

UNISON Matters

Aberdeenshire

December 2012

Raising our Banner for a Future that works on 20th October

Many were up at the crack of dawn to get the free bus from Inverurie to Glasgow. Others made their own way to join the demo.

All were there to call for an end to austerity and public service cuts – which are making the economic situation worse and are hitting all except the 1% of the richest – and for a future where there is social justice and greater equality for all.

Mike Kirby, UNISON's Scottish Secretary told the Rally in Glasgow Green,

The wider public sector contributes more than the banks to the British economy.

"Trade union members, their families and friends, know that the drastic spending cuts and attacks on benefits are hurting them and are hurting the most vulnerable people in society.

"Ordinary people are being asked to pay too high a price. Key public services are under attack and politicians need to be told that "enough is enough".

He warned that even on their own terms government policies are failing.

"Government borrowing has had to increase to £11.8 billion more than the previous government's. Even the economists who endorsed Osborne in 2010 are abandoning him," said Mike.

"Unless policies change the economy will not grow, incomes will not rise, and there will be almost no new jobs. If the government keeps

on with big spending cuts and austerity we face a lost decade."

Mike went on, "The cuts we are facing across the UK are not about money but about politics. A politics that hates public services and loves to profit from privatisation.

"A politics that sees a workforce engaged in caring and educating not as an achievement to be celebrated but as a problem to be tackled.

"But we shout loudly. Why should the jobs and services go

if the need still exists?" said Mike.

"Seventy years of social progress will be lost in a decade of destruction.

Police staff say what the result of cuts will be for them



Austerity and low pay destroys not just people's lives but whole communities and national economies.

Sonia Wilson enjoying the day



Mike Kirby Scottish Secretary, you can read his speech on www.aberdeenshireunison.com. Where you can also see the interview with Kate Ramsden on STV News.



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The books listed here make the case that **Casino Capitalism is not the best foundation for a nation's economy.**

"23 Things They Don't Tell You About Capitalism" (library reference 330.122 or your local book store) by Ha Joon Chiang from Cambridge University England draws upon his expertise in International Economic History and uses 18th to 21st century examples of economic problems and solutions to expose the "markets know best" lie. He then proposes tools like government investment in infrastructure, fair pay policies and better regulations to restore economically and socially battered countries like our own.

"Treasure Islands: Tax Havens and The Men Who Stole The World" (library reference 336.206 or your local book store) by Nicholas Shaxton reads part detective story, part undercover journalism. This book shows you how the tax havens (many British Dependencies) account for 85% of world's international banking such as currency speculation and describes how 40% of world trade goes through the tax havens to avoid taxes in the home country. This book provides the evidence for the expression "only the poor pay taxes," and exposes the institutional inequality that requires a stronger civil society including trade unions to create a fairer country.

"The Price of 'Inequality'" Joseph Stiglitz (library reference

305.509 or your local book store) has been written by the economist who took on the IMF and predicted the 2008 Global Financial Crash and the follow up Euro crisis. Stiglitz shows and why the so called "Free Market" is institutionally unfair and unjust creating nations where the 1% super rich own the majority of the wealth and the remaining 99% of the people struggle to cope. Stiglitz also advocates government investment in infrastructure, fair pay policies and better regulations to restore a fairer and more economically robust society.

So be part of the dialogue for change read this book and arm yourself to argue with free market fundamentalists in whatever guise they come in.

YOUR Branch shapes national policy at conference



This year's conference was all about equality and social justice and the devastating impact of the Condem's policies on the poor, the disabled, the elderly and our children whilst the rich get ever richer. It was about communicating, organising, campaigning to get our message to our members, prospective members and to the public at large. There is an alternative!

Once again our Branch played an active role at conference. Kate Ramsden, Branch Chair moved our motion calling for an end to Child Poverty.

Child poverty: An injustice we have to fight

As a result of Aberdeenshire's motion, UNISON will lobby and work with a range of

organisations to campaign for an end to child poverty by 2020.

Moving the motion, Kate Ramsden told delegates that almost 4 million children live in poverty in the UK – one of the highest rates in the industrialised world.

She told delegates that rather than end child poverty, by 2020 one quarter of our children will be growing up in poverty. UNICEF says this is a direct result of this government's cuts, which hurt the poor, but not the rich.

"These could be our children," she added. "If not our children, then almost certainly the children of our workmates and friends."

It is up to the union, she said, to force the government to comply with its statutory duties.



Dave Prentice smashing the pay freeze

Local Government Conference

Campaign for Fair Pay and a Living Wage

Scotland speakers, including Branch Chair, Kate Ramsden, were to the fore as Local Government Conference



threw its weight behind a wide ranging strategy to challenge pay restraint, reject regional pay and campaign for fair pay and a living wage of at least £7.20 an hour.

Enough is enough - the battle for decent pensions for women

Susan Kennedy, Branch Equalities Officer spoke out as



Conference set out a range of measures to encourage women to join or to stay in the Local Government Pensions Scheme and to become actively involved in campaigning for improved pensions for women.

Justice for School Support Staff

Susan Kennedy gave a Scottish perspective to the

debate as Local Government Conference supported a range of measures to defend school support staff, who have faced a range of attacks on their jobs, pay, terms and conditions and job security across the four nations.

Stop cuts to Further Education

Local Government Conference supported a Scottish motion moved by Regional Delegate Inez Teece, and condemned cuts to the Further Education sector throughout the UK. It strongly supported campaigns in Scotland and Cymru Wales, and in the rest of the country for improved funding, no job loss and to stop and reverse privatisation.



Susan is elected to UNISON's national Local Government ruling body

Assistant Branch Secretary, Susan Kennedy has been elected to the Local Government Service Group Executive, the ruling body for the union's local government members. Susan is the first branch member to serve on a UNISON national committee.

No other member of the Aberdeenshire Branch has held such a position since

ex-branch secretary, Bob Revie, was a members of the ruling body of NALGO in the 1980s and 90s.

Susan, who has been active in the Branch at a number of different levels and currently holds a seat on the Scottish Local Government Committee said, "Earlier this year I was asked to consider nomination to the Low Paid Women's Seat for the LGSGE by some of the other Scottish Unison Branches.

"I viewed this opportunity not only as a great chance to represent our members nationally, but to be able to take forward the issues being faced by our low paid members in the branch and across the UK.

"With the backing of the Branch, alongside nominations from other Scottish branches, it was announced that I had been elected at the Local Government Conference in June."

UNISON Aberdeenshire Branch
Local Government Meeting

Branch consults on Scottish pay offer

Your delegates to the Scottish Local Government Conference on Friday 30th Nov agreed that our negotiators should liaise with the other trade unions to seek improvements to the employers' offer of 1% which still represents a pay cut for many, plus a Living Wage of £7.50 per hour.

Steve Gray, Assistant Branch Secretary and Branch Pay Champion said, "This national pay offer comes on the back of the Aberdeenshire Council Living Wage pledge made last month but still not delivered upon. UNISON welcomes the commitment to a Local Government Living Wage of £7.50, which will help many of our lowest paid members and which is set at a higher level than the current £7.20 or even the proposed increase to £7.45 in April 2013.

"A 1% pay offer breaks the current pay freeze and we welcome that. However, when you think that the pay freeze has translated into a pay cut of 13% for

most workers you can see that 1% goes nowhere to addressing that. In work poverty is a growing problem across Scotland and the rest of the UK. Local Government workers need and deserve better pay which can be used to support local shops and services.

"The national pay offer will be consulted upon with our members, however UNISON is waiting to see if there are any conditions attached such as changes to terms and conditions. In the meantime UNISON Aberdeenshire calls upon Aberdeenshire Council to deliver the Living Wage agreed in November.

Branch delegates - Steve Gray, Inez Teece, Kate Ramsden, Susan Kennedy and Morag Lawrence will attend the Recall Conference.

Kate Ramsden said, "In the meantime we will be asking all our stewards to speak to members about their views on the offer so that we can report these back to the Conference."

If you are a member and have views on this pay offer, please email them to aberdeenshire@unison.co.uk



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Congratulations

Mrs Caroline Hunter you were last time's competition winner and a cheque for £25 is on its way.

Terms & Conditions

Aberdeenshire Council again issued details of the proposed Terms and Conditions to all staff in September. The other 2 Unions, GMB and Unite balloted their members once again on whether they accepted or not. Although the result was close both rejected the changes.

As you know, UNISON balloted its members in May of this year. Although some staff were still losing out, our members recognised that the new proposals were a big improvement on the council's original plans. Our members delivered a yes vote to help protect jobs, to increase mileage and to ensure the lowest paid received the Scottish Living Wage.

At present we are unsure how the Council intends to proceed with the Terms and Conditions changes, we will inform all of our members as soon as possible.

However, UNISON has asked that the Scottish Living Wage be implemented independently of the Terms and Conditions changes and we await the outcome of this request. We want the 1500 lowest paid staff in the council to get the help that a Living Wage would give them in these challenging financial

times. Giving them a wage of £7.20 per hour will help these workers and their families, and since they will spend their money in their local shops and businesses, it will also help the local economy.

Inez Teece, Branch Secretary said, "Times have been and are difficult for everybody trying to deliver the best service they can under difficult circumstances. Please be assured UNISON is doing its utmost to protect staff and to ensure Council services are provided by Council staff that are rewarded well for the work they do."

