

# Unison Retired Members Forum

## Newsletter Special

### Hoping for a better New Year

Easter 2021.  
Issue No 15.

#### Remembering Them

Remembering:

**Judy Linton.**  
**Denis Keatings.**  
**Annie Nicholl.**  
**Dorothy Hutton.**  
**Jonathan Swallow.**  
**Inez Mc Cormack.**  
**Rodney Bickerstaff.**  
**Gerry Mc Collough.**  
**Stanley Bowles.**  
**Joan Mc Craffrey.**  
**Kathleen Rainey.**  
**Cath Friel.**



Hi Folks

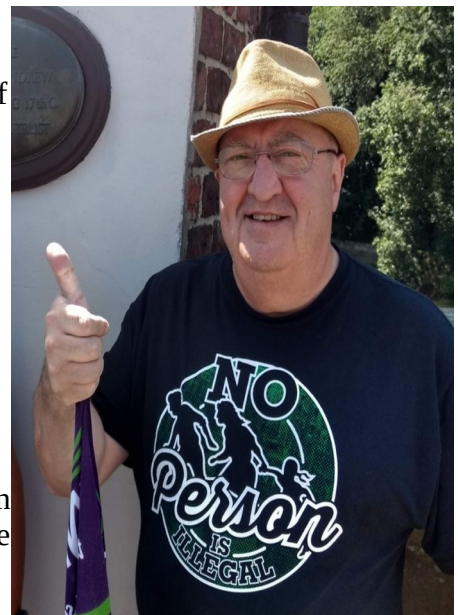
We hope you are all keeping well at this very difficult and dark time in our lives. The Joint Chairs have given the go-ahead for this Newsletter Special dedicated to our colleagues in UNISON and members of our Retired Members Forum who have passed on from this life. When the merger of the three main public service unions COHSE, NUPE & NALGO happened in 1993 in the whole of the United Kingdom into one big union a new dawn had broken. Now the largest union in the whole of the UK, UNISON has in excess over 1.5 million members. For many thousands of members being a part of one of the biggest unions in the whole of the UK felt triumphant and an honor. But it could not have been a reality

without some of the biggest names in the Trade Union movement and today in this *special edition* of the *Newsletter* we are going to remember some of our activists and colleagues who fought for justice and the rights of others, people such as **Judy Linton** pictured here with her best pal and colleague

Marjorie. Together with Marjorie, Judy looked after the members rights or was there to assist them with Welfare issues when having difficulties in managing their affairs at home or run into some type of dept and needed help to get by from day to day.

Members Welfare was a priority with Judy and together with Marjorie they were at the heart of the workers on the ground. Supporting the various campaigns and standing with colleagues on the picket lines meant Judy was hand in hand with the membership. Judy had a good heart and was always able to offer comfort and support to those in need. **Remembering Judy today.**

The training that UNISON provided was second to none and many thousands of activists and members availed of what for many developed their skills, knowledge and experience for life. People like **Denis Keatings** who for many was a gentleman and an activist in UNISON NI and was respected by all who knew him. Denis held the post of Branch Secretary in the Mater Hospital for a considerable period of time. His passing brought great sadness to the UNISON

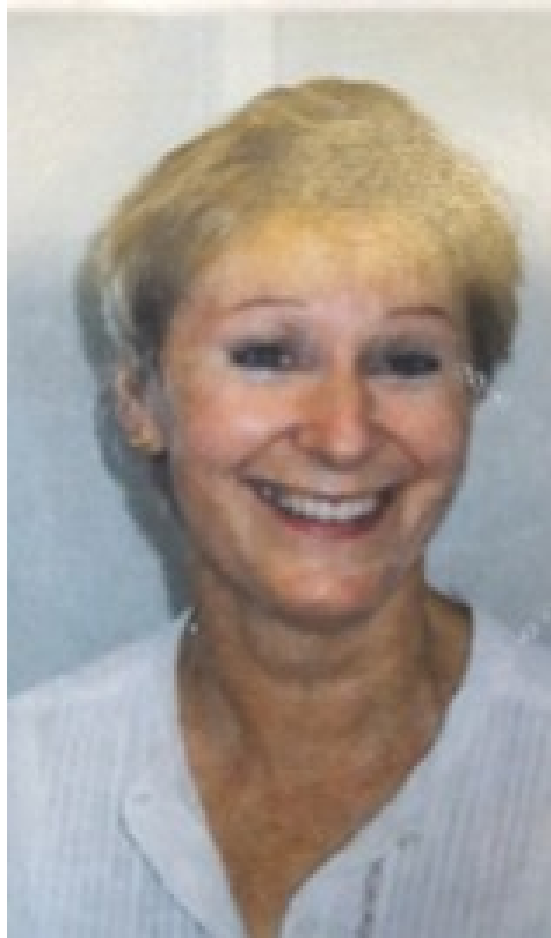


family throughout the region of which he was part off. Indeed Denis was a big supporter of our Retired Members Forum. He rose through the ranks of the Trade Union Movement when he first joined NUPE back in the 70's and was part of the historic struggle known as 'The Winter of Discontent'. At that time public service workers took part in strike action in a bid to bring about pay justice for all. When UNISON was born in 1993 it was then that Denis began to rise up through the ranks of the union to become Joint Regional Convenor for the whole of the region. In a statement put out by the Regional Secretary Patricia Mc Keown she described Denis as 'A trade unionist to his core'. He was certainly that. **Remembering Denis today.**

Becoming a member of any union is an important step in anyone's life whether that is working in the public or private sector like health and social care. Everyone who has worked in the caring profession knows that working with the sick and dying is a dedicated job requiring specialized skills, knowledge & experience. Indeed that could be said of our friend and colleague **Annie Nicholl** Ward Sister who worked at saving the lives of others and who was one of the Joint Chairs of the Retired Members Committee with Victor Murphy in 2008 before it became a Retired Members Forum. Annie was a pleasant lady that had the skills and knowledge that allowed her to comfort and console those in need or in times of difficulty. Staff members mattered when it came to their Welfare at work and she took time to listen to any concerns raised during working hours. She was the first woman from the Retired Members to become the National Delegate to attend the Retired Members Conference in England.

**Remembering Annie today.**

Down over the years our Retired Members Forum members have had the great pleasure to meet up



and welcome some wonderful people. Indeed this is the case as we think on **Dorothy Hutton** and **Jonathan Swallow**. Taking them each in turn Dorothy Hutton was someone whose smile was not just beautiful but welcoming. She took the time to sit down with you and have a little chat over a cup of

tea/coffee. Dorothy represented the Retired Members Forum as delegate at National Level on the NRMC and had the opportunity to attend the National Retired Members Conference during her lifetime. While she was a bit nervous speaking to a large audience she was able to get up on to a podium and read out the motion from NI. Afterwards she exclaimed that she felt great and that her confidence had shot through the roof. Reporting back to the members of the Forum was equally important to Dorothy and she did so by writing up a report so everyone knew what happened at conference. She was amazed at the knowledge she had gained during her time away at conference and could see a big difference in the way things were done across the pond in comparison to the region. This was clear when she announced to the Joint Chairs 'We're doing a very constructive job at National level'. **Remembering Dorothy today.** Privatization was creeping into our public services in Northern Ireland with Domestic and Catering services feeling the brunt of the private sector. UNISON was not prepared to sit back and let this happen as Compass began to review services with drastic cuts in mind and staff and patients suffering as a result. Then a brilliant man by the name of Jonathan Swallow came along to advise UNISON NI. He was an intellect full of skills, knowledge and experience who was prepared to fight the establishment who was prepared to wreck the good name of the NHS.



Jonathan was described by the RMT of UNISON NI in his passing as a '**Champion of Workers Rights**'. He saved the jobs and services of thousands of public service workers in NI and across the UK. He was held in the highest esteem and loved by all and was missed by everyone who had contact with him. He was a great supporter of the Retired Members Forum NI and was always there to advise or

help in any way. He could be asked anything and would be ready with an answer. **Remembering Jonathan today.** Being an activist means standing up for '**what you think is right and just**' and we are remembering some of the greats of our union who have sadly passed away from this life but will never be forgotten.

**Inez Mc Cormack** (pictured above) a Human Rights Campaigner and Regional Secretary of UNISON in Northern Ireland was quite famous among the union fraternity. Fair employment for all was part of her campaigning and was one of the signatories of the 'Mc Bride Principles'. She became the first female President of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and in 2002 she was described as probably the best known and most experienced Human Rights Campaigner in this country. She had a special calm way when talking to people regardless of who she spoke too. Inez was respected by everyone and after her passing she was remembered by all in UNISON NI. **Remembering Inez today.** Lets pause for a second and look at the photos on display in this Special Newsletter that our Forum is editing for the members. 'Remembering Them' has been an important means for us as Forum Members to say a special goodbye and thank you for all your hard work. You have brought inspiration to the table and give us the means to stand up for what is right and just both in the workplace and beyond. **Rodney Bickerstaff** was one of those people who felt that '**workplace injustice must stop**'



and so became an activist to make a stand for what was right. He rose up through the ranks of NUPE and when UNISON became the new merged union in the UK, Rodney had the honor to be the second General Secretary of the newly formed union and the second president of the National Pensioners Convention. Pictured below at a TUC Conference Rodney was not afraid to make his voice heard loud and clear and always sent a clear message to the government 'injustice in the workplace must stop'. He was sadly missed by all pensioners that he represented on the NPC. **Remembering Rodney today.**



At time of printing we were unable to get our hands on some of the photos we would have liked too. Below we are always conscious of the people whom we have come into contact with and who took time to offer you help if it was needed. **Gerry McCullough** who looked after the printing and logistics within the office. He was always there to say hello and help in any way he could. Gerry showed respect to all generations who came into contact with him. He was there for the staff in the office who he represented and was sadly missed when news of his passing was relayed to the office.

**Remembering Gerry today.** Members working in the public sector always looked forward to their pay day. For people working in Salaries & Wages in any of the trusts it was the responsibility to ensure that the correct wages was in each pay packet and **Stanley Bowles** was one of those people who had that responsibility. He was a Higher Clerical Officer working with one of the Health Trusts in Belfast. Stanley always made time for everyone and looked after the staff whom he represented.

**Remembering Stanley today.**

To be a Midwife takes a special kind of person with the skills, knowledge and experience to deal with a special event. **Joan McCaffrey** from Causeway was a member of Forum from its inception back in 2007. Joan joined the union as a COHSE member back in 1981 and worked as a Midwife caring for and nursing women and their new born children. The announcement of her passing saddened everyone who knew her especially within the Forum. **Remembering Joan today.**

Looking after feeding an entire hospital is a big undertaking for anyone working in the catering department in our hospitals. Ensuring that an entire team of staff and patients working in the hospital setting is fed and watered takes great skills, knowledge and experience. **Kathleen Rainey** was one of a special team of people who help take on that responsibility. As a Catering Assistant she loved her job working to help cater for others.

**Remembering Kathleen today.**

Educating the members and more

importantly the activists was a true job in itself. Without it an activist could not carry out their duty of care to the members. UNISON NI has seen many Regional Education Organisers come through the system and we cannot forget one such lady, **Cath Friel**. She joined UNISON in 2000 and retired in 2015. In June 2019 everyone in the office was shocked and saddened to learn of her passing. Cath was an inspiration to the many members and activists undertaking training. She was a real 'peoples person' and helped to encourage and motivate many members to get more involved in the union. Cath would have been known to many members of the Forum. **Remembering Cath today.**



**Remembering the Frontline Workers:**

Finally we have been faced with one of the most darkest years in all our lives with the world wide spread of a vicious coronavirus Covid-19. Frontline workers in the public services were faced with very difficult times and hospital supplies of PPE, Testing Equipment and Ventilators fell short. Frontline workers in the caring profession went over and above the Duty of Care to deal with members of the public who were falling victim to this terrible virus and who themselves fell victim to the virus. Their Health, Safety & Welfare was put at risk on all fronts and we are reminded today as we remember our comrades who were part of UNISON so we remember all members of the public at this time. We could say more but we will leave it to the day when a public inquiry will reveal answers.

**Remembering all Frontline Workers today.**