

Education workers have had enough, both of attacks on our terms and conditions of employment and on the quality of the education and educational experience that students and pupils are given. We have had enough of temporary contracts, employment agencies, privatisation, redundancies, increasing workloads, government interference, and arrogant, bullying management and personnel tactics aimed at isolating individual workers, and ignoring and undermining our elected union representatives. We are also sick of unions that cannot unite all education workers; that are too often unable or unwilling to respond to management manoeuvres; and that seem more interested in channelling members' anger away from collective action into individualistic solutions.

Education, Education, Education

After ten years of a government that professed education as a top priority, the problems that education workers of all categories and all roles face are huge. If it's not under-funding, poor resources or violence in the classroom, it's heavy-handed management, mountains of paperwork and constant testing of pupils and students. The morale of education workers in general is at rock bottom.

The UK education system groans under the weight of government policies. While funding is slashed, school teachers suffer increasing bureaucracy and stress and the universities are increasingly geared towards turning

the British syndicalist movement of the early 20th century. Many other European countries (and throughout the world) have strong IWA sections, and a history of anarcho-syndicalist organisation. SolFed aims for the establishment of anarcho-syndicalist unions in Britain across all sectors.

Libertarian Education

Since the late nineteenth century, libertarians have opposed the domination of religion in schools and universities, have favoured and campaigned for coeducation and for the freeing up of education from worthless examinations and rote-learning in order to allow for students and education workers free development. One example is the construction of the "Integral Education" movement of the Modern School conceived by Francesco Ferrer Guàrdia in Spain. The IWA, since its inception, has questioned the kind of education provided by state and religion and has sought to move towards a self-managed system of education.

The increased involvement of religions, corporations, and exam-obsessed ministries of education mean that it is high time for us in this country to question and seek alternatives to the establishment curriculum. EWN in Britain seeks to help move this agenda forward.

Cleaner's view

“A few years ago my employer got rid of 100 cleaning posts to cut management's budget. They cut cleaner numbers in halls of residence, and the remaining workers were expected to make up the shortfall in staff. Later, halls of residence were privatised and more cleaners took redundancy pay or were transferred to a new, private sector employer with ultimately even worse pay and conditions. Although we had a militant shop steward there was no backing from the union bureaucrats for strike action to save our jobs.”

Admin worker's view

“Student administrative support has just been centralised to create a “one-stop student reception” to deal with all student enquiries in one location. Previously separate departments have been physically and organisationally re-located together (management is trying to get people to do work outside their job descriptions, without actually discussing it). The union hasn't been involved at all.

When the union does negotiate with management, it is always from a position of weakness, since direct action is very seldom employed, the membership is not involved in the union, and membership levels generally are low.

Recently the management of the university I work at spent millions on building renovations. Jobs are left

What is the Education Workers Network (EWN)?

The EWN is an anarcho-syndicalist union in-formation for workers in education.

Why an “anarcho-syndicalist” union?

- Collective decision-making by workplace meetings open to all union members; not by paid officials, lay representatives, committees, or branch meetings outside the workplace
- Decisions carried out by mandated, recallable delegates elected from the workplace by their fellow workers
- Union open to *all* workers employed within education, regardless of job, sector or workplace (industrial, as opposed to trade, unionism).
- Collective industrial action, rather than grievance procedures or discussions with management, is where our power lies, and is the way to win our demands
- While fighting management for short term, “bread and butter” issues at work, we strive at the same time to help build a revolutionary opposition to capitalism and the state which ultimately destroys both, and ushers in workers control of industry and a stateless, classless, free, libertarian communist (anarchist) society.

Why “in-formation”?

As a new initiative in this country, EWN is still relatively small (although interest and membership are growing all the time). For the time being, EWN members are probably best advised to remain as members of their respective trade unions (minimal

have an “internal market” in the use of rooms. This means that our department has to pay a “space manager” every time we use a classroom; it's like paying to use your own bog at home.

Because of management's constant need to justify their fat wage packets they have come up with mad schemes such as shifting people around. Some have been moved from one office to the one next door, or 2 doors away. Many of us know that the place is being run by idiots, a few recognise that the whole show is run by idiots for the benefit of thieves, but there is less chance to voice this. The whole show stinks, there is something to be said for the old liberal dons; at least they believed in questioning. Now it's fascist right from the top and it's killing us.”

Library worker's view

“HERA and the National Framework Agreement seems horribly reminiscent of the Single Status Agreement in Local Government. There Unison included a clause in the latter which allowed local employers to, in effect, decide which bits of the existing national agreements they could disregard while legally telling workers they adhered to them all.

Unison want their national bargaining rights but they don't want the responsibility of actually doing something nationally about them, so they drop branches in it. This also has the advantage for them of avoiding conflict with Gordon Brown, whom Prentiss

and all the others have backed for Labour leader for years, while he screwed public sector workers and robbed our pensions.”

Porter's view

“Having come from a well organised workplace where strikes and the threat of strikes were the norm it took a bit of adjusting to union activity within a university. Union members were in the minority, union meetings only took place once a year, and workplace organisation was virtually non-existent. The whole place was run on paternalism with management's attitude to staff, especially towards manual grades, condescending.

While orders were always dressed up as requests it was always made clear in the nicest possible way that what management says goes. As a result management's “requests” were never challenged. Amongst the manual grades where I work this led to understaffing, made worse by staff being expected to cover for sickness and absence. The whole attitude was that staff should do what it takes to keep the job going for the benefit of the university as a whole. Amongst the clerical staff this translated into an ethos based on a spurious “professionalism,” under which the needs of the university come first - to the extent that some staff often work extra hours without pay.

The Unison branch is dominated by the fulltime official and workplace organisation is non-existent. The whole