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Please inform us of change of address or email

We encourage retired members to use their **home** email for when you give up your work email address. We send out a quarterly newsletter by email but only an annual newsletter by post.

1. March branch meeting

10.30 a.m. – 12.30 noon.

Tuesday 4th March 2014
at The Mechanics, Nottingham

(Speaker at 11.30 a.m.)

Speaker: Alan Barker,

East Midlands UCU Regional Secretary

"The campaigns of the UCU". The aim will be to enable us to play a more active, albeit auxiliary, role in the campaigns of our union"

Please note the earlier time. Join us afterwards for lunch.

2. Age of death

Politicians often like to argue that an ageing population is one of the main reasons why the state pension age must rise, but the latest official figures show that life expectancy is actually falling. In 2009, men aged 65 were predicted to live a further 19 years and for women, 21.3 years. However, the 2013 data from the Office for National Statistics now shows the figures have fallen to 18.3 years and 20.6 years respectively. Whilst longevity has improved over the last few decades, many older people still have major illnesses with which to contend. Peter Rayner, NPC vice president said: "Many pensioners over 65 have health problems. Just because we can keep people alive longer doesn't mean we should make them work longer."

3. Indexation of the State Pension

The way in which the basic state pension (BSP) is currently increased each April is by means of what is called the "triple lock". This means the BSP is increased annually by the higher of the growth in average earnings, The Consumer Price Index (CPI) or 2.5%. This mechanism was introduced by the government in 2011 and is guaranteed until the end of the current parliament in 2015. After this date, the law will require the single-tier pension to be annually uprated in line with earnings. The Pensions Policy Institute (PPI) has produced a report funded by the Nuffield Foundation (PPI Oct 2013) that examines the impact of the switch."

The triple lock is assumed in the PPI assumptions to be on average around 0.26% a year more than earnings. The basis of the assumption is based on modelling of the 100,000 simulations undertaken for the research. Obviously these projections may not turn out to be exactly correct. Indeed the Office of Budget Responsibility has recently increased the gap to 0.3% which will make the actual cut in the real value of the pension even greater than calculated by the PPI.

The differences may seem minimal but pensions are paid over a long period of time and the effects are cumulative. The triple locked pension increases faster than earnings so that from 2016 to 2040 it would have been around 7% higher than the earnings linked pension. By 2065 it would have been around 14% higher than the earnings linked pension on the PPI calculations. That is why the triple lock is to be withdrawn.

The aim is to cut the cost of the State Pension. The Department for Work and Pensions in its single-tier impact assessment found that by 2060 there is a projected reduction in expenditure from 8.5% of GDP to around 8.1% of GDP. Removing the triple lock on the single-tier and instead linking pension increases to the rate of average earnings growth reduces the cost further, to around 7.5% of GDP in 2060 according to Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) projections.

The acceleration of the State Pension Age (*SPA*) announced in the 2013 Autumn Statement (it is now likely that *SPA* will be 70 by 2055) will further cut pension provision. The rise in *SPA* to 68 by 2035 gives rise to a Treasury estimate of a saving of £400bn over the next half century. Unless we up the campaign to defend our pensions, the cuts will just come and come. And we must not allow that to happen.

Julian Atkinson

4. 2nd Lowest pensions in the OECD

The state pension in Britain is the 2nd least generous in the developed world, according to the *OECD* (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development which uses the ratio of pension relative to average earnings). The average Briton will replace only a third of their working income with their state pension, compared to Australia and France where pensioners get over half their working wage in state pension, and Italy where the amount is 70%. At least we beat Mexico where workers retire with a worse deal than those in Britain. Britain has the 2nd lowest state pensions in the *OECD*-34 countries at 32.6%. Belgium (37.1%) and the USA (37.8%) are the next lowest. Netherlands (94.6%) and Denmark (80.7%) top the scale. The governments of Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey all give their pensioners more.

The sad fact is that for the vast majority of Britons things have never been quite so good as they were in the year (1978) before the neo-liberalism hit. We could have been another Norway. Instead, we're becoming Mexico. What an indictment of neo-liberal Britain! We have the lowest state pension of any country in Europe and the highest rail fares.

- * Inequality? We're right there at the top. A report by the *OECD* published in December 2011, said that income inequality among working age people had risen faster in the UK than in any other *OECD* country since 1975.
- * Social mobility? Right at the bottom!: *OECD* figures in 2012 showed earnings in the UK were more likely to reflect our parents' earnings than any other country.

The decline of the state pension began in 1980 when Margaret Thatcher's government severed the link between the state pension and average earnings. It's revealing to compare the situation now with 1978, the last year before our economic model was changed. In 1975 the "old" Labour government introduced Serps (state earnings related scheme), a generous scheme to top up the basic state pension. On returning to power in 1974 Labour also raised widows' and retirement pensions by a record real increase of 13%. This move meant that pensions as a proportion of average earnings matched their previous record, set in 1965 – also under a Labour government. In 1978, pensioners were not only getting an excellent deal from the government, with the value of the state pension, it was also the year that the gap between the rich and poor reached its lowest level in our history. Never before had the share of income of the bottom 90% been so great and the share of the top 10% been so low.

Countries in the *OECD*: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Chile, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israël, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic.

Info from the NPC and The Guardian - Russ Bowman

5. Rising pension age – more lecturers to suffer ATOS bullying

The steadily increasing age of normal pension age poses real problems: with greater age comes illness in a context of rapidly disappearing early ill-health retirement, more draconian actuarial reduction of our pensions and a growing possibility of ending up dependent on benefits.

The major benefit paid to those of working age with ill health is the Employment Support Allowance (*ESA*). It was brought in during 2008 by Labour (lest we forget) Minister James Purnell. Following a Work Competence Assessment (*WCA*), claimants are placed in three categories:

- * fit to work with Job Seekers Allowance (*JSA*),
- * fit to work with help,
- * the support group who cannot work.

The common complaint is that the *WCA* is carried out by ATOS employees who declare people fit with a speed not equalled since 1914-18 army medics were faced with an upcoming offensive.

Two recent reports have examined *ESA*. The most important is **The People's Review of the Work Capability Assessment Further Evidence (December 2013)**. There is a considerable section of heartrending personal anecdotes from claimants who have been failed by the *WCA*. The worst aspect is that the stress of this process has shortened the life of and caused suicide amongst these claimants. Such allegations appear to be given back-up by the statistics from the Department for Work and Pensions (*DWP*)'s release "Incapacity Benefits: Deaths of recipients" containing the relevant mortality statistics for 2008 to 2011. This problem has now been "solved". Following requests for the latest statistics, *DWP* (*ESA* Analysis) said: "There is no intention of releasing an updated version of these statistics."

Despite this, complaints about the *WCA* persist. The National Audit Office in November 2013 found: "41 per cent of face to face assessments completed between October 2012 and March 2013 did not meet the required standards." The British Medical Association commented: "The fact that initial decisions are overturned in almost 40 per cent of appeal cases reinforces these concerns. It means that large numbers of claimants are denied the full level of benefit that they are entitled to until their appeal is heard and a fresh decision is made, leaving many in an intolerable position". The Citizens Advice Bureau made an interesting suggestion: "We have long been calling for ATOS to be fined for every wrong report that they submit and a regular, independent monitoring process to make sure that reports are accurate. This is a good opportunity for the Government to introduce these changes." The opportunity has been foregone.

Serious questioning of the qualifications of the ATOS assessors (ATOS refers to them as Healthcare Professionals or *HCPs*) has taken place. In March 2013 a Freedom of Information request was made about the qualifications of what ATOS termed as "Disability Analysts". The *DWP* FOI team stated: "The term Disability Analyst is not a qualification, it is the title given to an ATOS Healthcare Professional (*HCP*)" and confirmed that information "regarding professional medical bodies is not held by this Department." On this basis I can call myself "Queen of the Fairies" without even a tinselled wand, let alone the ability to perform magic.

Of the 225,236 appeals heard during the year April 2012 to March 2013, approximately 43% were decided in favour of the claimant. The estimated cost to HM Courts & Tribunals Service of [ESA](#) appeals for the year April 2012 to March 2013 was £66 million. In addition, the costs to the Department for Work and Pensions for all activity relating to appeals against the Work Capability Assessments were: April 2012 to March 2013 - £17.1m. Thus the total cost to the public purse of [ESA](#) appeals between April 2012 and March 2013 was £83.1 million.

Of course ATOS had to be paid: 2009/10: £99.1m; 2010/11: £112.8m; 2011/12: £112.4m; 2012/13: £114.3m. Despite this, the National Audit Office found that Atos paid no corporation tax in Britain last year, despite carrying out billions of pounds of taxpayer funded work for the Government. A spokesman for Atos said: "Due to significant investment in the UK to maintain our business here as well as pension contributions, we did not make enough profit last year to qualify for Corporation Tax." It seems sad that a body so dedicated to public service is not sufficiently remunerated to pay Corporation Tax!

What **should** be the final nail in the ATOS coffin – but will not be - was the judicial review of the [WCA](#), which showed that the assessment discriminates against people with mental health problems, learning disabilities and autism. In May 2013 the Upper Tribunal ruled that the Department for Work and Pensions had failed to make reasonable adjustments to ensure people with mental health problems were treated fairly by the [WCA](#) process. [DWP](#) appealed the decision of the Upper Tribunal, but on 4 December 2013 the Court of Appeal upheld the decision of the Upper Tribunal, which will enable a final decision on the judicial review to be made in 2014 unless [DWP](#) appeals to the Supreme Court.

The second report, an official one, makes for far happier reading: "An Independent Review of the Work Capability Assessment – year four" Dr Paul Litchfield (Dec 2013 [DWP](#)). Dr Litchfield is highly qualified with great experience in the private sector, and was previously a member of the Mental Health Technical Working Group with, amongst others, Sue Godby from Unum Provident, and Dr Angela Graham from Atos Origin. Dr Litchfield stresses that he refuses to condemn claimants to a life of worklessness. He fails to pick up that the Work Programme in helping [ESA](#) claimants to get into work is a disaster. The Public Accounts Committee reported: "It is shocking that, of the 9,500 former incapacity benefit claimants referred to Work Programme providers, only 20 people have been placed in a job that has lasted three months, while the poorest performing provider did not manage to place a single person in the under 25 category into a job lasting six months."

Dr Litchfield is worried that [DWP](#) Decision Makers appear to 'overrule' recommendations from the ATOS. Some Decision Makers, with "good intentions", appearing set on "finding extra points" for people making a claim and awarding them on the basis of weak additional evidence or the reinterpretation of what an [HCP](#) had reported. Very sadly, "the barrage of public criticism may well have coloured Decision Maker views". The Litchfield solution is to bring the [DWP](#) people into the ATOS process so that "team spirit" can be fostered.

I have found one sensible proposal. At present, if a claimant wins an appeal, within days there is often an apparently

vindictive summons to attend yet another [WCA](#). Litchfield suggests a 6 months gap before a further summons is issued.

The radicalism of Dr Litchfield is at furthest stretch when he examines the disposition of chairs during the [WCA](#):" all assessment rooms visited were configured so that the Healthcare Professional ([HCP](#)) sat behind a desk opposite the person being assessed." In a far reaching change he suggests "[HCPs](#) sit offset at 90° or side by side with the person being assessed. The alternative arrangement has been shown to put people more at ease and is likely to foster a greater sense of trust and therefore a perception of fairness." Deckchair and the Titanic come to mind.

One of the roles of retired UCU members is not to retreat to an Ivory tower, but to staff a watchtower. We should UCU to get used to engaging in the debate around benefits because, in the future, significant numbers of our members might be entrapped in this system or its successors.

Julian Atkinson

6. Pay dispute in universities

In HE the national campaign for an improved offer over 1% continues. Several two hour strikes have been held with mass walkabouts, teach-ins, coffee drinking and picketing. The last two were successfully held on 6th and 10th February. All three campus unions are involved: UCU, UNITE and UNISON. It has been a long campaign and local branches have been working extremely hard. The union believes that is having a major impact on the employers. Surveys of both branches and members show that our two-hour strikes are being well supported by members, with many branches once again reporting seeing more people on their picket lines than ever.

Those of you who recall the dispute in 2006 will remember that it was the macho posturing of UCEA, the national negotiating body, that provoked the final sanction of the marking boycott. Now once again, some vice-chancellors are telling us that UCEA is stopping them from making a better offer. The strategy of two-hour strikes was designed and agreed to reflect the situation we were in at the end of last year. One-day strikes had not moved the employers and a marking boycott would have had limited impact because most institutions were not yet far enough through the timetable. If there is no progress arising from two-hour and full-day strike action, then UCU will need to consider further escalation including a marking boycott. The employers may plead poverty, but members know that they are accumulating bigger surpluses and reserves than ever. They can afford to pay more than the 1% they have offered. Managements have grown too used to seeing their staff as a cost and not an asset to be invested in. UCU simply has to change that view.

7. USS urged to allocate more assets to sustainable investment

ShareAction, a campaign group for responsible investment, has launched a protest against the USS, urging the group to increase its green investment allocation. USS is the largest pension fund in the UK, and is provided by universities, higher education and other associated institutions, managing over £34 billion in assets. The USS institutions meeting gives the educational organisations a chance to raise questions and concerns about the scheme. **ShareAction** protesters at the meeting argued that the 2% of total funds that USS has allocated to the green economy is dwarfed by its investment in fossil fuels and carbon intensive industries. They added that the scheme currently has more than £400m invested in Shell and BP alone.

Catherine Howarth, chief executive of **ShareAction**: *“Now that USS is the largest pension scheme in the UK, it’s right and proper it take a strong leadership role in climate risk. USS is a seriously high-carbon investor and currently making major new investments in airports across the world. Members are absolutely right to call for full transparency on the way the fund assesses and manages climate change risk.”* A report published in November stated that pension funds lack *“accountability and transparency”*. The study argued that people who put their money into pension funds should have more say about how the money is invested.

Prince Charles also recently commented that the pensions industry *“has a duty”* to be sustainable and tackle long-term challenges such as climate change, rather than focusing on what he called *“quarterly capitalism”*. Investors, however, are seemingly becoming increasingly aware about where their pension is being invested and how it reflects their values. A survey conducted among Dutch investors recently found that **three-quarters were willing to give up a portion of their pension in order to align investments with their environmental and social values.**

Speaking about the USS shareholder action, Sue Blackwell, a former UCU representative on the USS joint negotiating committee, said, *“I have been a member of USS for over 20 years now, and not once has my pension scheme consulted me about how I want my money to be invested. I object strongly to what is in effect my deferred salary being invested in companies which seem hell-bent on destroying the planet and have scant regard for human rights.”*

Note for information: USS has bought a 49.9% stake in Airport Link Company which operates stations on Sydney’s underground Airport Line railway. The deal is the scheme’s second major foray into Australian infrastructure in twelve months, coming after the £75m acquisition of Brisbane Airtrain. It is part of a strategy which has seen the £39bn fund invest almost 20% of its assets in alternatives over the last five years. USS has also invested almost £400m in Heathrow Airport and bought a £143m stake in UK air traffic control firm NATS this year.

<http://blueandgreentomorrow.com>

8. Vice Chancellor’s huge pay rises

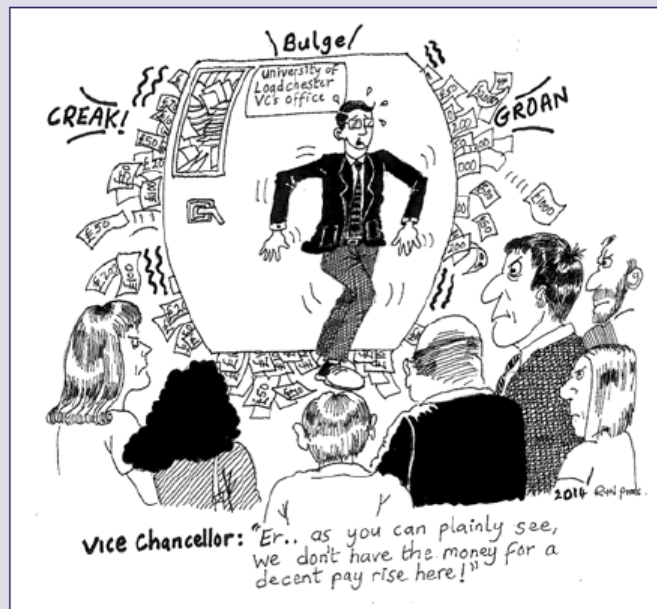
The average rise VCs salaries far outstrips the 1% pay offer to university staff. The pay rises reported for vice chancellors in the latest Times Higher Education survey is a real eye-opener:

<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/big-pay-rises-for-russell-group-chiefs-in-9k-fees-era/2010075.article>

Check the article for mouth-watering pay-rises and equally gob-smacking excuses for the rises. Michael MacNeil, UCU head of higher education, whose members have held two one-day strikes over last year’s one percent pay offer, said the salary rises would galvanise members to fight on for improved pay. It is the startling hypocrisy that grates more than the actual rises. Many vice-chancellors have talked down to their staff and told them to accept a 1% rise as it is the best they can expect, while happily pocketing big sums themselves.

The pay reported for vice chancellors in the latest Times Higher Education survey is an underestimate in some cases. Some are well paid for other work that they would not be offered if they were not vice chancellors - such as being directors of the USS pension scheme. Last year’s annual report reveals that David Eastwood (Birmingham) was paid fees of £23,000, and Glynis Breakwell (Bath) £29,000.

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Also two former vice chancellors are directors of USS: Sir Martin Harris (ex Manchester) earned £69,000 and David Bull (ex Plymouth) was paid £57,000 for their services.

The highest declared basic salary for 2012-13 in the sector belongs to the University of Birmingham's David Eastwood, who picked up £400,000 – a first for a UK university – up from £372,000 in 2011-12. However, this figure represented his total pay and benefits package – down from £406,000 in 2011-12 – as he longer received pension payments in 2012-13.

A very interesting interchange on payments made to senior staff for serving on USS or TPS. Bath UCU enquired of HEFCE under a Freedom of Information request about 'outside payments'.

HEFCE responded that they would expect the Governing Body to have authorized or been notified of any Head acting as a director/trustee of another organisation. If carrying out the director role during their normal working hours as a head and they were getting paid, it would be reasonable to expect a corresponding reduction in their salary. Transparency would expect some form of disclosure (if payment is material) in the accounts because it is a cost to the HEI. However, there is a situation (and this may be the norm) where the payment for acting as a director for an HEI pension fund goes straight to the employer (HEI), so disclosure as part of the Head's salary would not be appropriate. In Bath's 2011-12 published accounts there is an amount of £2.4m paid on behalf of other organisations which could include such a payment. If the Head acts as a director in their own time (outside their contracted time) then one would, of course, not expect disclosure of sums paid in the HEI financial statements... As always, well hidden by accountants.

Another interesting example of extra money comes from UCL where the VC only needed to work for 3-days a week to do the "outstanding" job for his pay rise. The outgoing president and provost of University College London, Sir Malcolm Grant, received a £41,077 increase in his pay and pensions package to £365,432, despite having spent only three days a week at UCL after taking the chair of NHS England. A UCL (University College London) spokesman said that the remuneration board had reversed a 10 per cent pay cut volunteered by Sir Malcolm back in 2010, saying that it regarded his performance as "outstanding". His £65,000 NHS salary was given to UCL, he added.

For the Russell group the average VC salary rose by just £22,000 to nearly £293,000 in 2012-13, according to a *Times Higher Education* analysis of 19 of the group's 24 members. Once pension payments are taken into consideration, those vice-chancellors received an average of £318,500 last year – up from £302,500 in 2011-12. It means an average salary rise of 8.1 per cent and a 5.2 per cent rise in overall benefits.

There were also rises for chiefs of non-Russell Group institutions. For instance, Steve West, vice-chancellor of the University of the West of England, saw his overall pay package rise by £52,434 to £314,632 thanks to a £24,158 performance-related bonus and higher pension contributions. A UWE spokesman said the bonus was awarded after the institution met a series of targets, including those relating to student satisfaction, financial health and graduate employability.

Russ Bowman

9. The EU and the NHS: How the EU is making NHS privatisation permanent

The European Parliament is bringing about a historic shift in world economics with far-reaching consequences for our NHS. In June 2013, the EU launched the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) a key part of which is to 'harmonise' EU and USA regulation.

Benedict Cooper says, "This will open the floodgates for private healthcare providers that have made dizzying levels of profits from healthcare in the United States, while lobbying furiously against any attempts by President Obama to provide free care for people living in poverty".

Linda Kaucher, a leading expert on trade agreements says that whilst on the surface the EU is a bastion of protections and rights, its true agenda is "driven and effectively controlled by transnational corporations, especially transnational financial services corporations. The Health and Social Care Act enforces competitive tendering and thus privatisation and liberalisation", i.e. opening it up to transnational bidders. She says that the TTIP sets this in stone by giving the act international legal backing.

Key parts of the TTIP are 'Investor State Dispute Settlement' (ISDS) laws which give Corporations legal protection for their profits regardless of patient care performance, with the power to sue any public sector organisation or government that threatens their interest. This means that private contracts will be underwritten even where a private provider is failing patients and the CCG wants a contract cancelled. So the provider will be able to sue a CCG for future loss of earnings, causing the loss of vast sums of taxpayer money on legal and administrative costs.

Even more worrying is that, once the TTIP is enacted, repealing the Health and Social Care Act in the UK will become almost impossible.

If you believe that you should have the right to contest this agreement and to fight for a health service that protects you, your family and all of us who rely on the NHS, write to your MEP and ask what s/he is doing to ensure that our NHS is free of these pernicious laws.

Extracted from **Benedict Cooper's** *New Statesman* blog and **Linda Kaucher's** article on the *Chartist* website.

See further:

<http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2014/02/andy-burnham-nhs-must-be-exempted-eu-us-free-trade-agreement>

Ann Donlan

10. UCU National Equality Conference

November 15th 2013

This was the first joint conference combining Women's, Black Member's, LGBT and Disabled Member's groups together. These groups met separately during the morning session to follow their own agendas.

At the *Women Members'* session, issues of representation were raised including concerns that people could not be in two places at once; e.g. Some women may have wished to attend more than one equality session.

Motions from the Women Members Conference are discussed and sent on to UCU Congress by the 'Women

Members' Standing Committee' which meets three times a year. Delegates also attend the TUC Women's Conference. Vicky Knight of Manchester College has been elected Vice Chair of the TUC Women's Committee and work is underway for the UCU website to provide specific information on the impact of cuts on education and women. Motions from this conference debated, amended and passed on to the UCU Women Members' Standing Committee this time, included:

- * A recommendation that UCU work with NUS in universities and Colleges to develop joint strategies and campaigns relating to sexism and 'lad culture' and to survey progress.
- * A request for the NEC to engage in the recruitment of women activists campaigning for women's rights by supporting TUC and other initiatives.
- * A call for the union and the TUC to encourage and support the celebration of Cradley Women Chainmakers Festival.
- * An instruction for the women's committee to continue to support the campaign against 'Lad Mags'.

A group on 'Women as Activists' raised a number of important and complex issues around difficulties faced when working in male dominated organisations (including UCU branches) which can be experienced as bullying, scary and harassing. It was felt there is a need for stronger union support and legal backing in these circumstances. Comments included: "when austerity hits, equality can be the first thing to go", equality issues need to be regular agenda items, links with other women's groups could be explored and consciousness raising and circulation of literature is useful.

The afternoon joint session was opened by Simon Renton – UCU President, who spoke about issues currently facing the union: the major casualisation of the workforce and its impact on lecturers and learners with the need to push for changes especially to the use of 'Zero Hours' contracts. He also expressed concern about the changing profile of learners in HE and FE through the erosion of part-time courses.

Guest speaker *Melissa Benn* (writer, campaigner and journalist) suggested this government's credibility is beginning to show cracks and thought the "fourth wave" revival of the feminist movement hopeful. She considered ways in which current government policy has roots in 'neo-liberal' thinking and that the free school and academy movements have not improved social mobility and are designed to break the power of the unions. She also emphasised the danger of selection processes that entrench the status quo and how Further and Lifelong Education are ignored, stressing the need to bring back 'EMA' and 'Sure Start'. Girls should be encouraged to be "creatively destructive" as the wage gap between graduate and non-graduate women is huge. She suggested putting pressure on the Labour Party from outside could be useful and that the 'progressive left' need to present a strong narrative about the purpose of education with a better appreciation of the role of teachers and lecturers. Her latest book "What should we tell our daughters?" is a discussion of young women's lives today.

Jo Corke (SW retired members), Lucretia Packham and Rowena Dawson attended afternoon workshops on: "Participation in the union" looking at initiatives supporting projects for the personal and professional

development of women, including free online courses for UCU members on Stress awareness and Personal Skills.

"Anti-fascism", a campaigning workshop lead by Weyman Bennett (Unite against fascism) and Ruth Smeeth (Hope not Hate) placing the increasing inequality in education in the context of the threat of fascism as jobs are cut and terms and conditions in education are eroded. Discussion centred around ways UCU can support multiculturalism in recruitment of teachers and the wider curriculum. It was emphasised that there is an important role for unions in opposition to ultra-right wing political parties in the forthcoming European elections.

The "Violence against Women" workshop lead by Kat Barnyard (UK Feminista) and Nimco Ali (Daughters of Eve) was enlightening. Problems of female genital mutilation and pornography were discussed in the contexts of danger to children and objectification of women, the very acceptance of which reveal hugely harmful attitudes towards women.

Finally the whole conference met to hear guest speaker *Peter Tatchell* on campaigning for Comprehensive Equal Rights and related issues. He made points about the number of countries still criminalising gays and about commonwealth countries agreeing to a charter of human rights but still doing nothing and stressed the importance of the 2010 Equality act as a benchmark. He suggested there has to be a change in culture and values through a more responsible media and positive educational strategies on diversity to help create a more enlightened generation for the future.

This was altogether an interesting and stimulating conference giving us insights into very important issues and concerns and plenty of food for thought.

[Rowena Dawson \(East Midlands Retired Members UCU Women's Officer\)](#)

11. High speed rail: investing in Britain's future?

On Saturday 16th November, I attended an 'Information Event' on HS2 in Long Eaton, Derbyshire, followed up by other research into local government responses.

HS2 Phase 2 involves the development of the high speed line from Birmingham to Manchester and Leeds. The route through the East Midlands will run close to the M/A42 through the National Forest, under East Midlands Airport and the proposed Strategic Rail Freight Interchange, over the MI near junction 24 and through Long Eaton town (crossing central streets there) to Toton Sidings (East Midlands Hub Station). This potentially involves disturbance to beautiful countryside, historic sites, local industry and residential areas before going onward and upward in a similar manner alongside the M1 towards Sheffield and Leeds.

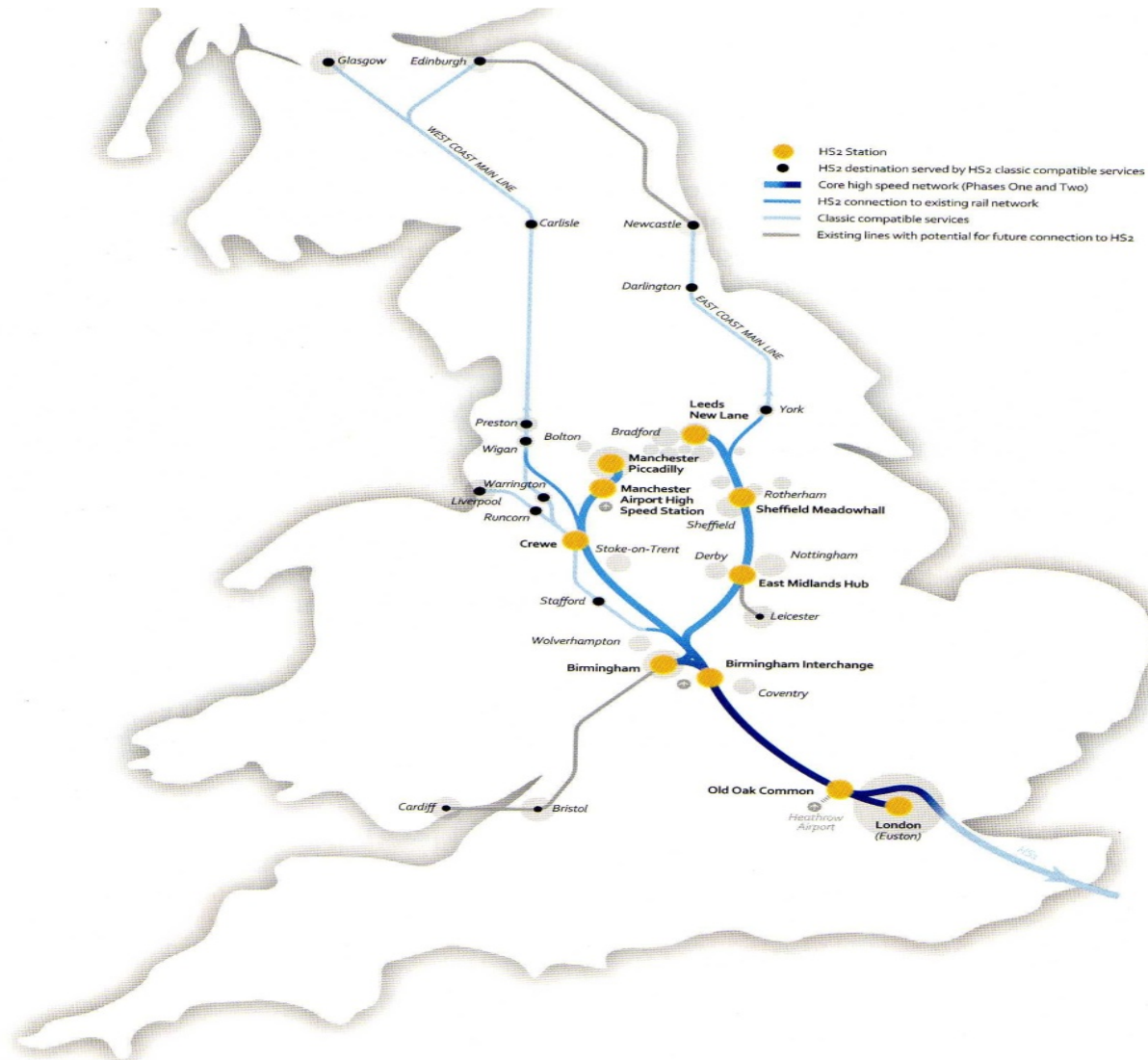
The consultation document is fairly detailed giving the impression of careful preparation in planning up to this point. Officials at the event, seemed quite keen to gain local information from visitors. This is a huge engineering project likely to cost much more than predicted.

Apparently however, thousands of jobs could be created along with many apprenticeships. The idea of current education policies demoting the importance of vocational,

practical based education and training, possibly making this difficult did not seem to have been considered.

Predictably, in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire, the reception of these plans by local councils has been mixed. Leicestershire County Council expressed concern about the potential short term and long term impact including the risk of a negative impact on other potential developments. Initially they also felt that a city centre station in Derby would offer far greater regeneration benefits than the one at Toton.

Derbyshire County Council discussed a quite positive report suggesting some economic and strategic benefits.



“Knowledge/service sectors such as finance, professional services, digital/creative and technology are likely to benefit significantly from greater connectivity with London and European cities”. Negative impacts could include “Visual intrusion and noise effects on residential and other sensitive locations” implying the need for compensation schemes. “The proposed scheme will cross highways and rights of way along the length of the route” and traffic problems could also ensue.

Nottinghamshire County Council initially seems to be more welcoming of the scheme and is involved in a joint ‘task force’ with Nottingham City, Derby and Derbyshire councils. “The development of High Speed rail is seen by the authorities as a one-off opportunity to boost the East Midlands economy by supporting businesses ... to increase their access to markets in other connected cities” etc etc.

North West Leicestershire District Council is more cautious. At their cabinet meeting (Jan14th) reasons to object were discussed: Impact on communities including “important local employment areas” and passing close to residential areas. “Moderate impact on the landscape” as well as “major visual impact”, disruption of “distinctive views” and loss of employment through the “demolition of commercial properties” is cited as another reason. The destructive impact on parts of the National Forest which is described as “a tourism and recreation destination of vital importance to the economy of the district” - not to mention the general environmental impact too. The railway would pass through this whole district without stopping or linking at all.

If it goes ahead, HS2 in our region is expected to open in 2032/33 when our children and grandchildren can expect to travel to London in 20/30mins less than they do now, at greater expense! So perhaps it will not come about during our lifetimes – but meanwhile many of us will end our days living through the disruption, noise and pollution of the construction process.

References/information: www.gov.uk/dft, www.hs2.org.uk
<https://www.gov.uk/hs2-phase-two-initial-preferred-route-plan-and-profile-maps>

Local info can be found of the websites of NW Leics, Notts, Leics and Derbys websites.

Rowena Dawson

12. UCU Retired Members Branch

The branch has been underway for four years with over 200 members. The aims are diverse, but include bringing together retired members of UCU in the East Midlands, giving advice to branches on pension and retired members' matters, campaigning on issues relating to retired members and representation to the UCU national congress, National Pensioners Convention, Local TUCs. If you previously worked outside the East Midlands, but lived or now live in the East Midlands please join our branch.

Meetings: We hold meetings three times a year, in places of interest to make part of a day and lunch out. The meetings centre round important issues for UCU pensioners and give a chance to chat to other retired members.

Newsletter: A termly newsletter with useful articles for retired UCU members is sent to all branch members for whom we have email addresses and to UCU branch secretaries in the East Midlands.

Email addresses: We encourage retired members to use their home email for when you give up your work email address. Please let us have your email address and also changes to your email address.

**For more information
please contact Julian Atkinson**
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East Midlands Branch officers and committee

Chair: Angus McLardy apmclardy@btinternet.com
Vice Chair: Ann Donlan ann@donlan.myzen.co.uk
Secretary: Julian Atkinson jdatkinson34@btinternet.com
Assistant Secretary: Rob Kirkwood
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Treasurer: Brian Hambidge brianhambidge@ntlworld.com
Women's officer: Rowena Dawson
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East Midlands regional UCU committee representatives:
Brian Hambidge, Russ Bowman

Roles and functions for retired members branches

The branch committee has drawn up a list of roles and functions of the retired members branch. These will be discussed at the next branch meeting in March.

1. To represent the interests of retired members within the union.
2. To represent the interests of retired union members within the wider union and pensioner movements.
3. To provide a forum within the union for retired members to come together to consider and debate matters of mutual interest.
4. To provide a resource of collective memory, advice and expertise in support of the union, in particular to those still in active employment.
5. 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.

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>

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

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

National Pensioners Convention (NPC): <http://npcuk.org>

East Midlands NPC: <http://leicesternpcgroup.btck.co.uk/>