

The Heckler

Spring 2011, Issue 2

The Collective. Your unions working together for you.



Rosie's Kettling

When I got on the train up to London with a small group of my friends we were in good spirits, making placards and attempting to invent new chants. We reached the station at eleven, the last time any of us used a toilet, and began to march peacefully. Following those in front of us we ended up in Parliament Square where we were halted. After a long pause the waiting and chanting protesters began to spread out around the grounds. Most of us chose to stand on walls to watch the scuffles with the police from a safe distance.

walk in that direction. Two of my friends and I hung back for what can only have been a minute to say goodbye to some friendly protesters we'd met before continuing to push our way out of the Whitehall entrance. The mood around us was turning a little sour but we pushed onwards. We saw people with blood dripping down their faces, some looking very unsteady from their injuries, walking towards us, shaking their heads and telling us the police had sealed the exit and that we were on our way towards a very violent front line. We retreated back into Parliament Square and searched for another way out.

After fruitlessly talking to multiple disinterested policemen we moved to another exit where a line had

Time went by and ever so slowly we moved forwards, the group behind us growing ever larger as people grew tired and wanted to leave. Finally, when I was completely hemmed in by people from behind, the police gave the only piece of official information I received, telling us that Westminster Bridge was now open. Because we had been attempting to leave for so long, we were now at the back of the new crowd of people whilst the rioters were now at the front. Those who had been waiting longest were now last in line and as such were punished further for behaving peacefully. There was no clear information but we joined the area where everyone else was. At around nine o'clock we were finally allowed to move, the pain of stretching my legs after holding them rigid for so long forced my and many around me to stumble and stagger instead of being allowed to walk with any dignity.

My overwhelming relief was quickly short lived. We had stopped moving on the bridge for no reason whatsoever. No information was given to us. The police had now forced the whole crowd of people into a far smaller space than we had been in. The mood was desperate with no hope of freedom. When we were moved a few steps forward the crowd didn't cheer. Instead, it was more of a groan. As we walked a section of police moved into the middle of the crowd and began to hit people with shields. There seemed no reason for this violence and they did not appear to mind who they hit. The crowd responded by raising their hands into the air and calling 'This is not a riot!', but the police violence continued near us. We were then stopped again, once more with no information given to us.

My whole body was shaking with cold and exhaustion and I couldn't stand upright. All that I'd eaten in the past fourteen hours was half a pack of Pringles, a handful of chocolate Heroes and a sherbet lemon. As I swayed those around me moved apart as much as possible to allow me a little air but it only resulted in others being pushed harder. At times our spirits were lifted when a chant reached us like 'Dumbledore wouldn't stand for this' but mostly all anyone could talk about was how much pain they were in, how cold they were, and that all they wanted to do was leave. Never in the whole kettling experience did I hear anyone even mention ideas of further protesting tonight. Those desperate to continue fighting were not those waiting quietly and patiently.

Finally, at midnight, at least eleven hours after I arrived at parliament square the crowd began to move. The police officers had made a fence with their bodies, forcing us to go the longest way possible. No reason or explanation was given for this but we'd learnt better than to attempt to talk to them. As I walked I was pushed to the edge of the line of protesters, forcing me nearest the police. I didn't touch the police line or say anything, I didn't have any surplus energy to speak anyway, but suddenly I felt a blow in my side. Staggering away, I saw a policeman glaring at me: his punch had

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Dominic Smith

It was immediately obvious that a few of those in the Square had a different agenda to us. While the vast majority were dancing or singing around the small fires lit to keep us warm, groups of young men in scarves and balaclavas could be seen. These were the ones graffiti-ing or charging against the police. None of the graffiti I saw all night had anything to do with fighting fees; all I saw were anarchistic symbols and slogans, proving just how separate their agenda was. They were ignored by everyone else in the square, many of whom were already looking up at Big Ben and wondering when we would be released. The media claim that we were given water and use of a toilet but that is simply not true. The policeman I asked about these things only laughed and shook his head.

When the result of the vote was announced the crowd I was in booed and vented their anger with a stream of chants. After a few stirring speeches the crowd began to dissipate and my friends and I decided it was time to leave. We'd finally heard we were allowed to leave through the Whitehall entrance and so we began to

formed, entirely from the protesters' own sense of fairness rather than police information. The mood inside the Square had now split into two opposing corners. While in the Whitehall corner, furthest from us, rioting may have been occurring, a group of at least 800 calm students had formed into an ever growing, very British, queue. This fact has received no media attention. Nobody wanted to be there and everyone around us had tried as we had to escape but had been denied.

Eventually we learned that they were letting protesters out: one at a time and only if they gave their name, address, date of birth and allowed themselves to be photographed, something fellow students were quick to tell us they had no right to do. But as the night grew colder nobody complained too much about this lack of human rights: all anyone wanted to do was get warm and sit down. The fact that the police decided to free us not from the front of the line but in a corner led to the neat queue turning instead to a pile of people and showed once again their complete disrespect for us as individuals, viewing us instead as a mass of guilty parties.

Editorial:

The Moral Economy of the English Students

The past few months since the first Heckler appeared have been extraordinary indeed. Tens of thousands of students, pupils, teachers and staff from the cloisters of our ancient universities to our gruggest comprehensives and FE colleges have bravely converged not only on the capital, but also on polite towns and post-industrial cities across the provinces. Campus buildings have been occupied; political, student and trade union leaders have mostly been outshone by the masses prepared to risk beatings, arrest and hypothermia for the greater good. United in their articulate and often witty outrage, their cause has been to save what remains of the welfare state and the good society. Much used to be made of the '68 generation, but this movement, in the UK at least, has been more diverse and numerous than that.

The task now is to overcome the dismay following the parliamentary votes to increase fees and scrap the Education Maintenance Allowance, and the disgraceful repression of the protests against them. As the experience of Rosie Bergonzi makes clear, middle-class children brought up to respect authority got a hard lesson in unacceptable police tactics. Video footage of mounted officers appearing to charge cornered demonstrators looked closer to the Peterloo Massacre of 1819 than the age of professional policing. But reports of, for example, a young philosopher allegedly bludgeoned so that his brain bled should come as little surprise to attentive history students who will recall that one of the early tasks of the Met was to confront the Chartists agitating for universal male suffrage.

Then as now, those in power attempted to provoke, intimidate and divide; they must not succeed. Condemnations of a few youthful hot-heads by politicians and journalists who coolly backed the bloody invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan should be dismissed with the snort of contempt they deserve. (A notable exception to that shameful episode, who resigned from the cabinet to stand up for what was right, was John Denham MP: he writes for us on the fees question.) Political representation is of course part of the solution, but power is about actual bodies — our bodies — and where they stand or fall. As Steve Davies reminds us in this edition, 'we need to add the argument of force to the force of argument.' And as our Arab brothers and sisters have shown us, popular force can be overwhelmingly peaceful.

The struggle will take place on many fronts, and working people cannot afford to sit out the long game of parliamentary opposition. In the UK, the example set by the students must connect with the popular anger that will further convulse Europe as cuts impoverish millions. The reality of those cuts is described by a student welfare officer and a doctor who write for us. And that they are neither necessary nor mandated is stressed in this issue by Dave Fysh.

The millionaire apothecaries of this economic snake oil may be slippery, but they are not stupid. They will have calculated that apathy, fear and resignation will dissipate resistance, and they have formidable means of disinformation and distraction at their disposal. The Heckler can help provide an antidote. The response to the first issue has been remarkable. It has grown into many universities, colleges and other public sector organizations across the region and beyond, and more distributors, contributors and readers are welcome.

Nevertheless, much of public opinion still believes that the present crisis is because of excessive government spending on public services, rather than the bankrolling of reckless war and capitalism. We can expect nasty myths about the deserving and undeserving classes, such as that outlined in these pages by Simon Stewart, to proliferate. Government strategy will also be based on an assessment of the last thirty-two years, during which global neoliberalism has rolled back the share of working people in the wealth that they produce, to levels of inequality not seen since the 1920s and 30s. We must not underestimate the scale of the task. There is a historic tide to turn. But we could start by demonstrating with the TUC in London on 26th March.

We are interested to hear your views. Have you got something you want to write about? Is there an idea or issue that you would like us to develop?

Please send correspondence and articles (fewer than 1000 words please) to louise.allen@port.ac.uk

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Rosie's Kettling – continued

been entirely intentional. After such a long day with my body already aching, it was too much for me and I felt tears coming. Only the encouragements of my friends forced me onwards till we finally left the rows of police and were shepherded into the rest of London and were left to attempt to travel back to Brighton.

Almost all I saw leaving were shell shocked teenagers. None had their faces covered or looked like the angry young males who caused the violence. Rather than containing the violent protesters, the police had only caught all those who weren't able to push hard enough through the crowds to escape. We were not the protesters who 'decided to stay'. Instead we were those who never got an opportunity to leave. While there may have been violent protesters in the crowd most of those around us were under eighteen and none of them were in any way dangerous. No-one could believe we were being punished in this way when our only crime was attempting to protest peacefully.

The general attitude of the media has shocked me. The claims that we are 'hardcore protesters' who chose to stay is ridiculous. We made every effort to leave in a safe and organized way despite the lack of order or information given. I asked countless policemen when I would be able to leave, and was treated like scum or something subhuman on every occasion. To be forced to stand for eight hours in the freezing cold with no food or water was not something I asked for or deserved.

Right up until that night I had respected the police. I really believed they were there for our protection and that they wanted the good of our citizens. What I witnessed completely destroyed this picture of them. We were treated like cattle and completely stripped of any human decency or rights. That a vast number of completely innocent bystanders were so harshly punished for the actions of few is unforgivable. I protested for education, but what I received was a traumatic lesson in police brutality.

Rosie Bergonzi

A level student.

Postscript – Four months on, what does Rosie think?

I feel that young people of today need to become politicised, as we as an age group are facing some of the biggest cuts. Just because we are not currently allowed to vote does not mean we do not have a voice. I will definitely protest again and would urge other young people not to be put off by an unforgivable breach of human rights.

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Who are the 'squeezed middle'?

Times must be hard: on *Channel 4 News* the other night, a spokesperson for *99p Stores* boasted that among those clamouring to get hold of the glittering but cheap bargains on offer in his outlets are the middle classes. Apparently, there is now a demand in such stores for balsamic vinegar and sun dried tomatoes. The middle classes, we are misleadingly told, are feeling the pinch of the recession more than any other group, and they are being squeezed by new legislation. They are being stripped, for example, of child benefits if their household contains a higher-rate taxpayer; their children will be burdened with debt should they chose to go to university, and will not receive the assistance that students from poorer backgrounds might receive. So pressing are these concerns that a defence of the rather ambiguously titled 'squeezed middle' has been promulgated by a curious selection of prominent characters on the political scene, including Sir Max Hastings, Jack Straw, Neil Hamilton and Ed Miliband. These are predominantly establishment figures, middle-aged men with considerable wealth at their disposal. Much of the language they have deployed has been dramatic and emotive, and has sought to defend an archetype: their rhetoric brings to mind a hard-working, white-collar, leafy suburb-dwelling, pragmatic, ascetic, gratification-deferring middle-class Everyman. This rhetoric should be treated with caution. In fact, the public defence by politicians of the 'squeezed middle' is simply a means of accessing a rich source of political capital; the pursuit of such capital, cloaked in a pretence of standing up for the ordinary person, is merely an attempt to gain the approval of affluent voters or readers, many of whom – though perhaps 'middle class' – are by no means in the 'squeezed middle' of income distribution.

So who are the 'squeezed middle' according to their prominent defenders? According to former Conservative politician Neil Hamilton, they are the 'striving classes', those whose 'financial prospects are grim, what with prices rising faster than in most other EU countries, VAT being raised ... cash now to be directed towards "poorer children" and diverted from schools in leafier areas'. In Hamilton's eyes, the squeezed middle is made up of hard-workers sidelined as a result of political interference that seeks to help those at the bottom of society. He writes that 'workers earning between £40,000 and £50,000 a year are not rich and could face tax demands for thousands of pounds as a result of being pushed above the lower tax-free limits by complex Treasury rules'. Hamilton calls to mind the small-business owner constrained by stifling bureaucracy and political meddling, hindered by taxes that serve to prop up the undeserving and prevent him/her from competing with those higher in social space.

In his defence of the squeezed middle, Sir Max Hastings muses on his recent dining experience in one of London's most expensive restaurants: 'I guessed that two-thirds of the customers were foreign ... few of those at the tables pay 40 per cent or 50 per cent taxation, or even any British taxes at all'. This freedom from taxation, he suggests, partly contributes to the ability of these 'foreigners' to dine in expensive establishments, places which are out of bounds for the tax-burdened squeezed-middle in contemporary Britain. Hastings stands up for those who 'nurture a sense of social injustice which will only intensify as the rich and poor carry on pretty much as before'; for Hastings, as for Hamilton, the injustice lies in the fact that the



ascetic tendencies of 'hard work and prudence' are tendencies that are no longer necessarily rewarded.

Ed Miliband has deployed the term 'squeezed middle' frequently since taking on the leadership of the Labour Party. Soon after his election, he wrote in the *Telegraph* that his aim is to show that Labour 'is on the side of the squeezed middle ... and everyone who has worked hard and wants to get on'. Jack Straw, at the Labour Party conference in 2010, was reading from the same script, arguing that Labour could only return to government 'by building ... support not only amongst the weakest in society but crucially among ... the squeezed middle and amongst those who feel more secure about their incomes and their place'. In a recent edition of the *Today* programme on BBC Radio 4, John Humphrys pressed Miliband to define exactly which societal grouping the term 'squeezed middle' represents. Miliband struggled; he was very vague, suggesting 'they are people who feel squeezed financially and they are people ... who are low paid... but they are also people who are earning a decent income like £45,000 a year who are going to be losing thousands of pounds in their child benefit'. He included in this category those above and below the median salary of £26,000. John Humphrys was clearly not impressed by such an ill-defined category: 'So you're talking about 90% of the population? This is about as vague as it gets'.

In a recent article in *The Times*, Daniel Finkelstein wryly observes that London-based journalists have added to the confusion, labouring under the illusion that the squeezed middle includes higher-rate taxpayers such as themselves. This illusion takes hold because such journalists are frequently hobnobbing with those who are significantly more affluent than them, and they therefore have a skewed sense of what comprises a middle income. In fact, the incomes that they have in mind as 'middling' are significantly higher than average incomes in British society. Finkelstein suggests that journalists thus deploy the 'middle class' as 'a vague,

almost infinitely expandable, term that is used to suggest that Kate Middleton and someone working behind the counter in a Liverpool benefit office are broadly in the same social and economic category'.

To enable a more precise understanding of the 'squeezed middle' it is important to differentiate between those on a middling income and those popularly termed 'middle class'. The former includes those identified by the Resolution Foundation in a report called *Squeezed Britain* as low-to-middle earners (LMEs). This group incorporates households with incomes that range between £12,000 and £30,000 and comprises 11.1 million adults (a third of the working age total in the UK). LMEs are too poor to readily enter the housing market and yet not eligible for social housing; they live on the edge of their means, with limited savings, and although they are not the poorest in society, they are among the most vulnerable in terms of fragile economic independence. During the current recession, when compared to those largely reliant on state support, LMEs are more likely to have jobs to lose and thus mortgage repayments to jeopardize. When compared to those on above-average incomes, LMEs are 'more likely to face unemployment and underemployment, less likely to return to work quickly and much less likely to have access to safety nets in the form of savings, insurance and redundancy payments'. The report finds that LMEs are likely to spend longer periods of time seeking re-entry to the labour market than those who have been made redundant from professional occupations.

The term 'middle class' varies in meaning from country to country, and its use in the United States, for example, tends to be more income-related than its use in the United Kingdom. Here, it refers to a broad range of fairly dominant societal groupings. For example, according to the historian Lawrence James, the middle class were the architects of modern Britain, main players in the eighteenth century empire of trade and

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**THE NEXT
CLIMATE MEETING
WILL BE
EVEN WARMER**



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Global warming: whose problem is it?

Universities have an important role to play in tackling climate change. Through research they contribute to a better understanding of the physical and socio-economical factors that lead to global warming. They help developing greener technology. They educate the future leaders in politics and business, as well as the teachers and parents, consumers and voters of the future! They are businesses themselves, and employ people who commute to work, travel on business, use equipment and laboratories etcetera. They purchase goods and services from local and global suppliers. It uses buildings that use gas and electricity. So as an institution of knowledge and innovation, a main employer in the region, I believe that Portsmouth University should lead the way towards a green, low carbon economy and society on the South coast.

The University of Manchester has acknowledged its responsibility in tackling global warming, and committed itself to an ambitious sustainability plan. To help convert that plan into reality, it has appointed an Associate Vice-President with special responsibility for Sustainability and an Environmental and Sustainability Officer. Have a look on their website www.manchester.ac.uk/sustainability. Football pundits may disagree, but I can't think of a reason why Portsmouth can't be in the same league as Manchester!

Car ownership, an informed and rational choice?

A case to ditch your (2nd? 3rd?) car, for purely economic reasons!

My partner and I work and live in Portsmouth. We cycle to work, and do our weekly groceries shopping online. Our children go to a local school, within walking distance. Their various clubs are within walking or cycling distance. So when our car kept breaking down and we got fed up with yet another bill, we decided to ditch the car, and not replace it. We're now saving about £100 a month on insurance, servicing, tax and MOT, and I haven't even mentioned petrol and the cost of a new car (a £5,000 loan over 5 years works out more than £100/month). Instead, we have joined Commonwheels (www.commonwheels.org.uk), a not for profit organization that rents out two low carbon Polo's. I use them when it's my turn to drive my son to an away game for football, a day trip to Marwell Zoo, or to take rubbish to the household recycling site in Port Solent. I pay £4/hr, and a mileage fee that includes petrol.

Economists claim that rational people make informed, rational decisions. Now that you know this, and add in that most university buildings are within 10 mins walk from a train station, and have bus stops even nearer; how informed and rational is owning a (2nd? 3rd?) car?

Loesje

Let me introduce you to Loesje (pronounce 'Looshah', Dutch for 'Lucy'). Loesje is a fictitious girl, in her late teens, at college, single but falls in love easily, bright, and a great observer of what is happening in the world. She has developed an amazing skill to ask questions or shout out things that get to the core of social, political and personal problems. And then she writes them on posters, and while everybody (bar a few students) is asleep, she and her friends take to the streets and put up these posters in public places. They even translate them into English! When I see the posters in the streets, I invariably wonder what Willy Walsh, David Cameron, John Craven, Wayne Rooney or the person next to me on the bus would think. A cynic would call Loesje naive, I find her very inspiring, refreshing, disarming. And that's why I have squeezed a few of her posters on these pages of the Heckler. Want to know more about Loesje? Visit www.loesje.org, and download the posters yourself. I think she is now on facebook too!

Next Heckler.....

Discussing environmental issues involves a mixture of facts and opinions. If we know more about environmental threats, we can form a better opinion and make better decisions. So if you have any questions about carbon footprint, energy consumption, recycling etcetera, please email me on eric.degrees@port.ac.uk and I will try to answer it in the next Heckler.

Eric Degreeef

UCU Green Rep.



Loesje

Who are the 'squeezed Middle'? – continued

the industrial revolution; they 'represent the enterprise and genius of the nation; they are the people who recognise what needs to be done and set about achieving it'. The sociologist Beverley Skeggs has quite a different take on the middle classes: she argues that the kind of enlightened virtue that is attributed to this grouping by the likes of James is acquired at the expense of less prestigious social groupings. Just as the middle classes are in a position to economically exploit those lower than them in the social scale, 'they have access to others' culture as a resource in their own self-making'. James and Skeggs, put in a room together, would probably disagree on most things. However, they would share the conviction that the middle classes are relatively powerful and well positioned in society. In my book *Culture and the Middle Classes*, I argue that 'middle class' is the popular title for a number of dominant societal groupings. These groupings have competing interests and affiliations, but they have in common the fact that they are favourably positioned in relation to key assets. These assets include various forms of capital – as identified by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu – such as economic capital (property, income, shares and investments), cultural capital (educational qualifications and cultural competences acquired over time) and social capital (readily available networks and contacts). There is little evidence of middle class consciousness, and the middle classes are not unified by any agenda but their common defence of their assets and desire to transmit them across generations. Societal groups popularly termed middle or upper class are those with disproportionately large stores of the above-mentioned assets, those able to exploit these assets at the expense of less dominant groupings.

The appeal to the squeezed middle beloved by politicians deliberately ignores the crucial distinction between low-to-middle earners and the popular term 'middle class', and the conflation of the two as the 'squeezed middle' is a vote-catching ploy aimed at courting the middle class. I remember sitting in on a lecture at the London School of Economics and Political Science during which Baroness McDonagh – the former General Secretary of the Labour Party – advised postgraduate students drawn from the ranks of the global elite, many of whom are destined for careers in political communication, regarding the best ways to appeal to voters. McDonagh waxed lyrical about courting the middle class vote, joking that she'd wash their cars, walk their dogs, and do almost anything so as to gain the trust of this much coveted section of the electorate. There is a danger that as government spending cuts take effect, a disingenuous and ill-thought-out defence of the squeezed middle gets in the way of serious analysis of the increasing insecurity facing those who are – in the words of the Resolution Foundation report – 'squeezed, exposed and overlooked', those unable to make the most of private sector opportunities and yet not poor enough to be eligible for state support.

Dr Simon Stewart

UCU member

The Resolution Foundation is an independent research and policy organisation working to improve the lives of people with low-to-middle incomes

<http://resolutionfoundation.org>



The Cuts Con

Why we don't have to accept the cuts

Universities are facing cuts of billions of pounds; student fees are to be raised by up to £9000 per year; pensions are being reduced and schemes closed; education maintenance allowance is being stopped; hospitals are facing impossible PFI debts and reducing services, welfare for the disabled is being cut; VAT and National Insurance taxes are being increased, public sector workers are facing redundancy – the list of the Conservative-Liberal Democrat 'austerity' proposals seems endless. Many of us know how bad things will be in our own job and area of expertise. We can produce excellent cases against our own cuts. But we always seem to lose when someone says 'but we haven't got any money – we have government debts to pay off – so something has to be cut'. In my view, not only do such points sabotage our good arguments, but they are totally misleading. A few questions and answers – actually not much more than common sense – can illustrate this. The cuts might look economically inevitable but I hope to show they are basically just another post-Thatcher ideological attack on the welfare state and indeed on the living standards of most people in the UK.

The Government and all major political parties tell us that the Government, and thus 'we' as citizens, have a huge national debt that must be largely repaid. Surely we must all make sacrifices to achieve this end.

There is a monstrous falsehood in this point which, when uncovered, changes the whole nature of arguments about whether we should accept the concept of cuts and the austerity programme. Notice that politicians and the media never ask to whom 'we' owe this debt. The whole question is treated as if there can be borrowers without lenders, debtors without creditors. So who lent the Government money, who are the creditors? To whom do 'we' owe money?

Not, in general, foreign Governments or indeed 'foreign' lenders. According to the Chancellor of the Exchequer's Debt Management Office, most of the national debt – 70% – is owed to UK citizens and institutions.

Therefore, 'we' owe it to ourselves.

So, we don't need to pay it back if we decide not to. Suppose I lend £10 to the government which they have used to provide services for me. Later the Government cuts £10 worth of my services to pay me back. The cuts have made me neither better nor worse off. An obvious political option would be keep the services and cancel the debt!

But what if those who lent the money are not the same as the Government service users?

OK let's look at the lenders. Generally they are, directly or indirectly, big finance – the 'markets' if you like. We are talking about hedge funds whose managers are paid millions or even tens of millions of pounds each year and whose members are often billionaires. We are talking about market dealers on millions of pounds per year, directors and CEOs of industry – earning well into the tens of millions per year. And, of course, we are talking about bankers with their massive bonuses.

And these are the very people that caused the financial crisis a couple of years ago that precipitated the cuts and the Con-Dem austerity programme. Already bankers' bonuses are back and, according to Income

Data Services, FTSE 100 CEOs' pay rose by 55% over the last year.

Even so, isn't 'the party' now over? We've had some 'good times', now we must pay for them.

Except that ordinary people like you and I haven't had much of a party. In fact we have had a real pay cut over the last five years!

The real choice is political, not economic, and is about who should suffer cuts: poor or rich; worker or boss; citizen or market dealer; old age pensioner or hedge fund manager; schoolchild or banker. By concentrating on repaying the national debt, the Con-Dem Coalition has chosen to make the poorer pay, leaving the wealthier unharmed or even perhaps advantaged.

Might the cuts make the economy as a whole worse?

Yes cutting spending on services and raising taxes on ordinary people, such as VAT and National Insurance contributions and perhaps council tax, is taking billions of pounds out of the real economy – our wages and salaries. This means we will have less to spend. Additionally many public servants will lose their jobs and have next to nothing to spend.

So we can't buy the goods our neighbour makes, she loses her job and can't buy the goods her neighbour makes so he loses his job, etc. If a third of a million state jobs go (Office of Budget Responsibility) then another third of a million jobs in the private sector go. Cutting Government spending and taxing ordinary people more can, in an economy already made precarious by the banking and financial crisis, only lead to a disaster of continual redundancy and pay-cuts, as John Maynard Keynes predicted seventy five years ago.

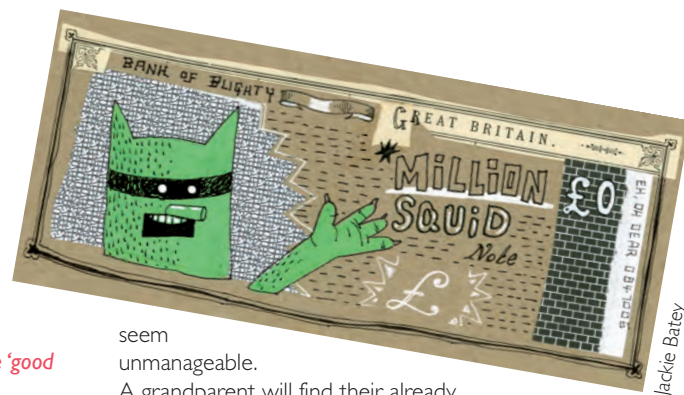
Won't this be as bad for the rich as the rest of us?

No, the austerity programme will not have the same effect on everyone. The rich will expect to get a bigger share of the declining economy. This will happen as the national debt is repaid, services privatized, taxes made less progressive, etc. In fact, over the last thirty years, as a result of anti-trades union activities and policies, income and wealth have already been redistributed from most of us to the wealthy. Worse still, the resultant distributions of income and wealth (the least equal since records began in the nineteenth century) make it inevitable that anyone on low or average income will be hit not by one or two austerity measures, but by a tidal wave of cuts.

But the Government says that their austerity measures will be implemented fairly: all will make sacrifices.

So let's imagine what will happen as the cuts are implemented:

The low and average paid will be the worst affected. Think of an ordinary family. Working tax credit is reduced whilst disability benefit disappears for many. Medical services worsen because some services at the local hospital are closed. One member of the family loses their job because of the economic recession, but will also find Jobseekers allowance almost impossible to obtain. The child suffers because the local school deteriorates as education cuts bite. EMA for the teenage daughter stops, losing the family £30 per week. The son will hold back from university as future debts



seem unmanageable.

A grandparent will find their already small local government pension declines to an unlivable level as it is no longer properly indexed to inflation (CPI, to which pensions are to be indexed, is not designed to cover the full effects of inflation in the way that the replaced RPI did). Wages are cut by 10% because of public sector pay cuts, or unemployment pushing private sector pay rates down. **This family has to cut down on food, clothing, housing, utilities - the basic necessities of life.**

Compare this to a middle-class family. Some of the above apply, but the family relies less on benefits so is less affected by benefit cuts. They have a few savings to help tide them over and might even use private medicine for a few less expensive problems. A 10% pay cut makes their mortgage payment more difficult and their previous little luxuries – the occasional holiday, going out for entertainment, buying higher quality cars etc, disappear. The fear of unemployment hangs heavy. They move towards a more basic budget.

For the comfortably well-off the cuts are much less important. Few state benefits (apart from child benefit) are taken-up, the children do or at least can have a private education and private medicine is available in all but the most critical situations. Perhaps the new car is replaced less frequently and the summer holiday is spent in Spain rather than Barbados. Savings are not made at previous levels. Apart, perhaps, from the threat of unemployment, the Government's austerity programme is an inconvenience.

For the rich, a 10% cut in income has virtually no impact at all. They couldn't spend all they earned anyway. They'll feel no loss from benefits or state services because they don't use them. And some of the rich will be the bankers and dealers and CEOs previously mentioned. They may indeed make money from the cuts.

So the richer you are the less the cuts will hurt you. This can only lead us to one, common sense, conclusion – there is no way that Government cuts and tax increases, with all their economic and social consequences, can apply equally across all income and wealth levels.

There are many more points to be made, but I hope I have indicated some reasons why cuts are not economically unavoidable. The Con-Dem austerity programme is about using the economic crisis to distribute money from ordinary people like us to the rich!

Making our own specific case against our cuts in our area, whether they be in universities, schools, hospitals, pensions or welfare stands us in common with the many millions who will be fighting the cuts in their own areas. We have every reason to stand together. There is no real reason for the cuts, no reason to roll back the welfare state. So how would we resolve the crisis? I'll leave that to you and maybe a possible future issue, but just a little nudge – maybe we can use the again burgeoning bankers' bonuses!

Dave Fysh, retired UCU member

Our Friends in the NHS

A colleague in the NHS

What an interesting time in government over the last few months some might say. Not so interesting when working within the National Health Service, just plain old scary. In all my years working within the NHS, with all the changes we have been through, there has never been a more difficult time for both staff and patients. It seems that each day I go to work there is some new piece of information coming from the government or at work on the changes that will be made to public services and the NHS.

So much for "the NHS being important to us", Mr Cameron. All I have seen since you came into office are cuts to public spending that will result in minimising of staffing levels and reduction in the provision of resources to care for patients. Not only have you put a freeze on pay rises for those working in the private sector; when nurses are already lagging behind the many less qualified emergency services, but you then announce further cuts to make cost savings that have resulted in most people working within the NHS fearful about whether or not they will have a job left over the next year. Plus, to add insult to injury, you then announce that our pensions are all under review with thoughts of trying to bring them in line with the private sector. Shouldn't our pay reflect that of the private sector as well? Should we not be entitled to massive bonuses as well to stop us from going to another company?

Surely you would have thought that the government would have realised what highly skilled, loyal staff they have working within the NHS, who certainly do not do this work for the money. Personally I would put up with the pay freeze and paying more into my pension as long as I keep my job. That feels like such a sad compromise and reminds me of that saying about being caught between a rock and a hard place!

All of the staff in the NHS Trust I work with currently are fearful they will be losing their jobs due to the transformation of services in a bid to save money for the trust. There is no suggestion that any of the many senior manager posts will be evaluated with the possibility of being made redundant to save some money, but it is okay to lose the shop floor managers, practitioners and specialist posts as that seems to be the best option to solve all problems. How many Service Managers, Associate Directors and Directors do you need?

Working within the NHS for a number of years, and experiencing a few government changes in policy in how services will be delivered has never felt so dismal in the past. Never had I felt the need to check out the NHS Employers website to see what sort of redundancy package was on offer before. Working within the public sector was always a safe place to be. It certainly does not feel like that anymore. Should I be made redundant what opportunities are there on offer for someone who has only ever worked as a nurse and has no other qualification or management skills suitable for the public sector? Where are we to get jobs if made redundant? These spare jobs will surely be taken up by those who are now supposedly all languishing on benefits.

I know this sounds like an awful lot of moaning and I'm sure there must be other solutions to the problems. As a nurse my skills lie in the work that I do with patients and not with sorting out the mess but surely there must be some other way to save money within the NHS. One quick and easy way that springs to mind would be to stop serving tea, coffee and food on training days or at meetings. I'm sure people would prefer to take their own beverages to a training day rather than see a colleague made redundant. Whilst I agree that it is important to have team building exercises, do they always have to be held in nice, expensive hotels, when there are surely cheaper rooms available at the multitude of NHS sites. The best areas in our Trust do not lie within patient care areas but seem to be those offices frequented by the Directors.

It is hard to stay motivated when the future seems so bleak at the moment but it would seem that supporting each other is the only way forward at times like these. Take time out to hear what your colleagues need help with and hopefully we will all get through this difficult time and be able to look back afterwards and wonder what was all the fuss about. Fingers crossed!

Alison Ward, Nurse



Doctors Note – The View from the Surgery

1 in 5 16 - 24 year olds is currently unemployed.

EMA is set to be scrapped.

Tuition fees are set to rise significantly from Autumn 2012.

How is all this being received by young people looking to the future?

The on-line chat room "The Student Room" is quite interesting: here are just a few typical recent threads from the last few weeks:

"Has anyone worked in a strip/ lap dancing club to pay tuition fees?"

"I want to start gambling..."

"I feel sick because of money"

"Is £10 a day enough to live on at Uni?"

"EMERGENCY"

"No money-help"

Portsmouth boasts a gaping void between haves and have nots. There is a chasm between top and bottom in secondary education. Families often make significant long term sacrifices to get a child into private school. Even for the fortunate ones with a good school education and motivated backup at home, the prospects have changed: no more talk of Gap Years, of a little breathing space to spread the wings and find out about the wider world before the responsibilities arrive and the debts bite.

Young people are anxious and worried about the future. Those who can consider University enter the maelstrom of course work, exams, university choices, interviews, often additional aptitude testing, and even then are not always offered a place. After which they hopefully leave with a degree-which might even help them get a job. And sometimes even then it goes wrong: so they've spent 3-4 years accumulating a nice fat debt and finish with no degree.

The young patient with depression/addiction/more serious mental health problems is one of the saddest and most challenging: there is everything at stake here. Often by the time they reach the surgery there has already been a crisis: Police involvement, alienation from family, suicide attempts. There are services they can use, there is help on offer: if they trust it and feel some purpose in it.

Not all of them are salvageable and it may take a very long time to rescue them.

Dr Veronica Sprott

Proposed cuts to the National Health Service.

The British Medical Association has weighed in on the new Prime Minister David Cameron's health care proposals.

The Allergists voted to scratch it, but the Dermatologists advised not to make any rash moves.

The Gastroenterologists had a sort of a gut feeling about it, but the neurologists thought the Administration had a lot of nerve.

The Obstetricians felt they were all labouring under a misconception. Ophthalmologists considered the idea short-sighted.

Pathologists yelled, "Over my dead body!" while the Paediatricians said, "Oh, Grow up!"

The Psychiatrists thought the whole idea was madness, while the Radiologists could see right through it.

The Surgeons were fed up with the cuts and decided to wash their hands of the whole thing.

The ENT specialists didn't swallow it, and just wouldn't hear of it.

The Pharmacologists thought it was a bitter pill to swallow, and the Plastic Surgeons said, "This puts a whole new face on the matter..."

The Podiatrists thought it was a step forward, but the Urologists were pissed off at the whole idea.

The Anaesthetists thought the whole idea was a gas, but the Cardiologists didn't have the heart to say no.

In the end, the Proctologists won out, leaving the entire decision up to the arseholes in London.

One Week with the Student Welfare Officer

Amy Baker Vice-President Welfare and Volunteering, describes a typical week working in Portsmouth Students Union.



Monday

An incident occurred over the weekend in halls of residence. A student had been threatened in their room by an intruder who used knife-point to steal a mobile phone and £15. This followed on from a separate incident last month where a student house was broken into by crowbar and the students were tied down and all their valuables swiped. All the students were really shaken up but seemed to want to stay at University despite this. The housemates, however, are struggling to replace their items needed for study as house insurance had seemed too expensive and impossible to jointly hold between them. I'm planning to run an emergency crime awareness campaign and I have been told to be wary not to 'scare' our students.

Got a call from a student this afternoon who has been struggling with his finances. His case is so serious that he has resorted to online casinos to try and make money and evidently has lost more because of it. Surprisingly he has actually called because he has been scammed by a faux escort agency. He thought it was a quick way to make money and gave them £300 upfront to create his online profile. He is ashamed to ask his parents for money because it would mean having to tell them the reasons why. I agree to accompany him over to the student finance centre and see if there is some way he can stay at Uni and not admit his indiscretions to his parents.

Great start to the week really. It hadn't occurred to me before just how obviously vulnerable students are to thieves and scammers. You hear of the horror stories of what lengths students will go to, to put some pennies together, but today has made me think more about how fraudsters are using that as a means to make their own money.

Tuesday

A parent contacted me regarding their concerns over their child not settling in properly. They are one of nearly 50% of first-year students not in a room in halls at Portsmouth. Unfortunately, the current housemates do not get on with them and make it really difficult to live with them. It reminds me of so many cases in halls and private housing of students ganging-up on one housemate because they are interested in different things. Unlike this student, in halls there are hundreds more students to meet and talk to, and more people to make friends with to live with the following year. Other than me and the uni's chaplains there isn't really anyone this student can turn to. This makes me think of other students who do not know that this small amount of support is here and have this same situation. Do they just dropout or get overwhelmingly stressed with it all that they burn-out?

On the subject of housing, one of this year's sabbaticals, who had to leave their flat owing to the landlord selling it, struggled beyond belief to put the deposit and admin fees together for a new place. Their flatmates owed them over £700 in non-bill payments. Small claims court is the last thing on their mind with homelessness or sofa-squatting on the horizon. Tenant's rights are weak at the best of times and moving from rented property to rented property is one of the most expensive things to do, with the total cost amounting to over an average month's wages. It isn't too hard for students to find a property and put deposits down as there is always a pool of student rooms and housing which do not require credit checks, administration fees and check-out fees. What worries me is our graduates. No wonder so many graduates go back to their parents' home after leaving uni. The costs often double when you are no longer a student. Final year students have particular financial issues. They get a smaller living costs loans, owing to their non-student status over the summer period. However, they will have to pay out more money from their final term's loan travelling to graduate job interviews up and down the country, attempting to put together money for relocation, and of course the cost of graduating.

Wednesday

It is CV Wednesday over at the employment centre, Purple Door. According to our VP Academic Affairs, they have been overrun since the first day of term with students needing part-time work and CV help. The halls of residence support team has said the same and its students are struggling to put their rents together without part-time employment. I do not remember it being that difficult when I was at uni. It was a struggle and at times the thought did run past me, 'can I stay at uni without this extra money?' It is a hard balance to strike. You know that part-

time employment probably will not include the right kind of transferable skills you need upon graduation, so you volunteer as well to earn CV points, but then your degree studies slip. Few, if any, have achieved this balance.

Thursday

Three students contact me regarding sports injuries that have meant they are hospitalised and need to fill out extenuating circumstances forms. One of the injuries means their shoulder is out of action for the rest of the semester and the student needs to find ways of requesting extra support, but has not considered 'long term disabled' status, so they may have to suspend studies if this cannot be sorted. Our academic caseworker is helping track down someone at their department who can advise on support they give in these cases. Another injury is to a team captain who has a serious knee injury. This means he cannot do his part-time job. He is thus losing his pay and is not entitled to sick pay. Again I am liaising with student finance and his department to help ensure he can stay at uni.

Friday

Next week I am starting work on the Union's SHAG week campaign. (That's sexual health and guidance week). I want to expand our normal scope of contraceptive awareness and STIs awareness to pregnancy and parental support. This has been something that has cropped up on the Union's radar for a while, either through the academic route of extenuating circumstances, or the welfare side for support and guidance. It seems to be an unspoken occurrence for a lot of students at University and I sometimes wonder if Portsmouth's young pregnancy and abortion rate is worsened by the student population.

One of the main issues is financial with students asking 'Do I have enough money to stay at Uni or not?' Most loans for our 'traditional' students only cover termly rent, if that, and most are in the unfortunate position of coming from a middle-income household which means that young students have to find any shortfall themselves without support from their families. I'm not necessarily advocating that the University takes responsibility for these students' welfare, but one has to remember most of the time they are still young adults who have never left home and not had the opportunity yet to grow up into the 'real' world and they would benefit from clear guidance. The University should have the responsibility to ensure every student it accepts onto a course understands the financial implications and has plans in place so ensure that they can complete it. If financial issues trigger the question, 'can I stay in uni or not?', then universities need to be able to answer these students, especially after 2012.

That's no excuse



“Unfortunately due to fatigue I am unable to attend today's lessons.”

I am writing to you to explain my absents over the past few weeks. From the 5 till the 8th of October I had a nasty bug that made me feel unwell, physically weak and coastally drossy. I was feeling better by Saturday the 9th but on Sunday the 10th I started to develop a cough and suffered with it for 4 days and went to see a doctor on Wednesday the 13th because my tonsils were swollen. On the 18th I had to stay home because I had streusel eagerness coming over to look at the steers to my flat. They are condemned and I need to sort them out so I can move closer to the university. On the 19th I had a man from Britannia coming over to give me and my house mate a price for moving and he did not show up till 3:15pm by which time there was no way I would be able to get to uni on time. On the 20th I was on my way to uni and as embarrassing as it is to admit I fell asleep on the train and was woken up at Southampton. By the time I got back to Portsmouth it was almost mid-day and I had missed my lesson and lost almost £10 getting a ticket to get back to Portsmouth. From Friday the 22nd I have been trying to sort out my student loan and I am still doing so at this time. I hope to have it sorted out by Wednesday the 27th and I am afraid until that time I will be unable to attend uni. I hope to have it sorted out by Thursday the 28th and will be back at uni by the 29th circumstances permitting. I have borrowed money from the uni I have spent £30 on grocery shopping and had to spend another £20 because most of the food I had left was out of date and going off. This left me with £50 left but I spent almost £30 on the 20th as I had explained above. I had to stay home on the 18th and the 19th because my house mate was away and could not come home.

I will email you everyday to keep you informed of my situation.

Rod Jeffcote

What's the best excuse you've heard? We would like to hear from you: louise.allen@port.ac.uk

Bottom Up

We believe that the answers to saving money and working smarter are in the ideas and suggestions of the staff that work at the chalk face. It is you who really knows what goes on. We are looking for good ideas that will ultimately help save our jobs and keep our workplace in a strong position. So, what do you know?

Email: louise.allen@port.ac.uk



I JUST CALLED TO SAY...

In our last edition of The Heckler we showed you that if you fold a A4 letter and put it into an A5 envelope we can save £12,000 a year.

We want to save even more money, so we are asking you to up your game. Instead of writing a letter or emailing a colleague or associate pick up the phone and talk to them, as you speak you will both remember that it is easier, more efficient you may even share ideas and in the long run will save £1000s, and internal calls cost nothing.



FLASH WITH OUR CASH

We have been asked by Estelle in the office to make a request to all staff responsible for procurement and purchasing within HE/FE and the NHS. She has suggested that we all need to think about how we spend the money because according to Estelle it's OUR money and she is worried that we are being frivolous as there isn't much of it anymore. Before you spend our hard earned cash would you just check to see if we really need those items and services.

Thank you.

John Denham MP

A longstanding principle of the UK's higher education system – set out nearly 15 years ago by Lord Dearing – was the idea that the cost of universities should be shared between the taxpayer and graduates. The reasoning behind this was sound. Not only do students benefit from a top-class education, so too does wider society.

In December at a stroke, and without real debate, the Coalition Government broke this principle. They decided that public sector cuts should fall disproportionately on universities, and that the cost of university funding should fall disproportionately on students.

University funding is clearly a difficult issue and one which requires tough choices. It is important that the UK's universities have a secure, long-term funding base that protects our world-class standards in teaching and research.

That's why one of the more concerning aspects of the Government's announcements is the fact that, in most cases, universities will be no better funded than they are at present – even after a huge increase in the fees students pay.

This is because the Conservatives and Lib Dems have chosen to cut funding for university teaching by 80%.

Fees will need to increase significantly just to maintain funding at current levels. Research has shown that many universities will need to charge fees of at least £7,500 a year just to avoid losing money.

These cuts will leave many of our internationally successful research intensive universities struggling with too little money to maintain their global status, at a time when the UK's competitiveness is fundamental to our economic recovery.

It also means students on most courses will now be entirely responsible for funding their own degrees. English students will face the highest fees of any public university system in the industrialised world but will also have less public funding than the vast majority of countries.

Moreover, with some universities charging up to £9,000, my concern is that many students will be forced to choose the cheapest course, not the one that is best for them. Most graduates will still be paying off their debts 30 years later.

The Coalition Government has produced the worst of all possible worlds, putting spending cuts above the interests of our students and universities. That's why Labour opposes these measures.



15% of homeless people have a degree*



laptop tv chair

13x violence

John and tv

Homeless images by student Richard Brown

*A Crisis survey of 150 homeless people across the UK found that 47% possess qualifications; of those 48% have GCSEs, 16% have A levels, 15% have a degree and 13% have professional qualifications. Crisis, 2002

Browne and the re-engineering of higher education



On Thursday December 9th 2010 MPs voted by 323 votes to 302 to raise the cap on tuition fees to £9,000. This was a narrow victory, but a victory nonetheless, just like the vote in 2004 bringing in fees of up to £3,000, passed by 316 votes to 311. The coalition government must hope that this result draws a line under the waves of increasingly enraged, student-led, protest. The anger was crescendoing and spreading, its targets widening beyond education cuts to attacks on social welfare and the public sector; rich tax avoiders, the Lib Dems and the government in general. The Browne report was published on October 12th, less than two months previously. This 64 page document has pictures of smiling students, graphics such as a hand with a pound sign on it, and headings like “how would it benefit me?” It

informs us that its key principles and recommendations are both reasonable and widely accepted. There is a “wide consensus that the current system needs substantial reform”; and “rationale for seeking private contributions to the cost of higher education is strong and widely accepted”. The phrases “private benefits” and “private contributions” recur like a drumbeat throughout. Apparently without irony, it mentions that graduates are less likely to smoke, be obese, be depressed, or commit crimes, and more likely to engage with their children’s education and be active in their communities. And yet at its core is a model of higher education as a commodity for private use, bought and sold in a marketplace. A university education is a private investment for future private gain, funding, no doubt, private health insurance and a future private-school education for one’s kids. Requesting public money for such a venture is akin to asking the state to fund a private purchase of stocks and shares. That Browne and co-ideologues should devote many words to selling their underlying philosophy is little surprise: HE sector cuts would be a slow and uncertain way of cutting national debt. True, some wealthier students may pay their fees upfront, and so pay a lot less than the relatively poor buying their education on the never-never, but no one suggests that private contributions will immediately fill any economic gaps. At least for now the only obvious change is how money is routed from government to universities, with HEFCE giving way to the Student Loans Company. The government will also underwrite the long-term risks, and – perhaps this is little known – anticipates only a quarter of graduates repaying their education debts in full.

Exasperated coalition politicians have been on air shaking their heads because apparently young people are obstinately refusing to understand the changes, wrongly believing they’ll have to pay their university fees upfront. But our considerable private debt culture has taught us the practical and psychological realities of debt quite well. Fear of vast levels of debt is deeply rational, especially if you have not grown up around wealth and privilege. Three in four people agree, believing the fees rise will reduce the likelihood of teenagers from deprived backgrounds going to university.

Not content with discouraging the less well off from higher education, the Browne model involves another kind of re-engineering. The report discusses “priority subjects” which might deliver “significant social returns”, but insufficient “private returns” to persuade students to take them up. This has translated into protection of teaching funding for so-called STEM subjects, while it seems the teaching of history, philosophy, sociology, art or music deserves no support at all. Universities may not immediately pass the differential loss of funding down to departments, but in the longer term there will be pressure to do so. We appear to be heading for a future where the humanities, arts and social sciences are left as hobbies for a leisured class. The partition lines have little to do with economics – it is unclear how astronomy, or much of maths, have more potential for economic impact than media studies in our media age. One must conclude that the aim is to divide student from student and faculty from faculty, unfortunately with some success. The “Science is Vital” campaign could have been a worthy one, but at the current juncture, “learning is vital”, or “knowledge is vital”, would seem more appropriate slogans.

I have focussed on university education. However university fees are only part of the unprecedented attack on young people, the poor and the vulnerable. Low-income teenagers are losing the 30 pounds a week lifeline that was EMA. Libraries are to shut

and lollipop ladies (and men) to go. Legal aid is being cut, with implications for child protection. Disability Living Allowance is getting harder to obtain with charities working in the sector united in condemnation. In what even the Tory mayor of London referred to as “social cleansing”, people on housing benefit are being driven out of wealthy boroughs. We often hear that opposing this campaign of immiseration, and for investment in education, the public sector and welfare ignores the realities of collapsing banks, of edgy, and above all of a national debt heading for a trillion pounds. Surely our elite are doing their best to steer us through this mire and is irresponsible to sabotage their efforts? Such nonsense is put in perspective by a number of experts including a professor at Glasgow University who points out that one fifth of the wealth of the richest 10 percent in Britain would pay off the entire national debt. It hardly needs saying that the agents of austerity are this same 10 percent and their friends. Yet no mainstream political party has the guts to say that the rich need to be taxed more, ostensibly because this might frighten the markets, those beasts whose mere fear we are told to fear. It falls to the protest movement to suggest that austerity might be passed upwards, where it becomes minor inconvenience, rather than downwards where it becomes life shattering.

Are any rays of hope to be found in all this? Despite politicians’ efforts, more and more people are ready to reassert world views where the public and the social are central. I have heard young and old at demonstrations and rallies declare that education is about being empowered to participate in society more effectively and confidently; that it spreads in families and communities; that it is a social good, giving you the tools to improve your local school or hospital rather than opt out from them. In this model, knowledge production must not be driven by economic concerns, and the study of nature, of human experience, and even of the very abstract all form part of an equal, entangled web of learning, from which “progress” emerges organically. To a government of millionaires obsessed with privatising all aspects of life, this is idealistic talk, but they have not succeeded in driving it from our collective common sense.

So, has the vote of December 9th pulled the rug from under the protesters? I hope not. Policies may be passed, but they are not irreversible. And there are many battles ahead, not least for workers and students in universities, as the coalition redraws the social and educational map of Britain. Many trade union leaders have been dithering while their members’ futures are being destroyed. But ordinary students dragged their leaders from apathy, and perhaps the same can happen in the trade union movement. To succeed, the movements will need to fight together on many fronts.

Murad Banaji

UCU member



Hands off our Pensions

REPORT National Executive Committee (NEC)

Colleagues,

The UCU is now engaged in no less than five campaigns of industrial action. They are over pensions, jobs and courses, and pay.

Why five disputes?

It is not that the UCU is ballot-happy or profligate. It is because the anti-trade union laws would have been used against the UCU to rule unlawful any ballot that aggregated the issues. Each one has to be treated as a separate trade dispute. At some stage, the trade union movement will have to confront these laws that render lawful industrial action virtually impossible to organize.

For the UCU to try to do that over these issues now would, however, remove the focus from pensions and jobs.

What are the disputes?

- in the pre-92 universities in defence of the University Superannuation Scheme (USS);
- two ballots (one in FE, and one in post-92 universities) in defence of the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS);
- over jobs, equality and the employers' 0.4% pay offer in both pre and post-92 universities;
- in FE over the employers' 0.2% pay offer.

Universities –

Jobs, Equality and the 0.4% Offer

UCU estimates that cuts in government spending (£3bn by 2015) could lead to 40,000 redundancies in our universities, and puts up to 40 universities at risk of financial non-viability. If members think that an exaggeration, consider the recent accountancy forecast of the total cost of a degree for students who pay back their loans: £83,000 plus living expenses for three or four years. *What proportion of undergraduates will shoulder such repayments; how many schools and departments will survive such a reduction in student numbers; which Masters programmes will be viable in such a world?*

Meanwhile, institution managements are positioning themselves for a competitive market in university education – competing over market image, the market value of their commodity, and crucially over the cost of delivery. The employers refuse even to discuss a national agreement on job security and redeployment. They want the maximum flexibility to close courses and 'rationalise' provision, and thus to make redundancies, and worsen workloads and the SSR.

The absence of job protection agreements can cause havoc - leaving staff, their courses and schools, and students, at the mercy of a market-led restructuring of the academy. It is only a national agreement on this question can enable us to defend our universities, and a public education system.

On the pay spine, on equality and on a pay settlement, the employers are refusing any movement. No movement the 13% gender pay gap in universities, and no extension of the pay spine. Between 2002 and 2009 vice-chancellors drove down overall staff costs, yet their own pay rose by over 62%! The modest gains in pay that staff won in 2006 have already been more than

wiped out. Now the current pay offer to staff is 0.4%. With inflation at 5.2%, that means a real terms pay cut of 4.8%, following a similar cut last year. Four years of pay cuts of this magnitude would reduce the compound real value of staff pay by almost a fifth. Few of us would be able to cover our mortgages and live.

The USS dispute

The employers want to calculate pensions by averaging out salaries over a whole career, rather than the current final year salary scheme. Staff joining the new scheme, and retiring at the top of the lecturers' scale, could lose £100,000 compared to current arrangements.

On top of this they want to shift the inflation link from the Retail Price Index (RPI) to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), wiping £2bn off the pension fund. Then they want to cap the rate that pensions increase in line with inflation at 5% - a move that over time could drastically reduce the value of pensions.

At one point during negotiations, the employers revealed that once the new scheme is introduced, they would like to move everyone onto the inferior pension scheme. The immediate effect of these and other changes would be to reduce the cost of severance packages for staff being made redundant.

Teachers Pension Scheme

The announcement that the inflation calculator would switch from RPI to CPI was the trigger for the decision to ballot in defence of pensions in FE and the new universities. CPI was never designed as a cost of living index. It has been chosen because it usually gives a lower value than RPI. The consequence of this switch will be a dramatic reduction in pensions. Extrapolating and averaging from past differences between the two indexes gives the following over the average length of retirement:

- For an FE lecturer with a £10k pa pension, a £36,000 loss over 25 years;
- For a HE lecturer with an £18k pa pension, £65,000 loss over 25 years.

To compound matters, the Government announced in its Comprehensive Spending Review in October last year that there would be increased employee contributions to public sector pension of 50% - from 6% to 9% of salaries. The effect of this will be dramatic on take-home pay as a result of increased pensions contributions:

- a top-of-the-scale FE lecturer will pay an additional £84 per month;
- a top-of-the-scale HE lecturer will pay an additional £104 per month.

There are other outrageous aspects of these proposals. Firstly, pensions are simply deferred pay. Thus increased contributions and/or reduced benefits are just a pay cut in a different form. For the notional HE lecturer described above, the joint effect of these proposals constitute the equivalent of a £3,848 reduction in annual salary, i.e. a reduction of £320 per month. This is on top of the cut in real take-home pay from the sub-inflation settlements.

Secondly, this constitutes a retrospective imposition of a unilateral decision to worsen our contractual terms. We accepted the job on the basis of a package of 'benefits' or compensation for our work, including our salaries and our deferred salaries (pensions). That contract of

employment is now being rewritten without our agreement.

Thirdly, as with the USS, there is no financial necessity for these changes. The TPS is not an under-funded scheme; it does not require additional inputs or to reduce its obligations in order to maintain viability. This is entirely about shifting the burden of pensions from employers to employees. In other words, it is a salary cut.

The defence of the TPS will need to involve more than the UCU. The large majority of those in the scheme are primary and secondary school teachers, and the UCU represents something like 15% of its members. All the teaching unions (the NUT, NAS and ATL) are set to ballot soon. Once the other unions (or some of them) have balloted, we will need to coordinate action as much as possible. We will then be able to take action with our colleagues in primary and secondary education – nearly three quarters of a million educationalists objecting to the pensions robbery.

The FE Dispute

The employers' offer is 0.2% (£50 per annum). That is a 5% CUT in the real value of salaries. Comparatively, FE lecturers' salaries are already behind those of teachers, and this difference will be compounded by a 0.2% settlement when teachers are being offered 2.3%. Not only would such a settlement damage morale at a sensitive time for all in education, it would also seriously impair the capacity of colleges to recruit and retain staff.

Thus, not only is this offer insulting to all FE staff, and a further deterioration in the value of real pay, it is also another attack on education. The effect would be felt in the medium term by students as well as by staff in the short term.

The Way Forward

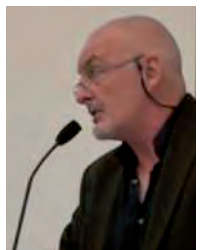
The action on the 24th will draw all sections of the union together for the first time in a struggle against the consequences of Government policy for pensions, jobs and pay. It will also reignite student anger at what was in store for them and for future generations. All of that anger is to be represented in the massive TUC march for an alternative on the 26th, which will unite trade unionists, students and communities in defence of the public sector.

We will need to follow up with coordinated action to prosecute all disputes, sometimes targeting particular regions, sometimes institutions, and always keeping pressure on the Government. We need to work with both the NUS and with students activists to make sure that this is as much about the defence of education as about our sectional interests as employees. We need to involve whole communities in the defence of education, and to unite with others in the public sector who are fighting for their jobs and to preserve services.

If your branch would like someone to speak about the current national disputes, your branch officers can contact me.

Tom Hickey

National Executive Committee (and HEC) and Chair of UCU Coordinating Committee, University of Brighton



How should the Unions respond to the CSR?

The publication of the CSR (Comprehensive Spending Review) marks the end of the phoney war. The Conservative-led coalition has now revealed for the first time the detail behind the crash-diving of the economy and the most serious attack on the welfare state in its history. The Tories have made no secret of their aim to use the economic crisis to make an epoch-changing shift in shrinking the size of the state. It is plain to see that all the rhetoric about 'progressive cuts' and 'we're all in this together' really means the unleashing of naked class war by the coalition in the interests of the powerful.

Although thousands of jobs have already been lost in the private and public sectors, and many services cut, the scale of the onslaught means that a half a million public sector jobs are now at risk and many more with the economic knock-on effects on the private sector. It also means that public services which have been taken for granted for decades and which contribute to the quality of life of everybody are likely to end, become means tested or be sold to the private sector; reappearing only as commercial services for sale. It also means that millions of people who rely on one form or another of state benefit will see their standards of living cut in a punitive attack to drive them into minimum wage jobs and depress pay across the labour market.

In such a situation what can the unions do, how should the labour movement respond? The first thing to recognise is that the idea of 'not wasting a good crisis' cuts both ways. It offers opportunities for the unions to rebuild in the workplace, reach out to the wider community and lead a debate on the future of the country, as much as opportunities for the Tories to reconfigure the state.

But at the moment many workers, particularly in the public sector, are worried about losing their jobs, fearful of taking action that might jeopardise their position further. Many union members – even activists – are demoralised and feel that they have little power and are unable to do much against the prevailing wisdom of the cuts, and the power of the government and employers.

One approach from the unions might be to try and ride out the storm. Unions could try to hang on to what they already have, make concessions where possible, negotiate redundancies where necessary, and try to defend jobs and membership as best they can.

This won't work. The scale of the attacks means that circling the wagons is likely to result in a jobs massacre. There is no alternative government about to ride over the horizon with an expansionist economic agenda. Even if Labour had won the last election, we would still be facing huge cuts - not so fast or so deep perhaps, but still unprecedented.

The jobs and services onslaught offers an agenda around which to mobilise and rebuild. The first thing that needs to be rebuilt is confidence. That comes from a combination of ideas, organisation, strategy and tactics.

So far the Conservatives have had the ideological terrain to themselves. Partly because of the collusion and collaboration of the new Labour leaders in their own version of the neo-liberal project, the Conservatives have succeeded in convincing the majority of the population of the 'commonsense of austerity' - that there is no alternative. But as Brendan Barber (2010) pointed out, this will start to fall apart 'and it is when the cuts come up close and personal that the public mood will change'. We are now at that point and the unions need to be able to both expose the Tory arguments and offer an alternative. The battle of ideas can be won but it must be fought around a strategy of mobilisation.

This means that the unions need to first convince their own membership, training activists, providing briefings and cascading the message down through the stewards and reps' networks. Many unions are already doing this and it offers the best route through to winning the argument among the general population. 200,000 workplace leaders reaching out through seven million members to family, friends and acquaintances would begin to deploy the social weight of the trade union movement – the largest voluntary organisation in the country.

The TUC, individual unions and sympathetic organisations have already produced a series of excellent briefing materials that set out both a critique and alternative policies (for example TUC, 2010; PCS, 2010; Horton and Reed, 2010; Irvine et al,

2010; Green New Deal Group, 2010). These (and others) expose the poisonous propaganda of the Tories in relation to tax, the debt, public spending, the public sector and its workforce. The Tories attempt to position themselves as the champions of the average earners and 'middle England' against the advocates of 'punitive' income tax. They seem to mean those with annual incomes of £100,000 or more despite the fact that median salaries are less than £25,000 in the UK. We must also expose the myth about the public sector 'crowding out' the private sector when, if anything, as Will Hutton (2009) points out, the City has crowded out manufacturing in Britain, while the bankers return to collecting their telephone number bonuses. The key point, of course, is to ram home the origin of the crisis, not let the market fundamentalists off the hook, and show that none of it is inevitable. As has been said (Toynbee, 2010): it's time to make some noise. The unions can offer a focal point by pooling resources (intellectual, financial, technical and otherwise) and become a pole of attraction for a much wider movement.

The coalition is not one side of a debating society so, while important, winning the argument will not be enough. To paraphrase Hyman (2005), we need to add the argument of force to the force of argument. That brings us to organisation and we need an honest assessment of where we are - of organised labour's strengths and weaknesses. 13 years of relatively benign new Labour government did not reverse the decline of the Thatcher/Major period: it just stopped the rot. Today more than 50% of all employees in Britain have never been members of a union (Bryson, 2010). Even in the public sector – the stronghold of the union movement – there are many workplaces with poor density and without a single union rep or steward. The US-influenced organising agenda has had some impact, but as Simms and Holgate (2010) have pointed out, among both many unions and many academics, the question of 'what are we organising for?' is rarely posed. Many of the cards are stacked against us – not just the economic situation and the government attack on the public sector but associated problems like more aggressive, self confident employers and a judiciary that appears increasingly inclined to penalise unions over trivial technical breaches of the Byzantine labour law.

If we are to change the game, Simms and Holgate (2010: 165) are surely right in arguing that 'central to the purpose of organising activity should be notions of worker self-organisation and power'. Whether in-fill or green-field recruitment, the traditional objectives of every workplace unionised, every unionised workplace a high density workplace, need to be augmented with a concept of action-oriented workplace organisation with high proportions of stewards to members (share out the union work and the facility time, where it exists, to a wider group) and every steward a workplace leader. We need to move from a passive membership focussed around a 'willingness to pay' subs to a membership with a 'willingness to act' – a fighting capacity (Offe and Wiesensthal, 1985).

The fightback will certainly involve industrial action and will certainly take place around jobs, but if we confine it just to strikes around jobs we will concede far too much territory to the Tories and allow them to portray the unions as yet another 'vested interest' looking after itself. That would be a major error and an unnecessary one. Of course, the unions fight for the interest of their members – why would anyone join otherwise? But equally, the unions are far more than that. Flanders (1970) recognised that unions have a dual role as a 'sword of justice' as well as vested interest. And it is this role that should be uppermost in this campaign. Rather than a single concentration on members' jobs, the focus should be on the services that those members provide. Rather than solely emphasising the attack on members' standards of living we should emphasise the attack on everybody's quality of life. And we should adopt the language of rights to frame our demands.

There will be defensive strikes and other action against local implementation of the cuts and these must be built upon and supported. But in some instances, conventional responses may play into the employers' hands – a strike in a public sector workplace that is threatened with closure may just accelerate the process. New tactics will have to be developed to complement the traditional ones - a work-in or refusal to charge entrance fees or fares may be more effective than a

strike or an overtime ban. Imaginative ways of involving service users in the action need to be developed and a focus on campaigns that pull together workplace issues with those outside, for example: living wage campaigns for all workers in a locality (not just union members); defence and improvement of healthcare and municipal services; equal access to education for all; preservation of pensions of those that have them and the extension of this right to all who don't; social housing programmes – particularly for young people.

People should have the right to work, a roof over their heads, education, good health, a decent pension and so on – all of which are threatened by this government. Such an approach allows us to build out from beyond the ranks of organised labour. We need to establish - in every city and town, in rural as well as urban areas – a coalition against the cuts and in favour of a decent life for all. We need to organise where members live as well as where they work. Sometimes that may involve using or revitalising structures that already exist, like local trades councils and civic society organisations like London Citizens. In other cases it may mean the creation of completely new structures. In every case it will have to pull in community organisations as partners and allies not as add-ons, but as central to the wider campaign.

As well as going local, we need to go global. It is not a British crisis but an international one. International links at every level from workplace to workplace, union to union, within the same company and across different employers need to be established. We need to build a living solidarity around shared goals and ideas and agreed actions. A mood for action is building across Europe and we should aim to be a strong part of that.

This is clearly a political battle, as much, if not more than an industrial battle. And organised labour in Britain has an obvious problem here. The Blair/Brown governments accepted much of the neo-liberal agenda around anti-union laws, markets, privatisation and financial services. It politically demoralised much of the labour movement, leaving a hollowed out Labour party which routinely ignored whatever the unions had to say, whilst happily pocketing union funding. The abject failure of the affiliated unions to fundamentally influence the line of march of the last Labour government means it would be the height of naïveté to place a new set of hopes in Ed Miliband. And in any event, Labour is in opposition and we can't wait for another five years.

The unions cannot afford to be bitten twice; no more blank cheques. There has to be a much more critical approach to elected representatives whether they are in councils, Parliament or the devolved administrations. Work with them – from Labour, the Greens or the nationalists - when they advance the cause of labour but without becoming locked into a stifling embrace that demobilises the membership and dilutes the political goals. Every elected representative of whatever party should be made to feel the heat of what the cuts will mean in their constituency – especially in those areas that rely on public sector employment for good quality jobs.

With organisation, an alternative agenda and an outgoing campaign strategy will come increased confidence, enthusiasm, and optimism. The key will be to use the attacks to mobilise and rebuild workplace power; using this as the basis to reach out through the community and build political power. Nothing is guaranteed other than the fact that without determined resistance from labour in concert with wider allies in the community, the Conservatives will ride roughshod over a century of reforms and progress.

Steve Davies

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<http://www.unionnetwork.org.uk/>



The University Pay Claim

The Heckler interviews Prof. Clive Sharpe-Practtiss, Vice-Chancellor of Bogsville People's University and head of the well-known forum of university heads, Unis ʘUs (our editor has omitted the stray apostrophe)



The Heckler: Good afternoon, Professor Sharpe-Practtiss.

Sharpe-Practtiss: Oh, just call me Clive; we're all very informal here, you know.

H: Clive, then.

SP: That's me!

H: I've come to talk to you about the pay dispute with UCU and your refusal to budge on 0.4%.

SP: Yes. I thought you might...sorry, I don't know your first name.

H: No, that's correct; you don't.

SP: Oh, well. Where are we? Look, these are hard times and this is the very best offer we can make.

H: Is that why UCU are talking of industrial action, then?

SP: Look, these people are just a bunch of bloody Trotyskites wanting to hasten the revolution and bring the nation to its knees, which, quite frankly, I don't care about. But what I do care about is that they're holding our students to ransom and ruining their careers.

H: With a 0.4% pay award and job cuts imminent, Vice Chancellor, I mean, Clive, they probably think that their careers are already in ruins. What is the current rate of inflation?

SP: Never mind the rate of inflation. If these troublemakers go on strike, there will be fewer jobs at the end of it, I promise you. And when the students start paying nine grand a year...

H: That doesn't really answer my question, though, does it?

SP: Sorry, what was the question again?

H: Why can universities only find 0.4% for their staff?

SP: Well, it's obvious, isn't it? The country can't afford it. We can't afford it.

H: But the students are going to pay all this extra money in fees. Don't you feel that some of it, at least, should go towards providing them with a better education?

SP: I'm afraid you've lost me now. Let's get this clear. Paying fees provides a better education and this happens somehow by paying those bolshy lecturers more money? Is that what you're trying to tell me?

H: Well I thought I was. You know, a decent pay rise is an incentive to do a better job, isn't it?

SP: Incentive? Listen the only incentive that those buggers will get is the sack if they don't pull their

fingers out, and pronto! Now, I hope that covers that subject adequately.

H: Indeed it does but I can't help thinking that vice-chancellors pay went up by around 8% over the same period.

SP: And what is wrong with that?

H: You don't see the contrast in treatment between the top brass and the rest of the staff? I mean, shouldn't you be taking the lead in a time of pay restraint?

SP: (*laughs scornfully*) I thought we were; after all, 8% seems to lead 0.4% in the pay stakes, or, at least, it did when I was at school.. Look, I know what you're thinking. As Cameron keeps saying, 'we're all in this together.'

H: Well, aren't we?

SP: Well, in a sense we are. But we aren't really comparing like-for-like here, are we?

H: Go on.

SP: No, not at all. Look, the market for academics is what? What else could most of them do? They wander around all day, looking scruffy and talking a load of balderdash about some daft idea or other or whining on about how hard-worked they are. Where's the market for them? I mean, who'd employ that shower?

H: Well, maybe. But by the same token, where's the market for vice-chancellors?

SP: Sorry, I didn't quite catch that.

H: I said, where's the market for vice-chancellors?

SP: Well, quite simply, we are captains of industry and our decisions could mean the make or break for universities. So, if we fail to receive the incentives to remain in higher education, we would be snapped up to run British Airways or Barclays Bank or some FTSE Top 100 company while Bogsville goes down the pan, so to speak.

H: So why don't they?

SP: Why don't they what?

H: Snap you up?

SP: Well, I'm sure they would, given half the chance.

H: So could you name me one vice-chancellor who's gone off to run a FTSE Top 100 company, or a Top 250 company, come to that?

SP: Well, not off the top of my head, I can't. But it's not just where we could go too; it's where we've come from that matters equally.

H: So where did you come from then Vice Chancellor, I mean, Clive?

SP: Well, the University of Downmarket, since you ask. But it's not just me you know. We need all these private sector management techniques unleashed on universities and they don't come cheaply.

H: So you think the head of Barclays Bank wants to run Bogsville People's University, then?

SP: I'm sorry. Do you find that funny? Do you think that we can ignore the real world out there?

H: No, I apologise. I didn't think it was funny. I was just thinking, why don't we carry out an experiment? Let's freeze VCs' pay for one year and see how many of you will be snapped up by the private sector in a year's time.

SP: Look we don't fix our pay ourselves, you know. It's done by remuneration committees.

H: Indeed. And who sits on these committees other than a handful of friendly governors who determine senior pay levels based upon what? Not only are they unaccountable to the workforce but they are also unaccountable to the students, the taxpayers and, dare I say it, the market.

SP: Come now. Our governors are totally independent.

H: Are they? So how do they idly sit by and watch universities demoralise their workforces with 0.4% pay increases while their vice chancellors are creaming off their salaries and bonuses greater than those of the prime-minister; while making platitudinous comments about staff holding the students to ransom.

SP: (*hits intercom button*) Sandra, Ms Phillintime. I think my next appointment is waiting for me

Sandra Phillintime: No vice-chancellor. You haven't another meeting until your lunch appointment with the Chair of Governors at Luigi's. By the way, I've got your new credit card ready.

SP: (*coughs*) Thank you Ms Phillintime, that'll be all.

H: And thank you Clive, I mean, Vice-Chancellor. And if I hear from the head of BP, I'll tell him that he had better soon watch his back. I'm sure he has a better credit limit on the plastic.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2010/mar/12/universities-high-pay-top-data>

What are the powers of line managers ?

CAN THEY SACK YOU ?

In recent months incidents have occurred at the University where members of staff have been threatened by their line managers with disciplinary action or even the sack for disobedience. The purposes of this article are:

- To examine the types of instructions a line manager can give.
- Summarise the University's Disciplinary & Grievance Procedures.
- Briefly explain the legal action an employee can take for actual or constructive dismissal.

This article is primarily written in the context of the academic contract but much of it may be of some use for all staff working in Universities and Colleges.

MANAGERIAL POWER AND YOUR CONTRACTUAL RIGHTS

The first thing to emphasise is that your HOD or line manager has no power to sack you. In the **extremely unlikely** event that a HOD did this, and the University supported the decision, then a claim for unfair dismissal would succeed (see below). According to the University's own procedures only the VC can dismiss you, and then only after formal procedures have been followed.

However, line managers do have a pretty wide power to issue instructions which should be complied with providing they are reasonable. What constitutes reasonable cannot easily be defined in advance (hence the wide nature of the powers managers possess), but they must be reasonably consistent with the type of job you are employed to do. Most importantly, they must be consistent with your terms and conditions of employment as you cannot be required to work beyond what your contract requires of you. In terms of the academic contract this means instructions by HODs must be consistent with the following.

- Teaching and teaching related duties should not be for more than 18 hours in any one week, and for no more than 540 hours in any one year.
- These 540 hours should include allowances for

administrative roles, REF research activities, dissertation supervisions and so on. Therefore, there will be very few, if any, lecturers who undertake 540 hours of classroom teaching.

- Teaching should be for no more than 36 weeks a year.
- There are also 2 additional weeks set aside for administrative duties.
- The academic year consists of a maximum of 38 weeks. You can only be required to attend campus for up to these 38 weeks.
- The remaining part of the year consists of 35 days' contractual leave, public holidays, the period over Xmas when the university is shut and self-managed research and scholarly activity. Whilst you can be required to account for how this time is spent as part of appraisal procedure, **self-managed** means what you do (providing it is scholarly) and **where you do it** is primarily for you to determine.

In terms of instructions you may be given with regard to your timetable it is important to remember that the academic staff handbook explicitly provides:

You cannot be required to teach for more than three consecutive hours.

You cannot be required to teach after 18.00 for more than two evenings a week.

On any day where you do teach after 18.00 you cannot be timetabled to teach before 10.00 on that day or the following day.

Common humanity might suggest anyone doing an evening class should not be required to teach at all during the morning of that day, but that is not a formal protection that academic staff enjoy. It is also important to point out that lecturers have no express right to work off-campus outside of formal hours for teaching and scheduled meetings/supervisions, etc. However, in most departments, by custom and practice, academics are permitted to do this as HODs are sensible enough to trust the professionalism of their staff



and to recognise that there are a number of reasons why working from home will result in staff being more, rather than less, productive. If, contrary to the departmental norm, you are instructed to be on campus for the whole of the working day, then the safest thing to do is to comply but then to raise the issue immediately with your union representative.

DISCIPLINARY ACTION

So, if there is a dispute between you and your line manager over what you can be instructed to do, what action can the latter take? In short, a line manager cannot take any **formal** action against you, but the manager does possess informal disciplinary powers. Essentially, these consist of requiring you to attend a meeting to have what the ACAS Code (see below) describes as a **quiet** word. This may take the form of an informal warning and the manager will make a note of this.

There is a very real problem with this process, although it is fully compatible with employment law, in that it can be used to intimidate staff as there is no right to be accompanied by a union representative at an informal meeting. My advice is that if you are required to attend an informal disciplinary meeting you request that a union rep be permitted to be there with you. If this request is refused, then at the very least you should ask your line manager to note your position during the meeting, as well as that of the manager and any action taken. This is important if at a later date the formal disciplinary process is invoked. It is also important, of course, that you consult a union rep prior to the meeting and inform the rep after it as to what has occurred.

You are not entirely powerless with respect to these meetings as they may be evidence of bullying or harassment by the manager. This is particularly the case if there is no real foundation to the meeting, and/or the manager raises his/her voice or otherwise acts abusively towards the employee. In such situations you should

continued on page 16

What are the powers of line managers? – continued

immediately consult your union rep with a view to invoking the University's formal grievance procedures. The formal parts of this process amount to a formal grievance hearing with a further right of appeal. You have a legal right, as recognised by the University's procedures, to be accompanied by a union rep or official at both of these meetings. If the outcome of these meeting is unsatisfactory then there is the possibility of resigning and seeking compensation for constructive unfair dismissal. But hopefully things will never get to this point, and you should not resign before first obtaining union advice on your legal rights.

Where the University's formal disciplinary procedures are invoked, then again there will be a formal disciplinary hearing with a further right of appeal to a more senior level of management. At both these hearings you have the right to be accompanied by a union rep or official, who should be permitted to question and cross-examine witnesses and speak on your behalf. (If you are not in UCU or UNISON you can be accompanied by a colleague but it is only union members who in practice will be accompanied by persons trained to represent you in an effective manner.) Where a penalty is imposed, this will normally be in the form of a written warning or a second final written warning. Any such warning should normally be removed from your work record after one year. Other than in cases of alleged gross misconduct, a disciplinary hearing will only result in dismissal if a second warning has been given and not complied with. Only the VC can decide to dismiss you, and you still have a final right of appeal to the Board of Governors.

Therefore, contrary to what your line manager may tell you, dismissal can only take place after a lengthy and very formal process has been followed. Moreover, from a practical perspective, employers, like Universities, are very reluctant to dismiss employees - in part because of the adverse publicity this can attract. I am not personally aware of anyone being dismissed by this university during the past 12 years.

CLAIMING UNFAIR DISMISSAL

For the above reason I hope what follows will never be needed, and it is, of course, very much a brief summary. If dismissed, or you resign in order to claim constructive dismissal, the first thing to do is to access the employment tribunal website and download form ET1 to formally present your claim of unfair dismissal. Your union official (or any employment lawyer including non-practitioners) can help you complete this form and you have three months, from the date of the termination of your contract, to send it to the tribunal.

Your claim will succeed if the tribunal agrees that the employer has failed to act as a reasonable employer would act (beware that this test is loaded in favour of employers), either in deciding to dismiss you, or with respect to the procedure that the employer took before reaching the decision to dismiss. Employers should adhere to their own procedures, and these procedures should be consistent with the provisions of the ACAS Code on Disciplinary Procedures. (In my personal view, there is an arguable case that this university's procedures are deficient in one important respect, but hopefully this will never be put to the test in an actual case.) If you win, you will be entitled to a basic award of up to £11,400, which is the equivalent to a statutory redundancy payment. Most importantly, you are entitled to a compensatory award subject to the (current) statutory limit of £65,300. The actual sum awarded can only reflect your actual financial loss. However, this includes lost pension rights, and a fair number of university employees could expect to be awarded the maximum sum if dismissal results in long-term unemployment. Just be aware that compensation can be subject to deductions if the tribunal thinks the employee has been guilty of contributory misconduct. If your dismissal is substantively unfair then you can be awarded reinstatement along with full arrears of lost pay and benefits. Employers do not have to comply with this, but failure to do so will result in additional compensation of up to £19,760 being awarded.

Finally, as stated above, universities are very reluctant to dismiss and even if they choose to do so there is an alternative to an employment tribunal hearing. This is a compromise agreement which could be negotiated on your behalf by a union official. This agreement will be for a sum of money, which is not subject to any statutory cap, and in return the employee will give a legally binding promise not to disclose the issues resulting in their leaving the university. I am aware of situations where universities (not necessarily this one) have entered into such agreements. It is also worth clarifying such agreements can be an alternative to a dismissal.

In conclusion:

- Your line manager can only issue instructions which are consistent with the type of job you do and with your terms and conditions of employment.
- Line managers can give you an informal warning but have no rights of dismissal.
- Dismissal is highly unlikely and can only take place after lengthy and detailed procedures have been followed.
- If dismissed you may be able to secure compensation for unfair dismissal or to avoid a tribunal claim.
- At all stages where disciplinary action is threatened or taken consult with your union rep.
- If you are the victim of managerial bullying then consider invoking the university's grievance procedures.

Roger Welch

Retired UCU member

Editor's note: You can find full details of all conditions of employment including all the policies and procedures on the intranet here
<http://www.port.ac.uk/intranet/humanresources/conditionsofemployment/>



Love in the workplace

Have other people's relationships impacted on your worklife or opportunities? Have you felt that you work for 'the family firm'? Are you a couple in the workplace? Even if you as a couple believe you are behaving objectively, there will always be other people's perception of your relationship over which you have no control. How do you manage your relationship in the workplace?

The Heckler will be carrying out a study of the impact of relationships at work. If you have experiences that you feel would be useful to our study please send them to louise.allen@port.ac.uk or post to: Love in the workplace, The Heckler, The Collective offices, St Pauls Annex, St Pauls Road, Portsmouth PO5 4AQ

Books and fish markets – those well known Cold-War strategic targets

Whenever I am giving an introductory talk to those visiting our Map Library for the first time, I always like to spread across the table a selection of maps that give a flavour of the sort of material we keep. For a bit of fun, I almost always include our copy of a 1:10,000 scale map with the title . To the casual observer it might look a little like something produced by our own Ordnance Survey, showing as it does a typical urban setting of buildings and roads amid a landscape of contoured hills overlooking a harbour. One of its distinguishing features, however, is that all the text is printed with a cyrillic script. So, my question to the onlookers would be “Can you identify where this place is?”. Several might say that it is somewhere in Russia and one or two might suggest the location is in Greece. So it comes as a surprise to everyone when I tell them that the map is of Plymouth in Devon.

If that weren't surprising enough, even more interest is stirred when I go on to describe how the map was produced in 1981 by the Soviet military as part of a top secret cartographic enterprise of colossal magnitude, including maps at various scales of the whole world. It has been suggested that the total Soviet mapping output amounted to over 1 million separate sheets, thousands of which were detailed maps of towns and cities around the world.

The story goes that, following the collapse of the USSR, more than 6000 tonnes of these maps were ordered to be destroyed. News of this destruction came to the attention of a Latvian by the name of Aivars Zvirbulis who managed to negotiate the purchase of about 100 tonnes of maps. Unfortunately, most of what he saved was later destroyed by fire. Aivars Zvirbulis went on to open a map shop in Riga from where the remaining sheets found their way on to the open market.

A striking feature of these Soviet plans of British towns, of which at least 80 were mapped at either 1:10,000 or 1:25,000, is the attention given to the buildings. Significant buildings are numbered and a system of colour coding is used: black for industrial buildings, green for military buildings, and purple for government and administrative buildings. So these maps are basically highlighting strategically significant 'targets'.

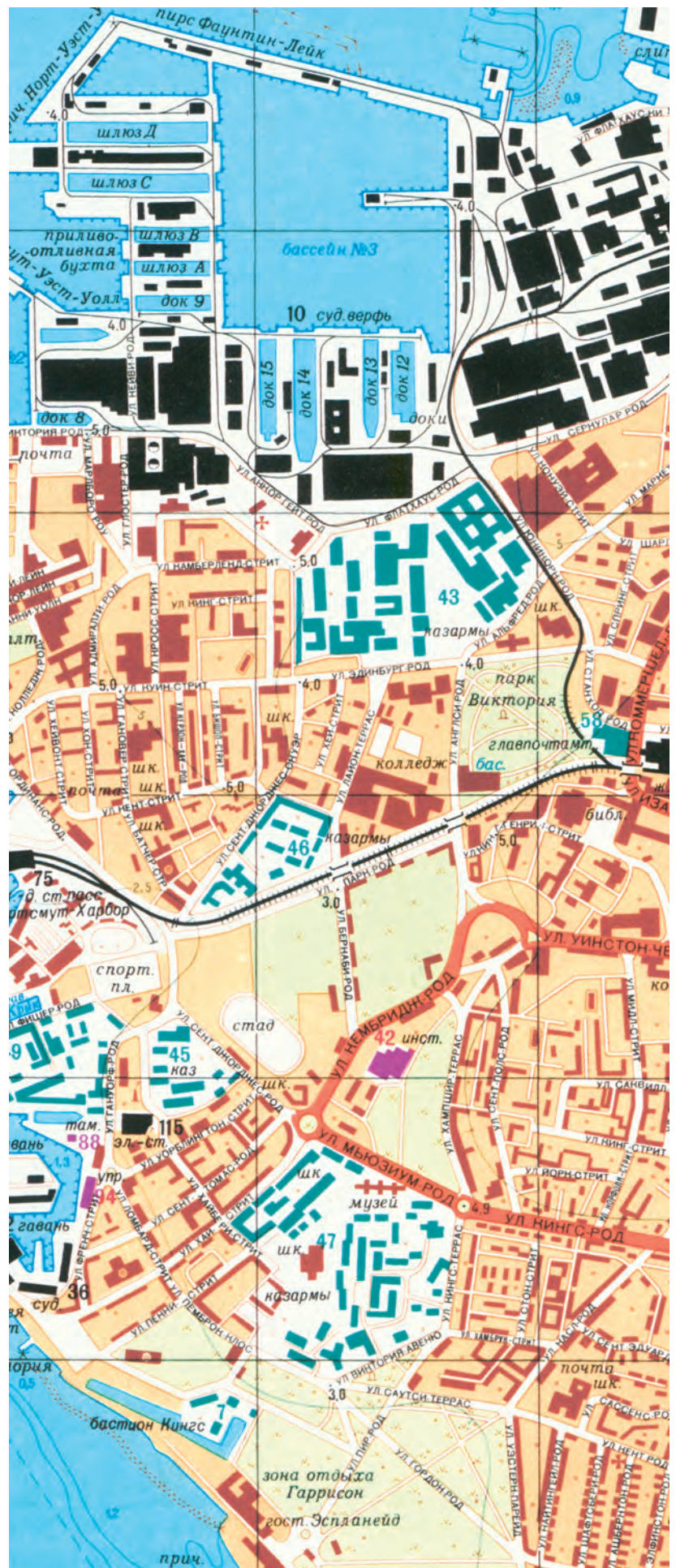
Until recently the Map Library only held copies of the Plymouth and Glasgow sheets so, earlier this year, I mentioned during a visit to the Defence Geographic Centre in Feltham that I would really like to get my hands on the Russian military town plan of Portsmouth. So it was with great delight that I received the desired map from my colleague in the MoD. An unfamiliar map of a familiar place is something that gets map librarians very excited, and this was no exception. Curiously, the map appears to display the sheet title

(Gosport). They also sent the adjacent map of Gosport which has the sheet title (Portsmouth). Obviously the first thing you do when you have such a map is to see which familiar buildings had been labelled for particular attention by the Russian military. Not surprisingly the dockyard stands out in black and green, as do the industrial areas around Farlington, Fratton and north of Burrfields Road. However, only a handful of buildings are shown in purple. Not, as you might expect, the Guildhall, the Civic Offices or the tax office. Instead, the 'government and administrative' buildings that they had their eye on included HM Prison Kingston, part of the Fraser Gunnery Range adjacent to Fort Cumberland (no surprise there I suppose), our library building, and (most curiously of all) two buildings adjacent to the Camber. These include the fish warehouse in White Hart Road (incorrectly labelled on the map as French Street, which is adjacent). A base for spy trawlers perhaps, or did the Red Army march on a diet of shellfish?



David Sherren

David is Map Librarian at the University of Portsmouth Library



Egrets? I've had a few.

More, probably than I know. The Little Egret travelled from Finisterre to Courtmacsherry Bay in 1997 and seemed to signal the true emergence of Ireland as a full-blown European nation, making its television debut on the sentimental cameo landscapes that mark the 6 o'clock Angelus on RTE. By Easter Monday 2008, Ireland's economy was in tatters and Europe a sick joke. Since then nobody has known how to regard the little white wading bird. It has disappeared from the shoreline paintings so favoured by Irish artists and seems somehow to be conscious of its own fall from grace. Numbers are declining and it is rumoured to be making an appearance on Sunday dinner tables throughout county Cork. It is reputed to be a staple ingredient of a restaurant at Coolmain Strand where I have eaten on a number of occasions. This family run place faces Courtmacsherry at the Atlantic end of the bay, and overlooks a typical slice of west Cork country, culminating in the burnt out shell of the Black and Tan barracks on Laharane Point.

This is not a landscape suited to apologists for Empire. Within a radius of five miles from the abbey ruins at Timoleague I counted fourteen IRA memorials from the 1920-22 conflict. They take the form of enamelled metal crosses below which names and details of death are inscribed, and are attached to hedges and walls at fatal spots along the lanes. Despite the continuing currency of these events and the appalling tragedies of the North, I have never experienced a wrong word directed at me or any other British person in Ireland on that account. The lanes, known in Irish as *bohareens*, have always been central to Irish affairs. In the days of occupation, when it was forbidden for Catholics to own property, the lanes were the only accessible sites for both business and pleasure. The Hedgerow schools taught there in a proscribed language until Catholic emancipation, and the verges in the west of

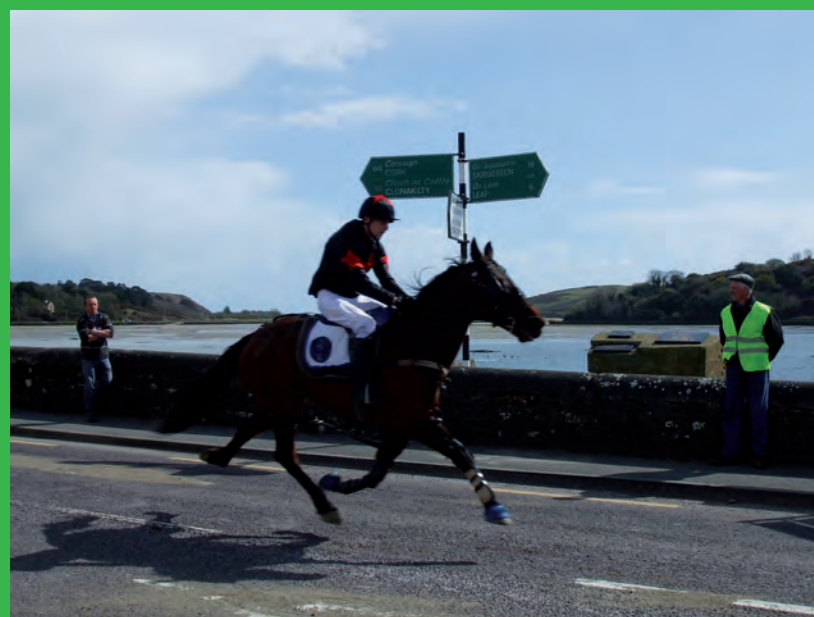
Ireland are said to consist almost exclusively of the casual graves of famine victims. Despite the massive increase in car usage, the lanes continue to be the venue for the sports of *road bowling* and *road trotting*. They conflict with, and impede the flow of traffic, but it would take a brave soul to deny them. It is commonplace for motorists in west Cork to come up against hand-made signs warning of 'road bowling in progress', and I have yet to see a driver dare to ignore one. The sport consists of hurling a 16 oz. steel ball along the road with points awarded for distance, and style. Huge sums of money change hands and betting is wide spread. Road trotting is if anything even more lucrative, and consists of a form of horse racing, in which the legs of horses are restrained by a *trotting rig* that prevents the animals bursting into an free gallop that would cause injury on a metalled road surface.

For these events traffic is diverted, often at the last minute, by the simple expedient of moving signposts around. This causes chaos but it is characteristic of Ireland that such things are usually treated with a rare humour. I have come to realise that conflict, in its various forms, can be regarded as an essential attribute of social life. Where our instinct might be to smooth and stifle conflict seeing it as an obstacle to utility, the Irish seem keen to allow it to take shape and to observe its nuances before deciding whether a resolution is necessary. This leads to a disconcerting degree of candour: It is hard to imagine the recent Irish Star headline *Useless Gobshites* appearing over a picture of British cabinet ministers.

One might expect the refined echelons of the universities to have, let us say, a more urbane approach to institutional conflict. This is not the case. Having spent a year or so at University College, Cork, I am more struck by the differences than the similarities when comparing my English and Irish experiences. Assessment of students'

work at Cork was undertaken with the explicitly stated purpose of reducing class sizes. Forget the guff about student experience and empowerment; the ruthless nature of assessment rendered the process one of clearly understood conflict, in which there were clear winners and losers. On the other hand, the process was mercifully free from corporate jargon and hence of some value to students. The written assessment feedback was particularly engaging, and is typified by the experience of a mature student in the music department who was informed that he 'had a fine pair of ears'. Although opaque at its highest levels, the dialogue between staff was clear and not generally susceptible to subjective interpretation. At an open meeting held to discuss the possible adoption of Student Satisfaction Surveys in the university, the Head of the Music Department was able to announce from the platform that 'only an idiot or a lickspittle would express satisfaction with something when asked'. It will be interesting to see how far the extreme economic situation will affect attitudes and social practices in Ireland. It is already affecting the behaviour of extreme Republicans who are cashing in on peoples' disappointment by blaming Britain and the international community for the nation's plight. A return to the austere Celtic nationalism of De Valera is feared by many and eagerly anticipated by others, like members of the *32 County Sovereignty Committee*, who are on the move again, stalking the bars of Cork city and reporting unpatriotic behaviour. It is difficult not to sympathise with people who have been through all of this before. Hopefully the Egret will survive in Ireland. It will be a sad day if it doesn't.

Brian Lunn



Uncle Ed

We would like to welcome Ed our Agony Uncle to the Heckler Team. Ed has worked in employment law and is a trained counsellor. He is here to support and advise our readers with their problems in the workplace. Whilst Ed moves into his new office and sets up his email, please send your problems to our editor, louise.allen@port.ac.uk who will pass onto Ed or post to Uncle Ed, The Heckler, The Collective offices, St Pauls Annex, St Pauls Road, Portsmouth PO5 4AQ.

Your messages will be dealt with in strictest confidence.



Workloads can hurt!

The Heckler receives many emails and phone calls about workloads from staff across the region. With the increase of tuition fees in the HE sector and ruthless competition in the FE sector all our workloads are increasing. Higher Education minister David Willetts MP wants more contact hours for students. We are asked to do more and better research, departments face administration staff redundancies which will mean that teaching staff will be asked to absorb this work. Every university and college will be thinking about workloads. The good ones will be setting up workload working groups to look at current practice and through proper consultation design good workload frameworks that invite transparency and equality. Bad institutions will put their heads in the sand and hope that the problem will go away, which of course it will not. If you are personally suffering from three or more of the symptoms listed below then you need to do something about your workload. Firstly talk to your line manager. If you do not get the support you feel you need, then contact your union official. Tackling workloads only works when you take collective action.

Workloads stress:

- headaches and migraines
- muscular tension
- back- &/or neck-ache
- tiredness and sleep problems
- digestive problems
- raised heart rate
- skin rashes
- sweating
- blurred vision
- often rushing about, trying to be in too many places at once
- missing breaks and taking work home with you
- not having enough time for exercise, relaxation or spending time with your family
- unable to concentrate or finding it difficult to concentrate
- feeling you can't cope
- not having enough energy to get things done
- finding it hard to make decisions
- having emotional outbursts
- generally feeling upset
- lack of sense of humour
- feeling irritable

Retirement

Judging by the emails The Heckler has received, there is much concern from our readers about issues about retirement.

If you want further advice and support please contact life coach rosemaryjane@port.ac.uk

Rosemary Jane



Drogi Do Wolnosci (Roads to Freedom)

So how does a Trade Union Studies lecturer and UCU Branch Secretary celebrate his 40th birthday- any ideas?

Well, it could have been a cliché moment of trying to recapture my youth by buying some trendy clothes and a sports car; but we all know that a lecturer's pay won't stretch to that. So it was a busman's holiday instead for me and a trip to Poland, Gdansk to be exact and a visit to the Solidarnosc (Solidarity) exhibition: Roads to Freedom.

It had been a good week as on the 10th November, like many of you, I was in central London taking part in the Demo-lition march against the education cuts and plans to increase HE tuition fees. We all know what a great day that was and how empowered we felt walking through the streets with over 50,000 like-minded people showing the government our feelings: "No Ifs No Buts – No Education Cuts!"

Then a couple of days later I found myself outside the Lenin Shipyard remembering all of those TV pictures from the 1980s and what a pivotal place this had been in building a trade union and the events that led to this, which meant political freedom for millions of people!

There is a shop with nothing on the shelves except bottles of vinegar; as for some reason vinegar was readily available, but how much vinegar does one family need!

I then moved into the next exhibition hall and was confronted by a prison cell. In the Polish People's Republic at that time there was a great deal of political repression and virtually no opportunity to travel outside of the Soviet bloc. Strict censorship led to many arrests and long prison sentences for speaking out against the political regime. It was also the time when people were encouraged to spy on their neighbours and report any wrongdoings or negative remarks against the Communist Party. Many political prisoners served long and unjust sentences, their release was part of the demands by Solidarity.

I followed the signs and went into the hall telling the story of the birth of Solidarity: an independent labour union with which I am sure we are all familiar. Their famous strike action of August 1980 came about from the firing of Anna Walentynowicz (a popular crane driver and activist) and the previous sacking of Lech Walesa (a name you surely recognise). A strike began



were able to hold out longer than many of the other workers on strike. Finally, on August 31st, Poland's Soviet influenced Government agreed to many of the demands and the "Gdansk Agreement" was signed. One of the most important demands was the right to form independent trade unions. Within 16-months Solidarnosc had more than 10 million members. The formation of this trade union is widely accredited with being the catalyst for dismantling the Soviet grip over Eastern Europe. The rest, as they say, is history!

So, if you are at a loose end one weekend and have a spare £70 or so for return flights and a little bit of spending money, go to Gdansk, where I am sure you will be as energised as I was when visiting this exhibition and realise what is achievable if we work as a collective for the greater good. Nie ma Wolnosci bez Solidarnosci – (there is no freedom without solidarity)!

Ian McCann

UCU Branch Secretary
Southampton City College Branch



Just a short walk from the shipyard (now called Gdansk Shipyard) and the monument of the 80 fallen shipyard workers, who in 1970 were killed during strikes, is the exhibition hall. At first, I was certain that I was in the wrong place as I walked down the steps of what looked like a war bunker; but then I turned the corner and I walked through the door and stepped back into communist Poland of the 70s and 80s. I was greeted by a mannequin of a woman wearing a necklace of toilet rolls. As goods were so hard to come by apparently toilet rolls were very difficult to obtain, so when they did appear in the shops you bought them by the necklace and hoped you had enough to last you and your family before they were available again. Otherwise, there would be a real need to take a newspaper into the toilet – and not for reading!

The exhibition hall starts by showing what day-to-day life was like in Poland for the average person. It took me a while to understand what I was looking at as it seems so different to anything I know and certainly of Poland today. I am a regular visitor to the country as my partner is Polish, so I have heard all the stories from family and friends but here it was staring me in the face.

on August 14th 1980 as workers were fed up with the continual price rises without a matching rise in wages. The sacking of their colleagues was the "last straw" for the shipyard workers. Two-days later several other strike committees joined the shipyard workers. The next day a list of 21 demands was written by the unified strike committee on pieces of plywood. This wood is now part of the UNESCO World Heritage list. The demands were about much more than local concerns and included the legal formation of trade unions, end of media censorship, the right to strike and freedom for political prisoners. The movement printed 30,000 copies of a newsletter entitled *Solidarnosc* on the shipyard printing press. These were distributed amongst the people both inside and outside of the shipyard gates.

On August 18th the Szczecin shipyard workers also joined the strike, which then caused a wave of strike action along the coast. Within a few days most of the country's factories were shut down by newly formed trade unions, who joined their colleagues at Gdansk. By this time the dispute had gained international support and media coverage, which meant that the workers



Retirement

Whatever your age, thinking about retirement will usually prompt feelings of positive anticipation tempered by varying degrees of anxiety and uncertainty. Beyond this common ground it is a highly individual issue, since our circumstances and wishes will always differ somewhat from those of our colleagues. This article briefly discusses some political, institutional and personal aspects of retirement from both collective and individual points of view.

Political

The question of when and how workers retire addresses two relationships; the relationship that a citizen has with the state and the relationship that a worker has with their employer. Governments determine the amount of state retirement pension and when it can be claimed, age-related benefits and relevant employment and equality legislation. A review of the more prominent news stories published during the autumn of 2010 clearly shows that retirement is a strongly political issue in the UK and elsewhere. Plans for raising the state retirement age in France were recently met with nationwide demonstrations, protests and industrial action. Interestingly many students took part, recognising that retirement is as relevant to young people on the threshold of their working lives as it is to older people nearing retirement.

All western governments face challenges arising from increasing life expectancy and thus greater numbers of retired people in society. As a result, the proportion of the population which is in paid work is steadily declining. In the UK there is a broad political consensus that the age at which state retirement pensions are payable must rise. The current economic recession has made the challenges much more acute, and the coalition government is now seeking to limit public sector occupational pensions as well. The chancellor of the exchequer has recently described public sector pensions as 'gold-plated', a description that probably seems insulting to those who receive a modest pension at the end of their working lives after decades of making contributions. UNISON and UCU are strongly opposed to political decisions that seek to diminish the value of occupational pensions in further and higher education. But why did the comprehensive spending review recently produced by the coalition government avoid reducing other age-related benefits such as the winter fuel allowance, bus passes and free prescriptions for the over sixties? This was because older people are more active in party politics and are more likely to vote than younger citizens; attacking their wallets and purses could prove to be electoral suicide.

In the UK, the introduction of age discrimination legislation (as a result of European law) did little to assist those who wished to work beyond the default age determined by employers, which is 65 in the HE / FE sector. It merely conferred the right to request this, but allowed employers to refuse on the grounds of business efficiency without further justification. The Equality Act 2010 is much stronger, requiring employers to provide objective justification. The default retirement age will no longer apply from April 2011. This is potentially positive for employees, but not all employers are happy about it and the Confederation of British Industry has recently expressed serious reservations.

Institutional

Responsible employers invest considerable resources in supporting new recruits through induction and orientation programmes, usually organised by human resources departments in collaboration with key departments. When established in their new posts, professional development courses and opportunities for up-dating are offered to enable employees to work efficiently and perhaps to take on new responsibilities. But what happens when impending retirement will soon bring paid employment to an end? What does a responsible employer do at that stage?

This advice to employers comes from the Department of Work & Pensions: 'Your employees will appreciate more choices in later years working. You should ensure they know that you support flexible approaches to work and retirement and want to encourage employee participation in discussions regarding their retirement options and eventual exit from the workplace.'. As an example of good practice the DWP quotes an employer: 'Our approach involves paying for employees who are approaching retirement, as well as their partners, to attend an external preretirement training course, which helps them prepare personally and financially for their retirement – all of our staff who have retired in recent years have been on the course and told us it was worthwhile.'. ACAS emphasizes the need to 'ensure older workers have a soft landing into their life after work'.

What does the University of Portsmouth offer to staff who are planning to retire? There is a very helpful pensions advisor in the HR department who provides information on this one aspect of retirement on request but, otherwise, the approach seems entirely passive at this institution. No general advice is available in written form and no pre-retirement courses are offered. The HR department has very recently



confirmed that there are no plans to offer specific support to enable staff to plan for retirement.

What is on offer at your university or college? The editorial team at The Heckler would like to learn of your experiences and your views about how good practice should be promoted.

Personal

In order to minimise uncertainty, planning and information gathering are essential. Thinking about money will be a priority for most people and it is usually possible to arrive at a reasonable estimate of income beyond retirement. An estimate of income and benefits can be obtained from occupational pension schemes, and from the Department for Work & Pensions in relation to the state retirement pension. Unfortunately, estimates from private, investment-based pension schemes may not be reliable. Remember that no contributions to National Insurance or to your occupational pension scheme will be required and liability for income tax could be lower. With this information, income before and after retirement can be broadly compared. It is also important to look closely at future expenditure, especially regular and recurring costs, bearing in mind that prices will always tend to rise. You need to know what adjustments to your personal finances will be necessary after retirement.

Perhaps the most significant change to social life is the potentially radical alteration to daily routines. Many decades of working life have imposed a structure on our time and activities and, whilst freedom from this can be liberating, making use of that gift of time requires careful thought. Suddenly abandoning long-established routines on retirement carries with it the risk of experiencing a sense of boredom or lack of purpose. We all need some structure in our lives so it may be useful to continue with some of our daily routines until there is a specific reason to change them. For example, an employee may have risen at seven in the morning every working day, so it may be advisable to continue that routine until there is a particular need to rise earlier or later.

Many people develop friendships with their colleagues, perhaps sharing transport to work, taking lunch breaks together and socialising outside the workplace. If you have friends at work who have recently retired or are planning to do so soon, think about ways in which you can maintain contact. These might include invitations to festive gatherings, works outings, public events in your department and occasions when other colleagues are retiring or leaving your university or college. Workplace friendships are often longstanding and much valued; they are well worth preserving.

Trades union members have the opportunity to continue their membership into retirement, paying greatly reduced subscriptions, and UNISON and UCU warmly encourage this. Retired members can continue to be involved with almost all union activities, including attending local branch meetings. This is a great way to offer support and the benefit of long experience to former colleagues and to keep in touch socially. It is also possible to maintain some work interests through academic societies, professional bodies and trade associations.

But outside the world of work, how can that great gift of time be used? Alas that question is beyond the scope of this article but perhaps readers would like to suggest aspects of retirement that could be explored in greater detail in future.

Martin Giddey

Martin is an active retired member of UCU at the University of Portsmouth.

Footnote

The Heckler now has a legal correspondence team who will be writing a follow up article on your legal rights for retirement in our next edition.

Collage is a flat way to see the world

Jacqueline Mair has worked in various guises in the world of Art and Design for the past twenty years. At present she is Senior Lecturer in Fine Art in the School of Art Design and Media, University of Portsmouth, where she teaches three days a week and co-ordinates the Eldon Gallery for the Faculty. She is shortly departing for a year to Savannah College of Art and Design USA as Professor of Illustration.

"I have been playing with stuff," she says, "with creative bits and pieces for as long as I can remember, moving backwards and forwards between the worlds of fine art and Illustration. I am an artistic omnivore and have developed a taste for everything: a jack-of-all-trades and master of none, I feel at times, collaging, printmaking, painting, illustrating, writing children's books, making doormats, decorating windows, taking printing presses to refugee camps, teaching, passing on ideas, fiddling with broken pottery and endlessly rearranging objects of the absurd around my house and studio—the relentless pursuit of the obsessive collector of all sorts, trying to make sense of it all."

"Collage and painting on paper have always been a major preoccupation. The personal work that I produce has references to folk and naïve traditions. I am drawn to the flat perspectives: the contrasting of disparate, even quirky elements. Much is a personal response to the domestic, homespun solutions made up in my head, referenced, from newspapers, Radio Four or projects while traveling. The work reproduces memories or events that have been processed and filtered through the imagination, yet always tied to a reference."

"One important factor I have recognized over the last eight years was the right to be creative in

whatever form appropriate and not always being the artist in the traditional format. I realised I wasn't always going to be fulfilled making work only for myself, as I have the ability to share those ideas with others creatively. To recognize the value of this was paramount and has become increasingly more vital."

"Our lives can be impacted by early life-experiences and the desires from childhood. A lot of opportunities I have maneuvered and created in my career to satisfy my desire to travel. This really started as a small child. I was given a book, which had stamps to stick in it, and it purported metaphorically to take you off on a magic carpet



to exotic places once the stamps were completed. Imagine a child's disappointment to discover this was not true! Yet it planted the seeds of excitement and possibilities into the mind of a child from a poor and quite culturally undernourished family. The magic carpet took me all over the world. As a student at Bristol I had a French exchange in my second year to Luminy Art School in Marseille. These experiences can have a life-changing effect. They opened my horizons and shifted the goal-posts."

"A lot of the work at Bristol and in France was based on collaging with print. Nothing was edited. The print afforded the time and reflection to place stories together. I was always finding things. Creating stories, the narrative was always there: by working with some of the French artists who taught me, I pushed the work more inventively. Drawing on graph paper and sticking down found tickets may now seem commonplace and, with the use of Photoshop, easy, but then it was exciting, new and different."

"As I have said, I have used collage all my life. Jockum Nordström, my hero, says he uses scissors as another form of drawing and I feel the same. The collages are like a print process for me, layering one on top of the other: moved, lost and bought back again. Every collagist who uses discarded papers from the street world would have to look at Kurt Schwitters. His signature has stamped these materials of commerce with an aesthetic value. He validated collage as a medium of modernity comparable to painting."

"I have often searched for ways to see the world, with British Council Grants to Travel round India and Mexico, researching themes and constructing new paintings and collages that make sense of the ideas that can only come from the experience of being there. All this fed into over twenty years of illustration and as much as I love the stress of the deadline I knew that I wanted more than my illustrations being the cat-litter lining of tomorrow."

"This was a turning point for me. I am mindful of the quote by Martin Luther King Junior:

Our lives begin to end the day we come silent about things that matter.

Creativity is an appetite and if it's blocked, it may be because we have lost the appreciation for what exists outside of us. Blocks are commonly caused by being immersed in ourselves, in limited experiences. We cease imagining and I worried this was happening to me."

"The best way I dealt with it was to realize that creativity, and being creative, did not just have to be about me making things, but helping others to have a voice."

"For the past five years I have been working with various organizations—UNICEF, Save the Children, Campaign for Drawing and Mobile Arts Schools for Kenya—to take art and creativity somewhere else."

"I am now moving on for a year's leave of absence to work as Professor of Illustration at Savannah School of Art and Design in the USA, to see what happens there!"



To **P** Or Not to **P** ?

Are you one of the many University of Portsmouth staff members who endure problems every day trying to find a parking space? Although I haven't owned a car for a number of years, I can empathise with you. Mind you, when it's pouring with rain and I've been waiting for a bus for forty minutes, I'm a little less inclined to feel charitable as you whoosh past in your nice warm car! But why isn't there anywhere to park these days? Are there too many cars on the road? Well, to put it simply, yes. There is an ever increasing number of people commuting long distances for their jobs too. And, sadly, people who walk more than half a mile to work are generally thought of as being a bit odd!

So you'd think, then, that there would be irresistible pressure from the motoring public to have more reasonably-priced and conveniently sited car parking provided. The problem is though, local authorities simply can't afford to leave council-owned land undeveloped as they used to, and of course, private landowners would laugh (or cry) at the suggestion they tarmac expensive city land for the small income generated by current car parking charges.

There are, I suppose, 2 solutions which spring to mind from this situation: Firstly, we have new legislation to ensure property developers provide enough permanent car parking spaces in cities when building residential or commercial premises. Secondly, it could be argued that we let the markets set a price for car parking spaces to encourage the private sector to build more parking facilities in city centres. However, the initial price to purchase 'urban land' and the 'opportunistic returns' by not building a block of 'posh apartments' on it would necessitate setting parking charges at what most of us would certainly consider an unaffordably high level.

Admittedly, I am 'that' kind of person who believes in using a car only when necessary. Mind you, I don't think I've ever met anybody who believes in using their car when it wasn't necessary! But what does "necessary" mean to you and to your own lifestyle?

How far is 'far enough to take the car'? A mile?, Two miles?, Five? Does the distance get shorter if it's raining or you've got the kiddies with you? Or how about when you're wearing your best suit and shoes for a meeting, or even on 'dress down Fridays'?

When I did have a car, I would walk or use public transport if my destination was within 5 miles and practicable to get to in this way. Of course, I had to allow a good deal more time to travel! Not least because, when using public transport, bus and train timetables could often be mistaken for works of fiction and would certainly give the Booker Prize nominees a run for their money! And when your ride eventually did turn up, it wasn't guaranteed to whisk you to your destination at Ferrari speed in comfort, luxury and quiet.

But hey, that is the way of public transport for the moment and I think the transport companies will only take action to improve their vehicles, timetables and employment conditions when there are more users. Presently though, the converse seems to be true: the transport providers seem to be daring the public not to use their services with a 'use it or lose it' strategy which allows them to retain only the most profitable routes (and less staff) by reporting low usage and profit figures to the government for the majority of their services.

Well, if neither the public nor the private sector can be relied on to provide public car parking, how about employers in our area providing spaces for their staff?

Here at the University, every staff member has the right to apply for a Parking Permit to access the University car parks. The permit costs are certainly very reasonable, (at the time of going to press the charge is 0.3% of the person's gross salary, deducted monthly).

With regard to provision of spaces across Campus, the University states that it is "committed to offering a measure of car parking provision for staff, as far as its land capacity will allow". However, this commitment starts to look rather non-committal as the Policy then goes on to say: "As staff numbers far outweigh available parking provision, it is not possible to satisfy the parking needs of all members of staff. Therefore, all members of staff are encouraged to consider alternative forms of transport (public transport, car sharing, cycling and so on)". Not so encouraging, then, as it looks as though you're lucky to even be part of the car parking lottery. But look on the bright side: at least you're in the Big Draw! How about those studying at the University? What does the University have to say about the fee-paying punters?

Apart from exceptional circumstances, permits will not be issued to students. Please note that there are no general car parking facilities for students at any hall of residence on the Guildhall Campus including Rees Hall and Burrell House. Student residents at the Langstone Student Village however, may apply for a parking permit (for LSV ONLY!), from the Mobility Office, but must do so before bringing a car to the site.

(It is important to note however, that whether you are a Staff member or a Student, if you're a 'Blue Badge' holder, you are entitled to a free permit).

There are long-standing fears amongst many staff about a couple of existing car parks inasmuch as the use of these areas of land may be being reconsidered with a view to building on them in the future. I have been unable to confirm that this is University policy but inevitably it does raise questions about the University's future commitment to parking provision. As with Portsmouth City Council, and elsewhere, the argument would presumably be that people should consider other transport options (and it would of course be no more than idle speculation to ask whether the motives and such reduction of car parking numbers would be based in environmental and/or traffic planning concerns alone). I don't remember, though, any great outcry from the Council about the increased traffic congestion in and out of the City when the developers of Gunwharf Quays were intending to incorporate a large number of parking spaces into the shopping complex. Hmmm...

The alternatives?

So what to do? For the foreseeable future, as there are not enough car parking spaces available for all staff and students here at the University and there will probably continue to be a system of 'first come, first served' for the lone car occupant.

The University has actively been considering how it can help its staff. One positive idea which they have implemented is that of offering incentives to car share. Sharers are given generous and progressive discount incentives on their car parking permits: for cars with two or three sharers, the cost of the permit decreases proportionately and for cars with four sharers no charge will be made for permits and the driver of the car will get a choice of fixed reserved spaces for exclusive use. This is definitely a good deal but very

much dependent, of course, on whether you can find one or more colleagues to share with you. This is probably more of a problem the further away you live from the Campus, or if you work unusual hours. It's still very much worth popping a note onto a staff notice board though: nothing ventured, nothing gained!

The University also provides an inter-site bus service between Langstone Village and the main Campus, which is free to all staff and students, and runs at regular intervals throughout the day (and evening). However, the service does not run during student vacations. Perhaps the University would consider extending the service and have a trial run during a term break to see how many staff would use the service during this time to get to the different areas of the Campus; as well as to The Hard and Fratton train station.

What about the City as a whole? Although I've joked a little in this article about bus services in Portsmouth, the services on the whole have improved somewhat and it's much more rare now that I find myself standing at a bus stop wondering if I've just missed a bus or if it is running late. With the constantly rising cost of car fuel and insurance these days, you will probably find the bus fares surprisingly reasonable, especially with a weekly, monthly or annual ticket. For trips further afield, the railway, National Express and Greyhound Coach services are generally reliable and – especially if you book in advance – reasonably priced (even if the traffic queues and "the wrong kind of leaves on the line" aren't).

Portsmouth City Council is already running a scheme with local employers, including the University, entitled "The Big Commuter Challenge". This encourages people to use alternative transport or to car share for a week. Before the event, people can contact their employer's coordinator to get discounted bus travel from FirstBus or StageCoach to use during the week, or to get discounted cycle services from a couple of local bike shops. Here's the website which reports back on 2010's event and gives you an idea of what incentives and advice are on offer:

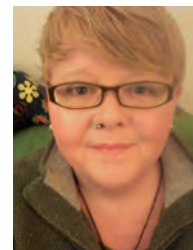
<http://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/CommuterChallenge/index.html>

For anyone who is struggling with parking on site, it might be worth trying out alternative modes of transport or speaking to a work colleague or two to see if they would like to car share. I do understand this is not always practicable but it is worth really looking at how you use your car each day and to see if this or other alternatives would suit. If you find no one is interested in car sharing where you work, there are some great websites out there where like-minded people offer such facilities. I have used one as a one-off for a journey to Glastonbury and have to say it was a great way of making new friends, and reduced my guilt in making use of a car rather than public transport.

Use Google: you'll be surprised how many car sharing websites there are out there and what advice is offered in helping you to find ways to reduce your car usage, stress and possibly even your carbon footprint.

Happy Travels!

Debbi Richards, Unison



"There is the old joke attributed to Chicago President Hutchins about a university being a collection of schools and departments held together by a central heating system, and the variant from Clark Kerr in California, that a university is a collection of departments held together by a common grievance over parking (Kerr 1972: 20)."

Stockman, Norman. (2010). Sociological Reflections on the History of a Sociology Department. In D. F. Smith and H. Philsooph (Eds.). Explorations in cultural history: essays for Peter Gabriel McCaffery. Aberdeen: Centre for Cultural History, University of Aberdeen. p. 56. Kerr reference: Kerr, Clark. (1972). The uses of a university. With a 'Postscript-1972'. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Adventures in Trade Unionism

or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love UCU

Editor's Note

1. **Inter-Site Bus Service:** Although this service has improved/increased dramatically from its humble 'one minibus' origins way back in 1997, its ultimate mission remains the same, and that is to ensure the Students living at LSV have adequate transportation to get from their place of residence to the main Campus and back again.

Due to the small number but highly experienced drivers we have, it's been extremely difficult in allowing those individuals to have annual leave in term-time, and as such, require them to take much of their leave when the students 'break up'. It's due to this, as well as other workloads, that a service throughout the year is currently not an option.

We have however, commenced a weekend Bus Service trial which is presently underway between Langstone Student Village (LSV) and the main campus between the hours of 11 am to 5 pm Sat / Sun. This started on the 8th January 2011 and will run until the 3rd June 2011 and is already proving popular amongst the student body. However, once the trial is complete and all the data is collated, a decision will then be made on whether to try and continue the service on a more permanent basis.

2. **Staff discount on Bus fares:** You can buy an Annual ticket from Russ Reeves (Estates). This can either be a Portsmouth or Hampshire ticket. Ports £378 (£31.50 pm, normally £52) Hants £450 (£37.50 pm, normally £70) You just need two passport type pictures, your payroll number and five minutes of your time.

3. **Parking at Crasswell St (by Tesco):** For £3 per day. Tickets are available from Jane Sheldrake (Estates) for staff and students; we even have day tickets for visitors. No matter how long you stay put your card in the machine it automatically reduces to £3.

4. **Parking Permits:** At present all staff (no matter where you live) are entitled to have a parking permit upon request and payment.

Comment

Exclusion zones are possibly one way to go. Let's start with a mile and see how many fall into that net. Mobility Committee please note!

I'm not entirely sure how my adventures in Trade Unionism began, but I suspect a forensic scientist would trace their origin to the startling realisation that David Cameron really did mean his 'idea' of the Big Society to be taken seriously. I'd assumed this notion of a smaller state where you do-it-yourself was something made up on the hoof during the General Election to make it seem like he really did have a 'Big Idea'; that he wasn't just attempting to dress up his sub-Blair act with something akin to a philosophy. It came as something of a shock, then, when I watched him walk into Downing Street and realised, as the weeks went by, that he actually meant us to take him at this word; that his intention was to shrink the state and the public sector that forms its civilising backbone.

My politics were forged early, in the industrial unrest of the 1970s, and I can remember vividly the circumstances. My mother was lighting candles during a power cut caused as a result of the miners' strike, and, in response to my whingeing, told me that all workers deserved a proper wage for their work. Two periods of unemployment for my dad made that first political lesson something that was felt in my guts and gave an existential basis to my politics. I grew up with an abiding feeling that there is something pernicious and sickening about the way capitalism deals with its workers and that you need a political outlet in the Labour Party to mitigate the excesses of the market.

As a result, I can bang on about politics with the best of them. But I've never been what you might call 'an activist'. I feel happier talking to friends who share my views about my politics. With people I don't know, I can always see things from their perspective and that can make for the kind of conversation where you are forever attempting to see the good in what someone says regardless of how bonkers it is. That's the failing of being an academic, I think, and even more so in my case as I lecture in philosophy.

But activism? The closest I come to it is delivering leaflets and occasionally sitting outside polling stations checking to see that the Labour vote is turning out.

But then came the Coalition and the excuse provided by the deficit for decimating public services. I'd always assumed – naively – that Labour had won the battle over good public services and the need for a state that supported its citizens and their aspirations. Good grief, even Cameron was committed to the same spending as Labour until very late in the day. I'm not going to pretend that everything the Labour government did was perfect by any means, but at least I felt that things were moving in the right direction. Now I do not feel that that is the case at all.

The upshot of this sudden realisation was that I knew I was going to have to do something or go slowly mad. And there is nothing very attractive about a middle aged woman banging her head against a wall, believe me. As a result, I'm increasingly finding myself attending political meetings and participating in demonstrations. On the back of this rush of activity I thought I really ought to become more involved with my trade union, although possibly I got rather more than I bargained for.

Before we go much further, I should say that my relationship with UCU has been, to say the least, semi-detached. To be completely honest, the emphasis in that statement should be on the 'detached' rather than the 'semi'. I can count on the fingers of two hands, where the thumbs have been lost in an industrial accident the number of branch meetings I have been to in a twenty-

year career. I have always been a member but – evidently – far from active.

My reasons for union membership are fundamentally romantic rather than practical. My granddad, a classic south London patriarch, survivor of the 1930s, and member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain, used to say that he had two pieces of advice for safe passage through life: "be good at your job and be a member of a union."

My less than passionate commitment to my union is partly due to the nature of the union itself. We are not affiliated to the Labour Party. We're a bit wimpy, to be honest, when looked at in the light of the history of the trade union movement. I also suspect that if analysed closely the membership would be revealed to consist largely of Lib Dems.

But, feeling inspired by my rush of activism, and with my granddad's ghost at my shoulder; it seemed a good plan to attend UCU's Women's Conference. A nice way into the union I thought, especially as I attended with one of my favourite friends in the whole world who has the same sense of the ridiculous as me and who is not averse to giggling at the excesses of the politically right-on.

In some ways it was, indeed, a good way in. Frances O'Grady, the Deputy General Secretary of the TUC kicked things off and was brilliant. She was exactly what I wanted a trade union leader to be like: lively, authentic, practical, and inspiring. Oh, and wearing a really nice shade of lipstick. My kind of activist. Sally Hunt turned out to be a similarly impressive woman.

I was invigorated by the experience and so, feeling I needed to grasp the nettle, I rang our Branch Secretary to find out who our Equality Officer was. The upshot of that conversation was that this article is being written by her.

So, exactly a week after my first real engagement with the union, I was taking part in a meeting of union and management.

Picture the scene.

A smoke filled room, sandwiches curling on a table next to half-drunk bottles of beer. Condensation rolls down the steamy windows, as union and management fight it out in hand-to-hand combat.

Back to reality.

A civilised conversation which revolved largely round issues of catering, car-parking, the state of toilet provision and new building works. Oh, and the really important matter of projected university finances in light of the Comprehensive Spending Review.

Not very exciting, then – although by the end of the meeting I'd somehow managed to move from being Equality Officer to being Union Rep for our School through some kind of osmotic process that I really don't quite understand.

As I come to terms with this turn of events I do, however, know one thing for sure: my granddad would be proud.



Beverley Clack

For her reflections on accidentally becoming an activist, see www.theaccidentallabouractivist.com

Threats to University of Portsmouth Access Programmes

The coalition government's Adult Education Funders, the Skills Funding Agency, as part of the cuts agenda, plans to axe hundreds of smaller Adult Education providers (that is, any centre funded for less than £1M a year). Likely victims of these cuts are the University of Portsmouth's renowned Access to HE programmes: Access to Art and Design and Access to Humanities and Social Science. These programmes may be withdrawn from this summer, despite Portsmouth University's strong commitment to them.

These programmes' roots in Portsmouth University go back to the merger of the University of Portsmouth with Portsmouth College of Art and Design in 1994. Over the years these courses have sent hundreds of local people to Portsmouth University and to universities as diverse as Warwick, UEA and Exeter.

Students have gone on to achieve degrees in Art and Design, Business, Social Work, Psychology, English, History, Law and Politics. They have literally provided a lifeline for people in a city that, while it has become highly aspirational in recent years, remains one of the most disadvantaged areas in the country.

Of course, the closing of two Access programmes that are above the national average in terms of retention and achievement, and therefore of the highest quality, would be an act of intellectual vandalism of the first order. This reveals in sharp relief the true agenda of the coalition government: far from its claims to wish to expand access to higher education for the disadvantaged, it aims to deny access to the poorest by removing key pathways to university.

Even more sinister, because these programmes offer routes to the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, areas deemed low priority for the coalition government, they are deemed expendable. Their prospective closing down confirms further the urgency of the fight against the cuts. The Adult Skills Agency's policy is nothing more/nothing less than an assault by the coalition government on the ordinary people of Portsmouth. We must fight the cuts.

Kevin White

Course Leader, Access to HE, SECS, University of Portsmouth.
UCU member.

If your management are imposing aggressive unannounced peer observation onto you or your colleagues lessons it is your right to say NO. Cut this sign out and place on your door.

NO to unannounced
lesson observations



- UCU oppose unannounced lesson observations.
- I am a UCU member. Please do not intrude unannounced into my lesson.
- Respect my students and my professionalism by arranging a time in advance.
- Unannounced lesson observations are intrusive and disruptive.
- They are not supportive, and cannot provide a true assessment of my teaching practice.

UCU
University and College Union

Recourse makes sense...

If you work in post-16 education, things have been very uncertain of late. HE and FE are facing unprecedented cuts, the government will increase tuition fees and the way that universities are funded. Better off graduates will have to pay more, education maintenance allowances will be abolished and lecturers, staff and students have taken to the streets in the biggest demonstrations this country have seen in some time... and that was just the last few months in 2010.

2011 looks set for much of the same as the various cuts and legislations are implemented. So who can you turn to in these uncertain times?

Recourse is the new name for the College and University Support Network (CUSN) and while we may have changed our name, one thing remains certain: Recourse is here to support "all" staff working in FE, HE and adult education.

Yet what can you do yourselves to successfully navigate these changes ahead? First you need to understand what types of change there are. Some change is easy. More often it can be difficult. Sometimes it can seem downright impossible.

Changes can be roughly grouped into five types:

1. Straightforward change, like changing your car or changing your hairstyle.
2. Changing something you already do and relearning a new way, like changing your golf swing.
3. Changing something that obviously needs changing but you either don't want to or you can't quite see how it could be done. This kind of change usually involves a habit - for instance, smoking. You know you shouldn't, but you can't seem to stop.
4. Changing something you absolutely, positively know you can't change. This kind of change is about beliefs.
5. Change that's imposed upon you and over which you appear to have no control.

The first three we grapple with every day of our lives. We change in little ways all the time. We may struggle a bit with this kind of change. We may never give up smoking but they are the kind of things of which we are conscious. We can choose relatively easily how we will deal with this kind of change. Yes, I may struggle over whether to change my hairstyle or not and I may get some comments for a few days, but it is unlikely that a change in hairstyle is going to fundamentally change my life. A lot of other things would have to happen alongside it.

It is the fourth and fifth types of change that can be the more difficult and therefore more challenging and confrontational. Both these types come right up against beliefs that we've created that underpin our whole lives.

The fourth type of change asks us to change a point of view and adopt a way of seeing the world that is at odds with the way we are used to seeing it. This experience can easily tap into our insecurity. We can develop a feeling of unsureness, a sense of not quite knowing what the right thing to do is. There is no longer a predictable, reliable pattern to follow.

The fifth type, imposed change, can often be very difficult. If we have no say in the matter we can feel like it is being done to us. We can feel cheated or hoodwinked. Often, even those who instigate it will disown this type of change: "We have no choice. The curriculum has changed and we must change with it."

This is the type of change that those in the education profession deal with on a regular basis: changes to curriculum, new qualifications, new ways of working to learn.

When change is imposed or brings us up against our beliefs we can easily feel disempowered by the experience.

Why is change so hard sometimes?

Humans have been described as 'pattern-making mechanisms'. In general, our systems are more comfortable with pattern and routine than with change. Once a pattern is established, our left-brains will quite happily keep marching along that path.

Most patterns get set very quickly. Think what resistance we therefore have when we try to change patterns that have been part of lives for years.

Some patterns are as simple and straightforward as the route we take into work every day. Some patterns are as complex as the way we feel about ourselves.

For instance, the fourth type of change: something I don't believe can change. A limiting belief.

Restricting or limiting patterns that people have are often to do with low self-esteem. These can be the hardest patterns to break. The reason is that a belief system, the pattern, is stronger than the contradictory evidence because it has been around longer.

If, as I'm growing up, I hear over and over again what's wrong with me and what I need to do to in order to improve myself, then I will have a well entrenched belief system established. Even when I no longer have other people to reinforce it, the pattern will persist. Now they are gone I speak to myself with that same punitive voice. So even in the face of evidence that I have done a job well, there will be this voice telling me how it could have done better.

For me to change that voice I first have to become conscious that it's there. "Oh look, I just told myself off again." Then I have to do a good deal of what you might call reprogramming. I have to talk to myself or with other people about how well I've done. I have to create an opposing voice of acknowledgement and praise to counterbalance the punitive voice.

Paradoxically, people can find it easier to deal with imposed change. The trick is overcoming negativity such as saying: "I don't want to", "It's not fair" or "Why me?"

Our dissatisfaction and helplessness about this type of change comes about because we didn't buy into the agreement or because we were never consulted.

The only way through this type of change is through negotiation with yourself and other people affected. Relief from both the stress and upset caused by imposed change comes about when people choose to accept and commit to the change, to stop fighting or cease feeling resentful. If this doesn't happen then people often choose radical reactions such as leaving, moving away or divorce.

Change is inevitable and mostly change is for the good. No one lives a life free of change, but sometimes we are afflicted by more change or demands for change than we can manage. When this happens it helps to look at what change is going to get your attention and effort.

Look for the smallest change that will achieve what is needed and be wary of wholesale change and change for change's sake.

Look also at the fourth type of change, yours and other people's beliefs or ways of seeing things. Changing in this area may be harder work but the end result of people changing their attitude to something can be dramatic.

Luckily, some things don't change. So when everything seems to be changing, remember Recourse will continue to provide information, advice, counselling and support through our Support Lines, online support, emails, InfoCentre, grants, regular e-newsletters, discussion forums, twitter feeds, research and supporter newsletters.

For more information, go to our website: www.recourse.org.uk or if you would like to talk to someone in confidence call our Support Line free on 0808 802 03 04.

This article was adapted from our InfoCentre factsheet: How do you deal with change?

Recourse

Supporting Education Professionals

Services

- **24/7 Support Line** staffed around the clock, every day of the year.
- **Online support** where an experienced coach will provide you with the email support you need.
- **Web-based InfoCentre**, giving you access to hundreds of factsheets on a wide range of issues, to support you at work and at home.
- **Financial support** if you are having trouble making ends meet, our trained advisors are here to provide practical advice, let you know if you are entitled to any benefits, advise on dealing with debt and also offer grants in certain circumstances.
- **Online self assessment tools** to help you focus on areas in your home and work life you may want to improve, for example work-life balance and wellbeing.
- **E-newsletter** provides updates on our work, as well as information and ideas to boost your health and wellbeing.

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advice • support • counselling • coaching

Contact us either online or via our free Support Line.

www.recourse.org.uk

0808 802 03 04

Recourse is the working name for College and University Support Network (CUSN) and is part of the Teacher Support Network group.
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CENTRE FOR RIDICULOUS, UNFATHOMABLE AND DERANGED IDEAS (CRUDI)

This week, The Heckler interviews Professor Trevor Osser, Head of CRUDI at Bogsville People's University about his award winning Diploma in Learning and Teaching (or is it Teaching and Learning) in Higher Education.

The Heckler: Hello, Prof. Osser and thank you for agreeing to this interview.

Prof Osser: Not at all

H: You have won a prestigious award recently from the Academy of Academic Excellence

O: Well I'd like to say that all of us have won the award in this unit, not just me.

H: So it's not just you then? How many of you are there in CRUDI?

O: Well, let me think. Ten if we don't include my brother-in-law

H: Your brother-in-law? It must be quite a coincidence to have brother-in-laws in the same specialist area of higher education

O: Well it would be. It's just that he's had a bit of a chequered employment history and my wife gave me a bit of grief until I employed him.

H: So what was his previous job, then?

O: I think he drove JCBs; at least I think that was his last job. But he's fitted in very well since he's been here

H: (clears throat) Yes. Well, can we move on to the substance of your course? I think it's fair to say that some of your methods have caused a degree of consternation amongst the academics at Bogsville

O: Well, some of these people are set in their ways but we have to demonstrate that there are better ways of teaching than just standing up-front and spouting off for an hour or two.

H: Yes. I can see this from your literature. Let's take an instance. What's this all about? 'This module encourages interpersonal team working linkages and personal trust frameworks. Participants choose a partner and send them a message by way of a paper aeroplane across the room. This information is disseminated onto a poster which is pinned up for verification by the sender'

O: Indeed

H: Well, what's that supposed to do, then?

O: Look, the trouble with academic staff is that they all just go off and do their own thing and, as a result of this, do not reach their full potential.

H: So do you think making paper aeroplanes does help them achieve their full potential, then?

O: Now you're just being facetious. This module simply encourages participants to think in coherent teams and communicate a coherent message; paper aeroplanes are simply the vehicle for delivery of these objectives.

H: I see. Well here's another one that caught my attention. 'In this module, each participant stands on top of the science block roof sending messages by way signals from bee-smoking device while their co-participant stand in the car park below with a morse code booklet in order to write down the gist of the lecture being given.' A bee-smoking device?

O: You seem puzzled? You know, one of those things that make the bees a bit more docile. (laughs) We're hoping it might have a similar effect on the students!

H: Yes, I know what a bee-smoking device is for. What puzzles me is why don't you just give the lecture in a lecture theatre?

O: Yes, but here you are again just showing your out-dated and pre-conceived views of what constitutes an effective teaching environment. The point of this module is to explore alternative and innovative ways of imparting information to students.

H: Well I have to agree with you; it certainly does that.

O: I think I detect that we're not being very positive here, are we?

H: Well, I'm not but let's move on to the assessment. You say that participants need to submit a portfolio of work that they have undertaken on the course and assess it themselves. Forgive me if I ask you, how many actually fail the course then?

O: There you go again, talking about antediluvian ideas like failing.

H: Ok, but how many actually fail?

O: Well, not many

H: How many?

O: Well, to the best of my knowledge.....none.

H: Prof. Osser. I have to put it to you that, when front-line teaching is being hacked to the bone, this course of yours is a complete waste of taxpayers' money.

O: Thanks to the Coalition, not for much longer, surely?

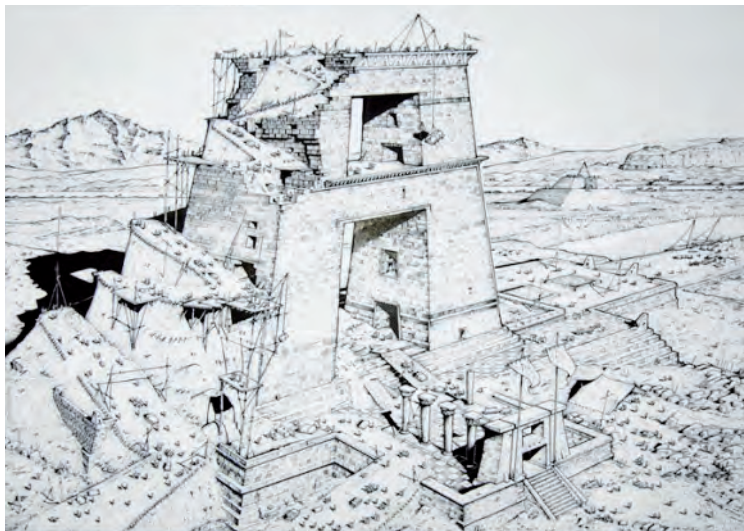
H: So what is the point of communicating by smoke signals and paper aeroplanes?

O: Well, don't you know? Bogsville is selling off most of its teaching blocks to make way for a new branch of Lidl. How else are we going to teach the little sods when we've got no lecture rooms left?

H: Very enlightening. Thank you, Prof. Osser

Dyslexia

Jon Adams is artist and lead geologist to accentuate's 'Look About' project
<http://www.disabilityartsonline.org/Jon-Adams>



A letter of the alphabet by Jon Adams
Black line drawing of a capital 'A' depicted as a building in construction

Interviews

Here I am at 49
No one wants me now
I either have too little or too much
Or maybe I'm too fat
No one tells me the truth anymore
They just knock you flat
We will let you know
We have more to interview
Why can't they say 'it's really not you'
Not make you wait, and hope, and stew.

Why I go to Interviews

I need a job
So I try and try
More Forms
More Interviews
My Oh My
Is that all you've got
Twenty years experience
Isn't enough to work here

Form Filling

Fill in the forms
Make sure they are right
Write all the names
And put who has frights
What education, did you go to school?
Only Elementary – Oh Dear,
This one's a fool

Bernadette Francis Burke

1979



Louise Allen

Equality conference

Subject heading: Involving employees from minority groups
Content: Making the involvement of employees from minority groups meaningful
Date and time: Monday 18th April 2011, University of Portsmouth, 9.30 – 16.00
Cost: £70 per delegate

At a time of economic challenge and legislative change an organisation's employees remain its most valuable resource. This one-day conference at the University of Portsmouth will give delegates an opportunity to look at how we can ensure the involvement of employees from minority groups to make a difference to both the organisation and the individual.

Speakers include:

Gary Loke, Head of Policy at the Equality Challenge Unit

The role of the Equality Act 2011 in employee involvement

Callum Ross from retail giant B&Q

Using employees from minority groups to improve customer service

Alexandra Muir-Mackenzie, Equality and Diversity Adviser, University of Portsmouth

The experience of involving staff from minority groups at the University of Portsmouth

David Filmer, Chair of the Disabled Staff Forum, University of Portsmouth

Staff support networks

Workshops will include:

Employee involvement in equality impact assessment

Employee support networks

Improving employment practice and the customer experience

Improving the student experience

For further details contact: equalityconference@port.ac.uk

To secure your place today visit: www.port.ac.uk/equalityconference

Workplace bullying costs this country 14 billion pounds in just one year.*



It costs nothing to treat people with dignity and respect.

* The Costs of Workplace Bullying

Sabir I. Giga, University of Bradford
Helge Hoel, University of Manchester
Duncan Lewis, University of Glamorgan

Research Commissioned by the Dignity at Work Partnership:
A Partnership Project Funded Jointly by Unite the Union and the
Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform.

May 2008

Louise Allen

People behaving decently

I was asked to write this short piece in order to put forward some positive ideas that might help us all to work more happily with each other.

As a harassment advisor I see both staff and students. From my experience so far, plus the training we were all given, many complaints about bullying and harassment could be avoided if only people could take a little time and effort to communicate more effectively, and in good time. There are serious cases, plus times when an outside agency needs to be used, but I am not covering these here.

There are times when we are feeling a bit sensitive, not quite well or stressed, and these can change the way we usually behave and the way we perceive others behaving. I am a very sensitive person, which is great for my job as an ASK (academic skills) lecturer, but it means I can take things the wrong way, or feel hurt or threatened when there is no malevolent intention by the other person/people. Other people do not deal with stress very well and this can make them touchy and aggressive. All of these factors can affect communication. We may not be able to recognize how we are behaving or reacting at the

time, so one thing we can do is to ask other people we trust for advice.

It is always a good idea to talk to anyone directly when there are communication and/or behaviour difficulties. A series of emails can escalate any situation that has not started off well. The way we use and interpret language is very subjective, so even a well meaning or completely neutral email can come across as being negative at the wrong time. At least with face-to-face conversation you can observe people's body language and use a friendly tone of voice. You can also ask people to clarify what they mean. Sometimes people have no idea they are coming across as offensive, threatening or bullying and they are genuinely shocked when someone points this out. It is important, therefore, to remain calm and open to solving difficulties. Yes, this does take time, and we might try to give the excuse we have no time to spare. However, a little time taken early on saves time. Happy people are healthier, more creative and more productive. They also treat others well.

There are some very simple and pleasant things we can all do to create a happy and therefore productive working environment. Saying 'Good

morning' with a smile is easy and very effective, and taking even a few minutes to ask how someone is feeling, or how their partner/child/friend is makes a huge difference to their well-being and ours. It does not cost anything to us personally to be pleasant to our colleagues, yet we all gain respect, happiness, well-being and a positive working environment where people cooperate when we are. Another easy but often welcome thing to do is to ask a colleague if they need or want a drink (not gin and tonic!). Sometimes people do not look after themselves properly when they are too involved in getting tasks done, which can lead to dehydration, headaches and fatigue. Your offer could remind them to take a break for a few minutes. Sometimes I ask a colleague if they want to pop over to Cafe Coco, which makes us both take a break. At others I make some tea and maybe spend a few minutes having a chat. The break gives rest and mental space, and helps the cohesion of the team.

Alida Bedford

UCU member

THINK

THINK

The creative arts are increasingly important to national and international economies but creeping vocationalism could damage these disciplines.

The danger is that you turn out technicians when the success of the arts derives from educating people to think conceptually and to challenge accepted norms.

SIR MICHAEL BICHARD

Rector of the University of the Arts, London



The artist must deepen the mystery.

FRANCIS BACON

Soyez Mysterieuses (be mysterious).

PAUL GAUGUIN

UNITED WE STAND DIVIDED WE FALL



This is not a good time to
NOT be in your Union.

Join now

UNISON

<http://www.unison.org.uk/join/index.asp>

UCU

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/join>

Union benefits

Over the last three hundred years, many trade unions have developed into a number of forms, influenced by differing political objectives. Activities of trade unions vary, but may include:

Provision of benefits to members: Early trade unions, like Friendly Societies, often provided a range of benefits to insure members against unemployment, ill health, old age and funeral expenses. In many developed countries, these functions have been assumed by the state; however, the provision of professional training, legal advice and representation for members is still an important benefit of trade union membership.

Collective bargaining: Where trade unions are able to operate openly and are recognized by employers, they may negotiate with employers over wages and working conditions.

Political activity: Trade unions may promote legislation favorable to the interests of their members or workers as a whole. To this end they may pursue campaigns, undertake lobbying, or financially support individual candidates or parties for public office.

If you would like to receive *The Heckler* in your workplace please contact louise.allen@port.ac.uk

ESOL (English Speakers of other languages) is being CUT

The government is advocating that all immigrants learn to speak English to ensure that they are able to integrate into British society. Please reconsider the proposal to discontinue support for ESOL, which will work against the governments stated aim to support the integration of immigrants.

If you disagree with the governments ESOL cuts, sign the national petition at <http://www.gopetitions/defend-esol/sign.html>

The Collective

UCU

Unison

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