



Tower Hamlets

# Class Struggle

A Workers' Liberty education workers' bulletin

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## Bishop Challoner School

# We can beat bullying management!

**Teachers at Bishop Challoner successfully used the NUT/NA-SUWT national action on workload to refuse a “mocksted” inspection in the Autumn term of 2012, and won significant changes to the school’s observation policy.**

A strong union group was forged on the back of this. Weeks later, the union rep found himself on capability. The capability was triggered by two observations, both with a low-set Year 11 class last thing on a Friday afternoon that took place in June, months previous. It is no coincidence that a rep who has built a fighting union group in his school that has challenged the authority of the head finds himself in this situation.

Capability is designed to get rid of teachers; the stress of the process makes a downward spiral of lesson observations almost inevitable. And it is all too often successful union reps that find themselves caught up in it. This is victimisation in a school in which many members of staff feel oppressed, belittled, and bullied. Staff have little faith in the practices and judgements of the leadership team.

An attack on a rep is a direct attack on the school union group and thus the union at large, and so the school union group and the local association must rally all its forces to defend the individual and in doing so, defend the right of the union to organise free of fear.

### BULLYING

**The treatment of this rep is not unique. The issues of a bullying style of management are broad and affect many members of staff.**

The school group has voted for a ballot for strike action to defend their rep and oppose the culture of bullying prevalent in the school.

If the NUT is to build an active and confident base in schools, the union must step-up to defend its reps when they come under attack. For the members to show the management of the school that when they come for an individual they meet the full force of the collective power of the union, is absolutely right.

Teachers have taken on bullying bosses before, and won. In March 2009, a two year-long campaign against management bullying at Walthamstow Academy resulted in a strike ballot.

As a leading NUT activist put it in a press release at the time, “there have been complaints from members [about management bullying] for a long period. We have had many meetings at the school, conducted surveys, engaged the employers, the United Learning Trust, in many discussions, both at the school and at their HQ in London. The result has been that the NUT has grown from 35 members at McEntee [the name of the school prior to it becoming an Academy] to 52 members now.

“Whatever we tried, the complaints from members about bully-

ing emanating from the management style of the head teacher continued. No one should underestimate the devastating effect that a bullying head teacher can have on individual staff. Threats of procedure, criticism, victimisation, and recrimination destroy confidence, and without confidence performance declines and stress-related illness beckons.”

Despite constant time-wasting and delaying tactics from management, the workers in the school maintained their commitment to dealing with the issue collectively at workplace level rather than through atomising processes of arbitration and tribunal.

Before the strike took place, the headteacher resigned her post and the management offered the NUT a resolution to the situation that the union felt satisfactorily addressed the problem.

More recently, in December 2011, teachers at Langdon Park struck several times against a bullying head, as did teachers at Stratford Academy in December 2012. Both strikes won concessions.

These experiences show that workers are strongest when we act collectively, and that even the threat of collective workplace action can make it very clear to a bullying boss that they are not welcome in a workplace.

An indicative ballot for strikes against the victimisation of the rep, and against the wider bullying culture of management at Bishop Challoner, has already taken place. The result of that ballot is still pending.

**If it returns a yes vote, as is expected, the NUT should immediately sanction a formal ballot for strikes and build for a strong yes vote to defend therep and beat bullying!**

## Hands off Bob Carnegie!

**Australian trade unionist Bob Carnegie is facing victimisation from multinational construction/property giant Lend Lease, and its Australian subsidiary Abigroup, because of his role in a successful dispute by construction workers in Brisbane from August-October 2012.**

Bob faces 24 criminal charges (down from 54 the company initially brought) and could face huge fines and a jail sentence.

On the day his trial began, thousands of construction workers and dockers in Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, and Adelaide struck to demand Lend Lease drop the charges.

In Britain, Labour MPs John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn, RMT leader Bob Crow, PCS leader Mark Serwotka, and the UCATT construction union have all backed Bob.

**Leave a message of support on the campaign’s website at [bobcarnegiedefence.wordpress.com](http://bobcarnegiedefence.wordpress.com)**



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## Action needed on pay



By a Tower Hamlets teacher and NUT activist

**If Michael Gove gets his way, from September teachers' pay will be directly related to our performance. Individual heads will have the power to move individual teachers up or down the pay scale as they see fit.**

They will also have the power to withhold our 1% pay rise, already a real terms pay cut. If you move schools, you can be employed on a lower pay point and if you take maternity leave, you could find yourself returning to work on less pay. Many heads may choose to judge performance in terms of good progress or good teaching and learning, others will use raw data. Either way this is a huge backwards step for teachers and another advance on the fracturing of the education system into a competitive marketplace.

So what are the unions saying? The NUT and NASUWT oppose these proposals outright. Many members assumed this attack would be the trigger for a strategic campaign of action that would stop Gove in his tracks.

But this has not happened. Despite a meeting in London of around 300 reps voting unanimously for strike action this term, the January meeting of the NUT Executive voted narrowly against calling a strike in March.

The narrow majority of the NUT leadership argue that they don't have confidence that the membership will take action without NASUWT members, and there is more to be won by waiting until NASUWT is also ready to strike.

But the longer action is delayed, the more those NUT members who are willing to strike become confused and disillusioned while Michael Gove grows in confidence.

And the experience of the last two years should be instructive. NUT struck without NASUWT on 30 June 2011. That strike helped create the pressure that drew NASUWT into action on the 30 November strike day. The best way for NUT to encourage NASUWT into action is to lead the way itself.

It is vital that the NUT shows confident leadership to bolster and organise those members that are not convinced. We must explain clearly what these proposals mean and why they are so

wrong and outline a strategy that could win.

The NUT Executive meets again on 27-28 February, and will vote on whether to call action. It could plausibly call a strike for late March, although this is unlikely. If it shies away from this, it must at the very least call a strike in April as the start of a programme of action. The wheels need to be put in motion this term; if we wait until the summer we have high-stakes exams to negotiate and if we wait until the autumn, we will be fighting to remove something that is already in place.

Several NUT associations have organised a lobby of the Executive meeting. NUT members must tell the union's leaders they will not accept inaction in the face of Gove's attacks.

The type of action matters too. No more one-day protest strikes, but a fast moving plan of escalating action combined with positive campaign building that involves all aspects of the communities in which we work.

**Members need to make sure they know the full impact of this attack and contact their branch secretaries to urge them to vote for a plan of action that begins this term.**

● For more info, see the website of NUT Local Associations National Action Campaign, a rank-and-file caucus in the union fighting for action on pay — [nutlan.org.uk](http://nutlan.org.uk)

### Boom for profiteers

**According to research by investment bank Seymour Pierce, the public sector is likely to be contracting-out £101 billion worth of work by 2014-15.**

**Already the value of contracts awarded each year has doubled in four years since 2008. The rise has not been steady, but rapidly increasing in the last year.**

**60% of the contracts awarded in 2012 were from local authorities rather than central government, but the bankers say "health-care is also seen as a growth market, with the value of private sector deals rising from £157 million to £552 million between 2008 and 2012".**

Workers' Liberty is a revolutionary socialist organisation active in the British labour movement fighting for an alternative to capitalism and Stalinism based on common ownership, democracy and workers' control. *Class Struggle* is produced by our members, supporters, and friends who work in education in Tower Hamlets. To get involved with producing the bulletin, or to take copies for your workplace, email [awl@workersliberty.org](mailto:awl@workersliberty.org) with the subject line 'Tower Hamlets Class Struggle'.

