



To: NEC Campaigns and Communications Sub-Committee

7 November 2022

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Dear Colleague

Parliamentary Report

As the committee will no doubt be aware, the past six months has been a period of significant political turmoil.

The Johnson administration came to an end after he was seen to have been dishonest in public statements about parties in Downing Street during the Covid lockdowns and what he knew about the alleged sexual misconduct of his Deputy Chief Whip.

The following leadership election saw Liz Truss cruise to victory over Rishi Sunak, with early polls suggesting she had a commanding lead over the former Chancellor whose resignation led to Johnson's downfall.

Regal and economic turmoil dominated the first few weeks of the Truss premiership. The death of HM the late Queen Elizabeth II led to the suspension of politics as usual for almost two weeks after the summer recess. Economic turmoil then followed new Chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng's mini-budget, which included a series of unfunded tax cuts primarily benefiting the richest and a massive intervention to protect consumers from rising energy bills. This led to the removal of Truss and the installation of Rishi Sunak as Prime Minister and Jeremy Hunt as Chancellor.

The sustained political and economic turmoil that seems set to continue means that very little can be predicted with the certainty so needed by industry, business and the public.

Meanwhile, Keir Starmer has cemented his grip on the Labour Party, having had a successful party conference with his detractors side-lined and having delivered a confident speech to the party faithful.

The next election must take place by January 2025 and it seems for now that the Conservatives are unlikely to call an early election, in the hope that playing for time gives them chance to turn current polling around.

Against this backdrop Prospect has continued with a varied and busy programme of political engagement on key issues for our members.

Party conference season 2022

Prospect played a leading role at Labour Party Conference in September. Sue Ferns, in her capacity as TUC President, delivered the sororal address to delegates, highlighting shared values of solidarity, collectivism and compassion and urging Labour to focus on delivering a strong economy, decent jobs and higher wages.

New Prospect House
8 Leake Street
London
SE1 7NN

0300 600 1878
info@prospect.org.uk

prospect.org.uk

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Sue Ferns also participated in panels led by Trade Unionists for Safe Nuclear Energy and the National Grid exploring how we can develop the future energy workforce needed to deliver a just transition to net zero and setting out the need for government to get on with funding new nuclear infrastructure and skills. Jez Stewart joined a panel hosted by the Nuclear Industry Association examining how to finance energy security, reiterating the need to ensure jobs in the sector are well-paid and unionised to avoid shortages.

Johnson's resignation at the start of the summer and the subsequent leadership contest ending just weeks before the Conservative Party Conference meant fringe panel organisers had trouble confirming government ministers and sponsors – and therefore other panellists.

This led to limited appetite for union involvement, despite extensive outreach to the more moderate think tanks, but our engagement with them in the past year has seen Mike Clancy appear on two Bright Blue panels on hydrogen (at Labour Party Conference) and post-pandemic growth, and Sue Ferns join an Onward panel on the dignity of labour.

Richard Hardy will be speaking on an SSE Just Transition panel at SNP Conference in his capacity as a member of Scotland's Just Transition Commission. The Liberal Democrat conference was cancelled due to it being scheduled to take place during the period of national mourning.

Energy

Energy costs and security have dominated the political agenda over the past six months. In April, the Johnson administration published its British Energy Security Strategy, which set out ambitions to deliver secure, clean and affordable British energy for the long term.

Our political engagement continues to focus on the need to turn strategies and plans into new sources of domestically generated power. With planning consent for Sizewell C now granted, we have repeatedly called for the announcement of the Government Investment Decision when meeting and corresponding with BEIS ministers and shadow ministers and raised the issue in media comments. We will be writing to the newly appointed climate minister Graham Stuart MP, who has responsibility for energy, to continue to press the case.

We continue to make the case to local and national stakeholders that true energy security must include the supply chain and that Government should consider a new ownership model to safeguard the future of Springfields, the UK's sole nuclear fuel fabricator.

In July, we held a reception in Parliament to celebrate skills in the nuclear industry and call for the Government to get on with its ambitions for a nuclear renaissance. We were joined by politicians from across the political divide and senior industry leaders to hear speeches from Shadow Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds, Virginia Crosbie MP (Anglesey [Wylfa]), and Baroness Sue Hayman.

We have submitted evidence to Select Committee inquiries on delivering nuclear power (Commons Science and Technology Committee) and energy pricing and the future of the energy market (Commons BEIS Committee).

We also shared the news of our recognition agreement with Orsted with local stakeholders, receiving welcome feedback from Emma Hardy MP (Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle) and local press coverage.

The Truss administration is undertaking a review of how net zero can be delivered efficiently and in a way that delivers growth, and Prospect will be submitting evidence to the consultation later this autumn.

Defence

Our political engagement relating to defence continues to focus on the need to invest in British industry in an increasingly unstable world. We have engaged with government and opposition politicians on the need to examine procurement regulations and increase the weighting given to social value in procurement decisions to ensure our sovereign defence capabilities are maintained, skilled workforces and retained and communities benefit from the highly skilled jobs defence procurement can produce.

Earlier in the year, Shadow Minister for Defence Procurement Chris Evans MP launched Prospect's *Social value and the prosperity agenda in defence* report, which highlighted the above issues. We have continued to meet and engage with Evans and his staff throughout the year to keep this issue on Labour's agenda.

Public service broadcasting and cultural industries

Attacks on public service broadcasting have been a recurring theme of the past six months, with former Culture Secretary Nadine Dorries having threatened the future of the licence fee and attempting to push through the privatisation of Channel 4 despite there being no economic case for doing so.

In June, Labour held an Opposition Day Debate on the Government's proposed privatisation of Channel 4. We shared a briefing with all MPs setting out the case against privatisation, with Charlotte Nichols MP and Rosie Duffield MP directly referencing Bectu in the debate.

Since Truss became Prime Minister, there has been briefing that the business case for privatising Channel 4 will be re-examined, which gives hope that the plans may be shelved. We will continue to lobby for Channel 4 to remain in public hands to protect its unique British output and the independent production sector it allows to thrive.

Similarly, the review of the BBC's licence fee model appears to have been paused by the new Culture Secretary Michelle Donelan – though she has previously expressed support for scrapping what she has described as an “unfair tax”. In a letter to Donelan upon her appointment in September, Philippa Childs raised these issues alongside pay in the West End and cultural sites, and diversity in the creative industries.

We will be hosting a parliamentary reception on Monday 17 October to mark the BBC's centenary and launch our #ALicenceToMore campaign celebrating the unique role of the BBC in UK cultural life. We are expecting senior politicians and BBC Director-General Tim Davie to attend and speak.

Public services, Westminster culture and attacks on civil servants

We have been vocal in the media and correspondence with ministers on inadequate public sector pay offers from government and public sector employers, including the pay remit guidance for the civil service. Mike Clancy has met with the newly appointed Minister for the Cabinet Office, Edward Argar, and subsequently written to him calling for a reset in relations and action on pay and conditions. His predecessor, Jacob Rees-Mogg, refused to meet with or respond to trade union representatives whilst in post.

In the Spring, we submitted evidence to the Lords Select Committee on Public Services' inquiry into designing a public services workforce fit for the future, stressing the need to invest in specialist and expert capabilities and capacity. In the summer, we also provided written evidence to the Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs

Committee inquiry into the Civil Service People Survey, highlighting the need to gather more granular data and act on the survey's findings.

The culture of bullying and sexual harassment in Westminster has been in the news frequently in recent months and we have been pushing for an end to a culture of impunity in meetings and correspondence with senior politicians. We have repeatedly written to senior government ministers calling for an end to the relentless attacks on civil servants in the media and held them to account for this behaviour in print and broadcast comments.

Our focus on sexual harassment in Westminster led to Prospect and the FDA securing a meeting with the Speaker of the House of Commons in July. We pressed for meaningful action and the suspension of access to the parliamentary estate for those accused of sexual misconduct. Another meeting is set for early November, where we expect to be updated on the progress the Speaker has made. We wrote to the new Prime Minister asking her to show leadership on this issue upon her appointment in September.

Mike Clancy has made a number of broadcast media appearances on the issue, most recently appearing on Sky's Kay Burley's breakfast show in September.

Earlier in the year, we secured meetings with the leadership of Natural England to discuss our latest State of Natural England report and make the case for a better pay system. We also Natural England members to write to their MPs and share their own experiences of working for the non-departmental body.

Heritage

In June, we launched the World Class Heritage, Second Class Pay campaign in a photocall outside Parliament, where we were joined by a number of cross-party MPs and Peers including members of the shadow DCMS team. As part of this, we also shared our research into pay into the sector with dozens of parliamentarians.

In November we will be hosting a parliamentary reception to celebrate the 100th meeting of the Heritage group and raise the profile of our campaign.

Pensions

In March, Sue Ferns gave oral evidence to the Work and Pensions Select Committee's *Protecting pension savers – five years on from the pension freedoms: saving for later life* inquiry. Her evidence focused on improving automatic enrolment, increasing take-up of advice and guidance, the need to incentivise pension saving for the self-employed and freelancers and the gender pension gap.

There continues to be interest in our work on the gender pensions gap and we hope to confirm Shadow Pensions Minister Matt Rodda for the launch of this year's report, which was delayed due to the death of the Queen.

Union crackdown, workers' rights and the cost of living

Sustained inflation caused primarily by energy prices rocketing as a result of the war in Ukraine has led to a cost-of-living crisis and the greatest levels of industrial action in years as workers face bills rising faster than wages.

Coinciding with the Johnson administration attempting to divert attention from its failings, and the subsequent Tory leadership contest, this has resulted in increased Conservative focus on restricting workers' rights to strike. There have been threats to introduce minimum service level provisions for some industries and increased ballot thresholds and minimum notice periods. We will be working with the TUC to oppose any proposals that undermine

workers' rights and focus our lobbying effort on wavering Conservative MPs, as well as Peers in the House of Lords.

The TUC is holding a national lobby of Parliament on Wednesday 2 November as part of the #WeDemandBetter campaign and we have encouraged members and reps to arrange meetings with their MPs, and will support those who do with briefing and advice. Mike Clancy and Sue Ferns both addressed the rally at the TUC's national demonstration in June.

We have also been engaging with shadow ministers on the need to develop better arbitration mechanisms between workers and employers to deliver better outcomes for workers and to prevent some negotiations ending in dispute in the first place.

Labour markets and the future of work

In mid-October, Mike Clancy is due to give evidence to the Lords Economic Affairs Committee on UK labour supply, which resulted from the evidence we submitted to a Commons BEIS Committee inquiry into post-pandemic labour markets.

We have continued to lobby on the need for true work flexibility for all, feeding into the policy platform being developed by the Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, Angela Rayner MP, who holds this brief.

Our case for public procurement to give greater weight to social value and investment in jobs and communities has also borne fruit with Rayner's announcements of a National Procurement Plan and a Fair Work Standard.

Yours sincerely

Tom Rutland

Senior Public Affairs Officer