



Unite Executive Council Report October 2020

Previous Executive Council Minutes from July 2020: Read and Adopted

FGPC minutes from 16th April: Read and Adopted

FGPC minutes from 21st May: Read and Adopted

General Secretary's Report

Activities of the General Secretary for the period since the Executive Council meeting of October 2020:

Political, International and Inter-Trade Union Matters

- Telephone call with Chris Clark, TSSA, re: "Labour Together"
- Phone call with Michael Gove, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, plus Gabby Rimkeviciute,
- James Silcox and Steffan Jones, Cabinet Office
- Zoom Contact Group Meeting with Sir Keir Starmer, Leader of the Opposition
- TUC arranged conference call with the Chancellor
- Participated in a Prime Minister hosted conference call with senior business leaders and representatives on the evening of Sunday 10 May following his filmed broadcast to the UK
- Phone call with Sir Keir Starmer, Leader of the Opposition.
- Attended TUC GC via skype
- Attended TUC EC meetings via skype
- Attended TUC large affiliate meetings via skype
- Phone call with Lucy Powell, MP
- Phone call with Dan Carden, MP
- Phone call with Laura Pidcock
- Phone call with AGS Tony Burke regarding international matters

Administrative and Organisational Issues

- Quarterly Management Meeting in Esher
- Met with Sharon Graham, EO
- Hosted a number of conference calls with the Senior Management Team
- Hosted a number of conference calls with the Regional Secretaries
- Phone call with Mike Eatwell, RO and Ian Methven, RO re: Rule 27



- Met with CoS Andrew Murray and AGS Howard Beckett regarding finance.
- Met with DoEP Amy Jackson regarding political matters
- Phone call with DoE Jim Mowatt
- Met with AGS Howard Beckett on a number of occasions regarding legal and various matters
- Met with AGS Steve Turner on a number of occasions regarding manufacturing and various matters

Constitutional Committees and Industrial Matters

- Pre-meeting with Ritchie James, RS, and Ryan Armstrong, RO, re: Mitie, Sellafield
- Met with Tim Roache, GS of GMB, Ritchie James, RS and Ryan Armstrong, RO, re: Mitie, Sellafield
- Conference call with BA reps and management
- Meeting with BA CEO Alex Cruz
- Attended F&GPC meeting via audio conference 16 April
- Attended F&GPC meeting via zoom 21 May
- Phone call with Martin Gwynn, CEO GIST
- Introductory meeting via Teams with new Sainsbury's CEO, Simon Roberts
- Skype meeting with David Connell, Human Resources Director, PSA Group

Media/Interviews

- Interviewed for C5 documentary – “History of the Mersey and The Docks”
- Interview with John Arlidge – Sunday Times Magazine
- Filmed video segments for forthcoming Durham Miners’ Gala and Tolpuddle Festival events
- Filmed video segment for Education Department’s new virtual learning programme

ORGANISING REPORT

‘Lockdown’ Growth Strategy

Covid-19 is obviously a serious health pandemic with far reaching economic consequences. It was/is crucially important that we were/are with our members and workers throughout this time.

Our Organisers have continued to work throughout this period, often using innovative techniques to contact workers, whilst ensuring ‘social distancing’ is maintained. From the very beginning of ‘lockdown’ it has been our Department’s



objective to stand with our members and workers. By focussing many growth campaigns on 'essential services' where workers have remained at work throughout this crisis, we have helped deliver over 40,000 new members.

Despite the obvious practical obstacles in our path, we have been able to drive and grow issues in the following areas. These areas are the ones where "swarm" campaigns were deployed:

- Civil Air Transport
- Construction
- Health
- Food and Drink
- Passenger

It is clear, that redundancies will start to hit the Union's membership, but by continuing to focus on organising and growth, continuing to be on the front foot and fighting for jobs, we can mitigate the long-term impact on our organisation, along with winning on the key issues workers face.

Work, Voice & Pay – Bargaining through the pandemic

Throughout this period we have continued to provide practical support and advice to our frontline Shop Stewards. As we entered 'lockdown' the Department produced industrial guidance through our template 'lockdown' agreement, with the objective of supporting those activists and officials who needed it. At a time when everything was in flux, it was critical that the Union continued to provide support and maintain clear industrial lines, namely the rejection (wherever possible) of imposition in favour of meaningful negotiations.

Second, at a time when decisions regarding jobs, pay, terms and conditions that usually take months are being made instead in a matter of hours and days, it is extremely important that we understand the employers real 'ability to pay'. Of course, for many the pandemic has led to vastly reduced revenues or pressure on services. That is understood. But this does not always equate to the need for drastic cuts. To this end, we produced our template request for 'financial disclosure'. The demand to 'open the books' prior to acceptance of any serious employer led proposals is critical. Many employers (like British Airways) can afford to make many fewer cuts than they are proposing, simply because of their strong financial position on entering the crisis. They have 'buffers'. The idea that any employer will be more likely to make cuts because the Union has asked for it to make clear its underlying financial position (as opposed to just the current profit and loss) is misleading. We



need more knowledge not less. We need to make our own informed decisions, not be led by employers so-called 'facts' presented to us in a vacuum.

For 'essential workers' who remained at work throughout the crisis and those encouraged to return as 'lockdown' restrictions were eased, health and safety has been a critical issue. It was fantastic that so many Shop Steward Committees and Health and Safety Reps were in a position to pre-empt Government advice and negotiate their own procedures to ensure the safety of our members. Many contacted 'Work, Voice and Pay' with details of their agreements and as a result we issued an example template of a Covid-19 Checklist to our Shop Stewards and Officers. It is important that activists receive practical tools in a timely fashion as well as advice and commentary.

Finally, for some wage negotiations have continued as (almost!) normal and therefore we have also continued to provide support through the provisions of inflation figures and average earnings data via 'Work, Voice, Pay Monthly'.

In the coming weeks we will be adding to our growing list of practical tools through the development of our online 'Agreement Builder' which will allow Shop Stewards and Officers to create bespoke collective agreements on any number of subjects (including those related to Covid-19). Perhaps more importantly in the current context, we are also working on proposals to develop a simple but effective 'ability to pay' calculator, whereby Shop Stewards with major employers in the private sector, would be able to see at a glance a snapshot as to the underlying financial stability of the company. If possible, this would help activists gain a better understanding of what financial 'buffers' their employer has to help withstand the crisis.

MANUFACTURING REPORT

As with the last report, three months on this report largely speaks for itself and core issues are addressed in each of the sector specific reports below. At the time of writing **we're staring in the face of a second national lockdown, with local measures having been already introduced across our nations** and ongoing concerns over demand alongside a collapse of confidence in the face of a deep recession. This continues to impact on any meaningful return to work in many of our manufacturing sectors and their associated suppliers. **Nationally, some 4.8 million workers remain on furlough** (16 percent) which, while a welcome improvement on the 32 percent a month earlier, better reflects the growing number of dismissals and



redundancies across our economy as employer contributions to furlough payments have been introduced.

In manufacturing we've seen some improvement in the total number of employees on furlough, but with **numbers still at 421,600 (17 percent) and some 70 percent of them on full time furlough despite short time working options**, we remain deeply concerned about our ability to recover and rebuild from Covid, protecting the jobs, skills and knowledge necessary in the absence of a clear plan and strategy from government. Further, government plans to simply end the Job Retention Scheme (JRS) at the end of October, coupled with the ending of the Self-Employed Income Support Scheme, has led to a continued and rapid increase in new claimants for Universal Credit (up 2.5 million by the end of June alone and currently totalling some 5.51 million), housing and unemployment benefit.

In this climate the devastation being wreaked on our manufacturing industries and wider economy is unprecedented and **our shop stewards and officers are currently mounting the fight of their lives** to protect both jobs and long fought for terms and conditions of employment.

The challenges we face are immense and beyond the immediacy of the fight for jobs will be magnified by a failure of the UK and EU to reach a good and fair agreement on future trade by the end of the government's self-imposed timetable ending in December 2020. **While GDP grew by 6.6 percent in July compared with June 2020**, the third consecutive monthly increase, **it has still only recovered just over half of the lost output caused by Covid-19**. In July, monthly GDP was 11.7 percent lower than the pre-pandemic levels seen in February 2020 with **the manufacturing sector being 7.0 percent lower** than in February 2020.

Given our warning of the dangers to UK manufacturing of a no-deal or even bad deal Brexit remain very real. Concerns over tariffs, quotas, customs arrangements, tail backs and supply chain disruption are very real as are genuine issues over regulatory convergence and rules of origin. **A failure to reach a sensible agreement with our largest and closest trading partners will lead to a perfect storm for manufacturers already devastated by a global supply chain and market meltdown.** This, in addition to **growing consumer and regulatory pressures to speed up our response to the climate emergency**, is leading to global corporations with global footprints, shifting product and investment away from the UK.

Throughout this crisis we've had **three clear priorities**; the **safety** of our members and their families, their **financial protection** and the **security of a job** to return to. We can be very proud of the work we've done and continue to do on all three fronts. Over the past period however, we have moved the debate on to a serious discussion



about the future of our economy and the need to recover and rebuild from Covid-19 with manufacturing at the heart of a 'build back better' agenda.

- We have **updated and re-launched our 'Manufacturing Matters' industrial strategy** and to accompany it, **launched an immediate focused short-term campaign (#SOS4Jobs)** to secure a targeted renewal of the Job Retention Scheme post October.
- We continue to discuss with Treasury alongside other government departments the need for urgent assistance for both individual businesses and whole sectors of the economy. **Exposing the failures of the governments 'Project Birch'** offer and loan based schemes to refinance corporate debt.
- We continue to **lead the discussion in our movement and with government for a 'green new deal' to meet the challenges of the climate emergency** that places workers and our communities at the heart of a discussion on the just transition of our economy.

Services Report

Construction – apprenticeship survey and the 'Talent Retention Scheme'

The construction industry is facing a major disaster with the number of apprentices losing their job due to the pandemic. There also is real concern over the predicted 2020 intake of apprentices. The sector carried out a survey of our apprentice members in order to help us gauge the level of the problem. Some of the key points to come out of the survey were:

- Electrician and plumbing apprentices made up 2/3 of respondents
- Eagerness to complete apprenticeship a chief priority
- Of those furloughed over 2/3 paid 80% of normal pay
- Concern over social distancing being implemented on site
- Concern around understanding changes to the workplace due to Covid-19

Unite has made strong representation to BEIS Ministers with proposals to safeguard apprentices to at least complete their apprenticeship and continue to work with the CITB of initiatives to bring this about. In addition Unite have via the CITB, now secured a place on the CLC Skills Network, this should ensure Unite have the opportunity to have their voice heard.

Education – Sheffield University jobs saved as plans dropped to fire and rehire 8,000 staff on inferior pay and terms

Thanks to a campaign spearheaded by Unite, proposals by the University of Sheffield for staff to go down to four days-a- week, with no pay rises, no incremental pay rises



and no promotions have now been abandoned, along with other higher education unions.

Energy & Utilities - Centrica - British Gas

Announced 5000 redundancies across the business swiftly followed by the issue of a Section 188 dismissing all 20,000 employees and re-employing them on different terms and conditions (firing and rehiring, similar to BA). Company also served notice on all recognition agreements. This action impacts Unite as the Company have indicated that across the field force of 9,500 employees they will no longer recognise Unite. This will affect 166 of our members in the electrical services part of the business. We have launched a National petition and have received 2142 responses so far.

The local Officer and our Convenor are doing an excellent job on behalf of our members. The National Officer has obtained the support of the GMB to retain recognition in this part of the business and also requested a meeting with the new CEO to discuss the ongoing situation. The Company will still recognise Unite in the gas storage and power business streams where we have another 300 members.

Health - Industrial issues during Covid 19 England

- Unite working with sister trade unions has won national safe guards on key terms and conditions such as management of annual leave, shielding, quarantine and the long awaited guidance on flexible working options for the Bank and temporary workforce during the pandemic
- A refreshed English Industrial relations statement was agreed NHS Employers and Trade Unions in July to reflect a new phase of pandemic and provide guidance for employer and trade union relationships in this period.
- Trade union principles on health and safety risk assessment and vulnerable workers (including Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) staff) has also been published. The key point from this document is to ensure that trade union health and safety representatives are involved and present in the risk assessment process and that staff network groups such as BAME and Disabled employee network bodies are consulted too.
- Unite played the leading role for in the establishment of the English Laboratory Forum which meets on a regular basis to review what is happening on the testing regime and in particular the impact on our healthcare science members.

Scotland



- After concerted lobbying by Unite and Scottish health trade unions, students on unpaid placement who contract Covid-19 on NHS placement are now eligible for the Death in Service benefit for Health and Social Care staff

Wales

- Unite launched a petition to force the UK Conservative Government would not tax the £500 lump sum payment for social care workers granted by the Labour Welsh Government.
- A Covid-19 testing super lab is coming to Wales, but a Non NHS private provider will operate the Super lab. Unite will pay close attention to these developments.

Northern Ireland

- Unite and trades unions have developed the fit testing regime for the wearing of PPE for health staff
- The Death in Service scheme for Northern Irish health and social care workers has been announced after pressure from trade unions to get this established like in the rest of the UK.

Republic of Ireland

- The National Joint Industrial Council is the bi-monthly forum where all issues are normally discussed with the involvement of Unite with sister union
- The excellent co-operation of HSE employees so far during the pandemic has surpassed expectations or what was thought possible however it is a great concern that the HSE is now indicating that they believe most of the changes implemented with the goodwill of members, will be implemented on a permanent basis. This will be challenged.

TRANSPORT AND FOOD SECTORS

Unite Transport and Food Workers – facing the impact of coming out of Lockdown,

Social Distancing changes, Local lockdowns, Quarantine, Face Coverings requirements, JRS/SEISS changes, inadequate Government support and enforcement requirements

Following the important stabilising effect of the Job Retention Scheme, the introduction of the flexible furlough has provided vital assistance, but the gradual increase in the % of JRS to be paid by the employer from August, has meant that since the last Executive Council, redundancy mitigation and negotiations have dominated the agenda in the Transport & Food sectors, particularly CAT, DRFW, fuel delivery, license house managers and hospitality-related FDA and RTCWL. A notable



success was at Ryanair, where negotiations achieved temporary changes to be restored, provided additional protection for the lowest paid, and prevented all job losses.

In FDA, RTCWL and Passenger sectors, and those parts of CAT and DRFW where our members have been working on the front line throughout the pandemic, delayed pay negotiations, calls for recognition and compensation payments, agency/contract working, health, safety and security issues have all been at the forefront. There are major positive examples in Food, Drinks Logistics & Beverages manufacturing, where regular union and employer meetings have ensured safer operations and protections for our members; and stark contrasts in the meat sector, where there have been two extremes: on the one hand, Covid-19 has led to localised outbreaks forcing shutdowns, on the other, adequate pay to support self-isolation has prevented such outbreaks.

Enforcement of requirements to wear face coverings on public transport, in airports and in supermarkets have led to major pressures on our members, which we have raised at every level – none of our members should be put at risk through lack of effective enforcement provisions, and without these provisions, confidence cannot be restored.

The disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on BAEM people has been particularly significant in Transport & Food sectors, and Equality Impact Assessments e.g. carried out by Unite in BA at Gatwick have exposed serious redundancy inequalities both within and across sectors, with women, BAEM, and 'out' LGBT+ concentrated in areas hardest hit, and the impact in the sectors of pregnancy, childcare and caring on women transport and food workers, and of disability is clear.

Unite Shop Stewards in Transport and Food under pressure from employers using Covid-19 as cover for permanent cuts, changes, restructuring and undermining the union

While there are vital constructive examples included in all the National Officer reports which follow, it is also the case, with BA heading the league table, there are also employers in Transport and Food using Covid-19 to impose cuts and changes they have sought over many years, and as I am preparing this report, there is increasing concern being raised regarding convenors and shop stewards facing disciplinary action and redundancy. We have raised this at the Unite Covid Coordinating Task Force, and are closely monitoring the situation in line with Unite rule book protections for our shop stewards.

Campaigning for Aviation



The continuing impact of Covid-19 on the entire aviation sector is devastating, with every part of the sector involved in major negotiations. Our campaign for aviation overall is for the bespoke package for aviation we first called for right at the outset of the pandemic and in our Blueprint for Aviation, which now has an Urgent Summer Update https://unitetheunion.org/media/3266/9168_ukaviation_briefing_a4_4page_3-1.pdf

The Chancellor first stated in March there would be such support, followed by months of no action, and our summer aviation campaign targeted him directly with online postcards, messages and socially distanced demonstrations across all regions/nations, and a letter signed by cross-Party MPs calling for an extension of JRS support for aviation. As well as raising the issues at Prime Minister's Questions in July, speaking at the TUC Congress in September, Keir Starmer confirmed his and Labour's support for a package for aviation. Both Keir Starmer and Jim McMahon also met with the Unite BA reps leadership.

Unite has continued to raise the vital need for support for aviation, including with Kelly Tolhurst Aviation Minister and the Department for Transport in weekly meetings which have also discussed, safety measures, testing/quarantine, skills and Brexit. We have also coordinated with aviation unions and the TUC, as well as with Mike Kane Shadow Aviation Minister, Jim McMahon Shadow Transport Secretary and Anneliese Dodds Shadow Chancellor. Unite wrote to Robert Courts MP the newly appointed Aviation Minister on 9 September, the day we also held an MPs briefing on aviation as it was the day before a debate in parliament on aviation on the government's response to the Transport Select Committee's report on the impact of Covid-19 on Aviation, which included Unite's evidence session.

The announcement on 7 September that the government will finally develop a plan to support the aviation sector until 2025 is of course welcome. However, they said the details will only be announced 'in the Autumn' – far too late for so many of our members' jobs and livelihoods.

We have met regularly with CAT reps and regional officers, and had support from the Campaigns & Communications and Political Departments and across our regions and nations.

EQUALITIES REPORT

TIME FOR EQUALITY 2020-2030 The impact of Covid-19 continues to be far-reaching, and the exposure of all existing underlying inequalities and systemic discrimination is clear. The sadness, fear, passion and anger of members from this are a daily reality. We have already carried out the measuring and produced the reports, now is the time we must have action for equality: **A Risk Assessment and an**



Equality Impact Assessment in all workplaces and on all policies. This is the only way we can effectively protect everyone's safety, pay and jobs, dignity and security, and:

- stop the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on Black & Asian people's lives
- ensure women have safe PPE that fits and protects them
- check disabled workers and pregnant women are not being targeted for redundancy
- prevent LGBT+ workers being subjected to bullying & harassment, or isolated from support
- act on the impossible choice workers are facing between family care and keeping a job or between safety and having enough money to survive on
- ensure anyone facing domestic violence and abuse, or mental health pressures has somewhere to turn
- protect members through recognition of "Long Covid"

There are many other changes needed which Unite has been long been calling for – statutory rights for union equality representatives; new rights not just to measure the gender pay gap, but action required to close it too, and to measure and act on pay gaps for BAEM and disabled workers; an end to the hostile environment for migrant workers; and enacting Part 1 of the Equality Act on socio-economic inequalities – in other words, class. Without these changes, the underlying inequalities exposed so starkly by Covid-19 will deepen. It's Time for Equality – Now.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT – Making sure your workplace is Fair for ALL

Equality Impact Assessments are essential to ensure that workplace policies and changes to policies do not discriminate and are fair to all, particularly safety, jobs and pay. As Covid19 further exposes deep underlying inequalities, Unite's new "*Guide to Workplace Equality Impact Assessments*", backed up by a programme of online workshops for reps, is a vital tool. The virus may not discriminate, but the impact is disproportionately fatal for Black & Asian ethnic minority people, a great risk to pregnant women, women and BAEM workers are particularly at risk as front line workers, disabled workers and LGBT+ workers are at risk of greater discrimination and exclusion, and all with childcare and caring responsibilities are facing conflicting pressures and impossible choices. The devastating impact of a decade of austerity has left a threadbare safety net, patched up by the Job Retention Scheme, SEISS and other workplace and community measures, but pressure is intensifying as these come to an end, and inequality will intensify if we don't act now.

The "*Unite Guide to Workplace Equality Impact Assessments*" includes a proposed **9-step approach to Workplace EQIAs** and sections on:

- How Covid19 is exposing inequality
- Unite's call for action on equality NOW!



- Guide to Workplace Equality Audits : the first step to Workplace Equality Impact Assessments (EQIAs)
- How to approach EQIAs
- Covid19, Equality and Health & Safety Risk Assessments
- Selected sources of further information with links to Unite and other useful guides
- Annexes : *including Unite Equality Audit templates, the Public Sector Duty and Human rights, Template letter to request an EQIA in a public authority, EHRC Wales Myth Busters, Template Equality Impact Assessment*

A checklist has also been produced specifically on **Redundancy and Equality Impact Assessment** and Unite's guidance on **Domestic Abuse and Violence** has been further updated and strengthened. We are also reviewing the **Equalities web pages** which we were alerted require attention following changes to the Unite site overall.

Political Report

October 2020

The period since the last EC meeting has continued to be dominated by the Covid-19 crisis. The political team has been working hard to give as much support as possible to our members, to defend jobs, incomes and keep people safe at work.

Parliament

Despite the consequences on jobs with mass unemployment on the horizon the Chancellor, Rishi Sunak, is still determined to end the job retention scheme at the end of October. From debates in Parliament it is clear that there is a cross-party consensus that the job retention scheme must be extended. It is only the Government who are refusing to acknowledge the grave threat that hangs over the future of UK workers, and the British economy.

Redundancies, under cover of Covid-19, are already being served with dire effects on our industrial sectors. We are keeping up the fight to protect jobs and save our crucial industries by applying maximum pressure in Parliament, and we have had brilliant support from a wide range of Labour MPs. With a second national lockdown on the horizon, and many local ones already in place, our parliamentary campaigning is as important as ever.

Key actions during this period include:

- Promoting the “SOS for Jobs” launch – attended by over 40 MPs
- Aviation Zoom briefing to MPs ahead of Aviation debate



- Drafting and distributing briefings for industrial debates
- Private meetings with Shadow Cabinet members on policy issues
- Briefing MPs ahead of Alex Cruz appearing at Transport Committee
- Drafting and promoting an Early Day Motion against “Fire & rehire”
- Preparing interventions on BA, the wider aviation sector and “fire and rehire” at Transport Questions

Since Parliament returned after Summer Recess, Unite has been specifically focused on the “SOS for Jobs” and “No Fire and Rehire” campaigns. We have achieved a number of interventions in Parliament, as well as a high attendance at the SOS for Jobs rally and BA Zoom briefing, an Early Day Motion against fire and rehire, the drafting and distribution of briefings ahead of opposition debates, a backbench debate and the Transport Select Committee session with BA CEO Alex Cruz, and meetings with Shadow Cabinet members.

We have also set up a communications network for the Unite group of Labour MPs to help co-ordinate our Parliamentary work.

Our campaigns have definitely had some impact with the Labour Party, as the Leader Keir Starmer centred the key demands from both campaigns in his speech to the TUC on 15 September, calling for an extension of the Job Retention Scheme, and insisting: “Fire and rehire tactics are wrong. They’re against British values. They should also be illegal.” The campaigns are looked at in more detail below.

SOS for Jobs

Over 40 MPs – all Labour apart from the SNP’s Chris Stephens – attended the launch of Unite’s “SOS for Jobs” campaign on College Green outside Parliament on Wednesday 9 September, with speeches by Shadow Chancellor Anneliese Dodds and Shadow Transport Secretary Jim McMahon. The MPs present signed Unite’s pledge to back the UK’s workers, with over 20 others adding their names afterwards. Following the launch, many of the MPs participated in Labour’s opposition day debate that day on protecting jobs and businesses, with Unite’s briefing informing many of their contributions. Of special note was Grahame Morris’s speech, which raised the SOS for Jobs campaign launch:

Grahame Morris: I wish to acknowledge the tremendous campaigning efforts by members of Unite the union, my own trade union as a Unite MP, who have come down today from the aerospace, aviation and manufacturing sectors, and a variety of others, to express their concerns for their own jobs when the furlough scheme comes to an end.

At Prime Minister’s Questions a week later, Shadow Minister for the Voluntary Sector and Charities Rachael Maskell used her question to call for a targeted



extension of the Jobs Retention Scheme. However, her request was rejected by Johnson, who insisted: “We need to get people off furlough and into work.”

The issue returned front and centre the following day at a debate by the SNP on the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, with MPs fully briefed beforehand. Numerous excellent contributions were made by Unite MPs and others, some of which were clipped and tweeted from the Unite Politics account. Zarah Sultana’s speech mentioned the SOS for Jobs campaign directly:

Zarah Sultana: A deepening jobs crisis can be prevented—it just takes political will. Look at France, Germany, Ireland, New Zealand, Australia and elsewhere—their Governments have stepped in and extended wage support schemes. If they can do it, so can we. This is demanded by those from trade unions like mine, Unite, which last week launched the “SOS for jobs!” campaign.

No to Fire & Rehire

Although this tactic of Fire and Rehire is being used by a number of employers, it is of particular concern to British Airways staff, tens of thousands of whom have spent the summer under the threat of either seeing their pay, terms and conditions severely degraded or facing the loss of their jobs. The issue was raised at a Parliamentary Zoom briefing ahead of the backbench debate on the aviation sector, on Thursday 10 September. The briefing saw 23 Labour MPs and Peers hear directly from Diana Holland and Oliver Richardson, and was complemented with a written briefing for the debate that went to all MPs. The debate itself was well attended, with many MPs using the union’s briefings to inform their contributions. Ian Byrne raised BA and “fire and rehire” in the strongest terms:

Ian Byrne: The BA plan to fire and rehire its staff on worse terms and conditions is undeniably a fundamental attack on the rights of its workforce. It is immoral, and shamefully, it is spreading to other sectors of our economy, including British Gas, which with BA joins a list of dishonour in treating a loyal workforce appallingly.

The following day saw a Private Members Bill from the SNP’s Gavin Newlands outlawing this practice make the Order Paper, although it was not reached during that day’s business and has little chance of becoming legislation without Government support. An Early Day Motion (#860) on the topic was drafted for Newlands, which attracted 37 signatures in 10 days, while a letter from him calling for cross-party support was distributed to Unite MPs. See below for more details.

BA boss Alex Cruz gave evidence to the Transport Committee the following Wednesday (16 September), and a briefing on issues to raise was distributed to Committee members beforehand. As expected, Cruz led with the news that an agreement had been reached in principle with Unite on a number of issues, which



would be put out to ballot, and he implied that the notorious fire and rehire threats were now off the table. However, this was not the case, and Sam Tarry was able to use information from Unite challenge Cruz on the matter – pointing out that 800 mixed-fleet staff were still subject to this shameful threat, and that A-Scale and engineering staff were still subject to lay-offs of up to 24 weeks a year. Following the session, Unite put out a press release refuting Cruz's claims and accusing him of misleading the Committee, which was forwarded to all MPs.

At the following day's Transport Questions, Gavin Newlands raised Cruz's pledge to the Committee "that he would protect BA at all costs" – charging: "Those costs will be borne by 10,000-plus jobless employees and the remainder whose terms and conditions have been permanently slashed and are as yet unknown." Richard Burgon explained to MPs how Cruz had misled the Committee:

Richard Burgon: Giving evidence to the Transport Committee yesterday, BA boss Alex Cruz seemed to suggest that the company's notorious fire and rehire threats were now off the table. However, I am informed by Unite the Union that, although it's campaigning has meant that many of its members are now free from this kind of blackmail, there are at least 800 mixed fleet staff who still face this threat unless they sign new contracts.

Aviation Minister Robert Courts replied that "the Government are quite clear that they regret some of the decisions that have been taken, although these are of course commercial decisions".

A meeting with Shadow Employment Rights Secretary Andy McDonald has been arranged for the week commencing 21 September to discuss how the Labour Party can best support any legislation to make fire and rehire illegal.

Text of EDM #860: Employment practices on redundancy and rehiring:

That this House notes with alarm the growing number of employers, especially in the retail, hospitality and aviation sectors, who are making employees redundant before re-employing them on less-favourable terms and conditions; believes that these employers are cynically using the covid-19 crisis as cover to reduce staff costs at a time when they should instead be focused on supporting their employees through this pandemic; agrees with Unite the union and others that this fire-and-rehire practice makes a mockery of workers' rights and goes against the spirit, if not the letter, of UK employment legislation; and calls on the Government to close this legal loophole as a matter of urgency, for example by amending the Employment Rights Act 1996 to specify that such redundancies should automatically be regarded as unfair dismissals.



We are also working on numerous other industrial campaigns, and have been supporting our members in places such as Babcock Clyde, Sizewell C and Easyjet. We are also planning to run a political campaign on hospitality jobs, given that the sector is currently at risk of losing at least 900,000 jobs.

Covid-19

Boris Johnson's government heads up a litany of failures in its handling of Coronavirus. The most shameful is the lack of testing and those that manage to get a test have to contend with an enormous backlog for getting results. This causes great uncertainty both at home and in the workplace.

This lack of a plan demonstrates the height of incompetence of Boris Johnson's government. They knew schools were going back, that universities were returning for the new academic year and that workers who were working from home were returning to their workplace. They have failed to adequately prepare for any of these changes.

Their sheer incompetence has led inevitably to the spread of the pandemic and we are now in the second wave with local lock downs in place, and further restrictions that will be in place until the Spring. Yet workers remain without adequate protection from the government in terms of their jobs, income and security. Despite new restrictions in place, the government have not agreed to extend support for society or for the economy. The duty of a government is to protect the people. On every single measure they have failed.

We are also continuing to help develop communications for Unite candidates running for elections on super Thursday next May. We are also setting up other courses for activists as well as a political school for women via zoom.

Labour leadership

Keir Starmer gave a speech to the TUC on September 15th, where he strongly affirmed his commitment to the trade unions. He supported Unite's demands for targeted sector support, and to extend the furlough scheme. Starmer also called on the government to work with the Labour Party, trade unions and businesses to create a new, targeted scheme, to replace the job retention scheme, to deliver direct support and training to those who need it, and to prevent mass unemployment.

On workers' rights, he called on the government to outlaw "fire and re-hire" tactics, where thousands of workers had been issued redundancy notices and offered new contracts on worse pay and conditions he said.

Naming and shaming BA and British Gas, he said: "Fire and re-hire tactics are wrong. They're against British values. They should also be illegal."



Responding to the speech, Len McCluskey said:

“This was a good speech which showed Keir to be absolutely on the side of working people.

“An unemployment tsunami is looming and I very much welcome the Labour Party’s campaign to save working people from the scourge of mass unemployment by fighting for a new job protection scheme with targeted, sector support for those industries that need it most.

“Failure to do so is to let the historic investment to save jobs made by UK taxpayers go to waste, and worse, will let working communities slide into decline. With political will, that can be averted.

“I also welcome Keir’s condemnation of the increasing use of fire and rehire tactics to hammer wages and conditions, and his call today for this to be outlawed by the government. It is a despicable and immoral practice that is spreading through the public and private sector and must be made illegal.

“I call on employer organisations and MPs from all parties to work together to put pressure on the government to defend our workforce in a way that Germany, France, Spain and other European countries are doing. UK workers must not, once again be treated as second class citizens and they must not be forced to pay for this crisis.”

Linking the Industrial to the Political

We have been working alongside the research department on mapping our workplaces and membership to parliamentary constituencies. From this we can now see how many members, activists, CLP delegates and Labour affiliated members we have in each constituency.

We are hoping to use this information, alongside the outcomes of the political research we are conducting, to do very specific targeting of our members in particular constituencies to get MPs supporting our demands and to increase support for Labour in particular constituencies. We will also be contacting Labour MPs with details of the largest workplaces in their area, with the aim of developing relationships between MPs and the membership, and ensuring MPs are aware of the workplace issues in their constituencies.

Work with Shadow Secretary of State for Employment Rights and Protections

The political team are continuing to input into the Shadow Department for Employment Rights and Protections with regular meetings with Andy McDonald and his team. We are extremely grateful for the support and solidarity shown to use by Andy McDonald, who is unwavering in his commitment to support trade unions. We



see it as a political priority to defend and progress the policy commitments which were achieved between 2015-19 through the consultations and negotiations with the trade union movement as they produced a gold standard set of industrial relations, individual workers' rights and trade union freedoms which would hugely benefit our members if implemented by a Labour

Government. The team will continue to work with this department which has become even more crucial in the Coronavirus pandemic with the acute effects it will have on working people and their jobs.

After the Political Report was presented the Executive Officers recommended reducing affiliation to the Labour Party by 50K. This was agreed by the Executive Council after a lengthy debate.

Central Office Departments & Administration

NATIONAL CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCES

6th Policy Conference 2020

Arrangements are in hand for the policy conference to be held 28 March to 1 April 2021. Branches and constitutional committees have been advised of the decision of the EC in July regarding motions for the conference and we are writing to delegates to find out whether they are still able to attend the postponed conference.

National Equalities Conferences

Further to the previous report on these conferences a paper setting out the arrangements for the conferences in 2021 has been circulated separately for consideration.

2021 other national conferences.

It is proposed that the National Industrial Sector Conferences take place in the new Unite Conference and Education Centre in Birmingham in November 2021. The National Retired Members conferences will be held concurrently with these conferences in accordance with previous practice, it is also proposed that the inaugural National Community Membership conference be held at the same time.

The National Young Members Conference will also be held in the Birmingham conference centre on 15&16 October 2021.

Finance Report



Total Income amounted to £41.2 million in the June Quarter of 2020, down £1.5 million versus the same period a year ago. Whilst Contribution Income was down in the quarter versus the same period in 2019, it should be noted that the results for Quarter 1 2020 were higher than expected due to the timing of the receipt of check off contributions. Other income remained static when compared to the same period in 2019.

Our income levels remain relatively static, however, we are anticipating a significant period of unrest in the UK economy and this could have a detrimental impact on the Unions membership numbers and therefore contribution income.

Total Recurring Expenditure amounted to £29.5 million in the June Quarter which was £10.1 million lower than the same period of 2019. Our spending has reduced significantly as a result of the cessation of normal Union activities during the second quarter and the lockdown situation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, it should be noted that much of the reduction in spend is as a result of deferment of payment to a later period. For example, the costs associated with holding the 6th Policy Conference that should have taken place in June 2020 will now be incurred in 2021.

Employment Costs excluding Organising of £15.5 million were static versus 2019. Taken together, Employment Costs including Organising amounted to 42.9% of Income in the June Quarter; up from last year's comparative figure of 41.1% however this is as a result of the reduction in income and not a result of increased employment costs.

Investment Income, from dividends and interest amounted to £0.7 million in the June Quarter –up £0.6 million on last year. Global Stock Markets and Worldwide Economies remain extremely volatile during the Pandemic and as such any future income from dividends is expected to be extremely low.

International Report

Covid19 overview: The international context remains dominated by the global struggle against Covid19, with the disease now spreading very rapidly in some highly populated countries with poor health infrastructures, such as India, Brazil and South Africa. A clear picture is emerging of multinational companies using the crisis to undertake massive restructurings and attack pay and conditions, and in some countries, such as India, the situation is being used to attack basic labour rights and protections.



International political situation: Politically the international situation remains extremely tense with China-US tensions over trade and technology high and tensions in the South China Sea remaining high across multiple countries. The US is dominated by the pending presidential election and the struggle against police brutality on the Afro-American population. In Europe, the EU is struggling with multiple challenges including Brexit, the rise of far-right parties and rising tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean. The Middle East remains extremely volatile and explosive in relation to Syria, Turkey, Israel/Palestine and the growing alliance between Israel, Saudia Arabia and the Gulf States. In Latin America political conflicts in Venezuela, Bolivia, Colombia and Brazil are intensifying.

Multinational Companies: Unite has been heavily engaged to support reps and officers in the wave of restructurings by multinational companies that is taking place on the back of the Covid19 crisis. Many companies, such as those in the airlines, aerospace, auto, service sectors have been hit by dramatic reductions in business and sought to shed jobs as part of cost cutting measures, but there is also no doubt that many companies are using the crisis to opportunistically attack pay and conditions. At the European level many companies are failing to properly inform and consult their European Works Councils and the situation is complicated further by the impossibility of face to face meetings even where information and consultation obligations are being respected. Companies where active assistance has been provided since the last report to the Executive Council include IAG, Nissan, GE, Rolls Royce, Westrock, Siemens, ADL, Amcor, DS Smith, Easyjet, Bombardier/Alstom, and Vertiv.

Global and European Federations: Unite has played its full role in all the European and Global union federations which have focused intensively upon analysing the effects of the crisis on their respective sectors, drawing up specific demands in relation to them, and most importantly, aiming to strengthen the exchange of information and coordination amongst affiliates. The federations have adapted well to the changed circumstances and are making full use of the new videoconferencing technologies. That said it is very likely that some of the organisations will face acute financial situations in the coming years with many affiliates either unable to pay and asking for exonerations, or reducing their affiliations in light of membership losses resulting from the crisis. In addition to the work inside the federations Unite has also organised bilateral meetings with IG Metall, the United Auto Workers in the US, the South Korean Metalworkers Union. Numerous meetings have also taken place with the progressive left unions grouping inside IndustriAll-Europe and IndustriAll Global.

Workers Uniting: Work within Workers Uniting, the structure that brings together Unite, the North American United Steelworkers and the Mexican Los Mineros, has



continued. Online activities and meetings have included companies such as ADL, Rio Tinto, OI Glass, Westrock and Caterpillar, and meetings such as Black Lives matter. All unions in the structure have been very adversely affected by the virus and all are closely exchanging information on the developing political situation in each country, particularly with a view to the post Brexit US-UK trade negotiations and the coming US presidential election.

Solidarity Work: Unite's international solidarity work has intensified in relation to Palestine and the Middle East following the announcement of the Israeli intention to annex great swathes of the West Bank and the subsequent efforts to raise international pressure to stop it. Unite has been centrally involved in the work of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and tabled the extremely important motion at this years TUC conference that was unanimously adopted. Actions in relation to solidarity work with Turkish unions and the wider Kurdish political movement were undertaken as well as activities in relation to Cuba.