

We need a national strategy to defend Further and Adult Education

In recent weeks the industrial climate has begun to shift. Ballots are underway in local government and health, which could see a million workers strike over pay on 10 July.

The NUT has announced it will be part of this and others such as the FBU and PCS may join in.

Lambeth College dispute

Members at Lambeth College have delivered a brilliant 89% vote for indefinite strike action (on a 71% turnout in their rebalot), drawing a line in the sand in defence of jobs and contracts.

Their fight has to be a cause célèbre for the whole union. We can all help deliver a victory through active solidarity – such as regular collections and inviting strikers to speak at our own workplaces.

Since our Annual FE Sector Conference in 2013, we balloted by 70.9% for action and struck on 3 December, alongside others.

We lobbied Parliament on 2 April over FE funding. Our pay ballot remains live and we have now held two pay negotiation meetings with the AoC, over this year's claim.

At the latest meeting we were offered 0.7% (this is not the final offer), which was rejected by all the unions as it would represent a further pay cut of about 2% based on current RPI figures.

The backdrop to this year's conference remains challenging with another Tory austerity budget in March. Our pay has declined 16% since 2008 and is stuck 7% below schoolteachers'.

The employers have used the financial crisis to drive down our pay, while raising their own, despite staff being their main asset.



National UCU demo in solidarity with Lambeth College strikers

Section 188 notices

Across the country UCU is being inundated with Section 188 notices. Thousands of our members are threatened with redundancy.

Further massive cuts to FE funding are planned up to 2019. The Adult Education budget is to be slashed by around 20% in the next two years.

This could destroy Adult Education and any promise of a second chance in life for hundreds of thousands of people.

The AoC predict that between 50 and 100 colleges will go to the wall within the next two years.

We continue to face endless local attacks on pay and conditions, increasing stress and workloads, bullying managers, punitive observations and Ofsted inspections.

We will debate motions on these issues on Thursday afternoon at FE Sector Conference and we urge delegates to support action to defend the sector and defend our members.

National strategy

But we can't beat the government's attacks on our sector college by college. We need Conference to adopt a determined national strategy of resistance and to insist that our

leadership sticks to it. If we fail to do this we will see more maverick attacks like that at Lambeth.

This Conference is our best opportunity to develop an effective strategy on pay, jobs and workload and put this at the heart of our defence of Further and Adult Education itself.

Such a strategy must show how funding cuts, pay cuts and the daily battles in the workplace are inevitably linked.

Any failure to fight declining pay, for example, only encourages employers to further attack jobs and conditions nationally and locally. That's why our pay dispute is so crucial.

Unfortunately since December members have been left wondering what the next steps might be.

Instead of a strategy to win the pay dispute, a series of surveys were organised that not only ignored the democratic mandate we had but effectively stalled the pay campaign.

What we have lacked since December has been a serious strategy informed by the necessary resolve and understanding of the situation we face in FE. It is high time that we put that right.

What should an effective strategy look like?

We should:

- Use our live ballot to join the likely public sector strike this summer. We urge you to support amendments to FE1 which endorse strike action and active campaigning. In 2008/9 we won one of our best pay deals (which beat inflation) – because we struck with the NUT and then followed this up when they settled.

- Take further national and targeted action from September, including demonstrations and protests at the AOC, BIS and the Treasury.
- Urge branches to be part of an education bloc on the People's Assembly march against austerity on 21 June.
- Take local initiatives that inspire members like lobbying governors at their workplaces - many of whom are bankers and a little embarrassed about bonuses.
- Insist that our principals and the AoC stand with us in defence of the sector against cuts, instead of attacking our contracts or sickness entitlements.
- Organise paid, targeted coordinated strike action against employers who do not implement any settlement.
- Support the TUC demonstration in October called 'Britain needs a pay rise.' This will be huge. We need strike action leading up to it and more action after.
- Develop a clear communication strategy week in and week out to show all members what we are doing, plus publicity, badges and rallies that arm reps with the arguments and materials to take to members.
- Underpin the campaign with an effective national, regional and local recruitment plan and develop reps as part of it.

We can put much of this in place by voting for the amendments to FE1 which call for an effective campaign. All the amendments, FE1A1-7, should be supported, as well as FE2.

Other key motions and amendments we should support are:

FE4 on Sexual Harassment and Bullying and FE5 on Racial Discrimination in FE

FE9 (and the amendment) on zero-hours contracts

FE10 on Part-time and Casualised Lecturers

The composite FE15 on Lesson Observations, FE17 on Ofsted and FE18 on Workload

The FE19 composite on funding cuts
FE20 and FE 22 on launching a national campaign to defend Adult Education

UCU Left fringe meeting

Building a campaigning union, building national action, building the fightback

Thursday 29 May, 7.30pm
@ Mechanics Institute, 103 Princess Street, Manchester M1 6DD

Chair: Liz Lawrence
UCU president elect

Speakers:

- Mandy Brown
Lambeth College UCU and UCU FEC
- Lesley McGorrigan
Leeds University UCU and UCU HEC
- Carole Duggan
Justice for Mark Duggan campaign
- Egyptian Solidarity Initiative
- Care UK UNISON striker
- NUT speaker

Speakers appear in a personal capacity

UCU official fringe meeting

After the Euro elections... Fighting racism and anti-semitism

Friday 30 May, 1pm
@ Exchange 4 & 5

Speaker: Weyman Bennett
(Unite Against Fascism)

Unite Against Fascism conference

Themes include:

- Challenging racist scapegoating of immigrants
- No to Islamophobia
- Busting the myths on immigration
- Responding to racism and fascism in Europe
- Stand up to UKIP

Saturday 14 June, 9.30am-5pm
@ Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS

Building the UCU Left

IT HAS NEVER been more important to build networks of activists within and between institutions and in regions to build solidarity and to organise a fight back against the unprecedented attack on the jobs and working conditions of those in universities.

More widely, we are engaged in

a struggle to defend our institutions against an assault on public education.

Join the UCU Left and come to our conference in October where we will debate; Where now for pay? How to fight casualization? Strategies for defending public education.

For further details contact Jane Hardy at janeannhardy@gmail.com

Join UCU Left at www.uculeft.org

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