

VOTE FOR A SECOND WAVE OF STRIKES NAME THE DATES

We have achieved what many in our union thought was impossible.

In 2018 our dispute was apparently 'settled' by the setting up of the Joint Expert Panel and the employers withdrawing 100% DC. Following a major Get the Vote Out campaign in September and October, and eight days of strikes in November and December, our dispute is back with a bang.

Picket lines in many places have replicated or exceeded 2018. Rank and file local involvement in the strike can be seen by the scale and diversity of teach-outs. Membership is up 3,500 and counting, and the website crashed several times!

In 2018, despite not being in USS, young members on insecure contracts joined up to strike anyway.

They saw what was happening to USS as symbolic of the destruction of the sector and their future in it. This time, running the dispute on pay, casualisation, workload and inequality alongside USS strengthened both. It brought more people out and it opened up a wider debate about the future of the sector.

Eight years after the start of the Tories' market experiment in England, the UK sector is in deep crisis. Every member knows how



Students join our picket lines in Nottingham

their university is fighting the one down the road to recruit students – putting up new buildings while cutting our pay.

The bubble may burst soon. Student numbers reached a plateau in 2018. The student loan debt mountain has reached £100bn. The Treasury may be forced to call time on unlimited loans. The Augar Review was just a foretaste of what the Tories may do.

And if Labour wins the general election, they are committed to curbing the market and bringing back free education.

Any “new risk” this creates will have been inflicted by greedy vice-chancellors promoting the Tories' tuition free market competition.

Defending the USS defined

benefit pension is a bulwark against this fragmentation and greed. There is everything to fight for, and everything to win.

2020: a year of reckoning

We now have to look at where we take the dispute. This conference cannot set the agenda for the pay dispute and its decisions only directly affect the pre-92 institutions.

Nevertheless, we need to send out a clear message to HEC and our members in both pre and post-92. First, we must not break the link between USS pensions dispute and the 'four fights' pay dispute. No members should be left behind in

any settlement.

In many ways this is an easy argument. The closer UUK comes to our no detriment position for USS, the more they release income to help settle the 'four fights'.

Second we now need to maximise the turnout for the latest ballots. These were launched on Thursday and can bring new universities into strike action.

We need to get the experience of those on strike into these branches with door knocking and phone banking. Lessons, tricks and techniques from successful GTVO campaigns must be shared with branches being balloted. Twinning branches is key.

Third, all other branches need to fight to ensure that they are not left out of the rebalot.

HEC voted for all branches with 40% turnout or more be rebaloted promptly. In pre-92 that would cover 98% of the members. This is a national fight to defend a mutual pension. 80% of members are already out, and have taken eight days! So if your branch is not yet in the list to rebalot, demand that this happens from 1 January.

But we need to go further. We need to announce further strike action immediately and begin to build support for it.

- Vote for motions and amendments calling for escalating strike action in the Spring Term.
- Vote also for amendments and motions that propose a strategy for building action in the Summer Term.

We need to be clear with the employers – if they do not back down, staff will go further than 2018 and hit the exam period with strikes. We need to put a credible threat of strike action on the table now.

Announcing this now while putting pressure on employers

to settle also means members' involvement is maximised by determining the exact timing of the action in their own institution.

We also need a serious campaign of solidarity. The employers are taking a tougher 'no blinking' stance at present – in part because they know the stakes are so high.

But that means we must be better organised in raising funds and organising UK wide demonstrations, solidarity and support, so that branches taking strike action are fully and actively supported by branches, students and workers outside of HE that are not.

We are in it to win it.

Where is the JEP 2 report?

The second JEP report was due for publication in September 2019. No doubt, with the extensive number of submissions, a delay is not unexpected.

However, even with these delays it was due for publication prior to our strike ballots and it appears to have been held back to avoid influencing this outcome.

Now, after our eight days of strike action, it has still not appeared and it is now set for publication at the end of the year. We can only assume that it is equally damaging to USS's case for a 'de-risking' valuation.

Meanwhile real asset growth has outstripped CPI by a large margin.

By whatever means one performs a valuation, the longer the scheme matures, the more the so-called 'deficit' turns into a real surplus!

UCU must now demand the report is released without further delay.

Say no to racism: kick out Boris Johnson

The general election takes place next week. A victory for Corbyn over Johnson will embolden us all, irrespective of whether you vote for Labour in your own consistency or not.

The relentless attacks on Corbyn are indicative of the fear of the bosses about his intentions to end austerity and give workers more power at work.

But whatever the outcome of the election, our disputes continue.

If we win we are best placed to ensure that it is university staff, not management, that speak for the future of our universities.



Picketing at Liverpool Hope University