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# Scotland *in* UNISON

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# TRADE UNION RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

## Organise and recruit to defend them

by John Stevenson  
*SiU editor*

**UNISON members from across Scotland and the UK descended on Parliament on 2 November to lobby MPs against the undemocratic Trade Union Bill.**

By the time you get this issue of *SiU*, MPs will have already voted on the bill's final reading before it goes to the Lords.

**'Trade Union Bill is a ferocious attack on almost every aspect of trade unionism'**

DAVE WATSON - Page 2

The lobbying and pressure has brought some important late changes in the bill but many threats are likely either to remain or come back again in the future.

Whatever happens, STUC general secretary Grahame Smith has highlighted that the best way for workers to protect themselves is to be in a union in the first place.

He said "We will continue to campaign; to organise and recruit new members, and emerge from this latest attack stronger."

The bill is described by leading human rights groups as "a major attack on civil liberties in the



Glasgow City branch members were among the UNISON members from across Scotland who lobbied their MPs in London against the Trade Union Bill on 2 November. [See more on Page 2](#)

UK". In a joint statement Liberty, Amnesty International and the British Institute of Human Rights said the bill: "Would hamper people's basic rights to protest and shift even more power from the employee to the employer."

UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis has called the bill 'the most draconian legislation in the western world', which undermines the right to strike,

union organisation and aims to make it harder for unions to win a fairer deal at work.

This was graphically outlined by UNISON Scotland NEC member Gordon McKay at the recent Scottish Labour Party conference.

Slamming the ballot threshold plans, Gordon told delegates: "Now if a trade union has 1,000 members in a workplace and they

vote 499 to nil for industrial action it will be ruled illegal."

"If union gets a 79% vote in favour of industrial action on a 50% turnout it will be ruled illegal", said Gordon.

"If that rule had applied in other votes we wouldn't have a Tory government, we wouldn't be in the EU, we wouldn't have a Welsh or London Assembly and the Scottish Parliament wouldn't

have tax raising powers.

"Electronic voting would increase turnout so the Tories ban it, but keep it of course for their own internal elections.

"If a trade union hits the thresholds no other organisation has to achieve, the Tories will allow companies to bus in strike-breakers no matter how much that puts safety and services at risk."

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## TU Bill lobby: Thanks to Scottish MPs

by Dave Watson  
Scottish Organiser

**Despite the weather that disrupted travel into London, UNISON Scotland was well represented at the lobby of Westminster against the Trade Union Bill on 2 November.**

The bill is a ferocious attack on almost every aspect of trade unionism. It shifts the balance of power in workplaces further to the advantage of employers and away from workers, whether they are in a union or not.



Dave Watson with SNP group leader Angus Robertson MP (left). A particular thanks to Chris Stephens MP (right) for his assistance with the lobby.

It is fundamentally an attack on core trade union activity: facility time, check off, and the ability of unions to underpin collective bargaining with a credible right to strike.

It subjects unions to unprecedented levels of civil and criminal penalties, red tape, and monitoring by the Certification Officer. It proposes to curtail unions' abilities to fund political activities and campaigns.

The lobby started with a rally at Central Hall, Westminster. So full that hundreds were left outside.



We thought the Aberdeenshire and City branch delegations got lost, but they found an MP to lobby!

Moving inside the Palace of Westminster, trade union members appeared to take over the building talking to their MPs.

Discussions with Scottish MPs focused on those aspects of the Bill that undermine the devolution settlement. Under the bill, Ministers for English departments will be able to direct health boards, councils and NDPBs across Scotland.

This would be the most serious breach of the devolution settlement since the Scottish Parliament began.

There was a good turnout of Scottish MPs and trade union members. All were very supportive of our campaign.

Thanks to all those activists who made the often difficult journey to London due to the fog. And a special thanks to the Scottish MPs who turned up to listen to our concerns.

## UNISON campaign brings shared service u-turn

**UNISON has welcomed Stirling Council's decision to drop plans to share services with Clackmannanshire.**

UNISON Stirling and Clackmannanshire branches ran a major campaign against plans for Stirling social work services to be run by Clackmannanshire and Clackmannanshire education services to be run by Stirling in what has been called the 'Shared Services Lead Authority Model.'

The UNISON campaign successfully exposed the flaws in the accountants Ernst and Young business case document.

UNISON said from day one that this was never in the interests of the people of Stirling



Pam Robertson Lorraine Thomson

and Clackmannanshire. It was always about cutting funds and jobs.

It would have cost millions of pounds to implement meaning savings would never have materialised even though ordinary people would have seen cuts in services and local jobs lost.

Lorraine Thomson, UNISON Stirling branch secretary, said:

"UNISON is pleased that Stirling Council's elected members have decided to ditch the project altogether.

"This decision will give an opportunity for more direct provision of services in both authorities."

Had this agenda gone forward, the union feared it would have seen a reduction the quality of services and further job losses.

Lorraine added: "This project has been allowed to continue for far too long.

"We are pleased to see that common sense and simple accountancy has prevailed, however this should not deflect away from the very real budget cuts that both authorities have to

face locally.

"UNISON intends to work with management and elected members to enable as smooth a transition for staff as possible in the coming months."

Pam Robertson, Clackmannanshire branch secretary, said: "We are relieved that this threat to local jobs has been averted, however senior staff who have already been integrated will be anxious to find out what role they will fulfil in the future and who their employer will be.

"It is vital that both councils agree a plan with trade unions as soon as possible to disentangle their education and social services."

# Equal pay victory for Fife workers

**UNISON has reached a multi-million pound settlement with Fife Council for over 1,400 mainly low paid women members for their equal pay claims.**

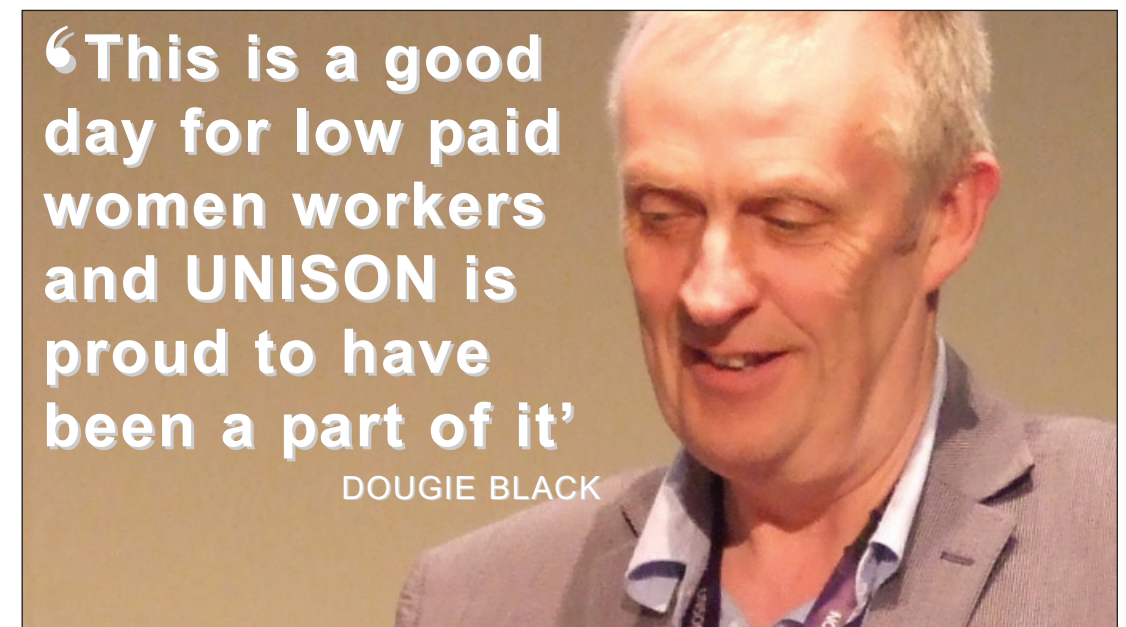
UNISON members will now be properly recompensed for historic discriminatory pay practices in Fife Council.

UNISON has been at the forefront of the legal campaign to fight for equal pay for women workers and to ensure they receive the back pay to which they are entitled.

Dougie Black, UNISON regional organiser for Fife local government said: "This has been a long time coming with many claims stretching back to 2006."

"We can only thank UNISON members for their hard work and patience.

"We will now discuss individual claims with the employer to ensure each claim is



**"This is a good day for low paid women workers and UNISON is proud to have been a part of it"**

DOUGIE BLACK

calculated properly.

"This is a good day for low paid women workers and UNISON is proud to have been a part of it."

Suzanne Craig, UNISON's legal officer said: "UNISON will be seeking early payment from the employers.

"Regrettably it took the threat of proceeding to an employment tribunal to focus the employer's mind to settle, but it is great news for everyone that we have agreed.

"This settlement also agrees the legal principles for moving forward to ensure wherever

possible that job evaluation and pay practices remain free from discrimination in the future.

"Members will receive individual letters, in due course, outlining their settlement figures. I want to thank everyone for their patience."

## TU Bill is a 'knife in the back'

*From Page 1*

Gordon added: "As a last knife in the back, pickets will have to wear an armband and give their name to the police just to make sure the employers know who to blacklist."

The bill will make it more difficult to join a trade union by ending check off/DOCAS agreements where members pay subs direct from their pay.

UNISON pays for its check-off agreements. They're not a gift, and it's not something that's costing the taxpayer anything. For example, Fife Council charges UNISON 5% of subs (£39,575) for collecting members' subscriptions.

It doesn't cost anything like

**"Pickets will have to wear an armband and give their name to the police just to make sure the employers know who to blacklist"** GORDON MCKAY

that to process the payments. It's the easiest way for the union members themselves, their union and their employer – a system that's worked well for decades in both the public and private sectors.

"This new measure seems to be designed solely to cause disruption for unions like UNISON, but it also runs the risk of damaging partnership working and morale in health, schools, and local government",



said Dave Prentis in his general secretary blog.

So extreme are the proposals that there is wide consensus across Scotland to oppose them.

CoSLA has come out against the bill and many Scottish local authorities have said they will not co-operate with attacks on facility time or check-off.

## Vote in the general secretary election

**Make sure you vote in the UNISON general secretary election from 9 November to 4 December.**

The top job in UNISON is a crucial one and four candidates will battle it out.

**Roger Bannister**, Knowsley branch and NEC member, nominated by 25 branches.

**John Burgess**, Barnet branch, nominated by 62 branches and one regional council.

**Dave Prentis**, current general secretary, nominated by 204 branches, eight regional councils, six service groups and the National Executive Council.

**Heather Wakefield**, head of local government, nominated by 81 branches, one regional council and one service group.

## Call for halt to police control centre closures

**UNISON Scotland gave full support to a Scottish Labour conference call for a halt to the continued closures of local control room / service centres across Scotland.**

George McIrvine, Secretary of UNISON Police Staff Scotland

branch, called for a halt to the 'strategic direction' of Police Scotland closing local services.

"Police Scotland need to step back from their blinkered centralisation plans of control rooms and service centres closures. They must consider a different path involving those who know the job best, the

workforce", said George.

Police Scotland proposed a staged approach for closing police control rooms but there was no detail on the rationale other than cost savings.

This has resulted in a workforce who are under continued pressure with an increased workload and - as the

recent staff survey showed - morale at its lowest ever.

Problems have arisen, and the tragic loss of life in the widely reported M9 incident, led to the Scottish Government call for HM Inspector of Constabulary to review the changes and allocate another £1.4 million to iron out the problems.

# The silent slaughter of jobs and services

**UNISON members in three Scottish councils mounted demonstrations on 28 and 29 October against another round of savage cuts.**

3,000 jobs are to go in Glasgow, 1,000 in North Lanarkshire and 2,000 in Edinburgh with all that means for members' livelihoods and the local services they provide.

Edinburgh UNISON's John Stevenson told hundreds who demonstrated at the city chambers: "Rightly the Scottish government has set up a task force in the wake of 300 jobs being at risk in the steel industry in Scotland.

"But where is the task force for the 40,000 jobs lost in local government?"

"Local councils cannot survive year after year of cuts while governments say nothing.

"It has become the silent slaughter of jobs and services."

UNISON Glasgow branch secretary Brian Smith said: "Glasgow City Council politicians have a choice - make the Tory cuts or do not.

"We call on all elected politicians in the city to use all available financial mechanisms to hold-off any further cuts whilst leading a fight to win more money for the city.

"The council could use some of its reserves and borrowing powers, supported by the legal financial process of 'capitalisation', to fill the two



Clockwise from top: North Lanarkshire rally, Edinburgh lobby and UNISON's Carol Ball addresses the Glasgow demo.



year £103m hole expected in April 2016.

"This would allow time and space to build a mass campaign of elected councillors, trade unions, user groups and local communities with the objective of winning more money from the Holyrood and Westminster governments."

In a branch statement, UNISON North Lanarkshire's

John Young said cuts were a 'devastating blow for everyone living in North Lanarkshire'.

10% of jobs are under threat with £26 million lost to the local economy.

"Once once again it is the low paid and vulnerable, including children, elderly and disabled people who will be the worst affected.

"We understand it's a

difficult time and Scottish councils are being hit by the UK Government austerity and the Scottish Government's council tax freeze.

"However they can do more to mitigate the impact of these cuts like borrow at record low interest rates, refinance, use reserves, reform taxation, and make better use of pension funds", added John.

## Water privatisation 'ultimate market madness'

**UNISON has slammed the 'crazy system' that will see £350million shuffled between Scottish Water and a private company with the taxpayer picking up the tab.**

"UNISON is deeply disappointed that the contract for Scotland's public sector water and wastewater services is to be awarded to a privatised utility", said Dave Watson, head of UNISON Scotland bargaining and campaigns.

"In fairness, the Scottish Government had few options

because the system of retail water competition is the ultimate in market madness.

"£350m will be paid to Anglian Water in Huntingdon, only for most of that money to be repaid to Scottish Water in wholesale charges. The cost of this crazy system is picked up by the taxpayer."

"The claimed headline savings include water efficiency measures that should be undertaken anyway and are often included to spin out the alleged benefits of retail competition."

This procurement also

highlights the importance of addressing tax dodging in procurement, an issue UNISON and other civil society organisations campaigned for during the passage of the Procurement Act.

"There should be pre-qualification disclosure of company taxation policies and public bodies should be able to evaluate a tender on the basis of which company pays tax or not. Assessment of bids could make use of the Fair Tax Mark", said Dave.

"We have always said that

Scottish water should stay in Scotland in public hands. It works, is good value for money and water customers support the corporation staying in public hands", added Dave.

A Corporate Watch report shows Anglian paid £151 million to its private owners but just £1 million in tax in 2012, after an operating profit of £363 million.

It says Anglian avoids millions in tax by routing profits through tax havens via high-interest loans from their owners through the Channel Islands stock exchange.

## Climate March, Paris rally and new UNISON green network

by Fiona Montgomery  
Information and Devt officer

**Climate change is a key priority for activists around the globe in the next few weeks and UNISON will be part of the action.**

General Secretary Dave Prentis has urged members to support demonstrations across the UK on the weekend of 28 and 29 November.

**Scotland's Climate March in Edinburgh on Saturday 28 November will see thousands out on the streets calling on world leaders meeting in Paris next month to agree a strong deal to cut greenhouse gas emissions.**

Marchers are being asked to show their colours for climate, justice and jobs.

Stop Climate Chaos Scotland is organising the Edinburgh march and rally and members can join in the social media build up to spread the word. Do also please volunteer to steward if you can.

**STOP PRESS!** UNISON has agreed to subsidise some bus places for members nominated by branches to attend a massive march and rally in Paris on 12 December at the end of the UN talks.

The Friends of the Earth Scotland bus leaves Edinburgh on Thursday 10 Dec, returning in the early hours of Monday 14 Dec. Details are on our blog. Contact Fiona Montgomery [f.montgomery@unison.co.uk](mailto:f.montgomery@unison.co.uk) asap to secure a place.

Members interested in union work on climate change were invited to a UNISON Scotland Green Network meeting on Saturday 14 November in the West Campbell Street office in Glasgow.

A Just Transition to a low carbon economy and green workplace policies were on the agenda, along with building support for the demonstrations.

Dave Prentis said: "All governments need to commit to a just transition as the human and economic costs of the transition need to be managed whether it's support for displaced workers, affected communities who suffer local plant closures and job losses or low-income households who need support for affordable fuel."

He added: "Paris is just the beginning not the end. UNISON's green reps in the workplace will play a vital role in the Just Transition."

## Trident speech wins praise

**UNISON policy officer Stephen Low has won widespread praise for his passionate speech in moving the Scottish Labour Party conference motion against Trident renewal.**

Stephen reminded delegates that Trident's purpose was: "to detonate a nuclear warhead above a city, killing everyone in its radius. Not enemies, not targets, everyone."

He said: "When it comes to the real threats to this country, things like terrorism, things like cyber attacks, things like climate change, Trident is utterly, utterly useless.

"We shouldn't want Trident renewal even if it were free, but of course it's not free, it comes at an utterly bewildering cost."

See Stephen's full speech at <http://notesonnationalism.typepad.com/>

# Big increase in assaults on public service workers

## UNISON Scotland's annual violence at work survey of employers and members in Scotland shows an increase of 1,227 assaults compared to 2014.

The total recorded assaults on public sector workers in Scotland in 2015 was 38,279.

The UNISON report included a survey asking what staff had suffered, how they had felt about it, and what action their managers had taken to try to make sure they were safer in the

future.

Examples of the stories they had to tell included: 'Patient was verbally abusive and looming over me.' 'Grabbed, attempted strangle, punched, slapped, glasses broken.' 'Too many incidents to describe.'

UNISON members also said they felt undervalued, frightened, afraid, disrespected and sick. One summed it up as being: "Really



## Public service workers have a right to carry out their duties free from fear of attack

SCOTT DONOHOE

upset and in tears most nights after work."

Worryingly many members accepted it as: "Fine. It's my job".

Others said they were: "Mostly

sad for the people that have resorted to violence. Not great obviously but it's my job and sometimes these things happen, we just have to deal with it."

Scott Donohoe chair of UNISON Scotland health and safety committee said: "The abuse of staff is intolerable and no one should have to experience it as part of their work.

"This level of violence is simply unacceptable. There is no doubt the recording continues to improve, however the problem is clearly

growing, rather than decreasing.

"Public service workers have a right to carry out their duties free from fear of attack.

"Whatever the difficulties faced by some of those who are assaulting staff we need to ensure special measures such as extra training, additional staffing or sanctions.

"We would urge employers to follow guidelines like those in 'Managing Occupational Violence in the Workplace' by the Centre for Healthy Working Lives."

# New procurement guidance should extend Living Wage

by Fiona Montgomery  
Information and Devt officer

## New Scottish Government Statutory Guidance on procurement will help in our efforts to extend the living wage in Scotland to thousands of staff on public contracts.

Branches will find the guidance particularly useful with employers who have argued that it is difficult or impossible to include the Living Wage - updated this month to £8.25 per hour.

While UNISON, along with the STUC and civil society coalitions, had called, in '10 Asks for the Procurement Bill', for all public contracts to include the Living Wage, the Scottish Government continues to claim that it can't legally do so across the board.

However, the guidance on 'Fair Work Practices' does set out how the Living Wage and other employment matters, such as trade union recognition and representation and no 'inappropriate' use of zero hours contracts can legally be included.

Under the Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014, employers must set out their general policy on the living wage in their procurement

strategies and can evaluate bids against that policy and confirm details in the contract as an enforceable performance clause.

UNISON is particularly keen to see the Living Wage extended to all those working in social care, given the often appallingly low pay and poor terms and conditions.

## Branches should make sure that public bodies revise procurement strategies to include the Scottish Living Wage

DAVE WATSON

The new so-called National Living Wage (NLW) introduced by George Osborne will come into effect in April, at £7.20 per hour for over 25s.

It is in effect a higher National Minimum Wage but takes no account of the cost of living and doesn't do anything like enough to offset the effects of tax credit cuts and other changes that will hit the poorest families very hard.

The real Living Wage does make a big positive difference to people's lives and we can step up efforts in procurement and use the Ethical Care Charter to push pay and

standards up in social care.

We have been involved in discussions with the Scottish Government, COSLA and care providers, looking at ways of driving up pay, ideally to the Living Wage as a minimum.

Proposals under consideration include an initial investment in pay or improvements to conditions covering at least the rest of this year and a further deal next year, with talks also looking at the impact of the new NLW to 2020, overall costs in the sector, and a longer term solution.

Dave Watson, Head of Bargaining and Campaigns, said: "Previous legal objections to including payment of the living wage in contracts no longer apply.

"Branches should study the statutory guidance and make sure that public bodies revise procurement strategies to include the Scottish Living Wage."

He welcomed Scottish Labour's newly announced policy to guarantee the Living Wage in social care.

UNISON Scotland has an updated briefing on the website with links to key documents, information and resources.



Don't forget the annual STUC St Andrew's Day march and rally against racism and fascism on Saturday 28 November. Assemble Glasgow Green 10.30, march off 11.00 and rally at GFT at 12.00.

## UNISON wins personal injury settlements

UNISON Scotland won £164,376 in personal injury settlements for members in October 2015 alone, ranging from awards of £1,000 to £30,000. Another snippet to help you in recruiting new members.

# FE ballot: Members urged to reject 1% pay offer

## UNISON further Education members are being balloted on a pay rise which was due on 1 April.

UNISON is recommending rejection of the employers' 1% final offer. In common with the lecturers' union EIS/ FELA, it is angry at the lengthy delay in the pay negotiating progress and the conduct of the employers' side in this first ever round of Scottish wide negotiations.

The final offer of a 1% consolidated pay award, with £300 flat rate for those under £21,000 replaces the previous risible offer of 1% unconsolidated - a first such offer in the Scottish public sector.

The offer falls well short of UNISON's claim of £1,000 for all which is fair, equitable and would have started to address the deep seated and longstanding pay variances across the 26 colleges.

The final offer squeezes middle earners (between £21k and 30k) who will receive between £210 and £299 a year extra.

Chris Greenshields, UNISON chairperson for further education said: "This final offer is a slap in the face for FE support staff who have been working all hours to maintain college services for students in the face of job cuts and mergers.

"We have been arguing that

all staff in the sector should receive the same flat rate pay rise. We want an end to the unfair system of percentage rises which if applied to all staff would see some principals in line for a £1,400 pay rise while some support staff will only get £210 to meet the cost of inflation."

John Gallacher, UNISON Scottish Organiser, added: "UNISON Scotland is seeking an urgent meeting with Angela Constance, Education Minister, to discuss this crisis.

"Whilst the First Minister, with the great and the good, opens the new City College campus on the Clyde in Glasgow at an event

which cost the sector thousands of pounds (with a lunch including guinea fowl), hard working support staff in further education are struggling to buy their weekly grocery shop.

"In a sector that promotes reward through education and hard work, our members are being let down by college principals and boards."

Shirley Sephton, UNISON vice-chair for further education said: "It is not easy to provide support and assistance for thousands of students while all around you staff numbers are being cut and there is an expectation that services will be

maintained.

"The least college staff deserve is a fair pay increase at the end of the year. Our members work under considerable pressure and deserve a decent pay rise for the first time in many years of pay cuts."

UNISON will put sustained pressure on the sector to unlock its substantial reserves and pay its workforce properly.

## We want to hear your news

SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories. John Stevenson (Editor) 0131 558 7488, john.stevenson@unison-edinburgh.org.uk