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MANUFACTURING

Bombardier orders secure Belfast jobs



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There was some excellent news for Unite members at Bombardier in Belfast in November. The company has secured two major contracts, ensuring employment at the company for the foreseeable future.

Bombardier has secured an historic record-breaking order for 142 business jets worth £4.8bn – with Vistajet, a private jet charter firm, in a deal worth more than £4.8bn (US\$7.8bn).

Then in December, Delta Air Lines placed a firm order worth more than £1bn for 40 CRJ900 NextGen aircraft which also includes an option for a further 30. If the options are converted to firm orders the total value will be more than £2bn.

“This is fantastic news for the committed workforce and

manufacturing in Northern Ireland,” said Unite Ireland regional secretary, **Jimmy Kelly**. He added, “This historic order is very welcome at this particularly fragile economic time. Unite understands that it will secure the current workforce levels for a number of years.

“It also shows manufacturing in NI is a world leader following the success at Wrightbus with its order for Transport For London.”

- There was more good news for local manufacturing recently announced by the **Montupet Group** for workers in Belfast. The company had been successful in winning a new annual contract with Ford for their Panther cylinder head range.

MEMBERS' ACTION

Fairer settlement after fightback

Unite members engaged in a short sharp campaign of industrial action at Chartered Accountants Ireland at the end of 2012, after notices of dismissal were sent by email to nine members working in Dublin.

40 union members out of 100 employees voted overwhelmingly to commence a campaign of protests which took place at the Institute buildings on Pearse Street in November.

“The savings proposed amounted to €210,000 which is €150,000 less than the salary being paid to the Institute’s CEO,” said Unite regional officer **Claire Keane**. “This is a terrible abuse of lower paid staff members who are having their livelihoods ended while

senior management in the organisation sail on without a care.”

The action stepped up when one of the workers, **Marie Charlesworth** addressed 20,000 people at the march against austerity in Dublin on November 21.

“Taking money out of our economy costs jobs. Real jobs, like mine,” she said addressing the march from a stage outside the GPO on Dublin’s O’Connell Street.

“The institute had refused to meet at the labour relations commission, or to row back on the decision and enter consultation,” added Claire, “but the pressure we were able to bring to bear did force them back towards beginning to negotiate a fairer settlement.”



Pensions group lobby Commons

A delegation representing the age sector platform in Northern Ireland travelled to Westminster for a lobby at the House of Commons. Unite reps **Hugh Rafferty** and **George Galloway** were part of the 11-person group who joined with the national pensioners' convention (NPC) rally, (pictured above).

The group also met with a number of Northern Ireland politicians and peers to discuss fuel poverty, winter fuel payment cuts, the impact of the change in pension payments from RPI to CPI, cuts to pensioners' tax allowances (granny tax) and state pensions.

Hugh reported, "We had a very constructive debate with **Anne Gregg** (chairperson of works and pensions) on the government's position on a single state pension and its proposal on a new pension with employers and employees contributing. We asked **Vernon Coaker** about Labour's position if it won the next general election.

"The only thing he would say was that Labour would reinstate the 50 per cent for the higher earners, the money saved would abolish the granny tax but the rest of the policies introduced by the coalition would be taken in priority."

Later Labour MP **David Crausby**, who had put forward an early day motion in support of the bus pass said he was disappointed more Labour MPs had not signed it. On means testing he said his party would start at the top but it would stop there.

The NPC Parliamentary MP **Kelvin Hopkins**, said he supported all the organisation's policies. He also talked about health privatisation in the NHS and the increase in fuel bills of the six power companies, where four were from other countries and taking their profits abroad. He called for utility companies to be nationalised.

The final session saw the NI group meet members of the upper house. "This was more of a 'get to know you' exercise and

indeed most of the peers had not heard of our group", said Hugh. He added, "After a worthwhile meeting it was agreed that contact would be maintained and the issue affecting pensioners would be heard."

Economy boost plea

Unite welcomed the Stormont decision to re-direct £200m of funding towards boosting the economy. "This union has long called for injection of state capital into the local infrastructure," commented Unite regional secretary **Jimmy Kelly**.

He added, "Understandably, it's not a huge amount or what is really required to drive the economy forward but Stormont's intention of dividing this stimulus into a package which helps a number of projects is welcomed by Unite.

"Creating apprenticeships and training for youth and long-term unemployed will in the long-term prove beneficial to society."

The news that 190 workers are to lose their job at Patton's on Ballymena will have a major effect on the local construction industry with even more jobs lost in the sub-contracting businesses.

"Unite also calls for a major social housing project to begin immediately. There are 40,000 people on the social housing list in Northern Ireland," he added.

Just can't take any more



John Harris / reportdigital.co.uk

People cannot take any more austerity. The savage attacks in Budget 2013 mean many families will go without adequate heat food and bare essentials this winter.

Equally damaging is the reduction of money to spend in the domestic economy will accelerate the vicious circle of job losses, emigration and the destruction of communities. We need to stand up on behalf of our members

and adopt a leadership position within civil society.

We have proposed to the Irish congress of trade unions planning for a single day of action in the first half of 2013 whereby members of the trade union movement engage in a day of civil disobedience – strong in unity, peaceful in execution and effective in making our political leaders fully aware of the anger being felt by those by

whom they were elected.

We can no longer tolerate a situation whereby our people suffer immensely while vast payments are made to cover the debts of private banks. We need to harness public energy to halt this payment and to reverse the policy of austerity.

At a time when Ireland holds the presidency of the EU, there has never been a better time for the trade union movement to lead this concerted action. In recent times, a myth has developed that 'the Irish do not protest' and that we are happy to be the lab rats for Angela Merkel's austerity programme.

Tens of thousands of people have marched against hospital closures, attacks on home helps, household charges and a range of other issues. Our belief in Unite is the country should be shut down for a day through an ICTU-led campaign of peaceful mass civil disobedience through walk outs, occupations and strike actions.

We urge discussion and consideration of this idea in the coming months.

Jimmy Kelly
Unite regional secretary

A series of mass protests around the country will take place on Saturday, February 9th to coincide with the Irish Presidency of the EU.

M&S Mallusk job fears grow

Unite is concerned for the future of the M&S warehouse at HydePark, Mallusk, after the company announced a further reduction to its stock holding in December, transferring a further four departments from Northern Ireland to Stoke.

A Unite steward said, "We are totally disgusted at the lack of communication. We were previously given a guaranteed commitment by management that any future moves would be discussed in advance. DHL, the sub-

contractor on site, is hiding behind M&S, which is nonsense.

"Unite shop stewards are putting 'a failure to agree' on this and will seek support from its membership to tackle M&S on this in the form of a protest.

"DHL senior management said it would put our concerns to M&S, but this did not materialise. Unite demands M&S declares the plans for this site and how many years it has left."

Irish links across the sea



Forging links – (l-r) Noel Coard and Jenny Toman promoting Workers Uniting with Unite regional co-ordinator Jackie Pollock.

Two Unite colleagues in Ireland are setting out on the path of promoting closer transatlantic links with a major US union.

Forging the hands across the sea gesture are **Noel Coard**, the transport shop steward at Wincanton Distribution, Belfast and **Jenny Toman**, a shop steward with Sainsbury's, Portadown.

The pair plans to bring the work and agenda of Workers Uniting to the Irish region.

Workers Uniting is the name of the international union created by Unite and the United Steelworkers (USW), North America's largest

private sector union.

Speaking enthusiastically of their task, Noel said, "The idea is to create a global union whereby we build up activism locally in each sector in order that workers can challenge the injustices of globalisation."

Jenny and Noel met with their US counterparts in a cultural exchange at Esher training college, England, earlier this year.

"We got to know how the USW works at all levels," said Jenny. "Their reps are heavily committed to working within their own communities, even standing for council elections. It was a real eye-opener on how USW reps work."

Noel, vice-chair of the road transport committee and chair of the Wincanton combine and Jenny, who was voted on to the Irish executive committee this year, were impressed at how the USW develop and train their activists.

"Each rep undergoes a four year training programme," explained Noel, "and each will undergo a programme that develops their strengths in many areas."

Both plan to attend a joint-union media-training course in Edinburgh and further courses before they roll-out their campaign in Spring 2013 to bring what they've learned to each branch and sector in Ireland.

UNITE WOMEN

Shake fists, not heads plea

Unite Ireland women's committee has urged women to stand up and resist the budget cuts that have attacked them more than any other group.

"The cuts to family through children's allowance; to carers through the respite grant and to lower paid workers through the PRSI allowance impact hardest on the women of Ireland,"

said **Frances Hourihane**, deputy chair of the Unite Ireland women's committee.

She added, "Women are holding the country together at this time of unparalleled community breakdown. The number of homes affected by unemployment is the highest in Europe and society is in danger of breaking down.

"It's always women and the most vulnerable that take the brunt of these cuts and we are urging all women to stand up and fight back.

"We must take issue with every politician who voted for the cuts, every employer who applauded them and every commentator who defended them. A recent report shows 1.3m women's jobs have been destroyed in the current depression. We need to stop shaking our heads and start shaking our fists."

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