

SATC supporter attends austerity seminar for young greens

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 23 February 2014 17:52 - Last Updated Wednesday, 26 February 2014 18:41

From 6th to the 9th of February Sahaya James, a supporter of Stroud Against the Cuts, participated in the Federation of Young European Greens (FYEG) London Seminar focused on austerity.



Sahaya writes:

“The intensive four days were filled with a fantastic variety of workshops, talks and panel discussions on an array of current concerns, especially austerity, the many ways in which it is affecting youth in Europe, immigration, Roma-phobia, food production, green economy and fuel poverty, and on related matters such as the importance of the EU, the Green New Deal, youth participation in politics, being a young politician, working with social media, winning debates and campaigning speak. These talks and workshops were given by many passionate and prominent figures in UK green politics such as Natalie Bennett, MEPs Keith Taylor and Jean Lambert, former London Mayoral candidate Sian Berry and other inspiring speakers.

We considered which effects of austerity are going to affect young people across Europe, and we all recognised that the ones that will affect them most are primarily less affordable access to education (due to rising tuition fees, living costs, etc.) and high unemployment. Though these two basic needs for young people (education and employment) are where we are going to be hit hardest, many other factors associated with these, such as unaffordable housing and rising food costs, are going to harm us no less.

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We all acknowledged and agreed that the austerity policies that are being imposed upon us are far from being the necessity and only option that they are often portrayed as. We discussed how it was not a lack of resources that led to the cuts we are facing, but the way the abundant resources are managed and distributed.

When we started to discuss more formally the solutions we would propose (though we had been discussing these throughout the seminar), most of us found it almost amusing how simple the possible solutions were, and how clear it was that the cuts we are all facing across Europe are in most cases ideological and far from necessary. We spoke of how simple taxes paid in proportion to each person's wealth or land, and more effective implementation of the laws already in place for regulating large businesses, could quickly clear the deficit and solve other issues at the same time. When we discussed how the key to solve both the problems that have caused austerity and the problems that austerity is causing is to divest from unethical industries and businesses and reinvest in ethical and sustainable ventures that will benefit the majority rather than just a minority, we started to realise how despite initially speaking about austerity, the solutions we were discussing were equally relevant to a range of ultimately interconnected issues that are being faced by us all.

Though our solutions were far from original and were sometimes even highly specific, such as supporting a citizen's income, we agreed that despite our solutions being so obvious and so easy to implement, we are living in a society and economic system that is far from applying them.

All the seminar participants also joined the Student Loan Sell Off protest outside the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills.

As I am sure most of you know, some student loans are currently being sold off to private debt collector companies, meaning that not only will students be unable to know to whom their debts will be owed in future, but also that in a completely arbitrary manner the interest and payback requirements for each student are going to differ drastically. This will not only affect students starting their course after the law is passed, but any former student with a loan currently outstanding. This is of course of great relevance to all present and many past students, but also to young people generally, since many of them will become the students of tomorrow and be the ones suffering from this.

The protest was organised by [The People's Assembly Against Austerity](#), and was also attended and supported by some NUS officers, London Greens and Young Greens, as well as FYEG members. Though the numbers were not representative of the number of students and former students in London, it was nice to see the SU president of MidKent College (an FE

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college) lending his support to show solidarity on behalf of his SU, even though its members are not directly affected (though they could be in future if they decide to go on to study at any university). For more information, please see

[The Student's Assembly Against Austerity](#)

, and to take action, visit

[Fight the Student Loan sell-off](#)

and

[support EDM 542 to stop the sale of student loans](#)

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I greatly enjoyed speaking to YGs from across Europe and hearing of both the similar and the different challenges we face, and felt I learned so much from this. I had the most incredible time at this brilliant event and would like to thank FYEG and the fantastic prep team – Benali Hamdache, Riocárd ÓhÓdail, Fiona Costello, Paul Cohen and Darcy Lonegran.”

Notes:

The Federation of Young European Greens (FYEG) serves as a key link between the many Young Green wings of the Party from across the EU, and also between them and Green representatives in the European Parliament. It enables Greens under 30 to share their local concerns with those of their counterparts in other countries, while also providing them with opportunities to contribute towards bringing about the changes they wish to see and to broaden their understanding of the diverse challenges that are faced by young Greens in modern Europe. One of the objectives of these seminars, which take place across Europe, is to find the key concerns of young Greens. This is done by getting participants to prioritise the changes or policies they would like Green MEPs to push forward or issues they would like them to address, and at each seminar we must decide a final top three of these. At the end of the current round of seminars, which is likely to be one in Brussels, all the prioritised responses (top three changes or policies) will be collated into the Youth Manifesto, which is to be used by Green MEPs when representing youth opinions at an EU level.