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**UCU Retired Members’ Branches Annual General Meeting held on 5th November 2015 at UCU Head Office, Carlow Street.**

1. Present Julian Atkinson and Rob Kirkwood from East Midlands, Lloyd Wilson and Robin King from Eastern and Home Counties, Tony Hodges and David Binns from London, Emily Fawcus and Norman Jemison from Northern, Alastair Hunter and Terry Brotherstone from Scotland, Steve Byrne from Wales, Ken Childerhouse from South East, John Daniell and Tom Murray from South West, Elizabeth McFarlene and John Walker from Southern, Kate Clayton and Darrall Cozens from West Midlands, Doreen Magill and Tina Downes from Yorkshire and Humberside.
2. In attendance Paul Russell, Pat Roche and Phil Burgess UCU representatives on the National Pensioners’ Convention (NPC).
3. Apologies were received from Tim Bimpson from North West.
4. Tina Downes chair from the Congress meeting welcomed delegates to the Annual General Meeting and introduced the President Liz Lawrence.
5. **Liz Lawrence** gave her address. She highlighted the attacks on pensioners as being better off than working people, part of the divide and rule tactics of the establishment. The Trade Union Bill which was a direct attack on the trade union movement to organise in the face of austerity. Her address was placed on the website.
6. The meeting thanked the President for UCU continuing to support NPC. London Retired Members praised UCU for taking forward their motion on Bahrain into EI and the TUC, this had given momentum for change.
7. **Election for Officers**

**Ken Childerhouse was elected Chair**

**Norman Jemison was elected Vice-Chair**

1. Tina Downes thanked the meeting for the honour of chairing the last few years, but felt the time was right to let others take events forward.
2. **The minutes of the AGM,** it was noted these had been to the Congress meeting and had been agreed as a correct record, but that only the outcome of the AGM had been provided for this meeting. It was agreed to refer these to the Congress meeting.
3. **Matters Arising**

* **It was agreed that Retired Members Motions be subject to the union traffic lights system of action** and this would assist branches in being aware of the outcome of their motions.
* It was noted that Congress last year in Glasgow was held at a non-union establishment. The meeting urged that UCU look at this issue to prevent its recurrence.
* It was agreed that standing orders needed to be developed for the meeting.
* It had been agreed that UCU representative on NPC would vote for the retention of the call for state pension to be above the poverty level. This was lost so NPC now calls for the state pension to be above the living wage.
* It was agreed to take the other items under the reports.

1. **Reports**

**11.1 NPC Finance report**. In addition to the papers. Phil Burgess reported at the NPC lobby yesterday, his SNP MP had been supportive :

* of the need for the state pension to be raised to the living wage.
* That use of agency staff in care homes during strikes would be disastrous, SNP were working on the Trade Union Bill and were seeking to have Scotland excluded from it.
* He drew attention to his paper on the Johnson Review and the need to press for an index that retained the actual value of pensions.
* NPC needed to raise its fees by 50% to the trade union movement. The present structure had divides at 100,000 and 50,000, but he thought it might be possible to introduce further tiering to protect the smaller unions.
* **It had been agreed that the proposed increase needed to be discussed with UCU, to be raised with the NEC for advice on how our delegates should vote or to arrange a meeting with UCU officers and the NPC representatives.**
* **It was agreed to encourage retired members’ branches to affiliate to their regional NPC**.
* There was discussion on whether or not it was possible to encourage members of UCU to donate at least £1 to NPC, and whether this should be information targeted at retired members. If so how this was to be undertaken? It was noted that members might be confused between NPC and UCU at the point their branch might be changing**. It was agreed that NPC representatives consider carefully and take their proposals to retired members’ branches, proposals may need to go to Congress**.
  1. **NPC Health Working Group.** In addition to the presented papers Pat Roche talked of her experience of Health and Social Care in the USA, with the closure of public hospital, the removal of patients once their insurance ran out. The selling of body parts by undertakers without protections. Given the austerity measure and pressure on the health and social care it felt that the USA experience could become our future reality.
  2. **TUC Pensioners Committee.** Norman Jemison reminded the meeting that this committee still stood outside the TUC structure and had no right to process motions or issues into the TUC structure. This year the chair had ceased to be a general council member and was now the Head of Economics and Social Affairs. The committee is also only allowed to meet twice a year**. It was agreed to ask the General Secretary to write to the General Council.**

**12 Motions from the Regional Retired Members Branches.**

The chair reminded delegates to concentrate on what they want to achieve with their motions.

12.1 **Rule change on Equality Standing Committees**

Conference recognises that inequality is a lifelong scourge, affecting people from the cradle to the grave.

 Conference also recognises that inequality appears in a multiplicity of forms and affirms that fighting against inequality calls for inclusion of all members of UCU. To exclude some members for whatever reason, weakens the forces that can be engaged to fight inequality.

 Conference therefore **calls for a rule change in 2016 that will allow non-employed members to serve on the Equality Standing Committees**, so that such members are recognised as an essential and integral part of this Union in the fight against inequality."

**This motions was passed.**

12.2. **Inclusion**

This retired members AGM recognises the outstanding work UCU has done for all oppressed groups in society over many years.

We understand that this vital work is ongoing and that we still have an important part to play, alongside other trade unions and associations, to make sure all equality legislation is applied properly in all aspects of life to put an end to discrimination and thereby ensure a fairer society is achieved.

We have had 20 years and longer of the DDA and other equality legislation but still there is often an acceptance of inappropriate language and suspicion of those who are different, not only in society at large but also often within our own movement.

We therefore think it is important to be reminded as a union movement in general that we need to be welcoming to people of difference and that we in our labour movement must set the example in our practices, and where these fall short of what is acceptable that we address such matters immediately.

**This motion was passed.**

12.3 **Consideration of affiliation to Labour Party.**

The RM AGM recognises that the next few years will be difficult as working class people in general, and those in the public sector in particular, are made to pay the price for a budget deficit that they did not cause.

 Our class is facing job losses, wage freezes and public service cuts with the aim that public spending as a percentage of GDP falls to its lowest level since 1938.

The RM AGM believes that such a prospect demands a unified response from the labour and trade union movement.

 It believes however that the attacks on our class cannot be defeated by industrial action alone. We also need a political response.

 It further believes that the overwhelming mandate obtained by Jeremy Corbyn in the Labour Party leadership election creates the opportunity for UCU to develop an organised political response.

 It therefore calls upon the NEC of UCU to promote discussions at all levels of UCU with the aim of persuading members that their interests will be better served by UCU affiliating to the Labour Party.

 The RM AGM is of the opinion that the election of Jeremy Corbyn provides a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for UCU to develop the necessary political response to the attacks on our members from inside the political wing of the labour and trade union movement, the Labour Party."

**This motion was defeated.**

**12.4 Retaining Members on Retirement.**

Conference considers that every member has the right to a happy and peaceful retirement and notes with approval the contribution made by UCU Retired Members Branches to just such a retirement of its members.

Consequently, Conference believes that the NEC should implement a strategy automatically to transfer retiring members to Retired Membership of UCU. Such members should be informed of their changed status and reduced direct debit. They should also be offered an ‘opt out’ if they do not want this to occur.

**This motion was amended to:**

Conference considers that every member has the right to a happy and peaceful retirement and notes with approval the contribution made by UCU Retired Members Branches to just such a retirement of its members.

Consequently, Conference believes that the NEC should contact all retiring members to urge them to take up retired membership and explain the advantages of joining a relevant Retired Members’ Branch.

**This motion was passed**

**12.5 New State Pension Scheme**

This conference notes considerable confusion amongst most people as to their benefits from the new state pension scheme, due to operate from 6 April 2016. It believes this is in part due to cynical and repeated attempts by Government to imply that the new scheme constitutes a generous increase in state pension payments.

Conference believes the new scheme to be no more than an attempt to reorganise the current and clearly inadequate state pension scheme and does not address major issues.

It notes that the new so-called flat rate pensions payment:

• will only be immediately paid to a small minority of pensioners and an even smaller minority of women;

• will not apply in full or even in large amount to ‘contracted out’ pensioners;

• will not constitute an actual increase from £115.95 to £151.25 per week even for most of those who qualify for it, as it will replace pension credit and some entitlement to ‘SERPS’ or ‘second pension’ already receivable under the current scheme;

• will increase the qualifying years of National Insurance payments from 30 to 35 years:

• will increase NI payments by people currently ‘contracted out’;

• will not become a simplified universal rate for at least 35 years;

• may result in loss of housing benefit;

• may result in loss of ‘inherited’ (between partners) pension rights;

• does not provide a pension which reaches the poverty level of £175 per week.

Conference resolves to ask UCU to campaign for a proper and adequate state pension scheme and to expose the fundamental flaws in the new scheme.

**This motion was passed**

**12.6 Model Motion for Trade Union RMAs**

Millions of workers in the UK face a future pensions’ crisis when they retire. The state pension is currently ranked as 36th out of 37 OECD countries, one in six older people already live below the official poverty line of £175 a week and six million pensioners - the vast majority of whom are older women - have an income less than £10,500 a year.

For years, successive governments have relied on large sections of the workforce having a decent occupational pension, based on final salary as an alternative to providing a higher state pension. However, over the last decade we have seen the gradual decline of good occupational pensions, only to be replaced by more insecure market-based alternatives where the risk lies almost solely with the individual.

As a result of insecure employment patterns, low pay and poorer pension alternatives, the vast majority of future pensioners will therefore become increasingly reliant on the state pension to form the largest source of their income in retirement.

It is therefore vital that UCU now recognises the need to campaign more vigorously for a decent state pension system for all generations - including future members.

Following the general election this campaign should include:

• Strengthening links with Britain's biggest campaigning pensioner organisation, the National Pensioners Convention

• Lobbying the government to ensure all existing and future pensioners receive a state pension set above the official poverty level

• Calling for annual increases in pensions to be linked to the best of wages, CPI, RPI or 2.5%

• Rejecting any further attempts to raise the state pension age beyond 67.

**This motion was passed**

**12.7 Integration of Social Care and NHS**

Successful motions at Congress have established the need to campaign for the integration of adult social care with the NHS and a subsequent improvement in care provision. To assist members in contacting their MPs and others this meeting asks for a **centrally produced fact sheet of relevant information which can be used to supplement personal experience**.

**This motion was passed**

**12.8 Living state pension.**

As the inadequacies of the new “single tier” state pension, which will affect all those reaching retirement from April 2016, become more and more evident, and as all existing state pensioners continue to receive a state pension which is ranked 36th out of 37 OECD countries, it is essential that the trade union movement recognises the need for more serious reform of the system. We therefore call on the NEC to work with other unions to support the National Pensioners Convention’s campaign for “a living state pension for all generations”.

**This motion was passed.**

**12.9 Talks with new leadership of the Labour Party.**

UCU retired members recognise that the election of a new leadership of the Labour Party presents the union with new opportunities for dialogue. Whilst the issues of immediate concern to members now employed in further, higher and adult education will properly be priorities in any talks and submissions, we call on the NEC to include, where possible and appropriate, issues of concern to retired members and future pensioners, particularly relating to the state pension and the health and social care needs of older people.

**This motion was passed.**

**12.10 Trade Union Rights.**

UCU retired members are appalled at the government’s latest attacks on trade union rights, and pledge themselves to join with working members in local, regional and national campaigning activities to fight these proposals.

**This motion was passed.**

**12.11 Challenging ‘Prevent’**

This meeting notes that the predictably malign effects of the Government’s Prevent legislation have become apparent in the appalling treatment of Mohammed Umar Farooq by Staffordshire University. The wholly disproportionate investigation of his legitimate academic study, leading to his withdrawal from his course of study, raises questions about the probable institutional racism inherent in that legislation. The related case of a Muslim pupil at a north London school investigated following an innocent debate in class, show that discriminatory tactics are likely to be present when societies attempt to deal with the causes of terrorism without proper analysis or serious consultation with academic and educational professionals. We therefore call on NEC to reinforce its work in challenging Prevent by highlighting these and similar cases, and working with sympathetic parliamentarians to discredit this racist and sectarian legislation. [Source: *Guardian*, 25/9/15, p.9]

**This motion was passed.**

**12.12 Representing Retired People**

Ongoing demographic change is having a significant impact on relationships between retired workers and the rest of the community. An increasingly complex network of different organisations (for example, NPC, PSPC and FERPA) claim to represent older people’s interests. In the interest of transparency this meeting urges NEC to seek a review by the TUC and STUC respectively of the extent to which their current arrangements in this sphere are fit for purpose in terms of facilitating the representation of the interests of retired workers and their continuing engagement with the world of work and the body politic.

**This motion was passed.**

**12.13 Trades Councils and the Trade Union Bill.**

Conference believes that the Trade Union Bill poses the greatest threat to the Trade Union Movement since 1980s Thatcher Government. In particular the proposals concerning balloting would effectively make industrial action impossible.

Conference notes:

* That the TUC has made opposition to the Bill a priority for the TU and labour movement.
* That the TUC conference passed a resolution which calls for:
* Organising committees, based on local unions, trades councils and existing anti-austerity campaigns to coordinate local activity, with meetings, days of actions and rallies in every region across the UK
* That Tom Mellish, TUCJCC Secretary, has called on Trades Councils to make opposition to the Bill a campaigning priority.

In view of the above conference believes that RMBs can most effectively support the campaign against the Bill by affiliating to local TUCs, sending

Delegates to local TUCs and through them playing a leading role in this campaign.

**This motion was passed.**

**12.14 Fighting the Social Care Crisis**

Over the past 10 years spending on social care services for older people has plummeted by a third (34.2%) from £8.1b in 2005/6 to £5.46 b in 2014/15. Community care services have been hardest hit with a huge drop of 24.9% (£560m) since 2010/11 alone. These cuts alongside privatisation and poor wages for care staff threaten to cause an implosion of these services in the next few years.

The NEC is urged to convene a meeting of unions, the NPC and other appropriate campaign groups to launch a unified fight back to provide sufficient funding for both domestic and residential care that should be **mainly** within local authority provision, together with decent wages guaranteed for care workers.

**It was agreed to amend this motion by removing ‘mainly’ from the penultimate line. It then read**

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**This motion was passed.**

**12.15 Housing – Intergenerational Solidarity**

We recognise that the housing is in desperate need of a response emphasisingintergenerational solidarity. Young people cannot afford to buy and private rents have become extortionate, while social housing is under attack. Retired people are often facing the ‘bedroom tax’, while the government proposes to charge a ‘market rent’ for households in social housing who have reasonable occupational pensions. Revenge evictions from rental accommodation have become commonplace. We note the motions this year’s TUC Congress. While agreeing wholeheartedly with the sentiments in these motions, direct action will be necessary to force their implementation. We welcome the TUC Housing Charter for young workers and call for a similar charter for older and retired workers.

We welcome the rise in housing action groups fighting evictions, opposing the privatization of social housing and similar injustices. The trade union movement should support such local campaigns both to defend workers’ housing and to increase our relevance to younger workers.

**This motion was passed.**

**13 Any Other Business**

13.1 It was understood that ex-Natfhe retired members who paid the one off subscriptions are not counted as branch members in the calculation of branch funds. It was agreed to investigate and check on the position of honorary members.

13.2 The chair thanked the meeting for their co-operation in dealing with business.

The meeting ended.

GE Nov 2015