

Wolverhampton, Bilston & District Trades Union Council

Secretary's Annual Report of Work 2012-2013



The Trades Union Council brings together local trade union branches and the communities we are part of; to act in pursuit of common goals.

our meetings are open to all trade unionists, we meet
3rd Thursday each month 7.15pm Civic Centre (except August)

☎ 07932 797139

info@wolvestuc.org.uk

sign up for emails on: www.wolvestuc.org.uk

2013 our Plan of Work

- summary of actions from this year's *Trades Union Council's Programme of Work*

Fighting the cuts

- Provide speakers for regional and local anti-cuts rallies and on union strike days.
- Commit to building in the community for national TUC demonstrations.
- Work with the campaign themes and adapt TUC campaign material on employment rights.
- Work with the Peoples' Charter to promote the trade union movement's alternative economic and social policies.
- Liaise with local elected councillors to have the Fair Pay motion introduced in to council debates.
- Regularly check the action for rail website.
- Gather and co-ordinate information about the impact of the reforms and cuts on local health services and share information on cuts to NHS services with unions and community groups and on campaign websites.
- Work with the local community to bring pressure on local politicians and decision making to defend NHS services.
- Identify opportunities to highlight the real detriment that the introduction of academies and 'free' schools can cause to local education standards and opportunities.

Campaigning against the far right

- Get a copy of the Tackling Racism' workbook. Contact the TUC regional Education Officer to discuss ways in which the trades union councils and its affiliated members can use the training given in the book and the services of TUC regional education.
- Engage with community campaigners and local residents to ask questions of local chain stores about how their produce is supplied.
- Identify opportunities to publicise the exploitation of farm workers and other workers in the food supply chain.
- Question local authorities and similar organisations about their procurement practices.

Unemployed workers' centres

- Consider the possibilities of establishing a centre since none exists – the appointment of a small committee might be of assistance in bringing the relevant information and resources together to help the council in its discussions.

The Green Agenda

- Promote the green agenda with affiliated branches.
- Elect a trades union council green officer.
- Promote the Green Rep Network in the area.
- Discuss with TUC regional office links with regional network.



Winner of competition to design a new national logo for trades union councils;

- our entry was a runner-up.

President's Report: It has been an honour to serve as President of Trades Council in 2012. You don't need me to tell you what a terrible year it has been for workers facing the effects of the failing economic and social policies of the current coalition government.

Workers in Wolverhampton face some of the highest levels of Youth Unemployment in the Country, high levels of adult unemployment as well as attacks on pay and terms and conditions. Government imposed Public Sector cuts compound these difficulties leaving them with under funded NHS and Local Government services to meet their needs at a time when they need them most to meet these challenges. All Trade Unions have been working hard to try to protect Members from the worst ravages of the Government policies.

In 2013, I believe the Trades Council more than ever has a key role in bringing trade unions and community campaign groups together for effective campaigning to protect workers. We have a very strong Trades Council.

2013 has to be a time when we step it up a gear in Wolverhampton. We need to be even more actively committed and contributing to the trades Council campaigns. We need to develop the links with Community groups supporting and promoting the Alternative to Austerity.

The Government operates by division setting public sector worker against Private sector, north against south, and suggesting there is a deserving and undeserving poor. Trades Council is ideally placed to explode these myths.

We need to work together, for effective defence of Trade Unions and the few hard won rights we have.

I have to pay tribute to Nick for his dedication again this year as Secretary of Trades Council. His efficiency as secretary means that information is quickly and easily disseminated to workers in the City. We have to support this by being efficient delegates, reporting to branches and motivating members to play their part in campaigns, signing petitions, join the picket lines, demonstrations and rallies as required.

Marie Taylor, January 2013

What happened in 2012 and 2013's plans

The Trades Union Congress launched a project to support and develop locally-based campaigns in a number of Black Country areas including Wolverhampton South West. Campaigns around the now-defeated Pasty Tax and local Youth Unemployment have been run, with us and affiliated branches assisting and receiving regular reports.

Midlands Choose Youth rally in Wolverhampton had around 100 people attend. Several union stalls; WB&DTUC & NUT ran a workshop on joining trade unions.

In March we sent a delegate to the Morning Star Conference 'For a Peoples Britain, not a Bankers' Britain' in London.

The **Justice for the Shrewsbury 24** campaign

lodged a submission in April 2012 to the Criminal Cases Review Commission in Birmingham; the first legal attempt to have the miscarriage of justice overturned. It was the 40th anniversary of the national building workers strike that led to the imprisonment of the Shrewsbury pickets.

www.shrewsbury24campaign.org.uk

Wolverhampton **Workers' Memorial Day** 28th April – 40 attended, additional speeches from UCATT & Emma Reynolds MP.



This year's 22nd annual Workers' Memorial Day will be on **Sunday 28th April 2013** 12.30pm at the Cenotaph in front of Civic Centre and St Peters' church WV1 1TS. **action: more input from unions needed to emphasise the campaigning side of the day**

Community Right to Challenge - the right is part of the Localism Act 2011 which gives community groups and local authority employees the right to submit an 'expression of interest' in taking over and running a local authority service. We called on the authority and the Labour Group to set limits.



Thatcher is Dead CD
& other Wolves TUC merchandise on www.wolvestuc.org.uk

1st May 2012 Wolverhampton's 18th annual Workers Day rally attracted over 300 people a good mixture of trade unionists and local people from Whitmore Reans. Vincent Dlamini Secretary General of Swaziland's Public Services union and leader of banned Swazi TUC, Penny Welch from UCU, Kanlungan Filipino Alliance, Asbestos Support and Indian Workers Association all spoke. Dub poet Moqapi Selassie, the ever popular Transit Trix break-dancers and a local rappers Broken Dialect performed. We had 18 union and local campaign stalls, free mehndi, face-painting and a bouncy castle and gave out over 200 free meals. We distributed 1,000 posters and 7,500 flyers including leafletting of 2,500 local homes and spent £1,400 on the event which was raised by donations from ever generous local trade union branches.



Wed. 1st May 2013 Wolverhampton Workers Day
7pm@Pegasus featuring

Tim Martin, local political singer-songwriter

Transit Trix, the ever popular breakers and our main act will be

Progression, an excellent five piece reggae band from Wolverhampton (who are supporting The Selector six weeks before!). **Plus speakers.**



Industrial action – the momentum of November 30th 2011's mass pensions demos in Wolverhampton and all over Britain was not sustained by the biggest unions. Unions such as PCS continued to take industrial action in 2012 which delegates supported on early morning pickets.



We had a stall at the TUC **Chainmakers'** festival for the second year at Cradley Heath.



The TUC's 2013 event is being planned and is expected to be held on **Saturday 8th June 2013**
at Bearmore Park, Cradley Heath B64 6DU

Anti-fascism

Wolverhampton, Bilston & UK now fascist-free

With the help of dozens of volunteers again, we continued our campaign and leafleted 15,000 homes with our new anti-Bnp ward leaflets for the May local elections.

Bilston Matters
DO NOT vote for the BNP

OUR BRITAIN NOT THEIRS
Vote 3 May for the BNP and the policies of the fascist BNP

THE TRADE UNION ALTERNATIVE

People who say that there is no alternative to racism are wrong. A better tax system would reduce cuts in spending which hit the old, young and vulnerable the hardest.

- **state bank deposit tax ended** £18 billion
- **end tax avoidance & tax evasion** £70 billion
- **progressive income tax** £83 billion
- **raise corporation tax & tax company super-profits** £20 billion
- **currency speculation tax & ban hedge-funds** £22 billion

Let's make a new tax system that would keep the interests of Bilston North and...
Please don't bring hatred to our community...
VOTE for ANYONE except the fascist in the on Thursday 3rd May.

Springvale - Bnp 173 votes, 6.6% the fascists' lowest ever % here (8.8% last year) and lowest number of votes ever.

Bushbury North - Bnp 353 votes, 14% last again of 3 and the lowest number of votes the fascists ever got here. Turnout significantly higher than Bushbury South.

Bilston North - Bnp 212 votes, 9%, last again. UKIP & Lib Dems both failed to stand here again this time. Turnout highest turnout of all Bilston wards.

Every Bnp & far-right candidate lost including all sitting councillors across the country. Although they may appear a spent force electorally, we shall continue to campaign against them and any of the splinter groups that have emerged elsewhere this year.

In the autumn we joined almost 1,000 local people who had turned out for a We Are Walsall counter-protest against the EDL – a lively celebration of multicultural unity. Separated by several steel barriers and well out of sight, a gang of 200 racists, who had come to Walsall from a far afield as Scotland, spent the day drinking and ended up fighting each other and throwing missiles at police - another nail in the EDL's coffin.

Their leader has now been imprisoned for 10 months for using a fake passport on his speaking engagements with foreign fascists that was exposed by Hope Not Hate.

Unions supported local campaign groups which sprang up in the summer around Wolverhampton to **save 9 libraries**. Finchfield, Low Hill, Penn, Tettenhall and Whitmore Reans were saved. Some of the community and youth centres will remain but others remained threatened by the creation of a series of community hubs in the city. Very comprehensive submissions were made & several petitions each with several thousands of signatures forced council debates over the issues and concessions.



We affiliated to the **Anti Academies Alliance**. and passed a motion opposing the creation of Academies and Trust schools because:
 Academies set their own pay and conditions outside of national frameworks.
 They are not democratically accountable. The sponsor appoints the majority of governors and controls the school's curriculum. Ownership of the school's buildings and grounds are transferred to the private sponsor. They create more selection;
 Academies and Trust schools set their own admissions policy and are not bound by education law that protects the rights of students and parents.
 Union submissions have been made re Wednesfield High's potential partnership with anti-union Carillion.

Fundraising

Affiliation is 10pence per member of each affiliated branch, which gave us annual income of £1,800. We have received additional donations from union branches to fund our activities and a £500 TUC grant towards the autumn demo. An NUT grant paid for the anti-Bnp leaflets which we produced and distributed this year. Our Xmas Party this year was not a great success and lost a small amount of money.

action: to continue our high level of activity, we need new ways to fundraise.

11 Bar volunteers again worked for our trades union council this summer raising over £1,800 for us at Latitude festival in Suffolk and at Leeds festival.



FREE music festival ENTRY for trade unionists

Wolverhampton TUC gets £6.50/hour for each worker from the Workers' Beer Company (set up by Wandsworth & Battersea TUC) by sending local teams to work on the bars at music festivals. Over £24,000 has been raised in the last fourteen years by voluntary work for our TUC - mainly by non-delegate trade unionists. Funds are split between WB&DTUC and the Morning Star (for use for advertising our events/donation).

Contact WB&D TUC for festival volunteer leaflets to distribute to your branch

2013 bar work volunteers needed (see www.wolvstuc.org.uk) for:
Glastonbury (June), Latitude (July) & Leeds (August)

Places are expected to be very limited. If you offer to work, you must be available.

What do you get?

free entry to a festival (worth up to £200)
 free meal & 2 pints each day
 free festival T-shirt
 secure camping, hot showers
 flush toilets, subsidised bar

What's expected of you?

no experience needed
 serving pints 6 hrs/day, with breaks
 hard work, reliability & a sense of humour
 transport is sorted out between us
 bring a tent



Palestine Solidarity has remained very active and ran a campaign, which we backed, calling on Wolverhampton City Council not to extend its waste disposal contract with Veolia - a company involved with building transport links across Palestinian land into territory occupied illegally under International law. The council will not renew it but take it back in-house. PSC have continued to leaflet supermarkets against Israeli goods and hold public meetings.

After eight days of brutal bombardment in November, which left 160 Palestinians dead, around 40 of them children and 5 Israelis died, a ceasefire was called. Over 100 took part in the Vigil for Peace in Gaza organised by Wolves PSC in Queen's Sq. Our TUC applied for annual solidarity membership of the Arab Workers' Union

(Israel). It was formed as a result of the established Trade union movement's failure to represent Arab workers in Israel; many of its founders were part of the Saw-t Alami trade union which was suspended two years ago.

[Wolverhampton Palestine Solidarity](http://www.wolverhamptonpalestinesolidarity.org.uk)

wolvespsc@yahoo.co.uk or 01902 450640



Progress on 1819 transported

Wolverhampton Tinplate workers' history:

We were contacted by John Tully a psychology lecturer at Victoria University, Melbourne who saw the article on our website. There has been a flurry of emails across the world and he has got a number of other people involved and keen to help including:

Tasmanian State Secretary of the Amalgamated Manufacturing Workers' Union, a retired Supreme Court Judge in Hobart, Prof from University of Tasmania History department, former Labour Tasmanian State Premier and the head of the Tasmanian archives and heritage dept. They and us have so far been unsuccessful in identifying the names of those transported in 1819. They are keen to establish a permanent memorial in Tasmania for the 200th anniversary in 2019.



Wolverhampton Cuba Solidarity

details on
www.wolvestuc.org.uk



TUC Education

Stewards and H&S Reps courses run in Bilston in January, April & September. ☎01743 342531 to book a place

We continue to promote courses see www.wolvestuc.org.uk

Thanks to the outgoing Officers:

President: Marie Taylor (CYWU-UNITE)

Secretary: Nick Kelleher (UNISON General)

Treasurer: John Grant (UCU)

& EC members: Vera Kelsey (CWU); Sylvia Sharkey & Jane Ceresa (UNISON General)

Vice-President: Rob Marris (UNITE 5/836)

Minutes Sec: Marion Halfpenny (NUT)

Campaigning around a **trade union Alternative** to government policies developed further from last year and we incorporated it into our work.

Midlands TUC's Demo Against the Tories – TUC March for the Alternative in Birmingham attracted a broad range of unions and over 3,000 people and a good turnout from our activists.



In October there was a mass TUC march through central London & rally in Hyde Park. With the aid of a grant we subsidised 40 train tickets for demonstrators mainly from smaller union branches; there were 4 local union coaches too.

At our November meeting Paul Mackney, (former Gen. Sec. NATFHE) Chair of Greece Solidarity Campaign spoke on the Resistance to austerity in Greece (& Britain).

After a summer of anti-privatisation campaigning by UNISON & UNITE Police Staff branches, a decision was delayed until after the Nov 15th Police Commissioner Election. Unions supported winner Bob Jones (long-serving Blakenall Labour candidate) though the turnout was just 12%; with similar public apathy all over the country.

A Peruvian trade unionist from banana workers' union Sitag was barred from Wolverhampton by our embassy.

In 2013 attempts will again be made by UNISON to bring her here.

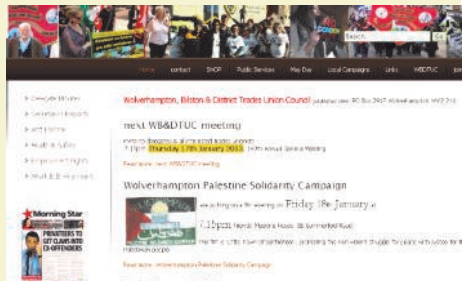
Action: a lot of effort is put into our website www.wolvestuc.org.uk keeping it up to date.

Over 19,000 pages were viewed on the site last year (20% down on previous year). We average about 30 visits per day. Over a quarter of all site usage is from within the Black Country.

Delegates should promote it within their own circles and provide information from their branches that might be useful for inclusion.

Anyone can sign up to emails on the site and this facility has now grown; 150 people get emails about our meetings and 235 are signed up to at least one of our union, anti-fascist or Stop the War/Palestine lists. We also use Facebook to promote events to a wider audience.

www.facebook.com/wolvestuc



Wolverhampton, Bilston & District Trades Union Council

27 local trade union branches affiliated to us in 2012, the highest for over 20 years despite branch closures and mergers; and another increase in affiliated members from 15,300 to over 18,000:

Industrial union branches:

ASLEF Community (Hall Palm)
 Community (Midlands) Community 17000
 CWU (W.Mids & Worcs) GMB X13 Prospect UCATT
 UNITE branches: 0758M, 3210M, 5/836 & 5/998

Education union branches:

ASPECT ATL NASUWT NUT
 UCU City College UCU University

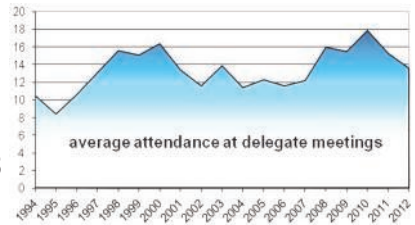
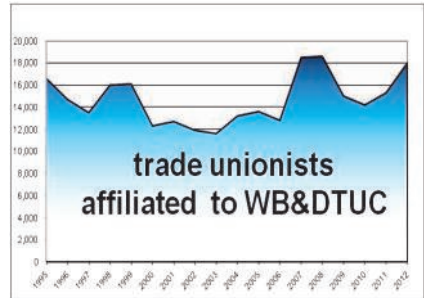
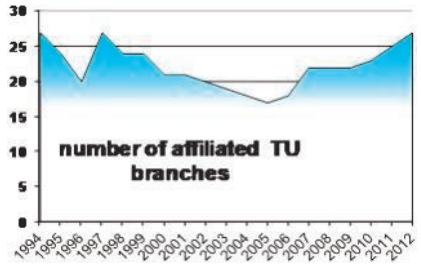
Public Service union branches:

CWU (W'ton) FBU PCS (West Mercia)
 POA UNISON Acute UNISON General
 UNISON Police Staff UNISON University UNITE-CYWU

Last year, our branches put forward 18 female delegates of whom 10 attended, and 38 male delegates of whom 16 attended delegate meetings last year. Average attendance last year at delegate meetings was down to 13.6. 23 visitors attended during the year.

action: branches need to attract new activists to be put forward as delegates, to fill their vacant delegate places

Our monthly delegate meetings involve an outside speaker and are open to all trade unionists (but voting by delegates only). Each month delegates give reports from their workplaces and branches to other delegates. We sent a delegate to the national Trades Union Council conference and received reports from delegates who attended TUC and Equalities conferences.



Monday 11th February 2013 6-8pm Wolverhampton Civic Centre



Socialist Health Association are running a workshop here:
NHS For Beginners project is intended to help more people get involved in their local NHS. Most people have very little idea about how the NHS is organised. We plan to run classes across England directed at people who are not currently involved in the NHS. There is no charge, but you must book. See www.wolvestuc.org.uk

Time to up the ante

Welcome to 2013 and a make-or-break year in the great fight against the Con-Dem coalition of millionaires. If you thought the Tory toffs' assault on British society was savage then you ain't seen nothing yet. Dole queues may already be growing and soup kitchens doing roaring business, but this is the year when "austerity" really starts to bite.

Council budgets are set to be slashed. Hundreds of thousands of public servants will be shown the way to the jobcentre. Vital benefit payments will be snatched from the hands of the disabled and the penniless. The hated Health and Social Care Act will effectively destroy the NHS as we know it.

It's heartening to see new TUC leader Frances O'Grady take office with a stinging attack on the spending cuts and the government's demonisation of Britain's poorest and most vulnerable. But the first question we would put to Ms O'Grady in her new role is: So what now?

It's a waste of breath to talk of calling on the government to change course. It's been facing such calls from day one and has ignored every single one.

The TUC demonstrations haven't stopped the cuts. Nor has criticism from right-wing economists who are increasingly forced to admit the obvious truth that austerity will deepen the recession, not end it. Nor has mounting hostility among the Tory faithful and right-wing media, fearing electoral wilderness for another generation as punishment for this savagery.

If rational argument won't work, and media condemnation won't work, and mass protest won't work, then we need to escalate our fightback, not just wait for the return of a Labour government.

That means preparing for general strike action.

There is a great deal of work to be done to make it happen. Unions need to identify what they want and what they're capable of, and plan a joint strategy accordingly. This is precisely what TUC delegates backed at their September Congress.

But the broader question is not in doubt. We need co-ordinated and general strike to save what is left of our welfare state and lay the foundations for a new, better, socialist society.

And we need it as soon as the labour movement can deliver it.

Morning Star editorial 01 January 2013

The Morning Star is a lone voice for trade unionists, reporting on issues that directly involve our class and our organisations.

Despite its meagre resources, our paper is unique, for over 80 years, the world's only English language socialist daily paper; telling real stories of real people.

It is also the only newspaper in Britain owned by its readers; we take part in their Annual General Meeting each June in Birmingham to elect the editorial board.

Our trades union council supports the paper's Fighting Fund by donating half the funds raised from the festivals; £12,200 donated in 14 years.

Available at all newsagents on order daily & now on the shelf at many places.

