

# NUS: name the day for student walkout

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This week there's been another set of statistics showing working and middle class people are finding the prospect of £50,000 worth of debt enough to make them rethink plans to embark on a university education. Official UCAS statistics, have confirmed what Socialist Students has said all along. There's been an 8.7% drop in applications for the first year of students facing the government's enormous hike in tuition fees.

Last week the Socialist reported that the National Union of Students (NUS) had called a 'week of action' and a walkout of students against the government's plans for cuts and privatisation set to devastate our universities. Socialist Students welcomes the announcement, but says that the NUS leadership must 'put their money where their mouth is' and start building for mass action.

We call on NUS to immediately name the day for this student strike which should include university, college and school students across the country.

As some unions are trying to coordinate another strike over attacks on pensions, we argue that NUS should co-ordinate the student walkout with strike action taken by workers. Free education and the reinstatement of EMA must also be central demands; these are inextricably linked to all of the



Socialist Students was involved in leading the 2010 student walkouts photo Senan

government's attacks on education.

The 2010 student movement showed that the right-wing, New Labour affiliated bureaucracy in the leadership of NUS cannot be trusted with the fight to defend our future. While students walked out of colleges, schools and universities in their thousands, NUS saw fit to condemn

student protesters and organise a candle lit vigil - in reality a funeral for education - on the day parliament voted on tripling fees.

This latest announcement of action marks a shift in NUS brought about by that movement and by the big youth and student actions taken since then, such as the Youth Fight

for Jobs Jarrow March.

Socialist Students members and other activists across the country need to be organising to put pressure on NUS not to sell us out again. The fact that the leadership have felt forced to announce action is evidence of the huge anger bubbling under the surface. We need to mo-

bilise on our campuses to force our local students unions and, in turn, the national leadership to prepare for a massive strike.

What should Socialist Students groups be doing?

- Organise a campaign stall to petition NUS to name a date for the walkout and coordinate with striking workers
- Call a public meeting to discuss the walkout on your campus. Invite representatives from the students union and campus trade unions
- Organise mass leafleting, poster and other publicity to get a big turnout
- Use the meeting to discuss building for the action on campus - what is the students union doing to make sure there's maximum turnout and the strike is solid? Are they demanding that NUS set the date?
- Put forward a motion at a students union general meeting or council calling for NUS to name the date and strike with workers but also mandating your local union to support and organise action with or without the blessing of the NUS leadership
- Be ready to take a lead in getting the show on the road! A successful strike needs lots of organisation and socialists need to be at the forefront of the movement to defend education and demand our future

## Only one in six 'vacancies' real

**A Jobcentre Plus worker**  
West Midlands

Jaime Davies points out in 'Condemned to unemployment' (Issue 702) that there are only 463,000 job vacancies advertised with Jobcentre Plus for 2.5 million unemployed people.

463,000 is the figure Chris Grayling, the Tory minister, uses to beat the unemployed with. In fact only about one in six of these vacancies is a real job.

In my office 150 adverts were placed in our catchment area in one week. Only 25 of these were placed on a statistical return to our district office. When district queried this difference, staff explained that those were the real job vacancies. The other 125 were duplicates, agencies, commission only or catalogue and leaflet distribution.

Employers are now able to input vacancies directly to the jobs da-

tabase. It is extremely difficult to get 'rogue' employers banned from advertising with Jobcentre Plus, although we have managed this with a couple of double-glazing firms, including one that pays commission only and paid a worker £1 for obtaining £40,000 worth of sales!

There were ten or eleven vacancies a couple of months ago, each for an interpreter in a different African language and for the London area - hardly a series of jobs appropriate for a large number of applicants.

People who come in to use the job points in my Jobcentre are always complaining that they do a local search and it comes up with London, Glasgow, Southampton or somewhere else hundreds of miles away. This is because, if there is nothing local, the system provides 'near matches'.

So, not only are there only a sixth of the vacancies, there may be none in your area.

## Tough conditions for agency workers

I am 23 and have been unemployed for four months. Prior to this, I was working in an unskilled job as a temporary worker for a higher education institution.

Recruitment agencies employing temporary workers have increasingly become a fact of life. It is estimated that only around 5% of current vacancies are for full-time permanent positions.

Agencies are used to undercut the terms, conditions and wages of permanent staff. It can provoke a 'divide and rule' tension among workers, as temps start to resent the permanent staff, who are usually better paid and may be in more responsible positions.

Some unions seem reluctant to represent agency workers. When I talked to colleagues about being involved in a union, most did not believe that the union could do anything, and some did not even think they were allowed to join.

Agencies are often appallingly run. For people who chose to work bank holidays, they would receive only the usual rate. At my workplace, a fourth shift was added, for a derisory extra 50p an hour, despite



photo Paul Mattsson

the fact that those working it would be doing, in some cases, a 60-hour week. I could barely manage a 45-hour week because I had a one and a half hour commute, as I could find no jobs in my local area!

Nonetheless it was not uncommon for the agency to ring me up and ask me to come in for a shift which was due to start in half an hour. Yet

people who could not attend a shift could face dismissal if they did not inform them the previous day!

Wages of £6 or £7 an hour are barely enough to get by on, especially when shifts are so erratic, making it difficult to plan the week. Many of my colleagues had families which made an already impossible situation even worse.



## South East Wales youth plan new campaigns

On 15 January South East Wales Socialist Party held a youth campaign meeting. The aim of the meeting was to get all of the young Socialist Party members in the area, including students, workers and unemployed young people, together to discuss issues and upcoming tasks.

We discussed the Occupy movement, the Socialist Party national

youth meeting, Marxist discussion groups and social media.

We also discussed Youth Fight for Jobs at some length and one of the ideas that came out of that discussion was to have an event for the campaign in the biggest city in the region, Cardiff.

**Jaime Davies, South East Wales Youth Organiser**

### Socialist Party national youth meeting

11-12 February

Including A World in Crisis introduced by Socialist Party general secretary Peter Taaffe

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