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ACTION ON MARCH
2ND TO SCRAP FEES

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Students need a fightback! After nearly two years of Covid, the effect of Tory and New Labour marketisation of our university campuses has been laid bare. In September 2020, students were lied to about in person teaching and then locked down on campuses across the country just so university management could keep our rent and tuition fee payments. This came on top of years of cuts to jobs, wages and conditions, and courses on campus, meaning a slow decline of the quality of education students receive while paying £9,250 a year fees.

Last year saw students organising rent strikes across the country, succeeding in winning millions of pounds in rent refunds. Far from just being a fight for compensation for the disruption to campuses caused by Covid, for many students the rents strikes were a first step towards fighting against marketisation, cuts on campuses, fees and student debt. It was during this time when the rent strike movement was in full swing that Socialist Students organised campus protests to demand tuition fee and rent refunds for students, funded by the government as the first step towards the complete scrapping of tuition fees.

Since then there have been further developments on campuses. The UCU took three days of strike action last term over attacks to staff pay and pensions, and is continuing with action short of strike this term with more possible strikes to come. And students have been protesting against the failures of management to effectively tackle the pandemic of sexual harassment and assault on campuses.

All of these events combined have been mounting pressure

on the leaders of the NUS to act. The National Union of Students has launched its campaign for a 'student strike for education', calling for a national student demonstration in London on March 2nd. The NUS is demanding among other things "higher and further education to be funded by governments - free at the point of use for students - with proper pay, pensions and conditions for staff across education and beyond".

Albeit a whole year after the campus rent strike movement developed, that the NUS has finally called for a national demonstration to stop these attacks is a welcome step. Given the depth of the crisis facing students, March 2nd could find a significant response from students looking to fight for free education.

However, guaranteeing the best possible turnout for such a demonstration will take a fighting campaign on the ground on campuses to link the day to day attacks on students and staff to the need for free education. This should include a campaign by Students' Unions around the country to mobilise students, including the funding and organising of transport to London for students and staff.

This demonstration has been called at a time when rumours are swirling that the government are considering lowering the student debt repayment threshold, threatening to trap particularly working class students in a lifetimes worth of debt repayments. This is a prime opportunity for the NUS to put forward the cancellation of student debt, the replacement of loans with grants, as well as the scrapping of tuition fees, all funded by taking the wealth out of the hands of the super-rich.

Socialist Students is going to be organising local campus protests as part of the campaign to mobilise students for March 2nd, and will be demanding that Students' Unions organise coaches for students to London. March 2nd could be a significant step in building the fightback against marketisation of the universities and for free education. Socialist Students is holding its annual conference Saturday 26th February in London to discuss how to rebuild the student movement and what next after March 2nd.

Socialist Students stands for the replacement of the broken system of capitalism, which is inherently chaotic and crisis-ridden, with a new kind of society. A socialist society based on solidarity and cooperation, by taking the vast wealth and resources out of the hands of the super-rich and into democratic public ownership to meet the social needs and wants of the majority in society. Come to Socialist Students' conference to discuss socialist ideas to rebuild the student movement - visit socialiststudents.org.uk for info.

Socialist Students **says:**

- **Fight for free education - scrap tuition fees, cancel all student debt and introduce living grants for students. Make the 1% pay.**
- **No to all job cuts and course closures on campuses. Students should link up with campus trade unions to fight all cuts.**
- **For rent controls! Bring all third party halls into ownership and control of the universities, as a step towards democratically set rents, decided on by elected committees including students.**
- **Build a national student movement – democratic and active.**
- **Fight for a socialist alternative to capitalist chaos.**