

# Jarrow marchers put forward an alternative

## Minimum wage not to blame

**Paul Callanan**

Youth Fight for Jobs national  
organiser

On the day that the latest unemployment figures were announced I was asked to debate with Mark Littlewood of the Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) on the Tony Livesy show on BBC Radio 5Live. The IEA claims that we can reduce unemployment by getting rid of the minimum wage.

Demonstrating that 'free marketeers' like Littlewood see workers merely as commodities, he said that "like anything, if you put up the price people are less willing to buy it... if you put the price of labour up, people won't buy it".

He also claimed that many young people wrote to him asking if they could work for him at £4.50 an hour but claimed he has to write back "saying that it is illegal for him to hire people on that and leaving them on the unemployment scrap heap".

### Banks bailed out

I was then brought into the debate and made the point that it is not because the minimum wage is too high that small businesses can't take people on. It is because banks that have been bailed out by the tax payer will not lend. I said that it is outrageous that working class people are being asked to take more punishment for the economic crisis while bankers still rake in huge bonuses.

Clearly flustered and failing to grasp the point I was making Littlewood resorted to comments about

a "magic money fairy". I put to him that we need money to live on and that what he's actually calling for is a race to the bottom where the lowest bidder gets the job.

The interviewer then asked people to call in saying "do we lower the minimum wage to get people into work like Mark says or do we just call on people to sit around waiting for a job on £8 an hour like Paul says?"

### Socialism

I took issue with this saying that Youth Fight for Jobs is building a movement and calling for real solutions to this problem. We need to nationalise the banks, create a programme of public works and nationalise the biggest corporations and failing businesses to protect and provide jobs. This would enable us to provide apprenticeships and other training on decent rates of pay that guarantee a job at the end and provide jobs with decent terms and conditions.

The interviewer then claimed that I would take the country back to an era of nationalisation and socialism. I agreed that yes I was putting forward socialism. Capitalism, a system run in the interests of the super-rich has failed.

What we need is to change society so that it is run by ordinary people and in the interests of ordinary people. I also pointed out that I wasn't talking about the 'socialism' of the old eastern bloc or the nationalisation of the past but that what we need is a genuine democratic socialist solution



to the crisis.

The texts from the public after the debate went 100% in favour of the arguments I was making. We demand that small businesses that claim they can't hire on a minimum wage or are sacking workers open their books to the trade union movement and local communities. If we find that their claims are true then we would fully support a government scheme to help them out financially.

What Youth Fight for Jobs will not accept though is workers being made to pay by taking away the minimum wage, one of the few safety nets they have at work.



photos Paul Mattsson

## No answers from politicians on Newsnight

**Ian Pattison**

Jarrow marcher

On Tuesday 15 November, I was asked to appear on a live Newsnight debate alongside 29 other young people who were either unemployed or underemployed, Chris Grayling, the Tory unemployment minister and Labour MP David Miliband.

One young person said: "I want to be a juvenile justice social worker, but there are no jobs in the youth service, so you're looking for generic jobs, such as Marks & Spencer, and

things like that, but they still don't want to hire you."

Chris Grayling told her to "find an alternative route" by taking a job at her local supermarket as an outreach worker! He seemed ignorant of the fact that 30,000 youth support workers' jobs are being cut by local councils and ignored that she had already said that she couldn't find a job at all.

Neither of the politicians had any answers to the concerns of young people. Youth unemployment was already rising under the last Labour government. All Miliband could say

was: "until the economy is growing it's going to be very very difficult for the young people here."

I had my hand up for 20 of the 25 minute debate, and when I was finally brought in I said: "The reality is that there are two and a half million job seekers in Britain today searching for just half a million jobs. What David and Chris have said shows that the main political parties in Britain see youth unemployment as a price worth paying."

"You shouldn't just be saying it's the economic climate, you should be creating jobs. There are 200,000

unemployed construction workers at the moment, you should get them building homes for the five million people on council housing waiting lists."

Presenter Jeremy Paxman tried to interrupt me, asking: "where are these jobs going to come from then?" I answered him: "What are the policies that Chris's government is putting forward? The Work Academies scheme, that he came out with when the last unemployment figures were announced, is going to provide unpaid work experience, ie working for your dole, for just 50,000 of the one million young people who are out of work, and it's just re-advertising jobs that are already being advertised."

At the end of the debate, Jeremy Paxman tried to talk about 'hope for the future'. One young unemployed person asked the politicians to stop arguing with each other, work together. We are all sick of the point scoring between out of touch millionaire politicians.

Chris Grayling and David Miliband agreed to work together, but they probably meant they agreed to work together to make ordinary people pay for a crisis caused by those at the top, by condemning young people to a generation on the scrapheap.

There is hope for the future. There's hope if we can kick out this rotten Con-Dem coalition and their broken system and build a socialist society that puts the needs and aspirations of ordinary people above the profits of the 1%.

5,000  
university  
courses cut

**Sarah Wrack**

London Youth Fight for Jobs

Not only are students hoping to start university in 2012 facing increased fees, slashed resources and fewer lecturers but now figures have shown they've also got less choice of what to study.

The number of courses available through the admissions service Ucas is down 12% on last year after 5,000 have been cut because of government cuts to universities' budgets.

Vice-chancellors claim they have cut 'soft subjects' but what they really mean is subjects that don't make a profit. We need an education system that doesn't rely on 'the market'. An economic crisis caused by bankers and big business should not mean that a 17 year old deciding what path to take after finishing school finds many doors closed for them.

As well as an end to all cuts from government, Youth Fight for Jobs and Education demands that vice-chancellors refuse to implement the cuts and instead stand with their students and staff in the fight to defend the right to a decent education for all.



photo Senan