

## **Branch Executive Report 2004/05**

(UNISON's calendar starts in January and ends in December)

Your Branch Executive met monthly in 2004 (except August) on 13 January; 23 February; 16 March; 22 April; 20 May; 15 June; 21 July; 23 September; 14 October; 18 November; and 14 December. Minutes are available from Branch Office.

**The year has seen our membership reach 7,000** and is still increasing (we are the Branch with the most members in the South West). While we have many members prepared to be active, we still have a number of workplaces without stewards. This large number means that we have been in more difficulty in servicing their need.

Stewards and officers of the Branch volunteer to do this essential work and the Executive wishes to thank them all for their involvement. This work is recognized for its real value by members and management. It's very important and I wish to thank you particularly for your part in this. We have requested Regional assistance to help us and this is expected to be a valuable aid to all of us.

Roberto Franceschini has been **Branch Chair**. Edd Naylor-Williams, **Branch Secretary**; Sue Abraham (now retired) was **Assistant Branch Secretary**; Dave Parsons **Branch Treasurer** and Mike Dunstone the **Assistant Treasurer**; Rose Gander **Education Co-coordinator**, Graham Parkhouse **Labour Link Officer**; Mr J Goldfinch the **Branch Auditor**, Yacob Cajee both **Equalities Officer and Black Members Officer**, Pauline Roberts **Health and Safety Officer** and Mr Colin Lomax (after George Barnes stepped down) **Retired Members Secretary**; Royston Davis **Welfare Officer**; Andy Bowman **Branch Magazine and Publicity Officer** and Des Gander **Assistant Publicity Officer**; Lesley Harper **Young Person's Officer**; Darienne Flemington **International Officer**; Moira Macdonald **the Lesbian and Gay Officer**.

**The lay work of the Branch is carried out by the Officers**, but we are always seeking ideas and help from the membership to make our Branch more effective. We took part in South West Region activities through **South West Provincial Council** with the employers (now part of the S W Regional Assembly); in UNISON through **Regional Committee and Regional Council** and other UNISON committees. Thanks again to all those who have given their valuable week-ends to this! Our SW Regional Officers assigned to us were Emma Dunn and Kathy Clarke, thanks!

Branch Delegates attended **the Annual Conference; the Local Government Conference and other national meetings, including those of Self-Organized Groups**. We put forward a motion to improve pension arrangements, an important issue for our Branch, and were delighted to see it supported by the National Executive Council NEC as part of our Union's national policy.

With our key aim of securing full lay membership participation, we agreed with UNISON SW region to fund a Branch Development Officer John Dunn who pointed us to ways of improving representation and stewards' action. Our **Branch Office** has been operating to assist us all. **I thank our own employees, the Branch Office staff: Caroline, Carol and their Manager Lesley Huggins** (who has been ill: the Branch wish her well). They work under increasingly challenging circumstances to provide for our activities. Others have helped in the office and I thank **Paul Preece** for this, as well as **Ray Jackson** who is helping on service conditions issues. I must mention too the Retired Members who helped us with the Magazine and distribution.

We need as many members as can spare the time to help us run the union business better. Our negotiators dealt with a range of issues across all directorates in DCC and similar issues elsewhere eg, **Single Status and Job Evaluation (a whole range of service conditions negotiations), Health Trusts and Partnership (impacting on a range of Council services but particularly affecting Social Service delivery). Best Value and possible externalizations and latterly the Pensions attack by Government on members' entitlements to the LGPS. In addition to Budget limits (and constraints on funding from Central Government) our members may be still at risk from further changes that might be imposed on Local Authorities.**

The Joint Trade Union Liaison Committee is consulted on Budget setting by the Council and the UNISON Regional Secretary services this group. The JTULC has continually been pressing the case to maintain the current level of services (especially Social Services, Education and Highway maintenance) by asking Devon County Council's administration to raise the Council Taxes; but we are now in a National (possibly) and County election year!

**I wish to thank stewards who deal with their own employers** (Our Branch also encompasses other Public Sector, Voluntary Sector and Charity employers), **and all the Devon County Staff Side.** A big thanks to Moira Andrews as joint leader, for having dealt with and continuing to address a number of service conditions issues with management through the Devon Joint Consultative Committees (JCC) and with the employers, the democratically elected Councillors at the County Personnel Partnership Committee.

All Members of UNISON are reminded that we are all part of UNISON so we all need to play our part in making it work. Please ensure you give support to such Stewards and Health & Safety Representatives as you elect and please consider putting yourself forward if you can!

**I also wish to thank the very many people who have been helping the Branch** so far this year. I look forward to our continuing to work together over

the year. A special Welcome to young members; we need you to help so please give it a try, have a go and some fun too!

**Roberto Franceschini**

Branch Chair.