

# Workers' Liberty

## School Workers

NEU Conference  
Bournemouth  
2022  
Bulletin 14/4/22

# Ukraine: better no policy than a shameful one

The debate on UM2 was astonishing and convoluted. The original emergency motion was poor, the way it was moved and argued for was terrible. It had a fake even handedness, it had an ill-placed pacifism and worse it centred on a negotiated-settlement not recognising that negotiating with a despot who has invaded your country, unleashing murder, rape, mass destruction and arguably genocide might be problematic.

That's before we consider that Russia has repeatedly stated it won't stop the war for negotiations. The motion also stated: 'the deployment of British and NATO forces in Ukraine would be a dangerous escalation'.

This is entirely a red-herring, there is no indication of that happening, indeed British and other NATO troops were removed before Russia's invasion to avoid them becoming embroiled in the war.

**Amendment 1** again was poor, it stated 'it is incumbent on us to oppose war and militarism in all its forms' without noticing that the war the Ukrainian people are waging is one of self-defence, whilst the one Russia is waging is of vicious imperialist aggression.

**Amendment 2** was strong and would have placed the union clearly in line with the rest of the international education unions. It would have ensured a clear solidarity with Ukraine without equivocation or obfuscation.

**Amendment 3** was the worst of the lot, almost a chemically-pure version of what-about-ery with all its focus on UK

and European powers' military spending.

**Amendment 4** was a well meaning practical solidarity proposal.

In the end conference, voted for amendment 1 and shamefully against amendment 2 but as the argument went on a palpable shift occurred in conference's mood. Strong speeches were waking conference up to what they were about to do.

When Amendment 3 was lost, those around the NEU 'Left' curtailed the debate and went to push the motion through. However, by this time conference could see what they were voting for and saved the honour of our union by voting it down. Over an hour to end up with no policy but better no policy than a shameful one.

### Model motion for branches

We oppose the Russian state's invasion of Ukraine.

We oppose Russia's war and demand Russian troops leave Ukraine.

Ukraine has the right to self-determination and the right to defend itself.

We demand the west adequately arms Ukraine so it is able to do so.

We oppose any attempts by Russia to force Ukraine to sign political agreements which would undermine Ukraine's right to govern itself.

We oppose NATO. But this war is not being waged by NATO. The war is being waged by Russian imperialists. Putin's regime is responsible for this war.

We support the anti-war left in Russia, defend those arrested in Russia for taking action against the war, and support Ukrainian internationalists.

We welcome all refugees from wars and persecution.

We agree to affiliate to the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign.



Mariupol

*Putin has been promising to wipe Ukraine off the map for 20 years. Meanwhile some on the left were looking the other way at NATO. Shockingly, despite the current slaughter, they still are.*

# *Time to end the scandal of all members are equal but some are more equal than others*

Teachers are not the only workers in schools, and the National Education Union is not just a union for teachers. Yet it is still the case that we continue to hear reference to not upsetting 'Support Staff Unions'. The NEU is a support staff union and it has more than 50,000 support staff members to prove it.

Support staff activists and school reps, some ex teachers, are repeatedly telling us that they feel like second class citizens in the Union. These workers, our lowest paid members, are basically begging the union to give them equal rights on bargaining and representation.

They are repeatedly pointing out that they have fully supported campaigns on teachers' pay, have stood on teachers' picket lines with teachers, have fully respected the professionalism of teachers and more. All they want in return for all the incredible work they do, is the same rights as teachers in the NEU, as

individual members and in collective action.

Unfortunately, this is proving too much for some of our long standing, mostly teacher activists. It appears that some teacher members, even those claiming to be socialists, are spreading unfounded fears of dire consequences if the Union concedes full union rights to support staff members.

But the sky will not fall in on the NEU if support staff are given the union recognition they deserve. The spectacle of teachers in a 'workers' party not supporting equal rights in our union is not a pretty sight.

And worse, some are even spreading untruths about the consequences of full rights for our support staff members. Rumours have spread in the NEU that the Union could be expelled from the TUC for actively recruiting non-teachers into membership and giving them full rights as members. This rumour is entirely bogus.

A well-placed ex senior official of the Union has said it was nonsense to believe the Union would lose its TUC status because of any membership war between different school based unions. The NEU contributes shed loads of money to the TUC, money the TUC can ill-afford to lose. In any case intra-union conflicts related to poaching members is already rife amongst TUC affiliates.

It is now five years since the NUT/ATL merger, five years during which our support staff members have been patient and reluctantly accepted inferior status in the Union.

This situation cannot be allowed to continue and it is shameful that it has continued this long. But the support staff members, and those teachers in the NEU who back their demands for equal rights as soon as possible, will not give up on this fight. The campaign will go on year after year until the rule that some members are more equal than others is abolished.

It really is a case of enough is enough. Solidarity with all our support staff members. Together we will win equal rights for all NEU members. The days of second-class NEU membership are numbered.

## ***Palestine - direct links better than BDS***

The only seriously contentious part of the motion on Palestine was around the issue of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS). No amendment was submitted on BDS and no debate took place about its effectiveness in promoting the national rights of the Palestinians.

Only one speaker was taken against the motion, and that speech was general opposition rather than focused on BDS.

BDS has been around since 2005. By and large it has been a failure. Since its inception, it has done nothing to damage Israel's GDP. In its 16 years of existence, it has only managed to hurt academics and independent cultural institutions already marginalised by mainstream Israeli society and government for their dissenting position against the occupation.

Palestinians, like Ukrainians, have the right to national self-determination. Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza has been brutal and barbaric. Workers' Liberty unconditionally supports the right of the Palestinians to a state alongside Israel, with the removal of all the settlements on the West Bank.

Rather than boycott, we can better counter the Israeli Government's denial of national rights to the Palestinians through *links* with groups in Israel and the Palestinian territories like Standing Together. These groups are fighting for democracy and recognition of the rights of both peoples - immediately, of the Palestinians who are denied the right to self-determination.

## ***Workers' Liberty School Workers***

To find out more about Workers' Liberty School Workers contact us on 020 7394 8923 or email us at [schoolworkers@workersliberty.org](mailto:schoolworkers@workersliberty.org).

To find out more about Workers' Liberty and what we stand for, visit our website at [www.workersliberty.org](http://www.workersliberty.org)