

Introduction

Thanks, Branch, for sending me to Congress. It was my first time attending this type of event so please excuse me if I miss or present clumsily what occurred. I will limit this to these areas: the general vibe of optimism; our climate change motion at Congress; the Retired Members Conference; a little comment on the Interim Report of the Democracy Review.

1 Optimistic Atmosphere

I thought that Jo Grady's election to General Secretary was popular and a move leftwards which was giving heart and hope to, eg discussions about fighting back against casualisation. Jo O'Neill was also a focus for hope that this would give impetus to actions that seriously protect UCU members and informal left leaning events were well attended.

2 Retired Members Climate Change Motion

The relaxed and happy vibe bode well for our climate change motion which was seconded, and spoken in favour of, by Elizabeth Lawrence.- I had put Graham Peterson's notes into a 3-part motion structure and timed it - we used the speaking time fully though I did need to speed up at the end. It was passed without any objections or difficult questions.

3 Retired Members Meeting

Jennifer Hart gave a talk about the Education Support Partnership, discussing the many areas of its work: grants, research, counselling etc with an emphasis on staff emotional wellbeing and the objective nature ESP research.

Branch reports were circulated: some delegates spoke in detail about their branch's work. I simply presented the main points of the report Steve Cushion created. Several times delegates from other branches addressed the difficulties of getting enough members to meetings.

Reports were given on

National Pensioners Council, TUC Pensioners' Committee and a Health & Care Working Party.

There was also a discussion postponed from the Annual Meeting about a suggestion that each RM branch should set up sub-groups to take on specific issues such a Trades Council work, NHS campaigning, UCU branch activities etc. Each group was envisaged as having an 'organiser' with a list of people to be involved and would have a duty to report back to branch. This was not passed, partly because we had already been discussing how difficult it was to get people together in a meeting.

Congress Business was previewed and signposted, especially the Interim Report on the Democracy Review. I have to confess to being unable to

report on this with any expertise but have pencil notes on which pages and agenda items were of interest and am happy to share this with any branch members more knowledgeable than myself.

There were 3 motions presented, two from our branch and all three passed.

1 Pollution and Alzheimer's disease. I supported this motion by presenting the findings of a Canadian study that correlated the incidence of Alzheimer's disease with proximity to a major road. <https://www.nhs.uk/news/neurology/people-who-live-near-busy-roads-have-higher-dementia-rates/> I also listed the sources of particulates..

2 Scrap the ICP Contract. The presentation on Health and Care already had highlighted the obscure language used by the Integrated Care Providers and I was able to agree strongly with this by giving examples from the Save the NHS Website.

3 Free TV Licences for the over 75s.

I met some great people: especially other retired members, and enjoyed hearing about the struggles in my old work area – FE.

Someone who worked at the first campus I taught at told me how it was now - demolished, of course. I don't think I have ever eaten so many sandwiches or drunk so much coffee, though the air conditioning was very uncomfortable for me by the last day - so please excuse vagueness on that last session.

Alison Meeds

16 September 2019