

**WORKERS
WILD
WEST**

THE UNOFFICIAL
BAKKAVOR
BULLETIN



LATEST NEWS FROM THE FACTORY FLOOR

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UNION REP ELECTION AT ELVEDEN: A MISSED CHANCE

Finally, after 8 years, the GMB held fresh elections for union reps at Elveden. After the bad pay deal last year workers trust in the GMB has been quite low. The rep election was supposed to be a new start, a way to re-create trust so that workers can get a better deal in the future. So, time for a change, right? Wrong! The old reps decided who people should vote for, with no involvement of all the workers. They missed their chance to show that things were really changing...

So what actually happened?

The workers and candidates were not told when the voting day would be until the very last minute. There were no meetings, no chance for workers to discuss what they wanted from their new reps, no chance for the candidates to introduce themselves or talk about why they wanted to be reps and what they wanted to do inside the union for the workers. The ballot paper only had names, no photos, so people did not know who they were voting for!

Instead, some GMB insiders already decided who they wanted as reps. Lots of people were given a list of who to vote for on the days of the ballot - 5th and 7th February (Pictures overleaf).

When the election results were announced on Friday 9th February - surprise surprise! – EVERYONE on this list 'won'. Coincidence? We don't think so...

This was a massive missed opportunity by the GMB to make the union stronger. If workers were allowed to be actively involved in the process of choosing their own representatives, workers might have started to have some faith in their union. They might have started to trust their own abilities to fight together against management. This election could have empowered its members. It could have built trust amongst ourselves.

They shoot themselves in the foot. Without workers support, the union is nothing.

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**WE NEED
YOU**



GET IN TOUCH!

Write to us. Talk to us when we distribute. If you want to meet, tell us when and where. If you want us to talk to workers at the other plants and create a link, tell us. You don't have to give your name. Are you being bullied or do you know someone who is? Are health and safety rules not being followed? What tricks do the managers do when there is an audit? The more of us who share information, the better this bulletin will be!

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▲ The list handed out at the ballot box. Each number corresponds to the position of a candidate on the list of candidates (See below).

◀ The list of candidates on the GMB board.

Many people were unhappy with the situation. But luckily, a new election has been called. Maybe the process will be a bit better the second time around... Workers need to demand more of a say in how things are run and decided. After all, it is supposed to be our union...

Workers across all the sites need to challenge the GMB. If they are not working for us, why should we give them our money?

We should also ask ourselves why we let the GMB reps decide things for us..?!

We should put pressure on GMB to hold department meetings where all workers –from across all the sites - (permanents/agency/members/non-members) can say what their main problems are and discuss what to do about it. If GMB doesn't want to hold these meetings, we have to organise them ourselves.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

“He came into the chiller behind me and tried to touch and kiss me. I made a complaint but it was difficult because this guy had worked here for many many years and you could tell that people did not believe me...”

Across the Bakkavor sites in recent years, there have been a number of complaints of sexual harassment by guys against women. A man was recently arrested at Elveden and there is a collective grievance against a guy at the Harrow Pizza factory. The sleazebag mentioned above at Abbeydale is allowed to take advantage of his position as red cap over women on the line to get phone numbers and facebook details so he can stalk women. All of this is an open secret. Sometimes men are fired and sometimes they come back to work, as if nothing has happened...

Lots of people think the woman is lying. Or they think these situations are no big deal and definitely not something men should be punished for. They are wrong. It is not right if a woman feels unsafe or on guard at work. She should not have to take time off work for ‘stress’. She should not fear isolation if she speaks up.

“All the women on my line know that he treats me unfairly. But none of them want to get involved...”

Women need to stick together and support each other. They need to raise their voice and not be quiet. They need to take out grievances against the men in question. Women are not to blame. They have nothing to be ashamed of.

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At Bakkavor, where bullying is normal and when men are in positions of power over women, it is easy for them to take advantage of the situation. We need to question these hierarchies and make these red caps talk to women in a respectful way. If a woman is being bullied by a male manager, everyone should support her so that he knows he cannot win. But if we do not support our sisters, if we stay quiet when we see injustice in front of us, if we do not want to get involved, we only end up hurting ourselves.

Sex Pest of the month!

From Goa to Wembley via the samosa line at Abbeydale, this car-loving red cap is a total sleazebag with the laydeez! If you are young, from Eastern Europe and preferably an agency worker, watch out! This guy will hound you on facebook and try and get some love action. Avoid this shorty at all costs!!!

First Call - Agency workers, make sure you get the money you are owed!

When I first arrived in London, I did not have a national insurance number, and so could not immediately open a bank account. But First Call said that was no problem: they would pay me by cheque to begin with. I sent them the bank details pretty quickly, but I still did not get any money for the first few weeks I worked at Bakkavor. I had to go to the agency twice, fill out a form to complain about outstanding wages, wait for another ten days... but still no pay! When I could finally talk to the accountant, he opened a MASSIVE folder FULL of unpaid cheques and gave me my cheques. They did not send the cheques to me (as other agencies do), did not even tell me that the cheques were ready.

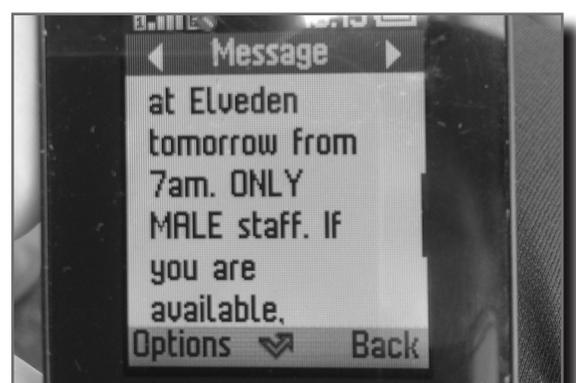
First Call are not telling people that they have money owed to them. This folder is full of money STOLEN from workers. They could easily give these cheques to the workers if they wanted to, but why would they? It is free money for them! So remember: get your pay cheques and keep track of how many hours you are doing and how much they owe you!

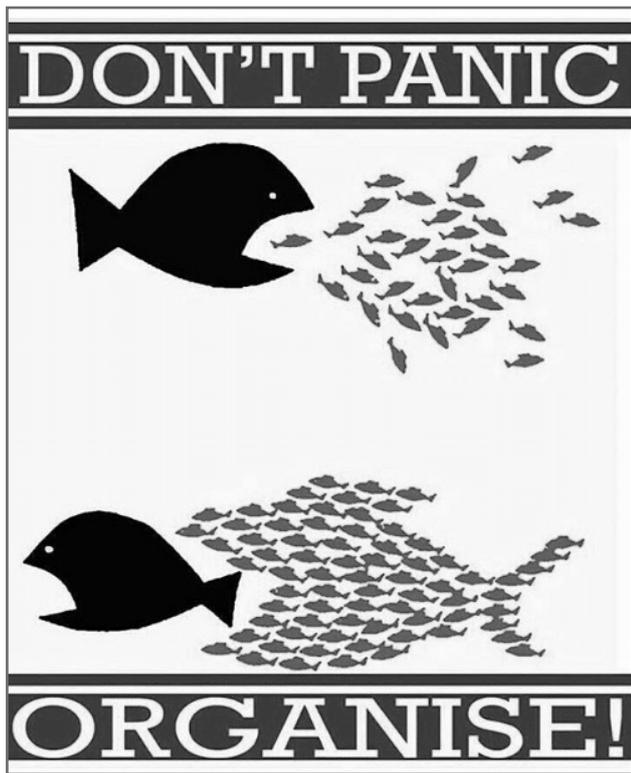
They are also acting illegally by saying they only want men for certain shifts (See right).



Bakkavor on share-market!

At the end of last year Bakkavor entered the stock-market. Most big companies do this in order to raise more money. Not all the raised money is for investments. The stock-market is a lot about speculation. The ups and downs of the stock-market make companies more unstable. This is why shortly after Bakkavor entered the stock-market big managers at Abbeydale and Elveden told us not to speak to 'journalists and outsiders'. For some managers the stock-market is a possibility to make more money on top of their high wages: in November 2017 Bakkavor Chairman Simon Burke bought 50,000 shares. Share prices only tend to go up if the company announces that they can squeeze more work out of less workers ("labour efficiency!").





Adelie sandwich factory workers in Southall act together

Some of you might have heard of Adelie sandwich factories in Southall and Wembley. Like Bakkavor there are mainly women workers from India and Eastern Europe on the lines. Working conditions are bad: shift times change often, no extra breaks even during 12-14 hour shifts, being sent home unpaid if there is no work. We met some of them in Southall and they told us how they put pressure on management together - without the help of a union. Workers wrote a complaint letter to management and around 100 workers of all languages and contracts signed. A group of a dozen women workers went to the office of the main manager to demand better uniforms, as it is cold and the boots tend to be too small. Two lines of women refused overtime and went home together after management refused an extra-break. Only in this way will we get respect from them.

Bakkavor generated revenues of close to £1.8bn last year. Remember that when they tell you they can't afford to pay us more!

