



DEMOCRACY IN UNISON



GUIDELINES

INCORPORATING MEDIA GUIDELINES

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CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Democracy in UNISON Guidelines	6
UNISON Media Guidelines	12
Demonstrations and Lobbies Code of Conduct	14
Democracy in UNISON and the Right to Campaign	18
UNISON's Political Funds	19
Guidance to Branches on Political Fund Expenditure	21

INTRODUCTION

The Democracy in UNISON Guidelines were first introduced in 1999 following a decision taken at National Delegate Conference the previous year concerning 'The Right to Organise and Campaign in UNISON'. They were initially approved by the NEC following consultation with regions and service groups, and were subsequently endorsed by National Delegate Conference in 2000.

The framework for the guidelines, as laid down by the conference policy, was for the NEC:

'to agree in conjunction with regions guidelines covering the way in which branches, regions and the NEC should promote and implement agreed policy while safeguarding the right to campaign to change policy.'

The NEC conducted an extensive consultation exercise in 2001/2 to determine areas in the guidelines that may require updating, clarification or improvement in the light of experience. Responses indicated that the guidelines had been well received and were generally well supported, although a number of improvements were also identified. This revised version has therefore been issued by the NEC to take these matters into account.

In December 2002 the National Executive Council adopted media guidelines which have been incorporated in this document. See page 12.

DEMOCRACY IN UNISON GUIDELINES

1.1 The basic framework determining how policy is developed, changed, promoted and implemented is laid down in the UNISON Rule Book.

1.2 The following rules are particularly important:

Rule B defines UNISON's principle aims and objectives. Rule B 2 focuses specifically on Union Democracy identifying that UNISON should:

- promote, safeguard and improve the interests and status of members and the union as a whole (B 2.1)
- promote and establish a member-led union, and carry out and fulfil decisions made by members in a spirit of unity and accountability (B 2.2)
- promote and safeguard the rights of members to have an adequate opportunity to participate in the initiation and development of policy making (B 2.5)
- encourage the maximum democratic debate, together with the right to campaign to change policy, while at all times acting within the rules and agreed policy (B 2.5).

Rule D determines the structure of the union at national level, including:

- the supreme government of the union is vested in National Delegate Conference (D 1.1)
- the general management and control of the union between conferences is vested in the National Executive Council, which must act within the rules and within policy as determined by National Delegate Conference (D 2)
- the scope and powers of service groups and of self-organised groups (D 3 and D 4 respectively), which should act within policy as determined by National Delegate Conference, and as applied by the NEC.

Rule F determines the powers and functions of regions, whose activities must be consistent with the rules and general policy of the union (F 3.4).

Rule G governs the structure and functions of branches, which are required to administer their business in accordance with their rules and any guidelines issued by the NEC (G 2.2).

1.3 In addition, the UNISON Rule Book also deals with circumstances where rules or policy are not followed or are breached:

Rule I places a requirement upon all members to have a duty to follow the rules of the union (I.1), and provides for the union to take disciplinary action against any member who disregards, disobeys or breaks any of the rules or regulations of the union (I.2.1), or who acts in a manner prejudicial or detrimental to the union (I.2.2).

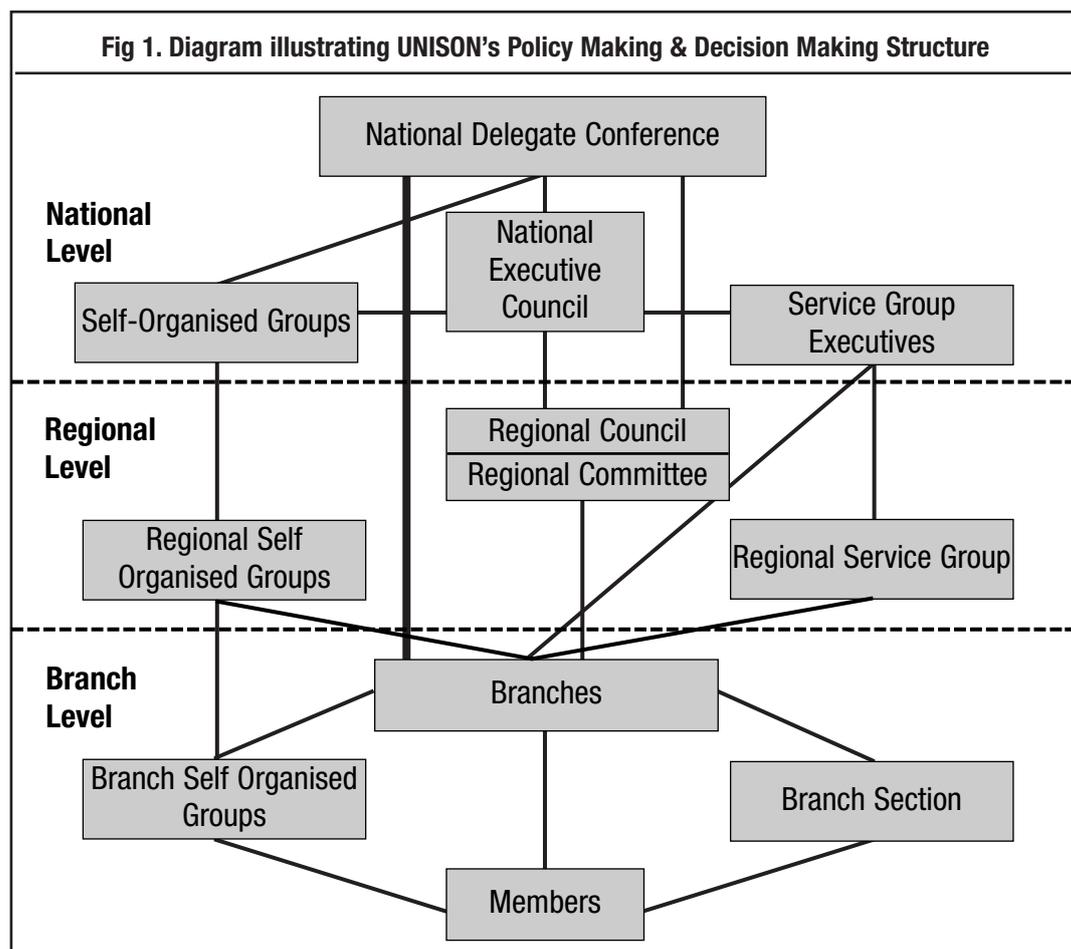
- 1.4** These rules define UNISON's policy making process and structures, determine roles and responsibilities for policy development, promotion and implementation, and underpin these Democracy in UNISON guidelines.
- 1.5** These guidelines apply to all aspects of UNISON's structure: members, branches, regions, service groups, self-organised groups, and the NEC. They also apply to all aspects of UNISON policy development, be it developing or changing policy, promoting or implementing it, and campaigning within it.
- 1.6** They are intended to clarify and promote rights conferred by rule rather than inhibit them, and to encourage and enable members, branches and all other bodies within UNISON to fully participate in the union's democratic process and structures. However, any breach of this guidance may amount to conduct prejudicial or detrimental to the union, and could be subject to disciplinary action under Rule I.

Making and Changing UNISON Policy

- 2.1** All principal UNISON policy is determined by the National Delegate Conference, which is made up primarily of delegates from branches. Delegates from regions, service groups, self-organised groups and the NEC are in attendance and can speak but not vote.
- 2.2** Motions to National Delegate Conference can be tabled by a range of bodies in UNISON:
- branches
 - regions
 - young members forum
 - self-organised groups
 - NEC
- 2.3** Members wishing to develop policy can do so by winning support from their branch to make a submission direct to Conference. In addition, branches can seek to win support from their region, young members forum, self-organised group or the NEC, via UNISON's representative structure, to promote their views when tabling their own motions.
- 2.4** In addition to the above, branches, regions, service groups and self-organised groups can develop policy within their own sphere of influence. As such, they can develop and promote policy particular to the needs of their own members so long as this is within the framework of primary policy as established by National Delegate Conference, UNISON's rules - including our aims and objectives - and any guidelines laid down by the NEC.
- 2.5** As a general guide, the appropriate spheres of influence for these bodies are:
- service groups - pay, conditions, professional and occupational matters, and other related industrial relations issues associated with the employment of members covered by the group
 - self-organised groups - employment and citizenship issues related to the members covered by the group

- regions - citizenship and union governance issues within the region, with regional service groups progressing regional related matters associated with employment
- branches - matters associated with the employment and wider citizenship issues of their own members.

- 2.6** Rule D 3.8 gives guidance on how the relationship between service groups and wider citizenship and governance issues should be dealt with at regional level. Namely, if a branch motion relates exclusively to a service group matter, it should be referred to the appropriate regional service group. However if the motion has implications for other parts of the union it should also be referred to the Regional Council or Regional Committee for action or information as appropriate. Any dispute regarding the application of these principles should be resolved by the NEC, or by the General Secretary acting on its' behalf.
- 2.7** Members, branches, and other UNISON bodies wishing to develop or change UNISON policy should do so within the structure and framework described above. In doing so they should act within UNISON rules and agreed policy in accordance with Rule B 2.5.
- 2.8** The structures for developing policy are depicted diagrammatically below in figure 1.



Collective Responsibility

3.1 Once a policy is established it is important that all constituent parts of the union work together to promote it and take collective responsibility in supporting it.

3.2 This principle was reinforced by the 1998 National Delegate Conference which decided:

‘ there is an obligation on branches, regions and the NEC to promote existing policy and to accept collective responsibility once decisions have been democratically taken. Once policy has been agreed by democratic means at an appropriate level, all members should expect that those who may not have agreed with the decision establishing policy but were in a minority, should not be able simply to withdraw it. Such action would undermine the whole principle of collective strength and solidarity which the democracy of the union is established to promote. Democracy cannot thrive if agreed policies count for nothing. Outside bodies should not be able to seek to undermine the established and agreed policies of the union.’

Campaigning, Promoting and Implementing UNISON Policy

4.1 Similar principles, processes and structures apply to the promotion and implementation of policy as for its development.

4.2 Branches, regions and other bodies of the union will often be called upon to take action in support of particular policies. It is important that when this happens the union acts effectively and consistently in accordance with transparent and robust democratic principles.

4.3 Moreover, branches, regions and other bodies of the union are frequently placed in a position by employers, political bodies or other outside agencies where they need to campaign publicly to promote or implement UNISON policy in order to defend members’ interests. In such cases it is important that UNISON provides clear and effective processes for enabling such activity to take place, again in accordance with transparent and robust democratic principles.

4.4 The following guidelines are designed to meet these requirements. They are based upon the original guidelines issued in 1999 but have been improved to take into account responses from the 2001/2 consultation exercise:

a) all activities and initiatives taken under the auspices of UNISON must be in accordance with UNISON policy, rules, aims and objectives, and any guidelines or regulations issued by the NEC

b) as a matter of principle and practice, activities initiated by any UNISON body should not extend beyond the constituency of that representative body without prior consultation, agreement and approval of the neighbouring or extended constituencies. Constituency, in these circumstances, refers to the members, or groups of members, for whom the representative body concerned has a direct responsibility. In most circumstances the constituency will either be the membership of a branch (or group of branches), a region, or a regional service group or self-organised group

- c)** national initiatives called in the name of UNISON should be determined by the National Delegate Conference or require the support of the NEC, having consulted the appropriate service group executive and/or self-organised groups
- d)** similarly regional initiatives require a decision of the regional council or committee, and activities which cross borders with other regions must be approved by the regional councils or committees in all regions affected
- e)** branch initiatives require a decision of a general meeting or branch committee and should not extend beyond the branch without reference to the regional committee or regional service group executive for agreement and approval
- f)** the authority of regions and branches must be acknowledged and respected. Any cross-border or cross-branch initiatives must be referred to the appropriate regional and branch committees for agreement and approval
- g)** it is recognised that on occasions branches need to act swiftly and that it will not be possible to wait for a meeting of an appropriate regional body to give agreement and approval to initiatives which impact upon neighbouring branches. In such cases regions may make their own arrangements for awarding fast track decision-making powers to approved regional council or regional service group officers, who should seek retrospective approval for their decisions through the established structures
- h)** in dealing with cross-branch initiatives, regions should seek wherever possible to promote the wider interests of the union and of the membership. One branch should not be able to exercise an automatic power of veto over another.

Activities Initiated by UNISON

- 5.** Branches, regions, service groups and self-organised groups intending to organise activities to promote policy or to campaign on behalf of their members should ensure that the following principles are adopted:
 - a)** the event is in line with UNISON policy or our aims and objectives
 - b)** the decision to initiate the activity should be taken in accordance with the principles outlined in section 4.4 above
 - c)** as broad a spectrum of members, and branches where appropriate, is consulted as is practical in the circumstances before the decision is taken
 - d)** any expenditure incurred in organising the activities or events or to facilitate members' participation, must be approved and accounted for in line with UNISON's financial rules and guidelines
 - e)** no payments can be made for party political purposes or to political parties from branch or regional funds in accordance with the requirements of the Political Parties, Referendums & Elections Act 2000
 - f)** the event is governed by the UNISON Code of Conduct for Demonstrations and Lobbies
 - g)** the UNISON Media Guidelines are followed.

Activities Initiated by Other Organisations

- 6.** Branches, regions, service groups and self-organised groups are often approached by outside organisations with requests to support their activities. In these cases similar principles to those outlined in section 5 above should apply, namely:
- a)** support for such activities and events should only be given if UNISON at the appropriate branch, regional or national level is affiliated to the outside organisation involved or its activities are in line with UNISON policy or our aims and objectives
 - b)** the decision for the UNISON body to support the activity or event should be taken in accordance with the principles outlined in section 4.4
 - c)** as broad a spectrum of members, and branches where appropriate, is consulted as is practical in the circumstances before the decision to support is taken
 - d)** guidance on expenditure and payments outlined in paragraphs 5d and 5e above are followed
 - e)** UNISON members supporting such activities are also subject to UNISON's Code of Conduct for Demonstrations & Lobbies and the Media Guidelines.

Role and Responsibilities of UNISON Staff

- 7.** The principles and objectives contained within this framework will be acknowledged, supported and upheld by all UNISON paid staff.

Mechanisms for Review

- 8.** These revised guidelines have been approved and agreed by the National Executive Council in accordance with its responsibilities under Rule D 2.1 and following consultation with branches, regions, service groups and self organised groups. The NEC will continue to monitor their implementation with a view to revising them further in the light of experience should this prove necessary.

UNISON MEDIA GUIDELINES

These guidelines will assist members, branches, regions and other UNISON bodies in dealing with the media. There are thousands of local and regional newspapers, radio stations and regional TV channels all looking for local angles on national stories and good local stories. Regional media is a popular source of news and information both among the general public and UNISON members.

Members, branches, regions and other UNISON bodies can greatly enhance the union's key messages and campaigns by using the media effectively. The media, of course, can be hostile to the union's aims and objectives and so it is important that it is not allowed to exploit any genuine debate within the union as potentially damaging or splitting the power of the union. These guidelines therefore are intended to assist members, branches, regions and other UNISON bodies in speaking with one voice to the outside world.

- 1.** Branches, regions and other bodies should identify nominated media contacts who are authorised to deal with the media on their behalf. Where possible it is useful to have one point of contact for the media to avoid confusion, that person should have the confidence and authority of the people that she/he represents to be able to make comments to the media on their behalf.
- 2.** At branch level the media contact will normally be the branch secretary, supported by the elected branch communications officer where one is established, and in accordance with the Code of Good Branch Practice. At regional level, the contact will normally be the Regional Secretary working in liaison with the Regional Convenor, with other senior activists and staff speaking on behalf of the region on specific matters by agreement. At national level, the primary contact is the National Press and Broadcasting Office working in liaison with appropriate senior elected officers and staff.
- 3.** Media contacts and spokespersons are responsible to the UNISON body on behalf of whom they speak, and through it to UNISON as a whole. Staff are accountable to the NEC via the General Secretary and appropriate managers.
- 4.** All statements made to the media on behalf of UNISON must be in line with UNISON's aims, objectives, policies and rules. You are being asked to comment because you are from UNISON, so it should be what UNISON thinks and not your personal opinion. You should refer queries about other parts of the union to the appropriate level.
- 5.** Branches, regions and other bodies will often want to put particular members or activists forward to give comment to the media. This is appropriate and should be encouraged. The union's case is often portrayed most effectively by featuring members who are directly involved, and media coverage provides us with good opportunities to raise our profile among particular target groups, such as young people. In these circumstances it is important that the media contact or other senior officials take responsibility for supporting the members concerned, including assisting in preparing for and during the interview, and making sure they are aware of the requirements of these guidelines.

- 6.** In addition to making comment in response to media enquiries and initiating approaches to the media as appropriate, media contacts should also be responsible for any written statements (e.g. news releases) made by the relevant body. Statements should reflect the policies and views of the branch, region or other body in whose name they are issued. Make sure you have proper headed news release paper, with contact details, including out of hours numbers of the media contact.
- 7.** There will be occasions when elected officials may be asked, or wish, to give comment to the media even though they are not a media contact. In such circumstances they should consider whether or not it is appropriate to make comment, and would normally refer to, or discuss with, the appropriate media contact or senior official before doing so.
- 8.** Remember the media will have preconceived ideas about trade unions which may not accord with how we view ourselves. Journalists will not always want to deal with the usual media contact because they will want to try to develop a story in a different way. They may, for example, want to demonstrate a split amongst the union ranks which would be damaging to the interests of the union or its members. Members approached by the media should bear this in mind and discuss this with the media contact or senior officials of their branch before deciding whether to respond and in what way. Remember you do not have to answer a journalist's questions, particularly if they are hostile. If you do not know the answers, do not guess. Check, check and check again.
- 9.** If you think that you have been misquoted or misrepresented, take up the issue immediately with the journalist concerned to get a correction published. If you need to take the matter further, contact the National Press & Broadcasting Office at Mabledon Place.
- 10.** Further information, guidance and training in dealing with the media is available from regions and through the National Press & Broadcasting Office.
- 11.** For official media statements please visit the UNISON website press releases area at www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease.asp

DEMONSTRATIONS AND LOBBIES

CODE OF CONDUCT

Preamble

- 1.1** This code has been agreed by the National Executive Council in accordance with its responsibilities under Rule D 2.1. The Code covers:
- UNISON members attending demonstrations, lobbies and marches initiated by branches, regions or national level
 - UNISON members attending similar activities convened by organisations to which UNISON is affiliated or where explicit UNISON support is given
 - UNISON members attending demonstrations at UNISON premises.
- 1.2** It must be read and applied in conjunction with the Democracy in UNISON guidelines.
- 1.3** The term demonstration in this code includes lobbies of employers and others, marches and similar activities.

Principles

- 2.1** The intention of this Code is not to inhibit membership participation but to ensure that any demonstrations comply with UNISON's Rule Book and its aims and values. These:
- encourage solidarity and effective partnership working between members, activists and UNISON staff
 - ensure membership participation in decision-making, proportionality and fair representation
 - support campaign activities to maintain and improve both the quality of public services and the interests of UNISON members.
- 2.2** Any demonstration which is organised or supported by UNISON must accord with these principles and promote the interests of UNISON and its members. The intention is to ensure that individual members and branches participating in such events behave in such a way as to enhance the Union and not detract from it. Under Rule B 2 branches and regions should not support or encourage membership participation at demonstrations organised by outside bodies whose aims and objectives conflict with those of UNISON.

Demonstrations Initiated by UNISON

Branch committees, regions, service groups and the union nationally which decide to organise a demonstration will ensure the following:

- 3.1** The demonstration is in line with UNISON policy or its aims and objectives.
- 3.2** The fullest possible consultation takes place with members.

- 3.3** Any activity relating to Industrial Action has been approved in line with UNISON's Industrial Action procedures.
- 3.4** Adequate notice of the event is given to the police under the Public Order Act 1986, 5.11 (or it's equivalent in the case of Scotland & Northern Ireland) in order that it may be properly policed for the safety of members and the public, particularly when a march on the highway is proposed. Failure to observe this requirement can result in prosecution.
- 3.5** Any expenditure incurred in organising the demonstration or to facilitate members' participation must be approved and accounted for in line with UNISON's financial rules and procedures. No payment can be made for party political purposes or to political parties from branch or regional funds.
- 3.6** The regional office should be advised of agreed demonstrations in order to provide any necessary co-ordination with other branches and to respond to media enquiries.
- 3.7** A Chief Steward must be appointed to take responsibility for maintaining order at the event, liaising with external bodies, and ensuring that UNISON's aims, objectives, policies, rules and this Code of Conduct are applied. S/he will be assisted by a team of official Stewards where necessary. The Chief Steward and Stewards must be easily identifiable and will be wholly accountable to UNISON.
- 3.8** Banners, placards and other printed materials associated with the event should be produced or approved by UNISON and should conform with UNISON's aims, objectives, rules and policies. UNISON members wishing to carry banners and placards or issue printed material will be encouraged to use official UNISON materials. UNISON members and individual members of the public carrying, selling or issuing other printed material may be asked to stop and/or leave. The decision of the Chief Steward on such matters will be final.
- 3.9** Other organisations wishing to participate will be expected to notify the Chief Steward and to follow his/her direction. This may include taking up specified locations within the event and withdrawal of materials which are deemed not to comply with UNISON's aims and objectives. UNISON members wishing to attend as members of other organisations, or promoting other organisations e.g. by carrying their banners, may be asked to join colleagues engaged in similar activity at a specified location within the event. Members attending in such capacities still remain subject to this Code.
- 3.10** Any press or media statements and comment made on behalf of UNISON can only be made by authorised UNISON spokespersons acting in accordance with UNISON's Media Guidelines.

Demonstrations Initiated by Other Organisations

- 4.1** A decision to participate in a demonstration organised by an outside body should be subject to prior approval by the appropriate branch, regional or service group committee after the fullest possible consultation with members.
- 4.2** Support for such demonstrations should only be given if it complies with the principles set out in section 2 above.
- 4.3** Support should only be given if UNISON is affiliated to the outside organisation or its activities are in line with the aims and objectives of UNISON.

- 4.4** It will be expected that any demonstration organised by an outside organisation and endorsed by UNISON will comply with the requirements of the Public Order Act 1986 5.11 (see paragraph 3.4 above).
- 4.5** Guidance on expenditure and payments outlined in paragraph 3.5 above also apply here.
- 4.6** Branches and regions should not permit or facilitate the use of UNISON banners, placards or other printed materials at demonstrations which do not comply with the principles or guidelines outlined in section 2 above.
- 4.7** UNISON representatives from branches, regions, service groups or national level should not make statements to the press or media supporting demonstrations which do not comply with the principles or guidelines outlined above. Any statements made to the media must be in accordance with UNISON's Media Guidelines.
- 4.8** Branches, regions and service groups participating in events run by other organisations should identify persons to be responsible for co-ordinating the activities of the UNISON delegation amongst UNISON participants.

Demonstrations at UNISON Premises

- 5.1** Demonstrations at UNISON Premises will impact upon the staff working at those locations. All necessary steps will be taken to safeguard staff interests, and to ensure a safe and secure working environment in accordance with UNISON's legal obligations as an employer.
- 5.2** Branches planning a demonstration at UNISON premises must ensure that either the General Secretary's office or the appropriate Regional Secretary is advised as soon as is reasonably practical. The police should also be advised.
- 5.3** Entrances and exits to the buildings must be kept clear, and if necessary arrangements will be made for barriers to be erected prior to any demonstrations. The police may be asked to be present to ensure that the demonstration is orderly and the security of the building(s) and staff safeguarded.
- 5.4** Meeting rooms or other facilities will not be made available to demonstrators. Where these are required they should be arranged elsewhere by the demonstration organisers.
- 5.5** Demonstrators must stay outside the UNISON premises and not attempt to enter unless invited to do so by an appropriate senior officer.
- 5.6** The general provisions of this Code as set out above apply to such demonstrations.

Demonstrations at UNISON Conferences

- 6.1** The guidelines set out in paragraph 5 also apply to demonstrations at UNISON Conferences. This includes complying with the different rules and procedures which operate at Conference.
- 6.2** Demonstrations and lobbies must take place outside the conference venue and the police should be advised.

Behaviour at Demonstrations

- 7.1** All members participating in demonstrations must act in a manner which is not prejudicial or detrimental to UNISON. Everyone must be treated with courtesy, dignity and respect, including other UNISON members, staff, stewards and members of the public.
- 7.2** UNISON will not tolerate aggressive, intimidating or violent behaviour or language at demonstrations. In such circumstances the Chief Steward in charge of the demonstration/march should be alerted to the situation. Unacceptable behaviour will lead to any individual or individuals being asked to leave the demonstration. Disciplinary action may subsequently be taken against the member(s) concerned.
- 7.3** The principles of courtesy and respect should form the basis of any communications on the purpose of the demonstration, whether spoken or written.
- 7.4** The directives of approved stewards and the police must be followed, as should any official advice issued regarding the purpose of, or organisation of, the demonstration. UNISON members and members of the public failing to follow these may be asked to leave. The Chief Steward, or Steward acting on his/her behalf, may seek the assistance of the police in such circumstances. Failure to observe police advice may be in breach of the law leading to possible arrest.

Future Advice

- 8.1** Branches or members requiring advice or assistance should contact their regional secretary or regional service group head.
- 8.2** The NEC will monitor the implementation of this Code and revise it in the light of experience.

DEMOCRACY IN UNISON AND THE RIGHT TO CAMPAIGN

Composite I as amended.

Carried at National Delegate Conference 2001.

Conference reaffirms its decision of 1998, confirming the right to organise, campaign and communicate to change, modify or replace policy through the constitutional channels of the Union, while acting within agreed Union policy.

Conference reaffirms its view that this right is universal and includes:

- 1.** The right of branches, regions, service groups and self-organised groups to campaign to change policy.
- 2.** The right of branches, regions, service groups and self-organised groups to participate in events which promote the policies of the Union.
- 3.** The right of branches, regions, service groups and self-organised groups to affiliate to external organisations, which have aims and objectives in line with UNISON policies, while accepting that it is not permissible to use members' subscriptions and branch funds to finance external political organisations other than through the established political funds or to fund organised factions within the Union with declared aims and objectives or separate constitutional structures and/or set up to support particular candidates in elections.
- 4.** The right of branches, regions, service groups and self-organised groups as they themselves determine to organise, fund and attend meetings, seminars, conferences and events to campaign and seek to initiate, develop, modify or replace existing policies and rules.

Conference notes the breadth of democratic structure and opportunities in the union involving branch, regional and national conferences, service group structures and the range of self-organisation.

Conference therefore notes with great concern the low levels of participation in UNISON democratic structures in that a significant number of branches do not take part in National Delegate Conference. Moreover it is evident that submissions to agendas are originated by less than ten per cent of branches.

Conference welcomes the 'Democracy in UNISON' guidelines which place a primacy on working within UNISON's official structures to initiate, develop or modify the policy of our Union. A representative and vibrant democracy accountable to UNISON members is the key to UNISON's successful development.

Therefore Conference calls upon the NEC, in conjunction with all bodies of the Union, to review UNISON's democratic process with the objective of securing the active involvement of all branches in policy formulation, in particular attendance at National Delegate Conference, and to provide a detailed report to Conference in 2001.

UNISON'S POLITICAL FUNDS

(An extract from the UNISON Code of Good Branch Practice)

Under the terms of the 1984 Trade Union Act certain activities must be funded from a separate political fund. These include those deemed to be 'political', in that they might be seen as being opposed to central or local government policy and therefore seek to persuade people to vote for or against a particular political party.

UNISON reflects the different traditions amongst its membership by maintaining two political funds approved by a political fund ballot in UNISON in 1995. Political fund arrangements are governed by legislation and the agreement of the government Certification Officer. Branches and individual members are therefore required to comply with the procedures specified at all times.

Political campaigns and payments to a political party by a trade union can only be made from the union's political fund.

Affiliated Political Fund (APF)

Also known as UNISON Labour Link, the Affiliated Political Fund promotes the interest of members through affiliation to the Labour Party, nationally and locally. It enables members to have their views heard in the party; campaigns for Labour in elections and promotes democratic involvement in the party at local, regional and national level; promotes political education and policy discussion and produces its own UNISON Labour Link information and campaigning materials.

All APF levy payers in a branch should meet together regularly to discuss APF matters and to promote relations with the Labour Party. Where possible the meetings should be arranged around normal branch meetings so that costs are kept to a minimum, but only APF levy payers can participate and vote.

The legitimate business of APF levy payers is set out in the fund's operating rules. All branches should have an APF officer, who should be elected by the APF levy payers and be a member of the Labour Party.

General Political Fund (GPF)

The General Political Fund is used for campaigning at branch, regional and national levels of the union, as well as for research and lobbying in Parliament. It is independent of support for any political party. The fund has been used in the run-up to general or local elections for effective advertising campaigns to ensure that issues of importance to UNISON are high on the agenda.

Branches with GPF members wishing to spend money on campaigns and other activities, should submit a completed form to the regional office outlining the nature of the activities proposed and the likely cost accompanied, wherever possible, by the proposed text of any written material. The General Political Fund Committee will consider the view of the Regional Secretary and Regional Convenor and determine whether costs should be met from the fund.

Expenditure will only be made in accordance with UNISON's policies, aims and objectives.

Membership of the Political Funds

Political fund levies are agreed by UNISON National Delegate Conference. Members are asked to elect to subscribe to either the APF or the GPF when they apply to join UNISON.

All UNISON members have the right to:

- choose whether to pay the APF levy or the GPF levy and to change from one fund to the other. The cost of contributing to one of the two funds is included in the basic UNISON subscription
- contract out of paying any political fund levy by completing an 'Exemption notice'. The subscription rate will be reduced or a refund made
- pay into both political funds. This involves paying an additional amount equal to the second fund's levy which is made as a separate payment.

Members in Northern Ireland do not automatically pay into the political fund as legislation there is different. They can, however, opt to pay an additional political fund levy by contacting the regional office. All other new members make a choice of political fund when completing their UNISON application form and receive information on their rights in the New Member's Pack.

Limitations on Use of Branch Funds

No payments shall be made for political purposes or to political parties from branch funds. Such payments should be dealt with through the Affiliated Political Fund or General Political Fund, which are managed nationally.

Meetings of branch APF members wishing to affiliate to local Labour Parties are encouraged to do so by completing an affiliation form obtained from regional office. The Regional Political Officer will then make arrangements for the affiliation fee to be paid from the APF account.

UNISON GUIDANCE TO BRANCHES ON POLITICAL FUND EXPENDITURE

(Extract from a General Secretary circular issued to the branches in February 2001)

The Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 (PPERA) came into force on 16th February 2001 and has had a major impact on political activity and campaigning in Britain.

Breaches of the PERA can lead to prosecution. A new Electoral Commission has been established and is now in operation to ensure that the new laws are observed and enforced.

Legal Requirements

There are no 'political funds' in branches.

Branches cannot give any donations to any political party or candidate or spend money on election campaigns of any candidate or party. Nor can there be any donations in 'kind' to parties or candidates.

Only UNISON's Affiliated Political Fund can make donations – and only to the Labour Party as per UNISON's Rule Book and the law. The APF only holds funds at regional and national level, not at branch level.

Branches who wish to undertake campaigns that may be classed as 'political' may still apply for money in the usual manner to the UNISON GPF through their region. However, publicity which might be considered to be election material, should not be produced during election periods as it may be held to be in breach of the legislation.

Instructions have been previously circulated following decisions of the Certification Officer that branches must not make payments to political parties or in the furtherance of political objectives – these can only come from the political funds, the GPF and the APF, as determined by the Rule Book. The PERA now makes any breaches an offence that can lead to prosecution.

