

Teachers march in their thousands as June 30 strike closes over 80% of schools

**DAVID CAMERON HEARD US SAY**

## **PENSIONS ROBBERY, NO WAY!**

### **JUNE 30**

#### **WHAT A FANTASTIC DAY!**

Right across England and Wales, teachers thronged to local rallies and demonstrations, ATL and NUT members marching with striking public-sector colleagues from PCS and UCU as well.

The turnout exceeded expectations. London planned for ten thousand - at least twice as many hit the streets! 5,000 marched in Bristol, Manchester and Birmingham, 4,000 in Brighton, thousands more in Liverpool and Leeds. Even rural Llandrindod Wells held its own march and rally!

Young teachers were to the fore - spurred into action by the pension robbery - but also by workload. They'll be returning to school more confident to stand firm on that too.

The strike itself also reached further and deeper than our last national action in 2008. The NUT estimate that 85% of schools were closed or partially closed to pupils. Many academies and even some independent schools were hit by our solid action.

Yet support on the school gates and even in opinion polls showed that many parents understood why we had to strike. The public have seen trade unions standing up to Government cuts at last.

Ministers need to be warned - if they don't back down, they'll be even more public sector workers on strike together in the Autumn!

The streams of people turned to rivers, and the rivers turned into a flood as delegations of striking trade unionists from right across London converged on Lincoln's Inn Fields for the June 30 march.

*(Martin Powell-Davies from London)*

Many had already come from local rallies and pickets in their own boroughs. There were ten different picket lines outside Lewisham schools and several PCS and UCU pickets as well. £155 for our hardship fund was collected outside Crossways Sixth Form alone!

The march was good-humoured but determined, whistling and chanting as we made our way through the sunshine of Central London. "What do we want - a decent pension - When do we want it - Before we die!" seemed to go down best with the young teachers on the considerable delegation behind the Lewisham NUT banner!

Many held placards saying 'All Strike Together' and '24 hour Public Sector General Strike Now'.

There was an electric atmosphere at the closing rally addressed by the General Secretaries of all four striking unions which, like other rallies, launched a Fair Pensions for All Petition demanding that all workers & pensioners have decent living standards in retirement.

Mary Bousted, General Secretary of the ATL, won the biggest cheer when she lambasted Ed

Milliband for criticising our strike: "He should be ashamed of himself ... If the Opposition will not defend our pensions, then we will."

At the overflow rally outside Central Hall set up to address the many marchers that could not make it inside, James, a Lewisham Teaching Assistant, explained that he had joined the rally today to show his support. To cheers, he said that in the Autumn, UNISON and other school staff unions must all be on strike together.

I asked the marchers to "Look around and feel your strength. This Government may have thought they were going to get away with their cuts but now they know that the trade unions are on the march. In 2005-6 the threat of united action forced the last Government to retreat over pensions attacks. We can do the same in 2011. If we strike together, we can win together"



**"If we strike together, then we can win together"**

## BRIGHTON (Phil Clarke)

In a massive show of strength, the Brighton and East Sussex Trade Union and Anti-Cuts movement brought 4,000 people on to the streets of our small city.

The NUT delivered solid action as large numbers of schools shut. The huge turnout on the demonstration was matched by the wider public's support. Bin lorries and fire engines organised by the FBU and GMB turned up to a great reaction from the striking workers.



With the local paper reporting 77% of local people in support of the strike there is a powerful momentum in Brighton among the four unions taking action - and the big public sector unions yet to ballot - for further action if the government doesn't back down.

## COVENTRY (Jane Nellist)

The mood on June 30 was upbeat but determined. We had very lively pickets on most of our major secondary schools as well as some primary schools. Cars were beeping their horns in support.

After a joint rally in Coventry, we travelled to Birmingham. The rally there was brilliant. Around 5,000 marched, the numbers boosted by City Council UNISON members who were also on strike against massive pay cuts. The NUT contingent was huge. Loads of shoppers were taking photos and smiling. People were clapping as we went by. On the local TV news the vote in support of the strike action was 62%.



The main chant on the Manchester demonstration was:

"1 2 3 4, we're not paying any more;  
5 6 7 8, we won't work 'til we're 68!"

"We had a great adventure joining you in London after getting up at 4 am. - home by 8 pm, exhausted but happy to be part of history!"  
Granville, Retired Teacher, Norfolk

Well over 500 strikers were applauded through the streets of Ipswich. The march was led by a coffin on a bike in which sat a white-haired and wrinkled teacher, with the words printed on the coffin: 'Good morning, class, I am your new teacher today!'

250 strikers from West Sussex rallied in Worthing. One speaker from the floor said that arguing that public sector pensions had to be cut because private sector pensions had been axed by ruthless employers was the equivalent of saying that because three houses in my street had been burgled, the only fair thing to do was to burgle the rest!

Derek McMillan, West Sussex NUT

## WALES (Geoff Jones and Rob Owen)

1000 of the 1800 schools in Wales were shut on June 30. There were rallies in Merthyr Tydfil and a 1000 strong turnout in Cardiff. Caroline Butchers (pictured) spoke about how the pensions proposals would be a disaster for young teachers at the 500 strong rally in Swansea.



Over sixty strikers joined a march in Llandrindod Wells, Powys. Powys is the largest and most thinly populated county in England and Wales, with no big towns, so a rally of this size, with people coming from over fifty miles away, shows the depth of feeling on the pensions issue.

Mike Whale, Hull NUT branch secretary, had a 'gloves off' debate with a Tory on Radio Humberside. Mike said: "I lost my temper with him but the journalists clapped me out of the studio!"

"Camberley has never seen anything like this before" said Ted Truscoe from Surrey NUT as a human stream of mainly young people with balloons, flags and banners marched around the town centre.

The strike was solid in Exeter. Striking ATL teachers from private schools even held a small picket. 700 people marched in a lively demonstration to a Festival for the Alternative, including Billy Bragg.

### **MORE NEWS ON OUR BLOG**

Full reports and pictures that couldn't fit into the July Classroom Teacher have been posted on our blog:  
<http://classroomteachers.blogspot.com/>

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