



Organising and partnership from strength: Scotland at UK Health Conference p4



There is a Better Way
Reports from the STUC Congress in Inverness with UNISON's Mike Kirby as President p2-3



PUBLIC WORKS:

a million voices for public services

May/June 2012 No. 95

Scotland in UNISON

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Time for fair pay in local government

Local government Unions lodged a pay claim on 8 May to end the council pay freeze.

UNISON, GMB and Unite are calling for a Living Wage of £7.20 in councils and a £1,000 flat rate (£500 for this year and £500 for last year).

They will urge community and voluntary and arms-length organisations to honour any settlement.

‘Raise public awareness of the contribution UNISON members make to local communities and the pressures they face’ Dougie Black

Dougie Black, UNISON Trade Union Side Secretary, said: “Workers in local government are the poor relations of the public sector as we enter the second year of a pay freeze.

“Families are already struggling to make ends meet and if their pay is frozen for a second year, whole families will be pushed further into poverty.

“Council workers are already suffering from cuts to jobs and services and their terms and conditions are under attack at local level.

“To make matters worse, the £250 promised by the

government to soften the blow for the lowest paid has been denied to local government workers.

“This is an unparalleled assault on those who are working harder for less to maintain vital community services and it can’t be allowed to continue.”

But Dougie warned that it was not enough to simply lodge the claim and hope that negotiations will prevail.

“Our employers have already told us that they have no intention of engaging with the trade unions on pay this year. If we are to change this we need to ensure that our members are ready to stand up and fight for fair pay, it is no more than they deserve.”

A major ‘Fair Pay’ campaign is planned with leaflets, posters, briefings and materials to support local lobbying.

Branches will be asked to provide ‘Pay Champions’ to link in with campaign planning. And the union will use social media like Twitter and Facebook to lift the profile.

Dougie added, “However, the key to a successful campaign to burst the pay freeze will be to ensure the members help us win wide support to raise public awareness of the contribution UNISON members make to local communities and the pressures they face.”



Back UNISON police staff: Keep writing!

As over 1,000 police staff posts have been cut, with a UNISON survey showing police officers are being taken off the front line to cover them, UNISON members are calling on their colleagues to support them by writing to your MSP.

It couldn’t be easier. Just visit the web page and click away. www.unison-scotland.org.uk/police/messagetoMSPs/

‘We want to see a balanced, modern police team’ George McIrvine



George McIrvine, chair of UNISON’s police committee, said: “The Scottish Government’s plans to maintain an artificial target of police officers will see between

two and three thousand civilian jobs being cut - it’s a crazy strategy and it makes no economic or operational sense.

“We want to see a balanced, modern police team, with the right skills and expertise for an effective police force.

“We need the skills of police staffs to enable police officers to do the job the public wants them to do, where they want them to do it – that is fighting crime, out on the streets.”

‘Hard and long’ negotiations start on NHS pensions

The first meeting of the NHS Scottish pension negotiations took place on 15 May in UNISON House Glasgow, as SiU went to press.

Following very successful strike action by UNISON Ayrshire and Arran, Lothian, Greater Glasgow and Clyde and Lanarkshire Health Branches, the Cabinet Secretary Nicola Sturgeon met the trade unions in UNISON House on 28 March to discuss the terms of reference for

Scottish negotiations.

The aim of the group will be to provide an agreed recommendation to Scottish ministers in terms of employee pension contributions and the NHS Scottish Pension Scheme response regarding longer term reform in light of the Hutton report.

At the meeting UNISON was represented by Lilian Macer, Tam Waterson and Willie Duffy who presented evidenced-based information on affordability and sustainability in relation to what

‘We reserve the right to return to the argument of force’

Tam Waterson



is a very vibrant scheme.

The negotiations take place in the context of certain constraints; a new scheme must be in place by April 2015; the costs of such a scheme needs to be within Treasury spending limits; and the

preference of Scottish ministers is for successor schemes to be based on career average principles.

Lilian Macer, UNISON Scotland Convener, said: “UNISON hopes this process of Scottish negotiations will lead to better outcomes for health workers in Scotland in relation to their hard won and paid for pensions entitlements.

Tam Waterson Chair of UNISON’s Scottish Health Committee, said: “This will be a

hard and long negotiation, but we will stick with the talks so long as they are positive.

“The Health Committee does reserve the right to return to the argument of force.”

In April, Lilian Macer told the STUC Congress: “We will negotiate to the best of our abilities, but our members expect us to see this campaign through to a decent conclusion.”

The STUC promised support to unions who remain in dispute on pensions.

As inequality grows, our children suffer

Campaigning for an end to child poverty by 2020 will be a key plank of the STUC's Better Way



Carol Ball

campaign, through a range of measures including lobbying for more social housing and a living wage for all.

UNISON's Carol Ball told Congress: "Changes to benefits under the Welfare Reform Act will make a lot of poor families very much poorer."

Supporting an Aberdeen TUC motion, Carol warned that 59% of children in severe poverty live in households where at least one adult works. "Some will be the children of our low paid members," said Carol.

Stop homophobic bullying in schools



Willie Docherty

Unions are being urged to work together and with local authorities to tackle homophobic bullying in schools.

This follows research by Stonewall that shows 65% of young LGBT people face bullying.

"The facts are that being bullied isn't something that might happen to young gay people", said UNISON's Willie Docherty, "It is something they are more likely to experience than not".

International

Sam Macartney, Chair of UNISON Scotland's International Committee urged the STUC to use every means at its disposal to help broker a lasting peace for the Syrian people.



Women's Employment Summit announced



Liz MacKay

Just a day after Congress had called on the Scottish Government to make real its commitment to tackle gender inequality and

occupational segregation, the First Minister announced to the STUC that the Government will set up a "Women's Summit" to tackle the issue.

Liz MacKay of UNISON said that Freedom of Information requests by Close the Gap and the STUC Women's Committee showed that public service employers do not have baseline information on women workers.

She called on the Scottish Government to have a template for baseline information to meet the requirements of the Gender Equality Duty.

Celebrating and learning lessons from Edinburgh victory

The STUC celebrated the victory by trade unions and community groups in Edinburgh in seeing off the the privatisation of a huge tranche of council services and pledged support to unions and communities to fight privatisation in the future.

UNISON's John Stevenson, whose Branch led the fight in Edinburgh under the "Our City's not for Sale" campaign told delegates that it was great to be there to celebrate the victory with Congress.

"It's even better following the victory in Aberdeen," he said, adding that it was hard to overestimate the importance of seeing off the Edinburgh privatisation plans.

"No-one tried to hide the fact that it was a Trojan Horse for privatisations across Scottish local government", said John.

He warned that cuts in local government



Photo: Louis Flood

mean that it is not just services that are hit - but the whole economy that depends on them - public and private. John paid tribute to the skills of UNISON's full time officers whose role in the success could not be overestimated.

"Their research, analysis and lobbying, went alongside basic organising, campaigning and reaching out and engaging communities. They were all required. No one part of it could have delivered by itself."

"It is now important to review what worked and what didn't and build on that for the future.

So if Councils are daft enough to try again - we'll be ready for them," warned John.

● **In an earlier debate**, UNISON's SAM MACARTNEY called on councillors to oppose outsourcing. He described the 'disastrous consequences' for staff and services through Glasgow and other councils' use of arms length companies and privatisation.

In brief: In full on the website

● **Community Mental Health must not become a 'Cinderella service'** as the NHS cuts £400 million, Lilian Macer warned the STUC.

● **More BME councillors needed:** Hamid Rasheed called on the STUC to work with BME communities to encourage more local councillors from ethnic communities.

Austerity isn't working 'there is a better way'

Cuts not about money but about politics that hates public services, says MIKE KIRBY

In a wide ranging STUC presidential speech from domestic to international issues, UNISON's Mike Kirby laid out what we stand for as a movement and why there is a better way than austerity.

Mike said the coalition government was, "set against everything which has general, and almost universal support, from the body politic and civic society in Scotland."

But the unions were rising to that challenge, "because we know that there is a better way. A better way for jobs, for services, a living wage and fair taxes."

"The cuts we are facing across the UK are not about money but about politics. A politics that hates public services and loves to profit from privatisation.

"A politics that sees a workforce engaged in caring, educating, nursing - not as an achievement to be celebrated, but as a problem to be tackled."

He called on Scotland's councillors to find a "renewed political purpose" and find a better way than the cuts agenda.

"Councillors should not be



Photo: Louis Flood

Mike Kirby was STUC President for 2011/12. See his full speech at ww.unison-scotland.org.uk/stuc2012

passive administrators of a cuts package determined elsewhere - but champions of their areas, their authorities and the services their local populations rely on."

Mike urged the unions to meet the challenges ahead by "providing a clear vision, by organising, by arguing that good and fair employment rights, a well-trained, competent, confident and valued workforce can benefit business, and in the sector which gave me employment for 36 years, can put the 'public' in public services."

Underlining the STUC's international values, Mike said: "Whatever the challenges we face at home, we shall not forget our international responsibilities", and the problems we face "will not find resolution in a narrow national or domestic context."

"The European Trade Union Movement could play a critically important role, and we could play a greater role in that movement, in combating xenophobic nationalism."

Mike paid tribute to five women from Britain imprisoned by the

Israeli government for participating in the 'Welcome to Palestine' initiative to highlight Israel's blockade of the West Bank.

Scotland's future

Turning to the constitutional debate at home, Mike called for a 'serious debate, a mature debate'.

"It is arguable that the Scottish Parliament and the body politic in Scotland, provided by civic society, have presented a bastion of faith in the public service state."

Cooperation over competition had given us free prescriptions, school meals and university education, personal care and public transport for the elderly.

The question that needed to be asked was "How can we defend that? What sort of place do we want to live in? And then examine the limits of existing powers under the current constitutional settlement.

"And then what can the Parliament do with current powers? And then what additional powers might we need.

"The issue of the future governance of this country, defined by what kind of society we want to live in, where there is quality of life for all, in peace and progress.

"That will define the best system to achieve our goals, the best system of governance. Not historical romance. Not a reaction to the views of others.

"And born of confidence in ourselves, not a fear of future options or scare stories."

Speech praised

Mike's speech as STUC President was widely praised across unions as an eloquent expression of principles and actions the movement needed to address.

In addition, warm tributes, with a heavy-helping of merciful ribbing and humour, were paid to Mike by UNISON Scotland's John Stevenson, ex general secretary Rodney Bickerstaffe, Dave Prentis, general secretary, and Tony Higgins of the International Federation of Professional Footballers.

STUC campaign to oppose FE cuts

The STUC will coordinate a campaign to oppose Further Education cuts and to bring back national bargaining.

National bargaining would "stop the postcode lottery which has eroded pay and conditions", said UNISON's Pat Rowland.

"It is imperative that both academics and non academics have a place at the table," said Pat, calling for more to be done



Jim Snell



Pat Rowland

to ensure that bodies who receive public money are much more accountable to the communities they serve.

UNISON's Jim Snell,

speaking for Glasgow TUC, echoed Pat's calls as he slammed the tens of thousands of pounds colleges have spent on consultants. "We think this is profligate in the extreme."

He welcomed the recognition that education is delivered by a team but criticised the recommendation of the Griggs report that trade unions only get one place on the new governance structures.

Reform must improve public services, not cut costs

Users and staff must be put at the centre of public services that prioritise long term prevention and promote equality, the STUC heard.

UNISON's Stephen Smellie highlighted the 'personalisation' agenda that should be about empowerment for service users but was being used to cut costs in councils and starve third sector providers of funds.



Services should be about a person's need, not profit, Lynne Rankin

He paid tribute the members at Quarriers, led by Stephen Brown, who were forced to strike because of huge pay cuts and huge cuts in care packages.

Slamming consultants as the

'modern scourge' of public services, Stephen told delegates, "The experience is that they don't improve services, they often don't save money", as he pointed to the Highland social care integration with all the upheaval and transfers of staff with outcomes for users at best unpredictable.

UNISON's LYNNE RANKIN warned of the effects on care of the elderly. "Make no mistake, the

cuts in Council budgets, pushing up the costs in care mean a race to the bottom between public services and private profiteers.

"This is a race that starts with our members' wages and conditions and ends with poorer standards of care for your mother and the vulnerable in our communities", said Lynne.

"These services should be about a person in need, rather than a shareholder's profit".

stuc Inverness 2012

Reports by Kate Ramsden and John Stevenson

Only a summary of the debates is printed here. For full coverage of all the UNISON speakers go to the website and click on STUC 2012

We can afford decent benefits

There should be a 21st century welfare system, based on need, not moral judgements, which ensures everyone has a decent standard of living, free from poverty and low pay.

These principles will underpin the STUC's campaign to defend the welfare state against the coalition's welfare reforms, and for a fair and just taxation system.

"We have the money, these are political choices", Ann Wardlaw told the STUC as she slammed £18 billion in benefit cuts that will hit hundreds of thousands of Scottish households whether in or out of work.



Ann Wardlaw

Make universal childcare a reality

The STUC will challenge the cuts in childcare places in Scotland and campaign for the Scottish Government to expand investment in childcare as part of its economic strategy.

UNISON's Carol Ball, herself an Early Years worker, told Congress: "There are sound economic arguments for moving to a universal entitlement of early childhood education and care, publicly funded and provided to improve the lives of families in Scotland."

Real jobs, not false hopes for young

Congress threw its weight behind a wide ranging strategy to tackle youth unemployment and to increase the numbers of permanent, well paid jobs available to young people.

James Corry, of UNISON's Skills Development Scotland Branch, warned Congress to be wary of the hype and "the much lauded

25,000 modern apprenticeships target" which the government says it has reached, but which he described as "numerical smoke and mirrors".

James called for vigilance to ensure that any new opportunities offered to young people are much more than "a clutch of certificates and false hopes," and urged all trade unionists to make sure that the schemes offered are not short-term "holding corrals" used to mask the real levels of youth unemployment.



James Corry

Broken economy leads to a broken society

There is an alternative, Lilian tells STUC

We have been proved right. The ConDems have been proved wrong, UNISON Scottish Convener Lilian Macer told the STUC as she laid out a 10 point plan of alternatives to the government's failed austerity measures.

Speaking for the STUC general Council, Lilian called for policies that would rebuild the economy, create growth and demand, abandon cuts and 'genuinely' tackle tax evasion.

She called for the 'key drivers' of growth and wealth to be taken back into public ownership in a plan that included:-

- Working with partners on manufacturing strategies
- Genuine reform of the financial sector
- Green investment banks
- Transport and infrastructure investment
- Procurement that boosts employment standards and local jobs

"We have been proved right. The ConDems have been proved wrong. They said austerity would improve confidence and boost jobs and growth. We said austerity was avoidable, unfair and regressive", as she listed the failures from a double-dip recession to public service cuts undermining jobs and investment in the private sector, unemployment and disgraceful youth unemployment.

"All these factors have been caused or



We have been proved right. The ConDems have been proved wrong' Lilian Macer

exacerbated by austerity", said Lilian.

UNISON's Brenda Aitchison told Congress, "A broken economy leads to a broken society. The ConDem austerity cuts do not affect Cameron, Clegg and Osborne and their millionaire pals... they happen to someone else. But their economic 'Plan A' isn't working, just like we told them!"

So how do we fund a fairer society? Through companies and individuals 'paying their share', said Brenda.

"The gap between rich and poor continues to widen and we must address this. The STUC motion was "a blueprint for a better way".

Stark choice to heat or eat



The cost of heating and keeping warm is leaving more and more of us having to make stark choices on whether to "heat or eat", whilst the "Big Six" energy firms see their profits multiply, Susan Kennedy told the STUC.

It pledged work with the Scottish Government and other organisations to eradicate fuel poverty and campaign for a return to public ownership of the energy companies.

It pledged work with the Scottish Government and other organisations to eradicate fuel poverty and campaign for a return to public ownership of the energy companies.

Action not words to deal with housing crisis

The STUC will step up its campaign for increased and sustained investment in good quality, affordable social and council housing.



Although welcoming some of the Scottish Government's announcements and legislative changes, UNISON's Mark Ferguson warned that "it simply isn't enough. It's actions we urgently need - not words!"

Not about powers but what we do with them

As the STUC set out on a historic campaign to engage people in the debate on the future of Scotland, it should not be about what powers politicians want, but about what they want to do with them, UNISON's Stephen Smellie told Congress.

He welcomed the first minister's call for union members' questions on independence but the first of those should be: "How would we create a fairer society with lower business taxes and monetary control with the Bank of England?"

"Questions about the status quo, Devo Max and Devo Plus. Could more devolved powers allow us to take rail back into public ownership? Would a constitutional settlement within the UK guarantee an end to child poverty?"

The answer to all these questions is not a flag, a border or even a list of powers in Edinburgh and London. It is what you intend to do with these powers and for what purpose' Stephen Smellie

"The answer to all these questions is not a flag, a border or even a list of powers in Edinburgh and London. It is what you intend to do with these powers and for what purpose", said Stephen.

Pat Rafferty of Unite reminded the STUC that it won't be trade unions or politicians that decide the constitutional future.

"The constitutional issues will be resolved by the people" and they deserved as full and



wide debate of the kind of Scotland they want to see.

The question that Scotland will be eventually asked was 'too important to be left to politicians', said STUC general secretary Grahame Smith, as he urged politicians to "stop their petty squabbles and political posturing" and come up with a clear question for the people of Scotland.

"That last thing we need is a confused result." If the

politicians can't decide, he called for an independent commission to do so.

UNISON's Tommy Morrison, speaking for Clydebank TUC, said the question was simple enough, "what does it mean for our people?"

"Constitutional change in itself will not improve our members' position. What will, is democratic control of accountable public services to stimulate growth in the economy for everyone".

It was time for the Scottish Government to tell us "how independence will give us social justice", said Des Loughney from Edinburgh TUC, noting that the STUC has always had a key role in the major decisions facing Scotland. How it consults, engages and decides will have a huge influence on the vote.

Impact of an ageing workforce on AHPs

HEALTH 2012

With the retirement age increasing, Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) are concerned about the impact of the ageing workforce on their health, patient care and the career progression of newly qualified staff.



Sandra-Dee Masson

UNISON Scotland's Sandra-Dee Masson told UNISON Health Care Conference, "The NHS is not engaging new staff in the younger age groups. Cuts mean there are less vacancies or opportunities available.

"We must seek to explore options for less physically demanding roles as the retirement age increases but... we must safeguard against AHPs being forced to take a cut in hours, take part-time posts or take early retirement - actions which affects the pensions they will receive."

Show Racism the Red Card with Valspar 2002



Campbell Peden from South Ayrshire Branch hands over £100 to kids' football team Valspar 2002 FC who were going to the Foxes Cup in Scarborough. The branch gives continuing support through the Show Racism the Red Card initiative.

At a Show Racism the Red Card STUC fringe, this was one example UNISON's John Stevenson gave from across Scotland of how UNISON members had engaged young people in their areas in the anti-racism campaign.

"The focus on taking the message of hope and not hate to young people where they are, has never been more important. That is where Show Racism the Red Card - and the people who give of their time to get directly involved - is achieving something great", said John.

Next issue: New activists

With a hundred activists attending branch officer training in April, the future looks bright for UNISON Scotland organising.

Partnership working - not from weakness but from strength

HEALTH 2012

Partnership working has delivered for our members in Scotland, Gordon McKay told the UNISON Health Conference.

"It has delivered a no-compulsory redundancy agreement, a lifetime organisational change pay protection agreement including pay awards and enhancements and unsocial hours".



Gordon McKay

Gordon, one of the Scottish regional delegates, added: "But let's be honest, we do not get these agreements because the

employers or the government are good guys.

"We get these agreements in Scotland because of our strength. The employers and the government know just how strong we are.

"UNISON ran the Health Service in Scotland on November 30th. We closed every service that we chose to, and every service that ran, ran because UNISON agreed

exemptions.

"Conference, that is how you do partnership working - not from weakness, but from strength."

Conference agreed to a programme including continuing to embed partnership working at national, regional and local level and to defend and extend trade union facility time to undertake partnership working.

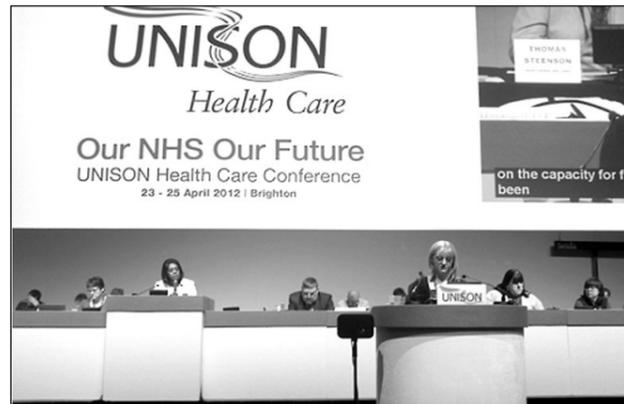
Let's get organised!

HEALTH 2012

Conference backed a Scottish Health Committee call to put more resources into organising members, building on the November 30 pensions campaign lessons.

Wilma Brown, speaking on for the Service Group Executive, said: "We must move away from the usual reactive fire fighting methods that we all dislike to more pro-active, ready for action methods.

"We must maximise our ability to engage with members, employers and the wider community around our



Wilma Brown at UNISON Health Care Conference
Health Reports from Graham Smith. See more on our website

campaigns. There is no doubt that a well organised Ward or Department will provide the members with a better workplace."

The motion called for sharing best practice, training, briefings and tools for branches to urge them to develop organising plans.

North East shares good practice with Norway



North East activists have been sharing their recent success against privatisation with a group of activists from Norway.

Branches and staff met with the 27-strong delegation from LO Stat - the Norwegian equivalent of the STUC - in April.

Aberdeen City, Aberdeen and Grampian Health branches spoke to their visitors about their campaign 'There is An Alternative'.

Activists shared stories of their successful battles against privatisation, withholding of increments, terms and conditions cuts and the pensions campaign.

Kate Ramsden, Aberdeenshire branch chair, said: "The Norwegian trade union representatives seemed very interested in our successes and we discovered we had a lot of issues in common - but we did wish that we had their success in getting 4.7 per cent pay increases in recent years!"

Retired members: Wary of health and care integration

Scotland's Retired Members' Conference took a different tack this year. Everything was kept in house!

The guest speaker, Stephen Smellie, UNISON Scotland Depute Convener, spoke on the current move to integrated Health and Social Care.

Sue Chalmers Retired Members Secretary, said: "It was good to have a speaker on a subject which we were not totally for or against. An excellent idea in principle, but delegates were very wary of the way it would be implemented. We



recognised we would have to keep a careful eye on local initiatives."

The rest of the conference was devoted to workshops on Concessionary Travel, Exploitation of Older People by

Internet/ Postal/ Phone Scams and Commissioner for Older People in Scotland - Justified?

Sue was pleased with the outcome. "We were able to tap into extensive lifetime

experience and knowledge of our own members who took the opportunity to share ideas.

"Perhaps the main talking point was the value we put on concessionary travel. The spin off in terms of health and social well-being cannot be overestimated.

"Any political party which threatens such concessions will certainly not get the older peoples' vote."

The Retired Members Committee will promote the issue at the National Retired Members Conference in October.

Sack Lothian PFI contractor

After the lights went out in operating theatres following a long catalogue of problems at the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, UNISON has called on Lothian Health Board to sack the PFI contractor Consort.

Branch Secretary Tam Waterson said; "The Board say Consort's failings can no longer be tolerated. It's taken them over a decade - but we are delighted that they have come round to our way of thinking."

Challenge Gypsy Traveller discrimination

UNISON Scotland has launched a guide to raise awareness of the discrimination faced by Gypsy Travellers and to offer advice to members on engaging with the communities.

UNISON produced the booklet - Make a Difference! - in partnership with Gypsy Travellers. It challenges the prejudices surrounding the community, dispels some of the common myths and provides occupational guidance for members. www.unison-scotland.org.uk/gypsytravellers/



The reality of sickness absence

Nearly half of public sector workers polled in a recent UNISON Scotland survey said sickness absence policies encourage staff to turn up ill or injured at work.

The findings are the result of a UNISON survey which looks at the reality of sickness absence policies in Scotland and provides further evidence to dispel the myth that public sector workers are prone to taking sick leave.

See the full report on the website.

We want to hear your news

SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories. Contact: John Stevenson (Editor) 0131 558 7488, webmanager@unison-edinburgh.org.uk or Trisha Hamilton t.hamilton@unison.co.uk