

SUCU Extraordinary General Meeting, Mon 29th October 2018

Hicks Building, Lecture Theatre 7

Chair: Sam Marsh (Branch President) and Emma Nagouse (Branch Vice President)

Minutes: Jane Rodger (Branch Administrator)

1. Welcome and introductions

Sam Marsh welcomed all to the meeting which has been called to discuss the current pay and pensions disputes, in particular to send motions to the Special Sector Conference on 7th Nov. We also have a local motion on the University Superannuation Scheme pension (USS) to discuss.

2. Pay dispute update – branch motion

Proposed motion:

PAY AND EQUALITY DISPUTE

Conference notes:

- On an approximate 42% turnout Higher Education members voted overwhelmingly in favor of strike action. This is the highest turnout on a pay and equality ballot in UCU history, indicating widespread willingness to engage in major industrial action.
- Due to the arbitrary 50% turnout threshold of the Trade Union Act, only a minority of branches have a legal mandate to take industrial action.
- The dispute claims of fair pay, gender pay equality, casualisation and workload remain unresolved at a national level

Conference resolves:

- That the 2018/19 dispute should be resolved through national bargaining machinery and that individual local claims are ineffective and undermine national bargaining
- As a consequence of the 2018/19 dispute remaining unresolved, the union should complete a statutory ballot by the end of April 2019 at the latest so as to enter 2019/20 negotiations with a legal mandate for industrial action.
- The statutory ballot will be national and aggregated.
- The union will invest in recruiting regional organisers to support both sectors as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Proposed: Jon Benson on behalf of Committee

Seconded: from the floor.

Discussion included:

- The proposer gave some background and then discussion followed.
- The Branch did really well to reach the 50% threshold. Thanks to all members who spoke with colleagues about the ballot.
- It was noted that the current government were elected on a much lower turn out.
- Why is national negotiations on pay better?
Ans. The motion recognised that the disaggregated approach undermines national bargaining machinery. Unlike Further Education (FE) we have national bargaining machinery. The outcome of the most recent ballot shows that it's much easier to make up for an aggregated shortfall.

- What would Regional Organisers do that we have not already done?
Ans. They would use targeted organising for Branches that may be under resourced. Not all Branches are as well organised as ours.
- There was a stronger feeling during the USS dispute that we were being lied to.
Ans. There is a strong argument that we are being lied to now about the affordability of a pay increase by the use of convenient accounting measures. This makes people angry.
- A consistent method of balloting would help turn out.
Ans. Legislation dictates that ballots for strike action are paper based.

Amendments:

The following amendments were discussed.

- a) In the second resolves bullet point, replace “April” with “March”
Proposed: from the floor
Seconded: from the floor
Passed nem con.
- b) Amend the fourth resolves bullet point:
“As soon as is reasonably practicable, the union will invest in:
 - recruiting regional organisers
 - providing resources and support to branches in both sectors.”
 Proposed: from the floor
Seconded: from the floor
Passed nem con.

Final motion as amended and submitted to the Special Sector Conference:

Conference notes:

- HE members voted overwhelmingly in favour of strike action, with the highest turnout on a pay and equality ballot in UCU history, indicating widespread willingness to take major industrial action.
- The dispute claims of fair pay, gender pay equality, casualisation and workload remain unresolved at a national level

Conference resolves:

- That the 2018/19 dispute should be resolved through national bargaining machinery and that individual local claims are ineffective and undermine national bargaining
- As a consequence of the 2018/19 dispute remaining unresolved, the union should complete a statutory ballot by the end of March 2019 at the latest so as to enter 2019/20 negotiations with a legal mandate for industrial action.
- The statutory ballot will be national and aggregated.
- As soon as is reasonably practicable, the union will invest in:
 - recruiting regional organisers
 - providing resources and support to branches in both sectors.

Passed nem con.

3. USS dispute – branch motion

3.1. At this point Emma Nagouse (UCU Vice President) took the Chair. Proposed motion:

USS should abandon the 2017 valuation

Conference believes that the Joint Expert Panel's first report and newly released information on asset projections mean that USS's current approach to the 2017 valuation and its associated proposals for cost-sharing have been entirely discredited.

Conference notes that the funding position of the scheme has improved significantly in the year to 31 March 2018, as discussed in the report of the Joint Expert Panel.

Conference calls on the USS trustee to abandon the 2017 valuation in favour of a valuation as at 31 March 2018, updated according to the Joint Expert Panel's recommendations, and to make clear to the regulator that the delays to the 2017 valuation are best dealt with in this manner.

Proposed: Sam Marsh on behalf of Committee

Seconded: from the floor

Discussion included:

- The proposer gave some background and then discussion followed.
- The National UCU Dispute Committee met last week and decided that should the Employer increase contributions or reduce benefits UCU will ballot members for industrial action.

Amendments:

In the third paragraph after the word "valuation" to amend the final two sentences to, "Moving forward, discussions and negotiations would be based instead on a valuation as at 31 March 2018, updated according to the Joint Expert Panel's recommendations. USS should make clear to the regulator that the delays to the 2017 valuation are best dealt with in this manner."

Proposed: Bernard Corfe

Seconded: Robyn Orfitelli

Passed by majority. 1 abstention.

Final motion as amended and submitted to the Special Sector Conference:

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Conference calls on the USS trustee to abandon the 2017 valuation. Moving forward, discussions and negotiations would be based instead on a valuation as at 31 March 2018, updated according to the Joint Expert Panel's recommendations, and to make clear to the regulator that the delays to the 2017 valuation are best dealt with in this manner.

Passed nem con.

Sam Marsh returned to the Chair.

3.2. Proposed motion: This motion was proposed by an ordinary member of SUCU. Members are encouraged to bring motions to General Meetings.

BRANCH MOTION - USS

Whereas, UCU Sheffield notes that the recent report of the USS Joint Expert Panel dated 13 September 2018 has vindicated the UCU pensions strike. The report effectively confirms that the basis on which strike action was taken was a valid one.

UCU Sheffield further notes - having followed the dispute in the national media, online and social media, union and employer communications, as well as on the picketlines - the disquieting information that has emerged about the way in which UCU members' deferred pay is being 'managed' by the trustees of USS and by the University employers and their representative bodies.

UCU Sheffield further notes that the incoming University of Sheffield Vice Chancellor, Professor Koen Lamberts, has been a Chair of the Employers Pension Forum during the USS dispute.

UCU Sheffield therefore has very serious concerns about both the competence and trustworthiness of UCEA, UUK, the USS and The University of Sheffield management as regards the stewardship of members' staff pensions, which are, after all, our deferred pay.

UCU Sheffield further notes that striking members were docked up to 14 days' pay, effectively for fighting for a just cause.

UCU Sheffield further notes that before, during, and after the strike, the vast majority of students have understood and supported the action.

Therefore, UCU Sheffield resolves that:

1. This branch has no confidence in The University of Sheffield management's, nor the incoming Vice Chancellor's, plans and intentions for the future of USS.
2. This branch shall file a collective grievance on behalf of UCU Sheffield members locally against the University management, seeking:
 - a) the full and complete restitution of docked wages to all those members who were on strike, and
 - b) an apology for its aggressive, confrontational and disrespectful attitude and actions towards staff on the issue of USS pensions.
3. This branch reiterates its wholehearted thanks and sincere appreciation to all those students who backed the strike.

Proposed: from the floor

Seconded: from the floor

Discussion included:

- The proposer gave some background and then discussion followed.
- The University seems not to be fulfilling its promise to commit strike money saved to spending on students. In several Departments information about how the money is being spent has been withheld.
- The University can afford to both reimburse strike deductions to members and fulfil its promise to students.

Amendments:

To move resolves 2(b) to (c), and add a new resolves (b), "nevertheless to respect its financial commitments to student mental health and welfare made during and immediately following the USS strike."

Proposer: from the floor

Secunder: from the floor.
Passed by majority with 1 abstention.

Final motion as amended:

Whereas, UCU Sheffield notes that the recent report of the USS Joint Expert Panel dated 13 September 2018 has vindicated the UCU pensions strike. The report effectively confirms that the basis on which strike action was taken was a valid one.

UCU Sheffield further notes - having followed the dispute in the national media, online and social media, union and employer communications, as well as on the picketlines - the disquieting information that has emerged about the way in which UCU members' deferred pay is being 'managed' by the trustees of USS and by the University employers and their representative bodies.

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 - (c) an apology for its aggressive, confrontational and disrespectful attitude and actions towards staff on the issue of USS pensions.
3. This branch reiterates its wholehearted thanks and sincere appreciation to all those students who backed the strike.

Passed nem con.

4. AOB
None.