

NO TO FORCED ACADEMIES



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Cameron and Osborne want to force all schools to become academies. This is the opening bell for auctioning off of the education system to the highest bidder. There is no proof that academies are better at providing education. But what has been shown is that there is huge scope for academies denying children entry, for a complete lack of transparency, and for creaming off profit from money needed for education.

The government White Paper proposes that all English schools currently under local authority oversight would be forced to become academies, removing any democratic control at a local level of education. Instead of councils being responsible, it will be academy chains and education businesses that will decide how schools are run.

The push on academies is modelled on the piecemeal breakup of the NHS, removing local democracy and dividing the service up into isolated chunks, ripe for cherry-picking by private businesses who are prioritise profit, before considering the service they are providing. This is from a government intent on destroying the public sector through privatisation and cuts in jobs and services.

The academies proposal is also an attack on teachers and their working conditions. Breaking up the education structures will be used to try and undermine national bargaining, in the hope of picking off teachers at a local level and driving down pay. This in turn will have an impact on the quality of education that they are able to provide.

But action by teaching unions has driven back academisation plans. Just this year, action at the Joan Roan school in South London and at Birmingham Small Heath has halted the conversion of schools to academies.

In the days after the government's White Paper publication, a protest called by teachers but joined by school students, parents and supporters, shows the huge opposition that exists. The plans by the NUT teachers' union, to ballot members on national strike action against the government's academy proposals, show the way forward.

Other unions, of teaching and non-teaching staff in schools, need to organise and coordinate strike action to fight back against academies. This could be coordinated with the junior doctors' dispute to show that workers are not prepared to see public services sold off.

Morgan, the education secretary, told union members that there is 'no reverse gear' on academy plans. But this government had previously said they would not shift on tax credit cuts, or on disability payment attacks. The Tories, with less than a quarter of the vote at the last general election, are weak and deeply divided, and can be pushed back.

Academies and education sell-offs represent right-wing politicians vision for the future of education. Academies were introduced by the hero of Labour's right-wing, Tony Blair.

Jeremy Corbyn's clear opposition to academies and education sell-offs is welcome. He could go further. For example, a clear commitment that a future Labour government would bring all academies back under local government control would significantly undermine the Tories' plans.

Labour councils could also help build a movement against academies, for example by organising ballots of parents to show their opposition, refusing to sign over land to central government control, and exploring other avenues to prevent

the removal of their oversight.

But we need a party committed to fighting cuts and service sell-offs. Again and again, Blairite MPs have sought to undermine Corbyn and those who support a fightback against cuts. While many Tory councils protested government cuts to their funding, and won concessions, many Labour-led councils sacked workers and shuttered up services without a fightback.

We need to kick out the cutters, and build a party that is united on the side of workers. The Socialist Party supports steps to realise Corbyn's anti-austerity programme, and kick the big business politicians out of Labour.

But we can't wait until 2020 to fight back; the Tories have made it clear that they want to leave nothing of the public sector by then. Working with others including the RMT trade union, the Socialist Party will be standing candidates as part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition against councillors making cuts and opposing an anti-cuts fightback.

A determined fightback can defeat the forced academies plan. But the ground has been prepared for this attack through decades of undermining the education system. As long as big business dictates the policies of government, schools will be seen as a potential avenue for profit, rather than an investment in educating the next generation. A socialist transformation of society would have at its heart developing the potential of all, using society's huge wealth for the good of all.

If you agree, and want to help fight back, join the Socialist Party today!

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