

STAYING ACTIVE in UNISON

GREATER LONDON REGION RETIRED MEMBERS

WINTER 2019

RETIRED MEMBERS CONFERENCE SOUTHPORT 1-2 OCTOBER 2019 LONDON SEMINAR



'NAME AND SHAME LORDS'

An outraged delegate said in response to the Lords Committee proposing the abolition of bus passes, senior concessions, Winter fuel payments and the triple pension lock. National Pensioners Convention representative Jan Shortt described it as an attempt to roll back the welfare state, increase poverty, and to drive a wedge between young and old. Pensioners contribute to the economy with unpaid childcare and voluntary work, affirmed Christine McAnea, Assistant General Secretary. Pensions are not a benefit, but have been paid for already.

The Winter Fuel allowance was a sop instead of a decent pension increase.

SEASONAL DEATHS RISE

Delegates spoke of the UK pension as the lowest in any developed country. Seasonal deaths are recorded as higher than

forty years ago, accentuated by poor housing, high energy costs, and restricted benefit payments.

ANTI-SOCIAL CARE

A delegate noted that Matt Hancock, Health Secretary, didn't mention social care in his speech to the Tory Party conference. A Green Paper was promised in June, but hasn't materialised. A Nottingham speaker spoke of the increase of dementia sufferers in care homes, with a widespread lack of staff training to address this. Further speakers described the absence of a career structure for carers who are often not reimbursed travelling expenses and only have fifteen minute time slots to care for clients.

A Birmingham delegate described how a two year strike and victory was followed by staff reductions, more privatisation and Care Quality Commission reports on inadequacies.

NO QUALITY IN CQC

Further speakers referred to abuse and neglect of the elderly and the continuing inability of the CQC to enforce proper care standards.

CANCER SCANNING

Delegates highlighted unequal scanning age limits, which are set locally, with an upper limit of 74. Breast and bowel cancer are the two main killers, while there are no scans for prostate, penile or male breast cancer.

DIGITAL DISCRIMINATION

Concerns were expressed on the widespread use of online applications for local services and benefits, which exclude pensioners with no such access.

HELPFORCE NOT HELPFUL

Delegates who disagree that Retired Members should have contact with the private company set up to organise NHS volunteers, expressed concern that a motion from last year's conference had not been implemented by the National Committee. In response, a Committee Member noted the concerns, and explained that the motion wasn't debated at the National Conference. However, the Volunteer Charter is needed.

It is a reality and has been negotiated by UNISON Health and other trade unions between NHS Staff and Helpforce, ruling out volunteers carrying out paid roles

TWO MOTIONS BALLOT

Delegates chose two motions to be put on the National conference agenda: Composite B Health & Social Care Provision for Older People, and

Composite C Austerity-Defending the Living Standards of Older People

GOOD NEWS FROM WALES

A delegate from Flintshire reported that her mother, age 103 has been looked after for eighteen years by trained and dedicated Council staff, where in-house provision is increasing.

TV LICENCE CAMPAIGN

Retired Members were encouraged to protest to the BBC and Government on the restriction of free licenses only to pensioners receiving tax credit over 75.

AGEING WELL

Retired Members were encouraged by speakers to keep their minds and bodies active, to organise, pressure, and protest, to defend public services and to speak up for families and communities in the fight for justice and equality.



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Our Annual Seminar took place this year on 8th October at the NEU.

SEMINAR SPEAKERS

Maggi Ferncombe, London Regional Secretary, explained the need to recruit more young stewards and workplace contacts. Also to encourage increased participation, with low voting in NEC elections and industrial action ballots.



999 CALLS 6,000 PER DAY Eddie Brand, Branch Secretary London Ambulance Service, talked about his work in the NHS, the mental health pressures on call handlers, long ambulance drives, queuing to offload patients, and private ambulances with low standards of care and working. He hoped that body cameras may mean less violence against staff.



DEFENDING PENSIONS Simon Steptoe, Greenwich Local Government Branch, talked about Pension Boards' priority to maximise returns for beneficiaries. Some disinvestment from fossil fuels is happening. Campaigns continue against Council service cuts and pri-



vatisations intended to reduce pay and pensions. Young people need to be encouraged to join the scheme.

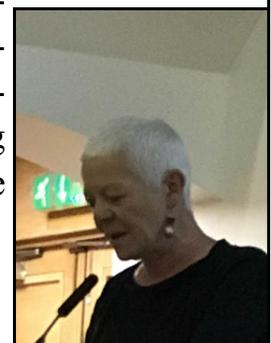
YOUNG MEMBERS UPDATE

Josephine Grahl, National Young Members Officer, reported on recruitment progress in the Year of Young Members, currently 60,000. Several 50 plus activists will retire during the next few years. Potential activists need to be talent-spotted and mentored. Branch representatives are encouraged to take advantage of the wealth of Retired Members' experience and knowledge to pass on. 'Youthquake' describes the high cost of accommodation, precarious employment status, and zero hours contracts, which young people are experiencing. This month a UNISON Young Members Charter is being launched, featuring quality apprenticeships, fair pay and conditions, equality, free training and development opportunities.



DEFENDING BENEFITS

Megan Dobney, National Assembly of Women, argued for intergenerational fairness, missing from the Lords' Report proposing the abolition of all pensioner benefits. Pensioners have paid for these benefits, and would suffer greatly from an abolition of the triple pension lock. Any levelling down would increase pension poverty.



ELIZABETH R. MEETS PARMODH S.



Parmodh Sharma, RM London Committee Member, met the Queen at a Windsor Castle reception to mark the National Council of Voluntary Organisations Centenary. He represented the Barnet Elderly Asians Group.

MEMBER INVOLVEMENT THE EALING WAY

Our retired members are well qualified in their own fields. As local authority employees, civil servants, health workers or schools, they gave their all! Yet on retirement they are often socially isolated and do not have the same opportunities or social involvement, and this in turn affects their health. So how do we connect with our members?

We meet 14 times a year, and arrange recruitment days twice a year with the UNISON office. We talk to members and give out flyers at the UNISON AGM about the benefits of being retired, and also at the Local Government Pension Scheme AGM to publicise our existence. We set up a Retired Members Group page on the UNISON website, and communicate via social media and What's App groups. We call members who haven't attended meetings, and send each member a personalised Christmas card, either to thank them for their valuable contribution, or to check on their health. We invite them to our events.

How do we manage to do this? We have a committee that meets once a month as well as an all member meeting. We discuss whether our members' needs have been met, what have our members asked for, and who should be our next speakers. We prepare the agenda for all our meetings.

Amarjit Jammu, Chair, Ealing Branch Retired Members

Editor: Paul Duployen

Sub-Editors: Gabby Guarino & Richard Mann

Southport Pier & Lake pictures: with grateful acknowledgement to Visit Southport

News from the Chair.

We are going through some very precarious times in our schools, hospitals, police, firebrigades with threats of reduction of workers rights.

Hopefully we will end the year with more clarity and safety to jobs and the future of public services.

I hope to see many of you at our next Annual Delegates Meeting on 10th March 2020.

Ann Jefferson, Chair, Retired Members Committee



From the Retired Members Secretary:

Those of you that are regular delegates to our Seminar may have noticed that our Chair, Ann Jefferson, was missing from our top table this year.

Ann has had a major operation but I am pleased to report all went very well and she is on the road to a full recovery. We wish you a very speedy recovery Ann and look forward to seeing you at our ADM on 10th March 2020

Paperwork for the Annual Delegates Meeting will be sent to all branches at the beginning of the new year.

Next year we will be holding a joint ADM and Seminar and they will take place at the UNISON Centre. Full details will follow in the new year

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