

Defending jobs in South Wales

inbrief

TRADE UNIONISTS, community campaigners and young people from all over South Wales will descend upon Pontypridd on 19 January for a demonstration called by Unison. We will be protesting against cuts to public services and jobs in Wales, specifically those being made at Rhondda Cynon Taf (RCT) council, a Labour run authority.

Jamie Davis,
Vale of Glamorgan Unison,
personal capacity

Following on from a similar move at Labour controlled Neath Port Talbot council last year, the workforce were told their contracts were to be terminated, and that they would be given the option of signing new contracts with worsened terms and conditions.

After the joint trade unions formally registered a dispute, the

council announced they were not prepared to participate in mediation with the joint secretaries of the Welsh Local Government Association and the trade unions.

The Unison and GMB branches have subsequently initiated a ballot for industrial action.

At a question and answer session for Labour Party members last weekend, Ed Miliband's advice to council workers in RCT was: "Blame the Tory government" - little comfort when trying to pay the bills.

Labour councils willing to wield the axe of Con-Dem cuts against their workers and community must be made to understand that they will face the full might of not just the trade union movement, but all those whose lives will be devastated by the programme of destruction that they allow to happen.

• For demo details, see page 5.



Fighting for jobs at Newport passport office.

photo SP Wales

Rawmarsh teachers' action wins reprieve



On the Rawmarsh picket line.

photo the Socialist

AFTER NINE days of strike action taken over the last six weeks, National Union of Teachers (NUT) members at Rawmarsh Community School in Rotherham have won a reprieve in their fight against cuts and redundancies.

Alistair Tice

On 11 February, negotiations between the NUT, the school and the local authority resulted in the employer withdrawing the last remaining teacher redundancy which was to have been implemented this April. As a result NUT members at the school voted to temporarily suspend any further strike action for the remainder of this school term.

However if the school continues with the redundancies planned for August, NUT members will resume strike action after Easter,

at the start of the summer term. Ian Stevenson regional secretary for the NUT Yorkshire Midland region said: "Significant progress was made today by the NUT in ensuring that no teacher at Rawmarsh Community School is now to be made compulsory redundant in April.

"It remains the case however that a number of teachers' jobs remain at risk for September. The agreement reached today provides time for the employer to find a way to avoid further job cuts.

"NUT members at the school remain determined to continue the fight against these cuts. I have no doubt that if the school continues with its plans for redundancies in August then members will resume strike action after Easter."

A benefit gig is being held at the Star Inn, Rawmarsh, on Friday 18 February and the teachers will lead an anti-cuts march in Rotherham on Saturday 5 March.

No to Cutts!

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY council Unison is balloting for strike action against the Tory administration of councillor Kay Cutts. On 24 February Unison hopes to strike and will be organising a demonstration to the budget setting meeting at County Hall.

The council leader has the right name - £87 million of cuts are planned for this coming year and £154 million over three years. The council is prepared to spend £60 million to make 3,500 workers redundant!

Against these attacks Notts Unison has fought a long hard battle. It has conducted a twelve week work to rule, three indicative ballots and is now in its second formal ballot for

action. Scores of workplace meetings have taken place.

Greater support is now being offered to the branch from Unison regionally and nationally. But this has only been after a lot of pressure was exerted.

Some members feel isolated and can't see how to overcome the council's butchery of jobs and services. This can be overcome by Unison linking all local government struggles together: to use our collective strength in wide-scale coordinated industrial action.

Assemble 11am Trent Bridge embankment 24 February. For free coaches to the demo ring Notts Unison: 0115 9810405

By a Unison member

UCU members prepare for battle on pensions and pay

STUDENTS CAME onto the streets in their thousands in the closing weeks of 2010 and university occupations sprung up all over the country. UCU members - the union for lecturers and academic-related staff - gave their full support. Now it's UCU's turn to take the lead.

Dave Beale and Sarah Mayo
(UCU, personal capacity)

National strike ballots in universities over the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), jobs and pay commence on 17 February, postponed from 2 February. On 23 February, university and college strike ballots commence on the Teachers Pension Scheme (TPS). Further education (FE) colleges in England are also balloting on pay.

The union is balloting on TPS pensions not only in FE colleges but also in adult and community education provided by local authorities. In addition, UCU will ballot lecturers in English colleges on the current 0.2% pay offer.

As Socialist Party members in UCU, we urge a strong 'yes' vote for industrial action on all these issues.

In Wales, FE college members have agreed to accept a 2.3% pay award which ensured that lecturers in Wales maintain pay parity with schoolteachers.

It would be disastrous at this stage for the national leadership of the union to waiver over the strike ballots as planned. Only special national UCU delegate conferences should have the power to call off action and make the key decisions over any settlements in these critical disputes.

Wednesday 23 March - Budget Day - provides the golden opportunity for a UCU national strike in both colleges and universities on all these issues.

Students would need little encouragement to strike too. This would precede the national TUC London demonstration on 26 March and should also be followed by a further one-day UCU strike on 1 April, the day the employers propose to introduce the changes to USS pensions.

Defend the Four!

AN EMPLOYMENT tribunal has ruled that four Socialist Party members have been wrongfully barred from office in Unison. They are now demanding that the injustice of the Unison's bureaucracy's witch-hunt be undone.

• There will be a campaign meeting on 22 February at 7.30pm in the Exmouth Arms,

1 Starcross Street London NW1 2HR. (Around the corner from Euston station)

• On 23 February there will be a lobby of the Unison national executive council: 8.30am, outside Unison HQ, Mabledon Place, off Euston Road.

• For more information see: www.stopthewitchhunt.org.uk

Tata steelworks cleaners' strike

Around 70 contract cleaners, working for OCS at the Tata Steelworks in Port Talbot, South Wales are taking part in two days of strike action in a dispute over pay.

Alec Thraves spoke to Tony Eley, Community branch secretary on a determined picket line at the Margam site.

"Our members are on the minimum wage at the moment and all we want is a decent wage. We have been negotiating with OCS over the past few months but are not getting anywhere. We've had great support today from our members who have been on the picket line since 5.30am. Other contractors have also been supportive and we are determined to get away from a minimum wage so that we can have a better standard of living".

Building for action at Cardiff university

Members of the Cardiff University and College Union (UCU) packed a lecture hall on 2 February in a special meeting called to launch the trade union's strike ballots, over pay and pension cuts.

Employers have refused to shift from their positions on either job security and pay or the university pension system, despite months of negotiations on both.

700 out of 3,000 academic jobs are under threat at Cardiff University in the 2010-2011 academic year alone, although hard work by the UCU branch has managed to prevent any compulsory redundancies.

The mood at the meeting was resolute and nobody spoke against action.

Rae Lewis-Ayling of student group Action Against Cuts - Cardiff, which led the occupation of a Cardiff University lecture hall last November, spoke in support. He received enthusiastic applause and one lecturer later commented that the speech, showing student support for whatever action the lecturers' union feels is necessary to fight the cuts, was "just what we needed to hear".

Edmund Schluessel, Cardiff University UCU,
personal capacity

CD launched for Shrewsbury pickets

A fundraising CD for the Shrewsbury pickets was launched by Ken Loach and Ricky Tomlinson on 10 February (see page 3). Shrewsbury: Whose Conspiracy? has been made to raise money for the legal costs needed to clear the names of the 24 pickets convicted in the first national building strike in 1972.

Six pickets were jailed, including Ricky Tomlinson and Des Warren. Des died in 2004 - campaigners feel that was brought about by the drugs given to him in prison. The CD includes tracks from Chumbawumba, Billy Bragg and the late Alex Glasgow - famous for the Socialist ABC.

• For more information ring Eileen Turnbull on: 07821 624564