

Gove's EMA concession not enough

Demand a living allowance for Further Education students

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For school and college students, education minister Michael Gove's latest announcement of a scheme to 'replace' the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) will have left a bitter taste.

His new allowance scheme amounts to a mere third of the funding which was available to students previously with EMA.

This is coupled with a complete lack of clarity on how this 'targeted' financial support for students will be delivered, making it likely that many of the small number of students who are entitled to it, will not receive it.

In fact, this was the education minister's attempt to mollify some of the massive, growing opposition towards the government's spending cuts. And from this, young people and workers can take heart.

This was a retreat by the government - brought on by the huge student movement at the end of last year, as well as by the massive 26 March trade union demonstration. The Tories and the Liberals are beginning to feel the heat, and on EMA, they are already on the back foot.

In some ways, the most important part of Gove's announcement was the promise that those students who began their studies this year will continue to receive EMA until their



Young students protest at Con-Dem plans to scrap EMA last November photo Senan

courses end next year. This is a small victory that has been won by mass protest, and it is very significant.

Significant, because it shows the government is being forced to backtrack. But it is also important because it means EMA will be in existence for another year - we have more time to fight to save it!

Meanwhile, Soutwark council in

south London has pledged to initiate a scheme to continue to provide an EMA-type grant if the government scheme is abolished.

If councils across the country began implementing 'needs budgets' (which included the continued funding of an EMA scheme) and mobilised students, trade unionists and the local communities in sup-

port, then the government could be forced to find the money.

These small victories are an indication of what could be to come as the anti-cuts movement gains momentum. The fight for education and a decent future isn't over, with a mass movement with a fighting strategy, we can defeat the Con-Dems!

MPs back the Jarrow March for Jobs

Paul Callanan
Youth Fight for Jobs, national
organiser

Seventeen MPs have signed an early day motion put forward by Labour MP John McDonnell backing the Youth Fight for Jobs Jarrow march. We will be marching in October on the 75th anniversary of the original Jarrow unemployed march, demanding decent jobs and a free education for youth.

Young people in Britain today are facing the same questions of a lack of jobs and cuts in living standards as they did 75 years ago. This government is intent on making us pay for a crisis caused by the bosses and bankers, by wiping out the gains made by working class people since then.

We have already seen the number of 16-24 year olds out of work rise to around one million, the right to benefits attacked and an onslaught on the right to an education. At

present there are currently one in five graduates on the dole, university is no longer a short cut to a decent job but an expensive detour to the Jobcentre.

The 17 MPs should use their positions of authority to help mobilise and raise funds for the march. We also call on trade unionists and community campaigners to do the same. We want this march to become a rallying point for the entire anti-cuts movement in Britain. We will hold protests, demonstrations

and rallies in each town and city we pass through.

This October young people will be marching to show this government we won't pay for their crisis. We won't be a lost generation and we will fight for our futures.

See www.jarrow2london2011.wordpress.com and www.youthfightforjobs.com for more details and information on getting involved.

Chancellor's sleight of hand fools no one

Listening to many of the media reports on the government's budget last week you would have thought that chancellor George Osborne had become a socialist!

With a penny off fuel duty paid for by a levy on the oil companies and the raising of the income tax threshold, the Con-Dem coalition is hoping that people will believe their pressing concerns are being listened to by the government.

However, January's VAT increase effectively added 3p a litre to fuel. And the budget surreptitiously adds to the future squeezing of people's incomes, for instance by uprating tax allowances and thresholds annually from 2013/14 in line with the CPI inflation measure rather than the higher RPI rate as at present.

Meanwhile, big business was handed a multi-billion pound budget gift with the planned 1% cut in corporation tax next month being doubled to 2%. It will be cut by a total of 5% over the next three years.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies has calculated that households will be £480 worse off on average this

year as a result of the government's attacks.

Osborne announced a clamp-down on a small proportion of the tax avoidance by companies and more tax extracted from some of the 'non-doms'.

But these measures will do very little to eat into the mega-profits

being made by the multinationals. Bank profits alone have been £28 billion in this financial year.

Many of the top companies have more cash than they know what to do with - HSBC bank has estimated that the FTSE 100 companies are sitting on £110 billion of cash.

Osborne trailed his package as a

budget for economic growth which will enable his targets on reducing public debt to be met. But his previously announced £81 billion cuts in public services and welfare benefits could easily push the UK economy's anaemic growth into a double-dip recession. The economy contracted in the last quarter of 2010 and Osborne had to lower his expectation for growth in 2011 from 2.1% to 1.7%.

This forecast adjustment means that the government intends to borrow £50 billion more over the next five years than previously planned. Its forecasts of over 2% growth in 2012 and 2013 are also likely to be overestimates or even wildly wrong.

Where is this growth going to come from when the spending power of working and middle class people is being massively squeezed by the austerity measures and there is no rosy outlook for exports?

The budget will only have added to the determination of working people to fight back.

More budget analysis on www.socialistparty.org.uk

Fast news

Pay squeeze

Average take home pay is lower today than in 2004, according to the BBC's Panorama TV programme - The Big Squeeze - shown on 28 March. It reckoned that the average worker takes home £1,088 a year less than two years ago after adjusted for inflation.

What this shows is that the bosses have used the recession - with the attendant fear of unemployment - to drive down wages.

The sharpest drop in take home pay has been in the construction industry.

Unemployment and shrinking wage packets mean that 659,000 households are struggling to pay their mortgages, while 117,000 people are in arrears.

Big society funding

State indoctrination and David Cameron's 'big society' may sound like polar opposites, but it seems they go hand in hand.

The Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) is being made to spend much of its funding on researching the 'big society'. Cameron's big society idea is all about axing public services and instead to provide vital services on the cheap with volunteers or by privatising them.

For the past 90 years the 'Haldane principle' has allowed university academics to choose where research funds should be spent. Now, however, research bodies must work to government objectives to be given public money. According to the history director of research at Cambridge University, Peter Mandler, the AHRC was told it has to study the 'big society' in order to get its £100 million annual funding.

Though surely it won't take much of that money to find out that 'big society' is really a 'big con'.

Nuclear fallout

The political fallout from Japanese nuclear power disaster appears to have reached Germany after the ruling right-wing, pro-nuclear power party, the CDU and their FDP partners, suffered big reversals in last week's state elections.

Chancellor Angela Merkel saw her CDU lose control of Baden-Wuerttemberg to a coalition of Greens and social democrats after nearly 60 years. The election result in Baden-Wuerttemberg also reflected voters' opposition to the environmentally destructive urban renewal project called Stuttgart 21. The ruling coalition also suffered reversals in the western state of Rhineland-Palatinate.

The Greens, having recovered from their discredited governing coalition with the social democrats from 1998 to 2002, are now eyeing the city state of Berlin in forthcoming elections.

Merkel had attempted to take the wind out of the Greens' sails by announcing, after the Fukushima disaster, the shutdown of the seven oldest of Germany's 17 nuclear power stations, pending a three-month safety review. She also imposed a moratorium on her government's earlier decision to extend the operating life of nuclear power stations by a further 12 years, but to no avail.

Disappointingly, the Left party's electoral drive appears to have stalled, failing to clear the 5% threshold necessary to get deputies elected.

See www.socialistworld.net