



22nd April 2010

To All Unite the Union and RMT Offshore Caterers (COTA grades A to E)

Dear Brothers / Sisters,

COTA Wage Negotiations 2009/10 Ballot

We write to update you on matters relating to the annual wage negotiations.

On Tuesday the 1st of December 2009 COTA informed the Trade Unions that due to the current economic constraints within which they operate they were not in a position to make any offer in regard to wage negotiations for 2009/10.

We held three joint Shop Stewards meetings on 8th, 22nd and 29th of January when discussions took place on what recommendation would be put to the members in regard to the wage ballot for 2009/10.

These discussions were in relation to:

- Whether a pay freeze for 2009/10 was acceptable.
- If the timing was right to take on not just the COTA employers but the whole offshore industry, bearing in mind that Drilling and Construction sectors had received no pay increase for 2009/10.
- If we were to take action in pursuance of a wage rise how this would be best achieved.

Having discussed this and also taken note of points raised from members who could not attend any of the meetings, those present voted overwhelmingly (89%) to recommend to the members that they **accept a pay freeze for 2009/10** (11%) voted against that recommendation.

There were other points which were unanimously accepted at the meetings, those were:

- Wording should be drafted to make it clear to COTA that the membership would not be prepared to accept a pay freeze for 2010/11.
- That we get organised and that any non Union member of staff should be encouraged to join the Union and not just sit there freeloading while weakening the ability to deliver united action when the time is right.
- That the full time officers continue discussions with COTA in an attempt to protect and improve our terms and conditions.

All those Shop Stewards who attended agreed to continue with the telephone ballot for wage negotiations (as this delivers a higher participation than a postal ballot) and also allows the Unions to ensure contact details are up to date.

Following those Joint Shop Stewards meetings COTA asked the Unions to consider a proposal to remedy the outstanding paid leave claims which have been submitted by our members to the Employment Tribunal, while at the same time introducing a contractual entitlement for all catering employees to a period of paid leave taken at a time at which they would have otherwise been offshore.

Because of this development three further joint Shop Stewards meetings were held on 17.2.10, 3.3.10 and 10.3.10 to see how this might affect the previous recommendation which was still to be balloted on.

Although these discussions on paid leave were at a very early stage the Shop Stewards felt that there were serious concerns about the draft proposals, one of those concerns being a suggested second year pay freeze.

For all the reasons stated above we now feel we need to get closure on the 2009/10 wage negotiations so will now ballot our membership on the 2009/10 wage offer.

The recommendation from the Joint Shop Stewards Committee is to accept a pay freeze for 2009/10.

If this were to be accepted by our membership it is the intention to enter into negotiations for 2010/11 on the 24th of May 2010. These negotiations will include further discussions on paid leave.

For the avoidance of any doubt, should you not accept the recommendation from the joint Shop Stewards committee then you must be prepared to take industrial action. We cannot commence negotiations for 2010/11 until negotiations for 2009/10 have been concluded.

Full detail of the 2009/10 COTA wage ballot is attached separately.

Fraternally



Mr John Taylor
Regional Industrial Organiser
Unite the Union



Mr Jake Molloy
Regional Organiser
RMT