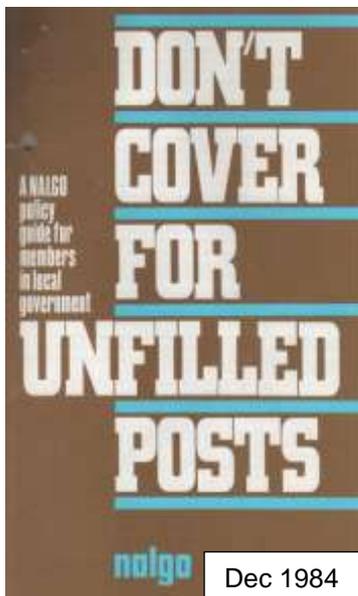


Somerset County Branch 1914 to 2014 100 years of Trade Unionism



NEWSLETTER



Dec 1984

1984 “Until they become conscious they will never rebel, and until after they have rebelled they cannot become conscious.” George Orwell.

In 1984 the Equal Opportunities Committee had now been meeting for a year.

We pressed the Council throughout the year to make provision for the increasing problem of stress felt by staff in their working lives.

Peter Bates of the Planning Department recently became this year’s “Brain of Britain” winning the BBC radio award by one of the highest margins ever. This was no surprise to those who know him but still a marvellous achievement. Well done, Peter.

We campaign to win support for the miners although there are no mining communities in the division links have been built with Kent and South Wales.

In 1986 we reported that after many years we were close to agreeing a civilised basis for the payment of classroom assistants.

We achieved an outline agreement on Equal Opportunities for council staff, covering disability, race, gender, sexual orientation and political and religious belief.

1987 saw Somerset County Council become an Equal Opportunities Employer.



NALGO Pay Rally Taunton 1989

A marcher writes “A long line of rally supporters assembled on the grass outside County Hall 'C' Block at Shuttern and, led by a small but very enthusiastic musical band, were guided through the main streets of Taunton by police, traffic wardens and union stewards. Warm support was given by shoppers and others as we passed. At the County Library, silence was suggested, but what was the point - it was closed! Thus was our case for better treatment brought to the attention of all and the validity of our claim confirmed by speakers at our destination in front of the Taunton Deane offices in Belvedere Road.”

75 years and counting

In 1989 we celebrated our 75th Anniversary as a trade union branch with 2291 members. We had planned to have a party but the pay claim action overtook that idea. In 1989 we searched for any members around from the early days (1914 – 1920) but to no avail.

What would the founders of the Branch think of our present situation? We must have developed beyond their wildest expectations.

Many of those early members fought in the 1914-1918 war – sadly six never to return. Fighting on the field of battle and later at the negotiating table those early members of NALGO laid down the basis of many of our current conditions of service. They were not given – they were fought for!

They could not have contemplated a British Central Government which prohibited trade unions membership, privatised local government and would not allow local government officers to speak in their own time about political issues!

The 1989 Pay Rally



UNITY IS STRENGTH

First they came for the Jews
and I did not speak out –
because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for the
Communists and I did not
speak out – because I was not
a Communist.

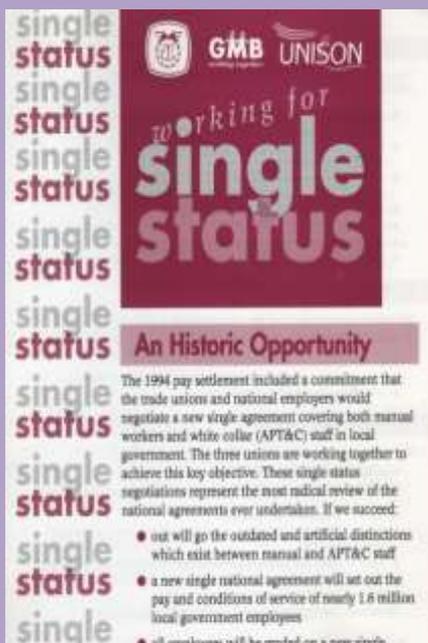
Then they came for the
Teachers and I did not speak
out – because I was not a
teacher.

Then they came for the Trade
Unionists and I did not speak
out.

Then they came for me – and
no one was left to speak out
for me.

AGM 21st November 1990

A version of the Pastor Martin
Niemoller poem.

**Into the 90's**

One departmental or service review after another keeps the Branch busy, trying to maintain pay and conditions for staff groups.

On the 13th February 1990 we point out to the Council that dissolving the joint Central Health, Safety & Welfare committee is not a legal act. “The work of the safety committee has a separate identity and safety matters should not become interposed in the agenda of other meetings”.

Displays of Pin-Ups at the Wyvern Club create an interesting debate between the Wyvern Management Committee and the Branch, resulting in the Branch not meeting there.

In 1991 The Employee Handbook is reissued which is intended as a convenient reference book...Trade union membership was not discouraged. In 1992 staff are now provided with name badges for communication & security purposes.

UNISON emerges

On the 9th September 1993 the Branch had a meeting to discuss the formation of the UNISON branch.

The National & Local Government Officers Association (NALGO), National Union of Public Employees (NUPE) and the Confederation of Health Service Employees (COHSE) become UNISON in late 1993.

On the 25th October 1994 the Secretary of State decided to adopt the status quo for the present Somerset area. Ending years of speculation on County, District & Unitary authority proposals.

County Consultative Conference discusses the Single Status agreement in October 1996.

In 1998 the Branch covers an expanding range of members, not just confined to those working for the County Council but those working for the Meat Hygiene Service, W.S. Atkins, Somerset Care and...

Purple and Green

101 years ago, Emily Wilding Davison was fatally wounded by the King’s Horse at the Epsom Derby as she stepped in front of it as part of her fight for votes for women. Tragically, this dedicated suffragette died in hospital four days later at the age of 40.

It is worth remembering the courage and resolve of all the suffragettes who fought and endured privation, ridicule, abuse and torture for the basic fundamental right of women to vote. And with nearly one million women in membership of our union, we wear our union colours with pride - purple and green - the colour of those suffragettes.

Deeds not Words



...Somerset Catering Services, the Exmoor National Park, the Careers and Probation Service, colleges, private nursing homes and foster care.

A roving AGM now takes place in Shepton Mallet, Yeovil, Bridgwater and Taunton.

The Single Status agreement is signed in 1999 by the County Personnel Officer, UNISON, GMB and TGWU.

The new century

In 2000 Car allowance issues dominate the year!

The Black and Ethnic Group held its second meeting at Dillington House on the 15th January 2001. It was a positive day for equal opportunities.

In 2002 The Council persists in seeking to remove car users from the national allowances rates. Agreement is finally reached that no-one is under obligation to use their own car for work and the Council will provide transport without moral, work or career pressure on any individual.

In 2003 we deal with flexible working, email policy, secondment policy, capability policy and the pay claim. We support the fire-fighters locally during their strike and make a considerable donation to their fighting fund.

Pensions are the national service conditions issue in 2004. The annual budget dilemma rears its head as not enough money comes into the Authority and are now dealing with compulsory redundancies. However we negotiate on the staff charter, school room reform, reviewing the sickness absence policy, SCC’s Corporate Plan, reviews of resources, children’s services and adult & community services, restricting of management pay, reviewing the secondment policy and the development of Somerset Direct.

2005 saw the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz concentration camp. A memorial service was held at St. Johns Church, Taunton where Jon Gray spoke about the danger and discrimination trade unionists still face in certain parts of the world.

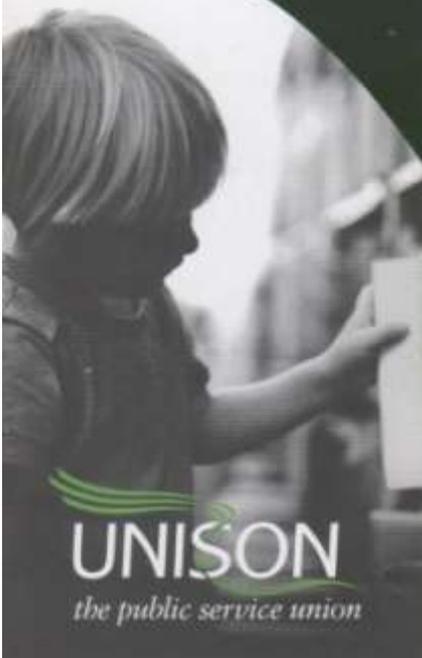


Love
Your
Libraries

2011

Everyone
needs libraries
for facts,
for fun and
for the future

Join UNISON's
campaign to
protect our
libraries



From 2004 to 2007 The Council believes that services can be improved in Somerset by paying an international company to apply their expertise to the running of finance, personnel, information technology and property. The Branch seeks to scrutinise the extended process of identifying and appointing a company. Answers to critical questions are “evasive” throughout.

In 2006 the dominant issues were proposed pension changes, ISIS (Improving Services In Somerset) and continuing reorganisation.

The issues **get bigger** in 2007 the Branch doing a lot of arguing on your behalf and achieving some successes too. Pensions, pay claims, privatisation and a plethora of service conditions. REMEMBER – DON'T BLAME US BLAME THE EMPLOYER!

The most dramatic change in 2007 was the establishment of Southwest One (formerly ISIS). UNISON is opposed to the scheme as the public services ethos is undermined and commercial confidentiality is increasingly used to justify withholding information.

In 2008 The Branch takes the Council to an Employment Tribunal over a failure to consult on service conditions aspects of Southwest One and wins on key points. The council carries on!

In 2009 UNISON still believes that employers should get the best out of the workforce and look at seriously improving in-house services and include in-house bids in any tendering process.

The Branch is involved in the Save Somerset Libraries Campaign with a petition of 25,000 signatures passed to the Council. On the 16th November 2011 library campaigners feel, 'Completely vindicated' when proposals by the Council to close many of Somerset Libraries' are stopped following a judicial high court review. The council did not comply with public sector equality duties.

In 2012 Service reviews are being carried out across the Council with a push for an outlined business case for each review before the May 2013 local elections. The first SMART office workspace and hubs are occupied.



Every so often our Employers push us into a position where our only option is to withdraw our labour in defence of our rights to a decent standard of living. It is difficult for all concerned but, it does provide an opportunity for members to demonstrate their loyalty to the Branch's work in quieter times. Thousands of local council and school support workers in Somerset strike on the 10th July 2014 as part of a nationwide action over pay.

Our final words go to **Belinda Burton** our **Branch Secretary**:-

Somerset County UNISON is very proud of its heritage and the fact we are now 100 years old. We really hope that we have carried on the amazing work that so many people have carried on before us over time, and that we live up to their legacy. We are a thriving branch still, with over 5500 members. We like to think we are a very

active Branch too with a commitment to recruiting new members alongside providing advice and representation for existing members. We also campaign hard and negotiate and consult with the employer on behalf of our members.

Over the last three or four years our job has become much harder as central government squeeze local government with budget cuts and members have lost jobs and are having to cope with huge restructures and the threat of privatisation but UNISON recruitment is still buoyant - we are one of the most successful branches in the South West.

21st century trade unions probably look quite different from in the past, for instance communicating via email and the website, we are much more diverse and membership of women has greatly increased. But even if we do look different we would like to think that the really important aspects are the same - collectivism, strength in unity, looking out for each other, tolerance and inclusiveness. We do have to deal with reduced Trade Union rights generally and tougher employment laws but we can still make a big difference and it has never been so important to be part of a union.

We always welcome new activists - if you would like to get more involved do get in touch. There are so many different facets to what we do that I am sure you would have a skill that would really help.

Our 100 years team, producing the newsletters: – Richard Antliff (Retired member), Allie Ewan (Health & Safety Rep – Libraries) & Phil Hocking (Steward – Heritage). We hope you have enjoyed this fleeting look at our Branch's history. A small archive of papers giving a flavour of the issues addressed and the people involved is maintained in conjunction with the Somerset Heritage Centre. Please enquire at the Branch Office. A BIG THANK YOU to Heather, Karin & Jack at the Branch Office for their help with access to the UNISON archive at County Hall, Taunton.

Why not join us today for the next 100 years?
www.somersetcountyunison.org