



Women's Conference 2010

Wintergardens
Eastbourne.

Agenda



"Equality at the heart of our Union"

UNITE - National Women's Conference 2010

26th-27th February 2010 Floral Hall, Winter Gardens, Eastbourne

AGENDA

Friday 26th February 2010 11am – 1pm 2pm - 6pm

1. Unite Women's Conference Chair's welcome and opening address –
Chair National Women's Committee, Jane Stewart
2. AGS/NO Equalities - Address
3. Panel Session Speakers
4. Workshops and Report Backs
5. Elections
 - (a) Unite delegation to the 2010 TUC (13th-16th September in Manchester) - one to be elected
 - (b) Unite delegation to the 2011 TUC (Brighton) - one to be elected)
 - (c) One substitute delegate for 2010 and 2011 TUC
6. Motions from Regional Women's Committees
7. International Women's Day and Women Chainmakers Centenary

Saturday 27th February 2010 9.15am – 10.30 11am - 1pm

8. Motions, Workshops and Report Backs continued
9. Way forward
10. BREAK
11. JOINT SESSIONS WITH ALL NATIONAL EQUALITIES CONFERENCES
Floral Hall, Winter Gardens, Eastbourne

Joint General Secretaries Report
Tony Woodley Derek Simpson

Chaired by : Chair Unite Executive Council – Tony Woodhouse

12. Joint Equalities Panel – The General Election and the Future for Equalities
Chaired : Assistant General Secretary Equalities & Organising - Diana
Holland

CLOSE

Motions for Womens Conference

1. Mandatory Pay Audits

On behalf of our daughters and granddaughters, this Conference recognises it is 40 years since the Equal Pay Act and calls on the Unite National Conference to ensure that Mandatory Pay Audits are finally incorporated into the bargaining agendas of all our workplace negotiators, whether they sit in the Public Sector or in the Private Sector. The Equal Pay Act of 1970 gives us as trade unionist the power to address the gender pay issues that are putting women at a disadvantage in all sectors, we therefore instruct all pay negotiators to immediately implement the provisions that the Equal Pay Act of 1970, gives us and address inequality in your workplace.

We also request that negotiators are reminded that pensions are deferred earnings therefore any changes to company pension schemes should be fully explored for inequalities, as financial discrimination stretches far beyond a women's working life.

Furthermore, the Conference is appalled that a recent EHRC enquiry highlighted that 1.3 million women working in the Finance Sector are earning 55% less than men and we are calling for the reinstatement of the Name and Shame campaign so that employers who discriminate against women face the adverse publicity they deserve.

North West

2. Women and the Recession

Labour market figures covering the September to November 2009 period reveal that the unemployment rate of men remains higher than the female unemployment rate – 8.9% compared to 6.6%; that unemployment is falling; and that the UK has moved out of recession.

However, it is noted that more women are working than in previous recessions and that much of the growth in employment is in part-time

jobs. Full-time employment continues to fall for both men and women and we are yet to see the impact of future public sector spending cuts on employment.

Women are also making a bigger financial contribution to family incomes and unemployment and job insecurity has a big impact on women and their families leading to lower standards of living, increased debt and poor health.

Conference calls on the union to:-

- ensure that women are not targeted for redundancy and unfair dismissals, particularly in relation to pregnancy and maternity leave;
- continue the campaign for equal pay at work and the introduction of mandatory equal pay audits for all employers;
- ensure union negotiators promote flexible working policies for all workers and that these policies are implemented in practice; and
- work with the Government and employers for women have full access to training and the development of new skills.

South West

3. Flexible Working

This conference notes the increasing refusal by employers to allow flexible working requests, despite the many advantages flexible working can bring both to businesses and to employees. We therefore ask that Unite campaigns for a change to legislation which would give workers in certain circumstances the right to flexible working, not simply the right to request flexible working. We ask that this matter is raised with Unite supported Members of Parliament, activists within the Labour party, and publicised throughout Unite.

East Midlands

4. Pensions

Reliance on private funded pensions exposes working people to risks, especially where the pension scheme is defined contribution and where wages are low; such pensions enjoy a public subsidy in the form of tax relief, half of which goes to the top 10% of earners with an even smaller percentage being women; and private pensions make no allowance for periods of caring.

1. State pensions allow credits for periods of caring; but the amounts are inadequate to maintain a decent standard of living, providing less than the minimum income required for a healthy diet, heating and other essentials
2. Means tested Pension Credit fails to reach many of the poorest pensioners, 80% of whom are women; it is complex and demeaning so that up to 40% of those eligible do not claim

We urge the government to:

3. Reconsider the policy of promoting private over state pensions.
4. Restore the value of the basic state pension, raising it to at least 25% of average earnings and thus lifting most pensioners off means testing and providing a solid foundation for the pension system
5. Increase the accrual rate of the state second pension for all those on less than average earnings

London and Eastern

5. Women and Pensions

Women aged over 65 currently have incomes that are only 57% of men's and as a result many women are living in poverty in retirement. This is due to the pay gap between men and women's earnings over their working lives and the fact that women still have the major responsibility for caring in society. Women are less likely than men to have a continuous employment record and more likely to have periods of working part-time on low wages.

Although, improvements are being made to the state pension scheme that will increase women's income on retirement in future, the state pension system still needs further reforms so that it better reflects the working patterns of women.

Conference calls on the union to campaign for the Government to introduce the following reforms:-

- reduce the Lower Earnings Limit and allow part-time earnings from more than one job to be combined for National Insurance purposes;
- expand the right for carers to build up an additional state pension for those looking after children up to age 18;
- increase the basic state pension to the Guarantee Pension Credit; and;
- ensure the commitment to increase the basic state pension annually in line with average earnings from 2012 is adhered to.

South West

6. Equality Reps

We call on the National Women's Conference to ensure that pressure is put on Parliament and employers to ensure that there are new legal rights put in place for the Unite Equality reps, similar to the legal rights that our H & S Reps, Workplace Reps and Learning Reps currently enjoy. Equality reps are now successfully winning for Unite Members on all issues of Equality in the majority of our workplaces and need to ensure that they have rights to protect them enshrined in law.

North West

7. Campaign Against Domestic Violence

This Conference calls for the National Union to issue campaigning/educational materials to coincide with International Day to end Violence against Women.

Each year within the UK alone one million women experience at least 1 incident of domestic abuse, which is approximately 20,000 women a week. Violence against women can be both physical and psychological, and include financial abuse and social isolation.

This conference calls for the Executive Council to adopt International Day to end Violence against Women to launch a national union campaign to challenge violent and abusive attitudes against women and girls, to educate members on the real extent of domestic violence and eradicate the myths that surround domestic violence.

This conference also calls for the Executive Council to adopt good working practices within the industrial areas, where there is union representation to negotiate good working policies within industrials to cover Domestic Violence within the workplace, in order to assist and help their employees whom are affected by this abusive.

East Midlands

8. Domestic violence

Conference urges this union to continue its campaign and lobbying for improved legislation which protects the lives and careers of women.

Too often women are at the receiving end of a 'fist' or 'boot' because their partner chose to assault them and these women very often have young dependants and careers. Living with domestic violence is frightening and it takes courage to speak out and seek help. Victims very often feel it is easier to accept it, rather than trying to protect themselves because of the difficulties they incur in the bureaucratic processes.

Rape and domestic violence rated higher than cancer, motor vehicle accidents, war and Malaria in a study by the World Bank on the risks facing women today.

This conference urges National Women's committee to campaign for

- workplaces to address domestic violence as a welfare issue and their
Sickness schemes must reflect this.
- extension of the Sojourner project throughout the UK to support victims
with no recourse to public funds.
- all victims of domestic violence should be entitled to legal aid.

Ireland

9. DOMESTIC ABUSE

This Conference calls upon Unite the Union to step up its campaign around Domestic Abuse. This is a workplace issue affecting our members on a daily basis. This conference believes that too many of our members are being systematically let down by their employer when suffering the rippling effects on a victim. This can include poor performance, a breakdown in working relationships, absenteeism, lack of self esteem, all factors that some employers may use as a tool for disciplinary action without fully understanding the underlying reasons why our member is in this position.

Conference further calls on Unite Union to ensure that all Lay Representatives as well as Officers are given adequate training to raise their awareness about Domestic Abuse in the workplace, supported by those support organisations that specialise in each of our regions on this issue. This training should then be available as a toolkit online for anyone seeking further advice or guidance online.

Wales

10. Sexualisation of Children

That this conference is concerned about the sexual exploitation of children in the media, in products directed at children and in the advertising of children's goods.

It notes that the sexualisation of children and the advertising of certain products target children from an early age. Conference notes that international studies show that seeing particular images which imply that physical appearance and beauty are central to social and self-worth may put children at risk of depression, shame, anxiety and eating disorders. Conference also believes that sexual imagery of children objectifies children, particularly girls, portraying them as sexual commodities.

“Conference welcomes the research and consultation into the sexualisation of children proposed by the Equal Opportunities Committee of the Scottish Parliament.

“Conference notes that the 2010 FIFA World Cup will be held in South Africa and concern is already growing about commercial exploitation of women and children.

Conference urges the National Women's Committee to:

- Raise awareness within your own regions of this issue and its possible outcomes
- campaign against this abuse of children
- publicise who benefits commercially from such images;
- campaign to reduce the amount of sexual imagery of children in media;
- urge the Government to take appropriate action to challenge this abuse; and
- support campaigns against the sexual and commercial exploitation of women and children associated with the 2010 football tournament and also other major sporting events”

Scotland

11. Childcare

This conference recognises the importance of good quality childcare facilities and realistic allowances in enabling parents to participate in our union meetings and education courses.

In the past there appears to have been an inconsistent approach and a general lack of clarity regarding entitlements and provision. Conference believes that approach is no longer acceptable and that with the formation of our new union we should be striving to be an example of best practice in this regard.

Conference accepts that some research and consultation will be needed in order to assess what should be put in place, but calls upon the union to prioritise this matter, and to make recommendations as soon as is reasonably practicable.

West Midlands

12. Shift work and Breast cancer

It is proposed that we encourage and increase awareness of the possible link between Night shift Workers and breast cancer.

Norway have now classed this as an Industrial Injury, Spain is following quite close. Once an EU Country agrees this is an industrial injury then the UK may take notice.

1. Companies that employ shift workers should encourage work place breast screening.
2. Push that once a link is established then it is classed as an Industrial Injury.

South West

13. BREASTLIGHT

That this Conference calls upon Unite the Union to develop a National Bargaining campaign on breast screening and early detection through the workplace.

For those of us (and there are many) who have experienced and battled with breast cancer, early detection is vital in terms of defining all forms of treatment thereafter.

The Breastlight is a new tool that can be purchased for less than £100 and is proving to help women become more familiar with their body and aware of changes that may need further detection. This product, in particular can be made easily available at work and will enable the employer to support women in being breast aware as breast cancer is still the most common cancer in the UK, with 1 in 9 women likely to have this type of cancer.

This Conference therefore calls upon Unite Union to include the purchase of this tool by employers as part of the bargaining agenda.

Wales

14. Extension of 1967 Abortion Act

The Irish women's committee calls on Unite to actively support the 'Alliance for Choice' campaign, to extend the 1967 Abortion Act to N. Ireland.

Reproductive rights for women have been central to their transformation within our society and we are appalled that the 1967 Abortion Act has still not been extended to N. Ireland. We continue to receive a restrictive reproductive health care provision which is available to our counterparts in the rest of the UK.

It has now been reported that London has become the Abortion Capital of Ireland, with 1,500 women from N. Ireland and an estimated 5,000 from ROI travelling there for the procedure and paying £2,000 in costs.

We can no longer 'turn a blind eye' to inequality were there is no justification, it is discrimination and we urge the National women's committee to continue to support this campaign until we get proper reproductive rights.

Ireland

15. Detention Centres

This Conference condemns the practice of detaining families particularly with children in detention centres. A coalition of royal medical colleges, The Children's Commissioner, Sir Al Aynsley-Green and, in a separate report on Tinsley House at Gatwick Airport run by G4S by Dame Anne Owers the Chief Inspector of Prisons in 2009, finds that detaining children in removal centres like Yarls Wood run by SERCO is detrimental to children's physical and mental wellbeing. The royal colleges were particularly concerned about the prevalence of post traumatic stress disorder and clinical depression with children self-harming and being suicidal. All the above and many other concerned organisations and individuals have called for the detention of such children to stop.

It is estimated that approximately 1,000 children of mainly failed asylum seeking families are held in Yarls Wood removal centre and a smaller number held at Tinsley House which is a detention centre for men and is in no way adapted for women and children. Australia and Sweden no longer use detention centres for families, but house them in residential hostels and this method of detaining asylum seeking families is proving successful.

This Conference calls on the Union nationally to:

- Liaise with the Royal Colleges of Paediatrics and Child Health, General Practitioners and Psychiatrists, The Faculty of Public Health, as well as other organisations and individuals who want the detention of children and families in removal centres to end;
- Encourage members to sign the on-line petition petitions.number10.gov.uk/NoChildDention;
- Lobby this and any successive government to end the detention of children in removal centres; and
- Replace removal centres with residential hostels like Australia and Sweden.

London and Eastern

16. Gender Balance

This Unite Women's conference recognises the hard work and determination our Union has undergone to produce Unite's Equalities Committees and Structures. Conference also applauds the efforts of individuals both Lay and Officer core who brought about this massive democratic exercise which has put equalities at the very heart of our Union - Unite.

Despite these best efforts however, in the ten regions which make up Unite - every one of the Regional Committees has elected a man to the position of Chair of the Regional Committee. In some areas women have been elected to the position of Vice Chair of the Regional Committee and this Conference extends its congratulations to them.

This Conference therefore believes that in order to increase the involvement of women in these key positions that every Regional Committee should elect a woman to the position of Vice Chair. This conference also believes that these positions should rotate after one year. (Half-way through the two year period) This process will encourage the participation of women at this Senior Committee Level. This to take place at the next electoral process in two years time.

This Conference therefore urges the National Women's Committee to campaign for the principle of gender balance on all of Unite's Regional Committee Chair and Vice-Chair Positions

Scotland

Composites and Withdrawal of Motions

The Standing Orders Committee Recommend that

- a) **Motions 4 and 5 be withdrawn in favour of the following composite**

Composite 1. Women and Pensions

Women aged over 65 currently have incomes that are only 57% of men's and as a result many women are living in poverty in retirement. This is due to the pay gap between men and women's earnings over their working lives and the fact that women still have the major responsibility for caring in society. Women are less likely than men to have a continuous employment record and more likely to have periods of working part-time on low wages.

Although, improvements are being made to the state pension scheme that will increase women's income on retirement in future, the state pension system still needs further reforms so that it better reflects the working patterns of women.

Reliance on private funded pensions exposes working people to risks, especially where the pension scheme is defined contribution and where wages are low; such pensions enjoy a public subsidy in the form of tax relief, half of which goes to the top 10% of earners with an even smaller percentage being women; and private pensions make no allowance for periods of caring.

State pensions allow credits for periods of caring; but the amounts are inadequate to maintain a decent standard of living, providing less than the minimum income required for a healthy diet, heating and other essentials

Means tested Pension Credit fails to reach many of the poorest pensioners, 80% of whom are women; it is complex and demeaning so that up to 40% of those eligible do not claim

Conference calls on the union to campaign for the Government to introduce the following reforms:-

- reconsider the policy of promoting private over state pensions.
- restore the value of the basic state pension, raising it to at least 25% of average earnings and thus lifting most pensioners off means testing and providing a solid foundation for the pension system and ensure the Commitment to increase the basic state pension annually in line with average earnings from 2012 is adhered to
- increase the accrual rate of the state second pension for all those on less than average earnings
- reduce the Lower Earnings Limit and allow part-time earnings from more than one job to be combined for National Insurance purposes;
- expand the right for carers to build up an additional state pension for those looking after children up to age 18;
- increase the basic state pension to the Guarantee Pension Credit; and;

b) Motions 7, 8 and 9 be withdrawn in favour of the following composite

Composite 2. Domestic Abuse and Violence.

Each year within the UK alone one million women experience at least 1 incident of domestic abuse, which is approximately 20,000 women a week. Violence against women can be both physical and psychological, and include financial abuse and social isolation.

Too often women are at the receiving end of a 'fist' or 'boot' because their partner chose to assault them and these women very often have young dependants and careers. Living with domestic violence is frightening and it takes courage to speak out and seek help. Victims very often feel it is easier to accept it, rather than trying to protect themselves because of the difficulties they incur in the bureaucratic processes.

Rape and domestic violence rated higher than cancer, motor vehicle accidents, war and Malaria in a study by the World Bank on the risks facing women today.

This Conference calls upon Unite the Union to step up its campaign around Domestic Abuse. This is a workplace issue affecting our members on a daily basis. This conference believes that too many of our members are being systematically let down by their employer when suffering the rippling effects on a victim. This can include poor performance, a breakdown in working relationships, absenteeism, lack of self esteem, all factors that some employers may use as a tool for disciplinary action without fully understanding the underlying reasons why our member is in this position.

Conference calls on the Union, The Executive Council and the National Womens Committee to:-

1. continue its campaign and lobbying for improved legislation which protects the lives and careers of women.
2. launch a national union campaign to challenge violent and abusive attitudes against women and girls, to educate members

on the real extent of domestic violence and eradicate the myths that surround domestic violence and to issue campaigning materials to coincide with International day to end violence against women.

3. adopt good working practices within the industrial areas, where there is union representation to negotiate good working policies within industrials to cover Domestic Violence within the workplace, in order to assist and help their employees whom are affected by this abusive.
4. ensure that all Lay Representatives as well as Officers are given adequate training to raise their awareness about Domestic Abuse in the workplace, supported by those support organisations that specialise in each of our regions on this issue. This training should then be available as a toolkit online for anyone seeking further advice or guidance online.
5. campaign for workplaces to address domestic violence as a welfare issue and their Sickness schemes must reflect this.
6. campaign for extension of the Sojourner project throughout the UK to support victims with no recourse to public funds.
7. campaign for all victims of domestic violence should be entitled to legal aid.

Standing Orders

National Women's, Black, Asian & Ethnic Minorities (BAEM) Disabled Members, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans (LGBT) and Young Members Conferences

1) Purpose

The National Equalities Conferences have the following purposes:

- 1.1 to set key policy for women's, black, Asian & ethnic minorities', disabled members', LGBT and young members' equality as appropriate, provided that it is not inconsistent with the general policy and objectives of the union
- 1.2 to elect representatives to attend the annual TUC Congress
- 1.3 to elect the Standing Orders Committee for the following National Women's, BAEM, Disabled Members and LGBT Conferences

2) Composition and Size of National equalities conferences

- 2.1 National equalities conferences will be comprised as in the attached scheme of representation agreed by the EC September 2009, which is based on appropriate regional membership.

3) Delegates and attendees

- 3.1 The National equalities conferences will be open to all accountable representatives of workers elected by the appropriate Regional equalities conferences, as set out in Rule 11.5, (and in EC Guidance on Rule 9 on Young Members).
- 3.2 All delegates will be allocated a numbered seat and will retain that for the duration of conference.
- 3.3 Appropriate women/BAEM Executive Council members not elected as delegates shall be invited to attend on an *ex officio* basis.

4) Chair

- 4.1 The Conference plenary shall be chaired by the Chair of the Executive Council.
- 4.1.1 The Women's Conference shall be chaired by the chair of the National Women's Committee; the BAEM Conference shall be chaired by the chair of the National BAEM Committee; the Disabled Members Conference shall be chaired by the chair of the National Disabled Members Committee; the National LGBT Conference shall be chaired by the chair of the National LGBT Committee; the National Young Members Conference shall for 2010 elect a chair at the Conference.
- 4.2 The Chair shall only have an ordinary vote on all matters if elected as a delegate.
- 4.4 The Chair shall not have a casting vote.

5) Secretary

- 5.1 The Assistant General Secretary Equalities/National Officer or other employee shall act as Secretary to the conference - advising the chair as appropriate and recording decisions taken and the outcome of the elections.

6) Order of Business

- 6.1 The Order of Business for the Conference shall include:
 - 1. Joint General Secretaries Plenary
 - 2. Election of delegates to form the SOC for the following National equalities conferences
 - 3. Assistant General Secretary/National Officer Equalities' Introduction and Apologies
 - 4. Assistant General Secretary/National Officer Equalities' Report inc national strategy for women, BAEM, disabled, LGBT, young members
 - 5. Consideration of composites and motions approved by Standing Orders Committee inc noting withdrawn motions
 - 6. Election of delegates to the annual TUC Congress for the next two years
 - 7. Political, international and other speakers

7) Conduct of elections

- 7.1 All nominees in conference elections shall be individually nominated and seconded. Nominees who do not attend may be elected provided they have given an appropriate apology reported by the National Officer and accepted by conference.
- 7.2 Votes shall be cast by a ballot vote or by show of hands from amongst those delegates present at the Conference.
- 7.2 Any dispute about the conduct of an election should be settled by the Chair. If it is not possible to settle any dispute at the Conference, then an appeal should in the first be lodged with the Standing Orders Committee which has overall responsibility for the conduct of the elections.
- 7.3 In the unlikely event that any such dispute cannot be settled, an appeal against the decision of the Chair can be forwarded to the Joint General Secretaries, who may delegate handling the appeal to an appropriate senior official.

8) Conduct of Business

- 8.1 The Chair shall be responsible for the conduct of the meeting. Delegates may only speak when called by the Chair. The Chair shall have discretion on whether to allow a delegate to speak more than once on a subject.
- 8.2 The mover of a motion shall be allowed five minutes and subsequent speakers three minutes each. No delegate shall be allowed to speak more than once on any motion except the mover who shall have the right of reply.
- 8.3 Next business, that the vote be taken or such other procedural motions may be moved and seconded by any delegate who has not previously spoken during the debate. There shall be no speeches on such motions.
- 8.4 Emergency motions shall be put if in writing to the Joint General Secretaries for the attention of the Standing Orders Committee. No such motion shall be deemed an 'emergency' that is connected with circumstances which

- could have been dealt with by conference/committee allowed to forward motions for the agenda.
- 8.5 The Chair shall have the same speaking rights as any other delegate. In addition, the Chair may intervene during or at the conclusion of any discussion, to clarify the issues decided and/or to sum up the discussion.
 - 8.6 A delegate who wishes to raise a point of order (which must be confined to the manner in which the meeting is being conducted) should say “*point of order*” and hold his/her aloft until called by the Chair. Subject to that exception, delegates should not interrupt another speaker.
 - 8.7 The ruling of the Chair on any question relating to the conduct of the meeting shall be final unless a challenge to the Chair is supported by at least two thirds of the delegates present.
 - 8.8 Save as provided herein, the business of the Conference shall be conducted in accordance with the normal rules of debate as laid down by Walter Citrine in the ABC of Chairmanship.
 - 8.9 In the event of an equality of votes, the proposition before the conference shall not be carried.

9) Smoking/Alcohol/mobile phones

- 9.1 There shall be no smoking or consumption of alcohol allowed at the Conference.
- 9.2 All mobile phones should be switched off at all times during conference.