



Plymouth & District Trade Union Council

Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 4th February 2009 held at the T&G Unite Offices, Plymouth.

1. **Present:** Tony Staunton Asst.Secretary/T&G Unite; Dave Franklin, Vice Chair/PCS; Robin Beal T&GWU; Thomas Jeffery USDAW; Neil Young Chair/NUJ; Paul Staddon, PCS; Jeremy Guise Secretary/UNISON; Diana Beal Treasurer/T&G Unite; Dave Uren AMICUS/Unite; Neal Harrington (UNISON) ; William Telford (NUJ)
2. **Apologies:** Alison Smith NUS; Hayley Kemp (PSC); Chris Bligh RMT; Danny Bouch CWU; Chris Webb CWU; Darren Turner UNISON; Mike Barry RMT No5 Branch Secretary - buses; Neil Thompson (RMT No 5); Pat Ryan, Pensioners/TGWU;
3. **Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 7th January 2009** were considered for accuracy and **Approved**.

The following **Matters Arising** were then taken:

3.1. Item 3.1: Stop the War Coalition:

3.1.1. Gaza: TS reported on the National Demonstration of 100,000 for Gaza held on the 10th January in London, the 1,000 in Exeter on the 17th and the 350 in Plymouth on the 18th January. The Plymouth Vigil continues every Wednesday.

3.1.2. G20 Protest Demonstration: Saturday 28th March, London. **Agreed** to support.

3.1.3. G20 Welcome Obama Demonstration 2nd April 2009 in London: The meeting **agreed** unanimously to support.

3.1.4. CND NATO International Protest: Strasbourg 4th April: **agreed** to support. TS reported on the successful CND public meeting in Plymouth last night with Bruce Kent and Kate Hudson.

3.2. Item 4.4.2. Stonehouse Against Racism: TS reported on recent BNP leafleting of key Plymouth communities, and their attempts to have a presence at the "foreign worker" wildcat strikes at Langage Energy Complex. **In discussion**, DB explained the official Unite position on "level playing field for workers", and that Health & Safety conditions have produced valid grievances. The meeting acknowledged the reporting of the strikes as nationalistic and xenophobic, but that the real situation was more complex. DF spoke of the diverse workforce there, and the need for the Trades Council to go there and speak with workers. The meeting **agreed** for a delegation to the Langage site, and to support the meeting of "Stonehouse Against Racism" at the Crown Centre on Tuesday 3rd March.

4. Officers Reports:

4.1. Chair: No Report

4.2. Secretary: Nominations are open for Officer positions for next month's Council AGM. TS nominated Paddy Ryan for President, seconded by DF, and **agreed** by the meeting.

4.3. Treasurer: DF reported the accounts are now being audited.

4.4. Delegates to external Bodies:

4.4.1. Climate Change: TS reported on current extreme weather conditions and the growing evidence of accelerating climate change. He expressed concern at the apparent growing retrenchment of unions, backtracking on campaigning and returning to individualist calls for turning-off lights and monitors, which will not affect CO2 reductions. The meeting confirmed his attendance as a Trades Council delegate to the TUCCC national Conference this Saturday.

4.4.2. SW TUC Regional Council: DU reported back from the January meeting. Guest speaker, Geoff Harding, spoke on the economy. Motions from NUT and UNISON on Aid to Gaza were carried. Yeovil Trades Council motion on database of SW Trades Council was agreed. Royal Mail campaign was discussed, to protect small sorting offices. Somerset Councils SW1 privatisation of back room services to IBM was condemned, with a lack of consultation. Support offered to suspended Branch Secretary, Nigel Behan. The NUT is progressing its anti-BNP Campaign in the light of a number of teachers being listed on the BNP membership lists. The Campaign against academies was supported. The NO2ID campaign was supported again. Regional SWTUC AGM is to be held on 27th and 28th March at Croyde Bay.

In discussion, TJ was also a delegate, and explained the discussion on the economy recognised that pay rises will be zero rated in the near future.

The delegates were thanked. DB asked for a written report in future.

5. May Day Festival 2009: DF reported on current funding pledges for the Festival:

T&G Unite £1,800; RMT Region £1,000; UNISON Plymouth Branch £1,000; PCS £200; USDAW £50; ASLEF £25;

DF **proposed** that the programme is now committed to, bookings are confirmed and publicity is distributed. **In discussion**, JG spoke of concern and caution at committing large sums of money ahead of and cash actually being confirmed in the bank account. DB disagreed, explaining we have to get on with it with only 3 months left. NY spoke of the desperate need for Trade Unions to be seen and having a voice inside a recession. DU said if we don't take chances we're going to stagnate. **Following further debate, the proposal that the May Day event is now confirmed to take place as planned on Monday 4th May" was put to the vote and agreed, 9 for, 0 against, 2 abstentions.**

6. Motions:

6.1. Maintaining Media Diversity & Distinctiveness

Plymouth & District Trade Union Council is concerned that, whilst the amount of media available has increased exponentially over the last 10 years, the diversity, quality and local distinctiveness of many media outlets has been reduced. We believe that having access to sound information and informed opinion on local matters is a necessary pre-requisite for

democratic control over social and economic decisions. It therefore condemns the closure of, or reduction to skeleton staff, of some local news outlets and the dumbing-down of news features in favour of syndicated features. We resolve to support journalists and media workers in the NUJ trade union in their battle to retain jobs and maintain standards in their news outlets.

NY moved the motion, explaining the terrible working conditions and threats to jobs now endemic across the media, including local newspapers. **In discussion**, **WT** spoke for the tens of millions of pounds profit that Northcliffe makes from its newspaper empire. The cuts that the workers are suffering, right across the Daily Mail group and the Evening herald in particular, are being made purely in order to keep the profit margins high. This ensures paying the large dividends to the Shareholders, which appears the primary objective, not news reporting, journalism or quality. This is true across all groups. But the acceleration means papers are closing most weeks, with the demise of regional press. What remains will be news agency services wired from central clearing houses, with no independent or local journalism. **DF** spoke of the need for solidarity with the media, as a defence of democracy and coverage of class struggle as well as a defence of workers jobs. **TS** spoke of the ideological attacks across society that has seen the erosion of democracy and dumbing-down of education and culture. The defence of journalism has to represent the challenge from below to the passification of the working class and the end of democratic values. Just calling on support for a fight for jobs isn't enough. What are we going to do? **JG** considered the London-centricity of media, and the danger of centralism. This is a big issue that requires a campaign. **DB** **proposed** a three-pronged campaign of 1. Building the NUJ and TU recruitment in the Media; 2. Build inter-union solidarity and publicity about the threats; 3. Get into the communities and explain the need to defend local voices. She offered help in a recruitment campaign. **NH** re-iterated the importance of defending local democracy, protecting local media to keep an eye on the Council. **DF** **proposed** a Trades Council leafleting of the WSM/EH site and broaden this to the BBC and other media outlets.

Following further debate the proposals for action were **accepted** as amendments to the Motion, to be added to the end as numbered items. The amended motion was then **put the vote** and **Carried Unanimously**. A Planning Meeting was arranged for the evening of 17th February, to complete leaflets and a lunchtime roadside megaphone meeting at the site, on Friday 20th February. Next meeting of the May Day Committee: Tuesday 10th February, 7pm at Dave's 124 Devonport Road, Plymouth.

7. Class Struggle:

7.1. Anti-Academies Alliance: **NH** offered a full report on the Anti-Academies Alliance National Conference last weekend, where he was elected as a regional representative to the National Executive. Plymouth City Council is failing to consult. A full local campaign is now being organised. It is vital to get the entire Labour and Trade Union Movement locally to support the campaign, and offer a voice to parents and local communities. Academies are divisive and unproven either financially or educationally. **NH** **proposed** an umbrella campaign, *Plymouth Schools Not For Sale!*, with a communal website and blog, in

addition to the very informative national website. Neil has received some support for recent media coverage, through joint Press Releases from UNISON and the NUT. An explanatory pamphlet has now been sent to all Plymouth Councillors, in advance of them meeting on the subject next Tuesday. The meeting endorsed the campaign strategy and reaffirmed full and active support to the AAA, including active practical local help.

- 7.2. Local Government Workers:** The meeting heard report of the 300 jobs being cut for Plymouth City Council, and **agreed** to support council union campaigns against job cuts and privatisation, including a rally and lobby of the Council Meeting on 2nd March outside the Council House, from 12:30pm.
 - 7.3. Post Services Privatisation:** The latest CWU campaign against serious attacks on public postal services was endorsed and supported, and it was **agreed** to invite a speaker to the AGM.
- 8. Any Other Business:** There was none.
 - 9. Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 4th March 2009: Annual General Meeting 7:15, followed by a full Council meeting to 9:15pm, at the T&G Unite District Offices, Bretonside, Plymouth.**

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