

THE BULLETIN

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#GRANTSNOTDEBT

FREE EDUCATION
& LIVING GRANTS FOR ALL

LONDON, NOVEMBER 4, 12PM

TOM ROBINSON - UCLU WELFARE & INTERNATIONAL OFFICER

Students and our education are under attack like never before. We have already seen the tripling of tuition fees in 2010, a measure that barred many potential students from coming to

university. Meanwhile, our education has been steadily marketised, with our institutions run like businesses aiming to generate profit.

Now the government intends to entirely scrap maintenance grants, replacing them with loans. This

will mean that students from the poorest backgrounds take on yet more debt in order to access an education – if they even start at university in the first place. We know that many students who relied on maintenance grants in order to make it through their degree simply **CONTINUED ON PAGE 2**



UCL DEFEND EDUCATION

would not have been able to come if they had been forced to take on thousands of pounds more of debt instead.

We know that the system was not fit for purpose in the first place. Any system for allowing access to grants which is based on means testing will mean that some students do not receive what they need. It is difficult to legally prove estrangement from your parents, which means that many LGBTQ students who do not receive financial support from 'phobic parents are unable to claim the amount of grant that they require. We can't argue that we should keep the current system: we need to demand a radical change, with living maintenance grants for everyone. We cannot and will not sit quietly as the government

destroys the final chance for anyone other than the vastly rich to go to university. All around the country, students are mobilising. Students organised a series of protests and occupations of MPs' offices in mid-September, demanding that they oppose government plans to scrap maintenance grants.

On October 14, students will be demonstrating at the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills to demand #GrantsNotDebt, and on November 4, students from all over the UK will converge on central London to march in our thousands to demand free education and living grants for all – no barriers, no borders, and no business.

STRIKE!

As well as demonstrations and occupations, we need to use new tactics to win the fight for living grants and free education. The tactic of a student strike has a long history of successes, from the 1971 strike called by NUS that beat Thatcher to the 2012 Quebec strikes that halted a fee rise and brought down their government.

UCLU will be voting on whether to support a national student strike. Come to the General Assembly on Tues 13 Oct and vote in favour!

For information and resources make sure to look at <http://anticuts.com/student-strike/>

WHY WE'RE CAMPAIGNING FOR LOWER RENTS AT UCL

ANGUS O'BRIEN – UCLU HALLS ACCOMMODATION REPRESENTATIVE

If you're reading this, the chances are that you either live in UCL halls or have done so recently. It is likely, then, that you know just how expensive it is – this year, the average cost per week of a room in UCL accommodation is £176, which is £7031.59 for the full year. This year, the very cheapest single room is £135.59 per week, coming to well over half the entire loan available to students – if you are eligible for the full amount.

Yet six years ago, the picture was almost entirely different. In this time, rent has increased by an average of almost 56% – students are paying an average of £2484.94

more per year, and the cheapest room at UCL has increased by more than £40 weekly, from £94.01 per week.

So, are these rapid, high rent increases justified? The short answer is no – inflation has caused prices to rise by 19.8% since 2009, and student income has only increased by 12% to 16%, depending on income bands.

Alongside this, UCL will be running a surplus of £15,779,000 from accommodation during this academic year, enough to fund a rent cut of almost 45% without affecting the running of halls.

We as students of UCL have decided that enough is enough – UCL cannot continue to raise the

rent in halls as it wishes, ignoring the rapidly decreasing level of affordability. Living in halls now is almost impossible without financial assistance on top of your student loan.

UCL cannot pretend to offer equal opportunities to students from all sections of society when the sky-high cost of living constitutes an unofficial entry requirement based on your financial position.

Asking nicely won't make UCL accommodation affordable – your help is required to run the campaign to hold UCL to account. Join us for this year's first meeting on Wednesday, 7th October and for more information check out [facebook.com/uclcuttherent](https://www.facebook.com/uclcuttherent)

JEREMY CORBYN: WHAT NEXT FOR THE LEFT?

OMAR RAI – STUDENT AND LABOUR MEMBER

In May of this year, the Tories managed to gain an overall majority in the general election and got ready to continue in power for five more years, with plans of implementing even more devastating cuts to public services and an unrelenting austerity agenda.

Now imagine if someone had said at the time that a few months later, the Labour party would be led by the vice-chair of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, a patron of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and a man who had voted against the previous Labour government hundreds of times. Imagine if someone had said that this man would have as his Shadow Chancellor someone who described one of his hobbies as "generally fomenting the overthrow of capitalism". It would probably have sounded somewhat surprising.

But that is of course exactly what has happened.

After over a hundred thousand people joined the Labour Party, as well as many registering as supporters, Jeremy Corbyn, initially quite the outsider with some bookies offering odds of 100-1 for his winning, was elected by a landslide on a mandate to oppose austerity and change the direction that Labour had been going down for many years.

Corbyn has chosen as his Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell, someone who has not only had a track record of opposing Tory

attacks on working people, but who also has supported student protests in the past. This included visiting student occupations at UCL in 2010 and 2012 to show his solidarity!

There has been a somewhat refreshing renaissance within the Labour Party and in its relation to the government it was always meant to oppose. After a majority of Labour MPs shamefully abstaining on the Tory Welfare Bill, we are now in a position where every single Labour MP voted against the Tories' ultra-restrictive Trade Union Bill and the party is now promising to support strikes in future. The new Labour leader's anti-austerity politics carried over also into education and debt, where he promised to end tuition fees, leading him to be very popular with student voters and being officially supported by the National Campaign Against Fees and Cuts.

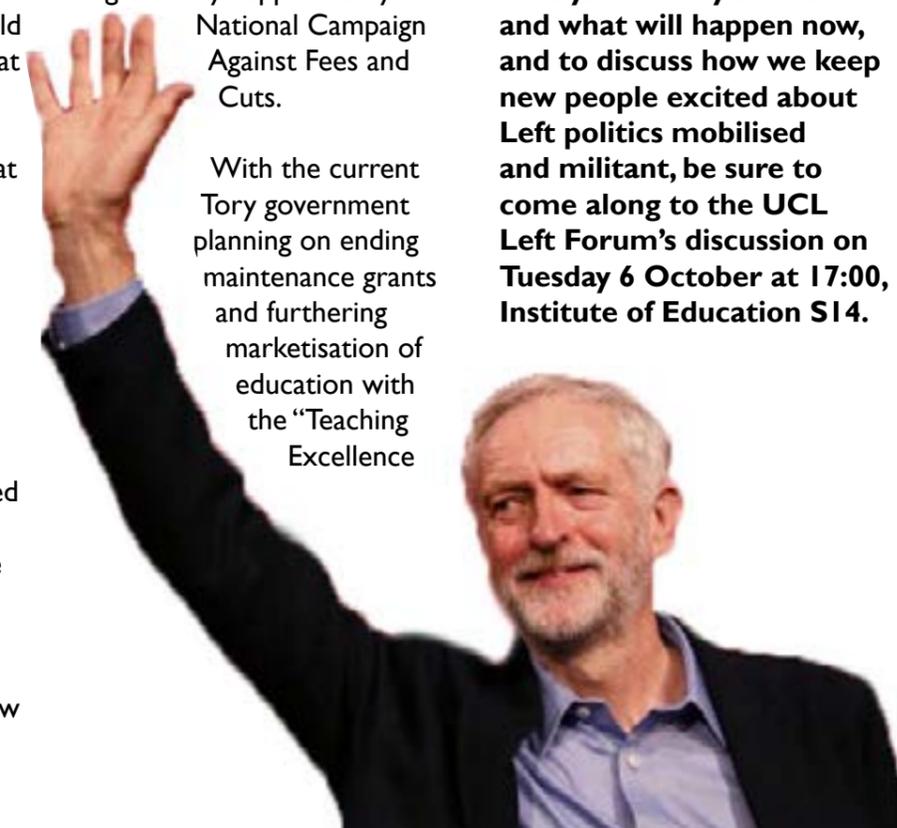
With the current Tory government planning on ending maintenance grants and furthering marketisation of education with the "Teaching Excellence

Framework", this has come as encouraging news.

But this honeymoon period can't last forever. On September 20, various youth and student groups as well as individual Labour party members that had been supportive of the campaign to get Corbyn elected came together to set up a new organisation, Labour Young Socialists, in order to build on the momentum from the campaign and to further socialist ideas and democracy within Young Labour and Labour Students as well as the wider party.

If you're a Labour member, get involved with Labour Young Socialists as well as your local CLP and fight for the socialist policies that Labour desperately needs.

To hear more about what Corbyn's victory means and what will happen now, and to discuss how we keep new people excited about Left politics mobilised and militant, be sure to come along to the UCL Left Forum's discussion on Tuesday 6 October at 17:00, Institute of Education S14.



WHAT IS UCL DEFEND EDUCATION?

We're a group based at UCL, campaigning for free, funded, accessible education, and for social justice and freedom more broadly. We want educational institutions to be liberatory and democratic, not tied to serving the interests of business and the government, and we fight for decent conditions for students and education workers. We resist cuts, marketization and privatisation, not only in education but other public services, and we oppose sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia and ableism.

Our group came out of 2010's mass occupations and protests against tuition fee increases. Since then, we've helped Stratford residents defeat our university's attempt to bulldoze their homes, played our part in the national campaign that halted the privatisation of student debt, and supported campus workers striking for decent pay. We are part of a democratic network of student activists across the country through our affiliation to the National Campaign Against Fees & Cuts.

We are a democratic, open group for anyone who agrees with these goals. We meet weekly at 6pm on Mondays. Come and get organised!

CALENDAR

JEREMY CORBYN: WHAT NEXT FOR THE LEFT?

UCL Left Forum & UCLU Labour
5:00pm, Tues 6 Oct, Institute of Education Bar S14

BUCK'S FIZZ SOCIALISM

UCLU Labour
7:00pm, Tues 6 Oct, School of Slavonic & Eastern European Studies

WINNING THE RENT CUT

UCL, Cut The Rent!
6:00pm, Weds 7 Oct, venue TBC

GRANT CUTS, RISING FEES & HOUSING CRISIS: UCL DEFEND EDUCATION LAUNCH WITH LESBIANS & GAYS SUPPORT THE MINERS

UCL Defend Education
6:00pm, Thurs 8 Oct, Kathleen Kenyon Room, Lewis' Building

PINTS & POLITICS: UCL LEFTY WELCOME DRINKS

7:00pm, Fri 9 Oct, Institute of Education SU Bar

WTF IS GOING ON?: THE FIGHT FOR EDUCATION

UCL Defend Education & UCLU Labour
5:00pm, Mon 12 Oct, Institute of Education Bar S14

#GRANTSNOTDEBT DEMONSTRATION AT DEPARTMENT FOR BUSINESS, INNOVATION & SKILLS

11:00am, Weds 14 Oct, meet UCL Quad

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATION FOR FREE EDUCATION

12:00pm, Weds 4 Nov
Meet Malet Street

