As we say goodbye to another year, we have to start preparing for the challenges that 2015 will bring and explore what they will mean for millions of working people throughout the UK.

The main focus will be on the forthcoming general election, now only a few months away, and the implications of what each political party has to offer.

Probably the worst scenario would be the re-election of a Tory government – either directly or indirectly (through tactical voting). One thing is for sure is that Labour needs to announce some radical policies pretty soon if they are to have any chance of forming the next government, especially considering the rise in popularity of the SNP in Scotland and the one trick ponies of UKIP everywhere else.

A major move away from Labour to either will guarantee that we have five more years of Tory rule and that will be an absolute disaster for UK workplaces and the working class in general.

We want an active party

Clearly we don’t want another shade of blue with ‘light touch austerity’ and limp promises from an opposition who on many occasions have abdicated their responsibility to challenge a government that makes Thatcher’s rule seem almost friendly.

There may well be reasons why on occasions Labour members cannot be in the chamber, but abstaining on the big issues is unforgivable. We need a Labour government, but we need a Labour government that will stand its corner and fight for the people who elected it.

In any other workplace you are expected to turn up to carry out the duties you were employed for, but how does this work at the Palace of Westminster?

The chamber is invariably half empty and it’s even worse in the unelected side, the Lords, where you often see members appearing to be asleep. This, of course, is denied – instead they are listening to the speakers in the seats – not getting 40 winks at all. They can come and go as they wish, collecting more in a day than millions of workers get for a full week’s graft and then they rubberstamp detrimental legislation passed on the other side.

Come on Labour, get your fingers out and start thinking about how we can promote hope and benefit to the millions who have paid the debts for bad management at the top of our political and financial sectors. Show us policies that give working people a chance and a reason to vote and that bring some equilibrium to the discriminatory class system in our country.

...five more years of Tory rule will be an absolute disaster for the working class

What about UKIP?
The biggest disaster would be for UKIP to start making gains within the political system. Farage, the beer-swilling, fag-smoking, Europe-hating multi-millionaire, would be a disaster for the aims and aspirations of working class people.

Whilst he insists he wants withdrawal from Europe, he and his rag tag party are prepared to earn their living in Europe. He himself married a German woman and his ancestry is mixed French and German stock.

This is not one of the lads down the pub – this is a political hypocrite who earned his fortune as a merchant banker (Yes – he was a member of the profession who almost brought our country to its knees!).

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His party plays on the fears of people by continually harping on about immigration and the jobs that migrant workers are taking.

You don’t have to be a rocket scientist to know that immigration is indeed a major debate that needs to take place in the UK, but it is all the other things that UKIP talk about that we should be afraid of. For one, their deputy president talked about privatising the NHS. Farage wants deregulation of the laws that come from Europe because they are restrictive on employers and business – but remember these are the laws that guarantee your entitlement to holiday pay, reasonable health and safety protections and the right not to be forced into excessive hours.

Imagine if Miliband was constantly photographed with a beer and fag in hand. The press would be talking about him promoting health issues that cost the NHS a fortune every year (just look what they did when he had a bacon butty for breakfast!). But put the same items in the hands of the smiling xenophobe Farage and they brand him a ‘man of the people’.

For all the names he calls Cameron now, that is who he will be voting with if he gets into parliament. They are a right wing organisation who have only one interest in working people and that is their vote, so think over the coming months about where your cross is going and what it will in store for the future.

"Oh, I say – Good show, George!"
It is interesting that at the time of writing this article that George Osborne has announced that we are to start paying back our debts from World War 1 from the 1st February 2015.

This is the man who has complained incessantly about debt created by everyone but the Tory Party, the man who claimed he would balance the books by 2015, the man who says we cannot leave debt to future generations and promotes austerity for working people while millionaires prosper.

But the good news is that we are going to make a start on a debt that is between 100 and 300 years old as some government bonds date back to the 18th century. He may find any of these debts difficult to blame the Labour Party for.

Season’s greetings
May I take this opportunity to wish a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year to all our members, our activists, our employees and all those who have assisted with campaigns that will help to secure the future of our great union.

Ronnie Draper
General Secretary

Over the last five years, David Cameron’s unelected coalition government has unleashed a relentless blitz on the sick, the disabled, the young, the old and the unemployed in this country. We must make him and his party pay the price in May 2015.

We need to be absolutely clear about this: any political party that believes in forcing people with cancer, extreme disabilities and illnesses to either work or lose their benefits has no place in any civilised society. Any political party that believes in unpaid labour and disabled people being paid less than everybody else should be totally unelectable. Finally, any political party that believes foodbanks are a good thing in one of the world’s strongest economies should face the wrath of the people and political oblivion.

It’s ironic that David Cameron should use the language of wartime Prime Ministers, because let there be no doubt about it; he has waged a five-year war on the working classes, and a five-year love-in with those at the top of the pay scale. I make no apology for demanding a society that benefits everybody, rather than just a handful of the ultra-wealthy and I certainly make no apology for demanding higher pay for workers in our industry.
Where there is a clear ability to pay, especially in the case of multi-national, hugely profitable fast-food organisations, they should do so, and if a moral obligation isn’t enough for them to pay people a wage they can live on, they should be forced. The taxpayer should not be used to top up poverty wages, subsidise cheap labour and prop up massive companies, whilst safeguarding the generous remuneration packages of CEOs. Our taxes should be used to maintain the public services we rely on and to provide a safety net for those who fall on hard times through no fault of their own. End of story.

I strongly believe that people working in the food industry, especially our members, deserve the best — and we have a duty to demand it. That is why we’ve campaigned so hard against the use of zero hours contracts and pushed for a minimum wage of at least £10 an hour. Zero hours contracts allow governments to fudge unemployment figures. They make out that the practice has all but eradicated unemployment. It hasn’t.

Their employment figures include those on part-time and zero hours contracts. They also include people on ‘Workfare’. The government also likes to make out that it has created a million new jobs. It hasn’t.

Those jobs were former public sector ones that have been merely transferred to the private sector. The reality is that employment levels pretty much resemble those of the 1980s. The difference is that Spin-meister General, Cameron and his cohorts have been allowed to manipulate statistics by a mainly spineless, sycophantic and equally vindictive mainstream media.

**A Living Wage**

It was fantastic to see the TUC unanimously back our Union’s motion for a minimum wage of at least £10 an hour for all workers at this year’s Congress. I’m fully aware of how controversial and radical a move this is, given the wage levels at some of our own sites nationwide, but we have to at least aspire to something better.

Food workers in the United States have made similar demands, and the signs are that the tide could well turn in their favour, as a number of states have already signed up to a credible living wage of around $15 an hour. If we can achieve something similar here in the UK, then it would be a huge boost to those we represent and could help us to increase and strengthen our membership along with our bargaining position, whilst raising the profile of the BFAWU in the process. A minimum wage of £10 an hour would help to reduce the cost of welfare, give people more disposable income and better spending power.

This would subsequently provide our economy with a major, much-needed shot in the arm, with the majority of our taxes being put to better use. If that’s not something to aspire to, then I don’t know what is. So let’s go a step further by making the politicians hear our growing collective demands for a better deal. Remember: they depend on our vote. Let’s make them work for it.

**Renewable energy or Eco-Rape?**

As the weather starts to get wetter and colder, the cost of energy will undoubtedly raise its ugly head and people will once again be demanding a better deal whilst condemning the greed of the energy cartels.

The government believes that the answer to this problem lies in fracking. They’re trying to convince us that rummaging underground for shale gas, causing earthquakes and polluting water courses in the process will bring down our energy bills. How? It would be private companies based in other countries with shareholders and investors to satisfy who would be doing the ‘drilling’. The fact that the government wants to give these companies the right to ‘frack’ under our homes whether we like it or not should be of great concern to everyone. Also, one look at the number of politicians and their friends with vested interests in fracking companies should tell it’s own story. Our collective response should be to tell them politely, to ‘frack off’.

The answer to solving the energy riddle is actually very simple. If we want our bills lowered, we should first demand the re-nationalisation of the energy industry. Secondly, in case we haven’t noticed, we live on a windy island, surrounded by water. If that isn’t enough, we get sunshine every now and again, especially in the summer. If that is still not enough, we get sunshine in the winter as well. With the combination of high prices, low wages and shameful consumerism often leads to a struggle to make ends meet.

The government’s programme of wealth protection, masquerading as austerity has led to the rise of payday loan companies; organisations that have contributed quite literally to the destruction of people’s lives. Many years ago now, our Union created its own and the Labour Movement’s very first Credit Union. How innovative that was, and how relevant it is now.

Thanks to this membership benefit, along with our financial and legal services, (in addition to our benevolent funds and other fringe benefits), no BFAWU member need ever be tempted by predatory payday loan companies. In this area, the BFAWU continues to set the example and lead the way.

So with that in mind, I would like to congratulate the staff and Directors of our Credit Union for the fantastic work they have done and the positive impact they make on our members’ lives.

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**Further information can be found at [www.climate-change-jobs.org](http://www.climate-change-jobs.org)**

**Our very own Credit Union**

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If you are not a member of the Credit Union and would like to be, or would like a roadshow to be arranged at your site, please contact either our head office or your full-time official. For more information about the Credit Union, again contact either Head Office, or speak to your Branch Secretary.

**Recruitment, Recruitment, Recruitment...**

Over the last few years, our Union has been hit hard by the loss of many food industry jobs in various parts of the country. In many cases, this has been due to jobs being moved abroad, in addition to managerial incompetence and basic, corporate greed. In other cases, it’s simply been down to companies being unable to deal with and adapt to changing trends, dynamics and eating habits of a ‘modern’ society.

In order for our Union to succeed where some companies have failed we will need to be creative and forward-thinking. If we want to exist and continue representing workers well into our next century, it’s vital that we look at how we run our Union and how we broaden our appeal and remain relevant. We also need to ask ourselves if we are doing enough to promote and sell our Union within our branches all over the country and whether or not we’re doing enough in terms of recruitment.

I believe that the UK food industry still provides massive potential to increase our membership base exponentially and this Union is still arguably one of the best around. We are good at what we do and always try our utmost to do our 1847 forefathers proud. However, I think it’s important as we approach a new year to ensure that we use our quarterly Regional Councils as part of a process that identifies what is needed to improve and for our elected representatives to really get involved in helping to secure the Union’s future.

It’s also vital that our members use their voices and ask their representatives what the Union is up to in their respective regions and explore how they can get involved. We need to stand together and face the future now as a relevant and active collective more than ever.

Remember: the BFAWU is nothing without members and the members ARE the Union.

**and finally...**

*On behalf of the EC, I would like to wish all our members, officials and their families a very merry Christmas and all the very best for 2015.*

Solidarity

Ian Hodson

National President

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**DAVE DASH REPORTS BACK ON US FAST FOOD RIGHTS STRIKES**

What a fantastic honour it was to witness, on behalf of BFAWU and the Fast Food Rights Campaign, the organisation of this heroic strike on 4th September.

US Fast Food workers were striking for $15 an hour – only currently being paid $7.25 (£4.46). The Service Employee International Union (SEIU) was very organised. Accompanied by Julie Sherry (Unite the Resistance) and two visitors from New Zealand, we had a very busy schedule. There were four officials helping to organise the strikes when we were in Raleigh and Durham, North Carolina.

We were all given a brief on what to say to the media on the day of the strike. We had a video conference call with other global delegations (New York City, Los Angeles, Chicago) and we were given an update of what was going on in the other 150 or so cities across the US.

About 30 strikers were being put up overnight at the hotel. We witnessed them being trained on what to say and what to do on the day. The strikers who had volunteered to get arrested (Mass Peaceful Civil Disobedience) were trained on what to do if the Police were violent towards them. The Union organised transport for the strikers.

We joined a group of about 50 strikers demonstrating in Raleigh. After that, we went to Durham by coach to an organised rally and march. We were joined by Rev. William Barber II, the NAACP President. Well-known as someone who supported the working class, he quoted from the Bible and got the strikers all fired up and ready to go – but made it clear they had to conduct themselves in an orderly fashion.

We marched for some time, then the volunteers sat in the road to stop the traffic so they could be arrested. These were workers that have never been on strike or been arrested before.

They sat on hard tarmac for hours in very hot conditions, showing no signs of ever giving up. The police, however, were going to play the long game – stopping and redirecting the traffic. This went on for hours. When the strikers moved to another spot, the police did the same. They finally had enough and told the strikers they had 10 mins to move or they would be arrested.

– and after about 10 mins they were duly arrested, albeit in a very orderly manner. Of the two lawyers helping to advise the strikers, one was arrested – I didn’t see or know why. 27 were arrested in our area but there were 400 in total across the US.

They were taken to the Police Station – where the strikers marched and demonstrated outside. They were detained longer than everyone expected. Finally they were released and joined us all back in the office where they received a very big celebratory welcome.

Next day we escorted the strikers back to work to make sure that they did not have any problems with their Manager or suffer any form of victimisation. If there were to be problems with a striker not being allowed back to work or even being sacked, there were Ministers, Politicians and Councillors – the heads of the community waiting on standby to come to the store to play hell. I was told that a letter was sent to the store Manager pointing out the striker’s rights to take action and their right to return to work without suffering any detriment.

I didn’t hear of any striker having problems. On our journey home it was amazing how many people knew about the strikes. We were both wearing our *Fast Food Rights* badges and people were asking what they were for. When we told them they said they had heard about the strikes and were very supportive.

*Working together globally, we will win.*
FAST FOOD RIGHTS PROTEST AT LABOUR PARTY CONFERENCE AFTER TUC BACKS £10 AN HOUR!

The demand was initially passed at the Bakers’ Food and Allied Workers’ Union (BFAWU) Conference in June this year, and other unions, such as the GMB, have also backed it. A motion was then passed at the TUC annual conference in September to back the demand.

As mega corporations such as those in the fast food industry rake in huge profits, it is a disgrace that the workers who produce those profits struggle to make ends meet, with a £5 an hour average wage for fast food workers in the UK.

With the cost of living going up, nothing less than £10 an hour now is a wage that workers can live on. All workers deserve the right to live, not just to scrape by in poverty on zero hours and low pay.

Boosted by the TUC backing, Fast Food Rights will continue the fight for £10 an hour now!

Ian Hodson
National President

Hungry for Justice protesters on the streets
FOR JUSTICE?

here's one answer...

... and here's a couple more

lowest employment since 1972'

lowest living standards since 1872

Selfservatives

Deficit Down...
Unemployment Down...
Families Are Better Off...

Sarah Woolley FF Rights
Peter John Cox at St Mungos Broadway
The BFAWU-led Fast Food Rights ‘Hungry for Justice’ campaign was thrilled to host a delegation of fast food workers from the United States on their UK leg of a global tour (#fastfoodglobal).

The strikers, ordinary fast food workers, have set out to visit unions across the world to spread the lessons from their incredible strike movement for $15 an hour (around £10 an hour) and union rights.

Through Fast Food Rights, BFAWU has been developing links with the US Fast Food strikers. There is a lot we can take inspiration from in their struggle.

Here in Britain we face the same issues of poverty pay, job insecurity through zero hours and the fight for respect and dignity at work. Like in the US, ‘Hungry for Justice’ demanding £10 an hour minimum wage, an end to zero hours and abolishing the youth rate will not affect fast food workers only. When the campaign in the US won a raising of the wage, the victory affected whole cities of workers from every industry and sector who will all see their wages rise as a result of the campaign.

Flavia Cabral – a McDonald’s worker from the Bronx in New York, Alvin Major – a Brooklyn, New York, based KFC worker made a great journey across the Atlantic alongside Nicholas Allen, an international organiser for the fast food strike campaign and Gregory Reynoso, a fast food strike organiser based in New York all landed in a very rainy Glasgow on Thursday 13 November.

They spoke to a lively and passionate meeting of around 70 people that was put on by Fast Food Rights and hosted by the Scottish TUC (STUC). Dave Moxham, Assistant General Secretary of STUC, remarked that it was one of the best meetings he’d had the privilege of chairing in all his time as a trade union official.

One young woman who works at a Glasgow food outlet spoke out in the meeting about the issues of low pay, inconsistent shifts and management ridiculing and putting down staff.

On Friday we travelled down to London from Glasgow, and the strikers were hosted at a reception at TUC congress house at an event put on by Fast Food Rights, chaired by John McDonnell MP.

She then joined the Bakers’ Union from the floor of the meeting.

The Glasgow branch of the campaign has recently seen successes with a bunch of fast food workers signing up to the union. But there were also supermarket workers, care workers and others who face the same issues of zero hours, low pay and lack of respect at work. They spoke of how inspired they were to hear from the struggle in the US. The meeting made a spread in the Sunday Herald and got coverage from the BBC too.

The strikers were also able to make a flying visit to the Scotland Hazards conference, where delegates hung on to hear them as soon as they knew they were coming, and Katy Clark MP squeezed in a meeting with the delegation at their hotel.

**Visiting the Glasgow Hazards Conference**

**Katy Clark MP made time to say hello**

**The TUC reception**
Alongside activists from the executives of a number of unions, there was press representation and TUC officials like Lauren Usher. Ian Hodson, BFAWU National President summed up the event with a big push for the campaign, now backed by the TUC, for £10 an hour now, and encouraged people to join the lobby at parliament over zero hours contracts on 21 November.

On Saturday the US strikers spoke to 5–600 trade union activists and campaigners at the Unite the Resistance Conference in London. They brought the house down, receiving a standing ovation in the opening plenary where they spoke alongside St Mungos Broadway and Care UK strikers, a New Era housing campaigner, Billy Hayes from CWU, and speakers from NUT teachers’ union, Unison and others.

Unite the Resistance opening session

The strikers also popped in to the TUC’s Big Youth Event and spoke to delegates, joining Sarah Woolley from BFAWU’s executive.

Alvin joins in the Big Youth Debate

They also spoke in a totally rammed workshop session at the conference on ‘The fight against zero hours and organising the unorganised’. Their contribution explaining how they organised the strikes was hugely helpful for a number of zero hours workers who came in from the floor and discussed the difficulties of trying to unionise from scratch.

We wish them nothing but success as they spread their message around the world.

EARLY DAY MOTION 451 – INCREASING THE NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGE TO £10 PER HOUR – UK PARLIAMENT

Keeping up the pressure

The following Early Day Motion was put before Parliament on 30 October 2014, sponsored primarily by our own John McDonnell MP – on behalf of the BFAWU Parliamentary Group.

That this House congratulates the Trades Union Congress for passing a motion, proposed by the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union, committing itself to campaign for an increase in the National Minimum Wage to £10 per hour; notes that this would ease the burden on welfare spending by alleviating the need for in work benefits which subsidise exploitative employers paying poverty wages; further notes that this would free up funds for much-needed investment in the NHS, education and other welfare programmes; believes that action is needed to address the scandal that apprentices can be legally paid as little as £2.73 per hour and under-18s just £3.79 per hour; and considers that employers who claim to be unable to afford £10 per hour should be required to submit to an audit of their company profits, bonuses paid to senior executives and dividends paid to shareholders to ensure they are not out of line with employee rates of pay.

The 25 Signatories to the motion included stalwarts like Dave Causby MP, Katy Clark MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Ronnie Campbell MP, Glenda Jackson MP, Ian Lavery MP, Linda Riordan MP and Dennis Skinner MP.

We will not allow this issue to drop out of the public’s consciousness.
On Saturday 27th September I attended the Stand up to UKIP demonstration in Doncaster, on behalf of the union.

There was an initial rally when we got there, with speakers from UCATT, USDAW, an independent labour MP from Hull, Care UK strikers amongst others, including NUM.

The atmosphere was brilliant. There were about a thousand of us altogether from trade unions, trades councils, community groups, Unite the Resistance and SWP – all standing together to tell UKIP we don’t want them in Doncaster, in Parliament or in the UK at all.

We set off on the march around Doncaster, from Sir Nigel Gresley Square up to the racecourse where UKIP were holding their conference. There were all kinds of people: elderly, children, disabled, different ethnicities and religions, men and women, but we all united to march and chant together to tell UKIP they weren’t welcome.

The march itself went right through Doncaster town centre and we had a lot of people applauding us and shouting encouragement at what we were saying. Unfortunately a small group of around ten EDL members (both men and women) decided they would try and cause trouble. They didn’t succeed as the police kept them away but what was funny was the fact the EDL ten were running around Doncaster trying to keep up with us while we were steadily marching along, they looked a bit worn out by the end!

Once we reached the conference centre at the racecourse we had another rally with speakers from minority groups, Stand up to UKIP, a representative from TUSC … and me!

We got halfway through the speakers of the closing rally (I’d had my turn speaking about how the ‘people’s army’ were anything but – and pointing out that we must let people know the true policies of UKIP) when a stream of people started to appear from the conference.

What an end to the day – we actually got to tell the UKIPPERS what we thought of them, it was brilliant! They didn’t know how to react other than to swear at us or try to ignore us, really showing off their true colours. We had another visit from EDL too but we drowned them out with our chanting to the conference attendees

I think the day was a success. We definitely told Farage and his brigade that racist, homophobic, sexist opinions and policies cannot be disguised by pictures of him drinking pints and smoking in pubs (incidentally, now illegal in the majority of countries). They do not represent working people. The most important thing to come from the day is that we, as trade unionists and other activists, have a vital role in ensuring our friends, peers, work colleagues and families know and understand the policies, ideas and opinions of UKIP.

Having a clear understanding of them is the only way people will truly realise they are nothing but a group of horrid individuals set on making themselves richer by dividing us up and making us poorer.

Sarah Woolley
National Executive Member
AS SOME OF YOU MAY BE AWARE, I’m currently working my way round all of our union regional councils. I think it is of absolute paramount importance that everybody is aware of what I’m doing as your young person representative on the EC. To those that I haven’t seen yet due to some of the regional council dates clashing, I promise to be around within the next six months. However, if you need to contact me for anything, you can email me on: apryl.walcott@bfawu.org

November marks Young Workers’ Month and it has been great being able to speak to our members about what matters to them not only in the workplace but in the political sphere. I also attended the TUC Youth Forum which brings young people from all trade unions to speak about trade unions and young people. I will also be attending the TUC Big Youth Debate on November 15th where there will be talks regarding housings and other political issues. Our very own and very lovely Sarah Woolley will be speaking at the event. I’ve also been in talks with the Learning Services team about getting more young people into the courses so, as always, if you are interested all you need to do is contact me.

It has been a really busy period for me as the youth rep, I have talked at numerous events, two of which are at universities about the benefits of being a member and active in a trade union and hand on heart, our trade union really is well loved. We should all be incredibly proud of the trade union we belong to.

Ian Hodson, John Fox and I also spent a day in London at the LRC and Socialism 2014. Ian shared a platform with Kshama Sawant, the self-proclaimed proud socialist councillor from Seattle who campaigned and won a raise in the minimum wage in Seattle which now stands at $15.

Remember that we now have a facebook, twitter and a blog which you can find at www.bfawuyouth.wordpress.com. I have set up the blog so that all of our young members can be given an online megaphone to express what they are doing within our union. If you want to write a blog, all you have to do is email me.

Finally, I hope you all have a great Christmas and New Year! The fight, as always, continues in 2015. See you out there.

Apryl Walcott
Young Members’ Representative

WHEN YOU TIP A WAITER AT A RESTAURANT, YOU EXPECT THAT THE MONEY IS KEPT WITH THE WAITER AND NOT TAKEN BY THE COMPANY.

Where I work, there are a lot of young staff members who earn £3.79 an hour. As you can imagine, no matter how long under 18s work throughout the week, £3.79 does not add up to much. Customer tips can really make a difference to your wages.

We are given money – but the company policy is that we collect all the tips and share them out at the end of the week. However there are a number of problems which are presented by this.

To start with, staff do not see how many tips have been made through the whole week of service. When it comes to getting tips in our pay packets, we often have a very similar amount each week (mostly between £3 and £8 a week). For a while staff have been uneasy about this as we often see a lot of money being taken as tips – yet we don’t seem to be receiving much back in our pay.

Staff are often afraid to question this arrangement. Many of us are on zero hours contracts and if we ask the boss about such issues we are afraid we might lose shifts, (which many of us going to college can’t afford to do as we have to pay for transport and dinner etc. through our wages).

Recently we were given a tip which was a considerable amount – over £100. We wonder if we will ever see any of this money!

Gary Bamber
Branch 405

There are a few things which can be done.

- Write or email restaurants and ask them to clarify their tip policy
- Name and shame companies who are unfairly keeping tips from the staff.
- Campaign for an end to zero hours contracts – not just in the fast food restaurants like McDonald’s but all restaurants which are using them.

Gary’s Top Tips

FOODWORKER

11
There has been much debate in recent years about the Human Rights Act and again recently suggestions were made that it should be scrapped and replaced with a Bill of Rights. It is worth considering the Act and what is actually means, in view of the many myths which surround it.

Human rights themselves are based on fundamental principles like dignity, fairness, equality, respect and autonomy. They protect our freedom to control our own lives, to take part in decisions made by public authorities which impact upon our rights and get fair and equal services from public authorities.

The Human Rights Act 1998 came into force on 2 October 2000 following an election promise by the Labour party for the 1997 general election. It pledged to incorporate into UK law the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, more commonly known as the European Convention on Human Rights. The Convention was not imposed on the UK, it was specifically adopted by Parliament.

The Convention rights themselves date back to the end of the Second World War. Following the horrors of the Holocaust and Hiroshima, the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

Until the HRA came into force, anyone wanting to take action for infringement had to take their case directly to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The fact that the convention rights were incorporated into the HRA made it possible to use our own legal system for the same purpose, saving much time and money.

The HRA allows every person in the UK access to 15 fundamental freedoms:
- Right to Life (Article 2)
- Freedom from Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment (Article 3)
- Right to Liberty and Security (Article 5)
- Freedom from Slavery and Forced Labour (Article 4)
- Right to a Fair Hearing (Article 6)
- No Punishment without the Law (Article 7)
- Respect for your Private and Family Life, Home and Correspondence (Article 8)
- Freedom of Thought, Belief and Religion (Article 9)
- Freedom of Expression (Article 10)
- Freedom of Assembly and Association (Article 11)
- Right to Marry and start a family (Article 12)
- Protection from Discrimination in respect of these rights and freedoms (Article 14)
- Right to Peaceful Enjoyment of your Property (Article 1, First Protocol)
- Right to Education (Article 2, First Protocol)
- Right to Participate in Free Elections (Article 3, First Protocol)

Despite this, some rights can be limited if they conflict with other issues, including:
- Public safety
- National security
- Prevention of an offence being committed

The rights to privacy and to free expression can come into conflict with one another and Article 10 has allowed journalists to protect their sources and protect investigative reporting. The right to privacy has prevented reports on celebrities where they are not in the public interest. The attempted restriction on allowing prisoners the vote was found by the European Court of Human Rights to conflict with the right to participate in free elections.

The attempt in 2011 to require companies to keep swathes of information about who we text, e-mail and phone etc via the Draft Communications Data Bill was abandoned under pressure from campaigning organisations including Liberty which claimed it was in contravention of Article 8 – respect for family life, home and correspondence.

Other rights can be specifically limited by statute – the HRA specifically states that an individual can be deprived of their Article 5 right to liberty where they are suspected or convicted of a criminal offence.

Some of the rights in the HRA can never be limited – such as the right to life, freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment, or the right not to be enslaved. The state is obliged to investigate murders, terrorism and rape, and the HRA has forced independent public investigations into deaths and given loved ones the right to be involved.

The UK has a long and proud history of the protection of human rights, which dates back to Magna Carta in 1215. However, there were no laws relating to many of the rights enshrined in the HRA until 1998, (including the rights to privacy, to free speech, to protest and to non-discrimination). The HRA has expanded the citizen’s rights and enabled them to enforce them more quickly and cheaply than they could have done before.

There can be no doubt that the HRA benefits every person in the UK. Misunderstandings and myths surrounding what it protects only mask its basic purpose which is to safeguard each and every one of us from human rights abuses. Perhaps this is part of what makes the UK great.
Who’s Who of your National Health & Safety Committee?

You are probably aware that the National President, Brother Ian Hodson sits on the National Health & Safety Committee but could you name the regional representatives on the committee?

These are the representatives making up your National Health & Safety:

Region 1  Bro V Payne (Chair)
Region 2  Bro W Gammon
Region 3  Bro M Brooks
Region 4  Bro J Owens (Vice Chair)
Region 5  Bro K Hutchinson
Region 6  Bro D King
Region 7  Bro D Best

The National Health & Safety Committee meets once a quarter to discuss the issues raised at Regional Councils.

The Chair will go around each region asking what concerns have arisen or what good practices have come from Branches to the Regional Councils. The issues raised involve the changes that have already happened or are going to be implemented – it’s not all negative concerns: for example, we have Branches reporting that companies have bought Automated External Defibrillators and the like. The National President will report back on updates regarding Health & Safety on union policies.

What’s What of Health & Safety?

Health & Safety has been around since Victorian times, but in 1974 a major piece of Legislation was enabled. This was called the Health and Safety at Work Act (HASAWA) 1974. Today all Health & Safety falls under this Act.

In order to understand the current position with regard to Health & Safety, we need to look at the range of H&S legislation which is currently in force.

HASAWA 1974

The main Health & Safety law in the UK is the Health & Safety at Work Act 1974. When it was introduced, it aimed to:

- Overcome some of the weaknesses of earlier health & safety legislation.
- Ensure that virtually all workers are protected by health & safety legislation.
- Provide a broad framework within which health & safety can be regulated by providing a comprehensive act dealing with health, safety and welfare of workers and the public.

SRSC Regs 1977

Safety Representatives and Safety Committees carry out a vital role within the workplace. The role and functions of a safety representative are covered in detail in the so-called Brown Book.

First Aid 1981 (amended 2013)

From the Health & Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981:

When someone falls ill or is injured at work, a fully-trained first aider should be there to attend to them.

The role of the first aider is treat the injured person, stop the situation from getting worse and determine the appropriate treatment necessary eg. plaster, bandage or calling for an ambulance.

Treatment will be determined on an accident by accident basis, no two accidents will ever be the same.
Worker injured in fall after not being provided with proper equipment

A Premier Foods employee, who was injured in a fall while cleaning a bread oven, has secured compensation with the help of Thompsons Solicitors and the BFAWU.

Paul Strange, a technical services operator, was asked to clean a large bread oven at Premier Foods’ Avonmouth facility in Bristol. However, the employer failed to provide a ladder or any other safe means to get down onto the oven floor. In order to gain access, Paul had to climb over the oven wall and use a crankshaft fitted to the wall for support.

Unable to work for two months

In doing so, he slipped and fell heavily onto the floor – with his left shoulder taking the full force of the fall. As a result, he sustained ligament damage to his shoulder and a soft tissue injury to his left wrist. While Paul eventually made a full recovery, his injuries meant that he was unable to work for two months.

Following the accident, Paul contacted the BFAWU’s Legal Services, who instructed personal injury specialists, Thompsons Solicitors, to investigate a claim of compensation on their member’s behalf.

No safe system of work

Thompsons investigated a case against Premier Foods for a failure to provide and maintain a safe system of work. Paul’s employer admitted liability and Thompsons were able to negotiate a sum of compensation for him.

Paul said: “The fall was very painful and it took months for me to get full movement back in my wrist. This could have been avoided if the bakery had just given me the right equipment to get into the oven in the first place.”

No room for complacency

BFAWU General Secretary Ronnie Draper, commented: “There can be no complacency when it comes to an individual working at height, and it is vital that employers provide the correct equipment to ensure the safety of their staff. It’s irresponsible of Premier Foods to let a member of their staff carry out this task knowing that the right facilities were not in place.

As a result of their negligence, our member suffered a personal injury that impacted upon his work and personal life.”

Ian Cross at Thompsons, the solicitor who represented Paul, highlighted the fact that such easily-prevented accidents are far too common. He said, “We all too often see employers who underestimate the importance of carrying out adequate risk assessments and providing the right equipment for their employees.

This accident would not have happened if Premier Foods had provisions in place for the oven to be cleaned in a safe and systematic way. Instead, they let their employee stand on a crankshaft, which is by no means an adequate replacement of a ladder to carry out his duties.”

This case is another example of the value of the BFAWU’s Legal Services working with Thompsons to provide expert legal support and representation and – unlike high-street solicitors – a guarantee that members will take home 100% of their compensation, with no deductions made in fees or hidden charges.
Many workplaces have high temperatures and this can cause accidents or exacerbate ill-health. In many industries it is a seasonal concern, for example: construction workers in the heat of the summer are faced with an increased risk of contracting skin cancer as a result. Elsewhere it is a problem that affects workers year-round and many BFAWU members have to work in hot environments as a matter of course.

Excessive heat can have various effects. It increases the risk of dizziness, fainting and fatigue. It puts extra strain on the heart and lungs and causes heat cramps. High heat can also aggravate pre-existing medical conditions such as asthma and rhinitis, high blood pressure and heart disease.

Even apparently mild symptoms such as lower concentration and increased tiredness can have consequences, making workers more likely to make mistakes and put themselves and others at risk.

Given the risks it is a surprise (and a scandal) that, unlike minimum working temperatures, the law does not stipulate a maximum working temperature. This is not logical. If employers are required to take action when their workers experience dangerously low temperatures, the same should be true when temperatures rise to threaten health and safety.

**Why no maximum temperature?**

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) says that a specific maximum working temperature cannot be set because the factors – other than air temperature – which determine comfort (such as ‘radiant temperature’, humidity and air flow) become more significant, and the interplay between them grow more complex, as temperatures rise.

However, the more likely reason for the absence of a law on high working temperatures is a commercial one. For some, such as furnace workers, temperatures are high all the time. Therefore many employers argue that any law which would limit their workers from carrying out their duties would effectively mean they would have to shut the factory doors.

**The law as it stands**

The relevant law, the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992 Approved Code of Practice, says that the minimum temperatures in workrooms should be at least 16 degrees Celsius, or 13 degrees if much of the work involves ‘severe physical effort’. Even then the law is flexible. 16 or 13 degrees Celsius are not considered ‘absolute’ legal requirements. It is ultimately the employer’s responsibility to determine what is ‘reasonably comfortable’ in any particular circumstance.

No equivalent maximum temperature is provided. All that is given is guidance – not legally binding – that ‘all reasonable steps should be taken to achieve a reasonably comfortable temperature’.

Because the law relating to minimum temperatures is more specific, employers have much less opportunity to ignore or avoid it. If you are affected evidence can be gathered to prove that an employer failed to take action when the temperature falls too low.

In our view specific maximum working temperatures should be set in law to make lazy or negligent employers ensure conditions do not have a serious effect on their workers. Employers must not be just let off from putting in place working practices and supplying appropriate protective equipment to minimise the effect of excessive heat.
Cool It

The BFAWU’s ‘Cool It’ campaign is designed to raise awareness of this problem. It calls for the government to provide clear, coherent and enforceable requirements for employers to combat excessive heat in the workplace, and for a maximum temperature of 30 degrees Celsius (or 27 degrees during strenuous work) and, once the temperature reaches that limit, control measures must be implemented to reduce the effect of the heat.

Thompsons’ experience shows that, while the law is not much help, employers can be brought to book if they don’t arrange for their workers to operate in a ‘reasonable’ temperature, and they also have to show that they have effective means of monitoring workplace temperatures, for example by using thermometers.

A failure to follow either the regulations, or the HSE’s recommendations, can and will be taken into account by the courts if injury or ill-health results.

A case in point

The state of the law means legal cases relating to high working temperatures are rarely brought to court. However there has been a recent case that was brought to court and the Judge found in favour of the claimant.

A worker with a medical condition which made her susceptible to fainting was left to work in temperatures described as being around 30 degrees. Due to the nature of her work, she had to wear heavy, lead-lined safety clothing and, despite the fact that senior colleagues knew of her history of fainting, no allowances were made for this.

Because of the high temperatures, lack of air flow, and heavy work clothing, the worker fainted – which caused her to be injured.

The case went to trial and a judgment was made in the worker’s favour. It was found that the employers were guilty of breaching regulation 7 of the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations because the temperature of the workplace was not ‘reasonable’ and medical experts agreed that this caused the faint and subsequent injury.

The judge also found that the defendants had failed to comply with regulations 3 and 7(3) of the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1993 by not making a proper risk assessment or monitoring the workplace temperature with a thermometer.

This case illustrates the range of factors that employers should take into account when dealing with high working temperatures. As well as the temperature itself, air flow and other environmental factors, the effect of work clothing or equipment and any personal reaction to the heat needs to be considered. Here, a predisposition to fainting should have been properly recognised. In other cases, an employer should carefully consider the effect of heat on members of staff who may be pregnant, or elderly, or who suffer from medical difficulties which impair breathing, blood pressure or heart function.

It is vital that employers are not allowed to simply ignore their responsibility to provide a reasonable working environment.

Setting a maximum temperature in law would go a long way to ensuring that this does not happen.

STUDY LINKS SHIFT WORK TO INCREASED RISK OF DIABETES

Companies are constantly raising the issue of absence at work and attacking our rights to sick pay. So when discussing the issue of absence, why don’t you ask the company how many people who are off are currently off with diabetes?

New research has linked shift work to a heightened risk of developing Type 2 diabetes. It is more common in people who work shifts, a large international study suggests with the highest risk found amongst men and those who work rotating shifts.

The study published in the Occupational and Environmental Journal involved an analysis of 12 international observation studies, including more than 225,000 people participating, which looked at the link between shift work and diabetes.

When pooling the results the researchers found that overall, shift work was associated with a 9% increased risk of diabetes. The association was found to be stronger in men (37%) and for those working rotating shifts on different parts of a 24 hour cycle on a regular basis (rather than on a fixed pattern) the figure increased to 42%.

The researchers said that although the study was large it was observational so no conclusion could be drawn about direct cause and effect. However the results could suggest that repeated disruption of the internal body clock which controls levels of the male hormone testosterone is linked to insulin levels. Rotating shifts make it difficult for people to adjust to a regular wake sleep cycle and some research suggests this lack and poor quality of sleep may prompt or worsen insulin resistance.

World Health Organisation

- An emerging global epidemic of diabetes can be traced to rapid increases in overweight, obesity and physical inactivity.
- Total deaths from diabetes are projected to rise by more than 50% in the next 10 years – most notably, projected to increase by over 80% in upper-middle income countries.
- Type 1 diabetes is characterized by a lack of insulin production and Type 2 diabetes results from the body’s ineffective use of insulin.
- Type 2 diabetes is much more common than type 1 diabetes, accounting for around 90% of all diabetes worldwide.
- Reports of Type 2 diabetes in children (previously rare) have increased worldwide.
- A third type of diabetes is gestational diabetes – identified by hyperglycaemia first recognised during pregnancy.
- In 2005, 1.1 million people died from diabetes.
- 80% of diabetes deaths are now occurring in low- and middle-income countries.
- Lack of awareness or facilities leads to complications such as blindness, amputation and kidney failure.
- Diabetes can be prevented. Moderate-intensity physical activity and a healthy diet can drastically reduce the risks.
EMPLOYERS FAIL TO PROTECT PREGNANT WOMEN AT WORK – A TUC RESPONSE

The Equal Opportunities Commission recently found that the majority of employers failed to undertake the legally-required Risk Assessments to protect new or expectant mothers at work. Around 350,000 women continue to work during their pregnancy every year and, of those, 69% return to work after giving birth.

A new TUC online guide provides detailed and practical workers’ resources on pregnancy and risk assessments. TUC says employers must fulfil their legal obligations and protect both pregnant women and those who return to work while breast-feeding.

The regulations on new and expectant mothers at work are very important. Many hazards in the workplace can affect the health and safety of both groups and their children and therefore working conditions previously considered acceptable, may no longer be suitable when a worker is pregnant or breast-feeding.

Because pregnancy usually goes undetected for the first few weeks, employers should identify hazards and risks for all female employees of childbearing age, not only those that they know are pregnant. In addition, some hazards can present more of a risk at different stages of pregnancy.

However, controlling common workplace risks better will reduce the need for special action for these groups and a good employer will ensure the workplaces is safe for all employees, including pregnant employees, regardless of whether they know any of the workforce is pregnant.

Regional Secretary, Kevin Rowan commented:

“The last thing that a pregnant woman needs is to be anxious about either her own health or that the health of her future baby could be made worse by working.

The law and common sense requires employers to take account of the special position of new and expectant mothers and to conduct a Risk Assessment. This should then take account of any risks where the worker may be exposed to any process, working conditions, or physical, chemical, or biological agents that could adversely affect the health and safety of the worker or their baby.

Risk assessments should include consideration of the risks for those who are pregnant, those who have given birth or miscarried in the last six months, or those who are breast-feeding.

If any risks cannot be avoided the employers must make provision to alter the working conditions or hours of work of new or expectant mothers.”

Not many workers (or employers come to that) are experts on employment law and Guides (like the one provided free, online by the TUC), give easy-to-understand information on what everyone should expect from their employer and their work environment. Pregnancy is usually not considered as a health and safety issue – by staff and employers alike, but it is imperative to protect new or expectant mothers from any increased risks by adopting a sensible, yet sensitive approach; something which should be maintained for all employees whatever their circumstances.

The full online guide can be found at: [www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/tuc-9712-f0.cfm](http://www.tuc.org.uk/h_and_s/tuc-9712-f0.cfm)
MEETING GED KEARNEY

As some of you may know I recently attended a study trip to Australia as part of my role on the GFTU executive council.

The purpose of the trip was to offer solidarity to the unions over there who are facing a much harsher conservative government than our own and to form some links with the unions there to further strengthen the union movement internationally.

The journey there and back took over 41 hours but the jetlag was certainly worth it to have met the people and formed the links we did with unions and campaigns over there. Watch this space for some more information on those.

We met with a whole host of trade union leaders including Ged Kearney, the President of the Australian Council of Trade (the Australian version of our TUC) who is a nurse and began her session with a quick explanation of the difference in union framework there.

There are only a couple of national unions in Australia. The majority are run as federations in which the branches hold all of the power, partly due to the number of amalgamations taking place to form the unions and partly due to Australia being so vast a country that it takes a plane ride to get from one side to the other!

Ged pointed out that the right are extremely organised. They all have the same agenda when coming to power and this is something that we as trade unionists need to be preparing ourselves for. She spoke of ‘the strength of internationalism needing to start plotting and actioning the alternative to the Right’s thirty year plotting’.

These people are demonising the venerable and isolating the minorities. It’s our job as trade unionists to speak out for everyone – to give them a voice and help them.

Ged’s session was only one of the twelve we sat in on the study trip but it truly cemented the need for international solidarity. We need to learn from other unions more so ones that are dealing with issues that we are likely to face in the future or beginning to face now – so we can fight back against the attacks and gain more victories as a trade union movement.

Tertiary education loans now have interest on them which have to be paid back and he has even attacked Medicare, Australia’s version of the NHS. Currently, all employees pay a 1.7% levy on their income for universal healthcare. Abbot wants to introduce a system in which people have to pay $7.00 for access to services and wants to make healthcare into a commodity which means it will lose its universality. People who can’t afford to pay will stay sick, deteriorate and even die – whereas for the rich this won’t be an issue.

He has introduced the Royal Commission which is designed to make unions look corrupt. Fortunately so far it’s not working – the unions have nothing to hide. He’s introduced a productivity commission that’s holding an enquiry into the barriers to trade and how to make employees more productive. This includes scrapping the penalty rates – the premium rates employees are paid to work weekends bank holidays and unsociable hours!

All the things the labour movement have worked hard to achieve and implement are being attacked and dismantled. Union membership has dropped in Australia (as it has over here) at a time when they, like us, can’t afford it to happen and should Cameron get into power next year this will be the norm for us too.

She talked us through life in Australia under the Abbot government (first pointing out to us that when Abbot came into power unions weren’t ready – they had relaxed on the campaigning front during the Labour government meaning they had to start again from scratch building up the momentum).

After coming into power, within one year he had outsourced all financial policymaking to the Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA) which is the biggest business in Australia. He then attacked the public sector, slashing 30,000 jobs, raised the pension age to 70 and started to outsource services. Under 30s cannot claim benefits for 6 months and he has attacked welfare further by making people work for their benefits (sound familiar?).

Solidarity! Sarah Woolley GFTU Representative & Female Members Representative

Over the past 6 months we have seen really diverse changes in the weather, from high winds, heavy rainfall, and blistering sunshine. At times we could curse the weather but if we look at it logically, we could store all the energy that it brings with it, instead of looking at the fossil fuels that we still use.

Do we still use our rivers to produce energy?

In the past we used our rivers to grind grain or for other agriculture, but this seems a lost technology in the United Kingdom. In Nevada, USA they have the Hoover Dam which is used to power Las Vegas and a great amount of the south west of America.

New power technology is being tested on slow moving rivers and being developed by the University of Michigan. This is called VIVACE (Vortex Induced Vibrations for Aquatic Clean Energy). This acts like a fish that swims through the water and using the current to conserve its energy. VIVACE developer, Professor Michael Bernitsas, has said in a statement if we could harness 0.1% of the energy in the ocean then we would be able to support the energy needs of 15 billion people. This development only needs the current of a river to run at 1 knot as even the wind turbines need 5 knots to produce energy.

Northern Ireland had a tidal stream turbine installed in the Strangford Narrows which will produce enough energy for over 1000 homes, it makes no noise, only a small amount sticks above the surface of the water.
(no spoilt views of the environment), and it has zero emissions. This was a British invention by Seagen – a firm from Bristol.

The technology that we have today could cut our fuel bills and create a better environment to live in, but this government are still hell bent on using fossil fuels, just to line their own, and their friend’s pockets with our taxes.

We now know that we have to start leaving all our fossil fuels in the ground, and to start using the environment, but mostly the weather, as a source of energy. Here in Britain we have the numerous different ways to produce energy efficient fuels, wind, sun, and water. The wind blows almost all of the time, You don’t need it to be sunny all of the time just have the light for the solar power and we have tides all around the coast twice a day, and the rivers are always flowing with the rain that we receive.

Are we understanding the problems?
I believe that this government does understand these problems, but intends to ignore them so that these businesses can make the profits for their shareholders and themselves.

We have wind turbines – but I have noticed on numerous occasions that these are turned off because the ‘grid is full’. If that’s the case, why do they not stop using the fossil fuels and use this instead. The turbines only need to be switched off for maintenance.

- We have a constant use of power. So, how are the grids full?
- Why are the government still pushing Fracking as an alternative to solar (or any environment-friendly) energy?

These are just a few of the questions that need to be answered (and answered truthfully) by the government that only sees either pounds or dollar signs in their eyes.

Is enough being done to combat the problems
I believe that there is not enough being done. Industries are ignoring the legislation that is in force. These industries have set targets to reduce the emissions but are doing very little to reach those targets. This for the industries is down to cost; they don’t look to future savings that this could bring them, but to the profits that they are making now.

The Government must act on this legislation and force these companies to comply.

We now have many demonstrations across the world over the past six months campaigning on climate change. The largest was in New York City where over three hundred thousand people marched and demonstrated for climate change holding banners saying ‘There is no Planet B’ or ‘Go solar – you control the climate’.

Well-known celebrities also attended the march, such as Leonardo DiCaprio and Mark Ruffalo. In the UK it was held in London and plenty of activists attended it with a rally outside of Parliament. Other countries that were involved in this day of action were Canada, Denmark, Spain, Australia, New Zealand and many more.

If we all care about where we live and the environment that we live in then become a part of the movement, find your local group, and help to combat the problems on the planet where we all live.

Peter John Fox
National Vice President
I would like to know more about the benefits of belonging to the Union:

Name (Block letters) ...
Address ...
Contact Phone ...
Email address ...
Where employed at present ...
Occupation ...
Signature ...
Date ...

Please complete details above and hand to your local representative, Branch Official, Regional Office (for addresses see above) or send to Head Office at the FREEPOST address shown.