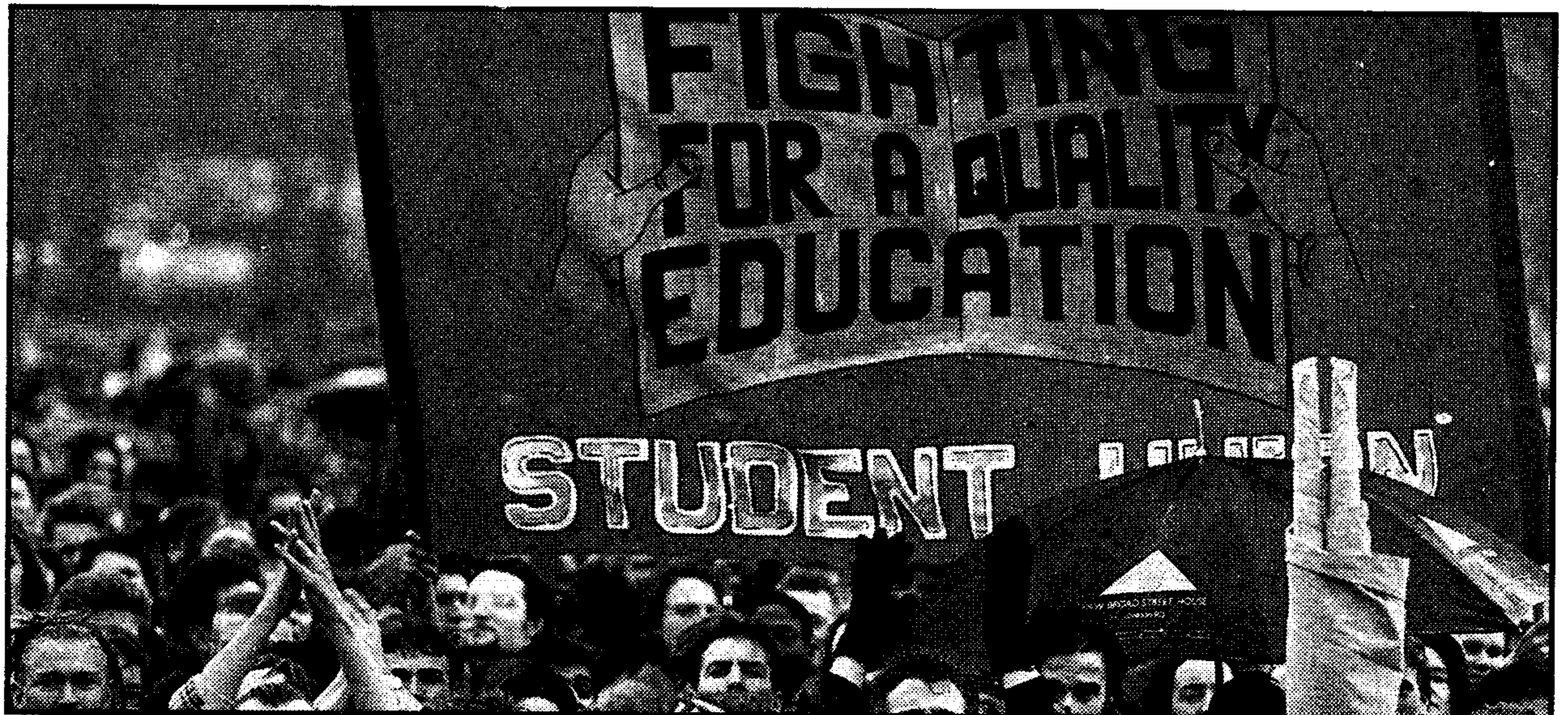


NOW!

No to a graduate tax! No to loans

Defend our union



Before April's General Election the Labour leadership of the National Union of Students (NUS) argued that students should avoid "rocking the boat" with too much campaigning.

"Work for a Labour victory instead" they told us. At the time we said that not making any demands of the very party claiming to represent us was stupid, to say the least.

Today one might hope for a confident air of defiance: stating clearly that students must do everything in their power to get rid of the Tories as quickly as possible. Instead Stephen Twigg, President of NUS, is saying that John Patten, Secretary of State for Education, is a man with whom students can do business!

The NOLS leadership is so keen to 'do business' with Patten, they are even considering supporting a graduate tax rather than fighting for a decent living grant.

Patten is an enemy of students and education. Patten is after all the person who has planned the

end of state funded education as we know it - the opting out of schools and colleges from local control.

Now the government is threatening to break up student unions. They want to end the 100% membership of NUS by forbidding student unions from affiliating to NUS, and to make students pay to join their local or national student unions.

The Tories aim to put the services of student unions up for compulsory competitive tendering. The Liberal and Labour-right NUS leaders have responded in a crazy way. They have all but stopped any campaigning work, and attempted to cut the democracy of the national union.

This will not defend NUS. It isn't the radical campaigning work of the NUS the Tories hate. There is none. The Tories want to dispose of student unions because they keep money away from capitalists, and because student unions have the potential to lead a struggle to defend education.

Students need NUS. The

only way to defend and improve education is through student and trades unions. That means we need to stop the attacks on student unions with united action against the Tories. We cannot rely on the weak leadership of NUS. That is why it is so important to build a mass student campaigns which can overcome the general apathy of the NUS bureaucracy.

We need to fight for a better education for all. Building a militant and fighting student base in every college also means uniting the left in the college.

United discussion and active work is needed to give a socialist leadership and a winning strategy to students. Unity can be held together only with the experience of collaboration.

In NUS the main threat comes from the right. There is an urgent need for open, pluralistic alliances of socialist students involved in campaigning in the colleges.

Build unity in action. Demonstrate to defend our right to unions!

LIBERATION

What we stand for

Power in our world is held by a tiny class. Racism, sexism, homophobia, poverty and oppression are built in to every level of life under capitalism. So we need to replace the power of the ruling rich with the direct democracy of the ordinary people.

There are none so fit to break the chains as those who wear them. We support and actively build autonomous organisations of Black people, women, lesbians and gay men and disabled people.

Liberation will not be achieved either within the capitalist system, or by simply 'waiting for the revolution'. Strong independent organisations of the oppressed are needed both to fight for immediate gains and to unite with working people in the struggle for liberation.

The knowledge and technical means exist to conquer famine and ecological decay, but our world is in crisis. Even the ruling rich cannot control capitalism. The west is entering an international depression. The burden of debt it has placed on underdeveloped countries means only one in five human beings can live without hunger.

In the United States and European Community, 40 million people are kept unemployed. The Maastricht treaty attempts to build a racist super-state which massively cuts state social security and welfare provision across Europe.

We need to unite to defend our rights, and to work in solidarity with people in struggle around the world. We support all those fighting for national self-determination and freedom from imperialist oppression.

The ruling rich are destroying both our planet and our future. It is not enough to put forward minimum demands defending our rights today. We need to put forward demands that help students and youth turn their defensive struggles into a mass united struggle to replace capitalism.

That struggle won't always go through the traditional structures - the student and trades unions and the Labour Party. So we must be prepared to campaign for our interests - with or without the support of our 'leaders'.

The Higher Education system today is becoming even more elitist. The 'quality' of the graduate is becoming less important as recession lessens the need for intellectual labour. Fourteen elite universities or university colleges train the children of the rich. While other universities will be underfunded but numbers of students will increase. In the school and colleges the situation is worse. 'Local management' in schools and colleges will ruin state education.

Socialists must fight for an education system that serves the working people. Control must lie with the community, students and staff. At times of progressive struggle in the community, universities and colleges must open up their facilities to those who need them. The struggles of students can only be solved outside the college. So students need to build alliances with the campaigning organisations of working people.

Unemployment is used as threat by the bosses to make workers accept low pay and wages related to productivity. Unemployment also produces an unorganised layer of the working class. We demand an end to this divide. We are for the right to work.

Working or not, everyone should receive a minimum wage. The rich tell us we can live on a £1,600 benefit a year. Instead we need a wage level agreed by ordinary working class people. We are for the unity of workers, students and the unemployed in campaigns against the bosses and the Conservative austerity programme.

LIBERATION now! is written by young supporters of Socialist Outlook, a paper in solidarity with the Fourth International - the worldwide revolutionary organisation founded by Leon Trotsky and other socialist opponents of Stalinism in 1938.

The United Secretariat of the Fourth International, as the continuation of Trotsky's tradition, unites socialists in more than 50 countries. We stand for a revolutionary transformation of society and a pluralist, socialist democracy worldwide.

In order to effect this necessary change in the structure of society, we stand for the building of a mass revolutionary world party, with sections in every country worldwide. Youth and students will have a crucial role to play in the building of this movement.

Think about our ideas. Join us.

The truth about women in education

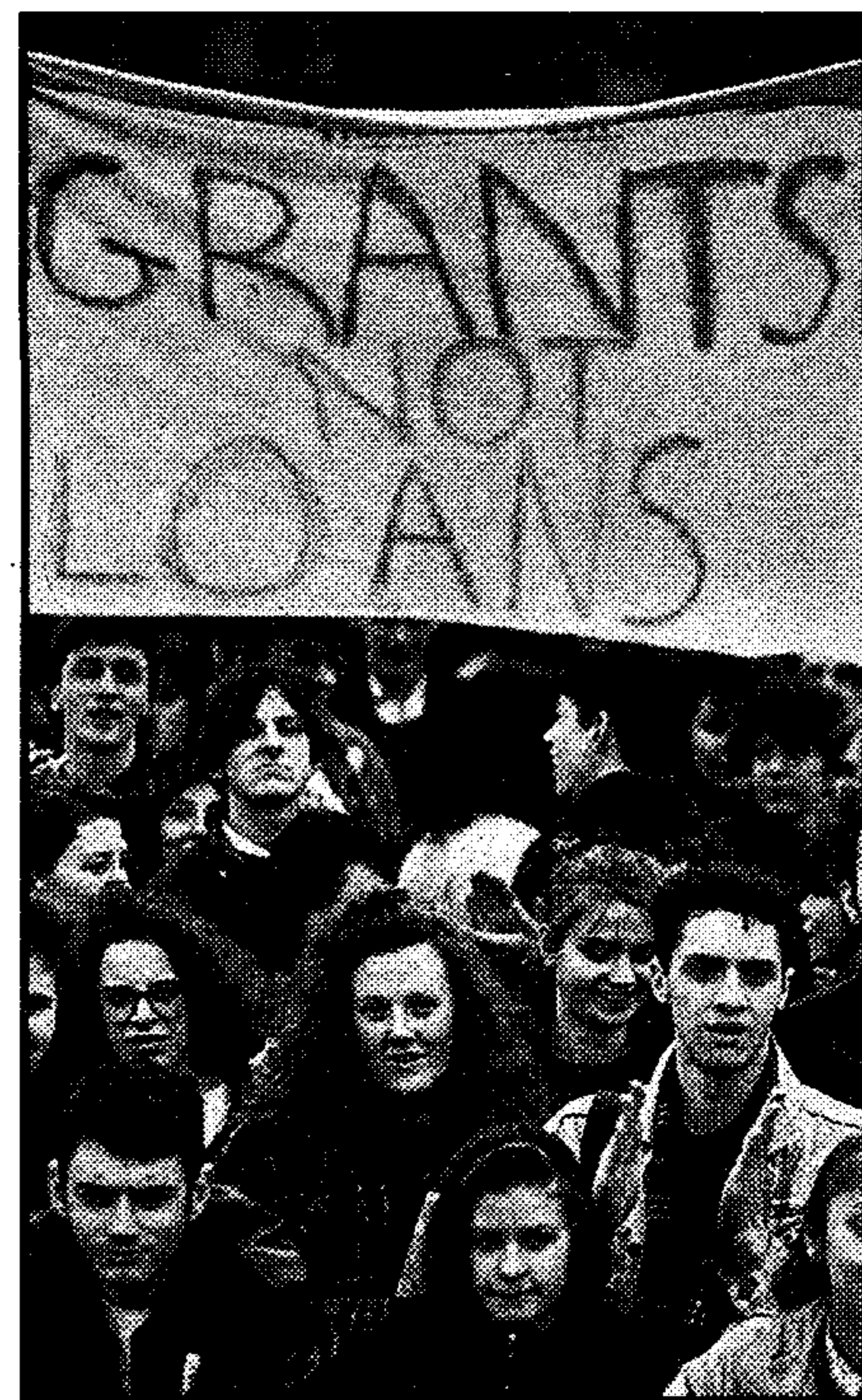
The numbers of first-year full-time students in higher education reached a record high of 318,000 in 1990: 47% more than in 1980 and 9% more than in 1989. The proportion of women in higher education rose from 41% in 1980 to 47% in 1990.

What do these statistics really mean? Are there more working class people entering higher education, more women or black people?

Still more men than women are entering higher education. In 1990 the numbers of male university students was 164,000 while the number of women students full time at university was only 132,000.

Women are still concentrated in arts, humanities and social science courses, while the government pumps money into science and technology courses.

The Tories aim to have one young person in three studying in higher education by the end of the 90s: but they refuse to improve funding for education - something that hits hardest at women dependent on their families and partners for money and childcare.



The vast majority of working class youth, women and black people are denied a decent education. If they go to college they get a paltry sum of money (described as a 'living grant!') and long term debt from top up loans.

Living standards have dropped now that students get no benefit. This will heavily effects working class students who cannot rely on being subsidised by their families.

Many college administrations will cut back

on courses and library facilities. Overcrowded lectures and inadequate childcare and study facilities will all become more common.

Consider this:- polytechnics becoming universities; 2 year degree courses; the way education has been restructured in general; testing 7 year olds, the core curriculum. The ethos of the Tories is education on the cheap to those who can't afford to pay extra for it!

The way forward is to fight the Tories with the support and backing of an unflinching student movement. Recently there has been organised student militancy against these new Tory cuts.

Cuts inevitably hit working class women and black people the hardest which is why it is vital for united action. Student unions, and especially NUS, must be working and campaigning with women and black people: not paying the usual tokenistic lip service.

Oxford poly occupied

Oxford Polytechnic went into occupation at the end of the last academic year. They took over one of the college buildings and held it for a week.

Students at the polytechnic felt forced to take direct action against the polytechnic management. They felt the action was necessary due to the increase in student numbers and no increase resources. This policy had resulted in chronic overcrowding. This, along with lowering the high canteen prices and improving library facilities were the key demands of the occupation.

Students also felt that the students union had failed them. The Student Union executive lead by Tracy Neale (now NUS National Treasurer) was supporting only minimal action.

Within 24 hours they were arguing that the stu-

dents should leave. The executive also used bureaucratic means to ensure they did all the negotiating with the management rather than students elected by the occupation.

200 students voted to go into occupation. By the beginning of the following week a meeting of 300 students voted overwhelmingly to continue the occupation. The majority of students had not previously been involved in student politics and many were mature students or women.

Trade Union support on the campus was strong. NALGO's local government workers, NATFHE's lecturers and porters and cleaners from NUPE fully supported the occupation and its demands. Messages of support were received from other colleges, unions, the Oxford East Labour Party and Tony Benn MP.

The occupation was the longest in the polytechnic's history and ended in an agreement with no victimisations. It was also agreed that there would be 'extensive negotiations' between the student's union and director and chair of governors when the occupation was over.

The directors issued a press statement recognising the occupation demands as reasonable. The occupation must be judged a success. There now exists a group of students committed to ensuring that the demands are fought for, and are prepared to take direct action again.

The student union could never have attracted people like these; women; black students; overseas students; who are fighting for their education - not interested bureaucratic gains.

Education on the cheap

By the end of the decade, the Tories plan to have one young person in three educated to university level - for less money. It is part of a remarkable offensive they have planned.

The polytechnics are now underfunded universities, also able to award degrees without outside scrutiny. Higher Education is more elitist: a larger proportion of students from private schools go to university than 15 years ago.

While a small layer of top universities are protected, most universities are brought down to funding levels lower than that of polytechnics.

The latest attack is the two year degree. Eleven new universities introduce pilot schemes this year. While resources and teachers are over

stretched with round-the-year teaching, 'space' is created for one-third more students. The two year degrees in France, DEUG and DEUS, are cheaper but carry little weight.

When the economy was booming in the sixties, graduates were needed with the flexibility of thought needed to oversee the continual renewal of industry. In recession there is less need for intellectual labour. The job market has seen graduates move from management to more clerical and administrative work. The government is making sure the universities change their education to suit the bosses.

While the binary divide has ended, a three-tier system is being introduced in the new universities.

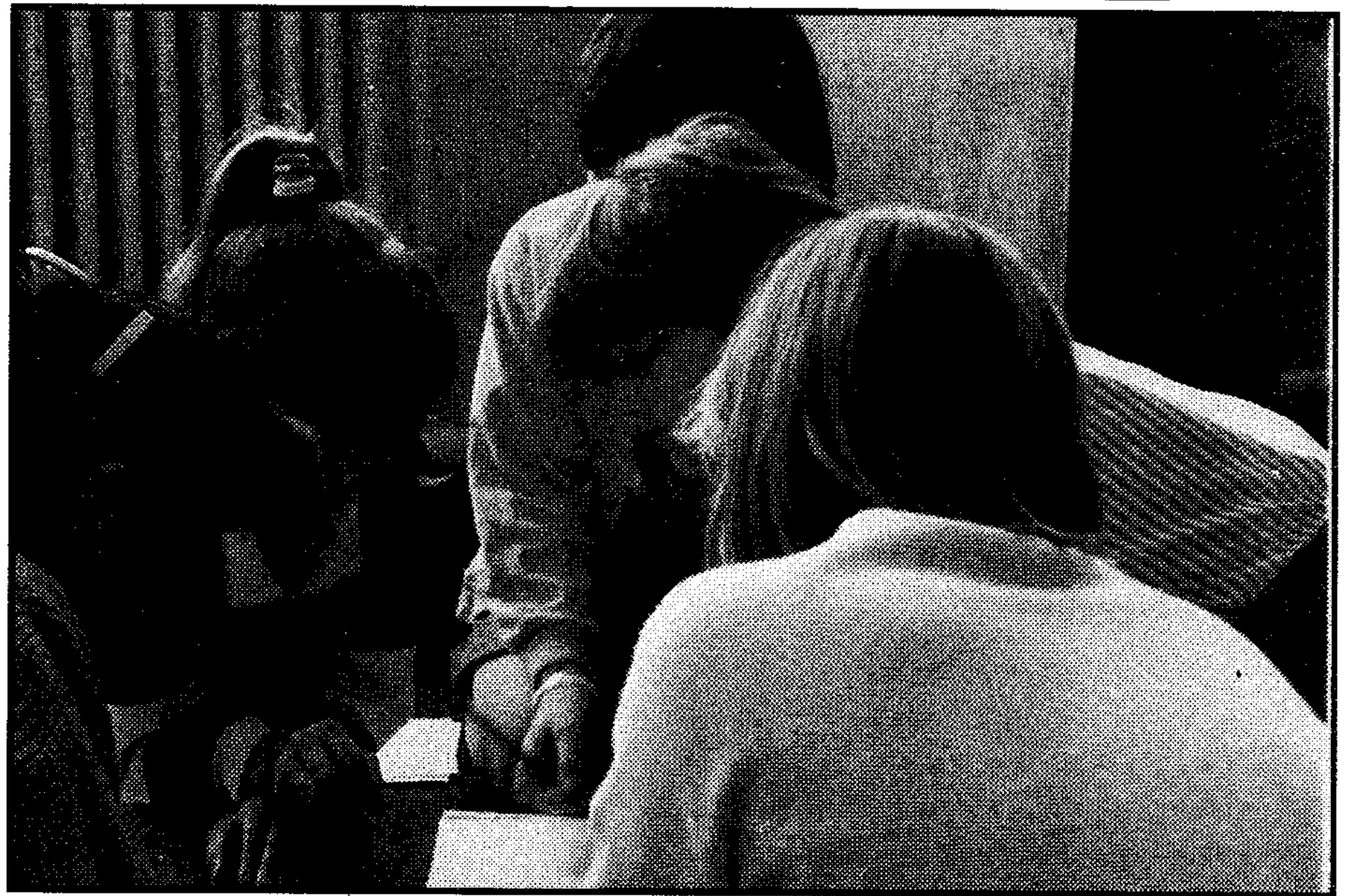
There is a first-tier of fourteen research

universities or university colleges (like Cambridge, Imperial or the London Business School) get about two-thirds of the national research budget.

Student numbers at these universities are not expanding, but students from the families of the ruling rich are being concentrated there. Fifteen years ago, for instance, 20% of students at Bristol University were from the elite independent schools. Today it is 45%.

A second tier of mainly small universities also have not been able to expand their student numbers - but they have not gained extra research funding either.

The worst funded tier is dedicated to producing graduates on the cheap. In polytechnics spending per student fell by



23% in the 1980's while student numbers rose by 21%. Universities in the bottom layer can stay open only if they take large numbers of students, putting their asking price for more students.

These universities are taking many students only for the token fees paid by local councils. So for each science student, for instance, a

university would get £2,770 a year. The average cost of teaching is over £5,000 and that forces universities to cut.

At Keele, 40% of students are taken in return for fees only; at Swansea it is 36%; Strathclyde and Heriot Watt, 25%. This means an increase in students but with less teaching resource. It also forces

universities to call for students to pay fees too.

Today, only 13.7% of universities recurrent income comes from the government. In real terms university resources per student in 91/92 were 88% of their level in 88/89. The united action of students and workers can end the decline.

Con artists running NUS

NUS reform is one of the biggest con tricks of all time. A right-wing block in NUS: the Kinnockite National Organisation of Labour Students (NOLS); the Liberal Democrats and so-called "independents"; have been pushing for years. They claim to aim to "democratise" the NUS and give it to "ordinary" students. I have yet to meet this imaginary "ordinary" student and it is difficult to find very many in the above groups. NOLS, for example, long ago degenerated in to little more than a rump of careerist bureaucrats, ruthlessly competing for desk space at Walworth Road.

"Reform" is a con because it is a factional tool by the right-wing to hold on to power in the NUS and to drive out the left. The supposed "democracy", involving abolition of one of the 'national conference and abolition of Area NUS organisa-

tions, seeks to do that by centralising power in larger regions and in a national forum. Like the Labour Party leadership, the right are also running scared of the Tories and are desperate to make the Union appear ultra-moderate.

The policy of the right allows the government to push voluntary membership on a Union where collective action has been consistently run-down. Many members have been disengaged from activity.

"What about services" you hear the right cry? When Tory students say that the services can be provided by the private sector, they are not wholly wrong. Without the collective life that makes the Union a Union, the choice for some students over the NUS



may end up a simple commercial one.

But reform is also negative because to most students it smacks of the worst kind of boring bureaucratic politicking. Laced with "this will kick out the trots", NOLS probably get a positive response from a few inactive Tories. Big deal. I wonder which way they will vote on disaffiliation?

So reform is leading the NUS down a path to disaster, reinforcing the lack of interest in the NUS that the right are happy to see and

actively encourage. Not surprisingly some elements of the right-wing bloc are already planning a new business-based Union of Democratic Students. They guess or probably hope that the destruction of NUS is imminent.

The response of the student left to this crisis is crucial. One bloc, Left Unity, have reacted to NUS reform by taking the NUS to court. As well as undermining the independence of the NUS at a time when the Tories threaten it, this strategy does not build activity on the ground.

NUS democracy will not be secured through the courts, or through the internal struggle of the NUS Executive. Mass, united student action is the only reliable force for democracy in the union.

Agenda

Defend Yourself Defend Your Union

Students Convention

Fighting Student Poverty

Defending Student Union

Fighting The Tories

10am Saturday 7th November 1992
University of London Union, Malet Street
(nearest tube: Euston)

Organised by Defend Yourself, Defend Your Union:- 081-539 3817

Weekend event for students and youth

Saturday 7th November

7pm

Socialism 75 years after the Russian Revolution

Sunday 8th November

10am - 5pm

Revolutionary Marxism Today

Sessions include:- Imperialism & Racism; Stalinism; Women's Oppression; Reform or Revolution; Marx & Freud; Consumerism & Culture; the Fourth International

University of London Union

Sponsored by Socialist Outlook

for more details write to LIBERATION now!, PO Box 1109.

National student demonstrations

Defend yourself
Defend your union

Students

demand a

living grant

London

Tuesday 10th November meet University of London, Malet Street

Manchester

Wednesday 4th November meet All Saints Park

Brighton

Wednesday 7th October meet at The Level
For details of these Demos contact NUS
London on 071 637 1181.

Lesbian and Gay

Civil Rights

Demonstration

Saturday October 31st
assemble Noon Hyde
Park

Rally at Trafalgar
Square 2.00pm

Transport will be available

Further details from the organisers:-
Lesbian and Gay Rights Coalition, 69
Cowcross Street, London EC1

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Fourth International youth camp

Celebrating

Socialism!

July 1992 saw over 850 young people arrive in central Portugal, for a week-long camp of socialist youth from all over Europe organised by the United Secretariat of the Fourth International. Delegations came from 16 countries, including Britain. Individuals came from many other countries.

Unlike many other events 'for youth', the youth camp is organised and run by young people. Planned in advance by young supporters of the Fourth International, the camp is run jointly by representatives from each delegation.

The camp was planned to be sociable as well as socialist. Two all-day bars and nightly discos were organised, as well as swimming trips to the local river. Very successful women's and lesbian and gay discos helped round off the week. The food was fantastic - especially the vegetarian food: half the camp became veggie for the week! Singing and drinking went long into the night.



Morning forums were held on topics like Maastricht and the construction of a racist 'Fortress Europe'; anti-racist and anti-fascist struggles; 500 years of anti-imperialist struggle in Latin America.

Full days were given over to discuss both women's oppression and sexuality. The British delegation, organised by Socialist Outlook, introduced workshops on Yugoslavia, Zionism, and women & fun-

damentalism. Additional discussions were organised in the women's space and the lesbian and gay space throughout the week.

The site for next year's camp is still undecided but it is certain to be another great success.

LIBERATION now! is planning to bring a big delegation from Britain. To find out more about the camp, write to LIBERATION now!, PO Box 1109 London N4 2UU