

## Moray UNISON First in Scotland!

**W**hat springs to mind when you think of what Moray UNISON does for it's members? Is it dealing with grievances, dealing with health and safety issues, attending meetings on behalf of members? Yes, we do all of these things and more, but we have just become the **first UNISON branch in Scotland** to negotiate a paid time off agreement with Moray Council so that members can attend training and courses under the Lifelong Learning programme.

**T**he Council's Corporate Plan 2001-2004 states "The Council considers its employees as its major asset and the Council recognises that a healthy and motivated workforce is the key to achieving its aims ..." - Lifelong Learning and the introduction of this policy will underpin this statement.

**M**oray UNISON, along with the WEA, has already trained eight Lifelong Learning Advisers and another group will be trained starting in May. Starting Points – a basic literacy course is currently running. Certain groups of Council staff are currently involved in a Return 2 Learn course. Introduction to Basic Computing has been completed and a Women's Lives course will be run in the near future.

**F**ind out more – inside this issue – report from Dougie McPhee, Education Officer.

### Single Status – Dates for Your Diary

Following on from the successful roadshows on Single Status which were held by Moray UNISON earlier this year, the following second phase of roadshows are planned

Elgin Library – Gallery	Tuesday 28 October 2003	12 noon to 6 p.m.
Forres House Community Centre	Thursday 30 October 2003	12 noon to 6 p.m.
Buckie Town House	Tuesday 4 November 2003	12 noon to 6 p.m.
Keith Resource Centre	Thursday 6 November 2003	12 noon to 5 p.m.

Further information on Single Status coming soon!

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## Report from Outgoing Joint Branch Secretary

Moray UNISON has enjoyed another successful year. We have continued to lead negotiations, challenge employers, influence policy and procedures and secure beneficial deals for our members.

Within the Moray Council, Moray UNISON has forced the creation of a corporate Health & Safety Committee and are now placed to drive our agenda for improving safe working practices for our members.

Moray UNISON has been receiving feedback from members, and non members alike, that the main source of information on Single Status is the Union. The variety of bulletins and the huge success of the roadshows have ensured that good information has been released and this is being recognised by employees of the Council. Criticism has therefore been levied at the Council for not producing appropriate and timeous information and I'm delighted to report that Moray UNISON is being credited for filling this gap.

As a result of the above, Moray UNISON has seen an increase in membership. In this last year we have increased membership by 15%. Within January alone we have increased membership by 5%, a third of our yearly target. We can therefore build on this throughout the year by general and targeted recruitment activities.

Not everything has gone according to plan though and it is worthwhile noting the extremely difficult situation our colleagues within Moray College have found themselves. Restructuring, threats of redundancy, and an employer who has not been fully up front with all the information.

The pressures placed on the sub-branch have been immense and we should acknowledge the work of all involved in trying to resolve a very difficult situation.

Having held the position of Branch Secretary for three years, and latterly as Joint Branch Secretary, I have decided to step aside to allow Eric to take the lead role in negotiations. It is important that we ensure that a number of people build up appropriate experience, building up the strength of the branch. By stepping aside, it also ensures that the focus of the negotiations are not placed on one individual. Finally, there has been a danger that employers have got used to my negotiating style and therefore, to change tactics, a change of style is a positive move!

With the support of the branch, I therefore plan to concentrate on case work on behalf of individual members. Through my new role as one of the two Service Conditions Officers, I also hope to support and develop the work of stewards in dealing with member's cases and look forward to the challenges that this will bring.

I'd therefore like to take this opportunity to thank everyone for their support over these last three years. I'd especially like to thank Eric Foley for his support, guidance and friendship over the last year as a job share partner.

It's been a fabulous three years, a really tough three years, and a hellish three years all rolled into one! It's an experience I'd recommend to anyone!

**Kenneth A. Matthews**



### Equalities and Self Organisation

To make sure all our members have a voice UNISON, members have set up self-organised groups to provide a voice for people who are traditionally under-represented. There are groups at national, regional and local level for women, lesbians and gay men, black members and disabled members. These groups are designed to be self organising but also integral to UNISON structures.

If you require any information on self-organised groups – contact Moira Bangura on 01542 882461.



# DO IT FOR YOU! TAKE THE CHANCE!

Over the past few months I have seen the number of staff joining UNISON steadily increase from all departments and jobs, but especially the low paid and under recognised.

I have talked to a few who tell me they have joined for protection, some for the assistance the branch gives, some because their friends did. However, in our conversations it is clear that none of them have joined for a second chance. What do I mean by this?

UNISON is in a unique position in that, as a trade union in partnership with other agencies, we can give anyone who wants to improve themselves in employment a second chance to learn. We can help to develop new skills that can lead to a new job or more importantly we can give you qualifications that can assist you in your existing job.

**HOW?** It's so simple. Have you ever felt that training and promotion are not for you because of paperwork? This part of everyone's work is changing, as we have to keep records in nearly everything we do no matter our job. Could it be the fact that you left school early with poor reading and writing skills and therefore only see the job you have as the only one you could ever hope or qualify to do? Not at all! UNISON in partnership with the Workers Education Association (WEA) offers you the chance to brush up on these skills through starting points. This can lead to a SQA qualification and start you on a new path to better pay and promotion. The WEA can even tailor courses to your own needs. The Scottish Executive are investing an incredible amount of money in learning. Scotland has

the poorest record in Europe in literacy with 1 in 4 people having difficulty in reading or writing and numeracy skills.

The courses that are open to you are numerous, the most important at this time for most is Return to Learn. You can participate in a variety of courses suited to you and these can lead you on to SVQ and SQA qualifications.

**WHY NOT TRY TO MAKE IT BETTER FOR YOU?** Either contact the WEA direct on 01224 642725 or contact me, Dougie McPhee, the UNISON Moray Branch Education Officer on 01542 885517, for more information. Don't live on regrets or the fact that you're too old. Your choice is out there, the money is there, so use it and learn, you may even enjoy it.

## UNISON WELFARE

UNISON Welfare is UNISON's registered charity. We can provide support at times of unforeseen financial hardship or personal difficulty such as redundancy, bereavement, illness or relationship breakdown. Financial assistance is available to members and their dependants who meet our criteria and charitable objectives.

There is no guarantee that applicants will be offered financial help, but every year hundreds of members and their families benefit in this way. Help can be given in a variety of ways in direct response to the applicant's individual circumstances. This could be, for example, to help with household bills, ease debts or help with the cost of a much needed break.

**If you are in need and think we might be able to help, contact the Moray Branch Welfare Officer,  
Jeannie Henderson -  
01343 562600**



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# MORAY UNISON WORDSEARCH COMPETITION

The names of 20 towns in Moray are in the wordsearch. Can you find them? Send your answers on a postcard to **UNISON, FREEPOST (AB048), 7 Alford Place, Aberdeen, AB10 1ZQ.** First correct entry out of the hat on 14 June 2003 wins £25.

**Good luck!**

Q V M M E L O D N U M L O D  
G O X L I S E V L A S H D U  
C O Y T H C O D N I F A N F  
E C R O C L H B F B H N A F  
T K U O A F U K V T M B K T  
E T Y L L F Q O U I E R C O  
S V A D L K O O T I L Y O W  
S S F W E E M C K N G D N N  
O A Q I G E N C H Y I E K W  
L L T O I O U X B A N M S M  
N H Y S A B F U H O B S O U  
I T S F R Z N F O R R E S T  
K O D O C A B E R L O U R L  
L P O R T K N O C K I E V S

## Changes in Maternity Rights from 6 April 2003

From 6 April 2003 parents will benefit from a number of key new rights. Pregnant women will benefit in two ways from the changes to statutory maternity rights. Firstly, the amount of leave a woman can take goes up from the current maximum of 40 weeks to 52 weeks. Secondly, women will also get a significant boost to pay rights. Statutory maternity pay will be paid for the whole of the period of ordinary maternity leave. For the first 6 weeks it will amount to 90% of earnings, as at present. However for the remaining 20 weeks it will be either a flat rate of £100 or 90% if the woman's average weekly earnings are between £77 and £100 a week. The table below summarises the changes in entitlements from 6 April 2003.

Ordinary maternity leave	26 weeks
Additional maternity leave	26 weeks
Service qualification for additional leave	26 weeks
Pay during ordinary leave	6 weeks full pay then 20 weeks @ £100
Pay during additional leave	none
Notice to employer of pregnancy and leave	By 15th week before due date
Sickness in late pregnancy	Leave may begin if sick in last four weeks before due birth date
Premature babies	Leave calculated from day after baby's birth
Employer's notice of return to work date	Must inform employee at least 28 days in advance of return to work date

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01224 620624  
For an  
Application Form**

**UNISON Moray Matters is a regular publication by the branch. We would welcome any comments/letters/ideas for competitions, etc. Any contribution from members, especially those in Higher Education and the Voluntary Sector would be appreciated.**

**Contact Linda Magill, Communications Officer through the branch office if you can help.**

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