



A Worrying Future?

The prospect of being made redundant is not something many of us like to contemplate. However announcements over the last year of plans for a total of 1,760 AXA job cuts across the country have raised the spectre of unemployment for many staff. At the same time UK unemployment has reached its highest level for 14 years, making the prospect of finding alternative employment that much more difficult.



Whilst we cannot claim that being a member of **Unite the Union** will guarantee that you will not be laid off, there are many advantages to being a union member at a time of uncertainty such as the one that we are all currently experiencing.

Unite's initial involvement is at a strategic level in consultation with **AXA** over its plans and in challenging the business case. However, whilst some staff believe that once the company announces its plans that there is nothing more that can be done and the outcome is inevitable, in some respects the work of the union is really only just beginning as the shop floor impact on union members is analysed and challenged. This is where the role of the local union rep is of great value.

Unite are consulted on the redundancy selection criteria. We reject any that are subjective or open to favouritism and ensure those used are consistent and fair. We also support members in challenging their selection if they believe they have been incorrectly selected - and yes, mistakes are sometimes made.

Union representatives also provide support for members both in meetings with management and in preparing any appeals against the business case that suggested the role should be made redundant or against their individual selection. There are cases where **Unite** has assisted members that have felt the redundancy exercise has been engineered, for example to allow a manager who doesn't like them to get rid of them.

Finally, **Unite** provide members with the support and unrivalled expertise of the union solicitors who are experts in employment law and will support members in legal challenges to redundancy and if necessary represent them at an employment tribunal.

Whilst we don't want to scaremonger and we all might prefer not to think about the prospect of redundancy, the reality is that everybody needs to be aware of the impact it could have on our life. It is of course up to you whether the help and support available from **Unite** is worth a union membership subscription.

Don't leave it too late...

One of the biggest benefits of union membership is free legal assistance. However, it is only available to members who have been in the union for at least six months. This means that whilst you can join and receive advice and assistance when you are put at risk, if your case is one that requires a specialist employment law solicitor then you need to have already been a member for six months.

Some people may think this unimportant and assume they can get good legal advice from any solicitor or even Citizen's Advice. In reality employment law is a very specialised area and expert knowledge is vital.

AXA wouldn't take a friend or a High Street "No Win No Fee" solicitor to an employment tribunal, so why on earth would you?