

PASSED with prior amendments 3 December 2009 959

Equal Opportunities Campaigns united against Annual Conference delegation cuts!

Proposer: Liz Biscoe LGBT Campaigns Convenor

Seconder: B Schulz Women's Campaign Convenor

Union Notes:

- At last years National NUS conference a large overhaul of the governance structures was started.
- Democratic Procetures Committee (DPC) were given the ability to set a delegate entitlement whilst paying due regard to the need to ensure wide participation, demographic change, accessibility and an event within financial means.
- The transitional arrangements schedule, passed at an Extraordinary Conference this January, goes on to say –
"3.15. In the first year the transitional Democratic Procedures Committee shall set the figure for Conference on the basis laid out in the core and relevant schedules, save that the overall amount budgeted to be spent on Conference 2010 will not exceed the amount spent on Conference 2009"
- Document CD02 for Conference 2010 **incorrectly** says that "the transitional arrangements schedule goes on to require that the budget for National Conference 2010 does not increase". As is shown in 3.15 of the transitional arrangements above, it is not the budget that we should be basing the new delegate entitlement on, but the amount spent. This will give a very different delegate entitlement, as Conference 2009 went over its budget.
- Despite the mandate to ensure wider participation, the number of delegates has been **CUT** (even for FE institutions that were promised an increase in delegates due to the changes in the way part-time students are counted)
- The impact assessment on the new constitution that was demanded at extraordinary conference was not carried out.
- The NUS LGBT, Black Students', Women's and Disabled Students' Campaigns have all officially opposed this move by the DPC, and have signed the statement attached.
- The LGBT Campaign convenor has undersigned the statement

Union Believes

- The slashing of delegation sizes across the board is being achieved behind a smoke screen of increasing part-time student representation and budget cuts, but will in fact reduce Annual Conference's size and completely change its demographic for the worse.
- Our sovereign decision-making body should reflect the full diversity of our movement, not simply the straight white men.
- Smaller delegations will mean less Liberation and other minority groups elected to conference, and therefore less debate and plurality of opinion.
- It will also mean a much greater percentage of fulltime officers, and less "ordinary" students!
- That this is in opposition to the union of UEA Students' ideology of equal opportunities and involvement for all.

Union Resolves

- to mandate the Executive to write a letter to the NUS Liberation Campaigns supporting their assertion that delegate cuts will decrease diversity at National Conference
- To mandate the executive to look into how UEA might widen participation and ensure diversity within its own delegation to Annual Conference 2010 despite the reduced number of delegates.
- To write a letter to the NUS DPC (or whoever is most appropriate) explaining our displeasure at these decisions and highlighting the impact that it will have on the demographic of conference attendees.
- to mandate the Executive and other interested parties to prepare for submission to Union Council a motion that can be sent as a resolution to the NUS National Conference 2010 addressing this issue

Letter from the NUS Liberation Campaigns (LGBT, Black Students, Disabled Students and Women's Campaigns) to the NEC and DPC.

"We are writing to express our opposition to the decision to significantly cut delegation sizes to NUS Annual Conference. NUS Annual Conference 2009 agreed to increase the representation of part-time students whilst freezing the budget for conference, and allow the new Democratic Procedures Committee (DPC) to set a delegate entitlement. Many of us feared at the time this would be used as a pretext for major cuts in delegation sizes, and were accused of exaggeration and paranoia.

It seems we were right. The recently passed proposals have halved the delegate entitlement of most HE institutions. Many FE institutions have seen cuts too, even though they were led to believe they would get greater representation through the new part-time student ratio. This will lead to a significant reduction in representation of Liberation and other minority groups and their opinions. The Black Students' and LGBT Campaigns both have policy to increase their representation within all levels of NUS, including at Annual Conference. These cuts will set back years of work to increase participation of Liberation groups at NUS events, and follow the lack of completion of an Equality Impact Assessment on the new constitution that was demanded by an Extraordinary Conference last November.

These proposals will also create even more of a sabbatical dominated conference, with even less of a voice for grass-roots student activists. The plurality of annual conference is its greatest strength, and this will severely limit that. NUS Annual Conference should reflect the full diversity of our movement, not simply the sabbatical elite.

We, the undersigned oppose the decision made by the Democratic Procedures Committee and ask that;

- The DPC re-considers its decision
- The DPC opposes any further proposals that decrease representation
- Any further changes to the composition of Annual Conference are debated properly at every level of NUS"