

**UCU**

Bath Spa University

University and College Union

**BRANCH**

# NEWSLETTER

## June 2011

### Quote Of The Month

"Reforms leading toward freedom, commitment, criticism and inevitable social conflict, endanger and indeed nullify the historical role of administration which has been not to protect its community but to pacify it."

Paul Goodman. The Community Of Scholars. 1962

#### Fairness Fact 1

Some interesting facts on the Sunday Times Rich List

Page 2

#### Campaign Round Up

The current state of play on active UCU@BSU campaigns

Page 2/4

#### Fairness Fact 2

Some interesting facts on the ConDems record on equality & fairness.

Page 4

#### In The Chair

UCU at BSU branch Chair outlines his thoughts on David (2 Brains) Willetts

Page 5/6

#### Academic Freedom & Collegiality

Extracts from last years comprehensive THE website article

Page 6/9

#### Book Review

THE PLOT AGAINST THE NHS  
By Colin Leys and Stewart Player.

Page 9/11

## Fairness Fact No 1

According to the Coalition government, we are all in the current financial crisis together and in the Age of Austerity everyone is going to have to make sacrifices. The *Sunday Times Rich List* gave the lie to this claim in a remarkably unambiguous fashion.

Over the last year, while the great majority of us have had our living standards either frozen or cut, the richest people living in Britain had their wealth increase by a cool £60 billion! And this is the wealth that they are happy that we know about. No wonder the one sector of the economy that is undergoing a recovery is the luxury goods sector.

In best Shock Doctrine fashion, the Age of Austerity is providing an opportunity for a historically significant redistribution of wealth in favour of George Osborne's friends, the rich and super rich. What we are seeing is a 'trickle up' effect, although, to be fair, the sums involved seem more like a tsunami than a trickle. The Coalition, despite their wilting fairness rhetoric, are engaged in trying to achieve US style levels of social inequality in Britain.



## CAMPAIGN ROUNDUP

### The Great Pensions Heist

The most immediate issue confronting us today is the fight to protect our pensions. The scale of the attack on our standard of living in retirement is just staggering and has led to even private schoolteachers and head teachers balloting for strike action. Our pension contributions are being increased, our retirement age is being raised and our pensions are being dramatically cut. We are not talking about small amounts of money here, but cuts that will over a 25 year retirement add up to £100,000+ for young and middle aged HE staff.

The savagery of the attack has backfired, however, and the Coalition (nice Vince Cable is the chief architect of the attack) has succeeded in uniting the whole education sector in opposition. Teachers, Headteachers, FE lecturers and HE lecturers are joining together to fight the attack. There is going to be a campaign of industrial action across the whole sector, a campaign that we cannot afford to lose.

This is a battle we can win. The Coalition is weak and divided. Even the dimmest LibDem can see the writing on the wall as far as their prospects are concerned. Determined resistance will save our pensions.

## Redundancy

Most British Universities are responding to the ending of state support for the Humanities by making academic and support and administrative staff redundant. This is happening from De Montfort to Cambridge. At Bath Spa, the outgoing Vice Chancellor, Frank Morgan, has made clear that there will be no redundancies this year. Realistically, however, we must expect that the new Vice Chancellor will take a less sympathetic view. There is every likelihood that 2012 will see redundancies at Bath Spa and that these will affect every level of the institution from Pro-Vice Chancellor down. This is what is happening just about every where else and there is no reason, absolutely no reason, to believe it will not happen here.

At the moment, the UCU branch is engaged in negotiating an agreement that seeks, first of all, to avoid redundancy, and as a last resort to provide a generous voluntary scheme that will enable us to avoid compulsion. It is our belief that to have this in place will be good for staff morale and that good staff morale will be good for Bath Spa. We want this agreement in place before the end of 2011.

While there is considerable common ground between the unions and the management regarding the avoidance of redundancy, there are also inevitably some crucial areas of disagreement, not least over the appropriate monetary component in any voluntary deal. While we hope for an amicable resolution of these difficulties, the committee feel that they are so important that unless agreement is reached it might become necessary to ballot for local industrial action.

## Pay and Recognition

The Coalition has decided that we, along with everyone else in the public sector, deserve to have our real take home pay cut. A pay freeze at a time of rising inflation neatly achieves this, but the effect is compounded by the dramatic increase in pensions contributions that is coming as well. It seems clear that the Coalition regards most academics as being paid too much and we can expect our pay to continue to fall over the foreseeable future if they get their way.

Related to this, we are also certain to see a major attack on national bargaining over pay and conditions. This attack is going to take place across the whole education sector involving schools, FE and HE. The Coalition's academies programme at secondary level, for example, is intended, among other things, to undermine teachers' national agreements.

There is no doubt that with Universities beginning to charge different fees, they are going to want to pay different levels of salary and offer different conditions of service. The Coalition's determination to encourage for profit Universities is also intended to drive pay down across HE. In the US some for profit Universities do not employ *any* permanent teaching staff and are completely casualised with staff having no paid holidays, no pension, no sick pay, low salaries and, of course no job security. This is the model Cable and Willets wish to import into Britain, not least as a way of driving down fee levels, which will in turn impact on staff pay and conditions

Already at one University, Robert Gordon University in Scotland, the new principal, Professor Ferdinand von Prondzynski, has derecognised the trade unions organised on the campus. This is unlikely to be the only University going down this road.

## Domestic Issues

Colleagues will remember the poll that the union conducted regarding compulsory online marking and online feedback. At the time of writing management have not responded to our request for assurances that no attempt will be made to introduce this and there is a fear that some schools might go ahead and try to introduce compulsion either piecemeal or by stealth. The union will resist any such attempts and will not hesitate to invoke the full support of the national union.

Another issue that is of great concern is the introduction, without any consultation with the union, of Sunday working. This is something we will be taking up with the management urgently.

## Academic Freedom And Collegiality

The branch is submitting a document on collegiality to the University that all members will have received by now (See also the article below). We consider this a vitally important contribution to improving the University and its governance and welcome contributions to discussion. Next term we will devote a special issue of the branch bulletin to this question and invite contributions from all everyone working in the University. This will be accompanied by a public discussion to which we hope to invite both governors and the new Vice Chancellor.



## Fairness Fact No 2

As colleagues are no doubt aware, among the recommendations of Sir Roy McNulty's recent review of the railways was inevitably the proposal that staff should be made redundant and that staff pay should be cut. And, of course, in the Age of Austerity who could possibly object. Unfortunately, Sir Roy only considers pay cuts as appropriate for some people. As the RMT union revealed, Sir Roy also heads a quango, the Olympic Delivery Authority where the average executive salary is over £200,000. He has just authorised a bonus payment of £1.5 million to be shared among the Authority's eight directors. As the union pointed out, he clearly has a 'do what I say, not what I do' attitude.

While the national press extensively reported McNulty's call for pay cuts for railway men and women, with conservative newspapers in particular extremely enthusiastic about the idea, not one major newspaper so much as acknowledged the RMT's press release pointing out his hypocrisy.



## In The Chair

Branch Chair John Newsinger outlines his thoughts on the ConDem Minister For Universities And Science David Willetts.

### PRIVATE WILLETTS

David Willetts is apparently a brilliant man, an intellectual's intellectual, a man with two brains. Only someone absolutely brilliant could seriously argue that one of the biggest obstacles to social mobility was the fact that middle class women had too many of the good jobs. Only someone absolutely brilliant could seriously argue that the way to improve social mobility was to allow the rich to buy places for their children at the top Universities.

In reality, Willetts is a quietly spoken Thatcherite, part of the neo-con tendency within the Conservative Party (he is a founder member of the Henry Jackson Society) and he is committed to introducing for profit Universities into Britain. As the Daily Mirror revealed on 30 May, over the last six months, Willetts has had meetings with four major US for profit providers, including the Apollo Group. He has already given University status to Britain's second private University, BPP University College of Professional Studies (July last year) and without any doubt more are on the way.

BPP is owned by the Apollo Group, the largest US for profit HE provider, which in 2010 had a turnover of \$4 billion. It owns the University of Phoenix, the largest University in the US with between 400,000 and 500,000 students. As Howard Motson points out in his London review of Books article, 'Short Cuts' the assumption made by the for profit providers is that

the internet provides the ideal vehicle for delivering course material to less well-off students, who can study at home as suits their schedule. Automated instruction reduces expensive contact time and enables the institution to pare costs to the bone...Thanks to the near death of the job market in public universities there is no shortage of teaching staff desperate for work, which helps trim budgets even more.

There are students in the States with nursing diplomas who never so much as stepped inside a hospital while doing their course!

Instead of paying salaries to annoying academics who witter on about 'their research' all the time, the for profits invest hugely in marketing. The Apollo Group spends something like a quarter of its turnover on marketing, on selling its degree courses to unsuspecting potential students from working class and lower middle class backgrounds and presumably not mentioning its abysmal completion rates. The University of Phoenix has, according to Hotson, a 9% completion rate. In the States for profit providers use telephone sales to sell

Continued...

In Britain, BPP already has over 36,000 students doing non-degree courses. If it recruits similar numbers to its cut-price degree courses then it would be the biggest University in Britain. This is going to happen if nice Vince Cable and nasty David Willetts get their way.

The head of the University of Phoenix, John Sperling, is, of course, a billionaire and the three top executives at Apollo all earned over \$6 million in 2008. At a time when their activities are coming under increasing criticism and scrutiny in the States, the Coalition proposes to get in bed and have sex with them.

---

## Academic Freedom & Collegiality

### A Clear and Present Danger

Times Higher Education Website. 11 February 2010

Many scholars feel that their freedom to question is in danger of being eroded or even lost. Zoe Corbyn examines the threat in the UK, while Christoph Bode and David Gunkel consider the state of affairs in Europe and America

There is an online retailer in the UK that sells T-shirts marketed specifically at academics. Most of them feature geek jokes and nerd humour (one sports the slogan "Chillin' with my genomes", another a Rubik's Cube image), but one carries an amended version of the popular short poem First they came. The original by Pastor Martin Niemoller was a rebuke to the intellectuals who stood by while the Nazis purged group after group of "undesirables" ("First they came for the communists, and I did not speak out - because I was not a communist;"). The T-shirt makes changes to detail the lack of voices defending black people, gay people and "bleeding-heart liberals", but it leaves the final line intact: "Then they came for me and there was no one to speak up for me."

Although it may seem odd to some, the sentiment speaks to many inside Britain's academy who feel they are in danger of losing a core feature of scholarly life: academic freedom. Barely a week goes by when Times Higher Education does not carry a complaint or a warning from an academic about threats to their cherished right to speak out. And it is not just high-profile people - there is a real sense of unease among rank-and-file academics that their right to speak truth to power, to set their own research and teaching agendas and to voice their opinions about the management of their institutions is being stripped away.

Despite the UK's generally liberal atmosphere, there have been many instances where officials have come down hard on scholars attempting to exercise their freedom.

Aubrey Blumsohn lost his job as a researcher at the University of Sheffield in 2006 after he blew the whistle over his difficulty accessing research data on a drug from his funder, Procter & Gamble. After 30 years at the Dartington College of Arts, Sam Richards, a lecturer, was sacked in 2007 because his apology for publicly criticising his principal was judged to be insufficiently sincere.

And last year, outrage greeted the decision by the University of Nottingham to vet the reading lists of politics lecturers after it was discovered that a student had downloaded an al-Qaeda training manual.

Last year also saw the sacking of David Nutt, the independent scientific adviser on drugs, after he "campaigned" against the Government's policies - a case that underscored the broad threat to scholarly values, even if it was arguably more a crisis of scientific advice than of academic freedom (as there was no university reprimand).

Other notorious and unpleasant cases test the limits of academic freedom. Chris Brand was fired by the University of Edinburgh for gross misconduct in 1997 after questioning paedophilia charges against Nobel prizewinner Daniel Gajdusek on the grounds that his own research suggested that paedophilia with a consenting partner over the age of 12 with above-average IQ was not harmful. Frank Ellis, an expert in Russian and Slavonic studies at the University of Leeds, sparked intense debate about scholarly liberty in 2006 after he was suspended for expressing support in a student newspaper for a theory that whites were generally more intelligent than non-whites.

There are, nonetheless, academics who are rather more sanguine about the state of their personal freedoms.

Steve Fuller is not a biologist, but that does not stop him arguing publicly that intelligent design should be accorded equal status with evolution and other scientific theories. In fact, he believes it is his right to speak out as he does. According to the controversial University of Warwick sociologist and author of *The Sociology of Intellectual Life* (2009): "Academic freedom isn't simply the right to speak within your expertise: it is the right to speak about anything - but in a way that involves an appeal to reason, argument and evidence."

He regards his participation in the debate about evolution as living proof that academic freedom is alive and well in the UK. "There are people who hate my guts, but they have not been able to shut me down."

Another scholar unafraid to speak his mind is David Colquhoun, professor of pharmacology at University College London. Best known as an outspoken campaigner against pseudoscience, he is also an inveterate critic of the objectionable changes he sees at universities, including his own. On hearing that his department would be restructured, he launched a blog to chart its journey to "death". "People say it is brave when you challenge your institution, but if you think things are not being done right at a place you are very attached to, you should say so."

Which examples give the true picture of the state of liberty in the UK academy in 2010? Are scholars being cowed? Is the UK academy suffering a catastrophic loss of liberty? What dangers are looming, what lines are being drawn and how is freedom being protected and defended?

**OXBRIDGE - WHERE ACADEMICS RULE OK**

**Academics at the universities of Oxford and Cambridge enjoy far more freedom to participate in - and criticise - their governance than academics at most other UK institutions.**

It is a model of self-governance that some such as Terence Karran, who studies issues of academic freedom, would like to see adopted more widely.

Given that Harvard University has a similar model, perhaps it is actually part of the fabric of what makes a world-beating institution, he contends.

As established by their own 1923 Act of Parliament, the universities' supreme governing bodies are their Congregation (Oxford) and Regent House (Cambridge). Each consists of all of their 4,000 or so permanent academic staff. And each acts almost like a mini-parliament, giving scholars both the capacity to speak truth to power and to democratically stop their administrations dead in their tracks if they don't like what they are doing.

Of course, the bodies are not involved in the day-to-day administration - mostly their approvals are just a rubber-stamp process. But if they desire, academics can speak their minds and flex their muscles.

Imagine standing up in public to your deputy vice-chancellor as a matter of routine and without an ounce of fear and saying the following, as Andrew Aitchinson, a young computer officer in the department of pure mathematics and mathematical statistics at the University of Cambridge, did in November last year. His comments were part of a four-hour debate on proposed changes to weaken disciplinary, dismissal and grievance procedures (so-called Statute U) and which Cambridge's administration and its Regent House are currently locked in battle over.

"Mr Deputy Vice-Chancellor," he began, after stating his name and his department. "I can't tell you what I really feel about the report, since I am unwilling to use what Westminster calls 'unparliamentary language'. (But) I believe that this proposal, if enacted, will make the university a less good employer, put an unproductive division between academic and academic-related staff, and dilute our academic freedom, so I wanted to be able to stand here and tell you how to make the proposal work better for the interests of the university. I struggled for ages; in the end the best improvement came to me: drop the proposal and stick with what we already have."

Terry Hoad is vice-president of the University and College Union and an Oxford academic. "Ultimately we do have this power, which is very precious to us. We are not the worst off (when it comes to academic freedom in UK institutions), but we are not immune from the creeping threat either."

A longer version of this article can be read at

<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=410297>

"It is precisely the combination of academic freedom and a collegial approach to academic decision-making and institutional governance that defines the very nature of a university community. These are the distinctive practices and values that protect the university both from the stultifying effects of internal managerialism and the dangers of external political interference. We see little sign of any respect for these values in the world of for-profit higher education. But we are also concerned at their erosion in our own public institutions and fear their further undermining as survival comes to depend on competitive marginal cost-cutting in the scramble for fee-bearing students. We would like to see these wider issues addressed in the White Paper and reflected in statutory safeguards."

From the UCU Submission to Browne Report Consultation.



## REVIEW

### THE PLOT AGAINST THE NHS

**Colin Leys and Stewart Player. Merlin Press**

This a vitally important but thoroughly depressing book. What it conclusively shows is that the New Labour governments of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown were engaged in covertly privatising the NHS, a bit at a time. This was being done in partnership with private health companies, including the giant US companies exposed in Michael Moore's *Sicko*. Indeed, in 2002, Alan Milburn, the Health Minister, actually went to California to meet with Kaiser Permanente executives with a view to involving them in 'reforming' the NHS. This was the company that dumped a 63 year old woman in her hospital gown in a Los Angeles street after her insurance had run out.

The symbiotic connection between senior Labour politicians and Health Department officials and private health companies is best demonstrated by the way they go to work for them once they lose office or retire. Both Alan Milburn and Patricia Hewitt have taken up extremely lucrative posts with private health companies. And Milburn, of course, is also the Coalition government's social mobility Tsar!

Most of these companies have very dubious track records to say the least. We have, for example, the South African firm, Netcare's involvement in organ trafficking (the company, one of the biggest private hospital providers in Britain 'has admitted receiving £342,000 from an organ trafficking syndicate for work that included the removal of kidneys from five children' although they have denied other charges and insist that they haven't been involved in this sort of activity since 2003). And there are many cases of massive fraud and we mean massive fraud. UnitedHealth, a US company 'which has featured so extensively in the marketisation story in England' in January 2009 'agreed to pay \$50 million to settle a case brought by the New York attorney general, Andrew Cuomo, for boosting profits by systematically reducing insurance payments to patients, and in the same month paid \$350 million to settle three class actions for non-payment of benefits'. And so on.

Presiding over all this is the malign influence of the McKinsey consultancy, the multi-billion US consultancy firm that was at the very heart of the New Labour project. All that Andrew Lansley has done is to bring the privatisation agenda out into the open. He has tried to take advantage of the financial crisis to complete the job begun by New Labour. And hopefully, in the process has destroyed his political career.

In 2000 Tim Evans of the Independent Healthcare Association looked forward to the day when all NHS care was provided by private firms. By 2009 there were 149 private hospitals, treatment centres and clinics doing NHS work. By the summer of the following year private companies were running 227 surgeries and health centres, with one company, Virgin Assura, alone providing for over 3 million NHS patients. The Lansley Bill as originally intended, with the full support of the LibDems (this was before electoral annihilation forced a rethink!) would have opened the way for the whole NHS 'to go private'.

Urging privatisation forward has been the McKinsey consultancy. This company is not as well known as it should be, and this is no accident, because it has impacted on all our lives one way or another. It was McKinsey who advised the privatised railway to economise on track maintenance, it was McKinsey who recommended the disastrous NHS IT programme and it was McKinsey who provided the new model for financing (and privatising) HE in Britain. Most of New Labour's reactionary domestic policies have McKinsey fingerprints on them.

One of the key figures in the Department of Health was 'the ubiquitous Doctor Penny Dash', who was appointed Director of Strategy in 2000, recruited from Boston Consulting. She went to work for McKinsey, acting as an 'adviser' to the NHS and was in their London office when the New Labour government commissioned a report on improving efficiency in the NHS in February 2009. The report, 'Achieving World Class Productivity', recommended massive job cuts (10% of the work force-135,000 people). It was suppressed and then repudiated by Lansley, but it is being implemented covertly.

Another McKinsey stalwart involved was David Bennett, a senior adviser to Tony Blair and today the man appointed by Lansley as chief executive of Monitor, the regulatory body for his new NHS. This is like appointing Reggie Kray to regulate organised crime in the East End! What it shows, of course, is the dreadful continuity between New Labour and the Coalition.

Are Leys and Player correct in writing of there being a plot against the NHS? The point they make is that New Labour's policies were carried out covertly in secret partnership with private health companies including giant US firms with the government deliberately withholding information about what it was doing and when necessary telling barefaced lies. It also attempted to damage the careers and reputations of its opponents.

The reason for this secrecy was that public opinion would not have supported the government's plans if people had known about them. As far as the Coalition government is concerned, it is worth remembering that before the last General Election David Cameron promised faithfully with all the fake Blairite sincerity he could muster that the NHS was safe in his hands, that there would be no NHS cuts, and that there would be no new top down reorganisation of the NHS.

It isn't safe, cuts are being made and Lansley's 'reforms' are the most far-reaching and damaging top down reorganisation in NHS history. As for Nick Clegg's recent conversion to saving the NHS, well how trustworthy is this man?

The uncomfortable conclusion that this book leaves the reader with is that senior politicians of all parties have a much closer relationship with predatory US health companies than they do with the people who elect them.



## **UCU at BSU**

### **Contact:**

**Branch Chair: John Newsinger**

**Email: [j.newsinger@bathspa.ac.uk](mailto:j.newsinger@bathspa.ac.uk)**

### **General Information & Membership**

**[ucu@bathspa.ac.uk](mailto:ucu@bathspa.ac.uk)**

### **Branch Website**

**<http://ucuatbsu.wordpress.com/>**