**Unison National Women’s Conference 2020- Bournemouth International Centre-13 to 15th February**

Attending this conference were;

Julia Davies (Lead Rep and Delegate)

Lorna McCourt (Delegate)

Trudy Phillips (Visitor)

It was Lorna and Trudy’s first time at a Unison Conference.

After travelling down on the Wednesday (12th) and checking into our hotel-we explored Bournemouth –It was decided that, as we had a busy few days ahead, we would have an early meal and chill ready for conference.

**Thursday** had us up, bright and breezy –ready for conference to start.

After looking at the stands, gathering information that was useful to us-we attended our Cymru/Wales regional meeting-we were introduced to our council members, and all newbies were welcomed. We received signposting for if we needed any assistance during conference, and support offered if anyone wanted to speak.

Once this meeting had finished-it was time for our First Conference Session. We were welcomed to the conference, and the Standing Orders Committee reports were read out-behavioural guidelines of acceptable /unacceptable practices and speech highlighted.

We then had our 1st Guest Speaker- Angela Rayner MP-candidate for Deputy Leader of the Labour Party. She thanked Unison for our support, telling us of her journey from 16 year Home Help who became a rep to her current role within the shadow government. Angela’s feeling that in order for the Labour Party to increase its popularity with the Nation-it needs to tell a better story, to sell its policies more. It needs to let voters know that, as a party- values are greater than just about money. The aim is for free lifelong learning for all-not just the fortunate few. By increasing our learning potential, we increase our earning potential –creating a greater economy –it is not about spending but investing, the pay-off for this is not just economic growth but human potential being realised.

Angela then took questions from the floor:

1. How do we get confidence with the Labour Party

By empowering people to gain control of their own lives, the labour party wants us to all be part of a community again. It’s not about a left or right view but a right not wrong perspective.

1. What advice would you give to a new officer?

Have confidence in who you are-don’t let anyone define you-just be you. And support the next woman!

1. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

We need to support this movement-we need more women in power

1. HRT Crisis

We need to push women’s need forward.

Unfortunately Angela was on a very time limited visit due to her campaign, and had to leave.

Emma Proctor than gave us the Annual report:

Our achievements included-

* Sexual Harassment and Menopause awareness policies
* Northern Ireland-aiming for a legal framework for abortion
* Flexible working for women-we need that from day 1
* Women Against State Pension Inequality (WASPI)

However, there is still work to do

* there is still no provision for buffer zones outside abortion clinics
* domestic abuse bill
* paid leave for domestic abuse victims
* need to encourage more women to join Unison-to make a difference!

There is a lot to be done, to make sure women our heard.

**Motions were then put forward for conference to vote-**

1. **Women on Cliff Edge-submitted by National Women’s Committee (NWC)**

This motion was written last year-it was bad then but any hope has been quashed by the result of the General Election-things will get worse. Universal credit, austerity, impacts us all. Women are reducing their hours, or downgrading their role-just so they can receive universal credit. The last decade was one of austerity-there seems to be no end to it-this is about survival, we must keep this at the forefront of our campaigns and not just sit quietly.

The Conference vote was to support this motion-MOTION WAS CARRIED

* 1. **LGBT+**

14 Million People are living in poverty. People are selling their bodies just to survive-we could look at using the Nordic model and decriminalising the sex worker. It is time for Unison to stop this

The Conference vote was to support this motion-MOTION WAS CARRIED

NI (Northern Ireland)

The implications of the 5 week wait for Universal credit is plunging Women into poverty.

The Conference vote was to support this motion-MOTION WAS CARRIED

1. **The reality of Social Care-unfunded increase in pay-submitted by National Women’s Committee (NWC)**

There has been underfunding since 2010-with half Council run homes have gone.

80% social care workers are Women-there are disputes in Birmingham and Glasgow.

2.1 To support this we need to follow the Ethical Care Charter for all procured services-working locally to implement. It was recommended to watch the Ken Loach Film-Sorry We Missed You-which highlights austerity.

The Conference vote was to support this motion-MOTION WAS CARRIED

2.2 To strengthen the motion to increase funding

The Conference vote was to support this motion-MOTION WAS CARRIED

2.3 Care needers are struggling-there are over stretched resources. Services have been outsourced to make savings-this has led to an unregulated sector.

13/22 care contracts have been returned to the public sector, as they could not operate within the funding given.

5/22 local authorities actually pay the home care provider transport.

The Welsh Government has recognised and acknowledged the lack of funding-with the Introduction of the Social Partnership Bill.

The Conference vote was to support this motion-MOTION WAS CARRIED

1. **The Impact of Welfare Cuts on Women-submitted by Northern Ireland Region**

They impact women more than man-they hit the poorest. The Vile rape clause needs to be scrapped-alongside the 2 children benefit cap.

“Politicians have plenty-Purses are empty!”

The Conference vote was to support this motion-MOTION WAS CARRIED

1. **Time off for dependants & special leave-a women’s burden –submitted by EDF**

Caring can be full time job on its own-the caveat of being “reasonable” can put pressure on an employer which is then passed on to employees.

Loss of earnings has lead to an increase in pay day loans.

Work/Life balance and austerity is not going to get any better.

The Conference vote was to support this motion-MOTION WAS CARRIED

1. **Bring Parity to Shared Parental Leave-submitted by South East Region**

Shared parental leave was introduced in 2015-and was supposed to lead to flexibility for both parents to be an active part of a child’s first year-but due to the complexity of putting it in place has led to only a 1% uptake.

The main cause of this being family finances will not allow it-due to inequality of pay.

Finland allows all parents the same parental leave, promoting Wellbeing & Parental Equality-leading towards closing the gender pay gap.

The Conference vote was to support this motion-MOTION WAS CARRIED

**COMPOSITE A**

Consisting of motions **6/7/7.1/8**-regarding Menopause/good practice/Black Women

Menopause-is it worse for Black Women-they experience more intense symptoms, they prefer information from other women-not their GP.

We need to raise the awareness of the impact of the menopause-3.5million women are over the age of 50-educationand raising awareness must happen. We have to celebrate the uniqueness of women-showcasing the pockets of excellent help and support, include our trans sisters in our campaigns. Menopause symptoms can lead to dysphoria.

We have to break the taboo surrounding the menopause, and be fully inclusive.

Under the HSE guidelines-employers have legal duties to support the wellbeing of staff-there must be risk assessments undertaken, adjustments made to the workplace if necessary. We need to act against employers who breach this.

We could hold more workshops-knowledge is power-leading to the empowerment of woman.

There has to be education for black women on menopause.

We have to lobby parliament to allow smear tests on demand-to change the guidelines that women under 24 have a test, raising the profile to make this good practice.

The Conference vote was to support this motion-MOTION WAS CARRIED

Motions **9/10/10.1/11**

* Employer with Heart Charter
* Early miscarriage Misery
* Work place support for mothers with premature or sick babies

The Conference vote was to support these motions-MOTION WAS CARRIED

**12.** Ending the Hostile Environment for Pregnant Women-submitted by South East Region

It is a myth regarding the NHS tourism for pregnancy care.

More women spoke about their pregnancy experience.

The Conference vote was to support this motion-MOTION WAS CARRIED

We had our Health Section Meeting then-topics discussed were:

* Gender Pay Gap
* The role of the Band 2
* Flexible working

When this was finished, we enjoyed an evening networking session with fellow members from

Cymru / Wales- with a lovely meal at a Greek Restaurant.

**Friday**  again had us up bright & early-after a very enjoyable breakfast, we made our way across to the BIC

The 1st session of the day involved us taking part in workshops. We attended the Mindfulness Wellbeing Seminar-which was an introduction to mindfulness based techniques aimed at stress reduction. It showed methods of how to support our own sense of wellbeing-ways of taking care of ourselves.

We then entered our 2nd Conference session-with our guest speaker of Dave Prentis-

Dave informed the conference that we had over 1000 women attending this year-with 1 million women as members-showing we have, as a union, equality at our core.

He paid tribute to all the women of Unison-showing that with our solidaity , we have taken on causes and won-Northern Ireland/Picket lines/Queen Alexandra Hospital/Bradford/Blackpool to name a few-he thanked everyone for all their hard work, for our commitment and our time devoted to the Union.

With women at our core, we are shaping Unisons agenda on deciding our way forward-unfortunately though, silent sexism is back (“banter”, “laddism”) but our union is leading the way in treating women with dignity and respect.

We have fought in the Supreme Courts-for the rights of care workers to have pay when sleeping in-we are fighting for fairness and justice, whatever the cost.

We are leading the way to ensure unequal pay is tackled.

He mentioned Angie Rayner, an example of our union, and what we stand for. We need take the labour party back into power-we know we have more battles to win, we will not abandon our fights.

As women, we are tackling issues, that are not just women’s priorities but Unisons- we are an inspiration to him, and he will never let him down.

After Dave’s speech, there was then an opportunity for “selfies” with him, before we attended any fringe meetings.

Following these, we had our 2nd Conference session

**Motions were then put forward for conference to vote-**

**13.** Breastfeeding & lactation facilities in the workplace-submitted by Durham local Government

* We need to draw up a guide for good practice
* All areas need adequate facilities, and storage
* Need to look at a child’s right, as well as a woman’s right to breastfeed

The Conference vote was to support this motion-MOTION WAS CARRIED

**14.** Disproportionality in the Treatment of Women suffering Heart attacks-submitted by Birmingham Unison Branch

* British heart foundation figures show 50% women likely to get a wrong diagnosis
* 8200 women die unnecessary every year-98 women a day-4 per hour....
* Women are getting diagnosis of panic attacks/gastric irritation rather than heart disease
* We need to raise awareness of this through Unison

The Conference vote was to support this motion-MOTION WAS CARRIED

**15 & 15.1** Health & Safety Testing- a world built for me-submitted by the Northern Region & National Women’s Committee

* There is a gender data gap-women are forgotten in the design protocol for personal protective equipment (PPE)
* Examples of data gap-temperature of offices-based on men, car testing based around men
* Need to campaign for Risk Assessments to be gender specific, to raise the issue of gender specific PPE
* Need to expand Health & Safety Training to include the above
* Need more women as Health & Safety representatives
* It only highlights the need for more training to be available.

The Conference vote was to support this motion-MOTION WAS CARRIED

**16.** Our NHS-Not for Sale, not a bargaining chip in trade deals-Submitted by National Women’s Committee

* There is a real threat that the NHS will be sold off-especially to the USA
* We currently have full access to our NHS, and currently control drug prices, keeping them low-if sold off this will lead to higher drug cost-impacting on Women NHS Staff and Women Patients
* We need to campaign now to save our NHS
* We need to bring outsourced services back in house
* We cannot wait for a Labour Government-we need to act now

The Conference vote was to support this motion-MOTION WAS CARRIED

We then adjourned for hustings to take place-after which we had our 3rd Conference session.

The Guest Speaker for this session was Christina McAnea

Christina told us there are 220,000 members of the Women’s Institute-however Unison has 1 million Women members, making us a bigger voice for Women

However, there is still a gender pay gap for us to fight for-we need to improve Women’s pay, and increase the value of the jobs. It is 50 years since the Equal Pay Act, there is still segregation of workers. Unison started to be a voice for the working people-we still share that vision.

We are ready to stand up to the Government-Unison is in a good place to that , our activists are brave, speaking out when things are wrong.

**Motions were then put forward for conference to vote-**

**17.** Impact of Domestic Abuse on Workers-submitted by Northumberland Tyne & Wear

* There is an increase in women accessing Mental Health Services-showing we are more vulnerable to domestic abuse.
* We need to break the taboo around domestic abuse, and speak freely to mental health support
* We need to raise the profile, and increase the importance of training to spot signs domestic abuse
* Women shared their stories of surviving domestic abuse.

The Conference vote was to support this motion-MOTION WAS CARRIED

The evening of the Saturday included a social event, held in the Hilton Hotel. This was a chance for us all to network, enjoy a dance-and just enjoy being together. It was a great success!

Unfortunately, due to Storm Dennis impacting on the safety of our travelling, Women’s Conference was cut short for us, and we left before the Saturday session started.