

# **Migrant Workers in the North West**

**The Work of Cities and Regions  
Workshop**

**University of Manchester  
Friday 16 November 2007**



**A Trade Union perspective and  
response....**

**“A little less conversation -  
and a lot more action”**

# What is the background issue.....?

- Government policies since 1997 have significantly increased number of workers able to work in UK
- Limits lifted on temporary work schemes (SAWS, SBS, etc)
- UK government policy has allowed unlimited access to workers from “new” EU states
- This is response to demands from UK employers
- But there is no decent legislation “safety net”

# What are “migrant workers”.....?

- nationals of the European Economic Area (EEA) with right to travel, live and work in the UK;
- nationals of all other countries – who require a work permit, obtained by an employer who cannot find a suitable national to fill the post;
- Commonwealth working holidaymakers – individuals between the ages of 17 and 30 who can work in the UK for up to two years; and
- students from outside EEA who can undertake part-time work whilst enrolled on courses here.

# And more simply.....?

**..... any individual who arrives in  
the UK either with a job to go to  
or with the intention of finding  
one**

# How many migrant workers.....?

- From Worker Registration Scheme and NI registrations, 103,000 new migrant workers in North West over past 3 years
- Figures include 18,000 from Indian Sub-Continent; 21,000 students (Australia, China, Spain, USA)
- No real increase, however, except 37,000 from Eastern Europe (69% from Poland)
- It's the workers from the A8 Accession Countries who represent the new "net" increase since most other levels of inward worker migration remained fairly static

# Why is this a TU issue....?

- Considerable existing research to show that Migrant and European Workers particularly marginalised and need support
  - TU experience of exploitation against migrant workers
  - Employers' experience of poor or non-existent signposting when wanting to apply "best practice"
  - Increasing evidence of racism in the workplace around migrant worker issues

# Is this a new phenomenon....?

- 100 years of Irish immigration
- Early 1900s - the beginnings of Globalisation
- The voyage of the SS Empire Windrush
  - 1948 British Nationality Act
- The changing face of Britain in the 50s and 60s
  - Spread of "casualisation" in many industries - the Docks, for example
    - Existing exploitation of Agency Workers

# Marginalisation Examples....?

- Morecambe Bay and *Ghosts* - who are the real beneficiaries?

- Social Cohesion issues and "Myths"....

Impact of Claimant Count and Jobs

Local Services and Housing

- Racism triumphs around "migrant workers" in workplaces where BNP failed

- Union Responses....

Active myth-busting

(eg Migrant Workers contribute 20% more to the economy in Tax/NI than they take out in services

Working with *Searchlight* and others

# Exploitation Examples.....?

- Hazlewoods and the threat of deportation
  - Farmworkers and Gangmasters
    - Woolworths in Rochdale
    - Gangsters at UK North
- Driving Edge, Top Hat and other agencies
  - Union responses....

Good old-fashioned Organising

Direct Action

Court Cases and Employment Tribunals

Campaigns for Better Legislation

# Employers and Best Practice

## Examples.....?

- First Bus - a holistic approach and ESOL
- Stagecoach “pick up the pieces” from the UK North crisis
  - Crewe and Nantwich Council - Polish Support Workers
- Entrepreneurs - bringing 103,392 jobs to the NW and £ms to the economy
  - Union responses....

Union Learning Fund resources for Migrant Workers

# North West Regional Support

## Examples....?

- Trade Unions
- Advice, Voluntary Sector Agencies, RECs
- Refugee/Asylum Seeker Support Networks
- Government Agencies (EURES) and NWDA
- FE/HE institutions and Local Authorities
- “Business in the Community” organisations
  - but NO co-ordination
    - Union response....

Establishing Migrant Workers North West

# What is MWNW.....?

- a Limited Company, with charitable objects

- supported by an Advisory Committee which includes representatives of the North West

Development Agency; North West TUC; affiliated unions; MPs and Members of the European Parliament; the Regional Assembly (Economic and Social Partners); ACAS; Colleges; First Bus; Arriva; Region Plus; Manchester Refugee Support Network; the Co-operative Group; Logistics College North West; Oxfam; MSIO; Sustainability North West; the Manufacturing Institute; the LSC; the North West Employment Relations Forum; Bolton REC; and Jobcentre Plus, etc.

# Migrant Workers North West.....?

- Co-ordinates alliance of all key providers of services for migrant workers, their employers and communities
- Provides a Directory and web site listing all those providers and services
- Promotes Minimum Standards Charter inc. dealing with existing local unemployment and “contract compliance” in all sectors
- Promotes development of a region-wide strategy (including Skills Match and ESOL) on Migrant Workers through North West Development Agency, etc

# The conclusions of the Unions and Migrant Workers North West....

- Learn lessons from previous immigration peaks - we need to plan for the long-term
  - Success in achieving social cohesion, maximising opportunities, etc, will depend on what practical actions we take NOW!
- Contact us on any of these issues or other points... [dmccall@tgwu.org.uk](mailto:dmccall@tgwu.org.uk) or [denise@migrantworkersnorthwest.com](mailto:denise@migrantworkersnorthwest.com)