

## Cable is a coward!

**"C**ABLE IS a coward" said Teddy, an Oxford student, reflecting the anger of the 1,000 students and university workers from Oxford and Oxford Brookes who turned out to welcome Vince Cable, Con-Dem Business Secretary, on his planned visit to Oxford on 28 October.

In fear of the protest organised by Oxford Education Group, Cable didn't show. Fearing the wrath of students, many who voted Lib Dem, betrayed by his U-turn, Cable showed the courage of a mouse, citing policing costs for the protest as a reason for leaving his seat at the meeting empty.

Yasmin, one of the students angered at Cable's retreat, said: "Not turning up is ridiculous. He lapped up the praise when he stood against

an increase in fees. Now he won't defend his decision in front of students. The demonstration gave a good feeling of being unified against the government. It's crazy if politicians think there won't be a backlash against these proposals."

What the protest shows is that this weak coalition fears a mass movement that will take to the streets. With news that close to one in ten of 2009 graduates were out of work in January this year, a 17 year high, anger is growing.

And with news that Clegg is planning to visit Oxford ten days after Cable's no show, further mass protests are likely. If students build links to the workers and the trade unions, a powerful movement could see Cable forced into another u-turn.

**Ben Norman**

## 100 students march against cuts and fees in Leeds

**A**S STUDENTS were left reeling from the Comprehensive Spending Review, Leeds University Against Cuts (LUAC) held a lively feeder march to the Leeds Against The Cuts city centre demo.

The march was initiated by Socialist Students members in LUAC. At a rally before the march LUAC was addressed by Leeds Uni UCU president Malcolm Povey.

Malcolm highlighted the reality of life under the Browne Review. Numbers swelled to 100 as LUAC were joined by Leeds Met Students

Against Cuts. At the demo in the city centre, students heard from trade unionists like PCS NEC and Socialist Party member Rob Williams.

Immediately after the announcement of the draconian attacks in the Browne Review there has been a strong show of opposition despite a massive level of shock.

This will soon turn into mass protest, occupations, and strikes as students gain confidence and begin to fight back.

**Ian Pattison, Leeds Socialist Students**



Thousands of young people have been protesting against fees and cuts.

## Birmingham youth protest

**O**N 28 October people walking home through Birmingham city centre were met by the sight of young people with banners and placards reading "no to cuts - fund our future" and "Cameron: on your bike!"

The protest was organised by Socialist Students and Youth Fight for Jobs, in reaction to the government's plans to slash university funding by 80% and more than double the cap on tuition fees.

Within minutes of setting up, some local college students came over and offered to help hand out leaflets and collect signatures, whilst several university students came along to support the protest.

The plan is to take the campaign against fees and cuts into as many universities and colleges in the city as possible, and to let Cameron and Co know that we won't be a lost generation!

**Nich Brook-Hart, Birmingham Socialist Students**

## Students challenge Willetts

**A** DELEGATION of students and trade unionists representing Youth Fight for Jobs (YFJ) recently lobbied Tory minister for universities David Willetts at his Havant constituency office to challenge him over the findings of the Browne Review, student debt and his government's plans for savage education cuts.

Accompanied by a journalist from the Portsmouth News, the delegation (comprised of members of Unite, RMT and Portsmouth and Southampton student unions) picketed Willetts' office, and had an hour

long meeting with the minister, who infamously declared students to be 'a burden on the taxpayer'.

Clare Blackwell, a medical student from Southampton University, challenged Willetts over his assertion that higher levels of debt won't restrain working class college students from going to university.

Clare also rejected Willetts' claim that cuts in education would be sparing. She pointed out that at Southampton, technicians and support staff had already been made redundant and that in many overfilled lecture theatres students have to sit

on the floor.

When asked if he accepted that under a free market system some universities would 'go to the wall' Willetts agreed, saying: "you could have private companies taking over universities."

Aside from publicly challenging Willetts and gaining valuable press coverage the event also succeeded in building links with teachers and union reps at Havant College, ensuring that YFJ continues to play a key role in uniting students and workers across the region.

**Nick Chaffey**

## Nottingham school staff force council retreat over pay cuts

**U**P TO 1,000 school support staff gathered recently in Nottingham's market square to protest against Nottingham City Council's plans to move them onto term time contracts.

**Jean Thorpe**  
chair Nottingham City Unison,  
personal capacity

This would mean huge pay cuts. Teaching assistants could lose as much as 25% of their pay. Midday supervisors' pay could fall by up to 8%.

The original plan was for this to start on 1 April without even any pay protection. However such was the uproar amongst staff, teachers and school governors, that even be-

fore the protest, the city council had backed off and delayed the implementation.

At most of the meetings held in the run-up to the protest, Unison members asked when a ballot for strike action could be organised. At the protest itself, the call for strike action got a huge cheer.

The city council had clearly hoped that they could get these proposals through without too much opposition. This has backfired spectacularly.

Parent governors were being put in an awful position by the council, being expected to cut the pay of staff who work with their own children! Teachers flooded the local NUT union office with calls and emails.

The first stage of this campaign re-

sulted in the massive protest, one of the biggest trade union protests in the city for years. Dozens of homemade banners including one stating "New contract or new con-act" were on display.

Nottingham City Unison also held a successful public meeting for headteachers and governors to put the case against pay cuts as governing bodies were being asked to vote through these proposals at breakneck speed.

During the campaign many new members and stewards for Unison have been recruited.

The council has delayed but the proposals have not actually been withdrawn. Our campaign will therefore continue until we see off these proposals completely.

## UCU: No education cuts, no fees!

**A**FTER STOPPING building work on schools, preparing to privatise the NHS and slashing benefits, the Con-Dem coalition government has turned its attentions to higher education as part of its attempt to redistribute wealth upwards.

Senior management in universities, under pressure from the government, want to make staff and students pay for the cuts in funding.

While students face increased fees, reduced contact hours and poor resources, staff face attacks on jobs, pensions and conditions.

The National Union of Students (NUS) and the University and Col-

lege Union (UCU) are therefore correct in calling a national demo on university funding for 10 November, before the decisions are made.

A key task is to link further with local and national anti-cuts campaigns and other TUC-affiliated unions. Even workers who did not attend university are furious that the opportunity to do so may be taken from their children and grandchildren.

The anti-cuts movements should demand the complete abolition of fees and enhanced public funding for teaching and research - demands that could win wide support.

But at the same time, we need an industrial strategy for the sector. UCU needs to ensure that national action is taken over jobs, pensions and privatisation, to protect a system of education and research it took centuries to build up and which, through public funding, was able to enhance the lives of thousands.

**Join the UCU supported National Union of Students demonstration against education cuts:**

**Fund our future: Stop education cuts, 10 November, 11.30am, Horse Guards Avenue, London SW1**

## Tube workers take more action for safety

**M**ORE THAN 11,000 tube workers are striking for 24 hours against job cuts from 2 November.

Members of the RMT and TSSA unions will be taking further action against the tube bosses' plans to cut 800 safety-critical staff.

The unions have again shown

evidence that cuts are already threatening the safety of staff and passengers - a District Line train was found to have damage to its brakes which could easily have caused a derailment. The unions are planning further action until the cuts are withdrawn.

## BBC strike over pensions

**M**EMBERS OF the National Union of Journalists at the BBC will be on strike on 5 and 6 November and 15 and 16 November, with further dates to be announced in the next week or so.

The action is going ahead to stop plans to make all BBC workers work longer and pay more for lower pensions, but will inevita-

bly also bring into focus the huge cuts in funding the government imposed on the BBC by the backdoor in the comprehensive spending review. Join the picket lines on 5 and 6 November. For further details of picket times/places, contact campaigns@nuj.org.uk Please send messages of support to the same address.



Tube workers striking in September.

photo Paul Mattsson