

THE UNIVERSITY WORKER

Rank and File Strike Bulletin: Week 1, 25th November 2019

What is this?

The University Worker is a rank-and-file bulletin produced by academic workers.

Reports

We want to collect reports on the picket lines from across the country. In a national strike like this it is important we share information and tactics to strengthen each local picket.

Please send in short reports and pictures to:

editors@notesfrombelow.org

[@NotesFrom_Below](https://twitter.com/NotesFrom_Below)

We're aiming to produce reports for the next issue!

Help us distribute!

There will be picket lines across the country. We want to be on all of them. Download the PDF from notesfrombelow.org and print some out

Contributions welcome!

Like we did during the previous strike, we'll be producing regular issues of *The University Worker* as the strikes and the dispute develop.

We welcome contributions for future issues that can either be included in the bulletin (in short form) or on *Notes from Below* (in longer form).



Here we go again... A year and a half after UCU's largest strike ever - against employers' assault on our pensions - we are out to finish the job.

This is important. After stopping the then-union's leadership from selling the strike out, a large majority of members still decided to accept a status quo deal and return to work despite no agreement being signed. We effectively accepted that employers had learned their lesson and that they would now be prepared to negotiate in good faith. The last 18 months have shown how wrong we were...

It is also true that a significant minority - about a third of those polled - rejected the deal and argued at the time that we needed to press on, continue the strike, and that only more sustained industrial action could get us the goods. The fact that we are here, out once more to finish the job, demonstrates the validity of this argument in practice.

The lesson from this period is that our membership is in desperate need of an organised, confident, and united rank and file that can develop and argue for more effective action from below. There have been many initiatives to do just this, but they have all suffered from the same short coming: they are initiatives from above, controlled by few activists, with little roots in local branches across the UK.

This strike is an opportunity to turn things around. Every local dispute will have brought together groups of activists, from different departments and sectors of our institutions - casual and permanent, academic and admin, support and technical - to get the vote out and organise the action. These networks can form the backbone of longer term organising group in every institution.

Now is the time to formalise these groups. Why not start with a strike bulletin where reports, debates, and strategic arguments can be had in the open - linking local realities and points of view to national ones? These could then continue to be published after the strike and become a regular focus for all those who want a better, more unified, and more active trade union movement in higher education.

National rank and file networks can only be built on the back of solid local groups. And our sector is in dire need of solid, continuous, and unified action to defeat vice chancellors, pension providers, and other government officials.

Let's strike with all our might and energy in the days ahead - and let's build the organisation we need to take the fight forward in the months to come.



IWGB Outsourced Workers Strike at UCL!

On 19 November, Outsourced workers at University College London (UCL) went on strike to end discriminatory outsourcing.

Despite UCL being one of the richest universities in the world, they continue to treat outsourced workers like second class workers. These workers, the majority of whom are migrants or from ethnic minorities, receive worse sick pay, pension, holiday pay and parental leave than in-house colleagues.

The 300 outsourced who are members of the University of London Branch of the IWGB, including cleaners, porters and security officers voted 98% YES to take strike action.

IWGB University of London branch chair and former UCL cleaner Maritza Castillo Calle said:

“UCL would not be able to function without its cleaners, porters and security officers, however for years the university and its contractors have been happy to treat them like second class workers. They are overworked, underpaid and mistreated, while UCL is happy to look the other way when issues are raised about the abject failure of its contractors to treat people with basic dignity. We gave UCL a clear deadline by which to present a plan to end outsourcing which it failed to abide by. Now we are left with no option but to strike.”

The IWGB has called another day of strike action on the 4th of December, coinciding with the last day of the UCU strikes. This means at UCL there will be the first ever strike of outsourced and in-house workers.

You can donate to the strike fund here:
www.gofundme.com/f/ucl-outsourced-workers-strike-fund

Décembre sur le piquet !

A report from an activist in France on the upcoming pension struggle.

The French government has been tiptoeing towards drastic reforms in the pension system since President Macron’s election. The government has now tabled a report that lays the groundwork for legislation in 2020.

The reforms include the scrapping of profession-specific direct contribution schemes entirely, replacing them with a universal points-based system inspired from the Canadian pension system. Even though the retirement age isn’t officially changing, the years of contribution for equivalent pay will sky-rocket under the new system so we will have a choice to go on retirement poorer or work longer for (possibly) the same retirement.

Pension points will be calculated across entire careers (as opposed to pensions being calculated as 50% to 70% of your average salary during the 25 years of highest pay during your career), which will hit women hardest as women continue to face higher rates of part-time work, longer out-of-work periods, and worse pay for equal work.

In response, a massive strike is planned for 5th December. The powerful transport workers unions have called for rolling strikes, and general assemblies across Universities are being organised in the next two weeks to decide on joining the December strikes.

Meanwhile, the government has already exempt coppers from the pension reform plans... à suivre...

MARCH FOR PENSIONS PAY & PLANET

Demonstration Friday 29 November, assemble at Malet Street, London WC1E 7HY
 Marching to parliament at 12, then rally at 2pm Westminster Central Hall