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a million voices for public services

May 2013 No. 102

Scotland in UNISON

scottish council activists bulletin Use these stories in your branch newsletter or circulate the pdf version to members

Action calls on NHS and council pay

by John Stevenson
SIU Editor

The possibility of two major - and possibly coordinated - pay actions in Scotland was flagged up at the Scottish Council meeting of UNISON branches on 13 April.

The day before, a ballot result from local government members saw a 60% rejection of the employers' 1% offer, with an industrial action ballot to follow.

Stephanie Herd, chair of UNISON Scotland's Local Government Committee, said: "We are now considering with our members, and with the other trade unions on the negotiating body, what our next step is in terms of action that might be required to shift the employers."

Dougie Black, lead negotiator for the local government unions, said: "We will want to speak to COSLA early on to seek to re-open discussions on pay."

Meanwhile health members won assurances at the Scottish Council meeting that the

Local government members reject 1% and Scottish health members call for ballot



Scottish Health Committee would back calls for action on pay at the union's National Healthcare Conference in Glasgow (starting as we went to press).

The Scottish Health Committee has a motion on the agenda calling for ballot by

31 July 2013 on whether members want to accept or reject the government's 1% average pay offer.

"You can be assured that the committee will back the call for a ballot", Scottish Health Committee vice chair Sandra-Dee Masson told delegates



Gordon McKay: Members must have a say on pay.



Sandra-Dee Masson: Committee will back ballot.

responding to a call from Gordon McKay of Ayrshire and Arran Health Branch.

"Our members must have a say on pay", said Gordon.

Stephanie Herd pledged to look at coordinating any local government action with health to bring maximum impact.

Bring national bargaining back to further education

UNISON joined forces with the EIS to win STUC backing for the re-establishment of national bargaining in FE in Scotland.

UNISON's Carol Ball told delegates that re-introducing national bargaining was raised over four years ago. "... but we are still waiting", said Carol.

"And it is not as if the Scottish Government have had a hands-off approach to further

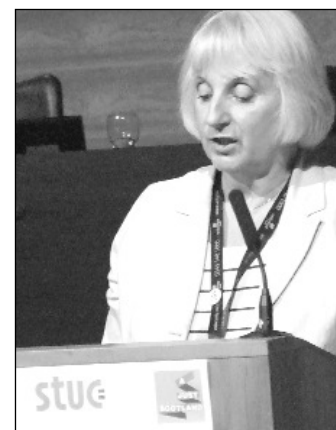
education. They have been quite happy to put through massive cuts way out of proportion to the overall reduction in the Scottish government budget.

"They have been quite happy to force college mergers. They have been quite happy to plan a programme of centralisation. So if they are dragging their feet on this issue it's not because they need to. It's because they've been

choosing to", said Carol.

The FE changes were hardly about efficiency. "The amount of staff and management time spent negotiating and overseeing all the different sets of pay and terms and conditions is enormous", added Carol.

"Surely it would be more efficient to move to harmonising to the best of these on a national basis", she said.



Carol Ball

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22,000 - 23,000	£1.30
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48,000 - 49,000	£1.30
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1 million reasons to be in UNISON

UNISON recovered nearly £1m in damages for members in the last quarter in personal injury cases alone through Thompsons solicitors.

Members should remember that UNISON and Thompsons can support them with any type of personal injury and not just accidents at work. This includes public liability, road traffic accidents, and accidents whilst travelling on a package holiday abroad.

Free Legal Expenses Insurance

Did you know that you can avoid paying extra for Legal Expenses Insurance because you already get it free just by being a UNISON member?

Calling all Personal Assistants

Lynne Rankin has started work on the Personal Assistants (PA) Project which aims to organise and recruit to UNISON this relatively new but growing group of workers.

Personal Assistants are employed by people receiving a direct payment and work in a variety of support/care roles doing different hours of work depending on their employer's needs.

Lynne is looking to identify these workers and set up networks, initially around Greater Glasgow.

She has written a full briefing on the website on the social work pages.

If you have any ideas about how to reach PAs or want any more information, contact Lynne at L.Rankin@unison.co.uk or phone 07903 853022.

Heaping homelessness on top of poverty

The Scottish Government must work to prevent evictions over the deeply unfair bedroom tax – evictions that would heap homelessness on top of poverty.

That was the call from UNISON's John Stevenson at the STUC as he supported a motion condemning the despicable 'welfare reform' agenda of the coalition government.

Unions must make sure the public know the facts – not the fiction in most of the media - to make them angry and give them the confidence to act.

"To their credit, councils across the country, including Edinburgh on Tuesday, have pledged not to evict people due to this vicious legislation", said John. "Great though the campaign is, it will not stop councils pursuing the money, they just won't evict."

"And it comes at a cost. Edinburgh could lose £4m. So it's making people poorer, councils poorer and local economies poorer."

John also warned that the blame would be heaped on local councils and staff could face dangers if care roles were fudged with means testing.



John Stevenson

Action must back words in fighting cuts

In one of the major debates of the STUC, delegates slammed the failed economic policies of the UK Government; their failure to stimulate the economy and to tackle tax evasion and avoidance; their attacks on welfare provision, jobs, pay and pensions; and their failure to develop a credible growth strategy.

Speaker after speaker demolished the incompetency of the government, the failure of austerity and the poverty it was creating.

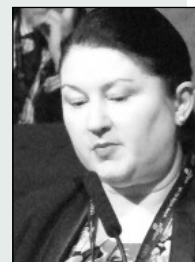
The General Council motion laid out a strategy for campaigning against austerity and for a socially just and progressive welfare and tax system. Delegates also agreed to mobilise for a one day strike in protest at the cuts and to support trades union colleagues taking action.

UNISON's Brenda Aitchison told delegates: "Tax avoidance alone costs us £30 billion or 6% of revenue, yet the ConDems choose to target the poorest sections of our society."

"Ian Duncan Smith thinks we need to make work pay. However, he seems to have forgotten that 60% of benefits go to those who are working. In the 21st century they are the working poor."

"We know austerity isn't working. We need the blueprint in this composite to put things right. We need to continue to unite with churches, charities and communities to fight back."

Brenda said this included a co-ordinated industrial action strategy.



Brenda Aitchison

Equality means a living wage for all workers

As the lowest paid in our society suffer as a result of pay freezes and rising costs, UNISON led the call for the STUC to take forward its campaign for the living wage in Scotland.

The STUC will press the Scottish Government to enshrine in law a requirement that the living wage be paid by any employer bidding for a public sector contract.

It will also call for it to set up a Living Wage Unit and to produce a Code of Practice on promoting the living wage in procurement.

UNISON Scotland's Depute Convenor Stephen Smellie contrasted the wage freezes and price increases which have caught our members in a vice

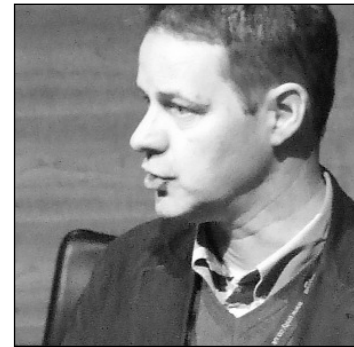
‘This is a Unionised Workplace – That is why we have the living wage’

Stephen Smellie

of declining living standards, mounting debt, misery and despair, with the bankers' bonuses scandal and the continuing rocketing of executive salaries.

"As a matter of policy, a society of huge inequality has grown to an obscenity, where aspiration for the few to buy more property abroad is contrasted with the aspirations of the many simply to hang on to a job and pay the bills and debts each month to keep their heads above water," he said.

"We know that an unequal



society performs poorer than a more equal society – in health, life expectancy, educational attainment, lower crime and quality of life," added Stephen, quoting his 'political' hero, Joe Strummer, that it is time to "phone up Robin Hood and ask for some wealth distribution."

The living wage, said Stephen, is more than just supporting the low paid – it is about transferring wealth from

the rich to the poor and is a significant economic demand.

"And we have had some success," added Stephen pointing to the Living Wage offers in local government and health.

Stephen told delegates that we should celebrate these achievements and put up posters saying "This is a Unionised Workplace – That is why we have the living wage."

And he referred to the constitutional debate, reminding Congress that whether we are being offered independence or the status quo, it is not about a flag, it is about the kind of Scotland we want to live in and that is a Scotland that is just and fair and guarantees all workers a living wage.

Unions only hope for workers as Tories tear up employment rights

The one place of hope for working people is trade unions, banding together as we've done for generations to fight for the Better Way.

That was the message from UNISON Scottish Secretary Mike Kirby as he slammed government attacks on basic employment rights.

The STUC pledged to work with the TU congresses across the UK to build a wide ranging campaign to protect workers' rights and for a repeal of all anti-trade union legislation.

Speaking for the General Council, Mike accused opponents of workplace rights, like venture capitalist Adrian Beecroft, of "using the economic crisis as an excuse to hack up workers rights."

"Half a million jobs have been lost in the public services. 30,000 in Scotland according to our estimates. 51,700 by government's own figures since the economic crisis began", said Mike, warning that 250,000 more will go.

"To make it cheaper for the government to dismiss so many workers, it has instituted new laws." Those include:-



‘Opponents using the economic crisis as an excuse to hack up workers rights’

Mike Kirby

‘Worst off will be worst affected’

Dave Watson

- Plans to halve consultation on redundancies to 45 days
- Cut unfair dismissal payouts
- Changes to TUPE regulations
- Shareholder contracts that mean the loss of unfair dismissal and redundancy rights
- Increased tribunal fees
- Reduction in liability for



health and safety at work

- Attacking the Equality Act.

Mike rounded on 'Zero hours' contracts that give workers no security and no way of planning what they will earn, if anything at all.

Speaking on government plans to change the TUPE regulations that protect workers

when they are outsourced, Dave Watson, UNISON Scottish Organiser, warned that the government's own assessment showed the worst off would be worst affected.

Even employers and lawyers were against the changes, with the Law Society response warning: "The government has mistakenly labelled clarity as 'gold plating'."

"Repealing the 2006 amendments would only increase uncertainty, and thus the number of disputes. Businesses and employees both want certainty."

And it's not just the UK Government that can get a bit muddled when it comes to staff transfer. Scottish Parliament Bills delivering public service reform often have very poor staff transfer provisions.

"In reorganisation after reorganisation we are constantly reinventing the wheel because officials struggle to understand what is required" added Dave.

"This could be dealt with in Scotland with a workforce framework, as UNISON has proposed, for organisational change that includes common staff transfer provisions."

UNISON warns Lib Dems - Don't take health and safety back to dark ages

The Coalition Government should abandon measures that would drive a coach and horses through health and safety legislation.

That was the message when UNISON lobbied senior Liberal Democrat politicians at the party's Scottish conference.

In a victory for common sense, the House of Lords threw out a damaging clause in the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Bill. But the government reinstated it and it is going back to Lords so lobbying is still needed.



UNISON is calling on Ministers to protect workers against careless employers and agree not to reintroduce Clause

‘Wrong to continue with such an unfair attack’ Patrick McGuire

62 (formerly Clause 61).

Patrick McGuire, of the union's law firm Thompsons, told senior party members, including Deputy Chief Whip Alistair Carmichael, that it would be absolutely wrong to continue with such an unfair attack on people who are injured at work – one not specified in the Coalition Agreement.

He added that doing so

would "take us back to the dark ages in terms of health and safety."

The clause would have amended Section 47 of the Health and Safety of Work Act 1974, potentially removing the ability of an employee to enforce a civil claim for workplace injury on the grounds of a breach of workplace regulations, making it virtually impossible for people to win compensation for injury at work.

See the website for full briefings on the issue.

Unions can drive the debate on 'A Just Scotland'

Trade unionists have to push both sides in the referendum debate on how their plans will deliver a just Scotland, a fairer Scotland and a Scotland whose economic policies will tackle inequalities, poor health and deprivation.

After a wide ranging debate, Congress rejected a call to support the Yes campaign and endorsed the STUC's "A Just Scotland" strategy. The STUC will take forward discussions with affiliates, partner and civic organisations, to promote a shared vision of a socially and economically just Scotland, culminating in a large scale summit.

UNISON's Hazel Marshall urged delegates to push for

Debate on the fate of the nation must be on the state of the nation' Hazel Marshall

answers about what the different proposals will actually mean for working people. She told Congress that we have an opportunity to influence and drive the debate on Scotland's future in a way that can engage our members and the wider population.

"And given the way our politicians seem to prefer insult to argument - I'm not sure that anyone other than us is capable of making this debate seem relevant to ordinary people," said Hazel.

"And frankly Congress - the way to do that isn't to line up



behind YES Scotland OR it's Better Together mirror image. It's to analyse and to challenge both campaigns. To ask questions and demand answers of all the political parties."

Hazel said that we need to move the referendum debate on from talk about what *could* happen and make parties and

campaigns tell us what they intend to do, "to make sure that the debate on the fate of the nation is a debate on the state of the nation."

"A debate where the value - or otherwise - of constitutional change, or no change, is whether it will drive the social change that we need."

She reminded delegates that the trade unions have more than 600,000 members. "I would suggest that it would be a foolish politician or campaign that chooses to ignore us," she warned.

"Over the next 17 months we must continue to shape the debate and insist on coherent, focused answers that will allow voters a genuine choice."

Social care integration must be about care not costs

Scottish Government moves to integrate health and social care when providing services for older people should be about improving services not about cutting costs.

The STUC will seek talks with the Scottish Government to demand that public services remain under democratic control and to ensure that any attempts to open up the NHS to privatisation are stopped and that service users and staff are at the heart of decision making.

Congress overwhelmingly supported UNISON's motion, as Lilian Macer, Scottish Convenor, told delegates that UNISON supports a "seamless provision of health and care pathways with quality as the central plank and principle driving any changes.

"Quality - not the desire to cut budgets that is at the heart of so many other so called reforms."

The Government's proposals will see the abolition of the current Community Health

Partnerships and the introduction of new Community Health and Social Care Partnerships.

"This sounds harmless enough - but these new statutory bodies will be run by a single individual - the Jointly Accountable Officer - responsible for a multi million pound budget of public money", said Lilian.

"Technically accountable to both the Local Authority and the Health Board the, so called, Jointly Accountable Officer will in reality be accountable to no one", she added.

"UNISON, indeed this whole movement, are advocates for efficient, properly funded public services, democratically accountable to local communities. But there is precious little democratic accountability in these proposals.

"We are not opposed to reform - or measures that will make services responsive to the needs of those who use them. But we have enough, sometimes bitter, experience of centrally managed structurally



Lilian Macer

driven, top down changes to know that they seldom deliver on their promises."

For real reform and for effective change for a better service, staff engagement and involvement is essential.

"Real change comes when staff and service users work

together planning how services should be delivered."

And Lilian said it was vital that any legislation "ensures that any new structures cannot act as a Trojan horse for a further wave of outsourcing or privatisation of vital public services."

Scottish health call to scrap pay review body

Alex Neil, Scottish Health Secretary, was the key speaker at UNISON's Scottish Health conference in April.

He was quizzed on pay and pensions at the Glasgow event, which also heard from UNISON's head of health Christina McAnea.

Willie Duffy, UNISON Scotland lead organiser for Health, said NHS members are feeling angry about pensions increases.

He said that the Scottish Government could make different choices and health



workers want to know why they should be paying more when they have effectively had pay cuts for the last couple of years.

"We are calling on the Scottish Government not to bring in the third year of the

increase next year, and pay for this with the efficiency savings made by employers," he added.

Tom Waterson, chair of UNISON Scotland's Health Committee, said that other key issues are concerns about health and social care

integration and a call to scrap the NHS Pay Review Body.

He said: "The Scottish Health Committee wants a return to collective bargaining directly with the UK government on NHS pay. The PRB is a busted flush. It is certainly not independent.

"The UK Government's deplorable actions have negated its historical independent role.

"We will be asking the UNISON UK Health Conference to agree to negotiate NHS pay on this basis."



Stories by John Stevenson, Kate Ramsden and Fiona Montgomery.

STUC in brief...

Over the course of three days, UNISON speakers contributed to 25 debates so we can't possibly cover them all here.

So for more stories and fuller versions see www.unison-scotland.org.uk/stuc2013

Police: Rushed changes disguise cuts as 'reform'

Congress backed a UNISON motion condemning plans to sack some 3,000 non-uniformed staff in the move to a single police force and fire service.



George McIrvine of the UNISON Scotland police branch, criticised: "the kind of mess that you end up with when politicians try to disguise cost cutting as 'reform'

and put unrealistic political targets ahead of effective and efficient delivery of service."

Procurement: Public money should be spent for Public Good

Congress welcomed the Scottish Government's commitment to new legislation on public procurement and called on them to work with the STUC to shift the focus from cost to quality and sustainability in public sector contracts.

UNISON's Jane Aitchison told delegates: "There is a very simple, but very important, principle at the heart of this composite. Public money should be spent for Public Good.

"So when Government or public bodies are deciding on procurement they should be able to give preference to suppliers who will pay a living wage.

"Companies should be made well aware that if they are involved in blacklisting, they will be excluded from bidding for public contracts. Not a penny of public money for blacklisters", said Jane.

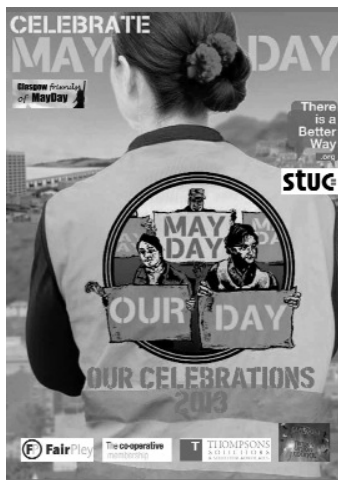
Public ownership needs to rise up political agenda to end fuel poverty

UNISON Scotland's Willie Docherty told Congress that more than one in three households in Scotland are estimated to be in fuel poverty as a result of poor energy efficiency in their homes, low incomes and the high cost of fuel.

The STUC will back campaigns to eradicate fuel poverty and will campaign to bring energy supply and distribution back into public ownership.



Look out for your local May Day events



May Day events will be held around Scotland and the biggest will be in Glasgow with a host of stars and events.

Comedian and activist, Mark Thomas; Marxist magician, Ian Saville; the Coop brass band and former BBC Young Folk Musicians Siobhan Miller and Jeana Leslie, join political song master Arthur Johnstone; singer/writer Dave Anderson; and harmonica virtuoso, Fraser

Speirs, in a star studded line-up crowning this year's Glasgow Friends of MayDay activities.

The Great MayDay Cabaret is on the evening of Monday May 6 in Glasgow's Oran Mor from 7.30pm. Tickets are £12.50 from the venue or (plus a booking fee) from www.oran-mor.co.uk.

The hugely successful film, *The Happy Lands*, returns to Glasgow to the GFT, on the afternoon of May 5.

This great film deals with

the General Strike and the subsequent lock-out in a pit village in Fife.

Keep an eye out for the programme for these events at <http://may1st.org.uk/>. This has booking details. It is supported by the STUC as part of its There is a Better Way Campaign, and also sponsored by the Co-operative Membership, and Thompsons Solicitors.

For your local May Day events see www.stuc.org.uk

Careers: 'Modernisation' is selling young short and 'reform' is a cut

UNISON speakers at the STUC condemned Skills Development Scotland 'reform' as a cut and warned that the modernisation programme was letting young people down.

STUC Young Workers' delegate, UNISON's Sarah Collins, told delegates: "Many UNISON members in Skills Development Scotland insist that replacing full time careers advisers with temporary life skills coaches is a deskilling of the workforce."

UNISON Scotland treasurer Pat Rowland joined Sarah in criticising the My World Work website, part of the modernisation programme.

Sarah said that it: "should only be a resource, not a replacement of TU members.



Sarah Collins



Pat Rowland

Websites do not lend themselves to computer illiterate, no access to computers, or those not yet motivated to scroll through web resources."

Pat Rowland slammed the traffic light system as 'crude'. "It appears that the classification system used by Skills Development Scotland and that

used by many schools don't match up, leaving thousands of children in another category - unassigned."

"UNISON represents members in Skills Development Scotland and I'm not giving away any secrets when I tell you that they are not happy at the changes that are being imposed on them.

"But while they aren't happy about what's happening to them - they are furious about what's happening to the service they provide - or increasingly the service they aren't allowed to provide", Pat told delegates.

Sarah told Congress: "Our members should be genuinely consulted on any further changes and should be involved with training carried out for these changes."

Pat Rowland added: "We're all for reform and we're all for modernisation. What we're not for is calling something an improvement when its really a step back.

"Or calling something reform which is actually a cut or calling something modernisation when its selling Scotlands youngsters short."

Retirement shouldn't stop us working in UNISON

by Sue Chalmers
Retired Members Secretary

As a UNISON activist, you'll come in contact with members who are heading for retirement ... and you'll want to do your best to encourage them to view it positively.

You'll assure them they're leaving the stresses and strains of work behind them ... no more hassles on the journey to and from their workplace ... plenty of time to spend doing other things ... things that they want to do and when they want to do them.

"Filling in the time" is always one of the uncertainties. Sadly, many have spent a lifetime working and are uncertain for the future. Happily, you should be able to advise them to look no further than UNISON...

Do they realise that members can continue with union membership after they stop working? Many branches actively encourage retired membership by paying the lifetime subscription for those who wish to continue in membership.

Most branches now have

UNISON Membership

need not stop when you retire

With RETIRED MEMBERSHIP you can enjoy a range of benefits ...

- Access membership services e.g. Travel & Insurance
- Keep in touch with former colleagues and friends
- Enjoy varied social events or outings
- Support issues concerning older people
- Remain involved with Branch matters
- Stay active in UNISON campaigns

If you need any more information about Retired Membership or your local Retired Members Section contact your local UNISON Branch Secretary

active Retired Members Sections which offer a range of benefits and activities for those of us who have reached the golden age. RM Sections have regular meetings with interesting invited speakers, outings and social events, through which they can keep in contact with the union and former work colleagues.

Local retired members meetings can also provide an ideal platform for discussion and action on issues affecting older people - at local and national levels. The Scottish Retired Members Committee,

comprising elected members nominated by branches, can raise issues through UNISON's Scottish Council, the STUC, the Scottish Pensioners Forum and in all other areas where UNISON has a voice.

As an activist, you'll probably appreciate other spin-offs from encouraging Retired Membership. Many retired members have been active in the union throughout their working years. Why not harness their time and not inconsiderable energies to continue to work for the union?

Many have useful skills and

experience and could be encouraged to take part in branch affairs - such as campaigning and lobbying - or even in such straightforward tasks as assisting with large branch mail-outs or circulations.

Branch activists are constantly encouraged to recruit new members - we should be doing all we can to hold on to and make use of members we already have.

You may stop work when you retire, but you should never stop being a trade unionist.

Food safety: More robust inspection needed

UNISON highlighted the recent horse meat scandals caused by cuts to the Food Standards Agency, as the STUC backed UNISON's call for the FSA to be properly resourced to maintain quality in the food chain.



Ewing Hope

Moving the emergency motion, UNISON's Ewing Hope told Conference that despite all the jokes, the recent food scandals were no laughing matter.

"What these show is a serious shortcoming in the regulation

regimes which are supposed to ensure that the food we and our families eat is safe, uncontaminated and is what it says on the packet.

"What angers me most is the Government and their advisors telling us that there is nothing to worry about, that horse meat isn't dangerous and is safe to eat.

"Do they think that the criminals who stand to make a fortune by passing horse meat costing £20 a ton as prime beef which costs thousands a time are going to adhere to strict food hygiene procedures as laid down in law that should be policed by a meat hygiene inspector?" asked Ewing.

Ewing laid the scandal at the door of the Tory led UK government who dismembered the Food Standards Agency in favour of the "light touch" regulation preferred by the supermarkets, leaving it incapable of protecting public health.

He told Congress that the numbers of meat inspectors in Scotland have fallen by 50%; samples taken by Scottish Local Authorities have fallen from over 16,000 in 2009 to just over 10,000 three years later.

UNISON will be relaunching its "Food for Good" Charter calling for sustainable, locally sourced food, and Ewing called for these principles to be introduced into all school meals and hospital food.

Attacks on union reps an issue for the whole trade union movement

"Stewards and reps are the lifeblood of the union" UNISON's John Stevenson told Congress as it applauded the work of lay activists and shop stewards as key to vibrant and successful trade unions with benefits to the employer as well as staff, but recognised that on a day to day basis management are taking a harder line.

The STUC will promote the benefits of facility time, will call on all employers to adhere to facility time agreements, and will prepare a briefing to counter the myths of facility time in the public sector.

We want to hear your news

SiU is your paper, we want to hear your stories.
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