"The banks make all the mistakes and we get the blame"

Students speak on UK education cuts

Our reporters
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The *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to students participating in the demonstrations in London and Leeds protesting the education cuts.

Raisul, a sixth former from east London, said, "People need to come to these protests to get active. The younger generation need to get involved. We can make a difference.

"Our voices are not often heard. A lot of us can't vote and there's a lot of anger building up. People need to get involved in politics; kids need to get involved and educated."

Speaking about the government's austerity programme, he said, "They use these excuses like the deficit and all that, like it's our fault and the public sector is paying for it. Whereas when you look at what actually happened, we're the ones who bailed out the banks.

"The banks are the ones who make all the mistakes and we are the ones who get the blame. That's quite unfair. So when people look more deeply into the situation, they find out they are targeting us even though they are the ones to blame. It's a real messed up situation. Everything is topsy turvy.

"Some people don't really agree with the National Union of Students. If you hear what they are saying, it could come out of the mouth of a Conservative. They want us to march, but they don't want change. That thing called Demolition [a student organisation]; it sounds very militant but at the end of the day all they want us to do is go home and have a cup of tea after the protest. They don't really want change.

"Companies are lawless. It's not the presidents that make the decisions, it's the bankers. Once people realise that, regardless of your political ideology, that's when a real change will start to happen. When Barack Obama came to power everyone said he's a socialist. No, he's a corporate lawyer, he's not a socialist. You have to look behind the mask and see the actual machine, the money machine. Socialism is the only way forward. There might be disagreements but the general idea of socialism is going to be the anti-thesis to oppression."

Raisul's friend Zak, also a sixth former, said, "University is going to be hard for us, as you won't be able to go. We need our voices to be heard. We can't just sit and let them take away our freedom. They are slowly taking our freedoms away."

Several hundred students, sixth former and school children participated in the demonstration in Leeds, in west Yorkshire. The march into the city centre to the Victoria Gardens in front of the Art Gallery was flanked by scores of police for much of the way.

A group of film and photography students from Bradford University were prevented from filming the march outside the Art Gallery, on the grounds they didn't have press credentials. One of them, Sam, said he was "amazed" at the huge numbers of police.

Paolo and her friend are from Turin, Italy. She is studying for a Masters degree and said, "I believe the people protesting are totally right. If tuition fees are going to rise, most people will be prevented from getting an education. That's completely wrong. I really agree with the protesters."

"I think we should fight for the right to be educated. I think that education is an investment that society makes for itself. It has to be financed by society for society. Since the 1960s it has been democratised. We should fight for it."

Monique Campbell is a first year student from Leeds Metropolitan University studying Youth and Community Development. She said, "Up until Monday I didn't know that the cuts were going to affect me. I

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thought that was already in the contract. So my fees will go up. I've been told that if it gets implemented in 2012, my fees will go up to ?7,000. My maintenance grant will go. I feel really passionate about this, so we should unite together as one."

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