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No.28 January 2022

open to all branch members; if we meet on-line the zoom link will be sent to you by email.

The branch AGM is planned for April 5th 2022.

If you wish to stand for a position in the branch please email the branch recording officer, Alan Cousins, a.cousins345@btinternet.com or ucu.swest@gmail.com or by post c/o the UCU Exeter offices 1st floor, Brittany House, New North Road. Exeter, EX4 4EP

We will continue with the minimum requirements in the guidelines by keeping in regular contact with our members by email.

All branch members can contact officers and reps by the emails listed in this newsletter; the general branch email address is ucu.swest@gmail.com and members are welcome to contact us anytime.

Tony Staunton chair SWRMB

1. Branch meetings.

The branch committee has re-visited the guidance.

Democratic continuity: advice for branches, regions/devolved nations HO advice received 30.4.20.

https://www.ucu.org.uk/media/10879/Democratic-continuity-advice-for-branches-regionsdevolved-nations/pdf/ucu_covid19-democratic-continuity.pdf

We will make decisions nearer the time as to the venue, whether we meet face to face or continue to meet online.

A branch meeting is planned for 8th February 2022. The meeting is

2. Welcome to all members new to this branch since the previous newsletter.

Andrew Wyllie from UWE.' joined us in Sept 2021.

Geoffrey Burton from Bath University, joined us in Sept 2021.

Only those wishing to appear in the list are included. If you have any suggestions for the newsletter we are happy to hear from you.

Allan Middleton, a member of our branch, has been elected SW Regional Treasurer.

David O'Toole of the Exeter office retired recently.



Newsletter: A termly newsletter for retired UCU members is sent to all branch members for whom we have email addresses.

Email addresses: UCU encourages us to use our home email when we retire.

For more information please contact:

ucu.swest@gmail.com
or contact the officers below:

Are you getting all the info?

If UCU HO has your email you should also receive regular updates on campaigns from UCU head office as well as occasional branch emails.

If this is not the case let us know and we can check with the H.O on your behalf.

Chair: Tony Staunton tony.staunton@blueyonder.co.uk

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and Mike Farmer mikefarmer84@hotmail.com

SW NPC D/C Liza Sentance lizasentance@hotmail.com

3. National Pensioners Convention

Some of you will already be individual members of the NPC.

<https://www.npcuk.org/join-us-and-get-involved>

In this branch we are affiliated with South West GAS and Devon and Cornwall branches.

The NPC website is <https://www.npcuk.org/>



4. SW TUC.



The successful outcome of the 8-week strike at Clarks Somerset was celebrated nationally on December 1st 2021.

Clarks had been seeking to cut their wages by almost 15% to £9.50 an hour by using controversial fire and rehire tactics.

The changes were implemented the Hong Kong-based private equity firm, LionRock Capital, acquired a majority stake in the firm in March 2021.

SW TUC <https://www.tuc.org.uk/>

5. UCU Equality conference.



UCU's Equality Groups Conference 2021 was held on line at the beginning of December.

The Equality conference is open to all members who self-select which sessions they wish to attend. All the Conference papers can be found [here](#).

The message I came away with was **No Room for Complacency**. And **Activism is**

bloody hard work. This is a flavour of the conference:

Women's conf. Pura Aziza (Manchester Met) Chair, arrived from a stint on the picket line – it was day 2 of the Four Fights Strike in early December 2021: **Equality and Pay, Casualisation and Workload**.

The annual Women's Conf. report is [here](#). Included are the committee's work over the last year on Abortion Rights; Parents at Work, Sexual harassment & the TUC Women's Conference.

Sabby Dhalu is co-Convenor and founding member of Stand up to Racism (SUTR) that aims to unite the broadest alliance against racism, Islamophobia, antisemitism, the far right and all forms of racism. SUTR campaigns for a multicultural society where everyone is free to express their faith & culture and for better refugee and asylum rights. Sabby gave us 3 messages: 1. Encourage mobilisation against Trump for the next election. 2. In Europe, the Refugee crisis and its link to racist, right-wing politics. 3. In Britain celebrating the sporting section Black Lives Matter protests.

Kerry Abel has been Chair of Abortion Rights since 2014 which campaign for safe and legal abortion. Kerry asked "Why should we care about what is happening in USA?" Well, "anti-choice" though small is active in many countries, so there is no room for complacency. Pills-by-Post has removed many barriers, for example for women in abusive relationships. It also cuts medical complications because it's quicker by post – in Covid-times as many of us know, getting a GP appointment is often less than easy.

Kerry mentioned that Array Collective (NI) were winners of the 2021 Turner prize for their creation of a shebeen, adorned in banners advocating reproductive rights. They are known for their politically-themed work protesting against gentrification and advocating for

issues such as reproductive rights, education and language rights. The Coventry Herbert Art Gallery and Museum hosted an *Art, Abortion and Anti-Choice Protestors* event.

Women and Identity. This workshop was led by Anna Bull (University of York), co-director of the [1752](#) Group, a research and campaigning organisation working to address staff sexual misconduct in higher education.

Anna was an academic advisor to the National Union of Students for their report *Power in the Academy: staff sexual misconduct in UK higher education* and was lead author on The 1752 Group's report *Silencing students: institutional responses to staff sexual misconduct in higher education*. Most recently she has co-authored The 1752 Group and McAllister Olivarius' Sector Guidance to address staff sexual misconduct in UK higher education.

We discussed recent press coverage of Academic freedom of speech. Protest is fine; "No Platform" is about denying space to those who want to destroy democracy. The **Disabled members conference** had this header: *Putting disability back on the agenda*. Given the UCU fight for members at work, it is a call for UCU support members financially in their branches.

The annual report for the Disability conference included: Disabled Post 16 educators have experienced another deeply challenging year, the combination of Covid impacts, including Long Covid, and government policies have affected us all in our work and family lives. The committee felt that it was important to issue a statement on the Government's National Disability Strategy which we are not alone in believing to be hugely disappointing. The full report is [here](#).

UCU's Day of Action for Disability Equality was held on Wednesday 24 November. A number of resources were

produced to promote disability equality and to challenge discrimination towards disabled people.



Black Members' Annual Conf. 2021.

The speakers were **Gary Younge**, and **Jason Arday**.

Workshops: • Challenging the misuse of Equality, Diversity & Inclusion initiatives – beating the bosses at their own game.

• Health and Safety in the workplace: More than just slips, trips, and falls.

• Challenging the divisive narrative on the 'white working class'. • Surviving the workplace, protecting yourself, and fighting to win your battles; strategies to win your case.

The [annual report](#) focussed on community accountability, decolonising education and promoting Black Lives Matter initiatives.

LGBT+ Members' Annual Conference.

There are [profiles of the speakers](#): The conference tabled a motion arising from the student protest at Sussex University concerning the views and work of Kathleen Stock and Stock's subsequent resignation. The annual report is [here](#).

Migrant Members' Annual Conference 2021.

The MM annual report is [here](#) which includes information on Navigating the new immigration system (post Brexit) and Increasing member awareness of migrant issues. Of particular importance is a motion about the requirement that the Home Office places on FE institutions to monitor migrant workers and students.

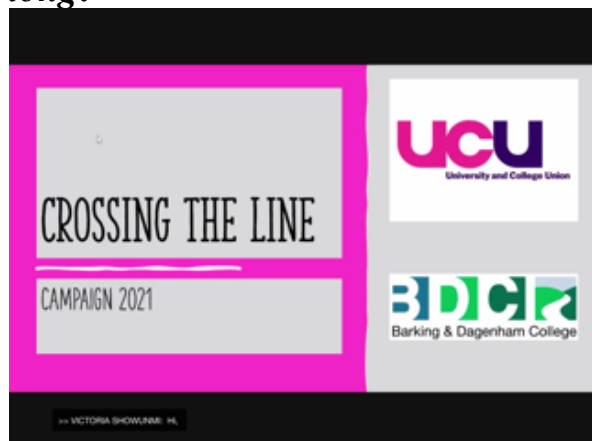
The **plenary** session for everyone.

Jo Grady joined the plenary session. UCU has been in the frontline of activism for decolonisation of our establishments and the government. We have had from JoG in some of the weekly UCU Campaigns updates which arrive in our inboxes on Fridays.

Ellie Munro spoke about the situation of Post Graduate Researchers (PGRs) during Covid. In most Schools they are not treated as staff & have no entitlement to any of the protections available to staff – yet their work contributes to their University status. In addition, many establishments use PGRs to do a lot of the undergraduate teaching. Perversely, some Students Unions do not allow PGRs to be counted as students.

Julia Downes is a member of the [UCU Sexual Violence \(SV\) Task Group](#). Given SV is primarily an abuse of power, victims are at a disadvantage even within the UCU as to the support offered. The situation may start with subtle, apparently innocuous acts which, if unchallenged, build up.

Diana Aynaci. **Crossing the Line** is a project at Dagenham college; PR are working with students. Diana reminded us that colleagues need to be role-models to raise standard and raised the question *”How did they get away with it for so long?”*



6. From the stamp album.

I came across this stamp through an interest in who and what countries choose to put on their stamps, not as an historian. So I have made use of what is available on the internet. Your comments and ‘letters to the editor’ are welcome.

Eire has often celebrated their national icons on postage stamps; as in many countries, those seen by one side of the struggle as heroes are sometimes seen as terrorists by others.

In 1946 Davitt and Parnell are commemorated on stamps to celebrate their shared birthyear in 1846 which was during *an Gorta Mór*.



This stamp is titled *tír agus teach* literally Country and Home, published as “Country and Homestead”.

Michael Davitt was an Irish republican activist for a variety of causes, especially Home Rule and land reform. There is no lack of historical information on the internet; this is a selection, mainly from Wikipedia, that I found interesting.

There are many strands to his career as a social activist, journalist, historian and politician. He supported female suffrage and with Parnell formed the Irish Labour and Industrial Union, which aimed to help rural labourers acquire land and the franchise.



Born in Co. Mayo in 1846 during *an Gorta Mór*, his family emigrated to Lancashire in 1850 where, seven years later while working in a factory, he lost his right arm in an industrial

accident while working in a factory. No compensation of course.

The following decade he joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). In 1869 he was charged with treason-felony and sentenced to 15 years' penal servitude in 1870. Released seven years later, he returned to Ireland and embarked on the crusade for land reform with which his name will forever be associated, establishing the Irish National Land League, appropriately in County Mayo, in 1879.

Parnell, also on these stamps, was made its president and Davitt was one of its secretaries. Through the Land League,



Davitt attained the pinnacle of his political influence and power from 1879 through 1881. His famous slogan: "The land of Ireland

for the people of Ireland" was aimed at strengthening the hold on the land by the peasant Irish at the expense of the alien landowners.

He also initiated the Ladies' Land League, the first political organisation in Ireland led by women, presciently set up to continue their work when the male Land League leaders were, as expected, arrested. Davitt died 1906. This is from The Irish times of 2006.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/davitt-s-land-struggle-has-finally-been-lost-1.1009833>

It is perhaps the greatest paradox of his career that, while regarded as a national icon and so closely identified with the struggling tenants he sought to champion, his solution to the land question was fundamentally at odds with the Irish love affair with private property."

That was Then and this is now...

At the beginning of this century the opponents of the Corrib pipeline raised concerns about the health, safety and environmental impact of the onshore aspects of the project. The Corrib pipeline



is in county Mayo, birthplace of Davitt. They claim common cause with Davitt and their struggle continues.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corrib_gas_controversy

Davitt's land struggle lives on in his legacy, writes *Diarmaid Ferriter* *, “not least to demonstrate the fact that, in the 100 years since his death, Ireland has witnessed one of the greatest ironies of its history - the Irish social revolution of the late 19th century, in which the political and social power of the landlords was broken by their tenants, has been replaced by a native class of landowners and speculators, who sometimes exercise their domination of land and the property market in an even more invidious way than the most wretched 19th-century landlords.

The egalitarian solution to land redistribution Davitt sought has never been more remote. Many young Irish people cannot afford to buy houses. Davitt's angry ghost should continue to haunt us.”

**Diarmaid Ferriter is Professor of Modern Irish history at University College, Dublin.*

Stamp images from my collection
Jo Corke SWRMB

7. Who do we think we are?

Recent news reports that our home office minister and others are planning to turn back refugee and migrant boats attempting to cross the channel to seek asylum here, has been shocking. Priti Patel, the Home Secretary, complained about having to put people in hotel accommodation which she described as “suboptimal and counter-productive, acting as a pull factor for people to come to the country illegally”. She also said there was a legal basis for turning around small boats at sea which she described as not illegal at all. Nigel Farage joined the debate by accusing the RNLI of operating a ‘migrant taxi service’!

However, government lawyers have recently warned Ms Patel that she would probably lose a legal challenge if she

implements plans to turn around small boats of migrants in the channel. Current discussions in parliament and elsewhere also suggest that legal challenges to such ‘turnaround’ tactics are likely to be successful. The debate goes on as Border Force staff are worried that refugees are continuing to risk their lives by taking to the boats this late and later in the year. For example, 1200+ people were reported as arriving in the UK on one day, having to be sheltered in very poor conditions without proper beds or toilet facilities etc. Fortunately, the RNLI (Royal National Lifeboat Institution) remains “very proud of its humanitarian work and continues to respond to coastguard callouts to rescue at-risk channel migrants in line with its duty under international maritime law”.

Other worrying events have been highlighted by ‘The Movement for Justice’ and Jamaica’s High Commissioner in London. These include plans for the continuing deportation of people of Jamaican and West Indian origin, the Windrush Generation, who came to this country not as refugees or asylum seekers but as legitimate family members of people seeking employment here, but who have never had official British Citizenship.



Photo CC

The Refugee Council reports that the Home Secretary has recently announced “the government’s new plan for immigration: a two-tier system that effectively discriminates against certain asylum seekers for the way in which they arrive in the UK”.

All of which seems unfair, dangerous, inhospitable and unkind. Who are we to object to those wanting to join us on our island home? Where did we come from that gives us the right to turn others away, and why would we? So, who are we? Who were our ancestors? How did they get here and why did they come??? Very big questions.

Here in the East Midlands, we and our ancestors have received invaders, migrants and refugees from many places, over many ages including people such as Vikings, Normans, Romans, Huguenots, Jews, West Indians, Hungarians/Eastern Europeans, and Ugandan Asians to name just a few. Many of these are well known to historians and archaeologists who continue to find and discuss usual and unusual links to our past.

Recent very sombre and serious Remembrance Services, parades and events clearly illustrate our links to many other once colonised countries, showing just how much we owe to peoples from all over the world. Even popular television programmes such as “Who do you think you are”, “A House Through Time” and “Antiques Road Show” reveal fascinating details of this history including people’s links to different countries and cultures from the past right up to the present day. These all show the multicultural nature of our society and the contributions made by so many different people from so many different places and traditions. Surely these links should be appreciated and celebrated more for the contributions made to our

society and such people given the right to come here without question.

Rowena Dawson East Midland RMB

8. Do pensioners in the EU get more cash than the elderly in the UK?

This image claiming that French, German, and Spanish maximum weekly state pensions are between double and triple those in the UK has been shared many times on Facebook.



The [Full Fact](#) website explains why this is a simplified claim. “The figures for the UK, Spain and France are in the right ballpark, but differences between their pension systems means it’s not a fair comparison.”

The Full Fact site has a wealth of information abt claims and their veracity.

Jo Corke SWRMB

9. The Public Service Pensioners’ Council.

The [PSPC](#) represents the interests of retired public servants. [P. K. Burgess](#) UCU Scottish RMB, is on the PSPC NEC and regularly reports on matters of interest.

Founded almost fifty years ago, PSPC brings together the various organisations for retired public servants and the retired members’ sections of public sector unions,

providing a united voice on issues of concern to government and the public.

We campaign alongside other organisations, including the National Pensioners' Convention and the TUC, to protect the interests of pensioners and protect public service pensions.

PSPC members are not just concerned about protecting existing pensioners. From the vantage point of retirement, we recognise the importance of pensions for current and future public sector workers alike.

The PSPC therefore aims to provide access to better information on the public service pension schemes and on the case for good pension provision for public servants and better State provision for all pensioners to ensure dignity in retirement. The importance and the true costs of public service pensions are all too often misunderstood or misrepresented. We believe in protecting public service pensioners by promoting the facts rather than misconceptions.



Photo PSPC website.

PSPC NEC on 4th. Nov 2021

We discussed a number of items of interest to UCU:

1) Regarding indexation, it was noted that whereas the gap between CPI and RPI had usually been slightly under 1 percentage point, in September the figures were 3.1% and 4.9% respectively: a gap of 1.8

percentage points. This would make the effect of the Government's "cherry-picking" even worse than usual. It was also noted that the OBR were predicting even CPI inflation to rise to at least 4% this year and to remain high for some time. This will be built into our campaigning.

2) During the discussion on the implications of the flurry of Governmental announcements around the Autumn Statement, I drew attention to something which had been announced earlier and a few days after our last NEC on August 2nd; namely the imposition of NIC's on pensioners who undertook paid work after retirement. I pointed out that (as noted earlier in this Report), the Financial Secretary to the Treasury was on record as saying that to do so would not be fair. It was agreed that we should draw attention to this in our campaigning. I firmly believe that a good petard should never be wasted.

3) Regarding the Triple Lock, I noted that the HoL had just passed an amendment (by 220 to 178) overturning the Government's proposal to delete the earnings Link for this year, and suggesting a smoothed algorithm which would result in an increase of around 5%. Although we recognised that this would not be ideal, it was agreed that we would ask the Government to accept this amendment. It was further noted that Steve Webb (a former Pensions Minister) had calculated that under the Government's plans, pensioners would accumulate a loss of £2,600 over the next five years. It was agreed to include this point in our campaigns.

4) During a discussion on Universal benefits, it was noted that some of them (e.g. The Christmas Bonus) had never been increased since their introduction decades ago, and had now become nugatory.

5) NEU reported that the implications of the McCloud judgement for TPS members were complex and that an explanatory paper was to be written for them by Christine Hasswell (formerly the UCU Pensions Officer). I asked if this could be circulated to all of us as I could then pass it on to UCU for the information of our own TPS scheme members. This was agreed.

Philip Burgess. Scottish RMB

10. Trades Union banners

[OpenLearn](#) has has 5 minute video on Protest Banners.

Trades Union banners and membership certificates have a rich visual history. The banners and certificates (the latter proudly displayed like paintings in workers' homes) might be designed by Royal Academy artists and were monumental in their structures. They tended to be packed full with classical symbols, biblical scenes and quotations, celebrating the history of the craft, and drawing upon the emblems of freemasonry and friendly societies.



CC. Tolpuddle display 2008

Jo Corke SW RMB

11. Teachers' Pensions | For Members

My Pension Online is the Teachers' Pension online portal designed to help you manage your pension more efficiently.

<https://www.teacherspensions.co.uk/members/faqs/my-pension-online/my-pension-online.aspx>

12. Editor's Note.

Contributions to the newsletter are welcome.

Jo Corke SW RMB

END

