



***NATIONAL RETIRED MEMBERS'
CONFERENCE 2007***

9-10 OCTOBER 2007

PLYMOUTH

PRELIMINARY AGENDA

Sections

- * Amendments to Standing Orders
- * Pensions
- * Campaigns
- * Retired Members' Organisation

AMENDMENTS TO STANDING ORDERS

1. STANDING ORDER 3 - SPEAKING

At the end of paragraph 3.1 add new sentence:

'Any member of a regional Retired Members' Committee attending the conference as a regional or branch delegate may be appointed by their regional Retired Members' Committee to move a motion or amendment submitted by that regional Retired Members' Committee.'

Greater London Region

PENSIONS

2. INCREASE IN THE BASIC STATE PENSION AND RESTORATION OF THE LINK

Conference regrets that in his March 2007 budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, again failed to increase the basic state pension to restore its value if the link to average earnings had not been broken by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government. Pensioners should have an immediate rise now to restore the pension value and future increases should be linked to male average earning or the Retail Price Index (RP) whichever is the greater.

The Government has also again ignored the discussions between the National Pensioners Convention and the Minister for Work and Pensions, James Hutton MP. Campaigns, responses to the Pensions White Paper and lobbies are also ignored as if pensioners do not exist. The continued attitude of the Government is deplorable and has to change if MPs are expecting pensioners to re-elect a Labour Government.

Although the link has been promised for 2012, the Treasury may decide not to implement it and many more pensioners will have died struggling to meet higher fuel bills and coping with increased council tax, water rates etc.

In the meantime, the abhorrent means testing of pensioners continues, causing concern and hardship to those who are unable to cope with the bureaucracy and who exist with incomes below the poverty level (1.8 million pensioners are entitled to Pension Credit but do not claim it according to Government figures). Other pensioners are just slightly above the cut off level for claims and are not eligible for any financial help at all.

In April 2007, Pension Credit was raised by £5 per week, basic state pension by £3, increases in Pension Credit are linked to earnings.

Therefore, Conference

1. instructs the National Retired Members' Committee (NRMCC) and calls on the National Executive Council to liaise with the National Pensioners' Convention, Trade Union Congress and all appropriate organisations to achieve:
 - a) an immediate substantial increase in the basic state pension to £138 per week to restore its value;
 - b) the immediate restoration of the link to male average earnings or RPI whichever is the greater. Deferring this link to 2012 is unacceptable;
2. instructs the NRMCC to communicate progress to all UNISON retired members:
 - i) through Senior Service quarterly in January, April and July 2008 and;
 - ii) monthly bulletins to Regional Committees to commence in January 2008.

South East Region

3. UTILITIES V PENSIONS

Once again, this vital issue is being raised at this Conference. Pensioners across the country are now facing yet again massive increases in utility bills. The increases in occupational and Government pensions do not meet the increases imposed by the utilities.

This Conference instructs the National Retired Members Committee to pursue through the National Executive Council all avenues, to demand that this Government and any other subsequent Government, takes drastic steps to remove this burden from the shoulders of all pensioners in the country, and allow them to have the basic services which they should be entitled to without worry of debt.

North West Region

4. PENSIONS NOT POVERTY

Conference congratulates Help the Aged and Help Age International on the launch of their Pensions Not Poverty Campaign.

Conference notes that two-thirds of the world's older people live in poor countries and that by 2050 there will be an estimated 2 billion people over 60. Older people are often the poorest and most vulnerable, and later life can bring persistent poverty, isolation and limited access to health care. Yet in many poor countries there is no state pension provision.

Conference believes that no matter where they live every older person has the right to life, dignity, security and a say on the issues that affect them. Receiving a guaranteed state pension that lifts them out of poverty can help turn this vision into a reality.

Conference calls on the National Retired Members' Committee to support and publicise the Pensions Not Poverty Campaign and to call on the National Executive Council and the UNISON Labour Link to urge the United Kingdom Government to take action to support older people in developing countries and to campaign for a social pension for all the world's poorest older people.

University Greenwich (M)

CAMPAIGNS

5. COUNCIL TAX

Conference believes that council tax is an inherently unfair tax which does not properly reflect people's ability to pay. More importantly it is not based on an equitable system for calculating amounts that should be paid.

This is most clearly demonstrated by the current system of council tax collection, which specifically affects pensioners who pay a disproportionate contribution based upon arbitrary bandings dependent on property values, but not on income or more crucially an ability to afford these arbitrary amounts. Whilst the proposed re-banding may be advantageous to some pensioners, this will not address the basic problem of disproportionate payments. Thus many pensioners will continue to pay a higher percentage of their limited income on council tax than their working counterparts whose income is higher.

Conference therefore supports a radical solution to this problem whereby the current 25 percent rebate for all single households is maintained; and in addition all those in receipt of a state pension, or of pensionable age, and on a total income on or below the average wage should receive a mandatory rebate of 50 percent for single householders and 25 percent for married and civil partnership couples. This would address the inequity of the current system which results in pensioners on modest fixed incomes paying far more of this income in council tax than their working counterparts.

Conference therefore instructs the National Retired Members' Committee to

- 1) liaise with the National Executive Council and other appropriate bodies about progressing this proposal;
- 2) publicise their support for this proposal through all appropriate channels;
- 3) urge retired members to write to their MPs to seek their support;
- 4) report back to Retired Members' Conference 2008

Leicestershire County

6. PENSIONERS HOLIDAY INSURANCE

Conference notes that pensioners, especially those over 80 years of age when seeking holiday insurance are either being refused insurance or being asked to pay exorbitant rates. At present insurance to Europe if you are over 75 years of age costs £96 a couple for two weeks and they do not provide yearly travel insurance to over 75's at all.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to seek to get this age discrimination removed especially with regard to UNISON recommended insurance companies.

Epsom & St Helier NHS Trust

7. NATIONAL CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL SCHEME

Conference sadly is aware of the increasing cash crisis to fund the present concessionary travel scheme for over 60's and disabled persons.

Conference is also concerned about the difficulties arising from the national travel scheme to be implemented in April 2008.

Conference urgently requests the National Retired Members' Committee to produce campaign material for use by regional and branch committees which sets out specific requirements necessary to achieve a truly workable and acceptable free travel scheme throughout the United Kingdom.

East Midlands Region

8. TRAVEL PASS

Conference acknowledges the fact that a national bus pass for pensioners is to be introduced from April 2008. Conference believes that this pass will fall short of what is needed in that it will only enable travel on local buses and exclude express travel, trains and other forms of public transport.

Conference instructs the National Retired Members' Committee to campaign for a national travel pass to enable all senior citizens to travel by road, rail and other forms of public transport.

West Midlands Region

9. FREE NATIONWIDE TRAVEL

The Government included in the 2006 budget the introduction of free local bus travel for pensioners in April 2006 and free nationwide bus travel in April 2008. The implementation of the free local bus travel in April 2006 has not been consistent. Local schemes have been implemented but with many anomalies and unfair treatment in some cities including time restrictions.

The Labour Government's policy should include free nationwide travel on buses, trams, trains, tubes/metros and all local ferries with no restrictive time penalties for implementation in April 2008.

Pensioners' health and well being would benefit greatly from the freedom to travel at any time and at no costs. Apart from the pleasure and financial help this would give pensioners, the worry of attending early hospital/doctor appointments would be eased if there were not time restrictions.

Therefore, Conference:

1. instructs the National Retired Members' Committee (NRMC) and calls on the National Executive Council to vigorously campaign together with the National Pensioners' Convention and the Trades Union Congress to put strong pressure on the Government for national funding for free nationwide travel with no time restrictions commencing in April 2008;
2. instructs the NRMC to report progress to all UNISON retired members through regions and branches by 31 January 2008.

South East Region

10. TRANSPORT PUBLIC HOSPITAL BUS PASSES

Conference notes that pensioners who are sent to hospital long distances from their homes are being denied hospital transport.

Large parts of the country have no direct public transport to hospitals, forcing some pensioners to pay as much as £100 return taxi fare to attend a hospital appointment.

Even pensioners needing chemotherapy treatment for cancer are denied free hospital transport.

National Health Service treatment is supposed to be free at the point of need. If the hospital is many miles away from your home your need is not being met.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to make representation to the Government

- 1) to ensure that pensioners receive free hospital transport if the hospitals used are more than five miles from their home
- 2) make it mandatory on public authorities to ensure that accessible public transport is in place to enable pensioners to make full use of their free bus passes to get to all National Health Service appointments and facilities.

Epsom & St Helier NHS Trust

11. CLINICAL ASSESSMENT, TREATMENT AND SUPPORT SERVICES (CATS)

Conference notes the Government's latest interference with the National Health Service (NHS) So far, two have been agreed in Lancashire, both in the same NHS Foundation Trust, which covers two hospitals. One is to be provided by a South African company and sited near to one of the hospitals, the other is to be established within and run by the other hospital. Many more are in the pipeline and are more likely to be provided by a private company rather than within the NHS.

Before hospital closures and mergers started, most hospitals were serviced by a good bus service, now patients have to travel on two or three buses in order to reach the hospital. Public transport is used mainly by the elderly, who are on limited, often low, income and find it difficult to get to the hospital or where the CATS are being set up. Taxis are expensive and relatives cannot always take the time off work to take them notwithstanding that we, the elderly, like to maintain our independence.

This Conference, through our National Retired Members' Committee calls upon the National Executive Council to use whatever influence they can to make the Government see that there is no need to mend what is not broken but where any CATS are to be set up they are wholly within and run by NHS hospitals.

North West Region

12. ENTITLEMENTS TO HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Conference believes that many older people are not fully aware of their entitlements to receive proper health and social care, in a way which suits their own circumstances. Where this is the case, patients may be deprived of their entitlements by misleading information from health care providers under financial pressure to cut services.

Particular issues on which this produces serious problems for patients include

- 1) hospital transport
- 2) attendance allowances
- 3) single sex wards
- 4) residential and nursing care

Conference therefore asks the National Retired Members' Committee to consult the National Health Committee and other appropriate committees, through the National Executive Council, about the production and distribution of an 'Entitlement Leaflet' for all retired members. The leaflet should be concise and clear and include details of how members can access comprehensive and detailed information about their own areas.

South West Region

13. ELDER ABUSE: HUMAN RIGHTS IN PRIVATE REST HOMES

In view of the fact that the rights of elderly people in private rest homes are not covered by the Human Rights Act, Conference urges the National Retired Members' Committee to take note of recent well documented cases of abuse of elderly people in these institutions and to campaign for the section of the Human Rights Act to be amended to include this vulnerable group of people.

South East Region

14. HOMECARE SERVICES

Conference notes with despair the continuing outsourcing of local authority services. Many of the services have a direct effect upon retired members.

The latest services currently being targeted for privatisation is homecare. Retired citizens are the major users of this service.

Conference therefore calls upon the National Executive Council to mount a national campaign as soon as possible to stop further privatisation of this essential service. All retired members sections and regions should be encouraged to support and take an active part in such a campaign.

Swindon

15. COLD WEATHER DEATHS

Conference is concerned that the campaign to turn down heating thermostat settings conflicts with the advice to keep a warm home.

Conference requests the National Retired Members Committee to seek, through the National Executive Council, assurances from the Government, and other interested bodies, that clear advice relating to elderly people is included in future heating economy campaigns.

East Midlands Region

16. FUEL POVERTY

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, in his March 2006 budget, totally ignored the needs of pensioners coping with higher fuel bills. Fuel poverty is described as being when a household spends at least 10 percent of its income on fuel costs.

The fuel allowance, which has remained at £200 since 2003, was not increased in line with the spiralling prices of gas and electricity. Since 2002/3 electricity has risen on average by 32 percent and gas by 48.9 percent compared with the basic state pension which has increased by only 8.7 percent. For every 10 percent rise in fuel bills, it is estimated a further 200,000 people go into fuel poverty. One result (from the Office of National Statistics) states that excess winter deaths recorded between December and March are over the numbers experienced through the rest of the year. In the period December 2005 to March 2006, 23,200 older people died and since Labour came to power in 1997, over 260,000 older people have died during the winter months. Quoting Gordon Brown, 'pensioners should not have to choose between spending money on food or spending money to keep warm.'

Therefore, Conference

1. instructs the National Retired Members' Committee (NRMC) and calls on the National Executive Council to strongly campaign for an increase of an additional £300 in the fuel allowance immediately ensuring that £500 will be available for pensioners to meet fuel bills incurred during the winter months of 2007/8. This extra money is needed as the basic state pension has not been increased to a level where fuel bills can be met without handouts;
2. instructs the NRMC to report progress in monthly bulletins to all UNISON retired members through regional committees and branches commencing in December 2007.

South East Region

17. TOILETS

Conference calls upon the National Executive Council and the National Retired Members' Committee to pressurise local authorities to stop the closure of public conveniences, as this particularly affects the older people and the disabled.

North Yorkshire

18. ADULT LEARNING

Conference condemns the decision to remove the entitlement to concessions for pensioners attending day and evening classes other than for those in receipt of pensions credit.

For many decades all pensioners could access day and evening classes either free or at a nominal cost. This allowed many people who had not previously had access to education, adult or otherwise, to enrol for subjects including GCSE and A-level, as well as a whole range of academic and non-vocational classes. The value of such options for pensioners cannot be overstated. As well as providing the opportunity for learning it also offers an important social network for people who may otherwise be socially isolated and at a time when they are adjusting to life after work.

The decision by the Government to transfer responsibility for adult learning from local authority education departments to the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) has signalled this change in emphasis and the removal of concessions to everyone not in receipt of means tested benefits. This has resulted in many pensioners being unable to attend classes as the fees can be prohibitive for anyone on a modest pension above the state minimum.

Conference believes this is a retrograde step which impinges on the rights of pensioners to have access to further education and learning in their later years, and agrees that concessions for pensioners enrolling for adult learning classes should be re-introduced.

Conference therefore instructs the National Retired Members' Committee to:

- 1) liaise with the National Executive Council to look at ways of addressing this issue including, if appropriate, liaison with Labour Link;
- 2) urge all retired members to write to their MPs seeking re-introduction of these concessions;
- 3) report back to Retired Members' Conference 2008.

Leicestershire County

19. PROVIDERS AND CONSUMERS WORKING TOGETHER

Conference regrets that UNISON's press statements on public services are often perceived as the voice only of the providers of services. UNISON's members, particularly retired members, are also consumers of services with similar concerns to those working in those services.

Conference therefore asks the National Executive Council to consider ways in which the voices of the provider and consumer could be combined in public statements from UNISON.

South West Region

20. CONTRAST PRINTING

Conference is alarmed by the continued use of small letters so frequently used in publications. This practice is not acceptable by the elderly. Conference therefore instructs the National Retired Members' Committee to take up this matter with the appropriate authorities with a view to give more consideration to their print presentation affecting so many of their elderly readers.

York City Local Government

21. THE RISE OF FASCISM

Conference recognises that many retired members will know from their own personal experience the dangers of fascism.

Conference notes that the British National Party (BNP) is organising in the West Midlands, East London and in other areas across the country in an attempt to have at least one BNP candidate elected at the next General Election.

Conference supports the work being undertaken by Searchlight and Unite Against Fascism to combat the BNP.

Conference therefore calls on the National Retired Members Committee to ensure that UNISON's retired members are aware of the real policies of the BNP and of ways in which they can get involved in campaigns against the BNP now and in the run up to the next General Election.

Greater London Region

22. INTERNATIONAL LINKS

Conference recognises the outstanding role UNISON plays in the international trade union movement.

UNISON recognises that Britain's economy and political system are interdependent with Europe and the rest of the world, and that it is vital that UNISON works with sister trade unions in other countries and through key international organisations to promote and protect its members' interests and concerns.

Conference therefore calls on the National Retired Members' Committee to consider how UNISON's retired members may develop links with retired members in our sister unions and key pensioners' organisations in Europe and the rest of the world, and to submit a report with proposals to Regional Retired Members' Committees by early March 2008.

Greater London Region

RETIRED MEMBERS' ORGANISATION

23. RECRUITMENT OF RETIRED MEMBERS

Conference notes that regions and branches monitor their membership figures for working members on a regular basis in order to inform an ongoing recruitment campaign. However, there is no such process in place for retired members.

Conference therefore calls on the National Retired Members' Committee to:

- 1) carry out an audit of the total number of retired members region by region;
- 2) produce a report at each of its meetings showing the cumulative totals of numbers of retired members lost and retired members recruited, region by region;
- 3) submit a report to the National Retired Members Conference 2008, including proposals for a robust ongoing campaign to recruit retired members.

Greater London Region

24. COMMUNICATIONS TO RETIRED MEMBERS

Conference declares that effective and workable communication to all retired members is essential to the present and future interests of all retired members' groups, and is disappointed at the lack of progress by the National Retired Members' Committee (NRMC) in developing a clear policy for this purpose.

Conference also regrets that no report has been made before this Conference to all Regional Retired Members' Committees as requested by Motion 33 at Conference in 2006 and directs the NRMC to do this before April 2008, on the progressive steps they plan to develop effective and pertinent communications to retired members.

Conference also calls upon the NRMC to include priorities for the progressive implementation of their policy, using all modes of communications to all members on a regular basis and establish an editorial panel with nominated contacts in all regional committees.

West Sussex County

25. ANNUAL REPORT

National Retired Members Conference is to be congratulated on producing the Annual Report for questioning by members in advance of the National Retired Members Conference. However, the time scale for questioning in 2006 was inadequate. There does not appear to be any reason why the Annual Report is not circulated to retired members in June. Conference instructs the National Retired Members' Committee to ensure that the Annual Report is circulated in June.

South East Region

26. ROLE OF RETIRED MEMBERS IN UNISON

Conference recognises the different role and contribution of retired members to their working counterparts and accepts that their involvement in UNISON is more limited. However, Conference believes that many retired members still have much to offer the union and that their preclusion from almost all aspects of its work is not necessarily in UNISON's best interests. Whilst accepting that retired members should not be involved in basic trade union work around pay and conditions for working members, retired members should still be able to participate in Self Organised Groups (SOGs) including involvement in Regional SOGs and attending SOG conferences.

Conference therefore instructs the National Retired Members' Committee to liaise with the National Executive Council and the SOG Committees to discuss ways in which this may be achieved, including where necessary the submission of appropriate rule amendments, and to report back on this issue to Retired Members' Conference 2008.

Leicestershire County

27. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY

Conference notes that UNISON is a union committed to promoting equality and valuing diversity, and that these principles underpin all our organisational structure, policies and practice.

These principles are enshrined in our nation rule book. Rule B1 Aims and Objectives, 1.2 and 1.3. Rule B2 Union Democracy, 2.3. They apply to all the union's structures, including the retired members' organisation.

Conference accepts that much progress has been made since the inception of UNISON in achieving gender proportionality in our retired members' organisation, and we are an example of good practice for other unions and pensioners' organisations.

However, more work needs to be done towards achieving fairer representation in UNISON's Self Organised Groups to remain active as retired members.

Conference therefore calls on the National Retired Members' Committee to put forward practical proposals aimed towards achieving fairer representation in UNISON's retired members' structures and encouraging and helping members who have been active in UNISON's Self Organised Groups to remain active as retired members, and to submit a report by early March 2008 for consultation to regions and branches outlining the action we need to take to make UNISON's retired members' organisation truly representative of all members.

Greater London Region

28. INSURANCE COVER FOR RETIRED MEMBERS ON UNISON BUSINESS

Conference notes that, until recently, retired member officers and representatives, in common with all other UNISON officers and representatives, had UNISON insurance cover whilst on UNISON business.

Conference now understands that cover for retired member officers and representatives have ceased under new arrangements.

Conference instructs the National Retired Members' Committee to ensure that insurance cover for retired member officers and representatives is restored under UNISON's insurance arrangements.

West Midlands Region

MOTIONS RULED OUT OF ORDER

Reason not approved: Beyond remit of the Conference

UNCONTROLLED IMMIGRATION

Given an ageing population and increased reliance on essential services to the aged, Conference acknowledges that it may be necessary to employ skilled immigrant workers to ensure that such essential services are delivered.

However if immigration is not controlled, then the impact of immigration may be to increase demands on essential services rather than to meet the existing and planned demands for such services.

Conference therefore instructs the National Retired Members' Committee to lobby Government to ensure that immigration is controlled such that it does not have an adverse impact on the delivery of essential services, particularly to the aged and infirm.

Devon County

Reason not approved: Beyond remit of the Conference

ENFORCED CHANGES IN PURCHASING

Conference is concerned that many providers of goods and services have introduced policies that force customers to pay by either credit card/debit card or cash. This will have a particularly adverse effect on older people, many of whom do not use, or have a credit/debit card and rely on a cheque to make purchases.

Conference urges National Retired Members' Committee to raise awareness and use any means at their disposal to initiate a campaign to halt or reverse this process.

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough

Reason not approved: Beyond remit of the Conference

WITHDRAWAL OF CHEQUE PAYMENT METHOD

Conference is concerned that many providers of goods and services have introduced policies that force customers to pay by either credit/debit card or cash. This will have a particular adverse effect on older people, many of whom do not use, or have a credit/debit card and rely on a cheque to make purchases.

Conference urges the National Retired Members' Committee to raise awareness and use any means at their disposal to initiate a campaign to halt or reverse this process.

Yorkshire and Humberside Region

Reason not approved: Conflicts with an existing rule

CAUCUS MEETINGS AT RETIRED MEMBERS' CONFERENCE

Conference believes that Retired Members' Conference should include caucus meetings for Black Members, Disabled Members, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Members and Women Members. This would bring it into line with other Self Organised Group (SOG) Conferences who have had such meetings as part of their timetable virtually since UNISON's inception in 1993.

These meetings provide members with the opportunity to get together with like-minded colleagues and discuss issues of mutual interest and where relevant progress them on the Conference agenda. They also provide an invaluable forum for new delegates and visitors and the opportunity for mutual support.

Conference therefore instructs the National Retired Members' Committee to liaise with appropriate bodies with a view to introducing these meetings at Conference 2008.

Leicestershire County

Reason not approved: Conflicts with an existing rule

THE WAY AHEAD

Conference welcomes the funding of the first UNISON Scotland Retired Members Annual Conference to determine policy as related to the retired members in Scotland. Conference recognises that the Scottish political dimension has significantly changed since 1997 with devolved and tax raising powers being prescribed to a Scottish Parliament allowing UNISON in Scotland direct access to influence policies with affect UNISON Retired Members resident in Scotland. The UNISON Scottish Retired Members believe that their own conference will encourage growth in the membership and an identity with which to deal with those issues that affect Scotland.

The accessibility which everyone, including pensioners, has to their Member of Scottish Parliament allows for issues to be easily brought to the forefront in Edinburgh whereas, in the past, they were discouraged due to the distance involved in dealing solely with their Westminster MPs. This inaccessibility is prevalent with the UNISON Scottish Retired Members who live in the remote

Highlands and Islands and rural areas of Scotland who find that it is a major logistical challenge to travel to either London or Plymouth.

The socio/economic structure of the Scottish nation historically is different from other parts of the United Kingdom, and this has been consistently reflected in our voting patterns. It is recognised that Scotland has major health issues which are being addressed by the Scottish Parliament along with housing, community care, law and order all of which are a major concern with Scottish Pensioners and as an example free personal care in the community was a result of pressure from interested groups within Scotland. At present, the Scottish Executive in Parliament is committed to abolishing the Council Tax and replacing it with a Local Income Tax. With regard to pensions, which is a reserved power retained by Westminster, we will continue to work closely with our colleagues nationally to achieve a fair and just pension.

This motion is not about separation, it is to open up dialogue and debate as to the advantages of the four parts of the United Kingdom i.e. Scotland, England, Northern Ireland and Wales to recognise their own distinct social, cultural, legal and economic structures and how these affect the retired UNISON members in their respective areas. Conference is asked to support the principle of four separate annual conferences dealing with the matters already raised in this motion and to bring all the policies forward to a National Annual Conference thereby allowing a wider understanding of all the issues that affect us as UNISON retired members with the other organisations which we liaise with.

Scotland Region

Reason not approved: Conflicts with an existing rule

VOTING RIGHTS

Conference recognises that UNISON's Retired Members' Section throughout the United Kingdom is reflecting society in general and growing in numbers, commitment and youth.

Whilst we recognise that is inappropriate for us to be involved in questions of pay and conditions of service, there are nevertheless many matters of policy and citizenship which are outside those areas and which retired members can and do get their teeth (even if they are dentures) into.

There seems therefore no logical reason why we should not be allowed to vote for our leadership in those wider campaigns, our National Executive Council. They do not deal with pay and conditions: that is the role of the Service Group Executives. The role of the union in the country and the world is however one in which grey power is included and should be recognised as such.

Conference therefore calls on the National Retired Members' Committee to ask the National Executive Council to take a rule amendment to the National Delegate Conference 2008 to include retired members in those eligible to vote in the National Executive Council elections.

Suffolk County

Reason not approved: Not competent

MOBILITY ALLOWANCE

Conference notes that Mobility Allowance was introduced to enable people with disabilities to get access to employment. The Government now has a policy of pensioners working into older age.

Pensioners are denied access to Mobility Allowance and free car tax if they are diagnosed after retirement age with a crippling illness such as multiple sclerosis.

Many pensioners when they get an incurable illness that affects their mobility are forced to use all their savings to enable them to continue to live a reasonable life.

Conference calls on the National Executive Council to work to end this ageist policy and extend the Mobility Allowance to pensioners with a disability.

Epsom & St Helier NHS Trust

Reason not approved: Not competent

PERSONAL CARE/NURSING CARE

Conference deplores the treatment of the elderly, who, after serious illness and treatment in hospital are considered to be 'bed blocking.' Whilst they still require continued use of oxygen they are placed in rest homes where they, or their families, are required to pay expensive fees for their care.

Conference instructs the National Retired Members' Committee to request the National Executive Council to seek clarification for our members on the difference between nursing care and personal care.

North West Region

Reason not approved: Not competent

TAX CONCESSIONS

Conference notes the adverse effect on the Local Government Superannuation Fund, of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's decision ten years ago to withdraw the tax concession on interest on dividends receivable by pension funds.

Conference therefore requests that UNISON makes every effort to persuade the Chancellor to re-instate the tax concession, thus enabling our pension funds to best support their payment commitments.

Swindon

Reason not approved: Not in line with SOC procedures

THE ORGANISING APPROACH

Conference notes that in recent years UNISON has evolved from an organisation with a servicing culture to one with an organising approach. The union is more likely to get good results where it has strong membership organisation. Strong membership is based on the following organising principles:

- 1) working collectively
- 2) listening to members' views
- 3) knowing where our members are
- 4) getting members actively involved
- 5) high membership density
- 6) promoting democracy and membership participation

Conference believes that for the retired members' organisation to operate effectively within UNISON to pursue not only our aims but to support our working colleagues, retired member activists must be aware of the union's organising approach.

Conference therefore requests that the National Retired Members' Committee take appropriate action to ensure that information on UNISON's organising approach is made available to retired member activists.

National Retired Members' Committee

Reason not approved: Not in line with SOC procedures

CHALLENGE X

Conference notes that recruitment is vital to this union as UNISON's strength is based on its members - the more members we have, the greater influence UNISON will have both locally and nationally to campaign to improve public services and stop discrimination.

Conference further notes the Challenge X campaign which is intended to achieve a target of 1.5 million members by encouraging members to commit to recruiting ten new members.

Conference believes that retired members have an important role to play in the campaign and therefore requests that the National Retired Members' Committee take appropriate action to publicise Challenge X to retired members and encourage their participation.

National Retired Members' Committee

Reason not approved: Not in line with SOC procedures

CALCULATING PRICE INDEX

Conference believes that although we are firmly committed to the restoration of the earnings link we should also seek to strengthen the link to price increase.

Conference notes that the 'shopping basket' used to calculate the price index contains many items that are not relevant to pensioners, for example video games.

Conference therefore requests that the National Retired Members' Committee work with appropriate bodies to consider the viability of a separate 'pensioners' basket' which would include relevant items such as energy costs, groceries and council tax increases.

National Retired Members' Committee

Reason not approved: Not in line with SOC procedures

COMMONWEALTH PENSIONERS

Conference notes that over 520,000 expatriate pensioners living in Commonwealth countries have contributed to a United Kingdom pension which has been arbitrarily frozen at the level it was first received. As a result, their state pension decreases in value in real terms every year. For example, a pensioner who retired in 1999 with a pension of £66.75 and moved to Australia to be near their family would still receive a pension of £66.75 in 2007.

Conference believes that there is no justification for this and therefore calls on the National Executive Council to request that the Government takes appropriate action to unfreeze the pensions of affected Commonwealth pensioners.

National Retired Members' Committee

Reason not approved: Not in line with SOC procedures

PENSIONS GOVERNANCE

Conference notes that UNISON has a long standing commitment to undertake work to develop, train and elect members to become effective trustees of public and private pension funds. UNISON has had many initiatives over the years to provide support for Member Nominated Representatives (MNRs).

The importance of member involvement can be illustrated by the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). Although benefits are statutorily protected and the scheme has no trustees, it is funded. Collectively the LGPS would be the largest pension fund in the UK with around 80 billion pounds worth of investments. The role and importance of trade union representatives on investment committees is therefore crucial to make sure the funds are well managed and not used as an excuse for reducing benefits for active members in the future.

Conference further notes that the members of pension schemes consist of both contributors and beneficiaries. Retired Members as beneficiary members of pension schemes have an interest in how the fund is run and should have involvement in MNRs.

Conference therefore calls on the National Retired Members' Committee to pursue through the National Executive Council the following:

- 1) encouragement of retired members to participate in pension fund/scheme governance as MNRs;
- 2) provision for training of retired member MNRs;
- 3) continued pressure on government and employers to enhance the rights of all members over governance of their schemes;
- 4) continued pressure on government and employers to achieve best practice in scheme governance, auditing, reporting, communications with members and the voting of stock at company annual general meetings by pension fund trustees and MNRs.

National Retired Members' Committee

Reason not approved: Not sufficiently clear

CONCESSIONARY BUS FARES

Conference welcomes the Government's initiative to extend free bus travel across the whole of England from April 2008 but believes such a scheme should also be extended to provide reciprocal arrangements in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In order to ensure consistency in application, Conference instructs the National Retired Members' Committee to lobby for such an extension and to seek assurances that the cost of this scheme is met wholly out of national taxation and does not fall in any way to the council tax payer.

Devon County

Reason not approved: Not wholly or predominantly relevant to retired members

0870 AND 0845 TELEPHONE NUMBERS

Conference deplores the increasing use of 0870 and 0845 numbers by all manner of organisations (including UNISON) as the only means of contacting that organisation by phone. Much of the reason for this is the revenue sharing option these numbers offer which allows the organisation to rake in extra money while receiving calls from customers. Most organisations fail to advertise these costs and seem to believe that it is perfectly acceptable to charge callers using 0870 prefixes anything up to 80 pence per minute (on certain networks) and up to 8 pence per minute on BT landlines whilst keeping them waiting on automated answering systems. 0845 numbers are little better despite being advertised as

'lo-call' cost and can be nearly six times the cost of a normal call. In this regard both can be worse than premium rate (090) numbers because while they are the most expensive they are transparent as they are obliged by law to state their tariff. In addition there is the scandalous use of premium rate 07 numbers by many hospitals which charge at least 40 pence a minute for incoming and outgoing calls to and from patients.

Conference agrees that the impact of such costs is greatest on those on fixed incomes, a significant number of whom are retired people, who will usually be 'phoning from home, and therefore argues that every effort should be made to have their use discontinued. Conference acknowledges the changes being introduced in 2008 through Ofcom which will address most, but not all, of these concerns. 0870 numbers will be replaced by 03 numbers which will not be revenue sharing and will cost the same as a geographic call. All 0870 costs will be more strictly monitored and it is to be hoped that their costs will be advertised. 0871 numbers will be redefined as premium rate lines and will be more tightly controlled, however many companies will switch from 0870 to 0871 rather than than 03 so their high costs will be maintained.

Conference supports the work of Ofcom and its efforts to curtail the use and abuse of 0870 and 0845 numbers and agrees that organisations should provide geographic alternatives.

Conference therefore instructs the National Retired Members' Committee to:

- 1) liaise with the National Executive Council to seek the discontinuation of the 0845 number by UNISON and its replacement with a geographic or 03 number;
- 2) work through all appropriate channels to seek the discontinuation of 0870, 0845 and premium rate 07 numbers in hospitals;
- 3) publicise through all appropriate channels the website SAYNOTO0870.com which provides geographic alternatives to 0870 and 0845 numbers;
- 4) urge retired members to boycott 0870 and 0845 numbers and ask them to write to their MPs on this issue;
- 5) report back to Retired Members' Conference 2008

Leicestershire County

Reason not approved:

Not wholly or predominantly relevant to retired members

ROAD CHARGING

Conference acknowledges the probability of road charging as it recognises that there is a need to reduce emissions from cars and their contribution to global warming as well as the need to address the very real problem of the growing congestion on Britain's roads. It is already estimated that by 2050 there will be a 40 percent increase in the number of cars on the road, and the impact of this on congestion alone will be catastrophic. Furthermore a report published in February 2007 based on research by the University of York showed that people aged between 50 and 64 have the UK's largest 'carbon footprint' whilst also being the most concerned about climate change and wanting the Government to do more to tackle global warming.

Conference believes that any road charging strategy must be coupled with the provision of a comprehensive and affordable public transport system and that to implement one without providing the other will have a particularly adverse effect on older people, especially retired members, many of whom rely on cars for their every day needs. This is particularly true for those who live in rural areas with little or no public transport and who therefore have no choice but to use cars to go shopping, attend hospital appointments, visit family and friends etc. Thus whilst wanting to support a sustainable strategy geared to tackling global warming and road congestion, retired members will not want to pay unnecessary charges for using cars simply because there is no viable public transport alternative.

Conference therefore instructs the National Retired Members' Committee to

- 1) liaise with the National Executive Council and other appropriate groups including Labour Link to make clear our concerns about the introduction of road charging without the provision of comprehensive and affordable public transport and the financial impact this could have on our already limited income
- 2) publicise these concerns through all appropriate channels
- 3) report back to Retired Members' Conference 2008.

Leicestershire County

Reason not approved: **Not wholly or predominantly relevant to retired members**

SUPPORT FOR ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR ACT 2003

Conference calls upon the National Executive Council and UNISON Labour Link to give their full support to all those who have worked vigorously for the continuation of this very important piece of legislation.

North West Region

Reason not approved: **Not wholly or predominantly relevant to retired members**

IDENTITY THEFT

Conference notes the Home Office estimates that over 100,000 people both retired persons and otherwise are affected by identity abuse or identity theft in the UK every year. Identity theft is when criminals find out your personal details and use them to open bank accounts and get credit cards, loans, benefits and documents such as passports and driving licenses in your name. A recent survey according to Equifax says 88 per cent of us carry items with us every day that could leave us vulnerable to ID fraud.

This Conference calls upon the National Executive Council and the National Retired Members' Committee to raise awareness of this important issue by inserting articles in U Magazine and Focus and by using any other means of publicity at their disposal.

North Yorkshire

Reason not approved: **Not wholly or predominantly relevant to retired members**

INHERITANCE TAX THRESHOLD

This Conference calls upon the National Executive Council and the National Retired Members' Committee to campaign for an increase in the inheritance tax threshold.

North Yorkshire

Reason not approved: **Received past the deadline**

POST OFFICES

Cymru/Wales Region