

Farewell Maurice Rennie!

It is with a heavy heart that the Branch will say goodbye to its long serving Branch Secretary, Maurice Rennie, on 6th November 2009.

I'm sure many of you have received help and support from Maurice over the years but his work as Branch Secretary is far reaching and this article is a testament to it.

Maurice joined Northamptonshire Police on 6th November 2000 in the Central Ticket Office and became a workplace rep for Mereway Operations in 2003. He became the full time Branch Secretary in 2004.

When Maurice took over the role the Branch had very few Stewards with Executive Committee meetings being attended by maybe 4 or 5 people. Compare that to now when the Branch has 23 Stewards, all either completed or in the process of completing the 5 module Steward's Passport training to become fully Employment Relations Accredited and be able to offer a much higher level of support and guidance to our members.

As you may know the Branch was runner up in the Branch of the Year Awards 2008 and is held in high regard within the Region and nationally.

During his tenure as Branch Secretary Maurice has led the Branch through some difficult times, numerous budget cuts and redundancies and the Pensions strike in 2006, which was handled in a very diplomatic way.

On top of all of this Maurice has also been a very enthusiastic International Officer and Regional International Committee Chair. This role has taken up a considerable amount of his own time. He was one of two Police Staff members who joined a Unison delegation to Cuba in 2007 and, as you saw in our last newsletter, has recently been to South Africa. He keeps the Branch Committee updated on any international issues he feels could be of interest or that we should act on, keeping international campaigns on the agenda. This will role will also need to be filled on his departure.

During his 5 years in the role Maurice has never taken the honoraria offered to him by the Branch. As a show of thanks for his work the Branch Executive Committee will be making a donation on his behalf to the Diana Princess of Wales Mohau Children's Centre in South Africa which left a lasting impression on Maurice following his visit there.



Also Inside...

Police Staff Conference 09

Results of the Prize Draw!

UNISON Welfare

Branch Secretary's Final Report

All good things must come to an end and it is my turn to go. I leave Northamptonshire Police Staff Branch on the 6 November 2009.

I leave in the certain knowledge that the Branch is in a much better position than when I took over in 2004. You have more members, a higher density, a better-trained and motivated executive committee, 2 and half full time officers and a good solid working relationship with your employer. I cannot and wouldn't ask for any more.



To those of you who have allowed me to help you in any way down through these years I say farewell and thank you for allowing me to enter your work lives. For those I have helped I am grateful and for any who I have upset I unreservedly apologise.

Peter Lake is standing up as Branch Secretary until you, the members, elect a new Branch Secretary at your AGM in February 2010. Peter has been my full time Assistant Branch Secretary for the last 2 and a half years and I am confident that he will do a good job for you all as your new Branch Secretary

The next few years will be difficult ones for Northamptonshire Police and I wish you all well. Please continue to give the same level of support to the Branch that I have been privileged to receive from you over the last 6 years.

I have done the best job I could do over these years and I hope you will not judge my stewardship too sternly.

As I now fade into the sunset to be quickly forgotten I again thank you and wish you all the very best of health, wealth and prosperity that together I am confident you can achieve.

Yours in solidarity

Maurice B Rennie

Website

www.unisonnorpol.org.uk

Northamptonshire Police Branch of UNISON have their own standalone website which is just bursting with information for you the members.

It is constantly being updated with the latest Branch news, upcoming events and latest UNISONPlus benefits. It also has information about your team, direct links to the main UNISON website and the opportunity to ask the Branch Secretary a question.

It is definitely worth a look every now and again.



'If you think nobody cares if you're alive, try missing a couple of car payments'

Earl Wilson

With the recent economic climate and Christmas fast approaching many people may be wondering how to make their money stretch. Here are a few schemes through Unison Welfare that may make that small difference...



Contact Debtline on 0800 3893302 (Lines open Monday to Saturday)

With the completely free of charge Payplan Debt Management Plan you get:

- Reduction of multiple debts to a single payment
- Choice of payment methods including a PayPoint cash option
- An assigned case officer to call for advice throughout the repayment plan
- Supported self-help if you prefer

Credit Unions

An alternative way to save and borrow run by their members for their members and especially good for those on low incomes or with bad credit history.

Once you have a reliable record as a saver you can apply to borrow money from them. Credit Unions do not have to pay shareholders and keep their money within the community.

Visit the British Association of Credit Unions at www.abcul.coop or the Financial Services Authority website.

Coping with Energy Bills

Gas and Electricity prices have risen by around £600 per household in the past five years but there are some ways to save money on your energy bills.

Switching Supplier

If you have never switched gas and electricity supplier you could save between £150-£220 depending on how you pay.

Comparing Prices

Use one of the internet price comparison sites that are accredited by the Consumer Focus 'Confidence Code'. Look out for their logo



Staying with your Supplier

If you have never switched you may well be on their most expensive deal, ask to be put on their cheapest deal.

Further advice on cutting the cost of your energy bills is available by following this link to the UNISON website http://www.unison.org.uk/welfare/news_view.asp?did=5002 or going to the Consumer Focus website www.consumerfocus.org.uk.



Apply for a financial grant from UNISON Welfare

If you are suffering severe hardship you can apply via your Branch Welfare Officer. Further details are available at <http://www.unison.org.uk/welfare/apply.asp>



UNISON Welfare & Payplan Micro-site

www.debtclinic.co.uk/unison

The micro-site includes a debt calculator and advice covering a whole range of debt problems.



UNISON Pre-paid MasterCard

Different from a credit card as you cannot overspend!

Apply online at www.unisonprepaid.com or call 0800 107 8065

Luisa Jepson, Welfare Officer

01604 703664

UNISONwelfare

Registered Charity No. 1023552

Police Staff Conference & Seminar 2009

Peter Lake, Assistant Branch Secretary, and Janet O'Toole, Weston Favell Steward, attended the annual Police Staff Service Group Conference and Seminar in Scarborough this year. Peter drew the short straw in writing the main report.

Well I've actually done it and attended my first UNISON Conference and Seminar and even stood up on the podium and admitted that I was a retired officer and on secondment from PSD! I not only survived to tell the tale but actually got a round of applause at the end!

Even in October Scarborough is a stunning venue provided you like trekking up and down huge cliffs and enduring the seemingly never-ending journey thanks to our Notts neighbours closing the M1!

But seriously, I would recommend everyone to attend one in the future, if you can, either as a delegate to the conference or the seminar (many people seem to go for one or the other rather than both - which is perhaps something we should consider as a Branch to perhaps encourage more participation). One of the things that really hits home is that although we are all Police Staff we all seem to be working under so many different terms and conditions, different management 'styles', contrasting policies and working conditions that we might as well be from different planets. Having said that it is the coming together of like-minded souls and comparing Our experiences, which makes it so valuable and interesting.



As the saying goes "there's always someone worse off than yourself" and believe me it appears that we have a lot to be thankful for in our Force. Mind you that's not to say that everything is perfect here – far from it. We still have a long way to go for that and to catch up with some Forces – in addition we need to work hard and remain vigilante even to maintain the positions we have achieved.

I kept a more detailed account of the 'business' discussed and will provide that later. But for this report I will mention what I consider some of the highlights.

For the first time, I believe, the President of UNISON is a member of Police Staff - Gerry Gallagher from Durham. Gerry chaired the Conference and did a great job He is an example of how our status and profile as employees and union members has risen steadily in the last 15 years.

We had a number of guest speakers who all spoke highly of the commitment and dedication of our members, but there was always the undertone of what the future will bring.

Chief Superintendent Derek Mann from the NPIA National Workforce Modernisation Programme appeared to make all the right noises about WFM – well he would wouldn't he? Concentrating on career paths and calling it a 'profession'. He also stressed the need for terms and conditions to be more "flexible" - a common theme throughout our stay. You can read more of Derek's views in the Autumn edition of Profile magazine.

Interestingly he is from Surrey who are not governed by the Police Staff Council Handbook and another former Surrey man now Chief Constable of Greater Manchester, Peter Fahy, also addressed us.

Peter spoke on WFM in his role as ACPO lead on the subject. He was extremely supportive of PCSO's and rather surprisingly, and in my view displaying refreshing honesty, on the "flexible" subject, tending to explode the myth that officers 'are' and police staff 'aren't'. He rightly pointed out that if an officer is not trained in a particular skill he or she is no more "flexible" than one of our members. He added that police work has been historically likened to a 'playground' in that officers tried the swings, moved on to the slide, then the roundabout and so on. He claims this is no longer affordable and that as more rules apply, the standards go higher, the work becomes more complex and the omni competent police officer will become a thing of the past – which is where we come in! He wants to raise the professional status of policing with officers only used in roles for which they have the necessary level of skills and expertise.

The remaining tasks being performed by properly trained Police Staff. He cited the teaching profession where they brought in Teaching Assistants and then raised the profile of Teachers. He wants the police to go along a similar track. One other interesting point he made concerned call centres. A study has shown that if the police don't deal with calls properly in the first instance then more calls inevitably follow which leads to a downward spiral of inefficiency which is difficult to get out of.

Therefore if we have better trained staff and deal with it correctly in the first place we reduce calls – simple!

Gavin Buist Supt from Falkirk presented a complete success story for a similar CIU/CID set up in Falkirk to the one we have in WB. In addition, it may surprise you to know that not only was there a very favourable video of our CIU/CID but also there was nothing but glowing reports about it. I decided not to create any 'scene' and did not disclose our evaluation (which as you may know is not very favourable) in the open forum, but I did manage to speak to Gavin later, who was somewhat taken aback. However, when I told him that our conclusions were only based on 6 months data his reaction was more or less "Well, what did you expect?" taking into account all the circumstances - apparently they did not evaluate their project until they had 18 months to look at.

Gavin stated he was happy to discuss all aspects of their project with me, so I am sure he would be even more inclined to speak to someone from the Force so I have passed this info to Supt Ivan Balhatchett who has been appointed to review WB CIU/CID.



During a question session it was slightly worrying when Peter Fahy appeared to contradict his earlier presentation when he said that there was: "A lot of interest (nationally) in what Surrey has achieved." But he again repeated what he had said about flexibility and then he and Derek Mann stated that: "Privatisation was not an option" mainly due to the "vocational commitment" of our members. But the service does need to organise itself better and sharpen up its act. On the future of PCSO's Peter replied, "Why would you want to take away the

people who are dealing with the public? How would you do it? How could you financially go about it?" Altogether quite reassuring I'm sure you will agree.

The second day of the Seminar, was devoted to the proposed new National Disciplinary Codes. Our Branch committee is not in favour of much of this although it is accepted that national procedures on 'anything' do need to be considered providing proper local consultation takes place and there is no lessening of any local terms and conditions that we already have. For example the new codes include a right of appeal to the Police Authority who are after all the "employer". I always believed we had that right but we had to reluctantly agree to a policy revision when our Police Authority 'delegated' the responsibility to the Force. There are many things we are not happy with however such as reduced time limits for Hearing dates and papers to be served coupled with written warnings lasting 18 months rather than the present 12.

We made our feelings known and pointed out that the codes (based on the revised Police Officer one) were for police staff - not for police officers, who enjoy many better terms and conditions than we do as 'compensation' for the restrictions imposed on them both on and off duty – not least of all their pay!

Paula Porter from Thompson's was the final guest speaker and had some interesting points to make regarding Investigations - mainly Criminal. She is a Criminal lawyer so not an expert re Employment law, but she had made some enquiries with colleagues to assist us with cases that went from the former to Discipline.

She pointed out that tapes of Criminal cases are never used for discipline except in the police and we may have to re-consider our normal practice of allowing this. She also raised the legitimate tactic of 'drip feeding' disclosure in criminal cases and stated that this should not be allowed in a Discipline case as a member **must** be informed of the whole case against them at the start. It has apparently been held that failure to do this would mean that any subsequent dismissal of the member would automatically be regarded as unfair! She went on to say that her advice to members is never to accept a police caution. Her main reason for this is that this will always lead to a dismissal. She argues that police officers who accept cautions and even some who are convicted often avoid dismissal. Although I can see where she is coming from I had to stand up and point out that such advice is rather easier when you are not the one who faces standing in court – but she did accept that it should always be the member's final decision.

Anyway, all in all a thoroughly worthwhile few days and the final highlight? The Queen Mary 2 sailing across Scarborough Bay on Friday afternoon in all her glory!



Janet's experience...

A funny thing happened on the way to conference..... there I was sitting in my car, engine off, feet up, reading my paper (due to a serious RTA between junction 28 and 29 on the M1) when my phone rang. The voice said "Is that you Janet, sitting in the car behind me reading your paper?" It was Lesley Panton from Leics. We had never met but she just said I looked familiar. I suppose we union reps must look a certain way!! But I found it all rather spooky!!

As a first time delegate at the conference, I found the whole process very interesting and it was good meeting people from other forces and sharing experiences. I did get an ache in my right arm though with all the voting.

I attended a fringe meeting on privatisation in the Police Force which is a possibility now for many forces who want to save money. Funny, I always have a problem with that, how its possible to save money when you have a middleman creaming off the profits? Somerset and Avon said they have a real problem. They have had Finance with an outside Company for 18 months now and some bills are not getting paid and now some of their suppliers have stopped supplying. The delegate from Cheshire said that they used an outside company for 4 years, and they had so many problems that they have now brought it back in house. Cleveland Police are going through the process of choosing a provider for their Finance and HR and others appear to be in the same boat. I'm sure it will only be a matter of time before our force tries to go down that road. The only way it will save money for the force is by our staff losing their jobs and a substandard service provided by the successful tenderer.

Read Alison Bucklow's report on the next page for views on 'Privatisation by the Front Door' from the National UNISON Delegates Conference...

“Privatisation by the Front Door” by Alison Bucklow

Shared services projects between local authorities and private sector companies are often little better than “outright privatisation dressed up in a new guise,” delegates were told at the Unison National Delegate Conference 2009.

The first cross-sector shared services project, between Somerset County Council, Taunton Dean Borough Council, Avon and Somerset Police and IBM – in which IBM are 76% shareholders raised some concern.

Ann Price of south west region told delegates: “Shared services has a friendly sound to it. But it’s privatisation all the same. Not privatisation by the back door, but by the front door.”

The National Executive Committee was charged with urging public sector employers to produce in-house bids, should the procurement process be implemented; and, as a “least worst option”, to promote public-public partnerships, as opposed to public-private partnerships, ensuring that there are no compulsory redundancies in any proposed reorganisation or restructuring.

Northamptonshire Police Branch members must not be complacent, shared services are already being set up and explored with other Forces in our region, and these WILL affect our members. Within the 5 regional Forces there are local agreements on terms and conditions and salary structures. Police Staff cannot assume they can move from one Force to another as easily as a Police Officer can, and enjoy special privileges. That’s why this Branch will continue to actively consult within this Force and the Region to safeguard members rights, and members must contribute, respond and support the Branch in its activities on their behalf.

Get Involved

Become a Steward

Being a steward enables you to represent your views and needs and those of your colleagues.

Stewards have many roles and you can do as much or as little as you want.

Training is provided and you are entitled to paid release for training and to carry out your duties. All trade union training is accredited and you can use these credits towards eligibility for further or higher education.

Current Vacancies

International Officer

Black Members Officer

PCSO Stewards

Custody Stewards

Force Contact Centre Stewards

Northamptonshire North Stewards

Mereway Stewards

If you are interested in any of the above vacancies or would just like to discuss the opportunities further then please contact the UNISON office on 03000 111 222 ex 2149 or e-mail unison@northants.police.uk

Results of the Free Prize Draw

You may remember that we launched a recruitment initiative back in August.

Any member who recommended a friend who has joined between then and 30th September was entered into our Free Prize Draw.

The winners of the draw were:

Leslie Jenkins

Receiving a multi-cooker

Angie Pegg

Receiving a coffee maker

Sue Tomlinson

Receiving a tool kit



Winner of the
Pink Quiz
Karen Ansdell



Congratulations!

