



Read it and Weep

Scotland's library staff speak out - p3

Trade Union Bill: Most draconian legislation in the western world
Build for Parliament lobby. London 2 November - p2



Ballot of Fire and Rescue support staff

Final attempt to reach collective agreement p3



PUBLIC WORKS:

a million voices for public services

October 2015 No 115

Scotland in UNISON

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

Holyrood and councils can combat austerity

UNISON Scotland has launched a campaign calling on the Scottish Government, local authorities and public bodies to do all they can to mitigate UK government austerity.

The union is calling for a range of financial and industrial policies to create investment in Scottish infrastructure, green energy production and jobs.



Every sensible mitigation measure government and local authorities can take reduces the number of job losses and damage to vital services'
MIKE KIRBY

For example, with interest rates at an all time low, it is cheaper to buy out or refinance PPP/PFI contracts saving up to £12bn.

Pension funds could be a source of badly needed investment for infrastructure; we need a political consensus on reform of local taxation; and councils should collaborate in using bonds as a means of financing borrowing rather than routinely using the Public Works Loan Board.

Mike Kirby, UNISON Scottish secretary, said: "Every sensible mitigation measure

government and public authorities can take reduces the number of job losses and damage to vital public services."

Dave Watson, head of UNISON Scotland bargaining and campaigns, said:

"We are expecting a further £2bn of cuts to local public services across Scotland. We could save



COMBATING AUSTERITY

Signposting the ways Scotland could limit some of the damage

£2bn by refinancing PFI/PPP projects. "Some councils are already using pension funds to invest in affordable housing, but we need to do this on a national scale."

Scottish local government has already seen over 40,000 job losses and many more jobs have been lost in the NHS, police, community and voluntary sector.

Dave stressed that UNISON would continue to campaign with the STUC and others against austerity.

"However we are ready to work with Scottish Government and public authorities to do all we can to mitigate against the worst effects of these cuts", he added.

UNISON is seeking views on the paper from those who share the union's objectives.

See the full report on the website; click on Public Works.

Morale at rock bottom in our colleges

A UNISON survey of staff in Scottish colleges has exposed problems caused by cuts, college mergers and unaccountable senior managers, with staff concern that education services for students are declining.

Over 6 in 10 staff think college services have declined; 7 in 10 blame the Scottish Government's merger policy; and the vast majority of staff are extremely doubtful that services will improve within the next year.

Chris Greenshields, chair of the UNISON FE Committee said: "College management and the Scottish Government need to listen to the staff. We are here to work with the Scottish



Learning the Hard Way

Survey of Further Education Members

Government to make that vital difference. But it is getting increasingly difficult.

"It's time warm words are translated into better pay and conditions for staff who are delivering despite real problems. If we don't do something soon we can expect real industrial relations problems in the sector."

See the report 'Learning the Hard Way' on the website.

Personal injury settlements

UNISON Scotland won £154,794 in personal injury settlements for members in August 2015 alone.

End the cuts and rethink policing

UNISON Scotland police staff have called for the suspension of 'all cuts and reforms while we re-think Scottish policing'.

George McIrvine, secretary of UNISON Police Scotland branch, made the call at a public meeting in Dundee attended by shadow justice spokesperson Graeme Pearson MSP.

The MSP is travelling the country speaking to rank and file officers, civilian staff, community groups, victim support staff and others as part of Scottish Labour's wide-ranging review of policing.

George pointed out that cuts mean that: "It's police civilian staff like control room operators, crime analysts, and criminal justice staff who are losing their jobs.

"We need to suspend all cuts and reforms while we re-think Scottish policing before we completely dismantle modern policing in Scotland and take the force back to the 1970s.

"UNISON welcomes this particular Review. This is an opportunity for police staff and public to have their say on policing in Scotland."

But be warned: "UNISON will be up for a fight if we continue with these cuts and keep the uncotted manifesto pledge to maintain 1,000 police officers."

Gas job cuts a 'harsh blow to loyal workforce'

UNISON has described British Gas plans to shed thousands of jobs as a 'harsh blow to a loyal workforce'.

The union was responding after an announcement by Centrica/British Gas of 6,000 posts to be axed between now and 2020. The majority of these are likely to be gone by the end of 2017.

The company provided little detail but indicated that around half of the job losses could be compulsory redundancies.

UNISON Regional Organiser Janet Stewart said: "This is a bitter blow especially considering the efforts made by British Gas staff in recent years.

"Our members have been very loyal to the company, providing excellent services to customers whilst under great external pressure and despite the absence of systems that are fit for purpose. We expect that loyalty to be repaid.

"If the company needs to restructure, it should not be on the backs of the poorest paid."

Fight 'draconian' anti union bill

by Kate Ramsden
Communications & Campaigns Cttee

Branches across Scotland and the UK are gearing up to fight the Tory government's Trade Union Bill, described by UNISON General Secretary Dave Prentis as 'the most draconian legislation in the western world'.

The bill, which passed its second reading on 14 September, proposes huge restrictions on peaceful picketing and protests and is widely seen as an attack on basic human rights.

Workers will only be able to take strike action if 50% or more of eligible members vote in the industrial action ballot.

For action in 'important public services' which includes health and education, 40% of all members eligible to vote would have to vote yes for a union to have a strike mandate. That means if 50% of members vote, 80% of those must vote yes.

It is worth remembering that the government trying to bring this in was elected on only 24% of those eligible to vote.

For the first time in 40 years,

Mass lobby of Parliament 2 November London

See the website for details

employers will be able to break strikes by bringing in agency workers to cover for strikers - a move that could have serious safety implications, lead to worse public services, and undermine the right to strike.

Astonishingly, striking workers will have to tell their employers of all their plans - including what they will post on Facebook or Twitter - two weeks before they strike.

So extreme are the proposals that there is wide support across Scotland to oppose them.

Last week CoSLA announced: "Scotland's Councils have come out in force today to stand shoulder to shoulder with their trade union colleagues against the UK Government's Trade Union Bill."

Earlier Glasgow, Edinburgh and Renfrewshire councils voted

an outdated response. That is particularly true in post-devolution Scotland."

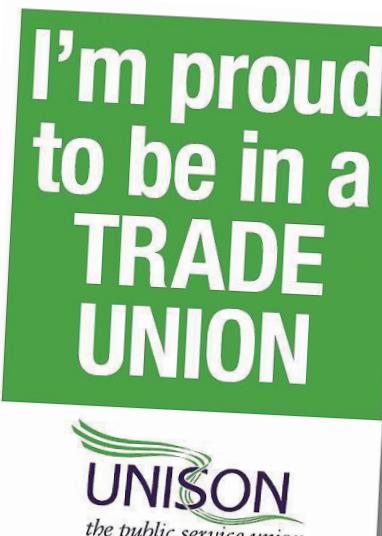
UNISON is encouraging members to write to their MPs and MSPs and to join the national demonstrations against the bill.

As we went to press a huge demonstration was expected at the Conservative Party conference on 4 October and a mass lobby of Westminster will be held on 2 November, with an event planned for Glasgow at the end of November.

Dave added: "Both party leaders in Scotland have made the link between the bill and the Tory approach to the workplace generally.

"They support the idea that employees working together for better wages, terms and conditions makes for a more productive workforce - good for business and good for society.

"Both the Scottish and the Welsh governments support UNISON's position that, although industrial relations is a reserved matter, some parts of the bill will need legislative consent by devolved parliaments."



UNISON
the public service union

not to co-operate with attacks on facility time or check-off (which enables union dues to be paid direct from wages).

Dave Watson, head of bargaining and campaigns, said:

"The Trade Union Bill weakens our voice at work, and weakens our campaigning voice. It undermines the right to strike, union organisation and aims to make it harder for unions to win a fairer deal at work.

"The bill has been described even by employer organisations as

Show your colours for Climate, Justice and Jobs

by Fiona Montgomery
Information and Devt officer

Climate, justice and jobs care the themes for Scotland's Climate March on Saturday 28 November in Edinburgh.

Branches are urged to send representatives to Edinburgh in support of the worldwide demonstrations that weekend, calling for a strong deal at the United Nations climate talks in Paris in December.

Marchers are asked to wear bright colours for joining in the weekend of global action. There are also marches in Cardiff on Saturday 28, and in London on Sunday 29 November.

Dave Watson, Head of Bargaining and Campaigns, said: "Scotland needs to show its colours in Paris and beyond with strong action on climate change."

It's feared that world leaders in Paris will not agree a strong enough programme to prevent dangerous runaway climate change.

So branches are also encouraged to support a massive march in Paris on Saturday 12 December, which aims to state loudly at the end of the talks that we won't stop fighting for a fair



Scotland's Climate March

Show your colours for climate, justice and jobs

and just deal that delivers on the urgency of climate science.

Dave added: "We will be standing up for people affected by rising global temperatures and showing support for a low carbon society that will create green jobs, improve our transport and food systems and protect our land, air and water."

International trade unions working on the UN talks are focusing on Just Transition policies, arguing that there are no jobs on a dead planet.

Leaflets and posters are downloadable from the Stop Climate Chaos Scotland website www.stopclimatechaos.org/march

Meet at the Meadows in Edinburgh at 12 noon. Set off at 12.30 and head to the Ross Bandstand in Princes Street

Gardens for an inspirational rally at 1pm.

Please volunteer names for members willing to help out as stewards. Please email f.montgomery@unison.co.uk

Further details about a

STUC St Andrew's Day Rally Glasgow 28 November

The Climate march unavoidably clashes with the STUC's annual St Andrew's Day Anti Racism March and Rally, which takes place in Glasgow, also on Saturday 28 November.

This year's STUC march has a special theme: "No Racism. Refugees Welcome Here." UNISON strongly supports this

meeting soon for new people to join UNISON Scotland's green network and plan for the Edinburgh march, and about transport to Paris for 12 December will be available as soon as possible.

Branches are encouraged to be represented at both events and to support and promote both through social media, including Facebook and Twitter.

The STUC march assembles at 10.30am at Glasgow Green, setting off at 11am, with a rally at the Glasgow Film Theatre at 12 noon.

Fire & Rescue Service conditions ballot

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) members are being balloted from 3 October in a final attempt to reach a collective agreement. Ballot papers must be returned by NOON on Friday 23rd October 2015.

UNISON and UNITE members failed to agree with SFRS on the harmonisation of terms and conditions and

entered a formal consultation period in August. Both unions are clear that the revised pay and reward package now on the table is the limit that can be achieved through negotiations:

Further details are included in the ballot letter sent to UNISON SFRS members which includes

- Pay protection for all employees in detriment until 28 February 2017



- Implementation date of revised pay scales will be 1 August 2015 and the implementation date for terms and conditions will be 1 November 2015
- Outwith core hours allowance increased to 7.5%

Union members should also be clear that the SJC pay awards will no longer apply and that there will be direct negotiations with SFRS from 1 April 2016.

SFRS have stated that if there is no collective agreement then they will go to voluntary offers and thereafter dismissal and re-engagement on the revised terms. Members are urged to use their vote.

Prentis opens UNISON centre in new hospital

UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis opened UNISON's shop and resource centre in the new Queen Elizabeth University Hospital in August.

The Glasgow Clyde and CVS Branch shop is in the main thoroughfare of the hospital building.

The initiative follows Lothian Health Branch's shop in the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary which was recently visited by First Minister Nicola Sturgeon.

And in September, Nicola Wood, patron of Simpson's Memory Box Appeal (SiMBA), opened a shop in Livingston's St John's Hospital.

The branch has a partnership in both shops with the charity which responds to the needs of those affected by the loss of a baby.

Dave and UNISON's national head of health Christina McAnea were given a tour of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital by senior NHS managers

They met patients and staff and spent time listening to UNISON members talking about their early experiences of working in the new buildings.

Dave said: "UNISON is the biggest union in the new hospital and we are recruiting



Above: Dave Prentis cuts the ribbon at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Right: Nicola Wood opens the St John's shop

many new members every week.

"It's important that I hear direct from them about both good and bad issues they face when providing day to day patient care.

"The new UNISON shop will be great asset. It will be a place where UNISON members can

join up, get advice and support, and report problems.

"It's impossible to build a hospital as big and complex as this and for it not to have a few teething problems.

"Our members see things that hospital managers who are running a big hospital can sometimes miss. And they will



have good ideas about how we can improve patient care.

"If everyone works together, this fantastic new hospital could meet its vision of providing world-leading patient care for many years to come."

Edinburgh beats privatisation but job cuts loom

UNISON's City of Edinburgh Branch is celebrating a brief victory after the council rejected council officers' plans to privatise Facilities Management.

The victory is brief because there is also a threat of compulsory redundancies with hard negotiations to go on throughout October.

Amanda Kerr, Edinburgh UNISON branch secretary, said: "Following concerted UNISON pressure, we welcome this rethink and the dropping of privatisation plans.

"We also welcome the delay on redundancies, however we still have a long way to go and we will be building for a major lobby of the next Council Finance and Resources



Amanda Kerr and Gerry Stovin put UNISON's case to the council committee

Committee on 29 October.

"Our campaign has brought this to the public eye and that campaign will continue.

"We warned that the level of cuts envisaged would be devastating for services.

"After years and years of cut after cut, no council can sustain more massive cuts like these."

In 2012 the union beat off

new slogan of Our City's **still** Not For Sale.

Lead negotiator Tom Connolly explained: "This is an important victory. The damage privatisation would have caused cannot be overestimated.

"The union will now focus on protecting jobs and conditions, engaging with our members and building towards the lobby."

ourCity's NOT for sale

WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY AGAINST CUTS AND PRIVATISATION

UNISON
Edinburgh

"Our mandate from our members remains. Industrial action remains a real possibility in the event of compulsory redundancies."

While opposing all job cuts, the branch will be pushing the council for better voluntary terms for members who wish to leave.

UNISON's Gerry Stovin warned councillors that staff left behind after voluntary redundancies need to be considered too.

He said: "Staff that do remain will be under increasing pressure, stress and anxiety. There will be serious problems for the services we all support."

Libraries need more than 'fine words and ideals'

UNISON has published a report 'Read It and Weep', which outlines the experience of members working in Scotland's libraries.

It raises the concerns and difficulties of staff who are simultaneously being expected to expand services while being in the front line of cuts.

The report is based on qualitative research from UNISON members working across Scotland's libraries. The frustration on the part of staff is clear.

They are well aware that the services they provide are not as good as they could be and they highlight the impacts that cuts are making.

Library services have been undergoing massive change in recent years yet staff numbers have been going down, buildings are closing and opening hours reduced.

Gray Allan, UNISON Falkirk Council branch spokesperson (and a librarian), said: "There is no shortage of people willing to say libraries are a good thing. But what our libraries need isn't just fine words and ideals but proper financing and investment.

"The Scottish Government has endorsed a national strategy for public libraries that talks of libraries being part of a shared civic ambition.

"There isn't much point in giving every child in Scotland a library card if their local library is being closed or its hours have reduced so much it isn't accessible.

"Staff are keen to see their service move forward but that isn't happening."

Local govt members vote to accept two year pay offer

Over 88% of local government members voting in their pay ballot have accepted a two year offer with a new Living Wage deal.

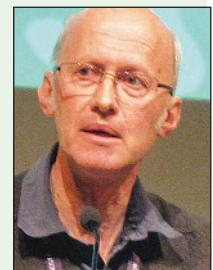
Staff will now get a 1.5% rise from 1 April 2015 and 1% from April 2016.

Importantly, the Scottish Local Government Living Wage of £7.85 per hour will be put in place before the 1.5% rise, making it £7.97 an hour.

And in April 2016, the Living Wage will be increased to the recommended figure of the Living Wage Foundation, again before the 1% rise. There will also be talks on removing the pay points below the Living Wage level.

Negotiators succeeded in getting the initial offer of two years at 1.25% front-loaded to 1.5% in 2015 which is above inflation and slightly increases the value of the 1% in 2016.

In August inflation was 0.0% on the Consumer Prices Index and 1.1% on the Retail Prices Index.



Gray Allan

Refugees welcome here ..the message in photos

by John Stevenson
SiU editor

UNISON is urging members to campaign to say 'Refugees welcome here' by using photos taken at last month's Scottish Local Government Conference.

The photos, like the one on our front page, can now be downloaded through the website by clicking onto our Picasa link.

"The power of these pictures is that these are the local government workers who will plan, organise, manage and deliver the services that refugees so badly need. The clear message is 'refugees are welcome and we stand ready to do our best'", said communications officer Danny Phillips.

Members are also encouraged to share information about the host of humanitarian initiatives from Scottish campaigns like the one we report on here.

Glasgow campaigners help refugees in Greece

A delegation from the Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees visited Athens and Lesvos in September at their own expense to assist volunteers helping refugees.

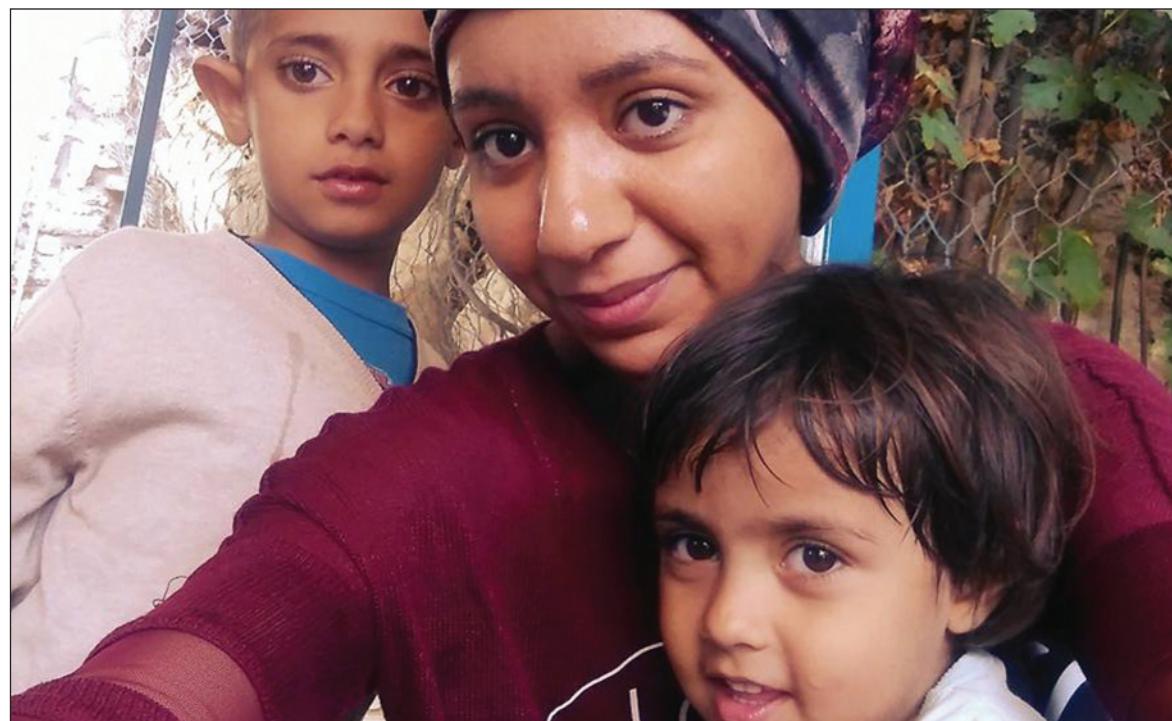
Along with human rights activist Pinar Aksu and social justice campaigner Margaret Woods was 'Glasgow Girl' Amal Azzudin, a Somalian refugee who arrived in Scotland as a child.

As teenagers, the Glasgow Girls' campaign for the rights of asylum seekers inspired a UNISON Scotland asylum children guide, TV documentaries and even a West End musical!

Amal sent reports back via Facebook. On 21 September she wrote of seeing three or more refugee dinghies arriving in Lesvos.

"We helped people get out of

I can't imagine any human being witnessing this and not doing anything to help. Shame on the governments who are turning their back on humanity! AMAL AZZUDIN



'Glasgow Girl' Amal Azzudin with Afghan refugee Ilhaam and her brother after they and their mother climbed from a dinghy arriving at Lesvos.

the boats and get water, food and a change of clothes as they were wet", she said.

"Each boat had 50 people in them. To cross to the island costs around 1,200 euros each. The people arriving in the island were so relieved that they made it here while others burst into tears because of the traumatic experience.

"One mother from Afghanistan gave me her child to hold while she got out of the life jacket and looked for her husband and other kids. It was an experience I will never forget.

"One of the doctors told me the best thing we could do is to say welcome and smile as soon as they arrive.

"I can't imagine any human being witnessing this and not doing anything to help! Shame on the governments who are turning their back on humanity!"

The next day the group went to a self organised refugee camp which has space for 100 refugees but recently had over 300.

The workers are all volunteers, and they spend about 12 hours a day helping refugees.

"The food, shelter and clothing is provided through solidarity donations. Some of the donations are also used to bury people who drowned", explained Amal.

The desperation of the situation was summed up in the haunting words of one Syrian refugee who

said: "In Syria we may die once through a bullet or explosion but being a refugee we die a hundred times."

How you can help

You can donate or offer time, skills and housing to support refugees coming to Scotland on a new Scottish Refugee Council website set up on behalf of the Scottish Government at www.scotlandwelcomesrefugees.scot

You can also join the 1,750 households across Scotland and the UK that have registered with Positive Action in Housing to host refugees for free. More information from www.roomforrefugees.com

International Seminar goes from strength to strength

Newcastle was the venue for this year's UNISON joint region international seminar, an event that has been growing from strength to strength.

The weekend saw discussions and information on Nicaragua, Venezuela, Colombia, Kurdistan, Kobane, Palestine, European trade unions, Qatar Playfair campaign, Bangladeshi garment workers and Show Racism the Red Card.

Delegates attended from Northern and North West Regions, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

Solidarity message from Hampden

Scotland supporters displayed a "Refugees Welcome" banner before the UEFA EURO Qualifying match against Germany at Hampden on 7 September, in a proud imitation of the actions of football supporters across Germany.

Backed by UNISON Scotland, Unite and United Glasgow FC and organised by the Scottish Football Supporters Association, the event included getting supporters to tweet with hashtags #refugeeswelcome and #reclaimthegame to make sure the message was spread as far and as clear as possible.

The display gave Germany and Scotland fans the opportunity to express their support and solidarity for those affected by the refugee crisis.

Kurdish trade unionist calls for Scottish solidarity

Stephen Smellie, South Lanarkshire branch, Sarah Collins, East Ayrshire, and Viv Thomson, Scottish Healthcare branch, took part in a delegation to Diyarbakir in Kurdistan/Turkey in September.

The purpose of the visit was to find out how trade unions were affected by the crisis in the region and how the Ezidi refugees who had fled from ISIS threatened genocide were seeking to deal with the situation.

Stephen said: "As well as the refugee crisis, in recent months the Turkish government has launched a series of strikes against the Kurdish group the PKK. In addition they have began to crack down on their political opponents at home. This includes the trade



The delegation met DISK union reps. Zeynep, the Co-President of the union's Diyarbakir region, is third from the left.

unions in the Kurdish region.

"We met the co-president of the local health workers branch who reported that the branch office had been raided by the police, vandalised and staff terrorised. The police used anti-terrorist legislation to justify the raid."

The delegation visited the camp for the Ezidi refugees and spoke to the camp organisers as well as some of the 3,000 people living in tents for over a year.

Stephen said: "Their situation is desperate. The camp is well run but it isn't permanent. The Ezidis



say they can't go back to Iraq due to the very real fear of ISIS and they do not feel safe in another Muslim country. Instead they would like to seek asylum in Europe."

The delegation are producing a report which will tell the story of the ordinary people they met such as Dakhil who fled ISIS, Lisa who lost both legs in a bomb attack on a Kurdish political rally and Zeynep the woman trade unionist who appealed to Scottish

Stephen Smellie, and Roza Salih (a Glasgow Girl like Amal above), met film maker Lisa (centre). She lost both legs when a bomb was targeted at a Kurdish political rally, killing five and injuring 400. With friends she is trying to raise money to travel to Germany to get prosthetic legs. "She was an inspiration", said Stephen.

workers for trade union solidarity in their struggle for a peaceful and democratic end to the current conflict.

We want to hear your news

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