



Scottish International Committee's Newsletter ...

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GLENROTHES TO LONDON — HOW ARE OUR PENSIONS INVESTED?

By Tony Caleary

To ensure success for the BDS movement (boycott disinvestment sanctions) against Israel; Sam Macartney Chair of the UNISON Scotland's International Committee urged upon the trade unions and civil rights groups, that they must redefine their approach; to find out where our pensions are being invested.

While delivering a presentation at UNISON Joint International Seminar that took place at Newcastle; Sam Macartney pointed out that it is an area of real concern, that we do not know enough, how our Councils invest our pensions in unethical business; and dilute or nullify the BDS movement (boycott disinvestment sanctions) against Israel. Sam Macartney said: "Despite the sanctions are in place against the racist Israeli regime, yet nevertheless the fact remains, that other so called democracy's still allows this Israeli government to continually murder Palestinian man women and children.



Sam Macartney said: "Despite the sanctions are in place against the racist Israeli regime, yet nevertheless the fact remains, that other so called democracy's still allows this Israeli government to continually murder Palestinian man women and children. It appears that the UN resolutions never for the Palestinian people; and leaves Israel to breach UN conventions on Human Rights at will! The big question, however, remains why it is like that? As part of the approach the trade unions and other civil rights groups we must find out where our pensions are being invested and are we unknowingly supporting arms companies and racist regimes like the present government in Israel? The pension holders must ask their employers, questions about their pension companies and investors. They must find out where is their pension invested and how do they change this investment, if they feel that their pension is unethical invested in racist company with links to Israel, Sam added."

In Scotland companies like Raytheon systems, in Glenrothes; makes fuel for drones and other components for the Israeli war machine. This company is one of the many companies, where our pensions are invested, this must stop! Sam insisted that the Trade unions and members of the civil right groups must make sure our pension providers are fully aware that we don't want our money invested in these unethical arms suppliers. How do we achieve this? Sam suggested that the starting point must be to get trade union representatives on the pension bodies, to act as eyes and

ears for the unions and their membership. Union representative on Pension bodied must get the information and pass it on to members; ideally to empower members, to be able to raise objections on our investments within our pensions schemes! Cost and loss for the punters I hear the councils always shout! The Councils line is, if we don't invest in these companies investors will lose out! The reality is "Yes there may be losses, but only in some areas! "We must support ethical companies that show no interest in arms trade investment,



Sam said: "From Glenrothes to London has been a brief overview of some areas of work we need to address, but hopefully as our London government wines and dines the warmongers and vile hate bringers of this earth. We can help and enlighten our members to remove our pension investments from unethical businesses with links to Israel.

LINKS

- [Working internationally](#)
- [About](#)
- [Making international policy](#)
- [Events](#)
- [News](#)
- [Resources](#)

Just a Wee Word ...

The Autumn edition of our newsletter is with you. The purpose of this non-editorial driven publication is to keep our readers fully aware on Scottish International Committee's work. Hence, neither the Editor nor the Publishers are liable for the accuracy of the content. Editorial team members Hamid Rasheed and Sam Macartney, Tony Caleary are keen to have your views to improve this publication. Please provide your feedback to: Simon Macfarlane. Regional Organiser UNISON House, 14 West Campbell Street Glasgow G2 6RX Tel: 0845 355 0845 Email:s.macfarlane@unison.co.uk

UNISON Joint International Seminar, Newcastle Upon Tyne

A report by Tony Caleary / Hamid Rasheed



The UNISON Joint International Seminar kicked off at Newcastle with a reception at Tyneside cinema, in the evening on Friday 18 September. Clare Williams, Northern Regional Convenor welcomed the delegates from Northern, North West, Northern Ireland, and Scottish Region. She stressed that International Trade Union work has become more relevant; as a result of anti – trade union position taken the worst far right government we have in the UK.

At the occasion Matt Abbot, with his revolutionary poetry warmed up the atmosphere and Bethany Coyle a young activists entertained the delegates with her music.

The keynote speaker at this reception was no other but Mr Archie Sibe-ko an ANC activist, trade union leader and author of a book “Freedom in Our Lifetime” presented a comparison between the struggles to achieve freedom in the days of apartheid and current political situation faced by trade union in the UK. Archie highlighted the importance of Solidarity, and urged upon the delegates to keep the fire of solidarity burning, because it is the spirit of Solidarity that will always help trade unions to face difficult times with dignity and pride.



On Saturday 19 September, Joint International Seminar started at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Newcastle Upon Tyne, whereby delegates were updated by presentations on key issues related to UNISON’s International Work.

Nicaragua & Venezuela Update

Marcos Garcia – Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. And Flor de Maria Avalan – (Deputy General Secretary) CTCP Union, Nicaragua briefed about the socio-political situation in their part of the world.



Marcos Garcia highlighted the Venezuelan social progress and difficulties his country faces as a result of US sanctions and falling oil prices. He informed that US agenda to destabilise Latin America is nothing new. US funding to anti-democratic right wing opposition is being done with a purpose no other than to destabilise democratically elected government in Venezuela, and to put an end to social progress we have made so far. Marcos Garcia, also spoke about ALBA and the benefits ALBA delivers to the South America member states and the Caribbean. In response to a question about developments in US Cuban relations; Marcos Garcia said: “We are happy with the developments, but these developments are being observed with bit of suspicion as lot of issues are yet unclear”. In solidarity Marcos Garcia asked the delegates for their support in defending Venezuela’s sovereignty and independence, by supporting the right of the Venezuelan people to determine their own future -- free from external intervention.

Flor de Maria Avalan – (Deputy General Secretary) CTCP Union, Nicaragua briefed the delegates about how people in her country struggled against a 15 year dictatorship. They campaigned for the San Denistas and how they made progress during last 16 years under a neo-liberal government. She explained Nicaragua is very agricultural and depends heavily on imports, not strangely enough but via the Panama Canal. Unions are getting stronger but there are no national unions in our country. Flor de Maria Avalan said: “We have benefited from ALBA membership and and we have made progress in housing, and micro-financing sectors.” She added, Unions in Nicaragua tend to be workplace dependant and believe in that if they are “United Organised – they are Invincible! Not one step backwards!”



>>> Next Page

UNISON Joint International Seminar, Report

Solidarity in Columbia



Claire Williams, Convenor Northern Region spoke about why there is a greater need for Solidarity in Colombia. She added, we all know Colombia is not a safe place for trade unions and highlighted Northern region's involvement with human rights organisation NOMADESC and Colombian trade union organisations such as Electricity union SINTRAUNICOL, and Municipal Workers Union SINTRAEMCALI (fighting against water privatisation). Clair also spoke about her meetings with Tirana Women Group and "CORTEROS" Sugar Cane Women Committee seeking truth, Justice, and repatriation of massacred families. Clair told a story about land grabbing, eviction and intimidation around the expansion of the roads infrastructure, to service the growing needs of Buenaventura port city, which has a notorious history plagued by the Colombian armed conflict, drug trafficking, violence, and the presence of guerrilla and paramilitary groups. Violence in Buenaventura makes this Port Columbia's Deadliest City, where making profit over social justice and human rights is a common practice! As a result of threats posed at trade union activists, by military and para-military groups in Colombia. Clair urged upon the need to build solidarity and capacity with these trade union organisations more than ever before. Clair also showed video messages of thanks from Colombian trade union leaders acknowledging the support of British workers to their cause.

Kobane

Stephen Smellie in his presentation spoke about the geographic problems, to make the romantic dream of Kurdistan come true. Stephen added, Kurdistan does not actually exist but is bordered by Turkey, Syria, Iran & Iraq. Talking about Kobane the little border town – Stephen said as a result of Kurdish people's fight against ISIS to gain control over the town. All services are destroyed and there are no medical facilities or schools available. Stephen mentioned Assad's regime withdrew recognition of citizenship for Kurds in Syria. However, the Kurds have created democratically elected assemblies, often ensuring a fair representation between the sexes, to ensure fair, equal and representative, non-sectarian governance and representation for all. Being a discriminated nation Kurds have little or no support from the 4 bordering countries. Kurds face national intolerance, particularly in smaller religious groups such as Yazidi. Stephen spoke about issue faced by Kurd in Turkey; as there are currently over 2 million Kurdi refugees – giving rise to all kinds of problems with factions within Turkey. Stephen urged delegates to take action to generate funds, and generate idea that in solidarity how UNISON can help in rebuilding Kobane.



Palestine

Komal Idris & Wajih Ahmed El-Ayassa, and Sam McCartney – Chair Scottish International Committee spoke about Israeli occupation of Palestine and BDS. Wajih is a Palestinian born in Bethlehem and one of the founders of Knowledge and Socialist Thought Institute. In his presentation expressed, that the aim of the institute is to increase trade union activism, through increasing the ability for working people to undertake social & political education and awareness, and to promote a progressive labour movement in an environment when there are over 50 disparate human rights organisations. The stark reality is that Israel was established in 1948 and over the years managed to displace over 80000 Palestinians. Wajih said: "If you are not organised, you cannot fight".



EUTI Young Leaders

Sarah Collins, from East Ayrshire talked about the EUTI young leader's course. Sarah's presentation was enlightening, and followed by a practical exercise, that showed no matter where you are, all trade unionists throughout Europe face incredibly similar challenges and choices.



Playfair Qatar and Show Racism the Red Card

Stephen Russell in his presentation briefed the delegates, that Playfair Qatar campaign is sponsored by TUC. He expressed the concern that almost 4500 workers will lose their lives in building the stadium for football world cup, which is scheduled to take place in Qatar. The population of Qatar is over 2.2 million. However, over 1.5 million immigrants who are carrying out low paid menial, often unsafe work. These migrant workers are often "bounded" to their employers through employment sponsorship called "Kafalah". As a result the sponsor takes migrant workers passport and, in effect does exercise full ownership right of the sponsored workers. In building the world cup football stadium, roughly 40 Indian / Nepalese workers are dying each month. It is however, a huge surprise that FIFA, is not even remotely interested in these avoidable deaths. The issue remains, that if Qatar can get away with deaths in build-up of the football world cup; then it is likely Qatar will pitch up for every major sporting event, without giving a consideration about how many human lives it is going to cost. Stephen asked the delegates to support the campaign, to put pressure on FIFA and those responsible for the terms of employment and health / safety of migrant workers building stadium for football world cup in Qatar.



Laura Piddock presented an overview about "Show Racism the Red Card, the campaign", and how the campaign involves top footballers to build awareness against racism. She briefed about the ideas on how to fight racism and the work her organisation do, which ranges from holding events

with football clubs all over the country, to running competitions for schools, to producing a whole range of educational resources. She asked the delegates to support the campaign.

Conclusion:

Some 54 delegates representing Northern, North West, Northern Ireland, and Scottish Regions of UNISON, attended the seminar, including 2 staff and 2 members of the UNISON international Unit. As at the seminar a bevy of quality speakers were spot on in building awareness on all issues related to the UNISON's International work. It will be appropriate to call the joint international seminar a success.

TTIP Commission Recognises ISDS is Fundamentally Flawed!

As a result of trade unions and pressure groups opposition to TTIP agreements; it is emerging that the TTIP Commission is finally Feeling the Pressure Over ISDS. New European Commission proposals to reform the investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) arbitration system shows the Commission has finally recognised ISDS is fundamentally flawed.

The Commission proposes that future claims by international investors and multinational corporations against states, under the EU-US Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and future EU trade agreements, will be substituted by an Investment Court System (ICS).

Labour MEPs led the opposition to the previous arbitration proposals and gave voice to the thousands of EU citizens who have called for ISDS to be removed from TTIP. In July we voted against the Parliament's resolution because it still included ISDS.

ISDS would have seen corporate lawyers make decisions on disputes between states and investors behind closed



doors with no chance of redress. The new ICS proposals suggest public hearings - presided over by qualified judges - where the right of governments to regulate is enshrined. Sam Macartney Chair of Scottish International Committee of UNISON said: " We will need to see the details of the proposals but this is a welcome step forward by the Commission and it shows public and political pressure is having a positive effect".

However, UNISON activists continue to participate in TTIP street events around the country. These street events were organised by War on Wants from 5th 10-October against TTIP, the secretly negotiated EU-US Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership.

October 6 marks one year since the launch of the most successful petitions seen in Europe – the [European Citizens' Initiative \(ECI\)](#) against TTIP. Almost 3 million people, including almost 500,000 in the UK, have signed the ECI against the trade deal in outrage at TTIP's assault on our social, health and environmental protections, privatisation of our public services and use of 'corporate courts' so big business can sue European governments for policies affecting their profits.

Bus to Paris, for 12 December demonstration on UN Climate Change Talks

UNISON Scotland's Green Network meeting will take place on Saturday 14 November in Glasgow, and about possible subsidised bus places for members, nominated by branches, who are interested in attending a major international climate demonstration in Paris on Saturday 12 December. The demo will be the culmination of civil society actions, including TU action, during the two weeks of United Nations climate talks. The meeting is open to all UNISON members.

UNISON Scotland is keen to make sure that all those interested in campaigning for climate action/green workplace/Just Transition policies, are being kept fully informed and involved in the Green Network. UNISON Scotland officials hope to send ten members from Scotland to Paris to join the UNISON delegation, as part of the trade union bloc. (Trade union [demands](#) for a Just Transition to be part of the final UN text are ongoing. [Latest here](#))

The meeting of 14 November will discuss building support for the Edinburgh and Paris climate demonstrations, greening the workplace ideas for 2016 and developing the Green Network. There will be contributions from Stephen Smellie, Deputy Convener, and Dave Watson, Head of Bargaining and Campaigns. **The meeting will be in the UNISON office in West Campbell Street from 2-4pm on Sat 14 November.** It follows the International Committee meeting, with branch International Officers obviously very welcome.

Bus places – itinerary below and online here www.foe-scotland.org.uk/come-to-paris-2015

A GPF application from the International Committee and Scottish Committee Officers has been made, looking for funding to offer ten fully subsidised bus places on the Friends of the Earth bus from Scotland to Paris for the Saturday 12 Dec march. **Please can branches submit nominations for members interested in going and, if the bid is successful, places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.** That subsidy would cover just the cost of the bus places, which includes the basic hostel accommodation as detailed on the FoES web link above and copied below. Branches might wish to consider offering assistance with other subsistence costs. Please make an effort to let your young members know about this potential opportunity. Some of those travelling from London include a small young member's International delegation from UNISON.

Nominations from branches should be emailed to me f.montgomery@unison.co.uk as soon as possible, with Paris Bus in the subject line. Branches also obviously have the option to pay for bus places themselves entirely separately, via the FoES website.

www.foe-scotland.org.uk/come-to-paris-2015, or they can make other arrangements themselves, to attend the demonstration. Also more detail about the various useful events is available on the UNISON Scotland blog <http://unison-scotland.blogspot.co.uk/2015/10/join-unison-scotland-green-network.html> . In addition to that there will be a demonstration on Sat 28 Nov in Edinburgh (Scotland's Climate March – Climate, Justice and Jobs) and in Glasgow there will be STUC St Andrews Day Anti Racism March and Rally - with a theme "No Racism: Refugees Welcome Here".