



Sally Hunt, UCU general secretary - speech to the TUC rally, Methodist Central Hall, Monday 9 June.

I am proud to inform you that our London college members are on strike today for a better deal.

College lecturers have hourly pay 13% lower than secondary school teachers, they are currently the lowest paid teaching professionals in England.

For that reason, where London leads the rest of England will follow in September unless we get a national offer we can put to members.

I am proud also to say that despite attempts to divide and rule by the employers all the college unions - Unison, Unite, GMB, ATL and ACM have told management where to go.

It is that kind of unity we need if our campaign for a better deal in the public sector is to really work.

Because whatever jobs our members do they are fed up with being the scapegoats for problems caused by others.

Some ministers blame us for causing inflation.

Try telling that to my members who have seen real terms pay cuts every year since 2005.

I have even heard the argument that making a fuss on behalf of our members will help the Tories get back in... and then we will be sorry.

Well the problem, sisters and brothers, isn't the people affected by the decisions. It's the people making the decisions.

Because there is a deepening concern within our country about the future of our public services, of which pay is just one part.

In our universities and colleges the private sector has grown 80% in ten years and now makes up one-third of all provision.

Their latest hair brained scheme is to sell student debt to the city of London.

And the pattern is the same across the public sector.

Failing hospitals and schools are to be taken over by the private sector.

The same private sector that has given us Northern Rock, rail privatisation and all the rest.

Do ministers really not understand why the polls look so bad?

The real problem is that while money can always be found to bail out the banks, the piggy bank is always empty when it comes to teachers, nurses _ and now even the police.

So UCU is proud to be part of this campaign to defend public sector staff.

We would like to see more coordination between unions, and more unity until we win a better deal for all our members.