TUC Women’s Conference 2019

THE UNCERTAINTY of Brexit and its impact on workers’ rights may have been an immediate concern at this year’s TUC Women’s conference, but these could not overshadow the ongoing issues of sexual harassment, the gender pay gap and societal inequalities.

“While I pay tribute to the work of our unions in campaigning against Theresa May’s awful Brexit deal, austerity has carried on space and that disproportionately affects our women workers,” said Mark Serwotka, TUC president: “We still live in one of the most gender-inequal societies in the world.”

The gender pay gap and equal pay were the subject of around a quarter of the 43 motions proposed at the 89th TUC Women’s conference, held in London on 6-8 March.

Meanwhile, the NUJ delegation proposed a motion on addressing the gender imbalance among those working in photography.

Natasha Hirst, chair of both the NUJ Equality Council and Photographers’ Council, noted that only 15 per cent of photojournalists are women and called on the TUC Women’s Committee to work with the NUJ Women’s Network to support the development of opportunities for women in photography. The motion also called for the TUC Women’s Committee to promote mentoring, grants and scholarships and address gender imbalance.

“The stories being told are framed largely by men,” said Natasha: “It is crucial that we have a diversity of voices in photojournalism. We need opportunities for a wide range of women, from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, with lived experience of disability, poverty and oppression in a variety of forms.”

Dawn Butler, shadow secretary of state for women and equalities, added her support, committing to “laying the foundations for an escalator of success”, with more women “rising to the top”. “The burden of cuts has fallen on women,” she said. “But if society is more fair and equal, it is more fair for everyone. It is not about us and them.”

London Freelance Branch chair Penny Quinton seconded a motion from the Musicians’ Union that called on the TUC to lobby to extend shared parental pay to self-employed workers. Currently shared parental pay of up to 39 weeks can be split between parents, allowing them to share the paid leave, but the right does not apply to self-employed people. A private members’ bill introduced to Parliament by Tracy Brabin MP proposes an extension for the self-employed. “Self-employed people have children the same as those who are employed,” Penny pointed out.

Meanwhile, the NUJ delegation – which also included Ann Galpin, chair of the Disabled Members’ Council, Ann Coltart, equality council member, and Magda Ibrahim, co-equality officer for London Freelance Branch – supported a further seven motions.

Ann Coltart, equality council member and Ann Galpin, Equality Council member Ann Coltart, LFB co-equality officer Magda Ibrahim

Better copyright through Brussels

THE EU DIRECTIVE on copyright in the Digital Single Market was passed by the EU Parliament unamended, by 348 votes to 274, on 25 March 2019 and was formally signed off by the European and International Federations of Journalists ensured that the Directive includes Article 15(5): “Member States shall provide that authors of works incorporated in a press publication receive an appropriate share of the revenues that use headlines and snippets of press publishers receive for the use of their press publications by information society service providers.”

These measures are a direct response to EFJ and IFJ discussions with the European Commission, the EU civil service, over many years. Over the next two years the IFJ and EFJ will advise member unions on what is perhaps the harder task: ensuring that the “transposition” of the Directive into national laws fulfils the promise set out by the EU. It is almost certain that these will be reflected in some way in the UK.

New rules will mandate transparency of reporting uses made of our work. There will be provision to “adjust” contracts in the case of windfall income to the exploiter of the work – and perhaps more generally. And there will be voluntary alternative dispute resolution procedures throughout the European Union – though we suspect the copyright small claims court will continue to be preferred in the UK.

More online

The Freelance is regularly updated online and at www.londonfreelance.org/fl you will find:

• A full report from WIPO – the United Nations copyright body
• Our intrepid recruitment team ventures to Roehampton and the deep East End
• Earn under £85k! The consolation is that you can relax about Making Tax Digital… for now

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