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### More information and news

can be obtained from these websites.

UCU National Website:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk>

AgeUK: <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/>

68 is too late: [www.68istoolate.org.uk](http://www.68istoolate.org.uk)

National Pensioners Convention (NPC):

<http://npcuk.org>

### Follow your branch:

Website: <http://www.ucu-em-rmb.org.uk>

Twitter: @ucu-em-rmb

Please join the new Facebook Group at:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1077256209678817>

## Branch Meeting

Wednesday 24th April 2024, 11.00am

The Gothic Warehouse  
Mill Road  
Cromford, DE4 3RQ

At 12.00:  
Justine Mercer  
UCU President



## 1. Higher Education Industrial Disputes

As many of you will be aware, there are an increasingly large number of disputes in Higher Education. These include the following university branches where our working members are defending jobs and education. This list is lifted from a recent newsletter.

- **Aston University:** around 60 academics in the college of engineering and physical sciences have been told they are at risk of redundancy due to a proposal to close some chemistry programmes and rearrange many departments. As part of the fight against redundancies, Aston UCU has forced the university into extending the consultation period and will continue to campaign to remove all threats of compulsory redundancy
- **Goldsmiths, University of London:** [an industrial action ballot opened on Friday 1 March](#) in a dispute over large scale redundancies associated with the so-called 'transformation programme'; the ballot will close on Thursday 28 March
- **University of Kent:** an industrial action ballot opened on Friday 23 February in a dispute over 58 academic redundancies. UCU are determined to fight this academic vandalism and defend the university; the ballot will close on Friday 5 April
- **Northumbria University:** [a strike ballot opened at Northumbria University](#) on Monday 18 March after management refused to rule out compulsory redundancies as part of plans to make £12.5m of staffing cuts. The ballot closes on Friday 26 April
- **Open University:** 35 professional services and support staff have been placed at risk of redundancy, with frontline student-facing roles particularly affected. A further voluntary severance scheme has been opened to all teaching-only staff, affecting around 50% of OU employees. UCU demands the removal of the threat that compulsory redundancies will be

issued if voluntary schemes do not meet management's targets

- **University of Winchester:** [Winchester has recently announced large scale redundancies](#) due to, it claims, a £6m structural deficit. Winchester UCU has declared a trade dispute with the university and will be consulting with members over plans for collective action.

**As always, more information is available on the national UCU website. A full list of all active UCU disputes is available from [www.ucu.org.uk/your-support-is-needed/](http://www.ucu.org.uk/your-support-is-needed/).**

Rob Kirkwood

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## 2. The State Pension Age

The debate about the State Pension Age (SPA) has been revived by a recent report from the International Longevity Centre (ILC). The UK pension age of 66 is set to rise to 67 between May 2026 and March 2028. From 2044, it is expected to rise to 68. The ILC suggests that this is not enough, and that anyone born after April 1970 may have to work until they are 71 before claiming their pension. This age limit may need to be set even higher, say experts, thanks to the high rate of workers exiting the workforce before they reach state pension age, predominantly due to ill health. An ILC executive said: "In the UK, state pension age would need to be 70 or 71 compared with 66 now, to maintain the status quo of the number of workers per state pensioner." This argument now shifts the emphasis to the issue of mean disability free age and illness rather than increasing life expectancy. There is a good reason for this.

The latest data from the ONS, covering the period 2020-22, shows life expectancy for both men and women has fallen. Life expectancy across the UK has fallen to its lowest level in a decade. Boys born between 2020 and 2022 can expect to live to 78.6 years, a decrease of 38 weeks compared with the same measure between 2017 and 2019. For girls, the expectancy for the same period was 82.6 years, having also fallen by 23 weeks compared with 2017 and 2019. The ONS ascribes this only to

the impact of Covid, but there is evidence that austerity was actually the major player. The single biggest achievement of society and science of the last century has been to increase life expectancy. In 1901 life expectancy at birth was around 45 for men and 49 for women. By 1951 it had increased to 66 for men and 70 for women, adding an extra year of life expectancy, on average, for every 30 months that went by. By 2010 life expectancy at birth was 78 for men and 82 for women.

Now, 14 years later, after stalling pre-pandemic, it has slipped back. And, while the pandemic has played a part in this, other more disturbing factors are at play. Veena Raleigh, senior fellow at The King's Fund, points to "deeper problems with the health of the nation and the resilience of the health care system. Although most countries globally experienced devastating death tolls from Covid-19, several studies have shown that excess mortality in the UK during the pandemic exceeded that of most comparable western European and other high-income countries".

She added that many deaths in the UK were the result of preventable sicknesses, and that "improving life expectancy in the UK will require a coherent cross-government strategy that supports people to make healthy choices, identifies and treats illness earlier, and reduces health inequalities by improving the health of people in deprived communities". The Institute for Public Policy Research found that just 9% of men and 16% of women born today can expect to reach state retirement age in good health. The poor not only die sooner, but they also spend more of their lives with a long-term condition or disability.

Danny Dorling of Oxford University stresses the impact of austerity. Cuts to public services and living standards across Britain from 2010 contributed to 335,000 excess deaths – twice as many as previously thought, according to new research. These austerity measures were introduced by the coalition government elected to office that year, partly in response to the banking crash of 2008.

Previous estimates had suggested that 152,000 people died prematurely between 2015 and 2019 due to austerity. The new

study, conducted by researchers at the University of Glasgow and the Glasgow Centre for Population Health and published in the Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health, suggests this was an underestimate and also suggests that austerity had a growing effect over time.

These findings are troubling for several reasons. They suggest that men were much more affected than at first thought. Furthermore, the UK government now plans to embark on a new round of very large public spending cuts.

More people in Britain died due to austerity in the five years before the pandemic, than died from COVID-19 in the first three years of the pandemic. The effects of austerity continued after the pandemic hit, but initially became harder to discern. In August 2022 the Financial Times published estimates suggesting a large proportion of recent non-COVID-related deaths could be ascribed to just one aspect of austerity: waiting over 12 hours to be seen in accident and emergency departments.

The figures for UK life expectancy between 2014 and 2018, showed large falls for particular groups such as the poorest tenth of the population, whilst the health of people living in the wealthiest areas continued to improve.

This research indicates that **twice as much** of the fall in life expectancy was due to austerity as was due to Covid. The decline in the economically active workforce is primarily driven by poverty and an underfunded NHS. Accelerating the increase in SPA does nothing to deal with these real underlying problems.

[Julian Atkinson](#)

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### 3. Pension Poverty

#### Is it time to introduce a universal basic income?

The Conference reaffirms the fundamental principles on which the Organization is based and, in particular, that: ... (c) poverty anywhere constitutes a danger to prosperity everywhere...

ILO Declaration of Philadelphia, 1944

The fourth [State of Ageing report](#) contains a raft of data showing that both the current generations of retirees, and the generations heading towards retirement, are experiencing significant and growing financial difficulties. It highlights that, among UK adults, people aged 60-64 now have the highest rate of relative poverty (25%). As disadvantage accumulates over time, gaps in terms of health and wealth grow as people are getting older. As a result, poverty rates are even higher among some older people from ethnic minority backgrounds; more than one in three people from Bangladeshi and Pakistani backgrounds aged 50 and over are living in relative poverty. According to a [research paper](#) produced for the House of Commons Library,

The UK devotes a smaller percentage of its GDP to state pensions and pensioner benefits than most other advanced economies. Income from occupational and personal pensions is a relatively important source of pensioner income in the UK...

The same paper claims that in 2017, social expenditure on old age pensions in six OECD countries accounted for 10 percent of GDP (with an average of 6.5 percent). In the UK, that figure is 4.7 percent, which puts the UK at 28th of 38 countries.

This is a major weakness of the pension system, but Beveridge never meant to have a state pension system only: the state pension was to provide a floor and individuals were expected to make additional provisions. For many, this was done through occupational pensions, which became even more important when Thatcher broke the link between state pension and earnings. The example of Maxwell syphoning off the money from the pension fund demonstrated early on, however, that pensions tied to employers were not as safe as people had imagined. In the 1990s, many employers took “contribution holidays”, which, according to *The Guardian*, netted employers an additional £18bn in profits. When they should have started contributing again, many closed their final salary pension schemes. Thatcher had also presided over people being allowed to opt out of occupational schemes,

which led to more people losing money to the financial sector through the mis-selling of pensions.

One in ten people is currently not enrolled in any pension scheme, and those working in the gig economy are also unlikely to contribute. Current whispers about raising the pension age to 71 (at a point where life expectancy is declining) or means-testing pensions suggest that a contributory system of pension provision may not be sustainable in the medium term. Even where people pay into defined contribution schemes, it is unlikely that these will provide for a financially secure retirement.

Maybe the social insurance model based on contributions requires a radical rethink. A different model, not just for pensioners, but also for those on benefits and poverty wages, might be the introduction of a basic income. According to the [Basic Income Earth Network](#), a basic income has the following five characteristics:

**Periodic:** it is paid at regular intervals (for example every month), not as a one-off grant.

**Cash payment:** it is paid in an appropriate medium of exchange, allowing those who receive it to decide what they spend it on. It is not, therefore, paid either in kind (such as food or services) or in vouchers dedicated to a specific use.

**Individual:** it is paid on an individual basis—and not, for instance, to households.

**Universal:** it is paid to all.

**Unconditional:** it is paid without means test and without a requirement to work or to demonstrate willingness-to-work.

It is an idea that can be traced back to Thomas Paine, but which has gained broader currency in the present because of the immiseration experienced across Western societies over the last four decades. Pilots of various sorts are running in Scotland, Wales, Spain, Germany, Finland, and the Netherlands. There are, of course, the usual voices warning that people will just stop working, and that such an idea is

unaffordable, but the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW) has undertaken a study suggesting that such a basic income may well be affordable. According to their research, 83 percent of the population would be better off, 7 percent would see no change, and 10 percent would be worse off. The study assumes that every adult will be paid €1200 per month and every child under the age of eighteen €600 per month. This would replace means-tested benefits, including unemployment and child benefits, and therefore also save the cost of administration and means-testing. On the German example, which is currently the only one I have, this would cover 74 percent of the total cost. Most of the rest could be financed by making all income above this level taxable and abolishing a number of tax exemptions. Savings would also accrue because people feeling secure tend to be less stressed and possibly less susceptible to mental illness. By putting money into people's pockets and increasing consumption and putting a floor under wages, the state would also recoup some of the expenditure through an increased tax base.

Harry Ziegler

#### 4. Waspi Women to be compensated?

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman has recently issued a report on the plight of the Waspi women. Its conclusions were clear:

1. Research "showed that too many people did not understand their own situations and how the new State Pension affected them personally...DWP did not demonstrate principles of good administration".

2. There was "maladministration in DWP's complaint handling."

3. "We find that maladministration in DWP's communication about the 1995 Pensions Act resulted in complainants losing opportunities to make informed decisions about some things and to do some things differently, and diminished their sense of personal autonomy and financial control."

4. "We find that maladministration in DWP's complaint handling caused complainants unnecessary stress and anxiety and meant an opportunity to lessen their distress was lost. For some complainants, it also caused unnecessary worry and confusion."

5. "When we find that complainants have suffered injustice as a result of maladministration, we would usually recommend their injustice is remedied in line with our Principles for Remedy. When making recommendations for financial remedy, we take account of our guidance on financial remedy and our severity of injustice scale. While it is unusual for organisations we investigate not to accept and act on our recommendations, we have no powers to compel them to comply. When an organisation does not comply with our recommendations, we can lay a report before Parliament so that Parliament can act to protect citizens' rights. **What DWP has told us during this investigation leads us to strongly doubt it will provide a remedy.** (*My emphasis*)

6. "Given the scale of the impact of DWP's maladministration, and the urgent need for a remedy, we are taking the rare but necessary step of asking Parliament to intervene. We are laying our report before Parliament under s10(3) Parliamentary Commissioner Act and asking Parliament to identify a mechanism for providing appropriate remedy for those who have suffered injustice. We think this will provide the quickest route to remedy for those who have suffered injustice because of DWP's maladministration. To help Parliament with its considerations, we have set out in this document what we would consider an appropriate remedy."

7. We have explained our thinking about where on our severity of injustice scale the sample complainants' injustice sits. We would have recommended they are paid compensation at level 4 of the scale." This would provide the ludicrously small compensation of from £1,000 to £2,950. Level 4 is defined as: "a significant and/or lasting injustice that has, to some extent, affected someone's ability to live a relatively normal life. The injustice will go beyond 'ordinary' distress or inconvenience, except where this has been for a very

prolonged period of time. The failure could be expected to have some lasting impact on the person affected. The matter may 'take over' their life to some extent." The direct financial losses incurred tower over this pathetic amount. The further impacts of the life of these women is difficult to quantify but has sometimes been huge. The final sting in the tail is that the Government does not have to pay the recommendation!

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## 5. Privatisation: the malignancy within the NHS and Social Care

The Independent Healthcare Providers Network (IHPN) has explained how supportive it is of the NHS. Its expansion was helping NHS patients get speedier care. It made clear that, with the demand for care rising and long waits likely to continue for the foreseeable future, it hopes private operators will diagnose and treat even more NHS patients in the next few years, and thus relieve the pressure on an NHS many doctors and experts say is overwhelmed.

The NHS in England outsourced 10% of all elective procedures such as hip and knee replacements to private operators for the first time during 2023. The Health Service Journal revealed that between last September and November, the figure was 20% in both the Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire ICB, and the Bath and North East Somerset, and Swindon and Wiltshire ICB; it was 18% in the Sussex ICB and 17% in both the West Yorkshire and Mid and South Essex ICBs.

The cost of building new hospitals and the NHS's lack of capital funding mean some trusts are now building new facilities in collaboration with private firms to treat both NHS and private patients. In January the Harborne hospital in Birmingham, set up a partnership between healthcare giant HCA and the University Hospitals Birmingham (UHB) NHS trust. Under the deal, UHB has been allocated two of the eight floors, giving it 72 extra beds, and some of its top specialist doctors provide much of the private care in HCA's larger share of the new hospital.

The government is encouraging the NHS to make as much use as possible of private healthcare capacity, and Labour's shadow health secretary, Wes Streeting, has made clear that he sees outsourcing as benefiting both patients and the NHS. The financial support given him by private health sources certainly must benefit Mr Streeting.

Others take a less sanguine view of privatisation and the director of the Centre for Health and the Public Interest thinktank, was concerned by the growing outsourcing of NHS because of the "systemic patient safety risks" in the private sector. And what happens when the cherry-picked procedures go wrong in the private sector? About 6,000 patients a year have to be transferred from a private to an NHS hospital when complications occur, according to government figures given in a written answer to a Parliamentary question..

A new study from Oxford University researchers Benjamin Goodair and Aaron Reeves paints a worrying picture of the impact of privatisation on the health services of many countries. They reviewed the literature, focusing on the effects of outsourcing health-care services in high-income countries and found that hospitals converting from public to private ownership status tended to make higher profits than public hospitals that do not convert, primarily through the selective intake of patients and reductions to staff numbers. It was also found that increases in privatisation corresponded with worse health outcomes for patients. The review provided evidence that challenges the justifications for health-care privatisation and concludes that the scientific support for further privatisation of health-care services is weak.

Some studies flatter private care. More specifically, the private sector frequently treats healthier patients in health systems where some services are provided by the state and some by the private market. Evidence suggests that those individuals who access privately provided health care tend to have more resources and better health. This bias can suggest in some cases that private hospitals can provide better outcomes, not because of the quality of care, but because of these patients' underlying health status. However,

most of the evidence showed that hospital privatisation had negative implications for the quality of care. High rates of privatisation and outsourcing almost always corresponded with worse health outcomes in the studies included in the review. Two articles considered looked at regional levels of privatisation for an entire country and both found that increases in the percentage of outsourcing corresponded with higher avoidable mortality rates than before outsourcing took place. Outsourced cleaning services corresponded with higher rates of inpatient infection than internal cleaning services. Outsourcing corresponded with fewer staff members employed per patient. This was true for cleaning staff.

Privatisation also had a deleterious impact on **Adult Social Care**. Research at the Centre for Health and the Public Interest shows that around £1.5bn is taken out of the care home sector each year in the form of different types of returns to shareholders and investors. Even during the pandemic, when the care home sector suffered more than 40,000 Covid-related deaths and was propped up by £2bn of taxpayer support, a number of private care home companies continued their focus on profit-making, with 122 of them paying out dividend payments totalling £120m during the first year of the pandemic (an increase of 11% on the previous year) – all this while many of the staff in those homes worked longer hours and received no extra pay.

A [paper in the British Medical Journal](#) found that private equity ownership increased costs to those paying for care with “mixed to harmful impacts” on quality. A new analysis led by researchers at the University of Oxford (The Lancet Healthy Longevity) has found that virtually all care homes forced to close in England by the Care Quality Commission are run on a for-profit basis. It raised questions about the role of the private sector in exacerbating the care sector's ongoing crisis. The study assessed the number of care homes that had been forced to close by the independent regulator of health and social care in England, the Care Quality Commission (CQC). This found that almost all involuntary closures since 2011 occurred in for-profit care homes: 804 out of 816 closures. This translates into one in 30 for-profit care homes having

been closed involuntarily by the CQC during this time.

An **involuntary closure** is typically a last resort for care homes that have put their residents at risk, or whose care services have continuously failed to meet industry standards. However, 52 of the homes that had been forced to close had been rated as "good" during their last CQC inspection. According to the researchers, this suggests that these homes posed urgent safety concerns, with residents at acute risk of harm. The researchers estimate that up to 20,000 residents were forced to relocate urgently due to enforced care home closures since 2011. Privatised care can easily become inadequate care.

Co-author Dr Benjamin Goodair (Department of Social Policy and Intervention at the University of Oxford) said, "Social care services in England are on a knife-edge of a crisis: underfunded, understaffed, and struggling to supply the quality of care deserved by the most vulnerable people in society. However, this new data challenges the assumption that these pressures can be eased by outsourcing more social care to the for-profit sector. Instead, what is needed is a comprehensive assessment of the impact of for-profit provision on the quality and sustainability of adult social care in England."

The results are particularly concerning given the increasing dominance of for-profit care homes in the sector: According to the CQC data, in September 2023 more than 85% of all care homes in England were operated by for-profit providers; in 2011, the figure was 78%. Local Government needs to be given resources by the Government to increase its higher quality care provision.

[Julian Atkinson](#)

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## 6. Talk at Branch Meeting by Angie Mindel

Angie Mindel is an active member of the Palestinian Solidarity Campaign and the National Treasurer of Jewish Voice for Labour.

Angie began by telling us about the huge death and injury toll suffered by Palestinians during

the current war. Some examples quoted were: 17,000 children orphaned or separated from their parents, people in the North of the Gaza Strip eating grass and grinding up cattle feed for flour because no aid is reaching them. There are enormous health problems, e.g. child malnutrition, operations being carried out without anaesthetics, deaths from late treatment and many people with life-changing injuries.

Hundreds of trucks full of aid are waiting to enter Gaza – the Israelis search every one of them and stand guard so that none can enter without that. They aren't allowing any aid into the north because they say that they told everyone to leave the north, therefore those that remain must be terrorists. NGOs are unwilling to send trucks to the north because of the danger of them being attacked.

When the latest hospital was attacked, 70 medics were arrested, several patients died from a lack of oxygen because the Israelis turned off the power. As well as hospitals, schools, colleges and universities have been targeted and destroyed. The Medical Director of the first hospital to be attacked has not been seen since the attack.

Returned detainees have told of a concentration camp in Israel where detainees are stripped and tortured there are credible accounts of women being abused and raped.

### **Reaction of other nations**

The USA has vetoed UN resolutions calling for a ceasefire whilst the UK has abstained. The UN has ruled that what is occurring in Gaza is genocide but our politicians are happy to see arms sales to Israel continue and have cut funding to UNRWA.

Neighbouring states are unwilling to support the Palestinians because they want to maintain economic relations with Israel. There is a large gas field off the coast of Gaza which has been sold to BP.

### **Protests**

Very marked, especially since the Corbyn era, is the silencing of critics. The IHRA definition of anti-semitism conflates criticism of the

Israeli government with anti-semitism, making it easier to silence critics.

The case of the Rochdale Labour candidate, Azhar Ali, (accused of pushing a conspiracy theory) is being discussed in the Israeli media. There is evidence that the Israeli government knew for a year that an attack was coming and that the Egyptian government had warned them a week in advance of the October 7<sup>th</sup> attack. Apparently, there was a large redeployment of troops to the West Bank and reduced surveillance of the border fence in the weeks before the attack. The attack gave the Israeli government the excuse of self defence for its war but collective punishment of a people is regarded as a war crime.

There was even criticism of the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres for pointing out that the October 7<sup>th</sup> attack did not happen in a vacuum. Many Palestinians fled there in 1948, the barrier fence was erected in 2008 making Gaza dependent upon Israel for supplies.

The Palestinian Ambassador to the International Court of Justice said "we have 3 options – displacement, subjugation or death".

### **West Bank**

Whilst attention has focussed on Gaza, terrible things are happening on the West Bank such as forcible displacements, evictions and the destruction of homes, destruction of olive trees which are the livelihoods of Palestinians. There are around 9,000 Palestinians in Israeli custody with around 3,500 of these having faced no charge. The illegal settlements are growing, some are the size of cities, and they are given protection by the military. There are now around 700,000 illegal settlers in the West Bank. They can restrict Palestinian rights of way and there is a big new road building project which will put Israeli-only roads through Palestinian territory. The settlers have heavy arms and sometimes military uniforms.

Four hundred people have been killed in the West Bank since October 7<sup>th</sup>, houses bulldozed, olive trees destroyed. Palestinians are searched, shot at and prevented from going to their prayers.



## Recent Visit

Angie told us about her visit to Palestine last year and how tense the situation was in the North West Bank compared to previous visits. Some Palestinians in Nablus were wary of tourists since Mossad agents sometimes disguise themselves as tourists. It was clear that going through checkpoints in an Israeli registered car with a European driver was easy compared with those in cars with Palestinian plates. They met a local man who ran a café near Nablus where he also lived with his family. He is to be evicted from his home and business because the Israelis want to take over the archaeological site. There are earth mounds making roadblocks to prevent cars travelling in and out of Bethlehem.

The Israeli PM has said that a Palestinian State will never happen. The government has made it clear that it wants the whole of the land and that any Palestinians remaining will have no rights of citizenship. It has even been suggested within the Israeli Government that Palestinians should be offered financial incentives to move out of Gaza. The Egyptian government is said to be preparing for an influx of refugees by building a large walled detention centre.

## What can we do?

Actions by activists are having an effect on firms supplying goods to Israel. Nottingham magistrates recently threw out a case against Palestinian activists citing political interference by the Home Office. Thousands of people are staging protests and boycotting Israeli goods.

The meeting held a collection for the charity Medical Aid for Palestinians. You can read about their work and donate at [www.map.org.uk](http://www.map.org.uk).

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## 7. NOTTINGHAM SOS24

There has not been a single elected Tory Councillor in Nottingham for the last two electoral cycles, and little evidence of any revival in their fortunes this coming May. However, the city now finds itself in the grip of non-elected Tory appointed commissioners following the Labour-run authority's declaration of effective bankruptcy two months ago. So much for local democracy. So

much for levelling up. The long and the short of it is that nigh-on £1bn of central government funding has been cut from Nottingham in the past 10 years. Any financial losses incurred by the Labour authority's mistakes (e.g. its c£30m losses in Robin Hood Energy) are barely significant in comparison.

Following Birmingham's similar demise and the prospect of 25% of local authorities declaring 'bankruptcy' this year, we might have hoped for a concerted electoral campaign by the Labour Party to restore local government funding, but this is just not happening. In Nottingham, against the wishes of local unions and campaigning groups, the Labour group has thus far acquiesced and 'reluctantly' agreed to a budget of devastating local cuts. There is little doubt that their 'reluctance' is genuine. However Councillors have had their hands partly tied by the threat of individual legal sanctions and by a national Labour Party determined not to rock the boat in its pursuit of winning the next general election. Some have reasoned that a refusal to set a 'legal' budget would result only in the Commissioners having total power over running the affairs of the city. Only one Labour councillor, the mayor Shuguftah Quddoos, voted against. She was immediately suspended from the party and now finds herself, as an independent councillor, the figurehead of the 'SOS24' campaign to save the city.

SOS24 has emerged from the vestiges of recent successful campaigns to save 3 local libraries from closure and the preservation of free bus passes for people with disabilities. Coordinated by Nottingham and Mansfield Traded Council, and alongside the major unions in local government as well as Equity and the Musicians Union, the campaign has thus far held lively lobbies, meetings, and protest marches. There has been a good UCU presence in the campaign and, pleasingly, some lively involvement of the NUS. It is now focussed on getting deeply into those communities who will be the direct victims of a programme of cuts that will have horrific consequences, especially in the poorest areas of an already impoverished city. Under threat of closure are all of the city's libraries bar one, adult residential care homes and support services, ending of subsidies to

local community centres, lunch clubs and community sports facilities which will result in closure in most cases, and the removal of physical and telephonic access to council advice and services. In addition there will be cuts to any 'non-essential' subsidies to arts and culture and the prospect of a fire sale of public assets in the city's property portfolio. Job losses could be in the region of 500. It is, in short, the ransacking of a city.

In a further grotesque and sadistic twist of the knife Nottingham will have to pay the Commissioners £510,000 per year of their stewardship from its own budget, so presumably their own costs will need to be met by the closure of a care home or similar. We hope that our members will do everything they can to help protect local services and local democracy. Nottingham and Birmingham are the tip of the austerity iceberg. It will be highly disappointing to many of our members that Keir Starmer's recent launch of the LP's local government strategy said nothing about real new money (except not to expect any) but only a new 'mechanism' for determining local authority funding. It certainly looks like we are going to have to persuade them. If you are interested in getting involved in the SOS24 campaign it can be contacted via:  
Email: [nottinghamsos@outlook.com](mailto:nottinghamsos@outlook.com)  
Facebook Nottingham SOS24

**Paul Wilkinson**

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## 8. May Day 24 Nottingham

Nottingham Trades Council will mark this year's International Workers Day on May 4th with its traditional March and rally. Given the current situation in the city, reported above, the March and rally will focus attention on the fight against the local government crisis. Local community campaigners and unions will take centre stage. Palestine, Ukraine, and the 40th anniversary of the Miners Strike will also feature, making this a day of local and international commemoration and solidarity.

The march will commence at Nottingham's central library at 11am with a strong message about resisting the cull of library provision in the city, followed a rally with music poetry and

stalls in Market Square at the beleaguered Council House.

**Paul Wilkinson**

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## 9. Chesterfield TUC May Day 2024

Chesterfield TUC May Day 2024 on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> May marks the 46<sup>th</sup> People's Gala & Demonstration in the town. We will assemble at Chesterfield Town Hall at 10.30am to march off at 11.00am with a rally in New Square at 11.45am.

Our march and rally this year includes the commemoration of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1984-85 Great Miners' Strike and follows on from the very successful exhibition put on by the Derbyshire Unemployed Workers Centres with the title 'Solidarity and Community', held in the Market Hall Assembly Rooms in Chesterfield from Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March to Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2024. It was a very successful and moving exhibition with visitors reflecting upon their memories of the strike and their role within it, and with several ancillary events including talks and songs. The exhibition will be moving on to other locations in North Derbyshire over the course of the year.

Our May Day march will be led off again by the Ireland Colliery band and the banners of the striking Derbyshire miners from 1984/85. Our speakers' platform this year reflects our theme 'Remembering the past Organising for the Future'. We have a great line up with John Burrows, one of the key leaders of the Derbyshire striking miners, Dima Al Shami of the Palestine Solidarity campaign showing our support for [#CeasefireNow](#), Libby Nolan an NHS nurse who is the National President of UNISON, and Fran Heathcote the newly elected General Secretary of PCS.

As usual there will be lots of campaign stalls and live music in New Square, together with refreshments in the Market Hall.

We look forward to seeing you there with the Retired Members banner.

**James Eaden and Allister Mactaggart**

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## 10. UCU Retired Members Branch Handbook

The main tangible news from the RMB national committee is the publication of the long-awaited Retired Members Handbook. This document, which is intended as a working document, has been produced principally for the support and guidance of officers of RMBs. RMBs operate in a variety of ways; some are well established, others not, while others are getting going again after the pandemic and the period of isolation it entailed. Much of the material is of an advisory character. However, it should also be of interest to members more widely. Any feedback will be most welcome. The web version of the document is available at: [www.ucu.org.uk/RMBHandbook](http://www.ucu.org.uk/RMBHandbook)

On a related issue, it has also been agreed that the committee will work with the relevant staff within UCU nationally to help produce one or more CPD webinars on “Working with UCU as a retired member”.

**Rob Kirkwood**

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## 11. Committee “Changing of the Guard”

As you will be aware, our AGM took place recently. This marked the retirement from the committee for Judy Wills and Rowena Dawson. We would like to pay tribute to both Judy and Rowena for the invaluable contributions that they have made during their time as committee members. We thank them both and wish them well. Angus McLardy has retired from his long-held role as Chair of our Branch, a position that he had held since before I can remember! We thank him for his immense contribution to the establishment and continued success of our branch. We are delighted that he is able and willing to remain as a committee member and to bring his vast experience to the fore as our Vice-Chair. We are very pleased to welcome our new members, Rachel Grant and Alan Tuckman. The role changes that were agreed at the AGM are reflected in the committee list at the end of this newsletter.

**Rob Kirkwood**

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## 12. UCU Retired Members Branch

See how to join our Branch Facebook group, as detailed in the information section on Page 1.

Our branch has been meeting since 2008 and now has well over 300 members. Our aims are listed below. We meet three times a year, often in places of interest to make part of a day out. Meetings focus on important issues for UCU pensioners and provide a chance to talk with other retired members.

A termly newsletter with articles of interest to retired UCU members is e-mailed to all branch members for whom we have addresses and to UCU branch secretaries in the East Midlands and to other RMBs.

Please let us have your personal e-mail address and let us know if it changes.

### RMB Roles and Functions

- To represent the interests of retired members within the union.
- To represent the interests of retired union members within the wider union and pensioner movements.
- To provide a forum within the union for retired members to come together to consider and debate matters of mutual interest.
- To provide a resource of collective memory, advice and expertise in support of the union, in particular to those still in active employment.
- To provide active support, where appropriate, by involving the broadest section of the branch in support of the wider interests of the union and its members, including support for those still in active employment.

**For more information  
please contact Harry Ziegler  
e-mail: [em-rmb-sec@outlook.com](mailto:em-rmb-sec@outlook.com)**

website: [www.ucu-em-rmb.org.uk](http://www.ucu-em-rmb.org.uk)

twitter: @ucu-em-rmb

facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1077256209678817>

**East Midlands Branch officers and committee**

Chair: Rob Kirkwood: [rsmkirkwood@gmail.com](mailto:rsmkirkwood@gmail.com)

Vice-Chair: Angus McLardy:

[apmclardy@btinternet.com](mailto:apmclardy@btinternet.com)

Secretary: Harry Ziegler: [em-rmb-](mailto:em-rmb-sec@outlook.com)

[sec@outlook.com](mailto:em-rmb-sec@outlook.com)

Assistant Secretary: Crystal Walker:

[crystalwalker@btinternet.com](mailto:crystalwalker@btinternet.com)

Assistant Secretary: Paul Wilkinson:

[paul.wilko@ntlworld.com](mailto:paul.wilko@ntlworld.com)

Treasurer: Brian Hambidge:

[brianhambidge44@gmail.com](mailto:brianhambidge44@gmail.com)

Equalities officer: Vacant

Membership: Bob Haskins:

[bobh@piperdrive.org.uk](mailto:bobh@piperdrive.org.uk)

Newsletter Editor: Julian Atkinson:

[jdatkinson34@btinternet.com](mailto:jdatkinson34@btinternet.com)

Committee Members:

Margaret Davies: [mhdavies8@aol.com](mailto:mhdavies8@aol.com)

Alan Tuckman: [alantuckman@gmail.com](mailto:alantuckman@gmail.com)

Rachel Grant: [rachelhgrant@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:rachelhgrant@hotmail.co.uk)

East Midlands regional UCU committee.

HE representatives: Harry Ziegler, Rob Kirkwood

FE representatives: Margaret Davies

**Nottingham**  
**Rise Like Lions**

**May 4th**  
 International Workers Day

Local  
**Save Our Services**

International  
**Gaza Ukraine**

40th Anniversary  
**Miners Strike**

**Speakers Music Stalls**

**MARCH**  
 11am Assemble outside  
 Nottingham Central Library

**RALLY**  
 12:30 Market Square

 Nottinghamshire, Mansfield & Nottingham  
**Trades Union Council**  
 An injury to one is an injury to all



**Our Platform speakers at Chesterfield May Day 2024 Monday May 6th**



**John Burrows**  
 Derbyshire  
 NUM 84/85  
 striking miners



**Dima Al Shami**  
 Palestine  
 Solidarity  
 Campaign



**Libby Nolan**  
 President  
 UNISON



**Fran Heathcote**  
 General Secretary  
 PCS