

Campaign Briefing

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Working Time Directive: End the Opt Out Support GMB/UCATT/UNITE Emergency

By Richard Ascough – GMB Regional Secretary

(We understand an Emergency Motion has been accepted by CAC and that it will be timetabled today. The GMB has provided the following article.)

The case for the end of the opt out in the Working Time Regulations is over-whelming. In the debate on our Emergency, the government are likely to press a business-friendly argument.

The principle points of the union case against the opt out have been made for many years and are as follows:-

- The health and safety implications of long hours
- The counter-argument that individuals have a free choice is often not the case. Many employees are pressurised to sign the opt out
- The UK has the longest working hours in Europe

- The public were told that the opt out was only to be a short-term transitional measure.
- In addition there is real concern over the proposed changes to on-call working.

If the government refuses to respond to the fair and just case against the opt out, there will be a worsening of employees' working conditions. We should remember that the opt out was introduced by the Tories and was opposed by the Labour Party and TUC. If it was wrong then, it is certainly wrong now.

Some employers and their supporters in the media, argue that working over 60 hours a week is acceptable. No delegate at this Conference would take this view. It is time we returned to a Social Europe and not continue with this pro-business, anti-worker agenda.

SUPPORT THE EMERGENCY MOTION

Support contemporary issues on workers in a global economy concerning the European Court of Justice judgements – from CWU / Unite / TSSA and several CLPs

Elections to the National Constitutional Committee

We urge CLP delegates to vote for the following candidates:

Teresa Pearce (sitting member) — Rita Stephen

Shenanigans

The meeting of CLP delegates with contemporary issues on housing, following their success in the priorities ballot, shows just how unsatisfactory the new process is. Nine CLPs had submitted the following issues: "Government must lead and fund a council house building programme"; six others were included under the more general heading "housing", some of which were much more "on- message" and less focussed on council housing.

Delegates were called to see the CAC. Before they got into the room, a member of the Party staff sidled up to some delegates to urge them to support guess which text! After a polite introduction from Jack Dromey and Iain Wright, junior Housing minister, the chair proposes an "on-message" delegate to move. When this was challenged by a delegate supporting the majority policy position, the chair was upheld by 6-5 in a very confusing vote.

This sort of behaviour does not bode well for the new process, especially given all the effort the platform has made to sell it as a step forward for party democracy.

Delegates should be in their seats early tomorrow (Tuesday) to ensure they are ready for the rule changes from CLPs which are the first item of business.

