
BFAWU Retired members Network meeting October 2024

Gaza

Those in attendance said the ongoing situation was heartbreaking and expressed disgust at the Government supporting Israel. There is a lot of information on social media that needs to be shared as it is more factual than what we are being shown on the news.

Concerns were raised about the lack of empathy around and how people don't seem to be at all bothered about what is happening, the conversation moved onto the situation between Russia and Ukraine and that despite the fact the situation was ongoing, the news was incredibly quiet now. This led to a wider discussion about the two situations and how widely things are reported when it suits a particular narrative and how things suddenly go quiet when they no longer do.

It was agreed that people need to know the facts of these situations and others like them, we are not told the whole story in situations of war or conflict so opinions are developed, and sides are taken that may differ should we have a full picture and better understanding, people might also care more.

Pensions

Removing the Winter Fuel allowance has and will cause no end of issues for people, how is it that they can know who a billionaire is for tax purposes is but can't automatically give those who need benefits to survive the payments they are entitled to, why do people have to jump through hoops to claim them

People are being forced into using cars as public transport isn't fit for purpose, but these are additional costs people can ill afford, the removal of the WFP as well as general lack of support for retired people are pushing more and more people into poverty.

It was generally felt that society wasn't meant for retired people, however people are and should be entitled to fairness, pensioners in the UK don't get a living wage, if you have worked all of your life in a low paid job but make sure you have saved into a company pension, that is likely to be small as a result you get penalised. The state pension which many pensioners are fully reliant on is not enough to survive, even if you are able to get pension credit to top them up the annual amount is thousands less than minimum wage.

It was agreed that pensions should be enough to live on, people pay their whole adult life towards their state pension and therefore they should then receive a basic living wage for pensioners.

Examples were given where a couple may each have a small private pension and their state pension and how even though a private pension may be less than £150 a month that it can stop the couple claiming pension or housing credit, this is despite rent, council tax and water rates each month totaling more than one partners pension eating into the second one, without any gas, electricity or food.

It was agreed we should look into how much is actually needed to live and campaign to ensure pensions are at that level as a minimum.

Conference

The group said that we should have more motions to conference around pensioners, some of our retired members have paid into the union for 40 years and should still be able to input into the direction of the union and have campaigns run on issues that impact them.

There could be a retired members fringe or event at conference, where a session could be run on some of the paperwork you have to fill in after retirement, whether that be for benefits, or financial help

Motions about the Labour Party and how let down members feel as well as the situation around pensions were floated as ideas.

WhatsApp Group

A retired members WhatsApp group was suggested so that members can keep in touch between meetings, discuss and construct motions that can then be put to branches to put forwards, it could even be used to share relevant information and help develop speeches.

Far Right

Concerns were raised around the number of members on social media that can be seen being drawn into right wing rhetoric and the damage that can do to the union and members trust who look to us for support. This led to a



discussion about the statement that was put out by the executive after the riots and after a larger than normal number of people at conference voted against motions supporting Palestine and other international issues.

Pre-Retirement

An idea was floated about creating some sort of pre-retirement support, which could contain a guide around what to expect, forms that might need filling in, keeping membership up and other relevant elements like having a hobby or a routine to move into. Those who have already retired could maybe add their experiences to the process as it can be quite daunting going through such a significant change, speaking to or hearing about others having gone through the process and coming out the other side, even if there were struggles initially may help others in the future.

AOB

The union's membership levels were discussed, how we move forwards, keep people in membership once they have retired and encourage more people to join the BFAWU, who actually represents workers and those who have retired as the Labour Party clearly don't, what the world may have looked like if Jeremy Corbyn had actually become Prime Minister and whether that would have happened and what changes we could see if Kamala Harris is elected as the American president in a few weeks.