

# Wolverhampton, Bilston & District Trades Union Council

## Secretary's Annual Report of Work 2009-2010

The Trades Union Council represents an important form of union organisation; local trade union branches forming the link with the communities we are part of, acting in pursuit of common goals.

Action in unity with other workers achieves so much more than can be done in isolation. Only through union strength can we win rights at work and deliver a better quality of life for people throughout society.



We were founded in 1865, following a period of strife between workers, and employers who had attempted to thwart the organisation of labour. Wolverhampton & Bilston trade unionists continue the fight today, with delegates from the local unions.

### UNITED WE STAND!

[www.wolvestuc.org.uk](http://www.wolvestuc.org.uk)

[info@wolvestuc.org.uk](mailto:info@wolvestuc.org.uk)

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This report is an analysis of our work in 2009 (another active year for us) and using the annual *Programme of Work* drawn up by the Trades Union Councils' Joint Consultative Committee, it provides a framework for our work in 2010.

Last year's Programme identified five broad areas of work: Trades Union Council Activity in the Community, Public Services, Manufacturing, Vulnerable Workers and Combating the Far Right. **This year, the programme consists of five main areas of work – *Dealing with the Recession, Fighting Fascism, New Media, Developing Green Trade Union Councils and Organising.***

Trade union branches affiliate to Wolverhampton, Bilston & District Trades Union Council to work with each other to build organisation locally, but also to take a lead in forging links with other parts of the community and to raise the profile of the labour movement generally.

Crucial to this is identifying issues on which unions and other organisations share a common agenda - an agenda based on the pursuit of social justice. With such a wide base, there is good potential to take action and mobilise workers in support of campaigns.

Affiliation details are listed on our website [www.wolvestuc.org.uk](http://www.wolvestuc.org.uk) or contact WB&DTUC by phone, mail or [info@wolvestuc.org.uk](mailto:info@wolvestuc.org.uk)

#### All main local union branches affiliated to WB&DTUC in 2009:

##### Industrial:

ASLEF  
CWU (W.Mids & Wores)  
UNITE branches: 0758M, 3210M, 5/748, 5/836 and 5/998

Community(Hall Palm)

GMB X13

##### Education:

ASPECT  
Community 4333 (new branch of sports trainers)  
NUT

ATL

NASUWT

UCU City College

##### Public Service:

CWU (Wolverhampton)  
PCS (Midlands CPS)  
UNISON University

FBU

UNISON General

UNITE-CYWU

POA,

UNISON PCT

**covering over 15,000 local trade unionists**

Further tough times ahead are predicted for working people, with unemployment continuing to rise, and more cuts to public spending to fund wars and banking bailouts. But it doesn't have to be like that. We don't have to sit there worrying that our jobs are going to be flushed down the toilet, our homes are going to be repossessed and our future mortgaged for a generation to bail out a pack of overpaid and underachieving bankers.

It's a choice that is in our own hands. Sure, we can accept that there's no real difference between the free-marketeers of the Tory Party and the grovelling class traitors of new Labour, but we don't have to accept the inevitability of one of those two unappetising items being on the menu of our next Christmas dinner.

There are choices to be made. There is the choice of accepting that the Labour Party is cast in the image of Blair and Brown or accepting the challenge of fighting to remould it as the party it should be, or melting it down and recasting the steel.

There is the choice for left-wingers of being pure as the driven snow and continuing endless arguments over which trade union leaders can dance on the head of a pin, or accepting the challenge of making sure that they cease pin-dancing and get down to the business of opposing capital in all its gory forms.

And there is the choice of accepting endless war as the only answer to terrorism or getting to grips with justice for Palestinians and other oppressed people the world over, getting rid of the continued abuse that imperialism subjects them to.

These are real choices. With the unity, that elements of the left are unused to and with the determination that another world is possible, we can set about building it. What we say is real and what we say is true.

For all the left, the first choice is to tell it in a way that working people can understand and identify with. The second choice is to shed the self-righteousness that historically afflicts the left and get on with it.

*Morning Star editorial*

**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, as the world's only English language, socialist daily paper.**

*Britain's only socialist daily*

**Morning Star**  
ONLINE

[www.morningstaronline.co.uk](http://www.morningstaronline.co.uk)

This year, the paper has improved and increased in size. Day in day out, there's only one daily paper telling real stories of real people.

**Our trades council supports the paper's Fighting Fund by donating half the funds raised from the festivals - £10,000 donated in 11 years.**

Available at all newsagents on order 60p daily, & now on the shelf at many places.

*thanks*

to the outgoing Officers:

President	Dave Cole (NUT)
Vice-President	Marie Taylor (CYWU-UNITE)
Secretary	Nick Kelleher (UNISON)
Treasurer	John Grant (UCU)
Minutes Secretary	Marion Halfpenny (NUT)
& EC member	Brian Clarke (POA)

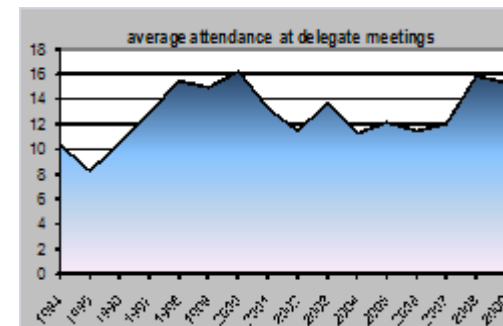
**action: increasing our affiliation base and attendance is key to increased activity and effectiveness for our campaigns.**

Many local trade union branches have very small branch meetings or have difficulty involving members in activity. WB&DTUC is thus the ideal platform for increasing the capacity for involvement in public work.

Our branches have put forward 37 male and 15 female delegates to the council. We averaged over 15 per meeting with a higher proportion of women delegates in attendance and active.

**action: branches need to attract new activists to be put forward as delegates.**

There is still a huge potential for increasing our affiliation base and delegates can assist by contacting unaffiliated branches with which they have dealings.



TUC Stewards Stage 1 and H&S Reps courses have been running for several years locally will start on 26/7<sup>th</sup> January 2010 over 10 weeks, ☎ 0121 237 8120.

Uncertain future for the Bilston site – we continue to promote courses. Other **TUC courses** are available at Shrewsbury and Walsall.

We previously agreed to seek to have an input into TUC shop stewards' training so that the role and value of Trades Union Councils can be explained. We did get invited this year by TUC tutors to keep inviting us. **Needs addressing for 2010.**

**Schools** – WB&DTUC officers are available on request to give talks on trade unionism at schools as part of the citizenship national curriculum.

**Union Recruitment** – the listing of WB&DTUC's phone number in Yellow Pages, on publicity and the website generates enquiries for joining trade unions. Information of relevant unions is provided by us. Potential trade unionists are redirected to unions; The TUC has produced a new *Join a Union* leaflet which we could use this year.

**Trades Union Councils' Annual Conference.** There were fewer delegates 60 rather than 100, three years ago. All the motions were passed. TUC had done nothing since the last conference in response to conference motions. The motion on unemployed centres went to TUC conference and was passed but no one from trades councils was allowed to speak on it.

At the **Trades Union Congress conference**, there was less consensus than usual. TUC voted after some controversy to boycott Israeli goods and support *The Peoples' Charter*.

## Fighting Fascism and the Far Right

**Council elections will take place on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2010, possibly alongside the 2010 general election, which must be held on or before 3<sup>rd</sup> June.**

WB&DTUC urges you to register to vote if you are not already and Vote for *Hope NOT Hate* in the coming general and local elections - anyone BUT the Bnp.

We have built on our previous anti-fascist work and had our busiest year ever. Thanks to all who helped in anti-Bnp campaign.

We went over to Nuneaton to help in joint UAF/HNH leafleting for the December by-election, where the Bnp were defending a seat and lost it to Labour.

November - quote from Searchlight magazine: *"The union sisters took charge in Wolverhampton outnumbering the brothers by 2:1 In anticipation of possible by-elections, we leafleted 5,500 homes in the Bushbury N and Oxley wards of two senior Wolverhampton Conservative councillors, due to be tried by a Crown Court jury on a cocaine rap. These were areas where the fascists have stood before or had leafleted recently. The Remembrance Day leaflets proved popular and we had to order more for local factories."*

4,500 *Bilston East Matters - Jobs & Homes Not Racism* leaflets were delivered to homes in Bilston East on the September Weekend of Action. The Bnp had tried to call a public meeting there but the pub refused, it also borders Princes End and there was NF activity there years ago – we'd not leafleted there before.

We also helped at the Cannock Chase by-election – a hard-hitting leaflet against the Bnp's fascist candidate meant they came nowhere.

The summer anti-Bnp demonstration against the *Red White and Blue Festival* in Codnor was bigger and better organised than last year, with the Midlands TUC taking more of a lead.

In the Euro election, Hope Not Hate campaign almost 30,000 leaflets and newspapers distributed to homes, in factories and workplaces, to churches, gudwaras, mosques, community groups and commuters in Wolverhampton in three weeks, with 9,500 leaflets being distributed in a single day of action. This election campaign was our biggest and best mobilisation ever with 70 volunteers, a magnificent effort and had high proportions of women and black workers involved. We confronted them in Bilston during the campaign when they set up a stall.



The Bnp vote in Wolverhampton was lower than in neighbouring boroughs and we can take credit for mobilising a Labour vote in Wolverhampton; but still over 5,000 of our fellow Wulfrunians voted for a fascist party. Searchlight took up our campaign against NewsQuest who were taking adverts in their Dudley and Halesowen rags.

**In election campaigns in the last few years, that's 13-0 to us in Wolverhampton.** We cannot rest on our laurels in the West Midlands though as can be seen from the outcomes in the North West & Yorkshire/Humberside.



Race Equality Partnership Wolverhampton, the eventual successor to the Race Equality Council closed down as expected without making any impact and there is still no replacement for the axed Race Equality Council.

The TUC is committed to tackling racism in all its forms. Trades Union Councils support those communities being targeted and challenge the arguments of racist groups that attempt to intimidate, spread fear and increase racial hatred. **action: create links with Community Cohesion groups to promote equality at work, celebrate diversity and widen the anti-fascist campaign.**

Over 300 trade unionists, political activists, campaigners and people of Whitmore Reans celebrated the **1<sup>st</sup> May, Workers' Day** in Wolverhampton for the 15th year. Searchlight, IWA, Women Against pit closures & Cuba Speakers, Jazz band, breakdancers and morris dancers, food, bouncy castle, face-painting and stalls.

It had an anti-fascist theme which helped build our euro-election campaign. The £1500 cost was covered by generous union donations FBU, UNISON,

UNITE & NUT.

**action: WB&D TUC is part of the W'ton May Day Committee. More help is needed so VOLUNTEER NOW.**

**This year's Wolverhampton Workers' Day celebration is on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010.** Ian Saville, Socialist Magician is to appear. [www.wolvstuc.org.uk](http://www.wolvstuc.org.uk) has a downloadable document written by the Committee, explaining how we run May Day.





## New Media

We keep in contact by: monthly paper mailing to 60 delegates. Email - 90 contacts on WB&DTUC list approx 10 emails sent per month; additional email lists exist for STW, anti-fascists etc.

Email [info@wolvestuc.org.uk](mailto:info@wolvestuc.org.uk) to be added to our email contact list and receive all the latest information on local trade union events.

Group texts to mobiles are effective for urgent activity.

Our website [www.wolvestuc.org.uk](http://www.wolvestuc.org.uk) is fully functioning and a vast improvement on the very basic site we started with 7 years ago. Trade union branches can submit their forthcoming events and campaigns by email or post for listing on the site.

For all the latest info on local labour movement events, visit [www.wolvestuc.org.uk](http://www.wolvestuc.org.uk)

We average about 40 visitors to the site each day. Updated by the Secretary; hosted by *LeftSpace*, a local progressive web company.

You can join 'Wolverhampton TUC' now on FaceBook.

**Cradley Women Chainmakers' Festival -there will be events from Friday 17<sup>th</sup> to Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2010, to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1910 strike, at the Black Country Living Museum.**

**Wolverhampton Cuba Solidarity** holds regular meetings & socials. £5/£2 to join, details: WB&DTUC website, ☎01902 429591 [wolverhamptonnut@btconnect.com](mailto:wolverhamptonnut@btconnect.com)

**How we are funded** - affiliation is 10pence per member for each affiliated branch, which gives us annual income of £1,500. This was supplemented by £2,200 raised by organising teams of volunteer bar workers at Glastonbury and Leeds music festivals this year.

We always need new volunteers.

We applied for a TUC Development Grant of £300 for our anti-fascist work this year.

We again run the annual council unions' Xmas party night and raised significant funds. UNISON members were main participants. We booked a night club and the night went very well with again over 200 attending with a good mixture of people.

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



## Dealing with the Recession & the Capitalist Crisis

### Public Services

**Keep the Post Public** –in March, a CWU demo of 1000 protesters brought Bilston to a halt with their message to our MP; demo report on the front of Morning Star; followed by good rally at the Imperial Palace.

Wolverhampton CWU's solid picket line in October, was replicated all over the country resulting in the employers being forced back into negotiations. CWU national postal strike update, bullying management, overworked and imposed terms & conditions.

Pat McFadden MP still spokesperson but Royal Mail responsibility passed to an unelected Lord.

Defend  
Public Services



### Save Our Public Services -Council cuts

Tory/Lib Dem council has been and continues to threaten services to the vulnerable to save a £10 council tax rise this year - despite huge reserves and £tens of millions stored in the Art Gallery. UNISON/Carers' have been campaigning regarding Underhill House, Sweetman Street, Meals on Wheels and Ekta and Learning Disability Day centre. More job cuts are due to be announced which will affect some of our delegates directly. Remember, the elections are on 6<sup>th</sup> May.

We got regular reports from the POA of their ongoing campaign against the privatisation of prisons.

Local UNISON activist Bro. Goodall was dismissed from his nursing job in relation to his trade union activity. NHS paid him off in an out-of-court settlement prior to his employment tribunal. He secured an excellent reference and continues to nurse.

### Manufacturing

**CWU Union Busting at Carphone Warehouse, Wednesbury** - Two CWU members were victimised by the company for trade union activity. A successful demonstration at Carphone Warehouse led to the reinstatement of Kulvinder Plaha. Another steward's employment tribunal is still to be heard. The charges related to the fact that both members were willing to challenge unfair management practices through raising grievances – as is their right. CWU has had good recruitment in the last two years at the site.



We passed a motion seeking to dissolve the **West Midlands County Association of Trades Union Councils** since it represents a layer of bureaucracy which hampers the ability for its constituent trades union councils to participate in the national conference. It was defeated by the County Association which now comprises almost entirely of retired trade unionists from Birmingham, Coventry and Walsall. Our trades council is not presently represented and thus not on the Midlands TUC either.

Our monthly delegate meetings involve an outside speaker and are open to all trade unionists (but voting by delegates only). **Speakers at our meetings included:**

Thompsons Solicitors gave an update on recent employment case law  
PCS speaker -The Challenge To Trade Unionists In The Capitalist Crisis  
 Cheryl Pidgeon new Midlands TUC Secretary also visited us.

No to EU, Yes to Democracy - a discussion was raised that if BNP had highest vote of minor parties standing in the Euro elections then No2EU could aid them. This point was raised by us nationally and caused a lot of criticism but proved correct unfortunately in NW & Yorkshire/Humberside, where fascists now "represent" millions of people in Europe.

No Borders campaign – Calais activist camp; a joint venture between French activists and migrant support groups and the UK No Borders Network. It aims to highlight the realities of the situation in Calais and Northern France; to build links with the migrant communities and to challenge the authorities on the ground, to protest against increased repression of migrants and local activists.

Lenia Lopez from the Cuban Institute for Friendship with People spoke at our meeting this year to celebrate 50 years of socialism.

### FREE music festival ENTRY for trade unionists

Over £20,000 has been raised in the last eleven years by voluntary work for our TUC - mainly by non-delegate trade unionists. Funds are split between WB&DTUC and the Morning Star - this doubles our annual affiliation income. Wolverhampton TUC gets £6.90/hour for each worker from the Workers' Beer Company (set up by Wandsworth & Battersea TUC) by sending teams to work on the bars at music festivals.

#### What do you get?

free entry to a festival (worth £100+)  
 free meal & 2 pints each day  
 free festival T-shirt  
 flush toilets, subsidised bar  
 secure camping, hot showers,  
 transport is sorted out between us

#### What's expected of you?

no experience needed  
 serving pints 6 hours/day (with breaks)  
 hard work, reliability and a sense of humour  
 you'll need a tent



2010 bar work volunteers needed for: Glastonbury (June) & Leeds (August)

for other festivals - see our website. **If you offer to work, you must be available**

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

### Developing Green Trade Union Councils

We are part of the Sustainable Energy Partnership. Trades union councils should build links with local environmental campaign groups enabling organising opportunities and ensuring that trade unionists are recognised as part of the community. This should also open up opportunities for local environmental groups to help the union Movement with its greening the workplace agenda.

Trades union councils should promote the role of the workplace union green representatives (UGR) with affiliated branches, work locally with other community groups to raise the profile of the unions and the green environment and to campaign for changes in government legislation to give more rights to UGRs.

**action: to invite a speaker on these issues to a meeting in the coming year.**

**Workers' Memorial Day 28<sup>th</sup> April** 18 pairs of shoes were laid to indicate those who have died in the West Midlands. Over 60 heard an Asbestos Support speaker. For the first time council flags not flown at half mast thanks to the Tory council leader who refused. The Government launched a consultation on national recognition which we took part in.

**Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2010 @12.30pm at WMDay Tree by Cenotaph.**

It should be noted that this event should not just be a commemoration but a focus for activity around Health & Safety campaigns.



We have plans for a future meeting/film to be held with the Asbestos Support Group.

[www.shrewsburypicketscampaign.org.uk](http://www.shrewsburypicketscampaign.org.uk) We joined a march in Shrewsbury seeking justice for the 24 building workers arrested on conspiracy charges after picketing sites in Telford in 1972. Ricky Tomlinson and Des Warren were jailed and Des died as a result.



New evidence has come to light and so marches, as with GCHQ, will be held annually until victory:

**Saturday 3rd July 2010, in Shrewsbury.**





## Activity in solidarity with the people of Gaza:



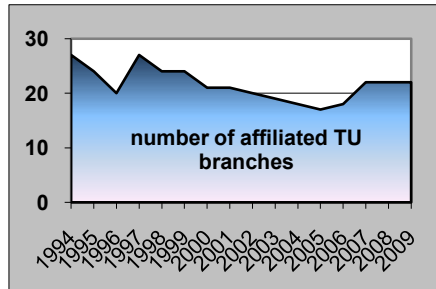
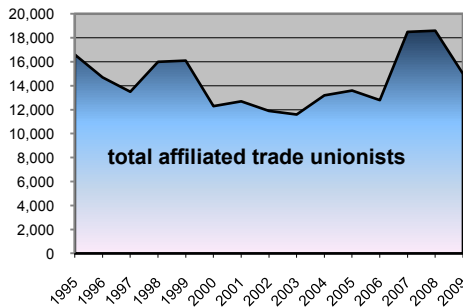
After the attacks on Gaza by Israel at the start of the year, we worked with the local PSC group and the UK Islamic Mission mosque around the boycott, campaigning and fundraising this year. Several mass vigils with over 200 people were held at short notice on the ring-road as well as in Queen Square. We also joined London demos with several coaches against the attacks on Gaza. The Gaza Humanitarian Appeal Bazaar raised over £10,000, an absolutely tremendous result for the one-day event. Lobby of Pat McFadden MP at his surgery to urge him to call for an embargo on British arms exports to Israel (backed by Ken Purchase and Rob Marris.

MPs). He believes Britain should continue to arm the Israeli state. However arms sales have plummeted in 2009. Justice and self-interest dictate that British trade unionists should demand an end to military occupation, ethnic cleansing and illegal Israeli colonisation of the West Bank. However public activity has dropped off since the attacks on Gaza subsided but the PSC group continues with supermarket leafleting around the boycott.

**Wolverhampton Palestine Solidarity Campaign organises regular public meetings, local leafleting and organises transport to national demos. To join: ☎01902 450640**



## Involvement of local unions in our TUC:



January 2010							February							March						
M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su
				1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
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25	26	27	28	29	30	31								29	30	31				
<b>27<sup>th</sup> Holocausts Memorial Day</b>														<b>10-13<sup>th</sup> TUC Women's conf. 26-28<sup>th</sup> TUC Youth conf.</b>						
April							May							June						
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26	27	28	29	30			24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28	29	30				
<b>23-25<sup>th</sup> Black Workers' TUC 28<sup>th</sup> Workers' Memorial Day</b>							<b>31 1<sup>st</sup> Workers' Day</b>							<b>June 24-27<sup>th</sup> Glastonbury</b>						
July							August							September						
M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su
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26	27	28	29	30	31		23	24	25	26	27	28	29	27	28	29	30			
<b>1-2<sup>nd</sup> TUC LGBT conf.</b>							<b>30 31</b>							<b>13-16<sup>th</sup> TUCongress</b>						
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Shrewsbury 24, 18<sup>th</sup> Tolpuddle</b>							<b>Aug 27-29<sup>th</sup> Leeds festival</b>							<b>17-19<sup>th</sup> Chainmakers'</b>						
October							November							December						
M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su	M	Tu	W	Th	F	Sa	Su
				1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	6	7			1	2	3	4	5
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18	19	20	21	22	23	24	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	29	30						27	28	29	30	31		

**WB&D TUC meets 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of each month .**

7.15pm, Civic Centre. Entry through outside car park entrance. All trade unionists are welcome to attend. **2<sup>nd</sup> Thursday is Executive.**