



## **Unite Retired Members' National Newsletter – March 2023**

### **NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING DECEMBER 2022**

**Report by Philip Wiseman, your NEC delegate**

#### **Notes from the General Secretary's update to the NEC**

The General Secretary (GS) reported to NEC that Unite has managed to conclude many disputes for our members. The most recent figures demonstrate that we have achieved over £200 million in increases to pay and conditions for our members as a result of successful strike action, including the deal at Liverpool docks, worth over 14%.



NEC was told that we have balloted our people in the public health sector and the biggest dispute will be the NHS. As well as pay, our members are also striking to save the NHS and for the principle of free healthcare. The underfunding of the NHS is part of the government's strategy to undermine and privatise the service. The GS made it clear that we are committed to supporting our people fully if they wish to take strike action.

Politically it has been disastrous for many months, brought together by the Truss mini-budget. The GS emphasised that Labour cannot sit back and accept the fiscal rules of the Chancellor. Unite will not take on board austerity 2.0. The government is introducing more anti-trade union legislation and Unite is ready for any attack. Regarding taxing our strike fund, the GS told NEC that we are ready to put more money aside and we will get better organised whatever the government does.

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## RETIRED MEMBERS PLUS

There are now 68,477 members in the Retired Members Plus programme, an increase of 1,737 since the last report.

### Notes from the Political Report to the NEC

Never again can anyone believe it when a Conservative politician tells you that they are the party of working people. The reckless, callous mini-budget has trashed an already weak economic position on Unite members and all working people, with those in the worst situation hit the most. People who may have voted Conservative at the last election are dismissing the government and the heat is on the Labour Party not just to be there as better than 'Conservative chaos' but to win permanent support because Labour is for real change and is on the side of working people.





# THE IMPORTANCE OF RETAINING THE UNION'S POLITICAL FUND

## Report by Mike McLoughlin

Roisin McDermott from the Political Department addressed the Retired Members National Committee in January. She stressed the importance of the upcoming ballot in May for the retention of the union's political fund. This ballot is a legal requirement imposed by the Thatcher government and must take place every ten years.

Retired members can play an important role in the ballot and help secure a victory and retain the political fund, according to Roisin. This will, however, be a challenging campaign because many members believe that the political fund goes directly to the Labour Party. Roisin stressed that the political fund is not a fund for the Labour Party, it's the members' fund.

Without the political fund we would not be able to campaign on the issues of the NHS, cost of living, anti-strike bill or the triple lock. The government insists that we cannot use money obtained from union subscriptions to fund political campaigns – that is why we need a successful ballot to retain the political fund. The Political Fund allows us to put our money where our mouth is when it comes to campaigning on the issues that matter to members.

You can get materials for the campaign to keep the Political Fund from your regional Unite office by contacting the office or your Regional Political Officer.

## PARLIAMENTARY UPDATE

### Report by Mike McLoughlin

Roisin McDermott from the Political Department also gave an update on the union's activity in Parliament over the last quarter.



**NPC winter deaths demonstration outside Downing St, London, January 2023**

We have provided political support from politicians at all levels for a number of live industrial disputes including Shelter, Felixstowe Ports and Hitachi.

There have also been several key pieces of legislation passing through Parliament, most prominently the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Bill and the union has actively been briefing MPs and members of the House of Lords on our concerns. This bill is a blatant attack on workers, trade unions and democracy and we have been clear that it must be opposed both in terms of its content and also its rushed passage through Parliament, avoiding proper scrutiny. The Committee Stage, Report Stage and Third Reading all took place in a day – a timetable usually reserved for emergency situations such as war or pandemic. Unfortunately the bill passed its Second and Third Reading in the Commons, 315-246 with opposition parties and one Conservative MP voting against.

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## **NATIONAL PENSIONERS CONVENTION (NPC)**

### **Report by Tony O'Brien**

The NPC will be holding two events in summer: a one-day Policy Conference on 27th June and a two-day Conference on 28th & 29th June, both in Blackpool.

The NPC plays an important role in the movement, organising and supporting various protests. However the NPC cannot manage without the support and participation of the whole movement. Unite is a major donor to the NPC and it is important that we get more of our people involved in it.

It is also crucial that more branches affiliate to the NPC: this funding is critical to the long-term future of the NPC.

# **CAMPAIGNING PRIORITIES OF THE NPC**

## **Report by Mike McLoughlin**

We held a productive meeting with the National Pensioners' Convention (NPC) in February 2023 to discuss campaigning together. The NPC outlined their top three campaigning priorities:

1. Social care and the NHS – campaigning for a National Care Service.
2. Older People and Ageing Commissioner – campaigning for an independent commissioner responsible for older people.
3. State Pension Age – campaigning against the government's plans to bring forward the retirement age to 68 and ultimately campaigning for the State Pension Age to be reduced to 65. The NPC aims to bring the TUC on board to launch a large intergenerational campaign.

The meeting was positive and we agreed to work together closely.

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## **CAMPAIGNING FOR OUTSTANDING BUS SERVICES: NATIONAL CONFERENCE SATURDAY 17TH JUNE**

The Yorkshire and Humber Pensioners Convention is hosting a national conference, "Campaigning for outstanding bus services", to bring together people and organisations from across the UK who want to fight for better services – to demand both guaranteed funding and an end to the privatisation which has created the crisis we face. The conference will take place on Saturday 17th June (11am to 4pm) in York and will be hybrid to allow online participation.

The aim of the conference is to build a coalition of all those groups concerned about the impact of poor bus services. It will be an opportunity to share experiences and work together to develop powerful and effective campaigns both locally and nationally. We already have sponsors from as far afield as Glasgow, Bristol and Merseyside.

To register as a supporter or for further details email YHPC on:  
[yandhpc@gmail.com](mailto:yandhpc@gmail.com)





**Retired Members at the Education Course show their support to #SaveDebtAdvice**

## SAVE DEBT ADVICE CAMPAIGN

The pandemic, soaring inflation and energy costs, stagnating wages and years of attacks on social security have created the worst household debt crisis in living memory.

Expert free debt advice has never been more important, yet funding cuts threaten access to this service, and advisers' jobs.

On Monday 13th March, Unite for a Workers' Economy organised a historic first day of action in London.

Unite is calling on the government to increase and extend the levy which pays for debt advice services, so that all organisations which create problem debt or profit from it make a contribution to fixing it.



**Tanis Belsham-Wray, former debt adviser, addresses the demonstration at the Treasury.**



## WEST MIDLANDS LONG SERVICE BADGE PRESENTATION DECEMBER 2022

This was a long awaited and successful evening which had been delayed due to Covid. The presentations were made by Annmarie Kilcline, Regional Secretary and Maureen Scott Douglas, Regional Women's and Equalities Officer.



**Monica Taylor**  
52 years' service



**Ron McStocker**  
72 years' service



**Jimmy Ray**  
70 years' service



**Richard Alford**  
62 years' service



**Lol Thurstan**  
52 years' service



**Mick McBride**  
52 years' service

### Contributions wanted

Please send your letters, reports and photos for publication in this newsletter or on the retired members' website to the editor **Mike McLoughlin** at the following email address:

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