

UNISON Matters

Aberdeenshire

November 2017

CUT THE CAP EDINBURGH MARCH & RALLY

Aberdeenshire Branch members travelled to Edinburgh to join 5,000 public service workers to march through Edinburgh on 7 October as part of UNISON's Pay Up Now! Campaign, which is keeping pressure on both the Scottish and Westminster governments to end the pay cap and give all workers a decent pay rise.



Peter Fraser and Talhiya Yahya taking charge of the branch banner



Steve Grey pictured above said

"What a brilliant day. I was proud to join so many members from the North East and across Scotland to give a clear message that we need decent pay"

Our branch has had hundreds of postcards signed and sent off to relevant MSP's to try and add to that pressure.

Public service employees have seen their pay held back right across the UK for almost a decade. Public sector pay rose by just 4.4% between 2010 and

2016, while the cost of living rose by 22%.

Any pay rises need to be properly funded so they don't mean deeper cuts to jobs and services elsewhere. There must be no selective lifting of the cap for some public servants but not for others. All public sector employees, no matter where they work or what job they do, need and deserve a decent pay rise now.

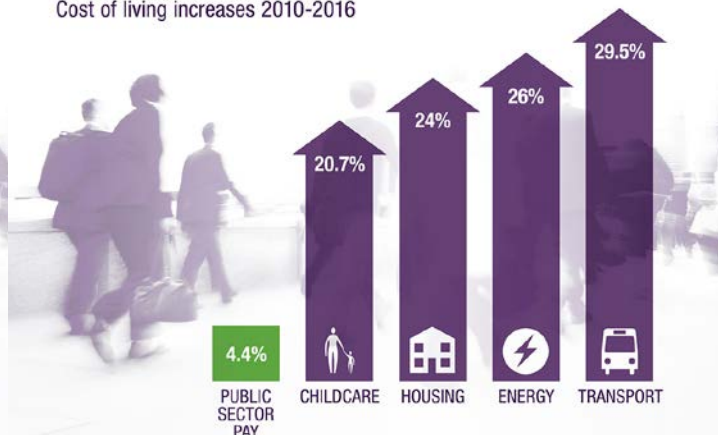
Each year you lose more

Cuts in the value of the average public sector annual pay



Pay down – prices up

Cost of living increases 2010-2016





CONFERENCE 2017 18TH – 23RD JUNE

Once again UNISON's National Local Government and Delegate Conferences took place in Brighton. This year the aftermath of the Grenfell Tower fire, threw into focus the reality of the divide in UK between obscene wealth and inexcusable poverty.

The need to address that was reflected in policies we set on breaking the pay cap, on campaigning for decent public services, on housing policies and on a decent living wage that is actually enough to live on.

Equalities too was high on the agenda. One of the most moving bits of any Conference is when people who are directly affected have a personal story to tell. There was much of that in this debate. The pain of the stories was matched only by the courage of the delegates telling them.

But there was optimism too. The Labour Manifesto, so heavily built on the policies that UNISON has been calling for since 2010 and before, gave a more upbeat feel to this conference. Jeremy Corbyn's speech as he addressed the conference was inspiring for all.

"The politics of hope will always overcome the politics of fear," said Jeremy to cheers.



Branch Officers Susan Kennedy, representing the Local Government Service Group Executive; and Kathleen Kennedy, representing National Disabled Members were both at the podium. They both stressed the branches role in tackling stress and mental health issues.

ALTERNATIVE PENSION FUND INVESTMENTS ARE NEEDED

Unison Scotland, in the form of Stephen Smellie, won Conference backing for a campaign for divestment of fossil fuel extraction from our pension funds for the sake of our planet while also warning that fossil fuels pose a risk to our pension fund investments.

Stephen said: "We need a successful investment strategy to pay our pensions. However we do have a wider interest – good pensions might not help if the planet is frying. Our kids and grandkids won't thank us if they have to deal with more extreme weather conditions, poisoned air, and a shortage of drinking water leading to millions of deaths, and a refugee crisis that will make

the last few years seem like nothing." Stephen explained that when governments do actually honour existing agreements to keep the temperature rise below 2°C, the value of fossil fuel reserves and share prices of BP, Shell and other such companies will drop, and so will the value of our pension fund investments.

"We need to propose alternative strategies that will be more socially useful and less environmentally damaging at the same time as making the necessary return on investments. It could be renewable energy, social housing or public transport."

This year's UNISON Scotland pensions seminar was attended by pension champions from across the

country. The seminar had presentations on the work of scheme advisory boards and on the recent FCA report on investment cost transparency. You can get more information and link to the FCA report at this web address: www.unison-scotland.org/library/Scot-Pensions-bulletin-53-Oct-2017.pdf

I have attended training and the seminar above to prepare for my new role on the pension board. *"I will have some big shoes to fill in more ways than one after the sad loss of James our previous Pension Champion and board member."*



Morag Lawrence

THE STORY OF ONE WASPI WOMAN

I am 61 and a half years old and thought all those years ago when paying my NI contributions that I would get my State Pension at **60!** Well I was shocked to find out by letter from DWP in November 2013 that I would not get my State Pension until 2022 when I am **66!!**

The implications of this rise in the State Pension age has impacted on my life to the tune of a loss of approximately **£42,000** which is how much I would have got from the age of 60 to 66. If there are women in similar situations please join our local WASPI group on [Facebook](#) **AberWaspis-state pension changes action group** or apply to main WASPI website

at www.waspi.co.uk

We would welcome on board male or female members who would like to become a part of our group against this injustice.



I think we all might agree with Shirley who sent in these details that to lose 6 years worth of pension payments with only 3 years warning is really very unfair and that these women deserve our support so even if you do not stand to lose as much please get in touch with your local group and help with the fight to get a fairer transition to the new state pension age.

Shirley Mclachlan

MASSIVE THEATRE DISCOUNTS – FOR MEMBERS!

If you are planning a trip to London take a look at these discounted theater tickets

We are currently running an offer with a theatre ticket website to offer members an exclusive extra 10% off already

heavily discounted theatre tickets in the West End and across the UK. <https://unison.entstix.com/offers>

LEISURE AND CULTURE TRUST WORKING GROUP UPDATE

UNISON continues to be involved in all working groups and project board with regards to the proposal to move sport, culture and leisure out to a trust.



UNISON has met with members during a series of meetings during September and the feedback we have received continues to form our negotiating strategy.

We have been seeking:

- trade union recognition in the new trust
- a non voting trade union advisor to the board
- a sign-up of the trust to the SJC (Scottish Joint Council)
- terms and conditions to maintain parity with colleagues remaining within the Council.

So far, the Council have agreed to trade union recognition; the others we continue to discuss.

The one big issue that has affected many people's view on whether they would be happy to move to a trust or not is the Barclay Report. This is a report published late summer that indicated grounds for the removal of non domestic rates relief to trusts similar to the one being proposed.

If the Scottish Government were to action these recommendations, then the proposals for the trust are not likely to save money and could, in fact, cost the council more.

Obviously work continues to be ongoing with plans to put before full council in November.

The Scottish Government do not make their budget announcements and allocations until mid December.

It is clear that UNISON needs to continue our work to protect the best interests of our members and the vital health and wellbeing services they provide.

Inez Kirk

COURT VICTORIES FOR UNISON

UNISON legal victory sees employment tribunal fees scrapped



The branch is delighted to report that employment tribunal fees will be scrapped after UNISON won a landmark court victory against the government.

The Supreme Court – the UK’s highest court – has unanimously ruled that the government was acting unlawfully and unconstitutionally when it introduced the fees four years ago.

From today, anyone who has been treated illegally or unfairly at work will no longer have to

pay to take their employers to court – as a direct result of UNISON’s legal challenge.

The government will also have to refund more than £27m to the thousands of people charged for taking claims to tribunals since July 2013.

Anyone wanting to pursue a case against their employer has had to find as much as £1,200. This has been a huge expense for many low-paid employees, says UNISON.

Reacting to this decision, UNISON general secretary Dave Prentis said: *“The government is not above the law. But when ministers introduced fees they were disregarding laws many centuries old, and showing little concern for employees seeking justice following illegal treatment at work.”*

UNISON wins payout for unfairly dismissed staff

A group of workers who supported adults with addiction issues have won a court victory after a private company left them jobless, thanks to support from UNISON.

The seven members received £178,000 compensation after UNISON took Arch Initiatives to an employment tribunal when

the company refused to take on the staff, whose jobs were transferred from the Greater Manchester West NHS Foundation Trust, arguing that the jobs changed and TUPE regulations did not apply.

One of those who lost their jobs without even receiving redundancy pay was Denise Holcroft who said: *“There’s never a good time to be told you’re out of a job, but this was so stressful. I couldn’t pay my bills and had to take what work I could just to cover my mortgage.”*

Another court victory makes it much harder for employers to ignore staff when making major changes in the workplace.

The Court of Appeal ruling means that for the first time employers will be obliged to consult with unions around any workplace issues that affect their members. Until now, unions only had the right to be consulted where the law required this, for example in TUPE regulations

where employees transfer from one employer to another, and in redundancy cases.

The ruling means employers will also have to involve unions in issues such as those around working hours and holiday pay.

It will benefit thousands of employees whose rights at work are under threat and means that employers will face greater scrutiny over their treatment of staff.

UNISON: HERE WHEN YOU NEED US

Write to: UNISON Aberdeenshire, Grampian Resource Centre,
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