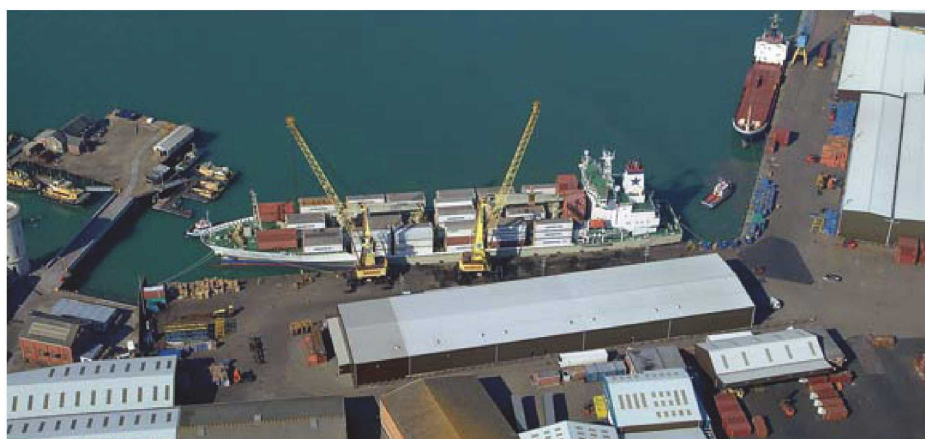


South East CAMPAIGNER



NOVEMBER 2016

UNISON SUCCESS AT MMD SHIPPING



Strike action was averted and an agreement reached with MMD Shipping Ltd after ongoing negotiations between UNISON and the employer resulted in a much-improved offer to members.

For the last year, UNISON has been in discussion with MMD management to find changes in working practices that would improve MMD's financial stability. The initial proposal by MMD to move Dock Operatives onto annualised hours was successfully fought off by UNISON and the employer introduced a more favourable shift pattern. This did however result in increased flexibility of start times and saw significant cuts in pay.

Negotiations with MMD management broke down this summer and the employer issued new contracts to staff on the basis of dismissal and re-

engagement. A strike ballot was taken, members began preparations for strike action and the media were informed.

In the run-up to the strike, talks were re-established in order to come to a collective agreement. As the dialogue with management became more constructive and more information was shared by management, an improved offer was established which helped to restore pay levels and offer more reasonable arrangements on flexibility:

Key points

- Increase in basic salary offered within new contracts
- Pay rise of 3% for 2017/18
- Pay rise in line with CPI for year 2018/19
- Lump sum payment
- Profit share/productivity scheme for all staff to be developed with UNISON

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Women drag last equal pay claim council to court, says UNISON

Reading council – the only local authority in England and Wales never to settle an equal pay claim – was challenged in court on October 17th by more than 60 women owed over £1.5m because they were paid less than their male colleagues for years.

The women – mostly care workers, cooks and administrators – are angry that seven years on from the council's acceptance it had broken equal pay laws, none of them have received a penny in backdated pay.

UNISON says that although the council has set aside £9m to settle its equal pay obligations, it has instead been using the cash to balance its budget.

One of the women is owed as much as £47,000, with her remaining colleagues due an average of £10-15,000 each.

UNISON has accused Reading council of dragging its feet, and rather than doing the right thing by

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BRANCH FOCUS

NHS SUPPLY CHAIN

NHS Logistics is one of the smallest branches in the South East with fewer than 130 members and ten activists covering a variety of posts within the branch. The branch has members in five different sites across the UK- with the Maidstone site falling within our region.

Andy Surman has been branch secretary at NHS Logistics for the last eight years and in that time the branch has gone from strength to strength. However, this was not always the case.

Prior to Andy joining, the branch had been kept going by three dedicated UNISON activists- George Foggarty, Julia Chandler and Kevin Sutton after the departure of the previous branch secretary. The branch was left with no funds and barely any equipment.

At the Branch AGM, Andy Surman was elected Branch Secretary in absentia- Andy was undergoing treatment for throat cancer but agreed to take on the role and work towards building the branch again.

When Andy started, the branch shared an office with Customer Services; there was no privacy for meeting with members or space to store files. Andy met with management and agreed a



locked room for storing information; four years ago this was upgraded to a Port-a-cabin. Since the new depot manager, Dean Robinson, was appointed about 18 months ago, the branch and employer relationship has continued to improve and strengthen- aided by the good relationship between DHL and UNISON at a national level. The branch was finally given their own secure- and spacious- office in the main building, and the working relationship between the branch and employer has now been rolled out as a standard across NHS Supply Chain sites.

Andy has secured full time release to carry out his duties as branch secretary and meets regularly with members and management to continue and improve their joint working. This approach has

benefitted both the employer and members with reduced sick days, reduced accidents, and a small but dedicated pool of activists to help and advise members. The branch has successfully achieved pay awards for the last several years and secured a three year pay deal earlier in 2016.

The branch office now holds numerous resources for members and stewards to use, including UNISON policies, employer protocols, health and safety information, employment law, training modules, all previous agreements with management, minutes and agendas, recruitment and advise/ support materials, and many other useful documents and resources.

The branch has successfully achieved pay awards for the last several years and secured a three year pay deal earlier in 2016. The branch now has a Communications Officer, a Young Members' Officer, a Black Members' Officer, two Women's Officers and a queue of members waiting to go on stewards training. Members are given the help and support they need, and membership is steadily increasing.

All this hard work has been achieved by a branch with the lowest reserves in the Region- they currently operate on just over £3 per member. When compared to branches that have over £100,000 in reserves, it is astonishing- and refreshing- to see how so much can be achieved by such a dedicated group of branch activists.

Reigate and Banstead Branch Olympics

Reigate & Banstead UNISON branch held 2 weeks' worth of Olympic activities for all staff whilst the Rio Olympics were on.

There were over 37 different events which took place over lunch times and at an athletics track one evening. The branch organised everything from swimming, tug of war, 100m relay, blind three legged race, boccia, Olympic themed cake decorating, welly wanging, speed jelly eating and their own Grand National on homemade hobby horses.

Maggie Judd, Branch Secretary said it "really brought the staff together with departments mingling and new friendships made. We are already being asked are we going to do the same next year!"

UNISON members who won were treated to a bottle of bubbly and all events had bronze, silver and gold medals awarded.



REGIONAL

WOMEN'S FORUM

Women members and activists from across the South East Region met in Eastbourne during September for the annual women's forum.

There were guest speakers, workshops and formulating ideas and writing motions for next year's National Women's Conference.

Self organisation is an excellent way of increasing the participation of women members – of the 47 attendees at this year's Forum, 34% were attending for the first time.

The women's forum also coincided with the start of Black History Month and to celebrate this, the Forum kicked off with the film about the Grunwick dispute of 1976. Some might remember 1976 as the 'heat wave' summer, but for the workers of Grunwick it was the start of a two year dispute involving trade union recognition and working conditions inside a film processing factory.

The guest speakers included Professor



Elizabeth Anionwu who spoke about her new book 'Mixed Blessings from a Cambridge Union'. The second guest speaker was Anneliese Dodds Labour MEP South East who spoke about the Referendum result and how important it will be to keep campaigning to maintain and improve on current employment and equality law. The third and last speaker of the weekend was Megan Dobney, Regional Secretary of the South East Region TUC. Megan also spoke of the challenges ahead for protecting existing rights for workers as part of the

Brexit negotiations.

The Forum ran four workshops: 1) Attacks on our terms and conditions: the impact on women and how we can challenge it; 2) Women doing it for themselves – looking at how women have played a key role in pushing forward issues and developing legislation; 3) Proud to be in UNISON – looking at the regional campaign and encouraging new women members into the union; 4) Sexual harassment and Sexual Violence in Schools –focused on raising awareness of the issues.

National Women's Conference will take place from Thursday 16th to Saturday 18th February at Brighton Conference Centre. The Conference Bulletin was dispatched to all branches in the summer so if you are interested in being a delegate or visitor then please contact your branch. *Please contact Sam Comerford if you are unsure of who to contact – s.comerford@unison.co.uk*

UNISON secures 2-year pay deal at Serco Woking

UNISON has negotiated a pay deal with Serco Woking, establishing a pay increase for members consisting of a 1.5% for each year, totalling 3% over the two years.

UNISON submitted a pay claim to Serco on behalf of members and received an offer of 1% for one year from Serco. Consequently local and regional UNISON representatives met with Serco management representatives to seek an improved pay offer. A new 2 year offer was issued by Serco of 1.5% for each of

two years. The offer was accepted by overwhelming majority following a ballot of UNISON Woking Branch members and was backdated to 1st April 2016.

Earlier in the year Serco introduced new street cleansing starter rates in January 2016. As a result, non-driver pay rate increased by 5.5% to £7.25 per hour and the driver's rate increased by 3.25% to £7.35 per hour. This was recognised by both employer and union as a positive step working towards the living wage of £8.25, without the reliance on the annual performance bonus.

In May, Serco confirmed the



extension of their contract with Woking Borough Council to 31st March 2023. This provided the additional benefit of job security for UNISON members.

TOGETHER, WE CAN BE

SUCCESSFUL

My name is Tansy and I am a senior team leader for a cleaning company called Noonan's. I am also a UNISON Steward for my staff. I work at Southampton Solent University and I have a team of 90 cleaners working across the whole of the University.

Last year, the University decided to fund the money for my cleaners to be given a pay rise up to the foundation living wage, over the following year in two instalments. This was widely publicised by the University- "Southampton Solent University is firmly committed to social justice and economic prosperity and in recognition of this, they are implementing a move to the payment of the Living Wage for staff employed by their main contractors".

In August of 2015 their hourly rate went from £6.63 to £7.34. The second increase was going to be in September 2016, from £7.34 to £8.25. As we moved nearer to the date of the second stage increase, my Branch Chair Tomasa



Bullen started asking both Noonan's and the University for confirmation of the pay uplift. Just six weeks before the uplift was due to take effect, Tomasa was told that the University had changed its mind. The reasons given were:

- The cleaners had had a pay rise last year;
- The University could not control the Foundation Living Wage rate; and
- The University could not afford it.

The University's annual income is about £122million; the cost of the pay rise is roughly £52,087. This works out at roughly about 0.04% of the university's annual income. The University's aim is to

make a "surplus" of 6% per annum and they regularly achieve it.

The cleaners were angry and so was everyone else. Tomasa and I organised a meeting and we came up with a plan of action which included contacting the local press and media, the Board of Governors, local councillors, protests with placards and leaflets outside working hours and a strike ballot. Tomasa stated that we could win this fight. I contacted BBC South Today who contacted the University. Our local Labour Councillor, Satvia Kaur contacted the Vice-Chancellor and the Chair of the Board of Governors. Within a week the University had changed its mind.

I recruited lots of new members and we learnt that by sticking together and standing up for what we knew to be right, we could be successful.

I would like to thank Southampton District Branch for their unflinching support and the support of individual members across the University.

Continued from page 1

Women drag last equal pay claim council to court, says UNISON

paying up, has chosen instead to shell out more than £800,000 on lawyers in an attempt to delay settling its equal pay debts.

But at an employment tribunal in the town, UNISON argued that because so much time has already passed, the low-paid women shouldn't have to wait a moment longer for the wages they are owed.

The council has taken so long with these equal pay claims that one of the claimants has died since the case was lodged.

The women's case is based on the fact that Reading council was employing men doing equivalent jobs to them but paying the men substantially more.

Commenting on the tribunal, UNISON South East regional secretary Maggi Ferncombe said: "Reading council has known for many years it was guilty of treating its low-paid male and female employees very differently.

"But rather than cough up the cash owed when it had the chance, the local authority has instead chosen to spend

hundreds of thousands of pounds on expensive lawyers trying to avoid settling the case.

"The council's actions are nothing short of immoral. The stress of the last seven years has taken its toll upon many of the women, who will be hoping that today really is the beginning of the end.

"Seven years is way too long for anyone to have to wait for wages that are rightfully theirs. Hopefully Reading council will today see sense and pay the women the money they are due."

HOW I BECAME A BRIT WITH A GERMAN PASSPORT AND WHY I NO LONGER AM



The first time I came to Britain I was 15. I came on a three week student exchange to Ramsgate in 1981. What I took back with me was the memory of rows of identical Victorian terraced house with differently coloured doors, Royal Wedding paraphernalia, a visit to London, cheese-and-onion crisps and, oh, cream teas!

The next time I came was following my A levels. I came for a year to work for a charity with learning disabled adults. I was quickly struck by the diversity in Britain which seemed to be in such a contrast to my native Germany back then. Growing up in fairly rural Germany the only non-Germans I had ever encountered were Turkish "Gastarbeiter" (guest workers), and even then they had been people I rarely actually came in contact with. They seemed to live in different places, move in different circles and go to different schools.

By comparison the Britain I encountered was vibrant and diverse, with people from different nationalities and ethnic backgrounds living and working and studying together, with cultures blending and merging along the way.

In short, I fell in love with the country. Incidentally, I also fell in love with an Englishman. Eventually we were to get married, have two children and make our life in England – but first I returned to Germany to train as an occupational therapist.

I came back to Britain newly qualified in 1990, this time to stay. I applied for three jobs and had three job offers. I started working in the NHS which I have done in a variety of settings and specialities ever since.

I eagerly embraced the British way of life. I never particularly held on to my German background, upheld German traditions at home or sought contact with fellow expats from Germany. For a long time I tried to lose my accent until I finally accepted that I probably never would and that it was OK to speak English with a foreign accent. I taught my children my mother tongue, but only fairly half-heartedly. Although they now have a basic understanding of German and have visited Germany fairly regularly over the years to stay in touch with family there, they both see themselves as British more than German.

I love Britain! I love the country with its varied countrysides and cities. I love the people, the English language and the British sense of humour. I have mastered the English language and no longer need to look for volunteers to explain countless puns and innuendos to me. I have a fair grasp on the humour thing although I may never fully get sarcasm...

In all those 26 years I never bothered applying for British citizenship. Firstly I wasn't required to and secondly I never felt it necessary. As far as I was concerned I was already British. A Brit with a German passport!

Recently things seem to be shifting. In the run-up to and during the EU Referendum campaign we started to hear from a very different Britain.

Ask any German of my generation and they will probably confirm that we had it drummed into us to be vigilant against any individuals, groups or systems which try to single out minorities and outsiders to blame and scapegoat for wider problems in society, and which seek to divide society into "us" and "them".

And here we are in Britain in 2016

where the Brexit campaign has openly blamed migrants for anything from the housing crisis to unemployment and pressures on the NHS. Where groups and individuals have been emboldened to spread xenophobia and racism. Where hate crimes are on the rise. Where even in government it has become acceptable to consider forcing companies to disclose their foreign staff, and where advice from experts on EU law is not welcome if those experts don't hold a British passport.

Increasingly I find myself questioning whether this is still the Britain I so admired and fell in love with.

If Britain leaves the EU I no longer have automatic right to remain in this country. So together with 3.5 million EU citizens in the UK I am now weighing up my options:

I could do nothing and hope that common sense will prevail and I will be able to remain in this country – which seems risky and careless.

Or I could apply for British citizenship under Naturalisation, a process which is expensive, time-consuming and complicated – and which may mean I end up losing my German (and therefore European) citizenship.

Or I can explore my options of returning back to Germany – which, given that I have not lived in Germany for 26 years and never worked or paid taxes there, seems an unlikely solution.

It may just be that applying for British citizenship is my safest bet to ensure my future in this country. But I fear that even if I apply for and obtain citizenship, I will never feel British again in the same way I did when I was a Brit with a German passport.

Anke Plummer, Milton Keynes LG

EDUCATION SERVICES RETURNED TO SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL CONTROL

Following an 'inadequate' rating from Ofsted, schools and children's centres within the borough of Slough were outsourced to Cambridge Education, part of the Mott MacDonald Group, in October 2013. The contract was initially for three years, with an option of extending it for another two, at which point services would be transferred to the independent body running children's social services, the Slough Children's Services Trust.

But now the Department for Education (DfE) has revoked this original order, allowing the council to regain control after the Cambridge Education contract expired at the end of September. Councillors have welcomed this move following an improvement in the relationship between Slough and the Trust, who will now be working in partnership. Both services have agreed that this would be in the best interests of the children.



As a result, UNISON members, including one steward, Ish Akhtar, have been TUPEd back into the employ of the council. Ish said

"Our members are very happy about this transfer and ready to continue doing what they do best, providing a high quality of service to the children in Slough."

During the three years they worked for Cambridge Education our members had a bumpy ride, with Mott McDonald attempting to 'harmonise' members' TUPEd terms and conditions by

proposing an annual leave reduction of three days and removing the right to claim Essential Car User expenses, along with an increased workload and responsibilities whilst having to reapply for their existing posts.

Branch Secretary of Central and East Berkshire UNISON, Billie Reynolds, welcomed the return of services to Slough Borough Council, saying

"We are very pleased that SBC are bringing this service back into full control of SBC and the public sector. Some local authorities have recognised the flaws in privatisation and are returning other externalised services, but this privatisation policy has cost local authorities many millions in the commissioning and legal processes, money which should have been invested in their communities."

It is rumoured that Slough Borough Council are looking at the feasibility of taking other outsourced services back in-house.

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UNISON SUCCESS AT MMD SHIPPING

for introduction in Year 2018/19

- Paid 20 minute breaks restored to new contracts
- Night shift overtime rate restored to new contracts
- Re-introduction of fairer overtime roster
- Permanent change of location clause removed

James Smith, regional organiser said "This deal is mutually beneficial as it offers financial security to the company along with job security to its employees. UNISON has negotiated the best possible settlement to protect members' pay and conditions at a time when staff employment contracts and working practices are due to change radically."

Chris Pickett, joint branch secretary at UNISON Portsmouth City said

"We look forward to continued open and constructive discussions with management and hopefully MMD will go from strength to strength. We would like to thank our workplace representatives for enabling a resolution to be attained on this issue- they consistently and accurately reflected the views of our membership at MMD throughout the discussions."

YOUNG MEMBER TAKEOVER AT FAREHAM UNISON

We all know that we need to recruit more young people into the union, not just as members but as activists if the union is survive. Fareham UNISON have been putting that into practice this year with not only a number of new young members in the branch, but with three young members now also holding branch committee positions.

Pearl Gillies- Young Member Officer, Chris Motherwell- Equalities Officer and Jess Wicks- Steward spoke to Jenny Mason from UNISON about why they had joined- and gotten active.

Pearl said: "I've been a member for about 18 months and I joined not only because I was unsure of my employer but also because I wanted to be part of something and show solidarity with other workers. It was after I attended a Young Women's Confidence and Assertiveness course, and I met other young women like me that I realised what was important and decided to take a more active role in the branch. As well as the Confidence course, I've also been to the Women's Forum and done the

Stewards Training."

Chris said: "I've always been interested in Equalities and I joined UNISON in April on the back of some persistent recruitment from Lee Sprake (Branch Chair). He spoke to me a lot about his role and the work he did, about how important it was to have a strong union and about the different roles within the branch. After joining I took on the Equality Officer post and I completed the Equality Officer training in Eastbourne."

Jess said: "I joined because of job uncertainty but also because I wanted to be part of this community that helps each other. The training available has really helped me develop my skills- I've been to National Delegate Conference, the Women's Forum and am currently doing my Steward's Training. I'm also really interested in the Women's Officer position."

And what would they say to young people who are unsure about joining?

"Join! You can make a difference and actually get something for your subs above an insurance policy- we've done



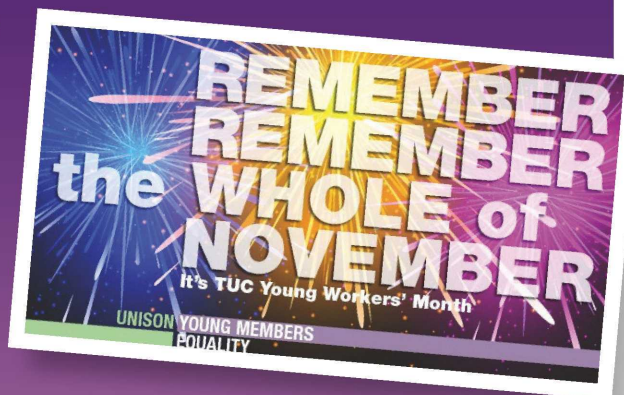
Left to right, Chris, Pearl and Jess

more training through UNISON than we have with our employer! The union is here because people are here- if you don't join and get involved there will be no one to do the work when it's needed. We are the next generation of activists and reps."

Remember, remember the whole of November

Held in November every year, TUC Young Workers Month aims to promote trade unions to young workers and highlight the issues faced by young workers.

Young Workers Month is an opportunity for union reps, activists and campaigners to reach out and inform young workers about trade unions and ensure that there are sufficient opportunities for young people to get involved and play an active role in shaping the movement. It's also a chance for unions to demonstrate to young people that we are campaigning on the issues they care most about and that we are relevant to their lives both in the workplace and beyond. *To find out how you can get involved, please contact Jenny on j.mason@unison.co.uk.*





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