

February 2011

## Scottish Elections 2011

The election campaign leading up to Polling Day on 5 May has started. The candidates have been selected including a number of UNISON members, several of whom will be contesting marginal seats. Boundary changes will also be a feature, with voters finding themselves in unfamiliar seats with new candidates.

The regulated period for election expenditure started on 5 January. **Branches are reminded that no expenditure is allowed from branch funds.** Any requests for donations should be sent to Dave Watson.

UNISON Labour Link will be supporting a range of local campaigns with a focus on UNISON members standing in marginal seats. These include Matt McLaughlin in Kilmarnock, Karen Gillon in Clydesdale, John Hendry in Stirling, Sarah Boyack in Edinburgh, and Alex Rowley in Dunfermline. We will also be supporting Rhoda Grant and Dave Stewart on the Highland list. All of these candidates have active campaigns and would welcome assistance from UNISON members. Contact Malcolm Burns or Dave Watson if you can spare some time, either on a UNISON campaign day or at other times.

## Manifesto

Scottish Labour's manifesto will be based on the Policy Programme agreed at the party conference in Oban last October. It includes many of the key issues identified by UNISON Scotland in its manifesto project, Scotland 2011. The trade unions came together as part of this process to agree the Workplace Agenda 2011 as a statement of the values we want Scottish Labour to stand for. Copies can be downloaded at <http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/labourlink/STULPWorkplaceAgenda2011.pdf>.

## Scottish Labour Campaigns

Scottish Labour has a number of campaigns particularly relevant to UNISON members. They include:

**Scottish Living Wage:** Scottish Labour is committed to introducing a Scottish Living Wage of over £7 per hour. Not just for public sector workers but to create a Scottish Living Wage Unit that will use the power of government to promote the living wage across Scotland. Sign up for the campaign at: <http://www.scottishlabour.org.uk/fairpayforall>

**It's Scotland's Water:** The Tories and the Liberal Democrats both want to privatise Scotland's water. Scottish Labour is committed to keeping it in public hands. Sign up for the campaign at: <http://www.scottishlabour.org.uk/scotlandswater>

**NHS Winter Watch:** Real term cuts in health board funding are putting real pressure in our NHS. Help Shadow Health Secretary Jackie Baillie keep track of the strains across the health service this winter at: <http://www.scottishlabour.org.uk/winterwatch>



## Con-Dem broken promises

This Con-Dem Government has gone back on so many pledges and the electorate simply cannot trust it. Remember some of these:

\* **Protect front line services** - the devastating cuts to the Scottish budget is leading to libraries closing their doors, day care centres shutting, charges for services, social care and careers services being cut. The NHS is cutting jobs, including nursing posts.

\* **Crack down on Bankers' bonuses** - the Con Dem Government has failed to rein in the greed and excess of city bankers, who this year are predicted to get bonuses totaling £7bn. At the same time they have missed the opportunity of introducing the Robin Hood Tax which would have raised as much as £20bn - getting this country back on its feet.

\* **Get Britain Working**- by cutting hard and fast the the number of people out of work has grown to 2.5m. The picture is even bleaker for 16-24 year olds where nearly one million are out of work.



## Local Government Cuts

Scottish Government moves to dictate how council budgets are spent are effectively 'handcuffing' local authorities and sound the death knell for democracy. They presented councils with a Hobson's choice: deliver key SNP policies, or face an even bigger cut in your budget allocation. Councils who signed up to the 'package' of Government priorities would face a cut of 2.6 per cent, while councils who did not would face a cut of 6.4 per cent. UNISON has branded the move a veiled attempt to turn local government into the administrative arm of central government and is urging councils to set a needs-based budget based on local need, not government dictat.

## Police staffs

UNISON has branded the SNP Government's demands to recruit 1,000 extra police officers a "cosmetic political exercise". Giving priority to maintaining police numbers in a declining police budget simply means that large numbers of police (civilian) staffs will be cut. This will mean fewer police on our streets as they are taken off normal duties to perform administrative and specialist tasks they are not qualified to do at a greater financial cost to the public.

## Pensions

The UK government plans to increase public service pension contributions by 3.2% over three years, grabbing £2.8bn, for the Treasury - not for pensions. In Scotland this means around £375m being raided from Scotland's budget, £140m from local government and further £140m from health. This isn't the only way governments are breaking the pensions 'contract' members believed they had entered into. The switch from the RPI to the CPI for indexing pensions will result in a cut in pension benefits of at least 15%. Members are being asked to pay more contributions for a worse pension.

## March for the Alternative

On **26 March 2011**, thousands of people will join the TUC march in London, to tell the government that savage spending cuts are unnecessary and unfair. We don't believe the coalition when they say we are all in this together - their public service cuts will hit the most vulnerable the hardest. For transport arrangements from Scotland: <http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/publicworks/26march2011.html>

### Get in touch, get involved

For further details about Labour Link Scotland contact Dave Watson [d.watson@unison.co.uk](mailto:d.watson@unison.co.uk). Do you know who your local Labour Link Officer is? Or where meetings take place? Do you want regular bulletins with information about campaigns and other activities? If you want get more involved or to sign up for the e-bulletin, email Malcolm Burns [m.burns@unison.co.uk](mailto:m.burns@unison.co.uk) or call 0141 342 2855.