



**NICARAGUA SOLIDARITY CAMPAIGN ACTION GROUP
(NSCAG) Annual Report 2014**



Nicaraguan health union celebrates 40th anniversary

Visit to Nicaragua

Following her appointment as Trade Union and Communications Co-ordinator in October 2013, Louise Richards visited Nicaragua in March 2014 for a period of nine days. The purpose of the visit was to enable her to meet with a range of Nicaraguan trade unions in order to get up to date on their current work and activities and to identify their priorities in terms of future support and solidarity. During her visit, she met with the National Workers' Front FNT, the public sector union UNE, the teachers' union ANDEN, the health union FETSALUD and the self-employed workers' union CTCP. She was also able to visit the UNE legal office, funded by UNISON's International Development Fund. She also attended UNE's International Women's Day celebrations and spoke at a number of trade union meetings. All of the trade unions spoke about the restoration of their rights since 2007, when the FSLN came back to power. They were gradually growing stronger and had seen increases in salaries and pensions and a more just and equal society.

UK Trade Union Solidarity

2014 was an extremely successful year in terms of increased support and solidarity from UK trade unions. Following a motion passed at their Congress in June, we were delighted to welcome the GMB as our tenth national trade union affiliate. A number of unions, in particular UNITE, UNISON, CWU and the NUT, agreed to circulate our affiliation flyer to all their members, resulting in a considerable increase in union branch affiliations – with over 35 from UNITE alone. CWU kindly sponsored our raffle, and the FBU agreed to sponsor an edition of Nicaragua Now. We were particularly saddened by the untimely death of RMT leader Bob Crow, a true internationalist and a long-time supporter of ours.

As in previous years, we were present at all of the major trade union conferences. We were also invited to participate in RMT's Global Education Course held in Doncaster and in UNISON's International Seminar, attended by UNISON branch international officers from all over the country. These activities succeeded in raising awareness about trade unions and the general political and economic situation in Nicaragua and also brought some funds into the organisation due to the number of goods we were able to sell on our stalls. In May 2014, Dr Camila Mejia from the health union FETSALUD visited the UK at the invitation of UNISON's West Midlands Region. In addition to meetings with UNISON and attendance at a number of May Day events in the West Midlands, Camila visited George Eliot Hospital in Nuneaton in order to discuss the possibilities of a twinning arrangement with her hospital in Ciudad-Sandino, Managua. She also visited the Royal Free Hospital (arranged by EC member Rita Drobner on behalf of UNITE). Her visit was of major significance in terms of reactivating union support and awareness; arising from her visit, a project was submitted to and approved by UNISON's International Development Fund. The project, set to begin in January 2015, was specifically designed to provide trade union training and capacity building for women and young people in FETSALUD.

A particularly disappointing development was the decision of PCS to disaffiliate. We understand that this was largely due to financial concerns and a decision therefore to reduce the number of international campaigns supported. They have agreed that we can continue to have a stall at their annual conference.

Appeals

Following the earthquake in Nicaragua in April, we put out an appeal that raised over £6500 after costs. Of this, £4000 was sent to FETSALUD and was used to repair and rebuild the homes of members of the union affected and/or made homeless as a result of the earthquake. UNITE generously donated £500 to the Appeal. A separate appeal for NSCAG funds raised £5264 after costs.

Affiliations

Nine national unions were affiliated at the year-end: BECTU, BFAWU, CWU, FBU, NUT, RMT, UNISON, UNITE and USDAW. Welcome news was that GMB agreed to affiliate with the payment due in early 2015. The number of affiliated branches and regions was 109, an increase of 44 over 2013. Four trades councils were also affiliated.

Affiliation breakdown by union:

	Dec 10	Dec 11	Dec 12	Dec 13	Dec 14
CWU	15	16	14	13	15
FBU	0	0	0	0	0
GMB	1	1	2	2	4
NUT	8	6	6	6	7
PCS	0	0	0	0	0
RMT	1	1	1	1	1
UNISON	24	20	21	24	28
UNITE	28	27	23	18	53
USDAW	1	1	1	1	1
TOTALS	78	72	68	65	109

Staff: Louise Richards

NSCAG Executive Members: Dave Auger (co-opted September 2014), Dave Cosgrave, John Drewery, Rita Drobner, Pauline Fraser, Bob Hardie, Ken Rustidge (nominated by NUT, September 2014)

We would like to thank all those who have contributed to NSCAG's work, whether a trade union individual, branch, region or national office. We are also extremely grateful to the volunteers who have staffed our stalls at trade union conferences around the country and to those who have assisted us with translation work throughout the year. A full copy of the NSCAG accounts is available on request from the office.

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