



# bulletin

## Michael Farthing and John Duffy: privatizing your jobs since 2006



In early May of this year, Sussex University announced that it would essentially privatize 235 of the around 2,200 jobs at the institution. Private companies would bid to take over management of estates, facilities, catering and conference services from August of 2013. Unions were informed of this decision only a day before the university went public with it, on May 10th. Under the new employment regulations, staff would be transferred to the companies on their current terms and conditions, but of course with no guarantee that the latter would not be changed in the future. Areas affected include cleaning, catering, print and reprographic services, recycling management, security and grounds management. John Duffy, Sussex's registrar and secretary, said the following when questioned about what the decision portended for the future:

"As we grow, we need to ensure

we provide support services to our students and staff as efficiently and effectively as possible – making best use both of public funding and, increasingly, of our students' own investment." (quoted in Times Higher Education, 19th May, 2012)

However, back when Duffy was Director of Administration at St. George's medical college of the University of London, along with current Sussex VC Michael Farthing as its Principal (in 2006), an ample example was provided of how the 'need to ensure we provide support services to our students and staff as efficiently and effectively as possible' through private companies actually works. Some two weeks after Farthing had announced the privatization initiative in May 2012, an Early Day Motion (number 129, on 23/5/12) was being tabled in Parliament concerning the results of private sector efficiency and effectiveness. The Motion read as follows: **continued page 3**

## Interview: Sussex porters

*For Sussex management, staff are just human 'resources' to be sold off to other companies, but who is really running the university – Sussex House or Sussex staff? We met up with a few porters to find out.*

### How did you find out about the outsourcing?

We were all called to a meeting in Arundel building with the head of estates. We thought it was going to be about something else, and at first we were all 'what are you talking about?' - and then we realised, about being outsourced. They told everybody on campus the same day.

### What was the immediate reaction?

Disgust. Shock. We already had a lot going on, and it was just another pressure, stress. We were all stressed out anyway, and people were all called in and told 'what's going to happen is going to happen'. That's when I started speaking up a bit. The first rally we had was fantastic. I just hope it doesn't fall away. The feedback I get is 'the union's done nothing', but management timed it right, just before the end of term so the students weren't here. I think we've just got to be patient, and we've got to do everything right as well. Because if we don't, they'll be down on us like a ton of bricks. But no, we were disgusted.

### How will it affect people?

There's one guy who's just taken out a mortgage... **continued page 2**

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London Met University also faces massive privatization.

## Interview: Sussex porters (continued)

a couple of the other guys have got mortgages obviously. People have been paying in for 10-15 years pension, that'll be frozen. The morale is just so low as it is. And it's the moral grounds too for me. I think it should be put across to the students that we're being run by people who've lied to us. We should make them sweat. If you and I didn't do a proper job, we'd be sacked. We want some of that money back we've paid [VCEG] over the years, cos they haven't done an honest job!

### What do you think's the real reason for the outsourcing?

The big thing I've heard is the pension scheme. It's obvious that they'll be making money somehow by wiping away their responsibilities to us. And if it all goes pear-shaped, they'll take

us back in-house on their terms - everyone down to grade 1 with no pension, or whatever the legal minimum is. So it's the pensions, and it's obviously about money making.

What are the things you do as a porter, and has it changed over the past couple of years? We're on call basically all of the time. People want to know where's this?, what's that?. when's this?, how?, where's this room?, whatever. Part of the job is doing the internal post, from the external post coming in, which we issue out to different departments, as well as student residences. We also do the parcels, we do recycling, we do furniture moves... and we really don't have the staff to do it anymore - now they've taken the porters out of the buildings. Porters used to be run by the schools, now there's no contact with them at all.

There used to be a porter for each building pretty much. Now we work from one porters' lodge, and cover more buildings, plus sometimes covering internal post if someone's sick. And the buildings are suffering as far

as we're concerned, cos we're nowhere near them. I'm working harder than I've ever done. I'm walking everywhere, it's a 10 hour day, and I'm tired.

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### It sounds like management have made things worse?

They've got all these project managers, and all these new buildings going on. We see things in the buildings that are terrible. Money's wasted, furniture goes out the window, stuff isn't recycled properly. They look good on paper, but when you look underneath it it's bad

management all round. It was mentioned in the 'forum' with the VC [Farthing] about the new Fulton building, which is a disaster, same as the new Jubilee building.

In the Jubilee, it's the fire doors, they're not shutting. There's loads of things - some of the rooms are too small, disabled access is poor, there's no cleaning cupboards. Fulton building gets flooded down in the boiler room, it flooded through to the lecture theatre one day, and got all in the electrics. The way the bathroom sinks are designed means water goes all over the floor. The fire doors don't close automatically, but they've got these automatic windows which close in the summer when it's really hot, and open in the winter when it's freezing!

There's a list of problems as long as my arm. I asked 'who signed it off?' - 'Projects'. They've got these cheap contractors in but it's going to cost them more money in the end. Farthing didn't have a clue about it. Somebody said after, 'that's the first time I've seen him go quiet!'

### What's it like working here?

I enjoy working here, I enjoy working with the staff. But it doesn't feel the same anymore. We all know there's too many managers. With my job now, there's 21 porters, out of those three are supervisors, and three are assistant supervisors. Before we just had two supervisors. Plus you've got the supervisors in estates above them. Then you've got the manager above them. The new company's going to come in and fire people straight away. At the end of the day, the students will suffer. They're the ones paying their £9,000 for less.

This job is about people at the end of the day and if you can make them happy, get people at conferences and they're paying money, that brings money into the university. But they come in and it's all... the food here is rubbish - basically it's bad management, again. It's nothing to do with the staff, they're all there on their grade one/two pay, with no overtime, while the university are taking £9,000 off each of those students.

## Farthing & Duffy (continued)

“That this House notes that the cleaners employed by Ocean Facilities Services Ltd, under contract with St George's, University of London, are paid below the London living wage; expresses disappointment that St George's, which has a 250-year history that includes fathers of modern surgery, should have cleaners contracted on its premises who are on wages beneath the London poverty line; urges St George's to revise its contract to raise the wages of its cleaners to the rate recommended by the Greater London Authority as the London living wage of 8.30 per hour; expresses concern at reports that the contractor has ignored the requests of the cleaners' union for the London living wage, responding with unwarranted threats to dismiss them, to cut hours and increase workloads; and expects the cleaners to be treated with respect and dignity at work and their trade union be recognised accordingly.”

The USSU wrote a letter to VC Farthing on May 14th, 2012, voicing concerns that the privatization initiative be negative in a range of ways, including ethically. It called explicitly on Farthing to ensure that the move towards private provision will not lead to a two-tier wage structure with staff in the private sector working for less money and under poorer conditions than the university sector. The experiences of St. George's six years ago suggest that this call is unlikely to be heeded - this VC and his Registrar are no strangers to making decisions which leave people working for pittance while the VC and his Executive Group rake in a combined £2,100,000 a year, with Farthing's own annual salary at £227,000.



## Sussex protests in The Argus

More than 100 students and staff protested at The University of Sussex over plans to outsource campus jobs.

Protesters fear privatisation of security and catering services will lead to inferior services for students and the possible loss of 235 jobs.

The university is planning to privatise services including estates and facilities management, residential services, catering and conferencing.

University of Sussex Student Union president Kelly McBride, said: "With catering in particular, we feel that a private company won't cater for student's needs as much because it is not the most profitable."

The university said it is not intending to make redundancies but staff will be transferred to contracts with new employers.

"A lot of these staff are some of the lowest paid workers on campus," said Luke Martell, academic staff member.

"There are various ways to make profits; one of the ways is to cut costs in pay. There is plenty of evidence for this in other places."

The protest marched through the campus on Wednesday, September 26, passing the university administrative centre, Sussex House, as well as the workplaces of many of the affected staff.

A statement released by the university said the move to new providers will aid in the continued development and quality of its services.

"Working with external partners is the best way of enhancing and developing its estates

and catering services for its staff and student."

By Jonny Barton and Sophie Turton



## Unions united at Sussex University



The three campus trade unions continue working together on the campaign to challenge the proposals by the university to outsource Catering and Facilities Management Operations. As we have had so little information about the University's proposals, we have submitted a Freedom of Information request for more detailed information on the questions we raised with the University back in May.

We still want all union members and affected staff to contribute ideas for a Service Improvement Plan. Your ideas will be written

up into a formal proposal and presented to the University as an alternative proposal for in-house services. Questionnaires have been circulated, and more copies are available. Please send responses and ideas for improvements to Maureen Winder in Falmer House - m.e.winder@sussex.ac.uk. You can also contribute ideas on-line at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/L9SYKX8>

Representatives of all three unions are meeting every week to build and develop the campaign. The next stage of the campaign is

to contact local MPs and Councillors, and ask for their support in persuading the University to think again.

### Union contact details:

**UCU** - 8909  
ucusussex@sussex.ac.uk  
**UNISON** - 8178  
m.e.winder@sussex.ac.uk  
**UNITE** - 6579  
p.a.burr@sussex.ac.uk

# Wholesale privatization at London Met

London Metropolitan University recently experienced a series of unwarranted attacks, including the University management planning to outsource all services, bar teaching and the vice chancellor's office, affecting IT, library facilities and student services such as counselling. According to the Exaro News website the contract is valued at £74m over five years. Three companies-Wipro, BT Global Services and Capita-are currently being considered, and the management's preferred bidders are to be announced in October.

The campaign at London Met has included a series of emails, national publicity, seminars by experts on outsourcing, lobbies of the vice chancellor's office, and threat of a ballot for industrial action. London Met's UCU has passed motions pledging to resist privatisation initiatives by all means including industrial action, and the Unison local branch are stepping up the campaign and preparing to ballot for industrial action unless

management abandon this disastrous initiative. Their campaign stresses the need to keep ownership in the hands of the support staff, academics, and students who make up the university: "stay 'proud to be London met'-no to shark services!".

As Jeremy Corbyn, the local MP, pointed out, "The only way the contractors make a profit is by cutting jobs and wages—that is the essence of privatisation." Additionally Steve Jeffrys, a faculty member of London Metropolitan University, published a paper in May 2012, examining the effects of outsourcing services within Higher Education.

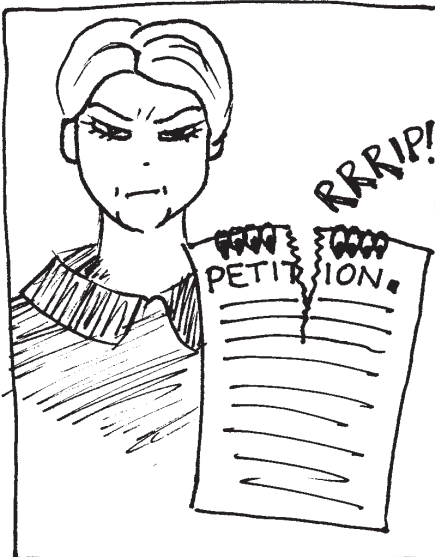
The paper concluded that most of the theoretical benefits attributed to outsourcing within universities are unproven, and that the likely outcome judged by both empirical evidence and theory, is in fact raised costs and worsened quality of services. As a trainee librarian finishing their MA at London Met said: 'It's difficult not to think that the quality of library provision would be affected, partly because of any private provider's



profit motive and partly because of the kind of close, organic relationship with teaching staff and students that academic libraries need to thrive.'

The extent of services being outsourced at London Met is a signal of what is to come at Sussex. Their current eagerness for industrial action is an evitable result of the management's unwillingness to revoke their catastrophic decision. As this same trajectory, and the inevitable response, continues to take shape at Sussex, it is important to remember that we are part of a wider struggle.

## #1 | WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON?



### Keep up-to-date with the campaign

The campaign to stop privatization at Sussex includes staff, trade and student unions and students. Keep an eye out for regular open meetings to get involved.



**STOP THE PRIVATIZATION OF SUSSEX UNIVERSITY SERVICES**



**@sussexworkers**

**WWW**

**www.sussexagainstprivatization.wordpress.com**

### DIARY DATES

- **OPEN MEETING.** Wednesday (10th October), 6pm, in Arts C133.
- **OPEN MEETING.** Friday (19th October), 1pm, in Arts A05.
- Then 6pm Weds 24th October, 1pm Friday 2nd November, rooms to be confirmed.
- **PLUS** keep an eye out on for demonstrations and other events on facebook and twitter.