

# communist students

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## Capitalist crisis and communist necessity

Anybody who has picked up a newspaper in the last two years will notice that the capitalist system across the world is in crisis. The ongoing spectre of wars, environmental destruction and poverty is all too apparent. This crisis is not simply down to the greed or corruption of individuals but is endemic to a capitalist system in decline. In its lust for profit, capitalism has plundered the earth's natural resources and left the world on the brink of ecological disaster. It spends endless millions on manufacturing arms for the destruction of human life, yet at the same time it refuses to produce cheap medicine that could be used to combat the diseases afflicting millions of the poorest people in the world. Why? Because the ruthless logic of capital means production is based not on what people actually need but on what can make profit. Capital would force us to toil 24 hours a day if it could.

The capitalist classes are still struggling to get to grips with the most serious economic catastrophe in post-war history. Bourgeois governments of all nations rushed to protect the interests of their class, whilst ensuring that the mass of the people would be made to pay for the mess they had no part in making. As a result, the British working class (alongside much of the European working class) is staring down the barrel of public service cuts, wage reductions and unemployment. This is sold to the public as wholly necessary and unavoidable and we are then assured by our rulers that 'we are all in this together'. Of course, the contrary is true. Economic downturns expose this more than ever. Such crises heighten class tensions and un-

derline the fundamental irrationality of capitalist production, where in order for wealth to be created millions globally must starve.

The crisis has also acted to dispel many of the great myths of capitalism held by a generation brought up in a neo-liberal age, which arrogant sections of the bourgeoisie hailed as



the 'end of history'. The farcical claims made by newspapers, teachers and self-help gurus about our 'meritocratic' society where 'rugged individualism' can lead to prosperity and happiness is blown apart when we can see millions unemployed and social mobility at its lowest point for a century.

Of course, we cannot simply state that 'It's all down to capitalism'. Obviously, *politics* explains where we are today – in particular, the way that the balance of forces between the ruling and working class has shift-

ed in favour of the former over the last quarter of a century. Their side is in trouble, but our forces are also very weak.

For students, the results of this weakness can be clearly seen in the education system. Loans have replaced grants, tuition fees are on the rise, resources and facilities are stretched to breaking point - there are more attacks to come.

Like all other social institutions, our education is subject to capital. Our universities are used as research facilities for the imperialist war machine, university students are left with massive debts and face dwindling job prospects. Instead of a fulfilling, rounded experience, students are made to study for the sake of passing exams and taking their place as wage slaves. Communist Students regards students as a section of the working class given that we do not own the call centres, bars and nightclubs that get us through our studies - the majority of us have nothing to sell but our labour power. Students have the ability to play a vital role in the class struggle, demonstrated most famously by the student activists of France '68. Communist Students fights to combat the influence of capital in education at every opportunity. Humanity's emancipation from capital requires education's emancipation from capital. Only under socialism can the profit motive be removed from education and our schools, colleges and universities become centres for true

self-development. Until then it is important for the communist movement to develop our own political forces and to educate ourselves and others in the ideas that can challenge the capitalist system - the ideas of Marxism. But how can we move to a position where the working class, schooled in these ideas, is capable of overthrowing capitalism?

In Ireland, Spain and Greece - where highly unpopular measures are being or have already been implemented - the working class have reacted spontaneously in retaliation to the assaults of capital. In Britain it is likely that we will witness similar protests. However, there are important lessons to be learned from these examples. If the working class cannot organise itself effectively as a political force, it will win nothing but short-term concessions. Rocks and Molotov cocktails cannot bring down capitalism. A revolutionary communist movement of the working class *majority* can. The fight back must go beyond defending services and scrapping tuition fees. Crucially it must have a programme that takes up the question of how we are *ruled* - how the ruling class defraud, deceive and cheat us through their sham institutions such as parliament, the House of Lords, the monarchy, MI5 etc. The history of capitalism has shown that while the bourgeoisie remain as the ruling class, they can take back any concession won by the workers' movement. We do not nostalgically call for pre-Thatcher conditions: all our demands should be geared towards cohering our class into one with a clear vision of an alternative *society*.

Revolution, the seizure of the means of production by the workers coupled with the smashing of the state, is what we advocate as an absolute necessity. The society we strive for - communism - is an

egalitarian and democratic one, the pinnacle of human liberation. This is, no doubt, a far cry from the communism that many will imagine due to the horrors of USSR and Stalinism in the twentieth century. The sorry state of the left and its ideas at present (including the student left) in many ways results from the historic defeats inflicted on our class in the twentieth century - many of which came in the name of 'communism'. The far left lives in the shadow of these so-called 'communist' dictatorships of the USSR and has inherited some of the crudely bureaucratic practices and norms from this.

Today's far left consists of an array of sects competing to recruit members and refusing to address the question of unity seriously. It is important then for the workers' movement to learn from its mistakes, discuss and develop its ideas and to strive for the utmost levels of democracy within our movement - ie to *rearticulate* the consistently democratic project initially set out by Marx and Engels. We must *win back* the term communism. Communists are democrats in the truest sense, we are for democracy in every sphere of life - not merely in the realm of politics but in our workplaces, communities and education syllabuses.

We in Communist Students are for the unity in action of all socialists and revolutionaries around the inspiring yet practical politics of Marxism. We cannot dupe people into becoming communists by pretending to be labour leftists, British nationalists or 'all-things-to-all-people' populists. Communists must engage in the wider working class movements whilst consistently and unequivocally pro-

moting Marxist political strategy. A true proletarian struggle, a communist struggle on an international scale, is required for human self-emancipation from capitalism. It is this struggle to which we commit ourselves.

Communist Students was formed in 2006 by members and associates of the Communist Party of Great Britain (PCC) with a view to creating a mass Marxist student organisation. This was as desperately needed then as it is today.

At present, the student left, reflecting all that is bad with the left more generally, is split up into various warring sects, whose only conception of 'unity' is around the narrow and uninspiring political outlook of anti-fees and anti-cuts campaigns. For these 'Marxists', genuine revolutionary unity around the worldview of Marxism is, it would appear, to be avoided at all costs.

Seemingly endless demonstrations are organised to keep activists busy shouting the same old manufactured slogans and keep thinking for themselves to a minimum. The bigger question of unity is hardly addressed at all. In these so-called 'revolutionary' groups, openly criticising the leaders is tantamount to utter betrayal of the cause. This must end.

Communist students believe that activists have a responsibility to develop their thinking and this can only be achieved in an environment that encourages debate whilst emphasising programmatic unity for principled action and organisation.

Differences of opinion on strategy and theory should be no obstacle to being in the same organisation as long as members are willing to accept a programme committed to making a new generation of communists. This is the sort of serious approach to left unity that is needed if the balance of class forces is to be shifted in our favour.

**Callum Williamson**

## Join Communist Students!

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