

## **REPORT**

### **THE 2016 UNISON NATIONAL BLACK MEMBERS CONFERENCE HELD IN LLANDUDNO, WALES HELD BETWEEN 22 AND 24 FEBRUARY 2016**

**From: Ulela Kaferawanthu (Branch Black Members Officer)**

**To: UNISON Newcastle Branch**

The National Black Members Conference, held in Llandudno between 22 and 24 February 2016, went very well. The delegates from Newcastle City Branch felt the Conference had been vital as it dealt with issues that were of the utmost interest to UNISON Black members.

The Conference started on Friday January 22<sup>nd</sup> with Regional meetings. In our Northern Region meeting, we scoped what needed to be done and issues that needed our specific attention, vis a vis, election of national officers and supporting specific issues that needed all our support from the Region.

The Regional meeting was then followed by the main Conference at 16:00 with the Chairman, Margaret Greer, welcoming delegates and visitors to the Conference and asking the first guest speaker Councillor Frank Bradfield Mayor of Llandudno to address the Conference.

After the address and welcoming speech by the Mayor, we had presentations on the Standing Orders Committee Report and the Annual Report 1 that was on Organising and Recruitment. These reports were adopted by the Conference through voting.

The reports were followed by a speech by the second guest speaker, Dave Prentis, UNISON Secretary, who presented a good speech to the Conference. This speech was followed by the Mandela Award Presentation. Margaret Greer received this award for her excellent work in Unison. Then Conference went on to debate the first motion of the Conference. This motion debate was the last item on the main conference session for Friday.

Following the end of the main session of the Conference, there were sessions for service groups. Some delegates from Newcastle City Branch participated in the Local Government Service group discussions where pertinent issues were discussed mainly on pay conditions, austerity, and campaigning amongst others.

The second day of the Conference began with Report 2 of the Standing Orders Committee which was accepted by delegates via a vote. This report was followed by the Annual Report 2: Campaigning and International which delegates voted to accept.

The first guest speaker for this day was Matilda MacAttram, Director of Black Mental Health UK, who spoke on Black Mental Health issues. The speech she gave was good highlighting the specific problems experienced by Black mental health sufferers in the United Kingdom. Matilda's speech was followed by various debates on motions including the motion moved by Newcastle City Council: Recruiting and Organising Black Members.

The morning session for motion debates was followed by a speech by the second guest speaker for the day, Chuka Umunna, Labour MP who present a very good speech on the reason why Labour lost the General Election and how to learn from that.

The afternoon session of the Conference began with fringe meetings. Some of our branch members attended the meeting on the rise of Islamophobia and what was being done to mitigate threats arising from this rise. There were good discussions on this subject area.

Debates on motions followed the fringe meetings. Workshops and caucus meetings followed debates on motions. These marked the end of the Conference activities on the second day. A social event was provided on the evening of Saturday to ensure delegates and visitors were entertained.

The last day of the Conference comprised a presentation of the Standing Orders Report which delegates adopted via a vote. This presentation was followed by a speech from the final guest speaker, Wendy Nichols, the Unison President, who gave a good speech. The rest of the time for the conference was used to debate motions.

Over the three days, there was a wide range of motions debated and adopted for further action by the National Black Members Committee. There was near unanimity in the adoption of the motions moved.

The motions were grouped under three themes:

1. Recruitment and organising
2. Negotiating and bargaining
3. Campaigns.

The majority of the motions were under the “campaigns” theme.

Newcastle Branch moved motion 3 titled “Recruiting and Organising Black Members” under the “the recruitment and organising” theme. This motion was the only one moved from the Northern Region.

This motion highlighted the problems associated with the recruitment of Black employees in UNISON and also lack of their participation as activists once they join UNISON.

The motion was very well received by the Conference with five delegates and an officer from the National Office standing to move their support and asking the Conference to support the action requests in the motion. The motion was adopted by the Conference and the National Black Members Committee.

To ensure increasing numbers of Black workers join our UNION and become activists after they join, the motion called upon the National Black Members Committee to:

- 1) Encourage branches to work with their Black Members Officer and Black Members group to support recruitment activity amongst Black members of staff.
- 2) Encourage Regions and Branches to work with Black activists to ensure that the makeup of committees is representative of the membership.
- 3) Seek to work with Regional Black Members’ Committees to deliver training targeting Black members officers covering subjects such as becoming active, establishing a self-organised group and Challenging Racism in the Workplace.
- 4) To assess our current recruitment material to see if this needs to be updated to reflect the workforce.

The rest of the motions debated over the three days included in order of debating time allowed:

Motion 1 Increasing Young Black Members to attend Conference

Motion 2 Organising and Bargaining Race Equality

Motion 32 Branch Self Organised Groups one of our Eastern Regions motions

Motion 7 Black Women in low paid occupations

Motion 8 NMC Criteria for overseas Nurses

Motion 10 Assessing the value of the Race Equality Charter Mark for Black Staff and Students.

Motion 11 Labour Party reaching out to the Black Communities

Motion 12 Health Care for Young Black People

Motion 5 and Amendment 5.1 Urgent Review of the Joint Enterprise Legislation

Motion 6 Labour and the Black Vote 2015

Motion 9 Austerity How much worse will it get for Black Members

Motion 13 Black Action in Unison

Motion 14 Austerity and Black Workers

Motion 15 Prostate Cancer and Black Men from the Eastern Region

Motion 16 Prostate Cancer and Black Men

Motion 17 Immigration Detention and Deportation from the Eastern Region

Motion 18 Rise in Islamophobia

Composite A Nepal Earthquake

Motions 21 Justice for Sheku Bayoh

Motion 22 Black Representation in Public Life

Motion 23 Black Youth Unemployment

Motion 24 Black disabled and discriminated

Motion 25 Genocide of the forgotten people the Rohingya

Motion 26 Black organ Donation

Composite B Black Mental Health

Motion 29 Unison Black Members turning back the UKIP Tide

Motion 30 End the siege on Gaza

Motion 31 Treatment of Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender Asylum Seekers

Motion 33 After the General Election from the Eastern Region

Motion 4 Black Member involvement.

680 delegates and visitors attended the Conference. 2017 Conference is scheduled to be held at Brighton.