

# REGIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCES 2009

## Summary of Key Issues Raised in Discussion

- **Impact of recession on women**
  - Monitoring impact of recession on women by sector/region
  - Retention of women members in current financial climate
- **Monitoring and Implementing Equality** in all workplace policies
- **Gender pay gap**
  - Gender pay gap different sectors eg finance
  - Caring & Poverty
- **Family policy for ALL** (support from all, including single people)
  - Maternity pay linked to earnings extended
  - Carers – link to flexible working and affect on pensions
  - Flexible working – need to raise awareness and encompass grandparents
  - After school care – impact on women working
- **Women's health :**
  - PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) especially menopause and pregnant women
  - Pregnancy-related absence treated as sickness eg post-natal depression, miscarriage
  - Night-shift working/'random' shiftworking and health surveillance eg incidence of breast cancer, impact of sleep deprivation eg children off school and not sleeping in day
  - Breast cancer – negotiate for employers to supply 'breast lights' for use at the workplace; extend the age range beyond 50-70
  - Lack of toilets for mobile workers is a big issue – especially women when they have their period/menopause
- **Sexual and other Harassment and Bullying**
  - Feeling frightened and intimidated
  - Unacceptable behaviour tolerated
- **Women & Pensions** and range of related issues, including :
  - Having paid reduced stamp
  - Gaps in contributions
  - Caring
  - Retirement age
  - Widows pensions changes
  - Same sex partners
  - Military wives/widows pensions
  - Implications for pensions of being a couple but not married

## **WIDER CAMPAIGNING ISSUES**

- **Equality Bill**
- **Statutory and negotiated rights for union equality reps**
- **Domestic violence** - all forms; learn from Scandinavian example, where perpetrator is relocated rather than the 'victim' and children
- **Human Trafficking** – women, men and children
- **Working in the public sector**
- **What Labour has done for women**
- **International links**

## **ORGANISING**

- Linking up to organise those in the most vulnerable situations eg migrant domestic workers
- Linking up with campaigns beyond the workplace and new methods of campaigning eg Hope not Hate email Campaign
- Call centres and organising – bringing together across sectors – Unite as union for call centre workers

## **EDUCATION**

- Importance of Union Education for Equality and Dignity at Work

## **WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION AND INVOLVEMENT**

- **Strength of Women's Committee as part of Unite**
  - where women and equality is the total focus
  - important to ensure clear links with industrial sectors, activist areas and BAEM, Disabled members, LGBT and Young members' structures too
- **Involving young women** must be a priority – they are not getting the rights they should
- **Importance of being continually vigilant** – women are not a minority
- **Building support and unity between women** essential
- **Women networking** needed
- **Need to tackle time-off problems for women** as elected reps as well as activists seeking to build their involvement
- **Monitor impact** on building involvement of new and younger women of 'accountable representatives' requirement
- **Childcare support** for National Conferences and union education courses