

Let's rise again to defend all our public services, let's become the mosquito in the ear of this government!

Ros Hanmer

During my twenty years experience of Further and Higher Education I have understood the ethos of 'widening participation' on a profound level. My major encounter with this concept was in the mission of London Metropolitan University formally North London University and before this North London Polytechnic.

The mission of these educational establishments came to hold for me a place in my heart because their prime objective of education was the student experience and the unlocking of the true potential of every student with the aim to achieve diversity in student population and to enable students to have a voice in the decision-making within their learning environment. If we allow the ethos of 'widening participation' to be lost, the youth of this country will have no future.

This government's aim is to dissolve and destroy our world-wide renowned education system. It is their objective to break down the building blocks of education by removing the funding available, by setting extortionate fees for students thus eroding the assurance that everyone has equal access to a lifetime of high quality education and thus enabling and maintaining a stable and fulfilled society.

Access to education and its relevance to individuals should not be class-based or profit driven. The White Paper title 'Students at the Heart of the System' is ironic in its naming, given that students are now referred to as customers within the business speak adopted by higher educational managers. The proposals in the white paper disrupt and undermine our global standing as world class in our delivery of higher education. These profit driven proposals will drive down quality as the focus of our educational system.

The massive debts students will be saddled with as being pointed out by many unions is contradictory in that the governments supposed thinking in cutting public funding is to pay off the national debt, yet at the same time happily transferring debt to students and encouraging them to borrow more is the hypocrisy and foundation of this government's policies. Their stance is another ideological attack to destroy the working class and the most vulnerable people within our society taking away their self esteem and true potential as citizens of our country.

We must fight back and become the mosquito in the ear of this government, we must continue to strengthen our resolve by becoming new super heroes, we need to call on our unions and universities to polish their shields of social justice and form our ranks under the banner of 'Captain Relentless' by refusing, as Milly Williamson (UCU) suggests, to use or accept the language of 'consumer choice' that is cloaked in its vagueness and concealment of the truth.

We are being attacked on all fronts such as education, pensions and the National Health Service, not forgetting the erosion of our protective health and safety rules and our hard earned terms and conditions of employment. All these things traditional fought for and successfully achieved over the decades. In defending education for all we must remember that the youth of this country are our future and our responsibility, so please keep having dialogue with friends and family and explain the real issues.

It is a right for everyone to have a decent education not just a privilege for the few. It is a right for everyone to be taken care of in their old age not just a few it is a right for everyone to have decent working conditions and affordable social housing. So let's take back the shield that belongs to the

people and not to governments who continue to capitulate to the regime of the Thatcher free-market policies.

Lets rise again to defend all our public services, to defend our educational system that encourages our youth to grow and develop without limitation. Let's use the educational philosophy that bases its ideas and teachings on the highest seat of learning, a cradle of a new culture for our youth who are our future founded on the premises of continued widening participation where their true potential can come to the forth, not an education driven for profit.