

EDUCATION SECTOR

Our Ref: MJR/VT/HE/19/08

20th August 2009

To: All Workplace Reps and Branches

Dear Colleagues

JNCHES Pay UCEA talks

UCEA have now agreed a date for the meeting required under the JNCHES dispute procedure agreement. It will be held on the 20th August with the possibility of another meeting if necessary. Due to diary problems with UCEA that second meeting is unlikely to be until September.

Do not expect too much to come from the August meeting. It is exploratory and Unite will put its current negotiating position. UCEA are expected to stick to their worn out position and are increasingly looking as if they cannot negotiate.

Our aim is to try and get UCEA to agree a national job security redundancy avoidance agreement and an improvement in the abysmally low 0.5% offer especially for our low paid members who are doubly hit by food and fuel inflation.

As I have explained in an earlier communication although RPI inflation is negative currently (- 1.4%) it includes mortgage and interest payments that are currently low for some but do not affect everyone. Other forecasts predict the RPI will move into positive territory early next year. The CPI index is already at 1.8%. Those who do not have a mortgage choosing to rent instead will find the RPIX index which excludes interest rates a better guide. RPIX is on the rise to 1.2% in July. With this mixed bag and changing picture it is another reason why the 0.5% offer may not cover future predictions.

On a wider front other unions are still consulting.

Many UCU academic members won't be back until September so don't expect anything earth shattering from UCU until then. However job losses in academic areas may make UCU and the other academic union EIS even more interested in the job security angle.

Here also is what Unison are saying to its members

"Unlike the previous three year pay offer which we were happy to recommend we cannot do so this time, as it is such a poor offer. The HESGE seriously discussed recommending a rejection of the offer, however we are aware that if we did so we would need to be sure that the members would be prepared to take strong action to back this up. To reject without being prepared to take strike action would put

UNISON negotiators in a weak position in any future negotiations. Taking into account the feedback we have had from members so far and comparing this to the feedback when we last had a national strike over attacks on the Local Government Pension Scheme in 2006 we do not believe that we can recommend such a rejection.

Therefore we believe that the offer represents all that can be achieved by negotiations and that if members reject the offer then we will need to be ready to take sustained strike action to make the employers move significantly. It is on that basis we ask members to vote to either accept or reject the offer."

Unite negotiators think there is a bit more mileage to go before any Unison strike vote. As ever in HE all small signals are closely observed so Unite is quietly preparing to move its tanks forward if necessary.

I am therefore urging everyone to make sure membership records are as up to date as can be achieved. The lists will need to include actual campus or specific workplaces if possible. If the records do need to be cleaned then mid September would be a useful time to have them ready by.

You may have seen the Times Higher news item at <http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?sectioncode=26&storycode=407786&c=1> and also Unite have covered the issue under a press release at http://www.unitetheunion.com/news__events/latest_news/unite_reject_ucea's_poor_pay.aspx

Please keep members informed and ask them to keep faith with the negotiating team.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Robinson".

Mike Robinson
National Officer
Education Sector