

Massive vote for strikes to defend pensions...

# All out to defend pensions & pay

**UCU HAS ANNOUNCED STRIKE action across 61 pre-92 universities, where UCU members have delivered a massive 88 percent vote to back strikes, 93 percent to back action short of strikes, on a 58 percent turnout.**

This is well over the 50 percent demanded by the Tories anti-union laws. Strikes have been called for 22-23 February, escalating to three and four day strikes. A total of 14 days of strikes have been called so far.

The strikes in our universities will be the biggest wave of action in this sector for many years. The outcome of these strikes will affect the future of staff and students alike. What's at stake is the future of post-16 education.

This is one of the largest private pension schemes in Europe.

The employers are proposing to scrap the collective defined benefit scheme and replace it with an individual defined contribution scheme. Members would be expected to pay in more, and could lose a third or more of the value of their pensions.

## Student fees

A dubious set of assumptions and a pessimistic revaluation of the scheme by the employers has led to the belief it is in crisis. In fact the USS pension scheme is in good health. But the employers aren't listening to rational arguments.

This is the logical conclusion of the privatisation and marketisation of our universities. In the rush to expand student numbers and build new property portfolios, Vice-Chancellors are shifting the balance of risk onto staff whilst reducing their institution's own liabilities.

The same forces that have driven

up student fees are attacking wages, conditions and pensions. We face a choice between the market or the public university.

We need strike committees organised on every campus and every UCU region to push the campaign forward.

We need protests, pickets, rallies and demonstrations to get our arguments across and put the employers under pressure.

Colleges and universities should twin with striking universities. We should fight to build support from our students and other campus unions.

In Further Education, 16 colleges in London and 4 outside London will commence a ballot on pay this week from Monday 22 January, for escalating strikes to win a 3 percent above inflation pay award.

These branches are also fighting over "part two claims" including fractionalisation, holidays, contact time and workloads. FE branches could be striking by the end of February.

## Labour government

UCU should coordinate strike action to unite higher and further education.

In the wake of the USS disputes and FE campaign we should launch disputes where we can to join the action as soon as possible. A number of FE branches are moving to dispute to form a second wave on pay.

Every UCU branch and region needs to be a council of war, doing everything they can to build the strikes and build the union.

We're not alone. Many student unions are already speaking out in support of UCU's action in the universities.

Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell

backed the UCU at a rally organised by the London Region of the union last week.

We need to capitalise on that support to mobilise public opinion. We should also seek guarantees from a future Labour government to underwrite our pensions and end the cycle of 3 year revaluations.

This is one of the biggest fights UCU has ever faced, but it's a fight we can win.

## National demonstration

UCU should call a national demonstration to bring the whole weight of the union and the movement behind the strikers.

UCU Elections are running throughout February. The UCU Left has played a key role organising to get these fights off the ground.

We all need to campaign to get a fighting left majority on the union NEC, including Nita Sanghera she is standing for the position of Vice President.

## We are supporting the following UCU Left candidates in the NEC elections

### Vice President FE

Nita Sanghera

### London & East HE

Paul Anderson

Rachel Cohen

Ioanna Ioannou

Sean Wallis

### London & East FE

Julia Roberts

Sean Vernell

### North East HE

Jeff Fowler

Mike Lammiman

Steve Lui (Sun

Chong Lui)

### North East FE

Saleem Rashid

### North West FE

Carol Cody

### N. Ireland HE

Peter Collins

### UK-elected HE

Mark Abel

Sunil Banga

Elio Di Muccio

Julie Hearn

Jo McNeill

### UK elected HE

(casual vacancy)

Marion Hersh

### UK-elected FE

Margot Hill

Naina Kent

Richard McEwan

### Women members HE

Sue Abbott

Pura Ariza

Marian Mayer

### Women members FE

Martha Harris

Elaine White

Land-based education

Eleni Michalopoulou

