

Day X3 fees vote special—9 December 2010

Socialist Worker

Democracy? Vote goes through as police batter protesters

Keep fighting after the revolt shakes coalition

THE STUDENT protests very nearly defeated the coalition less than six months into its rule. MPs voted by 323 to 302 to allow fees to rise to up to £9,000 a year. A coalition majority of 80 fell to 21.

Tens of thousands protested in London on Thursday, and thousands elsewhere. This is not the end, but the beginning of a new phase of revolt.

Students, their parents and many workers will feel a deeper anger now.

A cabinet of 18 millionaires has wrecked the future of millions of young people. It wants to move on to do the same for those who rely on Education Maintenance Allowance.

A policy based on lies, which the Lib Dems pledged not to introduce, was pushed through in the shadow of mounted police charging students.

They seriously injured some and could have killed people. What a travesty of democracy!

The main streets outside parliament daubed with graffiti and littered with rocks tells their own story

The police complain that some students “were violent”. But it was the police who spent hours attacking wholly peaceful protesters.

Keep fighting

The government “winning” a vote is not the end of the matter. The main protests over Margaret Thatcher’s poll tax in the 1980s took place after the law was passed—and our side won.

In France in 2006 the government pushed through the CPE law aimed at slashing young workers’ employment rights. It was met with huge youth mobilisations, but parliament voted it through.

The revolt spread to workers, inspired by the young people’s fightback. After a month of strikes and mass protests the



Students marching down the Mall in central London

Picture: Socialist Worker

government withdrew the law.

The political crisis of the Coalition will be worse after this vote. Lib Dems voted three different ways—and even some Tories rebelled! They feel the breath of furious voters on their necks.

The student movement has transformed politics. It has shattered the myth that people are too ground down, or bought off, or apathetic to resist.

It has unmasked the fake radicalism of Nick Clegg and Vince Cable.

One protester after the vote was announced said, “A few months ago I was in Parliament Square trying to get the Lib Dems into government. Now I’m here trying to get them out. It’s a sell-out.” Such feelings will get stronger.

Now it’s time to prepare for the next round of protests, to build for occupations, strengthen the unity of university, college and school students—and to make links with workers.

Cameron and Clegg were pushed to the edge tonight. Stepping up the battle can bring them down.

Unite with workers

THERE WILL be more parliamentary votes over fees and the Education Maintenance Allowance. And, as the protests against the cuts show, other issues will rise to become the focus for the whole movement.

During this year’s protests in France over pensions, a popular slogan was “What parliament does, the streets can undo”. Here, if the revolt develops, the Tories and Lib Dems can be blown away like the scum they are.

We need bigger numbers to win. And we need the social power of workers to guarantee victory. That will be the most effective preparation for the battles to come.

What happens now can build for a strike by hundreds of thousands of public sector workers over pensions in the new year, and for the TUC demonstration against cuts on 26 March. We need to bring down this rotten government. And the best way to do that is a general strike.

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www.socialistworker.co.uk

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phone 020 7819 1171

A wider revolt

THE ROOT of the coalition's attacks on education is a desire to make workers pay for the bankers' and bosses' crisis.

Cameron and Clegg want more privatisation, more power for the rich, and fewer rights for workers and the poor.

We need a revolt against the whole capitalist system where profits come before people.

Everywhere there are people who back the student revolt, hate racism, support workers fighting back and want a socialist society.

Everywhere there has been struggle over the last month individuals or groups raised the idea of a fight, learned quickly how to organise, and won others to resist. They need to get together.

The ruling class has its police and its corrupt parliament.

We have numbers and our collective strength. But, it takes political arguments to win out against hesitant union leaders, vision to give a lead, and patient argument to pull in wider layers.

That's what a revolutionary socialist political party is about. It is an organised and democratic group who discuss, debate and then move into united practice.

Many people are wary of political parties. They've seen the bitter betrayals by Lib Dem and Labour politicians.

But without organisation, the ideas of the ruling class win out.

We face a ruthless enemy and we have to find a way to stop people who will stop at nothing.

If you agree with us about the need for socialism, and want to be part of the struggle, join the Socialist Workers Party.

To join text 07986 936 094 or phone 020 7819 1171.

● **NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

6pm, Friday 10 December, Hong Kong Lecture Theatre, Clement House, London School of Economics, Aldwych

● **DAY OF ACTION TO DEFEND EMA**

Monday 13 December,

—4pm: **AFTER SCHOOL PROTEST** at Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 1 Victoria St, London SW1H 0ET.

—6pm: **UNKETTLE EDUCATION!** public meeting, Central London.

Called by Education Activist Network, supported by London Region UCU educationactivistnetwork.wordpress.com

Students lay siege to House of Commons

University, school and college students besieged parliament today.

Most of what happened was the result of independent organisation, not "official" protest from the NUS.

In the morning students walked out of schools and colleges to join the protests. Students occupying their universities sent delegations to join the march.

At a rally before the march set off, messages of solidarity from workers in the UCU lecturers' union, the RMT transport union and the Communication Workers Union raised huge cheers from students—the biggest when a lecturer raised the call for a general strike.

Enraged and determined, the students marched through London in their tens of thousands—repeatedly attempting to break through police lines, rushing down side streets, determined to reach parliament.

Demonstrators chanted, "We hate Tories" and "Shame on you" and people came out of shops and workplaces to cheer the students on.

The police had said protesters would not be allowed into Parliament Square, but students surged in, getting close to the House of Commons. The police began to "kettle" people then tore into them. They started with baton charges then galloped in on horseback.



Police in Parliament Square

Picture: Socialist Worker

Students launched themselves at police lines and barriers, and tore down the fencing around the grass in Parliament Square.

Barricades

The police were forced to retreat behind barricades as the students occupied Parliament Square and the surrounding streets. Students repeatedly tried to break through police lines to reach parliament.

A number of protesters had megaphones and organised impromptu discussions and chanting.

Others had sound systems and hundreds danced and waved placards in defiance.

A student from Manchester had her collar bone broken by police. Her friend from Cambridge was nearby with her bag splattered with blood.

But people remained defiant, some fighting back to defend themselves and their comrades.

A group of around 150

students, furious at being stopped from joining the protest outside parliament, occupied the National Gallery at Trafalgar Square, others set off to march through central London.

In the evening protesters attacked the Treasury and the Supreme Court, and fought running battles with the police.

The Royal car containing Charles and Camilla was confronted in Regent Street!

Groups of trade unionists joined the protest throughout the day. The UCU lecturers' union held a rally as MPs voted on the plan, many also joined the students against police violence and kettling.

There were banners and delegations from the RMT, UCU, Unite, GMB, CWU and Unite unions.

● Other demonstrations took place in Newcastle, Swansea, Brighton, Glasgow, Edinburgh and other towns and cities.