

UNISON beyond the

General Election

*UNISON annual leadership seminar
for key activists and officers*

Tuesday 26 January 2010
Nobel Suite 2
Novotel Hotel
100-110 Euston Road
LONDON
NW1 2AJ

10.30am – 3.30pm

The UNISON logo consists of the word "UNISON" in a bold, sans-serif font. Above the letters "I" and "O" are three horizontal, wavy lines that sweep across the top of the text, creating a sense of motion or a stylized wave.

UNISON beyond the General Election

With political fortunes rising and falling faster than the stock exchange, none of us can safely predict the political complexion of the UK's government and devolved administrations. Will Labour bounce back, reinvigorated by Gordon Brown's handling of the economic crisis? Will David Cameron continue to lead the Tories towards power? Or will all our elections be likely to lead towards more diverse representation – minority governments; coalition groupings or new alliances?

Come and hear Dave Prentis introduce these questions and take part in discussions about what they might mean for UNISON and our members.

Programme

1 0.30am *Tea/coffee/registration*

11 .00am **Opening remarks:** Gerry Gallagher, President

Key note speakers:

UNISON 2010 and beyond: In the keynote contribution, General Secretary Dave Prentis looks at the challenges and opportunities facing the union

Leadership - what is required to face the future?

Helen Black, Regional Secretary, East Midlands

12.30pm *Lunch*

1.30-2.45pm **Group discussions:**

[1] 2010—a year of renewal? The UNISON organising response

[2] 2010 – a year of austerity? The bargaining challenges

[3] 2010 – a year of change? The new political landscape and the threat to public services

[4] 2010 – a year of solidarity? The international agenda

2.45pm *Tea/coffee break*

3.00pm **Report back/discussion/response**

3.20pm **UNISON Objectives and Priorities 2010**

3.30pm **Closing remarks:** *Keith Sonnet, Deputy General Secretary*

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2010– a year of renewal?

The UNISON organising response

Introduction

In this briefing on whether 2010 can be a year of renewal, we look at our current organising performance and the practical measures we have taken to improve on it.

Current performance

Recruitment: At the end of November 2009 we recruited as many members as we did in the preceding year. Our performance is significantly better because we did not rely upon a major industrial dispute to boost recruitment levels as we did in 2008 with the Local Government pay dispute. Overall the union was forecast to grow by 25,000 members. Eight regions were either meeting or exceeding their membership growth KPI. Two regions were in negative territory and forecast to lose members in 2009.

Of the two major service groups, the Health group was growing at 4 per cent and six regional service groups were forecast to grow by more than 5 per cent. The Local Government service group was growing by less than half a percent, but three regional service groups were growing by more than 3 per cent. It was hampered by four regional service groups losing members whereas Health had only one.

Density: Our organising performance has to be seen against the challenge we face to improve both union and, more importantly, UNISON density. In Local Government average UNISON density is 30 per cent and union density is 16 per cent, which means that one out of two local government workers is not in a trade union. A more encouraging picture appears in Health where UNISON and union density is 26 per cent, which means that fewer than one out of two health workers are not in a trade union.

Reps: In 1998 reps were found in 60 per cent of workplaces, but the number of reps has been declining throughout the 1990s and into the millennium. In 2007, the figure was 51 per cent. The decrease in workplace coverage occurred at the same time as the introduction of our national organising strategy. Consequently reps were taking on more servicing of members at a time when they have significantly more workplaces to cover. This has had two effects; first reps have had less time to spend on recruitment and, second, more cases of rep burnout are occurring.

Our organising response

Our organising response to these challenges falls into three categories:

a) Administration, staffing, and training

NEC D&O organising committee: A new initiative that will have a significant impact on our performance is the establishment of the NEC D&O organising committee, which will meet all regions in 2010 to review their organising strategies and learn about the challenges they face. Greater lay scrutiny and understanding of our organising strategies at regional and branch level will in the medium and long term lead to an improvement in our overall organising and recruitment performance.

Line counting and density measurements: Before we can have an effective organising strategy at national, regional and branch level we require accurate data. The membership line counting and density projects provide accurate membership data that will enable us to design, implement and monitor organising strategies. The next membership line count began at the end of September 2009 and will provide the official national, regional and service group membership figures for the year.

On-line joining: Unquestionably this is the most significant development in the field of recruitment we have had in UNISON for many years. From the launch of on-line joining in mid April until the end of November we had over recruited 20,000 members. We estimate that in a full year we will recruit at least 30,000 new members on-line, which represents 20 per cent of our new members.

Branch assessment: The new branch assessment procedure came fully into operation last year and the appraisal of the first year is taking place this year. The significance of the new procedure, which builds on the branch development process, is greater lay and management scrutiny of branch outcomes. As the system becomes embedded it will indisputably contribute to an improvement in our recruitment and organising performance.

MTOC: The second most significant development in 2008/2009 has been the appointment of the new cadre of organisers at levels 5 and 7. It is difficult to quantify accurately the impact that they have on our recruitment and organising performance, but anecdotal evidence suggests that in a number of regions they are starting to have a significant effect. Intuitively it is clear that the new staff will have a significant effect both on our recruitment performance and our organising ability. The challenge for regions is not to allow them to be overwhelmed with casework or diverted onto other union business that has become a priority.

Steward recruitment module: A training module to assist branches to find new reps is available from LAOS. The module has been designed and piloted in the West Midlands region.

Activist development: As part of a review of activist development LAOS are proposing a scheme whereby every workplace rep should be able to expect a regular conversation (a

minimum of 2 per year) with a nominated person in their branch. It is an opportunity for the new rep to reflect on how the role is going and a look at the next steps in terms of training or other support for the role. As part of this programme a new branch secretary training and development programme is coming on stream. It will offer a programme of training and development to new branch secretaries over an eighteen month period and will include a formal system of mentoring. The intention is to develop a generation of organising branch secretaries who develop a culture of sharing responsibilities and tasks and focus on organising.

b) Organising campaigns

Three Companies Organising project: The project aims to work in partnership with our sister union from North America SEIU in order to recruit and organise the staff of three major private companies - Sodexo, Compass and Aramark - that hold significant contracts in the public sector. By joint working with our sister union we aim to test and employ SEIU organising and recruitment strategies and tactics in the care, cleaning and catering sectors where we struggle to organise.

Organising in schools: Following the creation of the School Support Staff Negotiating Body that is formulating a new package of terms and conditions, the Education service group is co-ordinating a national schools support staff recruitment and organising campaign. The campaign is paying dividends in several regions.

Health primary care project: This is an organising project the Health group has been piloting in Camden & Islington PCT. It has been rolled out to six other primary care trusts across the country. The goal of this project is to develop long-term sustainable membership increases matched with increased activity among members.

Million Voices For change campaign: As part of the campaign all regions have had a briefing on how to maximise the campaign as a recruitment vehicle. The campaign is now an integral part of day to day recruitment in branches.

c) Union modernisation Fund

In addition to the organising initiatives described above the union secured grants from the Union Modernisation Fund in 2007 to fund three organising projects. The projects focus on recruiting and organising migrant workers; establishing a network of Equality Reps; and the setting up of a network of Virtual branches on the web to improve membership participation. The projects will be reporting back on their outcomes in the spring of this year.

2010 – a year of austerity?

The bargaining challenges

Bargaining context

- UNISON's future bargaining strategy will face challenges posed by both the economy and a General Election. The upcoming pay rounds will take place within the confines of tight public sector finances and a potentially hostile political environment.

Trends 2009/10

- Pay settlements remained very low over 2009, held down by a combination of historically low inflation, rising unemployment and the worst economic downturn since 1929.
- By the end of the 2008/09 bargaining year the whole-economy median had fallen to 1.5% for the 12 months to August 2009, compared with 3.5% the previous year.
- The overall median for the private sector settlements was 2% and for the public sector was 2.5%, with the private sector being 'weighed down' by a large proportion of pay freezes.

Prospects 2010/11

- There is evidence of a 'thaw' in pay freezes in the upcoming pay round. The majority of private sector firms who paid 0% increases in 2009 say they will return to paying increases this year.
- While the government will honour current long-term deals in the public sector, new deals for 2010 will be subject to 1% cap announced in the Pre Budget Report.
- The Pre Budget report means that the public sector has now been subject to a stringent policy of pay restraint since 2007, long before the recession began.
- While the latest policy on public service pay is linked to plans to reduce the budget deficit, employees in the public sector will have their pay capped at a point when inflation – having been negative for a year – is likely to rise.

Economic indicators

- The all-items Retail Prices Index (RPI) rose to 3% in the year to November 2009 compared to -0.8 per cent in October. This is the first time that annual inflation has been positive since January 2009.

- The 1.1% increase in a single month was the largest rise since March 1990. CPI –the government’s preferred measure of inflation stood at 1.9% in November, up from 1.5% in October.
- Forecasters expect RPI to average 2.4% in the first quarter of 2010, and between 2.4% and 2.7% over the remainder of the year.
- Even this will not reflect the real rise in cost of living for UNISON’s low paid members. Low paid workers have a higher ‘effective inflation rate’ than higher paid workers. Expenditure on ‘essentials’ accounts for over two-thirds of the expenditure of the poorest households, but less than one-third of the wealthiest. According to the Minimum Income Standard project, the cost of a minimum household budget rose by about 5% in the year to July 2009, at a time when inflation was negative.
- Average earnings, excluding bonuses rose by 1.7% in the year to October 2009, unchanged from the September rate. Average earnings including bonuses rose by 1.5% in the year to October 2009, up from the September rate of 1.4%.
- The total number unemployed in the UK currently stands at 2.49 million - or 7.9% of the population - following hundreds of thousands of job losses in 2009. It is predicted by the CIPD that a further 250,000 jobs will be lost in the UK before the second quarter of 2010. Total unemployment expected to peak at 2.8m is still below earlier predictions of 3.5m.

Jobs vs. pay

- According to UNISON’s ‘Jobwatch’ report, NHS staff numbers grew by 23,000 in the third quarter of 2009, while local government shed 3,000 jobs and public corporations employed 5,000 fewer people.
- Councils are blaming potential funding cuts of up to 30% over three years from 2011 for job losses.
- At the same time the jobs market is growing at its fastest rate for two and a half years, with both permanent and temporary/agency placements up.
- Public service and voluntary sector job cuts are likely to be accomplished through the ‘reshaping’ of services via strategies such as shared services, Total Place, ‘Easy Council’ and general reorganisation.

Pensions

- Public service schemes are under attack, with media, pressure groups, Conservatives and Lib Dems arguing that they are ‘gold plated and unaffordable’.
- In fact neither LGPS nor NHSPS are unaffordable. Both are on firm financial footing, despite the recession.

- Average LGPS pension payout is only £4,000 (average for women is £2,000) with an average retirement age of 65. Average payout in NHSPS is £7,000 (£5,000 for women) but that includes 20% of membership who are GPs and other higher paid medical professionals.
- Defending pensions will involve ongoing efforts to make our case; lobby politicians and put pressure on employers through collective action.

Bargaining Strategies

- Employers may be using the recession as a smokescreen to make cuts and hold down pay. Branches should carry out detailed investigations of their employer's financial situation to ascertain the true position on the affordability of jobs and services.
- Where there are unavoidable limits on pay increases, branches should go through a consultation process to identify non-pay gains that would be of benefit to the membership. These include improved conditions, such as job security; improved family friendly provisions; workplace training and redeployment.
- Branches should also look at imaginative proposals to improve the social wage which would help our members' pay go further, such as subsidised childcare, green transport or leisure provision; youth employment schemes or healthy food programmes. As well as being a gain for our members, these proposals could spur collaboration with advocacy organisations and community groups interested in these issues.
- Our bargaining strategy should involve plans to build the power needed to achieve the goals we set out 0including increasing union density and going beyond the workplace to build sustainable alliances in the community.

2010 - a year of change?

The new political landscape and the threat to public services

Political outlook

- **UK General Election** now expected on 26 March (less likely) or 6 May (more likely).
- latest polling indicates slim **Tory majority** or **hung parliament** most likely result. Lib Dems and/or nationalist parties could be key to balance of power
- 6 May will also see **local elections** in all London boroughs and 134 other English authorities.

Economic and fiscal background

- most expect the recession to end in early 2010, but **growth will be low** and could even relapse.
- **unemployment will continue to rise**, CIPD expects peak at 2.8 million in summer 2010.
- collapse in tax revenue means govt now **borrowing at record levels** to finance public spending
- Conservatives have promised early **emergency cuts budget** in summer 2010 if elected
- BUT spending cuts and/or tax rises to close deficit will further depress growth and employment

Prospects for public services

- all three UK parties are committed to a sharp squeeze on overall public spending that will necessitate **real cuts** in 'unprotected' budgets and **major 'efficiency savings'** across the board
- overall this could imply the loss of **hundreds of thousands of public sector jobs over 5-10 years** – though 'natural wastage' may mean compulsory redundancies remain relatively rare
- they also imply **minimal growth in pay** – quite likely below inflation – for several years. It is not yet clear how this will affect comparisons with private sector pay, or recruitment and retention.

- the numbers of people in need of key services including health, education, social care and housing are growing, not falling, so even 'protected' budgets will feel increasingly stretched.
- all three UK parties are also committed to policies such as **contestability** and **personalisation** which are likely to **increase the role of private and third sector** in service provision

Labour have in recent months offered a new commitment to public provision of NHS services, and slightly shifted the emphasis of their deficit reduction plan from spending cuts to tax rises.

The **Conservatives** have made it clear they would cut faster and deeper than Labour, be less restrained in their use of the private sector, and more aggressive in their attitude to unions.

The **SNP** in Scotland are aiming to outflank Labour in their opposition to marketisation and privatisation, but are implementing major service cuts while blaming Westminster funding.

Plaid Cymru in Wales have a clearer commitment to public provision and better funding.

Public opinion

Polls suggests that the public want to see services protected:

- **53%** say 'spending on public services should be maintained, even if it means increasing the income tax I pay' (November 2009)
- **75%** think 'it is too easy for very rich people to get out of paying a fair level of tax' (June 2008)
- **73%** are against 'public services being run by private companies' (June 2009)

However the right-wing media and organisations like the TaxPayers' Alliance are working hard to whip up resentment over public sector pay, pensions and job security.

At a glance: key party positions on public services

Labour	Tories	Lib Dems
pledge to halve deficit by 2014	pledge to cut more than Labour	pledge to cut "savagely"
NICs up 1% for all over £20k; 50% income tax over £1 50k	aim to reverse NIC increase; aim to cut income tax and IHT	tax cuts for poor; tax rises for wealthy; no extra revenue
public pay rises capped at 1% for all in 2011-13 further pay restraint likely	public pay freeze 2011-12, except those under 18k further pay restraint likely	public pay bill frozen & job cuts and/or pay restraint
public pensions & not clear	public pensions & attack likely	'radical review' of pensions
small rise in school spending 'frontline' health spending frozen in real terms to 2013 Sure Start spending frozen in real terms to 2013 all other budgets (inc social care, FE, HE, housing, transport) cut around 6% pa major back office 'efficiencies'	schools spending not protected health spending frozen in real terms to 2013 Sure Start spending likely to be cut significantly all other budgets (inc social care, FE, HE, housing, transport) cut more than 6% pa major back office 'efficiencies'	all budgets subject to deep cuts Trident and Eurofighter cancelled
public sector 'preferred provider' of NHS services	NHS market opened up and deregulated	NHS market opened up and deregulated
local government outsourcing	local government outsourcing	local government outsourcing
personal budgets in social care and some NHS services	personal budgets in social care and some NHS services	personal budgets in social care and some NHS services
private sector running more 'back office' & shared services	private sector running more 'back office' & shared services	private sector running more 'back office' & shared services
some commitment to union partnership and consultation	likely attack on recognition, facility time, check-off	not known for union sympathy

2010 - A year of solidarity

The international agenda

UNISON members will be increasingly affected by what happens internationally in 2010 and beyond. Even those working in some of the more remote areas of the public sector will see changes to their working and personal lives which are the direct consequence of events and decisions which take place in the international arena. Some of those factors will be more obvious than others. The impact of climate change and the world economic crisis will be ever more influential on our lives whether it is through direct financial consequences or the need to adapt our lives to accommodate the changing environment in which we live and work. Some factors may be less obvious. Changes in working practices in another part of the world may affect our own jobs. A change in government in one part of Europe or Asia can radically alter the international political balance. And the emergence of new conflicts or the strengthening of fundamentalism in a distant part of the world could have a direct impact on our working lives. During 2010 we will be faced with a range of international issues which might include the following:

A changing world order

This is of course a phrase which is very much over used, and often misused, but clear changes are taking place in the international balance of power which could impact on our working lives. The growing influence of China is bound to have a profound impact. And while there could be enormous economic benefits there could also be major consequences for trade union and human rights. The growing influence of China in the developing world could seriously undermine some of the gains made by the trade union and democratic movements as economic aid is dispensed without any question about the activities of some of the most heinous dictators. The attempts to develop a new economic and political order (ALBA) in Latin America, if successful, could be an example which is adopted and built upon elsewhere and which could radically change the relationship of the United States with the rest of the world. And the growing power and influence, built on increasing co-operation, of key countries in the developing world could also have an enormous impact on some of the key decisions that the global community faces in the coming years. And as natural resources - energy and water in particular - become scarcer those who own and control them will see their potential power and influence increase.

A growing attack on trade union rights

We are all aware of the dangers of being a trade unionist in countries like Colombia, the Philippines, Korea, and Burma. And we can be sure that, despite campaigns mounted across the world and trade union interventions in bodies like the International Labour Organisation, the situation in those countries will at best only improve marginally. But it is not just in the developing world that trade union rights are under threat. In France, Italy and Canada we have seen a growing attack on some of our basic trade union rights – especially in the public sector. The definition of essential services and minimum levels of service are being drawn ever more widely in order to allow reactionary governments to hinder or prevent normal trade union activity. This should be seen not simply as a national quirk but as an international trend, as one government is emboldened by the ‘success’ of another in ‘reinterpreting’ ILO conventions. And, as the impact of the world recession continues to tighten its grip, so employers everywhere will be looking to use the opportunity to rein in trade union rights, testing out their ideas in one part of their global empires before implementing them across the whole of their enterprises.

Changing patterns of migration

Parts of our economy are increasingly dependant on migrant workers. And at the same time the influx of migrant workers has provided new challenges for the public services we deliver. And the presence of migrants is used by our extremist political opponents to increase fear and instability. The flow of migrants is affected by both ‘pull’ and ‘push’ factors. The pull of the prospect of a better job and an improved quality of life in Britain can be reinforced by the push of conflict, economic hardship and political attack in other parts of the world. It is difficult to predict precisely what will happen to migration flows world events, climatic change; possible new wars will all exert an influence. However whatever happens to actual levels of migration, whatever countries those migrants come from, or return to, it is certain that the influence of migration in all aspects of our working, political and personal life will continue to grow.

Building global trade union partnerships

As the world becomes ever more ‘globalised’ so the trade union movement has responded to the challenge by strengthening its global co-operation. The challenges can and will take many forms as will the instruments of co-operation. The ITUC and the Global Unions are becoming ever more important players on the world arena but we have to work to link them more closely into the daily challenges of the workplace. Individual unions are building alliances whether it is to interact more effectively with employers who have a global reach or simply to ensure that the best and most up to date trade union practices are being followed as widely as possible. And the labour movement is becoming increasingly active in the international NGO arena both in terms of ensuring that employment rights and decent work are integral to international negotiations and as a player in wider social, environmental and economic issues.

UNISON Objectives and Priorities 2010

This year, UNISON members face a tough political and economic climate. We aim to make our union stronger so that we can continue to defend our members and promote public services.

We will ensure that we provide value for money from our members' subscriptions during this difficult economic climate by focusing the union's activities on our agreed objectives and priorities.

OBJECTIVE 1 Recruiting, organising, representing and retaining members

1.1 We will grow stronger as an organising union by:

- working towards a goal of achieving 1.5 million members by July 2013. We will aim to increase the union's influence in private companies, the community and voluntary sector and among migrant workers.
We aim to maximise recruitment performance and gain a better understanding of the reasons for non-membership. We will support all branches/regions through the joint assessment process designed to strengthen our organising capacity, and will ensure that they have the resources needed to meet workplace organising targets
- increasing the diversity, number and percentage of trained workplace representatives and will provide development pathways linked to national standards and qualifications. We will investigate the barriers and incentives relating to improving their recruitment performance. We aim to improve access to and distribution of time off facilities and secure improvements to the legal frame work achieving greater member participation and engagement by improving access to union information and resources.

1.2 UNISON will improve representation by:

- Increasing member participation, in particular at branch and workplace level, including achieving increased turnout in national elections and ballots.
- operating an efficient and effective casework management system
- implementing a new and responsive member complaints/feedback procedure.

OBJECTIVE 2 **Negotiating and bargaining on behalf of members and promoting equality**

- 2.1 UNISON will combat low pay, negotiate improved pay and conditions and implement agreed pay and grading packages to:
- deliver fair and equal pay across all sectors and bargaining groups
 - secure quality and non-discriminatory pension schemes which are governed in the best interests of members,
 - and promote lifelong learning, skills pathways and workforce development.
- 2.2 The union will provide effective bargaining and support services to members; including expert support in procurement processes aimed at securing employer compliance with statutory guidance to prevent a two-tier workforce; ensuring long term job security and avoiding enforced redundancies
- 2.3 UNISON will promote equality and challenge discrimination in the workplace, using public sector equalities duties and relevant equality legislation.

OBJECTIVE 3 **Campaigning and promoting UNISON on behalf of members**

- 3.1 UNISON will work to prioritise and promote its Million Voices campaign to stand up for our members, defend their jobs and the services they provide by:
- developing the case for promoting properly funded quality public services
 - campaigning against PFI, privatisation and the marketisation of public services, and
 - campaigning for more decent and affordable housing.
- 3.2 UNISON campaigns for rights at work to:
- Eliminate discrimination in the workplace
 - Improve working lives and work-life balance
 - Extend collective rights in line with ILO conventions, UN convention on social economic and cultural rights, EU charter and bills of rights and effective application of statutory duties
- 3.3 We will maximise our political influence by:
- ensuring effective and co-ordinated use of political fund resources

- improving political engagement at local, regional and national level to secure changes to government policies including those of devolved nations
- promoting our key objectives within the European Union and internationally.

3.4 UNISON will challenge discrimination by:

- developing and implementing a robust equality strategy across the union
- promoting respect for asylum-seekers, migrant workers and humane immigration rules, combating the BNP and the far right , and promoting community cohesion

3.5 UNISON will implement a green strategy across the whole union that ensures consistency and rigour by:

- working with environmental organisations that share our aims and values.

OBJECTIVE 4 Developing an Efficient and Effective Union

4.1 We will improve our branch and service group structures by implementing the decisions of the 2009 National Delegate Conference.

4.2 We will improve the management, development and diversity of staff by:

- re-profiling and developing our workforce regionally and nationally to maximise resources on UNISON's organising and campaigning objectives
- maintaining and developing the union's equality-proofed pay and grading system
- retaining Investors in People status and improving work-life balance policies for staff to enhance flexible working while ensuring that services to branches and members are maintained and improved.

4.3 We will improve our IT, organisational and financial systems by:

- developing the membership records system (RMS) as the union's core organisational database and communications channel for the recording, processing and storage of membership and income records; for e-communications with members, activists and staff; and for organising information to support the recruitment and retention of members.
- developing the RMS to improve membership data accuracy; income collection and allocation and branch accessibility and promote online member recruitment.
- improving systems for financial reporting for branches, including continued development of online and interactive services to support branch financial accounting.

- using new and developing technology to further integrate UNISON's Information and Communications Technology(ICT) to improve communications and information management and maximise the use of e-communications throughout the union.

4.4 We will improve our environmental performance and reduce our carbon footprint by:

- implementing our environmental strategy, policy and action plan and meeting targets set in accordance with best practice.
- putting in place an environmental management system leading to ISO 14001 certification.

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