

# MAC SENIOR

UNISON

Issue No 11 - Oct 2015

## The 2015 National Retired Members Conference

The 2015 National Retired Members Conference was held in Brighton on 6th/7th October. Going from the published agenda, the business was fairly predictable. The same old motions calling for the same old things ... nobody really disagreeing with anyone else.

Conference is restricted to issues which directly and primarily affect older persons. As a result, business had a predictable and rather boring look about it. It covered the 'usual pensioners' issues' - Pensions Levels : Fuel Poverty : Free Travel for the Elderly - which

seemed simply to underline existing policies. Some were related so were composited.

There were no contentious issues so little or no debate. Everyone agreeing with everyone else. It was so unlike any Conference we'd attended over years in NALGO or UNISON!



Well done, Wendy!

Conference was chaired by UNISON's National President, Wendy Nichols who was elected at the 2015 annual conference in Glasgow. This was the first full Conference she has chaired as President and she did an excellent job.

'Welcome to Brighton' - We had a good speech from the Lynda Hyde, Mayor of Brighton & Hove. Good because it was short, but more importantly it wasn't just the usual "Welcome and I hope you enjoy your stay and spend freely in our city".

Despite being a Tory, the Mayor voiced her full support for Public Services and for those who sought to protect and provide the services in the current difficult economic climate and in the face of Government cuts.



The Scottish section of the Conference seating - taken as delegates voted on one of the motions. The Conference Chair only counted hands raised clutching the bright orange voting card



Seasoned Delegates may have noticed that Conference was larger than in previous years.

In his Conference address, UNISON's General Secretary Dave Prentis noted the increasing size and commented on how it reflected the developing role of the Retired Membership.

He also observed that taken as a single entity, UNISON's RM membership (170,000 strong) would be the 7th largest Trade Union in the UK. We had around 600 delegates - 50 or so from Scotland.

### Care Home Visiting Service

A motion from Scottish Region had sought to establish an independent Care Home Visiting Service to oversee Care Homes (in much the same way as Prison Visiting Committees do for Prisons). However, it was ruled as "not specific to Conference" by the Standing Orders Committee as it was **not restricted to older persons**.

### Promote Retired Membership

Do you have a Branch AGM soon? We have 2 brightly coloured pull-up banners which you can borrow to promote your Retired members section? They are aimed at working members who are just about to retire.

If you want to use one, contact Margaret Cusack at West Campbell St. (tel.0141 342 2872)



## Emergency Motion

Taxpayers Alliance - 'Enemy of the Pensioners'

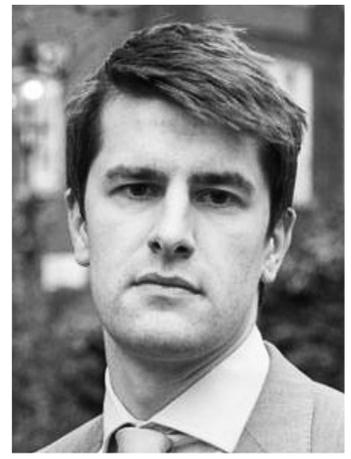
Perhaps the most lively discussion of the Conference centred on the NRMC Emergency motion on The Taxpayers Alliance

## Just Who are they?

One speaker - our old friend Jimmy Porter from Norfolk (right) drew applause from Conference by asking "Just who are the TaxPayers Alliance? Who do they represent? How are they appointed ... and more importantly who funds them?".

# Taxpayers Alliance urges "Cut Pensioners' Benefits as SOON AS POSSIBLE"

Scottish Delegates sought to raise an emergency motion on comments made at a Conservative Party Conference Fringe meeting on Monday 5th October by Alex Wild from The Taxpayers Alliance (right). Unfortunately, 'administrative procedures' for submitting emergency motions didn't allow us to get the motion in by the deadline. However, the issue was taken up by the National RM Committee who introduced their own motion.



## Tory Party Fringe comments

Addressing the Tory faithful in Manchester, Mr Wild urged the Government to make cuts in the winter fuel allowance, free bus passes, the Christmas bonus and the other pensioner benefits as soon as possible. His reasoning, was that "some of the people won't be around to vote against you at the next election. That's just a practical point, and the other point is they might have forgotten by then".

Conference Delegates voted unanimously to accept the National Council's Motion condemning Alex Wild and calling for the TPA to remove him from his post. The motion also called for the Prime Minister to dissociate the Conservative Party from such comments and that the TaxPayers Alliance be removed from invitations to future Conservative Party events.



## TPA comments 'despicable'

Speaking to Conference, Dave Prentis said "The comments by the Alex Wild from the Taxpayers' Alliance are despicable. His remarks are disrespectful to the millions of pensioners who have paid more than their share in taxes down the years, helped build their communities, educated our young people, looked after the sick and the elderly, and kept our public services running."

## Tax Help for the Elderly motion run out of time

Unfortunately the one Scottish Motion which introduced 'something different' - on Tax Help for the Elderly - was not heard as Conference run out of time on the Wednesday afternoon.



This sought UNISON's support for the charitable organisation by that name which gives free advice to older persons.

The motion arose from the workshop session run by the organisation's Scottish Regional Coordinator at the 2015 Scottish Retired members Conference.

The NRMC had agreed to support our motion if it had been debated - so we are confident that they will now take it on board for action.

## Never too old to Agitate, Educate and Organise

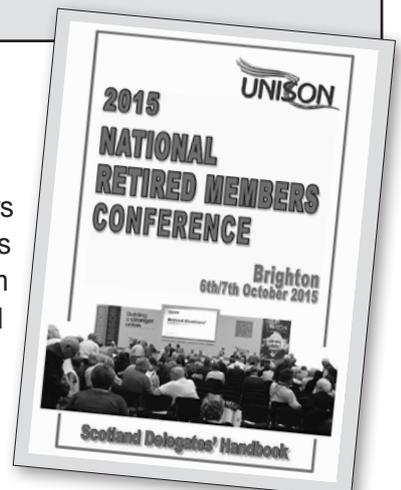
One motion which struck a chord was headed "Never too old to Agitate, Educate and Organise".

Dave Prentis also expressed similar sentiments when he encouraged Retired Members to play a bigger part in UNISON. Leaving employment doesn't mean switching off.

The SRMC recently produced a leaflet which aims to encourage members who are about to retire to continue in membership and to remain actively involved.

## Scottish Delegates Handbook

The Scottish Region Retired Members Committee again issued a "Delegates Handbook" to all of the delegates from north of the border. It was aimed primarily at new or inexperienced delegates and offered a range of tips or advice on Conference procedures.



Dave Prentis tells Conference

## “UNISON needs our Retired Members”

UNISON's General Secretary Dave Prentis paid tribute to the work done by Retired Members Sections in his address to Conference. He acknowledged the work retired members have done to make this great union of ours what it is today.

“Retired Members are an asset to this union and should be utilised by regions and branches You continue to support your working colleagues and they now need your help to fight the Trade Union Bill. I know that you agree with me that our members should be given the respect they deserve for the vital jobs they do instead of having their right to be represented and supported by their trade union taken away.”

“The Trade Union Bill, now being discussed at Westminster, has serious implications for your working colleagues and the union which you built. He urged delegates to help UNISON in the fight to drop the Bill.

He urged delegates to “please pass on this message to as many of your retired colleagues as you can.”

“I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all that you have done for our union in the past and continue to do. Together we are stronger!”



## Scottish Speakers did well

A number of delegates from Scotland spoke well in debates. While most of the contributions were on minor points, Marie Macrae and Sue Chalmers spoke well speaking on “Delayed Discharge from Hospital by Elderly Patients” and “End of Life with Dignity”.



Dundee's Ron Kerr spoke well to support the motion on “Raising Awareness of Prostate Cancer Treatment Inequalities for older men”.



Bob Revie

A quick glance around confirmed it was easy to agree with Dave Prentis on the continuing involvement of ‘activists’.

### A couple of Bobs

Liam Chalmers from Dumfries & Galloway Branch commented “I hadn't been to a Union conference for some years and it was pleasing to spy a few faces from ‘yesterday’.



Bob Deacon

Former Scottish NEC **Bob Revie** from Aberdeen was in the Scottish contingent. while another Bob (Deacon) - formerly Lothian Region is still fighting the good fight in Wolverhampton



Scottish delegates listen intently to one of the debates. It must have been a good one .... As far as we can see, none of them had fallen asleep.

**Campaigning doesn't always mean rushing off to demos in London, Glasgow or Edinburgh. Most UNISON Campaigns can be supported by Retired Members at local level. Why not offer to help collect signatures for petitions ... lobby your MP, MSP or local Councillor ... write to the local paper on a range of issues.**

## The Trade Union Bill

The Trade Union Bill is unfair, unnecessary and undemocratic. MPs need to focus on the real problems the country faces and talk to us about how we can work together for a better future. UNISON is campaigning with the TUC and other unions to oppose this attack on the rights of working people.

## The Living Wage

The idea behind a living wage is very simple: that a person should be paid enough to live decently and to adequately provide for their family. At its heart is an ethical argument for preventing in-work poverty and ensuring workers are not exploited through low wages.

## Tax credit cuts: a penalty on work

An average household in receipt of tax credits will lose a whopping £1,350 a year when they are cut in April 2016. Many ordinary working people can't afford this loss – tax credits are helping them to keep themselves afloat UNISON believes in that people should be paid a wage that they can live on.

You can find out more about UNISON's campaigns at [unison.org.uk/](http://unison.org.uk/)

# Scottish Birthday Girls in Fire Scare ...

Conference was fairly predictable with no major surprises. There was a surprise for Rose Jackson and Sue Chalmers at the Scottish Region meeting, however, when Marie MacRae presented them with a lovely birthday iced cake (complete with candles).

Marie told us "When we learned that they both had birthdays this week we thought it would be a nice surprise. The only concern was that the Centre's Fire Safety Officer stopped us from putting the correct number of candles on it".



Our photo shows Rose cutting the cake with a 60:40 split while Sue finishes off the candles

## Sue and the Standing Orders Committee

Regional RM Secretary was none too pleased when the Standing Orders Committee rejected one of our amendments. We were trying simply to correct the title of the motion on "Delayed discharge from hospital **by** Elderly Patients" - to read "**of** Elderly Patients". Simple ... and sensible!

SO Committee Chair Ralph Murray (left) ruled that the rules don't allow us to change the title of a motion. We can amend a motion - but not the title!



Despite arguing strongly at the SO Committee meeting - the rather bemused Sue had to admit defeat.



## Conference business

### Who says these things don't concern us?

At the Scottish Region Delegates meeting on the Tuesday afternoon, delegates seemed to be agreed that we need to extend Conference business to allow discussion on issues which are classed as 'Citizenship Matters'.

As it stands, motions have to be 'directly and primarily affecting older persons'. Many felt this is restrictive and tends just to regurgitate old arguments and discussion.

Why shouldn't we discuss the developing threat to all of us from the war in Syria? Why not the growing humanitarian crisis caused by the influx of migrants into the European Community? Or renewal of the Trident Missile Defence System?



What makes them think that these images don't concern just because we're that bit older?

Anyone with a social conscience should be touched by images such as these. Wider international issues do affect us. They will affect our children, our grandchildren.

**Addressing Conference, Dave Prentis urged Retired Members to be more active and play a full part in UNISON. Can he seriously suggest that we can if we are to be restricted simply to "old persons' matters?"**

## Conference Workshops

### Great session on TTIP ... but, oh, the others ...

The Tuesday afternoon Conference session was taken up with a series of workshops. Delegates were asked to select from several topics ...

#### ● Media Skills

Opinions suggest the group session on "Media Skills" was uninspiring. The group explored Facebook, Twitter and a series of other communication tools but the session was rather disjointed. The problem is that if you knew what the presenter was talking about you were perhaps okay .... if you didn't you were none the wiser. The session was chaired by SRMC member Rose Jackson)

#### ● Save Care Now Campaign

The "Save Care Now Campaign" is aimed at English & Welsh Authorities so didn't appear to attract any Scottish delegates.

We received no reports on the other workshops viz. **General Update on Pension** and **Fighting Against Dementia** We don't even know if any of the Scottish delegates attended either of them.

#### ● Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership" (TTIP)

By contrast, the panel debate on (TTIP) was good. It was highly informative. and according to one report "could easily have taken up twice as much time". TTIP is a comprehensive free trade and investment treaty currently being negotiated – in secret – between the European Union and the USA. It is a major threat to public services (see page 5)

# What is TTIP and why oppose it?

**Why we should be scared of TTIP - very scared indeed ...**

The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is a series of trade negotiations being carried out mostly in secret between the EU and US. As a bi-lateral trade agreement, TTIP is about reducing the regulatory barriers to trade for big business, things like food safety law, environmental legislation, banking regulations and the sovereign powers of individual nations. John Hilary of War on Want, said it is "an assault on European and US societies by transnational corporations."

The negotiation process has been secretive and undemocratic. This secrecy is on-going, with nearly all information coming from leaked documents and Freedom of Information requests.

The secret nature of the talks are maybe the least of our problems. Other good reasons why we should be scared of TTIP are ...

## TTIP is a direct threat to our public services

One of the main aims of TTIP is to open up Europe's public health, education and water services to US companies. This could essentially mean the privatisation of the NHS.

## Food and environmental safety

TTIP will seek to bring EU standards on food safety and the environment closer to those of the US. But US regulations are much less strict, with regard to GM ingredients, pesticides and growth hormones.

## The Environment

EU's regulations on potentially toxic substances are far tougher. In Europe a company has to prove a substance is safe before it can be used. In the US the opposite is true. Any substance can be used until it is proven unsafe. The EU currently bans 1,200 substances from use in cosmetics - the US bans just 12.

## Banking regulations

TTIP cuts both ways. Under the influence of the City of London, the UK is thought to be seeking a loosening of US banking regulations.

America's financial rules - put into place after the financial crisis to curb the powers of bankers and avoid it happening again - are tougher than ours. TTIP will remove

those restrictions, effectively handing all those powers back to the bankers.

## Individual Privacy

The Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement - widely viewed as an attack on individual privacy - was thrown out by a massive majority in the European Parliament in 2012. TTIP could mean easing of data privacy laws and a restriction of public access to pharmaceutical companies' clinical trials.

## Jobs & Employment

TTIP will almost certainly cause unemployment as jobs switch to the US where labour standards and trade union rights are lower.

## Democracy

TTIP's biggest threat is to democracy. It aims to bring in Investor-State Dispute Settlements, which allow companies to sue Governments if those Governments' policies cause a loss of profits. In effect it means unelected transnational corporations can dictate the policies of democratically elected Governments.

**So we should all be scared. We could vote against TTIP, except... we can't. We have no say in whether TTIP goes through or not. All we can do is tell as many people about it as possible. We must oppose this attack on democracy and not just suffer in silence.**



## Advance Notice

The 2016 Scottish Retired Members Conference

**will be held on**

**Wed. 13th April 2016 in the**

**STUC Offices**

333 Woodlands Rd. Glasgow

**Full details and Delegate nomination forms will be sent out to branches by the beginning of February - but why not put the date in your diary NOW!**

## Two Motions for UNISON 2016 National Delegates Conference

The National Retired Members Committee can submit 2 motions to the National Delegates Conference each year. These motions are decided by a ballot at the conclusion of the Retired Members Conference. The 'winners' in this year's ballot were :-

Motion 2

**Increase in the Basic State Pension**

Motion 12

**Free Social Care in England**

These two will go to the Annual Delegates Conference in June 2016

## Contributions Please

We hope to publish 3 or 4 Issues of MAC Senior during the year. With that in mind. we welcome articles from RM Sections or individuals.

Send your comments or contributions to ....

Sue Chalmers on [suechalmers.sky.com](mailto:suechalmers.sky.com)

**UNISON is holding an election this year to choose who will be General Secretary and lead the union for the next five years.**

**If you're a UNISON member, it's time to be heard and use your vote in the ballot, which opens on 9 November.**

**There's no bigger role in the union than that of general secretary.**

**It's one of the most high-profile jobs in the country – leader of the largest public service trade union in the UK and the leading voice of more than 1.3 million public service workers.**

## **The Scottish Region Retired Members Committee**

**Retired Members affairs in Scotland are overseen by the Scottish Retired members Committee (SRMC). The Committee is made up of 16 members who are elected by ballot at the UNISON Regional Delegates' meeting in April each year.**

**Each Scottish Branch can nominate one individual for the Committee.** Nominations must be endorsed and submitted by **UNISON Branches (not Retired Members Sections)** on the appropriate nomination form. Talk to your UNISON Branch Secretary if you wish to clarify the procedure.

**MAC Senior is produced and published by the UNISON Scottish Retired Members Committee. Contact RM Secretary, Sue Chalmers 01387 267647 (e-mail suechalmers@sky.com) if you have any questions or comment.**



**The election for the post of General Secretary of UNISON will start on 9th November. Trade Union legislation determines that the position has to be appointed by ballot of the whole membership on a 5-yearly basis.**

**The four candidates who have been nominated are:-**

**Roger Bannister**, Knowsley branch, nominated by 25 branches.

**John Burgess**, Barnet Local Government branch, nominated by 62 branches and 1 regional council.

**Dave Prentis**, General Secretary, nominated by 204 branches, 8 regional councils, 6 service groups and the national executive council.

**Heather Wakefield**, UNISON national (staff) branch, nominated by 81 branches, 1 regional council and 1 service group.

**The ballot papers will be sent to members' homes or other notified address, starting on 9th November.**

**The ballot closes on 4th December.**

When Government ministers or employers sit down with our elected General Secretary, they know they're dealing with someone with 1.3 million trade unionists behind them.

It gives us political clout. It helps UNISON get things done. That's why it's vitally important all our members cast their votes.

The UNISON rule book names the General Secretary as the "principal officer" of the union. Our rules, and trade union legislation, say UNISON has to elect its general secretary every five years.

**All UNISON members, including Retired Members, who were in membership on 9th August 2015, have the right to vote in this important election.**

When you get your ballot paper ....

**Make sure you use your vote!**

**Voting is very important. You need to make sure your General Secretary represents UNISON and you.**

The outcome will have a tremendous effect on the future of our union – use your vote and encourage your colleagues to do the same.

It's your union and your vote counts. Be heard – use your vote in UNISON's General Secretary election.



**Some of the Scottish Retired members Committee - at their recent meeting in Edinburgh. The Committee elects its Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary from within its number. This year's Chair is Peter McCann and the Secretary is Sue Chalmers**