

MANCUNION

THE UNISON NEWSLETTER

DEC '09/JAN '10



WISHING
ALL OF OUR
MEMBERS
A MERRY
CHRISTMAS
AND A
HAPPY
NEW YEAR
~ FROM ALL
BRANCH
STAFF.

In the first instance, if you have a work problem or query then get in touch with your local UNISON steward or workplace representative. Otherwise, telephone the Branch Office directly on the number below.

**UNISON Manchester, Sixth Floor,
Sunlight House, Manchester M3 3JZ
Tel: 0161 254 7500
Fax: 0161 274 7365**

If you want to join or if you have a membership query, please contact the Branch on the number above or you can email at this address:
branch@unisonmanchester.org

UNISON Manchester is organised by the Branch Executive Committee and is supported by skilled staff - locally, regionally and nationally. The UNISON Manchester Branch Officers are listed below.

Branch Chair: Noel Bayley

Vice Chairs: Kate Russell & Eddy Redmond

President: Mo Baines

Vice Presidents: Rodney Lund & Kate Russell

Branch Secretary: Tony Caffery

Assistant Branch Secretaries: Pete Banks, Cath Donnellan, Evelyn Doyle, David Hall, Pat McDonagh, Jane Slater, Brian Stangoe & Rena Wood.

Equality Officer: Sonia Stewart

Branch Treasurer: Bob Oram

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Mancunian Editor: Noel Bayley

Proofreader: Mark Bowden

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Chair & Secretary of Health and Safety Committee: Geoff Archibald & David Allwood

International Officer: Isobel McVicar

UNISON/TUC Learner Representatives' Lead Officer: Peter Wilkinson

Welfare Officer: Helen Clarke

The Branch Executive Committee, the Branch's decision-making body, comprises of stewards from across all the workplaces represented by the Branch plus elected Officers. All members of UNISON Manchester are encouraged to attend meetings, vote in Branch elections and get involved in our campaigns and activities.

We are always looking for people who feel they can contribute to the work of the Branch and help other members. This could be a regular commitment or you could be a 'mailbox' steward and help pass on UNISON information to members in your workplace. The Branch provides training courses, advice and support for all our stewards and officers.

In my view...



UNISON recently balloted City Council members on a package of changes to terms and conditions relating to Part 3 of the Green Book.

We are pleased to announce that members have overwhelmingly supported these proposed changes in the ballot by a margin of 5-1 in favour. As a result, the package was agreed at a meeting of the Council's Joint Consultative Committee on 14 December.

The new deal covers changes to annual leave, payments for those employees working outside of normal 9-5 working hours, overtime payments and standby allowances, as well as the framework for assessing employees under the Competency Increment Scheme, which allows for an additional increment to be paid once employees have passed an assessment.

The changes were agreed following 13 months of detailed negotiations between the joint Trade Unions and the Council.

These changes have been subject to some tough negotiations but we believe that we have arrived at a package that is acceptable to UNISON members, and this is borne out by the overwhelming majority in favour of the proposals in our ballot. We believe that most aspects of the package are a significant improvement for our members. As an example, large numbers of members will see an increase in annual leave entitlement, while nobody will lose any of their current entitlement.

As a result most of the changes will be implemented from 1 April next year. *Tony Caffery*

FRONT COVER: Angel of the North-West... atop the Town Hall tower.



Tony Caffery signs up for HOPE Not Hate at the Cathedral.



A Vision of the Future?

"We in the Government are dedicated to providing basic public services – that goes without saying. But we will not allow your money to wash away down the plugholes of every hospital in the country. We will not stand idly by whilst councils waste money on minority projects. We will not hold our hands up and do nothing whilst well-fed public servants retire to feed on grouse and fois gras paid for by inflated pensions. The fiscal deficit is a personal problem for every one of you and demands proactive government. That is why I am delighted to open this Department of Wellbeing and Usefulness, a place which can handle all your needs. Efficient, cost-effective with no staff concerns because, well,

there are no staff! Just punch in your problem to Zed 219, the auto-reception, and it will do the rest. For instance: been referred for cancer treatment? Just click on the drop-down menu, select your dodgy organ (lung, bowel, liver, etc) and within five minutes, you will receive a text telling you there are no appointments available and to come back next year where there might be a pre-referral with a financial analyst to assess your health at the Costco Hospital next to the bus station. You know it makes sense: Good for me, Good for you, Good for Britain!"

~ Sir Tristram Tuffon-Buffon, Minister for Wellness.

Apologues to Aldous Huxley and the rest. Of course, this won't

happen. It couldn't, could it? Probably not, but there's a simple equation which all too many politicians are ignoring which is that cuts in public investment equal cuts in vital public services, from healthcare to education, social services to public transport.

All of the main political parties seem to be falling over themselves to be toughest on cuts in the public sector. 'Tough choices' will become a mantra we'll be thoroughly sick of, particularly if we start to experience the sort of savage public sector cuts and privatisations we suffered in the 1980s under the Tories. And there are alarming signs that the new crop of Conservatives appear hell bent on cut after cut after cut despite their Mr 'Nice Guy' Cameron brand image.

Even though it wasn't spending on public services that got us into this mess, but de-regulated markets and greedy, irresponsible bankers, it looks like it'll be us, the general public who'll be the ones to pay. That's why UNISON, along with the TUC, other trade unions and a wide range of organisations are calling for a fairer and more sensible way of dealing with the fallout of the financial crisis. UNISON's Million Voices campaign is calling for:

- social justice - help for ➔

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There might be a pre-referral with a financial analyst to assess your health at the Costco Hospital by the bus station.

those facing redundancy, repossessions and poverty - not bonuses and tax cuts for millionaires

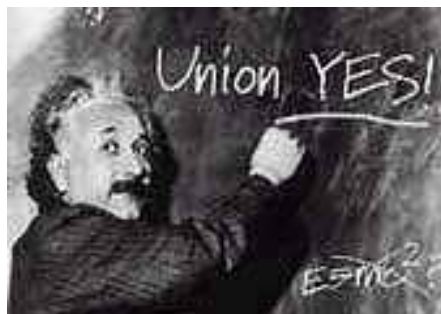
- good jobs - environmentally sustainable and socially useful jobs, with decent pay and pensions and a strong union voice
- quality public services - no more privatisation and investment in accountable public services like health, education and housing.

The rush to pay back the fiscal deficit is led by financial institutions in the City of London, which got us into the mess in the first place. And who are the City's new friends? Here's a clue: Michael Spencer, the Conservative Party Treasurer raised £5.3 million for his party from the City in the three months to September and is on track to get £18 million before the election talks of how his party 'cherished the City' and 'realises it has to be nurtured.' That probably means at our expense. Sadly, the rest of the mainstream media, which still seem to take the views of the financial elite as gospel, faithfully trots out their line too.

Yet our level of debt in relation to GDP is lower than Italy (okay, not an ideal example) but also lower than the biggest economy in the Eurozone, Germany. And there are very good reasons that we should not be paying this back immediately. For starters, we need to protect our fragile economy until it's in a state

when we can collectively, with the rich and the financial elite paying their full share, start to repay the debts incurred by the banks.

And only then we can start to build a fairer and more sustainable economy for the future. An economic system that allowed short-term profiteering and widening inequality has plunged us into a recession that is devastating lives, communities and entire countries. We can't go back to business as usual. We need to build a fairer and more sustainable economy for the future.



Whistle-stop Tour of Branch Activities...

The Branch Executive Committee receives reports from Branch Officers at each meeting. Below is a highly edited summary as there's not room to note all activity here but if something catches your eye and you want to know more, contact your local Steward, or the Branch Officer named below. And if there is no local Steward, why not get involved yourself?

In **Children, Young People and Families**, the workloads and Micare system problems are still a big issue but there have been some improvements, although UNISON will press for more.

UNISON has also negotiated a new 'First Response Team' which filters referrals to social work teams and has resulted in a reduction in caseloads. Due to the previous grade structure in this service, the Job Evaluation process was always going to be difficult. Previously the social work post was part of a long scale. Now, through negotiation, a new senior post has been created which most long-standing social workers will move onto, giving them an improved career structure while newer social workers are unaffected. This new structure provides a higher ratio of management support for each social work team with a maximum of five social workers per manager.

The Branch has recently been informed of proposed changes to policies at **Manchester Solutions**, which would be detrimental to our members. These changes include staff no longer qualifying for occupational sick pay when they are the subject of a grievance, disciplinary, capability etc. A stewards' meeting has been arranged to organise the defence of our members. *Pete Banks*

Another very busy period in **Corporate Services**: this phase of the finance SIP has come to an end. Staff who have not secured a role are now going through redeployment with several having got new posts. Extra management support has been brought into the **Occupational Health Unit** to support the SIP changes. The disciplinaries that were taking place in **Alex House** have now been concluded

with both suspended staff returning to work. A lot of time is being spent on the **Town Hall Extension's** move. Well attended stewards' meetings take place regularly; stewards are looking to do a recruitment drive within the section.

In **Chief Executive's** it's possible that a Joint Venture will be sought to transfer the staff in **Engineering and Highway Services**, along with **Manchester Contracts**, to a private company. APSE have now been retained as a 'critical friend' by the Council and UNISON, which is a really positive outcome that UNISON brokered. **Corporate IT Unit's** restructure has been concluded and new posts that were not filled internally have been advertised externally.

As elsewhere, stewards in **Manchester Advice** are busy with casework but are also involved in the work groups that are looking at changes to the back office around the move to First Street. *Jane Slater*

In the **Museum of Science & Industry**, Stewards are looking to improve members' pay. There's plenty of activity in **Manchester Adult Education Service**, particularly regarding a number of outstanding JE Appeals.

The **Youth Service** re-structure is at the stage where UNISON are negotiating on the ringfence and assimilation arrangements, as well as clarifying the position of part-time staff in the process.

There are some concerns involving **Neighbourhood Services'** move to Number One

First Street which are being raised by Jane Slater as the lead UNISON officer.

Switchboard members in **HATS** who noticed a discrepancy in the Business Analyst comments with regard to point scores in their Stage 3 JE appeal will now have their posts upgraded.

There's always a lot going on in **Markets**, where membership really counts and the Branch has organised stewards' training for activists working for the **RNCM**.



In **Education Services (non-schools)** there are issues regarding the ringfence interview outcomes and UNISON is seeking clarification on the detailed feedback requested by our members. In terms of Equal Pay, there have been a number of significant cases, which have had an impact on UNISON's Equal Pay claims, and the Branch is working with the Regional Equal Pay Unit on the outstanding claims.

A number of school members have signed up to the Million Voices for Public Services campaign and the Branch are continuing to encourage members to sign up by going to UNISON's website www.unison.org.uk.

www.unison.org.uk and posting a comment with photos, describing the role they play in working for public services and making a real difference to people's lives. *Rena Wood*

The restructures within **Housing** continue to run consecutively. The **Homelessness** division has nearly concluded although there are still issues, including rotas at the quick access centres (Men's DA and Egerton hostel) that UNISON will pursue. Members in **Private Sector Housing** are currently in the ringfence and assimilation consultation period. This will involve surgeries at each workplace site to make sure that all UNISON members are covered in preparation for the forthcoming interviews for the post within the new structure. Unfortunately the collapse of the private market renewal fund has led to a number of supernumerary staff within the structure. Steve Swift and David Hall will be coordinating the ringfence and assimilation process along with any subsequent redeployment issues born out of the interview process. The housing strategy restructure is still in its infancy and UNISON will continue with consultation as agreed with the Director of Housing following recommendations from the recent Audit Commission exercise within the Department.

In the **Manchester Learning Disability Partnership**, the results of the JE exercise are still awaited, but hopefully there will be some positive results from the appeal. Casework within the unit remains constant with a mixture of cases and UNISON are providing members

with support. *David Hall*

Big changes in **Schools** as the latest Education Bill received Royal Assent in November. This establishes a new national body, the School Support Staff Negotiating Body, which will set national terms and conditions, introduce a new job evaluation scheme and establish national rates of pay. This has major implications for over a quarter of our membership, taking them off Green Book conditions. It is planned to ballot all our school members in Spring 2010, with the change taking effect from 1 September 2010.

Manchester is now involved in the **Regional Schools Project** which aims to promote the new national agreement on terms and conditions and rates of pay for all school support staff. This also gives us an opportunity to promote UNISON in schools and aid further recruitment amongst school support staff.

In order to assist with the above work the Branch has secured funds via a regional pool bid to second a member from a school for a term and a half. Clayton Doyle, a Teaching Assistant from the **Birches School**, is working with Brian Stangoe and Area Organiser Katie Newton on this project.

UNISON has also been assisting members subject to allegations of physical abuse brought by students, which is obviously extremely stressful for the members involved. There has also been a large increase in staff out of work due to stress because of workloads and alleged bullying. These

trends are a source of great concern, as is job evaluation and assimilation into new job descriptions. Each school organises its staff in different ways and it is therefore difficult for members to identify a job description that covers the range of duties they undertake. At the last count there were 82 different job descriptions prepared for school support staff of which only 28 have been subject to a live interview.



Our **Teaching Assistant** members are extremely aggrieved with the outcome of their desk top evaluation which was carried out in February 2008. These members want proper live interviews undertaken and the job descriptions reviewed to take into account the changes that have happened since that date. The Branch is pursuing this issue with the Head of Personnel. *Brian Stangoe*

The Branch are currently negotiating in **Manchester Working** over compulsory redundancies arising from the completion of regeneration work and the failure to win new maintenance contracts. We are trying to get the company to explore every alternative to compulsory redundancies including voluntary severance.

Workplace meetings were held at 14 **Manchester College** sites in one week. Some involved only a few members and some were large but we now have a contact at every site prepared to circulate information and get involved in various ways to boost membership and improve everyone's working lives.

The Branch is now involved in a detailed market rates assessment of the whole **Southways** housing company with local representatives being fully involved in meetings with management and the consultant agency. *Pat McDonagh*

The Branch has been involved in consultation regarding restructures of various services in **Adult Social Care** which is ongoing. The first stage, the restructure and reorganisation of the Social Work teams, and Reablement Service into Localities has been completed to produce a new Customer Support Division.

All Manchester City Council staff in **Adult Social Care** undertaking work in Mental Health Services are currently seconded to the **Manchester Mental Health Trust**. This arrangement has been in place for about eight years, but is currently being reviewed with an options appraisal on the future of the Trust being undertaken jointly by the Health Trust and MCC. It proposes commencing consultations on a TUPE transfer as the preferred option. The Branch has recently recruited five new stewards within this service area

which will be invaluable as the consultation process proceeds. If the preferred option after consultation is TUPE transfer then it is likely that this would take place for 1 April 2010, although no decision has yet been taken.

Ongoing support continues to individual members on a range of casework issues including management of absence, grievance and disciplinary issues as well as on JE issues.
Evelyn Doyle

Job Evaluation Update

The initial stage of the Job Evaluation process has now been completed, but there are large numbers of posts which still require a live interview procedure.

UNISON has raised this as a priority despite suggestions that we should live with

desktop outcomes for areas likely to be restructured next year.

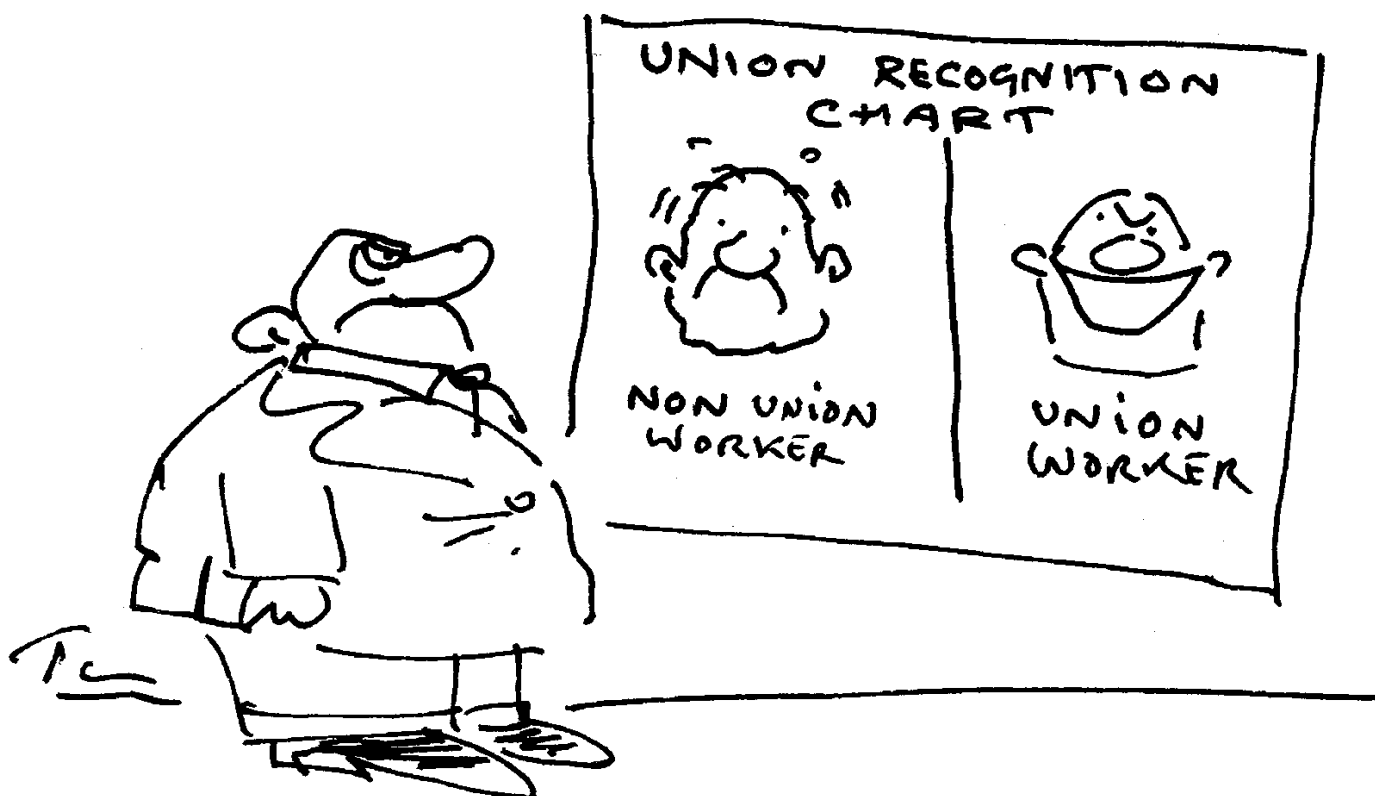
However, we have maintained that staff were promised a live interview and had been denied an appeal in respect of the desktop evaluation on that basis.

We have also been under pressure to agree wider job family types or 'alignments of posts' and while it may be reasonable in some cases if the facts seem to support it, there needs to be a facility to allow for appeals from those who believe they have been put in the wrong job family for JE purposes. As ever, we will continue to fight for the best deal for our members.

This is a particular problem in terms of school support staff where not only is there a dispute by many that

they have been put in the wrong staff JE group but that some are one-off roles and should be separately evaluated. Overseas House management and Town Hall management imply blame on each other for the delay in dealing with this area. It has now been agreed both sets of management will meet jointly with UNISON to try and break through the logjam.

The Branch has asked that the Equalities Impact Assessment be carried out as a priority, and that the Part 3 changes that members voted for be incorporated. We will then have an accurate picture of the outcome in relation to how many staff gained, lost or stayed the same. Then the Branch will urgently seek negotiations on the points to pay line where possible to reduce the number of those losing.



Nice To Meet You...

Name: Edward Owen
Redmond

Job: Youth Worker

How long have you been a Branch member? 22 years

What do you like about your role in UNISON Manchester?

At this moment in time the youth service is going through a restructuring so there is very little that I like about my role. Dealing with managers is one thing, helping people who feel under the threat of losing their jobs or roles is another.

Whereabouts do you live?
Whitefield.

Where would you want to live? I would like to live in a worldwide socialist republic.

Best thing about UNISON?
I have

found people in the Branch to be supportive and very helpful while going through a restructure.

Who or what is your inspiration? James Connolly

If you were Prime Minister, what would you do first?
Dissolve the Act of Union.

What would your superpower be? To make everyone love each other.

What's the worst job you've ever done? Cleaning dead mice from the top fridge in a butcher's shop.

Favourite holiday destination, film, drink, football club? Enniscorthy County, Wexford; *The Hunger*; anything but whisky; Manchester City.

What was your best day at work? The day I became a steward?

And your worst? The same answer.

Why do unions matter?
Because the people who own the means of production do so only to make a profit from the labour of the people. And because of this they need to be reminded that the exploitation of the workers is anti-social behaviour that needs to stop.

What is the trait you most deplore in yourself? I sometimes say things without considering the impact that it causes to others.

What is the trait you most deplore in others? The trait I deplore is the rejection of socialism as a way forward for the people of the world.

What should Fred Goodwin do with his pension?

Put the lot into the UNISON hardship fund. If the Conservatives get in at the next election we are going to need it.

