



University and College Union
WARWICK

CUT BACKS, FIGHT BACK!

British universities are facing unprecedented cuts in funding. Whilst vice-chancellors stay silent, university staff and students are fighting the cuts and the rise in tuition fees. Locally and nationally the UCU and the NUS are working together. Warwick staff joined the 300 Warwick students who marched in London on 10 November; other staff gave financial support. Staff and students marched together at Warwick on 24 November and staff also participated in the teach-in at Warwick on 30 November.



The Committee of Warwick UCU wrote to the Vice-Chancellor in support of the students, to make clear the Committee's opposition to the cuts and the rise in tuition fees, and to ask him to declare his opposition to them. The Registrar replied that 'The University understands the concerns of students and staff about the reduction of funding and the Government's proposals for increased fees.' We do not believe that this response is sufficient.

The cuts will be discussed at a general meeting of Warwick UCU at 12.00 this Wednesday in Room R1.13 in the Ramphal Building. On Thursday the House of Commons will vote on tuition fees and there will be a mass rally on Victoria Embankment starting at 3.00. Please get involved!

DEFENDING YOUR PENSION

Both Cambridge and Oxford have decided to hold consultative ballots on the proposed changes to USS pensions. We think Warwick should do likewise.

Many thanks to all of you who signed the petition asking for a special meeting of the University

Assembly to debate the changes and to call for a ballot. We easily exceeded the 25 signatures necessary to request the meeting.

We are asking Assembly to consider the following motion:

The Assembly notes that the University as an employer has a statutory obligation to consult

affected employees on the changes that have been proposed to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS). Believing that consultation, if it is to be meaningful, must seek the views of those consulted when the latter have been provided with all the information necessary for them to make an informed response, the Assembly requests that the University will:

Defending your pension (cont.)

1. publish to all affected employees the alternative proposals for changes to USS put forward by the Employers Pension Forum and by UCU, together with supporting arguments for each, recognising that independent actuarial advice recognises that both proposals adequately deal with USS Fund sustainability;

2. conduct a consultative ballot, without recommendation, on those alternative proposals;

3. publish the result of the ballot to scheme members within the University;

4. send the ballot result to USS as the principal local response to the statutory consultation exercise; and

5. ensure all members of USS are able to engage in the process and that their comments are fully reflected in the institution's response to USS and that the University response is entirely consistent with the result of such a ballot

We hope that as many of you as possible will attend the meeting of Assembly.

There will also be a discussion of the UCU's decision to ballot on pay and pensions at the general meeting of Warwick UCU at 12.00 this Wednesday in Room R1.13 in the Ramphal Building.

'REFRESHING' THE STRATEGY

Management at Warwick has published a draft of the 'refreshed' University Strategy and has invited comments to be submitted to them by 20 December. We would also like to know your views. Please email them to warwickucu@gmail.com

We have numerous concerns about the aims of the strategy and how those aims would be achieved. These include:

What models of private ownership of the University are being investigated?

What is meant by seeking out opportunities to develop or acquire successful teaching and research operations elsewhere in the UK and overseas?

From where will support and resources be re-oriented to respond to 'grand challenges' confronting the world?

How will the number of postgraduate students be doubled in the light of increases in tuition fees, the reduction in grants for postgraduates, and the tightening of visa controls?

What will be the impact of increased postgraduate involvement in undergraduate teaching?

Given the issues above and the increases in workload and stress, how will Warwick recruit and retain the best staff?

THE PROBLEMS OF STRESS

As the pressures increase on university staff, Warwick UCU made a Freedom of Information request to Management for statistics relating to sick leave taken for work-related stress and/or stress during the past five years.

The key figures demonstrate that the number of sick days and the number of individuals taking time off work with stress have increased over the past five years and significantly over the past year when 2686 days were lost.

The UCU is concerned that Senior Management is not engaging adequately with staff to determine the reasons behind so many days lost and the personal effect that this is having on an increasing number of people, not only those who are sick but also their colleagues who have to cover for them. We will raise our concerns with Management and let you know their response.

THANK YOU

We would like to thank all the members who responded to our questionnaires about probation and about the REF. You have provided us with invaluable information which we are analysing and which we will raise with Management. We will let you know how they respond.