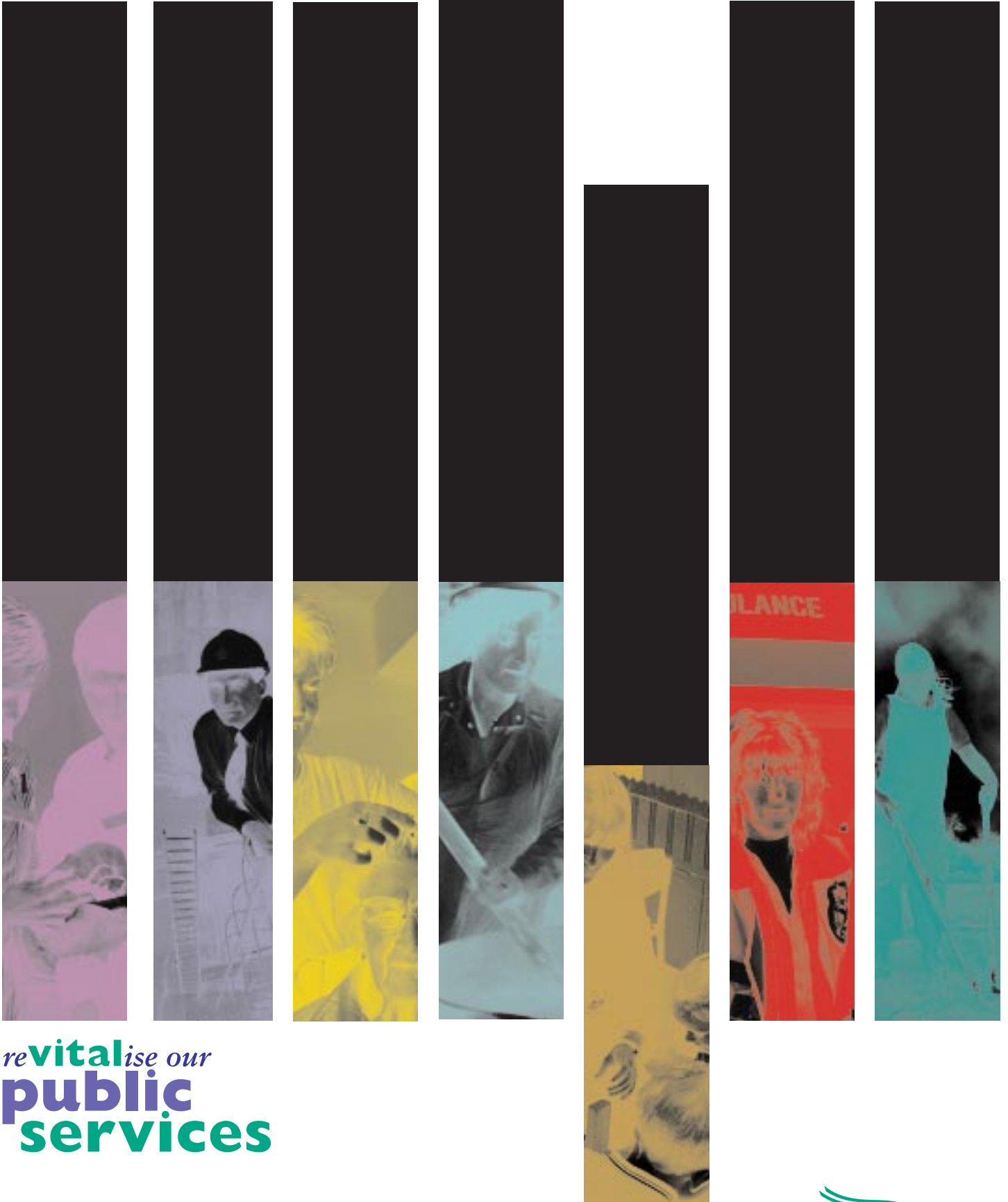


Priorities for Scotland

UNISON Scotland's Manifesto for the 2005 General Election



revitalise our
public services

UNISON
Scotland

One of the most important and welcome constitutional changes delivered by the current UK government has been devolution. However, this creates a presentational challenge to most political parties whose General Election manifestos will cover issues facing the government at Westminster. In Scotland many of these issues are devolved and therefore it is important that the relevance of the election to Scotland is highlighted by focusing on UK issues that impact on the people of Scotland.

Devolution has also given focus to Scotland's distinct political culture within the UK. This is reflected in the emphasis we give to the issues set out in UNISON's *Priorities for Scotland*.

Excellent Public Services

UNISON welcomes the sustained long-term investment in public services that has enabled the Scottish Parliament to begin rebuilding our public services. That investment needs to be sustained and not diverted into expensive privatisation that undermines democracy and accountability.

The Scottish model of co-operation and collaboration is the right approach to improving public services. It reflects Scotland's geography, our values and our sense of ownership in our public services. Competitive models offering the illusion of choice have no place in Scotland. Instead we have a public service ethos driven by values of selflessness, integrity, objectivity, openness, accountability, competence and equality.

Whilst good progress has been made in Scotland in tackling the two-tier workforce more remains to be done to end this inequity across all our public services. A genuine level playing field between public and private finance would ensure real value for money in public procurement. Efficient government should start by recovering the additional »5.8bn wasted on PFI in Scotland.

A Strong and Sustainable Economy

UNISON recognises that the government has created a strong and growing economy with low interest rates and more people in work than ever before. Public services are a key economic generator in Scotland. They purchase, create infrastructure, educate, innovate, provide health and care and ensure a quality of life for all. Public procurement should safeguard jobs and skills in the UK.

A strong skills agenda should be promoted through sector skills councils with a particular focus on sectors under-performing on skills, and new support for union learning representatives.

A Scottish energy strategy is essential to Scotland's economy. This requires a planned and balanced generation policy, following a full and informed public debate, to ensure that we do not become reliant on insecure overseas gas supplies.

Quality of Life in Retirement

UNISON will expect any government to maintain the public sector pensions contract. Public sector workers should be able to retire on a decent pension at 60.





Public sector workers give a lifetime of service, putting up with lower pay and conditions, making substantial pension contributions and should expect to have dignity and a quality of life in retirement - not have to rely on means tested benefits. We also need to develop new pension arrangements to reflect new forms of public service provision.

Occupational schemes need real protection when organisations fail together with protection for pension funds during transfers and mergers. The governance of pension funds should be strengthened to include more member trustees and bargaining rights for trade unions. We need to move beyond the current voluntary system of occupational pensions to ensure dignity for all in retirement.

Fairness at Work

UNISON seeks new employment rights to ensure fairness at work. Four weeks paid holiday exclusive of bank holidays, increased redundancy pay, extended protection for striking workers and effective employment protection for temporary and agency workers.

A new strategy is needed to tackle unequal pay, with the government leading the way in promoting best practice in the public services. A minimum wage of at least »6.50 an hour, and an end to the different age rates.

The number of workers who are injured or worse at work remains unacceptable. Further action is required by government and employers to strengthen the safety culture and ensure adequate regulation and enforcement. Assaults on staff are not part of the job and must be tackled vigorously.

Childcare and work life balance

UNISON wants government to provide clearer incentives for a more worker-friendly approach to working hours. To introduce legislation where a voluntary approach is not working and ensure equality in the provision of flexible working opportunities.

Childcare should be extended while making sure that early years staff are properly trained and rewarded. Recognising the value of early years education in achieving wider social policy goals.

Stronger Communities

UNISON believes the UK government can support the measures taken by the Scottish Parliament to support local communities. Local authorities should be allowed to borrow to build and maintain new homes, instead of being forced to transfer houses out of their ownership.

Promoting respect for asylum seekers and developing humane immigration rules. Supporting the Scottish Executives Fresh Talent Initiative and recognising that migration brings economic, social and cultural benefits to Scotland and the UK. Leading the fight against racism by challenging the negative language and images presented by parts of the media and by combating the far-right.

Britain in Europe

Devolution has enabled Scotland to make a more direct contribution in Europe recognising that the European Union has a major influence on our daily lives. Government should focus on developing the European Social Model and resist attempts to create a union based on a neo-liberal free market. Europe must be more than an economic space where competitiveness is the only measure. We see no merit in joining the Euro.

Britain in the World

UNISON campaigns for decent working conditions across the globe. We would encourage government to take responsible action in support of global justice whenever possible. This includes incorporating Core Labour Standards in international treaties including the rules of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Similar provisions should be incorporated into the GATS and the EU Services Directive as well as clearly excluding public services from these competition provisions. Privatisation should never be a condition for aid.

UNISON opposed military action in Iraq without the support of the UN and in the face of strong opposition from much of the democratic and free world. The emphasis now should be on building a democratic Iraq with a functioning civic society including independent trade unions. The government should work for peace in the Middle East, based on the implementation of UN resolutions including the creation of a viable Palestinian state based on 1967 borders.

Whilst disaster relief has rightly been in the forefront of our recent thoughts, government needs to develop a comprehensive strategy to address global poverty, the reduction of debt and the blight of HIV/AIDS particularly in Africa. The resources devoted to war could be so much more effectively used to make the whole planet a safer place in which to live. Government should also take action to enforce respect for human rights particularly in countries such as Colombia and Burma.

Constitutional Change

Devolution is a developing process. The Scottish Parliament has taken responsibility for additional functions since the Scotland Act. UNISON believes that the respective functions should be regularly reviewed to ensure that the Scottish Parliament is able to address the challenges facing 21st Century Scotland.

UNISON's vision is for a devolved Scotland, within the UK, based on excellent public services, sustainable economic growth and strong communities. A Scotland that challenges racism and sectarianism, that tackles the culture of ill health and ensures fairness at work and dignity in retirement. But our vision is also about the way we project ourselves in the world. Promoting global justice, tackling poverty and ill health, and championing human rights.

A Scotland, at home and abroad, that is able to respond positively to the challenges of the new century.



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For further information about our Revitalise our Public Services campaign or to join the union that fights for Scotland's public services and those who deliver them, contact Matt Smith at the address above or at matt.smith@unison.co.uk.

This manifesto is also available on our website - www.unison-scotland.org.uk