the brighton Agitator
'March for Jobs' special
Bulletin of Brighton Solidarity Federation

NEWS // ACTION // ANALYSIS



Sussex students occupy Bramber House to urge workers to strike

STOP THE CUTS

Sussex University at the frontline of the fightback

ACROSS THE country, education is under attack. In the past month, job losses have been announced in many places, including 200 at the University of Cumbria, 130 in Manchester MMU, £35m cuts at Leeds University, and of course 116 redundancies at Sussex. Politicians from all parties are united in wanting to make ordinary people pay the costs of capitalism in crisis, and they are starting with higher education.

But not only are cuts being made to universities, the very nature of such institutions is being remodelled. The governement is using the economic crisis to press ahead with the marketisation of higher education – which means a view of students as 'clients' and teaching staff as 'service providers', increasing privatisation of services, an infringement on academic freedom, and the rise of managerialism. In this way universities become businesses to be run competitively in opposition to the values which universities are meant to embody.

On Wednesday, students at Sussex University occupied a Sussex House against the planned budget and job cuts. Police were called in and made two arrests of supporters, and the occupiers left after 5 hours. The occupation came as the results of the UCU union's strike ballot came in - 76% in favour on an 80% turnout.

During a previous occupation, students released a statement that said "We recognise that an attack on education workers is an attack on us ... No cuts anywhere. Strike. Occupy."

"This action is only the beginning and it is part of the wider campaign against management's cuts at Sussex. We intend to continue to bring the fight to management."

Save Phoenix nursery



Should you vote Green?



Fighting 'workfare' slavery



INSIDE

With Caroline Lucas set to stand in Brighton this May, the Agitator asks...

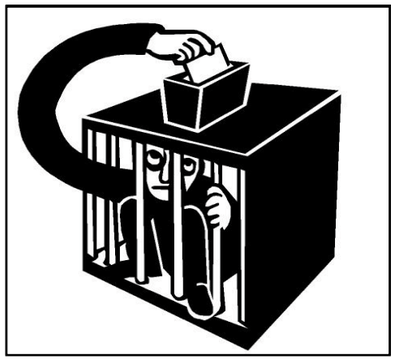
Should you vote Green?

ELECTIONS RARELY offer much choice between the mainstream parties, whose policies are closer to each other than members of the cabinet if the reports of internal feuding are to be believed. After 13 years of Labour government, many people want a change. The economy on which Gordon Brown staked his reputation as Chancellor has nosedived on his watch as Prime Minister.

It's true that Labour can't be singled out for blame for the recession. Its underlying causes stem from the very nature of capitalism and its tendency to swing from bubble to crisis. However having boasted of 'no more boom and bust', Brown certainly has egg on his face.

Nationally, Labour's only serious rivals are David Cameron's Conservatives. Much like Blair's New Labour project the Tories - like all opposition parties - are promoting themselves as the party of change. However the main difference between Labour and Conservatives is the technicalities of when and not if to take the axe to public services, impose pay freezes and cut benefits for the unemployed and vulnerable.

Faced with such 'choice', the opportunity to vote for Caroline Lucas – in a town where the Greens have previously polled 23% against a national average of 1% - seems at first glance appealing. The Greens are perhaps the only left-wing party with a chance of getting an MP, and Lucas herself enjoys a certain respect amongst local activists and trade unionists.



However, we should sound a note of caution. It is true that Caroline Lucas shows her face at campaign meetings for more than just a photoshoot and some self-promotion (yes, we're looking at you Nancy Platt), but history shows that wherever the Greens have got into power they have behaved just like any other capitalist party.

In Germany, the Green Party in government sent riot police against protesters trying to stop nuclear waste being transported through their communities – precisely the kind of green activism they had once supported. In 2001 they supported the invasion of Afghanistan as part of a coalition government. In Ireland too the Green Party went from vocal supporters of the 'Shell to Sea' movement against the Corrib gas project to actually implementing it. Green minister Eamon Ryan is now in charge of the project, the Greens having dropped their election promises to enter a coalition government.

Much the same can be said of the new Trade Union and Socialist Coalition. We all know what happened the last time a party of union bureaucrats got into power: the Labour Party. And we should dispel any nostalgia for 'Old Labour' from the off – they supported imperialist wars, opposed strikes and imposed austerity measures on the working class



from their very inception: just like every other party that finds itself trying to balance the budget of the capitalist state.

The closer politicians get to power, the more like the rest they become, however well-intentioned and full of integrity they may start out. If Caroline Lucas does get in, she'll be a lone voice of dissent. This will do her credibility on the left a lot of good, but will mean she's not able to actually deliver any of her election promises. That would require a larger contingent of Green MPs... and if we got that, we're back to the 'power corrupts' German/Irish scenario.

This takes us to the heart of the matter. The cuts will not be defeated at the ballot box, but on the picket lines and in the streets. Precisely because voting doesn't really make any difference, we aren't calling for a boycott. But if you are thinking of voting, don't have any illusions in the political process. It's a circus designed to give us the illusion control over those who rule us, when in reality the change we are promised is forever delayed.

If you want to make your voice heard don't vote for a different ruler, vote to strike with your fellow workers. That's the way we'll beat the cuts, and start creating the basis for a world without politicians and rulers altogether.

Picket CDG-Maximus

Outsourced administrators of 'workfare' schemes and forced unpaid labour

Meet at the Clock Tower at 10:30am Wednesday 24th March.

MAXIMUS HAVE been subcontracted by CDG – a registered charity – to take on 'Welfare to Work.' They are responsible for setting up job search workshops, interviews and presentations. Interviews will be fortnightly in addition to signing on at the Job Centre and there will be a compulsory 15 hours job search per week.

Unemployed workers will be forced to take up work placements for up to six months. This is supposedly to get people off benefits and into 'sustainable' work, but sustainable is defined as a minimum of 13 weeks out of 26 - part-time. The jobs they offer are mostly low-paid service sector and call centres, but they also run building work at Lewes Prison the 'Flexible New Deal' – four weeks unpaid work. We're sure that used to be called slavery.

In response, supporters of the Brighton Benefits Campaign will be picketing CDG at Vantage House, North Road on Wednesday 24th March. Meet at the Clock Tower at 10:30am for an 11am start. Leaflets will be given to staff encouraging the workers to support the campaign against workfare. 270,000 workers in the PCS union, including Job Centre staff have voted decisively in favour of strikes, which will take place on the 8th and 9th March. There is a chance to form a united working class fight-back against the cuts whether we're currently employed or not.

Protests against Phoenix Nursery closure



WORKERS, SERVICE users and supporters joined a protest in February in support of the threatened Phoenix Nursery at the University of Brighton. The protest was held at Mithras House, where the University governors were holding a meeting. Despite the rain, the protest was lively and well attended, with the entrance completely crammed.

The threatened attacks match attacks currently being aimed at almost all public services, and come as the nursery at the University of Sussex is also at risk. Nursery workers and activists have vowed to keep up the protests while the threat remains.

Belgrade Six free, terror charges dropped



The Belgrade Six celebrate their release with supporters

OUR SIX comrades imprisoned in Serbia since September last year on trumped-up charges of 'International Terrorism' have been freed. The six are all members or associates of Anarcho-Syndicalist Initiative (ASI), SolFed's Serbian sister-section in the International Workers' Association (IWA).

The acting IWA Secretary, who took up the role when the incumbent was imprisoned as one of the six said "the Serbian state is in full retreat as the case against the Belgrade 6 is falling apart. The six comrades are free and unlikely to be returning to jail as the charges against them are reduced hopefully to something very minor."

On February 17th the six appeared in court. Hundreds of supporters from Serbia and abroad gathered inside and outside the court and TV cameras from all of Serbia's major stations were in attendence.

The release of the six comes after an international protest campaign. The six also drew support from prominent Serbian intellectuals who signed an open letter stating "in its essence, the trial against the six young people is a political one. This is why we demand the the withdrawal of this senseless indictment."

There will be a public meeting on the recent state repression of anarcho-syndicalists in Europe on Tuesday 16th March at 7:30 pm in the back room of the Cowley Club, 12 London Rd.

About Brighton Solidarity Federation

BRIGHTON SOLFED is a group based on the idea that through solidarity and direct action, ordinary people have the power to improve our lives.

Add us on facebook

'Brighton Solidarity Federation'

Our members are workers, students and others looking to build a libertarian working class movement. Our aim is to promote solidarity in our workplaces and outside them, encouraging workers to organise independently of bosses, bureaucrats and political parties to fight for our own interests as a class. Our ultimate goal is a stateless, classless society based on the principle of 'from each according to ability, to each according to need' – libertarian communism.

We see such a society based on our needs being created out of working class struggles to assert our needs in the here and now. Our activity is therefore aimed at promoting, assisting and developing such class struggles, which both benefit us all now and bring us closer to the society we want to create.

We believe in direct action solidarity. That could mean pickets or occupations, or organising with your co-workers. We also believe in collective action - that we are stronger when we stand together.

Discuss your problem with us and we'll make suggestions how we can help - but the decision which course of action to take always rests with you.



Picketing Subway for an unfairly sacked pregnant worker

We do this in our free time and we'll help you out for free... so why would we do this? We are not a service provider – we can't provide professional legal advice, and we can't solve your problems for you. We are not a trade union or political party. What we are is fellow workers who are sick of being screwed around ourselves and want to do something about it. What we can do is share experience, information, and support in methods which have proven effective previously. This is solidarity, not charity. An injury to one is an injury to all!



Getting messed around by a boss or landlord?

Want to do something about it?

Get in touch!

[PRINT ONLY]

CAMPAIGNS

As well as our own activities, we are involved in several local campaigns on a number of issues

Sussex Uni Stop the Cuts

www.defendsussex.wordpress.com

The Stop the Cuts campaign formed in response to plans by the university administration to cut back on spending by millions in the next few years and cut 116 jobs. Students and staff have been working together to take direct action - pushing for strikes and occupying the university.

The Brighton Benefits Campaign (BBC)

www.brightonbenefitscamapign.blogspot.com

People on benefits are being criminalised and scapegoated like never before, while unemployment is at record levels. The campaign draws the links between the unemployed and those in low-paid work, as well as building links with Job Centre workers.

The Brighton Workers Solidarity Group (BWSG)

www.brightonworkerssolidarity.wordpress.com

The Brighton Workers Solidarity Group is a network of organisations and individuals supporting action to defend jobs and public services. It exists to support all workers taking action to defend and improve their living standards.

