



British Steel Industry 'Crisis' Rally Attracts Hundreds

Thousands of job cuts have recently been announced in Teesside, Scunthorpe and Lanarkshire, with unions fearing more to come.

The TUC-organised rally urged the government to stem the influx of cheap steel from China.

Business Minister Anna Soubry said her department was doing all it could.

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady said "The crisis in British steel isn't over. One in six steelworkers face losing their jobs.

"Britain desperately needs a long-term industrial plan, but ministers have refused to commit to one.

"The closure of factories will devastate surrounding communities, and cause jobs losses throughout the supply chain. The chancellor's 'Northern Powerhouse' has to be more than a slogan for a party conference."



Scotland's Business Minister Hopeful about the Future of Beleaguered Industry

Business Minister Fergus Ewing says he remains "hopeful" that investors in Scotland's beleaguered steel industry can be found and jobs saved.

His comments came as hundreds of steelworkers and their families gathered for a huge rally in Sheffield aimed at pressing politicians and companies to do more to tackle the crisis in their industry.

Many travelled from Scotland to join the show of strength after 225 jobs were threatened at the Dalzell plate rolling works in Motherwell, along with 45 posts at the Clydebridge plant in Cambuslang.

Steel firm Tata, which runs the plants, has also announced plans to cut 900 posts at its facility in Scunthorpe.

Ewing, who wasn't at the rally, is heading up a 'Scottish Steel Task Force' in response to the crisis, which aims to secure an alternative operator. The group has already met twice with a third meeting scheduled for November 26.

Speaking to the Sunday Herald, Ewing said "This is a very difficult time for Tata Steel employees and their families. I am determined to fight for a future for our steel industry and the Scottish Steel Task Force's primary aim is to secure an alternative operator for Dalzell and Clydebridge and to retain as many jobs as possible.

"Our efforts therefore are firmly focussed on finding new investors, cutting costs and creating the most supportive business environment. All members of the Scottish Steel Task Force are firmly behind this aim and, while it will be challenging, I remain hopeful of a positive outcome."

At rally, Roy Rickhuss, general secretary



of the steelworkers' union Community, which represents the majority of Scottish workers, said the steel industry was running out of time.

He said "We cannot allow our struggle for survival to be hijacked as a piece of political theatre. We must secure the rightful place of steelmaking at the absolute heart of an active industrial strategy.

"So we need action not just words on energy costs, business rates, skills retention and, most of all, action to ensure a level playing field. Let us compete fairly stopping, as the USA has done - the dumping of cheap steel from the likes of China."

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady, who was also at the rally, said "The crisis in British steel isn't over. One in six steelworkers face losing their jobs. Britain

desperately needs a long-term industrial plan, but ministers have refused to commit to one.

"The closure of factories will devastate surrounding communities, and causes jobs losses throughout the supply chain. The Chancellor's Northern Powerhouse has to be more than a slogan for a party conference.

"The North needs real support for job-rich industries with strategic economic value. British steelworkers contribute over £2 billion to our balance of trade. Every steelworker generates over £90,000 of added value. These aren't jobs we can simply watch fade away.

"The US has taken strong steps to protect its steel industry, and so can we. I have written to the Prime Minister proposing international action to stop China dumping cheap steel on the global market.

"All we see from the Government is inaction at home, and inaction abroad. In the short run we need action on Chinese steel dumping. In the long run we need a serious industrial strategy."

Business minister Anna Soubry said "The Government is well aware of the challenges facing our steel industry and we are working tirelessly to help.

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