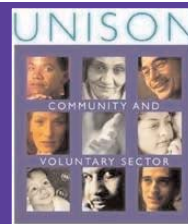




Seasons greetings to all UNISON members and their families



voice@work



newsletter for unison scotland's community & voluntary sector members

Dec 2003 issue no. 6

Quarriers Branch continues to grow

Quarriers held their bi-annual three day staff conference last month, and UNISON were pleased to have a stall at the event.

Over the course of the event we recruited 55 new members and, more importantly from a Branch perspective, 13 members agreed to volunteer as stewards or mailing contacts for the Branch.

Obtaining these volunteers allows the Branch to communicate more effectively with members, as the stewards/contacts will be able to disseminate information to members and pass it on to the Branch committee.

Other news from Quarriers:

includes agreement at last month's Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) on

- UNISON's request for a Guardian Angel Scheme being introduced for lone workers;
- Payroll deduction for staff who wish to join the SCVO Credit Union (a meeting has to be arranged to finalise the arrangements);
- A report on the continuing success of Return 2 Learn;
- A report on the Health & Safety training undertaken by UNISON members. The Branch had arranged

a special 10-day health & safety training course for interested members.

- The new corporate Health & Safety Committee to take up UNISON agendas through these newly trained representatives.

And finally UNISON discussions ongoing re:

- Project Support Worker Salary Structure,
- Grievance and Disciplinary procedures,
- Sickness Absence

If you are a Quarriers member and would be interested in becoming a Steward, Health & Safety rep or a mailing contact, please contact the Branch on:



☎ 01360 622 792

A date for your diary is the Branch Annual General Meeting (AGM) which is on:

Friday 12th March
5.30 pm
UNISON House
14 West Campbell St,
Glasgow G2 6RX

ALL MEMBERS WELCOME!

Inside this issue

- Capability Scotland news p.2
- Website for smart workers p.3
- Breast cancer link to shift work p.4
- Health & Safety website launched p.4
- Call for action on asbestos p.4
- Is your job a pain in the neck? p.5
- Safety first at SPPA p.5
- GATS and world trade p.6
- Get active p.7
- Rhants & Rhymes p.7



voice@work

- is your newsletter to make it more representative of members, we need your input!

Why not write a letter, an article or give us your views of any issues that you feel we should be addressing?



UNISON Scotland - the community & voluntary sector union





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issue no. 6

December 2003

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Community &
Voluntary Sector
Committee or the
Editorial Team.

Capability Scotland Branch *news*

This may come as a surprise to some UNISON members employed within Capability Scotland, but we really do have a UNISON branch all of our own which was formed by UNISON members in December 2001.

This was a very difficult time for the founding members and we, the current branch officers would like to acknowledge the amount of work, time and commitment given by them at that time. We would like to take this opportunity to thank them and wish them well, as without them we would still be a group of disorganised misfits.

What have we been doing over the last few months?

Over the last few months with the help and support of Mary Scott, UNISON Branch Development Officer, we have been developing our UNISON Branch's identity and we have a couple of announcements to make.

In June this year we took the step of launching our very own website on the World Wide Web:
www.unisoncapscot.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk/unisonwebsite/index.htm

sorry about the long address but once you've bookmarked it will take a couple of seconds to reconnect.

The site still needs some work done on its layout and content and once you have had an opportunity to look, feel free to forward any suggestions or improvements you may have by dropping us a line at our branch email address:
unison.capability.scotland@unisonplus.net.

Yes it is our very own contact email address and is checked a few times very day, even at the weekend, for mail. Alternatively write to the Branch Communications Officer direct at the following address

Colin England, Communications Officer, UNISON Capability Scotland Branch, Westerlea (SEU), 11 Ellersly Road, Edinburgh EH12 6HY.

Keeping track of our membership has been a major ongoing exercise for us so we recently took the decision to join a group of other UNISON branches in the Central Area Resource Centre.

This resource centre will help us to co-ordi-

nate our membership records, communicate with our membership and serve as a first contact point for all members of UNISON Capability Scotland Branch.

The Resource Centre can also provide information and advice on a variety of UNISON membership services.

**UNISON Central Area Resource Centre,
Office 62,
Stirling Business Centre,
Wellgreen Place,
Stirling FK8 2DZ
Email: b.slater@unisonfree.net
☎ 01786 465634
Fax: 01786 465604.**

What about the future?

By the time you read this letter, you should have had the opportunity to attend a Joint Management/Trade Union Workshop which outlined proposals for revised Management/Trade Union structure and staff involvement.

This comprises the formation of five area sub J.N.C.C's (Joint Negotiation and Consultation Committees) not to be confused with the J.C.C (Joint Consultative Committee). These Committees will be negotiating committees with a remit to negotiate on local issues and refer issues that have a national consequence to the National Consultation Committee.

We as a branch see this as an opportunity for UNISON members to become more involved with the negotiation and consultation structures within Capability Scotland. We do however have a slight problem whereby we require more members to be willing to come forward to become workplace stewards and sit as UNISON representatives on these new Committees.

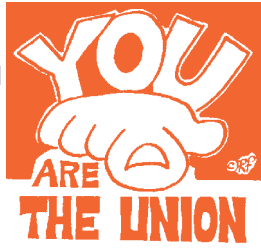
Be assured that full training and support will be offered to any member who is willing to come forward for election as a Steward. Elected stewards will also have the support of UNISON Branch Officers who in turn can rely upon the support of the UNISON Regional Officer when required on some of the more sticky points when and if they arise.



Capability Scotland Branch news

continued from page 2

We currently have elected stewards in E2, Westerlea, Central Office, Upper Springland, Alexander Anderson Centre and Stanmore House (Residential).



However, we need stewards in the other schools, centres and services. Please consider being a representative for your workplace, otherwise the voice of you and your colleagues may not be heard.

If you are interested in becoming a workplace steward (or even if you would just like to be a workplace contact) and would like further information then please contact Susan O'Neill the Branch Secretary at the number shown above.

In closing we would like to advise that we will shortly be making arrangements for the Annual General Meeting of the members of UNISON Capability Scotland Branch. Meetings will take place in several areas around Scotland.

We will be seeking your nominations for Branch Officers to serve for the next year and hope that you will see this as a further opportunity to get yourselves involved in the workings of the UNISON Capability Scotland Branch.

If in the meantime if you have any questions or would like further information on any of the above then please speak to your local Steward or contact the Resource Centre.

Yours sincerely
UNISON Capability Scotland Branch
Committee

SCVO Credit Union

Join the money revolution

Membership of the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations Credit Union is open to all Voluntary sector employees whose employer is affiliated to the SCVO.

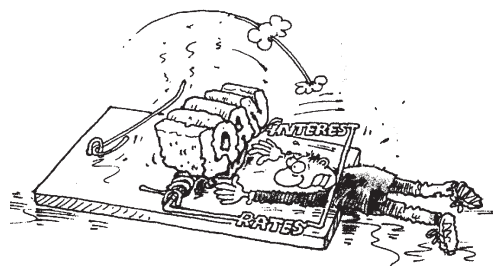


Give them a call:

☎ 0131 556 882



Credit.union@scvo.org.uk



POVERTY TRAP

Busy year in SPPA

UNISON stewards at Scottish Pre-school Play Association (SPPA) have been reflecting on an eventful year.

The early part of 2003 saw the organisation move from its existing national centre in Glasgow to new premises in the city, while a review in the summer resulted in a number of staff there being redeployed on new job remits and salary scales.

Meanwhile, a review of the salary scales of network posts – funding for which comes from local authorities – is now underway.

Training and health and safety were high on the agenda this year also.

A draft staff training and development policy is now in circu-

lation, and a dedicated safety committee has been established (see report page 5).

Union membership has grown slightly over the course of the year, while UNISON's promotion of SCVO's credit union has seen several more SPPA employees sign-up to save and borrow.

UNISON stewards Margaret Brunton and Ian Williamson are pleased at the way the year has panned out. Margaret said: "We are happy that our voice is being heard. This means that the consultation and negotiation process is working."

The first management/union Joint Negotiating and Consultative Committee (JNCF) meeting of 2004 will be held on 20 January.

Site for smart workers

Trade unionists (and, indeed, future union members) with access to a computer can help themselves to a wealth of useful information on employment issues on WorkSMART, an excellent website from the Trades Union Congress (TUC).

WorkSMART features an extensive rights at work guide, advice on pensions with an interactive pension calculator, a jargon buster giving easy to



understand definitions of employment terms, and a 'union finder' to assist non-union members to find the relevant union for them. Visitors to the site can also sign up for a free monthly newsletter delivered to their e-mail address.

The website, which comes highly recommended by voice@work, can be found at www.worksmart.org.uk



Breast cancer link to shift working

The possibility that shift working can increase the potential for women to contract breast cancer needs further study according to a new report published by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

Professor Anthony Swerdlow, a leading epidemiologist at the Institute of Cancer Research prepared the report. He concluded that: "Overall, the evidence for an association is appreciable, but not definitive" and that "further epidemiological research is needed to clarify the relationship."

The HSE commissioned this research following the publication of two articles in the United States, which indicated the possibility of a relationship between shift work and breast cancer.

These articles suggested that an effect of altered light exposure at night on levels of melatonin or other hormones may affect cancer risk.

The HSE says it will be conducting more research, after consulting with a panel of cancer experts on the best way to proceed.

Shiftwork and breast cancer: a critical review of the epidemiological evidence, RR 132, is available free at: www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/index.htm

First published: Labour Research Department, Workplace Report,

Issue 6, September 2003

UNISON's website providing free health and safety information to small and medium sized community and voluntary organisations is now up and running.

As voice@work reported earlier this year, a year-long pilot of workplace safety advisors in the community and voluntary sector in the Newcastle area - funded by the health & safety executive and supported by UNISON - revealed that community and voluntary sector employers wanted simple, straightforward information on health and safety.

Existing materials were often far too complicated or irrelevant to their needs.

There was also evidence that employers were resorting to employing consultants, often at huge cost to the organisation, for work that they were more than capable of doing themselves.

UNISON has put together a website with the aim of giving free, simple, practical information.

"Community and voluntary sector employers often hide their heads in the sand when it comes to health and safety, yet this is just storing up trouble for the future," said UNISON's national officer for the voluntary sector, Rosalie Ward.

"Both management committees and managers have to start taking their responsibilities as employers seriously and make

Health & Safety website launched

the health, safety and welfare of their staff a priority".

UNISON's head of health & safety Hugh Robertson, also expressed concern that health and safety issues have been neglected in the past.

"The community and voluntary sector is experiencing an epidemic of stress related illness, RSI and other occupational illnesses. These can be very easily avoided," he said.

"This website shows that health and safety is not rocket science, often it is just common sense, and the three keys to it are risk assessment, training, and consultation with staff."

The health and safety site for community and voluntary sector employers contains a range of guidance and basic information aimed specifically at the C&V sector, as well as giving links to UNISON and HSE publications and guidance.

The new site is at: www.healthandsafetyinfo.org.uk

UNISON calls for action on mesothelioma

Urgent action is needed to increase awareness of the asbestos cancer mesothelioma, UNISON has said.

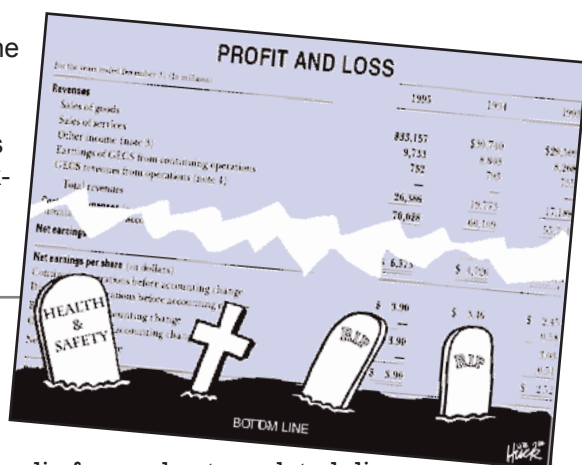
The union says there is no treatment for the condition and victims suffer a painful death, usually within 12 to 18 months.

'People with mesothelioma are written off. There is no research into the condition and no drugs to help,' said UNISON head of health and safety, Hugh Robertson.

'You can easily prevent exposure but in terms of people who've got it there is nothing for them.'

By 2010, more than 10,000 people a year are expected to die from asbestos-related diseases. This will make asbestos the biggest occupational killer by far and about three times as deadly as the roads.

UNISON supports mesothelioma research: Mick Knighton Mesothelioma Research Fund. Further details from Dave Anderson, c/o Joan Walker, UNISON, 1 Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9AJ.



A large number of employees in the community and voluntary sector will work in jobs that expose them to the risk of developing some sort of Repetitive Strain Injury (RSI).

Thanks to trade union campaigns to raise awareness over recent years, many workers will already be familiar with terms such as RSI and Work Related Upper Limb Disorders (WRULDs) which, according to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), covers more than 20 job related medical conditions, including RSI. WRULDs, in turn, are part of a 'family' of Musculoskeletal Disorders (MSDs) which the HSE cite as the most common occupational illness in the UK, affecting 1.1 million workers in "virtually every workplace from commerce to agriculture, health services to construction." (Source: www.hse.gov.uk/msd/index).

Who's at risk from RSI?

The HSE states that any type of work that involves a worker using his or her arms to carry out a task can lead to RSI and other WRULDs. For those working across the community and voluntary sector, deskbound computer centred work is perhaps the most, but by no means only, obvious danger zone.

What can cause RSI?

It is the repetitive nature of the work that is the main cause of RSI. Working at a computer terminal, for example, involves a variety of repetitive movements that put a strain on muscles, joints and tendons. Other factors such as awkward posture, poorly designed equipment, and too few rest breaks can also heighten the risk of RSI.

What are the main symptoms of RSI?

The HSE lists the following as among the main symptoms: tenderness, aches and pains, stiffness, weakness, tingling, numbness, cramp or swelling. Even where these symptoms are considered slight, the advice is that they should not be ignored.

Is your job a pain in the neck (and arm, and wrist, and shoulder.....)?

Ian Williamson, UNISON Steward/Health & Safety rep in the Scottish Pre-school Play Association writes on RSI



What do I do if I have these symptoms?

Any employee experiencing the symptoms of RSI should report this to their line manager. Employers have a legal duty under health and safety legislation to prevent RSI or to act to ensure existing cases do not get worse. (Workers in organisations where a union is formally recognised should also tell their steward or union safety representative).

In its guidance for employers, the HSE suggests that RSI/WRULDs can be successfully managed by:

- assessing risk by considering which jobs in the workplace have the potential to cause harm.
- taking steps to reduce the risk - perhaps through changing the way the work is organised; through providing new ergonomically sound equipment (for example, wrist mats or chairs for computer operators); through redesigning the layout of the work station; through introducing more rest breaks; or by training

employees on the risks and how they can help avoid them.

- helping employees who have had to take sick leave due to RSI back to work.

Where can I find more information about RSI?

- In unionised workplaces, stewards or union safety reps should be able to help their members access information and advice on RSI/WRULDs.

- UNISON's new community and voluntary sector health and safety website includes a link through which a handy booklet on RSI can be downloaded free of charge. The address is www.healthandsafetyinfo.org.uk

- The Repetitive Strain Injury Association's website at www.rsi.org.uk provides a comprehensive range of information on all aspects of RSI - causes, treatments, research findings, legal issues and more. The Association is also launching the first RSI Awareness Week in the UK in February 2004. Further details from the RSI Association, 380-384 Harrow Road, London W9 2HU. Tel. 020 7266 2000

HSE website: www.hse.gov.uk

TUC Worksmart website has an excellent section on RSI: www.worksmart.org.uk

Safety First at SPPA

Scottish Pre-school Play Association's (SPPA) new health and safety committee held its inaugural meeting at the beginning of November.

The committee, made up of representatives from across the organisation including UNISON's workplace safety rep, met to discuss its function, role and objectives, and to

consider drawing up a terms of reference. It was agreed that the committee's guiding principle would be the cultivation of a health and safety culture within the organisation.

UNISON stewards in SPPA are delighted that, after lobbying for a dedicated health and safety committee, one has finally been established.

General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)

Origins of the World Trade System

The GATS was established in 1994 at the conclusion of the "Uruguay Round" of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, (GATT), and was one of the trade agreements adopted for inclusion when the World Trade Organisation (WTO) was formed in 1995. The GATT itself was created in 1948 to establish a global trade and investment regime with minimum regulations.

Between the formation of the GATT in 1948 and the establishment of the GATS in 1994 there were eight rounds of trade negotiations, the first six of which focused exclusively on tariff reductions. But the seventh "Tokyo Round" (1973-1979), coincided with the emergence of the so-called "Washington Consensus" - a global economic model based on the principles of privatisation, free trade and deregulation - and the growth in the power of transnational corporations.

For the first time the GATT began to deal in "non-tariff barriers" to trade, such as environmental programmes and publicly funded social programmes. The eighth "Uruguay Round" (1986-1994) expanded the scope of subjects, uniquely naming services, and covering many areas not normally associated with trade. It suddenly became clear that much of the power of governments and the United Nations had shifted to global trade regimes.

What is the GATS?

The GATS goes much further than previous trade agreements in its scope. The mandate of the GATS is the liberalisation of trade in services and the gradual removal of "barriers" to competition in the services sector. Its basic purpose is to constrain all levels of government (local, regional, national) in their delivery of services and to facilitate access to government contracts

by transnational corporations in a multitude of areas, including education, health and local government.

"Services" is an extremely broad term which is not actually defined by the agreement, but essentially it is anything which is not a tangible commodity, for example sewage treatment and water purification. No government measure that affects trade in services, whatever its aim, even for environmental or consumer protection or to enforce labour standards, is beyond the reach of GATS.

In theory therefore, everything is included, but there is one exception as stated in the GATS Article 1.3: "services supplied in the exercise of governmental authority". These are defined as services "supplied neither on a commercial basis, nor in competition with one or more service suppliers". It is unclear, however, just what this means for public services such as education and health where there is an element of competition and private sector involvement. And where there is a disagreement over this, interpretation of the rules will be undertaken by a WTO Dispute Panel.

The GATS is made up of a mixture of basic obligations and specific commitments. The basic obligations are rules which automatically cover all services. Other rules do not automatically apply to all service sectors, but only to those which governments have decided to 'commit' to these rules. Countries including the UK, commit specific service sectors to these through a series of negotiations which began in February 2000. Countries also submit requests to other countries asking them to commit certain sectors to the GATS, or to remove any particular conditions or restrictions which they have listed for certain sectors.

Requests had to be submitted by 30 June 2002, and the deadline for responses with offers was 31 March 2003. The EU received within the June 2002 deadline, requests from 27 countries. The EU have made requests for improved market access to 109 WTO member countries, including a number of the world's poorest. The requests cover a range of services which include construction and engineering services, distribution, energy services, environmental services, financial services, telecommunications, tourism and transport.

Although the official deadline for the GATS process is 31 December 2004, in practice it will continue until all 160 service sectors (including sub sectors) are open to competition. Negotiations are conducted under the Doha Development Agenda, established in November 2001.

UNISON's position

National Delegate Conference in 2001 adopted a motion which called for active campaigns against GATS, and in 2002 conference supported a motion on globalisation and international trade which demanded a full assessment of the impact of GATS on public services.

Conference 2003 adopted Composite F on GATS and Public Services which, among other things, calls for a halt to the GATS process until its effects have been fully assessed and publicly debated.

The Composite reflects the policies set out in our response to the DTI consultation document 'Liberalising trade in services', published in October 2002. This can be found on the UNISON website.

UNISON wants to see a world trade system with rules that ensure a level playing field, in which developing and least-

developed countries can play an equal part, and which respects the highest employment and environmental standards, based on International Labour Organisation conventions, particularly core labour standards.

We believe that GATS is a real threat to these standards. High employment and environmental standards require strong regulatory powers. GATS will reduce governments' ability to regulate, where it is believed to be a "barrier" to trade. Weak regulation will follow GATS, as sure as night follows day.

What UNISON is doing

We are working with other trade unions and NGOs to highlight the potentially damaging effects of the GATS. To facilitate this a UK GATS Network has been set up. The Network, of trade unions and NGOs, meets regularly to discuss tactics and strategies, as well as issues of concern.

The Network has produced a GATS Action Card, which is available from UNISON's Policy & Public Affairs department (Tel. 0207 551 1529/1752). The card should be signed and sent to the Secretary of State for Trade & Industry.

Please see the box opposite for a list of websites of organisations and campaigns against GATS.



Get active

Wanted workplace contacts

What do workplace contacts do?

UNISON workplace contacts play different support roles in the workplace, including:

- Making sure members receive union and other important information
- Helping groups of members to organise effectively
- Maintaining contact between members and the union where there is an elected steward
- Supporting other activists such as stewards and health and safety reps

Workplace contacts have a more informal role than stewards or safety representatives. They can also operate as part of a network supporting an elected steward.

Where can I get support and advice?

Your own steward, your health and safety rep and your branch are all there to help and support you in whatever you are able to contribute. You can also get advice from regional offices where necessary.

The union will make sure you:

- Receive regular UNISON information
- Are encouraged and enabled to get involved in branch work
- Get training and access to edu-

cation, including induction courses for members considering becoming more involved

Know where to go for advice on dealing with workplace problems.



Most branches can give workplace contacts training and support through practical experience, for example, by inviting them to observe and assist in advising and organising members and in meetings with management.

How do I become a UNISON workplace contact?

Any group of members can elect a workplace contact. This group is known as the workplace contact's constituency.

Members don't need to hold an election but should find some way of agreeing on who the contact should be.

Contact

If you are interested in becoming a workplace contact, please call Robert Rae on: **0870 7777 006**



Law at Work

Our regular column by UNISON's Legal Officer, Peter Hunter will return in the next issue

Organisations lobbying against the GATS and for the reform of the WTO and world trade

- <http://attac.org>
- www.policyalternatives.ca
- www.ceo.org
- www.corporatewatch.org.uk
- www.ei-ie.org
- www.epsu.org
- www.gatswatch.org
- www.ourworldisnotforsale.org
- www.peopleandplanet.org
- www.polarisinstitute.org
- www.world-psi.org
- www.citizen.org/trade
- www.savethechildren.org
- www.thecornerhouse.org.uk
- www.twinside.org.sg
- www.union-network.org
- www.waronwant.org
- www.wdm.org.uk

Rants & Rhymes

by UNISON CILIG member
Iain Smith.



The Editors would like to offer their congratulations to Iain in being awarded the 'New Deal for Disabled People Award 2003' and the 'Langside Achievement Award'.

Santa's Issues

It's coming up to Christmas
There's presents to be labelled
But have you wondered who'd deliver the goods
If Santa was disabled

For some would say he must be sacked
He's no use any more
His disability slows him down
He must be shown the door

For Christmas is a demanding time
He won't be able to cope
Unless we find alternatives
The kids will have no hope

They'll have no toys on Christmas day
And that would be a shame
Then Santa would be signing on
He'd have to take the blame

But others have a different view
On Santa's so called problem
So what if he has barriers
There must be a way we can solve them

Recruiting more elves is a possible step
Yes I know there would be resistance
But Santa's direct payment
Could pay for some personal assistance

And if there's access issues
Which impair him in whatever way?
We'll speak really nicely to access to work
And we'll find out what they have to say

Of course he'll have be assessed
They don't give equipment for nothing
But kids demand he keeps his job
Believe me I'm not bluffing

They don't want him to be retired
Because of fear and ignorance
They want their toys from Santa Claus
For that what makes their Christmas

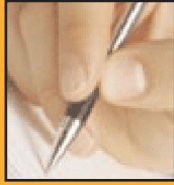
They want their presents beside the tree
From Santa and his carriers
So solve his access issues now
And bin his disabling barriers

copyright: Iain Smith 18/11/2003



Sign-up for TUC training

The TUC's Education Service has published its course programme for the session starting January 2004.



UNISON stewards, safety reps and learning reps can access a range of courses in a number of locations throughout Scotland, including Stow College in Glasgow and venues in Dundee, Aberdeen, Kirkcaldy, Inverness, Falkirk, Edinburgh, Livingston and Paisley.

The courses are on a day release basis lasting anything from three days to one year, with the costs being met by the TUC.

Some courses can be studied through the internet using the TUC's Learn On-Line System

In addition, some of the venues are offering all UNISON members free evening classes in computing and foreign languages.

For further information or an application form, contact:
TUC Education Service,
4th Floor,
John Smith House,
145-165 West Regent Street,
Glasgow G2 4RZ.
Tel. 0141 221 8545.
Fax. 0141 221 8575.
Email. tucedsotland@tuc.org.uk

Get ready for the Gathering

Scotland's first ever voluntary sector fair is to be held in Glasgow early next year.

'The Gathering' will be hosted by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) and will run over two days on Monday 23rd and Tuesday 24th February in the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre in Glasgow.

The event will bring together around 3000 voluntary sector workers, volunteers, job seekers, organisations and individuals for a massive exhibition and marketplace, plus a programme of seminars, conferences and entertainment. Topics to be covered in the seminars and conferences include voluntary sector workforce issues, pensions, funding and international issues.

There will also be presentations from key politicians, business leaders and celebrities.

UNISON Scotland is to run a seminar and will be among the 100 or so organisations exhibiting at the event.

Other features include one-to-one advice surgeries, a network café, a relaxation zone, head massages and live music.

For further information contact:
Alex Thomson,
Conference Organiser,
SCVO,
Mansfield Traquair Centre,
Edinburgh EH3 6BB.
Tel 0131 474 6152.
Email: thegathering@scvo.org.uk
Website:
www.gatherscotland.org.uk



Self-organisation in UNISON

UNISON encourages members to participate in its self-organised groups within the union. If you are a member who is eligible to participate within any of the self-organised groups please contact:

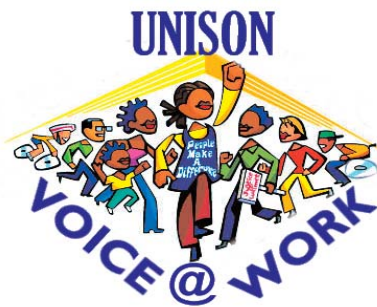
Eileen Dining,
UNISON Equalities Officer
14 West Campbell Street,
Glasgow G2 6RX
☎ 0870 7777 006



Freepost address:

Robert Rae
UNISON Scotland,
FREEPOST NW486,
14 West Campbell St,
Glasgow G2 6BR

☎ 0870 7777 006



Beat the rush - write
or telephone today!

Name:
Address:
Postcode:
Telephone:
E-mail:
Employer: