

UK national Hazards Campaign
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“We Didn’t Vote to Die at Work so ‘Stop it You’re Killing us!’

The UK Government is waging a punitive war on THE working class, from cradle to grave, in the name of ‘austerity’, after the banking crash caused by lack of regulation and enforcement. This war includes attacks on childcare, education, wages and pensions; cutting public services, privatising them, slashing the welfare/social security safety net to shreds; destroying workers’ rights and working conditions including health and safety, with specific attacks on the poor, disabled and most vulnerable. Terminally ill and severely disabled people are declared ‘fit for work’ and beaten off inadequate welfare benefits into low paid impossible work. It is a deliberate ‘race to the bottom’ with the aim of forcing those with jobs to accept any changes however detrimental to their health, and forcing unemployed workers to take any job, at any conditions including low wages and poor health and safety, just to survive. The attack on workers health and safety, hard won by collective action by workers and trade unions over the last 200 years, is a specific target to crush working conditions as the aim of the government is to serve its corporate masters, the elite, by removing regulation, restraint and scrutiny of employers so that UK PLC will be competitive with countries with much lower standards. David Cameron, the prime minister has frequently spoken out about ‘killing off health and safety culture’, waging war on it, removing the ‘millstone’ and the ‘burden on business’. Business and employment ministers say the same.

Set up in 1987 after 2nd Hazards Conference: A network of grassroots Hazards organisations, Hazards Centres, Occupational Health Advice Services, UK WorkStress Network, Asbestos Victims Support Groups, Asbestos in Schools, Alliance for Cancer Prevention, Construction Safety Campaign, Blacklist Support Group, RSI Action, Families Against Corporate Killers, local Safety Reps Groups, Trade Unions and Hazards magazine. The Greater Manchester Hazards Centre runs the Hazards Campaign Secretariat.

The UK Hazards Campaign:

- Promotes and co-ordinates International Workers Memorial Day 28 April
- Runs the annual Hazards Conference, Hazards 2013 19th to 21st July where 450 to 600 safety reps and activists from all trade unions and all types of workplaces, from all over the UK come together for workshops and plenaries, to exchange information and ideas, and to be rejuvenated and inspired.
- Campaigns for better health and safety, challenges the government and employers, produces papers, press releases, organises lobbying, actions and demos, and speaks at over 100 meetings/conferences each year.
- Promotes better health and safety research and evidence published in the award winning Hazards magazine to get our message out

Hazards Campaign organisations are funded locally and work in their own area. They work on all aspects of occupational health and safety e.g., dust and chemicals causing skin, lung disease and cancers; stress from long hours, heavy workloads bullying &

harassment; musculo-skeletal disorders due to poor job design/equipment, too much hard work and inadequate breaks; effects of shift work and working time; fire safety; asbestos, construction and other industry safety; endocrine disrupting chemicals. Some group specialise, others do a wider range of occupational safety and health work. Our Asbestos Groups are very active in the international campaign to ban asbestos and stop Canada exporting to Asia, and for International Workers Memorial, Day demonstrating outside the Russia Embassy which has taken over from Canada as major exporter of death.

We campaign on the demands of the Hazards Campaign Charter which are for better health and safety for all workers, just compensation for those injured, a ban on all hazardous substances and practices – a global ban on asbestos - for new laws and higher standards, better enforcement and inspection, more prosecutions of negligent employers with punishments that provide some justice and deterrence and good independent health and safety services for all workers and local communities
<http://www.hazardscampaign.org.uk/charter/newcharter.htm>

Last year 86 people were sent to prison in the UK for hurting animals in some way. Only 5 employers have EVER been jailed for killing workers. Penalties for killing and injuring workers are mostly fines of tens of thousands usually, a few fines are of hundreds of thousands and fewer still over £1 million. The new law of Corporate Manslaughter is not working as it does not include individual duties on directors, and companies can still go out into liquidation and avoid penalties after killing a worker.

Globally Work kills more than war every year: 2.3 million is a minimum and gross underestimate

The Hazards Campaign agrees with the following statements:

"If terrorism took such a toll, just imagine what would be said and done." Jukka Takala, International Labour Organisation

"No worker should have to sacrifice life, limbs or health to earn an honest day's pay—not here in the United States, not in Bangladesh or anywhere else. Yet, corporations continue the push for profits, seeking to avoid regulation and oversight. They claim that stronger worker protections and enforcement kill profit, when the reality is that failure to act kills workers." Statement from AFL-CIO president, Richard Trumka.

Kern Ward Jnr Charleston Gazette after the Boston marathon terrorist bomb, West Fertilizer plant explosion and Dhaka building collapse: "Terrorists want media attention, so we give it to them. Unsafe industries don't want media attention- so we give that to them"

The Hazards Campaign agrees with the statements above and says that:

Unsafe and unhealthy workplaces are employers waging war and terrorism against workers, aided and abetted by governments that deregulate, cut enforcement and scrutiny. The only people who benefit are unscrupulous employers.

In the UK the death toll from work has gone down since the 1970s, but is still too high as 80% of all deaths, injuries and ill-health at work are completely preventable.

The workforce is about 28 million, and about 7 million are trade union members.

Using official statistics the Hazards Campaign estimates per year:

- 1,400 killed in work-related incidents
- 50,000 dying of work illnesses (cancer- 18,000, heart disease -20,000, lung and other diseases -12,000)
- That's 140 per day: 6 per hour
- About 2 million suffering work-related illness, 27 million working days lost to injury and illness

See: <http://gmhazards.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/gmhc-stats-hazards-2012-nat.doc>

See Hazards Campaign explanation for arriving at this figure in Safety & Health Practitioner, December 2008: **'The Whole Story'**: <http://gmhazards.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/the-whole-story-shp-december-20081.doc>

UK standards of health and safety are better than in Asia, due to workers/union collective action forcing laws and enforcement to be enacted. Since 1974 the Health and Safety at Work Act, deaths and injuries at work have fallen, though some of this is due to a decline in heavy industries, steel making and mining. All asbestos import and use was banned in 1999 but millions of tonnes remain in buildings, including 85% of all schools. Even though it is better now, the toll of work is still too high and the Hazards Campaign says that no-one should die at work, and under the government attacks, already more people are being killed, injured and made ill by work.

Bad health and safety has a massive cost:

- To Individual workers & families pain, suffering, heartache - immeasurable
- Public purse – health and support costs, lost revenue – over £30 billion per year
- Those individuals harmed pay 55%; state/public purse pays 24% and employers who cause the harm pay 22%.
- The burden is on US not on business!

The Hazards Campaign Launched the 'We Didn't Vote to Die at Work' Campaign in July 2010, warnings of what the government would do, producing the evidence to challenge their lies and actions and as their war on workers' health and safety has borne poisonous fruit, 'Stop it you're killing us!' The government has cut the HSE-labour inspectorate – by 35%, banned preventative inspections in almost all workplaces which it says are low risk, but where half of all recorded deaths occur and where occupational ill-health is rife, wiped preventing occupational ill-health off the agenda, scrapped laws, downgrade Approved Codes of Practice to guidance, made it even harder for victims of work to claim compensation or get any justice. The gains of the last 200 years are being reversed rapidly and more people are being killed, injured and made ill by work. See www.hazards.org/votetodie, and <http://gmhazards.files.wordpress.com/2011/06/updated-wdvt daw-leaflet-september-2012.pdf>

We work with and support victims of work, for example those dying of asbestos related disease and their families and the families of those killed in incidents at work in a group called Families Against Corporate Killers, FACK. We help them to get justice and also use their stories to campaign for better health and safety in the press and media, to put pressure on government, our latest slogan is 'What's health and safety all about? FACK knows'. See the website: www.fack.org.uk

We use International Workers Memorial Day to ‘Remember the Dead and Fight for the Living’. We ‘Tell the stories of our lives’, good stories about how and why union workplaces with safety reps are twice as safe, and bad stories about the consequences of poor health and safety, the real toll, not partial official, figures, and who really bears the burden- workers and their families! The Hazards Campaign provides resources – ribbons, stickers, posters, T-shirts- and support for the hundreds of events across the UK every year. <http://gmhazards.files.wordpress.com/2012/02/resources-for-workers-memorial-day-20132.doc> In Manchester about 300 people gathered and showed solidarity for garment workers in Bangladesh, and we held our first ‘Shout out for Safety’ for all workers everywhere and this featured on the BBC news. <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?v=10151440495250958&set=vb.738280957&type=2&theater> In Blackburn a May Day event collected £60 for the victims of the Rana Plaza collapse. We used social media to get our message out via twitter and Facebook, using hashtag #IWMD.

The financial crisis is being used to destroy workers protection based on lies that we challenge and refute. Good health and safety is not a burden on business, bad health and safety is a burden on us all; regulations do not kill jobs but lack of regulation and enforcement kills workers There is a global crisis of enforcement and we all want Action not Reaction, we want to stop the incidents not mop up the blood and tears afterwards.

European Work Hazards Network EWHN

- Network of European Country Networks in Austria, Denmark (AAA), Germany, Italy, England & Wales, Scotland (UK Hazards Campaign), The Netherlands ,Norway, Estonia, Latvia, plus individual contacts in other countries
- Steering Group meets 2 x a year, networks, campaigns around the EWMH Charter, occasional seminars on specific issues, e.g. Stress & Cancer, set up European campaigns
- Biennial conferences - next one 13th EWHN Conference 4-6th October, Bologna Italy <http://www.ewhn.eu/>

European Union EU

- www.youtube.co/user/etuivideos/featured gives a very good summary by ETUC of the state of health and safety from a conference in March 2013
- EU = 27 countries, 503 million people
- 160,000 workers die from injuries & illness per year
- Workers exposed daily to threats to their mental and physical health, chemicals such as carcinogens, pesticides, solvents, plasticisers, EDCs that cause metabolic disease e.g. diabetes and obesity. Prenatal exposures cause these diseases in adulthood.
- H&S part of EU treaty but E Commission fails to present new strategy and continues with deregulation e.g. of REACH (chemicals) DSE (MSDs) and Psychosocial risks

- ETUC says the debt crisis should not be used as excuse to endanger lives of workers , and a new H&S strategy must be immediately proposed.

UK Hazards Campaign pledges solidarity with workers, their families and communities all over the world and says that A better World is Possible. If we all organise, educate, agitate to make work safe, and work together on specific issues and the overall challenge to the neoliberal globalisation that enslaves us all.

Useful Contacts in UK Hazards Campaign

- UK Hazards Campaign www.hazardscampaign.org.uk;
info@hazardscampaign.org.uk Hazards Campaign secretariat
- Face Book :We didn't Vote to Die at Work; Alliance for Cancer Prevention www.acp.org.uk; Twitter @HildaPalmer #IWMD, #IWMD13, #WMD
- Hazards Magazine: www.hazards.org; editor@hazards.org sub@hazards.org
Twitter @hazardsmagazine, FaceBook: Hazards Magazine; Workers Memorial Day 28 April
- Scottish Hazards Campaign: <http://www.scottishhazards.co.uk/>
- FACK Families Against Corporate Killers: www.fack.org.uk,
mail@gmhazards.org.uk; FaceBook: Families Against Corporate Killers
- Alliance for Cancer Prevention www.acp.org.uk
- Greater Manchester Hazards Centre : www.gmhazards.org.uk
- UK Work StressNetwork: <http://www.workstress.net/>
- EWHN: <http://www.ewhn.eu/>