



Conference backs Glasgow strikers

Support from far and wide for Homeless Caseworkers - p2



Pay: Recruit, campaign and organise

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July 2015 No 114

Scotland in UNISON

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Defending jobs services and union rights

Two thousand delegates at UNISON's national conference in Glasgow pledged a campaign to resist the government onslaught on jobs, services and trade union rights - as well as challenging the Tory lie that public spending caused the crash.

Scotland national executive (NEC) member Jane Carolan told delegates: "This union has consistently opposed the austerity measures imposed on this country since 2010



'We will oppose in every way, at every level, the new Tory anti trade union bill that seeks to all but outlaw trade unionism.'
JANE CAROLAN

because they reinforce the state of inequality in this country, shoring up the wealth and power of the 1% against the 99%."

She praised the union's success in getting the living wage, living standards and zero hours into the debate but there was still work to do in challenging the austerity agenda.

"We must do better", said Jane: "And to do better it is right that we take time to review our political campaigning, our communications both with our members and the wider community."

Expose the austerity lie

Jane vowed: "We will continue to defend our public services, and to promote the anti-austerity agenda. And where branches like Barnet continue their campaign and industrial action against the sell-off of services, we will continue to back them 100%. Back them with solidarity, but also with reserves.

"And we will oppose in every way, at every level, the new Tory anti trade union bill that seeks to all but outlaw trade unionism, starting by supporting the TUC campaign including the lobby of parliament."

In an earlier debate, Jane reminded that a complete meltdown of the financial system was averted as governments intervened to bail out the financial sector.



Young members from Scotland and North West England joined thousands in Glasgow's George Square on 20 June for the People's Assembly and STUC protest against austerity

"How this argument came to be turned on its head so that public spending was not part of the solution but part of the problem constitutes the great lie. A lie that needs not just be exposed but confronted for the myth that it is. Unfortunately no party at the election was willing to do that."

"Public services should be a source of pride for this country, as they are for this union", added Jane. The same public money used to bail out the banks should be used for public services.

Equality reps key to fairness at work

Conference delegates voted to campaign with the TUC and through Labour Link for facility time for equality reps who are "uniquely placed to promote fairness in our workplaces."



Davena Rankin

Since the election of the coalition government in 2010, equalities have been under sustained attack.

"Cameron's legacy will be one of increased inequality and reduced access to justice for workers", said Scotland's Davena Rankin, speaking for the national executive.

That made the role of equality reps even more important. "Despite the playing such a vital role in our workplaces, equality reps have no legal right to time off to undertake their trade union equality duties", added Davena.

Student nurse bursaries not fit for purpose

UNISON is calling on the Scottish Government to urgently increase bursary rates for student nurses and midwives in the next academic year.

This recommendation is part of the UNISON's report 'Caring, Learning and Worried about Money' which was published in June.

The survey of student nurses across Scotland found that 85% of student nurses relied on financial support from family and 83% say they have been in debt in the last year. Around half (42%) were running up credit card debts, 14% took out a loan and 6% had turned to high street loan companies.

Matt McLaughlin UNISON's regional organiser for the NHS said: "The present system of funding student nurses and midwives is clearly unfit for purpose.

"We need a system which is based on a fundamental principle of fairness; which delivers a long lasting commitment to a Living Bursary and is unafraid of committing public money to doing so.

"Two thirds of student nurses and midwives are working part-time, some doing more than one job to make ends meet, many working up to 25 hours or more per week.

"As students make very clear in our report they find juggling work placements, part-time jobs, and studying very stressful."

New Lanark Family Fun Day 30 August

A Fun Day for UNISON members and their families at the World Heritage Site at New Lanark.

See the website for details.



West Dunbarton early years charter

UNISON has launched a positive 10 point Charter for Early Years Services run by West Dunbartonshire Council.

The Charter sets out how the council should work with staff to implement government plans for 600 hours free nursery places for all three and four years olds, and the expansion to some two year olds coming this August.

Regional organiser Simon Macfarlane said: "Our 10 point charter sets out clearly what the workforce believe is the way forward to provide the best service possible to the youngest children in West Dunbartonshire."

Devo protocol needs updated

The fast moving debate around devolution across the UK was high on the Conference agenda this year, with two motions and a lunchtime fringe.

Over 200 delegates packed the joint region fringe meeting on the topic which looked at the different models for public services in the devolved nations and the proposed city partnerships in England, and the implications for UNISON and the trade unions.

Later Scotland's Jane Carolan on behalf of the NEC, highlighted the need for UNISON to revisit its devolution protocol.

The original protocol in 2004 recognised devolution was a process, not an event: "So the time is right to review our processes - our approach to policy, to bargaining, to campaigning and to our communications and the resources that go with them", said Jane.

She promised this will be an NEC priority in the forthcoming year, changing our working practice to better reflect the world we live in.

School staff don't have enough hours in the day

Scotland's Carol Ball, Vice Chair of the Local Government Service Group Executive, called for support staff in schools to be properly recognised for their contribution to the wider education team, as delegates backed a campaign for more funding, decent pay and to reduce workloads.

A UNISON survey has shown that 80% of school support staff members are worried about workload. Numbers have reduced leaving more work for those left behind, compounded by a lack of cover in some authorities for absence or maternity leave.

Carol said: "Support staff are being asked to complete tasks where quite frankly, there are not enough hours in the day, leading to increased stress levels and demoralisation."

"We need to convince our members to stop doing unpaid overtime as this impacts on both their home and their work lives. It hides the problem and employers are happy to get work completed on the cheap."

Need to organise smarter on pay

UNISON needs to agitate, educate and organise on pay but it needs to do it smarter and consistently, South Lanarkshire's Jane Aitchison told Conference.

Speaking to the branch's motion in a composite on pay, Jane called on the union to develop a pay campaigning strategy that is different from the annual cycle of: "Put in a claim. Wait for months to get a response. Reject the initial response.

"Wait for a month. Be told the final offer which is significantly less than the claim. Consult members on industrial



Gordon McKay Jane Aitchison

action. Get a low turnout in the ballot. Maybe a Yes vote. Try to deliver a strike which many branches fail to deliver on.

"Eventually settle for either the original offer or one slightly better than the original offer.

"Wait for a month. Put in a

claim. And off we go again..."

What is lacking in that type of campaign is "the involvement of the members, education, the winning of arguments with members, with the press, strategies to persuade politicians, win allies, maximise our base of support and, oh yes, success!"

"Our approach to pay as an annual process leading up to a ballot for strike action which we increasingly fail to deliver on isn't working.

"Let us agitate, educate and organise but do it smarter and consistently."

Scotland national executive member Gordon McKay

underlined the need to: "recruit, campaign and organise."

"And in case there is any doubt let me be absolutely clear, that includes sustained industrial action – co-ordinated campaigns with other unions. This union will protect and defend our members at all times."

Slamming other attacks on the poorest, with cuts in tax credits, the bedroom tax, the freezing of child benefits, Gordon added, "This is not about economic recovery, it is about increasing profits and increasing the wealth of the few at the expense of the many."

Big conference support boosts Glasgow strikers



General secretary Dave Prentis and Conference delegates mounted a huge demonstration for the strikers on 16 June

As SiU went to press, the striking Glasgow Homeless Caseworkers were marking their 14th week of industrial action.

"The action, called over a regrade claim to achieve parity with other Social Work staff undertaking similar tasks, remains as solid as day one", said Ian Leech, Glasgow City Branch, as he updated on the strike.

This demonstration of unity is a testament to the hard work, organisation and commitment shown by the members.

Talks eventually began with

Glasgow City Council and appeared to be making headway when the employer agreed that the future grading for the Homeless Caseworker tasks would be grade 6, the strike's objective.

"Unfortunately the talks then quickly stalled due to the Council announcing that they would require fewer caseworkers in post as part of a review of the homeless service", said Ian.

Despite this, morale among strikers remains high.

This was aided by the recognition of the dispute during UNISON Conference

where the George Square rally in particular provided members with a much needed boost of support.

In addition, the strikers have received regular generous donations, invites to speak and messages of support from trade unions around the UK and Europe.

Whilst further talks are being pursued the strikers have returned to picketing their respective workplaces where they continue to receive huge financial support and encouragement from other council colleagues and service users.

Why social work staff need UNISON

...and some good news from Scotland as members cleared of contempt

Conference showed just why social work and social care workers need UNISON as it backed a range of measures demanding safe staffing levels.

It also raised concerns about social workers being named in reports which will add to the abuse staff often face due to the negative portrayal of the profession in the media and TV dramas.

Kate Ramsden from Aberdeenshire branch and a member of UNISON Scotland's Social Work Issues Group, reminded Conference she had spoken last year about the two

Edinburgh members who had been convicted of contempt of court: "Just for doing their job. For placing the welfare of two young children as paramount."

"These workers were forced to defend themselves as individuals, not agents of their council", explained Kate.

If they had not been members of UNISON they would have had to pay for their own legal counsel at the beginning – though their council did step in to pick up the tab.

More contempt proceedings against staff in other parts of Scotland followed. Guidance

was issued to support workers "but there's no doubt that it left workers and councils risk averse", said Kate.

Delegates applauded as Kate told them: "I am delighted to report that in March the Court of Session quashed the contempt ruling against our two members.

"But not only that, in their ruling they re-established the principle that the child's welfare is paramount.

"We were delighted with the outcome, not just for our members but for all those vulnerable children whose care and welfare are entrusted to us. How important

was it that UNISON could speak up for them?"

Glasgow branch's Naomi Junnor underlined the role of austerity in cutting staffing levels and increasing caseloads, constant system changes and the workforce micro-managed.

The effect of cuts is that the very principle of these services is under threat.

Naomi told delegates: "I want to see our members be able to pass on to their children and their communities the right to take for granted these vital services that have served us for over 50 years."

Violence against women is a gendered issue

Conference called on the union to campaign to educate and improve understanding of violence against women as a gendered issue, providing guidance, sharing good practice, and ensuring branches can represent all parties fairly and impartially.

Helen Duddy, Lanarkshire Health, told delegates: "We are very clear in UNISON that this is a gendered issue absolutely recognising that men and boys can also be victims of violence too."



Helen Duddy

She praised the work of the Zero Tolerance Project in Scotland and the Everyday Sexism Project which records women's daily experiences of sexism, assault and harassment.



Rose Jackson

She also highlighted the effect of austerity cuts on women's services and ways in which women are most affected.

"And sadly we all know that financial dependency can be a

factor in whether women feel able to leave a violent relationship. Meanwhile women also bear the brunt of cuts to local government services," said Helen.

"We need to change society to make sure women can live free from violence."

Rose Jackson, Retired Member, and first time speaker, ('better late than never', she said) highlighted there are men who are also on the receiving end of domestic violence in relationships. She called for services to be made available to male victims too.

High hopes for Fair Work Convention

Conference delegates backed a range of measures to combat the rise of vulnerable employment and casualisation across the UK and to restore decent jobs, decent pay and decent standards in the public, voluntary and private sector.

Scotland's amendment highlighted the Working Together Review in Scotland which has led to the establishment of the Fair Work Convention - a stakeholder body providing leadership in industrial relations and promoting decent work and dignified lives for working people.

Scottish Convener, Lilian Macer, was a member of the Working Together Review and is now one of the trade union representatives on the Fair Work Convention.

She told delegates that the Review group was tasked by

the Scottish Government to work with trade unions, private and public sector organisations, academics and the Scottish Government itself to help identify and share policies, insights and methods needed to support the development of more collaborative working

There is to be a clear focus on measures to 'optimise relationships between trade unions, employers and the government.'

Lilian said: "Last week the First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, told a conference in New York that in Scotland we oppose the undermining of trade union rights by the UK government."

"She also highlighted the importance of working positively with trade unions to develop a new model of industrial relations in Scotland and emphasised that the Scottish Trades Union Congress is an integral part



Lilian Macer

of the Fair Work Convention."

Lilian pledged that in Scotland UNISON will work

with the Scottish Government "to oppose the vicious attack on workers' rights by this Tory government."

Homes for people not profit

Conference backed a call for government and Labour councils to stop implementing the bedroom tax; for an end to the privatisation of social housing; for enforced rent and quality controls over private landlords and for a massive social house build programme.

Seconding a wide ranging composite which included Aberdeenshire's motion, first time conference speaker Ann Gray told delegates that homes are for people, not profits.

Ann said, "We condemn the UK Government's housing and financial policies that have focused upon "Buy To Let" as the main source of rented

Lack of affordable housing marginalises people, breaks up families and ruins communities'
ANN GRAY

housing in Scotland and across the UK.

"The result has been growing inequality and poverty as working people struggle with ever rising housing costs, poor quality housing and insecure tenancies."

She slammed the UK Government's proposal to have another fire sale of Council and Housing



Association homes, and warned that "from my own experience as a former housing officer, the lack of affordable housing marginalises people, breaks up families and ruins communities."

She reminded delegates that the council house building programmes in the 20th century not only housed people, they

also provided jobs that helped the economy to recover from the Great Depression - new secure homes that revitalised communities, peoples' sense of identity and offered hope to millions for a better, healthier life.

"Now in the 21st century we need a system of rent controls based on a living rent, security of tenure and rented housing quality standards in partnership with a public sector led house building programme to deliver homes for people, reduce welfare costs and allow rental income to be reinvested in Scotland's infrastructure instead of being dumped in offshore tax havens."

More on Conference

See fuller details on these stories and much more at

unison-scotland.org.uk/conf2015

Reports by Kate Ramsden, Jane Aitchison and John Stevenson

Local Government Conference in brief...

Dealing with violence in schools

Local Government Conference heard the problems of challenging behaviour in schools as two Scotland delegates brought their front line experience to the debate.



Glasgow City's Sylvia Haughney, a support for learning instructor for 34 years, told delegates: "Staff in mainstream school may find it hard to understand that when an ASN colleague has been slapped six times during the course of the day or kicked 10 times the next day, that somehow this can be normal despite it being entirely unacceptable."

Sylvia called for more training in 'Promoting Positive Behaviour' but also stressed that the staff who know the pupils need to be at the centre of risk assessments.

Susan Kennedy, speaking for the Service Group Executive, reported on developments in Scotland where UNISON'S Education Issues Group were recently invited to sit on the Scottish Advisory Group on Relationships and Behaviour in Schools.



Time for £10 living wage



Life's Colin Paterson, speaking for the Service Group Executive told delegates that whilst we rightly campaign

for a living wage, we need to remember that the current living wage should be a minimum - not a target.

As the conference threw its weight behind a living wage of £10 per hour, Colin reminded delegates that the current Living Wage does not reflect the true cost of living.

Arbitrary freeze on teacher numbers - bad for members, bad for children



North Lanarkshire's John Mooney brought a Scottish perspective to the debate on organising in schools as delegates backed a range of measures to support recruitment and campaigning on school issues.

John slammed the Scottish Government's insistence on an arbitrary freeze on teacher numbers. He warned, "This ill thought out, non scientific, arbitrary freeze on teaching numbers brought in by Scottish Government leaves our members in schools bearing the brunt of cuts which will detrimentally impact on our children's education."

We recognise Palestine so act on it!

UNISON Conference reaffirmed its support for the Palestinian people and for a free Palestinian state and will step up our contribution to the campaign for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS).



Stephen Smellie

Supporting the motion, Scottish deputy convener Stephen Smellie reminded us of UNISON's role over the years in bringing "attention to the need for governments and companies to take steps to stop colluding with the abuse of people."

The motion regretted the UK government decision to abstain in the UN vote to recognise Palestine and its refusal to respect the parliament vote to recognise.

"However our position is that we, UNISON, recognise the Palestinian state and we should act on this", said Stephen.

"This means respecting the Palestinian people and where their rights as a nation or as a people are denied or they are abused in the West Bank or Gaza, where they are attacked in refugee camps and where they are denied freedom of movement, then we should protest.

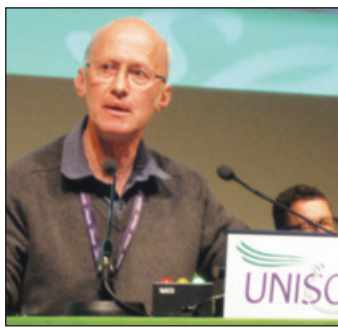
"When they are denied these rights or abused here in our backyard, in our Universities, in our pension schemes or in our public sector procurement procedure then we not only protest we have to take action.

"And when our activists and branches are then challenged either in terms of their employment or legally or as in some cases through personal threats, this union should stand by them and citing international law defend them and their actions," urged Stephen.

Bring libraries away from the madness of the market

Falkirk's Gray Allan warned Government delegates of the dangers of outsourcing library services.

The conference pledged to campaign against the closure of library and leisure services but also called for support and training to engage in commissioning and procurement to ensure that UNISON can play a full role in protecting jobs and services.



Gray Allan

A librarian himself, Gray told delegates that he is not a local

government worker but a "company man" after Falkirk's library and leisure services were outsourced four years ago to Falkirk Leisure Trust Ltd.

"We are now under the microscope," said Gray.

"Visits are dropping, issues are dropping but polling shows that popularity is very high."

He warned that statistics hand a weapon to Trusts.

"I am told my service is 'failing', that it's 'not generating

income', that 'sports centres are keeping me in work'. And it's the same for all library services in Trusts in the UK."

Gray called for UNISON to bring together library members whether in local authorities or outsourced, to share experiences and to learn from each other.

"But above all we must work to bring library services back in-house and away from the madness of the market."

Reinstate Robert O'Donnell

Hundreds of UNISON delegates from across the UK suspended their Local Government Conference in Glasgow to walk out and demonstrate in solidarity with Robert O'Donnell, a UNISON Health and Safety rep sacked by the SECC.

And the Conference later in the week took the unusual step of suspending proceedings to hear Robert speak. He walked on and walked off to emotional standing ovations.

A UNISON Glasgow City briefing outlines the issues.

"UNISON believes that Robert was unfairly sacked. He was dismissed following an alleged unwitnessed incident with his supervisor. UNISON is totally convinced that this was a trumped up charge and that the dismissal relates to Robert's role as a trade union activist.

"Robert has 12 years' service with the SECC during which time he has never been the subject of a complaint, investigation or disciplinary action."

The SECC, which is 91% owned by Glasgow City Council, has refused to recognise trade unions for collective bargaining purposes.

This is despite Glasgow City Council having a policy



Robert is applauded to the rostrum at National Conference

supporting trade union recognition within the council and other council owned companies.

"The SECC complex, including the Hydro, was built by public money. It is a disgrace that the Labour controlled Glasgow City Council has not used its majority shareholding to force the SECC Management to recognise one of the largest trade unions in the country. There is also an elected SNP councillor on the SECC Board who should be doing much more to support our case."

What you can do

Support Robert and the campaign for trade union rights at the SECC by:

1. Sending emails of protest

to: Peter Duthie, SECC Chief Exec peter.duthie@secc.co.uk, Cllr Gordon Matheson, Leader Glasgow City Council gordon.matheson@councillors.glasgow.gov.uk, Annemarie O'Donnell, Glasgow City Council Chief Executive Annemarie.O'Donnell@glasgow.gov.uk, Cllr Graham Hendry, SECC Board Member graeme.hendry@councillors.glasgow.gov.uk

2. Sign petition online at www.thepetitionsite.com - Defend Robert O'Donnell

3. Write to your own MSP and MP highlighting these issues. As went to print, the campaign was set to leaflet the public at the Neil Diamond concert at the SECC Hydro on 7 July.

Justice for Bhopal

UNISON Conference vowed to put pressure on UK, Indian and US governments to get justice for Bhopal, and to get the Indian Government to ensure adequate healthcare, employment opportunities and pensions for those affected.



Sam Macartney

It's 30 years on from Bhopal, the Union Carbide industrial disaster, that caused 25,000 deaths and left 120,000 chronically ill and it continues to maim generations.

Lilian Macer, Scottish convener, told delegates: "It is an absolute disgrace that upwards of 100,000 people in the city are still seriously ill and the drinking water of a further 20,000 has been poisoned by chemicals leaking from the abandoned plant. There should be no hiding place for the criminals that caused this disaster."

Last December Sam Macartney and Scott Donohoe, Glasgow City, and Tony Caleary, Stirling, took part in an STUC delegation to India to be with the people of Bhopal on the 30th anniversary.

Sam told Conference: "We witnessed their ongoing struggle for justice, retribution and compensation after 30 long years of struggle, a struggle that has seen their government ignore them and a justice system that has failed to represent them, and an American government, who has failed to bring then company that caused this disaster to justice and accountability. But this wasn't a disaster, this was corporate killing - murder!"

Give members confidence so they can make a difference

Aberdeenshire's Kate Ramsden issued a challenge to Conference delegates, calling on them to get the message out to our members that austerity is not just bad for members and the services we provide, but is also bad for the economy.

Kate said: "People - including many of our members - don't believe that this Tory government has presided over the biggest mass transfer of wealth from the rest of us to the super rich, but it's true."

Kate was backing a motion condemning the growing inequality in this country and setting out a national and international political campaign to



Kate Ramsden

rebalance the economy to deliver a fair distribution of wealth,

"The richest 1,000 in our society have doubled their income, whilst the poorest are dependent on foodbanks to survive. The rest of us, stuck in

the middle, see our standards of living and our work life balance taking a nosedive."

Kate warned that austerity is bad for the economy because, first of all, unlike the super rich, we pay our taxes.

However with massive job losses and wages that don't keep pace with inflation, tax receipts have gone down leading to a vicious circle of cuts leading to fewer jobs, lower pay and less tax coming in, leading to even more cuts.

"This is a stupid way to run any economy," slammed Kate.

"Then, we buy in our local shops and businesses. The super-rich don't. They rarely even buy in our country! They might

patronise us with their promises of trickle down wealth but you won't get them patronising our corner shops!"

Kate urged delegates to build our members' confidence and help them to see that there is money to pay them a decent wage for a decent day's work and for high quality public services.

Earlier, Edinburgh's Duncan Smith had supported an NEC amendment highlighting the crucial role of high quality properly funded public services in creating a more equal society and the vital role of trade unions.

Duncan told conference: "When trade unions fight to defend their pay and conditions they are also protecting people who depend on these services."

We want to hear your news

SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories. John Stevenson (Editor) 0131 558 7488, john.stevenson@unison-edinburgh.org.uk