

“Thanks but no thanks”

REJECT SLAVE LABOUR FOR YOUNG UNEMPLOYED

In October, Youth Fight for Jobs (YFJ) activists, marched over 300 miles from Jarrow to London to hand a petition into Downing Street demanding job

creation instead of workfare, bringing back EMA student payments, scrapping tuition fees, saving youth services and building affordable housing.

YFJ recently received a response from Chris Grayling, the employment minister promising nothing, with wooden words. Here is the campaign's reply.

Dear Chris,

Thank you for your letter regarding the petition handed to the government by the Youth Fight for Jobs Jarrow Marchers on 5 November. But I'm afraid that we have to disagree with you on just about everything in the letter.

We marched over 300 miles against sky-high levels of youth unemployment. We did not march so that we could become unpaid skivvies for your big business mates. This is what your “coherent package of major reform” (read austerity agenda) actually means. Schemes like the Work Programme and the Youth Contract simply give the green light to big business to exploit unemployed young people.

In your letter you outline two ways in which employers will be subsidised to take on Jobseekers Allowance claimants. If these companies claim they can't afford to pay real wages, we demand that they open their books so that we can see where the money has gone.

The companies administering these slave-labour schemes are making huge profit out of other people's misery too. For example A4e, one of the Work Programme providers, is currently worth £70 million. Or how about the Gatches' firm whose profits shot up to £10.3 million in 2010 off the back of economic crisis?

Not only does this treat those who are looking for work like modern day slaves, it also represents the starting gun in a race to the bottom. These employers will now have the go ahead to drive down the wages, terms and conditions of existing workers.

If I were you I would think very carefully about what you are doing. We don't support riots as a method of fightback but the violence that erupted in the summer in our inner cities was due to the fact that a whole generation is seeing every avenue to a decent future being closed off. There are already one million 18-24 year olds unemployed. The figure for those not in education, employment or training almost mirrors that.

We have seen education ripped away from all but the wealthiest in society. The number of young unemployed is only set to increase as the public sector is cut to the bone with the leftovers gobbled up by private sector vultures. If you continue on this course then the type of violence we saw erupting on our streets this summer is likely to happen again and again.

If this is what your offer of support to young people is going to be then I'm afraid we'll have to say thanks but no thanks. We want the government to invest in job creation. Recent research has shown that almost two billion unpaid hours of overtime are given

by UK workers every year – the equivalent of one million jobs. The work is there, it's time young and unemployed people were paid a decent wage to do it.

So we'll have to decline your offer. We want to have a future. We will continue to fight against slave labour schemes. We want real jobs, apprenticeships and training schemes on a living wage and with decent conditions.

We will fight for free education - it is a right, not a privilege to be enjoyed only by the sons and daughters of the rich. We will fight to keep youth services open and re-open those that have already been closed as a result of the drive to austerity.

We refuse to be punished for a crisis caused by the bosses and bankers. They have had over £180 billion thrown at them as a reward for causing the worst economic crisis in generations. All the while the rest of us are expected to pay with our jobs, livelihoods and services.

We refuse to be made to pay. We will fight every inch of the way for our futures. They are the 1% and we will fight their rotten capitalist system. We will fight for a socialist system run by and for the 99%.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Callanan
Youth Fight for Jobs national organiser



The Jarrow marchers arrive in London photo Senan

What we stand for

The Socialist Party fights for socialist change – a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also fight, in our day-to-day campaigning, for every possible improvement for working-class people.

As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international.

The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a democratic, socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:

Work and income

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £8 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards £10 an hour. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state

retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension. Reinstate the link with average earnings now.

- Reject 'Welfare to Work'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage.
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

Public services

- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies and 'free schools'!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs – free at the point of use and under

democratic control. Kick out private contractors!

- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

Environment

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low fare, publicly-owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

Rights

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

New workers' party

- For a new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and aid the building of a new workers' party!

Socialism and internationalism

- No to imperialist wars and occupations. Withdraw the troops immediately from Afghanistan!
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and banks that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neo-liberal European Union! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!