

UCU Left for a fighting, democratic union

Defend ESOL provision and Adult Education **National Action Needed**

The decision to set up a national campaign to fight the government's plans to end free ESOL, English classes has proved absolute-ly right.

It has been vindicated both by the 1,000 strong mass lobby of parliament in February and today's marches and rally.

The opposition to the attack on ESOL is gathering momentum as swingeing cuts and redundancies in Adult Education come in its wake. But a union strategy based on lobbying and pinning hopes

on enough MPs signing the Early Day Motion does not go far enough.

The attack on free universal ESOL and now the more generalised assault on Adult and Further education show the need for a co-ordinated national campaign and a national demonstration.

The regional actions and today's protest show there is a basis for this.

We have already won some concessions around ESOL, but activists are right to say these

are not enough and insist it stays absolutely free. The government claim, that the changes to ESOL funding is not intended to cut provision but prioritise those most in need.

This is dishonest and cynical. LSCs have been instructed to set targets for level 1 and 2 ESOL training which if not reached means a loss of funding, however, to reach them requires cut backs of provision at lower language levels. We know and so must they, that it's a lose, lose situation.

ESOL Cuts are a 'Racist Policy'

On the ESOL front, Paul Mackney rightly calls this 'a racist policy'.

Removing this entitlement is an act of gross hypocrisy from a government that claims to put social cohesion at the top of its political agenda. These moves, picking on asylum seekers and migrant workers can only serve to strengthen the poisonous ideology of the far right standing in the May elections.

Asylum seekers need access to ESOL and further education from the time of arrival not after 6 months.

Migrant workers too need full access to ESOL. They have been responsible for the UK's soaring economic growth and the boost to corporate profits, a fact not lost on Digby Jones Gordon Brown's Skills Envoy, who has said forcing them to pay for their own classes is 'a damaging retrograde step in the nations pursuit of an integrated productive workforce.'

Today's marches in north east London are in the very area where the 2012 Olympic games are supposed to create jobs and opportunities in boroughs. The recent UNICEF report shows British children to be the poorest and most deprived of the richest 21 nations with 16% living below the poverty line.

Now we find the population of these areas do not have the requisite skills to get these jobs. This is because, as the head of NIACE says, Adult education has been devastated over the last two years and lost a million learners.

No wonder there's a skills deficit for the Olympics.

For so many years adult education has been acclaimed as 'the jewel in the crown of education'. That is why we must say 'NO' to more and deeper cuts to Adult education and 'YES' to a national conference, a strategy for a national campaign and a national demonstration.

Stop the privatisation of Education

Language is not just the target for fees and privatisation in Adult and Further Education.

In Higher Education too, language centres are treated as easy targets by privateers, with companies like KAPLAN, INTO and others, wanting bridgeheads for future privatisation of other areas. That is why lecturers across ALL sectors have a common interest in each others' sectors and need to join UCU Left to build a broad, fighting union to oppose the neo-liberal offensive.