Quotes Of The Month

‘The problem is that I have signed two pledges, one on tuition fees and one on the coalition, which have turned out to be mutually exclusive pledges. I will have to break one of them’

Don Foster MP

‘I wouldn’t vote for it because I believed that with the higher rate that could go in some cases up to £9,000 a year, that could put people off applying to university. The problem with the system is the perception rather than the reality’

Simon Hughes MP
SPECIAL BRANCH MEETING

TO STRIKE OR NOT TO STRIKE?
THAT IS THE QUESTION!

SAME MEETING TWICE:
NA.G02 Tuesday 25th 12-1
ST.G17 on Wednesday 26th 1-2

An opportunity for all members of UCUATBSU to discuss the issues around the forthcoming UCU National ballot on Industrial action over the employers refusal to negotiate over pay and redundancies. The agenda will aim to cover:

- The national vote on industrial action.
- A UCUATBSU resolution on Saturday working.
- A UCUATBSU resolution to secure enhanced redundancy terms for staff at BSU.

This is your chance to influence the UCUATBSU policy on these crucial issues that affect your own terms & conditions and the future of HE in the UK.

WE URGE ALL MEMBERS TO ATTEND

http://ucuatbsu.wordpress.com/
RESULT: CHILDCARE VOUCHERS

After representations from the union, the University has agreed to introduce the childcare voucher scheme. Crucial in achieving this result was the work done by Katie Akerman in putting together a case for the scheme. Union reps made it absolutely clear to the management that we could see no possible grounds for their refusing to introduce the scheme and that the union would initiate a campaign to shame the University if they did respond to our request favourably. When asked why they had not introduced the scheme when just about every other University in the country had, management were unable to tell us.

FASCINATING FACT

We are all aware that a history of student hooliganism has been a necessary preparation for high office in the Conservative Party: Cameron and the Bullingdon Boys trashing restaurants. What is less well known is Nick Clegg’s dark past of public school hooliganism. While on an exchange in Germany, young Cleggers and a pal got drunk and apparently destroyed part of an eminent Professor’s irreplaceable cacti collection. When asked why he had done it, he replied, because I promised not to! Some unkind journalists have actually suggested that he made the whole episode up in an attempt to make himself more interesting.

REVIEW: BE AFRAID, BE VERY AFRAID!

The Last Professor: The Corporate University and the Fate of the Humanities

Frank Donoghue

Fordham University Press

The Conservative-LibDem government is engaged in an attempt to Americanise British higher Education. They intend to rollback the Humanities, to turn Universities into businesses and to ensure that HE becomes the propagator of entrepreneurial values. At least a part of the sector is going to become involved in training rather than education. Their chosen instrument is the draconian increase in student fees and the even more draconian cut in funding for the Humanities.

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What they are after is a tripartite model with the elite institutions at the top (the equivalent of the US Ivy League), beneath them institutions that can still be meaningfully called Universities but that are increasingly becoming teaching institutions (the equivalent of US State Universities), and at the bottom the community college and for-profit institutions.

The introduction of this bottom layer will be a significant development in Britain, but the government has made its intention to foster this layer absolutely clear. FE colleges and for-profit providers will be encouraged to offer two year Ordinary Degree courses on the American model. In fact, Vince Cable actually told a meeting of Vice Chancellors that the government expected competition from for-profit institutions to drive some existing Universities to the wall and that they were quite relaxed about this. Five Universities were believed to be in danger. The rise of the community college and the for-profit ‘university’ in the States has been accompanied by the closure of Liberal Arts colleges, and the same is likely to happen here, not tomorrow or the day after, but over the next decade.

Frank Donoghue’s *The Last Professor* provides us with ample warning of what is coming down the track. When he writes of *The Last Professor*, what he means in the British context, is a lecturer with a permanent contract or with the possibility of getting one, that is either with tenure or on the tenure track. As he shows such people are a declining breed in the US where the marketisation of the academy has led to a great expansion in the numbers of teaching staff employed on temporary contracts. He writes that only 35% of US HE staff are tenured or on the tenure track, and the percentage is falling. Even at Harvard, for example 45% of the academic staff are not tenured or on the tenure track.

To a considerable extent the deterioration of academic conditions and pay that this casualisation inevitably involves has been driven by the rise of the for-profit ‘universities’ and the community colleges that really only offer training. Whereas in 1990 there were hardly any for-profit ‘universities’, by 2003 there were 2,383, a third of the total number of HE institutions. Some of them are huge and very profitable indeed. The University of Phoenix boasted 300,000 students, for example (it did not boast of its 16% completion rate). Much of its teaching is distance learning, so that as Donoghue points out, it is ‘neither a University nor in Phoenix’. These institutions have worsened conditions everywhere… and they don’t teach the Humanities.

According to Donoghue, US big business has always been hostile to the Humanities, but for a while, during the Cold War, it was felt it was felt that it was necessary to show that the West had a civilisation worth defending against Communism, so their expansion was tolerated, even encouraged. With the end of the Cold War things have changed. Between 1970 and 2001, the proportion of US students doing English degrees fell from 7.6% to 4%, the proportion doing Social Sciences and History fell from 18.4% to 10%. On the other hand, the proportion doing Business and Management rose from 13.6% to 21.7%. This turnaround has been achieved by increases in fees and the government are hoping to accomplish the same here.

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For many US University and College managements, ‘the ideal college or university is one without permanent faculty’. This has been achieved in some two year degree institutions where on average 65% of staff are casually employed. In the for-profit ‘universities’ there are institutions with no permanent teaching staff and overall 90% of staff are part-time, employed course by course. Staff are hired, given the text book and told to teach the course. A survey showed that 12% of these casualised academics had three jobs or more. The academic labour market has been dragged downwards by these low-pay, no pension, no holiday pay, appalling conditions, jobs. A 2002 survey revealed that in the US 33% of academic staff have no office space at all…presumably hot-desking would be an improvement!

This downward drag affects everyone. At Texas A+M University, not an elite institution, but still a major state University, the management have introduced an individual profit and loss account for all staff. In 2008-2009, for example, an eminent Professor, Chester Dunning, was costing the University $112,138, but only earning $82,275 in paid student teaching hours (a loss of $26,863) whereas Stephanie Juarez, someone without tenure, cost only $45,447 and earned $113,960 in paid student teaching hours (a profit of $68,523). The logic of this has not escaped sharp-eyed managers throughout US Universities.

Donoghue regards the decline of the Humanities as irreversible. The day of the teacher-researcher, except at elite institutions, is, he believes, coming to an end. This is the model the government are in the process of establishing in Britain. For more and more students, it will replace education with training, and they will be paying more for it. A liberal education in the Humanities will be reserved for the children of the well-off and the rich. Just like the good old days.

BROWNED OFF

Lord Browne: A Profile

British Higher Education is being completely reshaped in the light of the Browne Review. The deliberate intention is to remodel the system along American lines, with the Humanities shrinking and Business Studies and similar subjects expanding. It is worth remembering that the review was set up by New Labour with the personnel appointed to produce exactly that outcome. There was no student representation on the panel (something the LibDems actually condemned at the time-they were still after student votes) and no staff representation. As is well known, the review was headed by one of New Labour’s favourite businessmen, Lord Browne (he was ennobled as one of New Labour’s ‘people’s peers’ in 2001), but what is less well-known is that it also include, along with two stooge Vice Chancellors, two representatives of the US consultancy firm, McKinsey and Co.
New Labour relied very heavily on McKinsey for advice during its time in office, for example they commissioned a report on the NHS from them that recommended 137,000 job cuts, a report that was suppressed with the General Election approaching.

The Browne report has McKinsey written all over it. Indeed, it would have been better described as ‘the McKinsey report’. There can be no serious doubt that if New Labour had won the General Election, students would still have been confronted with an increase in fees although probably not the obscene increase the Coalition has introduced. The attack on the Humanities would have certainly taken place, but, once again, probably not as ferociously as it has under the Coalition. It was after all, New Labour that transferred HE from the Education to the Business Dept (this was what Sherlock Holmes used to call a clue) and it was Lord Mandelson who appointed his good friend Lord Browne to head up the review. It is clear that the intention was, from the very beginning, to transform British Higher Education, to Americanise it, make it more entrepreneurial, more business oriented. The increase in student fees was to be the instrument whereby this was accomplished.

What of Lord Browne himself? First of all, he is a very modest man as can be seen from the subtitle of his autobiography, ‘An Inspirational Memoir From A Visionary Leader’. He was head of BP and was, as is well-known, very close to new Labour (BP was apparently known as ‘Blair Petroleum’ in the City). This closeness included making private jets available for the use of New Labour dignitaries and providing well-paid jobs for selected individuals, for example, Anji Hunter, Blair’s closest aide.

Without any doubt, Browne transformed BP from a company in decline into one of the giants of the oil industry, something which earned him all the plaudits a businessman can accumulate. And, of course, he was fabulously well paid: in 2004 his total remuneration was £5.7 million.

Much of his success was the result of ruthless cost-cutting to drive up shareholder value. According to journalist, Tom Bower, Browne ‘presided over a corporate court filled with sycophants and where there was an unhealthy glorification of a boss who enjoyed unlimited expenses…with even his teddy bear being flown at the company’s expense from California to London’. Not necessarily the first man one would think of to review HE funding, but what do we know about it?

Browne was to attempt to give BP a ‘greenwash’, to project it as ecologically friendly, as having concern for the environment in its genes. This was contradicted by its actual record where Browne’s cost-cutting agenda produced disaster. In March 2005 an explosion at BP’s Texas City refinery killed fifteen workers, because of, as Bower puts it, ‘BP’s negligent maintenance’. This was followed in March 2006 by the Prudhoe Bay oil spillage in Alaska, a disaster caused, Bower writes, by ‘BP’s failure to prevent corrosion of pipelines. By cutting maintenance, employing cheap sub-contractors and covering up reports warning of possible danger, 6,400 barrels of oil polluted two acres of pristine tundra’. BP was fined £70 million. The Deepwater catastrophe in 2010, the worst oil spillage in US history with eleven dead in the original explosion, even though it took place after his resignation from BP, is best seen as merely the culminating achievement of the regime that Browne established.

After the Alaskan spillage, Browne was coming to be seen as a liability and the BP board had decided that he should retire in 2008 when he reached sixty with a retirement package of £32 million to help him cope. He was trying to fight this when his ex-lover, Jeff Chevalier, approached the Mail on Sunday with the story of his

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His attempt to prevent the publication of the story forced his early resignation. Browne lied to a High Court judge, Mr Justice Eady, claiming that he had met Chevalier while jogging, whereas, in fact, he had met him on a website, ‘suitedandbooted.com’. He subsequently claimed that he had lied to keep his sexuality private, but it is much more likely that it was to prevent revelations concerning his life-style, the private dinners he had with Blair, Brown and Mandelson and BP business. Eady condemned Browne for his ‘willingness to tell a deliberate lie in court, persisted in for about two weeks’, and, also, for his casual attempt to blacken the reputation of his ex-lover with unfounded accusations of blackmail, alcoholism and drug-taking. Eady made absolutely clear that Browne had ‘thereby committed a criminal contempt of court or, perhaps attempted to pervert the course of justice’. Such a serious offence would normally deserve a custodial sentence. Once again, not necessarily the first man one would think of to review HE funding, but what do we know about it?

Astonishingly, Eady decided not to refer Browne to the Director of Public Prosecutions on the grounds that the damage to his reputation was punishment enough. This was a mistake. People like Browne can buy reputation. He was so damaged that his rich friends subsequently had him appointed chairman of the Tate and his New Labour friends (some of them overlapped with his rich friends) chose him to Americanise British Higher Education. And he has never looked back. Today, Lord Browne is the head of a major private equity firm, Riverstone Holdings and David Cameron has appointed him to a new post, Non-Executive Director at the Cabinet Office to lead the campaign to cut government spending. On his past record, we can look forward to Whitehall’s first oil spillage.

NATIONAL DEMONSTRATIONS TO DEFEND UK UNIVERSITIES
Saturday 29th January
London & Manchester

We have managed to arrange a joint coach to the student and staff education demo in London on Saturday 29 - next weekend (details below or on attached flyer).

It is going from the University of the West of England in Bristol, but it can pick up people in Bath first. The way to reserve a place is to email uwe.better.together@gmail.com or to phone Tim Nelson on 07591143131.

Continued…
Education Activist Network

Students, workers, parents, unemployed, pensioners...

UNITE FOR EDUCATION, FIGHT EVERY CUT

March on Parliament
Sat 29 Jan, Assemble 12 noon
ULU, Malet St, London WC1E

After eight months in office the Cameron-Clegg pact faces mass opposition in the streets. Hundreds of thousands of students have protested, walked-out of their schools and colleges, or occupied their universities. The vote to treble tuition fees and scrap EMA might have passed through parliament, but the fight for education goes on.

The attacks on education and young people are part of a wider assault on workers and the public sector that must be resisted. A record one million under 25s are now unemployed and hundreds of thousands of public sector jobs, as well as pensions and benefits, are under threat. Students have paved the way for a movement which can beat the Con-Dem austerity agenda. We call on workers, parents, pensioners and the unemployed to join us on the 29th to win a future for all.

Called by Education Activist Network and National Campaign Against Cuts and Fees.

Supported by UCU, PCS, UNISON HE Committee, London Student Assembly

http://educationactivistnetwork.wordpress.com
twitter.com/edactivistnet • educationactivist@gmail.com
**In The Chair**

Branch Chair John Newsinger outlines his understanding of where we are now.

WHERE WE ARE

Liverpool Hope University has announced that it is cutting a hundred jobs, perhaps as many as sixty academic posts, in order to save some £6 million. The University is apparently responding to the government’s plans to shift teacher training into schools, although as the union has pointed out it is still not entirely clear what Michael Gove actually intends.

There is a lot more of this to come. Particularly damaging will be the period between the ending of funding for the Humanities and when the fees increase comes into effect. The government has said that it expects the gap to be covered by efficiency savings, but this is shorthand for redundancy, voluntary or otherwise, and for those staff who remain, bigger classes and more teaching. At Bath Spa, the Vice Chancellor has assured the union that the University has the reserves to carry us over the gap period and that this is the intention. Other institutions are likely to be in serious trouble, however. Most serious for Bath Spa in the short term is likely to be changes that Gove might make to teacher training and whatever decision the government makes about post-graduate funding. If Universities have to charge the full cost of Masters degrees, then in the words of Les Ebdon, VC at Bedfordshire University, ‘it looks bleaker than the Arctic in winter’.

In the longer term, it seems clear that the government intends Humanities to shrink, to either become much more ‘vocational’ in the Universities or be altogether replaced by vocational ‘ordinary degrees’ taught in FE Colleges, some 6th Forms or by new for-profit providers. The consequences of this will be horrendous, with students paying more than they do now for what will really be training rather than education, with staff pay and conditions deteriorating dramatically, casualisation increasing, and the Humanities becoming the preserve of the well-to-do. As Vince Cable put it some existing Universities will not be able to compete in this new market-driven environment and are expected to go under. It is clear that HE is going to change dramatically and not for the better and certainly not to our advantage.

There is also the long term problem of bad student debt. The government has itself estimated that 25% of students will repay none of their debt (other estimates go as high as a third) and Nick Clegg said recently that most students will never repay all their debt. This is a subprime method of funding HE and one cannot help feeling that we are in the hands of snake-oil salesmen. Ten or fifteen years down the road there is a massive funding crisis waiting to happen as the accumulation of bad debt reaches crisis dimensions.

Continued…
Where Bath Spa will be in all this remains to be seen, but certainly there are going to be great changes and realistically it seems inevitable that the University will shrink.

More immediately, we are confronted by a pay freeze and a serious attack on our pensions, where the government expects us to pay considerably more for considerably less. There has never been a greater need for a strong union, both nationally and domestically. Supporting national action to defend jobs and pensions is absolutely vital, but it is also an important way to make the union stronger at Bath Spa. It seems certain that in the new world that the government are bringing into existence a concerted attack will be made on national pay bargaining. Hopefully such an attack would fail, but if it succeeds then our pay and conditions will depend entirely on our strength locally. We urgently need more people to become involved in the union if we are to protect ourselves from what is inevitably coming down the road.

On the plus side, it would be completely wrong to assume that the government will be able to succeed in what it wants. It is worth remembering that when Mrs Thatcher took on the private sector unions, she took them on one at a time. David Cameron, one of Thatcher's children as he proudly proclaimed himself, has forgotten that lesson and is taking on the entire public sector at the same time, including the police, and at the head of a Coalition government reliant on the LibDems. Without any doubt, the LibDems are the weak link. While the party is, at the moment, in the hands of the Orange book Thatcherites, many party members are going to become increasingly unhappy as government cuts bite deeper and deeper. The prospect of electoral catastrophe in order to prop up a rightwing Conservative government is going to cause the LiDems serious problems. There is every reason to believe that the Coalition will not last.

As far as the union is concerned, we are not alone. On the question of pensions, for example, we are fighting alongside the teacher trade unions so that the government is in for a serious fight and can be beaten. As it becomes increasingly unpopular and faces growing opposition, the government, even if it survives, will be forced to retreat, but it will only retreat where it has met opposition. Those who don’t fight will just be walked over.

One last point on the government’s funding decision that has largely gone unnoticed is that the subjects that have by and large lost funding have a majority of women students while those that have kept funding have a majority of men students. Funny that!

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