



Build student-worker unity: keep the movement going!

Unions and student activists should call a national

demonstration for January

Today, 9 December, it is likely that parliament will vote in favour of a massive hike in tuition fees. We cannot accept that as decisive defeat!

In 2006 the movement against the CPE law in France, which would have allowed bosses to summarily sack workers under the age of 26, continued after the French parliament passed the legislation and eventually forced its repeal. It can be done!

Forcing the government back means maintaining momentum, and that means reaching out to a wider working-class resistance to the cuts.

Students need to organise strongly, and develop organisations which can reach the trade-union rank and file and push concerted demands on the union leaders.

The TUC has called a national demonstration against cuts. But it's not until 26 March 2011. So calling for student-worker unity can sound like an instruction to student activists to harness their activism to the sluggish and bureaucratic pace of the labour movement. That's not what we want to say at all!

Student organisations, and rank-and-file union organisations, should demand that union leaders co-sponsor, with student activists, a big demonstration early in January to restart the campaign with a bang after Christmas.

If the union leaders won't do it, then the demonstration should be called with whatever lower-level union organisations will back it.

One way or another, a January day of action on fees and EMA should be set soon.

Students and workers together can be a decisive force against cuts. By virtue of its pivotal position in capitalist production and the logic of the class struggles that position generates, the working class is the social force which can win a socialist alternative to the rule of profit.

Make links now

We can build student-worker unity now by:

- Delegations from union branches and trades councils visiting student occupations, as striking RMT members and TSSA members have been doing in London.

- Union groups supporting student actions in other ways, even if that's just by visiting demonstrations with union banners or by producing supportive statements, like the one signed by several National Union of Teachers National Executive members (initiated by AWL member Patrick Murphy).

- Producing joint statements, like that from the Regional Secretary of the rail union RMT in London and leading members of the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts.

- Students visiting workers' picket lines, as many have done in London during the recent Tube strike.

- Students going to speak at union branches and trades councils.

If the unity and solidarity that is being developed locally can be amplified nationally, then the wave of student action can catalyse a long-dormant labour movement into life. If it does that, the possibilities are limitless.

How to organise: take over your student union!

On every university campus, students should organise to take over their student union and make it a campaigning body rather than a bureaucracy fixated on "services" and good entries for the sabbaticals' CVs.

The success of the UCL occupation in forcing an emergency general meeting of the SU, and winning SU backing for the occupation there, shows what is immediately possible. The transformation of SUs can't be done overnight; but, in the meantime, the broad and democratic campus organisation of students needed to change the student union will also be the organisation for immediate action.

It will also connect with campus unions in a joint student-worker committee.

In every school and FE college, student activists should form a broad and democratic campaign committee. Across every city - a coordinating committee.

Demand an NUS emergency conference!

The recent actions of the leadership of NUS (the National Union of Students) have exposed it as a conservative, thoroughly-bureaucratised organisation. The NUS refused to back today's march (9 December).

After condemning the Millbank protest on 10 November, NUS president Aaron Porter was

forced to shift a bit and support occupations. But the NUS Executive's vote not to support the 9 December march, and instead to limit support to a "vigil", shows that little has changed.

Years of anti-democratic structural reform have left NUS's membership all but incapable of exerting any pressure, never mind direct control, on what NUS does politically at a national level. These changes have fed, and been fed by, a lurch rightwards in policy terms.

In the 1980s and 90s NUS used to organise a national demonstration every year, and it would have two conferences a year, with vigorous debate. 10 November was the first demonstration that NUS has organised for some years.

On education funding, NUS wants to tinker around the edges of the payment system but accepts as inevitable (desirable, even) the idea of education as a paid-for commodity. Its leaders denounce free education activists as utopian fantasists.

Activist Student Unions should take lead

The NUS leaders can't be allowed to continue peacefully on their present lines until 12 April, when NUS's regular conference is due. NUS has held plenty of emergency conferences in recent years to push through anti-democratic rule changes. It should hold an emergency conference now to allow the new generation of student activists to control the battle over fees and EMA.

Activist Student Unions should get together to press for an emergency NUS conference, and also plan their own conference, soon, to be a powerful left force within NUS, and also to have the means to organise action independently.

To fail to take up these campaigns, and instead rely exclusively on ad hoc activist networks, would be to let the large resources available from our student unions' membership fees and assets stay under unchallenged conservative control.

We should:

- agitate for local SUs to demand an emergency NUS conference
- propose policy for NUS conference 2011 that seeks to overturn its position on education funding and to abolish the existing undemocratic constitution and replace it with one based on a grassroots control
- stand a united left slate for the NUS NEC, in the first place based on the unity of activist networks such as the NCAFC and EAN.
- form a permanent caucus of left SUs that can organise within NUS and, when and where necessary, independently of it.

NCAFC meeting, Friday 10th

The National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts (NCAFC) has called an activist meeting for

Friday 10th, from 11:00 at Tower One Room U8, London School of Economics. This will discuss NCAFC action, and prepare for the planning meeting also scheduled on Friday (18:00, Hong Kong Lecture Theatre, Clement House, LSE).

NCAFC has played a pivotal role in the recent movement. Activists who want to be part of an ongoing campaign for free education should support the NCAFC and build CAFC groups on their campuses. For more information, visit anticuts.com, email againstfeesandcuts@gmail.com or ring 07775 763750.

Next week

Students in some areas are planning new walk-outs for 13 December. Those should be supported.

And, whatever about that, organise! On every campus and in every school and college, next week must be the time we make sure we have a strong activist network in place, well-publicised and accessible to all students, and well prepared for next term.

Barricade meeting, Saturday 11th

Workers' Liberty members and others have recently launched 'barricade', a zine for young activists. Check it out at www.workersliberty.org/barricade or email barricade@workersliberty.org for more info.

Barricade meeting: 5.30pm-7.30pm Saturday 11 December, upstairs at the Lucas Arms, 245a Grays Inn Road, London WC1 (accessible to under-18s).

Workers' Liberty

The Alliance for Workers' Liberty, with its newspaper *Solidarity*, is a working-class socialist group active in workplaces, unions, anti-cuts campaigns, and the student movement. Interested in joining, or finding out more? Check us out at www.workersliberty.org.

Students, class struggle and socialism: a day-school for young activists

Saturday 19 February 2011
Highgate Newtown Community Centre, Bertram Street, London N19 (near Archway tube)

Workshops and discussions on: * revolution, the state and violence * why class is central * school students organising * students in the miners' strike * and many more. More info: tinyurl.com/awlyouthschool

9 December 2010
AWL, P O Box 823, London SE15 4NA. 020 7207 3997/
awl@workersliberty.org/
www.workersliberty.org

