

Hartlepool for Global Peace and Justice - Minutes of meeting on 13/6/16

Present: Chris Eddowes (Chair), Richard Eddowes, Diane Wanduragala, Lynn Fletcher, Martin Green, Keith Gorton, Bill White, Irene Green, Sheila Deacon, Jennifer Kerridge, Stephen Thomas

Apologies: Michael Unwin, Susan Atkinson,

Minutes The minutes of the meeting held on 10th May 2016 were accepted as a true record.

Matters Arising: None.

TTIP CE welcomed Stephen Thomas (Councillor HBC) to the meeting. She explained that when HGPJ had asked the Council to support opposition to TTIP she was surprised to find that they had already done it and that Councillor Stephen Fletcher was happy to attend an HGPJ meeting to explain the Council's support.

Stephen Thomas explained that his relationship with TTIP goes back a few years due to his trade union activities. He had tried to raise awareness of TTIP locally, had got it onto the Council agenda and the Council had approved opposition to TTIP. Although much of European opposition to TTIP arises in Germany, it was surprising to find that this was not the case in Hucklehoven. This was probably due to Hucklehoven being an atypical local authority. CE pointed out that in the general election local hustings there appeared to be very little awareness by candidates other than Iain Wright & the Green Party Candidate. ST explained that traditionally "trade" has not been discussed much within the Labour Party but TTIP has put it back on the agenda & there is much more awareness now, particularly in the left wing of the Labour Party.

ST made the following key points in relation to TTIP:

- Although numerous trade agreements already exist (more than 300 worldwide) TTIP is exceptional because of its massive size.
- TTIP was instigated to combat the increasing competition from emerging economies such as China & India.
- TTIP was formally introduced in 2013 & the EU started negotiations.
- Although reduction in tariff barriers is often quoted as the major justification, such benefits to trade are not significant because tariffs are now at record low levels. The trade agreement between USA, Canada & Mexico has illustrated this. The attraction of TTIP to multinational companies is the potential reduction in standards in areas such as environment, growth hormones, safety of chemical products. In Europe companies must demonstrate that their products are safe before they can be marketed. In the USA bodies representing the consumer have to prove that the products are unsafe.
- TTIP will allow companies to sue governments through the Investor State Dispute System (ISDS) if government policies potentially degrade a company's profitability. This has happened in, amongst others, Slovakia, Australia (Philip Morris) and Egypt (Veolia). TTIP will surrender sovereignty to corporate lawyers & multinational companies.
- TTIP should be opposed in its entirety. Although MEPs such as Jude Kirton Darling considers that protection can be built into TTIP, the size & complexity of the Protocol will allow corporate lawyers to find loopholes that will circumvent the protection.
- TTIP will perpetuate world wide inequalities & will protect the status quo.

MG said that if there were 18 Local Authorities that have opposed TTIP, is there a standard wording for the motion that can be used by other LAs? It was suggested that the motion provided by Unison is available. ST said this was the basis of the HBC motion.

DW asked how ST was campaigning now. ST said that he continues to keep TTIP in view of the Council.

Fairtrade MG asked ST what could be done about the low level of commitment by HBC to Fairtrade. Fairtrade Town status has to be renewed every two years & Council commitment is an essential component of the renewal submission. ST said that he would have a word with Carl Richardson (the Council's FTTSG representative) & with Stephen Williams (Unison). ST suggested that there should be a two pronged approach. FTTSG should also write to the Chief Executive pointing out the essential requirement to have Council commitment in order to maintain Fairtrade Town status.

The Chairman & members thanked Stephen Thomas for his very helpful contribution to the meeting & extended an invitation to him to attend future meetings.

Christian Aid and Tax Dodging.

MG asked ST how best to get the Council to incorporate tax compliance measures in their procurement contracts as described in Christian Aid's campaign on Tax Dodging. SC was given some Christian Aid campaign material & he agreed to look into it. He suggested that HGPJ write to the Chief Executive.

Action: KG to write to Chief Executive

Human Rights Act

MG raised concerns about the Government's proposal to replace the HRA with a Bill of Rights. There was general agreement that HGPJ should make representations but that discussion should be held over until the next meeting.

NE-CAP

LF alerted the meeting to forthcoming NE-CAP activities.

- It is hoped that the Newcastle Jubilee Development lecture will be by an Oxfam representative.
- Eve of Great North Run event – more information to follow.
- Druridge Bay campaign

Finance

IG reported a balance of £304.31

Correspondence

Jubilee Debt Campaign thanked HGPJ for our affiliation. CE recommended that members look at the latest Jubilee Debt Campaign brochure for information on PPPs.

AOB

- KG, CE, & LF had written to their MPs regarding the House of Commons International Aid debate.
- DW alerted members to the possibility that HBC may be getting some Syrian refugees and that HGPJ should be prepared for any backlash.
- MG alerted members to the efforts being made to help destitute asylum seekers. An email from Jenny Medhurst describes the project & would be sent to members

Next Meeting Is on Monday 11 July 2016 at St Georges at 7.30 pm