

EDUCATION SECTOR

Our Ref: MJR/VT/HE/25/09

15th October 2009

**To: All Workplace Reps and Branches
Sue Sharp NEC for information
Paula Bartle NEC for information**

Dear Colleagues

2009 pay and associated items

I reported to you in my last Circular 7th October 2009 that Unite had entered into discussions with UCEA via ACAS following our members rejection of the offer on 0.5% on pay and the refusal by UCEA to enter into a national agreement on job security and redundancy avoidance.

I also reported that Unison appeared to be willing to accept the offer but remained deeply disturbed by the low offer and warned that they would not accept a repeat in next years pay round.

Since then others unions have reported back their positions. EIS one of the Scottish education unions has written to UCEA and rejected the offer. So has UCU, again rejecting the offer and seeking a firm commitment by UCEA on job security and redundancy avoidance within the sector. The last union to report back was GMB who have also rejected the employers offer.

I attach for your convenience various items of correspondence between different unions and UCEA on the rejection of the offers. They are not a complete set but show you what the different unions are saying and the replies from UCEA.

The latest letter sent today is from all unions to UCEA seeking a reopening of the New JNCHES negotiations. This has been timed to arrive for the UCEA Board meeting taking place today, 15th October.

Unite has continued with a series of meeting with UCEA under ACAS auspices. The content of these discussions were reported in my last Circular. For the time being the discussions are paused awaiting other developments reported above. The ACAS discussions may be reopened but other attempts are being made to reopen New JNCHES and Unite will be a party to those talks if they materialise.

In a way I can appreciate UCEA's dilemma. Their university subscribers refuse to give them any leeway on negotiations. The subscribers appear to be acting like Ostriches with their heads firmly stuck in the sand hoping the legitimate issues the trade unions are raising on pay, especially for the low paid in the sector and job security will simply go away. They will not.

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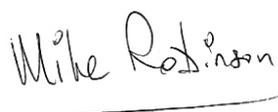
Until UCEA have the power to negotiate then the employers will be faced with a rising level of dissatisfaction and discontent from ordinary members. It does mean at the moment UCEA have little to offer and there is a danger to national negotiations if UCEA do not have the ability to negotiate. On the other hand the employers won't want full blown negotiations locally because as institutions will find the pressure from trade unions can be more concentrated and intense.

Unite continues to receive announcements from universities on proposed job losses, yet the same universities refuse to agree a process for redundancy avoidance before we even get to an announcement on job losses. In other sectors deals have been done in exchange for settlements on low pay that also limit redundancies. In higher education the employer wants the "penny and the bun"; to offer the lowest increase in the public sector this year but also to retain the ability to apply compulsory job losses and not even sign up to a modest agreement on redundancy avoidance.

The joint trade unions are now waiting to see if UCEA are prepared to engage in further dialogue. If not I will be seeking a clear mandate from members on where they wish to go next and it will be debated at the new Unite national education industry committee (NIEC) meeting being held next week.

I will keep you advised after next weeks meeting.

Yours sincerely

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

Mike Robinson
National Officer
Higher Education