



## 2010 ANNUAL REPORT

### Introduction

NSCAG has continued to focus on the development of solidarity links between Nicaraguan and UK trade unions, particularly between young activists. Key activities included the visit of a UK young member to Nicaragua in January and the production of a short film about the work of the Nicaraguan trade unions the FNT (National Workers Front) and the CTCP (Confederation of Self Employed Workers).

We have been working to encourage and maintain trade union affiliations and twinning links and agreements, such as that signed between the Managua branches of FETSALUD and UNE and London Region UNISON in 2009.

We would like to thank all those who contributed to this work, whether a trade union individual, branch, region or national office.

### **\*Establishing and Strengthening Trade Union Links\***

#### **• Nicaraguan film project**

In 2010 funding was secured to produce a film about workers rights and trade union issues in Nicaragua, focusing specifically on the work of the informal sector union, the CTCP. The film was produced collaboratively between Nicaraguan film makers and trade unionists to allow Nicaraguans to present their own issues directly to people in the UK and to help develop the long term facilities and skills needed to communicate issues to UK supporters and the World at large.

“Young, Nicaraguan, and Organised!” Is an 11 minute short film featuring a potted history of Nicaraguan trade unionism and interviews with leading Nicaraguan trade unionists on the situation in Nicaragua today. Of particular interest is the development of new trade unions for workers previously left unorganised, as well as heartfelt thanks to UK unions and NSCAG for their solidarity with Nicaragua.

Filming in Nicaragua took place between March and September 2010 and the final editing and subtitling was completed by December 2010. The film, to be distributed from 2011 onwards, will be an invaluable tool for promoting the work of NSCAG and highlighting the issues affecting workers in Nicaragua. It will also hopefully stimulate increased interest and understanding of Nicaragua and NSCAG.

#### **• UNISON activist visit to Nicaragua**

In January 2010 Matthew Egan, Salford City Unison's International officer and former member of UNISON National and North West region young members committees, visited Nicaragua to meet NSCAG trade union partners. He met with the General Secretaries and Youth Committee's of FNT member unions, visited various workplaces such as the maquilas and

pumice mines and attended a Nicaraguan cultural event to celebrate diversity and international solidarity. Matthew described the visit:

*"I went to Nicaragua primarily to see how they were going about getting young members involved in their unions. I had previously met Karina Gomez and a few other young Nicaraguans on trips to the UK and was extremely impressed by their activism and their grasp on what unions were about and why they're important.*

*Whilst I was over there I gained an appreciation of how they actively cultivated a sense of togetherness through their social activities and how they reached out to get their communities involved in their work. Despite having minimal resources they were bursting with ideas and commitment about how to improve not just their workplaces, but their whole society. I was humbled by the kindness showed to me and left feeling inspired to be part of such a movement and involved with the NSCAG."*

Matthew joined the NSCAG Executive when he returned from this visit and has been working to strengthen links between UNISON members and NSCAG Nicaraguan partner unions.

- **Young member fringe event at Latin America Conference 2010**

NSCAG assisted the coordination of a young member fringe event at the Latin America Seminar 2010, hosted by SERTUC (Southern and Eastern Region TUC). UNISON activist and NSCAG EC member Matthew Egan represented NSCAG at the event and spoke about his experiences visiting Nicaragua in January 2010 and developing links with Nicaraguan young members. The event was a good opportunity to raise awareness of the issues faces by young workers in Nicaragua and promote the involvement of UK young members in the work of NSCAG.

- **Visit to the UK by Walter Sandino and his wife Marbely Sandino.**

Walter and Marbely were in the UK between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> December. NSCAG helped out with interpreting at a meeting held in Old St, as well as at the Latin America conference on December 4<sup>th</sup>. Walter and Marbely both spoke about their work researching the legacy of Augusto Sandino and about the political situation in Nicaragua. NSCAG also interviewed the two of them about their opinions of the process in Nicaragua for use on the website. The video of the Marbely interview will be available on the new website once it is live. Walter also spoke to Ken Livingstone and several UK trade unionists at the conference held at Congress House.

- **Further developing young member solidarity links**

Following on from the July 2009 Young Member Delegation on the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution, NSCAG has been working to maintain and strengthen young member solidarity links. The UNITE young member delegate and Regional Equalities Officer, Mel Whitter, subsequently became NSCAG Chair at the 2010 AGM and UNISON young member and Salford Branch International officer Matthew Egan also joined the Executive Committee. A number of other young member delegates attended the 2009 AGM and met with NSCAG Managua office staff to follow up on the delegation visit and report back on their solidarity activities, including a sponsored paraglide to raise funds for the literacy programme.

The direct involvement of young member representatives on the NSCAG Executive Committee and the ongoing activities of NSCAG has been a great step forward in the development of the organisation towards the interests of the UK trade union movement and their young members.

- **Developing relations between UNISON and Nicaraguan unions**

Unison's Greater London International Committee donated £200 to support striking workers in the right wing municipality of Granada, where they had been sacked from their jobs in spite of new legislation that was supposed to protect them.

An application for funding has been submitted to Unison's International Development Fund on behalf of UNE, who have for some years cherished the dream of being able to open a fully staffed and equipped law centre, by means of which they can provide better advice and support to UNE members (such as in the situation above) as well as offer training to current and aspiring trade union leaders. The result of the application will be heard in 2011.

Greater London Unison Women's Committee has decided to develop links with a women's co-operative in La Concha, a rural community outside Managua. They sent £500 to help with a housing project and are looking at ways to expand and consolidate the relationship, including proposing a motion at next year's Women's Conference to encourage women to become more involved in Unison's international work, using their twinning with La Concha as an example.

Plans have also been initiated with UNISON to invite Domingo Perez, General Secretary of UNE, to the UK in 2011 to speak at Unison's Local Government Conference in June. Domingo will also be speaking at a fringe meeting at conference and meeting with other leading trade unionists and others whilst he is in the UK.

#### **\*Other trade union work\***

- NSCAG took part in five UK trade union conferences (BECTU, CWU, PCS, UNITE and UNISON) as well as the Latin America Conference. With NSC we ran stalls at these events to distribute information, maintain key trade union links and raise funds through the sale of NSC and NSCAG items.
- The NSCAG Trade Union Worker spoke to UNITE activists at Gender and Globalisation course in January 2010
- During 2010 NSCAG met a number of trade union and solidarity contacts to discuss potential ways in which we can work together.
- NSCAG also maintained regular contact with our key trade union affiliates at a member, branch, regional and national level through briefings, mail outs and appeals.

**New NSCAG website:** In the second half of 2010 work was initiated to design and develop a new NSCAG website, in order to provide a modern and up-to-date communications tool to enable us to engage more UK trade unionists and activists in our work. The website will be launched in early 2011.

#### **\*Affiliations\***

- 10 national unions were affiliated at the year end: BECTU, BFAWU, CWU, FBU, NUT, PCS, RMT, UNISON, UNITE & USDAW.
- The number of affiliated branches and regions was 78 (see chart below)
- There were only 2 new branches and regions in 2010 compared to 15 in 2009. Of the latter, many of them affiliated as a result of circulating the TU affiliation leaflet produced in 2008. The overall result of this leaflet was disappointing, mostly because few unions were able to circulate the leaflet itself. When we last produced a new leaflet (in 2003) 57 new branches and regions affiliated in that year alone.

- 4 trades councils were affiliated, all pretty long-standing. For the 1st time for many years all the other trades councils were mailed, well over 100 of them. One gave a donation and none joined. The only feedback we had (from one trades council) was that £40 was too expensive.
- The numbers affiliated per union are shown below.

	Dec 04	Dec 05	Dec 06	Dec 07	Dec 08	Dec 09	Dec 10
AMICUS/MSF	34	24	22	In UNITE	---	---	---
CWU	12	12	9	8	9	15	15
FBU	0	1	1	1	1	0	0
GMB	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
NUT	11	8	5	5	8	9	8
PCS	2	2	1	0	0	0	0
RMT	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
T & G	14	13	13	In UNITE	---	---	---
UNISON	29	29	28	24	30	24	24
UNITE	---	---	---	31	32	25	28
USDAW	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>78</b>

**Staff:** Natasha Eve (Trade Union Worker until October), Victor Figueroa Clark (Trade Union Worker from November).

**NSCAG Executive members:** Bernard Roome (Chair, resigned July), Mel Whitter (Chair from July), Ruby Cox, Rita Drobner, Anna Cooper, John Drewery, Bob Hardie, Christine Oddy, Martin Prior, Wendy Wedgebury, Jessie Russell, Mathew Egan (from July), Jennifer Forbes (resigned July), Dave Godson (resigned July).

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