

Scottish Socialist VOICE

DONATION STUDENT FRESHERS SPECIAL

A SCOTTISH SOCIALIST PARTY PUBLICATION

INSIDE THIS
ISSUE

Anti-fascism,
Drugs,
Climate
Change &
a free poster!

AT UNI?

Not if the Tories have anything to do with it!

THE TORY TOFFS

and their LibDem lapdogs in the Westminster coalition are gearing up to announce a massive attack on further education – with direct implications for students across the UK. Among their plans are to:

- Slash university and college funding by up to £3.5bn – directly

impacting on courses, jobs, research, student places and degrees

- Scrap a previous government promise to introduce 20,000 new student places

- And in England, to raise tuition fees to up to £5000 a year – placing further pressure on the Scottish govt to re-introduce them.



OCCUPATION: The massive wave of student resistance which swept Central Europe last year, including the University of Vienna (above) points the way forward for the anti-cuts struggle here.

A Voice for change

WELCOME to the fresher's special edition of the *Scottish Socialist Voice*. If this is the first time you've seen this paper, you might be wondering about who makes it and why. Here's the deal.

The *Voice* is the newspaper of the Scottish Socialist Party, and is the only regular radical, left-wing newspaper produced in Scotland. Pretty much all the other papers are right wing, and spread propaganda and misinformation. But the *Voice* brings you the news from a different perspective.

The SSP have been around for 10

and a bit years, and we fight for an independent Scottish socialist republic.

With the economy in crisis and the Tories about to start an all out war on ordinary people, the need for socialist independence for Scotland has never been greater.

The SSP is dedicated to fighting the ConDem cuts, and offering an alternative vision of a Scotland where we devote our resources to ending poverty and environmental destruction instead of war, nuclear weapons and bank bailouts.

This issue is a special edition for fresher's fairs written and produced entirely by Scottish Socialist Youth, a self-organised group of young (26 and under) socialists who fight for radical change and against discrimination against youth. Young people are suffering harder than most from the crisis, with unemployment soaring. The time to fight back is now.

So read on for more news on what SSP and SSY, and for details on how you can join the fight to change the world.

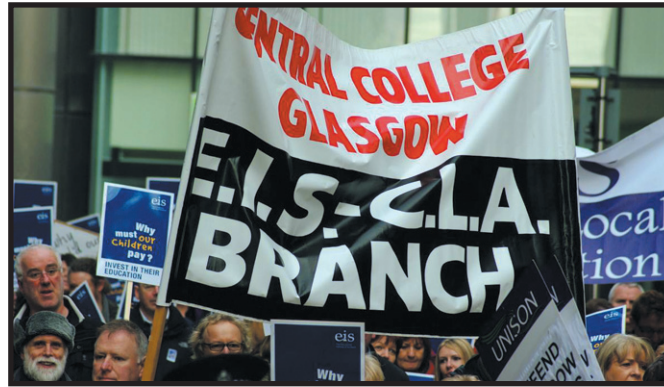
STOP THE EDUCATION CUTS

by Liam Turbett

TONY Blair famously said that his priorities in government could be summed up as 'education, education, education'. We think that 'war, war, war' would be more appropriate, but anyway... for the current Tory-led administration, it'd be more appropriate to phrase it as 'education cuts, education cuts, education cuts' – such is the extent to which their coalition of Sweeney Toffs are planning to butcher funding for universities and colleges over the next few years.

When even the management of the UK's top universities, the Russell Group, are admitting that our education system faces 'meltdown', you know things have got pretty bad. The first signs came earlier this year, when the government announced initial cuts of nearly £1 billion in funding for higher education – and this figure now looks likely to triple as the Tories go on all-out war against the public sector, in their bid to make ordinary people pay for the crisis of the bankers and the super-rich.

October's budget spending



UNITY: Students and staff against education cuts

review will make clear the extent of the cuts in England and Wales. The following month, the SNP government in Edinburgh is expected to draft their own Scottish budget. But rather than standing up to the ConDem butchers, the SNP are instead going to carry out their dirty work for them, implementing exactly what their Tory paymasters tell them to. So much for 'Scotland's Champions', eh?

Already, the cuts are hitting unis and colleges hard. Edinburgh University slashed their first year intake by 1300 places this year – a third of the total. Stow College in Glasgow faces closure, with its funding being diverted to other colleges in the city. At

Glasgow Uni, management have, with barely any consultation, imposed a huge 'restructuring' of the entire uni, which trade unions and student groups fear is just a cover for job losses and departmental cuts.

In other words, the pretext of the economic crisis is being used as an excuse to push through cuts - and continue the EU-led 'Bologna Process' of opening up education to private companies and the free market. With this, there's an increasing attempt to orientate education towards the needs of big business - at least for the more profitable subjects, that is.

Meanwhile, with youth unemployment at its highest for decades, and continuing to

rise in Scotland, more people than ever before are wanting to come in to higher education – for a dwindling number of places. Most Scottish universities were unable to offer clearing places this year given the huge demand.

The only solution the government, and indeed the universities, can come up with is to - where they exist - increase fees, and for Scottish students, to introduce them - the logical conclusion of their bid to turn universities into little more than businesses.

This must be resisted at every turn. We need a huge movement of defiance to oppose the cuts across the whole of society. Last year's wave of student unrest which swept across central Europe, with mass demonstrations and occupations involving tens of thousands of students, points to the way forward for the student movement.

We also need to recognise the underlying ideology of the attacks on education - a neo-liberal, capitalist drive to make turn our colleges and unis over to big business - and fight it at its core. We say that our education is not for sale - let's start the fight back now!

TIME TO CHANGE THE DRUGS LAWS

by Jack Ferguson

IN the last year an increasing number of scientists, doctors and drugs workers have been willing to come out and say publicly what everyone involved in the field knows: the UK's drugs policy is a disaster.

Around the world, other countries are waking up to the fact that drugs should never be treated as a criminal justice problem. In Portugal, the government decriminalised possession of all drugs in 2001, and saw the rates of crime and addiction plummet. In the Netherlands cannabis is tolerated and allowed limited public sales, and yet people smoke far less than they do here. Across Latin America a swathe of countries have decided to bring an end to drugs prohibition, and in California in November voters are due to vote on a proposal to legalise cannabis.

Meanwhile in the UK, the government ignores the advice of its own scientific experts, such as when the Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs (ACMD) told them not to reclassify cannabis as a "class B" drug, making punishments for possession and dealing harsher. The government went ahead and did it anyway, and then sacked Prof. David Nutt as chair of the council for his inconvenient scientific findings, such as the paper he published showing using ecstasy was less dangerous than horse riding.

The result of this is that the UK has some of the highest rates of drugs misuse in Europe, and huge rates of crime by people with problems forced into theft or prostitution to try and support their addiction.



ACTION: SSY on the streets

PHOTO: Eddie Truman

Human beings have always used drugs, and drug use always comes with risks. But for decades the risks have been overstated in the UK and US by ridiculous propaganda, meaning that young people often don't trust their own governments to give them useful information. The latest in a long line of drugs panics were the lies peddled by the tabloids about mephedrone; they falsely claimed it had killed a whole series of young people who it

was later found had died of other causes. But the government went ahead and banned it anyway, giving illegal dealers yet another product.

Drugs prohibition suits criminals just fine, ensuring they get huge profits and face no regulation of what they put in their product. Meanwhile, drugs profits go on to fuel wars in places like Afghanistan and Colombia, where western allies use the money they get from heroin

or cocaine to do our governments' dirty work. The alcohol industry also don't want to see an end to prohibition, worried about competition for their own legal, incredibly harmful drug.

The best way to deal with drugs would be to recognise people have a right to experiment with them, and our concern should be protecting people's health, not locking them up. We should have a legally regulated market in relatively harmless drugs like cannabis, and for real addicts they should be able to access clean pharmaceutical heroin on prescription rather than on the street.

That's why SSY organises a demonstration every year demanding the legalisation of cannabis and an end to the drugs war. It's high time the common sense expressed by scientists, doctors and people who actually know what they're talking about was reflected in government policy, and we will go on fighting for that.

Scottish Socialist Voice

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YOU HAVE TO BE RED TO BE GREEN

by *Liam McCombes*

THINK of ways to protect the environment, and you might come up with ideas such as energy saving light bulbs, recycling and reusable shopping bags. Earth Day encourages people to turn off their lights for one hour a year, and many other widely publicised campaigns tell each one of us to do our bit for the planet. But can small, individual actions like these really solve climate change, the biggest problem that civilisation currently faces?

Unfortunately, these measures don't take into account the structures of society which have created the ecological crisis in the first place. As an economic system, capitalism depends on growth, year after year. This means that companies must constantly grow bigger, increasing their profits, and making them richer and richer. If companies aren't able to expand, capitalism stops working - the recent economic crisis shows this. In order to be able to expand, finite and environmentally dangerous resources such as oil and gas are exploited with no regard for the damage this causes to the earth's ecosystem.

Although most major governments in the world accept the reality of man-made climate change, they have been



CLIMATE CHAOS: profit before the planet

unable or unwilling to take action on it. The Copenhagen summit in 2009 was hailed as the moment when the leaders of the world would finally come up with a solution - it (predictably) ended in a failure to do so. Even if met, the Scottish government's promise to cut carbon emissions 42 per cent by the year 2020 is too little, too late. Because of the need for companies to continually increase profits, and because of its heavy reliance on fossil fuels, governments are unable to regulate capitalism in a way that protects the environment.

Additionally, the fossil fuel industries are some of the most rich and powerful organisations in the world, and have an obvious vested interest in downplaying the need for a change to a sustainable system of production. ExxonMobil, the world's largest oil company,

has poured hundreds of thousands of pounds into organisations which which promote climate change "scepticism" - this scepticism amounts to no more than anti-scientific untruths. The fact of man-made climate change is accepted by the vast majority of climate scientists, and ExxonMobil's funding of those who say otherwise again shows how capitalism's only interest is in increased profits, at any cost.

Individual actions certainly do no harm, and energy conservation is something that should be encouraged. But by focusing on these type of campaigns, we ignore the real heart of the problem. The vast majority of CO2 emissions are produced by industry and corporations. Because of this, even if everybody took steps to reduce their personal energy usage or live a more

environmentally-friendly lifestyle, the problem would still remain.

It is true that if a significant proportion of the population switched to renewable energy sources, this may go a long way to increasing sustainability. However, this ignores the fact that most ordinary people are simply unable to do this - how many people do you know who can afford to mount solar panels on their roofs, with the pressures of food costs, bills and rent already putting a strain on most people?

Instead of putting the blame for climate change on individuals, we should be looking for a collective solution. If industry was taken into democratic, public ownership, we could decide what the best way forward to recovering the environment is. Renewable sources of energy could be invested in, and alternative methods of manufacturing could be used - with the focus on what's good for people and for the planet, rather than what's good for profit margins. With a free public transport system, we could reduce the reliance on cars and slash our use of fossil fuels. Only by getting rid of capitalism, with its singular focus on money above all else, can we solve the ecological crisis and save the planet.



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ONCE A BLIAR, ALWAYS A BLIAR

by Andy Bowden

UNLESS you've been living on the planet Mars for the past couple of weeks you'll have noticed the media hysteria around the release of ex-Prime Minister and serial liar Tony Blair's autobiography - *A Journey*.

It's the latest instalment in New Labour hacks freely spilling the beans on their time in Government now the Nu Lab project has collapsed under the weight of it's own stinking lies. Peter Mandelson already released his book *The Third Man* earlier this summer, rejecting calls from friends and close associates to start a career in children's entertainment and breakfast TV. Gordon Brown hasn't got into the act so far, but sources close to this author have revealed his proposed title for his autobiography has been finalised - *Bugger off and die you scum, I blame all of you for this (especially you Sue)*.

Blair's autobiography has shot to the top of the bestseller list, breaking all previous records for sales of political and celebrity biogs. This is despite the fact that so far Blair's book has about as much regret, modesty and contrition as a coked up rockstar screwing his way through an army of groupies. Only two



SIGNING: Blair was showered with eggs in Dublin by anti-war protestors at his book launch

regrets from Blair's book appear to have been widely reported - first of all, that he regretted the banning of Fox Hunting, saying that euthanizing pensioners would have given him less hassle. And given his record in Iraq, mass death is more to his forte.

Unfortunately Iraqi children just weren't as cute as little baby foxes being ripped apart by bloodhounds, but nevertheless the fact that Tony Blair supports rich public schoolboys chasing, tormenting and killing animals for sport does reinforce his status as an all round bit of an arse.

His second regret is the freedom of information act passed by New Labour, which allows ordinary members of Joe Public to find out some (often redacted) details of what their Government is up to. God knows why Tony Blair would find a little transparency worrying. So the Fox Hunting ban and the

Freedom of Information Act - two rare halfway decent things done by his Government - Blair opposed. That really is what you call 20:20 hindsight.

There is of course no apology for the act which will define Blair - his support for the invasion of Iraq.

His apologetics and defence would be more suited to a last ditch legal defence with Joe Beltrami than a reasoned analysis of the invasion.

His justification boils down to a series of "what if's" outlining the danger of Iraq and Iran competing for WMD's.

He's also been in the press saying military action has to be kept on the table to deal with Iran if necessary, showing that if nothing else he does literally stick to his guns.

The rest of the reportage of the book revolves around Blair's hate/really totally despise relationship with Gordon Brown - the first Scottish person

made unemployed and homeless by last May's Tory victory.

He describes Brown as "maddening" for plotting to remove him as Prime Minister and repeatedly making faces behind him at cabinet meetings.

Blair also reveals that Brown threatened to bring the cash for honours scandal to public light if Blair did not back his pension reform, showing the unique blackmail and threats based dynamic leadership that characterised New Labour's Government. But as Blair is quoted in his book:

"Politicians are obliged from time to time to conceal the full truth, to bend it and even distort it, where the interests of the bigger strategic goal demand it be done. And don't get too offended by it; we all make these decisions every day in our business and personal lives".

Of course if you are cynical you might say this passage could have

been summarised as "lying right through your teeth".

Arguably the biggest Blair bombshell - and one that will no doubt influence the Labour leadership debate - is Blair's effective support for the ConDem cuts in public services.

He explicitly calls for increase in VAT, and 'reforms' ie cuts in public service to slash the deficit. At the same time he outlines how New Labour lost because it "stopped being New Labour" - ie it went too far to the Left.

This should surely be the last nail in the coffin of Blair as a "Labour" leader - in the most important question the country faces, of the cuts in public services and the deficit - Blair is a Tory. Just as he always has been.

You can pick up Tony Blair's book *A Journey* for £12.50 in the crime section of your local waterstones, or in the £1 bargain bucket at The Works in about 6 months time.

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NO PASARAN: Hundreds of anti-fascists poured on to the streets last November in direct action to stop the SDL marching on Glasgow Central Mosque

RACISTS NOT WELCOME!

SDL postpone Glasgow Demo while Nazi NF step up activity in Aberdeen

THE racist thugs of the 'Scottish Defence League' suffered another major setback recently when their application for a march through Glasgow city centre on 18 September was rejected by the council.

This followed concerns over public order after anti-fascist groups vowed to stop the SDL's plans for a march on the war memorial in George Square.

The group – a rag-tag collection of far-right football hooligans and loyalists, who claim to be 'peacefully protesting against Islamic extremism' – have attempted to march in the city before. On that occasion, last November,

they were met by a mobilisation of thousands of antiracists, who ensured that they were unable to march on the day. Since then, they've tried it two more times, in Edinburgh, where similarly they were stopped by a thousands of antifascists, and in Kilmarnock, where allowed their march and rally to go ahead.

After their humiliating retreat over the George Square demo, the SDL have now applied for another Glasgow march – on Saturday 6 November in the east end of the city.

Activists from the Scottish Anti-Fascist Alliance have already begun work to ensure that another mass convergence

of anti-racists can stop the SDL, using the same tactics of peaceful direct action that worked so successfully in Glasgow and Edinburgh before.

The SDL themselves have never been able to muster more than around 100 of their supporters for a demo so far – a vastly smaller scale than down south, where the English Defence League have regularly been able to muster upwards of 1500 to their demonstrations and wreaked although they too look to be on the back foot after being smashed by local youth in Bradford last month.

But there should be no room for complacency when dealing with the far-

right – in a time of huge economic upheaval and unemployment, fascists like the SDL and the BNP can provide easy answers in their attempts to blame immigrants and ethnic minorities for any number of social problems, ably backed up by a hysterical right-wing press.

We shouldn't give them any room to grow.

Meanwhile in a disturbing development in Aberdeen, the neo-Nazi National Front have taken to leafleting high schools, handing out racist propaganda calling on young people to 'not mate with nonwhites'.

Local SAFA activists are working to counter the NF activities.



BLOCKADE THE FASCIST MARCH IN GLASGOW
Saturday 6 November
city centre convergence
details tbc
Scottish Anti-Fascist Alliance www.scottishantifascist.org.uk