

**SUCU General Meeting Wed 8<sup>th</sup> March 2017, 1pm**

**Council Room, Firth Court**

**Chair: Craig Brandist, SUCU President**

**Minutes: Jane Rodger, SUCU Branch Administrator**

1. Welcome and introductions

Craig welcomed all to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

3. Brief round-up of news

3.1. Today is International Women's Day. Over 50% of UCU members, and members on the National Executive Board are female. Our recently re-elected General Secretary is also female. The gender pay gap formed part of last year's pay claim, and this Branch is finalising a local claim consisting of; what we want to see in the University's equal pay report followed by tangible actions. A local anti-casualisation claim is also being drafted to form the basis of negotiations.

3.2. There are a number of reviews taking place across the University and the situation is moving forward quickly. A review has just recently been announced in aspects of Student Services and SUCU has sent an email to all affected members. The outcome of the research support review was due to be announced yesterday but this has been delayed by five weeks. There will be a "deep dive" in to Faculties as part of the reviews in research support and in Student Services. We hope to hold workplace meetings where we can, and members are also getting in touch.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- Are costs driving this?

Ans. Shearer West's webpage sets out that the University is concerned to protect its finances.

- How does this fit with huge capital expenditure commitments?

Ans. Our view is that UK Universities are using campus buildings to compete with each other for marketing and branding purposes. This is at the expense of staff and students.

3.3. One key concern following the staff release scheme is that there will be more work, and fewer people to do it. We want a formal policy on workload allocation that ensures that work is manageable and equally distributed. However, the University regards workload allocation models (WAMs) as a way to ensure all institutional agendas are met. Currently the units to measure the workload allocations models differ between Departments which means they cannot be compared. We need an agreed formulation of units which the unions can scrutinise. It is important that WAMs are open, transparent and consulted on. Management will provide a response in May and a Branch motion may be required to support our negotiation position.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- WAMs are not a solution to the problem as they can be misused by management.

Ans. A transparent WAM goes some way to protecting staff – more so than a totally arbitrary system.

- There are many problems with WAMs leaving individuals exposed. Research on the effectiveness of WAMs will be forwarded to SUCU.

Ans. We need proper scrutiny and use of health and safety provisions to ensure individuals do not feel exposed.

3.4. We have been meeting with University management about the valuation of the USS scheme currently under consultation. We are hopeful that this University is now paying more attention to concerns.

3.5. We have seen an encouraging rise in SUCU membership over the last year – up 5%.

#### 4. National Student Survey

Craig introduced our guest speaker Ali Day, Student Union (SU) Education Officer noting the recent amendment to the Higher Education Bill passed by the House of Lords. The amendment uncouples the National Student Survey (NSS) from the right to raise fees. This will now return to the House of Commons. Ali Day thanked colleagues for supporting the boycott of NSS – part of the NUS campaign which is proving very successful at this University. So far there has been an 11% decline in response rates compared to last year. Ali has been assured by the Vice Chancellor that if the amendment to the HE Bill is accepted by the House of Commons this University will opt out of the TEF. The local SU campaign had three strands:

- Linking with a mass audience.
- A dedicated webpage containing a pledge for students, a guide to opt out of Ipsos MORI contact, and how to delete your response before the end of NSS in April if a response has already been sent.
- Connecting with academic colleagues and societies.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- Is the House of Lords amendment due to pressure from the NUS?

Ans. Yes, but there were other factors including a general feeling in the sector that the NSS is not right.

- We have been told that the University has already signed up to TEF.

Ans. The University has submitted the application but the VC is willing to withdraw it. We are confident he will stick to his word.

- For more information on how staff can support the boycott colleagues are encouraged to look at the UCU FAQs.

#### 5. Save Sheffield Central Library campaign

Craig introduced our guest speaker Rebecca Gransbury who explained that the yearlong consultation regarding plans for Sheffield Central Library started in November 2016. The Council's position is that they do not have the estimated thirty million pounds needed for refurbishment. A Chinese company are offering to buy the building and the Council are saying another will be built within a quarter of a mile of the current site. The concerns are; there is insufficient information from the Council about the new plans, there has not been sufficient appraisal of alternative funding and options, the investors could pull out, and heritage issues have not been considered. The next Library Action Group meeting is on 17<sup>th</sup> March. Campaigners have visited Liverpool library - a grade two listed building successfully refurbished by the local Council.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- Is the £30 million a serious figure?  
Ans. The report stating this has not been made public yet.
- We should push the University to support this campaign.
- This is an important campaign and SUCU will try to attend the meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup>.
- Ayrshire Council has adopted a new approach to funding public services by using borrowing and stopping the use of outsourced companies.

#### 6. Lecture capture

Many members have been raising concerns with SUCU about the plans for lecture capture. SUCU Committee are formulating guidance for members and a draft copy was circulated. It is important that staff have the right to opt out of recording lectures at any point. We understand the University owns the copyright but does not have the automatic right to the performance. Individual staff can either assign their performance rights (in which case the recording could be sold), or license them for defined purposes. The next SUCU Action Group (29 March 1-2) is for people particularly interested that lecture capture works for staff and students.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- What is the connection between intellectual property and copyright?  
Ans. The University could claim a right to everything but it cannot due to the protection in the nationally agreed Framework Agreement.
- Lecture capture changes the dynamic of the lecture as it can work against open discussion, and there are issues of student consent.  
Ans. We should be able to turn it off.
- This scheme can be misused to control academics.
- Ali Day suggested further discussions with SUCU on a set of joint principles, and that it is important to have a robust policy.

#### 7. Jobstown not guilty motion

This motion is against the criminalisation of the right to protest.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- One member felt prepared to vote for an amended motion which was about a principle rather than a specific circumstance as more information might be needed.  
Ans. This is an important situation and the motion should be put to the vote un-amended.

The following motion was proposed by Sam Morecroft and seconded by Umberto Albarella:

##### **Jobstown Not Guilty motion**

In 2016 working people in the Republic of Ireland built a mass campaign of non-payment and direct action to defeat the imposition of a tax on water. This charge was a first step towards the privatisation of water.

On 21 October 2016, a 17-year-old was found guilty of false imprisonment in the Children's Court in the Republic of Ireland.

He was 15 at the time of the 'false imprisonment', which consisted of participating in a protest against water charges and austerity on 15 November 2014, which resulted in Joan Burton's (the then Deputy Prime Minister) car being delayed for 2.5 hours in Jobstown in Tallaght in the Republic of Ireland. There was no allegation or charge against him of any violence. He was recognised by the judge as having led a "blameless life".

However, the judge found him guilty of false imprisonment and listed the following factors which led him to that conclusion: He sat in front of a car and encouraged others to do so; He participated in a slow march; He momentarily stood in Joan Burton's way and asked to talk to her; He used a megaphone to chant "No way, we won't pay."

**This branch believes that:**

It is clear that he was protesting, not kidnapping.

Although he was given a 'conditional discharge', meaning that he will not face imprisonment if of good behaviour for nine months, the important fact is that he was found guilty of false imprisonment because of participating in a protest.

The verdict prepares the way for convictions and imprisonment of 18 adult defendants next year, and a dramatic broadening of the definition of false imprisonment to include many forms of protest.

Striking workers could find their picket lines classed as 'false imprisonment', as could any protesters who engage in a slow march or sit-down protest.

In England, Wales and Northern Ireland a system of law similar to that in the Republic operates. There is a danger that a successful prosecution of the Jobstown defendants could lead to similar tactics being used against protesters here.

The first trial of adults starts on April 24 with a group of seven defendants charged with 'false imprisonment'.

One of those is Paul Murphy, an MP for the Anti-Austerity Alliance. If jailed for more than six months, he will be removed as an MP and the people of Dublin South West (which includes Jobstown) will be denied the democratic choice they made.

**This branch resolves to:**

- Condemn the conviction of the 17-year-old protester of 'false imprisonment'.
- Recognise that "an injury to one is an injury to all" and this conviction is a threat to everybody's democratic right to protest and to effective trade unionism.
- Call for all charges to be dropped against all the Jobstown protesters immediately.
- Agree to send a message of solidarity and a donation of £100 to the #JobstownNotGuilty campaign and to publicise and support activities supporting the campaign.

A vote was taken and the motion was carried with two abstentions.

8. AOB

UCU National Congress takes place 27-29 May in Brighton. This Branch can send delegates. If any member would be interested in taking one of the places please get in touch.