



No to racism
No them
and us - p3



revitalise our
public
services

Scotland in UNISON

April 2005
No. 54

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YES vote sparks pensions action

by Chris Bartter
Communications Officer

A massive YES vote in the Local Government Pensions action ballot signals the next step in UNISON's fight to protect pensions across the public sector.

The ballot result in Scotland showed a 77% vote in favour of strike action, and UNISON joins a range of other unions in delivering a YES vote.

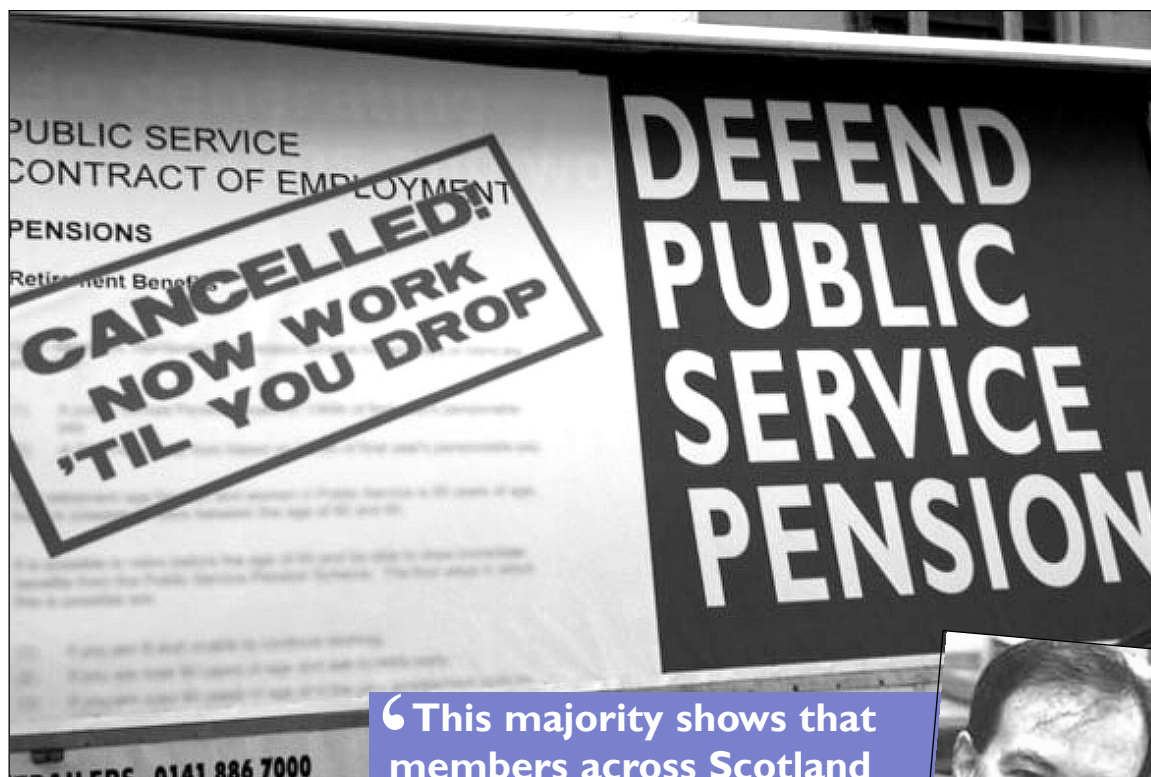
In Scotland, the PCS and FDA civil service unions and other local government unions Amicus and Ucat joined UNISON in delivering Yes votes ranging from 73% to 87%.

Day of Action

As we go to press, arrangements are being made for an STUC co-ordinated multi-union day of action on the 23 March, with marches and rallies in Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness as over 100,000 workers in Scotland are expected to strike.

Matt Smith said, "This level of majority shows that members across Scotland are angry at proposals to tear up their contracts with no proper consultation and negotiation.

"Raising pension age and penalising hard-working public service workers is bad for the workers, bad for public services



and bad for the economy of Scotland, as Scotland has a higher proportion of public service workers and lower average pay than the UK as a whole."

The action follows successful rallies last month - again co-ordinated by the STUC, and a campaign to increase pressure on MPs across the UK to get amendments to regulations increasing Local Government pension age in England and Wales withdrawn.

The Scottish Deputy Minister for Finance, Tavish Scott MSP, has indicated that this should also apply in Scotland.

Negotiations with Deputy

“This majority shows that members across Scotland are angry at proposals to tear up their contracts with no proper consultation and negotiation”



Matt Smith
UNISON Scotland Secretary

Prime Minister, John Prescott and Local Government employers were continuing as this was being written.

Keep up the pressure - use the materials.

UNISON has produced a Campaign Bulletin for all Local Government Pensions Scheme members. These have been deliv-

ered in bulk to local government (and other) branches, and contain, draft letters for members to use to write their own letters to MPs and MSPs and arguments for a YES vote in the action ballot.

Although the last items are now past, the letters are still important - especially the letters to MPs.

Around 17 Scottish MPs have so far failed to sign UNISON's Early Day Motion (EDM579) calling for withdrawal of the proposal to increase the pension age of Local Government Pensions Scheme members.

Why not draft three or four letters yourself and ask members in your workplace to sign, date and address them? Then get them sent off to their MPs!

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Who's out?

Local Government Pension Scheme members work in many other places than just for local councils. Not all members have been balloted for action at this stage but are being held in reserve for future action.

Those taking part in the ballot and action on 23 March are - Local council staff; staff working for Valuation Boards; Fire Boards and Tayside Contracts; FE College support staff; Leisure trust workers; Glasgow Housing Association and Dumfries and Galloway Housing Partnership staff; Meat Hygiene Service workers; Strathclyde PTE staff; Scottish Social Services Council and Commission for the Regulation of Care Staff and the staff of some Voluntary Sector employers in the North East.



Dave Prentis re-elected

Current General Secretary - Dave Prentis has been re-elected on a massive majority. The results were:

Roger Bannister 41,406 (16.9%)
Dave Prentis 184,769 (75.6%)
Jon Rogers 18,306 (7.5%).
The turnout was 16.6%.

Mike Kirby, UNISON's Scottish Convenor said, "A three to one majority is a massive vote of confidence in Dave's leadership. I am pleased that the nominee of the overwhelming majority of Scottish UNISON is so successful."

Health Pensions come under scrutiny... Page 2

Health pensions come under scrutiny

As well as the attacks on the LGPS, the NHS scheme too faces a test of its provisions.

A review into the benefits and regulations of the scheme has been begun by the Scottish Pensions Review Group - a joint union/management group who will report to the Scottish Public Pensions Agency.

Booklets have gone to all NHS staff letting them know about the review and how to input their views. UNISON is encouraging members to respond.

Eddie Egan, Chair of the Scottish Health Service group and member of the working group says, "There are a great many concerning proposals in the review.

"A similar attempt to increase our pension age as that in local government, but also the threat of taking away our final salary scheme and replacing it with a career average scheme."

UNISON has sent out a bulletin to branches for all members to urge them to write to their MSP, and to use the SPPA's response form to get views back to the government and employers.

Some key responses are included in the bulletin that is also available on the UNISON Scotland Website www.unison-scotland.org.uk/pensions/healthleaflet.pdf

Eddie says, "UNISON has fought for years to protect

UNISON has fought for years to protect NHS staff from the high stress levels of their job

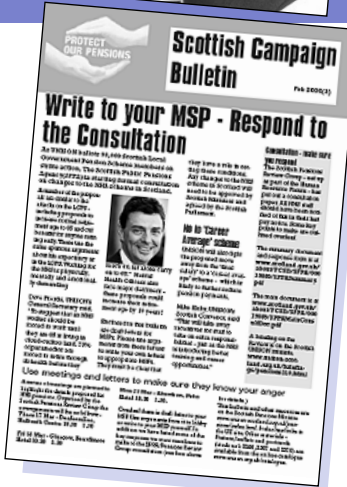
Eddie Egan, Chair Health Group



NHS staff from the high stress levels of their job. Mental Health Officers currently can retire at 55 - and there is good reason for that.

"To increase their working life by ten years is unacceptable.

"As are attempts to cut our pensions benefits by adopting a 'Career Average' scheme. We need a big response from UNISON members telling them this."



Scottish Labour backs UNISON pension call

Support for suspension of pension changes and 'a positive agenda'

UNISON's delegation to the Scottish Labour Party Conference successfully got a decision from the Conference in favour of suspending the attacks on local government pension age.



Michelle Brankin means to promote a positive pensions agenda.

In a motion that was carried unanimously the conference called on all parties 'to enter into a constructive and meaningful dialogue to promote a positive pensions agenda.'

Michelle Brankin (UNISON NEC) compared the pensions of the boss of Rentokil - Sir Clive Thomson - at £734,000 a year with that of the average local Government worker at £3,800 per year. Moving the motion she said the reasoning behind the changes was flawed.

"The Government says it must raise the Pension Age because we are living longer," she said. "But this very much depends on your social class.

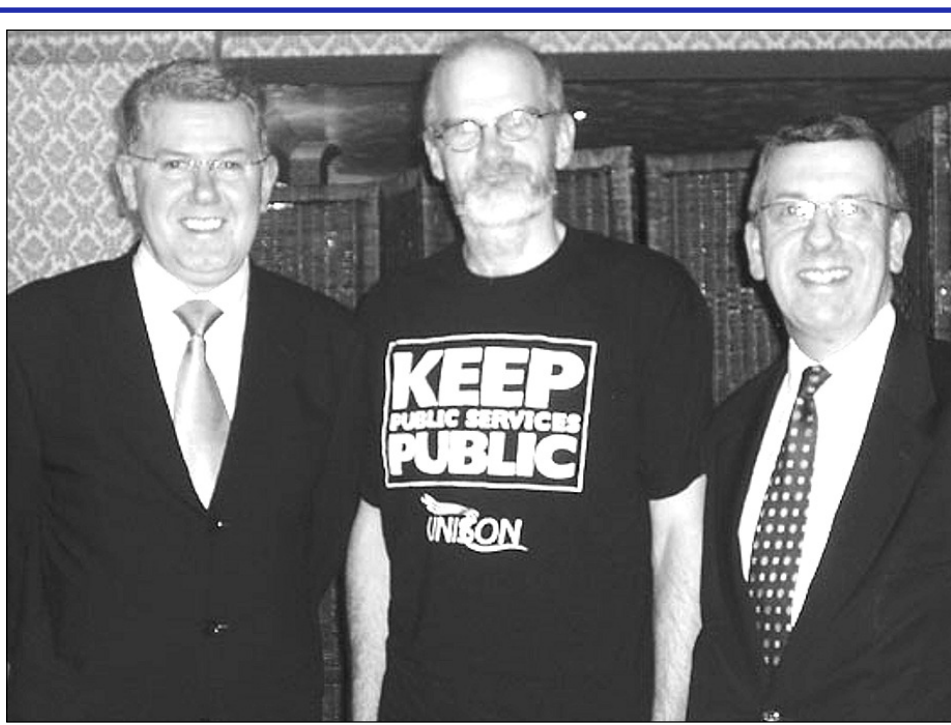
"The lifespan of a hospital cleaner did not improve at all between 1972 and 1999, and the lifespan of a male caretaker only improved by 1.5 years.

"Of the 10 local authority areas with the worst lifespan rates for men, eight of these are in Scotland."

She called for a positive agenda to encourage workers to work longer:-

- better action to reduce stress
- better work-life balance and flexible working
- ending low pay
- better occupational health policies; and
- tougher action to clamp down on age discrimination.

Conference agreed unanimously.



AGM gets it straight from the minister

Health Minister Andy Kerr with David Stewart with Adam Palmer at the Highland Health branch AGM.

Andy Kerr was a guest at the AGM giving members a chance to speak to the man with the power in the health service in Scotland. Educational for both, no doubt!

New legal right to freedom of information

by Lui Giacomello
Communications Committee

The Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 came into force on 1 January 2005.

It was introduced by the Scottish Parliament to ensure that people have the right to access information held by Scottish public authorities.

The Act states that any person can receive information that they request from a public authority, subject to certain exemptions such as protection of personal data, commercial confidentiality or national security.

Anyone will have the right to information that may previously have been withheld by public authorities.

If your request for information is refused or ignored, you will have the right to ask the public authority to review its decision.

If you are still unhappy with their response you will have the right to appeal to the Commissioner, who will investigate your case.

He has powers to force the public authority to release any information that is not exempt under the Freedom Of Information (FOI) Act.

The Act applies to all Scottish public authorities including the Scottish Executive and its agencies;

"A person who requests information from a Scottish public authority which holds it is entitled to be given it by the authority"

The Scottish Parliament; Local Authorities; NHS in Scotland; Universities and further education colleges; and the Police.

UNISON has welcomed the fact that the Scottish Freedom Of Information Act is stronger than the UK equivalent.

We argued for the widest possible coverage - wanting all public service providers covered, and to reduce the exemptions.

There are still problems with private providers delivering public services as can be seen with 'confidentiality

Bridging gap between asylum and work

UNISON Scotland is asking branches and activists to take part in a pilot project working with 16 refugees in the Glasgow area.

The project will provide refugees with training and work placements including a personal development plan and mentoring and support from trained UNISON lifelong learning advisors.

Elaine Rae is UNISON's project development worker. The project is funded by the Home Office and is due to start in April.



Elaine Rae

Elaine says, "Historically jobs carried out by migrant workers have been low paid and, as we have seen in recent reports, do not utilise their skills.

"There are a large number of hurdles that cause this problem, and this project is UNISON's contribution to the learning and training that will enable refugees to break down these barriers."

The mentoring in the project is also important - ensuring that assistance from more experienced workers in the workplace is available to help refugees.

Of course it is also a great way to learn about another culture, with its own customs, history and values.

The placements will take place over ten-twelve weeks, and travel and childcare costs will be funded.

UNISON is also offering the refugee participants one year's free membership, which will be extended if they are successful in getting further work.

If you are a learning rep who is interested in becoming a mentor - contact Elaine in WCS, e.rae@unison.co.uk

clauses' between the prison service and Reliance, for example.

However the commissioner has made it clear that such clauses should not be entered into in the future.

Most importantly, however we pointed out that increased resources would be needed to:

- identify, track, record, store & supply the information
- train staff in the provisions and terms of the Act, and appropriate staff in the procedures and responsibilities.

To find out more about the Freedom Of Information Act, visit the Scottish Information Commissioner's website - www.itspublicknowledge.org.uk or contact the author Lui.Giacomello@luht.scot.nhs.uk.

Decisive vote to keep political fund

by Chris Bartter
Communications Officer

Call to scrap law which forces wasteful ballots

Members have voted overwhelmingly to retain the union's political fund.

85 per cent of those who voted said Yes to the fund, which will allow UNISON to continue campaigning in the political arena, including the current campaign to defend public sector pensions.

General Secretary Dave Prentis said:

"This result is a clear indication that our members want their union to speak up for them in the political arena as well as in the workplace.

"They understand that increasingly we need to make the case to politicians as well as employers."

Virtually every union obliged to hold a review ballot in the last year has secured a decisive majority to retain its political fund.

These ballots are expensive and unnecessary and UNISON's NEC will now put a motion to Annual Conference to step up the union's campaign to repeal the legislation.

Matt Smith, Scottish Secretary added, "We will be asking the government to



Scottish Convenor Mike Kirby and General Secretary Dave Prentis launch 'Priorities for Scotland', UNISON Scotland's manifesto for the forthcoming general election.

Just one example of why we need the political fund for campaigning on the issues affecting members.

Dave touched on two when he slammed the government for 'wasting billions on PFI and PPP' and also demanded resources to ensure equal pay in the public services.

See the manifesto at www.unison-scotland.org.uk/prioritiesforscotland

repeal the Tory laws that require all unions to re-ballot members on the political fund every 10 years. Our membership has made their feelings very clear once

again - whether it is campaigning for decent pensions or fighting against racism, trade union issues are political issues too."

The full Electoral Reform

Society figures record that 85 per cent voted Yes on a 19.6 per cent turnout. A total of 243,827 voted to retain the fund, with 43,194 voting against.

Campaign keeps Inverclyde ICT in house

A UNISON campaign to keep services in house has paid off with Inverclyde Council deciding not to outsource its entire ICT service along with the jobs of 26 employees.

The Council decided last June to prepare specifications and invite tenders on the basis of the future provision of ICT services.

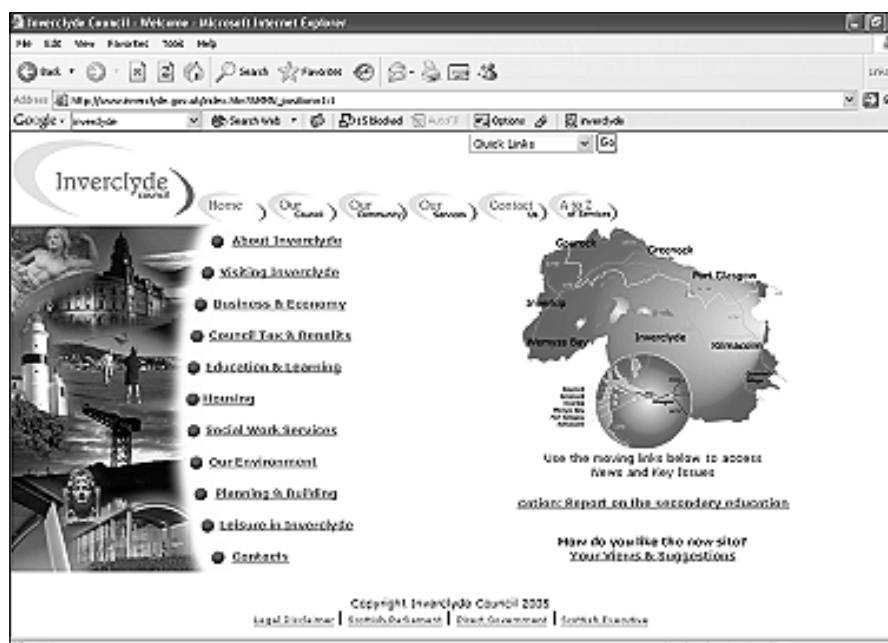
Since then UNISON has been working closely with staff in an effort to have the service retained in-house.

Robin Taggart, Inverclyde Branch service conditions officer, says,

"We are obviously delighted that the Council have shown faith and confidence in the current staff group in opting for an in-house solution to the Council's ICT problems.

"The staff now face a massive challenge in delivering the service to the required specification and will be assisted by the appointment of a new senior management team along with additional resources and investment in the infrastructure."

Robin added, "The Council clearly believe that this can be achieved at both strategic and operational levels internal-



Inverclyde's swish new website

ly. There is a lot of relief that the tendering process is now over and we believe the committee made the right decision for the Council.

"Public services belong in the public domain with surpluses reinvested back into local services and not to remote private shareholders."

UNISON will now work with the Council in rebuilding an in-house structure which can deliver the contract specification as well as the service level agreements.

For further information contact Robin Taggart: 01475 715900 or robin.taggart@inverclyde.gov.uk

No to racism No them and us The fight continues

by Jane Carolan
NEC



With the date of the General Election due to be announced shortly, UNISON's Policy Committee is preparing to continue its campaign against the BNP and other racist parties.

The union has traditionally used the resources of the General Political Fund (GPF) in particular to campaign for a UNISON Manifesto, and advertised in the UK and Scottish press.

These plans are ongoing but with the continuing threat from the far right, the committee has already decided that we must continue to highlight our policy of "No to racism- NO them and us".

During last year's European elections these campaigns were most successful where branches engaged with local community activists.

Anti Fascist campaigners - Searchlight, were funded by the union to conduct research on our behalf to ensure that we had excellent information on where the far right were standing candidates and to ensure that we were able to mobilise against them.

Branches were able to link with church groups, parents organisations, tenants groups, football supporters, a wide variety of people with one thing in common - opposition to the racist message.

Use your vote

Street or door to door leafleting in selected areas and public meetings were held. A key feature of the campaign was the message to "Use your Vote". Often fascists are elected as the result of low turnouts.

We also targeted messages to our own members in key areas - getting the anti racist vote out. GPF funding was used for national press advertising and also for local papers.

The low vote achieved by the BNP during last year's elections speaks for itself. We must have done something right and must continue to do so.

During a General Election there will probably be less of a spotlight on the right wing fringe by the national media, and as a union we also have other messages that we need to get across.

Nevertheless the anti racist message must remain a union priority. Searchlight will again provide intelligence and we are also contributing toward Unite against Fascism. Information, materials and resources will be available to branches in the near future.

In the year where we commemorate the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, we must ensure that such things never happen again.

In the year where we commemorate the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, we must ensure that such things never happen again.

Jane Carolan

Make poverty history - get involved

by Michael Macneil
Secy, International Cttee

Like slavery, like Lappartheid, poverty is not natural, said Nelson Mandela.

Poverty does not result from chance; it is the result of human decisions and economic policies imposed by rich countries. But it doesn't have to be like this.

UNISON has joined with other trade unions, aid agencies, campaigning organisations and faith groups in the Make Poverty History (MPH) coalition.

We aim to put unprecedented pressure on the G8 countries to reduce the gap between the world's rich and poor.

www.makepovertyhistory.org



John Barton, Chair of the International Relations Committee, said,

"Struggling for justice is at the heart of trade unionism, whether at home or abroad. I hope that many UNISON members will become involved in the MPH activities."

A campaign plan,

outlining what branches and individuals can do to help, is being developed. But there are two things you can do immediately:

- One is to wear a white MPH campaign wristband (available from Michael Macneil, UNISON House, 14 West Campbell Street, Glasgow, G2 6RX,

m.macneil@unison.co.uk tel: 0870 7777 006 - first come, first served)

- The other is to make a date - join the march and rally in Edinburgh on 2 July (to coincide with the G8 Summit). Further details about the march and rally will be sent to branches.

2005 is a crucial year to influence the UK

Government on international issues. Not only does the UK Government host the G8 Summit in Scotland, but it holds the Presidency of the European Union.

The UN Summit of world leaders on the Millennium Development Goals takes place this September, and 2005 is the 20th anniversary of Live Aid

The message to world leaders is clear. We know what is needed to tackle poverty, HIV/AIDS, malnutrition, conflict, illiteracy, the point is to take action and take it now.

We must drop the debt, increase the amount and quality of aid, and work towards trade justice.

Morning Star is 75!

Britain's only daily newspaper not owned by multinational firms celebrates its 75 Anniversary this year with a day of discussion, exhibition and a social at the STUC Centre in Glasgow on Saturday 16 April.

With a list of speakers that include Bob Crow (RMT), Bruce Kent (ex-CND), Elaine Smith, Rosie Kane and Mark Ballard MSPs, and a fascinating line up for some of the cultural events.

The day will wind up with an evening social starring Dick Gaughan, Arthur Johnstone and the Jim Daily Ceilidh Band.

Further information will be coming out very soon, and tickets can be obtained from John Foster, John@foster845.fsnet.co.uk.

News from the NEC

At each Scottish Council, NEC member **Jane Carolan** provides a written briefing on what the National Executive is up to.

Last month, the major reports were:

Recruitment: Research shows the TV advert was a success and recruitment in October/ November was the highest for three years.

Pensions: UNISON involved in Parliamentary lobby, government meetings, TUC forum with other unions, discussion with trade union group of MPs and a push for an Early Day Motion. Jane also briefed on the national campaign materials.

Campaigning: Reports on political fund, tackling the BNP and international issues. The NEC also agreed a package to maximise participation in union elections.

Repairs to Headquarters: Because of the high cost of repairs to an out of date building, professional advice is being sought on a new build across the road from the existing HQ in Mabledon Place London.

Ongoing Campaigns 2005

- Public Service Improvement Agenda
- Workforce Development and the in house team
- Fair wages/ two-tier workforce
- Pensions
- Privatisation and PFI/PPP
- Race Equality
- Tackling the BNP

Minimum Wage: Detailed report received and formally agreed target of £6.50 by October 2005.

Updates also on the union's approach to the Women and Work Commission and the Migrant Workers project.

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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Walk the Loch for family holidays

by Eleanor Haggett
Chair, Scottish Welfare Committee

UNISON's Scottish Welfare Committee is arranging a sponsored walk round Loch Katrine in April to raise money for the Welfare Fund's Bucket and Spade Appeal.

At a UK level this appeal aims to raise £150,000 for family holidays provided by UNISON Welfare for those who would otherwise not get one.

Much hard work by fundraising initiatives so far has helped towards raising this figure. Much more work still needs to be done.

So far, Fife UNISON have sent a donation of £1000 and have also set up a standing order so that £100 per month can go directly to this cause

The Scottish Welfare Committee has pledged to sup-



Delegates to the recent Welfare Seminar - over Loch Katrine - and shortly to be hiking round it!

port this appeal and plans to raise £1,000 itself, with the walk. If successful they would like to see it as an annual event.

So how can you help?

* Ask your branch to raise the Bucket and Spade Appeal at

their next meeting.

* Why not take part in the Walk The Loch yourself? Or sponsor one of our walkers in this event, which will take place on Sunday 10th April 2005 at Loch Katrine.

Check out the details of

what is involved at www.unison-scotland.org.uk/welfare/

To register for this event then please contact: Kevin O'Neil Information Development Officer UNISON House 14 West Campbell Street Glasgow G2 6RX, k.oneil@unison.co.uk Tel: 0870 7777 006.

Join in, speak up, and be counted!

UNISON's NEC election ballot opens 4 April 2005.

Use your vote and choose who speaks for you.
www.unison.org.uk/elections/nec elections.asp

Keeping it right under data protection

To protect members' privacy, and to ensure we are adhering to Data Protection laws, we ensure that when sending e-mails to several members, their names are entered into the BCC field and not the TO field.

This allows the mail to be delivered to all people on the list but no one else can see who it has gone to.

When using a home PC you can set up an e-mail list of 'undisclosed recipients' but this is not normally possible at work because of Global Address Lists and security around this.

The BCC field is therefore a way round this. By doing this, we are keeping members' per-

ELAINE DUFFY, Publicity Officer UNISON Scottish Electricity, gives tips for activists on email organisation

sonal data secure and thereby removing the risk of breaching the law and bringing ourselves and the union into disrepute. This is easy to set up within Outlook if not already there.

Furthermore, stewards should be aware of security with regard to e-mails and documents they store on employers' servers.

Within our employer, a breach of security was found and since then we have negotiated to agree a policy for e-mail security

for TU reps.

Please be aware that anything you store on the employer's servers, even on your home drive, can be accessed and seen by them if they so wish. Confidential documentation should be labelled as such and should be password-protected.

It is helpful if stewards agree a 'code' for passwords and these can be applied to documents easily. Additionally, you can protect documents easily within Word and this allows any changes to be tracked, or limits what people can do to the document.

In addition, we thought about what would happen if a steward were to leave the employer suddenly.

They could be holding confi-

dential and sensitive information that you would not want the employer to be able to access, but equally, they could have information that you might need to access quickly to pick up cases for them.

It is helpful if you can agree a policy with the employer to ensure another TU rep has access to the person's mailbox in such circumstances.

An easy way round this is to give delegate access to your mailbox to your convenor or a fellow steward.

I hope this has been helpful and if you want more information on any of this, or want to see a copy of our policy, then please let me know and I am happy to go over this with you. elaine.duffy@uk.saic.com