

Report of NEC Meeting 28th April 2005

This is not an official or comprehensive report, but picks out issues that may be of particular interest to members in Health.

This report is written under guidelines for all NEC members on collective responsibility. Like other NEC members, I am now allowed to outline my own position in debates or votes only if I am specifically asked about my personal position.

I welcome questions on my personal position from members. Please feel free to contact me by phone: 020 7502 6905 (home) or by e-mail: gill@ghg.me.uk

Matters Arising

An NEC member raised the outstanding issue of childcare costs. This relates to concerns raised by the CPHVA, and the NEC decision had been to contact the CPHVA for further information. The General Secretary reported that the National Officer had met the CPHVA Executive, and it should have been discussed then.

A brief but heated exchange took place regarding a recent dispute at Terminal 5. An NEC member raised concerns that reps at the site had not been consulted before the union had issued a repudiation. The NEC member was told by the General Secretary to mind their own business as they were not from this sector. A second NEC member pointed out that NEC members had been told previously that they had no responsibility for their own sectors but had collective responsibility, and that the language used was unbecoming.

An NEC member asked why the consultation period for branch reorganisation had been changed from 31st May to 23rd September. While they did not oppose this decision, it had caused a great deal of confusion for an NEC decision to be changed so quickly. The General Secretary's view was that there were better things to discuss. The change was to give branches more opportunity to comment.

Telephone/Computer System

Amicus is investing in a new telephone and computer network. This will cut costs and increase efficiency, and should avoid current problems of e.g. officers finding that they are cut off from the e-mail system.

Branch Reorganisation

The General Secretary reported on branch reorganisation. (The NEC approved a paper on branch reorganisation when it met in March). Derek felt that people were confused, or that someone was deliberately creating an argument to confuse. There were no plans to break up structures that were working, but colleagues were ignoring the fact that there were hundreds of branches that were moribund. Confusion was causing unnecessary discontent, and where we came across confusion, we should try to allay it.

An NEC member said we hadn't had an analysis of branches that were moribund, and that this undermined what we said about a need for reorganisation. We should move on this with all speed. The NEC could make a decision on false information or could inadvertently kill live branches.

The Chair felt we could not list moribund branches as this would create paranoia.

Later in the meeting, the NEC approved a statement on branch reorganisation to go to Conference.

Amicus/TGWU/GMB Merger

There will be a meeting on 9th May between the three General Secretaries.

A smaller union called NUDAGO (white goods operatives) will also be joining Amicus.

Rover

The General Secretary rightly reported that this was a major disaster, with five and a half thousand jobs going, and ultimately as many as 20,000 jobs to be lost as suppliers were hit. There might still be a chance of a rescue package from China or Iran. NEC members from Motor Components and Motor Vehicles added to the discussion, and had little hope that anything could be salvaged. One NEC member from the sector said we needed a change of attitude from the Labour Government, and people in manufacturing felt insecure. Another NEC member asked about nationalisation. Apparently Amicus had suggested nationalisation in a meeting with Tony Blair and Patricia Hewitt but had got the response we expected.

Political Report

A question was asked about the amount of money spent supporting the Labour Party in the General Election campaign. This was substantial. Support had been in the form of several direct donations, literature, a DVD, a political tour, and sending letters to every Amicus member in 100 marginal seats.

Make Poverty History

It was agreed that Amicus will support the Make Poverty History demonstrations at the G8 summit in Scotland in July. The first demonstration is in Edinburgh on 2nd July; the second is at the summit itself – Gleneagles on 6th July. Amicus will be encouraging regions to support these events.

CMA

The General Secretary gave a report on the relationship between Amicus and the CMA Executive, which now appears to have broken down completely. Members of the CMA Executive have made complaints to the Certification Officer and are taking court action against Amicus, and are also seeking to set up a breakaway union. The detail around this is very complex. The core of the argument is the CMA view is that Amicus removed money from its bank account, while Amicus believes that the money was not ring-fenced for the use of CMA members and rightly belonged to Amicus. Discussions seeking to agree a settlement have been unsuccessful. The NEC endorsed the General Secretary's report. Amicus will continue to contest the legal action, will write to CMA members, will re-endorse the decision to merge with Unifi and GPMU (as the CMA had queried the financial basis for this), will make amendments to CMA byelaws to integrate the CMA into Amicus structures, and will write to members of the CMA Executive indicating that they could face disciplinary action for bringing the union into disrepute.

Conference

The NEC agreed statements and reports to go to Conference. These included a statement to be proposed to Conference instead of the Composite motion that our motion from Health Conference is a part of. The NEC is asking for the Composite motion to be remitted, and will oppose it if it is not remitted. One NEC member won a small change to the wording of the NEC statement; another called for the NEC to support both the statement and the Composite (but there was little support for this).

The NEC statement and the Composite motion are attached at the end of this report, if colleagues wish to compare these.

Fringe Meetings

There had been reports that no fringe meetings would be allowed at Conference. The National Women's Committee wanted to hold a meeting to launch an equal pay campaign, but was told this would not be allowed; other union bodies were given the same advice. An NEC member queried this, and was told by the Chair that any group could get together, leaflet, and have as many meetings as they liked but these would not be official fringe meetings.

Correspondence was carried over to the NEC meeting prior to Conference. I will be unable to attend this meeting due to prior work commitments.

Gill George
8th May 2005

POLICY CONFERENCE 2005

COMPOSITE 14

PRIVATISATION

Formed from:

Motion 55 - Privatisation	Health Service
Motion 56 - PFI/PPP Motion	Scotland
57 - Public Services Motion	South East
58 - Privatisation	London
Amendment	London

This Conference totally rejects the PFI/PPP schemes that the Government is pursuing, especially in the NHS. This Conference believes that privatisation has led to declining services for the public and attacks on workers' rights, whilst delivering fat pay rises for the bosses.

Conference rejects the Government's argument that the private sector can bring benefits to the public sector. In light of the enormity of cost of providing services through private enterprise, which by its nature generates profits for its shareholders, thus reducing the funds available for the provision of the service, the Union's campaign will by necessity seek the re-nationalisation of the already outsourced public services, by such action producing a better service to the tax payer which is truly accountable to the people of this country.

Conference believes that essential public services must be provided on the basis of human need, not the drive for profit.

Conference instructs the NEC to campaign vigorously:

1. for and end to privatisation of the public sector
2. oppose privatisation in all its forms, PFI, PPP or any new name that is invented
3. for public services that have already been privatised to be taken back into public ownership.

Conference instructs the NEC to implement this policy in all dealings with employers and Government. Conference further instructs the NEC to publicise the policy throughout the membership, to encourage members to resist privatisation and to co-operate with other unions to resist the Government attacks.

To this end we call upon the NEC to organise a national demonstration against privatisation. This demonstration should take place before the end of 2005.

NEC Statement No. 5 - Public Services

Conference welcomes the high level of investment in public services carried out by the Government in education and health. Following 18 years of Conservative underinvestment in public services, we recognise the immense task which faced a Labour Government that has committed to delivering on public services since 1997

However, conference notes with concern the new agenda on 'choice' and "plurality" and totally rejects an agenda which seeks to undermine universality and increase long-term private sector involvement in the provision of our public services. Conference believes that the Government should consult fully with Amicus representatives to ensure that reform of public services delivers real benefits for public service users.

Conference strongly opposes government policies that require public service job cuts and cuts to public sector worker pensions to finance government spending plans and believes our public services require more and better trained public servants not fewer.

Conference reaffirms its opposition to privatisation of public services, and believes there is increasing evidence that privatisation is more expensive, detrimental to service delivery, creates significant inequalities as profits rely on a two-tier workforce. Conference welcomes the Labour Party manifesto commitment that the post office will remain in public ownership.

Conference believes that rigorous systems for testing value for money comparisons between conventional procurement, public private partnerships and the Private Finance Initiative have yet to be developed and there is no conclusive evidence that costs under PFI procurement and PPPs are lower.

Conference continues to adopt a pragmatic approach when supporting members who are affected by privatisation, one which fights for and delivers robust contracts for our members but one which calls for greater monitoring and accountability of PPP projects

Conference recognises concerns over safety and PPP projects in transport, in particular the rail industry, and does not accept any compromise over safety in the pursuit of PPP. Conference believes that the railways should be renationalised, along with a major investment programme to improve rolling stock and restore the UK train building industry.

Conference believes that if they are to be accepted, Public Private Partnerships must demonstrate long-term value for money to the public purse through a level playing field with regard to public sector comparators, we must tackle the perception that PPP is the "only game in town"

Conference believes the Government must ensure that there is greater freedom for public authorities to borrow to invest outside PFI and that access to revenue support is on an equal footing. Conference believes that pensions are a key area of concern and anxiety in any Public Private Partnership process and will continue to pursue open admitted body status where appropriate for our members.

Conference calls on the Government to deliver an end to the two tier work force for all public sector workers by extending the two tier workforce Code to cover all forms of contracting across local

government and the rest of the public sector, and across the United Kingdom, and ensure public sector pension benefits are comprehensively protected. Conference further calls on the Government to explore options for a more comprehensive solution, in the form of fair wages legislation.

Conference believes that Amicus should mount a campaign to ensure that terms and conditions of existing workers and new starters working in public services are not undermined by private contractors, to ensure that any profit made by private companies in the public sector is not made by undermining wages and conditions.