

Sinn Fein chief wins praise of ex-car workers

By **PAUL OFFORD**
paul.offord@nqe.com

FORMER Visteon workers have praised Sinn Fein president Gerry Adams for demanding a full investigation into the firm's pension crisis.

Visteon UK went into administration in April, leaving more than 600 people out of work when its car parts factories closed in Christopher Martin Road, Basildon, Enfield, and Belfast.

The Government-run Pension Protection Fund is set to take over Visteon UK's retirement scheme, but this could mean up to a 50 per cent drop in the former car workers' monthly pension payments.

The Belfast factory is in Gerry Adams's Northern Ireland con-

□ Gerry Adams wants Visteon pensions probe
□ Ex-staff facing cut in retirement payments

stituency and he joined calls for Ford, which owned Visteon UK until 2000, to rescue the pension scheme.

Visteon UK pensioner Paul Bailey, 60, of Wincoat Drive, Benfleet, said: "We all know Gerry Adams' history, but I can't fault him for all his support."

"He spoke out earlier this year to help ensure former Visteon workers got the redundancy packages they deserve and now he's backing us over pensions."

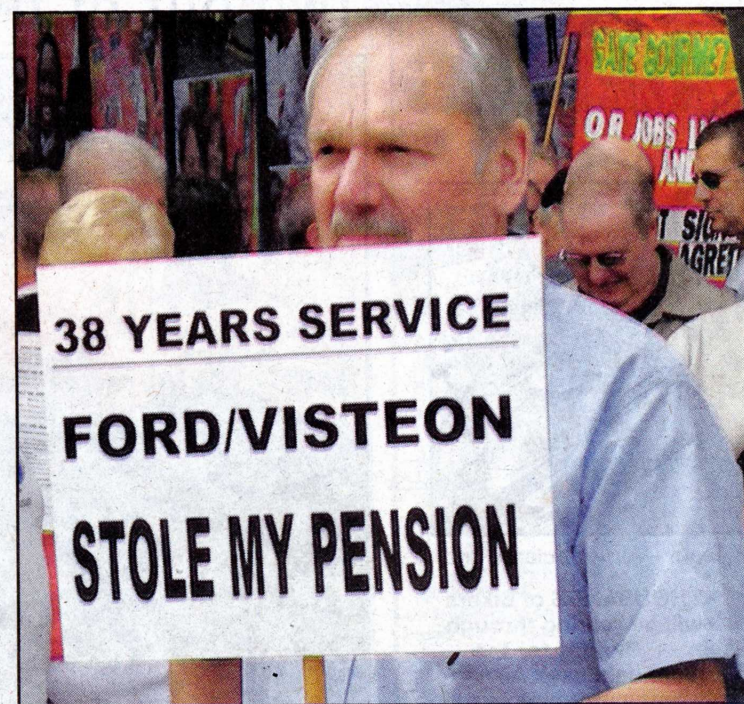
"He's a man with a high profile and a lot of influence, so hopefully he can help us a lot."

Mr Adams claimed new documents given to Sinn Fein confirm highly questionable management practices by Visteon UK in the months leading up to it folding.

He said: "This new evidence, which I am passing to the British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and to the Pensions Regulator, makes it imperative a full investigation is urgently undertaken into the Visteon scandal."

The factories in Basildon, Enfield and Belfast belonged to Ford until they were transferred to Visteon UK in 2000.

Ford spokesman Brian Bennett said: "Ford is not in a position to provide further assistance to affected parties and is currently striving for its own continued viability."



■ Protest – one of the demonstrators outside Unite's London HQ

Rally fires up union

THE Unite union has vowed to use all legal means to get justice for Visteon pensioners.

Tony Woodley, Unite joint general secretary, reassured former car workers following a mass rally outside Unite's head office in central London.

Around 40 former workers from across south Essex went to the rally, organised by Visteon pensioners across the

country to put pressure on the union to do more to help them.

Mr Woodley said: "Unite is calling for an urgent meeting with the chairman of Ford and has asked the Government's Pensions Regulator to investigate whether there was inappropriate behaviour that sees thousands of workers having to go into the Pensions Protection Fund."