

# Striking UK lecturers speak out to denounce attempted UCU sell-out: “I’d like to see the membership taking control more as it has done today”

**Our reporters**  
**14 March 2018**

World Socialist Web Site reporters interviewed striking lecturers at an all-day protest of several hundred lecturers, students and university workers outside UCU’s headquarters in North London. They had gathered to protest the sell-out agreement reached by the University and College Union (UCU) and the employers’ body, Universities UK (UUK), the previous evening.

Many in attendance brought homemade banners and placards with slogans demanding, “Don’t sell us out!”; “Reject the deal!”; “No capitulation!” Others asked the UCU, “What do I pay my dues for?” and insisted “Strike still on!” Refusing to accept the union’s betrayal protestors chanted, “The strike goes on!” and called for the resignation of UCU general secretary Sally Hunt.

Hunt was denounced—to rapturous applause—as she entered the building early in the morning after she tried to defend the rotten deal the union was attempting to enforce on lecturers.

Members of the Socialist Equality Party and its youth movement, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, distributed copies of three statements: “UK lecturers dispute: Lessons from the West Virginia teachers strike,” “The UK lecturer’s dispute and the marketisation of higher education” and “For a unified socialist movement of lecturers and students!”

Claire, a lecturer at University College London, said of the UCU/UUK agreement, “I think it’s appalling. There isn’t a point in its favour, it’s a complete backtrack on everything we’ve been striking for. We’ve been out for weeks now and, certainly at my

own workplace, no one is going to accept that the strike has essentially been for nothing. I read through the agreement and I was shocked. Paying more and for what is still a cut to our pensions and for what would be the death warrant for the DB [Defined Benefit] scheme.

“A lot of people have been calling for Sally Hunt to resign and I think that’s right. You can’t present your members with this and expect them to have any faith in you, in your leadership anymore.”

Asked about UCU’s acceptance of previous changes to pensions in 2011 and 2015, she said that the union “have allowed changes to take place which have hurt us. I think there needs to be a change in the organisation.”

“I’d like to see the membership taking control more as it has done today.”

Marie, from SOAS University in London, agreed, saying, “It was the members who pushed this strike in the first place and it’s been down to us to keep it going and to oppose this deal, or proposal, whatever it is now. We should definitely have more of a say.”

When reporters raised the issue of the recent West Virginia teachers strike, Marie told them, “The fight to defend education is definitely a worldwide thing. I hadn’t heard of the West Virginia strike, but I will take a look.”

Asked whether she agreed that education workers had to unite their struggles in Britain and internationally as a pre-requisite to defending their past gains and the right to education, she replied, “Of course.”

Goldsmiths University lecturer Harry explained he had attended the protest “to make known my complete

opposition to the deal that was suggested” and to “see what the union leadership had to say for themselves. Why was this ever even moved, why are we being sent back to work? I feel like they were trying to demobilise us. I think the leadership has to go.”

Asked about West Virginia and the role of the unions, who attempted to end the strike and against which the teachers revolted, Harry said, “I saw that in West Virginia. I think what the teachers tried to do in West Virginia was very powerful. And yes, I think it’s true, unions have betrayed on a number of occasions, betrayed their memberships, their strike mandates. We need to think very seriously about where we go from here. Whether it’s shaking up the union or taking a more radical direction like you say.”

Susanne, a lecturer at the University of Manchester, said, “There’s been strong push back against the UCU agreement at today’s branch meeting. So far none of the UCU branches has accepted the deal, and lots have rejected it. She asked a WSWS reporter, “Are there any lessons we can learn from the US teachers strike in West Virginia and other UK occasions where similar things happened?”

Pam, also a University of Manchester lecturer, said, “The word from the Manchester branch is that they have communicated to the union centre that the proposal is not acceptable.”



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**