

National Demonstration Saturday 3 November

March and rally - in central London to celebrate and defend the NHS. Come along with colleagues, family and friends to help UNISON celebrate the fact that, after almost 60 years, the NHS is still largely owned and run by the public sector and send a strong message to the government that we want to keep it that way. For more information ring the Branch Office on 01772 533072.

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EQUAL PAY

Equal Pay is very much the issue of the moment in terms of Local Government workers and, whilst Job Evaluation will eventually put right any inequalities, the completion of this exercise is still some way off. This leaves us with the question – What do we do in the meantime?

We have over the years resolved equal pay issues for many of our members and in early June we wrote to all UNISON members who are Lancashire County Council employees asking them to complete Equal Pay Claim Forms but the number we have received back was below expectations.

Remember, Equal Pay is a right but we cannot make the claim on your behalf unless you take the first step by filling in the form. Successful claimants are entitled to up to six years back pay which, in many cases, will be thousands of pounds. We are also advising our members not to sign up with no-win no-fee lawyers and stay with us. At the end of the day you pay your subs to have your case fought for you by your union and its solicitors at no cost to you at ANY stage – so don't be fooled by the rhetoric.

So, if you are a Teaching Assistant, Library Assistant, Meals-on-Wheels Worker, Community Support Worker,

Rehab Care Assistant, Home Care Assistant or if you are not employed in one of these groups but feel that you may have a claim for equal pay, and you have not received a settlement from Lancashire County Council please return the forms as soon as possible. A copy of the form and a return envelope are enclosed with this newsletter.

Claim in time

Members need to be aware that there are strict time limits to making an equal pay claim – especially if you've left or changed jobs.

You need to claim within six months of leaving the job you were discriminated in. These time limits can start if you leave your employment or change your job with the same employer, if you are promoted or if your job is transferred to a new employer.

The key thing is to contact the Branch Office as soon as possible if:

- You have left your job within the last six months
- You intend to leave your employment in the near future
- You have changed jobs within the last six months or you intend to
- You have been promoted within the last six months or you are due to be promoted
- You have had another change to your contract in the last six months, or are due to have a change, such as changing your hours.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION SCHEME

97.1% vote 'yes' to LGPS

By the time you receive this magazine, the ballot on accepting or rejecting the proposals to change the Local Government Pension Scheme will be over.

However, I thought it would be remiss not to take the opportunity to congratulate not only our negotiators but also you as members for the solid strike action you took last year, the letters written to MPs which kept up the pressure and to those members who lobbied their MPs last November.

The Pensions Campaign has been one of the longest and most successful we have ever undertaken. It was also an issue which was one of the biggest threats. The initial proposals were so

detrimental to our members – with no final salary scheme on the agenda – that to get to where we have is a massive achievement and shows what we can do when we act together,

UNISON members have overwhelmingly backed the new Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) in England and Wales.

Members from across the union - from local government to higher education, transport to police staff, environment agency - voted by a massive 97.1% to support the improved scheme, which will come into effect on 1 April next year.

The consultative ballot saw 166,283 members cast their votes, with 161,421 saying yes to the scheme

LGPS 'ready reckoner' for members

Following the proposed changes to the Local Government Pension Scheme, UNISON, in conjunction with our advisors, has developed a ready reckoner for use by members.

The aim of this reckoner is to allow members to compare their pension benefit entitlements before and after the changes, using scenarios tailored specifically to each member. The modeller is intended to act as a guide to members for illustrative purposes only.

Members should always seek independent financial advice before making any financial decisions relating to their Local Government Pension Scheme pension benefits.

You can download the ready reckoner from www.unison.org.uk

and 4,862 (2.9%) saying no.

The ballot followed years of intense negotiations, action, campaigning and lobbying to protect and

improve members' pension rights.

Carol Lukey
Branch Secretary

EQUAL PAY continued from page 1

If any of these apply to you complete the equal pay enquiry form which

is enclosed with this newsletter and return it to the Branch Office in

the envelope provided. In some cases, a job change won't trigger a time limit – but the only safe course is to assume that time has

started to run!

If you are still working in the same job with the same employer, then the time limits do not apply to you. But contact the Branch Office to find out more information on the local situation.

If you have already had some compensation and signed a 'COT3' (or 'compromise agreement')

your claim up to then has been concluded and can't be re-opened – but you may have a claim for any losses after that. Further information can be supplied by the Branch Office on 01772 533072 (duty desk open Monday to Friday between 1000 and 1600).

Carol Lukey
Branch Secretary



Equal Pay Lobby

Equal pay between men and women is a legal right however, 32 years on from the equal pay act women are still being paid less than men in local government. The single status agreement that was supposed to eradicate pay discrimination has been largely ignored by government due to the high costs involved. This of course is unacceptable and UNISON is fighting to get equal pay onto the government's agenda.

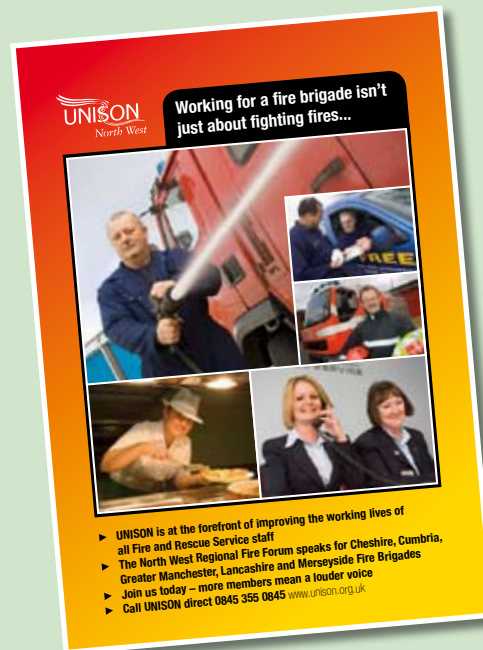
The branch sent six representatives (John Fletcher, John Hall, Vanessa Bedford, Carol Lukey, Elaine Cotterell and Paul Shackley) to London to lobby their MP's in June. This was an opportunity for UNISON representatives to speak to North West MP's to voice our concern over the fact that equal pay and job evaluation should be properly funded by the government. MP's that were present included Ivan Lewis (Lab, Bury South), David Chaytor (Lab, Bury North), and David Borrow (Lab, South Ribble).

As usual MP's were all for supporting equal pay. However, they claimed there was no money to fund it. It was pointed out that the government could find money for things like the war in Iraq for example, but this was of course dismissed by the MP's that were present. It is quite clear that Equal Pay is not all that high on the government's list of priorities, and it is now down to us to make sure that it is.

The bottom line is that if we want to end gender pay discrimination then all of us individually will have to do something about it. We all need to write to our MP's and visit surgeries when we can. Raise the issue with your county councillor and talk to your colleagues about it. Letter templates and advice can be obtained from the Branch Office (Room D43, County Hall, Preston PR1 0LD 'phone 01772 533072).

Lancashire is one of the largest branches in the country. We could make a difference if we all did our bit and contacted our MP's and made as much noise as possible.

Vanessa Bedford
Steward



Working for fire service not just about fighting fires

A number of fire and rescue workers from Lancashire Fire Authority became new UNISON members when a mobile information service rolled into the county.

The brigade's headquarters at Broughton was the first stop on a tour of all five North West Fire HQs by UNISON's Regional Fire Forum.

The Fire Forum provides a voice for all fire and rescue service staff and has launched a road-show to hammer home the message that working for the fire service isn't just about fighting fires.

Forum Chair Janice Pugh said: "It is UNISON members who pay the wages, repair the fire appliances, maintain and clean the fire stations, some are also Control Staff.

"But whenever you tell people you work for a fire brigade they automatically assume you are a fire fighter. Without our members, fire-fighters wouldn't get paid, would have a dirty fire station and wouldn't have a fire engine to turn out in."

The road-show aims to

provide an insight into the work of the union, the benefits of membership and the part members can play. One of the key messages is that we don't just want you to join – we want you to join in.

The Forum would welcome feedback from Lancashire Branch members who visited the road-show. Did you find it useful? Would you be interested in getting more involved in the life of the union by becoming a workplace contact, a steward or health and safety representative?

If so please contact Lancashire Fire Forum representative Norma Norris on 01772 533072 or email her at norma.norris@unison.lancsc.gov.uk. Norma is the Forum's vice-chair.

If you are a member, or know of a non-member, who couldn't attend but would like a copy of a new information booklet launched on the day please contact organising assistant Jennifer Walley at UNISON's regional centre on 0161 661 6208 or j.walley@unison.co.uk.

New members are always welcome.



Branch enables youngster to fly high at Lathom High School

Good attendance has been rewarded at Lathom High School in Skelmersdale thanks to a project started at the school before Christmas.

Twenty-eight tutor groups were each assigned their own “make believe” hot air balloon. All the hot air balloons were placed on the main notice board and each balloon travelled a distance over a period of 48 days, depending on the group’s cumulative attendance

The winning balloon was that belonging to Tutor Group 9L and their prize was to experience all the thrills of a real hot air balloon. The Branch sponsored the UNISON Hot Air Balloon as it felt this had been such a worthwhile and constructive project.

Two of the Branch convenors, Rosemary Cunningham and David Flannagan, attended the event which took place on 4th April 2007. The Branch also provided a display for the teaching staff on the services UNISON provide to its members.

Rosemary was also able to

tell the students about the work UNISON does on the international front, highlighting one of the many projects with which UNISON is involved - the Book and Ten Pence appeal that involves sending books to a South African school. It was very rewarding to see the students taking a genuine interest in the appeal and the worthwhile outcome it was achieving.

The students and staff viewed the day as something really special, an opportunity that not many young people have the chance to experience. Unfortunately, due to deterioration in the weather conditions, some students did not get the chance to fly, but still managed to enjoy the day enormously.

If you wish to know more about the work UNISON does on the international front, or you or your school wish to take part in the Book and Ten Pence Appeal, contact Rosemary Cunningham or visit the UNISON or branch web sites.

Rosemary Cunningham
Convenor

Pay claim

The Branch has done a very quick consultative ballot to see if members are prepared to accept the 2% currently on offer, or reject and vote yes in an Industrial Action ballot. The result of the ballot is 871 members rejected the offer and 124 members who were willing to accept the offer. On the basis of this result we will be rejecting the offer and moving swiftly to a ballot for Industrial Action. We will send out further information to members as soon as it is received.

Carol Lukey
Branch Secretary

Job Evaluation News

The project is now officially in its “live” phase with many staff in Care Services and Commercial Services busily completing Job Evaluation Questionnaires and participating in follow-up interviews. The focus of the project will now be on compiling and evaluating a list of benchmark jobs from all sections of the council and schools. This list will comprise of around 200 posts which will be rigorously evaluated to provide a guide against which other jobs can be compared as they come into the project. For more information contact UNISON’s seconded officers in the Job Evaluation Team – John Mackey and Ashley Bramwell- through the branch office.

Calling All stewards and activists in North Lancashire

If you are an activist or steward for a workplace in the north of the county and have found it difficult to get to UNISON meetings in Preston, plans are in hand to help out. Ashley Bramwell, who is a UNISON seconded officer in the Job Evaluation team and steward at Heysham High School is hoping to establish a contact group of reps and activists in the Lancaster, Morecambe and Carnforth area. If there is sufficient interest it is hoped to arrange a regular meeting in the area to share latest information though initially contact will be by e-mail. If you would like more information please contact Ashley via the branch office or by e-mail to Ashley.Bramwell@unison.lancsc.gov.uk.

Why is UNISON involved in international activity?

Today more than ever, Britain's economy and political system are inter-dependent with Europe and the rest of the world. Many of UNISON's members now work for transnational companies and have counterparts working for the same employer in another country. Decisions taken in Brussels affect our daily working lives.

It is vital, therefore, that UNISON works with sister trade unions in other countries and through key international organisations to promote and protect its members' interests and concerns.

You probably take for granted the right to access UNISON's website, to meet and discuss work problems or politics. But trade unionists in many other countries risk intimidation and even death for active membership in a union. Solidarity, joining together with others who share a common interest, is the very basis of trade unionism, and it shouldn't stop at national borders.

International Policy Making

UNISON's international policy is determined by national delegate conference, which meets annually and considers resolutions from branches, regions and the national executive committee.

The NEC's international committee is responsible for international policy between conferences and, as well as overseeing the work of the international unit, it is also responsible, after wide consultation, for determining the international work of the unit.

The Role of UNISON's international priorities of the union

Contact with UNISON abroad

UNISON has links with sister unions throughout the world, and puts UNISON branches and regions in touch with their counterparts in Europe and further afield. Learning from other trade unionists is vital way of strengthening our own movement.

Solidarity work

Solidarity means speaking out when fellow trade unionists are under threat - in Colombia, Burma or Zimbabwe, for instance. Solidarity also means helping sister trade unions to build their organisations on their own terms. Recent projects have included working with unions in Serbia, Palestine and Iraq to develop their organisations and working with unions in Southern Africa in the struggle against HIV/AIDS.

Working with international organisations

UNISON is affiliated to several international trade union organisations,

including Public Services International (PSIO with over 16 million members world-wide), Union Network International (UNI) and European Public Services Union (EPSU). The international unit co-ordinates UNISON's work to promote the policies and interests of its members through these organisations and other international bodies.

Sharing experiences

Many unions in different parts of the world face similar challenges to our own - privatisation, equality, the fight against racism. A key role of the International Unit is to keep UNISON informed about international developments related to these kinds of issues so that we can better look after members' interests.

If you wish to find out more about the work of the International Unit, go to UNISON's website/ international.



Conference

National Delegate Conference

Government urged to define domestic abuse

Delegates discussed the need for a statutory definition of violence against women, as a key step towards eliminating domestic violence.

One in four women in Britain will experience domestic violence in their lives, and it is now the second biggest category of violent crime – with 13 million incidents each year.

While as many as 80,000 women are raped each year, conviction for rape has dropped to 5.3%, the lowest for 30 years.

“What we must never forget is that every single one of those statistics

represents a woman’s life, and behind every number is a woman with a story of abuse and violence to tell,” said Cath Elliot of the national woman’s committee. Ms Elliot said that though the government’s measures to combat domestic violence were welcomed, there were still “too many questions unanswered”.

She cited the recent so-called ‘honour killing’ of Banaz Mahmod, who was murdered by her father and uncle in Birmingham, after falling in love with a man her family did not want her to marry.

Ms Mahmod had asked police for help on several

occasions, but was ignored.

“Just as the death of Stephen Lawrence woke us up to the reality of institutional racism, we can only hope that the death of Banaz Mahmod finally wakes us up to the institutionalised indifference to women’s lives.”

The lack of a statutory definition gives UK courts discretion to determine what domestic violence is, for themselves, conference heard.

UNISON believes that the government should adopt the UN’s definition, as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is

likely to result in physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.

Guest speaker Baroness Scotland, minister of state for the criminal justice system and law reform, said that both employers and trade unions had a key role to play in combating “this pernicious crime”, not least because many perpetrators of domestic violence “have stalked, harassed and murdered their victims in the workplace.”

Union fights for a ‘lifeline’ for disabled people

UNISON is to lobby government to improve its commitment to the Access to Work scheme.

The union is concerned that Whitehall is losing interest in the scheme, whose funding is crucial in assisting employers to maintain and create job opportunities for disabled people.

Paul Harper, of the national disabled members’ committee, told delegates that only half of those disabled people who could work - and wish to work - have jobs. Access to Work

was “a lifeline” for them.

Conference heard from colleagues who have benefited from the scheme themselves, but also of the arbitrary reductions in funding, for example of language services, and of the withdrawal of funds from government departments.

“Lie detector tests should be used on ministers and not on disabled people to test benefit fraud,” said

Mr Harper.

The union is to lobby government to increase, and in places reinstate, Access to Work funding across a number of areas. These include disabled people coming off benefit and into work, deaf workers’ access to qualified and registered sign language interpreters, and expanded provision to enable employers to meet their obligations under the disability equality duty.

Special 2007

• Tuesday 19 to Friday 22 June

Europe enemy number one of public services

UNISON has agreed to a raft of measures designed to ward off the European Union's "relentless drive" for a single market.

Conference noted that despite the exclusion of health and social services from the European Directive on Services – due largely to trade union campaigning – the EC intended to bring forward directives for those two sectors, which could open them to free market competition.

The debate, said Wendy Allison of Manchester local government branch, was at the heart of many of the key issues discussed in Brighton.

And Ms Allison added that the motion represented "meaningful action" to safeguard the future of public services.

"If we are not vigilant about the EU it won't matter whether the next government is Tory or New Labour or old Labour," she said. "We will have cheap labour, deregulation,

privatisation, and marketisation imposed by Brussels and supported by European court."

NEC member Jane Carolan told conference that the concept of public services was not even defined in European law. "The implications for us are horrendous."

Among the tasks now to be undertaken by the NEC are to:

- Closely monitor and campaign around the transposition of the Services Directive into UK law, to ensure that there is no further undermining of public services;
- Actively campaign against any EU proposals to open up health and social services to the market and competition;
- Continue to influence the policy of the British government and political parties, to oppose the introduction of any EU directives that effectively privatise health services;
- Promote the benefits of keeping essential services in the public sector and under democratic control.

2008 Conference Diary

■ NATIONAL BLACK MEMBERS CONFERENCE 2008

This Conference will be held at the Crown Plaza Hotel, Glasgow from Friday 11 to Sunday 13 January 2008. The Branch can send up to four delegates; the principles of proportionality and fair representation must strictly apply to the Branch delegation:

1 Delegate	can be either a woman or man
2 Delegates	one delegate must be a woman
3 Delegates	at least two delegates must be women
4 Delegates	at least two delegates must be women

Anyone wishing to attend the Black Members' Conference must let the Branch Office (01772 533072) have their name by Thursday 1 November 2007.

■ NATIONAL WOMEN'S CONFERENCE 2008

The 15th National Women's Conference will be held at the Harrogate International Centre from Thursday (1600 hours) 14 February to Saturday (1300 hours) 16 February 2008.

The Branch can send a maximum of three delegates based on the fact that we have over 4,001 women members – one delegate must be a low-paid member.

Anyone wishing to attend the National Women's Conference must let the Branch Office (01772 533072) have their name by Thursday 8 November 2007.

Conference 2007

UNISON's International voice

UNISON has proven to be a powerful voice for workers not only for Britain but all over the world, conference heard.

"When you speak, governments listen," said Annie Geron, general secretary of PSLink (pictured above), UNISON's sister union in the Philippines

She praised the union for its condemnation of the corrupt political regime in her country which has let extra-judicial killings go unpunished.

"Every week someone is killed," she said. "Every day, the government treats it as business as usual."

Appealing to the union to continue to speak up for the ordinary people of the Philippines, Ms Geron said: "You are the largest union of the public sector; you have power and influence in this country - please continue creating the pressure on the Arroyo government to take decisive action to stop the killings and to respect human rights.

"Please don't underestimate what these petition letters can do," she urged. "They do save lives."

In the Philippines, as in the UK, trade unions are waging war against the privatisation of public services. But in a country where corruption is already rife, privatisation only opens the



Annie Geron, General Secretary of PSLink, UNISON's sister union in the Philippines

door wider to corruption, Ms Geron said.

"And when corruption is pervasive, public services suffer."

Ms Geron also thanked the union for championing the rights of migrant workers, and hailed its contribution to the development of an ethical recruitment framework.

Education and health were suffering because of an exodus of teachers and healthworkers from the Philippines, she said. "The Philippines is the number one exporter of nurses in the world," and the past four years have seen a 61% decrease in the number of doctors.

All over the country, hospitals are closing because of a lack of skilled health professionals, she said, blaming "relentless and unethical recruitment by developed countries" who were poaching skilled professionals without offering any compensation.

“*Please don't underestimate what these petition letters can do*”

"Keep migrant workers on the union agenda," she urged.

"Finally, I thank UNISON for your invaluable contribution to empowering workers in developing countries. Together, let's wage war against poverty, against rights violations, and let's win the fight to keep public services in public hands."

SOS for vital language service

UNISON is joining with the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) in urging the government for a one-year moratorium on changes in entitlement to free courses in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

The government is introducing changes this autumn which will reduce the number of people entitled to free ESOL courses. For thousands of low-income people who don't get fee remission - those in settled communities and migrant workers - fees of between £420 and £990 will be unaffordable.

Many colleges are currently making lecturers redundant in anticipation of reduced registration for ESOL courses, despite lengthy waiting lists which had indicated a growing demand for classes.

UNISON and UCU argue a breather is needed for the government to reconsider its plans. A joint conference in London calling

for a moratorium recently took place to hear professional concerns and develop an ongoing strategy in the campaign to save ESOL. Speakers included trade unionists, students, tutors and college principals.

Following the conference a delegation of ESOL lecturers will took the message to Downing St, where they handed a giant postcard to prime minister Gordon Brown.

UNISON gave its full support to the conference and campaign because ESOL cuts endanger its college members, fly in the face of social cohesion programmes and threaten to derail our training agenda for the public service workforce, many of whom have ESOL needs."

The Commission on Integration and Cohesion has said ESOL is "fundamental to integration and cohesion - for settled communities, new communities, and future generations of immigrants".

Youth and Community/Connexions merger into the new Integrated Youth Support Service

The process of merging the two services is now in full flow and some progress is being made in integrating these two services into one single service provider to meet the needs of young people in Lancashire.

We have a broad agreement to set up a Staffing Commission to look at the best way we can integrate both sets of staff. There is still much work to be done on the grading of jobs within the new structure and how the ring fencing will operate. We are still working on the criteria and arrangements for those seeking voluntary redundancy.

It is imperative that we determine the most appropriate conditions for our members and we are negotiating with the employer in relation to the consideration of JNC. Much work

has still to be done before we reach agreement and we will be consulting with the membership before any decisions are taken in relation to this.

We still have several issues in relation to the new structure and the process and we are still progressing these with management. We have managed to secure some additional facilities time which will help us to keep our membership better informed in relation to the development of these matters.

Representatives of all the constituent unions meet on a regular basis to move this project forward and if you have any queries then contact your representative directly.

John Fletcher
Convenor

UNISON gears up for equality duty

Gender equality is about improving the working lives of both men and women, delegates were reminded yesterday.

The gender equality duty, introduced in April, places a statutory duty on all public authorities to eliminate sex discrimination and promote equality.

Crucially, the code of practice on the duty refers to consultation with, and involvement of trade unions – identifying 13 employment priorities that are longstanding items on the equality bargaining agenda.

UNISON is in an ideal position to influence its implementation, since the union's members can participate in the consultation process both as service users and service providers

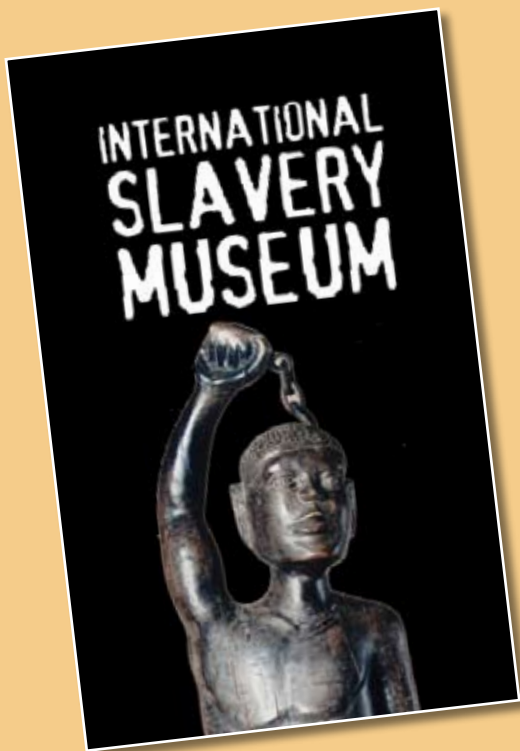
Sharon Foster of the national women's conference told delegates: "You can use this duty to change your working lives for the better."

Conference called on the NEC and other relevant bodies to:

- ensure that all branches and service groups are aware of the potential of the duty;
- make sure all branches make use of the guidance and training available on taking part in the consultation process;
- work with regions to share best practice;
- lobby the government to ensure proper funding for the monitoring and enforcement of the duty.

The NEC's June Nelson spoke of the breadth of the gender equality duty.

"It is not just about providing crèches and greater maternity leave, but issues that affect all members, both male and female," she said. "It could be used to open up job opportunities for both men and women, that will encourage more men into caring professions and more women into senior posts. It is about flexibility arrangements for men who are tired of the 24:7 culture, and a new opportunity to put in place strategies to close the gender pay gap."



This year we celebrate 200 years since the slave trade was abolished... **Why not visit the new International Slavery Museum?**

The museum's galleries will feature dynamic and thought-provoking displays about the transatlantic slave trade. They will address issues such as freedom, identity, human rights, racial discrimination and cultural change.

The International Slavery Museum will also look at the deep and permanent impact of slavery and the slave trade on Africa, South America and the USA, the Caribbean and Western Europe

For more information please visit:

www.internationalslaverymuseum.org.uk

Entry to the museum is free

Meat Hygiene Service

MHS as an agency of FSA (Food Standards Agency) have been subjected to pressure from the meat industry pressure groups almost since its formation in 1995, due to the high cost of running the service which is met by Food Business Operators (FBOs). They have demanded that the FSA undertake a review for the provision of meat inspection in the UK. As a result, the MHS have been charged to justify why the sole responsibility to provide this service should be met by MHS, rather than the many contract agencies which have been posturing to take on this role.

The MHS has recently undertaken a fundamental review of its operations to include the cost and efficiency of its staff. An SVT (Staff Verification Team) visited each Abattoir in the UK to study the role of Meat Inspection Teams, and make recommendations on what they consider to be the appropriate levels of staff necessary at those plants (not one plant was recommended to increase its staff).

As a result of this report, the MHS has announced that many of its staff are now in a redundancy situation. A matrix system has been adopted by MHS to enable it to consider what it thinks is a fair method of selection for redundancy. This is based on appraisals (carried out by team leaders) - attendance levels and qualifications are taken into account in the event of two having matching scores or service. Managers from MHS have

recently been having a series of meetings with its staff to outline the procedure for these changes. However, the information has been rather vague to this point, ie timescales, numbers of actual job losses, redeployment opportunities have yet to be confirmed.

MHS have asked if any of its employees are interested in voluntary redundancy, but are not offering any enhancements to staff who may be close to retirement and/or have appropriate years service. The MHS has stated that the basic redundancy package on offer is one week's pay for every years service, or for those aged over 40 1.5 weeks for every year worked. They have refused to offer six months notice or pay in lieu of notice to those employees made compulsorily redundant. UNISON solicitors have challenged this at ET.

The MHS have a meeting with the FSA on Thursday 19th July to present its proposals for meat inspection to continue to be the sole responsibility of the MHS under the transformed MHS Model.

UNISON officials representing the members in the North, upon receipt this information from the employer and from the findings on the 19th July will meet as a group to formulate its response, and meet with its members.

What is clear at this point is that members health and safety is being put at risk due to reduced numbers of staff having to complete heavier workloads.

The FSA are to announce their decision on the 19th July to the MHS. There are many working in the MHS who care little for what badge it has on the hat!

Joe Howard
MHS Steward

Accrington – Preston – Lancaster Academies are coming!

Members who work in schools will now be aware of proposals for new academy schools to be built in Lancashire.

Whilst no detailed information is yet available it is known that Accrington Moorhead High School will become an Academy in September 2008 and it is proposed that a new academy will replace

- Fulwood and Tulketh High Schools in Preston
- Skerton, Hornby and Central Lancaster High Schools in Lancaster. these are also proposed to be up and running by September 2008.

There is a further proposal, still under consideration, to replace the City of Preston High School with an academy in September 2009. Because of the

way academy schools are run – out of Local Authority control – by a private sponsor, there are obviously concerns about the future employment prospects of staff currently employed in the affected schools.

Officers of the authority recently held several meetings with staff in the affected schools to bring them up to date with progress on the academies. It is expected that further developments will take place during the summer school closure period.

UNISON is aware that this is a very anxious time for members in these schools and we are intending to organise meetings in the new school year to enable members to relay their issues and concerns

to us. We will then be able to relay those concerns to the authority during consultation discussions which will take place to discuss the staffing implications that may arise out of the introduction of the academies.

If you work in any of the schools mentioned look out for UNISON notices on your staff notice boards from September onwards. We will also be contacting individual members to inform them of any meetings we arrange.

You can also contact the Branch Office by telephoning 01772 533072 and asking to speak with Elaine Brookes or Elaine Cotterell.

Elaine Brookes
Convenor

Site Staff Review Update

Site staff in schools may remember that the Branch held a number of consultation roadshows during the autumn term last year to seek views on the draft job descriptions. Branch Officers were pleased to receive positive and constructive feedback from members who attended.

We are now pleased to announce that we will be in a position in the autumn term to consult on the full package of job descriptions and revised grading structure. The details of assimilation are still at the discussion stage but we are confident that all details will be finalised by the time we consult.

Keep an eye out for a mailing to your home or school during September.

Nationals Pay Framework for School Support Staff

The School Staff Working Group (SSWG) has been meeting for over a year and presented their second report at Easter. In May Alan Johnson the former Education Minister agreed that trade unions representing school support staff and school employers would develop a national pay and conditions framework for school staff in England

The SSWG examined four models against a set of agreed criteria. The main findings of the group are that Model 3, ie a separate negotiating body for school staff, meets most of the criteria and should be developed further. Alan Johnson accepted this and SSWG will now be working towards developing a national structure. At this stage the group will be trying to negotiate a structure that can deliver fairness and consistency for school support staff and deal with the issues related to term-time working.

One of the key considerations for UNISON has been to ensure there is a system that will apply in all types of schools ie community, voluntary aided, foundation and trusts. Already over 30% of schools in England are self governing and in Lancashire the number is higher. Most if not all schools in Lancashire do apply the Local Government NJC (Green Book) agreement.

The SSWG report accepts that there will need to be some form of

statutory underpinning of any new agreement to ensure consistency and implementation across schools.

At this stage no side has signed up to any binding outcomes and when we see what a new structure can deliver, members in schools will be fully consulted. In terms of timescale it is not clear when the Branch will be in a position to consult but at a guess it will be 12 to 18 months, in the meantime the Equal Pay Review will still be rolled out in to schools.

A full copy of the SSWG report can be obtained at www.unison.org.uk/acrobat/A3270.doc

Editors comments...

The Classroom Support Staff Agreement 2004 delivered a grading and career structure for all teaching assistants. The grades negotiated are amongst the best in the country and are far higher than the current Green Book grades for Nursery Nurses.

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