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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

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 Facebook Group at:

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

Branch Meeting

Tuesday 3rd February 2026, 11.00am

The Mechanics Institute
3 North Sherwood Street
Nottingham, NG1 4EZ.

At 12.00: Professor Andreas Bieler
(Nottingham University)

"Organising resistance in a globalised economy."



We hope that you will read and enjoy our newsletter. It would be even better if you wrote for it. Send in an article - it does not have to be long - to me. It can be on an issue of interest to you and other retired members. You might want to correct or challenge a previous article. The only limits are that you must provide your name and treat other members with respect. Get writing!

Julian Atkinson

1. Talk by Tom Vickers, Associate Professor in Sociology, NTU, to the October Branch Meeting.

Tom explained that he was seconded to GMB for six months in order to carry out the research for his book "Organising Amazon". The work was centred on the Coventry warehouse and was based on ethnographic research and reflective essays from worker-leaders and organizers.

Midlands GMB had begun to organize Amazon workers in 2012 and had built up a membership of 60 from 1400 workers. They had already achieved some modest improvements in facilities and conditions for the workforce. However, in 2022 there were wildcat protests after management had promised a pay rise which turned out to be only 50 pence per hour. At Coventry, the action led to a sustained campaign and the GMB was asked to help.

The workforce was very diverse, over 20 languages were spoken by workers, many had limited English and were very dependent on their wages to be able to send money back to families abroad. Management used these factors to divide the workforce.

In 2023 a protest began with a sit-down in the canteen but they were threatened with having their pay stopped so the next day they met outside the workplace. The workers were balloted for strike action and the first formal strike began in January 2023. The GMB supported the action by paying £70 per day to strikers who joined the picket line. There were mass pickets with strikers stopping cars to speak to workers outside the warehouse. They used a strategy of some strikers driving towards the picket line and stopping to have conversations, thus holding up all the other

cars. The main aim of the organisers at this point was to build up the branch, even without recognition and to build up the profile of the union. There were 37 days of strike action over the next two years. The membership saw a huge increase.

There were two applications for recognition. Membership had risen to 40-50% and in the second one in March 2024, there was a turnout of 86% but it was lost by 15 votes. Amazon went to great lengths to influence the vote. They brought in huge numbers of extra workers to dilute the membership percentage, even though they were not needed. They held voluntary 'information sessions' where workers could go and sit and talk to someone for an hour or so (a not unpleasant prospect for workers who were allowed very limited breaks). They spread rumours, e.g. that having a union to negotiate pay rises would delay those rises, that the warehouse might have to close and they'd lose their jobs. They brought in 30 managers from across the country to lean on individual workers. In effect, they generated a climate of fear.

Those identified as key leaders were targeted and sometimes moved. An example was a woman in her 60s who had been moved to a less demanding role because of health issues was moved back so that she wasn't able to speak to as many people, resulting in her becoming ill again. Managers looked for any disciplinary issue they could find to harass people.

As a result of the research, the 'Coventry Model' of organising, the 6 'Cs' was outlined.

1. Capitalize on spontaneous ruptures in employer control (e.g. wildcat protests)
2. Create democratic spaces and time outside the employers' control, e.g. picket lines and strike schools.
3. Cultivate worker leadership through support and education, e.g. organisers looked for the natural leaders and surveyed workers to ask who they turn to for advice. They came up with 60 names whom the organisers then spoke to. They had weekly leadership meetings with pay compensation for attendees, reps training and individual mentoring for leaders.

4. Connect with workers' lives beyond the workplace. E.g. many had different immigration issues so GMB referred them to an immigration advice service. Those who wanted them could have free ESOL lessons.
5. Challenge the employer's freedom to operate, e.g. use media to influence public opinion in favour of the workers, intervene in shareholder meeting, contact MPs.
6. Contest the employer's control of the workplace, e.g. workers became more confident to challenge managers.

Over the course of the campaign, the workers received increases in pay totalling 28.5%, having not had a previous pay rise since 2018.

Tom's book 'Organising Amazon' offers a rich case study of the factors contributing to the union's successes and setbacks. It provides a practical organizing model applicable beyond Amazon, offering strategies to engage the workforce, sustain support and develop leadership. An essential toolkit for those navigating the complexities of evolving labour practices, with particular relevance for precarious workers and workplaces where access is limited.

It can be purchased online at: <https://tinyurl.com/buyOAbok> with half the proceeds going to support the Amazon union branch.

Helen Chester

2. The Golden Future of Further Education and Training

Recently there have been some cheering pronouncements from Government. Rachel Reeves has announced a Youth Guarantee (YG) for those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEETs). Sir Keir Starmer has announced that there will be Gold Standard Apprenticeships. The careful buyer, however, examines the small print before coming to a conclusion about the headline promise.

The Youth Guarantee is to give paid work and skills to NEETs. A young person who has been on Universal Credit (UC) for 18 months will be offered guaranteed paid work. Refusal of this offer risks benefits being cut off. Great care will

have to be exercised over the removal of benefits. There are reasons why work has not been taken that go beyond the "lazy jobs" evaluation of the the Daily Mail: young parents and young carers come to mind. However, the Guarantee could be a very useful exercise if handled intelligently.

The Learning and Work Institute, in their research "Off the Grid", pose a further problem. 800,000 16-24 year olds are NEETs. One in five of these are too ill to work but receive UC. But roughly 50% of NEETs are not claiming benefits. The low take up is mainly because of fears of stigma and the belief that the system is more about compliance than support. This seems to exclude them from the YG scheme.

Sir Keir has also announced that there will be a target of two thirds of young people to get higher level skills, through university, further education or apprenticeship by age 25. Even better is the pledge to allocate in 2026/7 £800m extra in funding for 16-19 year olds. The Gold standard Apprenticeships will have equal status with degrees. There will also be some maintenance grants, but the details will need to be examined. Level 6 and 7 apprenticeships are at degree level. It is therefore worrying that the funding for level 7, which Bridget Phillipson announced, is to be cut. As always, the devil may easily be in the detail.

Julian Atkinson

3. Reports from Regional Committees

Report on the East Midlands HE Sector Committee meeting of 24 September 2025

HE Sector Committee now meets on the Wednesday afternoon before the Regional Committee. The meeting was quorate, but they used to be better attended. We welcomed a new member from Lincoln Bishop University (formerly Bishop Grosseteste University). As the last meeting had not been quorate, the September meeting also had to elect officers. Chris Pritchard was re-elected as Chair, but no one came forward as secretary. There was a short but inconclusive discussion as to how we might engage more members in an environment of rising workloads.

The main discussion concerned the impending national ballot for industrial action. There was some anxiety that the necessary threshold might not be met, but the dispute had to be framed as a battle over the future of HE, defending jobs and national agreements. Some members felt, however, that reference to national agreements would fall flat with younger members of staff who were not even at university when these agreements had been negotiated. It was pointed out, however, that job losses would precede the attack on terms and conditions, and that it would, therefore, be important to get members to vote.

Leicester was congratulated on managing a high turnout on their ballot in defence of jobs. Loughborough was increasingly moving from negotiation to consultation and from consultation to informing the Branch. So far, however, no compulsory redundancies had been announced. In the East Midlands, universities are continuing to cut staff and courses albeit at different paces. The corollary is increasing workloads and pressure on the remaining staff.

Report on the East Midlands Regional Committee meeting of 27 September 2025

As the April meeting had not been quorate, the September meeting had to elect officers for the year. John Clay will continue as Chair, Chris Pritchard as Secretary, and Harry Ziegler as Treasurer. All other positions are vacant. The meeting of the FE Sector Committee, which had taken place just before, had not been quorate. The Respect FE campaign would have a disaggregated ballot. Some colleges had already made offers, others not yet. The FE Sector is seeking parity with the salaries of teachers and a return to national bargaining. Adult education had its funding cut and there had been no dialogue with the mayors who had assumed some responsibility for that. Reform were shutting down Adult Education centres. There were redundancies in Prison Education and its fragmented nature made coordinated resistance difficult.

The HE Sector was anticipating mergers of universities and the meeting decided to set up a cross-sectoral working group on the experience of mergers in FE and the lessons

that might be learnt from this by HE. This was also seen as a possible way to involve more Branches in regional work.

Harry Ziegler

4. UCU Retired Members Annual Meeting – 5th November 2025

On 5th November, your Chair and Secretary made their ways to UCU HQ in Carlow Street, London. As has been the case for some years, the Retired Members Annual Meeting is the major event in our year. Inevitably, much of the discussions focussed on pensions, both the future of the state pension and the two major occupational pensions. There is potential for major changes in the structure of the state pension, with the formation of the Pensions Commission. A continuing theme through the meeting was the need to determine what the state pension should be and how this should be determined and then achieved. This issue and many more were highlighted by guest speaker, Jan Shortt, General Secretary of the National Pensioners Convention. Jan informed us that the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in its yearly income standards report has calculated that the minimum needed by a single pensioner is £17,200, and £27,800 is needed for a couple. The meeting was also addressed by Maria Chondrogianni, current UCU President, who reported on the major issues affecting the union, as exemplified by the situations in Leicester and Nottingham. As colleagues will be aware there are similar problems across the whole of the United Kingdom. On a more positive note, Maria was very enthusiastic about the valuable work of UCU's retired members.

There were eight motions submitted to the meeting, one was withdrawn. The other seven were passed unanimously. The subjects of these were:

- Ensuring Standards and Accountability in the Teachers' Pension Scheme
- Continued Defence of Pensions
- Administration of Teachers' Pension Scheme
- No jail for climate protestors
- Defend the Right to Protest
- Rights of Refugees, Migrants and Senior Citizens

- Government age-related vaccination policy

The fourth of these motions is worth reproducing in full as colleagues may not be so aware of this matter, which involves UCU retired members. It reads as follows...

RMB Annual Meeting notes UCU policies on defending the right to protest and support for action on the climate emergency.

It sends its best wishes and solidarity to UCU retired members, Ludi Simpson and Mollie Somerville, who are facing trial in 2026 after taking part in an act of non-violent protest at the National Gallery in connection with Just Stop Oil.

It supports the right of protestors arrested for non-violent civil disobedience to advance in court arguments about the merits of the causes they support in their defence and the right of juries to hear these arguments.

It opposes jail sentences for peaceful protestors who engage in acts of non-violent civil disobedience.

It condemns moves which have led to more authoritarian policing of political protest.

We applaud the senior citizens who are stepping up to oppose genocide whether arising from military aggression or from climate inaction.

The membership of the national committee remains the same, with the re-election unopposed of the three current members, who were all eligible to stand again, including your Chair.

If you would like to know any more about the national Annual Meeting or the work of the Retired Members Committee, please let us know.

Rob Kirkwood

5. Struggles at The University of Leicester

In our last newsletter, we focussed on the struggles being experienced by our colleagues at the University of Nottingham. In this edition our attention moves south of the Trent to the University of Leicester (UoL).

UoL UCU members began two weeks of strikes from 10th November in their fight against

redundancies. This follows three weeks of strikes that began in late September.

Management told staff in six areas (geography, geology and the environment; education; chemistry; modern languages; history; film studies) that their jobs are at risk, as they seek to cut the staffing budget by £11m. Hundreds of professional services staff have also been told they face a review that may lead to job losses. These plans are already becoming firmed up.

As part of this campaign, the national UCU demonstration took place in Leicester on Wednesday 12th November. This helped to raise the profile of Leicester University UCU's action, as UCU members from around the country, including East Midlands retired members, came to participate. Demonstrators assembled at De Montfort Square on New Walk, before marching to Victoria Park for a rally. There were a number of speakers including representatives from the Universities of Nottingham and Derby, as well as the national president, Maria Chondrogianni.



The extent of “phase one” of Leicester University management’s plans is already becoming clear. Film Studies is to be closed down and the staff sacked. Modern Languages is to be closed down and the staff sacked. History will lose the number of staff that it takes to save £500,000 a year. Those who remain will have to organise teaching based on whoever is left. If too few History staff leave “voluntarily”, compulsory redundancies will begin in January.

Chemistry will merge with Geography, Geology & the Environment (GGE), although the term “merger” is not permitted: apparently this is

now to be known as a “reimagining”. Staff involved in researching “Critical & Creative Geographies” or “Evolution & Past Environments” in GGE, and “Synthesis & Catalysis” or “Environment & Society” in Chemistry, are already deemed surplus to requirements. Some of these staff were celebrated in recent weeks for their contributions to UoL’s research, which has helped generate record levels of research income across the university.

College Operations, the name now applied to large numbers of professional services staff who work primarily at School level, will see job cuts too. Not only will people across 76 posts have to apply for just 50 new roles, but those roles will be at lower grades, with lower rates of pay, once pay protection for staff moved into these roles expires. This is, in other words, a degrading of staff by stealth. Of course, these colleagues will be expected to deliver the functions they currently deliver, just with fewer people and for less money.

More information is available from www.uculeicester.org.uk from which much of the above was derived.

This is just one story from among many different ones across the UK. The struggles at Nottingham are still ongoing (see uonucu.org for the latest news) and many other institutions are making cuts that are just as severe but are doing so in “salami-slicing” fashion and hence not receiving the same level of attention, albeit the outcomes will be equally devastating. Our HE institutions are under great threat and no genuine resolutions are in sight.

Rob Kirkwood

6. UCU Congress May 2025, Liverpool

Congress 2025 saw the introduction of electronic voting which is an excellent idea and did speed things up – no delays in locking doors and counting votes. It has its downside in as much as it could be slow but the outcome of the votes was very fair.

It was late on Saturday morning before the 3rd CBC report was adopted with the usual

arguments to change the order on the agenda. Inevitably motions were lost. Almost half of the first day was lost. Due to this many motions were dropped from the agenda at end of Congress, mostly Equalities items which upset a lot of people.

Needless to say our motion was passed. I moved it from the floor to help things along (my small contribution to moving congress along).

We had a Retired members meeting on Sunday at 10.00 am - 13.00 chaired by Liz Lawrence. Due to time constraints Congress closed earlier than planned on Monday. I stayed until the end to help ensure we were quorate. This was the day of the Liverpool FC parade. Getting to the station was very tricky as we had to walk. Getting on the train was even trickier but we made it.

Patricia Hulme

7. Nottingham Green Festival – what happened to free speech for the left?

Nottingham Green Festival was planned to take place on Sunday 14 September. This is an annual event which developed from the Nottingham Peace Festival and has taken place for many years. It is a festival run by volunteers and features many green businesses, vegan food and stalls by various left and campaigning organisations.



Image from Nottingham Live

This year the festival was disrupted – by an insurance company! On Friday 12 September late in the afternoon, and less than 48 hours before the festival was due to start, the

insurers informed the festival organisers that their public liability insurance would not be valid if any of the stalls addressed 'political, religious or cultural issues'. Informing the organisers just before the beginning of the weekend and so close to the start time of the festival left the organisers with no chance of finding alternative insurers.

Here is the statement from the festival organisers who were very upset by what had happened. They decided reluctantly to proceed with the event, renaming it the Nottingham Green Fair, with a more limited range of organisations able to have stalls.

<https://nottmgreenfest.org.uk/> At the time of writing we do not know why the insurance company threatened to cancel the insurance of the event nor why they did it so close to the start time for the festival. It could be pressure from right wing politicians or a panic about 'political' issues, by which people often mean 'left political' issues. Nonetheless what has happened is a chilling silencing of progressive and left voices on a whole range of issues, such as climate justice, workers' rights and international solidarity. This is at a time when the far right is saying a lot about free speech, often for people who engage in hate speech and spread fear and division, but clearly do not believe in free speech for those who disagree with them.

We do not know yet whether this is a one-off occurrence or a more concerted move by the far-right in the UK to attack free speech on the left by sabotaging left-of-centre events – meetings, festivals, conferences – by getting insurers to refuse or cancel insurance or organisations to refuse bookings for venues. Nonetheless the threat to democracy is real.

These are the organisations whose stalls were cancelled and were unable to take part in the Nottingham Green Festival this year. Some are left political groups, two are religious organisations, some are environmental groups and one is concerned with voting and electoral matters. Nottingham Friends of the Earth had planned to have the Better Buses petition on their stall. None of these groups can remotely be defined as a threat to the safety of anyone attending the Nottingham Green Festival.

Alliance for Workers' Liberty
Amnesty International
Bahá'ís of Nottingham
CND, Nottingham / Stop the War Coalition
Cuba Solidarity Campaign, Nottingham
Friends of the Earth, Nottingham
Global Justice Nottingham
Greenpeace, Nottingham Support Group
Keep our NHS Public (KONP)
Make Votes Matter
New Lucas Plan / Just Space Nottingham
Anti-Capitalist Resistance Nottingham
Climate Assembly Nottingham
Friends of Standing Together Nottingham
Green Party Nottingham
Labour Group Nottingham
Morning Star Readers and Supporters Group Nottingham
Socialist Workers Party (SWP)
Nottingham Stand Up to Racism
Nottingham Unite Community
Nottinghamshire Trades Council (TUC)
Open Homes
Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC)
People for Palestine
Refugee Forum,
Nottingham & Notts Socialist Party,
Nottingham Soka Gakkai - (SGI-UK)
XR Extinction Rebellion

[Liz Lawrence](#)

8. Contract Cash Cow – Private Sector Bonanza

It is bad enough having the private sector operating in healthcare, but the NHS is complicit in the growth of the private sector especially in certain areas of provision. Rules on patient choice that govern cataract care in England are allowing private companies to make millions of pounds in profits from treating NHS patients. The regulations also mean that treatment for patients at risk of losing their sight is being delayed as profit margins are prioritised over clinical need.

A report¹ from the Centre for Health and the Public Interest (CHPI) think tank found that £526m was paid by England's 42 NHS integrated care boards to five companies for NHS cataract surgery in 2023-24. Of this,

£169m consisted of profits for the firms, while £68m went towards paying interest on high-cost loans taken out by some of the companies that are owned by private equity funds. “Very large amounts of money are leaking out of the money paid by the NHS to private companies in the form of pre-tax profits, dividends, and interest payments on high-cost loans, which could otherwise be spent on NHS patient care.”¹

This drain on NHS finances has grown considerably in the last five years. The percentage of NHS cataracts delivered by the private for-profit sector has increased from 24% in 2018/19 to 55% in 2022/3. Over this period the NHS has paid private providers c£700 million.

The overall budget for cataract provision has doubled over this period, thus fewer resources are available to treat other eye care conditions such as glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy and macular degeneration, which can lead to irreversible sight loss – there is some evidence that waiting times for these conditions have increased.

The rise in expenditure on cataract services has been accompanied by an increase in private clinics: 78+ in 5 years. Concern has been expressed by some ophthalmologists that the growth in expenditure on NHS cataract provision is not being driven by patient need but by commercial interests of the companies delivering them – so called ‘supplier induced demand’ i.e. market-driven. The provision of ‘complex cataracts’ has increased by 144%. NHS England said that this could not be explained by changes in patient complexity. It is estimated that had the private sector been delivering complex cataracts at the same rate as the NHS the overall cost to the NHS would reduce by £29 million.ⁱ

There has also been suspicions on ‘upcoding’ i.e. billing for a more expensive type of service or procedure than was delivered. The Centre for Health and Public Interest (CHPI) have called for greater scrutiny from government, parliament and regulatory bodies. Other areas of concern include training and staffing. It is reckoned by NHS England that to train the next generation of ophthalmologists

there is a need for 47,000 routine cataract operations for trainees to develop their skills and competences; there are now 37,000 fewer than five years ago due to outsourcing. On average NHS hospitals are undertaking 20% fewer operations than five years ago: some trusts 40% fewer. There is already a shortfall of ophthalmology consultants. As the private sector uses NHS ophthalmologists there is a reduction in the availability of staff to work in NHS hospitals.

These developments are having an impact on the financial viability of NHS Eye Departments and thus a reduction in cross-subsidies that provide for more complex eye conditions. Also, income from cataracts support emergency care and care for children.

According to CHPI there are over 100 ophthalmic consultants with shares or equipment in private clinics, and some consultants have generated millions of pounds in dividends. The system since NHS inception which allows private work was and is a fundamental flaw.

There is some evidence to suggest that high street optometrists are being offered financial incentives to refer patients to particular companies. The estimated value, according to the CHPI,

Profits leaking out of NHS funded eye care 2023/2024 (CHPI)

NHS INTEGRATED CARE BOARD	TOTAL SPEND ON 5 EYE CARE COMPANIES £	ESTIMATED AMOUNT OF ICB REVENUE GOING TOWARDS PROFIT £	ESTIMATED AMOUNT OF ICB REVENUE GOING TOWARDS INTEREST ON HIGH-COST LOANS £
Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland	8,493,922	2,733,202	1,203,096
Northamptonshire	5,642,928	1,675,669	871,464
Nottingham	8,654,752	2,667,234	1,776,045
Derby and Derbyshire	11,500,572	3,557,917	881,494
Lincolnshire	9,537,268	3,393,042	549,398

It is worth noting that the aggregate financial position of all 42 ICB's in 2023/24 was a deficit of £109 million. Of course there are more cuts to come recently announced, though there are no budget cuts to clinical services, ICB's are facing a mandatory 50% reduction to their *running and programme costs* for the 2025/26 financial year.

If profits leaked were plugged, these parts of the NHS would move from deficit to a surplus of £60 million. The government is introducing a cap on profits in the children's care sector of 8.8%. If such a cap was implemented in the NHS it would have saved £122million on outsourced eyecare services alone in 2023/24 and aggregate finances of the NHS ICB's would have moved from overall deficit to an overall surplus of £12.5million (CHPI).

Apart from the view that private healthcare is morally wrong even Wes Streeting, a champion of outsourcing and the private sector should surely see the economics and the counter-productive effects on the system.

¹ Rowland, D and Ryan, S *Out of Sight – understanding the hidden impact of cataract outsourcing on NHS finances*. (2024) Centre for Health and the Public Interest (CHPI)

Godfrey Jennings

9. The Politics of Grievance (or Resentment)

The womb from which that crawled is fertile still.

Brecht, *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*.

As Western democracies are coming increasingly under pressure from the far and extreme right, observers are trying to explain why this is the case and why voters would be willing to abandon democracy in favour of authoritarian rule. One concept used to describe this shift is the politics of grievance which examines what strategies are used to mobilise (and create) these grievances and how they affect political processes. What seems to be absent in the discussions, however, is a historical dimension and an explanation as to why ideas, which are not in themselves new, are gaining traction again.

After introducing the concept, therefore, there will be a brief attempt to locate the politics of grievance in a broader historical context. Damhuis and Rashkova (2024) define a set of criteria for the politics of grievance for the purposes of comparing across a number of different countries what grievances are being articulated and how they are being mobilized. This is also in the context of what we might call the emotional turn in academia as researchers have become more interested in how emotions affect politics (and other human activities).

According to the authors, resentment in politics is a "...hostile emotion, qualified by the perception of having suffered a wrong..." (p. 2) which results in "...the desire to alter the subjectively unacceptable situation, by making the wrongdoers pay and "get even" with those who are considered to receive morally unfair privileges..." (p. 3) In the politics of the far right, that resentment is directed toward elites (who are seen as wrongdoers) and minorities (who are considered the recipients of unfair privileges). The implication of these two quotes is that resentment has three aspects: it is redistributive in terms of resources, it is recognitory, i.e., it addresses issues of identity and difference, and it is retributive. The redistributive element is often articulated as welfare chauvinism, as a demand to exclude non-natives from national welfare arrangements. Having been told for years that austerity is necessary because the coffers of the State are empty (or the national credit card 'maxed out'), such a position appears reasonable on the basis that if there are fewer of 'them', there is more for 'us'. It also appears sensible on the basis that those who contributed, should have first call on national resources. This situation of relative deprivation (getting less than is considered fair or deserved) has supposedly been created by 'self-serving' elites who prioritise immigrants; the question as to whether austerity is necessary and/or who benefits from it is seldom raised. To add insult to injury, the groups thus affected also feel that they do not receive the symbolic recognition they deserve.

This translates into a feeling of victimhood into which the right can tap by claiming that they speak for a neglected and/or devalued majority. The parties of the populist radical

right thus appeal directly to the emotions of their target audience and help create an identity based on perceived victimhood. Flinders and Hinterleitner (2023) go further in their analysis, claiming that grievance politics is a competing mode of representative democracy, trying to replace party politics. They argue that grievance politics is based fundamentally on *negative* civic energy, that individual politicians are the main agents of representation, and that grievance politicians do not have a strong policy orientation. They see the rise of this mode of representation as resulting from the weaknesses of contemporary party politics. Neoliberalism, through its “cult of personal responsibility” (p. 675), has led to the withdrawal of state-based control (and support) mechanisms, and politicians, because risk averse, are lacking problem-solving capacity. In order not to have to take responsibility, they “depoliticise” their rule through arms-length quangos, the actions of which are represented as technocratic rather than political choices. At the centre of the state exists thus a vacuum, which grievance politicians fill by a) fuelling grievances, b) generating blame, and c) seeking blame as a way to claim authenticity and cast themselves as champions of “the people”. The authors explain the first point mainly as fearmongering, and creating chaos and confusion through lies and misinformation.

According to this analysis, “[f]ear appeals create a sense of vulnerability among people by emphasizing their “downward mobility” in society while simultaneously removing their own responsibility for it,” (p. 676) by blaming globalization. Thus, they are creating a counter-narrative to individual responsibility. By focusing on relative deprivation and spreading stories in which those who do not belong are being advantaged over those who do, grievance politics accentuates and reinforces tribal identities. This serves two purposes: it gives citizens a target for their negative emotions, and it also undermines party politics by sowing mistrust in established institutions and structures. Overall, the authors argue that “...democracies’ integration into the global economy creates an increasing gap between responsiveness to domestic demands and responsibility to international and supranational constraints that is

exceedingly difficult to bridge for governments...” (p. 678).

A paper by Stoetzer *et al.* (2023) argues broadly that income inequality is a driver for the electoral success of populist parties in Europe, but that there is no clear explanation as what the connection is and how it works. Nevertheless, according to the authors “...disposable income inequality increases the support for populist parties. A one-unit increase in the GINI [a measure of income inequality] increases the support by one percentage point.” (p. 3) This could also be summed up by saying that political polarization follows economic polarization. These articles all deal with the present, but with the exception of Flinders and Hinterleitner who at least imply a broader context, there is little sense that although the concept is new, the phenomenon it describes may not be. If we take at face value Marx’s explanation as to why the French peasants voted for Louis Napoleon as President of the Republic, we can already see some of the aspects which the politics of grievance describe. In *The Eighteen Brumaire*, Marx argues that Bonaparte’s election was the result of the countryside revolting against the cities and the bourgeois order and their taxes. In *The Politics of Resentment* (2016), Cramer shows how countryside dwellers in Wisconsin see themselves as victims of an urban culture that looks down on them and refuses to give them their dues, in both actual and symbolic resources, but favours people who, for various reasons, don’t belong. Similarly, the collapse of the Weimar Republic started in the countryside where the Nazi Party had its first electoral successes, particularly, as Thurner *et al.* demonstrate, in areas where farmers of medium-sized farms dominated. Trump’s election and Reform’s recent successes are also owed to broadly (but certainly not only) rural and small-town voters. There seems to be a pattern which requires further exploration beyond the notion that “[r]ight-wing authoritarianism ... a strong correlate of social conservatism ... is also negatively associated with [generalised cognitive ability].” (Hodson and Busseri, 2012, p. 2)

Trump, as he has repeatedly asserted, loves the poorly educated, but maybe we should ask

what (and who) creates their sense of relative deprivation. People can only think and feel with the information available to them, and we all live in a mediated reality. It was noticeable in the Brexit vote that, with some exceptions such as Boston, the fear and rejection of immigration was highest in those areas which had very few, if any, immigrants. This is to argue that in rural and semi-rural areas there is not much of a corrective through lived experience to what news is provided. News outlets such as *The Daily Mail* or *GB News* certainly fuel the fears on which the politics of resentment feed. They amplify stories and claims which suggest to their audiences that elites favour groups which are either undeserving or don't belong or both. They suggest that the law protects these groups and that the law either needs to be changed or broken to restore justice. This destruction of the rule of law will not serve the interests of those who support it at the ballot box but will serve the interests of those who want to evade democratic accountability, taxation, and regulation. The politics of resentment are not a natural occurrence but are manufactured so as to destroy democracy, which makes the redistribution of wealth a possibility.

Cramer, K.J. (2016) *The Politics of Resentment. Rural Consciousness in Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press

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Harry Ziegler

10. Social Care: extracting the ...

There have been many comments on the crisis of adult social care that have dealt with the impact of austerity, managerial incompetence etc. There is less scrutiny of the money extracted from the system by the eventual owners of care homes. The **Centre for Health and the Public Interest** report (7 November 2025 *Plugging the leaks in the UK care home industry – Strategies for resolving the financial crisis in the residential and nursing home sector*) explores the issue. To do this risks undermining the useful proposition that “there simply isn't the money” – a prop for most politicians.

For 784 small and medium-sized care home companies £7 of every £100 received goes to profit before tax, rent payments, directors' remuneration, and net interest are paid out. For the 18 largest for-profit providers the level of leakage is more than double, at £15 of every £100 received.

Some of the largest 26 providers use complex company structures to maximise leakage and hide profit extraction. Six have an offshore owner in a tax haven; 18 split up their operating and property companies; 9 use sale and leaseback; and 12 purchase services or supplies from a related company. The largest 26 providers pay out significant amounts in rent payments each year, **often to related companies which are based outside**

of the UK's tax jurisdiction. Seven of the 18 largest for-profit providers spend between 15-32% of their income on rent payments, totalling £264m a year.

The eight largest **not-for-profit** providers spend £2.34 out of every £100 of their income on rent, compared to the £11.07 out of every £100 received for the 18 largest for-profit providers.

Debt repayments are a significant area of leakage for some of the largest 26 providers. The problem is especially serious in relation to homes operated by the five largest for-profit care home providers which are owned or backed by Private Equity. Collectively their debts amount to £35,000 for each care bed they own, and they pay interest costs of £102 per bed per week; this means that 16% of the weekly fees paid to these providers by local authorities or individuals for residential care goes towards paying off debt. And guess who owned that debt? Correct, the parent company that owned the care home company: these related companies that are often based offshore and at high rates of interest i.e. a form of hidden profit extraction which also avoids tax.

A further point that this excellent report does not mention is that the care home and the property companies are often divided. This means that if the money extracted by the eventual parent company makes operating the care home not profitable, then the land can be sold at a significant profit.

The report makes three recommendations:
A Care Home Transparency Act – care home providers should be mandated to disclose where their income goes.
A new form of care regulation is required to prevent care home companies with unsatisfactory financial models from providing care in the UK.
Capital should be made available by the government for the provision of new care homes.

A second useful report comes from the **New Economics Foundation** [12 November 2025 *Ending Extraction in the UK Care System*]. Extraction leads to money being pulled out of

the care system instead of being invested in it. The report follows the growing importance of Private Equity and Hedge Funds in the care sector with their propensity to extract high profits in a short time which makes them inappropriate owners in caring for the needs of the elderly of the nation. Furthermore, these owners of last resort are shy beings and have ended up in Tax Havens – several of which are British dependencies. Of the largest care home providers **80% had owners in tax havens.**

There is a useful, albeit complicated, examination of labyrinthine company structures so that the name on the Care Home bears no trace of the actual owner. This allows significant room for tax avoidance and possibly evasion. Many of the investors in the care industry increasingly use debt to buy, grow and run companies. Debt financing is when a company takes on loans or sells bonds which it needs to pay back with interest. These interest payments are in part not taxed as some can be deducted from profits, meaning they provide a means of removing money from a business while paying less tax than would be the case for dividends. This use of debt improves profit margins for owners, while transferring risk to operating companies in the care sector. There is always a higher risk associated with highly leveraged businesses which could put the provision of care at risk. The Competition and Markets Authority commented that “some of the largest private providers are carrying very high levels of debt, creating a risk that disorderly failure of highly leveraged firms could disrupt the placements”.

Larger for-profit firms tend to use complex organisational structures, allowing them to extract money through payments such as property rents and management fees. In this way, a care company separates out different functions of the business and transfers the company's earnings, the assets it owns and the liabilities it owes between different entities. These complex structures make it harder for public authorities to understand how money is being used and to hold businesses accountable.

This is a sector receiving substantial public funding that is increasingly prioritising private investors' returns over the quality of care

provided and the conditions of frontline workers. In the Covid-19 pandemic tens of thousands of residents died and social care workers were put at risk of severe illness or death greater than the wider population, the social care firms focused on profit extraction. During this period, the owners of some large care firms accepted huge public subsidies while taking home bumper profits for themselves.

The sector is underfunded, but huge amounts of money are being syphoned out of public expenditure into private profit. But this is how privatisation works.

Julian Atkinson

11. 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
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