

SBMG News



Scottish Black Members Group of UNISON

Spring 2008 Newsletter

Chairs Message



Dear Readers,

Winter season by Scottish standards is not over ... yet. Irrespective of bad weather; SBMC have been quite busy.

In January, we successfully played host to the National Black Members Conference, in Glasgow.

The SBMC policy weekend took place in Edinburgh, in the middle of February. Following UNISON Policy, SBMC members agreed to an action plan based on various activities to achieve recruitment, equality, communications / campaigns, and organising targets / objectives, for the year 2008.

A week later, SBMC representatives (including sharers) left for Leeds in gale force winds, to attend the NBMC Policy Weekend and AGM. The two new Scottish reps Patricia Agu and Ismail Donmez easily made their presence felt by making valuable contributions.

The ballot papers regarding Local Government Pension Scheme are out and we need a "YES" vote. As you all know I lead from the front and in doing so I have voted "Yes" to the new pension scheme. If for one reason or another you have not cast your vote, then please do so before the deadline of 21st March 2008.

Well, spring is around or not! SBMC is teeming with life to contribute to the work of UNISON Scotland. We have the support of the Scottish Region, and its branches - SBMC aims to improve its performance this year.

Cheers
Hamid Rasheed, Chair SBMC

Vote Yes for a New Pension Scheme and Recruit a Friend



Mike Kirby, Scottish Convenor, gave a call to Local Government UNISON members to "Vote Yes" in the ballot for the new pension scheme and recruit a friend at the same time.

In his special message Mike Kirby said: 'This is an excellent result for UNISON and its members and has been delivered by the solid support for industrial action that UNISON members showed in the dispute in 2006 and by the professional expertise of the union in leading the negotiations for the new scheme'.

This ballot is for you to have your say on the new Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) negotiated between the trade unions, the employers, and the Scottish Government.

Ballot papers will be dispatched to members on 3 March 2008 and the ballot will close on 21 March 2008. If a UNISON member has not received a ballot paper, or members have lost their paper, please contact the ballot helpline by 18 March 2008. Either phone 0131 226 0096 or email membershipteamscotland@unison.co.uk Evidence of UNISON membership will be required.

For further information on the details of the pension agreement please visit: www.unison-scotland.org.uk/pensions/index.html

The 'recruit a friend' leaflet, which is enclosed with the ballot paper, is also available at:

<http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/pensions/recruitmentleaflet.pdf>



SEPA Staff Aims To Challenge Dismissal Notices

Zia Hussain

A letter to nearly half of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) staff who have refused to sign away their agreed conditions, is to be challenged by the staff union, UNISON at a series of meetings starting this week.

The workplace meetings that UNISON are organising across Scotland, will discuss action by the staff to challenge the dismissals and a number of other breaches of agreements detailed by the union in a dispute notice handed to SEPA last Friday.

The dismissal notices – which according to SEPA arrived on Tuesday 4 March 2008 proved a failed attempt to pressure staff into signing away their conditions. This failure led SEPA, management to announce their intentions, to impose the changes unilaterally.

Zia Hussain of the SBMC, a Black SEPA employee said: "Imposing the changes unilaterally does affect us all. Not listening to the staff and attempts to avoid negotiating a fair set of pay and grading proposal, by the SEPA management is unhelpful, and leading to poor morale in the workforce."

"I am sure UNISON will not allow its members to be bullied and brow-beaten in this way, and we will be considering all methods of challenging these Victorian labour relations – including by industrial action where appropriate", Zia concluded.

The SEPA pay and grading proposals – while details continued to be changed during the series of staff presentations – could lead to some staff losing thousands of pounds a year. The attempt to pressure staff into signing away their rights led to a 93% vote of no confidence in the board and management of SEPA.

Scottish Black Members Committee Policy Weekend

The Scottish Black Members Committee (SBMC) policy weekend took place on 16-17 February 2008 at the Premier Travel inn, Edinburgh. The majority of SBMC members were new to the committee and therefore did not possess policy development experience. Hence, the highlight of the weekend was the learning input, which was provided by experienced members.

It was the quality of the learning input, which empowered the members on the SBMC, not only to fully understand the policy framework, but also to enrich their awareness on identified priority objectives.

The policy weekend was successful in achieving twin objectives:

The overall cost of organising the policy weekend was kept well within the allocated budget and the SBMC engaged itself well to discuss, improve and agree its Action Plan for the year 2008.

However, as the SBMC agreed action plans are geared to increase the level of SBMC activities then resource implications follow. Not only does the SBMC intend to make best use of existing resources it also aims to put in a bid for additional resources, to maximise the objectivity by joint working within the UNISON Scotland "Opposing Racism Action Plan".

UNISON UK President Combating Racism

Norma Stephenson, UNISON President has called for the work the union does in combating racism across the UK to be increased.

At the union's Scottish Council in February, Norma, congratulated UNISON Scotland for the campaigning they did against the British National Party in the last Scottish elections, preventing the right-wing party from gaining a foothold in Scotland.

She also called for the union to join with the anti-racist charity - Show Racism the Red Card - to extend the union's message to the general public.

Norma said, "I am proud of UNISON's record in opposition to racism, and this is a campaign that I have put my energies into over the years. I am particularly heartened to see that the BNP have no political foothold in Scotland, and proud of the action that you in UNISON Scotland took to deliver that."

National Black Members Committee (NBMC) AGM & Policy Weekend

Patricia Agu, and Hamid Rasheed (including sharers Tamara Mhura, and Ismail Donmez) represented Scottish Black Members at this year's NBMC AGM & Policy Weekend in Leeds on 22-24 Feb. 2008.

At the AGM, Bev Miller was re-elected (unopposed) as Chair of the NBMC and Pam Singh and Ade Alao (job share) were elected Vice Chairs.

Our very own, Hamid Rasheed was also elected (un-opposed) as NBMC Communications Officer.

At the policy weekend the Scottish reps commenced work on Scottish and other regional motions, which were carried at the 2008 National Black Members Conference.

National Black Member's Conference 2008

Sheer Success for UNISON Scotland

Ismail Donmez and Lui Giacomello

Mike Kirby, Scottish Convenor successfully led a team of UNISON Scotland Officers and Black members to play host to the 2008 National Black Members' Conference, which took place on 11-13 January 2008, at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, in Glasgow.

Hamid Rasheed, Chair of Scottish Black Members Committee, officially welcomed the delegates to the opening session of the conference on Friday afternoon. In his speech he briefed the conference about the contributions made by Scottish Black Members to the work of our union on recruitment, equality, communications and learning & organising.



Mike Kirby stole the show during Saturday's session by welcoming all delegates and visitors to Glasgow - "The real curry capital of the UK". In his speech Mike briefed the conference about UNISON Scotland's ongoing work on:

- Equality and Equal Opportunities
- Fighting Racism in Scotland and our successful campaigns
- The Fresh Talent Initiative
- One Nation, One Culture Project,
- Asylum Seekers and Migrant Workers,
- The Role of Black Self Organised Groups in UNISON Scotland

Mike's speech was warmly received, as was his gift of a spurtle to every delegate and card based on UNISON Scotland's Tartan Design. Almost 500 delegates, visitors, guests and officials attended the conference.

At the request of the Scottish Black Members Committee, Scottish branches encouraged their Black Members to attend the conference.

As a result 12 delegates and 8 visitors from Scottish Branches attended. The Black Members from Scottish branches invited debate on four motions (2 from the SBMC and one each from Fife LG and Perth and Kinross Branch Black Members). First time delegates moved 3 out of the 4 motions and all were carried unanimously.

Standing Orders Committee (SOC) Election

Against all the odds; Mr Ravi Nathan's election to the National Black Members SOC was successful. Ravi's nomination was effectively supported by votes from Greater London, Yorkshire and Humberside, Wales and North East Region.

Editors' Corner

Zia Hussain & Lui Giacomello

The Spring 2008 edition of the NBMC contains information regarding the proposed new pension scheme for Local Government workers.

Along with the ballot paper you will receive, will be the 'recruit a friend' leaflet but whether you work in the Local Government sector or other sectors such as Health, we all need to be involved in recruitment.

As Black members in UNISON we work together to win positive change in the workplace. The more of us that are actively involved the stronger we become. The stronger we are the more positive change we can achieve.

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.

Thought For The Day

"When I despair, I remember that all through history the ways of truth and love have always won. There have been tyrants, and murderers, and for a time they can seem invincible, but in the end they always fall. Think of it--always."

Mahatma Gandhi (1869 - 1948)

TUC & STUC Black Members Conferences 2008

The SBMC agreed to nominate Ismail Donmez, SBMC Secretary, to attend the TUC Black Members Conference (BMC) 2008 and Hamid Rasheed, SBMC

Scottish Black Members Training Weekend

UNISON Black Members Training Weekend is normally organised following consultations with black members regarding their training needs.

Ravi Nathan attended a recent meeting of the Scottish Learning & Organising Committee and at the meeting it was agreed that the SBMC Training Weekend would take place on 19-21 September 2008 in Edinburgh.

The SBMC once again seeks support from Scottish branches to send more and more new black members to attend this year's SBMC training weekend.

NBMC Social Event

The SBMC thank Scottish Region for organising the social event at the 2008 conference. In terms of success; according to the members from North West Region, the NBMC's Glasgow social event was the best ever social event at a conference.

Birthday Boy



No, this is not Ravi Nathan celebrating his election to the NBMC Standing Orders Committee; it was also his birthday during conference. From the number of candles on the cake, Ravi seems to qualify for the Young Members Group as well!

Show Racism the Red Card

Also at the 2008 NBM Conference was Matt Smith, UNISON Scotland Secretary, who joined in with Scottish Black Members to Show Racism the Red Card.



L-R Ismail Donmez, Secretary SBMC, Derek Ferguson, SRTRC, Hamid Rasheed, Perth & Kinross Branch Communications Officer and Chair SBMC, Matt Smith, Secretary UNISON Scotland, Claudius Manyundwa, Lothian Health Branch, Lui Giacomello SBMC, Tecla Wight, Fife Branch, and Ravi Nathan, SBMC.

Overseas Nurses Network and Joseph Rowntree Foundation Fringe meeting at the NBMC 2008

Sofi Taylor

Matt Smith, Scottish Region Secretary, chaired the fringe meeting, which was organised to provide feedback on the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) report 'Site in Glasgow', to our members, to the Foundation and to those who carried out the flagship research called 'Rhythms and Realities of Everyday Life'.

This research was carried over six sites across the United Kingdom and examined the integration of new and settled migrants over the last 2 years. The Overseas Nurses Network was a partner of this work and our overseas members contributed extensively to this research.

Among the speakers at the meeting were Dr Helen Crawley (from London Metropolitan University), author of the JRF report 'Site in Glasgow' and Wilf Sullivan, TUC Race Relation Policy Officer.

In her speech Dr Crawley said: "Migrant workers were drawn to Glasgow to meet the shortage of health workers, but faced racial discrimination and harassment in the workplace."

On the role of the trade unions, she recommended that they must support migrant workers. 'Migrants are willing to integrate however we as a society must not put up barriers to stop this process', she concluded.

Wilf Sullivan also echoed the need for trade unions to support Migrant Workers and stressed the need for trade unions to organise in the workplace, or lose out completely on issues facing Migrant Workers.

Wilf said: 'The Overseas Nurses Network (ONN) is dear to my heart, and ONN work is the right way forward to end the plight of Migrant Workers'.