

Editorial:

**DEFEND OUR PENSIONS!
REJECT THE PROPOSED
'HEADS OF AGREEMENT'**

Welcome to the second bulletin of the UCU Wales Retired Members branch.

Starting in March, continuing in June and climaxing in November 2011 we have seen our members participating in the biggest wave of strike action since the 1920s, opposing the plans of this government to wreck our pensions.

With its customary arrogance the government response is to refuse to budge an inch from its original plans!

All of which makes it incredible that there are voices at the top of the trade union movement who actually favour a settlement on the Tories' terms.

This, in our view, would be a huge mistake and a massive betrayal of every public sector worker. It would mean a majority of UCU members being required to work to the age of 69 for a hugely reduced pension.

As retired members, we demand that our brothers and sisters still in work are treated exactly as we were – allowed to retire at 60 on a final salary pension.

This simple message has not always come from the leadership of UCU. For this reason we urge all branch members to use their votes in the forthcoming elections for national officials and to consider voting for candidates from UCU Left who favour a decent settlement to this dispute.

This dispute is far from over. On 20th January the UCU NEC correctly rejected the 'Heads of Agreement' proposals. More public sector trade unionists have now rejected these proposals than were on strike on November 30th.

These workers must now co-ordinate strike

action until these proposals are totally defeated.

As retired members it is our duty to support them every inch of the way.

Andrew Price

(Branch Secretary & Bulletin Editor, formerly Coleg Glan Hafren, Cardiff)

Pam Hughes

(Branch Chair, formerly Deeside College)

Norman Morgan

(Branch Vice Chair, formerly Coleg Morgannwg)

John Martin

(Branch Treasurer, formerly Coleg Menai)

**UCU Wales Retired Members
Branch**

Next meeting: Branch AGM

- Friday, February 24th, 12 noon-2.00
- Royal Oak Hotel, 200 Broadway, Cardiff. CF24 1QJ
- Guest speaker: a public sector trade unionist will talk on trade unions and the struggle against the cuts.
- A buffet lunch and drink will be provided for all members attending.

For more details contact:

ucuwalesretiredmembersbranch.u@googlemail.com

*or ring: Branch Secretary Andrew Price
02920 462168.*

SUPPORT TRADES COUNCILS!

It is branch policy to send delegates to as many Trades Councils as possible throughout Wales.

Any interested member please contact Andrew Price on 02920 462168 before the AGM on 24th February.

News from the National Pensioners Convention

Editor's note: *Our branch is affiliated to the NPC and at branch meetings we distribute its material. Below we reproduce an important article from the winter 2011 edition of 'the Message' principally for those of us not able to attend meetings.*

PENSIONS NOT POVERTY!

Britain already has one of the worst state pensions in Europe.

Future generations are told to work longer, pay more and get less.

Britain has a terrible record on pensions: average company pensions in both the private and public sector are around £5000 a year and the basic state pension is one of the least adequate in Europe.

One in five older people live below the official poverty line and millions more are struggling to keep up with the rising cost of living.

The state pension for those who have worked all their lives is just £102.15p a week – while the official poverty line is around £70 a week higher.

Even the means-tested Pension Credit fails to reach nearly 2 million of those eligible to claim.

For years, successive governments have adopted a policy of keeping state pensions low, in the belief that that retirement income is being supplemented by good occupational pension schemes. Over the last few years this policy has been looking less and less coherent.

All the evidence shows that final salary pension schemes are no longer open to new entrants and millions of public sector workers are being told to work longer and get less in return. The truth is if you are a low paid worker you will be poor in retirement.

Since coming to power, the Coalition has already weakened our pension system by linking future pension rises to the lower Consumer Price Index rather than the Retail Price Index. Over a ten year period this will cut average pensions by between 15% and 20%.

However, this is not a problem for the average company director in the top 100 companies - who still has an occupational pension of around £175,000 a year!

Pension inequality is what this government should be tackling – not trying to cut the pensions of those who care for our loved ones or who collect our rubbish.

Nowhere is this inequality more apparent than in the plans to raise the retirement age. All the evidence shows that life expectancy is linked to income.

The well-respected Marmot Review into ageing showed that the life expectancy gap between the richest and poorest in society is as much as 17 years.

Not only does raising the retirement age at a time when youth unemployment is at its highest for two decades look misguided, it also hurts the poorest in society, who will have to work until they drop.

There will also be those who try to argue that tax payers are paying for gold-plated public sector pension schemes, when the truth is that we all pay for pensions through taxes, national insurance or the price of goods and services in the shops.

The NPC continues to campaign for a basic state pension set above the official poverty level of around £178 a week as well as defending the right of those in work to protect their pensions.

It is vital that those in work and those retired campaign together to make the case for decent pensions for all.

The alternative is to see more and more future pensioners spending what little retirement time they have in financial difficulty.

We must not let this happen.

FAIR PENSIONS FOR ALL!

A pamphlet published jointly by NPC, NUT, UCU, UNITE & PCS puts the case for a decent state top-up pension.

Vital reading for every Branch member.

Order from:

ucuwalesretiredmembersbranch.u@googlemail.com

or from Andrew Price 02920 462168

Thanks to Geoff Jones (formerly Sussex Univ.) for production.