

Motion: A call to take action on fuel poverty in our communities

This union branch notes:

1. Fuel poverty, where a household cannot afford to keep adequately warm at a reasonable cost, affects 4.5 million (17%) households across the UK. The government's own statistics show that this number is set to rise this year, and the severity of fuel poverty is increasing too.
2. Cold homes were a major contributor to the 31,000 'excess winter deaths' last winter. Other impacts of fuel poverty include causing and exacerbating health problems including cardio-vascular and respiratory diseases, and mental illnesses with an estimated cost to the NHS of £1.36 billion a year. One in four homes is having to make the choice between heating or eating and one in five people are in debt to their energy supplier. Fuel poverty means hunger, hardship, and anxiety for millions of households all year round.
3. The three major causes of fuel poverty are rising energy prices, stagnating and falling incomes, and our poorly insulated housing stock. The Big 6 energy companies made a combined profit of £3.7 billion last year whilst ordinary people struggle to pay their regularly hiked bills. Wage freezes, job losses, zero-hour contracts and benefit cuts and sanctions mean that people's incomes are reducing as their bills increase. Meanwhile the UK has the leakiest housing stock in Europe requiring more heat for people to stay warm. Current government policies are significantly contributing to these issues.
4. The for-profit fossil-fuel driven energy system, dominated by the Big 6 with the support of their friends in government, which leaves people to freeze in their homes, is also causing climate change, harming people's lives across the world now and the lives of future generations. There are an estimated 400,000 deaths worldwide each year caused by climate change.
5. That unions are currently taking a strong lead on calling for an end to fuel poverty by pushing a national energy efficiency scheme that would make all UK homes fuel poverty proof and create 100,000 skilled jobs (see Unison's Warm Homes report, 2014).

This union branch resolves:

1. To support the growing grassroots movement against fuel poverty and for a clean, sustainable, democratic energy system by signing up to Fuel Poverty Action's Energy Bill of Rights and discussing and organising ways to promote and enact the Bill locally with the support of FPA. (To read the full version of the Energy Bill of Rights please go to the 'Energy Bill of Rights' tab on our website www.fuelpovertyaction.org.uk)
2. To promote the independent campaign group Fuel Poverty Action, the Energy Bill of Rights, and the information and support resources created by FPA, amongst its branch members and union networks.
3. To make a suggested donation of £50 to help with the running costs of Fuel Poverty Action (for printing costs, travelling to give talks and workshops).
4. To continue to raise the issue of fuel poverty and an alternative, sustainable, just energy system at the regional and national levels of the union.