

We will meet the challenge says Warwick



Steve Forrest

UNISON General Secretary Dave Prentis has tasked UNISON Labour Link with the challenge of securing positive support for public services in Labour's next manifesto – a challenge that Labour Link Chair Steve Warwick says he is determined will be met. In his keynote speech to UNISON's National Conference in Brighton, Dave Prentis warned that the union was at a crossroads. He reiterated the integral role of UNISON's Labour Link established when UNISON was created, but warned that UNISON's support could not be taken for granted. He called on the Labour Link to suspend all constituency development payments and ensure that UNISON only promotes and supports candidates who are willing to stand up for UNISON values of public service. Stressing that the issue was policies not personalities, he demanded that the next Labour manifesto should put limits on privatisation and rebuild public provision.

In a speech following that of the general secretary, Steve Warwick told Conference : "I am sure that Labour Link will respond positively to the challenges Dave has put before us." He noted the strength of feeling in the Conference hall and said that the Labour Link would reflect the will of the wider union: "Dave Prentis has issued a clear challenge not just to us in UNISON Labour Link but to the leadership of the Labour Party. This year at Labour Party conference we need to build on the coalition with CLPs to reflect the anger of public service workers at the growing outsourcing and privatisation of the NHS despite the clear costs and failure of private company takeovers of services. We will be pressing other affiliated unions and constituency parties to support us in our demand that the next Labour Party manifesto is about rebuilding public provision, not privatisation."

Harriet Harman set for Labour Link Forum

Labour Deputy Leader Harriet Harman will be the key Government speaker at UNISON Labour Link's annual national forum to be held in Manchester. UNISON Labour Link have used the Labour Party's contemporary issues process to prioritise equalities and equal pay, having a significant influence on the Equality Bill being

taken through Parliament by Harriet Harman. Delegates will be pressing the Deputy Leader to strengthen the Bill. The Forum will consider a range of motions submitted from regions and self-organised groups as well as considering key outcomes from UNISON National Delegate Conference.



Euro MP calls for action on Needlestick Injuries



UNISON member and recently re-elected Member of the European Parliament for Yorkshire and Humberside Linda McAvan has called for European action to tackle needlestick injuries. An estimated one million needle stick injuries occur across the European Union every year when a healthcare worker or support staff worker is accidentally pricked with a used needle. Although the majority of needle stick injuries are not life threatening, there is the risk of exposure to blood-borne viruses such as Hepatitis B and C, and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV). UNISON has long campaigned for action on needlestick injuries, working with UNISON members in Westminster as well as the European Parliament.

Linda McAvan MEP, who is also Labour Spokesperson for Health in the European Parliament, said: "Every day, nurses and other health care workers are exposed to over 20 different blood-borne diseases, such as Hepatitis B and C and HIV, due to needle stick injuries. These injuries could be easily avoided through better training and working conditions, and the use of safer needles."

The demand is part of a wider report adopted by the European Parliament on patient safety which calls for national governments to prioritise patient safety in health policies and promote knowledge sharing and further research at a European level. Linda McAvan adds: "We welcome the current efforts by trade unions and employers to generate a Framework Agreement on needlestick injuries. However, if an agreement is not reached by autumn 2009 we will be pressing the European Commission to come forward with new legislation. I have personally written to the European Commissioner responsible for health to highlight the need for action on needlestick injuries and in particular for requirements to use safer needles and further training of workers on safe use and disposal of needles."

Labour success in Conwy

Labour candidates had a tough time in Wales on June 4 – but UNISON Labour Link News can report that it wasn't all bad news...

Peter McGlory, Mayor of Conwy is North Wales' youngest mayor, at just 25. He and fellow UNISON and Labour Party members campaigned hard in the elections on June 4 and, with the local Labour candidate winning with over 25% of the vote, the battle was worth it. Peter, who has been a UNISON member for over 2 years, said: "This is a great example of what UNISON and Labour can achieve through working together and supporting one another. I am proud to be able to call myself both a UNISON and Labour party member and am pleased that I can be a visible link between the two. Through hard work and collaboration, UNISON and Labour can make great achievements, as we can see through the election results in Conwy."

Now that the European elections are over, Peter will refocus his attention on the voluntary groups that he works closely with in the community. Peter is committed to raising the profile of small voluntary organisations within Conwy. Peter is acutely aware of the funding pressures that they face during these troubled times, when in reality the need for them is at its' greatest. Conwy Citizens Advice Bureau is Peter's chosen

charity for the year: "You can't underestimate how valuable a service the Conwy Citizens Advice Bureau is to the community during this economic crisis - it is vitally important that UNISON and community members alike are able to access free and impartial

advice and assistance in a time of need. Unfortunately, the service is hugely under-resourced as it only gets a small amount of government funding, which is why I have chosen to support the Conwy Citizens Advice Bureau this year."



North East Labour Link Forum



(pic): Caption Steven Byers MP, Steve Warwick, Merv Butler, Stephen Hughes MEP, Phil Wilson MP, Vera Baird MP, Helen Goodman MP and Dave Anderson MP at UNISON Labour Link North East Forum.

Labour Link activists had a chance to question MPs from across the north east recently when the Northern region's Labour Link Forum was held in Gateshead. During what's now become a regular feature of the regional Forum, Labour MPs and MEP, took part in a Q&A session looking at key UNISON priorities regionally and nationally. MPs Dave Anderson, Vera Baird, Stephen Byers, Helen Goodman and Phil Wilson joined Labour MEP Stephen Hughes to answer questions

on subjects from Keeping the Metro Public, through to the Banking collapse, privatisation at the Business Services Authority, council housing and privatisation of the Royal Mail. Our MPs were left in no doubt about the importance of all of these topics to UNISON members across the Northern Region.

Earlier in the Forum delegates were joined by Newcastle Central MP Jim Cousins who told delegates about the political challenges facing us, including the need to counter the

BNP in the region, the need to reinvigorate the party and the importance of active trade union involvement in the party at constituency level, with a particular plea for more UNISON delegates to get involved and play a part. Delegates also heard from Labour North's Regional Director, Fiona Stanton on the European election campaign and from Steve Warwick, Chair of the National Labour Link Committee about the review of our UNISON political funds.

UNISON LABOUR LINK NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING

KEY DECISIONS 14TH MAY 2009

- Members discussed at length the issues around MPs expenses, expressing anger and dismay. The Committee sought prompt action against those who had brought the Party into disrepute.
- **Local and European Elections:** The Committee received reports on UNISON's campaigns, working with the GPF, in both elections.
- **Labour Link Forum 2009:** Motions from regions and self-organised groups were discussed and National Committee positions agreed. Draft annual report also agreed and timetable noted.
- **Labour Party NPF and NEC:** Reports were taken from recent Labour NEC meetings.
- **Political Fund Review:** The committee discussed outcomes from the joint away-day with GPF.
- **Labour Party Conference:** Delegates were elected to represent the Committee at Labour Conference.
- **Labour Link Regional Elections:** Draft timetable for Labour Link regional elections agreed.
- **Parliamentary Work:** Reports on Equalities and Equal pay; Local Government Pay Campaign; Health Bill; Two tier workforce issues.

National Committee slam MPs over expenses



The anger and betrayal felt by Labour Party members at the actions of some Labour MPs' expense claims was unanimously expressed by members of UNISON's National Labour Link Committee at its meeting on May 14th. Members demanded that the Government and the party take clear and swift action to clean up the expenses situation and for stiff sanctions against those MPs who have broken the rules and those who have brought the Party into disrepute, even if the letter of the rules had not been broken.

The committee stressed the need for the action by the Party and the NEC to be quick rather than wait for slow parliamentary processes in which much of the public had little faith and that it should be seen to be fair rather than it appearing to let some get away with it. All the Committee felt that the party should be leading the way in publishing expenses and establishing new rules rather than letting the Daily Telegraph spin the story day after day and cause Labour as much damage as possible by picking on some and adding in their own spin! With Committee members out canvassing for the local and European elections it was felt that Labour candidates coming up for election who all believe in and work for the Party and its values should be strongly supported and not dragged down by the actions of a minority

of MPs. It was also agreed to highlight that our Labour MEPs have all had their expenses independently audited since 2000 unlike the representatives of other parties in Europe!

Labour Link's representatives were mandated to take the Committee's views forward to the Labour Party NEC which was held the following week, The Labour Party NEC agreed a process for action by the Party regarding MPs' expenses, not only where the rules (and possibly the law) have been broken but also where the spirit of the rules have been broken that bring the Party into disrepute. The NEC established a committee to hear cases with representatives from the constituencies, unions and local government.

On behalf of the Government, Gordon Brown outlined his proposals to confront and correct the current expenses framework bringing in immediate new rules for MPs – as the independent Commons review could take until the late Autumn – with claims limited and everything on the web in a transparent manner; new regulations on pay and expenses to be regulated by an independent outside body and all Labour candidates to sign up to strengthened party standards.

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