

## Lancaster UCU e-Bulletin (08 June 2015)

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### **New Government: New Trades Union Bill**

*In our last e-bulletin we wrote about May Day as a time for remembering workers' struggles around the world as well as the continued need to defend trade union rights here. One election on and how much greater that need is. In the Queen's Speech, the government proposed a **Trades Union Bill**, which will set new, higher thresholds on the right to take industrial action in essential services like education and healthcare. A 50 per cent turnout will be required in a ballot on industrial action and 40 per cent of all those eligible to vote must vote yes. If these thresholds on voter participation were applied to the general elections just gone, 270 Conservative MPs, according to the rail union TSSA, would not have been elected last month. The government proposing this new law was elected by 24 per cent of the electorate. In addition, the bill would allow employers to use agency workers to replace striking workers, thus sanctioning strike-breaking. Even before this bill, Britain has the harshest union laws in Western Europe. This bill is a direct attack on the six million trade union members in the UK, who have suffered the severest cuts to pay in generations alongside a deterioration in working conditions (insecure employment, increasing workloads, preferential treatment for those at the top).*

*As workers, we are indeed sailing in dangerous waters. We need to make sure our life-jackets are firmly fastened and our life-boats are sea-worthy. At a national level, we need to support the TUC in campaigning against the bill including a demonstration on the day parliament discusses the new anti-union laws. The TUC has warned that they want to 'make legal strikes close to impossible'. Locally, how can you stem the tide?*

- *Come to branch meetings*
- *Talk to colleagues about the need for unions and ask them to join one of the campus unions: UCU, Unite or Unison*
- *Volunteer to be your department rep*
- *Volunteer to join the casework team*
- *Vote in ballots and encourage colleagues to!*

### **CAMPUS NEWS: Meeting Reports & Members Needed**

#### **Researchers and fixed term contract policy discussions**

Many thanks to all members who turned up for the open discussion on Friday 8th May to share their experiences and observations on life as a researcher here at Lancaster. Lancaster UCU has been actively campaigning to improve the visibility and treatment of staff on research contracts and whilst there have been some positive developments, there remains a culture at Lancaster which views researchers as high turnover disposable assets. For further information please see: <http://www.lancs.ac.uk/users/ucu/campaigns/researchers.htm>

#### **Building the branch**

On Wednesday 3 June Jo McNeill shared her experiences as our elected NW rep on the UCU National Executive Committee as well as president of Liverpool UCU. It was a very useful and productive meeting as we discussed national issues (UCU recommendation to reject 1% pay offer; performance-related pay; pensions); current concerns from the floor (researchers with PhDs employed at Grade 6; the extension of the working day; how to make industrial action more effective) and looked to campaigns (stressed at work?) for next year.

#### **Members joining the casework team**

Many thanks to members who have joined the team since the last e-bulletin. We still need more! Please contact Louise Banton ([lbanton@ucu.org.uk](mailto:lbanton@ucu.org.uk)) for information.

#### **We are still seeking a Prof to sit as UCU Rep on the Academic Promotions Committee from 1st Aug 15**

The Academic Promotions Committee is made up of three subcommittees:

1. the [Academic Probation](#) Sub-Committee which considers academic probation cases in line with our academic probation policy. It is due to meet 4 times next academic year - UCU vacancy.
2. the [Academic Promotion](#) Sub-Committee which considers cases for academic promotion to grade 9, Readership and Chair level in line with our academic promotions [criteria](#). It is due to meet 5 times next academic year - UCU vacancy.

**Check your membership details online at: <https://members.ucu.org.uk/>**

3. the [Professorial Review](#) Sub-Committee. In even years, it considers professorial cases for salary movement within professorial bands. In odd years, it considers professorial cases for promotion to band 2 and band 3. It is due to meet twice next academic year and the UCU rep on the sub-committee is Professor Bob Jessop.

Please let us know if you are interested.

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### REGIONAL SOLIDARITY

#### University of Salford

UCU members in the school of nursing, midwifery, social work and social sciences at the University of Salford took part in a successful four-day strike in protest at the treatment of two colleagues who were put on forced gardening leave, sacked and refused any appeal. This has been followed by a week-long walk-out at the school of marketing and student recruitment, where the sacked pair worked. [Please show your support by signing the petition here.](#)

#### University of Bolton

One of our members attended the solidarity rally and march on Saturday 16 May for UCU branch secretary, Damien Markey, and his partner, Jennifer Markey, a Unison member, who were both summarily dismissed. UCU and Unison have launched a joint petition and we urge each of you to sign it.

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/reinstatethemarkeys>

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### NATIONAL NEWS: UCU Congress; March against Austerity; Managerialism

#### UCU Congress 30-31 May 2015

Paul Levy, VP, attended national Congress for us. Here is Paul's report and below are the higher education motions discussed, ours was 'failure of trustees to act prudently' HE5. <http://www.ucu.org.uk/7524>

UCU's annual Congress took place in Glasgow on 30th-31st May. Unfortunately, Lancaster UCU's motion on pensions fell, although some other motions on USS in a similar spirit were passed. Some of the issues raised in other motions were trade union victimisation, "lad culture" on campus, managerial misuse of anonymised marking, and the Prevent Agenda. The general spirit of Congress was one of determination to resist the new government's planned onslaught on trade unions, communities and the public sector.

At the Higher Education Sector conference, a lively discussion took place about the employers' recent final pay offer. Delegates voted strongly in favour of members being balloted on the offer with a recommendation to reject it.

UCU has already had one victory since Congress, when Warwick University decided to drop its plans to use the outsourcing firm Teach Higher to casualise its teaching staff.

#### Editorial Note: Pensions Update

Although our motion was not passed, experts still question the legality as well as sustainability of changes to the pension scheme. See <http://blogs.warwick.ac.uk/dennisleech/>. In addition, we await the outcome of the recent USS consultation exercise. Finally, and importantly, there is a growing campaign not to invest USS pension funds in arms companies. For information and to sign the petition: <http://listentouss.org/>

#### National 'End Austerity Now' March in London, Saturday 20 June 2015

Trade unions, including UCU, are supporting the People's Assembly 'End Austerity Now' demonstration outside the Bank of England with a march to Parliament Square. Thousands of people are expected and it is the first national demonstration since the 'austerity government' came in. It keys into the anger which saw spontaneous post-election demonstrations in Cardiff, Bristol, Manchester and London. There are two coaches going from Dalton Square, Lancaster at 7am. £5 waged; £10 or more if you can afford it for waged. To book a ticket call Eugene Doherty on 07944142876.

#### Managerialism in Universities

Interesting article, which may resonate with members.

<https://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/news/cuckoo-managers-are-throwing-out-academy-traditions/2020315.article>

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### INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY:

#### Stop the Executions in Egypt

UCU members are encouraged to [sign a new Egypt Solidarity statement](#) condemning the recent death sentences that have been announced by the Egyptian authorities. One of those condemned to death is Professor Emad Shahin from the American University in Cairo.

*Best wishes for the summer from your editorial team here at Lancaster UCU.*