Educate, Agitate, Organise!!

That was the message from Unite Director of Education, Jim Mowatt, at our first ever ULR conference. On February the 6th this year 360 ULR’s from across the country converged on TUC Congress House in London; to celebrate their achievements in the lifelong learning field. Alongside Jim, Unite Head of Lifelong Learning, Kenny Barron, Unite Executive Chair, Tony Woodhouse and TUC General Secretary, Frances O’Grady spoke to the delegates. The day culminated with General Secretary, Len McCluskey presenting the ULR of the year awards. Sally Outram from Sheffield City Homes took home the North East, Yorkshire and Humberside trophy.

In Len’s closing speech he praised the work of the Unite Lifelong Learning team and said “Lifelong Learning is a key part of our union’s agenda. It is at the forefront of our ambition for our members, ensuring that education is not only readily available but that more importantly that it is promoted in the workplace.”

Active Engagement “Key To Success” At Durham Political School

NEY&H learning organiser’s Dave Condliffe and Dom Goldrick engaged with 80 delegates at the Unite political school which ran in conjunction with the Durham Miners Gala. The main theme was clear. Learning and organizing works best when reps actively engage with everyone in the workplace on a regular basis and, using a workplace learning survey, is a great tool to do this. Dave said: “Interacting with workers through the lifelong learning agenda not only helps to retain our members but is proven to recruit new reps and members.” After the delegates had completed a learning and organising survey Dom led the feedback session. He reported that 75% of delegates attending the presentation had completed surveys and just under half (44%) had requested a meeting with a ULO to discuss learning and organising in their branch.

In conclusion the school felt that fully utilising the ULR role should be a higher priority, as it is proven to assist with our Strategy for Growth. They echoed Len McCluskey’s words. “Education gives our members empowerment and it strengthens our Union, and we are proud to use learning as a tool for recruiting members and retaining them”.

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“Hat Trick” Of Agreements For Unite

Workplace learning agreements are one of our main objectives and 2013 has seen Unite ULO’s negotiate 3 new major signings. Becky Feather has facilitated agreements at Greencore in Kiveton and Molson Coors in Tadcaster. Greencore have agreed full time off to study to level 2 in Maths and English and matched time for ICT. The company also wishes to pay up to level 3 ICT for non-members and have enrolled our ULR on a level 4 PTTLS course.

Molson quoted “It’s early days for our process but we have had great support from Unite, establishing ULR’s, promoting the scheme and launching the first IT course. We look forward to supporting our workforce in the future with enhancing their literacy and numeracy”

A disturbing press release, claiming that one in seven adults did not have basic qualifications in Maths and English jolted local politicians into action and allowed for the signing of a major agreement over 3 years in the making. On the 20th May 2013 Kirklees Council signed a partnership agreement with Unite, Unison and GMB to back learning opportunities for their employees.

Unite ULO, Gill Campbell, was instrumental in sealing the deal which sees staff having two and a half hours paid facility time to learn per week. Council leader Mehboob Khan said “..with the introduction of new ways of working we need to continue to support our staff and invest in their development and lifelong learning.”