DEFEND BRYAN SIMPSON

DEFEND THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

The recent wave of student protests has shown the mass dissatisfaction over the Tory-Liberal Democrat plans to scrap the Education Maintenance Allowance for school pupils and increase tuition fees to up to £9,000 per year for university students.

The Guardian newspaper reported that 52,000 people joined the NUS/UCU organised protest on 10th November 2010 against the cuts. The anger and sense of sheer injustice that was felt by a broad layer of students, school pupils and staff was shown clearly on that day with the protest at Tory Party HQ, at Millbank Tower.

The proposed changes to university funding are grossly unfair and regressive. They will lead to an eventual marketization of the education system with only the rich being able to afford quality higher education and deter poorer students from even applying in the first place from fear of being saddled with massive and unaffordable debts.

The occupation of Tory HQ at Millbank Tower has unleashed waves of discontent around the country, with hundreds of thousands of students exercising their democratic right to protest in occupations and demonstrations around the country from Dundee to Plymouth.
However 100's of arrests have been made following these demonstrations. 22-year-old Bryan Simpson from Strathclyde University was arrested at his home in Glasgow in a dawn raid by police officers at 6am on 24th November 2010. This was prior to a fresh set of planned demonstrations on the 24th November which saw 130,000 college, university and school students take to the streets throughout the UK, including in Glasgow. Bryan was questioned on suspicion of violent disorder, which could lead to a 5 year term of imprisonment. He did not harm or injure anyone. He did not threaten anyone, nor did he commit any criminal damage. He denies any accusations of violent disorder.

We, the undersigned, consider the arrest of student protestors to be a disproportionate response which victimises individuals who are expressing their democratic right to protest in the name of defending education.

- We call on any charges against Bryan Simpson and all those students denying charges to be dropped.
- We pledge support for the Defend the Right to Protest Campaign.
- We denounce the Coalition government's education cuts as regressive and deeply unjust

Initial signatories include **Aamer Anwar,** Human rights lawyer, **Alan Bailey**, LGBT Officer, National Union of Students (open place), **Alex Callinicos,** Professor of European Studies, King's College London, **Billy Hayes,** General-Secretary, Communication Workers Union, **Clare Solomon,** President, University of London Student Union, **Chine Mieville,** Author, **Colin Hansen,** President, Glasgow North College Student Union, **Estelle Hart,** Woman's Officer, National Union of Students (Wales), **Gareth Pierce QC, George Galloway,** Broadcaster & former Respect Party MP, **Graeme McIver,** National-Secretary, Solidarity Party, **Hanif Leylabi,** LGBT Committee, National Union of Students, **Iain McWhirter,** Edinburgh University Rector & Journalist, **Ian Hamilton QC, Imran Khan QC, Jerry Hicks,** General-Secretary candidate, UNITE, **Joanna Gilmore,** University of Manchester UCU Exec (pc), **John McDonnell MP, John Pilger,** Journalist, Author & Documentary Film-maker, **John Rees,** National Officer, Stop the War Coalition, **Katy Clark MP, Len McCluskey,** General-Secretary, UNITE, **Liam Burns,** President, National Union of Students (Scotland), **Lindsey German,** Convenor, Stop the War Coalition, **Mark Bergfeld,** NEC, National Union of Students (pc), **Marion Hersh,** NEC, University and College Union (pc), **Martin Mayer,** National Chair, UNITE United Left, **Michael Mansfield QC, Mike Gonzalez,** Professor of Latin American Studies, Glasgow University, **Nick Grant,** NEC, National Union of Teachers, **Noam Chomsky,** Author & Institute Professor of Linguistics, MIT, **Paul Brandon,** Chair, Right to Work Campaign, **Phil Whyte,** President, University of Strathclyde Student Union, **Rhianna Humphrey,** President, Stirling University Student Association, **Roz Foyer**, Scottish Regional Organiser, UNITE, **Sarah Gibbons,** President, Glasgow Metropolitan College Student Union, **Tony Benn,** Former Labour Minister & President, Stop the War Coalition, **Tony Woodley,** Former General-Secretary, UNITE, **Vicki Baars,** LGBT Officer, National Union of Students (Woman's Officer), **Weyman Bennett,** Joint Secretary, Unite Against Fascism

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