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**To: Branch Secretaries**  
**Regional Secretaries**  
**Regional Women's Officers**  
**National Self-Organised Group Officers**

11 November 2011

Dear Colleague

**NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE**  
**16-18 FEBRUARY 2012 – THE BRIGHTON CENTRE, BRIGHTON**

A copy of the preliminary agenda for the 2012 national women's conference to be held in Brighton from 16-18 February 2012 is being forwarded to branches.

The closing date for amendments to motions is noon on Wednesday 14 December 2011.

Amendments must be submitted on the correct forms. The forms must be completed with the date of the meeting of women members at which the amendment was agreed.

The forms must be signed by two members of the Branch Women's Group. Amendments not correctly submitted will be ruled out of order.

Please note that amendments to Standing Orders are not open to further amendment.

More information on women's conference can be found at: [www.unison.org.uk/women](http://www.unison.org.uk/women)

Yours sincerely  
**DAVE PRENTIS**  
**GENERAL SECRETARY**





**NATIONAL WOMEN'S  
CONFERENCE**

**16-18 FEBRUARY 2012**

**BRIGHTON CONFERENCE CENTRE,  
BRIGHTON**

**PRELIMINARY AGENDA**

- \* Recruiting, Organising, Representing and Retention of Members
- \* Negotiating and Bargaining
- \* Campaigning and Promoting UNISON
- \* Developing an Efficient and Effective Union

## **1. DECENT PENSIONS MATTER TO YOUNG WOMEN**

This Conference is appalled by the attacks on our pension schemes and that women - young women in particular - will be disproportionately disadvantaged.

This Conference is alarmed that low-take up, or withdrawal from the schemes, by members will be damaging to the schemes and may in the long-term make them unviable.

This Conference believes that women have a key role in defending our pensions, including explaining to others the importance of:

- 1) Joining and staying in occupational pensions schemes to ensure that members have some small measure of dignity and independence in retirement;
- 2) The part decent pensions play in reducing the call on state benefits, welfare and health services;
- 3) The investments made by pension schemes to support industry and create jobs.

This Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to do its utmost to:

- a) Ensure these messages are communicated to all women members
- b) Work with regional women's groups to ensure this issue remains a priority in women's self-organisation, and is promoted in the union's other structures;
- c) Examine ways of campaigning to move beyond pensions to make the case for improving the value of belonging to a pension scheme.

*National Young Members' Forum*

## **2. ENOUGH IS ENOUGH - THE BATTLE FOR DECENT PENSIONS FOR WOMEN**

Conference notes with concern that the proposed changes to public sector pension schemes and the state retirement age are disproportionately impacting on the lives of women.

Women are already statistically more likely to have lower pensions, primarily due to time taken out of the workplace and part-time working to meet caring responsibilities, and low pay affecting both their lifetime earnings and their pension in retirement.

Disabled and Black women statistically have lower lifetime earnings, and are therefore even more vulnerable to pensioner poverty. LGBT women have fought long and hard for equality in public sector pensions including pensions for surviving same sex partners and pensions equality for trans workers, and now face seeing those pensions eroded.

In the current economic climate low paid women in the public sector have also seen their household income reduced and may now see a stark choice between paying pension contributions or meeting household bills and childcare costs.

Many women are already suffering the consequences of being unable to pay into an occupational pension scheme - two thirds of the UK pensioners now living in poverty are women - but research shows that as many as half of all women are still not able to make adequate pension provision for their future.

Meanwhile the accelerated state pension age raise for women has dashed the expectations of working women who will now be forced to work longer. This raises serious questions about the ability of workers in some professions to be able to do their jobs safely and effectively; the lack of opportunities which will be available for younger workers; and the levels of stress and ill health among an ageing workforce.

Conference applauds the public sector pensions campaign led by UNISON, and calls upon the national women's committee to :

- 1) liaise with the NEC and service groups to ensure that these concerns are taken on board in UNISON's pensions campaigning and negotiating agenda;
- 2) liaise with the NEC to ensure that clear advice is available to members on the benefits of remaining within their occupational pension scheme and the implications of leaving;
- 3) encourage women members to become actively involved in pensions campaigning, and as pension trustees and champions.
- 4) work with regional women's committees to promote the "get campaigning" materials which provide resources and training to assist women in lobbying and campaigning in defence of pensions and other UNISON campaigns.

*National Women's Committee*

### **3. WOMEN AND WORK**

The budget cuts being imposed on the public sector is having a huge impact on women, two thirds of the public sector workforce is made up of women, who carry out a variety of roles. In some regions almost fifty per cent of the female population is employed in this sector.

Those traditional job roles filled by women such as administration is seeing a nineteen per cent increase in redundancies if compared to figures for 2010. This figure added to the rising numbers of posts not being filled due to employers closing workplaces, deleting posts and generally not recruiting is having a further impact on women's lives.

In August 2011 the number of unemployed women rose by fifteen thousand six hundred. Changes to the welfare state are also contributing to the amount of women trying to access employment. We have lone parents being moved off income support onto Jobseekers Allowance when their child reaches the age of seven years. This benefit has seen claims reach a fifteen year high. It is clear that the budget cuts within the public

sector will see this figure continue to rise. Cuts to tax credits and the gap between pay and living costs is also adding to the burden that women face.

The government's view on the effect of these cuts on women is worrying, the Equalities Minister Lynne Featherstone when asked about her views on the effect on women that public sector cuts would have, is quoted as saying "you can't make an omelet without cracking eggs".

This shows a total lack of understanding of the role that women play in society and the contribution they make.

Therefore, conference asks the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Work with regions to establish the extent of redundancies within both the public sector and the voluntary sectors that are affecting our women members.
- 2) Raise the issue with both Labour Link and the GPF.
- 3) Use the Million Voices Campaign to raise awareness at national and local levels the impact of the cuts on women and how the loss of posts traditionally held by women are impacting on services.

*West Midlands Region*

#### **4. FOOD BANKS VS BANKERS' BONUSES**

Conference notes with dismay the resurgence of food banks across the UK.

In September 2011 it was announced that jobcentres in England and Wales will refer people whose benefits have been delayed, or have been refused crisis loans, to charity-run food banks that will give them a food parcel containing basics such as tinned soup, baked beans, meat, fish and pasta.

The food banks will be run by the Trussell Trust, a charity that anticipates running around 130 centres and feeding between 90-100,00 people in the next year, and which predicts that this may rise to up to half a million people by 2015.

Cuts in public services are already having a disproportionate impact on women, as the services they rely on and the services they provide are being targeted for cuts. Women escaping domestic violence may see no alternative other than to seek help from the food banks as benefits are delayed and crisis loans refused.

UNISON members, particularly low paid women members and lone parents (90% of whom are women), may be forced to seek help in this way, as rising food and energy prices, wage freezes and redundancy impact on their ability to support themselves and their families.

Whilst working people, and those made unemployed suffer, bankers bonuses continue to rise. In July 2011 it was reported that payments hit fourteen billion pounds despite the coalition's pledge to block "unacceptable bonuses". Conference agrees that this is yet more evidence of the government's callous disregard for the most vulnerable in society.

Conference therefore calls upon the national women's committee to :

- 1) Encourage branch and regional women's groups to liaise with local community organisations and public sector alliances to support those most in need, and to campaign jointly to raise public awareness of the impact that this government's policies are having on the most vulnerable in our society, particularly highlighting the return to food banks and soup kitchens;
- 2) Work with UNISON Welfare "There for You" to ensure that members are aware of the assistance available to members in crisis

*National Women's Committee*

## **5. DEFENDING LGBT WOMEN'S PUBLIC SERVICES AND JOBS**

Conference deplores the Tory-led government's brutal and unnecessary cuts on public services, many of which have had a particular impact on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) women.

These ideologically driven cuts to public sector funding have seen targeted services such as those delivered by domestic abuse workers, HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus) prevention workers, LGBT youth workers, LGBT, women's and equalities officers lost. Mainstream council services which LGBT women rely on, like social care and libraries, have been severely affected. Council and National Health Service (NHS) contributions to voluntary sector organisations have been reduced, with LGBT community organisations delivering vital services among the first to feel the threat of closure.

The Tories' promise to protect the NHS has turned out to be hollow. LGBT women are already experiencing the detrimental impact of cuts to the NHS. NHS trusts across the country have started tighter rationing of NHS funding for a range of treatments such as In Vitro Fertilisation. Many are taking steps to scale back and reduce access to whole swathes of vital healthcare including HIV services, safer sex services, gender reassignment surgery, mental health and addiction services.

Cuts to police and justice services will hamper their ability to deal with hate crime and domestic abuse. The wholesale attempt to privatise education through free schools and academies and through developing a market in higher education will make it more likely that homophobia, biphobia and transphobia in education will go unchallenged.

Conference also notes that our pensions are under fire and our terms and conditions such as pay, allowances and sick leave are being chipped away. Conference believes that the attack on pensions and terms and conditions is a first step towards selling off public services and ensuring even greater profits for private sector providers.

Conference further notes that unemployment amongst women has increased massively and is at its highest level in twenty-three years. Public sector cuts have played a huge part in job losses, as women make up two thirds of these workers. The threat of losing their job can deter LGBT women from raising complaints about harassment and bullying in the workplace.

Conference acknowledges the lack of awareness of the impact this concerted assault on public services is having on LGBT women.

Conference recognises to save jobs and public services, including those targeted at LGBT women, we need to continually focus on building the strength of public opinion behind us. We must push home the core UNISON messages that these cuts are unnecessary and we are not all in this together.

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to urge regional women's groups to:

- 1) Use the Million Voices campaign materials to educate the public about the value of public services including specific services targeted at women and LGBT women;
- 2) Record the impact of government cuts in their local areas for use in campaigning;
- 3) Seek ways to work more closely with other regional self organised groups including regional LGBT groups, other unions and trade union networks, local voluntary and community sector organisations and anti-cuts groups, where appropriate.

Conference further calls the National Women's Committee to:

- a) Develop a comprehensive, proactive communications strategy, including targeted campaign materials, publicising the impact of the attack on public services on women, with specific reference to LGBT women;
- b) Work with appropriate national community and voluntary organisations fighting the cuts;
- c) Work with appropriate structures in UNISON to highlight cuts to LGBT women's services and campaign for properly funded LGBT women's services.

*National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and  
Transgender Committee*

## **6. THRICE CUTS**

This Conference is all too aware of the disproportionate impact on women that the Coalition Government's distorted priorities and divisive agenda of cuts are having. This time last year conference members heard about the likely impact on women of the cuts - predictions and estimates all backed up by the research undertaken for example by, the Institute of Fiscal Studies, the TUC, the Commons Library Gender Audit of the 2010 Spring Budget, the Fawcett Society and more. The Fawcett Society called it 'triple jeopardy' to highlight a threefold attack on women via job cuts in the public sector, a reduction in the core public services that women rely on for themselves and those they care for and slashed benefits - all of which threatens a huge step back in women's equality.

In the period from April 2010 to October 2011 the richest one per cent in the UK saw their incomes rise by eighteen per cent, the buzzword in the City last year according to city journalists was 'BAB - Bonuses are Back' with bankers bonuses for 2011 totalling fourteen billion pounds (two billion pounds more than in 2008). By contrast, in the same period women were hit by a freeze on child benefit; health in pregnancy grant abolished; Sure Start Maternity Grant only to be paid for the first child; child tax credit changes

cutting the incomes of many families; cuts to women's advice centres and refuges; the rise in childcare costs and State Pension reforms that saw thousands of women lose thousands of pounds in lost state pension, in spite of the government's six month concession for women who would have been the hardest hit.

In addition, public service workers, the majority of whom are women, have come in for some of the government's fiercest attacks - enduring another year of pay freezes, pay cuts, redundancies and being asked to pay more, work longer for a poorer pension. Sadly, the predictions made in 2010 are now reality for hundreds of thousands of women. According to Aviva, between October 2010 and October 2011, thirty two thousand women were forced to leave their jobs due to the rise in childcare costs (Aviva Family Finances Report, October 2011). When it comes to the cuts, 'women and children first' takes on a whole new meaning.

There is an alternative, and it doesn't include attacking women's state pension, closing Sure Start Centres, shutting libraries, closing women's refuges, abolishing school breakfast clubs. Conference recognises UNISON's hard work campaigning for an alternative. An alternative that includes for example, a small tax of 0.05 per cent well known as the 'Tobin Tax' or 'financial transactions tax' - a small tax that could yield billions for the UK economy every year.

Women's rights have not been easily won. Most, if not all have been as a consequence of years of struggle. Over the last hundred or so years, women have won the right to vote and have won the right to equal pay. However, this Tory led government are a sharp reminder that women's equality can all too quickly be eroded and conference believes that as well as continuing the great work that UNISON already has been doing to raise awareness on all of these issues, that it is time to raise the level of campaigning once again.

UNISON have proudly played a prominent role in winning many rights for women over the years and Conference believes that we must step up our campaigning if we are to make any inroads in preventing the damage that the coalition government are intent of levelling on women.

Therefore we call upon the National Women's Committee to work with the NEC, Service Groups, National Self Organised Groups to:

- 1) Plan a campaign and strategy aimed at branches and women members, that will raise awareness at a local level, along similar lines to the recent Fawcett Society 'Don't turn back time' campaign.
- 2) Produce a leaflet and poster with the campaign message for all branches and women members.
- 3) Encourage branches to raise awareness of these issues during women's history month.

*South East Region*

## **7. WOMEN AT RISK - THE DANGER OF CUTS TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN SERVICES**

Conference notes with concern that research published by the False Economy campaign in August 2011 showed that numerous support services for women were having their funding cut or withdrawn, according to data gathered from 265 Local Authorities in England. Services in other parts of the UK are similarly under threat.

Research has demonstrated that there is a clear link between economic tension and domestic violence, which may potentially lead to family breakdown and an increase in the number of lone parent families who may need greater state support. This makes no economic sense.

Conference believes that violence against women services are essential for women to access safety, justice and to rebuild their lives. It is of great concern that authorities are increasingly adopting a "one size fits all" approach, denying the need for specialist services for LGBT women and Black women. Specialist Black women's organisations and refuges, in particular, are feeling the impact of increased referrals for support for women with no recourse to public funds.

Under international human rights obligations, including recommendations under CEDAW and the European Convention on Human Rights (Articles 2,3,8), States have a responsibility to act with due diligence, that is with due care and effort, to respect, protect and fulfill the rights of all women within their jurisdiction. Conference believes that these cuts, and changes to the legal aid criteria, mean that the government is failing to fulfill those obligations.

Conference therefore calls on the national women's committee to continue to work with the End Violence Against Women Coalition to challenge the government to meet its obligations under the Convention and to press the government for :

- 1) ringfenced funding for specialist services as part of local violence against women strategies;
- 2) a national oversight mechanism to ensure that quality services are delivered consistently across the UK;
- 3) specialist commissioners who have expertise in the field of ending violence against women.

*National Women's Committee*

## **8. CUTS TO SERVICES AND THE EFFECT ON WOMEN IN RURAL COMMUNITIES**

Conference is well aware of the cuts to services all over the UK and those particularly affecting women. Conference however recognises that cuts to services will affect those in rural communities even more acutely. It is acknowledged that services relied upon by those in urban areas, are even more valuable to those living in the country areas.

We have seen unprecedented cuts to our services to include transport, benefits, social services, support networks and of course the voluntary sector. These are felt all too

much by those living in urban areas, but for those in rural areas, it is a lifeline for women that is severed for them.

Conference is aware that once these services are cut, they are seldom replaced, or a more expensive and less reliable service is put into its place. The government is stripping women in rural communities of their independence and their option to participate fully. They will have to travel further and wider to access the services that once were easily available to them.

Conference believes that women in rural communities are facing disproportionate higher cuts to services and suffer as the requirement for these are more wide ranging, and cost more money to support and to run.

Conference asks the National Women's Committee to lobby Government ministers about the effect of cuts in rural areas, taking into special account how this specifically affects the health and well being of women and their families.

*Cymru/Wales Region*

## **9. WOMEN AND THE CUTS - TRANSPORT**

Women's Conference confirms UNISON's backing of Campaign for Better Transport's campaign 'Save our Buses'.

An increasing number of local authorities have looked to save money by reducing the number of socially necessary and school bus services they support because of cuts to government funding.

Once again, as statistics show that women use buses far more than men, these draconian funding cuts are having a greater effect on women including:

- 1) Women who catch the bus for work
- 2) Women who take their children to school on the bus
- 3) Young women in education
- 4) Women in rural areas
- 5) Older women who can no longer drive (women statistically out live men)
- 6) Women with caring responsibilities taking family members for medical appointments
- 7) Women who rely on the bus for social interaction
- 8) Women having benefits cut for turning down jobs because no transport is available

Clearly this government is not willing to accept the social and economic detriment, nor the climatic impact these cuts will have.

We have also seen affects on jobs for our members working in bus companies and transport departments in local authorities.

Conference asks the National Women's Committee to liaise with and support the Water, Environment & Transport Service Group Executive, as well as regional women's committees in their efforts to lobby politicians and the government in campaigning to protect bus services and members jobs.

*West Midlands Region*

## **10. WOMEN AND THE CUTS - LEGAL AID**

Conference notes that women rely disproportionately on state funded legal advice services for civil law cases (sixty two per cent of applications being made by women, especially in areas like education and law).

Legal aid will be cut for welfare benefits, education and medical negligence advice and severely reduced for debt, unemployment, family law, housing and immigration advice.

There will also be changes to eligibility criteria, access to Legal aid and payments to legal advisors, leading to a significant impact on advice services leading to effects such as the following:

- 1) Violations to the right to a fair trial where there is no legal advice in particularly complex cases
- 2) Removal of advice on complex welfare benefits issues, housing and immigration issues
- 3) Restrictions on local availability of services
- 4) Women in abusive relationships will be particularly vulnerable to removal of Legal aid

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to liaise with the NEC, Labour Link and use all other avenues applicable, such as the Million Voices campaign to raise awareness of these issues and to lobby the government to reverse these cuts.

*West Midlands Region*

## **11. RESPONDING TO THE TORY LEAD GOVERNMENT'S ATTACK ON WOMEN AND OUR ROLE IN SOCIETY**

Conference knows the history of the struggle that women have fought for the right to equality for all aspects of our lives. From the days of the Suffragettes and the Women's Social and Political Union women have fought for rights to education, equal pay, decent childcare, maternity and parental leave, health care, equal rights for part-time workers, and decent pensions for our old age.

We are proud that UNISON alone of all the trade unions has proportionality and fair representation enshrined in our rule book. Those of us who are members of the Labour

Party have fought for equal access for women into political life through supporting women only shortlists, and ensuring that the Labour party created the Minister for Women as part of the Cabinet Office to scrutinise legislation for gender equality. The Public Sector Equality Duties and associated Equality Impact Assessments helped to deliver equality in the public sector for service users and providers including staff.

These achievements have been bought by so many women both famous and unrecognised, and in some cases at considerable personal cost, to place us where we are today. We are the descendents of those women and the baton has been passed to us to continue the struggle, and struggle it will be.

Our current Tory lead Coalition Government with the Liberal Democrats, is seeing the position of women in society facing an unparalleled attack. From day one the Coalition Government has targeted women. From the emergency budget which had a significant disproportionate impact on women than men, attacks on the benefit system, increase to VAT, threats to Sure Start, tax credits, and the threat to universal benefits, all predominantly affecting women. In addition, their attack on the public sector workforce will see the majority of those at risk of losing their jobs being women. For those women left, their terms and conditions, including redundancy, are under threat. Vital public services that women rely on are being decimated or prepared for wholesale privatisation. Openly we are seeing Ministers of the Government saying that if women chose to have children the responsibility should be theirs and not a burden on their employer. The so called Pension Reforms of this Government are seeing women paying more and being made to work longer for less benefits. Putting huge pressure on millions of women. The right wing media are buying into these policies and demonising public sector workers, the majority of whom are women, and lauding the tactic of setting women against women in new think tanks aimed at vilifying the role of feminism in improving the lives of women at home and abroad. We have already seen Topshop introducing Topman T-shirts promoting domestic abuse which they have had to withdraw due to the complaints they generated.

These attacks are and will prevent women fulfilling their potential within society, whether that is in their communities or within their employment opportunities, and undermining the gains that women have made especially in balancing employment and their caring responsibility. For women and our women members we are going to be faced with the struggle not just to improve, but to fight to maintain the protection that we currently enjoy. The Tory ideology clearly has not changed and that is that women should be denied the opportunity to work outside the home.

Already in the North East we are seeing women's unemployment reaching the highest level in 23 years, and with the highest unemployment rate in the country. Take on top of this the decimation to the Connexions Service and the huge hike in university tuition fees, and the abolition of Education Maintenance Grants, meaning the future for young women in the UK is bleak.

UNISON in the Northern Region has been campaigning with our other public sector trade unions against Government policy through the Public Services Alliance, and it has been UNISON women at the forefront of the local PSAs. It is imperative that UNISON continues to encourage our women members to come into positions of leadership within the Union. In the Northern Region, we are working through our Regional Education Committee to develop leadership courses for women. Women should be central in

making the decisions that affect women whether that is in UNISON or Government or as local politicians.

The Northern Region Women's Network has been campaigning for many years to encourage women to become involved in public life, whether that is working with our Regional Labour Link or encouraging them to take up public duties such as becoming school governors or local councillors, all of which develops women and reflects our role in society. One of our previous motions led to the UNISON "I don't do politics" campaign.

It is imperative that UNISON women are at the forefront of the defence and promotion of women's rights.

This Conference instructs the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Campaign with the relevant parts of UNISON's structures to highlight the disproportional impact of Government policies for our women members;
- 2) Work with our representatives on the TUC Women's Group to work with the other trade unions to campaign against the attacks being made by the Government and right wing think tanks that challenge the position of women in today's society and seek to undermine the rights that women presently enjoy;
- 3) Fight to protect the employment rights of women members; and
- 4) Encourage UNISON regions to promote leadership courses for women members along with buddying and mentoring courses.

*Northern Region*

## **12. THE DEVALUING AND EXCLUSION OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY**

Privatisation and cuts to care providers and the Public Sector are driving down women's wages and resulting in increased job losses in these areas.

Women are known to be the predominant users of public services and are therefore more disadvantaged by this.

The loss of wages and reduction in wages impacts greater on single income households and lone parents.

The whole of the above results in women and their roles in society being devalued and their ability to be active in society reduced. This in turn impacts on the woman and her family's self esteem and health.

Conference calls upon the National women's Committee to:

- 1) Work with all appropriate bodies such as the Fawcett Society to challenge cuts and changes that impact on women's jobs to continue to publicise and monitor the impact the cuts have to low paid women workers and provide publicity materials.

- 2) Work with UNISON Welfare to ensure women receive advice and provide financial support if required and work with UNISON Education to promote and encourage women to access further training and education in order to increase their self worth and value.

*Yorkshire and Humberside Region*

### **13. THE DEVALUING AND EXCLUSION OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY**

Conference notes that the coalition government's measures to reduce the deficit are steadily undermining the hard-won gains of women in the workplace and in society:

- 1) At least 65% of public sector workers are women - cuts in public sector jobs, wages and services will therefore impact on women more than men;
- 2) Women's unemployment is now at its highest level in 20 years, and continues to grow;
- 3) Services used primarily by women, including those providing specialist support to Black, disabled and LGBT women, have become increasingly under attack during this government's term of office, with grants being cut or withdrawn from women's community and voluntary organisations;
- 4) Low income mothers, particularly lone parents, who have returned to the workforce are finding it impossible to balance childcare costs with paid work, whilst services they rely on, including Sure Start centres, are being cut;
- 5) Women continue to be unfairly selected for redundancy when pregnant, whilst levels of maternity/paternity pay remain too low for many women and their partners to take advantage of the statutory leave for new parents;
- 6) Disabled women tend to be concentrated in relatively low-skill, low waged jobs which are particularly vulnerable to the cuts;
- 7) Attacks on public sector pensions and changes to the state pension are attacks on women's pensions;
- 8) Women, particularly Black women, are still under-represented in political life, on decision making bodies and at board levels in private companies across the UK, including those which provide public services.

Conference further notes that a leaked document from 10 Downing Street makes it clear that the government is worried that their claims to be "women and family friendly" have backfired, and that they intend to launch a "charm offensive" on women voters.

The document, which was widely reported in the press in September 2011, says that "We are clear that there are a range of policies we have pursued as a government which are seen as having hit women, or their interests, disproportionately." The document mentions public sector pay and pensions as an example, "particularly as contrasted with - mostly male - bankers, in the popular narrative".

Conference therefore calls upon the national women's committee to :

- a) Work with the NEC to ensure that UNISON's women members are aware of the disproportionate impact of the cuts on all women, and the additional impact on LGBT, Black and disabled women;
- b) Work with regional women's committees and UNISON Learning and Organising Services to ensure that women members have the necessary resources to campaign in their local community on these issues, including lobbying skills, use of local media and social networking;
- c) Work with Labour Link and partner organisations to ensure that the reality of the impact of the coalition government's policies are understood and that their family friendly claims are repudiated;
- d) Continue to work with UNISON Welfare ("There for You") to ensure that women members are aware of the advice and assistance available to them.

*National Women's Committee*

#### **14. FUTURE LEGISLATIVE CHANGES AFFECTING WOMEN**

Each year European and UK parliament bring legislative changes forward for consultation and debate.

Many of these consultations and legislative changes are not well publicised and it is often by default that women become aware of these forthcoming changes.

This conference believes that the more information about proposed legislative changes that can be given to our women members, the more we can influence consultation exercises, the more we can influence policy changes and any implementation within our workplaces.

Each year the National Women's Committee produces a comprehensive report on its activities; progress made on campaigns and initiatives. Yet this report could also highlight to our women members' forthcoming changes - looking ahead to future years.

Conference believes that this additional chapter would be a valuable addition to the annual report, giving an enduring use to the annual report and may enable women in their branches to plan ahead, anticipate local campaign issues and predict impending challenges.

Conference instructs the National Women's Committee in future annual reports to include a chapter that lays out forthcoming legislative changes that have an impact on women's lives and work.

*Eastern Region*

## **15. VARIABLE AND ZERO HOUR CONTRACTS AND THE THREAT TO WOMEN MEMBERS EMPLOYMENT**

Conference will be aware that for some time we have been seeing in the public sector the increase in zero hours or permanent variable hours contracts, the majority of those being placed on such contracts are women. Sunderland Local Authority, in the Northern Region has been using variable contracts as a means of avoiding compulsory redundancies. There has been a recent Employment Tribunal decision in the Newcastle Employment Tribunal which has serious implications for women members. The case involved Ms Pureen Hasib, a teaching assistant, who had been working on average 27.5 hours per week for the council during term time since October 2006, when on seeking to return to work from maternity leave, she was told that there was no work for her to return to. Ms Hasib took her case to Employment Tribunal after she had been given no work for six months, claiming unfair dismissal. The case was heard in August where the Employment Tribunal accepted the employer's argument that there was no work available and not that there was no job, and therefore the Tribunal decided it had no jurisdiction to hear the case as there was no dismissal. Sunderland Council has almost one thousand staff on variable contracts, the majority of whom are part time low paid women.

Local Authorities are not the only ones using zero hours or variable hours contracts. These contracts are increasingly being introduced in other services for example Police and Universities. At Newcastle University, 'Casual' worker contracts are now being brought in to replace any full time ancillary staff positions that are vacated; effectively undermining the terms and conditions of employment of this already much maligned group of workers, predominantly female cleaning staff. But it's not just lower grades that are suffering recently a woman who is employed as a Grade D Research interviewer has been told that she and nineteen other Research Interviewers are to have their contracts changed to 'variable hours', effectively making these women 'redundant by stealth'.

Women members who are reliant on paid employment are being faced with difficult decisions. Do they continue with no guarantee of paid employment but not being made redundant or being eligible to claim unemployment benefits, or voluntarily leaving their employment and have to wait to be eligible to claim state benefits and possibly claim constructive dismissal.

Public sector employers are arguing that in the current climate of cuts, employees are opting for these contracts in preference to being made redundancies.

The reality of these contracts are that women members:

- 1) Have no guarantee of earned income
- 2) Increase the difficulties of arranging dependant care due to uncertainty
- 3) The impact on families is not only financial
- 4) Increase the pressure on women including mental stress
- 5) Increase in travel costs if they have no designated work location
- 6) Impacts on training opportunities for women staff

- 7) Linked to the erosion of terms and conditions of employment for women members
- 8) Impacts on equality at work
- 9) Impact on social care both for service providers and service users
- 10) Detrimental impact to work life balance
- 11) Potential to increase bullying and victimisation at work by withholding hours

This National Women's Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to:

- a) Raise awareness of the implication for our women members of zero hour or variable hour contracts
- b) Work with the appropriate structures of UNISON to highlight and negotiate where appropriate retainer pay and/or access to state benefits
- c) To work with the UNISON delegates to the TUC for protection for women workers placed in this position
- d) Raise through Labour Link to campaign on this issue

*Newcastle University*

## **16. A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE - WITHOUT PREJUDICE**

Conference welcomes that an attempt to strip abortion providers of their role in counselling women was heavily defeated in the House of Commons in September. The amendment to the already flawed Health and Social Care Bill was brought to the house by Tory MP Nadine Dorries, a former nurse. It would have seen non statutory organisations such as Marie Stopes and the British Pregnancy Advisory Service unable to provide impartial advice and counselling to women considering abortion but leaving the door open to allow anti abortion faith groups to step in and provide the service.

Conference also welcomes the emergency motion agreed at TUC Conference in September, "Pre abortion Counselling" which highlighted the attacks on women.

Conference notes that the amendment was defeated by a majority of three hundred and sixty eight votes to one hundred and eighteen with three out of four MPs voting being male. Meaning women relying on men making decisions on highly sensitive women's issues.

Conference further notes that MPs will get another chance to vote on this issue following a government review on abortion counselling services.

Conference believes in a woman's right to request an abortion and that in the UK we fail women as they still require two doctors signatures and must demonstrate that continuing

a pregnancy would have a detrimental effect on her mental or physical well being or that of her existing children, than having a termination.

Conference further believes that woman's right to request an abortion should be underpinned with balanced professional support from regulated organisations. Women must have access to unbiased, unprejudiced, clinically sound and researched information regarding all pregnancy choices including abortion.

Conference therefore instructs National Women's Committee to:

- 1) work within the relevant structures of UNISON to affirm that abortion is a trade union issue and distribute relevant literature highlighting this.
- 2) Work with Labour link and lobby MPs to ensure women's voices are heard during the review period and subsequent vote.
- 3) Continue to work with and support affiliated and sympathetic organisations such as the Fawcett Society in highlighting these attacks on women's rights.
- 4) Work with the TUC women's group to ensure a co-ordinated approach in challenging and lobbying against any detrimental changes to abortion counselling.
- 5) work with regional women's networks to provide leadership and political training for women to encourage more women to get involved in politics and their trade union; ensuring women's issues are debated predominantly by women.

*Newcastle Hospitals Unison Br*

## **17. A WOMAN'S RIGHT TO CHOOSE**

Conference believes that a woman's right to choose with regards to abortion is fundamental to her political, social and economic equality. Control over whether, when and how many children to have is crucial to control over every other aspect of a woman's life. An overwhelming three quarters of people in Britain support a woman's right to make her own abortion decision.

Anti choice proponents continue to attempt to force the debate in the public arena to reduce women's choices through attempting to impose 'independent counselling'. Based on amendments to the Health and Social Care Bill, the proposals would have stripped abortion providers of the right to provide pre-abortion counselling, and could have seen anti-choice groups invited to offer pregnancy counselling in their place. The purpose of these proposals was to limit access to impartial information and deter women from having the procedure.

Conference believes that each woman needs clear information about their options so that they can make an informed choice that is right for each individual woman.

Conference notes the attacks on UNISON's pro choice policy and support of Abortion Rights UK by a Conservative MP.

Conference notes with concern the beginning of religious groups picketing outside of UK abortion clinics.

Conference notes with concern that the 1967 Act has never been extended to Northern Ireland. Women in Northern Ireland don't have access to abortion services unless in exceptional circumstances. Many northern Irish women face travel to the UK to access abortion services at their own cost. Fees, accommodation, and travel expenses make the cost prohibitive for others.

Conference, therefore, opposes any attempt to restrict existing legal rights, and calls upon the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Maintain close links with Abortion Rights UK to defend women's right to choose
- 2) Continue to circulate The Abortion Rights Newsletter to all Branch Women's Officers.
- 3) Work with the STUC, TUC and its affiliates to maintain its pro choice position.
- 4) Call for the extension of the 1967 Act to Northern Ireland.
- 5) Report back at next conference on the progress to date.

*Eastern Region*

## **18. BULLYING IN THE WORKPLACE**

The public sector cuts have had an unprecedented impact on women, with increasing numbers accepting redundancy and voluntary early severance.

Those women who are left in the workplace are experiencing an increase in stress as work pressures mount and bullying, in its various manifestations increases.

This is also affecting vulnerable clients, as our professional members raise concerns about unsafe working practices, due to the cuts.

This Conference calls upon the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Ensure that women specific training courses and resources are provided to help women recognise the signs of bullying and to be aware of the actions to take.
- 2) Recommend that every branch has a dedicated steward or branch officer responsible for supporting women to address the problem.

*South West Region*

## 19. WOMEN AS CARERS

For many years women have been the main carers within the home for their children, disabled and elderly parents. Women have fought for the right to be recognised and to be treated as equal to men.

Many workplaces now have policies in place to enable employees to take time off work to care for their sick children. Unfortunately, these policies do not reflect the fact that, as a society, we are all living longer and in many families it usually falls on the women to care for disabled and elderly dependents. Many dependents need to attend regular hospital appointments, sometimes over a number of months and even years.

It would appear that some employees women in particular are having difficulties in obtaining time off work to care for their elderly dependents, especially from line managers, this may be due to the fact that as predominantly the main carer they may have already accessed their carers leave and be up to the maximum of their annual leave entitlement.

This Committee recognises that our women members need support from their employers to take time from their employment to care for their dependents. This will be a positive action helping the already overburdened social services sector.

Whilst in the role of carer, it is additionally realised that within the ideological cuts put forward from this coalition Government cut backs have been made in the field of public sector social care, with private, often less regulated companies, providing care to our elders of extremely poor standards where they are left unattended in soiled sheets overnight and facing a prolonged wait for poorly paid and over committed carers to arrive.

On some occasions these carers are unqualified and are allocated the minimum of time to perform their tasks. They have been known to take personal calls whilst dealing with a service user, have been unfocussed and inattentive to service users at times in desperate need.

We are concerned for the many safeguarding and health issues which may arise if situations such as these are allowed to go unregulated and unchecked.

In the first instance of carer's leave for women, Conference calls on the National Women's Committee work to:

- 1) Provide guidelines to branches and activists on how to work alongside managers to engage in supportive discussions to facilitate time off (leave, flexible working or a personal arrangement) for members so affected.
- 2) In respect of the impact of the cuts on women in the caring professions and the effects on our cared for, the National Women's Committee liaise with our relevant organisations who set national standards for the work of the caring professions and National Inspection Agencies in obtaining information to bring enhanced awareness of the real situations and safeguarding issues which may arise if these situations remain unchecked.

- 3) The National Women's Committee, become involved with campaigning initiatives that will support women in the role of carer.

*North West Region*

## **20. FLEXIBLE WORKING OPTION FOR ALL**

Conference notes that despite numerous attempts to ensure that employers have a consistent approach to dealing with flexible working requests, there are still widespread differences. As those most likely to be in caring roles are women, this disadvantages women far more than men.

Particularly in these challenging times of financial constraints on employers, it is likely that they will become less willing to agree flexible working requests, and it is imperative we move to ensure consistency and fairness.

Conference therefore calls on the National Women's Committee to work with the NEC and service groups to:

- 1) Carry out a survey amongst branches to identify the quality of data collected by employers with regards flexible working requests
- 2) To identify how this data is used to inform decisions on flexible working requests
- 3) To identify areas of good practice and develop guidance to advise how this can be consistently applied

South West Yorkshire Partnership  
Health

## **21. EQUALITY MONITORING**

Conference on 2 September 2011 Eric Pickles, the Secretary for Communities and Local Government new guidance called 'A fair deal for the community and voluntary sector'. The guidance states councils should not carry out equality questionnaires and use the money saved to fund the community and voluntary sector. They claim that the questions asked about gender, disability, ethnicity and sexual orientation duplicate information collected in the Census. Pickles himself said "Local residents shouldn't be asked to reveal detailed personal information just because they've enquired about getting their bins emptied or how to join their local library. Clamping down on such town hall activity will save taxpayers' money and protect the privacy of residents of all backgrounds".

Although councils have a statutory duty to collect information on how their policies affect protected groups Pickles says equality questionnaires are not necessary. This clearly comes from a man who has never suffered from prejudice or discrimination.

Gender discrimination most commonly affects women. This can be because of negative attitudes, stereotypes or because some policies and practices disadvantage women, for example, we are more likely to have caring responsibilities. Sixty five per cent of public sector workers are women but we are still under represented at the highest levels with the vast majority working in low paid or part time jobs. Women are less likely to feel safe when they are out, particularly at night. There is evidence to show that women are less

likely to access welfare benefits, are more likely to be living in poverty and have less access to sport and leisure facilities.

Councils point out that equality monitoring forms are voluntary and are used to make sure they are properly serving all parts of the population. It is important to know whether service users reflect the make up of the population so that services can be targeted effectively. Equality monitoring helps councils make effective use of very limited resources. It is based on the basic principles of knowing your staff and your customers.

Conference notes that many organisations have already failed to take on the full value of monitoring. Monitoring in isolation keeps the emphasis on under represented groups rather than institutions as a source for change. Sometimes the sole purpose of monitoring is a way of 'record keeping' rather than collecting evidence to implement positive action.

As the Tory led Coalition continues to cut regulation and Eric Pickles encourages councils to stop equality monitoring in employment and service provision we need to make sure employers and service providers are aware of the benefits of carrying out equality monitoring. This conference calls on National Women's Committee to work with the NEC to:

- 1) Campaign for equality monitoring to be continued in employment and service provision.
- 2) Produce guidance for branches and regions on promoting the benefits of equality monitoring; and
- 3) Lobby government and councils to maintain equality monitoring.

*Newcastle City*

## **22. A SIMPLE BLOOD TEST THAT COULD SAVE LIVES**

Last year's conference motion on Ovarian Cancer would have been a wake up call to women members unaware of the necessity of early detection of ovarian cancer for there to be any reasonable chance of effective treatment.

To be told one has cancer is terrifying enough, but for those whose cancers have no immediate symptoms - often called the silent killers - ovarian cancer, prostate cancer, kidney cancer the long term prognosis is often not good as by the time symptoms manifest themselves the only possible treatment is invasive and not very successful. In addition all too often early symptoms are not acted upon by the sufferer and/or detected or misdiagnosed as something far less sinister.

Figures published in The Lancet show that about eighty two per cent of British women with breast cancer survive to at least five years after diagnosis. For ovarian cancer the figure is just thirty six per cent. The key reason for the difference is late diagnosis. An early diagnosis could double the survival rate. Ovarian Cancer Action estimates that the UK has the worst survival rate in the developed world and is taking steps to improve survival through funding research and raising awareness.

One of the methods for detection is a Twenty pound (approx) blood test that can highlight possibility of "cancer makers" the proteins and antibodies already at work in fighting the disease deep within the body. Although some in the medical profession question the reliability of the blood test, it has been effective for many women in early detection of ovarian cancer and more importantly is relatively cheap and non invasive. However, many GPs do not offer the blood test and too many women are unaware that it even exists as a procedure to detect the possibility of ovarian cancer.

Conference asks the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Continue to support the work of Ovarian Cancer charities/research organisations.
- 2) Raise awareness amongst UNISON women members of the relatively simple tests available that could aid early detection.

*South East Region*

### **23. LIGHTS OUT**

In London 1684-1694 there was an important innovation. This was in the form of public street lighting and was part of a movement across Europe. It was an important innovation because it enabled business, leisure time and daily life to go beyond the confines of daylight hours which was previously bound by a curfew. Having street lighting meant that study could be expanded into the evening, businesses benefited as opening hours could be later, jobs were formed and people felt safer. There were also more arenas for leisure activities as well as more convenient for daily life. Another hidden benefit was that people saw the city in a different yet beautiful way and meant that this space was accessible to the general public not just in daylight hours.

Since that time street lighting has been a significant confidence boost to women who walk or travel out in the evening and night. Perceptions of safety and security are improved where women can see about them, enabling them to identify danger areas and hazards.

Conference is disturbed to know that many local authorities have decided or are considering cutting street lighting in order to cut energy bills and costs. So far:

Essex	91,000 lights off
Suffolk	40,000 lights off
Norfolk	27,000 lights off from midnight to 5.30am
North Yorkshire	30,000 lights off at midnight
Somerset	switching off lights in 14 villages between midnight and 5.30am
Nottinghamshire	all lights to be dimmed or switched off
West Sussex	In towns, most lights dimmed after midnight, most rural lights switched off after midnight
Dorset	thousands of lights to be switched off

Cutting street lighting has a significant impact on women's perceptions of safety; darkness limits women's willingness to venture outside of the home, limiting women's life style and choices.

In particular, those with sight problems like night blindness or retinitis pigmentosa will have additional problems, which may leave them isolated and unable to be outside of their homes after dark.

Those women who may be particularly vulnerable to assaults and hate crimes on the streets may well feel that in reality they are subject to a darkness curfew.

In addition, mothers will have increased anxiety over their loved ones being out socialising, walking or travelling home in complete darkness, vulnerable to accident or assault, without lights to guide them home to safety.

One of the benefits of CCTV has been an increase in perceptions of safety for women walking on the streets at night. Reduced or eliminated lighting will dramatically reduce the effectiveness of CCTV.

In decision making local authorities are obliged to consider equalities issues in their deliberations; to make real considerations of the impact of their decisions and whether reducing or eliminating street lighting will adversely impact on women. Equality Impact Assessments have to be real and substantial pieces of work, requiring consultation and meaningful dialogue with stakeholders. Yet where EIA's have been undertaken on turning off street lights they have concluded no adverse gender impact.

Women at a local level need to be armed with the tools to challenge the cuts in both services and funding on Gender Equality grounds. This includes making sure that public authorities abide by their legal requirements to equality impact assess the effects of their cuts.

Conference is concerned that turning the lights off is a backward step and that this cost cutting strategy further isolates women and limits their lifestyle and choices.

Conference instructs the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Actively promote the need for branches to challenge local authorities proposals to cut or reduce street lighting
- 2) To work with other interested groups to research or collate information on the impact of these street lighting decisions on women
- 3) To report back to women's conference in 2013

*Eastern Region*

## **24. CORRECTIVE RAPE**

Conference agrees that violence against women is a crime. All women, regardless of their race or sexual orientation, have the right to live without fear and to be free from prejudice, discrimination and violence.

Conference is therefore appalled that in countries across the world, "corrective" rape takes place, where women are raped as a way of punishing and "curing" them of their sexual orientation.

Much of the media focus has been on South Africa, where there are an estimated 500,000 rapes, hundreds of murders and countless beatings carried out every year. It is estimated that almost half of all South African women will be raped during their lifetime, and for every 25 men brought to trial for rape in South Africa, 24 walk free.

The wave of hate crimes against black lesbians is part of this epidemic of violence against women. Women who choose not to identify as heterosexual are being victimised for daring to step outside the boundaries of what their families, communities and wider society prescribe for them. However, conference further notes that this practice is not limited to South Africa.

Conference therefore calls upon the national women's committee to work with the UNISON LGBT committee, End Violence Against Women Coalition and other appropriate organisations to:

- 1) Raise awareness of this issue;
- 2) Lobby the UK government to ensure that their strategy on ending violence against women includes measures to address "corrective" rape at an international level;
- 3) Work with UNISON's international committee to ensure that violence against women in all its manifestations is raised in the international arena and recognised as a human rights violation;
- 4) Liaise with our sister unions in South Africa to support them in action to challenge the cultural system which allows violence against women and "corrective" rape to take place unpunished.

*National Women's Committee*

## **25. TIME FOR A CHANGE**

Conference acknowledges that UNISON publishes some valuable information and guidance material for branches, activists and members on a regular basis and on varying workplace issues and/or recruitment based materials.

Yet conference believes that there is not enough UNISON material tailored specifically for women and that the design and format of existing publications for women sometimes appear outdated, often too typical of all UNISON literature and not necessarily reflecting the diversity of all our women members. UNISON encompasses women members from different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds, women who define as lesbian, bisexual or trans, disabled and young women. Each will be attracted to the services and information of UNISON for different reasons and by a variety of advertising methods. Therefore, literature pertaining to women should take into account that one size does not fit all.

In the South East, some women members have reported that much information targeted at women members can often go unnoticed by branches and women members, it would be beneficial to create an easily recognised 'themed' look or 'logo' such as the LGBT 'OUT in UNISON' logo or the Young Members logo which is now so readily recognised

by branches and activists. Conference notes that the 'Women in UNISON' logo sometimes used by more randomly and not necessarily 'as a rule' on all materials that are aimed at women, for example UNISON's 'Health & Safety' for Women' guide book.

As a consequence, much of the information especially with regards to recruitment, training opportunities, forums and conference could go unnoticed by branches and women members. This might be reflected in some of the persisting difficulties of increasing the participation of women in union activities especially at a local level.

Considering women make up sixty five per cent of the public service workforce - much higher in some sections such as NHS (seventy seven per cent) and Local Government (seventy five per cent), Schools (eighty two per cent) - and that women make up seventy five per cent of UNISON membership, conference believes that more investment could be made to improve the design and content of UNISON literature and materials for women members, women activists and most importantly for potential women members. Taking into account facts such as, the size and gender make up of the Public Service workforce, there are potentially hundreds of thousands of women workers to recruit. Maintaining our current strength and building our union for the future will rely, not solely but nonetheless predominantly on ensuring that UNISON is the union that women public service workers want to join.

Conference therefore instructs the National Women's Committee to work with women members of the NEC, National Service Groups, National Self Organised Groups to:

- 1) Create a new and modern 'branded' logo for women in UNISON, to be used on all materials aimed at our women members and potential women members.
- 2) Produce a 'women's recruitment pack' to be disseminated to regions and branches for use at all recruitment events.
- 3) Update and modernise existing leaflets, guides, factsheets, booklets aimed specifically at women, to adopt the new women in UNISON look.

*South East Region*

## **26. LABOUR LINK AND SUPPORT FOR WOMEN**

Conference is aware that there are one million women members in UNISON. Through Labour link UNISON is affiliated to the Labour Party. Many of our women members are also members of our Labour Link.

Labour Link rightly promotes itself as being transparent and encourages women to become involved. In recent years in the Northern Region we have been developing closer links with our Regional Labour Link Group and the Women's Network with mutual benefits for both. We are delighted that women from the Network have been selected to run and been elected as new Labour councillors across the Region.

The Labour Party is in the process of Refounding Labour and it is vitally important that the Labour Party hears what women have to say about their future and the future of their children, whether they are Labour Party members or not. After all, it is women

electorates that hold the balance of power in elections in the UK, whether that is local or national.

The Labour Link rules currently allow for seats from the National Black, Disabled and LGBT Committees and they have representation on the Labour Link Forum.

We are facing an unprecedented attack on women led by the Tory Party and the Coalition Government. It is vitally important that the concerns of women and especially UNISON women are fed into the Labour Link through formalising the link between the National Women's Committee and the National Labour Link Committee.

This National Women's Conference instructs the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Enter into dialogue with the National Labour Link to consider creating a seat for the National Women's Committee on the National Labour Link Committee and Forum.

*Northern Region*

## **27. MARY SEACOLE - ICON FOR UNISON WOMEN**

Mary Seacole was born Mary Jane Grant in 1805 to a free black Jamaican woman. Her mother ran a boarding house for British soldiers and sailors in the capital city, Kingston. Her mother was known as a "doctress" and passed on much of her knowledge of healing, using the arts of Creole medicine.

In 1836 Mary married Edwin Horatio Hamilton Seacole, godson of Lord Nelson. After only eight short years of marriage, Edwin died. On reaching the age of fifty, Mary was concerned about the welfare of soldiers she had known in Kingston, who were serving in the Crimean War. Mary travelled to recruitment offices in London, at her own expense, in an attempt to support the nursing efforts of Florence Nightingale who was at that time in Turkey. Mary was rejected by at least four of those offices due to racial discrimination.

Rather than return home full of bitterness about her rejection and treatment, Mary then made her own way to Turkey. There, she set up the British hotel, again at her own cost. She provided food and care for the soldiers who she referred to as "my sons". The hospitals set up by the British under Florence Nightingale were three days sail away from the Crimea Battlefields. In comparison, Mary worked continually under the heat and danger of battle; she often went onto the actual battlefields and her courage and nursing skills were reported in the Times newspaper and Punch magazine. As a result the British as well knew her, as a Black Florence Nightingale.

When the Crimean War ended abruptly, it left Mary bankrupt. Her supporters in Britain, from all backgrounds ranging from ordinary soldiers to the Prince of Wales rallied to her aid with fundraising events in her honour.

After the war, Mary was awarded several medals for her bravery. She died at the age of seventy six and is buried in St Mary's Catholic Cemetery, Kensal Green in London. But unlike Florence Nightingale, this amazing woman still does not have a permanent memorial to her bravery and perseverance in the face of discouragement and discrimination. Mary Seacole has been voted the greatest Black Briton and was awarded a personal pension from Queen Victoria.

Mary Seacole is an icon for UNISON women. She was a woman who did not give up in the face of discrimination or hardship. Her story needs to be kept alive to inspire future generations of UNISON women.

There is an enormous gender imbalance in the public statues erected to merit the achievements in society. Within the borough boundaries of Westminster there are one hundred and twenty four named public statues; of these on fourteen are women and four of those are Queen Victoria and another the late Queen Mother. There are two for Florence Nightingale and the only Black person's statue is that of Nelson Mandela. This needs to be addressed and the funds needed are achievable if it is publicised and acted upon.

Conference commends the championship of this issue carried out by UNISON and the National Nursing Committee whose sterling efforts to raise and keep this issue on the agenda have contributed to already raising one hundred thousand pounds towards a permanent Statue to be erected in the grounds of St Thomas's hospital in London and the Friends of Mary Seacole and the Jamaican High Commissioner, who do so much to keep Mary Seacole's memory in the public eye.

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Work with Learning and Organising Services (LAOS), Regional Women's Committees, Black women Member's Committee and the Mary Seacole Memorial Statue Appeal to jointly produce and distribute literature and posters highlighting the achievements of Mary Seacole and the Memorial Campaign. This should also include information on web addresses.
- 2) Use Mary Seacole and other inspirational women to encourage a new generation of women who face adversity and/or discrimination as positive role models and publicise their achievements bi monthly in Focus magazine as a regular editorial.
- 3) Encourage networking via all regional Equality Officers a plan to highlight this campaign to all Self Organised Groups (SOGs) and Branches especially during Black History Month in October each year.
- 4) Report back to 2013 National Women's Committee with the availability of the campaign materials and invite a guest speaker from the Mary Seacole Memorial Statue Appeal to address Conference.

*East Midlands Region*

## **28. WOMEN FRIENDLY WOMEN'S CONFERENCE**

Every year at National Women's Conference we come together to debate motions, to listen and learn from each other, develop and set UNISON policy and direction.

We debate motions on all sorts of issues that affect the lives and work of women. In recent years for example delegates have debated motions about domestic abuse, about rape and other forms of sexual violence, motions about sexual harassment, prostitution, Female Genital Mutilation and so-called honour crimes. Many of these motions cover

issues that are intensely personal to some delegates, issues that touch on events from their own lives and experiences and that continue to have an impact on them to this day.

And yet despite this, despite the personal nature of so many of our motions, women regularly feel moved to get up at National Women's Conference to tell their own stories of survival, bravely and movingly bearing witness to the atrocities that have been perpetrated against them.

Delegates to National Women's Conference have felt able to speak out about these things so openly because they have thought this conference to be a safe space. They thought that they would get no heckling, no-one doubting the truth of their words, no insults or comments about who they are or how they look.

Conference is concerned to know that despite our working together guidelines being firmly explained by previous chairs of conference, last year there were problems with inappropriate; hurtful and discriminatory comments made at this very conference.

Women are a diverse group; it is this very diversity that makes us so very powerful and dynamic. In this conference there are women; black women; disabled women; lesbian women; bi-sexual women; trans women; low paid women; full time working women and part time working women. We come from different service groups and; different professions and workgroups. We are not a one size fits all group. But we are all women; all UNISON women and every UNISON woman deserves respect for being the woman that she is. Respect that means she is not insulted or harassed. Respect that she is here, an activist in UNISON, participating in setting women's policy and direction.

Conference affirms its commitment to a safe and empowering conference for all its women. Conference acknowledges that this can only be achieved with the co-operation of all its delegates and visitors.

Conference therefore instructs the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Work with the Regional Women's Committees and other self organised committees to raise awareness of the need for a supportive; respectful and empowering conference environment
- 2) Carry out a review of the Working Together Guidelines for National Women's Conference to ensure the guidelines meet the needs of the conference.
- 3) Report back to National Women's Conference 2013

*Eastern Region*

## **29. BUILDING INTERNATIONAL LINKS - CHILDBIRTH - WHAT IS A WOMEN'S LIFE WORTH**

In Britain we are worried about the attacks on the NHS and the effect on the ratio of midwives to expectant mothers. This results in the worry of whether the experience will be more painful than is necessary and whether there will be any side effects on the baby.

In Africa women are worried that when they go into hospital to have their baby whether they will survive the experience.

UN millennium targets, which should be delivered by 2015, has at number five - improving maternity health. This target is currently showing the least improvement even though it would also deliver improvements to targets one to four and six.

For approximately the price of a postage stamp literally hundreds of thousands of women a year could be saved.

Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Work with and build links between all appropriate bodies and agencies such as Life for African Mothers.
- 2) Encourage Regions and Branches to donate baby bundles and/or money to Life for African Mothers.
- 3) Encourage UNISON Representatives to visit Africa with Life for African Mothers (£1,500 per person approximately).
- 4) Encourage women who work in health and social care to visit Africa as part of their personal and professional development with one of the agencies.
- 5) Start a campaign to move maternity facilities at home and abroad up the political agenda.

*Yorkshire and Humberside Region*

### **30. UK SLAVERY AND TRAFFICKING**

As the economic vice bites deeper and the whole world struggles to maintain status quo on everything from stability in the stock markets to coping with the effect of massive unemployment, there will always be a type of entrepreneur to exploit natural resources and turn a profit.

These people pride themselves in supplying a rare commodity, sometimes smuggling it across borders and the boundaries of accepted behaviour. Of course they also need a buyer for these precious jewels. The eventual owners will not care if the transportation method was conventional as long as they can enjoy its rare gifts.

But these jewels are not dazzling fossilised mineral deposits to adorn a pretty neck but living, breathing young girls and sometimes boys; to fuel the insidious sexual slavery market under the guise of domestic employ.

Many are transported by gang masters as undocumented migrants believing they are coming to the UK to work as house staff or provide childcare for rich families and gain an education to help them support their families back home and better their lives. For those who have passports and a right to come to the UK, the journey maybe more comfortable, but on arrival at the dock or airport their passport will be confiscated. From there on, their future is sealed. Many will be split from and denied all contact with their friends and families and the desocialising will begin in earnest. They may be brainwashed into thinking the UK is a dangerous place and it is unsafe for them to go outside at all; or

worse drugged, beaten, tortured and gang raped into submission. They are then sold again and again to different areas and brothels to provide a constant fresh new supply to feed an every hungry devouring monster.

In the UK this year the 2012 Olympics will provide rich picking grounds for the gang masters; it is quite likely the girls are already being selected in their own countries prior to being trafficked here.

It is sickening to note there are now ten times more slaves in the world than at the end of the transatlantic slave trade.

The gang masters licensing agency is only licensed to operate in Fisheries, Forestry or Agriculture and there are no constraints on Construction, hotels or domestic labour markets which makes it almost impossible to legislate or keep track of where these victims end up.

At Heathrow Airport in one month early in 2011 unaccompanied children arriving as young as ten were taken into Local Authority care yet four months later were found working as child prostitutes in Italy where they had been trafficked again, after being tracked down by their gang masters and spirited away.

Conference calls upon the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Work with Labour Link on campaigning to UK Government to highlight the plight of these individuals.
- 2) Use the expertise within the sister organisations, the International Committee and the Regional Women's Committee and Equality Officers to encourage branches to discuss and feedback in the spirit of information exchange and education.
- 3) Report back to National Women's Conference in 2013 with progress made.

*East Midlands Region*

### **31. CUBA AS A ROLE MODEL FOR WOMEN IN PUBLIC ROLES**

Today only twenty two per cent of MPs in the House of Commons and twenty per cent of members of the House of Lords are women. Compare this with Cuba where women hold thirty five per cent of parliamentary seats in the Cuban National Assembly. Therefore Cuba ranks sixth out of one hundred and sixty two countries, regarding female participation in political life. In contrast the public sector cuts in this country are having a disproportionate affect on women and the government's reform agenda will lead to an even bigger divide in society creating a negative impact on women in public roles.

The Cuban Constitution guarantees women economic, political, social, cultural and family rights and opportunities equal to those of men. Article 32 of the Cuban Constitution, states that women and men enjoy the same economic, political, cultural, social and family rights.

This conference therefore calls upon the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Work with Labour Link to encourage more women to become Councillors and MPs.
- 2) Work with the TUC and sister unions in promoting and encouraging women to become engaged in politics.
- 3) Encourage regions to promote courses that empower women to become activists.

*South West Region*

### **32. MILLENIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL 4**

In the year 2000, at the Millennium Summit, one hundred and eighty nine members' of states of the United Nations declared that they would spare no effort to achieve a set of eight goals aimed at raising the level of development, health and prosperity of the globe by the end of the year of 2015.

In 2009 this conference heard of the work that still needed to be done on Goals 4 and 5. Goal 4 aims to reduce child mortality. Steady progress has been made with the mortality rate for children under five declining globally by a third. All regions except sub Saharan Africa, southern Asia and Oceania have seen reductions of at least fifty per cent. In 1990 the death rate among the under fives stood at an astonishing twelve point four million annually, this declined to eight point one million in 2009. The success of this Goal has led to twelve thousand fewer children dying each day. But children from the poorest households are still two to three times more likely to die before the age of five than children from the richest households.

Conference, between 2000 and 2008 child death rates due to measles has plummeted due to improved immunisation coverage and the opportunity for a second dose. This led to a seventy eight per cent drop in measles deaths worldwide. But shortfalls in funding for measles control activities means that a number of priority countries are facing depleting resources for routine immunisations and immunisation campaigns. as a result, outbreaks of the disease are on the rise. Adequate funding and strong political commitment and high quality implementation are needed o ensure that the reduction in child mortality rates continues to fall.

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals Report 2011 states that a mother's education is a power determinant of child survival. In all developing regions, children with mothers with some education are less at risk of dying. A child's chances of survival increase even further if the mother has secondary or higher education. Empowering women, removing financial and social barriers to welfare, encouraging more innovations to make critical services more available to the poor and increasing the accountability of health systems at the local level are all examples of policy interventions that could improve equity, with benefits for child survival.

Conference, every minute fifteen children will die due to a preventable disease. With this in mind, Conference calls on the National Women's Committee to continue to:

- 1) Work with Labour Link to lobby the Government to ensure that the Millennium Development Goals are kept on track.

- 2) Work with Regional Women's Committees and UNISON's International Committee to raise awareness of the importance of the Development goals and in particular Goal 4.
- 3) To prepare a report to National Women's Conference 2013 to show the work that has been done.

*East Midlands Region*

### **33. INTERNATIONAL LINKS**

This Conference is proud of the reputation that UNISON has on International work.

In the Greater London Region, the Regional Women's Committee (RWC) has been developing links with the Nicaraguan Communal Movement (NCM), through the Nicaraguan Solidarity Campaign, and in 2010 co sponsored the development of a social project for the improvement in living conditions for members of the NCM in dwellings in dispersed locations in twelve communities of the municipality.

This year we are proposing to help with the construction of much needed latrines in the same communities. Latrines are surely one of the most basic requirements for the eradication of disease and for healthy living conditions, and we are glad to be able to help these women in the daily struggle to improve their lives.

During the year we have exchanged photos and information about each other and about events that the women have supported eg a day of action and awareness on the prevention of AIDS/HIV.

The Greater London RWC will be continuing to develop links and to seek to further support and share information with the La Concha co operative.

Conference notes the benefits of establishing such links and therefore instructs the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Encourage all regional women's committee to become involved in international work and to forge links with women's groups overseas.
- 2) Remind women members of the re establishment of UNISON's Trade Union International Development Fund which provides funding for international initiatives between UNISON and sister unions in other countries, and to encourage them to apply for such funding.
- 3) Continue to encourage UNISON women members to become involved by becoming Branch International Officers.

- 4) Continue to work towards establishing an ongoing global women's trade union network, as agreed at National Women's Conference 2010.

*Greater London Region*

### **34. ACKNOWLEDGING AND SUPPORTING WOMEN ACTIVISTS IN THE ARAB SPRING**

It is a sad truth that opportunities for capitalising on the success of union activity within the recent Arab uprisings have mostly been missed by the mainstream press. Some of you may have read, in tiny snippets, or in specialist media that unions have been a powerful element in generating the Arab Spring. In some countries the organised demands for constitutional change have actually been led by union activists.

However, the mainstream press have committed very little airtime or space to investigating the true extent of trade union influence on the Arab Spring, and even less on the outcomes caused by women trade union activists.

This means that unions are not getting the credit they are due for this historic movement; a movement that is popular with the British public and has been described at a recent party conference as "undoubtedly having the potential to bring about the greatest single advance in human freedom since the end of the Cold War".

Unions may not be getting the credit they deserve, but for some of the women activists the situation is far worse. Many have been, and are still being, raped, beaten and detained in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, Yemen and Syria. Despite assurances from the King of Bahrain in June that military trials of pro reform protesters would be transferred to civilian courts, both the vice president of the Bahrain Teachers Union (Jalila al-Salman) and the head of the Bahrain Nursing Society (Roula al-saffar) are awaiting a military trial. Both women report having been tortured and have been on hunger strike while in detention.

Middle Eastern women's activism in their unions is not new. As Maya Jribi, a successful activist in Egypt put "The women's role has been huge, not just in the revolution, but for years before it, from supporting strikes to staging sit-ins".

But the women are now afraid that their efforts risk going unrewarded, and that men who were keen to have them on the streets crying "Freedom" may not be so happy to have them in positions of power. One concern on the secular left is that the return of Islamist parties could reverse gains made on women's rights. An Egyptian protester told Catherine Ashton, (EU foreign policy) during a recent visit to Tahrir Square: "The men were keen for me to be here when we were demanding that Mubarak should go. But now he has gone, they want me to go home".

In view of the impending season of action, and the prevalence of damaging media reports, we ask the National Women's Committee to highlight maximum exposure of the positive aspects of union action in the success of the Arab Spring, and in particular women's union action, where appropriate.

We further instruct the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Liaise with UNISON's National International Committee to promote awareness of women specific atrocities in countries that fall within the international work programme, and to further encourage UNISON's Regional International Committees to include a gender element to their work programmes.
- 2) Make every effort to work with the International Committee, in solidarity with other trade unions, to campaign against military trials for women trade unionists in Bahrain and other Middle East countries.

Women may have contributed significantly to the Arab Spring, but it remains to be seen if the Arab Spring will contribute to empowering of Arab women workers and union activists. Let's at least make sure that our union is at the forefront of supporting that contribution.

*Devon County*

### **35. WOMEN IN LIBYA**

With the dramatic end of the Gaddafi regime, Libya has the chance for a different future, one that contains real freedoms and liberty for all its citizens and potentially many changes for the lives of Libyan women.

Women have been significant in the struggle for a new and free Libya; taking to the streets in February protesting; smuggling arms beneath their clothing, founding a number of civil society groups, tweeting updates, blogging on progress, feeding and nursing the injured, mourning the dead. Libyan women may not have been visible on the streets with guns, but they have played an equally important role, displaying courage and strength that has been invaluable to the success of the people's revolution. Women have taken a central role alongside men.

And yet despite these contributions the National Transitional Council has very few women amongst its number.

At the present time, there are many issues for women in Libya; they live in a society that is emerging from years of dictatorship and control.

What is to become of women's role in this new era for Libya? Without women's involvement in the key decision making forums fundamental change and true equality for women in Libya is unlikely to become a reality

This conference applauds the courageous efforts of women in Libya in bringing about political change and recognises that women's involvement is essential to peace building in a new and democratic Libya.

This conference supports the efforts of women in Libya to gain political representation and influence in the new structures. Conference recognises that dictatorship and tradition have held back women's progress in Libya for over 42 years.

This conference asks the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Establish links with Libyan women public sector workers ; and
- 2) invite a Libyan woman public sector worker to address a future women's conference.

*Eastern Region*

### **36. STANDING ORDERS 2.2**

Delete 2.2 No delegate shall serve on standing orders committee for more than three consecutive years.

Replace with:

2.2 No delegate shall serve on standing orders committee for more than four consecutive years.

*East Midlands Region*

### **37. STANDING ORDERS 3**

Insert new 3.3:

Each motion shall consist of no more than three hundred words, and each amendment shall consist of no more than fifty words.

Renumber accordingly.

*Scotland Region*

## **MOTIONS AND RULE AMENDMENTS RULED OUT OF ORDER**

### **NOT COMPETENT**

#### **MORE YOUNG WOMEN TRAINED ENGAGED AND ACTIVE**

I am the Young Members' Officer in a branch that has nine hundred members; I am the only Young Member on the Executive. Of the membership there are fifty nine Young Members; of these fifty nine only twenty six are Young Women.

On a regular basis I send communications to my Young Members, I rarely get a reply let alone from a Young Woman wanting to get trained, be engaged and become active within our branch.

Nationally our membership consists of seventy five per cent women yet only twenty five per cent of senior roles are filled by women. With cuts to jobs, pay and pensions, and the rise in living and childcare costs we need to train, engage and get Young Women active in our union more urgently than ever before.

We call upon the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Conduct research into the barriers facing Young Women that is preventing them from being engaged and taking up active roles.
- 2) work with Education and Training to develop a Young Women's training and engagement package which can be rolled out by branches.
- 3) Run regional awareness campaigns for Young Women.

*Devon & Cornwall Police*

#### **POSITIVELY PROMOTING WOMEN MEMBERS WITHIN BRANCH STRUCTURES**

It is a well known fact that within UNISON women make up a majority of our membership. Despite this, many branches appear to be male dominated at Branch executive level.

It could be that women bear the brunt of most of the caring needs for their families and many work part time and have two or three low paid or part time roles to make ends meet.

Conference welcomes the debate at last year's National Delegates Conference which it was echoed we need to involve women especially those from minority groups or low paid to bring a balance to our negotiations at all levels, from stewards, Health and Safety stewards, ULR, Branch Officers and indeed NEC positions.

UNISON provides training, including the excellent Women's lives course, once women are identified and wish to progress to local, regional and national levels. But it is hard to

identify the talent pool if information is not filtered down in Branches to the very people it needs to reach.

Most women are skilled negotiators, many juggle very demanding multi tasks without a second thought - yet they shy from putting themselves forward for any position in a branch. These women are also fettered, especially if you have a male dominated Branch Executive gate keeping and blocking the Dragon's Lair.

The Self Organised Groups provide an excellent conduit for encouragement, mentoring and nuturing but rely on lay women members to get the message out in their own branches, usually under the guise of an active Equality Officer.

Pensions:

Women will be detrimentally affected deeper from the attacks on the LGPS. This coupled with extending the retirement age will have a profound effect on their lives - becoming a Pensions Contact or Champion could be the first step on the ladder or of confidence and capability and all Regional Officers should seek to encourage and promote women within their branches, to climb the ladder to the top and continue to remove any barriers, either internal or external in order to make this happen.

Therefore conference requires the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Highlight the opportunities to women from UNISON via a two page spread in U magazine, and a follow up in every edition using success stories and detailing specific training well in advance.
- 2) Utilising the experience of Regional and Area Officers to provide every assistance to Branch Women and Equality Officers to promote the women's lives and Pension Champion's causes within the branch.
- 3) Roll out the successful Women's lives course nationally in all regions working with the Learning and Development Teams within the Regions with cross regional working where possible.
- 4) Utilise the experiences of the successful women's groups, such as the Fawcett Society to develop joint working on best practice.
- 5) Encourage women to train for traditionally male dominated roles within the branch such as Health & Safety representatives.
- 6) Report back to National women's Conference 2013 with the progress made and future plans identified to keep the momentum going.

*East Midlands Region*

## **EFFECTS OF THE CON DEM ATTACKS ON CHILD BENEFIT AND THE INTRODUCTION OF UNIVERSAL CREDIT ON WOMEN IN DOMESTIC ABUSE SITUATIONS**

Conference notes Cameron's pre election promise that the cuts would affect all society 'equally and fairly'. Clegg promised to deliver the 'fairness that people want'. Since the general election and the formation of the Con Dem coalition government equality and fairness have failed to materialise. What we have actually witnessed has been a series of broken manifesto pledges and a complete failure to consider the impact on women. Cuts in the public sector and welfare reform are having a disproportionate effect on women.

Conference feels the abolition of the Women's National Commission (WNC) also compounds the Con Dem view of women in society and women's needs. For over forty years the WNC has provided an independent voice to government on issues such as domestic violence and supporting women into leadership and decision making roles.

The cut to Child Benefit and the introduction of universal credit further attacks women. This will have an especially disastrous effect on women fleeing domestic violence or hiding from an abusive partner. Child Benefit has been a universal benefit predominantly paid to women since 1945. It was intended to give mothers some security and rights. It went some distance to giving women equal status and ensuring the money was spent on the children.

Conference further notes that Child Benefit can be the only source of reliable income available to women fleeing or hiding from a domestic violence situation with their children or living. In an abusive relationship money is often used by men as a way of exerting their power, influence and control. Child Benefit can give these women a level of financial independence. The introduction of Universal Credit means that households can only put in one claim for benefits including Child Benefit. All the money will be paid to one person in the household meaning many women will lose money as it will be claimed by their partners.

The attack on Child Benefit has already proved unfair with the discrepancy of a one income family earning forty four thousand pounds losing their entitlement while a dual income family earning forty three thousand pounds each keep theirs.

Can it be right that the most vulnerable women who need Child Benefit most may lose it? In situations where women are fleeing or hiding from domestic violence partners can contact the HRMC to say that their income takes the 'family' over the threshold. This would mean the mother losing the Child Benefit.

Conference calls on National Women's Committee to work with the NEC to:

- 1) Work with Labour Link and other appropriate organisations to campaign against the attacks on Child Benefit.
- 2) Lobby all MPs and actively campaign against this and future attacks on Child Benefit.
- 3) Promote the effects the changes to Child Benefit will have on women's independence.

- 4) Continue to work with and support the Fawcett Society in their legal challenge of the government's failure to Equality Impact Assess the budget; I think this challenge has ended. If it has then we need to take this action out as it probably won't get through Standing Orders.
- 5) Work with community groups and member unions to embed the defence of women's hard earned rights at the heart of all campaigns.

*Newcastle City*

## **NOT SUFFICIENTLY CLEAR**

### **WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND LIVELIHOODS UNDER ATTACK**

There is now almost universal agreement that women in our society and working class women in particular, are now bearing the greatest burden as a consequence of Government policies. This discrimination is further being compounded by cuts decisions being taken at the level of public bodies and public service employers.

Conference calls on the Women's Committee to work with UNISON structures in a campaign to prioritise the protection of women's rights and livelihoods. This campaign should include spotlighting specific cuts in women's services in the community and in public services, particularly in health, education and social care. It should also include a political lobby which forces all elected politicians to confront this discrimination and state their intentions to end it.

*Northern Ireland Region*

### **CUTS IN PUBLIC SERVICES - IMPACT ON WOMEN**

That this Conference is seriously concerned at the continual budget cuts in services, with to date many workers being offered voluntary severance. Conference has recognised the tactics used in this measure in selecting staff.

However, in addition to those directly involved, there is a largely unspoken, indirect impact on staff that remains part of the workforce. While posts are no longer filled, the work and responsibility that person had does not disappear, but is too frequently put onto the remaining staff. There is an expectation that staff can work longer hours, manage an ever increasing workload and even taken additional responsibilities without being equipped for this.

These demands conflict with 'health at work' policies, increasing stress levels, reducing worklife balance, having the potential to increase mental health issues, as well as all the well documented stress related illnesses dominant in Scotland, including high blood pressure, stroke and heart disease.

As the majority of UNISON members affected by these cuts are women, the decision by the Con Dem Government not to introduce specific duties under the Equality Act 2010

means that much of this downsizing will directly and indirectly discriminate on our women members.

Conference therefore calls on the National Women's Committee to work with the NEC to lobby and put pressure on the Government to introduce specific duties, no less than those introduced by the Welsh Assembly.

*Scotland Region*

## **SUPERFLUOUS**

### **WOMEN CUTS AND EXPLOITATION**

Economic pressure has been increasing on women since the moment this coalition government took power.

Public sector pay is frozen, with no sight of a pay increase on the horizon, and worse than that, many women face cuts in their already meager pay.

Compounding this squeeze on finances is the rapidly increasing cost of food, utilities and everyday essentials. These increases in costs are increasing pressure on the many women who struggle and juggle to manage the household coffers. Luxuries and treats are not a consideration for these women; the daily grind is to keep the household afloat financially.

And so we see the vultures circling overhead, the pay day loan shops, the return of pawn shops on our high streets.

New high street shops are appearing that offer weekly, easy terms over 20 weeks, with what turns out to be an average of 29.9% APR or more on many items. This is profiteering borne out of the struggles and hardship felt by our members.

Affluent celebrities are increasing their already substantial wealth by appearing in adverts that encourage those that are already financially struggling, to take out loans with high or exorbitant interest rates in the small print.

Conference believes that UNISON already does much to support its members but more could be done to actively promote the safe and ethical organisations our members can go to when they are attempting to effectively manage their finances or debt.

Conference instructs the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Distribute the UNISON Plus leaflet to all conference delegates and visitors
- 2) Encourage these UNISON endorsed organisations to have stalls at future women's conferences
- 3) Actively promote UNISON Welfare services at women's conferences

*Eastern Region*

## **BEYOND REMIT OF THE CONFERENCE**

### **BUDDYING AND MENTORING**

As National Women's Conference are aware, UNISON is facing one of the most challenging times in our existence. One of the consequences of the job losses we are experiencing is the loss of many of our senior activists. Never has there been a more important time to encourage new women activists to come forward in the union. Women have a vital role to play in delivering our union to our members and being the face of UNISON. This Conference can be rightly proud of the work that UNISON has done to encourage women to become activists through our training programmes both at National and Regional level. It is the right time to empower women to feel that they have a place and a voice in UNISON.

In order to develop new women coming forward into activity in the union we need to support them with help and guidance. We all know the pressures and demands that women face in their everyday lives, and it is incumbent on us to ensure that we do everything in our power to show that activity within the union does not have to be another onerous demand on already busy women.

Buddying and mentoring are valuable ways of nurturing new women activists without 'throwing them in at the deep end' to trade union activity. It helps to allay fears about what is expected and help women gain an understanding of various trade union roles in advance of taking them on. By mentoring them, women can be guided through trade union processes which can from the outside appear daunting. It is also an opportunity for those with experience at local, regional and national level to pass on their experience and knowledge to new activists and act (in a voluntary capacity) as an aide towards the organising approach promoted by UNISON. Conference will be aware that both buddying and mentoring are advocated in UNISON's document Developing and Supporting Workplace Reps.

In order to meet this requirement, there needs to be a training package incorporated into our training provision on the roles of buddying and mentoring. Both have different expectations and there should be a clearly defined role for each. Activists benefit from a staged approach to their development which gives them linked and key stages to work towards. It also has to be recognised that both these roles need to be delivered by those who are committed to developing new talent in the union and who clearly understand what their roles and responsibilities are in helping those they support to set targets and achieve their goals, thereby developing their self esteem. It is essential that the buddy or mentor is capable, competent and confident.

A good buddying and mentoring scheme will encourage new women and young women to come forward and volunteer. it will aid succession planning and help women members to gain skills within UNISON for the benefit of UNISON. It will also encourage retention and recruitment of women members.

This National Women's Conference instructs the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Produce publicity materials that will encourage women members to come forward to become buddies and mentors for new women activists.

- 2) Develop suitable training materials with the appropriate education functions within UNISON such as the Learning and Organising Services for both buddying and mentoring as separate courses.

*Durham*

## **CONTINUING SUPPORT FOR THE WOMEN AND CHILDREN OF BURMA**

Nobody at 2011 National Delegate Conference could fail to have been moved by the video message sent from Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi. Her heartening message of thanks for the support of UNISON in bestowing upon her an Honorary Membership, displayed a grace and nobility rarely seen in public life.

Despite the illegal 21 year imprisonment or "House Arrest" forced upon her by an oppressive regime, she has never shied from the difficult choices or complained about the separation from her family. She has endured so much in the struggle for a peaceful resolution to her country's problems. As the democratically elected representative of the people who won eighty two per cent of the seats in elections in 1990, which instigated her incarceration. She was released on 13 November 2010.

Fake elections were held by the regime on 7 November 2010 and bought in a rubber stamp parliament and a new constitution designed to legalise dictatorship and will not bring any new freedom to Burma's people. Rather than a step towards democracy, it marks a transition from Military to Civilian dictatorship. Indeed, Burma's new election laws bar the opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and all political detainees from taking part.

A new illegally imposed leader has now been "enthroned" from these fake elections. There continues to be international pressure for the right of the people of Burma to have their wishes granted and for Aung San Suu Kyi to be the voice of the people of Burma. Instead they are ruled by a cruel, brutal dictatorship that were charged by the United Nations with a "Crimes against Humanity" for its systematic abuses of human rights including withholding access to proper healthcare, education or food. Half the annual budget of this country is spent on the military.

Protests against this should hopefully include the UK Government to join International leaders to apply pressure to carry out a United Nations Commission of Enquiry into the horrific crimes of the Burmese Army including mass use of gang rapes of ethnic minority women and girls.

In order to be an effective ally and continue raising the profile of not, One Woman's Struggle, but to be effectively listened to, amidst the loud voices as we fight for our own rights and assaults on our way of life, we need to continue with due diligence to fight in any way possible to campaign for the women and children of Burma to lead a peaceful and productive life free from fear, threats of violence and be treated with grace and dignity from all their fellow people.

Conference therefore calls upon the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Work via Labour Link to campaign and apply pressure on UK Government to support a United Nations Commission of Enquiry into the horrific crimes of the Burmese Army.
- 2) Continue to work via the International Committee and other SOG's to encourage branches to affiliate to the Burma Campaign UK.
- 3) Send an open invitation to Aung San Suu Kyi to attend future NW Conferences and include a message of support and solidarity from all women in UNISON.
- 4) Report back to 2013 Conference on progress made.

*East Midlands Region*

## **WOMEN OF LATIN AMERICA**

Conference, with campaigns to protect our NHS, Public Transport Preservation, and the ongoing battle to protect our pensions, UNISON is leading the way in an ever changing world. but we need more women to come forward to lead the way in campaigns that fight to preserve the rights of women and their families.

In Cuba we have seen the improvements to their health service. Cuba has been blockaded by the Americans for fifty years and has a trade embargo that denies them free trade. America denies Cuba free access to food, education and medical equipment and supplies. Yet despite the blockades and sanctions, Cuba sent medical teams to Haiti in the aftermath of the earthquake in January 2010. Cuban medical staff still work in forty cholera centres in nineteen countries - mostly in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa. Despite all of these sanctions, Cuba has a lower infant mortality rate than either the USA or Canada.

In Venezuela, American sanctions have been placed on their oil production as the country is on the USA's list of 'state sponsors of terrorism'. Yet in Venezuela, the Bolivian Revolution has achieved a chance for all women to participate in all areas of life both socially and culturally. Men and women are equally valued by their President, Hugo Chavez.

There has been an improvement in education in Venezuela, Nicaragua, Bolivia and Cuba and a further thirty countries using the Yo Si Puedo (Yes I Can) method developed in Cuba to solve illiteracy.

Conference instructs the National Women's Committee to:

Work with Regional Women's Committees, Learning and Organising Services (LAOS) and the International Committee to encourage Branches and in particular women members to join Cuba Solidarity, Venezuela solidarity, Nicaragua Solidarity, Bolivia Information Forum, Palestine Solidarity and Justice for Columbia.

- 1) Work with UNISON publications and the International Committee producing articles for inclusion in these publications - for activists and members to raise awareness of the issues facing the women in these countries and their achievements. This

should also include information on web addresses and contact details to allow members to stay abreast of the changing situations.

- 2) Work with Regions and Branches to encourage more women to come forward as International Officers.
- 3) Report back to the 2013 conference on the progress made.

*East Midlands Region*

## **LESBIAN GAY BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER WOMEN IN THE GLOBAL TRADE UNION MOVEMENT**

Conference notes that the 2011 International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) global survey of trade union rights violations details a grim picture of violence, harassment and restrictions on trade union rights in almost every country. Columbia tops the poll of shame as the most dangerous place to be a trade unionist, with 49 documented murders last year, including a mother of four - her youngest child being just four months old.

The reason our rights are restricted and our fellow trade unionists intimidated, assaulted and arrested is because we are demanding better rights for working people: decent wages, better jobs, safer and healthier working conditions and equality. All through history, the role of women in the struggle for change has been huge. In this country within living memory supporting the miners' strikes and staging sit-ins in textile factories were hugely significant. This courage and determination to combat injustice is also true of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) women around the world.

Conference notes that trade unions and specifically women have been instrumental in the Arab Spring revolutions. However, increasing independent and democratic trade union organisation does not necessarily equate with increasing respect for trade union rights or with increasing rights for women, including LGBT women. In some countries there have been crackdowns on trade union activity, attempts to restrict the right to strike and mass dismissals of trade union members. There are also very real fears that homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and xenophobia could be used to canvas political votes.

Conference welcomes the fact that there have been some positive equality developments. The "Statement of Trade Unions from Arab Countries for Democracy and Social Justice", issued on 1 May, included commitments to "strive for full equality for women, in all aspects of politics, society and the economy, including within the trade union movement" and to "work for a transition in our societies that enhances human dignity through democracy, equality and social justice". In September, Tunisia became the first country in the region to withdraw reservations to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women.

Conference notes that global trade union bodies the ITUC, Public Services International (PSI) and Education International (EI) are in a good position to influence, at least, the direction of travel and, potentially, significant policy decisions within affiliate unions and federations on issues of LGBT and gender equality.

Conference calls on the National Woman's Committee to:

- 1) Work with UNISON's National Executive Council's (NEC) International Committee to request that PSI, EI and the ITUC draw the attention of newly affiliated unions and federations to their policies on LGBT and gender equality and to promote education and training on these issues;
- 2) Encourage regional and branch groups to respond to calls for messages of solidarity - in some cases trade unionists depend for their very survival on the ability of unions in other countries to highlight their situation;
- 3) Continue to work with the NEC and UNISON's international department towards a better future of social justice by organising with sister trade unions and supporting challenges to human rights violations.

*. National Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and  
Transgender Committee*

### **CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE - THE HIDDEN COST OF WOMEN'S POVERTY**

Conference notes with concern the increasing numbers of looked after children in the UK. Since 2006 the number has increased by 13%, and continues to grow year on year.

The reasons for children being looked after are complex, but they include abuse, neglect, parental substance abuse, disability and involvement in the youth justice system. Poverty, caused by low pay, unemployment and cuts to the benefit system, all of which impact disproportionately on women, can only exacerbate these growing problems.

Conference further notes that this situation is worsened by the government's cuts to the services which are designed to protect and support women. Women who may have been able to escape a violent partnership, seek help with drug or alcohol issues, be supported whilst experiencing mental health problems or seek advice and support through children's centres such as Sure Start are finding that those sources of support have been cut or withdrawn.

Lone parents, of which 90% are women, are particularly vulnerable to these cuts, and may be reluctant to seek help because of society's stigmatisation of lone parent families and concerns that they will have their children removed from their care.

The cuts in these services are having a significant budgetary impact as the cost of children's social care increases. The increasing number of children in care is resulting in more children being placed with private sector fostering agencies, which can double or treble the cost of foster carers registered with the local authority. Private sector foster agencies often charge over £1000 per week to place a child with a foster carer. With around 13,000 such placements at any one time, the cost to the taxpayer is in excess of £650 million per year.

Conference believes that profit should not be made from looking after the most vulnerable children, and that resources should instead be directed to supporting women as mothers and, wherever possible and safe to do so, keeping families intact.

Conference therefore calls upon the national women's committee to:

- 1) work with the local government service group to campaign against the increasing drive for private rather than public sector provision for children's social care; for funding for sufficient social workers to meet the needs of all vulnerable children in need of social care; and to campaign for all foster carers to be registered through a local authority ceasing the expensive profit driven fostering agencies trading in looked after children;
- 2) campaign with the NEC and regional women's committees to protect those services used primarily by women, and provided primarily by women (including Sure Start centres) which support women caring for children who are facing challenges in that care.

*National Women's Committee*

## **DEFENDING SERVICES FOR YOUNG WOMEN**

This Conference is appalled by the rising number of services for young people which are either closing or being cut back at a time when they are needed more than ever to support young people in finding employment and to support them in their personal development.

This Conference believes that young people are being targeted by the Con-Dem coalition in respect of loss of jobs and job opportunities and in respect of cuts in public services.

This Conference also believes that services for young women - for example advisory services on employment and training, housing, alcohol and drug abuse, violence against women, reproductive health, mental health, sexual health, and Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) - are under particular threat.

This Conference further believes that these services for young women must be defended against cuts, and that bringing together workers and service users to campaign together is an important part of achieving that aim.

The conference calls on the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Support regional women's groups in developing campaigning links between workers and service user groups;
- 2) Raise the profile of campaigning to defend services for young women through and publicise any success stories;
- 3) Call for these issues to be raised in the wider union, including Labour Link and other appropriate channels;
- 4) Call for a voice for young women to be developed within "Chose Youth" - umbrella body supported by UNISON, and which is campaigning to defend youth services.

*National Young Members' Forum*

## **ATTACKS ON REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS**

Conference notes the rise of indirect attacks on women's reproductive rights by anti choice coalitions in both the USA and the UK. These take the form of making the process of obtaining abortion more complicated and restrictive.

The battle to completely outlaw abortion has been lost in the UK but attacks such as 2011's move by Nadine Dorries and Frank Field in the UK to enforce independent pre abortion counselling are likely to keep recurring.

The organisations which could bid for pre abortion counselling such as the national Pregnancy Crisis Centres network may be covertly funded by churches and push a particular agenda, in just the way that BPAS were accused of doing.

Conference believes:

Women have the right to free, safe and easily accessible abortion on demand, including counselling if, and only if, they wish it.

Conference instructs the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Step up its ongoing campaigns on abortion rights by drawing members' attention to the covert nature of current attacks on reproductive rights, and the need to be vigilant for further attacks.
- 2) Liaise via Labour Link with Labour MPs and councillors to ensure that UNISON's stand is reflected in debates, also that organisations working in this area which receive public funding are rigorously scrutinised to ensure objectivity.

*Yorkshire and Humberside Region*

## **ACTION NOT SPECIFIC TO THE CONFERENCE**

### **ATTACKS ON FACILITIES TIME AND TRADE UNION RECOGNITION**

UNISON has a proud record on proportionality and fair representation, working towards ensuring that our branches activists reflect our membership. UNISON statistics were reflecting an increasingly female percentage of our activists and use of facility time.

But in recent years, national newspapers and political parties have made numerous Freedom of Information claims to public sector employers seeking time and costs of our trade union activism, particularly in Labour controlled councils.

Conference notes the assault on facility time by the Taxpayers Alliance and other right wing organisations and rejects their ideological undermining of facility time as dangerous, ill-conceived and bad for staff, service users and the public sector generally.

Any attack on the public sector such as this is also specifically an attack on women. Women make up sixty per cent of all public service workers and seventy five per cent of

those who work in local government, education and the NHS. Those figures are reflected in Unison's membership too.

Facility time enables activists to undertake consultation with members, identify problems in the workplace at an early stage and help ensure high levels of productivity and morale in the workplace.

Effective trade union representatives are problem solving in their workplaces on a daily basis; working with the employers to make improvements and providing support to our members in an ever changing working environment.

Conference affirms its belief that adequate facility time is a crucial ingredient for ensuring positive working relationships between employers and staff, as noted jointly by the TUC and CBI.

Conference is further concerned to note that local authorities are choosing to de-recognise UNISON to avoid difficult negotiations and conflict, hoping to create divide amongst other recognised trade unions.

Conference applauds the work of activists who successfully brought Plymouth back to the negotiating table and regained recognition for UNISON.

Conference instructs the National Women's Committee to:

- 1) Send a message of congratulations to Plymouth Branch on their success.
- 2) Re-publicise and promote the need for women to become actively involved in their UNISON branch; standing for election to posts that have facility time so that gains made towards equality, proportionality and fair representation are not lost in the Con-Dem imposed era of austerity.

*Eastern Region*

## **SCHOOL SUPPORT STAFF**

As largely female, low paid workforce; organising and recruiting school support staff to improve their terms and conditions has to be at the heart of UNISON's agenda.

In the past eighteen months school support staff have had fear instilled upon them in several ways, the abolition of the SSNB, local councils forcing regressive term time only pay proposals, job cuts and now the threat of increased pension contributions; costs these low paid staff.

Conference will be aware of the successful campaigns run across many regions in recruiting and organising school based staff but there are still difficulties accessing many schools and in achieving facility time for support staff. Conference should continue to build on the success of this year's campaign in recruiting and organising in our schools and to lobby the government to end the two tier workforce in schools.

The government's agenda for education and schools includes:

- 1) An increased role for the private sector in the management of schools and the provision of support and advisory services.
- 2) Reducing the role of local authorities; and
- 2) For schools to be independent of local authorities, employing staff, setting terms and conditions, purchasing professional and other services as they choose.

Add in the removal of community governors, staff governors and local authority governors, academies and free schools; will mean terms and conditions for school based staff will be more vulnerable to attack, this is driven by the government's aspirations for greater deregulation of pay and terms and conditions for the schools workforce. This is a direct attack on and will lead to greater exploitation of a worker group that is made up overwhelmingly by part time women workers, the majority of whom are already low paid and have struggled to get the professional recognition they deserve.

We call on national women's conference to work with the NEC to:

- 1) Encourage branches and regions to consider organising shop stewards training in holiday periods and at weekends or at other times suitable for school workers.
- 2) Make these fully accessible through offering quality childcare and transport if necessary.
- 3) Encourage branches to continue, or to develop, school specific training, monitoring take up and impact and focusing on areas of low density.
- 4) Campaign for the proposals for the working year to reflect those of teaching staff and the end of inequity of a two tier workforce in our schools.
- 5) Encourage branches to be involved with broad based community coalitions, such as local public services alliances, to highlight the risks school based staff face and to aid in rapid mobilisation if necessary.

*Newcastle City*

## **AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS**

### **CAN BE DEALT WITH IN OTHER WAYS**

#### **STANDING ORDERS 2.4.4**

Renumbering the amendment to make it consistent with numbering conventions contained with Standing Orders Committee

To renumber SOC 2.4.4 to read:

- 2.4.4 Consider all motions and amendments submitted for consideration by Conference and, for the purpose of enabling Conference to transact its business effectively, the Committee shall:

- 2.4.4.1 decide whether such motions and amendments have been submitted in accordance with the UNISON Rule Book, and specifically principles outlined in Section D4, and in accordance with these standing orders;
- 2.4.4.2 group together motions and amendments relating to the same subject, decide the order in which they should be considered and whether they should be debated and voted on separately or debated together and voted on sequentially;
- 2.4.4.3 make such minor wording changes of a technical nature as the Committee may consider necessary and which will render competent motions and/or amendments submitted with minor errors and/or omissions;
- 2.4.4.4 prepare and revise, in consultation with the movers of motions and amendments, composite motions in terms which in the opinion of the Committee best express the subject of such motions and amendments;
- 2.4.4.5 refer to another representative body within the Union a motion or amendment which in the opinion of the Committee should properly be considered there. The mover shall be informed of the reason for so doing.
- 2.4.4.6 have power to do all such things as may be necessary to give effect to these Standing Orders.
- 2.4.4.7 The Standing Orders Committee will, from time to time, issue guidelines in order to assist with the smooth running of Conference and submission of motions and amendments. Such guidelines shall be consistent with these Standing Orders and amendments will be ratified by the Standing Orders Committee at their final meeting at conference, prior to issue with the papers for conference in the following year.
- 2.4.4.8 Any guidance issued by SOC will be reviewed by SOC following each National Women's Conference to ensure the guidance continues to be fit for purpose.

*East Midlands Region*

### **STANDING ORDERS 3.3**

To amend SOC 3.3

3.3 Second sentence replace 'motion' with 'motions' and amendment' with 'amendments'

The new 3.3 would read:

Motions and amendments shall be sent to the General Secretary's Office in order that the Standing Orders Committee may consider them for inclusion in the preliminary agenda. Such motions or amendments shall be in writing and signed by the appropriate persons from the body on whose behalf it is submitted.

**STANDING ORDERS 3.5**

Amend punctuation contained within SO3.5

SO 3.5.1 replace semi colon at the end of final sentence with a full stop

SO3.5.2 replace semi colon at the end of final sentence with a full stop

SO3.5.3 replace semi colon at the end of final sentence with a full stop

**STANDING ORDERS 4.1**

At the end of SO 4.1 first paragraph insert a full colon. Last sentence will then read:

'In addition to the elected delegates the only persons permitted to attend a private session of a conference shall be:

**STANDING ORDERS 8.3**

Amend punctuation and capitalisation contained within SO 8.3 and renumber to create a new 8.3.3

SO 8.3.1 replace semi colon at the end of the final sentence with a full stop

SO 8.3.2 at the end of first paragraph replace semi colon with a full stop

SO 8.3.2 replace 'presiding conference chair' with 'presiding Conference Chair'

SO 8.3.2 second paragraph renumber as 8.3.3

SO 8.3 once amended will read as follows:

8.3 When a count has been called:

8.3.1 No other conference business may proceed until the count has been completed.

8.3.2 The presiding Conference Chair shall immediately instruct the tellers to close the doors. Any person may leave the conference during the time that the doors are closed. Members of the Standing Orders Committee and UNISON staff may enter the Conference, should they deem their business to be such that it cannot wait until the count is completed, whilst the doors are closed.

8.3.3 The presiding Conference Chair shall instruct the tellers to do a count of those in favour, those against, and those not voting, and shall declare the result. Once the result has been declared the presiding Conference Chair shall instruct the tellers to reopen the doors.

*East Midlands Region*

### **STANDING ORDERS 12.1**

Renumbering SOC 12.1 to read:

12.1 That the question be now put, provided that:

12.1.1 The Chairperson may advise Conference not to accept this motion if in her opinion the matter has not been sufficiently discussed.

12.1.2 If the motion is carried, it shall take effect at once subject only to any right of reply under these Standing Orders.

*East Midlands Region*

### **STANDING ORDERS 16.2**

Renumber SO 16.2 to read

16.2 The following procedure will be followed:

16.2.1 The Chairperson will advise Conference of the order of business and of the sequence in which motions and amendments will be moved and voted on following a general debate, and of the effect of certain proposals on others.

16.2.2 All motions and amendments included in the debate shall be moved.

16.2.3 The general debate shall take place.

16.2.4 The Chairperson shall again state the order of voting and shall advise Conference which, if any, motions or amendments will fall if others are carried.

16.2.5 Voting will take place on motions, preceded by relevant amendments, in the order in which they were moved.

16.2.6 A debate being conducted under this procedure may not be adjourned until after all the motions and amendments have been moved.

*East Midlands Region*