

President's report

1 USS strike

Clearly the highlight of the extended year, and of the century so far, was the industrial action in defence of pensions. Since the end of the industrial action proper, and the establishment of the Joint Expert Panel which has examined the methodology of USS, it has been proven that we were right all along: the money was there, and USS can't do arithmetic. Even our employers are now shifting to our position, and this would never have happened without our willingness to go on strike.

The strike itself was remarkable. As a union we had never before taken the risk of asking members to come out for so long and so completely. Fourteen days of near-continuous strike action was taking a huge chance, but that chance paid off, and our union has been transformed by it. We were supported by students, who resisted foul treatment by management, and by trade-unionists and the public elsewhere. As the Treasurer will confirm, we have a lot less money than we did this time last year, because we spent most of it on supporting members who were on strike. There could have been no better use for it.

Though it is clear that we have already had a massive win by saving our defined benefit pensions, the USS dispute is not settled. There is a chance that by Monday we will be committed to a strike ballot in September, should the employers "refuse to confirm . . . that they will not impose any contribution increases in October 2019".

2 Casualization

We have recently, after many years of grumbling, submitted a claim (the opening shot in bargaining) to management. The interim proprietors engaged with it through the bargaining machinery, so there has been an opening for the development of dignified terms and conditions for the most precarious staff in the university. In the last few months, we have been making some slow progress so

that there is a reasonable prospect of beginning to issue proper contracts in the next academic year.

3 Pay

We have had two ballots on industrial action over pay, neither of which reached the statutory 50% threshold. This year's pay claim has been submitted at national level and it is likely that we will again reach a failure to agree and move into dispute. As yet we do not know whether there will be a ballot on industrial action.

4 Future prospects

There are a number of things coming up, or which we might like to bring up:

workload management have finally begun to engage properly on this, and we have made an informal suggestion that workload model tariffs be set in departments with input from UCU representatives. We have also secured the principle that workload estimations will apply equally to staff on fractional contracts.

gender pay we are engaging with management, and beginning to negotiate, on the gender pay gap and ways to eliminate it.

professorial recognition a process has opened to allow professors to choose to be covered by UCU for collective bargaining.

travel if anyone is interested, is there an appetite for developing a policy on "green travel", meaning that the university as employer would encourage and/or incentivize staff travelling on university business to use public surface transport.

5 Get involved

If you have any views on how our union should operate, don't keep them to yourself. Make it your New Year's resolution to get a little bit more involved. If you don't come to branch meetings, start coming. If you sit in silence at meetings, speak up. If you speak up at branch meetings, join the committee, and so forth. You get the idea.