

Section 5: A Voice for Change

Introduction

NUS and students' unions have an important role to play in the wider community. As a progressive section of society, we have a moral obligation to work with other voluntary and non- governmental organisations to challenge inequality and human rights abuses. We must retain our proud tradition of being an internationalist movement, speak out for our values - a fair and democratic society. We must also be at forefront of the campaign to shape the future of the UK. We must re-energise our efforts to encourage students and young people to play an active role as citizens of their local communities.

We must also speak out for thousands of students in the work place with little protection and representation. We must continue to work with the trade union movement and ensure every student at work knows their rights and that they are adequately protected from unscrupulous employers.

Working Students

The vast majority of students are now in paid employment and for many it is in the service industry with rigid rules and little representation. Many students are forced to miss vital lectures and tutorial support because their employers refuse to give them time off. Whether it is students on placement or paid jobs, they too need a voice and the protection from unscrupulous employers. I will continue to support the ongoing work with the TUC to provide representation for students at work. I will also work with students' unions to ensure the jobs advertised meet the expectations of our movement. However, we must also continue to lobby government for more student support so students can work fewer hours and spend more time securing decent qualifications and developing themselves through extra curricular activities.

Leading on Equality

Students and NUS have always been at the forefront of campaigns to promote equality and challenge discrimination and bigotry on and off campuses. Throughout my time in the student movement, I have been actively campaigning against the BNP and defending the no-platform policy. During the last General Election, I was leafleting against the BNP and the Far Right in many constituencies. The fight for equality is not just the fight of liberation campaigns, we all have a responsibility, and as President, I will work with them and with community groups to challenge discriminatory laws like Section-28.

I will work with the Voluntary Sector to identify funding for students' unions to comply with the Disabilities Discrimination Act on access. The Human Rights Act has for the

first time provided protection and new rights for citizens. But it has also provided opportunities for certain groups to exploit it under the guise of free speech, and we all have a responsibility to challenge those who abuse the laws and threaten the safety of our students. As President, I will defend the no-platform policy and actively encourage unions to adopt it. I will provide unions with briefings on the practical implementation of the no-platform policy and how best it can complement existing equal opportunities policies.

Making the Student Vote Count

The potential of over three million students to express their view in the ballot box remains our ultimate strength, but the current trend among students and young people should be a worry for all of us. NUS must be at the heart of the campaign to encourage young people and students to register to vote.

As President, I will work with the Electoral commission and local government associations to develop a simpler system of registration for students and to bring polling stations to every campus. I will also work with all the political parties to set up MP surgeries on campuses.

Internationalism & Europe

Environmental degradation, dictatorships and poverty continue to blight million of lives. Student leaders continue to be jailed in many parts of the world for standing up for the same values that founded our movement. We all have a moral obligation to speak out and defend those values we take for granted.

This century has seen the establishment of new relationships for the UK, especially in Europe, and the Single Currency is going to be an issue not just for the government but also for students' unions and NUSSL. It is therefore vital that students are well informed and play a central role on the Euro debate. I will work with NUSSL and AMSU to provide unions with information on its impact of on trading and commercial services.

As we get closer to Europe, it is important we work closely with our counterparts on the continent. I will establish a specific area of responsibility on Europe on the NEC teams to work closely with ESIB and the European Parliament.