

MAG Senior

UNISON

Scotland

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Dave Watson - UNISON's Head of Policy & Public Affairs in Scotland- gave a report on the current BREXIT discussion to UNISON's Scottish Council meeting in December ...



UNISON's core message on Brexit

is that the general public wants well-funded and quality public services with beneficial workplace rights and regulations for workers.

There are four strands to the Union's Brexit considerations

- A deal that has the best positive and least negative impact on the UK economy - to ensure stability of funding for public services. That entails maximum access for UK manufacturing goods and services to the EU Single Market - although we have been critical of the Single Market in the past.
- Protection of Employment Rights
- Free movement and right to remain for EU citizens and other migrant workers - with reciprocal guarantees for UK workers in the EU and other countries
- We must have high standards of environmental and consumer protection, public procurement etc which must not be compromised by future Trade Agreements with either EU or other countries.

Where does UNISON stand now with BREXIT?

The result of the referendum on EU membership continues to dominate public and political discussion. While it was not the outcome that we campaigned for, the Union has a duty to minimise any adverse impact on its members. In the absence of clear UK Government strategy there is a continuing large amount of speculation - but less clarity

The Scottish Government has taken a robust position based on the 62% vote north of the border for remaining in the EU. All sorts of options are being banded about - but all are subject to significant legal challenges.

The External Relations Committee is the Scottish Government's Lead Committee on Brexit - although Brexit permeates all other Holyrood business. UNISON has set out its immediate

and medium-term priorities. This reflects the Union's 4 strands of UK strategy (see right) - with the immediate focus on the economic consequences for public spending and protecting UNISON members who are EU nationals working in Scotland (current estimate is 4 to 5 thousand).

Current estimates suggest that the Scottish economy will lose between £1.7bn and £11.2bn a year by 2019.20 dependant on UK Government spending plans.

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Eric Roberts

Those who were at the 2017 National Retired Members Conference in Southport will have been shocked by the news of the death of UNISON's President Eric Robert who died after a brief struggle with cancer. His loyalty to UNISON was unquestionable and as unwavering as his love for its members. When elected as president he said that UNISON was the "best union in the country" - and in truth Eric was the best of us.

Scottish Retired Members Chairperson, Sue Chalmers posted this message on behalf of Scotland Retired Members Committee. "Eric chaired our National RM Conference in October with his fine example of humour, compassion and obvious big personality. We mourn a dedicated trade unionist."

UNISON



Well done Mr President



We must comment on the role of the Conference Chair - UNISON's National President Eric Roberts (above).

Eric was appointed UNISON President at the National Conference in June. The RM Conference is first in the Union's calendar and as such is first to be chaired by the new President

He had a relaxed attitude and a keen sense of humour, even when things got into a bit of a fankle. On the very odd occasion when he got things wrong, he acknowledged his mistakes and quickly got things moving on.

If Eric handles the other Conferences and attendant presidential duties in the same way as he handled us he'll have no problems. He'll make a much better job of the UNISON Presidency than Donald Trump might make of the USA version.

Well done Eric - and thanks from Scotland!

We paid tribute to Eric's handling of the Conference in the last issue of MAC Senior. Our thoughts are with his children Jack and Rhian, family, friends and colleagues.

In this MAC Senior ...

- Men are now doing it in their sheds all over Scotland
- Bosses to be made to pay for cold-calling
- Is the "Ageing Time Bomb" a myth?
- State Pension under attack again
- Get help staying warm this winter
- The 2017 Scottish Retired Members Conference

Non-UK workers contribute so much to Scotland

Close examination shows that there are few Scottish public service that will not be affected by the Brexit decision.

Health/Social Care

There is poor workforce data on EU nationals in Scotland but estimates suggest 4% of our NHS nurses and Midwives and 1400 are from EU countries.

Dentistry might reflect these figures - and Scottish Care which represents private care home providers estimates 14 to 16% of their workers were born in other EU countries.

Local Government

Another concern is the loss of EU funding for Scottish Public Services. For example, in the last 4 years £127m has been assigned to assist with projects initiated by Scottish Councils - £46m of this in the last financial year.

COSLA has called for this funding to be replicated in extent and in terms of certainty over a 7-year funding programme.

Universities/Colleges

Universities and Colleges across Scotland have expressed a range of concerns over research funding, student numbers and free movement of teaching staff.

There are also indications that Scottish energy companies are delaying or reconsidering investment decisions.

Are there any BREXIT opportunities?

It's maybe difficult to comprehend - but surely it isn't all bad news

Dave's report notes that while there is an inevitable emphasis on the risks, there may also be some opportunities.

In a 'Hard Brexit' scenario, EU Law constraints that have caused us difficulties in areas like procurement and State Aid could come to an end.

We'll just have to wait and see, won't we ...



UNISON's submissions have emphasised the value that EU migrants bring to the country. A recent TUC report shows that EU migrants contribute £2bn a year more in taxes than they get back



Dave Watson's conclusion

"There remains a high degree of uncertainty over the impact of Brexit on UNISON members in Scotland. The absence of a clear UK Government strategy is adding to the uncertainty.

We are contributing to the work UNISON is undertaking on a UK basis and working with a range of partners in Scotland to identify the risks and opportunities for our members"

Cold calling bosses will now be made to pay ...

Are you fed up of being phoned by cold-calling sales personnel - just when your sitting down to your tea or watch your favourite television programme? Well, there's been some success at last for those who have been campaigning against nuisance telephone calls!



The Government has taken action against cold-calling companies following the 'Calling time on Nuisance Calls' campaign launched by the Silver Voices Organisation. Over 460,000 SV supporters signed their petition and helped them achieve this massive victory.

Company bosses now face fines of up to £500,000 when their company is caught bombarding people with nuisance calls. The new rules will also stop rogue bosses by-passing the rules and dodging fines by closing one business and starting a new one.

The Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) will be able to issue a fine of up to £500,000 to the company and a further £500,000 fine to the people running it.

This is a huge step forward in the fight against nuisance calls but it isn't over yet. Our big concern is whether the Law will be translated into action.

Are you happy that rogue bosses could be faced with a £500,000 fine? Silver Voices are anxious to hear what supporters think Go to <http://www.silvervoices.co.uk/> for more information



The 2017 Scottish Retired Members Conference

Arrangements are well underway for the Scottish Retired Members Conference 2017. It will be held on Wednesday 29 March at the STUC in Glasgow as usual.

We've decided against hustings this year, although there will be Local Council elections in May. Instead our main focus in the morning session will be on integrated social care with speakers to be confirmed. The afternoon will again be devoted to workshops covering a range of current topics including funeral poverty.

The 2017 Scottish Retired Members Conference

will be held on **Wed. 29th March 2017**
at the **STUC Offices**
333 Woodlands Rd. Glasgow

Full details and Delegate Nomination forms will be sent out to branches early in the new Year. Make sure to ask your Branch Secretary to pass on the nomination papers to your Retired Members Section when they arrive.

Places are limited so you need to get your name in early to be guaranteed a place.

Put the date in your diary NOW!

Men are now doing it in sheds all over Scotland



Originally started in Australia, the Mens' Sheds idea is now catching on in Scotland. The project aims specifically at men aged 50 years and over. It provides a space both indoors and outdoors where men can work together on a range of practical activities.

Sheds are managed locally. Activities are loosely 'structured' and can be anything from woodworking, repairing things and gardening. Members can put their skills and experience to good use, share their knowledge or learn new skills. **Some just want to put the world to rights over a cup of tea and a biscuit.**

Members usually come from a wide variety of backgrounds - ranging from highly skilled to those with little or no experience - but all working together with a role for everyone.

Some groups have retired or budding chefs who share their culinary experience. Not only do the others learn how to create healthy, tasty and cheaper meals - but they then sit down



Dumfries Mens' Shed

afterwards and share a meal with the lads.

Other Sheds have their own gardens or polytunnels and are growing their own vegetables which are used in the Shed kitchen. The excess is sold off to shedders to help fundraising.

Scientific research gives men the perfect excuse to join their mates in a Shed. A leading psychologist claims men's health and well-being are greatly improved if they see their friends a couple of times a week.

Professor Robin Dunbar of Oxford University claim that while 'talking with mates' on a daily basis is valuable, to experience the real benefits of friendship men must meet up in person twice a week with four friends and 'do stuff'.

There are now about 70 Mens' Sheds operating or in development across Scotland. For information on where to find one near you visit the Scottish Mens' Sheds Association website

<http://scottishmsa.org.uk/>

The benefits of joining the Men in Sheds?

It gives participants the chance to ...

- Make new friends
- Learn new skills such as DIY and cooking
- Put practical skills to good use and also share them with others
- Try something new and learn new skills. Support their local community
- Experience the fun and camaraderie of working with other men
- Learn about other activities and services in the area
- Support and encourage other men to get involved
- To enjoy the Shed, have a laugh and have something to look forward to on a regular basis
- Maybe just to sit down and have a blether and a cup of tea with friends

Useful links ...



The Triple-Lock and Winter Fuel payment

The Westminster Parliament's Work and Pensions Committee report on 'Intergenerational Fairness' has been published recently - and it makes interesting reading.

Although maybe not as damaging as some predicted the report enhances standard stereotypes of senior citizens doing 'just fine' at the expense of the young.

Following BREXIT, it is likely to drive another wedge between the generations

For more information go to

[http:// www.silvervoices.co.uk/](http://www.silvervoices.co.uk/)

Keep yourself up to date with UNISON in Scotland

So much of what we all do these days is done through the internet - and we "silver surfers" are more than likely to be at the fore. To keep yourself up-to-date with all that is happening in UNISON in Scotland visit the UNISON website ...

<http://www.unison-scotland.org/equalities/retired-members/>

<http://www.unison-scotland.org/>

Is the "Ageing Timebomb" simply a myth?

Allyson Pollock, Professor of Public Health at Queen Mary University (London) has

published an article challenging the notion that the ageing population is placing unsustainable pressures on the health and social care system (the so-called demographic or ageing time-bomb).

This is another interesting article. It was published by the Socialist Health Association and can be accessed on the following link -

<http://www.sochealth.co.uk/2016/11/14/myth-demographic-time-bomb/>

NOTE - If you come across anything on the internet which you think might interest others ... drop us a line and we'll share it with others.

Another attack on the State Pension ...

The Government has charged former CBI Director General John Cridland to conduct a further review into the State Pension Age (SPA). An interim report in October set the context for the review and gave background information on the financial sustainability of the State pension scheme and the growing elderly population.

His final report is expected in 2017. Given the tenor of the interim report we can expect recommendations to accelerate the rise in the SPA. This is already set to rise to 67 for men and women by 2028 and to 68 by 2044.

International comparisons in the report are interesting - in terms of what is included and what is missing. Comparisons are made with other developed nations (OECD countries) and it is obvious that the UK is already at the upper end of the SPA range. The average SPA in developed countries is currently only 64 and will rise to only 65.5 by 2060! Slovenia has the lowest SPA at 59 which will not rise to 60 until after 2050. **Only the UK, Ireland and the Czech Republic have legislated for an SPA as high as 68.**

Cridland ignores a key comparison - the actual level of the state pension. This is hardly surprising as the UK ranks 32nd out of 34 OECD countries in terms of state pension.

Only senior citizens in Mexico and Chile are facing worse prospects. The level of the state pension should be a fundamental consideration in looking at the state pension age but Cridland clearly doesn't want to discomfort the Government in this respect.

The report provides some useful information on the variations in life expectancy both geographically and by class which we will cover in a future briefing. It concludes by throwing out a few interesting ideas for consultation, including ...

- Possible early access to the state pension after a long working life (e.g. after 50 qualifying years)
- Possible early access to recognise certain occupations where there is a lower life expectancy (e.g. some manual occupations) or to accommodate regional variations in life expectancy
- Possible early access to a reduced state pension (e.g. someone who was entitled to £155 pw at 65 could claim a state pension of £120 pw at age 60)

(Summary from Silver Voices)

SILVER VOICES is a national membership organisation launched for senior citizens. It campaigns on the Social Care crisis and NHS. To be fair, it concentrates its focus on the services in England & Wales and although these are devolved functions in Scotland, much of its material is well-worth reading.

There's an annual subscription - but it's only £8.00/year.

Check it out at www.silvervoices.co.uk . if you want to know a bit more



SILVER VOICES

MAC's favourite Xmas cracker joke

Q. Why will your Xmas dinner be different after BREXIT?

A. BECAUSE THERE WILL BE NO BRUSSELS (Boom! Boom!)



there
for you supporting UNISON members
when life gets tough

Get help staying warm this winter

With rising fuel costs and another cold winter many members are worried about how they're going to pay this year's winter fuel bills.

Help is on hand

"There for You" has set up a limited fund to help UNISON members on low income by way of a one-off payment of up to £50.

To apply and download the application form visit unison.org.uk/thereforyou or simply contact your UNISON branch office.



UNISON
the public service union

There for you is the working name of UNISON Welfare, a registered charity supported by UNISON the trade union. Registered charity no. 1029332/50038305

Season Greetings to everyone

It's that time of year when we look back at the last 12 months and begin to look forward to the new year.

What have we to look back on?

We've had the continuing Brexit debacle and the major uncertainty that has followed. No matter your political persuasion it's getting clearer that it hasn't been too good for all of us ...

Meanwhile ... across the pond ...

There's been the election of Donald Trump! It was the most bad-tempered and fractious election I've ever experienced anywhere! The signs there are also not too good!

To use an old Glasgow

expression - **"He's loonie that hisnae been caught!"**

What can we look forward to?

Most predictions are that Brexit will cost us dearly. The Government will be forced to make cuts (not that this lot need much forcing). Pensioners' benefits are easy targets. Free bus passes - carers and heating allowances - are likely to be questioned.

We must be prepared to oppose any attacks on these. When that time comes, **will you join us in the fight?**

All our best wishes for 2017!

It looks as though you are going to need them ...

MAC Senior is produced and published by the
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Contact RM Secretary, Marie Macrae (mariem2248@googlemail.com) if you have any comments.