the City so that people comment on the proposals. Comments will have to be submitted by 20 January so the Council officials can present them to the Planning Committee on 27 February.

The Council aim is to:

- create a modern central business district and increase housing choice

- ensure a high quality, attractive, exciting, and sustainable design and mix of activity
- make that design complementary to the historic heart of York
- expand and diversify the urban economy.

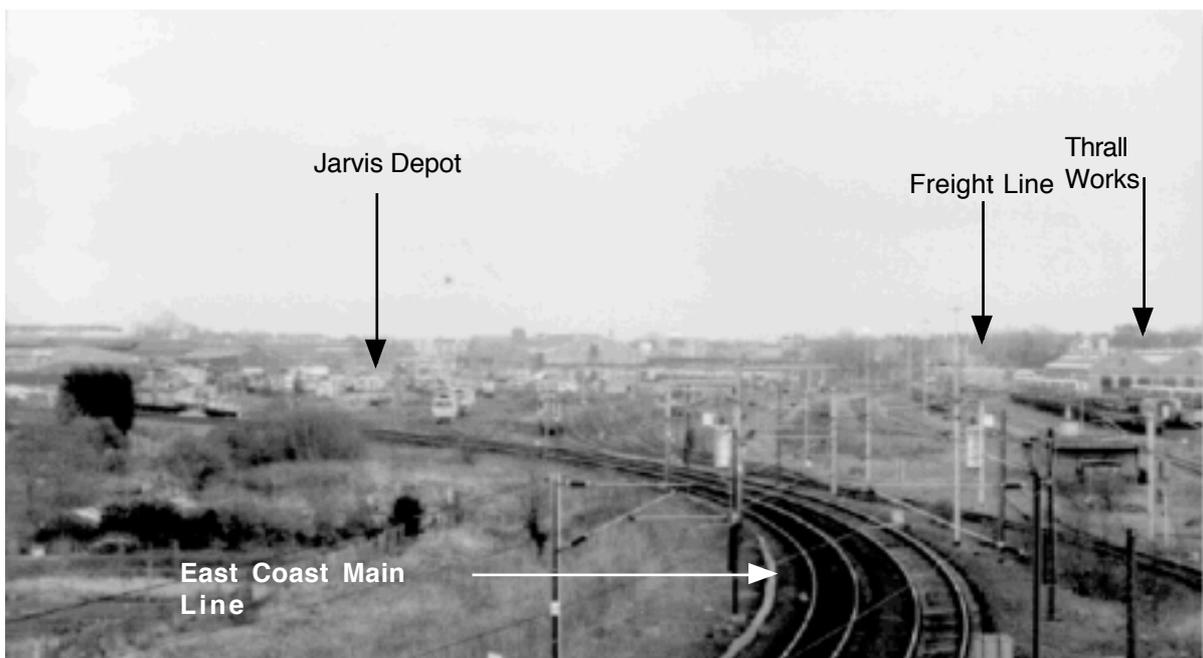
The Council state that they want to see comprehensive rather than piecemeal development of the site, so that its full potential can be realized. The only business development referred to in the brief is that of office development and mention is made industrial or commercial premises.

When there was consultation on the carriage works site (Holgate Park), YTUC expressed

the view that the whole of the site should be reserved for industrial development rather than being a mixed development that could cause potential planning problems later on.

City of York Council Exhibitions

Are being held throughout the city, details can be found on their web site: www.york.gov.uk



York Central development site from Water End

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Some of the information in Link Up is drawn from documents and information from the following sources:

**Labour Research
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www.tuc.org.uk**

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**The views expressed in
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those of the York and
District Trades Union
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