



CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY BRANCH NEWSLETTER February 2011

Pay and Conditions

At the branch meeting on 7 February 2011, Tony Britton, Joint Negotiating Committee for Higher Education Staff (JNCHES) negotiator, outlined the reasons why it was felt Unite had to accept the national pay offer. These included that Unison had accepted the offer, there was a low turnout for the pay ballot from members with little enthusiasm for action in support of a higher claim. He detailed some of the difficulties of being one of 5 unions involved in negotiating and hoped that members might be more inclined to take part in any future ballot over pay.

N B In answer to a question from the floor as to why Cambridge University Press (CUP) had a 2% pay offer while University staff were only offered 0.4%, this is because CUP is involved in local bargaining and the university in national bargaining.

Voluntary Severance Scheme

Staff will have received letters from the University inviting them to apply for voluntary severance. An incentive is the possibility of up to a year's salary for those leaving up to 30 September 2011. Members have until 28 February to register their interest. We understand that in the first week there were 340 applications of which 125 were from Assistant staff.

Cuts are not the cure

The TUC National Rally and March through London on Saturday 26 March is not only against the damaging cuts that have been imposed but is a march to highlight the alternatives of jobs, growth and justice. The TUC comprises 58 unions, representing nearly 6.5 million members.

Free transport is available for anyone wanting to attend. Members of the Cambridge University branch can sign up for free places for themselves, their families and supporters at the next branch meeting on Monday 7 March or contact Sara Bennett to book a place.

Pensions

The University Joint Board Special Joint Negotiating Committee (SJNC) met on 13 January and again on 21 February to discuss the University's proposed changes to the CPS pension scheme. These changes are in addition to those which took effect for new entrants in December 2009.

Unite are trying to reduce the detrimental effects of the changes.

A final meeting of the SJNC takes place on Monday 28 February. It is expected that the proposed changes will be shared with CPS members as part of the formal consultation period during April

Reps and activists meeting

A joint meeting of representatives and activists from all trades unions represented in the Universities of Cambridge and Anglia Ruskin took place on Tuesday 1 February. This was the first in a series of meetings where Unite members come together with colleagues from Unison and UCU. The aim is to present a united front to the University over its proposed cuts, redundancies and re-organisations planned for this year and the future. A broader aim is generate greater awareness of how the widespread government cuts will affect everyone.

There was a large turn-out at the meeting demonstrating how important members feel it is that we work together for common goals and defend our communities against the proposed swingeing cuts.

National Executive election

Sara Bennett and Will Smith have both been successfully nominated for NEC elections.

Planning and Resources Committee Working Group (PRC) :

Adam Booth reported at the last Branch meeting on 7 February on a University paper which recommends outsourcing of essential University and service departments which could result in redundancies.

In a joint initiative with other local unions against cuts posters will be distributed to members for display where possible throughout the university.

A motion was passed in response to the PRC proposals to send a letter expressing deep concern and calling on the university for openness in its financial decision making and budgetary allocations

Cuts in Cambridgeshire

Cuts to the arts in Cambridge: Cambridge City Council recently announced a £350,000 in funding to the Corn Exchange

One campaigner said "This cut in arts funding in Cambridge is coming on top of Huntingdonshire reducing its arts budget to zero, East Cambs cutting back it's arts budget massively, and also cuts in the South Cambs council arts budget....an act of cultural vandalism...."

Lion Yard loos to relocate: plans to move the city's most well used public conveniences to a smaller first storey location have been approved by the City Council. The relocation will cause particular difficulties for the disabled and those with babies and small children. Over 10,000 people have signed a petition against the relocation. At the Cambridge City Council meeting on 17 February it was agreed to defer the relocation while an Equalities Impact Assessment was made: three people spoke against the closure including a local Unite branch member.

Cuts in recycling: East Cambs council will withdraw kerbside collections from 26 March 2011.

Cambridgeshire County Council cuts: as widely reported, the council is going to implement savings of £160 million over the next five years and will be making up to 450 people redundant this year. Protesters from Cambridgeshire Against the Cuts demonstrated outside Shire Hall and lobbied councillors

Cambridgeshire cuts quote: Abby Newton, a youth worker volunteer said: "The government gave £1.3 trillion of tax payers' money to guarantee private city firms, while the young carers and the children with learning difficulties I work with are left with barely any support. The organisation I volunteer for is losing 100% funding; the so called 'big society' is due to fall apart."

Cambridge 'planning to raise fees to £9,000'

Cambridge University is considering plans to charge tuition fees of £9,000. Proposals from its working group show the university has plans to set fees at the maximum level of £9,000 a year for every subject. Poorer students would be offered means-tested reductions of up to £3,000.

The university's students' union has warned that raising fees must not put off poorer applicants.

The proposals have been submitted to the university's council for a final decision with a strong recommendation that a single flat-rate should be charged for all courses and colleges from 2012.

It comes after MPs backed plans to raise university fees to a maximum of £9,000, with a lower limit of £6,000. Before the vote ministers claimed the upper limit would only be applied in "exceptional circumstances". But the report from the Cambridge working group says it expects "most if not all our peers" to charge the maximum fee.

Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-12392734>

NB: In October 2010 the *FT* noted that Cambridge University was by far Britain's richest university

Note: Two-thirds of Cameron's government have had a private education compared with 7% of the wider public.

Imperial College announces fees of £9,000

Imperial College London has become the first university in England to formally announce that it wants to charge the maximum level of £9,000 in tuition fees for all subjects from 2012.

Protest over Glasgow University course cuts

More than 2,000 attended a protest march at Glasgow University on 16 February over plans to cut or merge courses. The rally was held before the university court approved a consultation on proposed cuts designed to save £20m over the next three years. Critics accused university management of trying to reshape the institution into a smaller money-making enterprise at the expense of academic quality
Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-12467789>

UK unemployment rises again

UK unemployment rose by 44,000 to almost 2.5 million in the three months to the end of December, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) has said.

Youth unemployment rose to a record high, with more than one in five 16 to 24-year-olds out of work after a rise of 66,000 to 965,000. Andrew Cave, from the Federation of Small Businesses, said the future looked gloomy for the young unemployed. While the unemployment rate is now 7.9%, youth unemployment is running at 20.5%.

Most analysts still expect unemployment to rise in the coming months, largely because of public sector spending cuts implemented by the government, which are designed to bring down the UK's budget deficit.

Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-12477563>

MPs asked to vote against 1% pay increase

The government is asking MPs to give up the 1% pay rise that has been recommended for them next year in the light of the imposition of a two year pay freeze for public sector workers earning more than £21,000.

The 1% rise was approved by the independent Senior Salaries Review Body (SSRB). MPs are currently paid a salary of £65,738 after receiving a 1.5% rise last year - a particularly controversial move as it came in the aftermath of the scandal over parliamentary expenses: they received then an almost £1,000 increase .

The coalition announced the two-year pay freeze for workers earning more than £21,000 in June's Budget. The move will affect 1.7 million workers when it comes into force in April.

Note: Of the 29 ministers attending David Cameron's first cabinet meeting. 23 have assets and investments estimated to be over £1 million.

No pay rise for council workers in England, Wales and Northern Ireland this year. Unions had been calling for a pay increase of at least £250 a year for all salary grades from 1 April. The ruling applies to 1.4 million workers. Teachers and firefighters are covered by separate pay arrangements.

UK inflation rate rises

The UK *Consumer Prices Index* (CPI) annual inflation rate rose to 4% in January, up from 3.7% in December, as the effects of the VAT rise were felt. Higher oil prices also meant inflation remained well above the 2% target.

Retail Prices Index (RPI) inflation, which includes mortgage interest payments rose to 5.1% from 4.8%.

The CPI figure is the highest since November 2008, and will put pressure on the Bank of England to lift interest rates to curb accelerating inflation. The CPI measure has now been one percentage point or more above target for 14 months.

Bank of England governor Mervyn King has written to the government saying that inflation is likely to rise towards 5% in the coming months.

Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-12462901>

Fuel prices have increased at their fastest annual rate since July, while the cost of food showed its biggest annual rise since May 2009. Prices are up 15% compared with this time last year.

Of the price you pay at the pump for petrol, the government takes 62% in duty.

The Office for National Statistics has said the biggest drivers of inflation were air transport, fuel, utility bills and food costs.

EDF Energy will increase gas prices by 6.5% and electricity prices by 7.5% from 2 March. The company is the last of the "big six" energy firms to increase prices. Energy regulator Ofgem is currently investigating the prices charged to domestic customers.

BA announced further fuel surcharges on flights wef 8 February as follows: £12 per flight per person in World Traveller and World Traveller Plus; £17 per flight per person in First and Club World

Suffolk County Council plan to make 1500 job cuts and outsource council services

Norfolk County Council plans 3,000 job cuts. They said it was hoped more than half of the 3,000 people affected would switch to similar jobs with private firms as services currently run by the council were farmed out. Source: *Independent*

Essex County Council to cut 450 jobs: more than 450 new redundancies have now been announced at Essex County Council. The council's cabinet met to agree the budget for 2011/12 and its proposals will now go to full council for a final decision later this month

Cuts: their impact

Price Waterhouse estimate that 500,00 public sector jobs will go with government spending cuts

Economy contracts: the UK's economy suffered a shock contraction in the last three months of 2010 shrinking by 0.5% in the October-to-December period, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said.

The severe weather hit activity in this quarter, but the ONS said that even with this excluded, activity would have been "flattish". The figures raise concerns over prospects for the economy, with large public spending cuts expected this year. But Chancellor George Osborne said the government would not change its austerity programme.

Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-12272717>:

Pfizer closes UK research site: Pharmaceuticals group Pfizer is to close its research and development (R&D) facility in Kent, which employs 2,400 people. The company said the majority of people would be made redundant over the next two years though it hopes to transfer several hundred positions to other sites. Business Secretary Vince Cable called the decision "extremely disappointing". Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-12335801>

Birmingham City Council 'to shed 7,000 jobs' in a bid to save £300m. The jobs will go over the next 3 – 4 years with 2,450 in the next financial year as 71% of the savings target must be met in the 12 months from April 2011. Birmingham is the UK's largest local authority and Unison described the job losses as 'devastating' not just for those losing their jobs but for the people of Birmingham
Source: *BBC News Front page 11 February*

Sharp rise in job losses: redundancies are set to rise sharply in the next few months as public sector cuts bite, a survey by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development has suggested: Four out of 10 organisations planned redundancies in the first quarter of this year, the survey discovered including one-third of NHS employers, half of central government and three-quarters in local government. The organisations affected typically proposed to cut around one in 10 employees, increasing to one in eight in the public sector.

Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-12445050>

'Save buses' campaign is launched to save subsidised bus routes after it was found more than two-thirds of councils planned to cut services. According to the Campaign for Better Transport, who launched the campaign, some councils intend to end all subsidised services. The Local Government Association has also warned many bus routes would disappear as a result of government cutbacks.
Source: *BBC News*: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-12349621>

Day of protests over library cuts: on Saturday 5 February protesters held "read-ins" at libraries across the UK to campaign against planned branch closures. At one library in south London the event turned into an all-night sit-in involving about 35 protesters. Some councils have said keeping libraries open would put services for vulnerable and elderly people at risk. More than 450 libraries and mobile services across the country are currently threatened with closure. Source: *BBC News Front Page*

Sell-off of forests: government U-turn

Controversial plans to sell off thousands of acres of state owned woodland in England have been scrapped when the government announced that the current consultation would be halted. There has been public outcry with 0.5m signatures to a petition and accusations of 'environmental vandalism' over the proposals, which would threaten public access and biodiversity, Over the next four years however the government can still sell up to 15% of England's woodlands. Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-12488847>

Liverpool withdraws from 'big society' pilot:

the leader of Liverpool City Council has written to the Prime Minister withdrawing its involvement from his "big society" plans. The city was one of four pilot areas for the scheme, aimed at giving community groups and volunteers more control over their local services, but council Leader Joe Anderson said government cuts have threatened the future of many local volunteer groups and he has told David Cameron he can no longer support the initiative. Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-12357450>

Manchester City Council's £109m savings

cuts: leisure centres, libraries and public toilets will close as part of Manchester City's plan to make nearly £110m of savings in the next financial year. The Council also confirmed 2,000 job losses. Council leader Sir Richard Leese said the cuts process was 'unpalatable'. Source: *BBC News Front Page*

Police to lose '10,000 officers by 2013':

Shadow home secretary Yvette Cooper said "cutting so fast and deep" was "irresponsible" and "crazy". The coalition's Spending Review set police budget cuts at 20% by 2014-15. The Police Federation, which represents police officers, said numbers will fall back to the level of the 1970s. Chairman Paul McKeever said "... I'm one of the very few police officers old enough to remember what it was like back in the 1970s. We really were in meltdown then, it was very bad news indeed. We've improved enormously over the last 30 years, through increased funding and the resources we've had, and we're going to lose an awful lot of that." Source: *BBC News* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-12375310>

Cambridge University Press

The pay offer of 2% plus Christmas Eve as an additional day's leave has gone to a full paper ballot. Management deemed the outcome of the previous ballot as unrepresentative since it was conducted hurriedly (at their insistence) and so near to the Christmas break.

Branch News

Simon Dowe from Chemistry has been appointed as a representative on the University and Assistants Joint Board to replace John Baldwin who recently retired. The last meeting of the UAJB was on Tuesday 8 February 2011.

Unite stages rally against youth service cuts

A campaign by the Unite union against "catastrophic" cuts in youth services was launched with a rally in Solihull on Saturday 12 February. It comes as Unite warned that one in four youth services in England faced spending cuts of up to 30%. Some councils, such as Norfolk, Suffolk, Bucks and Manchester, planned to cut the services completely.

Young people from across the country took part including a 12-year-old from Prime Minister David Cameron's Witney constituency, who said he attended a youth club which was threatened due to the proposed cuts. Nicky Wishart said: "I use it three times a week, which is a lot in a five-day working week. If it's closed I won't do anything - sit indoors, or hang around on the streets. I also use the local library which is also threatened with closure. I've got two younger brothers, one was born last Friday and one who is three, and both of them are never going to have a chance to know what a youth club is like."

Doug Nicholls, Unite's officer for youth workers, said: "The people here represent hundreds of thousands. This issue of youth services represents more people probably than students' fees and the EMA. There are many life-changing stories, not just crisis intervention but people whose attitudes and behaviour and understanding of the world has been transformed by youth work."

The rally included a range of organisations as well as Unite, including Unison, the National Youth Agency and the British Youth Council.

Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-12438325>
For figures on youth unemployment see page 3

Regional News

At the Branch meeting on 7 February, Sara Bennett reported on the *Unite Anti Cuts conference* organised by the London & Eastern Region which she attended on 5 February. The event was extremely well attended with over 400 delegates packing into Conway Hall in London to hear speakers and discuss strategy against the cuts.

The Unite Regional Secretary, Steve Hart, will attend a meeting at MRC in Fulbourn on 22 February for anyone who would like to go along.

Steve Hart was present at the *Peoples Convention*, a conference which took place on Saturday 12 February in London

Cuts kill the countryside

In July last year the government announced it would scrap the Agricultural Wages Board (AWB) putting thousands of rural and agricultural workers' pay and conditions in jeopardy. The AWB has been in existence since the first world war and its abolition gives bad employers the opportunity to undercut existing national wage agreements. Unite is campaigning to stop its abolition as thousands of its members in Norfolk and Suffolk will be affected. They staged a protest on Wednesday 9 February in London which also included campaigners from similar organisations threatened by merger and privatisation such as British Waterways and the Construction Industry Training Board, a major employer in north west Norfolk.

Diary Dates

Wednesday 16 March

Open Meeting for all staff at 1.00 pm
Babbage Lecture Theatre, New Museums site

Find out about how the cuts will affect you
This is personal not political

Saturday 26 March

TUC National Day of Action

Assemble 11.00 am Victoria Embankment for march and rally in Hyde Park

See: www.tuc.org.uk/march

Join the campaign at: www.falseeconomy.org.uk

For transport to the rally see front page

National Officer for Education Sector:
Mike Robinson

London & Eastern Regional

Regional Officer: Ian Maidlow
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Regional Secretary: Steve Hart
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For national news and issues please visit
the *Unite the Union* website at:
<http://www.unitetheunion.com/>

More information and links

Information on the branch including details of working groups, branch structure and Minutes of monthly branch meetings can be found at:
www.amicus.cam.ac.uk

For national news and issues please visit the *Unite the Union* website at:
<http://www.unitetheunion.com/>

Branch Meetings

Branch meetings take place on the first Monday of the month (except when a Bank Holiday occurs) at 12.45 pm in the Bramwell Lounge, University Sports and Social Centre (USC)

UNITE Cambridge Website

The Unite / Amicus web pages are available at: <http://www.amicus.cam.ac.uk>
Website co-ordinator : Cathy Salkield. Items for inclusion please contact:
webmaster@amicus.cam.ac.uk

Use your website: copies of draft Minutes from monthly Branch meetings can be downloaded from the website and taken along to Branch meetings: this will help cut down on photocopying costs for the Branch.

Branch Newsletter

Please display a copies of Newsletter in your workplace. If you need additional copies please contact Will. Please pass copies of your Newsletter to colleagues who may not be union members to show them what Unite can do for them. Any items for inclusion in the Newsletter to Juliet Barrows at:
newsletter@amicus.cam.ac.uk

Branch Officials and Organisation: contact details

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