

## Election for general secretary

Papers for the ballot are being dispatched from 25 Jan. If you have not received your papers by 3 Feb, call the hotline on 0845 355 0845.

UNISON prides itself on its democratic principles. Throughout the union, members have the chance to stand for election to a range of posts at national, regional and branch level.

But there's no bigger role in the union than that of general secretary. It's one of the most high-profile jobs in the country - leader of the biggest trade union in the UK and the leading voice of more than 1.3 million public service workers.

Pay deals in local government, increased funding for the NHS, a national minimum wage, increases in the basic state pension - UNISON was at the forefront of all this and more. But none of that would have happened without a general secretary elected by the membership.

That's why it's vitally important all our members cast their votes.

Candidates announced

The nomination period for this election has now closed. The following have met the nomination threshold and have been confirmed as candidates by the returning officer.

Roger Bannister Nominated by 30 branches.

Dave Prentis Nominated by the NEC, 524 branches, nine regional councils and seven service groups.

Jon Rogers Nominated by 50 branches and one regional council.

Dispatch of ballot papers to members will begin on 25 January 2005 and all completed forms must be returned by 28 February.

## Review of the NHS Pension Scheme

The full report is available on the NHS Employers Web Site at [www.nhsemployers.org](http://www.nhsemployers.org). A concise version of the report and the "Proposals at a Glance" are available on the same site. A variety of consultation tools are also. Members of the scheme will be receiving a four page leaflet in their January pay packets and roadshows are commencing this week.

The Review was a joint process including the NHS Trade Unions and NHS employers. Similar processes were followed in Scotland and Northern Ireland but there are timescale differences. The document sets out the recommendations that have emerged from the Review.

In some areas these are proposals agreed by the partners as the best way forward. In others, more than one possible option is set out. In particular UNISON cannot support extending the Normal Pension age from 60 to 65. In addition the final salary scheme is valued by our members and we are not convinced of the case for the proposal for a Career Average Scheme. The issues that views are being sought on are set out throughout the document.

Dave Prentis General Secretary of UNISON the UK's largest health union, today slammed proposals to change the NHS pension scheme and raise the pension age to 65 saying the union would fight them all the way.

Dave Prentis said:

"MPs who will retire at the next election with a five-star pension package are plotting to make NHS staff work longer for less pension. No wonder trust is at rock bottom.

"To suggest that NHS workers should be forced to work until they are 65 is living in cloud cuckoo land. 73% of paramedics are forced to retire through ill-health before they reach the age of 60, let alone carry on until they are 65. Forcing staff to work longer will simply raise the level of ill-health retirements and end up costing the NHS more.

"And what about the possible risk to patients? People whose capability is compromised by age-related problems but are not eligible for ill-health retirement, may continue to work in vital occupations in order to avoid reducing their pension benefits. This cannot be right.

"Working for the NHS is physically, mentally and emotionally demanding. It is a highly stressful environment because of the rapid changes in technology, the rapid turnover of patients and constant reforms and changes.

UNISON will also fight plans to move towards a career average, rather than final salary pension scheme.

Dave Prentis added:

"Just as the NHS is introducing better training and career opportunities to help staff move up through the ranks, they are taking away a very good incentive to take on additional responsibilities and try to improve your career chances."

### UPDATE YOUR MEMBERSHIP DETAILS

To prepare for the 2005 Political Fund and General Secretary ballots, you need to ensure your membership details are up to date. You can change your home/employment address by phoning UNISON DIRECT 0845 355 0845

Branch Website [www.sdhealth.unisonplus.net](http://www.sdhealth.unisonplus.net)

Published by: South Derbyshire Health Branch