

## The Newsletter for UNISON members in MORAY AUGUST 2004

### ✓ SURVEY WINNER

Well done to **Mrs Wilma Stewart** who won £25 in our branch survey featured in the April edition of *Moray Matters*.

Your views on communication between branch and members gave a very positive thumbs up to the way we are doing things.

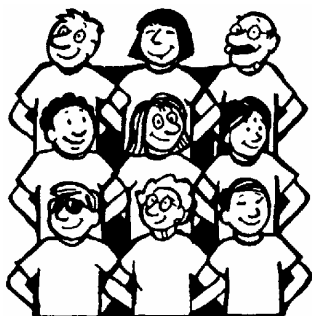
- ☺ The majority of you contact the branch using your telephone and you feel this is a good method and gets you results.
- ☺ You all said you receive the newsletters and regular mailings without any problems and you feel you receive enough regular information from the branch.
- ☺ Unfortunately, only one reply offered any ideas for future articles.

*A big thank you to everyone who took part.*

### ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS

You should have received your MORAY BRANCH MEMBERS GUIDE folder by now.

If by any chance you have not, please contact the branch office on 01343 563170 to let us know.



### CONFERENCE REPORT 2004

by **Dougie McPhee, Education & Service Conditions Officer**

The Annual UNISON Conference this year took place in Bournemouth to which Irene Sinclair and I represented the branch. The conference is always a bit daunting with a full attendance by the Secretary and President as well as the full NEC and members of branches from all over Britain and Northern Ireland.

The first day was taken up with local government business. A disillusioned London borough constituent asked twice for the chair to be removed since he would not allow a full debate on the pay award which at the time was going through the consultation process so debates could not be carried due to the process being concluded. This did not go down well.

Debates over the day took place dealing with issues from Health and Safety to the single status pay modelling. Certainly it was a long day but very rewarding with opinions across the country mixed.

Full conference took place from the Tuesday with a large swell of members coming for this. The sessions over the next four days were 3 hours long (that's long in a hard uncomfortable seat!). The morning of Tuesday was taken up with the school workforce and the national agreement, which had to be passed to cast our concerns on the PPP processes.

Afternoon took in the pension scheme, which due to the many speakers questioning Gordon Brown's tactics, it was clear that UNISON needed to voice concerns that the pension scheme had to be defended vigorously.

Over the Wednesday and Thursday the debate ranged from equality and welfare issues to that of the young persons identity within UNISON. We also had some emotional speeches from trade union leaders from Iraq and also from those on the front line of war on

poverty around the world. It's here today listening to these people that we have to realise how lucky we are living in a far more civilised country, it may not be the best, it has it's problems, but at least we have water on tap and the ability to get food.

The Friday saw our branch being presented with the **national runners up prize for the best organised branch in UNISON**. This was a great achievement that shows that it's not just the committee, stewards, and contacts that have a role to play in the branch but most importantly the members do. I would hope that we would be able to see more people taking on the role of steward in the workplace.

Another part of the conference that amazed me was the behind the scenes work, a print room that was double ours in the Moray Council churning out the documents required, a press room full of PCs, etc. for the news to be spread. Additional to this were the rooms for the committees and also the National Executive. All this plus the members access room where you got to meet all those companies that help or give advice to UNISON.

All in all, a well worth-it week, and Bournemouth's a nice place too!



#### **TAX REFUND**

##### **Do any of the following statements apply to you?**

- I have brought up a child as a single parent.
- I have paid a subscription to a professional organisation (not UNISON subs).
- I have had to wash my own work uniform.
- I have had to use my own car to do my employer's business (not travelling to or from work).
- I have worked from home some or all of the time.
- I have looked after a grandchild on at least one day a week.
- My employer has deducted tax from my wages.
- I have a child born between 6 April 1985 and 5 April 2003.

If you've answered YES to ANY of these questions, you may be entitled to a tax refund.

UNISON offers a confidential assessment service in conjunction with the Tax Refund Company. For more information and an assessment form, contact the Moray Branch Office on 01343 563170.

## **RETIRED BUT NOT RETIRING**

### **Conference**

The UNISON National Retired Members' Conference takes place this year at Scarborough on 12-13 October. The delegate for Moray UNISON will be John Barrett, Retired Members' Officer.

The preliminary agenda is dominated by motions on pensions (of course!) – especially in view of the proposed changes to local government scheme regulations. Other debates will focus upon transport, dental services, and the council tax. Anyone who wishes to consult the preliminary agenda should contact John through the branch office.

### **Scottish Committee**

John Barrett has been elected to sit on the Scottish Retired Members' Committee which meets four times a year in Glasgow and Edinburgh. So, if there are things that you feel we should be discussing or campaigning for, let John know. He will be happy (as ever) to be a pain in the bum in supporting the interests of Moray UNISON retired members.

### **Lunch!**

The Branch Committee has generously made a sum of money available for retired members' activities. Rumour has it that a lunchtime "meeting" is being contemplated in the near future!

### **UNISON after work**

Strangely, not every member who retires wants to become a retired member. Of course there are reasons enough why, having retired, one might hope never to be troubled by thoughts of Moray Council again. But it seems a shame to lose touch with colleagues, and to lose touch with the Moray Council gossip – which is so much more entertaining when enjoyed from the safety of retirement.

And it seems a shame that retiring members should lose out on the services and benefits that are available to UNISON members – including welfare fund benefits and discounts on insurance, holidays, etc.

All you have to do to continue membership after retirement, is to fill in a simple form. The one-off subscription (presently £15) is paid by the branch as a thank you for the past support and participation in the work of the union.

So, if you have recently retired or are soon to do so, contact your steward or phone the branch office to ensure you don't lose out. Continue in UNISON as a retired member. Where is so much on offer? – and for free!!!



## BEING ACTIVE IN UNISON - YOUR BRANCH OFFICER PROFILES

Many workers wonder why some of their colleagues are active in UNISON. They ask why these people take time away from their workplaces, not only in the working week but also in the evenings and weekends, to give of their time to UNISON.

We continue to ask each of our Branch Officers to tell us why.

### The series continues this month with

Linda Magill, Moray Branch Communications Officer

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*Where is it you work and what is your job title?*

I work in the Educational Psychology Service at Beechbrae Education Centre in Elgin and I am Senior Clerical Assistant/Typist for the Service.

*How long have you worked for the Moray Council?*

It's almost 11 years.

*How long have you been in a Trade Union?*

All of the years I've worked for the Council.

*Are there negative points in being in a Union?*

The only really negative point is the fact that there are so few officers in the branch having to take on the heavy workload all the time. The branch needs more stewards coming forward to become branch officers.

*Many fellow workers think you're daft doing what you do?*

They want to remember that all us officers in the branch are out there fighting their corner.

*Why did you get involved in the Communications role?*

I got involved in the branch and it just followed that I was asked to take on the Communications role.

*Why in a few words do you believe in Trade Unions?*

Without the unions fighting for the employees, employers would run rough shod over everyone.

*What is your greatest achievement so far?*

I don't know about so far, but it's an achievement putting out the newsletters every time!

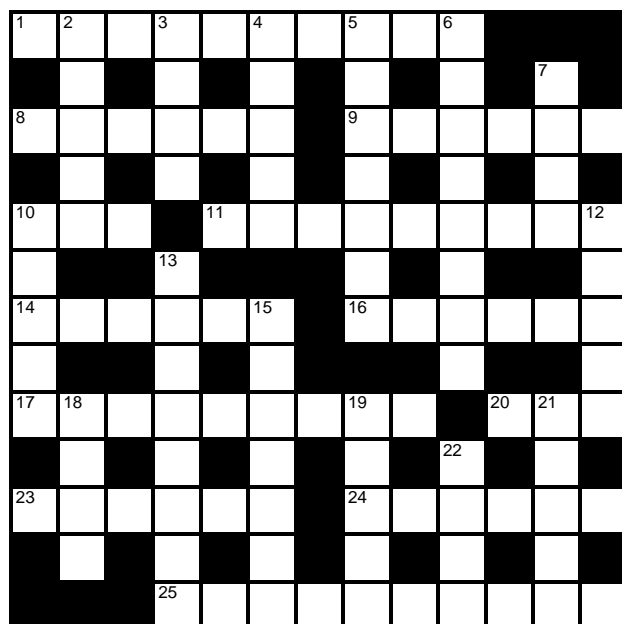
*What are your fears for the future?*

Like Moira, I'm worried about the amount of privatisation that has crept into public services. The only people that benefit from privatisation are the private companies.

*How would you best describe your Branch?*

VERY HARD WORKING!

## The August Crossword ...enjoy



### Across

1. From Scotland's biggest city (10)
8. Post flight fatigue (3,3)
9. Woolen garment (6)
10. Bashful (3)
11. Organised violence (9)
14. Block, hamper (6)
16. Like flour paste (6)
17. Masked clown (9)
20. For each (3)
23. Spicy sausage (6)
24. Cruelly fated (6)
25. All those eligible to vote (10)

### Down

2. Sucking parasite (5)
3. Smooth fabric (4)
4. Large bird (5)
5. Hurt at sport (7)
6. Many (8)
7. Clutter (4)
10. Rushing sound (5)
12. Civic dignitary (5)
13. Fellow prisoner (8)
15. Ask (7)
18. On holiday (4)
19. Complete fool (5)
21. Survive (5)
21. Always short of cash (4)

The answers will appear in the December edition of the branch newsletter