

MAG Senior

2016 Scottish Conference more popular than ever

The Scottish Retired Members Conference was held in Glasgow on 13th April. It attracted even more members than in previous years - with 70 delegates from 30 branches from all over Scotland.

It begs the question that as Conference becomes more popular, will the STUC Centre be able to accommodate it next year?

It is something the SRM Committee may have to consider.



Not only bigger - but most certainly better!

Not only is Conference getting bigger - it is also getting better. There was widespread opinion that this year was the best ever.

The main session was the Scottish Elections Hustings and featured prospective candidates from each of the Greens, Liberals, SNP and the Labour Party. Unfortunately, the Conservative representative called off the day before Conference.

To be absolutely honest and be fair to all of them, no matter your political persuasion, they were all high quality and a credit to their Parties. Three out of the four obviously knew each other well - and the 'banter' was good humoured.

Thanks to everyone for a productive session - and thanks to Marie Macrae in the Chair for keeping it all moving.

"Public Services under unprecedented attack"

"UK Public Services and the Trade Union & Labour Movement are facing the worst attacks ever" UNISON's Scottish Secretary Mike Kirby told delegates. "The right-wing of the Tory Party are striving to complete the agenda started by Thatcher, Keith Joseph and Michael Forsyth.

In a well-delivered address, Mike detailed the threat to Unions in the Government's "Anti"- Trade Union Bill - including removal of Stewards facilities time - removal of the salary check-off for paying Union dues - introduce unrealistic thresholds for strike ballots and open the way for employers to use Agency workers to break strikes.

He emphasised "This is nothing to do with the Economy. Their sole aim is to crush local democracy and they won't be satisfied until they grind the Trade Union Movement into complete oblivion". Mike then outlined the various options which the Movement would have to consider to combat the attack.

Mike also spoke of the dangers posed by the Government's support for the Transatlantic Trade & Investment Partnership (TTIP). "If this goes through, it will open the way to greater Privatisation of Public Services - it will drive down wages - it will weaken the Health & Safety legislation and Environmental controls" he said.

On a positive note, Mike said UNISON is recruiting many new members as workers see the dangers ahead.



WHICH calls "Time" on nuisance calls

One of the most annoying and at times distressing issues for many Pensioners - the Telephone NUISANCE CALL is being tackled by UK Consumer Group, WHICH.

They're calling on the Government to make senior Executives accountable by law for their company's nuisance calls, and require businesses to show their number when they call.

It also wants individuals to have more control over how their personal data is used.

Website for more information

For more information on the campaign and what you can do, visit <http://www.which.co.uk/campaigns/>



Candidates sign the Pledge

It's not often you see Politicians 'signing the Pledge' but all four of those on our Election Hustings did just that.

This was the STUC request to pledge not to implement aspects of the Trade Union Bill that conflict with human rights obligations



Tom Coleman



Patrick Harvie



Bill Kidd



Anas Sarwar



Scottish Election Question Time

With the approaching elections for the Holyrood Parliament we had our customary cross-party Question Time with speakers from four of the five main Parties in Scotland. We've had the same format as for other election campaigns in the immediate past. The Chair, Marie Macrae, managed to keep both the panel and the assembled delegates in line and on their toes.

The SRMC will issue a summary of the debate in the near future. Sufficient to say at this stage that this year's discussion was so much better than in previous.

Perhaps the only criticism some of the audience may have had was that the panel was all male - but that was clearly outwith our control.

This was a much more 'high-powered' panel than we've had before. All of the speakers are standing as candidates in

the May elections. Two of them were MSPs in the last Parliament and one a former MP.

Again, while the various Party representatives were from across the political spectrum, they managed to keep the discussion good-hearted. Occasional hackles were raised - but all-in-all it was very controlled and good natured.

Is it too much to hope that it stays that way until election Day on 5th May?

The questions?

We had invited branches to let us have topics to test the panel. There wasn't too much time - but the eventual list covered was a good range. Among them were ...

- Police Scotland - centralised services
- Scotland's Tax-raising powers
- Fracking
- Scotland's relationships with "oppressive regimes"
- Their own individual priorities

There was a predictable degree of similarity about the answers. **Maybe we needed the Tory Party candidate to be there to offer some sort of 'difference'!**

As in previous Question Times - it was amusing to hear the panel all trying to both agree and disagree with each other without actually saying so.

Not enough time for everyone

Fairly obviously, time restrictions dictated that it would not have been possible to invite speakers from EVERY POLITICAL PARTY IN SCOTLAND.

The Committee invited the FIVE MAIN PARTIES.

Unfortunately the Conservative Party speaker called off on the day.

A welcome lunch break ...

One of the most-eagerly awaited aspects of Conference is always the buffet lunch. Not just for the food - but for the chance to have a 'wee blether' with some old friends you hadn't seen for a while.

The STUC staff served up another really good spread with a great range of choices and plenty to go round. Thanks all round!



Euro Referendum is our next big decision ... make sure you vote

With the Scottish Parliament elections out of the way, the next major issue facing us will be the Euro Referendum or 'Brexit Poll' which will be held on June 23rd. Voters will be asked the following question:

Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union or leave the European Union?

and they will have to asked to make a choice between the two options :-

Remain a member of the European Union or

Leave the European Union

Opinion polls suggest a very close struggle. Pollsters, YouGov, recently asked 80,000 Britons how they intend to vote in the referendum. Their shock results show that the further south in Britain you live the more likely it is that you are Eurosceptic.

Large parts of England appear to be backing Brexit - although Wales and

Northern Ireland opinion seems to be favouring staying in Europe.

All of Scotland's main Political Parties are campaigning for us to remain in the European Community. Wales and Northern Ireland seem to be very much in favour of staying in Europe.

UNISON is urging members to vote FOR STAYING IN on the basis of "Better the Devil you know".





Three excellent workshops

With the increase in delegates attending the Conference this year, the three afternoons workshops were all packed out. Everyone had been given a choice of 2 out of the three sessions - and with a degree of 'Organiser's Licence' SRM Secretary Sue Chalmers had managed to make it all fit together pretty well.

Full reports will be sent out to Branches in due course

Tiptoeing through the Pensions minefield

As you've probably guessed before, the subject of Pensions is a veritable minefield.

UNISON Scotland's second-in-command Dave Watson had the unenviable task of trying to make things clear for delegates in his two workshops.

He did a quick resumé of the new State Pensions, the Scottish Local Government Pension Scheme, equal Pension Rights

for women, and the Government's new scheme for individual Pension choice. He warned that the latter throws up problems for Pensioners - from the danger of 'scams' to unreliable poor returns from alternative investments.

Looking to future issues, the Scottish Government is considering options for the administration of Scottish LG Pension Funds. He suggested

that it may be advisable to look at other countries such as the Netherlands for examples of good practice.

Well done Dave! So much to cover and so little time to do it



Dave Watson

Integrating Health & Social Care

A good thing or a bad thing?

Stephen Smellie, Depute Convener of UNISON's Scottish Council (below) took the workshop on the new arrangements for joint working between Councils and NHS Boards for the provision of services for the elderly and vulnerable individuals.



On the positive side, Steven supported the need for a coordinated approach to service provision. Integration should lead to streamlining of resources, and coordinating staffing.

He stressed "Integration should be about innovation and improvement but the danger is that it is about managing cuts".

He welcomed the greater degree of consultation on individual, group and community needs and the general approach to providing care in the patient's home but warned against a blanket approach in all parts of Scotland.

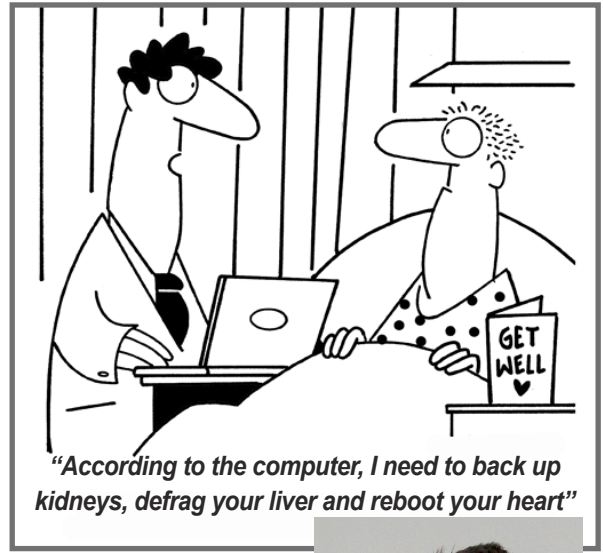
On the negative side while stressing that finance should not be the driving force, he acknowledged the difficulties during times of austerity.

From a Union viewpoint, there is some concern that the Private Sector has a place in the planning and delivery as they are driven by the profit motive..

Thanks

The Conference Acting-Chair, Marie Macrae, thanked former SRMC members who would not be on the new Committee.

Marie paid special tribute to Peter McCann and Ron Kerr for their work as Chair and Vice-Chair over the last few years.



Sorting Wills and Power of Attorney

Tim Weir from Thomsons Solicitors in Glasgow gave an excellent summary of the Legal requirements Wills and Power of Attorney in Scotland.



Tim Weir (Thomsons)

Most of the session was handled as a question and answer format. Tim was refreshingly clear with his answers. A few of the group members spoke about personal experiences of both Wills and Powers of Attorney - and again Tim gave clear advice or support - particularly regarding Power of Attorney.

Service for UNISON members

UNISON provides members in Scotland with a range of legal services and has an agreement with Thompsons to give branches access through the UNISON Scotland office to high quality advice. This includes a Wills and Power of Attorney service.

Scottish Retired Members Committee

There was stiff competition for this year's Scottish Retired members Committee - with 21 candidates standing for the 16 places. The successful members met on 18th April and decided on Office bearers as shown below.

Chair	Sue Chalmers	Dumfries & Galloway
Vice-Chair	Roberta Gair	Perth & Kinross
Secretary	Marie Macrae	Fife
Asst. Sec.	Barbara Fulton	East Renfrew
Committee	Graham Anderson	Glasgow City
	Jim Burnett	East Dumbartonshire
	David Hannah	Highland LG
	Rose Jackson	Edinburgh City
	Morag Houston	NHS GGC & CVS
	Alicia Hutchison	Ayrshire & Arran NHS
	Tom Lithgow	East Lothian
	Jo McLean	Lothian Health
Alex Morrison	Lanarkshire Health	
Lila Sneddon	South Lanarkshire	
Bob Revie	Aberdeenshire	
Glennis Watt	Tayside Health	

Scottish Local Government is in crisis as the Scottish Government forces Councils to make savage cuts in services.

We cannot just accept Swinney's bullying without protest.

Don't complain to you Councillor.

Write or speak to local MSPs - especially if they are part of the Government that has forced the cuts.

Scottish Councils submit to Swinney's bullying tactics

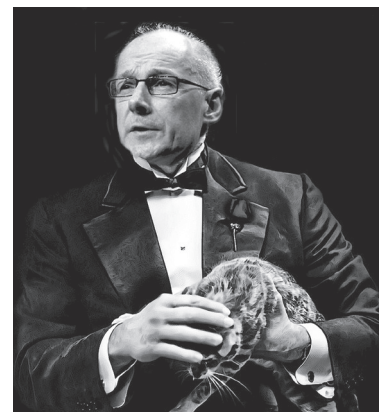
In a move that sounds the death knell for scores of local services, Scotland's Local Authorities have been forced to accept cuts of £350 million to their budgets. All 32 councils have been forced by the SNP's Deputy First Minister John Swinney to sign up to massive budget reductions. They simply had to agree to freeze the council tax, maintain teachers numbers and amalgamation of health and social care - or face even harsher cuts as they lose out on their share of a further £408 million.

Glasgow City's Council leader said: "We have signed up to the Swinney Tory budget with great reluctance. It is the most draconian budget ever inflicted on the people of Glasgow by any Government. Worse than that it comes with 'pistol to the head' sanctions".

"Glasgow faces £133m of cuts in the next 2 years. If we don't sign up for that the Scottish Government will hit us with an additional £50m of sanctions. "Don Corleone" Swinney is making us an offer we can't refuse."

Edinburgh City has accepted the cuts of £78 million to its budget. Council leader Andrew Burns, has hit out at the cuts in a letter to Mr Swinney, claiming the budgets are imposed with "punitive financial penalties. He added: "It makes a mockery of any semblance of a belief in local democracy.

Other Councils - including those controlled by SNP Councillors - are facing the impossible. Local 'consultations' show that local residents want to maintain services. They want their buckets emptied - streets cleaned and



John 'Corleone' Swinney

repaired - swimming pools & Leisure Centres - Libraries - Youth clubs - Adult Education - local Bus services etc. etc. etc.

Studies show that the majority of people would be prepared to pay for these services - and most appreciate the local Council's dilemma.

Council services are there for you when you need them, making your community a decent and safe place to live.

Years of Westminster budget cuts have forced Councils to cut back services. The Holyrood administration is now weighing in with equal might. Swinney's cuts will lead to massive job loss. Services won't just be 'cut' - they will disappear completely.

With rising demand for support and more cuts to come, local Councils need our help.

What can you do?

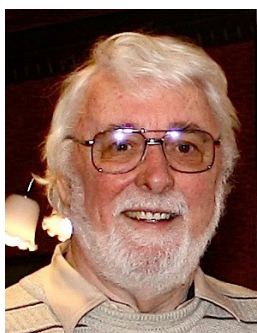
If ever there is a time to agitate, this is it. Kick up a devil of a row - shout your protest to the rafters when you are hit with a reduction in service - the closure of a Library, a swimming pool or a community centre - scream about it.

If your bins are only going to be emptied monthly or the road maintenance cut - don't accept it without a row! Get your friends to join you. Write to the papers (national & local). Tell your MSP you are not chuffed!

MAC Senior takes the Silver

We've been trying to put out regular issues of MAC Senior - and if you don't mind us saying, we've been pretty pleased with them.

Great to see that our efforts recognised. We collected the Silver Award in the "best printed Communication" category in annual Scottish UNISON Communications Awards competition.



Editor Liam Chalmers commented "It came as a bit of a surprise. The truth is we actually only entered it to make up the numbers."

The award took account of layout and content of both MAC and the Annual Conference Delegates Handbook



"There's really no easy way I can tell you this ... So I'm sending you to someone who can"

Across Scotland Councils have been forced to take the axe to ...

- Community grants and funding**
- Community transport schemes**
- Council Housing & Housing support**
- Environmental Standards**
- Environmental Health**
- Help for homeless people**
- Housing support services**
- Leisure & Sports Services**
- Library Services**
- Local Transport & Bus Services**
- Museums & Galleries**
- Parks & Recreation**
- Planning & Building Standards**
- Street Care & Cleansing**
- Support and advice for private homeowners and tenants**
- Support for Tourism & Local Events**
- Youth & Community Services**

and many other "non-essential" services that we have come to expect and which contribute so much to our quality of life locally.

MAC Senior is produced and published by the UNISON Scottish Retired Members Committee. Contact RM Secretary, Marie Macrae (e-mail : mariem2248@googlemail.com) if you have any questions or comment.