



PRESS RELEASE

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INDUSTRIAL UNREST AT PETERLEE FOOD DISTRIBUTION PLANT

The North East's biggest general union has announced plans to ballot its membership in a major food factory in the North East.

The GMB Union which is the recognised union at Walkers Snacks Distribution in Peterlee, County Durham, have been in discussions with the Company in relation to pay. The Union's membership at the plant have grown increasingly frustrated with a constantly protracted process.

Stephen Thompkins of the GMB Northern Region who is the Full Time Organiser for Walkers said:

"The reason the pay talks went on so long is that the Company wanted to listen to the workforce but in reality they did not and they have stuck to their original proposal which was only to offer what they think other companies are offering, rather than focus on Walkers Distribution".

"Over the past 6 months there has been a number of meetings with the employer and direct meetings with GMB members.

"The main dispute is that Walkers operate a pay principle which means that they take information from other employers and if there is a pay differential our members will get a rise, if there is not then they will not".

The GMB has consistently argued against this principle since becoming recognised in Walkers.

Mr Thompkins said:

"This year as per normal, the employer informed us that they were offering a 2% increase for days and 1.5% for nights. We balloted our members on this offer and 92% of our members rejected this. There is a feeling that Walkers are paying at best lip service to recognition and at worst showing utter contempt for the workforce".

After informing the Company, Walkers asked the GMB to consult further and establish the wishes of Union members.

The GMB say that they consulted further and fed back to the Company that if there was an increase in both original pay offers by half a per cent, then there could be a settlement.

Mr. Thompkins added:

“At a subsequent meeting, Walkers stated that even though we had given them the opinions of the members they were taking no notice of this and would implement the pay award. I asked if they would consider conciliation or even arbitration through ACAS to which they declined.

“A consultative ballot was carried out and the result was overwhelmingly in favour of going to a formal industrial action ballot. This is regrettable but Walkers have shown what they think of their workforce by paying scant regard for them”.

-ENDS-

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The Ballot closes on Monday 18th February 2013. Contact Stephen Thompkins for more information.

