

KEEP THE PRESSURE UP WE ARE WINNING

We have to keep striking as talks take place...

The fact that Universities UK (UUK) are calling for talks is a tribute to the strength of our action. They want to talk. Fine. But UCU is absolutely right to keep strike action on. The best way to concentrate the employers' minds is to build on the success of the initial strikes.

Our strength is growing. More than 5,000 people joined UCU in the days before the strikes to defend USS pensions began.

We've seen amazing support by UCU members and students on our picket lines and protests across Britain.

Hundreds of staff and students have joined big pickets and protests from Newcastle to Glasgow, from Cambridge to Bristol.

Teach-outs involving hundreds of staff and students are being held at many universities. The Guardian journalists Owen Jones and Gary Younge spoke to a huge teach-out at Goldsmiths. Newsnight's Paul Mason and veteran activist Tariq Ali are set to speak at UCL events.

Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell has been on UCU picket lines while Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has spoken out and called on UUK to talk.

Oxbridge rules

The splits on the employers' side have clearly been growing as our action has bitten.

Now even the VC at Cambridge University wants talks, despite the fact that Oxford and Cambridge were the driving force behind the plans for the attack on USS.

Students know who is to blame. A recent YouGov poll found 61 percent of students supported the strikes while just 19 percent opposed them. It also found 50 percent of students blamed UUK for the



Sally Hunt joined pickets at University College London on Friday

strikes while only 2 percent felt that staff were most to blame!

UUK says there's a massive deficit in the scheme. But there is no deficit. This has to be stressed over and over again.

They have based their valuations on a situation where every university goes bust. In reality, the income pays for the outgoings.

A manufactured crisis

But employers aren't attacking the scheme because it's unaffordable. They are attacking it because they want the liabilities off their books so they can better compete with other universities. The 'crisis' in USS has been manufactured to extend competition in education.

The attack has rightly infuriated university workers. We face losing £10,000 a year in retirement—and having our pensions at the mercy of the stock market.

Meanwhile vice chancellors' bloated pay has become a national scandal and students have been milked for over £9,000 a year tuition fees.

With a programme of 14 days of strikes UCU members need protests and teach-outs to involve staff and students. We need to expand strike committees and activists meetings to maximise involvement and develop imaginative campaigning.

We should go out to other unions and seek solidarity and financial support.

Our action will be boosted this week by more universities joining the strike action and by the start of strikes by Further Education Colleges this week in London, Sandwell, Hastings and Sunderland.

The London Region of UCU has called a march on Parliament on Wednesday (28 February) that every UCU branch should support*. It can be a massive show of strength. It's also the union's day of action against workplace racism. We should use the opportunity to build the national 'March Against Racism' the union is backing on Saturday 17 March.

This is a fight UCU members can win. A victory will be a massive boost for university staff and students and for everyone resisting Tory austerity.

* London Region march assembles 12 noon at Malet Street, London WC1E 7HY

NEC elections: the UCU Left supports these candidates Voting ends Thursday 1 March

Vice President FE
Nita Sanghera

London & East HE
Sean Wallis, Ioanna Ioannou, Rachel Cohen, Paul Anderson

London & East FE
Sean Vernell, Julia Roberts

North East HE
Jeff Fowler, Steve Lui (Sun Chong Lui), Mike Lammiman

North East FE
Saleem Rashid

North West FE
Carol Cody

Northern Ireland HE
Peter Collins

UK-elected HE
Julie Hearn, Mark Abel, Elio Di Muccio, Sunil Banga, Jo McNeill

UK elected HE (casual vacancy)
Marion Hersh

UK-elected FE
Margot Hill, Richard McEwan, Naina Kent

Women members HE
Sue Abbott, Pura Ariza, Marian Mayer

Women members FE
Elaine White, Martha Harris,

Land-based education
Eleni Michalopoulou

More info at:
uculeft.org