

EDUCATION NEWS IN BRIEF

Unions express anger at the installation CCTV surveillance in schools.

Following the news that a south London school has over 60 CCTV cameras on-site, workers and unions have continued to criticise schools adopting such measures. It has been claimed the surveillance system at Stockwell Park High School is to help avoid teacher and pupil disputes and prevent theft according to school managers, who intend to have over 100 in the school when refurbishment is complete. Staff and unions have expressed concern that the technology will be used to covertly monitor staff and pupils and have described it as "Big Brother-ish", with almost 30 of the cameras being inside classrooms. The NUT, NASUWT and ATL unions have all spoken out against the use of CCTV in schools as heavy-handed, unnecessary, surveillance and a waste of school resources.

Money for student teachers slashed

In another prediction from Issue 1 of The Leveller, bursaries for trainee-teachers in England are to come into line with other non-teaching students. Prior to the recession, student-teachers received between £6-9,000 as income during the intense PGCE year. For the first time in over a decade, recruitment for many shortage subjects was met last year, partly attributed to the many bankers and financiers, those implicated in the current 'credit crisis', jumping ship for the 'safer' teaching profession. The significant projected decrease in income for student teachers is likely to make teaching even more inaccessible to many working class graduates.

Student fees rise as bursaries and grants are frozen.

Bursaries for the poorest students will be capped at 10% of annual fees despite this not covering the gap between grants and fees. This means the poorest students will have to make up the remainder of their fees out of their own pocket. UCU's general secretary Sally Hunt said, "I cannot understand why a government that is looking so hard at social mobility has taken the decision to charge the poorest students more money to attend university." Currently, bursaries for the poorest students cover the gap between grants and tuition fees but by 2010-11 fees will be £3,290 and grants still £2,906, leaving a gap of £384. With bursaries capped at 10% this will leave a £55 remainder for students to pay. While the amount seems insignificant, it is indicative of the cuts being made across the education sector during the 'economic downturn'. Grants will also be frozen at 2009-10 levels despite the rise in fees. The government is discussing dropping fees for students who choose to live at home during their studies, furthering the pressure on working class students to stay at home and limiting their choice of university. Under such a scenario, top universities will remain as economically stratified as they always have been, with only the rich being able to move away for university, and that is before taking into account tuition fees.

Hands Off Lewisham Bridge



In the Lewisham case, while the upholding of the heritage status is a significant step toward parents getting what they wanted, many will not be content until their pupils are back being educated in their normal school. Currently, pupils are being bussed to the Mornington Centre in New Cross, which is a significant inconvenience for most Lewisham parents, and a number of safety concerns have been raised concerning this busing of coach-loads of children every morning, including the fact that the buses had been involved in two accidents.

A further demand reiterated in the communication to supporters of the 'Hands Off Lewisham Bridge!' campaign is:

the Council should not allow Leathersellers, a private unaccountable body to run our school and that instead it should remain a local community primary school open to all.

The Hands Off Lewisham Bridge campaign also sent out an encouraging message to workers and communities engaged in struggle:

The Lewisham Bridge victory sends a message to those in struggle from the campaign against the Goldsmiths Trust in Lewisham, parents fighting academies in Barrow in Furness, and the workers at Vestas who have occupied their factory to save 600 jobs, that direct action works. By taking such bold steps, we along with many others have shown that if we stand up and fight we can win. What we must do now is build on this victory and stand up together. This is a fight against privatisation and the selling off of public services; it's a fight against redundancies and the selling off of our jobs. It's a national fight and with our victory we send a message of solidarity to the workers in the Vestas occupation. Stand up and fight - do it together and we can win!

Choccy

Parents occupying Lewisham Bridge Primary School in south-east London are a step closer to keeping the school open after the English Heritage Grade 2 status of the school was upheld.

Supporters and parents of children have been encouraged by the news that Lewisham Bridge Primary School's status as a Grade 2 English Heritage site has been upheld. This means that the school cannot be knocked down and replaced, as had been intended.

Parents had originally occupied the school roof on April 23rd after Lewisham Council's decision to demolish the school and replace it with a new school run by a private company. As the protest went on, more parents and local supporters joined the occupation and solidarity was built with workers occupying the Visteon plants in Belfast, Basildon and Enfield. Links were also forged with parents occupying four primary schools in Glasgow in April that were being closed.

In a communication with supporters on the Visteon support list, which has become a source of information for a variety of struggles, including school

occupations and the ongoing Vestas dispute, Eleanor, a parent at the school stated:

Thursday 30th July Ben Bradshaw (Secretary of State at the Department of Culture Media and Sport) secretary called Hands Off Lewisham Bridge with a very important message; that the English Heritage Grade II listing awarded to Lewisham Bridge Primary School remains in place.

Some supporters and parents view this is a significant victory, while others are being cautious in their optimism, given the premature enthusiasm during the Visteon dispute - workers in Basildon and Enfield overwhelmingly voted for a deal that meant they would lose out on their pensions, while 2 days later, Belfast workers followed them in accepting the deal, but were considerably split over the vote. Many later expressed dismay at the deal they had voted for and felt betrayed by their union, Unite, which had declared it a great victory. Visteon workers have had to re-engage in a battle for their pensions, but had already abandoned their occupations.

University Workers Fear Over Jobs and Pay While Bosses get Huge Pay Rises

A survey by the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) has reported that 6,000 lecturing jobs are expected to be cut in universities, with employers citing the recession as the reason. A staggering 4,593 jobs cuts are expected in universities and 1,298 in colleges. One-third of those axed could be in London alone. In the first issue of The Leveller we reported that two-thirds of the UK's 150 Higher Education (HE) institutions were planning job cuts this year.

These job cuts are compounded by the announcement that university teaching is to have £65m slashed from its budget despite the governments plans for 10,000 new students a year to be recruited – more students, less money to teach them, and less staff.

However the UCU have suspended the ballot for industrial action over pay and job security until autumn. Following notification that 78 higher

education (HE) employers intend to use anti-trade union laws against UCU, the union has announced that it is suspending the ballot for industrial action that had be due this month. The union had sent ballot papers to members in May for strike action, after a failure of the University and College Employers Association (UCEA) to assure the unions that jobs in HE would be secured and over demands for a 8% pay-rise for all staff in HE.

The UCU and other unions in HE had already rejected a 'derisory' 0.3% pay offer, and later described a final offer of 0.5% as 'miserly'. This was all the more insulting given university senior managers and vice-chancellors had received average 5.5% and 9% pay rises in the last year respectively.

UCU are looking for a national agreement on the security of jobs in HE and in a communication to members, general secretary Sally Hunt said:

" I hope that the employers' put as much effort into seeking a negotiated solution to the unions' claims for a new national job-security agreement and for a fair approach on pay, as they have on seeking to undermine our internal processes. We will continue to work closely with our colleagues to pressure the employers to agree national principles to treat staff fairly; and to settle this year's pay award."

In the communication, Hunt also cited a software problem with the UCU member list which may have resulted in some members not receiving ballot papers.

Five HE unions have joined forces to launch a 'Defend Higher Education' campaign, and are expected to be distributing materials to university workers over the summer.

In the mean-time vice-chancellors, many earning more than the UK Prime-Minister, will continue with life on the pigs back. University and College Union (UCU) general secretary, Sally Hunt, said, "when staff are being warned pay increases may lead to job redundancies, it is quite incredible and rather distasteful that vice-chancellors have enjoyed such exorbitant pay rises."

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London Met Occupation

In May, London Metropolitan University (LMU) was occupied for 3 days as students from the university took over the institution's Commercial Road building in a protest against job cuts. LMU is London's biggest university and has a track record of providing higher education to many 'non-traditional' students.

The protests were sparked after LMU announced plans to sack 550 staff and possibly put more at risk. LMU was motivated by a massive bill of £35million incurred for misreporting student degree-completion numbers to the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE).

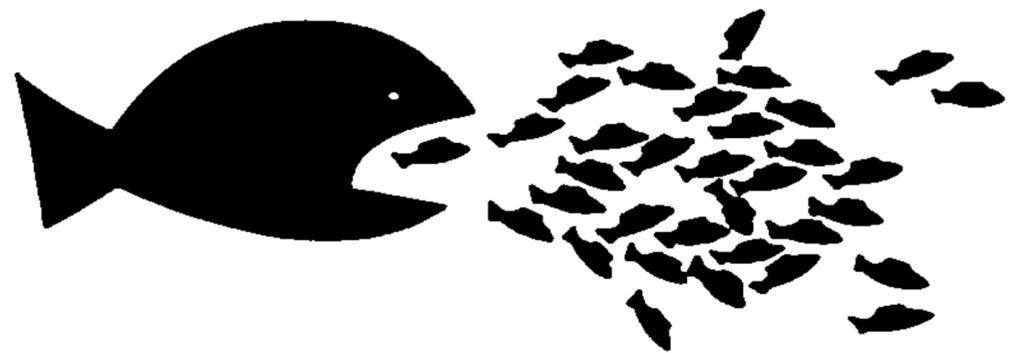
The occupation ended after 3 days, when LMU successfully obtained a court-order to evict the occupying protestors. Prior to the student occupation, staff had gone on strike over job-security.

New Education Workers Group in London

Education workers from around London have been meeting recently to discuss forming an education workers group to address issues facing workers across the sector. The preliminary meetings contained members of Solidarity Federation, Organise!, Anarchist Federation, IWW and Liberty & Solidarity. The intention however is to build a group for all education workers, regardless of group/union membership, or lack thereof, provided they agree with basic principles such as non-hierarchical collective decision-making, direct action, and collective solutions to individual problems. So far the group contains teachers, lab-technicians, librarians, and teaching assistants and will be open to worker in education including admin staff, catering, security and cleaning staff, but is obviously not managers.

The group aims to provide a forum for workers to discuss issues affecting them in the education sector, and to produce literature to distribute to workers across the industry to inform them of relevant issues and how we might organise to fight back, and also to criticise the nature of education under capitalism. The group also aims to carry out solidarity work with workers who are taking action to improve their lives in the education sector and beyond.

Against our bosses, landlords, politicians...



Solidarity is strength!

