

For action to defend jobs and conditions

UCU NEC elections: Vote Richard Bradbury for HE South

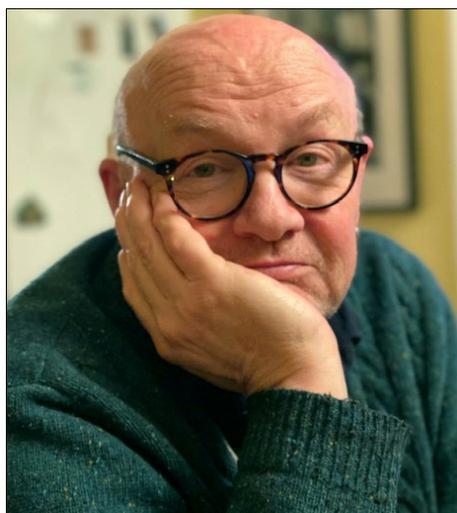
I am an Associate Lecturer at the Open University and have been a regional representative for over ten years. I am also a branch caseworker. I am currently serving my second term as branch vice-president, and I am one of the negotiators for the new AL contract.

The pandemic has not caused the crisis in HE but rather revealed it in stark forms. Arguments made in the past about the damage marketisation has wreaked have been underlined this year: Cuts to overstrained resources, additional pressures loaded onto already overworked academic and academic-related staff, the impact of lost fee income, in most universities, on already precarious financial plans.

Pressing

None of this is news to any of us. The more pressing question is what we do about it. Right now, we should reject any plan to make staff and students suffer for a crisis not of their making.

I was overjoyed at the successful Manchester student occupation, by successful ballots for action to



resist redundancies and cuts to services, and by strike action taken by colleagues.

I believe that it is only determined resistance across the sector that will avert both the attacks already happening and those that will come in the new year.

But I also want to make two more points. First, that as well as preparing for action we should celebrate the victories already won. Because they point to possibilities for the future.

Successful ballots for action have seen managements withdraw immediate threats.

At my own institution we are about to conclude a new contract that will take thousands of previously precarious teaching staff onto permanent contracts.

This undermines the argument about the disgrace of precarious employment being necessary for an institution's future in ways that I

believe we should carry out into the sector.

Secondly, that we need a vision for another education. The current system is, either already socially, pedagogically, financially bankrupt or facing bankruptcy.

An education system modelled on plans for a National Education Service would be a major step forward. This would support widening participation and greater access to higher education.

I am delighted that the OU has committed to becoming an anti-racist institution.

Change

None of this will be easy. I have been involved in HE, on and off, for 45 years. I have seen staff victimized, departments closed, the insidious spread of casualization, and much more besides. But I continue to believe that change is possible.

I am proud to say that in my time I have been involved in 8 student occupations and more strike days than I count. Because, even though I am involved in negotiations with management on an almost daily basis and continue to believe that this is useful, in the end it is our collective action that will change the sector for the better.

Election runs from 29 January - 2 March

For more information about the UCU Left platform & candidates [click here](#).