

# **2015 National Delegate Conference**

## **Decisions**

**2015 National Delegate  
Conference  
Decisions**

**2015 National Delegate Conference  
Decisions**

<b>M5</b>	<b>Young Workers Month</b>
<b>M6</b>	<b>Meeting the training needs of UNISON activists in challenging times</b>
<b>M9</b>	<b>Fair representation for Disabled Members in UNISON</b>
<b>M10</b>	<b>Tackling vulnerable employment and casualisation</b>
<b>M12</b>	<b>LGBT rights and collective agreements</b>
<b>M13</b>	<b>Equality Facility Time</b>
<b>M15</b>	<b>Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre Glasgow Trade Union Recognition</b>
<b>M16</b>	<b>Care Workers – Promote the need to record violent incidents</b>
<b>M29</b>	<b>Campaigning for our public services and those that provide them</b>
<b>M30</b>	<b>The Impact of the Economic Crisis on Workers in the Public Sector</b>
<b>M36</b>	<b>Care of older people</b>
<b>M37</b>	<b>Social Care Workforce</b>
<b>M46</b>	<b>Challenging Growing Inequality</b>
<b>M66</b>	<b>Solidarity with Palestine</b>
<b>M69</b>	<b>The Bhopal Disaster 30 years later</b>
<b>M85</b>	<b>Creating an Agenda on Equality and Human Rights</b>
<b>M88</b>	<b>UNISON and Devolution</b>
<b>M89</b>	<b>Devolution: seizing the opportunities, avoiding the threats</b>
<b>M102</b>	<b>Domestic violence, a gendered issue</b>
<b>CEC1</b>	<b>An Organising Response to the Result of the 2015 General Election</b>
<b>CEC2</b>	<b>UNISON's Political Campaign After the 2015 General Election</b>
<b>CA</b>	<b>Organising</b>
<b>CB</b>	<b>Campaigning for a Living Wage</b>
<b>CC</b>	<b>Pay and collective Bargaining</b>
<b>CD</b>	<b>Pensions</b>
<b>CE</b>	<b>Funding Public Services</b>
<b>CF</b>	<b>Housing</b>
<b>CH</b>	<b>Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership</b>
<b>R1</b>	<b>Rule C Annual membership audit, the appointment &amp; removal of the Assurer</b>
<b>R3</b>	<b>Rule D The right to attend and speak</b>
<b>R4</b>	<b>Rule D National Executive Council</b>
<b>R5</b>	<b>Rule D Service Group Conference</b>
<b>R6</b>	<b>Rule D Service Group Executive</b>
<b>R7</b>	<b>Rule D Service Group Executive</b>

**2015 National Delegate Conference  
Decisions**

- R9**            **Rule E Deputy General Secretary**
- R10**          **Rule F Regional Council**
- R11**          **Rule F Regional Council**
- R12**          **Rule F Regional Council**
- R13**          **Rule F Regional Council**
- R14**          **Rule F Regional Committee**
- R15**          **Rule G Branches**
- R16**          **Rule G The Branch Committee**
- R17**          **Rule G The Branch Committee**
- R18**          **Rule G Branch Meetings**
- R19**          **Rule G Branch Officers**
- R20**          **Rule G Branch Officers**
- R21**          **Rule G Branch Officers**
- R22**          **Rule G Stewards**
- R23**          **Rule G Health and Safety Representatives**
- R24**          **Rule G Equality Representatives**
- R25**          **Appendix 2 - 4.13**
- R26**          **Schedule A Reduced Pay**
- R27**          **Schedule Maternity, Paternity, Parental, Adoption,  
Dependant Care, Compassionate Leave and other Unpaid  
Leave**
- R28**          **Schedule A Retired Members**

## 2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions

### Motions

#### 5. Young Workers Month

**Carried**

Conference welcomes the work of UNISON's National and Regional Young Members Forums to raise the profile of young workers and young members through activity during young workers month, which is now held in November each year under the auspices of the TUC.

Conference believes that recruiting young workers and organising young members is an all-year-round activity, but that the young workers month can provide a particular focus for specific issues, and is an opportunity to celebrate the contribution that young members make to UNISON and the trade union and labour movement in general.

Conference therefore instructs the National Executive Council to call on all branches to help support and develop a UNISON-wide vibrant young workers month by committing to at least one activity around young worker and/or youth-oriented issues in November each year, suggested activities being:

- 1) A recruitment activity specifically targeting young workers;
- 2) Seeking a visit to a local school to talk to students about trade unions (utilising the 'Unions Into Schools' online materials where appropriate);
- 3) Campaigning for the Living Wage and an end to the age-discriminatory and low level national minimum wage (Living Wage week falls in November);
- 4) Organising a political education and/or social event for young workers.

#### 6. Meeting the training needs of UNISON activists in challenging times

**Carried  
as Amended: 6.1, 6.2,**

The challenges facing the trade union movement in relation to developing and training activists have rarely been as difficult as they are now, yet the need to ensure our representatives are confident and skilled is greater than ever.

Last year the coalition government announced that full funding for trade union education at level 3 and above would cease in September 2015. This will directly affect all diploma and organising academy courses and as a consequence the TUC will be unable to offer many such programmes. From September 2016, this change in funding will impact on all trade union education delivered by the TUC. This will have a major and potentially devastating effect on TUC centres at Colleges across England and Wales and will make the crucial role of training our reps much harder.

Already the effects of austerity mean that as a union we are identifying fewer activists and finding it more difficult to arrange training. According to RMS data in 2014 fewer stewards were recruited than in 2013. The rate at which new reps are trained in regions is holding up well, and new initiatives such as the new stewards' e-note, which is now sent to all new stewards once they have been added to RMS, have been well received.

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

However we need a step change across the union in the way stewards and other workplace reps are supported and encouraged to become active before they are trained, in how they are trained and in how they are supported in the workplace following their training.

This is particularly significant an issue in the private and community sector. Conference notes that UNISON's Organising strategy has already established the following objectives in relation to activist and member learning and training:

- 1) To ensure that elected representatives, branch officers and workplace contacts are able to access training and follow up support which is timely, accessible and relevant to their specific needs;
- 2) To support the development of activists;
- 3) To develop and support roll out of lifelong learning initiatives to support member development and confidence, and as part of strategic organising and recruitment campaigning.

In line with these objectives, Conference calls on the National Executive Council to:

- a) Extend e-learning to supplement, support and augment face to face training, for example by introducing further blended face to face and distance learning along the lines of the new version of the organising steward course aimed at reps in the private and community sector and from non-recognised workplaces;
- b) Explore options for enabling low paid workers including in private companies and where there is no recognition to attend face to face training, including options for paying loss of earnings, and delivering existing short, flexible modules to small groups;
- c) Develop a plan to track closely new activists identified as part of the private company organising campaign, and organise relevant training as quickly as possible for the new reps, where possible with other private sector reps;
- d) Work to improve data collection, monitoring and information provided to branches about untrained reps including in private and community employers. Improvements to AMT (the training database within RMS) will make it easier for branches to identify untrained stewards by employer;
- e) Work with regions and the TUC to minimise course cancellations and, recognising that the financial climate sometimes makes these inevitable, to minimise the impact of course cancellations on new reps;
- f) Develop training for reps from lead employers to support them in negotiating and bargaining on behalf of members in small private employers where an organising strategy is not practical;
- g) Continue to develop a national network of lay tutors able to support flexible delivery of training and member learning.

Conference calls on regions and branches to:

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

- i) Ensure branches have filled the branch education co-ordinator (BEC) post, and work with BEC's to support reps including from the private and community sectors by providing them with a named contact, buddy or mentor, and ensuring that they can participate in appropriate training;
- ii) Identify potential union learning reps and lay tutors who can be trained to deliver short workshops in the branch; Ensure branches have a network of ULR's throughout the branch
- iii) Promote and deliver short, flexible modules for new workplace contacts to get them active quickly; Investigate setting up regional meetings for BEC's and ULR's to share knowledge/experiences and promote ULR's in the workforce.
- iv) Take advantage of the member learning offer workshops including Your Skills, Your Future and longer programmes including Return to Learn, as a means of encouraging members to get involved in the union. Both programmes are supported by Learning and Organising Services who can help with publicity and providing a tutor. Investigate working with local Trades Councils to co-ordinate activities across all TUC affiliated unions locally.
- v) Encourage branches to bid for funding from the national union or regional funds for projects that focus on education in the community and private sectors to support the recruitment and organising activity in these sectors.

### **9. Fair representation for Disabled Members in UNISON**

**Carried  
as Amended: 9.1**

Conference is concerned about the level of discrimination currently faced by disabled people. Cuts to public services, welfare reform, changes to health and social care, reductions in disabled students allowances and bedroom tax have all targeted disabled people.

To fight this campaign against disabled people, disabled people need to be politically and societally active. We need to ensure that disabled people are heard at all levels of society including within our own union. Branches and regions need to be encouraged to support Disabled Members Self Organised Groups and encourage disabled members to become activists and this work should be led from a national level.

UNISON's rules state that the National Executive Council must include fair representation for women as well as reserved seats for young members and Black members. This is a credit to our union and confirms our commitment to fighting discrimination.

But Conference is concerned that these same positive steps have not been taken to support disabled members in their fight against discrimination. We commend UNISON's excellent work to promote equality for disabled people. We recognise there are disabled members on the National Executive Council but they are there to represent their service group or region not disabled members. There is still a considerable amount of work to be done if our disabled members are to fight

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

prejudice, discrimination and achieve equality and this can only be done if we are represented at all levels including on the National Executive Council.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to work with the National Disabled Members Committee:

- 1) To carry out a consultation exercise, including the process for the nomination and selection of candidates, with other self organised groups, the National Young Members Forum, regions, branches and service groups to explore the benefits of having reserved seats for disabled members;
- 2) In light of the above to consider appropriate Rule Book changes to include reserved seats for disabled members on the National Executive Council.

### **10. Tackling vulnerable employment and casualisation** **Carried as Amended: 10.1, 10.2, 10.5**

Conference is deeply concerned that job insecurity, in-work poverty and workplace exploitation have become the hallmarks of the so-called economic recovery in the UK. While the growth of zero hours contracts has rightly attracted the public's attention, they are only the tip of the ice berg. The proliferation of short hour contracts, false-self employment and the continuing exploitation of agency workers underlines the workings of a deeply unjust labour market where flexibility flows one way.

Conference notes new research by the TUC exposing the growth of vulnerable employment, and highlighting:

- 1) 3.4 million workers working part time and wanting more hours, an increase of more than a million since the start of the recession;
- 2) The rapid expansion of self-employment, accounting for 44% of the net rise in employment since mid-2010;
- 3) The impact of term-time only working on support staff in schools;
- 4) The problems of unpaid travel time, unpaid stand-by time and 'sleep-overs' in social care;
- 5) 41% of zero hours contract workers reporting that they were in temporary work because they could not find a permanent job, a rise from 19% in 2008;
- 6) Significant lower rates of pay experienced by workers on temporary, zero hour and agency contracts;
- 7) The disproportionate impact on women, black, migrant and young workers;
- 8) The vulnerability of workers in casual contracts to exploitation and mistreatment in the workplace including lack of access to basic employment rights.
- 9) Conference notes that whilst these issues affect all public sector workers, the predominance of women workers in the public sector – up to 80% in some

## 2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions

services – mean these factors have a particularly significant impact on women, who dominate the low paid, part time and zero hours contracts jobs, and who still bear the brunt of caring responsibilities. These issues, along with others addressed in this motion, are reported in detail in the TUC report "The Impact on Women of Recession and Austerity", which highlights both the workplace and societal impact of the Coalition government's cuts.

Conference believes that low wages and insecure employment are fundamentally linked to the growth of in-work poverty and the increasing reliance by working people on in-work benefits, food banks and pay-day loans. Once workers on insecure contracts get into debt, it can be even harder for them to escape low paid, insecure work or to challenge bad practices in the workplace. Casualised workers struggle to secure access to decent housing or cheap credit.

Conference notes with concern the continued vulnerability of agency workers. Conference believes that the implementation of the EU's 2008 directive on Temporary Agency Work has been inadequate in the UK due to the provision that the rights do not take effect until the worker has been in position for 12 weeks. This has greatly weakened the ability of the union to help workers assert their rights under this directive

Conference notes with concern the continued vulnerability of agency workers. Conference believes that the implementation of the EU's 2008 directive on Temporary Agency Work has been inadequate in the UK due to the provision that the rights do not take effect until the worker has been in position for 12 weeks. This has greatly weakened the ability of the union to help workers assert their rights under this directive.

Conference believes that action to tackle the casualisation of the UK labour market is desperately needed to restore decent jobs and decent pay and decent living standards in the public, voluntary and private sector.

Conference recognises the outcome from the Working Together Review in Scotland with the Review Group identifying a shared ambition to embed progressive workplace practices to boost innovation and productivity and deliver successful organisations, sustainable business and economic growth, high-quality jobs and a more equitable society. The establishment of The Fair Work Convention which will be a stakeholder body providing leadership on Scottish industrial relations, and which will promote the principles behind fair work promoting Decent Work and Dignified Lives for working people.

Significant progress would be made by:

- a) Reforming employment status laws and rules on continuity of employment to ensure that all workers benefit from the same basic floor of rights at work;
- b) Stopping the use of the 'Swedish derogation' or 'pay between assignments' contracts in Agency Worker Regulations;
- c) Regulating not just the abuses of zero hours or short hour contracts but also measures to ensure that all who want them get a regular hours contract;

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

- d) Extension of the Gangmasters Licencing Authority's (GLA) remit to include other high risk sectors;
- e) Increasing minimum wage enforcement by HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC), especially in social care;
- f) Giving trade unions the right to make formal complaints and trigger minimum wage investigations without having to name workers;
- g) Empowering the GLA and the Employment Agency Standards Inspectorate to meaningfully enforce the law and pursue illegal practices by bad employers;
- h) Improving workplace health and safety inspections;
- i) Increasing access to workplace justice by scrapping employment tribunal fees in Great Britain.
- j) Removing the 12-week qualifying period before workers employed by agencies receive their rights under the Agency Workers Directive.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to tackle these problems by a strategy to:

- i) Influence government, the devolved administrations and other workplace regulators to have fair standards and resources for enforcement;
- ii) Negotiate for public authorities to take genuine responsibility for their procurement practices and to have decent standards for in-house teams and contracted staff;
- iii) Consider what the union can do at all levels to bring vulnerable and casual workers under collective bargaining coverage.

### **12. LGBT rights and collective agreements**

**Carried**

Conference is concerned that collective bargaining and pay determination agreements have been under sustained Tory-led attacks. They have sought to destroy the very agreements that prevent them and their business friends from imposing poverty pay with no holiday or sick leave entitlements. Threats of regional pay bargaining are just the tip of the iceberg. Local talks, taking workplaces away from these agreements, threaten to damage the trade union movement's historic achievements.

Conference notes that workplace lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights were negotiated in collective agreements long before they were established in law. It takes negotiated agreements to bring legislative rights to life in the workplace. Legislation sets out minimum standards and collective bargaining raises standards above the minimum.

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

Conference notes that LGBT workers still face considerable workplace discrimination, made worse by the impact of austerity. The most large scale United Kingdom study into the ups and downs of lesbian, gay and bisexual people in the workplace (Manchester Business School, 2014) found that LGB workers were more than twice as likely to be bullied and discriminated against than heterosexual employees. LGB people were nearly 3 times as likely to experience a range of negative acts at work – and these were highest for lesbians and bisexual people. The research also found significantly higher levels of poor physical and mental health, highest for lesbian and bisexual workers.

Every survey conducted into the experience of transgender workers shows they experience even higher levels of discrimination, prejudice, harassment, bullying and indeed hate crime at work. One of the most recent (Fundamental Rights Agency, 2013) found that in the UK 65% transgender people personally felt discriminated against or harassed in the past 12 months. For 78% transgender people, neither they nor anyone else reported their most recent incident of discrimination, fearing it would make no difference or make things worse.

Conference notes that many employers have generic equality policies that pay no more than lip service to LGBT issues. Bisexual workers, in particular, are often an invisible minority, their existence denied or seen as ‘fair game’ for so-called workplace banter. They are the least likely group of workers to feel able to be open about their sexual orientation at work, which is known to impact on work performance and on health.

There are still significant numbers of workplaces without transgender equality policies. Knowledge of transgender equality issues amongst managers remains very low. Transitioning at work is an unnecessarily stressful experience for far too many people and our members regularly report difficulties with time off for gender identity services. Prejudice is rife.

Conference welcomes the resources on bargaining for LGBT equality within UNISON – bargaining factsheets, guides for reps, and the members of our LGBT self-organised group.

Conference recognises that many workplaces, particularly in the community and private sectors, are not covered by national agreements, but they do gain from them. Nationally agreed pay helps push up local pay rates and nationally agreed workplace equality rights helped lay the foundations for LGBT and other equality based workplace laws and protections which all workers benefit from.

Conference notes the challenges of collective bargaining in the community sector which has numerous small employers, with members attached to local government or health branches. There are similar issues in the privatised sector, which hinders the union’s ability to negotiate robust equality policies. Many private employers mistakenly believe they do not need to deliver on the Equality Act 2010, nor put in place equality strategies. However successful examples include Barnardo’s, Action for Children and some housing association branches which negotiate nationally. The growth in regional community branches presents further opportunities to develop collective bargaining. We must continue to push our equality agenda with private sector employers.

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

Conference reasserts the principle that collective bargaining is the cornerstone of our political, organising and industrial strategies. Conference further believes that nationally agreed terms and conditions set a framework for us all, assist in the advancement of LGBT workplace rights and must therefore be protected and built upon. Conference notes that our negotiating strength also depends on our density and workplace organisation, across our diverse workplaces.

Conference therefore calls upon the National Executive Council to work with the National LGBT committee to:

- 1) Support the service groups in challenging attacks on collective bargaining processes and agreements;
- 2) Raise regional and branch awareness of the vital importance of including equality and LGBT workers rights in collective bargaining negotiations and the UNISON resources available to support this work;
- 3) Support moves to entrench collective bargaining in all sectors in which UNISON organises, including community, voluntary and private workplaces;
- 4) Promote the pursuit of collective agreements which incorporate LGBT and equality rights;
- 5) Increase efforts to build our workplace density and organisation, including self-organisation, and support our equality work.

### **13. Equality Facility Time**

**Carried  
as Amended: 13.1**

At the Discrimination Law Conference in January 2014 Professor Sir Bob Hepple QC said that “if a new government enacts only one new piece of equality legislation it should be to require equality representatives at workplaces” – such representatives would require a legal right to time off to “be involved in drawing up and enforcing employment and pay equity plans”.

Currently equality representatives have no legal right to time off to undertake their trade union equality duties. The TUC argued in a 2005 submission to the former Women and Work Commission that trade union equality reps (in UNISON this would include Equality Co-ordinators and SOG officers) should be given the same statutory rights as learning representatives – paid time off for training and for undertaking their role. Training included developing the necessary knowledge, skills and confidence to undertake the role effectively and capacity building for effective engagement with employers.

TUC research published in 2010 concluded that a key factor in equality reps effectiveness was the amount of time they were able to spend on their duties and without a statutory right that time was limited. The research reported that equality reps greatly enhance employers’ equality work and have a positive impact in the workplace. There was evidence of employers support with one saying “It is in our interests to develop competent equality reps.”

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

The TUC research also found that:

- 1) Though less than half of equality reps surveyed were women (46%) this was unsurprising given that the role is largely undertaken by reps with other established roles due to the lack of specific time off;
- 2) 63% of those who had not had previous rep experience were women which indicated that the role was attracting women members into union activity;
- 3) Equality reps are more likely than other union reps to be from an ethnic minority suggesting these roles can attract Black members into activity.

This matter is especially important for UNISON given that:

- a) Nearly three quarters of our members are women, a majority of whom are low paid. The lack of equality facility time is therefore indirectly discriminatory in that women's time is heavily pressurised due to caring responsibilities;
- b) A significant proportion of UNISON members are Black and the lack of equality time impairs Black activist's abilities to challenge discrimination;
- c) Organising for disability workplace equality cannot be achieved on snatches of time taken from other responsibilities;
- d) The lack of equality time lowers the profile of LGBT equality work which particularly needs to be 'out and proud'.

Four years of the coalition government and its austerity policies have rolled back equality successes and significantly increased workplace inequality. The lack of equalities facility time seriously impairs equality activist's abilities to challenge discrimination in the workplace – it is becoming a 2nd class matter for better days. The implicit – if not explicit – perception is that equality is not as important as other trade union issues.

Now more than ever equality should be centre stage. Equality issues are not an add-on or bolt on to trade union work, it is at the heart of what we do as trade unionists. The inequitable effects of the austerity policies need tackling:

- i) How zero hour contracts affect discriminated against groups;
- ii) Disproportionate redundancies affecting Black workers, the growth of low paid casual jobs and the need for a living wage and pay equity plans;
- iii) Effects of the increase in stress and mental ill health on workers and employer sickness absence monitoring resulting in 'survival of the fittest' and the particular impact on disabled workers;
- iv) Cuts to hard built LGBT services.

Conference requests the National Executive Council to:

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

- A) Discuss facility time for equality reps with the TUC with a view to raising it with the Labour Party;
- B) Work with Labour Link to influence the Labour Party to commit to the extension of facility time to equality reps.
- C) Work within the union to ensure that equality not only continues to be included but is prioritised across UNISON's bargaining agenda.

### **15. Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre Glasgow Trade Union Recognition**

**Carried**

Conference notes that this year's event is in the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre (SECC) Glasgow. SECC UNISON members continue to be disappointed over SECC management and Glasgow City Council's refusal to grant trade union recognition.

Over the last year, SECC management have continued their anti-trade union stance and doggedly refuse to positively engage with UNISON representatives nor allow them access to talk to SECC staff. CEO, Peter Duthie has made it clear SECC will 'not respond directly to requests regarding company matters from UNISON; effectively ceasing communication with the trade union.

Over the last year a formal recognition request, under the Employment Relations Act 1999, was made to SECC as 10% membership of the total number of SECC staff had been reached. This was refused by CEO.

Matters have not been helped by majority shareholder, Glasgow City Council, who own 91% of the Arms Length External Organisation and currently has one Glasgow City Councillor and three Council employees on its Board of Directors. Despite a UNISON Glasgow City Branch communication to all 79 Glasgow City Councillors, including Council Leader Gordon Matheson, only 6 have responded.

Conference is disappointed with Glasgow City Council's refusal to become actively involved in the issue of trade union recognition, especially after Council passed a motion on 21st February 2014 stating 'Council reaffirms its commitment to the principle and practise of collective bargaining and negotiation to determine workers' pay and conditions and further agrees that this is the principle route by which all of the Council family should continue to conduct relations with their staff'.

Conference therefore calls on the Glasgow City Council leadership to abide by the Council's said motion and urgently meet with UNISON Glasgow City Branch officials to pro-actively discuss the situation at the SECC with a view to granting SECC full statutory trade union recognition and collective bargaining rights to UNISON and their members.

Conference also notes that current and proposed anti-trade union laws which give rise to situations such as ours and hamper the daily business of trade unions and their members should be challenged vigorously by UNISON, and through other trade union organisations such as the Campaign for Trade Union Freedom, in order that

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

trade union members can have an effective and unhindered say in the working conditions of their own workplaces.

### **16. Care Workers – Promote the need to record violent incidents** **Carried**

There is a high proportion of Black workers in the care and support sector. Black workers disproportionately face job losses, downgrading and cuts in hours.

In addition to this, care workers working with individuals with learning difficulties and dementia are at a higher risk of suffering from violence and abuse at work. Some of whom find it very difficult to report these incidents for fear of losing their jobs.

In a survey by Skills for Care on support workers in 2013 it found that under reporting was a major issue. Black staff are continually given the impression that suffering abuse is simply part of the job. Under reporting is a real issue due to their lack of awareness of organisations policies and procedures and fear of losing of their job.

In 2013 a UNISON survey of healthcare assistants found that 85% of the participants were verbally abused whilst 20% had been exposed to actual physical violence at work. Many of those interviewed were thinking of leaving the profession as they felt that their jobs were neither appreciated nor respected by those in authority.

Further, UNISON research undertaken in 2012 into homecare revealed over half the respondents reported that their terms and conditions of employment had worsened during that period. In light of these findings UNISON's ethical care charter was developed to establish a minimum baseline for safety, quality and dignity of care.

We therefore call on the National Executive Council to work with the Local Government Service Group Executive and the National Black Members Committee to seek to:

- 1) Explore and discuss how we can encourage Black members to routinely report issues of abuse;
- 2) Explore increasing training for members on the issue of violence at work and how to address this;
- 3) Develop a campaign highlighting violence at work and how to combat this issue;
- 4) Promote UNISON's ethical care charter throughout Black members' structures and support campaigns for it to be adopted by employers

### **29. Campaigning for our public services and those that provide them**

**Carried  
as Amended: 29.1, 29.2, 29.3, 29.4, 29.7**

Conference notes the decisive role that UNISON must continue to play in campaigning for effective public services that embody the values of a good society –

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

care and compassion, dignity and respect, fairness and equal treatment, accountability and the public good.

Conference further notes that the context in which we must campaign is characterised by significant structural challenges to public services. These include meeting increasing demand for care and new treatments, meeting the costs of technological and medical advances and addressing the needs of an ageing population. But Conference is deeply concerned that whilst these challenges are formidable enough in their own terms, the real debate about how the NHS, local government and other public services face up to new demands is being obscured by continued government obsession with spending cuts - even though austerity has clearly been self defeating, decimating the services that we rely upon and failing to restore the public finances.

In early 2015 the consequences of this policy are all too visible, as we see:

- 1) A crisis situation across the NHS, where patients are being denied services or are experiencing critical delays, not only in the acute sector, resulting from a mixture of cuts and Tory led reforms;
- 2) A significant cut in the number of vulnerable people, many of them elderly, receiving council funded care;
- 3) Evidence of the disproportionate impact on Black people, disabled people, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, women, young and older people;
- 4) Evidence that specialist services which meet the needs of minorities are particularly badly affected. For example, research by NatCen Social Research for UNISON into the implications of austerity for LGBT people showed that dedicated LGBT mental health, sexual health, care and support services and specialist job roles are disappearing.
- 5) Huge difficulties for public services in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as a consequence of reduced funding from Westminster;
- 6) A National Audit Office report suggesting that half of all councils in England are at risk of financial failure over the next five years;
- 7) Hundreds of thousands more job losses being predicted across public services in the period up to 2020;
- 8) The integration of health and social care brings together two underfunded budgets; social care is means tested whilst NHS is not, which could lead to the re-badging of NHS services as social care with the consequent threat of charges.
- 9) Continued outsourcing and privatisation, despite evidence that this is costly and harmful to services;
- 10) Increasing demands on dedicated public sector staff as a result of an unacceptable squeeze on their pay and conditions and increase in underpaid overtime.

## 2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions

Whatever the result of the General Election this union will continue to campaign for publicly owned, accountable public services provided by public sector employees as the best guarantee of equality, efficiency and value for money. We will need to assess how to take forward this campaign work in the light of the election result and will liaise with regions branches, self-organised groups, and the Young Members and Retired Members Forums on our approach, assessing the challenges and threats.

Conference notes that UNISON and other trade union activists are in the frontline, increasingly facing risk of victimisation for speaking out publicly and campaigning in defence of public services. We welcome the recent announcement by Barts Health Trust that they had “invited Charlotte Monro to return to employment at Whipps Cross Hospital” and that “Charlotte Monro is an energetic and committed campaigner on patient care issues in the NHS, and the Trust welcomes the contribution which Charlotte will undoubtedly be able to make to the discussion about ensuring Whipps Cross’s future” as a huge victory for UNISON and all campaigners for the NHS and public services.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to:

- a) Highlight the consequences for our public services of continued austerity and the impact of cuts on public life ensuring that the disproportionate impact on equality groups is an integral part of the campaign;
- b) Engage service users, the workforce and our communities in a public debate about policy alternatives to austerity;
- c) Continue to challenge the dogma of outsourcing and privatisation, highlighting the cost to the exchequer of such schemes, and pressing the case for an alternative procurement strategy incorporating economic, social quality and sustainability criteria;
- d) Set out the case for public spending, exploring the social and economic role that public spending plays;
- e) Continue to set out the case for decent employment practices and fair pay in the public sector and challenge the portrayal of workers rights and equality protections as burdensome red tape ;
- f) Build a vision for public services that shows them to be accountable, collaborative and based on equality and human rights, and which are accessible to and meet the needs of all, including minority communities, including in the context of proposals for regional governance;
- g) Work as appropriate with the self organised groups and other sections of the union to ensure that recruitment is an integral part of the campaign
- h) Work through Labour Link and the General Political Fund to campaign and lobby politicians for positive measures to ensure that public services are sufficiently funded to meet the challenges ahead whilst upholding values of collectivism and social solidarity;

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

- i) Ensure that every support possible within UNISON rules and guidelines is offered to our activists facing victimisation for speaking out in defence of public services and that we work closely with other unions to defend trade unionists facing victimisation in similar circumstances.
- j) Campaign to ensure NHS provision remains free at the point of access.
- k) Work with UNISON branches in 'English city-regions' that are involved in devolution initiatives. Help ensure that these initiatives do not involve an intensification of cuts and privatisation. Assist branches in protecting jobs and services and in realising opportunities around service integration and public-public partnerships.
- l) Work with UNISON regions in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales on influencing, using the political funds, the 2016 Scottish Parliament, Northern Ireland Assembly and Wales Assembly elections.
- m) Call under the TUC to organise major national demonstrations in defence of public services early in the new Parliament.

### **30. The Impact of the Economic Crisis on Workers in the Public Sector**

**Carried**

The last five years have seen the Coalition Government use the economic crisis as a means of devastating the public sector. The Government's austerity measures, in response to the global crisis, have been extreme and harsh. The cuts in the public sector are too quick, too deep and causing devastation to the services that they provide, resulting in slashing vital support on which individuals and communities rely.

The Coalition Government is paying scant regard to the impact that policies are having on those affected, especially in the most deprived areas that have the greatest need for regeneration, jobs, social provision and growth. The crisis was not caused by the public sector but it is paying the price; services valued by all citizens are under threat of rampant privatisation and outsourcing.

This government has pledged to cut 730,000 public sector jobs by 2017 and to cut spending by £80bn, and already the North East has seen 59,000 public sector jobs lost. There has been an overall 40% central Government grant reduction over the last 5 years which has disproportionately hit those areas with the highest need the hardest. The Association of North East Councils (ANEC) has also stated that the grant cut for the North East would mean a cash budget reduction of around £190m (8%). There is no question that this level of reduction will have dramatic and damaging consequences for councils' ability to fund vital public services, such as children's and adult social care, that citizens and communities value and expect the local council to deliver.

No public sector organisation is being spared the Chancellor's axe, including the NHS which is being rapidly prepared for privatisation since the implementation of the Health and Social Care Act. Since 2011, NHS staff have been paying the price of keeping the NHS within budget through pay freezes, while coping with widespread reform. The Coalition Government's drive to privatise the NHS amounts to the selling off of the country's greatest asset.

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

The Government has also consistently been disingenuous with its figures. The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), which represents public sector accountants, has stated that the Government is double counting local government and health allocations of funds for social care.

Millions of working people's jobs, pay and pensions are under threat, yet despite such heavy job losses in the public sector, it is noticeable that there has been no specific retraining or skilling programmes to assist those workers who have lost their employment. In the past when a region had substantial job losses in a particular sector such as heavy industry, European funding had been available for retraining those affected.

The future of public services is an issue that concerns people, not only as UNISON members, but also as citizens. UNISON has a valuable contribution to make in delivering and shaping services fit for the 21st century. Together with the Public Service Alliance, UNISON Northern have developed a public services manifesto which clearly articulates a vision for public services that works to benefit working people and communities. These principles should be underpinned in any trade discussion, such as The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations, where there is a potential threat to jobs, health and safety standards and the democratic ability of governments to make decisions in the public interest.

There is an alternative to the breakup of the public sector through commissioning and procurement, which is leading to the reorganisation of service delivery into the hands of private profiteers, with less and less democratic accountability and engagement with communities on quality provision.

Services that are outsourced through procurement and commissioning must be subject to accountability through public scrutiny. UNISON must continue to campaign to ensure facility time in the procurement process, and that the trade union is part of the scrutiny process through workplace agreements. The role of health and safety reps in public sector contracts is crucial and these rights should be expanded.

As well as protecting the rights of workers, UNISON needs to champion the rights of service users to have a voice in the future of the public sector. In the North East through the Public Service Alliances, activists have been able to join with service users, the community and voluntary sector to fight to retain vital resources and services such as walk-in centres, prevent schools from going to academy status, and come together to fight the closure of libraries and leisure services, including youth services.

Working people and vulnerable groups should not be paying the cost of a global financial crisis. There is an alternative to the austerity measures being pursued by politicians that are out of touch with the realities of ordinary people's lives.

Conference calls upon the National Executive Council to:

- 1) Campaign for quality public services that meet the needs of local communities;
- 2) Protect the terms and conditions of public sector workers threatened with privatisation or transfer to mutuals, co-operatives or social enterprises;

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

- 3) Promote public accountability for the delivery of public services through effective and meaningful scrutiny;
- 4) Ensure that, through workplace procurement agreements, the trade union is part of the procurement scrutiny process and that facility time is made available.

Furthermore, Conference calls for UNISON to campaign at local, regional and national level with elected representatives and other relevant organisations to promote an agenda that:

- a) Petitions the European Parliament to call for European Funding to be made available for a comprehensive retraining program that would benefit and support public sector workers faced with job loss as a result of austerity measures;
- b) Defends employment rights and trade union representation and rights;
- c) Strengthens regulation to prohibit short-term speculative financial activity, and instead prioritise investment into socially beneficial and environmentally sustainable job creation;
- d) Reforms the tax regime to strengthen and rebalance it by closing havens and loopholes, and ensuring big companies and the very rich pay a bigger share;
- e) In terms of alternative models of delivery, promotes accountable public provision of healthcare, education, housing and social services that are protected and expanded to meet social and economic needs;
- f) Campaigns against privatisation across all service groups;
- g) Engages with citizens, employees, trade unions, employers and community organisations, in finding a way forward for enterprises, communities, and regional economies as a whole.

### **36. Care of older people**

**Carried  
as Amended: 36.1**

Conference supports integrating health and social care services providing the principal aim of doing so is to improve the quality of services particularly for older people. Conference believes that services can only be successfully integrated if social care is made, like health, free at the point of need.

Conference therefore welcomes:

- 1) The Labour Party's policy 'Whole Person Care' to integrate the two services in England;
- 2) Reports that the Labour Party is considering making social care in England free at the point of need.

However, Conference remains concerned that:

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

- a) The principal aim driving the present government's approach to integration is not service quality but that pooling budgets will save money and its analysis that integration is quite compatible with competition;
- b) Labour has not so far rejected this approach, rather it too appears more concerned with the integration of budgets and organisations than of services and committed to a model where its proposed Health and Wellbeing Boards will commission services not provide them.

Conference reiterates UNISON's view that public services are at their best when they are delivered directly by bodies which have been directly elected to do so and which remain accountable to the general public.

Conference therefore urges that integration be pursued as an anti-market measure and as an opportunity to:

- i) Introduce free social care for older people;
- ii) Rebuild the public sector in social care and defend health from privatisation;
- iii) Defend and rebuild collective bargaining, level up terms and conditions and root out abusive employment practices like zero hours contracts.

Further, Conference believes it is vital that UNISON's strategy is based on uniting the aims and values of the workforce with those of older people and other service users.

Conference recognises there is a wealth of experience in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland about the integration of health and social care services and policies on care being free, means tested or charged for, from both a workforce and a service user perspective.

In addition, Conference note notes that millions of pounds annually are saved to the economy by the efforts of unpaid carers looking after parents or other relatives in their own homes, often on a 24/7 basis. The great majority of those receiving such care are elderly people, many with physical disabilities or mental illnesses such as dementia. The Carer's Allowance (paid only if the carer does 35 hours a week or more) is £61.35 a week. Attendance Allowance of £54 or £81 a week is paid to disabled people over 65 in need of 24/7 care. This is "free Social Care" indeed!

Conference is appalled that what is a strenuous, physically and emotionally demanding job is not recognised as such and is rewarded at a level far below the National Minimum Wage.

Conference instructs the National Executive Council to:

- A) Continue to bring together UNISON's campaigns on integration and on free social care for older people;
- B) Learn the lessons from the different and developing situations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on health and social care integration;

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

- C) Raise this matter with the relevant UNISON Service Group Executives and seek to ensure that, in discussions about integration, UNISON reflects the views both of UNISON members employed in health and social care and UNISON retired members who use the services;
- D) Raise the issue with the National Pensioners' Convention;
- E) Publicise and report on progress to regions and branches through all appropriate communication channels, including the UNISON website, U Magazine, In-Focus and E-Focus;
- F) Seek the backing of the whole union and other relevant bodies in mounting a major campaign aimed at improving payments and other help for carers so that our retired members and all other elderly people needing care can have their needs met without their carers being exploited.

### **37. Social Care Workforce**

**Carried  
as Amended: 37.1**

Conference notes with concern that community, health and local government social workers have long been vilified in the media when things go wrong. Individual social workers have seen their careers destroyed when they have been held to account for the failures of the employer to fund the service properly. Portrayal of social workers in television dramas has compounded the one sided view of the profession.

Added to this, the ruling by Lord Justice Munby whereby social workers will be named in reports will only add to the social worker being the target of abuse. Quite apart from the individual distress, the effect on recruitment and retention of social workers will inevitably decline.

Conference believes that all social workers and other care staff providing services to adults and children provide a vital service, from cradle to grave, for the most vulnerable people in our society. Adverse portrayal of social workers in the media creates a negative perception of the work they carry out, potentially impacting on citizens accessing such essential services in their hour of need.

Conference therefore calls on the National Executive Council to:

- 1) Issue guidance and advice to branches around safe staffing levels including acceptable caseload in the community, health and local government social care context;
- 2) Campaign to press all governments in the UK to review social worker numbers and to bring in the appropriate regulation to ensure employers compulsorily report staff levels and vacancies annually;
- 3) Encourage Regions to map all our community, health and local government social care members, including social workers so that we are better able to target information and organising and recruitment activity;
- 4) Seek to enter early discussions with commissioners of television productions to strive for a more balanced portrayal of all social workers in the media.

## 2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions

### 46. Challenging Growing Inequality

Carried  
as Amended: 46.1, 46.2

For the past 30 years the economic philosophy has been that wealth would 'trickle down' to working people, and it has also been argued that austerity was necessary to build a future for subsequent generations and lift living standards.

The reality has been that ordinary people have not seen the quality jobs and higher living standards that were assured would follow, and working people have watched wages stagnate while big business profits soar. There is clearly growing inequality in society, which has been displayed by a recent Oxfam report that states by 2016 the top 1% will possess more than 50% of the world's wealth.

Economists in the IMF's Research Department have highlighted the increase in inequality since the 1980s across developed countries. In the report "Power from the People", they argue that the decline in unionisation has led to increased inequality. Conference notes that austerity is an international project and that trade unions have a central role to play in combating it.

UNISON need to be pushing the debate with politicians and economists to place inequality at the forefront of future discussions and economic policies. Economic and productivity structural reforms cannot ignore the social impact of inequality. Our economic and social strategy must centre on an inclusive agenda where the benefits of growth flow through to the wider community in the form of jobs, decent incomes, and rising living standards.

Central to this debate is the role that public services and trade unions have to play in tackling inequality. Well funded public services and provision of the highest quality health, education and housing are clearly central to any attempt to create a more equal society. Effective trade unions, operating within a fair framework of employment law, able to negotiate decent pay and conditions for people at work are fundamental.

Too many in society have an existence that comprises of loan sharks, zero hours contracts, food banks and poverty. Many people are working multiple jobs on minimum wages and suffering in-work poverty, with few opportunities of improving employment chances. Dependent on in-work benefits, these people are seeing themselves being demonised as scroungers by the media. In addition, in-work poverty and income inequality are major contributors to health inequality.

The world of work has changed significantly and many workers are fearful of their employment prospects. George Osborne lauded that new jobs were being created and unemployment was falling, yet these are poor quality, precarious jobs with little long-term prospects. The latest annual report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation highlighted that insecure, low-paid jobs are leaving record numbers of working families in poverty, with two-thirds of people who found work in the past year taking jobs for less than the Living Wage.

The growing sense of insecurity is having a profound effect on individuals. In the UK last year 50 million prescriptions were issued for antidepressants, and more young

## 2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions

men died from suicide than any other cause. This is a sad reflection on the state of society, and a tragedy for the individuals concerned.

UNISON is proud that it has equality at the heart of the union. The commitment to self organisation has built inclusivity and developed an equality agenda which has benefited all members.

Inequality is not a fringe issue, politicians and governments need to acknowledge and accept that they have to grasp this as a priority. UNISON should be leading the debate on what kind of a society the country needs, with a value base that is linked to sustainable and equitable growth, collectively provided public services and democracy and solidarity in the workplace.. Furthermore, UNISON's campaigning work on the Living Wage and Ethical Care Charter needs to continue to strength and argue the case for minimum standards that have social benefit.

Ethics, which appears to be absent from the politics of austerity, should be at the centre, helping to truly enable social mobility and economic growth in the 21st century. The Greek election results have shown that there is rising condemnation of austerity measures, and grassroots opposition is permeating throughout Europe, including in Italy and Spain. There is growing opposition to the punishment imposed by a remote elite on working people.

The Government need to acknowledge and accept that inequality is not a fringe issue. It is essential that politicians recognise that nurses, builders, teachers, labourers, hairdressers, shop assistants and service sector workers are as much generators of growth as bankers, investors, businesses and multinational companies. There needs to be a genuine discussion about fair distribution of wealth that allows people to live in dignity.

Conference calls on UNISON to:

- 1) Engage with politicians, academics and economists at all levels to debate structural and economic reforms that tackle growing inequality and rebalance the economy to deliver real social mobility and a fair distribution of wealth;
- 2) highlight the crucial role of high quality properly funded public services in creating a more equal society and the role of trade unions and collective bargaining in securing a more equitable distribution of the national income.
- 3) Campaign for decent living standards, guaranteed through improved measures to support the unemployed (especially those who are young), prevent homelessness, and lift people out of poverty;
- 4) Continue to campaign to establish the Living Wage as the National Minimum Wage;
- 5) Continue to work with international organisations including the ETUC in order to highlight and combat the international austerity agenda.
- 6) Continue to campaign for local authorities to sign-up to the Ethical Care Charter.

## 2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions

### 66. Solidarity with Palestine

**Carried  
as Amended: 66.1, 66.2, 66.3, 6.4,**

Conference hopes that a lasting ceasefire between the Israeli Government and Palestinian Organisations can be established, but recognises that this will not happen or be sufficient unless the illegal siege and occupation are ended.

UNISON welcomes Palestinian attempts to establish a unity government and urges the UK Government and the EU to support and encourage this development.

Conference expresses alarm at the United Nations (UN) assessment that since the 7 July 2014, and the latest, ceasefire nearly 2,500 Palestinian, mainly civilian, and 67 Israelis, three of whom were civilians, have been killed, and 9,986 Palestinians injured.

Conference deplore the attacks on UN facilities, including the attack on 3 August 2014 resulting in 9 deaths and 27 injuries and notes UN assessment of 12 August 2014 listing hospitals, clinics, United National Relief and Works Agency (UNWRA) installations, schools and mosques that have been damaged or destroyed.

Conference notes with concern the re-election of the Likud government in March. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has promised to expand illegal Israeli settlements in occupied East Jerusalem and reiterated his total opposition to a Palestinian state. The election was yet more confirmation of the racist nature of the

International law states that “parties to a conflict are prohibited to target civilians”. The UK Government is urged to support Palestinians in referring violations to the International Criminal Court.

Conference believes that the lack of a proper and meaningful response from the British government, EU and UN has been unacceptable and recognises that it is going to be necessary to step up the campaign for a free Palestine.

Conference believes that it is urgent UNISON step up work to implement policy on Palestine determined by earlier conferences, in particular to contribute more to the campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS).

Conference recalls its resolutions of 2012 and 2013 and welcomes the proposals adopted by the National Executive Council’s International Committee in September 2013 to:

- 1) Make the Russell Tribunal on Palestine findings available through the UNISON website;
- 2) Work with Communications to set up a ‘mini-campaign’ website aimed at promoting UNISON policy on BDS;
- 3) Work with the Pensions Unit to look at how the governance structures of the Local Government Pension Fund can be used to implement UNISON policy on divestment; and,

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

- 4) Work with the Services to Members Committee to issue guidance to UNISON's affinity partners.

Conference also welcomes the committee's adoption in November 2014 of its 2015 work programme which identifies Palestine as a priority and includes:

- a) Working with Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) to develop a campaign tool kit for pension fund divestment from companies complicit in the occupation that can be taken up by branches; and,
- b) Supporting PSC to develop the trade union network launched at the Trades Union Congress in September 2014.

Conference also notes that, as a result of approaches by members of PSC and other local campaigners, the Pensions Committee of the West Midlands Pension Fund, at its meeting on 10th December last, considered its investments (amounting to £150 million) in companies making profits from violations of International Law by Israel in Palestine. As a result of the UNISON observer's intervention, the committee did not adopt an officer recommendation that its fiduciary duty required it to take no action but has agreed to delay a decision on the matter and to seek advice. Conference congratulates those involved in this initiative, urges similar initiatives elsewhere and instructs the National Executive Council to offer appropriate support.

Even so, Conference is concerned that three of the September 2013 proposals have yet to be implemented. It instructs the National Executive Council to do so.

Conference also recalls that its resolutions of 2012 and 2013 instructed the National Executive Council to develop guidance for branches on campaigns to stop public service contracts being let to companies which are complicit in Israeli violations of International Law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, for instance by contracts which service the illegal settlements, construct the Apartheid Wall or provide security in prisons holding Palestinians illegally transferred from the occupied Palestinian territories to Israel.

But Conference is also concerned that no guidance has been issued so it confirms and repeats this instruction.

Conference recognises the increasing significance of academic, cultural and sporting boycott. In a public relations bid called "The New Hasbara", Israel promotes areas of excellence in its society to distract people abroad and get them to admire Israel and defend it. An example is to portray Israel as progressive and civilised on account of how it claims to treat Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) people and to misuse LGBT struggles to attack the Palestinians and demonise surrounding countries. Conference commends the work of the UNISON LGBT Self Organised Group in this area and that of the 'No to Pinkwashing' campaign. It instructs the National Executive Council to offer appropriate support.

Since the ceasefire last autumn, the Israeli government has rapidly escalated its aggressive policy of settlement building in particular in East Jerusalem and the occupied territories. This action is a flagrant disregard of international law. This illegal action demands a robust response from the UN, UK and EU.

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

As a first step, Conference demands that the British Government and the EU immediately end all arms trade, and all military-industrial collaboration, with Israel (that has been or could be used or tested in breach of international law). This should be supported by campaigning for those companies that are involved in industries supporting Israel's military industry to end their complicity.

Conference welcomes the 13 October 2014 vote of the British Parliament overwhelmingly in favour of recognising Palestine as a state. It further welcomes those other European countries which have similarly voted for the recognition of Palestine. However, Conference regrets that on 30 December 2014, at the UN Security Council, a resolution calling for the establishment of a Palestinian state failed to attract sufficient support including an abstention by the UK Government.

Given the outcome of the March 2015 general election in Israel, it is now urgent that we increase our support and solidarity for the Palestinian people. Benjamin Netanyahu declared on the eve of the election that as long as he is Israel's Prime Minister there will be no Palestinian State. This major reversal of Israeli policy must be condemned by the international community. It is now clear that only strong international pressure will stop Israel's increasingly aggressive policy towards Palestine. Trade unions have a vital role to play in lobbying national governments and supranational institutions such as the European Union in support of an independent Palestine and the national rights of its people.

Further, Conference congratulates UNISON branches, regions and the national union for its support so far to the humanitarian appeal from Medical Aid for Palestine (MAP) and calls on all branches and regions and the national union to continue to support MAP's humanitarian work whilst continuing to support longstanding work with the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) and the Democracy and Workers' Rights Centre.

Conference notes that discussions with some regions and sister unions have taken place around the establishment of the 'Institute of Knowledge and Socialist Thought' in Ramallah. The Institute is a training establishment founded by a group of trade union leaders, academics and political leaders in Palestine. Its purpose is to develop workers' representatives, especially women, in developing and shaping their future in workplaces and communities. The founders of the initiative recognise the importance of working in partnership with trade unions in the UK and Europe.

Conference supports this important initiative and recognises the value of building trade union activist capacity within Palestine. Conference welcomes the generous support from some regions and branches towards the initiative and calls on other branches and regions as well as the union nationally to support the initiative by offering practical and financial support.

Israeli state and its reliance on brutal repression of the Palestinians."

Conference resolves to:

- 1) Reaffirm our opposition to all forms of discrimination including anti-Semitism and Islamophobia;

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

- 2) Use the influence of our union to fight for pension funds to which our members contribute to disinvest from companies complicit in Israel's illegal occupation of the West Bank and attacks on Gaza;
- 3) Reaffirm our support for the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and the Stop the War Coalition and make a donation to both organisations;

Play an active role in the Boycott, Disinvestment and Sanctions movement in line with union policy.

### **69. The Bhopal Disaster 30 years later**

**Carried**

Conference notes:

- 1) That a Scottish Trade Union Delegation to Bhopal participated in events marking the 30th Anniversary of the gas leak disaster of 1984 for which Union Carbide was responsible;
- 2) That Dow Chemical Company (which now owns Union Carbide) has continued to avoid accountability and evades legal liability;
- 3) That the people of Bhopal are still struggling for justice, adequate compensation, clean water, appropriate health care, employment, pensions and human dignity.

Conference resolves:

- a) To continue and further develop links with the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal, the Bhopal Medical Appeal and Scottish Friends of Bhopal;
- b) To exert pressure on UK, Indian and US governments to take action to bring Dow Chemical to accept responsibility for the disaster;
- c) To exert pressure on the Indian government to provide adequate health care, employment opportunities and pensions for people affected by the disaster;
- d) To encourage trade union branches and individual trade union members to support the Bhopal Medical Appeal in its work to provide health and rehabilitation care in Bhopal.

Conference calls upon UNISON directly and through TUC to:

- i) Seek a meeting with the Indian Consul General, the Minister responsible for International Development, and relevant spokespeople from parties represented in Parliament, to support the demands of the survivors' movement;
- ii) Write to the representative of Dow in the UK to express the concerns of Conference at the company's continuing denial and avoidance of accountability for the actions of Union Carbide;

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

- iii) Work with the TUC, STUC, ICTU and Cymru/Wales TUC to convene a conference/ workshop of affiliated trade unions and relevant religious and third sector organisations to discuss practical issues of solidarity such as those listed in this motion.

### **85. Creating an Agenda on Equality and Human Rights**

**Carried**

There has been a roll-back on equality and human rights throughout the UK despite decades of anti-discrimination legislation, statutory duties to promote equality of opportunity, domestic legislation on human rights and the UK's obligations under a wide range of EU and UN equality and human rights instruments.

The persistent attack on public services has further eroded equality and human rights for many across society including women; children and young people; black people and ethnic minority groups, including migrant workers; people with disabilities; workers and trade unions.

Governments' failures on implementation of their equality and human rights obligations and the persistent attack on equality and human rights needs to be addressed on multiple levels including pressure on Governments and public bodies, a new set of demands at the bargaining table, and a raised awareness amongst UNISON members of the rights that are denied or frustrated.

In this motion we set out, in summary form, the areas of public policy and legislation which a range of UN Committees have identified as requiring action by the UK if widening discrimination, inequality, erosion of human rights and the persistent attack on social and economic rights is to be addressed.

In 2009 the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) recommended action that included the UK's obligation to:

- 1) Reduce unemployment, particularly for vulnerable groups, including people with disabilities and ethnic minorities;
- 2) Overcome gender inequalities at work, including the gender pay gap;
- 3) Combat poverty, fuel poverty and children's poverty;
- 4) Address the impact of welfare reforms on vulnerable groups;
- 5) Guarantee access to adequate housing for all, including the provision of sites for Roma, Gypsies and Travellers;
- 6) Overcome health inequalities;
- 7) Reduce discrimination in education;
- 8) Combat violence against women;

The unfettered right to strike, identified in previous reports, has never been implemented.

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

One important overall observation was the fact that failing to produce an action plan which recognised political devolution and responsibilities for overseas territories led to uneven development on equality and human rights.

In 2013 the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) recommended action that included the UK's obligation to:

- a) Ensure that women can access courts effectively;
- b) Ratify the Istanbul Convention;
- c) Make forced marriage a criminal offence;
- d) Adopt a comprehensive national action plan to tackle trafficking in women and girls;
- e) Improve mental health care in all prisons;
- f) Take steps to end occupational segregation and reducing the gender pay gap.

The Committee also made a number of specific observations on actions to eliminate discrimination against women in Northern Ireland.

In 2008 the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) recommended action that included the UK's obligation to:

- i) Allocate the maximum available resources to implement children's rights and eradicate child poverty;
- ii) End the use of physical restraint and solitary confinement on children in detention;
- iii) Establish mechanisms for monitoring and collecting data on cases of violence, sexual abuse, neglect and exploitation;
- iv) Tackle inequalities in access to health service;
- v) Reduce the achievement gap in education for children with disabilities, Roma and Traveller children and asylum-seeking children;
- vi) Raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility and develop alternative measures to detention of children.

In 2011, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) recommended action that included the UK's obligation to:

- A) Produce a detailed action plan or strategy to tackle race inequality;
- B) Review the impact of 'stop and search' powers on ethnic minority groups under various pieces of legislation in the UK;
- C) Take all necessary steps to eliminate all racist bullying in schools.

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

In 2008 the UN Human Rights Committee (CCPR), that monitors implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, recommended action that included the UK's obligation to:

- I) Investigate alleged acts of torture, ill-treatment and suspicious deaths inflicted by UK personnel in detention facilities in Afghanistan and Iraq;
- II) Ensure that no one is returned to another country if there are substantial reasons for fearing that they may be subjected to torture;
- III) Ensure stop and search powers are used in a non-discriminatory manner;
- IV) End the detention of asylum seekers in prison;
- V) Combat negative attitudes towards Muslims;
- VI) Encourage increased representation of women and ethnic minorities in the judiciary; and
- VII) Review legislation which denies all convicted prisoners the right to vote.

In 2013, the UN Committee against Torture (CAT) recommended action that included the UK's obligation to:

- aa) Improve efforts to prevent violence and self-harm in places of detention;
- ab) Establish standards and measures of compliance to prevent ill-treatment of patients receiving health care services;
- ac) Investigate alleged acts of torture and ill-treatment of detainees held overseas under the State's control or jurisdiction;
- ad) Take steps to prevent vulnerable asylum seekers and torture survivors from being entered into administrative detention;
- ae) Ensure that electrical discharge weapons (tasers) are used only in extreme and limited situations where there is a real and immediate threat to life or risk of serious injury;
- af) Use restraint against children only as a last resort and to prevent harm rather than for disciplinary purposes; and
- ag) Direct children with mental disabilities to appropriate health institutions rather than police custody.

Conference notes that between 2015 and 2017 the UK Government will be re-examined by the relevant UN Committee on its compliance with all these Treaties and the actions it has taken to implement the above recommendations. For the first time the UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) will also examine the UK Government's implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities following its ratification in 2009.

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

Conference is concerned that in addition to its failure to implement its Treaty obligations the UK Government has also so far failed to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (CMW) as well as the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED).

Conference is further concerned at the failure of the UK Government to incorporate each Treaty into domestic law despite this being a key recommendation in the concluding observations from various Treaty bodies over many years.

Conference therefore calls on the National Executive Council to work with relevant UNISON structures to press the UK Government for implementation of the above recommendations and its obligations and duties under international human rights law. In particular:

AA) To ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families (CMW) and the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED);

AB) To lift all reservations to the seven Treaties it has ratified;

AC) To incorporate each Treaty into domestic law;

AD) To ensure that the lead Government Department fulfills its obligation to ensure that each Treaty is mainstreamed across government;

AE) To consult with trade unions, human rights groups, and civil society to gain widespread input into the state report and to share a draft of the state report prior to submission to the UN;

AF) To ensure the input from the devolved administrations where Treaties refer to areas of devolved responsibility;

AG) To respond seriously to concluding observations of the Treaty bodies through the development of action plans outlining how they will be met, where responsibility lies in government and when action should be delivered by.

Conference also calls on the National Executive Council:

1a) To work with all relevant structures to develop claims for the bargaining agenda in pursuance of those recommendations, which are capable of being implemented by bargaining, for example on terms and conditions and staffing levels, and those which can be implemented through policy adjustments by public bodies and public employers;

1b) To develop education and organising programmes to raise awareness among the members of how to use the existing equality and human rights tools to secure their rights.

In developing these strategies UNISON notes the UNCESCR recommendation on the responsibilities of devolved administrations as well as the UK Government.

## 2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions

### 88. UNISON and Devolution

Carried

Conference notes the debate around devolution which occurred in 2014 impacted on all parts of the United Kingdom with the referendum on Scottish independence and the subsequent Smith Commission; the passage of the Wales Act 2014; the increased momentum behind combined authorities and “City deals” in England; the Conservative Party’s proposals around “English Votes for English Laws” in the Westminster Parliament; and the Stormont House Agreement in Northern Ireland at the end of the year.

Conference recognises that the debate on fiscal and legislative devolution is fast moving across the UK and that public opinion across the United Kingdom does not provide an endorsement for a single proposal. Conference also recognises that between 2010 and 2015 the Coalition Government cynically sought to use aspects of the devolution debate to justify the attempted introduction of regional pay in the public sector, to undermine the provision of public services through the promotion of outsourcing and privatisation and as a tactic to either pass on or avoid blame for the drastic spending cuts they inflicted on public bodies and devolved administrations in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Conference also recalls that in 2004 National Delegate Conference brought about rule changes for UNISON which led to the establishment of a Devolution Protocol for the union in 2005. This Devolution Protocol was necessary to allow the union to reflect on differences in policy, bargaining and communications across the nations and regions of the United Kingdom – as well as to facilitate learning from different experiences. Rule B 2.7 states that it is intended “To devolve to regions policy making responsibility in relation to devolved administrations while maintaining the integrity and unity of the union”.

Conference believes that there is a bargaining agenda that unites the union around:

- 1) Collective bargaining in the public, private and voluntary sectors;
- 2) Low pay, living wage and fair pay;
- 3) Equal pay;
- 4) Equalities;
- 5) Decent pensions;
- 6) Rights and conditions for part time workers;
- 7) Ending vulnerable and casualised work;
- 8) Skills and access to training;
- 9) Safe working environments.

Conference therefore calls on the National Executive Council to:

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

- a) Unite all UNISON branches and UNISON regions around a vision of quality public services, social justice, fair taxation and fair funding;
- b) Continue to support the principles behind Rule B 2.7;
- c) Provide a framework within existing structures for UNISON regions in England to take a view on city-region proposals outside London and on any new proposals for changes to London governance;
- d) Work with service groups on their bargaining priorities across the UK;
- e) Unite the union around our national recruitment and organising priorities;
- f) Update and improve the existing UNISON Devolution Protocol and its implementation;
- g) Work with UNISON regions on their policy and campaigns to ensure the continuation of the universal provision of public services.

### **89. Devolution: seizing the opportunities, avoiding the threats** **Carried**

Conference notes that issues around the scale of governance have come to the fore in political debate in recent months. Questions that have become more prominent in the political discussion include:

- 1) The relationship between the UK and Europe;
- 2) The relationship between the nations of the UK;
- 3) The relationship between central and local government.

Conference notes recent agreements between the Con-Dem Coalition Government and some Combined Authority (CA) areas.

- a) In Greater Manchester, the CA was established in 2011. In November 2014, it was agreed with the Treasury that additional powers and resources would be transferred to the CA in the areas of transport, planning, housing, health and social care, skills and business support, early years, policing and justice. A newly-constituted Greater Manchester mayor will lead on transport, housing and policing;
- b) In West Yorkshire, a combined authority was established in April 2014. The CA signed a growth deal with the Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg in November 2014. The deal is claimed to bring more jobs, homes and transport funding to the area. There is no requirement or agreement to have a new mayor position;
- c) In Sheffield, the city region CA was set up in April 2014. The Local Enterprise Partnership agreed a growth deal in July 2014, and then the CA agreed a devolution deal with the Deputy Prime Minister in December 2014. The devolution deal covers areas including skills, housing, transport and growth. Again, there is no requirement or agreement to have a new mayor position;

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

Conference supports the following principles in relation to devolution:

- i) That public services are best delivered directly by democratically accountable bodies;
- ii) That public sector bodies should work together where possible and appropriate. This holds some potential for cost savings and service improvements within the public sector;
- iii) That employment standards should be adopted in the delivery of public services – binding all employers;
- iv) That public bodies should promote sustainable economic, environmental and social well-being;
- v) That it is important that people feel connected to civic politics, with opportunities for engagement and participation.

Conference believes that:

- A) The devolution of powers from Central Government to a more local level offers potential for real improvements in economic performance and the quality of life;
- B) Voters have shown little enthusiasm for taking part in elections to choose directly-elected mayors or Police Commissioners. Nine out of ten English cities rejected having elected members in referendums in 2012. Executive mayors who cover large geographical areas are likely to be remote and unaccountable figures;
- C) Devolution alone cannot overcome the problems of chronic underfunding of public services. There is a danger that in a context of austerity, devolution of power can simply mean the devolution of choices about how to make cuts.

Conference instructs the National Executive Council to:

- I) Support devolution arrangements that hold the prospect of protecting public services and promoting quality jobs;
- II) Support devolution of public spending decisions to a more local level and pursue devolution in towns and counties as well as cities;
- III) Oppose changes in governance that facilitate cuts and privatisation;
- IV) Continue to campaign against austerity and for fair funding for public services across the UK;
- V) Seek the inclusion of employment charters that bind all employers delivering public services over the widest geographical area possible;
- VI) Demand that devolved political structures are based on improved accountability to citizens rather than to central government;

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

VII) Conduct a review of alternative models for democratically-accountable governance in the English regions. The review should consider the potential role of newly-constituted regional assemblies. The review should report back with recommendations to Conference 2016.

### **102. Domestic violence, a gendered issue**

**Carried  
as Amended: 102.1**

Conference notes that research from the home office has shown that nearly 90% of severe and repeated domestic violence is experienced by women. The Home Office report on domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking (findings from the British Crime Survey) reported that “women are the overwhelming majority of the most heavily abused group. Among people subject to four or more incidents of domestic violence from the perpetrator of the worst incident (since age 16), 89 per cent were women.”

Conference is concerned that on an average week in this country two women are murdered by their male partner in extreme cases of domestic violence, and 1 million women experience at least one incident of domestic abuse each year. UNISON and our trade unions are part of that society.

Conference notes that in describing domestic abuse as “gender-based” we are categorically not alleging that all perpetrators are male and all victims/survivors are female. Conference recognises that men and boys can also be the victims of violence. We also note with concern the rise in domestic abuse in same sex relationships: UNISON’s national LGBT Conference in 2013 noted that 37% of same sex relationships have featured non-consensual violence. Conference affirms our opposition to all violence, whatever the gender or age of the perpetrator or victim.

Conference reiterates our recognition that, in a sexist society, male violence against women plays a particular role in limiting the participation of women in all areas of civil life, including trade union activity. Therefore, we must address the particular problem of male violence against women.

In noting that domestic abuse is gender based we reiterate our recognition that historically physical and sexual violence has been used to control women, and there is still widespread tolerance for sexism and abuse of women. The Everyday Sexism project was established to record women’s experiences of sexism, harassment and assault – as at October 2014 there were 45,000 tweets and tens of thousands of posts on the website. The Zero Tolerance project in Scotland works with individuals, communities, women’s and men’s organisations, schools, the media and others to address the causes of violence against women, and bring about change - their research found that half of all young men believed that forced sex was justifiable in some circumstances; worryingly one third of young women also accepted this.

Conference welcomes the UN General Secretary in 2006 stating “Violence against women is not the result of random, individual acts of misconduct, but rather is deeply rooted in structural relationships of inequality between women and men”.

However, we remain concerned at the lack of progress and the recent moves to dilute the recognition of domestic abuse as a gendered issue – for example by the

## 2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions

media publishing sensationalist data on the number of incidents of abuse by women which ignore patterns, severity, repetition and circumstances.

Conference is concerned that women order their day and lives around the restrictions to safety and freedom of movement which the background threat of men's violence imposes, sometimes without them even realising it. Some women were surprised when it was pointed out to them that their own "habits" of not going out alone after dark, or of holding their keys in their hands whilst walking home in case they are attacked, are carried out because of a fear of violence from men. The women reported that they'd never thought of it in that context previously, it was just something they did.

Conference notes that despite significant social change, men continue to grow up within a deeply misogynistic male dominated culture where violence against women is commonplace and acceptable.

Sexual harassment and male violence against women can - and sadly do - occur within the labour movement and within our trade unions and labour movement groups at all levels.

In 2011 new Crown Prosecution Service guidance was published following a review of allegations of rape and domestic abuse. The research recorded that "During the 17 month period of the review, there were 5,651 prosecutions for rape and 111,891 for domestic violence. During the same period there were just 35 prosecutions for making false allegations of rape, six for making false allegation of domestic violence and three for making false allegations of both rape and domestic violence."

However, it is still the case that women report that when they have been a victim, they are not believed. They may face allegations that they inflicted the injuries on themselves and/or inappropriate questioning of their mental health status, alcohol consumption and sexual history.

In a Mumsnet survey in 2012, 83% of those who had been raped or sexually assaulted failed to report it to police and 29% did not even report it to friends and family. More than half of the female respondents said the legal system, the media and society at large is unsympathetic to rape victims.

Conference notes that the fear of stigma and the fear of not being believed prevent many women from reporting violence. In 2014, HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary, Tom Winsor, said: "Domestic abuse is not only about violence; it is about fear, control and secrecy. It is essential that the police make substantial reforms to their handling of domestic abuse, including in their understanding of the coercive and psychological nature of the crime as well as its physical manifestations. They must create the conditions so that victims have the confidence to call for help, in the knowledge that they will be believed and kept safe."

Conference notes that as a member-representation organisation, the situation facing UNISON is different to that of the police, and that we are obliged to represent all our members to the best of our ability. Therefore, in any incident or allegation there must, of course, be a fair and impartial investigation that protects the rights of all parties. Conference notes our branches manage this on a daily basis. For example,

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

in a situation where a member has put in an allegation against another member, each member has a representative who is there to protect their individual interests and to support them, but any investigation resulting from their allegations is independent, fair and impartial.

Likewise, if legal advice were sought in a situation where both a complainant and the person complained of sought UNISON's assistance, the same test would be applied to both parties in that there would be separate legal evaluation of the complaint and the defence, and separate representation for both parties, where this was judged appropriate within UNISON's legal guidelines.

Conference believes that it is essential that anyone reporting violence is confident that reporting such an incident would be taken seriously, and that all women who complain of male violence, both in and outside of the trade union movement, have the right to be listened to, their allegations taken seriously and properly investigated with appropriate action being taken if proven.

Conference believes that in adopting this approach we would be showing our million women members that when women complain of male violence within our movement, our trade union will provide support for them.

Conference further recognises that the National Women's Committee, in submitting this motion, is the self-organised group for women members and therefore has an obligation to speak up for women's rights and to defend women's interests.

Conference believes that male violence against women is not acceptable in any case. It must not be tolerated from those who hold office or power in our movement: our movement must be a safe space for women.

Conference therefore calls on the National Executive Council to work with the National Women's Committee and the National LGBT Committee to:

- 1) Improve understanding of the issues raised within this motion;
- 2) Share good practice throughout UNISON on campaigning and organising around ending violence against women;
- 3) Encourage branches to use the UNISON domestic violence guidance to negotiate workplace policies on supporting the victims of domestic abuse;
- 4) Issue guidance to branches on:
  - a) How to support women who allege violence;
  - b) How to ensure branches can represent all parties fairly and impartially in any investigation.

# Composites

# Composites

## 2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions

### Composites

#### EC1. An Organising Response to the Result of the 2015 G

Carried

Conference notes the unanticipated outcome of the 2015 General Election which produced a majority Conservative Government.

The new Government is set to intensify austerity in the public sector and increase privatisation and outsourcing of public services.

The Conservatives also explicitly targeted the right of workers to organise by including the following commitments in their manifesto:

- 1) Legislation to “ensure trade unions use a transparent opt-in process for union subscription;”
- 2) A commitment to “tighten the rules around taxpayer-funded paid ‘facility time’ for union representatives.”

Conference believes that the attack on workers’ right to organise is intended to weaken workers ability to oppose further cuts and privatisation and the consequent reduction in jobs, pay and conditions.

However, we must also prepare ourselves to face this challenge from the Conservative Government with an organising response. This will require, above all, a focus on building membership and density in our branches, supported by UNISON at every level.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to launch the strongest possible public campaign to expose the ideological anti trade union attack aimed at undermining trade unions throughout public services to the point of seeking to make DOCAS contracts fully paid for by unions unlawful.

UNISON must make this a major campaign which reflects the very real threat to the future of UNISON should the Tories succeed in removing DOCAS throughout public services.

Conference recognises that should the union lose the fight there would be no option other than moving entirely to Direct Debit.

Conference recognises that persuading members to transfer their subscriptions to direct debit, and subsequently ensuring that we maintain the information we need to organise, will require face to face conversations by our activists with our members.

Work has already begun on a strategy for dealing with the reduction in facility time for our already hard pressed activists. This work becomes even more urgent as we face the threat of more facility time being removed.

Conference therefore calls upon the National Executive Council:

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

- a) to lead a determined campaign to defend our DOCAS arrangements involving all members, other trade unions, political parties, employers and the wider public to defend the future of public service trade unions;
- b) To develop and implement measures to ensure that we can maintain accurate records of members' employers;
- c) To revise the Code of Good Branch Practice to provide guidance to branches and shop stewards on how to ensure that members paying by direct debit pay the appropriate rate of subscription;
- d) To put in place as a matter of the utmost urgency a whole union strategy and the allocation of resources so as to ensure that all members paying by DOCAS are retained in membership through any transfer on to DD;
- e) To review what can be done to ensure that activists have sufficient facilities, support and resources to ensure that they can adequately represent their members.

Conference further recognises that this organising response requires lay member buy in and prioritisation throughout UNISON. Conference therefore calls upon the National Executive Council to ensure that this work receives the support and priority it requires at all levels within UNISON.

### **EC2. UNISON's Political Campaign After the 2015 General** **Carried**

Conference notes that the Conservative Party's success at the General and local elections on May 7th carries with it significant threats to public services, our members' jobs and standard of living and growing levels of inequality. As such Conference calls upon the National Executive Council to develop and put in place a comprehensive political campaign to address this dangerous situation.

Conference agrees that this should complement the union's post election organising and negotiating strategies and maximise the use of our political resources and activist base over the lifetime of this parliament (up to 2020). Conference further agrees that the union's political campaign strategy will need to reflect a changing and challenging political environment, examples of which include the new political landscape in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and the millions of votes won by UKIP. Crucially the strategy will also need to face up to the urgent and immediate challenges posed to our members by the legislative programme set out in the Queen's Speech on 27th May and the measures anticipated in the forthcoming stability budget on 8th July. These include plans to:

- 1) Implement further massive cuts to public services and public service jobs, with close to one million more job cuts anticipated between now and 2020 regardless of the consequences on the services our communities rely upon;
- 2) Continue with the policy of pay restraint which has resulted in the average public service employee now being more than £2,000 a year worse off than they were in 2010;

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

- 3) Make yes votes for industrial action harder to achieve by setting high turn-out thresholds and making it easier for employers to use agency workers during strikes;
- 4) Make it more difficult for trade unions to maintain political funds;
- 5) Implement further reductions in public sector facility time and possibly extend the removal of DOCAS across the public sector;
- 6) Continue to privatise our public services, including in probation in England and Wales and in the NHS in England, whilst also encouraging more cut price outsourcing, social enterprise spin outs and personal budgets in local government;
- 7) Increase the number of Free Schools and Academies in England and attacks on unsocial hours payments in the English NHS;
- 8) Promote greater regional devolution in England, changing the political landscape in which public services are delivered;
- 9) Extend the right to buy to housing associations in England;
- 10) Cut £12bn from welfare and freeze of most working age benefits, e.g. Tax Credits, until 2018.

At this moment of Conservative triumphalism, we must keep in mind that their permanent austerity agenda is not as widely shared by the public as it might appear. The UK is not a right-wing country, but a divided country. Only a quarter of the electorate and fewer than 4 in 10 voters, supported the Conservatives and their victory has been met with more dismay than joy. Anti-racist activists will be heartened by the failure of Farage to win a seat in South Thanet. However, UKIP have continued to spread fear and division which unfortunately has been echoed by other parties. With UKIP registering over 4 million votes we must challenge their racist lies.

In drawing together the union's political strategy, conference calls upon the National Executive Council to ensure that the central objectives of UNISON's campaign activity focus on:

- a) Protecting members jobs;
- b) Defending quality public services;
- c) Protecting and enhancing pay, living standards and gender equality;
- d) Defending the rights of trade unions to take action, including industrial action;
- e) Encouraging a fair, inclusive and tolerant society so that no one is left behind and nor is anybody scapegoated for the economic crisis;
- f) Seeking to ensure that the next UK level government is one which better reflects our values.

This process should culminate in UNISON's political campaign strategy and include:

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

- i) Opportunities for all parts of the union to feed into and shape the union's political messages to build unity and cohesion for the period ahead, by including branches, regions, self organised groups, National Young Members Forum and the Retired Members;
- ii) An assessment of how to build new coalitions of support for public services, including encouraging branches to take part in the People's Assembly march on 20th June. This should include an evaluation of previous coalition building efforts, e.g. the Public Services Alliance (Northern Region), Housing Voice and the various citizens initiatives;
- iii) Opposing further attacks on benefit claimants and work to develop stronger links with anti-poverty organisations including the Child Poverty Action Group and anti-Bedroom Tax campaigns;
- iv) Effective mobilisation of both the Labour Link and the GPF – with every effort being made to ensure that the political fund is protected from the Tory attack set out in the Queen's speech;
- v) A thorough review of the UNISON response to political devolution as it has evolved over last 10 years, in conjunction with the devolved nations, and how it emerges in the English regions, seeking to improve our campaigns and communications;
- vi) Full engagement in the development and execution of broader trade union movement campaigns co-ordinated by the TUC, STUC, WTUC and ICTU;
- vii) Convene and seek TUC support for a national demonstration against austerity and racism at the Conservative Party Conference in Manchester on Sunday 4 October;
- viii) To work with other trade unions, campaign groups and the TUC to organise the biggest possible campaign of meetings, rallies — and action— to defend the right to strike and call on the TUC to hold lobbies and rallies of Parliament on the Trade Union Bill;
- ix) Identification of and full involvement in key electoral staging posts, including local, mayor, Police and Crime Commissioner elections and the elections in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and London in 2016;
- x) Co-ordination with our organising and industrial work, so as to ensure that political campaign activity supports and amplifies local actions and vice versa;
- xi) Development work to ensure that the union is supporting and training the new generation of trade union political activists;
- xii) Ongoing efforts to make sure that the union is using the most effective campaign techniques possible to reach and mobilise members and to ensure that the voices of our member and activists are heard at the highest level;
- xiii) A campaign to save the Human Rights Act which provides essential protections to UK citizens.

## 2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions

### A. Organising

Carried

Conference recognises that activism is at the very heart of UNISON. Activists ensure that the union is accessible to members in the workplace giving day to day support and representation to members, encouraging other workers to join the union and building our organisation. Without activists we could not function as a democratic lay member led union.

Conference utterly condemns the Tories unwarranted attacks on trade union facility time, which has led some employers to take an ever more restrictive view of trade union facilities. This in turn has made it difficult for some activists to represent members, particularly members whose jobs have been outsourced. Conference believes that activists, with access to the facilities necessary to do their trade union work, are essential to good industrial relations.

Conference also notes with concern that pressure on existing activists is growing as a result of austerity and the continuing fragmentation of public services. This has led to a reduction in the number of activists, putting further pressure on those who remain, as their own work intensifies and they try to cover for colleagues who have left. Conference also notes that workplace issues faced by groups of members who experience discrimination are generally harder to tackle in fragmented workplaces. Isolated members fear to speak out and may not be sure where to go for support.

Meanwhile the number of UNISON members working in the private and voluntary sectors is increasing, while our activists tend to be disproportionately concentrated in public sector employment. Even within the public sector fragmentation has created problems, for example in academies. This leaves whole areas of public service where UNISON has fewer activists than our membership numbers warrant. Conference notes that our practice of self-organisation of groups of workers facing discrimination can assist in giving these members scattered across diverse workplaces a strong sense of collective union identity. Branch support for self-organisation and outreach into equality communities can reap great benefits, uniting members around a shared identity and purpose, encouraging them into activism.

Conference recognises that it is evident from the membership figures that despite proportionality and fair representation being written into rule; women, particularly lower paid women, and Black people are underrepresented amongst activists. The current surge in membership amongst young members means that there is also a need for more activists among young members. Conference believes that in addressing the shortfall in activists it is important that we should also seek to redress underrepresentation amongst these key groups. This should include working with the self-organised groups to raise awareness of their potential to help branches to reach, recruit and engage members.

Conference recognises that the rapidly growing numbers of our members who are not employed within our traditional core employers do not receive the same high level of support and assistance that all UNISON members deserve.

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

All members, regardless of their employer should be able to access support and representation and to participate fully in the democracy of the union.

Conference understands the very real difficulties many branches face in both representing and organising members outside the core employer, and in providing opportunities for those members to engage in the democracy and decision making of the union.

Conference applauds those branches which have begun to address these difficulties in creative, ambitious and successful ways.

Conference asks that the National Executive Council develops and issues guidance to branches, suggesting strategies branches can adopt to ensure members in the fragmented workforce can access all the benefits of UNISON membership on an equal footing.

Conference also asks that the National Executive Council require that all UNISON systems and processes are focussed on making it as simple as possible for our branches and activists to work to build the organisation.

Conference notes the work that is already being done, which includes:

- 1) Issuing advice on best practice;
- 2) The roll out of the skills bank;
- 3) Making training more accessible;
- 4) Greater emphasis on mentoring and support for activists;
- 5) Developing strategies for protecting and enhancing trade union facilities for activists.

The aim should be to increase the overall level of activism amongst members, not simply the number of shop stewards. All activism is valuable, and for many members activism is a journey in which their engagement with UNISON increases over time, as they gain confidence, or where they find a particular area where they feel they can contribute most.

Last year we established an annual organising planning cycle, involving the Joint Branch Assessment (JBA), Regional Plan, Service Groups and SOGs. Conference believes that it is essential to embed activist development as a central part of that planning process.

Conference notes that, in a time of austerity and job cuts, our recruitment figures for the past year are still encouraging. We commend our activists and staff for their efforts.

However, there is still a need to recruit and organise more young members in our union. Given that the majority of public sector workers are women, it is essential that we devise ways to attract young women into our movement, and ensure that our

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

agenda is one in which their aspirations are met, and that our organisation is one in which they can reach their full potential as UNISON members.

Conference calls upon the National Executive Council to work with the self organised groups, Young Members' Forum other appropriate bodies in UNISON to:

a) Branches to:

- a) Identify those areas where taking into account fragmented and outsourced workers they need more activists and consider which groups of members are underrepresented to help the branch establish targets for the number of additional activists they need, preparatory to the JBA;
- b) Encourage retired members to help identify and develop new activists;
- c) Formulate a plan for how potential activists can be identified and encouraged to become active.

b) Regions to:

- i) Ensure that all JBAs map activists within branches against all the employers covered by the branch, and examine the activist base in the branch to see how representative it is of women, low paid women, Black and young members;
- ii) Use the information gathered in the JBA mapping process described above to agree firm targets for activist development in each JBA with a clear plan of how new activists are going to be identified, trained, mentored and developed. The targets will seek to rectify areas of underrepresentation, whether in terms of representation for outsourced workers and or amongst women, low paid women, Black or young members;
- iii) Monitor progress against the activists' targets in the JBAs and report on how monitoring and evaluation will be managed in the regional organising plan;
- iv) Produce a regional activist development plan based on best practice and aimed at targeting underrepresented groups such as low paid women, women, Black workers and the private sector, which should also form part of the regional organising plan;
- v) Work with Regional Retired Members' Committees to identify ways in which retired members can be involved with the recruitment of activists.

c) Service Groups to:

- i) As part of the organising planning process to incorporate into their organising plans the development of activists in national employers where there has been fragmentation;

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

- ii) In the case of private contractors mapping and targeting will be developed as part of the joint work programme between the Private Contractors Unit and Strategic Organising Unit in liaison with regions.
- d) The Retired Members National Committee to:
  - i) Encourage retired members to take an active role in supporting branches to identify and develop new activists amongst the current membership;
  - ii) Prepare a training programme to enable the achievement of i) above.
- e) SOGs to:
  - i) Develop plans to use their networks to encourage more members to become active in UNISON;
  - ii) Identify any barriers to members of the SOG or young members becoming more involved in UNISON;
  - iii) Review progress against plan on an annual basis and liaise with the Development and Organising Sub-Committee of the National Executive Council over both the planning process and progress.
  - iv) Each of these steps should in turn feed into the annual planning process established at Conference 2014.
- f) Young Members' Forum to:
  - i) Collaborate with student unions, nursing and technical colleges etc to raise awareness of the benefits of union membership and to recruit eligible students into membership at the end of their period of study;
  - ii) Address the needs of young women who enter the workforce through avenues other than college, including those who are taken on as apprentices, by developing appropriate strategies;
  - iii) Ensure that our branches, regions and formal structures are "user friendly" and easy to access – including by the use of social media;
  - iv) Work with regions to identify appropriate student events and other events attractive to young members and potential young members where UNISON could have a recruitment and information stand;
  - v) Identify the issues which are of concern to potential young members, including those which are of particular concern to young women, and the barriers to them joining a union;
  - vi) Investigate free or very reduced membership to students while studying in vocational fields such as nursing, social care, childcare and early years students and to consider how best to work to recruit and organise in these fields including voluntary sector and private sector.

## 2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions

### **B. Campaigning for a Living Wage**

**Carried**

Conference condemns the continued attacks on the funding of public services and the impact of the poor pay awards for staff in the public sector.

Our members' wages have decreased in real terms and public sector pay no longer leads the way.

Many employers within the public sector are now employed on rates less than the Living Wage. Much independent research has been conducted to highlight the benefits of implementing a Living Wage with increased morale of employees and a drop in absenteeism.

By employers paying a Living Wage it affords people to provide for themselves and their families.

Recipients of a Living Wage – a single-level hourly-rate (aside from the London Living Wage rate) - would also no longer be subject to the disgraceful situation of legalised discrimination on grounds of age in the National Minimum Wage and apprentices would no longer be subject to such a low hourly rate.

Conference notes the major campaign being waged by the BFAWU (Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union) within the national fast food takeaway companies, in partnership with the Fast Food Rights Campaign and Youth Fight For Jobs. The main thrust of this campaign is to recruit and organise young people into trade unions around the demand for a £10 per hour Living Wage.

Conference also notes that the GMB National Conference 2014 agreed to campaign for a £10 ph Living Wage in the security industry.

During 2014 UNISON members in Local Government (those covered by the NJC) engaged in a major dispute over poverty pay levels and the demand for a £1 per hour increase in wages. Conference recognises that, even if this claim had been met in full, thousands of Local Government workers would still only just be receiving the Outer London Living Wage of £7.65 per hour.

In 2014 UNISON members in the Health Service Group also engaged in a key campaign to raise members' pay to a fair level and to eradicate poverty pay.

These pay claims took place against the backdrop of UNISON's 2014 evidence to the Low Pay Commission, which demanded a stepped increase in the National Minimum Wage to bring it in line with the Living Wage.

We can look across the ocean to the USA for inspiration. The 15Now mass movement in Seattle has won legislation which provides for a minimum wage of \$15 per hour. All across America 15Now groups are being established and are growing steadily. Conference applauds this initiative.

Conference believes that we need to raise the sights of members as to what is possible and look towards a Living Wage for all which prevents workers falling into poverty.

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

Conference therefore calls on the National Executive Council to:

- 1) Support branches in working with employers to get them to adopt the Living Wage and become a Living Wage employer;
- 2) Urge the UNISON Labour Link to take up this issue at all levels of the Labour Party;
- 3) Provide guidance and campaign materials to support branches in campaigning for the Living Wage;
- 4) Ensure that any procurement agreements incorporate the Living Wage, as achieved by UNISON Scotland in the Scottish Procurement Bill;
- 5) Campaign to have a legally-enforceable Living Wage enshrined in legislation;
- 6) Support current initiatives in the UK campaigning for a £10 per hour minimum wage, send solidarity greetings to the BFAWU in support of their campaign 'Fast Food Rights and to the 15Now campaign in Seattle;
- 7) Campaign with the TUC, with other trade unions and alongside other appropriate campaigning organisations in building a united push toward minimum pay rates of £10 per hour and utilise the opportunities in some industrial sectors for quicker progress in raising the living standards of the lowest paid through both collective bargaining and the National Minimum Wage. Whilst doing so, always seeking appropriate pay rises higher up grading scales to maintain equality proofed pay systems based on equal pay for work of equal value.

### **C. Pay and collective Bargaining**

**Carried**

Conference notes evidence demonstrating that the share of the total wealth generated by the UK economy that is paid out in wages has been falling from 60% in the post war period to around 53% now; and that this is made worse by the fact that falling wage share is distributed in an increasingly unfair way, with the proceeds of economic growth since the early 2000s accruing to a small group at the top of the income scale, and declining real incomes for those on low to middle incomes.

Conference recognises that pay in the public sector has been in decline for decades. This has been a deliberate policy of successive governments as part of a neo-liberal economic policy. At the same time there has been an increase in profits and incomes from shares which has benefited only the very richest in the country.

Conference notes David Cameron's statements in the General Election campaign that workers should get a pay rise but note that he had no intention of giving public sector workers a pay rise that would keep pace with inflation for this year, never mind address the years of relative pay cuts that UNISON members have suffered.

Conference notes that disregard and in some senses hostility to collective bargaining by successive governments and employers has played a significant part in falling wage share and the increasingly unfair way in which pay is distributed across the economy.

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

Conference condemns the Labour Party's stated intent to continue with public sector pay restraint if elected.

The Institute of Employment Rights publication by Keith Ewing and John Hendy "Reconstruction after the crisis: a manifesto for collective bargaining" highlights that in 1979 over 80% of workers in the UK had some part of their terms and conditions set by collective bargaining, but that this has now fallen to below 25%. And whilst collective bargaining remained in many parts of public services, this was being undermined by pay caps and fragmentation.

In addition Conference notes that the current government pay policy is resulting in a growing low pay problem, with more than five million workers now falling below the official low pay threshold and the longest and most severe decline in workers' real earnings since Victorian times.

Conference believes that falling pay not only directly affect the workers themselves but also has a detrimental impact on the wider economy, with less spending power the country is forced to pay out £900 million more on tax credits than planned and tax revenues have fallen too.

Specifically, Conference notes that more than a tenth of council staff are now on low income tax credits. Many public service staff have had to resort to second or even third jobs to make ends meet.

Conference supports the efforts of members in all sectors in seeking to pursue pay rises through negotiation, campaigning and industrial action and supports the co-ordination of effort across UNISON and with other trade unions, including where possible co-ordinated industrial action, to achieve decent pay rises.

Conference welcomes the successful campaigning work by UNISON, working with allies, to push for the Living Wage.

Conference particularly applauds the fact that staff in more than 12,000 schools are potentially set to be paid the living wage as a result of landmark framework agreements secured in 2014 and also the living wage achieved in the NHS pay agreements in Scotland and Wales.

While it is welcome that more than 1,000 employers are Living Wage accredited, Conference remains extremely concerned that more than a fifth of UK workers earn less than the living wage. Fewer than one in five FTSE 100 top companies are accredited living wage employers, but Conference nevertheless recognises the shareholder action campaigns UNISON has supported to bring this about.

Conference believes that the time has come to raise the National Minimum Wage (NMW) up to the higher level of the living wage, and believes that government should introduce a target for achieving this goal.

To such ends Conference notes the potential significance of the recommendations of the Buckle commission on reforming the National Minimum Wage and the Low Pay Commission, including the possibility of adopting a sectoral approach to tackling low

## 2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions

pay. Conference further notes the overlap between these proposals and the ideas put forward by the TUC for wages councils to be established in low pay sectors.

Conference reiterates the importance of a Living Wage being used as a means of bringing pay up, not levelling it down, but agrees that this has to be introduced alongside a systematic strengthening of collective bargaining across the economy.

Furthermore, Conference is concerned that uncoupling wages from in-work benefits will increase poverty if workers lose more due to austerity welfare cuts than any wage gains.

Conference believes that state benefits have to be defended and positive welfare policies promoted to halt the increase of child poverty. Items such as free school meals, housing benefit, childcare allowances and tax allowances are an important part of improving living standards alongside wages.

Conference is concerned that without the wider implementation of the Living Wage and collective bargaining arrangements, the currently fashionable policy of increasing personal income tax allowances is a wholly inadequate response to low pay and in-work poverty. Conference notes that a 2014 TUC paper concluded that middle to upper earners benefit most from income tax cuts and that “the very high cost of this policy does not appear to be justified by the limited living standards gains it brings for those on the lowest incomes”.

Conference recognises that the willingness and ability of trade unions to organise substantial and sustained industrial action underpins collective bargaining and is key to our ability to stop the ongoing decline in real pay in public services. Whilst recognising that it is for the appropriate service and bargaining groups to determine their own pay strategies it is essential that in a period of government driven pay freezes we have an overall strategic view as a union of encouraging the maximum unity across the public sector of opposing the continuing driving down of our pay.

Conference recognises that just as the deterioration in public sector pay has been part of a political and economic strategy over decades then the response to it also needs to be political and part of a wider economic strategy.

Conference therefore calls upon the National Executive Council to develop a coherent and ongoing strategy to:

- 1) Highlight the decline in public sector pay and contrast this with the increase in wealth at the top of society, therefore building support for progressive taxation systems;
- 2) Campaign for an end to the public sector pay cap and for fair rewards for public service staff;
- 3) Campaign alongside the TUC and other unions to implement TUC policy for a National Minimum Wage of £10 per hour and for other state benefits to be uprated consequently;
- 4) Work towards coordinated lawful and sustained strike action within union rules across and within service groups to win decent pay;

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

- 5) Ensure that any future national strike action on pay is built on the effective mobilisation of our membership across all affected regions and is part of a resilient campaign plan to achieve a good outcome for members;
- 6) Continue to highlight falling living standards;
- 7) Popularise the understanding that low pay limits demand in the economy and that increasing pay will promote a healthier economy, therefore building support for the Living Wage to be applied throughout the public sector and beyond;
- 8) Change the adherence to neo-liberal policies of political parties in power at all levels of government, therefore committing them to support decent pay rises in all negotiating bodies where they have influence;
- 9) Engage more effectively with our members through education and campaigning on the alternative economic policies that would include better pay, therefore building greater support amongst members for campaigning activity and support for industrial action;
- 10) Campaign alongside the TUC other unions to strengthen collective bargaining across the economy;
- 11) Promote a Living Wage as a means of reducing the blight of in-work poverty;
- 12) Undertake an evaluation of the Buckle proposals and the TUC's ideas for wages councils. This should include an analysis, carried out with service groups, of how such arrangements might work alongside existing agreements and bargaining machinery;
- 13) Defend in-work social security benefits, such as tax credits, to make work pay for the low paid;
- 14) Highlight the inadequacy of higher personal income tax allowances as a policy response to low pay and in-work poverty. Work through the Labour Link to encourage the Labour Party to support more progressive tax and benefit reforms;
- 15) Promote sectoral collective bargaining to cover workers including those in social care and school support roles, so as to maximise the scope of collective bargaining across fragmented, multi-employer public services;
- 16) To seek to coordinate within and across service groups and with other trade unions in the public and private sector to organise united action against the pay freeze;
- 17) Call upon any incoming Labour Government to end the freeze on public sector pay.

### **D. Pensions**

**Carried**

The Westminster government announced in its last Budget that it planned to allow all those who have been contributing to Defined Contribution (DC) pension

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

arrangements, the option of being able to take their whole pot of money as a cash sum from 6 April 2015.

Up to then contributors could take a maximum of 25% of their pot as a tax free cash sum but have to use the 75% of the value of their pot to buy a pension for life (When contributors used a lump sum to buy a pension this is usually called an annuity).

From April contributors who are over 55 can retire and decide to take the whole pot as cash in which case only 25% will be tax free and 75% will be reduced by their marginal rate of tax (20% for most tax payers and 40% for upper band tax payers)

The government plans to extend this option to members of Defined Benefit Pension Schemes that have funds including the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS), Social Housing Pension Fund and the Pensions Trust. Members of unfunded pension schemes like the NHS Pension Scheme will not have this option.

Conference expresses deep concern regarding these proposals.

Conference should be aware that converting pension into a cash sum may be in the best interests of a small minority of members but there are serious dangers that our members' and their schemes will face.

The risks posed by these proposals are:

- 1) Likely to cause cash flow problems for the funded schemes if a significant number of members transfer their money out of the funds;
- 2) Generally not in best interests of scheme member as they are likely to be paying tax where otherwise they would not - but temptation will be great;
- 3) Likely to worsen annuity rates further so for many members of Defined Contribution arrangements there will be no choice but to take it as cash and suffer tax;
- 4) Experts anticipate a new market in pension scams to target these lump sums;
- 5) Potential for vulnerable pensioners to be coerced into cashing in their pensions for someone else's financial gain.

However, Conference believes the most pressing pension issue at the present time is not being addressed at all.

The biggest vulnerability for future pensioners lies with the inadequate level of employer contributions to Defined Contribution arrangements where there is no benefit guarantee and the member takes all the risks.

Low employer contributions mean that the pensioners' retirement pot is going to be unable to provide adequate income in retirement. It is the fundamental reason why pension pots in the UK are so small.

Conference recognises that UNISON negotiates hard with employers who are closing their defined benefit schemes both Final Salary and Career Average

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

Revalued Earnings (CARE) and replacing it with a DC arrangement, to ensure an employer contribution is as high as possible.

However, there is the likelihood that if the employer contribution for the majority of those saving for their retirement continues to be totally inadequate, the pressure to dumb down all pension provision in the UK will continue.

Conference believes that it doesn't have to be this way.

In Australia where they have had compulsory employer contributions for nearly 20 years the situation is very different:

- a) Median size of pension pot in Australia is equivalent to £100,000 (A\$ 181,000);
- b) Median size of pension pot in the UK is nearer to £20,000.

This is because in the UK the minimum employer contribution under Auto Enrolment is currently 1% of a band of earnings rising to 3% by 2017 while in Australia the minimum employer contribution has been 9% for years expected to rise to 12% soon.

Conference recognises the need to obtain properly funded occupational pension schemes but further believes that the failure of successive Governments to set a basic state pension at least equal to the official poverty line figure (currently £175 a week) will result in pensioner hardship.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to:

- i) Start a campaign for a decent pension for all workers to exert pressure on politicians of all parties to recognise the problem of inadequate minimum employer pension contributions and agree a road map to increase minimum employer pension contributions to 12% as soon as reasonably possible;
- ii) Organise a member information campaign which explains the potential dangers, pros and cons of cashing in pension fund savings and where possible promotes the benefits of remaining in the LGPS;
- iii) Lobby the Financial Conduct Authority and the Pensions Regulator to ensure proper safeguards for members of pension schemes that will allow members to choose to take all their benefits as cash;
- iv) Campaign for an increase in the basic state pension to at least the poverty line figure;
- v) Work with the TUC, STUC, WTUC and ICTU and the National Pensioners Convention.

### **E. Funding Public Services**

**Carried**

Conference is angered that between 2010 and 2015 a five year austerity programme, driven by Conservative ideology rather than national necessity, saw massive cuts in public spending, huge public sector redundancies and pay restraint

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

across the public services on an unprecedented scale. In his 2014 Autumn Statement last year, George Osborne let it slip that the Conservative-led Government's plans were no longer about "balancing the books" but that he wanted to shrink the size of the state and return the UK to the level of spending of the 1930's – a time before the NHS and when young people left school at 14.

UNISON members have experienced the worst of the Conservative Party's failure to rescue the economy. With rising prices and falling wages, working people across the UK are worse off than they were before the 2010 General Election because of the disastrous economic policies of David Cameron's Coalition. The drastic cuts in public spending since 2010 saw the UK experience its slowest economic recovery for 100 years. These cuts were made on the backs of the poor and disadvantaged, whilst big businesses and wealthy individuals continue to get huge tax cuts. The Tories allowed social security spending to spiral out of control because of their failure to address low wages, insecure jobs and the housing shortage.

Conference notes that UK firms have been estimated to hold £700bn in their reserves. Last year, it was reported that the FTSE100 companies alone hold net cash of over £50bn, up 40% since 2013 and up more than 400% since 2008. Conference further notes that no country in the G20 has a lower corporation tax rate than the UK. The UK's rate is now 20%, the same as that in Turkey, Russia and Saudi Arabia. In Germany the rate is 29%, France 33%, Japan 38% and the US 40%. George Osborne inherited a corporation tax rate of 28% in 2010 and by cutting it he has foregone billions of pounds of revenue that could have been invested in public services. Conference further notes the central role that public spending plays in economic innovation and private sector growth, as highlighted by the economist Mariana Mazzucato.

Conference notes with concern the ongoing savage cuts in funding available to support public services. The Tory-led coalition Governments dogmatic pursuit of austerity and rapid paid down of the deficit has led to the loss of hundreds and thousands of jobs in the sector. Conference is concerned that the impact of austerity has disproportionately affected local government services, central government has forced through cuts to the revenue support grant reducing its value by a half since 2010. This has had a profound impact on the communities in England and Wales who have witnessed the loss of essential services.

Conference also notes that the impact of funding cuts has had the biggest impact on northern towns and cities. The removal of grants linked to deprivation in 2010, the introduction of the New Homes Bonus and the retention of 50% of business rates locally, has effectively resulted in a direct transfer of funds from northern areas to those in the south. Conference agrees that this is unfair and supports calls from local enterprise regions, city regions and combined authorities in the north for greater powers and funding to be devolved from Whitehall and placed under the democratic control of local communities.

Revenue cuts coupled with service pressures has led to pay for local government workers being reduced in value by 20% since 2010, cuts to conditions of employment, more services being market tested and privatised and greater fragmentation.

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

It is also unquestionable that the impact of cuts has fallen disproportionately on women who have a greater propensity to work in local government or rely directly on the services provided by local government.

Furthermore, Conference recognises the positive campaigns that our union has supported nationally, regionally and at branch level in support of our members and the service that they deliver.

Conference believes the UK deserves the best public services – but rejects the Conservative Party ideological belief that economic prosperity can only be achieved by reductions in public spending, the introduction of competition into public service provision and the privatisation of nationally provided collective public services. We do not accept that, as some have suggested, there is no “new” money to be spent on public services in 2015 – but that there needs to be a better balance between government income and expenditure. Savings could have been made by the last Tory-led Government in public spending – such as scrapping their “free school” and NHS reorganisation vanity projects in England. Reducing defence spending to invest more in education and skills, housing or transport would also see public spending targeted at social gain. Similarly, we rejected the tax cut for the rich that saw millionaires paying less tax whilst those on low incomes were forced to visit food banks to feed their children.

At our core, UNISON believes that a fairer system of taxation is the basis for economic success and also represents the key to achieving social reforms such as ending child and pensioner poverty, ending low pay and saving our natural resources. We need a modern taxation system for modern public services if we are to achieve the high standards of public services and infrastructure many of our European neighbours enjoy. This must not only include changes to the existing domestic taxation system, but should also include efforts to tackle tax avoidance and evasion as well as the introduction of a financial transactions tax. A fairer system of taxation will see those who can afford to contribute more to society doing so for the good of everyone.

Conference notes that it was leaked in November 2014 that the Government instructed civil servants to find a further £25 - 30 billion worth of cuts in for 2016/17 and 2017/18. Conference also notes The Financial Times believed that the cuts would be approximately £48 billion between 2014/15 and 2018/19. Conference notes that employers have been attacking our terms and conditions and continually reorganising.

Conference notes with concern the ongoing savage cuts in funding available to support public services. The Tory-led coalition Governments dogmatic pursuit of austerity and rapid paid down of the deficit has led to the loss of hundreds and thousands of jobs in the sector. Conference is concerned that the impact of austerity has disproportionately affected local government services, central government has forced through cuts to the revenue support grant reducing its value by a half since 2010. This has had a profound impact on the communities in England and Wales who have witnessed the loss of essential services.

Conference also notes that the impact of funding cuts has had the biggest impact on northern towns and cities. The removal of grants linked to deprivation in 2010, the

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

introduction of the New Homes Bonus and the retention of 50% of business rates locally, has effectively resulted in a direct transfer of funds from northern areas to those in the south. Conference agrees that this is unfair and supports calls from local enterprise regions, city regions and combined authorities in the north for greater powers and funding to be devolved from Whitehall and placed under the democratic control of local communities.

Conference should continue to support campaigns highlighting the devastating impact of government cuts and campaign for a change of policy, both in respect of increased funding for public services, and also fair funding formulas for distribution of resources to communities across England and Wales. Conference calls on the National Executive Council to explore an alternative economic strategy for the whole country to provide the stable and fair funding our public services deserve based on a fair system of taxation. Conference therefore calls on the National Executive Council to do this by:

- 1) Working with regions and service groups to establish fairer and more stable systems of funding for public services including the reform or replacement of Council Tax and the impacts of reforming business rates, corporation tax and against all service cuts, privatisations and attacks on jobs, pay and conditions of service and to maximise publicity on the devastating impact of the government's dogmatic pursuit of its austerity agenda;
- 2) Working with the TUC, STUC, WTUC and ICTU on building a UK-wide national economic strategy that promotes growth across the whole of the country and not at the expense of individual areas, regions or nations;
- 3) Continue to promote UNISON's already well publicised "alternative budget";
- 4) Explore protecting access to certain public services in law to ensure their funding is protected appropriately;
- 5) Supporting the work of organisations who campaign against tax avoidance and evasion to seek an end to schemes which channel profits by large corporations and the incomes of rich individuals out of the UK tax systems;
- 6) Campaigning to encourage people to view taxation as contributions towards the provision of excellent public services for everyone;
- 7) Working with the political funds to campaign to ensure that the UK Government and the devolved institutions support fairly funded public services, public investment, job security and raising living standards which will restore our economic health;
- 8) Highlight the lax corporate taxation regime in the UK and how companies are not paying their share towards public spending. Campaign for a robust corporate tax regime to ensure that the public sphere is properly funded;
- 9) Produce a study on the disproportionate impact of funding cuts and produce a set of recommendations for consideration at Conference 2016 for a comprehensive

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

devolution of funding and decision making powers from Whitehall to the regions of England;

- 10) Launch a campaign amongst the membership based upon a fighting strategy with the aim of defending jobs and terms and conditions from attacks by the employer(s) and to include in the strategy, lawful industrial action in accordance with UNISON rules up to and including strike action and co-ordinate any lawful industrial action with other lawful disputes, where possible;
- 11) State its opposition to cuts in services, jobs terms and conditions by whoever makes those cuts.

### **F. Housing**

**Carried**

Conference recognises the massive housing crisis which exists in London and nationally.

Conference condemns the UK Government's financial policies that have focused upon "Buy to Let" as the main source of housing and rented housing in the UK.

The result has been growing inequality, poverty, the break up of families and communities across the UK as working people struggle with ever rising housing costs, poor quality housing and insecure tenancies.

In London alone the following facts outline the depth of the crisis:

- 1) It is estimated there are 809,000 too few homes;
- 2) The numbers sleeping rough in London have gone up 75% since 2012. The number of young people sleeping rough has doubled. Homelessness services have been cut by 25%;
- 3) In 2013 more than 800,000 Londoners were on social housing waiting lists. Now councils are slashing their waiting lists by as much as 75% by simply telling people they are no longer eligible;
- 4) 11% of the capital's population live in overcrowded conditions;
- 5) Hardly any council housing is built and great swathes of stock have been sold off;
- 6) Much-needed renovation increasingly means handing council homes over to private developers or housing associations, which means no guarantees of getting their homes back for current tenants, and yet further reduction of council housing stock for future generations;
- 7) The vicious bedroom tax and other housing benefit changes have left thousands in deeper poverty;
- 8) Councils are moving hundreds of people out of London;

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

- 9) Secure tenancies are under attack. The most common reason for being made homeless is the end of a non-secure (assured) tenancy. London's rate of landlord repossessions is more than double any other region;
- 10) Private rents have gone up 14.5% in two years. In the private sector the average rent is over £2,100/ month in Hackney. The London average for a two bed home is £320 a week;
- 11) Some 'affordable' homes were approved by London Mayor Boris Johnson that could cost £2,400 a month;
- 12) Meanwhile private developers are handed billions of pounds of public money in subsidies, and public land, and buildings are sold to private companies sometimes, for next to nothing.

Of course the Con Dems champion privatisation and cuts. But shamefully Labour councils do the same. Labour councils have privatised housing and land. They have implemented the bedroom tax and cut jobs, pay, and services.

Conference believes that homes are for people not profits.

The lack of affordable rented housing and the "cleansing" of low paid working people from "desirable" housing areas in cities, town and villages marginalises people, breaks up families and ruins communities.

Homes that are affordable, secure, fit for purpose and responsive to the needs of local communities are essential to a fair society and the private sector has not been able to deliver these homes.

Conference notes that the 1930's council house programme not only housed people in town and county, it provided jobs that helped the UK economy to recover from the Great Depression, revitalised local communities, peoples sense of identity and offered hope to millions for a better, healthier life.

Now in the 21st Century a "Living Rent" based system of rent controls, security of tenure and rented housing quality standards is needed in partnership with a public sector led house building programme to deliver homes for people, reduce welfare costs and allow rental income to be reinvested in our countries infrastructure instead of being dumped in offshore tax havens.

Conference therefore resolves to engage with the Trades Union Councils, Shelter, other charities, community groups, faith groups and the People's Assemblies to build a broad based campaign to support the introduction of a "Living Rent" system and new council house building programme.

Conference calls on the next government and Labour councils to:

- a) Immediately stop implementing the bedroom tax;
- b) Stop all housing privatisation;
- c) Renovate homes themselves instead of handing them over to the private sector;

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

- d) Commit to 80,000 new local authority and housing association homes every year, as argued for in the UNISON Housing Voice Report; this should count towards the target of delivering 200,000 new homes per year to tackle the housing crisis, as pledged by Labour;”
- e) Register private landlords to enforce rent controls, decent standards and deal with overcrowding;
- f) Use their powers of compulsory purchase to take over empty houses (there are one million empty homes in the UK);
- g) Fight for the government to plan a mass housing investment programme including a new council house building programme to provide secure jobs and solve the housing crisis.

### **H. Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership**

**Carried**

Conference notes that the European Union (EU) is currently negotiating three free trade agreements including the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). The others are the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement with Canada (CETA) and the Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA). These agreements threaten public services by harmonising regulatory standards, forcing through market liberalisation and could drive down trade union and employment rights by failing to enforce compliance with International Labour Organisation (ILO) core conventions.

Conference notes growing concern about the negotiations between the EU and the United States (US) on TTIP. The proposed agreement is not about traditional trade issues. It is a wide-ranging trade deal giving unprecedented power and influence to transnational corporations and limiting the role of democratic governments to regulate in the public interest. It opens up public services, including our National Health Service (NHS), social services and education, to private profit to an unprecedented extent, removing the control of governments to act in the interest of their citizens, whether as workers or service users.

Conference notes that one of the key elements is the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) clause, which would act as a tribunal. ISDS could see millions of pounds paid out to big private sector corporations if NHS services are brought back into the public sector. ISDS would allow multinational investors to challenge state actions which they perceive as threatening their investments in international tribunals rather than in national courts.

Conference believes, based on the experience of other trade agreements, that multinational corporations will use the ISDS mechanism to further erode the ability of national governments to act in the public interest.

The possible consequence, for example, of recompensing a tobacco firm for a loss of sales due to stricter government health legislation would be unacceptable. This is what happened in Australia under the terms of a similar partnership arrangement when the government enforced cigarette packaging.

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

The European Union has exclusive powers to negotiate trade and investment agreements. In the UK, the department for Business Innovation and Skills is the lead. The TTIP negotiations are shrouded in secrecy with national governments and Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) having only limited access to documents. Little information is publicly available about the content. Because of this lack of transparency or proper democratic oversight, trade unions and equality groups are denied opportunities for scrutiny and consultation.

Conference is concerned that the painstaking work over decades to build UK public services that are accessible to and meet the needs of all will be unravelled if profit becomes the only driver. The most disadvantaged in society, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT), women, disabled, Black, young and older people, are the most reliant on public services and are most likely to be in precarious employment.

As the US has not even ratified some of the most fundamental labour rights set out by the ILO, for example the rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining, this means that standardisation across the EU and US as proposed by TTIP would most likely start an avalanche to the bottom.

Conference is concerned that previous free trade agreements, such as CETA between the EU and Canada, should not be used as a blueprint for TTIP. Agreements between Mexico, Canada and the US have resulted in a rise in atypical employment. This translates as precarious jobs for workers in already marginalised sectors of the workforce, particularly those who work in public services - many of whom are our members. TTIP may force more of our members into low paid, part time, zero hours contracts and reduced terms and conditions.

Conference further believes that these Free Trade Agreements will only serve the interests of multinational corporations and those who seek to push back regulation and privatise public services and permanently remove them from democratic control in order to extract maximum private profit.

The anti-union policies of US corporations and the wish for transatlantic harmonisation would accelerate the US model of weakening the unions in Europe as well.

Conference believes that workers' rights are coming under increasing threat as neo-liberal policies are implemented globally. The work of trade unions, together with non governmental organisations, to challenge labour and human rights violations wherever they occur has never been more vital. Conference is also very concerned that TTIP will provide a route for America to breach our more stringent food safety regulations, putting the health and well being of our citizens at risk.

Conference believes that the harmonisation of regulatory standards puts at risk existing European regulations in the fields of public health, social and employment rights, health and safety and the environment.

Conference notes that the negotiation process may lead to an effort to introduce a 'TTIP-lite' proposal – perhaps removing the ISDS mechanism and emphasising

## **2015 National Delegate Conference Decisions**

protections for the NHS. Conference does not regard such concessions as adequate and reaffirms our position of outright opposition to TTIP.

Conference applauds the campaigning that has already taken place in opposing TTIP, including the involvement of UNISON members in the #noTTIP delegation organised by Global Justice Now (formerly the World Development Movement) that went to Brussels to lobby MEPs in February 2015.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to work with our General Political Fund, UNISON international, service group executives, the self organised groups and young members group to:

- 1) Encourage branches and regions to link up with organisations locally that are campaigning against TTIP and other free trade agreements such as War on Want, 38 Degrees and Global Justice Now;
- 2) Continue to spread the word about the dangers of TTIP to our public services, to the workers who provide them and to the health of all of us using all possible means, including social media;
- 3) Continue to raise awareness amongst UNISON members of the damaging effects on public services, democracy and working people of these agreements
- 4) Continue to oppose TTIP in the event of a 'TTIP-lite' proposal being suggested
- 5) Work with the Trades Union Congress, European Federation of Public Service Unions, Public Services International and Education International to campaign against TTIP;
- 6) Use the campaign against TTIP to strengthen our links with sister unions in the United States and get them more involved in our labour internationals;
- 7) 7) Work with Labour Link, lobby Labour MPs and MEPs to oppose TTIP.

**2015 National Delegate Conference  
Decisions**

# Amendment to Rules

# Amendment to Rules

**2015 National Delegate Conference  
Decisions**

**Amendment to Rules**

**1. Rule C Annual membership audit, the appointment & removal of the Assurer**

**Carried**

Insert new rule C 8:

"C 8 THE UNION'S ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP AUDIT

8.1 The Union's membership system shall be audited each year by an Assurer.

8.2 The Assurer will be a qualified professional body of either financial auditors or membership scrutineers.

8.3 The Assurer will be appointed by the National Executive Council who thereafter shall continue to hold office until replaced by the National Delegate Conference.

8.4 An Assurer must be re-appointed for the following reporting period unless:

8.4.1 A resolution has been passed by the National Delegate Conference expressly stating that they are not to be re-appointed or appointing someone else instead.

8.4.2 The Assurer has given notice that they do not wish to be re-appointed.

8.4.3 They no longer meet the qualifications for appointment.

8.4.4 They are no longer able to act as an Assurer due to incapacity.

8.5 The Assurer will provide a membership audit certificate for the previous financial year to the National Executive Council for approval and adoption."

**3. Rule D The right to attend and speak**

**Carried**

Rule D 1.7.2 delete " Deputy General Secretaries"

**4. Rule D National Executive Council**

**Carried**

Add new Rule D 2.9:

"D 2.9 Meetings of the National Executive Council shall take place, so far as is reasonably practicable, in venues which are accessible to all members eligible to attend."

Re-number as appropriate

**5. Rule D Service Group Conference**

**Carried**

Rule D 3.4.6.2 delete " Deputy General Secretaries"

**6. Rule D Service Group Executive**

**2015 National Delegate Conference  
Decisions**

**Carried**

Add new rule D 3.5.10:

"D 3.5.10 No member who holds a seat on a Service Group Executive can hold a seat on the National Executive Council as a service group representative under Rule D.2.3 at the same time. She/he may stand as a candidate in an election or by-election for a seat on the National Executive Council as a service group representative under Rule D.2.3. If elected, she/he will be a member of the Service Group Executive as defined by Rule D.3.5.9 and will be deemed to have resigned their previous seat on the Service Group Executive from the commencement of the period of office for the National Executive council seat they have been elected to."

Re-number subsequent paragraphs accordingly.

**7. Rule D Service Group Executive**

**Carried**

D 3.5.8 add at end:

"She/he may stand as a candidate in an election or by-election for a seat on a Service Group Executive, subject to Rule D.2.3.4. If elected, she/he will be deemed to have resigned from the National Executive Council from the commencement of the period of office for the Service Group Executive seat they have been elected to."

**9. Rule E Deputy General Secretary**

**Carried**

Delete E4, E4.1, E4.2 and E 4.3

**10. Rule F Regional Council**

**Withdrawn**

**11. Rule F Regional Council**

**Lost**

**12. Rule F Regional Council**

**Lost**

**13. Rule F Regional Council**

**Lost**

**14. Rule F Regional Committee**

**Lost**

**15. Rule G Branches**

**Lost**

**16. Rule G The Branch Committee**

**Fell**

**17. Rule G The Branch Committee**

**Carried**

Insert new Rule G 2.1.3:

"G 2.1.3 Such representatives of the retired members' section within the branch as the branch may determine;"

Re-number subsequent rules.

**18. Rule G Branch Meetings**

**Fell**

**2015 National Delegate Conference  
Decisions**

- |                                   |                |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>19. Rule G Branch Officers</b> | <b>Lost</b>    |
| <b>20. Rule G Branch Officers</b> | <b>Carried</b> |

Rule G 4.1.1

Insert "Retired Members' Secretary," between "Young Members' officer," and "Welfare Officer".

- |   |                |
|---|----------------|
| <b>21. Rule G Branch Officers</b>                   | <b>Fell</b>    |
| <b>22. Rule G Stewards</b>                          | <b>Fell</b>    |
| <b>23. Rule G Health and Safety Representatives</b> | <b>Fell</b>    |
| <b>24. Rule G Equality Representatives</b>          | <b>Fell</b>    |
| <b>25. Appendix 2 - 4.13</b>                        | <b>Carried</b> |

Appendix 2. 4.13

Delete second sentence "The panel may impose any or all of the penalties under Rule I.8 (4) – (6)"

And replace with "The panel may impose any or all of the penalties under Rule I.8 (4) – (7)"

- |  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| <b>26. Schedule A Reduced Pay</b>  | <b>Lost</b>      |
| <b>27. Schedule Maternity. Paternity, Parental, Adoption, Dependant Care, Compassionate Leave and other Unpaid Leave</b> | <b>Withdrawn</b> |
| <b>28. Schedule A Retired Members</b>  | <b>Withdrawn</b> |

**2015 National Delegate Conference  
Decisions**