

Eastern and Home Counties Retired Members' Branch

No.9 Winter 2016

MESSAGE FROM YOUR CHAIRMAN



Let me start by wishing you all a pleasant and hopeful New Year.

Belonging to a certain age group, it concerns me greatly to be continually told that "Insecurity defines the future of young people". These are, of course, the same young people we helped to succeed in the past.

Implicit in this insecurity is that education is a contributory factor, although there are a few other factors. For example, the significant debts that are incurred to obtain a further or higher education. Even with a successful outcome, work opportunities are limited and there is also the matter of obtaining affordable housing.

Sometimes, when gloom descends, one can imagine a media mogul wondering whether all this education is necessary for everyone and whether or not it would be better to concentrate our scarce resources on defence in these times of austerity.

In order to ensure the above prognosis remains a fantasy, we need a strong UCU. ***This means supporting the right of public service unions to defend their members by fighting against any legislation that prevents this in any way you can, even if only in conversation with friends.***

(See the section on the Trade Union Bill: <http://www.publicsectorexecutive.com/Public-Sector-News/queens-speech-contains-new-restrictions-on-public-sector-workers>).

Therefore, don't forget the ❤️ Unions Campaign (<http://heartunions.org>) between the 8-14th February and join the TUC's campaign against the Trade Union Bill at:

https://www.ucu.org.uk/tradeunionbill?&utm_source=ucu-members_all&utm_medium=email&utm_term=LE083&utm_content=html&utm_campaign=lyr-UCU%2520update%2520from%2520general%2520secretary.

Before signing off, I will once again reiterate that it is always a pleasure to see new faces at our well-attended, quarterly gatherings in Cambridge. We are a friendly group and have relevant and informed speakers, providing an interesting afternoon for our members, so do please come along - everyone is welcome!

Robin King

NOTES FROM YOUR SECRETARY



As a lifelong gardener I always find this an exciting time of year with things starting to grow under glass and planning ahead for the coming season.

Indeed, it is rather like this in the Union year, looking ahead to the Annual Congress in May.

As a branch we are entitled to send one motion and we will be drafting this at the February meeting, which is on Wednesday, 24th of February and not on the 29th, as publicised - my apology. If you have a motion, or an area, or topic, which you would like to be put forward, you can bring it to the meeting or let me know beforehand.

Continuing our short series of speakers from different areas of education, we have made contact with a member currently working in prison education who is willing to come and talk to us at a meeting later in the year.

For our February meeting, our treasurer, Roy Batt, will speak on his recent experience of working with young offenders. The last time Roy spoke to us it was on his visit to Palestine, which was very interesting so I am looking forward to hearing him speak again.

At our April meeting we will need to elect officers for the next year. Three of us were present at the inaugural meeting of the branch in the spring of 2004 and have been heavily involved ever since, could it be time for the odd change?

Both my IT knowledge and my computer are well out of date and I would certainly be happy to stand aside if there is someone willing to come forward and take on the job.

Our current rules need to be amended to come into line with the latest model rules and I am hoping to bring forward a draft for consideration in April.

Finally, as ever, if there is something you think the branch should be doing or talking about but you are unable to come to meetings to put your views forward, please let me know and I will add your items to the Agenda and make sure that they are discussed.

On passing another milestone

Having now reached the age when my state pension is enhanced by 25p a week, it seems like a moment to pause and reflect. Whilst at a personal level I have much to be thankful for there are many who are not as fortunate and the larger picture is disturbing. Since embarking on the war in Iraq we have remained continuously at war in one way or another whether directly with troops, or bombing, or by supporting one side against another in various ways and, as a result, there are now huge numbers of refugees seeking to come to Europe, widespread destruction in many countries, no clear idea of how to bring peace but widespread media applause for rousing speeches in parliament calling for more bombing.

Meanwhile, essential public services such as adult social care, policing and the many services

provided by local authorities, struggle with repeated cuts in funding and, whilst the health service is "protected", the load on it is increased by reductions in these other services and, as a result, it is building up a deficit whilst the level of service begins to fall away.

The major financial crisis we experienced was brought about by irresponsible behaviour by the banks and, after initial attempts to reform and control them and expose some of their anti-social behaviour, the Government has now given in to pressure from the banks and rolled back some of this control and ended public examination of their practices thus allowing the level of private debt to grow again at an alarming rate.

Whilst numbers in employment have recovered following the financial crisis, there are less well paid jobs, less job security, more people forced into self-employed status, more part-time and zero hours jobs. Rebranding the minimum wage as the "living wage" does not make it sufficient to live on as the extent of tax credits to people in employment shows.

With trade unions now much weakened after decades of attack by successive governments from all major parties, there is no one to speak up for ordinary workers or counter the views put forward by trade associations, other employer bodies and massive global companies.

In education, rather than encourage professionalism, governments for years have endlessly meddled, changed and dictated and, despite the emphasis on measuring the value of education in terms of the job obtained, the result is a shortage of skilled people at all levels.

In short, a depressing picture with the politicians responsible for all this seemingly removed from the real world. When questioned, they speak at length but avoid answering. Their main concern seems about how to remain in office and ensure as little information as possible reaches the general public.

In her Christmas message the Queen spoke of a dark year but she saw a small light of hope in the darkness. I pray that she is proved right and at last enough people, regardless of their personal circumstance, will say enough of this yah boo politics and this blundering government, which is creating a country in which so many cannot find job satisfaction or decent housing, and demand a debate spread outside Westminster about what is needed to build a real quality of life for all.

Even if putting right so many wrongs is expensive then we will have to pay a little more tax. If we can manage this then there will indeed be hope for the future and the country may begin again to be one in which we are proud to live.

Lloyd Wilson

PETITIONS & CAMPAIGNS

See links on front cover, second column, under "Message from your Chairman".

ADVANCE NOTICE OF:

SERTUC Retired Members' Seminar 2016

All retired Union members are welcome to attend this free event, which is to be held on Tuesday, 15 March 2016, 10.30 to 15.30 at Congress House.

The title is "Crisis in Care" and guest speakers include Barbara Keeley MP and Jan Shortt, NPC.

Registration is essential: register by email sertuc@tuc.org.uk or telephone 020 7467 1220

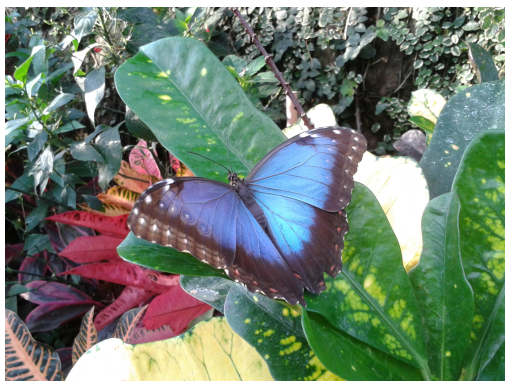
NPC Parliament

The 2016 National Pensioners' Convention Parliament will again take place at the Blackpool Winter Gardens from 14-16 June. A provisional programme will be available shortly. Tickets are priced £10 or £5 for a day ticket. A booking form can be downloaded from: <http://npcuk.org/pensioners-parliament>

DAYS OUT FOR RETIRED MEMBERS

As the February half-term is not far away and one might be looking to visit somewhere with both indoor and outdoor facilities, especially if accompanied by children, I would recommend getting up close and personal with "Butterflies in the Glasshouse", on until March 6th at RHS Wisley:

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/whats-on-at-rhs-gardens/whats-on-at-rhs-garden-wisley/butterflies-in-the-glasshouse>



Ranked #1 in things to do at Wisley on Trip Advisor:

http://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/ShowUserReviews-g1884789-d218509-r153523892-RHS_Garden_Wisley-Wisley_Surrey_England.html

we took my partner's mother there last year for a 95th birthday treat - a place for young and old alike - and experienced what it was like to have an exotic butterfly alight on you!



There is no extra cost for "Butterflies in the Glasshouse" other than the entry price to RHS Wisley (free to members) although a timed ticket has to be booked in advance. For further details go to: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/wisley>

Enjoy!

Valerie Schicker

NEWSLETTER

Just a reminder that everyone is welcome to contribute to the Newsletter, so if you have something that you would like to share with members of the Branch, could you please email it to valerie.schicker@gmail.com as a word attachment ca. 6 weeks before our next meeting. For example, you might like to include an article you have written or a special trip you have been on. Whatever it is, we would love to hear from you.

THIS AND THAT

The electric wheelchair that climbs stairs:

<http://home.bt.com/tech-gadgets/tech-news/the-wheelchair-that-can-travel-up-stairs-11364035427656#.VqSgA-Fsas8.mailto>

How new technology might help those suffering from dementia and diabetes:

<http://home.bt.com/tech-gadgets/tech-news/nhs-innovation-test-beds-technology-modernise-patient-care-11364035428407#.VqSfss9E7nw.mailto>

Become a Dementia Friend:

<https://www.dementiafriends.org.uk>

Women's Network Exchange Newsletter:

To subscribe to the above please contact:

apurshouse@npcuk.org

Later Life Newsletter:

To subscribe to Later Life Newsletters contact:

simon.wilkinson1@dpw.gsi.gov.uk

Valerie Schicker

OBITUARIES

Peter Hutchin 1936? - 2015

Peter Hutchin was a much valued member of NATFHE as a member and activist serving the union and membership at branch, region and national levels. As branch secretary he gave leadership in the most difficult of times following the market testing of penal education and incorporation. Peter always led from the front on the picket line and in negotiations with the employer. The dramatic cuts in terms and conditions demanded by the newly established corporation were met full on by the membership and in a brilliantly organised campaign involving not only tight campus organisation but taking the arguments out into the community. It is true to say that with the lead given by the secretary, officers and branch committee, disciplined organisation and a deep sense of injustice felt by the membership achieved the most favourable of settlements. All this under an unprecedented onslaught by the anti-academic, reactionary, small minded local employers and worthies who were the corporation.

Peter continued to serve the membership as staff representative on the corporation much to the discomfort of the local great and good. But the basis of his legacy, the organisation, remained intact and there followed a series of courageous secretaries who at no small cost to their own welfare continued to withstand the attacks of an increasingly bullying and aggressive employer: Miles, Sally, Adrienne and Andy.

Given Peter's persistent advocacy of the staff's welfare it was inevitable that he would be targeted. Within the interminable rationalisation that took place at the college the branch officers found their chairs creeping closer to the door and Peter became one such casualty.

Due to Peter's leadership it was established that the membership in Penal Education (and Prisons) was not marginalised. With the aid of Dan Taubman at Britannia Street a model sub-branch structure was established which was instrumental in ensuring uniform terms and conditions of employment for all City College staff. The interests of penal educators were carefully pursued by Peter in his capacity as staff representative on the corporation, continually enlightening the great and the good who only saw the prison contract as a nice little earner.

Based on his previous experience in the engineering industry, his knowledge and instincts relating to health and safety were second to none. Often, much to the chagrin of the employer, the branch had a thriving health and safety committee with representatives in each school. Peter also served the union at national level on its health and safety body that is until its demise (along with penal educators) in the stringent cost cutting exercise.

Peter was also a regular delegate as a branch representative on regional committee and was often elected to serve as delegate to sector conferences, during which period the branch showed its solidarity with other members in the struggle by supporting their rallies and events.

In spite of the impediments of the bosses and trade union legislation, membership records were up to date and ballots returned results for industrial action. In spite of all the pressure put on him he never blinked, let's hope that Jeremy Corbyn does not blink in response to the bosses' onslaught. Well done Peter, "Goodnight and good luck".

John Eccleston

Other members who have died that we have been notified of are:

- **Mrs. Bolton**
- **Mr. C. S. Petch**
- **Mr. Kenneth Todd**
- **Mr. W. Aitken**, who taught for some time at Luton and Putteridge Bury.

If anyone has any further information on the above and would like it to be included in the next newsletter, please email it to: valerie.schicker@gmail.com or write to the Secretary.

If you received this newsletter by post and have an email address please could you provide your email address to pensions@ucu.org.uk with your membership number on the envelope, or your name and address. This will reduce the cost of postage and the administration of sending paper copies via the post. Thank you!

If you wish to attend the Eastern and Home Counties Retired Members' Branch please contact Lloyd Wilson by

email: l.wilson853@btinternet.com

Telephone: 01234-881274

Address: Four Oaks, Stagsden Road,
Turvey, MK43 8BU

Branch Officers:

Chair: Robin King rubecularex@yahoo.co.uk

Vice-Chair: John Rose john.rose@talktalk.com

Treasurer: Roy Batt royalvet1@yahoo.co.uk

Minutes Sec: John Eccleston
samuel.eccleston@btinternet.com

Secretary: Lloyd Wilson (as above)

Newsletter: Valerie Schicker
valerie.schicker@gmail.com

NEXT BRANCH MEETING

WEDNESDAY, 24th February, 2pm - 4pm at
MICHAELHOUSE CENTRE
MONTEFIORE ROOM
ST MICHAEL'S CHURCH, TRINITY STREET,
CAMBRIDGE CB2 1SU
<http://www.gsm.cam.ac.uk/michael-house/>

Speaker:

Roy Batt on

"Working with Young Offenders"

The AGENDA for the Branch Meeting is on the next column of this Newsletter and a separate copy will also be sent out along with the Minutes of the last meeting, relevant reports and this Newsletter.

Please let Lloyd Wilson (Branch Secretary) know if you are able to attend or not.

There is a café in the church with good food:
<http://www.michaelhousecafe.co.uk>

AGENDA

- 1 Attendance
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Minutes of the Meeting 14 October 2015
- 4 Matters Arising
- 5 Reports
 - (i) UCU Eastern and Home Counties Regional Committee 6 Feb 2016
 - (ii) NPC Eastern Region
21 October 2015 &
20 January 2016
 - (iii) SERTUC Pensioners Network
15 September 2015 &
8 December 2016
 - (iv) SERTUC International Committee
 - (v) Cambridge Trades Council
 - (vi) Retired Members Annual Meeting
5 November 2015
- 6 Motion for Congress 2016
- 7 Election of Congress delegate
- 8 Any other business
- 9 Speaker Roy Batt on
"Working with Young Offenders"

Notes:

There is disabled access and a cafe at the Michaelhouse Centre. Access to the Montefiore Room is through the cafe both for stairs and disabled lift.

Item 5: Written reports attached where available.

Item 6: Motions can be tabled at the meeting with copies if possible. If you have a draft motion, can you please send it to me in advance of the meeting and I will make copies. If you are unable to attend the meeting but have either a draft motion or a topic you would like considered for a motion, if you can let me know I will present it to the meeting.

Item 9: Roy will be speaking on his own recent experience and the Chairman will limit the time spent on items 1 to 8.

Future meetings (on Wednesdays):

20 April 2016 - AGM

Election of officers. Do not assume that the present officers are keen to continue, new officers can bring new ideas and enthusiasm, if you are prepared to take on a job please put yourself forward, do not wait to be asked.

6 July 2016

Congress report.

We hope to arrange a speaker from another sector of education.

Meetings will continue to be held at Michaelhouse unless a feasible and desirable alternative appears. Exact dates for meetings beyond those above depend on the UCU calendar for 2016 but it is expected that the pattern set this year will be followed.

Lloyd Wilson
Branch Secretary

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