

*The 20<sup>th</sup> National Hazards Conference, Manchester, July 2009*

*Campaigning Debates:*

# **WORKPLACE BULLYING**

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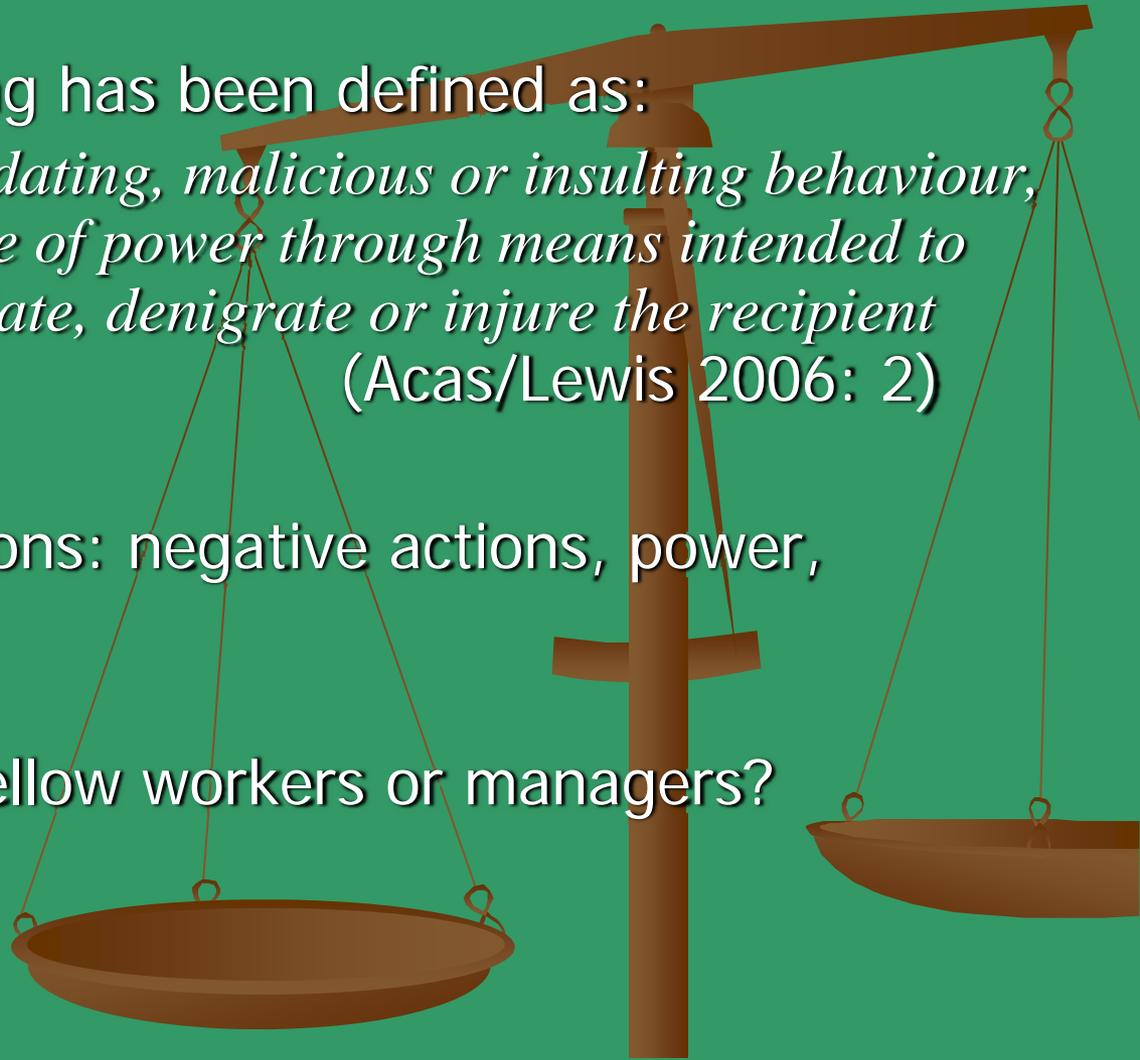
# 1. Definition of workplace bullying?

1.1 Workplace bullying has been defined as:

*...offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, an abuse or misuse of power through means intended to undermine, humiliate, denigrate or injure the recipient*  
(Acas/Lewis 2006: 2)

1.2 Academic definitions: negative actions, power, persistence

1.3 Perpetrators - fellow workers or managers?



## *2. Workplace bullying: employers' costs and management initiatives*

2.1 Financial costs?

2.2 CIPD estimate

2.3 Big growth in UK employer initiatives

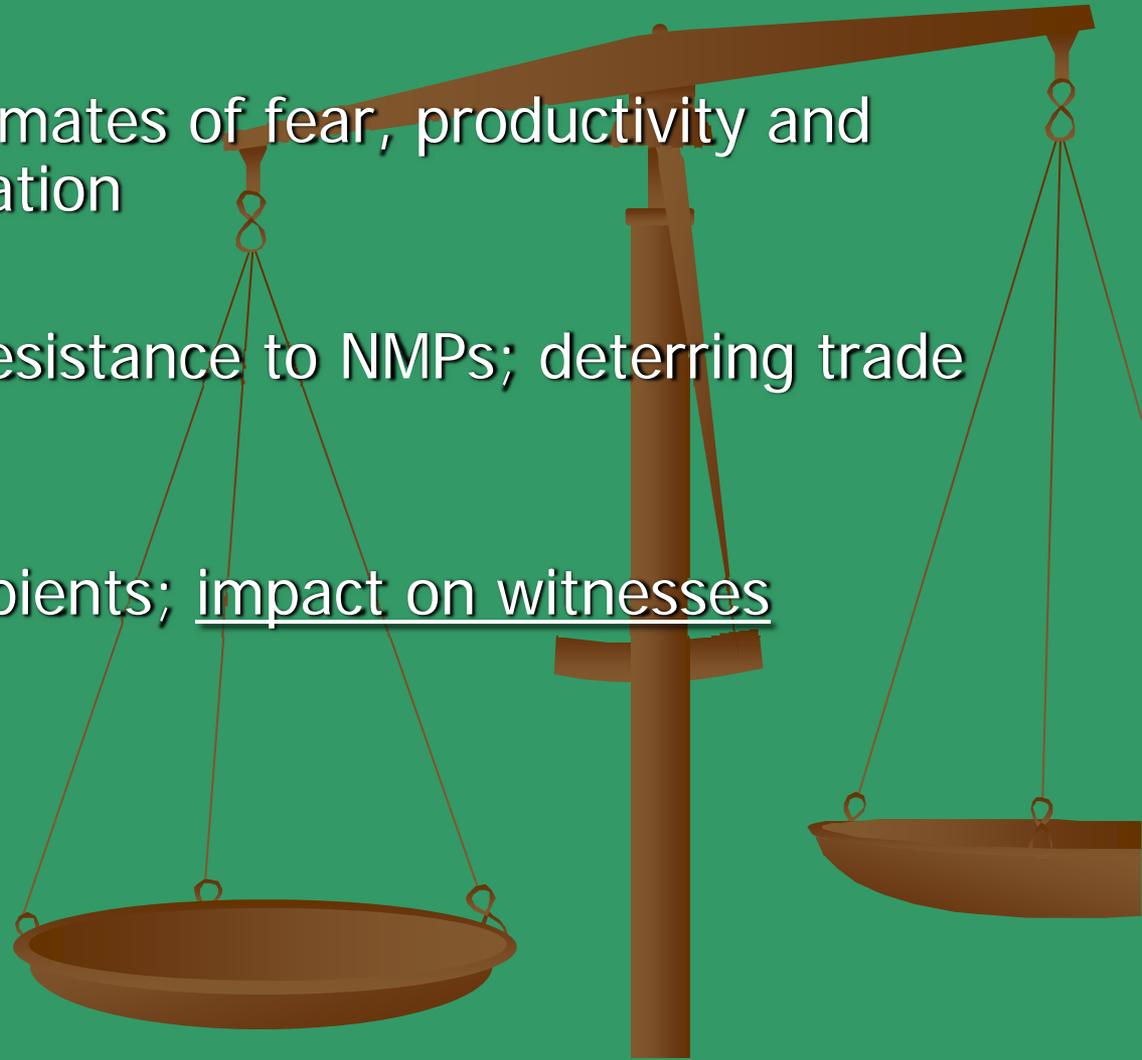
2.4 Often linked to broader harassment and 'dignity' policies

2.5 DTI/BERR Dignity at Work Partnership project



# *3. Bullying: employer gains?*

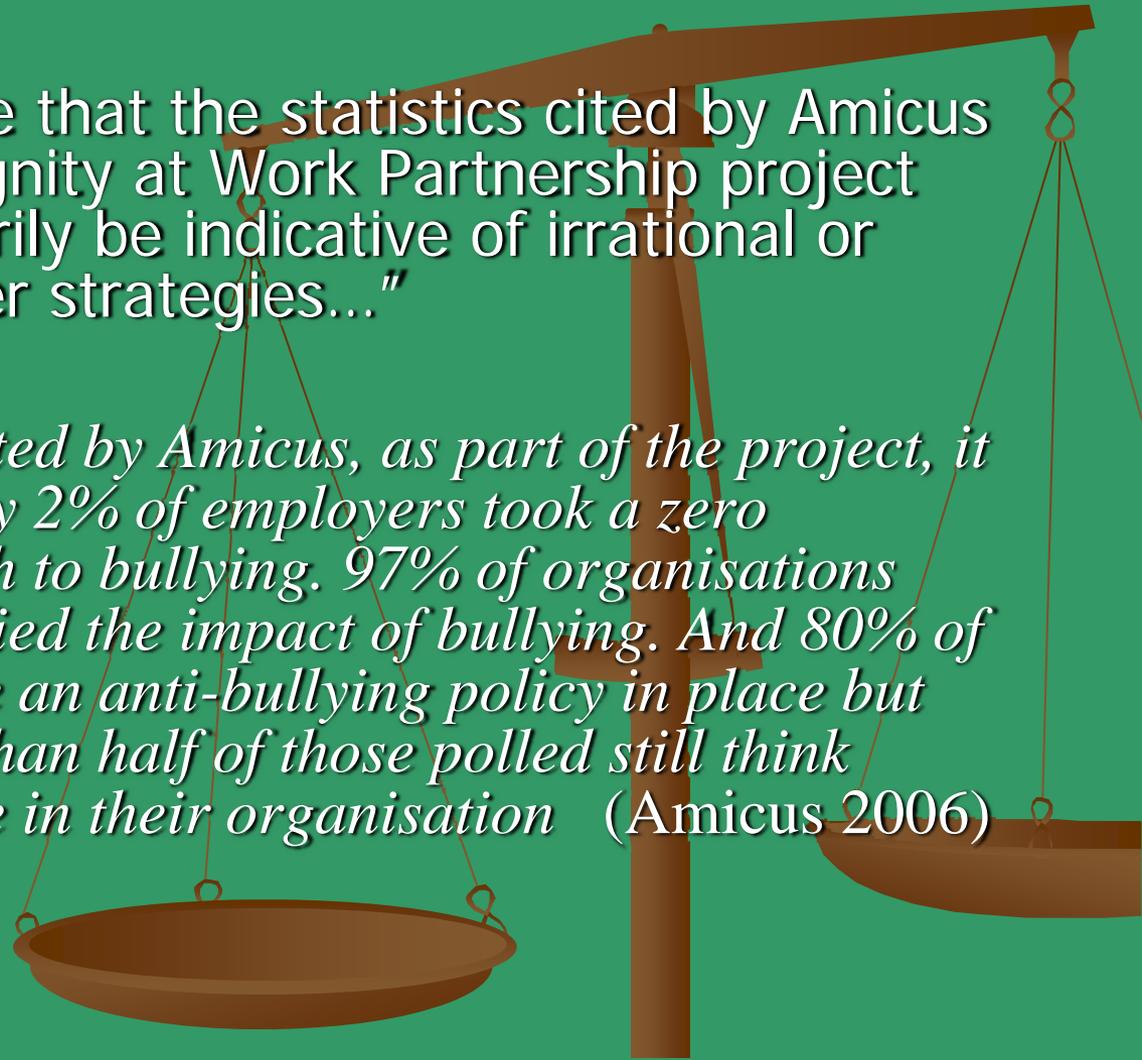
- 3.1 Compliance, climates of fear, productivity and work intensification
- 3.2 Discouraging resistance to NMPs; deterring trade union activity
- 3.3 Impact on recipients; impact on witnesses



## 4. *Employers and bullying: a rational approach?*

"Thus, we believe that the statistics cited by Amicus as part of the Dignity at Work Partnership project may not necessarily be indicative of irrational or ignorant employer strategies..."

*...In a poll conducted by Amicus, as part of the project, it was found that only 2% of employers took a zero tolerance approach to bullying. 97% of organisations have never quantified the impact of bullying. And 80% of organisations have an anti-bullying policy in place but despite this more than half of those polled still think bullying is an issue in their organisation (Amicus 2006)*

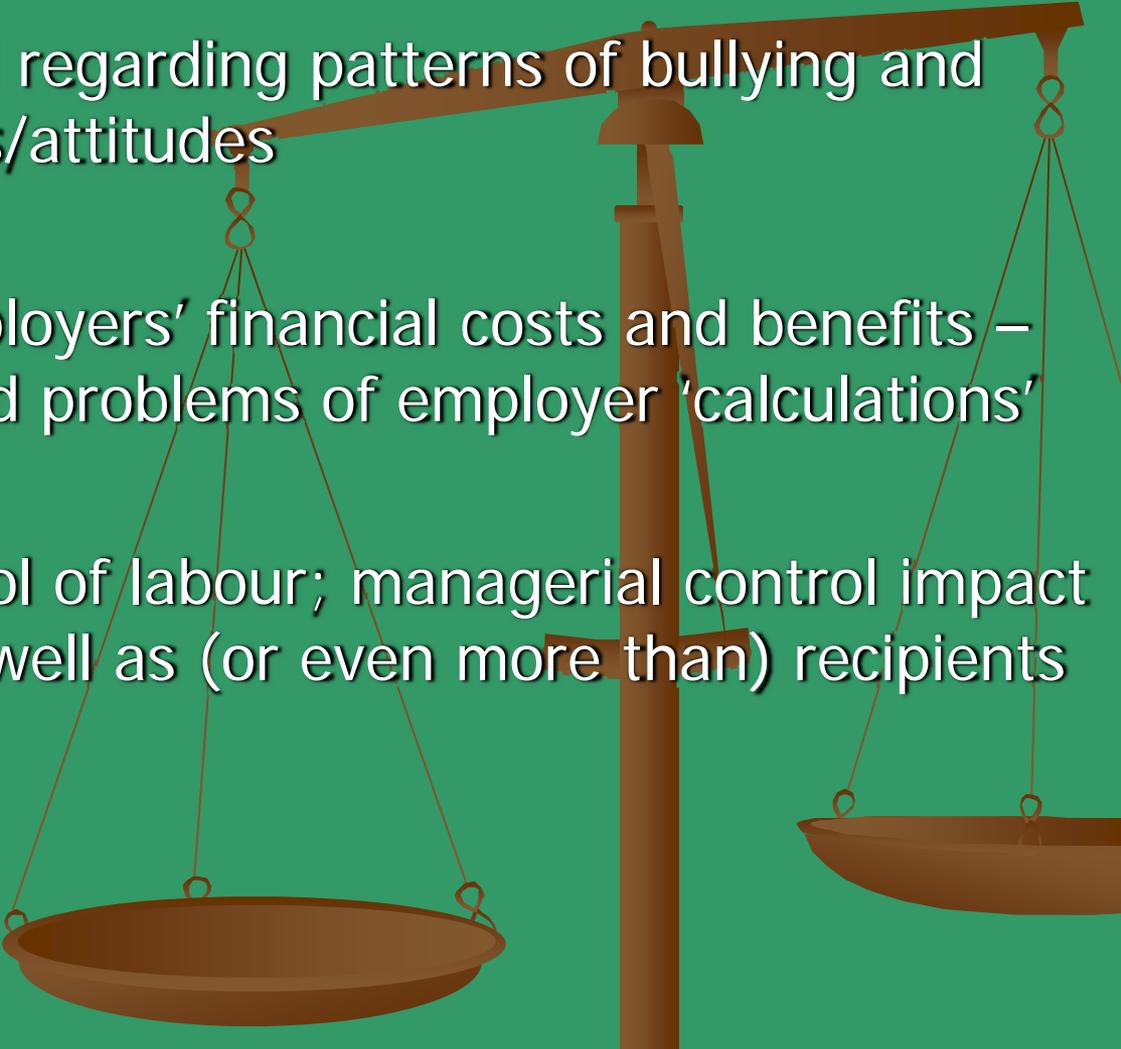


# 5. Emphasising 'degree' and 'context'

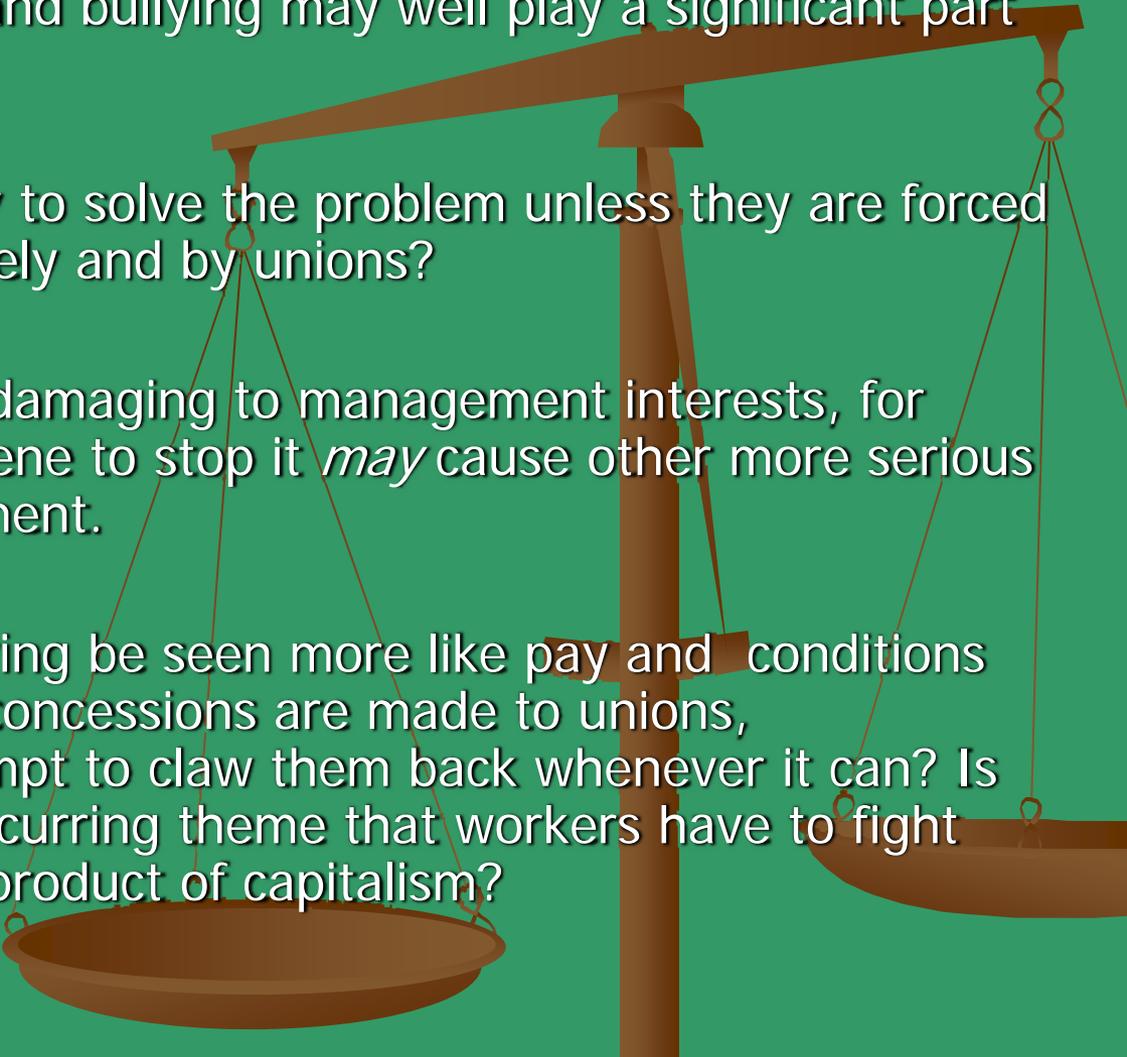
- 5.1 Employers' rejection of *zero tolerance*
- 5.2 Considerable variation in degree of bullying that may serve managerial interests
- 5.3 Historical context and radical/rapid management-led change
- 5.4 Other contextual factors: occupation, operation, employment sector, company size, managerial devolution, national context (legal, political, economic)



## 6. *Broader issues*

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- 6.1 Context is critical regarding patterns of bullying and employer policies/attitudes
  - 6.2 Bullying and employers' financial costs and benefits – the net result and problems of employer 'calculations'
  - 6.3 Bullying as control of labour; managerial control impact on witnesses as well as (or even more than) recipients

# 7. Trade union implications?

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- 7.1 Employers *often* gain from bullying as a means of controlling or intimidating workers, and bullying may well play a significant part in work intensification.
  - 7.2 So are employers likely to solve the problem unless they are forced to by workers collectively and by unions?
  - 7.3 Even when bullying *is* damaging to management interests, for management to intervene to stop it *may* cause other more serious problems for management.
  - 7.4 Should workplace bullying be seen more like pay and conditions issues, i.e., whatever concessions are made to unions, management will attempt to claw them back whenever it can? Is bullying inevitably a recurring theme that workers have to fight over and an essential product of capitalism?