

# Join the mass lobby to defend ESOL

At the Houses of Parliament on Wednesday 28 February

Once again, in their recently announced plans to force parents off benefits and into work – no doubt for poverty pay – New Labour are attacking and scapegoating the poorest in society.

The recent UNICEF report showed British children to be the poorest and most insecure of the 21 richest nations. 16% live below the poverty line. In ten years New Labour have utterly failed to address the growing inequality and fracturing of society.

## Funding hypocrisy

Likewise they claim they want to reduce the social exclusion of refugees and migrant communities yet they plan to cut support to asylum seekers and migrants. And from April such people must pass an English test to win permanent leave to stay here!

These cuts are part of diverting funds to 16-19 vocational training to satisfy business needs and away from Adult Education, through which many people find a second educational opportunity.

Yet there were 700,000 fewer adults in education last year than the year before. It's not true that adult education classes are 'only recreational'.

## Private profits, not people's needs

The government and the Learning and Skills Council want colleges to be conveyor belts for 'customers' to gain the skills big business needs, and little else. Courses become 'products': unprofitable 'product lines' get axed.

*If ever the mismatch between people's needs and the profit motive was crystal clear, it's with ESOL.*

Many colleges have long waiting lists for ESOL, perhaps 40,000 people, yet tutors are sacked, classes closed and learners turned away.

## The money's there – but the will isn't

UCU Left says the money's there – millions are squandered every day on the Iraq war. Every year we see obscene bonuses and pay rises to City slickers and 'top people'. New Labour has earmarked billions for a new Trident programme. The money's there: the political will isn't.

Following the launch of the Save ESOL campaign at UCU headquarters in January, the campaign has grown across the country. The national lobby of Parliament is the next big step in the campaign.

In many colleges lecturers and community activists are mobilising to defend ESOL provision. At Bradford College the ACE branch is organising a local

protest with students, MPs and community organisations in the city centre on 28th. They have also got college management to agree to support staff travelling to London for the lobby.

In Birmingham there's a public campaign involving lecturers, asylum seekers and community organisations planning local activities and booking coaches for the lobby.

We can do the same in loads of colleges up and down the country. We can make the lobby on 28th February big, loud and effective. Get College managements on board where we can. Let's hold our MPs to account. So far over 100 MPs have signed an Early Day Motion demanding restoration of ESOL funding. The lobby can pressurise many more to do the same. But a mass lobby of Parliament has to be just the start of a national campaign that can force New Labour to end their assault on ESOL.

See [www.ucu.org.uk](http://www.ucu.org.uk) for more details of the Save ESOL campaign and the lobby on 28th February.

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