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**Time:** 6pm – Informal Greeting / 6.30pm - 8pm – Branch Business

**Date:** Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2018

**Venue:** Syracuse University, Faraday House, [48 Old Gloucester St, London WC1N 3AE](#)  
*5 minutes' walk from Holborn tube, 2 minutes' walk from Unite HQ*

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## Agenda

**1. Apologies**

**2. Minutes of the Previous Branch Meeting (February 2018)**

- a) Accuracy
- b) Matters Arising

**3. Guest Speaker – Len Hockey, Secretary, Barts NHS Branch**

Len has been a porter at Whipps Cross for almost 30 years, and is the Secretary of the local health branch. They have regularly been in the press for taking a militant stand on behalf of some of the most vulnerable workers. In 2017 he led more than 700 cleaners, security guards, catering staff and porters in successful strike action against sub-contractor Serco. This followed a staggering 99% vote in favour of action. Len will talk about how they built for the action and how it unfolded.

**4. Workplace and Campaign Updates**

- Workplaces
- Sector Pay Campaign

**5. Motions**

- Membership Fee Reductions for Organising Campaigns. Text attached.

**6. Finance**

- Q1 Accounts – Jan to Mar 2018
- A Statute for Sylvia Pankhurst (raised over £80,000, need another £65,000). Info sheet attached.

**7. AOB**

**Motion Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> May 2018  
**Motion Title:** Membership Fee Reductions for Organising Campaigns

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**This union notes:**

That trade union membership continues to fall across the economy. According to the Resolution Foundation, rates of union membership need to double amongst the under 35s by 2030 to stop the long-term decline in numbers.

Wages across the economy have the longest period without real growth since the 18th century, which is leading to a massive squeeze on disposable income.

There is a need for the union to grow in strategic sectors or employers where it has not traditionally been strong as the economy changes and automation develops.

Members have reported to our representatives that subs in excess of £15 per calendar month as *“sometimes the difference between eating and not”*. Younger members in particular, often with insecure incomes, struggle to pay.

**We believe:**

That the cost of joining Unite should come down for those in workplaces without recognition during organising and recruitment campaigns. It could help incentivise membership growth in strategic sectors or employers. Lower fees will aid recruitment during the difficult period of establishing a presence, profile, and track record of success.

**We resolve:**

To allow branches to apply a reduced cost of union membership in non-recognised workplaces for a limited period where targeted recruitment activity is taking place. The recommended rate will be £10 per calendar month for full-time, and £6 per calendar month for part-time members, with no loss of benefits to the members.

# A Statue for Sylvia Pankhurst – the Socialist Suffragette – The Sylvia Pankhurst Memorial Committee

## Why are we raising funds to erect a statue to Sylvia Pankhurst?

You may know about Sylvia the suffragette but perhaps be unaware that she doesn't feature on the existing London memorial to the suffragettes.

Sylvia wrote the definitive history of the suffragette movement and her name is primarily associated with the fight for votes for women. What is less well known is her active involvement in socialist causes both domestic and international.

Sylvia trained as an artist. Whilst painting and thus documenting working class women in factories, mills and potteries she wrote;

“Mothers came to me with their wasted little ones. I saw starvation look at me from patient eyes. I knew then that I should never return to my art.”

Sylvia was in fact expelled from the Women's Social and Political Union by her sister, Christabel, endorsed by her mother Emmeline. This is why she is not represented on the memorial to them and the women imprisoned during the campaign for women's suffrage (despite Sylvia also being imprisoned and force fed) in Victoria Tower Gardens, adjacent to the House of Lords.

They were opposed to her determination to improve the conditions of the working class, to her involvement with the trade union movement and her belief that campaigning for votes for women should not be suspended during the First World War. Emmeline and Christabel disagreed. They felt the war effort should be supported and so campaigning should cease for its duration. The final straw was Sylvia speaking in defence of James Larkin, Leader of the Irish TGWU and the workers subjected to the Dublin Lock out of 1913.

### Sylvia and Britain's first black journalist

Anti-semitism and racism was rife in the early twentieth century. It was also present in some areas of “Left” politics. The *Herald* newspaper ran a headline in 1920 “Black Scourge in Europe”. E D Morel, who became a Labour MP, was outraged that the French were deploying black troops – he called them “black savages” in the parts of Germany they occupied after the first world war. He asserted that “primitive African barbarians are perpetuating an abominable outrage upon womanhood, upon the white races and upon civilisation”. So, the leading socialist paper of the time and then, the only daily paper of the Left, colluded with the age old racist stereotype of black men as over-sexed rapists. A Jamaican revolutionary poet, Claude McKay, was incensed by this and regarded it as a further incitement to racial violence against “the many members of my race, boycotted economically and socially, who have been dumped down on the English docks since the ending of the European War”.

Sylvia invited McKay to write regularly for her paper, the *Dreadnought* – and so he became Britain's first black journalist. He wrote of Sylvia “...whenever imperialism got drunk and went wild among native peoples the Pankhurst paper would be on the job”. The paper was one of the first to criticise the “colour bar” in South Africa. Sylvia also wrote on the struggle for Indian self rule. McKay, like other black radicals and revolutionaries recognised Sylvia was a fearless and committed revolutionary who understood their cause.

### Anti-Fascism and Ethiopia

Sylvia also well understood the dangers of fascism from the first years of the 1920s. Appalled by the murder of the Italian socialist Matteotti at the hands of fascists in 1924 Sylvia then worked tirelessly to assist opponents and victims of fascism.



The second half of Sylvia's life from 1935 when Italy invaded Ethiopia until her death in 1960 was devoted to the liberation of this country which became her home. Until 1935 it was the only independent country in Africa and the only African country to have escaped the domination of European Imperialism and was therefore a beacon in the anti-colonial struggle. Sylvia understood the significance of Ethiopia for the struggle for freedom of black Africa and the importance of asserting African values against imperialist counter culture. In her paper *New Times and Ethiopian News* she printed an article by Marcus Garvey, the black Jamaican leader, protesting against films which were "calculated to create prejudice against the Negro race". In the debates and discussion about racism she was astute and prescient in the anti-racist movement by using the term "Afro American" for black Americans in preference to "Negro" an "Americanised version" of the African people. Her involvement in the Ethiopian struggle led to her contact with black pan African activists including C L R James and Jomo Kenyatta.

W E B Du Bois – one of the most important black leaders of his day – expressed the view of black radicals when Sylvia died: "...the great work of Sylvia Pankhurst was to ...make the British people realise that black folks had more and more to be recognised as human beings with the rights of men and women."

### **Where we are now**

This is why Sylvia merits a statue in London... and it will be beautiful! It will represent Sylvia's commitment to peace and her fight against racism, fascism and imperialism; her work with trade unions, fighting for the impoverished working class in the East End of London and her campaigning for votes for women.

We are delighted to have the support of Islington Council and the Corporation of the City of London to raise the statue on Clerkenwell Green, London – now we urgently need £70,000 to make this happen.

### **Why Clerkenwell Green?**

London's first May Day march, organised by the London Trades Councils, set off from the Green in 1890 and still does. It was the site of Chartist gatherings, rallies supporting Irish freedom and the Tolpuddle Martyrs.

The Green is home to the Marx Memorial Library, a meeting place for many progressive causes in the nineteenth century and where Lenin worked when in exile in Britain. In 1933 it was established as an educational centre for working men and women, highlighting the barbarism of fascists burning books in Germany.

It houses the archives of the International Brigade and the Bernal Peace collection. This is where the book of donors to the statue will be kept. Dubbed the "headquarters of republicanism, revolution and ultra-non-conformity" Clerkenwell Green will be an excellent site for the statue.

### **What you can do**

The objective is to see the statue erected, however we have always wanted the process to be important – raising the issues, values and causes espoused by Sylvia Pankhurst. These remain as relevant today as when she "fought to struggle to right the wrong".

Please let people know about the campaign and become part of it, fundraising, publicising, speaking to individuals and organisations. We can supply you with information and possibly a speaker. Please share this information on social media, to inspire and reach out as widely as possible with our message of Sisterhood, Socialism and Solidarity on Facebook and Twitter.

We do hope you will add your support. Thank you for taking the time to read this: The Sylvia Pankhurst Memorial Committee – Philippa Clark, Mary Davis, Megan Dobney, Barbara Switzer

We are crowdfunding on:  
[www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/sylviastatue](http://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/sylviastatue)

The campaign website is [www.gn.apc.org/sylviapankhurst](http://www.gn.apc.org/sylviapankhurst)

Find us on [www.facebook.com/astatueforsylvia](http://www.facebook.com/astatueforsylvia) and follow us on Twitter @sylviaastatue

You can also donate on line at <https://donorbox.org/a-statue-for-sylvia-pankhurst>

Cheques should be made payable to "SERTUC (Sylvia Pankhurst)" and sent to Megan Dobney, 1 Camden Hill Road, London SE19 1NX

Contact us 01479 851 306 or 07952 771 451 and [philippa.clark@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:philippa.clark@yahoo.co.uk)

*Information is extracted from "Sylvia Pankhurst A Life in Radical Politics" by Professor Mary Davis, published by Pluto Press*