

## Safe at Work?

Following the success of the Book Launch event at WEA London, Dave Putson, former WEA learner, talks to us about the inspiration behind his recent book 'Safe at Work?'

My first ever WEA course was the Stage 1 H&S with Phil Hood this was clear, cogent and precise tuition, inspirational and the beginning for me.

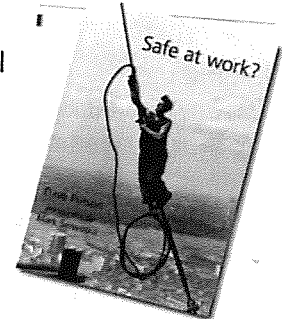
Then Stage 2 H&S with Monica and on to Stage 3 H&S Diploma course, once again with Monica. (I thought Phil was excellent and Monica carried that WEA tradition forward with many nuggets of inspiring comment and observation, truly superb!)

Trades Union reps Stages 1 & 2 with Chris Ford. (This was deep and yet once again clear, cogent and thorough. It was also Chris's encouragement for me to (successfully it appears) ask Mark Serwotka to do a foreword for the book to offer it a nationally recognised TU person to gain a profile)

The influence for writing the book was from Stage 3 H&S when Monica through discussions with the group presented a throwaway line of "with all of this information we are discussing somebody should write a book about it". I thought it was a great idea. But I was only planning to write a pamphlet to assist my H&S committee members of my branch know some of the beginnings of H&S rather than just thinking that it had "appeared" out of the ether !!

After completing the Diploma course I started looking for information on these H&S histories to inspire my H&S reps. I started by drawing up a list of appropriate legislation. I kept writing down little snippets of stories to remind myself of what and where this was meant to be going. It was almost as though I had to keep on adding as every time I saw or read a story I felt that it was very important and couldn't be left out. Before I knew where I was I had more of a book than a pamphlet. When I went to the excellent London Hazards Centre to do a bit of research Margaret Sharkey was very supportive and offered a book ("Hazards At Work : How to Fight Them" : Patrick Kinnersley) it provided two things, a formal structure that I could work to by means of a time line. And secondly the introduction to Ramazzini which gave me my obvious starting point. Before which I had research starting with some Anglo Saxon legal applications which were vaguely relevant but not as specific as the old boy Ramazzini himself. Without the Kinnersley book I think the book as an introduction to H&S history

could quite easily have wandered in and out of all sorts of subjects that always touch on H&S but are not quite what the focus should be if you are specifically writing H&S History as a subject.



I can't remember who it was who suggested that I submit it to publishers to see if it was either a pamphlet or a book or even remotely suitable for publishing at all (possibly my brother). I do recall that many publishers were keen to publish, if I parted with £x or £xx. I didn't want this to be a vanity publication so I kept on, driven by a little bit of annoyance that some might believe that H&S was a vanity subject!! Then a friend sent me a gift of a book called "Bad News" which was a personal insight into Trades Unionists experience of the print dispute of the 1980's. I contacted the publisher, Spokesman books, as a general enquiry as to whether they would be interested in "My Tome".

From start to finish it has been a pleasure working with Spokesman books, the publishing arm of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation. This in itself is enough to be proud of having been published by such an august organisation! They have been nothing but honest and clear with all of their comments and guidance. They have been as good and supportive as I have always found the WEA. Indeed my point of contact, Tony Simpson, has travelled to London on more than one occasion to provide support at events linked with the book. He worked with Monica on the book launch. Although I doubt that anyone could match the sheer hard work and endeavour of Monica in the promotion of that event which proved to be a massive success. I was right up until the night completely unsure what was really required at a book launch. But I now have an excellent model to work from were I to have the good fortune to have another book considered. Although the amount of work on the book launch alone is equivalent to writing one itself! On the night I sold out of the copies I brought to the event and took a substantial number of orders!