

# UNISON Matters

Aberdeenshire

## THE REAL BIG SOCIETY STARTS TO FIGHT BACK

Branch members joined thousands of Scotland UNISON members as they descended on London on Saturday 26th March from across the country to join hundreds of thousands in the biggest trade union demonstration in a generation.

**Many,** including members of our branch, travelled overnight on buses, arriving in London early to join the march. The branch banner joined banners from across Scotland and the UK and became part of a ribbon of green and purple that snaked past the iconic sights of London to make one simple point - there is an alternative to cuts and to the smashing of our welfare state.

This was a well organised and good humoured march with trade union members joined by parents, children, students and older people, all with one message for this UK government - leave our services alone.

At the Rally in Hyde Park, we heard speaker after speaker calling for a government rethink. Speakers from churches and voluntary groups joined trade union leaders, the TUC and Ed Miliband, leader of the Labour Party to express their deep concern and anger about the impact of the cuts on ordinary people, on the poor and vulnerable and on the economy. And to highlight the injustice and immorality of bankers getting £7 bn in bonuses whilst 4,000,000 children live in poverty and more and more families are struggling to make ends meet.

Public sector unions and unions whose members work in the private sector were of one voice because despite this government's rhetoric, cuts to public services will hit the private sector every bit as much as they will the public sector.

It was a wonderful event. It was truly uplifting to see so many people come together to challenge the policies of this government and to tell them that "There is a better way!"

Read our quotes and check out the photos [www.aberdeenshireunison.com](http://www.aberdeenshireunison.com).

Your Branch also gets involved with the local issues such as negotiations to reduce the number of closures of Playgroups.



The branch has launched a campaign to convince our Councillors not to cut the number of learning support staff, as part of the budget cuts. Go to [www.aberdeenshireunison.com](http://www.aberdeenshireunison.com) and click on the link to find out more and sign our petition.



UNISON launches safety guide 'Keeping Safe in the Workplace' written by Kate Ramsden for social workers.

It is the responsibility of all of us to report any dangers we see in the workplace, and we should remember that there are many issues that may effect our health & safety such as stress or abuse from service users. Your branch has 2 Health & Safety officers they are Trisha Morrison & Richard Lawrence, and they can be contacted via the UNISON Resource Centre on 01224 620624 please let them know of any issues.



The ability of the union to negotiate agreements and procedures that will protect members and ensure fair treatment is dependant on strong union membership.

More information on anything in the newsletter is available on the web site: [www.aberdeenshireunison.com](http://www.aberdeenshireunison.com)



# AGM 2011



**This year's AGM was a sombre affair as members gathered to consider the challenges that face us in the coming year from this Tory Lib Dem Government's ideological attack on public services and the council's budget cuts.**

Inez Teece, presenting the Annual Report as Acting Branch Secretary, told the meeting that already we were beginning to see the impact of the budget cuts as vacancies were frozen and temporary contracts brought to an end, with the knock on effects on other staff.

"We know that the council are in a difficult position," she said, "But we will continue to press them to avoid

compulsory redundancies and we will be monitoring the effects of the cuts on our members and our services."

She called on all members to help the branch by telling us when services are cut and the effects of staff reductions on their ability to do their job.

She warned that the council will be coming after our terms and conditions next. The branch will be doing its best to maintain these as far as possible and will be consulting with members on any proposed changes.

The AGM pledged to continue to fight at both local and national level against the Tory LibDem government's cuts to public services. It approved a range of motions that provide for a two-pronged strategy of negotiation alongside campaigning.



## Protect Our Pensions

**The long awaited report by Lord Hutton on public service pension schemes was published this morning. As expected he is recommending long term structural reform of the pension schemes that millions of public sector workers depend on.**

**The report is 215 pages long with 27 recommendations it will take a little more time to digest all of the key issues. However the government can ignore all it if it wants to. More likely they will cherry pick the changes they want to make.**

All of the issues around pensions will be taken forward by Dave Prentis in a series of negotiations with the government that will run up until June. Nothing will change, except pensioners benefit increases, until the negotiations with government have finished.



General Secretary, Dave Prentis, has summed up UNISON's reaction:

"Whatever the Hutton report may say about

fairness, the Government will use it as a Trojan horse to raid the pensions of hard working public sector workers. Pensions that our members have paid into year in year out and which are fair and affordable.

***In fact, even before the report today, the Government announced they were increasing employee contributions by 50%. There is a lot of nonsense talked about public sector pensions – they are not gold plated. The average is very low - in local government, the average is just***

***over £4,000, falling to £2,800 for women.***

Asking workers to pay more and work longer for less is simply not an option. We want to talk to the Government about their response as a matter of urgency. If we cannot make any progress in our talks with the government to get it to see sense, we will have to take very hard decisions on moving to an industrial action ballot.

If you just do one thing, pass on this message to your work colleagues. If they are not in the union, ask them to join, so we have a stronger voice. You could get involved in activity within the branch or become a pension champion or write to your local MP to protest.







Ian McDonald, Branch Treasurer and pensions contact said, "The Chancellor's decision to use Lord Hutton's report as cover for 50% contribution increases has fatally undermined his recommendations.

"The £375m raised from Scottish public service workers will go straight into the Treasury - not the pension schemes. This is little more than a tax on scheme members and will result in further opt-outs from the scheme, placing new burdens on welfare benefits."

He added, "This is an attack on one of our most important terms and conditions. It is vital that we are well organised at all levels. We need to build our strength to defend our pensions from branch level up, and ensure all our members understand the impact of changes to our pension schemes."

## UNISON members face a number of attacks on Scottish pension schemes including:

- Challenge to the way pension increases are calculated – RPI to CPI that will cut average pensions by at least 15%
- Retirement age increases that don't reflect the demands on many public service workers
- Abolishing pension protection for workers who are forced to transfer to another employer outside the public sector
- A complete overhaul of the state pension that will impact on public service schemes
- Changes to fund governance and cost sharing provisions with employers

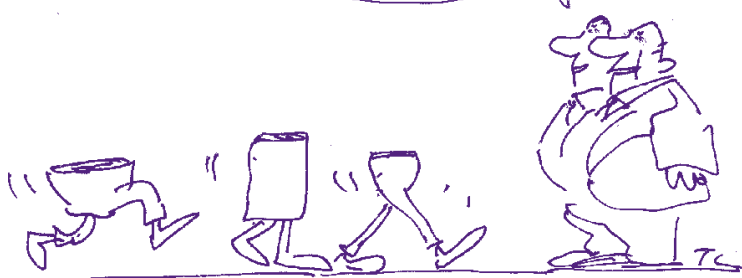
Important though these issues are the key issue is the proposed 3.2% increase in member contributions. THAT'S A 50% INCREASE. This is simply a tax to pay back government debts that were raised to bail out the banks. None of the money will go into the schemes and it threatens the whole system – if the members opt-out. Overall the pension changes mean:

## PAY MORE – WORK LONGER – GET LESS

### UNISON'S Current Position

UNISON will need to see the full details of the proposal before we can establish who we have a trade dispute with and the nature of it. It would be at this stage, if discussions break down that UNISON will consider taking

NOT HAVING A UNION HAS ALLOWED US TO HAVE OUR WORKFORCE!



## Pay Rises of 32% for top Bosses

Chief executives of FTSE 100 companies earn an average of £3.7m – **or 145 times the average wage**. By 2020 they are expected to be paid 214 times more than the average, according to the High pay Commission.

Are they in this financial crisis with the rest of us? Could it be they don't use the public services that the rest of us need? As our government is in the same financial bracket this seems to explain their policy of making the rest of us carry the burden!

steps towards lawful industrial action to protect our members' pensions.

To comply with legislation we have to demonstrate an accurate membership database and conduct a full ballot of members affected.

**It is essential that members inform us of any changes e.g. job title, workplace, home address – CONTACT 01224 620624 if there is a change to your circumstances.**

Up to date information on pensions can be found at

<http://www.unison-scotland.org.uk/pensions>

**"The price of this financial crisis is being borne by people who absolutely did not cause it, now is the period when the cost is being paid, I'm surprised that the degree of public anger has not been greater than it has."**

Quote from Bank of England Governor Mervyn King... the man in charge of money in our economy!

## More from the AGM



Julie Neale, steward, said, "It is the greed of the rich and the bankers that has forced the shortfall for Aberdeenshire Council but it is us who will pay."

She called on members to be vigilant and to report any changes within our workplace and service provision to the branch. "We have difficult times ahead but together we can make a difference," said Julie.

Steve Gray, steward, added that if the banks and the rich paid their fair share there would be no need to cut services to the most vulnerable.



"We hear in the papers every day about how the richest businesses avoid paying their corporation and other taxes and this needs to stop," he said.

Trisha told the meeting that to properly challenge the cuts the branch needs to do more to involve our members - not just at AGMs but all the year round. "We need to make sure that our members recognise that they are being sold a lie - a great big one - when they are told "we are all in this together" and the cuts are necessary," said Trisha.



"We need to involve all of you and all our members who are not here tonight in campaigning against these cuts to our services. And we need to increase our membership, because as we have already heard, the more members, the more clout we have with the council."

### Tell the Branch how the cuts are affecting your services.

- The sooner the branch know of changes in your service the better the position we are in to start negotiating to lessen the impact and make sure that you & your colleagues are treated fairly. You can download a monitoring form from the web site: [www.aberdeenshireunison.com](http://www.aberdeenshireunison.com) or you can speak to your local Steward or phone: 01224 620624 and ask to speak to a Aberdeenshire Branch Officer.

More  
Members

More  
Clout

Join us today:

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



### Congratulations

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



Photo: Jess Hurd / reprodigital.co.uk

### What is he thinking?

Best printable quote will be printed next time and author will receive £25 cheque.

Thought: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

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

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