

30 November: student day of action on cuts and fees

London

THOUSANDS OF students marched again on 30 November, to protest as tuition fees were to be debated in parliament.

Over 2,000 people, mainly school and college students, gathered in Trafalgar Square, climbed the plinth on Nelson's Column and filled the air with lively chants.

They then set off on a hectic march around central London, winning the applause of shoppers and workers. The students ended in Trafalgar Square with a spontaneous rally, inside a police cordon.

Socialist Student organiser Claire Laker-Mansfield spoke and announced to great applause the latest victory in this battle - that the Welsh Assembly had pledged to subsidise the fee increase for Welsh students.

Students were let out in small numbers and many went to visit the various university occupations continuing around London.

Bristol

2,000, MAINLY school and college students, marched in Bristol on 30 November. Unlike on 24 November and in spite of police attempts to block our way, students were able to march into the city centre - twice!

Honks of cars and shouts of good luck from shoppers confirmed the support of workers in Bristol. As we marched, the demo almost doubled in size, with around 1,000 of us starting the demo and 2,000 leaving the city centre and marching up to the financial offices of the University of Bristol.

The demo went on for hours. Around 400 students were 'kettled' near Bristol University, held for over two hours, and eventually all photographed as they were let out one by one.

But the students of Bristol are not going to stop fighting until we have won our right to free education.

Frankie Langeland

Sheffield

OVER 300 students marched the two miles from Sheffield University



Tens of thousands protested around the country again.

photo Senan

to Nick Clegg's constituency office on 30 November.

As we assembled, the police gave us all a Section 14 Public Order Act notice, trying to restrict protesters to only 100 at a designated site 50 yards away from Clegg's office. Neither police threats nor snow could prevent students voicing their anger against Clegg's broken pledge to scrap fees.

School students from King Edward's School in Clegg's Hallam constituency had walked out for a second time. Of course, Clegg wasn't at home, despite chants of "where's our MP?" and "answer the phone!"

Marching back, a spontaneous occupation of the Richard Roberts building by around 100 students began the second occupation at Shef-

field University in a week.

Stafford

ON 30 November, a very lively demonstration was held in Stafford. Students from local secondary schools, the FE college and Staffs University were involved in organising the protest.

Even though people only had a few days notice and despite almost continuous snow-fall, over 100 people turned up. The chants of "no ifs, no buts, no education cuts" and "Tory scum" along with singing, whistling and horn blowing, made for a loud demo despite the numbers!

The plan had been to march to the Tory HQ, just outside the town centre, however we were stopped by

the police and were only allowed to march around the pedestrian area of the Market Square. The route also took in some council offices where there was supportive clapping through the windows!

On arriving back at Market Square, the students were 'kettled' by the police for about 15 minutes.

Josie Shelley

Swansea

GORSEINON, A few miles west of Swansea, was brought to a standstill for the second time in a week by hundreds of protesting students.

The 300 students from Gower (Further Education) College who protested on 24 November invited students from other local colleges

to join with them this time - notably a delegation from Swansea University.

At least 600 swept through the streets and got a fantastic response when they reached the high street, giving everyone in this working-class town a huge lift.

The same day, unions in the Labour-controlled Neath/Port Talbot council recommended that their members give concessions - including a 2% pay cut after the council shamefully gave 90-day notices. These students showed that the Con-Dem cuts can be fought through militant action.

Already the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) has been forced to backtrack on cutting EMA and bringing in big rises on tuition fees.

Swansea Socialist Party, Socialist Students and Youth Fight for Education are raising the idea that students in every school, college and university should meet at noon in Castle Square in Swansea city centre on 9 December for a mass demo that will lift the sights of workers and students in South West Wales.

Rob Williams

Yorkshire

SOCIALIST STUDENTS members from around Yorkshire built for and participated in the second National Day of Action against cuts and fees on 30 November, despite the appalling weather.

18 attended a Youth Fight for Education meeting in Huddersfield after a demonstration. Around 400 from York University, York College and several schools attended an end of day rally in the city centre.

In Leeds Socialist Students members have, alongside others, been occupying the Michael Sadler building at Leeds University. Around 500 marched from the Parkinson Steps down into Leeds, where protesters were shamefully kettled by the police, before marching back to rejoin the occupation.

Iain Dalton

Con-Dems can be defeated

Welsh Assembly backs down on EMA and fees

SHOWING THE impact of the mass student protests over the past few weeks, the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) has pledged to maintain Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) despite the funding from Westminster being stopped from next year.

Sarah Wrack

The move proves that rather than cuts being about how much money there is or isn't in the bank, these attacks are a matter of choice.

After seeing hundreds of thousands of angry students take to the streets to demand the right to education, suddenly the funds are available. The same has happened in the Scottish Parliament.

This should give a new optimism to the campaign to save EMA across the country. It's not only the Welsh assembly and Scottish parliament that have control over how money is spent.

Youth Fight for Education demands that local councils follow suit and continue to provide EMA even if the central funds stop.

Any council that did this would be backed up by a surge of support from workers and students in their area and beyond.

The WAG has also promised to subsidise the increase in fees for Welsh students meaning that none will pay more than the current £3,290. This will cost around £330 million and again shows the pressure that politicians are feeling from students.

This move, however, is not as straightforward a victory as the decision to maintain EMA.

It is likely that it will be compensated for by further cutting the higher education budget and assuming Welsh universities can make the money back from English students paying full fees. This shows that the fight is far from over in Wales.

The WAG decision was also clearly influenced by the fact that

Welsh students have already had their fees doubled this year as the previous scheme where they received half the cost back was ended from September. The WAG undoubtedly feared that fees jumping from £1,285 to £9,000 a year would create even more anger amongst Welsh students.

However, it is still a significant move that will prevent tens of thousands of students being burdened with the levels of debt being foisted upon the rest by the Con-Dems.

The movement against cuts and fees must avoid falling into the divisive trap of seeing this as what the Daily Mail calls "fees apartheid".

On both fees and EMA, there is the potential to force the Con-Dem government to back down, even if the cuts are formally voted through.

The WAG decisions have made it clearer than ever that we can win and, in fact, that we are winning. They are victories for the whole movement, which must be built on.

Organising a walkout

SIXTY STUDENTS from Haberdashers Aske's Hatcham College in New Cross Gate joined the central London protests on 24 November. They were led by Jack Jordan, a year 11 student from the school. I interviewed him to find out a bit more about building for the walkout.

Jack had been thinking about joining the protest with a few of his friends, when he realised that there were a lot more students interested too.

He created a Facebook group, which had over 100 members in three days. It was gradually noticed that with so many people going, the most effective course of action was to stage a walkout, and meet up with students from nearby Goldsmiths University.

The number of students that took part in the walk out made it impractical to punish them when they returned to school.

Jack also attributes the lack

of reprisals to a statement from the National Union of Teachers that pledged its 'strong support' for students and teachers in the struggle against tuition fees.

Jack also spoke of the importance of making any action as well publicised as possible, and open to everyone.

Tom Jouselin

