

Reports of 'Day X' fees protests

ON THURSDAY 9 December, while parliament debated the Con-Dem coalition government's plan to treble university tuition fees, a fifth day of angry protest took place across the country.

The debate ended with MPs disgracefully voting to increase fees to a higher limit of £9,000 a year, with 323 in favour and 302 against, and so the campaigning against this attack must now continue and be stepped up.

London

IN CENTRAL London, 35,000 students and education workers, many from outside London, marched to parliament to show their strong opposition to education cuts and increased tuition fees.

However, demonstrators were faced with very heavy policing, and again the use by the police of 'kettling', on what was a very cold day.

The recently launched Youth Fight for Education (YFE) held an impromptu rally during the demonstration, with speakers from the YFE campaign itself, London RMT regional secretary Steve Hedley, and student activists from Hull, Cardiff, London and elsewhere.

YFE promised that if parliament voted for higher fees, the campaign against this attack would go on, as will campaigning against all the other attacks on education.

Coventry

OVER 200 school and college students, many under the age of 16, from over 14 different schools in Coventry took the decision to strike or walk out of school on 9 December



YFE held an impromptu rally in Parliament Square.

photos Suzanne Beishon

- Day X.

Many had sacrificed their EMA for the week to fight to make sure it is there next year and after.

Students made their way to the city centre, to the YFE and Socialist Students protest march through the town centre.

Workers from the UCU, Unison, CWU, GMB and Unite trade unions

came out to join the students and also a teacher in the NUT union who had organised a 'school trip' for students at his school.

The students were met with applause as they marched loudly through the city centre.

A rally was held in front of the council house, where speakers from many different schools, colleges and

trade unions addressed the crowd.

The students and workers responded with deafening cheers when former Coventry Socialist Party councillor, Rob Windsor asked the crowd not only to join the fight against the Con-Dem attacks but also to join the struggle to change society.

Lenny Shail

"The Rolls-Royce that Prince Charles and the Duchess of Cornwall were in was splattered with paint and a window was cracked. Why does that demand the attention of dozens of front pages and spark outrage among the mainstream press? So, these unelected aristocrats were frightened by the protest. What isn't being raised is the fact that the extravagant Rolls-Royce they were driving in is paid for by the tax payer, and part of the anger which caused the violence emerged from legitimate disgust that Britain's ultra-wealthy elite are taking millions from our money whilst workers, the unemployed and students are hit with increased VAT and massive cuts to welfare, education, transport and the rest of the public sector."

Josiah Mortimer

THERE WERE also protests around the country the day before the vote.

Falmouth

THE CORNISH town of Falmouth was the scene of a lively student demonstration on Wednesday 8 December. 200 people marched behind a banner saying "Capitalism isn't working", chanting anti-cuts slogans.

The day began with rousing speeches, including from Socialist Party member Tom Baldwin who mentioned the recent general strike in France as an example of workers and young people fighting alongside each other.

Although the demonstration was

mainly made up of students, they made it clear that they were opposing all cuts.

Leeds

AROUND 300 people marched in Leeds. The mood was angry but determined, with students from all over the city attending.

Protesters marched from Leeds Met into town before protesting outside the city council chambers where the Labour-led Leeds City Council is planning to cut around 3,000 jobs. We delivered the message that we are not just against education cuts, but the wider cuts agenda.

Iain Dalton

Leeds Trinity occupation

ACTIVISTS AT Leeds Trinity University have occupied a corporate suite.

The education attacks threaten the very existence of Leeds Trinity University because funding will only remain for stem courses such as maths and sciences, which Trinity doesn't offer.

If Trinity continues to recruit at the same level, even if the higher tuition fees come in - which we are fighting against with everything we have - there will be a deficit of £6 million.

Cuts are already being carried out, tutors have already been 'of-

fered' voluntary redundancy and whole departments are under threat.

Students, with the support of university staff, will fight these attacks with all our might.

Andy Smith and Iain Dalton

Carlisle

HOLDING CARLISLE'S first youth demonstration for seven years in a temperature of -10 degrees made jumping to "hop, hop, hop - the cuts must stop" inevitable.

It was organised by Youth Fight for Jobs (YFJ) and Socialist Students and backed by the University of Cumbria Students Union, with

support from the PCS, Unison and UCU trade unions.

100 university, college and school students rallied in the town centre to hear speeches from different colleges.

I spoke for YFJ. It was great to see the protesters get fired up, with some banging placards together and spontaneously chanting "Tory scum, here we come" as we stopped for protests outside the city and county council building to demand they maintain EMA.

After the march there were speeches from the crowd including an excellent statement from some school students.

Dan Thorburn

Save EMA day!

London

OVER 100 people protested outside the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills in central London.

Cutting EMA has been one of the coalition's most vicious attacks and will leave any form of post-16 education completely out of reach for thousands of young people.

The protest was attended by school, college and university students as well as by trade unionists from the teachers' unions - NUT and UCU.

There was an angry mood on the demonstration where students shouted chants of 'Take away our EMA - we say no way' and 'When I say Tory - you say scum'.

Ridiculously, several thousand police were amassed in central London, many dressed with riot gear at the ready, equipped with hundreds of vans and with a police helicopter hovering over head!

On reaching the department,

the protesters were surrounded by police who refused to allow us to protest outside the building and instead, moved us to the other side of the road.

Claire Laker-Mansfield

Nottingham

200 COLLEGE students and staff joined a 'Save EMA' protest at Bilborough College, Nottingham as part of a national day of action on Monday 13 December.

YFE leaflets were enthusiastically snapped up. A-level student Tom Anderton, co-founder of Bilborough College Against Cuts, spoke to the crowd about how the scrapping of EMA would keep poorer students out of college.

Ian Pattison from Leeds University also spoke, focusing on the police attempts to trample on the democratic rights of people to protest.

Helen Pattison

Youth democratic rights campaign: defend all victimised protesters

IAN PATTISON, Leeds University Against Cuts press officer and Socialist Students National Chair, was recently told by police that he had 'legal responsibilities' and 'personal liabilities' for a demonstration on 8 December through Leeds city centre.

The police visited Ian's house to hand-deliver letters informing him of this, in a clear attempt to intimidate leading activists. Ian was not the organiser of the demonstration and had been selected for this police attack because of his prominence in the campaign.

But the police were met with a determined defence campaign for Ian. YFE and the Youth Democratic Rights Campaign organised a campaign of complaints to the West Yorkshire Police to make it clear that Ian is part of a national movement and that any intimidation will be met with determined opposition.

YFE also put Ian in contact with a solicitor to prepare for any legal action. Ian, and the anti-cuts campaign which was separately being threatened with eviction from occupation by university management, received many solidarity messages from student and trade union activists around the country.

The demonstration went ahead peacefully in the end, and so far no further action has been taken



Ian speaking on 9 December at the London demo.

against Ian. This is one of many clear illustrations of the lengths that the police will go to, but also how important it is to defend every activist against even the threat of arrest or victimisation.