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Scotland *in* UNISON

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT PAY CAMPAIGN

Reject the 3 year pay cut - it doesn't add up

by Malcolm Burns
Communications Officer

UNISON Scotland has called on local government members to reject a final pay offer far below the rate of inflation.

The three year deal of 1% this year, 0% next year and 0.5% the year after is effectively a pay cut. Inflation was running at 4.4% at the time of the offer.

Dougie Black, who led the UNISON side in talks over the 2010 pay claim said: "Our members will be extremely angry at this offer. It does not meet our claim in any way."

Stephanie Herd, chair of UNISON's Scottish Local Government Committee said: "A 1% pay rise will have a damaging effect on women's pay and will widen the gap between local government pay and the rest of economy."

A single year pay claim

of 3% or £600 had been sought by the unions. The claim also demanded a £7 per hour 'Living Wage' minimum.

Employer's side CoSLA made a final offer of a three year deal - 1% from April 2010, 0% from April 2011 and 0.5% from April 2012.

UNISON negotiators and the Scottish Joint Council Trade Union Side (UNISON, Unite and GMB) all unanimously agreed to recommend rejection of this offer.

Dougie said: "It is now very important that we build a campaign of support for this position amongst the membership."

"Branches must seek the views of members, and also consider the type of action required to force the employers to improve upon this offer."

Branches are now organising local meetings to discuss the campaign and reasons for rejecting the offer.

A ballot on rejection will



Offer will have a damaging effect on women's pay and will widen the gap between local government pay and the rest of the economy' *Stephanie Herd*

then take place between 21 June and 29 July.

Dougie said: "A high return and a strong rejection will show the employers just how angry members are about the poor offer they have made."

"The employers will then be asked again to re-

open talks and make an improved offer to meet our claim.

"If they refuse or there is no improvement, a further ballot of members will take place on taking some form of industrial action."

"The industrial action strategy will be

determined by branches and again members will have an opportunity through their branch to influence the strategy."

● **STOP PRESS** - Inflation up again: Latest figures show Retail Price Inflation in the year to April was 5.3% - up from 4.4% in March.



YOUR VOTE IS YOUR VOICE



UNISON General Secretary ballot

The ballot is now open for the election of the union's General Secretary and closes 11 June.

The General Secretary leads the union and speaks up for you. That's why it is so important that you have your say in choosing the person who leads your union.

The Scottish region agreed to nominate **Dave Prentis** (pictured), General Secretary, who was also nominated by another 10 Regional Councils, 371 branches, 7 service groups and the National Executive.

The other candidates are **Paul Holmes** (Kirklees Branch) nominated by 52 branches and **Roger Bannister** (Knowsley Branch) nominated by 31 branches.

Please use your vote. To find out more go to www.unison.org.uk/elections/gselections.asp



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Tel: 0141 342 2842



Health cuts: Thousands of jobs to go across Scotland

by Malcolm Burns
Communications Officer

The NHS in Scotland faces job losses of 5,000 or more as budget pressures mount.

Three large health boards, Greater Glasgow & Clyde, Lothian and Tayside reported to the Scottish government in May that thousands of jobs would be cut to make financial savings.

Tam Waterson, Chair of UNISON Scotland's Health Committee said:

"We are concerned at the scale of these planned job cuts. The Scottish

Government's commitment to ensure no compulsory redundancies is welcome, but it is clear that we face deep cuts which will impact on our vital health services".

Greater Glasgow & Clyde will cut 1,252 full-time jobs over the next year and a half. The proposed cuts include 669 nurses and midwives, 116 support staff and 315 clerical workers.

The Board claims these cuts are part of a "programme of modernisation of services".

NHS Lothian, the second biggest board, plans to cut 700 jobs this

year and a further 1,300 next year.

Tayside will cut around 500 whole-time equivalent jobs over the next 12 months. The Board claims that standards will not be compromised and front-line staff will not be "jeopardised."

If all the other health boards follow suit, over 5,000 jobs would be lost across the NHS in Scotland by the end of 2011.

The NHS Scotland requires to save £270 million in the current financial year to balance the books following a

no compulsory redundancy pledge welcome but we face deep cuts which will impact on vital health services'

Tam Waterson



tight Scottish budget settlement in February.

Meanwhile the health service faces rising inflation and increased demand.

Further pressure on funding is likely after the new coalition government at Westminster

implements its emergency budget in June.

The £6bn immediate cuts to UK public spending promised by the Tories during the election and now agreed by the LibDems will have inevitable knock-on effects in Scotland.

Chris Bartter has left the building

by John Stevenson
SiU Editor

In a week where retiring Scottish Communications Officer Chris Bartter attended what seemed like his 17th farewell party, it is time to formally recognise that he has at last left the building.

At the last Scottish Council meeting, I embarrassed him by saying: "Chris has been communications in

Scotland and communications has been Chris. The union owes a great debt to him".

It was met by one of the warmest rounds of applause ever heard from delegates.

Mind you, we *had* been paying him for the job but nevertheless he always delivered above and beyond.

The essence of a vibrant union that delivers for its members is a real partnership between lay and full time officers,

each complementing the other.

Chris, with his lay background, his flair for communications and his skills with written word and design, managed that partnership superbly.

A network of contacts across the country, enthusing branches in campaign work and being there when support was needed have all been characteristics of Chris's tenure.

Alongside that, a keen eye for what the media

will latch onto has made sure that UNISON Scotland has been rarely out of the news.

From his early days as a steward in Glasgow libraries, to Service Conditions Officer in the branch, to Chair of NALGO's Publicity Committee to lay District Secretary and then on to full time Communications Officer, Chris has devoted enormous energies to UNISON and the trade union movement.

And he managed to do



Chris Bartter

it and still be liked. An accomplishment indeed.

SiU wishes him all the best for the future.

The search is now on for Chris's replacement with Malcolm Burns and Fiona Montgomery covering until the process is complete.

Health Boards Vote

Voting is under way in pilots for elected Health Boards in Fife and Dumfries and Galloway. The ballot closes on 10 June.

Voting is by single transferable vote so instead of marking a cross against one candidate, you put a 1 against your first choice, 2 against second choice, 3 against third choice and so on, voting for as many or as few candidates as you wish.

UNISON's Kevin O'Neil (pictured) is standing in the Fife election.



New Government - What comes next for public services?

COALITION ANALYSIS

Will you be one in half a million?

The Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) estimates that half a million jobs will go, on top of the current unemployment figures of 2.5 million, as a result of projected cuts in government spending.

We've been promised an Emergency Budget on 22 June. This will be the set piece announcement, in which Chancellor George Osborne shows the markets he is tough enough to deliver the deep cuts they are looking for.

The Tories want to take another £6 billion out of public spending in this current financial year to show they can reduce the deficit faster than New Labour.

Before the election the Liberal Democrats argued, rightly, that this would hit the recovery and increase the risk of a "double dip" recession.

In April Vince Cable said: "Cutting too soon and pushing the economy back into recession will make the deficit worse, as tax receipts fall and benefit payments rise. The Conservatives' so-called efficiency savings are particularly dangerous. They have no clue where or how these 'efficiencies' will be made, making it likely they will be nothing more than a

Scottish Convenor, MIKE KIRBY, reviews the headlines from the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition agreement, and the impact on our members at work.



smokescreen for job cuts."

But they've obviously changed their mind, the price of a place at the Cabinet table. The new coalition agreement states that "cuts of £6 billion to non-frontline services can be made within the financial year 2010-11".

The Tories based their assertion that such savings were possible on statements they extracted from



New Labour's advisors on their own efficiency drive but said that an additional £12 billion of efficiency savings could be made immediately.

£37 billion in cuts

This £12bn (half of which would supposedly be reinvested in frontline services, leaving £6bn as an absolute cut in total spend), is on top of £30bn annual efficiency savings already extracted from public sector since 2007 under New Labour's last Spending Review and an additional £5bn extra savings already announced for this year in New Labour's 2009 Budget.

The Financial Times estimated

on the previous government's plans, that £37.4 billion would have to be cut from public spending by 2014 if the deficit as promised is to be halved.

That's 25% of the whole NHS budget, half the cost of the basic state pension, 10 times the NHS dentists' bill, three quarters of the defence budget.

And remember, the pressure of public sector cuts is likely to hit hardest on women, often the low earners, as workers and family users of services.

It is important to be aware that the Emergency Budget will be a mere foretaste of the cuts that can be expected in the autumn Comprehensive Spending Review.

What budget will say

We can expect it to include:

- deep cuts or very tight restrictions to funding and provision in health, education, social services, policing, housing, and throughout our public services

- further plans on imposing pay restraint across the public sector beyond the pay freeze already announced for 2011-12

- recommendations of the "independent review" of public sector pensions.

While the focus will inevitably be on cuts and spending, there may be some minor consolation in

the coalition proposals in areas of social policy and civil liberties.

They will implement the Calman Commission proposals on more tax powers for Holyrood but no date has been set.

While there is no mention of scrapping the Barnett formula, which provides Scotland's budget, it is not clear what the knock-on effect of £6bn cuts will be and when.

The shine of restoring the state pensions link with earnings is severely tarnished by raising state pension age to 66, not sooner than 2016 for men and 2020 for women. The review of public sector pensions will threaten final salary schemes and closing schemes to new entrants.

Criticism of the previous government's attacks on civil liberties may be addressed, with the end to the detention of children at Dungavel, although they will still be detained in England, and the scrapping of ID cards and future plans for biometric passports.

Some will question the absurdity of the coalition, that it will be unsatisfactory and short-lived.

However, we may also ask "Did New Labour pass the poisoned chalice?" Did they resist Lib Dem demands to cut the deficit further and faster?

UNISON must lead fight

Some in New Labour would be opposed instinctively to any form of proportional representation, and/or power-sharing. They may say that the coalition will have its internal weaknesses and will crash and burn.

However, with the prospect of a five year fixed term parliament, described by William Hague as "the locking together of the coalition" and a 55% threshold for a vote of no confidence, we could have five years of pain.

With unemployment continuing to rise, the priority must be to secure a recovery from the recession. Public services must be at the core of that recovery plan.

Across the UK there is a clear majority against deep cuts in public expenditure.

It is more important than ever that UNISON is seen to be at the forefront of the campaign to protect and expand public services and jobs.

Edinburgh steps up campaign against sell-offs

UNISON's City of Edinburgh Branch has stepped up its anti-outsourcing drive with two recent half page newspaper adverts urging the public to join the campaign.

The "Our City's Not For Sale" campaign exposes Council privatisation plans that could see a fifth of the workforce outsourced, probably to huge corporations.

"Services like front line customer contact, revenue and benefits, catering, cleaning, security, cleansing and vehicle and grounds maintenance, along



with HR are all up for grabs with cultural services, transport and legal services also being primed for outsourcing through multi-million pound 'strategic partnerships' or 'joint ventures' - privatisation, to you and me", explained Agnes Petkevicius, UNISON Edinburgh Branch Secretary.

The adverts point out that

- Of the 18 'comparable' councils used to justify the outsourcing, few are comparable in any way with the capital and one is the smallest metropolitan borough in England.

- In most of the 18 contracts, there is *no evidence of any benefits* being achieved.

- At least one has been severely criticised on quality, others have lost money and services have had to be brought back in house.

- Even the Audit Commission has warned about such ventures and says councils should consider 'other options to transform service delivery including reforming in-

house provision'.

"But if all that is not enough, just ask the obvious question.

If the council provides services without having to make a profit, **how can a private company save money and make a profit on top?**

"With shareholders and big executives to pay, how can they do it cheaper?"

"Simple. By cutting quality. By cutting the service. By cutting the wages and conditions of some of the lowest paid staff.

Or - as other councils have discovered - by charging more!

"So your tax pays for profits instead of services." says the advert.

Glasgow culture and leisure staff step up action

Two further days of strike action were planned at Culture and Sport Glasgow as staff stepped up their dispute as SiU went to press

Staff were also set to begin an overtime ban from 21 May.

Culture and Sport Glasgow (CSG), the arms length company set up by Glasgow City Council, intend to cut the pay of

some staff and institute a pay freeze for the rest. There are also cuts planned in public holidays and overtime rates.

In a message to CSG UNISON members Glasgow City Branch Secretary Brian Smith said: "All the trade unions in CSG are united in their opposition to these attacks on their members' pay and

conditions.

"We have tried to negotiate with CSG but we have been left with no option other than to use strike action in an effort to defend ourselves.

"Our members provide culture and sport services across Glasgow and we take no pleasure in the wide disruption that strike action will cause.

"CSG was established at "arms length" from

Glasgow City Council to obtain a tax advantage, to draw in private money and grants from charitable trusts. It has failed to live up to the promise.

"Staff at Culture and Sport Glasgow, many of them low paid, should not have to pay for the failures of CSG and Glasgow City Council.

"And working people in general should not be

asked to pay for the bail out of the banks and the mistakes of bankers.

"It is important that all trade unionists and working people stand together at this time.

"Ultimately the standard of service which the public will receive in their libraries, sports centres and community centres will be affected if workers' wages and conditions are cut."

UNISON Scottish solidarity with victimised US Sodexo workers

by John Stevenson
SiU Editor

Lanarkshire Health's Elaine Carswell was part of an eight-person delegation of Sodexo workers and trade unionists from the United Kingdom and France, who visited the US in April.

The SEIU union had been organising nationwide actions against the anti trade union practices of the contractor in the US.

Workers have been victimised and dismissed for organising trade unions on Sodexo worksites and two thirds of Sodexo workers receive no health care.

Elaine met Sodexo workers from George Mason University and Ohio State University, and

took part in the action at Sodexo's US headquarters, as well as meeting Hollywood star Danny Glover who was there backing the workers.

"Thank you once again for the amazing experience! I had a blast! Alas, now it's up to me to make this experience count", said Elaine.

"It was a fantastic opportunity to see first hand the price people will pay for others, the risk of workers having no job if they speak up for what should be a given - dignity and respect!

"To have the right to be paid a fair pay for a fair day's work, the right to have health insurance, sick pay, pension rights and even a contract of employment!

"I was truly humbled by this experience,

especially when I know that we have it a lot easier here in Scotland in comparison.

"I will of course reiterate that we are not immune to viruses, and what is spreading in the USA could very well be caught here; therefore prevention is always better than cure.

"We need to stay vigilant and recognise the signs of the times.

"Companies like Sodexo are not respecters of people; they will infect whoever they want if we let them."

In the UK workers in Richmond School Meals Service and UNISON organisers are leading a fight to get sick pay and other conditions that have been lost through outsourcing to Sodexo.



Elaine with Hollywood star Danny Glover who was also backing the Sodexo workers

Health Conferences to fight cuts and pay caps

Two major UNISON Health Group conferences in April pledged to fight cuts and pay caps in the NHS.

Gordon McKay (Ayrshire & Arran) told the Scottish Conference there would be a "robust industrial response" if any UK or Scottish Government tries to impose a pay cap or pay freeze on NHS workers.

And later at the UK Health Conference in Brighton, UK National Chair Lilian Macer (Lanarkshire Health) said the concern about cuts united all health workers in the UK.

In Glasgow, Sandra Dee Masson (Grampian) warned against "the dilution of quality services in search of cheaper staffing models" while speaking to a successful motion for UK Conference on 'Skill Mix'.

Marie Garrity (Greater Glasgow & Clyde) made an

impassioned plea for a successful outcome to UK negotiations on on-call payments, saying: "It's time for agreement on a fair system for all."

Ewing Hope (Ayrshire & Arran) called for an end to the abuse of fixed term contracts in NHS Scotland. These were "damaging to individuals and to career progression," he said.

Cabinet Secretary Nicola Sturgeon endorsed UNISON's Public Works campaign during her visit to the Scottish conference.

She acknowledged the "fundamental challenges in public expenditure over the next few years" and stressed her continued support for the 'partnership' model of industrial relations in NHS Scotland as the "best hope to navigate through the tough times".

'Banks have privatised the profits and socialised the debt' Lilian Macer

In Brighton, Lilian Macer set out the challenges facing workers in the NHS in her keynote speech.

"One thing that health workers have in common throughout the UK is a massive concern about the prospect of public services cuts," she said.

Billions were already coming out of health spending in the UK in so-called 'efficiency savings', she argued, "but as we all know this means cuts."

She condemned the irresponsibility of speculators and bankers which had caused the economic crisis. "What they have achieved is to privatise the profits and socialise the debt."

Pay policy 2011: Conference agreed to vigorously oppose calls for pay freezes or for local

or regional pay which would undermine the national agreement.

Gordon McKay, for the National Executive, said: "The pledge to cap basic pay at 1% or to freeze pay for those earning under £18k is unjustified.

"The NHS Pay Review Body determines pay based upon evidence. If Governments unilaterally and unfairly cap or freeze pay, they should not be surprised if there is a robust reaction from staff and their trade unions next year."

Ready for Ballot? The Conference agreed to mount a high profile campaign in opposition to the public sector pay freeze among branches, regions and nations and begin preparatory work for a potential ballot on industrial action, including strike action, of all members covered by Agenda for Change.

From reports by John Gallacher



Marie Garrity



Gordon McKay

LANDMARK EQUAL PAY RULING IN EDINBURGH

Just moments before going to print, SiU has learned that thousands of low paid council workers took a step closer to equal pay thanks to a landmark decision of the Employment Appeal Tribunal.

While many manual workers such as cleaners, cooks and carers have already received compensation, previous decisions of the EAT removed the right to compensation from thousands of administrators, clerical workers, learning assistants and library staff.

In the absence of a proper explanation for the pay differences between women and men, local authorities developed a technical argument that women and men only deserved equal pay if they were based in the same premises or had the same pay and conditions. **This argument has now failed.**

UNISON estimates that this Edinburgh decision will affect up to 70,000 workers across the UK and while claim values will vary from person to person some will exceed £30,000.

Check the website for more details as they come in.

Branch launches new Green Workplace project

by Fiona Montgomery
Communications Officer

South Lanarkshire UNISON is launching an innovative green workplace project with £60,000 from the Climate Challenge Fund.

The branch was successful in its bid to set up the Green Workers project, which could lead the way for similar union work across the public sector, contributing to Scottish climate change targets.

Branch Secretary Stephen Smellie said: "The aim is to raise awareness of the carbon footprints of our members, give advice on how to reduce emissions and empower members to raise ideas on how to make a difference not only at home but in their workplace."

The project will work with UNISON members across South Lanarkshire Council, South Lanarkshire College, South Lanarkshire Leisure, Lanarkshire Joint Valuation Board and a number of voluntary and private sector employers.

Meanwhile UNISON has warned that much more must be done on green workplace action and a Just Transition to a low carbon economy.

In a submission to the Royal Society of Edinburgh on its inquiry 'Facing up to Climate Change', UNISON said that we need continued stimulus to prevent a double dip recession, investment in decent public services and a Green New Deal that will create jobs and deliver significant savings through energy efficiency measures.

Branches urged to join UNISON Scotland in sponsoring Glasgay!

UNISON's Scottish Communications & Campaigns Committee and the LGBT Committee are urging branches to join with them in sponsoring this year's Glasgay! festival.

UNISON has been a long time supporter of the international arts festival and will be

G! sponsoring it again this year. But Glasgow City Council has cut funding by half which will significantly impact on the festival and the successful work it has done over the last 20 years.

So, in a letter from Chris Bartter (Communications) and Miranda

Jacques-Turner (LGBT), branches are being urged to put some funding in themselves.

"The 2009 festival doubled its audience on prior years and received four and five star critiques for its top quality commissioned productions, the most popular of which was a total sell-out smash hit, *The Maw Broon Monologues* by Jackie

Kay, sponsored by UNISON Scotland", says the letter.

"Glasgay! remains a truly international celebration of the strength of the LGBT community. Glasgay! enjoys the support of a broad audience, not just LGBT."

Donations to - Gala Scotland Ltd, 87-91 Saltmarket, Glasgow G1 5LE. Further information, from e.dinning@unison.co.uk

Cut Trident not jobs

UNISON Scotland Convener Mike Kirby joined campaigners and MSPs to hammer out a new strategy against Trident renewal at a Scottish CND rally on 15 May.

"Here's a headline for you - trade union leader calls for more cuts," Mike said. "Save £80 billion over 40 years by cutting Trident, rather than have our people pay for the bail out of the banks, anything between £50 billion and £120 billion".

Mike argued for a broad coalition of the people against Trident renewal, based on economic need as well as military and moral arguments.

Denis's remarkable life of dedication to freedom

by John Stevenson
SiU Editor

UNISON Scotland backed a book launch for old friend and anti-apartheid campaigner Denis Goldberg at Glasgow City Chambers on 28 April.

"When I came here (Scotland) after being released from prison, my goodness, it was like being at home, of being enfolded by people wanting to help. Which is why I am here today", Denis told the Sunday Herald on his visit to Glasgow.

Denis's autobiography *The Mission - A life for freedom in South Africa* follows his early days in the ANC to being sentenced at the Rivonia Trials in 1964 with comrades which included Nelson Mandela and Walter Sisulu. Still referred to by Mandela as the 'boy' because he was the youngest, Denis had been technical officer for the 'Spear of the Nation'.

Denis then writes of his 22 years in prison and his continuing campaigning for freedom in South Africa on the international stage after his release to exile in London.

He was a spokesperson for the

ANC and also represented it at the Anti-Apartheid Committee of the United Nations.

Denis reflects on the close links with UNISON over the years and the charity he set up in 1995 called 'Community HEART' now organised by UNISON member Isobel McVicar. As well as books for schools, the development charity also supports a rape crisis centre.

He chronicles his return to South Africa in 2002 as a government adviser and his ongoing work for freedom causes to the present day and into the future.

Denis's book is an inspiring, humbling and in many ways historic read, cataloguing the political and the personal victories, dilemmas and tragedies of a remarkable life of dedication to freedom.

Denis is a joy to be with. An infectious and cheeky sense of humour but also a quiet dignified certainty in his cause.

He told us it took the prison warders 'years and years and years to respect us'. But with his certainty in the justice of his cause, you knew that he knew they eventually would.



Denis Goldberg shares a joke with UNISON Scottish Convener Mike Kirby and Scottish Secretary Matt Smith

As he told the Sunday Herald, he is not yet free. "I'm free to be free. I'm not free. To be free you have to advance the freedom of others and respect it. We're not there yet." For more info see www.community-heart.org.uk.

Conference

Around 2,000 UNISON delegates will descend on Bournemouth from 15 June for UNISON's supreme policy-making body - National Conference and Scotland looks set to form key national policies again.

Delegates will soon get a special Conference pack from the Scottish Communications and Campaigns Committee, along with briefings on all the main issues through the week.

Look out for reports on Scotland's input at www.unison-scotland.org.uk/conf2010

Campaign goes on to save Stow College

Staff from Glasgow's Stow College lobbied the Scottish Parliament on 4 May as part of their campaign to save the threatened college.

It is facing removal of its funding unless a large number of courses transfer to the newly merged City of Glasgow College.

As SiU went to press, UNISON Glasgow City Branch officers were hoping to meet with the Scottish

Funding Council to try to take the issues forward, having been told by the Scottish Government that it could not step in.

Stow College removed itself from the merger process involving the Metropolitan College, and the other colleges planning to form the new City of Glasgow College.

Glasgow UNISON's Jim Snell said, "Despite the withdrawal, the Scottish Funding Council still

wants certain courses and student numbers to be delivered from within the new college structure".

"However if Stow does this then it will be longer be a viable college, so in essence it is being forced to the merger table or to huge uncertainty."

The lobby was the start of a wider campaign to include the EIS and the STUC given Stow delivers a huge number of TU courses.

A voice for social work in poetry?

In a world of guideline after guideline, key performance indicators, inspections and media savagery, social work these days can seem so distant from the human relationships that should be central to the job.

Then along came poetry. Poetry?

Who would have thought that it would take a collection of poems called *'Dancing With Big Eunice'* to bring the focus back to personal interactions with all the warmth, the dilemmas, the pain, but most of all humour that those relationships bring?

After a line of books including *'Shale Voices'*, *'The Love Songs of John Knox'* and *'100 Favourite Scottish Football Poems'*, UNISON member Alistair Findlay's retirement prompted him to turn his pen back to his 30+ year career as a social worker.

The politics are there. The anger at poverty; at the hypocrisy that penalises the marginalised for failings excused in the powerful; at the inequality that perpetuates

John Stevenson reviews 'Dancing With Big Eunice - Missives from the frontline of a fractured society' by Alistair Findlay

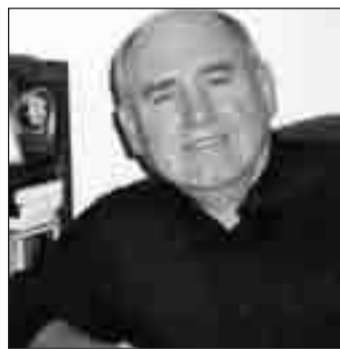
disadvantage; and at the 'back covering' of systems that purport to support.

The trade unionism is there in "Work-to-Rule!" when fellow steward Jimmy Johnstone agonises over the need to tell members the fight is lost. On the verge of doing just that, Jimmy always....

*changed his mind and thundered out a Lenin speech and so got carried away by a cheering crowd back to my car where he would groan and, yes repeat: 'We're really, really f***ed this time.*

But it is the rejoicing in people that dominates. In fellow workers and clients and the emotions that charge those interactions. He does this with respect, fun and not a little anger.

For this social worker, he elicits a recurring mumble of "ye've hit the nail on the head



Alistair Findlay

there". It can seem bitter at times but, read as a whole, the warmth, the rapport with people and the respect for straightforwardness and honesty shine through in some beautifully crafted verse.

His wonderful rant in "Child Protection Guidelines (the Latest)" will ring true with workers as it lists a host of agencies to alert, then warns in frustration:

...but don't, repeat, don't notify the parents, or ask a child anything, unless, of course, you are accompanied by a police officer.

The recalling of great one-liners like:-

I've a social background report to do on you

*I don't have a social background so you can f*** off.*

The ability to laugh at yourself that keeps social workers this side of cracking up:-

Caught sight of Davie McRobie bunking off school while sitting at the traffic lights, Grahams Road, saw his beatific face go from shock to delight when I, his social worker, crunched into the tail lights of a truck that had moved off. (then stopped)

Alongside this he probes at the heart of the doubts and concerns that continually haunt workers.

"The New Born Baby" sleeps blissfully unaware that social workers are already arranging care that will probably be permanent because mother has already left hospital for a 'drug den' and other family members are not an option.

sleep on little one you will have a brother, and a sister whom you will find out about when you are fourteen and if you are resentful then I hope

it is not because you feel more could have been done by

people like us.

And the photo of the 'expressionless gaze' of Baby P which 'we are always told to look out for' although it will not stand up in court by itself, leads to lines that must have been heartfelt by so many:-

*haunting me
haunting you
haunting them*

UNISON and BASW have been working together to build a 'voice for social work' in Scotland. *Dancing With Big Eunice* has created part of that voice in poetry and, whether you are a social worker or not, it is worth listening to.

Dancing With Big Eunice by Alistair Findlay is published by Luath Press, www.luath.co.uk priced £7.99

We want to hear your news

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

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