Deal slows down NHS Sack Race

New redundancy entitlements for NHS employees came into force with effect from 1st October 2006.

With the intention of ending age discrimination in employment, the new rules mean that all NHS staff now get a month’s pay for every reckonable year of service in the NHS up to a maximum of 24 months.

This is a huge improvement for many staff from the previous calculation that saw staff aged below 40 only receive a week’s salary per year of service.

The cap on redundancy at age 65 has been lifted, and NHS service before the age of 21 now fully counts towards redundancy entitlement.

Added years for early retirement will be phased out over the next 5 years, although those over 50 will be able to choose to take a redundancy lump sum or retire early without a reduction in their pension.

This has made it significantly more expensive to make staff redundant.

The impact of this has already been seen in the delayed proposals for service changes (and inevitable job losses) in Shared Services.

UNISON negotiator Mike Jackson told The Meerkat:

"I was part of the Staff Side negotiation team, and we were delighted to be able to deliver such a good result for members.

"The objective for UNISON in any negotiation will remain to avoid redundancies wherever possible.

"But if the inevitable happens, it is fitting that staff are properly compensated for the distress caused, and that the cost of redundancy is increased to make this a tougher option for employers to take."

Merry Meerkat

Have yourself a merry Meerkat Christmas
Make indulgence light,
Try to keep your bulging waistline out of sight.

Have yourself a merry Meerkat Christmas,
Transgender, straight or gay,
From now on redundancy is on its way.

Here we are as in olden days,
HAPPY golden days of yore,
Faithful friends who are dear to us,
Gather near to us once more.

Through the years our branch will stand together,
'Neath our banner proud,
Hang the NHS Exec upon the highest bough,
And have yourself a merry Meerkat Christmas now.
The seminar was the situation in the UK, union members are affected by issues faced by other workers in other parts of the world. It is therefore important that branches are involved and support international campaigns and calls for action. UNISON has links with sister unions throughout the world and in solidarity with other trade unions to speak out when fellow trade unions are under threat or when their human rights are violated.

UNISON's international unit was launched in 2004 to develop policies on international issues and campaigns relevant to union. UNISON has been involved in and supported campaigns including 'Make Poverty History', HIV/AIDS, labour migration, trade justice, security, and the protest against the Iraq War.

Specifically highlighted at the seminar was the situation in the Philippines requiring urgent action and support. Since the Arroyo regime took power in 2001, there have been over 800 extra-judicial killings of political activists, union organizers, women, indigenous people, peasants, and youth. In addition, there have been thousands of human rights violations committed by the Armed Forces of the Philippines under her command.

UNISON calls upon its branches and affiliates to send letters of protest to the Arroyo Government. We were especially pleased to see our UNISON Regional Officer, John Kelly-Chandler, who will be transferring one GP, a nurse, an administrative assistant, and a receptionist from Lambeth to AT Medics. The staff and services at Edith Cavel GP practice transferred from Lambeth PCT to AT Medics during the start of November. Within a month of the transfer, one GP, a nurse, an administrator, and a receptionist have resigned. UNISON is advising two of our members about bringing forward cases for constructive dismissal.

Endorsements for the first edition of The Meerkat from Andrew Adolphus (left) and John Kelly-Chandler (below). Andrew Adolphus was the co-founder of The Meerkat project, a photostory newspaper published by UNISON. The project was started in 2000 as an alternative to the traditional union newsletter. The Meerkat was a monthly newspaper that was produced by members of the union. The newspaper was distributed to UNISON members and was available to the public for free. The Meerkat was a way for UNISON members to have a voice and to share their experiences and ideas. The newspaper was published until 2007.
Breaking the chains of debt, or where the Tory Tosser is wrong

Tosser is the star of www.sort-it-co.uk, a Conservative Party website with the laudable aim of encouraging people to keep out of debt. But the underlying assumption that people who get into debt do so deliberately. More frequently, it arises because of a change of circumstances such as loss of income, illness or relationship breakdown.

UNISON Welfare has set up a free and confidential debt advice service. The service is provided in partnership with Payplan (a non-profit-making free service) who are experts in helping people in financial difficulty.

Zero Tolerance? Zero Points

We reported in the last issue on a GP practice in Lambeth where reception staff had been arrested for assault on a patient.

Despite repeated requests for a call back, one of the receptionists (another receptionist was present at the time of the incident, left the practice shortly afterwards) it took 5 months for the practice to decide to refer the patient to the violent patient programme. And that was too late.

Within days of the decision, and before the patient had gone out to the patient, he returned to the surgery wielding a knife.

REORGANISATION NEWS

SOUTHWARK PCT

SureStart & Senior Management

As we go to press, Southwark PCT’s SureStart programme begins. This responds to the national initiative for SureStart projects to be managed through Children’s Trusts by Education Departments.

During November, UNISON responded to a consultation exercise on the reorganisation of Southwark PCT’s Senior Management Team.

The consultation document provided only minimal information, and it was not possible to assess the impact that the proposals will have.

Unfortunately, because we currently have so few stewards in Southwark, it is easy for the branch to be by-passed in consultation exercises.

We expect in the New Year to see the full charge proposals unfold. UNI-

SOUTHWARK PCT urgently requires new stewards in Southwark to make sure that our mem-

bers are properly represented.

The Meerkat sends congratulations to Chris Bull who has been appointed Deputy Chief Executive of LB.

He will caretake his current joint post at PCT but also look after Southwark Director of Health, Community Services and Housing until his successor is appointed.

LEWISHAM PCT

Dissolution of Modernisation Directorate

The PCT in Lewisham make 15% efficiency savings in management costs has forced the PCT to look closely at all the func-

tions. Consultation is currently under-

way to dissolve the Modernisation Directorate.

As we go to press, most directors will be in their office when the consultation closes 15th December 2006.

Staff Side has asked for more details to back up the proposals and will ensure that staff views are represented.

Celebrating fit Westminster Studs

The roving branch camera spotted an intriguing plaque in the entrance hall of Westminster University.

It was a marble plaque, inscribed with the names of students awarded the Studd Award for ‘Outstanding Athletic Performance’.
Christmas fun for Meerkat readers

What words can YOU come up with for...?

• I see a Fac for Christmas is my P4S
• Away in a Manager*
• Oh UNISON, Oh UNISON, How Lovely are your Branches
• Christmas trees, whitestyle and white
• While choropists washed their socks by night

*try to keep it clean

...especially for Trust Boards, why not have a go with...?

Maurice Meerkat asks the Challenging questions...

For this issue, Von Dixon faced the spotlight and answered Maurice Meerkat’s challenging questions. How long have you worked for the NHS? Briefly describe your most memorable Christmas Party?

The Facilities Directorate Christmas Party 2003 held at Burgess Park was memorable for me as it was the first time I ever attended a party. I saw the vast variety and diversity of food and drinks displayed thinking to myself of the hard work plann- ing behind this to make it such a success and so enjoyable for all the staff involved. I also remember the Santa Claus putting a smile on everyone faces.

Where do you work and what does your job involve?

I work at Cantilever House as a Receptionist/Administrator which involves interacting on a daily basis with a wide range of Staff Members and Visitors to the Lewisham Primary Care Trust. I also operate the Switchboard. I am also responsible for safety and well being of visitors to the building.

Did you become actively involved in UNI- SON?

I joined UNISON because I felt that it is important to be part of an organisation that is representative and supportive of their mem- bers.

What is your New Year’s resolution for work?

My New Year’s resolution is to keep staff employed.

What was your favourite subject at school?

Maths.

Favourite record: What’s your favourite Christmas record?


From this we can see that the Branch needs to focus on some key issues:

- The Meerkat has the audacity to believe that a situation has arisen that requires an equal- ly radical solution.
- Just at the time when NHS ‘Trusts can no longer afford to employ staff, along come new redundancy rules that mean they cannot afford to sack them.
- Desperate threats call for desperate measures so, at this festive time, we present our own Modest Proposal.

Our Swift solution to surplus staff

It is a melancholy prospect for those NHS bodies deemed weak of Fitness and fabulosity of structure that they can afford neither to employ their staff nor to dispense of their services. It is apparent to both manage- ment and staff, if honestly minded, that this is a prodigious waste of public money and ties staff into a position that is not sustainable.

The answer must be swift and must be radical. In an organisation such as the NHS where failure is rewarded by knighthoods, nothing less than the cessation of public statuary is due to the person who can find the solution. However, The Meerkat seeks no such recognition. To serve the public benefit is all the reward we seek.

The Meerkat therefore proposes a regular cull of NHS staff. Of course, this would need to be done humanely. We would not want to see, for example, every third staff member sitting at their PC struck across the back of the head and dropped from the office. The objections to this is obvious: the carpet cleaning and manual handling risk would prove too great a hurdle. Furthermore, a possibility arises that this could be demotivating for the remaining staff. No, indeed. The Meerkat concludes that the neces- sary cut can take place in 1:11 meetings, or as they could be called 1:11 meetings.

The Meerkat assumes an intelligent readership. We do not expect our readers to ask “Is this moral?” for it is not. Neither should they ask “Is this legal?” The answer is plain.

But author would be achieved in politics or business if our great ministers of state and entrepreneurs restricted themselves to acting morally or legally. We know that Meerkat readers will be asking “Is this going far enough?” Indeed it isn’t. The reader will already be thinking of the opportunity for using delet- ed posts in organ transplants. This would immediately reduce waiting lists, and eventually “just-in-time” intelligent culling could be matched to demand. Cull the workforces and we also find that the pension cri- sis is back under control.

Culling could be linked into the appraisal process and become a new “Agenda for Change” gateway. For those who worry about legality, legislation would soon catch up to sanction society’s reasonable demand for a slimmed-down and motivated NHS workforce and reduced waiting lists. Only the most dim-witted would protest.

Another disadvantage is that the mass extinction of staff would be unlikely to leave a proper skill mix at the end of the process. The Meerkat reluctantly concluded that this would not work.

For this issue, Maurice Meerkat asks the Challenging questions...