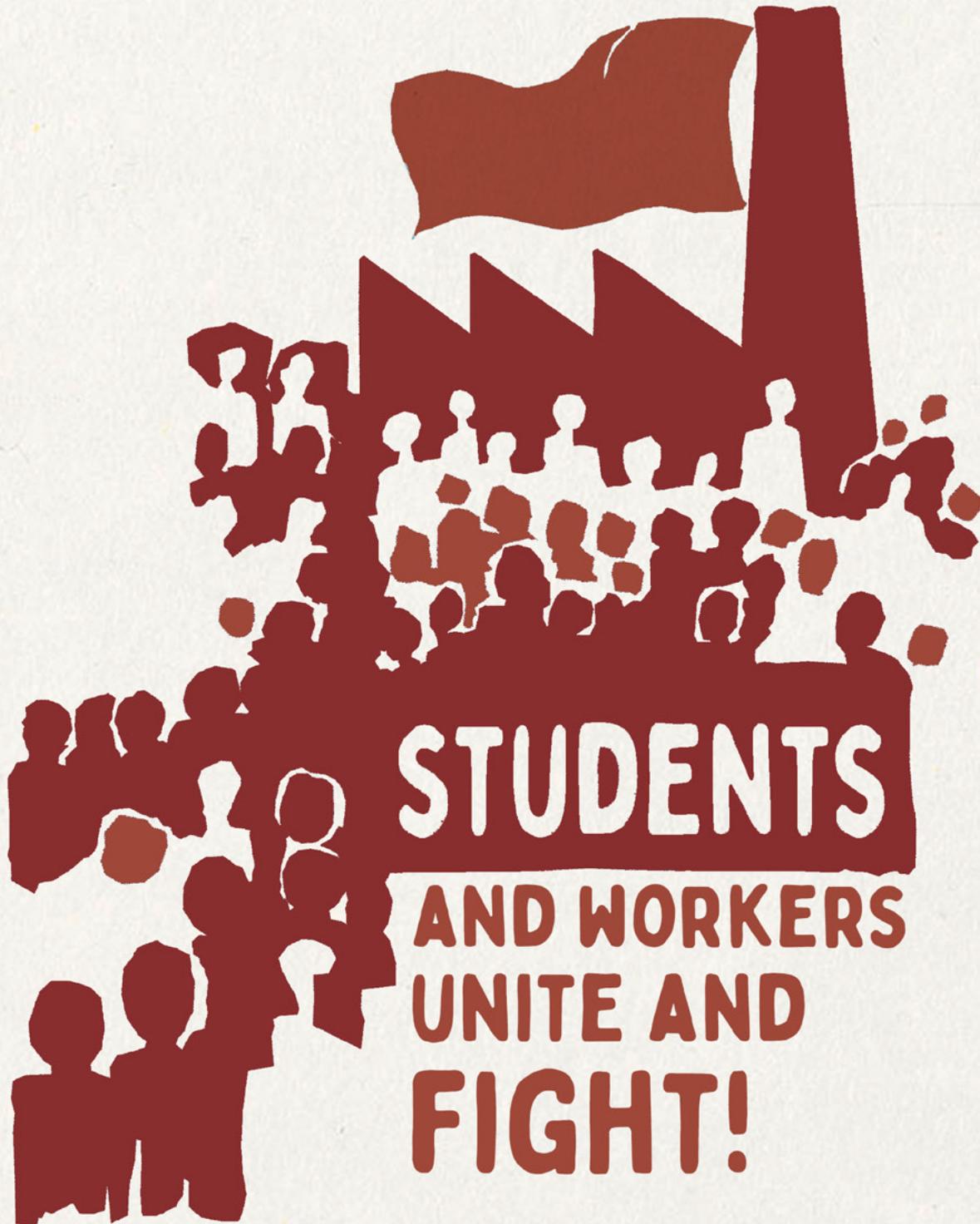


REVOLUTION

MARXISTSTUDENT.COM

ISSUE 13



**IN THIS
ISSUE**

6 *2020: A Year in Review*

8 *Fighting for Safe Schools*

11 *LGBT Liberation*

WHY WE FIGHT



The Marxist Student Federation is a group of young revolutionaries, working to build a revolutionary party across the world. We have over 30 Marxist Societies across the country, in various Universities. These societies discuss the ideas of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Trotsky as well as getting involved in local campaigns and movements. Our aim is to build an alternative to the world we see around us now.

We believe that the capitalist system is responsible for massive exploitation and oppression of workers and youth. We can see the suffering that capitalism is causing all around us. A huge section of the British population are homeless, while next to them lies enough empty homes to house them easily. This is a product of capitalism. Racist and homophobic policing is rampant. This is a product of capitalism. The handling of the coronavirus has led to massive unemployment and avoidable deaths. This, again, is a product of capitalism.

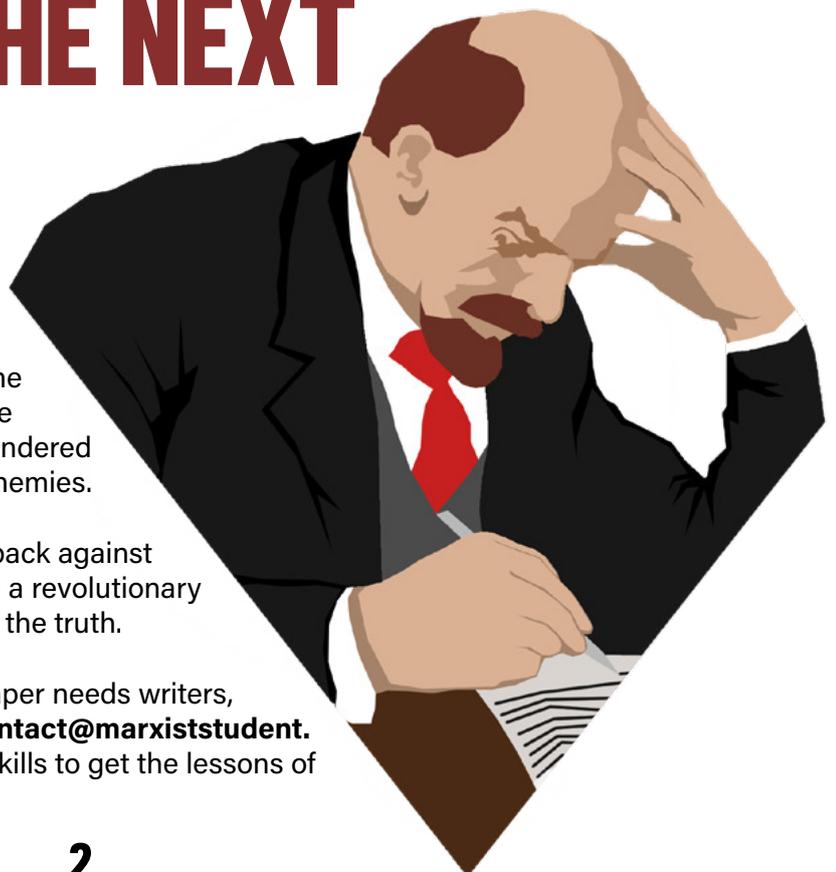
The Marxist Student Federation is discussing the issues of capitalism and fighting against all the effects of it. Join us and fight the capitalist system.

HELP WRITE THE NEXT REVOLUTION

Throughout history, revolutionaries have produced newspapers, pamphlets and magazines to put forward world changing ideas! We cannot trust our enemies, the capitalist class, to allow revolutionary ideas to be discussed in their media. Ideas are distorted, slandered and outright ignored in the hands of our class enemies.

We cannot allow this to happen. We must fight back against these lies about socialism and communism with a revolutionary press. A press of our own where we can publish the truth.

We need your help to do this! The Revolution Paper needs writers, illustrators and distributors. **Get in touch via contact@marxiststudent.com to help us with the next issue!** Use your skills to get the lessons of revolutionary Marxism in the public eye!



TELL [REDACTED] [REDACTED] THE [REDACTED] [REDACTED] TRUTH

On the 28 September, the British government banned anti-capitalist teaching materials in schools, in an attempt to block more and more young people from finding the revolutionary ideas they are beginning to seek out. The past year has seen a massive radicalisation of youth for a multitude of reasons, including most recently the Tory government's scandalous handling of A-Level assessment during the pandemic.

In response, the Marxist Student Federation launched the Tell the Truth campaign to expose the lies about capitalism fed to young people by the ruling class through the education system. In December, the Tell the Truth campaign held three meetings online, looking at the way economics, history and politics are taught in schools.

The first meeting on economics took place on the 3 December, and the speaker drew attention to the lies presented in economics GCSE and A-Level textbooks, such as the idea that the economy is geared to benefit the working class, despite clear evidence that the economy functions to benefit a tiny minority of the population, ie. the capitalist class.

The speaker also discussed the role of capital flows across the globe, and how poor countries are kept in a state of underdevelopment for the benefit of rich countries. This results in misery, disasters and crises; a face of capitalism that the British education system is unwilling to show. The enlightening discussion brought in the voices of several students, who pointed out that the education system is structured in such a way so as to keep any knowledge of economics out of reach, and partitioned from politics – despite the two being innately intertwined.

The second meeting on history began with a talk on how revolutions have changed the world. The speaker demonstrated how the ruling class slander revolutionary movements, whilst cynically exalting moderate and purely peaceful movements, in order to discourage any revolutionary sentiment against the capitalist system.

In addition to this, the speaker stressed how revolutionary movements are severed from the circumstances that drove them; they are attributed to individuals alone in an attempt to hide from students the power of a united working class. The discussion that followed brought out dissatisfaction at the way history is taught in schools, which is generally taught in modules that disconnect it from the present day.

The final meeting centred around the way politics is taught in schools, with the speaker demonstrating how ultimately the British education is a tool in the hands of big business and is used to benefit the latter. The education system is not fundamentally built in the interests of young people. The education system is failing to give young people access to knowledge they both want and deserve to know.

The success of the Tell the Truth meetings gave a glimpse of the fact that young people across the country are disillusioned with the education system in Britain. Despite the government's efforts to clamp down on anti-capitalist teachings, their failures will only drive students towards revolution, rather than away from it.

By Emma Griffiths



INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION UNDER CAPITALISM

The education policies of the government have been in the news this year, as students and teachers fight back against the mess the Tories have created. Schools are shut, exams are cancelled and online learning is the way forward. Much of the debate around lockdown - and vulnerable students - has revealed how deeply education is embroiled in class politics.

What is correct, then, is to view education, and the policies which define it, as a visible symbol of the class divide. This cannot be highlighted any clearer than when it comes to adult learners, and how the government has treated vocational qualifications, like BTECs.

Vocational qualifications are not the traditional path to university. However, for working-class students, this is changing. A Social Market Foundation (SMF) study noted how increasingly important vocational qualifications have become for disadvantaged students, centred around accessing higher education. For adult learners, the Department of Education (DfE) point out how finance is a crucial factor in the decision of whether to pursue education later in life.

Once again, the future of BTEC and FE students have been compromised by the government's mishandling of vocational qualifications. After Boris Johnson announced that exams in the summer would be cancelled, and that schools would shut, many students pursuing vocational qualifications were left in the dark about their own exams due to take place this month.

The DfE hurriedly issued a statement that exams would be taking place as planned in January. This begs the question, why are A-Level and GCSE exams unfair to run but BTEC exams are perfectly fine to go ahead?

Another statement was then issued by the DfE - after the Education Secretary felt pressure from staff and students about vocational qualifications - which stated the decision of whether exams should go ahead was up to centres.

The mixed messaging and lack of direction from the government has been a theme of recent times, as they stumble from one crisis to the next. It reveals

how unprepared they were after months of ignoring warnings. Even the day before schools were shut, they continued trying to frame the debate around online versus in-person delivery, rather than working on ways to mitigate the effects of pandemic on students and their exams.

It is important to note that this recent mishandling of vocational qualifications is anything but unique. On the contrary, this incident fits into a long timeline of these students being continuously overlooked and ignored.

The government has continuously used disadvantaged students as one of the reasons against locking down, which was always going to be inevitable as cases rose. But what care have they actually shown to them? It has been nine months since the first lockdown began! Schools are still waiting on the distribution of laptops, while Ofqual find that over 1 million children have no access to remote study.

**“
Mixed messaging
and lack of direction
from the government
has been a theme
of recent times, as
they stumble from
one crisis to the next.”**

It is all very well and good for the government to promise schools will be kept open for these students, but they have no idea how to make sure schools won't be overwhelmed by them or how to keep staff and students safe. Rather than take the time to improve digital infrastructure in Britain, Gavin Williamson (the Education Secretary) turned down the offer of free broadband for disadvantaged students. We are back where we were in March, and it is students (of all ages) who are being punished for the mistakes of the government.

With every crisis the Tories throw us into, it becomes more obvious that education must be democratically controlled by students and teachers. Every student should have free access to the tools that allow them to learn, whether that is textbooks or the internet. We must push for free education - for everyone, of all ages!

Student movements against the class divide in education have to link up with staff who are facing redundancies and poor working conditions. Only when we have a world free of class divides can we have an education system free of this too.

By *Elizabeth James*

MSF CONFERENCE 2021

REVOLUTIONARY YOUTH FOR REVOLUTIONARY TIMES

13TH FEB ON ZOOM

Our society under capitalism has reached what seems to be a turning point. From the climate crisis, to insane levels of wealth inequality, to racism, to the scourge of the far right: it's easy to feel hopeless. The facts seem clear and inevitable. Capitalism prioritises profit above all else; and human lives are, at best, an expendable by-product.

The Marxist Student Federation's 2021 Conference Revolutionary Youth for Revolutionary Times is soon taking place, however, offering hope in the fight for a socialist future.

This conference comes at an important time. The idea of revolution is becoming less and less of a distant prospect, as crisis after crisis mounts, and workers and youth begin to move into action. Activists are looking to get organised and fight. And that is what the MSF aims to provide: a reference point for revolutionary youth in Britain.

The conference will be divided into three sessions. In the first, entitled *The death agony of capitalism: World Perspectives*, we will discuss the political situation across the world, and the importance of a worldwide revolutionary movement.

In this session, Fred Weston, editor of *marxist.com*, will give an insight into the incredible events of the past year, which has seen both the deepest crisis in the history of capitalism, and also some of the largest ever movements against this same system.

It is vital, as internationalists, to understand the whole world situation. Socialism cannot be built in one country alone. The class struggle must transcend national boundaries to fully transform society. Making sure we understand the revolutionary processes and potential in all parts of the world is therefore key.

In the second session, we will discuss the radical movements that are taking place in universities and

schools, with a focus on what we must do to solve the problems created by capitalism and the Tories. This session will have regional breakout rooms, along with a separate breakout room for school and college students.

The aim is to understand our role as Marxist activists within these movements taking place – including the rent strikes that are erupting on university campuses across the country.

As young people, we represent the future of society. But we cannot wait for change to occur around us. Only by organising and fighting back against the establishment and the capitalist system can we change the future.

The final session is titled *Order from chaos: The role of organisation*. This meeting is especially important, providing an opportunity to learn from working class and student movements of the past. We are stronger when we are united and organised. This is the lesson that we must take into the movements taking place today.

Crucially, revolution won't take place simply out of the will of individuals. If that were the case, it would have happened already. Rather, we need movements based on mass struggle, democratic participation, and collective action. It is therefore vital that we educate ourselves on the organisation needed to channel the revolutionary energy that exists.

Capitalism cannot be allowed to continue. In reality, its collapse has already begun. We must organise to deliver the knockout blow. As Rosa Luxemburg put it, the outcome for humanity can only be "either transition to socialism or regression into barbarism".

Let's use this opportunity to agitate, educate, and organise. Let's fight for a socialist future, instead of the barbarism of capitalism. Join us at the MSF conference 2021 and help us in this struggle!

By **Vic Lancaster**

CLICK TO BUY TICKET

EDITORIAL

2020: A YEAR IN REVIEW

Across the world, events are moving at a rapid pace. The last few years have shown an increasing amount of politicisation, especially amongst young people and the working class. Revolutionary movement after revolutionary movement has exploded onto the streets, reflecting the volatility of the global situation.

COVID has exacerbated this, exposing the contradictions of capitalism. At the time of writing, over 100,000 people have died from COVID in Britain. It is clear to see that most of these deaths are avoidable, and have happened because of an underfunded NHS, the lack of proper PPE, and the push by the bosses and the Tories to keep businesses open, putting profits before lives.

The Tories have explicitly stated that their number one concern is the survival of the economy. Yet this rotten government of the rich has failed even on this front. The UK economy has struggled more than any other advanced capitalist country, apart from Spain.

The Tory leaders have their heads in the clouds, imagining that Britain is still a great power. This, however, is no longer the case.

Ultimately, the ruling class have lost control of their main political representatives. From Trump to Boris: the 'sensible' sections of the capitalist class are in a state of complete dismay and pessimism about the actions of these mavericks, who are supposed to defend the interests of big business, but instead care only for their own personal ambitions.

The last year has seen young people facing crisis after crisis, as we're thrown from pillar to post at the whims of this government.



Back in August, in what now seems like a time ago, the class-based nature of the rigged education system was demonstrated clearly, when the government used a 'postcode lottery' to decide the futures of students across the country.

From there, the situation only grew worse. University students, including many freshers who had just suffered from the A-level fiasco, were lulled to campuses under the promise of some form of normality. Once they got there, however, they were trapped in halls, given no support and little food. In the case of Manchester University, students were literally caged into their accommodation.

All the while, schools remained open. Again, this comes down to the fact that the Tory government is more worried about working-class parents going to work and making profits than about the safety of students, staff, and the wider public.

The science clearly showed that schools – forced to stay open by the government – were contributing to rising levels of infection. But Boris Johnson ignored the facts, before finally making a hasty U-turn at the 11th hour, under pressure from a mass movement of teachers that demanded schools be closed until health and safety concerns are addressed.



All of this has, unsurprisingly, has led to an epidemic of mental illness amongst young people. Some reports suggest that there was, on average, one suicide per week across university campuses during the first term.

It is clear that the Tories are to blame for thousands of avoidable deaths. Yet they have spent time and money peddling the myth that young people are somehow to blame. For example, health secretary Matt Hancock told teenagers “don’t kill your granny”, pointing the finger at young people for the huge numbers of deaths amongst the elderly. Meanwhile, many high-level Conservatives have been caught flouting the rules themselves.

These tumultuous times have not gone unnoticed by young people. More than ever, students and youth have been fighting back against this treatment.

Last year’s Black Lives Matter protests were yet another spark for the radicalisation of the youth, with millions of young people flooding onto the streets and questioning the powers that be. In Manchester, for example, over 15,000 protestors stormed the city centre, angry against systemic racism, in Britain and across the world.

The dust from this was barely allowed to settle before young people had to, once again, stand and fight. After the government fiasco over A Level results, protests

broke out across the country, with strong demos seen in places such as Liverpool. Students directly called out the class based nature of education, forcing another government U-turn.

Only a month later, and demands for rent reductions were being raised by university students. In response, rent strike groups have mushroomed on dozens of campuses. Now there is a growing national rent strike movement, reflecting the desire amongst students to create something that genuinely changes higher education.

As 2021 begins, it seems there’s no slowing down in this student and worker militancy. The NEU teachers’ union, for example, organised a mass online meeting of nearly 400,000 attendees to mobilise against the callous and idiotic decisions of the Conservative government.

2020 was a year of hardship for young people. But for many, this has led to revolutionary conclusions being drawn. 2021 shows no signs of letting up. The

situation for students will likely become worse. But the radical mood will also grow. As has been seen throughout history, it is the youth that will move into action first.

The ongoing crisis of capitalism – with a collapsing economy and a rotten ruling class – will not disappear easily. Even the departure of Trump from the White House cannot make the turbulence go away. Having had their system bailed out by governments across the world,

the capitalists will now be looking to make the working class foot the bill.

Students and workers must fight back against this oppression and exploitation with united action. The constant government U-turns have shown what can be done through militant movements and bold demands. More than ever, we need revolutionary leadership to offer a way forward in these struggles. We must show the bosses that we have the power.

“
2020 was a year of hardship for young people...

But for many, this has led to revolutionary conclusions being drawn.

KEEP OUR SCHOOLS SAFE! FIGHTING THE TORIES

Boris Johnson insisted that the majority of primary schools in England would fully open on Monday 4 January. He repeatedly assured that they would be safe for students and staff.

These assertions from the Prime Minister came despite a planned week-long delay in exam-sitting pupils (those in Years 11 and 13) returning to secondary schools, along with a fortnight-long delayed return for non-exam-sitting pupils.

The evening later, however, the same Boris Johnson was holding an emergency news conference to announce that all schools in England would be closed until mid-February at the earliest. Furthermore, this latest measure would be part of a full national lockdown, in which all but essential services and businesses would have to close.

Tory lies

Johnson stated that such a sharp U-turn was a consequence of dramatic changes in the objective situation – specifically, an alarming rise in the number of COVID cases, along with a new consensus amongst scientific experts.

Furthermore, the PM claimed that these changes were a consequence of a new strain of the virus emerging and spreading, which apparently could not be foreseen.

Like most of the words emanating from Johnson's mouth, however, this is all lies, fabrications, and distortions. Yes, the scientific evidence demanded a need for a strict lockdown. But such advice had come from SAGE [the government's own Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies] back on 22 December. So why the last minute change of heart on Boris' part?

Scientific evidence

In truth, the Tory government was forced to change course due to a backlash from the organised labour movement – a

movement that, unlike Johnson and his ministers, has always been guided by scientific advice and the interests of workers, students, and the wider public.

On Saturday 2 January, the leadership of the National Education Union (NEU) took the decision to advise members who work in primary schools to issue a Section 44 notice to headteachers, and offer online teaching instead.

Section 44 is a notice that all workers have the legal right to issue to an employer, if they have evidence to suggest that their workplace is unsafe.

In this case, the necessary evidence was provided by SAGE and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. According to analysis presented by SAGE, the new strain of the virus was up to 70% more infectious; and schools are an important vector of transmission for this more contagious variant.

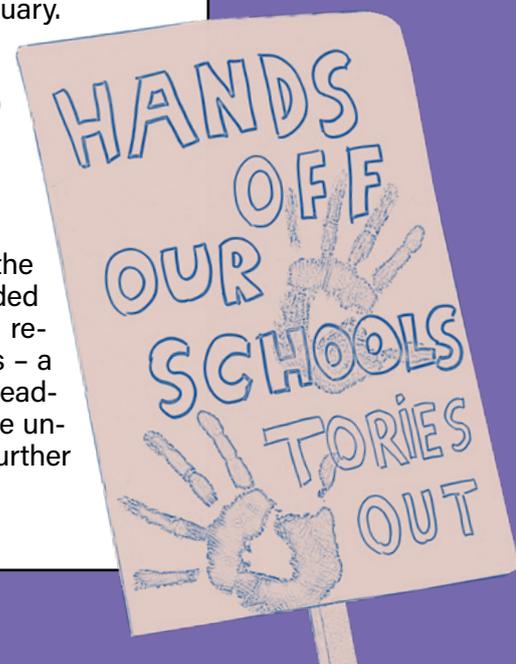
The scientific advisory group therefore recommended that schools should remain closed until mid-January at the earliest, so that the R-rate could drop below 1.0 – the level at which case numbers would start to fall.

A petition in support of this action was launched by the NEU and Unison that same evening – on 2 January.

By the next morning, over 170,000 people had signed it; 24 hours later, 250,000 had.

Mass response

On Sunday – shortly after the Prime Minister had defended his position regarding the re-opening of primary schools – a rally was held by the NEU leadership, in order to clarify the union's stance and generate further support for this.



There was a limit of 40,000 places available in the online meeting – a limit that was quickly reached. In addition, many watched on other social media platforms.

Subsequently, figures show that 100,000 people listened to the entire meeting, with 400,000 attending in total. This event was therefore the largest online meeting in British history!

The NEU leaders presented their arguments clearly, supporting them with facts and figures from the scientific community. At the same time, the confused and contradictory arguments of the Tories were comprehensively demolished.

Those who attended evidently took these arguments back to their respective workplaces and colleagues. This was shown on Monday, when significant numbers of primary schools across the country were forced to remain closed due to Section 44 notices being issued. In Norfolk, East Sussex, and Durham – where the NEU is particularly strong – the vast majority of schools had to stay shut.

Furthermore, motions in support of teachers were moved by Labour activists in CLPs around the country. In Parliament, a significant number of MPs – primarily from the Labour Party – were also prepared to offer their support. Even some local councils, such as Brighton and Hove, came out and told primary school teachers and headteachers to defy the government.

The movement was clearly growing, going from strength to strength. All the indications were that the teachers were not going to be defeated. As a result, Johnson's latest U-turn came later that same day.

Profits vs lives

As we have argued before, schools should not have been fully open for some time. This is precisely because younger people are generally asymptomatic. Pupils therefore unknowingly spread the virus to their peers, teachers, and parents, and onwards to the wider community.

This has been the NEU's position. The union has argued for a blended curriculum of both on-site and online learning, on a rota basis. This would have reduced the number of pupils in schools at any one time, thus significantly reducing the transmission of the virus.

The Tory government, however, has refused to engage with the NEU. Instead, they have consistently pushed to keep schools fully open – even after evidence emerged that a new, highly-infectious strain of the virus was spreading, initially in the South East of England.

At root, the Tories' position on schools is a reflection of their priorities throughout this crisis: not for the health of the public, but for the health of big business and the bosses' profits.

The Tories and bosses want schools to stay fully open so that parents can continue to work. Some estimates suggest that around two million parents and carers are affected by school closures in terms of their ability to work. This means a lot of missed working-hours, and thus a lot of lost profits for the capitalists.

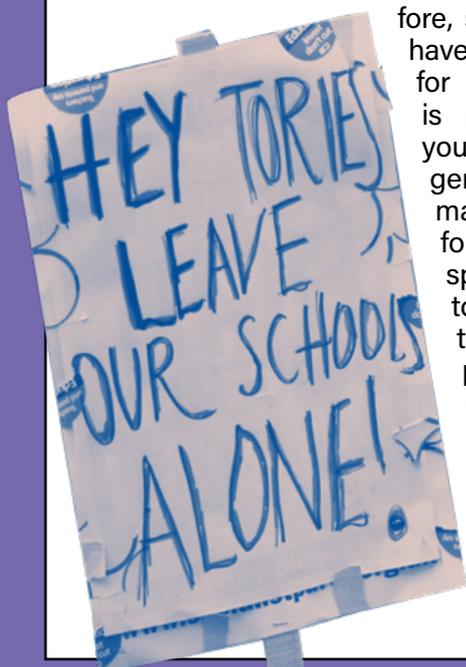
Ironically, we must add, the incompetence of Johnson and his chums has only exacerbated the public health crisis, leading to higher COVID levels and a subsequent need for longer, stricter lockdowns. In other words, by recklessly pursuing short-term profits, the Tories have actually increased the severity of the economic impact, deepening the crisis overall.

Put workers in control

These recent events directly pose the question: Who should run our schools? Should it be the Tory government, who are intent on sacrificing lives for the sake of the bosses' profits? Or should it be the teachers and workers who are on the frontline – those who know best about conditions in their workplaces and local communities?

In this battle, it is the workers who have come out on top, ensuring the safety of students, staff, and the general public. But unless action is taken to transform education, this same struggle is going to break out again and again.

To start, the labour movement needs to fight for the recommendations that the NEU have made





to make schools safe. The current lockdown period must be used to carry through these changes, including:

- **Keeping remote education in place until schools and universities are genuinely safe to reopen, as decided by teachers and their unions.**
- **Providing laptops and decent internet connections to ensure that all students have access to online education.**
- **Mass testing of students and staff.**
- **Requisitioning empty buildings in order to create extra space for reduced class sizes and proper social distancing.**
- **Providing emergency funds to hire more teachers and support staff.**

Solidarity and support

Unfortunately, Keir Starmer and the Labour leadership have failed to back the teachers so far, refusing to support the closure of

schools until after the fact. Similarly with the leaders of right-wing unions such as GMB, who represent support staff in schools.

Instead of tail-ending the Tories, Labour should be giving their full support to teachers and teaching unions in their struggle against Boris Johnson and his rotten government.

Rank-and-file activists in the Labour Party and other unions should pressure their leaders to come out in defence of teachers, passing motions of solidarity – including calls for the above demands – in branches and CLPs across the country.

Struggle for safety

Had the government listened to teachers and the unions over the last year, working to make schools genuinely safe, then this unfortunate step of now having to close schools might not have been necessary.

Instead, the Tories have consistently demonstrated that they are willing to sacrifice the safety of teachers and students – and the health of wider society – on the altar of profits.

This recent win by the NEU is a significant victory for the entire labour movement, which shows the way forward for the working class as a whole – through mass struggle and militant action.

If workers are to successfully resist the attacks of the Tories and bosses in the period ahead, they should take a leaf out of the teachers' book.

*By Sean Beazley
National Education Union (personal capacity)*

FIGHT FOR LGBT LIBERATION WITH CLASS STRUGGLE!

Under class society, LGBT people face a double oppression. Not only are we exploited as workers, but also degraded and dehumanised by a society based on the morality of the bourgeois family.

Homosexuality was only removed as a mental disorder in the World Health Organisation's ICD-10 (classification of diseases) in 1990. Gender dysphoria was only removed as a mental disorder in the DSM-5 [Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition] in 2013.

Of course, these changes represented steps forward. But in the UK and across the world, LGBT people continue to be oppressed. One in five LGBT people are assaulted in their lives due to their sexual orientation and / or gender identity. This figure rises dramatically when we look only at transgender people.

LGBT people have been oppressed throughout class society, told that our very existence violates 'nature' and the norms and morals of the 'traditional family'.

Friedrich Engels, in his work *The Origins of Family, Private Property and the State*, argued that the idea of the traditional family emerged with the development of class society.

With the development of settled agriculture and the production of a surplus came the possibility of accumulating wealth in the form of private property.

As civilization took on a class structure, the owners of land and livestock – predominantly men – began to look to pass on their property to their children. This led to the establishment of the 'nuclear family', with monogamous marriage between man and wife, so that a line of lineage could be established between fathers and their heirs.

This was the basis for the development of patriarchal society, and also for the suppression of non-heterosexual relationships. The traditional family setup therefore arose with class society, and is intrinsically intertwined with it. Where class society exists, so does oppression.

Liberal politics and the supposed 'liberation' promised by capitalism do not help L G B T people.



'Rainbow capitalism' and the promotion of some people from the LGBT community to powerful positions, such as CEOs and politicians, does nothing to genuinely end oppression or address deep inequalities between the rich and the poor.

Every summer, on Pride marches, we see large companies with rainbow flags flying next to their logos. All too often, these same companies can be tied to regimes and practices that are responsible for homophobia and bigotry – working with known homophobes or engaging in work that hurts LGBT people.

It is important to remember that Pride began as a protest. 'Rainbow capitalism' is nothing more than an attempt to distract us from fighting the system that causes oppression and exploitation.

Alongside continued bigotry, the material problems that LGBT people face are an acute form of the same issues that workers and youth everywhere face, no matter their sexuality or gender identity. Despite anti-discrimination laws, for example, LGBT people make up to 24% of the youth homeless population.

The solution to genuine liberation, therefore, lies with united class struggle to address these material problems: from homeless, to unemployment, to healthcare.

We have been abandoned by the system, which works to pit us against other sections of the working class. Capitalism seeks to divide workers, in order to prevent unity against this corrupt system of greed and exploitation.

Reforms are welcome. But these can only go so far under capitalism. As the crisis of capitalism hits workers harder, the ruling class will increasingly seek to demonise oppressed minorities as scapegoats – including LGBT people.

Only with the abolition of class society can we see true liberation for the oppressed. For example, following the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, homosexuality was decriminalised in the Soviet Union – one of the first countries to regard sex and sexuality as a private matter, of no concern to the state.

Class solidarity must be built. We have seen this before, with the Stonewall riots in the USA, and with the Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners movement in the 1980s. We can do this again.

By Jack Currie

THE STATE, POLITICS, AND PARLIAMENTARY STRUGGLE

On the first page of the **Communist Manifesto**, Marx highlights the character of our age: class struggle between the capitalists and the working class. Each engages in a conflict with the other, fighting for their diametrically opposed class interests.

The struggle between these classes has been happening for over 200 years now. So why then have these two classes in the course of their struggle not torn society asunder?

The interests of the capitalists are clear – to exploit the working class and extract as much profit as possible. The fact that there are laws against child labour is evidence of the barbarism the bosses will resort to, when given the chance.

On the other side, the working class has a shared interest in resisting this exploitation, and instead fighting to raise living standards through better pay and conditions.

Seemingly standing above these two forces is the state. In normal times, the state appears to be a 'neutral' arbiter, laying out laws and 'maintaining order', supposedly in the interests of all. In reality, however, the state is a tool of the ruling class, used to maintain their dominance over society and uphold their own class interests.

In its most basic form, the state consists of 'bodies of armed men', which exist to defend the status quo – that is, the power and property of the ruling

class, based on the exploitation of the working class.

To this end, the state organises courts and the legal system, which defend capitalist property rights – i.e. wage slavery. And it manages armed forces – the police, the standing army, and the prisons – to ensure the maintenance of private (capitalist) property.

When workers organise and fight for better living standards, however, the capitalist class can often be forced to give concessions.

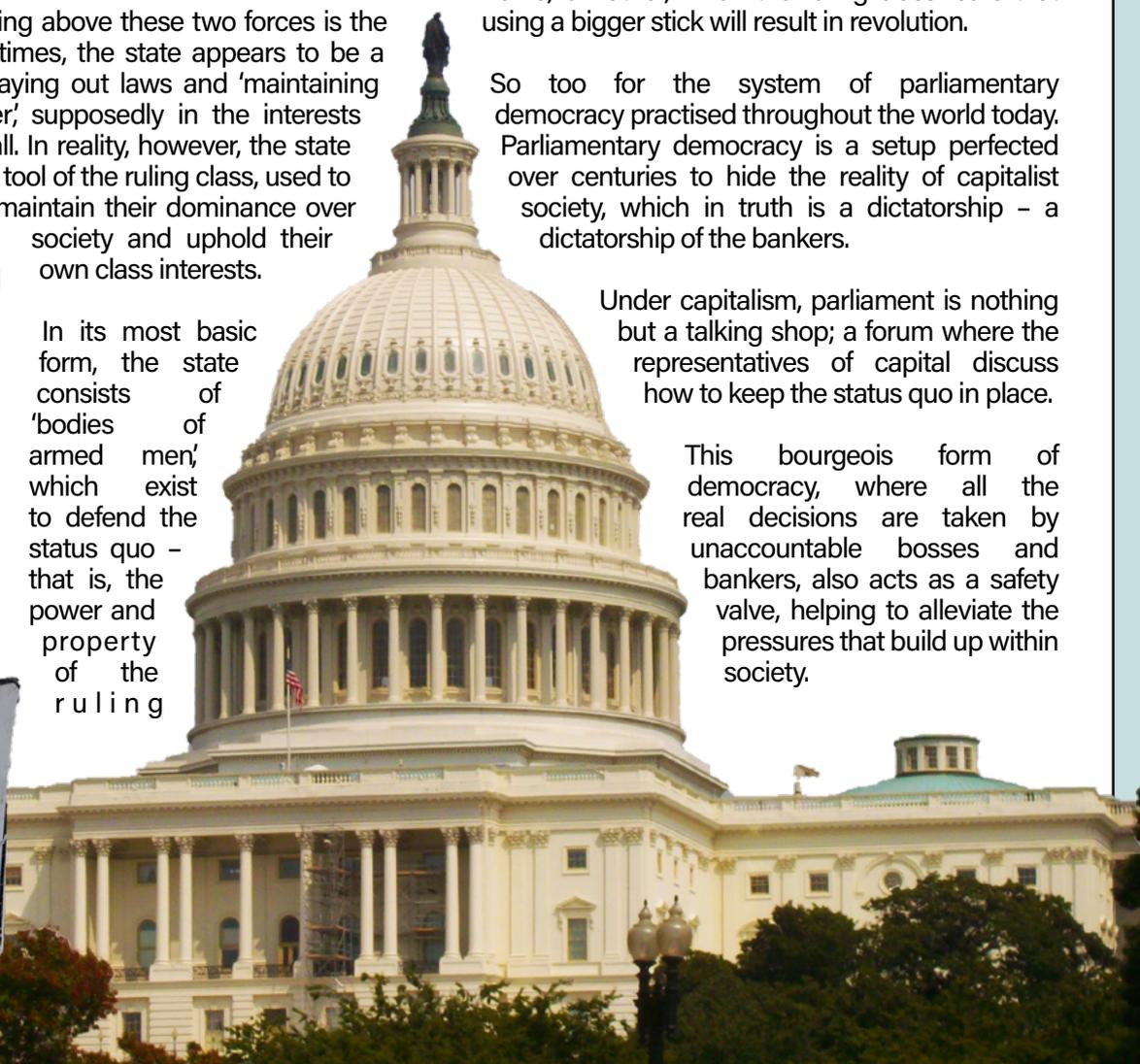
As previously mentioned, for example, child labour laws came in thanks to workers' struggle. Later, pensions were introduced to ensure that elderly workers would not be reduced to pauperism. And universal healthcare in Britain – in the form of the NHS – was established on the back of mass radicalisation seen during and after World War Two.

These so-called 'socialist' policies are in fact only the carrot, when the repression of the stick no longer works; or rather, when the ruling class fears that using a bigger stick will result in revolution.

So too for the system of parliamentary democracy practised throughout the world today. Parliamentary democracy is a setup perfected over centuries to hide the reality of capitalist society, which in truth is a dictatorship – a dictatorship of the bankers.

Under capitalism, parliament is nothing but a talking shop; a forum where the representatives of capital discuss how to keep the status quo in place.

This bourgeois form of democracy, where all the real decisions are taken by unaccountable bosses and bankers, also acts as a safety valve, helping to alleviate the pressures that build up within society.



The existence of an elected body that supposedly represents the population, offering hollow promises of change and progress, allows the establishment to divert the anger and discontent of the masses down 'safer' channels.

In this way, instead of organising to overthrow the whole rotten system, workers are offered a choice between different big business politicians; between this or that representative of capitalism. The faces at the top change, but the same capitalist class interests are vigorously defended inside Parliament.

We can see this illustrated in the USA. The only major political parties are the Republicans and the Democrats. The capitalist media depicts them as fundamentally opposed. But in reality, they are identical.

Both are bourgeois parties, faithfully serving the capitalist class, and working to advance the interests of Wall Street against the workers. These parties take turns cycling in and out of government every four or eight years. But they are only two alternating jackboots of a single bourgeois dictatorship.

In many advanced capitalist countries, however, workers have come together to defend their own independent interests: firstly, by forming trade unions; and secondly, by creating political parties to represent workers and labour.

Even here, the capitalist class does not stand back idly while the working class attempts to form their own parties. As can be seen with the Labour Party in Britain, the establishment will always seek to take over and corrupt workers' parties, to ensure that they have a reliable reserve team for capitalism.

The struggle currently taking place inside the Labour Party is a reflection of this – of the establishment attempting to regain control of the party, on one side; and workers looking to transform the party along socialist lines, on the other.

The failure of the German Revolution offers another example of this. The German Social Democracy (SPD) had been the mass party of the working class in Germany since the 1870s. It held vast numbers of seats in the Reichstag (the German parliament).

But over the decades, the party's leaders had come under the pressure of capitalist society. Many of its leading layers became detached from the working class and were bought off by the ruling class, abandoning Marxism and genuine socialism. They became – what Marx and Engels called – an 'aristocracy of labour.'

This was demonstrated in 1914 when SPD MPs betrayed the working class and voted for the 'war credits' that enabled Germany to launch what would become World War One.

In 1918, when a revolutionary wave swept across Germany and the working class held power in its hands, it was the SPD who came to the rescue of the ruling class, proclaiming a new capitalist state. And it was this SPD government who set the reactionary Freikorps on communist leaders Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht in the following months.

The capitalist system offers no future for the working class. Instead, the organised working class must smash the capitalists' tools of oppression – their police, their courts, their army – through revolution.

In place of this, the working class must fight for democratic ownership and control over the economy and production. All aspects of society must be in the hands of the organised working class.

Initially, this will take the form of a workers' state, where all officials are elected; where representatives are paid no more than the average worker; and where everyone has the time to participate democratically in politics and the running of society.

From this point, the workers' state will 'wither away,' its duty fulfilled. After all, what purpose does a tool of class oppression have where there are no classes? Instead of class conflict, society will be united and organised, consciously planning its destiny.

Where there once stood a repressive state apparatus, there will remain only the organised working class, managing production and the needs of society, operating under genuine democracy. This will be the realisation of communism – humanity's emancipation from the shackles of class society.

By *Shelley O'Sullivan*

“
The capitalist system offers no future for the working class. Instead, the organised working class must smash the capitalists' tools of oppression through revolution.



RENT STRIKE WAVE

FIGHTING FOR FREE EDUCATION

Thousands of students at over 45 universities are preparing to undertake rent strikes this month. This is the biggest ever wave of student rent strikes to take place – a reflection of the profound crisis we are living through, and of the radical mood amongst young people. Marxist societies around the country are part of this important fight.

As part of the latest national lockdown, students have been told to stay where they are, and to delay their return to university. This announcement has added fuel to the fire amongst students, who were already fuming from the chaotic COVID situation seen on campuses at the start of the academic year, when university management lulled students into unsafe accommodation.

Further rent strike campaigns were formed immediately in response to the new lockdown. These come on the back of successful action by Manchester students last November, who have won a 30% rent reduction for the first term, and a 10% reduction for the rest of the year.

Buoyed by this victory, students up and down the country are putting forward radical demands. In Brunel, campaigners are demanding a full refund on rent and tuition fees.

Although rent strikes have yet to begin in most places, university bosses and private student accommodation owners are already feeling the heat, and have started to hold out concessions.

Unite Students, the largest student accommodation provider in the country, has offered its tenants a 50% rent reduction. Some universities have also offered reductions for those in halls of residence. But we don't need to settle for crumbs. Instead, we must organise and fight for much more. The lesson from these recent concessions is clear: militancy pays!

Fight to transform education

If isolated, any rent strike is vulnerable to harsh clampdowns by management. Through collective and united action, however, students have the potential not to only win considerable reductions in rent, but also to revitalise the fight for free education.

Different national groups have formed to link these struggles. This demonstrates the potential that this strike wave has to create permanent structures through which students can fight for their own interest.

The current battle cannot be viewed as an isolated, one-off event. The crisis of capitalism is not going to end any time soon. Next year's students will therefore be facing even more insecurity than the current generation. We should fight to fundamentally change the university system: to make education free and accessible for all – not just for ourselves this year, but for all students every year.

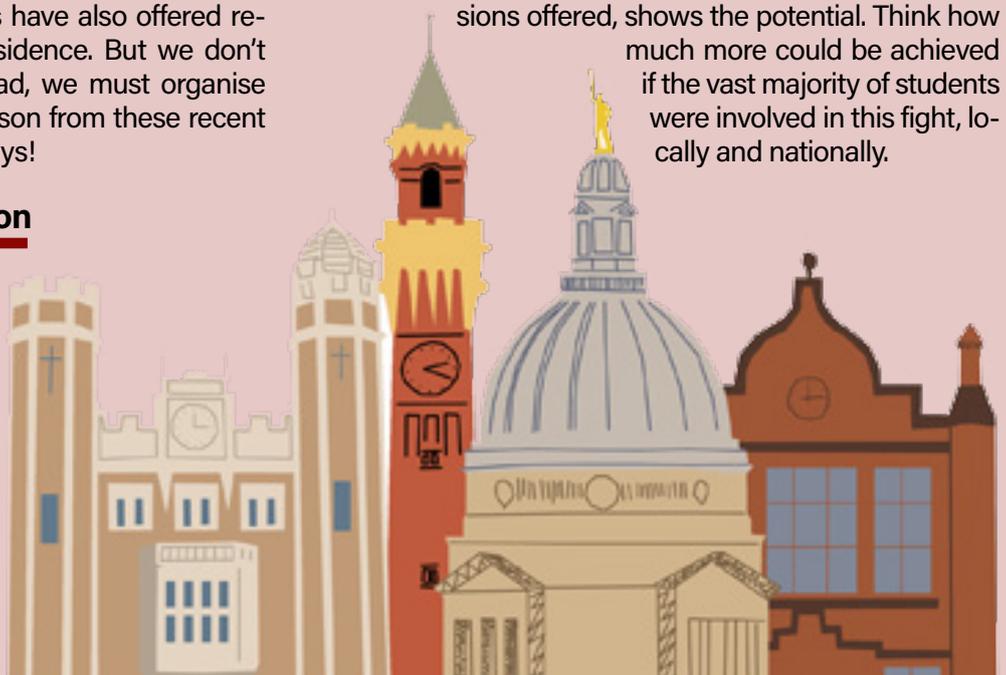
This strike wave is not an accidental occurrence, but is the result of years of cumulative attacks against higher education.

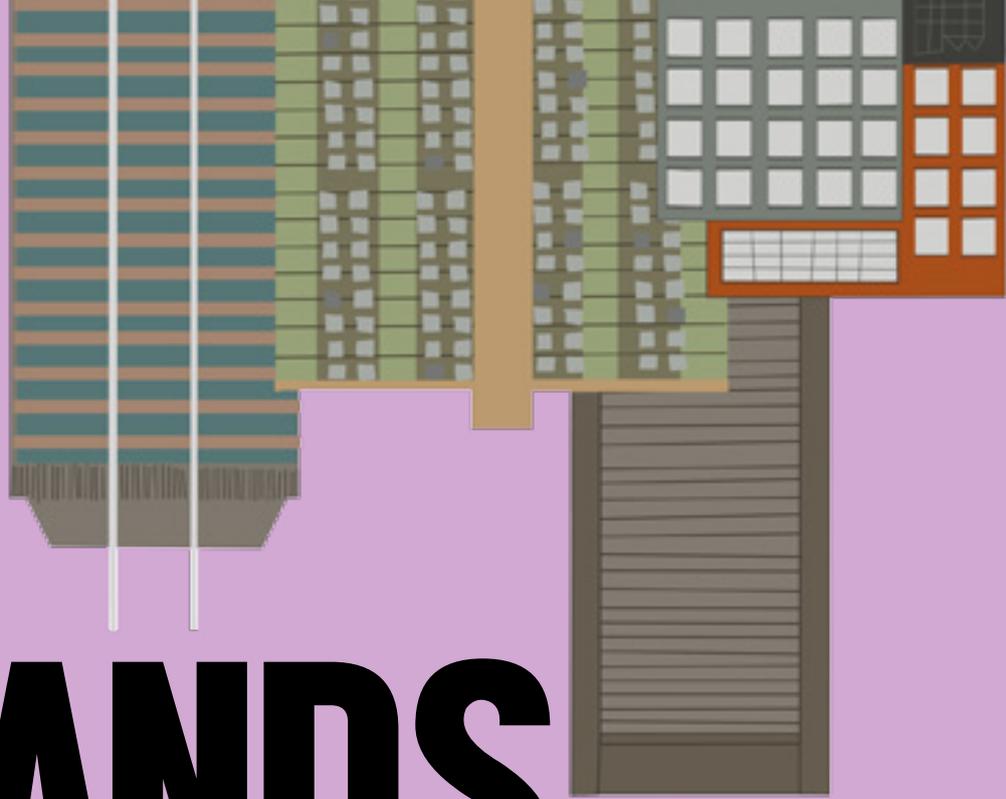
Over the last two years, we have seen two national UCU strikes, supported by the majority of students. Students have joined picket lines to support academic staff, recognising that the fight for decent staff pay, pensions, and conditions is connected with the fight for free education, and the struggle against the marketisation of education.

Strength in unity

The Marxist Student Federation is active in over a dozen local rent strikes. As well as putting forward bold political demands, Marxist activists are calling for the formation of a structured, democratic national organisation to oversee this huge rent strike movement. Mass participation is the greatest strength that students have.

The Manchester victory, along with other recent concessions offered, shows the potential. Think how much more could be achieved if the vast majority of students were involved in this fight, locally and nationally.





DEMANDS

A full refund of all rent paid by students so far this academic year and release from further payments.

A full refund of tuition fees for this academic year.

For universities to publish detailed breakdowns of income and expenditure - especially relating to student accommodation and its maintenance - to be circulated to all students.

Student unions and the NUS to actively campaign for free education, with maintenance grants for all students.

Students and staff to be given control over financial decision-making in the university.

Link up with trade unions to ensure no COVID job losses.