

# SBMG News



Scottish Black Members Group of UNISON

Summer 2008 Newsletter

## Chair's Message



Summer is here, but in the wake of soaring oil and food prices by the day, the slow down in housing market and, on top of that, Scottish Employers are digging deep not to budge from their final pay offer of a 3 year settlement worth 2.5% per year, which is "well below inflation, and less than the increase in average earnings across the economy."

Frankly, we have had enough of low pay, and we are left with no option other than to take a "Strike Action", to bring back the employers to the negotiation table. What it means is that you need to take part in substantial industrial action starting with one day strikes supported by a rolling programme of selective and further action.

Vote 'YES' in the Scottish Local Government Pay Ballot. If you haven't received a ballot, or want to join UNISON phone the UNISON Direct Helpline 0845 355 0845. This line is open until 28 July, Mon-Fri 6am till Midnight and 9am till 4pm on Saturday & Sunday

Cheers

Hamid Rasheed

Chair SBMC

## Local Council Strikes — Resolve the dispute before they happen in Scotland

**As hundreds of thousands of local government workers enter their second day of strike action in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Scottish Secretary of UNISON, the main union taking part, said today that similar action was planned for Scotland, unless Scottish councils sat back down with the trade unions and renegotiated the pay offer they had made.**

Matt Smith, UNISON's Scottish Secretary, has written to the 32 councillors who make up the employers' side of the Scottish negotiating body (one per council) urging them to sit back down with the trade unions to avoid the kind of national disruption that is being experienced down south.

UNISON's local government members in England, Wales and Northern Ireland voted to take strike action over a similar 2.45% offer recently. The first strike action days there will be 16 and 17 July. UNISON's 100,000 Scottish Local Government members are currently being balloted to ask if they will take similar strike action to their colleagues. Local council members of Unite and the GMB are also balloting.

Matt Smith said: "I have written to all our regions elsewhere in the UK expressing our backing for their action and welcoming the solidarity our members are showing. I have also indicated that we are heading for another 'YES' vote for strike action here in Scotland, and our 100,000 members will shortly be joining their colleagues. Our members deliver vital services here in Scotland, they empty our bins, they clean our schools, they care for our parks and look after our children. I've also written to the local councillors who represent the employers to say that if want them to continue to do these things, then they should re-enter discussions so we can find a solution before disruption comes to Scotland."

For further information please contact: Matt Smith (Scottish Secretary) 07771 548 997(m) Dougie Black, Regional Officer – Secretary, TU negotiators 07958 121 851(m), Stephanie Herd, Chair – TU negotiators 07989 544 162(m), and Chris Bartter, Communications Officer 07715 583 729(m)

## UNISON Launches 'Migrant Workers' Charter



UNISON, took a number of migrant worker members to the Scottish Parliament to talk to MSPs, and to launch a Migrant Workers' Charter, outlining a range of 'good practice' for employers to follow. Sofi Taylor, from UNISON's NEC, said: "Migrant workers are vital to the continued operation of a large number of Scotland's industries and services – from food production to care homes. They too often also face exploitation and discrimination. We have arranged this event so that MSPs can hear from the people themselves what they face, and so we can launch a set of guidelines that employers can sign-up to help these key workers." The meeting was organised by UNISON, the STUC and the Migrant Rights Network. Those present at the launch include: Sofi Taylor (UNISON National Executive), Mary Senior (AGS – STUC) and Ruth Grove-White (Migrant Rights Network) plus migrant workers from 14 countries from Kenya to the Philippines. The launched Charter seeks to set the standard in the treatment of migrant workers. >>> Page 2



## Act Now on Climate Change to Save the World

The world has to act now on climate change or face devastating economic consequences, according to a review compiled by Sir Nicholas Stern for the British government. The Stern review, *The Economics of Climate Change*, paints a bleak picture. Inaction will only lead to declining crop yields will leave hundreds of millions without sufficient food, damaging our eco systems and resulting in the extinction of 40 per cent of species living on our planet. Black communities around the world almost certainly feel the disproportionate impact of this reality.

Dave Prentis, UNISON's general secretary said: "Tackling climate change is a big issue for UNISON members. We need to take action now, before millions of people suffer

the irreversible effects of climate change."

Hamid Rasheed, chair of the Scottish Black Members of UNISON, said: "Scottish Black members can play a their role to tackle global warming in our own workplaces and homes. As Scottish Black Members we recognise that we can contribute to UNISON tackling climate change campaign by greening their workplace".

To become a trade union environmental representative you should speak to your branch chair. You can also sign up to the UNISON network by sending an email to:

[greenunison@unison.co.uk](mailto:greenunison@unison.co.uk)

## Happy 90th Birthday To You Mr Mandela



ACTSA Scotland has organised a range of activities to celebrate Mr Nelson Mandela's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday on Friday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2008. **Glasgow:** In the morning book-container loading will start at Kelvinhaugh St and it will be send - off from George Square, Glasgow at 1.00 pm. A civic reception will take place at Glasgow City Chambers, in the evening at 7.00 pm, and birthday celebration at 8.30 pm at the same venue. There will be a lecture in Dalkeith Library. The lecture is organised by Midlothian Libraries and Midlothian World History Society. ACTSA Scotland conference is scheduled to take place at the Glasgow Caledonian University, on Saturday 25 October 2008. **Dundee:** Dundee Libraries will be collecting signatures for the Mandela

birthday card, from 14<sup>th</sup> – 26<sup>th</sup> July 2008. **Edinburgh:** The birthday book will be in City Chambers Reception from 3 July 2008 to Friday 1 August 2008 (9am to 4pm) to allow the public to record their own birthday message. The book will then be sent to Nelson Mandela as a gift from the city.

## UNISON Launches 'Migrant Workers' Charter

Dave Watson (UNISON's Scottish organiser said: "The Scottish Government and the wider public sector can lead create a positive image of Scotland for migrant workers, by using their powers as employers and procurers of goods and services to promote best practice."

## Editors' Corner

Zia Hussain & Lui Giacomello

The Summer 2008 edition of SBMG News has information regarding the Scottish local Government Strike Ballot. We need to remember that our brothers and sisters in local government in England, Wales and Northern Ireland have already voted and are taking strike action on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> July. Like summer weather in Scotland, we should not take a sunny outcome for granted so if you have a vote in the ballot – use it! The other notable event this summer was the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the NHS on July 5<sup>th</sup> so what better than a quote from Nye Bevan, the architect of the NHS, which is equally applicable to UNISON members today. 'Society becomes more wholesome, more serene, and spiritually healthier, if it knows that its citizens have at the back of the consciousness the knowledge that not only themselves, but all their fellows, have access, when ill, to the best that medical skill can provide.' – Nye Bevan.

Zia Hussain is an IT Project Manager working for the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) in East Kilbride. Lui Giacomello is an IT Network Engineer with NHS Lothian.





## Food for Good Charter for the public sector

UNISON launched its new Food for Good Charter at one of the East Ayrshire schools that helped show how healthy, sustainable meals can be provided at a reasonable cost. UNISON wants to see Food for Good introduced across the public sector to help change the diet and health of the nation. It has recommended the changes in a response to the Scottish Government's consultation on establishing a national food policy.

Dave Watson, Scottish Organiser, said: "Food for Good would improve the health of children in schools and nurseries and of hospital patients and prisoners as well as being good for the environment, for local suppliers and those in the developing world".

Ismail Donmez Secretary Scottish Black Members of UNISON, while commenting on the UNISON Food for Good Charter said: "Improving health of our children in nowadays multi-cultural Scotland is of vital importance. The charter is a positive step in the right direction to influence the decision makers, to ensure provision of quality meals in Schools, Nurseries, Prisons and Hospitals, without damaging our environment."

The Charter, in a response to the Scottish Government's consultation to establish a national food policy, sets its focus on:

### 1. Sustainability

Food should be fresh, prepared locally and sourced locally where possible. Mains-fed water coolers should be provided, minimising the use of bottled water. Public bodies should produce annual reports giving clear 'global footprint' type information on all aspects of their food use, including e.g. % of fresh, local food, progress on waste minimisation and recycling etc.

### 2. Health

Universal free school meals should be recognised and adopted as a major contributor to improving health and tackling childhood obesity. The aim for all public sector catering should be to give a daily option of an organic/ethically produced main meal, ideally locally sourced. Vending machines on school/hospital premises should be used for healthy alternatives, not junk/fast food.

### 3. Social Justice

Fair trade food should be used where possible, with targets of 50% by 2010 where relevant fair trade products are available. Decisions about menu options should give consideration to providing less meat-intensive diets, with more fresh, seasonal fruit and vegetables and sustainable fish. Animal welfare must be prioritised, with an aim for animal produce of using only recognised farm assured schemes or organic schemes by 2015.

### 4. Excellence

All food must meet quality nutritional standards, monitored by relevant regulators. This involves excellence in procurement and in staff training and conditions. The top priority must be the contribution of food to health and wellbeing, with recognition of the folly of previous policies that pursued Compulsory Competitive Tendering, privatisation, PFI and outsourcing - cutting standards and employment conditions, increasing the use of cook-chill and cook-freeze food, and allowing 'fast' and junk food in schools and hospitals. The public must have access to clear relevant information about food, including via labelling and annual reports.

### 5. Skills

Quality training and proper pay and employment conditions for the sector, including training in environmental factors as part of 'green workplaces'. Lessons for young people in primary and secondary schools about the food chain, sustainability and preparation of healthy meals. Public awareness campaigns on healthy diets, tied in with support to local food co-operatives and similar initiatives to improve access to quality food for the most vulnerable.

## Stop BNP

**Campaigning against racism and fascism is an important part of UNISON's work and our members, are directly affected by the electoral growth of the British National Party (BNP).**

So far we have kept Scotland BNP free. However, it is not over yet. Currently, BNP has 57 local councillors across Britain. With the European elections in 2009 UNISON is

determined to mobilise its members and play a pro-active role in the campaign against the BNP.

UNISON with Unite Against Fascism and Searchlight provides valuable guidance on how to get active in your branch keep to halt BNP right in its tracks.

## NHS Founder's Statue to Sit Beside Mick McGahey

As part of a series of events marking the 60 Anniversary of the NHS, the largest health care union in Scotland has commissioned a statue of Aneurin Bevan, the architect of the NHS.

UNISON's Lothian Health Branch has contracted Andrew McFetters – the sculptor who produced the statue of miner's leader Mick McGahey – to produce the Bevan statue. The two working class leaders will sit side-by-side in George V Park, Bonnyrigg, Midlothian.

Tom Waterson, Chair of UNISON Lothian Health branch and of the union's Scottish Health Group said: "It is entirely appropriate that the founder of the NHS will sit next to an important workers leader. The NHS was created to provide free care for all who needed it, and stopped the crime of working people being unable to afford vital healthcare."

Other connections between Bevan and McGahey are that Bevan was himself a miner and a miner's union official, and he married Fife miner's daughter Jennie Lee. Mick McGahey's son also works in the NHS, and is the Lothian Health Branch Secretary. The statue will be unveiled later this year.

This Newsletter is produced by the Scottish Black Members Group of UNISON

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## Challenge Racism In The Workplace



**Equality matters in UNISON was the message from the challenging racism in the workplace training delivered by Pav Akhtar UNISON's Race Equality Officer to a room full of Scottish Black Members at Royal Victoria Hospital, Edinburgh.**

At the training, Pav's presentation spelled out that UNISON believes that our members should not only be challenging overt forms of racism such as harassment, but also taking action to challenge structures and processes within the workplace that covertly disadvantage fellow Black workers. Discrimination is affecting the employment rates, progression and retention of Black workers in the workplace.

UNISON activists are well placed to challenge racism in the workplace, but this can often be a challenging and complex process.

Dealing with discrimination is not just about supporting a worker who wishes to pursue their grievance through formal

procedures, with the possibility of an employment tribunal.

While this may be the only way of resolving an individual's grievance, this ultimately means it is dealt with outside of the work environment from which the problem originated.

The root cause may lie in the actions of a manager or other workers, the culture of the workplace, a particular policy or the failure to enforce an anti-racist strategy.

The Challenging Racism in the Workplace project enables every-one within the branch to become pro-active in identifying and collectively negotiating to challenge the issues that affect Black workers in order to ensure that all workers are treated fairly.

In all some 17 UNISON members came from all over Scotland to attend the training.

Ismail Donmez Secretary Scottish Black Members of UNISON said: "It is delightful to see that many shop stewards and few equality officers from different Scottish branches came to attend the training. I am sure the training will enable trainees to serve our members well". For more details contact Pav: [p.akhtar@unison.co.uk](mailto:p.akhtar@unison.co.uk)

## Our NHS Turns 60

The National Health Service celebrates its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 5 July 2008. For six decades, NHS Scotland has provided everyone with access to health care free at the point of use, funded by general taxation. The NHS has undergone many changes throughout its history, and continues to face challenges, but it remains vital to the life of the whole population. UNISON is proud of our NHS as it turns 60. Although formally separate, the NHS in Scotland continued to be run along broadly the same lines as the NHS in England until the devolution settlement in 1999. In the first ten years of the Labour government, spending per head on health in Scotland was doubled. More than 700 extra doctors and 5,000 extra nurses plus other health team members have been added since devolution in 1999.

As a result of this investment, patient treatment has become faster and better. Waiting times are now the lowest ever despite a big increase in the number of operations. There has been a focus on tackling Scotland's "big killers": cancer, heart disease and strokes. Since 1997, deaths among the under-75s from cancer have been reduced by 15%, from strokes by 40% and from heart disease by 45%. Today nearly 60,000 UNISON members who work in NHS Scotland, and many more in local government and the voluntary sector, are key and committed players in the teams delivering the nation's health, and all of our 160,000 members, their families and their communities benefit from the public health ethos of the NHS.