

Friday 22nd June 2007

Steve's Round up.



This week has gone very slowly, there has been little debate, by the time this goes to print we have only debated 20 motions. It's been very bland. All our Motions have been carried, which is a good result for the

West Midlands.

Unfortunately I've not had time to socialise, apart from the Regional meeting on Monday night, which I thank you all again for attending, it was a good turn out.

Delegates have commented on how they have found the geographical seating arrangements within our section, alas I could not get anything changed about the raised seating area, I did try! Going back to the debates we seem to have had more debate in the News Sheet than in Conference, I have enjoyed the reading of this years' News Sheet. Overall Delegates and Visitors seem to have enjoyed Conference so far.

Conference decisions on West Midlands Motions so far

Motion 28 Save our services—carried
Motion 53 Palestine—carried
Motion 63 Global warming—carried
Motion 57 Rise of the BNP—carried

Message from News Sheet Team

Amy, Julie and I (Sue) would like to say a big thank you to all of you who contributed to the News Sheet this week. Without the articles, quizzes, not forgetting Steve's quiz we would not have been able to produce what we believe an informative sometimes controversial news letter.

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Steve Beatgore



This weeks News Sheet Additions are available on the Regional Webpage.
www.westmids.unison.org.uk

Facilitators Role

A facilitator can have many roles when assisting a fellow delegate prior to, during and after conference. The qualities required are many and varied. I should probably have joined the gym to strengthen my arms for case carrying and lifting prior to taking on the role. On a more serious note the role can include helping someone to get dressed, bathed, putting on and fastening shoes, assistance to get to and from the Conference, in fact all those things we often take for granted.

Sue Laws



Conference Democracy

Whilst we all agree that it is important to get as many motions as possible heard during the week and that we don't need to hear endless debates on the same subject.

Has anyone else noticed the cynical use made of the 'right to move' to the vote to stifle views with which the NEC disagree.

Watching the 'NEC' 'organisers' on the floor tactically ending debate once the NEC or Professional Speakers have spoken or to stop known 'opponents' speaking would be fun if not for the fact that it is such a shameful misuse of democracy.

Dave Auger
Wolverhampton.



Sounding Board as Debating Tool.....

What a wonderful thing is the regional newsletter to facilitate a war of words about Shrewsbury and the APF Green Councillors and the BNP—nowhere would bother listening to us and perhaps the rest of the region are looking on in bemusement!

However there are 2 points that I made in my previous article that need further clarification:

- ◆ There are no green councillors at Borough level in Shrewsbury. I was referring to Brighton where we are staying this week
- ◆ I indicated that there were only a few (I think) members of the Labour Party who delivered anti BNP leaflets. Contrast this with the huge number of 'firing party' activists who did the talk of the work

The UAF in Shrewsbury would of course, welcome many more helpers next year, in the 14 wards up for grabs when another mass leafleting will take place. I look forward to seeing the Labour Party joining our ranks then.

Jonathon Sedgeber
Telford LG Branch

New Perspectives

Conference Diary

Saturday: My first Conference after over 30 years as a Trade union Member and over 20 years in Unison. This is a chance to find out what they really get up to at National Conference. **Sunday:** Local Government Conference and I am asked to speak on the Pensions Debate, which has been of real interest to our Branch Members over the past three years. Our regional rep, Tony provides invaluable assistance, but advises me to prepare my own notes, because I '...probably won't be able to read his writing...' My first draft is probably very good and covers the main points. Unfortunately this now highlights a further problem in that I cannot now read my own writing! The Agenda moves rapidly forward reaching the Motions on Pensions. I report to rostrum Control, as the previous Amendment is debated. I will have to wait like the condemned man, until the morning. **Monday:** With the unexpected delay, for my speech, I have the luxury rarely enjoyed by other speakers of being able to re-write my notes, which are now virtually legible. My speech is over in a flash, and is genuinely exhilarating. After this I can relax, and we take in a fringe meeting on Public Housing, which provides considerable interest, from the passionate speakers. **Tuesday:** As a visitor to the National Delegate Conference, I have the opportunity to watch proceedings from the gallery which provides an entirely different sense from actually being in the auditorium and caught up in the proceedings. **Wednesday:** The sun is now blazing over Brighton, as we are enthralled by various wide ranging topical issues including climate change. As the week progresses I come to appreciate the over whelming sense of community amongst delegates. Whilst some clearly have their different views, this only serves to make the proceedings lively. The opportunity to meet fellow delegates and share information and experiences, is invaluable for the future.

Andrew McLaughlin, Branch Chair, Shropshire LG Branch



First timers!

Tony describes his first visit to Conference as exceptional, he found the atmosphere friendly and not as daunting as he first expected. Once the initial visit to the Conference Centre and hall he felt at ease, "I think getting over the first session of Conference was like an ice breaker, and since then I've got used to the ebb and flow of the proceedings." He has enjoyed the debates and felt drawn into them by the passion and devotion shown by the speakers and the power of their speeches. I have enjoyed the Fringe Meetings that I have attended and also the West Midlands Social. Previously Tony has been to Black Members Conference as a visitor, and several Service Group Seminars. He would definitely like to come to Conference again.

Karen is enjoying Conference, particularly the video about the last 12 months in UNISON. She likes Brighton and the venue, a little disappointed with the seating and temperature in the hall. Karen has previously been to Health Conference. She is disappointed to find there is no Cancer Stall in the UNIZONE or Main Foyer Stalls. She has found the other stalls interesting and informative. Last night she attended Regional Women's Meeting, taking the opportunity to meet other women from within the West Midlands and hear about their experiences as Union members and what's going on within the Region.

*Tony Meads, University of Wolverhampton Branch
Karen Burgess, University Hospitals Birmingham*



Older! Perspectives



A PEACE ARROW

President Malcolm Cantello hopes to mark his time in office by helping make life a little easier for young people in war-torn Sierra Leone. Malcolm has chosen to make his mark by adopting a project being run by youth group ARROW in Sierra Leone. ARROW – or Art: a Resource for Reconciliation Over the World – is based at the Desmond Tutu centre, at Plymouth's College of St Mark and St John. It started out as an attempt to use art and IT to build a dialogue between schools initially in Plymouth, Palestine, Kosovo and South Africa. Archbishop Tutu himself described the project as "exciting – particularly as it is so apt for our time". The aim is to build a space that provides a rare opportunity for different cultures to overcome division and meet and discover each in a friendly and informal environment. This year, it is expanding with projects in Sierra Leone, Brazil and India and Pakistan. The "Voices of Reconciliation" project in Sierra Leone aims to help young people overcome the trauma of a horrifying civil war.

So why did Malcolm choose this particular project? "I wanted something that involved young people as they are our future," he says. "Sierra Leone is struggling with the aftermath of a civil war, and I believe that, as a former colonial power, we have a responsibility to do what we can to help people who are living in very difficult circumstances." Another factor that attracted the UNISON president is that this is project that will continue long after his presidential year. Starting with one group of young people in Freetown, the Sierra Leone capital, ARROW plans to move on to build a network across the country, allowing young people to engage with others in the wider world and throughout the country, across the barriers thrown up by the civil war. "I wanted to do something different and sustainable," notes Malcolm. "This is a project that is ongoing that hopefully will make a real difference to people's lives." Find out more about ARROW at www.art-peace.co.uk

Malcolm Cantello, Unison President



Last Conference for Lou!

Lou Gladden has been a member of Unison for 22 years within the Shropshire Local Government Branch. He believes his first Conference was in 1989, which means that he has attended 18 times - he must be mad! On reflection, Lou feels that there used to be more humorous and interesting speeches which gave Conference a lighter atmosphere. One of Lou's most memorable moments was when Tony Robinson paid tribute to Rodney Bickerstaff in an excellent speech. Lou and others used to cheer when Ivan Beavis spoke at the rostrum and wore his topical sloganed t-shirts. A memorable regional moment was when Shropshire spoke against the subs rise as the Branch weren't getting value for money. Lou feels that the Branch is reasonably quiet so when they make a fuss, they mean business! Sometimes it's necessary to do this and Lou would encourage Branches to speak up once in a while. Lou believes that the best part of Conference is the networking. This gives Branches the opportunity to discuss with others how they deal with issues and share tactics. Make the most of the opportunity and attend as many fringe meetings as possible. Take Lou's advice, he's been around a while! Shropshire Branch support and promote the Credit Union. This is important to members and Lou would encourage others to do the same where possible.

One thing about going to Conference with Lou, is that you never go hungry! You're never far away from food and he always knows the best places to go. Except in Glasgow where he makes you walk in circles only to end up back at the hotel! He didn't like Glasgow in 2005 as he got wet from the rain, and that was while sitting in the conference hall! Lou will be taking up the Secretary's position within the Shropshire Retired Members group so we haven't heard the last of him just yet. Watch out West Midlands, he's still got issues to deal with!

Shropshire LG Branch

Samar and Jawad

Unison West Midlands has a Samar and Jawad Working Party. It meets quarterly in Birmingham, liaises with the campaign and works within the union to build support. The Working Party is open to Reps from any Branch or SOG in the region. The next meeting will be at the Regional Centre on Wednesday 5th September. In 2003 Unison National Delegate Conference backed the campaign for freedom and justice for Samar and Jawad. The motion carried overwhelmingly. Samar and Jawad have now spent another four years in prison for crimes they didn't commit. The European Court of Human Rights has just dealt them another blow. It has dismissed their appeal. And although they are now well past the mid-point of their prison sentences – when parole is normally considered – both of them are still in gaol. The campaign carries on till Samar and Jawad are out of prison and are given the chance to rebuild their lives. Visit the campaign's stand in the Unizone.



Bob Deacon, Wolverhampton Branch

MOTION 53 Palestine

Yesterday, came news the European Union will restore aid to the occupied Palestinian Territories. At last some relief to communities where unemployment reaches eighty percent and to public service workers like us who each month for the last 18 months live on tender hooks whether this month they'll get their wages or half their wages or none of their wages. Why was the aid stopped? Because in January 1996 the Palestinians held a democratic parliamentary elections and the West didn't like who won. Yet in Israel parties of out-and-out Racists, people who want to transfer the Palestinian population out of the country, service in the government and billions of dollars of US and carry on regardless. One rule for Palestinians, another for Israeli's.

Our union has supported the Palestinians ever since we formed our union in 1993. We've done some magnificent work with our brother and sister Trade Unionists in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and here in the UK, with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. Ten days ago when 20,000 demonstrated in London to say Enough! To forty years of Israeli occupation, UNISON was there. The National Banner, Keith Sonnet, Deputy General Secretary on the Platform.

The Palestine Solidarity Campaign – Like Anti Apartheid of twenty years ago – sees the Trade Unions as the base to build their campaign. Eighteen national Trade Unions representing 5 million workers are now affiliated. But, Conference, all this work over all these years and the lives of the Palestinians still get worse.

So, its not enough, is it, Conference. We need more, and our motion calls for redoubled effort at National, Regional and Branch level. No doubt the most controversial part of our motion is the call for a boycott of Israel.

I understand the point of view of those who say, peace requires equality and partnership. Of course it does but where are we starting from? Can a knife and a wound be partners? First the wound must heal and the other guy must put his knife down. We think that ending the occupation is the precondition of any of this. The boycott is not an end in itself. Our aim is to end the occupation. We say ending the occupation demands concerted and sustained pressure on Israel including the boycott.



Tracy Morgan, Wolverhampton General

Moving Amendment 57.4 and supporting Motion
57 Rise of the BNP



.....Conference we have a problem. A member of the Wolverhampton Branch spotted this problem on the run up to the Local Elections in May. This Conference is the problem! It's a Search Light leaflet. Its bright. Its glossy. And it says all the right things. But Conference, it won't deliver itself. It doesn't have wings. So Conference, if we are going to talk the talk then all of us have to be prepared to go back to our localities and literally walk the walk.....

Adrian Turner, Wolverhampton Branch



Sandra Dean
Branch Secretary Walsall Hospital Branch
NEC Member



Sadly this is Sandra's last National Delegates Conference.

We wish her all the best and thank her for all her hard work to date.

Motion 49
New Labour - What do we get for our money?

I think that it is very good that Motion 49 is being discussed on our newssheet. It is high time that we had a debate across the whole union about the issues involved and I hope it gets debated at Conference.

However, I don't think Patricia or Lou from Shropshire Local Government Branch have really taken up the points raised in the motion or those that have been raised by Dave Auger. In Coventry District Branch we unanimously voted to support this motion, as we believe this debate is long overdue.

Yes it was bad under the Tories, but as an ex Labour Party member, I don't believe that we can continue down the current road that we are on. Attacks on pensions, pay, NHS and many other important issues stem from Labour Government policy. With only 37% of members paying in to the APF, we need an urgent debate about what we get for the funding. New Labour. Why should we pay money to a party who are robbing our members on pay, pensions and health?

Paul Hunt, Coventry District

It is unfortunate that this following article has been written -

The Regional Representatives have received a number of complaints about the behaviour of some West Midlands delegates and visitors, both inside and outside of conference.

We would like to remind all delegates and visitors that UNISON expects it's members to behave with consideration to each other, this includes not using mobile phones in the conference hall whilst it is in session and having lengthy conversations with Colleagues whilst speakers are presenting.

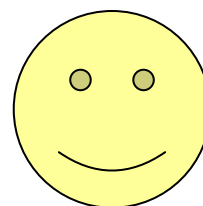
Whilst it is perfectly in order to disagree with the view and actions of other members, it is not in order to descend into personnel abuse. Please behave with courtesy in all other delegate and visitor areas.

We would also like to remind delegates and visitors that we have been supplied with information about their attendance at each of the sessions at conference.

Steve and Erica, Regional Delegates

Answers to competition 'What's next in the following sequence?'

1. Holyhead— where the A5 ends
2. Bourbon—French Royal House
3. Brian Wilde—4th man in Last of the Summer Wine
4. Inter Milan—4th European Cup winner
5. Thomas Jefferson—American Presidents
6. Rome—post war Olympics
7. McMillan—post war PM's
8. Leeds—4th largest city
9. Peter Shilton—100 caps for England
10. Picard—Captains of the Starship Enterprise



Answers to yesterday's film and TV quiz

1. The Sweeney
2. Elizabeth Montgomery
3. Laurence Olivier
4. 1960
5. Elizabeth Taylor

Yesterday's obscure photo was the top of a Brighton Parking Meter!

Q & A Q & A Q & A

Q The News sheet Team would be grateful if you could complete this brief questionnaire. Please spend a few moments and hand the completed forms to your Regional Delegates on Friday morning, we will be in the hall to collect them.

Your answers will assist in helping next years' News sheet Team

Q

& Q.1 Did you receive a copy of the news sheet daily?

A Yes..... No.....

Q Q.2 Was the news sheet informative?

& Yes..... No.....

A Q.3 In one sentence can you describe the design?
.....
.....

Q Q.4 Did you find the articles interesting?

& Yes..... No.....

A Q.5 Was there enough mix of light hearted and serious articles?

Q

& Yes..... No.....

Thank you

A

Q & A Q & A Q & A