

COUNCIL LEADERS AGREE TO TALKS, NEGLECT TO TELL US AND THEN DELAY THE START



WHO KNOWS what's going on in the minds of Council leaders these days; for months they have not spoken directly to unions, preferring to play party political games in the local media or seeking to undermine union members by communicating their political propaganda directly to staff and residents.

Anyone would surely think they have no interest in resolving this dispute; they certainly weren't interested in negotiating a settlement at first. Perhaps they didn't believe UNITE and UNISON members could deliver an effective campaign and were waiting for us to just fizzle out, or perhaps they thought public anger and opposition towards public sector workers refusing to accept being sacked would force us into hasty retreat.

What they obviously can never understand is that the decent hard working people of this city will not support an unreasonable and unscrupulous employer, who's only intent is to beat its workers into the ground.

Anyway, low and behold, SCC has finally now agreed to talks with ACAS, after two weeks of industrial action that we did not want to take and the public certainly did not deserve.

In true fashion however, we only learned about the Councils agreement to talk by reading it in the local press. Yes you've got it; they couldn't even tell us directly that they want to talk to us.....good start then!

Just to demonstrate how eager they are to negotiate a settlement, the council then proposed meeting dates in 3 or 4 weeks time, subjecting the public of Southampton to yet more pain while they considered "diary commitments".

UNITE and UNISON on the other hand is committed to talks now; we're not sure what can be in a Councillors diary that is more important than this? (answers on a post card please); so much for the Tory claim to care about jobs and services.

Now, because they have agreed to talks, Council leaders are calling upon unions to withdraw industrial action immediately.

Unite's message to that is simple: SCC should withdraw the threat of sackings and then unions will suspend industrial action. Whilst we accept that we cannot have meaningful dialogue whilst taking industrial action, neither can the council expect a climate of conciliation to prevail with 11th July becoming ever closer (the date that we are all sacked and re-engaged).

TO NEGOTIATE A SETTLEMENT IS THE ONLY GAME IN TOWN AND WE CALL UPON SOUTHAMPTON COUNCIL LEADERS TO GET SERIOUS ABOUT RESOLVING THIS DISPUTE.

INDUSTRIAL ACTION UPDATE

Since 23rd May, industrial action has been taking place by UNITE and UNISON members throughout the City Council, over imposed cuts to pay and conditions.

The action (a combination of selective strike and action short of strike) involving all members of UNITE and UNISON working for Southampton City Council is, in only its second week, proving to have a real effect in achieving our aim; that is to convince SCC the only way to resolve this dispute is by negotiation and agreement rather than imposition and mass sackings.

Not only is our action having a telling effect, the public are demonstrating very high levels of support for our campaign; striking workers, other local trade union activists and a range of supporters are leafleting the whole city telling the public why we have been forced into this act of last resort and they are in the main being very well received.

The public thankfully understand we have been forced into this by an unreasonable employer more intent on breaking the will of its loyal staff than working with them.

POLL SHOWS SUPPORT

Apart from the messages of support we are receiving on a daily basis from members of the public, a Daily Echo Poll of readers also shows a high level of support still remains.

Unlike Southampton Council; our residents value the hard work of its public servants and for this we extend our humble appreciation.

Unite News

For Unite members in Southampton City Council

June 2011



The story so far...

WASTE & RECYCLING

UNITE members working in Waste and Recycling began 5 days of strike action on Monday 23rd May; this action was followed by a period of indefinite action short of strike including a work to rule and the non-handling of side waste (bags outside of the bin).

A further one day strike on the contractual catch up from the previous bank holiday took place this last Saturday, 4th June and another week long strike is scheduled to begin on Wednesday 8th June with an option being considered to extend this action by a further week.

PARKING SERVICES

UNITE & UNISON members working as Civil Enforcement Officers and maintenance and cash collection staff in the Council's Parking Services department began a 7 day strike on Tuesday 31st May and immediately announced a further 7 days strike, meaning a total of 14 days of action is being taken, set to end on Tuesday 14th June.

ITCHEN TOLL BRIDGE

UNISON members working on Itchen Toll Bridge will begin a 7 day strike from midnight tonight (6/6/11)

STREET CLEANSING

UNITE and UNISON today (6/6/11) announced 7 days of strike action to begin from one minute past midnight on Monday 13th June for all Street Cleaning members, along with action short of strike including a ban on overtime (already announced) either side of strike action.

BELOW IS A PRESS RELEASE FROM UNITE ISSUED ON WEDNESDAY 8TH JUNE, RELATING TO POTENTIAL BREACHES OF ELECTORAL LAW.

Perhaps a little more effort spent on resolving the dispute from this administration would be advisable. **Unite urges Hampshire police to investigate bandwagon' leaflets attacking council workers**

Unite urges Hampshire police to investigate bandwagon' leaflets attacking council workers

The country's biggest union, Unite, has written to the Chief Constable of Hampshire police force requesting that they conduct an immediate investigation into the origins of leaflets distributed throughout the Southampton area attacking council workers.

Workers, including refuse workers, have been taking lawful industrial action since late May in protest at their employer's insistence that 4,300 council employees sign new, inferior contracts by July 11th - or lose their jobs.

Unite says that during the first week of strike action leaflets were stuck on residents' bins with the deliberate intention of smearing the workers.

The leaflets carry the Conservative Party logo but make no mention of who had written or produced the leaflets. Failure to clearly establish both authorship and production credentials are infringements of election law, as set out in the Representation of the People Act 1983.

Unite regional secretary, John Rowse, commented: **"Our concern is that this leaflet is deliberately designed to cause division between the service users of the city and the workforce. Its purpose is not to inform the people of Southampton but to poison them against a solution being negotiated between the workers and their employers, Southampton City Council.**

"This dispute will only be resolved by negotiation between these two groups. Interventions from third parties made for some other gain, only damage prospects of a peaceful resolution.

"Moreover, in their haste to attack Unite's members, the authors failed to make it clear who produced or distributed this materials and could well have breached electoral law.

"We hope that Hampshire police force will take a dim view of this sort of bandwagon behaviour and caution those who did produce these leaflets to follow the law rather than stirring up antagonism against Southampton's workers."

In the letter to the Hampshire Chief Constable, Unite suggests that the leaflet violates Section 110 of the Representation of the People Act 1983 (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1983/2/section/110>) and Section 143 of the Political Parties, Elections and Referendums Act 2000 as amended by the Electoral Administration Act 2007 (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/41/section/143>).

The union says the leaflet fails to meet a basic requirement of election law that all printed materials, including websites and emails, used during the campaign bear an imprint of the organisation producing the material.

ENDS

The story so far...

ADULT & SOCIAL CARE

Action short of strike by UNISON and UNITE members, including refusal to use private cars to provide council services is having a major effect on travelling costs. It is reported that 80 taxi journeys are being taken every day at a cost of £30,000 per month; one journey alone costing £140. This serves only to demonstrate the value for money that current mileage allowances provide.

If things aren't bad enough SCC is embarking on cutting Child Protection Social Workers salaries by £1,000 to £1,500 per year whilst recruiting agency Social Workers at a cost of £250 per day due to staff shortages.

So whilst Social Workers are leaving to work for nearby Councils, SCC are prepared to pay temporary, self employed Social Workers £63,000 a year.

If anyone is risking services to the vulnerable, it is this Tory Council choosing to sack dedicated care professionals because they refuse to accept pay cuts.

Stop Press.....

UNITE members in Waste & Recycling agreed to extend the week-long strike which started today (Wednesday 8th June) by a further 7 days.

A REMINDER ON ACTION SHORT OF STRIKE

Ban on all overtime – Unless you have been informed otherwise all overtime bans will continue, however since announcing the action, UNITE have decided to concentrate its resources in areas where this is having the most telling effect and will therefore be in the main in conjunction with selective strike action and in Adult & Social Care.

Work to Rule – will include taking specified breaks

Not using private cars and refusal to use pool or hire/lease cars – Only public transport including Taxis will be used to provide services.

Working strictly to Contract – No work carried out that you are not obliged to do as part of your contract (removing good will)

Only working Contracted hours – No working outside of contracted hours even when there are no overtime enhancements payable.

Only using all forms of mobile communications for Health and Safety purposes – this will include mobile telephones and any mobile technology.

Non cooperation with transformation projects - Cease to engage in any dialogue or cooperation, including participation in steering or project groups

Refusing to work with Private Contractors – No working with Private Contractors brought in to replace and undermine effects of industrial action.

Not taking any side waste – Waste & Recycling staff not to remove any waste outside of the wheelie bin.

Non use of Bartec – Refusal to use mobile technology on Waste & Recycling vehicles.

No multi-skilling or multi-tasking – Building Works not carry out works outside of their core trade operation.

UNITE/UNISON

JOINT MASS MARCH/RALLY

MONDAY 13TH JUNE

STARTING AT 12.30 PM AT HIGHLANDS PARK AND
MARCHING TO CIVIC CENTRE

ALONG WITH STRIKING SCC AND HEALTH SERVICE
WORKERS OTHER PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR UNION
MEMBERS WILL JOIN THE MARCH IN SUPPORT

Donations to the campaign can be made to:

TGWU 2/8 Strike fund

Please send to: Mark Wood Unite Convenor,
Southampton City Council, Albert Rd North, Southampton SO14 5AT

MESSAGES OF SUPPORT KEEP COMING IN

As well as members of the public approaching our members on a daily basis expressing support for our campaign, throughout the South East region, the whole of the UK and from every corner of the world; UNITE and UNISON in Southampton is receiving messages of support and financial donations toward the fighting back fund.

There are far too many to mention in this newsletter, however UNITE members and Shop Stewards wish to extend our sincere gratitude to all of those well wishes and we hope to eventually respond to each and every message individually.

Messages from the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) and from individual unions in Portugal, Italy, Spain, Austria, Finland, Norway, Ukraine and our Global "Workers Uniting" partners; The United Steel Workers Union from the USA and Canada to name but a few.

Three recent messages of support

I write on behalf of the Executive Committee of SERTUC (the Southern & Eastern Region of the TUC) to send solidarity greetings to Unite and Unison members engaged in industrial action in defence of jobs, terms and conditions, and services.

The Tory-led Council's view that Southampton's workforce and people should pay for the Government's demented economic austerity through cuts in wages and services is outrageous but expected. So we salute the trade unionists taking intelligent and structured action to press for a change and to force the issue to the public's attention.

Southampton's economy is already under severe stress with 6 people chasing each job, more than one in five employees paid less than £7 an hour, and almost a quarter of Southampton's children in families receiving key out of work benefits. Government and Council policies will of course make this worse.

You will no doubt be in touch if there is any practical support that SERTUC can give.

Megan Dobney, Regional Secretary, Southern & Eastern Region TUC

Dear comrades,

On behalf of all the affiliates from the Spanish Federation of Public Services (FSP-UGT) I wish to express our solidarity with all our friends from UNISON and UNITED in the United Kingdom, struggling for maintaining quality public services through decent public work and fair salaries. Southampton City Council has refused to listen or conciliate with our fellow trade unions and has decided to fire more than four thousand public workers and re-employ them on new contracts with poorer conditions. FSP-UGT believes that undermining social dialogue and impoverishing working conditions of public employees is the worst way of protecting quality public services that are vital services to protect the most vulnerable members of our societies.

Decent wages and fair working conditions are key factors to attract and retain dedicated employees to work for our society. We stand with you and I truly hope that your fight for decent working conditions and decent public services will be successful. Be assured that throughout your fight you will always enjoy the unconditional support of FSP-UGT.

In solidarity, Julio Lacuerda Castelló, Secretary General FSP-UGT

MESSAGE OF SOLIDARITY TO UNISON AND UNITE The Finnish affiliates of EPSU (the European Federation of Public Service Unions) send a message of solidarity to members of the UNISON and UNITE trade unions who have had to resort to industrial action in the face of the Southampton City Council's decision to sack 4,300 employees across a range of services and re-employ them on new contracts with lower pay and poorer conditions. The Finnish Public Services Unions' EU Working Party FIPSU hope that the action will make the employers discuss a negotiated solution.

Tuire Santamäki-Vuori President of the Finnish Public Services Unions' EU Working Party FIPSU Finland

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