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UK: Tens of thousands of students and lecturers marching on parliament - rolling update

Wednesday 10 November 2010, by [Socialist Worker \(UK\)](#) (Date first published: 10 November 2010).

Socialist Worker is reporting live from the national student and lecturer protest in London against Tory education cuts and fee increases.

16:30

While the media are complaining about a small minority causing “trouble”, there are at least 1,500 students at the front of Millbank Tower, and many more in the surrounding areas.

The crowd is pushing against police lines, the air is still thick with smoke from burning placards and flairs.

15:16

The protest outside Millbank Tower – the Tory HQ – is growing. Over a thousand people have occupied the courtyard while thousands occupy the street outside.

Riot police have moved in to try and block any more students from entering the building or the courtyard – but have failed.

Every window surrounding the tower has been smashed. Flares have been set off and a bonfire is raging outside. Activists are standing on the roof of the building.

There is a carnival atmosphere. A samba band has arrived, some activists can be seen dancing, wearing police officers’ hats

Students who have reached the end of the protest are streaming back to join those at the tower.

Thousands of students have occupied the road between Parliament and Millbank Tower screaming “Police protect the Tories, police protect Tories” and “No ifs no buts no education cuts.”

Aaron Porter, NUS President, rushed onto the news to say, “I absolutely condemn the small minority of students and others who’ve gone off on this splinter demonstration and undermined our message. I condemn these actions of violence.”

But Socialist Worker congratulates the students at the Millbank Tower for showing the government

just how angry people are at their brutal cuts.

14:57

Protesters are now on the roof of the Millbank Tower.

14:52

Windows at the front of Millbank Tower – the Tory HQ – have been smashed.

Thousands of students are gathered outside and more are joining them as the word spreads. Some activists are still inside Millbank, dancing on the desks.

Students are also still occupying the streets near Parliament, sitting in the street, and chanting anti Tory and Lib Dem slogans.

Thousands of students are still on the march heading towards Millbank Tower and there are reports that others who have reached the end of the route have turned around to make their way back towards it.

14:25

SOAS student Alana was one of many who occupied Millbank Tower. She told Socialist Worker that students need to keep the pressure up.

“The message of today has to be hammered home to the government. We have to be organised because demos like this don’t happen on their own.”

14:15

Thousands of students are blockading the entrance to Tory HQ at Millbank Tower—and there’s no sign that they’re planning to leave any time soon.

There is a whiff of flares in the air, and the students are now burning placards and banners in the street.

Earlier a group of up to 100 students got inside the tower.

Ryan, a student from Telford, told Socialist Worker, “Some of us started running to get in. There was hardly any security.

“Hundreds of other students then tried to storm the entrance.”

Students are now outside the building chanting, “They say Tory, we say scum.”

Meanwhile, outside parliament, near Big Ben, a growing group is sitting down in the road, chanting, “We’re young, we’re poor, we won’t pay any more” and “Sit down if you hate the cuts”.

Some students even chanted, “The only cuts we want to see, Tories on the guillotine.”

Student Amile said, “This is the first demo I have been on—and it’s the best experience ever.”

14:02

Around 500 students have surrounded the department of business, innovation and skills on Victoria Street.

There's something of a party atmosphere as the protesters have brought a mobile sound system with them. Heavily equipped riot police have now arrived and are attempting to disperse the crowd.

14:00

Students are laying siege to the Tory Party's headquarters at the Millbank Tower.

Police drew their batons and started hitting protesters as a group managed to get inside the building and let off flares.

The students angrily chanted "they say cutback, we say fightback".

Meanwhile a hundreds-strong breakaway demo is outside the government's Department of Business, Innovation and Skills.

Riot police were moving in to clear the protests away from both buildings.

Around 500 students have surrounded the department of business, innovation and skills on Victoria Street. There's something of a party atmosphere as the protesters have brought a mobile sound system with them. Heavily equipped riot police have now arrived and are attempting to disperse the crowd.

13:27

NUS president Aaron Porter just wrote on Twitter: "this is the biggest student demo in generations with figures now set to hit 50,000."

13:15

As the march started, the students broke out to take over both sides of Whitehall.

There was a carnival atmosphere as tens of thousands of students took over the street with banners, samba bands, chanting and singing.

And around parliament now there are sit-downs as the march spilled out beyond the barriers.

12:41

Class rage is running through the demo as students chant "David Cameron, fuck off back to Eton" and "education for the masses, not just for the ruling classes".

Alan Whitaker, president of the UCU lecturers' union, said to huge cheers: "Make no mistake about it—this is class war. They've declared war on us, we declare war on them."

The march is already one of the noisiest since the Tories came to office—and it may yet turn out to be the biggest.

The road is packed for hundreds of metres back with thousands upon thousands of angry students, many with homemade banners and placards.

A group of A-level students from the BRIT school in Croydon walked out of classes to join the demo.

"They want to bring back an elitist idea of education," said one. "My parents will have to delay retiring to help pay for my younger siblings education."

Hummayra Sheijh, a first year student at Manchester university, added "People feel betrayed by Nick Clegg. People's blood is boiling."

Now tens of thousands are heading down Whitehall towards Downing Street.

12 noon

Students from ULU, Kings and the London School of Economics have merged and are marching down the strand in their thousands. Chants of "They say cut back - we say fight back!" and "Tory, Tory, Tory - scum, scum, scum" ringing through the air.

Abedha, a first year student at Kings in London said, "I'm from a working class background, and the rise in the level of fees will mean people like me won't have a future in higher education. It should be an experience for everyone, not just a privilege. It will make the class divide much bigger. It will affect the whole atmosphere of education, make it just about getting a job and removing any creativity."

Sital from Westminster Kingsway FE college told Socialist Worker, "Loads of us came from our college to protest against them cutting the Education Maintenance Allowance. Its going to destroy people's lives, they're so rich they never have to worry about money - but we do."

11:10

Some 60 sixth form students from Battersea Park School in South London have boycotted school today to join the demonstration.

Paulo Rocha said, "We all want to go to university in 2012 but our parents won't be able to afford the fees."

Anna, who is also from the sixth form, said, "They want tax payers to pay for their homes - but they should be using that money to pay for our education. We are going to have to rebuild the mess they are making. The Tories are for the middle classes and the rich - why don't they force millionaires to pay more tax?"

10:50

Hundreds of Southampton University students arrive at Horse Guard's Parade - one placard simply reads, "Eton Mess".

10:40

Students from Scotland have arrived in London and are marching to Horse Guard's Parade where the march is assembling.

Stewart from Aberdeen University told Socialist Worker, "I want to show the Tories that we want to see them out of Downing Street in tears like Thatcher - not smiling smugly as they cut our lives to pieces."

Louise Townsend, a second year student at Southbank University is joining a feeder march from her university. She said, "I campaigned with the Lib Dems in the election. Now I've cancelled my

membership. Nick Clegg has gone back on everything he said. If they raise fees, poor people won't have the option of going to university. It'll just be for people with rich mummies and daddies."

Students are leaving from towns and cities across Britain to join the protest.

10:20

Around 100 students from Stirling University in Scotland have arrived at London's LSE to join the feeder march

Three coaches have left from Northampton university and over 400 students from Southampton University and Southampton Solent University are making their way to London to join the protest

Solent Students' Union president Daniel Prendergast said, "The Government's proposals to hike university fees are clearly out of touch with the public mood and put our future at risk. Students at Southampton Solent University are marching on Parliament to ensure that tomorrow's students aren't saddled with thousands of pounds worth of debt to achieve an education that Government ministers got for free."

P.S.

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