



Tower Hamlets

Class Struggle

A Workers' Liberty education workers' bulletin

www.workersliberty.org • awl@workersliberty.org • 0207 394 8923

“I can see Canary Wharf from here. I’m fed up of being told what I can’t have when there are people on massive bonuses.”



Above: Cabot Square, Canary Wharf. It's us against them.

By a CFGS support worker

The restructure which was announced last year was going to change my contract from all year round to term time only. It meant that I would not be paid during the holidays.

On its own this was going to mean a 10% cut in my pay, but we had also been told that all our jobs were being reviewed and I fully expected this also to cut my pay by lowering my grade.

This was just before my 50th birthday, so it was not a very good birthday present. My daughter is just moving from school to college and we will be having fees to deal with soon.

It does take the wind out of your sails. I've worked here for 8 years. We know what we do for the kids. We never say no to anything that needs to be done, so this was a kick in the teeth.

When we were told about it, it was a statement not a discussion. They might call it consultation but that's not what it was really.

One of my colleagues in my department said, “well at least you're not losing your job”. But I'm the lowest paid worker in my department and it was only me who was going to take a hit in my pay.

The review still hasn't happened. It's still coming down the line. At the time it was announced before the strike I was sure I was going to be downgraded. I feel more optimistic now because of the action we took. In fact that optimism is across the school.

The action was completely justified. It would be nice if we didn't have to do things like this, but we do. Since we won the dispute there has been a definite shift in the attitude of management. There will be more proper consultation from now on. Before, management just wanted to drive it through and only deal with us as individuals, meeting us separately. But I joined a union so that we could be treated collectively and to have representatives speak out for us and guide us. If it was not for the union we would not have won.

We all know the situation with cuts and austerity. The government are very good at telling us what they can't afford. But I can see Canary Wharf from here. I'm fed up of being told what I can't have when I look out the window and see people on massive bonuses.

The morale in the school is much better now. The dispute

has unified people. Winning it determines what management feel they can do further down the line and how they approach us.

Stand up for SRE!

By a Tower Hamlets teacher

The Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child (SPUC) and East London Mosque have launched phase two of their anti-SRE (sex and relationship education) campaign in Tower Hamlets.

Following a public campaign against schools using the Channel Four resource *Living and Growing*, a DVD that is accused of “priming” children for sex because it shows a brief animation of sexual intercourse, a petition has been launched to ban the programme of study. Many schools replaced *Living and Growing* with *The Christopher Winter Project*. This too has been termed “sexually explicit”, by which they must mean “honest”. It would seem that if SPUC and SRE Islamic have their way, no SRE will be taught in schools.

SPUC has been opportunistic in its targeting of our borough for its ‘safe at school’ campaign. Those of us who work tirelessly to make sure that our young people actually are safe at school, and outside of it, know that clear, honest, sex and relationship education is essential for children's physical and emotional health and well-being and all the research proves it. We live in a world where children in Year 6 have access to pornography on their phones and are using in the playground sexually violent language they've heard on TV. They already know about sex; how could they not. It's our job to make them feel safe in their knowledge; to give them the information they need and are ready for in order that children can make choices and feel confident in themselves. We do that by taking our lead from the child, not the church or the mosque.

Education workers need to stand up to this bullying and explain to parents, patiently but firmly, why we will not compromise on this — because it is too important.

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 with the subject line ‘Tower Hamlets Class Struggle’.

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Teachers organise rank-and-file push

By a teacher

More than one hundred delegates, representing over thirty National Union of Teachers associations met in Liverpool on 16 June.

The meeting, called by 'Local Associations for Action', drew together a diverse range of union activists unhappy with the outcome of recent disputes but determined to organise for effective action in the future.

Opening the meeting, Julie Lyon Taylor (NUT Executive) explained the situation: "We're here because we expected more after 30 November ... it became clear that we weren't moving to take more action ... Some of us on the Executive pushed and pushed for more action. We organised a meeting at conference of over one hundred people [to address the issues]. It became clear that what happened at conference made another meeting necessary.

"There is now a further ballot taking place. We need to have a massive turnout; we need to make the ballot massive. We are the people who can do it."

Patrick Murphy (NUT Executive) explained the rationale for Liverpool meeting: "What's happening here today is a model for how trade unionists react when things go badly. When you have a setback you organise. Whatever flaws, our guiding principle is that you organise..."

A steering committee had been working since the NUT's national conference to organise the Liverpool conference and to put together a statement of intent. The steering committee was made up of several executive members who'd

been central to opposing the union's drift away from action and representatives of supporting divisions and associations.

The conference discussed a statement which proposed to cohere the Network into an ongoing rank-and-file organisation based on NUT branches and workplace groups. Unfortunately, some elements within the union, such as the SWP, are hostile to this development and SWP members attending the Liverpool conference supported amendments to the statement which attempted to slow down or derail the process of ongoing organisation. These amendments were overwhelmingly defeated.

What is significant about the new network is that it gives teachers in schools the opportunity to link up to support each other, build solidarity, share skills, and help organise action (including by pushing the union nationally to act when the leadership is reluctant to do so).

Roy Bowser, Barnsley division secretary and a miner active in the 84-85, strike closed the Liverpool meeting. In his speech he pointed out the manifold attacks now facing not just teachers but the entire working class.

Highlighting the viciousness of the present government he called for an organisation that can meet the challenge and mobilise school workers for the fight.

- For a longer report from the conference, see tinyurl.com/lanacreport

- To read the statement which the conference passed, and the amendments to it, see tinyurl.com/nutlanac

A WORKERS' ALTERNATIVE TO THE CUTS **A WORKERS' LIBERTY PUBLIC MEETING**

**WEDNESDAY 27 JUNE, 7:30PM, MONTEFIORE CENTRE, HANBURY STREET, E1 5HZ
(OFF BRICK LANE)**

**SPEAKER: PATRICK MURPHY, NATIONAL UNION OF TEACHERS EXECUTIVE AND LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS FOR
NATIONAL ACTION STEERING COMMITTEE**

Why do we face job losses, wage cuts, and cuts to public services when bosses' pay and bankers' bonuses are soaring? Is it true that there's just "not enough money" to pay for things like the NHS? Are problems of unemployment due to people being "too lazy" to work? How can workers organise to fight for change in our workplaces, in our communities, and in society as a whole? Is socialism possible? Come along to discuss these questions and more. No prior political experience is necessary, and debate and discussion is welcome/encouraged.

More info: 07883 607506