



- Congress May 2015 edition

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1. **Welcome to Equality at Congress**

This newsletter focuses on recent initiatives to involve all members in equality issues and current activities to progress equality in our workplaces and union practices.

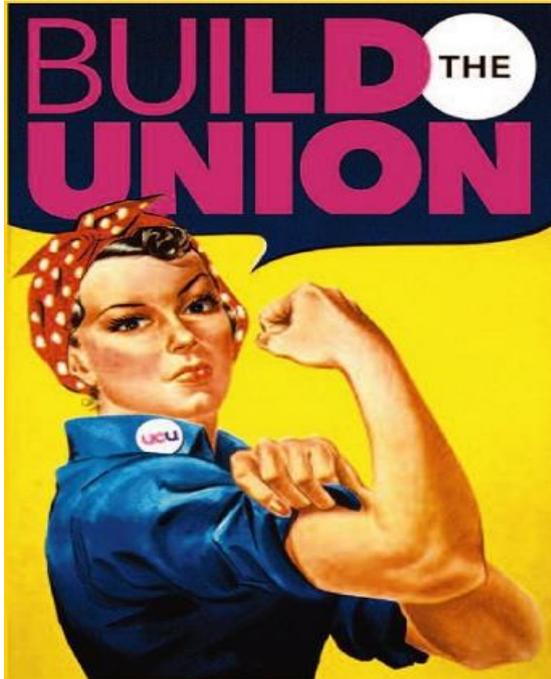
- **Recruiting and involving all members**

Ensuring that all members are visible and able to participate in the union is vital for an effective and inclusive union. To help support this priority, the equality team has produced a number of films which are available on the website which can be used to recruit members and also provide an introduction to discussing particular equality issues.

- **International women's day film**

This year we launched a film on International Women's Day which highlight women's huge contribution to the trade union and labour movement but also the struggle for equal access to education.

The film is showing at Congress on Saturday and Monday in Carron 2 room on the first floor at Congress and is available on the website.



There is a recruitment postcard which goes with the film available at the Equality Stall. **If you want to get involved in progressing equality for women, contact Charlotte Nielsen**
CNielsen@ucu.org.uk

- **Surveying members on equality issues**

The Equality Unit has been surveying members from different equality groups on different issues including LGBT members on monitoring and disclosure, black members and disabled members on their experience at work and in the union and women members on their experience of sexual harassment at work. All these surveys will inform the work of the equality committees and team. **The disabled members still has a week to run – please complete the survey if you self-identify as disabled.**

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/disabledmembers>

• **Social Model of Disability**

UCU supports and campaigns for the use of the social model as a way of understanding disability. It says that disability is created by barriers in society. The barriers generally fall into 3 categories:

- the environment – including inaccessible buildings and services
- people’s attitudes – stereotyping, discrimination and prejudice
- organisations – inflexible policies, practices and procedures
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The TUC has recently reviewed and re launched their policy which UCU has disseminated. UCU has also produced a film with Professor Colin Barnes who was Head of Disability Studies at Leeds University which articulates the importance of the model in an accessible way. **The film is showing at Congress on Saturday in Carron 2 room on the first floor at Congress and is available on the website.**

• **Holocaust Memorial Day films**

UCU has produced two films to support branches commemorating Holocaust Memorial Day and to raise awareness of the importance of campaigning against anti-Semitism in our workplaces and communities. **The films are showing at Congress on Sunday in Carron 2 room on the first floor at Congress and is available on the website.**

UCU has reviewed the anti-Semitism leaflet following a member consultation. The new leaflet is available on the Equality Stall at Congress.

• **Witness film for Black History Month**

UCU is producing a film about Black member’s experiences in the union and in the workplace. It is to be launched in Black History Month. **If you are interested in being involved in the film please contact Sharon Russell on SRussell@ucu.org.uk or Chris Nicholas CNicholas@ucu.org.uk**

• **Black members networks**

UCU is setting up Black member networks in our regions, to not only improve the participation of Black members but to ensure issues which are of importance to black members are heard and shared. The networks will feed in to the regional committees and to the National Black Members Standing Committee. **If you are interested in what is happening in your region, please contact Chris Nicholas. CNicholas@ucu.org.uk**

• **LGBT wallchart**

In partnership with other post 16 education trade unions and sector agencies, UCU has produced a LGBT wallchart showing the history of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered rights and acknowledging LGBT people from across the world who have made a difference to the visibility and rights of all. The wallchart will be available from UCU and for download from the website this summer. **To get involved in our LGBT work please contact Seth Atkin SAtkin@ucu.org.uk**

• **Prides**

UCU has a presence at a number of LGBT Prides held in the UK. This year these are Birmingham (23-24 May), Manchester (28-31 August) and London Pride march on Saturday 27th June. There will be a UCU stall at each Pride and in London UCU will be visible on the march. **If you want to get involved and want to know more please contact Swati Patel on SPatel@ucu.org.uk**

• **Training**

UCU runs an extensive training programme for our reps. The courses are held all over the country and include the UCU reps courses, casework, equality reps, health and safety reps and specialist courses such as sexual orientation and gender identity awareness and supporting members with mental health conditions. We are also launching in September, a course for Black members interested in becoming active in the union (flyer available on the equality stall). **If you are interested in attending any of these courses please check on the UCU website or contact Karen Brooks KBrooks@ucu.org.uk**

2. Equality Bargaining – we need your help

To support branches more in having the tools to take issues forward locally, we are developing an easy to use equality negotiators pack. We already have detailed guides to support branches on the following areas.

- Reasonable adjustments
- Disclosing a disability
- Mental Health
- Disability leave (HE priority)
- Supporting members experiencing domestic violence
- Shared parental leave and flexible working
- Equal pay
- Lesbian and Gay Rights
- Family friendly

- Points Based Immigration
- Transitioning at work
- Religion and belief at work
- Public Sector Equality Duty

Issues which we will be progressing this year are:

- Sexual harassment at work
- Bereavement at work
- Supporting people with cancer at work
- Carers
- Disabled members and performance management and capability
- Maternity leave and fixed term contracts

If your branch has any enhanced agreements on any of these issues, please could you send the details to the Equality team by emailing eqadmin@ucu.org.uk

If you want support in progressing equality locally, please get in touch too. A member of the team would be very happy to advice and support any equality initiatives at local level.

3. Best practice in organising and involving members

UCU is developing a good practice guide on how to ensure we involve all our members in our structures, activities, campaigns and policies. It will encourage UCU members and staff to reflect on what union look like in terms of participation and visibility of, for example, women and black members, at all levels of the union. The guide will look at good practice in mentoring, training, networks, events and campaigning.

If your branch has good practice to share or if you have found increasing participation challenging due to pressures which prevent this, please get in touch as we want the guide to reflect actual experiences and solutions. Please contact Helen Carr hcarr@ucu.org.uk

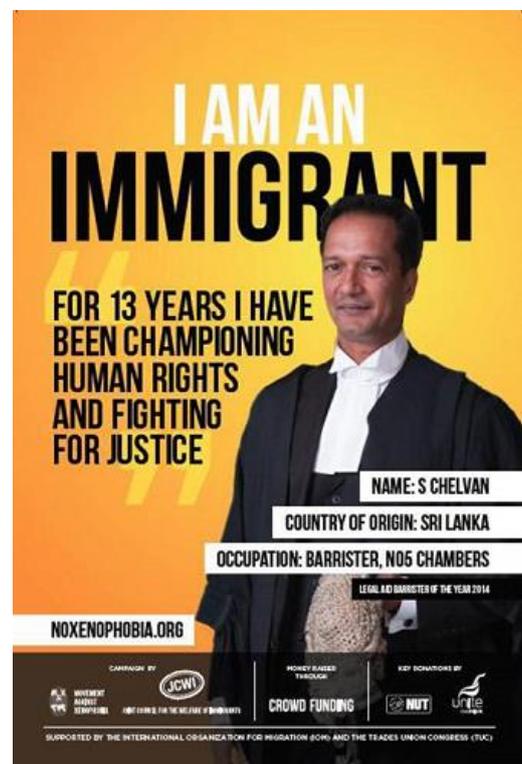
4. Campaigning positively on immigration

Congress Fringe

The politics of hate is creating a society which is becoming hostile to different equality groups and creating a climate of fear for many. This includes the current immigration debate which is poisonous, racist and negative and makes our voice for social justice and equality so important. There has also been the increasingly huge number of deaths of so many trying to reach Europe by boat and the fringe will discuss the importance of offering sanctuary and safety to those people fleeing poverty, war and persecution and the need to restore funds and resources for search and rescue missions in the Mediterranean.

John Wilkes, Chief Executive of the Scottish Refugee Council has accepted an invitation to speak. John has been in post since 2008 and has a background in equalities and human rights. He was formerly Director of the Equal Opportunities Commission in Scotland and Scottish Director of Carers UK. He has also held other Chief Executive roles in The Scottish voluntary sector on issues of HIV and AIS.

The fringe will discuss what we can do as UCU in this post election period to develop a Positive inclusive agenda for all.



Congress Fringe Meeting
Sunday 24th May
1.00pm – 2.00pm
Room Boisdale 1

Resisting the politics of hate – why immigration is good for all of us

UCU has published a booklet with CLASS called 'Immigration is good for us all'. This myth busts many of the media and political perceptions around immigration and details the positive contribution immigration has given to the UK. The booklet has been very well received and many regions and branches are using the booklet to campaign.

Impact of immigration policies on our sectors

A sister booklet has been launched looking at the impact of immigration policy (and perceptions) on higher and further education. This includes both students and staff.

Multiculturalism pack

Congress supported work to develop a resource pack on immigration, multiculturalism and racism. The Equality Unit is asking for contributions from members and appropriate affiliates. This will also bring together the existing resources UCU has produced. UCU has now developed significant resources which includes the updated anti-Semitism leaflet. **If you want to contribute please contact Sharon Russell SRussell@ucu.org.uk**

Coming soon



The annual UCU Equality Conference will be held in November 2015 (provisional date 12 -14 November). Please look out for further details on the website and through the Friday email in September.

5. Update on equality and employment rights

Shared parental leave

Under this new system parents will be able to choose how they share the care of their child during the first year after birth. Mothers will still take at least the initial two weeks following the birth, following that they can choose to end the maternity leave and the parents can opt to share the remaining leave as flexible parental leave.

Statutory adoption leave and pay

The statutory adoption leave will no longer have the 26 week qualifying period and adoption pay will be brought in line with maternity pay, which will be 90% of normal earning for the first six weeks.

Parental Leave

The right to unpaid parental leave will be extended to parents of any child under the age of 18 years old.

Surrogate parents eligible for adoption leave

Provided they meet the eligibility criteria parents who have a child through surrogacy will be permitted to take ordinary paternity leave and pay, adoption leave and pay and shared parental leave and pay. Both parents will be entitled to take unpaid time off to attend two antenatal appointments with the woman carrying the child.

Gender pay gap information to be published by organisations with over 250 employees

The Government has finally agreed to enforce section 78 of the Equality Act 2010 which means companies with more than 250 employees will have to publish the pay rates of their male and female staff in the next 12 months. While this accounts for just 0.13% of businesses, these organisations employ more than 10 million people across the UK. The Regulations will also be able to specify a fine for non-compliance, proposed to be up to £5,000.

In terms of detail, employers will be expected to publish the difference between male and female starting salaries, the difference between average basic pay and total average earnings of men and women broken down by grade and job type, as well as other components such as bonuses.

The new legislation has teeth, but a maximum fine of £5,000 may not be enough to ensure compliance.

Wider recommendations provision repealed

The Equality Act extended the power given to Employment Tribunals to recommend that an employer who has lost a discrimination claim take steps to mitigate the discrimination happening again in the future. This means that even if the claimant is no longer employed which is the case in 72% of cases, the tribunal can recommend that it take steps to improve its approach to equality, such as adopting an equal opportunities policy and arranging training for managers and other staff.

The Government has repealed this because of employer fears about inappropriate and excessive recommendations. It is now part of the Deregulation Act.

Caste discrimination

Following much debate in the Houses of Parliament, a provision was included within ERRA that will lead to caste discrimination being outlawed. There will have to be an order amending the Equality Act 2010 to bring caste within the definition of race, alongside ethnic and national origins, colour and nationality. There is no fixed date for implementation and the Government is yet to report. The Liberal Democrats had it as a manifesto pledge to give caste discrimination equal footing with other protected characteristics.

Same sex survivors benefits

UCU participated in the Government review of same **sex survivor benefits** in pension schemes. Inequality still exists for same sex couples who are only entitled to a limited period of a partner's benefits in the event of death. UCU with other trade unions met with the Treasury to push for equality in survivor benefits. The outcome of the review has not yet been announced and this huge delay will be challenged by the TUC.

Civil Partnership Act 2004

The Government has reviewed the **Civil Partnership Act** mainly to see if civil partnership is still wanted. UCU has argued with the TUC that the partnership should be extended to heterosexual couples rather than be abolished. The Government has announced there will be no change.

Of the over 10,000 online survey answers to each of the relevant questions:

- Less than a third of respondents supported abolition of civil partnership
- The majority were against closing civil partnership to new couples
- Over three-quarters were against opening up civil partnership to opposite sex couples.

Several organisations thought it was too soon to consider making changes to civil partnership – this should wait until the impact of extending marriage to same sex couples was known. Other organisations, in contrast, put forward a case for opening up civil partnerships to opposite sex couples now, for example because civil partnership and marriage were different relationships and couples should have equal access to both.

Paid Bereavement Leave

ACAS has produced guidance on handling bereavement in the workplace. The guidance is a direct result of campaigning and lobbying around the Children and Families Bill for statutory paid bereavement leave. The campaign was instigated by Lucy Herd whose young son died and found that only 3 days leave was given by most employers to cope with bereavement. Bereavement is often badly handled by employers so this guidance is welcomed not only in terms of ensuring adequate paid time off but in supporting and empathising with a bereaved colleague.

For further information on all these issues, please look on the UCU website or contact

eqadmin@ucu.org.uk

Further information please visit the following websites

www.ucu.org.uk

www.acas.org.uk

www.tuc.gov.uk

www.equalityhumanrights.com