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Are you getting all the info?

This newsletter is sent three times a year by email.

If UCU HO has your email you should also receive regular updates on campaigns from UCU head office as well as occasional branch emails.

Let us know if that is not the case and we can check with the Head Office on your behalf.

For more information please contact:

1. Branch meeting - AGM

Friday 23rd March 2018

12.00 a.m. – 3.00 p.m.

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

**Light refreshments will be provided if
you let us know a week in advance.**

ucu.swest@gmail.com

Newsletter: A termly newsletter for retired UCU members is sent to all branch members for whom we have email addresses.

Email addresses: UCU encourages us to use our home email when we retire.

ucu.swest@gmail.com

or contact the officers here:

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SW NPC & Glos TC. Ruth Amias

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2. Annual meeting of Retired Members Branches. 15th November 2017.

The UCU officer present was Linda Newman. The SWRMB was represented by Barbara Segal and John Daniell.

Motion 7.11 (2016) from SWRMB relating to 'Survivor Benefits' is still with the ROC (Resources and Operations Committee) and the points raised in the SW Branch report concerning the retention of survivor benefit. An NPC representative stated that the numbers in receipt of survivor benefit are quite small and that government is not providing information about the cost of this provision which itself is insignificant compared with the overall costs of occupational pensions.

In response to a question about future support for retired members' branches (Minute 7.4 from 2016 Meeting), the meeting was told that this had been devolved to the Recruitment and Organisation Committee (ROC). Linda Newman agreed to a request that any developments on this should be communicated to retired branches in writing. Concern was expressed for a second year about the gender balance of the conference, only 3 women from a total of 16. It was agreed that the invitation to next year's meeting would include a reference to the diversity of delegates.

There were 3 motions from Northern, London and Yorkshire and Humber side RMBs concerning the fact that members are able to retire well before the State Pension Age and the risk that there may be pressure to raise the qualifying age for occupational pensions! The conference reiterated its commitment to the defence of the triple-lock as well as identifying various hardships that can arise by raising the State Pension Age in certain cases. Motion 8 from West Midlands RMB seeks exploration of liability cover for retired members who are being approached (because of their experience) to support case work either in their former or other branch.

John Daniell drew attention to the possibility that a RMB officer may give advice to a retired member on (for example) Survival Benefit which implies

that there should be full knowledge of the 'rules' as well guidance on the steps which that officer should take.

The Northern & Scottish RMB motion on the Railway System identified in particular the need to provide more support for handicapped people.

The London RMB motion called for continued support (facilities such as University libraries) for retired members who wish to continue their research.

A further motion called for UCU NEC to continue to campaign within the trade union movement for support of all the demands raised in UCU Congress 2017 resolution 17: Climate change, jobs and airport expansion.

The Yorkshire & Humberside motion asked that the Equality Act of 2010 include single people as a protected group noting that it is still law to treat single people less favourably than the married or those in civil partnerships. The lack of legal protection can give scope for expression of negative attitudes towards single people including the bereaved. The Eastern & Home Counties RMB called for the NEC to pay due regard to branches which cover large areas without a central town, good public transport or road links and in particular the way in which this affects retired members attending a branch meeting. ***The officer Linda Newman gave the following:-*** All resolutions were passed with some minor amendments.

Travelling expenses for attendance at RMB meetings. The conference was informed that notwithstanding the Branch capitation limit all reasonable travel costs shall be paid for all those attending. Any excess that may arise will be reimbursed by head office.

Barbara Segal, John Daniell SWRMB

3. 2017 Equality conference.

UCU's annual equality conference combines a joint equality conference for black, LGBT,



disabled and women members; any member can attend if you identify with one of the groups. For

your newsletter I have selected two presentations.

Shen Serefe. In September 2017 workers at two McDonald's restaurants staged their first strike, McStrike, to bring attention to their contracts and working conditions. Shen Serefe addressed the Women's Equality Conference. Shen was one of those on strike: she said "We couldn't take anymore". We joined the Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union to get support. We joined because of sexual harassment, bullying and assault by customers and management, and our grievances were ignored. Since the strike two managers have been sacked.



September 4, 2017

Shen stressed that they are **not asking anyone to boycott** McDonalds – on the contrary, it's their employment – but to offer a word of encouragement as fellow trade unionists to the staff.

Kalwant Bhopal is Professor of Education & Social Studies at Birmingham University. Her research focuses on the achievements and experiences of minority ethnic groups in education. Despite claims that we now live in a post-racial society we heard that those from black and minority ethnic communities continue to be marginalised and race continues to disadvantage those from minority ethnic backgrounds.



White Privilege. Kalwant Bhopal. University of Birmingham. *

This book is planned for publication in 2018. In it Kalwant Bhopal examines the shift in recent years from overt to covert racism. She explores how neoliberal policy-making has increased rather than decreased discrimination faced by those from non-white backgrounds. She also shows how certain types of whiteness is privileged, whilst other white identities, Gypsy and Travellers for example, remain marginalised and disadvantaged in society.

*A review of the book for a branch newsletter would be welcome.

Jo Corke SWRMB

4. University of Bath vice-chancellor to leave post

You may recall that, in the previous branch newsletter, we reported on the situation at Bath University. Here is an update; 29 November 2017

Commenting on the resignation of Dame Glynis Breakwell, the University and



College Union (UCU) said her position had become untenable and the announcement had to herald a marked change in the transparency of senior pay in universities.

UCU general secretary Sally Hunt said: 'This whole episode has shone an important light on the murky world of senior pay in our universities and it would be wrong to think a change at the top of one institution solves that problem.'

Vice-chancellors should not be sitting on the committee that sets their pay and there must be much more transparency surrounding senior pay and perks. The vice-chancellor should leave immediately to allow for a clean break and for Bath to start to recover its reputation for academic excellence. She should also resign from the USS pension board.'

Dame Glynis Breakwell, the highest paid vice-chancellor in the country had faced calls to resign from numerous quarters outside the university in recent months, & her own staff also called for her to go.

Following the release of a damning report from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (Hefce) into senior pay and governance at Bath, the campus trade unions called for Breakwell and chair of council, Thomas Sheppard, to resign.

The university's senate met and discussed a motion of no-confidence in the vice-chancellor. Following a lengthy debate, senate members narrowly voted against the no-confidence motion by 19 votes to 16.

As well as being paid until 2019, the vice-chancellor's £31,000 car loan will be written off.

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/9091/University-of-Bath-vice-chancellor-to-leave-post>

UCU website.

5. Book Corner.

Judging Shaw by Fintan O'Toole. 2017. Royal Irish Academy.

“The lie that poverty is a moral failing was buried a century ago. Now it’s back.”



By the time he died, in 1950, Bernard Shaw, as the most widely read socialist writer in the English-speaking world, had done as much as anyone to banish the fallacy that poverty is essentially a moral failing – and conversely that great riches are proof of moral worth. His most passionate concern was with poverty and its causes. He was haunted by the notorious Dublin slums of his childhood.

[Fintan O'Toole](https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/fintan-o-toole-the-lie-that-poverty-is-a-moral-failing-was-buried-a-century-ago-now-it-s-back-1.3260468)

<https://www.irishtimes.com/opinion/fintan-o-toole-the-lie-that-poverty-is-a-moral-failing-was-buried-a-century-ago-now-it-s-back-1.3260468>

Fintan O'Toole has been an op-ed columnist for the paper since 1988. His column on political and social affairs appears every Tuesday.

In the Introduction to his book, (the intro is free to download), Judging Shaw, 2017, Fintan O'Toole says *"I grew up (knowing of) Shaw as the working-class hero. When we walked into town we would sometimes take a small detour up Synge Street just to pass the house where he was born, a house grander than ours certainly but modest enough to be within our ken.*

His most important work is driven above all by a deep hatred for economic oppression and inequality. This, too, has contemporary meaning: much of our twenty-first-century politics could do with reintroducing itself to Shaw's coruscating assaults on the self-serving nature of power and the corrupting influence of poverty, both on those who suffer it and those who benefit from it.

Shaw's great political impulse was to demoralise poverty, and his most radical argument about poverty was that it simply doesn't matter whether those who are poor "deserve" their condition or not – the dire social consequences are the same either way. He assails the absurdity of the notion implicit in so much rightwing thought, that poverty is somehow more tolerable if it is a punishment for moral failings: The cure for poverty is an adequate income.

"The crying need of the nation," he wrote, "is not for better morals, cheaper bread, temperance, liberty, culture, redemption of fallen sisters and erring brothers, nor the grace, love and fellowship of the Trinity, but simply for enough money. And the evil to be attacked is not sin, suffering, greed, priestcraft, kingcraft, demagoguery, monopoly, ignorance, drink, war, pestilence, nor any other of the scapegoats which reformers sacrifice, but simply poverty."

The solution he proposed was a "universal pension for life", or what is now called a Universal Basic Income (UBI)."

There is a two year trial currently taking place in Finland, which pays 2,000 unemployed people an unconditional monthly sum of €560 (£515). Other cities in the Netherlands, Italy, Canada and Scotland are also at various stages of investigating and launching trials. UBI is not without controversy; Sonia Sodha (Guardian 18.12.17) claims the basic income is a distraction from the core issues of economic power; a radical-sounding excuse to avoid the more complex question of how to ensure labour market rights are properly enforced.

Jo Corke SWRMB

6. Pensioners' Annual Conference, 2017.

Ruth Amias, Jo Corke and Charles Henderson attended this conference as delegates. There were delegates from UNISON, USDAW, CWU, Unite, NUJ, PCS, RMT, Prospect, GMB, NEU and local Trades councils so a range of issues were covered in the Motions.

Here are some of the highlights from the guest speakers.

Pensions today – key issues from recent changes. The new state pension schedule applies to those who reach pension age after 1st April 2016, which may affect some UCU RMB SW branch members.

Charlotte Thompson, head of Devon and Somerset's pension administrative team reminded the rest of us that between 1978 and 1997, contracted-out defined benefit pension schemes were required to provide a Guaranteed Minimum Pension (GMP). You can read more here

<http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN04956>

TPS and USS were both contracted-out schemes.

There is a large project under way to reconcile all guaranteed minimum pension records with those held by HMRC.

Nigel Costley, South West TUC Regional Secretary Nigel said that trade unions have declined over the last 30 years, previously the Unions were part of many people's lives, now they are looked upon as wage bargainers but they should be so much more than this.

Joanne Kaye, South West TUC Vice-chair Joanne hoped that we can see a way to be uplifting. We need to focus on where the difficulties are. Life expectancy improved thanks to trade unions and the NHS. Progress has been rapid, our unions have created the institutions which have benefited all, including the fight for equal pay and racial equality. She went on to ask us what stories would our grandchildren tell about us. *"They had a final salary pension, the NHS, protected jobs, holiday pay, paid rest breaks, funded university fees and grants, improvements in Health and Safety and an occupational pension."*

WASPI - Sandra Broadbent, Lesley Williams and Nicky Slater, represented South West branches of WASPI, a campaign group that fights to achieve fair transitional state pension arrangements for all women born in the 1950s affected by the changes to the State Pension Law (1995/2011 Acts).

<http://www.waspi.co.uk/>

The government had aroused a "sleeping giant" with the changes to the state pension ages, for many women are taking a more active part in the politics of pensions. Sandra thanked the unions for their support in particular Unison who had given them both financial and practical support and that, thanks to crowd funding, they had put in an official complaint to the DWP. There is still time to sign the petition

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/200088>

A selection from some of the motions carried

Triple Lock and Universal Benefits.

Maggie Roberts called on the TUC Pensioners National committee to liaise with bodies opposed to the end of the 'Triple Lock' and to encourage the TUC nationally to mount a campaign to oppose the removal of the 'triple lock'. She pointed out that as occupational pensions are eroded it is important to ensure that we do not erode the state pension provision for future generations. Michael Cobb reminded us that the triple lock only applies to the state pension, but that the press often fail to make that clear, rarely publishing stories of people who only have the state pension.

Removal of the triple lock will hurt the poorest in our society.

European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). The

European Insurance Health Card (EHIC) enables access to the same emergency medical help as their own citizens in most other European countries while travelling or staying there for short periods, such as visiting relatives, friends or holidaying. Roberto Franceschini was worried that Brexit may lead to the withdrawal of the EHIC. This would particularly discriminate against pensioners as they have higher insurance premiums for overseas travel due to age, and in some cases they are refused cover due to ill health. He asked conference to call on the TUC to lobby with other bodies to ensure the continued coverage of the EHIC, recognising the particular importance of this benefit to pensioners. Brian Willis in seconding the



motion said that private insurance would greatly increase the costs of any journey as we disclose existing conditions.

Bus Operators Engagement and Consultation. David Campbell called on conference to ask all bus operators in the region to carry out meaningful public engagement and consultation exercises well before significant route, timetable and fare changes.

Increased number of service provision online - Ian Chard asked that we call on the TUC to pursue with the government that Wifi is installed free universally and that appropriate IT courses be expanded and be made fully available to all applicants. Contributions from the floor - in a car park recently the only way to pay was by smart phone; some people would prefer to have a hard copy rather than read information on a screen; a recent letter from the DWP saying that his pension now had to be paid into a bank. The conference ended with elections to the committee; Charles Henderson from UCU SW RMB was elected.

Jo Corke SW RMB

7. From the Archives. Part 2. The journeymen bookbinders struggle.

This is a story involving bookbinders, both journeymen and those who have mastered their trade; and booksellers in London in the early years of the reign of Queen Victoria. It was at a time when there was great fear in the eyes of the authorities over the effects of working men combining together in any form of work related association. The Operative of 12 May 1839 puts it thus: "The Dorchester labourers (Tolpuddle Martyrs) were banished for combining together to protect themselves, the Glasgow cotton

spinners were banished for uniting to defend themselves: the London bookbinders are now about to be tried for simply being members of a union". So far as I can establish these are the circumstances of the dispute, but readers of this short article are asked to remember that newspaper reporting may well be slanted to suit the political opinion of the newspaper concerned.

According to a report of 20 January 1839, the Journeymen bookbinders' trade society had been in existence for upwards of 50 years. It appears that in 1830 a decision had been taken to appoint a committee from amongst their number with a view to establishing a pension society for "decayed" employers as well as journeymen with funding coming from subscriptions. The intention was to accumulate a fund to help those who might be in sickness or out of employment. Three firms: Wesley Remnant and Leighton had, apparently at the instigation of associated masters, thrown the whole of their working force out of work, amounting to some 300 men, as the men refused to withdraw their names from the benefit society. The men were now being accused of conspiracy.

The association for the Master bookbinders had been in existence for two years prior to the beginning of the dispute. In what would seem a logical progression, about one third of numbered amongst the Master bookbinders' society had previously been members of the journeymen's society.

The report of 27 January, *idem*, carried a report of a meeting of the Master bookbinders stating that they did not want to break up the society, only to purge it of its illegality: its benevolent features they heartily approved of.

By 17 February 1839 the dispute is clearly escalating with some 300 men having been dismissed by their employers, as they refuse to withdraw their names from the society benefit society. The meeting at which this was being discussed were worried that if the three main employers trying to force their withdrawal succeeded, then it would afford a precedent for suppressing all the Trades Societies, Trade Unions and political associations.

The principal publishers and booksellers including some names well-known even today such as Longman & Co, Murrays' and Hatchard & Son held a meeting on the subject. They "cordially approve the steps they have taken to express the steps taken to express the illegal and unconstitutional means adopted by these workmen" and "do hereby resolve and pledge themselves to discountenance all illegal combinations of workmen by patronising those master bookbinders who employ men unconnected with the trade society of journeymen under its present regulation" This powerful group of companies were "prepared to wait for their work until bookbinders could comply". A settlement which had been in prospect, before the report of the meeting became widely known, therefore collapsed.

From all over the England support came for the men who had lost their jobs in this way and to help meet the costs of their legal defence to the extent of £3611 (a huge amount of money). It came from such diverse sources as coach lace makers, copper plate printers, and wire workers. Edinburgh is recorded as having



Fig. 1. John Jaffray from The British Bookmaker.

sent contributions from bookbinders, women and apprentices typesetters, operative tailors. There were contributions also from three bookbinders and apprentices in Montrose, carvers, gilders, In the end the court case appears to have been dropped, and the dispute resolved peaceably, although there are no reports that I have been able to trace as to precisely how this was

managed.

If you are interested in finding out a bit more, you might find a search using the term "John Jaffray trade " useful. Jaffray has been described as a trade unionist, Chartist and bookbinder – and he was a Scot by birth. From one Scot to another, I salute you sir.

Verne Hardingham Rugby

8. The aftermath.

While natural disasters can reduce entire cities to rubble, leaving streets littered with debris, bodies and toxic material, modern warfare's devastation also brings the hidden dangers of unexploded weapons, landmines and booby traps.

A BBC report "Who clears up the wreckage of natural and man-made catastrophes and where does it go?" <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/resources/1dt-d7bc8641-9c98-46e7-9154-9dd6c5fe925e> appeared on the day of our SW RMB meeting in October 2017.

In the midst of post-emergency chaos, when the piles of damaged or waterlogged remains of communities line the streets,

survivors and anyone else on hand tend to begin the process of moving debris.



But amid the shock and devastation, what does and what should happen next are often two very different things, says Martin Bjerregaard, director of [Disaster Waste Recovery](#), and Aiden Short, director of [Urban Resilience Platform](#) - two disaster specialists who have worked all around the world in the aftermath of storms, earthquakes and wars.

After the meeting some of us adjourned to a café where we talked about this issue and wondered what happens to educational opportunities in the aftermath of these events.

For example, on the surface, many universities in Syria still function. But the ongoing violence and instability (including numerous checkpoints that have to be negotiated before even getting to the campus) have meant that it has become more and more difficult for students to keep up with their studies. As a result, the number of students enrolled at universities has dropped by a large percentage.

Arguably, life may arguably be as difficult for those eligible for higher education - Syrians who are now living in Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, Iraq and Egypt - as it is for students still inside Syria.

Data available from the [2014 Syria Regional Response Plan](#), [Uncounted and Unacknowledged: Syria's Refugee University Students and Academics in Jordan](#) and

[*The War Follows Them: Syrian University Students and Scholars in Lebanon.*](#)

Students and staff are suffering from emotional wreckage. This is why a number of UK universities have recently launched [Sanctuary Scholarship schemes](#).

<http://theconversation.com/what-universities-are-doing-to-help-syrias-lost-generation-70951>

These scholarships are available to displaced people from anywhere in the world who are living without the relative security of refugee status. These are people who are in the often long process of seeking asylum, or have some other form of temporary leave to remain in the UK.

CARA, (the Council for At-Risk Academics) was founded in 1933 by Britain's academics and scientists, in response to Hitler's decision to expel hundreds of leading scholars from German universities on racial grounds.

CARA helps academics who are being forced to flee by the risk of imminent imprisonment, injury or death to find temporary refuge in universities and research institutions until they can one day return home to help re-build better, safer societies. <http://www.cara.ngo/>

CARA already has active partnerships with universities in the UK, France, Germany, Canada and Australia.



CARA and the **Sanctuary Scholarships** are two ways in which UK academics are offering help. We are not alone.

Liza Sentence & Jo Corke SW RMB

9. OU Cuban student ban

In an earlier newsletter we reported on the OU ban on Cuban students

In the summer UCU wrote to both the vice-chancellor of the Open University and universities minister Jo Johnson calling for the ban to be overturned. UCU pointed out in its letter to Peter Horrocks, that put it directly at odds with the government's position on Cuba.

The 2016 [Memorandum of Understanding between the United Kingdom and Cuba](#) states there should be improvements in the links between universities in the two countries.

In Nov 2017 we heard that the [Open University has reversed its policy of barring Cuban students from studying](#) at the institution.

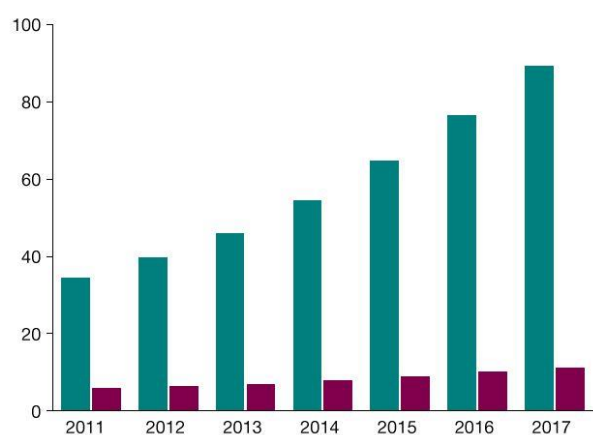
UCU campaigns

10 No Comment

Student loan debt has risen past £100bn

Units, £billion

■ England ■ Northern Ireland / Scotland / Wales



Note: Figures are for the end of the financial year

Source: Student Loans Company



Source: Student Loans Company

11. UCU Conference Dates 2018

Equality reps conference - Friday 16 February

Annual meeting of academic related, professional staff – Thursday 1 March

Annual meeting of prison educators – Friday 23 March

Annual meeting of staff on casualised contracts – Friday 9 March

Annual meeting of adult education members – Saturday 24 February

UCU Congress – Wednesday 30 May – Friday 1 June 2018

Congress marks start of 150th year



and launches a new phase for union to reach out to younger workers who have little if

any understanding of trade unionism.

SOUTH WEST TUC meeting dates for 2018

Regional Council:

13 January, New Library, Taunton

20 - Sat, 21 April (Annual Conference), Croyde Bay, N Devon

30 June, Unite, Bristol

13 October, Guildhall, Plymouth

Pensioners' Annual Conference: 18 October WSM tbc

Trades Council Annual Meeting: 3 March Bridgwater GWRSA Club

Tolpuddle Festival & Radical History

Radical History - Thursday, 19- Saturday, 21 July

Tolpuddle Festival - Friday, 20 - Sunday, 22 July
