

The

February 2003

# Grapevine

UNISON

The Official Newsletter of *Angus Council Branch*

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# AGM - DONT MISS OUT ON YOUR SAY

27th February 2003 FORFAR ACADEMY

Finger Buffet from 5:30pm :APF meeting start 5:45pm :AGM start 6:15pm

UNISON Angus Council Branch is to have it's 2003 Annual General Meeting (AGM) on Thursday 27th February in the main hall of Forfar Academy. **This is YOUR chance to have YOUR say and YOUR union needs YOU there.**

For the meeting to be valid the rules state that a certain percentage of the total membership must be present. The magic figure is around 75 members. At the last 2 AGM's (2001 & 2002) there has not been enough members attending therefore nothing could be agreed at the meeting. This is known as "not being in quorate". This has made these meetings a farce and I'm sure that disappointment was felt by the members who turned out and the organising staff. It is due to this that the AGM minutes of 2000 are included in your AGM papers, which should have accompanied this newsletter. They have not been ratified by a AGM of members since 2000, and cannot be until we have an AGM in "quorate".

All members are entitled to attend and vote. This is the only event that we, the Branch Officials, ask you to attend this year. We are aware that members may be worried

about attending due to them not understanding the procedures and processes of the meeting. We would like to reassure members that the meeting is very welcoming and friendly. If you are unsure of coming alone then please force a work colleague (who is a member of course) to come with you. A finger buffet is available from 5:30 so you don't even need to go home for your tea. A meeting of the Affiliated Political Fund (APF) members shall take place at 5:45 with the main AGM starting at 6:15 which should take just over an hour. This year we have a guest speaker from UNISON's solicitor's Thompson's, who is to speak about employment law. A full agenda of the meeting is included within the AGM Papers.

During the meeting there will be opportunities for you to vote and make your views known on issues. This is your chance to get involved with democracy and shape the way of YOUR branch. A good turnout would also send a wake-up message to the employers. So organise the babysitter and **HELP YOURSELF** by attending, because without you there is no union.

Remember to use the FREEPOST address for any written correspondence

Unison - Angus Council Branch, FREEPOST SC07380, FORFAR, DD8 1ZR

# Health & Safety

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS NO. 2 – RISK ASSESSMENTS

Following on from last issue's article on Eyesight tests, this quarter's Frequently Asked Question is on Risk Assessment. When safety reps receive a complaint about an unsafe working practice, they will ask if you have reported the problem to your line manager and if you have seen the Risk Assessment for the task. The article below, taken from the HSE website, answers many of the questions that safety reps are often asked about Risk Assessment. It is hoped that through the Branch newsletter members will be able to access more information about basic health and safety issues and generally raise awareness about the safety legislation that affects us all.

Please remember if you have a health and safety issue, report it to your line manager in the first instance to give them an opportunity to rectify the problem. Then, if no action is taken, contact your UNISON safety rep.

### How do I carry out a risk assessment?

Risk assessments are a legal requirement under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Regulation 3 of these regulations stipulates that:

Every employer shall make a suitable and sufficient assessment of -

(a) the risks to the health and safety of his employees to which they are exposed whilst they are at work; and

(b) the risks to the health and safety of persons not in his employment arising out of or in connection with the conduct by him of his undertaking.

The Approved Code of Practice (ACOP) goes on to say:

This regulation requires all employers and self-employed people to assess the risks to workers and any others who may be affected by their work or business. This will enable them to identify the measures they need to take to comply with health and safety law. All employers should carry out a systematic general examination of the effect of their undertaking, their work activities and the condition of the premises. **Those who employ five or more employees should record the significant findings of that risk assessment.**

A risk assessment is carried out to identify the risks to health and safety to any person arising out of, or in connection with, work or the conduct of their undertaking. It should identify how the risks arise and how they impact on those affected. This information is needed to make decisions on how to manage those risks so that the decisions are made in an informed, rational and structured manner, and the action taken is proportionate.

A risk assessment should usually involve identifying the hazards present in any working environment or arising out of commercial activities and work activities, and evaluating the extent of the risks involved, taking into account existing precautions and their effectiveness. In this approved code of practice:

(a) **a hazard** is something with the potential to cause harm (this can include articles, substances, plant or machines, methods of work, the working environment

and other aspects of work organisation)

(b) **a risk** is the likelihood of potential harm from that hazard being realised. The extent of the risk will depend on:

- the likelihood of that harm occurring;
- the potential severity of that harm, i.e. of any resultant injury or adverse health effect; and
- the population which might be affected by the hazard, i.e. the number of people who might be exposed.

The purpose of the risk assessment is to help the employer or self-employed person to determine what measures should be taken to comply with the employer's or self-employed person's duties under the 'relevant statutory provisions' and part ii of the fire regulations. This covers the general duties in the Health and Safety at Work Act (HASAWA) and the requirements of part ii of the fire regulations and the more specific duties in the various acts and regulations (including these regulations) associated with the HASAWA. Once the measures have been determined in this way, the duty to put them into effect will be defined in the statutory provisions. For example a risk assessment on machinery would be undertaken under these regulations, but the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 determine what precautions must be carried out.

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### Summary

To summarise, our employers should have carried out a variety of risk assessments and recorded the significant findings i.e. hazards and risks. Employees should be made aware of these findings and this may take place in a variety of ways from being given a copy of the Risk Assessment, to being shown a safe way to carry out the task or being given protective clothing to wear. The risk assessment is usually turned into a safe system of work, and this is usually what members are familiar with, rather than the risk assessment itself.

**Louise Trayner : Branch Health & Safety Officer**

You can Telephone or Fax the Office

01307 468950

2nd July  
**2003**

**UNISON's  
10th  
Anniversary**

The 2nd July 1993 saw the creation of a union which has matured in the last 10 years to now form Britain's largest union. The Branch wish to mark this occasion with something to remember. What that 'something' is, we don't know, so we are asking you, the members, if you have any reasonable ideas that could be considered.

If anything springs to mind then please contact the Branch Office via phone, FREEPOST or email.

## An Anniversary Message From The General Secretary

**UNISON** is ten years old on 1<sup>st</sup> July and there is much to celebrate in this our anniversary year. We are now Britain's biggest union with 1.3 million members, and are growing daily. Our finances are strong. We live up to our name: despite being such a huge organisation, we have succeeded in merging into a coherent, unified whole.

UNISON was founded on principles of equality, fairness, democracy and mutual respect. Two thirds of UNISON's members are women and they are elected in proportion to their membership in all lay structures.

We represent people at every level of the workforce, from the low-paid and manual workers to managers and professionals. We have fought to ensure that part-time workers enjoy the same conditions of employment as full-time workers. We make sure our young and retired members are properly represented. We celebrate

diversity within our organisation with self-organised groups representing women, black, disabled and gay and lesbian members.

Our work is progressive and our methods innovative. We led the way for unions to embrace new technology, with email, the Internet, electronic distribution to branches and our award winning website. We were the first union to set up a call centre to deal with members' enquiries, meaning that union officials can get out and do the 'hands-on' work of representing, recruiting and organising.

UNISON is a powerful force in industrial relations, a key player in the political scene, a voice which must be listened to. You are a part of that voice – that's something to be proud of.

**Dave Prentis – General Secretary**  
**Nancy Coull – President**

# Branch Website Launch

## **[www.unison-angus.org.uk](http://www.unison-angus.org.uk)**

In the last issue of *The Grapevine* I mentioned that a Branch website would hopefully be up and running by the New Year. There was a website of sorts available however it had a number of pages not completed and wasn't a slick as I was hoping. By the time you get this newsletter I hope to have resolved these problems and enhanced the website greatly.

The site is primarily for information about the Branch, and is aimed at both members and prospective members. For members there are sections where you can send us changes to your details such as workplace, job title, etc. This is currently limited and for security reasons no personal data is held on the website. There are also details of the Branch, with email and postal addresses for the Branch and its Officers. We hope that the website will also attract people who are currently

non-members. They will be able to find out about UNISON and the Branch and hopefully then request an application form. Unfortunately they will still have to send it by FREEPOST as the form requires a signature.

For Workplace Stewards, Health & Safety Reps & Branch Officers there is various forms and notes, for aiding them in their duties, available for download. There are also useful links to other websites and a news area for local and national items. Copies of *The Grapevine* are also available for download, however please be aware that they are very large files which can take quite a while to download over a normal phone line.

If anyone has any suggestions for material for the website or constructive criticism then please email:

**[webmaster@unison-angus.org.uk](mailto:webmaster@unison-angus.org.uk)**

**You can Email the Office**

**[office@unison-angus.org.uk](mailto:office@unison-angus.org.uk)**

# Snippets



## Branch Email Address Change - Again

Please note that the email address for the Branch Office has changed permanently to:

***office@unison-angus.org.uk***

Email Addresses for Branch Officers are as follows:

Branch Chair	<b><i>branch-chair@unison-angus.org.uk</i></b>
Branch Secretary	<b><i>branch-secretary@unison-angus.org.uk</i></b>
Treasurer	<b><i>treasure@unison-angus.org.uk</i></b>
H&S Officer	<b><i>healthandsafety@unison-angus.org.uk</i></b>
Communications	<b><i>communications@unison-angus.org.uk</i></b>
Education Officer	<b><i>education@unison-angus.org.uk</i></b>
APF Officer	<b><i>apf@unison-angus.org.uk</i></b>
Welfare Officer	<b><i>welfare@unison-angus.org.uk</i></b>

## Car Fuel Allowances

Since last year national negotiation on car fuel allowances no longer happen. Any changes shall have to come about via local negotiations only and because of this a sub-group in the Branch has been formed. The group's remit is to research the allowances and any financial implications regarding tax, if allowances were to change. These findings would then make a basis for any negotiations with the employers, who are not rushing to address this explosive subject, however it is hoped that the group will now place pressure on them.

## Are You Due To Retire?

If you are about to retire then please contact the Branch Office as soon as possible. The Branch have a policy of paying the one-off subscription for the retired members section for any member who is retiring, however **we need to know!**

## In Debt? UNISON Welfare can help

If you are in debt and don't know where to turn then contact the Branch Welfare Officer through the Branch Office or by email. Alternatively, phone UNISON's free and confidential debt advice service help line on 0800 3893302. This service is open 8am to 9pm Mon - Fri and 9am to 1pm on Sat.

## Re-Nominations and New Nominations Welcome

If any members wish to help in their workplace by becoming a Workplace Steward or Health & Safety Rep then nominations will be taken from the floor at the AGM. All existing officers who wish to remain in post are reminded that they must be re-nominated.

## MORE CONTACTS WANTED

Another 2 new workplace contacts have been recruited since the last newsletter. They are:

- Joan McLaren - Montrose Museum
- Linda Allan - Property Services, Ravenswood, Forfar

The network of workplace contacts is slowly starting to grow, however there are still a great number of workplaces that have no representation or contacts. I can only ask again for members to help themselves and their fellow colleagues by offering to be a contact. The workplace contact only has to aid with the distribution of local Branch literature as and when they receive it. There are NO meetings to attend apart from the AGM and you would not be asked to carry out any other UNISON duties unless you wished to become a Workplace Rep or Health & Safety Rep,

## NO EXPERIENCE REQUIRED

etc. If you are willing to help then please complete the slip and send it to the Branch Office using the FREEPOST address.

**Workplace Contact**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Workplace Address:**  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Contact Phone No:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Newsletter Articles

If you have any newsletter articles or any suggestions for items which you wish to be considered for inclusion in *The Grapevine* Newsletter then please contact Bob Bruce by email :

***communications@unison-angus.org.uk***

**or phone 01307 473738.**

The next newsletter shall be distributed in May 2003.

## New Branch Retired Members Section

It was revealed at the last Branch Executive Meeting on 11th February 2003 that the current arrangement for the Retired Members Sections of the former Tayside Region is to cease immediately. This was brought about after the Perth & Kinross Section decided to pull out and create a separate P&K Group. A second blow to the Branch was that the current Angus Council Branch Representative also decided to stand-down.

At the Executive Meeting it was decided to form our own separate Retired Members Section and ask for nominations for the Officers posts that will be required, from within that group. A meeting of the retired members shall be called in the near future.

**REMEMBER**  
A.G.M.  
Thursday 27th February  
Forfar Academy

You can visit the branch website

**[www.unison-angus.org.uk](http://www.unison-angus.org.uk)**

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