



President slams pensions cuts - p3

re**vitalise** our public services

Local Govt Pay deal at last but councils face cash threat-p3

Happy festive season to all our members ...especially to those delivering services over the holiday

scottish council activists bulletin

Scotland UNISON

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Don't silence your union - vote YES

by Chris Bartter
Communications Officer

Early in 2005 all UNISON members will be balloted on whether they want to keep our unique political fund.

UNISON is legally bound to do this every 10 years and we will be arguing strongly that members should vote YES.

UNISON's Political Fund is unique in the British Trade Union movement and is the resource behind many successful and very public campaigns on behalf of UNISON members.

Scottish Secretary **Matt Smith** said, "The Political fund gives UNISON a voice. It allows us to speak up for UNISON members during election campaigns and in

As an activist who is independent of any political party, I urge activists to use the materials provided by UNISON to start the campaign for a YES vote



Mike Kirby
UNISON Scotland Convenor

the political discussions when decisions are being made.

"Here in Scotland it has allowed us to fight against the correctional agency and for better protection for members at risk from violent attack.

"It has continually resourced work exposing the economic

madness that is PFI and allowed us to campaign to stop the evil of racism at election time."

Many members may be under the mistaken impression that this is all about Labour Party affiliation, but UNISON's unique arrangement makes sure that this isn't the case. **Mike Kirby**,



YOUR UNION YOUR VOICE
use it don't lose it

UNISON's Scottish Convenor, explains: "UNISON's twin funds give every member a choice. Members can pay into either the General Fund or to Labour Link - or indeed into neither or both," he said "To continue giving members that choice, members should vote YES. A no vote would fatally undermine the ability of UNISON to fight for issues like defending decent pensions.

"As an activist who is independent of any political party, I urge activists to use the materials provided by UNISON to start the campaign for a YES vote."

Dave Watson, UNISON's Scottish Organiser for Policy and Information also points out the value of the twin-track funds to allow UNISON to argue members' case in a variety of fora.

"Issues like the recent victory against the single correctional agency, for example were financed from both funds."

"The public material and political campaigning at party conferences was financed from the GPF, whilst the briefings and lobbying of Labour MSPs and ministers was backed by the Labour Link. The best of both worlds in putting across UNISON members' views."

Ballot papers will start being sent out early in February and all the evidence shows that people vote in the first week of receiving the paper. That is why we must make sure all members know what the campaign is about before they get their ballot.

Materials already produced include an activists guide (stock

no 2361) and educational materials. A powerpoint presentation with additional Scottish arguments is on the web www.unison-scotland.org.uk/polfund

A DVD is being sent out to all activists with this *SiU*, and the New Year will see posters, mem-

- **Ballot papers go out: 9, 10, 11 February 2005**
- **Ballot closes: Friday 11 March 2005**
- **Results published: Monday 14 March 2005**

bers leaflets, and stickers, and a downloadable newsletter template that branches can customise to their own branch material.

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A happy OT means patients benefit



Must have been a good Occupational Therapists' seminar by the look of the smiles on OT stewards from around the UK at a recent UNISON National OT Stewards' Seminar. Twelve Scottish stewards, including three from local government attended which was a record!

Of course Agenda for Change dominated but there were also Local Government workshops. A session by Dean Royles from Personnel at the Department of Health presented interesting research showing that happy staff means better patient outcomes and decreased mortality. And

significantly, bad appraisal systems are worse than no appraisal at all.

● **Therapy Weekly:** Edinburgh's Kirsten Hey (pictured fourth from the right) tells us she has been asked to write a monthly column for *Therapy Weekly*, addressing issues facing OTs in Scotland, particularly within Local Authorities.

"If any OT in Scotland has anything they would like me to look at, I can be contacted on kirsten.hey@edinburgh.gov.uk or 07771 881615. I will anonymise information if required", said Kirsten.

Staff have no confidence in Careers Scotland management

A staff survey paints a bleak picture of the confidence and morale of staff working for the Scottish Enterprise attached Careers Scotland.

The most damning figures of the survey reveal that 88% of staff have no confidence that senior management is competently developing the service as a professional organisation, and that 98% feel they do not value contributions and views from staff.

Peter Veldon, UNISON's Regional Organiser for Careers Scotland said "There is a great deal of anger about the unfair and unequal performance related pay system that has been imposed on Careers staff by Scottish Enterprise. 95% feel that this will not improve performance, either of themselves or of Careers Scotland as a whole."

The survey also asked Careers staff for their views on the 'inclusion agenda'. Despite the public stance of Scottish Enterprise Chief Executive, Jack Perry that 'inclusion' should not be part of SE's remit, 85% of Careers staff think that it should.

UNISON has written to MSPs describing Jack Perry's statement as 'ill-considered and regrettable' and claiming it 'served to undermine the work of hundreds of careers staff'.

UNISON members are also concerned that the threatened removal from careers staff of the vacancy-handling function - where staff play a vital role dispensing advice on such things as qualifications, entry requirements and equal opportunities - is a precursor to an attempt to close Careers Centres and withdraw from areas of Scotland.

Neil Cruickshank, UNISON's Scottish Enterprise Branch Secretary said "In addition to the unilateral imposition of pay deals, and the overall lack of confidence in the direction of Careers Scotland under Scottish Enterprise, the threat to a core part of our function causes grave concern. 94% of staff think that this function is an integral part of the service to clients, and should be retained.

"If this is stopped, and clients are lost, it may be used as a justification for closing Careers Centres."

UNISON has sent the survey (see www.unison-scotland.org.uk/sectd) to all MSPs and is seeking a meeting with Ministers.

Tony Gault

By John Gallacher - Regional Officer

Tony Gault, past Branch Secretary of Quarriers UNISON (1998-2000) died at home on Monday 1 November 2004. Tony stabilised the Quarriers Branch, helped gain formal recognition for UNISON and was one of the founder members of the formal JCC arrangements.

He was highly respected by management and members alike. His funeral service on Friday 5 November saw St John's church in Port Glasgow full to overflowing. Tony is survived by four sons and two daughters. His wife had passed away a short six months previously. Our sympathies in UNISON are extended to the family.



UNISON KINNEIL BAND 'Concerted' effort to encourage involvement



UNISON Kinneil Band performing in Germany recently

Pat Rowland - UNISON's Scottish Treasurer attended a concert by UNISON's sponsored Band (the former Kinneil Colliery Band) when she discovered that no-one from UNISON attended their concerts.

Never having been attended a brass band concert, I didn't know what to expect. I arrived to a packed hall and was ushered to a seat near the front. (Difficult to escape if I wanted to.)

The band entered in their smart concert uniforms. The age range was between 16yrs and 60yrs from all walks of life. From school and university students to council employees - one was Head of Cultural Services for a Local Authority.

The concert was excellent, covering a wide range of music. I was particularly impressed by Highland Cathedral where they were joined by a lone piper. This piece was a tribute to one of their colleagues who had died. There wasn't a dry eye in the hall

including mine.

I was extremely pleased that I attended the concert and ashamed that no-one had attended in the past, despite them using our name as the main sponsors.

We should be very proud of this band and the fact that they win or are rated highly in many band competitions throughout Britain.

They also recruit and train young people to join their youth section, nurturing and encouraging them until they are able to join the main band.

I met some of the young and not so young band members and supporters after the concert. They had changed into their very smart travelling uniforms sporting their UNISON badges on their blazers.

I hope some of the branches will support and encourage OUR band and I look forward to attending more of their concerts in the future and will be buying a copy of their first CD.

www.kinneilband.co.uk/

UNISON appeal win means employers must promote deaf awareness

by Peter Hunter
Legal Officer

UNISON member Elizabeth Simpson struck a major blow for the rights of deaf workers with a recent decision of the Scottish Employment Appeal tribunal, that employers must now consider whether deaf awareness training for other employees would help prevent a deaf worker experiencing discrimination.

Speaking at the UNISON National Disabled Members Conference in Glasgow last month, General Secretary Dave Prentis said:

"UNISON has always campaigned against disability discrimination and the ineffective law introduced in 1995. The expansion and improvement of the law in October is welcome but this case shows how UNISON and other unions must continue to

press for improved protection for all disabled people.

"This council has lost the skill and experience of a UNISON member who would have offered important support to deaf children and other pupils in Longridge Primary school."

Elizabeth was a classroom assistant at West Lothian Council when she was deafened by a viral infection. Although she battled on without assistance for several years the isolation and exclusion she experienced at work became intolerable and she had an extended period of absence from work.

When referred to occupational health with a view to dismissal on grounds of capability, her employer was told to make reasonable adjustments to support Elizabeth at work. Deaf awareness training was identified as an option but the initial session was a disaster as her colleagues took offence at the

suggestion that they lacked awareness. No further efforts were made. The specialist worker from the council's Hearing Impairment team told the tribunal the attitude from Elizabeth's colleagues was such that the council could not place a deaf child in that School.

After applying for several vacant posts, and unable to return to her original workplace, Elizabeth resigned.

Elizabeth said: "Becoming deaf was a frightening, depressing and life changing event for me, but the anxiety and depression would not have been as extreme or long lasting if conditions at work had been better.

"It was not the shock of being deaf that made me ill. I managed to continue working for four years before succumbing to anxiety and depression. It was the council's inability to retain me in the normal operation of school life, or some

other job, that made my position impossible.

"All I needed was colleagues who knew how to avoid excluding me. The training isn't rocket science, but awareness doesn't come naturally to hearing people. They tend to assume that everyone hears them when they speak."

A tribunal had found that it was "stretching the provisions of the Act to suggest [deaf awareness training] is a reasonable adjustment which an employer should make. And that "...employers cannot force employees to become aware of issues of equality if they do not wish to participate."

However, the EAT agreed with UNISON that such training was a reasonable adjustment and should have been organised by the employer. A new tribunal will now decide whether it was the absence of deaf awareness training that forced Elizabeth to resign from the council.

Hospital futures in public debate

by Lui Giacomello
Communications Committee

THE future of hospitals in Scotland is under the spotlight as a group set up by the Scottish Executive begin their meetings in public. And UNISON will be putting forward our views.

UNISON has drawn up a 10-point plan that it believes must be satisfied before major changes are introduced.

Jim Devine, UNISON's Scottish Organiser for Health told the group at the first public meeting in Glasgow, "UNISON recognises that major changes are taking place in the Scottish Health Service and that the status quo is not an option. Not only will this change impact on communities, but will also have a major impact on the staff who are providing quality care in Scotland."

The group is led by Professor David Kerr and was formed amid massive unrest about hospital closures and the transfer & centralisation of services.

Public uproar reached unprecedented levels as more than 20 hospitals in Scotland faced the prospect of closure or restructuring.

Professor Kerr called on Glasgow and other health boards to 'build bridges' with their communities and condemned a history of failures to listen to patients.

The ten criteria that UNISON wants are:

- * Proposed change to services must be patient/client centred.
- * Change must be evidence based.
- * Patient/client safety must be a key consideration
- * There must be an agreed format for public involvement in decision making
- * There must be an agreed format for staff involvement too.
- * Service change must be affordable.
- * Service change must be sustainable.
- * Prior to proposed change evidence must be produced of alternative provision and resources in place before the change is implemented.
- * Proposed change must be accessible to local communities.
- And last, but not least,
- * Proposed change must be compatible with agreed Scottish strategies in relation to the specialisation of services, workforce planning, training and development.

Leaders slam political decisions on pensions

by Chris Bartter
Communications Officer

Government proposals that could severely damage the pensions of UNISON members have been roundly criticised by the General Secretary, UNISON's National President and Matt Smith.

Proposals to raise the minimum retirement age across most of the public sector pension schemes, and threaten a move away from a final salary scheme in the NHS, whilst at the same time argue for an increase in the contributions that members have to make, were roundly condemned by Dave Prentis in the Lobby of Parliament on the 16 November.

He pointed out that the proposals would add to the ill-health of public sector workers by forcing them to work longer at stressful jobs, would mean more pensioners depending on benefits and hit recruitment and modernisation in the public sector.

He demanded that the Government withdraw or suspend their proposals and sit down with the trade unions.



Pauline Grant
National President

'I'll tell you what's indefensible - and it's not the modest pensions provided by the public sector schemes - it is:

- the contribution holidays taken by many employers when the stock exchange profit was high
- the sickening sight of company directors packing their pockets closing schemes and cutting schemes for ordinary workers. ☹

Pension cuts - Yet another reason why we need our political fund

Matt Smith, pointed out that the effect would be even worse in Scotland.

"In Scotland the proportion of the workforce in the public sector is higher than England - rising to almost a third or more in some areas, and average earnings are lower.

"Not only are these proposals a betrayal of government commitments to public service providers, they could also damage the economy in many regions, and the Executive's attempts to increase employment in key services will be under threat."

Pauline Grant, UNISON's

National President speaking at the recent Scottish Council, in Glasgow, said that the arguments being put up to justify changes to pension schemes were indefensible

"We are told that our pensions have to be cut back because they have become politically indefensible as a result of the crisis of pension provision in the private sector", she said.

"Well, I'll tell you what's indefensible - and it's not the modest pensions provided by the public sector schemes - it is:

the contribution holidays taken by many employers



when the stock exchange profit was high

the sickening sight of company directors packing their pockets closing schemes and cutting schemes for ordinary workers.

"Two standards - one for the rich, and one for the rest of us", said Pauline.

All speakers called for the start of a major political campaign to defend pensions.

"UNISON members will want to know from MPs whether they support UNISON's campaign for a fair deal for pensioners," said Dave Prentis.

Political campaign sparks victory for criminal justice social work

Staff working for Scotland's social work services welcomed the Scottish Executive move away from setting up a mammoth 'single correctional agency' and instead go for a partnership approach at local level to reduce re-offending.

And the campaign that we fought against the proposals was significant.

Stephen Smellie, Chair of UNISONScotland's Social Work Issues Group said: "Those working in Criminal Justice will welcome the recognition by the Executive that the creation of a new quango would do nothing to reduce re-offending and would threaten the ability to work with people in the community.

"We are glad that the Government has recognised the warnings of UNISON and over 90% of the respondents to the consultation.

"Had we not had a political fund allowing us to campaign across the political spectrum, it would have been so much less effective.

"The efforts of branches and members lobbying MSPs at local level alongside the formal political fund activities were critical in persuading the Executive".

The union had also worked with the large number of other organisations that opposed the plans.

'Had we not had a political fund allowing us to campaign across the political spectrum, it would have been so much less effective. ☹

Yet another reason to



Joe Di Paola, UNISON's Scottish Organiser for Local Government sounded a warning, however, about the new national direction the Executive are proposing to use to oversee the various agencies involved in Criminal Justice.

"We will have to look carefully at the proposals", he said. "No one objects to having someone to set standards and promote good practice, but if this becomes a strait jacket that tries to enforce a 'one-size-fits-all' solution on all local initiatives, it will run the risk of stifling good practice and innovative projects.

"We will want to ensure that not only are services joined up, but that they are accountable to local people."

UNISON has consistently campaigned against the single agency, advocating more emphasis and resources to alternatives to custody, and increased networking between central and local agencies to develop innovative schemes.

Local government pay deal at last

All the local government trade unions have now agreed to the Scottish Local Government Employers final pay offer of 2.95% from April 2004 plus 2.95% from April 2005.

UNISON members accepted the offer in a consultation in June this year but T&GWU and GMB members were balloted on industrial action. This has been rejected by members of both unions.

Local government organiser Joe Di Paola has now written to the employers accepting their pay offer and asking them to advise constituent local authorities as a matter of urgency, so that the rise and any back money can be paid as soon as possible.

Check with your local branch for details.

GENERAL SECRETARY ELECTION

Make sure you vote!

by John Stevenson
SIU Editor

UNISONScotland has nominated current General Secretary Dave Prentis in the election due to start on 25 January.



Dave Prentis

Mike Kirby,

UNISONScotland

Convener told branch delegates at the union's Scottish Council Meeting two weeks ago that Dave was the candidate who best represented UNISON Scotland policies.

There's no bigger role in the union than that of general secretary. It's one of the most high-profile jobs in the country - leader of the biggest trade union in the UK and the voice of more than 1.3 million public service workers.

So when we vote in the election, we are making a decision crucial to the union and the trade union movement.

Candidates for the post need nominations from at least two national service groups executives, at least two regional councils and at least 25 branches. Many Scotland branches have already nominated Dave.

As we went to press, nominations had not yet closed but at least two other candidates were seeking nomination, Jon Rogers from Lambeth and Roger Bannister from Knowsley.

Ballot papers will go out on 25 January 2005 with the ballot running until 28 February. We should hear the result around 9 March.

This is a crucial decisions for your union - make sure you vote.

Jobs and services threatened by grant limits and PFI subsidies

UNISON has warned that the tight grant settlements announced for local councils by Tom McCabe, Minister for Finance and Public Services, could lead to cuts in local services and councils failing to deal with key staff shortages.

Having to pay for PFI facilities could skew authorities' budgets leading to cuts elsewhere.

Joe Di Paola, UNISON's Scottish Organiser for Local Government, said "Efficient delivery of public services is not achieved by cutting the jobs of those who deliver them. We all know how short Scotland is of social workers, and other key workers."

UNISON also warned that unless the opportunity was taken to allow authorities to move away from expensive PFI/PPP projects, money was unlikely to be used to deliver services most efficiently.

Joe said: "The Executive must take a leaf out of the Treasury's book and use this opportunity to create a level playing field for public authorities."



Joe Di Paola

Citty wins prestigious STUC award

Citty Finlayson has been a union activist since she joined the Health service in 1977 and has held most activists positions in UNISON and its predecessor union, Nalgo.

In addition her background and life is rich and varied.

In the 1960's she was active in CND, Anti Apartheid Movement and Women's Lib movement.

Her activity across the trade union movement and women's movement is legendary - including a tremendous contribution to the STUC Women's committee and Conference.

You would think that her union activity would be enough to fill up her time - but no. The rest of her time is dedicated to the Scottish Folk scene.

She is currently a director of the

UNISON'S CITY FINLAYSON has been awarded the STUC Women's Committee's MERITORIOUS AWARD. Here Eileen Dinning does a brief 'This is Your Life'.

Traditional Music and Song Association of Scotland. Previously she was Convener for 8 years. And has organised many a festival!

In 1989 she was diagnosed with breast cancer. She underwent various operations and treatments which left a permanent disability in her right hand and arm.

She is still undergoing treatment including chemo this year.

She's in the middle of course 4 out of 6 just now and has had breathing problems since July



Friends and comrades Carol Peggie and Noreen Crabb flank Citty with her award

this year.

Anyone else confronted as Citty has been with serious ill health would have used it as an opportunity to lead a quieter life. Not Citty. She continues to fight for people's rights as well as her fight against ill health.

It is difficult to even attempt to try and put into words her commitment to

this movement. She is not only a true, honest and passionate advocate for women's rights, and her loathing of any kind of injustice is not confined to the workplace. Her fight against injustice and unfairness goes beyond the borders of this country and she is an internationalist in the best sense of the word.

She is also one of the

funniest people to be with. Her wit is sharp and dry and she adores gossip but never spreads it.

With Carol Peggie and Noreen Crabb she formed an extraordinary trio on UNISON's National Women's Committee who never, ever seemed to stop laughing.

A great fighter, a great friend and a great feminist.

Giving Buttiglione the Boot

UNISON joined the successful protest against the Rocco Buttiglione's nomination as EU Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security. He had openly expressed homophobic views and insulting remarks about women in the workplace, writes LINDA JACKSON

As well as Dave Prentis, General Secretary writing to all Labour MEPs urging them to vote against the inclusion of Mr Buttiglione, UNISON activists have been very involved in the ILGA Europe (International Lesbian and Gay Association) Campaign to highlight this man's unsuitability for such a post.

The level of protest resulted in ILGA Europe's Co Chair, UNISON's Jackie Lewis being able to announce at the start of the ILGA Europe Annual Conference in Budapest that President Barroso had withdrawn his proposed commission.

UNISON Scotland delegates were actively involved in the Conference and UNISON led a well-attended and lively workshop on organising in trade unions for LGBT workers rights. This year, the workshop was organised in partnership with our sister union in Hungary, where the conference was held.

This provided a very interesting position with two public service unions, both committed to LGBT rights, but one with many years of experience and one just starting out. We look forward to future work with our sister unions in Europe and in particular Klara Gode of the Hungarian Democratic Union of Health and Social Workers, our co-presenter at the ILGA-Europe Conference.

A full report of UNISON Scotland's participation will be presented to Scottish Council's February meeting.

UNISON Scotland's Lesbian and Gay Group European activity



Open Meeting

to welcome new members and activists to become involved and to contribute to the work of the group for 2005.

**Saturday 19 Feb 2005
Edinburgh
(Venue and details TBC)**

See full details of all the work the L&G Group is involved in at www.unison-scotland.org.uk/lesbiangay/

Or contact Neil MacInnes, Secretary macinnesneil@aol.com
07810 358 139

Palestine - time to act on the real message of Christmas

by John Stevenson
SiU Editor

'Greetings from the Holy City of Jerusalem', read the Christmas card to us from Mohammad Aruri of the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU).

A message of peace from a far from peaceful part of the world. A message of hope at a time of despair for Palestinians.

And a message of respect for other's traditions, religions and cultures that is tragically missing at home and abroad.

Mike Kirby, UNISON Scotland Convener called on branches at Scottish Council to remember and respect other religions and cultures as we celebrate our fes-

tive season, whatever that may mean to us individually.

A timely call when there is so much intolerance. When the effect of press irresponsibility is thumped home in a poll showing tabloid readers are far more likely than others to link rising crime with immigration.

At a time when professed Christian leaders here and in the USA have led us into a war where they don't even count the numbers of innocents killed.

At a time when families grieve the young men who won't come back after doing their country's work in Iraq.

And at a time when the toll mounts in Palestine. A toll underlined in a selection of 40 examples reported through the

PGFTU from just a few days in November.

RAFAH 16 Nov: Israeli troops opened fired at residential areas. 'Alaa' Suleiman al-Sheikh 'Eid 19 and Salam Joma'a al-Rush 50 wounded by the gunfire.

KHANYOUNIS 15 Nov: Soldiers fired at homes and wounded Mustafa Omar Al-Astal 21

CENTRAL GAZA 21 Nov: Khaleel Shihada, 20 shot dead by Israeli soldiers in refugee camp.

GAZA CITY 17 Nov: Intisar Jaber Darweesh 14, died of wounds sustained last week when she was shot during a military raid. Ambulances had been unable to reach her quickly as a result of heavy military fire.

HEBRON 15 Nov: 12-year-old 'Alaa' Isma'il Abu 'Oalayan was

hit by a rubber-coated metal bullet in the head.

NABLUS 20 Nov: Montaser Harara 14 and Amer Banat 15 shot dead by Israeli soldiers.

It would of course be wrong to ignore the fact that innocent Israelis are also being killed. How do you excuse leaders who send their desperate young men and women out as suicide bombers to kill other innocents?

But we rarely hear about the

day to day human suffering in Palestine. It is a suffering on both sides that can only end when our country and the USA back words about peace with action.

Peace is the message of Christmas. With professed Christian leaders is it too much to ask that they take that message seriously and bring peace and justice to Palestinians in 2005?

www.unison-scotland.org.uk/international/palestine.html

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:

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We couldn't use all contributions this issue - sorry if yours is not in but check back next issue.