

UNISON Matters

Aberdeenshire

March Against the Cuts

Aberdeenshire branch officers and activists joined thousands of public service worker and service users who took to the streets of Glasgow on 10 April in the highest profile action against public service cuts yet delivered by UNISON.

The March and Rally was part of UNISON's Public Works campaign, the Scottish arm of the union's million voices campaign aimed at changing the way our economy is run, and ensuring that those who deliver and those who depend on public services aren't sacrificed because of the greed of bankers.

UNISON UK President, Gerry Gallagher brought greetings to the marchers from a similar rally in London. He said:

"In Glasgow and in London today our key message is that public services should not suffer because of the bank bailout. Our members didn't cause the crash, and neither did the people we



serve every day in communities across Scotland.

"Cuts will damage recovery from recession; Cuts will hit public services we all depend on; Cuts will threaten the wellbeing of our members and their families. You all have your own story to tell. And tell them you should. Because it is the combined voice of public service workers and service users that need to be heard in corridors of power."

UNISON Scotland's Public Works campaign will now target the election, with hustings at Scottish and local level, and by questioning political parties and individual candidates.



I've added mine!

Members who came along to the Public Works stalls in Gordon House and Woodhill House add their voice to defend public services.



Branch pledge to defend our public services but we must all get involved.

A well attended Branch AGM on Wed 17th Feb 2010 pledged to defend public services and to campaign to stop the cuts.

Kate Ramsden, Branch Chair told the meeting that public service workers and the users of public services should not have to pay for the recession.

"We did not cause the financial crisis, it wasn't us that gambled millions, so why should we have to pay for the bail out of the banks?" she asked, slamming the media and politicians for their attacks on public service workers.

"What they forget though, is that public services and public service workers have a crucial role in stimulating economic growth and are key to the economic well-being of our communities," she added.

Kate welcomed UNISON's "million voices campaign" and the Scottish "Public Works" and "Stop the Cuts" campaigns but called on branch members to do their bit to speak up for public services.

"After all, as both providers and users of services, who knows their value better than us?" she challenged.

Supporting with reservations, member Scott Sutherland called for a more hard hitting campaign, joining with other trade unions and community groups with action up to and including industrial action. However, other members spoke up for the campaigning approach called for in the motion, and urged members to become more actively involved in the campaign. "We can't leave it to the Branch Officers," Moira Deans told the AGM. "We all need to do our bit."

Pointing out that the Public Works/Stop the Cuts campaign is all about joining up with community groups and others who would be affected by cuts to public services, Kate called for united support for the campaign, and the AGM approved this overwhelmingly.

Assistant Branch Secretary, Inez Teece updated members on the work of the branch over the year. She told the AGM that Single Status Appeals are now in the final stages and are due to be concluded very soon.

We need good trade union membership

Inez added that modernisation reviews have continued to take up time and energy for both activists and members and many of these are still ongoing. Member Lesley Ogston told the meeting of her concerns around the Care Homes review and called for members to get involved if their services are facing review and to try and ensure a good trade union membership to have as much influence as possible on the outcome.

Inez warned the AGM that the big challenge for the coming year is the budget. "Although our Branch is luckier than many across the country who are already facing major cuts in jobs and services, our council has warned that significant cuts are likely in next year's budget if they are to balance the books," she said. "We will be working to minimize the impact for our members and campaigning to defend our public service jobs, pensions and services."



Pressure on voluntary sector

Inez added that our members in the voluntary sector have continued to face attacks on their terms and conditions. "We recognise that there have been many problems for the sector, especially in relation to the tendering process which has the effect of driving down standards, pay and conditions," said Inez. "Unfortunately when council budgets are under pressure it is often the voluntary sector who bears the brunt, with funding cut to the bone."

The branch has continued to be involved in negotiations with both Cornerstone and Inspire and is aware of the difficulties facing these organizations and our members.

For a more detailed report go to <http://www.aberdeenshireunison.com/agm/agm10.html>



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Supporting stewards and recruiting new members

At a time when all our members are faced with a range of challenges, including the grim prospect of cuts to our jobs and the services we provide, the branch will focus on recruiting new members, supporting our stewards and contacts and campaigning vigorously against public service cuts.



Bill, Les, Steve and Anne work under the supervision of Betty Lyon, Area Organiser

This was the conclusion of a Branch Development event held in March, and well attended by branch officers and stewards. Activists recognised that there are challenging times ahead and the more members we have, the better able we are to protect jobs and services.

10 Good Reasons

The activists who came along identified 10 good reasons to join the Aberdeenshire Branch of UNISON, ranging from all the conditions of services we have negotiated for members such as parental leave; to our legal and welfare services and our up to date communication with

members. This will be the basis for a new branch specific recruitment postcard.

And we looked at how best we can support our members who are faced with redundancy and TUPE transfer - already an issue for many of our colleagues in other councils and in the Voluntary Sector and something we may yet face in greater numbers in Aberdeenshire.

"This highlights the need to strengthen our steward and contact network and to increase our membership," said Bob Revie, Branch Secretary. "However, it is very good to see the influx of new stewards this year."

The branch made plans to take forward the "Stop the Cuts: Public Works Campaign" at a local level. Kate Ramsden, Branch Chair said, "This is the critical issue for all our members and we need to find ways of getting our members' support, not just for themselves, but also for the people who use our services."



Shona, Susan & Naida also working hard

Pay offer ties staff to pay freeze next year as part of 3 year deal

UNISON, along with the GMB and Unite unions, is calling on members to reject CoSLA's three year pay offer of 1% this year, a pay freeze next year and 0.5% in the third year.

UNISON will conduct a full postal ballot of all members in local government in Scotland between 21st June and 29th July. At the Branch Committee in May, the branch agreed to campaign for a rejection of the offer as it stands.

Dougie Black, UNISON Regional Organiser, and Lead Negotiator said,

"At a time when inflation is rising above 4%, to offer 1% to members delivering essential front-line services is completely unacceptable. Many of these members are low paid, yet the employers rejected a call from the trade unions to redistribute the offer in favour of the low paid."

Bob Revie added, "The offer falls far short of the joint union claim for a one-year rise of 3% or £600 (whichever is the greater) with a significant underpinning for the low paid - including a claim for all workers to be paid a living wage of at least £7.00 per hour.

"Despite many authorities, including our own, making provision for pay for council staff this year they now appear to want to backtrack on this and leave our members high and dry."

For more information go to <http://www.aberdeenshireunison.com/pay/pay2010.html>



UNISON Welfare was founded at the inauguration of our trade

union in 1993. However its history dates back to 1910 when it was first established as the National Benevolent and Orphans Fund by Jabez Darricote of the Bolton Guild.



Mr. JABEZ DARRICOTE.

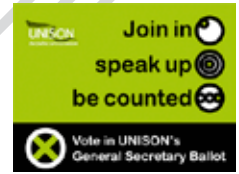
It is still providing support exclusively for UNISON members and dependants at times of special need. There is also a free and confidential debt advice referral scheme.

Branch backs Dave for General Secretary

The Branch Committee has agreed to nominate Dave Prentis for General Secretary of the union.

Bob Revie, Branch Secretary said, "For the past 9 years, UNISON has been a strong and effective union under Dave's leadership, and we want that to continue."

The General Secretary is elected in a postal ballot of all members. Ballot papers will be sent out to all members the week of 17th May. There are three candidates and members are urged to vote in the election.



A life for freedom in South Africa

I was privileged to attend the Glasgow launch of Denis

Goldberg's book, "The Mission - a life for freedom in South Africa"

Denis was convicted in 1964 at the same trial as Nelson Mandela and spent 22 years in a South African prison for fighting apartheid.

He is an inspirational and charismatic man, convinced of the justice of his cause and a key figure in bringing down the evil that was apartheid.

Of his book, he says, "I hope you will come to know why I was so deeply

involved in the struggle to put an end to apartheid and why I am so engaged in community work where I now live back in my home town in South Africa."

Denis knows that in South Africa there is still a way to go and he continues to work within his community, "to try and realise in practice the vision we had that our children shall not be hungry, shall be well-cared for, go to school, have jobs to go to and to be able to laugh a little."

I hope that as a branch we will support him in that vision as much as we can!

For more information go to:

New stewards attend training at UNISON's Training and Resources Centre in Alford Place



Steve Gray, Julie Neale, Carol Munro and Dot Gannon are now qualified to help you with any workplace issues. But the

above mentioned need not worry as there will always be help, support and encouragement available from the centre staff, the Branch Officers and other more experienced Stewards.

<http://www.aberdeenshireunison.com/international/denisgoldberg.html>

Kate Ramsden, Branch Chair

Competition

winner will receive £25 cheque.

General Election Wordsearch

candidates	hustings	pollingstations
canvassing	leaflets	votes
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Cut out and send in to UNISON Freepost (AB048), 7 Alford Place, Aberdeen.