

WHY WE MUST REJECT THIS PAY CUT

FE branches are being asked to accept or reject a pay offer from the Association of Colleges (AoC). The offer is part of the Coalition's continuing efforts to drive down workers' incomes and make us pay for the crisis. In FE most lecturers are now significantly worse off than when the crisis first hit.

Osborne's strategy of slashing public spending and public services is completely failing to drag the economy out of recession yet he and his millionaire friends stubbornly insist there is no alternative.

No-one should believe this. The crisis was the bankers' fault, not ours. They have successfully dumped their private debt onto the public purse.

A generation of austerity?

In a recession, to keep cutting pay and public spending only drives the economy into a downward spiral.

The problem is not the debt – it is the refusal of banks and corporations to invest the piles of cash they are sitting on, much of it our money handed over by the Coalition.

Yet some commentators now suggest that the austerity assault will continue not for two years, or five, or ten, but for a generation!

Public services and public sector pay are directly in the firing line. Barely 20 per cent of the cuts announced so far have been implemented. The Coalition is using the crisis to drive through privatisation, higher productivity and lower living standards.

The London Met crisis, where thousands of overseas students face deportation, shows how they are priming HE and FE for privatisation, with dire implications for pay and conditions.

A hot autumn

But the potential for a real fightback is everywhere. People remember the inspiring N30 pensions strike last year but have also felt frustration that N30 was not built on by the trade union leaders.

Despite that, the mood of anger

and outrage is growing. Already this autumn several public sector unions are preparing to actively resist the cuts, and the recent TUC conference resolved to 'consider the practicalities' of a general strike against austerity.

NUT members have voted heavily for industrial action alongside the NASUWT over pay, workloads and pensions. Unions such as the FBU, PCS and others could join in. Our HE colleagues are also balloting over pay. Unison HE staff are planning a strike in October. The stage is set for joint union action.

The TUC demonstration planned for 20th October will also be a huge step to boost workers confidence and stop this wrecking coalition in its tracks.

A fight back that can win

For UCU's FE members to accept a pay cut now would be a huge mistake. The Coalition's assault on education is accelerating. If we fight back we can win, as the Classe movement of students and education workers in Quebec has just shown with its stunning victory against tuition fee rises and education cuts.

Here, crippling tuition fees and this summer's grading scandals have slashed HE recruitment by around 17% and FE numbers have been badly hit by EMA

and ESOL cuts. If we are to effectively defend jobs, courses and conditions in colleges and universities then we cannot be seen by employers to roll over on pay.

The case for rejecting this offer is overwhelming. Since April we are all paying higher pension contributions – really a pay cut. Fuel costs, energy, food, insurance and other necessities keep rising.

An insulting offer

The AoC's 'final' pay offer of 0.7 per cent is a real insult. Despite most colleges having money for new buildings and rising pay for principals we get told to be more efficient, work harder and accept pay cuts. Some employers are even talking about regional pay rates.

We need binding national agreements on workload and observation policies but we have only been offered a joint working party to 'consider best practice' on observation policy.

That is why your national negotiators and the Further Education Committee (FEC) have rejected the offer and are urging members to do the same. The FEC will meet on 5th October to consider the outcome of branch meetings.

- **Reject the AoC offer**
- **Support the ballot for action over pay**

The Tories want to wreck our lives...

MARCH FOR A FUTURE THAT WORKS
SATURDAY
20 OCTOBER



- **Fight the cuts, no privatisation**
- **Stop the Con-Dem wreckers**
- **Unite the resistance**

London: Assemble 11am, Victoria Embankment. Called by the TUC
Glasgow: Details at www.stuc.org.uk/20-oct