

March 10th 2023 - Students4Change Calls for a Boycott and Sit-In of Trinity College Dublin Catering

Students4Change, a group of progressive students and staff from Trinity College Dublin, have called a boycott and sit-in of their College's cafeteria, specifically the Buttery, on the 16th of March 1pm-2pm. This is in response to Trinity's elitist, discriminatory and classist policy of not allowing students to bring their own food into catering places around campus. Over the past few months, we have had concrete reports pouring in from students who have been asked to leave, oftentimes becoming separated from their friends, despite there being empty seats available (Please click [here](#) for our social media post announcing the survey and [here](#) about the results of the survey). Trinity has at times made this policy explicit ([please click here to see](#)), and through continued enforcement of the policy made it clear that they favour profit over the wellbeing of the academic community. This is especially worrying as there are not enough seating places across campus in the first place.

As such, Students4Change has called a boycott and sit-in on the 16th of March from 1pm-2pm of the Buttery, next to the Dining Hall steps, as an act of peaceful, civil resistance and to protect the wellbeing of students during the cost of living crisis. We call on all students on that day from 1pm-2pm to refuse to buy anything, bring their own food and sit-in at the Buttery.

It is our understanding that Trinity's Commercial Revenue Unit, College's profit-maximising arm, has instructed Trinity Catering and workers to kick students out who bring their own food to catering places. We do not blame Trinity Catering nor the college catering employees. Solidarity with staff is of utmost importance to us as we are trying to build a movement of workers and students to challenge the corporatization of academia. We have met with trade union representatives for the Buttery workers, and they assured us that they have no issues with us taking this action. They said they will interfere if the College attempts sneaky tactics to divide students and staff. Legally, College cannot dock pay for this, lest it become an industrial dispute. The Buttery employees are protected by public sector legislation. The blame lies squarely on senior management, who are pursuing a profit-driven agenda.

"It is a testament to how corporatized our universities have become and how little senior management cares about the student experience that students are being kicked out of Trinity catering places in an attempt to favour paying customers. Our College is a public space and an academic community which should be inclusive to all and especially those struggling during the cost of living crisis. Students are being asked to leave their friends and go eat their lunches somewhere else and this is just disgraceful", said László Molnárfi, 3rd year PPES student, Chairperson of Students4Change and President-elect of the Trinity College Dublin Students' Union.

"It is utterly astonishing to me that college believes it is acceptable to create a classist atmosphere on campus. It is of the utmost importance for college to have shared spaces among all students that are readily accessible to all us regardless of ability to pay. Yet here we see with the buttery segregating those who pay and those who don't and it just shows what the senior management truly feels about their students. If they truly cared about accessibility and the student experience they would not dare consider separating friends based on who can pay for food in the buttery," said Aléssandro Correia, 2nd year drama and theatre studies.

“The college seems to believe that it is acceptable to segregate the student spaces based on whether a student –already paying thousands in fees, on top of a cost of living crisis– is able to buy food that is profitable to the university. The lack of compassion from senior management is frankly stunning and it further shows the need for students to engage in direct action,” says Jared Reilly, 3rd year PPES student.

“I often prepare my own lunch so that I don’t have to pay the costly catering prices, and I avoid the Buttery out of fear of being kicked out. I am shocked at how Trinity College Dublin treats its students and staff by kicking out everyone who brings their own food to catering areas during a cost of living crisis. This is unacceptable,” says Isobel Duffy, 3rd year Middle Eastern, Jewish and Islamic Civilisations student.

“So many students have said that they are afraid to bring their own lunches to College catering places because they heard the stories of being kicked out. They are left to eat their food on the floor of overcrowded College buildings, separated from their friends. It is very embarrassing for those students who are asked to leave, since it is as if they are being shamed for not being able to afford the high prices at catering. This year, Trinity College Dublin increased its prices in catering by 25%. This is the elitist approach that College has taken and we need to stand in solidarity with those worse off, so we have called this action.”, says Louie Lyons, 2nd year Middle Eastern, Jewish and Islamic Civilisations student.