

Workers' Liberty

Teachers

NUT Conference
Liverpool
Sunday March 31
Bulletin number 7

Teachers face pay Armageddon Build LANAC to organise resistance

The debate and decisions from this year's priority motion represent a continuation of the strategy pursued for over two years. This strategy has singularly failed to strike any significant blows to this Tory Government or make any difference to any substantive area of policy. Coming out of this year's debate, there is a real risk that the same pattern of inaction will continue.

From one point of view the agreement with the NASUWT is an historic gain. Undoubtedly many, many teachers will be heartened by this agreement. At a basic level, unity amongst teacher trade unions can only be a good thing. However, at what cost has this unity been forged? During the debate on the priority motion there was much posturing about the risk to the "historic agreement" posed by a one day national strike on June 26th. However, what has really been put at risk by the unity-fest is a serious action strategy that can win real gains

for teachers. In reality we have left any strategy between now and the next Conference in the hands of our executive, and, even more worryingly, the executive of the NASUWT.

How did it come to this?

It's not as if there has been no opposition to the leadership's shockingly inadequate strategy. In 2011 an amendment outlining some steps to ensure the Pensions dispute had a shot at winning was defeated. By 2012 the STA and CDFU leadership had all but merged with old Broad Left as the pension campaign hit the buffers. Grass roots anger saw the emergence of the Local Associations National Action Campaign (LANAC). A large impromptu LANAC fringe meeting on Friday night saw an action strategy emerge that was ultimately manoeuvred off the Conference floor by the STA and CDFU leaders, aided and abetted to some extent by the SWP who, unbeknown to those at the LANAC meeting, had produced their own crazy General Strike amendment.

In the intervening year LANAC has begun to develop into a genuine branch based rank and file, capable of not only debating and proposing strategy for the Union but also coordinating this strategy in local disputes.

It could also play a big role in delivering national action on the ground locally. It has clearly been a breath of fresh air in the Union at a time when the established left were unwilling to be critical of the union leadership.

At this year's conference the STA and CDFU for the first time held a joint Friday night meeting, something we have been urging them to do for years. Unfortunately this was not to promote left unity and a serious action strategy but to scupper the chances of LANAC doing that very thing. After being invited to support this meeting LANAC had asked for a speaker on the platform and proposed that it be a debate around the strategy rather than a rally for the leaderships policy, which it largely turned out to be. There was no response of any kind to LANAC.

In response and in order to allow delegates to debate and democratically decide an amendment spelling out a genuine way forward, LANAC called a meeting immediately after the first Conference session. Well over 100 people participated in the debate. After a full discussion this meeting had to make a decision between closely related positions. One simply focussed on adding a one day national strike on June 26th, the other on the additional need for a calendar of action and a recall NUT Special Conference to hold the Executive to account and



The Liverpool LANAC Conference June 2012

maximise the voice of the rank and file. Members of the AWL backed the latter position. Unfortunately what should have been a comradely and constructive debate was hijacked by egotistical grandstanding from leading members of the SWP, even though these people have actively opposed affiliation to LANAC in their associations. Members of the AWL argued from the start and supported a single amendment from LANAC for the sake of unity and to maximise our impact in conference.

Ultimately, the position argued vociferously argued by the SWP, did not reflect the actual mood of conference despite their insistence that this was the only way to win the

debate in the hall. One unfortunate consequence of this approach was that questions of democracy, accountability and control of the Union strategy were not raised during the debate. As a result we not only have an inadequate strategy but we have no mechanism to hold out leadership to account for the next 12 months. This state of affairs simply illustrates the continued need to build LANAC as a serious representative organising force rooted in the associations and divisions of the NUT.

What next?

Clearly we need to make June 27 a big success and continue to demand

the naming of dates for the other regional strikes as well the national strike before Christmas. Members have been severely demobilised since the last action in the pensions dispute, and given the lack of leadership from the Union so far on pay, it is down to rank and file activists to mobilise the force to take us through regional action successfully to national in the autumn. The best way to do this is to maintain and extend your active involvement in LANAC. First and foremost if your association or division is not affiliated propose affiliation at your next meeting.

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LRC COUNCILLORS AGAINST CUTS

Fringe Meeting

Making the labour movement fight

Kevin Benne —Warrington Labour
Councillor against cuts

Liam Conway—Workers Liberty Teachers

Liverpool Pub,
14 James St., L2 7PQ

Monday 1st April

12:45—2:00pm

