

# For an Autumn of Resistance

The National Union of Students (NUS) has announced the date for its national demonstration against education cuts, tuition fee rises and student debt as November, 21<sup>st</sup> 2012. The demonstration was called on the back of a substantial vote at April national conference that fed off the mood, both in the room and within the movement: students want to take on the government over its Further and Higher education policy and over austerity.

A lot has changed since the last national demonstration organised by the NUS back in November 2010. That 'hot autumn' gave the trade union movement the confidence to march half a million strong in March that subsequent year, and strike over 2 million strong in November of the same year. The reciprocal relationship that students and the trade unions have must be the thread that runs through our preparations for the upcoming term.

To merely approach this November as a 're-run' would be a cruel parody of the rage and anger that was shown on that demonstration back in November 2010. The vital experiences of both Chile and Quebec have shown how far students can go. In Quebec, a proposed raise to tuition fees has led to an explosion of student militancy which has seen over 100 days of education strikes and campus shutdowns. For our student movement, the bar has been raised.

In 2010, the students alone brought the Government to within twenty-one votes of defeat and showed that only a few months into their term, there was a visible and angry section of the British youth that were totally opposed to the Coalition. But since 2010, the trade union movement has stepped onto the streets and onto picket lines to show that same opposition to the Coalition government. That is why students' unions and the NUS should be a part of the TUC October 20<sup>th</sup> protest, 'For a Future that Works'.

We cannot wait for the new term to begin before unions start the preparations for this autumn. The work must start now to book coaches and form organising committees for the autumn demonstrations on our campuses. Our Unions need to be central to cultivating a culture of resistance on our campuses.

We know that a one off protest will not be enough to win – to do that, we need to fuse our movement to the trade unions, building ever stronger links, as students did when

they joined picket lines and rallies on November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2011. We will need to work with unofficial grassroots organisations to organise and reach those who traditionally are left behind by NUS. We will need days of action, in the lead up to November 21<sup>st</sup>, to cultivate that resistance and set in motion the process that can make sure that Education is not the defining debate in the 2015 election, but the defining grievance that leads to our movement bringing down the Government.

**Nathan Bolton**

**President Elect, University of Essex Students' Union**