

Happy festive season to all our members ...especially to those delivering services over the holiday

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our City's ^{still} NOT for sale PUBLIC WORKS: KEEP EDINBURGH PUBLIC! In-house wins vote p4

PUBLIC WORKS:

a million voices for public services

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Scotland ⁱⁿ UNISON

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You were all magnificent!

November 30: Solid strike with great public support shows government must stop Great Pensions Robbery



Strike stories by John Stevenson
SiU Editor

Around 300,000 public service workers in Scotland stood up to fight the government's malicious and unnecessary pensions cuts on 30 November.

Rallies across the country underlined the resolve of ordinary people to stand up for fairness - and to defeat the myths and lies peddled by the

government and big business.

For many of the two million taking action across the UK, this was their first ever time on strike. Most of them were women. The biggest public service industrial action ever.

UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis said, "Today, history has been made - not by politicians - not by bankers and business leaders, but by the millions of ordinary men and women - few of them militants or hardened activists, many

thousands who have never taken industrial action before, who, with courage and quiet resolve have said: 'enough is enough'.

UNISON Scotland secretary Mike Kirby had them cheering to the rafters at the Glasgow rally.

He hailed the 'solid strike' and told members "The real pensions' crisis is in the private sector - where two thirds of employers do not pay a single penny towards their workers' pensions.

"It could cost this country up to £15 billion to support the

millions of private sector workers who have been locked out of saving for their retirement."

In Edinburgh, 10,000 strikers were treated to a barnstorming performance by National Pensioners Forum leader Rodney Bickerstaffe outside the Scottish Parliament.

Reaching out to the young people on the rally, the ex UNISON general secretary was cheered as he urged them, "You have a legal right and a moral duty to stand up to bullies and diktat or

Photos: Glasgow march. pic by Ian Wallace. Inset: Detail from Edinburgh rally at the Parliament.

they will walk all over you".

From Shetland to Dumfries and everywhere in between, workers from 30 unions across the UK walked out and said 'enough is enough' after pensions cuts are being heaped upon pay cuts and job losses across the public services.

Full stories pages 2 and 3

What's the next step in the campaign?

As we went to press, a national scheme specific talks had begun on pensions with UNISON's service groups due to reconvene on 11 January to review progress

The TUC's public sector group was also due to meet to 'maintain the maximum unity across all sectors'. The STUC will also call all public sector affiliates to a special meeting on 11 January.

The focus is to leave enough space for meaningful talks to take place without losing the

momentum of the campaign. On 3 December UNISON's Scottish Council of branches agreed to hold an emergency meeting if needed in light of developments.

There was an air of celebration at the meeting with pride in how well the strike had been organised and how well members had responded. There was a broad consensus on the need to build while people were motivated.

Local Government recruited almost 2,500 members in the run

up to the strike and service group chair Stephanie Herd said: "It is time to celebrate and congratulate the activists and members."

The next step needed to be a "joint union campaign with co-ordinated action".

Lothian Health's Mick McGahey called for targeted action. "There is a concern that this is it over and done with. It is not. It was the start", he told delegates.

We should build on the action on the 30th and people need to

understand there should be 'no compromise' in negotiations.

His branch had recruited 600 new members and there was a new mood for action.

Edinburgh's John Stevenson recognised the balance between members "getting action-fatigue if too much is asked of them but also the risk of missing the moment if we don't build more action soon."

It was Tayside Health's Alan Manley's first time on strike as a health worker. He was 'proud' of his

branch's organisation and it was time to "move to the next stage".

Cathie Miller for NHS Glasgow Clyde and CVS Branch said the employers had 'underestimated us' and, as so many other branches reported, employers were not organised for seeking proper life and limb cover from the unions.

UNISON Scotland vice-convenor Stephen Smellie backed the calls to take the action forward and particularly the call to set an action date. But he stressed that it was essential that the decision was a joint one agreed with other unions.

Strikers take to the streets of Stornoway



In the Western Isles workers picketed the Work and Pensions office, the NHS main offices, the Stornoway hospital, the Port Authority, and the council's Marybank depot.

First time striker, Rebecca Macleod told the *Hebrides News*: "I've never been on strike before but I feel really strongly about this."

"We suffered pay cuts for two years and the money they're taking is not going back into pensions but going to fund the Treasury."

Flora Somerville of UNISON Western Isles Local Government branch said. "Going on strike has been a last resort for us but we've been forced into it."

Shetland: Osborne 'made things worse'



Almost all Shetland schools were closed, council services were running just life and limb cover and inter-island ferries were cancelled.

As strikers marched through Lerwick, UNISON's Stuart Hubbard told the local press that chancellor George Osborne's cuts the day before the strike had made life for public sector workers even worse.

"We believe in supplying high-quality services. However, we have just heard that on top of the two year pay freeze we get a salary increase of just 1% over two years when inflation is at 4.5 to 5%."

"On top of that our pension is being reduced. I don't think that bodes for a well motivated work force and will lead to a lower quality in public services."

A moral duty to stand up - or they will walk all over you

EDINBURGH: It was cold but it was sunny and the atmosphere was electric as 10,000 marched down the Royal Mile waving flags and banners to the sound of whistles and vuvuzelas.

A sea of colour from union after union but dominated by UNISON's purple and green.

Unite tweeted that the rally area was already filled by UNISON alone before the rest of the march got there.

When the rest of the marchers did get there - taking an hour to pass at any point - they were treated to a barnstorming performance by Rodney Bickerstaffe outside the Scottish Parliament.

Reaching out to the young people, he was cheered as he urged them, "You have a legal right and a moral duty to stand up to bullies and diktat or they will walk all over you".

Marchers were still coming down the Royal Mile as the rally began and they cheered in their thousands when Rodney told them, "Thousands and thousands are out today and we'll do it again and again if and when necessary."

Rodney, president of the National Pensioners Convention and ex UNISON general secretary, rounded on the hypocrisy of the 'millionaire' cabinet.



Rodney Bickerstaffe (centre) meets UNISON NHS pickets in Edinburgh

The hypocrisy that says we have to pay the price when it was they and their city friends who caused all this mess in the first place' Rodney Bickerstaffe



Recalling the recent Remembrance Day, he said: "They rightly stand and show respect for dead at the Cenotaph for one day. But they go on to show disrespect for the living for 365 days".

We rightly mourn the death of thousands in the World Trade centre "but when 25,000 old people die every year from winter related illness, nobody sheds a single tear".

The hypocrisy that says we have to pay the price when it

was "they and their city friends who caused all this mess in the first place".

And as for attacks on public service workers as 'uncaring', he said: "Who was it out in the fog that night on the motorway pulling bits out of the tarmac? Who is it that wipes the noses and bottoms day in day out? Not them. They wouldn't know what caring was if it sat on them!"

"Uncaring? They're the ones closing the hospitals,

throwing people out of jobs, cut, cut cutting."

He tore into the attempts to create a public-private divide on pensions. "It's like saying that because one person has had their leg cut off, it is only fair that everyone gets a leg cut off".

"The government call us unpatriotic because 2.5 million of us are out on strike. What about the 2.5 million unemployed they've created - lost days every day of every year. Who is it who's not patriotic?"

And to those who crossed our picket lines today out of so-called 'principle', he asked, "Will they show the same principle and say 'we don't want that pension you have won for us because we didn't stand up and fight for it?'"

We can and will win!

MOTHERWELL: UNISON Scottish convener Lilian Macer told strikers: "This is a historic day as millions stand up against a pensions robbery."

"We can and we will win this dispute because we are on the side of fairness at work and decency in retirement while Cameron and his cronies are on the side of misery at work and poverty in retirement."

Pickets were out in force across North Lanarkshire and met with great public support. Area organiser Janet Stewart said: "Public support has been great and at one picket line a pensioner handed the pickets a tenner to buy themselves teas and coffees!"



Who was the first to walk out?



Vying for the award for first out on 30 November were the Caledonian University and Tayside Police branches.

Scottish Secretary Mike Kirby joined Caledonian's Davena Rankin as security staff were



filmed by TV news as they marched out led by a piper at midnight.

But 70 miles away, George McIrvine and his Tayside Police colleagues were also out on the picket line on the stroke of midnight.

Never before have so many public service workers taken action

GLASGOW: Mike Kirby, UNISON Scottish Secretary and STUC President told the thousands at the Glasgow rally: "Never before have so many public service workers - and so many women - taken action."



6 The real pensions' crisis is in the private sector - where two thirds of employers do not pay a single penny towards their workers' pensions' Mike Kirby

"We know that today's strike is being led by women - 3.7 million could be affected by the plans to make detrimental changes to pensions."

The rally followed a massive turnout on the streets of Glasgow as strikers from a host of unions - with UNISON colours dominating the march - snaked through the streets undeterred by pouring rain, boosted by public support as passers-by applauded them.

Initial police figures grossly underestimated the numbers. Mike suggested this was because their helicopter had been 'going round in wee budgie circles'.

Mike's speech was met by cheer after cheer as he told the rally, "Public sector workers are entitled to pensions that are affordable, sustainable and fair. They are doing what successive governments have told them to do to prepare for life after work."

"At a time of pay freezes, pay caps, real pay cuts, significant increases in national insurance contributions, higher VAT, rising inflation and fuel costs, we believe it is wrong to require public service workers to increase their pension contributions. Contributions which will go straight to the Treasury to pay off the deficit caused by the banks."

"50% increase in monthly contributions for 15% less benefits over the lifetime of drawing benefits. Some Fair Deal on Pensions!

"The real pensions' crisis is in the private sector - where

two thirds of employers do not pay a single penny towards their workers' pensions.

"It could cost this country up to £15 billion to support the millions of private sector workers who have been locked out of saving for their retirement."

"The critics of today - the bonus billionaires and Tory Cabinet millionaires - know nothing of the value of public

services, where we care for elderly and infirm, we teach children, empty bins and save lives.

"And as floods hit parts of Scotland people resort to public services for assistance."

"But on a day like today, you don't want to hear from me. You'd rather hear from George the police civilian in Dundee, who, with his

colleagues, walked off the shift at midnight.

"You'd rather hear from Tina the nurse in Inverness. Tina has worked as a nurse for 27 years. She looks after outpatients at her local hospital £597 worse off today because of the 50% contributions, £1,275 worse off tomorrow because of the cut in benefits."

"From Davena and the security staff at Glasgow Caley University marching off shift at midnight... led by a piper."

"And from nursery nurse Carol, tackling her first live TV interview last night, to tell Scotland, that after 30 years paying a pension she's being robbed."

Three generations fighting for pensions justice



DUMFRIES: 93 year old ex Civil Service union steward Jack Smith backs his daughter Sue Chalmers (left), UNISON Scotland Retired Members secretary,

on the Dumfries strike. Sue's brother and his daughter were on the pensions demonstration in Norwich. Three generations fighting for justice!

Also pictured is Elaine North, Dumfries and Galloway Branch, and winner of the 2008 STUC One Workplace Equality Award.

Rich getting richer while the rest pay the price

ABERDEEN saw one of its biggest trade union rallies in years as members gathered at the Castlegate after early pickets had been treated to bacon rolls to warm them up.

"Let's nail the lies of this ConDem Government. Our pensions are not "gold-plated", UNISON speaker Kate Ramsden told the rally.

"An average local government pension is around £4,500 and for women it's under £3,000 Compare that to the average pension of a Director of a FTSE 100 company - £175,000. These



Aberdeen rally with UNISON speaker Kate Ramsden centre are the real gold plated pensions!"

She warned of the government's divide and rule tactics. "Cutting public sector pensions won't make private sector pensions any better. In fact it will just make it harder to win pensions justice for all.

"That is why our colleagues in private sector unions are supporting our action today and we thank them for it."

"The real pensions divide is between those at the top of the earnings chain and the rest of us. And this is the message we need to get across," she added.

"We in the trade unions are on the side of fairness and justice for all. We condemn the growing inequality in this country where the rich are getting richer while the rest of us pay the price. We stand here to tell this government that enough is enough."

UNISON NEC member Sandra Dee Masson slammed the government's attacks on our pensions.

"Our members are having to pay more, and work longer for a poorer pension at the end of the day. Once again ordinary people are being made to pay for a crisis they did not create."



Cold but cheery Paisley pickets

Danny the pensions robber



INVERNESS: Before the rally, strikers, holding placards and banners, marched past MP Danny Alexander's office as one member, dressed as 'Danny the Robber', symbolically ran away from the workers holding a pensions 'swag bag'.

Dundee turns out in thousands for rally



Dundee City branch secretary Rory Malone told Scottish Council that members turned out for the biggest trade union rally seen in the city for decades on strike day.

The Dundee Courier called it the biggest action since the 1926 general strike and one that would affect 'every family in the country'.

Sleep over to organise..



IN ARGYLL AND BUTE, activists went round visiting every workplace to organise members for the strike.

With such a widespread area including several islands, this meant some didn't see their own beds for days. But it was all worth it with the huge turnout on the day.

Orkney: Biggest walkout in a generation



June Ross and Balfour Wylie mount a morning picket in Orkney where the local press described the action as 'the biggest walkout for a generation.'

Legal officer appointed as tribunal judge

by Fiona Montgomery
Information Devt Officer

UNISON Scotland's Legal Officer, Suzanne Craig has been appointed as a part-time judge of the First Tier Tribunal Social Entitlement Chamber.

Suzanne will sit on tribunals hearing appeals about benefits such as Employment Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance.

Suzanne said: "I am pleased and



honoured to have been appointed by the Ministry of Justice and I am looking forward to gaining new skills and experiences as a judge."

She will also continue in her full time job providing employment law advice and training to UNISON staff and activists.



President: Thanks for day to be proud of

UNISON President Eleanor Smith thanked branch delegates at December's Scottish Council for making November 30 'a day to be proud of'.

And she waded into the 'misery' created by Chancellor George Osborne in his Autumn statement. "The Government's economic plan is failing and their only response is to take more out of people's services and throw more people on the dole", she said.

They've blamed everything from the Euro to the snow, the royal wedding and the strike "But if they want to know who's to blame - they should look in the mirror - and at the misery they're causing".

Eleanor, a theatre nurse from Birmingham, also promoted her presidential charity - the African and Caribbean Leukaemia Trust. Details at www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/20328.pdf

Edinburgh's still not for sale

After almost two years of campaigning, UNISON's City of Edinburgh Branch is celebrating the council's environment contract staying in house.

Labour, SNP and Green councillors joined on 24 November to vote to abandon 'Alternative Business Model' (privatisation) plans and support the in-house option for services like bin collection, cleansing and grounds maintenance.

"Credit must go to activists, our full time officer and the members for putting such a strong case that convinced the public and ultimately the council", said John Stevenson, branch president.

"We are certain the council has made the right decision for the right reasons. However, challenges remain with job losses and tough targets in the in-house option.

"It was a model campaign but the fight is not over as two more massive contracts are coming up for decision on 19 January.

"It is not just important for Edinburgh that this wholesale and unnecessary privatisation is stopped, but for the whole of Scotland", he added.

Full details of the complex analysis done by the union, along with many briefings, leaflets, public meetings, lobbies and demonstrations are at www.unison-edinburgh.org.uk

Living wage victory for Stow College members

by Stephen Low
Policy Officer

UNISON members at Stow College won a fantastic victory in October - achieving a commitment to a Living Wage following a campaign involving both selective and all out strike action.

All 90 members took one day of all out strike action and the canteen workers took a further six days of selective strike action.

The campaign received support and goodwill from other unions at the college as well as the student body.

This in part at least, may be down to the way UNISON strikers showed imagination as well as determination during the campaign, including canteen staff running a 'solidarity sausage stall' for students and other staff when the canteen was closed.

Securing a Scottish Living Wage of £7.20 per hour represents an 8% pay increase for around one in five UNISON members at the college.

This pay award will be backdated to 1 August for most workers, will be paid to all future workers and will form



Stow Solidarity Sausage Stall

part of any TUPE transfers.

The two days additional annual leave won for all support staff is a concrete improvement in a core condition of service.

The introduction of a new training fund for support staff linked to pay also represents an advancement in members overall employment arrangements.

The deal - accepted by a 4/1 margin by workforce - wasn't a complete victory. The failure to force the management into a pay

award for other members is disappointing and will be a core demand of the UNISON branch in 2012/13.

The UNISON branch will also continue to do all it can to protect the interests of our members already subjected to or threatened by transfer to private companies.

The fantastic stand made by Stow College UNISON members this year will surely provide a base on which to build next year's campaign.

Quarriers fight for fair procurement

by Malcolm Burns
Information Devt Officer

The UNISON Quarriers Branch is planning a new campaign around the issue of Social Care Procurement with the Scottish government and councils.

Branch Secretary Stephen Brown said: "We want local authorities to write into social care contracts with the voluntary and community sector a wage which is comparable to directly employed local authority workers.

"Our members, workers in Quarriers homes looking after some of the most vulnerable people, are facing a bleak Christmas as their pay has been cut in some cases by as much as 17%. The cuts are coming from Westminster, passed on by Holyrood and then local councils to the voluntary sector.

"We're at the end of the line. It is unacceptable and we're aiming to change the unfair way procurement is done."

The branch led a great campaign culminating in a well-supported strike in September, which won concessions including a reduction in the pay cuts from a proposed maximum cut of 30%, and then 23%, and saved sick pay benefits.

But despite a lobby of the Scottish Parliament and support from many MSPs, pay cuts of up to 17% were effectively imposed on Quarriers staff in October

Scotland's Radical Exports

Pat Kelly, an ex NALGO Scottish convener, PCS secretary and STUC president has published a fascinating and superbly researched book on the key role of Scottish emigrants in trade union movements around the world.

While we often hear of the historical role of Scots in building empires and exploitation, it is refreshing to see the radical role of Scots workers turning their industrial experience and political understanding into leading workers to better conditions around the world, especially at a time when that could mean serious personal risk.

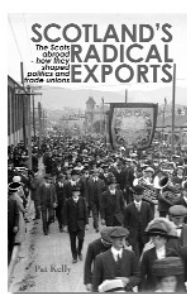
Get the book at <http://thegrimsaypress.co.uk>

A Rose Loupt Oot - Poetry and Song Celebrating the UCS Work-in

Following the recent UCS Gala Concert David Betteridge has published a book with some of the songs that were so memorably sung at the concert by, for example, Dick Gaughan, Jimmie Macgregor, and Arthur Johnstone.

The book also has a witness statements by UCS veterans, cartoons by Bob Starrett, poems, photos, historical notes, etc. Available from Smokestack Books: £9.50 inc p&p PO Box 408, Middlesbrough TS5 6WA info@smokestack-books.co.uk www.smokestack.co.uk

BOOKS



Let us know how cuts are affecting services

by Fiona Montgomery
Information Devt Officer

Following the Chancellor's Autumn Statement, the Scottish Government is finalising its budget and branches are urged to monitor the impact on services and jobs across the public sector.

Scottish councils and health boards will be working out budgets for 2012-13 after Finance Secretary John Swinney sets their final allocations.

UNISON Scottish Organiser Dave Watson is urging branches to let the Bargaining and Campaigns team know how cuts are affecting services and jobs locally.

He said: "The UK ConDem coalition's ideological attack on public services, dressed up as a deficit reduction plan, is a further real terms cut in the Scottish

budget, just at a time when the economy needs public spending the most.

"John Swinney has had choices to make and we will be watching closely to see the impact of those choices and speak up about how cuts are impacting on families already under huge financial pressures who need local services more than ever.

"Although the Scottish Government has said it will protect health spending, the costs of inflation and increasing demand means there will still be cuts. And councils have no flexibility due to the damaging council tax freeze, as well as facing more cost pressures.

"Branches should work with their Regional Organisers on completing Cuts Impact Assessment forms as soon as budget information is available.

"This information helps branches with local campaigns and is key to providing a national picture of how damaging these cuts are."

Forms should be returned to Fiona Montgomery at the B&C team f.montgomery@unison.co.uk

Earth Day 31 March 2010

Look out for details in next issue or see the WWF UNISON toolkit on UNISON Scotland's Green Workplace web page

We want to hear your news

SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories.
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