

NUS elections 2008

Who to vote for?

In our view, these two points are the *minimum* platform any candidate worth supporting must openly and clearly adhere to. Why?

1. The proposals in the governance review are a blatant attempt by the ruling Labour bureaucracy to restrict democracy even further and to increase its stranglehold over the NUS (see *Communist Student* No 5 for a longer analysis).

2. The occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan and the sabre-rattling against Iran remain the key issues for the British working class and progressive movements. As long as British troops deny the people in the Middle East the right to govern their own affairs, we have a duty to campaign actively against the occupation and for the immediate withdrawal of all troops.

Sadly, not everybody on the left agrees with this basic internationalist position. In their motion on Iran, the Socialist Workers Party/Student Respect does not call for troops out *now*, illustrating the way that this organisation often hides its politics, be it to placate the leaders of the mosque in Respect or liberals and sappy pacifists in the Stop the War Coalition. For the SWP 'broadness' - ie, unity with the right - overrides any principle. Having said that, in their individual manifestos the three Student Respect candidates standing for executive positions clearly state that they are for "troops out now". They should be supported

The candidates standing on the 'Education not for Sale' ticket have a joint manifesto, which calls for: "No to war on Iran; for mass action including occupation in the event of war; against the occupation of Iraq. No to Iran's theocratic regime: solidarity with workers, women and students in Iran and Iraq." Sounds ok, doesn't it?

However, the problem is that majority of members in the Alliance for Workers' Liberty (which runs ENS) have consciously taken a position on Iraq *against* troops out now. They actually believe that there is something potentially progressive about the occupation in that it gives "breathing space" to the social movements and trade unions. Some in the AWL even advocate that US and British imperialism should be conducting "surgical strikes" against Iran, others are in favour of sanctions.

After we were informed that most ENS candidates have a 'troops out now' position, we wrote to the four ENS candidates to clarify their positions. The two who are *not* members of the AWL - Laura Simmons (VP Further Education) and Koos Couvee (treasurer) - support both points. Laura for example writes that, "I disagree with [the AWL's]

Communist Students call on all delegates to only vote for candidates who:

- 1. Oppose the governance review.**
- 2. Oppose the occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan, stand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of troops from the Gulf region and oppose any imperialist action or sanctions against Iran.**

platforms in the Middle East" and "oppose all western imperialism that is prevalent in the Middle East". However, while AWL member Heather Shaw (standing for secretary) did not reply, Daniel Randall (standing for president) says he cannot support our second

point, because it is too "abstract" and does not take "working-class solidarity as its point of departure".

Actually, the call for the immediate end of the imperialist occupation of other people's countries might be taken as the *first* rule of international 'solidarity' ... but not by the social imperialists of the AWL, apparently. And as Daniel knows very well, Communist Students is heavily involved in the campaign Hands Off the People of Iran, which fights against imperialist war, against the theocracy and for active solidarity with the students, the women's and workers' movements in Iran. However, Hopi and CS also know that the main enemy is US/UK imperialism. And this is where Daniel and the majority of the AWL - really disagree.

This organisation is social imperialist - that is, socialist in rhetoric; pro-imperialist in policy. But it is good to see that this scab AWL position is being increasingly condemned - both in the organisation's own ranks and the fronts it sponsors.

Arran Cottam (standing for Socialist Students) also leaves out the word "now" from his manifesto. He has however confirmed to us that he supports the above formulation and therefore we call for a vote for him (even though we would criticise SS/SP for its lack of energy when it comes to attempts to organise united challenges to the Labour bureaucracy and its reluctance to get involved the Hands Off The People Of Iran campaign).

But we cannot advocate a vote for 'Student Broad Left', the bastard child of the Stalinoid organisation Socialist Action. When it comes to the vote on the governance review, for example, a number of SBL members are planning to hide in the toilets rather than break the mandate of their student union. Who needs shithouse weasels like that? Naturally, we also cannot advocate a vote for Labour Students, a group that has run the NUS into the ground.

We call for votes for members of the following left organisations in the order below (ie, where two candidates of the left stand against each other, we will give preference to members of the groups higher up the list).

- 1. Communist Students**
- 2. Laura Simmons & Koos Couvee (ENS)**
- 3. Socialist Students**
- 4. Student Respect**



'Mehdi Kazemi must stay! No to war, no to the theocratic regime!' Chris addresses a protest in support of the gay Iranian refugee

Chris Strafford for the Block of 12!

As the right-wing NUS bureaucracy prepares to gut what remains of the union's democratic structures; as the fight for free education faces a growing series of setbacks; as resurgent student movements from Iran to Western Europe are met with brutal repression, there is a desperate need in the student movement for the revolutionary fighting spirit and consistent democratic politics of Marxism. Communist Students fights for that cause, and we urge you to vote for our candidate Chris Strafford in the NUS executive elections.

Chris and Communist Students fight for:

Democracy in the student movement

The Governance review is an attempt by the NUS bureaucracy to make the NUS even less transparent and accountable body than it already is. But our campaign must say more than just 'no' if it is to succeed. We are for:

- The whole executive to be elected at conference (apart from the representatives elected by the liberation campaigns).
- The possibility to immediate recall officers of the executive; for full accountability of the executive to the membership.
- No more than a skilled worker's wage for officials and employees of the NUS. Open the books.
- For full transparency in all matters, especially dealings with government ministers and commercial concerns.

Free education for all

- An end to tuition fees.
- A living grant, at a level based on the actual needs of

students to educate themselves and live fulfilling lives: in present conditions, at least £300 per week.

- For an end to the subordination of education to the needs of capitalism. As they are currently taught, many subjects take capitalism as a system for granted, and rarely allow for the suggestion that another form of society is possible.
- For the direct democratic participation of students and staff in the affairs of the university.

Principled internationalism

- Troops out of and Iraq and Afghanistan immediately.
- No war or sanctions on Iran. Solidarity with Iranian workers, students and democrats in struggle with the reactionary regime.
- We support the election of Anoosheh Azadbar to Honorary Vice-President of the NUS. She is one of the students arrested in December and has been actively campaigning both against a war on Iran and against the rule of the theocracy.

Women's Liberation

- Free 24 hour childcare for all. Free contraception and abortion on demand.
- Support and pay for students who are parents.
- The decriminalisation of prostitution.

LGBT

- Equality of rights between LGBT people and heterosexuals.
- Equal opportunities for same sex couples wishing to adopt.
- For the right to marry – not just civil partnerships.


communist students

www.comuniststudents.org.uk, info@communiststudents.org.uk