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revitalising our public services

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LOCAL AND PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS: SCOTLAND DECIDES - WELL ALMOST...

New Executive brings new opportunities - and challenges

by Chris Bartter
Communications Officer

The outcome of the recent Scottish Elections has major implications for UNISON in Scotland, says Matt Smith, UNISON's Scottish Secretary.

"The important thing to grasp, is that UNISON's policy of engaging with political parties across the spectrum continues."

He said, "UNISON is keen to sit down with the new Executive and discuss with them ways forward for our members, our services and our policies."

UNISON ran a strong campaign during the election, primarily promoting the role of Scotland's public services.

Thousands of leaflets and posters were distributed via UNISON branches urging members to question their candidates and supplying the questions.

In a new development a major sponsorship was undertaken with the Herald. Their pre-election supplement and their election website all carried the UNISON message - as will the new government poster due on 24 May.

An opinion poll commissioned by UNISON confirmed that the Scottish public continued to value their public services and contin-

"We want to engage in serious discussion with the new government."

Matt Smith used to want them democratically delivered - rather than by private firms.

This was backed up by a poll for the BBC which put the public delivery of public services as the number one issue for electors.

In a new development separate material was produced featuring the important role UNISON members play in protecting and enhancing the environment and the increasing role that UNISON as a union is playing in the fight against climate chaos.

This message and other policy issues had a struggle getting into the press.

Matt Smith said, "In the tight race between Labour and the SNP, third party campaigns like ours faced an uphill battle to get press coverage. However, branches and members picked up the message - and candidates were left in no doubt where UNISON stood.

"While we need to re-examine ways of more effectively getting the message to our members faster, there is no doubt we had an impact."

Analysis of SNP manifesto commitments illustrate many of



Photo: Alan Wylie

**Matt Smith
UNISON Scottish Secretary
"We need also to recognise the importance of dialogue with newly elected councils, most of whom will be coalitions."**

the issues that UNISON is likely to want to discuss with the new government.

Public Service Trusts and the future of PFI; the threat of financial cuts and removing tax raising powers from local government are indicative of possible opportunities and challenges for our members.

Matt Smith is clear that issues need to be raised constructively.

"We want to engage in serious discussion with the new govern-



**Alex Salmond
New First Minister**

ment." He said "We currently are drawing up key issues to raise.

"This will be a minority government, and some issues will be put on the back burner because the SNP know they will not win them.

And when they do take on legislation - opportunities are there to work across the political spectrum - something we've been doing for some time.

"UNISON is not in opposition: we are looking to constructively engage with the SNP government, and with all of the political parties in the Scottish parliament to pursue our policies.

"We need also to recognise the importance of dialogue with newly elected councils, most of whom will be coalitions."

Health seminar sets agenda

UNISON Scotland health activists gathered on the weekend of the 5 and 6 May for two days policy discussion centred around change in political landscape - setting UNISON's agenda for next year.

Major issues covered were Pay, Equal Pay compensation claims (page 2) and PFI (page 3).

Presentations were given on the Delivering for Health programme from Colin Cook of the Scottish Executive's Health Department and Mark Hellowell from the Centre for International Public Health Policy at Edinburgh University on the impact of PFI in Scotland.

Conference

As we go to print, the Communications and Campaigns Committee is working on briefings for delegates to National Conference in Brighton from 19-22 June

The Scottish position on motions, a guide for delegates and other information will go out soon and will be on the website at www.unison-scotland.org.uk/conf2007.

New ballot as Quarriers strike action pays off

The first ever day of strike action in Quarriers - one of Scotland's largest social care charities - has paid off with management coming up with an improved offer.

After consistently refusing to include a flat rate element in their offer, they have now offered £400 or 2.5% whichever is the greater. Following further negotiations a proposed settle-

ment for the year ahead has been reached on the basis of an extra day's annual leave for all and a further 2.5% wage increase from 1/10/07 so members won't have to wait the usual months to get their rise.

Simon Macfarlane, Regional Officer said, "This unprecedented action by Quarriers members shows three things, firstly that when staff in the voluntary sector organise themselves



in their union they can win important improvements, secondly there is a genuine funding crisis in the sector and we need to get the

Executive and local authorities to fully fund services provided by the sector and lastly, that low pay is unacceptable whether you work for a charity or not."

The improved offer is being recommended to members in a ballot to conclude on 30 May.

UNISON has won flat rate elements in other deals in the voluntary sector recently including Enable and the Mungo Foundation.

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Health equal pay claims - next steps taken as training arranged for June

by Nicola Morris
Organising Assistant

The level of potential equal pay/back pay claims in the NHS in Scotland was a major issue at the Scottish Health Policy Seminar earlier this month

Achieving equal pay across all sectors and bargaining groups has been a key priority for UNISON over the last few years. In Scotland, this priority is currently presenting members, activists and

staff with one of the biggest challenges they have faced.

Being a member of UNISON has already given many people strength in numbers and a real opportunity to win equal pay through negotiations or, where necessary, through making a legal claim.

UNISON has had many successes in such claims, both at individual and group level.

Back in 1996 for example five domestic assistants employed at Belfast's Royal Victoria Hospital claimed equal pay, comparing

themselves to male porters and groundsmen at the hospital.

Eleven years later, the number of claims lodged had risen to over 900 and the health board eventually agreed a settlement, estimated at over £1 million.

UNISON continues to pursue back pay claims in the health service.

Thousands of health members in Scotland have made enquiries about potential equal pay/back claims, many of them asking why they have not received back money when some colleagues in

local government have.

UNISON has many health members' cases lodged at tribunal and work is progressing to see these through to a successful conclusion.

Members who have made enquiries about claims will be contacted by UNISON Scotland's lawyers, Thompson's in the next few months.

In order to oversee activity, the Scottish Health Committee has established a small working group to work in conjunction with UNISON Scotland's Pay

Equality Group and develop an equal pay strategy in Health.

In recent months, the focus on equal pay has been on local government, and a number of training sessions for activists in relation to dealing with equal pay have been held.

However, work is now in progress to meet the specific training needs of health activists.

As a first step, a two day training session is being held on the 14/15 June 2007 at the Beardmore Hotel in Clydebank.

Anti racist campaigning keeps BNP vote low in Scotland

by Chris Bartter
Communications Officer

A further key element of UNISON's Election Campaign was to continue our anti-racist campaigning, targeting the BNP to maximise the vote against them and to try and stop their politics of hatred gaining a foothold here.

Traditionally the BNP have not fared well in Scotland, but over recent elections they have been increasing their campaigning and the need for UNISON vigilance is greater than ever.

This election they stood four candidates in every regional list, cynically importing paper candidates from England to make up numbers so they would qualify for a

Party Political election broadcast.

A number of papers commented on the hypocrisy of this tactic for a campaign that was titled 'Local People First', and one commentator pointed out that one of their candidates was simultaneously standing as a councillor in South Gloucestershire!

UNISON produced a series of leaflets and posters urging people to be careful with their vote and to stop the BNP.

They were primarily aimed at members, but were also used by branches for street stalls in Ayrshire, Aberdeenshire, Glasgow and Stirling, where BNP candidates had surfaced in Council elections as well.

Advertisements were placed - with some difficulty - in local and some national papers - again tar-

getting these areas, and direct mailshots sent to UNISON members in these wards.

The restriction of the BNP vote to less than 2% was welcome as was their trouncing in council elections, but Dave Watson - UNISON Scotland's Head of Policy - warns that we cannot be complacent.

"Whilst the BNP vote remains marginal it is growing. Of course they stood in more areas this time so it is not a fair comparison but in an election that marginalised all the minority parties the BNP gained votes. We will not be relaxing."

Right: UNISON members Bettina Eyre (Grampian Health Branch) and Biff Barrow (Aberdeenshire Branch) hand out anti-BNP leaflets in Turriff.



Scottish power members 'green up' workplace

by Fiona Montgomery
Information Development Officer

Members of UNISON's Scottish Power branch are involved in greening up one of their workplaces.

They have teamed up with Prospect in the joint TUC/Scottish Power Green Workplace project in Lanarkshire, aiming to save energy and raise environmental awareness.

Initiatives at the New Alderstone House site in Bellshill include a staff survey, an energy awareness day and a training workshop for those interested in becoming green reps.

Caroline Molloy, of the TUC Green Workplaces project, joined UNISON's Scottish Organiser Dave Watson and local members for the energy awareness day.

Staff were able to calculate their carbon footprint, learn about green workplace initiatives and see a film of TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber interviewing Al Gore.



Dave Watson and Caroline Molloy with the staff survey poster

The survey found that staff felt there was room for improvement in personal behaviour, at work and by the unions.

A total of 50% thought their behaviour at work was 'quite green', but only 11% thought the organisational behaviour was 'quite green'.

Half were not aware of Scottish Power's environmental policy and 53% of union members didn't know what action the union was taking on

the environment.

Proposals for management action included video conferencing, improved bus services and location, car sharing, action to tackle energy waste on heating, air conditioning, lighting and use of computers. (See Al Gore's comments on how trade unionists can act on climate change at: www.tuc.org.uk/sustainable-workplace/algore.cfm?theme=sustainableworkplace)

Stirling branch in Belarus link

UNISON members and the UNISON branch in Stirling are combining to ensure that one of its members can carry on the valuable work he has been doing for children in Belarus.

Brian Smith (a UNISON member and receptionist in Stirling's Environment Services) does voluntary work for a charity called Buskit which helps children in Belarus.

Not simply by donating now and again, but by giving up his own time and going out to Belarus every July to physically help the children there.

- Buskit delivers 25 tonnes of aid, food, clothes, beds, toys, toiletries etc. each year.
- They perform concerts for the children who have leukemia
- They do playgroups/ games/ music groups for the children who are in remission
- They paint hospital wards with cartoon characters
- They hand out toys at hospitals

They donate all the money raised to keep the charity hospital in Belarus operational. Without their funding it would have closed three or four years ago.

Each member of the charity

needs to raise £650 to cover their own costs and each year this gets harder. This year his workmates have rallied round and are using a 'dress down' day on Friday 25 May to help Brian continue the tremendous work he and the charity do.

The Stirling Branch has agreed to donate £250 (or any shortfall) to the appeal.

Andy Douglas, UNISON Branch Treasurer said "This was an important decision for the branch to take. I have spoken to Brian and he is delighted with the sum, and has promised to report back on this year's trip."

Andy also said he is proposing that Stirling UNISON assist the charity on an annual basis.

The UNISON money will be specifically used for 18 fold-up beds. These beds will be used for the parents of the sick children who come to stay over. Previously they would have slept on the floor.

If any other branches or individuals wish to donate towards this very rewarding charity please send your donations to Buskit at UNISON Office, Room 006, Viewforth, Stirling FK8 2ET. Brian can be contacted on smithb2@stirling.gov.uk

Hope that Classroom Assistants will get strong backing from report

by Chris Bartter
Communications Officer

Hopes are rising that an influential report due out later this month will prove to be a valuable resource in UNISON's fight for equal pay for classroom assistants in Scotland.

The Equal Opportunities Commission is due to publish the final part of their Formal

Investigation into Scottish Classroom Assistants, and it is clear that the extension of the investigation into Classroom Assistants in Secondary and Special Schools, has confirmed and expanded on the results found when the jobs of Primary School CAs were investigated.

That research showed that they were working at high levels of responsibility - including plan-

ning and organising learning activities, but being paid at the bottom end of local government pay. Almost all work five days a week, however their hours are less than 'normal' full-time hours and they work only during term-time. This reduces further their annual and monthly pay so that in many cases it is little more than the statutory minimum wage.

Glyn Hawker, UNISON's

Scottish Organiser (Bargaining) said "We are aware that Classroom Assistants do a wide range of jobs, jobs that can contribute significantly to the learning and teaching of children.

"We have said for some time that they are undervalued for what they do and are looking forward to the final piece of the jigsaw that will confirm this."

The initial research found that

Primary School Classroom Assistants are 99% women, who mostly work (and are paid for) term time only. They typically are aged 31-50. However their salary is paid over the whole year resulting in an hourly rate of between £5.05 and £8.93. The current minimum wage is £5.05 per hour for workers 22 and over.

The final report is due at the end of this month.

Back to school for South Lanarkshire union activists

by Jane Aitchison
Communications & Campaigns Ctte

South Lanarkshire UNISON activists, Tom Clark, Loraine Barkley, and Charlie McLeish have been taking Unions into Schools, raising young people's awareness of the role that trade unions will have to play in their future working lives.

Hitting on health and safety, the minimum wage and union representation and negotiation, the relevance of trade unions today couldn't be made any clearer.

Unions into Schools is part of the Scottish Executive's Enterprise in Education agenda. The STUC has co-ordinated and managed the programme of school visits for participants from a number of different unions, including UNISON.

Tom Clark said, "A few months back, I noticed an article looking for activists to train for the Unions into School programme. Myself, Loraine and Charlie all signed up and duly did the training. That was the easy bit. We then had the "pleasure" of trying to talk to a group of S4, S5 and S6 pupils."



Photo: STUC

Photo: Participants including South Lanarkshire UNISON's Loraine Barkley (Education Officer, centre with glasses), Charlie McLeish (Health & Safety Officer, to Loraine's right), Tom Clark (Service & Conditions Officer) receive award for completion of Unions into Schools training.

"However, having now visited around a dozen schools, I can say it has been a pleasure. Apart from one exception, it has been a fulfilling and rewarding experience."

"Whilst I expected classes of screaming weans, we have found pleasant, articulate and knowledgeable young adults. Whilst this session is now ended we intend to restart in the autumn

with the new school year. We're looking forward to it."

Linda Henry, a UNISON Shop Steward from Edinburgh participated in visit to Leith Academy

Terry Anderson, STUC Union and Community Development Officer said "I have to say that the help of UNISON reps was invaluable. Tom Clark and Loraine Barkley have helped

enormously in co-ordinating visits and helping to assist new reps, and Tom participated in one of the very first visits. Loraine has also assisted in the statistical evaluation of the schools project, which will be useful for taking to Scottish Executive".

"Charlie McLeish has brought a lot of Hand Safety experience to the project."

93% strike vote beats trust attempt to tear up conditions

by Mark Ferguson
Renfrewshire Branch Secretary

Attempts by Renfrewshire Leisure Limited (RLL) to unilaterally tear up terms and conditions on overtime, travel costs and dealing with detriment have been stopped by a massive 92.9% consultative strike vote by UNISON members.

Renfrewshire Leisure Limited was established in 2002 to take over the council's leisure services.

Arising out of a dispute on the grading of head leisure attendants and a restructuring exercise that left some members facing pay cuts, previously progressing negotiations broke down when the new trust chief executive introduced unilateral changes.

These included reducing overtime rates to plain time and removing excess travel expenses, claiming that they had union agreement. RLL also failed to honour their commitment to work with those suffering detriment as a result

UNISON Members attended a meeting where a consultation ballot was taken. 92.9% of members voting returned a 'Yes' vote to undertake action up to and including strike action.

Armed with this the Branch negotiators returned to Management and won:-

- a partial backdating of the head leisure attendant upgrading
- an extension of the protection for staff losing money, where RLL have been unable to resolve their detriment situation. All parties must be involved in assisting members eradicate detriment.
- Reinstatement of all overtime rates and other terms & conditions.

Mark Ferguson, Branch Secretary said, "The strength of our members and commitment from the branch ensured we reached a satisfactory conclusion. This proves that UNISON is still effective in representing members who are transferred."

Let Larbert hospital be the last PFI

by John Gallacher
Regional Officer

The PFI deal for the new Larbert Hospital was only signed the week before the Scottish Parliament Elections.

The costs of that project have already increased by 50% from the £200 million in the outline business case to £300 million by October 2006.

Now that exclusive negotiations are continuing with the preferred bidder, the taxpayer can expect the costs to rocket still further.

Cost increases in England at this stage range from 12.5 % to

393.9%! This project will also see the privatisation of cleaning, catering etc. despite the fact that even the UK Treasury now discourages such privatisation as damaging to the quality of service.

A recent Health Group Policy Seminar called for the new Scottish executive to place a moratorium on new PFI projects. UNISON wants a public inquiry into PFI and demands that the issue feature high on their programme of government.

Tom Waterson, Chair of UNISON NHS Scotland said,

"Implementing the plans for NHS Scotland requires revenue invest-



Tom Waterson

ment for community multi-disciplinary teams. Trained staff are needed, not rip-off mortgages which merely deliver millions of pounds of public money to private shareholders."

The seminar heard evidence from Mark Hellowell of Edinburgh University's Public Policy Research Unit, detailing the harm PFI is doing to budgets and services.

Namely

- Boards with PFI projects pay twice as much to use their buildings than those paying normal capital charges.

- By 2027/8, Lothian will be paying an annual PFI charge of £68million; Lanarkshire will be paying £60.1 million.

- Five major new NHS projects - each with a value of over £100million - are in the planning stage (Glasgow Southern General/Sick Kids; Glasgow Royal; Fife District General; Forth Valley General; Lothian - Investing in Change). The annual costs of PFI in NHS Scotland will rise from £107.1 million to £400 million.

- After this year new Treasury rules state that boards cannot continue their creative accountancy of transferring capital to revenue expenditure. Deficits will spiral.

- Evidence from England says that PFI is a major cause of the financial crises and service cuts besetting the NHS there. Tom added, "PFI is like unexploded Trident missiles in NHS Scotland. If we allow more to go off then it will do untold damage to the delivery of NHS services for generations to come".

(Statistics based on a presentation to UNISON by Mark Hellowell, University of Edinburgh, 10 May 2007)

Charter for care staff employed through 'direct payments'

UNISON Scotland has agreed a landmark joint statement setting out its position on direct payments with a number of key Scottish disabled people's organisations.

The agreement was made with the Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living (GCIL), the Lothian Centre for Independent Living (LCIL), the Scottish Personal Assistant Employers Network (SPAEN) and the Scottish Consortium of Direct Payments Support Organisations (SCDP-SO)

Stephen Smellie, Chair of UNISON Scotland's Social Work

Issues Group speaking at the launch at the GCIL said:

"This agreement has been introduced because there have, in the past, been misunderstandings between UNISON and disabled people's organisations on our respective positions on Direct Payments.

"We are also agreeing to promote trade union membership amongst those staff employed via Direct Payments, and to sit down with the employers' groups and draw up good practice terms and conditions for people employed through direct payments."

The organisations also promise to campaign for increased levels

of funding from the Scottish Executive for independent living support. And for that support to be high enough to cover decent pay, training, holidays and pensions.

Etienne d'Aboville of the GCIL said "This clearly states our agreement that direct payments are an important option for disabled people, enabling them to purchase services directly and to support independent living."

Peter Brawley of the Scottish Personal Assistant Employers Network said "These payments are often vital for the person concerned but they are not a substitute for other public services, and



Photo: Alan Wylie

UNISON's Mandy McDowall and Stephen Smellie (centre) at the launch with Etienne d'Aboville and Peter Brawley

are currently set too low to cover the full cost of employing staff at a decent level of pay, training and

holidays. We will join with UNISON in arguing for more realistic payments"

British Sign Language course in Stornoway

by Ali McLennan

Secretary, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Branch

Eight staff in the Western Isles from the Council and NCH Scotland have taken part in a five day course covering Introduction to BSL and BSL at School, College or Work.

Both units were assessed by the Council for Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (CACDP).

Passing a third unit, Conversational BSL, would give a CACDP certificate at Level 1 in the National Language Standards and it is hoped that this can be done later.

It is also possible to progress to Levels 2 and 3, but the students feel they are a long way from applying for a job on See Hear!

In 2005, the STUC Highlands and Islands Skills and Lifelong Learning Team, in partnership with UNISON, the FBU, the Rail Union Learning Project and Highland Deaf Communication Project developed the Sign Here initiative, a deaf awareness project for union members across the Highlands.

The project received funding from



Back: Donald Macdonald, Marion Eadie, Katie Macleod, (all CnES) Morag Maclean (NCH), Sandra McLaughlin (NCH) Front: Stephanie Thomas (NCH), Nikki Errington (CnES), Mary Whittaker and Marco, and Sandra Dodson (CnES/NCH)

the European Social Fund and the Scottish Executive (through the Scottish Union Learning Fund).

In 2006, the project found eight Employers as new partners - Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Highland Council, H & I Fire & Rescue Service,

Grampian Fire & Rescue Service, Caledonian MacBrayne, First Scotrail, NHS Highland and Scottish Ambulance.

UNISON locally supported the students by supplying tea & coffee and soup & sandwiches.

Running the Race for Life

Four members of UNISON's Inverness Resource Centre staff completed the Race for Life 5K held on Sunday 13 May in Inverness, writes Jane Atkinson



They were running for Cancer Research UK, and a wee reminder, if you wish to sponsor their efforts, it is not too late and this can be done on line at www.raceforlifesponsor.org/unipink. Angela MacLaren, Cathy Mitchell, Philippa Clark and me, along with my daughter, Zoe aged 6 - who substituted for Amanda MacMorran who was not able to make it - started the race.

Angela, Zoe and Jane ran the whole race in a time of 39.12. Needless to say Zoe is delighted with herself and it cost me a fortune in rewards, while Angela was pleased that the pace was slower than last year!

Phil and Cathy walked in just under an hour and had a great time. Weather was perfect, cool but bright and a great time was had.

Many thanks to those who have already sponsored us.

Social work staff should get credit, not constant criticism

by Kate Ramsden

Communications & Campaigns Ctee

Social work staff in Scotland should get credit for their excellent work to support the most vulnerable people in our society, instead of constant criticism in the press and media.

This was the call from Stephen Smellie, Chair of the UNISON Social Work Issues Group, speaking at the Holyrood Conference, "What do we want from Social Work?"

The conference, held in February, considered the challenges for social work in the 21st Century in relation to funding, regulation and service provision.

Stephen told a packed conference hall in Dynamic Earth that every day social work staff make a difference. They help people to cope in traumatic circumstances and they deliver quality services

to children and families.

"Every day social workers assess risk and find ways to manage the risks so that children and vulnerable adults can live safely," he added.

He paid tribute to managers who effectively manage multi-million pound budgets and multi-disciplinary teams, and to the Local Authorities who ensure that as much money as possible is allocated to provide services to the most needy.

"There are a million more success stories in social work than disasters. We should move the discussion on to look at what works, what is successful and what is rewarding," he added, calling on the inspection process to focus on highlighting good practice, to share what works and to promote a positive image of social work.

"UNISON members are committed to delivering improved

and effective services. And therefore we are not content to defend the status quo, even when that is quite good," he told the conference.

He welcomed the framework for regulation and inspection but warned that it needs to be streamlined to ensure it avoids duplication and has the least impact on available resources.

"Social work needs more money. It needs more and better rewarded staff, more training, more foster carers, more residential beds, more day services, more home helps, more specialist services for children who have been abused, more respite care to give families a break."

He rejected criticism of social work staff for not taking children into care when there is nowhere to place them; or for not visiting children enough when there are not enough social workers to do this.

Stephen spoke of the role of the UNISON Social Work Issues Group set up in response to the crisis in social work five years ago with a remit to play a full and proactive role in addressing the problems in social work.

"Our most important contribution is to give a voice to the thousands of social work staff who not only know the problems in social work but also know the answers, know the good practice from which we can learn and have the ability to drive forward improvements in the services we provide."

He welcomed much of the 21st Century Review of Social Work, especially the widespread

consultation with service users and front-line staff.

He welcomed the emphasis on the role of social worker as an accountable professional worker, but stressed that accountability is not a one-way street.

"UNISON wants to make it clear that no-one can reasonably hold a social worker accountable if they have not created the circumstances to allow that professional worker to use their skills effectively.

"We want to open a discussion on how we ensure that workers have effective supervision and supports and reasonable workloads."

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