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1. UCU adopts environment policy - and wins plaudit of chief scientist

UCU has adopted policy which commits the union to play its full role in promoting the principle of sustainability. The 2007 Congress resolution unanimously passed – moved by Graham Petersen of South Thames College branch and seconded by John Fletcher President of Aston University LA – calls for UCU to:

- Develop the environmental role of union reps,
- Promote sustainability via the curriculum,
- Act at institution level to develop sustainable workplace policies and practices.

22 - Environment (South Thames College)

UCU recognises:

1. The ecological impact of national and global policies and activities which are damaging the ecosystem
2. The need for the adoption of the principles of sustainability to combat these policies.
3. The positive role which the education sector can play in promoting sustainability.

Congress therefore commits UCU to:

1. Promoting action at institution level to develop sustainable workplace policies and practices, such as 'greening the campus'.
2. Developing the environmental role of union reps and campaign to extend legal rights to paid release for their duties and training.
3. Contributing to efforts to promote sustainability via all elements of the curriculum.
4. Support appropriate organisations and campaigns in pursuit of these objectives.
5. Instruct UCU NEC to organise a fringe meeting on the environment at the 2008 UCU Congress.
6. Explore the policy options for reducing the 'environmental footprint' of UCU.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Sir David King, the government's chief scientific advisor, was a guest speaker at UCU Congress and gave a detailed, illustrated presentation on how human activity has contributed to climate change - and on the grave seriousness of the situation. He congratulated UCU for adopting its new environment policy.

Many UCU health and safety reps are already engaged in local discussions on institutions' environment policies. The intention of this newsletter and other initiatives is to respond to the new policy, to provide support for reps, and to give all interested UCU members a chance to contribute to this work.

Your news and ideas are sought. We are discovering that a good deal is already happening in many universities and colleges to make some effort to address environmental concerns, but we would like to have a fuller picture, to inform our efforts.

Please send news from your institution to Graham Petersen at graham.petersen@south-thames.ac.uk

2. 93 UCU reps say: 'Our institutions are not doing enough on environment'

The recent Labour Research Department survey on the environment got the highest rate of response of any union from UCU with 93 reps responding, suggesting there is considerable interest out there and a growing understanding of the importance of responding to climate change. Etc

Amongst the 93 UCU responses, you should note:

- 18 said the environment was already on the bargaining agenda but only 9 said there was a joint union-management agreement on environmental issues
- 17 have negotiated time off facilities for reps to carry duties and undergo training for environmental issues – but 2 have been refused such time off

Employers failing on green issues, says TUC: www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-13354-f0.cfm.

3. Successful UCU Congress environment fringe

The environment fringe meeting at UCU's first Congress was a success. Caroline Molloy, the TUC's Green Workplaces project leader, outlined the rapidly growing involvement of unions in environmental issues in the workplace, nationally and globally. She outlined the TUC's work, including TUSDAC - a forum for national unions and government to jointly develop sustainable policies, and the Green Workplaces project which is creating partnerships between unions and employers to lessen workplace environmental impact by measures including energy and waste reduction and travel-to-work schemes.

UCU rep Graham Petersen reported from South Thames College on how one such scheme is working, and on his role in TU Education in the training of environment reps. Delegates exchanged news and ideas and everyone present signed up to the new UCU environment network.

4. TUC conference on 'Environment policy and the climate change bill'

Roger Kline, Graham Petersen and several UCU members attended this 4 June conference. A fine speech by TUC deputy general secretary Frances O'Grady stressed the importance of putting response to climate change at the heart of trade union activity including the recruitment and organisation of new members and the negotiating agenda.

Frances O'Grady's speech and other useful materials can be found at the TUC environmental web page at:

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-13368-f0.cfm?theme=sustainableworkplace>

Other useful materials are on the TUC environmental web page at

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/theme/index.cfm?theme=sustainableworkplace>

UK employers failing on green issues, says TUC at

<http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-13554-f0.cfm>

5. 'The environment and climate change – a guide for union reps'

This booklet by The Labour Research Department is a practical guide for trade unionist to take action on the environment at work, it includes essential workplace and environment tools and contains results from the LRD workplace survey of over 1000 workplace contacts, highlighting examples of what can be achieved in the workplace, as well as setting out a case for legal rights for trade union reps to take up environment issues.

If you would like one free copy please contact Sharon Russell at srussell@ucu.org.uk

6. Association of Colleges start sustainability audit

UCU members in Further Education should note that college estate managers are currently being asked by the AoC about what if any sustainability initiatives they have taken or intend to take. This could be a good opportunity to raise environmental issues within your college.

7. TU reps courses on the environment

The TUC is running an excellent TU and Environment training course, taking place at South Thames College from 11-13 July. Previous courses have been oversubscribed, but this course currently needs more applicants, so if you are able to circulate this email / encourage any contacts to sign up, that would be great!

<http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/courses/index.cfm/citem/2170>

8. EDM warrants support

The following Early Day Motion is being promoted in support of workplace environmental representatives. You may wish to encourage your MP to sign this and you can find out who has signed it so far here:

<http://edmi.parliament.uk/EDMi/EDMDetails.aspx?EDMID=32872&SESSION=885>

WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENTAL REPRESENTATIVES

John McDonnell Mr. Elliot Morley Tony Lloyd Colin Challen
Nia Griffith Mark Lazarowicz Mr. Andrew Love Mark Durkan

"That this House notes the warnings set out in the Stern Report about the potential economic effects of climate change; strongly welcomes the fact that the Climate Change Bill will legislate to reduce carbon emissions by 60 per cent. by 2050; believes that trades unions and their 6.7 million members have a vital role to play in this task by working for best environmental practice in the workplace by negotiating sustainable workplace agreements with employers; notes that the Department of Trade and Industry is currently reviewing facilities and facility time for workplace representatives; and urges the Government to use this review to respond positively to the campaign for trade union environmental representatives to be given the same rights at work as other trade union representatives."

An Early Day Motion posted by John McDonnell MP calls for an increase in HSE resource. 76 members have already signed; please ask your MP to sign this EDM. If they haven't already done so, to show that there is strength of feeling in the country on this issue. The address is <http://edmi.parliament.uk/edmi/edmdetails.aspx?edmid=33095&session=885> where the signatories are listed. You can e-mail your MP via <http://www.writetothem.com/> website - just enter your postcode.

9. Join the UCU environment network

UCU has begun to establish a network of members who share concerns about the environment and want to do something. The network is intended to help us share ideas, news and good practise and find and train reps to maximise UCU's contribution locally and nationally to promoting sustainability.

Let us know of other members who might be interested: lecturers, researchers and academic related staff who we can invite to join the network. Or pass this on.

To join, send an email titled 'Join environment network' to Sharon Russell, srussell@ucu.org.uk

Important: please send Sharon the following information about yourself: Name, institution, role at work, any roles in UCU, any special environmental interest/knowledge, and your preferred e-mail address.