

Solidarity

Elections Special - UNISON NEC Elections, April 2007



UNISON members need leadership on pay and cuts

VOTE FOR A UNION THAT FIGHTS BACK

By Kate Ahrens

The elections for UNISON's National Executive Council have never been more important. The NHS is under fierce attack, with politicians from all parties saying it is too expensive, and has to face competition or replacement by private healthcare. Who will speak up for the NHS, and for healthworkers delivering essential services?

All over the country healthworkers and community campaigns are fighting back against the cuts and the threat of privatisation. Manchester has seen a strike of mental health nurses, the South West and the East Midlands have seen massive demonstrations, and workers in national services like NHS Logistics and the National Blood Service have taken action to defend their services, too.

But there is something missing.

All these local fights need bringing together into a national campaign, one that is capable of uniting us all to win, not just the future of the NHS but also decent pay for all of us who work in it. Such a national campaign needs a top-quality national leadership in our union, and we just don't have that right now.

Too often the current leadership of UNISON are guilty of negativity. They don't ask for enough in pay negotiations, they don't object strongly enough when cuts are proposed, and they don't fight back when the government attacks our pay, pensions, terms and

conditions through things like Agenda for Change. Without the national leadership we need, healthworkers are divided and weak.

With a different national leadership, UNISON could turn the tide in the NHS.

We urge you to vote for the following candidates in the Health Service Group seats:

Female Seats:

**Kate Ahrens
Alison Brown**

General Seat:

Paul Harper

Male Seat:

Len Hockey

HOW CAN WE BEAT THE NHS PAY CUT?

Electing a better leadership in UNISON would be a great step forward, but it would still be only one step. There is much more we need to do.

The government think they can abuse our commitment to patients; they think we will end up accepting to be paid less next year. Gordon Brown is trying to impose below-inflation rises on all public sector workers, to show how tough on the unions he will be as Prime Minister. Are we going to let him?

To stop this year's pay cut healthworkers will need to take some form of action. That could mean working to contract, taking our legally entitled breaks or some form of strike action. In Ireland at the moment, nurses are fighting for better pay and shorter hours by refusing to answer telephone calls or use hospital computers - which they say are not 'nursing duties'. Strike action can take different forms, or be 'selective': for example, finance or IT staff out on full strike pay with other members subsidising them.

Principles of effective action

1. Healthworkers should discuss and decide what action they are going to take - unions don't tell us what to do, we tell our union what to do!

2. The action needs to be effective, which means it needs to target NHS bosses and the Government.

3. Whatever action we take it should be on the same days as action by other public sector workers like civil servants, teachers, council workers - who also face similar pay cuts from the Government.

We hope this leaflet will give you some ideas. Talk to others where you work about what sort of action we can take against the Government's pay cut, and in defence of the NHS. Ask your union rep what your local branch is doing to prepare for action over pay, and if you haven't got a union rep, now is the time to elect one - or perhaps to do the job yourself.

Should Gordon Brown be the next Prime Minister?

No! Gordon Brown is as much in favour of privatisation as Tony Blair. As Prime Minister, he would continue all that's bad about Blair. UNISON should back John McDonnell MP for Labour leader when Blair resigns. UNISON sponsored MPs should nominate McDonnell to ensure he gets on the ballot paper, and then UNISON members can vote for him if they pay into the Affiliated Political Fund (APF).

What can we do about the BNP?

Healthworkers have much to lose if the BNP get a foothold in British politics. The NHS relies on migrant workers, and we are all, black and white, trade unionists. Fascists in power have attacked unions, wanting a quiet and docile workforce. The way to stop the BNP is to show that there's a better way to solve the NHS crisis than blaming black and Asian workers - taxing the rich to fund an NHS that everyone can use and everyone can be proud of.

Find out more! Get involved! Help us!

UNISON members need to organise. To do that effectively, we need information and ideas.

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