**Fight Welsh universities’ fees hike**

Dove Reid

The Welsh Assembly government’s promise to keep down annual fees at Welsh universities lies in tatters. A basic degree at University of Wales in Newport will now cost £27,000. No Welsh university announced an upper level below £9,000 a year.

Glyn Matthews from Youth Fight For Education called for the National Union of Students (NUS) and NUS Wales to organise a mass campaign to defeat the UK government’s fee rise.

“There’s no way I could have afforded £27,000 to go to University of Glamorgan. Even £3,400 a year, the current fee, is steep but reducing the subsidy will price thousands of working class people out of education.”

Clearly university vice-chancellors (VCs) have a completely different agenda from most of Welsh society. The Welsh government is being led by the nose by these profit driven executives. The VCs award themselves six figure salaries while courses are cut, jobs lost, working class students work 30 hours a week in jobs to get through their course and lectures lose 18% of their salaries.

Welsh universities are being turned into businesses to service the wealthy with no sense of serving the community. The education system should be brought under public control and run by elected representatives. The Higher Education Funding Council for Wales should be wound up and replaced with a public body genuinely accountable to the people of Wales.

If the Welsh Assembly government does cut its subsidy Wales would be forced to adopt a similar higher education model to that in England with high fees combined with bursaries for a few ‘deserving poor’ students. In effect this would be a return to the pre-war model where the rich have open access to university regardless of ability, while working class students are forced to borrow from banks.

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Fefe Mason

In parts of the USA you can set fire to your tap water. Now an enterprising company seems to want to bring the practice to Britain. Cuadrilla Resources has been drilling for gas, the first company to introduce the notorious technique of ‘hydro-fracking’ into Europe. Cuadrilla had to stop, however, over suspicions that it caused two earthquakes in Blackpool.

Local resident Caroline Murphy, told the Blackpool Gazette: “I was literally shaken from my bed at 3.4am yesterday. I’ve never felt anything like it, it can’t be coincidence they are drilling nearby. I want to know who is regulating it.”

**Gas in tap water**

The government told the Financial Times it would ‘no doubt look’ to carry out a review over shale gas drilling, which it believes to be safe. This week, however, a new quarterly report, hydraulic liquid fractures rock containing oil.

The gas and hydraulic liquids escape—despite denials by the fracking experts—and enter the groundwater. Rural communities and farms that draw water from wells find explosive gases emerging from their tap water.

The water is only good to burn in any case. The hydraulic liquid—dubbed “water” by the fracking industry—is said to contain the carcinogens benzene and formaldehyde, but companies will not disclose their “trade secrets.” Videos showing people setting fire to their water supply went viral in the US last year - 2 US states have stopped all fracking activity. You can imagine someone leaving their tap running for a while, then turning on the cooker and blowing the roof off their home.

The US Department of Energy’s Energy Information Administration astonished and outraged environmentalists by predicting that shale gas will provide 45% of the USA’s gas by 2035. 15% of oil imports are predicted to be halved, with fracking producing 4.5 million barrels of oil a day, twice the Gulf of Mexico’s output, by 2020.

Global warming is currently heading to the very worst scenarios discussed by climate change experts. Even the highly conservative International Energy Agency (IEA) warns that the era of cheap oil is over. But the oil companies, rather than moving to clean, renewable, carbon-free energy sources or for real improvements in existing technology, would allow money to be invested in research for new, clean energy sources or for real improvements in existing technology. Capitalism, however, is interested in profit not safety—it is the main enemy of the earth.

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