

Review: Classroom Warriors

THE MAKERS of BBC's Panorama should reconsider their programme title after their 'Classroom Warriors' episode. It was a one-sided and loaded piece which served as an uncritical advertisement for one of Tory education minister Michael Gove's flagship education policies.

James Kerr
Teaching assistant

It focused on the government's new 'troops to teachers' initiative where ex-military personnel are to be fast-tracked into Britain's schools with a financial sweetener. This is at a time when the government has axed thousands of Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) places and removed the bursary for trainee teachers. Universities had to delay offering places this year for months as they waited for their budgets.

This all dove-tails with Gove's desire for teacher-training to be school based, a craft picked up by observation rather than a profession based on a theory of how students learn.

Interviewees pointed to the 'magic' former military personnel bring to the classroom. This assertion relied on three case studies from one US and two UK schools where ex-military play a leading role.

It may be true that some ex-soldiers have the ability to inspire and gain the respect of young people but it was hardly evidence that the military is an ideal grounding for a career in teaching. Only a short contribution from Christine Blower from the NUT gave a counter argument.

Much of the episode followed Lordswood School in Birmingham where one in 12 staff comes from a military background. Regular 'cadet days', where students wear military uniform and parade in the playground, were praised by Gove and he pledged more money and support for independent schools in developing this. This is a dose of the 'DNA of the private sector' for our public services.

Panorama presented the situation as if schools are falling apart and only military intervention can save them. It's undeniable that behav-

iour is a big issue for teachers and support staff and a major contributor to stress, but how can we deal with this?

Pressure on teaching staff is such that there is little time to share and develop strategies and systems to manage behaviour and to support each other in this task.

The programme was also silent on the huge cuts which will lead to job losses, higher class sizes and cuts to provision for students with behavioural, emotional and social difficulties. Also, as many working class young people will have their options after education blocked, a military career may be the only alternative to unemployment.

The uptake of Gove's scheme so far has been questionable. Tough posturing by the government won't deal with the deep rooted social problems which impact on students' behaviour or the huge pressure heaped onto Britain's teachers by targets and a lack of genuine support that holds them back from offering the support students need.



Ex-military personnel will be fast-tracked through teacher training.

Support the UCU strike



photo Paul Mattsson

THE LECTURERS' union, UCU, will be carrying out rolling strike action from 17 March culminating in a national day of action on 24 March. This week includes budget day and leads well into the TUC demonstration on 26 March.

Ian Pattison
Leeds University Against Cuts

The government and university managements are attempting to impose thousands of job cuts. For example, in Leeds, vice chancellor Michael Arthur is trying to bulldoze through over 1,200 job losses, and close the classics and joint honours departments this year alone. This will deny many people the right to a decent education.

Over the last few months students have led an inspiring mass movement that has put pressure

on the unstable Con-Dem coalition. Unlike the National Union of Students, the UCU has supported students and still supports free education.

If students want to win the battle against fees and cuts, we need to look wider than just ourselves. We need the might of the working class which, when taking collective action, has the power to bring the government to its knees.

We therefore need student solidarity like never before on the UCU picket lines. We need student strikes and a mass turnout of students to help convince others not to go into university on the days of the strikes.

Student anti-cuts campaigns and activists should be organising joint strike day rallies with UCU and using the strikes to build for future mass action linked to the struggle of education workers.

Save our youth services

AS COUNCIL budgets are being revealed around the country, youth services are facing some of the biggest cuts. Haringey's youth services face a 75% cut, whilst in Hackney jobs will be cut by 50%.

Suzanne Beishon
London Youth Fight for Jobs

Alongside massive cuts to youth centres and youth worker jobs, services like Connexions, the careers guidance service for 13-19 year olds, also face huge cuts or even extinction.

Head teachers have warned that more than two million young people in England will lose out on careers advice if the government's cuts are pushed through.

These cuts cannot be taken lying down. While the government raises tuition fees and scraps EMA payments to students, local councils are taking away the already limited services that are available for young people locally.

Lewisham is the council area with the highest youth unemployment rate in the country with 35.8% of 16-24 year olds unemployed. And yet Lewisham council is about to close the Connexions services after al-



Lewisham Connexions is set to close from 18 March.

ready closing Opening Doors which offered similar advice.

Youth Fight for Jobs has organised a protest outside Connexions in Lewisham to demand that the service is kept open.

As well as this, Youth Fight for Jobs alongside Day-Mer Youth and a group of youth workers in Hackney have launched 'Save Hackney Youth Services' and are organising a protest on 4 April outside the council's Children's and Young People Scrutiny Committee meeting.

Protest outside Lewisham Connexions when it is due to close

Friday 18 March, 4pm
209-211 Lewisham High St
London SE13 6LY

Save Hackney Youth Services protest

Monday 4 April, 5.30pm
Hackney Town Hall, Mare St
London E8 1EA

For real jobs not exploitation

IT WAS recently reported that an increasing number of students are taking up lap-dancing to fund their studies.

Becci Heagney and Jasmine Shadrack

Despite the arguments that working in 'sex entertainment' is liberating and empowering, the reality is that these young women are desperate for finances to get through university and to not be crippled by debt when they leave.

Women still earn less than men and in a sea of public sector cuts and rising unemployment, lap-dancing can seem like an ideal job. With the possibility of earning up to £300 a night and flexibility to work when you want, it is no wonder that it is estimated that one in three lap-

dancers is a student.

However, on closer inspection, even the pay and flexibility are not as ideal as they might seem. In Northampton, where Socialist Party members are currently involved in a campaign to close a lap-dancing club, the women working there have to pay the owner for the 'privilege' of using his establishment.

They are also encouraged to do more, such as dancing completely naked, to earn more money. Many go home with less money than they started with.

It is often claimed that lap-dancing is just a bit of 'harmless fun'. But many lap-dancers are 'self-employed' and so have very few employment rights, meaning that the reality of these clubs is anything but harmless.

The advertising of these venues often uses images of half-naked

women on billboards or on mobile ad vehicles. A survey in London has shown that in an area where lap-dancing clubs exist there was a rise in the number of attacks on women.

The rise in tuition fees to £9,000 a year, along with rising living costs and youth unemployment, means that students will be struggling even more to make ends meet.

Worried about leaving university with a lifetime of debt, more young women may feel that they have no other option but to work in these clubs.

We deserve better than this. University education should be fully funded, with full grants for all, so that students are not forced to work in degrading and unsafe jobs. We also need jobs with trade union rights and decent pay from day one.