

Chair's Message

Merry Christmas with our winter edition of SBMG News!

Well, we better prepare ourselves for predicted heavy snowfall, who knows, we may have a 'White Christmas' after all.

However, how can we forget that racism in the work place is a reality! In addition to that budget cuts; job losses; increased work loads; shorter deadlines to meet unrealistic targets; threat of the increased use of revamped Capability Policy to pave the way for dismissal on the grounds of poor performance. Fear of multinational companies' ability to provide low cost services. Rise of the Scottish Defence League; on going war in Afghanistan and neglected diseases in poor countries. The Plight of Palestinians and the Burmese people; foreseeable drought in Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania, and slow progress on a global deal to cut emission are a few of the challenges we need to face on the home and global front.

Surely, not all is doom and gloom. Change is not as bad as it may sound.

As your Chair ... I am stepping down! It has been my privilege and pride to serve you. I thank you all for enabling me to provide Leadership to our group for 8 successful years. Have "Unity, Faith and Discipline" to elect a new Chair and a new working committee at our group's AGM on 9th January 2010.

I am confident the new leadership will improve on the work we do, to overcome the above challenges, and make our workplace a better place to work.

Good Bye ... I wish you all a very happy new year.

Hamid Rasheed

SCOTLAND UNITED MARCH & RALLY



UNISON Scotland's officials; members from its branches & self organised groups, and about 1,500 anti-racism protesters marched through the city of Glasgow under the banner Scotland United, in opposition to the Scottish Defence League (SDL).

There were reports of clashes outside Central Station and at several points around the city centre. Police said they had made five arrests.

The Scotland United Rally was called by the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) to counter the threat of the SDL - an offshoot of the English Defence League - attempting to hold an 'anti-Islamist' demonstration.

Deputy First Minister Nicola Sturgeon was among those who attended the rally, organised to oppose the views of those involved with the SDL. The SDL protesters, some with their faces partly covered with scarves, sang songs and chanted 'SDL' as they held their demonstration. Strathclyde Police estimated about 80 people took part in the SDL protest.

Hamid Rasheed, Chair Scottish Black Members of UNISON said: "The SDL is not welcomed in Scotland; and the best way to deal with the SDL is to deal with it collectively and this is how we aim to ensure a future free from racism and fascism in Scotland".

UNISON'S MILLION VOICES CAMPAIGN GOES GLOBAL

Since UNISON launched its Million Voices campaign in support of public services, sister unions around the globe have been adding their voices and 'speaking out for public services'. In response to calls for support for our Million Voices campaign, trade union leaders such as Wellington Chibebe president of ZCTU in Zimbabwe have added their voices.

Add your voice and speak up for public services at:

www.unison.org.uk/million/solidarity.asp

A FUTURE FREE FROM RACISM

St Andrews Day March & Rally



UNISON Scotland members, fellow trade unionist, politicians, faith groups and hundreds of people took part in the St Andrews's Day Anti-Racism march and rally in Glasgow.

The march set off from St Andrew's in the Square, off Saltmarket, for a rally of about 500 people at the Glasgow Film Theatre, on Rose Street. The rally received messages of support from Prime Minister Gordon Brown and First Minister Alex Salmond.

Speaking before the march, the Secretary of State for Scotland, Jim Murphy, said: "It is right that we tackle racist and fascist views and show to the world that Scotland is against racism. Racism has no place in a modern society and the vast majority of people in Scotland embrace equality and diversity openly".

Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) general secretary, Graham Smith said: "There is no place in Scotland for the extremist defence leagues, their vile views and their hatred of our Muslim community. Their attacks on Muslims should not be tolerated in our multi-cultural Scottish society. In fighting for a future free from racism we are proud of our record as trade unionists in challenging the racism and bigotry that exists in our society, but we cannot afford to be complacent."

Other organisations taking part in the March and rally included Glasgow Anti-Racist Alliance and Hope not Hate Scotland.

Editor's Corner

Lui Giacomello

As you have read in the Chair's message, it is all change at the helm of the SBMC next year.

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of all Scottish Black Members to thank Hamid for all the good work, inspiration, support and leadership he has given us as chair of the SBMC over the past 8 years. Thank you Hamid and we wish you well!

"I refuse to accept the idea that man is mere flotsam and jetsam in the river of life, unable to influence the unfolding events which surround him. I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality."
- Martin Luther King, Jnr.

National Black Members

Conference 2010

The 2010 National Black Members Conference is to be held on 22-24 January 2010 at the Sage Gateshead

International Migrant Workers Day

The world marks International Migrant Day on 18 December 2009 and UNISON will be summing up the achievements of the union's two-year migrant workers participation project. The project has pulled together much of the excellent work that has been done in regions and branches to organise migrant workers and provided additional support and encouragement for migrant worker to become active in UNISON.

Migrant workers can be particularly vulnerable in the workplace, but are a crucial part of our public services: around one in five care workers and one in three nurses looking after the elderly are migrants. Getting to the UK for those who need permission to work here costs around £5,000 in fees and fares; money that has to be borrowed.

When those migrants come to the UK, the money they send home, typically £400- £700 per month, is a vital part of the income for their wider family. Their ability to repay the money they owe and support their family depends on them staying with their employer. This makes them particularly vulnerable. These are the workers who more often than not end up covering the Christmas shifts that no one else wants to work.

UNISON's report on the project highlights that targeted organisation of migrants by regions and branches is particularly effective. It also shows that migrants are often overlooked because many of them work in the privatised sector. The two-year project concludes in January, but as UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis says, "this is the beginning of a long term engagement with migrant workers. Without migrant workers many of our public services would collapse – migrant workers are an important part of the public-service family."

www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/B4847.pdf