



NICARAGUA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN ACTION GROUP (NSCAG) Annual Report 2013

In spite of the departure of trade union worker Stephanie Henthorne in March 2013, solidarity work continued throughout the year and, although some work had to be shelved pending the appointment of her successor, the year was marked by a number of significant successes such as securing further funding for the UNE legal office from UNISON. Progress in other areas is detailed below. Thanks must go to Helen Yuill who covered Stephanie's post until the appointment of Louise Richards in October 2013.



*International Women's Day Celebrations
Photo: Liz Light*

Motion approved by UNISON National Delegate Conference (NDC)

In preparation for the conference NSCAG produced and disseminated a briefing on 30 years of solidarity between UNISON and UNE, focusing on the political and economic significance of trade union solidarity. The NDC approved a motion calling for support for the Nicaraguan public sector union UNE and for the NSCAG. The motion noted the longstanding friendship between UNISON and UNE and applauded the progress made by the Sandinista government towards social and economic justice since being elected in 2007. The motion recognised the pivotal role that the NSCAG has played in maintaining an awareness of Nicaragua's progress both amongst trade unions and the general public, and in facilitating the deepening of the relationship between UNISON and UNE. The motion called upon UNISON to encourage all branches and regions to affiliate to the NSCAG and to promote NSCAG events and campaigns. It also called for all UNISON regions and branches to develop twinning agreements with UNE regions in Nicaragua. Thanks are due to Ruby Cox for her tireless efforts in ensuring that this motion reached the UNISON Conference agenda, and to the Greater London Region for submitting the motion. On the stall we collected messages of solidarity which Executive Committee member John Drewery delivered to UNE during his visit in July.

Funding for UNE legal office approved by UNISON

UNE received funding from August 2011 – August 2012 to set up and run a legal office. In June, UNISON's International Development Fund approved further funding amounting to £20,500 to cover the period June 2013 – May 2015. This support is vital in terms of providing UNE with the capacity to address members' problems, negotiate collective bargaining agreements more effectively and to provide training in employment law for union leaders.

'If this office didn't exist, we would have to pay high legal fees for an independent lawyer. Now the union can use these resources for other purposes. So as union representatives, we listen to the concerns of the workers, explain the situation to them and then work hand in hand with the UNE lawyer' – Yaritza Arauz, Trade Union Leader

Arson attack appeal. We very much appreciated the generous donation of £500 made by UNISON to our appeal following the arson attack on our offices in March 2013.

Louise Richards appointed as NSCAG Trade Union and Communications Coordinator

Louise was appointed to this post in October. She has a long association with Nicaragua, having been Chair of our EC during the 80s, when she also visited Nicaragua a number of times. For almost twenty years,

Louise was Head of International Relations at the trade union NALGO, subsequently UNISON, where she was responsible for establishing the relationship between UNISON and UNE. She has previously headed up War on Want and Computer Aid International. Her main role is to sustain and develop links between Nicaraguan and UK trade unions and to promote awareness of, and support for, the work of the Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign and NSCAG.

Presence at trade union conferences and sponsorship of raffles

We had stalls at a number of trade union conferences – CWU, PCS, GMB and UNISON - to raise awareness of our work, promote the work of Nicaraguan trade unions, encourage unions to affiliate and to sell our fair trade and solidarity products. We were pleased to receive sponsorship of two raffles from RMT.

Affiliations

Ten national unions were affiliated at the year-end: BECTU, BFAWU, CWU, FBU, NUT, PCS, RMT, UNISON, UNITE and USDAW. The number of affiliated branches and regions was 65, a drop of three over 2012. The majority of these were from Unison and UNITE. Four trades councils were also affiliated. There were slightly more new affiliations in 2013, 8 instead of 2. This compares with 15 in 2009 when we circulated the TU affiliation leaflet produced in 2008. Note that in 2003, 57 new branches and regions affiliated; the main reason for this high number was that several national TU offices sent out the new affiliation leaflet with a covering letter encouraging branches and regions to join.

Affiliation breakdown by union:

	Dec 2008	Dec 2009	Dec 2010	Dec 2011	Dec 2012	Dec 2013
CWU	9	15	15	16	14	13
FBU	1	0	0	0	0	0
GMB	0	1	1	1	2	2
NUT	8	9	8	6	6	6
PCS	0	0	0	0	0	0
RMT	0	1	1	1	1	1
UNISON	30	24	24	20	21	24
UNITE	32	25	28	27	23	18
USDAW	1	1	1	1	1	1
TOTALS	81	76	78	72	68	65

Staff: Stephanie Henthorne (until March), Louise Richards (from October)

NSCAG Executive Members: Matt Egan (resigned during the year), Dave Cosgrave, John Drewery, Rita Drobner, Pauline Fraser, Bob Hardie, Christine Oddy, Martin Prior (resigned during the year)

We would like to thank all those who have contributed to NSCAG's work, whether a trade union individual, branch, region or national office. A full copy of the NSCAG accounts is available on request from the office.

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