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## Student protests

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# WORKERS AND STUDENTS UNITE!

**T**HE STUDENT protests against fees and cuts have marked a watershed. On 9 December the atmosphere was electric. Rough and ready placards pulled no punches. The chants were exhilarating. While students dared to hope that their efforts would bring victory, most knew the £9,000 tuition fee vote would go against them.

**Linda Taaffe**  
Secretary, National Shop Stewards Network

As Con-Dem coalition MPs, on their very handsome salaries, sat securely in the hallowed Palace of Westminster cobbling together a vote to trap young people in a future of eternal debt or low wages, students outside raged in anger.

No wonder the anger spilled over when the vote was announced. As one young protester said: "We've come up from the slums of London. Where do they think we are going to get £9,000 from?"

As Treasury windows were smashed some were heard chanting "give us back our money". In the attack on the royal car a mischievous character was reportedly heard shouting "off with their heads".

The day had all the elements of a real turning point in society. But once the dust has settled, rocketing fees remain. Education Maintenance Allowance is still wiped out. Teaching budgets will be decimated. The fight goes on!

£9,000-a-year fees and devastating cuts are a problem for everyone. Teachers and lecturers, often on casual contracts, will be unceremoniously 'let go', college cleaners and canteen staff will be thrown out. Simultaneously, thousands of workers in local authorities are facing the axe. Public services are being decimated.

Students will now be mulling over what to do next. An important place to debate this issue will be at the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) anti-cuts conference on 22 January. Hundreds of rank and file trade unionists and anti-cuts campaigners from across the country will be there. Activists and leaders from trade unions that have shown a fighting lead, including PCS, FBU and RMT, will participate.

Socialists and trades unionists will be arguing that students should join up with organised workers to create a mass force.

Those living with uncertainty about jobs, homes and public services have watched students come from nowhere to present the government with its biggest challenge so far - and dare to wonder if they can do the same.

If an appeal was made to all unions in education for a total one-day education shutdown, that could ratchet up the opposition.

If students demonstrate on a Saturday, and made a call to all unions, and all parents to join them, that too could result in a mammoth show of strength, and prepare the ground for serious coordinated strike action.

Such strike action could rock this government. The Con-Dem coalition could break.

This NSSN anti-cuts conference can play a part in making these things happen. We urge students, workers and all who oppose these cuts to attend.



photo S.Beishon

# CUTS CAN BE STOPPED

**National Shop Stewards Network  
anti-cuts conference**

**Saturday 22 January 2011  
11.30am - 3.30pm**

**South Camden Community  
School, Charrington Street,  
London NW1 1RG.  
(by Euston station)**

**www.shopstewards.net**



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