



GREATER LONDON REGION RETIRED MEMBERS' NEWSLETTER

August 2014



Well, here we are over half of 2014 gone and I must say I am writing this editorial in 30 degrees heat.

It was pleasing to note that the Day of Action on 10th July turned out to be a success, and I know many of our retired members joined in the protest by helping at our branches by being on picket lines and giving out leaflets all over the Region. I, myself, attended the rally in London which was well attended but as good as the day turned out we still have to do a lot more to make this government take notice so do not forget there is another National demonstration taking place in October and I am confident our members will again join our working colleagues in their fight for a decent wage and pension.

The next struggle coming up will be with our health workers who have been fighting for months now to save the NHS from being privatised and being handed to the private sector, as we have seen with disastrous results, to care and care-homes by handing over most of it to the private sector where profit comes before people.

Our new Committee has now met a couple of times and it is refreshing to have new faces on board as it brings fresh ideas to the Committee. I bumped into quite a few members at the National Delegates Conference in Brighton. It was pleasing to note that UNISON Retired Members did quite well with rule changes. We can still make a contribution to the union. Our campaigns are still ongoing on Elder Abuse. We have a meeting soon with the Elder Abuse charity on a way forward.

On NHS, UNISON is waiting to see how things pan out in London after the changes that took place after the London elections last May. One of our Committee members is also following up the issue of the new bill proposed called Deprivation of Liberty Safeguarding Orders.

Finally, our next gathering will be our annual Seminar in September, but I must remind members that you can only attend if you are nominated by your branch as a delegate. It is no good phoning up our Secretary or turning up on the day to seek admission. You will be turned away, **You must be nominated by your branch.**



## A MESSAGE FROM THE REGIONAL RETIRED MEMBERS' COMMITTEE SECRETARY—GABBY GUARINO



We had our second set of two –day IT Training on 24th and 25th June. It was really successful. Many thanks to our tutor Almeida. Our third one in September is now fully booked.

We will be running an advance course on 5th and 6th November for anyone who has computer experience but would like to further their training. If you would like to attend please contact me, Gabby Guarino on 020 7535 6576 or you can email me at [g.guarino@unison.co.uk](mailto:g.guarino@unison.co.uk)

### Surfing the Internet may Lower Pensioner Depression Risk

Using the internet may lower the risk of depression for retired people, according to a new study from the United States.

The research was produced by a group of US universities and surveyed more than 3,000 pensioners. They found that being in a “depressed state” was common amongst pensioners and that many were in this state for multiple periods during the research. It also found that pensioners who used the internet were 33% less likely to experience that “depressed state” than those who didn't. These results were particularly relevant to those amongst the study who lived alone,

possibly because internet use helped reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation. However, as the study did not use a clinical definition of depression, some of the results reflected low moods, rather than clinical depression.

The study did lack in some details as it did not examine the lifestyle and health of participants or monitor what purpose the internet is used for amongst the group. This means that there were potentially other factors which influenced the “depressed state” of many participants.

However, if the internet use can make elderly people feel more connected to their friends and family, then that's a positive choice that's worth considering.

### HEARING AID SERVICES NOW UNDER THREAT

North Staffordshire Clinical Commissioning Group has announced plans to withdraw NHS-funded hearing aids for adults with mild to moderate age-related hearing loss. Campaigners say this would have a devastating impact on those who miss out; leaving them unable to properly communicate in their day to day lives.

The charity *Action on Hearing Loss* is worried that if the proposals go through there will be further cuts across the country. Since the NHS was established in 1948, hearing aids have been provided free to those who need them.

Campaigners say that the plan to decommission such services is concerning because early diagnosis and management of hearing loss is much more beneficial for the individual, and more cost effective for the NHS than waiting until someone reaches a critical point.

Jan Shortt, NPC vice president said “This is a real life example of how the cuts are damaging people's lives”.

Those wishing to support the campaign against the proposals can visit [actiononhearingloss.org.uk](http://actiononhearingloss.org.uk) or call 0808 8080123

## UNISON ANNUAL DELEGATE CONFERENCE 2014 -

Brighton Centre – 17<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> June 2014

The 21<sup>st</sup> UNISON Annual Delegate Conference was held in Brighton. Brighton is the home of the Royal Pavilion, King George IV's Seaside Fantasy Palace with its Indian domes & oriental interiors. One of Europe's most extraordinary Royal Palaces.

The Conference opened on Tuesday, 17<sup>th</sup> at 10.30am and was chaired by Maureen le Marinel. There were eight sessions during the four days and in between there were caucus meetings and fringe events.

The Conference was attended by 1,406 delegates and 1,019 visitors, representing 1,266,750 members. Two members from the National Retired Members Committee and 12 representatives from the Regional Retired Members Committee also attended the Conference.

There were 128 motions and 32 rule changes. All of the motions supported by the NEC were carried successfully. This year's Conference was an important and remarkable one for the UNISON Retired Members, as during the Conference a few rules were changed and carried by a two thirds majority. These changes give new rights, which will enable Retired Members to take a more active role in UNISON.

The UNIZONE is an exhibition of UNISON's key Campaigning, bargaining and organising work. UNIZONE offered a great range of interactive sessions, exhibitions, talks, specialist advice and fun. The zone was held from Monday to Thursday at the foyer.

Finally, I would like to thank the London Region Retired Members' Committee for nominating me to attend the 21<sup>st</sup> UNISON National delegate Conference and Gabby for all the assistance given to me.

*Raymond Gnanapragasam*

### **REGIONAL RETIRED MEMBERS SEMINAR THURSDAY 18TH SEPTEMBER 2014—10AM—3PM**

Look out for paperwork which will be sent out soon inviting you to attend our Regional Retired Members Seminar which will be held at ULU, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HY. **If you would like to attend please contact your branch who will register you as a delegate.**

## PENSIONERS PAYING £45BN IN TAX

New analysis of government data shows that the average pensioner household now pays out 30 percent of its annual income in tax. This amounts to £6400 a year from an average income of £21,300 and is made up of a combination of direct and indirect taxes. In total, the pensioner population pays a total of £45.6bn in tax per year.

Of the 30 percent of its annual income that the average retired household pays in tax, just under three fifths (£3,800) is in indirect taxation.

As such, retired households with lower incomes are likely to find themselves paying out greater proportion of their incomes in tax than those with greater wealth.

Whilst VAT and income tax are the largest duties that older people have to pay—each consuming eight per cent of the average retired household's annual income—council tax also accounts for around four percent. Indirect taxes other than VAT including

vehicle excise duty, taxes on alcohol, tobacco and petrol, combine to take a further 10 percent.

Ron Douglas, NPC president said “Just because you may have retired from work, doesn't mean that you have retired from paying tax. Whether you are liable for income tax or you are paying VAT on your purchases, the contributions you make to the Exchequer will continue throughout your retirement”.

“This completely undermines the recent argument that has suggested that older people are somehow getting something for nothing when they claim their bus pass or winter fuel allowance” he added.

This new evidence also supports the NPC's claim that older people continue to make a valuable contribution to the country, regardless of the fact that they are no longer working. “We're still economically active” said Mr Douglas.

If you've been a UNISON member for at least two years on the day you retire and have either reached state pension age or get a pension, you can become a retired member. UNISON retired members enjoy all the benefits of UNISON membership including:

Legal Advice  
Welfare Support  
Special Discounts and offers on a wide range of financial offers and other services

### FORTHCOMING EVENTS / MEETINGS

- 18th September - Retired Members Seminar
- 14th —15th October —Retired Members Conference—Southport
- 5th & 6th November —Advanced IT Course
- 13th November— Committee Meeting—Members only

#### **For further information or any queries please contact:-**

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