

Proud of our NHS at 60

The NHS was created on 5 July 1948 by Labour to ensure free healthcare for all. UNISON Labour Link Scotland joins in the celebrations...

Free from fear

Since 1948, the NHS in Scotland has cared for millions of people and saved many hundreds of thousands of lives. With its unique offer of healthcare free for all at the point of need, the NHS has liberated us from fear of unaffordable treatment and untreated illness.

We fought to save the NHS from Tory attacks in the eighties and nineties. Since then, thanks to the extraordinary work done by dedicated staff, backed up by Labour's extra investment, the NHS is more firmly than ever part of the fabric of our lives. Between 1997 and 2007 Scottish Labour doubled spending on health care, with 12,000 more nurses

and 5,000 extra doctors.

But now the SNP is spending less. Under Labour, health spending in England will go up by 4% a year, while the SNP has cut the figure in Scotland to less than 1.5%.

Future challenges

As we celebrate the achievements of our NHS over the last 60 years, it is also right that we look ahead and address Scotland's health challenges. This means focusing on the poverty and inequalities which underly poor health for too many.



All the best from Edinburgh Labour

A magnificent cake and healthy debate were on the menu at the recent Edinburgh Labour NHS anniversary celebration and policy discussion where shadow health secretary Margaret Curran and UNISON Scotland's Dave Watson were the speakers.



Check out the Scottish Labour Party's new NHS 60 website for more campaigning action including the petition to defend Labour's NHS www.scottishlabour.org.uk/proud

Scottish Health Network

Interested in health policy and campaigning? Join Scottish Labour's new Health Network. Contact Malcolm Burns at UNISON Scotland for details
Tel: 0141 342 2811
Email: M.Burns@unison.co.uk

Holyrood celebration for NHS

The establishment of the NHS by Nye Bevan was celebrated in a debate at the Scottish Parliament in June sponsored by Labour's Bill Butler.

"The creation of a socialised health service remains the crowning achievement of Labour in government," he said.

Scottish Labour's shadow health secretary Margaret Curran praised the ethics and staff of NHS Scotland.



"A collective approach, absolute commitment to public service, and the notion that a shared problem can find a shared solution - when we have those ethics, we provide

public services at their very best," she said.

Health workers joined UNISON Scotland reps, MSPs and members of the Scottish Youth Parliament at a reception after the debate.

Aviemore 2008

Scottish Labour Conference report

Scottish Labour gathered in Aviemore on 28-30 March for its first conference since the Scottish parliamentary and council elections in May 2007. UNISON Scotland Labour Link was there...



Campaigning message

With Labour in power at UK level responsible for reserved matters in Scotland and now a minority SNP Scottish administration at Holyrood, the conference was in many ways a strange mix of government and opposition politics.

There was a strong campaigning message from the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown who supported warnings that Labour had to learn the lessons from its defeat in the Holyrood election.

This was taken up by Scottish Labour leader, Wendy Alexander who in a radical speech far removed from conventional New Labour language defined the challenge as "nationalism against socialism" and "left against right, cutting poverty against cutting taxes".

Labour Link in action

UNISON Scotland Labour Link was active on the conference floor and on the fringe promoting UNISON's messages to politicians, delegates and the media.

Our contemporary motion attacked Conservative plans to privatise Scotland's water. Moving the UNISON motion, Gordon McKay poured scorn on the Tories' apparent conversion to co-operative principles. John Lieser of UNISON NHS Glasgow & Clyde Branch seconded a motion attacking plans to privatise NHS occupational health services. Pat Rowland of West Dunbartonshire UNISON attacked SNP plans to replace early years professionals like her with teachers.

Opposing SNP cuts

A major theme of the conference was the impact of the SNP budget on public services. SNP priorities and tax cuts now have to be paid for, and core budgets in health,



Gordon McKay:
Poured scorn on the Tories

education and local government are under considerable pressure across Scotland. Local campaign groups are springing up to oppose cuts in



Pat Rowland:
Attacked SNP plans

services and Scottish Labour is organising in support of local services.

This is a new campaigning language for a party more used to the responsibilities of government - but one that has a greater resonance with UNISON members and the services they deliver.

● Thanks to Lesley

Scottish General Secretary Lesley Quinn addressed Conference for the last time. Lesley recalled how she joined the Labour Party staff as a shorthand typist and in 27 years of service worked her way up to the position of general secretary. The trade unions have all paid tribute to the tremendous contribution Lesley has made over the years.

"I do not believe the obituaries that have been written for the party," Lesley told delegates. "I've seen it all before during the Thatcher years. The Labour Party and the movement in Scotland, through listening to the electorate and hard work, will reconnect and will win back. And I intend to continue campaigning with you towards that end."

● Liz-Anne on Exec

Congratulations to UNISON's Liz-Anne Handibode from South Lanarkshire Branch who was elected to the Scottish Labour Executive for the first time along with Dave Watson.

Liz-Anne is a member of the Scottish Labour Link Committee and a Branch Labour Link Officer.

● Dave is party chair

UNISON Scottish Organiser Dave Watson was elected Chair of the Scottish Labour Party.

Taking over in what he describes as "challenging times", Dave's priority for the coming year is a new and robust political and organisational strategy.

"Scottish Labour needs to reform its organisation, renew its political priorities and reconnect with voters," said Dave. "That of course includes its core trade union membership, which reflects the key values Scottish Labour has always stood for."

Making our points

On the Conference fringe UNISON organised a range of meetings on health inequalities, climate change, Venezuela, party reform and Show Racism the Red Card.



Disabled parking bill

Motorists who abuse disabled parking bays can expect tough legal action if a bill launched by Labour MSP Jackie Baillie becomes law.

Disabled parking bays under the control of local authorities will become enforceable for the first time. This could mean fines of up to £60 for drivers who park wrongly in a disabled space. And it should benefit more than 200,000 Blue Badge holders who live - but have found it increasingly hard to park - in Scotland.

Introducing the Disabled Persons' Parking Places (Scotland) Bill in the Scottish Parliament on 5 June, Jackie Baillie that too often the case disabled drivers were unable to find parking facilities outside their own home or in their local high street to access essential services.

"The abuse of a disabled parking bay has real consequences for someone who is disabled," the Dumfries MSP said.



Jackie Baillie:
Labour stands
up for Scottish
core values

Councils will have to negotiate agreements with private car parks including supermarkets and out of town shopping centres to enforce disabled parking places. And councils will also be required to report annually to Scottish Ministers on the enforcement of disabled parking bays in their area.

● **The Disabled Parking Bill is first in a series of Labour private members' bills standing up for core Scottish values. These will include: increasing modern apprenticeships; tackling hospital parking charges; and securing water rebates for pensioners.**

Make it fair, not Farepak

Following on from last year's UNISON-commissioned report on the Farepak collapse, a group of Labour MPs asked Gordon Brown to ensure that those who lost out receive compensation and that regulation for Christmas Clubs be introduced.

The government investigation into the collapse of the Christmas hamper firm has concluded, and 238 MPs have now signed a Parliamentary Early Day Motion put down by Ayrshire member Katy Clark calling for compensation for the Farepak victims and regulation of Christmas Clubs.

"It's not just Christmas saving clubs like Farepak," said Clark. "The whole of the 'pre payment industry' targets those on low incomes who pay up for things in advance, and it's completely unregulated. We now need legislation brought forward to fill this gap in the law."

Moffat fights minimum wage exploitation

East Lothian MP Anne Moffat is mounting a campaign to force Scrooge employers in her constituency to pay a legal wage to their workers.

The Labour MP was alerted to the shoddy practice of one East Lothian employer by the local branch of UNISON. The Restaurant Group Plc is a massive conglomerate with profits of over £35 million a year. Yet the company employs workers on as little as £4.80 an hour - well below the minimum wage.

"These waiters and waitresses are appreciated by their customers and tips are awarded," Moffat told us. "If a credit card is used the employer then tops up the hourly rate using the



Anne
Moffat:
'End this
shoddy
practice
now'

workers' tips. This may not be illegal but is surely immoral."

"I have have discussed this exploitation with Gordon Brown," the MP continued. "He committed to giving consideration to the closing of this legislative loop hole."

Meanwhile Moffat will campaign in Parliament and with UNISON members.

"Let's expose and rectify this shoddy practice," Moffat said, "and let's ensure we do it promptly!"

Labour listens to rural Scotland

Scottish Labour has launched a consultation on the challenges for rural areas across Scotland. The party is engaging in dialogue with people in rural communities so we can work with them to address these challenges.

It is clear that, one year into government, the SNP is failing our rural communities.

The SNP has slashed the budget of Highlands and Islands Enterprise, reduced the share of health spending to rural health boards, failed on rural housing and threatened the vital public transport links of rural communities by freezing the Bus Service Operators Grant.

By contrast, Labour continues to work for a better deal for Scotland's rural communities through policies such as support for rural buses, and extending the national concessionary scheme to community transport so as to make services viable for local communities.

Labour will also oppose any moves to abolish the Agricultural Wages Board - vital in supporting rural workers' incomes.

PFI by any other name

Labour MSP Elaine Smith weighed into the SNP's proposed Scottish Futures Trust in a Holyrood debate on infrastructure funding in June.

Smith reminded Finance Secretary John Swinney of the clear promise the SNP made to Scottish voters to end PFI/PPP and restore commonsense public financing.

"The Government must now be honest by admitting to those voters that they have been deceived," said the Coatbridge MSP. "The SFT is not a clear end to PFI/PPP, as it is part of the PPP family."

The Finance Secretary has also made much of the "non-profit distributing" model proposed for the SFT. However, Smith pointed out

UNISON Scotland's evidence to the Finance Committee that the term "non-profit distributing" is a misnomer: "NPD is not non-profit, because the profit is simply taken at contractor level."

Smith said that there were alternatives available. "If a superhospital can be delivered through conventional funding, other projects can be delivered in that way. And we could pursue fiscal powers for the Parliament."

Smith also endorsed "UNISON's sensible five-point plan" to tackle the problems of PFI.

● **Find UNISON Scotland Briefings on SFT, PFI and other campaign issues at www.unison-scotland.org.uk**

A thousand SNP cuts

Not only has the SNP delivered a year of broken promises, but their policies are now delivering a range of cuts across Scotland.

There have been cuts to the enterprise budget and cuts in skills programmes. And a triple SNP whammy on local services:

- Cutting the income from business rates.
- Freezing the council tax.
- Giving local government a lower share of the Scottish spending cake than it had during any of the eight years Labour was in office.

Scotland's teachers and directors of education agree most councils will suffer education cuts this year. Pensioners face rising charges for services like emergency alarms, shopping, home helps. And dedicated voluntary sector staff face job cuts as funding dries up.

Nat Tax would hit workers more than wealthy

SNP plans for a Local Income Tax are falling apart as they come under increasing scrutiny.

The real losers from the 'Nat Tax' will be workers as the tax burden is shifted from those who own property to workers who pay income tax.

The richest 10% of the working age population receive more than four times as much of their income from investment as the poorest 10%. Yet this unearned wealth is not liable to the Local Income Tax.

Andy Kerr, Labour's spokesperson on local government, said: "The SNP knows a Local Income Tax of 3p in the pound will never be enough to meet the cost of local services. Our research shows a couple in Falkirk, each earning less than £16,000 a year, will have to pay more. That story is repeated in councils across Scotland."

● Highland Cuts Watch

Highland Labour MSPs Peter Peacock, Rhoda Grant and David Stewart have launched a Highland Cuts Watch website. They are campaigning against cuts in vital public services - cuts introduced by



the troubled SNP-led coalition on Highland Council earlier this year.

You can e-mail Highland Cuts Watch if you have any information of cuts in your area, and sign the e-petitions to oppose Highland Council's cuts in these key services. www.highlandcutswatch.org.uk

● Clydebank Women's Day

An International Women's Day Breakfast held in March by Clydebank Labour Party was a great success. Almost 50 women attended the UNISON-sponsored event at Skypoint in Faifley. Scottish Parliament Presiding Officer Trish Godman MSP



presented bouquets to Nancy Clunas and Phyllis McAllister (pictured) in recognition of their combined contribution to the labour, peace and women's movements.

● Euro Elections 2009

The Party of European Socialists (PES) has opened consultations on its manifesto for the next European Parliamentary Elections in June 2009. The European Socialists, with trade union support, are keen to secure a majority of seats in the 2009-14 European Parliament. PES wants a "common progressive manifesto shaped through open discussion and debate."

Members can take part in the consultation online at <http://manifesto2009.pes.org/en>

● Join Labour for just £1 a month

As a UNISON member you can join the Labour Party at a special rate of just £1 per month.

Download the UNISON Labour application form here:

www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/B3330.pdf

or call the Labour membership hotline on 08705 900 200