

SUCU General Meeting Thurs 21st November 2019, 1pm

Council Room, Firth Court

Chair: Sarah Staniland, Branch Vice President

Minutes: Jane Rodger, Branch Administrator

1. Welcome and introductions

1.1. Sarah Staniland welcomed all members to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

2.1. Minutes of the previous General Meeting held on 17th October were agreed as a true record.

3. Brief round-up of news including industrial action (guidance for pickets)

3.1. Our final industrial action roadshow will be held tomorrow, and members are encouraged to invite all colleagues to attend. We will continue to use social media but also emails to communicate with members. Please expect details of the national fighting fund, local hardship fund, picketing arrangements and teachouts in the next 24 hours. Thanks to everyone who have organised Dept and workplace meetings.

3.2. We will provide a report back on the Democracy Commission Special Sector Congress due to be held on Saturday 6th Dec. This was also the subject of an Extra Ordinary General Meeting held on the 1st November.

3.3. Members were made aware of a request from Kate Moran from Maternity Action who would like to interview any members who are about to go on, or are on parental leave.

4. USS Special Sector Conference motions

Proposed motion:

Title: Change within USS as a high priority

Conference notes serious problems with how USS conducts its business, including the appalling treatment of UCU director Jane Hutton, the suppression by its Chief Executive and Chair of a complaint of misrepresentation from the Pensions Regulator, inappropriate levels of secrecy, an overbearing control on the flow of information, and a much criticised approach to valuation.

Conference notes the "no detriment" policy previously established, understood as no decrease in benefits and no increase in contributions for members, and supports "no detriment" as a negotiating target.

Conference notes the crucial importance of change within USS in advance of the 2020 valuation, and instructs the HEC/NDC/SWG to pursue this as a high priority. In particular, conference:

1. Reiterates its call for the Chief Executive to resign;
2. Calls for the suspension of the Chair and an investigation into his conduct; and tasks those negotiating to demand that UUK support these calls.

Proposed by Moty Katzman on behalf of SUCU Committee.

Seconded by Robyn Orfitelli.

The proposer spoke in favour of the motion and gave some background.

Comments and questions from the floor included:

- This motion was written by Sam Marsh who is unable to attend today, and was approved by SUCU Committee.

A vote was taken and the motion was passed by a majority. There was one abstention.

5. Democracy Commission Special Sector Conference amendments

Proposed amendment:

Democracy Commission Special Congress – amendment to national dispute committee motion

Add to the end of 35.1: Elected negotiators for a given dispute will be members of any national dispute committee by virtue of their election as union negotiators, in order to facilitate productive communication and open negotiations where feasible.

Original motion

16 Rule change: Dispute committees (National executive committee (DC recommendation))

Two-thirds majority required

Congress approves recommendation 13 of the democracy commission's final report, Rule change: Dispute committees.

Recommendation 13: Rule change: dispute committees

Insert new rule 35 (renumber remaining rules accordingly)

35.1 For all multi-institution industrial disputes, a dispute committee will be constituted immediately following the declaration of a dispute from delegates from each branch involved in the dispute, which will exist for the duration of the dispute. Delegates will be elected or nominated by branches, with an entitlement of one delegate per branch. NEC members from the relevant sector/subsector may attend as observers. The committee will be chaired by the relevant Vice President (for single sector disputes), or by the President (for cross-sector disputes). The frequency of meetings will be determined by the committee. Branches may send different delegates to each meeting.

35.2 The scope of the dispute committee is limited to the dispute for which it is constituted.

35.3 No decision affecting continuation, escalation, or ending of an industrial dispute, including putting to the membership for approval a proposed deal to settle the dispute, will be taken without the approval of the dispute committee constituted for that dispute.

Purpose: To create in rule dispute committees for multi-institution disputes.

Background to the amendment and the original motion was provided and discussed. The dispute committee recommendation (recommendation 13) rule change motion was discussed at the last Extraordinary General Meeting on 1st Nov. The amendment proposed today to the rule change motion is intended to clarify the remit of negotiators in relation to the national dispute committee. We would like

an opinion from members on the motion, and for members to consider the amendment. The recent EGM voted in favour of the motion but this was inquorate.

Amendment proposed from the floor.

Seconded from the floor.

Questions and comments included:

- What is the current process following an offer being made to the UCU Higher Education Committee (HEC)?
Ans. Members are balloted.
- Who currently decides whether to put an offer to members?
Ans. Members of HEC. They are elected from the Regional Committees.
- Who decides on the delegates to the dispute committee?
Ans. Each branch will decide this at a General Meeting.
- The meaning of the motion is that national negotiators would be added to the dispute committee as well as the delegates sent from each Branch.
- If the point of the dispute committee is to have a mandate from members, including national negotiators could muddy the water.
- The number of negotiators on the dispute committee would have a small impact.

The vote was taken in two parts. First, a vote was taken on the amendment which was passed by a majority. There were 20 abstentions.

Secondly, the motion as amended was then proposed and seconded from the floor. A vote was taken and the motion as amended was passed by a majority. There were 22 abstentions.

6. Confucius Institute motion

Proposed motion:

Sheffield UCU notes:

- 1) The University of Sheffield has an active agreement with the Confucius Institute;
- 2) Concerns have been raised about some agreements between Universities and the Confucius Institute. It was recently reported that 'Australian universities hosting Chinese government-funded education centres have signed agreements explicitly stating they must comply with Beijing's decision-making authority over teaching at the facilities.

Eleven previously undisclosed contracts between the universities and Hanban, the Beijing-based headquarters that funds and oversees the global network of Confucius Institutes, shed light on the different approaches taken to safeguarding academic freedom and autonomy

Agreements signed by the University of Queensland, Griffith University, La Trobe University and Charles Darwin University state in identical clauses that they "must accept the assessment of the [Confucius Institute] Headquarters on the teaching quality" at their centres.

The wording, which does not place any qualifications on Hanban's overriding authority, appears to hand Beijing more control than versions signed by other universities

Sydney Morning Herald 25/7/19

<https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/universities-must-accept-china-s-directives-on-confucius-institutes-contracts-reveal-20190724-p52ab9.html>

SUCU believes:

The University should not enter into agreements which contradict its principles of academic freedom.

SUCU resolves:

1) To request the University provide SUCU with a copy of the agreement between the University of Sheffield and its Confucius Institute in order to reassure members this does not contradict the University's principles of academic freedom;

2) To pursue the matter under the Freedom of Information Act should a copy not be provided voluntarily.

Proposed from the floor.

Seconded from the floor.

The proposer spoke in favour of the motion and gave some background.

Comments and questions from the floor included:

- We do need clarity on what is going on, as this Institute is involved in educating children from the age of 2.
- Are there other Institutes linked to Sheffield?
Ans. No there is not.

A vote was taken and the motion was passed nem con.

7. Motion from member - Solidarity with the Chilean students, academics and wider society

Proposed motion:

Branch notes:

1. The deep social and economic wounds felt today by ordinary people, directly relate to the economic model and subsequent privatisation of public services – education, health, water and pensions – established under Pinochet's dictatorship. Chile is one of the countries with the highest levels of inequality in the world
2. The mass fare dodging protest by secondary school students on 18 October 2019 over transport fare hikes, supported by the Union of Metro Workers, has turned into a nationwide protest. With social movements and unions calling general strikes and ordinary people and their families taking to the streets armed with pots and saucepans to make noise over years of inequality and corruption.
3. In response President Sebastian Piñera on 20 October 2019 announced that Chile was "at War" against its own citizens.
4. University staff and students are being targeted by the state's security forces e.g. On 4 November armed policemen dispersed a protest at Pontificia Universidad Católica's largest campus (one of Chile's catholic universities) in Santiago using teargas canisters, a water cannon and rubber bullets.

Branch believes:

1. That there are grave human rights violations taking place, with around 23 fatalities to date, 26,000 have been detained (including minors) and an estimated 2,500 people have been injured. The Red Cross believe the numbers to be higher given the cases that they have come across on the streets. Furthermore, there are allegations torture, sexual violence and rape.
2. The shooting of rubber encased bullets by police and the military have led to around 200 people suffering serious eye injuries or eye loss; a figure unprecedented by any place of conflict in the world.
3. The Constitution put in place by dictator Augusto Pinochet is being used against ordinary citizens exercising their democratic right to protest; from the state of emergency and curfew declared, to the Anti-Terror legislation, drawn up in 1984 by the dictator.

Branch resolves:

1. To sign and circulate the following petition
<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd5kkuEPIhkovaUAkQW0OzpXVLKJvZP1QRgNMbvUnJ-i-ZWOQ/viewform?fbzx=2927881873114383521>
2. To support and promote local/national activities and events organised in solidarity with the Chilean people.
3. To send a letter of protest to President Sebastian Piñera via the Chilean Embassy in London calling on the Chilean Government to:
 - a. Ensure that there is no impunity, and human rights abusers are brought to trial
 - b. Release all prisoners detained under emergency powers.
 - c. End the use of repressive force by the state's security forces, and adhere to international laws and norms on human rights
 - d. Enter into meaningful dialogue with the social movements leading the protests.
4. To make links with universities in Chile and support the academics and students in their calls for a new constitution and the end of political repression

Proposed from the floor.

Seconded from the floor.

The proposer spoke in favour of the motion and gave some background.

Comments and questions from the floor included:

- A request was made for clarification of the details of the killing of a young Chilean mime artist.
- Is the use of the word "impunity" in resolves 3a intended?

Ans. Yes. This is to ensure that people in power will be brought to justice.

A vote was taken and the motion was passed by a majority. There was one abstention.

8. AOB

None.

