

Tuition fees to rise to £10,000!

STUDENTS MUST FIGHT BACK

STUDENTS WILL this week find out what future Lord Browne has in store for them. The multi-millionaire Baron of Madingley (the beneficiary of an Oxbridge education himself) has for almost a year been heading an 'independent' review into higher education funding and student finance.

Michael Wrack
Westminster Socialist Students

Over that time students have been left to worry about just how (not if) they will be made to pay more for their right to an education.

Earlier this year it appeared that there were divisions amongst the coalition government over this issue. Certain Lib Dems such as Vince Cable favour a graduate tax being brought in (which would result in most students paying back significantly more than they are loaned) while most Tories prefer to simply raise fees.

Double blow

EARLY REPORTS are now suggesting that Browne will attempt to keep both sides happy by including both an increase in fees and elements of a graduate tax in his recommendation!

In fact details printed in the Observer suggest that the fees increase will be significantly more than expected.

Rather than just raising the fees cap to £5,000, or £7,000, or even £10,000, as had previously been hinted (any of which in themselves would represent a massive increase on the current cap of £3,290), the newspaper reports that Browne will recommend allowing the elite universities to charge over £10,000. In exchange for this, some of that

money would go towards a centralised fund to be used for bursaries for poorer students.

This would be combined with an almost 75% cut in the higher education teaching budget as well as interest on student loans being increased to commercial rates. The article points to students leaving university with over £80,000 debts in this situation.

Two-tier education

CLEARLY IF these proposals are accepted, only students from the most well off backgrounds could even think about applying to the elite universities. The already existing two-tier higher education system would be hugely exacerbated very quickly.

As university funding moves further away from the state and further towards those students who can afford it, universities with a more working class student population (already at the sharpest end of education cuts) will fall even more behind the elite universities.

If these reports are correct then the Browne review will represent huge attacks on education in general, but on working class students in particular.

At a time when youth unemployment is at record levels, the right to an education becomes more important than ever.

The National Union of Students and the University and College Union have called a demonstration on 10 November under the title "Fund our future".

This demo needs to be built for properly, not just in isolation, but as part of a national campaign uniting students and workers to fight against every cut and against all fees.



Youth Fight for Jobs rejects a rise in fees and a graduate tax.

photo Dave Carr

Youth Fight for Jobs and Socialist Students will be holding protests around the country on 20 October when the results of the comprehensive spending review are announced. Get in touch via www.youthfightforjobs.com and www.socialiststudents.org.uk to get in involved in your area.

whatwestandfor

The Socialist Party fights for socialist change – a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also fight, in our day-to-day campaigning, for every possible improvement for working-class people.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international.

The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a democratic, socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:

Work & Income

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £8 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards £10 an hour. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state retire-

ment pension, as a step towards a living pension. Reinstatement the link with average earnings now.

- Reject 'Welfare to Work'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage.
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

Public services

- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out private contractors!

- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

Environment

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low fare, publicly-owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

Rights

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

New workers' party

- For a new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and aid the building of a new workers' party!

Socialism and Internationalism

- No to imperialist wars and occupations. Withdraw the troops immediately from Iraq and Afghanistan!
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and banks that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neo-liberal European Union! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!