

Issue 2, Wednesday 20th June 2018

Tuesday afternoon saw UNISON General Secretary, Dave Prentis, deliver his speech to Conference with the over-riding message that “this is our union”. He used his speech to celebrate UNISON’s 25th Birthday and reflect on past successes and achievements as well as looking to the future for the Union.

His speech opened with a tribute to Michael Braithwaite, a child of the Windrush Generation, a teaching assistant being systematically attacked by the government. Dave used Michael as a glowing example of the inclusivity of the UNISON family.

The Leeds born, General Secretary then discussed the Union’s birth ‘three roads into one’. The Unions of NALGO, NUPE and COHSE merging into one against the odds and against the backdrop of a concentrated attack from the Conservative Governments of the 80’s and early 90’s on trade unions. How could a public service union survive? “Well we did survive and we’re still surviving.”

Dave outlined UNISON’s history as a union of firsts; the first union to take on a stress at work claim and the first union to support the Blue Light Campaign for mental health. He spoke of his pride in the Union’s support for the Hillsborough campaign for justice and in standing in solidarity with the Lawrence family. And finally, pride in the Union’s support of international matters including Cuba, and the struggle of the Palestinian people.

Looking at the present, Dave echoed the ideas of the motion that had just been discussed around women and low pay, reflecting on the current membership and the role women play in the Leadership of the union. He paid special tribute to the current President, Margaret McKee and thanked her for her service. To a rousing applause from delegates, tributes were paid to all those workers currently and recently in dispute with their employers.

Finally, a look to the future. Dave talked of his hope that a Labour Government, under the Leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, would bring about a positive change for working people in the UK but that UNISON would be front and centre in demanding this for workers.

Dave finished with a message for UNISON members: “You are the giants. 25 years – we’re just getting started.”

Luke Holliday, North Tyneside





UNISON Review – Refocusing of UNISON Resources

This year we celebrate 25 proud years of UNISON. During this time UNISON has become a world leading union. As we heard from our General Secretary Dave Prentis we have achieved a lot in that time. However we now need to recognise that during this time the environment of work and public services has changed significantly. This is something which we have been discussing in the region for some time about new ideas and ways to take the union forwards. Branches are dealing with hundreds of different employers including in the private sector which brings challenges in organising in the workplace. Therefore the Northern Region welcomes a proposal to review the union at all levels to make sure we get resources to where they are needed to support members and run a modern progressive union.

In order to be fit for purpose we need to ensure the union has appropriate structures, improved organisation and sufficient resources placed where they are needed not historically allocated. All resourcing must reflect the ever-changing fragmented work environment and new models of public service delivery that continue to place a huge burden on branches striving to represent every member across multiple employers. The lack of facility time, limited access to non-core employers and members in isolated and fragmented workplaces continue to add to that pressure. Any future resource allocation must also accommodate the new and growing demands placed on the national union for faster, speedier communications, more strategic large-scale litigation, more flexible, targeted training and more demanding and complex, sector based bargaining arrangements.

We seek our strength from our unity and the resources of our union belong to us all, to be shared fairly guided by the trade union principles of solidarity and equity. As demands change those resources must be redirected to where they are needed for the benefit of all, and not to the detriment of some and directed to ensure that every member wherever they work can be represented. That is our challenge.

The review will be conducted by a task force comprising key stakeholders including representatives from branches, regions, service groups, self-organised groups and the NEC.

NDC believes that nothing should be excluded from consideration from this review and calls on the NEC to invite submissions and views from all parts of the union, to produce a 6 monthly up-date and to report back to NDC with proposals to renew our union structures to improve our operation, effectiveness and relevance in the future and with specific proposals including the level of branch resources which could take place with effect from 1 January 2020.

Please support Composite A and let's get involved across the region .

Linda Hobson & Debbie Lydon, Regional Delegates



Working people already paid for the financial crises; they should not pay for Brexit

The Conservatives' self-imposed Brexit deadline is fast approaching but they remain distracted by internal divisions and ideological entrenchment, which is in real danger of pushing the country towards a cliff edge. In February 2018, Cabinet ministers lined up to produce a series of 'major speeches' on Brexit that has only succeeded in highlighting how much the last two years have been a vortex of in-decision, rhetoric, blue passports and chlorinated chicken.

Conferences notes that with no concrete plan on creating a stable economy or how our public services will be decently funded, the need for stability and reassurance for working people has never been greater.

The release of a wide-ranging assessment on the economic impact of Brexit has estimated that the north-east would lose 16% of regional economic growth if no deal is reached. This is a region with already high levels of unemployment, the only UK region to export more than it imports and where approximately 160,000 jobs are directly linked to membership of the single market. Given that this region has already been on the receiving end of some of the deepest public sector cuts in the country the stakes could not be higher.

If Brexit was driven by widespread disillusionment with an economic system that favoured the rich and powerful and reduced living standards, the reality is that the Tories' strategy will only succeed in establishing a low-tax, low-regulation haven for unscrupulous businesses where competitiveness is driven by attacks on workers' rights.

Though UNISON had backed Remain after a major cross union consultation exercise, Conference is not willing to indulge in a 2016 referendum post mortem but wants to face the future putting forward arguments that best defend public services and UNISON members' jobs and employment conditions in all parts of the UK. Talks of a Canada-style CETA arrangement highlights real dangers.

Brexit which emphasises the need for an economic investment strategy that delivers quality jobs and protects living standards and employment rights.

Already our NHS is experiencing a Brexit-induced drain of qualified European staff. It has recently been reported that almost 10,000 EU NHS workers have already left since the Brexit vote, and one in five of European NHS doctors have made plans to leave the UK. In addition, official figures have shown that the number of nurses from the EU registering to work in the UK has dropped by 96%.



Conference therefore believes that public sector workers from Europe who came to the UK to work for our NHS, schools and social care, must be reassured they are welcome and can remain as part of any Brexit deal.

Conference calls on the NEC to:

- Continue the lobbying on behalf of UNISON members in the Westminster Parliament, European Parliament and devolved administrations in line with the policy passed at the 2017 Conference;
- Continue to campaign with the the3Million campaign group of EU citizens living in the UK and to promote the UNISON EU members group;
- Set up a new programme of forward looking member and activist EU briefing materials that can assist the understanding of different types of UK-EU relationships and different types of trade agreements;
- Assess the costs and benefits of different UK-EU future relationship agreements based on the UNISON EU exit objectives from 2017

This is a key issue for our region and we must ensure that our members and public services do not suffer as a result of Brexit.

Debbie Lydon & Linda Hobson, Regional Delegates

Show Racism the red Card—Challenging Racism in the Workplace

For those who may not know, Show Racism the Red Card started in North Tyneside. The campaign started in 1996 with the aim of combating racism through enabling role models, who are predominantly, but not exclusively, footballers.

They combat racism in at least three ways:

1. Producing education materials
2. Developing activities to encourage all people to challenge racism
3. Challenging racism in the game of football and other sports

UNISON has been and still is a major sponsor and supporter of Show Racism since 2008. At the fringe meeting on Tuesday sponsored by Thompsons Solicitors, a number of key note speakers addressed the issue of racism.



Clare Williams, Northern Regional Secretary affirmed how proud we are to support the work the Region do against racism stating how important it is to engage with people and involve them in conversations. She called on everyone to challenge racism wherever we come across it. Clare highlighted the Ambassador Programme (a 12 week programme) that is facilitated by Show Racism to further empower activists and others who aspire or are currently involved in being champions against racism.

Elizabeth Cameron, NEC highlighted why racism continues to happen in the workplace, mainly because it continues to exist in the wider society. She reiterated the need to support all action against racism, including our support for Show Racism the Red Card.

Kevin Maguire, The Mirror's Political Editor spoke about three choices we all have: consent, concede or change. On the issue of racism we cannot ever consent or concede but should always seek to change it and bring it to an end.

Luther Blissett, former England International Footballer spoke about his personal experience. He said football should always be about football but sometimes some people see only colour – the colour of some players. He powerfully reminded us that whilst we have certain differences in our physical features, peel our skin back and we are all the same underneath.

Roger McKenzie, AGS spoke passionately and powerfully stating “equality is at the centre of everything we do. Build alliances with other organisations and amongst ourselves to ensure that equality wins and not racism.”

This was a timely fringe meeting given that soon to be debated is **Motion 106 – The Race Equality Act – How far have we came since 1968?** This motions will show several things including:

- More black people are going to university but they are less likely to get a place at a top university.
- Black people are not like to be in the top jobs.
- The Guardian reported 'Black families in the UK earn as much as £9,000 a year less than their white counterparts.'
- The most recent NHS staff survey found that black staff in the NHS are more likely to be subject to harassment, abuse, bullying and discrimination by colleagues and managers.

More than ever before, it is time to make a stronger stand and stop this systematic marginalisation and discrimination of black people.

Estwar Sanichar, Northumbria Healthcare

Motion 45 – Housing affordability is a growing concern for public service workers

High rental costs mean some public service employees in the Northern Region are spending a third of their wages on rent, according to research published by UNISON. Hospital porters are struggling the most, with rents swallowing up over a third of their take home pay in seven out of 12 local authorities in the North East.

The findings are based on the average private rent for a one bedroom property in each local authority area across England, compared with the pay for some public sector jobs.

Newcastle is the most expensive area in the North East, where 48% of an NHS porter's salary would go on rent, 40% of a teaching assistant's, 38% of a refuse driver's, 36% of a nurse's and 34% of a police community support officer's.

The data is based on the starting salaries of a band 2 NHS porter, a band 5 nurse, a refuse driver on local authority scale point 21 and a special needs teaching assistant on scale point 19. For the PCSO it is the typical starting rate plus shift allowances. London salary figures are based on the NHS high cost area supplement for inner London, the inner London weighting and fringe area allowance for local government jobs, and the PCSO (including shift and location allowances) pay rates as published on the Metropolitan Police website.

Sky high rents mean public sector staff have less money to spend on food, clothes and getting to work. The housing crisis is affecting people up and down the country. Employees are being forced to work further away from where they do their jobs, and young people cannot afford to move out of the family home. There needs to be less talk and more action by the government on housing.

Spending more than a third of take home salary on housing is used as a benchmark by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in monitoring poverty, and by the Royal Town Planning Institute for measuring housing affordability.

The average rental costs come from the Valuation Office Agency's Private Rental Market Statistics (September 2017)

Linda Hobson & Debbie Lydon, Regional Delegates

Presidential Address



Margaret McKee showed what women in our Union can achieve with the support of branches, Regions and National. Band 1 to president.

Margaret Highlighted the importance of numbers during her presidency:

100 - A 100 years ago when some women achieved the vote

70 - Happy Birthday NHS. Margaret stressed the need to continue to fight the Tories for its survival.

50 - demonstrations against repression and injustice. Margaret spoke on Enoch Powell's legacy of prejudice and how proud she was that Eleanor Smith, MP and former UNISON President, had taken his slot.

20 - The Good Friday Agreement and UNISON's role in this.

25 - Happy Birthday to us! Margaret spoke on the wonderful work activists do and that we should anew our dedication and determination to keep our members at the heart of all we do.

Throughout her speech Margaret spoke of the support of many individuals throughout her Presidency and I'm very proud to know that one of those was our very own Pat Heron.

Margaret McKee she walks and talks with pride.

Linda Hobson, Regional Delegate

Motion 8 - Making 2019 the year of young workers.

2019 may be the Chinese year of the Pig, but here in UNISON we want it to be the year of the Young Worker.

UNISON bucks the trend, we recruit as many young workers to our union as leave or become 27. This is on a back drop of the careless destruction of public services, something that should have hit us hard! Young members make up around 5% of our membership but only 2% of our activists.

Frances O'Grady recently said in a news interview that 'unions must change, or die'. This union changes every day but this is our change this is the young members strategy to keep us strong, to get us growing!

Workers join a union when the union works for them and fights for the causes they believe in.

Following this motion, and the appointment of a new National Officer for Young Members, the National Young Members Forum Leadership working with the Regional Representatives will meet to devise a plan to meet some ambitious targets, increasing membership, increasing activism.

This won't be the National Young Members' Forum plan, this will be all of ours. Yes this is a big task, but our Region has done it before and we can and will do it again!

Please support Motion 8 as amended by 8.1.

Andrew Anderson - @YoungUNISON NEC representative

Andrew Baker - Northern Region rep to NYMF and NYMF Vice Chair.

This morning I'm speaking in support of motion 8 but I will be focussing on working class young people. I don't need to tell you that the trade union movement has its roots in working class life and culture in Britain. I'm proud to come from the North East which has a rich history of trade unionism with the mining communities and ship building in Wallsend.

Unfortunately, I fear young working class people are forgetting this history and are being targeted by right wing groups. At our branch AGM, we had a guest speaker from Show Racism the Red Card and the figures around referrals for far right extremism for the North East were startling.

I do however feel that as a society we are forgetting and failing our white working class boys and this is evident in that they are now the lowest performing students in our schools. I believe that this failure at an early age is pushing working class people into the arms of fascist groups and causing further disharmony in our communities.

The Labour movement, under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn, has seen an injection of youth recently but I don't see this being reflected in working class communities, we need to engage with these people I believe as a union, we need to get out and have conversations with the young working class about both the history and future of our trade union. As the Geordies say – "shy barins get nowt". We need to reclaim our history and shape the future of our movement.

Luke Holliday, North Tyneside LG



International Rally

As trade unionists we are internationalists and UNISON has a proud record of putting this into practice through the work we do with trade unions in other countries to fight austerity around the world and to defend human rights and trade union rights wherever they are under threat.

A highlight of Conference is therefore the International Rally where we welcome trade unionists and human rights activists from overseas to tell us about the challenges they face in standing up for their members and social and economic justice. As Monday night's rally, which was supported by our General Secretary who reaffirmed UNISON's commitment to international solidarity, speakers from Turkey - Latife Canan Kaplan - SES , Korea—Jeonghee Hyun and Wol-san Liem - KPTU , Brazil—Sandro Alex de Oliveira Cezar - CNTSS , Vilani de Souza Oliveira (CONFETAM) and aria Zelita dos Ramos and Colombia—Hector Vaca and Cesar Lopez - USO talked about their respective struggles. One of the Miami 5 , Fernando Gonzales told us of the importance of the international campaign (in which UNISON played a central role) to challenge the trumped up charges of terrorism and bring about their release.

A common theme of the four trade union speakers was that without effective organising of workers, the wealthy and powerful will strip away hard won rights: a powerful message for us in the UK that we constantly have to fight to retain what we have achieved over decades of struggle. The courageous and creative struggles of our sister and brother trade unionists is an inspiration and we have much to learn from them.

We also have a duty to support our fellow trade unionists in their struggles by offering them practical solidarity. Our UNISON Region has a proud tradition in this respect in the support we provide for workers' groups in Colombia, the support we provide for the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and the links we have with trade unionists in Cuba. Branches are encouraged to get involved and support the work the Region are undertaking by contacting Conor McArdle, International Lead.

Mick Bowman, Northumberland LG

Return to Learn (R2L)

Twenty Five years ago, as a NUPE (National Union of Public Employees) member, I was invited to enrol on a Return to Learn course being piloted by the union in the Northern Region. With feelings of nervousness and apprehension, I attended the enrolment session and signed up for the nine month course. It was one of the best things I did.

The course enabled me to see my confidence grow, make new friends and rise to the challenges of this once accredited course. Support came from my peers, tutor – Keith Hodgson (REO) and my work colleagues. Half way through the course NUPE, NALGO and COHSE amalgamated to form UNISON. Here I was benefitting from a new course and a new union and I loved it!



Since completing R2L in 1993, I have seen many opportunities come my way. I became a Voluntary Education Advisor (VEA), where I supported other learners through their R2L journey, a lay tutor, delivering regional courses and attending national courses, a trip to Washington DC to address the American Federation of Teachers about R2L and the barriers we face regularly at work. I have also tutored R2L many times over the past few years and I'm proud to be able to give back something to UNISON. I'm also proud that R2L is still ongoing 25+ years on. My only regret is that R2L is no longer accredited and I firmly believe it should be!

I've seen people grow in confidence and change their career opportunities and paths due to this fantastic free course. I'm a steward and branch Education Co-ordinator.

Jane Parkes, South Tyneside LG

On The Fringe...

Lunchtime:

Justice for Colombia
Room A/B

Social Care organising and sectoral collective bargaining
Auditorium 2

New SUBCOs—the ‘new wave’ of healthcare outsourcing
Room 1C/D

UNISON’s Political Fund arrangements: what we’ve learned so far
Syndicate 1

Workers’ legal rights in 2018—practical advice in an apocalyptic world
Syndicate 2

Learning—the next 25 years
Syndicate 3

Secure Homes for all—making housing a workplace issue
Syndicate 4

Evening:

How can good pension schemes be saved
Room 1 A/B

Solidarity with Palestine
Room 1 AC/D

Police & Crime Commissioners and the future of police and fire services
Syndicate 1

Briefing on trans equality
Syndicate 2



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Visit UIA Mutual at STAND 8 or go to unisoninsurance.co.uk/UNDC



One year's FREE Home Insurance!
If you get a quote from the UIA Mutual stand and purchase your Home Insurance policy before midnight on 21st June 2018 then you'll be in with a chance of winning FREE UIA Mutual Home Insurance for 1 year. We'll even pay your cancellation fees if you decide to switch!

* One entry per person. 1 winner will be selected at random on 22nd June 2018. Full terms and conditions can be found at www.uiam.co.uk/home-conditions

† Entrants must still be a policyholder on 21st September 2018. 1 winner will be selected at random on Monday 24th September 2018. Full terms and conditions can be found at www.uiam.co.uk/home-conditions



This year's Regional Social will be happening on:

Thursday 21st June

From 7.30 pm

At THE WALRUS

10 Ship Street BN1 1AD

It's an opportunity for Northern Delegates to get together informally for a drink and a bite to eat from the buffet.

With a DJ playing some tunes it will be a relaxing and enjoyable evening and we hope you can join us.

Your Newsheet Needs You!!

You're here at Conference! Is it your first time? Are you speaking in a debate? Got something to say about your time in Brighton? Let us know your thoughts, opinions and views through our Regional newsletter.

See Allison in the Newsheet Room (3rd Floor) or e-mail her
a.jackson2@unison.co.uk

