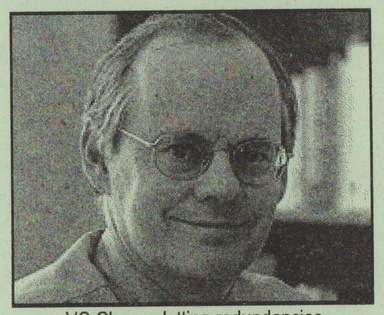
Bradford >>

Aiders remains at 5p per hour (with inflation it should be more like 50p now – a de facto cut). Whenever unions have raised this in recent years, Personnel has responded cynically that the rate compares favourably with other universities, that perhaps it should be scrapped altogether and that First Aiders should be found from within Security, where it is part of the job description. This is a specious argument. Universities are legally obliged to provide a minimum number of qualified First Aiders per head of staff/students which is unlikely to be met by a small number of Security workers alone; hence the need for an allowance to induce other workers to undertake these additional responsibilities.

Redundancies

Currently, management are seeking voluntary redundancies within two Schools, Informatics and Health, with redundancy terms significantly improved to encourage volunteers. The VC, in a memo to all staff, has specifically not ruled out compulsory redundancies if the projected staff cuts are not made voluntarily.

Omitted was any mention of the shedding of low-paid staff in the Sports Centre, which has been closed down for rebuilding – presumably not worthy of a mention as it is not an academic department.



VC Cleary plotting redundancies

Similarly, some of the part-time cleaners in the Halls of Residence demolished over the last few years have been short-changed on their legal rights / redundancy terms. Often they are not union members, and easier to push about as a result. In one case a cleaner with 12 years continuous service was offered 5 weeks pay on termination, which was also subject to tax and national insurance deductions.

As elsewhere in HE, new Halls of Residence are in the hands of private contractors looking for a profit from students by undercutting university terms and conditions.

In a supreme piece of irony Bradford recently retained its "Investor in People" status.

Manchester >>

been in management roles. It is high time for the unions to organise a joint ballot instead of waiting for the end of the process. Although staff morale is low, due largely to the unions not balloting when management's intentions became clear, this is not going to be improved by continuing to cling to the forlorn hope that negotiation will bring management around to a fairer way of thinking.

Education Workers Network

EWN is made up of Solidarity Federation members who work in the education sector. Joining EWN also means joining your nearest SF group (solfed@solfed.org.uk or PO Box 29, S.W. DO, Manchester, M15 5HW for details). Even if you don't wish to join us, we welcome requests to join our discussion list (ewn@lists.riseup.net) and / or for bundles of *Education Worker*. Also available:

EWN intro pamphlet *Building a Revolutionary Union for Education Workers*

basic EWN intro leaflet

back issues of *Education Worker*.

EWN, c/o News From Nowhere, 96 Bold Street, Liverpool, L1 4HY.
ewn@ewn.org.uk; www.ewn.org.uk

Want to find out more / get more involved?

- ❍ I would like to be added to the EWN email list (or contact ewn@lists.riseup.net);
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- ❍ I would like to join EWN and be put in contact with my nearest SF group)
- ❍ I would like a copy of ***Catalyist***, the Solidarity Federation free sheet
- ❍ I would like a free copy of ***Direct Action***, the Solidarity Federation magazine
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Please send to: EWN, c/o New From Nowhere, 96 Bold Street, Liverpool, L1 4HY.

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'A History of Anarcho-syndicalism' is a series of 24 pamphlets covering the role of anarcho-syndicalists and anarcho-syndicalist organisations within the international workers' movement. All of them downloadable for free from www.selfed.org.uk.

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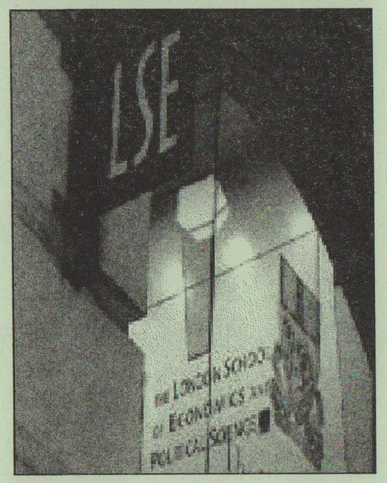
Education Worker

Bulletin of the Education Workers Network - 2008 issue 3

Migrant Cleaners – the Need to Organise against Immigration Controls



Ever given much thought to who cleans your workplace? At the London School of Economics the contract is held by *iss*, a multinational with a lot of privatised cleaning contracts, including on the London Underground. The cleaners are mainly Latin American with poor English and a fear of joining a union or speaking out about lousy pay and conditions.

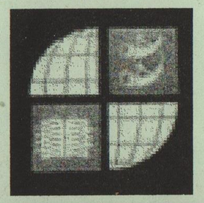
As a result of a campaign by Justice for Cleaners, part of the T&G/Unite! Union, the LSE has adopted the London Living Wage which is higher than the National Minimum Wage and is endorsed by the Mayor of London. However, it was introduced into the new cleaning contract which started in August 2007 as being phased in over the three years of the contract. Worse, the workers are paying for it. They are currently paid £6 per hour but staffing has been cut and they have to work harder. This has affected standards of cleaning – for instance, library management blame the new contract for its mouse infestation.

iss are well known on the Underground for using immigration controls to victimise organisers and intimidate the workforce. Union activists in the recent strike by cleaners on the Underground have been suspended without pay, allegedly for working with bogus or incorrect National Insurance numbers. They always have worked with these numbers for years – this is simply victimisation.

National Physical Laboratories once arranged an immigration raid on its cleaners to cut the workforce and cut costs. *iss* is rumour- >> p.2

"Confronting Inequality: Celebrating Diversity" – the Chasm between PR and Practical Reality

Bradford University Vice Chancellor Mark Cleary has been forced to apologise for poor management practises and racial discrimination at the School of Health Studies, after problems going back 8 years (*Times Higher Education* 3 July 2008). Elsewhere within the School this year, bullying and arrogant members of lower management in the Learning Resources Team have flagrantly disregarded a university-wide policy of flexitime for clerical workers, and refused to meet their union representatives. At least one worker has resigned as a result.



The VC also acknowledged in the *Times Higher* article that the university's formal grievance procedures are "protracted, confrontational and distressing" (although he gave no undertaking that they would be revised). The procedures, in place since the 1970s, are outside of ACAS guidelines as they have no stated time limits and can therefore drag on indefinitely – somewhat defeating the object. Personnel anyhow generally disregards or sweeps workers' grievances aside.

Also in place since the 1970s, the allowance for First >> back page

HERA to Zero

MANCHESTER 1824

The HERA saga (Higher Education Role Analysis) at the University of Manchester rumbles on. It is clear that management has wanted a cost cutting exercise rather than to implement "equal pay for work of equal value". Indeed, with upwards of 800 redundancies, a massive debt run up in the dash for "world class university" status and an expected squeeze on public spending the writing has been on the wall for over a year. Since then there has been delay after delay followed by large scale "red-circling" of staff into lower grades. Needless to say, much of the "green circling" into higher grades has >> back page

by workers – for workers

Migrant Cleaners >>

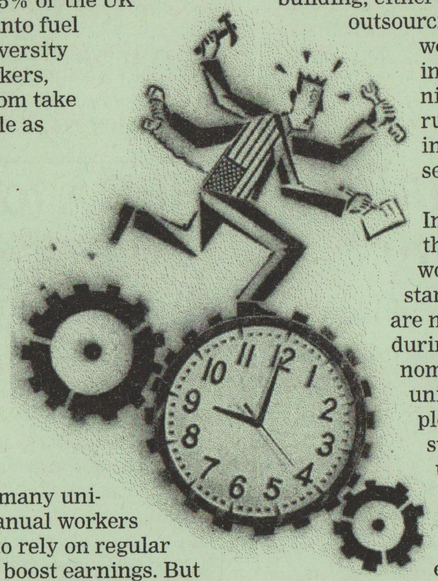
ed to have used document checks against workers at the LSE earlier this year. Hard facts are difficult to come by due to the reluctance of cleaners to talk to union activists, but there is a suspicion that the workforce was cut by this method.

LSE was founded in 1895 by Fabians, the same people who got the TUC to found the Labour Party. It likes to think of itself as special; it's paternalistic and it's part of the Russell Group. Its apparent benevolence – especially if your face fits – helps to undermine union membership as many people think they don't need a union. Yet scratch the surface and the need for organisation couldn't be clearer.

We have to organise in solidarity with cleaners and push for the contract to be taken back in house on the grounds that it isn't really value for money. We also have to recognise that immigration controls are a means of undermining pay and conditions and of disciplining vulnerable workers, and we have to oppose them.

Double Whammy for the Low Paid

As the economy slides towards recession, manual workers within higher education face a particularly hard time. Like all low paid workers they spend a far higher percentage of their income on domestic fuel and food and as such suffer disproportionately from the effects of rising inflation. With rising gas and electricity prices expected to drag some 25% of the UK population into fuel poverty, university manual workers, some of whom take home as little as £200 a week after stoppages, are bound to be among the many who simply will not be able to heat their homes properly this winter.



Further, in many universities manual workers have come to rely on regular overtime to boost earnings. But as the effects of the credit crunch begin to spread beyond the banks to the economy as a whole, higher education, like all other sectors, will be forced to make cuts. And one of the first areas to be slashed will be overtime payments, leaving many manual workers having to face the double whammy of reduced earnings just as prices begin to rocket.

In the search for ever greater cuts university managers will also attempt to speed up privatisation. As well as selling off buildings and outsourcing services the "internal market" will be used to replace staff and drive up productivity. This process has already begun in some universities as individual managers, who now often control the budget for their particular building, either use the threat of outsourcing to increase workloads or bring in private companies to take over the running of cleaning, portering and security services.

In the face of all this, if manual workers' jobs and standards of living are not to be hammered during the coming economic downturn the unions must completely change their strategies. The unions' current reliance on grievance procedures which are dependent on the good will of management simply will not work in an economic climate driven by a constant aim to drive down cost. Collective action aimed at defending jobs and incomes is what is needed. And it is long past the time for campus unions to drop their petty differences, get out of the union offices and begin to organise a united front against management.

Third in our series focusing on anarcho-syndicalist politics.

What we mean by... Direct Democracy

When anarcho-syndicalists talk about "direct democracy" what do we mean? We often complain about the current unions' internal democratic processes and how, too often, decisions are taken by officials without consulting the membership. This can take a variety of forms, like when to have branch meetings (or whether to have them at all) or when to call off strike action – decisions often taken by Executive Committees. Workers often find themselves "high and dry", not knowing whether their action is to go ahead or not because the "union is negotiating".

Anarcho-syndicalists believe that democratic decision-making should exist at all levels of the organisation and its life. All the way from who writes and edits our bulletins (including *Education Worker*!) to how decisions are taken on the organisation's direction and daily life. We also believe that all members can and should take a part in these decisions and, crucially, that those designated with particular tasks, such as secretary, are accountable to all members. This means that they cannot take decisions on their own and must be mandated directly by the membership, which always has the ability to modify a decision and, ultimately, to recall that person and replace them with someone else.

Our commitment to direct democracy is what we want to carry forward into the new society, so democratic control is exercised by all.

Unions Derecognised at Nottingham Trent

In the last issue of *Education Worker* we stated that a number of universities were looking to undermine trade union organisation by bringing in works councils or some form of workers' forums. Unfortunately, our predictions have proven true; in July Nottingham Trent University (NTU) withdrew from its recognition agreement with the unions and announced the setting up of a new mediation body for industrial relations entitled the Employees Information and Consultation Forum (ECIF).

NOBBLING TRADE UNIONS

The ECIF is to be made up of managers and elected union and non-union members, with the non-union members having to give a sworn statement that they do not belong to any union. Those employees elected to the ECIF will also have to sign a confidentiality clause that, if broken, will result in the sack. Elections to the ECIF will be completely under management control to the extent that it will be management who decide the constituencies from which the union representatives are elected.

NTU's aim is pretty clear – they want to replace the unions with the ECIF, which will largely be under management's control. The University has announced that union facility time will be cut by 80% in a clear attempt to try to ensure that the unions cannot function independently of the ECIF. With the unions struggling to function all industrial relations will be channelled through the ECIF which, like all forms of works councils, will end up as little more than a "rubber stamp" for management decisions.

Management has made much of the fact that the ECIF will give both non-union and union members an input. What they fail to mention is that there will be little or no consultation with the workforce about decisions taken at the ECIF. Reps will be elected every couple of years after which they will take decisions on behalf of the workers in the interest of the long term future of the university. Unlike in the unions, the workforce cannot hold elected representatives accountable nor will there be any requirement for the representatives to consult the workforce. Just in case the more principled representatives do attempt to ask workers what their wishes are then the confidentiality clause, which forbids discussion outside of the ECIF, will be enforced, with representatives facing the sack for the appalling offence of asking workers about their own terms and conditions.

The proper approach to the ECIF is not to get into talks about trying to make them more democratic. Rather, what the unions should do is to boycott the whole profoundly undemocratic ECIF process and use the workers' collective strength to force management to negotiate directly with the unions. The UCU branch at Nottingham Trent fully recognises this and is balloting members as *EW*3 goes to press. A large majority is expected to favour strike action if the university attempts to bring in the ECIF. Workers at NTU need the support of all university workers in their struggle against management. This is not just a local issue; universities up and down the country will be watching NTU with a view to bringing in their own form of works council if the UCU is defeated.

Leeds Met Update

Leeds Metropolitan University has rejected all criticism from the Health and Safety Executive about bullying and general management unaccountability (see *EW*2). Well, they would, wouldn't they? Workers, of course, tell a different story. Calling in the HSE is a good start but it's only by collective action that we can protect ourselves at work.

Academy Protest

In August more than 30 people protested in Waterhead, Oldham, against plans to replace two schools with one new academy. Oldham parents and school kids are following the lead set by other communities who reject government plans to close local schools and build even less accountable academies, where business and non-educational forces win out over teachers' and parents' desire for local control and quality education for all.

Reclaiming HE

Universities face many changes as they move to a market based model. Many institutions are now seeing, among other things, significant effects on education workers' terms and conditions. Before the summer break, the Universities of Sussex and Manchester saw occupations and demonstrations demanding an end to this commercialisation process. In both cases, while the impetus for action came from student activists, university workers have also been involved.

At Manchester, for example, the introduction of an internal market is bringing about a situation where each building has devolved decision making. Though university support staff are used at present, work can also be outsourced – in one new building, private night time security staff are to be used.

It is encouraging that workers and students are coming together to oppose the neoliberal climate in universities. Here at *Education Worker*, we hope these positive moves can re-gather momentum in the new academic year.