

MORAY

April 2001

UNISON

MATTERS

About Moray UNISON

MORAY BRANCH OFFICE
Council Offices
12/14 Greyfriars Street
ELGIN
IV30 1LS

Tel. 01343 563170

Fax. 01343 563437

E-Mail unison@moray.gov.uk
Mobile 07779 155101 (Branch Secretary)

An answer machine is available when the branch office is not occupied. Please leave a message, speaking clearly and a branch officer will get back to you as soon as possible.

Moray UNISON represents members employed within public, voluntary and community services. Members are represented within The Moray Council, Moray College, Grampian Joint Valuation Board, National Children's Homes and organisations and projects within the voluntary and community sector.

Strategic Priorities

- * Recruitment
- * Communications with members on organisation, structure, activities and campaigns of the branch
- * Steward Recruitment
- * Branch officer and steward training

Members Vote Yes to pay deal

Members of UNISON within local government voted by almost 5 to 1 to accept the 14.2% four year offer from the Council. The vote saw a 45% return with 31,438 members accepting and 6,353 members rejecting the offer.

Moray branch would, therefore, wish to express our thanks to all the members who supported the action over the five month period.

Special thanks are due to the members in the Refuse Collection Service who stuck their necks out at a very

difficult time for everyone in The Moray Council.

Branch Secretary, Ken Matthews said "I'm absolutely delighted that the offer has been accepted.

Let's be clear, this offer was only on the table due to the action of our members.

If it had been left to the other unions, we would only be looking at a 2.5% pay rise.

Yet again, the other unions have followed the lead taken by UNISON".

PAY SETTLEMENT

1 April 2000	-	2% on all salary points
1 October 2000	-	1% on all salary points
1 February 2001	-	3% on all salary points
1 March 2002	-	£500 on all salary points
1 April 2003	-	4% on all salary points



HARASSMENT AT WORK (MORAY COUNCIL STAFF)

It is a sad but true fact that within the management of all organisations there will be managers who abuse their power, who bully or unfairly harass employees. To prevent this from happening and to have a process that tackles the manager when it does, many Councils have a Harassment At Work Procedure. Moray Council's procedure was drawn up in consultation with the Trade Unions. The Council states that its primary goal is the prevention of harassment at work. So what do you do if you feel that you are being bullied or harassed? The first thing you shouldn't do is put up with it or be afraid of telling someone about it. You can have a confidential discussion with Personnel Services. If you feel unable to do this you can speak to your Trade Union representative. If you feel confident enough you could raise the issue with the individual who is harassing you or bullying you. It is however accepted that for many this would be a very difficult thing to do and that is why there is help available.

It is important that you keep details of when the harassment started, the form it took, and whether or not there were any witnesses.

All of the above would fall into the informal stages of the procedure. Where the harassment is viewed as being serious, a complaint should be made to your Line Manager. Again, your Union rep can help you with this. Where the complaint is against your Line Manager, it can be taken to the Head of Department or, in exceptional circumstances, to Personnel Services.

Once a complaint has been lodged a trained Officer, who must not be connected with the allegation, will be nominated by the Head of Department to investigate the grounds of the complaint.

The alleged harasser quite rightly needs to know the grounds of the complaint. S/he will be interviewed along with the complainer and other relevant individuals, ie witnesses to the harassment.

When the investigation is taking place you are strongly advised never to at-

tend any meetings without your Union rep.

The investigation could lead to the alleged harasser being suspended until the inquiry is complete, particularly where the allegation is viewed as being of a serious nature. The investigation may also involve a formal hearing.

Throughout the investigation the complainer is to be treated in a fair and sensitive manner and there are clear written guidelines on this.

If the complaint is upheld the harasser may be the subject of disciplinary action. If the complaint is not upheld then clearly there needs to be discussion about future working relationships, in particular if the two employees are still expected to work together. Where the outcome is positive for the complainer, the Council have to make sure that the bullying and harassment stops. They also have to ensure that an employee who has been harassed is not subsequently victimised for defending his/her right to be treated fairly at work.

What we as individuals have to be very clear about is that no one has the right to bully or harass us in our daily employment. It is not right, it is not fair and from a trade union point of view it is totally unacceptable. We know, however, that within Moray Council it does happen. Unfortunately the bully tends not to care for or adhere to Council Policy.

If you feel that you are the victim of bullying or harassment at work and want to speak to someone about it in total confidence you can contact the Unison office at Council HQ on 563170. Alternatively you can phone Gerry Harkins on 01343 552699, e-mail gerry.harkins@comm.moray.gov.uk

Please do make contact if you have an issue about harassment or bullying. You can be assured that your query will be treated in the strictest confidence, and that we will take no action unless you want us to.

Legal Update

Representing members is what Unison is all about. On occasions that representation stretches into the court setting. Here are some examples of recent victories won on behalf of members.

£3000 for a medical receptionist who was injured by a faulty filing cabinet

£45,000 for a patient transport driver who sustained injuries following a crash

£35.6M over the year in compensation for members who suffered personal injuries while carrying out their duties, including £68,000 for a worker who sustained an eye injury while using a faulty wheelbarrow and £120,000 for a care worker following a number of assaults by a resident.

Open University

Unison through its Open College can assist members financially with fees for the Open University. If you are thinking about enrolling for a course and want to find out if you are eligible for assistance please contact the Unison Open College on 020 7388 2366, e-mail open.college@unison.co.uk. If you do get assistance please let us know. One member who did recently enrol for an OU course did get assistance.

We want to hear from you

The Branch is anxious to get members' views on any aspect of UNISON, whether it be related to the Branch itself or to do with national issues.

Please contact us to express your views.

Whilst all members views may not be published, the Branch undertakes to respond to them all.

Crossword Winner

Congratulations to Lesley Manson of Education Services, Moray Council, who won last month's Scottish Islands crossword competition.

Branch Secretary's Report – AGM 12 March 2001

There can be no doubt that this year has been one of the most challenging years for Moray UNISON.

Within a six week period, the branch lost two of its most experienced and senior officers, entered into protracted and heated negotiations with TMC over its proposed departmental restructuring plus embarked upon a long and bitter pay dispute within local government.

Relationships with The Moray Council hit an all time low during the consultation process for the departmental restructuring. Arbitrary decisions and intransigent attitudes underpinned the Council's conduct throughout the period. Agreements made with the trade unions were swept aside by the Council who then failed, in our opinion, to provide adequate consultation information. We basically had to fight for the information all the way through.

At the end of the process, the Council shed 34 posts through voluntary early retirement and Voluntary Redundancy. There was, however, one compulsory redundancy.

Moray UNISON continued to campaign against this style consultation. Towards the end of last year, we secured an acknowledgement from the Convenor of the Council that mistakes had been made, this being said in front of representatives of all the councils in Scotland, plus national union representatives. This acknowledgement was then followed up by talks with the Chief Executive through the Joint Secretariat of the Scottish Joint Council. During this time of poor relationships with the Council, and with the threat of members losing their jobs, a national campaign to secure a fair pay deal in local government reached its most critical point.

In Moray, the circumstances within the Council made for an uncomfortable position for Moray UNISON – here we were, threatening industrial action whilst some of our members were in line to be made redundant.

Despite these difficulties, we played a full part in the national dispute through three days of all out action plus selective action within the Refuse Collection Service. I would therefore like to express on behalf of the branch, our appreciation to all the members who supported the strike and to all the branch officers, stewards and contacts who helped to co-ordinate and organise our local action.

I'd like to pay a special mention to our members in the Refuse Collection Service. They put their heads in the firing line by going on selective action at a time when the dispute was at its height. They also became the focus of everyone's attention – the press and media, the public, elected members and the Council itself.

Just before Christmas when the talks nationally entered a bit of a deadlock, we managed to put pressure on the Council to encourage COSLA to get back to the negotiating table by offering a deal over the suspension of the selective action. This was achieved with the addition of a public acknowledgement by the Council that despite the Council's own press statements, the selective action had in fact been successful in having a significant impact both organisationally and financially.

The results of the recent national ballot has

seen an overwhelming vote in favour of the new pay offer. This is also an endorsement of the campaign waged by UNISON as let's be clear about this, the current pay offer was only brought to the table due to the actions of UNISON members and negotiators. If it had been left to the other two unions, we'd be looking at 2.5% with no guarantees on future commitment, no attempt to address low pay issues and no safeguard of allocations out of the new three year council funding cycle.

I must say, though that personally, any jubilation on the pay front is tempered by the current situation being faced by our colleagues in Moray College who are looking at absolutely no pay increase at all, plus the very real threat of redundancies. The branch has and will continue to give its full support to the College sub-branch in tackling what is a grave situation.

So, this year has been a difficult one. However, the branch has aimed to represent the best interests of our members, protecting their rights and fighting where these rights are infringed.

Despite this, we've come in for a fair amount of criticism and even been accused of meddling and nit picking. If nit picking means paying close attention to detail, then yes we're guilty. If meddling and nit picking means fighting for members legal rights, en-



sur, for example that interview processes are carried out fairly, that members have accurate job descriptions which reflect their pay grade and where they don't, supporting a re-grading claim, representing members on health and safety issues, supporting members through service reviews, securing contracts of employment for members which reflect the legal protection afforded them through employment law, winning holiday pay entitlements, fighting against harassment, ensuring that members are consulted on issues which affect them, protecting members interests through compulsory transfers to a private employer or securing recognition in the voluntary sector, then again we're guilty.

Can I just say though, that there will always be those who will criticise and there will always be activists. And let's don't forget, it is always easier to criticise than to take action which challenges, campaigns and protects the rights of others.

So what about this next year. Moray UNISON has established priorities for its action over the next twelve months which will target recruitment, increased participation of members, improve upon our organisation and develop further the representation of our mem-

bers.

Last year we achieved a recruitment target of 16% and again we will aim to increase our membership by this amount through both general and targeted recruitment campaigns. We will call upon your help to achieve this too. As existing members, you know you own workplace better than anyone else. We will therefore ask you to recruit non members in your own workplace by sharing with them the information on the union and our success stories.

One of the most vital, yet neglected areas of organisation within the branch is communication with our members. Therefore, a major push is being made to ensure that all our members have accurate information on the branch, details of officers and stewards plus details of the activities going on within the branch. We have introduced what will be a bi-monthly newsletter which will form the focus of communication with members both on local and national activities. We will increase the information on campaigns and common issues which affects us all. And we will share information on the work being carried out by your branch, for the local membership.

Representation is what the union does best. Therefore another strategic priority will be to develop the network of stewards across Moray, backed up with a system of local workplace contacts. Our target will be to have one steward for every 25 members. We have also begun work in accessing local and national training for stewards and officers, with some opportunities taking place over the next few months.

The branch will also target support to ensure that effective negotiation and representation takes place across all of the employers recognising Moray UNISON. It has, on the one hand, been understandable that over the last year, the bulk of the activities and campaigning of the branch has targeted members working for The Moray Council. We must, however, ensure that members in other employers have fair access to the resources of the branch in taking forward their issues and representation. The branch has acknowledged this and is taking steps to redress the balance.

Despite the difficulties over the last year, we have had successes for individual members as well as on the collective front. The branch has continued to campaign and plan activities which progress the overall aims of the union and the aspiration of its members.

We look forward to continuing this vital work.



WHO'S WHO IN THE BRANCH

Branch Officers

Jean-Anne Goodbrand	Chairperson/ Treasurer/APF	Education Services HQ	01343 563151
Ken Matthews	Secretary	Room 200, Greyfriars Street	01343 563170
Gerry Harkins	Service Conditions	Social Work, Gordon Street	01343 552699
Steve Clegg	Health and Safety	Ashgrove Depot, E4lgin	01343 557300
Fiona Rolt	Membership Services	Speyside CEC	01340 871641
Jeannie Henderson	Welfare Officer	Elgin Library	01343 562600
Moirang Bangura	Equalities Officer	Keith Grammar School	01542 882461
Eric Foley	Publicity Officer	Finance, Greyfriars Street	01343 563224
Dougie McPhee	Education Officer	Keith Area Office	01542 885517

Moray Council Stewards/Contacts

Helen Clark	Steward	Property, HQ	01343 563330
David Jack	Steward	Housing, Elgin	01343 543139
Alistair Mitchell	Steward	Housing, Forres	01309 672277
John Muir	Steward	Property, Keith	01542 885528
John Ross	Steward	Moray Resource Centre, Keith	01343 551339
Billy Smith	Steward	Property, HQ	01343 563319
Bill Taylor	Steward	Forres Academy	01309 672271
Joe McAlister	Steward	Milnes High School	01343 820611
Leslie Innes	Steward	Keith Depot	
Steve Pugh	Contact	Planning, HQ	01343 563276
Susan McIntosh	Contact	Social Work, Elgin	01309 674382
Mike Murdoch	Contact	Housing, Elgin	01343 541669
John Murray	Contact	Social Work, Elgin	01343 552699
David Millar	Contact	Forres House CEC	01309 672838
Karen Ferguson	Contact	Greenwards PS	01343 541661
Linda Mitchell	Contact	Beechbrae	01343 550999
Stuart Beveridge	Contact	Estates	01343 563257
Ann Scott	Contact	Seafeld Nursery	01343 545269

Grampian Assessors

Tom Sandison	Steward	Woodhill	01224 665211
Niall Thom	Steward	Banff	01261 815516

NCH Stewards/Contacts

Normal Kebel	Steward	Forres Group Home	01309 672665
Anne Wiberly	Steward	Rowan Lea, Elgin	01343 860397
Voluntary Organisations			
June Milne	Contact	Noah's Ark Playgroup	

Moray College Sub Branch

Jessie Gray	Chairperson	Moray College	01343 576301
Alan Stevens	Secretary	Moray College	01343 576291
Louise Proctor	Treasurer	Moray College	01343 576218
Eric McLean	Health and Safety	Moray College	01343 576475
Maureen Anderson	Equal Opportunities	Moray College	01343 576475