



WELCOME

London Ambulance UNISON

AGM 2009

I am very pleased to welcome you to this 13th Annual General Meeting. I hope you enjoy the meeting and the evening. Although we like to keep these meetings friendly and relaxed there is however, formal business that we must attend to.

Our strength is that we are part of a large Branch within a big Union organised in the Capital City's ambulance service. Organisation, discipline and recruitment have been an important key to our success. Disciplined organisation within the Branch has led to professional ways we organise negotiations with the Service as well as how we represent our members. Ours is an inclusive Union, open to anyone who is employed by the L.A.S., whatever his or her job, grade or rank. We strive for equality and diversity. The Branch is at the forefront of negotiations at every level throughout the Service as well as playing an important role on the national stage. The hard work of our representatives across the Service has been a major key to our success and I wish to place on record my sincere appreciation.

Since the last A.G.M. in March 2008 we have been busy both inside, and outside, the Service. The full Branch Committee has met once a month and the Branch Officers have had 2 extra meetings.

We still face unprecedented pressure for change as the NHS in general and ambulance services in particular have been restructuring to meet the needs of patients (and life) in the 21st century. The NHS has changed. London has changed, and with it, people's expectations have also changed. It is important that our Branch, our Union and our members are in the forefront, and in control, of these changes.

Our job as a Union within the Public Services in the Capital is two fold: to look after the interests of our members working in, and delivering, the service, while at the same time making sure that the public service survives and delivers for Londoners and visitors. That is a difficult balancing act which sometimes requires difficult decisions. A successful Service is in all of our interests.

We cannot have it both ways though. We pride ourselves, rightly, on being the only Union to really care about the future of public services (particularly for us, the Health Service). To protect public services we need to work in partnership, we need to negotiate, we need to jointly work together and jointly take responsibility.

This means taking control of our working lives It means taking control of the future of our Service and it means taking control of decisions which affect us all.

If we do not: then others will.

OUR HISTORY

When the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE), National Association of Local Government Officers (NALGO) and the Confederation of Health Service Employees (COHSE) merged in 1993 to form Unison we had eleven branches within the London Ambulance Service.

Each of those branches had a Branch Secretary and an executive committee and ranged in size from fifty odd members to six hundred members (my own branch, NUPE North West London had six hundred).

It was Unison's policy to have single branches based on the employer so the following years were devoted to getting the eleven LAS Unison branches down to one. Numerous negotiations and meetings took place between the lay officials and the full time officers of the union. Every branch was represented in what turned out to be very difficult talks. Every branch had its own tradition and some found it difficult to give that up and work within one branch, under one set of rules, led by one Branch Secretary, one Branch Chair and one Branch Committee.

The majority of members knew it was the right thing to do as well as the only way forward and in 1997 the largest ambulance branch in the United Kingdom was born. After the elections for the Branch Secretary and Branch Officers the LAS UNISON branch held its first Annual General Meeting on the 19th March 1997. It was held at the headquarters of the National Association for Teachers in Higher Education (NAFHE) in Kings Cross.

We have not looked back since. Through the hard work of our branch, branch officers, stewards and health & safety representatives our membership has

grown year on year. We have always strived to do the right things on behalf of all London Ambulance staff by being an influential voice in negotiations for better pay and conditions.

LAS UNISON has majority seats on the Staff Council and the Branch Secretary currently holds the position of Staff-Side Secretary on behalf of all unions with seats on the Council.

Unison representatives have had huge influence in shaping the future direction of the London Ambulance Service and by their efforts pay has increased, career opportunities have improved, recruitment has risen and funding has been greater than before. Funding which is vital for the future of our Service.

The LAS is a better place to work because of UNISON's organization, involvement and support.

UNISON believes in the future of the London Ambulance Service as a successful public service and we want to play a central part. The NHS is changing and so are Ambulance Services. We cannot sit on the sidelines or others will take decisions that affect us. A successful Service means better pay, more staff, less workload and job security for all.

To achieve that we have to enter negotiations, form partnerships, look to the future and not to the past and be strong enough to make difficult decisions. The union is the only organisation we have to improve our working lives and we should take with a pinch of salt those that sit on the sidelines and oppose everything, every time and all the time.

Since 1997 our branch has been at the forefront of ambulance issues and we will continue to lead the way to better pay, better training, better career pathways and better protection at work.

Eric Roberts

Branch Secretary