

Socialist Party

Support our striking lecturers Fight for Decent Pay and Funding



The current AUT and NATFHE strike action over pay in Higher Education comes after a ballot that saw a good turnout of about a half in both unions, with big majorities supporting both strike action and 'action short of a strike'. This reflects the anger present at years of empty promises from the employers to give us the pay we deserve.

For United Action

Although lecturers' productivity has more than trebled over the past fifteen years, as student numbers have shot up with no increase in staffing, pay rises have been near or below inflation for decades. The management has been relying on the goodwill of university workers to get away with this exploitation, but we are now sending a clear signal that the goodwill has run out.

Enough is enough!

While past action has concentrated on action short of a strike such as marking boycotts, this has often proved to have had limited impact, because management could pick members off one by one. This time the emphasis should be on building support for strike action, which should be escalated if made necessary by the intransigence of the Vice-Chancellors.

Joint work between AUT and NATFHE members is a significant step forward, and will be an important test for the success of the united union UCU due to form this summer. It is also important to build the broadest possible support for our action, locally and nationally, from the NUS, and from other trade unions, particularly public-sector unions in the middle of similar disputes.

Fees No Solution

It has been clear for years that Higher Education in the UK is seriously underfunded, with staff having to spend increasing amounts of time on bureaucratic procedures like the Research

Assessment Exercise and Teaching Quality Assessment - or writing lengthy research grant applications - to get what little money is made available. In this context, some academics are making the mistake of looking to the introduction of 'top up' fees as a way to get money flowing back into universities.

In fact, it is clear that as the privatisation of universities continues, it is only very few academics in very few universities who will benefit from significant salary increases - 'market forces' will drive down the pay of the majority of university staff as they have done in all other privatised industries.

Furthermore, the introduction of fees is already having a bad effect on applications to undergraduate courses. If we seem to support fees, even implicitly by demanding a share of the income generated from fees, we risk undercutting support from students angry at the debt they incur from studying, and from workers who will not be able to afford to send their children to university.

Political Alternative Needed

Socialist Party members in AUT and NATFHE argue that we should fight for more public funding in higher education to pay for more staff on better wages, to abolish fees and introduce living grants. The money is there in society to pay for this without increasing taxes on ordinary people, contrary to New Labour's arguments: just look at the obscene profits of the energy and retail monopolies! We should approach the NUS and other trade unions for a national demonstration for better funding and an end to cuts, closures and privatisation of higher education.

The 'New Labour' Government is attacking the living standards of working class and young people everyday. These include savage cuts in education and health, attacks on pensions, privatising public services or introducing their much-hated water charges. These policies are designed to benefit big business and the super-rich, while working and unemployed people are made to pay the price.

Join the Socialist Party

The Socialist Party is building a fighting, socialist alternative to these right-wing policies which are also shared by our local politicians. While the Assembly was up-and-running all the main four parties implemented anti-working class policies such as privatisation, through PFI's, and had agreed to introduce water charges!

These same parties also have an interest in maintaining sectarian division. Only by building a socialist alternative which fights for the common interests of working class and young people can we cut across sectarian division. The Socialist Party believes it is in the best interests of workers and youth to unite to fight for a socialist society where the needs of people are put before the greed of the few. If you agree with us then join us today and help us build the socialist alternative!

I would like to join the ☐ Socialist Party ☐ Socialist Society ☐ more info

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

TEL _____

E-MAIL _____

Return to: Socialist Party, 13 Lombard St Belfast BT1 1RB Tel: 028 90 232962

e-mail: socialistpartyni@btconnect.com Website: www.socialistpartyni.tk

Socialist Party - 90232962 or 07821058319