



University Destruction INC! RIP University of Helsinki

written by Miia Halme-Tuomisaari
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Today is a black day in the ongoing the destruction of Finnish universities, particularly the University of Helsinki! Under the the pretence of austerity the University will be firing up to 15% of its staff by end of 2017. All this spring people have been waiting to hear who will be fired – with random horror stories flying around. Yesterday and today the true extent of horrors is becoming public: the Professor of Japanese culture and language has been fired – a post initially started with support from the Japanese embassy and a study program attracting



large numbers of students. The arts department, started in 1707, will be annihilated. The study of philosophy is seeing massive cuts. Arts programs are cut dramatically.

This morning we heard that both lecturers of the chair of Musical pedagogics have been fired, and this chair will thus be annihilated. This is a famous chair started in 1640 and occupied by the most renowned composers of our country, including Jean Sibelius and Fredrick Pacius, the composer of the national anthem. The chair has endured very dark phases of our tiny nation's history - including the 30 year war, famines, World War II, and the vast national recession of the 1990s.

It is evident that things are worse than at any previous time in the history of our nation - and that this condition has nothing to do with material scarcity, objectively speaking, makes matters infinitely worse.

Yesterday we heard that the University of Helsinki has ended up with a surplus of 46 million euros!!! None of which have been utilised toward reducing personnel cuts in the face of university funding cuts imposed by our current awful government against all electoral promises.

All this only speaks of pettiness, narrow-mindedness, intensifying neoliberal penetration of our institutions of higher education, growing hierarchical leadership. All the firing decisions have been made uniformly by the University's rector Jukka Kola. With no discussion, transparency or accountability. An aggressive profiling & streamlining of a university that last year boasted its history of 375 years.

It is difficult to express how sad all this makes me - watching such destruction unfolding in front of our very eyes. There have been massive protests of every imaginable kind: online campaigns, parody campaigns, online petitions, endless statements written to Finland's leading newspapers, petitions to politicians -



signed by hundreds of professors – debates, international comments, repeated university occupations. With NO results!!!

Yet the battle is not over yet! There HAS to be ways to make those responsible accountable for the destruction that they are doing! Thus the next step will be to start digging deep into the law and see if there is any clause that can be utilised to get the rector fired!

We simply cannot allow for the year 2016 to go down in history books as the year when Finnish universities are destroyed!

The picture below portrays our current prime minister Jukka Sipilä (on the left) and our minister of finance Alexander Stubb both posing with signs – pre-election, of course – that say ‘student benefits will not be weakened’ and ‘there will be no cuts to education’. The images have become notorious, and today there is a Facebook page that re-posts this same image every single day. Day after day.

