

Working together in the Norwich region

Welcome once again to the N24 General Branch Newsletter. Since April there have been some organisational changes at branch level, but we hope we are still able to provide our members with an efficient service. Indeed, we are now able to offer new benefits and information services to you all. In June, the GMB congress was held in Newcastle and our branch were represented by Keith Rowley (report overleaf). Our website has expanded further to include information for Union Learning Representatives and a library service for the publications we receive. We hope you find the information in this newsletter informative. Most importantly we hope you all enjoy this summer. Whatever the weather, we hope you are able to have a healthy balance between work and leisure time.

N24 Committee Changes

June the 1st saw us holding our AGM, with elections for branch officials. It gave us an opportunity to thank the retiring branch secretary Neil Cooper, who had the misfortune of suffering ill health earlier in the year. Thankfully, he has made a strong recovery and we were lucky enough to have him chair the meeting. N24 branch has benefited no end from his time in the hot seat and we hope members will join us in thanking him for the service he provided. We are fortunate to have retained his accounting skills as he was elected into the position of Financial Secretary. The new committee is:

President: Phil Innes,
Vice President: Mick Hardy,
Equality Officer: Terry Nokes,

Secretary & Webmaster: Steve Moore,
Financial Secretary: Neil Cooper,
Auditors: Clare Morton / Keith Rowley,

Committee Members: Charlie Moore, Robin Youngs, and Will Kelty.



Why spend hundreds of pounds on making out a will with a High Street solicitor? GMB solicitors will do it absolutely free for GMB members making a single or joint will. To obtain a copy of this form please contact the GMB Legal Dept on **020 8202 8272**

Great benefits for retirees!

Branch has now agreed to reward our long-term members by making the financial contribution towards life time membership.

If you are retiring from employment and have been a GMB member for 20 or more years the branch will pay the £25 fee.

Please call the secretary for more information:

secretary@norwichgmb.com

07979 684494

Recent Branch Donations & Membership Information

- Canon Collins Education Trust **£30**,
- Epilepsy Action **£50**,
- Breakthrough Breast Cancer **£25**,
- Macmillan Cancer Relief **£50**

Membership levels have risen in recent months and our branch has approximately 1500. Thanks go out to our regional organisers who have continued to promote trade unionism and win recognition agreements for our members and their employees.

The website www.norwichgmb.com has become a central point for information about branch activities and developments. There are helpful links for union shop stewards and safety representatives. If there is anything that you would like to see on the web pages or in this newsletter, then please contact the webmaster; webmaster@norwichgmb.com

Congress 2005 Report

Like all trade unions, the GMB belongs to its members, and it is the members that make up the 500-strong delegation for the Union's biennial Congress. Any member of the Union can put themselves forward as a delegate and seek election in the Regional ballot.

The Congress, subject to the law, can make any decision on behalf of the Union and its policies become the goals for everyone in the organisation. We were fortunate to have our branch member Keith Rowley as a delegate and here is a brief report:

This was a very positive and successful Congress. Paul Kenny as Acting General Secretary won the respect of regional delegations with the passion he showed, his obvious pride in being asked to take over from the disgraced Kevin Curran and the wealth of ideas he put forward for strengthening the Union's financial position.

One of the key documents presented was ***A Framework for the Future of GMB*** which summed up the CEC's responses to the questionnaire sent out to all branches last year. Paul rubbished the disparaging remarks Kevin Curran made about the role and effectiveness of branches and, in a pep talk to the London Region, suggested that he would like to see the CEC develop into a lay members-only body.

This was not a rule-change Congress so all the motions calling for a return to annual congresses were ruled out-of-order. However, because of the debacle of the last elections for General Secretary and Deputy General Secretary and the need to run new elections next year, the CEC announced that there will be a Congress in 2006. Paul indicated very clearly that the CEC will not oppose the groundswell of opinion in favour of annual congresses.

The branch's motion on pensions was composited and the composite, which clearly met the aims of our motion calling on the Union to get tough with employers who renege on pension commitments, was passed. Our motion criticising the powers of detention being gathered by the Home Secretary was part of a composite that was eagerly supported by delegates. Our motion calling for the British Government to get tough with Israel about its illegal wall in Palestine was the first such motion to become Union policy. Unfortunately, and to my complete surprise, our motion calling on all guest speakers to be subject to questions from delegates was defeated after heavy and manipulative intervention by the President. I was asked to withdraw it because "it would make organisation of programmes difficult and be embarrassing if no questions were asked"!!! The vote was conducted so quickly that I really could not gauge reactions. However, I was told by other delegates that not only did we win the argument but we actually won the vote. At least we know what one of our motions will be next year.

The Union is now £1.9 million in surplus after being £6.5 million in debt in 2003. Paul Kenny is confident that better organisation and integrated purchasing can save at least a further million. He promised that surpluses would be used to improve the service to members. However, the delegates agreed that membership dues had to be increased. With effect from 1st October, Grade 1 contributions will increase to £2.25 per week, Grade 2s to £1.18 and the promotional rate to 60p. Benefits will also be increased.

I will be giving a more detailed report at the next Branch Meeting.

KEITH ROWLEY

Next Branch Meeting: 7th September 2005, 7:30pm, Angel Gardens PH