
Students and Staff: Shoulder to Shoulder!

Across the country, university staff are facing growing redundancies, increased hours and heavier workloads – the only thing shrinking is their pay packets. The Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) has sparked this dispute by offering workers a desultory 0.3% pay offer! In real terms, this is a cut as inflation runs at 2.9%.

On top of this laughable offer, the UCEA has threatened jobs cuts in more than 100 universities. At London Metropolitan University, this could see up to one-quarter of the jobs there culled. Apart from adding to the dole queues increasing by 100,000 people per month this will no doubt have a dramatically adverse effect on the workload for the remaining, already over-burdened, staff.

Many university managements will look to use the economic crisis to push through “re-structuring” programmes aimed at hacking away staff and raising profits. It is estimated that London Met will see a 15 million pound cut in funding at a time when billions of pounds, dollars and euros are being thrown at the tottering structures of capitalism and anarchic profit accumulation. As usual, it is education and the welfare of students and workers that will suffer.

Fighting back

UCU members are right to mobilise and fight. The system is in crisis and working people should not be made to pay for it. We back the militant action and are proud to join strikers fighting for a sustained campaign that can win the existing demands and more.

These attacks have sparked resistance across the country. London Metropolitan University has called for strike action following a decision that could see up to a third of staff made redundant. Winning key struggles like this and others such as the ones in Liverpool John Moore University and others can boost the confidence of university staff and see a sentiment for further, deeper change grow.

Communist Students is fighting for students from across the country to take a lead in organising solidarity and working with UCUs to fight attacks which will affect both students and staff. CS condemns the right wing leadership of the National Union of Students (NUS)

for not backing the UCU.

The NUS leadership is intimately tied up with Labour. Brown’s government is deeply discredited and hated by many. It has saddled 1000s of students with crippling debt. Its moronically bureaucratic culture of muddling, fiddling and target-setting from above in education is mirrored in the bloated and self-perpetuating bureaucracy that sits on top of the system and stifles educational

The logo for Communist Students features the word "communist" in a bold, red, lowercase sans-serif font. A red starburst graphic is positioned above the letter "i". Below "communist" is the word "students" in a bold, black, lowercase sans-serif font. The "s" in "students" is partially overlapped by the bottom of the "i" in "communist".

communist
students

creativity. More generally, it reflects the totally vacuous nature of Labour's programme for society as a whole.

It is a foul betrayal that the students 'union' has effectively acquiesced in the attacks of this reactionary government, the bosses and the bureaucrats in every key battle over fees, privatisation and job cuts. The working class needs not just militant trade union actions: we need a party that is genuinely of and for our class – a class that has expanded as college lecturers and other sections have become increasingly 'proletarianised' with casualisation, less and less control over their work and squeezed pay rates. And a genuine workers' party is a Marxist party - the principles of radical democracy, internationalism and solidarity laid out by Marx and Engels - not the horror of the Soviet Union. CS stands shoulder to shoulder with Higher Education and Further Education staff and will fight on campus to build solidarity. We call for the formation of solidarity committees up and down the country.

Communist Students and Education

Clearly, attacks on pay and conditions are key arenas of struggle. However, we also need to articulate a broader vision of progressive change. We need to assert that education is about the rounded development of students as future members of a truly democratic and human society – not simply meat computers or sponges to be squeezed for surplus value.

Academic institutions now operate according to the brutal logic of a pseudo-market; it has nothing to do with real education. Like everything else – be it our planet's ecology, outer space or our bodies themselves - capitalism reduces everything to a ugly cash nexus. It brutally commodifies education not simply to retool the next generation for exploitation, but also to internalise in the young an acceptance of class society and the wage slave discipline it demands.

Education must have a totally different – actually an opposite – role. It should equip students to be genuinely useful in the contemporary world. In the 'contemporary world' we are confronted with today, this can only mean becoming partisans of the universal class – the working class – the one agency that can emancipate humanity as a whole.

Students, alongside lecturers, teachers, pupils and parents, must be at the forefront of opposition to attacks on our education system, and fight for an education under the genuine democratic control of lecturers and students, not faceless bureaucrats. Wider than that, we need to mobilise millions of others in a fight for an education system that can equip us with ideas that facilitate human beings rising to their full stature as a species. At a time when the financial crisis is tearing through the globe and causing enormous suffering, we need an education system that helps us change the world more than ever.

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