

In this newsletter

1. Building a Vision: TUC
2. Education – Not for Sale
3. UCU Equality Conference
4. USS dispute – Employers turn nasty
5. False assumptions of the USS
6. The politics of USS
7. State Pension Deferral
8. The People's History Museum
9. National Pensioners Convention (NPC):
Women's Working Party Event
10. What Future for the NHS?
11. TTIP
12. Book Corner
13. Retired Members' Branches
14. The Fight of Unions Against Austerity.
15. Pensioners manifesto - NPC

AGM 2015 Feb 23rd

Noon – 3.00 p.m.

**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

**The AGM is an opportunity to elect your
branch officers and to propose motions to
Congress.**

**If you wish to stand for a position, or suggest a
motion, please contact us asap.**

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.

1. **Building a Vision for the South West &
other TUC campaigns.** The branch meeting of
27.10.14 was preceded by a presentation by Kit
Leary, the South West Regional Campaigns
Officer. Kit spoke to us about several campaigns.

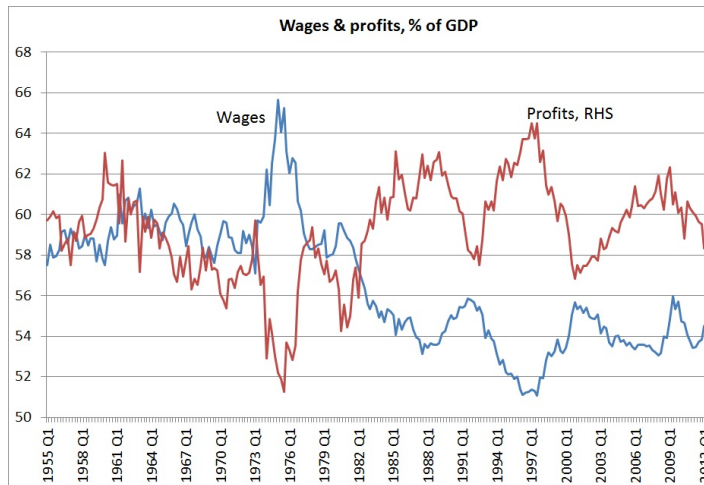


Wages and collective bargaining

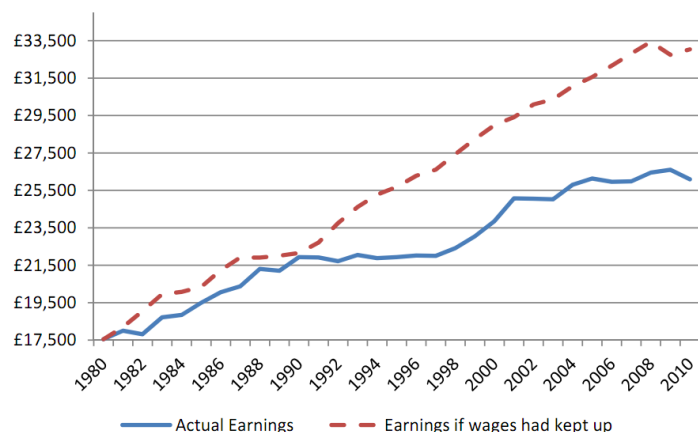
A number of bodies as well as the TUC have pointed to the fact that in 1975 the proportion of wages to national income was at a peak of 65%.

Over the next 36 years there was a clear decline to a proportion in 2011 of 55%. Over the same period there was a rise in share of national income going to profits. During the same period, but particularly from the early 1980s, there has been a decline in collective bargaining. Between the 1940s and the 1980s collective bargaining was the main way of regulating employment relations in the UK, including pay and conditions. In 1984

70% of all workers had collective agreements with employers. The current position is that 29% of all employees enjoy collective bargaining arrangements, and in the private sector the figure is as low as 17%.



Another factor affecting collective bargaining is that increasingly in recent decades many of those in the public sector have had their pay decided by pay review bodies, so that collective bargaining for pay has been prevented or curtailed, and over the course of this government, pay for the public sector has been frozen. The pay review body system has also affected the whole approach to pay with performance related pay being imposed in some cases, and recently the government has unilaterally stepped in to make unilateral changes: with health workers to end annual increments in pay, and with firefighters to change pension arrangements.



Although there isn't a clear causal relationship between the decline in collective bargaining and the fall in proportion of national income going to wages, there is good evidence that private sector pay over the years has been higher when workers have had a collective bargaining agreement.

Alan Cousins.
TUC graphs

2. Education – Not for Sale.

The advantage of having a tactless, offensive and universally hated figure like Michael Gove as Secretary of State meant that Education was constantly in the news. Since Nicky Morgan took over the press have found other issues to fill their front pages. However, this does not mean that there will be acceptable improvements in the Government's Education policy, or that the expansion of privatisation and outsourcing in schools, colleges and universities will be reversed. We must continue to fight the trends which are taking our Education system back to the nineteenth century, and this is why the TUC's "Education Not For Sale" campaign is so important. It was launched in March 2014, and details can be found on the TUC website. The campaign aims to bring together unions, educators, learners and communities to fight against the privatisation of education.

The website includes a campaign report that examines the current situation in schools, colleges and universities. It begins by reiterating the case for state education. "Education should not be a commodity". Of particular interest is some information about for-profit schools in Sweden and some states of the U.S.A. In 2013 one of the companies running schools in Sweden announced the closure of four schools because they were not making enough money!

Our own UCU website provides what it describes as a toolkit for fighting privatisation in tertiary education. This consists of downloadable factsheets reflecting the different forms of privatisation that are taking place. Titles such as "Useful questions to ask your management" and "Planning to campaign and bargain on outsourcing" look especially useful.

The NUT website provides a manifesto, with the title "Stand Up for Education". Under the heading "Education should not be Run for Profit" it states, "Education is a public service and a public good. It must be inclusive and accessible, with all schools working together in the interests of all children and young people"

With the approach of the 2015 General Election we should all take the opportunity to make candidates aware of how strongly we oppose the privatisation of education. By supporting the TUC campaign, and those of other unions, we can make sure that education is once more a front page issue.

Pat Mee

3. Women's Voices being heard – UCU Equality conference in Manchester 2014

The conference was over three days and I attended the Women's Conference and the Plenary Conference for all groups.

The keynote speakers.

Diane Marsden, Care UK. Diane has worked in the care industry in for 7 years starting as a car worker with the elderly and disabled and then with autistic children in a residential setting. The UCU Women are very passionate and have talked frankly about issues that are of huge importance. The conference provided us with mixed emotions from listening to Diane Marsden an employee of Care UK the people who won the bid or as she put it the won because they were the 'lowest bidder' the poor employees are victims of the gradually privatisation of our NHS. She told us stories of incidences of inappropriate staff attending to people who could suffer because of their lack of experience, she talked of having her pay cut by 23%. 23% whilst her new boss is on £800,000. She said they went on strike because they believed in what they did, they care about their work, they worked in the NHS because they wanted to help people. But Cameron came in a sold it off to people to make money from the sick. Next we heard about Sex workers and how the policies and practices put in place have had a negative impact on their lives and their safety. It seemed we had two speakers with two differing (not completely different) viewpoints. One represented Object <http://www.object.org.uk/>

Object is a grassroots campaigning movement against the objectification of women and sexualisation of girls in media, advertising and popular culture.

The other represented the English Collective of Prostitutes. <http://prostitutescollective.net/> Since 1975, the International Prostitutes Collective has been campaigning for the abolition of the prostitution laws which criminalize sex workers and our families, and for economic alternatives and higher benefits and wages. Horrible stories of mistreatment of victims, criminalisation of sex workers has led to terrible things happening.

The issue was raised about our pensions and how equality is an issue here. Many women work part-time, earn less than men (because they are women) and are on zero hours contracts. A perfect cocktail for no pension fund. What little pension they may get is being looked after by men with lots of money and higher salaries who have little regard or insight into their

circumstances. I'm paraphrasing but feelings were running high and the mood was that equality hasn't been very high on the agenda in the fight against the destruction of the pension scheme (in the press or otherwise).



Delayed by Rail Problems, the NUS Womens Officer, Susanna Antubam managed to get to us in time. She has been working on a report called

That's what she said

<http://www.nus.org.uk/en/leading-women-back-thats-what-she-said-recommendations/>

She has been raising awareness about things people say, it's not just about going out and getting drunk. It's about making comments and the impact words can have on people. Something positive to end the day really because she said what she has been doing has been making a difference. The campaigns included "I love consent" raising issues around what consent is at university and other education institutions. The focus should be education not punishment.

Fiona Harvey Equality Officer UCU University of Southampton.

Jo Corke SW RMB

4. USS dispute – Employers turn nasty

The Employers have proposed massive cuts in USS for members still working. The proposed cuts are all based on false financial premises which are detailed in following articles. UCU met the employers on 24th October and stressed the strength of feeling among members about the detrimental USS pension proposals. The plans were the most radical restructure of the fund in its history, yet the employers could not answer important questions from UCU about its effects. On top of the attack on pensions there is a warning of more cuts to come after the election.

With a lack of response from Employers, UCU moved to a ballot for industrial action. USS members voted overwhelmingly for strike action with a huge 45% turnout. 78% of members said they backed strike action and 87% voted for an assessment boycott. The day of action strike was

successful and has been followed by a boycott of marking and assessment from 6th November.

A mixed response from the employers to UCU's marking boycott has left four universities facing all-out strike action in response to 100% pay docking threats. Union members at the University of Surrey have voted for a one-week strike, an academic boycott and a vote of no confidence in vice-chancellor Christopher Snowden – the current president of UUK – if the institution's decision to deduct full pay is not rescinded.

UCU general secretary Sally Hunt has written to members affected by the USS dispute to update them on the latest talks held on 13 November. She reported that the current boycott is being strongly supported across the country 'and it is against that backdrop of strong union action in support of our negotiating strategy that the meeting finally saw some progress in three key areas'. These are:

- * The employers agreed not to press their proposals to a vote.
- * A series of formal and informal negotiating meetings have been agreed between now and the next joint negotiating committee meeting on 15 January 2015.
- * A tripartite agreement was reached that actuaries representing UCU, UUK and USS should meet to discuss the funding position.

Latest

The UCU higher education committee (HEC) met on 19th November to discuss the USS pension dispute including the agreement to a programme of negotiations between now and 15 January 2015. HEC also considered the following statement on pay docking arising from last week's negotiations: "UCU and Universities UK (UUK) have confirmed, following discussions on Wednesday, an agreement to suspend the industrial action in relation to the USS pensions dispute from Thursday 20 November until after the joint negotiating committee (JNC) meeting scheduled for Thursday 15 January 2015. UCU and UUK have agreed to a series of negotiating meetings between now and the scheduled January JNC. It is hoped that this period can be used to close the differences between the negotiating positions, with a view to reaching agreement on reforms to the USS scheme."

UCU has submitted a paper for consideration by the Funding and Benefits Working Group of the

USS JNC and the JNC as a whole. While UCU does not accept USS' approach to valuation and de-risking, UCU notes that significant other actors consider there is a case for change. UCU believes their proposal has the benefit of maintaining the character of USS as a defined benefit scheme which is affordable, sustainable and attractive. It also carries the key benefit of not changing the nature of the scheme beyond recognition so that when economic circumstances change, the damage is not irreparable.

For details of the proposals and data that backs them up see: <http://www.ucu.org.uk/circ/pdf/UCUHE236.pdf>

Russ Bowman East Midlands

5. False assumptions of the USS

Letter to the THES

Recently, the Employers Pension Forum published "Proposed Changes to USS – Myths, Misconceptions and Misunderstandings". The document contains misinformation and a mistake. We focus on the section "M7: The assumptions used to value the fund have been chosen to artificially create a large deficit".

Having reviewed the assumptions given in the 2013 annual report, we believe, as statisticians and financial mathematicians, that each assumption is inadequately justified and that cumulatively they are unreasonably pessimistic and incoherent. The predicted salary increases assume a buoyant economy while investment returns assume a recession.

For example, the average annual rate of return on assets achieved by the Universities Superannuation Scheme over the past 10 years was about 7% and over the past five years about 11%. It is therefore difficult to understand the EPF's assertion that "since 2011...the continuing global economic challenges...have had a detrimental impact on the value of USS' assets".

Meanwhile, members' wages are assumed to grow by the retail price index plus 1% (taken to be 4.4%) plus incremental increases. Over the past 20 years the actual rate was about 2.7%, with similar growth over the past 10 years. Post-2008 rates show negative real-pay growth. The age-related assumption is wage growth (1% to 4%) by progress up the salary scale: anecdotally, this assumption leads to higher pay growth rates than the majority of academics have experienced over the past 10 or 20 years. As the fund's actual experience was used to give a mean retirement

age of 62 years at the last valuation, it seems odd that salary assumptions do not also reflect actual experience.

The assumptions on mortality appear to be unchanged from the 2011 valuation, yet the EPF archly advances the statement that “members of the USS are living longer so the pension scheme has to pay pensions in retirement for longer than planned” as a reason for deterioration in the fund’s position since 2011.

A reasonable change in any one of these assumptions would give a lower estimated deficit. The EPF states that although changing the assumptions in this instance could affect the size of the deficit, “it cannot change a deficit into a surplus”. It takes little mathematical knowledge to recognise that this statement is wrong.

Letter to THES from

Saul Jacka, professor of statistics, University of Warwick, Peter Green FRS, professor emeritus of statistics, University of Bristol, Steven Haberman FIA, dean, Cass Business School, Jane Hutton, department of statistics, University of Warwick, John Aston, professor of statistics, University of Cambridge, Sir David Spiegelhalter FRS, Winton professor of the public understanding of risk, University of Cambridge, Charles Taylor, professor of statistics, University of Leeds, Simon Wood, professor of statistics, University of Bath, Qiwei Yao, professor of statistics, London School of Economics, Michalis Zervos, professor of mathematics, London School of Economics.

THES 23rd October 2014

6. The politics of USS

Reasons given for an action are usually divisible into stated reasons and the real reasons. The stated reasons for the proposed USS changes are a mixture of regulatory and choice by the USS Board. The USS is implausibly deemed to be in deficit due to the eschatology of assuming all pre-92 HE institutions simultaneously collapse and a bizarre “de-risking” that envisages a wholesale move from profitable equities to a tanking bond market.

The real reasons are easier to understand. The burden of risk is to be shifted more onto the shoulders of the employees and less on the employers. There is a significant neo-liberal lobby that includes ideologues such as Michael Johnson and John Ralfe together with the powerful financial industry and the self-interest of some HE top managers that are pushing these changes.

Ideologues such as Michael Johnson of the Centre for Policy Studies see public sector [Defined Benefit \(DB\)](#) pensions as a mill stone weighing down British Commerce and Industry; the original sin goes back to the 1945-50 Labour Government that introduced the parasitic Welfare State. The way to supersede [DB](#) schemes is to gradually introduce a Defined Contribution (DC) element. (*Michael Johnson “Don’t let this crisis go to waste” CPS Sept 2009*). This is precisely the manoeuvre being attempted with the USS. This first step could be applied to all Public Sector pensions.

the eventual removal of a [DB](#) pension scheme opens the way to privatisation. Both the CBI (*“Getting a grip” CBI April 2010*) and KPMG (*“Delivering value for money through infrastructural change” KPMG May 2010*) have seen public sector DB schemes as a barrier to “market entry” and a threat to “market neutrality”. Privatisation of the DB schemes and their transformation to DC pensions will give big profits to City institutions. With the pension liability having been dumped, the way is open for greater privatisation of the educational sector as a whole. The history of the privatisation of the building societies and public utilities is that the biggest winners are the existing top managers. Sadly some VCs and college Principals might like to tread that same route.

The worsening of the USS scheme and especially the proposed introduction of a DC element pose a threat to all public sector pensions. Already the jackal voice of Mr Ralfe has been heard worrying that the TPS scheme is too expensive. All of us have a vested interest in supporting our UCU colleagues directly affected by the proposed USS changes.

Julian Atkinson East Midlands

7. State Pension Deferral

This may be of interest to your family and friends.

Men born before 6th April 1951 and women born before 6th April 1953 are still eligible for the old state pension. This means that these will be able to defer their pensions and get an uplift on their pensions of 10.4% for each year deferred. Alternately, this can be taken as a lump sum plus interest at about 2% above Bank of England rate. For those born after these dates, the deferral rate is only 5.8% and there is no lump sum option.

This situation is not as clear as it seems and **people would be wise to take expert financial**

advice with regard to their personal situation.

Claiming extra state pension will affect any benefits you receive, such as pension credit, house benefit and council tax reduction. This is because the extra amount you get counts as income. However, if you decide to take a lump sum, these benefits won't be affected. Other factors can mean that the pension is deferred but uplift diminished or not given. The situation is complicated by having dependents such as a spouse under pension age. Deferral would mean that you would not get any extra state pension or lump sum for that part of your state pension.

Furthermore, if you are deferring your state pension, you will not build up any lump sum or extra pension for the days you're receiving any of the following benefits:

- Income support, Pension credit
- Employment Support allowance
- Jobseeker's allowance
- Carer's allowance, Incapacity benefit
- Severe disablement allowance
- Widow's pension, Widowed mother's allowance
- Any type of state pension

[Julian Atkinson East Midlands](#)

8. The People's History Museum in Manchester.

In Manchester for UCU Equality Conference (Nov 2104) I made time to visit the People's History Museum. <http://www.phm.org.uk/>

The Staff I met on the front desk were themselves committed trade unionists and made sure I saw some of the prized exhibits. At the entrance of the Miners' Strike section there is a picket line, which stopped me in my tracks till I recalled it was just part of the exhibit. Nevertheless crossing it felt strange!

For me the highlight was opportunity to meet the senior conservator, Vivian Lochhead and hear about the production and conservation work of the banners. <http://www.phm.org.uk/our-collection/textile-conservation-studio/>

I was shown how the 4 banners in the current exhibition. They conserve or preserve the banners rather than restoring them, as they regard the banners as historical objects, rather like archive material. One, National Union of General Workers Bradford Branch, was a particularly interesting design as the banner was itself being carried in a march depicted on the banner. You

can see it in the phm downloadable booklet.

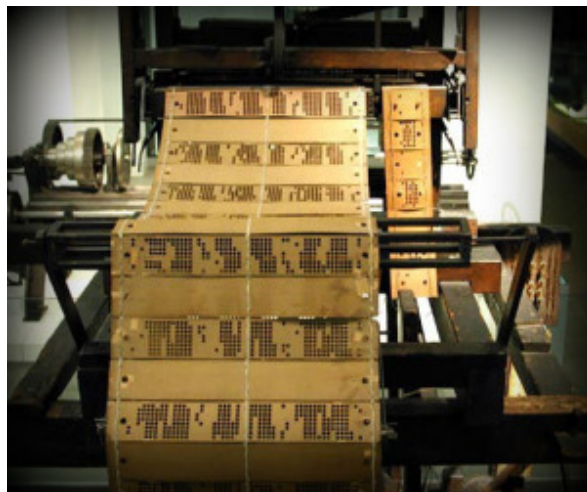
<http://www.phm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/tcob2.pdf>

George Tutill was a prolific banner maker and advertised his banners thus:

**Inventor and sole patentee of the
MAGNIFICENT WOVEN
BANNERS with Scroll & Ornamental
designs woven in the silk, and
APPROPRIATE PAINTINGS ON BOTH
SIDES to order. (1)**

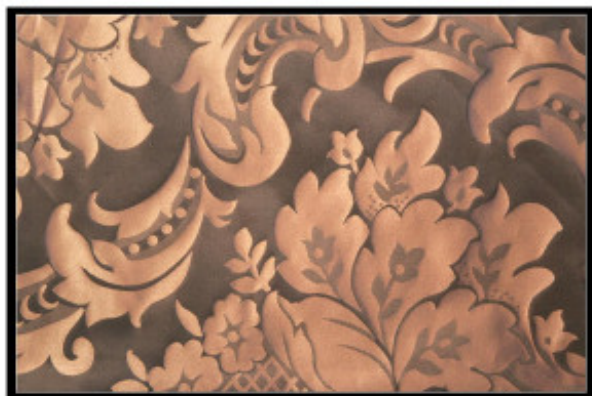
Tutill imported the Jacquard French looms which were programmed a punchcard system to make the fully woven silk banners which have a central panel surrounded by a typical jacquard design.

photos: *A Jacquard loom with punched card and jacquard design from (3).*



The central panel, a silk, un-patterned twill weave, is hand-painted, with a different design each side. The whole is surrounded by a thinner plain silk border. The London workshops were busy places but the workforce was not allowed by Tutill to join a union!

Banners to be displayed are selected by the



exhibitions, curatorial and conservation staff, although the conservators, with more intimate knowledge of their condition decide which banners are fit to display.

There is no attempt to hide the damage, but to mend it using strong supporting fabrics to allow Various materials, including traditional silk and modern supportive mesh, are used. One of the conservation support fabrics used is produced in France, (3) and is dyed in house to match. Other support fabrics come from Nottingham, UK and Switzerland.



This one is in Bridgwater. (2)

<http://bridgwatertuc.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/bridgwater-druids-friendly-society-silk.html>

If you are in Manchester then do visit. If you can't visit, a Google search for 'Union Banners' may be your next best option for inspiration.

The internet has provided me with details to build on this piece about my visit.

These are the main sources I used.

1. <http://www.flags-tutill.co.uk/pdf/George-Tutill-Monograph.pdf>

2. <http://bridgwatertuc.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/bridgwater-druids-friendly-society-silk.html>

3. <http://helenafairfax.com/2012/12/04/silk-weaving-in-the-historic-city-of-lyon/>

News: People's History Museum Sponsor a Radical Campaign - selected 100 from the museum's diverse collections from across the political spectrum – all of them appear somewhere in our museum. They are all

radical men and women who believed in ideas worth fighting for and who changed history. The campaign was launched in November by Alan Johnson MP, who sponsored his own radical hero, Scottish activist Jimmy Reid.

JoCorke

9. National Pensioners Convention (NPC): Women's Working Party Event

This event was held at Tony Benn House (UNITE building), in Bristol on 1st November 2014. Participants had travelled from around the country including Devon and Cornwall, Derbyshire and even Liverpool, as well as locally from the Bristol area, to attend. We were informed and challenged by a range of speakers on topics highly relevant and important to us all.

Sharon Graham, Unite the Union executive officer, spoke of the very serious issues surrounding the **gradual privatisation of the NHS**. UNITE has been carrying out a very detailed and thorough look at the current situation and what lies behind it as one of their recent projects concerning public sector organisations. As well as expressing very strong views on the situation, Sharon presented us with information from their "Preliminary Leverage Report: In Defence of the NHS", in which Royal College of Physicians research has been used to trace the origins of government strategy to alter the NHS back to the Thatcher Government plan of 1987.

MPs Oliver Letwin and John Redwood together with David Willets took up the plan and they have apparently been working on it ever since. Their intention is to introduce an American-style insurance system, much of which has now happened. The chair of NHS England is quoted as talking about "new user charges for the NHS unless the economy strengthens".

Further danger around this and other developments is TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership) being negotiated by the EU. This could potentially 'lock in' privatisation of healthcare if this is included in the final agreement; large parts of NHS could potentially be taken over by American global health organisations. So what can be done? Sharon (and Unite) suggest we must do all we can, including signing of petitions, letters to MPs, putting pressure on those in powerful positions, taking action locally by getting involved in our own

community and generally pressing for the Repeal of the Health Care Act which has been pledged by the Labour Party. She was a most dynamic and convincing speaker so it was very encouraging to hear that Unite are up for the fight and going about it in a very thorough and structured way.

John Drake from Unison gave a thoughtful talk about the “Ethical Care Campaign”. He discussed issues of the Government’s ideological commitment to cutting public health care, backed up again by research into this. He talked about the reality of care workers jobs: zero hours, not being paid the minimum wage, not having travel time included or allowed for, lack of sick pay and private companies of course putting profit first.

Unison has put forward an Ethical Care Campaign Charter including such points as: appropriate time to be spent with clients/people, adequate travel time to be paid for, the same carer to bring continuity for each person, living wages and professional training for carers. Lancashire County Council is one of only a few who have so far adopted these standards, but an “early day motion” (345) is scheduled to raise the idea in Parliament. They also have a cunning plan to increase membership by approaching organisations and offering learning and training opportunities before encouraging union membership.

Discussion points and comments included: ‘Why should we feel guilty about growing old?’; ‘Everyone should have the right to join a union’; ‘There is an ideological contradiction in the profit making outlook of private companies involved in care that is morally wrong’. Suggestions varied from “We need to be inventive and creative to make campaigns stand out” to statements that “We need and deserve a more equal society”.

Janet Shapiro reminded us of **the role and structure of the NPC** and the Women’s Working Party, pointing out the lack of women on the committees and calling for more contributions from us to the Women’s Network Exchange newsletter. She mentioned too, Dot Gibson (NPC General Secretary) and the “Generations United” campaign to try to counter accusations that “This is all your fault” aimed at the so called ‘Baby Boomers’ who apparently are being unhelpfully long-lived!

Rosie McGregor raised our awareness of the desperate situations arising from “**Fuel Poverty**”, telling us this is a huge issue and examining hidden aspects of Government initiatives such as the “Warm Homes and Energy Act” which is measured by cost of fuel and household income, with energy suppliers taking too much profit. She also described the dire problems arising from people having to decide between food and fuel, leading to knock-on effects such as becoming more prone to disease, depression, loneliness and greater use of the NHS. Apparently in the UK our houses are much colder than those in other EU countries with up to 50 people a day dying in winter because of this. Other heart-stopping aspects Rosie mentioned concerned the replacement of electricity meters by pre-pay meters, so companies are not said to be illegally cutting power off, and requests for cold food at food banks when people cannot afford to cook.

Positive suggestions included: greater use of sustainable energy (this is really efficient), re-nationalisation of energy systems and action to end fuel poverty.

Finally, **Judith Brown of Age UK** spoke about a local Lottery-funded project she is involved in, “Bristol Aging Better” which is trying to create an ‘Age-Friendly City’ and help to combat loneliness among older people. Points raised from this included suggestions that portrayal of the NHS as inefficient is untrue and a deliberate campaign, that older women from black and ethnic minority communities can be overlooked, but also that older people are assets and problem solvers rather than a burden. This was an enlightening and worrying conference in many ways, giving much food for thought about how the world around us has changed and is changing, not always for the better, but there were also signs of hope and encouragement to get more involved and try to do something, however small, to help.

Useful websites: UCU campaigns update on

www.ucu.org.uk, www.nhsbill2015.org.uk

www.thepeoplesnhs.org, www.ageuk.org

www.unison.org.uk (look at ‘campaigns’)

www.energy-uk.org.uk, www.endfuelpoverty.org.uk

Rowena Dawson EM

Ruth Amias SW

Jo Corke SW

10. What Future for the NHS?

By now it is clear that every politician in the land loves the NHS passionately and wishes to smother it in innumerable big sloppy kisses. The

amount of money they are prepared to inject is more rigorously quantified and tightly restricted. The Wanless Report of 2002 into the NHS made it clear that reorganisations and the hunt for efficiencies were peripheral; a lot more money was needed. The same remains true today. Simon Stevens, the new head of the NHS, and worryingly fresh from his involvement with US private health care firms, has argued that further “efficiencies” of over £20bn together with £8bn extra funding are required to safeguard the NHS.

Over the past 5 years the NHS has suffered a cut of £20bn. The total shortfall by 2021 is now forecast by the chief economist for the Nuffield Trust to reach £30bn. Britain has been falling down the OECD charts for health spending as a proportion of GDP and is now 15th, lower even than Portugal. NHS funding is currently 9% of GDP whereas that in Germany, France and Italy is 11-12%. That is the extent of the challenge our politicians face. The situation for social care is, according to the Nuffield Foundation, even bleaker: cuts of over £600m to adult social care since 2010 mean that almost a third fewer older adults receive publicly funded care now than in 2010.

The Kings Trust has just published “**A new settlement for health and social care**” This is the final report of the independent Commission on the Future of Health and Social Care in England (the Barker Commission). Its findings are controversial but, nevertheless, shine a light on the obfuscations of political warm words.

It explains that demands for health and social care in England are increasing. Technological and other medical advances will bring cost pressures. An ageing population will add to these. There are also demands for a better standard of social care (and for a better-paid social care workforce).

The Report calls for a merging of health and social care provision. The Care Act 2014 will, from 2016, start to cap the lifetime costs to the individual of the assessed need for social care at £72,000 – this does not include so-called hotel costs. It is important to note that the cap applies only to *eligible* needs – that is, those that a local authority assesses to be necessary. The Report makes an important point: “It was hoped that the cap on lifetime costs would allow an insurance market to emerge to help cover the significant costs that people will still have to meet. But there

are very few signs of that happening”. Indeed, even after meetings with Government, “the insurers show little appetite for producing the new products that would be needed. That market failure suggests to us that there will need to be more public intervention if our goal of more equal support for equal need is to be met.” The Report also makes the blindingly obvious point that such a cap would be “unthinkable if it were applied to health.” Even more obvious is that the market offers only dangers to the NHS.

The Barker Commission accepts that extra money must be found and some of their suggestions are very controversial. These include: a revamped prescription charge; means testing of winter fuel payments and free TV licences; rationalising the treatment of accommodation costs in health and social care; and ending the exemption from employees’ National Insurance contributions when people work on past state pension age. They also propose a 1p increase in the rate of National Insurance for those aged over 40 as a health and social care contribution. Eventually, other tax changes would need to be considered, including new wealth taxes. These include: an increase to 3% in the additional rate of National Insurance for those above the upper earnings limit, reforms to inheritance tax, a wealth transfer tax, and changes to capital gains and property taxation. Some of these tax changes would take place over the dead bodies of many prominent politicians.

Prescription charges for all would be introduced. Under this approach, medical exemptions and the low-income scheme would be abolished for all, including pensioners, but no one would face a medicines bill of more than £104 a year on the current cap. There is a very important argument against this. In the Commonwealth Fund’s 2013 survey of 11 countries, patients in the United Kingdom were appreciably the least likely not to have filled a prescription, not to have visited the doctor with a medical problem, or not to have pursued their recommended care **because of cost**. The relative figures are: UK 4%, Germany 15%, France 18%, Netherlands 22% and USA 37%. So the present system gets this right.

Their final point is “the Government adopt the recommendation of the Wanless review of 2002 and institute a regular review of the health and social care needs of the country and the spending required to meet them.” Such a review might give us a more accurate financial understanding than at present.

Clearly, this is a mixed bag of proposals. It is, however, serious, unlike much of the present political waffle, and it enables us to grapple with some of the future threats to the NHS and refine our arguments for the upcoming General Election.

Julian Atkinson EM

The Campaign for the NHS Reinstatement Bill 2015. <http://www.nhsbill2015.org/>

The National Health Service has been one of the UK's greatest achievements. For 65 years it has provided a cost effective, universal health service, free at the point of need to all people irrespective of their background, circumstance or ability to pay.

Yet over the last 25 years, this founding vision has been slowly but surely eroded. The final blow was the Health and Social Care Act 2012, forcing a commercialised model on the NHS in England.

The campaign is to reinstate the founding vision and for the Queen's Speech after the next General Election on 7th May 2015 to include a Bill to do just that. If you agree please [contact your parliamentary candidates](#) in the run up to the election.

The campaign's Steering Committee is chaired on a voluntary basis by Professor [Professor Allyson Pollock](#), a public health doctor based at the Centre for Primary Care and Public Health, Queen Mary, University of London.

Jo Corke

11. TTIP; sounds harmless?

You may have already signed petitions about this and/or attended public meetings like the one in Bristol on Nov 1st. The issue has not gone away.

The row over TTIP (the *Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership* deal between the EU and the USA) and the inclusion of an ISDS (*Investor State Dispute Settlement*) mechanism continues. The ISDS could potentially mean that, if any privatisation within the NHS was reversed, the aggrieved company could seek damages from our government.

Does that sound bizarre? Here is an example of the how ISDS works: the Uruguayan government versus Philip Morris case. The Swiss-based tobacco giant accused Uruguay of violating the bilateral investment treaty between Switzerland and Uruguay, saying that anti-smoking legislation (such as Uruguay's 'single presentation' ordinance and its requirement that health warnings cover 80% of a cigarette pack) devalues its cigarette trademarks and investments. The company is seeking financial compensation.

12. Book corner

In the newsletter I reviewed *About a Pound a Week*, which was a record of the daily lives of some London families whose income was the £1 a week of the title. That was 1911. Alan Johnson's first memoir, *This Boy* is set in London's Kensal Town in the 1950's, but his family life was not so different.

The family lived in a condemned housing with no electricity and no running water, living from hand to mouth while his mother in poor health went to work to provide for her children. That the children made it through is a testament to Education, the NHS and Linda, his elder sister.

I grew up just 4 miles from Kensal town and went to a school in the 1950s just 2 miles away from their house. But the difference in our lives was immense – my parents had moved from inner London to new build in Wembley and were moving from a working class background to a bright future. However, I know that some of my fellow pupils did live in the same sort of circumstances as the Johnsons - looking back I wonder how they turned up for school at all, let alone in uniform and with their homework done. I certainly had no real idea of their circumstances.

So I read this book with a personal interest and marvelled that, no matter how harsh the life, it was met with humour and general acceptance that amazes me today. Success against all the odds of a bygone era, which leaves me wondering - in these days of escalating inequality is it really a Bygone era?

Jo Corke

13. UCU Retired Members Branch

The branch has been underway for 2 years with about 200 members. The aims are diverse, but include bringing together retired members of UCU in the South West campaigning on issues relating to retired members and representation to the UCU national congress, National Pensioners Convention, Local TUCs. If you previously worked outside our area but now live in the South West please join our branch.

Meetings: We hold meetings three times a year. These have been in Exeter but we are keen to hear from you if you would like a meeting in your area. 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. It is also posted on the main UCU website.

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.

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.

- * 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.

14. Professor Andreas Bieler on 'The Fight of Unions Against Austerity.' A presentation to the EM RMB in October 2014.

Tensions within trades unions. There was often a tension between the need to fight just for our own members and our wider responsibilities. Our sector cannot ignore the wider problems of falling wages, attacks on pension rights in other sectors etc. We needed to link up with other groups in struggle since there were important social movements outside of a weakened union movement.

The connection with the Labour Party. The trades unions are part of the Labour Party and we do have better access to Government when Labour is in power. However, the Labour party didn't endorse or support the 10th July strike even though Len McCluskey had very recently given them unconditional support in a conference speech and the Labour governments did not repeal anti-TU legislation. We may need to follow the Norwegian example and be more independent of the party – there they drew up a list of demands for the next election and said they would endorse all parties who supported their demands.

The right to strike. Our 14th October strike in the FE sector had to be called off because of an injunction and this is another sign that our right to strike is in danger. The right to strike was won by actions in the past; we need to be more forceful in safeguarding and maintaining this right. We should also look across Europe at different ways of resisting austerity, e.g. the indignados in Spain, occupying squares etc. Trades unions have been on the margins of these struggles – perhaps we should be more open to supporting innovative protests (e.g. UK uncut) or risk being marginalised. We should learn from those unions, such as in South Africa, which might appear to have a smaller trade union density but were so much more effective in mobilising unorganised allies.

Helen Chester E M

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/>

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

**For more information
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15. The NPC manifesto – below.

Pensioners' Manifesto 2015

Despite what some may claim, Britain's older generation are not to blame for the economic crisis. Neither does it help when the media suggests that there is a conflict between young and old, especially when the age groups share the same concerns over affordable housing, public transport, low incomes and retirement ages.

But growing older can be a real challenge. Britain's state pension is amongst the least adequate in the developed world, some of the stories surrounding the care of older people are absolutely shocking and last winter over 30,000 pensioners died from the cold.

A country can be said to be judged by the way it treats its young and older members. That is why we need a series of policies that improve the lives of Britain's 11m pensioners, as well as protecting future generations of older people.

At the General Election we will call on candidates to support our Pensioners' Manifesto that will put the concerns of older people at the heart of the political process.



- A basic state pension for all, set above the poverty level of £175 a week
- Increases in pensions to be linked to the best of RPI, CPI, earnings or 2.5%
- Universal pensioner benefits (bus pass, winter fuel allowance, free TV licences for the over 75s and free prescriptions) to be maintained without means-testing
- A National Health and Care Service which is free at the point of use and funded through taxation
- A legally binding Dignity Code to improve the quality and standards of care for older people



For more information about the NPC's policies visit www.npcuk.org or call 020-7383-0388