

# Sally's Commission into Effective Industrial Action

What is it that we want?

How are we going to get there?

*'Our working environment is the students' learning environment.'*

This is the banner message that should be carried forward by the union: optimum conditions for staff equates to optimum learning conditions, increasing the potential for student success.

## Government

NOTE

- Many employers are not taking sufficient positive steps to ensure the provisions of the Government's wishes in respect of stakeholder engagement in corporate governance reform.
- If the Conservative Government continues then Further Education as we know it will not exist and organisations will be carved into smaller institutes of technology for vocational areas and academic courses will move to 6<sup>th</sup> Forms.
- If Labour win the next election, we are likely to be working towards increasing funding for the FE sector.
- The left has historically reacted to Government changes in educational policy.

STRATEGY

- Research into stakeholder engagement across institutions, identifying failings and targeted actions.
- To particularly work to engage student bodies in respect of stakeholder engagement.
- 'Proact' – lead the change and set the agenda.
- Any proposed strategy for UCU must be flexible to whatever it must respond to.

## Purpose of education

NOTE

- Our education system was largely defined in the era of the industrial revolution and was geared to producing apprenticeships for trade and for careers in the army; which is why 'age' is so important in classing students.
- Higher Education is being sold to young people as a direct path to promotion and employment.
- The left is traditionally opposed to the education agenda.

STRATEGY

- Define the purpose and function of education in 21<sup>st</sup> Century society.
- Define the purpose of Higher Education and separate from employment.

- Recognise there is joy in learning for learning's sake.
- Rewrite the education agenda.
- Adduction – focus on commonalities (and not difference).
- Incorporate Transforming Lives evidence.

## Relationship with the employer

### NOTE

- In the current political context, educators and employers are alike are subject to Government policy in reducing funding.
- There has been a demonisation of employers as 'the enemy'.

### STRATEGY

- It is in the finding of common ground upon which improvements can be made that working conditions are improved.
- Shift the narrative of demonisation to one of working in partnership.
- National efforts should be directed at shifting the dynamic with employers to bring the employers and their organisations (Amok) on board in recognising that we have more in common than that which divides us.
- Negotiation and continuous dialogue are key to resolution.

## Action

### NOTE

- The left traditionally 'objects' to circumstances without putting forward alternative actions.
- Concessions that are won by industrial action are rarely to mutual benefit and can only presage future antagonisms.
- Strike action is not popular with members nor supported by the majority of the wider population.
- Strike action is not a threat unless taken in conjunction with other unions to create impact on an organisation.
- Actions Short of Strike; Work to rule/Go Slow etc. - remain possible but they are complex to implement nationally or even regionally because of the variance in working practices and requires close scrutiny of working practice at an employer level.
- Employers talk much of wellbeing without backing words with actions.
- There is policy in respect of minority groups.
- Targeted social media campaigning can embarrass employers and be successful e.g. No Darlo Pay Cuts
- There is variance in branches' ability and capability to act and to want to take action.
- Regional offices are over-worked.

## STRATEGY

- UCU must demonstrate its commitment to improving working conditions and environments – with a clear process of identification and then **acting upon** issues.
- Work towards mutually agreed settlements which demonise neither plaintiff nor appellant and reflect the needs of both.
- Redefine the commonly understood definitions of Industrial action to **a new narrative** where industrial action is non-dichotomous and about positive, contributing causes.
- Uses existing contexts, research and legislation to provide solutions (not simply objections).
- **Strike Action:**
  - Must not be the first response to a situation.
  - Those voting on strike ballots must do so only following discussions with the wider union.
  - Those voting on strike ballots must act on a mandate from all the members they represent.
  - Should be coordinated with other unions to maximise impact.
- 'death by rule keeping' - encouraging members to observe a specific action they are required to do by such detailed attention to it that other aspects of their work begin to suffer.
- Argue on fact and evidence: workload - if staff have too much to do employers need to be convinced this is the case and this requires itemised evidence.
- A positive programme of 'one task added-one taken away' advising members that when asked to take on a new responsibility they should not agree unless something else is removed from their workload.
- Insist on strategies to manage staff mental health. Persistence may embarrass the employer.
- Provide analysis and of employment of minority groups.
- Create actions to engage minority groups.
- Targeted social media campaigns coordinated by or with the regional office.
- Develop branches to be able to act and take action.
- Develop individuals to manage casework without reliance on regional office.