

Cornwall Trades Union Council

June 24 2024 meeting of Cornwall TUC – via Zoom

President's welcome: Rob Rooney opened the meeting, advising of minor changes to the agenda.

Present: Sandy Easterbrook (NEU, RCN, deputy president), Mark Newman (NEU). Sandy and Mark left early for another appointment. Reece Weatherburn (UNISON local government), Brian Blatchford, Rob Hawkins (Unite Retired) Ross Marshall (NEU), Susan Fairweather (Unite Retired, affiliations secretary), Jane Creagh, Zoe Fox (Unite Community), Geoff Ferguson (PCS ARMS), Rob Rooney (Unite Community, president)

Apologies: Mark Player, Richard Westcott, Trevor Hall, Mark Tripconey, Tony Martyn.

May meeting minutes: Accepted as a true record – proposed Brian Blatchford, seconded Geoff Ferguson.

Matters arising:

- 1) Bus safety in Cornwall. CTUC posed a series of questions for the chief executive of Cornwall Council following RMT full-timer Barry West's presentation on bus fires. There had been no reply from Cornwall Council. CTUC had learned, via Barry West, that Cornwall Council commissioned an investigation. Barry West had no confidence in this investigation, as it was carried out by an unqualified person employed by First Bus. The "investigation" concluded the A30 bus fire was down to driver error and a driver is currently being disciplined. Barry West reported to the president that he has asked RMT general secretary for authorisation for industrial action to defend this driver.

Ross Marshall reported that at the Cornwall NEU AGM this issue was raised. The NEU branch is to investigate the condition of buses used for school runs and will invite Barry West to its next meeting.

- 2) CND affiliation. This was debated with the benefit of Dave Chapple's (South West TUC trade council organiser) views on the issue and the testimony of a trade unionist who works in an arms factory who has seen his factory picketed by anti-Zionist protesters. Unfortunately, the link to the latter information did not work and it appears to have been removed from the "Labor Notes" website. The president had seen it and gave the meeting a summary as well as reading Dave Chapple's views in full. The matter was then opened for debate.

In summary, do we risk being seen by a section of trade unionists as a "left-wing righteous clique" (Dave Chapple's words) if we affiliate? If we do not affiliate do we, in effect, endorse trade union complicity in war and genocide? Should we distinguish between nuclear power and nuclear weapons.

Vote: Four in favour of affiliation, three against, three abstentions.

- 3) All Under One Banner reply. President reported problems locating the "What we stand for leaflet" and AUOB address. Sue Fairweather offered to help.

UNISON healthcare assistants strike at Derriford on June 17,18: Deferred to next month when it will be clearer if a donation is needed for the strike fund.

Affiliations: RMT Mid-Cornwall branch has affiliated. UNISON acute health branch (which declined to affiliate) to be followed up.

The president reported on his attempts to open up lines of communication with Unite branches in Cornwall. South West Unite regional office refuse to divulge any information on Cornwall branches, claiming GDPR. President to follow up.

Delegates – Geoff Ferguson confirmed as PCS ARMS delegate, Wayne Young confirmed as RMT Mid-Cornwall delegate, Ross Marshall, Sandy Easterbrook, Mark Newman confirmed as NEU delegates. Unite Community delegation unclear. Delegations not declared by other affiliates.

CTUC secretary: Richard Westcott (RMT) currently holds this position as well as treasurer. Richard's workload means he has to relinquish the role of secretary. President asked the meeting for a volunteer. No response. President to put it out to the mailing list with a job description.

Treasurer report: Richard Westcott was at RMT conference in Hull but had provided a report. This was shown to the meeting. £5,529.99 in current account. £1115.36 expenses, £2115.35 receipts giving a surplus over the month of £1000.01.

Branch reports: Unite Community – Zoe Fox said Unite Community will sort out its delegation at its July meeting. The branch has a stall at Falmouth Park Life, Kimberley Park, Falmouth, last Sunday of every month (weather permitting). Bus drivers working for First Bus are taking strike action over pay.

The president reported that RMT members working for Royal Fleet Auxiliary are taking a day's strike action on June 25, following up a similar action last month and have a picket at Torpoint. President to attend.

Safe Sick Pay Campaign: Statutory Sick Pay is a paltry £99.35 p.w. The Centre for Progressive Change (backed by the TUC) is pressing MPs and would-be MPs on this issue and wanted CTUC support. Aims are: 1) Abolish earnings threshold. There are two million workers who earn under this figure (£123 p.w.) and are thus excluded from claiming SSP; 2) SSP to be payable from first day of sickness rather than, as at present, after three days; 3) Increase SSP to be in line with Real Living Wage (currently £11.44 p.h.); Adopt flexible model for SSP to enable phased returns to work.

The meeting agreed CTUC put its name to this campaign.

Any other business: Zoe Fox wished the wording of CTUC aims, listed on its website, to be changed. The meeting agreed amendments – see website.

At this point, Zoe Young, Acorn activist in Falmouth, joined the meeting. It was explained the meeting was at an end but that she would be welcomed to future meetings.

Meeting ended 20:31

Next meeting: July 29, 7pm. Hybrid meeting at St Rumon Club, Redruth and via Zoom