

5a. Defending the Right to Protest

Conference Believes:

1. That the right to protest is a universal right and should be defended and that any attack on the right to protest is an attack on democratic values.
2. That peaceful protest has played a major part in bringing about many important social and political changes in the UK.
3. That there is a difference between civil disobedience and criminality.
4. That student protest and action in November 2010 and November 2011 has exemplified a passionate engagement with political life in the UK.
5. That the police presence on 9 November 2011 was disproportionate.
6. That the decision by Scotland Yard to announce before the student march on 9 November that rubber bullets had been sanctioned to use on students was intimidating and ill-advised.
7. That before 9 November march, police showed a clear political agenda to stop attendance by confirming use of rubber bullets and highlighting the cost of policing.
8. That 'total policing' tactics do not sit well with notions of freedom to protest and can be intimidating and unnecessary.
9. That the use of kettling, horse charging and rubber bullets on protestors is fundamentally wrong.
10. That students on their own campuses should be able to protest peacefully without fear of inappropriate interventions.
11. That strengthening links and building solidarity between students and lecturers and with the UCU and other trade unions is essential to defending our right to protest.

Conference Resolves:

1. To increase the effectiveness of high profile demonstrations by winning the case for less, but appropriate, police interventions.
2. To increase safety of protesters by banning inappropriate police tactics such as kettling, horse charging and the use of rubber bullets.
3. To openly condemn and campaign against 'total policing' including kettling, horse charging and batoning of protesters and actively oppose the threat or use of new tactics including rubber bullets and water cannon.
4. To continue to work with Liberty, Defend the Right to Protest and other relevant campaigning organisations and student groups to defend the right to protest.

Add new Conference resolves

5. To campaign against the use of the courts to prevent protests on campus, as in Birmingham and Sheffield.

6. To campaign against the anti-trade union laws, which are a serious restriction on the right to organise and protest, and new attempts to restrict workers' rights.

7. To congratulate Edd Bauer, Birmingham Guild VP Education, for his reinstatement following suspension for being arrested at an NCAFC protest.