

Where next for the student movement?

THE STUDENT movement has had a massive impact. Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) has been saved in Scotland and Wales and fee rises are not planned in those areas either.

Ben Robinson
Chair, Youth Fight for Jobs

Crucially, hundreds of thousands of students have fought the government, learned to struggle and inspired workers and other activists to take part in the fight against cuts.

Unfortunately the government has ignored the clear opposition from the majority of the population and voted to increase university fees and scrap EMA. But this does not mean that the struggle is over.

Current recipients will still get EMA until the end of the academic year and the fee rise will not come in until September 2012. There is still time to force the government to repeal these attacks.

In every university, college and school around the country, the government's attacks will be translated into teachers' jobs being cut, library services axed, courses closed down. It is vital that anti-cuts campaigns are launched everywhere, and that a very clear message is given to management - that we will not put up with these attacks.

It's clear from the victories of the

movement that protesting works. In every area where they're talking about cutting our services, there are tens, hundreds, thousands who know how to fight back and are willing to take action. Youth Fight for Education (YFE) has recently produced a guide to action (see www.youthfightforeducation.com), to help discuss how to organise.

We can force them back locally. In almost every area, one of the major excuses that management give is that their money from central government is reduced, and that they have no choice but to cut. We should reject this argument completely.

We demand that they refuse to implement the cuts and demand enough money from central government to fully fund our education. If every school, college and university took this route the government would be forced to think again. YFE has produced a set of model demands (see website), based on those passed by the Leeds Trinity occupation, which can be used in other areas.

But there also needs to be further coordinated national action and linking up with the workers' movement. We support the National Union of Teachers and lecturers' union, UCU, linking up strike action, as is being discussed in those unions. If this goes ahead, YFE will call for national walkouts of all those



photo Sarah Wrack

in education, taking part in picket lines and demonstrations together with staff.

We will also be mobilising young trade union members, workers, unemployed young people and edu-

cation activists to march together on the TUC demonstration on 26 March.

The TUC must make demands around EMA and university fees a central part of this demonstration,

as well as opposition to all cuts and privatisation. Youth Fight for Jobs and Education will be contacting all student organisations and youth trade union sections to make sure this happens.

Education Maintenance Allowance 18 and 19 January days of action

No to sky-high youth unemployment!



Thousands of school and college students have protested to defend EMA.

photo Suzanne Beishon

London

AROUND 600 students marched in central London against the scrapping of EMA.

Inside the House of Commons, a motion calling for a parliamentary vote on the issue was voted down. Disgracefully, on this crucial issue for hundreds of thousands of young people, only a handful of MPs saw fit to attend the debate.

But the students gathered outside parliament showed that the movement against these cuts has not gone away.

Although smaller than the protests at the end of last year (affected by exams and other factors) this was an extremely important stage in rebuilding the momentum of the campaign.

Claire Laker-Mansfield
Socialist Students national
organiser

Leeds

THE DAY before parliament voted on the future of EMA, 45 school, college and university students held a silent protest in Leeds city centre.

Prepared with banners, leaflets and taped up mouths, the protest had an eerie resemblance to what our educational institutions will sound like if the government's attack on them is successful: deathly silent. The response of many passers-by and passengers on passing buses was encouraging; with people taking leaflets and some offering words and gestures of support.

Eventually the protest sprung into angry chants for 20 minutes. The protest then marched back to Leeds Metropolitan University for a meeting on EMA and issues specifically relating to college and school students.

Robert Harries

Coventry

YOUTH FIGHT for Jobs and Education in Coventry organised an EMA demo as MPs were debating scrapping EMA.

Around 60 students and workers from around the city joined together and marched down the High Street to the Council House.

Socialist Party members Lenny Shail, Rob Windsor, Paul Hunt and 15 year old school student Joe Shail all spoke at the demo as well as several students.

The speakers clearly outlined that we should not have to pay for the banking crisis. This was highlighted again and again, as was the need for a socialist society. Following the demo, over 20 students attended a Socialist Party meeting. The local newspaper ran a positive story on the demo.

Coventry Youth Fight for Jobs

THE RECENT announcement of the latest unemployment figures confirmed what most of us already knew. The number of people out of work jumped by 49,000 to 2.5 million in the three months to November 2010.

Paul Callanan
Youth Fight for Jobs

The rise among people between the ages of 18 and 25 was disproportionately high with a jump by 32,000 to 951,000 - the highest since records began in 1992.

One of the most striking features of January's figures is the rise in the number of 16-17 year olds not in employment, education or training (NEET) - the number has gone up to 204,000 from 177,000 in the previous quarter.

The Con-Dem government has already wound up Labour's Future Jobs Fund which was supposed to deliver 100,000 jobs for young people. Although it would only have provided 18-24 year olds with 20 hours a week of work on minimum wage, it is better than the work-for-your-dole schemes that are currently being discussed by the government.

The government's rhetoric about needing to get young people out of the 'cycle of worklessness' shows just how out of touch the politicians and their big business mates are. The fact of the matter is that there are simply no jobs to be had. There are currently 480,000 vacancies while 2.5 million people are unemployed. And that's before the government has carried through its brutal austerity programme.

The Con-Demolition government plans to take its wrecking ball to around 500,000 public sector jobs. This will mean that the private sector, where most young people who have jobs work in low-paid, insecure jobs, will also shed 500,000 jobs as less people are spending in the retail sector and private contractors lose public sector deals.

On 29 January the Trades Union



photo Paul Mattsson

Congress is holding a rally for "a future that works", following a motion that was passed at the annual congress in September 2010. The motion acknowledged the role that Youth Fight for Jobs has played in campaigning on the issue of youth unemployment. This demo should adopt YFJ's demand for a massive programme of job creation.

Like many motions before it the TUC attempted to kick it into the long grass and not act on it. A demonstration in support of the rally has been called by the civil servants' union, PCS and the lecturers' union, UCU. It has now been backed by the National Union of Students and Unison.

The huge student movement that erupted last year was a shining example of how to fight the Con-Dem government and its cuts agenda. We now need young trade unionists and the unemployed to come into that movement.