

**MEMBERS QUESTION PAGE**

**Q. Why do branches have to hold an annual general meeting?**

**A.** First and foremost to ensure democratic accountability at branch level. An AGM enables members to be informed of the work of the branch and to be assured that branch is organised and administered effectively. It gives members a voice in running the branch and enables elections to take place. On top of that, of course, it's a requirement of the union's rules. UNISON Rule G3.2 requires UNISON branches to hold an annual general meeting in the first quarter of each year (that's between 1 January and 31 March). All members should receive adequate written notice of the meeting and the agenda and other relevant paperwork should be issued in advance of the meeting. Branch newsletters, email networks, and notice boards should be used to promote the AGM.

**Q. I work for a small, voluntary organisation. We are taking on more staff and want to make sure we have an adequate grievance procedure in place. What should we include?**

**A.** When drawing up your grievance procedure, it pays to involve everybody it will affect, including managers, employees and union representatives. Grievance procedures should make it easy for employees to raise issues with managements and should:

- Be simple and put in writing;
- Enable an employee's line manager to deal informally with a grievance, if possible;
- Keep proceedings confidential;
- Allow the employee to be represented.

Most grievance procedures will outline:

- How and with whom to raise the issue;
- Who next to apply to if not satisfied;
- Time limits to each stage;
- The right to be represented.

HERE ARE THE ANSWERS TO THE AUGUST MORAY MATTERS CROSSWORD



**A CHRISTMAS WORDSEARCH for you with a £25 prize for the first correct entry received .....**

C E U P C T Q N P Y M C R S E L R D D E  
 S L O R A C S H E A A S D L S S E E M R  
 P B N G N R T L P I Q D R E E S I C O O  
 S H O F D D C D R D T T A S E M I J S N  
 S L E R L S Y E A T Y Z U L G D T E X G  
 R C Y T E L K I L M V J B D P V I H H N  
 Q H T D S G S M D S T U I K U P A I R N  
 E O N Y Y D A R W F A P Z T E O V H S E  
 E C U A S Y R R E B N A R C U J C L A L  
 W O N S H F U F M N R R N B Y C E I A P  
 T L N V G M E L V E S I D L D V P I Q S  
 A A H J I T Y G E N M S A U E Q M W I U  
 P T R E E O E V D T T N I F S Z G U I I  
 E E N M L E O Y A N I S U D T A N O G B  
 G L A A S L R G E F C D T F Z R S I S S  
 O O E U S R A S N A Z Q E T C O G Z P I  
 E G H W E F E O F U E S I E A H R B E T  
 H S E M K R T E P O O N P I H A E M U K  
 N X S P P P F D D S S P B A F T C S Y W  
 L Q G B C Q O E F N H T Q A K E E L A I  
 C A E Q U E A A U M I E I E E S X A S U  
 E L A A N S K Z R E U E X C S S N T Z A  
 E Z O Z E I S E E S O S R G J A C T G E  
 O S E T N D T R Z S S N C O K E F R W P  
 L B E F O L I C H F W A E E S H W R O I

Find the following hidden words:  
 santa, reindeers, presents, parcels, snow, carols, mincepies, chocolatelog,  
 cranberrysauce, candles, tree, baubles, merry, yuletide, log, elves, sleigh

**PLEASE SEND YOUR ENTRY TO THE MORAY BRANCH OFFICE (ADDRESS AT END OF NEWSLETTER) BY 31 DECEMBER 2004**

**SCOTTISH YOUNG MEMBERS COMMITTEE**

**P.P.PRESENT**

The Inaugural Scottish Young Members Awards beginning 2005. Three categories -

- Most Consistently Supportive Branch
- Best One-Off Branch Initiative
- Old Faggy Branch Award

Details of nomination process will shortly be available on our page on the UNISON Scotland website & at Scottish Council in February.

**And** If that's not exciting enough...

**Coming Soon Also in 2005**

Scottish Young Members Handbook For Everything The Inspired Young Member Could Ever Need to Know

Coming to a Branch Near You Soon!!

**So ... BE PREPARED**

**Join UNISON Today Contact: 01224 620624 For an application form**

**UNISON Moray Matters is a regular publication by the branch. We would welcome comments / letters / ideas for competitions, etc. Any contribution from members would be appreciated. Contact Linda Magill, Communications Officer, through the branch office if you can help.**

**MORAY BRANCH OFFICE Council Offices 12/14 Greyfriars St. ELGIN IV30 1LF**

**UNISON MORAY MATTERS**

**DECEMBER 2004 NEWSLETTER**

*A MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM US ALL AT THE MORAY BRANCH*

**UNISON is a union that speaks up for public service workers. We are a union that has a vision of a more just and inclusive society and we are the most influential union in the UK.**



**Discussing her new duties, at the October Branch Development Day held at the Mansion House in Elgin, is Kerry Dawson (on the right), our branch's first ever Young Members Officer, with Emma Phillips, our new Regional Officer.**

**WE SAY A BIG WELCOME TO OUR NEW REGIONAL OFFICER AND OUR FIRST EVER YOUNG MEMBERS OFFICER**

**SINGLE STATUS & YOUR PAY by Emma Phillips, Regional Officer**

Single Status is the review of pay and grading for APT&C and Manual workers in the Moray Council. Single Status is supposed to provide a pay scheme that is fairer than current pay. Many jobs in the council are undervalued and underpaid when compared to other jobs. The jobs that are undervalued are often traditional women's jobs. UNISON believes that people should be paid fairly and that there should be no discrimination in pay. We are therefore in active negotiations with the Council to introduce Single Status.

The changing of pay and grading schemes is going to be a difficult process for many staff and whilst UNISON is in favour of Single Status in principle, we will not accept Single Status at any cost. The UNISON representatives will try to get the best possible deal. Our discussions with the employer have been difficult at times.

At one point we had difficulty getting information from the Council and so left negotiations. Without the information we could not properly assess the proposals to date, so we walked out. Moray Council has now given us the information and we are back at the negotiating table.

Our negotiations are now on a more positive footing and we want to continue this good relationship with the Council. Most of the information we get is currently confidential as it is about individuals' jobs and pay. Whilst we have to keep some of the information confidential, we will try to keep you up to date in the process.

If we work together, our collective strength as UNISON means that we can try to improve things in your workplace. The more people who join UNISON, the more powerful and effective we can be. If any of your colleagues are not a member, you should encourage them to join. If you are interested in helping UNISON with Single Status, please let us know. You can e-mail [unison@moray.gov.uk](mailto:unison@moray.gov.uk) or telephone 01343 563170.

**Join in, speak up,  
be counted –  
vote in UNISON's General  
Secretary election.  
Ballot starts  
25 January 2005**



**HEALTH & SAFETY  
HAS MADE WORKPLACES  
SAFER**

**LIFELONG LEARNING  
WILL MAKE WORKPLACES  
SMARTER**

**ONE PHONE CALL COULD  
MAKE ALL THE DIFFERENCE**

FIND OUT WHO CAN HELP YOU  
CONTACT YOUR LOCAL  
LIFELONG LEARNING ADVISER

PERSONNEL DEPARTMENT 01343 563076	UNISON 01343 563170	LIFELONG LEARNING CO-ORDINATOR 01542 885517
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## NEWS FROM *BIG CAT* THE RETIRED MEMBERS' OFFICER'S CAT

It's so unfair! While the retired members officer is out and about doing all kinds of worthy things for UNISON, his big cat is left all alone with no-one to tickle his tummy and only an enormous dish of *Katkins* to keep him company. It's so unfair!

For example, every few months my man (the R M Officer) goes off to Glasgow or Edinburgh for the day to attend meetings of the **Scottish Retired Members Committee**. And while the Scottish Committee waxes all-political about fat cats, a fine handsome lean mean fighting cat has to fend for himself. The R M Officer knows perfectly well that I don't do tin openers. It's so unfair!

And then every month he has a day in Elgin at the **Branch Committee** meeting. And, of course I'm left home alone. The R M Officer really doesn't deserve all the tasty little mice and shrews and voles that I catch for him while he's out at his 'meetings'. He doesn't appreciate how busy I am around the place. And all I get for wages is a tin of cat food and a tickle under the chin! I'd be better off (almost) working for the Moray Council!

In September my man went off to a **Conference in Glasgow** to discuss the role of retired members - especially in respect of recruitment of new members. Which is all very well no doubt. But he left the house early in the morning (before I came home - from my scheduled business meeting and late supper with the rabbits up in the woods). And he was away all day! Of course he subsequently claimed that I had been fully consulted. But according to him I spent the whole consultation meeting murdering a piece of string. Well, I think I'd remember that - and I don't.

But I am a generous cat. I can't forget the odd day alone. But I won't forgive the October absence in a hurry! The R M Officer went off to the **Retired Members Conference in Scarborough**. He was away for days and days! (I don't do counting, so I can't say how many days - but it was a lot). And while he was away I was sent off to Guantanamo Bay, (or that's what it seemed like). Solitary confinement in the Speyside cattery! The only thing that made my incarceration bearable was the cute tabby kitten in the next cage - miaooooowwww!

It's all very well to debate motions about pensions and public transport and care for the elderly. But what about cats? There was not one cat-oriented motion in the whole conference.

The latest insult was the **retired members' lunch** in November. I was left alone all day (as usual) while the R M Officer went off to host the meeting. And of course he had a smashing time meeting old (and not so old) friends. But he didn't even bring home a doggy bag of leftovers!

It's so unfair! But radical protest and direct action are being planned: probably something involving a dead rabbit under the R M Officers chair - or perhaps just my teeth and his ankle.

**On behalf of John Barrett**

Retired Members Officer



## YOUR BRANCH NEEDS YOU **BRANCH OFFICERS & STEWARDS**

We are looking to fill vacancies within the Moray branch. If you are interested please get yourself nominated & attend our AGM in March 2005. For more information phone 01343 563170.

### 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 thought we would ask some of our Branch Officers to tell us why.

#### We continue this month with **Irene Sinclair, Joint Branch Secretary.**

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

"My working time is split between the Moray UNISON office, and Lossiemouth High School, where I am the School Library/ Resource Co-ordinator, a.k.a. the school librarian."

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

"I started work with Grampian Region in 1989 and continued with The Moray Council after local government re-organisation.."

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

"Too long to mention! My working life began in Glasgow, in the 'olden days' as my daughter quaintly describes it. I joined NALGO then and have been a union member ever since."

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

"Some employers are good and some are bad, but all are in a position of power over their employees. The only way in which people can challenge that power is to band together and unions provide

the opportunity to do that. The collective power of the trade union movement can bring changes in political thinking as well as local negotiation, and we shouldn't lose sight of that fact even though that power may seem to be less than it once was."

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

"I don't believe there are negative points."

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

"It's tempting to say that I don't care what other people say, but instead I'll say that they don't realise how being active in a union can have a positive effect on one's professional and personal development. Also there's the satisfaction of sometimes being able to help fellow employees."

*Why did you get involved in the Service Conditions role?*

"Serendipity! I had been taking some time out from active participation in UNISON when a chance meeting in Asda with a branch officer brought to my notice the fact that there was a vacancy for a joint secretary. In a moment of madness, I decided to go for it and haven't looked back since, except sometimes to wonder why I didn't go to Tesco instead that night!"

*What is your greatest achievement so far?*

"Ask me again next year!"

*What are your fears for the future?*

"That public service provision in health, education and other areas will decrease and more and more will go to the private sector. I see the gap between rich and poor increasing year by year, and that is a situation which we in the trade union movement have to continually challenge. Oh - and that more and more Scottish Executive money will be thrown at trendy and unsustainable initiatives, while we're scrabbling about for money for core services."

*How would you best describe your Branch?*

"A great team with a wide variety of experience and backgrounds, willing to undertake training for the good of the branch and play an active role in the work of the union."

*Thank you, Irene*



Next February, every UNISON member gets a vote on whether UNISON should keep the political fund. The Warwick Agreement explained in this leaflet is a good example of why it is so important that you vote YES! Without a political fund, UNISON would not have been involved in the discussions. The United Kingdom's biggest public service union would have had no say in the policies affecting the future of those very services.

UNISON's political fund has two sections - UNISON Labour Link (The Affiliated Political Fund) and the General Political Fund. Both are vital to UNISON's campaigning work, and UNISON's unique structure gives every member individual choice over which part of the fund to support.

Voting YES doesn't mean that you as an individual have to contribute to the Fund. All members can choose whether to contribute or not. But if you vote 'No' you could be preventing other UNISON members who want to contribute from exercising their choice. A YES vote means every UNISON member keeps their right to choose.

AMICUS, the TGWU and many other unions have already voted overwhelmingly to keep their funds. A YES vote will ensure that UNISON maintains its influence as the United Kingdom's leading Public Service union.

### UNISON POLITICAL FUND BALLOT 2005

The law says a union must have a separate political fund if it wants to spend money for 'political purposes'.

This puts UNISON potentially at risk because even bread and butter work such as campaigning to defend the NHS, to defend pensions or promote health and safety and to oppose the privatisation of local services, can be seen as 'political'. Government decisions and economic policies have a direct effect on all our members' jobs and pay prospects as well as on wider industrial relations matters. That is why we must keep the Political Fund.

Unions are the only organisations required by law to have such funds. Business can contribute to political parties and political organisations sympathetic to its interests. Without our fund UNISON would lose its voice in the political sphere.

We must make sure our union is not silenced. That is why it is vital that members vote in this UNISON ballot on the political fund and give it an overwhelming 'YES'. For UNISON to carry out its obligations to its members in the future and to make sure that their views are taken into account by politicians, parties and governments, we need the Political Fund.