

“To lie down will only lead to devastation” Teachers strike against redundancies

THE STRIKE against the loss of a third of teaching and support staff at Rawmarsh Community School, Rotherham continued this week. Over 30 redundancies are proposed to reduce the school's 'debt'.

Chris Bingham
Rotherham Socialist Party

The mornings of 12 and 13 January saw nearly 40 pickets outside the school gates, with supportive responses from passing traffic, for the second and third days of strike action. The numbers were bolstered by the presence of teachers who had left other non-striking unions (NASUWT, ATL) to join the NUT and the strike.

The Rawmarsh NASUWT rep is one of the teachers set to lose her job. Yet the NASUWT divisional secretary stood with the head inside the school gates to “make sure his members were not intimidated by NUT strikers”!

Deferral

THE STRIKES have already led to the deferral of redundancies – though some only until Easter. The next strike action is on 19 January, with the possibility of three more days of strikes the week after.

Please send messages of support to ralphdyson@yahoo.co.uk and donations to NUT Doncaster office,

7 Chequer Road, Doncaster DN1 2AA.

Ralph Dyson, NUT rep at Rawmarsh Community School, told The Socialist: “Every [striking] teacher has gone through all the guilt pangs of: ‘are we doing the right thing?’ But when you sit down and think about it there is no other alternative and it is up to others who have created this mess to search their conscience.

“We have worked at this school for many years and have built up an excellent working relationship with each other, pupils and parents. The school has year on year shown progression through its GCSE results and working rapport with the community. It would be a shame to see this slip through no fault of our own.

“Teachers in the NUT, even those who have been made redundant, are holding extra classes for GCSE students at breaks, after school and in holidays to keep on top of their work...

“Rawmarsh is a community which has gone through steel and mining closures and now sees their education being attacked by bureaucrats who can only see the dollar sign. Is this a cause worth fighting for? I think so. I myself have had first hand experience of pit closures and the effect this has on education and community. From bitter experience I have learnt that to lie down and accept it will only lead to even more devastation.”



On the Rawmarsh Community School picket line. 40 people took part each morning, with more strike action planned on 19 January.
photo Rotherham Socialist Party

Fighting cuts in Somerset

Around the country, trade unionists and local campaigners are forming anti-cuts groups, even in smaller and usually quieter towns. ANDY PRYOR reports on a public meeting organised by Weston and North Somerset Anti-cuts Alliance.

WESTON SUPER MARE has not traditionally been a hotbed of militancy but our lively public meeting attracted 50 people on 12 January. North Somerset Council wants to cut £47.3 million over four years.

Children and Young People's Services could take the biggest hit with maybe 130 jobs disappearing in the first year alone, a third of the budget slashed along with a quarter of jobs. As the council is currently the largest employer in the area this will have far-reaching effects.

There were many excellent contributions in the discussion. We heard from a library assistant who has watched the service deteriorate through persistent lack of funding. When the council first introduced the idea of self-scanning machines in libraries, they told workers that the machines would mean workers could be on the library floor interacting with the public, and providing a more proactive, high quality service.

The council have now changed their tune. Now that the machines are on their way, so will the workers be. Apparently libraries can operate with fewer workers as the public can scan books in and out themselves! Our libraries are a vital part of our communities and we should

campaign against any proposed closures and cutbacks.

A social worker spoke passionately about the disgraceful way those most at risk will pay the highest price. The council is seeking to cut the services designed to support children and families in crisis. With families facing job losses, pay cuts and pay freezes more support will be needed not less.

She pointed out that we face a national attack, so we need a national fightback. If the coalition government didn't turn up for work one day no one would notice the difference. On the other hand, if we all decided not to go into work then we could show where the power really lies.

There was a real resolve to take our campaign forward, starting with lobbies of council meetings in January and February, and throwing our full weight behind the national demonstration in London called by the TUC for 26 March. We also need to build for a public-sector stoppage leading to a general strike.

As a result of the meeting, a parent and a school governor came forward looking to build campaigns against academy status in their respective schools.

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