

FIGHT FOR JOBS & EDUCATION!

Vote Neil

Moore ★ #1 (FE)

Vote Edmund Schluessel #2 For the Block of 15



As President of Belfast Met students' Union and an organiser for Youth Fight for Jobs & Education, I have been at the forefront of the campaign in Northern Ireland to defend EMA, which as a result of walkouts and protests in December 2010 was not cut by the Stormont government. A united movement of students, lecturers and other trade unionists that cut across the sectarian divide won a substantial victory, tuition fees did not rise in NI and EMA was not cut. Since then I have organised campaigns against slave labour schemes forcing thousands of unemployed to work for their dole - being 'paid' £1.90 an hour on average. Last Autumn I organised a march of hundreds of young people against unemployment and education cuts through the Catholic Falls and Protestant Shankhill in Belfast, challenging sectarianism and austerity in two of Belfast's most working class and polarised communities.

Fighting Austerity

The government's policies of austerity are making students pay for an economic crisis not caused by us but by the super-rich. Fee increases, cuts to EMA along with degradation & privatisation of services across Brit-

ain have resulted in 50,000 fewer people going on to university from sixth form and college! Fewer students, of course, means less funding for unis and as a result management are cutting facilities, thousands of jobs and hundreds of courses. With mass youth unemployment, 25% amongst graduates, these policies and cuts are robbing young people of a future!

Despite these gloomy statistics, there is a fightback developing, local campaign groups and students' unions are challenging managements slashing of jobs and services. Protests are also being organised against local councils and devolved assemblies implementing the ConDem austerity. Unfortunately NUS doesn't seem to be leading any of these campaigns.

We need NUS to be at fore of this opposition to austerity. Linking up with the trade unions to defend jobs and services as well as helping organise local opposition to cuts. These local campaigns, trade unionists and students could then join together in a significant demonstration in the Autumn to challenge austerity with clear demands of free education, ending privatisation and restoring EMA as a step towards a living grant for all sixth form and FE students.

Fighting for Equality

As a member of Socialist Students I have also been heavily involved in the fight for the 1967 Abortion Act to be extended to Northern Ireland allowing women the choice to access safe and legal abortion services. Currently, the average cost for a woman to travel to England for an abortion including

travel costs is estimated to be in excess of £2000. This is money many women can't get hold of in time causing the stress of a later abortion, continuing an unwanted pregnancy or a child that the mother can't afford to bring up or an unsafe backstreet abortion. The NUS must be supporting women in their struggle to defend their rights in their choice of whether and when to have children!

Socialist Students joins in protests demanding equal marriage in Northern Ireland and against gay 'reparative' therapy sessions as well as bigoted comments from politicians. For example, Health Minister Edwin Poots has ignored medical experts and refused to allow gay men to give blood, as they can in the rest of the UK. Such decisions based on homophobic prejudice gives confidence to thugs who carry out homophobic bullying and attacks, which is why the NUS must directly challenge homophobic politicians.

**For a larger text format of
this manifesto email
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