

your friend at work



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## Disclaimer

The articles in this newsletters do not necessarily reflect the views of UNISON or the Region ...

# EDITORIAL

*Paul Foster*



As the new boy, it might be a good idea to introduce myself. My name is Paul Foster; I work for Walsall Hospitals NHS Trust and have been an active member of that branch for four Years (told you I was the new boy) for the past two years I have held the post of Communications Officer within the branch. In my spare time, when I am not working or taking part in union activities, I find time to be a school governor at the school my two oldest boys attend.

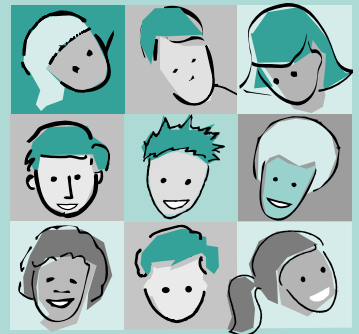
Although I work for the NHS and some times seem totally wrapped up in the issues that are effecting the health service today, such as Agenda for Change, PFI and Foundation Hospitals – I am up to date with the issues that affect Local Government thanks to my long suffering wife and best friend Jayne, who works for Walsall MBC where she is a Branch Officer and Health and Safety Rep. I look forward

to finding out more about the issues that affect the other service groups.

I would like to offer my congratulations to Rebecca Dalton and Bob Deacon who as well as myself have been elected to the West Midlands Regional Newsheet team for National Delegation Conference 2004. I look forward to working with both Rebecca and Bob.

That's enough about myself. I had better get on with the job I have been elected to, which is of course to edit this great newsletter (not to biased as you see). Finally, those of you who know me will be surprised that I have not mentioned rugby in any way in this editorial, until now, as I am a self confessed rugby addict. Hope you carry on enjoying the Midland Messenger.

**Paul Foster**  
Editor



## your friend at work

Recruitment is key to maintaining the strength and influence of UNISON. The more members we have, the more our voice is heard. With that in mind UNISON has produced a new range of recruitment materials around the theme of "Your friend at work". As well as brand new application forms there are coasters, carrier bags, stickers, pens, T shirts and much more.

### To order either:-

- Phone 08701 555568 (if your branch is registered for phone ordering)
- [www.unison.org.uk](http://www.unison.org.uk)
- For priced items fax 020 7551 1461

# NEC Members Report to West Midlands Region Annual Report

Recent months have seen a couple of changes within the West Midlands group of NEC members. Lin Holder took early retirement at the end of 2003 and has moved to a quiet country cottage in Shropshire. Lin was a member of the NEC for three and a half years and had also been a branch secretary and section officer within the Birmingham Local Government branch. Her retirement was, in terms of age, very 'early' so we are hoping that Lin will return to involvement in our movement through various voluntary bodies in the near future.

The election to replace her has just been completed with Eleanor Smith elected unopposed. Eleanor has started her period of office straight away. Eleanor will be well known as an Assistant Regional Convenor and co-chair of the West

Midlands Black Members' Self Organised Group. She also represents the region on the West Midlands TUC and is a delegate to the Regional Health Committee. You will also find her within the Labour Link (APF) organisation, representing the West Midlands on the conference Standing Orders Committee. In her spare time, she is branch secretary for the Birmingham Women's Trust branch, a chair of school governors and the chair of her Labour Party constituency.

So the West Midlands NEC group is now numbering six;

**Annette Place**

**Eleanor Smith**

**Graeme Horn**

**Sandra Dean**

**Malcolm Cantello**

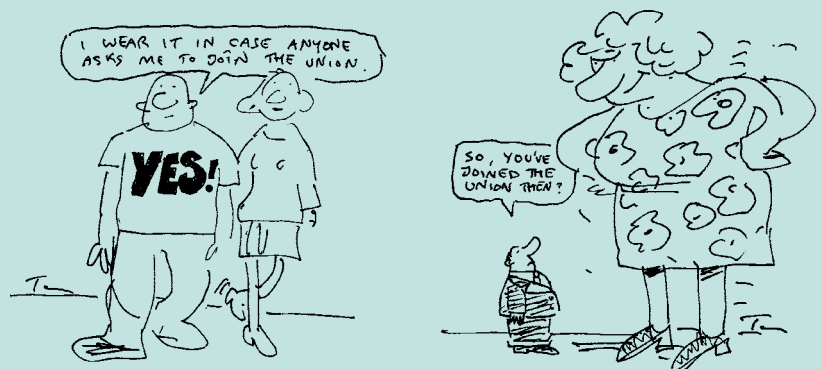
**John Flynn**

This year we have also extended our presence on the key national strategic committees which conduct much of the detailed business of the NEC.

Annette was elected chair of the General Political Fund Committee. John Flynn has for many years been the chair of the Finance and Resource Management Committee, making him effectively the Chancellor of the Exchequer for UNISON. Your points of contact for the strategic committees are :

- **Development and Organisation**  
John
- **Policy Development and Campaigns**  
Graeme & Annette
- **Services To Members**  
Malcolm
- **Finance and Resource Management**  
John, Malcolm and Sandra
- **International**  
Sandra Dean

## Cartoon strip



## NEC Members Report continued...

### • Education and Training

Annette

These committees are important in the next few months for branches putting forward motions and amendments to Annual Conference. The NEC's policy is largely determined by the strategic committees. So if you want to know what the NEC will be doing and saying about your motions, contact your relevant NEC members.

This next year will be

an intensive one for us. Annette's GPF committee is preparing a major advertising campaign for UNISON coupled with a widespread recruitment strategy. The June elections will be a focal point for defending public services and opposing the BNP. Then there is the conference season with an opportunity for UNISON to press its policies at the TUC and Labour Party conferences. Then we go into the Political Fund

ballot. Meantime, all our services are pressing on Agenda For Change, Pay Claims and the whole range of issues.

Though daunting, this period is one to look forward to provided can we engage our branches and members in standing up for our union and our policies. It is time for our new union to come of age.

**Graham Horn**

NEC member

## CAMPAIGNING AGAINST THE BNP

Unfortunately, the British National Party won four Council seats in last year's local elections and are hoping to take many more in the local elections of June 2004.

UNISON members will know that the British National Party is completely opposed to everything that UNISON stands for and notably our position to racism in all its forms, our upholding of rights at work and of decent spending in public services.

Having said that, in their elections last year, BNP candidates for local

Councils presumably failed to deal with their stance on these issues in an attempt to fool people into thinking that they were "middle of the road" candidates. It is important that we are not fooled!

This year, Council elections will be held on 10<sup>th</sup> June and on the same day will be the European elections. UNISON is commencing a campaign to inform all people of the dangers the BNP and related parties (National Front, New Party, Democratic Party etc.) pose. They are certainly hoping

to pick up at least one European seat as well as other Council seats.

UNISON will be working with other bodies including the Labour Party, Unity and with the respected anti fascist and racist magazine Searchlight to flag up these issues

More information will be supplied to members between now and the election in June.

**Terry Clark**

Chair - Campaign And Communications Standing Committee



**The Region recently welcomed a Colombian Trade Unionist, Luis Garcia, who is on a speaking tour of Britain.**

Luis works as a delivery driver for Coca Cola and is a member of SINALTRAINAL, the union that represents food workers in Colombia.

Luis spoke movingly about the repression and intimidation faced by trade unionists in Colombia, which includes the kidnapping of activists.

He spoke particularly of

the situation in Coca Cola plants, which led the union to take the company to the US courts and organise an international boycott of Coca Cola.

Luis told of colleagues who had been murdered inside the plant itself, by paramilitaries saying that it has been encouraged by Coca Cola management.

To date, five trade union activists in Coca Cola plants have been assassinated and many others threatened or warned to leave the area.

Luis himself was arrested and imprisoned for 6 months on alleged terrorist charges, which were unsurprisingly dropped on

the day he went to court.

Luis also emphasised the vital role trade unionists in other countries have in supporting Luis and his comrades. When asked how our support helped, he put it quite simply "it makes it harder for them to kill us and get away with it!"

During his visit to Wolverhampton, Luis was presented with a gift by the Local Government Branch. (the choice of gift may not be to everyone's taste, a Wolves shirt!)

Luis also visited Dudley Hospitals Branch (see photo) who agreed a £200 donation to the campaign.

The Regional International Forum also made a



Watch out for the FAIRTRADE Mark

**You should have seen it on products on the shelves at the supermarket.**

Choosing foods with the FAIRTRADE mark can help change lives.

It was introduced to ensure a better deal for growers and small-scale producers in developing countries, by being guaranteed prices that always cover the cost of

production, no matter how low world prices drop.

A premium is also paid, thus enabling them to invest in their communities and businesses. The workers and growers decide which project will benefit from this income; it could build roads, schools, health facilities or community developments.

For a producer or grower to receive the licence

donation of £200. The murder of trade unionists and social activists continues in Colombia, which continues to be the most dangerous country in the world for trade unionists. UNISON has a proud record of supporting Colombian trade unionists and

if you would like to help or offer support contact your local UNISON office or for further information on Colombian Solidity contact [www.colombiasolidarity.org.uk](http://www.colombiasolidarity.org.uk)



Luis Garcia is pictured here receiving his unique UNISON Wolves shirt! and also with the Dudley Hospitals branch

## What does it stand for?

to operate under the FAIRTRADE logo they have to pass a rigid criteria, which includes proper wages for the workers, health and safety procedures and the right to join a Trade Union without fear of retribution.

There are 120 products that can carry the FAIRTRADE mark and the number is increasing. They include wine, chocolate, cocoa,

drinking chocolate, tea, coffee, sugar, fruit and many more.

The large supermarkets all carry some FAIRTRADE products but the number needs to increase.

This is where you can help. By asking the stores to stock items of the FAIRTRADE FOUNDATION you are guaranteeing the communities that produce

these commodities a humane standard of living.

The FAIRTRADE FOUNDATION is celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year so please make it a year to remember, by increasing the sales of FAIRTRADE products.

P.S. The cost of these groceries is a little or nothing more than your usual brands.

# Black Members in UNISON

West Midlands Black members' Self Organised Group

UNISON's black members are clear that our organisation cannot exist in isolation from the rest of the union. Our work involves us in representation and negotiation along side and in partnership with our white colleagues, as well as working together to win benefits for all members of the union.

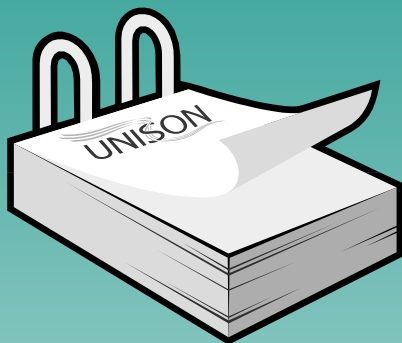
In turn UNISON recognises its responsibility

to pay attention to our particular needs. UNISON promotes and resources the black member self-organisation. We organise at national, regional and branch level. Our regular black members conference brings together black representatives from across the UK.

At branch and regional level UNISON Black Workers Groups are committed to:

- Giving a voice to the needs and priorities of black members.
- Ensuring our needs and priorities are at the centre of the union.
- Playing an important role in recruiting new members.
- Organising around work place issues.
- Being a vital part of lay member power in the union.

## Dates for your diary: Black Members Meetings



Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> April  
Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> July  
Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> October  
Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> November (AGM)

**Venue:** West Midlands Regional Centre,  
24 Livery Street, Birmingham.

For further information on becoming a member contact:

**Eleanor Smith** – Joint Chair

**Klaire Jassell** – Joint Chair

**Ray Salmon** – Regional Organiser

UNISON West Midlands, B.M.S.O.G,  
24 Livery Street, Birmingham, B3 2PA

### Keeping you informed

If you would like to include any points of interest in our next newsletter please contact Sue Higgins B.M.S.O.G Publicity office on:

[susa@higgins6344.freemove.co.uk](mailto:susa@higgins6344.freemove.co.uk)

# ONE DAY UNISON JOB EVALUATION AWARENESS WORKSHOP

Wednesday  
21<sup>st</sup> January  
2004 saw 16  
stewards from  
University Hospital  
Birmingham's  
Branch attend a  
One Day UNISON  
Job Evaluation  
Awareness  
Workshop, held at  
South Birmingham  
College trade Union  
Education Centre.

Mary Locke, University Hospital Birmingham's Education Coordinator, was keen to have the branch take the lead in equipping the branches reps with the resources and information on advising their members on 'What is Job Evaluation?'

West Midlands Regional Officer Ian Mckivett opened the workshop by giving the reps a detailed and informative insight into Job Evaluation and the NHS Job Evaluation scheme. Tutor Greg Chance from south Birmingham College then took the lead in encouraging the

reps to complete group work activities. With the varying Knowledge on Agenda for Change, this proved invaluable. The course content was packed each rep proceeded with enthusiasm. Reps were guided through discussion and debates.

Malkit Tung, one of University Hospital Birmingham's staff side reps, felt the day was invaluable 'I attended this workshop having no idea what a Job Evaluation is. I was pleased that I was able to meet with other reps from my hospital. I came away from the workshop equipped with enough information to now confidently inform my members.'

The day concluded with an activity entitled 'Organising Issues for UNISON'. Collectively the reps were able to draw up an action plan on organising Agenda for Change over the up and coming months.

Sharon Otto, University Hospital Birmingham's Lead Nurse rep and Branch Development Officer, said of the day "I knew that the preparation for Agenda for Change was going to be hard work, but I did not

realise how hard we will have to work to prepare ourselves and our members, I thoroughly enjoyed the day."

Mary Locke said of the day, "The Agenda for Change workshop was hard work but very interesting. I was pleased to see so many of our stewards attend. I hope that other stewards will contact me at UHB UNISON Branch, Joint Office for details of future courses. Our Branch has so many Stewards who all work hard for our members. Agenda for Change could be accepted by the members when we have the second ballot. We need an insight into all aspects of Agenda for Change so that reps can decide which areas they want to be involved in i.e. matching panel, job evaluation etc. So let our Branch be a trailblazer for Agenda for Change Stewards courses in the West Midlands."

**To find out about more  
Agenda for Change  
courses contact:**

Fred Cattle  
UNISON Regional Centre  
Livery Street  
Birmingham



# Israel's apartheid wall of shame

UNISON's solidarity with the plight of the Palestinian people is growing. Several Trade union delegations including UNISON's President, Deputy General Secretary and a group from Birmingham with UNISON members, have visited the occupied territories over the last 2-3 years. UNISON is now affiliated to the Trade Union Friends of Palestine and the Palestine solidarity Campaign. In the absence of a viable peace process the cycle of violence and the brutality and solidarity of the illegal Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, visits and solidarity with the Palestinians is an increasing important part of UNISON's international work.

For the majority of Palestinians with no weapons or means of defence against the daily destruction of their homes, confiscation of land and restriction of movement, hope for the future rests partly on the support of the international community. As with all these solidarity visits the message from the ordinary Palestinian people is the same: they welcome international support to help them tell their story and to bring back eyewitness accounts of what is happening on the ground.

This is symbolised by the construction that began in June 2002, of what the Israeli government calls, the "Security fence". Writing in a British national newspaper Silvan Shalom Israel's Foreign minister and Deputy Prime Minister stated that the sole purpose of the fence is to "prevent suicide bombers and armed terrorists from reaching Israeli cafes, city centres and buses". International observers tell a different story. The fence is in fact a concrete wall up to 8 metres high, with floodlights and electronic detectors. Contrary to Israeli claims it does not follow the 1967 green line (Israeli boarder) but cuts deep into Palestinian territory in a clear violation of international law and the forth Geneva Convention. The town of Qalqilya with its population of 42,000 people for example, is now completely surrounded by the wall: its only entrance point, a bottleneck, controlled by the Israeli army. One of the least publicised effects of the wall has been the loss of Palestinian water supplies. The wall has destroyed water pipes and aquifers. In the Qalqilya and Tulkarm district 30 wells alone have been recorded lost. Estimates say that Israel will

grab anything between 10 to 50% of Palestinian territory by the time the wall is complete.

Many voices describe the wall as a form of 'Apartheid' showing disturbing parallels to the South African Apartheid system of isolating communities into Bantustans and controlling the movement of the population. The challenge for us as UNISON members and activists is to transform expression of solidarity into building the international campaign and involving our members. Our aim should be to: pull down the wall, bring an end to the occupation, secure the right of return of refugees and establish the right of self determination for the Palestinian people. Trade unions and trade unionists played a part in helping to bring down South African apartheid. Now we need to support the Palestinian people in their struggle for peace and justice.

## **Simon Cardy**

Wolverhampton  
General Branch

For more information contact:  
[www.palestinecampaign.org](http://www.palestinecampaign.org) or  
Palestine Solidarity Campaign,  
Box BM, PSA, London, WC1N  
3XX. Tel 020 7700 6192

# Flying the Flag...

## Wearing the T-shirt

Walsall Local Government UNISON member Suraya Oliver was proud to wear her Walsall UNISON T-shirt after competing in the World Triathlon Championship. Suraya, who is rated 7<sup>th</sup> in the world rankings, is pictured on the right with World No. 2 Suzanna Degazon. Last year Suraya competed in Ecuador, Canada and Lithuania, and a small sponsorship cheque

from her union helped towards her air fair.

2004 promises to be equally punishing and there is even a whisper of a Decca triathlon (24 mile swim, 1120mile cycle race and 260 mile run) this year in Hawaii. Walsall Local Government Branch Secretary Reg Evans has offered to accompany her part of the way.... In his car.



Suraya Oliver (on the right) proud to wear her UNISON T-shirt, pictured here with Suzanna Degazon



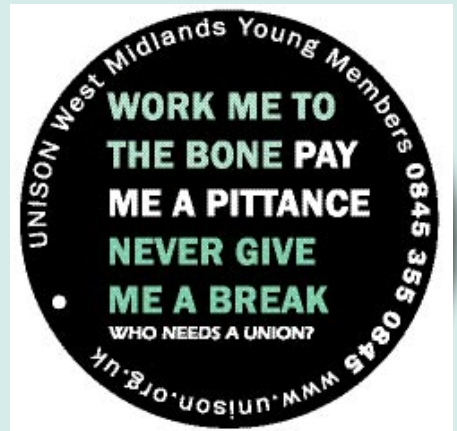
## Young Members Organising our future

Does your Branch have a Young Members Officer or a member that might be interested in the role? If not, does the Branch want to find a young member to take up this post?

The Chair of the Regional Young Members Group, Rebecca Dalton, and the Regional Young Members Contact, Rachael Baker, are available to meet with young members and Branches who would like to find out more about the role of a Young Members Officer.

There is also a lot of opportunity for young members to get together to share experiences and learn more about UNISON through events like the National Young Members Conference (7 – 9 May 2004, Croyde Bay) and the Regional Young Members Weekend (8 –10 October 2004, Birmingham – no charge to branches).

If you would like information on any of the above please contact Rachael Baker on 0121 685 3190



# Young Members Weekend



**YOUNG  
PEOPLE *in*  
UNISON**

**8 - 10th  
October 2004**

Code: 668

This weekend is open to all UNISON members who are under 30 years old and are active or interested in getting involved in UNISON.

It is an opportunity for young people to get together and find out how UNISON works, its policies and how to get involved in the practical work of the union.

**Held at the Copthorne Hotel, Birmingham**

*There is no fee for attending this course*