

Issue 4, Friday 21st June 2019

Nelson Mandela: Inspiring Future Generations

2020 will be the 30 year anniversary of the release of Nelson Mandela from political imprisonment. Mandela spent his life time fighting against oppression and Injustice perpetuated by the apartheid South African regime and dismantling the legacy of institutionalised racism and fostering reconciliation after becoming President in May 1994.

Mandela's life, sacrifice and values are an inspiration to us today in our union on the struggle for justice and equality.

For many years Mandela stood on principle of moral justice, fairness and equality. After his release from prison he took the fight further to the South African apartheid regime to demand equal partnership for all South Africans in the political discourse of the country and in economic and social opportunities afforded by the country so that all benefited from these benefits regardless of their colour.



Mandela was single minded in his fight to encourage equality for all. He fought against entrenched groups that sought black South Africans to be excluded from fully participating in the social economic benefits of the country. He worked in solidarity with interest groups (including our union) that sort to ensure that all South Africans equally participated in the political, economic and social affairs of their country. He also worked with those who had initially resisted him in order to bring about change that would result in equality for all.

It is this pure, unwavering focus on social justice and equality for all regardless of colour or national origin that is an inspiration for our union now and in the future. Our union stands on the belief that regardless of the resistance we may face in advancing our objective of equality and justice for all, we will not waver until we achieve equality and justice for all wherever it is needed through working in solidarity within the union and with other outside our union.

Our union continues to recognise the massive impact Nelson Mandela has had on the international discourse on equality and justice for all. To that effect, UNISON approved the creation by the Black Members Self-Organised Group of the Nelson Mandela Award in 2015. This award recognises outstanding representation of Black members within the union and more widely in society.

In the Northern Region, we operate in the same vain as the spirit of Nelson Mandela whereby the fight for equality and justice are at the forefront of Regional and branch activities.

Black members in the Region are active members and are encouraged to take part in all activities at Regional and branch levels.

Issues relating to Black members and their interests have been given forums through which they are discussed and follow up activity provided.

The National Black Members' Conference celebrated Nelson Mandela by setting up a National Nelson Mandela award. This award is given to a Black member (or members) who has been outstanding in representation of Black members'.

The Region and branches hope to continue to work tirelessly in ironing out those barriers (perceived or not) that would otherwise inhibit active participation of all members in our union.

Ulela Kaferawanthu, Newcastle City

Emergency Motion 1 Excluding Future Higher Education , Further Education and Sixth Form Staff from the Local Government Pension Scheme.



Here we go again, another attack on the pensions of hard working UNISON public services members by a Tory government who are littered with public school educated millionaires. The Tory's are determined not only to keep the working classes in their place whilst in employment but also in retirement. Most Tory's will have no concerns about finances in their retirement due to the majority coming from a privileged background.

The recent consultation from the Ministry of Housing, Local Government and Communities, "Changes to the Local Valuation Cycle and the Management of Employment Risk", proposes changes that would allow Higher Education Institutions, Further Education Colleges and Sixth Form Colleges to choose not to offer the Local Government Pension Scheme to new staff.

This comes at a time when the Augar report, which is a review of post 18 education and funding, is recommending a cut in tuition fees which will give University's the excuse to take up the opportunity not to offer the LGPS to new staff as a rationale for cutting costs.

This is an attack on these groups of education members and the effects of this could be wide reaching. If new staff are not joining then that will result in fewer contributions to the LGPS from employees and employers and could affect the financial viability of the scheme for other UNISON members in other sectors such as Local Government and Police and Justice.

What this atrocious Tory Government proposes today to disadvantage UNISON 's Education Services members it is likely to propose further damage for other members in the future. We need to nip in the bud this unfair and inhuman proposal as if brought in this will especially affect women and the low paid.

This consultation has been sent to employers only so it is vital that members and branches talk to their employers to influence their response.

Unfortunately some despicable HE employers in the Norther Region, despite branches fighting this with support from the region and national, have already implemented such measures by establishing arm lengths companies , so that new staff are not technically employed by the University and are therefore do not have mandatory entitlement to join the LGPS. Shame on them.

We must stop this spreading not just in Education but across all sectors if UNISON members are to continue to have access to a fair and decent pension and to stop any potential disasters to the health of the LGPS.

We need to work within our branches, regions and nationally to get a Labour Government elected to stop this abysmal and heartless Tory government destroying the fair pensions our members have a right to.

It is essential for all LGPS members and the future of the scheme that this Emergency Motion is debated and supported at NDC.

Denise Ward
Teesside University

Motion 116: The NHS Long Term Plan

Why we need to campaign on The NHS Long Term Plan



Newcastle Hospitals branch welcome many aspects of the NHS long term

plan that was published in January 2019. We believe the focus on mental health services which we have seen through previous motions this week needs a much needed injection of funds and prioritising. We have concerns however about many holes in the plan which includes a lack of funding for NHS education and training budgets as well as not including anything for much needed public health and social care.

We all know that the best savings to our NHS and the best outcomes for our society are through disease prevention. Yet the Tory Government time and time again fails to support these services.

We have seen the affects of cuts to both Public Health and Social care funding have had over the years. These include cuts to smoking cessation services, sexual health, alcohol and substance misuse as well as many other disease prevention services.

A another major issue with the plan is the lack of a separate work force strategy and therefore concrete proposals for how the health and care workforce will be developed over the coming years.

We feel it is vitally important for our Union to campaign on better funded Social care and public health services as well as continuing UNISON's campaign for more funding in our NHS. We also believe that our NHS cannot move forward while there are damaging and wasteful market mechanism and without the development of a workforce strategy that is created in partnership with Trade unions and other stakeholders in the NHS.

Hannah Stevenson, Newcastle Hospitals Branch

Stopping Social Insecurity

In the UK 14 million people live in poverty that's a fifth of the population and four million of these are more than 50% below the poverty line.

We have seen a 7% of child property reported by the Institute Fiscal studies and many children attending school are hungry and frequently missing meals.

On universal credits the United Nation Rapporteur said that social support should be a route out of poverty however it has done the opposite as we are living in the times of increased poverty and homelessness and the increase use of food banks.

Universal Credit is having a major impact on many families as they have to wait five weeks before they receive any money this means many do not having the ability to manage their finances. There is also an impact on those with mental health problems and physical disability due to the changes many more have become homeless with numbers increasing from 2.480 to 4.376 which is a disgrace when we are one of the 5th richest countries in the world.

This is an attack on the working class and those that don't have resources to fall back on as many are in low paid jobs or zero hour contracts in addition many have turned to private landlords due to the lack of social housing and pay high rent charges.

Members have advised that they have had to turn to pay day loans or loan sharks both which attract a high interest rate just to get by.

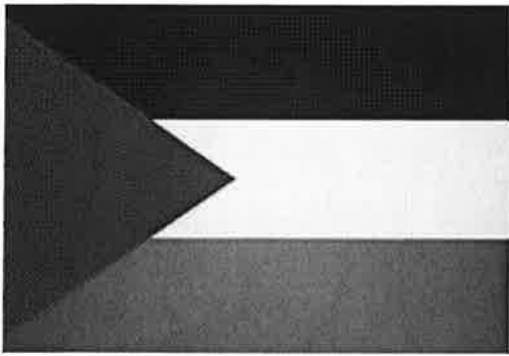
We need to end the five week wait and make the first payment within 7 days.

We need to look at the cost of private accommodation.

We need to encourage our members to seek financial support from credit unions who will provide a more ethical way of loaning money.

Maria Alberts, Regional Chair of Welfare, Gateshead Health Branch

Palestine: Practical Solidarity to end the Injustice



In the one year since last National Conference, the situation of the Palestinian people has worsened. The Great March of Return in Gaza which commenced on 30th March last year and by which the Palestinians are reaffirming their right of return to their homeland and protesting the blockade of Gaza by Israel, has been met by savage brutality by the Israeli State. This has resulted in the death of 277 Palestinians (including 61 children) and over 27,000 injured with 7,000 of these having serious gunshot wounds (figures from WHO report released on 29th May). The expansion of the illegal settlements in the

West Bank has continued. The ultra-right wing Netanyahu Government's Nation State Law which further erodes the rights of Palestinian citizens of Israel was passed in 2018 and the Trump administration is pushing a "great deal" which will accept Israel's intention to amass all the illegal settlements and deny any autonomy to the Palestinian people.

The Israel Government's unacceptable behaviour as outlined above has been colluded with by the UK Government and European Governments. Israel continues to have preferential trading access to Europe via the EU – Israel Association agreement and, shamefully, the UK Government continues to supply Israel with weapons and other military aid despite such equipment being used by the Israeli military to behave with excessive lethal force against unarmed protestors.

However, there is growing international support amongst civil society for the movement for justice for Palestine. Our union is at the forefront of solidarity action within the UK and this is shown by the number of motions at this year's Conference (including one from my own branch) and the ongoing commitment to the Palestinian cause by our General Secretary. It is also shown by the legal action spearheaded by UNISON, working with the PSC and War on Want, by which a Supreme Court hearing is to be held to challenge the Government's denial of local councils' right to use their pension funds investment to support divestment in companies collusive with the oppression of the Palestinians.

Of the motions on the agenda, Composite G Palestine has the best chance of getting discussed. The composite calls for the NEC to strengthen solidarity action by supporting the campaign to suspend the arms trade with Israel and also to suspend the EU - Israel Agreement with the Israeli Government complies with international law.

The composite also calls for the NEC to encourage branches to affiliate to the PSC (Palestine Solidarity Campaign) and to support the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) campaign – this is the main strategy for pressurising the Israeli Government. At a local (branch) level there is much that we can do to contribute to the movement for justice as well as affiliating to national PSC, branches can make direct links with their local PSC groups (there are active PSC groups in Newcastle and Durham) and work together on activities and campaigns.

Finally, just a word about the political discussion of solidarity. Write to your MP and ask them to make representations to the Government about Israel's behaviour towards the Palestinian; look on the PSC website for materials to help with this and very informative fact sheets which can be downloaded. (www.palestinecampaign.org) Lobbying local councillors over the pension funds divestment issue will also be important and UNISON provides excellent guidance on this. I am more than happy to any member to contact me for any advice and support on solidarity work for Palestine.

Mick Bowman, Northumberland LG

Emergency Motion 2: Defend LGBT Inclusive Education

As predicted, with the rise of far right politics, the rights of our LGBT community are under attack.

At recent protests outside a junior school in Birmingham 300 protestors gathered on the Eve of Birmingham Pride. The reason for the protest was to tell the school Head Teacher to stop talking to pupils about the existence and equality of LGBT+ families. They are also asking for the removal of all books that feature LGBT characters or families. The protestors said the school was promoting a paedophilia agenda and a local MP backed the protestors.

As our own Angela Rayner said "there is not only a moral imperative to ensure that all young children receive LGBT+ inclusive education, there is a legal requirement too and schools must comply with the Equalities Act."

The issue has become so divisive one of the Governors is calling for the school's proposed relationship and sexual education programme to be abandoned.

This motion maintains that education needs to be inclusive of LGBT people as all other equality strands. It also asks the NEC to produce guidance for our members where this issue arises. Please support.

Carrie Loughlin-Pearson, Stockton LG

Poem about my 1st Conference

*This is my first Conference, and I'm
overwhelmed to be involved,
I've never seen so many fight for their
issues to be solved.*

*It's inspiring to look around the room
and feel we are united,
fighting for what we believe in,
despite a Government so short-
sighted.*

*In our ethics, our views, we know
things must be changed,
and in order to achieve equality
things must be re-arranged.*

*I myself have been clueless to some
of the things that still take place,
our human rights have been
neglected and on that I feel disgrace.*

*I want to thank all for opening my
eyes and for fighting for your rights.
I hope one day we all find peace with
no more sleepless nights.*

Abbey McKay, Northumberland LG

Last Time Delegate

This is my 10th attendance at National Delegate Conference—as with Local Government Conference.

Over the years I have heard some incredible inspirational and moving speeches which have spurred me on as a rep. I always feel uplifted when young members in particular, speak for the first time in front of thousands of people.

Sadly, this will be my last time at Conference, as I will retire on 31 August.

I am proud of my branch and the Northern Region and our high profile and participation at Conference and in the wider union.

Wishing you all well for future Conferences.

Diane Wright, City of Sunderland

Re-Prioritisation

The Region prioritised the following Motions:

- 116—the NHS Long Term Plan
- EM 2—Defend LGBT Inclusive Education
- EM1—Excluding Future Higher Education Further Education and Sixth Form staff from the Local Government Pension Scheme
- 59—Democracy
- 111—Energy Climate Change A just transition and job for a low carbon economy

After the Conference session yesterday the reprioritised business for Friday afternoon was shared.

The first ten motions are as follows:

- EM1—Excluding Future Higher Education Further Education and Sixth Form staff from the Local Government Pension Scheme
- Comp B—Sexual Harassment in the Workplace
- 100—Make 2021 the Year of Disabled Workers
- 54—Television Licences for over 75's
- 102—The Trade Union response to racism—no to Pasaran
- 20—Challenging race discrimination, inequality and unfair treatment of black members
- 111—Energy Climate Change A just transition and job for a low carbon economy
- EM 2—Defend LGBT Inclusive Education

These will be key debates and it would be good if delegates from the Northern Region took part in the debates

Nicky Ramanandi

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. Growing the Union 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 newsheets 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 13th. Safe journey home everyone.

Clare Williams, Nicky Ramanandi & Linda Hobson



Your Newsheet Thanks You!!

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



