

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

JUNE 2013

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POLITICAL REPORT

National Political Committee 11th May Political Director's Report

Political Fund Ballot

87.4% Yes vote on a turnout higher than the General Secretary election, when the average Yes vote across our unions ten years ago was 71%, is an important and highly satisfactory result.

We carried through our agreed strategy of particularly addressing our activists in a determined but low key campaign. Steve Turner and I addressed very nearly all the National Regional Committees and received a very good reception. There were moments of doubt, when we wondered if we had done enough, but these doubts were clearly not well-founded!

Trying to understand what went well is an unusual but important exercise. More people voted than in the GS election because there is a layer of strong trade union loyalists who can't be bothered with arguments and disputes, but respond to the union asking them to do something. The ones who invariably vote yes when asked in a strike ballot. Moreover, while we display maximum angst about Labour's policies, and rightly so, there can be no doubt that current opinion polls would show that our members are indicating wider support for Labour than for some time – while we were very clear that the PFB is not about Labour Party affiliation, that probably 45% of our members are now indicating a voting intention for Labour must help in the PFB ballot.

Anyway, it was decisive victory – we should celebrate it.

NEC Elections

We are required to nominate for the NEC this year.

Our current members are: Jennie Formby, Rachel Maskell and Martin Mayer. (Diana Holland serves as Treasurer and her election does not come up this year). All have been diligent members for Unite. A decision is required at this EC.

Political Strategy and Political Situation

In the narrow sense our political department work is dominated currently by candidate selection matters. Our small department - 3.5 people – is working extremely hard on assisting in a large and growing number of selections. That is our current priority – alongside many other big pressures, not least the policy process and the NPF. That the lead story in The Times, acres of blogs, a long item on the Daily Politics and other press coverage has been devoted to the “malign” influence of Unite on candidate selection must mean that our modest efforts are at least getting noted. A Times editorial attacking us is a medal of honour.

We have had to park some areas of work temporarily – selections wait for no-one.

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Some words are appropriate about the general political situation. Both positive and negatives must be reported in respect of the Labour Party. Ed Miliband made it crystal clear in an interview with the Guardian that he rejects the “economic settlement of Thatcher” which he says Blair and Brown were content with. His aim is to create a new economic and social settlement. This is good – although the fleshing out of the new settlement is yet to be done.

On the other hand, while Labour has been clear in opposing benefit cuts, it has prevaricated over repeal of the Bedroom Tax – because it is making no financial commitment now at all, and didn’t oppose the law change as a result of the Court case over Poundland Workfare – very disappointing and the GS wrote to those fine MPs who did vote correctly on that.

The recent criticisms over the New Statesman interview with the GS were plainwrong. The GS did not name MPs, nor call for anyone to be sacked and he has made that very clear to the New Statesman and Labour MPs. He has also made it clear that he has political differences with some MPs in the party.

Another positive to be noted was the strong Opposition day debate against the Blacklist. At long as Labour has recognised the case and joined with us.

Most recently the speech by Ed Balls last Monday highlighted the key and central debate over economic policy.

This was in the context of the key battle over the future of Labour economic policy which is clearly continuing. The Labour right continues to argue for Labour to adopt a rigid fiscal austerity position – effectively mirroring the Tory spending plans and accepting all the arguments of austerity. They would have accepted the benefit cuts; New Labour continuity. Blue Labour which continues to have an influence of sorts enters effectively on the New Labour side of the argument, arguing for a weak

state, decentralisation and spending money “better” but within the same envelope.

Neither Ed Balls nor Ed Miliband appear to accept these argument – the argument for a new economic settlement explicitly repudiates neo-liberalism and trickle down economics, (see Ed M’s Bedford speech and interview with the Guardian). But the spending alternative for Investment and growth, and against austerity isn’t yet made. Whether it will be made will be determined in part by the influence of the movement, in making the argument and fighting for it.

Ed Balls speech was deeply disappointing in its opposition to the Winter Fuel payment as a universal benefit. While Labour was at pains to point out that it supports Universalism, and that there are many non-universal payments at present, there can be no doubt that this was in part pandering to the right, while making a speech which had a content that was generally out of line with the right.

The economics of the speech was mixed. He emphasised that if he were Chancellor today he would be funding the building of 400,000 homes over the next two years, supporting 600,000 new jobs in construction. That a spending review this summer should “take immediate steps to get the economy growing”. In the longer term, he talks about a zero-based spending review, as an incoming Labour government in 2015 would face departments with falling spending, but alongside “A clear and balanced plan to support growth”. He is silent about the extent of investment . In economic terms the key indicator is known as the “output gap” – the difference between the actual size of the economy and its potential. Commentators believe it will be anywhere between 3.5 and 7% of GDP in 2015. A wealth of commentators believe investment and spending to fill that gap is not only entirely rational, but is the most effective way to reduce the deficit in the medium term. The Ed Balls speech

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leaves open the opportunity for winning this argument in Labour – so that we do have a radical alternative.

Such policies as a State Investment Bank were also reiterated in the speech.

It is particularly disappointing that on the big key policy issues, there is not a democratic process – the winter fuel payments has not been discussed other than in general terms at Policy Commissions, nor has the overall fiscal and investment spending economic policy issue been discussed at Policy Commissions.

The County Council elections proved to be broadly a good day for Labour – based on the results Labour would have a majority of 12 in the House of Commons. Several Unite people were elected as County Councillors, including Laura Pidcock and Pat McCourt. South Shields was a victory for a decent local candidate – where recently it would have been fixed for a Blairite.

UKIP made advances, but while we must never be complacent, this was largely a reorganisation of right-wing votes. Where Labour was a campaigning force, evidence suggests that the haemorrhage to UKIP was small from Labour.

It is interesting to note that in 2009 UKIP received 16.5% and the BNP got 6.5%, whereas in 2013, UKIP got 23 % (16.5+6.5) and BNP virtually none, and the 23% national equivalent is challenged by

some. Also interesting that over 55s were greatly disproportionately supportive of UKIP while young voters decisively rejected them. However, the UKIP vote does represent a dangerous populist right wing vote which is swayed by anti-immigrant and anti-European rhetoric – and nostalgia for a comfortable world – that never really existed. These are all the hallmarks of pre-fascist movements – which is not to say that UKIP is fascist, because it isn't, but to point to the dangers of ignoring them and the issues or attempting to chase them. Labour's best response is to continue to develop the policies and campaigns which lead people to say – Labour – they are on our side.

Much work continues on Policy positions – while on the NPF we have representation and have made some uneven progress, much of the policy development in reality takes place on the Shadow Cabinet review groups – the inter-relationship between the two is profoundly opaque. The forthcoming National Policy Conference on 22/23rd June will be an important landmark.

There have been a number of issues of great concern lately, where we have had conflicts with the party. These include disciplinary matters, and candidate selection in Falkirk. All have been subject to intervention at a high level with mixed results.

On Falkirk we have been subject to sustained press abuse, both of the proposed candidate and of Unite and its political strategy. While we know that this emanated from the right of the party, it is unfortunate in the extreme that the party leadership has too often responded to the right rather than robustly holding the fair and democratic line. We have done nothing wrong yet find ourselves and our activists the subject of vilification. Efforts to find a way through have not yet produced a satisfactory conclusion.

Kingsley Abrams was denied an appeal on his suspension from Lambeth Labour Group. On our intervention a further appeal was secured, again to the Labour Group with regional observers, but the members chose to vote unanimously to continue his suspension for breach of the Labour Group rules.

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Kevin Bennett in Warrington was suspended from his Labour Group when he voted against the whip and against cuts because he was denied the right to put his arguments to the group. He will be appealing in the near future, to an appeal panel from another region.

Next 2 years – Unite's plan to General Election

While we are in the midst of candidate selection at the moment, we must make plans for Unite's work up to the General Election – what our Political Strategy calls "Winning working People for Labour". I do not intend to make definitive points here, but suggest where we should go with detailed plans later in the year.

What follows is in line with our agreed Political Strategy – in spite of current frustrations, indeed

anger, our strategic purpose and direction remain clear.

Firstly, we need to be crystal clear that our objective is to defeat the Tory Lib Dem coalition. It might seem obvious, but it cannot be restated enough.

Secondly, we will continue to work to ensure that Labour has the best possible policies. Radical policies to deal with austerity and the economy are the best chance of appearing credible, and the best prospect of winning back voters who Labour lost. Ed Miliband rightly speaks about the need to build a new economic and social settlement. If that is fleshed out with the necessary policies, then we believe that Labour can win back lost millions and win many new supporters amongst working class voters and many middle class voters (many of whom are our members!). But we will no doubt fail to get all we want! Even if Labour only partially and poorly meets the policy challenge, we will still fight for a Labour victory. I am an optimist perhaps – I believe that we can be quite successful on policy. But I also believe that the worst Labour government is better than the best Tory government – and this is one of the worst Tory governments! What follows in no way suggests any let up in seeking to get policies favourable for working people.

Thirdly, Unite will campaign alongside other unions and movements against the coalition and for alternatives. Our marches, stalls, disputes, strikes, Peoples Assembly are all part of the work to create the mass movement and alliance of forces that can defeat the Tories. Such crucial activity is not an alternative to defeating the Coalition at the polls in 2015 – but rather a necessary and complementary part of the battle.

Fourthly, no election is won by itself. The coalition will only be defeated if Labour wins. There can be no self-indulgence, or fantasies about other parties – only Labour can win. And for Labour to win requires hard organising. Crucially Labour will win if it wins in the battleground marginals. The “safe seats” must never be neglected, but there is a job to be done in the marginals.

Unite will work with others, especially TULO and the other unions in the party to ensure the most unified efforts in the marginals. But we will see our first responsibility lies in winning Unite members to vote Labour in the marginals.

We know that we have on average 2,750 members in each marginal. We can estimate that around 35-40% of our members voted Labour at the last election, with around 50-55% voting. We are working on more precise figures. According to opinion poll data today, we would expect that our

members would be now indicating 45-50% support for Labour. We intend to poll our members further to secure more accurate information.

Our targets will include (these are provisional and will be amended to accurately reflect figures and with a seat breakdown eventually):

Increase percentage of unite members who vote by 10% to 65%

Increase percentage of those who vote Labour by 10% to 55%.

Deliver directly 400 extra votes per constituency

Deliver a friends and family multiplier vote x2 of 800 votes per seat

Deliver a workplace bandwagon effect of 200 more votes.

If we succeed in these modest targets, we would secure Labour victory in 18 seats simply by these efforts alone. Clearly, in other seats this would be an absolutely indispensable contribution to victory. If replicated by other TULO unions, this work alone would be sufficient to win Labour the next election!

Unite will use its resources and organisational skills to win these new voters to Labour. We will see this as a whole union task. The whole Union is battling to win a Labour government, not just Labour Party members in Unite.

We have learnt a great deal from our US colleagues about the necessary methodologies to reconnect and win. Three key lessons:

Existing organisational structures need to be utilised with adaptations as much as possible;
Modern technologies and social media are essential tools (we use them extensively already) – vital but to assist the necessary person to person contact of campaigning, not as an alternative;
The more contacts of any kind made to members, the more success achieved in winning the member.

My recent visit to the Rapid Response Conference in Washington of the USW brought home to me and Dave Quayle the key insight that their key priority was to get their existing activists on board, and inspired, motivated and committed to their campaigns. Essentially, outside election time, the Rapid Reaction teams are active on the issues of the moment, but they then become the core of the Political Action around the various elections. They, the activists, then do the business with the members. The USW use organising principles, but to motivate and organise the activists, rather by direct contact with members which by-passed the activist layers.

Our provisional plan, which will be developed for launch very early in 2014 is as follows.

In each of 100 seats – the key seat 80 plus 20 defensive marginals – Unite will build a structure based on 1 Constituency Captain, and field organisers. The Constituency 10 will have responsibility for organising 10 contacts with each Unite member in the seat in the 20 months up to the General Election – contacts in a variety of ways including face to face conduct. They will be provided with training, and detailed plans and statistics for the CLP – including workplace information, any voting data we have, Mosaic and other information to ensure informed campaigning. Efforts will be made to develop an esprit de corps amongst the 10, including clothing etc and a degree of competition as seen with our US colleagues.

We will use Nationbuilder technology to facilitate the work.

We expect the 10 to be amongst the key workplace activists in each seat. The Seat Captain, may be a full time officer, or a lay member. Briefing assistance and direction will require national resources and people to carry the plan through. This will require the recruitment or deployment of several people nationally and regionally to carry the plans through successfully.

Ideally, we would want a larger lower tier group in each workplace and each branch to carry the plans forward.

Voting will be the absolute priority but we hope to grow Labour Party membership and involvement during the course of the campaign – not least from the activists who take on the responsibilities, so that post-election we will be a much bigger part of the party – and also a well-respected part from our efforts. We will very much continue with targeted membership growth plans using phone banking and activists alongside constituency initiatives with local candidates, especially where a strong Unite candidate has won through selection.

These plans will fit in with our CDP Proposals which suggest committing up to £10,000 to a large number of these marginals – based on draw-down of money for concrete proposals. Our overall expenditure on all the above will be significant – but it is a very proper use of our Political Fund.

These plans and targets are only a very brief outline- they are ambitious but achievable – all the more so if Ed Miliband begins to enthuse voters and union members alike with the policy propositions that we need. But they are only achievable if we get full union buy-in. Put brutally, the alternative is to contemplate our navels, hum and haa and watch the Tories win the next election.

Candidate Selection – Westminster

I do not intend to give a detailed written report. Previous reports to the EC have found their way onto web-sites and then been quoted in the press, so of necessity some of this will be verbal.

As some will have noticed, the work of the Political Department and the Union regionally in candidate selections is a little bit like a swan – all that can be seen is indication of support here or there, while below the water activity is furious! Indeed I would point out that this is a very big task for our small department!

It is important to point out that while we sought regional propositions for candidates last October from the Regional Secs and RPCs, we more usually have a last minute situation where every delay results in less prospects of success for our preferred candidate. Decisions have had to be made in some instances to secure agreement with other unions. As much involvement in candidate selection at local/regional level is our aim. When we have had a full term to develop our political strategy we will have a fuller possibility of full democratic participation in candidate selection. Moreover, while Unite is supporting many very good candidates, the results of our Political strategy, especially developing significant numbers of working class activists, rooted in the workplace and rooted in Unite's policies, as candidates will take a little longer.

With the exception of a small number of candidates from other unions that we have been asked to support, all candidates have been endorsed by sub-committees of the RPC, or some other mechanism based in the regions. Some are strong Unite people, including those who fully meet the

criteria laid out for our Parliamentary Panel, some are the best applicants in the particular seat, and who are members of Unite.

What follows is a list of candidates we have been supporting in different ways. I am pleased to report that the first on the list, Vicky Foxcroft, was successfully selected, winning over 50% in the first round of balloting in the "safe seat" of Lewisham Deptford.

London & Eastern

Lewisham, Deptford: Vicky Foxcroft
Hornsey & Wood Green: Catherine West
Bromley & Old Southwark: Gavin Edwards [Unison officer, though Unite member]
Enfield North: Annajoy David
Ilford North: Mike Hedges
Finchley & Golders Green: Alon Or-Bach
Brent Central : Kate Osamor

North West

Bury North: Jane Lewis
City of Chester: Chris Matheson
Manchester, Withington: Angela Rayner [Unison]
Warrington South: Sharon Connor
Weaver Vale: Rebecca Long-Bailey
Wirral West: Christine Spriggs
Lancaster & Fleetwood: Cat Smith
Burnley: Julie Cooper
Pendle: Azhar Ali
Blackpool North & Cleveleys: Chris Webb [CWU, though Unite member]

South East

Brighton, Kemptown: Nancy Platts [Unite/TSSA member, former TSSA officer]
Hove: Simon Burgess [GMB]

South West

Bristol South: Amanda Ramsay
Kingswood: Rowenna Hayward [GMB]
Plymouth, Sutton & Devonport: Luke Pollard [GMB]

West Midlands

Birmingham, Yardley: Eleanor Smith [Unison]
Halesowen & Rowley Regis: Steph Peacock [GMB officer but Unite member, RPC approved]
North Warwickshire: Mike O'Brien
Wolverhampton South West: Rob Marris
Nuneaton: Miriam O'Reilly [NUJ member, RPC approved]
Stourbridge: Pete Lowe [Unison officer but Unite member, RPC approved]
Dudley South: Natasha Millward [Unison officer but Unite member, RPC approved]

East Midlands

Sherwood: Lachlan Morrison [UCATT]

Amber Valley: Julia Long

NEYH

Sheffield, Hallam: Martin Mayer

Cleethorpes: Ian Gent

Pudsey: Jamie Hanley

Elmet & Rothwell: Veronica King

Dewsbury: Paula Sherriff [GMB]

Stockton South: Linda Hughes

Scotland

Dumfriesshire, Clydesdale & Tweeddale: Archie Dryburgh

East Dunbartonshire: Alan Moir [ASLEF]

Falkirk: Karie Murphy

Wales

Cardiff Central: Jo Stevens [GMB]

Candidate Selection – Europe

The Euro election boards made their decisions on the European lists recently. I am pleased that a number of people who unions support got through. Again there has been much attention in the press on this recently.

Labour Party members are currently voting on the order for the lists to vote on the list. Unite is working hard to ensure that good progressive candidates are high on the list, although it must be said that all the candidates in the regions would make great Euro MEPs.

Parliamentary Report

The major focus of the parliamentary work over the past couple of months has been trying to build more sustainable links for Unite's industrial sectors with members of the parliamentary group. There is a need to bring the industrial and political work of the union more closely together and developing relationships where Unite officers and key lay members are able to regularly speak with members of the group, update them on industrial developments, and discuss potential areas for joint work is an important contribution to this. Sectors where progress has been made include; aerospace and shipbuilding; civil aviation, Community, youth workers and not for profit; steel including foundries; health; MOD and government departments.

Over the past year it has also become clear that there is a need to strengthen the links we have with supportive members of the House of Lords. The experience of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform bill and the Growth and Infrastructure bill, as well as efforts to save the AWB, have shown how influential the Lords can be. Whilst we have a number of good contacts there is a need to put more work in to develop a clearer 'Unite group' as has been successfully achieved in the Commons. An initial meeting was held just after Easter and this will be followed up soon after the Queen's speech.

A significant amount of time has also been spent on individual campaigns and key pieces of legislation that the Government forced through prior to the end of the parliamentary year. This has included:

The fight to save the AWB – despite the sterling efforts of the sector and a great deal of political support from Labour MPs and Peers the Government forced through their amendment to the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill to push through the abolition of the Agricultural Wages Board. Working with the sector we will continue to raise this issue and will seek to influence Labour Party policy to commit to reversing this abolition.

Enterprise and regulatory reform Bill -The union provided significant contributions to MPs and the Shadow teams in supporting attempts to block the worst aspects of both the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill and the Growth and Infrastructure Bill. Despite the Lords blocking the Government's shares for rights scheme on three occasions the government finally forced it through. Both these bills had very serious attacks on employment rights, equalities and health and safety protections. It is clear that whilst there may not have been a 'Beecroft Bill' the government has clearly been implementing Beecroft's proposals through the back-door.

Single tier state pension – a meeting was facilitated for Unite's pensions expert with the shadow pensions minister in order to have an initial discussion of the implications of Government's proposed changes to the state pension

Blacklisting – significant progress has been made in raising the political profile of this crucial issue. Labour used the issue of Blacklisting as the subject of a well attended opposition day debate at the end of January, which received significant coverage, and the continuing investigation by the Scottish Affairs select committee has seen high profile appearances in front of the committee by a number of senior executives of major construction firms. The questioning of these executives by the Committee again highlighted how pervasive the culture of blacklisting was and still is in the industry. This will certainly continue to be an issue of central importance to our parliamentary work.

Agency Workers – in discussions a number of MPs have expressed an interest in developing work and campaigns around the issues faced by agency workers and also those on zero hours contracts. Meetings have been arranged to discuss the current situation and the key issues, from a Unite perspective, with the current legislation around agency workers.

MOD Firefighters – Unite members in this sector engaged in an extremely powerful campaign to try and ensure, within the Public Sector Pensions Bill, that they were treated no less favourably than their civilian counterparts. The campaign received significant support from within the Unite group and across the Labour Party.

Forestry Commission – a meeting was arranged for Unite members in the forestry commission to put their concerns to the Shadow Minister for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

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Law Commission consultation on taxi and private hire service – support has been given to the sector in their organisation of a major lobby of parliament to raise awareness of the issues contained in this consultation for our members.

BIS Select Committee – a meeting was arranged with the Labour members of the BIS select committee together with AGS Tony Burke and Simon Dubbins, Director of Research and International. The meeting was to look at opportunities to work with Labour members on this committee in shaping the agenda and ensuring that Unite's perspective on the issues under discussion is being heard. BIS's role in both employment law and industrial policy makes this a potentially very influential body and through looking at how the research and knowledge we produce as a union can be used to support their work on the committee it is hoped to develop a strong relationship with those Labour MPs to the benefit of our members.

The department has also supported a number of events that Unite officials and lay members were participating in through assisting in their organisation, providing information to the Unite group and encouraging their attendance at these events. This includes events, among others, on the nuclear industry, the peace process in Colombia, Action for Rail, Choose youth manifesto, Labour Friends of Palestine and the Middle East.

Welfare -The political department has been working together with the campaigns department to support their ongoing activities and campaigns around this government's attacks on the welfare system. Indeed a meeting of the Unite group was given over to discussing Unite's campaign on this issue and this will continue to be a key element of Unite's political work.

Unite was particularly disappointed with the decision by Labour not to vote against the Government's rushed attempt to shore up the discredited workfare scheme. The explanation of the Shadow minister was that the court judgement would have potentially made unlawful certain sanctions within the whole welfare system that are supported by the Labour party and therefore despite the focus being the discredited workfare scheme, the issue went beyond this. Unite made it very clear to all members of the Unite group, and at a senior level, that we believed this was not the right position to take. The Unite statement made it clear that we felt this was a cynical attempt by the Government to avoid giving rightful compensation to jobseekers who had fallen foul of the incompetence of the Department of Work and Pensions. We will continue to work with the Unite group, with shadow ministers and with the whole parliamentary Labour Party to ensure that our position on the assault of the welfare state is clearly understood. The letter from The GS congratulating the brave members who voted with their principles was much appreciated.

Europe -In addition to the work on the selections for candidates for next year's European Elections we continue to work with MEPs and the European Parliamentary Labour Party in ensuring that we keep a focus on European legislative developments that have an impact on Unite members. The

single biggest development since the last NPC has been the launch of the process which will result in negotiations being started this summer for a comprehensive free trade agreement between the European Union and the USA. This will clearly have potentially major implications and Unite is already working with the European trade union movement, MEPs and of course within Workers Uniting to ensure that this development receives the focus that it needs.

Other recent European developments have included votes to cap bankers' bonuses at a maximum of one year's salary, developments around the European youth guarantee, the Cercas report on potential strengthened rights for information and consultation and moves towards developing a financial transactions tax at the European level.

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The department has also been working with colleagues in other major affiliated unions and the European Parliamentary Labour Party in beginning discussions on the issues that will resonate with trade union members in next year's European Elections.

Councillors Network

As reported at the last meeting, Tom Beattie decided to take early retirement. Because of the enormously increased workload relating to candidate selections, we have not been able to convene the next meeting of the Councillors Network. We now have a new part-time worker in the department, the enormously experienced Joy Johnson. This will enable us to call further meetings of the Network towards the end of July.

Future Candidates Programme

While a small number of the early members of the FCP programme have entered the candidate race, this is overwhelmingly long-term. So plans for further sessions this spring have been postponed because of the pressures at the moment including the recent elections. Further dates are due before the summer. We are also working to ensure that we get a significant uplift in the women who apply – we need to ensure gender balance as far as possible – because it is right but also because it is practical when half Labour candidates are women. Equally, efforts need to be made to ensure BME, LGBT and Disability are properly represented on our future courses.

CLASS

CLASS goes from strength to strength. A number of important papers have been published – all available from our web-site. A new Mythbuster pamphlet on the Welfare state has been published (copies available at EC)– we will be sending send a copy to every branch with an order form for more. 15,000 have so far been printed

We now have affiliation from GMB, Unite, TSSA, UCATT, ASLEF, PCS, BECTU, NUT. A decent start in our first year.

We are very conscious of the need to focus our work on the key issues of the day – getting into the media more often. Ensuring high integrity of our work while also ensuring accessibility of our material is also a key objective. Two events in Liverpool and Leeds in the near future alongside upgraded conference fringes will assist.

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A major conference to be held at the TUC Congress House will be held on 2nd November. Unite delegates will be very welcome – and it should be a useful and enjoyable day of policy discussion. Further details will be widely circulated in the near future

Anti-fascism

Electorally the defeat of the BNP, indeed complete wipeout, in the recent elections was important and in no small part due to the relentless anti-fascist movement especially UAF.

However, the terrible murder of Lee Rigby in Woolwich provided the opportunity for an outpouring of racism from an unfortunately broad spectrum. While every Muslim organisation utterly condemned the murder, far too many, in the thrall of Islamophobia, sought to blame Islam. Yet rightly no-one blames Christianity for Jimmy Saville's crimes etc. Neither does the mass media point to the 100 racist murders committed since Stephen Lawrence died. Few could name the grandfather killed by marauding racists – struck down with a machete – in Birmingham three weeks ago. Sadly, an opportunity was provided which the EDL tried to exploit.

For a few days attacks on Muslims (and others who the racists thought were Muslims like Sikhs), and mosques and temples rose to very serious levels. The EDL mobilised 1500-2000 people in Newcastle – far more than any recent demos. The EDL managed to demonstrate in Whitehall on Bank Holiday Monday with 1000 people – an ugly screaming mob of menacing thugs. UAF mobilised a significant but smaller counter demonstration. However the excesses and repugnance at the EDL in exploiting the death of a young man, enabled the UAF and others to put them back in the box to some extent. Help for Heroes, the British army and the Rigby family all condemned them, and the BNP were prevented from marching in Woolwich. However, the EDL attempted to call 55 demos at war memorials across the country. Many were not successful. In other cities such as Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester, determined anti-fascist mobilisations of the community isolated the EDL. But in some

places – EDL was rampant. In London, the UAF mobilisation was very large outnumbering the BNP by 10 to 1,; mass action prevented the BNP from marching – in spite of Police serving Public Order Act orders on UAF leadership including me. Hope not Hate contributed too with its letter to the Mirror and a big e-campaign along the lines of “We are the Many”. Unite ensured that Ed Miliband and the Labour front bench signed alongside Len McCluskey.

As indicated earlier, the threat of Xenophobic UKIP remains very real – in common with Right wing populism and indeed fascism which is growing dangerously across Europe. We will need to remain vigilant and active on this front. Winning the battle of ideas and mobilising communities against fascism, racism and islamophobia.

Report from Washington and Toronto

Dave Quayle and I attended a USW Rapid Reaction Conference in Washington recently. For two days. It was very interesting and the key insights are incorporated above in the political report.

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The first day of the conference was a “Good Jobs Green Jobs” conference with a number of other organisations. It had interesting suggestions for our work here. They succeeded in making green issues a class issue – a jobs and growth issue rather than a tree-hugging anti-jobs issue as it is so often malignly seen in the UK.

The recent Workers Uniting Political Conference proved useful. No doubt this will be fully reported by the International Department who had responsibility, rather than the Political department.

Scotland

I attended the Scottish Labour Party Conference where Unite, as usual played a very full part. The Scottish trade union movement, with Unite in a leading position has taken a clear stance on the Scottish constitutional referendum of wait and see. Our membership has been extensively consulted, and doesn't want to be rushed to a decision without a full examination of the different positions. Unhappiness at campaigning alongside Tories has also been a feature of our position. It is to the credit of Scottish Unite that we have assisted Labour to realise that it must argue for a progressive future within the UK not simply around a dry constitutional position After setting up the Devolution Commission at our behest, a new Labour led campaign has been established.

Unite will develop its position further in Scotland as matters progress – led by the Scottish Committee.

Wales

As with Scotland, Unite involvement and indeed leadership in Welsh politics is very notable. Not only do we have relationships with the Welsh Assembly and its members, and with the First Minister which would serve as very satisfactory model for Westminster, but we achieve very significant results, whether on issues such as blacklisting, support for public sector workers and strikes or broader social issues. Welsh government and relations between trade unions and party are what we would hope for and expect with a social democratic party – in no small measure due to the leadership of Unite and its Regional Committee in Wales.

Steve Hart

Unite Political Director