

“This is just part of a bigger struggle that is happening on a global scale”

Our reporters
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A reporting team from the *World Socialist Web Site* interviewed some of those who attended the protest on Saturday outside the Liberal Democrats conference in Sheffield, England.

Tim Beale is a student from Sheffield Hallam University. He said, “I’m really disgusted about the cut to the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). If it wasn’t for that I would not have been able to go to university. As I was entitled to the full amount I was able to save this to pay for my first year at university as I don’t get parental support. I think it’s disgraceful that as soon as the Lib Dems got into power they sold out on everything, especially the tuition fees issue. They specifically said they would do everything to stop them being imposed.

“The wall they have built up around the city hall is not based on previous demonstrations. The police presence goes all the way down to the university [about half a mile away]. Based on one event in London they have decided to spend £2.5 million. The extent to which they have cordoned off the city, the money could have been spent elsewhere. I’m disappointed that the National Union of Students has done very little about this; they are not doing enough for students. In Wisconsin in America they have banned trade unions and are crushing them like Thatcher did.”

Caroline Nightingale graduated from university in Sheffield last year. “Before the election people were excited about the fact that Nick Clegg could get in and make a difference”, she said.

“Labour had gone so far to the right that the Lib Dems seemed like the only left party. I think it’s a disgrace that they have gone back on everything and now do what [Prime Minister] David Cameron says. He’s screwed students and all the public sector workers and thousands like me who are disgusted with them.

“I graduated last year and am the only person I know who has got a job amongst those who left at the same time as me. I wanted to stay in Sheffield but there were no jobs so had to go elsewhere”.

Wafa said, “The Lib Dems have gone back on everything they said, like Trident and tuition fees. They jump from one contradiction to the next. They say they are for the people, but just look at the massive barricade they have put up. The politicians are meant to be for the people by the people. This has cost £2.5 million and they’re making the cuts. This displays an attitude and it smacks of elitism. If the Eton boys were here they would be welcome, where as for us working class youth there’s a barricade!”

Kasia a student said, “I am not happy with the rise in fees; it’s going to affect all students. It will be financial trouble for me personally. I don’t want to have to end up with loans and financial obligations when I finish studying. It’s a commitment for years. We can only just manage the current fees, as it’s only my husband working, but when it triples we have no chance. I’m from Poland and looking at the movements in Egypt and Libya it’s like going back to 1989, when a whole region went against their governments”.

Victoria Cleary said, “I work in Stoke on Trent, but my boyfriend is still a student here in Sheffield, and many of my friends here are out of work. I feel passionately that people need to stand up against what is happening. The protests in Egypt have worked to some extent, and I think that is also the way we need to go.

“I don’t think the poor should be punished like they are now. It is the wealthy that should be taxed. Millionaires like Nick Clegg don’t see what is really happening to ordinary people. They’re not suffering; it’s us who are suffering. Many of my friends don’t

have jobs. When they finish university, they will have to pay back massive debts because of the increase in fees”.

Amy said, “I work for a theatre company, which is also a charity. I thought it was important to come down today and show solidarity. We face enormous cuts in Sheffield. It’s going to affect all of us hugely. My employer previously got support from local government towards our funding. We provide community arts programmes, and it may not be possible for us to do that in the future. I think the movements that are developing in North Africa are really positive. It is a time for change.”

Steve said, “In a way, the Tories have done us a favour, because what they are doing is creating more rallying points and dissent. For example there is solidarity now between students and public sector workers. If the government carries on like it is, it will force people to confront the need for change and for other political alternatives.

“Perhaps there was a generation that was a bit apolitical, but now all that is changing and people are starting to be political once more. This is just part of a bigger struggle that is happening on a global scale.”

Faye is a support worker for Shelter, the homeless charity. She said, “The cuts to services in the statutory and voluntary sector will impact on the most vulnerable. Whilst mine and my colleagues’ jobs are at risk, we’ve got the education and skills to make sure we are ok.

“The people I work with need public services to keep themselves afloat. The cuts will impact on the most vulnerable and this is something that is hidden from view. The Housing Support Project which will be decommissioned in July is to prevent further homelessness. Those people without that support are at a much higher risk of being street homeless and face increased poverty. Those kinds of examples rarely get into the mainstream media. I find it upsetting that it’s going to affect the most vulnerable, disabled, young carers, etc.”.

Becky Harris said, “I used to work with vulnerable women in London and have been unemployed for the last eighteen months. Things have been moving in this direction for a long time. Capitalism and consumerism are having a terrible effect on our society throughout the world. I feel strongly about the way in which people

who are sick and can’t work are being thrust into crippling poverty.

“Big corporations and the banks have so much of a vested interest in keeping people down. Rights and traditions to protest have been eroded to protect them. I don’t think you can have true democracy when the corporations have so much sway over society and make people into villains and scapegoat them to turn attention away from the fat cats.

“We won’t get a proper welfare state back again without a struggle.”



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