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inflicts double
race blow on
city council-p3

President
calls for
gender gap to
close - p3



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

scottish council activists bulletin

Scotland in UNISON

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UNISON welcomes Finance Committee report

Efficiency: Executive has it the wrong way round

Matt Smith, UNISON's Scottish Secretary has welcomed a Scottish Parliament Finance Committee report which exposes that front line service providers are bearing the brunt of government savings.

He urged the Executive to ensure that savings were being reinvested in public services.

Matt said, "Rather than the publicised aim of releasing money to reinvest in public services at the sharp end, these cuts seem to be the wrong way round."

"UNISON has said for some time that services need to be better resourced,

especially in local government. In addition the Executive needs to fund equal pay restructuring and compensation in local government as the Government is doing in other public services.

"It is not efficient - either for service delivery or for the health of the economy - for front-line service providers to bear the brunt of savings."

See the report at www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/committees/finance/reports-05/fir05-05-01.htm#report



It is not efficient for front-line service providers to bear the brunt of savings
Matt Smith

Edinburgh tenants vote NO to housing transfer
see page 3



The Charter is launched in the grandeur of the Scottish Parliament. Inset: Kirsten Hey UNISON, Michael Mathieson MSP, Gail MacNamara, COT. Photos: Douglas Robertson

UNISON launches charter for OTs in Scottish councils

by Chris Bartter
Communications Officer

UNISON has launched a charter that outlines the need for action to be taken to tackle issues faced by Occupational Therapists (OTs) working for Scottish Local Councils.

Occupational Therapists and OT support staff work with some of the most vulnerable people in society, enhancing their ability to participate in everyday activities.

They are employed both in the Healthcare and Local Government sector, and are at the forefront of the Government's joint working initiatives.

Michael Mathieson MSP, SNP spokesperson on Culture and Sport, himself a former council-based OT, hosted the launch at the Scottish Parliament.

He was joined by Kirsten

Hey, of UNISON Scotland's OT working group and Gail MacNamara, from the Scottish Board of the College of Occupational Therapists (COT)- the professional body for OTs.

Kirsten Hey said, "OTs working for local councils face a number of challenges which their union - UNISON - is campaigning to have addressed."

"Whilst we work closely with colleagues in the NHS - have the same qualifications and in some areas do very similar jobs - we often have worse terms and conditions and Agenda for Change in the NHS is likely to widen the gap."

"As Joint Future working moves on, OTs are becoming more and more involved in the management of complex care services in both social work and healthcare and the implications for pay and conditions are becoming urgent."

As staff who work in both the NHS and local government, changes to the public sector pension schemes will affect OTs who work in both services and who move between the two.

Kirsten said, "It is unacceptable that staff who increase their skills and take on more complex responsibilities by moving between health and social care should see their pensions diminished as a result."

"As someone who has transferred from the NHS to a local council, I feel the unfairness of this particularly, and whilst I know that UNISON is pulling out all the stops to change the UK employers position, it may yet come to industrial action."

The OT charter will form a key part of UNISON's negotiating agenda with both the Scottish Executive and the employers.

STUDENT NURSES Step forward but still discrimination

UNISON has welcomed the Scottish Executive announcement that support for student nurses who become pregnant is to be extended to Scotland.

This comes after UNISON pursued and won a court case in England and Wales. But the union is very concerned that the proposals are less good than those available to English student nurses.

Bridget Hunter, UNISON regional officer, said "We are pleased that the Scottish Executive has at last addressed the difficulties faced by student nurses who become pregnant during their training. But we are unhappy that continuing support is not automatic."

"It will have to be applied for and we have not been told what the criteria will be."

Tom Waterson, Chair of UNISON's Scottish Health Committee welcomed the inclusion of provision for those with carer responsibilities within the proposals but was disappointed that Scottish pregnant student nurses will not automatically receive bursary payments for 45 weeks as their English colleagues did.

He said, "There is no justification for Scottish student nurses to be less well treated".

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UNISON Scotland sets out new policy development changes

SIU has regularly run a column encouraging members with specific expertise to contribute comments to the policy pool system. Now the system is changing although the need for expert input remains. Indeed it is even more necessary.

Moving away from the poorly attended policy pool system, the Scottish committee has agreed that reports on policy issues current will be reported to them direct - preceding their normal meeting.

These reports are normally drawn up by officers with the assistance and approval of ad-hoc

groups of activists and members with specialist knowledge.

The information will be circulated by an email bulletin, the aim of which is to keep activists and staff advised of the policy issues that face UNISON Scotland and its members.

Each edition will feature a key issue as well as communicating UNISON's parliamentary and campaign activity.

We want to encourage a greater involvement of activists in policy and campaigns. So the policy bulletin will seek views and contributions on the policy development activities of UNISON Scotland.

One of UNISON's greatest strengths is the expertise of our

We want to encourage a greater involvement of activists in policy and campaigns.

varied membership.

We want to tap into that depth of knowledge and encourage greater involvement.

Five principles for reform

The first issue requests contributions on the five principles underpinning UNISON's position on public service reform.

This will continue to be a key issue in the run up to the 2007 elections and beyond. Scotland has followed a different path to England on public service reform.

For reasons of scale, geography and culture Scotland's public services have adopted a partnership rather than the English competitive, market led approach to the delivery of public services.

However, there are those who argue that we should adopt those reforms - that Scotland's public services are not performing as well as in England.

For this reason in 2003 we adopted the *Revitalise Our Public Services* principles (see web site). The aim was to set out a positive

agenda for Scottish public service improvement - not just defend the status quo.

In this context we want to refresh the principles to address new priorities, changed circumstances and the current challenges facing Scotland's public services.

The Scottish Committee at its last meeting received a presentation on progress with this work.

For a copy of that presentation contact: Kay Sillars
k.sillars@unison.co.uk.

To get involved in policy, contact Dave Watson in the P&I Team
d.watson@unison.co.uk.

Aberdeenshire first to be 'one step ahead'

by Kate Ramsden
Chair - Aberdeenshire

Aberdeenshire Local Government branch led the way in Scotland as stewards and branch officers attended the pilot of a new UK training course, "One Step Ahead".

The aim of the course is to develop an action plan to improve representation, negotiation and future recruitment.

It also provides a refresher for the experienced activists and further training for the newer stewards.

Emma Phillips, Regional Organiser, and Betty Lyon, the branch's new Development Officer ran the course.

Stewards attended from Cornerstone and the Meat Hygiene Service as well as from Aberdeenshire Council.

"I was pleased to trial this new course with the branch", said Emma Phillips.

"We had a good cross-section of participants and I believe that they all got something out of it.

"All those involved went away with a plan to address issues with their employer", added Emma.

"This included plans to arrange regular stewards meetings and for the recruitment of new stewards and activists."



Activists Ian McDonald, Naida Sneddon, Linda Robertson, Jamie Wright and Lesley Ogston perusing the course materials.

The course got mixed reactions from members who attended. The newer stewards found it very useful, but more experienced activists got less from it.

"The course was a good motivator to get better organised. It was interesting to hear from stewards from the voluntary sector and to get a sense of their different experiences", said shop steward Lesley Ogston.

Linda Robertson, also a steward, said, "I thought some parts of the course were very good and as a less experienced steward I felt I learned quite a lot. I enjoyed the workshop format, and meeting

stewards from other parts of the branch."

Aberdeenshire Branch Secretary Bob Revie was positive about the new course but hoped the trial run would improve things.

"I found the course was more geared to the newer activists than to the more experienced officers. It is a pilot though, so hopefully it will be changed to take all our views into account", said Bob.

The course will now be rolled out to the rest of Scotland, and will be amended in light of the comments of the Aberdeenshire participants.

In-house catering team win James Watt College

by Robin Taggart
Cof S Officer - Inverclyde

UNISON members employed at the James Watt College refectory have heard that their jobs are to remain in-house following the success of an in-house bid by a UNISON-led team.

Inverclyde Branch received an award from UNISON Scotland part-funding an external consultant to support the construction of an in-house bid after the college announced that they would be market testing their catering.

The team, comprising branch officers, stewards and college staff put together a bid which demonstrated value for money as well as protecting the jobs and conditions of members.

The team was supported by Panache Consultancy, a Gloucestershire-based firm with previous experience of delivering successful in-house bids in colleges down south.

After an intense and exhausting 12 months of uncertainty for James Watt College refectory staff, the college Board finally publicised their award of the catering contract at the Finnart Street Campus to the in-house catering team on Friday 2 December 2005.

The Board's decision was informed by reports from the selection panel detailing the commitment and passion shown by the in-house team's documentation and presentation and in the pragmatic business approach they employed.

Jessie Ritchie, refectory manager and member of the in-house team, said of the Board's decision, "We are delighted to receive this vote of confidence from the College Board and look forward to carrying out the improvements to the serv-

ice for our students and staff."

When the college employed a firm of catering consultants in November 2004 to report on the deficiencies within Finnart Street catering and make recommendations for improvements, UNISON, and its members feared a process had begun which would eventually lead to outsourcing.

Neil Coyle, UNISON steward at James Watt College and chair of the in-house team, commented, "For years Jessie had been battling for improvements in the refectory without success.

"Then suddenly a report is commissioned; the findings of which slated the whole operation, from basic hygiene practices to staff attitudes. It inferred that the only prudent option for the college was to outsource the whole operation.

"Fortunately - if that's the correct word - the college decided to engage in a market-testing exercise which would allow an in-house proposal to be submitted. We were confident that all staff and students would support our bid and that it would hold its own against any private company."

The successful in-house bid bears testament to that belief and to the work and effort which they put in.

Robin Taggart, Branch Service Conditions Officer said:

"Stewards and staff at the college deserve immense credit for their efforts in making this work, as does UNISON Scotland for providing much needed financial support. This process put jobs, conditions and pensions under serious threat.

"The fact that the in-house team delivered a value for money bid which at the same time protected all of these is evidence that outsourcing is completely unnecessary."

The power of campaigning on the web

Scotland's Communications and Campaigns Committee reps were excited to meet labour web guru Eric Lee at UNISON National Communications Seminar in Glasgow last month.

Eric has pushed the boundaries in web campaigning, helping win victories for workers around the world by harnessing a

LabourStart

Where trade unionists start their day on the web

world-wide network of trade unionists to email and campaign in other ways against the excesses of employers.

We in Scotland saw just how powerful that was when trade unionists from as far away as

New Zealand sent messages during the nursery nurses' dispute.

You can help in the campaigns. Just log on to www.labourstart.org and it couldn't be easier.

And remember your own unison-scotland website. There is over 1,000 pages of information and other resources there.

Edinburgh votes NO to housing stock transfer

Edinburgh's council tenants have voted **NO** to housing transfer by 53% to 47% on a 60% turnout, despite a huge and costly campaign by the council.

UNISON is now calling on the council to explore the other options that already exist to finance public housing and bring the improvements and new builds that are needed.

"The Government can start by

respecting tenants' views and writing off the debt.

"It was ridiculous that the Government would only write off the debt if tenants voted the way they wanted. Clearly Edinburgh tenants were angry at that blackmail", said Edinburgh UNISON Branch Secretary John Stevenson.

"Tenants have clearly said they want their public housing to remain public. They want their

housing to be democratically accountable. They want everyone to learn the lessons of the stock transfers elsewhere, not least in Glasgow.

"If the money was available for private landlords, then the money should be made available to public landlords.

"Let's us have the 'level playing field' called for by the House of Commons Council Housing Group", added John.

The council had been expecting a YES vote after the huge sums of money it put into its glossy campaign. UNISON, working with Edinburgh Against Stock Transfer had much fewer resources but did have the crucial backing of UNISON's General Political Fund.

This was enough to produce 25,000 broadsheets and newspaper advertising to put the other side of the argument. Clearly ten-

ants looked at the arguments and were either opposed or felt they had not been given enough unbiased information to vote away their council houses forever.

"The council now has a duty to these tenants to explore all available routes to get the funding to reward their loyalty", said John.

"This vote should give a clear message to the Government that people will not be blackmailed out of their public services."

Not enough to mend gender gap

by John Stevenson
SiU Editor

"The settlement for Scottish Local Government for 2006-7 will not only not pay enough for all the services needed but will definitely not be able to pay for the equal pay local government has to deliver, undermining Scotland's initiative to close the gender pay gap", National President Christine Wilde told Scottish branches on 2 December.



Christine Wilde

Speaking to the union's Scottish Council, Christine also rounded on the Deputy Prime Minister's pronouncement on pensions.

"The Scottish employers do not accept the age discrimination arguments of the English employers on the rule of 85, but the Scottish Public Pensions Agency wants to adopt whatever is agreed in England and Wales!"

"I certainly hope that this is yet one more area where devolution can deliver more sense".

Christine's priority was recruitment. "We need to recruit young people and get them on course, we have some brilliant courses. That's how I got started, with the opportunities to meet and learn from others".

Christine is President for 2005/6. She is a midwife with the Isle of Wight Healthcare Trust.

UNISON inflicts double race blow on city council

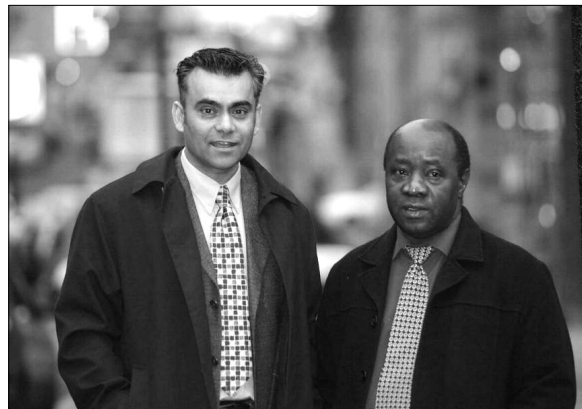
by Chris Bartter
Communications Officer

UNISON has won two important race discrimination victories at the Court of Session.

Two members who were passed over for promotions in Glasgow City Council have won cases of racial discrimination. The cases, which have been ongoing for four years, were decided at a recent Court of Session judgement after UNISON appealed against an appeal ruling overturning original Employment Tribunal findings in their favour.

UNISON has called on Glasgow City Council to appoint an independent race equality expert to head a drive for race equality across the city.

Kuldip Dhesi was unsuccessful in appointment to a key post with the council's asylum seekers project. He was the only black



UNISON members Kuldip Dhesi and Clarence Bvunzai

candidate and the job went to a woman who was less qualified and who performed poorly at interview.

Clarence Bvunzai also lodged a discrimination case when he failed to get a job as manager in a residential care home for the elderly. He too was passed over for someone less experienced.

Peter Hunter, UNISON's Legal Officer said, "These cases are extremely

important ones to win. They mark a radical shift towards employees in claiming discrimination. Lip service to equal opportunities is not enough any more - employers need to prove that they have the procedures in place to prevent discrimination.

"We recognise things have changed in the City Council's leadership since these cases were brought and want a high-level commitment to race equality

from the political and administrative leaders of the council."

Kuldip Dhesi - who has since left the council said "I would say the council is guilty of collective failure in dealing with my case - one of the defining aspects of institutional racism."

Clarence Bvunzai said, "I feel the council ought to acknowledge publicly that there are council workers who discriminate against other workers."

Sheltered Housing Wardens minimum wage tribunal set

by Kate Ramsden
Chair - Aberdeenshire

Finally, a date has been set in February 2006 for Aberdeenshire Council's sheltered housing wardens' employment tribunal. UNISON is fully supporting the wardens and has hired a specialist QC to represent the 47 members involved.

The wardens claim they have not been paid the national minimum wage for all the hours that Aberdeenshire Council made them work, and that the Working Time Directive has been breached.

"The sheltered housing wardens have been expected to be on call and available for ridiculously long hours," said Emma Phillips, regional organiser.

"We believe that this time is working time and that the wardens should have been paid properly for it. It has had a major impact on their lives."

Despite lengthy discussions with the employer over a number of years, it has not been possible to resolve the issue, and SiU readers will remember that wardens first lodged claims at the Employment Tribunal in September 2004.

UNISON is disappointed that Aberdeenshire Council has not admitted their liability.

UNISON wins landmark victory in 'Best Value' dismissal cases

by Chris Bartter
Communications Officer

UNISON Scotland has announced a new win against a Scottish council in an Employment Tribunal which has significant implications for equal pay negotiations across Scotland.

In what was clearly a bad week for Glasgow City Council (see 'race blow' above), the union won five cases against the council who dismissed their entire museum staff and re-engaged them, many with reduced conditions, as part of a so-called 'Best Value' review.

The bitter dispute in the muse-

um service lead to strike ballots and police intervention as angry pickets protested against wage cuts of as much as £1,000 for low paid workers.

UNISON took ten test cases to tribunal. The council offered full value settlements in five cases and UNISON have now won the remaining five cases.

Peter Hunter UNISON Scotland's Legal Officer, said "This is not only good news for our members in Glasgow Museums, but it has wide-ranging implications in the current debate over the introduction of equal pay and single status in Scottish local government.

"Tens of thousands of council workers may be threatened with

6 If necessary, UNISON will run as many dismissal cases as it takes to ensure equal pay is introduced in a reasonable manner

Peter Hunter

dismissal and re-engagement on worse terms and conditions as councils try to settle their equal pay debt in the next four months.

"This case shows that employers must act reasonably when changing terms and conditions - whether in a Best Value Review or any other situation. If necessary, UNISON will run as many

dismissal cases as it takes to ensure equal pay is introduced in a reasonable manner."

Joe Di Paola UNISON's Scottish Organiser (Bargaining) said, "UNISON is in advanced negotiations over equal pay and compensation for council workers in Scotland.

"In addition, we are doing the ground work to ensure council workers don't pay the employers' equal pay debt though pay cuts and jobs losses.

"This is the benefit of the trade union approach over no-win, no-fee lawyers. Lawyers may get some equal pay compensation, but unions get equality for the future, compensation for the past, plus job security.

"We are pleased that UNISON has successfully challenged the unfair treatment of our members in the museums.

"Hopefully the fact that Glasgow has a new council leader and new top management since these cases were lodged, will mean a different approach to negotiating changes to conditions."

Equal pay and compensation for past discrimination is a major issue for Scottish councils with debts running into hundreds of millions of pounds.

UNISON is campaigning for increased funding from the Scottish Executive in order to ensure that justified compensation is not paid for by service cuts or massively increased council tax.

Reconvened Black Members Conference to be held in New Year

The Scottish Black Members AGM, which was scheduled to take place on 19 November has been postponed, because there was no quorum. The AGM will now take place in the New Year.

David Ng Hop, Secretary Scottish Black Members Committee said, "Many UNISON members face discrimination both at work and in society. Ensuring equality of opportunity is therefore one of UNISON'S key objectives.

"It is very important for black UNISON members in Scotland to attend the Scottish Black Members AGM, and elect a new Scottish Black Members Committee, capable of taking on the challenge to enable UNISONScotland to develop policies and tackle discrimination face by black members".

Bernard Kamyia joint communications officer of the Scottish Black Members Committee, said, "Like any other self organised group, the Scottish Black Members Group is not exclusive-

Self organised groups.. have a key role in ensuring that UNISON's bargaining agenda reflects their concerns ;



Bernard Kamyia

and we do not work in isolation. Self organised groups are an integral part of UNISON's structure. They have key a role in ensuring that UNISON's bargaining agen-

da reflects their concerns".

It requires 15 members to complete a quorum, according to the group's constitution. The date for Scottish Black Members AGM will be announced soon.

Last year the Scottish Black Members AGM was attended by 24 black members. It is sad not enough interest was shown by the members in attending the AGM this year.

It is vital for black members (and for branches to encourage their black members) to attend the next AGM.

This not only provides members an opportunity to know about the performance of the Scottish Black Members Committee, but to use their vote to elect a new Scottish Black Members Committee. Use of this democratic right is essential for strong self organisation. Self organisation is a means to an end - the achievement of equality for all members.

Jim's award for Romanian project success

by Anne McNair
Communications Committee

UNISON activist Jim Mullarkey was recently invited to Birmingham to be presented by the West Midlands Fire and Rescue Authority with their Humanitarian Award.

Jim currently works as an Asbestos Surveyor in Glasgow Council's Environmental Protection Services.

The award Jim received was in recognition for all that he has achieved over the last twelve years in working, alongside comrades from Glasgow and from the West Midlands Fire Service, to improve living conditions for children in orphanages in Romania.

The project began following the overthrow of the Ceausescu regime in December 1989 and Jim became involved in working with Bucharest's Institution No.6.

The orphanage was one of the many children's homes in Romania where children survived in

appalling conditions. Institution No. 6 housed 150 girls aged 7 to 18, none of whom had a family home and a large number of whom were orphans.

It was located in a poor part of Bucharest where poverty, disease and social deprivation is high. Working through the charity *To Romania with Aid* the project was set up to tackle the horrendous conditions found in the orphanage.

Bucharest took up the early years of the visits to Romania. From the start Jim was involved in ensuring the basic amenities such as water and heating.

Wiring was renewed, sewers unblocked, toilets and washrooms refurbished, windows reglazed and the whole building redecorated.

As well as rolling his sleeves up, Jim made much of the work possible through his fundraising efforts and in ensuring support through the Charities Club of Glasgow City Council Parks and Recreation department.

On completion of the work in Bucharest Jim



Glasgow's Jim Mullarkey with his award

headed up north and a second project which was completed earlier this year saw a new purpose built orphanage constructed at Siret in Northern Romania.

Siret houses the orphanage first discovered on the Aneka Rice Romanian Challenge programme.

Initial attempts to upgrade the orphanage proved impractical and the decision was taken to build a series of new build houses. The new facility provides warm, modern accommodation with packages now in place to ensure

continuing support.

The project has been a great success. The children have been supported by the people of Siret and are now an integral part of life in this town.

Jim commented "The difference since the start of the project is immense. The children have responded with warmth and an infectious enthusiasm and we made many friends.

"Our hope is that from the most deplorable conditions these children will now have some chance of a safe and secure future."

Water targets will mean flooding and pollution

UNISON - the main union representing Scotland's water staff - has warned that the investment targets announced by the Water Industry Commission(WIC), can only lead to inadequate infrastructure investment and lead to poor quality construction that will not last.

In many areas no renewal of old infrastructure will be able to be made.

UNISON's Scottish Organiser for Utilities, Dave Watson said, "Today's announcement demonstrates the huge gap between those who build and maintain Scotland's water and sewage system and the WIC's economists, who have largely imported their ideas from the very different, privatised system south of the border.

"We warned Ministers when they announced the strategic direction in June that massive investment, over a short timescale, with no real charge increase, was a 'magic circle' that any sensible person could see could not be achieved.

"The result of that folly can be seen today. The consequences will be an increase in internal flooding, sewer collapse and the risk of pollution."

The unions have already commissioned a study of the WIC's methods that has found their comparisons with England and Wales misleading and false.

"These cloud-cuckoo economists are trying to square the circle by cutting investment," said Dave.

"This will only deliver short-life assets of poor quality and leave yawning gaps in provision. Scottish Water has already made efficiency savings faster than the privatised industry in England, and is already having to go through further increases in charges to pay for this short-term view that is now being imported to Scotland.

"The real agenda behind this announcement is a further effort to undermine the Scottish public service model and privatise Scotland's water."



Dave Watson

Refugees into work project reaches the stars

The ground-breaking Refugee and UNISON Learning Project piloted by UNISON Scotland has received top marks from the project's funders - the Home Office.

A five star rating compiled to assess the worth of the project, is the best that can be achieved and indicates the value placed in our work by the Home

Office. The project achieved beacon status and excelled at meeting all the indicators' says the report.

The project - managed by project worker Elaine Rae - planned to recruit and retrain 16 refugees into work with Scottish public service employers, providing them with UNISON mentors for a training and work experience programme that will help get them into

employment. Twelve are in placements and have a high level of support which suggests a good chance of achieving their aims.

Elaine said, "This is tremendous news. The project has been difficult at times, but very worthwhile; to get this commendation together with the further funding secured from the Home Office - means that we can use this

as a shining example of how to smooth the path into work and challenge assumptions that UNISON members may have about refugees".

The project has secured an extension of funding for a year, so that Elaine can write the project up as a model for other trade unions to use. It is planned to promote this at a conference in London next year

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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