The struggles in response to the Con-Dem tuition fee increase and abolition of the EMA have inspired us all. Together, we’ve mobilised hundreds of thousands of people, many of whom have never been involved in political action before.

School students and sixth-formers have been at the forefront. Many actions have been organised and led by women.

Our protests have been ethnically diverse. We’ve dared to do more than just polite A to B marches or lobbies of councillors and MPs; we’ve organised walk-outs, sit-downs and occupations. We have, in short, sent a message to the rest of our class; we do not have to take the attacks from this government lying down. We won’t.

You might be reading Barricade on the next national day of action. You might be reading it on the demonstrations on the day of the parliamentary vote on the tuition fee increase.

The fact that you might have bought this on any one of a number of actions coming up in December shows that we’re dealing with a pace of political activity unheard of for the better part of a generation. But that pace will not be maintained without organisation.

Barricade thinks the ideas drawn up by the National Campaign Against Fees and cuts are really good... see box!

Barricade also believes that a revolutionary socialist politics of class struggle will be needed to defeat this government. That doesn’t mean we should wait for workers’ organisations (trade unions, which can often be sluggish and bureaucratic) to wake up before we act ourselves, but it does mean understanding that the power to defeat capitalism fundamentally lies with the people who make it move – workers.

If we base ourselves on workers’ struggles, and use our own energy and direct action creativity to support them and link them with our own, we can not only resist immediate attacks but launch an offensive of our own that can bring down the government.

Organise!

In every college and every campus where action happens, we need ongoing organisation. Try and get active students to meet every week and democratically decide how to take the campaign forward. Where possible we should organise mass meetings in the college or uni, to make decisions about the campaign.

Set up a campaign!

Set up a blog or a facebook group for your local campaign and link it to anticuts.com. Try to pull off actions regularly, even if they are only small. Try making these demands –

• Abolish Tuition Fees
• Save EMA
• No cuts to education
• Open the books – come clean about management salaries and money wasted on consultants

Coordinate!

Every city should have a city-wide general assembly every week that brings together representatives of all the different college anti-cuts campaigns. These city-wide assemblies should make decisions about joint actions. They should be run democratically – the chair should rotate and the meeting should not be the ‘property’ of any one group or faction. Everyone should respect the decisions that get made collectively.

Link up with trade unions!

Get in touch with trade unions in your school/college/university, and invite union representatives to campaign meetings, and invite them to your city-wide coordination meetings. Students need to link up with workers fighting cuts to other public services. This isn’t just about forming alliances with other groups of people affected by the cuts; the working class is the force that makes society move, and when the working class strikes, it can change the whole of society.

• Keep an eye on anticuts.com for the latest.
• Get in touch with the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts
Why we walked

On 20 October, when the spending review was announced, there was a negative attitude in our Sixth Form common room. People were beginning to realise that the next five years weren’t going to be easy. The scrapping of EMA, which helps many students at our Sixth Form, was not greeted kindly. It is that machinery that the capitalist state uses to defend its interests at home and abroad (invading countries like Iraq and Afghanistan to salvage markets for profits and patch up the fabric of world capitalist).

It all started when a leaflet was handed around school. Somebody had heard from the National Coalition Against Fees and Cuts about a National Day of Action. Most of the students didn’t know what this meant. Why were we walking out? When told about the disgusting cuts and what would happen if we didn’t fight for our futures, the entire school was bursting with conversations and general outrage about the Conservative and Lib Dem Government.

We held a few meetings to get the walkout organised. The first meeting we had was relatively small, there were more people, but different people from those who were at the first meeting. By Tuesday night we were all biting our fingers, wondering how many we’d actually get walking out, whether there’d be enough of us to march into the city centre.

At 11 o’clock Wednesday morning, there was no doubt in our heads about this walkout, the school was all set and we were ready to march. Our massive group of high-school students then walked the two miles into the city centre to meet up with the university students and continue with the protest, and yet we left the school at eleven and walked down the main road near the school together. We were met by barriers and placards were made and the press were informed. After a brief rally in the common room, the police were met with massed resistance. All but a handful of the Sixth Form took part in the walkout.

Two bloodless wolves whose dry throats rattle, Two crows perched on the murrained cattle, Two vipers tangled into one. Percy Shelley

Get that animal off me

A lot of the press coverage of the student struggles has focused on the “violent” aspects of our actions (smashing a few windows at Millbank, a few folk going a bit nuts and kicking in a bus-stop or two, a police van getting a little battered and spray-painted, a few others bits and bobs getting broken).

But/they reckon most of this was perfectly legitimate (especially the Millbank stuff), and the stuff we wouldn’t condone (whatever lobbed the fire-extinguisher off the roof at Millbank should definitely have stopped to think first) was hardly representative of any significant proportion of the movement.

The media has focused somewhat less on the far greater levels of violence from the other side. Particularly in London, we’ve been confronted with police who have literally gone out of their way to be as violent as possible. And we’re not just talking about the really obviously violent stuff like clubbing us over the head with batons or charging us on two-tonne horses; we also reckon that keeping us penned in on a freezing cold street without access to food, water or toilets for hours on end is a pretty violent act too.

So what are they up to? Did we just get unlucky? Are London coppers just worse than coppers in the rest of the country? (Yes, actually, but that’s not the main reason.)

If you’ve read up on your working-class history you might recognise behaviour like this. How about police horses charging down pickets during the miners’ strike in 1984/5 (see picture) or at the Grunwick strike in the late 1970s? Cops behave like this because the police, as an institution, is part of the armed machinery of the capitalist state — just like the military and the prison system. It is that machinery that the state uses to defend its interests at home (from movements like ours which seek, in the immediate term to shift the balance of power away from capitalists and towards the working-class) and extend its interests abroad (invading countries like Iraq and Afghanistan to salvage markets for profits and patch up the fabric of world capitalist).

That doesn’t mean every copper is a bad person (although we can’t really understand why anyone would ever get a job in the police force), but it does mean that when push comes to shove (literally), the police will be motivated to repress, often using violence, movements that challenge the interests of the rich and powerful.

A lot of people are learning difficult and painful lessons about what the police are really for, and they’re not for helping old ladies cross the road. We don’t think they can just be abolished overnight and sometimes we might even need to call on them ourselves. But when do we think that they should do it with the knowledge of whose interests they really serve.

The police and use effective tactics like sit-downs and, if necessary, charges of our own to break their kettles. Faced with these levels of violence, a “non-violent” response means rolling over.

Get that animal off me

With the growing number of demos against student cuts and mounting concern about police behaviour there should be interesting times ahead for Copwatch, a new organisation set up to document and address unlawful behaviour committed by the police primarily in demos and protest situations.

Copwatch feels it is time to cent ruefully record this behaviour and make the information public. Until now, reports of this nature are spread across a range of organisations and the true scale of the problem is not apparent.

By relying on photographic and video evidence and statements from members of the public, and by gathering evidence itself, Copwatch aims to call to account each offending force. Officers unqualified to do so are very extreme.

Complaints will be properly registered with the IPCC and relevant organisations and passed to local MPs and councillors. If you have found the unjust heavy hand of the law, felt unable to do anything about it or that a complaint will go nowhere should contact Copwatch for advice.

Copwatch also invites reports and information from organisations regarding police behaviour so it may consider whether a class action lawsuit is necessary.

To add a report or to seek advice visit www.copwatch.co.uk.

Harry Sinclair-Waugh, North Leamington School
College and school students talk about why they walked out from their lessons on 24 November.

Get in touch with the National Coalition Against Fees and Cuts: 07775 763 750, facebook, twitter and www.anticuts.com

Why we walked out

Protestors fighting against the scrapping of EMA, the cuts to Higher Education and the near-tripling of planet and must be ended.

Yusuf, Westminster Kingsway College

The detention of children demonstrates the complete lack of regard capitalist need.

Another national day of action on the 30th will see more students along with samba drumming, which is an absolute joke. I think if the movement carries on we're going to need regular meetings in Hastings to discuss the cuts and how to take action against them.

Will Lloyd, Queen Elizabeth High School

The end of an era...

By Daisy

For many readers and film enthusiasts, it will be the end of an era when the much-loved characters of the Harry Potter series grace the screen one last time in the second part of Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.

As the books become darker, we see more hostile government takeovers and corrupt politicians fighting their way to power.

With the new 'evil' Ministry, Voldemort is not the only bad guy. Dolores Umbridge manages to make the colour pink, kittens, teacups, and even bows creepy. She is evil... in pink. Another strong evil female character is Bellatrix Lestrange. She's evil, unhinged, and possesses intense bloodlust. Those three are probably the cruellest characters, who provide Harry, Hermione, and Ron with plenty of challenges.

Harry accumulates a lot of allies along the way, but the focus is still on the threesome of Harry, Hermione, and Ron. Rowling very neatly ties up loose ends in the epilogue of the seventh book, showing them as married, happy, and parents to boot!

Speaking of parents, there is a theme of family running throughout all the books. Harry lost his parents when he was very young and therefore lacked the essential guidance and nurturing that all children need. After not getting love from his aunt and uncle, Harry turned to external sources of comfort. The strongest of all his "surrogate family" is Mrs Weasley, his best friend's mother. In fact, Harry is pretty much an honorary Weasley. It's hard to pick the strongest father figure. Many have appeared throughout the books — most notably: Mr Weasley, Sirius Black, Dumbledore, Hagrid, and Remus Lupin.

By the start of the seventh book, that list is shortened to three, because, with love and family, comes sacrifice. The previous sacrifices of both Dumbledore and Sirius continue to haunt Harry, as well as the loss of his owl, Hedwig, who dies trying to save him.

Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part One.

The cast performed brilliantly, really drawing the audience into the story. A lot of people, myself included, have grown up with Harry and his friends. Some people only really got into reading because of Harry Potter. Now that it's almost at the end, we're reluctant to let go. It's like the loss of some good friends.

If at the end of reading this, you haven't guessed that I'm recommending watching this film, then you obviously haven't read it closely enough! My major complaint is only that we have wait until next year for the second half. It's a fantastic film peppered with the good, the bad, and the funny. So, treat yourself to a few hours with Harry, Ron, and Hermione in Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part One.

Stop locking up children!

By Dan

Despite the government's pledge to end the detention of child migrants, no definite plan has yet been proposed to make sure that the powers currently being used to detain children are abolished. Children are still being locked up!

A recent report by the Medical Justice Network provides details on data raids used against families, issues of malnourishment in detention centres, reports of violence and existence is fleeting.

The statistics are real horror stories. 79% of children were "particularly traumatised during a dawn raid" with 10% witnessing or experiencing violence; parents reported that 47% of children would not eat the food provided in detention centres, with 8% being unable to eat the food without vomiting. 97% of children demonstrated "behavioural changes", with 78% expressing fear, anxiety or distress. The children had thoughts about suicide either during or after their detention and three girls attempted to commit suicide.

The detention of children demonstrates the complete lack of regard capitalist governments have for human life. It should be abhorred by every person on the planet and must be ended.
A younger person’s guide to: The Israel–Palestine conflict

By Rosie

The national conflict in Israel/Palestine has been one of the most consistently high-profile conflicts in world politics for many years. It requires enormous passion and controversy on all sides; anyone who’s ever attended a meeting about the issue may have experienced some of that first hand. But not every one—including some of the people who’most passionate’—have a genuine understanding of the roots of the conflict.

While the issues are undeniably complex, one immediate dynamic is simple. One state, Israel, which has a first-world economy and one of the most powerful militaries on the planet, is occupying the land where the Palestinian Arab people live and has been doing so since 1967. The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 was a rather botched attempt to deal with the reality that a large number of Jews, most of whom were refugees from Nazi genocide, were now living in historic Palestine. Most of these Jews had nowhere else to go. The UN proposed a plan that created two states, one for the Jews and one for the Palestinian Arabs. But in the war that followed the creation of the Israeli-Jewish state (which also included the effective forced exile of nearly 800,000 Palestinians), the Palestinian state was snuffed out. Egypt and Jordan grabbed most of its territory.

In 1967, the Israeli state extended its borders by occupying the two territories in which most Palestinians now live, Gaza and the West Bank. That set the stage for a series of ongoing brutalisations and humiliations of Palestinians, from the checkpoint network that inhibits their movement right through to full-scale military incursions. Israel is a highly militarised society, with compulsory military service being the norm. Its powerful military is occupying the two territories in which most Palestinians now live, Gaza and the West Bank. That set the stage for a series of ongoing brutalisations and humiliations of Palestinians, from the checkpoint network that inhibits their movement right through to full-scale military incursions. Israel is a highly militarised society, with compulsory military service being the norm.

By Alex

The question of how to respond to religious, and the fact that a lot of working-class people (particularly in the so-called ‘developing world’) hold religious beliefs, has been a tricky issue for revolutionaries for... well, forever really.

Karl Marx famously described religion as an ‘opiate’, comparing it to a drug that people take to make themselves feel better rather than actually dealing with the root causes of their problems. He said that it promised people a ‘heart in a heartless world’ but only provided an ‘illusory happiness’. We think that was pretty much spot-on then and remains pretty much spot-on now. Plus the actual drugs are better these days anyway, so why would we need ones that come back with moral codes and dietary laws attached to them?

The overwhelming weight of scientific discovery has edged out any real possibility whatsoever that some realm—spiritual, supernatural, call it what you want—might exist beyond the material universe. It’s true that, because of the omnipresent yet intangible nature that religious believers claim their deities have, it’s not possibly to conclusively ‘prove’ that god doesn’t exist.

But the ‘chocolate teapot’ analogy is useful here: we can’t ‘prove’ that their chocolate teapot orbits the sun because we’ll never get close enough to find out. But everything we know about a) chocolate b) teapots, c) sun and d) the nature of celestial orbits tells us that this is impossible. It’s the same with god.

We also have to look at the social role that religion plays. It’s true that it helps people with tough lives make it through the day. It can be a source of comfort and hope. It can offer an escape from the misery of everyday life. But all of that is also true of crack cocaine. While I can understand why people might get hooked on crack I wouldn’t necessarily recommend it as a good idea.

But religion’s actually worse than that. Whenever religion enters the political sphere it reveals itself as a thoroughly barbaric force. Whether it’s Islamic fundamentalist governments in Iran or Saudi Arabia using religion to justify the stoning of women, whether it’s jihadis using the Islamic faith to build into buildings, whether it’s Christian fundamentalists attacking gay people or abortion clinics, whether it’s Jewish zealots in Israel building settlements on Palestinian land, whether it’s Hindu sectarians attacking Muslims in India, the role of religion in politics has been, throughout history, categorically very bad indeed.

Unfortunately, organised religion is currently on the offensive. It wants more and more of public life to be subordinated to its narrow views. In the past few years we’ve seen bigots from Christianity, Islam and Judaism protest against various forms of artistic expression in Britain and elsewhere against Europe. In one instance, Sikh fundamentalists were able to get a play, ‘Bezali’, effectively banned because it depicted a rape in a gurdwara and was mildly critical of the Sikh clergy.

I haven’t seen the play. I don’t know whether its content was ‘offensive’ as the protesters claimed. Frankly I don’t care: no-one should have the right not to be offended! Religious beliefs are beliefs like any other; they should not be entitled to any special protection from criticism (even ‘offensive’ criticism).

People should be free to believe whatever they like, and if they choose to believe that the moon is made out of cheese or that it’s evil to be gay or that women should cover their hair or even their faces if they want to go outside, then the rest of us should be free to tell them that they’re wrong.

As opponents of the system that makes people’s lives so miserable that they need to turn to ‘opiates’ in the first place, we should focus our main fire on the root causes rather than the symptoms.

We should also defend anyone who is racist or state persecution because of their religion. But we also need to understand the role religion plays when it becomes an organised political force, and fight against it.

This is barricade

Welcome to barricade, a new socialist publication for young people. barricade is a space where young people can learn about socialist ideas and the history of working-class struggle, but this isn’t a political theory textbook or a history book. It’s a place where young people who’re involved in activist politics — or who want to become involved — can swap ideas and hear new ways of thinking about the world, and around the world, and more. barricade belongs to the people who read it; if you’ve got something to say, write for barricade and make it your own.

barricade was launched by young members of Workers’ Liberty, a revolutionary socialist organisation active in working-class struggle in the UK, but you don’t have to be a Workers’ Liberty member to support us. No prior knowledge or political experience is required to get involved. barricade is just a healthy contempt for bosses, bureaucrats, Tories, New Labour types, smug Lib Dems, middle-class moralisers, homophobes, racists, sexist, bigots of all varieties, the Royal Family and other parasites, and the rich in general. So if you...

...have ever worked in a shitty job for crap wages and been pushed around by your boss...think that there’s something wrong with a society in which a tiny minority controls all the wealth...think of the fascination and those who have no choice but to starve. Starve those who are hungry, such as the BNPs, who peddle them...resent the fact that education is mostly training for the workplace and, if we make it to university, we have to pay through the nose for the privilege of getting it...know which side you’re on when any group of workers, anywhere in the world, take on their bosses...then barricade is for you. barricade isn’t just words on a page; if you agree with the revolutionary socialist politics barricade fights for, then get involved. Take copies to sell or distribute at your school, college or workplace and discuss the ideas. Happy troublemaking....

Write to us: barricade@workersliberty.org Find us: www.workersliberty.org/barricade Talk to us: 02072074673

Here’s god?

Bigotry is bigotry