

## RETIREMENT AGE IN SCOTLAND

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This conference moves that UNITE lobby the Scottish Government to address the problems created by raising the Retirement Age.

The raising of the Retirement Age both within the Public and Private sector has resulted in many people working longer. This may of course be desirable for some workers, however for those who have manual or outdoor work this can create problems.

Employees working in certain categories and conditions can encounter serious physical and emotional distress as they grow older and more employers are using their capability procedures to dismiss the employee. The distress and hardship experienced by individuals and families that find themselves in this position is a poor reward for many loyal years of service, and is in fact punishing them for something over which they have no control.

Most pension schemes can only support early retirement if a medical report states that the individual is incapable of any further work. Most medical reports state worker is not able to carry out specific duties but are fit for other work however employers can exploit this scenario by stating they have no other suitable alternatives and therefore dismiss through capability.

For many years we have accepted that certain categories of employment should be accompanied by an understanding of earlier retirement age because of the nature of the work. The Fire and Police service are obvious examples.

Retirement and Employment legislation should be robust to provide protection to employees that have difficulty in execution of their contracted job due to advancing years or /and health conditions.

Consideration should also be given to make provisions in pension schemes for specific employee categories, where the employee can elect to pay an enhanced pension contribution in exchange for the opportunity to retire early if circumstances require.

The Scottish Government should be tasked to address these issues and provide resolution to the issues by 2018.

Gary Hannan

Unite Secretary , Dundee University.



read  
no  
9/15

**EDUCATION**

**REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL SECTOR COMMITTEE MOTIONS FORM**

N.B. each RISC is entitled to submit 2 motions (the subject of which should be on industrial business pertinent to your sector) for the agenda of the National Industrial Sector Conference. Each motion should be submitted on a separate form.

**Title of Motion: INDEPENDENT PAY REVIEW FOR THE UK EDUCATION SECTOR**

This conference notes that salaries in the Education Sector both in FE & HE have been set by pay freezes and arbitrary caps since 2010. It is proposed that an independent pay review body be established to wholly review and set salaries to reflect inflation, housing cost rises, and market rates. This will bring the Sector in line with MPs. Real wages of the average UK worker have fallen by 10 per cent since 2008 but even further in the Education Sector as well as in all Public Sectors with the exception of MPs! Falling real wages are the main reason why living standards of working age households are worse than before the financial crisis.

Conference notes that even the prime minister believes that "Britain needs a pay rise", even if only to make it easier to cut the welfare bill! It notes that working people in Education and all other public sectors have yet to feel any effect of the economic recovery, such as it is, in their pay packets. In our unequal society, those at the top, including those who caused the crash, are the only ones to benefit, whilst the public sectors like Education seem to be the ones penalised with job losses, attacks on pensions, pay freezes and arbitrary caps. Conference notes that Wage share of GDP has fallen from 66 per cent in 1975 to 54 per cent today, and believes that real pay increases are needed for sustainable and balanced economic growth. Lack of earnings growth also affects public finances through reduced tax receipts.

Date of Meeting: Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> September 2015

At the CONFERENCE this motion will be:

Moved by: Robert Liddell (Ref 30267256)

Seconded by: Stewart Forrester (Ref 13209573)

Signed by Officer responsible for RISC:

IAN EWING  
Regional Officer

Chair of Meeting: Colin Rae (Ref 32316827)

The text of the motion should be returned in a **Word** by e-mail to [conference@unitetheunion.org](mailto:conference@unitetheunion.org). And the original signed copy sent by post to the constitutional administration department, at Unite Central Office, Holborn. 7<sup>th</sup> floor.

**WITHIN 7 DAYS OF THE REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL SECTOR COMMITTEE  
BUT NO LATER THAN Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2015**

# Unite Rules Conference 2015

by Robert Liddell

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It started lively, with conference decisively supporting to reject the Standing Orders. Chaos and confusion reigned and eventually conference was adjourned until Len McCluskey came back with acceptable Standing Orders. Much of the debate on rule change motions submitted by branches and committees was overshadowed by Executive Statements which conference would have to reject in order to vote on many of the other motions.

There were debates on how some/all officers and senior staff should be elected or appointed. Conference rejected all the proposals, backing the EC's stance that it should continue making all officer appointments, that the General Secretary should be able to move them around rather than being linked to particular constituencies, and the General Secretary should appoint staff.

The other big debate was on the Labour Party. Conference decisively supported the EC statement which largely defended the status quo. The debate was hugely influenced by Jeremy Corbyn's candidacy and the EC's decision to back him. Some who had felt the general election marked the end of the road for Labour argued this gave Labour another "last chance". To win the EC position, Len had to stress his commitment to recall Rules Conference if the situation with Labour changed.

Executive Statement 3 means that the Retired Members' National and Regional Committees can each submit one motion to Policy and Rules Conferences. Each Region can nominate ~~one Retired Member as an observer to conference, with speaking rights. Motion 10.1~~ clarified that triennial Regional Retired Members' Conferences are for "retired members plus" members who are officers in any type of branch. It also gave the National Committee for Retired Members the right to elect a lay chair and coordinator. Motion 15/1 decided that (non-paying) "ordinary" retired members are not eligible to vote in General Secretary elections.

14/6 overturned the EC to say that there must be an audit of sector membership at the September EC meeting and those figures used to determine EC election constituencies for the following year. Conference overturned the EC to pass 14/20 which means EC members can't act as "Stand Down Officers" during their term of office. 14/13 means that EC by-elections only take place during the first two years of a term - any vacancies after that would be filled by an observer elected by the relevant national or regional committee.

Conference overturned the EC to pass 19/4 and set up a national access fund to provide support such as sign language interpreters as required by deaf and disabled members to access branch meetings, national meetings and other union events.

Conference overturned the EC to pass 21/1 which harmonises expenses between constitutional committees, branches, education etc. I think this is likely to mean the EC reviewing the expenses regime generally, to avoid incurring a lot of extra costs.

NR/2 was well received and supported at conference, This creates a rule which gives significant autonomy to the Scottish region (within Unite Rules and Policy) and created more substantial structures in Scotland to support that. Contrary to some reports, the motion does ~~not mean that the Scottish region can take decisions on political disaffiliation / disaffiliation.~~

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The Scottish delegation were delighted to see the presentation of Gold medals awarded to John Keenan, Bob Sullivan and Bob Fulton (who wasn't well enough to attend), members from Rolls Royce East Kilbride who had organised the blocking of aero engines destined for Chile after Pinochet's coup - solidarity which gave life-saving hope to people in concentration camps on the other side of the world.

Rule change 27/1 on member discipline established an Appeals Committee elected from Policy Conference to hear appeals against disciplinary sanctions imposed by the EC.

Conference agreed that for the year until Policy Conference, the Appeals Committee will be constituted by one person nominated from each Regional Committee, subject to the usual proportionality requirements.

Motion 2/1 from the Executive Council, which removed "so far as may be lawful from rule "2.1 The objects of the Union shall, as far as may be lawful, be:". Len McCluskey gave a great speech arguing why it was right to break unjust laws, even when passed by an elected government: This is not the first time Len has made such arguments, but it is nonetheless very important that he does. Not only do we face further attacks from the Tory government on workers' right to strike, but this forms part of a wider attack on the right to protest, on privacy against surveillance, and on access to justice. His speech will be welcomed not only by many trade unionists, but by many campaigners engaged in direct action who often face vilification in the press and from politicians.

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Motions 9/1 and 14/1 strengthened the Young Members structures and put the qualifying age back to "up to and including the age of 27" rather than 30 from the 2018/21 electoral cycle.

Motion 6/1 clarified that members who lose eligibility for lay office may continue to serve their term of office and required the EC to establish a right to recall over members holding lay office. A supplementary amendment to rule 6 added new clauses to bar from lay office members recruiting to other unions or who hadn't paid 13 weeks' subs. The EC assured conference that this would not affect members directing workers to join other unions in multi-union environment or joint campaigns, or members in newly organised workplaces.

17/1 clarified the operation of (the very few) national industrial branches and require branches to hold at least four meetings a year. 17/8 changes the timescale for branch elections from not later than June 30<sup>th</sup> to between January 1st and March 31st.

Motions 11/8 and 11/9 both sought to stop the union running its equality conferences in parallel on the same days, which limits activists who might have more than one oppression contributing to more than one conference. Both were remitted to the EC on the basis of assurances that the issue would be looked at. Conference was told that the decision on timing currently rests with the equality committees, who saw benefit of meeting on the same days as this enabled people to meet and discuss across the equality strands.

Motion 11/7 sought to explicitly include Eastern Europeans in Unite's BAEM structures. This was remitted to the EC with a clear recognition of the racism faced by East Europeans. Latin Americans are already included in the BAEM structures.

The conference overturned the Executive Council Statement over Gibraltar. NR/4 created an Area Activist structure called the "Gibraltar Committee" for elected representatives from companies, sectors and branches based in Gibraltar. The Committee will elect an observer delegate to the Executive Council.

Motion 15/2 introduced fixed 5-year terms for the General Secretary.

Motions 12/13 and 13/8 both sought to mandate electronic voting for union conferences. They were remitted to the EC on the basis of a commitment that electronic voting would be used in future for close votes, but not for every vote because it slows down proceedings where the result is clear from a show of hands.

The "enabling motion" empowers the EC to make changes to the rulebook required to reconcile all the motions passed into a tidy and consistent new rulebook. We are likely to have to wait some time to see the result.

# University of Aberdeen

## RISC Report

29th Sept 2015

As previously reported, the voluntary severance / early retirement scheme is still open to staff, with the current savings from staff taking one of the options sitting at £4.9M recurrent per annum. A further £0.9M of savings have been identified out with staffing via reduction in corporate credit cards, mobile telephone contracts etc.

A large scale exercise is about to be embarked upon in Professional Services with a restructuring of various directorates and the College / School structures which are looking to save £1M in 2015/16 and a further £2M in 16/17, taking the estimated savings to just under £9M, still £1.5M short of the "required" savings.

There is still an expectation that as budgets are confirmed, Schools will be able to identify areas of investment vs disinvestment, allowing staff in those areas where funding will be limited to reconsider if the VS/ER scheme is something to pursue.

There is currently agreement that no compulsory redundancies will take place before the closing date in November and that any further reduction in posts will be dealt with via our Avoidance of Redundancy / Redeployment mechanisms.

Within Professional Services there has been an assurance that the restructuring will not lead to job losses but may result in levels of "compulsory redeployment", Unite have requested that the terms of the current scheme remain available to staff in Professional Services after the closing date of the scheme, should any compulsory redeployment be felt unsuitable by staff.

# **UNITE RISC Meeting Tuesday 29 September 2015**

## **Abertay University Report**

### **University and HE issues**

There have been some redundancies in selected areas over the summer. In total, 18 posts have been lost. After some negotiation, all agreed to take a voluntary payment. We expect this type of selective redundancy to be the norm over the next few years.

Abertay has undergone significant re-organisation including the introduction of Grade Point Average marking scheme, the Honour's classifications calculated over the final 2 years of study, Elective modules and introducing a Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) for students. For 2016/17, Abertay intend to revamp the portfolio to 20 credit modules (from 15 credits), and introduce Accelerated Degree Programmes.

The increase in recorded absence due to mental health issues is concerning. The Staff Survey will be issued in October 2015, and it is hoped this will help identify some of the reasons behind this increase.

It was noted that UNITE had not agreed to the proposed pay offer. While Abertay members are unhappy with yet another low offer, it is widely presumed that the University will impose this offer anyway. In addition, there seems little appetite for any industrial action at the present moment as members do not believe the gains would justify the loss to wages.

We have submitted comments regarding the statement of common cause on the 2015 spending review which is currently being finalised.

The government announcement to ban public sector employers' use of check off was noted.

### **Joint Liaison Group (JLG)**

(All reps)

This is the main forum for raising issues with Management and meetings are held monthly. Last meeting was 03 September 2015.

Items to highlight:

- We have been asked to assist in completely revising the Capability policy. This is almost complete.
- HR are revamping our Harassment policy. We are awaiting the first draft.

### **Equality & Diversity Committee (Colin Rae & Bob Peter)**

Last meeting: 26 May 2015

Items to highlight:

- The application for the Race Equality Charter Mark was unsuccessful.

- The University is proposing assimilating the duties of this committee into the remit of 3 other committees as part of committee restructuring. However, there is no union presence on these committees.

**Health & Safety Committee (Bob Peter, Colin Rae)**

Last meeting: 24 September 2015

Items to highlight: none.

**Tayside Higher Educational Branch**

The last meeting was on Mon 29 June 2015

Minutes and Workplace Reports are available on the website <http://unitetheunion1.co.uk/>

**End of Report**