

AGM ISSUE 2009

Branch Secretary's round up of the year

Welcome to my summary of the year's activities...and what a productive year! As a trade union we can be very proud of our achievements and activities, both work related and social occasions, and I welcome more members feeling that they would be comfortable with being a steward or contact for their area or wider as we enter a time of great change. Under the auspices of working in partnership brought about by ACAS's involvement with the university, we need to build a strong steward network in order to be able to give active input to all the projects the trade unions expect to be involved with!

There will be policy reviews on the back of the HSE letter, which the recognised trade unions will jointly be part of; JCC's (joint consultative committees) and as a sub section of the JCC, will hopefully reside the LCC's (local consultative committees). We need to recruit stewards for the individual faculties who would be interested in joining local consultative committees. For anyone interested please contact myself or any member of the Exec committee. We will organise meetings for you to learn about the type of thing you could become involved with.

The appeals for HERA stage 2 are not yet completed; there are still about 30 individuals yet to have their outcomes. The lack of urgency in terms of returning and signing off completed forms is preventing panels from sitting. Although we have had a good level of success 17% went up a grade at stage 1 appeal and there is at the moment a better level at stage 2, we do want to get people through the process so that we can advise those members close to the top of the grade to apply for regrading! The window for regrading is very short...it is open now until the end of March.

I didn't put Simon Lee's resignation in as top billing because to me the members come first, but I do have to acknowledge it! You can expect a lot more common sense around the Staff Development Festival and the granting of leave during that and hopefully other periods. I was, as many of you will have read, extremely disappointed by the treatment of some staff and student Governor's during the time span involved between discussions between the Chair of the Board and Simon and the ultimate message to members about the resignation. However, we have an interim Chief Executive Officer in Geoff Hitchins and I hope that the changes he wishes to make will be implemented swiftly. He has, as those who read emails to all members will know, already met with and has set diary dates for future meetings with myself and Phil Webster to discuss with the trade unions issues we have been concerned with over the past months and years and to move forward and give resolution to those that are most pressing and sometimes easily resolved. There seems to be a buoyant and positive mood around the campuses and I would urge members who may be tempted to contribute to the THES and other blogs to desist from it. There has been a war, there have been casualties, and it is now the time for peace. I hope that no discrimination campaigns will be mounted against those who work in areas that traditionally have not come forward to be members of the trade union, and I for one will be going to The Grange next week as part of the recruitment campaign it has been agreed we can now carry out. Please help us to map our membership and if you know of areas where there are no members, or people who were members have been encouraged not to belong any longer let the branch committee know and we will target those areas first for our recruitment campaign!

We have recruited well recently, after losing the Harrogate branch members and I am hopeful that the recent flurry of new joiners will continue as we build a better stronger branch that all support staff can feel proud to belong to. **Janet Carr, Branch Secretary**

Leeds Metropolitan
University Branch

Return on the 125

Return on the 125 .yearly report .This is the opening statement of the Annual Report to National Conference in Bristol on Feb 26th 2009 as my role as National Chair relating to the issues that we have faced and facing in all our branches over the past and coming year.

Pay Deal Ends We could have been forgiven for thinking it was going to be a quiet year. It was the third and last year of the present pay deal and we got a deserved 5% increase. This final payment means that we are no longer the lowest paid workers in the public services and we need to maintain these gains.

National Bargaining and the Framework Agreement This report includes a detailed account of our attempts to get everyone back into national bargaining. Hopefully talks brokered by ACAS in January and February will sort out our differences; I do hope we can get UCU on board. We are stronger together both locally and nationally.

Branch Seminar I was delighted to see so many younger activists joined us at the branch seminar last autumn. I agree with the feedback from the event that it was our best yet! Communication with activists has continued to improve, with our HE newsletter and regular updates given to branches.

Recruitment These are difficult times in the recession, but we should also see it as an

opportunity to recruit members, particularly potential younger members who will not so readily move around the job market to increase and protect their pay and pension rights.

Pensions There are increasing attacks on our pension schemes and this will present one of our major challenges in the coming year.

Privatisation We need to be aware of attempts to outsource support staff, to gain quick fix profits but long term financial nightmares for universities.

Equalities I believe we are the leading service group in developing policy and implementing excellent guidelines in our universities on many equality issues.

I have no doubt it will be an extremely challenging year 2009. I am confident though we have excellent leadership from our executive and real engagement with our activists in our regions and branches (through our steward network), delivering for all our members in HE.

- **Derek Earnshaw, Branch Chair**

UNISON Welfare UNISONS registered charity

UNISON Welfare is a unique confidential service offering advice and support just for members and their families.

We offer:

- **Listening and support**
- **Financial assistance**
- **Breaks and holidays**
- **Debt advice**
- **Personal advice**

All these services are free. Whether it's an accident or injury at work, bullying or stress or a legal issue there is usually a role for UNISON's charity to play in helping members as well as addressing problems collectively. There are many other personal problems where we can help such as illness, relationship breakdown, domestic violence or debt. In short UNISON Welfare enhances and complements the work of the union in supporting members at work and at home. For further information please go to the UNISON welfare website <http://www.unison.org.uk/welfare/index.asp> or contact **Andy Brannan** your branch **welfare officer** on **07504 059 939**

Branch Donates to Medical Aid in the Gaza Strip – 16th Jan 2009

Imagine a strip of land 25 miles long and between 4 miles and 7½ miles wide. This is the Gaza Strip. It has an area of 360 square kilometres which is only two thirds the size of Greater Leeds and is home to twice as many people, approximately 1.4 million.

We've all seen recent news coverage of the unfolding humanitarian disaster in the Gaza Strip and while all violence directed at civilians is to be deplored the violence launched in Gaza is taking an unjustifiable toll on civilian

populations – 100's killed and injured at time of writing.

According to a report in the prestigious medical journal *The Lancet* at least 265 children have been killed so far, social infrastructures (UN buildings, schools, mosques, hospitals(?), water and power systems and government facilities) have been badly damaged, and agreed international norms of humanitarian behaviour in situations of conflict have been breached.

At this stage of the conflict it is definitely known that:

- Several mobile clinics and ambulances have been damaged by Israeli attacks.
- At least six medical personnel have been killed.
- The proximity of battle has closed Ministry of Health clinics and hospitals.
- Ambulances are unable to operate because of disrepair and lack of access to replacement parts
- Hospital equipment, medicines and anaesthetics are in short supply
- Beds and medical personnel stretched to the limit - many doctors are currently working 24 hr shifts
- Hospitals and clinics have had their electricity supplies cut - relying on fragile back-up generators
- Many homes no longer have running water.
- Vaccination programmes, laboratory services, antenatal care, and school health services have all been interrupted.

International law requires that all medical staff and facilities be protected at all times, even during armed conflict.

So these attacks on staff and facilities are serious violations of these laws.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has asked for urgent access to wounded civilians.

ICRC also reports that the Israeli army has failed to assist Palestinians in need of medical assistance and has imposed delays on ambulance access to neighbourhoods under fire.

The ICRC has said that "the Israeli military failed to meet its obligation under international humanitarian law to care for and evacuate the wounded. It considers the delay in allowing rescue services access unacceptable".

We find it hard to believe that an otherwise internationally respected, democratic nation can sanction such large and indiscriminate human

atrocities in a territory already under land and sea blockade.

The heavy loss of civilian life and destruction of Gaza's health system is unjustified and disproportional, despite rocket attacks by Hamas.

The collective punishment of Gazans is placing horrific and immediate burdens of injury and trauma on innocent civilians.

These actions contravene the fourth Geneva Convention – collective punishment of a civilian population is outlawed.

Members of The National UNISON Executive have experienced the terrible living conditions of Palestinians living in Gaza during fact finding missions over the last few years and have recently donated £10,000 for medical aid in that area.

Our own branch here at Leeds Met has this week agreed a donation of £100 to Medical Aid in Palestine. – **Patsy Lalfam International Officer**

A Night at the Dogs

By popular request our branch organised a coach to Meadow Court greyhound racing again at Christmas time and what a night it was.

The four course dinner was wonderful as always with loads of time to place bets and collect winnings and the disco afterwards was a good opportunity to get together with colleagues and have some fun.

Patsy Lalfam International Officer



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With the UNISON Welfare **Monthly Prize Draw** you could win great cash prizes every month and support UNISON Welfare.

UNISON Welfare is a registered charity providing a unique and confidential service just for UNISON members and their families.

Every year UNISON Welfare helps thousands of members with grants, wellbeing breaks, free debt advice and support.

You can buy up to a maximum of 10 numbers per month at just £1 each.

Unlike other prize draws or lotteries you don't have to remember to buy a ticket for each draw. Once you have filled out an application form and direct debit instruction we'll collect the money from your bank account and enter your numbers in each draw. You can cancel or change your direct debit at any time.

50% of all ticket revenues will be paid out in prizes and 40% will go to UNISON Welfare. Only 10% is used for administration costs.

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To play *octopus* call **0845 355 0845** or visit www.unison.org.uk/octopus for an application form.
The first one thousand members to sign up will be sent a **FREE Octopus fridge magnet**
For more information about UNISON Welfare visit www.unison.org.uk/welfare

UNISON Welfare
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The UNISON Welfare Monthly Prize Draw

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UNISON Welfare is a registered charity providing a unique and confidential service just for UNISON members and their families.

You can buy up to a maximum of 10 numbers per month at just £1 each.

The Prize draw forms are available on request from your Branch Representatives and at both AGM meetings this month.

Leeds Met Green Unison

In response to member's comments at the last Leeds Met Unison AGM in 2008 meeting an Environmental representative post has been created with James Appleby taking up post. In support of our members, relevant information on addressing environmentally friendly practices at work and home are available here <http://www.leedsmetunison.org/environment.html>



Back in October to coincide with Halloween we raised the electrical waste of devices such as Phone chargers, PDA chargers, Laptop power adapters waste energy in two instances when not connected to the device for charging.

- There is the converted energy loss as a result of not being plugged in and not transferring to a device
- but more energy is expended in the conversion of the AC line voltage to the low voltage needed to perform the functions typically operate at very low efficiency when they are operating at low power.

The [SERA](#) Regional Reception on Friday 11th July 2008
Leeds Civic Hall Council Chamber

(Socialist Environment and Resources Association – SERA)



A lively debate took place on the Environment and Resource Management for Yorkshire and Greater Manchester area and beyond. The Question Time style Panel comprised of Rosie Winterton, the Minister of State for Transport, Hilary Benn, Secretary of State for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, Linda McAvan MEP, Richard Corbett MEP, Benet Northcote (Greenpeace) and Louise Marix Evans (Consultant, Quantum Strategy & Technology). On behalf of Leeds Met Unison I was lucky enough to ask the following question to the Sera Question Time Panel:

“The Panel has spoken of Social and Environmental justice and yet the government is planning to build more nuclear power stations. My question is why? - **James Appleby Environmental Officer**



Leeds Met Green UNISON on Facebook

If you're a UNISON member and on Facebook and interested in Green issues then join the Leeds Met Green UNISON Facebook group

Chairs corner: 2/02/2009

Welcome to the new look Leeds Met newsletter, if your reading it from the web –site or from a hard copy we have provided for the AGM or for staff that have none or limited access to the internet. Something that is still a long term aim of the branch, that every one of our staff has access to the university system. After all the university provides all the info electronically and yet there are still examples of staff that don't have access or the standard training to use it? I hope you like the look of the magazine which is part of a pilot project nationally that can be rolled out to any branch in Higher Education

Well! What a few weeks to end UNISON'S year. I am sure you all have your own opinions of what has been going on in the university and I have mine. Surprise, Surprise I am not going to let you in on them.

I honestly believe it is time to move on and be positive about the university its staff and students in what are difficult times not only in the university but affecting all our lives in the economic downturn, I hope by the time you have read this UNISON will have met with the acting Chief executive Geoff Hitchins ,and will have addressed some of the concerns and issues the staff have with the university .I remember Geoff over many years at the university as being fair, honest and a supporter of in house staff in his previous role. I was particularly encouraged by his statement that he wanted to seek early engagement with the staff representatives of both the academics and support staff.

I am just going to focus on one issue as I am sure Janet will have informed you of our highs and lows over the past year. The new Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) has met twice over the last few months. It has been agreed that the minutes will be available to all staff. Both unions for the first time that I can remember have access to the three Steve's all at one table and discuss strategic issues and information that staff have not necessarily had access to in the past .At the last one we had a frank discussion about finances and were assured that the university is financially sound and on track .I hope by the time you read this you will have access to the minutes and you can judge for yourself.(we will let you know where to access them).Please contact me or Jan if you wish to propose anything for the next agenda or discuss the minutes of the JCC.

I started on a positive note and so will finish on one, I hope by the newsletter and the web site I can start to report a more open, honest and frank dialogue with the university on issues that matter to you as staff of Leeds Met University.

- **Derek Earnshaw, Branch Chair**



A message from the Communications Officer

Dear Fellow Unison Members,

This year has been a fascinating year to be involved in trade union activities. As communications officer my role has mostly been to keep other Union Executive colleagues informed of what is going on and doing much of the mundane stuff like organising meetings and taking minutes.

However, on top of this I have arranged meetings with our colleagues in UCU to discuss a coordinated approach to tackle the serious issues that we are all now well aware. I've also attended HERA Appeals Panels as a union rep and tried to advise people how best to engage the HERA process both as a union rep and as part of my job.

We've also met with Health and Safety Executive staff and with the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) which has meant it has been fantastic to see how unions can really make a positive difference to the lives of Leeds Met staff. Much of this credit, I have to say, goes to Derek Earnshaw and Janet Carr but it has also been a team effort.

My other union role as Labour Link officer has also seen me become a Unison delegate from Leeds Met branch onto Leeds West Constituency Labour Party where I now attend their committee meetings. More on the Labour Link on the website soon... Especially when the review of local government pensions comes back into the news.

Cheers **Roland Cross**



A message from the Publicity Officer

Members,

I guess it's coming up to the first birthday for the improved website, <http://www.leedsmetunison.org>, I say this because my recollection of time is almost none existent. This realisation only came to me when I had to put myself forward for the Publicity Officer post again.

I suppose I have had one little excuse – her name is Sapphire Star Monroe Cochrane.



While only small in size I am proud to say this is my biggest achievement in life to date.

So, back to the website and the start of this; our quarterly publication. What do you think? No really, **what do you think...** can I encourage you to give us feedback on what you like, don't like and what you would like to see in the future? Wherever possible, I will do my best to ensure the information being publicised is the information you want, the way you want it!

You can contact us via the website and via email unison@leedsmet.ac.uk. You can also use the email 'group folders' to start discussions with other members on the topics that affect you.

Hope to hear from you soon, **Peter Cochrane**