

Chair's Message

Colleagues I welcome you to the spring edition of SBMG news.

You are aware that elections are just around the corner. We face two threats. First the threat of a coalition government, and second the threat of BNP winning more seats.

We believe if the leadership of UNISON is strong, only then we have a chance to get through the difficult times ahead. We know among all the candidates contesting UNISON General Secretary's post, none of the contestants possess the quality of leadership Dave Prentis offers. Therefore, we have decided to support our current General Secretary's in his re-election.

Soon you will receive the ballot papers, and I have just one concluding message for you – VOTE for Dave Prentis!

Ismail Donmez
Chair Scottish Black Members

Editor's Corner

Lui Giacomello

Welcome to our new chair, Ismail Donmez and we wish you well in the challenging year to come.

Our minds are focused on the threat from the far right and the possibility of a change of government in the general election that is predicted to take place on May 6th this year.

Let us remember that all that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men and women do nothing.

VOTE FOR DAVE



Patricia Agu, SBMC Vice Chair, Dave Prentis, General Secretary, Hamid Rasheed, SBMC

At the recent Scottish Council meeting, the Scottish Black Members fully supported the Scottish Committee motion, urging the Scottish Council to support Dave Prentis (UNISON General Secretary), in his candidature for the post of UNISON General Secretary. The elections have been called by the National Executive Committee of UNISON, to ensure that UNISON leadership stays in the most capable hands, to take us through the difficult times ahead. The motion was carried.

Dave attended a rally following the Scottish Council where he launched UNISON's major 'Public Works' campaign fighting back against cuts in public services.

Speaking at the rally in the Glasgow Royal Concert Hall, he attacked the 'Macho Politics' of all political parties and announced that the union's research has uncovered cuts of £300m across Scottish Local Government with a planned job loss of over 3,000 staff.

Dave told delegates, "Our people worry about their homes, they worry about their families, their pensions, their jobs, their futures."

"No school cleaner gambled millions on the stock exchange; no nurse got a million pounds bonus from risking other people's money; no social worker, no librarian, no paramedic, no dinner lady, no housing worker - not these people - our people - none of them created this recession. So now why are they expected to pay for the recovery?"

He also urged Gordon Brown to learn from President Barack Obama's decision to stand up to American bankers. "Let us hear more about pay freezes for bankers", he said. "Let us hear Gordon calling for every 'last dime' to be paid back to the taxpayer."

The rally, was attended by around 400 UNISON delegates from branches all across Scotland who agreed to make public spending a major campaign issue in the forthcoming General Election campaign.

NATIONAL BLACK MEMBERS CONFERENCE 2010

By Nahid Aslam

The conference in Gateshead near Newcastle was well attended by Black Members from all over the UK. There were over 24 motions put to the conference and we heard from several guest speakers including Eleanor Smith, UNISON Vice-President, Razia Karim from the Equality and Human Rights Commission who talked about race transcending class and the need for a single Equalities Bill and Kemone Brown a Jamaican LGBT activist.

Kemone spoke about discrimination of LGBT people in the UK and also in Africa and the West Indies. She asked people from the UK to campaign for those in Africa and West Indies since if gay people from these regions 'came out' they were more likely to be killed.

Dave Prentis, UNISON General Secretary, was also a guest speaker and his speech can be read at: www.unison.org.uk/asppresspack/pressrelease_view.asp?id=1712

The Scottish Black Members Committee submitted two motions to the conference. Nahid Aslam moved motion 21 - War in Afghanistan. Kashina Kashina spoke in favour of motion 24 - The Challenge of Malaria Control – and this motion was carried.

There were various Service Group Meetings that where topics such as the funding crisis within the Voluntary Sector and the general economic crisis was discussed.

Fringe meetings included one on Collective Bargaining where issues affecting Black Members such as better self organisation were discussed. There was also a Black Mental Health Workshop led by Black Mental Health UK - www.blackmentalhealth.org.uk - where issues such as the high incidence of mental health problems compared to other countries was discussed and possible reasons such as family & social breakdown and the use of medication rather than counseling, were considered.

The Women's Caucus recommended that more women put forward motions on Black Women's issues in the following years.

Ravi Retires



Ravi Nathan -- a great friend of Black members in trade union reached retirement age in January 2010. As lay member; over last 22 years, Ravi's contributions to the work of our trade union UNISON can be summed up as Brilliant!

Ravi joined Scottish Water (Strathclyde Water) in 1978 and joined UNISON (then NALGO) at the same time. He worked as a water engineer specialising in reservoir safety and flood control projects. Ravi became a member of the Reservoir Supervising Engineer's Panel under The Reservoirs Act in 1985 to certify safety of large dams. In UNISON (NALGO), Ravi became a branch steward in 1988 and held the positions of Equality Officer, Service Conditions Officer, and Senior Steward.

Ravi is one of the founder members of the Scottish Black Members Group around 1990, involved in preparation of the Constitution. On the group's working committee he held various positions and led the group as SBMC Chair for 4 years. Apart from serving on the Scottish Trade Union Congress's Black Members Committee for couple of years, Ravi also served on the National Black Members Committee for 4 years. In addition to that Ravi did a two year stint on the Standing Orders Committee of the National Black Members of UNISON.

Ravi has been a Justice of the Peace for Renfrewshire for 8 years. Ravi retired from work and UNISON in January 2010. Scottish Black Members wish Ravi well and thank him for his ongoing support.

Edinburgh Isolates Fascist SDL



Thousands of anti-fascism campaigners including members of the Scottish Black Members Group of UNISON joined United Scotland Rally, and March through the streets of Edinburgh. The Rally was organised in response to the threat posed by the fascist Scottish Defence League (SDL) rally against Muslims, seeking a fight. The rally achieved its objective, as some 90 or so SDL members never made it to the streets of Edinburgh, and later on they were bundled out and sent home in buses, by the local police. The rally was addressed by trade union activist, elected representatives, faith groups, and community leaders. More on >>> <http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/antiracism/scotlandunited2.html>