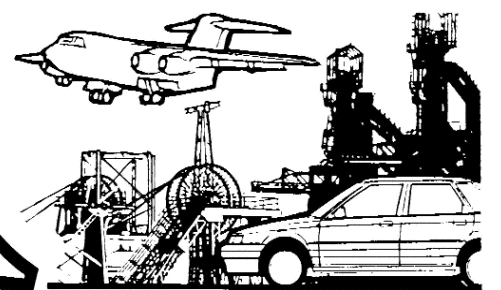


THE INDUSTRIAL Pioneer



DECEMBER 2005 – JANUARY 2006

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New mega-union could meet and beat 21st Century challenges

by Bob Scarth

THE WORKING PARTY of representatives of the three trade unions working to create one new union – Amicus, the GMB and the TGWU – met on the sidelines of the Labour Party Conference in Brighton to keep up the momentum towards their shared objective.

All three unions emphasised their commitment to setting up a new union willing and able to meet the challenges of the 21st century, and agreed to complete discussions on the many and varied complex issues involved by the end of this year.

If they can it would enable the democratic process of debate and ratification in each union, including the all-important process of meeting the relevant statutory obligations governing union mergers, to be undertaken during the course of 2006.

The Brighton meeting also agreed to establish a new subgroup, made up of members from each union, supported by senior

officers, to consider issues of lay democracy and industrial sectors or trade groups in a new union.

It would also look at communications strategy, whilst another subgroup will discuss the optimum



Jack Dromey, TGWU Deputy General Secretary Photo: TGWU

number and functions of regional structures in a new organisation.

In parallel, the general secretaries of the three unions will meet frequently from now on in order to maintain momentum towards real-

ising the shared principles needed to create the greatly enlarged union some two and a half million strong.

This writer, a GMB Life Member with 57 years of trade union activity behind him, can only welcome such a fabulous window of opportunity as this, and hope and pray that any new mega-union created will be worthy of the industrial and political power vested in it.

Addressing this year's annual Trades' Union Congress on such a prospect, TGWU Deputy General Secretary Jack Dromey matched wisdom with vision as he spoke of what this sort of body could do, both for its members and in recruiting the unorganised.

"No one here," he said, "should fear the new union. A strong new union will strengthen all working people. Only bad managers or government ministers who do not listen or respond to working people need fear it."

"Mergers in themselves, however, do not create new members. So organising is the key: based on the simple truth that unless you

build strong, self-confident and self-sustaining workplace organisations you stand still or fall back," he warned.

The Industrial Pioneer salutes all involved in this challenging new combination – leaders and led – and wishes them every success.

And through it all may they and their organisation have the vision, courage and selflessness to make the work and wealth of our world available for the good of all and the exploitation of none, and be an example to every one of us in the process. •

Ford-Peugeot expand diesel and hybrid car solutions

by our motor industry correspondent

FORD UK is to invest a further £80 million in its plant at Dagenham as part of another joint venture with French car-maker PSA Peugeot Citroen to develop and manufacture two new diesel engines.

Under the agreement, Ford will build a 2.2 litre diesel engine for the commercial vehicle market at the UK plant, while PSA will produce a similar sized engine for passenger cars at its Tremery factory in France.

Ford's latest investment will take its spending on developing Dagenham's capacity to design and build diesel engines up to £560 million, helping to fill the vacuum left when car production ended in 2002.

Dagenham and Bridgend, Ford's petrol engine site in south Wales, together now account for almost a quarter of all the engines installed in Ford models across the world.

This new joint diesel venture is the fourth between Ford and Peugeot, who hope to increase their total combined production of diesel engines to about 3.7 million a year by 2010, compared with two million last year.

Level our playing field say both firms

On another front, arguably as vital to their long-term financial and industrial wellbeing as higher volume outputs, Ford and Peugeot chiefs have just spoken out against innovations like tax breaks favouring certain hybrid cars against equally clean diesel engined vehicles.

One quite glaring example exempts hybrid cars from London's congestion charge, a benefit worth a cool £1,600 a year to the typical commuter. Some cities abroad also give similar concessions.

Lewis Booth, chairman of Ford Europe, said it was "a very dangerous precedent when legislators at city, national, or even at European level, showed bias towards tech-

nology rather than outcomes."

His PSA Peugeot counterpart, Jean-Martin Folz, said hybrid cars were "niche, very expensive products, requiring heavy taxpayer support to be affordable."

Both men said diesel engines provided the same 20% reduction in fuel consumption and emissions of carbon dioxide, the main greenhouse gas, as hybrid cars, without the extra cost. No wonder they want a level playing field for their products.

Ford and Peugeot hunt for own energy-saving solutions

None of this, however, is stopping the two giants from themselves investing in hybrid car technology and exploring biofuel alternatives, over a wide range of options.

Ford has developed the Transit HyTrans van, powered by diesel and electric units, offering savings of 20% plus reduced emissions, making it the first medium commercial vehicle in Europe using stop/start technology.

The prototype, produced as part of a twelve-month government-funded project, aims to tackle the ever-increasing volume of deliveries by vans on our roads.

The firm is also the first to market a bioethanol-powered car in Britain. Its 1.8-litre Focus Flexi-Fuel Vehicle runs on fuel from home grown wheat, and the first 40 models should enter service next spring.

Peugeot, meanwhile, whilst keen to promote the use of biodiesel in the longer term, is currently working with a top British engineering consultants and a leading technology firm, on a new diesel-hybrid engine, which promises to be even more fuel-efficient.

This project, also sponsored by the UK government, will put a pilot engine into the Citroen Berlingo van early next year, and hopefully go into commercial production in due course. "It all depends on performance and costs," says Peugeot's Mr Folz. •

Long-term future for RAF bases assures future of 4,500 jobs

by George Whyte

MINISTER OF STATE for the Armed Forces, Adam Ingram, told the House of Commons recently that RAF Lossiemouth and RAF Kinloss bases on the Moray coast would become home to a new generation of aircraft.

The MOD had drawn up a short-list of five bases for the state-of-the-art joint combat aircraft but Mr Ingram said Lossiemouth, currently home to the Tornado MR4, was the most operationally satisfactory and cost-effective solution. This will also replace the "Harrier", with the MOD planning to buy 150 new planes currently being developed in partnership with the US – the equivalent of around 10 new squadrons. They will be Joint Combat Aircraft.

Mr Ingram said the aircraft, to be based in Moray, will be a very important part of Nato's defence capability. He also stated that a very significant number of jobs in the Moray area would be created as well as confirming the long-term future of 4,500 MOD personnel, and that they would be safeguarded for forty years. The Government would consult with trade unions on the implications for civilian staff over the moves.

RAF Lossiemouth was built at the start of the Second World War and the station became a bomber

command airfield. Post-war it has been home to aircraft as varied as Shackleton reconnaissance planes, Jaguars, Hunter and Tornado strike squadrons.

RAF Kinloss to base new generation Nimrod

RAF Kinloss, known to its squadron members as, "Ice Station Kilo" was a bomber training site in the Second World War. It also operated Beaufighters, and Mosquitos for Coastal Command. It is now home to the RAFs Nimrod MR2 Maritime Patrol Fleet, many of whose aircraft have been used for battlefield surveillance over the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan in recent years.

Adam Ingram, Armed Forces

Minister, has confirmed that the Nimrod MR4s would be based at Kinloss until at least 2013.

Group Captain Chris Birks, RAF Kinloss Stations Commander, said he had informed personnel currently serving in the Gulf and the news had been "warmly welcomed".

Plans for a medical centre at the base to be shared with Lossiemouth are well advanced. The true extent of the area's reliance on the bases is believed to be £100 million of the income generated by service and civilian jobs at the bases and spent in the area which is very much "defence dependent". It has also been revealed that more than 1,300 RAF spouses work in civilian jobs in Moray, concentrated on the local economy and the NHS. •



One of the Nimrod MR2s currently based at Kinloss

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