

MEETING OF RETIRED MEMBERS' REPS  
UCU CONGRESS  
HARROGATE, SUNDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2019

**Chair's Informal Notes**

Twelve members attended, representing eight regions and nations; Linda Newman and Maureen McKenzie from UCU Headquarters were also present.

Formal business aside, the main matters covered were:

1. A presentation from Jen Hart of the Education Support Partnership (ESP);
2. Reports from branches;
3. Reports from external representatives;
4. Motions from Branches

1. UCU and its predecessors have a long history of close ties with the Education Support Partnership (originally the *Teachers' Benevolent Fund*, then *CUSN – Colleges and Universities Support Network*- and most recently *Recourse*). Jen Hart, Relationship Development Manager, outlined the main work of ESP and signalled future developments.

While the great majority of those staff helped are in the schools sector, 10% are in post-compulsory education, and the trend is to a growth in the College and Universities. ESP offers an advisory helpline 24/7 covering the whole year, and can provide both counselling and advice, as well as targeted financial support. The latter amounted to £300,000 in the last year, about 10% of which went to staff in tertiary education.

Although many of the problems are common to schools, colleges and universities, there are interesting differences. The fact that the tertiary sector has one of the worst records of all employment for casualisation is an important factor; in colleges in particular stress resulting from regular restructuring is particularly significant; and in universities pressures arising from aggressive and interfering management styles are specially noteworthy.

ESP is engaged in work to expand its recognition in tertiary education and to reach far more of those who could benefit from its resources, and project which Jen Hart is specifically committed to. Much of the funding comes from individual supporters – information about how to help can be found at the website: [www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk](http://www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk). The helpline for those who wish to make contact is 08000 562 561.

2 The common theme from branches was – with a few important exceptions – that of dedicated committee members representing a relatively small group of active members. Problems of geography, accuracy of contact lists, and the reality that many retired members are content to sit on the sidelines, are common across the field. Nevertheless a significant amount of work is carried out, including membership of local trades councils, support for UCU branches where appropriate, involvement in national organisations like the NPC, work in the areas of pensions and university governance, and contributions to UCU nationally through Congress.

Taking these factors into consideration, it was agreed at the meeting that the discussion topic submitted by West Midlands branch, proposing topic-based sub-groups, whatever the virtues

of such a process, would be impractical in the light of the limited numbers of active committee members.

Finally, one delegate noted the problems which arise when retired member are excluded from matters which seem to be employment-related (such as the financial implications of the gap between the expected retirement age and the raised age following recent government decisions), despite their obvious experience and knowledge. This exclusion follows from CBC guidelines directing such business to sector conferences. Our own branch's motion dealing with this issue (B1) on the Congress Agenda, was late and could not be taken.

3 Our external delegates – Norman Jemison on NPC and the TUC pensioners committee; Pat Roche on the Health and Care Working Part; and Philip Burgess both on NPC and the PSPC (Public Services Pensioners' Council) – provided detailed updates on their work. The NPC is our main contact for the TUC, though that is somewhat problematic given the latter's resistance to any proposal that its pensions committee might be enabled to bring motions to Congress. PSPC has, amongst its other strengths, a certain ability to win the attention of Government – important when pensions are (yet again!) under 'review'. Pat Roche has done sterling work in briefing us on a matter which is currently threatening NHS England: so-called Integrated Care Providers. While in principle integrating care needs and health seems admirable, the English system is heavily biased toward private provision by business units, and seems at risk of being as un-caring and dis-credited as its equally oxymoronic named partner in crime, 'Universal Credit'.

4 We passed two informal motions from London branch: on the link between pollution and Alzheimer's disease; and a call to scrap the Integrated Care Providers contract. The latter is connected to the concerns expressed by Pat Roche, and it was agreed that as Chair I should liaise with Linda Newman to take forward Pat's proposal (originally brought to the Annual Meeting in November) for UCU to host a consultative conference amongst healthcare reps in UCU and other unions to address this whole matter.

**Alastair Hunter**

**2 June 2019**