



The

*Daily Strike Bulletin No.2*

# Open Book

A bulletin by and for University of London workers  
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## Day 2: The IWGB Battlebus!



On the second day of this two-day strike, most of the picket line boarded a vintage open-top bus for a sight-seeing tour of London like no other.

**First stop was the Garden Halls**, the University intercollegiate halls of residence at which jobs are threatened by an upcoming refurbishment this summer. The bus pulled up outside the halls to tell students and workers what was happening with the job losses.

**Next we drove to Parliament.** Followed the whole time by a police helicopter, we arrived and were met outside the House of Commons by two left-wing Labour MPs, John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn. Their solidarity was very welcome and was well-received by the workers.



One moment at Parliament was reminiscent of BBC political comedy *The Thick of It*. On his way out of Parliament to another meeting, Labour's Shadow Secretary of State for Health was asked to say a few words. Kindly he agreed, despite not knowing what the dispute was about. After mumbling a few words about the living wage, Andy made a quick exit, most likely unaware that he had just addressed a gathering of striking members of a militant trade union!

**Our third target of the day was the Royal Opera House**, which hires cleaners and porters through a sub-contract with the facilities giant MITIE.

In February, members of the IWGB Cleaners' Branch plan to take strike action to win the Living Wage. We thought that paying the employer a visit might help to move things along...

With drums, megaphones and a portable PA system, IWGB members stormed into reception for a flash protest and demanded the Living Wage for low-paid staff. To remove us, Royal Opera House staff told us that a Living Wage had been agreed and was to be implemented soon! If so, this is a massive victory for the union. The workers will hold management at the Royal Opera House to their word!



**Finally, we stopped off in Angel to say hello to our new employers, Cofely GDF Suez.**

Cofely had clearly been forewarned, and their gates were shut, but the striking workers were able to communicate a clear message: recognise the IWGB or there would be further action and disruption to the company.

Workers will be back on the picket lines from 6am for the third day of this historic strike.



## **Interview with Sonia Chura, Vice-Chair of UoL IWGB: Women in the 3Cosas Campaign**

**Q: What are the issues facing women workers specifically? How do you tackle them?**

A: Issues facing women workers include excessive workload, especially on Mondays and Tuesdays. Women finish work with spinal pain, kidney pain and sore hands. In summer it's even worse. There's a lot more work in halls because of conferences. We take out the trash, make the beds, clean the closets, vacuum, and change the linen. It's very hard work in the summer.

**Q: Do women managers behave differently from the male ones?**

A: It's relative because there are more women managers and only a few male managers. It's ironic because many of these women started as cleaners. They move up and forget about what it was like. They're very demanding. They've forgotten what the conditions were like

**Q: Some feminists say that having more women managers or "businesswomen" is progress. What do you think?**

A: That is not the situation here. Very few women managers support us or care about us. They do what is in the best interests of the company.

Last week, one manager took advantage of her position as a Unison rep to set up a meeting. It was ostensibly about contracts but they brought Unison officials, including Ruth Levin, to try and poach members from us at any cost.

**Q: Are there any issues of sexism or male domination in the IWGB branch?**

A: There is no issue. There is equality between men and women. The Chair of our branch is a man and the Vice-Chair is a woman. Women are always in a majority in the weekly 3Cosas meetings.

**Q: Do you have links with women in other unions?**

A: A little. We have contact with women in SOAS Unison but being in different unions sometimes complicates things because of what happened to us in Unison.

**Q: Are women in the IWGB involved or interested in feminist or women's rights campaigns beyond the union?**

A: Yes. Many organisations support us, such as Latin American Women's NGOs and the Coalition of Latin Americans in the UK (CLAUK). Some of their women activists say that our campaign is an example for women in this country. Women in other cities, not just this one, should follow the model of our campaign to fight for their own objectives. This is especially true for other outsourced workers and cleaners, who are mostly women. There is lots of bad treatment from managers in other sectors, and many workers without rights to sick pay, holidays and pensions. And there are lots of barriers. The companies are devilish institutions. We will keep fighting.

**Q: What would you say to student feminist activists about why they should get involved in supporting your struggle?**

A: Every struggle is a big fight and effort. In many other places, women are in similar situations. We need moral support. They can support the strike and recognise the importance of the objectives which we want to achieve.

*The Open Book is a bulletin written by and for UoL workers, and published by Workers' Liberty, an organisation fighting as part of the labour movement for a socialist alternative to both capitalism and Stalinism, based on common ownership and democracy.*

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