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Summer 2019

Nottingham FOCUS

The magazine for UNISON members at the University of Nottingham

Farewell, Tracy and Stella!

On behalf of the branch, I would like to thank both Tracy O'Shea, who is retiring from the University, and Stella Fuller, who is leaving for a new job at Nottingham Trent Uni, for their commitment to Unison, and for playing such a big role in rebuilding the branch committee in the last few years. Stella was particularly dynamic in setting up the Notts Learning sessions, which many members have benefited from. Tracy has pushed along the campaign for the living wage, and been a relaxed and fun person to work with, with a justly critical attitude to University management. We wish them well with their next adventures but we will miss them both a lot! They will be hard to replace!

Vicki Morris, Branch Chair

Tracy O'Shea

Our branch secretary Tracy has been in a union all her working life. She was part of the riches that UNISON inherited from NALGO upon formation in 1993. She started working at the Hallward Library in 2003. Before that she'd worked in Beeston library.

Tracy first took an active role in Unison in 2012 when she became a shop steward and welfare officer. In 2014 Tracy became the international officer for the branch, and in 2015 she became branch secretary. If she could change one thing about

the University, she says, it would be for them to put into practice more of the schemes and policies they like to adopt and promote. This is particularly the case for the wellbeing of the lower paid staff where morale is especially low. The University needs to listen more to staff concerns. Also, affiliating to the Living Wage Foundation and becoming an accredited LW employer would not only help the lowest paid staff but would also enhance the University's image as an employer.

Tracy is a strong believer in the trade union movement and particularly in UNISON. She says: "The UNISON branch at the UoN has come on leaps and bounds over the past few years which is all down to the hard working reps/stewards/committee members who give their time for free in order to support staff and offer them help and advice.

"I have always tried to do my best for the members I have represented and

hope that in some way I have helped raise Unison's profile at the University.

"I have thoroughly enjoyed my time both as rep and as branch sec. It has given an insight into the workings of the UoN and I hope I have helped to encourage staff to become more involved with the union. I have tried to make them realise that they do have a voice and that with the help of the union they are able to challenge what they see as unfairness and bad practice in the workplace."

Stella Fuller

The branch chair pays tribute (with help from an unnamed source).

Stella started temping at the University in 2007, having previous experience as an administrator at the University of Bangor. Stella avoided the growing pressure to learn Welsh - which was part of the job requirement - by moving to the Midlands, when her husband got a job in Nottinghamshire.

When temp became perm, Stella became an administrator in the School of Geography, soon becoming PA to Michael Jackson (no relation), a true gentleman.

Mike had a long career as a CEO in industry before deciding to share his wisdom with students. When Stella said that was hard to believe - successful business people were tough, no-nonsense personalities (actually, she described them as b*****s) - his response was that he

Summer drink and nibbles

Meet other members and say goodbye to Tracy and Stella

**Tuesday 23 July 3:30 pm,
The Hemsley**

Free drink for every member

employed people with those skills to act like that on his behalf. To this day Stella doesn't realise the significance of what her boss had just said.

Life moved on and Stella was head-hunted by an Engineering research centre. Finally, in 2012, she was transferred to the Business School as Senior Research Administrator. This was when she decided that for the first time in her life it was time to join a union.

She has got stuck into several roles: training to be a steward and then adding Education Officer, Lifelong Learning Coordinator, and member of several committees and panels. She is now a well-known figure at regional and national level and makes sure that everyone she meets knows that this branch is active and willing to play its part.

Stella loves people who can smile and enjoy life. If there are problems that stop that happening, she wants to put it right. She hates bullies, and will stand up to anyone who thinks that they have the right to belittle or take advantage of someone else.

Stella can't hold her tongue when she knows that something is wrong. If she could change just one thing about the University – or indeed any work place – it would be that people could speak out if something is wrong, be listened to and have their opinions valued. As it stands, there are too many vested interests to allow that to happen, and that is why we still need unions!

It is said that people become like their pets. Stella has a border collie called Jess. Collies are tireless, keep their flock safe and face down predators, but make great friends. Any member who has had Stella supporting them over the past few years would recognise the similarity.

P.S. It is not all positive, Stella is hopeless at languages, she never learned Welsh and she has not picked up the East Midlands dialect either, so if you ever hear her say 'duck', you'd better do it!



Pay 2019

The University of Nottingham has once again decided not to take part in national pay negotiations for HE staff. Nottingham is one of the few UK Universities who do not join the negotiations, and is negotiating with UNISON and Unite locally instead. The position of senior management is inconsistent, because the University does negotiate nationally for those employees represented by UCU.

At the time of writing, the Branch has submitted a pay claim but has not had any meetings to discuss the claim or receive an offer. We have proposed that the increase accepted by the other Universities should be made to us.

In addition we have asked that:

- all O&F employees and APM employees at the top of their grade are moved one point up on the pay scale,
- that annual leave is increased by one day, and
- the University's contribution to the CRSP pension scheme is increased.

Once we receive a response to our claim we will be in touch to find out how you feel about the offer.

University employees who are part of the national pay negotiations have been offered 1.8% with a slightly higher increase for the bottom few points on the pay scale. The initial response has been to reject the offer. UNISON will be holding a ballot in September for those members who are part of the national pay negotiations. They will



be asked to vote on strike action.

What is happening nationally?

UNISON and the other HE unions pushed hard for a decent pay rise and put in a claim that included:

- A rise of RPI plus 3%, or a minimum increase of £3,349
- £10 ph minimum rate of pay
- All universities to become accredited by the Living Wage Foundation
- A 35 hour working week
- Action to close the gender and ethnicity pay gaps
- Action to reduce excessive workloads and combat stress

In response, University employers are offering the majority of HE staff a rise of 1.8%, and lower paid staff between 1.82% and 3.65%.

Where does the 1.8% offer come from?

The Government uses the CPIH (Consumer Price Index including owner occupiers' Housing costs), to calculate increases in pay, benefits and as a measure of the economy. This is because it tends to be the lowest of the three possible indices, the others being the CPI (Consumer Price Index), and the RPI (Retail Price Index).

At the start of national negotiations CPIH was 1.8%, so the employers say that is a fair increase. The RPI was 2.5%.

The UNISON website has an online calculator that will show how much your pay would be if we had kept up with the RPI. You will find it on the HE pay ballot page.

**STAND UP
for decent pay
& decent jobs**



UNISON is international

Many members may not be aware that UNISON has a proud tradition of standing up and supporting the rights of workers around the world. We are proud to have worked on many campaigns that have changed the lives of millions. As a result of our support to the anti-Apartheid movement in South Africa, Nelson Mandela accepted the role of Honorary President of the union. So it is great news to have Jack Nelson join us as International Officer for the branch.

Jack reports here on some of the initiatives that UNISON is supporting, often arguing for the type of recognition of rights that we take for granted - both as union members and human beings.

Jucelia Vargas Vieira de Jesus, president of the local government workers union in the Santa Catarina state of Brazil, spoke at the UNISON local government conference about her opposition to the rising far right in her home country. She spoke of all the positive work that had been achieved for women's rights under left-wing governments including the election of their first woman president, Dilma Rousseff, who *"made young girls believe themselves and know that women can occupy spaces alongside men and not behind"*. But this has changed since Jair Bolsonaro became president. Now unions are under attack, there are restrictions on public spending, and public services are being privatised.

Jucelia ended with a call for action, noting that on 14 June millions of Brazilians had protested on the streets, and efforts are being made to re-organise unions and workers' organisations in Brazil to fight back against the far-right government.

Unison International Rally

announced opposition to a potential attack on Iran by British and US forces.

At the National Delegates

Conference, Unison General Secretary Dave Prentis noted that Unison's solidarity "has no borders". Unison efforts are reaching out as far as Turkey, the Palestinian Territories and Colombia. He described Internationalism as "the heart of our union; solidarity its bedrock".

Each day, the Conference started with lively and inspiring speeches from international guests. These included: **Barbara Gwangwara-Tanyanyiwa**, president of Zimbabwe's Commercial Workers Union and national secretary of the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions, who described the challenges facing workers in her country. She explained that even after a change of leadership, living conditions and workers' rights continue to fall. Many families have just one meal a day, and essential items such as sanitary towels are unobtainable. The police and military use rape and torture "as a weapon of silence", particularly against women leaders. Barbara finished by saying that Zimbabweans "are not going to suffer and die in silence... We will peacefully protest until our cries have been heard".

Mandela 8 is a project in Liverpool that celebrates the life and example of Nelson Mandela to bring a troubled community together in a positive way through inclusive community projects.

The Cuban Blockade: Although Cuba has many problems, some areas of life are strong. Conference noted and praised the health care and education systems, and agreed that the Union should campaign against the Trump administration's blockade of the country.

Elsewhere...

Unison representatives met with Aminatou Haidar, an activist from the **Western Sahara region of Africa**, to discuss human rights in the Moroccan-occupied territory.



Unison announced they are helping to organise a **Solidarity with Palestine conference** for UK trade union activists. Currently this is planned to be held in London on 12 October, 10-5pm.

Unison co-signed a letter calling on the **Colombian government** to crack down on anti-union violence, which has continued into 2019 despite a peace agreement being signed in 2016.

Report from the National Delegates Conference (NDC) in Liverpool by Jack Nelson

Janis Hopkins and I were both first timers to NDC. I think we were both a bit uncertain about spending four days listening to debates punctuated by points of order regarding motions and composites. At the East Midlands meeting on the evening before NDC, we were warned that over 2,000 people at any time would be crammed into a hall with no ventilation let alone air conditioning, dim lighting, and, to top it all, East Midlands delegates would be at the front, way off to the left of the stage with a poor view of proceedings. But they taught us the words we would need to understand and we even had a dry run to see how long it would take to walk to the venue, so we were prepared - almost.

Janis was our delegate - the one with voting rights - and took up position at the front. As I was just an observer I settled down at the back with an excellent view. Helpfully, proceedings were shown on a huge screen behind the stage, so I did not need to squint. Also, the light did not seem to be an issue and the hall was a comfortable temperature.

(NDC continued...)

We acted as a team via text message, discussing how we thought we should vote on each issue. I had the advantage of being able to move around and even use the settees in the exhibition area to watch the debate via TV link.

Whereas Janis always had to ensure that if he left the hall during debates and a card vote was called, he could be back in the hall before the doors were locked (this happens if a show of hands is not decisive and all delegates must physically hand in a card with their voting intention and the number of members that they represent).

We both relied on other delegates to explain the significance of some of the motions and get an idea of how they would affect us as a branch. By Friday we were seasoned conference goers, totally at ease with the work of the Standing Orders Committee, and able to predict when someone would stand up to put a point of order, which to put it bluntly means we have heard enough to make up our minds, can we please vote and move on.

Most debates were foregone conclusions. However, two motions that had a direct effect on smaller Higher Education branches had a bumpy passage. The National Executive Committee threw their might into opposing each motion because they argued they were undemocratic.

The first concerned the freedom for branches to elect officials for two years, not just one. Note: the NEC is elected for two years, not one, the reasoning behind this was not explained. Large branches always have competition for each role, but smaller ones struggle to convince people to take on a new role, train over a period of months and then face re-election. On the other hand if there is no competition for that post re-election is normal.

The second was to prevent people holding more than one executive role

where many officers hold multiple roles because no one wants to share responsibility.

Both these motions were won by the NEC although in each case the voting was close, and only the block votes of the large branches carried the vote.

Apart from the main event, there were lunch and evening sessions on a wide variety of topics and an exhibition area with lots of stands to visit and buy everything from handmade jewellery and campaign tee-shirts to a subscription to Amnesty International.

Looking back, I had a really interesting and informative week, and I came away feeling that I had taken part in something worthwhile.



Nottinghamshire Pride

Nottinghamshire Pride is taking place on Saturday 27 July and is fast approaching! UNISON East Midlands LGBT+ will be marching and holding a stall. Everybody is welcome to join UNISON on the march – or help out on the stall if you want to!

We are gathering at 10am at Lister Gate in Nottingham City Centre, outside Marks and Spencer's. The march will last for an hour or so and ends in Hockley, where there will be live entertainment and information stalls.

Please join the Facebook event 'Unison – Nottinghamshire Pride 2019' or contact Seb Wilkins if you are interested wilkinsseb@gmail.com / 07397 524810.

Don't worry if you haven't been involved in UNISON/prides before – come along and have a fun day!



Bereavement Policy - is it fit for purpose?

We were contacted recently by a couple of members who felt they had been treated unfairly when they needed time off following a bereavement.

Line Managers read the Special Leave policy, (although there's nothing special about having to have time off because someone close to you has died), and apply it to the letter without taking into consideration the circumstances.

There is no allowance for different family relationships or for those who have to make arrangements which can take time to finalise. The amount of time that can be given isn't particularly generous either.

We need to know your experience—tell us what was good and what was bad

UNISON raised this as an issue at the latest Consultative Committee for Support Staff and asked that a new Bereavement Policy be considered.

Dr Paul Greatrix, the Registrar, asked if we could provide examples of where the policy is not fit for purpose. We don't know if the members who contacted us were unlucky and that they had unsympathetic line managers or if the experience across the University is similar to theirs. We are asking you to contact us by email at Unison@nottingham.ac.uk to tell us how you were treated when you needed time away from work following a bereavement. You can let us know about good experiences as well as bad and we'll pass them on to Dr Greatrix. We are also trying to find examples of how other employers deal with bereavement. If you have any examples of companies who have a good policy in place we would like to hear about that too.

there
for you

supporting UNISON members
when life gets tough

Get help with school uniform costs this summer

Struggling to make ends meet?

Worried about back to school costs?

Help is on hand

We have set up a limited fund to help UNISON members on low income with school uniform costs by way of a one-off payment of up to £120.

To apply, download the application form from unison.org.uk/thereforyou or contact UNISONDirect on 0800 0 857 857.

Closing date for receipt of applications is Friday 19 July 2019.

There for You

By now most people should be familiar with the support that UNISON offers members to ensure that their family is looked after and that sudden emergencies that could upset the household budget can be minimised.

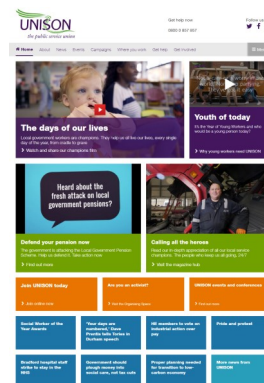
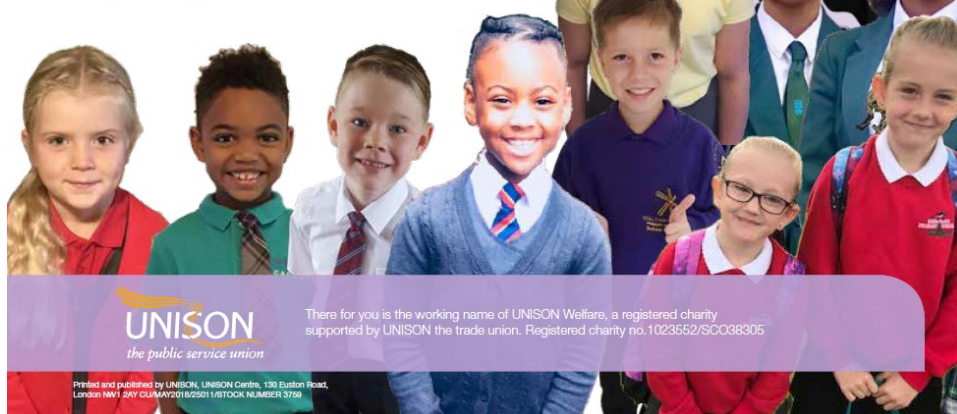
Summer is the time for holidays, but in the back of many people's mind is the looming expense of school uniforms. If you need support there is a link in the poster.

If the idea of filling out forms is worrying, get in touch with us by email:

unison@nottingham.ac.uk

Other helpful campaigns can be found on the UNISON website.

NB: The deadline for uniform cost applications is Friday 19 July 2019.



BRANCH OFFICERS

Branch Chair	Vicki Morris
Branch Secretary	Soon to be vacant
Branch Treasurer	Anne Kilker
Membership Officer	Laura Sun
Convenor for Estates	Kevin Hodges
Education Officer	Soon to be vacant
Equalities Officer	Liam Jones
Health and Safety Officer ..	Martyn Tring
Communications Officer	Steve Fuller
Young Members Officer	Janis Hopkins

If you are interested in finding out about becoming a Branch Officer, especially if you feel that your area is under-represented, please contact the Branch Chair, Vicki Morris at Unison@nottingham.ac.uk.

In addition to the vacancies of Branch Secretary and Education Officer we need to fill the following:

Welfare Officer

Black members Officer

Women's Officer

Labour Link Officer

To join UNISON contact Laura Sun laura.sun@nottingham.ac.uk or email the Branch: unison@nottingham.ac.uk