

No education cuts: We can win the battle!

Ben Robinson

Not content with pushing through a trebling of university fees and cutting EMA, this government is planning to cut £1 of every £8 it contributes to teaching and research in higher education in England - a total of £940 million.

Our schools and colleges are under attack too. In further education, 20,000 jobs could go because of the government's cut backs.

All universities bar one are set to have their teaching funds slashed savagely. Poorer universities will be hit the hardest. London Metropolitan University, recently threatened with bankruptcy, is facing a 7.6% cut in its budget.

If these cuts go through courses will close, fees and class sizes will increase, and services will be cut. But not if we resist.

The fantastic movement against fees and cuts last year showed the potential that exists to fight back. The mass movement beat the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament into retreats and brought this 'coalition of cutters' to within 22 votes of defeat.

Academic staff in colleges and universities, organised in the UCU union, have taken strike action. This action brought many places to a halt and was supported by Youth Fight for Education (YFE) and many student activists on the picket lines.

The massive 26 March demonstration will see students and workers marching side by side against all the cuts.

Universities are setting out plans for implementing the cuts. Oxford, Cambridge, Exeter and more are looking to charge the full £9,000 a year. The student movement has a clear opportunity to respond and



Students protest in London in November photo Senan

show management how much resistance these cuts will meet.

Already, Glasgow University has seen 2,000 march and students at Liverpool University have occupied to stop management meetings taking place. This resistance has to be linked to a campaign to inform and involve other students. What services are faced with cuts? Is your lecturer threatened with the sack?

University managements have been and can be forced back. Many universities regularly go into debt temporarily on the basis that they will receive increased income in the future.

Students and staff must raise the demand that universities set a budget based on no fees increase and no cuts. Just one university following this route would strike a serious blow to the government's plans for higher education. Ten would throw them into chaos.

The battle is not lost on EMA ei-

ther. A mass anti-cuts movement could win its restoration.

YFE demands that the government reverses the cuts in education, restores EMA and repeals sky-high university fees. But to achieve this a mass and sustained campaign is needed. Further national days of action must be organised. They have the potential to be bigger and bolder even than the protests last winter.

With both the National Union of Teachers (NUT) in the schools and sixth forms and the UCU discussing coordinated strike action, there is the potential for staff to link up with students and have a one-day education shutdown.

We need a national student movement that brings together representatives from the anti-cuts groups that exist and will spring up across the country. This is urgent in order to build a united, coherent fightback with the power to defeat the cuts.

Young people and staff protest against Connexions closure

Tom Jousselein
Lewisham Socialist Party

With 36% of 16-24 year olds unemployed, Lewisham, South London, has one of the worst youth unemployment rates in the country. Despite this, New Labour Mayor Steve Bullock has decided to completely withdraw funding for Lewisham Connexions - a service that gives advice on everything from unemployment to housing to people aged between 13 and 19.

On the day that Connexions was scheduled to be shut, 30 service users and staff members protested to show opposition to the council's plan. With slogans calling for the unity of workers and students, it gained a lot of attention from passers-by and gave many young people their first experience of action to fight the cuts.

Miriam Brown, a protester and service user, said that she always found the service very useful and had grown very attached to staff members. Shocked at the removal of this service, Miriam sent an reply directly to the mayor of Lewisham, but received only a very brief reply from his personal assistant, showing the disdain that he has for all of us!



Outside Lewisham Connexions photo Paul Mattsson

The staff have been treated appallingly. One employee explained that they simply have no idea whether or not they will be made redundant.

Connexions workers have not officially been sacked but are instead in a state of limbo. Employees who have been delivering frontline services for over 20 years and are known by young people across the borough for their work may simply not have a job.

If local councils and the government care about the future of young people at all, these services must be kept open. There is also a pressing need for the trade union movement

to help young people, through unemployed centres for example, with advice on jobs and to link it to the trade union movement and the wider fight for decent jobs for all.

But the services by themselves will not solve the problem of youth unemployment. Councils and the government should be funding services to create work and keep people off the dole queue.

The government's token gesture of creating 50,000 apprenticeships is far from what's needed to help the 974,000 unemployed young people across the country.

Join Youth Fight for Jobs!

Youth Fight for Jobs was launched at a national conference in November 2008 to fight back against the way young people are being made to pay the price for the bankers' crisis. The campaign fights against all cuts and for free education and training leading to socially useful jobs with decent pay and conditions. Six national trade unions - Unite, PCS, UCU, Bectu, CWU, RMT - as well as many local branches and student unions support the campaign. As well as hundreds of local meetings, protests and demonstrations, the national events we have organised include:

2 April 2009: 600 march to G20

As its first national event, Youth Fight for Jobs organised a march of 600 young people as part of the protests around the pro-big business G20 summit. We marched through four of the poorest London boroughs to a rally outside the G20 meeting at the Excel Centre in east London.



"Gordon Brown, stop the rot! Give us what the bankers got!" photo Paul Mattsson

28 November 2009: 1,000 march for real jobs and free education

Students and young people from around the country, including contingents from Day-Mer Youth, Cypriot Youth Platform and Tamil Solidarity, marched and delivered a petition of 10,000 signatures to 10 Downing Street.



"Students and workers, Unite and fight!" photo Sarah Mayo

13 March 2010: 500 march in Barking for jobs and services not racism

Marching past services and public buildings being closed we highlighted that it was the failure of any mainstream politicians to address the problems facing ordinary people in the area that allowed the far-right racist BNP to gain votes in Barking and Dagenham.



"When the BNP tell racist lies, We fight back and organise!" photo Paul Mattsson

See www.youtube.com/youthfightforjobs for videos of all these events.

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