



YES to political fund and Scotland manifesto launched

Gordon Brown writes for SiU
Public services collective pride of nation - p3



revitalise our **public services**

Scotland *in* UNISON

April 2005
No. 54

Copy sections of this bulletin or the online version to use in local branch or workplace newsletters

Union action forces pensions climb down

by Chris Bartter
Communications Officer

The strong threat of UK-wide industrial action from Local Government and other public service staff, brought a sensible move in the debate on public sector pensions.

Just days from 23 March, when council staff from UNISON and four other unions (two in Scotland), and civil service staff across the UK were due to take part in the first one day strike action, the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott announced that he was taking steps to revoke the amendments to regulation due to come into force in local government down South on 1 April.

As Westminster precedent has been quoted by both the Scottish Public Pensions Agency and the Deputy Minister for Finance and Public Service Reform as forming the basis for Scottish decisions it was vital that this was stopped.

In addition the Government set up a working party to look at the whole area of public sector pensions - involving both the unions and the employers in the kind of discussions we have been arguing for.

Matt Smith, UNISON Scottish



Show racism the red card with 'Racism Ban'd' wristbands

Eileen Dinning, UNISON Scotland's Equalities Officer, and Lubna Bajjali, a Chevening fellowship student from Jordan who was placed with UNISON for two weeks, show off their red 'Racism Ban'd' wristbands at Hampden Park. **Full story page 2**

Secretary, said, "We are pleased that these discussions will allow us to ensure the views of local government workers can be made without immediate threats to the pensions of both colleagues in

England and Wales, and the knock-on threat to Scottish Local Government workers.

"We are also pleased that we have a commitment from the Scottish Minister to a similar mech-

anism when it proves necessary."

"I have no doubt that had the strike gone ahead we would have seen a massive show of strength and solidarity across public services. **Turn to Page 2**

- Join in
- speak up
- be counted
- Vote in UNISON's NEC election

It's not just the General Election you need to vote in... UNISON is having its own elections for its NEC, the union's lay governing body

Scotland has an additional regional seat being contested by Jane Carolan, Mark Ferguson and Sandra Kennie and Scotland's Mick McGahey is standing in the UK Health seat.

Scotland members are also voting in the additional member seats.

Ballot papers are out now. See more details at www.unison-scotland.org.uk/elections

More inside

- Scottish Labour backs pension call - p2
- Bridging the gap between asylum & work - p2
- Kerr at AGM - p2
- Freedom of Information - p2
- Inverclyde ICT victory - p3
- Jane's NEC report - p4
- Walk the Loch for family holidays - p4
- Keeping it right, data protection - p4

GENERAL ELECTION 2005

"What are the Tories thinking? Use your vote to stop them"

This is the message to be proclaimed from many billboards across the UK during the General Election Campaign.

Once again UNISON will be using its General Political Fund (GPF) to campaign to defend public services and take action against racism. As a UK General Election, of course many of the issues that will be raised by UNISON members down South

are in Scotland devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

However the government of the UK is important for UNISON members in Scotland as well - not least because it sets the total amount of money to be spent on public services across the UK.

Billboards urging people to use their vote to stop the Tories are planned, and although we won't be able to comprehensively cover Scotland, we want to get to

as many targets as possible.

Dave Watson, UNISON's Head of Policy in Scotland said.

"Whilst the main policy thrust for this years campaign is coming from our UK colleagues, there are still many issues of concern to UNISON members in Scotland. Not least the consequences of the Tories spending £35bn less on public services.

"As we go to press we are also hearing about further BNP

attempts to use this election to peddle their racism in Scotland and we want to target them too.

"The financial restrictions of the Political Parties, Elections and Referenda Act, now means a limit on campaign spending by a third party (ie. a union like UNISON), and the union is currently attempting to balance the amounts spent on billboards with the other demands of the campaign."

Pensions

from Page 1

This solidarity must now be maintained during the discussions and negotiations ahead."

The arguments on the need for decent pensions for public service workers will continue.

UNISON will be leading the fight for an improved pension scheme offering people the choice to work on through a flexible retirement age, and protection for pension scheme members who need to leave work early.

The union will continue to oppose unfair penalising of pension scheme members either by cuts in benefits or increases in contributions.

Racism Ban'd

From Page 1

The red 'Racism Ban'd' has been produced by *Revolutionary*, a group of schoolchildren from



Graeme High School, Falkirk as their entry to a Europe-wide 'Young Enterprise' competition. They were

made using 'fair trade' labour, and all proceeds will go directly to Show Racism the Red Card.

Kirsty McDougall, from 'Revolutionary' said: "We decided in December to produce the 'Racism Ban'd'. Since then things have really taken off and it makes us all very proud to see Scotland's top players wearing them."

Roddy McNulty, SRTRC Co-ordinator for Scotland, said: "With the support of Scotland's top players, Show Racism the Red Card works year-round with young people to get the message over that racism is as unacceptable in society as it has become in football.

"We have been very impressed with the innovation of 'Revolutionary' who produced the 'Racism Ban'd'. The fact that the bands were made using fair trade labour was a clinching factor in SRTRC following this route in Scotland."

The bands are available from participating SPL and SFL club shops, priced £2, or online at www.revolutionaryonline.co.uk.

All proceeds go directly towards Show Racism the Red Card's campaign.

Show Racism the Red Card
1-3 Woodside Crescent
Glasgow G3 7UJ
Tel: 0141 332 8566
rodsrtrc@btconnect.com

Strike against housing cash collection cuts

Wednesday 30 March saw all Glasgow housing offices closed as Glasgow Housing Association (GHA) staff struck following a successful ballot.

Well over 500 members took action, closing virtually all housing offices in the city.

The action was provoked by the GHA decision to withdraw cash collection facilities, and cut cashiers' posts from local offices.

John Wright, Senior Steward for GHA staff said, "This means that rent collection is not available at housing offices, and that tenants will be forced to use alternatives, which may include post offices, themselves under threat, or local shops, and in

Jane Carolan reports on the Glasgow Housing Association dispute



some cases local off licences.

"Safety in housing offices for cash payment can be taken for granted but the local off sales?"

At present tenants use housing offices as a one-stop-shop for rent advice, to report repairs or deal with any other query that they have in relation to their tenancy. In a city where a large percentage of tenants are elderly, or on benefits, the local housing office is vital.

Glasgow is also a city where rent arrears have been a major problem, and to most people a local approach to arrears would appear to be commonsense.

Additionally many local offices collect considerable amounts in council tax not only from tenants but from

private householders for whom local offices are convenient. But the GHA's rationale is balancing its books, so cashiers had to go.

UNISON was not only concerned about the GHA's action but the manner in which it was decided. GHA Chief Executive, Michael Lennon gave an assurance that the issue would be discussed by the full board, but prior to its meeting, the union found that a decision had been taken on the quiet by a sub committee.

John said, "The GHA's actions have been typical of their arrogant decision making where genuine union consultation has

been neither a priority or if truth be told, much of a reality."

The issue was well understood by local office staff who saw that jobs were being cut and that the service being offered to the public was becoming poorer.

Hence the magnificent response to the strike call. Most of the handful that went to work chose not to walk through the picket lines but - to the horror of those picketing - drove through, taking little care.

At least one member of the public, a community activist supporting the action, was upset as a car hit him.

Discussions are now underway with the union, but further action has not been ruled out if a mutually agreeable solution is not now forthcoming.

Helen gets £1,000 holiday



Helen Duthie, Branch Secretary of NHS Argyll and Clyde Branch receives her holiday voucher for £1,000 from Eddie Egan - Chair of the Scottish Health SGE at the recent Scottish Health Conference.

Helen won the voucher in a draw run by the **UNISON Holiday Club** to encourage members to sign up to their e-mail updating service, and Jim Lord of UNISON Holiday Club is also pictured.

There will be further draws throughout the year - contact UNISON holiday club for further info - 08707 555 000 or

www.unison-holiday-club.co.uk

Courses coming up

Introduction to Conference

Glasgow 4 May

Stress in the Workplace

Glasgow - 6, 7 and 8 May

Assertiveness for Women

Edinburgh - 6, 7 and 8 May

Stewards Introduction

Glasgow - Non-Residential

10, 11 and 12 May

Branch Officers Training:

Publicity/Secretary/

Treasurer/Svc Conditions

Glasgow - 13, 14 and 15 May

Branch Officers Training

Chair/Equality/Education/Health &

Safety Glasgow - Residential

20, 21 and 22 May

Health & Safety (1)

Edinburgh - Residential

27, 28 and 29 May

Public Speaking

Glasgow - Residential

27, 28 and 29 May

If I can do it so can you

Eleanor fights odds to win degrees

Life Branch's Eleanor Haggett is thought to be the first woman UNISON activist to graduate from Stirling University with an MSc in Industrial Relations.

For Eleanor the success last month is the culmination of a long road which started with anger at prejudice against women workers with children.

"I left school to join the WRNS and qualified in school of accountancy. When I left and joined local government, that's when the prejudices began", explained Eleanor.

"I was only qualified via RN certificates, I was a woman and I had two little children.

"So despite asking to go on day release I was always refused for various reasons like, how would I manage to study with two little children".

This was before Eleanor was an active trade unionist but these obstacles only strengthened her determination.

"Eventually I negotiated flexi-leave and studied for HNC in Community Development and Economics", said Eleanor.

She then applied for funding for an honours degree at the Open University but was refused.

She lodged a grievance which was eventually upheld by councillors and she went on to achieve a BSc Hons in Applied Sociology, leading to more qualifications and eventually the MSc.

"This was all done initially as a protest however I did move it on as I enjoyed the studying and learning and found it very challenging particularly with a family, full time work and trade union activities", said Eleanor.

In addition to her academic success, Eleanor went on to become branch service conditions officer, welfare officer, chair of UNISON Scotland Welfare Committee and delegate to the Local Government Committee. She was also elected to the Scottish Committee, the top lay structure in Scotland.

Eleanor's advice to everyone is, "For anyone male or female with a family, do not be put off learning. It's not about being clever, it's about being determined to succeed and willing to work hard and you'll do it.

"Neither is it about age. After all I started in my early thirties.

"After all, if I can do it, so can you".



Eleanor Haggett
MSc, BSc Hons,
Dip App (S),
Dip Geog.

UNISON protection helps as tourist agencies merge

UNISON has been working to defend pensions and conditions as Area Tourist Boards across Scotland merged with the central agency VisitScotland (formerly the Scottish Tourist Board) on 1 April.

The merger - described as 'creating a new integrated tourism network' sees the winding up of all the Area Tourist Boards.

Dougie Black, UNISON's Regional Officer dealing with the issue has met with the VisitScotland management on a number of occasions and is also having regular meetings with staff around the country. He says

"The crucial issues identified by staff, are the protection of their terms and conditions, and in particular staff pensions. ATB staff are generally in the Local Government Pension Scheme,

Membership up by 25% over merger talks

and want to stay in that.

"We have been pressing VisitScotland to acquire admitted body status to the LGPS to enable staff to continue with their pension."

Staff terms and conditions have transferred, but VisitScotland want to introduce a

new set of terms and conditions - the organisational structure was issued at the end of January and the grading structure in February.

Staff have been UNISON has been negotiating on these new conditions through the Trade Union Consultation Forum - the body which discusses all aspects of the transfer. UNISON has made a pledge to staff not to agree to new conditions without consulting them.

The need for protection and professional backing has led to a steady influx of new UNISON members across the Tourist Board structures. UNISON has representatives on both the Trade Union Consultation Forum and the Staff Consultative Forum, and along with PCS is one of the two recognised unions.

Membership has increased by over 25% during this period.

Public Services - the collective pride of our nation...

by Gordon Brown
MP

I have said before that at their best, public services are founded on values greater than material, they are founded on the ethics of compassion, duty and service. I have seen this ethic of public service at work.

I have seen doctors and nurses who show not only exceptional skills and professionalism but also extraordinary care and friendship.

Carers whose unbelievable compassion and support can transform despair into hope, home helps and support staff whose dedication, commitment and humanity show that there are values far beyond those of contracts, markets and exchange, showing that public services can be a calling and not just a career.

So we are not isolated individuals, we depend on each other not out of weakness but because it is by the strength of common endeavour that we achieve more.

With Labour, health spending has doubled, education spending has doubled, transport spending has doubled and social services spending has doubled.

But we have much more to do.

Labour's long term goal is to match investment with reforms so that you can deliver world class services. Ten years ago under the Tories, 75 percent of all new public spending went on paying debt interest. Under Labour, 75 percent of new money goes to hospitals, schools and the other essential services that you deliver.

The Tories on the other hand boast about reductions in spending of £35 billion. Their parent's passport - to boost private education - their patient's passport - to boost private health - will take money out of public services and promote the cause of the few against

In a journalistic coup that we are keen to repeat, SiU has secured a column from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, GORDON BROWN MP. Here he outlines his views on public services.



Gordon Brown talks to Julie Smith and her daughter whilst out campaigning in Kirkcaldy. Julie is a Unison Shop Steward at the Victoria Hospital there.

the many. Their cuts can only be made by cutting deep into Scotland's public services.

The Tories do not understand what our public services really are and why ordinary people care so much about them.

Labour will not rest until our public services are an example to the world and the col-

lective pride of our nation.

It is vital now that we have confidence in our achievements. Yes there is more to do, but if we have the confidence in our values we will build a progressive consensus of prosperity and justice for all.

Branches await sheltered housing tribunal

by Emma Phillips
Regional Organiser

Many branches will be looking out for the result of a tribunal lodged by Aberdeenshire Branch for Sheltered Housing Wardens.

A number have taken Employment Tribunals because they do not believe they have been paid the National Minimum Wage and they believe the Working Time Directive has been breached.

Wardens have been expected to be on-call and available for ridiculously long hours. UNISON believes the time they have been on call is working time and the wardens should have been paid properly for it. The on-call system has a major impact on their lives.

There have been lengthy discussions to try to resolve the matter for years. Eventually, the wardens decided enough was enough and lodged the tribunal claims last September.

There was a case management hearing in the tribunal in January 2005 and another one is expected before the end of April before the full case is heard at tribunal.

In the meantime, Aberdeenshire UNISON is gathering information on everyone's contracts and working time.

They are also gathering information on the working practice for sheltered housing wardens throughout the years because there were different practices over time and in different areas.

SiU will be following this closely and updates will follow.

Careers staff start action over imposition of unfair pay system

Members in Scottish Enterprise are taking industrial action short of strike following the imposition of a performance related pay scheme that is out of date and discriminatory.

After a successful ballot, in which around 80% of those who voted, voted yes to industrial action, members began boycotting the collection of national statistics, and have also been publicly demonstrating their objections to the system to the Chief Executive, Jack Perry and

Minister for Enterprise, Jim Wallace.

Regional Organiser Matt McLaughlin said, "The imposition of this unfair and unequal scheme onto over 1100 staff in the middle of pay talks was crass, hard nosed and destroyed the good work that had been done in creating Careers Scotland. Scottish Enterprise has imposed a pay structure that in 2003 saw 71% of Senior Directors awarded with a bonus of 2.5% - on average around £1400 - on top of a 4.1% pay increase, whilst only 12% of Admin staff received a bonus.

"Despite this glaring unfairness and inequality being pointed out by UNISON, Jack Perry continues to ignore the fact that the pay system he has imposed is out of date and runs against the thrust of a number of reviews into civil service pay."

Matt added, "At a time when other agencies such as Scottish Courts Service, the Scottish Executive and Highlands and Islands Enterprise have moved significantly towards new and fair methods of distributing pay, Perry and his Senior Directors stick rigidly to a pay formula that benefits them and

no one else."

On the prospect of further talks Matt said, "Of course UNISON is prepared to talk to the employer - as we were doing before this unilateral move - but they need first of all to take a step back, and come to the table with no predetermined view other than the will and desire to create a fair pay system for all SE staff, like most other public service agencies."

Careers Scotland became part of Scottish Enterprise in April 2002 bringing together 67 separate careers bodies across Scotland.

Helen Joseph event

Action for South Africa Scotland has celebrated the centenary of the birth Helen Joseph, the first person to be put under house arrest in South Africa.

The event on 8 April, inspired by respected activist and ex MP Janey Buchan, heard that Helen was one of the defendants in the Treason Trial, and was an organiser of the Textile and Garment Workers' Union.

"The centenary of the birth of this remarkable woman does seem worthy of celebration", said ACTSA's John Nelson.

For more information about Helen Joseph, check out www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/people/hjoseph.html

Welfare - a unique confidential service

by John Stevenson
SiU editor

Approaching its 100 birthday in five years, UNISON Welfare is a unique confidential service for members and their families.

UNISON is the only union with a registered charity like this, Julie Grant, Head of Welfare told Scottish branches on 9 April.



Last year it helped 1,000 members through its debt advice service, paid £0.5 million in grants and financed 260 holidays with almost double that in convalescence provision.

This means the fund needs lots of fundraising in addition to the grants from UNISON.

"Welfare is very alive in Scotland and I am very grateful to Branch Welfare Officers and the Scottish Welfare Committee for their work", Julie told delegates.

She outlined new Welfare strategies including email bulletins and a revamped website along with other services.

"Our debt advice is free from advice to advocacy and even up to arranging bankruptcy", said Julie. And she pointed to the new legal position in Scotland.

"The new debt arrangement scheme in Scotland means people can legally require creditors to come to and keep to repayment arrangements. The first of these was taken last week", she said.

The reality

Turning to the 'Bucket and Spade' appeal, Julie said, "25% of the population can't afford to get away on holiday. We want to extend our holiday service to include applying for grants". These holidays will all be in the UK.

That's why the appeal is aiming to raise £150,000 and is well on the way there.

Julie turned to the reality of the help Welfare can give to members.

After a girl alleged sexual abuse by her father, her mother fled with her to new accommodation. They had no belongings and no money.

"Welfare provided money for settling in, to get the child to school and for furniture as well as advice and assistance with debt. We are now about to send mother and daughter on holiday", explained Julie.

As well as helping members, research shows that UNISON's Welfare Fund is also a great recruitment tool.



Walk the Loch raises thousands

On 10 April over 60 UNISON members and friends walked the 14 miles round Loch Katrine, making several thousand pounds for UNISON Welfare's Bucket and Spade appeal.



Our photo shows a selection of those hardy souls - before the start of the walk! The other photo is of Eleanor Hagget (Chair of the Scottish Welfare Committee) and Shirley Buchanan (also of the committee) at the end of the walk!

Scotland inUNISON passes on its congratulations to those who took part, and especially to those who finished! Most of them did, we understand.

Branches can still donate to the campaign, contact Eleanor Haggett or Kevin O'Neil Information Development Officer UNISON House 14 West Campbell Street Glasgow G2 6RX, k.oneil@unison.co.uk Tel: 0870 7777 006.



Photo by Gerry McCann

UNISON mentors get ready for refugee buddies

Eight of the prospective UNISON mentors at the launch of the UNISON Scotland Home-Office funded, refugee mentoring project.

The details of the project - which aims to bridge the gap into work for refugees in Scotland - were in our last issue. Greater Glasgow Health Board and South Lanarkshire Council are already signed up - discussions progress with Glasgow City Council, and Lothian Health Board.

UNISON backs protests to make poverty history

UNISON's Scottish Council meeting of branches has backed a variety of protest actions aimed at the G8 meeting in Scotland later this year.

These include:-

- The huge Make Poverty History Demonstration and rally in Edinburgh on Saturday 2 July
- The G8 Alternatives Summit the following day,
- A protest at Faslane Nuclear Submarine base on 4 July.

The union welcomed the 'Global New Deal' but called for the UK government to go it alone if agreement could not be reached with the G8.

Mike Kirby, UNISON's Scottish Convenor said "UNISON has been an integral part of the

organising of the Make Poverty History event. Trade union members wear the white bands urging 'Respect Workers Rights' as well.

"We will be urging UNISON members to attend the demonstration and be part of the giant human white band around Edinburgh".

"We will also be part of the STUC mobilisation raising support from elsewhere in the trade union movement at the STUC Congress later this month. It is wholly in line with UNISON's aims to draw attention to increasing world poverty and inequality and to show that another world is possible."

The meeting also backed the peaceful alternative summit being

organised by G8 Alternatives and the blockade of Faslane by SCND and Trident Ploughshares.

Michael Macneil, Secretary of UNISON's Scottish International Committee said "The alternative summit follows on from the European Social Forum last year. We want to ensure that the maximum number of people from across the world are able to take part in a range of peaceful protests. We want a New Global Deal to tackle issues of debt relief, trade negotiations and development funding."

More detail on the Make Poverty History campaign is available on a link from the UNISON Scotland Website at www.unison-scotland.org.uk

News from the National Exec

Jane Carolan's regular report was augmented this month by one from her other NEC colleagues Michelle Brankin, Jim Burnett, Margaret Dunbar and Angela Lynes.

Pensions: 220 MPs have signed an early day motion and Jane urges members to pursue their own MPs and check the UNISON website to see if they have signed. UNISON pensions seminar held.

Service Directive: UNISON's policy committee is working to challenge the Service Directive planned by the European Commission. A first draft would have been a blueprint for wholesale privatisation of services. This has been withdrawn but it has yet to be seen if the new one will be acceptable.

Pay Strategy: Reports commissioned on pay strategy now going out to service groups.

New Headquarters: As reported last month, because of the high cost of repairs to an out of date building, professional advice was being sought on a new build. The new build is now to go ahead.

Equal Pay: Reports on a number of cases the union is pursuing further where negotiations have failed.

We want to hear your news

Won any deals or cases for members? Any 'people' stories we could use? SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories.

Your SiU contacts are:

John Stevenson (Editor) 0131 220 5655, Chris Bartter 0870 7777 006

FAX PRESS RELEASES to 0141-331-1203

E-mail: webmanager@unison-edinburgh.org.uk

Published by UNISON Scottish Council, 14 West Campbell Street, Glasgow G2 6RX. Origination by FLESH Ltd 4 Roseneath Street Edinburgh EH9 1JH Printed by Centurion Press Ltd, 17 Manchester Street, London, W1M 5PG