

RESURGENCE OF TRADE UNION POWER

Trade Unions are back!

Are we facing a replay of the 1970's? All the indications are there; suddenly trade unions General Secretaries are being given media space and time. Strikes are definitely back on the agenda. All of the components are in place.

A labour government introducing private public partnerships in all public sectors, who continues to resist pressure to introduce the employment protection legislation found in the majority of the EU.

- "Fat Cat" stories of failed directors being awarded huge payouts after failing.
- Companies pulling out of final salary schemes.
- Ministers hinting at the retirement age being raised.
- War with Iraq, a traditional area of trade union opposition.

So, the stage is set for a period of trade union militancy, a swing to the left, the ERA 99 legislation designed to enable trade unions to be recognised in companies could be seen as a huge enabler in their effort to return to the glory days.

The pending dispute with the Firefighters: it is over twenty years since the last dispute, they are asking for a 40% increase, difficult to imagine how a claim of that dimension has gone through the internal procedures and arrives as a strike ballot. Who is managing this process?

Trade union membership in this country is not actually growing. What we are actually seeing is a few unions protesting at the various government initiatives in the public sector, using private finance, handing over control to private companies sections of public business as, Teachers resenting performance measures, Health Service workers resenting targets.

In short, change, changing the way people work, attempting to make them more efficient, cost effective and accountable.

Those who were part of the private manufacturing industry in the 70's

remember well, disputes about money were few, any attempt to change and improve traditional working practices were met with direct action!

The resistance to private public partnership may well at the general secretary level have some basis in ideology, getting support on the ground from people who do not wish to change the way they work.

In reality, we aren't seeing a raise in trade union militancy but a good old fashioned resistance to change. There is no evidence of political overtones in the current climate, and whilst the trade union leaders give out the usual rhetoric, I look forward to them being awarded their knight hoods or peerages just as their "militant" predecessors did as they inevitably accepted the establishment's needs.

What we need now, just as in the seventies, are managers with the vision and courage to manage the people, to ensure that they are well informed, involved in the process of change, paid and organised in a way that is conducive to change. At the moment, the trade union brand image is a better one than the organisations facing the problem. So forget the apparent resurgence of the trade unions and concentrate on managing the changes needed to give this country the public services we deserve!!

Gwyn Evans
leading-change.co.uk

coming soon...

Open forum

The Future Role of Trades Union in industry and Business"

March 2003 London.

Further details are available on our website:

www.leading-change.co.uk

If you would like to respond to the above article or feel you could contribute to the leading-changeTODAY call 01244 341241 or email vanessa@leading-change.co.uk

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leading-change.co.uk offers a unique and distinct service. We work with our clients to help them achieve their aims and exceed their own expectations.

Combining our own experience and expertise in the field of human capital, along with the latest research around the world we believe that there is nothing that isn't explainable, trainable and sustainable.

The Employment Act 2002

coming into force in April 2003.

Regardless of size, companies must operate minimum standards for disciplinary and grievance procedures. According to an article in the Director journal, there will be a "standard" and a "modified" procedure for disciplinary/grievance matters. Every employee must receive a written copy of procedures or else the Employment Tribunal may impose a financial penalty on the company should the employee bring a claim

Did You Know ?

According to a recent poll (01 October 2002) by Personnel Today, 91% of companies are not successful at measuring it's human capital.

According to a recent poll (10 September 2002) by Personnel Today, over 60% of us misuse the internet at work.

In the Kingdom of Bhutan, all citizens officially become a year older on New Year' sDay!