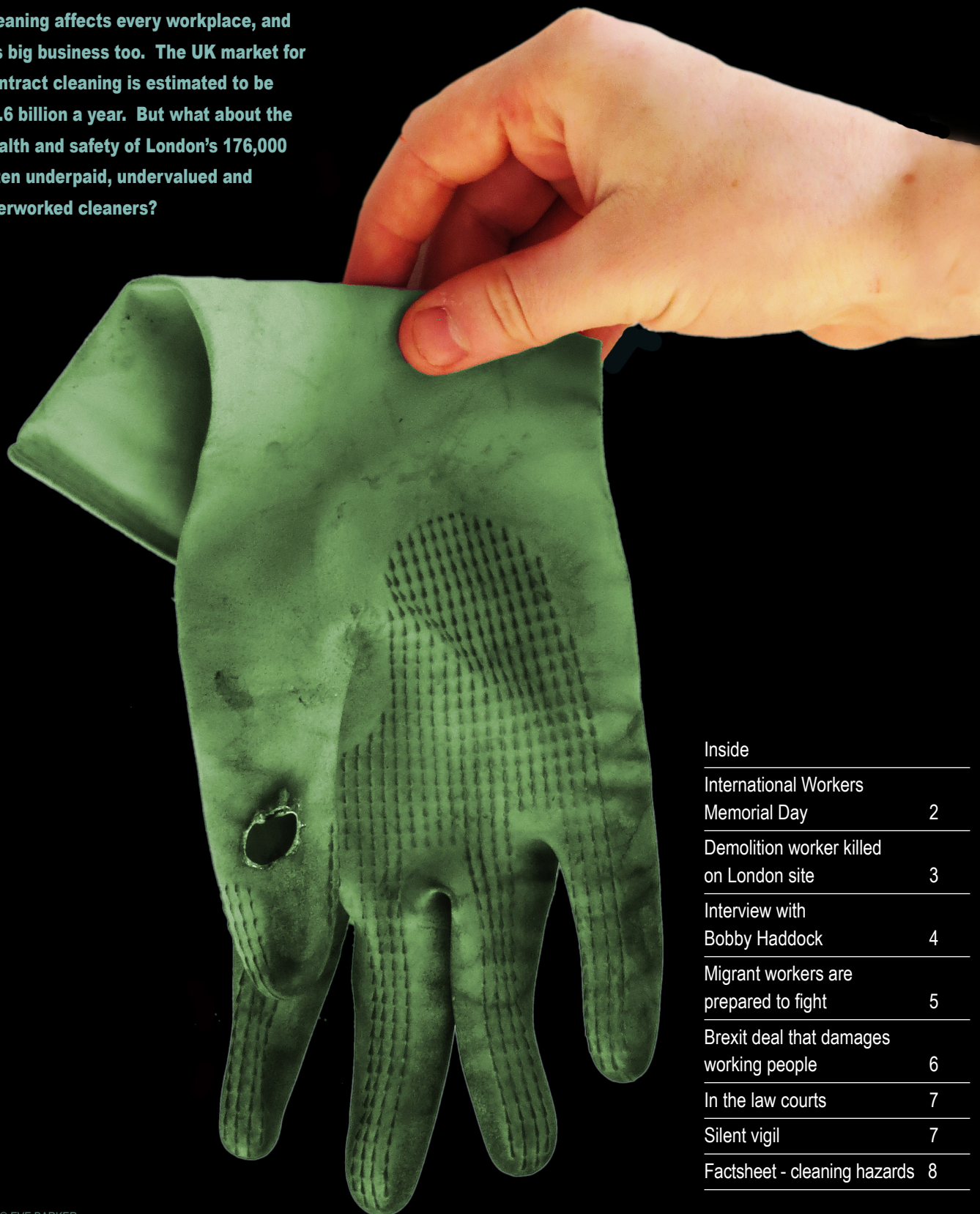


HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE CLEANING INDUSTRY

Cleaning affects every workplace, and it's big business too. The UK market for contract cleaning is estimated to be £5.6 billion a year. But what about the health and safety of London's 176,000 often underpaid, undervalued and overworked cleaners?



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AFFILIATE AND HELP KEEP US GOING

We are asking you to affiliate to the London Hazards Centre so that we can continue the work we were set up to do in 1985 – provide advice, information and training to make London a safer place in which to live and work.

Arguably the work of the London Hazards Centre is more important than ever as a result of cuts to the HSE budget and scrapping of key pieces of health and safety legislation.

The London Hazards Centre is also a campaigning organisation that takes a lead on issues like safety reps rights, as well as working closely with trade unions and other organisations, for example, to fight against blacklisting.

We need your support. We are asking individuals, trade union branches and regions, along with community organisations – to affiliate to us. The annual affiliation fees set out below remain the lifeblood of the London Hazards Centre.

Affiliation rates

Community groups, tenants and residents associations	£20
Trades Councils, law centres and advice/resource centres,	£30
Tenants federations	
Trade union branches (up to 300 members)	£40
Trade union branches (more than 300 members)	£75
Regional trade union or voluntary organisations	£120
National trade union or voluntary organisations	£240

Subscription rates

Unwaged individuals	£10
Employed individuals	£20
Commercial organisations	£300

Address to affiliate: London Hazards Centre, 225 - 229 Seven Sisters Road, Finsbury Park, London, N4 2DA. Telephone: 0207 527 5107. Website: www.lhc.org.uk

Registered Charity No: 293677
Registered Company No: 01981088



Trust for London
Tackling poverty and inequality

Why not volunteer?

The London Hazards Centre, is looking for volunteers to help run and organise some of our activities. Perhaps you have skills and knowledge that could help organise events, produce promotional material, train others or assist in our campaigning work?

If you are interested in volunteering at the London Hazards Centre why not call 0207 527 5107 or email mail@lhc.org.uk

We'd like to hear from you.

What on earth is the point of International Workers' Memorial Day?

OK – some history first. IWMD is an American invention. Or is it Canadian?

There are a couple of versions available on the world wide web, and I'm not qualified to judge. What is clear though is that it was the efforts of trade unions and their allies that developed 28 April as a day that is now observed internationally as an opportunity to "pray for the dead and fight like hell for the living" in the words of union agitator Mother Jones.

We're a bit more moderate now with the usual slogan being "remember the dead, fight for the living" – but the spirit is the same.

In the UK the trade union campaign for Workers' Memorial Day led to adoption by the Scottish TUC in 1993, followed by the TUC in 1999, the Health & Safety Commission and Health & Safety Executive in 2000. The International Labour Organisation adopted it in 2001 (and it is now an official day in the United Nations system: "World Day for Safety and Health at Work"), and the international trade union confederation, the ITUC, set themes for the year's commemorations since 1996.

So what's this year's theme? It depends where you look and much variety is, possibly, the effect of multi-translations. The ITUC confirmed "Unsafe and unfair – discrimination on the job hurts us all" and is urging unions to examine measures needed to protect the health and safety of the most vulnerable in our workplaces, due to gender, origins, class and/or sexual orientation.

The TUC has adopted "Good health and safety for all workers whoever they are". This reflects the current concerns about the dispersal of workers into the "gig economy"

and will focus on inequalities in occupational health and the role unions play in narrowing the inequalities gap.

The Building and Wood Workers' International (BWI) has adopted the theme "Unions make work safer" but they sweep up the inequalities issues with their sub-themes: "One death is too many", "No to xenophobia at work", "No to gender based violence at work", "Ban asbestos – the killer dust".

The AFL-CIO in America picks up "Safe. Jobs. Every worker's right", and then develops it in the context of the new US president. "All of these hard-won gains now are threatened. The Trump administration has launched an all-out assault on regulations. The president has ordered that for every new protection, two existing safeguards must be removed from the books".



<http://28april.org/>, an initiative of the ITUC and Hazards magazine, puts the current world reality into our view. "Every 15 seconds a worker dies from a work-related accident or disease. Every 15 seconds 153 workers have a work-related accident. Every day 6,300 people die as a result of occupational accidents or work-related deaths – more than 2.3 million deaths a year worldwide". Gender, race and class discrimination make some workers more vulnerable than others. Hence the 2017 theme.

So back to the UK. The reality

is that despite our legislative wins, the provisional figures for 2015-16 show 144 workers fatally injured. That's a rate of 0.45. It was 0.46 in 2014-15. The HSE says "over the latest 20 year time period there has been a downward trend in the rate of fatal injury, although in recent years this shows signs of levelling off".

It's worth looking at the figures for asbestos-related cancer mesothelioma where deaths due to an occupational disease can be counted directly. There were 2,515 such deaths in Great Britain in 2014. In addition there are each year around 10,500 deaths from occupational lung disease and cancer, estimated to have been caused by past exposure, primarily to dust and chemicals at work.

I finish on asbestos-related deaths. Those at danger are not only those outside of the UK – mining asbestos, handling it with no protective clothing, the fragments merrily floating in the air.

The National Union of Teachers says more than 85% of British schools contain asbestos. 319 teachers have died from mesothelioma since 1980, 205 of these since 2001. This also means that our children are at risk.

So yet again we must approach International Workers' Memorial Day with an emphasis on the consonance of the interests of British workers with all the workers of the world and a true belief that trade unions will be the only organisations that can protect workers and their families.

Let us remember the slogan "think global, act local" – support your Health & Safety Rep, support their facility time, support their demands. Remember the dead, fight like hell for the living.

One death is one too many.

Megan Dobney, Regional Secretary for the Southern & Eastern Region of the TUC (SERTUC)

The tragic death of Stephen Hampton in an explosion on a construction site in Highgate, London, was almost certainly preventable. It shouldn't have happened.



Demolition worker killed on London site

Residents living in the vicinity of the Swain's Lane site described how the blast shook their houses and how the huge bang was heard several miles away on the 16 March 2017.

Part of the site was a former petrol station. Reports in the local press refer to there being a strong smell of petrol over several days and residents' being extremely worried about what was going on. The site is being developed into new shops and houses.

The London Hazards Centre contacted the HSE to find out more and was told the Police are leading the inquiry and that "the Health and Safety Executive is working with the Metropolitan Police following the incident at a site on Swain's Lane, Camden where a man suffered fatal injuries". It would seem the police suspect negligence caused the death and are therefore leading the investigation. Stephen was described by a relative as being "a hard working man who lived for his family."

Stephen's employer – P.J.L Plant Hire & Demolition – started work in the New Year to clear the site including the removal of petrol tanks. Judging by reports, the tanks must have contained some residual petrol or vapours that ignited as work to remove them was being carried out.

'The Management of Health

and Safety at Work Regulations' make it very clear that employers have a legal duty to carry out a risk assessment of any hazard that is a risk to the safety of workers. It's hard not to conclude that this was either not done, or if it was, not acted upon. The regulations require employers to control, monitor and review any preventative measures. The responsibilities of the client – Noble House Properties – are clearly set out in the 'Construction (Design & Management) Regulations.' They have a duty to appoint someone to oversee the project that has the relevant knowledge and experience to manage health and safety.

For the tanks to be removed safely would involve isolating them from any pipework, draining the tanks and opening manholes to assist venting. The tanks would also need to have been properly cleaned and gas freed of any flammable residues. 'The Safe Work in Confined Spaces Regulations' and 'APEA Code of Practice on Decommissioning Filling Stations' would also come into play here.

As an industry, demolition has an appalling record on health and safety with firms showing a shocking disregard for the safety of their workers. The very nature of the work puts it right up there among the most dangerous jobs. According to

the HSE "all demolition, dismantling and structural alteration must be carefully planned and carried out in a way that prevents danger."

Demolition workers are at the low-end in terms of pay when compared to other trades in construction. They get £9:00 – £11.00 an hour, with up to £15.00 an hour for operating certain types of machinery. Workers are often paid less and expected to provide their own PPE. The jobs are mostly temporary and usually on a self-employed basis. There is evidence of migrant workers getting paid cash-in-hand on demolition jobs where the total lack of safety endangers their lives. Not surprisingly, trade unions do not have a presence on most jobs.

To work in the industry workers need to have an industry CCDO (competency) Card. They get this by completing one of the National Demolition Training Group's courses. For example, the one day 'Demolition Labourers Level 1 Course' costs £270 and is renewable after 5-years. Get one of these and you could start tomorrow.

P.J.L Plant Hire & Demolition refer to their work as "surgical deconstruction" rather than demolition. I requested an interview in an email to Managing Director Paul Harris. Assurances were given that questions directly relating to Stephen

Hampton's death would not be asked because of the ongoing investigation. I followed-up the email with a phone call and believe I got through to fellow director Jo Harris. There wasn't much discussion. After I explained what I was calling about she said "please don't call this number again" and put the handset down. It may well be that the company had a good track record on health and safety, but we didn't get the chance to find out.

Although it is early days in the investigation, the explosion could not have occurred if the work had been carried out in strict conformity with the law. Things were not done correctly and as a result another worker has been killed and added to the fatal injury statistics. Another husband, father and grandfather is dead. Proper procedures were not followed. Corners were cut and a life cut short.

Paul Street

Thanks for help with magazine distribution

The London Hazards Centre thanks the RMT, GMB and London and Eastern Region of Unite for their assistance in circulating the magazine.

Carcinogen free workplaces – a work in progress

In the UK, 8,000 people die each year from work-related cancer and a further 13,500 a year are diagnosed with the disease after being exposed to carcinogens at work. It is widely agreed that these figures underestimate the true scale of occupational cancer. Eve Barker interviewed Bobby Haddock, Joint Works Convener at Islington London Borough Council's housing repair and maintenance section, to find out his experience of keeping the lid on exposure to workplace carcinogens.

What is your experience on Islington DLO in making sure workers are not exposed to cancer causing substances

Asbestos is the main issue. "Because there is a lot of asbestos still in the buildings of Islington it's an ongoing problem that we have to be aware of. We have a lot of systems in place to cope with it. We have a flagging system on workers' PDAs (handheld computer) so they can be warned of any potential dangers they come across."

How does Islington Council handle it's duty to risk assess as part of the 'Management of Health & Safety Regulations' any carcinogens present at work?

"They have a health and safety department that deals with any cancer risks, especially asbestos. Using PDAs for risk assessment - there is a database that operatives can access and look up themselves - or find out over the phone if they need help. There is a line manager who can tell them of any hazards."

What role does the trade union play in keeping the workplace safe and free from carcinogens?

"We play an important role. The unions are represented on the consultation committee where the most important work is done at the local level. If we can't get a problem solved at local level - or if there is a disagreement over a particular issue - we can escalate it to a level above our local committees. Our mantra is 'if you think there is a problem, then it is a problem.'"

Have you had to bring to the employer's attention any particular concerns about carcinogenic substances in the workplace?

"When we were privatised we had to be on our toes. We were with Kier then, but we did negotiate some good things which were then carried-over to the council contract when we were taken back into local authority control in 2014. These were things which people might not be aware of. We have a serious problem with the fluorescent tubes when they get broken. It's very dangerous and an instant concern. We have a special disposal unit in our yard, for light fittings so they can be taken away and disposed of safely. The union had an input into establishing that. Another problem was asbestos washers on light fittings. We got involved writing the method statements for their safe removal - which had been started by the GMB."

What work processes have the potential to expose workers to carcinogens?

"We don't use oil based paints with cancer causing solvents which was one of the main areas of possible exposure. Union campaigning led safer products being used. The other main area of concern is asbestos, as we no longer have an in-house removal team. Asbestos is now removed by licensed contractors. Our workers receive jobs on their PDAs which has a red-flag system with data taken from the councils data base."

Painters used to die from exposure to carcinogens present in paints. Can you describe any experience you had of making the case for using a substitute safer product?

The campaign against dangerous substances hazardous to health was kicked-off by Peter Farrell. He started the campaign against oil based paint when he was working for Islington Council. We demonstrated how alternative substances were just as good as the paint that was a causing cancer. Although looking back I think we had a harder time convincing union members than we had convincing the council!

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) must be used where hazards can't be totally removed or controlled. What kind of work on the DLO requires issuing PPE for workers to wear?

"Workers are supplied with a PPE asbestos kitbag which they are supposed to bring to each job in case they come across any disturbed potentially asbestos material. However, the mantra is if you think it is, it is. So we ring the supervisor who will make arrangements for inspection and removal if necessary. We have our own store for sourcing

materials and access to COSHH data for all our materials."

Does your employer take a proactive stance in identifying any carcinogens? And does your employer seek to involve trade union reps?

"We have local meetings which we insist are held monthly. It is proactive rather than reactive and I believe it helps both sides keep their finger on the pulse. When our members go to collect materials they have access to the COSHH assessments at the counter. Because we have only one supplier this makes things easier. The technology we have now makes it possible to access any information on materials at our suppliers counter."

Do you have any tips for other groups of workers in how to go about trying to make workplaces carcinogen-free?

"Yes, join a trade union and get a health and safety committee going. That will give you the right to be consulted on health and safety issues in the first place. Much better than the alternative workplace representatives, who don't have the same rights or legal rights of representation. Basically don't be afraid to speak up."

HEALTH AND SAFETY TRAINING FROM THE LONDON HAZARDS CENTRE

Do you want to know your rights when it comes to health and safety? Working in a safe environment is a basic human right. Learn about your rights and how to enforce them. If you are interested please call 0208 527 5107 or email: mail@lhc.org.uk The London Hazards Centre is funded to provide health and safety training.

You will learn about:

- The main UK health and safety laws
- Who is responsible for health and safety at work
- Who enforces health and safety
- Basic risk assessment
- Sources of information and support

The course is ideal for:

- People new to health and safety or those wanting to refresh their knowledge.
- In particular, migrant workers or recent arrivals in the UK will gain important knowledge about their rights.

Migrant workers are prepared to fight

When community organisers in central London asked a packed room full of workers from countries across the global south, from Nigeria and Congo, to Ecuador and Brazil, what were the most serious problems each of them faced working in London, the responses were forthright – and unexpected.

Anticipating complaints about unpaid wages and long shifts, or protests about short hour contracts and no sick pay, the cleaners, carers, hotel and restaurant workers treated the organisers to an analysis of the state of industrial relations in the world of precarious, marginalised labour.

'Individualism', 'a lack of confidence to fight', 'fear', 'not knowing enough English', 'selfishness', 'not being able to express ourselves', 'ignorance', 'resignation', 'workmates who are only interested in themselves', 'no experience of collective resistance', 'colleagues keeping quiet', and 'uncertainty about whether those working with you will back you if you stand up to the boss,' were some of the reactions that show these workers were thinking beyond workplace conditions and were readying a response.

There are a mountain of work-

place studies that detail the abuse and exploitation of migrant workers. It is well documented that migrant workers are disproportionately exploited through employers imposing precarious, zero hour, short hour and temporary contracts on them. Labour abuses ranging from arbitrary dismissals and unpaid forced overtime, to receiving no holiday pay or being forced to work while sick, are commonplace.

Interviews with migrant workers in March, at the United Voices union based at Elephant and Castle in south London, reveal the intensity of bosses' attacks on workers, who they obviously believe will simply submit to being exploited as cheap labour in one of the wealthiest cities in the world.

One man related how, to get some days off work, he had to find someone else to cover his early morning cleaning shifts at a bank in the City, and then pay that person from his own pocket if he wanted to return to the job. A hotel worker told how her supervisor would follow her from room to room, messing up the beds she had just made so she would have to stay longer to remake them, in an attempt to force her to leave the job.

A cleaner at a prestigious university explained how she was injured at work, but continued working as she would have received no sick pay, but was then disciplined for taking time to rest during her shift. Other cleaners reported being routinely denied time off for holidays, then told that the company's



holiday year had ended and their untaken leave was 'lost'. Another cleaner at a glittering skyscraper in the City told how he was forbidden to eat in a canteen on a high floor, and was forced to take his break outside on the street – and how he had to use the freight elevator to get to the ground so that he wouldn't be seen by the bank's staff.

Migrants whose first language was not English explained that cleaning contractor supervisors regularly put them under pressure to work with chemicals and equipment without receiving any training, leaving them to operate machinery through trial and error. Some workers showed how handling cleaning fluids had caused burns and inflamed or dry skin - a result of their employer either failing to provide protective gloves, or of their supervisor demanding money to provide them, which the workers had refused to pay.'

Almost all the migrant workers interviewed had been underpaid for hours worked, or forced to work longer than their contracts stated without receiving extra pay. Many of the migrant workers had never even been given a written contract, others were not issued with pay slips, and several were threatened with

retaliatory disciplinary action and even dismissal for simply requesting such documents.

Third party dismissals, where a cleaning contractor's client demands a worker's removal, were routine, with the contractor taking the opportunity to arbitrarily dismiss the worker without attempting to relocate them, and inequality – forcing migrant workers to accept inferior terms and conditions to others in the same workplace – was frequently cited.

Yet the responses to the community organisers' questions in the migrant workers' meeting show that despite the exploitation and discrimination, these women and men don't see themselves as victims.

'We are not the dirt we clean', a Jamaican woman declared. 'We keep the bosses in the seat that they are sitting in, but if we don't organise, we are not going anywhere.'

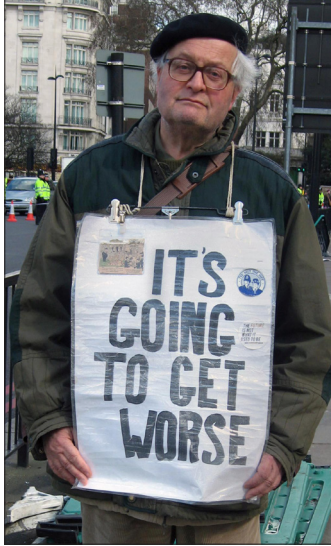
A Colombian man agreed. 'When everyone in your workplace is unionised, the confidence will come and the fear will go,' he said. 'Because then you won't be alone and everyone will stand with you. That's the way to fight injustice.'

*Paul Salgado.
Migrants Organise.*

Want free and confidential advice on health & safety

Are you worried about a health and safety issue at work or at home? If you are, give the London Hazards Centre a call on our confidential telephone advice line for up-to-date information to help you sort out your problem.

Call 0207 527 5107 on a Monday or Tuesday between 10.30 am – 3:30 pm. If the advisers are busy, please leave a message and they will call you back.



A Brexit deal that minimizes damage for working people?

What can we expect from Brexit in terms of jobs, workers' rights and health and safety?

The spike in the number of fatal injuries to workers in London (HSE 2015-2016) doesn't bode well as leaving the EU gets underway and health and safety comes under the microscope in trade negotiations.

In America the real deal for workers is becoming clearer as Trump dumps legislation that can prevent companies getting federal contracts if they risk the health and safety of workers.

Once the Great Repeal Bill takes effect, who can doubt that Tory ministers will relish the chance to use powers that are not subject to parliamentary scrutiny to make huge policy shifts on critical issues such as workers rights, health & safety, the environment and food standards. Professor Özlem Onaran sets out below her thoughts on minimising the damage for working people.

Brexit has left Britain with a very uncertain future and it is not the best starting point for progressive transformation. First, what are the expected economic effects of Brexit. Secondly, what is the best option that working people can expect.

The economy will be affected through five channels via the effects of Brexit on trade, migration, budget deficit, private investment, and the depreciation of the pound.

If the government opts for a hard Brexit, and prioritises substantial

migration controls, the effects of this on growth, productivity and budget balance will be strongest and negative. In very diverse professions ranging from health and social care, to science, engineering, food, agriculture, or retail, firms are worried that they may experience labour shortage. A substantial fall in migration is a big risk in our ageing society. With its vibrant migrant workforce this is a particular risk for London.

Rising inequality was a strong concern for people who voted for Brexit, but our recent research (Onaran and Guschanski, 2016; Guschanski and Onaran 2016) shows that migration has not been a cause of rising inequality and it does not have a negative impact on the share of wages as part of total UK income, or real wages – even in the service sectors where they predominantly hire low-skilled labour and employ a large share of migrants.

Inequality has risen because of the increased number of fallback options of the business class related to increased imports, capital mobility in the form of overseas investment and greater influence over economic policy by markets, financial institutions and financial elites.

At the same time there has been a decline in the fallback options for workers related to a reduction in the collective bargaining power of trade unions, deregulation of the labour market, zero hours contracts and false self-employment, austerity, housing crisis and rising household debt. The real solution to these concerns requires tackling the real causes of inequality and disempowerment.

Uncertainty about the future of access to the single market and migrant labour force as well as political risks have already started to hit private investment plans and is likely to have further negative impacts on investment in the future.

There has been already a substantial fall in the value of the pound. In a highly import dependent country like the UK this leads to inflation and real wages are likely to start falling in 2017. This

is a rather bleak prospect for working people given that they are still lower than in 2007.

The best Brexit option for working people?

The Leave campaigners in the government would like to have a Brexit deal to 'free' us from the EU regulations protecting workers, health and safety regulations, and the environment, and to strike new free trade deals without any standards that would open the door to the privatisations of our public services, and to abolish taxes on profits to attract Foreign Direct Investment.

In negotiating for the terms for Brexit, we should make sure that all existing employment rights underpinned by EU legislation are protected, such as the Working Time Directive, paid annual leave and rest times, health and safety regulations, maternity leave, the rights of part-time or agency workers, protections for workers if companies are sold-off, the right to strike and the protection against unfair dismissal.

Moving forward, a Brexit deal that minimizes damage for working people would require minimum distortion to the relationship with Europe. This requires negotiating membership to the customs union as well as access to the single

market via the European Economic Area (EEA). This would involve the UK complying with the Single Market regulations, and implementing new ones, despite being unable to influence their content, free movement of people and continue to make some contributions to the European Union budget.

If post-Brexit Britain is to deliver for the working people and address the concerns of those who voted for Brexit, it has to be accompanied by an appropriate policy mix combining industrial policy, fiscal policy, labour market policy and international trade policy. Labour standards and protection for workers and the environment should be at the core of any international trade or Foreign Direct Investment agreements. A post-Brexit deal that promises passporting rights to the City of London should also come with conditions to redefine the role of financial services to make sure that they are paying their taxes and delivering the financial intermediation that investments including small businesses require.

Özlem Onaran. Professor of Economics and Director of Greenwich Political Economy Research Centre, University of Greenwich.

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS MEMORIAL DAY

FRIDAY 28 APRIL 2017, TOWER HILL

International Workers Memorial Day is held each year on the 28 April to remember the people who have been killed or injured at work. The event is commemorated in countries around the world and the slogan for the day is "remember the dead – fight for the living". This year's theme is 'Good health and safety for all workers, whoever they are.'

RALLY: 10:00am VENUE: Statue of Building Worker at Tower Hill (facing across to Tower Hill Tube Station), London EC3N 4AB

SPEAKERS: 10:30

- **Mary Bousted** – General Secretary of Association of Teachers & Lecturers and TUC President
- **Gunde Odgaard** (General Secretary of Danish Building Trades)
- **Gail Cartmail** (Acting General Secretary Unite)
- **Peter Kavanagh** (Regional Secretary Unite London & Eastern Region)
- **Speaker from Construction Safety Campaign**

Join with us at Tower Hill to remember the dead and fight for the living. Stronger trade unions - stricter enforcement of health & safety laws – higher penalties for breaking health & safety laws!



Court cases

Laing O'Rourke fined £800,000 after worker fatally crushed at Heathrow Airport

Laing O'Rourke Construction Limited pleaded guilty to breaching Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2007 and fined £800,000 plus costs of £10,000 following the death of Philip Griffiths on the 2nd October 2104.

Southwark Crown Court heard that Philip's brother Paul accidentally reversed into his 38-year-old sibling when the pair were trying to move a broken down scissor lift on a service road.

Paul Griffiths tried to tow the scissor lift away using a dumper truck under the direction of managers. During the attempt his foot got stuck between the brake and the accelerator and the truck reversed. Philip, who was standing between the two vehicles, suffered crush injuries and died at the scene.

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found that neither worker was authorised with the appropriate certificate to use the dumper truck, and that the operation was not properly overseen or managed.

HSE Inspector Jack Wilby said: "This incident was a tragedy for all concerned and, as revealed by our investigation, entirely avoidable." "Had there been appropriate supervision, then better segregation between Philip and these two vehicles could have been established and maintained. This case should be a reminder of the dangers of using workplace transport without proper planning, management or monitoring of the risks involved."

HSE.GOV.UK – 24 March 2017

London Bus Firm, Go-Ahead London, fined £600,000 after worker's death

Bus company Go Ahead London was sentenced after a worker was killed when he fell from a ladder. Southwark Crown Court heard how on 26 May 2011 the worker, using a ladder to access the top of a fuel tank, fell 2.5 meters back wards, suffering fatal head injuries.

A Health and Safety Executive (HSE) investigation found the company did not follow their own procedures for managing contractors. As a result they failed to manage their contractors effectively so that work was carried out safely.

Go Ahead London was found guilty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 of exposing the deceased to risk and fined £600,000 plus costs of £78,531. Speaking after the hearing HSE inspector Neil Fry said: "This is a tragic case which was entirely preventable; if the company had managed their contractors effectively then the worker would have returned home safely from work."

HSE.GOV.UK – 14 February 2017

Jail for running "forgery factory" in East Ham

Five men were jailed for a combined total of 30 years for running a 'forgery factory'. Satnman Hayer, Sandeep Singh, Harjinder Kingre, Pritpal Singh, and Gurjit Singh were all charged with various fraud offences after immigration officers raided on a home in East Ham, east London, stumbled upon a bedroom converted into a fully-equipped factory manufacturing British, European and Indian documents. Snaresbrook Crown Court heard in December that the men were all involved in creating and distributing between 50,000 to 100,000 false documents including passports, driving licences and Construction Skills Certification Scheme cards.

The Construction Industry Training Board (CITB) supported the investigation by supplying evidence on genuine CSCS cards and verifying the status of counterfeit cards that had been produced.

CITB - 22 February 2017

Silent vigil outside court where Crossrail companies are prosecuted over safety

Serious breaches of health and safety law led to the death and serious injury of workers on the Crossrail project.

That's the charge against three construction companies being prosecuted at Westminster Magistrates Court on 12 April 2017.

Health and safety campaigners taking part in a silent vigil outside the court were reminded of Crossrail's callous indifference following the death of Rene Tka'cik on the 7th March 2014 when the company issued the following statement; "Crossrail has a good safety record and sets the most stringent contractor safety requirements in the industry. There is nothing so important on Crossrail that it cannot be done safely."

In reality, the £15 billion project involving 25 miles of new tunnel underneath central London, has been beset by health and safety problems, not least the culture of fear propagated by managers to dissuade workers from raising safety concerns. In April 2014 the Observer published an article based on a leaked report entitled 'Cultural Overview'. The report

– commissioned by the main Crossrail Contractors – described workers as being too scared to report safety issues and condemned a culture in which "individuals cannot move and work freely as they are constantly looking over their shoulder in fear of reprisals".

Back on 7th December 2016 the HSE said in a press release "We have today informed the three contractors that they will each be prosecuted for the death of a worker and injuries sustained by two others, in three separate incidents on the construction project." The two others were Terrence Hughes, injured on the 16 January 2015 and Alex Vizitui on 22 January 2015.

Campaigners from the Construction Safety Campaign and the London Hazards Centre outside the court distributed a statement from 'Families against corporate killers' (FACK) which said "we stand in solidarity with the family of Rene Tka'cik and injured workers Terrence Hughes and Alex Vizitui ... it is completely unacceptable in 2017 that large construction companies can neglect workers health, safety and welfare; and all employers must be held to account for the sake of justice for those killed and harmed."

The case has been referred to Southwark Crown Court for a hearing on the 10 May 2017. *Paul Street*



HEALTH AND SAFETY IN THE CLEANING INDUSTRY

Cleaning affects every workplace, and its big business too. The UK market for contract cleaning is estimated to be £5.6 billion a year.

But what about the health and safety of London's 176,000 often underpaid, undervalued and overworked cleaners. This factsheet provides some key information for cleaners.

Remember, employers have a legal duty to provide and maintain a safe working environment. How they must do this is spelt out in the 'Management of Health & Safety Regulations 1999'. One of the main requirements of the regulations is that employers carry out risk assessments of any hazards their workers may be exposed to.

Slips and trips

Slips and trips are the commonest cause of injury in UK workplaces. The cleaning process can create slip and trip hazards for people in the area being cleaned and for the cleaners themselves. For example, smooth floors that are damp can be slippery, and trailing wires from a vacuum cleaner can be a trip hazard.

Employers' must assess the risks from slips and trips to you and anyone else that might be affected by your work and decide what precautions are necessary.

Action points

- ◆ Allow detergents enough time to work on greasy floors
- ◆ Use the correct amount of the right cleaning product
- ◆ Use a dry mop on wet floors to reduce floor-drying time
- ◆ Maintain cleaning equipment so it remains effective

Ensure 'wet floor' signs are put up where floors have been left wet and use barriers and cones to prevent access while drying

Control of Substances Hazardous to Health (COSHH) Regulations 2002

To comply with the COSHH Regulations your employer must assess the risks of any hazardous substances used in the cleaning process and try to prevent exposure by eliminating

the use of the product altogether by finding a safer alternative.

If the product or substance cannot be eliminated control measures strictly limiting exposure must be introduced along with information, instruction and training about the risks - and provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) like rubber gloves and eye protection paid for by your employer.

Employers have an absolute duty to carry out a COSHH assessment and it is against the law for work involving hazardous substances to continue unless a proper assessment has been done.



Work-related contact dermatitis

Dermatitis is a skin disease - often called eczema - caused by work, and develops when the skin is damaged. This leads to redness, itching, swelling, blistering, flaking and cracking. The most susceptible parts of the body are the hands, followed by the forearms and face.

Employers must:

Assess the risks to workers developing contact-related dermatitis and where there is a risk, provide adequate control measures, information, instruction and training.

Action points

- ◆ Avoid contact with cleaning products, food and water by using for example a dishwasher for washing up and utensils when handling food.
- ◆ Protect your skin by wearing gloves when working and using a moisturiser to replenish your skin's natural oils.
- ◆ Regularly check your hands

for symptoms of dermatitis like itchy, dry or red skin and report it to a supervisor as early treatment is more effective if caught early.

Working at height

Accidents involving working at height are common in the cleaning industry, but with proper planning and training these accidents can be prevented. The Work at Height Regulations 2005 place duties on employers and any person that controls the work of others to follow this simple hierarchy for managing work at height:

1. Whenever possible, avoid work at height.
2. Work equipment is used to prevent falls where working at height cannot be avoided.
3. Where risk of a fall cannot be eliminated, use equipment to minimise the distance of a fall should it happen.

Action points

- ◆ All work at height must be properly planned and organised.
- ◆ Cleaners working at height are competent.
- ◆ Risk assessments for working at height carried out work equipment selected and used
- ◆ Equipment for working at height is regularly inspected and properly maintained.

Muscular aches and pains (Musculoskeletal disorders - MSDs)

The most common work-related ill health/injury experienced by cleaners is muscular aches and pains. MSDs cover a wide range of strains and sprains especially to the back, neck, shoulders and upper limbs. Cleaners often work in awkward positions for long periods which can lead to long-term damage. Many tasks involve using cleaning machines and heavy manual work.

Signs of musculoskeletal problems at work

Increased sickness absence, accident and injury reports can be a sign of MSDs problems. Similarly with reports of pain and discomfort, cleaners wearing splints, bandages or back supports and cleaners adapting

their own equipment.

Employers must

- ◆ Manage the risk of MSDs disorders that cleaners may be exposed to.
- ◆ Implement risk control measures identified by the assessment.
- ◆ Ensure systems are in place that will enable cleaners to work equipment safely.
- ◆ Make sure equipment is inspected and maintained correctly.
- ◆ Consult safety reps and workers.

Cleaners must take reasonable care

You have a duty to take reasonable care of yourself and others who may be affected by your actions at work. You should:

- ◆ follow safe working methods
- ◆ use equipment in line with instructions and training
- ◆ report any problems with or damage to equipment
- ◆ report any work practices causing pain or discomfort
- ◆ report any work-related accidents or ill health

Don't do this

Don't sit in a broom cupboard surrounded by cleaning materials worrying about your health and safety. If you think something is wrong then do something about it. Getting stressed over it on your own will only make things seem worse.

Do this instead

Talk about the problem with your workmates to see if they have similar concerns. Tackling health and safety problems on your own is not the best way to go about it. You will be in a stronger position if you approach your employer as a group; strength in numbers. But better still - and to protect your job as well as your health and safety - join a trade union.

Get in touch with one of the unions' that represent cleaners for their help. 'Unite', 'GMB' and 'Unison' are three trade unions that represent cleaners.

<http://www.unitetheunion.org>
<https://www.gmb.org.uk>
<https://www.unison.org.uk>