

Nursery nurses fight on through the summer

Busloads of nursery nurses from Edinburgh joined a national demonstration in Glasgow in June, marking the first phase of action for a pay and grading claim.

Now the fight goes on through the summer.

Barbara Foubister, Edinburgh UNISON Nursery Nurse steward said, "CoSLA have said the way forward is the job evaluation process. But at the same time they have asked unions to put the start date off until 2004. In Edinburgh it looks like some time never.

"It is just another attempt to fob off nursery nurses who have been waiting 15 years. We want at least an interim payment now".

National President Dave Anderson, in his

first official engagement as president, put it simply, "All they want is a fair day's pay for a fair day's work. That's not too much to ask".

Also there was UNISON Scottish Secretary, Matt Smith, underlining the level of national support.

Matt Smith said: "The first wave of action has demonstrated that the nursery nurses are dedicated, hard-working and conscientious professionals.

"But they will pursue their re-grading claim until they gain recognition for their professional status and secure fair pay".

"UNISON has been overwhelmed by the public support for nursery nurses. It's a shame COSLA is failing to recognise this and moving to end the dispute".



National President Dave Anderson (left) joins nursery nurses at the national demonstration

And Joe Di Paola, UNISON's Scottish Local Government Organiser, said

"We've had six weeks of very solid action. The nursery nurses are absolutely determined to win their claim."

There has been con-

fusion about Edinburgh's Social Work nursery nurses who are on a separate national agreement. But many came out to the demonstrations.

Nursery Nurses in ordinary nursery schools and classes are

only on £13,800 at the top of their grade.

They have been taking action since May for a deal to recognise their two-year training and the host of additional duties they have taken on. Their last review was 15 years ago.

Keep it quiet, but we won!

Members will have read of the tribunal judgement that our colleague, Gillian Walker, had been forced out of her job in Social Work through harassment by a manager.

Gillian was awarded a five figure compensation amount and has now found employment elsewhere.

Since winning Gillian's case we have settled claims against two other departments with members

awarded significant compensation.

Unfortunately we cannot give you details as part of the settlement agreement was a confidentiality clause. That basically means management accept they got it wrong but we are not to tell anyone.

Tribunals do not suit every case but where they do the Branch will not flinch from going down that path. But in the words of the council - let's keep that confidential!

Inside: Conference Special

- Job Evaluation - What happened to it? - p2
- Social Work: When will they wake up to the crisis? - p3
- Starting points for learning - p3
- National Conference Reports - pages 4-8
Edinburgh makes mark on Political Fund Debate, Fair Trade, Tuition Fees, Pensions and branch picks up magazine award.

Single Status crumbles as council dodges on deal

What's happened to the deal on job evaluation?

The deadline of 1st April 2004 for completion of the Single Status Job Evaluation exercise will not be met.

Members will remember the original target date was 1 April 2002 but this was extended at the request of the employers who had underestimated the scale of the exercise.

Despite UNISON calls for more resources to be committed to the exercise which underpins the whole Single Status Agreement, the authority has failed to make any progress apart from looking at a sample 41 posts across the authority.

Based on that sample it is estimated the wage-bill will increase by nearly £ 17.5 million.

The officials' reaction is not to accept this is proof they



John Ross

have been underpaying many jobs. No - the response is we cannot afford to implement the National Job Evaluation Scheme. Alternatively, implement it and accept 600 - 800 jobs going down the road.

A carrot has been dangled in the form of a proposed 35 hour week for all staff - if they accept personal salary protection will only last three years as opposed to the current provision which remains

in place until such times as a member leaves their job. It took all of a micro-second for the Branch Committee to reject that one.

"It appears Single Status is all about us giving away conditions and the employer reneging on their side of the bargain", said John Ross, Service Conditions Convenor.

Discussions are ongoing but Branch Officers will be raising this situation at the September meeting of the Scottish Local Government Sector Group.

Update domestic violence deal

Equalities Officer, Irene Stout, has called on the council to open talks on updating the policy on Domestic Violence.

The policy, agreed in the old District Council, was the first of its kind in Britain when it was introduced in 1994 and provided support mechanisms for staff who were victims of Domestic Violence.

Irene said, "After nearly 10 years it is time we updated the agreement to ensure it applies to all staff. It is ridiculous that it only applies to staff who were previously employed by the District Council."



Irene Stout

Nursery nurse leaves - but for a good reason!

Julia Heggie has resigned as a nursery nurse at Murrayburn primary - not because of the action, but because her baby Dylan Harrison Heggie was born on 10 May 2003.

Julia's partner is Chris Heggie, one time very active steward in both NALGO and UNISON. Best wishes to you all for the future.

'I was lucky to have the union on my side'

The DSO twice stopped my wages after I was off sick. The first time for three weeks the second time for three months.

I am writing an account of what happened to me in the hope that it may help other people who have been in the same situation and not realised that there could be something they could do about it.

I am a cleaner at a high school. I have worked there for 23 years and have never been in any trouble during that time.

I had to go into Hospital for major surgery. I told my manager that I would be off for quite a while. I was told I must hand in a copy of the letter from the hospital. The day I went on sick leave which was 29 August, I handed in a copy of the letter. My operation was on 30 August 2001.

I did not know that I had to put in weekly sick lines. A

few days after I had handed in my backdated sick line from my doctor, I received a letter from the DSO saying that they didn't know where I was and they were looking at my position as cleaner. From the tone of the letter it seemed to me they were threatening to sack me.

All this when they knew I had just been in hospital having major surgery. I immediately phoned and was told that they would not accept my doctor's back dated sick line and they would not pay me for those six weeks.

It was then that I discovered that they had already stopped my wage for October. At this point I phoned George Lee, my union representative, and he agreed to take my case.

George got in touch with the DSO and a short time later my October wage arrived. I don't know why as my wages were

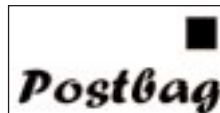
stopped again, this time for three months. I went back to work just before Christmas but I had to phone the wages office to get my wage in January.

It took from the middle of October, 01, until the middle of January 02 to get a meeting with management. This meeting was worse than the letter, I felt humiliated that they were very hard on me for breaking the rules.

It was May 02, before a Grievance Hearing could be held. But it decided against us..

The second Grievance Hearing was held in November with Personnel and senior management. This Hearing was held in a completely different manner from the previous two Hearings and the decision came down on our side.

It had taken over a year but at last we had won our case. I was very fortunate to have George working on my case,



Letters are very welcome for publication, see address on back page. As with any publication, the editor reserves the right to edit for length, legal and other reasons.

all a long he was very confident that we would eventually win. One thing was for sure there was never any time that we were going to give up.

I was very lucky to have the union on my side. I am sure if I had been on my own I would have got nowhere. So anyone who thinks this has happened to them, should get in touch with UNISON.

Anne Hunter

NOTE: While we won this one and it was obvious the member was ill, to avoid problems members should arrange to submit sick lines.

When will they wake up to the social work crisis?

UNISON is stepping up the fight to get the Council and CoSLA to wake up to the crisis in Social Work resources, recruitment and retention.

A Scottish UNISON working group is already looking at a series of claims after lobbying CoSLA and the Scottish Parliament, and has published a briefing "The Way Forward for Scotland's Social Work".

As a result of pressure from our branch CoSLA set up a working party to bring forward solutions.

Hopes were heightened when Edinburgh Councillor Kingsley Thomas was delegated to lead the working party.

We should not have set our expectations too high. As usual a CoSLA Working Group has brought forward a very wordy report highlighting the problems but, instead of proposing measures to resolve the crisis, they pass it to the Scottish Executive saying it is their fault for under-funding social services.

Edinburgh then stands still waiting for something to happen. Other councils are more proactive. Glasgow is giving extra increments to staff, West

Top starting salary: **£21045** (£25,000 Midlothian in some cases). Most have car user's allowance. Edinburgh starts £19,632 with no car users allowance.

Glasgow, North Lanarkshire, North Ayrshire, Argyll & Bute Higher grading - most 35 hrs
Edinburgh: Still thinking
Clackmannan: Higher grading
Midlothian: More for experienced staff. 35 hrs
West Lothian: Golden hellos
Renfrewshire, E. Renfrew, extended grade
Borders: Higher start point

Lothian has 'golden hellos', Midlothian is giving more money to attract experienced staff, Clackmannanshire is offering higher grades and South Lanarkshire is offering inducements, to name just a few.

To add insult to injury we now find a report was submitted to the Chief Executive's Management Team on 2 July without prior consultation with the unions.

The report drafted by the Director of Social Work appears to have proposed "measures to address the difficulties in the recruitment and retention of social workers and the concerns expressed in relation to the proposed amendments to the provisions relating

Council leaders 'note' report to tackle crisis while just about every other council acts

to car use" (quote from the minutes of the meeting).

What did the members of the Management Team decide?

"To note the measures.... and that the Directors of Corporate Services and Social Work discuss the proposed measures further."

Meanwhile the rest of the world is taking action to address the crisis.

Branch Officers have tried to be positive and have worked with management to bring forward measures.

"But despite that work, we have seen nothing positive coming from councillors or the Chief Executive's Management Team", said Lyn Williams, Branch service conditions officer.

"We have now lost patience and there is a range of action we need to consider. We have called branch officers and stewards together to work out a strategy to get things moving".

Meanwhile we have another example of Edinburgh being "the leading authority in Scotland" (Council Leader Donald Anderson's words, not ours!).

The Lamming Report makes it clear that the Chief Executive and councillors cannot duck their responsibilities if something goes wrong due to lack of staffing and resources.

It is time they woke up to the issues, especially when the problems are obvious to everybody - and staff at the sharp end are left wondering if they are living in the real world.

Full details of UNISON's briefing are at www.unison-scotland.org.uk/socialwork.

Local Partnership & Single Shared Assessment

Social Work and Housing Stewards from our branch continue to meet with reps from UNISON health branches and the RCN, and with the joint management side to progress the Local Partnership Agreement and Single Shared Assessment.

Members with concerns should contact Rab Brown in Housing or Kirsten Hey (number below).

OT direct referrals

OT steward Kirsten Hey will be attending meetings with the Mobility Centre at the Astley Ainslie Hospital to discuss the possibility of Social Work OTs being able to make direct referrals for wheelchair assessments, rather than all referrals having to go via GPs.

Any OTs who wish to discuss this with her should phone her before 29 July on 226 6731.

Starting points for learning

Ever felt that training and promotion are not for you because of the paperwork?

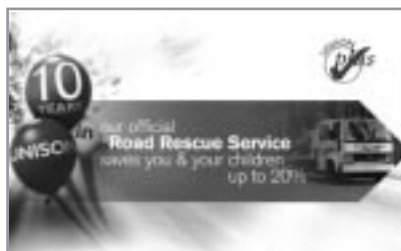
Do you feel that your **reading and writing** skills might let you down? **Well - this is for you!**

The Workers Educational Organisation (WEA) is already working with a couple of departments in the Council with staff who want to brush up their everyday reading and writing skills to help them move on in work and their personal lives too.

Course are **FREE** and in work time and planned around what **YOU** want to learn.

If you want to find out more, you can ring Vickie Hobson at the WEA and arrange to have a confidential chat with her - 225 7170. This is a great opportunity - UNISON thinks so too!

Don't just GET BY at work - take this chance and GET ON!



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10th Anniversary National Conference Reports 2003

What does Conference do?

UNISON's 10th anniversary National Conference in Brighton this June was dominated by the debate on our political funds (see pages 4-8).

Edinburgh played a major part in that debate and on Tuition Fees and Child Protection Legislation.

Our policy set last year brought the motion on ring fencing of local government funding and the pensions policy we set last year was built on in the first debate of the week.

National Conference is UNISON's supreme policy making body. Meeting once a year, it comprises around 2,000 delegates from every branch, from regions, service groups and self organised groups.

There are two days dedicated to Local Government alone, then four days when the whole union comes together.

Local Government Conference

With separate Scottish bargaining, this is becoming less and less relevant to us and we need to address the problem. Scottish delegates met the Standing Orders Committee to try to resolve this but were told it would need a rule change. Hopefully talks will get closer to solving the problem without the need for that.



The Edinburgh delegation votes

Eight days is a long time away, especially for people with child care responsibilities - even though there is an excellent creche. (The highlight of the week is the final day performance by the children).

We voted this year to bring forward plans to separate Local Government from the main Conference, partly because of the time commitment, but also to fit in better with Government funding announcements.

There were also early signs of a debate on holding Conference every two years. Edinburgh opposes this but would back a more streamlined conference.

Edinburgh delegation

Our delegation is bound by the policies members set at our AGM and the Branch Committee which has reps from all stewards committees.

The delegation goes over the agenda and makes recommendations to the Branch Committee.

This year we had motions on Pensions, Conference Locations and Burma with amendments on the Political Fund, Tuition Fees and Fair Trade.

We have nine delegates elected on the basis of fair representation and proportionality. This means we must have more women than men, a balance of white-collar and manual and a low paid woman on the delegation. We also give priority to a first-time delegate.

This year, the National Executive also insisted on a young member rep. We had opposed this because we did not believe there were obstacles to young members getting involved - especially since the young members officer post is vacant.

The delegation is elected by the Branch Committee. This year the team was John Stevenson, Irene Stout, Alison Gowrie, Amanda Kerr, Kevin Duguid, Wattie Weir, Dot Paterson and Rose Jackson. The young member place was vacant.

Through the week, the delegation played key roles in debates (see reports in this issue) and just as important, made links with other activists and branches around the country, listening, learning and promoting our policies.

Merit award for branch magazine

City of Edinburgh Branch has again won a prize for our branch magazine, though only a merit award this year.

Still, that makes an award almost every year since UNISON's inception, with the branch winning best website and best magazine in the past.

Two other prizes went to Scotland with Jane Aitchison (South Lanarkshire) winning a highly commended (ie second) in the magazine section.

Aberdeenshire's Kate Ramsden (an ex Edinburgh member) won runner-up for the best campaign in the national awards.

These important awards (and the cash prizes that come to the branches) were presented in front of the full National Conference for the first time this year.

Why was there a political fund review?

The review came from a Conference decision in 2001 to look at the workings and the effectiveness of the political fund.

The Branch consulted stewards and members via special bulletins and a series of articles in the branch magazine.

The AGM referred motions on the fund to the Branch Committee and, after a wide debate, we backed the unique choice UNISON members have in their political funds but also put forward an amendment to increase delegate structures in the affiliated fund and make it more 'member-led'.

Political funds explained

UNISON has a two-part political fund and members can choose to join one, both or none. Only members of the affiliated fund can make decisions about the fund. Both funds were set up by ballot of the membership when UNISON was formed and need to be confirmed by ballot again in 2005.

Affiliated Political Fund

This is by constitution affiliated to the Labour Party. *General union funds do not go to the Labour Party* - the only money used for campaigning in the Labour Party is the money paid by Affiliated Fund members.

General Political Fund

This is used for general political campaigning on issues like the campaign for the Scottish Parliament, UNISON Scotland's Manifesto for Public Services, against PFI and for a range of advertising initiatives.

A court ruled (under the old NALGO union) that we would not be able to campaign on 'political' issues without this fund.

This fund *cannot* be used for donations to political parties but is often used to sponsor research for MPs on issues of interest to UNISON.

UNISON keeps Labour Link and vows to reclaim party

Conference overwhelmingly backed a report on the review of UNISON's Labour Link, amended by Edinburgh Branch to create more accountability and democracy in the fund.

This means members will retain their unique choice to pay into the Labour affiliated fund, a non-affiliated political fund or no fund at all.

Edinburgh's John Stevenson urged Conference to back the report but also to support our plans for a more 'member-led' political fund in an amendment put together by Matthew Crichton, Branch APF Officer.

"We've had the review - we've got the result - now it's time to progress it forward to the next step", said John.

John looked back to UNISON's first Conference 10 years ago. "Trust seemed to be lost for a while - trust lost because sadly of some self interest, but also lost because of fear that long held political links were at risk of hijack.

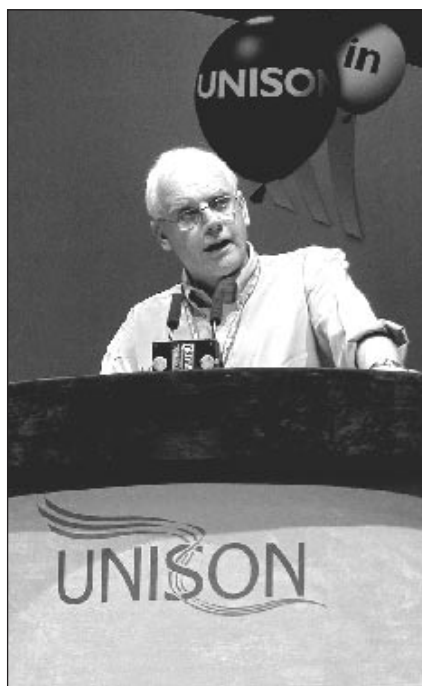
"Then we came of age. We came of age in my view, when we united around that key phrase - *a membership led union*", said John.

"This amendment asks that this UNISON ethos is taken fully on board in such a crucial part of UNISON, its affiliated political fund. It is no more than the APF itself is demanding in the Labour Party", he added.

Reclaim our party

General Secretary Dave Prentis gave a clear pledge that it was time to reclaim our Labour Party.

Referring to the 2001 debate on the future of the



“we will have the strongest, the most authoritative and most of all, the most representative voice to progress our policies in the political arena”

John Stevenson

political funds, Dave said, "Your anger struck a chord with me. Two years on and it's no longer about a protest vote. Like it or not, those consulted supported the original structure.

"Today you have the power, the means to make a difference. If we weaken our debate in the Labour Party, we weaken our voice. Weaken the link and you weaken our union!"

"Do not remove the most effective means we have to translate those policies, your vision, into tangible improvements for those we represent."

Dave had already pledged to work closely with the new union leaders to build a common agenda and to see "how we can reclaim our party".

Manchester's Mo Baines, welcoming our 'helpful' amendment, slammed the others as 'weapons of mass distraction'.

Conference agreed and threw out an amendment calling for the review to go on even longer and one from Glasgow calling for a

ballot and a third fund to back other candidates.

The Glasgow City plan could have left UNISON backing candidates against each other and Bill King of Cymru/Wales brought laughter with his



Dave Prentis
General Secretary

description of it being a case of "the affiliated fund, the general fund and the lost deposit fund".

Glasgow Health's Karie Murphy rounded on the amendment as dishonest and "fundamentally wrong". There would be a ballot of members in any case in 2005, and it was

More Information See Page 4 for

● What is the political fund?

● Why the review?

● What is National Conference?

simplistic to talk about giving money to other parties.

"It's UNISON policy to reject the separatist agenda. So we would not be able to support the SNP or the Greens, but we could support the Conservative & Unionist Party. Our members would freak!"

Echoing John's call to 'separate party and government', Karie said, "The Government does deserve a doing, the fight is with the Government not with the Labour Party."

Lambeth's John Rogers added a light touch to the debate. "Like the NEC, we are supporting Edinburgh's amendment with qualifications. Except our qualifications are that we're not supporting the motion!"

John Stevenson summed up the purpose of the Edinburgh amendment,

"This will address some of the suspicion, whether that is justified or not, some of the mistrust, whether that is justified or not - but mainly to build confidence in our APF, to give it the impetus to be inclusive and to allow it to show that it and its membership are an inextricable part of UNISON, sharing, promoting and most of all, celebrating UNISON's values.

"That way we will have the strongest, the most authoritative and - most of all - the most representative voice to progress our policies in the political arena".

10th Anniversary National Conference Reports 2003

Pensions: Link to earnings must be reinstated

In the past five years three quarters of final salary pension schemes have been closed.

As Graham Carswell (Young Members and Scottish Electricity) called for the restoration of the link between earnings and the state pension, Vice President Pauline Thorne warned that public sector schemes were also under review.

But while resolving to campaign vigorously against any changes, Conference did not prioritise an Edinburgh motion calling for industrial action if necessary.

The Pickering report, which the government intends to implement in a modified form, says that the age at which a non-reduced pension is available should go up from 60 to 65 years.

Veteran Scottish delegate Jim McDougal of Doncaster Health also reminded us that the proposals include raising the pension unit from 1/80 to 1/100.

What this means, said Jim, is that 50 years of work is required for a full pension and not the present 40.

In the next motion on pensions, Julia McIlhatton

Lanarkshire Primary Care demanded full compensation for part time workers who had been denied the right to pension schemes and conference backed her overwhelmingly.

Local Government Conference demanded that all workers providing local government services should have a decent pension through the local government pension scheme.

It condemned plans to 'simplify' the scheme as an attempt to reduce costs for the employers at the expense of the employees.

More pay needed to tackle Social Work crisis

Recruitment and retention in Social Work can only be tackled through better pay and efforts to combat the negative public perception, Conference was told.

"We need to involve branches in the campaign to improve the pay and status of all social work staff", said Stephanie Herd, Scottish Local Government Chair.

Scottish Region and Glasgow City Branch amendments to the main motion served to strengthen and extend the content.

Conference called for:-

- extra money to be made available for employers to increase wage levels, employ more staff and provide training opportunities for all grades of staff

- funding at levels which ensure that external providers offer pay and conditions which are no worse than those used by local authorities.

Scotland already has a major campaign on these issues with a series of local claims in the absence of any move from CoSLA for a national deal.

Now let's set the political agenda

Wednesday saw the best of Conference with a real debate on the political funds. But after that, it did get a wee bit shaky.

However, the passion of Stephen Lewis' contribution as UN special envoy on HIV/AIDS will live with many of us for a long time.

Edinburgh had key roles in the political fund debate and Tuition Fees debates.

More importantly, policies we had set before on Pensions and Ring Fencing of local government funding were also taken a step forward.

But, for a branch our size, we should be setting even more policies and we need to think about that throughout the year.

As usual Scotland played a major part in all the big debates. Glasgow and NEC member Jane Carolan, Scottish Convenor Mike Kirby and Treasurer Pat Rowland to name just a few.

The political fund debate was an object lesson on how important organisation is. When Conference takes control itself things go much better.

Dave Prentis has fair risen to the general secretary role as he laid down important pointers for our future and most important of all, laid down our uncompromising

Branch Secretary John Stevenson looks back at Conference and senses a new confidence in the union

fight against racism.

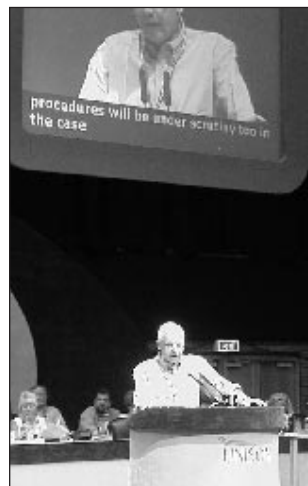
As the country's biggest union, we have taken the lead in setting the public service agenda. We have lots to be proud of over the last 10 years. Not least should be the pride in merging three cultures into a new progressive union.

That took perseverance, patience, organisation and trust - but it could not have been achieved without the goodwill and commitment of activists.

Now we've set the public services agenda, we need to set the political agenda. There was a clear signal from the leadership that this is exactly what we are going to do.

We have so much untapped influence in the Labour Party. Hopefully the call for us to get involved locally and push for UNISON's policies in the party will see that influence bring results.

This is my 20th conference.



They always infuriate me, they always surprise me, they always bore me, they always excite me.

But they also offer the opportunity to meet fellow activists from around the country - and around the world - to listen, to learn, to debate, and most of all to organise.

Conference is not a spectator sport. It needs us to organise and take responsibility for it - that's when it works best.

This conference, despite the light agenda, despite the usual political posturing and despite the occasional rogue decision, does seem to have reflected a union with a new confidence, a new self-assurance that will make the year ahead fascinating - or am I just an old romantic?

Fair Trade victory

An Edinburgh amendment means that the National Executive Council will have to **oblige** caterers at UNISON events to provide at least one fair-traded tea or coffee.

All tea and coffee used in union headquarters/the national office is to be fairly traded and branches and regions are also to use fairly traded tea and coffee wherever feasible.

Recognition for Self organised groups

UNISON is to campaign with employers and ACAS for time-off for self organised group activities.

Young members on NEC

Conference asked for a rule change to be brought forward for a Young Members NEC seat.



10th Anniversary National Conference Reports 2003

Education a right, not a privilege

Conference overwhelmingly backed opposition to government proposals for top-up fees for higher education students.

Edinburgh's amendment on the Scottish situation was part of the composite and the branch's Kevin Duguid told Conference,

"This government's battle cry used to be "Education, Education, Education - it is now "Reform, Reform, Reform".

"Let's reclaim that original battle cry and let's educate this government that reform doesn't mean cuts in terms and conditions", said Kevin.

"Educate them that reform doesn't mean PFI, PPP and privatisation.

‘let's educate this government that reform doesn't mean cuts in terms and conditions. ’

Kevin Duguid

"Educate them that reform doesn't mean education becomes a privilege rather than a right".

Kevin had warmed up Conference and won a laugh with a confession, "It seems like only yesterday I was a student... Well, Conference, as you can see that was not only yesterday".

Scotland's Graham Carswell from the national young members' forum said a two-tier high-



er education system would be created, saddling students with "astronomical" levels of debt. He added that education was "a right, not a privilege".

Emotional call to fight AIDS crisis

From report on UNISON website

Conference was brought to a hush hearing a vivid description of "the ferocious and unrelenting attack" which the HIV/AIDS pandemic is waging on the poorest in Africa.

United Nations special envoy on HIV/AIDS Stephen Lewis told delegates:

"I feel an absolute ideological similarity with the trade union movement. You are people who care passionately about the world beyond your workplaces. How can I tell you what is happening?"

He began with a story of visiting a non-governmental organisation (NGO) working with people with AIDS in Namibia.

"At the back were men making tiny papier mache coffins for infants. And their faces held a terrible mixture of pride in their work and confusion at what they were doing. 'We just can't keep up,' they told me."

Some 100 million are expected to die before the pandemic runs its



Stephen Lewis

course. "This represents a human toll that it is beyond the capacity of the human mind to imagine."

It means millions of orphans throughout Africa. It means families headed by children because they are all that is left.

It means children go untaught in Zambia because teachers are dying of AIDS faster than their replacements can be trained. It also means crops unplanted or unharvested because the women who do the agricultural work are dying.

"I admit to bewilderment and to rage," he said. "I don't understand why the world is letting this happen. There is no reason for it. We know how to run prevention cam-

paigns. We know how to provide care and we have the medication to treat those who are infected for as little as \$300 a year. What we simply don't have is the resources."

He accused the governments of the western world of "a protracted period of criminal negligence" in allowing the pandemic to rage unchecked.

"I simply don't know what in God's name explains the behaviour of the world leaders who refuse to respond," he said.

He gave UNISON delegates six ways to help: by pressing the case through our political contacts; in supporting fraternal unions' work in Africa; helping fraternal unions negotiate healthcare packages with employers; providing advice on infrastructure; working directly with a couple of particular countries and supporting the NGOs in their work.

With many delegates close to tears, he ended with a simple call. "Involve yourselves."

More Information

The full text of all motions passed is at www.unison.org.uk

Summaries of all the issues have been circulated to the Branch Committee and can be found on the branch website at www.unison-edinburgh.org.uk

Local Government in brief

● Lessons from the 2002/03 Pay Dispute

Scottish delegates reminded Conference that in fact the first national dispute took place three years ago in Scotland and that similar lessons had been learned – perhaps our counterparts should have read our report.

However, the report may be useful as Scotland starts its consultation on the Scottish Pay Claim for 2004 and beyond!

● End Ring Fencing of Local Government Finance

This motion, started off by Edinburgh last year, was carried.

● Race integral to bargaining

Conference called for race issues as an integral part of the bargaining agenda in the sector.

● Modernising Public Services

brought a call for

- increases in funding for local services
- massive investment in workforce training
- an end to the low pay culture in public services

10th Anniversary National Conference Reports 2003

Call for freedom and justice in Burma

President Nancy Coull made a special statement to Conference on 19 June about the crisis in Burma, pledging UNISON's support to the sanctions campaign.

This followed an Emergency motion from Edinburgh and a call for Aung San Suu Kyi - democratically elected president kept out of office by the junta - to be given honorary UNISON membership.

Conference heard Aung San Suu Kyi, had been arrested again by the junta, heralding a sinister new crisis in the country.

After Suu Kyi's arrest, National League for Democracy (NLD) offices had been closed and at least four died in clashes with pro-junta crowds.

Suu Kyi was arrested despite local abbots flanking her in support and protection.

This is the third time the



Edinburgh UNISON member Murray Forgie (right) of the Burma Educational Scholarship Trust Scotland, at a vigil in Chiangmai on 19 June, Suu Kyi's 58th birthday)

Nobel Peace Laureate has been detained. Supporters are hoping her detention is temporary, unlike her last period of house arrest which lasted 19 months.

In late May, the NLD marked the 13th anniversary of its land-

slide 1990 election victory, which was never recognised by the military government.

"The NLD must stand up firmly to achieve the result of the elections of 1990. To ignore the result of the 1990 elections is to

have total disrespect for the people and is also an insult to the people," said Suu Kyi in the strongest statement she had made since her release from house arrest.

Burma is notorious for forced labour, child labour, trafficking in prostitution and as the world's largest producer of illegal opium. According to UN estimates there are 50,000 child soldiers in Burma, more than any other country.

An Amnesty International report on Burma's 2002 human rights record said,

"Extra-judicial executions continued to be reported in most of the seven ethnic minority states." About 1,300 political prisoners remain in jail.

More information

www.burmacampaign.org.uk/
www.unison-edinburgh.org.uk/burma.html

New guidance on child protection laws

Conference demanded guidance for branches dealing with a host of legislation covering the protection of children

Edinburgh's John Stevenson spoke in the debate to ensure the Scottish dimension was recognised.

"UNISON, through the STUC, has had a major part to play in achieving significant changes in the Scottish Child Protection Act", said John.

To laughter, he noted, "When we gave evidence to the Parliament Committee, every MSP except two had to declare an interest that they were a UNISON member. The two excep-

tions were one who was a in a teaching union and the other who felt the need to be included by declaring his wife was a UNISON member!"

"I recall saying to the Parliamentary Committee - and I believe this is true - that our members are willing to give up some of their civil rights to protect children - but only if the protective measures are seen to be fair and transparent."

And the biggest bit of that transparency is employers taking their responsibility.

John brought applause from delegates when he said "if an unqualified young person is left with sole responsibility for six

older teenagers and one of them comes to harm, where is the real responsibility for that? - not with the staff member, but with the employers who allowed that unacceptable position to arise".

Agencies need to be brought to account as well as individuals in this legislation that can debar people from jobs if they have 'harmed' a child.

UNISON has convinced the Scottish Parliament of that problem and there will be an employment law specialist overseeing the measures and employers' actions and procedures will be under scrutiny too when someone is referred.

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