

# Protest resignations at Bromley Unison

In Bromley, south London, council Unison representatives have handed in their resignations to Unison and are to join Unite. They are calling on all the council's Unison members to join them. This now leaves Bromley council without a single council Unison representative.

Kathy Smith, the former Unison branch chair, was recently elected to Unison's national executive, in a show of opposition to how the union's national leadership have treated the Bromley branch and its branch secretary, Glenn Kelly.

Kathy has now issued a statement, extracts below: "Faced with the biggest onslaught against our jobs, wages and conditions in our history we had a right to expect that every ounce of energy of the union would be used to fight the employers. However Unison nationally has put in massive resources, not to fight the employer and organise the members, but to strangle the rights of the branch and its members and its ability to resist the cuts.

It has now been 16 months since the ban on the branch secretary Glenn Kelly was imposed and the branch was placed under control of unelected full-time officials, who have not led a single campaign in defence of members.

We had the disgraceful position of 140 personal care workers be-



Glenn Kelly speaking at a lobby of one of many Unison hearings photo Alison Hill

ing made redundant, yet the only meetings, lobbies and campaign organised to defend these members was run by the staff side secretary [Glenn Kelly].

One third of the parks service jobs have recently been cut and the union

officials did nothing again. The only lobbies, petitions and protests were organised by the staff side secretary.

When the council set its budget, where £30 million of cuts were passed, the officials sat at the back of the council chamber rather than

joining or indeed organising a lobby in defence of jobs and services.

In these circumstances is it any wonder that members are asking what they are paying their subs for?

Alongside all of this it has been shocking to find out from senior officers of the council that these union officials have been regularly meeting with our Tory employers. They have not only tried to get Glenn removed from his role as the staff side secretary but they have also demanded the council remove my facility time as the Unison branch chair. Given that I was and have never been subject to any investigation, let alone a ban by Unison, such actions are despicable and demonstrate the real motivations of the actions against the branch."

• See [socialistparty.org.uk](http://socialistparty.org.uk) for more information and [stopthewitchhunt.org.uk](http://stopthewitchhunt.org.uk) for background.

"I am resigning from Unison with immediate effect..."

One Bromley Unison member wrote a furious letter of resignation: "I am resigning from Unison with immediate effect... the most important point from my perspective (and I can say most of my fellow workers) - the complete and utter disgraceful treatment of Glenn Kelly. If you think that we are so stupid as not to be able to see that you are willing to rid yourselves of Glenn Kelly, at any cost, even at the expense of our branch being taken out of action, you are sorely mistaken. I

for one would be very interested to know how much this witch-hunt has cost Unison members in real financial terms.

It is just a shame that the same amount of vicious, nasty underhanded tactics you have employed in trying to expel Glenn Kelly from Unison are not applied when acting on behalf of fully paid-up members of the union.

I would rather stand alone with Glenn Kelly than stand beside a thousand of Dave Prentis [Unison general secretary] and his ilk!"

## Southampton council - fighting mood builds

Nick Chaffey

Around 1,000 council workers and supporters marched through Southampton on 13 July to protest at the Tory council's decision to dismiss its entire workforce and re-employ on worse terms and conditions.

It was the largest strike to date with over 700 workers out. The mood hardened over the previous weekend with news of a council document that estimated over 1,200 job cuts would be needed to 'balance' the books.

One notable absentee at the rally was Labour group leader, Richard Williams who had spoken out against the strikes and called for mass redundancies if Labour get elected next May.

Unite officer Ian Woodland said: "We will oppose the cuts whoever makes them." Hundreds then flooded into the Guildhall to heckle speeches from the council leader and others. While the fire is turned for now on the Tories, it is obvious that a fight to oppose cuts will come into collision with the Labour Party.

The Socialist Party has made its position clear, if the Labour Party won't oppose the cuts, the trade unions must withdraw their funds and stand their own council candidates, opposed to all cuts.

Despite the imposition of new contracts, the mood of the workers is to continue the fight. In a crude attempt to buy off the support of a section of social workers, the council offered one-off payments of £1,400 to accept the new contracts. At a meeting of over 70 social workers a unanimous vote was taken in support of joining the strike. "I have never seen anything like it," said one Unison member.

Support for the strikers remains strong. A striking parking warden said: "Things have gone too far to stop now." Without substantial progress in talks, further strikes are due to involve bin workers, transport, parking wardens, street cleaners and others in the weeks ahead.

Southampton strikers from Unison and Unite led the annual Tolpuddle Martyrs rally on 17 July, where thousands gave their support to the strike.

## Solid support for BBC jobs strike

Iain Dalton  
Leeds Socialist Party

Last year the government and BBC governors agreed a six year freeze in the TV license fee, which has meant spending cuts of around 20% within the corporation.

The BBC is imposing compulsory redundancies, and making it difficult for individuals in services that are being cut to re-train for other areas of work.

With over 20 journalists attending the picket lines during the day and a handful of managers and contractors putting out a skeleton broadcast, the BBC strike was fairly solid in Leeds.

BBC Radio Leeds Father of Chapel, Trevor Gibbons, spoke to the Socialist: "The NUJ represents 85% of BBC journalists and the strike today will impact services, particularly TV and radio news programmes as the people out here are the ones who make them."

A major topic of conversation on the picket lines was the News International saga. Many were worried about the future of the newspaper industry if more News International titles were



On a picket line in London photo Paul Mattsson

to close, given the already huge job losses in journalism. On the other hand, many were not sorry to see the Murdoch empire run into difficulties, especially given the attacks his media have made on the BBC.

In Coventry there was a picket line at the BBC office. Strikers reported that the action was solid. Socialist Party members brought support from unions such as the CWU, PCS and Unison.

## South Yorkshire journalists start all-out strike

A South Yorkshire Newspapers NUJ member

Twenty NUJ journalists at South Yorkshire Newspapers have marched out on a unanimous, indefinite strike over greedy owners Johnston Press's latest efforts to hack their jobs.

The cash-strapped company borrowed up to a billion pounds in the last decade, then watched its shares collapse from 428p to just 4p in the slump. Its shares currently hover around the 5p mark.

New managing director and axeman, John Bills, was brought into the company last December. He never discussed cuts with anyone -

or even met some editors - but allowed the editor of the Doncaster Free Press, Graeme Huston to draw up a redundancy hitlist. This included half the Mexborough editorial team at the South Yorkshire Times, including its editor, 37-year-long NUJ member Jim Oldfield.

The proposal is to edit the South Yorkshire Times in Doncaster, once more by Huston - who took some 2,500 off its sales of 6,500 in three years when he last ran it.

When Oldfield took over the title in 2009 he reversed circulation losses of around 30%, making the paper South Yorkshire's best-performing paid-for title in 2010 with losses of just 3.3%.

At the Free Press, Huston has already dispatched his sports editor.

The flagship title's sport, along with that of the South Yorkshire Times, will now be edited by the Free Press news editor.

An editor at the free Goole Courier is also proposed for redundancy.

NUJ official Lawrence Shaw said: "The community is right behind us and we've had a great response from passers-by, regular readers and campaigning groups in the local community such as the Socialist Party which has already been out supporting our members on the ground."

• Please email [nujmanchester@nuj.org.uk](mailto:nujmanchester@nuj.org.uk) and follow @DoncasterNUJ on Twitter for latest updates on the dispute. Also see [www.nuj.org.uk](http://www.nuj.org.uk)



Getting the message across photo Yorkshire SP