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If you're not a member, we want you to join us.

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Just follow the link from our blog on Staff Central.

University of Brighton Branch Newsletter

June 2020

I know that many of our members will have attended events to demand justice for all the victims of racism and to demand genuine equality for all.

The murder of George Floyd has sparked off a



global movement, not just against racist police and statues of those who made a fortune on the back of slavery, but against all forms of discrimination that divide us.

UNISON has long campaigned for equality, but this is not just about ticking boxes or setting up focus groups.

There is a clear need at the University to

examine all situations where black and minority ethnic people find themselves less likely to hold the top jobs. Whilst all of us who work at the University would say we are opposed to racism, the reality is that we have yet to record full equality of opportunity when it comes to interviews and job offers.

It's not good enough to say we're not racist. There's a need to take concrete steps to address the problems by proposing and following through on effective measures.

The trade union movement has to be at the forefront of this, not just because we oppose racism, but because the unity of working people is central to achieving better working lives for all.

Our branch is committed to do whatever is can to support the Black Lives Matter movement and campaign for an end to all forms of racism and the conditions which breed it.

Ivan Bonsell, Branch Secretary

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UNISON Post-Covid

Chris Baker (School of Pharmacy, personal capacity)

A Post-Covid19 recovery should prioritise people and the environment over profit, tackling the climate crisis at the same time. It will be a complex task encompassing many social, economic and ecological factors. Higher education is part of this large puzzle and the picture we should all be aiming to build is one of a fair and inclusive society, one that values and protects people and the planet.

The coronavirus pandemic has exposed the weaknesses in what was business as “Normal”. It has highlighted the need for leaders the world over to listen to the warnings of the scientific community. We are supposedly being guided by the science in our response to this challenge; science has been warning for years now that our planet is on the edge of ecological breakdown. The crisis is here.

We must act now, we cannot go back to “Normal”, as “Normal” was a slowly building crisis itself.

You cannot have infinite growth on a planet with a closed system of finite resources and not suffer ecological breakdown and growing inequality. There is however a silver lining to the cloud currently engulfing the planet; we have been presented with an opportunity to reset the economy in a way that puts the welfare of our planet and all that live on it, above maximising profits for the few. No small task, but we must be ambitious and even if we fall short at least we are heading in the right direction, we can lay the foundations. We must build back better.

We can clap for our carers and our key workers, but a more meaningful action would be to properly fund the NHS. Years of strangling cuts has been exposed in a country where a 100 year old war hero has to walk around his garden 100 times in order to raise money for the NHS. The NHS is not a charity, it belongs to us and we all pay for it in our taxes and the government should remember this.

We can talk endlessly about cutting emissions by 2050, but a more meaningful conversation would be how to accelerate plans and incorporate a green new deal in a way that would safeguard the environment and promote equality in the economy.

We can spout soundbites about “levelling up” the country, but a more meaningful approach would be to fund public services properly and empower communities to become more resilient in the face of the challenges recovery from the pandemic and the growing climate crisis will bring. It is our money, our economy and it should be used for the benefit of all.

And despite the frightening unfolding of events, there have been great displays of solidarity and communities have come together to help those most vulnerable and in need. I have never seen such strong community spirit and we must build on it.

Unions are built on solidarity and those willing to stand up for a better way forward, if there was ever a time that needed solidarity, now is that time. Unison has a part to play in this recovery and within the Higher Education sector we need to push for change. The package of measures the Government has released to assist universities does very little to secure their future.

Particularly when put into context of years of forced competition, the compounded issues arising from marketisation and when coupled with a projected drop in student uptake next year, it could very well mean that people will lose jobs and even result in some universities collapsing.

Universities bring great benefits to society; they can be the stimulus for cultural and social activities; They are centres of scientific research and innovation; They provide economic benefits to local areas and employ many local people. On an individual level they provide self-development and realisation, improve employability and encourage civic engagement. All things we will need in the rebuilding of our country post Covid-19. They should be funded properly and brought into a free and linked up education system along with early years, primary and secondary schools and colleges.

Education is a right, not a commodity to be marketed, and a university education is ultimately a public good.

FIVE THINGS YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW TO HELP US BUILD BACK BETTER:

Join Unison!

<https://join.unison.org.uk/>

Get behind our “Don’t Fail Our Future” campaign:

<https://www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/protect-higher-education/>

Write to your MP about the crisis currently facing Higher Education:

<https://action.unison.org.uk/page/60550/action/1?ea.tracking.id=web>

Sign and share this petition demanding the Government save Higher Education:

<https://www.megaphone.org.uk/petitions/save-higher-education-from-a-rapidly-approaching-crisis>

Check out Build Back Better and spread the word:

<https://www.buildbackbetteruk.org/>

Keep safe and be kind.

Don't fail our public services
Don't fail our economy
Don't fail our students
Don't fail our staff
Don't fail our future.



Please have a look at UNISON’s national campaign to defend higher education:

<https://www.unison.org.uk/our-campaigns/protect-higher-education/>

Fifty Years of “Equal Pay”

The Equal Pay Act, which established the legal principle that workers should receive equal pay for equal work, was given royal assent on 29 May 1970, following the huge publicity generated by striking sewing machinists at Ford’s Dagenham plant. However, 50 years on, do you think men and women are paid equally for work of equal value?



The Fawcett Society, which campaigns for Women’s Rights across the UK doesn’t think so.

They say:

Four in ten people (40%) do not know that women have a right to equal pay for work of equal value.

Only one-third of people (36%) know women have a legal right to ask male colleagues about their salary if they suspect pay discrimination.

In most workplaces, people do not talk openly about what they earn – with only 24% reporting that salaries are discussed openly in their workplace.

- ***46% of men said they would probably tell a female colleague how much they earned if she asked.***
- ***34% of men said they would be more likely to share their salary with a female colleague who suspected she was being paid unequally; 52% of men said this would make no difference to them.***
- ***Only 8% strongly agree that people at their workplace talk openly about pay.***

The Employment Tribunal Service data backs up the view that Equal Pay is still not happening. Since the 2007-08 financial year, employment tribunals in England and Wales have received more than 368,000 complaints relating to equal pay, an average of almost 29,000 complaints a year. This is the tip of the iceberg when you consider the impact of precarious and vulnerable employment which impacts women adversely and deters them from making claims against employers.

Do you think it couldn't happen where you work?

Do your systems make unequal pay impossible?

Ever scratched your head over a job evaluation?

Are roles traditionally filled by men (refuse workers/technicians) valued more highly than those traditionally filled by women (cleaners/carers?)

Are there bonus schemes or additional payments attached to male dominated roles?



In October 2018 around 10,000 home carers, cleaners, caterers, school workers and other council staff marched together to George Square to demand equal pay. This is the first day of a 48-hour strike and is the largest of its kind since the Equal Pay Act was introduced.

Speaking at the rally, UNISON's assistant general secretary Christina McAnea, said: "Today our whole union stands with Glasgow. Together we have taken the fight to the courts and to the streets. Councillors have come and gone but our demands for equal pay have remained the same. The dedication to the cause of UNISON members has been incredible, and it's been matched by the incredible strength shown by those taking action today."

Thanks to UNISON support, these women finally received their Equal Pay dispute offers in January 2019.

Nursery teachers, do you just play in the sand all day?

Cleaners, would you like to give your managers a lecture on infection control?

Work usually done by women has historically been low-paid and undervalued. For example, teaching and nursing were jobs for unmarried women, apparently done for love of the work rather than money, painting women as biologically programmed to be nurturing, rather than highly skilled professionals requiring decent pay.

Coronavirus has catapulted female-dominated industries from invisibility into the spotlight.

Cleaning, care working, cooking, childcare: UNISON members have always known that our jobs are essential. Now society has caught up. The essential workers list is topped by the lowest paid, while bankers and hedge-fund managers are nowhere to be seen.

It took Glasgow's council workers almost 50 years after the 1970 Equal Pay Act to achieve equal pay. Judging by recent events, we have a way to go before 'women's work' is truly viewed as equally valuable.

Universities in Crisis?

As the start of the new academic year approaches, we're already hearing of some universities pre-empting financial problems by trying to save money. Redundancies, withholding increments and even reductions to the working week are being proposed in some places.

Nothing so drastic is yet being proposed at Brighton, but a poor round of recruitment and clearing will push UEB in that direction.

Of course we see this as part of a bigger picture of national funding for higher education as a public service. The market system of universities wasting resources on squabbling for the right to take their share of a reduced number of school-leavers, is a fundamentally flawed system at the best of times, but with an international pandemic going on, it's even more dysfunctional.

If university workers are going to suffer for this, in terms of jobs, pay, pensions and working conditions then we'd hope for better of UEB. Nothing short of a nationally joined-up campaign for higher education will do. If we don't campaign for full public funding of universities now then when will we?

To: Universities Minister Michelle Donelan

**Save higher education from
a rapidly approaching crisis**



Campaign created by
Higher Education Covid
Activists

You can find our petition here:

<https://www.megaphone.org.uk/petitions/save-higher-education-from-a-rapidly-approaching-crisis>