

INSIDE: Focus on Scotland • Stagnation in construction • Long hours

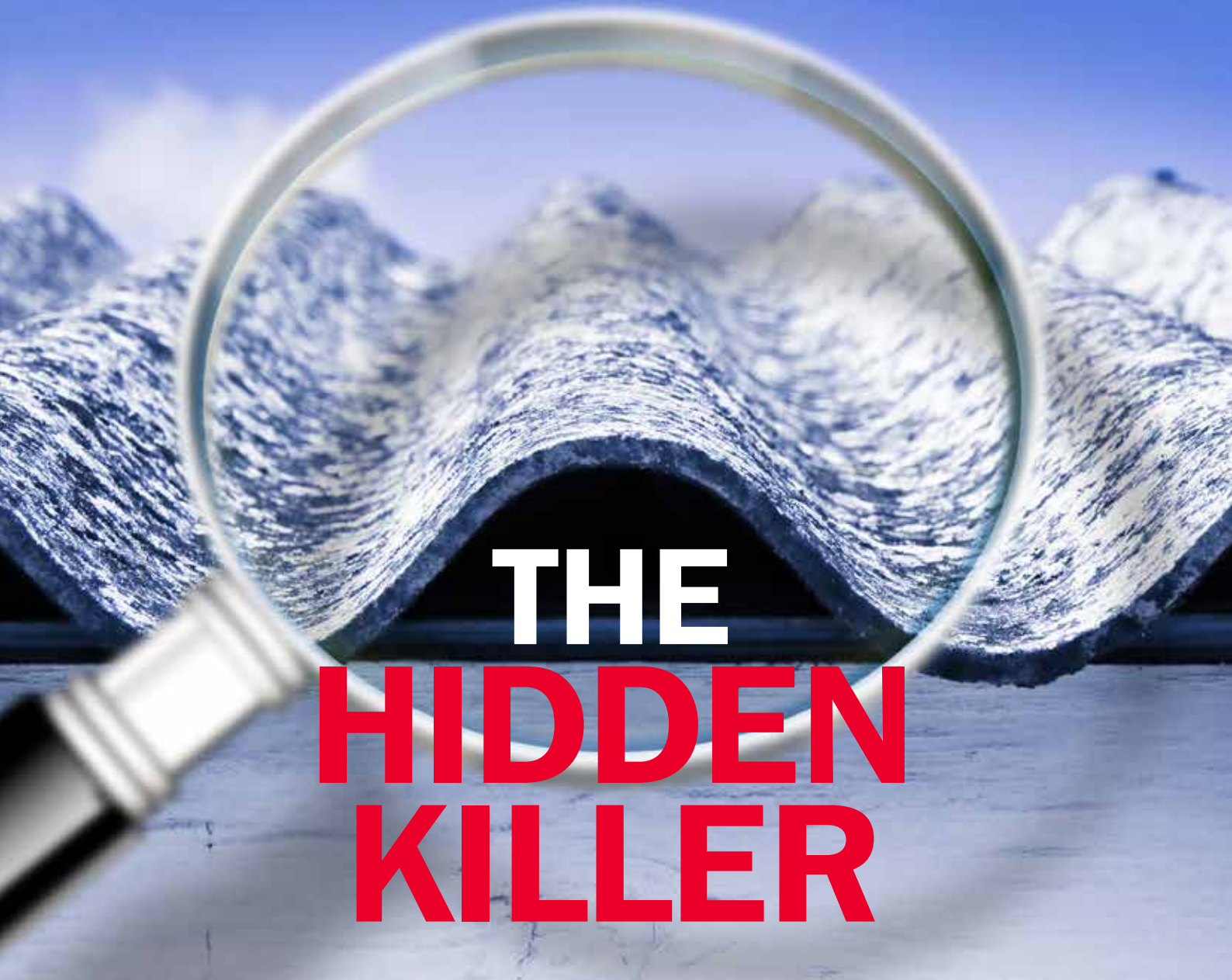
Autumn 2019 The magazine for construction sector members

buildingWORKER



Construction, Allied
Trades and Technicians

ASBESTOS



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Dear Colleagues,

Two critical issues concerning construction workers are the health of the economy as this impacts on availability of work and pay rates and your health and well-being at work. Both issues are covered in this issue of *buildingWORKER*.

On page 16-17 we examine the current state of our industry which is teetering on the brink of recession and examine how the policies of successive government's has harmed the health of the sector.

From failing to support the development of vitally needed new nuclear power stations to not backing a new potash mine and processing centre in Teesside, the article demonstrates how opportunities to invest in major infrastructure projects, which will improve people's lives or secure our power network is being lost.

We are fast approaching the twentieth anniversary of the ban on asbestos being used in the UK, yet deaths from asbestos continue to rise, with construction workers being at highest risk of being exposed. Far too often workers are not properly trained in how to spot asbestos and what to do when it is discovered.

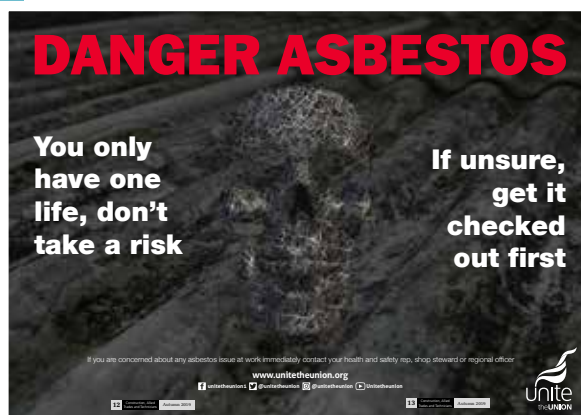
On page 10-11 we provide information for workers who are concerned about being exposed to asbestos at work and the centre pages is a poster for display in your workplace to raise awareness.

Long hours blight the lives of construction workers. In an industry which regularly switches from feast to famine, where engagements are short and when future employment is uncertain, it is natural to work long hours when they are available.

Yet the survey of Unite members, the findings of which are on page 14-15, demonstrate the terrible physical, mental cost to workers' health and the damage that long hours is doing to workers' relationships.

It is quite clear that across construction only radical change, root and branch reform of the current 'hand to mouth' economic and employment model will put an end to workers having their health and personal lives ruined. Help us build union strength to force change, use *buildingWORKER* to show your work mates that Unite is on their side.

Gail Cartmail,
assistant general secretary



Slight drop in CIS numbers

A freedom of information (FOI) request by Unite has revealed a slight decrease in the number of construction workers who were paid via the construction industry scheme during 2018/19.

The FOI revealed that 1.03 million workers were paid via the scheme which was a decrease of 90,000 workers (8 per cent) who were paid via the scheme in 2017/18.

The decrease in the number of workers paid by CIS is the first time numbers have decreased since 2014, when the government introduced measures to try to reduce the number of workers being paid via CIS. That change led to

a surge in workers being forced to be employed via umbrella companies.

The reduction in the number of CIS workers may be linked to the stagnation which is currently affecting construction and an even greater use of umbrella companies.

Forcing workers to operate via CIS is primarily beneficial to employers as they avoid paying employers' national insurance contributions which are 13.8 per cent of a workers' eligible earnings.

Workers operating on CIS are denied employment rights, meaning they can be sacked without warning as well as usually being denied holiday pay.

Construction workers urged to wear red for anti racism

Construction workers in England and Wales are being urged to wear red on Friday 18 October to support the educational and anti-racism charity Show Racism the Red Card (SRtRC).

The charity educates 50,000 young people a year by challenging attitudes to racism, it is unique in its work as it uses current and former footballers to promote its message.

Workers are asked to wear red on the day and then donate £1 to the charity.

Further information on how to register and donate can be found at <https://www.theredcard.org/wear-red-day>. Workers are also encouraged to share pictures of themselves wearing red on social media using the hashtag #WRD19.

Sadiq Khan condemned Boris Johnson for his racism at the SRtRC launch event

Speaking at the launch of this year's Wear Red Day, London Mayor Sadiq Khan attacked Boris Johnson's racism he said: "Just because you have a posh voice and write article with long words and you are the Prime Minister it doesn't excuse you of racism."



Unite wins TUC support on HS2 union busting

Unite has secured the support of the entire union movement in its battle against union busting.

Unions overwhelmingly backed a motion at TUC Congress in September which condemned the Costain/Skanska Joint Venture (CSJV) from denying unions access to workers on the Euston enabling work.



Unite has held a number of demonstrations at the HS2 site at Euston

Moving the motion Unite assistant general secretary Gail Cartmail explained how CSJV had justified their union busting by claiming that unions could not have access to workers during their breaks in the canteen as they needed to "decompress" after being involved in the removal of century old skeletons on the site.

Cartmail said: "If workers are traumatised this is when they most need their union. Shame on you Costain and Skanska for using the dead to justify your union busting."

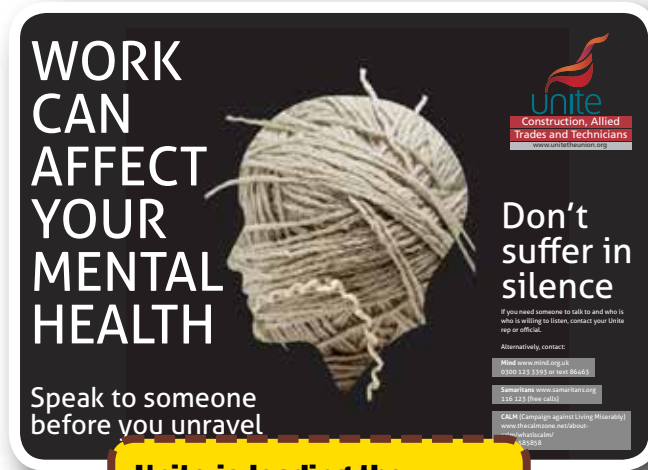
The motion also criticised the client HS2 for failing to intervene having signed an agreement guaranteeing unions access to workers on the project.

Mental health challenge

NATIONAL NEWS

Unite is calling for the construction industry to meet the challenges of the sectors' mental health epidemic. Unite made its call after it was revealed in August that workers operating on the new nuclear power station at Hinkley Point were struggling with mental health issues. The findings were particularly concerning as EDF at Hinkley Point has taken the lead in attempting to improve the mental health of construction workers.

EDF has been successfully working with Unite to recruit and train union health and safety reps as mental health first aiders and they have had considerable success in getting workers to begin to talk about their problems and find treatment. EDF has also put on talks with well known mental health campaigners such as



Unite is leading the campaign to tackle mental ill health in construction

Frank Bruno to tackle the macho culture that bedevils the industry. Unite believes that the mental health problems faced by construction workers is a cumulative effect which builds up over many years as a result of the hire and fire culture in the industry, where

direct employment is low, engagements are short and most workers are either bogusly self-employed or recruited via agencies. This is coupled with workers working away from home and a long hours culture.

Unite assistant general secretary **Gail Cartmail** said: "Unite is open to talk with sector bodies, clients, contractors and government ministers about solutions that tackle the cause not just

the symptoms of the mental health epidemic now rife in construction.

A 21st century construction 'accord' could establish a turning point that could literally save lives."

• For more details on physical and mental ill health in construction see pages 14-15

600 days after Carillion collapse - guilty unpunished

In September Unite marked 600 days since Carillion collapsed on 15 January 2018 to highlight that the government has washed its hands of the scandal.

Since its collapse no action has been taken against Carillion's directors, despite the company being forced into compulsory liquidation with liabilities of £7 billion.

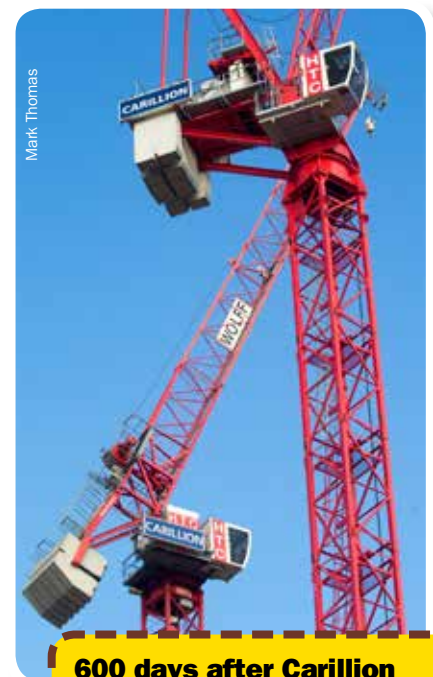
The Official Receiver investigation into Carillion's collapse is not due to be completed until early 2021.

While an investigation into the company's auditing and financial reporting, being undertaken by the Financial Reporting Council, but it is open ended.

Unite is taking legal action for over 200 workers who were made redundant when Carillion collapsed due to the company's failure to inform and consult its workers. However these cases are being vigorously defended by the official receiver and will not be heard until late 2020.

At the same time Carillion's two flagship hospitals the Royal Liverpool and the Midland Metropolitan hospital in Smethwick in the West Midlands, remain uncompleted with work not even yet fully restarted.

• See page 8 for latest on Midland Metropolitan hospital



600 days after Carillion collapsed work still has not restarted on its hospital sites

Inquiry needed following scaffold collapse

Unite demanded an urgent inquiry following a major scaffold collapse in Reading town centre in early August.

The scaffold was connected to a shopping centre which was being demolished by McGee's. Three people were injured as a result of the collapse. Unite is seeking a full open and transparent inquiry into the collapse, undertaken by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Unite national construction officer Jerry Swain said: "A full inquiry

must not just include the immediate reasons for the scaffolding collapse but also examine whether the work had been sublet, were all workers on site properly employed and did they all have the appropriate skills and training.

"It is essential that we learn the lessons from this accident to prevent similar serious incidents in the future."



Dilwar H

Collapsed scaffolding could have tragic results

Answers demanded following MGT jobs cull

Unite national construction officer Ian Woodland demanded answers following an unexpected jobs cull on a major project on Teesside.

In July the workforce on the £600 million Biomass site was suddenly cut from 1,150 workers to just 800, without explanation, at a time when the project was 18 months away from its scheduled completion.

Woodland contacted both the client Technicas Reundias and the principal contractor Atlantic Projects Company.

Woodland demanded to know:

- Why the jobs were culled
- The short and long term commitments on the site

- What commitments could be given about returning the workforce to the site
- What will be done to ensure that local labour is recruited?

Following Unite's representations the union has assurances that the site will not be mothballed and the number of workers will increase throughout the autumn.

Merseyside Police heavy handed on construction protest

Members of Unite remain concerned about the heavy handed approach of the Merseyside police, at Hooton Park, Ellesmere Port.

Construction workers have been protesting at the site since March. The site comprises a new energy from waste plant which is being built by Danish company Burmeister & Wain Scandinavian Contractor (BWSC).

The company has refused to comply with the National Agreement for the Engineering Construction Industry (NAECI), and refuses to

pay enhanced overtime rates or other benefits, creating a race to the bottom.

Unite members are also concerned about the anti-union practices of BWSC, at the latest protest on Friday 23 August, activists reported that Merseyside police were extremely aggressive and confrontational and they seemed to want to provoke demonstrators to get themselves arrested.

However the demonstration passed off without further incidents.



Unite members protesting at Hooton

Cladding fears on Midland Metropolitan Hospital

In early September it emerged that much of the cladding on the unfinished Midland Metropolitan was likely to be unsafe.

Work on the half built hospital is yet to restart after the original contractor Carillion went into compulsory liquidation in January 2018.

A similar issue concerning dangerous cladding has also been identified on the Royal Liverpool hospital which is also unfinished and was also originally being built by Carillion. However that was revealed a year earlier than on the Midland Metropolitan, generating questions about why it took so long for the cladding issue to be recognised.

Given the original time programme for the hospital, Unite is concerned that the dangerous cladding may have

been installed after the Grenfell fire on 14 June 2017. If it had become operational with the cladding still intact, the potential fire risk would have endangered the lives of the staff and patients.

Balfour Beatty are set to undertake the work to complete the Midland Metropolitan hospital but work has not yet restarted because the government has not yet released the funding. The hospital will not be completed until April 2022.

Unite regional officer **Su Lowe** said: "The devil may care attitude of Carillion is beyond comprehension, apparently it was prepared to clad the hospital in a dangerous material."

Unite held a demonstration on 6 September at the Midland Metropolitan demanding action to get the new hospital built. The date marked 600 days since Carillion collapsed and work stopped.



Unite members held a demonstration demanding action to get the Midland Metropolitan hospital built

Mayor of London signs construction charter



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: Jerry Swain, Unite national officer, mayor of Newham Rokhsana Fiaz and James Murray, deputy mayor of London sign the construction charter

Unite's construction charter has received a major boost as it has now been signed by **Sadiq Khan** the Mayor of London.

By signing the charter it means that all future construction contracts

tendered by the Greater London Authority (GLA) must comply with the charter's rules.

This includes outlawing bogus self-employment and umbrella companies. Also included in the charter is the requirement to train apprentices, the need to comply with the relevant industrial agreements and a complete prohibition of blacklisting. There are also clauses about union access and ensuring first class health and safety.

On the same day that the GLA signed up to the charter, Newham council in east London also signed up. Newham follows Barking and

Dagenham council which has also signed up to the charter.

Unite regional secretary for London **Pete Kavanagh** said: "The Mayor of London and Unite are joining forces to ensure our world class capital city has world class employment standards for construction workers."

The signing of the charter is only half the battle as once signed it is incumbent on officials and activists to police it and ensure that contractors are abiding by its provisions.

The deputy mayor for housing and residential development **James Murray** said; "We are proud to back Unite's construction charter, which leads the way on world class employment standards for construction workers across London."

PAY AND BARGAINING

Crawley workers secure sick pay

Housing maintenance operatives in Crawley working for Mears and Liberty Group on outsourced council contracts have secured a pay rise and secured sick pay.

Last year Unite secured formal recognition for the workforce, who had barely received a pay rise in the last decade. The workers were not entitled to sick pay.

Mears initially refused to enter into negotiations, which resulted in the workforce staging several demonstrations.

Preparations were also being made for an industrial action ballot.

The Labour leader of Crawley council **Peter Lamb** then intervened and ensured the workforce will receive six months sick pay in line with directly employed council workers.

Mears/Liberty Group also made a two per cent pay offer which workers accepted.

Unite regional officer **Malcolm Bonnet** said: "This shows



Protests at Crawley have helped secure sick pay and a pay rise

hat can be achieved if workers stand up for their rights."

Drax scaffolders secure agreement

Scaffolders employed by Altrad-Hertel on the Drax power station, in north Yorkshire, will enjoy better conditions from 1 November.

The 29 Unite members voted for industrial action after the company refused to register the workers under the National Agreement for the Engineering Construction Industry (NAECI).

The workers sought to ensure Altrad-Hertel would abide by the agreements independent procedures when a worker is disciplined or demoted.

Unite announced two 24 hour strikes in September but a settlement was then reached.

Unite regional officer **Chris Weldon** said: "Unite is pleased that this dispute could be resolved through

negotiation and look forward to working more closely with Altrad-Hertel in future."

Heathrow workers see bonus increase

Construction workers employed at Heathrow have backed a major increase in their bonus.

The increase was achieved through negotiations led by Unite official **Paul Lomax**.

The latest increase means that Heathrow construction workers will see their bonus rise by 50 per cent in a three year deal.

Negotiations underway

Unite is preparing to begin negotiations on two of its major industrial agreements.

The pay deals for both the National Agreement for the Engineering Construction Industry (NAECI) and the Joint Industry Board (JIB) Electrical enter their final year from January 2020.

Unite will submit its pay claim for the NAECI agreement for 2021 during October, and negotiations will begin early in 2020.

Meanwhile Unite national officer **Ian Woodland** convened a meeting of the JIB reps in Liverpool on 26 September, which framed Unite's pay claim.

The pay claim is due to be submitted this autumn. With pay talks expected to start in 2020.

Ancient building training available

The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) is offering Unite members the opportunity to join its training programme.

The training lasts six months and is conducted in three two month periods, those who pass will become a fellow of the SPAB.

The course is for workers who have completed their apprenticeship in a trade involved in restoring historic buildings and who are beginning their career. Potential trades include: carpenters, masons, bricklayers, roofers and glaziers.

There are no fees and trainees will receive a bursary of £6,500.

For further information contact Felicity Martin, the Communications Manager, at the SPAB on 0207 456 0905.



A scaffolding strike would have shut down Drax power station.

Gambling Charter launched

Unite has launched a workplace gambling charter, which has been created to provide a framework for employers and unions in assisting workers who have gambling problems.

The charter builds on previous articles and posters that have appeared in the *buildingWORKER* to raise awareness of the growing problem which costs the economy £1.2 billion a year.

Problem gamblers are 2.69 times more likely to have visited a GP with a mental health issue, 8.54 times more likely to be accessing mental health services, 5.53 times more likely to have been a hospital inpatient in the last three months and 4.4 times more likely to be in prison.

Several employers have already signed up to the charter including: Blackpool Transport, Bolton at Home, Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust and the Gambling Commission.

Unite head of education **Jim Mowatt** said: "This is an excellent initiative which is aimed at ensuring that problem gambling can be identified at an early stage and workers receive the support they need in the workplace.

"Problem gambling does not just affect an individual but can have a devastating effect on families."



Unite is assisting workers who have had gambling issues

The charter can be found at <https://unitetheunion.org/media/2514/unite-gambling-in-the-workplace-charter.pdf>.

- *If you have a problem with gambling speak to your union rep or regional officer for initial advice.*

Silica dust register goes live

Unite has launched an online register so that workers who are exposed to silica dust at their workplace can record their exposure.

If the worker then develops a health condition related to their exposure the entry in the register can potentially assist with a legal case.

Silica dust is created when cutting, grinding, drilling or polishing substances such as rock and sand. Silica is also a major constituent in bricks, tiles, concrete and building materials.

As a consequence construction workers exposed to silica are in danger of developing the serious respiratory disease silicosis. It can also lead to other potentially fatal illnesses including lung cancer, tuberculosis and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).



Cement and concrete contains large amounts of silica dust

Silicosis can take years to develop, making registering any exposure even more important. The symptoms of silicosis include: shortness of breath, severe cough, fatigue, loss of appetite, chest pains and fever.

It is the employer's responsibility to prevent workers from being exposed to silica dust; this should be by removing

the risk, introducing dust suppression measures or by issuing personal protective equipment (PPE) such as properly fitting masks to prevent exposure.

Unite national health and safety advisor **Bud Hudspith** said: "Silica exposure can have long term serious health consequences for workers, but simple measures can prevent the health of workers being damaged."

If you have been exposed to silica then record the information on the register which can be found at <https://www.unitelegalservices.org/services/silica-dust>.

If you believe your workplace is failing to ensure that you are being exposed to asbestos contact your union health and safety rep, shop steward or your regional officer.

ASBESTOS

THE HIDDEN KILLER

Asbestos an effective and silent killer

Asbestos still kills around 5,000 workers each year, this is more than the number of people killed on the roads. Construction tradesmen are particularly affected with around 20 dying each week.

Long latency periods mean those dying today were exposed decades ago, however the problem will continue as long as asbestos remains in our buildings and lives. Given that the fatal dangers of asbestos have been known for

over 50 years, it is striking that asbestos can be present in any building built or refurbished before the year 2000.

What we also know is that asbestos is killing people who occupy certain types of buildings that contain asbestos containing materials; this is evident even in our schools.

The Joint Union Asbestos Committee (JUAC) has identified that more than 380 school teaching professionals have died of mesothelioma (a cancer

almost 100 per cent caused by asbestos) since 1980. These figures are almost certainly an underestimation as many mesothelioma deaths remain misdiagnosed and do not include workers such as cleaners, maintenance staff and caretakers etc.

The majority of occupants' of schools the children are not recorded as they are not an occupation, an American study estimated that for every teacher and support staff who die of mesothelioma nine former pupils will die.

Risks from types of asbestos

Despite some debate over the different types of asbestos, all types are dangerous substances, and are class one carcinogens. The amphibole class of asbestos, of which **blue** (crocidolite) and **brown** (amosite) are a part, are regarded as being more dangerous than the serpentine group of which **white** (chrysotile) is the only member.

The medical and scientific reasons for this are not totally clear, but shape and durability in the lungs are cited. However **white** asbestos is certainly a killer. Following a survey to identify and categorise the substance's presence, asbestos plans and registers will risk rate the potential for exposure and harm as limited examples follows:

	3	2	1	0
■ Asbestos type:	Blue	Brown	White	
■ Product type:	Lagging	Millboards	Asbestos Cement	
■ Damage:	High	Medium	Low	Good
■ Surface treatment:	Sprays	Unsealed AIB	Painted	Resins

The results of each are added together to give a risk rating of between 2 and 12.

This is useful information for our health and safety reps in particular to understand. Full advice on this and **where asbestos can be found in buildings** is in the Health and Safety Executive asbestos survey guide HSG264:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/pUbns/priced/hsg264.pdf>

Medical effects

ASBESTOSIS is not a cancer and usually requires fairly heavy exposure and takes about 15 to 20 years to develop. The disease is caused by the defence system reacting to the millions of fibres. This

produces scar tissue making the lung, which is normally elastic to become inelastic and not able to function as it should. Symptoms are breathlessness and extreme pain, it can normally be detected on X-ray.

MESOTHELIOMA is a form of cancer which affects the thin membrane surrounding the lungs, stomach and heart: the mesothelium. It is virtually only caused by asbestos and very low levels can cause the cancer to develop.

OS: KILLER

Its development can occur up to 40 or more years after exposure. This is an extremely unpleasant very painful disease, which is untreatable, and sufferers usually die within one year of its onset.

For men who were born in the 1940s one in 100 will die from mesothelioma, for construction workers it will be one in 40.

Lung Cancer, from asbestos exposure is medically indistinguishable from that caused by smoking; however the HSE estimate that for every mesothelioma death there is one to two asbestos related lung cancer deaths. Other asbestos related diseases are, pleural plaques and pleural thickening

What Safety Reps should do if they think asbestos is present

If a safety representative suspects that there are asbestos materials in a building, they should ask the employer what has been done to determine if such materials are present.

Safety representatives can ask to see the results of any inspection or survey done to identify the presence, and condition, of asbestos materials.

Unite Safety Reps have the right under the Safety Representatives Committees Regulations 1977 to request and receive health and safety information.

Checklist of documents Reps should ask for:

- ✓ Current and previous asbestos survey reports
- ✓ Up to date asbestos register
- ✓ Results of any past and present air monitoring that has been undertaken
- ✓ Details of previous building/maintenance work that has been undertaken that would have disturbed the asbestos

Information, instruction and training for asbestos awareness is required to give construction workers the information they need to avoid work that may disturb asbestos during any normal work which could disturb the fabric of a building, or other item which might contain asbestos. It will not prepare workers, to carry out work with asbestos-containing materials.

If any worker is designated to carry out work that will disturb asbestos containing materials (ACMs), they will need to be specifically competent in that field and receive intensive training and protection. Please refer to the HSE guide: <http://www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos/training.htm>

The HSE chart which can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/y33bdkg3> is a very good guide for our reps to follow, and for them to advise members and co-workers how they should approach this.

Electricians are one of the construction trades most at risk of coming into contact with asbestos.

DANGER A

**You only
have one
life, don't
take a risk**

If you are concerned about any aspect of your health and safety, please contact your health and safety representative.

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ASBESTOS

**If unsure,
get it
checked
out first**

Asbestos issue at work immediately
report to, shop steward or regional officer

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HARD LABOUR: **C** **industry taking it**



Mark Thomas

The long hours culture is leading to the exhaustion of construction workers

Construction has a reputation for a long hours culture. With engagements unpredictable, it is inevitable that when work is available, workers try to maximise their earnings in order to protect themselves and their families against periods of downtime and financial inactivity.

However the nature of the UK's hire and fire construction industry, and those long hours, has an effect on the health and well-being of the workforce.

Unite recently undertook a survey of our construction members to begin to properly assess the challenges they face. The survey generated over 4,500 responses.

The first question was whether the perception of long hours was correct and the survey found that 63 per cent

of respondents worked over 41 hours a week, with 18.5 per cent working over 51 hours and nearly one in 10 (9.2 per cent) working over 60 hours.

Given the long hours recorded it is not surprising that nearly 60 per cent (58.9 per cent) regularly undertake overtime. However, what is more disturbing is that, two thirds of workers (64.4 per cent) who undertake overtime have no choice over doing it as it is considered "part of their normal duties".

Coupled with this issue of long hours is the lack of rest. While most workers were operating five days a week just under one in five (19.8 per cent) worked six days a week while six per cent said they worked seven days a week.

Under the working time directive workers should legally receive 11 hours

rest between the end of one shift and the start of the next. However a third of respondents to the survey said that they had 10 hours or less between shifts.

The long hours culture in what is for most workers a highly physically demanding industry means that again it is not surprising that over eight in 10 (82.1 per cent) said that they regularly felt fatigued or very tired at work.

It is not just work that leads to fatigue but also travelling to and from work (which officially counts as part of your rest). Most workers spent two hours or less traveling to and from work, however 14.3 per cent spent two to three hours travelling every day and five per cent had a travel time over three hours.

One way of reducing fatigue is to ensure that workers have sufficient breaks

Construction s toll on workers

during the working day. However, again many workers (40.5 per cent) record that they don't have sufficient breaks.

The other essential factor in reducing fatigue is adequate sleep and again this is a huge issue. The Sleep Foundation recommends that most adults should have between seven to nine hours a night. Just 11 per cent of respondents said they had eight hours or more of sleep. Just over half (51.5 per cent) said they got around six hours a night, while over a third (37.5 per cent) said they got under six hours a night.

Someone once said that hard work never killed anyone. A lie of course and what the survey found was that workers' physical and mental health is being adversely affected as are their relationships and family life directly as a result of the long hours culture.

Two thirds of respondents (74.6 per cent) said their physical health had been affected, while over half (58.2 per cent) said their mental health had been damaged. Just under three quarters (72.5 per cent) said long hours and fatigue had damaged their relationships and family life.

What was truly harrowing were some of the personal testimonies from workers including: "one divorce and can't remember my kids growing up", "arthritis, constant back ache, torn knee ligament, don't get sick pay, being treated for depression, split up with Mrs", "took an overdose four days ago". Other members said: "I feel I am underweight, I am currently on antidepressants or too tired and stressed out a lot, "too tired to think about sex and unable to help with my elderly

mother's care", "have been dismissed on capability grounds due to arthritis in numerous joints after 27 years with the same company", "have shoulder and knee problems and only 24 years old".

And finally: "I'm under investigation and constantly monitored which makes my home life hard because I'm always worried and can't sleep awake most of the night worrying about what has happened in work today and what will happen tomorrow, been made to feel suicidal many times."

Long hours culture doesn't just affect workers health it also has a detrimental effect on work. Half of workers (49.4 per cent) said that in the last year they had to stop work due to excessive tiredness, while in the same timeframe just under half (46.6 per cent) said they had to redo work due to originally doing it while tired, while over a quarter (27.6 per cent) admitted to making errors due to tiredness, which is very disturbing in a dangerous safety critical industry.

Finally the other disturbing finding from the survey is that these problems

are getting worse. Thinking about the last three years, over two thirds (67.8 per cent) said they were working longer hours, 42.6 per cent said they were working more days, while over half said they were working more overtime (54.8 per cent) and had fewer breaks (52.8 per cent).

Commentating on the survey Unite's national health and safety advisor Rob Miguel said: "This makes bleak reading almost like reading a Charles Dickens novel from the Victorian age of work, but entirely predictable for this sector."

What is clear is that the findings of the survey can't and won't be ignored. Industrially on individual sites, through our national agreements, in discussions with clients and in lobbying government, Unite will highlight the survey's findings and challenge the culture of the industry.

Action must be taken to stop the way long hours workers are being treated, it is making workers ill and wrecking their family lives. Construction workers deserve better than this.

- 63%** worked over 41 hours a week
- 64.4%** said overtime is considered part of normal duties
- 82.1%** said they regularly felt fatigued
- 89%** of workers get six hours or less of sleep a night
- 74.6%** have had their physical health affected
- 58.2%** said their mental health was affected
- 72.5%** said long hours had damaged their relationships and family life

TACKLING construction's challenges

Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party is committed to invest in the UK's infrastructure

VOTE LABOUR 

Sophie Brown

The Construction sector is vital to the UK economy, it accounts for over eight per cent of the nation's income and employs well in excess of two million workers.

There is a saying that if construction catches a chill then the whole economy shivers

The fact that the construction industry is stagnating and is on the brink of recession should be sounding alarm bells but the government seems to have barely noticed the danger.

The latest economic indicators produced by Markit UK demonstrate that the construction sector is on a the cliff edge:

- New orders fell at the fastest rate for over 10 years in August
- Construction output dropped for a fourth month in a row
- Business optimism sank to its lowest since December 2008 (which is

when the economy was in the grips of the last recession caused by greedy bankers)

- Respondents suggest Brexit related uncertainty encouraged risk aversion and tighter budget setting in clients
- Political uncertainty is the overwhelming reason for concerns and drop in client spending.

A critical factor in the success or otherwise of the construction industry is business confidence. Construction projects need financing and investment and therefore it is essential that lenders feel able to make funds available.

The prospect of a hard Brexit or leaving the UK without a deal is a major factor in why construction projects are being delayed or mothballed. If the UK should leave the European Union without a deal, it will have serious repercussions for the construction industry.

A further crucial factor in encouraging investment in construction is if the government is showing a long-term and consistent approach to investing in infrastructure projects. As this further helps to generate investment and create jobs. The present and recent governments have failed miserably.

The government's lack of support and funding for new nuclear power projects demonstrates the problem. New nuclear power stations are essential to keep the lights on. All nuclear projects in the UK are led by private sector developers. The government has conspicuously taken a back seat demonstrating the lack of an industrial strategy that would support union jobs on union rates.

Last year Toshiba pulled out of building a new nuclear power station in Cumbria. Likewise, Japanese investors backed away from a planned nuclear new build in Anglesey, North Wales. The government's response was some pathetic hand wringing.

In the nuclear sector we only have the construction of Hinkley Point C by EDF, with the same company also committed to building a new nuclear reactor at Sizewell in Suffolk, further down the pipeline.

The government's record across the energy sector is woeful. It pulled the plug on the Swansea Bay Tidal Lagoon project described by Unite as a "short term job killer". The project was supported in the Welsh Assembly and at Westminster. Yet despite the Welsh government having made a significant financial commitment the Conservatives refused to invest in a project with the potential of 120 years of green energy.

The government is also failing on transport infrastructure. The HS2 project should be a force for good, (and it will be once Unite deals with the union busting by Costain and Skanska's Joint Venture [CSJV]) at Euston, which will create thousands of construction jobs and generate investment and long-term employment in the Midlands and the North.

Yet the HS2 project, which was originally devised by the previous Labour Government, is under threat. One of Boris Johnson's first announcements as prime minister was a review of HS2 with a very discouraging remit of not when, but if the project will go ahead.

Even if HS2 does get the green light it still shows a lack of ambition from the government. We need an HS3 from Liverpool and Manchester to Newcastle, the north east, Leeds and Hull. Linking into HS2 and bringing investment into northern communities starved of good jobs and which feel left behind.

Last month we saw the mothballing of the Sirius Minerals potash and processing centre in North Yorkshire and Redcar, as the government failed to back the scheme. This has two effects, it led to the immediate lay off of hundreds of construction workers and if the scheme is not restarted it will deny an economically neglected region

of a huge economic boost and hundreds of skilled jobs.

It is not just new projects where the government is failing to back the construction industry. Both the Midland Met hospital and the Royal Liverpool hospital, were casualties of the Carillion scandal.

However, the ongoing delays with these projects are a direct result of the government failing to put their shoulder to the wheel to get both projects up and running again. In the case of the Midland Met the department of health has yet to even make the necessary funding available.

The government's failure to invest does not just affect construction workers but also the industry's supply chain including UK suppliers of building materials and the wide range of sub-sectors who support infrastructure building.

Construction's supply chain is crying out for consistent orders to plan and grow rather than the feast and famine approach they currently endure. Alongside and intertwined with proper investment in our sector is the ever growing need to rebuild construction's skills base.

Especially, as the apprenticeship levy appears to have perversely driven down the number of good quality

apprenticeships. Unite negotiated apprenticeships to scale with EDF at Hinkley Point. Major projects provide a platform for negotiations on skills and apprenticeships, small and medium sized firms can only do so much and many are in jeopardy as the industry shrinks.

Amid the doom and gloom there is a ray of hope the Labour party has pledged to build a better Britain, with more homes built by councils (100,000 new homes for rent or buy a year) and tangible support for retrofitting. Labour is also committed to 'greening' UK industry and investing in new technology which will provide challenges and opportunities for the construction industry.

Labour has also developed an exciting raft of policies on workers' right for example, a commitment to abolish bogus self-employment by creating just two employment categories employees and the genuinely self-employed.

Labour's commitment to allow unions the right to speak to workers on sites, would dramatically reduce union busting and help union organising.

A better way of organising and supporting the construction industry is possible and in the coming weeks members may well have the chance to vote for a better future.



Major projects are being delayed, mothballed or cancelled due to uncertainty in the industry

Focus on

Scotland plays an active and influential role in Unite's construction sector, due to devolution and some separate industrial agreements, there are different opportunities and threats north of the border.

Campaign for fair work

Due to the devolved nature of Scottish politics, there is potential to make progress on key construction matters that are currently closed to Unite in England. Unite has been heavily involved in the Scottish Parliament's economy and fair work committee, inquiry into the construction industry.

Unite's focus in the inquiry was to tackle precarious and exploitative work. One way Unite has argued that this can be achieved is by the Scottish government adopting the following rules for all public sector projects in Scotland:

- National industrial agreements to be adopted and adhered to
- All workers to be directly employed and not self employed
- Umbrella companies and other forms of exploitative employment models to be barred
- The adoption of the highest levels of health and safety



Unite are lobbying the Scottish government at Holyrood to introduce fair work rules

- Construction unions and their representatives to be given full and fair access to the workplace.

Unite is continuing to work with the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) to get the Scottish government to adopt these measures.

Construction Charters

While Unite has been working at Holyrood to ensure fair work, the union has also been highly successful in Scotland to have local authorities adopt construction charters. Once signed and properly policed they ensure that councils tender construction work, workers are not exploited, unions are recognised, blacklisting is outlawed and apprentices are encouraged.

As part of Unite's construction organising campaign, over half of Scottish local authorities have now signed up to Unite's charter.

The benefits of the charter can be seen following an intervention in Dundee. A group of workers were identified as being paid via an umbrella company,

Unite were able to ensure the workers were moved to standard PAYE.

The existence of the charters has also changed the expectation of how work is conducted. In August Neil Bibby MSP, a Labour member for West Scotland, wrote to Renfrewshire council challenging the local authority on its failure to ensure that the relevant industrial agreements are followed on the Renfrew swing bridge project.

Scottish learning

As a result of the devolved nature of politics in Scotland, grants for education and learning are often available that other nations don't have access to.

In Scotland, Unite has been involved in a three year project to help skilled workers without formal qualifications to



Apprentices in Glasgow have undertaken a sign writing course

under-take onsite assessment and achieve a SVQ level 2 in their trade and therefore a Construction Skills Certification Schemes (CSCS) blue skilled worker card.

The scheme which has been administered by Unite learning organiser Michael Conroy has received £147,000 of funding from the Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) and led to 153 workers having achieved their

Scotland

qualification with more workers still completing the process.

Other learning courses organised in Scotland include: traditional sign writing for apprentices in Glasgow, autism awareness in South Lanarkshire council and a slinger/signaller telehandler course.

Justice for workers

Unite supports the introduction of corporate manslaughter laws which would make a company director responsible for the safety of their workforce. If a worker was killed and it was shown that the company had acted recklessly, the director could face a prison sentence.

As Scotland has a separate legal system it is not reliant on UK ministers passing such a law.

Scottish Labour MSP **Claire Baker** has put forward a Culpable Homicide Bill, which if enacted would lead to the jailing of killer bosses.

Unite renewed its call for the Bill to be made law following the death of a worker on a Robert McAlpine St Enoch Centre development in Glasgow in August.

Unite regional coordinating officer **Steve Dillon** said: "Unite has repeatedly called for greater enforcement and regulation in the construction industry including stronger health and safety standards.

Apprentices

Scotland has a different system to employing apprentices than the rest of the UK. Construction apprentices are employed under the Scottish Building Apprenticeship and Training Council (SBATC). This gives the apprentices better protections.

Their pay is also regulated and is based on the qualification they are studying for and how far they are through their four year apprenticeship. Unite recently agreed a 2.9 per cent pay increase for all apprentices covered by the SBATC.

Unite also recognises that it is critical to recruit apprentices early to the union and to explain the importance of unions, employment rights, direct employment etc.

As part of Unite's construction organising campaign, organisers have been visiting construction colleges and other organisations to speak to and recruit apprentices.

This has been very successful, for example recently all the newly recruited apprentices at Fife council signed up and joined the union.

Motorway recruitment

Unite regional officer **David McGurk** has been building up Unite's membership at Scotland Transerve which undertakes the infrastructure work on the M8. Unite now has 54 members at the site.

One major issue was the incorrect payment of holiday pay by the contractor

Balfour Beatty. As Balfour Beatty was dragging its feet on the matter the conciliation service Acas was brought in. This resulted in a settlement being agreed and the 54 members receiving payments between £800 to £2,300.

Action on redundancies

One troubling aspect of the Scottish construction industry is the number of companies which have collapsed into administration, without warning.

This year regional officer **George Ramsay** has dealt with this problem in Dundee when McGills collapsed, while in central Scotland **David McGurk** has challenged the same issue at EM McKenzie and Lambert Contracts.

In all three cases Unite has had a high profile and has ensured that workers are given the correct support in seeking new work and also are helped to make a protective award claim, due to the failure of each company to inform or consult them before making them redundant.

Once the protective award is settled the workers receive a degree of compensation.



Unite is actively recruiting motorway construction workers

THE CASE FOR

The British coal industry has changed out of all recognition, but the UK still has an undeniable need for it for a range of different purposes – not least steel and cement manufacture.

Despite the UK still having ample coal resources that could easily meet this need, along with the technical and commercial knowledge required to produce it safely, efficiently and environmentally responsibly, we have increasingly seen imported supplies taking precedence over domestic.

Of the 12 million tonnes of coal needed by the UK during 2018, less than a quarter – only 2.6 million tonnes - was UK produced.

It's a situation that defies common sense, especially when the substantial greenhouse gas emissions caused by transporting coal imports many thousands of miles to the UK are taken into consideration.

The role of coal in the generation of electricity has gradually declined as renewable energy technologies have become widely used.

There is of course the irony that the basic components of any source of alternative green energy require steel and concrete, both of which require coal as part of the manufacturing process.

The UK still needs between five and six million tonnes of coal every year to supply a range of essential industrial customers, including steel, cement manufacturers and food producers.

This need has increasingly been met through coal imports from distant locations such as the United States, Colombia, Australia and especially Russia, from where coal import volumes doubled between 2016 and 2018.

More than four times the amount was imported from overseas during the first quarter of 2019 than was produced domestically.

It is common sense to ask the question 'if we're still going to be using coal for the foreseeable future, why aren't we mining more, or indeed all of it in the UK from our own resources?'

Our country has some of the strictest planning rules and mining regulations in the world, which provide clear guidelines of how mining environments are managed.

This offers far greater control and oversight than we have of other such sites in distant locations where less emphasis is placed on environmental management, health and safety and working conditions.

Greenhouse gas emissions generated by the transportation alone of Russian imports to the UK is between five and seven times higher than the equivalent figure for transporting coal mined in the UK to domestic customers.

As well as providing coal, surface mines are also the only source of fireclay, which is used to make house bricks and is found underneath coal seams.

Coal still has a crucial industrial role to play and the economic, social and environmental benefits of enabling producers to fulfil this need from domestic resources are clear.

There are hundreds of UK jobs sustained directly by the surface mining industry, along with hundreds more in the supply chain.

There is no justification in essentially exporting jobs by bringing in ever-greater volumes of coal from overseas when it can be produced more safely, efficiently and with greater environment oversight at home.



Workers at opencast mining company, Banks Group

Meet the RIFT Reps:

Tax refunds just got personal



Mark Thomas

RIFT assists thousands of construction workers every year make a claim for a tax refund

Claiming a tax refund through RIFT means getting a service to suit you – and that’s where our RIFT reps come in.

Covering over 3,000 miles per month they travel the country to give you all the help you need face to face – whether at work, in the pub or the comfort of your own home. It’s all about making things simple for you.

“There was one site manager who travelled so far to his sites that he’d simply stay down in the caravan next to his office and only go home at weekends. People in tough jobs have to be adaptable like that sometimes, and so do I.” **Ian Moss**, RIFT Rep: Wales and South West.

Your RIFT rep can get your refund started on site but if you’d rather get it sorted by phone or text message, even out of hours, just grab their mobile numbers from them.

“You’ve got to get to know people in order to help them properly, and you’ve got to have 24/7 availability. Our customers know we’ve got their backs and can handle whatever they’re

struggling with, whenever they need us.” **Jim Murray**, RIFT Rep: Scotland.

We’ve claimed over £145 million for construction workers in the UK, both on the books and self-employed. We do all the paperwork, calculations and chasing HMRC for you every year.

“Complex tax rules put a lot of people off claiming back what they’re owed. Luckily, we’re here to take care of all that for you.” **Wilf Hall**, RIFT Rep: Northwest and Midlands.

Traditional accountants may know the rules, but not the industry or what questions to ask about your work and travel to make sure you’re getting the biggest refund possible.

“Many people need a little extra help to get their money back. Having RIFT in their corner can make all the difference in the world.” **Eric McKenzie**, RIFT Rep: Scotland

Our reps are here to help your friends and family, too. If you’ve already made a claim and you know other people you think might be missing out on cash

put them in touch directly with your rep. They’ll be delighted to help them as well.

“I wanted to work somewhere that made a real-world difference... Getting a call thanking you for sorting out a tax refund in time for Christmas is a great feeling.” **Mary Daly**, RIFT Rep: London and South East.

We’re here to make sure you never lose out to the taxman so we’re pleased to offer Unite members discounted rates for all our services.

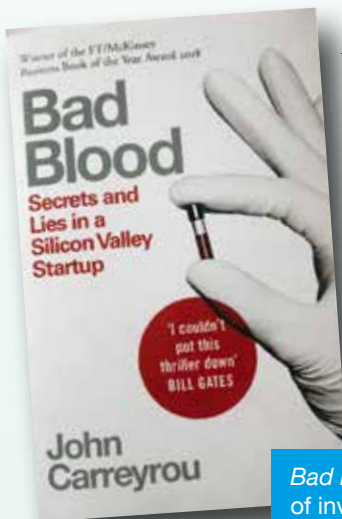
“There aren’t too many jobs where you really get the chance to help people – especially financially. That reminds me, one customer bet me she couldn’t get a refund over £1,500. She ended up with £1,800 so she owes me a drink now!” **Paul Clamp**, RIFT Rep: North and North East.

Call head office on our dedicated number for Unite members 01233 653974 or visit <https://www.riftrefunds.co.uk/unite>

This page is a counterpoint to the mainstream media and reviews important pieces of work for Unite members.

Books

Bad Blood: Secret and Lies in a Silicon Valley Start Up by John Carreyrou



Bad Blood is a gripping story about the silicon valley start up company Theranos and its founder **Elizabeth Thomas**.

The company which was considered at one point to be the next 'big thing' in the mould of Facebook, claimed it was able to conduct crucial blood tests, while just extracting a pinprick of blood.

Bad Blood: A great example of investigative journalism

The company at one stage was worth several billion. The problem was their technology didn't work and as a result, due to the United States private medical system, poor people were undergoing the tests and getting the wrong results, with potentially fatal results.

Despite the obvious flaws in their technology, Theranos continued to go from strength to strength as they were protected by aggressive lawyers who threatened and intimidated any potential whistleblowers.

Theranos further insulated themselves by creating a board which was stacked full of the great and the not so good from both the Republicans and Democrats parties.

Theranos downfall was a result of the investigative journalism of the author **John Carreyrou**, who was working for the *Wall Street Journal*. Carreyrou and his paper defied massive legal challenges to publish the truth that the pinprick blood tests didn't work.

As a result Theranos collapsed and Thomas is currently awaiting trial.

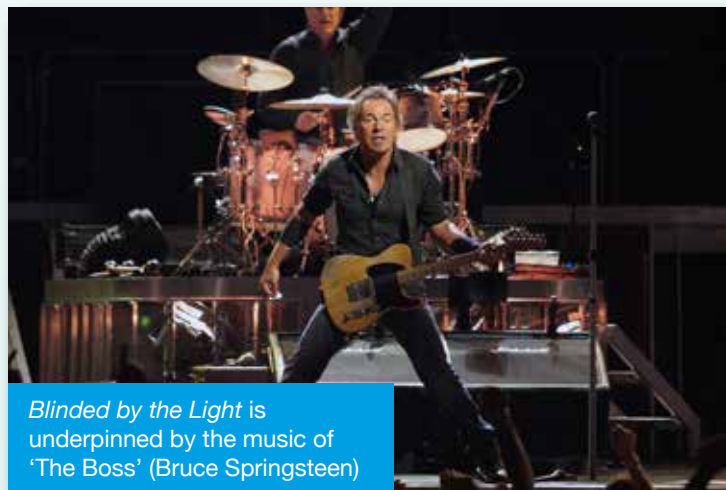
Barckley Sumner

Film

Blinded by the Light

Blind by the Light is a classic feel good movie with strong political undertones. Set in Luton in 1987 it tells the story of Javed a British/Pakistani teenager, whose horizons are raised as he discovers and falls in love with the music of **Bruce Springsteen**.

The film is obviously more enjoyable for anyone who has an awareness or a liking for 'The Boss' but its social messages are well placed and its portrayal of life in the late 1980s are pretty accurate. The conscious and unconscious racism in the film makes for uncomfortable watching about what society was like and that in many cases it hasn't moved that far forward.



Blinded by the Light is underpinned by the music of 'The Boss' (Bruce Springsteen)

The film is directed by **Gurinder Chada** who is no stranger to this type of film having directed the equally enjoyable *Bend it Like Beckham*.

The cast is a mixture of new faces and established stars such as **Hayley Atwell** and **Rob Brydon** (sporting a comedy wig). While you may have missed the film at the cinema it is well worth purchasing on DVD or downloading.

Stephen James

Your Recommendations

Unite members are encouraged to send ideas for future recommendations. We will cover film, television, DVDs and books. The only stipulation is a recommendation needs to be easily available. If you would like to write your own reviews please do but keep your contributions to 250 words. Send recommendations and reviews to barckley.sumner@unitetheunion.org

MEMBERSHIP FORM GB

Please use capitals – This address will be used for the purpose of ballots

Forename _____ Title _____
Surname _____ Gender _____
House No./Name _____
Street _____
City/Town _____
Postcode _____
Date of Birth _____
Home Tel _____ Mobile _____
Email _____

About Your Job

Employer/Company Name _____
Job Title _____
Work Address _____
Postcode _____
Work Tel. _____
Which membership do you require?
 Enhanced full time (more than 21 hours per week)
 Enhanced part time (up to 21 hours per week)
 Enhanced low pay
 Enhanced apprenticeship
Year 1 Year 2 Year 3 Year 4
Date apprenticeship started _____
 Basic full time (more than 21 hours per week)
 Basic part time (up to 21 hours per week)
 Basic low pay
 Basic apprenticeship
Year 1 Year 2 Year 3 Year 4
Date apprenticeship started _____
 Driver Care (a separate Driver Care application form will be sent to you.)
Date apprenticeship due to end _____
 Other (eg Unemployed member of the community, under 18, full time student, retired members or permanently disabled members who are not in paid employment)
Date apprenticeship due to end _____

Authorisation of deduction of your trade union contribution from your pay (check-off)

Note: Not all employers operate check-off. I hereby authorise the deduction of Unite the Union subscriptions from my pay of such amounts as shall be notified to my employer on my behalf from time to time by Unite. I authorise my employer and Unite to share personal data necessary to operate check off and for my employer to inform Unite of any changes of address.

Are you paid? Weekly 2-weekly Payroll No. _____
 4-weekly Monthly

I agree to abide by the union's rules. (Rule Book is available online)

NI No. _____ Signature _____ Date _____

For Office use only

Mem. No. _____ Employer Code _____ Workplace Code _____

Political Campaigning

Unite fights for our members' interests through political and industrial campaigning on issues affecting you – from pay, pensions, and broader workplace rights to housing, equality issues and our NHS.
If you would like to be part of this, opt-in to our political fund for just 10p per week. (tick here)

Those who choose not to opt-in will not be disadvantaged in any way compared with members who do opt-in, except in relation to control of the political fund.

I support Unite in campaigning on our policies and members' priorities in the Labour Party and I would like to be a Labour Party Affiliate Supporter* (this is free for political fund payers). I authorise Unite to share my personal data with the Labour Party for this purpose. (tick here)

* I agree to the terms listed at <https://support.labour.org.uk>

Equal Opportunities

The provision of this information is to ensure equality for all and is not a requirement

Unite campaigns for equality for all and to ensure that women, black Asian ethnic minorities, disabled members, lesbian gay bisexual trans - LGBT+ and migrant workers are fully represented within the union. To find out more go to www.uniteunion.org/equalities. Confidentiality is protected. Please complete:

Please tick your ethnic origin: Black/Asian White Please tick if you are LGBT+
Please tick if you are a disabled person: Please tick if you consider yourself to be a migrant worker

Direct Debit Details – Instructions to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit



Service User Number **9 7 1 4 6 7**

Name of bank/building society _____

Town of the Bank _____

Sort Code _____

On the selected day of the month:

7th 14th 21st 28th

Account Number _____

Name(s) of _____

Account Holder(s) _____

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society

Please pay Unite the union Direct Debit monthly from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Unite the union and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank Building Society.

I authorise the payment above. I agree to abide by the union's rules. (Rule Book is available online)

When you join Unite, you are also authorising the Union to deduct an additional amount for your subscription to your local branch fund.

Signature _____ Date _____

Branch No. _____

Job Code _____

Recruitment Code _____

Please send completed forms to: Freepost Plus RTZC-HKGG-RZBY, Unite the union, 2nd Floor, 160 Falcon Road, London SW11 2LN

Don't miss out!

Get Your *buildingWORKER* every quarter

buildingWORKER is the magazine for all Unite construction workers. In order to keep up to date with what is happening in your industry and your union you need to opt in to receive future editions.

Opting in to receive the *buildingWORKER* is quick and simple.

To receive *buildingWORKER* for free, four times a year. You just need to contact your regional office by email, phone or in writing.

Also by contacting the regional office you can update your address, notify a change of employer and request receiving free copies of *uniteWORKS* (Unite's award winning magazine) and *Landworker* (the magazine for rural workers).

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