

# No to £9,000 tuition fees

fastnews

## Fight for your future!

**T**HE GLOVES are off with regards to university fees. The Con-Dem coalition has announced that it intends to triple the cap on fees to £9,000 a year. If their plans are carried out a three-year degree could set students back more than £50,000, including the cost of living.

**Claire Laker-Mansfield,**  
*Socialist Students national organiser*

This is a vicious assault on the right of young people to access education. Hundreds of thousands will face exclusion purely because of a lack of financial means. Those who are lucky enough to be able to attend will find themselves saddled with three decades of crippling debt - almost the equivalent of taking out a mortgage!

If the proposals are allowed to go through, a 'free market' system will run riot in our universities. Even more so than now, institutions in the elite Russell Group will become an exclusive club for rich, ex-private school pupils. Even many with relatively well paid parents in professional work will find £9,000 a year to be beyond their reach.

Some institutions will charge lower fees (still hugely increased from at present), but due to swingeing 80% cuts to the teaching grant, what they can offer students will be unrecognisable as a university education.

As The Socialist warned, the Liberal Democrats have disgracefully and utterly betrayed those who voted for them in the last general election, believing their promise to abolish tuition

fees. On paper there are enough MPs who pledged to vote against fees to stop this increase, but only under huge pressure from a mass movement will the MPs be forced to keep their promise, even if it means breaking the coalition.

Young people and working people will not simply accept this attack on their right to a decent future. Tens of thousands of students and education workers are expected to march through the streets of London on 10 November.

The 10 November demonstration must be just the start of the fightback. A mass campaign against education cuts and fees organised on every campus and in every college, united on a national level, is needed.

Mass protests and demonstrations, student strikes and occupations, industrial action by education workers and unity with every group of workers fighting cuts, will all be needed in the struggle to defend education.

On 24 November, when fees are next discussed in parliament, Youth Fight for Jobs and Socialist Students are calling for a day of mass demonstrations and student walk-outs to take place throughout the country.

We need to begin organising to build for this day of action immediately. We need to fight to defend every job, course and service, to stop a rise in fees and demand free education. Now is the time to build the campaign - organise to fight for your future!



Students face a lifetime in debt because of fees.

photo N.Byron

### Crown profits

The government's repeated refrain that 'we're all in it together' when it comes to the pain of its spending cuts has worn very thin with the revelation that the Queen will receive a 15% share of the £6.6 billion Crown Estate property portfolio's profits. The Crown Estates include a large slice of expensive London's West End property, Ascot racecourse, a 12-nautical mile perimeter around the whole of the UK's coastline, and more besides. Since 1760 all Crown Estate profits have been paid to the Treasury which then pays the royal family an annual grant (currently frozen at £30 million until 2012). This grant is aside from the £150 million annual cost of security for the royals and their palaces and a further £5.5 million of expenditure which will continue to be funded by the government. Under the new formula, which starts in 2013, the monarch will scoop an estimated £37.5 million a year, a huge increase in her funds.

### Social cleansing

The Con-Dem coalition's cuts in housing and housing benefits will result in massive social cleansing in high rent areas according to the Chartered Institute for Housing. It predicts that by 2025 rents on the majority of two bedroom housing in southern England will become unaffordable to housing benefit claimants. The Institute also suggests that within 15 years much of London's suburbs will become too expensive for low income families claiming housing benefit.

The government has capped housing benefit to a maximum weekly allowance of £250 a week for a two-bedroom flat. It has also changed the local area rental formula to peg allowances to the bottom third of rents and will now uprate benefits by a lower measure of price inflation.

The head of the Housing Institute said that, contrary to government claims, there is no evidence that cutting housing benefits will make landlords drop the rents they charge tenants.

Outside of London the areas in which claimants will be worst hit by the housing benefit cap include Leeds, with 15,610 losers; Bradford, with 10,470; Liverpool, with 12,620; Manchester, with 10,210; and Brighton and Hove, with 12,550.

### Health cuts

More evidence that the NHS is suffering cutbacks, despite the government's pledge to protect health spending, has been provided by the public sector workers' union, Unison.

A survey of 8,000 NHS staff has revealed widespread job losses and cuts in service provision, affecting patient care. Its evidence adds weight to the argument that the NHS budget has not kept pace with inflation and that the £20 billion 'efficiency savings' have badly hit the service. As well as having to cope with increased workloads due to staff shortages, health workers are suffering a three year pay freeze ie pay cuts.

## Ireland: Largest student protest in a generation

**O**VER 30,000 students demonstrated in Dublin on 3 November, in what was reported to have been the largest student protest in a generation. It gave an indication of the fierce opposition the government can expect when attempting to implement its anticipated brutal 2011 austerity budget.

The demonstration, organised by the Union of Students of Ireland (USI), was called in opposition to the government's threat to double registration fees to €3,000 - against the backdrop of 100,000 graduates being unemployed.

About 30 students also occupied the lobby of the Department of Finance whilst up to 1,000 students protested outside, mostly engaged in a sit-down protest.

The Garda (police) riot squad brutally attacked the students with batons, inflicting a lot of injuries. They also used horses and dogs in what was a conscious attempt to intimidate students and to send out a message that the state will come down heavily on opposition demonstrations.

The Socialist Party in Ireland condemns the Garda brutality and

believes there must be proper stewarding of future demonstrations to protect protesters.

The conservative leadership of USI has condemned the protesting students and raised no criticism of the Gardaí. But this is not surprising as the USI leadership on the day didn't even call for the scrapping of registration fees but instead called for a cap on fees; in other words just opposed an increase!

The USI has the capacity to unite students in a mass movement against fees, but the current USI leaders don't support building a radical

movement against the government. Students all over the country must unite to build a campaign based in all colleges and schools that organises effective protests focused on defeating the government.

What was noticeable above all else on the demonstration was the genuine outrage of thousands of young people who are not going to let their education and their future be sacrificed to pay for the economic wreck of capitalism.

**Eddie McCabe,**  
*Socialist Party Ireland*

## Vendetta continues against socialist fighter

**T**OMMY AND Gail Sheridan's current perjury trial is certain to be the longest case of its kind in Scottish legal history. And that's just one of many precedents that have been set in this scandalous vendetta against Scotland's best-known socialist.

**Philip Stott,**  
*Socialist Party Scotland*

In 2006 Tommy Sheridan famously inflicted a bruising defeat on Rupert Murdoch's News International by winning a defamation case against the News of the World (NoW).

The enraged response of the Scottish Crown Office was to initiate a perjury inquiry. This was despite the fact that never before in Scottish legal history has a perjury investigation taken place after a civil case. Moreover, the police investigation only ever had one target, Tommy Sheridan. Even though

a jury had decided that it was the News of the World who had lied about his private life.

A two year police investigation meant over £2 million and tens of thousands of police hours were spent in trying to find enough 'evidence' to bring a case against Tommy Sheridan and his partner Gail.

This is linked to the central role played by Tommy Sheridan when he was a member of Militant (forerunner of the Socialist Party) in the mass anti-poll tax movement that led to the resignation of the then prime minister Margaret Thatcher.

It's a scandal that while the NoW has routinely and illegally hacked the phones of potentially thousands of people there have been no charges brought against leading figures in its publisher News International. Former NoW editor Andy Coulson is currently David Cameron's spin doctor!

Shockingly however, this court

case has also exposed the scandalous role of the leadership of the Scottish Socialist Party, who are central to the prosecution's case against Tommy Sheridan.

Many of the SSP leading members, as in 2006, have once again lined up in court to give evidence against him. However the current trial has uncovered the shocking depths that the SSP leaders have sunk to in an effort to assist the Crown's case and the enemies of socialism.

It has now been revealed that one SSP member, George McNeillage, received £200,000 from the News of the World for a video tape supposedly implicating Tommy Sheridan in telling lies during his 2006 case. This tape was sold to the NoW following the defamation victory in 2006.

Incredibly, Alan McCombes, another leading SSP member, went to the Sunday Herald newspaper and gave a 'sworn affidavit' in No-

vember 2004 just three days after the SSP executive voted to remove Tommy Sheridan as the party's convener.

In this affidavit McCombes states: "Had he [Tommy Sheridan] not resigned we would have put certain information into the public domain which would have forced him to resign."

These base methods and actions by the leaders of the SSP have helped destroy the SSP as a political force in Scotland.

The current trial sees the biggest media empire in the world, the police, and the legal and political establishment on the one side and a fighter for the working class and the poor on the other. It isn't difficult for genuine socialists to decide which side they on.

That is why the Socialist Party Scotland and the Committee for a Workers' International are giving our full support to Tommy and Gail Sheridan.