

More attacks on rights for young workers

THE GOVERNMENT and the leaders of big business met recently to discuss solutions to the unemployment crisis currently facing young people. Their verdict: young workers must accept low paid, casualised jobs, with employers having the right to dismiss people at will and big business entitled to tax breaks for going to the 'trouble' of taking a young person on.

Claire Laker-Mansfield
Socialist Students national
organiser

The multi-millionaires running top companies such as Marks and Spencer, Tesco and McDonalds, each making colossal annual profits, all seemed to agree that there was simply no way they could afford to take on unemployed young people without special 'help'.

Hearing their demands, the government is now preparing to institute a new "employers' charter", which will allow companies to sack

workers at will within two years of their being taken on. The employee will have their right to bring a charge of unfair dismissal in their defence attacked.

This crass insult to young people searching for work will be met with anger by those fighting for the right to a decent job and a future. The Youth Fight for Jobs campaign says no to casualisation, slave labour 'workfare' schemes and unemployment. We fight for jobs for all with decent terms and conditions and with a living wage.

If profit making companies cannot afford to provide this, then they must be taken into public ownership and run under democratic control in the interests of the many rather than the few. On 29 January, we will march - workers, students and the unemployed together - against this government of the rich and for the right to a decent future for all.

See page 12 for more details on
29 January.



YFJ demands the right to a decent job with decent conditions for all.

photo Dave Carr

MY MEMBERS who work in Jobcentre Plus share the concerns about a generation lost to unemployment because we meet them every day and see their desperation as we try to find them work. Job vacancies fell in December so it is getting harder to help them.

What makes it even more difficult is that we don't have enough staff. During the recent recession the then government recruited an extra 15,000 temporary job centre staff and they helped us to do a fantastic job.

In the March 2010 budget, the then chancellor was forced to announce an unexpected saving to the economy of £4 billion made by my members getting people off the dole and back into work quicker. The current government has only kept some of those temporary staff on despite the fact that unemployment has not fallen and is predicted to rise this year to 2.7 million - that would be a 17 year high.

The government needs to invest in jobs - including in Jobcentre Plus. My prescription is simple and everyone can see how it would

work - investing in jobs would take people off the dole queue to work in Jobcentre Plus to help others find work and save the economy money at the same time. It would be economic madness not to.

PCS is fighting the cuts and for the staff we need to deliver the services we all depend on as unemployment rises.

**Jane Aitchison, PCS President in the
Department of Work and Pensions**

LOOKING AT the job centre website for my area says it all about employment prospects for young people today: low paid, unskilled and insecure. This is in one of the most industrial parts of London!

The company I work for employs a great many young people, 70% are under 25 in my workplace. At busy times like Christmas, we have even more. They all come from agencies, who pay them slightly more than the minimum wage, and do not pay them a Sat-

urday or Sunday premium. They do not even get a guaranteed amount of hours a week, and are basically employed on a daily or half daily basis.

There is a real need for all young workers, including young women and migrant workers, to have the same rights as older workers. The minimum wage should be set at a level that is possible to live on, and should be the same for all workers, whatever their age. Those working for agencies need to be paid the same as permanent staff and be offered a real chance at permanent work.

There is a real need for skilled workers in this country, in the NHS and public services, as well as in building and other infrastructure. However, today, apprenticeships can turn out to be just as insecure as agency work, with young people being unfairly dismissed by their employers before they have qualified. Some employers will use apprentices as cheap temporary workers, as they do not even have to pay them the minimum wage, or offer

them a permanent job when they qualify.

There is a need for the government to invest in developing infrastructure and housing, especially green infrastructure, which will give young people real opportunities to learn real skills, as well as being of benefit to society. In public services, there are shortages of teachers, doctors and nurses - areas again where young people can be given chances to make a real difference in society.

The public sector unions need to be fighting to defend and extend our public services to create opportunities for young people, and private sector unions, especially the general unions, need to start a real campaign to unionise temporary workers and the unemployed.

In the end, it will take a different type of government, a socialist one, to stop the slide into a future of low wages and high unemployment, and that is what students, young people and trade unionists need to fight for.

Ian Harris

Axe falls on courses at UWIC

Students at Leeds Trinity re-occupy



A recent demonstration against education cuts in Cardiff.

photo Cardiff Socialist Party

ADMINISTRATORS AT University of Wales Institute, Cardiff (UWIC) have decided to axe six arts and humanities courses, while making serious cutbacks to its acclaimed Cardiff School of Arts and Design.

Edmund Schluessel

Courses in sociology, architecture and music technology are among those being dropped, while intake into sculpture will be reduced by 65%. University bosses made the decision without consultation with students and finalised it in a closed-door meeting held while students were away for Christmas. A previ-

ous meeting of the University board had been met by a peaceful but passionate demonstration of 200 UWIC students demanding that university courses not be cut.

UWIC is making the course cuts in anticipation of a merger with the nearby University of Glamorgan. Planning for the cuts began even before the Welsh Assembly announced a 9.3% cutback in higher education funding and before the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales demanded that the eleven universities in Wales merge to five by 2013.

While the Welsh Assembly Government claims university mergers are to reduce administrative costs, the experience at UWIC and else-

where in Wales shows students and staff, not top managers, will suffer if cutbacks and mergers are implemented on bosses' terms.

UWIC students have linked up with their lecturers, as represented by the University and College Union, in campaigning against the course cuts.

Representatives of the UWIC students will attend a mass public meeting on 3 February in Cardiff which will link up all the student, trade union and community anti-cuts campaigns in the city into a democratic body ready to fight against all cutbacks, whether they come from the Lib Dem-Tory coalition in London or the Labour-Plaid Cymru coalition in Cardiff Bay.

LEEDS TRINITY University College (LTUC) students went back into occupation this week. The campaign in general is designed to oppose all cuts, especially at LTUC where severe funding cuts are taking place.

Andy Smith
Leeds Trinity Socialist Students

Following the previous occupation in December, people are engaging very quickly with the tasks in hand.

We've received much greater press coverage this time around, with an interview almost as soon as we re-occupied with BBC Radio Leeds' Richard Edwards on the Drivetime evening show. This perked everybody up and caused some excitement and nerves as it was carried out live.

We will be marching in Leeds on 11 January to tell the Con-Dems that these issues are not going to go away and that college and university students are determined to see this campaign through until the government is forced to listen.

The tactics shown so far by the government do not deter protesters and will not stop the campaign demanding what is right. Students have led the way in demonstrating against the cuts so far, and the unions are beginning to fight back.

Students are out in force protesting and organising throughout the

country. They are getting involved and they are planning - they are certainly not the 'apathetic layabouts' portrayed by the right wing media.

A major point of our occupation and every other protest and demonstration that has taken place is to change this situation and to give a voice to people who thought they would be ignored. We fully intend to do just that and inspire others on campus to join with us.



Students marching in Leeds.