



RED BIRD

FOR ECOSOCIALISM

BULLETIN #5

2024

'WORKER LIAISON' ROLES – PLANNING AND PRACTICE

Allan, an activist and trade unionist with experience integrating workplace organising with protest actions, writes with suggestions of how to approach worker engagement in activity.

Protests are often planned at workplaces. Worker Liaisons are **protestors who have been briefed to carry out the task of speaking with employees who will be on shift during the protest**, and potentially also outside of protesting hours.

Given the diversity of tactical approaches and types of workplace that can be targeted, there is **no one-size-fits-all approach to this mode of engagement**. However, from my experiences of coordinating worker liaisons at protests in public cultural institutions, I would like to try and draw some broadly applicable principles.

The two main reasons for liaising with workers at protests are: **1. Sharing crucial information with workers, and 2. Finding potential allies who possess forms of bargaining power within the organisations that you are targeting**. This role should be considered as part of a **broader strategy to politicise worker organising**.

At a demonstration the principal task for worker liaisons is to ensure that on-shift members of staff are aware of themselves as employees, the role is to effectively inform them about the protest and ensure that they understand their rights. Job security has got to be taken as a priority, if a member of staff wants to risk their job by joining a protest then **that must be an informed decision** – last year a member of staff at an art gallery was severely disciplined by management for abandoning their post to join a protest.

As a general rule, the most effective way for staff to support protests is by staying employed and working deliberately to **apply pressure from within through a staff working group or workplace trade union branch**.

Practically, Worker Liaisons should prepare a printed text for workers to receive. **Outline the protest's political meaning and value, and emphasize that you are protesting against the employer – not the members of staff**.

Try to find out what workplace issues already exist for employees who will be reading your text, (e.g. low pay, bad contacts), so as to **express solidarity with their ambitions to win improvements collectively**. Offer workers a means of staying in contact so they can have the option of **talking with you more freely outside of their working hours**.



Experientially, protests can feel intense for some members of staff. Depending on the workplace and the action, workers may or may not have been briefed on what they can/cannot say to protestors.

Worker Liaisons stand to gain more **from finding those who are most willing to talk** than by trying to twist responses out of reluctant or nervous members of staff.

Although every good conversation has the potential to build a consensus of felt support for your cause, **finding confident and politically conscious staff who may work with us over the longer-term to agitate and mobilise their co-workers is of the greatest value.**

If you run into a manager – often identifiable by uniform, lanyard, authority of speech, and the degree of stress that they are visibly experiencing – you need to calm and reassure them. Generally, they will be focussed on practicalities, not the political content of what you're doing.

You need to emphasize that as a protest group you are keeping the safety and wellbeing of workers ('their team') in mind as a priority. You should explain your role as a Worker Liaison, offer that you want to 'temperature check' with them, ask generous questions 'how can we make easier...? etc.), reassure them that you will be working to make sure things are being done as calmly as they can with regard to members of staff and the public.

The majority of Worker Liaison's time should be spent talking with non-managerial staff and with one another – sharing conversation experiences to build up a dynamic knowledge of the social environment.

When talking with workers, once you've shared your information, it will be important to listen! A good interaction will involve you listening for around 70% of the time. **The information you gain will be useful for future actions.** Try to make a contact if you can, if it doesn't happen the first time round then maybe the next!

Successful work in this role will involve building your group's recognition and trust amongst workers, allowing them to feel more comfortable engaging with your group. **Balancing this requirement with radical political leadership is the art of Worker Liaison planning and practice.**

ACTION ROUNDUP

On the 6th September, a hundred activists from various collectives, led by **Climate Resistance**, descended on 55 Tufton Street – the HQ of various right-wing and climate denialist think tanks in London.

This gave space for joint action between various campaigns, but was harassed by busybody cops who interrupted and attempted to physically remove protestors. **A clear lesson in who the police are there to protect.**

During the Labour Party conference, on September 23rd two activists with **Climate Resistance** interrupted the speech of chancellor Rachel Reeves.

Shouting about the state's complicity in Israeli genocide and British government ties with fossil capital, they were violently removed.

The next day, supporters of **Youth Demand** spray painted the entrance to the conference with the phrase 'Genocide Conference'.

On the 27th September, Phoebe Plummer and Anna Holland, were jailed for two years and 20 months respectively, for their throwing of soup over Van Gogh's *Sunflowers*. Within hours, in retaliation, supporters of **Just Stop Oil** threw soup over two more Van Gogh paintings at the National Gallery.

The British state continues to support the genocide in Palestine and Lebanon, ally itself with polluters, and send its police to attack those fighting for a different world.

As the above actions show, people are not scared to continue the struggle.

Free the prisoners! Unite our struggles! Escalate our actions!

WHAT IS RED BIRD?

Red Bird is a bulletin for the British radical environmental movement. We want to encourage discussion about movement strategies and tactics. Print your own copies, discuss, and share with your fellow troublemakers.

WRITE TO US

Contact us on redbirdbulletin@proton.me

We welcome letters of 100-150 words.

Bulletin pieces are usually 500-700 words. Feel free to contact the editorial team for a longer discussion.

STAY IN TOUCH

You can join our Telegram broadcast:

