

WALES RETIRED MEMBERS GROUP

Newsletter: (November, 2015)

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1. Minutes of the meeting of the 11th. September

Main points:

- i) Agreed that Allan Screen and Lyn Gornall would edit the newsletter
- ii) Calendar of meetings for 2016
Friday March 4th. AGM
Friday June 10th.
Friday September 9th.
- iii) Retired Member's AGM on 5th. November, 2015 – Steve Byrne to attend as our delegate
- iv) Motion on travel expenses for RMB members agreed.
- v) Guest speaker, Margaret Phelan Wales Regional Official outlining the position in FE and HE regarding funding.

2. Academic working lives Ed. By Lyn Gornall, et al. published (Details attached). This shows the pressures faced by academics in the workplace. For details of how to obtain a copy visit www.bloomsbury.com

"*Academic Working Lives* helps us understand some of the seismic shifts that are currently shaping further and higher education – locally, nationally and globally ... an important book that speaks to academic workers, institutional managers and policy-makers – and which will undoubtedly impact upon their

work at the level of practice, organizational ethos and strategic planning." **Jon Nixon**, Senior Research Fellow, Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong and Honorary Chair, University of Sheffield, UK, from the Foreword.

Experiences of lecturers, researchers, managers and teaching & learning 'new professional' staff in further and higher education are the subject of the book

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Academic Working Lives - experience, practice and change, which was published by Bloomsbury in 2014 and is now reprinted in paperback. Rooted in research conducted in and from Wales by staff from three universities, the volume is nevertheless completely international in its contributions. And how interesting to find that work and some of the changes experienced in the UK are similar to those in Canada (women's career mobility), Japan (educational development and academic roles), Finland (lecturers' time pressures), Ireland (FE/HE organisational transitions) and South Africa (research capacity building for teams). On the other hand, many are aware too of the permeation and effects of globalisation, networks and the circulation of neoliberal policy ideas, and the ways in which these find their expressions in local contexts and impacts on individual careers.

There is something for everyone here - about professional development changes, working with challenging students, having a funding bid rejected, the ethics of being an examiner, equalities and cultural barriers to progression, and much more. We call it a 'This is Your Life for Lecturers'! The book's editors all work or worked in HE in Wales - Lynne Gornall, Caryn Cook, Lyn Daunton, Jane Salisbury and Brychan Thomas, where they held and experienced the spectrum of roles and careers in FE and HE. One reviewer called it a 'fascinating book about the how, when, where and who of working life in higher and further education, with the 'why' particularly well-drawn in a chapter on the optimists and the pessimists of the contemporary workplace', another started to see his everyday working routines differently, with this 'making visible' of academic and organisational practice; a further reader said 'I finished the book with a sense of optimism about the ability of ourselves to interrogate our work and to challenge prevailing orthodoxies'. But take your pick, it is all here, including a discussion of the mobility of the 'office' space, with the question of 'where do you work?', to the cafe, lounge and unbounded wider campus, as technology underwrites many of the options and affordances of teaching, learning, research, administration and management today.

The book is available in paperback now and members can get it for a discounted price of £21.59+p&p by quoting a special code GLR EQ7 on the site www.bloomsbury.com working lives

3. Retired Member's Branch AGM (RMBs) – Motion from Wales, 'That Officers' and Members who travelled more than 100 miles to Branch meetings to be reimbursed at the going rate , for at least 50% for mileage in excess of 100 miles, in order to function as an effective Branch within the Union.' This motion recognises the difficulties that members in Wales face regarding distance and geography which is not so much the case in other Regions.'

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4. Report by Regional Official (Margaret Phelan)

Main points:

- i) UCU Wales Election manifesto (attached) urging members to contact their AM's or prospective AMs on their support for FE and HE for the Assembly elections in May.
- ii) The Assembly is committed to funding the NHS in Wales and therefore there may be less funding for FE and HE in wales.
- iii) Compared to England there is less funding going into HE in wales.
- iv) Research from the LSE supports the contention that HE in Wales has been underfunded.

5. UCU Wales Manifesto

http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/b/s/ucuwales_assemblyelectionmanifesto2016.pdf

Main points:

Importance of FE and related issues:

- Provision of Second and Subsequent Learning Chances
- To Help tackle poverty
- To promote Equality, Social Mobility and Community Cohesion
- Reduce Reliance on Welfare
- To assist in delivering High Quality Apprenticeships
- To Ensure Appropriate Continuous Professional Development
- To assist the Delivery of HE in FE
- To Assist the Implementation of the Programme for Government

Importance of HE and related issues:

- Funding and Student Fees
- Contribution to the Economy and Well-Being of Wales
- Academic Freedom
- Governance and Accountability
- Role of Funding Councils

6. Michael Scott (UCU HO) confirmed that those who are life members and paid an annual fee would now not have to do so and their fees will be refunded.

7. Briefing on Anti- Austerity, Len Arthur (Left Unity Wales)

Left Unity Wales: <http://chwithunedigcymru.blogspot.co.uk/>

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At our last Left Unity Wales meeting we decided to produce a critique of the draft Welsh Labour manifesto that is currently out for consultation among Labour Party members. This was recently picked up by the Western Mail and resulted in the following article: <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/politics/group-radicals-wants-push-welsh-10308316>. You will see that someone in Welsh Labour, among other things, describes us as 'misguided fanatics', well actually our critique draws upon the platform that Corbyn stood upon in his leadership campaign, as well as policies that we have developed as Left Unity both in Wales and the UK, so perhaps the remark is a little exaggerated. We think there is actually a lot in our critique which can be taken by Labour Party members as practical amendments to the draft Welsh

Labour manifesto and here is the full text if you wish to use it: <http://chwithunedigcymru.blogspot.co.uk/2015/10/wales-labour-ignores-corbyns-politics.html>. It seems also, following the recent Plaid conference, that their left member may need to take up some of the points in the development of their manifesto!

Left Unity's application to be observer members of the European Left was made earlier in the summer and confirmed in September. We are now the only party to be recognised by the EL in the UK and joins us politically to socialist parties in 21 countries across Europe under the demand 'Another Europe is Possible': <http://www.european-left.org/>.

People's Assembly Wales

PA Wales estimates that cuts planned in the Welsh budget by 2018 will mean a 17% cut in real terms since 2008/09 – a cut of around £2.8 billion which is having a disastrous impact on across all public services in Wales. Osborne will announce the result of his spending review to Parliament on 25 November and this will undoubtedly tighten the screw even further – possibly up to a further £1 billion over four years. Here is how it will pan out for us all: <http://gov.wales/about/cabinet/cabinetstatements/2015/timingbudget/?lang=en>. In addition, everyone in Wales is affected by the welfare cuts announced for the UK. Already these have cost the people of Wales around £1 billion and what has been announced since the election could add another £500 million to this figure.

PA Wales has argued that the Welsh Assembly should do all they can to mitigate these cuts by mobilising other financial resources, if that is not possible, then the Assembly should be prepared to directly refuse to implement another cuts budget.

This is the position over welfare cuts that has been taken by left parties in Northern Ireland (Senn Fein; Greens and SDLP) and following the challenge to the Tory government by the unelected House of Lords, the elected Assembly should now have the confidence to do the same.

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PA Wales is running a declaration against austerity cuts in Wales #noausteritywales through 38 Degrees which we are asking all people in Wales to sign to the help the Assembly make up its mind. If you have not already done so please consider adding you name as well as sharing and campaigning for others to do so as well: <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/referendum-stop-austerity-cuts-in-wales-datganiad-rhowch-stop-ar-doriadau-llymder-yng-nghymru>

Hope you find this useful.

8. Equality and Human Rights report (EHRC) Members might find this interesting.

The link is at: <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/about-us/our-work/key-projects/britain-fairer/great-britain-report>.

9. Details of next meeting:

4th. December, 2015,
12pm – 2pm
UNITE HQ,
Cathedral Road,
Cardiff,
CF11 9SD

Refreshments provided.