



Scottish International Committee's Newsletter ...

Volume 6

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Editorial

Well late arrival of Spring season this year; the Spring edition of our newsletter is with you, almost in the Summer season. As the purpose of this non-editorial driven publication is to keep readers fully aware on Scottish International Committee's work. Hence, neither the Editor nor the Publisher are liable for the accuracy of the content.

Editorial team members Hamid Rasheed, and Fahd Ali Asif (SBMC Rep) are keen to have your views to improve this publication. Please provide your feedback to: Simon Macfarlane. Regional Organiser UNISON House, 14 West Campbell Street Glasgow G2 6RX
Tel: 0845 355 0845
Email: s.macfarlane@unison.co.uk

UNISON International Seminar 2014

A Report by Pricilla Maramba and Hamid Rasheed



Scottish Delegates with Nazma Aktar
L-R: Pricilla, Tony, Louise, Nazma, and Hamid

The UNISON International Seminar is a key annual event, which took place at Croyde Bay from 12th to 14th April 2014. The event is organised by the UNISON International Unit based in London. The event is specially designed for Branch International Officers and the purpose of this event to enable UNISON branches to undertake international work in line with the UNISON policy, which takes its shape,

as a result of decisions made every year, at the UNISON National Delegates Conference. As expected, this year's International Seminar provided information on UNISON work outside the UK, to advance the cause of workers. A summary report from the seminar is as follows:

GLOBAL ORGANISING: The session was chaired by Paul Glover NEC and speaker was Greg Thomson, from the strategic organising unit of UNISON. It was revealed that a significant number of UNISON members now work for multinational companies and the numbers are set to increase due to outsourcing by the Government agencies and Local Authorities. Therefore, global organising is very important as multinational companies operate across the world.

UNISON now is recognised by Four Seasons Health Care, which employs over 30 000 carers and nurses. And in addition to that UNISON also deals with over 10 600 private sector employers; however, the challenge is that currently there are no structures in place within Branches to accommodate those who work for private sector employers. As 1 in 4 new UNISON members are from private sector, therefore, it was suggested that after speaking to Heads of Procurement and negotiating for a living wage with Framework Providers, the way forward for UNISON is ethical procurement. The outcome was in response to work place changes UNISON has to change too.

PALESTINIAN CAUSE: The session was chaired by Jean Butcher NEC. Sarah Colborne the speaker from Palestine Solidarity Campaign highlighted the plight of Palestinians, particularly their living conditions under Israeli control and constant destruction of their property. The situation is at its worse in Gaza – where water and electricity are rationed for Palestinians and the water supplied is polluted. Detention of children and adults is used as a means to coerce and control. One Delegate who recently visited Palestine said in order to grab more and more Palestinian property / land; Israelis spray Palestinian homes with obnoxious liquid that smells for months. Forcing Palestinians to throw away their house old item, and eventually leave their homes. For over 60 years Israel has been violating International law but this is now changing as a certain section of Israelis does not support ill treatment of Palestinians, at the hands of their government. It was suggested as trade unionist we must continue to follow the Boycott & Divestment of funds policy with regards to Israeli goods and investment of our funds in companies linked with Israel. The branches were urged to Link with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. The details are available on www.palestinecampaign.org



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Twitter: @pscupdates; Facebook: Palestine Solidarity Campaign UK. The branches were asked to send their delegates to Palestine to see what is going on.

LABOUR BEHIND LABEL -- BANGLADESH GARMENT WOMEN WORKERS: - The session was chaired by David Augur NEC and among the Guest speaker were Sam Maher, Greg from Labour Behind Label and Nazma Aktar of Sommlito Garment Shomic Federation, Bangladesh. A minute silence was observed for the garment factory workers who lost their lives just a year ago, in the avoidable Rana Plaza disaster, in Bangladesh.



Nazma a former child labourer and mother of two highlighted the harrowing working conditions faced by garment factory workers in Bangladesh. She explained companies from Europe and America go to Bangladesh because cheap labour helps these multinational companies to keep their production costs very low. These companies do not follow ILO conventions but their own Code of Conduct. They control the land and they are very powerful. The situation is made worse by corruption in the Government. The workers suffer

from malnutrition and related diseases; and lack of: workplace safety, respect or even loss of dignity. Retirement age for women is 60 years but by 40 years age women workers are too tired and weak to carry on working, so they retire with no pension and live in poverty.

Nazma asked delegates to put pressure on 20 leading multi-national companies to sign an accord to prevent disasters and pay compensation to those who have lost their lives or limbs in Rana Plaza disaster. Among these 20 companies, the top companies that operate in the UK are GAP, Matalan, ASDA, H&M, Marks and Spencer, New Look, and Debenhams. The workers who died in the fire at the factory have still not received any compensation. She asked branches to help, support and organise the Trade Unions in Bangladesh, to ensure Unions can get better pay, living and working conditions for its members. So far 150 Brands have signed to the accord, but only 9 have companies including PRIMARK have paid into the compensation Fund. For more details please see the labourbehindthelabel/payup link on website. The delegates were asked to advise their branches to affiliate with "Labour behind the Label" Campaign, and by signing to their postcard campaign against Matalan. The delegates observed one minute silence on 24th April at 11:38am to remember those workers who got killed in the Rana Plaza disaster.

SWAZILAND / SOUTHERN AFRICA: The session was chaired by Ian Fleming NEC and representing Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA) – Mark Beacon provided an update on work being done in Southern Africa covering Swaziland, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Mark revealed that King Mswati III is the ultimate law in Swaziland. There is no real democracy in Swaziland. In 2014 elections a woman lost her election because her husband died on the eve of the election, so she was viewed as unclean and not to be voted for. Another woman lost the election because she wore trousers. Only 1 woman was elected in the recent elections. The rights of women are appalling. A third of women between 13 – 24 experience sexual abuse and women are not allowed to have their own property. There is a lot of work underway to improve the rights of women and change is inevitable. Those who campaign for democracy get rounded up. At the seminar a video of Beki Dlamini, a representative of the Youth League who was arrested, tortured and detained for 4 years and released upon acquittal was shown. The need was identified to increase work with Swazi trade unions. On Zimbabwe, although the ruling party got elected by rigging the ballot, yet the world now wants to start engaging with Zimbabwe because it has rich economic resources. Women still lack economic power but ACTSA is working with Dignity for women providing sanitary towels. Unemployment is 90% in Zimbabwe making it difficult for Unions to organise. Civil society in Zimbabwe feels that when UK speaks about Zimbabwe it is counter-productive so those willing to help can do so through ACTSA.



South Africa – is one of the most unequal societies in the world; suffers from highest levels of crime and violence against women. Gold miners suffering from Silicosis have no access to medical facilities, no diagnosis, and there is no compensation for miners, from mine owners. Delegates were asked to encourage their Branches to get affiliated to

ACTSA. ACTSA is looking at using Common Wealth Games in Scotland to highlight some of these issues.

LATIN AMERICA

The session was chaired by Stephen Kennedy NEC and the speakers from Cuba Solidarity Campaign, Venezuela Solidarity Campaign, Justice for Colombia Solidarity Campaign and Nicaragua Solidarity Campaign Action Group were Bob Miller (CSC), Francisco Dominguez (VSC), Victor Figeroa (JFC), and Louise Richards (NSCAG). The focus in the update was on US intervention, and on provision of support to strengthen Trade Unions and Democratic movements in these Latin American countries.

CUBA: The US blockade is condemned by all UN member nations except Israel. The blockade is causing hardships for organisations and companies wishing to work with Cuba. These companies have to face heavy fines imposed on them by the US government. As a result

increasing numbers of UK companies and banks are being fined and blocked from buying certain US goods, if these goods are to be used in Cuba. This problem is further complicated by rich and powerful Cuban – Americans who live in Florida. These are the one determine who gets the presidency in US via Florida vote; and these organised Cubans are against the Cuban Government and often organise terrorist attacks on Cuba.

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The Cuban Government responded by sending 5 men to infiltrate them but they got arrested, and after a trial these 5 were unjustly imprisoned. One of these Miami 5 was freed after serving his jail term but the Miami 5 Campaign continues to get the other 4 out. The Branches were urged to get affiliated to the Cuba Solidarity Campaign or by donating towards their work. The delegates were also informed that there is a Solidarity Conference taking place in Havana, in October 2014.

VENEZUELA: To understand the situation, the delegates were advised to watch a video, 'The Revolution will not be televised. The video can be accessed Chavez Code online too, which shows that la. To destabilise the newly elected Venezuelan position parties that were rejected by public sourcing is illegal and most services are the world. The world has accepted the election seems to have other ideas. Once again the es to get affiliated to the Venezuela Solidari-



online. And they were also asked to read the the US was involved in the coup in Venezuela Government; US is supporting the op- in the recent elections. In Venezuela, out- tionalised. It has the best election process in tion results in Venezuela, yet US government delegates were advised to have their branch- ty Campaign.

NICARAGUA: The 2nd poorest country in country was under dictatorship till 1930s but US felt threatened by Nicaragua and unleashed mercenaries causing deaths and political chaos in the country resulting in Sandinistas losing the 1990 elections, however, he got back into power in 2007-2013. Average age of Trade Union members is 33years compared to 54 in UNISON. Nicaragua is the 3rd most equal country in Latin America and ranks 10th in Gender Equality. Unions have a Tripartite Agreement with the Government and Unions work closely with community. UNISON provides funding for a legal office with 2 lawyers. The Nicaragua story is one of hope, optimism and outcomes that support working people in securing a better life – it is a story we need to hear particularly their success in recruiting young people to become active trade unionist.

COLOMBIA: So far some 59000 people have disappeared and there is lot of injustice and human rights abuses with many people being displaced. Civil society is not included in the political process. Trade Unionists are killed and imprisoned by the Government which accuses them of being guerrillas. There are 7 500 political prisoners including Trade Unionists. Trade Unionists and guerrillas share the same ideologies apart from violence. Some guerrillas are ex-Unionists and others are ex-MPs. Cuba is helping the peace process in this conflict which is more bloody than Afghanistan. Everything in Colombia is privatised. The branch delegates were asked to get their Branch affiliated to Justice for Colombia Campaign



2.6 CONCLUSION: There is a lot of good work being done but from what transpired, there is even far more to do and working together is the only way to be certain of bringing about the much desired change. Thank you very much for sending me to this eye opening Seminar.

BRANCH INTERNATIONAL OFFICERS TRAINING GLASGOW

Scottish Branch International Officers Training Weekend took place from 25-27 April 2014, at Jury's Inn Glasgow. The training focused on building delegates awareness on UNIOSN international work, and enabling them to pick an issue in line with UNISON policy, and support or devise a campaign around the issue, to help UNISON continue its international work.

During the weekend; in a special session "Scottish International Committee" meeting took place. At the meeting Sam Macartney and Allison Cosgrove were elected Chair and Vice Chair of the Scottish International Committee. At the committee meeting it was decided to work with branch delegates to send a Scottish Delegation Bhopal to mark 30th anniversary of Bhopal disaster, to support Bhopal survivors' struggle for justice. The survivors' groups of the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal appreciate the solidarity UNISON has shown over the years, especially when Union Carbide / Dow and their friends amongst the global corporations and national governments continue to evade justice. So far 5 branch delegates have expressed interest in going to Bhopal. However, this requires fundraising apart from financial support from Scottish Branches. It was also revealed that the UNISON Scotland's International Committee is working with our counterparts in the North West and Northern Regions to organise a joint international seminar in Manchester on 19th to 20th September. This follows on from the successful joint seminar in Glasgow in September 2013.



The plan is for delegates to arrive in Manchester on the evening of Friday 19th and to attend a welcome reception at the UNISON North West Regional Centre, Arena Point, 1 Hunts Bank, Manchester M3 1UN – exact time TBC. The seminar would then take place the following day at The Mechanics Centre, 103 Princess Street, Manchester M1 6DD. The FDO has kindly agreed to fund the attendance of the Chair and Vice Chair of the International Committee to the seminar. All other delegates will need to be funded by their Branches. Please note the Seminar is not just aimed at Branch International Relations Officers and members of the International Committee, it will be of interest to anyone keen to learn more about the Union's international work and to build our links with the Northern and North West regions.

During the weekend, one evening some delegates decided to build public awareness on Labour behind Label Campaign, and get public signatures to force leading multi-national companies such as are GAP, Matalan, ASDA, H&M, Marks and Spencer, New Look, and Debenhams to sign an accord to prevent disasters and pay compensation to those who have lost their lives or limbs in Rana Plaza disaster. The training weekend was successful, as delegates thanked Simon MacFarlane Regional Organiser and Nick Crook of UNISON International Unit for organising the event.

During the seminar; **International News ...**

The human cost of de-development in Gaza: One of the most unsettling aspects of visiting occupied Palestine is the sense one gets that Israel is squeezing the population as tightly as it can, and in as many ways possible, without inducing a full-blown revolt, international outcry or a total humanitarian catastrophe. In Gaza, the illegal blockade, about to enter its eighth year, is systematically de-developing the economy and stripping the population of their freedom and potential. Israel – helped by Egypt and the inaction of the international community – ensures that Gaza remains caught in the narrow divide between basic survival and man-made humanitarian crisis, slightly easing restrictions when the latter seems probable. Poverty is deep and widespread, with a population that is 80% aid dependent. The future health prospects of thousands of children in Gaza are hostage to the long-term impact of this systematic de-development. [Read more](#)



Public Sector Unions Mobilise over Jobs and Pay ...



Public sector federations called a national day of action in May including strikes and demonstrations to protest against the government's continuing pay freeze and other austerity measures. The unions continue to call for major reforms of public sector pay and are angry that the government plans to freeze the index on which public sector pay is based until 2017. The unions' demands include better conditions for contractual workers, equal pay for men and women and action on mobility and career development. EPSU sent a solidarity message. [Read more at > EPSU \(FR\)](#) [And at > CGT \(FR\)](#) [And at > CFTD \(FR\)](#) [And at > UNSA \(FR\)](#) FO federations also mobilised on 15 May. [And at > FO \(FR\)](#). New EPSU/PSI Study launched today at EPSU Congress, by Dave Hall, PSIRU Introduction and Executive summary This paper aims to explain why public spending, in particular on public services, is economically and socially vital. It is not an economic liability – rising public spending has been part of economic growth for over 100 years; it supports half the formal employment in the world, much of it in the private sector; it delivers services like healthcare and public goods.

UNISON'S Links on Nigerian Girls...

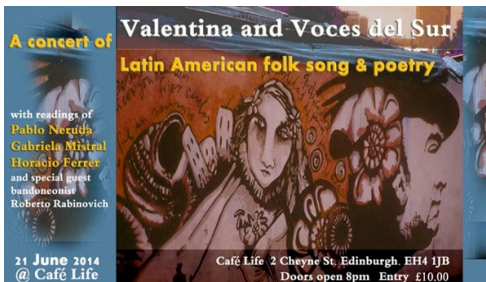
UNISON Scotland encourages its members to follow links to online campaigns.

https://twitter.com/UNISON_global

www.facebook.com/pages/UNISON-International/242756212467900



Latin American Folk Song & Poetry



Valentina invites our readers to the midsummer night concert of Latin American folk song and poetry with special guest Argentine bandone n player Roberto Rabinovich. For further information please check the link https://www.facebook.com/events/619930098089807/?ref_dashboard_filter=upcoming. If you enjoyed the last concert and want to see more please share our Facebook Link far and wide! Please note that the **start time** may be subject to change, if so it will be announced on the FB page. Valentina looks forward to seeing you at the event.

Stop Chevron's Attacks Against the Very People It Poisoned!

Chevron is guilty of deliberately dumping 18 billion gallons of toxic oil waste into the Ecuadorian Amazon. Now it is suing anyone who speaks out against it. Don't let Chevron turn defending the environment and human rights into a crime!

Momentum is growing behind the campaign for justice for Ecuador. Hollywood actors Mia Farrow and Danny Glover are the latest to visit the affected region to highlight the devastation caused. In Britain, musicians, artists, MPs, academics and commentators have been taking a stand. See <http://friendsofecuador.co.uk/statementsignatures/>.

Much of the environmental and social damage in the Amazon can be repaired, but only if Chevron comes under enough pressure to pay the compensation owed. Your participation will help build the public awareness needed for that. So far Chevron has sought to avoid paying compensation, challenging the legal rulings that backed the affected communities. >>>Next Page



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It has even taken action against Ecuador seeking to make it liable for any compensation that Chevron must pay, a move that if successful could seriously harm Ecuador's public spending on health, education and other services. Tell the U.S. Senate's top corporate watchdogs to investigate and help stop Chevron's attacks against the very people it poisoned and their allies. **TAKE ACTION »**

South Sudan Emergency Response

Fierce fighting in South Sudan has forced more than a million people from their homes. Please support [Oxfam's response in South Sudan](#) and help us provide urgently needed food, water and sanitation now and prevent this crisis turning into a catastrophe. Since conflict broke out in December 2013, thousands have died, and more than 800,000 people have been displaced within South Sudan, with a further 300,000 fleeing to neighbouring countries. In total, nearly 3.7 million people need urgent humanitarian support now. Many have lost everything they own and are living in some of the worst conditions imaginable. Our teams on the ground report acute shortages of clean drinking water and a lack of health facilities and basic sanitation, creating a growing public health risk to both displaced people and the communities hosting them.



Without a huge and sustained international relief effort, the situation is set to deteriorate further. More than 200,000 children are already suffering severe acute malnutrition, and an estimated 7 million people - well over half of the population - risk not having enough to eat in the months ahead. Families forced from their homes have had to leave the crops and animals they depend on for food and income. Most were not able to plant crops, so there will be no harvest in the coming months and no food stored to see them through next year.

UNISON Scotland sponsors the Take One Action Film Festival.

Report & Photos By Louise Giblin

The 'Changemakers Weekend - How To Change The World and Stay Human' took place at Comrie Croft in Perthshire. The aim of the weekend was for participants to engage in a two-day retreat with workshops, good food, talks, film and conversation with like-spirited peers and leading social change experts, journalists and artists, exploring how to sustain their love for a better world. The weekend focused on the recognition that activists have strong passions to change the world around them for the better, but the practicalities of day to day life sometimes make this difficult. The weekend aimed to refresh and refocus our energies in order for us to inspire others and avoid burnout and disillusion - no mean feat by anyone's standards.



Simon Bateson, the artistic director of TOA and Kirstie Shirra welcomed everyone to the weekend in the very warm and cosy Comrie Croft. Friday evening consisted of getting to know each other, a fantastic meal and a movie. It was apparent straight away how well the weekend was structured and it was clear from the programme which choices you had and how the weekend would be run. There was plenty of time worked in to the programme for amazing vegetarian food, walks, and time out for discussion, 'capacitor' and meditation. This is certainly something I think we could certainly learn from at our UNISON training courses as it meant you were relaxed and focused for the more structured sessions.



Saturday morning started with a motivational talk from Nick Thorpe entitled 'Connecting with our motivations' I wasn't sure what to expect so went with open ears and was very pleasantly surprised. Nick talked about how we build walls around ourselves and exert unrealistic pressure on ourselves on a daily basis. He talked about how we can stop worrying about everything and just learn to let go. I have since read his book called 'Urban Worrier' which I would highly recommend.

This theme progressed throughout the weekend where we learned about truth telling with care, nurturing joy in times of injustice and overcoming apathy and making wise choices. There was a lot more food, listening, participation and I even learned how to sing and write Haiku with the very lovely singer songwriter Karine Polwart.

After a very early night and restful sleep Sunday started with 'What Speaks: Powerful Communications' with Rebecca McQuillan, lead fea-

tures writer from The Herald. Rebecca opened up debate about how we communicate with each other, we all gave examples of communication and discussed which reached us. Personal communication resonated most with the whole group, which reinforced what we learn as trade unionists that the best way to recruit new members is to actually go and speak to people in person. Overall I had a fantastic weekend; I met lots of good people and made good contacts. I came away feeling well cared for, nourished and excited to get back to campaigning for our members. Take One Action is a Scottish charity whose aims are to empower communities, mitigate social inequality and promote environmental sustainability from a global perspective. They use cinema to highlight issues of global social and environmental change.

Edinburgh Transatlantic Trade & Investment Partnership Seminar

By Allison Cosgrove

The seminar had that old Thatcherite, Ken Clarke, as its poster boy, who is promoting the “Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) changes to trade regulation around the country. Edinburgh was just one of several stop off points. Obviously unaware of some of his audience, Mr Clarke stated that “US labour unions won't like TTIP”. He then went on to deride “Oxfam types with left wing instincts” as objectors.

Mr Clarke's main point was that key industry sectors such as motors and pharmaceuticals would benefit due to the decrease in regulation. He was ill advised enough to admit that if discussions were not resolved within 2 years the whole process might run into the sand. When I questioned him on the dispute resolution element (ISDS) he clearly didn't like this and more or less accused me of being one of the Oxfam leftie types who would object, saying he did not expect lobbyists to be on side.

I questioned the Philip Morris challenge to plain packaging for cigarettes, and his response was lamentable. He did seem to have some concerns about negotiations coming to nothing and opposition from lobby groups which he rubbished more than once - trade unions being one of these. He also made much of interest from other Euro countries – but future speakers identified this interest was because of existing unemployment, not from a particular wish to engage in TTIP, and cited interest coming from Spain and Greece where there was high unemployment.

Three speakers spoke from an academic point of view, looking at the EU as a global actor. Some of this was outside my understanding, but they noted that many countries had concerns and naturally each country in the EU wants to retain its own standards. The final speaker made a telling point that “considerable apathy may give an end result of managing disappointment”.

TTIP was being sold as very ambitious, on the same lines as the WTO was originally promoted, and politically plausible because of existing EU unemployment and promises of new jobs. One speaker dismissed actions by multinational companies as “not expecting this to happen again”. I didn't agree with this and nor did some others present. It was noted that Obama was said to consider TTIP a legacy issue but the Democrats in the US oppose it – and also that China, Brazil and India are excluded as they were seen as to blame for “wrecking” the Doha negotiations.

On the legal and political aspects of TTIP, the next speaker referred to the decline in EU/US renewal, and that TTIP was critically important to both countries, being a second transatlantic anchor between US and EU, and important for each partner's own goals, additional to NATO, as well as giving EU reassurance that it is US partner of choice, rather than Asia, and would offset EU decline. Noted the WTO weak response to Russia trading with Georgia Ukraine etc has weakened its position. The WTO system was under challenge, as the Doha round had been under discussion for more than 12 years, and the economy could drift towards national regulatory trades without TTIP.

An environmental advocate next expressed concerns of civil society with regard to TTIP, arguing that the estimated gains were likely to be small and the social costs could be substantial. He noted that the ISDs consultation had been flawed and there was no good reason to include ISDS as there was an established rule of law in the EU and US. A bigger threat was the Regulatory Cooperation Council with an obligation to take others' comments into account and advice of new regulation.

He expressed concerns about leaked proposals on chemical regulation and that about 80,000 chemicals were on sale without any hazard information. EU has REACH regulation to fill in gaps, but the US doesn't have this regulation. It was unrealistic to believe that TTIP would improve standards, and he felt there was grave danger.

David Martin MEP spoke next, advising that it had been a long held objective to have an agreement with EU and US, but this was due to a wish that EU/US becomes the international standard setter rather than China. He noted the concerns of campaign groups that TTIP would destroy the NHS, and that he didn't believe ISDS should be part of TTIP. He would like to see ISDS excluded. He also felt that TTIP was welcomed by some TUs in US as they saw it as a way of driving up standards, currently lower than EU. (I felt that TTIP should not be used as a way to drive down standards, and some others agreed).

The final event of the day was a lecture by Lord Mandelson. This was less than successful. Lots of flowery language was used but not much actual reality and very little reference to the terms of TTIP. No mention at all was made of ISDS, for example. He seemed keener on the idea of being a Professor for the day of the lecture than on explaining the process of TTIP. Questioners – well informed third or fourth year students – were snubbed and in two cases, ridiculed rudely by him for asking quite reasonable questions.

An instructive day, with a largely academic, European based audience. I think I was the only declared trade unionist present. There seemed to be a general fear that because of opposition to ISDS and other parts of TTIP, the whole process might founder but I don't have the expertise to know how likely that could be.

Further Reading: there is an excellent article in the Labour Research Bulletin which explains the implications of TTIP in detail. The seminar took place on 2nd May 2014, and Allison Cosgrove of Scottish International Committee's attended the event.