

BRANCH LINES

Retired
Members
edition

UNISON West Sussex Branch newsletter • www.unisonwestsussex.org.uk

Retired Members' Conference, Labour Leadership Election,

Clueless Council and Much More

Hello and welcome to the second edition of our Retired Members' Newsletter. There's plenty for you to get involved in so please take a moment to read through it and see what's going on.



Retired Members' Conference

Retired Members' Conference takes place this year in Brighton on 6 & 7 October and we still have a spare place to fill so if you would like to go along (travel expenses paid by National and anything else from the Retired Members' budget) please let me know (sorry but according to UNISON rules you must be a female). The deadline is 31 July. You can also go as a visitor if you don't feel you want to be a delegate at this time, but your expenses will not be covered. We have a delegation of three at the moment so you will not be alone and it's a great way to get a flavour of the issues concerning RM nationwide! Please get in touch with me if you have any other questions, I'd really like to see us using our extra place if we can!

Still Going Strong: 83 yr old Janet Cullup from SE

Region Retired Members

Committee Gets Standing Ovation at National Delegate Conference

You may have seen in the Regional newsletter which has just come round an article on Janet's extraordinary success at Conference. Well here's the link so you can see her in action yourself:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ctduPPcjy7Y&feature=youtu.be>



Janet spoke on several motions including one about how retired members and young members could work together. She made a great contribution to the event and gave a really high profile to retired members of the union. Well done Janet!

Labour Party Leadership Contest

No matter what you think of the Labour Party or of Jeremy Corbyn, you surely cannot fail to have been riveted by the cliffhanger which saw his nomination being accepted minutes before the closing deadline, or the avalanche of support he is now gathering all over the country, particularly from the young. It's a phenomenon which at the very least must make a sizeable contribution to the debate on the Party's future, and at best could even lead to positive change in the way we do politics.

So if you want to have your say, you will need to have a vote and the simplest way to do this is to become a Labour Party supporter (not necessary to be a member) and this will cost you the princely sum of £3. You need to have registered before 12 August to vote. Just click on the link support.labour.org.uk

I know that in the past APF members were able to vote through UNISON, but the position of RM is not clear so to avoid missing out just follow the link above.

You can watch the leadership and deputy leadership hustings at which the candidates addressed a UNISON audience here: <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLOC2tezWmZ8kVj3n0kSViZ1wAQS0SEldR>



Clueless Council

You may have seen the recent headlines in the Argus referring to the disappearance of millions of pounds from the Council coffers, mainly through appallingly poor contract management. Not only did the Council have no idea where the money had gone, they couldn't even give a precise figure, so inadequate were their procedures, and this at a time when staff are being increasingly squeezed to produce "efficiency savings" and the services that we all rely on are being cut to the bone.

I sent round an email asking people to write to the press on this matter, and I'm asking you again now if you can spare a few minutes to do this. If you missed the original email, in which I gave a few suggestions as to points you could raise, or if you want to see the Argus pages again, please let me know.



National Pensioners' Parliament

In June, delegates from South East Region UNISON attended the annual Pensioners' Parliament which is held every year in Blackpool. The event is organised by the National Pensioners' Convention and attracts wide support from trade unions and other organisations concerned with the welfare of



older people, and always attracts excellent speakers. Two reports were received by the SERMC of the event, here are some of the main points:

- Two outstanding speakers at the Opening Session were David Honeybone, a Care UK worker who explained in a very moving speech why he had become a first time striker to protest the appalling working conditions endure by him and his colleagues, and Natalie Bennett, leader of the Green Party
- Neil Duncan Jordan of the NPC talked about the new freedom to spend your pension pot, pointing out that the average sum was around £37k and what were you supposed to live on after it had gone, adding that the new "single tier" pension system was too complicated and was already beginning to unravel.
- Roz Altman, the new Pensions Minister, was too busy with a private company "advising" people how to spend their pension pots to meet with the NPC.
- Unions received a lot of criticism during the course of the Parliament for not making action on pensions more of a priority.

Young Workers' Event – Your

Input Needed!

Later in the year the Branch are planning to organise an event which will give an opportunity for young people to hear first hand from retired members about the relevance of the union to their working lives. I don't know about you, but I feel very strongly that young people simply don't get a chance to even form an idea of what unions are about, there is such a campaign of vitriol towards them from the popular press, and it is up to us to redress the balance because no-one else will! In my experience, even many union members today have little idea of the principle of solidarity, without which of course a union's effectiveness is severely compromised. So I'm only too happy to try to point out some of the benefits that unions have delivered, are continuing to deliver, and will deliver in the future.

Of course the other important aspect to this is the need to counteract the attempt by government and the media to create an intergenerational divide, telling youngsters that greedy baby boomers are to blame for the terrible lack of opportunities available to them. I'm sure you all have young family members who have difficulty finding a job, somewhere to live, and who find it impossible to plan any sort of future. And I also know that if you are anything like me, far from being the selfish monster as portrayed in the press, your heart bleeds for them and you would do anything in your power to help.



And talking of young people..... Cuts to Further Education

Karen Fisher, Steward at Northbrook College and Regional FE and 6th Form Committee Member, has written a report on cuts being made to Further Education not just in West Sussex but nationwide. This affects not only youngsters trying to get a good start in life but older people as well who for one reason or another want to go back to studying. Karen says:

“The government has cut the adult education budget by 24% for the coming academic year; this is on top of budget cuts already made in previous years. Further education colleges are in crisis with nearly every college making sweeping cuts to jobs and courses. Even the Association of Colleges is stating that FE colleges are in their death throes”

Members are now being balloted for strike action to protest against the shrinkage of this vital service.

You can support them by going to fefunding.org.uk and finding out more about the campaign.

Any comments?

Hope you found something of interest here and maybe you will join us at the next RM group meeting on 14 August at 12 noon in County Hall, Chichester. The agenda will be coming round soon with further details but as usual car parking is available if you let me or the Branch Office know in advance and sandwiches will be provided.

And please let me know if you have any suggestions at all re the newsletter – I know it's far from perfect but I think it's an improvement on its predecessor which was basically a sheet of A4!

Have a lovely summer and I'll see you on the 14th!

The photo below shows a petition, signed by 42,500 people protesting the cuts to FE, being handed into 10 Downing Street last month.

