



Seasonal Greetings to all our Retired Members

May this Christmas bring you joy and happiness and may the New Year be merry and bright. Thanks for being such supportive comrades. Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year.

Monica Taylor Chair of the National Retired Members Coordinating Committee

As Christmas approaches, I'd like to send my thanks to all our retired members for their support throughout this year. Your work has helped highlight many of our campaigns both regionally and nationally. You turn out come rain or shine to support our industrial members and have held the government

to account on matters of concern for our retired members. I am proud to work with you all and wish you and your families a merry Christmas.

By **Caren Evans**, National Officer,
Unite the union

Christmas Message from the General Secretary

Dear Friends,

When I was elected, I wanted to give practical support to our retired activists, to help deliver on your priority campaigns. I also said that I wanted our retired section to be more integrated and part of the fabric of our Union. Using your vast experience to make our Union even stronger. I'm delighted that in the time since, we have been able to make concrete progress towards turning those promises into reality. For the first time in Unite's history we have introduced dedicated organising support for your retired members' campaigns. Josh and

Aidan have been working with activists and branches as a focal point to provide support and contribute ideas to help drive your campaigns forward, including campaigns for:

- **Better Buses**
- **Triple Lock**
- **68 is too late**

In January we will begin to see our political influence being used to support retired members, when Shadow Pensions Minister Gill Furness comes to address your National

Committee. This work has all been supported by the reintroduction of the retired members' newsletter co-ordinated brilliantly by Mike. Plus, for the very first time we now have dedicated space on the Unite website for your campaigns which will be heavily developed over the coming year.

In, the near future I remain very keen on using the expertise and experience of our retired activists by introducing a mentoring scheme for young industrial Shop Stewards. I hope that we will see this up and running in 2024.

As your General Secretary, I am committed to ensuring that our retired members section

will not be a footnote in our Union. I want to continue to work with you to deliver for our retired members and the issues that matter to you all.

I would end by saying thank you for all you have done and do for our Union, every picket line you have supported and every campaign you have driven. Since I was elected, we have won over 1,000 disputes putting £420 million back into workers' pockets. Our Union is growing. Your work has helped us achieve this. Thank you for being part of Unite. I wish you and your families a peaceful Christmas and New Year.



Solidarity to you all! Sharon Graham

I would like to wish our Chair Monica Taylor, Caren Evans our National Officer, all Officer's, and retired member's, all the very best for Christmas and the new year. we have achieved a lot keep up the good work.

By **Phil Wiseman**, NEC

Black History Month

It was an honour to be part of such an inspirational event because so many iconic figures are part of Black and world history that we hear about, and what we do not know about fades into the background or have just been forgotten. This is why Unite BAEM have every reason to celebrate Black History, and making this event for the contribution that black people have made to society and the trade union movement. I hope that people will not only be informed and educated but inspired by so many influential black people that have done so much in their time. Black History Month (October) gives, everyone the opportunity to share, celebrate and understand the impact of black heritage and culture.

People from Africa and the Caribbean have been a fundamental part of British history for centuries, but Campaigners believe that their contribution has often been overlooked. So, Comrades do not let this event become a box ticking event, let us continue the work that has been started and tell the stories that have not yet been told.



Monica Taylor Retired Members National Chair pictured above receiving her surprise award.

Retired Members: Branch campaign reports

BETTER BUSES CAMPAIGN:

Lincoln Unite Retired Members Mike Hudson and Gary Hewson have campaigned for better bus service provision for Lincoln and surrounding areas. They distributed leaflets about the campaign and also retired membership forms.

We visited Lincoln Central Bus Station for a well-spent two hours on a beautiful autumn day. The best way to find out about the poor bus services is to speak to people on the ground. People are not happy with the lack of a service provision. Branch member Rodney Sadd distributed the Better Bus Campaign Leaflets whilst travelling on buses in parts of Lincolnshire and Cambridgeshire. He received a great response from the passengers. Branch member John Edwards also distributed many Better Bus Campaign leaflets in the Grims-

by and surrounding areas and was well received by the public.

Report by **Gary Hewson**, Lincolnshire RM Branch Secretary.



Photo above left to right Mike Hudson and Gary Hewson.

CAMPAIGNERS FROM BETTER BUSES FOR SOUTH YORKSHIRE:

We were joined by witches and ghouls, gathered outside a meeting of the South Yorkshire Enhanced Partnership to protest our zombie bus services. More cuts to timetables and fare rises for young people are due to take place next week.

It is the 37th anniversary of deregulation this week. Those 37 years have brought disaster and a vicious and worsening cycle of decline. We need fair funding for our services and an end to privatisation. See our photo below which shows our branch members in good form and

getting into the spirit of Halloween, there was a particularly good turnout from branch members for this event.

We have also received a great response from the public when we distributed Better Bus Campaign leaflets. The withdrawal of bus services has hit our rural areas particularly hard. It affects retired people, and people who can no longer travel to work by bus. The Photo below shows our Branch Members in action very effectively.

Report from **Frank Tyas South Yorkshire RM Branch**



Glasgow Retired Members Branch

The Glasgow Retired Members Branch is a very active one and has a great history of activity in pursuing and supporting the interests of its members and Unite Retired Members Campaigns. The first and second Photo is showing our branch members in attendance at the Palestine Solidarity March in Glasgow. The 3rd photo is the 13th NOTE protest supporting the Unite Hospitality branch.





Northwest Pensioners Association

Note from the Editor: Below are some extracts taken from minutes submitted to me for publication on an important subject. Just a note to please submit condensed reports or letters as it the editing process for long-form submissions can be time consuming.

The Northwest Pensioners Association want to go into the community with the Trade Union movement to campaign to remove pensioner poverty. More than 2 million older people are living in poverty across the UK. Nearly a quarter of older people on low income can only just afford essential costs and often struggle to make ends meet.

We're hearing of people missing meals and regularly using food banks. People are only washing in cold water and cancelling broadband services. They are scared to put the heating or lights on. Older people are getting into debt for the first time and are cutting back on paying for care and telecare. "With the energy crisis as well, I don't drink tea anymore, because putting the kettle on is too expensive on my bills".

Poverty in later life is rising. My bank sent me a letter saying I was overdrawn. And I've not been overdrawn since I got my first bank account at the age of 17."

There is significant underclaiming of benefits and entitlements. Around £70 million per year in Greater Manchester just in Pension Credit. Nationally, 1 in 7 people aged over

65 were reliant on loans and credit cards to make ends meet, and more than half also said they wouldn't feel comfortable asking friends or family for support. Are you warm enough at home? Are you getting the best deal on your energy? Have you checked that you are getting all you are entitled to? This can be compounded by the fact that so much is online now.

What can be done?

- Join a trade union: Trade Union members are more likely to have an occupational pension with a better income.
- Send out information packs before people retire. Advertise the free Tavel Pass better and free swimming for the over 60's in Manchester.
- Highlight the difference between the two state pensions.
- Education: Get the young to know what is coming.
- Collaborate with Local Authorities, Churches, and other religious groups.
- Lower the State Pension age to 60.
- Set the state pension at a real living wage and have a sufficient Winter Allowance.
- Free TV licence for the over 70's.

By **Derek Barton**, Chair Northwest Pensioners Association

Letters to the editor

Dear Editor,

Today I read in the national newspapers of Sir Kier Starmer's admiration for Margaret Thatcher and her policies. I was shocked and disgusted that the leader of the Labour Party should utter such lavish praises on someone who caused huge misery to millions of working people. I want to make that point that not one penny should be given to the Labour Party from the funds of our union Unite. Monies should only be given to the Labour Party when it has a leader who supports working people and the re-nationalisation of industries privatised by the Conservative Party.

Regards, **Charles Lubelski**,
Retired Member Plus

Dear Editor,

I have been a member of the union for over 55 years and been an activist and shop steward for 50 years. In that time there have been many changes to the "Union" with amalgamation with other unions to make the voice of the Union stronger and to be heard by the membership. I have noted that in Wales things are changing fast. For some, too fast. They cannot keep up with the pace of Rule changes, pension rights, benefit rights, taxation, just to name some of the things. They say when you retired you'll be prepared for it, but it does come to some as a shock.

In my ideal retirement, I will play golf all day, or go on holidays around the country in my new camper van, or abroad where its warmer and pleasant and cheaper to live. They now find pensions are being attacked by the government and have stated that the pension is an "unearned income" and as such is means tested. Like many I don't mind paying

my way and paying "my bit". But what is an applicable amount? And how should your means be tested? What is the government imposes a reduction of 85p for every pound over the applicable amount?

The other problem we have is that the applicable amount or amount that the government says you can live on is always set lower than your pension. In most cases it works out at around £35. So, 85% of that will go towards your Council Tax and Housing benefits if you are claiming benefits. But why? The state pension is set by the government so they should know beforehand what I will get.

In addition, if I have a deduction from my pension then why can't I claim tax relief on it? If I am given a personal allowance, and I am already £1900 under the limit for paying tax, then why am I not entitled to a rebate every year? This would amount to around £1,500 a year. Since the Chancellor has just given us all a nice 10.1% rise all this did was make matters worse because they took 85% of the 10.1% rise as well, left the applicable amount the same. They decreased the threshold, and I got hardly anything.

Is there another 6.5% coming? I would rather they use it with the NHS and give it to them as I do not see any of this. The government are giving me more money and taking it back as unearned income. So where is the gain for me?

Do we have representation in the Welsh Senedd? I've asked questions about health, pensions, and benefit rights before and after retirement. Each time I get an answer saying "It's outside my remit". Even in London I can't get an answer. Since when has an assessment company got the right to assess me medically when the NHS already do it under the NHS and NI? They charge a minimum of £850 "each

assessment" when I checked three years ago. It must be around £1400 for more complex cases.

So, the NHS hold the main contract for the assessment process. It is the Government that should be asking the NHS about charges and the use of private assessors. What right under duty of care of a patient has the government the right to pay extortionate private contractors than the NHSD who do it for free on the NHS?

If you are going to give me a rise on my pension then make it in real terms so I gain something for 40 years+ of contributions. They even means test a private pension of £2.90 a week. Scrooge comes to mind.

David Simpson,
Retired Members Plus Cardiff

Dear Editor,

We now have a 20mph speed limit in Wales. As a driver and road user, I am not alone in finding the 20mph imposition on drivers to be exactly that. What is our unions' / members' positions regarding this? The issue with the reduction is not regarding safety of children and pedestrians, or the need to address possible safety issues. It's about blanket legislation that once imposed is fixed. There is no variation based upon whether a restriction is variable reverting back to the original speed when the issue it has been imposed for no longer applies, i.e. schools are shut after 9.00 pm. I am interested in Welsh members views upon this.

Glen Jones,
Retired Member Plus, Cardiff

Dear Editor,

All the letters to the editor in the autumn newsletter were from men. I am guessing letters from women retired members were not excluded: I'm guessing that none were received. How do we get more women retired members involved in our campaigns? If a man's state pension has been messed up as much as a women's pension has, there would be a national outcry. The horrific impact this has on all women is abominable! However, the impact on women who worked part-time is ten times worse and the injustice has never been, recognised or investigated by Unite! "68 is too late" is a great strap line, but it misses so much. It misses too much!

Over 250,000 of the four million women impacted by the change to state pension age have already died. I consider this a national disgrace! How many of those women, will we die in the next 12 months? On a separate note, the CLP motion attached includes the following: 'A Unite survey of over 10,000 members across four key sectors construction, health, buses and road haulage found overwhelming evidence' etc. Three of these four sectors are the most male dominated within our union.

The exclusion of women from Unite's Retired Members Sector is unacceptable and I am really concerned that many issues are not being exposed.

Solidarity, **Lindsey Adams**

Editorial

We have had a good response to both the summer and Autumn newsletter from readers, a variety of those responses were reproduced in the Autumn newsletter some more are reproduced in this newsletter.

There has been much activity in many areas of the country in response to the National Better Bus Campaign. Some of the reports have been reproduced for information as this campaign is of importance to retired members who need to keep hospital appointments and members who must travel to work on public transport.

The different activities carried out by branches on behalf of their members are also very interesting and varied, two good examples come to mind. The letter from the Dublin RM branch to the Irish Government's Department of Business, Employment and Retail on the Pension Entitlements of the Retired Workers 2021 Bill, is very important because it draws attention to the fact that people are living longer and that it is important that the value of their pensions are not devalued or eroded due to political decisions.

The Report from our Retired Members in Gibraltar in the Autumn edition was also of great importance because they have been involved in helping to create a unity of joint activity with other groups of retired people, which succeeded in organising a rally of 400 people on May 24th, 2023 in support of disabled people. I hope that many of our readers will have read that report and clicked on the links provided in the report. They will have given you a great insight into how these members operate on issues of importance to

their community. Their activity should prove of interest to all our branches.

Lastly the letter in the autumn edition from a Nottingham branch Member who draws attention to the fact that his branch is unable to function properly due to the ill health of its leading members. This is not uncommon, we need the assistance of Regional Officers to persuade members on retirement to remain in the union and transfer to RM branches, as we desperately need new activists, otherwise many of our branches could fold and this would be a major loss to Unite.

We have in this edition our first ever letter to the editor from a woman member (Lindsey Adams) from the Northwest region, this is great, and I am hoping that this will be the start of many letters from our female membership on the issues that are important to them, this newsletter is not just for the benefit of male retired members it's for all our retired members.

"Seasonal Greetings to all our Retired members, members of the Retired Members National Committee, Monica Taylor RM National Chair, Phil Wiseman RM NEC Delegate, Caren Evans our National Officer, and the General Secretary Sharon Graham who has given us much support over the last 12 months". We would also want to thank the Unite Organisers Joe Rollin, Claire Peden, Josh Berlyn and Aidan Harper who have given us massive support over the past year.

Solidarity, **Mike McLoughlin,**



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