

Ballot papers for UCU NEC elections out on 7 February...

VOTE UCU LEFT: FOR A FIGHTING, DEMOCRATIC UNION

Time to turn the tide

Further education continues to be a battleground. The constant drive to turn colleges into 14-19 skills factories, short-term under-funding in the sector, the drive to push down unit costs and drive up our productivity all increase the pressures we are under.

Workloads are at record levels and sickness rates, stress levels and staff turnover are high.

UCU's recent survey showed bullying and harassment to be currently members' number one concern. Lecturers grow angrier as we see the very heart of education being progressively undermined by the mantra of the market and training for skills.

How do we start to turn things round in FE? How do we build a campaigning, democratic union which can challenge what is happening and organise effectively to protect our members and defend education?

FE Pay – “Our colleges, our communities, our union”

Gordon Brown's pay freeze is intended to make us and ultimately all workers pay for the crisis those in power have created.

We are told that inflation is our fault and there is no money for better funding of education and services yet they can still find £50 billion to underwrite Northern Rock and more billions to pour into the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

One of the first decisions of newly-elected UCU Left supporters on the Further Education Committee before the summer, faced with rising inflation, was to refuse to sanction a pay cut for FE lecturers by accepting the below-inflation AoC offer.

We initiated a branch consultation and a special delegate pay conference – for the first time ever in the union – so that branches and members could democratically discuss

and decide whether to accept the FEC recommendation. UCU Left supporters have argued consistently that we should not accept such an offer but should seek united action with other public sector workers in a campaign based on the defence of further education.

A series of joint pay rallies are planned with the NUT teachers' union and hopefully we can coordinate our pay ballot and action with theirs around the slogan 'Our schools, our colleges, our communities – fair pay for lecturers/teachers'.

ESOL – a successful campaign!

The Defend ESOL campaign, initiated by UCU, secured £15 million extra funding last Autumn in London to protect some courses, and now has secured a major national re-think on funding announced quietly over the Xmas break by ministers which could lead to the restoration of many courses.

This U-turn was won by high profile exposure of the hypocrisy of New Labour's policies and by

building a lively campaign of lobbies, protests, petitioning and a national demonstration involving lecturers, students, community groups and agencies. It is a model of how the union should fight over other issues.

Privatisation and bullying

Later this term there will be a national UCU conference on building resistance to privatisation, and another one on how we take on the bullying culture that is rife in our colleges.

UCU Left supporters have been prominent in initiating and building all these activities last year.

Our supporters wrote the 'Manifesto for Further Education' produced by the union in the summer. Much of what the union is currently doing to develop such campaigns would not be happening if members had not voted for our candidates in last year's NEC elections.

We need to build on these initiatives so that we can create a vibrant, campaigning, effective, democratic union for members to be proud of and we ask you to support our candidates again this year.

UK-Elected FE list

(we suggest you list your preferences in this order)

Lynne Chamberlain, David Swanson, Keith Mallinson, Jim Thakoordin

Region – North East

Howard Miles

Women members in HE

Amanda Sackur

Disabled members rep

Paul Brown

North East Region FE

All these candidates are supported by UCU Left. Read their manifestos at

WWW.UCULEFT.ORG

STV VOTING SYSTEM

To maximise votes for progressive candidates we ask you to do the following:

- Please use your votes to **first endorse all UCU Left candidates** and only after that use lower preferences for other progressive candidates in each relevant list; and
- Give your highest preferences in the UK-Elected list to UCU Left candidate(s) **from your Region**.