

# Young people march for a future

## Manchester

"CUTS AFFECT everyone" said one placard on a very lively and youthful march in Manchester on 29 January. The Guardian reported up to 5,000 on the demo organised by the PCS and UCU trade unions together with the National Union of Students (NUS). This showed the potential for a colossal national demonstration on 26 March.

Youth Fight for Jobs (YFJ) placards about unemployment and Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) were carried by many demonstrators, who came from workplaces, colleges and universities across the north and midlands. Union banners figured prominently, especially from the civil servants' union, PCS, the lecturers' union, UCU, and the Unison public sector union.

Before we even set off, NUS president Aaron Porter (who two months ago apologised under pressure for his "spineless" lack of support for student protests) was having a bad day. His high point was, surprisingly, signing the Socialist Party petition for a 24-hour public sector general strike. From there it was all downhill: being shouted at and running away to hide for the day in nearby university buildings!

Standing in for Porter at the rally was Shane Chowen, NUS vice-president for FE, whose speech was cut short within three minutes by boos, eggs and apple cores. Such is the fate of those who attempt to sell out to the enemy while attacking their own members.

This should be headed by Porter's right-wing equivalents in the trade unions. At present the TUC can organise a dreadful line-up of speakers far better than it can organise action. Dull pro-Labour speech followed dull pro-Labour speech from 'leaders' lacking any real intention of fighting the Con-Dems.

The great exceptions were fiery calls to action from leader of the firefighters' union, Matt Wrack and from Jane Warburton, regional youth organiser of the PCS.

YFJ supporters can claim much of the credit for this demonstration; from the struggle for it within the component unions of the TUC, to the resolving at the TUC congress in September last year to call a demonstration, to actually making it happen. 50 young people and workers attended the YFJ after-demo meeting. Most of them signed up to the campaign and all applauded speakers from the Leeds university occupation, from trade unions, from other universities, and from anti-cuts campaigns.

A bad day for the NUS president but a good day for the swelling movement to drive out the Con-Dems and their hated policies.

**Hugh Caffrey,**  
North West Socialist Party

## London

SEVERAL THOUSAND young people and workers took to the streets in London on 29 January as part of the ongoing protests at the attacks on education and the public sector.

The demonstration was called despite the already planned demonstration in Manchester on the same day which was linking up the struggles of students with those of young workers and trade unionists.

Despite the questionable action of calling the demonstration, the majority of the protesters on it understood the need for unity. They chanted slogans such as "workers and students unite and fight!" and carried placards relating to all cuts.

The mood was spurred on by the recent revolutionary uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt. "Let's all go the extra mile, let's do this Egyptian style" would undoubtedly win the 'chant of the day'!

Students understand that the rulers and dictators of these countries are the 'bath buddies' of the rulers of western states such as Cameron and Obama, and that they share common aims in making huge cuts in public services and attacking ordinary people's living standards.



Young NHS workers on the Manchester demo.

photo Andy Ford

In the UK one in five graduates is unemployed, this is the highest the figure has been since 1995, a clear sign of the inability of capitalism to provide jobs for everyone.

Graduates now face the likelihood of years of unemployment, and the private sector exploits the desperation of young people by offering internships without pay or a guarantee of a job at the end.

With the recent decision to hike tuition fees to £9,000 a year, vast numbers of young people will be deterred from going to university.

But unemployment for young people without degrees still remains higher than for those with degrees, so the future for young people looks very bleak indeed.

The only way to defeat the cuts is to defeat the government. That can only be done by uniting with the trade unions and standing shoulder to shoulder with them on the TUC demonstration on 26 March and in the coming struggles.

**Alex Moore,**  
Leicester Socialist Students



YFJ and Socialist Student members on the London demo. photo Senan

## Boris Johnson visits Waltham Forest Tories have no solutions to youth crime

**W**ALTHAM FOREST is a borough which has an above average rate of violent youth crime. This can have a devastating effect on the lives of people who live in our area, so the opportunity to ask questions at Boris Johnson's recent 'community conversation' was welcomed by many. But in reality, the forum failed to address the causes or offer solutions to violent crime.

**Claire Laker-Mansfield**

Waltham Forest Youth Fight for Jobs

The most ironic comment of the night came from the lips of Boris Johnson himself: "What will ultimately tackle the problem of youth violence is economic prosperity - jobs and education for youngsters." Well, perhaps on one thing Youth Fight for Jobs (YFJ) does agree with the mayor!

It is a complete lack of opportunities and the desperation that often follows from that which can lead some young people down the path of crime. But the reality is that what this Tory-led government is doing and what the Mayor himself is doing regionally is working to actively

deny young people those opportunities.

"What young people need is some 'pre-pre internships' - to be taken on for a week in the city for experience" was what one panel member (a former city banker) had to say on the matter.

But one local resident was far closer to the mark when he shouted out "people need jobs" as Boris Johnson was condemning local parents for failing to exercise enough discipline.

Boris's panel lacked any representatives from the youth offending

service in our area. That's probably because it's being cut massively due to Tory austerity measures carried out by a Labour council. None of the hundreds of public sector workers who work with young people were given a say and there weren't any representatives from local community campaigns or trade unions allowed to speak.

Even more worryingly, the panel did not include any young people and those who were in the audience were denied the opportunity to ask questions and describe the problems they face.

YOUTH FIGHT for Jobs challenges Boris Johnson to return to the borough to answer this question:

'As a result of government funding cuts carried out by the mayor's own party, the local council is cutting services which include the Youth Offending Service, Safeguarding Children, Community Learning and Skills, Education Welfare officers, and careers advisers. It is becoming harder to remain in education if you come from a poorer background because of the Tory fees increase and cutting of EMA. The mayor himself has scrapped free travel for young people over 16, making it harder to travel to college. Does the mayor agree that these moves are likely to add to the problem of youth crime in the area?'

## Police attack 'save EMA' protest in Leeds

**S**CHOOL, COLLEGE, and university students in Leeds were met with police violence on a recent peaceful protest against Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) being axed.

**Jay McInness**

Leeds Met Socialist Students

Protesters were violently attacked with batons outside Lloyds TSB in the city centre.

A number of completely unprovoked injuries were inflicted. The most horrific was the arrest of college student Matt Dawson after he was set upon by multiple police officers.

Eye witnesses and film footage on YouTube show officers snatching a flag from him before unleashing a savage and unwarranted hail of abuse. In the assault his arm was broken before he was dragged 300 yards and thrown into a police van.

The remaining protesters were then subjected to the infamous 'kettle' technique used by police on the student protests last year. One police officer made it clear that they were 'kettling' our demonstration to make it less visible to the public,

less likely to get news coverage and to have less resonance.

After police officers were heavily reinforced, the protest was then force-marched to nearby Leeds Metropolitan University.

The protest then regrouped and marched to Bridewell Police Station where Matt was thought to be held and demanded his release. A heated negotiation ensued which gained some media attention. More arrests were attempted but were prevented by the crowd.

Since then West Yorkshire Police have refused to comment but have charged Matt Dawson with possession of an offensive weapon (his belt buckle).

Socialist Students demands that the charges against Matt Dawson are dropped. Due to pressure so far an internal investigation has been launched bringing further into question police handling of peaceful demonstrations.

This is not the first time that police in Leeds have harassed peaceful protests - they 'kettled' the 30 November demonstration and repeatedly harassed and threatened to arrest Socialist Students activist Ian Pattison.