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More information and news

can be obtained from these websites.
We suggest 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>

Your branch has its own website at

<http://www.ucu-em-rmb.org.uk>

Follow your Branch on Twitter:

@ucu-em-rmb

Branch meeting Tuesday Feb 19th 2019

10.30 – 12.30
(Speaker at 11.30)

Speaker: Tom Unterrainer

**“Production, for use,
not destruction.”**

The Mechanics Institute,
3 North Sherwood St., Nottingham, NG1 4EZ



1. Donate to the UCU Fighting Fund

Following the USS strikes last year and the many other disputes that have taken place and will, no doubt, take place in the near future, the USS Fighting Fund is more important than ever. One way in which retired members can assist is through making a donation to the fund. We appreciate that this is not possible for everyone but for those who are able it is a good way to provide practical support.

The fighting fund was set up to support members involved in disputes, including the provision of strike pay where appropriate. At the 2011 Congress, delegates recognised the current economic situation and the likelihood that this would mean more disputes to save jobs and services and protect conditions. It recommended that members who could afford to do so, should make an annual donation to the fighting fund to support others.

Congress suggested that an appropriate donation would be £25, depending upon members' circumstances but any donation to support colleagues in struggle is greatly appreciated and will be used directly to help members on strike.

How to donate:

- Securely online by credit card via the PayPal website
- Make a direct bank transfer, or set up a regular standing order, to:
Account name: UCU Fighting Fund
Sort code: 60-83-01
Account no: 20179432
Reference: 'Fighting Fund Voluntary Levy'
- or send a cheque (payable to 'University and College Union') to:
Fighting Fund donation
Finance Dept
University and College Union
Carlow Street
London
NW1 7LH

Rob Kirkwood.



2. Val Wood on the fight for Women's Suffrage

The Representation of the People Act, 1918 gave some women over 30 the right to vote. Not until 1928 did all women over 21 get the vote.

There has been much debate about how the vote was won – was it women's war work, suffragette militancy of the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) and a desire by the government to avoid trouble in the post war period or was it the constancy and organization of the National Women's Suffrage Society set up in 1897 and led by Millicent Fawcett which was able to unite women from across the political spectrum and waged a long campaign of peaceful protest?

The 1918 Act, discussed by a conference of men, was designed to give the vote to soldiers; and women's suffrage was only discussed right at the end. They looked for ways to limit women's voting rights and settled upon the age of 30 and a £5 householder qualification. Thus, it was limited but it gave the vote to 8.4m women and in Nottingham it meant 7000 more women than men could vote, in Rushcliffe 14,000 more women and 13,000 in Broxtowe. If it was prompted by women's war work, it failed to enfranchise the young women who'd worked in the factories during the war in such significant numbers.

Iconic images of women in factories have been used in many ways, often to indicate patriotism and women's support for the war. Women working in factories was, however, not a new phenomenon, especially in Nottingham, and many women belonged to trade unions e.g. National Federation of Women Workers and National Union of General Workers. It's been estimated that 1 in 5 trade unionists were women. The role of working class women who campaigned for the vote through the trade unions and the Labour movement hasn't been highlighted.

The struggle for suffrage goes right back to the Chartists and women in the East Midlands were very active in this movement, forming their own associations and taking part in demonstrations and a general strike in 1842. A group of women wearing white and carrying a banner saying "Universal Suffrage" attended the meeting in St Peter's Fields Manchester in 1819. The original chartist demand was for universal suffrage but they changed it to universal manhood suffrage, hoping for more success and this opened divisions within the working class.

Extending votes to the working class was to be a slow process. Male household suffrage was granted in 1867 but this excluded most workers and all women. A number of women householders tried to register but were rejected. By the late 1860s there were many regional suffrage societies and a petition in 1866 demanding votes for all householders regardless of sex, was signed by over 1500 including many from this area. Emily Davis and Elizabeth Garrett took the petition to Parliament where it was presented by John Stuart Mill and Henry Fawcett. This was the first of many such petitions. The regional societies amalgamated and eventually formed the National Central Society for Women's Suffrage in 1888. In 1889 a Women's Franchise League was formed and in 1892, a women's emancipation movement campaigning for equal pay. These groups formed links with international suffrage groups and were supportive of the newly emerging Labour movement. In 1897 the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies was established under the leadership of Millicent Fawcett calling for equal voting rights for men and women 'under existing laws', i.e. still with a property qualification.

By the end of the C.19th, there was one body of suffragists, of around 21,000 members committed to constitutional methods. The term 'suffragettes' was coined by the Daily Mail in 1904 to refer to the 'militants' who favoured direct action including unlawful action. Many local suffrage groups formed which were affiliated to the national group. These women often shared a common outlook - non-conformist, radical and liberal. Some working class women were involved, especially in Mansfield and a few in Nottingham. Quakers were often involved. Anglicans came later to the struggle, establishing the Church Suffrage League and these were more likely to be associated with conservative suffragists. They used methods such as public meetings, lobbying, letter writing and were looking at voting rights as a means of dealing with women's issues such as protection from cruel husbands and rights over their children. The Contagious Diseases Act which enabled police to arrest prostitutes brought many middle class women into political action for the first time. There were other focuses for political action e.g. the women's temperance movement was active in the Midlands and they saw women's suffrage as essential for changing the licensing laws.

A new petition with 29,000 signatures in 1901 presented an opportunity for the TUC and Labour Representation Committee to work with the National Suffrage Union on the issue of universal suffrage but this led to a split in the Labour movement on the issue of women's suffrage. After

this, there began to be changes. 1903 saw the establishment of the WSPU in Manchester by Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst. This was the result of increasing frustration at the Liberal government's failure to act on the voting issue and also at the political parties not even discussing the issue at their Conferences. Both Emmeline and Christabel were members of the Independent Labour Party, the former was elected onto the National Executive in 1903 but by 1906 they'd both left. The WSPU was at first a grass roots movement with women from across the social classes but when they moved their organisation to London it became much less democratic and dominated by upper class women.

In 1906, the Liberal landslide galvanized the suffrage societies to greater action. There were huge meetings and demonstrations, including one of 30,000 on the Forest in Nottingham. The Pankhursts started to set up provincial groups and the leaders travelled to many towns including Derby, Nottingham and Leicester. The WSPU held its first 'Women's Parliament' in London and that's when the arrests began. Groups had their own newspapers (e.g. Common Cause and The Vote). Two private members bills were talked out in 1907 and 1908 and the Suffragettes reacted to this by intensifying their action and beginning to use confrontational methods, e.g. window smashing. The Liberal government responded by denying women democratic means of protest e.g. forbidding women's attendance at liberal party meetings unless they had a signed ticket, refusing to meet deputations or accept petitions, banning public meetings and censoring the press in an attempt to silence the WSPU. There were periodic raids on their offices and they prosecuted the printer of the suffragette newspaper. Things start to escalate after this point with arrests, imprisonment and hunger strikes. The first force feeding of a prisoner took place in Birmingham in 1908. This did provoke a reaction from the Labour Party condemning its use. The suffragists were still using peaceful methods and trying to distance themselves from the militants.

In 1910, there was a Bill on women's suffrage but Asquith refused to allow time for it and anger about this brought a coming together of the two wings to protest against the government about this. Many of these women were Liberal voters. There was a large demonstration in London in 1910 when 114 women were arrested and then released. It became known as Black Friday because of the violence by the police against the women. This caused a great furore. It was followed a week later by the storming of Downing Street by the WSPU which led to 150 arrests, all of them imprisoned,

including some from this area. In 1911 there was another bill and a march of 40,000 women and the suffragettes suspended their militant action. Women used other strategies e.g. tax evasion and the census resistance of 1911.

A second conciliation bill was carried in 1911 but Asquith announced that he supported manhood suffrage; this was viewed as a huge betrayal and led to a big increase in violent activity from 1912. The National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) changed their allegiance from the Liberal Party to the Labour Party and set up an election fighting fund to support Labour candidates against Liberals who didn't support votes for women. Another attempt in parliament to introduce votes for women was defeated in 1913. That year also saw the introduction of the Cat and Mouse Act and that drew a response from the trade union movement. The practice continued until 1914 by which time the suffragettes had moved on to bombings, breaking windows, slashing pictures in art galleries and so on. Sylvia Pankhurst was expelled by her sister for supporting the workers in the Dublin lock-out in 1913 so she then set up the East London Federation of Suffragettes. She came to Bulwell for meetings.

A WSPU branch was set up in Nottingham and Leicester in 1906. They sent a letter to the Trades Council asking for help but they didn't respond. In Nottingham May Burgis, a teacher and active trade unionist, was Secretary, supported by Dorothy Pethick and Helen Watts, daughter of a Lenton vicar. She was imprisoned twice, once in London and once in Leicester. She went on hunger strike in Leicester. She'd been radicalised in 1907 when Christabel came up to Nottingham when the movement's leaders were travelling around setting up local groups.

This area was often visited by key speakers. Christabel said "The women of Nottingham are with us and we shall come again shortly". Meetings were often disrupted – the Liberals would send in groups of young lads to shout and they also threw mice and rats on to the stage. The women responded by saying it would bring people to their side, they said 'the men in Nottingham had to burn the castle before they got their votes, we shall continue our tactics'.

Nottingham played a key role, it had a big suffrage society and also militant suffragettes. The interesting thing is that whilst some women were arrested, they were never imprisoned possibly because the elders in the city tended to be non-conformists and there was a lot of sympathy for the cause. A solicitor in the city provided an office for

them. There was just one occasion in 1914 when Eileen Casey was put on trial because she had bomb making equipment when the king and queen were visiting the city.

Many of the actions took place in London but from 1908 on there was a national organiser in Nottingham. Charlotte Marsh came as national organiser in 1912 and much of the activity occurred after this, e.g. burning of the boat club. The Trades Council came on board much later to condemn the use of the Cat and Mouse Act. Both suffrage societies tended to work together in Nottingham. When Helen Watts came back from Holloway on the train, she was greeted by members of both groups, militant and non-militant – 'the sisters of the lace city'.

In Leicester the militant suffragettes were led by the trade unionist Alice Hawkins – she belonged to the Leicester Co-operative Boot and Shoe Manufacturing Society, was a member of the Clarion Club, Women's Labour League, and she was an Independent Labour Party (ILP) member. She left the ILP because they disapproved of militant action. She was supported by Sylvia Pankhurst. She said she didn't get support from her union so set up the Independent Women's Boot and Shoe Union. She now has a statue in Leicester. She didn't manage to retain working class membership and the WSPU became less democratic and more dominated by middle class women.

Nottingham and Leicester both had regional organisers. Mansfield retained its suffrage society, opposed to militancy, and drew women in from the working class and had good links with the Labour and trade union movement, selling their journal 'Common Cause' through the trade unions. Loughborough had a WSPU branch linked to the teachers union and the local Independent Labour Party branch. Other areas in the region mostly had non-militant suffrage societies – Newark, Collingham, Southwell. Suffragettes from cities went to smaller towns and villages to get support.

1918 was the culmination of 60 years of struggle. Women couldn't stand for parliament until November 1918 but influenced elections e.g. Arthur Heyday of the Labour Party probably got elected because of women voters. This area didn't have a woman MP until 1945 when Florence Paton was elected in Rushcliffe. In Nottingham we didn't get a female MP until 2010 though women did stand as councillors.

Interestingly, the 50 year celebrations in Nottingham were only by the left not the right.

Nottingham Women's History Group has produced a booklet about the struggle for the vote in Nottingham.

Helen Chester

3. UCU Retired Members' Branches AGM



The annual meeting for the Retired Members' Branches (RMBs) took place on 21st November 2018 at UCU Headquarters in London. This is a delegate meeting, and the elected representatives for the East Midlands Branch were Julian Atkinson and Bob Haskins. Business was timed to take place between 11am and 4pm, and in fact a discussion item had to be postponed until the meeting that will take place at UCU Congress, due to time pressures. Alastair Hunter was re-elected as Chair for 2018-19 and the meeting was supported by Linda Newman (National Head of Resources) and Kay Metcalfe.

In reviewing the minutes from 2017, any progress on motions carried was reported. One motion had advocated the usefulness of retired members in helping with casework at Branches, but this is not currently permitted at Branches where the retired member did not work previously. The report back confirmed that the UCU's Insurers were not happy with the prospect of having "freelance" caseworkers, though there appears to be a divergence of opinion within the NEC on this topic.

One other matter was a report back on the Retired Member Consultation and it was declared that there being no clear result, there would be no progression of this issue in the foreseeable future.

Before the lunch break, the UCU Treasurer, Steve Sangwine, gave an address on current issues. Some of these had been well publicised, but it was interesting to hear comment directly from a member of the Executive.

- There had been a difficulty of achieving 50% turnouts in the most recent pay ballots. In HE, only 6 Institutions surpassed 50%, and in FE just 4. Welsh Institutions were aggregated, and the result was a 52%

turnout. HE will ballot again, and FE is to reballoon the underachievers.

- The FE lobby of Parliament on 17th October 2018 regarding funding was very successful with a turnout of around 3000 members.
- The industrial action over USS had been a big success, following 14 days of strikes. A Joint Expert Panel (JEP) was been set up, with a first report in September 2018. This gave the opinion that the valuation had been too extreme, and the test gave a false impression. The JEP is now moving to Phase2.
- Membership of UCU has increased (as of 30/9/18) by 19% in HE and 5.8% in FE.
- The banding structure for UCU subscriptions is being reviewed. The retired member rate is an (arbitrary) £2.80 per month. There is no intention of changing from a flat rate for retired members, but views are welcomed.
- There is to be a democracy commission, and this will include a one day special Congress. This is being led by Paul Cottrell.

Following reports from Branches and external representatives, the meeting moved on to motions from RMBs. Topics included: celebration of 10 years of the concessionary bus pass; the possibility of free academic library access for all retired college and university staff; modification of the model branch rules to suit RMBs (as they do not engage in collective bargaining or industrial action); pollution and Alzheimer's disease (importance of environmental campaigning); "Scrap the Contract" (a new model of health and social care provision that threatens the break-up of the NHS, run by "Integrated Care Providers), and the iniquity of Single Person Supplements for older people. These were all carried.

Our own branch motion expressed concern regarding the questionnaire about the future structure of Retired Members Branches. Although we knew from earlier in the meeting that the questionnaire was to be disregarded, the motion was still proposed in case such an exercise were to be repeated. This motion was also carried.

The three motions on pollution, Scrap the Contract and Single person Supplements will go forward to the National Pensioner Convention Biennial Delegate Conference in March 2019. The discussion item that was moved forward to the next meeting was that RMBs could set up sub-groups of activists.

Bob Haskins

4. An update on the USS dispute

UCU and Universities UK (UUK) have stated their support for the recommendations made by the joint expert panel as the basis for negotiations. USS has decided to undertake a fresh '2018' valuation. Before Christmas the Pensions Regulator (tPR) called upon USS to reach a formal agreement with UUK on how to manage any possible downside from the employers' new commitment to undertake more risk. Discussions at joint negotiating committee (JNC) level are ongoing. The National Dispute Committee (NDC) was constituted earlier this year to provide accountability and a representative steer of the USS dispute. They have published the following statement.

“The sacrifices of UCU members delivered significant results in 2018. Our strike action prevented the imposition of substantial cuts, and forced our employer to agree to establish a Joint Expert Panel (JEP). The JEP report vindicated the UCU position, and a recent, independent report supports the JEP’s work and the viability of the scheme. Recently, USS admitted that if the recommendations of the JEP report were implemented the scheme would have a £0.5bn surplus. UCU’s official position is ‘no detriment’. This means no increase to contributions, and no reduction in pension benefits. The NDC has evaluated the evidence and expert analyses and believe the ‘no-detriment’ position is justified, fair and, more importantly, realistic. USS is going to conduct a March 2018 valuation using the discredited methodology heavily criticised in the JEP report. It is important to resist any needless attempt by USS or UUK to convince us to accept a deal that means increases in contributions or decreases in benefits. The evidence demonstrates that neither are required. The NDC believes that if such moves are made by either USS or UUK, UCU members should be balloted for strike action, with a recommendation to vote YES. NDC will continue to provide members with further updates as the USS dispute continues.”

Rob Kirkwood

5. Equalities Conference

This year’s UCU Equalities Conference was held in Manchester in November. We attended the conference, representing East Midlands Retired Members Branch.



Women Fighting Back against Oppression, Violence and Discrimination

Report from the Women members’ session

This session gave us the opportunity to hear a range of speakers, beginning with Lynmarie O’Hara from Unison discussing the Glasgow women’s equal pay strike comprising more than 8,000 council workers, overwhelming low paid women in Unison and the GMB. The mostly male council bin workers also refused to cross picket lines and joined with the women in solidarity. Lynmarie passionately outlined the nature of the dispute, telling us that she had never before been on strike, let alone a picket line, but the twelve-year dispute for equal pay for women care workers, council workers and cleaners had finally galvanised her into action. The historical underpayment of women, firstly by the former Labour administration and then by the SNP council, after they took control in 2017, saw women paid on average £3 per hour less than male counterparts in similar jobs. Although the Court of Sessions in Scotland had ruled in favour of the women, their claims were still unresolved, with Susan Aitken, SNP Council Leader stating that the women of Glasgow would never strike! This comment drew rapturous support from the conference delegates.

Nita Sanghera, set to be UCU’s first BAME Vice-President and Stand Up to Racism activist, drew our attention to the disturbing growth in racist and extreme right behaviour on university campuses. She highlighted a particularly disturbing example of this – the infamous Snowsports Club ‘event at Lancaster University which saw students wearing white t-shirts scrawled with slogans mocking murder and rape victims, some inscribed with swastikas. Nita said that this should have been reported as a hate crime and reported to the police; however both the university and the Students’ Union were slow to take action and in fact, the Student’s Union suspended their BAME officer Chloe Long for exposing this behaviour.

The day's final speaker was Flavia Regina Bueno, a Cambridge PhD student, who will be returning to her native Brazil within the next year. She talked about the election of Bolsonaro as President of Brazil and the effect of his right-wing programme. As a gay woman, Flavia is concerned that she will not be able to live her life openly in Bolsonaro's Brazil. She concluded her brief talk by drawing attention to the EleNão protests – the largest to be led by women in Brazil's history – opposing the Bolsonaro regime.

The Women's conference finished with a number of workshops. The Menopause Workshop discussed appropriate policies in the workplace, referenced the TUC model policy and the example of policies put into practice such as at Leicester University. Delegates discussed that Women going through the menopause are sometimes treated as a capability issue by employers and their sickness absences are used as a Bradford factor in selection criteria for redundancy. The workshop members believed that this was not only indirect discrimination but also related to sexism and ageism.

Report from the Plenary session of full conference

On the second day of the conference the plenary speeches included Moyra Samuels from the Justice for Grenfell Campaign. Her speech began with a 72 second silence while the conference remembered the victims of the fire. She described Grenfell as representing a form of social cleansing and an intersection of race and class, where the emphasis is on profit not people. Of the 72 people who died, 50 were Muslim showing the impact of "the hostile environment". There are 40 families still living in hotels and justice has not been achieved. There needs to be a change in the narrative about decent and safe social housing. She also referred to the Nov 5th effigy of the Grenfell incident. She ended her speech with an appeal to the labour and Trade Union movement, "If not now – when? If not you-who?"

Dr Peter Purton, who was the TUC LGBT and Disability policy officer until his recent retirement, continued these themes and asked how we can win back support for a progressive agenda. He discussed the recession of 2008 and the ongoing period of austerity after the 2010 election and the coalition Government's policies which created an easy scapegoat of the disabled and a moral panic in the media about scroungers etc. He criticised the TUC for failing to get its message across about how vulnerable groups were being blamed. The TUC did not provide a counter attack and the focus both in the TUC and the Labour movement should be about class. There is still a large underclass whose

concerns are not being addressed. There is massive in-work poverty, a divided working class, increasing gaps in wealth, millions are left out in this wealthy world and politics doesn't care. This is a toxic mix reminiscent of the 1930s, which we can see in the Brexit debate and events in Hungary, Brazil, the USA and the general rise of the Right across the world. There is now more than ever a need for an economic agenda to end austerity, a restructure of the public sector, policies to deal with the pay gap and the housing crisis. Trade unions should be the glue to bring about genuine solidarity and collectivity in the workplace and to make alliances with other groups. He ended with the view that there is a glimmer of hope and some popular opinion change about food banks and universal credit, the solidarity of students in the recent USS strike, the Windrush stories and the ME/TOO campaigns, movements among young people and their support for the Labour Party. These themes were taken up by speakers from the floor and inevitably the contributions revolved around the different positions on the current Brexit situation.

[Judy Wills and Margaret Davies](#)

6. The impact of raising state pension age

Researchers from the University of Kent, Newcastle University and University of Edinburgh, in a wider study of extending working lives sought to understand how rises in the State Pension age (SPA) to as high as 67 for those born between 1953 and 1956 are affecting people's lives, both in terms of work but also their personal lives. The alignment of state pension ages for women and men has created very real difficulties for those whose who will now not receive their State Pension when they had originally expected to. As a result many older workers, particularly women, are living increasingly precarious lives because they are being forced to remain working in physically demanding and sometimes insecure jobs.

It was found that, contrary to some views that abolition of mandatory retirement ages and changes in pension provisions are giving workers more freedom to manage retirement flexibly, there are many workers that are unable to stop working, even when in ill-health, due to State Pension age changes. Not only this, many of those interviewed were worried by the precariousness of their jobs and the risk of restructuring (and being paid less as a result) or redundancy, as they are reliant on this income to provide for them now the state pension age has been raised. This is further exacerbated by

many feeling that at their age they would be unlikely to find new forms of employment, thus making their current job their only viable source of income.

The deleterious impact of raising SPA was felt worse by women. Many women interviewed were in poor financial situations because they had got divorced and failed to secure much financial support from this process. Prior to this, they had expected to rely, in part, on their husband's pension. However, after the divorce they had to go back to work with no option of early retirement. Many of these women are also living in rented accommodation now or paying a mortgage and so have no buffer in the form of equity in a home or the ability to downsize and increase their incomes.

The researchers argue that the risk of State Pension ages rising further still, perhaps to as high as 70, is unrealistic and will cause even more hardships for large numbers of the population and will have a detrimental effect in many ways on UK society. State-provided financial support mechanisms are required to enable people to exercise greater control over the timing of the end of their working lives. This means allowing people who cannot carry on working to take a State Pension at age 65.

[Julian Atkinson](#)

7. Government Consultation on Pensions

The UK government has finally launched a consultation regarding the introduction of collective defined contribution (CDC) schemes. At the present defined contribution (DC) schemes that are common in the private sector are bad value for money. CDC, whilst vastly inferior to defined benefit (DB) schemes such as the TPS and (mainly) the USS, does provide better benefits.

The difference between CDC and DC is that all assets are pooled, rather than each member having their own individual pot. The fund then aims to give members a certain level of pension from the fund each year, rising in line with inflation, but without actually guaranteeing it.

The DWP had stated that the new rules, as planned, would require fresh primary and secondary legislation to be taken through the UK parliament. The government has announced that it would [legislate for CDC schemes](#) "as soon as parliamentary time allows". The rulebook would be initially designed to allow a Royal Mail scheme to

be established, but could be adapted if other employers came forward with alternative models.

If the CDC model is better than that of DC, there are some profound downsides. Savers will not know what they will receive in retirement, especially if markets have a tough time. Many who take money directly out of their pension in retirement will also see their income fall or dry up if investments decline. Indeed if investment returns are worse than expected, then lower increases could be provided or, if things get really bad, benefits could be cut.

Opponents also argue that there's a lack of demand among employers to offer CDC. But given the enthusiasm of Royal Mail and its 140,000-strong workforce, it seems likely that some large employers will follow suit.

The government's forthcoming white paper on defined benefit (DB) pension reform was supposed to be out by the end of February 2018. The paper, whenever, or if, it arrives, will build on a [previous report released by the DWP](#) which explored ideas for scheme consolidation, changes to indexation, and how to make it easier for stressed employers to restructure their schemes. The only certainty is that it will not make DB schemes more generous and might even nod in the direction of CDC pensions.

It seemed for a while that the Labour Party and TUC were so enthusiastic about the CDC model that they were beginning to see DB as a lost cause. The TUC, at least, appears to be reconsidering its position. The reason is clear: the UCU strikes to defend the USS pension have had an astounding impact. Not only does it show that union members are prepared to take action to defend their pensions but that the spurious arguments of the USS and UUK that the pension was not sustainable were demolished. The UCU strikes have benefited not just USS scheme members but all other unions with DB schemes. And let us not forget that a revaluation of the TPS pension is in the pipeline!

[Julian Atkinson](#)

8. Midlands TUC Pensioners Network 7.11.2018 – Elderly Homelessness

Guest Speaker Bryn Phillips from 'Shelter' gave a very interesting and informative talk about the charity's work with emphasis on support for the elderly homeless.

Shelter is the biggest housing charity in Britain and was originally set up by a Methodist Preacher in 1960 concerning 'unfit housing' and was intended to support the powerless against the powerful with service centres in major cities.

Shelter has money power that can be used to pressure local authorities to help people in desperate need. This "forty-year housing crisis" is now a national emergency with far too many houses unfit for human habitation which has possibly been made worse by Tory policies and welfare cuts.

There has been a big rise in in the number of pensioners, including women, although mainly men, who are now accepted as homeless. Most of these are people who have worked hard all their lives and paid their taxes. Multiple causes include: closing of women's refuges, impact of divorce, benefit changes and unaffordable rent.

Problems for rough sleepers involve drug pushers with associated protection rackets, being moved on from warmer night time venues such as airports, all night buses and other places. Women on the street are often targeted by the sex industry. What can be done? Bryn suggested the response to all this needs to be to organise, to mobilise and to involve all kinds of people and groups such as churches, unions and others in a variety of responses. So setting us the challenge: what can we do??

The following discussions, contributions and comments from the group were impressive, as members of the network shared their experiences, highlighting other related problems and activities they participate in. Several people have backgrounds in social work, volunteering to housing projects, professional local authority work and other aspects and quite a number of others are also currently involved in charity or volunteering work of this nature.



Among issues highlighted were the need for more 'council housing' as high rents are a major cause of many problems, but also lack of support for people released from prison, coming out of the armed

forces or mental health treatment centres (the problems of becoming institutionalised), with nowhere to go, no means of finding work and not knowing what to do.

Finally, network chair Yvonne Washburn called for ideas for action we could take.

Rowena Dawson

9. Midlands TUC Pensioners Network

TUC Workshop Menopause in the Workplace workshop November 2018

"Older women (55-64) are the fastest growing section of the workforce. Yet, women's experiences of menopause transitions are often a taboo subject and very little support is provided in workplaces."

The TUC workshops around the UK during the autumn were set up to explore case studies, to raise awareness and to normalise discussions. This initiative started as an academic project with funding from the government equality office to consider the key issues and problems facing menopausal women in the workplace. Four main areas were identified, including Demographics, the Legal Case, Social Responsibility and the Business Case.

The Demographic view shows that the profile of the workforce is becoming older, particularly as the retirement/pension age is getting higher and fewer young people are entering the workplace. The Office of National Statistics figures show menopausal women are the fastest growing demographic at work. Going through the menopause is a natural process that will affect working women as they grow older.

The Legal Case can involve discrimination where dismissal may result from medical advice in dealing with recurring symptoms. It needs to be remembered that the menopause is not a disability but may affect women in a variety of different ways and for a variety of different periods of time. Menopause symptoms are protected under employment law through the Equalities Act 2010.

The Socially Responsible approach suggests a moral view is the right thing to do and that the menopause situation could be compared to maternity leave. Women experiencing menopause related health problems are encouraged to talk to colleagues, line managers, HR or Union reps to seek simple changes in the working environment such as cooler air conditioning, natural light or comfortable uniforms etc.

The Business Case looks at the potential costs involved from the need to fight legal cases, to the cost of losing experienced working women employees and having to train or re-train other staff.

To address these situations, two different approaches were considered. The University of Leicester established a formal, written structure to be followed where necessary, while Severn Trent Water took a more informal approach stressing the importance of communication so that the process becomes naturally accepted and understood with reasonable small adjustments to working practices and conditions being made when requested. Ultimately the workshops were set up to address what needs to happen to manage the situation where necessary. Over 5,000 people took part in a survey with one in ten confirming that their employer has a menopause policy or guidance in place which is a sign of ongoing improvement. Union reps can help to clarify individual situations and support colleagues having difficulties.

Ref. TUC Education Webinar, Health Awareness newspaper supplement.

Rowena Dawson

9. UCU Retired Members Branch

Our branch has been meeting since 2008 and now has over 300 members. Our aims are listed below. We meet three times a year, often in places of interest to make part of a day out. Meetings focus on important issues for UCU pensioners and provide a chance to talk with other retired members.

A termly newsletter with articles of interest to retired UCU members is e-mailed to all branch members for whom we have addresses and to UCU branch secretaries in the East Midlands and to other RMBs.

Please let us have your personal e-mail address and let us know if it changes.

RMB Roles and Functions

- 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.

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