



TRADE UNIONS FOR CUBA



Huge support for Cuba at the RMT Garden Party



Ronnie Draper, Jorge Luis Garcia, Rob Miller, Ian Mearns MP, Sean Hoyle, Kevin Courtney, Danielle Rowley MP, Ian Lavery MP & Mick Cash at the 2017 RMT Garden Party

Over 500 trade unionists, MPs and solidarity activists attended a packed, sold-out **RMT Garden Party for Cuba** at the RMT's Maritime House, south London. Guests were treated to an atmospheric garden party with rallying speeches, stand up comedy, live music, dancing, food, drink and great weather on the hottest June day in over 40 years.

MPs attended the event including John McDonnell, Cat Smith, Ian Lavery, Ian Mearns, Chris Williamson, Danielle Rowley, Andy McDonald and Steph Peacock, amongst others. Trade union leaders included Mick Cash, **RMT** general secretary, Sean Hoyle, **RMT** President, Len McCluskey, **Unite** general secretary, Steve Turner, **Unite** assistant general secretary, Tim Roache, **GMB** general secretary, Kevin Courtney, **NUT** general secretary, Ronnie Draper, **BFAWU** general secretary, Steve Gillan, **POA** general secretary and many more.

Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell said "Donald Trump has recently rebuilt the US blockade of Cuba... When we are in government, we will break the blockade", he said to huge applause.

Mick Cash, **RMT** general secretary, hosted the evening "The **RMT Cuba Garden Party** is the biggest fringe event of our movement. Cuba deserves our solidarity in their struggle to end the ongoing US blockade", he said.

Kevin Courtney, **NUT** General Secretary, spoke about the solidarity that the **NUT** has shown with Cuba, including supporting English language training to Cuban internationalist medics, some of whom went on to treat the Ebola outbreak in West Africa.

"Cuba needs our solidarity" he said. "Although Cuba is a Third World country, they spend more of their GDP than every other country towards education on Earth – this achievement must be celebrated".

Jorge Luis Garcia, the Cuban Embassy's chargé d'affaires, thanked the crowd of trade unionists and activists for their support. "The achievements of the Cuban Revolution cannot be separated from the international solidarity that we have received. International solidarity must continue in our fight to end the US blockade and return the illegally occupied territory of Guantanamo Bay", he said

For a full report visit: <http://bit.ly/2017RMTcuba>

NUT display excellent solidarity with Cuba



Niurka González Orbera, Robin Pardo Roques (translator) & María Victoria Martínez Zaldívar at the CSC fringe meeting

The **NUT** displayed excellent solidarity with Cuba – a world leader on education - at their 2017 annual conference in Cardiff, including the invitation of two Cuban teachers from the SNTECD (Cuban teachers' trade union), a hugely popular Cuba Salsa Social Night and a packed Cuba Solidarity Campaign fringe meeting with over 100 delegates in attendance.

Cuban teachers María Victoria Martínez Zaldívar, SNTECD Regional Secretary, and Niurka González Orbera, SNTECD Executive Committee, spoke to delegates about their experience of teaching in Cuba and the impact of the ongoing US blockade on education.

NUT General Secretary, Kevin Courtney and President, Louise Regan both spoke at the CSC fringe meeting and gave solidarity greetings to Cuban teachers. Kevin Courtney said "Cuba shows what is possible when free and universal education is at the heart of government policy – but it could achieve so much more if the blockade was lifted".

Kiri Tunks, **NUT** Vice-President, chaired the fringe, where she spoke about the active role that Cuban trade unions play in developing and reviewing education legislation on the island. "In Cuba, the teaching union has a veto on education policy - that is something to aim for here!" she said.

The NUT Vice-President reported back from her experience in leading the NUT October half term

delegation to Cuba, where 22 NUT delegates visited primary, met with teachers and the Cuban trade unions.

Primary school teacher Karen Parkin, who attended the delegation, said: "I remember a time in Britain when the syllabus was rich and varied - in Cuba it still is." Delegates Chris Smith and Niparun Nesa both spoke about their inspiration experiences on the delegation and how we have much to learn from the Cuban education system and the spirit of the Cuban people.

Niurka González Orbera said: "Despite all the difficulties from the blockade, the Cuban government ensures that all children have uniform, school places and meals for free.

"If a child in Cuba cannot attend school due to ill health, the government ensures that a teacher visits them at home or in hospital", she added.

CSC National Secretary Bernard Regan rounded up the fringe meeting, urging that solidarity is needed to support Cuba in its struggle to end the US blockade and return Guantanamo to the Cuban people. "The US blockade of Cuba is still in place and we need international solidarity to help end it", he said.

A highlight for many at conference was the Cuban Salsa Night on the Saturday evening. Conference delegates danced along to an excellent set from a full live Cuban salsa band, Omar Puente and the Raices Cubanas. The Salsa Night raffle raised over £400 for the NUT Braille Machines for Cuba Appeal, which will go towards sending Braille machines to schools for visually impaired children in Cuba.

Take Action!

Read the 2016 NUT delegation report here:

<http://bit.ly/NUT2016Report>

To affiliate your NUT branch or donate towards the NUT Braille Machines for Cuba Appeal, get in touch with campaigns@cuba-solidarity.org.uk

UNISON host Cuban General Secretaries



Dulce María Iglesias Suárez, SNTAP General Secretary

Santiago Badía González, SNTS General Secretary (Cuban Health Workers' Union) and Dulce María Iglesias Suárez, SNTAP General Secretary (Cuban Public Administration Workers' Union) were invited by UNISON to attend their annual local government and National Delegate Conference in Brighton, where both the Cuban trade unionists spoke at the International Rally and the Cuba Solidarity Campaign fringe meeting.

Over 250 delegates attended a packed fringe to hear the two Cuban general secretaries speak. Santiago Badia Gonzalez began his contribution to the fringe with a tribute to the late Unison president and friend of Cuba, Eric Roberts.

The health workers' general secretary gave an inspiring roll call of Cuba's achievements in healthcare, despite the huge negative impact of the US blockade on the sector.

"Due to Cuba's leading healthcare system, life expectancy is now 80.4 women and 76.6 for men.

"In 2015, Cuba became the first country on Earth to successfully eradicate the transmission of HIV and syphilis from mother to child.

"We have now successfully developed vaccinations for 11 diseases in Cuba, due to investment in our health service and biotechnology.

"In Cuba, infant mortality is now 4.3 per 1,000 births, one of the best rates in the world", he said, to much applause.

Dulce Maria Suarez gave an update on US-Cuba relations, in a rousing speech which ended in a standing ovation: "I'm not going to talk too much about one US administration or another, because although they change, their intention is always the same.

"What the US Empire hates is that, us Cubans, we will never give up our own destiny. We know that and the US knows that."

She said how the new Cuba policy recently introduced by Trump is an attack on international solidarity, as it will "stop Cuban trade unionists from travelling to the US for exchanges with trade unions in the US".

Tom Jones, Thompsons Solicitors, said at the fringe "It's a tragedy that Trump is where he is, but it's through international solidarity that we can resist his form of politics."

UNISON North West Regional Convenor Paula Barker chaired the meeting. "Cuba has achieved so much, despite all the difficulties of the US blockade. Please do affiliate your branch to CSC and support the campaign to end the blockade".

Jenni Gunn, a UNISON Scotland delegate on the 2017 young trade unionists May Day brigade to Cuba, gave an inspiring contribution at the end of the fringe. "Going to Cuba and seeing the achievements of the Revolution – achievements that have taken place in the context of an over 55 year US blockade - has reaffirmed my values as a socialist and someone who wants to see a better world. I'd urge all young members who get the chance to attend the brigade and to join and affiliate their branch to CSC".

Take Action!

To affiliate your UNISON branch to CSC, get in touch with Ollie Hopkins, CSC Campaigns Officer: campaigns@cuba-solidarity.org.uk

47 young trade unionists take part in May Day brigade



A record-breaking 47 young trade unionists and activists from Britain and Ireland participated in the 2017 young trade unionists' May Day brigade to Cuba. The largest ever CSC delegation - representing millions of workers from across the British and Irish trade union movement including delegates from **Unite, UNISON, TSSA, GMB, RMT** and **CWU** - took part in a full programme of solidarity and agricultural work, conferences, meetings, visits and exchanges with the Cuban people.

Delegates took part in agricultural work based locally to the camp included weeding, cutting grass, cleaning and clearing rocks and sticks. Grass was cut by hand using machetes, giving the young members a brief insight into the difficulties of agricultural work under the blockade in Cuba, as many resources are difficult to obtain.

The brigade visited local co-operatives in Artemisia province, which are playing an increasingly significant role in Cuba's economy, where they could meet with Cuban workers. Other visits included the General Hospital in Cienfuegos and the

University Hospital, where they had exchanges with international students from across the developing world, who are studying medicine, for free, in Cuba.

The young workers attended and took part in the huge May Day rally in Havana, under the banner of "Unity is our Strength", where over 800,000 Cubans from the Havana province marched through the capital.

Delegates enjoyed the opportunity to participate in the International Solidarity with Cuba Conference at the Palace of Conventions in Havana, which featured many high level Cuban politicians and trade unionists, including Salvador Valdés Mesa, a vice president of Cuba, Ana Teresita González Fraga, Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs, Raymundo Navarro, International Secretary CTC (Cuban TUC), Teresa Amarelle Boué, General Secretary of the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), Fernando González, President of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with Peoples (ICAP), and the General Secretary and Vice President of the World Federation of Trade Unions, George Mavrikos and Valentin Pachu. Miami Five hero Fernando González said; "When we hear in the media that the U.S. government is improving its relations with Cuba, it does not mean that the blockade has been eliminated, the blockade against the Cuban people continues."

TSSA delegate Gary Kilroy spoke on behalf of the delegation at a concluding meeting at the international camp. He spoke of the delegation's inspiration that they had got from the brigade and their commitment to campaigning in their trade union and in CSC on their return home to end the US blockade and return the Guantanamo Bay area to the Cuban people.

Take Action!

Interested in attending the 2018 brigade? Get in touch with Ollie Hopkins on campaigns@cuba-solidarity.org.uk for more details

Trade Union News Round Up

CSC has ran stalls at the **UNISON Black Members Conference, CWU Young Members Conference, UNISON Women's Conference, GMB National Equality Conference, TUC Women's Conference, TUC Young Workers' Conference, TUC Black Workers Conference, NUT Conference, NASUWT Conference, CWU Conference, UNISON Health Care Conference, USDAW ADM, PCS Conference, UCU Congress, GMB Congress and UNISON NDC** in recent months.

Her Excellency Teresita Vicente, Cuban Ambassador, addressed the **TUC Black Workers Conference** at Congress House in April. "The most important message that I can give today is that the US blockade of Cuba remains in place – and international solidarity is crucial in our struggle to end it. The US blockade is extra-territorial, so impacts on the British people too, including those who travel to Cuba via the US", the Ambassador added.

TSSA unanimously passed a motion at their annual conference in Liverpool, calling for an end of the US blockade of Cuba and in support of Cuba Solidarity Campaign. Gary Kilroy, TSSA Executive Committee member, who attended this year's young trade unionists' May Day brigade, spoke in support of the motion on behalf of the EC.

Ollie Hopkins, CSC Campaigns Officer, gave a speech on Cuba and ongoing US blockade at the **Unite Bracknell** branch AGM in January. The branch held a raffle with a Havana Club rum prize and also made a £200 donation to the Music Fund for Cuba charity.

UNISON Greater London Region made an appeal to branches to affiliate to CSC in their UNISON in London magazine, which goes out to over 5,000

stewards. "Solidarity with Cuba is now more important than ever", it said.

RMT Glasgow Shipping Branch supported the Havana Glasgow Film Festival with a donation, alongside national donations from **Unite, the FBU and UCU**. The films were shown over 10 days at a number of city centre venues and included a wide range of recent Cuban films & documentaries. With support from Unite - Cuban director Arturo Santana was able to attend the Festival, which also featured a number of Scottish films as Glasgow is twinned with Havana.

Ollie Hopkins, CSC Campaigns Officer, ran a workshop on international solidarity at a **Workers Uniting** event at Unite House, **Unite's** headquarters. British and Irish workers from **Unite** and US and Canadian workers from the United Steelworkers (USW) attended the session.

Key dates for your diary:

- Friday 14 – Sunday 16 July, CSC stall at **Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival**, Dorset.
- Monday 11 September, 5.45pm. CSC fringe meeting at **TUC Congress**, Brighton Centre.
- Tuesday 26 September, 5.30pm. CSC Fringe meeting at the **Labour Party Conference**, Brixton Centre, Brighton, BN1 1YD.

Take Action!

If your affiliated trade union branch would like a CSC speaker at your meetings, events and conference please get in touch with Ollie Hopkins, Campaigns Officer, campaigns@cuba-solidarity.org.uk

With thanks to our affiliates:

