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UNITE EXECUTIVE MEETING MARCH 2012

EC Report

DISCUSSION

The GS reported that there had been a successful result for Unite in the TUC Disputes Committee concerning an issue with USDAW over representation rights for Warehouse Operators and Drivers. There is still an outstanding issue in Retail Distribution that USDAW sign "Single Union Agreements" for new sites that do not allow Unite to organise in.

The BESNA campaign came to a successful conclusion for all lay activists in the Construction Sector.

Talks are still ongoing with BA Senior management & facilitators to achieve settlement of members sacked during the dispute.

The media coverage over the GS interview in the Guardian concerning the potential for industrial action during the Olympics has raised the debate over "fractured Britain", one part bonus bankers and the other of people struggling to get by.

Remploy was created in after the Second World War, building factories to produce high quality work from people who need support in work, many who were injured soldiers. The appalling attack on Remploy by this Condem Government demonstrates their attitude and lack of care towards this fantastic organisation of which in many cases are actually producing and generating profit will find themselves joining the benefit system.

Branch Reorganisation

This massive initiative to integrate the union further is ongoing and will take time. Identifying and eliminating small branches, some having less than ten members, is an enormous task. A panel of 12 Executive Council members was agreed to deal with any appeals being made by Branches that have any issues with of the branch reorganisation.

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Deputy GS

It was agreed that that an appointment of a Deputy GS is required in case of any serious incapacity (including death), to the incumbent GS. **Unitenow** delegates **voted against** the proposal on the grounds of finance and that there are already three AGSs in place so there is no need for this role.

Strategy for Growth

The Executive Officer and the Director of Organising gave a verbal report on the continued and successful implementation of the 100% UNITE Strategy.

They reported that 100% UNITE has enjoyed an enormously successful opening period. However, it is clear that considerable improvement can be made in specific areas.

- Over 12,085 new members have joined the Union in target workplaces where “planning sessions” have taken place.
- Over 2,800 of the new members are Agency Workers
- Over 1,000 Shop Stewards have attended buy-in and planning sessions.

Despite the outstanding start, significant membership potential remains within target workplaces, giving us all optimism as to the potential for 100% UNITE to deliver long-term growth to our Union.

- Over 263,175 new membership potential in agreed workplace targets

Organising

In the campaign during the recent BESNA ‘7’ dispute, the National Organising Department developed a successful “Leverage Strategy”. It is a strategy that is essential in order to win a dispute. Leverage looks at all areas of weakness of an employer(s) both direct and indirect. It is an extension of the understanding that ‘weight of argument’ does not change an employer’s mind. Leverage simply looks at what will change an employer(s) position.

However it is absolutely essential to state that leverage is in no way a replacement for collective strength. The development of industrial ‘muscle’ remains vital if workers are to have the ability to win long-term. Leverage does not offer a solution that excludes the critical need to organise workers.

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Community Membership

Unite is pioneering efforts to extend its political and social reach into our communities; providing a focus and voice for many of the most vulnerable groups within our society, networking and organising its campaigning work to effectively fight back against attacks on working class people. This is not an easy task and all Unite activists need to play their role in ensuring its success.

Community membership has got off to a good start since the formal launch in December 2011, with fifty six community branches being established across the UK and several hundred members have signed up.

An initial package of fifteen targeted benefits has been arranged with the union's affinity partners for the community membership across the UK with discussions on-going on the provision of same/similar benefits for community members living in the Republic of Ireland.

Membership Qualification

Unite Community Membership is open to all non-working members of our community over the age of 16, including **non-paid volunteers, unemployed, carers, students** and the **retired**. Community Membership is available at a rate of 50p per week. All new members joining Unite in these categories will be placed within the appropriate Community Branch.

Many existing members however, will choose to remain with colleagues they have known for many years on retirement or for industrial/work related reasons if they become temporarily unemployed.

- Those retiring from work or becoming unemployed as an existing member will therefore stay within their existing Branch unless they choose to transfer to either a local Retired Members or Community Branch. A specific package of targeted benefits is currently under discussion with our affinity partners for our retired members.

Community Branch Structure

The GS and Chief of Staff presented Community Membership Allocation Guidelines and like most good initiatives getting the structures right cause the most debate. Here are **some** of the guidelines:

- Existing members of Unite who become unemployed and remain in Unite membership at the same 50p rate as community members (with the same benefits) can remain in their existing branch and sector or transfer to a community branch.

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- Community members have been placed in new holding “community branches” established parallel to Area Activist Committees. This is a temporary expedient to ensure the new members are properly placed and recorded on the system. In many cases these branches will cover too extensive an area to function as effective community branches over the longer term.
- In parts of the country there may already be a Unite branch in existence which could best function as a “community branch”. These branches would be those which have an identifiable connection with campaigning on community issues. Such a branch can never be a workplace or sector-based branch (with the occasional exception of RAAW branches in rural areas which have long played a broad community role), but would include all Unite members (working and non-working) in a given locality who have not been placed in workplace or sector-based branches. Where such a branch exists it may be appropriate for Community Members to be included in it, rather than being placed in a “community branch” based miles away.
- No members can transferred out of workplace branches or sector-based branches into a community branch except with the explicit prior approval of the Regional Secretary.
- Whatever branch Community Members are placed in, their rights and obligations under rule are the same. Community branches campaigning and political activity must be conducted within the framework of Unite rules and Policy Conference and Executive Council decisions. In particular, for clarity, Community Members are eligible for election to two seats on each Area Activists Committee, and to serve on the Regional Political Committee (if they are Constituency Labour Party delegates). Where the Executive Council elsewhere decides to issue guidelines relaxing the interpretation of Rule Six (e.g. for some regional equality committees), this may extend the range of constitutional committees on which Community Members can serve. They cannot be delegated onwards to the Regional Committee of the union, play any part in industrial sector committees, stand for election to the Executive Council or be a delegate to the Policy or Rules Conference.

After considerable debate especially around the third bullet point above the guidelines were accepted by a majority of the EC. **Unitenow** delegates **supported** the guidelines.

Retired Members

A Draft Rule 10 was put to the Executive Council which established a new “retired members plus” membership and changes previously agreed. However the Executive Council **unanimously rejected** the proposal that members of a retired branch can hold office in another branch.

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Retired Members Plus will give members access to Legal and Funeral, Insurance, Health Benefits.

Lay Office

Changes to EC guidance on Rule 6 were agreed to take into account exceptional circumstances for holding Lay Office in the Construction and R&A sectors. Also BAEM members in Scotland, Wales & Ireland Rule 6 will be relaxed for election to Regional BAEM Committees. Finally for Regional Disabled and LGBT Committees Rule 6 should not apply to the election of these committees.

Finances

2011 Results

- Total income £150m (£9m legal & £1.7M affiliates)
- £8m Pension deficit payments (+£5m Kings Street), in 2012 this rises to £10m and in 2013 to £12m
- Surplus £1.7m
- Assets £68m
- **Pension Valuation:** Preliminary calculations with new assumptions adjusted to take into account the current abnormal market environment, giving a deficit of approx £157m (within the £12.1m & timescale plan already agreed).
- Future cost of T&G Scheme has risen above 15% salary limit on employer costs approved by EC. There will need to be discussions with the appropriate Bargaining Groups as the EC will not move above 15%.
- The intention remains to harmonise future benefits of the two schemes from Oct 2012
- 3 year forecast/strategy next F&GPC

Legal & Affiliations

A full report was give with the highlights being:

- Community benefits package
- Retired Member Plus benefit package
- Back to Work Services including Unite4Jobs search capability

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- Member get Member scheme, includes getting £25 M&S vouchers for recruiting a new member (on-line scheme). This is still being **reviewed**.
- New schemes under negotiations: Financial Advice & Credit Union
- Regional Legal & Affiliated Services Coordinators in place
- Unite solicitors panel review
- Repudiation – from start of year to week ending 9th March, no repudiations
- Mesothelioma Case Supreme Court Win (unite asbestos register)

Political

It has been a difficult period in our relations with the Labour Party which were not helped by comments made by Ed Balls in relation to public sector pay and acceptance of the 1% wage freeze. The GS made it clear at the time that the union were opposed to what had been said. The union have made it clear that we are seeking more progress on specifics of policy.

Also discussed as part of the report:

- Regional Constituency pilots (at least 2 per Region)
- Candidate development programme
- Durham Political School
- Parliamentary Panel
- Unite Councillors Network
- CLASS – Left Think tank

Manufacturing

There was full report given, the main points being:

- We face a major crisis at **GM Europe**, with the potential closure of two sites in Europe which could result in approximately 6,000 jobs
- At **MMP** in Bootle, Merseyside, our members having taken legal industrial action over redundancies, were locked out by their company, which was followed by a factory occupation by chapel members.
- **BAe** have announced the ending of the consultation on the closure at the Brough site in East Yorkshire.
- At **BMW** following magnificent support from our shop stewards and support Swedish Derogation for agency workers across the business and also dropped the Proposals to close the pension scheme to new starters.

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Transport & Food

A full report was given the main points being:

- **Oil Tanker Drivers** : This major issue has been raised with both the Energy Minister Charles Hendry and Shadow Minister Tom Greatrex, and is now being balloted on across contracts.
- **Unilever** : Following industrial action and major national and international campaigning, the company's latest offer is out for ballot.
- **Bombardier** : at the end of 2012, while permanent jobs were protected, 600 agency jobs on site were lost.

Services

- In the MOD and government departments there is an outstanding issue on pay for 2011, this is a non consolidated payment of £250.
- **Local Government Pension Scheme:** There are ongoing discussions regarding the proposed new scheme from the 1st April 2014 and a timetable has been agreed for the outcome of two periods of negotiation to be put to our members and consulted upon.
- NJC Local Government Services, England, Wales & Northern Ireland Pay Claim. the Local Government employers have said that they have nothing to offer yet again this year.
- Unite and the GMB in the form of the National Engineering Construction Committee (NECC) have started negotiations with the Engineering Construction Industry Association (ECIA) with respect to the latest pay and conditions review of the National Agreement for the Engineering Construction Industry (NAECI).
- Currently submitting evidence to the Pay Review Body of the NHS on the Treasury's proposals to progress to local/regional pay bargaining, Unite and all the other health unions oppose any move away from national bargaining.
- NHS talks have continued on a weekly basis to finalise the proposals, under the 'Final Heads of Agreement'. Little or no progress has been made on the key issues.

EC Public Sector Statement

This is not only a sector dispute, it is a political dispute. We do need to do the right things by our members. The Public Sector NISCs will take the lead on any action and the Union will support them 100%. Out of the 16 Union that represent public services Unite was the only

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Union that would not sign the “Heads of Agreement” that was offered to the Unions; however Unite has still been allowed to take part in further negotiations.

Equalities

A full report was given:

- Unite and PCS members working in the EHRC are campaigning hard against the horrifying cuts to basic services provided by the commission, including the lack of support for the helpline and specialist support. With more than 60% cuts, funding levels lower than individual commissions previously, and demands to cover a far wider range of issues, the ConDems are showing their true views of equality, and all who support equality should add their voices to the campaign. Sign the online petition at : <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/29879>
- The National Women’s Committee are organising a campaign for women workers by demonstrating how we can improve women’s health, safety and wellbeing through union membership and organisation of the union in the workplace. The aims of the campaign are to educate workplace reps on the bargaining issues of women’s health, safety and wellbeing in the work place and to encourage women members to become reps; to negotiate new agreements around women’s health, safety and wellbeing and to campaign for better rights for women’s health, safety and wellbeing in the work place.
- The EC were given details of a recent racial harassment case involving one of our members and supported by Unite. The member won almost £1 million in damages for racial discrimination and unfair dismissal, against the Central Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust, following ‘persistent discrimination and an intimidating environment’.

International

A full report was given of all the work being done by the International Department and International Sub-committee. These included:

- **EWC legislation strategy:** the new EWC legislation presents a number of opportunities for UNITE and our members. It has always been the strategy to have a proactive approach to the new legislation and to set precedent and standards early on, in an attempt to create a platform on which all other EWC’s can build.

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UNITE has made significant gains in utilising the rights under the legislation for Special Negotiating representatives and EWC representatives to be provided with the 'means required' to undertake training. Unite has already facilitated one course, which was attended by six SNB representatives and each of the representative's company agreed to cover the costs of £1,000 per delegate.

- The department has been involved with negotiating EWC agreements with various multinational companies. For instance Rolls Royce has signed a new EWC agreement, Unite has secured two representatives on to the Easyjet EWC, however there are ongoing discussions with other companies who are hostile to a new agreement.
- **International Solidarity Work:** Unite is still heavily involved Colombia, Cuba-Miami 5, Palestine, Venezuela and Africa – Unite DFID Project.

Administration

LGBT Election: Harry McNulty was elected but a complaint has been lodged to the CO by another candidate Lesley Mansell.

F D&T and S&GI: An election timetable will commence in April for EC positions in these sectors

Standard T&Cs: All Staff and Officer Bargaining Groups have agreed standard T&Cs.