

Protesters on the TUC demonstration in London

“It is the capitalists who the politicians really work for”

Our reporters
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A *World Socialist Web Site* reporting team spoke to some of those protesting at the Trades Union Congress demonstration in London on Saturday.

Astrid is from Spain and now lives in London. She previously worked in the planning department of a landscaping company.

“I am here because these cuts are not fair”, she said. “They are cutting all the services and resources from the people. The bankers are pocketing our money and the difference between the rich and the poor is huge now. It is obscene how rich some of these people are becoming.

“It is the capitalists who the politicians really work for. They are not bothered about the environmental crisis and social crisis. They don’t give a damn. They just carry on getting rich. Since 2008, they are making the people pay for the financial crisis they caused. They didn’t ask us what the money should be spent on. Now the government and the councils are asking us what we want to be cut!

“In Walthamstow, we get a paper through every month. But it’s just really propaganda from the councils and government. I am involved in a campaign to save Leyton Green Clinic.

“I don’t have much faith in the TUC’s demonstrations. I remember in 2003 when there was a demonstration against the Iraq war and there were 2 million people here. And they still went to war. So I don’t think the government will take any notice of this demonstration. My partner said to me that he doesn’t think the unions are for the common people. They are quite privileged. They are at the top of the ladder and are not really concerned with workers.”

Adalia is a university student and lives in Brighton. She said, “I think they should stop these cuts, because they are very harmful and will bring the economy down. We need to increase public expenditure, not cut it.

“What should be stopped is the tax avoiders like Barclays bank. If only they paid their taxes, we would have enough money not to have to make these cuts. This is why I made my

banner saying, ‘Don’t Feed the Fat Cats’.”

Maria lives in London. She said, “They are not looking for the money in the right places. Why are they making us pay? The banks are not an easy target because they have power. We don’t have power unless we get ourselves together.

“In my local area, Putney, there are Sure Start children’s centres threatened, libraries and funding for sports and sports at school are, too.”

Tony is a social worker for a local authority in east London. “In my area they plan to cut £50 million and that is 25 percent of the local authority budget. I have come here today not only to defend these jobs, but for equality”, he said.

“I have to work lots of overtime, three hours more sometimes. I start at 9 a.m. and yesterday I had to work until 8 p.m. If they cut the budget, that is half of my team gone and the question is, how can I survive?

“I feel so upset about what the bankers did. The government want to cut the public services by £85 billion. We, the public, never made any mistakes and yet we are the ones having to pay. And now the rich are just safeguarding their money in the banks. They don’t need bailing out.

“What will happen is that if we lose our jobs, we won’t have the confidence to buy goods. So there won’t be any economic growth.

“I agree with you about the Labour Party. They just carried on the legacy of the Conservatives when they were in government. With the council houses and care homes, they just cut them and privatised them. As a matter of fact they were worse than the Tories.

“I think we need to be in unions because I believe in collective power. We can’t do anything as individuals. On whether the trade unions will actually do anything to fight, that is different. At this point I can’t see another alternative. What you say about Brendan Barber [TUC General Secretary] sitting on the board of the Bank of England is interesting, because they don’t choose opponents to sit on their committees. They want compliant people.”

Jill and Sandra are public sector workers from Leamington Spa in Warwickshire. Jill said, “We both work in the public sector and we are worried this will affect the public and our jobs, so that’s why we are here.”

Sandra said, “There are huge job losses to come everywhere and I don’t think people fully realise. The other thing is, where are all those people going to find other work? Once you start to rip away a bit of that infrastructure, what have you got left in Britain?”

Eileen is living in London and comes from Ireland. She works for a charity supporting people with learning difficulties.

“I work with a lot of people whose services are just being taken away. So I’m also here for them and all the other vulnerable people in our society who are losing out as a result of the cuts. I have gone from five days work to just two days. But it’s really the vulnerable people who are suffering and that makes me mad”, she said.

“I was watching the news just before I came out and there was a Tory Member of Parliament who was saying the march wasn’t valid. And the reason he gave for that is that there is no alternative. I just thought, how ridiculous. Look at all these people out on the streets and he’s saying the march is not valid. How can he say such a thing? You hear these people talking about how we need democracy in Libya and in Egypt and then we come out in the streets and do they listen? No.”

Ash and Chris are research assistants. Ash said, “It costs £3 million a day to bomb Libya and £100 million has been put aside. Where does the money come from? These cuts are not driven fiscally, but ideologically.

“They are attacking the arts and the welfare state. They closed the British Film Institute, which costs just £15 million a year to run. We have done research that shows for every pound they put into the arts, the economy gets two pounds back. Culture is part of society. They have just cut Corporation Tax in the budget to support businesses and put money into the hands of the rich.

“George Osborne [the chancellor] and David Cameron will never understand the need for welfare as they have only experienced privilege and see people as the undeserving poor.”

Chris gave an example of some recent research they had carried out amongst school students:

“This was a study looking nationwide at young people who were underachieving and where one to one tuition was given. What came out was that this kind of support switched them on to education and gave them confidence where they were not getting support at home and were on free school meals. This intervention transformed their lives, whereas before they hated school and were ashamed of their behaviour.

“The wealthy have an obligation to help people who don’t

have the same kind of privileges. It’s not a level playing field. The rich are getting richer and poor are getting poorer.”

Jess works in a secondary school in Southampton, where the local authority is trying to turn the school into an academy.

“Not many of us are happy about this”, Jess said. “We have been told that if we don’t sign a new contract, when there are no jobs anywhere else, we will have to leave. Working at an academy is like a semi-dictatorship. At a regular state school there are statutory guidelines and procedures that you work under. At an academy the rules are made by the head and the governors.

“The cut in Education Maintenance Allowance has had a big impact on our school, which has a Sixth Form. The students who desperately need the £30 a week won’t go to college. I can understand why the students protested as people from working class backgrounds are not going to want to be £9,000 a year in debt. Education is becoming for the elite again.”

Esther is also a teacher. She said, “We work really hard, often 60 hours a week. Pensioners shouldn’t have to suffer. We work for future generations. The bankers don’t do that. It’s for life!”

Laura Thomas, from Norfolk, said, “I’ve been out of the country for the last five months and just got back a few weeks ago. I am going to be a nurse, so it affects me intensely. I hate the way they use the recession as a means for cutting services. I think it’s great today because so many people have turned out, but I don’t think it’s going to make any difference. If the TUC did care, then they wouldn’t have left it till now to organise a march.”

Louise works at Hackney Community College. She said, “There have been lots of cuts in various stages, and cuts among some of the managers, student support and the advice section. They are completely reorganising things and it is expected that teachers will be going just before the Easter holiday. All the students on Income Support and Working Tax Credit and Housing Benefit will lose the £40 entitlement to go on a course. They will be forced to pay full fees, which are between £600 and £1,500, so it’s unlikely they will be able to attend.

“The course most affected is the English for Speakers of Other Languages and women who are part-time are affected the most. This accounts for about 60 percent of students. Things are looking dismal for staff and students. The cuts are only starting and things are going to be bad.”



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