

# UNITE THE UNION

## DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

### REPORT FOR JANUARY 2010 EXECUTIVE

<b>Report completed by: Jim Mowatt</b>	
<b>Date: 11 January 2010</b>	

#### 1. INTRODUCTION

The objectives of the Executive Council based on the three pillars of Unite:

- Organising
- International solidarity
- Political Awareness

are the drivers of the union's Education Department. And we are meeting those objectives nationally and in the regions and countries. The decision to meet the Education Organisers' complement of eight is being implemented by the H.R. Department and interviews involving E.C. members will take place shortly for the four outstanding position.

- East and West Midlands Regions
- North West Region
- South West Region
- Wales

Of course we have experienced hiccoughs in the process of our ambition to seamlessly synthesise the previous sections' departments – with their different structures, ethos and practices. "Expenses" is one obvious friction. Nevertheless we have bridged the gap between aspiration and achievement in that we have ONE Unite Education offer – delivered in different modes and in a wide variety of venues both locally and nationally. Though this comprehensive approach should in no way stifle our capability to meet additional educational demands from our reps and their officials.

And you will see from our Regional Statistical Returns (Appendix A) that we have successfully mounted a whole tranche of courses in addition to those hundreds of courses advertised in our National Brochure and on the Unite Website:

[www.unitetheunion.com/dates](http://www.unitetheunion.com/dates)

[www.unitetheunion.com/education](http://www.unitetheunion.com/education)

The proximity of the date of the January Executive Council meeting has meant that the compilation of our full Statistical Returns could not be completed for the October to December quarter programme. Nevertheless on our website we shall add figures per course category on “male” “female” “young male” “young female”, “BME” and “Dis” for both our Regional courses and for our national provision, which are indeed impressive.

Through Hayes Court to our Esher Place venue we mounted:

42 courses attracting 408 students  
Undertaking 1975 student days.

Via Holborn to our Eastbourne Centre we mounted:

13 Courses attracting 123 students  
Undertaking 609 student days

Tribute to our Education Organisers, via their tutors, who have met the tidal wave of challenges posed particularly by our National Secretaries for “BESPOKE” courses for their senior reps: and a thanks to the staffs at Esher Place and Eastbourne for their professionalism and forbearance often at very short notice.

These course numbers are not exhaustive as additional courses were organised in concert with the Education Department, Equalities Department and H.R. too.

The headline figures for our Regional Education offer are encouraging. Courses totalling 147 attracted 1699 Reps who studied in class for 11355 student days.

## **2. Unite Education in the North West**

Following the resignation of the temporary (albeit for over a year) Regional Education and Development Officer, Maria Smyth in September, a seamless handover was accomplished by Helen Osgood with support from colleagues regionally and extra-regionally.

However, with the opportunity to become a Unite full-time official in the guise of the Regional Women’s Officer, Helen successfully applied, was interviewed and was duly appointed as the North West Women’s Regional Officer in December.

To ensure continuity a trawl was made of officers and staff in the North West who may have wished to be considered for the temporary position of REDO/Education Organiser, until such time as the Executive Council agreed, advertised, interviewed and appointed someone to be the Education Organiser for the North West Region (previously the REDO).

Indeed having agreed the job description for an Education Organiser, some four positions are being advertised viz.-

Education Organiser for the North West  
Education Organiser for Wales  
Education Organiser for East and West Midlands  
Education Organiser for the South West

Accordingly whilst awaiting those developments, and having failed to identify a Unite employee from the North West, the Department trawled its own corps and Ian Scott based in the North West but holding a national portfolio was invited to act as the interim Education Organiser in the North West.

Before and during these unanticipated turns of events, our Partnership Agreement with the Manchester College (TMC) had irrevocably broken down, leading to the Union being asked by TMC to rescind our Agreement. This we did, particularly in the light of the decision, taken and executed by the Director of Education, to suspend the five TMC tutors who worked out of our Regional Education Department. They remain suspended.

The Union in December received five claims, though as yet they have not joined together.

It is understood that on 21 October the Claimants raised a grievance with The Manchester College and on 20 November the Claimants were informed that on 7 December their Contract of Employment would transfer to Unite under the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006. A relevant transfer within the meaning of the Regulations preserves continuity and therefore the claimants have not been dismissed.

At a meeting held on 7 December, the five claimants were informed by the Director of Education of Unite the Union that their terms and conditions would be preserved save in respect of pension and that there would be no changes to their contracts of employment. The Union categorically denies that the five tutors were at any time dismissed by reason of redundancy or other reasons and therefore the claims for redundancy pay, notice pay and unfair dismissal compensation has been denied.

To date the situation is that the Union's solicitors are engaged in a series of dialogues with the five tutors' solicitors to ascertain exactly the nature of the tutors' claims.

Because of this and the impending Employment Tribunal cases, the matter is “sub-judice” and no further comment can be made available. As soon as we are released from this legal constraint the full facts – and history – will be forthcoming to the Executive Council.

### **3. Awards, Book Allowances, Grants etc.**

An increasing number of our reps, after completing the educational journeys which we provide for Workplace Reps, Health & Safety Reps, Unite Equalities Reps and Union Learning Reps, have developed an appetite to extend their studies.

This has resulted in a wave of requests for assistance to help them finance their continuing education.

Currently we employ two utterly different systems to respond to this pressure. We have committed to overhauling the whole approach – criteria for success, applications, purpose etc.

### **4. 100% Campaign**

Central to our Organising Strategy, every single request for educational assistance on an officers’ 100% Campaign has been met in every region or country and nationally, too. We anticipate an upsurge in demand in 2010 in the aftermath of the appointment of the Regional Co-ordinating Organisers (RCOs). In concert with the Organising Department the platform built by Mike Brider continues in late January with a two-day seminar on the 100% Campaign. For the newly appointed RCOs using materials developed through the auspices of Mick Bond the Education Organiser for the North East, Yorkshire and Humber Region with Tom Beattie and Jim Mowatt in the flanks. This illustrates the national approach to Education in the Union by which the expertise and experience of a senior official in the Region plays a pivotal national role. So, too for tutor training with Mick Bond. This approach of migrating what we do well, in a Region or a Sector or even a Company, will be extended in the Education Department in 2010.

### **5. Equalities**

As part of the Equality Reps Project a series of one-day regional “pilot” seminars on “Public Sector Duties have been organised for January 2010 by the Development Officer of the Project – Melinda Phillips. The Regional Education Departments through the Education Organisers are providing the actual tutors and this does represent a very good example of Unite “working together” to respond quickly to the needs of our workplace reps – in the instance, from the Health Sector and Further Education Sector.

This is one of the outcomes of a very successful project and everyone involved is to be congratulated.

## **6. Political Education**

With the unalloyed educational success of the Political Education Seminar at Ushaw College to coincide with the Durham Miners' Gala, this year's event would use the facilities of Van Mildert College in City Centre Durham. Our Equalities event success was in part due to the excellent venue. Hence the move from the rather Spartan Ushaw College to Van Mildert College. A project team would be assembled to undertake the necessary consultation and preparatory work.

In the meantime, as scheduled, the Regions and countries themselves were preparing to mount political education seminars labelled "Mini-Durhams" overseen by our political czar Chris Weldon. Save for a bleat about the quality of accommodation the only other criticism of our Durham event focussed on the political advantage of breaking out of our traditional means of advertising for participants – in last year's case, a rather snazzy full colour flyer from the Joint General Secretaries to BRANCHES: instead it's suggested that we exploit our political structures and tutors to drill down to deeper layers of the membership with favour being given to younger members and potential reps. The succinct (deliberately so) report of our Durham event is attached for your convenience. (Appendix B).

## **7. Lifelong Learning**

The current Unite projects in the English Regions funded through Round 11 of the Union Learning Fund (ULF) will reach their end on March 31<sup>st</sup> 2010. We have successfully submitted a bid to Round 13 that will enable us to have a project from April 1<sup>st</sup> onwards. This will be a single national Unite project that will seek to capitalise on and extend the progress made in the former T&G regional projects and in the former Amicus national project. The ULF Assessment Panel meets on January 21\22 to consider all of the bids. Tom Beattie has been nominated to sit on the panel as one of the trade union representatives. As has been noted in previous reports the new bid, if successful, will mean rationalisation of existing posts within the current projects. Discussions about how this will be achieved are ongoing.

The former Amicus National Project has been successfully audited by the ULF and received a very good report. The ULF have decided to formally audit only one of the former T&G projects. However, an internal audit is currently being conducted of the other projects.

The fall-out from the ending of the partnership agreement with the Manchester College had an impact on the NW Regional Project. The four project workers were issued with notices that their secondments would be coming to an end. However, the project workers will continue until project end and be paid by the ULF through the union, rather than through the college.

The Regional Learning Organisers (RLOs) and Union Learning Organisers (ULO) continue to recruit new ULRs in existing and newly mapped workplaces. Through the structures we have in place we are able to encourage, support and develop those ULRs. A prominent feature of our

strategy is supporting ULRs who have the opportunity to introduce workplace learning centres. This development enables us to build workplace activity and further embed learning and skills into the workplace structure. Training issues for ULRs can also be identified and addressed. Workplace activity is further developed through our supporting learners strategy that is implemented via our three project learning centres. These three centres have achieved matrix accreditation. The centres also have small Train to Gain contracts in order to further their ability to deliver recognised qualifications in areas such as ICT. The three centres have been a part of Unite's Ofsted inspection, which resulted in Unite being awarded an overall grade 2 for all aspects of learning provision, with particular praise by inspectors for Unite's learning centres.

We have experienced considerable success in developing workplace learning centres. Chamberlin and Hill in the Midlands and Smurfitt Kappa in the North West are good examples where workplace activity has increased through the introduction of a learning centre. A high profile project working in partnership with Port Vale Football Club has seen the introduction of a multi-union and community learning centre at the club. This project has been driven by a Unite FTO in the West Midlands and supported by the local MP. Several unions including CWU and the PFA are involved with Unite leading the project.

Engaging with employers is a key element of our strategy. Success in this area can be measured through the number of learning agreements we have secured. We have currently over one hundred learning agreements with employers across nineteen sectors. We also have over thirty learning agreements in draft stage. This is the cornerstone of our employer engagement within the project, where we can embed lifelong learning into the collective bargaining structure. Workplace reps get involved in this activity within the workplace, including joining any steering groups, which helps to further embed the ULR policy into the core industrial strategy of the union.

There is growing evidence of industrial officers engaging in lifelong learning issues and they are becoming more important in getting our learning organisers into new workplaces and also signing off learning agreements. A recent example of FTO support can be found at Veolia in London where the regional officer invited learning organisers to work with this company to help improve the skills of the workforce through a company NVQ programme. This is being achieved through newly recruited ULRs working with other workplace reps to introduce training opportunities and it is this type of liaison that helps embed our ULRs further into workplace reps' structures.

Our successful ULF Round 12 finance sector bid, now incorporated into the main project, gives us a prime opportunity to expand on this important area of work, building on the expertise of our learning organisers and previous projects. Helen Osgood, who co-ordinated this particular part of the project, has been appointed to one of the Regional Womens Organisers posts. Co-ordination of the project has been taken over by Javaid Aslam, a Learning Organiser in the North West Region.

13 Unite apprentices attended a very successful event at the House of Commons hosted by the Prime Minister. The event was organised by the TUC on the theme of "Apprenticeships are Union Business". One of the apprentices had recently returned from the Skills Olympics in Calgary where he won a gold medal in his event. He addressed the audience and spoke of his experiences both at work and in Calgary. As well as the PM other Cabinet Ministers in attendance were Peter Mandelson, Ed Balls and Ministers such as Pat McFadden. The apprentices were accompanied to the event by the Joint General Secretary.

#### Union Modernisation Fund

The Union Modernisation Fund (UMF) Project which seeks to establish a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme for Unite full-time officers is now entering its final phase, with the project ending on March 31<sup>st</sup>. There are two sets of issues which we are progressing:

- Ensuring project targets are met & finances are in order.
- Embedding CPD within the union.

*Project outcomes and finances.* The project has met its main outcomes which were concerned with designing a CPD programme, piloting provision, and engaging officers with the project. There are still several outcomes that have yet to be met which are largely around project dissemination.

The project is now working closely with a member of the finance department to ensure the finances are in order for the post-project audit.

*Embedding the project.* From the union's perspective there are two criteria for CPD. Firstly they have to want an officers CPD programme, and secondly what the project has formulated needs to be fit for purpose.

The involvement of the Personnel Department will be crucial to the successful establishment of a CPD Programme. Consequently, over the last two months there have been extensive discussions with the Director of Personnel and Development. At these meetings the project team have systematically gone over our findings and approach to CPD. There has been a very positive response about CPD generally and about the approach taken by the project. We have also discussed a timeline for CPD to go live, September 2010 and agreed the tasks we need to undertake prior to that date.

While there is a huge amount to undertake to make the September date, the main actions concern dissemination and obtaining agreement from the various stakeholders, including the Officers Committee for our approach.

The Project Management Board is scheduled to meet on January 21<sup>st</sup>.

## 8. Health and Safety Overarching Report

### Introduction

Over the last quarter the Health and Safety Unit has dealt with calls and site visits to do inspections with advice and guidance being given either over the phone or on site.

There are separate reports to come in from the Health and Safety advisors which will go into greater detail.

### Health and Safety Training

The courses are being delivered both nationally and regionally are starting to come into play. By Easter 2010 we will have the final materials which will form the definitive package to be used up and down the country.

Once we have the Siebel system embedded into all the regions we will have a clearer picture of the figures for attendance on courses.

Currently the figures for the last quarter are;

National	13 courses	141 confirmed attendees	123 actual attendees
	18 no shows	who have been contacted or written to	

Regional	69 courses	144 confirmed attendees	100 actuals
	44 no shows		

NB The regional figures may or may not be accurate and the key for accuracy will be one reporting and spreadsheet system (Siebel).

### Health and Safety Materials Working Group

A decision has been made to set up a further working group to tweak materials if necessary. By and large all materials are good background materials. We may need to include more activities within all our courses. This sits within both Unite's expectations and the TUC passport to progress requirements.

We are looking at a further outcome from the working group which will be to set up a survey of reps who have been on courses, to enable us to look at materials, find what reps think of them and what future expectations may be. Once we have measured and analysed this it will give us a clear understanding of what we will need to develop in the future.

### Workers Memorial Day

Unite Health and Safety Unit co-ordinates this around the regions. This is something that denotes deaths and injuries in the workplace. We send ribbons, stickers etc, and we try to get each region to carry out some activities and to remember our comrades who have died or have been injured. Workers Memorial Day will be April 28<sup>th</sup>. As part of this commemoration Unite are committed to campaign for;

- Increased rights for Safety Reps
- Individual duties for Directors and senior managers
- Increased funding and resources for the HSE
- Improved action from HSE in terms of inspection and enforcement. This is to create a credible threat to those employers who flout their duties under Health and Safety law.

#### Campaigns carried out in 2009

- Pleural Plaques
- Asbestos Awareness
- Occupational Cancers
- Chemical Controls
- Deaths in all industries – particularly construction
- Psoriasis
- Stress
- Directors Duties
- Environmental

#### Conferences attended in 2009

- East Midlands Health and Safety Conference
- Industrial Conference Brighton
- Hazards Conference Manchester
- Best Factories Conference

#### Advisory Committees

The Health and Safety Advisors sit on a number of advisory committees including;

- Toxic Substances (ACTS)
- COSHH essential working group
- Disease reduction programme board
- Construction (CONIAC)
- Foundries Industry (FIAC)
- Agricultural Industry (AIAC)
- Offshore Industry (OIAC)
- Paper and Board Industry (PABIAC)
- Print Industry (PIAC)
- Railway Industry (RIAC)
- Rubber Industry (RUBIAC)

These advisory committees are vitally important to the work of the union. They are mostly tri-partite so it means we can get our message across to both employers and government. They can also be the basis of our campaigning work.

### Publications

This is continuing work that sees us updating and branding existing documents, publications, posters etc. These publications are placed on the union website. We are currently working on a new Health and Safety Reps Handbook as well as continuing work for handbooks in each of the sectors.

### Campaigns for 2010

We will be continuing with the existing campaigns that were mentioned previously in this report, but will add a couple more. These will be;

- COSHH/ implication of chemicals and carcinogens
- Competency – we are seeing a number of cases where workers from other countries do not understand the competency issues around health and safety, particularly in construction
- Energy conservation/environmental issues
- Quality of working life – Unite “Good Work” agenda

### Conclusion

This report touches on a number of subjects that colleagues in the unit work on on a day to day basis. Their reports will have more depth and detail. However, I hope colleagues can have a clear vision of the strategy for Health and Safety in and around both existing campaigns and the campaigns that we will embark on.

The Strategy for 2010 is to get the Health and Safety and Environmental issues into the forefront of our activists and members minds. If we look on the down side, there is likely to be a conservative government in place. They will attack Health and Safety legislation, the HSE and unions like our own. We have to be ready to resist this. Resistance will come from good advice and guidance, good training and organising around Health and Safety.

## **9. Priorities for 2010**

### **INTRODUCTION**

One thing we all know about human beings is that there is always room for improvement; indeed the Olympic Games is predicated on the nostrum.

So, too, with organisations. We appreciated from our own workplace experience, from building up workers’ collectives, is that complacency is corrosive. That’s why in the Education Department of Unite, as Director, I have always designed into our everyday work a quarterly vision – a list of priorities for us to strive towards. And an annual list too.

For the forthcoming year our priorities are:-

A. To Recruit More Reps onto our Courses

This is simply not about numbers, more about the depth of penetration which we can achieve; the Executive Council reasonably expect that a representative whether for Industrial Relations (Shop Stewards), for Equalities, for Learning or for Health & Safety, should have easy access to the relevant Unite Education Course within six months of being credentialed – indeed for Unite Equalities Reps training is a prerequisite of being badged.

Therefore our Departmental top priority is to significantly raise the density of our reps who have been properly trained.

B. Establishing National/Sectoral Courses/Bespoke Company Provision

Real growth has already been achieved with this tranche of provision of education courses; the temptation is to simply increase the numbers of courses to those sectors already taking advantage of our facilities and expertise. Finance is an obvious exemplar whereby we are organising courses for Barclays, Lloyds Banking Group (including HBOS) RSA. So, too for transport sectors. Our priority is to not simply deepen our trawl but to also widen it to those Industrial Sectors and companies who have not yet taken advantage of Unite Education. A dedicated team of tutors, who also develop the courses, write up the materials and case studies, are led by the pioneering work of Kenny Barron, who ring-masters this development.

C. Improving Quality in Administration Procedures, Delivery and Venues

Infuriatingly we get 95% of our admin spot on – and you hear nothing. 5% hiccoughs in receiving expenses and the clamour is deafening. Understandably so – because it matters to reps and their families if a cheque is stuck in admin or in the post.

Our admin teams in Education are working very hard to sort out these hiccoughs and that's why this is a priority.

So, too, with venues. Standards and expectations of our members and their reps have risen in recent years; amusingly illustrated at our Political Seminar in Durham last year. The Public School ethos of Spartan facilities has no purchase amongst the Swarfego'ed hordes of Unite Reps. Thus from Ushaw to Van Mildert is our onward march. Equally so for the technical angle of teaching. Our members want the best – and it's up to the Education Department to deliver that within our financial constraints.

D. Running a Curriculum Against Union Priorities

We don't organise courses for courses' sake. We organise them to relate to the actual NEEDS of our reps. And our reps differ in a whole list of dimensions:

educationally  
experience-wise  
expectations

ambitions  
and abilities.

Plus, the motivations of a workplace rep dealing with angry managers and frustrated members are different to Union Learning Reps giving guidance, information and educational advice. Our courses, albeit with the ethos and politics of Unite running through them like Blackpool Rock, have to be designed with these acknowledged differences. One reason why we train our own accredited “UNITE” tutors. In turn, with their hands-on experience of being (or having been) a Unite rep they can be part of a dynamic/organic curriculum development team. Success has already been acknowledged – we need to migrate to every core subject in every Region.

#### E. Establishing a Tutor Training Programme

Progress has been concrete on this and the Executive Council has been thoroughly briefed on the whole philosophy and process of Unite tutor training. Necessarily we are working in harness with the TUC in respect of approving the relevant tutors to undertake specific courses.

The democratisation and opening up to scrutiny of our system has been universally welcome, though a couple of ripples remain coursing across our landscape. The use of former officials, who have volunteered for redundancy, as Unite tutors remains to be resolved.

#### F. Improving Use of Resources

The Executives’ commitment to improving the use of our resources is unequivocal. All “new build” has to have a purpose build education suite factored in, is a testament to the priority which the Executive Council gives Education. Additionally the policy of a similar standard for all Unite refurbishments has been welcomed.

As we grow the Education programme we will enjoy economics of scale in expenditure. Invariably our upfront costs are already reducing as we aim for the “Bigger Bang for our Buck”.

### **10. Conclusion**

If one has priorities then one has to measure those against existing practice. That requires a strategic management system which I have previously presented to the Executive Council. With the eight Education Organisers reporting directly to the Director of Education, a system has been put in to ensure that we achieve our ambition.

**Jim Mowatt**  
**Director of Education**

Educ/report/2010/january report to the executive