

# UNISON Matters

Aberdeenshire

March 2012

## Farewell to Ian McDonald & Jim Murphy

The Branch is having to lose the services of 2 long standing members.

Over the years Ian has performed a magnificent job in his position as treasurer. He has guarded every penny of our members contributions as if they were his own and kept us all right about what we are allowed to spend on your behalf. He is now training Ann Gray to follow in his footsteps and I am sure she will make an excellent job in replacing him.

We will also miss the contributions Jim made on behalf of our members in Inspire. He gave us regular updates on the issues that have affected our fellow members and the action that has been taken by UNISON to try and minimise the effects. Experience and knowledge gained that will I am sure help us fight off similar actions now being taken against our Local Government members.

## Lively AGM votes to fight council cuts plans

**A lively and well attended AGM roundly condemned the council's proposed cuts to terms and conditions and voted unanimously for action to combat the council's pay cut plans.**

**It also pledged support to members in the community and voluntary sector, who have already been hit by cuts to funding. And it supported action on fuel poverty, child poverty, council budget cuts and the UK government's austerity measures.**

Moving an emergency motion Inez Teece, Branch Secretary slammed the attack on terms and conditions at a time when staff had already suffered a pay freeze, and with job losses were already doing more for less.

Inez said, "These cuts affect all staff, but disproportionately affect those that provide front-line, essential services, 7 days a week, 365 days a year."

The AGM heard from many of these members, who told of how the cuts would affect them personally, with losses for some of up to a quarter of their salary; but also how the cuts would affect the people they work with, including some of our most vulnerable citizens, the elderly, disabled and children.

Many said that they will have to look for other jobs; others asked who will provide services for vulnerable elderly in care homes or in their own

homes at weekends or at Christmas and other public holidays.

Members in 9-5 jobs pledged their support amidst fears that if the council can do this now, it will have big implications for them in the future.



Inez Teece re-elected as Branch Secretary



## Elections

Following a lively hustings, and a secret ballot, Bill Edwards was re-elected to the post of Assistant Branch Secretary with 71 votes to Susan Kennedy's 45.

Bill then withdrew his nomination for the Branch Secretary post and Inez Teece was elected unopposed.

The AGM agreed the other nominations for Branch Officers and Stewards. It also agreed to remit to the Branch Committee the approval of delegations to Scottish, National and other external delegate bodies.

## Les Chalmers stands down as Welfare Officer

Les has been there for our members for many years. He has been very successful recently in getting a major award for a member who was granted £6,821.00 for house repairs.

He has also been granted smaller sums for other members in need. As he steps down Les has two other cases awaiting the Board's decision. Carole Munro will take over from Les, she says "Les is a hard act to follow. He has worked very hard for all our members in need. I just hope I can do as good a job." To speak to Carole Tel: 01224 620624

The Branch would like to thank Les for all his hard work & commitment.

For immediate debt advice call 0800 389 3302

there  
for you

UNISON Welfare, has been rebranded as there for you supporting UNISON members when life gets tough. Services include: Financial assistance, Wellbeing breaks, and Support and Information.  
call: 020 7121 5620  
email: thereforyou@unison.co.uk

On a 45% return, a massive 92% gave a resounding NO to the council's plans.

# UNISON calls on council to rethink as members reject cuts plans

The Branch has called on the council to rethink its cuts plans and to get back round the negotiating table, as members voted overwhelmingly to reject Aberdeenshire Council's planned cuts to term and conditions. All staff but the council's plans to cut overtime and unsocial hours payments will hit low paid, mainly women workers hardest.



The Branch issued a Briefing for elected members, which calls on councillors to reconsider their proposals for terms and conditions.

"The council had an underspend of £11 million last year, yet still they are planning to cut the wages of their lowest paid staff to make a saving of just over £5 million. And this on top of a wage freeze, which is a real terms pay cut, at a time when the cost of food and fuel is spiralling. We think that there are other ways that the council could save this money, without hitting already hard pressed staff.

"Our low paid members are extremely worried, upset and downright angry that, yet again, they and they people they work to support, are bearing the brunt of the budget cuts. Morale is at rock bottom," said Inez.

You can influence your local councillor by writing to them using the suggestions we give on the website or in the recent communication we sent out. Find out their details by phoning 01224 665033 or by going to [www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/councillors/contact](http://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/councillors/contact).

## Myths about the 'crisis'

**"Cutting public services will boost the private sector ...."**  
**WRONG**

For every one job cut in the public sector at least one is lost in the private sector. (Treasury report Guardian 29 June) Cuts don't just damage essential services, they damage the whole economy.

About 70p of each £1 a public service worker earns is spent in their own community. Pay cuts and job losses will damage local businesses and local jobs.

**"The national debt has never**

**been higher... we can't afford public services and benefits...."**  
**WRONG**

The national debt was proportionately four times higher in 1948 but the government could still afford to introduce the NHS, the Welfare State and a huge house building programme! [www.ukpublicspending.co.uk](http://www.ukpublicspending.co.uk)

**"Cutting public spending will get us out of recession...."**  
**WRONG**

Recent reports from the International Monetary Fund and the OECD warn that cuts are grinding the whole economy

down, risking the disaster of a double-dip recession. The last three month trade gap was the worst on record (Guardian 9 Sept, Herald 11 Sept). Public services and industry need investment not cuts!

**"We're all in this together...."**  
**WRONG**

The poorest families will be hit five times worse than top earners by government cuts (Institute for Fiscal Studies August 2010). Meanwhile bankers go on collecting bonuses, top businesses go on paying no corporation tax and billions are lost through tax avoidance by the very rich.



## Solid strike – with great public support – shows government must stop Great Pensions Robbery

Public sector workers are entitled to pensions that are affordable, sustainable and fair.

In a fantastic show of unity, members from all the public sector trade unions gathered in the Castlegate in Aberdeen to hear a range of speakers calling on the Coalition Government to think again on their pensions proposals!

And before that branch members had been up from early doors to join picket lines across Aberdeenshire. There were pickets at Seafield House in Banff, where Branch steward Julie Neale chained herself to a pillar in protest at the attacks on our pensions; at Gordon House; Woodhill House, Stonehaven; and at Meldrum and Kemnay Academies.

After being treated to coffee and bacon rolls to warm them up, pickets streamed into the Castlegate to join one of the largest crowds seen there in years. Banners, flags and placards made a colourful show as vuvuzelas and whistles joined the crowd's cheers and applause for the speakers.





## Children will suffer under council plans to slash one in five learning support posts

The branch has warned once again that children will suffer if the council presses ahead with plans to cut more than 180 full-time posts (final figures at the end of April) from learning support to our most vulnerable children.

We warned that job losses on this scale will mean that pupils with additional support needs will not get the help they need to make the most of their education. We also warned that creating a generic post would lead to a poorer

quality of care and support within the classroom for these children.

Susan Kennedy, Assistant Branch Secretary, and herself a pupil support worker said, "Already there have been job losses through the ending of temporary contracts and, despite what the council says or believes, our members in learning support tell us that they are already struggling to keep up with the workload."

"This further loss of almost 1 in 5 learning support staff will only make matters worse and will mean that a great many children with disabilities and other

additional needs will not get the support they need in the classroom. This will then have a knock on effect on teachers, who will be faced with providing the support to these children, taking them away from their teaching role, and all pupils will suffer as a result."

Parents and others need to push the council to think again."

Go to [www.aberdeenshireunison.com](http://www.aberdeenshireunison.com) for advice about how you can give your support.

## Inequalities in the workplace

At the St Andrews Day March against racism on November 26th Branch Chair, Kate Ramsden was UNISON's speaker. She told the Rally that UNISON, like the other trade unions, has a proud record in combating the far right; promoting the rights of asylum seekers, fighting for humane immigration rules, and tackling racism wherever it raises its ugly head.

She warned that it is particularly in these challenging economic times that we have to guard against prejudice and marginalisation, and any

suggestion that we can ignore equality issues.

"We need to guard against the demonisation of people because of their race, religion or culture, or because they are disabled, or on benefits, or elderly or young," she said.

Your Branch is there to fight against any instances you might come across in the workplace so report to: 01224 628282 or e-mail: [aberdeenshire@unison.co.uk](mailto:aberdeenshire@unison.co.uk)



Get in touch if you are living in fuel poverty and help us to help you.

This is measured by if you are spending 10% or more of your income on your fuel bills.

Look out for survey on the website in March.

[www.aberdeenshireunison.com](http://www.aberdeenshireunison.com)



## Your Officers spoke out at last years

National Delegates Conference June 2011

Kate Ramsden, Branch Chair told conference that our economy depends on a healthy public sector.

She said, that our branch was concerned that the ConDem Government was winning the propaganda arguments; that the public, including many of our own members had swallowed whole the myth that we all had to "share the pain" in order to deal with the recession.

"We challenge these myths and lies and take forward the alternatives," said Kate.

"This is absolutely vital as already we are seeing the impact of job losses in the public services on local economies."

**"Only the very wealthy and the bankers seem to be getting off scot free," slammed Kate.**

**"And these are the very people that created this crisis in the first place."**

Challenging the disgrace of cuts and child poverty

Delegates called on the union to work with the "widest alliance", not only to oppose cuts but to plan for improvements to the benefit system and their political implementation.

Susan Kennedy, Assistant Branch Secretary, speaking to our branch amendment, threw the spotlight on child poverty and the impact for our children of these cuts. She told conference that the UK already has one of the worst rates of child poverty in the industrialised world.

**"Twenty seven per cent of children in Manchester live in severe poverty",**

said Susan, adding that across the UK, four million children live in some sort of poverty.

**"It is immoral that bankers are raking in bonuses of £7 billion when our members are being thrown out of work and our public services are being slashed."**

## Health & Safety

More often becoming an issue of stress as those being left in a job are struggling to cope.

Stress may be caused or made worse by a number of factors including:

- long hours
- shiftwork
- unrealistic targets or deadlines
- too much or too little work
- lack of control and conflicting demands (especially among the lower grades)
- poor management
- bad relations with other work colleagues
- repetitive work, boredom and lack of job satisfaction
- working alone
- job insecurity
- job or organisational change
- low pay
- jobs with heavy emotional demands
- bullying, harassment and either actual or threatened violence
- a poor working environment

(such as excessive noise, the presence of dangerous materials, overcrowding, poor facilities, or extremes of temperature or humidity).

The effects of stress can lead to physical symptoms of ill health as well as longer term psychological damage. Many of the early outward signs will be noticeable to managers and work colleagues and should alert those within the organisation who have control of and responsibility for staff. They include:

- changes in behaviour
- unusual tearfulness, irritability or aggression
- indecisiveness
- increased sickness absence
- poor timekeeping
- reduced performance, for example, an inability to concentrate
- overworking or failure to delegate
- erosion of self-confidence
- relationship problems, for example, becoming withdrawn or argumentative with colleagues
- increased unwillingness to co-operate or accept advice

- excessive smoking or drinking
- drug abuse.

Those who are experiencing work-related stress may also complain of or demonstrate symptoms of:

- anxiety
- depression
- panic attacks
- headaches
- raised blood pressure
- indigestion
- muscle tension
- increased heart rate.

You don't have to face stress alone.

Our safety representatives have the legal right to raise health and safety issues on your behalf, so if you have a problem with stress, get UNISON involved. We will talk to your employer and look at practical ways to help you reduce your stress at work. Talk to your safety rep Richard Lawrence or Tricia Morrison. They can be contacted via the UNISON Resource Centre on 01224 620624.

Or visit [www.unison.org.uk/safety](http://www.unison.org.uk/safety)



More Members | More Clout

Join us today:  
Tel:  
E-mail:  
Web:

UNISON Aberdeenshire  
01224 620624  
[aberdeenshire@unison.co.uk](mailto:aberdeenshire@unison.co.uk)  
[www.aberdeenshireunison.com](http://www.aberdeenshireunison.com)

Mrs Aileen Glennie, Banchory  
you were last time's winner and a  
cheque for £25 is on its way.

'Should  
have gone to  
specsavers'

We thought this answer  
shows the short sightedness  
of the PM !!!

Photo: Jess Hurd/repodigital.co.uk



First correct  
crossword  
entry will  
receive £25 cheque.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership number: \_\_\_\_\_

Cut out and send in to UNISON Freepost (AB048), 7 Alford Place, Aberdeen.

### Take a letter by Caper

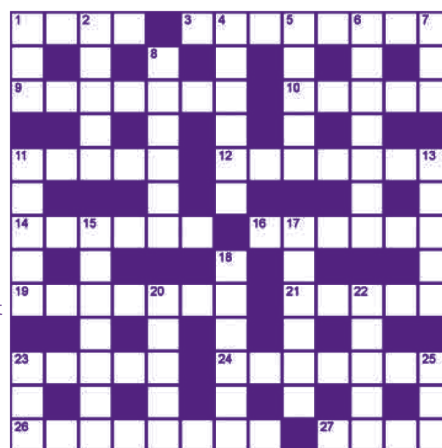
The seven asterisked clues have no definition and are clued in a cryptic way. The answers to these seven clues all share the same position.

#### Across

- \* Bovine animal – that's about right! (4)
- \* Looking silly skate and row (8)
- Multiplied by three (7)
- Warn or arouse to a danger (5)
- Spiro, president of America (5)
- Substances turning litmus blue (7)
- Famous site of executions in Middlesex (6)
- \* Pointed remark to the Queen (6)
- Large fast warship (7)
- Green citrus fruits (5)
- Hotel for motorists (5)
- \* Rip nest out (7)
- Plinth (8)
- Bloody (4)

#### Down

- Feline animal (3)
- Large sea (5)
- Make loveable (6)
- \* Western means of torture (5)
- In this, one is pregnant (3, 4)
- Dec's presenting partner (3)
- \* Left in a shady recess in the garden (6)
- Member of an ancient Mexican tribe (5)
- Rides the waves with a board (5)
- \* Best duo being broadcast (7)
- In a state of having a kip (6)
- Italian brandy made from grapes (6)
- Pieces of music for one person (5)
- Absorbent material attached to a handle (3)
- Lacking self confidence (3)



sorry this competition is not open to Stewards