

My Unite experience was not so positive

Dear editor,

In response to the letter "Shift in power led me to seek union protection" (June 6 issue), I would like to issue the author a word of warning. I joined Unite early in 2008 after an awful experience working for a "corporate" practice. I was not anticipating needing the union at that time, but within nine months found myself a victim of extremely unethical treatment by my new employer. I contacted Unite on several occasions requesting help, only to be told that the officers were too busy dealing with their larger clients to help me.

I finally got help after I sent a strongly worded letter to my area union office, but it came too late. I had already spent £1,000 on solicitor's fees and I left my job in a manner that I consider a constructive dismissal. The union officer did not respond to my emails after I left my employment, and I opted not to follow the case further. I simply could not afford the financial burden or emotional cost of a tribunal I would have had to fund and conduct on my own against an aggressive employer with almost limitless finances. I left Unite shortly afterwards.

I am grateful the BVA is now offering some help with employment disputes, although I hope I never need to find out exactly what it can offer. I do, however, consider a veterinary union (or similarly guided organisation) may be the only way to counter the abuse of employment rights in certain areas of the profession. It is no surprise at all to me that many new graduates leave the profession so soon after qualifying. As for me – I'm simply too old to retrain.

Yours faithfully,

NAME AND ADDRESS WITHHELD.

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