

It would appear from looking through UCU's financial statement for the year ending 31st August 2010 that our NEC is remarkably good value for money and that the case for making so many of them 'redundant' has by no means been made. And also that Sally's maths just don't make sense.

From Sally Hunt's recent email:

“Reducing the size of the NEC will save more than £600,000 over my term of office. This money will be ring fenced and used directly to improve support for members and branches.”

The General Secretary's term of office is 5 years, so the proposed saving is £ 120,000 a year. What can UCU get for an additional £120,000 a year?

Looking at past job-ads for UCU, a member of staff in an advisory/support role is around £40,000, or £60,000 when you add employers' NI & pension contributions. So the gain for sacrificing half the NEC is only two members of staff.

Sally writes “My manifesto commits the union to improving the scope and speed of advice for members when they need it; expert employment and legal advice for reps; an increase in staff working directly in support of branches; improvements to training, and making it easier for members to get help.” Is this really achievable with only 2 extra members of staff?

In order to gain some perspective about the costs of the NEC in comparison with other costs the union incurs, the information below is from UCU's financial statements for the year ending 31st August 2010 (the latest I can find):

Income from subscriptions:	£16,619,310
Total operating income:	£16,912,707
Total expenditure:	£16,216,145
Surplus for the year after tax:	£677,723

Costs of the NEC:

NEC:	£277,450
of which equality ctees:	£30,000 approx
NEC election ballot:	£207,403

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/ucu333financialstatements.pdf>

Staffing costs:	£1,523,864
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(208 employees, of which 34 are LA administrators)

Solicitors' Office	£351,333
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Campaigns, Organising, Recruitment,	
Training and Communications	£682,345
Professional fees:	£778,370
Higher and Further Education	£405,705
Financial expense	£362,000
Interest payable	£193,000
International affiliations	£154,257
Other affiliations	£311,927

Some questions:

1. Given the costs of balloting, directly consulting members to the extent implied could easily end up costing more than the savings of cutting the NEC. The costs of this, and of directly electing negotiators, needs to be estimated and included in the FAQ.

2. “Last year for example, UCU staff produced no less than 900 papers for these committees.”

Many UCU committee papers have major contributions from lay members; is this taken into account?

3. How does UCU’s NEC compare with other unions?

UCU’s NEC is made up of lay (unpaid) officers. The NEC numbers of other unions in Question 5 of Sally’s FAQ should be clarified to reflect the breakdown of lay vs fulltime officers.

Better still, we should see the cost of these NECs in comparison with UCU.

4. Can we see the equality impact assessment Sally has commissioned to address the likely disproportionate negative impact on equality and the plans to mitigate that negative impact?

When workplace UCU reps ask for EIAs of proposed changes that are likely to mean that already disadvantaged, marginalised or excluded UCU members become even more disadvantaged, marginalised and excluded, we’re used to receiving some really dismally poor excuse for an EIA or nothing at all.

UCU will obviously practice what it preaches so an EIA conducted by UCU will be an exemplar of good practice in terms of the thoroughness of its investigation of potential adverse impacts on equality of any proposal. We’re really looking forward to seeing it and a link to it should really have been made available in the FAQ.

The equality impact assessment will have addressed the concerns raised by Marion Hersh, NEC Women Members' Rep, of the possibility/likelihood of the women's and other equality seats being removed, the fact that the 'increased competition' for NEC places mentioned in Sally's FAQ is likely to mean that a lower percentage of women and minority group members are elected, and the possibility that the change in election procedures for national negotiations will lead to the removal of the requirement for at least a minimum number of women negotiators. So we should ask that it be made available to the membership as a matter of urgency.

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