

Eugene Duffy

UNISON Scotland's first Retired Members Seminar

UNISON's first Annual Retired Members Scottish Seminar was held in Glasgow on 15th April 2008 and it was roaring success. Opening the Conference Scottish RM Chair Eugene Duffy expressed delight that there had been such a response from Branches.

The principal guest speaker was Christine Graham MSP (below left) who last year was awarded the "Free Spirit of the Year" title from a national newspaper. And going by her highly amusing and thought-provoking address on "Growing Older" the award was fully justified. Her main thrust centred on the State Pension which she labelled as "basically crap". Highlighting the unfairness and anomalies of various pensions & benefits schemes, she backed the call for a decent State Pension.

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See the person not the age ...

was the Scottish Government's theme at a seminar held in Glasgow on Friday, 14th November.

The 'All Our Futures' event supported by the Scottish Pensioners Forum and the West of Scotland Seniors Forum was the first in a series of round Scotland seminars gathering information, opinions and concerns of Scottish Pensioners which gives the Scottish Government an insight into how pensioners in Scotland view their future.

A 'listening post' of subjects was offered to the delegates for their response, issues such as life expectancy, health and welfare, transport, safety, fuel poverty and the opportunity for older people to become involved in their community.

This initiative will in time highlight what the future political ruling body in Scotland will do to enhance the life of pensioners and hopefully erase the 'see the age of that person' attitude.

National RM Conference Not the most exciting ever but overall good natured

Unison's 2008 National Retired Members Conference had seats in blocks for each Region and as Conference was in Glasgow we were right there up front!

Sue Highton, UNISON's National President, opened the Conference. As she was relying on written guidance, she was a bit difficult for new delegates to follow.

Welcome Guest

Bob Winter, Glasgow's

Lord Provost, welcomed delegates to the City and endeared himself to delegates by announcing he'd been an active member of Nalگو as a social worker.

He spoke authoritatively and relevantly to us as

retired members - unlike other "distinguished guests" we've heard.

We were surprised that the National Retired Members Committee (NRMC) supported all the amendments from Scotland - most involved simply adding "Scottish Pensioners Forum and STUC".

Irene Sweeney, Scottish Secretary and I spoke to our amendments and finally got through to other delegates that we've our own organisations here in Scotland!

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Scottish RM Annual Conference

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Lovely Grub ... big thanks whoever arranged the buffet lunch at the Conference. Excellent!

National RM Conference in Glasgow

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Fairly rattling along . . .

By 11.15am we had rattled through 18 of the 36 motions on the agenda. I moved three Scottish Region amendments - all of which were accepted by the movers of the motions, supported by the NRMC and carried.

My one minor Rant . . .

My one "rant" was on paying for residential care when we've paid NI all our working life and most Occupational Pensioners still pay income tax.

11.45am - a speaker against an amendment! Debate at last! The amendment was lost despite being supported by the NRMC. The motion - on single sex wards in hospitals - was carried.

The afternoon session reflected the morning - little controversy! One reason this happens is that Unison and Unison RM have established policies on most issues. Motions now just tweak the policies. Then again, some policies need a good tweak!

Proposal for Conference Speakers

I voted against a NRMC recommendation to support a motion to invite guest speakers (Senior Politicians or Civil Servants) to take part in a question and answer session. It would be better to invite them to workshops (but they would not spare the time and would need prior warning of questions). The card vote was not known by the end of Conference.

Improving Campaigning on RM Issues

The last motion on Improving Promotion of RM Issues/Campaigns within Unison was the only one opposed by the NRMC. The motion woolly and ill-considered. It was resentful of the resources allocated to RM organisation and inaccurate in the detail. I opposed the motion but it was carried.

Not the most exciting Conference I've ever been to but it was constructive, positive and good natured.

Sue Chalmers

Christine Graham reminded Conference of "the power of old age" and urged Pensioners collectively to 'encourage' Governments of all political persuasions to do more to alleviate the difficulties facing pensioners today.

Elinor McKenzie from the Scottish Pensioners Forum outlined the issues facing Pensioners in Scotland and highlighted the ways in which the Forum is campaigning to address these.

Elinor also emphasised the need for a decent State Pension, particularly when Company pensions are under threat. She argued that the

Government has the means to provide this and that it is up to organisations such as the SPF and pensioners themselves to force the Government and all political parties to adopt the 'political will' to make the changes.

"There is no need to live in poverty" she argued. "We need to force the case for all older persons in Scotland".



Terry Anderson from the STUC (left) made an excellent contribution with his talk on the "Unions into Schools" project.

This aims to train TU representatives to go into schools to encourage an understanding among pupils as to the history and importance of the TU Movement. The project is working with the teachers to develop Information packs covering such as Workers Rights and Globalisation.

You can get more information from Terry at the STUC HQ.



Lunchtime gave delegates a proper chance to meet others from all over Scotland and chinwag about common approaches

2008 Annual Bowling Tournament

The Annual Bowls Tournament was again held at Kingskettle Bowling Club, Fife on 20th August 2008. Around seventy members attended (not all bowlers - Dumbarton and Edinburgh branches make this one of their days out).

Unfortunately, for the first time since the tournament began many years ago, play on the green was not possible due to heavy rain. However, not be deterred - carpet bowls were available and the tournament went ahead inside. All those

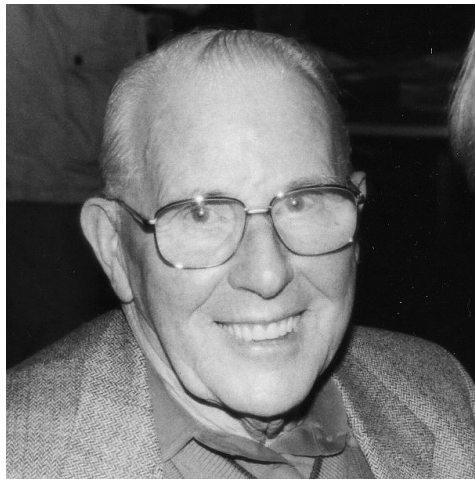
who took part enjoyed what for some a new experience. A list of winners is not available for in this competition as everyone who takes part gets a prize.

As usual, the Kettle Ladies serves up a lovely buffet tea - enjoyed by all. Before the end prizes were presented by David Oliver, Chair of the Fife Branch-Retired Members Section and this was followed by the usual huge raffle.

Thanks are due to Kettle Bowling Club for the use of their facilities and to the Kettle Ladies who always do us proud. Thanks also to the Scottish Committee for their continued support and to those branches and individuals who made contributions towards the prizes.

It's hoped more branches will support this event as it usually a good day out where old friends meet and new friends are made.

Bob Miller (Fife Branch)



Bob Miller

UNISON Scotland Retired Members Google Group

Retired Members pages in UNISON Scotland (www.unison-scotland.org.uk) contain a group discussion facility. By joining the Google Group you will be able to exchange messages with other retired members online. When you click on the "Retired Members" link, which is under "About Us" on the home page, you will enter the "Retired members resource pages"

To join the Google Group, click the link "New User Join" (if you are not already a Google Group User) and then follow the instructions. Once you have password and a nickname you can contribute to the discussions, by clicking on the UNISON Scotland Retired Members link contained within the Google Group advert and then clicking on "Sign In" the top right-hand link.

Once you have signed in you can contribute to any of the discussion groups by clicking on "reply to author" or you can forward a copy of the entry to a friend.

There are currently three topics:

Retired Members Committee

Scottish Convention of Myeloma People
Scottish Water Branch

which have been posted, or you can post your own topic by following the appropriate instructions.

Remember to scroll down to the bottom of the discussion in order to see the latest contribution Happy Googling

How active is your RM Section?

Retired Members are often thought of as being 'pretty inactive'. But more and more we hear how they're becoming that bit more than "a tea & buns club". A recent survey of Scottish RM Sections showed ...

- **Interesting speakers on community issues**
- **RM action on broader UNISON campaigns such as LG Pensions, closure of local Post Offices and environmental issues.**
- **Retired Members giving valuable support in Branches. Many help with postal campaigns and mailshots.**

Is your Branch doing anything special? Let us know about local interesting initiatives.

Have any of your retired members done anything 'different' or 'special'? Any good photographs which we could use?

Glasgow Pensions Centenary Rally hears a call for

"A proper, fair decent pension"

A rally marking the 100th anniversary of the introduction of the State Pension was held on Saturday 1st Nov. 2008 in Glasgow.

Organised by the Scottish Pensioners Forum, the STUC and the National Pensioners Convention, the rally was initially to celebrate the introduction of the State Pension.

Awareness

In reality it brought awareness to the

assembled Pensioners that the present State Pension is inadequate to meet the ever-increasing economic demands placed on us today.

Political Speakers

Speakers from the political arena included Jo Swinson MP (Lib Dem), Ian Davidson MP (Lab) and Sandra White MSP (SNP) who offered their respective party's policies on pensions and a personal view on

how the inequalities of the State Pension and its effect on Pensioners today and in the future.

'How we see it' had contributions from Unison RM Committee's Eugene Duffy, SPF Chairperson, Elinor Mckenzie and Frank Cooper of the NPC.

The three non-political contributors were informative, entertaining and gave a strong reminder to the politicians that we are growing weary of excuses. The message was for **"A proper, fair decent pension" – let us hope it gets through.**

Wee Pat

A well-deserved wee pat on the back to everyone including the Post Office staff for the successful campaign to retain the Post Office Card Account.

This has also resulted in a rethink of Post Office closures which is good news for all communities, particularly for those involved in the campaign.

No pun intended, but we certainly put our stamp on this one!

Read the SPF Newsletters

All Scottish Pensioners Forum Newsletters can be downloaded from www.scottishpensioners.org.uk. And like "MAC Senior", they are always looking for interesting contributions.



Mae Stewart - Dundee Branch

It wis me that startit Global Warming!

I think there's a Viking alive and well inside of me, because I prefer the cold to the heat. My windows are open summer and winter, and I absolutely love it when the rain is battering down and the wind is blowing up a storm. Mind you that's when I'm in my living room, not in a long boat!

I can remember my mother dragging me back in the house to tie up my pixie [which usually trailed down the back of my neck practically choking me], and force on these gloves that were tied together with long elastic and shoved up the arms of my coat, so that I wouldn't lose them. Thus the elastic scraped merrily across the back of my neck, whilst the pixie carried on throttling me.

Better still - yer faither's scarf

And - OH! Yeh! Your father's scarf was wrapped round your chest, on the outside of your coat no less, and then pinned at the back with the hugest safety pin that your mother could lay her hands on. At least you'd be warm when you fell backwards and impaled yourself on the safety pin.

The Liberty bodice effect

Another thing I hated with a vengeance was my liberty bodice.

That was stuck under my jumper in the winter because I "wiz alwiz runnin' around like a demented forkie, an wid nut shut meh coat". My mother never worked out the logic that I was **SWEATING TO DEATH!!**

And what about that camphorated oil. If I had a cold, that oil got heated up on a spoon and then rubbed all over my chest and back, and if you couldn't breathe, a good old rub of it went under your nose as well. Good job my pyjamas weren't nylon, or I'd've been slipping out the bed.

But I never caught a lot of anything when I was wee, so maybe it did work?

So as a kid, when all around me were huddling up, I used to wait until I got around the corner, then open my coat, pull off my pixie, leave the gloves dangling, and take off.

I'm a weather forecast

Do you know, way back then, in the winter, I went to bed with more on than I wear outside now-a-days? However, to this day, those who know me well will tell you that the ice age is coming if they see me with a scarf and gloves, and a heavy coat. And when you see me with my hat on, stoke up the fire.

Take care of yourselves and anyone else you know that might need it.

Yours Aye

**Mae Stewart (frae Dundee
on right above**

About UNISON Retired Members

UNISON works to raise awareness of issues which concern older people and to influence decision makers. Our priorities include campaigning on :-

- Pensioner poverty
- Health care and age discrimination
- Isolation and mobility issues

Retired and working members have a shared interest in obtaining decent incomes in older age, a universal health service and the creation of a civilised society. Today's workers are tomorrow's pensioners and UNISON's members work in the public services on which many older people rely.

UNISON retired members enjoy all the benefits of UNISON membership including:

- Legal advice
- Welfare support
- Special discounts and offers on a wide range of financial and other services

If you've been a UNISON member for at least 2 years when you retire and receive either a state pension age or a work pension, you can become a retired member.

We cannot say it often enough . . .

This isn't OUR MAC . . . it's YOUR MAC . . . or as Mae Stewart would say "It's a'body's MAC". It's meant to interest YOU. We can do our bit, but we also want contributions from readers. Tell us your experiences of being retired in UNISON.

What things concern you? What should the Union be tackling on your behalf? And don't forget to let us have some good news . . . it can't be all doom and gloom out there!

Send your submissions please to Sue Chalmers (e-mail : suechalmers@sky.com)

MAC Senior is produced and published by the UNISON Scottish Retired Members Committee.

Contact Retired Members Chairperson, Eugene Duffy 0141 956 3183 (e-mail ieduffy@btinternet.com) if you have any questions or comment.