

Whither or Wither Europe? Or what have the Europeans ever done for us?

Talk at Hazards Conference Saturday 20th July

In terms of H&S there is the European 6 pack and the concept of risk assessment, which before 1993 had only been used in the UK in the nuclear and chemical industries.

The Working Time Directive brought 3 million, mainly female workers, a holiday entitlement for the first time

Changes in the UK recently have not been favourable – RIDDOR, First Aid, Civil liability.

There is some scope in the devolved administrations but little positive UK wide.

In Europe they are currently evaluating the strategy from 2007 – 12

This is effectively a gap year as they are now consulting on a strategy for 2013-20

Areas under consideration include- the Ageing Workforce, the level of Labour Inspectors, Workplace carcinogens And Endocrine Disrupters, Nano – materials, Psycho- social conditions.

GMB want to see the issue of Asbestos kept on the agenda. BFWW want asbestos free by 2023, Stephen Hughes MEP bill has target of 2028- probably more realistic.

We also want to see workers consulted on H&S issues in public procurement contracts, before contracts are let.

There is a distinct rightward shift in Europe and a move towards a deregulation Agenda in response to the economic crises.

Leaving Europe? FOE commissioned a report on the Environmental benefits which outweighs disadvantages.

H&S Audit for rebuttal?

Tory approach – repatriate laws, out of social chapter and H&S.

GMB General Secretary, Paul Kenny warned at this year's GMB congress that if that was to be the outcome we would campaign to leave as it would only be a business agreement with no place for working people.

UK trade Unions contribute to the H&S agenda in Europe and it is acknowledged that we bring experience and knowledge.

The EU consultation finishes at the end of August- make sure your union responds at branch, regional and national level.