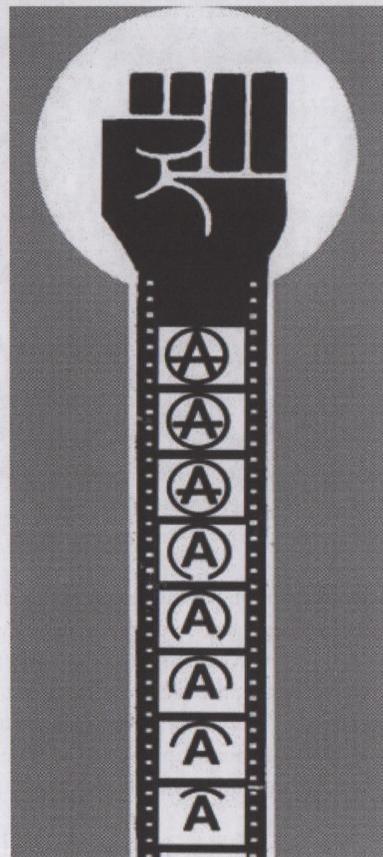


# Cinema Syndicate: building a libertarian cinema

Cinema Syndicate is an anarchist film society at Sheffield University, initiated a couple of years ago by students there who are members of the Anarchist Federation. It continues to the present day, with membership of the society collective open to all who hold an anarchist perspective politically; though of course anyone can come and see a film, whether they are anarchist or not. The society holds film screenings every week, with a focus on showing films or documentaries that feature some kind of libertarian/anarchist perspective, or that deal with issues of power in the world. The purpose of the society is to essentially get people thinking about such issues, but instead of having to read a paper or pamphlet, they can just sit down and

watch a stimulating film or documentary. It's a popular event, with a good number of people regularly coming to screenings, and with new faces often coming to see a film.

The way the society is run is along non-hierarchical lines, by consensus. As a Union society, the society has to have elected officer positions, but in Cinema Syndicate these positions are nothing more than names on paper. All members of the collective have an equal say in proceedings, and anyone who agrees with the anarchist perspective of the society can get involved on an equal basis to everyone else. Films are picked by essentially each person in the group being able



to have so many slots they can show a film in – so that everyone ends up having an equal number of their film choices being shown; though if a member disagreed with a particular film being showed, then this would be debated, or if a member wanted to show more than their share of films, another member could potentially take on the previous members suggestion in place of one of their own. We also leave some weeks on the screening program purposefully blank, so as members of the audience can make their own suggestions as to what films to show.

The film screenings are also useful opportunities for displaying literature and spreading a message; for example if there is an upcoming political event, this could be mentioned before or after a screening. The film screenings have also served as a useful opportunity to meet like-minded individuals. The society can also be used to book stall spaces etc. around the university to allow anarchist flavoured or community run campaigns to get their message across, as well as booking room spaces for these campaigns to hold their meetings. All in all, quite a successful little endeavour.

**ANARCHIST STUDENT** is written and produced by members of the Anarchist Federation who are currently in full and part-time education.



forms of oppression, as well as war and environmental destruction the rulers weaken and divide us. Only the direct action of working class people can defeat these attacks and ultimately overthrow capitalism.

As the capitalist system rules the whole world, its destruction must be complete and world wide. We reject attempts to reform it, such as working through parliament and national liberation movements, as they fail to challenge capitalism itself. Unions also work as a part of the capitalist system, so although workers struggle within them they will be unable to bring about capitalism's destruction unless they go beyond these limits.

Organisation is vital if we're to beat the bosses, so we work for a united anarchist movement and are affiliated to the International of Anarchist Federations. The Anarchist Federation has members across Britain and Ireland fighting for the kind of world outlined above.

The Anarchist Federation is an organisation of class struggle anarchists aiming to abolish capitalism and all oppression to create a free and equal society. This is Anarchist Communism. We see today's society as being divided into two main opposing classes: the ruling class which controls all the power and wealth, and the working class which the rulers exploit to maintain this. By racism, sexism and other

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# ANARCHIST STUDENT



Anarchist Federation Student Bulletin

free/donation

Issue#1

## Pay more for less? - what HE cuts mean for students

**With the recession over, the pain is only just beginning for students. With rises to VAT and tuition fees looming, already stretched budgets are looking tighter than ever. But not only are we going to be paying more (and working longer to pay off mountains of debt), we'll also be getting less bang for our buck, as vicious cuts at universities across the country will significantly damage our quality of education.**

More than three quarters of English uni will be affected, from Oxford and Cambridge to Leeds and Manchester. Some face cuts of over almost 14% compared to last year. University bosses have already begun to swing the axe, with hundreds of redundancies planned at scores of universities. This means larger class sizes and fewer contact hours for students. A total £135 million of cuts have been an-

nounced for the coming year, with more likely to follow in future years.

The prospects for students are pretty bleak. Firstly, in addition to cutting staff, closing courses and shutting down faculties, university bosses have responded to the cuts by clamouring for higher tuition fees – and they look likely to get their way. Proposed increases could see fees rise to £5-6 thousand pounds a year for those reading for an arts degree, or as much as £14 thousand for those studying sciences. That would mean more debt (a rise of about 25% compared to current levels) and more time spent working to pay them off. It will also have a massive impact on who can attend universities, with students from poor backgrounds effectively barred from higher education.

On top of this, we'll actually be getting less for

our money, as lower budgets mean less money spent on students (university bosses themselves seem less than eager to shoulder the burden of budget cuts; the average salaries of university vice chancellors rose by 10% last year!) as teaching staff and facilities come under attack. And that's just in the short term.

In the long term, sweeping changes to higher education in Britain are likely, with universities' priorities shifting away from providing a decent education and towards chasing corporate funding and investment. Education will become increasingly privatised, and our courses will become a kind of glorified training programme run at the whims of private investors with little to no regard for the needs of students.

As students, we have to organise against these cuts or we will suffer the consequences. Last year saw occupations and strikes against cuts at several universities, with students and university workers standing shoulder to shoulder in our opposition to uni management and the government on whose orders these attacks are being carried out. Now, facing a fresh round of cuts, we have to build on these struggles and fight back at a national level, or we'll pay the price in rising fees and a declining quality of education for years to come.



**Inside:** Sussex against Cuts, setting up an anarchist cinema, and post-graduate study. PLUS your very own Left survival guide pull-out!!

# Sussex Stop the Cuts

## a retrospective: lessons for anti-cuts campaigners

Last year's Stop the Cuts campaign at Sussex Uni (currently gearing up for action after a summer hiatus) provides both inspiring examples of mass action, and lessons on what to avoid when organising anti-cuts campaigns. The campaign witnessed 2 day-long strikes by lecturers, an overwhelming vote of no-confidence in management by a student's union EGM, some of the biggest ever protests on campus, 2 stormed buildings and 3 occupations, the longest of which lasted over a week. However, sidetracked by management retaliation in the form of riot police, suspensions and fines for student occupiers, the campaign also ultimately failed to avert over 100 redundancies, only managing a downgrading from compulsory to 'voluntary.'

Further, despite the savagery of 2009/10's cuts, this year is set to see even more, both at Sussex and across the country, so now is the time to get organised and learn from previous struggles. While the campaign at Sussex made impressive gains – especially in winning the unconditional reinstatement of 6 suspended students after a week-long occupation – those small victories only hint at a fraction of the strength that the campaign could have wielded, had it learned the lessons that it

**Now is the time to get organised and learn from previous struggles.**



Protesters clash with police during a demonstration at Sussex Uni.

did earlier in the year. With the Con-Dem government and more cuts on the horizon, these are lessons that will be of use to all student anti-cuts campaigns.

Anti-cuts feeling was already building among Sussex staff and students at the start of Autumn term last year, and was quickly translated into public meetings and demonstrations. Indeed, the Autumn term saw frustrations lead to two of these demonstrations storming the building in which university Senate meetings were taking place, demanding a vote against proposed cuts. However, the campaign was also slow to formally organise itself. Regular ad-hoc open meetings that followed demonstrations were able to keep the campaign ticking over, and even to grow it significantly over the course of the term, but this year the campaign will be that much more established from the

offset, thanks to the recognised importance of clearly advertised mass meetings for drawing people into a campaign. The strength that the campaign showed in

winning the reinstatement of suspended students was due to the mass of students and staff involved in it, with organising meetings of over a hundred people and over 800 attending the EGM. This is not a strength that could have existed were the campaign left to a small (formal or informal) organising committee, or, indeed, to a squabbling alliance of sectarian leftist groups – it relies on mass participation.

Equally, the campaign recognised early on the importance of student and staff solidarity. The first two occupations of the campaign were explicitly framed as shows of student support for staff strikes, and campaigners were in regular contact with staff unions on campus, putting the case for direct action. These activities ultimately bore fruit in the two strike days that UCU called, helping to win the downgrading of redundancies from compulsory to 'voluntary,' but again they were slow to get off the ground. This year, Sussex Stop the Cuts campaigners will already have these links established, and will hopefully be able to push

**Continued page 3**



Mass-meetings and sit-ins are a powerful tactic for any anti-cuts campaign.

for earlier and stronger action. Equally, perhaps one of the most significant developments towards the end of the campaign was increased focus on communicating with non-academic staff, a university demographic equally threatened by cuts, but often forgotten by student campaigns. The week-long occupation of a lecture theatre showed the importance of a space in which students and staff can come together to share information and coordinate struggles – for a truly successful campaign, each meeting should approach this form of mass assembly, where all those threatened by cuts can work in solidarity with each other.

However, perhaps the most important that lesson that the Sussex campaign learned, and one it learned fairly quickly, is that mass direct action is where our strength lies. From the student side, the storming and occupation of buildings was a strong feature of the campaign, and the constant reiteration of support for staff action helped to mobilise UCU. When this action was directed towards physically preventing management's administration of university, they showed that they were threatened by responding with heavy-handed retribution: they fabricated a 'hostage situation' during the occupation of the admin building in order to bring riot police onto campus, took out a High Court injunction on further occupations, and suspended six students. Despite this, the campaign had learned where their strength

## Postgraduate study should be open to all!

Many of you will be well aware of the general squeeze in higher education funding, places and teaching and support staff that has been carried through by the government in the past two years. What has got far less attention is the dire state of investment in postgraduate education that has pretty much cut off further study to all but the richest few students. MA courses can cost upwards of £3,500 (as high as £7000 in some cases) while PhD courses can cost as high as £11,000 a year to enrol. On top of this you have living costs as well as research materials and travel expenses. A career development loan can help ease the financial burden, but not everyone will be eligible (those with a bad credit history will be refused) and these loans are often

an addition to an already hefty level of personal debt following higher education.

For many the only viable route is to apply for research funding either through competitive university schemes or external bodies like the Economic and Social Research Council. However, these sources have also seen massive funding cuts in recent years. They are also highly politicised with, for example in the social sciences, funding councils favouring applicants who can demonstrate their research has some application for the business world or bureaucratic state management. The result is that radical research, and those most likely to pursue radical research, are effectively excluded from postgraduate study. This

lay, and 700 students demonstrated in support of the suspended six, with 300 of them occupying a lecture theater, openly defying the injunction and demanding full reinstatement of the 'Sussex Six'. Students, in seizing an organising space, provided an open forum on what education might look like were it freed from the constraints of hierarchy and profit, and management gave in after just 8 days of occupation, proving that direct action gets the goods!

These suspensions were presented by management as the singling out of 'ringleaders' of the campaign. However, they fundamentally misunderstood the fact that Stop the Cuts provides an example of organising without ringleaders. All the decisions of the campaign were made openly at meetings that welcome everyone, and the campaign therefore had no head to cut off, and was all the stronger for it. The occupation stood as an example of how people can organise together not only in opposition to attacks on their well-being, but also to create alternative structures.

The fight is still far from over, but the solidarity and unity recognised between students and workers, at Sussex shows the way that the campaign might be won, as ordinary people organise themselves and assert their ability to run their own lives in their own interest better than any boss or manager.

also fosters a competitive environment, continuing into academic life, where students are encouraged to compete with each other's research instead of looking for areas for co-operation and common study. Initiatives like the "anarchist studies network" represent an alternative to these structures – effectively building a self-help network for anarchists in the academy – but what is really needed is a generalised fight back uniting all those involved in the higher education system, from the support staff right up to the full-time academic staff. Only then can we start re-shaping the kind of education system we want - one open to all who desire to study, not one based on economic advantage.