



Mike Kirby slams tax scam that removes democratic control, and attacks fair pay - p3



stuc Perth 2009 Congress reports special

revitalising our public services

scottish council activists bulletin

Scotland in UNISON

May 2009 No. 78

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

Euro candidates must restore workers' rights

UNISON Scotland launches manifesto for Euro elections on 4 June

by Chris Bartter
Communications Officer

UNISON Scotland has called on Euro election candidates to back campaigns to overturn negative European legal rulings and restore the human rights of working people, following backing from the Scottish TUC in Perth last week.

Along with the RMT union, UNISON called for a 'Social Progress Protocol' to be inserted into the Lisbon Treaty – to hold employers to national collective agreements and to back the right to strike.

Jane Carolan, from UNISON's National Executive announced that UNISON Scotland had released a European election manifesto, which calls for a range of measures to be introduced to defend workers rights.

It is calling on Scottish members to judge the policies of the political parties on a range of issues – workers' rights, the environment, anti-racism and others - before they cast their vote.

Jane said "Recent decisions of the European Court of Justice have asserted the primacy of the economic freedom of business and undermined national labour



Jane Carolan

Photo: Louis Flood

law and collective agreements. "The Viking, Laval, Ruffert and Luxembourg judgements



have made clear that the market rules, and that public services and employment and collective rights are therefore always under attack.

"Unless we defend our rights we will end up in a Europe in which capital roams free and where labour is cheap, plentiful and unprotected – neo liberalism writ large".

The Viking judgement said that the collective action by the Trade Unions contravened Article 43 of the EU Treaty - the right of business to freedom of establishment anywhere in the EU.

In Laval, the collective action of trade unions was deemed to be in breach of business freedom to provide services within another EU state. The same considerations apply in Ruffert and Luxembourg.

The manifesto is available on the UNISON-Scotland website www.unison-scotland.org.uk/revitalise.

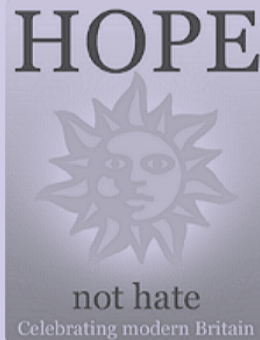
Standing up to the politics of hate

UNISON has a strong and proud tradition of standing up to the racist British National Party. This year is no different.

The BNP has set its sight on winning at least one seat in the European parliament. UNISON is campaigning to make sure that does not happen.

It's crucial to mobilise everyone opposed to the politics of hate to turn out and vote, because every single vote will count.

Organising, informing and mobilising are key. Using the same technology as the team behind Barack Obama's successful presidential campaign, we are building a network of activists in every corner of the country. We



urge all UNISON members to get involved.

Join us to defend a dynamic and inclusive multicultural society that values all its members equally, irrespective of their race, nationality, gender, sexual orientation or ability.

Together we can stop the BNP. To find out more about our campaign and how you can get involved, go to www.unison.org.uk/stopthebnp

Budget reveals damage to economy done by greed

UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis responded to Alistair Darling's budget by saying that it "revealed the extent of the damage done to the economy and public finances by the greed and irresponsibility of the under-regulated financial sector."

And he noted: "Future spending plans have been revised down again and the government's best ambitions of reducing child poverty and building world class public services now look in doubt.

Richest one per cent pay back nothing like their fair share of tax

Matt Smith

He added that the union "will look for assurances that public service workers... will not be made to pay the price for the failures of others."

Dave said: "The Chancellor is moving in the right direction with tax rises for the super-rich who have not been paying their fair share," but he noted that Mr Darling "will need to do more to go after the rich tax avoiders



Photo: Louis Flood

who cost us more than £25 billion every year."

Matt Smith, Scottish Secretary of UNISON told delegates at the Scottish TUC that the economic crisis must be paid for by fairer taxation, and

more investment in public services.

In a hard-hitting speech, Matt pointed out that the crisis has been caused by relying on a 'get rich quick' philosophy, and that the proponents of that philosophy are still arguing for the failed policies of deregulation and attacks on the public sector.

"The richest one per cent in our society have doubled their share of total income since the 1980s. Today, they pocket more money than the entire workforces of the NHS, state

Turn to page 2

Campaign for quality social care services

STUC: by Chris Bartter and John Stevenson

The Scottish TUC was told that a combination of increasing demand and cuts in social care funding threaten further tragedies as it backed a campaign to demand quality services in Scotland.

The situation is worsened by the use of tendering processes for home and residential care, that end up with low-cost companies taking over and driving down standards of care.

The union also blames the concordat between the Scottish Government and councils as a 'straitjacket'.

UNISON's Kate Ramsden, herself a social worker, told the Congress, "Our members are social workers, home carers, residential and day care workers, occupational therapists, and a range of other staff in the statutory and voluntary sector.

"We are providing services in a climate where our work has been consistently devalued in the eyes of the public by the media and politicians; where the demands have increased as the resources have been



Photo: Louis Flood

I am calling on all of you to support your colleagues in social work and to defend them whenever you hear them unfairly criticised

Kate Ramsden

Turn to page 2

Happy Birthday Young Members!

STUC delegates celebrated 70 years of the Youth Committee and the motion was seconded by UNISON's Katrina Murray - a young member who went on to become STUC President!

Listing a range of issues young workers had put on the agenda over the years, Katrina said, "70 years of youth conferences means many generations of young people moving into many aspects of the labour movement"

Matt slams tax dodge

From page 1

education and local government put together.

"And they pay back nothing like their fair share of tax. Almost £20 billion is lost from the money to pay for our services every year because of the use and abuse of "tax havens".

And he attacked the myth of over-staffed public services, saying that public sector workers "have made well in excess of 3% efficiency savings called for by the government over each of the past three years.

"Independent studies have shown that you cannot extract any more without damaging services for the public."

Level pensions up - not down

STUC: by Kate Ramsden

The State Pension is a right not a benefit and should be an entitlement for older people.

The STUC called on the government to restore the earnings or prices link, ensure the pension is universal and is raised above the poverty level.

It also condemned attacks on occupational pensions.

UNISON's Catriona Beveridge told delegates that we, in the public



Catriona Beveridge

sector, have been accused of having 'gold-plated' pensions.

"How would we define that?" asked Catriona. "Would it be £750,000 a year or whatever Fred Goodwin's pension is? Or would it be £3,800 a year? Because that's the actual level of the average pension for local government workers in Britain - It's more tin-foil that gold-plated", she said.

Catriona slammed the myths peddled by the Daily Mail and the Taxpayers Alliance and pointed out that the real pensions divide is not between the private and the public sector but between the rich and the poor.

"We should be levelling up - not down", she warned.

People protected every day due to social work

From Page 1

cut; and where there is a serious lack of understanding of the work that we do.

"What do you think of when you think about child care social workers? Baby P? Brandon Muir? We only hit the headlines when there is a tragedy and the moving finger of blame needs to stop somewhere.

"But these attacks take attention away from the real issues for social work; chronic underfunding; poor staffing levels; too high workloads and excessive bureaucracy; and management cultures which are not "fit for purpose" and fail to support front-line staff and acknowledge their crucial task of working with intense and complex situations.

"These are the barriers to good practice that our members identified in a recent UK survey of child care social workers".

Kate also pointed out that although child protection is the sharp end of social care, care for other vulnerable people is also threatened.

"A Panorama investigation sharply pointed out the problems of relying on cost to supply home care."

"But many thousands of children are protected day in and day out because of the work that social workers and other social care staff do", she added.

"Many elderly people are able to stay in their own homes because of the home care and other support services that can

be provided; and many adults with disabilities are enabled to lead the lives of their choosing.

"All this is achieved, despite all the problems, through the hard work and commitment of social care staff, and that should be recognised too.

"Inspections rightly point to practice and leadership issues but they never explicitly address resources. Too often they ignore the fact that there are too few people to achieve the standards we all want and this just covers up the problem", she added.

"As well as this though, I am calling on all of you to support your colleagues in social work and to defend them whenever you hear them unfairly criticised", said Kate.

The STUC in brief

Congress puts the environment top of the agenda in the workplace: Fiona Smith told congress that UNISON has long been committed to sustainable development and protecting the environment.



Anti -union laws must be challenged across the UK: Barbara Fulton opposed a call for trade union legislation to be devolved to Scotland as the STUC re-stated its aim to challenge anti-union laws across the UK.



Campaign to recruit more black members: Ravi Nathan told Congress, "We must be prepared to take on the mantle of leadership".



Put needs of trafficked women and children first

STUC: by Kate Ramsden

Congress strongly condemned the trafficking of women and children for sexual and other exploitation and pledged action to tackle this scourge and ensure that victims are supported, traffickers are prosecuted and those buying sex are penalised.

Speaking in support of the General Council motion and UNISON's amendment, John Stevenson told congress of UNISON's campaign, along with other organisations, to ensure that the rights and protection due to all children in Scotland under the Children Scotland Act was made a reality.

However a few years ago, the reality was that displaced children were second class and their welfare was regularly undermined.

"Since then we have come a long way in a short time, from a situation that should never have existed to one that is getting better.

"It is a great victory for us to hear politicians from all parties



John Stevenson

nowadays referring to the child's welfare as paramount."

John warned, however, that there is still much to be done; that children are still set up for deportation at 17, which means that many will end up back in the harm they were fleeing or in the clutches of those who exploited them in the first place.

"That goes for adults too," said John, asking why, if women feel rescued, so many of them disappear shortly afterwards.

"Are you really being rescued if your immigration status decides whether you are supported or deported?"

A key element in really

protecting trafficked women and children is the "reflection period" in the Council of Europe Convention, and he called for an extension on the current 45 day period to 90 days as called for by both UNICEF and Amnesty.

He highlighted trafficked women and children's need for real independent advice and called for a review system which puts "the needs of women first and the welfare of children paramount".

Scottish Government must stop wrecking bargaining in non-departmental bodies

STUC: by John Stevenson

The STUC backed UNISON's call for a review of Scottish Government pay policy to allow real collective bargaining in Non-Departmental Public Bodies.

Jane Carolan slammed Scottish Government interference in pay bargaining through its Public Sector Pay Unit, causing delays as the 'ping-pong ball' bounces back and forward between the employers and the pay unit.

She listed examples affecting UNISON members. "Scottish Childrens Reporters - pay deal imposed. SEPA - staff sacked and re-hired under new contracts. Commission for the

Regulation of Care - pay rise and new grading structure to come from the same pot and no equality proofing done on the scheme. Loch Lomond National Park - Pay Unit instructed that staff should not get their due incremental pay".

"It leaves our members very angry at inadequate pay rises that don't reflect either economic conditions or efficiencies made in the workplace", said Jane.

"This is about the right to engage in free collective bargaining".

"At the moment the dictates of the Scottish Government, far removed from the workplace, impoverishes our members. And that must be totally unacceptable".

Objective 1: Recruiting and Organising:

John Keggie, who leads on objective 1, recruiting, organising, representing and retaining members, said,

"UNISON is looking for a 3% growth in membership and more stewards and reps and would like to see more members take part in ballots and other democratic processes.

"We are keen to encourage branches to apply to the region for funds for workplace recruitment and retention campaigns."

"We made a successful bid to set up a migrant worker project within the Highlands and Islands to improve services to them and to encourage them to join the union."

Negotiating, bargaining and promoting equality for

Four national objectives define framework for how UNISON works in Scotland

Kate Ramsden (Communications & Campaigns) looks at UNISON Scotland's priorities for this year, who leads on them and how they are implemented.

members is the aim of objective 2 with a focus this year on single status and equal pay.

"We have developed a range of initiatives to support branches negotiating on single status and pressing employers to deliver fair and equal pay," said Glyn Hawker who holds key responsibility.

"We also want to make sure that pensions across sectors are non-discriminatory and governed in members' best interests; and that employers are meeting their public sector equalities duties. Our staff and activists need the

knowledge and skills to negotiate and bargain on these issues and we'll provide training and briefings as necessary."

Objective 3 is about campaigning and promoting UNISON on behalf of members. Dave Watson, who leads, said, "Examples of what we are doing in Scotland include the *Revitalise* Campaign which promotes quality public services and the public sector workforce; the campaign against PPP and other outsourcing; the campaign for decent and affordable housing and the opposing racism plan."

"We're also campaigning on health and safety issues in the workplace such as violence to staff and stress, and are about to launch a project to promote work life balance."

"We want to strengthen UNISON Scotland's political structures and activists' base to have the widest possible influence on policy makers at all levels," added Dave.

The final objective aims to develop an efficient and effective union. Carol Judge, who has primary responsibility said, "We want to ensure that

we're a good employer and that we make best use of our staff to support our priorities in Scotland; that our data is accurate and that branches get support to keep it up to date.

"We aim to 'green our workplaces' and to develop an environmental strategy to recycle and reduce waste."

Matt Smith, Scottish Secretary "A great advantage of these four objectives has been the consistency in recent years of maintaining the same broad themes while adjusting to meet circumstances as required.

"UNISON Scotland is keen to engage our activists in this implementing these objectives."

For more information about UNISON's objectives, go to www.unison.org.uk/about/objectives.asp

Aberdeen Forensic Lab to stay after UNISON campaign

by Betty Lyon
Area Organiser North Team

Staff working for Aberdeen's Forensic Lab have received an e-mail, telling them that the lab was staying open, with a guarded apology for the fact that the consultation process that the SPSA engaged in was not based on evidence but guesswork.

A huge success for UNISON, our members' hard work and commitment and the Grampian Police Branch.

In November it emerged that the Scottish Police Services Authority (SPSA) were to close the Forensic Lab in Aberdeen with no consultation with UNISON.

Our members were angry. The SPSA published a document which was nothing more than 10 good reasons to close the lab. We believed that the "report"

contained unsound reasoning and flawed data.

We planned our campaign. fingerprint and forensic staff produced a rebuttal document; gaining cross-party support from MSPs and MPs.

They involved Police Joint Boards, ACPOS, the Police Federation and the public; ran a poster campaign; and lodged a Public Petition for an open, fair and transparent consultation.

The petition closed on 24

November with over 2,700 signatures.

The support from cross party politicians was phenomenal, questions were raised in parliament, some weeks on a daily basis, and there was huge media interest.

At the Public Petitions Committee hearing on 8 January, the SPSA were slated by all parties. The promised new consultation never appeared, just the welcome email announcing our success!

STUC The annual conference of Scotland's trade unions met in Perth from 20-22 April. **UNISON's own motions and amendments are covered in this issue** with in brief coverage of other debates we were involved in. **For full reports on all UNISON speakers see www.unison-scotland.org.uk/stuc2009**

Stories by Chris Bartter, Kate Ramsden and John Stevenson.

The STUC in brief

STUC: by John Stevenson

Glasgow outsourcing tax scam removes democratic control and attacks fair pay

STUC: by Chris Bartter

UNISON has condemned Glasgow council's increasing reliance on outsourced trusts and Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs) to deliver public services.

Around 15,000 staff are employed by nine LLPs, trusts and partnerships in the city.

In a speech to the STUC, Mike Kirby, Scottish Convenor and Chair of Glasgow City Branch, denounced the rush to outsource services as a tax scam that abandons democratic control, and allows the council to avoid its legal duty to pay men and women equally.

Mike said, "A recent Glasgow Council report into these 'arms length external organisations' admits that these ALEOs are a tax scam, that they lead to loss of democratic control by councillors, and that they can avoid more equal pay claims because they have fewer comparators.

"So much for the Labour Government's public sector equality duty."

Mike also pointed to the farce created by an earlier outsourced organisation when the Glasgow Housing Association Ltd awarded one of their repairs and maintenance contracts to a private building company - Connaught - only to find they



Mike Kirby

couldn't meet the contract specifications on covering the workforce pensions.

Mike said, "Connaught had to be sacked and that workforce returned to their previous employer, City Building, after they spent two days travelling around the city - from Hampden Park, to Connaught, to GHA, to Glasgow City Council."

Moving the composite motion on Public Services, Mike pointed to the huge waste of taxpayers money being paid to consultants to recommend efficiencies and shared services.

Billions of pounds that should have been spent on the services themselves.

The composite will set out a charter to defend and build on the public service consensus in Scotland.

UNISON first pathway for migrant workers launched in Glasgow



March saw the first Pathway into UNISON course in the UK set up for migrants in Glasgow. Eighteen delegates from the Philippines and four from Poland joined representatives from Kenya, Sierra Leone, Nicaragua, India and Zimbabwe.

One of the many guests to join this event was Daniel Krzyszcak from the Northern TUC. Bridget Hunter and Elaine Dinning from UNISONScotland attended the evening discussion and meal with the delegates.

Greg Thomson from the Migrant Workers Unit said: "UNISONScotland should be proud to be able to bring together

this number of migrant members for this first course.

"Everyone enjoyed it and many of the delegates are considering becoming learning reps, shop stewards or health and safety reps"

There was so much of interest that many migrant members wish to be involved in the future. However there is only one course per region.

If you are a migrant member and remain interested in attending or future courses, please contact: Migrant Workers' Unit directly on 020 7551 1676 or 020 7551 1480.

Review brings Campaign for Fair Pay in Local Government

by Kate Ramsden

Communications & Campaigns Cttee

UNISON Scotland will launch a "Fair Pay in Local Government Campaign" based on the lessons learned from the review of last year's pay dispute.

The campaign strategy will prioritise low pay and will involve members on the issues which should shape our pay claim for 2010.

"We are looking to start the process in May so that we can build up the campaign before the pay claim is publicly launched in November," said Stephanie Herd, Chair of the Scottish Local Government Committee.

"We want to make sure that we

engage fully with branches and members during this time so that we can begin early to map out both a political and an industrial action strategy."

Stephanie added, "We need to strengthen the political campaign and to lobby MSPs and councillors at a local level and at an early stage, to get our message across and to build political support.

"We will also be setting out our communication strategy as an integral part of the campaign, and building on the strategies which worked well during the pay dispute, such as direct mailings to members and the website which provided the well received up to the minute information and



"We want to make sure that we engage fully with branches and members"

Stephanie Herd

briefings.

"The media coverage during the campaign was excellent, but we need to develop our press coverage on fair pay issues outwith industrial action."

The current bargaining structures will be retained, although further discussions will be held with the political leadership in CoSLA to resolve the difficulties which emerged during the last pay campaign in trying to conclude an agreed settlement.

A separate review will take place into the function and structure of the negotiating body (SJC) to ensure it is fit for purpose.

The pay review group looked at a range of key issues including the shape of the pay claim, the industrial action, the joint work with the other Trade Unions, and the bargaining process.

Workplace learning should be there for all "UNISON believes in equal opportunities for all to access lifelong learning which leads to a more informed, educated and upskilled workforce", said Jim Burnett.



Make the 'two ticks' scheme work for disabled people Julia McIlhatton called for an external awarding body to place the attainment of the 'two ticks' symbol at the same level as other quality standards.



Human rights for Gypsy Travellers: Sam McCartney told of the prejudice experienced by Scottish Gypsy Travellers and the STUC pledged to support the Scottish Gypsy Traveller and Law Reform Coalition to set up an advocacy and advice service for the community in Scotland.



Court plans are 'barrier to justice' for workers: Scottish Government plans to change the legal system will put up 'barriers to justice' for workers and must be withdrawn, UNISON's Dave Watson told the STUC Congress.

Glasgow Community Service Strike: The UNISON strikers got a huge welcome from Congress, a message of support and a collection from delegates.

Free NHS parking

The STUC pledged to continue the campaign for safe, adequate and affordable car parking at NHS hospitals.

UNISON's Katrina Murray said that parking charges are not in the interests of either staff or patients.



"Where is it in the best interests of patients that staff have to leave outpatient clinics to move their cars rather than risk a £40 fine?" she asked. "Imagine sitting in a busy A&E whilst a loved one is waiting for treatment, X-rays, tests etc. till you hit the 4 hour mark and face a £40 fine."

She called on affiliates to support Paul Martin's Bill to end parking charges in the NHS and to keep the NHS car parks safe for patients, visitors and staff alike.

Action to tackle self harm and suicide in young people

STUC: by John Stevenson

People in Scotland are the highest in the UK and the STUC pledged action to combat this appalling statistic.

Backing the STUC Youth Conference motion, UNISON's Carrie Milligan said she was not only speaking as a young trade unionist but also as an Occupational Therapist in the

mental health field.

"I have worked with people that have attempted suicide and regrettably with individuals who have completed suicide"

Suicide and self-harm could potentially affect everyone in some form at some point, Carrie explained. "We need to demand that employers introduce effective strategies in the workplace", she said.



Photo: Louis Flood

Scottish court victory features in new equal pay campaign

UNISON's court victory against fees and charges sought by "no win, no fee" solicitors who process equal pay cases, is to feature in a new UNISON campaign.

The initiative builds on UNISON's place as the leading provider of equal pay claims and aims to make workers aware that - in Scotland - solicitors cannot take a percentage cut from a client's compensation, and they cannot put penalty clauses into legal contracts.

Called *Which way to Equal Pay?* posters, leaflets and press advertising will be used to point out that UNISON offers FREE legal assistance

with equal pay claims, and we may be able to help if members have been threatened with fees and penalty charges, like Edinburgh home help Jacqueline Quinn.

When Newcastle-based lawyer Stefan Cross threatened to take her to an English County Court to enforce a penalty clause in the contract she signed with him, she came to UNISON.

We took her case to the Court of Session, and an interdict against these threats was granted.

The campaign wants all members who have been tempted to sign up with solicitors like this to be aware,

that - in the words of Jacqueline Quinn - they should "Stick with the union. Everyone should be in the union." After all, she knows

that UNISON can protect members from hassle and cost when they exercise the right to pursue a claim through UNISON's free legal service.



Climate Lobby: Hundreds of people lobbied MSPs for a strong Scottish Climate Change Bill on 22 April. UNISON's Dave Watson, joined other members of the Stop Climate Chaos Scotland coalition for a picture with all the colourful 'stick figures' representing thousands of SCCS supporters.

STUC calls for boycott of Israeli goods, disinvestment and sanctions

A packed STUC fringe meeting heard a range of Palestinian speakers call on the Scottish Trade Union movement to support boycott, disinvestment and sanctions (BDS) on the Israeli state.

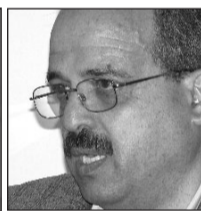
This followed the horrifying levels of violence meted out to the civilian population of Gaza in recent attacks.

And two days later, the STUC backed the BDS strategy.

Delegates had been moved by a film of an STUC delegation's visit to Palestine and Israel, which showed clearly the human rights abuses experienced on a daily



Dr Samia Botmeh



Menawel Abdul-al

basis by Palestinian men, women and children, by the actions of an occupying Israeli government.

The fringe, chaired by UNISON's Mike Kirby who was part of the STUC's delegation to discuss the BDS calls directly with both sides of the conflict, discussed this controversial topic.

Menawel Abdul-al, an executive member of the

Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions was clear about the need for the adoption of such a policy to respond to abuses of human rights faced by Palestinians on a daily basis.

In addition to the recent bloody conflict, he also pointed to the construction of the 'apartheid' wall in the west bank, built by Israel on the pretext of security, but which effectively entrapped pockets of Palestinians in 'bantustans'.

Dr Samia Botmeh, from the University of London and a member of the campaign for

an academic boycott, argued that to force Israel to engage with the Palestinians realistically, major pressure like that provided by a boycott was required.

"Other attempts to engage with the Israeli state have failed," she said, "the boycott is all we as Palestinians have left."

Mike Kirby recognised that BDS would not be an overnight decision, and wanted, as far as possible, to explain to bodies on the other side of the argument the rationale behind any decision.

That was part of the reason for the recommendation for a continuing dialogue with the Histadrut for example.

Palestine and Israel visit sees real life under occupation

Eleven senior Scottish trade unionists visited their opposite numbers in the Israeli Histadrut trade union centre and the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions, in early March.

They also met representatives of local communities, government and human rights campaigning organisations on both sides and travelled extensively in the West Bank.

The objective of the visit was to gather evidence to help the STUC decide whether to support a campaign for an international boycott of Israeli products, plus disinvestment and sanctions.

The report is an unvarnished account of meetings and

Mike Kirby was a member of the STUC delegation which visited the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel in early March. The full report is on the STUC website.

discussions that gives a clear indication of the complexity of the political issues faced on the ground by workers, whether Israeli or Palestinian, whether Muslim, Jewish or Christian.

The delegation deliberately sought to engage with the Israeli side as well as the Palestinians. Some of the encounters were "uncomfortable," especially the meeting with Israeli foreign affairs officials.

As well as listening, the Scottish delegation had some issues to raise.

"The delegation questioned the officials on Israel's failure to comply with UN security council resolutions, on the high number of civilian deaths and casualties, the political timing of the attacks on Gaza and Israel allowing the ceasefire with Hamas to expire.

"We did not receive any satisfactory answers to these questions," states the report.

While considering the undoubted negative aspects of boycott, which were unsurprisingly highlighted by Histadrut, the report concludes by

recommending that the STUC should support a campaign for international boycott of Israeli products, disinvestment and sanctions.

"I was a member of the last STUC delegation to the Occupied Territories in 2001, and led the last UNISON delegation to the Occupied Territories and Israel in 2005," said Mike Kirby.

"What I witnessed on this occasion was a greater sense of order and relative stability, particularly in the areas

administered by the Palestinian Authority around Ramallah and Nablus.

"However, this is order under occupation.

"An occupation surrounding these areas with check-points and the separation barrier wall and fence, cutting villages in half and away from their agricultural land.

"An occupation further enforced by settlements or colonies and a network of roads, barred to Palestinians and open only to Israeli Army and settlers."

UNISON backs Highland Pride ball success

UNISON's timely intervention to sponsor the first ever Highland Pride ball has led to increased recruitment, and new links with the media and other campaigning groups.

The Ball was held in Inverness in the middle of March and seems likely to be the first of a series of LGBT events in the Highlands.

At the event, the UNISON information stall did brisk business, and we spoke to many people who were unaware that UNISON supported people in the workplace. As a result of our presence there, we know we have recruited some new members.

Representatives from the Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) there have agreed to meet us to discuss how we support our LGBT members in the workplace, and have agreed to display our literature and material in their support building in Inverness. The Inverness Courier published a very positive report of the evening with a number of photos, mentioning the UNISON sponsorship.

Due to this success, the LGBT Forum are planning a Halloween Party in October - venue still to be arranged. This was a direct result of people at the Ball saying they would like another 'safe space' event to attend.

Balanced energy policy needed

The STUC again threw its weight behind a balanced energy strategy, based on a diversity of fuel sources from renewables to nuclear power, to ensure a secure and affordable supply of energy which contributes to a reduction in emissions.

UNISON's Dave Watson told delegates that, as well as developing the potential of renewable energy, we need to ensure that we have 'real juice' running into the network in Scotland. He called for a coherent debate in government and deplored the lack of planning "with governments and the regulator in thrall to market solutions -

The market fails consumers and in particular the fuel poor", said Dave.

"Let's remember that the overwhelming majority of generation keeping the lights on in Scotland today comes from power stations that were built by the industry when it was in public ownership.

"There is a lesson to be learned there - unlike the banks, perhaps we shouldn't wait until the lights go out before we recognise that market madness is no way to run anything and certainly not a vital public service like energy", said Dave.



We want to hear your news

SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories. Contact:-

John Stevenson (Editor) 0131 220 5655,

Chris Bartter 0845 355 0845, FAX PRESS RELEASES to 0141 331 1203

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