

Equality Committee 14 February 2014

1, Matters arising:

It was agreed to (i) circulate the anti-semitism leaflet to Equality Committee members and to branches for comments (ii) Revive the Holocaust Memorial Day Working Group to work electronically with committee members invited to express their interest in joining this..

2, Equality Committee report

a. Women Members Standing Committee (WMSC) has agreed to prioritise work on black women, but current has no black members. Black Members Standing Committee (BMSC) will aim to send a committee member to WMSC meetings.

b. Branches will be encouraged to use the film on the social model of disability produced for Disability History Month.

c. Concern was expressed about conflict between TUC and UCU meeting dates: (i) Congress and Disabled Workers' TUC; (ii) Women's TUC and NEC. Head of Equality will ask the TUC to circulate meeting dates earlier and ask members on the TUC equality committees to also raise this issue

3. Discussion of the motions from the Equality Conferences:

a. WMSC is proposing a motion on sexual harassment to Congress.

b. It was noted that the Women Chainmakers Festival is a national celebration of women's activism. There have been problems with the venue and funding, but it will be taking place this year.

c. A possible motion on the objectification of women and violence against women was discussed. Last year there was a motion on violence against women, including raising female genital mutilation. This campaign is now high profile.

d. It was noted that Congress motions on many issues should be ongoing and not end at the end of the year, rather than motions being repeated.

e. The Disabled Members' Conference had a motion on implementing previous motions, but there has been some progress on them.

f. It was agreed that a briefing for branches on reasonable adjustments will be produced covering the issues that were not included in the current guidance, including time limits and budgets.

g. BMSC is developing networks in each region where there is a committee member and developing training for new black activists.

h. The problems in getting black academics to join UCU were discussed and the fear resulting from their great risk of victimisation was noted. BMSC sent a motion about involving black members to Congress last year. There is a need for both UCU to really support black members and provide real protection and to make black members aware of this support and the benefits of joining a trade union.

4a. Congress motion update. A toolkit for women who are subject to violence at home or at work is being produced. The Head of Equality reported on motions from previous Congress, including attacks on the Equality Act and public sector equality duty. It was agreed that action on some motions should continue into the next year's report.

b. The issue of equality issues and working abroad was discussed. This included the fact that many universities have overseas campuses in countries which lack LGBT rights or even imprison LGBT people. Guidance on working abroad including equality issues was produced a few years ago.

5a Report to Congress. The draft report was discussed and it was agreed to strengthen it by an introduction and context.

b. Motions for Congress. After some discussion it was agreed to submit the following 3 motions:

(i) Working together with other organisations to promote the positive value and benefits of migrants and remove the cap on international student numbers.

(ii) Working with branches to develop and implement model policies, practices and procedures on equality.

(iii) Fighting attacks on equality issues and strengthening the equality duties and other legislation, linked to political campaigning.

c. Fringe meeting: Women's Disabled Members and LGBT Standing Committees have agreed to organise a joint meeting with the Equality Committee on employment rights, fighting back, fighting collectively and determining the agenda. Black Members' Standing Committee will be organising a fringe meeting on mental health issues for black members.

6. A briefing on family friendly workplaces has been produced

7. It was agreed to continue supporting LGBT Prides in London, Manchester, Birmingham. Increasing numbers of LGBT members are participating in the Manchester Pride

8. The feedback from the one-day Equality Conference was discussed. It was agreed to investigate holding a two-day equality conference outside London, though the potential disadvantages of this were also noted.

9. A motion was passed at last year's Congress to organise a major national conference on anti-racist education in October. A proposal was made to provide £1000 to support transport for members to the Unite Against Fascism and TUC anti-racist event on 22 March. It was agreed to go ahead with the organisation of the conference and to explore the contribution of £1000 with Strategy and Finance Committee. In the discussion the importance of not going against democratic decisions and of the issues were noted. It was noted that there would also be an anti-racist demo in Glasgow on 22 March.

10. The Equality Standing Committee of the European Education Unions (ETUCE) in October was attended by the Head of Equality. Broad recommendations on taking equality forward were agreed. The Committee focuses on gender equality and all UCU representatives at this Committee have raised other equality issues and tried to broaden the focus. The action plan includes a statement that discrimination has different dimensions for different groups. In some countries trade unions are getting a lot of funding for equality work. A lot of information is being received from ETUCE. This includes surveys on action on violence against women, with findings to be launched on March 8, International Women's Day, and equality issues for women in unions. The issue of representation by lay members rather than officials raised at the previous meeting was not discussed

11. The meeting finished early to allow a special meeting of HE Committee on the pay dispute to take place. Some members wanted to put in a formal complaint about this, but the Committee did not agree to do this. It was also noted that the real issue was the reduction in the number of meetings of the Equality Committee and the Equality Standing Committees.