

SBMG News



Scottish Black Members Group of UNISON

Winter 2007 Newsletter

Seasonal Message



Dear Readers,

“Merry Christmas to You All”
The year 2007 has been an eventful year. It was a team effort, which enabled us to achieve all our priority objectives. I am grateful to all in the Scottish Black Members Committee team of 2006-07 for their commitment to what we achieved in this term.

Scottish Black Members demonstrated unity at our AGM in November and unanimously elected the new SBMC for 2007-08. This unity, faith and discipline among us will help to continue our development work during our current term of office.

This year, David Okalo Olwa, Bernard Kamya, and Afshan Fairley took time off due to family and personal reasons – SBMC will miss them dearly.

I welcome Shireen Bonnar, Patricia Agu, Menchie Aquino, Lui Giacomello and Zia Hussain to the SBMC.

I believe induction of these new Black Members to the SBMC will make us even stronger to take on the challenges in the New Year. Have a lovely Christmas and Happy New Year with Best Wishes to all.

Hamid Rasheed
Chair SBMC 2007-08

Scottish Black Members AGM 2007

SBMG CELEBRATES ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR



Pictured left to right: Sofi Taylor, Hamid Rasheed, Ismail Donmez and Eileen Dinning

The Annual General Meeting of the Scottish Black Members Group took place in Edinburgh this year on Saturday 17 November. Sofi Taylor from the NEC and Eileen Dinning, Scottish Equalities' Officer were the guest speakers.

Elections for the Scottish Black Members Committee took place and the following members were elected:

Hamid Rasheed: Chair; Tamara Mhura: Vice-Chair;
Ismail Donmez: Secretary; Shireen Bonnar: Budget Officer;
Mary Mbae & Tina Makedenge: Membership Officer (Job Share)
Menchie Aquino & Ravi Nathan: Education Officer
Zia Hussain & Lui Giacomello: Publicity & Campaigns Officer (Job Share)
Patricia Agu & Tamara Mhura: NBMC Reps (Job Share)
Hamid Rasheed & Ismail Donmez: NBMC Reps (Job Share)

EQUALITIES ISSUES

Eileen spoke on key equalities issues relevant to Black members in Scotland. The promotion of Race Equality in Scotland, the Race Relation Act and amendments, anti racist projects and the need to attend events such as the St Andrew's Day Rally were all part of her interesting talk.

IMMIGRATION, VISAS AND WORK PERMITS

Sofi then followed, giving an informed update on another very important subject – changes in immigration, visas and work permits. These changes mean that overseas workers must be in continual employment for 5 years instead of 4 to qualify to apply for the right for indefinite leave to remain. Many workers entered this country with a work permit of 4 years provided by their employers.

Sofi told us that after pressure from UNISON and the Department of Health interim measures were established for extensions of existing work permit holders already in the UK. However the Home Office announced that employers had to confirm that they would pay an hourly rate of £7.02 and that without this confirmation the permit would not be extended. Based on the Home Office figures, 20,000 Senior Care Workers and families are potentially affected by this change. “UNISON continues the campaign to ensure that the changes are not applied retrospectively”, said Sofi.

ST ANDREW'S DAY MARCH

THE STUC ANNUAL EVENT AGAINST RACISM AND FASCISM



NO SLAVERY! NO RACISM!

The annual Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) St Andrew's Day event against racism and fascism took place on 24 November in Glasgow and marked the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade with the theme: "No Slavery! No Racism!"

About 800 people took part in the event and in which UNISON members, fellow trade unionists, politicians and faith and community groups were represented. The event was also supported by the Glasgow Anti-Racism Alliance and the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

The day started with a march from Blythswood Square and continued with a celebration rally at Glasgow Film Theatre. There were guest speakers, live entertainment, food and beer stalls, plus solidarity and craft stalls

CELEBRATE TOGETHER

Scottish Secretary, Matt Smith said: "The St Andrew's Day March and the Rally is now enshrined in Scotland's calendar. UNISON Scotland has a proud tradition of support for this event, and an even prouder one of being at the forefront of campaigning against racism. This year we vowed that the anniversary of the abolition of slavery should prompt us to abolish racism too. Something we need to build on in future years".

Hamid Rasheed, Chair of UNISON Scotland Black Members Group said: "One good reason to join this year's St Andrew's Day March, is to mark the 200th anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. The legacy of the Slave trade still exists ... even today in form of racism and discrimination. And we must challenge these in human attitudes and unacceptable behaviours in our work place and communities we live in."

A CLEAR MESSAGE

Phil McGarry, President of the STUC, said: "It sends a clear message to the people of Scotland that there's no place in society for racism or fascism. And I think the clear message of today's rally demonstrates that."

First Minister Alex Salmond gave his support to the rally. "Different traditions do not undermine the Scottish culture - they enrich and enhance it. I am proud to say that there are many shades and strands in the Scottish tartan." he said.

Peter Hunter, UNISON Scotland Legal Officer said: "It's an annual march against racism in Scotland, it's a great combination of the trade union movement and community groups, really strong every year. Just letting people know that racism's got no place in the workplace, but also in communities."

The St Andrew's Day Anti-Racist March and the rally was organised by the Scottish Trade Union Congress. The event started out as a counter demonstration to right wing racists from the BNP who tried to make St Andrews Day their own day of action. For many years now, the STUC, with support from UNISON Scotland, has organised the march and for the third year the Glasgow Anti Racist Alliance (GARA) co-sponsored the event.

Editors' Corner

Zia Hussain & Lui Giacomello

Welcome to you all from the new editors of the SBMG Newsletter. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all who supported us at the 2007 AGM. We would also like to thank the previous editor, Bernard Kanya for all the good work he has done in producing past editions.

Zia Hussain is an IT Project Manager working for the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) in East Kilbride.

Lui Giacomello is an IT Network Engineer with NHS Lothian and also the lead UNISON Steward at the Western General and Royal Victoria Hospitals in Edinburgh.

National Black Members' Conference 2008

The 2008 National Black Members' Conference is to be held on 11-13 January 2008 at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Glasgow.

A CHRISTMAS SERMON

"And the leaders of the world today talk eloquently about peace. Every time we drop our bombs in North Vietnam, President Johnson talks eloquently about peace. What is the problem? They are talking about peace as a distant goal, as an end we seek, but one day we must come to see that peace is not merely a distant goal we seek, but that it is a means by which we arrive at that goal. We must pursue peaceful ends through peaceful means. All of this is saying that, in the final analysis, means and ends must cohere because the end is pre-existent in the means, and ultimately destructive means cannot bring about constructive ends." -

Martin Luther King, Jr.

24 December 1967