

UNISON Newsletter

SBMG 2nd Issue 2007



Chairs Message

Dear Readers,

Congratulations to you all. We have had another eventful year. It was at the SBMC Policy weekend in Dundee that SBMC streamlined an action plan to achieve its priorities and objectives.

It was unity among us and the team effort, which enabled us to deliver. I am grateful to all the members of team SBMC 2006-07 for their commitment to what we achieved for the first time in the SBMC history. Our achievements can be summed up as:

- Continuous increase in our numbers.
- Setting up of 3 Black Self-Organisation Groups in branches. Quality service to our members
- Developing Shop Stewards
- Active participation in Consultations/Conferences
- Strong contributions to the NBMC
- Successful Training Weekend
- Building on our strengths

This year Afshan Fairley, Ravi Nathan and Bernard Kamyia have taken time out due to work / family commitments – SBMC will miss them dearly.

At our AGM on 17th November 2007, many new members will be contesting SBMC elections. I am sure with your vote their success will make us even stronger to take on the future challenges. I look forward to seeing you at Our AGM, in Edinburgh.

Best Wishes
Hamid Rasheed
Chair SBMC 2006-07

STUC Black Workers Conference Condemns James Watson's Racist Comments

By Sofi Taylor NEC

STUC Black Workers Committee moved a statement on behalf of the delegates from various trade unions to condemn the racist comments made by the eminent DNA scientist James Watson. The statement was moved by Habib Hashmi of EIS, who chaired the 11th STUC Black Workers Conference on 20-21st October 2007, in Perth.

David Olwa UNISON seconded this statement. The conference invited many guest speakers among these were:

- John Hulbert- Provost of Perth Kinross Council, who welcomed the conference to Perth.
- Professor Geoff Palmer- Chair of Edinburgh and Lothian Race Equality Council. Professor Palmer spoke on the history of the Slave trade and its implication for Scotland.
- Morag Alexander- Scotland Commissioner Equality and Human Rights Commission outlined the priorities of the new commission which are: building a credible and independent organisation, mapping and analysing the key battle grounds, improving life opportunities and experiences for BME Communities and developing new narratives.
- Jenny Duncan- Chairperson, STUC Youth Committee reflected the similarity of the concerns of young members and the conference agenda.
- Bashir Ahmad- MSP who recalled his journey into politics and encouraged the delegates to become active.
- Elspeth Bettany- STUC Disabled Workers' Committee, linking the work of the Disabled Members Committee to the concerns of black members.
- Tricia MacLaren-Chair, STUC Women's Committee shared the work of the women committee with conference.
- Grahame Smith, General Secretary STUC welcomed the input of black workers' committee and shared concerns as well as the achievements of the Congress.
- Phil McGerry- President of the STUC reminded the delegates that the wealth of Glasgow was built upon this horrific human trade and we cannot be too complacent about our history.

47 delegates from 13 trade unions attended the conference. Sofi Taylor led 14 strong UNISON delegates. 16 motions (including one composite) were moved and debated at the conference. UNISON delegates Tamara Mhura and David Olwa were successful, as no elections were required for the Black Workers Committee positions.

Georgia Cruickshank, GMB, went unopposed for the General Council Women's seat. On General seat, Satnam Ner, Prospect was elected. The vote of thanks was moved by Sofi Taylor and seconded by Satnam Ner. All UNISON delegates played a very active role at the conference. Among the UNISON delegates Patricia Agu, Jerome Rueda and Zia Hussain were first time speakers. Also at the conference Zaffir Hakim made a DVD presentation One Workplace Equal Rights Project. The fringe meeting at the conference were facilitated by UNISON Scottish Equality Officer, Eileen Dinning and National Race Equality Officer, Pav Akhtar, STUC Zaffir Hakim and "Unite's T&G Scotland Section", Women Officer Elaine Dougall.

Training success again for Black Members

Ismail Donmez, Scottish Black Members Secretary

This year's Scottish black members training weekend brought in new and old members to learn and organise, to contribute to the work of UNISON Scotland - defending the rights of its members by eliminating all forms of discrimination at all levels.

Lothian Health's Mary Mbae praised the input of Bob Cotton Award Winner, Ghulam Rasul Shahzad, who was asked up from England to tutor on the course.

City of Edinburgh's Maria Barnett agreed, "Ghulam got us really involved." Hamid Rasheed, Scottish Black Members Chair, said, "This year's training was a re-run of last years programme, with slight modifications.

"Black members enjoy goodwill and support for our cause in the Scottish Learning and Organising Committee and Scottish Branches."

At the end of the training, David Okalo Olwa, Chair Lothian Health Black Members Group, presented a tartan tie to Ghulam Rasul Shahzad, on behalf of the delegates.

- 62% trainees were new to the black members training weekend.
- Almost all trainees were happy with the venue. Only three trainees expressed dissatisfaction with hotel services.
- 100% trainees expressed their satisfaction with the tutor, training content and the ways the training was delivered.
- All trainees would like to keep the Training running every year.

Democracy in Action – Lothian Health Black Members Group Elections

Lui Giacomello

A Special Meeting of the UNISON Lothian Health Black Members Self Organised Group was held in September 2007, to elect its office bearers within the group.

The Special Meeting coincided with UNISON Scotland's Black Members Training Weekend in order to provide the course students with an example of democracy in action.

The Bob Cotton Award Winner Tutor, Ghulam Rasul Shahzad took the chair during the elections. Hamid Rasheed, Chair, Scottish Black Members Group and Ismail Donmez, Secretary, Scottish Black Members Group were nominated to act as tellers.

Ghulam explained the election process and then proceeded to read out the nominations, which had been received following the calling notice to all Lothian Black Group Members. The following members were elected to officer positions in Lothian Health Branch Black Members Group:

David Olwa, Chair; Tina Makedenge, Vice Chair; Claudius Manyundwa, Secretary; Lui Giacomello, Communications; Patricia Agu, Education; Menchie Aquino, Recruitment (job share); Midel Lena, Recruitment (job share).

David Olwa, on behalf of the group, thanked Ghulam, Hamid and Ismail for their assistance to ensure fairness in the elections. David also expressed the hope that observing the election process must have enriched learning for the delegates.

David said: "You have seen democracy in action and I encourage you all to return to your branches and set up your own Black Members Groups. We started from scratch just one year ago and now we are a 32 member strong self-organising group.

"Success of our Branch's Black SOG is enviable, yet we are more than happy to share our experiences in setting up of more Black Self-Organisation Groups in Scottish Branches, he concluded".

Editor's Wee Note

"UNISON black members in Scotland have continued to grow in strength during this year and deserve congratulations for their continued support of this newsletter.

Special thanks go to all those members who have submitted articles in the past publications.

The newsletter has continuously covered activities within UNISON Scotland.

Members are encouraged to continue to participate in campaigns and within their branches.

You are all aware our AGM is on 17 November 2007 Edinburgh. Please turn up in large numbers and let your voice be heard.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who have given me support during my time as Editor of this Newsletter. Unfortunately, I will not be serving on the SBMC due to unavoidable circumstances. However, I look forward to interacting with you outside the committee.

Good luck to you all and remember this is our union. Make excellent use of all the opportunities.

And in pursuing our aims, let us not forget those who are suffering in Burma, Darfur Sudan, Northern Uganda, Iraq, and Afghanistan. These are all victims of injustices and HIV, and let us make a resolution to support our newsletter and UNISON.

Bernard Kama.
Editor SBMC Newsletter

Obituary

David Singh ex-SBMC member lost his fight against terminal illness this year. In David the Scottish Black Members lost a good friend. God bless his soul in peace.

Palestine Lobby of Parliament

The Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) is working with trade unions, Christian Aid, World Vision, charities and faith organisations to lobby Parliament on Wednesday, 28 November, for a change in British government policy.

They are calling for people to join with them and call on their MP to: support international law, end the siege of Gaza and respect Palestinian democracy. End Israeli Occupation: Peace for all Lobby of Parliament 28 November 2007; 2–6pm Westminster, London.

Isolation: Our government must end the economic and political isolation of Gaza immediately. 1.5 million Palestinians in Gaza are suffering a humanitarian disaster with 87% of Gazans living below the poverty line.

International law: Our government must insist that Israel complies with international law and ends its continuing expansion of settlements on occupied Palestinian land. There are currently 500,000 Israeli settlers in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Illegal wall: Our government must respect the International Court of Justice advisory opinion regarding the illegal wall in the West Bank and Jerusalem and hold Israel to account. The route of the Wall is effectively annexing 10 per cent of the West Bank to Israel, leaving 49,400 Palestinians stranded between the Green Line and the wall.

Democratic principles: Our government must recognise those elected democratically by the Palestinian people and help to reconcile the differences between Fatah and Hamas. All illegally held political prisoners by both sides, especially children, must be released.

An end to 40 years of occupation and a just settlement is the only way to achieve peace for both Palestinians and Israelis. Help make the change! Join the lobby and speak to your MP. To lobby your MP, contact your MP as soon as possible and arrange a meeting with them on Wednesday 28 November. If you don't know who your MP is, go to www.faxyourmp.com or phone 020 7219 3000. Briefly explain to your MP what you would like to speak to them about.

Secondly, please let the PSC know when you have an appointment with your MP so they can co-ordinate with other people in the same constituency. Even if you do not manage to contact your MP in advance, you can still try to meet them on the day - just come along to the lobby and ask for a 'green card' which you then fill in to request that your MP meets you.

They will be able to brief you on how to lobby your MP in the House of Commons on the lobby day. When you have an appointment with your MP, please let them know. You can contact them at: info@palestinecampaign.org; 020 7700 6192; www.palestinecampaign.org

24 October marks 12th year of Aung San Suu Kyi's illegal detention

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of the democratically elected NLD in Burma, will mark her 12th full year in detention on 24 October. To mark the occasion a mass demonstration took place in London outside the Chinese Embassy at lunchtime on Wednesday to remind China of their international obligations to Burma.

24 October marks the 12th full year of detention (over an 18-year period) of Aung San Suu Kyi, who is an honorary member of UNISON. The date will be observed across the globe to ensure the pressure is kept up on the junta. The protest in the UK will be outside the Chinese Embassy reminding them of their obligation to the people of Burma.

Visit [avaaz website at http://www.avaaz.org/en/stand_with_burma/](http://www.avaaz.org/en/stand_with_burma/) to sign the petition and join the three-quarters of a million who have already signed!

Race Row Professor Resigns

The DNA pioneer professor James Watson has resigned from his post as chancellor of Cold Spring Harbour Laboratory in New York State.

The move follows the race row that engulfed his visit to London last week as a result of his comments suggesting that black people were less intelligent than whites.

The row led to his decision to cut short the lecture tour promoting his autobiography and left him fighting to save his reputation.

On Thursday, his employers announced that he would be suspended as a result of his comments. Dave Prentis, UNISON's general secretary and STUC Black Workers support this call.

Scottish Black Members Group AGM

The Scottish Black Members Group Annual General Meeting is scheduled to take place at Boardroom, Royal Victoria Hospital, 13 Craigleith Road, Edinburgh EH4 2DN on Saturday 17 November 2007, from 11.00 am - 2.00 pm. (Please report to Reception and they will direct you to the Boardroom).

National Black Members' Conference 2008

The National Black Members' Conference 2008 is being held at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Glasgow from 11 – 13 January 2008.

If you would like to attend the NBM Conference in Glasgow, you can apply to your branch to nominate you as either a delegate or a visitor.

Please note that the deadline for registration is Friday, 9 November 2007.

Your branch office has the conference nomination forms. But registration documents are also on: <http://unison.org.uk/conference/index.asp>.

Join me at the St Andrew's Day March

Zia Hussain

Hamid Rasheed, Chair Scottish Black Member of UNISON invites Scottish black members to join him at the St Andrew's Day Anti Racism March and Rally, which is scheduled to take place on Saturday 24 November 2007.

The march assembles at 10.30 am in Blythswood Square, Glasgow. The march will start at 11.00am and the Rally will take place at 12 noon at Glasgow Film Theatre, Rose Street, Glasgow.

The SBMC Chair said: "It is vital for Scottish Black Members of UNISON to take part in this Anti-Racism march. It is an opportunity for us to send a clear message across that there is no room for racism in Scotland".

Immigration & Discrimination Matters at Lothian Health BMG

Lui Giacomello

Rita Kochar, Complainant Aid Officer / Solicitor for the Edinburgh & Lothian Racial Equality Council (ELREC) gave an informative talk to the members of UNISON Lothian Health Black Members Group, at their meeting on 22 October 2007.

Rita spoke on Immigration/Discrimination matters especially about the recent changes in the immigration legislation that affects Senior Care Workers and UNISON Black members at work.

UNISON challenged the recent Highly Skilled Migrants Programme amendments. As a result transitional arrangements have been introduced, to waive the work permit skills criteria for in-country extension.

Now the applications for Senior Care Workers will be considered after 13 August 2007. All other criteria will continue to apply.

A question and answer session followed after Rita's informative talk. The group members raised specific issues regarding visas, work permits and discrimination. David Olwa, Chair of UNISON Lothian Health Black Members Group, thanked Rita for coming to do a presentation. At the end of the session, Tina Makedenge, Vice Chair of the group presented Rita with a bouquet of flowers.

Protection from Harassment Act Tackling Harassment at Work

Tackling Harassment at Work UNISON Scotland launched a report Violent Assaults on Public Service Workers in Scotland. That report highlights the continuing high level of assaults on public service workers and an action plan to address this issue.

The general principle behind the Act is to protect persons from harassment. This is particularly so against the background of traditional remedies of actions for damages and interdict being inadequate, ineffective and costly. The relevant sections applicable to Scotland in the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 are Sections 8 to 11. The Act was further amended by Section 49 of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 2003.

In terms of Section 8 of the Act every individual has the right to be free from harassment and the person must not pursue a course of conduct which amounts to harassment of another. The course of conduct must either be intended to amount to harassment of the person or occurs in circumstances where it would appear to a reasonable person that it would amount to harassment of that person.

- The course of conduct must involve conduct on at least 2 occasions.
- The harassment includes causing the person alarm or distress.
- The conduct includes speech.

This means that the conduct in question is therefore not confined to physical abuse or violence. It applies to verbal abuse.

For more information P & I briefing 150 Protection from Harassment Act is at <http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/briefings/harassmentprotect.html>

69% BEM members working in the health services suffered racism

A health group survey of 2000 "Black and Ethnic Minority" workers in the Health Services revealed that 69% BEM members working in the health services suffered racism at work. Of those who had experienced racism at work:

- 83% had suffered verbal attacks
- 9% had suffered physical attacks
- 61% racist incidents were from patients
- 39% were from managers
- And 24% were from members of the public

One ambulance dispatcher commented in the survey: "The abuse is very upsetting and relentless. I wanted to do this job because it's helping people and I care for people, but racist abuse is an everyday occurrence."

In response to the above findings UNISON launched a hotline to tackle racism in the NHS. The hotline is supported by UNISONdirect and is being widely advertised in NHS workplaces using postcards and posters "See Racism Hear Racism Report Racism".

Announcing the new service, UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis said a survey of 2,000 black and ethnic minority members had revealed that 69% had suffered from racism at work. We want to banish all forms of racism from our NHS. Mr Prentis said: "We have people from all over the world working in our world-class health service. We believe they have a right to dignity and respect and protection from racism."

The launch of a Local Government hotline to tackle racism in the work places, with similar postcard and posters campaign is due next year.