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Email addresses please!

We encourage retired members to use your home email when you give up your work email address. We hope to send out a termly newsletter by email but only an annual newsletter by post. This is to save money on post and the effort of stuffing over 100 envelopes.

**Please inform us of
change of address or email at
ruthamias2000@yahoo.co.uk**

1. March Annual General branch meeting:

12.00 a.m. – 2.00 p.m.

Tuesday 4th March 2014

Liza Sentence

will talk about

The Canadian First Nation in the Great War

Venue: UCU Office. Labour Party Rooms
26b Clifton Hill, Exeter EX1 2DJ

**A buffet lunch will be provided if you let us
know a week in advance.**

ucu.swest@gmail.com

This newsletter is, in part, that of the East Midlands branch who unselfishly share their expertise with all the Retired Members Branches (RMB). Your contributions for our next newsletter welcome.

Email them to ucu.swest@gmail.com

2. Pay and Pensions dispute in HE and FE.

UCU members in HE voted to take industrial action over the miserly 1% pay offer and the ongoing pension cuts. The

UCU pay claim was only for inflation proofing – a very moderate request. UCEA has declined to negotiate further with a take it or leave it attitude. This is at a time when VCs continue to get fat pay rises on an already over-high income. Since 2002, year on year the pay of university VCs has increased on average at double the rate of staff pay. Pay and benefits for university leaders increased, on average, by more than £5,000 in 2011-12, with the average pay and pensions package for vice-chancellors hitting almost £250,000. The pay ratio of the lowest to highest paid people is 1:19 across higher education, which means the gap has widened significantly from 1:15 from a report in 2010. The proportion of university sector spending which goes on staff, including pensions, has in fact been in continual decline. It was roughly 58% a decade ago and is now just 55%. Will Hutton, the Guardian and Observer columnist, said “this is one of the most sustained cuts in wages since the Second World War – staff have suffered a pay cut of 13% in real terms since October 2008.”

Sion Hill Bath UCU members went on a successful one day strike on 31st October



and a work to rule started on Friday 1st November. The other two campus unions, UNISON and UNITE were also on strike with the three unions working together. All have received the same miserly 1% pay offer with a refusal to negotiate. All S. West universities were picketed and several rallies of members held.

VCs were once generally sympathetic to pay issues even if they did not want to give us the money; then they were more reasonably paid, not much above senior professors. What a change, most VCs now see themselves as academic 'bosses' rather than academic leaders.

Russ Bowman

Unions exist to defend the interests of their members by collective action. The employers did not enter into meaningful negotiations so another one day strike was held on 3rd December for both FE and HE.

Jo Corke

3.USS funding level stable despite £6.4bn liability hike

- USS pensions scare story

Members may have seen the shoddy hatchet job on our [USS \(University Superannuation Scheme\)](#) pension scheme on Newsnight in October, [repeated on the BBC website](#) and then Radio 4 in the morning, absurdly claiming that student fees might have to go up £1000 to fund the deficit.

Yet the [USS annual members report](#) (all USS members) should all have received a copy from USS) on which the story was based (issued in October) shows that the deficit has in fact sharply fallen over the previous year. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the fake 'revelations' are timed to undermine support for the UCU strike on 31st October. In an email to UCU officers, comments from David Leech, Professor of economics, University of Warwick, explains what is actually happening:

So what is the reality? The scheme was officially 92% funded in March 2011, 77% funded in March 2012, 77% in March 2013, and 83% funded June 2013. This corresponds to an official deficit of £2.9bn in 2011 rocketing up to £11.5 billion by March 2013 but dropping to £7.9 billion just three months later. We all understand investments go up and down with the stock market and profitability of companies. But why have the liabilities gone up so astronomically?

The Newsnight item was about how the problem is all to do with the investment strategy - but in fact the investments have actually done pretty well. The problem is with the figure for the liabilities which Newsnight did not discuss. This incredible volatility gives a clue to the underlying problem with the official figures. Pension schemes are very long term investments and should be judged on that basis whilst the law requires that they are judged on short term criteria. The huge pension fund deficits across the country reported in the 2000's, including the USS one, are as phoney as the huge surpluses in the 1980's. USS is in good health based on real world criteria: its income exceeds expenditure on a long term sustainable basis.

We are told that the liabilities figure has gone up by 14.6% in one year. But how is that possible? Has our life expectancy suddenly increased massively - in one year? Remember that our pensions are fixed by the rules of USS and depend on our final salaries, our years of service, future price inflation, our longevity. So what has caused this figure for the pensions liabilities to increase so much? Pensions are simply deferred pay. And the proportion of University sector spending which goes on staff, including pensions, has in fact been in continual decline. It was roughly 65% when fees paid by home students were zero and has gone down to about 55% (54% in Sheffield) now fees are £9,000. If

Newsnight really wanted to locate the reason for rocketing student fees they would need to look elsewhere than staff pay and pensions.

The truth is that it is an artifact of the accounting method. The calculation of the liabilities figure is driven primarily by the current low interest rates due to government monetary policy (including quantitative easing). There may or may not be a deficit in the ordinarily understood meaning of the term but this is not it. The key facts are that all the pensions currently in payment, (£1.4 billion last year) were covered by the payments of members and institutions of £1.6 billion. In addition to that, the fund's investment income was almost £4.6 billion. This does not look at all bad to me. Whether it is adequate to cover the pensions promises only the actuaries will be able to tell. But the calculations we are expected to swallow using the accounting rules known as FRS17 which produce these mad deficits are highly misleading.

The problem is that the accounting methods are based on extreme neoliberal economics which views everything as if the world is just a gigantic perfectly efficient all-knowing market. But we know that markets are very volatile and affected by many factors including human irrationality, speculation, bubbles, and all the rest.

The whole emerging fiasco in funded pension schemes like USS is the result of the overeager application of neo-liberal economic thinking during the boom years. What is happening to USS, and the other final salary pension schemes in the private sector, is the logical culmination of a process based on the philosophy that “there is no such thing as society, only individuals and their families”. What is needed is not to close down the scheme, but to defend it for the success it is, and for the government to look again at the distortionary regulatory rules that have been introduced without sufficient thought.

For a cogent explanation of the USS 'deficits' please see a letter to the THES from this same scare-story season last year, '[Accounting tricks and pension deficits](#)'.

Britain has one of the worst records in Europe in pensioner poverty, corresponding to our lead in inequality. There are 20,000 to 30,000 'excess deaths' of elderly people in winter every year in Britain - dying of cold, hunger and diseases

contingent on them. This is the real pensions scandal.”

Comment from Harry Heaney, a UCU retired member

I received the USS annual report for 2013 about a week ago and came to the conclusion that the pessimistic view of the future of USS was largely due to the poor returns on the fixed interest investments, mostly Gilts which are at present yielding marginally over 1%. Incidentally USS has increased its fixed interest holdings from 16% in 2012 to 24% in 2013, but I don't understand that rational! But the 5 major investments in equities all yield over 5% in dividends, HSBC, RDS, VOD, GSK, and BP. The holding in HSBC (£466.2m) is 1.2% of the total of HSBC and in RDS (£458.7m) is 1.18% of the whole of RDS. USS is almost exactly 50% invested in equities and both the UK and overseas markets have rallied dramatically over the past 18 months or so. The major problem that I see for USS is related almost directly to the employers reduction in their contributions. When USS started employers contributed about 18% of salary and this was reduced to about 14% of salary when the scheme was found to be in an excellent position. This rather reminds me of the biblical story about seven good years followed by seven bad years. So why do the USS members of the board of USS not make a greater fuss when the employers argue for a reduction in their contributions.

Russ Bowman East Midlands

4. Pensions round-up

Let's start with the good news. The average annual pension contribution received by executives of FTSE100 companies has risen from £225,000 to £242,000 since 2011, according to research from the pensions experts LCP. The consultant's Executive Pensions Survey found the trend which has seen headline spending on executive pensions fall with the decline of defined benefit (DB) had been reversed. It said the median compensation for cash in lieu of pension, the measure used by companies and remuneration committees to benchmark benefits provision, had risen from 25% to 30%. Well that made you feel better!

Perhaps less cheering is the change in mortality figures. Life expectancy at retirement fell over 2012 according to the latest update of the

Actuarial Profession's Continuous Mortality Investigation (CMI). The cut in some of the CMI's core projections comes after the worse-than-expected mortality data from 2012 was incorporated into the model. The life expectancy of a man aged 65 has been cut by approximately three months to 22.5 years while life expectancy for a 90-year old male fell by about 1.5 months to 4.46 years. But there is a silver lining to the cloud. The consultancy Towers Watson said the reduction in life expectancy could reduce liabilities by up to 1% for some schemes. The mortality figures seem like a double headed penny. If they go down the private pension providers win; and if they go up then state pension age and normal pension age on public sector occupational schemes increase and the Government wins. Pension holders lose out both times.

The UK pension system's score in the annual Melbourne Mercer Global Pension Index has dropped two places in ranking to ninth as other countries overtook it. The consultant's annual index, carried out in conjunction with the Australia Centre for Financial Studies, ranks both publically funded and private components of pension systems around the world. It scores each country on adequacy, sustainability and integrity. UK pensions have been overtaken by Singapore and Chile.

The top two nations are Denmark and Netherlands. It is not surprising that the Government's flagship cheap, affordable and efficient NEST provision, which attempts to revive the flagging private occupational pension scheme, is being comprehensively outperformed by a rival Danish offer. Nor that Dutch private pensions offer 50% more returns than comparable British schemes. It becomes clear why last year's figures showed the number of people in an occupational pension schemes had plunged to 8.2 million or 35%. This compares with 12.2 million in 1967 and is the lowest recorded since 1953. The number of active members in occupational pension schemes has fallen 400,000 year-on-year, according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) in its Occupational Pensions Schemes Survey 2012. And the constant increase in cost and decrease in benefit of public sector schemes is a component of this problem.

The problem with the British private pensions industry is that there are large, and still largely concealed, charges that reduce the value of the resulting pension. There are a potential sixteen possibilities of slicing out money from a pension during its accrual and at the time of delivery. The declared management charges are only a portion of the total money removal from schemes. An example, of many such undeclared charges, is that when a pension matures, the pot is placed temporally in a holding account before the annuity is purchased. The resting time is usually a few hours but can be as little as half an hour. For this privilege a 0.1% charge on the money is made to add to the other 15 grabs. This explains why Dutch pensions, which do not extort large charges, are able to pay their pensioners 50% higher returns.

Julian Atkinson

5. Fair Deal transfer of pensions

HM Treasury issued in October 2013 "**Fair Deal for staff pensions**". This gives the new policy for the protection of pensions when staff are moved from the public sector: "future staff who are compulsorily transferred from the public sector will be offered continued access to a public service pension scheme rather than being offered a broadly comparable private pension scheme. In broad terms, all staff whose employment is compulsorily transferred from the public sector under TUPE, including subsequent TUPE transfers, to independent providers of public services will retain access to their current employer's pension arrangements." This protection is far from water tight but is, nevertheless crucial since the previous provision did allow bulk transfer to broadly comparable private sector schemes. Needless to say "broadly comparable" is open to widely differing interpretations.

The Government Actuary's Department Technical paper (9th October 2013) spells out who is covered: "The new Fair Deal policy covers staff transfers from central government, so applies to central government departments, agencies, the NHS, certain maintained schools (including academies) and any other parts of the public sector under the control of government ministers, where staff are eligible to be members of a public service pension scheme. The new policy applies when such staff move from the

public sector to an independent contractor by way of a transfer to which TUPE1 applies or when such staff move by way of a non-voluntary transfer to a public service mutual or to other new models of public service delivery.”

The problem for us is that under Fair Deal HE and FE are not classified as part of the public sector. UCU, the other teaching unions and the TUC are presently trying to change this anomaly which might pose significant problems.

[Julian Atkinson](#)

Extract from UCU HE Equality Committee 11th Oct 2013. Pensions:

There were detailed discussions of both USS & TPS. On USS the volatility of the funding position of the scheme and the ridiculous assumptions this is based on were noted. A meeting of pension officers will be organised.

The TPS dispute is still live and members may want to take further action. This would need to be discussed at NEC, as FE members are also involved. UCU, the other teaching unions and the TUC have lobbied very vigorously against this. Further increases in pension contributions will take place in 2014.

[Jo Corke](#) from [Marion Hersch](#)

6. Susan Banducci our November speaker.

Susan Banducci, Professor of politics at Exeter University gave an illustrated talk on the selection of women as political candidates. Lack of women in political office has been the subject of a great deal of academic research. Less work has been done on the effects of the under representation of women in powerful political positions on the political attitudes and aspirations of women.

There is a low visibility in the media of women in important political positions and powerful decision making bodies. Photographs of Maggie Thatcher's cabinets illustrate this point very well. An increased visibility of women would play a key role in inspiring women to take more interest in politics and participate more in the electoral system. Studies have shown that women are generally less interested than men in politics and also less

knowledgeable. They are less likely to feel satisfied with the political process or feel engaged with it. Evidence suggests that the presence of women as candidates and holding office can have a positive effect on women's political engagement and attitudes about their role in politics.

Data was presented from surveys of national elections from a range of countries around the world. As expected the operation of quotas increases the representation of women in national legislatures and also proportional representation. Nordic countries have the highest proportion of women in national parliaments and this is linked to an expectation that women will be represented and visible and inspires women's interest in politics. Generally women in the "established democracies" are better represented than in "newer democracies"

Women's representation also has an influence on policy making. When women hold office they put woman friendly policies on the agenda and are more likely to campaign on social issues. Welfare issues and gender equality are more likely to be debated. Women in positions of power raising these issues inspire other women to an engagement with politics as it is no longer seen as the preserve of men. It seems to be generally accepted that if women are better represented it will lead to more favourable decision making and increase the legitimacy of democratic institutions.

There was a discussion of why so few women are elected. There is no definitive answer but research has shown that there are cultural factors such as women's role as carers and their aversion to conflict. There are also institutional factors such as stereotyping and bias in the media. There is a perceived knowledge gap between male and female politicians. Women are seen as generally more trustworthy, compassionate and knowledgeable about welfare and social issues. They are seen as less competent when dealing with economics or foreign policy. Women bring a different consensual way of working into the political arena as well as the different set of issues they may bring to the table. The meeting agreed that in British elections women should not just appear as "paper candidates" in marginal seats but should be trusted with winnable seats. As women view issues differently this might lead to different political decisions. The symbolic

impact would be huge. It is not possible to talk about true democracy if half the world's population is excluded.

Ruth Amias



Susan sharing lunch with UCU members John Daniell and Bill Tampion.

7. The UCU Equality Conference 2014

As delegates to the UCU Joint Equality Conference 2014, we attended the annual meeting of UCU women members in the first part of the conference. The overall flavour of the meeting was somewhat different to that of last year's UCU Women's Conference. This was due to the combined nature of the conference and the increased impact of austerity clearly being experienced by delegates differentially in their relevant environments.

It is no accident that austerity was a central theme of the conference. In a climate of increasing casualization in education, and specifically with the widespread introduction of 'zero hours' contracts, women were identified as particularly vulnerable with family friendly working hugely under threat.

In the 'women as activists' meeting the effect of casualization in the workplace was specifically identified as impacting on a disproportionate number of women members, often inhibiting their capacity to fully participate in union branches dominated by men with more stable work contracts. In the light of this, it was agreed that the important role women's union equalities committees play in protecting the standing of women members needed to be assured. Conference also needed to be utilised as an important focal point for women's solidarity and support particularly where a male/female ratio was unequal at local branches and tended to

inhibit female activism. Encouragement of greater participation by women of all ages in struggles outside the work place was suggested as a means of building women union activists' confidence. For instance supporting picket lines and taking the union banner to local demonstrations and protests.

Speakers at the workshop on anti-fascism

included Weyman Bennett, joint secretary of *Unite Against Fascism* and Ruth Smeeth of *Hope not Hate*. The speakers put the increasing inequality in the education environment in the context of the threat of fascism developing as a result of government's deployment of austerity. As jobs are cut and terms and conditions in education are eroded in line with a climate of austerity imposed by neo-liberalism and privatisation, fascism can be seen to be rising as vulnerable groups and organisations become scapegoats for the continuing financial crisis. Discussion centred around ways UCU can support multiculturalism in terms of recruitment of teachers and the wider curriculum. It was also argued that it is vital unions are not weakened, which not only means members resisting reductions in facility time, training and recruitment initiatives, but ensuring they play a central role in actively opposing fascism on the streets and in the ballot box.

Both Weyman Bennett and Ruth Smeeth emphasised the important role for unions in the forthcoming European elections, to ensure that Andrew Brons and Nick Griffin are not re-elected to the European parliament. Weyman, having recently returned from a trip to Auschwitz, presented a grisly picture of the current attempt at amalgamation of ultra-right parties across Europe, reminiscent of the rise of the Nazis in the 1930s. They emphasised that the unions and the political left need to work together and in solidarity campaign to get the vote out at the European election. The rise of UKIP was also identified as a huge threat to a multicultural, fair Britain. The message was for all union branches to decide how they can ensure they actively broadcast the anti-fascism message loud and clear.

Participation in the union; how can we ensure the union reflects our membership in all roles and structures.

The North West Region presented their "UCU Women-Moving Further Reaching Higher" project which is supporting the personal and professional development of women. They have launched two new free online pilot courses for UCU members; Stress and

Mental Health Awareness and Personal Skills Development. UCU already runs a programme of courses for UCU reps but this project aims at the wider woman membership.

Keynote Speakers at the Equality conference:

Melissa Benn, writer journalist and campaigner.

In 2013 she published "What should we tell our daughters? The pleasures and pressures of growing up female" – a discussion of young women's lives today.

Peter Tatchell - a campaigner for human rights, democracy, LGBT freedom and global justice since 1967. He spoke about the need to raise awareness, understanding and the protection and implementation of human rights, in the UK and worldwide. A brave man.

A very interesting conference; indicating this is no time to be complacent. It is a time for all members to consider ways in which they can actively work with their branches to be part of a campaigning union.

Jo Corke UCU S.West RMB

Lucretia Packam UCU East Midlands RMB

8. 2013-2014: UCU SW RMB

It has been a pleasure to be chair of the branch this year and to meet some of you either at the Exeter meetings or by chance in other locations such as U3A classes or in the streets of Bristol, where I live.

We hope to see more of you at the branch meetings next year. So far they have been held in the UCU offices at Exeter. The South West region is so widespread that the choice of Exeter was because, as someone commented, 'it is equally far away for everybody'.

We have discussed whether there might be different venues to which more of you could come. We are wondering about a Plymouth event in the summer of 2014 and a Bristol event later in the year for those in the frozen north of the SW Region. If you have any feedback on these ideas, we would welcome them.

The March meeting will be our AGM. There will be elections for all the posts, so if you would like to stand, please let us know
ucu.swest@gmail.com

Jo Corke

Contributions welcome.

If you know about a group or activity that branch members might be interested in, do write a piece for this newsletter, and send it to ucu.swest@gmail.com

Jo Corke

9. National Pensioners Convention.

<http://npcuk.org/>

On Nov 27th the NPC held a rally to coincide with the start of the House of Commons looking at provisions in the Pensions Bill 2013/14. In the centre is Norman Jemison; some of you will know Norman, a retired member from the UCU North-East branch.

The NPC Executive Committee and officers mark next year's National Dignity Day on Saturday 1 February 2014 (organised by the Social Care Institute for Excellence). Look out for local and national events at <http://npcuk.org/>



NPC & Bridgwater Senior Citizens Forum invite you to celebrate

DIGNITY ACTION DAY SATURDAY FEBRUARY 1ST

Bridgwater Baptist Church,
Little St Mary Street, Bridgwater
2-4.30pm

The National Pensioners' Convention wants National Dignity Day to highlight the nation's lack of care and dignity for older people. In hosting this programme of songs and reflections, Bridgwater Older People's Forum wants also to highlight the importance of respect and dignity for all people in all walks of life. As well as some wonderful musical contributions, there will be testimonies from local people about what dignity means to them.

A programme of songs & music celebrating dignity & respect for all. Everyone is welcome.

Refreshments available. Admission is free but a collection will be held
Contact: Glen Burrows,
Bridgwater Senior Citizens' Forum,
01278 450562

10. Branch Book Corner.

This is the first of what may become a regular feature; but it needs you to send us something - a piece about a book, a film or play - we can adjust the headline to suit. Ucu.swest@gmail.com

Maud Pember Reeves 1913 Round About a Pound a week. Reprinted by Virago press. A vivid historical portrait of the daily life of working people in the early part of the 20th Century.

This book is particularly evocative for me as my mother was born in 1910 in a street just north of the river which on Booth's Poverty map shows it was also in the "Poor, 18 - 21 shillings a week" category.

From 1909 to 1913, undaunted by the proposition that a 'bi-weekly visit to Lambeth is like a plunge into Hades'. The Fabian Women's Group recorded the daily budgets of thirty families there. In 1913 they published this unique record in **Round About a Pound a Week**. It tells of family life, births marriages and deaths; of grinding work carried out on a diet of little more than bread, jam and margarine. I read how they coped with damp, vermin and bedbugs; how they washed, cooked, cleaned, scrimped for furniture and clothes, saved for all too frequent funerals.

In the report, Pember Reeves argued for a series of government reforms including child benefit, free health clinics and the provision of school meals. **And it all, eventually, happened!**

<http://lib-1.lse.ac.uk/archivesblog/?p=1831>

For more information
please contact ucu.swest@gmail.com
or contact the officers here:

South West Branch officers and committee

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Vice Chair: Liza Sentance, lizasentance@hotmail.com

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Regional rep: Margaret George mmargaretg@gmail.com

Treasurer: Andy Gatehouse, AndyGatehouse@hotmail.com

Membership: ruthamias2000@yahoo.co.uk

Specimen week		
18/-	rent	7 0
	10 ¹ / ₂ loaves	2 5 ¹ / ₂
	1 lb butter	6
	1 curd coal 4/5 week	1 7
	2 lbs sugar	4
	1 tin milk	4
	6 oz tea	6
	soaps, soda, blue & starch	5
	gas	10
	14 lbs potatoes	7
	fruits	2 ¹ / ₂
	matches, salt, pepper	2
	5 lbs meat	1 10
	1 carton flour	5 ¹ / ₂
	1 lb rice	2
	cocoa	4
		17 8 ¹ / ₂

11. UCU Law Extra. Info from HO about a new service.

As a retired member of UCU you will be able to access a range of everyday, non-employment related legal services including:

- Wills
- Lasting Powers of Attorney
- Renunciation of Executorship
- Probate
- Severance of Joint Tenancy
- Conveyancing
- Re-mortgaging; and
- Financial mis-selling claims such as PPI

How is this being made possible?

We are offering this service through a new partnership with BBH Legal Services Limited, a legal firm that has a well deserved reputation for giving clear, straightforward advice to clients. They are a subsidiary of Thompsons Solicitors LLP, a firm with more than ninety years experience of standing up for trade union members. They are committed to the trade union movement and work solely for the injured or mistreated – never for the insurance industry, and never for employers.

What makes this service different is that both you and the union will benefit. While you will get access to legal services at reduced prices our partnership with BBH will also provide revenue to the union which we will use to help members at work.

*I have checked with [Stephen Morrison](#) at HO and this **IS** available to retired members. You can access information through the dedicated website, email and phone number below:*

Jo Corke

[UCU Law Extra website](#)

Email: UCUlawextra@bbhlegal.co.uk

Freephone telephone: 0800 012 6675

12. Minutes of branch meeting 19 Nov 2013.

Present: Jo Corke (Chair), Ruth Amias, Alan Cousins, John Daniell, Margaret George, Liza Sentance and Bill Tampion

1. Chairs welcome

2. Apologies: Geraldine Egan, Pat Mee, Andy Gatehouse, Helen and Mike Gorman, and Tom Murray.

3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 11.6.13: Accepted.

4. Reports from the Committee:

4.1 Regional AGM report given by Ruth – appendix 1. Arising from this Jo informed the group of the difficulty of switching pensions between FE/HE.

At the Regional Meeting Ruth was elected as Vice-Chair of Region. She had raised the issue of

Members' subs; Chair of SW Region to write to HO regarding life members.

4.2 UCU Equity Conference 15th Nov.2013 – Jo gave her report which will be in the January 2014 newsletter. She pointed out that there were three groups represented: LBGT, Women and the Disabled and that having a combined conference made it difficult for those who were members of more than one group, to attend the speakers' presentations that affected them. The joint conference is a temporary measure to save money.

4.3. Pat Mee was not in attendance and no Secretary's Report was available.

4.4 Membership Report from Jo and Ruth. The issue of Retired Members' subs was discussed and it was noted that whilst these are now required of Life Members, Honorary Members were not being asked to pay. Jo reported that she had contacted S Hunt and Matt Waddup on the issue of RMs' subs but had not received replies and she would continue with our campaign. She would also write to other regions. This could be a possible motion for Congress. Ruth had not been informed of any members who had been struck off the membership list.

4.5. NPC Convention Western Region Council Meeting Report presented by Ruth – appendix 2.

5.AGM: It was agreed that this would be on 4th March 2014 and Liza would speak on the Canadian indigenous people in the Great War.

6. Format of future meetings: Longer meetings either 11.30 – 2.30 or 12 – 3.00, the choice depended on members' travel arrangements.

The possibility of holding meetings in other areas was discussed and one idea was Plymouth during Firework Week in August 2014. A meeting in Bristol is also possibility.

Discussion of a book instead of a speaker was suggested.

Chair's Business: Legal Services are now available to Retired Members via the UCU website.

October 31st. First HE strikes. Jo had been on the picket line at UWE where pay not pensions had been the main concern.

Date of next strike – Dec 3rd.2013

UCU Campaign information emailed to members of Committee.

Liza spoke about how she had been the victim of ID fraud and how she had dealt with it; she is prepared to help others who may fall victim to ID theft.

The meeting closed at 2.45 pm.

Appendix 1. Report on SW Regional Committee meeting (for SWRMB 19th Nov 2013, Exeter) Ruth Amias 19.11.13

Committee business

It has been difficult to fill positions on the committee. The post of communication/media officer has been rescinded and there is currently a vacancy for an equality officer. This is a problem as Region are committed to organising an equality conference in March 2014. There is also a plan to buy a stall at the 2014 Tolpuddle weekend and have a Public University event with short lectures. It was noted that "staffing difficulties" at the Exeter office have been resolved.

Report from HEC/NEC

Phases of HE strike action were discussed. The ballot has shown clear support for action. There have been some local successes. A notable victory at Liverpool where UCU forced the abandonment of a major sack and re-engage scheme. Negotiations are resuming over pensions. It is likely contributions will be raised. The TPS wants to consider HE/FE as out of the public sector. There have been some voluntary redundancies at UCU nationally in an attempt to ease financial difficulties. Nationally the Union is operating with less staff so resources are stretched.

Congress

Concern was expressed about the profile of the SW nationally. There was a strong delegation at Congress in May and it is hoped that this can be repeated next year. Branches are encouraged to consider motions that SW could submit for 2014.

Regional reorganisation

HO have been considering reorganising the regions. The Committee felt members should be more involved in decision making when resource allocation decisions are being made. There is a feeling that the Committee's request to be kept informed is being disregarded.

Branch reports

Given the current strike and work to contract action the meeting was well attended. It was clear that hard pressed branch officers were having to deal with more case work at a time they should be focusing on action. There was a mixture of depressing and uplifting news but what was clear was that there was not enough time for full reports from all the branches represented.

A request was made to clear the business agenda rapidly in future meetings to allow more time for branch reports.

Date of next Regional Committee meeting 18th Jan '14, Exeter.

Appendix 2.

Report on National Pensioners Convention Western Region Council Meeting (5th Nov, Cheltenham) Ruth Amias to SW RMB 19.11.13

Affiliation to NPC Western Region

Claude Mickelson (Treasurer Western Region) reported that he had not received the affiliation fee of £25 from UCU Western Region. I was invited to stay at the meeting but could not vote.

It was reported that NPC nationally is in financial crisis and this is reflected in a scaling down of its campaigning work. There is now no longer a march or large venue booked for a meeting at the annual NPC lobby of Parliament.

NPC Western Region publicity

To raise the profile of the NPC throughout the region it was decided to produce a modest quarterly newsletter. This would initially be an A4 single sheet. It will contain a statement of aims, lists of local contacts, affiliated organisations, current campaigns and profiles of local groups and activities. It will circulate to all affiliates, libraries, press contacts, doctor's surgeries etc.

The December issue will focus on the NPC Dignity campaign. There is an NPC Dignity Code which it is hoped local authorities will sign up to.

Social Care

There was a lively discussion on the future of

social care. A national campaign is needed to change the Care Bill.

Lobbying Bill

An NPC briefing paper has been circulated on the Bill, which is currently being rushed through Parliament i.e. the Transparency in Lobbying, Non-Party Campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill. Part II covers the registration of non-party campaign groups and charities and the cost of political campaigning in the 12 months prior to a general election (not simply the time between parliament being prorogued and the date of the general election.) It stipulates that each registered organisation (those spending £5,000 in England or £2,000 in the Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) would be monitored by a regulator and have to make regular returns.

The National Council agreed to add the NPC's name to the charities and campaigning organisations (currently around 60) supporting the Commission on Civil Society and Democratic Engagement, chaired by Lord Richard Harries, which has been carrying out consultations with affected groups around the country.

The Commission's main recommendation in its first report was for a three- month pause in the parliamentary process giving more time for consultation.

AGM NPC meeting 4th March, Cheltenham

13. Life members & subscriptions.

There has not been much progress on this issue since the last newsletter. Re-cap: in what many RMB officers consider to be an iniquitous and misguided policy, HO has asked those retired members with AUT and NATFHE life membership to pay the normal retired members' subscription or be deleted from the membership lists. If you have agreed to pay, thank you; however, we think this should be optional and not compulsory. Our branch, along with others, wrote to HO on 6th September asking that this action be withdrawn.

At the time of writing this January newsletter we have still received no response. Ruth Amias, membership, took our concerns to Region and Maria Morley, region chair, is writing to HO. At the November branch meeting we agreed keep you all on our circulation list which is why you are still getting the newsletter.

Jo Corke and Ruth Amias

14. New local rules for UCU branches.

This will be taken at the AGM 4.3.14. At its meeting on 29 November 2013, UCU's NEC agreed new model local rules for branches. Within this circular are the new rules, ready for adoption by your branch.

The new local rules came out of work done by the NEC's Recruiting, Organising and Campaigning Committee, built on findings from a survey of member and activist attitudes to branch and regional organisation. The Committee identified a need to improve members' opportunities for democratic participation, and to be consistent in the provision of members' rights at a local level.

Branches should check their own local rules to see how rule changes must be approved. For most branches, in accordance with the old model local rules, this will mean adopting them at a branch meeting (it does not have to be at the branch AGM). There will usually be a requirement for the rules to be circulated to members at least 10 days in advance of the meeting. Emailing the new rules, or giving members this link, which will be live on 24th January, <http://southwestregion.web.ucu.org.uk/> satisfies this requirement.

Jo Corke

More information

A lot more information and news can be obtained from these websites. We recommend that you have a browse.

UCU National Website: <http://www.ucu.org.uk>

Keeping you informed

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

Retired members' area on the UCU website:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=5436>

UCU South West Region websites:

<http://southwestregion.web.ucu.org.uk/>

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3366>

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

68 is too late: www.68istoolate.org.uk

National Pensioners Convention: <http://npcuk.org>

Later Life Newsletter The department of work and pensions publishes a newsletter.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/series/later-life-newsletters>