

# Revitalise our Public Services

**A**s the debate over public service reform at UK level hots up at the Labour Party conference it often seems that some UK ministers are happier promoting the private sector and attacking public service workers. This strategy far from promoting a sensible debate about reform, simply demoralise public service staff. It also plays into the hands of the vested interests that would dismantle our public services

// .... market solutions are not a panacea for the challenges facing our public services //

to the level of a safety net for those who cannot afford to pay for private provision.

In Scotland the context of the debate is very different. There is a recognition that market solutions are not a panacea for the challenges facing our public services. That's not to say that there are not differences between UNISON and government in Scotland. The wasteful use of Public Private Partnerships (PPP) and the growth of the quango state are just two.

**H**owever, this context means that we can have a serious debate in Scotland. Not just a defence of what some right wing commentators call the cosy consensus around the status quo. Public service



UNISON members and officers mingle with MSP's researchers and the press at the Revitalise our Public Services event at The Hub in Edinburgh

workers challenge the status quo every day, they want positive change to improve our public services.

To promote this debate UNISON Scotland has published five principles we believe are essential for the revitalisation of Scotland's public services. *Cont p2*

## Speaking up for Nursery Nurses



UNISON member and MSP for Kilmarnock and Loudoun, Margaret Jamieson gave a valuable contribution to

September's Scottish Parliament debate on Nursery Nurses.

Margaret, who has spoken at UNISON rallies for Nursery Nurses, emphasised the professionalism and training now undertaken by Nursery Nurses. She said: "the importance of the contribution of Nursery Nurses in delivering quality pre five education service has been

recognised by the Scottish Executive's removing the requirement to have Teachers in each Pre Five education establishment". Margaret asked that "the Minister do all within his powers to ensure that CoSLA resolve this dispute by entering into meaningful negotiations with trade unions representing early years educators".

# Hard fight needed for Euro votes

June 2004 sees the second European Parliament elections to be held in the UK under the proportional representation electoral system. It is also likely that Scotland's current number of seven Euro MPs will be reduced to six, as most UK regions cut their representation to accommodate the new MEPs from member states joining the European Union.

This reduction will mean political parties have to fight harder for votes under the D'Hont PR closed list system to ensure they get their candidates elected. Labour currently has 3 MEPs: UNISON member Bill Miller, David Martin, and Catherine Stihler, and will be campaigning hard to maintain this level of representation for Scotland in the European Parliament. There has been a push to pilot postal voting in Scotland for the European elections. Such a move will require Westminster legislation in the Queen's speech later this year if it is to happen.



UNISON member Bill Miller MEP

Whatever the voting system, UNISON LabourLink will be working to maximise the turnout at the elections in June. The European Parliament, the democratic institution in the European Union, is increasing in powers, and does make important laws on issues that are central to the trade union bargaining agenda, such as consultation rights for workers, health and safety at work, and family friendly working practices. It is essential that we ensure Scotland's voice is strong in the European Parliament, and that we elect representatives who will support workers rights.

## Strengthening the link between the unions and Labour

The Scottish Trade Union Labour Party liaison committee (STULP) are holding a series of "Strengthening the link" seminars this autumn. The first of the

seminars was held in Glasgow on 14 September and brought together trade unionists and elected politicians to look at ways of improving communications

and co-operation between trade unions and the Labour Party at all levels.

Delegates from UNISON, GMB, TGWU, USDAW and the FBU participated in the event, along with Duncan McNeil MSP, Bill Miller MEP and Mohammed Sarwar MP.

Useful debate focussed on key issues for trade unions and helped express the concerns of trade union members to the politicians. A particular theme was concern over the policy making in the party, with a strong feeling that the Partnership in Power process was in urgent need of reform.

## ReVITALise our Public Services

- From p1

- Extending democratic accountability to the quango state and the unelected regulators through real participation and involvement of service users and staff.
- Building capacity that then allows a culture of innovation to flourish.
- The recruitment and retention of high quality staff through fair pay and conditions.
- High performance assessed by systems appropriate to the complexity of public service provision.
- Cross boundary collaboration through public service networks that promote co-operation, not fragmentation and competition.

The key to this approach is recognition that the public wants to be treated as partners who have a real say in shaping their public services. As citizens not simply customers to be exploited for private profit. UNISON Labour Link is playing its part in promoting these principles. Further details can be viewed at our website [www.unison-scotland.org.uk](http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk). or contact the P&I Team on 0870 7777006.

re**vitalise** our  
**public**  
**services**

# Strengthen Local Democracy

The signing of the Partnership Agreement between Labour and the Liberal Democrats in May meant the Scottish Executive adopted the LibDem position on implementing proportional representation (PR) for local government elections.

Given that no one party had enough MSPs to form a government, it was inevitable that Labour as the largest party would have to enter coalition negotiations. This means that Labour accepted some coalition partner policies in return for LibDems taking on Labour policies on issues such as crime and justice. The Executive has promised to implement proportional representation for the next local council elections.

UNISON Scotland has a policy supporting proportional representation and this position is reflected in our response to the Executive.

We support the Kerley recommendations for the Single Transferable Vote system whilst maintaining of the link between councillor and ward with wards of no more than 3 or 4 members. UNISON also supports the moves to reduce the age that individuals can stand for election as councillors from 21 to 18, but argues that the Bill should go further and

reduce the age for voting and candidates to 16.

While the move to PR provides an opportunity for more women and minority ethnic candidates to stand, UNISON is clear that political parties will have to ensure women and minority ethnic candidates are selected in winnable positions, and promoted successfully.

UNISON also believes that local democracy will be undermined if powers are transferred to unelected Quangos, such as the proposed transport authority and correctional agency.

UNISON's full response to the Bill can be viewed on the website: <http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/response/lgovernance.html>

UNISON seminar on Palestine  
Sat 22 Nov. 10.00am - 4.00pm  
UNISON office - West Campbell St.

Speakers include  
Pauline McNeil MSP, Chair - Cross-Party Group on Palestine

## Scotland still needs positive action

believes **Anwari Din**

The Labour party had the whole of the Scottish Parliament's first term to take positive action to help members from ethnic minorities to be nominated and contest winnable seats.

Yet, come this year's election, we were still at the stage of working groups – a great tactic to give the impression that something is being done. But we know what has to be done

– it is the same as has been done for women. That is, positive action to ensure that individuals are represented within the next Scottish Parliament.

As a prospective candidate for two Scottish elections I was struck by a feeling of tokenism. There was no real impetus within the party to assist in contesting a seat. It was left up to me to find my

way through the maze of party structures.

This is not to say I expected any preferential treatment, just action that demonstrated the commitment

of the party in ensuring that candidates from ethnic minorities got off the starting blocks.

We are the Labour Party. It is time for individuals from ethnic minorities to join forces with other members who are committed to a true representation of society, and make their voices heard. We must not settle for crumbs being offered by the party hierarchy. We need to ensure that in three years time there are a number of candidate from ethnic minorities who can represent Labour and contest winnable seats – and not only in communities which are predominantly black.

Anwari Din is a UNISON member and a member of Labour's Scottish Executive Committee.

...ethnic minorities must join forces with other members... and make their voices heard.



# LabourLink area meetings launched in Hamilton

The first Labour Link area meeting, under our new system of working in area groups, was held on 18th September in Hamilton.

Labour Link members from the Central Scotland area met up to discuss the way forward, and had the opportunity to grill local MSP, and Minister for Finance and Public Services, Andy Kerr.

LizAnne Handibode, Branch Labour Link Officer in South

Lanarkshire, gallantly took on the role of area Convenor. Further local meetings are being planned, so keep an eye



out for notices of one in your locality.

Fife is to hold its meeting on Monday 17 November,

6.30pm, Fife Council Chambers, Dunfermline, all Fife Labour Link members welcome – contact Roddy Cameron for more details: tel: 01592 416637, [roddy.cameron@fife.gov.uk](mailto:roddy.cameron@fife.gov.uk)

For further information on the Central Scotland area (North & South Lanarkshire, Falkirk and Stirling) contact LizAnne Handibode (tel: 07905 909532).

# NHS Reform Bill welcomed

UNISON has welcomed much of the content of the NHS Reform Bill.

The Bill provides for the abolition of NHS Trusts, establishes Community Health

UNISON's APF is our special political fund that is affiliated to the Labour Party. Its organisation in Scotland is headed by **Dave Watson**. He can be contacted at UNISON House, 14 West Campbell Street, Glasgow G2 6RX. Tel 0870 7777 006. [d.watson@unison.co.uk](mailto:d.watson@unison.co.uk)

All local branches also have APF officers. Contact either for further information or to join UNISON and/or the Affiliated Political Fund



UNISON will be looking to protect the interests of any Trust staff transferring

Partnerships, ensures co-operation in delivering regional services, increases public involvement and promotes health improvement.

Whilst we're pleased to see

the end of NHS Trusts, UNISON will be looking to protect the interests of any Trust staff transferring, and to see real democracy in NHS Boards promoting the idea of elected Board members.

UNISON wants to see real democracy and accountability in community health partnerships, and transparency and accountability in the proposed Scottish Health Council and local health councils.

Patient involvement must be meaningful and organised at local level - not stifled by the dead hand of a centralised Quango.

For information about UNISON's Revitalise our Public Services Campaign, check out the UNISON website at [www.unison-scotland.org.uk](http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk)