

Education Reform Protested by Students and Opposition

April 25, 2012



Between 200 and 300 protesters denounced education reform at the rally on Novopushkinskaya Ploshchad.

The latest skirmish in the rash of protests in Moscow took place Tuesday between education authorities on one side and teachers and students on the other, infused with the support of political parties and opposition figures.

Several hundred people gathered on Novopushkinskaya Ploshchad to protest a proposed bill that would strictly limit federal funding for schools and universities according to the number of students, leaving the educational institutions to make up the difference, Interfax reported. The news agency put the number of attendees at 200, while Ridus.ru said at least 300 participated.

Teachers and students of Russia's most prestigious universities and schools, including Moscow State University, and parent organizations participated in the event, side by side with Left Front leader Sergei Udaltsov and representatives of the Communist Party and the Liberal Democratic Party.

Demonstrators said the bill would make make education less accessible and turn schools into businesses offering paid services to the population.

Udaltsov offered a fresh round of criticism for authorities and called for the resignation of Education Minister Andrei Fursenko, who said earlier Tuesday that the bill would be submitted to the State Duma for the spring session and added that "experts are practically in consensus" on the bill.

Udaltsov also called on participants to join a march planned for May 6 to protest the presidential election that opposition figures say was tainted by falsifications.

Protesters demanded pay raises for teachers, an increase in education financing, and the cancellation of a program to start this year that will require fourth-year students to study religion.

The rally was sanctioned by authorities, and a force of several dozen police officers kept watch at the event.

A similar event attended by 100 people was held to protest education reform in St. Petersburg on Saturday. Participants staged a play in which a corrupt official offered to enact reforms in exchange for payment.

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