

Issue 4, Friday 23rd June 2017

Emergency Composite 1 – After the General Election

Within the Northern Region we should be extremely proud of the message we sent to the Tories and to UKIP on the 8th June. The North East clearly rejected Theresa May and her manifesto of sustained austerity and a hard Brexit. It also condemned UKIP and its racist views to the scrap heap.

This fantastic result was down to the hard work and commitment of our Region. Our re-newed political organising strategy has raised the profile of UNISON across the Region, throughout local Councils and Constituency Labour Parties, building relationships with leaders of Councils, Councillors and MPs.



The result of this hard work from lay and organising staff, giving up their free time, tirelessly campaigning to return our Labour MPs was particularly evident in Hartlepool where we were told Labour had no chance of winning and we should just give up. UNISON refused to do this – we are not in the habit of turning away from a fight we know we can win. And win we did! Not only increasing Labour's share of the vote but also ensuring our own Mike Hill was elected on what essentially is a UNISON manifesto.

Across the Region the share of the Labour vote has increased and we even managed to get rid of James Wharton from Stockton South.

Since the General Election result we have been overwhelmed with messages of thanks from the MPs we supported across the Region.

We have built a strong foundation through our political organising strategy to continue to build upon going forward – always ready should another General Election be called, but especially in light of the local elections in May 2018.

We will continue to engage with our members, as we did throughout the General Election, not just taking them for granted, but ensuring they know we are listening to their concerns.

Nicky Ramanandi & Linda Hobson, Regional Delegates

Motion 14: Mental Health Champions

The reason I decided to write this motion, is due to an experience I had at a policy weekend. I will not go into details as I do not want to breach any confidentiality, but what happened was that a delegate who was at that policy weekend was someone who was diagnosed with bi-polar affective disorder.

I am a qualified mental health nurse with 23 years of experience. It was coincidental that we became friends, but things could have been so different if we had not.

She confided her diagnosis to me early in the first day. As the day went on, I noticed that this person was becoming increasingly elated. Her speech was more rapid and at times the content was becoming, what some without my knowledge and experience, would consider as inappropriate.

I took it upon myself to try and support this individual. As she became more elated, she began to upset other delegates with some of her comments. But I couldn't say anything to those she had upset as I would have breached her confidentiality. I was able to de-escalate the situation, but in the end this delegate left the weekend early and has never been involved with UNISON since.

It became apparent to me that although as a union we support members with physical disabilities, we can at times be lacking in supporting those with mental health issues.

The work done in Cymru/Wales regarding mental health champions, highlighted in Motion 13, is amazing to see, but I feel we need to take this further.

Motion 14 proposes that all UNISON conferences and policy weekends should have nominated and trained mental health champions available to provide support.

This is not about providing a crisis service, such as the one I work in, but to have trained mental health first aiders available throughout the event who can provide basic support and signpost to appropriate services as and if required.

This will hopefully then lead to improved inclusion and participation by lay members who do not have the confidence to attend conferences and policy weekends, due to their mental health issues.

Please support this motion and feel free to have a chat with me if you would like any further information.

Sophie Robinson, NTW Health Branch LGBT and International Officer.

Sophie.robinson1@ntw.nhs.uk



First Timer



Colleagues as a first time delegate and speaker at Conference, I want to say a huge thank you to all of you for the support and welcome you have shown me.

I want to say particular thank you to Nicky for allowing and arranging for this amazing opportunity for me and my son to experience. It has been a truly emotional privilege to hear speakers from our Region and across our union. Conference has afforded me the opportunity to hear in person a man I greatly admire Owen Jones but even more so our Prime Minister elect Jeremy Corbyn today.

Conference has inspired and motivated me to take all I have learned back to my work place ready to organise, campaign and recruit. Delegates have reignited my passion for justice equality and activism.

Totally self indulgent but on a purely emotional level I cannot thank Lesley Storey enough for her constant support, guidance, company, encouragement and sheer patience (of my hot and tired 7 yr old) who without a doubt has made this the most memorable experience for me. I came to conference as a delegate amongst colleagues and leave with a new group of friends.

Aisha Haq, Newcastle City Branch



My First Conference

Sweaty palms, nerves – how does this work????

Conference, what to say, what to think ‘what are they talking about in their speeches?’ – all this going through my head.

Train – met the gang and off we went 10 am train to London, it’s been a long time since I was last down there – FA Cup Semi Final – Chelsea – we lost. On the journey Emily with her cake, the smell of Joe’s corned beef pie, Tia colouring in, a few laughs and photos – Helen. Train to Brighton – hot and sweaty – sweaty and hot. I’ve never been this far down South, passing over head on a plane to Spain I have. Arrived at the hotel, Emily still with cake in hand. Did I mention it was hot! Cold shower before we set off for pre-Conference meeting. Met the local seagulls who nearly give me a pat on the back. Meeting at 6 pm, Emily now left cake to be eaten for all to enjoy. We were given T-Shirts – Show Racism the Red Card and Tia gave a little tune on the mic – “Let it go”. Met up for drinks and a bite to eat. Joe the tourist guide showing me the main areas of Brighton – Okay Joe where’s the bar. Bed. It’s hot.

No need for alarm clock, seagulls are up and ready. So let’s go back to the start. Sweaty palms, nerves. I’m okay plenty of freebies. Conference – Show racism the Red Card we are out in our numbers T-shirts on. “Wow” powerful speaking, lump in my throat, near tears, gulp, Michael have some water. I’ve never heard anything like this in my life, it was so moving, massive respect to those involved.

P.S. I got lost shopping later that day, lovely meal out and a few social ones.

I’m now used to the speeches, no sweaty palms, no nerves. A great week all round. I’ve learned a lot from this and will feed back my experience to the members and new members. Thank you Conference.

Michael Barclay, Newcastle Hospitals

Thoughts from a First Time Delegate

Although this is my first National Delegate Conference as a delegate (for Middlesbrough branch) I did attend Glasgow 2015 conference as a new rep visitor awaiting steward's training.

Being in a trade union is a privilege to hold dear and to encourage in others. Our voices and efforts are more important than ever in a country that has seen the worst wage growth since the 1780s!

I've not been a rep long, but that initial feeling of relief at my first branch meeting in Middlesbrough where reps from the college, the council, criminal justice agencies were all getting together to try and improve the lives of their co-workers was a revelation and has been a source of solace and strength ever since.

At NDC this feeling is amplified. I write this on Wednesday evening and am encouraged by the buoyant, engaged tone to the conference so far. It has also been incredibly moving hearing the brave accounts of the delegates at the podium turn their stories of hardship and injustice into motions that will seek to improve the working environments of people they may never meet yet, with our collective implementation, will positively impact upon their lives.

It's great to see democracy in action at conference and I'm proud to represent the 2,200 members when I lift the card, but it is a shared pride. I'm only sorry my work colleagues weren't there to see the debate on Motion 19, Tackling Stress. The speakers were excellent. Back at our workplace we are seven years into a pay freeze whilst picking up the workload of those who have left and not been replaced in the meantime. You're just expected to get on with it. Those delegates did a brilliant job in bringing home to us the untold burden and pain of austerity. A burden and pain that the wider public now seem to be realising was so unnecessary all along.

What has been the purpose of all the damaging cuts? At what point will we all see the benefits of the Treasury living within its means? When the deficit is reduced? Will it be then that we will be allowed the space to fulfil our individual and collective potential and share in the common fruits of our labour as we ought?

Of course we won't and as UNISON members I'm sure we could see that austerity was a con trick all along.

It's been a great conference at Brighton this year. There is a definite sense and a feeling in the air that the tide is turning and it's not by chance alone. It's by all our efforts. I'm very much looking forward to hearing Jeremy Corbyn, a UNISON member like us, speaking today. We backed him two summers ago when he was a rank outsider on the Labour leader ticket and he has our backs now.

I will take all the positive messages I've heard from conference and its fringe meetings back to Middlesbrough and Durham and wish you all a safe journey home.

Chris Riley, Middlesbrough LG Branch



NHS Bursarys – The Fight is NOT Over

As a second time delegate to National Conference, I am overwhelmed with the support of everyone with the current crisis in our NHS! As a Health Care Assistant in the NHS really wanting to train as a nurse, I want to speak to you about the bursary campaign.



Some of you may already know my story and like many others like me I cannot afford to pay £9000 per year to go to work as part of my studies due to family circumstances. My father is terminally ill and I care for him full time as well as having a full time job, bills to pay, keep a roof over my head and as a low paid woman this is already very hard to deal with without adding over £50,000 of debt to that!

There are so many others in a similar position to me, many are women who already have children and cannot afford to train. This does not just affect those of us who want to be nurses but radiographers, OTs, physios along with many others. There has already been a massive drop in applications to these professions and with Brexit the amount of people coming from Europe has already dropped by 94% just since last June.

I would like to invite you to read the Guardian on Tuesday – Education Section – as I was approached to do an article for them on the bursary and why it is so important now more than ever to help this gobby young member keep the fight going to help others like myself have the right and the access to train.

Emily Heron, Newcastle Hospitals

I'm Elliott, I'm 16 and here with my mam, Linda Hobson. I've just finished my GCSE's and decided to come to conference with my mam as a visitor from Newcastle Hospitals Branch.

Things have changed since I was last here 8 years ago and forced to go in the crèche, although the PlayStation was awesome.

This year has been fantastic, I've often listened to my mam talk about conference but now I've experienced it for real. You've all made me feel very welcome and I'm sure we are the best Region in the union. I've enjoyed listening to the debates on the floor and hearing how UNISON speaks up for young people like me.

I particularly enjoyed the debate on low pay and the Show Racism the Red Card fringe. I have learned more about politics at this conference than I have in my whole time at school.

Experiencing conference in this way has made me better understand the role of trade unions like UNISON and I hope to be back here one day as a member and delegate.

Elliott Hobson

Re-Prioritisation Result for the Northern Region

- 1. Motion 93 Campaigning for Real Devolution**
- 2. Motion 85 Standing together for LGBT equality**
- 3. Emergency Motion 3 Terrorism and Public Services**
- 4. Motion 16 Invisible or Non-Apparent Disabilities**
- 5. Motion 5 Recruiting and Organising Black Members in the Workforce**
- 6. Motion 68 Palestine time for a new debate**

Motion 106 - Shared Branch Resource Centres

In June 2015, Dave Prentis , UNISON General Secretary officially opened the first cross service UNISON Shop front / resource centre in the Northern Region, in Ashington , Northumberland.

This was a joint venture by Northumberland County, Northumbria Health Care and NTW branches.

As you will be aware, Northumberland has a vast geographic spread, with members from all 3 branches working in the public, private and C&V sectors. The joining up of resources allows us to provide a shared service to members regardless of their service group. Many of our members share workplaces so it makes sense we bring together resources to support our members in this way.

The facilities in the centre consist of a Small Conference room, front office and reception area. Activities include meetings with large groups of members, SOG monthly meetings, a learning centre to deliver education for activists across services and for our members. With many more ventures lined up for the coming months

If you would like more information on this project please contact Joyce Guthrie, George Barron or Mark Purvis who will indulge you. It is important that we support joint ventures like this because the way we use our resource in the future will change and having established centres in place now will help to support members moving into the private sector in the future.

Joyce M Guthrie, Northumberland LG Branch



Don't forget the Miners' Gala on Saturday 8th July where the keynote speaker is Jeremy Corbyn.

Camping is also now available close to the Gala site. For more information go to www.durhamminers.org

Motion 5 – Recruiting & Organising Black members in the fragmented workforce

There is an ever increasing spread of the workforce in the UK. More and more public service workers are employed by the private and Community Sectors. It is estimated that over 25% of public service workers are currently outsourced to private contractors.

All areas of the country are affected and indeed all UNISON branches. In my own branch, Northumbria Healthcare, a number of our members now work in the private care sector and, in many cases, this consists of low paid and the most vulnerable workers including black workers.

It is a particular challenge in the Northern Region where the density of black workers is not very high and visible. One of the dangers with this is that this part of the workforce can become invisible and lost. We are therefore compelled to find creative ways to meet these challenges in which workers are scattered across the public, private and community sectors. How we reach out to our members in the various sectors and particularly black members and also how we facilitate recruitment in these sectors is crucial.

The challenge becomes greater when our public service employers do not allow facility time for us to represent members in the private or community sectors. These members pay their union fees to an established public sector branch.

In the Northern Region the Regional Black Members Group is seeking to do something about this. For example, myself as the Chair of the Black Members Forum I'm currently arranging individual meetings with as many branch secretaries as possible. Also, the working group set up by the Black Members Forum has established links and has had several meetings already with NEEACA – North East England African Community Association. NEEACA holds social and cultural events and brings together people from different backgrounds and cultures and with us working in partnership with them, we hope to use this as an opportunity to inform black people and others of UNISON and hopefully to get them to join.

Estwar Sanichar, Chair, Regional Black Members Forum

Hope not hate - Fear & hope.

This fringe meeting reported on the direct correlation post between post industrial communities and Fear and hate. The meeting discussed the Impact of austerity, declines on wages raises and the outcomes of positive stories when we "don't tell people what to think but to listen to them and respond to their concerns". Clare Williams Northern rejoin secretary addressed the meeting on the impact of the economic regeneration, the impact on the local economy and the gap between the rich and the poor and how it is getting bigger with No feeling of any economic prosperity. Clare also discussed the rise of in-work poverty, the need to understand people's thinking to be able to construct a response and the importance of reviewing and strength our polical and industry work to be able change and offer alternatives and achieve social justice. "We have a duty to report things that right wing media don't report.



Speakers included Nick Lowles, hope not hate, Ravi Subtamanian, UNISON WM regional secretary and Clare Williams Northern Region Secretary.

Mo Abuzahra, South Tyneside LG

Motion 16 – Invisible or Non-apparent Disabilities

An invisible disability, or hidden disabilities are defined as disabilities that are not immediately apparent.

This can cover a range of conditions and people often face their own personal challenges which can be impacted massively by discrimination within the work place and within the wider community.

It's humiliating when you're challenged for using an accessible toilet or seat because "you don't look disabled" or when you hear people talking behind your back.

Some of you will know I was diagnosed with fibromyalgia just over a year ago. Fibromyalgia is a cruel condition, one where every sufferer experiences some similar symptoms but some very individual ones too. I live with pain every minute of every day. This impacts on my mobility, my mental well being as well as work and home.

Being a workplace rep, I've seen an increase in the amount of members going through sickness absence meetings with invisible or non-apparent disabilities. It was obvious HR and managers were not aware of how to support staff appropriately. I met a few women members who'd been diagnosed with fibromyalgia too and were working hard to manage their condition and remain well at work.

We decided to set up a fibromyalgia support group open to all staff, those who have the condition, those who have family or friends with the condition and managers who support staff. The response has been fantastic – it's a very positive and supportive group. We've had the Trust's pain team, psychology team, Occupational Health team, managers, members and non-members come along. We've done this with the support and in partnership with the Trust. We've raised the profile of UNISON, recruited new members and educated members and managers.

For me, our support group provides me with a sense of knowing I'm not on my own. Many people with my condition feel forced to give up work or reduce their hours dramatically, for me and many like me, having this level of support makes getting up and going into work every day that bit easier.

Motion 68- Palestine Time for a new debate

Since 1917 and the military conquest of the Palestinians' land, Israel has continued to built Jewish settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, connecting them by a reticulation of Jewish-only roads. Despite the UN in 2016 passed a landmark resolution demanding a halt to all Israeli settlement in the occupied territories and demanded Israel "immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem".

The Zionists used terrorist methods to induce the Palestinian population to flee, and refused to allow them to return, turning nearly 7.5 million of them into refugees across the world.

It is right and proper that conference called upon UNISON to enhance its existing policy on Palestine to include both Colonisation and occupation of Palestine. Israel has continued to use actions of settling among and establishing control over the Palestine people in Palestine. This is Colonisation and no longer Occupation.

The property of Palestinians who were barred from returning was taken over by Jewish settlers. Palestine's land has been stolen from its native people and time does not make it a property of the thief. The Palestinians have refused to capitulate to the colonization of their country, and we need to provide a new platform for debate that allows UNISON's members to speak of the truth and reality of the Colonisation of Palestine.

Mo Abuzahra
Chair of International Committee



So Long, Farewell

Once again the Northern Region has contributed to National Conference by delivering lots of speakers, and many of them new speakers. The level of participation and the cohesiveness of speakers articulating our Regional strategies and priorities has been outstanding and we have received numerous compliments on speeches that have been delivered, with particular reference made to speeches that highlighted the various events and campaigns that have been held in the Region. It shows the work we do throughout the year has an impact, and that we are well prepared for the battle ahead.

Clearly, attacks on terms and conditions, privatisation and recruitment and organising are still the priority in the months ahead. Again, our Region is well placed to support branches and to deliver for our members. Integration of services has been a feature of Conference and we will continue to meet to plan activities and work across Service Groups so we are able to build the union, and also to make key alliances with other trade unions and our communities through the PSA coalitions.

Our participation at Conference has been phenomenal and the Northern Region continues to deliver. Thanks to all who contributed to the newsletter and a special thanks to Allison for all her hard work during the week, as always the newssheets have been the high quality you would expect! Let's keep the good work going, and continue to work in a cohesive and united way to build the union in our Region, and to take our policies forward. Finally, we look forward to seeing you at the Durham Miners Gala on July 8th. Safe journey home everyone.

Clare Williams, Nicky Ramanandi & Linda Hobson



Your Newssheet Thanks You!!

Just a quick word of thanks to everyone for your articles, stories anecdotes and pictures. We hope you enjoyed reading the newssheets !!!



AT CONFERENCE THIS WEEK!...

