

Scotland in UNISON

scottish council activists bulletin

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PHOTO: Douglas Robertson

UNISON fights on for fair pay

by John Stevenson
SiU Editor

A third Local Government Strike will again paralyse Scotland's councils on November 16 - and 600 members will already be on indefinite action in key areas across the country when this SiU reaches you.

The action is aimed at maximum effect on councils with minimum effect on the public.

It follows a huge 68% rejection of a pay offer of 3% this year and just over 3% next year.

Joe Di Paola, UNISON's Scottish Organiser for Local Government,

Employers' scare tactics slammed - p3

said, "UNISON members are angry and frustrated. The offer...."

- shows no evidence of new money being used
- does nothing for the lower paid
- goes no way to compensate for previous below-inflation pay awards",

"The idea of being locked into a two year deal was also rejected as a hostage to fortune (there is no re-opener clause).

"We would hope that Scottish Councils will take note of the huge majority of their staff who have voted for rejection of this

offer and will, even at this late stage, look at using some of the money they have for next year to give a fair pay deal this year."

Last week at talks in Elgin, the T&G and GMB unions backed out saying they would accept the offer.

"This is not surprising since they had already voted not to strike over the original 2.5% offer. They are the minority unions and it has always been the case that any offer must be acceptable to UNISON. We will carry on fighting for fair pay for our members", said Dougie Black, UNISON negotiators' chair.



PHOTO: Donald Stewart

Top: 5,000 march through Edinburgh on the 20 September strike day. Above: Branch secretaries join members for the Aberdeen rally on the same day.

Divisive nurse points system to go in Glasgow

by Chris Bartter
Communications Officer

Nursing members in Glasgow Health Branch have voted overwhelmingly to accept an agreement with the Trust which replaces the discretionary points payments to some senior nurses and other medical professionals.

Staff affected by this proposal will

all have an extra incremental point created at the top of their grades. This will not be discretionary and the system will remain in place until *Agenda For Change* is implemented. All staff currently receiving points will have them protected!

Karie Murphy, Branch Secretary took the lead on these negotiations. She is pleased with the result.

"This is the first time an exer-

cise like this has been undertaken by the Trust, it is important that our members exercised our democratic right and participated in the response. I am pleased that so many appear to have voted for the changed proposal. The 'points' system was open to abuse, cumbersome and unfair. I think that other Scottish Health Trusts may well take note of what has been achieved here."

Passionately committed to a fairer, better Scotland

by Karie Murphy
Chair UNISONScotland APF Forum

The sudden and untimely death of Donald Dewar has left a huge gap in Scotland's political life.

The amount and nature of the tributes made to Donald by his colleagues and adversaries have shown the respect in which he was held. The scenes in Glasgow at Donald's funeral show the affection that was felt for him by people of Scotland (and particularly of Glasgow).

Donald was a good friend to UNISON. Whilst we didn't agree on every policy, Donald never ducked coming to UNISON events like the APF policy seminar or the full Forum AGM to argue his corner - and more importantly - to listen to what UNISON had to say.

There was much more that united Donald and UNISON, than divided us. We worked together closely in the fight for the Scottish Parliament, and shared his delight in the success of that campaign. He, like us, had a commitment to rebuild

Scotland's public services and in particular I will miss his deeply held commitment to eradicate poverty.

There are many anecdotes that describe Donald's dry wit, one told to me by colleagues who attended Matt Smith's Presidential dinner at the STUC sum up the man.

Matt and some colleagues had been invited to Bute House (the First Minister's official residence). Donald was late, and they had to wait on the steps. Donald described the scene (as he drew up in a taxi) as 'seeing Matt Smith standing on the steps of Bute House with a distinctly proprietorial air!' 'Never,' he said 'underestimate the ambitions of an ex-coconcillor from Stevenston.'

I can sum up no better than by quoting the comments of the 'ex-coconcillor'. Long time friend Matt Smith said after Donald's death.

"He was human, decent, approachable and funny. But more than anything else he was passionately committed to a fairer, better Scotland."



The late Donald Dewar with Karie Murphy, Chair of UNISONScotland's Affiliated Political Fund Forum

Prizes beckon for activists who register

UNISONScotland has five Psion Organisers and a laptop or standalone computer up for grabs in a draw to take place at the December Scottish Council, writes Chris Bartter.

The prizes are being offered as an incentive to encourage branches and activists to fill in the accreditation and training forms sent out in Mid-October.

Anne Middleton (Depute Scottish Secretary) explains:

"The new Employment Relations Act lays down requirements for standards of service and training for TU reps who deal with grievances and disciplines. We have been seeking a record of all our activists from branches in order to

accredit them, so far we have about a third back.

"We have written out again to branches and directly to activists where we have the necessary addresses, asking for this information again."

The union needs the information in order to develop the records of activists training, plus we want to find out other ways in which we can give activists support.

The laptop/standalone computer will be drawn from the survey forms returned by branches and the Psion Organisers from the forms returned by activists. **Forms should be back by 20 November to be eligible.**

Mainstream but beware tokenism

Mainstreaming was the theme of the Scottish Womens Conference as delegates set two priorities for motions to the national conference - Campaigns for equal pay and to end rape.

We had a fascinating day on 7 October at the home of the STUC in Glasgow. Our children enjoyed an excellent creche and we revelled in a morning devoted to excellent speakers and testing questions from the floor.

Mainstreaming means so many things to people. Dr Fiona MacKay from Edinburgh University shared information from all over Europe.

Her analysis of "why mainstream" saw eyes light up - a primary tool to deliver on equalities - puts people and their needs at the heart of policy making - gives better government - makes equalities issues visible - places equality with shared responsibility - exposes policies which replicate discrimination and make existing inequality worse.

The Key Tool - consultation and participation: Unions had a major role in 'capacity building' - encouraging ordinary voices - and advocacy. This can encourage innovative ways of thinking.

But watch out for tokenism, it is not an excuse to get rid of self-organisation.

Margaret Curran MSP, involved in Social Inclusion and Housing, pointed out that we cannot take the politics out of the equation and the backlash against women in politics is already visible.

She highlighted the media attitude to women in parliament and the personal remarks that so often cloud the serious political com-



Jennie Biggs reports from UNISON's Scottish Womens Conference

ments and arguments.

Margaret talked about family friendly policies and raising the wider womens agenda - a daily task - and pointed out that there were huge feminist issues with current policies on drugs and poverty - women do not come forward to use the services on offer.

Social Inclusion has to include a structural definition of inequality. Margaret stressed we have to celebrate that there are so many women in politics at national level and look at cross party working.

She urged all women trade unionists to monitor and test outcomes - and put them into the political system of accountability.

UNISON's Katrina Murray said mainstreaming and self organisation need to go hand in hand and UNISON needs to define what it means as mainstreaming. Self organisation needs to start issues off, like domestic violence, and make sure other structures keep them running.

A womens structure in UNISON ensures important issues are fed into the heart of our union.

● Conference sent best wishes to Carol Peggie, former Chair, who missed the Scottish Womens Conference this year - we missed you, take care Carol!

Conference was chaired by Natalie Robertson (see 'What a Result!' - p4).

West Scotland Voluntary Sector members find a new branch

by Paul Brady
Glasgow Health Branch

Glasgow Health Branch have taken on the role of servicing 440 members from 41 voluntary sector employers to reverse the temporary state of disenfranchisement which befell members with the dissolution of the West of Scotland Voluntary Sector branch.

To this end Glasgow Health Branch have adopted an 'Ellis Island' approach, accepting responsibility for these members and attempting to meet their needs through organising and training initiatives and, of course, through the usual round of 'fire fighting' specific individual issues as required.

Branch Officers met with Sheila

McGeoch, office administrator and Joe Lynch, Regional Officer. A mapping exercise has begun, to allow us to identify priorities for action within this group.

Already some targets have been set and 'drop in' information evenings, aimed at employer based groups, have resulted in new local stewards and contacts being identified, training needs recorded and the healthy recruitment of new members.

This programme of events will soon apply to all employers and hopefully this will reestablish the lines of communication for these members and also reactivate them as lay members.

Scottish regional staff have also

been closely involved in this process and have promised to resource the branch to help meet what is a significant and challenging undertaking.

The branch convenor has also become involved in the recently convened STUC/SCVO forum which has as its mission '...to promote good employment practice and a partnership approach to addressing employment issues of common interest to employers, employees and their trade unions in the voluntary sector'.

It is hoped that our participation in this will help us reach those objectives and reassure voluntary sector members that the Glasgow Health Branch is committed to providing a quality service to them.

Conditions Critical in Higher Education

by Chris Bartter
Communications Officer

As we go to press details of an Industrial Action ballot for many Higher Education staff are being finalised.

This industrial action - which will affect HE members covered by national terms and conditions - will include as a first step, a day of action.

The ballot is happening because HE members are angry at the contempt with which national employers are dismissing an important report into pay and industrial relations, according to Carol Judge (Scottish Organiser, Higher & Further Education)

"The Bett Report showed enormous gaps in pay between jobs in HE and market rates", she said.

"The bargaining machinery was out of date, new pay structures were needed and

more. However the national employers simply imposed a rejected 3% (4% for manual staff) offer with no agreement, ignoring the recommendations of the Bett Report."

The ballot will be issued shortly (possibly even the week you receive this) and branches will be holding meetings to encourage their members to vote Yes.

Affected universities

The Scottish Universities affected are those traditionally known as the 'old' universities - namely Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Heriot-Watt, St Andrew's, Stirling and Strathclyde - but not all employees of these are included.

- Members are requested to check with their Branch Secretary if they are not clear whether they are on National University Conditions.

University sell-off condemned

UNISON has condemned Glasgow University for failing to consult on plans to transfer student accommodation and the staff who work there to a housing association.

Staff only found out about the latest money making scheme in a Sunday newspaper.

"It is totally unacceptable that members who work in the halls have found out they are to be transferred to another employer in this way", said Matt McLaughlin, Regional Officer.

"According to the press the university's plans are well down the road and I condemn them for not having the decency to consult our members at the

earliest opportunity".

The union has now demanded an urgent meeting with Principal Sir Graeme Davies, recognised unions and students groups.

"Maybe then we can sit down and work together to find solutions to the very real concerns of the people they employ and rely on this service", added Matt.

The blow comes even harder after UNISON recently welcomed the possibility of a partnership approach to staffing issues.

"Sadly the timing and lack of consultation on the latest issue leaves UNISON wondering just how committed to their staff they (the university) really are".

Employers try frighteners as pay action steps up

Council employers look like taking a harder line in a desperate attempt to stave off disruption caused by their failure to settle the pay dispute.

CoSLA is writing to councils suggesting that they might like to write to members purporting to advise them of the dangers of the selective strike action.

But UNISON has warned that any attempt to penalise strikers will be challenged.

It is no surprise that the employers are trying to put pressure on strikers, and some of the letter may well be statements of fact. However, UNISON already knows that information put out by one council is misleading and wrong.

"We have examined the issues raised from a legal perspective and will raise challenges to a number of areas", said Local Government Organiser Joe Di Paola.

The union has also written to all affected members putting the record straight.

In particular, UNISON makes it clear that any statement claiming that strike action will mean broken service is legally incorrect.

Service is NOT broken by the strike and strikers retain their previous service.



PHOTO: Douglas Robertson

The 'frighteners' clearly won't work on this section of the crowd at Edinburgh's Ross Bandstand on 20 September

Members on selective strike will have normal pay and pensions contributions covered by the union, so any threats in that area are covered.

"Having lost the arguments, our employers are now reduced to threats and peddling misinformation in order to break your members resolve", said Dougie Black, Staff Side Chair.

"Instead of trying to put the frighteners on members, they would be

better getting round the table and coming to a fair pay settlement".

CoSLA's Pat Watters was quoted in the press suggesting sacking strikers was an option. Since then, Edinburgh's Personnel Executive member Cllr. Frank Russell has also been quoted in the press saying that strikers would not be sacked. Perhaps there is some common sense there waiting to come to the fore.

UNISON wins Health review re-thinks

by John Stevenson
SIU Editor

UNISON branches, working with health councils and community groups, have forced re-thinks on two major Glasgow health service reviews.

Greater Glasgow Health Board (GGHB) has admitted it miscalculated on bed closures by as much as a third in its Acute Services Strategy. It is now having to think again about the 390 beds at risk.

UNISON warned that the plan could see the closure of the Victoria Infirmary, Yorkhill, Queen Mother's Maternity, Western Infirmary, and Stobhill Hospital.

"UNISON's response to the consultation exposed the miscalculation. We are pleased they are backing off and looking at this again", said Joe Lynch, UNISON Regional Officer.

The second stage of consultation is now out and UNISON's acute services group was due to meet on 8 November

- **GGHB re-think after miscalculation exposed**
- **Blawarthill saved, Cowglen reprieved**
- **UNISON warns patients may die**
- **Members and local groups bring expertise to challenge reviews**

to plan another detailed response.

UNISON has also won reprieves in the Elderly Services Review.

Blawarthill will be saved and Cowglen will be reviewed at the turn of the year but UNISON is still worried it will close.

Joe Lynch again, "We are delighted our views about Blawarthill were taken on board. The closure plans were ill-informed, would have brought no improvement to health care and would have put even more pressure on under-resourced social care provision".

In the response to the GGHB consultation, UNISON condemned the proposed closures of both Blawarthill and Cowglen Hospitals, as 'purely a financial decision' and part of the 'virtual demolition of NHS Continuing Care in Glasgow.'

UNISON was also worried that hospital closures can cause deaths among elderly patients.

"Anecdotal evidence from members, patient groups and community groups suggests that both the death rate and the levels of re-admissions to acute hospitals is unacceptably high amongst these patients", said Joe Lynch.

"We called on the GGHB to investigate these claims before subjecting more patients to this process".

Putting in well researched and well argued responses has done the trick in winning these re-thinks.

"UNISON branches have been working in close partnership with the Health Council and community groups. These, along with our own members' expertise have given us the detailed information to make a real impact on decisions", added Joe.

Nurses and Drugs

Annual Nursing Seminar
24 November 2000
10.30am-1.30pm

Council Chambers
Elmbank Street
Glasgow

For further information or to apply, contact your UNISON rep or phone Bridget Hunter on 0141 332 0006.
www.unison-scotland.org.uk

Speakers

Baillie **JEAN MACEY**
Glasgow Depute Lord Provost

MARY MCCREADIE
Brownlee Rehab Centre

The Rehab Worker's View
REFORMED DRUG USER

Brownlee Rehab Centre
The Patient's View

BARRIE DOUGAL
Chief Sup'dent St'clyde Police

A Legal Viewpoint
KAREN JENNINGS

UNISON Professional Officer
The UKCC Position

UNISON member becomes First Minister

Long time UNISON member Henry McLeish was sworn in as Scotland's new first minister last week.

After working for Edinburgh's Social Work Department, Henry's first public office was in 1973 when he was elected as a Kirkcaldy District

by John Stevenson
SiU Editor

Councillor. He was then a Fife Regional Councillor from before becoming MP for Fife Central in 1987.

At Westminster his jobs included Spokesperson for Education, Employment and Training; Shadow Scottish Minister of State and

Shadow Minister for Transport, Health and Social Security.

In 1997 he became Scottish Office Minister for Devolution, Home Affairs and Local Government.

In the Scottish Parliament he was Minister for Enterprise and Lifelong Learning.



UNISON responses: Protecting our services and staff who deliver them

The business of Holyrood has been overshadowed by the very sad news of Donald Dewar's death.

It was not just Donald's unwavering support for the principle of the Scottish Parliament that will be his legacy but his backing for a modern parliament fit for the 21st century, particularly his support for equal representation of women and men as MSPs, a proportional voting system, a strong parliamentary committee structure and family friendly working practices.

In the words of the Presiding Officer Donald was truly the "Father of the Parliament" and he will be greatly missed.

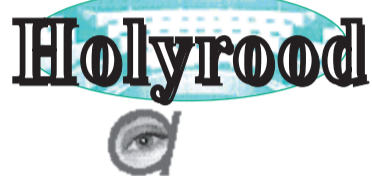
● Nine Bills for 2000/01

But the work of Government goes on and a number of key issues for UNISON are currently under consideration by both the Parliament and the Executive.

The Government's legislative programme for 2000/01 has been unveiled and contains nine bills including a: Housing Bill, The Water Services Bill, Graduate Endowment Bill, Evidence (Sex Offences) Bill, ECHR Bill, International Criminal Court Bill, Regulation of Care Bill, The Salmon Conservation (Scotland) Bill, and Budget Bill.

● Budget Bill

Some pieces of legislation clearly



A series of regular briefings by George McGregor, UNISON's Scottish Research Officer.

have more of an impact on our members than others.

UNISON's Public Finance Policy Pool is preparing a detailed response to the Budget Bill which will welcome the overall increase in public spending, particularly to health and local government, but will point out the union's concerns about the increased 'ring fencing' of expenditure and the use of Public Private Partnerships in funding capital projects.

● Housing Bill

We have already submitted a detailed response to Better Homes for Scotland's Communities: The Executive's Proposals for the Housing Bill which details UNISON's opposition to housing stock transfer and the extension of the 'right to buy' for housing association tenants.

It also details our demands for the protection of Scottish Homes staff in their transfer to an executive agency

UNISONScotland regularly responds to Scottish Executive documents. Here we cover...

- The Budget Bill
- Housing Bill proposals
- Best Value; Next Steps

For copies of all UNISONScotland responses see the web site at www.unison-scotland.org.uk or contact UNISON's Policy and Information Team on 0141 332 0006 or g.mcgregor@unison.co.uk

and calls for equal rights for same sex partners in rights of succession.

● Best Value: Next Steps

UNISON has also commented on the Scottish Executive consultation document Best Value in Local Government: Next Steps. Our submission states that best value should be driven by innovation and quality and rejects the idea that competition should be the central element of service delivery with crude financial criteria used to benchmark service provision.

Section 28 sparks UNISON sponsorship

by Andrew Burns
Scottish L&G and Comms Cttee.

We all sighed with relief this year when Section 28 was finally repealed.

Repeal, however, came at a cost as every homophobe 'came out' in protest. The 'Debate' that preceded repeal was less than positive, and has left a lot of us still reeling with anger at the level of homophobia and ignorance that was uncovered in Scotland.

So, when *Glasgay!* approached us requesting support (by way of sponsorship) for a 7:84 Theatre production, specifically aimed at 'hitting back' at Souter's mob and telling what it is like to be gay in Scotland today UNISON Scotland, listened with interest.

UNISON's officers and activists slaved over a hot negotiating table to hammer out the following sponsorship deal:

- Sole sponsorship of the 7:84 Production 'Just Pretending'
- UNISON Scotland Logo on all materials in relation to the 7:84 production (circulation 7,000)
- UNISON Scotland half page advertisement in the *Glasgay!* Brochure (Circulation - 20,000)
- Discounted tickets for UNISON members (£3)
- Stall at the Tron Theatre each of the nights the production is on.

We were particularly glad to be able to confirm our support, at the time when funding was at risk from other bodies due to legal challenges under Section 28.

We hope you all get/got the chance to go along and support this event, and have/had a good laugh at the same time!

Striking a blow for fair pay

Clackmannashire' Excuse me! lead with this headline in its September issue.

Branch secretary Catherine Craig praises the majority - and the 206 new members - who stood by the democratic decision, many of who "were unable to understand fellow members' disloyalty".

The strike had united members in their fight for increased investment in local government.

Health & Safety, Single Status, working hours, training and nursery nurse regradings are all covered in a packed and well designed issue edited by Alan Wilson.

● *Southside UNISON* from South Glasgow Hospitals leads on a 217% increase in violence to staff over the last 4 years. A 14 page issue has a centre spread on PFI. Return 2 learn is covered with a host of service conditions news.



● Glasgow Health's new magazine leads on the discretionary points issue (see *SiU* page 2).

This mag is packed with news and features with an eye-catching, if familiar design - aha! we see prize-winning editor Robert Rae (South Glasgow Hospitals) had a hand in it. That's cross branch co-operation.

● *Glasgow City's Voice* covers the local government pay dispute and more detail on the campaign to fight housing stock transfer.

● *UNISONNews* from City of Edinburgh is doing frequent two page issues through the pay strikes. It reports a huge 83% rejection of the pay offer by Edinburgh members. A front page leader slams the employers 'woeful lack of understanding' and warns, "The longer they dally, the more they'll dig a hole for themselves and local government".

What a result for Natalie

Natalie Robertson, Scottish Womens Committee Chair, has received her first class honours degree from Edinburgh University.

It was four years of hard work, the last year working full time and studying a course in Community Education. She found the energy from somewhere to stay involved in

UNISON activities. Her dissertation focused on women in community education and had links to her work and UNISON life, in particular the 'raise the roof on domestic violence' campaign.

At the Scottish Womens Conference, Sandra Kenny highlighted Natalie's success.

We want to hear your news

Won any deals or cases for members? Any 'people' stories we could use? *SiU* is your paper, we want to hear your stories. Your *SiU* contacts are: John Stevenson (Editor) 0131 343 1991 Chris Barter 0141 332 0006, FAX PRESS RELEASES to 0141-331-1203

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

UNISONScotland's Disabled Members AGM

Saturday 18 November, Edinburgh Hilton Hotel

- chosen for its good disabled access - from 2.00pm.

Speakers will include Neil McInnes (Secretary Scottish Lesbian & Gay Group) on 'The victory over Section 28'.

All UNISON members with a disability are welcome.

Contact Eileen Dinning, at the West Campbell Street office for further details. 0141-332 0006. Text telephone 0141-248 3981.

