

## **UCU Left DRAFT Report from UCU NEC Meeting: 14 March 2014**

The NEC started with observing a minute's silence for Bob Crow, General Secretary of RMT, and Tony Benn, both of whom had died very recently. Following the NEC there was a memorial event for John McCormack, UCU President Elect, who sadly died in December.

### **General Secretary's Report**

The General Secretary's report was a brief reflection on the union's work.

It reported on lobbying, reprimanding Tristram Hunt for crossing UCU picket lines (he refused to apologise), funding cuts, the 2 April parliamentary lobby (UCU will fund one member from each branch to travel), and recent use of the fighting fund.

Some members noted that FE appears marginalised within the union and that the report was weighted to HE sector. The report, and the NEC meeting in general, also lacked any reflection on the two significant pay disputes taking place within the union.

### **Revised Regional Committee Standing Orders**

A positive development was reported: Regional Committees now have until Friday 6 June to forward comments on the revised standing orders for regional committees which will be discussed again at the June NEC. Although not acknowledged, this positive shift is due to the lack of enthusiasm and refusal by most Regional Committees to adopt the revised standing orders that NEC has been pushing. The revised standing orders would serve to bureaucratise our regional structures and transfer some functions away from the lay elected members.

### **Budget**

A budget was presented which indicated that UCU is now in an improved financial position. The budget is based on a subs increase of 3.5% for next year which accounts for inflation plus a bit extra. This amounts to a 79p on the highest subscription band. The staffing budget is has been cut from 56% to 51% of expenditure due to the Union's voluntary redundancy scheme.

This financial report vindicates the UCU Left arguments from the previous year that the union's financial problems were not at crisis level and that the situation could be improved by subs increases and member recruitment if the union becomes more active. This strategy eliminated the need for UCU to have compulsory redundancies as a measure at its disposal which, at that time, was favoured by the majority on the HEC.

Questions were raised about staffing and the link between new posts being advertised which appeared to be replacing those that had been made redundant. It is also important for our members to know how the new staffing structure will serve our members.

No evidence was produced to show that the subs rate increases had had any detrimental effect on membership numbers. This argument had previously been made by the right majority on the NEC against substantial subs increases in favour of the redundancy scheme.

### **Prioritisation of congress motions**

Proposals for prioritisation of congress motions were passed for submission to Congress. These proposals for branches to vote on the priority of motions to be debated at Congress will force the deadline for motions to Congress to be set much earlier and will require timetables of committees and branch meetings to be moved forward.

This will result in motions being less timely and relevant as they will have been drafted very early in the year. The discussion had the tone of a bureaucratic exercise designed to get business pushed through Congress. Congress is the democratic forum for members to debate ideas in order to shape the union's strategy.

Serious concerns were raised about the likelihood of this process leading to equality and minority issues losing out. On a practical level, this may also lead to a proliferation of late motions, which will take more time up from floor.

The left argued that the Conference Business Committee, with its power to composite, and effective chairing can ensure that business is conducted within the timeframe of Congress.

UCU Left advises Congress delegates to reject these proposed changes.

**Motions from members on the following matters were passed**

1. TUC disabled conference and UCU congress. Due to a clash last year the timing will be reviewed.
2. Living wage – UCU will strive to use venues that pay the living wage to their staff.
3. UKIP – anti racist/anti-fascist motion.
5. Austerity and Trident – the hypocrisy of spending on war during a period of so-called austerity.
6. Points based immigration – against PBI.
7. F&HE funding and devolution.