

What A Let Down...

**SPRING
2011**

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Atypical Workers

SUCU has become increasingly concerned with the way in which the award-winning **Atypical Workers Framework Agreement is being implemented** and in December declared a collective dispute lodged on behalf of GMB, UCU, Unison and Unite as it had become clear that, although discussions had been taking place for over 18 months, agreement could not be reached without this course of action.



Contracts have been given to atypical workers for more than 35 hours a week, G7 job summaries are being used to pay people at G6, those who have worked for the university for years are being placed on Point 1 of the scale, transparent workload allocation models are not being used and we have no evidence that those regularised are being given the same time allocation as their full-time colleagues. There is no centralised database of bank workers, documentation provided to them is inadequate, the appeals process which is part of the framework agreement has been changed without any negotiation and the Good Practice paper for postgraduate students who teach, produced by UCU 15 months ago, has still not been adopted. We have no evidence that postgraduate students are employed on proper terms and conditions in recognition of the important contribution they make to the university and to the next generation of students.

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The University's Mission: To Increase Pensioner Poverty

Britain is top of the charts in Western Europe for both inequality and pensioner poverty. Official stats indicate that on average 25,000 elderly people die of cold and malnutrition in this country in a normal winter. The response of government, industry and now universities to this scandal is to cut pensions even more. **A particularly insidious trend is the imposition of inflation caps, which mean high inflation eats away at pensions until a decent pension becomes a pittance.** The proposals for both USS and USPS include caps.

USS

Most UCU members are in the national USS pension scheme, and some of you will have come to the Emergency General Meeting on 27th January to hear the latest news. Briefly:

31,000 responded to the USS ballot, with 96% against the proposals. Only 5,000 responded to USS's consultation and it seems they were also overwhelmingly against, though USS has not released any data officially. In any event the USS Consultation Working Group recommended to:

- Improve (eg 10%) or remove inflation caps.
- Extend the gap in service allowed before being forced off the final salary scheme, from 6 to 24-30 months.
- Allow staff in other associated final salary schemes (eg USPS?) to still transfer to the final salary scheme for another 24 months.
- Remove references to the CPI (Consumer Price Index) – this is the lower value preferred by government.

The Working Group recommended no changes to the employers' proposals on:

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Working Together: NUS and UCU

Last semester saw a seismic shift in the state's attitude towards higher education, which will have implications for our University, and indeed our society, for many years to come.

The Government's decision to triple tuition fees and pass the burden of debt onto individual students showed a dangerous disregard for the values of widening participation in higher education, while the effective withdrawal of state funding for teaching, coupled with Lord Browne's casual comments about 'priority subjects' seemed to symbolise policy making which understood the price of everything and the value of nothing.

However, I was immensely pleased by one of the unforeseen consequences of the Government's actions: a generation of young people, previously derided and dismissed as politically apathetic, rose to defend the value of higher education and to protest against the blatant betrayal of electoral promises.

In Sheffield, due to the dubious honour of being on the Deputy Prime Minister's doorstep, but also, one hopes, as the leading Students' Union in the country, we found ourselves at the forefront of the national campaign to resist Lord Browne's proposals.

And, I must admit, I am very proud that what began as a few ideas kicked around a dingy room by eight concerned Union Officers grew into a campaign which saw thousands of our students and staff taking to the streets of London and Sheffield, dominating the headlines, and coming achingly close to defeating the Government and stopping the proposals in their tracks.

Both as President of the Students' Union and as an aspiring member of the academic community, I was touched and encouraged by the many messages of support I received from academics from across the University last semester. And I was proud to march with UCU members – from postgraduates to Professors – on the National Demo jointly organised by the NUS and UCU in November.

This year, I hope we can build on this collaboration by working with members of UCU on several key subjects, namely: (1) resisting the Home Office's proposed visa changes which unfairly target international students and are likely to deter future applicants from studying in the UK; (2) ensuring that teaching remains valued in our research intensive institution, and; (3) improving access to our University for potential students from lower participation backgrounds, thereby ensuring that access to higher education be based on academic merit, not wealth.

In addition, I look forward to mobilising our members together to attend the TUC's 'March for an Alternative' on March the 26th, to highlight once again why we continue to think that cuts are, indeed, "nuts". Furthermore, if you would like to get in touch to discuss future action, please do not hesitate to email me at:

union.president@shef.ac.uk or Joe Oliver our Education Officer at education.officer@shef.ac.uk.

We look forward to hearing from you!

In solidarity,
Joshua Forstenzer
President of the UoS Students' Union

Sheffield Anti-Cuts Alliance

UCU have joined a number of other local Trades Union branches and other organisations in an alliance to protest and fight against this Government's extraordinarily brutal and ideologically-motivated regime of spending cuts. The Sheffield Anti-Cuts Alliance are planning a number of forthcoming demonstrations including:

12 March 2011 - Protest outside the Liberal Democrats Spring Conference: Assemble Devonshire Green, time tbc

26 March 2011 - TUC London Demonstration. Transport is being arranged, further details shortly.

For more information about the Sheffield Anti-Cuts Alliance, please go to

<http://sheffieldanticuts.wordpress.com/>

In the UCU ballots

Vote

YES

to protect your job and
your pay

to protect your pension



Pensions Update Continued:

- Normal Retirement Age
- Redundancy provision
- Career Average (CARE) at 1/80th for new joiners. With two tier schemes employers invariably force everyone onto the inferior scheme within a few years, so this probably means you.

By the time you read this the employers will have responded, but it is clear that the fundamentals of the proposals will be unacceptable even if they accept the recommendations. You will probably now have got a ballot from UCU asking for your support for industrial action. The SUCU Emergency General Meeting on the 27th January passed a motion urging all members to vote in favour of action. It is vital that our negotiators have a strong vote of confidence;

PLEASE VOTE YES TO ACTION

It is worth stressing that this whole conflict was completely avoidable. A compromise had been agreed between UCU and the employers' lead negotiator, but the employers themselves then rejected it. Our case may be just but that's not enough: action will likely be needed for justice to prevail.

USPS

Which brings us onto the USPS scheme, run by the University of Sheffield itself for mainly lower grade staff. The University plans to cut their pensions accrued from 2011 by two-thirds or more, depending on inflation. The current average pension paid by USPS is under £3,000 a year, but the University seems to think this is far too much.

Unison and Unite have a modeller on their websites which uses real inflation and annuity rates and current values so people can see the effect of the University's proposals in real terms. **If someone had been on the**

University's proposed scheme for the last 40 years and was retiring now their pension would be one eighth of their salary as a reward for their loyalty, instead of one half of salary with the current scheme.

Seriously. It is hard to understand how our colleagues in HR, Finance and UEB could have put forward such an appalling proposal.



The situation for members of USPS in grades 6 and above (some of whom are in UCU) is still not certain, but the proposals as they stand would exclude them from USPS and mean a transfer to USS. The devil is in the detail of course and discussions continue on this.

At the time of writing it is looking possible that under the threat of industrial action by the Unison and Unite unions the implementation, planned for April, will be delayed to allow proper negotiations to take place and hopefully reasonable proposals to emerge. However, if this doesn't happen and there is industrial action UCU will be urging its members to show maximum solidarity.

Further Information

Please look on the SUCU website for news and links, including presentations and background material.

The AgeUK website is good on pensioner poverty – see www.ageuk.org.uk/get-involved/campaign/preventing-winter-deaths/

USPS Real-terms Modeller – see www.amicus.group.shef.ac.uk/USPSExamples.xls

Recent comments from our members:

“So I'm much happier, and relieved, and very thankful for all your kind support and encouragement over the last few months. It helped enormously. Many, many thanks and keep up the good work in the UCU at Sheffield”.

“ And you are so right to say our UCU membership has been worthwhile. I have never regretted paying my union dues. Once again and as always, a huge thank you!”

“To be told that I was considered an employee and not a Bank Worker came as great news and I am so grateful to SUCU for their tremendous support and patience. It is OUR victory.”

Changes to SUCU Committee

David Patrick—a member of the UCU committee since June 2009—has stepped down from active participation in the committee.

The committee would like express its thanks to David for all his work and input into UCU and we look forward to continuing to work with him as he continues in his role as UCU Department Rep for the School of Dentistry.

There are currently a number of vacancies in the committee, and for Departmental UCU Reps in some areas. If you are able to contribute in any capacity, or would like to be co-opted into the committee, please contact ucu@sheffield.ac.uk

Atypical Workers (continued)

Whilst many hourly paid teachers have never had a written contract of employment, we expected that regularisation would change that but **the information being given to both bank workers and employees is still woefully inadequate as it fails to give basic facts such as the calculation of the hours of work, the actual weeks in which the employee is required to work, holiday entitlement, and in some cases the actual salary.**

Following a recent bulletin, it became clear that there is some misunderstanding amongst some staff about those being regularised. Those being regularised are not people who deliver the occasional lecture or who work for the occasional week – they are those loyal staff who have in some cases taught for more than a decade on a regular basis each semester. The job title has no influence on employment status. It matters not whether an individual is a demonstrator, gym instructor, teaching assistant or tutor – once work begins then there is mutuality of obligation and that gives employee status. Control and personal service are obvious indicators too.

Atypical workers represent a huge proportion of teaching staff and the issues raised should give all cause for concern since if UCU allows G7 work for G6 pay and Point 1 on the scale if the individual has been doing the work for years to become the norm, it is not inconceivable that full-time contracts will be changed to ensure that everyone is treated equally since indications are that the university is interpreting the Equal Pay Act to mean that everyone who teaches should be appointed to the same point on the scale no matter what qualifications or experience are possessed.

Looking to the future, when students will be asked to pay up to £9,000 pa for tuition it will be front line teachers who will be most important to the university's success and it is difficult to understand why a prestigious university such as Sheffield places such a low value on the delivery of its teaching.

Update: At the time of printing, we have been waiting for more than 2 weeks for HR to issue a joint statement outlining the Atypical Workers agreement. The SUCU Branch committee notes that more rapid progress can usually be observed in cases where the VC is involved....

FYI.....

VC Near Top of List of Yorkshire's 'Movers and Shakers'

Our own Professor Burnett is described as one of Yorkshire's 'Movers and Shakers' in a list published by *The Yorkshire Post*. The article, which includes information about many of the region's most powerful people, reveals that the VC has an **annual salary of £251,000**, and receives **benefits in kind of £4,000** not to mention **pension contributions of £39,000**.

This puts him near the top of the list and above other such regional luminaries as Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg (salary: £134,565) or Bill McCarthy, Chief Executive of NHS Yorkshire and Humber (Salary: £110,000-£115,000).

For more information please see www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/Power-and-Pay-The-region39s.6689994.jp

Fixed Term Contracts and Permanence

Members on fixed terms contracts should be aware that they are entitled to a permanent contract after four years of employment, even if their work is externally funded.

SUCU is currently supporting a number of colleagues employed for four years on two or more contracts who have been **erroneously informed that they are not entitled to a permanent contract** because their post is externally funded or because the University is not making fixed term posts permanent.

Do the Maths....

"We have discussed on many occasions the need [...] to keep staff costs, including both pay and pensions, in line with income."

Rosie Valerio, Director of Human Resource Management, 'Update on Pay Negotiations'. Email to University of Sheffield staff, 2 September 2010

"Income has grown by 4.0 per cent whilst costs have increased by just 0.7 per cent."

University of Sheffield Annual Report and Financial Statements, 2009-2010 (February 2011), p.12