

SBMG News



Scottish Black Members Group of UNISON

Autumn 2008 Newsletter

Chairs Message



Dear Readers

The autumn edition of our newsletter is in your hands. The crux of the matter, however, is that the Scottish Employers

have made a new below inflation 3% pay offer, whereas the evidence suggests RPI inflation is 5%. The sums do not add up.

UNISON recommends, "rejecting" the offer. Ballot papers have been mailed and the closing date for ballot papers is 12 November 2008.

Please use your democratic right to strengthen UNISON's position in the pay dispute.

Best Wishes,
Hamid Rasheed

SBMG AGM

The 2008 Annual General Meeting of the Scottish Black Members Group takes place in the AK Bell Library Theatre, Perth on Saturday 15 November from 11.00 am – 2.00 pm.

Anyone wishing to attend should complete a Delegate Form and return by Monday 3 November 2008.

Anyone wishing to stand for Scottish Black Members Committee positions must complete the appropriate form and submit it by no later than Monday 3 November 2008.

Any motions for consideration by the AGM must be submitted by no later than Monday 3 November 2008.

www.unison-scotland.org.uk

REJECT THE OFFER

" a 3% increase does not deliver "



UNISON Regional Officer and lead negotiator, Dougie Black said, "This offer is not a good offer – especially when inflation is riding around 5%, but our negotiators felt that we should put it before our members in a full postal ballot."

"The recent increases in inflation - especially increase in the price of basic necessities like food and fuel - impact particularly hard on low-paid members, and a 3% increase does not deliver the kind of help they need."

"Bankers and fat cats in the city get help - it is time for hard-pressed public service workers to get that help."

Ballot papers asking over 100,000 UNISON members working for Scotland's local councils were recently issued to ask their views of the latest local government pay offer.

The ballot covers members working for Scotland's 32 local councils, local joint valuation boards and fire and rescue staff. The union is recommending that members reject CoSLA's offer of 3% for 2008 and 2.5% for 2009. Members of the other two unions representing local council staff (GMB and Unite(T&G)) are also being balloted with a recommendation to reject the offer. They are due to declare in November at the same time as UNISON. The new offer comes following two successful one day strikes by the unions.

The Chair of UNISON's Local Government Group, Stephanie Herd, said "UNISON will be making it clear to our members that it will take a lot of pressure to get the employers to improve their offer."

"The employers are determined to keep the pay rise at the level of the current offer - if members hope to shift them we need to strengthen our industrial action strategy and members will need to be prepared to increase the level of their activity - we have to intensify our industrial and political campaigning."

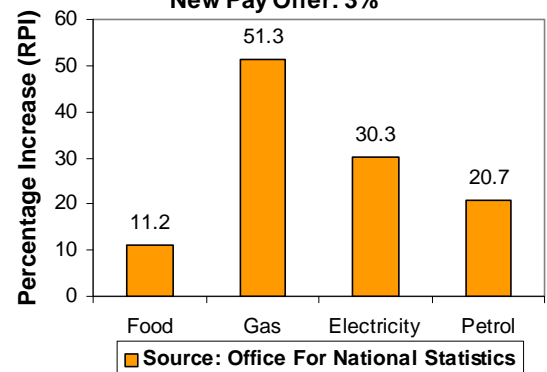
COST OF LIVING KEEPS RISING

Increase in Prices - September 2008

RPI Inflation (overall): 5%

CPI Inflation (overall): 5.2%

New Pay Offer: 3%



British 'Immigration Cap' Hotly Debated

by: Migrants' Rights Network (MRN)

The controversial proposal of an 'immigration cap' - introducing an annual limit to the numbers of immigrants coming to the UK - has continued to be hotly debated.

A new report 'Balanced Migration: A new approach to controlling immigration', released in September 2008 by Frank Field MP and Nicholas Soames MP and written by Migration watch, presents a case for a limit to permanent immigration to the UK.

The report broadly argues for a concrete reduction in migrants able to settle in the UK, over and above the "meal ticket for life" which its authors believe is offered by the Government's new Points-Based System for immigration. The report proposes instead that non-EU labour migrants allowed to settle in the UK be limited to around 20,000 per year. All other immigrants would only be able to work in the UK for a maximum four-year period before returning to their countries of origin.

The idea of an 'immigration cap' has been consistently rejected by the Labour Government and a range of non-governmental organisations, including the MRN, although we were disappointed to hear new Immigration Minister, Phil Woolas, appointed in early October to replace Liam Byrne, indicate to the Sunday Telegraph his support for the idea of an immigration cap.

We see this proposal as a problematic quick fix, over-simplifying the complex contributions made by migrants in the UK by setting an inevitably arbitrary limit on numbers who can settle here. Acute insecurity would be introduced for the majority of migrants by forcing them to leave after four years of paying taxes, working and establishing families in the UK. MRN believes there should always be the option for migrants who live and work in UK for four years to settle here, for the long-term benefit of both migrants and local communities.

The proposal to limit long-term migrants would also make worse Britain's growing over-reliance on temporary labour migration - already underway in the Government's Points-Based System. Research released by the OECD during September criticises the growing tendency of many countries, including the UK, to try to satisfy the majority of labour needs through temporary migration. It points out that many high and low-skilled labour needs are permanent, making it a waste of time and money to fill these gaps through a regular turnover of temporary migrants.

Source: www.migrantsrights.org.uk

MAJOR AGREEMENT BETWEEN PGFTU AND HISTADRUT

UNISON has welcomed the resolution of a long-standing dispute between the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions (PGFTU) and the Israeli TUC, the Histadrut. In 1995 the two unions signed an agreement whereby the Histadrut would remit to the PGFTU a percentage of the union membership fees of Palestinian workers employed in Israel. However, most of the money was never paid by the Histadrut.

This summer, after mediation by the international trade union movement, the Histadrut finally agreed to pay over the outstanding money. UNISON, regrets, however, that it has taken the Histadrut so long to honour its 1995 commitments. UNISON will also be watching carefully to see if the Histadrut also follows through on its commitment to provide legal advice to Palestinian workers in Israel, something UNISON itself has helped the PGFTU financially with in the past.

Single Equality Bill

UNISON has broadly welcomed the government's announcement of an equality Bill for England, Scotland and Wales. The proposals in Framework for a Fairer Future, include extending the duty on public bodies to promote equality, ban age discrimination in the provision of goods and services, increase transparency in gender pay, new rights to take positive action and wider powers for tribunals. For a UNISON activists' briefing on the proposals visit:
www.unison.org.uk/equality/pages_vie_w.asp?did=7727

St Andrew's Day Anti Racism March & Rally

Saturday

29th November 2008

St Andrew's Day 2008

Everyone deserves an equal chance to live free from
fear of discrimination, prejudice and racism

St Andrew's day is about showing a united Scotland

Come and show your support

**Scotland
Against
Racism!**

**Bring your banners!
All anti-racists welcome!**

The march assembles at 10.30am (for 11am) in Glasgow at St Andrew's in the Square, which is just off the Saltmarket.

The rally is at 12 noon at the Glasgow Film Theatre, Rose Street, Glasgow.

 Gara
Glasgow Anti-Racism Alliance

 stuc
www.stuc.org.uk

**Scotland
Against
Racism!**

Scottish Black Members Training

"another year of success"

by Ghulam Rasul Shahzad



The Scottish Black Members Training Weekend marked another year of success, as 74% of those attended the training weekend, were new to the training event. This year's training weekend was specially designed to match the changing needs of the Scottish Black Members, by the Scottish Learning and Organising Committee. The training took place from 19-21 September, in Edinburgh and the training agenda/programme was agreed and provided before the training course. This allowed the participants to actively participate in the training programme.

The training started on Friday evening and the session included introductions and setting a focus on the aims and objectives of the training, and identifying what participants expect to achieve from the training. This prompted a detailed discussion about the training weekend, its proposed outcomes and future planning.

In the second session on Saturday, the delegates discussed in small groups the issues affecting Black Members. To address these issues, they identified solutions and skills they needed to develop. The session was facilitated by the tutor.

Pav. Akhtar, National Equality Officer of UNISON, made a presentation about the 'Challenging Racism in the Workplace Toolkit' and distributed the booklets he had published. Pav took participants through these two booklets and explained in detail about the background, what the law says in this respect, Race Equality Schemes, issues for collective bargaining, next steps and enforcement etc.

The final session of the training covered issues such as demystifying UNISON structures, the need to increase membership, role and responsibilities of shop stewards, Branches, Regions and issues related to grievances, disciplinary procedures etc. Training on "Assertive, Aggressive and Passive behaviours" was also delivered and appreciated by the participants. The training ended with a question & answer session.

Kishana Kishana a first time delegate to the training weekend said: "All sessions of the training provided valuable inputs to raise the level of awareness on our rights and how we can benefit from the legislation and good practices to ensure discrimination free workplaces."

"All delegates at the training are of the opinion that such weekend training should be delivered regularly, and Scottish branches should encourage black members to increase participation in such events." he added.

Ismail Donmez Secretary Scottish Black Members Committee (SBMC), thanked Branches, UNISON Scotland, Pav Akhtar National Equality Officer, Ghulam Rasul Shahzad UNISON tutor and delegates, management of the Premier Inn, and particularly the staff at the 'Touchbase meetings', for their valuable contributions in making the training weekend successful.

Editors' Corner

Zia Hussain & Lui Giacomello

The Autumn 2008 edition of SBMG News contains news of the forthcoming ballot in Scottish Local Government.

Inflation (CPI) is currently at 5.2% and yet the employers want workers to accept 3% this year and force them to accept 2.5% next year.

We need to send a clear message - council workers deserve a fair deal. Make your vote count. Reject the below inflation offer.

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.

Challenging Racism in the Workplace

Everyone is entitled to fair treatment at work.

Yet, despite more than 30 years of legislation to outlaw race discrimination, Black workers of African, Asian and Caribbean heritage are still more likely than white colleagues to be disciplined at work, to experience harassment and to work in junior or temporary positions.

The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 has opened up new doors for Black workers, trade unionists and for UNISON to deliver equality.

It's up to all UNISON members – Black and white colleagues working together – to strive for race equality with UNISON supporting you all the way.

We can make a difference.

www.unison.org.uk/challengingracism/pages_view.asp?did=7630

ZCTU Concerns Over Power Sharing Deal

The Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) General Council met with Prime Minister, Morgan Tsvangirai on 27 September 2008 seeking an explanation on the contentious issues of the agreement between the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and Zanu PF.

ZCTU raised concerns about the 'flawed process', which has led to an agreement that does not address the primary causes of the dispute that created the current economic and political deadlock. The deal is argued not to be all-inclusive, since civil society and interested groups, such as labour, were not given the opportunity to participate. ZCTU contend that the power-sharing deal is a political settlement by the elite, and not about the welfare of ordinary people.

Iraq's Anti Trade Union Laws

UNISON's National Black Members Committee (NBMC) has worked through the NEC's International Committee, the TUC and with other trade unions to campaign for the repeal of all anti trade union legislation in Iraq, especially decree 8750 which allows the seizure of trade union funds.

The NBMC is also promoting twinning links with Iraqi trade unions and urging the UK Government to exert its influence on the Iraqi Government to cease the continuing violation of International Labour Organisation Conventions.

www.unison.org.uk/international

'DIVERSE AND UNITED' AT THE STUC

by Sofi Taylor



The Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) Twelfth Annual Black Workers' Conference was held on the 4th and 5th Oct 2008 in Perth. The theme of this year's Conference was "Diverse and United", and the Black Workers' Committee hosted a panel session with representatives of different faith groups.

The session was designed to facilitate initial engagement between trade unionists and faith and belief groups. To participate in the debate, the STUC invited the Glasgow Buddhist Centre, the Humanist Society of Scotland, the Baha'i Council for Scotland, the Scottish Islamic Foundation and the Action of Churches Together in Scotland (ACTS incorporates nine denominations: Church of Scotland, Congregational Federation, Methodist Church, Quakers, Roman Catholic Church, Salvation Army, Scottish Episcopal Church, United Free Church of Scotland, and United Reformed Church).

At the conference, 17 motions and 2 emergency motions were debated and the UNISON delegation played a full part in the debates. UNISON's own motions: 'Defending and Promoting Multiculturalism' and 'Supporting Show Racism the Red Card' were carried.

The UNISON delegation comprised of : Rajandar Aggarwal, Pav Akhtar, Nahid Aslam, Shireen Bonnar, Ismail Donmez, Bruce Graham, Paul Gupta, Kashina Kashina, Tamara Mhura, Bev Miller, Hamid Rasheed, Sofi Taylor and Eileen Dinning (Observer).

Many of the delegation were first timers; many also spoke for the first time and moved the conference with personal experiences. We were very proud of our delegation, their commitment to UNISON and the conference.

BURMA CAMPAIGN UK

The campaign is asking trade unionists to protest the way in which foreign insurance companies help companies to fund the military regime in Burma and so oppress the people. Part of this oppression is that free trade unions are banned. The situation is so dangerous that trade union leaders from Burma have to live in exile or risk long prison sentences and torture.

The Insurance Campaign exposes how foreign insurers directly and indirectly fund the Burmese regime by underwriting regime owned Myanmar Insurance. Myanmar Insurance has one of the best protected monopolies in the world, it is an imprisonable offence in Burma to buy insurance from any other company.

Take Action! Please write to your M.E.P. about the situation regarding insurance companies' support for the Burmese regime. Read more about the Insurance Campaign and how to protest against the injustice at:

www.burmacampaign.org.uk/insurance.php