

Tactics to stop racist EDL

Steve Score
Leicester Socialist Party

Hundreds of local people turned out to oppose the racist English Defence League (EDL) in Leicester on 4 February. Unfortunately, a massive police operation involving 2,200 officers on duty, horses, dogs and riot vans allowed around 400 EDL thugs to march through the city centre.

It is likely to top the £850,000 cost of having the EDL in Leicester in October 2010. The local paper and the police overestimated the size of the EDL demo and massively underestimated the various counter mobilisations. The EDL demo was far smaller than last time, and attracted few local people.

Division

The EDL claim their march was to oppose the "discrimination" in the justice system in favour of Muslims! In reality they aim to divide communities in this very diverse city. The elected Labour mayor and the police appeased the EDL, who last time rioted through the city, by allowing them to march past the clocktower - the heart of the city centre.

At the same time, a huge scare campaign was launched to try to prevent local people from opposing the EDL. The mayor and the local paper equated anti-racists to the EDL. Police threatened to remove anyone in the city centre under the age of 18 to a 'place of safety', and arrest any protester not in the 'designated assembly point'.

Despite this, Socialist Party members and other anti-racists mobilised alongside hundreds of people in the communities at the clocktower and also on the edge of St Matthew's estate in an attempt to defend their city. Hundreds also took part in a Unite Against Fascism (UAF) march. Unfortunately



photo Paul Mattsson

this was confined to a designated route on the outskirts of the city centre, away from the route of the EDL.

Some people who had earlier attempted to congregate at the clock tower were pushed back towards the UAF demo. Other groups of local people coming down from the communities of Highfields and St Matthew's were kettled by police and pushed back from the city centre.

Discussion

There will now be much discussion on tactics. There were obviously significant numbers of people who wanted to attempt, by force of numbers, to block the route of the EDL and stop them coming through the city centre. This is despite the fact that the Imams had told people to remain in their areas.

There are some who are calling for a ban on marches if the EDL attempt

to come back, however the Socialist Party does not agree with that. In October 2010 marches were banned and only static protests allowed and the result was racist attacks by the EDL. It will be the strength of the opposition mobilised by the movement that will stop them. If thousands had managed to mobilise in the city centre the police would have had no choice but to confine the EDL to the car park they assembled on outside of the city centre.

Trade unionists, socialists and people from various local communities now need to organise together to stop the EDL returning. This is linked to building opposition to the cuts and attacks on working class people's living standards in order to undercut any support racist groups like the EDL can win from working class people disillusioned with what all the main political parties are doing.

Students drop out of college without EMA

Claire Laker-Mansfield
Socialist Students national organiser

In late 2010, as thousands of college students took to the streets against the vicious scrapping of weekly EMA payments for 16-19 year old students, the government insultingly labelled the grant as 'frivolous'.

On hearing these crass attacks young people may well have felt a rather strong sense of irony. For college students £30 a week is an unaffordable luxury; for greedy bankers, who've presided over financial meltdown, millions in bonuses and inflated salaries are 'just business'.

Of course, no one who received EMA will need convincing that this grant was not a luxury but a necessity. Accusations of the money only being spent on alcohol and cigarettes smack of a government steeped in privilege, utterly removed from the realities of ordinary life.

This week a study by the children's charity Banardos has confirmed conclusively what young people said all along - EMA is essential. The grant enabled thousands of students to continue their studies. Now it has been taken away, many are struggling to continue and are being forced to leave college for financial



Protesting to save EMA at the end of 2010 photo Suzanne Beishon

reasons. Others are skipping meals to pay for their travel to college.

The report pours a bucket of cold water on the government's supposedly 'more targeted' discretionary learners' support fund. Just as Youth Fight for Jobs and Education (YFJE) said at the time, this fund - run on a third of the money spent on EMA - is no replacement for what existed before.

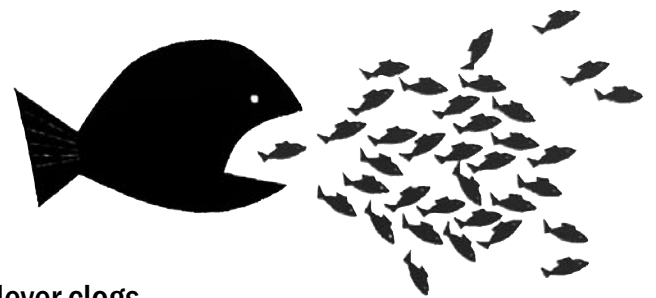
In fact all evidence shows this is far less 'targeted', many of those who need the money most desperately were found not to be receiving it and faced being forced out of education.

We say bring back EMA, and immediately expand it to be available to all those studying in sixth forms and colleges. YFJE is campaigning in towns and cities across the country for its re-instatement.

We demand that local councils continue to fund the grant (as they have done in Southwark and Tower Hamlets in London) and campaign for the government to fund it nationally. Join YFJE and help us build the fightback today!

See www.youthfightforjobs.com and www.socialiststudents.org.uk

Them...



Clever clogs

How many of you have had 'the look'? 'The look' from Tories who pity socialists for 'not understanding' how the world 'really' works. A trait no doubt picked up from the Eton-Oxbridge clique in government who think they're cleverer than the rest of us too.

So we can't help but be just a little bit pleased with results of a Canadian study which suggest that right-wingers are less intelligent than left-wingers. Childhood intelligence was compared to adult political views of more than 15,000 people.

The researchers said: "Cognitive abilities are critical in forming impressions of other people and in being open minded, individuals with lower cognitive abilities may gravitate towards more socially conservative right-wing ideologies that maintain the status quo. It provides a sense of order."

Olympic-sized bonus

There are less than 170 days to go until the 2012 Olympics kick off in London. The event, running over budget, is costing £24 billion. This has understandably raised some eyebrows given the government's continual insistence that there is no money in the pot for our jobs and services.

But lots of people are working very hard to make the games a success. For example, Jeremy Beeton, the director general for the Government Olympic Executive has been working so hard that he was rewarded with a £130,000 bonus on top of his £225,000 salary. He must be a really vital part of the team making sure everything goes smoothly in the summer. Although we don't quite remember the same being said about DLR drivers getting a comparatively humble £2,000 for working during the games to make sure everyone can actually get there!

Shell of a pension scheme

A month ago Shell closed its final salary pension scheme meaning that future generations of workers will have

a much less secure retirement. The same is happening across both the private and public sectors as employers insist the economic crisis com-

£2m

Profit made every hour by Shell

bined with an aging population mean these better schemes are unaffordable. And yet a matter of weeks later Shell announced a 54% rise in profits. The company is now making £2 million every hour!

£10.5 billion was paid to shareholders last year. Why can't that money be used to continue to provide decent pensions for future Shell workers - the people who do the work that makes the money in the first place?

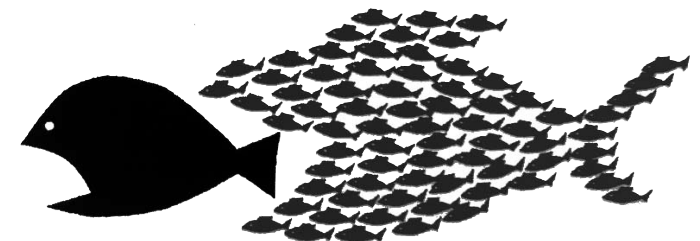
Equal opportunity?

The American Dream is all about everybody having equal opportunity. Apparently little Johnny Nobody has just as much chance of becoming president as anybody else as long as he's willing to work hard enough. So it's only right that the money individuals can give to campaigns of candidates for the presidential election is limited to \$2,500 each.

And yet three hedge fund executives managed to give \$1 million each by donating to Restore Our Future, a political action committee supporting Romney which isn't subject to the same rules. Other significant donations came from his former colleagues at Bain Capital who gave \$750,000 and senior executives at Goldman Sachs who gave \$385,000.

No prizes for guessing what kind of interests his policies will represent should he get elected.

...& Us



What they heard

Just got this message from my union. UniteYou: "The cuts affect us all in different ways. To support you we need to know how you're being affected. Via this service you can tell us, just text back."

I sent them this reply. "Here in Walthamstow the cuts carried out by a Labour council amount to £65

million. Stop giving them my hard earned subs. Support candidates who have a no-cuts policy when elected. See Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition.

Thanks."

Martin Reynolds



Join the fightback! Join the Socialists!

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