

SUCU Annual General Meeting, Wednesday 10th June 2015

Council Chamber, Octagon Centre, 1pm

Chair: Craig Brandist, Branch President

Minutes: Jane Rodger, Branch Administrator

Craig Brandist introduced himself and welcomed members to the meeting.

1. Minutes of the last AGM held 12th June 2014

The minutes were accepted and passed from the previous year. There were no matters arising.

2. Motion regarding use of the Capability Procedures

Jane Simm on behalf of SUCU Committee proposed the motion below which was also seconded by Sam Morecroft. She explained the University has a range of measures that can be used to support staff, and measures to support staff with a disability. These are being used in many cases. However there are concerns about the level of use of capability processes in particular Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs), and in particular for members with a disability. This motion is to support SUCU negotiators in discussions with the University.

The following motion was put to colleagues.

This Branch notes:

Concern at the level of use of capability processes including “performance improvement plans” (PIPs) by the University for our members, which is leading to high levels of stress and anxiety. Disabled members are particularly vulnerable to these procedures in situations where management does not make appropriate reasonable adjustments or understand the positive impact adjustments can make on performance. Even where adjustments are made, there is concern that disabled members may be more likely to be under scrutiny.

The Branch resolves:

To continue to challenge excessive workloads, discriminatory practice and unfair treatment.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- Through casework for individual members we are increasingly concerned about how PIPs are being used. There is a strong link with stress.

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

3. Motion from member concerning the arms trade

Umberto Albarella, SUCU Department Contact proposed the motion below which was also seconded by Sam Morecroft. Umberto explained campaigners against the arms trade are seeking support from trade unions for the redeployment of workers from the arms trade to the renewable energy industry. A number of other UCU Branches are also taking this forward and there is some support from the Students Union.

The following motion was put to colleagues.

This Branch notes that:

- the arms trade has a devastating impact on human rights and security, as well as damaging economic development through the diversion of resources
- the UK government is sending a message of support to many of the world's most repressive regimes when it promotes and sells weaponry to them;
- large scale military procurement and arms exports only reinforce a militaristic approach to international problems;
- real security requires tackling the negative effects of climate change, with its associated food and water shortages, as well as developing a reliable and clean energy supply;
- arms companies receive UK government support and subsidies from the taxpayer;
- despite the disproportionate support it is given, the arms industry, and the number of jobs within it, is declining.

This Branch also notes that there:

- is an acknowledged shortage of skilled engineers;
- is an urgent need to tackle climate change, not least through the development of renewable energy and low-carbon technologies;
- are many workers within the arms industry whose skills match those needed to develop such technologies.

The Branch believes that:

- a balanced economy demands a strong manufacturing sector;
- everyone is entitled to decent work, training and income;
- there is a need to take a broader view of security, addressing the real threats we face rather than limiting them to the military.

The Branch resolves to:

1. Campaign for UK government support currently given to the arms industry to be transferred to the renewable energy and low-carbon technology sectors; as well as re-building the manufacturing industry.
2. Press the UK government to support individuals and communities affected by such changes during the transition period; to include fully funded retraining for all those wanting to move sectors, and a guaranteed no loss of earnings.
3. Raise this issue to regional/national level of the union and with the local trades council
4. Tell the Campaign Against Arms Trade, Unit 4, 5-7 Wells Terrace, London N4 3JU enquiries@caat.org.uk that the Branch has passed this motion so that the Branch's stance may be publicised.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- Is the motion against the arms trade or government subsidy?
Ans. The motion calls for the abolition of the arms trade industry.
- There is more scope for success through pressure on the government. Getting trade union support is key.
- What is the economic argument?
Ans. There is a definite practical possibility of redeployment by linking concerns about the arms trade with global warming and the energy shortage.

A vote was taken and the motion was carried with one member voting against and one abstention.

4. Local subscription for 2015/16

It was noted that the UCU national subscriptions are unchanged from 2014/15, apart from a reduction for those earning under £5k from £2.67/month to £1/month. As the local subs change at the same rate as the national subs, they also remain unchanged.

5. Reports - to acknowledge written reports and take questions on the Annual Report

Craig Brandist introduced the SUCU Annual Report which was circulated and is in the appendix below. Craig Brandist read from his President's report highlighting the success of SUCU along with sister unions in defending automatic pay increments – a key part of the Framework Agreement. To see off this challenge in the context of increased pressure for performance management is of national significance, and has helped the sector as a whole. Craig also gave special thanks to Committee members standing down this year.

Sarah Staniland spoke to her Equality and Diversity Officer Report. She explained that equality and diversity are core to the work of a trade union and highlighted the positive influence of the Athena SWAN initiative which is now being rolled out in all Faculties. Its' scope will also be extended from gender issues to include other equality strands. She stressed the importance of members being aware of and using the new University policies for anti-bullying and harassment (Dignity at Work), disability leave and the stress policy (currently under negotiation).

Mick Ashman spoke to his Health and Safety Report highlighting that this year was the first time SUCU and the other campus unions have sought to use health and safety legislation to address stress and management behaviour in Departments. This is a legal entitlement as stress is a workplace risk in the same way as a trip hazard. In the coming year SUCU will push for the necessity to use health and safety risk assessments for incidents of staff stress.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- Gender inequality is apparent in the University, and all Departments and Faculties should have an equality scheme.
- Excessive workloads in many cases disadvantage women.

6. Election of SUCU Officers 2015-16

This was over seen by Jane Rodger (Branch Administrator) who acted as Returning Officer. Jane read out the nominees to Branch Officer Positions. Members were invited to raise objections to these candidates. No objections were made and the officers were elected for the next year.

| Position | Name | Department |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| President | Craig Brandist | Russian & Slavonic Studies |
| Senior Vice President | Mick Ashman | School of Nursing & Midwifery |
| Vice President | Jane Simm | Careers Service |
| Branch Secretary | Sarah Staniland | Chemistry |
| Education Officer | Vacancy | |
| Equalities & Diversity Officer | Wendy Michallat | French |
| Health & Safety Officer | Mick Ashman | School of Nursing & Midwifery |
| Treasurer | Pablo Stern | CICS |
| Pensions Officer | Sam Marsh | Maths |
| Membership Secretary | Rob Stanton | CICS |
| Communications Officer | Sam Marsh | Maths |
| Anti-casualisation Officer | Sam Morecroft | Politics |

A vote was taken to confirm the election which was carried nem con.

7. Election of Ordinary Committee 2015-16

This also was over seen by Jane Rodger (Branch Administrator) who acted as Returning Officer. Jane read out the nominees to Ordinary Committee membership. Members were invited to raise objections to these candidates. No objections were made and the officers were elected for the next year.

| Name | Department |
|-----------------|---|
| Nikolay Ogryzko | Medical School |
| Steve DeAlmeida | University of Sheffield International College |
| Vacancy | |
| Vacancy | |
| Vacancy | |
| Vacancy | |

A vote was taken to confirm the election which was carried nem con.

8. Report from UCU Congress 2015

Jane Simm (Branch Vice President) and Sam Morecroft (Branch Anti-casualisation Officer) attended UCU Congress on behalf of the Branch this year and reviewed the key highlights that included:

- There was much debate and motions concerning the ongoing and destructive attacks on the Further Education Sector.
- The HE Sector Conference voiced frustrations about the pension dispute.
- Conference also discussed the Employers' pay offer of 1% and resolved to recommend rejection and to vote for strike action and action short of a strike.
- Academic related members and issues were also high on the agenda and initiatives (for example the University of Hull) to further include this group of staff were discussed.

9. Any Other Business

9.1 The recent success of members at Sheffield International College winning UCU trade union recognition with the employer was acknowledged. All those involved including staff from the Regional Office were commended for their very hard work.

9.2 Members were encouraged to consider getting more involved in the life of the union by joining SUCU Committee.