

Socialist Students: showing an alternative to cuts and fees

Socialist Students members and supporters have had a busy start to what promises to be a busy academic year. Many have been discussing with students about socialist ideas, figures like Karl Marx and Che Guevara, the origins of this economic crisis and more. But more than just organising discussion groups, Socialist Students is starting to launch the fightback against cuts and fees in this new academic year. Students facing cuts want to know how to campaign, how to mobilise for the NUS demonstration on 10 November and how to stop the likely increases in university fees.

Swansea

AT THE Swansea Metropolitan University freshers fair, Socialist Students campaigned against tuition fees and cuts in education funding.

Not being allowed into the main hall, we set up our stall outside the entrance. After ten minutes, having already signed up 15 students, the students union told us that we were not welcome on campus but we could go outside the main gates.

We left the campus and set up our stall outside but went back in with just our petitions handy. Again, security came and told us we were not welcome, so back outside we went.

The principal of the university came out protesting that 'his' students union did not want us there and demanded that we leave, despite the fact that we were campaigning on issues of central importance to the lives of his students.

We said "no way" so he called the police. The police arrived in force, and after much deliberation said that we were perfectly entitled to set up our stall outside the campus.

The principal was clearly infuriated at the police decision to do their job properly. Then, showing how low he is willing to sink, went back inside and instructed security to make placards stating "this organisation is not approved by your students union" and to stand beside us until we left.

Almost everyone who walked past stopped to talk and signed the petition. The level of support from the students was overwhelming!

Khalid Qassem
Swansea Socialist Students

Leeds

LEEDS SOCIALIST Students kicked off the new academic year with a fantastic week of campaigning. 125 people wanted to find out more about Socialist Students or join. Many did the same for the Socialist Party.



Trying to campaign in Swansea.

326 people signed the Socialist Students petition against tuition fees and education cuts. A fantastic meeting saw 21 people discuss "What is socialism?" and the struggle against cuts. Nearly all those who attended joined the society or requested more information on our activities.

Leeds University Against Cuts (LUAC) held an internal organising meeting in preparation for a big public meeting. Last year, alongside lecturers in the University and College Union, LUAC won a partial victory by staving off compulsory redundancies until January 2011. LUAC will now have to fight the attempted closure of the student union bookshop.

Ian Pattison and Alicia Blackett

Lincoln

THE SOCIALIST Students stall at the Lincoln University sports and societies fair, maybe due to the

student union's distaste for politics, was placed upstairs, away from the majority of freshers, despite having applied for a downstairs stall months prior to the event.

This didn't stop us from generating a lot of support for our campaigns, including a no cuts, no fees petition.

In addition to this we handed out leaflets to students that contained information on socialism, and the time and date of our first meeting.

In the evening we hosted a meeting to discuss "What is socialism?"

We will be organising campaigns and marches in the coming months, including taking part in the 20 October day of action against cuts and supporting the Lincoln TUC demo against cuts on 23 October.

Huseyin Kishi and Jo Sams

Brunel

ON TUESDAY 21 September Socialist Students held a stall at Brunel University, campaigning against tuition fees and higher education cuts.

With around 40 students interested in getting involved in Socialist Students, we hope to form a campaigning society at Brunel, to fight against cuts and tuition fees.

We will build for a day of action on 20 October, involving students and staff, to protest against cuts to higher education.

Ian Harris

Wolverhampton

FIRST STOP for the Staffordshire Socialist Students 'freshers tour' was at Wolverhampton University.

Many students signed our petition calling for decent jobs for young people and a fightback against the Con-Dem government cuts.

Over 20 people also signed up to help launch a Wolves Uni Socialist Students society.

Staffordshire Socialist Students

Defend students' democratic rights



Alec Thraves, an honorary lifetime university member, gets picketed.
photos Swansea Socialist Students

WITH THE Con-Dem coalition's brutal attacks on young people already in the pipeline, the need for democratic, fighting student unions has never been greater. At many freshers fairs students have queued up to sign the Socialist Students petition against cuts and fees and for free education, with hundreds expressing an interest in joining the organisation.

Claire Laker Mansfield
Socialist Students national organiser

However, at some universities Socialist Students members have faced a struggle to be allowed to run a stall or even give out leaflets.

Several unions have attempted to charge Socialist Students extortionate amounts of money for having a stall, making no distinction between large profit-making commercial companies and not-for-profit campaigning student groups.

At Greenwich University, a union representative demanded £200 for a stall, then 'frogmarched' Socialist Students members off the campus and threatened to call the police.

Even stalls outside university property have been attacked. At City University in London, the police were called to a stall held on the pavement outside the campus. The officer who attended threatened an arrest for 'obstructing a public highway', despite the fact that the stall allowed plenty of room for members of the public to pass. At Swansea Metropolitan, the police recognised that it is not against the law to hand out leaflets or run a stall (see report left).

It is not a coincidence that these attacks on democratic rights come at the same time as massive attacks on the public sector. It is important that we defend our right to organise both on our campuses and in wider society

Stop the NHS sell-off

COMMUNITY HEALTH services in Nottinghamshire will be well on the way to privatisation by Christmas. Almost every part of healthcare that is not in an acute hospital or a GP's consulting room is affected.

A Nottinghamshire NHS worker

Services included are district nursing, coronary and stroke rehabilitation, mental health, Macmillan nurses for end-of-life care, sexual health, walk-in centres, health visitors, school nursing, Sure Start centres and many more.

These are now run by the Primary Care Trust (PCT). PCTs have been ordered to stop providing any services themselves, just becoming commissioners of services provided by others.

It could be other NHS organisa-

tions that take over, or charities, so-called Social Enterprises (which operate like private businesses) - or profit-making companies.

The 'Transforming Community Services' programme has grouped services into 'bundles'. Bids are invited by organisations wishing to run one or more bundles. The whole process sounds like a pub auction!

Whichever organisations win the bids, it will certainly be the profit-making corporations that will swoop down and grab them over the next few years. This will threaten many patients who depend on these vital services.

National bargaining

NEW PROVIDERS will break up national pay, conditions and pensions - starting with new staff and then moving on to transferred staff from the PCTs.

Thousands of PCT employees around the country have been issued with redundancy notices.

No debate

IT WAS only in July that the government published its white paper setting the NHS on the road to privatisation. Supposedly, this was for consultation. It hasn't even been debated in parliament, let alone become law.

But by December the successful bidders will be decided. The nurses, therapists and other staff who work in these services will find themselves employed by new organisations next April, unless a massive trade union-led campaign is built.

The speed of all this seems breathtaking - until we remember 'Transforming Community Services' was published back in 2008 by the Labour government!

The following letter was sent to the Hereford Times newspaper by a Socialist Party member:

The death of Sandra Lancaster at Kington Court community care centre highlights what can only be described as a regime of neglect. This is not the fault of the good-natured, hard-working staff but the level of service contracted and supervised by Herefordshire NHS from a private operator.

My father went to Kington Court two and a half months ago to recuperate from a cracked leg-bone. He entered as an independent, mentally and physically able man but has left there as a weak, skeletal, mentally confused and dependent person. His 92-year old wife has been turned from cared-for to carer. My father's deterioration was not inevitable but has arisen from a regime under which his waking hours were spent sitting in isolation, with no mental or physical stimulation. The staff are given no time or remit to engage patients in conversation or to gather them for communal activity.

No physiotherapy was initially provided and when it finally came, it was woefully inadequate. My father's muscles have wasted to a point where he is barely able to support himself even with a zimmer frame.

A sudden, obvious drop in his mental state was not noted as significant by nurses or doctors and it was only at the family's insistence that blood tests were taken. This revealed an imbalance in mineral salts and he was immediately admitted to Hereford County Hospital. He is now massively incapacitated.

Herefordshire health administration must be held to account for allowing this pretence of a service to continue. It is their responsibility to provide a service with proper medical and nursing supervision, with staffing levels that create a genuinely therapeutic service for people needing intermediate care. We would not let any family member go near Kington Court again.

Helen Redwood