

Livewire

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Women Aid Campaign



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FRIZZELL

SCOTTISHPOWER PAY PROTECTION

UNISON has been negotiating with ScottishPower for the last 12 months over company proposals to remove lifetime salary protection. This has been a long established policy over many years which has facilitated many re-organisations and helped avoid industrial unrest. Staff who would otherwise have faced significant cuts in their salary have been protected during and after re-organisations and the company has had a financial incentive to find members suitable work commensurate with their salary

The company initially proposed removing all salary protection after 24 months. This was roundly rejected by all trade unions and the company was forced to return to the negotiating table. The trade unions have pointed out that extended periods of protection are lawful provided that there is nothing discriminatory about who benefits from them. It is however accepted that Equal Pay legislation means there are complex legal arguments about whether specific protections may or may not comply with legislation and whilst trying to ensure members are not adversely affected by any new policy UNISON needs to bear these in mind.

Since the start of the negotiations a number of staff have been successfully removed from red-circled positions, however there are still 119 red circled staff with a few more expected from the current restructure. The Company have put those affected into four categories: (1) Transferred between businesses (2) Above the maximum for grade/band (possibly due to long service) (3) Personal Grades and (4) Red circled due to restructure/regrading. The Company have provided the unions with up to date details including where they are, why they are red circled and what the financial effects of

removing red circling would be on staff.

Members will understandably have great concerns about the level of Company commitment to finding staff appropriately paid jobs if they know salary protection is limited. A detailed process is being proposed which provides for three years salary protection and a clear obligation on the company during this period to try and find suitable alternative employment for anyone adversely affected by re-organisations. This includes a formal appeals / grievance procedure with an escalation route right up to the level of the Company Council. Where an employee has been unsuccessful in finding other jobs or there have been no suitable jobs available during the three years, UNISON has proposed that the company should include a choice of VSS at a meaningful rate as a final alternative option to downgrading. This would provide a financial incentive for the Company to get employees out of red circling as soon as possible. In order to assist with redeployment jobs should not be advertised externally unless it can be shown that there was no current employee had the necessary skill for the role.

Following a final negotiating meeting at the beginning of November we now have a set of proposals available for review with members. The unions will be arranging appropriate consultation over the next few weeks and will be meeting with the company again before Christmas to feed back issues and concerns. Please can you make sure you contact your stewards with any views and comments you have and if you know of any colleagues, who are not members of the union, make sure you ask them to join up as a matter of urgency?

RESTRUCTURE

The current shambles, otherwise known as the restructure, should be put out of its misery before it does any more damage, particularly to those impacted individuals who are still in limbo suffering uncertainty and stress after (in some cases) a working lifetime of loyal service.

Where did it go wrong? Everywhere – from the first day, when impacted employees found out their fate at a public slide show, to the subsequent humiliation of having to appeal a decision made not by immediate supervisors but by a faceless panel with no inside knowledge of the jobs they were eliminating.

What's that? Nobody redundant? Jobs for all? Oh yes, the "opportunity" to join the other remnants of the exercise in a vast tank of resources for as yet unannounced Projects, drifting here and there like fish, all very relaxing for the tank makers no doubt.

But seriously, what went wrong? After all a bunch of highly paid people came up with this thing. To put it down to

plain ineptitude or vindictiveness would be unfair. I believe it is the classic case of creating the results first, then deciding how to achieve those results. Not, as logic might suggest: look at the processes – decide changes, if any – reduce the core head count if feasible. No, I believe it was done back to front:

Pre-defined result: reduce the core head count – decide which jobs are going in order to fit this result – have a public announcement so that impacted and non-impacted can find out together.



The following story has been written by a manager affected by the current restructure.

'Restructured, unhappy, but still here'

Communication, a topic that is close to the hearts of ScottishPower senior Management, well so they say. You know what I'm talking about Voice of the Customer the Care Model, Health & Safety, "LEAN", there is always something new.

Strange however when Good Communication is essential to the Harmony of good working relationships between Senior Managers and the workforce it goes badly wrong.

This is what has happened with the Energy Retail Business restructure process, the "PEARL" has become nothing more than colourless glass.

It seems that the best way to tell people that their role does not exist anymore is to put everyone in a room and show the whole workforce the vision of the future which includes all the new section structures.

It's at this point that some of us (the impacted ones) suddenly realise our jobs are not on the new structure. To say this is annoying is an understatement, you are effectively discarded in Public.

To make things worse you then have to endure a lengthy appeals process in which you are pressurised to apply for roles, maybe this is to help their consciences.

It does seem strange to be made redundant, but don't worry this is only technically there will be a role for you, we just don't have a clue what it will be.

Retired Members Section

As a newly retired member I was privileged to attend the Retired Members Conference in October. It was very enlightening to see how much the retired members of Unison do. Not only in debating motions and making recommendations to improve living conditions for the 143,000 UNISON pensioners but for the

populace of Britain in general regardless of age. Perhaps the additional amount of free time that they have enables them to keep abreast with

Government legislation and how it affects everyone but it has certainly dispelled any thoughts I might have had that they are passed it! Some of the delegates highlighted

anomalies in Government legislation that were bizarre to say the least and I have returned with many questions that will be debated at the Branch Executive Committee Meeting in October and the next ScottishPower Pension Forum early in November. Please dispel any thoughts that you might have had that because I retired I

would cease to be working for your benefit. I may not be able to continue to individually represent you in ScottishPower but your interests will always be close to my heart and I will continue to do all that I can through my UNISON membership.

Shirley Vickery
Former Branch President

Stress Survey

UNISON are re-running the Stress survey which last year showed a significant number of members, especially in call centres suffering from stress. Has there been any progress since then? Please take time to fill in the enclosed stress survey and send back in the pre paid envelope.

UNION STEWARDS

WHO IS YOUR STEWARD?

Do you know who your local steward is? If not, it may be because your workplace does not have one because the post is vacant. Whilst most members in our branch work in one of the main locations where we have a number of stewards, members in some of the smaller workplaces are often without adequate representation.

Even in some of the larger call centres such as Warrington there are vacancies. Being a UNISON steward can be a very fulfilling experience. You are able to speak up for others

around you, help represent those who need our help and take a more active role in some of the day to day decisions affecting you and your colleagues.

All UNISON stewards receive full training through UNISON and TUC courses so you know what to expect, and a more experienced steward act as mentors to assist as you get to grips with the ups and downs of the job.

UNISON is one of four unions recognised in ScottishPower so you are entitled to carry out your trade union duties during working hours. Although the role is voluntary, the

company meets the costs of all expenses incurred in any company meetings and UNISON pays all expenses for any trade union meetings which you may attend in the evenings or weekends. You will never be out of pocket for trade union work.

If you would like to help your union remain a strong and independent voice in the workplace, looking after your interests then we would welcome any volunteers who are willing to take up a role as a steward in UNISON. Even if you only have limited time you can still help by volunteering to act as a point of contact for your workplace. If you would be

willing, please contact either one of your local stewards or the Branch Secretary or Branch office whose details you will find below:

Branch Office

01352 759953 or e-mail branch-office@unison-manweb.freeserve.co.uk

Branch Secretary

David Read – 01244 653076 or e-mail david.read@manweb.co.uk



Can Britannia Building Society help you?

Mortgages

If you are concerned about your current mortgage deal or wondering how you will even get a mortgage, then don't forget Britannia Building Society are your official UNISON Building Society and what's more, we're here to help.

If you would like any mortgage advice including a free protection review, then give us a call. With over 45 years of UNISON member experience, we offer free advice either face to face or over the phone.

Don't forget all UNISON members and staff will receive £150 cash back when they bring their mortgage to Britannia.

YOUR HOME MAY BE REPOSSESSED IF YOU DO NOT KEEP UP REPAYMENTS ON YOUR MORTGAGE

Savings

We also have a full range of savings and investment products including the Unison Cash ISA which is available to all members who haven't taken an ISA this year or topped up an existing ISA since 6th April 2008. In addition to this, we will provide a complimentary £5 start voucher to open your account. If you cannot use the voucher towards an ISA we will also accept it towards one of football accounts* Why not see if we can make your savings grow or increase your monthly income. For more information please call or email:

Rachel Dennis 077369 29346 or Email: rachel.dennis@britannia.co.uk

Don't forget to ask about our "Recommend a friend" scheme which rewards you with a gift when you open an account for you and a friend/colleague

STRESS



Sometimes the onset of stress is sudden because of, for example, a flat tyre at the end of a busy day or sometimes it can be ongoing.

In a difficult pressured job everyone reacts to stress in a different way. It's worth noting your own reaction, then you can identify when stress is getting too much.

You may have become so accustomed to feeling a certain way that you didn't even realise it was linked to being too stressed. Do any of the symptoms below apply to you?

- **Tiredness or having difficulty sleeping**
- **Headaches or stomach upsets**
- **Feelings of constant exhaustion**
- **Frequent minor illnesses like colds or sore throats**
- **Feeling tense or experiencing palpitations**
- **Increase in smoking or use of alcohol**
- **Emotional changes such as crying fits, being quick to lose your temper, talking too fast, the inability to express your feelings**
- **Difficulty making decisions, poor performance and concentration, forgetfulness**
- **Blaming yourself, feeling inadequate**
- **Dwelling on past situations and problems being unable to 'let go'**
- **Nervous reflexes-habitual touching of the face, biting of the lip**

Duty of care or harassment?

As part of its duty of care to staff procedures are put into place to manage sickness absence. Staff are expected to maintain a satisfactory record of attendance. Unfortunately most employees feel harassed by the constant checking up, with phone calls and home visits. One employee had even given in their sick note from the doctor with a date which they would be returning, and was still called at home to see if they were well enough to be able to come back into work. One agent has written the following-

"Whilst I was off long term sick, I was hounded bullied and intimidated on a constant basis by ScottishPower. I received a home visit within 2 weeks, which in my state of mind at the time was a harrowing and humiliating experience.

Not only did I have to contact my team manager weekly, if I didn't ring in they were ringing me constantly on my landline or my mobile. I was also expected to visit the office every 2 weeks as well as visiting Occupational Health. I have never experienced such

intimidation and as I was at my most lowest ebb felt these bullying tactics did nothing but hamper my recovery. I returned to work under duress, not because I felt better but because I was given no choice.'



So what can employers do while being signed off ?

Although employers have a duty of care and can request a visit on this basis after two weeks sickness, this visit needs to be by agreement. Any members facing harassment through phone calls etc. beyond this "duty of care" should contact their steward. If such harassment continues this may well need to be escalated as a formal grievance.

If people are ill, then they are

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