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Are you getting all the info?

This May newsletter has been distributed to SW RMB members by email.

If UCU Head Office has your email, then you should also be receiving regular updates on campaigns from UCU head office – the ones sent by Justine Stephens. You should also get occasional messages from Sally Hunt, UCU.

If you are only getting our newsletter, then let me know at ucu.swest@gmail.com and I can amend your UCU members' database entry.

1. Branch meeting and AGM 2017

Thursday 9th February

12.00 a.m. – 2.30 p.m.

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

A buffet lunch will be provided if you let us know a week in advance.

ucu.swest@gmail.com

2. 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>

3. Survivor's pensions.

This is a branch campaign. Since the Reviews by TUC and HM Government in 2014 the various schemes have moved away from final salary to working life contributions for determination of pensions.

There appear to be a number of anomalies which we have raised with UCU HO and at the Retired Members AGM. We are in

still in communication with HO but, as yet we do not have a definitive answer to share with you.

TPS: Members can raise any issues on-line

<https://www.teacherspensions.co.uk/members/member-hub.aspx> . Alternatively, write to Teachers' Pensions, 11b Lingfield Point, Darlington DL1 1AX.

USS: members can raise any issues on-line at <https://www.uss.co.uk/public/contact-us> Or write to Universities Superannuation Scheme Limited, Royal Liver Building, Liverpool, L3 1PY.

John Daniell. SW RMB.

4. Three Pensioners on a Southern Rail Journey.

At the Annual TUC Pensioners conference in October 2016 we heard about the discussions at both at national and regional levels about the introduction of Driver Only Operations (DOO) train services. These have raised concerns about the feasibility and desirability of this concept. Against this background the National Pensioners convention decided to do some 'on the spot' research; a day out to test the practicalities of travel within the Southern network for an older passenger with so called "normal " ageing problems, a wheelchair user and a blind person.

The full report of their Journey is available at <http://npcuk.org/2442>

Jo Corke SWRMB

5. 2016 RMB Annual Conference.

An annual meeting of representatives from UCU retired members' branches was held on Wednesday 23 November 2016 at UCU head office, Carlow Street, London. John

Daniell attended as branch delegate. Update see item 14.

6. UCU Equality conference Dec 2016.

UCU's annual equality conference combines a joint equality conference for black, LGBT, disabled and women members as well as dedicated sessions for the four constituencies, joint sessions, various workshops and guest speakers.



7. Book Corner.

The Maltreated and the Malcontents: Working in the Great Western Cotton Factory 1838 to 1914. ISBN 97819T11522010 .

This book, by Mike Richardson from Bristol UWE reveals a gendered working-class resistance based on action existing outside the framework of formal organisations as well as within them.

From the 1830s to the early 20th century Barton Hill workers in Bristol endured long working hours, high rates of industrial accidents and ill-health from the cotton dust and humidity. Moreover they were subjected to wage cuts and fines by a series of unrelenting managers. Divided along age and gender lines and largely outside the formal trade union movement, the balance of power at the Great Western



Cotton Works was skewed heavily in favour of the works managers.

Nonetheless Mike Richardson documents frequent acts of rebellion in which the women played a leading part; vocal protests, riotous resistance and thefts of inferior cotton to prevent loss of pay. He shows how workers also took their grievances to court in defiance of the legal bias against them.

I heard Mike speak in Bristol: I was astounded to hear that the cotton mill was built with money from the Slave Compensation Committee. The British government raised £20 million (equivalent to £2 billion in 2016) to pay compensation for the loss of the slaves as business assets to the registered owners of the freed slaves. This fund was 40% of the government's total annual expenditure 1834.

There is a Youtube video of one of Mike's presentations:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ssi2EZ7E-CY>

Postscript: I might not have noticed this if I had not heard Mike speak. *First, the cheap cotton spun and woven by Lancashire's steam-powered mills wipes out the handloom cotton industry of Bengal. Second, less than two centuries later, the even cheaper cotton cloth made*

in the factories of Bengal and elsewhere in south and east Asia wipes out the steam-powered mills of Lancashire. Perhaps nowhere else offers such a symmetrical illustration of the way the world has changed. Ian Jack. Guardian 12.11.16

Jo Corke SW RMB

8. Environment.

UCU produces an Environmental Newsletter. The second annual report on sustainability in tertiary education has been released this month by the *Environmental Association for Universities and Colleges (EAUC)*, *National Union of Students (NUS)*, *University and College Union (UCU)*, *Association of Colleges (AoC)* and the *College Development Network*.

There was a large trade union input to the survey with around one third of the respondents being UCU representatives. The report makes for worrying reading. For example, only a quarter of respondents consider that sustainability is a strategic priority for their institution. Further evidence that what is being taught in our colleges and universities fails to reflect the global challenge of the environmental crisis and climate change.

On a more positive note the NUS Dissertations for Good project has been launched. It is the new NUS scheme connecting students with organisations to complete research projects on sustainability topics. The GJA has registered and we will be reporting on progress in future newsletters.

The web site is at www.nus.org.uk/dfg

Liza Sentence, SWRMB Env rep.

9. From the Archives.

Cluff, Florence Amy (Flo) (1902–1990)

Trade unionist, communist and pensioner activist, born on 4 November 1902 at Chillagoe, Queensland, fifth of nine children of Frederick William Davis, an English-born railway carpenter, and his Victorian-born wife Florence Emma, née Nightingale. Flo attended primary schools at Chillagoe and Einasleigh, and Cairns District High School from 1917, returning home to Einasleigh in 1919 as a pupil-teacher. After her father's death in a railway bridge accident in 1921, she left teaching to look after her mother and brothers, but within months her mother also died. Unable to return to teaching, she married Robert Dawson Kershaw, a labourer, on 29 November 1921 with Anglican rites at Einasleigh. In 1931 she went to Brisbane, where she worked in hotels to support herself and her two youngest brothers; in 1932 she and Kershaw divorced.

Moving to Sydney in 1935, Flo worked at a Pitt Street café, sometimes for thirteen or fourteen hours a day, for a weekly wage of about £2. During the Depression union membership had dropped dramatically, award conditions were seldom observed, and activists were dismissed. At meetings of the Hotel, Club, Restaurant, Caterers, Tea Rooms & Boarding House Employees' Union of New South Wales, she met the communists Topsy Small and Vic Workman. Flo, 'a friendly pretty woman with a gentle air who, in the past had been more interested in dancing than in union affairs', returned to part-time work after the birth of her daughter and, in February 1937, joined the Communist Party of Australia. On 29 November 1940 at the registrar general's office, Sydney, she married Geoffrey Davis, soldier, former waiter and father of her child. They later divorced.

In 1940 Flo Davis was elected to the HCRU executive. She then became an organiser, assistant secretary (1941) and secretary (1945). One of the first women elected as secretary of a union, through her leadership she radicalised the HCRU. Equal pay was achieved for women cooks in the larger hotels; later the five-day working week in the catering industry, sick leave, and weekend penalty rates for club workers were won. The HCRU endorsed the 1946 boycott of Dutch ships during the Indonesian independence struggle; supported the 1949 miners' strike; worked with other left-wing unions in 1948 to fund a full-time country organiser; protested against encroachment on Aboriginal land for nuclear testing at Maralinga, South Australia; opposed the Menzies government's Communist Party dissolution bill (1950) and the Korean War; and helped establish the New South Wales Peace Council in 1949. Davis stood unsuccessfully for the Senate on the Communist Party ticket in 1955 and 1958. Following absorption of the HCRU into the Federated Liquor & Allied Industries Employees' Union of Australia, New South Wales branch, in 1961, she was assistant secretary until 1968. On her retirement she was named Woman of the Year by the Australian International Women's Day Committee.

A delegate to the State Labor Council and the Australian Council of Trade Unions for over thirty years, Davis was also prominent in the campaign for equal pay for women. She represented the HCRU on the Council of Action for Equal Pay which Muriel Heagney had helped to establish in 1937. Davis became the council's assistant-secretary and also served on the Labor Council equal pay committee established in 1941. As vice-president of the New South Wales section of the Union of Australian Women, she participated in a delegation attending a Women's

International Democratic Federation congress in Denmark in 1953, returning through the Soviet Union and then China, where she spent a month as a guest of the Chinese women's movement.

Flo Davis married Eric James Richard Cluff, a retired cleaner, on 9 October 1975 at the registrar general's office, Sydney. After travelling around Australia, they joined the Petersham group of the Combined Pensioners' Association (of New South Wales). Mrs Cluff enjoyed the social activities, but her skills were again in demand: in 1979 she became assistant-secretary and in 1980 secretary of the State branch. She worked long days, lobbying State and Federal governments for better pensions, health and welfare services, utility rebates and transport concessions. In 1983 she led the campaign against the assets test on pensions.

Mrs Cluff was awarded the OAM in 1984. After a lifetime working for social justice, she resigned as secretary of the Combined Pensioners' Association in 1988. Survived by her husband and her daughter, she died on 20 September 1990 at Kogarah and was buried in the independent section of Rookwood cemetery.

Citation details

Danny Blackman, 'Cluff, Florence Amy (Flo) (1902–1990)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/cluff-florence-amy-flo-12330/text22149>, published first in hardcopy 2007, accessed online 18 November 2016.

Thanks to Verne Hardingham for suggesting this for the branch newsletter.

10. Where does the money go?

GDP, the sum total of output, is used as a measure between countries of their 'wealth'. How countries spend their income is often presented using **% GDP**. Of course, what the numbers show depends how the public spending is classified into groups.

The 4 groups with the highest %GDP (UK) in 2015 were Health, Pensions, Welfare & Education. As a retired union member I am interested in all of these.

Over my working life in Education, 1965 to 2002, Education, has remained level, at around 4% GDP. Health spending increased from less than 3% to over 7%. Pensions more than doubled from around 3% to 7%. Welfare rose from 3.6% to 6%. The latest comparable figures I could find were for 2015, as a % of UK GDP:

Health 7.31

Pensions 7.76

Welfare 7.38

Education 5.9

Totalling 26.4% GDP, these 4 account for nearly two-thirds of government spending. The rest goes on Defence 2.47; Protection (Police Fire Courts Prisons) 1.62; Transport 1.11; General government 0.74 Other 6.41; Interest 2.51

The total, 41.26 % of GDP, puts UK between Germany and Poland on the world scale.

Source:

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

Thanks to Alan Bridgman for suggesting this for the branch newsletter

11. The Role of Retired Members.

Recruitment of members has always been a priority. However with the savage cuts in FE and potential for the same in HE, replacing lost membership is now critical. It may be that we, as retired members are able to help.

12. Branch rules.

Branches are asked to adopt or adapt the model local rules adopted by Congress 2016. <http://tinyurl.com/swrmb01> South West Retired Members Branch are invited to read the two documents and make comments to ucu.swest@gmail.com which will be gratefully received. We plan to ratify them at the branch meeting/AGM in February 2017.

Jo Corke

13. UCU Journal.

Recap: UCU 2015 Congress, passed a motion which called for 'the re-introduction of a regular UCU journal/magazine or newspaper at the earliest possible opportunity.'

The publication that was created in response to this decision is UCU@work and [it can now be downloaded here.](#)

Matt Waddup

UCU national head of policy and campaigns

14. Update RMB Annual conference.

The branch motion, below, was passed; now it goes to NEC for consideration.

RMBs note that there are inequalities between pension schemes (mainly USS and TPS but not exclusively), and within

each pension scheme, which significantly and differentially affect those nominated by retired members to receive survivor benefits after the pensioner's death ;

Calls upon the NEC to recognise that, as a result of the many changes in legislation, scheme rules and regulations that have been implemented during the past 5-10 years there is concern that different rules apply according to the date when a member retired;

Further recommends to the NEC that information leaflets should be produced as soon as possible indicating the current situation for members as follows:

Those who have been retired for up to 10 years, those years have been retired for 11-15 years, and those who have been retired for more than 15 years.”

Calls upon the NEC to set up a subcommittee (with access to relevant experts) to examine the current pension rights of UCU members who have already retired and who have a pension with the Teachers Pension Scheme, the USS Scheme (or other scheme within the area of influence of UCU), and in particular the benefits available to surviving spouses, civil partners and established partners (heterosexual or same sex), whether or not living at the same residence, who can prove a significant degree of interdependence;

Continued next page.....

Calls upon the NEC, in the light of the report of the above sub committee, to consider reopening negotiations with the relevant pension schemes in order to reduce inequalities in survivor benefits between and within schemes for the reassurance of existing and future pensioners.

END

15. National Pensioners Convention: Western region.

Ruth is our NPC and Glos trade council rep. NPC would welcome any additional members attending meetings in Cheltenham or Bristol. If you would like to attend, email ucu.swest@gmail.com and we will send you the information.

For more information

**please contact ucu.swest@gmail.com
or contact the officers here:**

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