

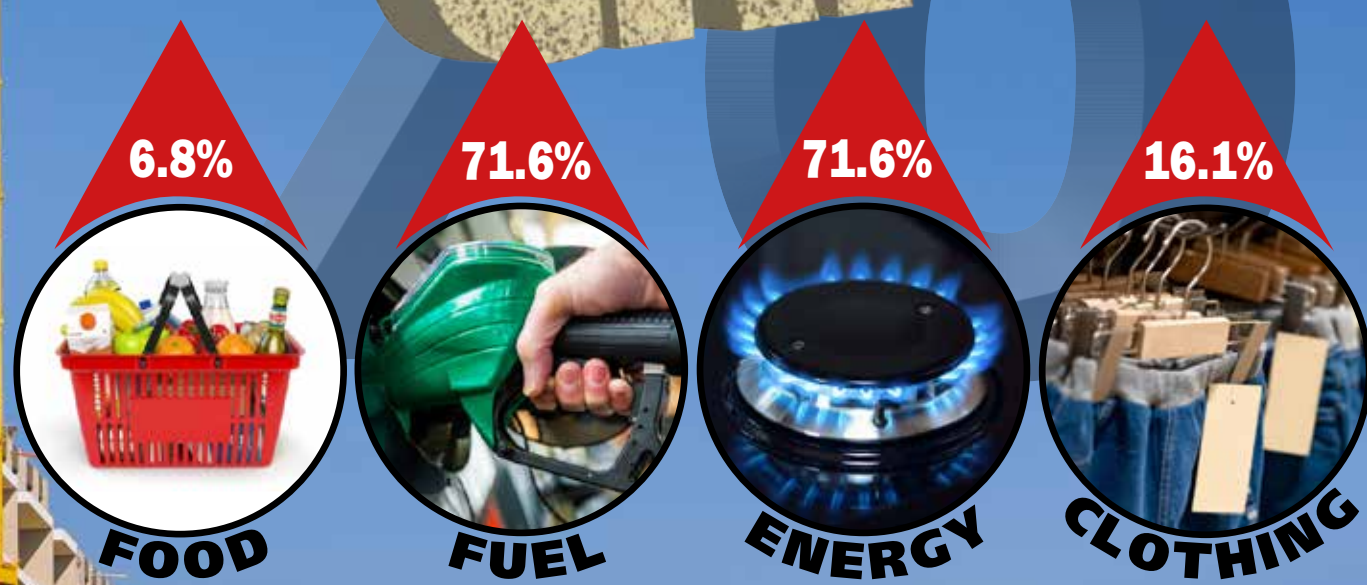
INSIDE: Workers' Memorial Day • Long hours • Gambling

Summer 2022 The magazine for construction sector members

buildingWORKER



COST OF LIVING CRISIS



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Undoubtedly the single biggest issue for workers in the UK is the cost of living crisis and construction workers are no different. The real inflation rate (RPI) is currently at 11.1 per cent, levels we have not seen in the UK for 30 years.

With energy and fuel bills dramatically increasing and the cost of housing and food rising, it is absolutely essential that all construction workers get the rate for the job.

It is why Unite has launched a campaign to ensure that the new energy from waste plant in Leeds is built under the appropriate construction agreement (see page 21).

Operating under the correct construction agreement ensures workers receive the appropriate rate of pay. As well as getting the right overtime rates and shift allowances. In addition the agreements ensure workers receive both lodge allowance (overnight accommodation) and travel expenses.

The difference between getting what is stated in a construction agreement and just a flat rate of pay often amount to hundreds of pounds a month.

This is money construction workers are fully entitled to and which they can't afford to lose.

To ensure that construction agreements are both in operation and fully adhered to it is absolutely essential that construction workers are organised on sites wherever possible. The stronger the union organisation, then invariably pay rates are both higher and fairer. Employers will try every trick in the book to boost their profits and if they can get away with paying workers less than they are entitled to they will.

Not getting paid the rate for the job is a major factor in the long hours culture (page 14) which bedevils construction making workers ill and destroying family life.

In an industry where engagements are often short and workers seek to maximise earnings when work is available, it is understandable why construction workers work excessive hours. Yet, in 2022 we shouldn't be primitively flogging workers in this way.

Finally, on page 10 the feature on gambling tackles a major problem for construction workers. With gambling increasingly moving online and easily available on smartphones, construction workers who often feel isolated and alone, are at risk of losing more money than they can afford. The article includes information on the help and support that is available.



Gail Cartmail, executive head of operations



Blacklisting inquiry stepped up

Unite has appointed two prominent lawyers **John Randall QC** and **John Carl Thompson** to investigate the possible collusion of union officers in the blacklisting of construction workers.

Last year general secretary **Sharon Graham** announced that Unite would

mount a full independent inquiry into possible collusion.

Since then Thompsons solicitors has been gathering evidence and interviewing blacklisted construction workers.

Unite general secretary **Sharon Graham** said: "Under my leadership

Unite is committed to uncovering the truth about allegations of union collusion with blacklisting.

"The workers affected and their families deserve to know the truth and this QC-led independent inquiry will get to the bottom of what really happened."

Unite and EDF agree electrician role on nuclear projects

Unite and energy giant EDF have struck a deal to end concerns about the deskilling of electricians.

Serious concerns were raised last year, which led to widespread protests, when there was an attempt to implement two defective training standards at Hinkley Point, without Unite's input and agreement. It was believed that if the training standards were introduced it would result in the deskilling of electricians.

The agreement between Unite and EDF covers the roles and responsibilities of electrical teams on all future nuclear new build (NNB) projects and covers the new role

of Hinkley support operative electrical (electrical HSO).

The electrical HSO roles does not involve undertaking installation work. The role is entirely restricted to NNB projects and cannot transfer to the wider industry.

To ensure the agreement is fully followed it will be reviewed and managed at a local level through the joint site governance process which involves Unite shop stewards and full time officers.



Getty Images

Concerns about electrical training at Hinkley Point have been resolved

Construction bosses must insure workers or leave the industry

Unite marked International Workers' Memorial Day by writing to all construction clients and principal contractors demanding that they get their house in order and ensure that all workers on their projects are insured against death or serious injury.

Although construction death rates have declined in recent years, there were 178 fatal accidents in the last five years and there have also been thousands of serious and life changing injuries during that time.

All construction industrial agreements have clear rules stating that workers must be insured but many employers ignore the rules and play fast and loose with workers' safety.

Unite has named and shamed employers who have failed to insure their workers on major projects such as HS2, where abiding by construction industry agreements is mandatory. The cost of death benefit cover is less than £3 per person per week.

Unite national officer for construction **Jerry Swain** said: "Unite has a simple demand – safeguard and protect workers. Clients and contractors need to ensure their entire supply chains are properly protecting their workers. Companies that fail to comply should be swiftly removed not just from site but from our industry."

■ *Workers' Memorial Day 2022*
page 18-19

CIJC pay offer rejected



Construction workers held a protest at the CIJC talks in May

Unite has rejected the latest pay offer made by the employers' side on the Construction Industry Joint Council (CIJC) industrial agreement.

During negotiations held in central London in mid-May the employers side offered an increase of just 4.25

per cent which is far below the 10 per cent pay claim that Unite submitted and the current real inflation (RPI) rate of 11.1 per cent. The offer was dismissed by Unite as being entirely unacceptable.

During the latest negotiations a lively and vocal protest was held by Unite members from across the UK. On hearing the employers' side had made such a derisory offer, they were described as a "shower of misery" by the angry workers.

As *buildingWORKER* went to press a further meeting was being sought providing the employers' side were prepared to improve their offer ahead of the anniversary date of the 27 June.

The CIJC industrial agreement principally covers the building and civil engineering sections of construction. Any pay increase has major implications for the entire industry. Around 500,000 workers in construction have their pay or terms and conditions linked to the agreement.

Construction workers' missing pensions

A Freedom of Information (FOI) request made by Unite has revealed that many construction workers still have no retirement provision despite the auto-employment pension system being well established.

The FOI only covered employees in the sector and does not apply to the officially self-employed who make up around half of the industry (with many of those workers being bogusly self-employed).

In general blue collar workers were less likely to have a workplace pension, compared to white collar workers and professionals. In total 39 per cent of elementary workers (labourers etc) had no form of workplace pension. While 30 per cent of skilled trades did not have a workplace pension nor did 25 per cent of machine operatives.

In contrast just 12 per cent of professionals did not have a workplace pension.

Although the FOI indicates that most construction employees have a workplace pension, there are no details on how frequently workers are paying into their scheme. Unless both workers and employers are regularly paying into their pension pot, workers have no chance of generating a worthwhile pension in retirement.

One of the major reasons that construction workers choose to opt out of an auto-enrolment pension scheme is due to many engagements being short in duration. Under the auto-enrolment rules an employer can delay paying into a worker's pension scheme for the first three months, creating large gaps in contributions.

Another major detraction concerns workers who are forced to operate via an umbrella company. In these cases if the worker opts into the auto-enrolment scheme, they are obliged to pay both the employer's and employee's pension contributions,

from their wages. A total of eight per cent of their earnings.



Mark Thomas

Too many construction workers aren't saving towards a pension

Hinkley Point workers support community

Unite members working on the nuclear project at Hinkley Point are becoming increasingly involved in the local community in the nearby town of Bridgwater.

The local Unite branch has made three separate donations of £200 to purchase products requested by the local food bank. The branch purchased rice pudding, shampoo, tinned meat and soup.

In addition the branch has paid for the restoration of the dockers' labour hall banner which was over 100 years old.

Following its restoration the banner will be displayed for 12 months at Unite's South West region headquarters, before transferring to a new permanent home in the Somerset Brick and Tile Museum which is situated in Bridgwater.



LEFT TO RIGHT: Steven Davies (Unite Learning Rep - Kier BAM), two volunteers from the food bank and Richard Lees (Unite Safety Rep - Bylor)

HS2 workers get the *buildingWORKER*



Unite construction activists used the opportunity of the National Industrial Sector Committee (NISC) meeting being held in Birmingham in April to assist local construction officer Stuart Baker to distribute copies of the *buildingWORKER* to workers on the HS2 project in the city.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: John Gillespie, Steven Geekie, Stuart Baker, Stuart Grice, Jamie Bramwell and Jimmy O'Malley

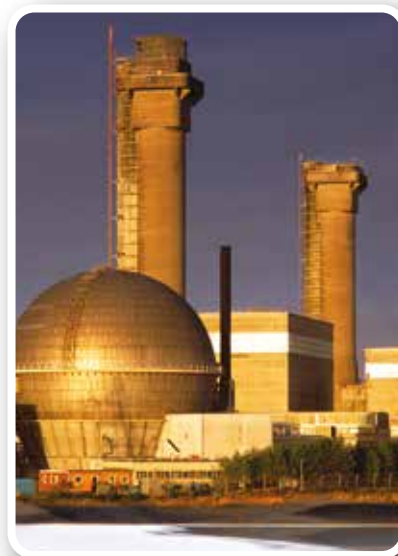
Sellafield cleaners and caterers secure major pay increase

Over 30 workers employed by Mire Services Ltd as cleaners and caterers looking after construction workers on the Sellafield nuclear reprocessing site in Cumbria have received a major pay increase thanks to Unite.

The workers have seen their pay increase from the then minimum wage of £8.91 an hour to a new rate of £10 an hour. Unite only secured formal recognition for the workforce in March 2021.

Unite regional officer **Ryan Armstrong** said: "Unite is absolutely focused on improving pay and conditions for all workers at Sellafield regardless of who they are employed by.

"Once our members at Mire Services became organised, Unite was able to enter into negotiations with the company and secure a much-needed pay rise for the workforce."



Unite secures electricians' pay after Aberdeen wage dispute

The swift intervention of Unite ensured that over 50 electricians working on a project in Aberdeen received their unpaid wages.

Problems occurred in early May when the electricians who were working on the Ness Energy from Waste plant in Aberdeen discovered they had not been paid three weeks wages nor six weeks lodge (accommodation) money. The workers were owed £3,000 - £5,000 each.

The plant is being built by principal contractor Acciona, with energy from waste specialists Hitachi Zosen Inova (HZI) acting as consultant engineers.

The electricians were working for the sub-contractor Randridge and engaged via the agency MPC Resourcing Ltd.

After not being paid the electricians were involved in a demonstration. Unite immediately contacted Aberdeen council, Acciona and MPC Resourcing demanding answers about why the workers had not been paid and threatened legal action if the money owed was not swiftly paid.

Following Unite's intervention the electricians were paid in full. Although Unite was pleased that the

electricians on site received payment concerns are ongoing about the lack of provisions which guaranteed under the NAECI to resolve issues, through the relevant procedure.

There is also no access to an independent audit process, that would identify under payments or the financial health of employers.

For further information or advice contact jason.poulter@unitetheunion.org with the subject line Aberdeen Wage Dispute.

■ *Pay the Rate campaign page 21*

Scotland moving towards fair work

In April the Scottish Fair Work investigation published its two year inquiry into creating fair work in the Scottish construction sector.

The report *Building Fair Work* into the Construction Industry identified the challenges and opportunities for achieving fair work in the sector.

With the public sector responsible for 50 per cent of construction work in Scotland the report concluded that for fair work to be expanded it was essential that public bodies included fair work clauses in all procurement deals.

The report found that fair work was not being consistently delivered. The challenges to fair work included: the lack of direct employment, insecure work, bullying and harassment and the inability to raise employment concerns.

The report said, by the Scottish Government upholding and ensuring the relevant construction agreements

are utilised throughout construction supply chains, a level playing field between employers and workers would be created, ending the race to the bottom and ensuring fairer outcomes in the workforce.

The report stated with the UK having left the European Union there is absolutely nothing preventing public bodies from stipulating in contracts that bidders must abide by the relevant construction agreements. The bidding process should also include clear rules that unions would be allowed access onto site to speak with and recruit workers.

The report also highlighted the challenge of an aging workforce with over 50,000 of current workers expected to retire in the next 10 years. This has added to a focus on the need to encourage new joiners especially apprentices. The report recommends that apprentices are paid the



Kim Traynor

The Scottish Parliament is being urged to adopt the finding of the fair work investigation

collectively agreed rates that are secured in the construction agreements.

Mary Alexander who is the union's deputy regional secretary in Scotland and who co-chaired the report said: "Too many construction workers still face problems at work and the over-reliance on outsourced labour creates a barrier to training, upskilling and effective modernisation of the industry.

"Wider adoption of fair work is essential to create a high quality, high value, construction industry fit for the future."

PAY AND BARGAINING

Hinkley problem resolved

Over 1,700 workers employed by the principal contractor BYLOR at Hinkley Point staged a demonstration in the site canteen in March following a dispute over bonus payments. The problem was resolved by Unite officer **Heathcliffe Pettifer** with the support of Unite's senior steward **Malcolm Davies** and the union's other reps on the site.

It was notable that Unite was the only union which was in a position to resolve the issues.

Atavo update

The Actavo scaffolders dispute that was featured in the Spring issue of *buildingWORKER* has ended. The workers who were employed on an outsourced contract at the British Steel complex in Scunthorpe have accepted a settlement agreement with both Actavo and British Steel.

Employers undermine CIJC agreement

Construction employers have been accused of undermining the Construction Industry Joint Council (CIJC) agreement following a national conciliation panel. The CIJC is the largest of the construction agreements, covering building and civil engineering. Unite's North West region raised a case for adjudication on behalf of members employed by Jacobs at Sellafield.

The company has moved from five days a week to four days a week working and attempted to cut the workers' holiday entitlement. This was despite the CIJC agreement having no provision for reducing holiday entitlement.

Despite this the employers' side ignored what is written in the agreement and tried to set a ruling about what they think the agreement should say.

Unite national officer for construction **Jerry Swain** said: "This action by the employers simply undermines the agreement."

Marshalls pay increase

Workers employed by building suppliers Marshalls have secured a five per cent pay increase backdated to 1 January 2022. The agreement was significant as under the company's initial proposals many of the workforce faced a pay freeze. Once the employer realised that Unite was organised and understood the strength of feeling among workers the improved offer was made.

CEMEX pay negotiations

Following negotiations with the employer workers have been offered an increase of 4.5 per cent in addition to a one off bonus worth 4.56 per cent.

Pay dispute looming at Hanson

Workers at Hanson Cement had rejected a 4.5 per cent pay increase and overwhelmingly voted in an indicative ballot to take industrial action. The company requested further talks an offer of five per cent and a one per cent bonus was made and accepted by members.

Meanwhile, at Hanson Aggregates, Unite's members have also rejected a 4.5 per cent pay offer and an indicative ballot is being held on whether workers are willing to take industrial action.

Demolition and building pay deals

Unite national officer **Jerry Swain** has recently concluded two pay deals for members. Workers covered by the national demolition agreement, which Unite negotiates with the National Federation of Demolition Contractors, will see rates increase by 5 per cent from June.

Meanwhile workers covered by the BATJIC agreement, which is negotiated with the Federation of Master Builders will also see rates increase by five per cent from Monday 20 June. The BATJIC agreement is predominantly used on smaller construction sites.

Ben Brooks/bank



Construction workers are being short changed by employers at Sellafield

FIFA must protect migrant workers in Qatar

With the countdown having begun for the World Cup in Qatar later this year, the Building and Woodworkers International (BWI) the global confederation of construction unions, has launched a campaign to ensure that improvements in migrant workers' rights are sustained.

Gregory Hawken Kramer



BWI is calling for FIFA to ensure that migrant workers are protected in Qatar following the World Cup

The BWI is calling for FIFA which runs the World Cup to fund a permanent migrant worker centre in Qatar.

A migrant worker centre is vital for training migrant workers to defend their rights and to receive information, support and guidance on employment rights.

Due to the efforts of unions and human rights groups led by the BWI, there

has been improvement in the treatment of migrant workers in Qatar but much work still remains.

The BWI has been successful in improving health and safety on the World Cup stadia, through a series of joint inspections alongside Qatar's Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy. However, this enlightened view on health and safety is yet to take root throughout the construction sector.

Health and safety a fundamental right

The long campaign to ensure that workplace health and safety is considered a fundamental right, is one step closer.

The International Labour Organisation's (ILO) conference in June will discuss an amendment to make health and safety a fundamental principle.

If passed it will mean that all ILO member states would have an obligation to promote healthy and safe workplaces.

The existing fundamental principles are freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of forced labour, the abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination with regards to employment.

The vast majority of the world's nations are members of the ILO.

Insecure work a health hazard

The Australian state of Western Australia has recognised that insecure work is a health hazard and affects physical and mental health.

Insecure work which often affects construction workers, particularly the bogusly self-employed, is considered to increase the frequency of accidents including fatalities, results in poorer physical and mental health and a lack of knowledge and access to employment rights including a reluctance to raise concerns.



Getty Images

Construction workers health is affected by insecure works

The recognition of the problems of insecure work are contained in a new code and while this is progress it is recognised that formal regulations are needed in Western Australia to ensure that employers make improvements in workplaces.

Europe taking stress seriously

A call for a European law on stress has been well received by the European Parliament following the presentation of a report to its employment committee.

It is hoped that the latest report presented earlier this year and an earlier report published in 2020 will persuade the European Parliament to introduce a new directive to tackle workplace related stress. Research from the EndStress campaign had found that 80 per cent of managers are concerned about work related stress. Stress is a huge problem throughout Europe with 60 per cent of days lost at work, related to stress.

Betting on yo GAMBLING P

“I was digging a deeper hole for myself, and in the end, taking my own life seemed like the only way out of the mess I had created.”

For Kelly from Leicester, the dire impacts of her gambling habit took such a toll that suicide seemed like the only solution. Sadly, she is only one of thousands whose problematic gambling has had devastating impacts on their life, as found in a report by the think tank CLASS and campaign group Clean Up Gambling. Yet, it has only recently begun to be viewed as a public health issue.

Since the 2005 Gambling Act, the gambling industry has expanded massively. This has often been at the expense of ordinary people, with a 2021 report by Public Health England estimating that there are more than 409 gambling-related suicides in England every year.

The explosion of online gambling combined with the Covid-19 pandemic has created the perfect storm for gambling to spiral out of control. New technology has meant that anyone over the age of 18 has constant and easy access to thousands of games online.

CLASS’s report uncovered why so many people became locked in a cycle of addiction after becoming involved in gambling. David from London explained how winning after making a new online gaming account helped to lure him back time and again. Moreover, the digitisation of the industry distorted the value of money. In David’s experience, the money felt like “monopoly money”. The realisation only came later, “when you [would] look into your bank account and see the money you [had] lost”.

For women, the visuals and sound effects used in online slot games would

almost lull them into a trance. April from Liverpool described a night when she won the jackpot of £1000. She explained, “I didn’t stop until my alarm went off and I realised it was 7am, by that point the money was basically all gone... I couldn’t believe that I had played it all night, I remember looking at myself in the mirror and crying, I felt sick...”

One common factor that reinforced gambling habits in both men and women was the idea of chasing losses. Josh, a recovering gambling addict, now realises how unlikely it was that he would have won back all his debts on a lucky spin, but, “it was easier to keep dreaming than face the consequences”. But it is not just the gambling industry which is to blame for this public health crisis. There are also wider social issues which have contributed. Rachel – a mother from Harlesden recovering from an addiction to online slots – told



Getty Images

Working away from home, long hours, isolation and loneliness make it more likely that construction workers could develop a gambling problem

Our future: PROBLEMS



People can lose thousands while gambling on their phones

CLASS how her area has deteriorated, with community centres being replaced with bookies, pawn shops and takeaways. A study by the University of Bristol revealed that betting shops are currently 10 times more likely to be in the UK's poorest areas.

CLASS found that, many participants began to rely on payday loans with strict terms and high interest rates to continue funding their gambling activity.

A chunk of the profits earned by gambling companies are invested back into gambling advertising. TV ads are one of the methods used to lure in customers. Kelly, a recovering addict, was unable to reconnect with friends that she had lost during her addiction, as she couldn't go on social media without being bombarded with gambling advertisements.

Gambling platforms also use the incentive of free spins - which are often thought of as free money to gamble with - and loyalty schemes to lure in customers. One of the most worrying interviews of this project was with Samantha from Glasgow, who was spoiled with gifts from a gambling operator.

"They would send me a massive gift hamper at Christmas and on my birthday. They would do everything to draw me in, they were taking thousands of pounds every month. The gifts were just bribes."

Worryingly, we found that workers who are lower paid and less secure incur debts that are a much larger

proportion of their income, meaning that in relative terms, it is working class people who are most at risk of having unmanageable debts.

The impacts of problem gambling cannot be understated. Samantha's addiction to online slots not only saw her lose a quarter of a million pounds in less than two years, but also life-long friendships as socialising took time away from gambling. Meanwhile, Kailum carries the guilt of missing his grandmother's funeral, as he had cut ties with his family to focus solely on betting.

But there is hope. Increasing understanding of the dangers of addiction may just provide the opportunity for gambling addiction to be taken more seriously as a public health crisis.

And there is hope for you if you're gambling and you think your gambling is getting out of control. Our interviewees found that reaching out to family and friends helped them make the change they needed. Many of them were scared to tell the people they love, but almost all of them were glad they had and it gave them the push they needed. Do any of the stories in this article sound familiar to you? Do you find that hours pass by when you gamble? Do you spend a lot of time thinking about when you'll next get an opportunity to bet? Have you missed important events, or work, so you could gamble? Have you taken out loans to support your gambling? If so, you are not alone. There are thousands of people like you, and there are thousands of people who have got their lives back.

GAMBLING SUPPORT SERVICES

The NHS currently provides regional services including the National Problem Gambling Clinic which provides treatment including individual therapy, couples therapy, support groups etc.

Gamban is an app that completely blocks gambling websites. All of our interviewees used this app and many told us how much it had helped them.

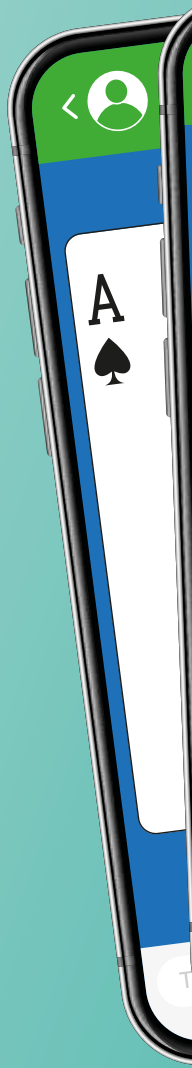
GamCare provides various resources including a 24 hour advice hotline, an online forum and even blocking software to assist people who are struggling with addiction.

GamFam is a charity which was set up by the families and friends of those who have struggled with gambling addiction and provides support both for the gambler and their loved ones.

GamLearn is an organisation which is run mostly by those who have experienced gambling addictions themselves, with the focus being "where members can connect with one another".

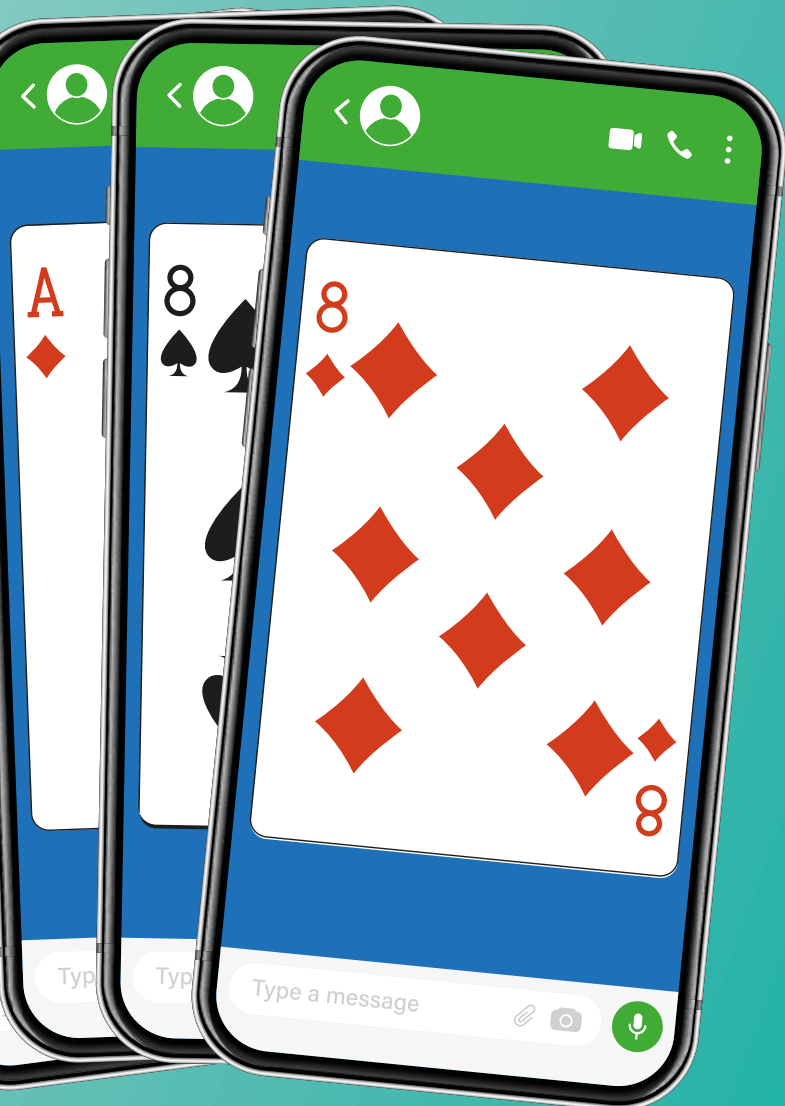
IS GAMBLING YOU OR YOU

or cont







GAMING AFFECTING OUR FAMILY?

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Fighting for **JOBS • PAY • CONDITIONS**

Working to live



Three quarter of workers say long hours affects their health

National officer **Jerry Swain** recalls that when working as a fit out carpenter, he occasionally worked a ghoster shift. He began work at eight in the morning and continued working until eight the next day.

Jerry admits it was exhausting but he was working under a construction agreement, so many of the hours were paid at double time.

Hopefully the ghoster shift has been consigned to history but it highlights the problem of long hours in construction.

In a 2019 survey of Unite construction members, where workers were working long hours three quarters reported it caused physical health issues, half said it damaged their mental health and 75 per cent said it damaged family life.

As one veteran construction worker said: "One day you look in the mirror and you are 40 and the next day you are 60".

Long hours leads to exhaustion and mistakes. In the 2019 survey 28 per cent of workers admitted having made a mistake due to tiredness resulting in an accident or a near miss. Rest periods are vital to recovery. Legally under the Working Time Directive workers should have an 11 hour break between work and this can't be opted out of. However the 11 hour period includes travelling to and from work.

To stay healthy workers should get between seven-nine hours of sleep. It is not surprising given the long hours, the need to travel, eat and have some family time that 85 per cent of members report they only get six hours of sleep.

The dangers of a lack of sleep is highlighted by **Professor Matthew Walker** in his book *Why We Sleep*. He details how even limited sleep deprivation, hugely affects workers' concentration. Tired workers experience micro sleeps which may last for just a couple of seconds. For someone driving a car that is sufficient to drift into the wrong lane, for a dangerous industry like construction it is sufficient to cause a serious accident.

Malcolm Davies Unite's convenor at Hinkley Point has experienced the effect exhaustion has on the mind and body. In the 1990s he was building the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff. He was working 12 hours a day, seven days a week. On a Saturday he finished at 6pm and went home and fell asleep on the sofa.

or living to work

He woke up and saw it was 8 o'clock and rushed back to work, worried he was late. As he arrived at the gate he was asked what on earth he was doing as he had only left two hours ago. He had slept for an hour but due to sheer exhaustion believed he had slept the entire night.

Malcolm and his colleagues at Hinkley highlight some additional issues about long hours.

Shifts at Hinkley tend to be 10 and half hours in length. However the high security nature of the site means workers must catch the company bus to work, resulting in it taking around 40 minutes to get both on and off site. In total workers are working and travelling up to 14 hour day.

Unite's activists at Hinkley have been seeking to reduce the working day but this isn't always welcomed. Malcolm

home. An extra factor in the desire to work longer is to "keep out of the boozer and not spend money".

One area where Hinkley has tried to tackle the long hours culture and ensure workers have sufficient recovery time is by offering different shift patterns allowing workers longer spells at home. Some shift patterns mean workers can have six days at home.

Unfortunately many companies are not so enlightened. Unite's members employed as electricians by Crown House Technologies a subsidiary of Laing O'Rourke experienced a macho attitude on long hours while building the much delayed Royal Liverpool Hospital.

One worker Ian (not his real name) describes what occurred last summer. "Workers were told there were two types of contract a basic 37.5 hours a week which isn't enough to live on or 12 hours a day."

On the basic contract workers finished at 15:30 while on the longer contract work didn't end until 19:00.

When workers asked for a bit of leeway and finishing at 17:00 so they could see their families, they were told by management "You are on the overtime bus or you are under the overtime bus. There are

redundancies coming up and if you don't sign up you will be top of the list."

Ian said: "I wasn't going to be treated like that. I wanted to keep a bit of dignity so I left."

Very long hours are intertwined with work for tower crane drivers. Gerry a

crane driver is currently working 85 hours a week, over seven days.

During the week, shifts begin at 06:30 and ends at 20:00 with slightly shorter hours at weekends. During the week he says it is a case of getting home "having a cup of tea and going to bed".

Gerry explains how his company's pay structure encourages long hours. Unite members receive a low basic pay rate for the first 39 hours, time and half up to 50 hours and double time after 50 hours.

At Gerry's company workers sought agreement on increasing basic rates in exchange for abolishing double time to create a working environment where workers doing 50 hours could earn a reasonable living. However, the employer rejected the proposal.

The problem of long hours won't be resolved until workers are persuaded there is a problem, that they won't be worse off financially and have the confidence to challenge employers. Unite will be giving them its full support.



Mark Thomas

Tower crane drives experience very long hours

explains: "We are trying to reduce the hours but lads want more". They describe some workers as "money mercenaries" who want to work "every hour and more and you have to send them home."

Hinkley is complicated as most of the workforce are working away from

KEY FACTS

- Workers are legally entitled to an 11 hour break between shifts
- 85 per cent of Unite members said they regularly only got six hours of sleep
- 28 per cent said they had made a mistake and caused an accident or near miss due to tiredness

A lifeline for construction workers in adversity



Mark Thomas

Construction workers who fall on hard times can seek assistance from the B&CE Charitable Trust

B&CE Charitable Trust

The B&CE Charitable Trust was set up in 1991. Its aim is to provide support and give back to the construction community, making a difference to the workforce on the ground – past, present and future.

Set up and funded by B&CE, the Trust remains of central importance to the organisation, donating funds each year in support of the construction industry. It's since gone from strength to strength, delivering some amazing work over the years and supporting 1,000s of people.

Importantly, it's also funded research into occupational health and safety in the construction industry – helping to keep workers safe.

A bit about B&CE

B&CE began business in 1942, created by unions and employer federations.

Construction workers tended to move around a lot and, in going from one employer to the next, they often missed out on paid holidays. So, B&CE set out to help construction workers build up holiday pay.

It worked like this: Employers could pay a percentage of an employee's

weekly wages into a central fund, and workers could then collect stamps, stick them on a card and cash them in to get an income during their holidays. And so began a simple stamp system.

Over time, construction workers needed more financial products that could be used to help protect them. So we listened to what was needed, built products specifically for the construction industry and those who worked in it and our membership grew. And when we saw that working people in other sectors also needed a high-quality workplace pension, we created The People's Pension.

Individual support for times of need

The B&CE Charitable Trust offers help for individuals and their dependants needing financial or emotional support, information, guidance and advice – or grants for training or retraining.

We provide:

- **Hardship grants** – we aim to help prevent homelessness and assist with funeral costs and essential utility bill arrears
- **Grants for education and training** – we help with entry level construction qualifications to help people who are out of work back into the industry or to retrain due to an occupational health reason
- **Occupational health** – we help individuals with mobility aids such as chair lifts, scooters and wheelchairs.

Here for the construction community

One of the Charitable Trust's aims is to provide relief for people in times of need, such as unemployment, poverty, sickness or distress. Grants paid under this objective have included help for a scaffolder with 15

The work of the team is so much more than that of a grant-giving body. They support every single call that comes through, and they won't leave anybody without giving them support



The B&CE Charitable Trust plays a crucial role in supporting construction workers

years of experience who was made redundant in 2020 following quadruple heart bypass surgery which left him permanently disabled and unable to continue working.

He said: "I will be forever grateful to your organisation. I'm not one to overstate words, your help will change my world with regards to my disability. But more profoundly your kindness personally has given me strength of heart. Thank you."

Another goal each year is providing education, training and retraining for workers, past operatives and young people who want to start working in the construction industry. We work alongside organisations that support unemployed adults, helping them to gain skills and qualifications that lead to permanent employment. They also support businesses helping them to employ people who have been out of work for long periods of time.

Support in and after the pandemic

In 2020-21, the Charitable Trust gave a record amount of support due to the pandemic which threw many people's lives into chaos. We supported 2,359 people, either through hardship or training grants, having received more

than 8,000 emails and 1,923 phone calls during that period.

Patrick Heath-Lay, the chief executive officer of B&CE, said: "The work of the team is so much more than that of a grant-giving body. They support every single call that comes through, and they won't leave anybody without giving them support."

Creating diversity in construction

The B&CE Charitable Trust has been involved in delegate participation on the Women in Construction – Leading with Integrity Programme. This initiative has been designed to support women in construction.

The programme blends taught modules and coaching, mentoring support, which is an accredited qualification and credited by the Institute of Leadership & Management (ILM).

Construction Youth Trust

Construction Youth Trust is a charity whose aim is to inspire and enable young people to overcome barriers and discover a career in the construction industry. The B&CE Charitable Trust has been supporting the charity for 20 years.

Carol Lynch, CEO, Construction Youth Trust said: "Our relationship with the Trust is fantastic as it's not just funding that they provide – it's a funder plus. We have a real relationship with them, and they put us in touch with their contacts. If we did not have the support from the Charitable Trust, it would be difficult for us to do what we have done."

Tackling the skills gap

Our Mowlem Award is an annual £20,000 grant given to organisations that can demonstrate they will make a real difference towards training and the promotion of health and safety in construction.



The 2021 Mowlem Award was granted to the Construction Youth Trust who will use it to contribute towards their new further education transitions programme. This includes health and safety in a construction environment training, and the opportunity to engage with construction industry professionals and receive employability support from employers.

If you have a question and would like to get in touch, you can call our construction worker helpline on 0808 801 0372 (Freephone 8am-8pm, 7 days a week) or email us at charitabletrust@bandce.co.uk

You can learn more about the B&CE Charitable Trust at www.bandce.co.uk/charitable_trust

INTERNATIONAL MEMORIAL DAY

Following two years of the Covid-19 pandemic in person International Workers Memorial Day (IWMD) events returned on April 28 2022.

Workers' Memorial Day when we remember the dead but pledge to fight like hell for the living is an especially important day for construction workers due to the dangerous nature of the industry.

Although death rates in the sector have declined markedly in the last 15 years, construction remains one of the most dangerous industries in the UK.

In the last five years 178 construction workers have been killed at work and thousands more have been severely injured, many of whom have suffered life changing injuries resulting in them never being able to work in the industry again.

While there is always a great deal of attention on workplace fatal accidents there is a much bigger killer and that is occupational diseases which kill 13,000 people a year. By far the biggest killer are lung diseases and construction workers are at the greatest risk. The biggest single killer remains asbestos, over 20 years after the use of asbestos was finally banned, roughly 5,000 people are still dying every year from inhaling the deadly dust. The majority of buildings still contain

asbestos. Other major killers are inhaling silica dust and diesel fumes and again construction workers are at significant risk of exposure.

This year both the London and Eastern region and the North West held construction specific Workers' Memorial Day events. The London event at the building workers' statue was well attended with construction workers from across the capital.

The North West event at the 'Harry the Hod' statue in Liverpool was especially poignant as it included the unveiling of a plaque remembering those workers who died during the Covid-19 pandemic.

On Workers' Memorial Day itself at many sites including the new Google headquarters in central London, workers paused for a minute's silence. While Unite construction members at Hinkley Point held an event in the nearby town of Bridgwater.

Unite is already working on ensuring that there are more construction led events for next year's International Workers' Memorial Day both on sites and in local communities to build on this year's successes and to ensure that even more construction workers can pay their respects to colleagues they have lost and demand safety at work.



Construction workers from across the North West attended a memorial service at the 'Harry the Hod' statue in Liverpool

WORKERS' 2022



Workers from the Hinkley Point nuclear power station attended a Workers' Memorial Day event in the nearby town of Bridgwater



London construction workers attended a memorial service at the Building Worker Statue at Tower Hill in the capital

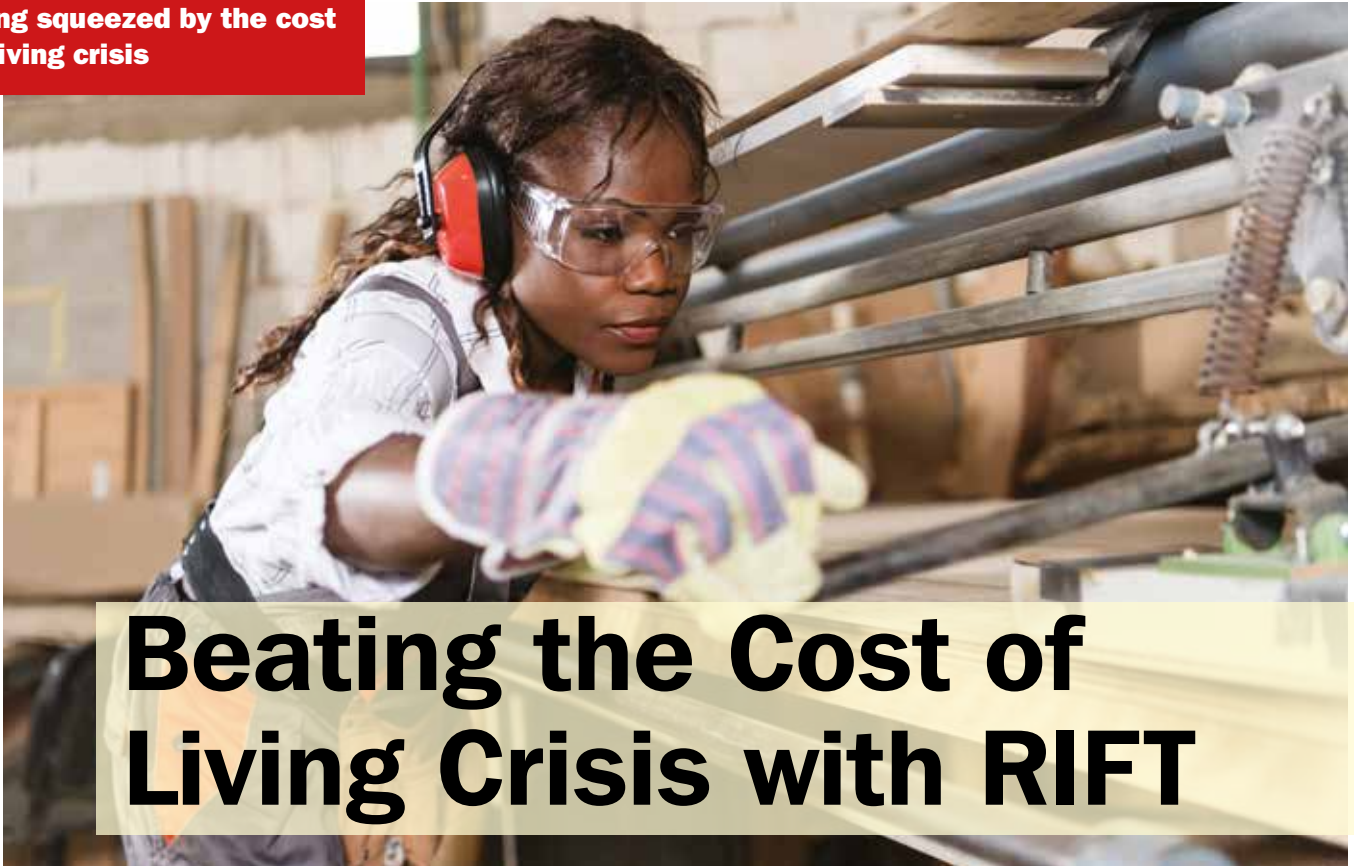


Unite's Scottish executive committee member and the chair of the National Industrial Sector Committee (NISC) Paul Mooney (left) represented the union at the Workers' Memorial Day event in Glasgow



Construction workers on the new Google building in London's Kings Cross paused for a minute's silence

Construction workers are being squeezed by the cost of living crisis



Beating the Cost of Living Crisis with RIFT

Getty Images

With the lid blowing off the energy price cap and the cost of living rocketing, we're all looking for ways to cut back on our spending and plugging the leaks in our finances. While the whole world's trying to drain the cash out of your wallet, RIFT is working hard to fill it right back up.

Everywhere you look, costs are on the rise. We're cancelling subscriptions, turning down thermostats and doing everything we can to slow down our spending. The trouble is, there's only so far that'll take you. Worse still, once people work out how much they can cut back on, they tend to hit a brick wall and stop looking for other ways to fix the problems – even when the real solutions are staring them right in the face. When you claim a tax refund, you're not looking to score some cheeky one-off windfall. It's not a hand-out or a prize to win. This is valuable money that never should have left your hands in the first place, and the taxman actively wants to give it back to you. He just needs a little help to do it – and that means you've got to make a full, well documented claim to get your refund cash.

It can look like an uphill battle, but RIFT makes the whole process simple and painless. We're the UK's leading tax refund experts, and can handle every aspect of your claim to make sure you get back everything you're owed each year.

We don't stop there, either. When you join the RIFT family, you get year round support and protection from our friendly team. We've got a huge and growing range of guides, articles, videos and interactive tools to help you understand your financial and tax situation and make the most of your money. Check out the advice section of our website to see how a few simple steps can put you back in the driving seat of your finances.

Every year, more and more people are teaming up with RIFT to claim back the tax they are owed for essential expenses like work travel. Over 10,000 people have already started their next tax refund claim with us in the first month of the new tax year alone. That's an all-time record after over 20 years in the tax refund business, and we're still pushing harder than ever to do even more.

An average first time tax refund of an on the books construction worker comes to around £2,500. Remember – this is your money, and it'll vanish into the taxman's pockets if you never claim it back. Get in touch with RIFT, and let's get your cash back where it belongs. While you're at it, subscribe to our YouTube channel and join us on social media for even more tips, guides and practical solutions from RIFT.

Call us on 01233 628648 or visit [riftrefunds.co.uk](https://www.riftrefunds.co.uk) to find out more – remember to mention your UNITE membership for a discount on our fees.

Leeds pay the rate campaign

Unite is totally committed to defending and enhancing the construction agreements which underpin our sector.

In an uncertain industry where engagements are often short, management poor and workers rarely have full employment rights, construction agreements bring stability.

In addition to governing wages, they also set hours, overtime rates, shift, mileage and lodge allowances.

This is why Unite is leading a campaign to ensure that a new waste-to-energy project at Skelton Grange, in Leeds is built under the appropriate construction agreement. In this case the National Agreement for the Engineering Construction Industry (NAECI).

The Skelton Grange development is worth £250 million and over 500 construction workers will be employed at its peak. When completed it will provide power for 100,000 homes.

The project is being built for Enfinium by principal contractor Hitachi Zosen Inova (HZI).

Despite having previously built several waste-to-energy plants using the NAECI agreement, HZI has confirmed it is not intending to use the agreement on this occasion.

Avoiding using the relevant construction agreement, invariably results in workers having their terms and conditions cut.

Of most immediate concern is that HZI will fail to pay the NAECI rate which is usually £17.89 or £18.64 an hour for skilled operatives, nor pay the agreed overtime rates after the standard 38 hour working week.

Not abiding by overtime rate rules results in a huge loss in wages for the affected workers.

Unite general secretary **Sharon Graham** said: "Unite will never allow the undercutting of pay rates and the undermining of construction agreements."

In response to HZI's plans a campaign has been launched to force the company to reverse its decision.

Hundreds of construction workers held a demonstration at Skelton Grange in early March.

This was followed by a further demonstration at Leeds council offices. The second demonstration was significant as the support of Leeds council is critical.

The council has given initial planning approval for the project but had not stipulated the project must be built using the NAECI agreement. If the council puts pressure on HZI to follow the agreement it will make life very difficult for the company.

It was therefore welcome that a large number of Leeds councillors joined the protesters and signed the petition demanding the NAECI agreement is honoured.

It is not just the issue of paying the rates which worries local construction workers.

There are growing fears that HZI will fail to recruit a local workforce or train apprentices. HZI is currently building a waste-to-energy project in Newhurst in



Leeds councillor Jess Lennox signs up to the pay the rate campaign



Construction workers protest at Skelton Grange

the East Midlands, where it is not paying the NAECI rate and it has employed a largely non-UK based workforce.

With opportunities to learn a construction trade limited in the local area, it would be a complete betrayal of young people if Skelton Grange did not offer a significant number of apprenticeships.

The online petition calling on HZI to pay the NAECI rate can be found at: shorturl.at/pquMU

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

Television

Then Barbara Met Alan Available on BBC IPlayer



Roger Blackwell

People with disabilities still have to fight for their rights

Then Barbara met Alan is a one off BBC drama about how disabled people battled for their rights.

It features the story of Barbara Lisicki played by **Ruth Madeley** (*Years*

and *Years*) and Alan Holdsworth played by **Arthur Hughes**.

Barbara and Alan meet fall in love and form DAN (Disabled People's Direct Action Network).

The drama portrays their direct action campaign and the stress it places on their relationship.

The drama, which includes a very strong supporting cast, is both funny and tear jerking.

The characters contempt for ITV's Telethon which was staged from the 1980's until the early 1990's, where ITV stars raised money for disabled people and which disabled people rightly considered condescending, is very funny. Equally when one of the characters dies, it is difficult not to have a lump in your throat.

The campaigning and the direct action undertaken by DAN and others was ultimately successful although their rights weren't fully recognised in law until the 2010 Equality Act. A drama, featuring disabled actors about their often forgotten civil rights campaign is important television.

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

Books

Kleptopia by Tom Burgis

The Adventures of Stevie V sang about *Dirty Cash* (*Money Talks*) but investigative journalist **Tom Burgis** describes in painstaking detail why the dirtiest cash is controlled by the wealthiest.

Burgis who is the investigation's correspondent for the *Financial Times* uncovers the tangled web of how the very wealthy are using their money to corrupt society and undermine democracy.

In particular Burgis focus on how the Eurasian Natural Resources Corporation (ENRC)

a multinational which initially gained its wealth from exploiting the natural resources in Kazakhstan, acted as an arm of the Kazack government and provided a vehicle to squash dissent and pursue anyone who ever dared to disagree with the country's leader.

Burgis begins his book with the banking crash of 2008 and describes how the banks which caused the crash were able to squirrel away the dirty cash in circulation. He then shows how the authorities in western nations, especially the UK and the United States were unable or unwilling to take action.

In a particularly disturbing chapter Burgis explains how the election of **Donald Trump** was a dream come true for the kleptocrats and that much of his fortune was based on him being the front man for some very suspicious financiers.

Tellingly in an afterword Burgis explains how after the book was published ENRC pursued him legally, claiming he was "corrupt". A typical response by an organisation which seems not to respect democracy, the rule of law or the freedom of the press.

For that reason and if we want to build a better world, this is essential reading.

Barckley Sumner

Bulle.org



ENRC's offices in Kazakhstan look superb but they contain a murky set-up

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 _____
Date apprenticeship due to end _____
 Driver Care (a separate Driver Care application form will be sent to you.)
Date apprenticeship started _____
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 4-weekly Monthly
Payroll No. _____

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.unitetheunion.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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