Brighton & Hove

Emergency Budget special

Solidarity

Bulletin of Brighton Solidarity Federation

NEWS // ACTION // ANALYSIS



ANGER: massive cuts in Greece have brought thousands to the streets in general strikes

CLASS WAR BUDGET

Savage cuts to make workers pay for bosses crisis

PRIME MINISTER David Cameron recently talked of the need for "difficult decisions" in dealing with the budget deficit that would affect "our whole way of life." In truth, he means it will affect *your* whole way of life, because if the expenses scandal has taught us anything, it is that the political classes know how to shield themselves from the economic difficulties faced by the working class.

The budget deficit itself goes back to the massive amounts the Labour government paid out to prop up a corrupt banking system, which is still failing to live up to the terms laid down for these state handouts. This means the government is unwilling to challenge the power of financial institutions, preferring to kick the majority of the population when they are already hurting.

It is simply untrue to claim as Cameron does that "we are all in this together", because the cuts are being used as a savage attack on gains made by the working class stretching back generations. They will be cutting services that are essential to the working class but that the rich simply don't need. Politicians of all parties are united in their belief that the cuts must come and they must be massive. Everything is being done to calm the markets, demonstrating that the interests of investors and shareholders are more important than the needs of workers.

Workers in other parts of the world facing similar attacks, are fighting back – with massive waves of strikes in Greece, Spain and France. Now is the time for us to join them and make our own demands.

Local focus: council cuts



Academy schools



Sussex Uni redundancies



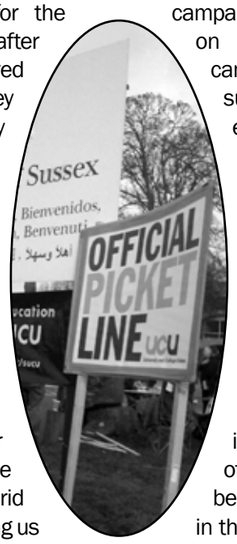
INSIDE

At Sussex Uni, management and unions approach agreement:

Strike off, redundancies on

THE ACADEMICS' union UCU at the University of Sussex, has called off industrial action planned for the week after 18th June, after university bosses declared they were "hopeful" they could avoid any compulsory redundancies. The number of job losses remains however at over 100, with severe impact on many courses and workloads expected.

One lecturer asked, "What, if anything, have the UCU achieved during the dispute? I, among many, have been made 'voluntarily' redundant, after being selected for compulsory redundancy. The University seems to have got rid of everyone it wanted by forcing us to accept a 'voluntary' settlement."



The other unions on campus - Unite and Unison, who represent support staff such as porters, IT and workshop technicians and cleaners - did not enter in dispute with the University. But like UCU, both Unite and Unison came from the position of reducing compulsory redundancies and getting the best voluntary redundancy packages possible - not fighting the cuts themselves.

Whilst the committee members were happy to continue the consultation process - which university bosses had made clear was in no way a negotiation process - some of the rank and file members argued that the starting point of the unions was wrong, and they should be arguing for no cuts at all.

"Our area rep came to a special Unite meeting, arguing to give them two more weeks negotiating with the management," said T, a Unite member and ITS worker. "If there was no significant movement during this time, the area rep said she would bring the ballot papers to the next meeting. I guess it shouldn't be too much surprise that she didn't even turn up to the next meeting, let alone bring ballot papers with her!"

As the student-led Stop The Cuts campaign was focussing mostly on academic staff, and the campus unions representing support staff were unwilling enter into dispute, a group of concerned support staff got together to discuss what could be done. The resulting Support Staff Forum (SSF) has workers involved from all three campus unions and non-unionised workers across the different sectors.

Paul, a worker who has also been involved in the informal group, said, "one of the good things we have been doing is making both us in the SSF and the wider campus community aware of the cuts and changes in working conditions in the different sectors, as although we all work on the same campus each department can be quite insular." The SSF have also been successful in building solidarity among education workers on campus, producing leaflets to encourage people to honour the UCU strikes and not cross their picket lines – regardless of whether they are in UCU or not.



CLASHES: The hard-fought struggle at Sussex hasn't yet stopped the cuts

Though multi-million pound building projects are still going ahead, none of the three campus unions had rejected the idea that cuts were necessary. As one education worker commented, "Despite UCU exec members working tirelessly to achieve the best outcome possible, I feel that once they accepted the need for cuts, they could only negotiate a defeat. Instead, we should have stopped management from using budget problems as an excuse – they have no right to wreck our university."

LOCAL FOCUS: COUNCIL BUDGET CUTS

AS THE new government prepares to unleash the attacks that Labour began, local government services lie directly in their sights. Just like the last, this government is intent on not just dealing with the financial crisis, but using it to implement pre-arranged agendas to attack our living standards in ways that had never previously been dared.

The public sector generally is seen as being ripe for plunder - any cuts directly reduce the state budget, and through the propagation of myths about "gold-plated pensions" and "non-jobs", the government believes that public sector workers can be easily divided from the rest.

Local government seems set to take the brunt of this attack - with the Department for Communties and Local Government receving the largest proposed cuts of all major government departments,



and the coalition promising a freeze in council tax. Local government workers, who have faced over 10 years of real-terms pay cuts are in the process of being demonised, and blamed for our economic woes.

In Brighton and Hove, this will hit especially hard, with drastic cuts to the council budget putting, in some estimates, 1 in every 4 jobs at risk at a time of already massive unemployment. Vital services used by people all over the city are facing attack. However, unlike many other places, workers in Brighton have an immediate inspiration to look to in the form of the Cityclean workers, who last year showed the way to defeat cuts, when their industrial action prevented massive paycuts.

While Labour politicians now pretend that they are somehow part of the solution to the process they started, the Cityclean workers have demonstrated in a very clear way exactly how such attacks can be defeated - standing together, and taking mass direct action to defend our jobs, pay and standards of living.

Academy schools:

Bad news for children, bad news for staff

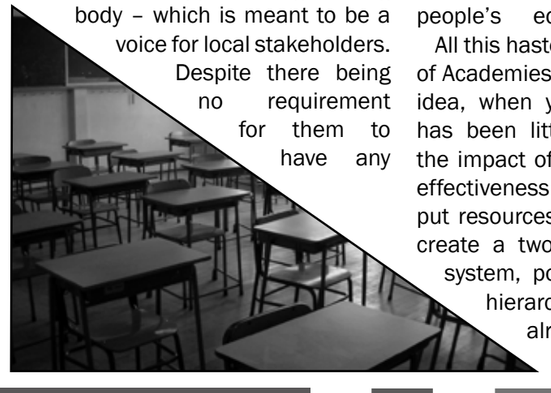
A LOCAL teacher assesses the impact of Academy Schools on Brighton and Hove.

A new Education Bill is set to massively extend Labour's controversial Academies programme – but this time without the need to consult anyone potentially affected by the change.

Brighton and Hove has already lost Falmer School into the clutches of local "entrepreneur" Rod Aldridge and currently there is a bitter struggle to keep Portslade Community College in public hands. The Education Secretary Michael Gove has now added Ofsted-graded "outstanding" schools to the hit-list. His plans promise even more Academies, now that the decision can be taken in a back room without even the need to ask staff and local people.

Academies were the previous government's answer to perceived "low standards" in too many secondary schools, even though the whole idea of standards did not take into account the social backgrounds of the students going to the schools – problems created not by schools themselves but government policies.

Under the scheme a private Sponsor – a charity, a religious group or individual millionaire – can take over a state school and be given control of the entire budget direct from the government. They are able to set admissions criteria – taking the brightest students from other local schools - and appoint the governing body – which is meant to be a voice for local stakeholders. Despite there being no requirement for them to have any





EDUCATION SECRETARY: Michael Gove has extendend the Academies programme

expertise, let alone experience, in education they will have the power to decide on the curriculum in most subjects. Rod Aldridge's "educational background" has been in making millions out of government IT contracts as the head of Capita Business Services. Naturally, getting rich from successful bids for funding - after secretly lending the Labour Party £1m - is not the same as running a complex institution like a school.

Academies can also set their own terms and conditions for staff new to the school. Although they often promise to keep to national pay scales, once the budget crisis hits them, this will be a major area to cut. This creates division in the workforce, low morale and high turnover – all things that harm the continuity of young people's educational experience.

All this haste to increase the number of Academies begins to feel like a bad idea, when you consider that there has been little or no research into the impact of this programme on the effectiveness of schools. Academies put resources into private hands and create a two-tier "public" education system, potentially reinforcing the hierarchies and divisions that already exist in Brighton & Hove schools.

World Cup: not all fun and games

WHILE MILLIONS around the world are celebrating the month-long FIFA World Cup, not everyone is enjoying the show.

On the third day of the competition, just after Germany's 4-0 drubbing of a poor Australian team, stewards who had been working at that game were attacked by police whilst holding a demonstration at Durban's Moses Mabhida stadium car park.

The Stewards are in dispute with Stallion Security Consortium, who are employed by the South African World Cup organising committee. Workers employed for 12-hour shifts said they had been promised 1,500 Rand (£134) per day – when in reality they were to be given as little as 205 Rand (£18) each.

The strikes appear to be spreading to Cape Town and Johannesburg amongst other stadiums hosting the 19th FIFA World Cup.



The country's police forces have been scabbing, taking on the work of the striking stewards.

Just after finishing a long shift, a steward had joined other guards in a protest outside Ellis Park, Johannesburg.

"I am tired and the last thing I need is to be sitting here. But what choice do I have? These people are robbing us we have to fight them," she said.

The guards say that they often had to work 15-hour shifts and accused security company Stallion, their employer, of "exploitation".

"We are very angry. How can they expect us to survive on the money they want to pay us?" said another steward.

Meanwhile in Johannesburg, several hundred fans were temporarily stranded after the Netherlands vs Denmark game in Soccer City when bus drivers went on an impromptu strike. Drivers complained they were not given sufficient notice that they were expected to work longer hours during the tournament.

About Brighton Solidarity Federation

BRIGHTON SOLFED is a group based on the idea that through solidarity and direct action, ordinary people have the power to improve our lives.

Our members are workers, students and others looking to build a libertarian working class movement. Our aim is to promote solidarity in our workplaces and outside them, encouraging workers to organise independently of bosses, bureaucrats and political parties to fight for our own interests as a class. Our ultimate goal is a stateless, classless society based on the principle of 'from each according to ability, to each according to need' – libertarian communism.

We believe in direct action solidarity. That could mean anything from organising with your co-workers, to pickets and occupations. We also believe in collective action - that we are stronger when we stand together.



We are not a service provider – we can't provide professional legal advice, and we can't solve your problems for you. We are not a trade union or political party. What we are is fellow workers who are sick of being screwed around ourselves and want to do something about it. What we can do is share experience, information, and support in methods which have proven effective previously. This is solidarity, not charity: **An injury to one is an injury to all!**



IN ACTION: Picketing Subway for an unfairly sacked pregnant worker



Getting messed around by a boss or landlord?

Want to do something about it? *Get in touch!*