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New web resource explores history of Britain's workers

www.unionhistory.info/britainatwork

A new online resource - **Britain at Work: Voices from the Workplace 1945-1995** - has been launched by the Trades Union Congress Library Collections at London Metropolitan University.

1945-95 was a period marked by extreme diversity and change in Britain, starting with post-war austerity and reconstruction and followed by eras of fluctuating growth and affluence. It saw a rapidly changing workforce, with new roles for women and immigrant workers, new employment conditions and work processes.

With the second half of the 20th century, came the growth of trade union organisation and influence. There were huge conflicts between unions and employers, associated with technological change, de-industrialisation and union legislation.

The **Britain at Work** website is an integral background resource for these developments, containing audio clips and transcripts of interviews with workers, as well as hundreds of photographs, posters and documents from the TUC Collections. Interviewees share their experiences of working in a multitude of occupations, including engineering, public transport, healthcare, entertainment, journalism, factory and office jobs.

The website holds video interviews with key figures in post-war union history, including Barbara Castle, Jack Jones, Len Murray and current TUC General Secretary, Brendan Barber. In addition, several experts have contributed background essays that provide context for the online resources.

Brendan Barber said: "Trade unions and the people we represent have played a major role in shaping post-war British society. We have campaigned in the workplace, on the streets and in direct representations to governments of all political complexions. Many of the advances in society over the 60 years covered by Britain at Work have come about following pressures applied on employers and politicians by union representatives and so I'm pleased that so much valuable information can now be accessed by students around the globe, allowing them to discover exactly how the efforts of working men and women have helped shape modern Britain."

Julie Howell, Director of Library Services at London Met said: "The website can be used by students, trade unionists and anyone with an interest in labour history to explore this period in depth. The oral accounts are especially fascinating as they give a great sense of people's experience of their work."

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Notes to editors:

The **Britain at Work: Voices from the Workplace** website is one of the outcomes of a research programme (also called Britain at Work 1945-1995) which collects and promotes oral history focusing on people at work.

The website was developed in partnership with the Trades Union Congress, and funded by the Barry Amiel and Norman Melburn Trust.

The TUC Library Collections, first established in 1922, constitute a major research resource in the social sciences, including historical and current publications from the trade union movement, documents relating to working conditions and industrial relations in various industries as well as deposited collections from organisations such as the Workers' Educational Association and the Labour Research Department. The Collections are housed at London Met's Learning Centre (236-250 Holloway Road, London N7). For more information, contact Christine Coates on: 020 7133 3726 or email c.coates@londonmet.ac.uk.

For more information:

Sophie Scott, Communications and Marketing Officer
The Women's Library, London Metropolitan University
020 7320 1180
sophie.scott@londonmet.ac.uk
www.thewomenslibrary.ac.uk

Victoria George, PR Officer, London Metropolitan University
020 7133 2467
v.george@londonmet.ac.uk
www.londonmet.ac.uk