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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 June 2022. Date to be confirmed after the outcome of investigations as to the availability of the Regional Office. The meeting is open to all branch members; if we meet on-line the zoom link will be sent to you by email. If we meet face-to-face the venue may be **UCU Exeter offices, 1st floor, Brittany House, New North Road. Exeter, EX4 4EP.** The meeting may be hybrid.

The branch AGM was April 5th 2022. Minutes have been circulated to members.

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

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

Remembering: You are only reading this newsletter because Denis stopped me resigning way back in the previous century; the circumstances are unimportant now, but we remained friends, colleagues and union members even after we both retired. Thank you Denis. *Denis Dearnaley died peacefully in Southmead hospital in February 2022.*

Newsletters: these newsletters are 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:

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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.

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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 <https://www.npcuk.org/>
The 11th Biennial Delegates Conference returned for 2022 with a packed agenda, passionate debate and a fervent re-commitment to campaigning for the rights of older people. The event was forced to skip last year due to pandemic restrictions.



Newly elected Vice Presidents, Norman Jamieson, Ellen Lebethe, Sandra Durkin & Barry Todman.

More than 100 delegates from affiliates across the UK were clearly eager to be back together to discuss how best the NPC can tackle the many challenges currently facing older people.

In his opening address, retiring President Ron Douglas thanked delegates for continuing their campaign work, despite the Covid-19 restrictions that prevented NPC groups meeting in person for much of the last two years. He welcomed their adoption of Zoom for online meetings and webinars to continue our work. Standing Orders Committee Chair Joel Kominsky presented an Interim Report, on the Review, outlining its aims to stabilise NPC finances, remain relevant to current and future pensioners, retain NPC core principles, aims and objectives, while increasing equality, diversity, inclusion and participation.

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4. SW TUC News

Every year in July, thousands of people enjoy the Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival. It is a weekend of family entertainment, stalls, political debate, comedy, music and a grand procession through the village.

This year's dates: 15-17 July 2022 if you want to know how you can get involved visit

<https://www.tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk/festival>

From the Tolpuddle archives 1948

Festival began on the Thursday with Old Time Dane in Dorchester Corn Exchange. Friday saw a Variety Concert and Saturday a 200-strong march in Dorchester led by London Workers' Pipe Band. Events included gymnastics, horticultural show and sports. On Sunday Edwin Gooch MP and Alfred Dann spoke of the massive growth in the NUAW. 70,000 workers had joined that year, 500 in Dorset in the previous six months.

Banners are always great at Tolpuddle – this one (2008) seems a reasonable request. *Creative Commons licence; Nigel Mykura.*



Trades Union banners: [OpenLearn](https://www.openlearn.org.uk) has has a 5 minute video on Protest Banners.

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

5. Gloucester Trades Council.

We have delegates to several Trades Councils. We hope to feature other TCs in future newsletters.

Dispute at the University of Gloucestershire (transfer of staff to a Pubco and pay). There has been a Trades Council presence on UNISON pickets and Dave Godsell, a Unison steward, was the guest speaker at the March TC meeting

updating us on the issues facing all staff at this post-1992 University.

Ragged Trousered Philanthropists performance. Organised by Gloucester TC and funded by Unite, performances of the play were cancelled last year due to Covid. The current plan is to have a matinee performance in June for Gloucestershire College students. The performance will be followed by a discussion to introduce students to the ideas of socialism and the need for workers solidarity.

May Day 2022. There will be a Gloucestershire Trades Council stall on the 7th May in Stroud (11am) and then later in the day in Nailsworth (2pm) at the annual May Day parades around the towns. The Stroud Red Band will lead the processions playing rousing music.

HeartUnions Week. This is a campaign week of activity where the trade union movement celebrates unions and the good that we do.



Photo Ruth Amias.

Stalls set up in Stroud during Heart of the Union week (February 2022) were more successful in engaging the public than previous years. At the weekend the Stroud Red Band played by the stall. Twenty marching band musicians playing socialist songs and tunes. The response from the general public was very positive.

People stopping to listen to the music picked up a range of 'join a union' leaflets or engaged in discussion.

Ruth Amias UCU SW

6. Meet Philip Burgess.

Thanks to Jo and Mike for inviting me to give a talk to your Branch Meeting in February and then to write something for your Newsletter.

As a native Bristolian, and having been on the Cheltenham GCHQ march every year, I feel I have some affinity with your region.



I quite miss the Cheltenham GCHQ marches; I used to come every year. My last day as AUT President. What a day that was!!

Currently I am a UCU Trustee and represent us on the NEC and Finance Working party of the National Pensioners' Convention (NPC), and the NEC of the Public Services Pensioners' Council (PSPC). I am also a Trustee of the Age positive Foundation which is a Registered Charity that has just been set up by the NPC. My first memory of trade unionism was seeing my father counting out pennies on the kitchen table at home in Bristol when I was little more than a toddler. I asked him what that was for, and he explained that it was his sub to the union; The NUVB if anyone can remember that far back. He then explained why union membership was so important. I must have

remembered that because I joined the AUT in 1971 on my first day as a lecturer in psychology at Dundee University. I have lived in Scotland ever since.

After that, I suppose I did what most members do. I grumbled about things the Branch were doing, or not doing until someone said, "stop moaning, if you think you can do better, stand for election". So I ended up as Branch Secretary and then President just as the first round of cuts threatened to close large parts of the University including our Dental School. Fighting those off (mostly successfully, to the benefit of my teeth) taught me a lot. It also persuaded me that the Branch was OK, but the National Executive might stand improvement.

So people said, "stop moaning, if you think you can do better, stand for election." I did, was elected, and it taught me a lot. Eventually, of course, I was convinced that it was the leadership that could stand improvement. So people said, "stop moaning, if you think you can do better, stand for President."

When I became President in 1996/7, I discovered that it was not as simple as I had thought. Although we had a successful dispute, at the end of which, having acceded to our demands, the General Secretary of the employers' organisation (UUK) refused to speak to me and their chief negotiator described me as a complete S**t, it nevertheless became clear to me that perhaps I had underestimated both the competence of my predecessors, and the challenges that any leadership has to overcome. I hope you will remember this when you are tempted to criticise. Don't shoot the NEC; they are doing their best!

After coming off the Presidential ladder I was elected to the NEC for two further terms, at which point the Rules required that I had to stand down, and I reverted to Vice-President of the Dundee Branch just in time to fight off another round of redundancy threats. Plus ça change!

During my fallow year AUT and NATFHE merged to become UCU. I had thought (and my wife had hoped) that after seventeen years on the AUT NEC I had been able to kick the habit, but of course that was a delusion. I stood for election to the UCU NEC and served two further terms of office. By then, I had retired and the rules were changed to debar retired members from the NEC. However, when a vacancy for Trusteeship occurred, I stood for that and I am now coming to the end of my second term. After that; who knows?

While on the NEC I was instrumental in setting up the Stress and Bullying Working Party, firstly as an HEC structure and then converting it into a cross-sectoral body serving both HE and FE. After all, the issues are essentially the same; except that, as my experience on the Legal Panel taught me, if you think Post 92 University managements are bad (and they are), then have a look at what FE has to put up with. Looking back on it, I think I got more satisfaction from my time on the Legal Panel than any other. What an indictment of the state of tertiary education today! Since my retirement, I have naturally taken an interest in Pension matters. I have been elected by the AGM of the RMBs to represent UCU on various NPC and PSPC bodies and I give a Report on those activities to the AGM each year.

Copies are obtainable from HQ if you want the details.

I have a number of hobby-horses as many west countrymen do. In my talk to your branch I explained why I believe that the UK State Pension is shamefully inadequate both in its level and its method of indexation. I argue that in breaking the earnings-link in 1980 and changing from the RPI to the (invariably closer to zero) CPI pensioners were cheated; particularly since the Government sometimes uses RPI when collecting revenue and CPI when paying out to claimants. This "index shopping" has been criticised by the House of Lords Economic Affairs Committee; with whom I have had some interesting correspondence. The Triple Lock gave some measure of redress and so its suspension last Autumn was another betrayal of pensioners.

I have, for many years in my annual Reports, argued that criticisms of the RPI are largely misplaced and that it is in fact a better measure of the true rise in the cost of living than CPI. The Royal Statistical Society shares this view and they cannot be said to have any axe to grind.

While housebound over Christmas, recovering from my second hip replacement (thanks to the brilliant NHS staff at Stracathro Hospital) I had little better to do than to look at the inflation figures. I think it had been the conventional wisdom that the gap between CPI and RPI was usually about one percentage point and that this would be fairly constant. However, as inflation started to climb towards Christmas, the gap began to widen.

This led me to wonder if it was not the gap between the indices that was constant, but the ratio between them. Perhaps the gap had only been relatively

small and constant because both CPI and RPI had been, for many years, relatively small and constant? If so, then I would predict a strong positive correlation between CPI (or the mean of CPI and RPI) and the gap between them.

Not having access to any sophisticated statistical programmes, I simply took the inflation figures from the ONS website for the previous 13 months and ran a correlation between $(RPI + CPI)$ and $(RPI - CPI)$. To my astonishment I found that $r = +0.92$ which was the sort of correlation that psychologists can only dream about. For $CPI \text{ v } (RPI - CPI)$, $r = +0.9$. These values are not only highly statistically significant, but of great practical importance. What they show is that as CPI rises towards its predicted peak of over 8%, then the RPI-CPI gap will also rise so that RPI will be well into double figures. Of course, the State pension will rise by only 3.1% this year, which was what CPI was in the Autumn. Many prices will rise by far more than RPI.

I am truly astonished that none of the press or broadcast media have commented on this phenomenon, nor has it been mentioned in Parliament. Since my statistical sample was ridiculously small, and there was always the possibility that I had made some mathematical blunder, I wrote to the ONS to ask them to check my conclusions. The first reply I received was little more than a holding response. However, I raised some more specific questions which obviously galvanised them into a more sophisticated regression analysis of inflation times series over a number of different periods. To cut a long story short, the ONS analysis confirmed my conclusion that as CPI or RPI rise, then the gap between them will also rise.

However, correlational and regression analyses are indirect. The obvious technique to test my conclusion directly would be to use algorithms that predict the values of RPI and CPI for the next few years and simply subtract the values to determine the gap between them. Such algorithms must be available to the OBR, the Treasury and, I assume the ONS, and so I invited the ONS to make the calculations and write a commentary for the ONS website. To my disappointment, I am still awaiting a response. Perhaps this is seen as too much of a hot potato? Fortunately, pensioners have the NPC, PSPC and UCU RMBs to fight for us. Keep up the good work.

Happy May Day,
Philip Burgess.

7. Further education: Respect FE consultative ballot, 1.4.22

**FE staff have had enough
PAY US RESPECT**



Our [Respect FE campaign](#) calls for action to address pay erosion and spiralling workloads as well as a demand for professional respect. Members at dozens of FE England institutions were invited via email to vote in an online consultative ballot on action to support our 2022-23 claim. The further education committee (FEC) will discuss the ballot results and next steps.

8. Academic freedom allegation lodged with international committee

The Joint ILO–UNESCO Committee of Experts (CEART) recently published a report in response to UCU's allegations concerning academic freedom and the 1997 UNESCO recommendation. A new UCU briefing paper summarises the report's main findings and recommendations, including in relation to job security, university governance and quality assurance. You can follow up on developments [here](#).

9.  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>

10. Editor's Note.

Contributions to the newsletter are welcome.

Jo Corke SW RMB

END

