

Build a Stronger Unite

Oppose popular *and* state racism

Len McCluskey and Harish Patel were right to sign the open letter highlighting the threat of a resurgent far right after 15,000 joined a racist march in London – their biggest mobilisation in the UK since World War II.

Delegates should support the Emergency Motion being promoted by the GPM&IT sector and **Motion 102** against the “Football Lads Alliance” (FLA) and mobilise for the demonstrations against Donald Trump on 13 July and against Tommy Robinson’s supporters on 14 July.

We need to educate members against racism – particularly against Muslims and migrants. The far right is organising in a climate created by the government, many politicians and the media. We also need to fight the bad employment conditions, housing and public services that feed scapegoating.

Most people reacted with anger when the Windrush scandal exposed the treatment of immigrants under Theresa May’s “hostile environment policy”, and with humanity when they saw children drowning in the Mediterranean or suffering in squalid camps like Calais.

Motions 54 & 55 champion migrant rights, while **motion 105** seeks to extend the vote to more people who live here.

Motions 12-14 demand the right to travel freely and be treated equally. Unfortunately, it appears the EC will oppose these in favour of a fudge that would mean different rules for employers hiring people depending on their nationality. Such discrimination against migrant workers should not be Unite policy.

Making it harder for migrants to work legally doesn’t stop them needing to work – it makes them *more* vulnerable to exploitation – as we saw so tragically with the Morecambe Bay cockle pickers in 2004.

Migrant workers have always been at the forefront of the trade union movement – from the Irish Chartists to Unite’s own Barts hospital cleaners and domestics.

To build a strong union and win against vicious employers and government we need unity, and opposing discrimination is a precondition for uniting the workforce in 2018.



Photo: Steve Eason

Unite Rank and File

Unite Rank and File is a network aiming to:

- Build solidarity and encourage resistance
- Put activists in touch with each other, share information and ideas
- Challenge the “partnership with management” culture
- Support rank and file networks and campaigning initiatives
- Reform and reinvigorate Unite’s democratic structures to promote a bottom-up culture where members participate, challenge discrimination and are in control
- Change Unite policies

Good policy is not enough

At Policy Conference, the focus is inevitably on Policy. But we all know that passing policy changes little – it’s what activists do in their workplaces and communities that has the potential to change things.

We are not aiming to create yet another electoral faction within Unite and we welcome your participation whether or not you are affiliated with any of the electoral groupings (e.g. the largest, United Left).

Want to know more or to get involved? Check our web site.



www.uniterankandfile.org

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 email@uniterankandfile.org



Solidarity corner

Support members at **Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh NHS Foundation Trust** striking against privatisation.

Donations to account 33211565, sort code 608301.

Support the campaign against **TGI Friday’s** pinching tips:

tiny.cc/alleyesontgis

Diversification

Motions 21-25 cover disarmament and diversification, trying in various ways to move us past the fudge of previous conferences, which allowed Unite to claim it was opposed to weapons of mass destruction, while supporting them in practice.

The debate has moved on since last conference, with **Motions 21** (if not amended) and **22** trying to do more to protect jobs by pursuing diversification more vigorously.

Motions 22 and 24 seek to support the new UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.

Motion 68 opposes the war in Yemen, which is being fought by Saudi Arabia – a despotic country heavily armed by the UK. **Motion 71** opposes Israeli human rights violations.

Partnership

There is a bad tradition in the labour movement of acting like lobbyists for our employers' interests, falling for the lie that “we are all in it together”, rather than building independent organisation that acts in workers' interests. The recent announcement from Airbus threatens members' jobs if Airbus don't get the deal they want over Brexit.

Rather than warning that Unite would use its full might to oppose any job losses or closures we have a pathetic response that sides with the employer. How does this prepare the resistance in case Airbus act on their threat? We need independence to defend existing jobs and fight for better, sustainable jobs.

Fortunately there are better traditions too.

Motion 46 supports the Campaign For Climate Change and the campaign for a million climate jobs, if it survives the wrecking amendment backed by the EC.

Motions 42 looks to move to “total use of renewable energy”, while amendment 1 seeks to smuggle in support for nuclear power.

An effective union

According to the membership report presented to the June EC meeting, all but one sector had over 100 Regional Officers covering bits of it, and six had over 200! How can officers be expected to build expertise of a sector if they only cover fragments of it and have their allocations changed without reference to the sector. **Motion 137** aims to change this.

Motion 139 wants elected activists to communicate with the members they represent. The EC will oppose this under the guise of the GDPR data protection legislation – the same excuse for the ongoing breaches of rule 18.7. Unite's own activists' guide to GDPR makes clear activists can have personal information for legitimate union activity in certain circumstances. Don't let the apparatus shift the power balance further away from members towards the union machine.

Motion 117 calls for direct action training, and **motion 141** calls for a guide to setting up strike funds even if you aren't in a workplace branch.

Equality

In the wake of #MeToo and #TimesUp it's good to see **motions 60 and 61** on sexual harassment and domestic abuse. **Motion 89** on dignity at work recognises the problems for public facing workers, including Unite's own employees – an important issue following the Sally Nailard case (tiny.cc/nailard).

Motion 65 supports the international women's strike which has been growing in recent years.

After opposition from the right and a small but vocal minority on the left, it's time Unite took a clear position for trans rights. Support **motions 56-58** and oppose motion 59.

Motion 47 demands robust equality processes for recruitment, including for temporary “stand down” full time officers.

Motions 119 & 120 challenge lower pay for young workers.

Motion 53 demands action on disability and sickness absence policies. **Motions 74-9 and 92** deal with mental health and workload.

Cuts, privatisation, austerity, jobs

There are a range of excellent and hopefully uncontroversial motions opposing Universal Credit, defending the NHS, on housing, opposing privatisation etc.

Motion 15 calls on local authorities to suspend cuts and privatisation, which it appears the EC will try to wipe out with Executive Statement 4.

Motions 80-82 deal with automation and digitalisation, and **motions 83-85** demand a shorter working week. While Universal Basic Income in motion 83 might seem more contentious, the EC appear to be opposing the excellent **motion 85**. If workers could win a shorter working week in the dark days of 1989-90, why can't we fight for it now rather than imagining we have to wait for a Labour government?