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formerly **Militant**

PAY PLUMMETS

PROFITS AND PRICES SOAR

WORKERS STRIKE BACK



How can you tell when a Tory is lying? Their lips are moving. It's a very old joke but it remains as true as ever.

That's because in this 'them-and-us' society, capitalism, the Tories exist to defend 'them', the bosses. But they cannot be honest about that, especially when working-class people are suffering so acutely.

The latest big Tory lie is that wage rises that protect workers from galloping price rises are a threat to living standards. Boris Johnson and the bosses say workers must take the hit. They hope to undermine the growing wave of pay strikes. But it won't work.

For one thing, this isn't a choice for workers - it's a question of survival. Nine in ten of the population are already thinking about how to reduce energy usage this winter. But it's only summer.

For another thing, while the crisis hits us, the bosses are in clover. Look at some of the companies where workers are organising for strike action: Royal Mail boss Simon Thompson got 23 times more than the average postie. No wonder 115,000 postal workers are balloting against a 2% pay rise - when RPI inflation is at 11.7%!

Unite the Union's new report highlights that profit margins for the UK's biggest listed companies (FTSE 350) were 73% higher than pre-pandemic levels in 2019.

What's more, workers create the wealth, as RMT executive member Jared Wood pointed out, speaking at one of the many solidarity rallies on the third day of June's historic national rail strike. That gives us enormous potential power.

Jared, who is also a Socialist Party member, said: "They said when you went on strike, you cost the London economy £50 million. I say that means every day we don't strike, we make the London economy £50 million! That's £18 billion a year!"

The truth is that a fightback is needed. And striking together is the obvious way to maximise our impact by hitting their profits.

As Jared concluded: "The best thing people in other unions can do at this time to help the RMT win is to get on the field of battle and join the fight! Put forward your own demands on pay, working conditions, get out there and strike alongside us!"

▶▶ CONTINUED ON P7



ORGANISE TO STRIKE TOGETHER

National Shop Stewards Network 2022 Conference

Saturday 2nd July

11am-4.30pm

Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL

www.shopstewards.net

US: OUT ON THE STREETS TO DEFEND ABORTION RIGHTS ▶▶ p13

RMT: Taking on the bosses and the Tories

- **Defend jobs, pensions, pay and conditions**
- **Generalise the industrial fightback**
- **Unite the industrial and political struggle**



PHOTO: JAMES IVENS

JARED WOOD
RMT NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
(PERSONAL CAPACITY) - PICTURED BELOW
SPEAKING AT A STRIKE RALLY

The fight against the managed decline of the rail industry is a fight with our bosses but it is also a political struggle against the Tory government and, in London, the Labour Mayor.

RMT rail union general secretary Mick Lynch has rammed the point home on TV interviews. It is not possible for an agreement to be reached while Network Rail (NR) and the Train Operating Companies (TOCs) are under the direction of the Department for Transport (DfT), but the government refuses to negotiate with RMT.

In London the position is even more complicated, with the DfT and London Mayor both seeking to blame the other for cuts, but both are committed to implementing them.

At the root of our industrial battle is a government plan to cut £4 billion from rail spending. £2 billion is to be cut from NR and the TOCs, with

the other £2 billion coming from Transport for London (TfL), which includes London Underground (LU).

RMT has stepped up magnificently. At a time when too many trade union leaders urge members to suck up pay cuts, pension attacks and flexible working, RMT has taken three days of strike action on NR and TOCs, and four on London Underground, including a stations' strike.

In addition to this, RMT drivers on LU have taken action for over six months in protest against the imposition of unsociable rosters to incorporate night-tube duties.

The industrial response must continue. We have to keep all TOCs, NR and different grades together. On LU, seven functions have to be united, involving over 10,000 members. But so far this has been achieved. We must maintain this unity, and keep the struggle going forwards with further strike action. The successful re-ballot on LU and the massive mandates for action on NR and the TOCs demonstrate the determination of members to win.

When RMT reps and activists

speak at trades councils or other unions' branch meetings we are always asked what they can do to help. Well, solidarity meetings are always welcome. But the most effective way to assist us is for other unions to get into the battle themselves and fight for their own pay, pensions and conditions.

It is apparent that the Johnson wing of the Tory party is using the strike to marshal its support behind the banner of smashing the unions. But they have miscalculated. The strike is absolutely solid, and RMT members have never encountered so much support on picket lines. Opinion polls show a clear majority support the strikes.

A generalised fightback would paralyse a weak and divided Tory government and force them into reverse. First up is the need for a generalised response encompassing RMT, Unite and Aslef in the rail sector.

But looming ballots of teachers, civil servants, local government workers and health service workers should be brought forward as soon as possible to join the resistance to another round of austerity.

The austerity, of course, is only targeted at working people. Government ministers and journalists are in apoplectic rage at the thought of a working-class tube driver getting £60,000 a year, but they have no problem with billionaires taking multi-million-pound bonuses. In fact, the government is so relaxed about this transfer of wealth from working-class pockets to the super-rich, that they are offering them another tax break.

We're expected to believe that a cleaner getting a 10% pay rise on the living wage is going to personally drive up inflation. Perhaps the government should hand out holiday homes, champagne and Bentleys to rail workers, as these purchases are not considered to be inflationary at all!

RMT is offering a fighting strategy to the trade union movement and has led the way into battle. The indications are that others will follow. But workers also need a political alternative. A government that is wedded to the privately owned capitalist economy cannot solve the problems confronting working people in Britain or worldwide.

The economic crisis has been triggered by issues associated with recovering from the pandemic lockdowns. But the underlying crisis of productivity, low wages and the inability of workers to buy the goods being produced requires a socialist programme. It requires a mass workers' party that is prepared to break with the dictatorship of the banks, multinational business and the political class that does their bidding.

RMT can take a lead in that process too. There is no off-the-shelf socialist alternative ready to replace the increasingly moribund Labour Party. But with the will, the trade union movement could create a force to oppose austerity, from the town halls to Westminster. Such a programme now, allied to nationalisation of our utilities, the building of real affordable housing and fair wages, would be unstoppable.

Why is there a £4 billion funding gap for our rail services?

The government likes to pretend that we just cannot afford to maintain our rail services, or the pay and conditions of rail workers.

They say both Transport for London (TfL) and the national rail industry face a £2 billion gap between their income and expenditure.

But this is arbitrary. The only reason there is any gap is because the government has chosen to cut the subsidies for our rail services. If the level of subsidy that was in place on TfL when the current prime minister was mayor of London was restored, back to its abolition in 2015, then TfL would be sitting on a financial surplus.

On our national rail system, the situation is even more bizarre. The level of subsidy is around double the maximum level of assistance that was ever given to British Rail under nationalisation. So the state actually spends a fortune supporting the dividends, profits and executive wages of the rail industry.

The row about funding our rail and tube systems is, in reality, a straightforward struggle to share out the profits of the economy to benefit working people. The rail companies had their profits fully indemnified by the state throughout the pandemic. The oft-quoted support for rail over the past two years was to support the profits of the privatised industry, not services and certainly not workers.

Instead of now demanding that we get rid of guards, stop inspecting track, and close all ticket offices, the Department for Transport could think about removing the chairman of Network Rail, which would save over £500,000 a year at the stroke of a pen. That is one redundancy RMT members could live with.

What has RMT been offered?

On London Underground, management has not made a single offer to address RMT demands: to maintain job numbers in the face of £500 million cuts to the annual operating budget, guarantee no detriment to our pensions, and maintain terms and conditions on key issues including rostering, notice of duties and work locations.

Network Rail and the TOCs have offered a pay rise of 2% with a further increase, later in the year, of a one-off non-consolidated 1%. But this insult is conditional on RMT accepting all the productivity demands of the employers, including thousands of job cuts. These job cuts could include compulsory redundancies.

As if these offers are not enough to detonate talks and prevent any hope of a settlement, the TOCs have now added an additional demand for pension 'reform'.

RMT strikers defiant

Action inspires other workers to fight back

Thousands of trade unionists joined RMT picket lines in solidarity during the three days of strike action across the rail network, and at dozens of public rallies in support of the strike on Saturday 25 June. Socialist Party members report from some of the pickets and rallies.

● Plymouth

Dave Goard, South West NEC member for the RMT told Ryan Aldred:

"The RMT has taken this fight by the scruff of its neck. There are other trade unions around the country in a similar position. The posties in the CWU are balloting, the NHS unions, the National Education Union, are all looking for a substantial pay increase in line with the cost of living."

"The working-class person has just had enough, and it's making sure that we now look to coordinate these strikes, not just with other trade unions within the train and transport sector, but also the wider movement. That's what we're calling for now. The TUC demo in London clearly demonstrated that there's a huge desire for people to support busting the pay freeze"

● Hastings

Pickets were in good spirits again on 25 June. Members of the public stopped to offer support, and a lot of food! Several members of train drivers' union ASLEF joined the picket line in solidarity.

There was a lot of positive talk about other unions balloting. One member said that he thought the Tories had made a big mistake, as the example set by the RMT would give confidence to workers in other industries and make industrial action elsewhere more likely.

JAMES ELLIS

● Staines

The mood at Staines after three days of strike action was defiant and confident. Numbers active on the pickets have grown. Three activists from Surrey County Union, including two Socialist Party members, brought biscuits, flags and solidarity to the strikers.

The discussion was mostly about how well Mick Lynch (aka the 'Hood') dealt with hostile questioning during BBC Question Time.

A GMB member from Heathrow stopped by to show support and tell pickets about the potential strike action there.

One young striker told the Socialist: "We want to be seen as just the first domino. All the other unions need to join in this fight for decent pay."

PAUL COUCHMAN

● Wigan

Workers and trade unionists marched through Wigan town centre on the third day of RMT industrial action.

Steve Shaw, member of RMT's National Executive Committee, commented on the need to oppose conditions that would risk the jobs and safety of workers and passengers. It was noted only two Labour councillors had shown support at the pickets. Steve Shaw commented: "Starmer has no working-class values and no longer an interest in the working class."

This notion was recurrent throughout the day, with other workers expressing their dissatisfaction with Starmer's Labour.

ALEXANDER ZUK



The TUC demo in London clearly demonstrated that there's a huge desire for people to support busting the pay freeze



Socialist Party member Oisín Mulholland addresses Swansea Rally
GARETH BROMHALL



ISAI MARJERLA



We want to be seen as just the first domino. All the other unions need to join in this fight for decent pay



Union members support the picket line in Staines, Surrey
PAUL COUCHMAN



Starmer has no working-class values and no longer an interest in the working class



Sheffield rally ALISTAIR TICE



Socialist Party members had a good response when we made the case for the unions to get together and discuss building a new workers' party

Train strike can help galvanise other workers

The RMT train strikes have captured the attention of workers across the country.

In the NHS, nurses and other healthcare workers continue to be denied the pay rise we need to make up for years of real-terms pay cuts. It looks likely that when, at last, the NHS pay review body makes its recommendations, this will continue.

In last year's NHS union pay ballots, the majority of voters said 'yes' to action for a pay rise. But without a serious campaign from the union leaders, ballots have not met the Tory-imposed 50% turnout threshold. The RMT action has the potential to galvanise other workers, including NHS workers, to vote to strike. The Trades Union Congress reports an 184% increase in Google searches for "join a union".

Without a fight, continuing cuts will mean more and more nurses leaving the profession, and care will become more and more unsafe. If the NHS is to continue to survive, and to win a decent pay rise for NHS workers, then voting for strike action is vital.

STUDENT NURSE, SOUTH EAST LONDON

● Swansea

In Wales, even though the largest operator Transport For Wales (TfW) is not involved in the dispute, strikes were underway at Swansea and Cardiff stations run by Network Rail and served by Great Western Railway.

Over the three days of strike action, all but a few TfW services on the valleys were stopped as RMT members, from cleaners to engineers, joined the picket lines in solidarity.

A rally organised in Swansea by the RMT Swansea No 1 branch and Swansea Trades Council attracted over 70 trade unionists and supporters on 25 June.

GARETH BROMHALL

● Cardiff

Over 50 attended a rally organised by Cardiff and Caerphilly trades councils on 25 June. Marchers were offered shelter from the torrential rain as the Tabernacle Church flung open its doors, an indication of the strength of support that exists among the general public.

At the rally, RMT regional organiser Steve Skelly echoed the comments of RMT general secretary Mick Lynch, that the union and its members are willing to take further industrial action if the Train Operating Companies do not come to the table and negotiate a deal that protects jobs and improves pay and conditions.

JAMIE DAVIES

● London

RMT leaders were facing the cameras again at Euston on 24 June, battling aside silly potshots from the bosses' media pundits. Striking workers held the picket line behind them for jobs, pay and safety.

RMT members are not impressed with Starmer's Labour, with the leader of the opposition instructing those on his frontbench not to stand on picket lines.

Socialist Party members had a good response when we made the case for the unions to get together and discuss building a new workers' party.

A hotel worker who'd passed by to have a go on the last strike day came back. Reps told him on Tuesday that he wasn't paid enough and should strike himself. This morning he told reps he was thinking about joining a union.

JAMES IVENS

● Retford

"This will finish Johnson off - about time!" Pickets were in confident mood.

Bassetlaw RMT branch secretary Wayne Barnett and safety rep Andrew 'Bart' Hawkins told the Socialist that Network Rail's proposals "are preposterous. They want to fire and rehire an operative grade on £21,000 a year - a £10,000 drop."

PAUL TOOLEY-OKONKWO

● Dover

NEU and Unite members added to the numbers at the picket line in Dover. RMT strikers on the Network Rail picket line explained that if they do not succeed, half of the people on the picket will lose their jobs.

One picket said that he had been on strike for a year with the P&O dispute in 1989. When the strike ended he was left with no job. He added: "I'm in this strike to win."

ERIC SEGAL

● Sheffield

Sheffield station was deserted on the second morning of the RMT train strike. Even the small groups of managers that had been trying to look busy on Tuesday had given up!

RMT pickets were joined by lots of supporters including a dozen FBU members.

ALISTAIR TICE

Give us back our pay

British Airways workers vote to strike

AIRPORT WORKER

Last week saw GMB and Unite members who are check-in agents at British Airways (BA) vote for industrial action.

On a turnout of 80%, 95% voted to strike. This reflects the extreme anger within the workforce that has been building for years.

Since the financial crisis of 2008 there have been waves of redundancies, coupled with wage freezes and almost continuous reorganisations. BA workers, pre-pandemic, were strong enough to resist this management onslaught.

As a result, management resorted to vicious cuts on new joiners' pay and conditions. Thus BA management have deliberately created multiple layers of contracts within the same job function. New joiners were even denied trade union recognition, and this has had to be fought for.

Within weeks of the pandemic taking hold, in the spring of 2020, passenger traffic fell to almost zero. BA made a third of its workforce redundant and furloughed another third. BA called

upon the government not to subsidise the industry because it hoped to outlast its rivals, and as a consequence bounce back to super-profitability once the lockdown was lifted.

BA immediately threatened to fire the workforce and rehire at a later date on inferior pay and conditions. With the airline at a standstill the workforce had no industrial power, and under this pressure agreed to take a 10% cut in wages.

Alongside these changes, managers 'voluntarily' agreed to take a 10% cut in pay. BA has now reinstated the management pay cut. However, for the workforce it has only offered a one-off 10% bonus that would arrive in three parts throughout the year.

On top of this wage cut, RPI inflation is in double figures. This would result in the employees' standard of living falling by a fifth. Check-in staff are simply seeking the reinstatement of their wages to pre-pandemic levels.

It is clear that many other groups of airline workers will be moving towards their own ballots over the summer.



Heathrow cabin crew, members of Unite, have secured an 18% pay rise, including reinstatement of 10% cut during Covid. Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: "I strongly advise other aviation employers, including British Airways, to take note."

Pictured: cabin crew strike 2010 PAUL MATTSSON

Royal Mail strike ballot: The mood is very angry



CWU MEMBER, POSTAL WORKER

Royal Mail workers in the Communication Workers Union, over 150,000 of us up and down the country, are gearing up for a 'yes' vote on our strike action ballot, which opens on 28 June.

As soon as the announcement was made of a 2% pay off followed by 1.5%, with strings attached long enough to tie us all to a workbench for life - the mood clearly became very angry.

But workers are also bemused.

After being hailed as keyworkers during the pandemic and, in 2021, making the company 20.9% more profit domestically than the year before, we all thought we had a fat pay rise to look forward to.

But it seems that rising prices have done nothing to change the outlook of the pound-mad board. They decided to award shareholders £400 million for staying at home while we were facing hundreds of potentially Covid-infected households daily to deliver all necessary (and not so necessary) items to the public.

The mood in the workplace meetings has been solidly behind the union for strike action, especially following the £200 lump-sum so-called 'sweetener' thrown to us to try and keep us quiet. The reaction of many was: "Great that will cover three days strike as a start".

And now, with the ongoing rail strikes, we see we are not the only ones being insulted by private companies turning their noses up at the ones who are the real source of their profits: us workers. Full steam ahead for our first strike in over a decade!

BT workers strike vote over pay

CWU MEMBER AND OPENREACH WORKER

With RPI inflation heading to over 11%, and BT making £1.3 billion annual profit, bosses have imposed a flat-rate below-inflation £1,500 pay rise on CWU members, without agreement from the union.

Members across BT group (including EE and Openreach) are balloting for strike action, with ballots closing on 30 June.

This is the first nationwide strike ballot in BT since 1987. Historically, pay deals have kept up with inflation; instead bosses have attacked pensions.

Many new recruits start their career on 'Workforce 2020' terms and conditions, with lower pay and longer hours than older workers. Angry young engineers in Openreach are demanding the CWU does not agree anything less than 10%.

Workers have tasted victory after

a partial union win over a personal travel time policy which meant engineers potentially driving their vans for two hours a day unpaid. The Repayment Planners' strike in 2021 has also given confidence for more action.

In the desk-based roles, the mood is different. The collapse of the union's 'Better Workplace Campaign', bringing redundancies and office closures, without a members' ballot, has led to some disillusionment.

The union must campaign hard to win back this layer of workers; it will not be enough to simply rely on postal mail-outs, text messages and social media broadcasts alone to build bridges.

While management try to create a generational divide in the workforce, reps are fighting hard to unite workers and to win the ballot. The CWU leadership must show that it is sincere on delivering concerted action.

● CWU has announced a further day of strikes at Crown Post Offices to take place on 11 July

Get all the latest union news...



Crucial stage for trade union movement



WHAT WE THINK

This year's National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) conference takes place at a crucial stage, as Boris Johnson's Tory government reels from one crisis to another. The RMT rail strike has acted as a lightning rod, for the striking rail workers but also wide layers of the working class. They are being seen as the union movement's 'praetorian guard', in the same way that the miners were regarded in the past.

In the space of a few days, the RMT general secretary Mick Lynch has achieved folk-hero status for his defiant, unapologetic approach to the Tory media. Workers are left politically leaderless by Sir Keir Starmer's new Labour Party, threatening his shadow cabinet with dire consequences if they should commit the crime of supporting striking workers.

He was dutifully backed up by David Lammy refusing to support British Airways workers. The RMT, and the other unions taking action, have stepped into the vacuum.

But it would be a fatal mistake to draw the conclusion that workers

need non-political trade unionism. Workers realised over 120 years ago that it was necessary to build a political vehicle with pro-worker, socialist policies, to stand side-by-side with the struggle in the workplaces.

Such a political alternative is needed now, that would support workers taking action, but also fight for the repeal of all the anti-union laws and the socialist re-nationalisation of the railways and transport network, Royal Mail, BT and the energy companies.

Leadership

Increasingly, it is the trade union movement, moving on to the front foot through a growing strike wave against the cost-of-living crisis, that is providing leadership and winning support from workers and sections of the middle class.

Striking barristers outside the Old Bailey applauded the RMT banner when solidarity was given to their action on Monday. No wonder that it has been reported that Google searches for 'join a union' have increased by up to 200% in the last week, while the TUC's 'join a union' website has seen visits up 800%.

The NSSN conference will hear from the RMT, along with other key unions, such as the CWU who are fighting on three fronts: Post Office, Royal Mail and BT.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham will speak about the



hundreds of disputes that her union is currently engaged in. In addition, one of the key public sector unions, the NEU is also on the platform.

The key task facing union activists is to bring together the growing number of disputes in both the private and public sector. The NSSN Conference is an opportunity to debate this vital necessity.

Coordinate

It is essential that the unions 'get in the room together' as they did at the TUC Congress in 2011, when 29 public sector unions co-ordinated strike ballots, leading to what was effectively a public sector general strike that November against the Tory attacks on pensions.

There is even more potential for mass joint action now, as workers across all sectors are struggling against spiralling price rises while real wages fall.

There should be an emergency TUC general council to thrash out a fighting strategy in light of the TUC demo and the rail strikes.

If necessary, fighting unions, such as those represented at the NSSN conference, should take the lead. Call a meeting and invite all those unions who want to wage the serious struggle that is needed. This could be open to union NECs.

Come to the NSSN conference - join the debate and discussion, to organise so that all workers faced with this crisis can strike together.

Wigs, gowns and placards: Barristers on strike

PAUL HERON SOLICITOR, HALDANE SOCIETY OF SOCIALIST LAWYERS

Make no mistake, this is a significant strike.

The sight of barristers in wigs and gowns, placards aloft, protesting outside courts - once unthinkable - reflects the crisis in society in general, and the impact of twelve years of austerity in particular.

The legal profession is notoriously hard to organise. Barristers, set out in a multitude of chambers, are self-employed, are generally slow to move with the times, and still conservative in many respects.

However, there is a realisation that using industrial action to defend incomes and stave off further Tory cuts is now necessary.

In early June, criminal law

barristers balloted for action. 81.5% of those who voted favoured strike action. The mood of meetings was militant and clear - enough is enough!

The reasons for strike action are there for all to see: a decade of austerity decimating the criminal justice system, a massive backlog of cases and, crucially, junior lawyers quitting in large numbers because the fees regime has had no increase in two decades.

Many aspiring criminal law barristers have significant student debt. The hope is that they will be able to get pupillage (a 12-month training period). But that is usually not the solution to the problem, just the start of different problems, mainly centred on low pay.

Russell Fraser, a barrister at Garden Court chambers, said

to me: "When I began pupillage in 2012, I was guaranteed an income of £12,000 in my first year, which was typical at the time. The potential existed to earn in excess of that, but not significantly so.

Ten years later that guaranteed minimum remains £12,000. And qualification (from pupil to barrister) doesn't suddenly see a rise in income. Most are lucky to reach £20,000 within the first three to five years of practice."

Indeed, the Criminal Bar Association estimated that since 2006 real earnings have declined by 28%.

At the Old Bailey on Monday, hundreds of barristers turned out to protest.

The RMT rail workers banner joined the picket in solidarity and received massive applause.



Leeds picket IAIN DALTON

Teachers prepare for autumn action

STEPHEN BROWN
OXFORD SOCIALIST PARTY AND NEU MEMBER

Teaching union leaders need to find courage and take a leaf out of the RMT playbook if we are to make the government sit up and take notice. We need our union leaders to be much more militant in their approach and commit publicly to a fight in a way they haven't done in recent years.

We don't want another indicative ballot. There is no point demanding better and then accepting less. That's why Socialist Party members in the National Education Union (NEU) have been campaigning for a national strike ballot. The NEU leadership has now announced one will start in the autumn. The teaching union NASUWT is also threatening an industrial action ballot.

The government's pledge to increase teachers' starting salary to £30,000 by 2024 is a step in the right direction, but it is still a below-inflation pay rise. If the government proposal is accepted by the School Teachers Review Body (STRB), the majority of teachers will receive below-inflation 3% and 2% pay rises over the next two years respectively.

Education minister Nadhim Zahawi's letter to the STRB at the end of last year claimed he wanted to 'promote recruitment and retention.' The government predicts that the new pay deal will help to retain around a thousand new teachers a year by 2024.

Let's imagine for a moment that this is true. In 2019 alone, almost 40,000 teachers left the profession. Only 5,000 can be accounted for by retirement. That same year, less than 30,000 trainees came into teaching. Add to that the well-worn statistics that 15% of teachers leave within two years of qualifying and a third within five years, and you can see that an extra 1,000 teachers won't touch the sides!

Like most schools, we have to trawl agencies from Canada, South Africa, and Australia to fill vacancies.

Last month, one recently qualified teacher said to me that he took a pay cut to become a teacher and has spent the year stressed, exhausted, and often overwhelmed by workload; on top of that he finds that he is struggling to pay his rent. He will leave the profession next month.

While £30,000 sounds like a huge improvement as a starting salary, compare it to what train drivers get and you can see what a difference having a union that stands up for its workers can achieve!

All of those unions which gathered in Parliament Square for the TUC rally on 18 June must put their shoulders to the wheel, and build towards coordinated action for the pay rises we need.

Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) press release Steering committee begins discussion on general election plans

The latest meeting of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) All-Britain steering committee, held on 15 June, saw a detailed discussion begin on plans for the next general election. This must be called no later than December 2024, but recent political developments have shown that it could be a lot earlier than that. And with the consolidation of Tony Blair-style 'New Labour' politics within the Labour Party, the committee agreed, working-class voters are once again set to be effectively disenfranchised.

To meet this situation TUSC strongly hopes that, before the election, steps towards a new vehicle for working-class political representation will have been taken by more authoritative forces than those currently involved in our coalition - primarily from the trade unions or potentially around Jeremy Corbyn himself standing independently of Labour in the general election.

But it is also possible that such steps might not have been taken in time for the next election and that therefore a TUSC challenge would be necessary. This was the theme of the discussion at the steering committee - hope for more, but prepare for a TUSC challenge - around a briefing document prepared by the TUSC national agent, Clive Heemskerker.

While recent conferences of both the Fire Brigades Union and the Aslef train drivers' union voted to remain affiliated to the Labour Party, this will not be the last word on this issue, in these unions or others. Developments towards a new political vehicle for workers could be accelerated by many factors, including the growing wave of industrial action showing to ever-wider numbers which side the new New Labour politicians are on.

And Labour's own general election planning could also push things forward. Its continuing retreat from the radical policies in the 2017 and 2019 manifestos put forward under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership will be one factor. And its candidate selection process will be another.

Local constituency Labour parties in non-Labour seats are beginning to select their parliamentary candidates while trigger ballots on whether sitting Labour MPs will face a full selection vote in the autumn are also underway. Labour's aim is to have a full list of general election candidates in place by March 2023, just eight months away.

So the question will be posed quite soon: who will be the candidate that trade unionists, socialists, and working-class community and social movement campaigners should back in Jeremy Corbyn's seat of Islington North? What will happen to the Labour Socialist Campaign Group MPs in Merseyside in the coming months, where the Labour NEC decided last year that all selections would be taken over by the national party until 2026?

Will the Labour leadership and its supporters allow the Socialist Campaign Group MP Apsana Begum to stand again in Tower Hamlets, with its new Aspire-led council elected in opposition to the local Labour Party's cuts policies? And so on.

It may be possible then that a wider coalition than TUSC currently is could be in place by the next general election.

But at this point in time it is also clear that there is no more developed individual party or coalition than TUSC that would be able to organise a significant all-Britain socialist

and trade union-based challenge at a general election - this year if events necessitate it, or in 2023 or 2024. And that plans need to be made accordingly.

On this basis the steering committee agreed:

- A target of 100 candidates standing on a TUSC list, in order to reach the qualifying threshold for 'fair media coverage' including a party election broadcast
- A national election fund with a target of £60,000, to guarantee the £500 per seat election deposits of the 100 candidates and the broadcast costs

Other organisations considering standing candidates who will not be able to contest 100 seats themselves should be asked to use one of the TUSC descriptions as a contribution to reaching the broadcast threshold, albeit with the provision for joint descriptions registered with the Electoral Commission allowing some flexibility

The TUSC conference to be held in February 2023 will focus on the general election and, along with the process to draft a core policy platform for the election, will be opened up to wider participation.

Feedback welcome

The full briefing document - covering issues around the party election broadcast regulations, ballot paper descriptions, election finances, and proposals for agreeing a minimum core policy platform - is available at tusc.org.uk/txt/475.pdf.

The steering committee would welcome any comments or observations from individuals or organisations considering standing in the next general election, whether they are currently participating in our coalition or not, which can be sent to the TUSC national agent at cliveheemskerker@socialistparty.org.uk



Johnson's Tories reeling, Starmer's Labour with bosses not workers - organise the workplace and political alternative



WHAT WE THINK

►► CONTINUED FROM FRONT

The impossibility of ignoring the failings of the 'them-and-us' system forms the background to the strikes - but also to the by-election losses for the Tories on 23 June.

In the Devon seat of Tiverton and Honiton, the Tories suffered the biggest numerical majority ever overturned in a by-election. The Tory candidate 'did a Boris', albeit hiding in a dance studio to avoid the press not a fridge. In both Tiverton and Wakefield, the Tories flagged likely losses but the scale was greater than anticipated.

That's because these were protest votes against Johnson and the suffering his government is bringing to the lives of millions. When placards outside the parliament of one of the richest economies on the planet read, "We can't afford to live", workers can't afford to tolerate the government any longer. These by-elections gave a small chance to protest.

This is understood by many Tory MPs, who fear the gigantic losses could translate into the looming general election, which must take place before December 2024; but what they do about it they cannot agree on.

Ideas?

Over the weekend following the results, all sorts of ideas were raised. Some are fighting to elect Johnson's opponents onto the 1922 backbench committee to change the rules and have another vote of no confidence. Many lamented the weakness of a cabinet which should get rid of him. Tory grandees came out of the rotting woodwork to fulminate against Johnson.

But they all face a major problem: who would replace him and how could they sell a system that means workers get poorer while Britain enjoys more billionaires with more money than ever?

Labour's victory in Wakefield was actually a 4,759-vote loss on the 2019 general election result under Jeremy Corbyn. This was no resounding endorsement of Sir Keir Starmer's 'New Blairism'. But Starmer is preparing for the general election by asserting and re-asserting his readiness to lead a party that defends the 'them-and-us' system.

In Sunday's Observer he wrote: "What Labour offers is a proper plan to ... get Britain's economy growing



PHOTO: TOMMY DOYLE

again so that businesses and families across the country can reap the rewards." But there are no shared rewards for big business and working-class families. Our interests are opposite to theirs.

Between 1937 and 1979, union membership in Britain doubled, while the share of income going to the top 1% fell by two-thirds. Between 1979 and 2014, membership of unions halved and the share of income for the richest 1% more than doubled.

Starmer's leadership is clear which side Labour is on - and will be in if in government. He banned Labour frontbenchers from attending RMT picket lines. That this is preparation for being a government that faces strikes by workers opposed to being made to pay while profits are protected was spelt out by Labour MP David Lammy.

Asked what would happen to the Labour MPs who did join picket lines to show their support for the RMT rail strike, Lammy said that Alan Campbell, the shadow chief whip, would be speaking to them "and making it very clear that a serious party of government does not join picket lines".

Which side are you on?

As Mick Lynch, RMT general secretary, correctly said at the Trades Union Congress demo on 18 June, pointing at Parliament, "you've got to pick which side you're on and you either get up and fight with us or you get out of the way". Starmer's Labour has picked a side.

But where does that leave workers fighting in the workplaces when the general election comes, with all the main parties on the side of the bosses? The need for a new workers' party gets clearer by the day.

How can workers fight to assemble a key part of the tools we need to fight the cost-of-living crisis - our own party representing our own interests?

The Socialist Party supports the call by the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition for those in a position to solve this problem - the trade union leaders or even Jeremy Corbyn standing independently - to act.

We will continue to do everything we can to make this necessity for our class a reality. And that includes fighting for a new party to have as a key aim the replacement of the 'them-and-us' system with socialism.

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) Coventry Area branch has passed the following motion on the union's relationship with the Labour Party and working-class political representation, calling on CWU general secretary Dave Ward to call a special conference

"This branch condemns the current position of the Labour Party leader regarding the ongoing rail workers' strike in calling for MPs and party members not to attend and support the picket lines. This is a disgrace and shows the extent to which Labour has lost its link with workers. We call on the branch to write to Dave Ward to ask that he call a special meeting to discuss this serious issue, and to call a special conference with the aim to end our affiliation with Labour."

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HANNAH SELL
SOCIALIST PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY

The Economist magazine has “built a statistical model to examine the relationship between food-and-fuel-price inflation and political unrest.” It concludes that “many countries can expect to see a doubling of unrest this year.”

Their ‘statistical model of the bleeding obvious’ is attempting to warn the capitalist class of looming trouble ahead. For them, ‘unrest’ means problems for the stability of their system and their ability to make profits.

It is a different story for the millions of workers in Britain paying more than £100 to fill up their petrol tank, watching their electricity and gas prices soar, and scrambling to buy enough to eat – with pasta costing 50% more than a year ago, bread 16% and rice 15%.

For us, a bit of unrest sounds increasingly like a necessity. That’s why the national RMT rail strikes on 21, 23 and 25 June had such enthusiastic support from the majority of working-class people in Britain.

The profits of Britain’s biggest companies are up

73%

Real-terms pay has fallen by 3.4% over the last year, so it is a huge relief to see a group of workers stand up and say ‘no further’, launching a fight to defend their jobs, pay and conditions. As a result, others are gaining confidence to follow suit.

The strike has, of course, laid bare Tory prime minister Boris Johnson’s lie that he stands for levelling up wages. On the contrary, his government is determined to hold all our wages down, making working-class people pay for the economic and Covid crises.

Johnson has raised the spectre of a ‘1970s-style wage-price spiral’ if workers refuse to just suck up the

misery on offer under his government. As RMT general secretary Mick Lynch has correctly responded, what we are witnessing is the opposite: prices are spiralling, while wages fail to keep up.

And it is a false argument that giving workers decent pay rises automatically leads to price rises, thereby creating a ‘spiral’. Unite the Union published a report which shows that in Britain the profits of the biggest 350 listed companies were 73% higher in 2021 than pre-pandemic levels in 2019. Even removing energy companies from the list, profits were up 52%.

There is nothing to stop these companies raising wages without increasing prices by a single penny, if they took the money out of their own very fat bank accounts. And in reality, of course, the bosses always increase prices to the maximum they can get away with and still find a market to sell their products, regardless of what they are paying their workers.

When ‘prestige’ brands like Nike or Apple move production to a lower-wage economy, they don’t lower their prices one penny, provided workers in the West are still prepared to pay for the brand name.

What do socialists say?

But what are the causes of the current problems in the world, and particularly the British, economy? And what solutions do socialists put forward?

Capitalism is a chaotic, unplanned system, based on the private ownership by a tiny minority – the capitalist class – of industry, banks, science and technique. It is driven not by any rational plan, but by the thirst for profit of this tiny minority.

Ultimately, that profit stems from the exploitation of the working class. Precisely because it is based not on rational planning but an anarchic competition for profit, capitalism has always been cyclical, with periodic recessions. But today it is an increasingly ailing system, with more frequent crises and weaker recoveries.

The current surge in inflation has a number of causes, including the huge sums pumped into the economy by governments to prevent economic disaster during the pandemic, the inevitable spike in demand following economies reopening, the disruption

Why is the capitalist economy failing?



economies first reopened, as Covid restrictions were lifted.

Lying behind those immediate causes is the failure of the major energy companies to invest – above all in clean energy – over decades and, of course, their profiteering. For example, in Britain, around 50% of gas comes from the North Sea, but the increased costs to consumers in Britain are just as high as in countries like Germany that are more reliant on Russia.

These are global factors, but inflation in Britain is the highest of the G7 economically developed capitalist countries. One main reason for that is the drop in the value of sterling, making all imported goods more expensive.

As David Smith put it in the traditionally Tory-supporting Sunday Times, sterling has become a “nominate currency”, having suffered a slump “the biggest of any big currency in the floating-rate era.” He points to various reasons, summed up as “global investors do not like what they see of the UK economy or British politics”.

Recent OECD figures showed that Britain is on the brink of recession and forecast zero growth this year, behind every economically developed country, except Russia. And the markets – interested only in where they can make the biggest profit – can see that.

In addition, Smith points out: “Breaking international law in a way that threatens a trade war with your biggest trading partners – to shore up a deeply flawed leader – is a ‘sell’ signal.” In other words, he puts a large part of the blame for sterling’s slide at the feet of Johnson and his hangers-on, who the international finance markets judge as unreliable.

However, the incompetent corrupt character of the Johnson government is not an accident. Ultimately, it reflects the ailing character of British capitalism.

Brutal and blind

Capitalism is not healthy anywhere. In its early days – despite the inevitable periodic crises, its brutal exploitation and blind, unplanned character – capitalism nonetheless took society forward. The drive to maximise their profits pushed the capitalists to invest in the development of the productive forces, of science and technique.

Today the progressive side of this basic driving force of capitalism has rotted away. In Britain, where capitalism first developed, it is particularly sick.

For example, if you take the US’s five biggest firms, three were founded after 1990, and the others in the 1970s. Four have valuations in the trillions. By contrast, the average age of the five biggest companies based in Britain is

135 years old. None is worth over \$250 billion.

Levels of investment are extremely low. The journals of British capitalism are forced to reflect on the sickness of their system.

The Financial Times, for example, bemoaned the lack of investment, declaring: “It is difficult to overestimate the lack of UK capital expenditure growth, compared with the wider economy, its historical trend or other countries.” Meanwhile, for the Economist magazine, Britain was “stuck in a rut and has become the stagnation nation.”

British capitalism decline

Over decades, declining British capitalism has turned away from concentrating on manufacturing, with it now making up less than 10% of the economy, lower any other G7 country. Most of the goods we buy are therefore imported, and get more expensive when sterling falls.

The economy is instead highly dependent on finance and services, but its declining even in those fields! In 15 years, the London Stock Exchange’s share of global equity values has fallen from 8.5% to 3.6%.

The particular weakness of British capitalism leaves it very limited room to manoeuvre in the current crisis. A country with stronger manufacturing might at least be able to take



ANDREW PARSONS/NO10 DOWNING STREET/CC

advantage of the fall in sterling to increase exports.

So far that is not the case, however. This year’s first-quarter figures showed exports of food and drink to the EU were down 17% on pre-Covid levels. Exports to other countries increased marginally, but not enough to offset the decrease to the EU.

The Covid-related huge increase in government debt levels – now the highest since the early 1960s – is not peculiar to Britain. However, the particular weaknesses of British capitalism mean that there is a real danger that the debts could become a serious problem, if the markets decide that Britain is a basket case and act accordingly, demanding higher interest rate payments on British government debt.

Zombies

And the gigantic levels of overall debt – corporate and personal, as well as state – mean that even small increases in interest rates could lead to widespread bankruptcy for businesses and people if they can’t service their debts. Last year, more than 20% of UK businesses were ‘zombies’ – only able to pay the interest on their debts when interest rates were at rock bottom.

The prospect of small rises, by historical standards, in interest rates leading to a deep recession is very real. Nonetheless, to try and tackle inflation, the Bank of England is compelled to start to raise rates.

None of these problems for British capitalism mean that the capitalist elite – including member of the rich list, Tory chancellor Rishi Sunak – is struggling. On the contrary, if the health of capitalism was only measured by the health of the richest, it would be considered in its prime!

In Britain, the average pay of the chief executives of the 100 biggest companies on the London stock market is up from 47 times that of the average worker in 1998 to 145 times today. During 2020 alone, when the Covid pandemic was at its height, the wealth of Britain’s billionaires increased by a fifth.

It does mean, however, that unless the workers’ movement follows the lead given by the RMT, and launches a serious struggle of coordinated strikes to defend our pay and conditions, the capitalist class will make us pay for the multiple crises in their system.

For decades British capitalism’s

‘solution’ to its problems has been to drive down our wages in a ‘race to the bottom’. If they could get away with it, however, the fall in living standards we are facing now would be worse than what has come before. However, it is already clear that millions of workers will not accept this, and are determined to fight back.

It also sharply poses the need to fight for an alternative to this rotten, failing system in Britain and worldwide. Capitalism and its blind, unplanned profiteering don’t work.

Chief exec pay is
145
times that of
the average worker

The incompetent corrupt character of the Johnson government is not an accident. It reflects the ailing character of British capitalism.

That is why we fight for the nationalisation of the major monopolies and banks that dominate the economy, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need. This would lay the basis for the development of a democratic socialist plan of production, harnessing science and technique to meet the needs of humanity while protecting the planet.

Such a socialist plan would create the basis to transform people’s existence. The basics of a civilised life – a decent income, an affordable and secure home, time for leisure – would quickly be guaranteed for all.

Fighting for socialism, and even taking steps in that direction, requires the working class having a political voice – our own party – alongside fighting back industrially. To give one example, the case to nationalise our rail system under democratic workers’ control is crystal clear. It would allow all rail workers pay, jobs and conditions to be guaranteed, but also the provision of cheap, or better still free, rail travel for all as part of a serious plan of action on climate change.

Clearly, however, Keir Starmer’s pro-capitalist Labour has no intention of taking such radical measures, and will not even support the RMT strike action. Therefore, the need for the trade union movement to start to build its own party is an essential part of the struggle against the crisis and chaos of capitalism.

Technology workers fight on pay

Leicester Socialist Party members spoke to Paul Brown, Unite SPS branch treasurer and chair:

"Last year Unite members at SPS Technologies Leicester struck over management's attempts at 'fire and rehire'. After several strike days, we went on all-out strike.

"Then the management just seemed to change straight away. The next day they said 'let's talk about this', and within two weeks we had settled. We're on worse conditions than we were, but better conditions than we would have been if we hadn't gone on strike.

"Wage negotiations should run from January to January. But management have been stalling on our pay claim and negotiations have been dragging on. So now we have balloted.

"The convenor has given management two weeks' notice of all-out strike because that was what was effective last time. The manager is up in arms about it. He claims we have been offered 6% but that's not the way the union sees it. It's a complicated offer with strings attached. Management have said it will be paid from July and not backdated to



SPS workers on strike in 2021. PHOTO: STEVE SCORE

January, when we should have had our pay rise."

● The strike is due to start on 30 June. Management have recruited staff on zero-hour contracts and it looks like they intend to use them

to break the strike if they can.

It's urgent that these workers are recruited to the union and the union fights for their contracts to be made permanent on the same wages and conditions as everyone else.

Doncaster rail engineers strike against 'fire and rehire'



Unite and RMT members on strike together at Wabtec. PHOTO: YORKSHIRE SP

ALISTAIR TICE
YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Over 200 workers at rail engineering firm Wabtec in Doncaster began a week-long strike on 27 June against cuts in terms and conditions and a well-below inflation pay rise. They are mostly Unite members, but with

RMT have coordinated ballots and action, having already struck on 10-13 June.

Management claim they have offered a "substantial" pay rise. Lie no. 1. Workers had no pay rise at all last year. Of the 8.25% rise covering two years, 1.25% is for the National Insurance rate rise, and it is all conditional

on accepting cuts, such as to tea breaks and wash time, equivalent to another 3%. So in reality this "substantial" wage rise is 4% over two years when RPI inflation has already hit 11.7%!

Lie no. 2. Management claim: "The majority of our employees are clearly in support of this plan." No way. The majority have now signed the new contract because they were threatened in one-to-one interviews with 'fire and rehire'. But they then signed a union statement to say that they were forced to sign "under duress".

US-owned Wabtec have cut the workforce by two-thirds over the last 18 months and clearly expected the remaining 250 or so workers to accept these cuts under fear of redundancy. In a further attempt to intimidate, management sent them all a letter making false allegations about the previous strike picket.

None of this has worked. Over 150 union members were on the picket. The strike is solid and more action will be called if the bosses don't back down.

Arriva bus strike solidarity

Three weeks into indefinite strike action and the Unite Arriva bus strike across Yorkshire remains solid. Across the five depots in Yorkshire, just a handful of school bus services are running.

Mid-Yorkshire NHS workers sent a message of solidarity, to both Unite bus strikers and RMT rail strikers. "We fully support our fellow 'key

workers' in their struggle against redundancies and for a decent pay rise. "We remember how they, like us in the NHS, kept the country moving during the Covid pandemic by putting themselves at risk on the front line, whilst government ministers partied, and the bosses stayed at home. "Many NHS workers rely on public transport to get to and from work.

We expect the workers who provide these vital services to be paid decent wages, free from the threat of redundancy

"We call for an integrated transport system under democratic public control.

"A victory for one is a victory for all!"
YORKSHIRE SOCIALIST PARTY

Leeds Uber drivers strike for a pay rise

IAN DALTON
LEEDS SOCIALIST PARTY

"What do we want? Fare increase," Uber drivers chanted as they marched down to the company's office in Burley, Leeds. Bosses slammed the shutters down on the 100 striking drivers.

While fuel prices have soared, along with the cost of living, Leeds and West Yorkshire drivers have had no pay increase. One driver explained a recent job taking a passenger to Barnsley for a fare of £21. £18 of that goes immediately on expenses such as petrol, and wear and tear; they had effectively been paid just £3 for an hour's journey.

As well as demanding a pay rise, drivers were also angry about automated sackings, without any due process of investigation, appeal and representation.

The strike and protest had been organised to coincide with a strike of Uber drivers in London organised by the recently formed App Drivers and Couriers Union (ADCU). The protest in Leeds was called by some local members of ADCU in conjunction with the Leeds Private Hire Drivers Organisation (LPHDO), which has organised recent strikes and protests in Leeds over council licensing policies.

At the protest there was a lot of

debate about what tactics were necessary. There were frustrations expressed about the strike and protest only having been announced a few days before.

I was able to speak and bring solidarity from the Socialist Party to the strikers emphasising that, like many other workers, drivers were finding that they needed to get organised and strike for a pay rise.

As Zahid from the LPHDO said: "We all need to take the day off together. If all of us aren't working then Uber doesn't make any money."

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Drivers on strike protest outside Uber offices. PHOTO: IAN DALTON

Unison members in higher education: Strikes get results

MARY FINCH
UNISON REP (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

Support staff at universities across the country are being balloted for strike action again after another totally inadequate pay offer.

Unison members at eleven universities took strike action over last year's pay increase, which was an insulting 1.5%. Clearly, it's had an effect. We've been offered 3% this year - far short of inflation, but still significantly higher than any pay rise we've had in years.

Unison members literally keep universities open. The union

represents all non-academic staff, from security, to catering, to admissions, to libraries. At my workplace, King's College London, our four days of strike action shut down entire sections of the university. Some libraries were effectively closed and we had reports of senior management forced to run front desks!

At King's, our strike action also won us an improved offer on London weighting. The fact that management conceded so quickly shows how much more we could win with determined action for a better national pay offer.

The confidence of Unison

members nationally has increased following the first round of strike action. 83% voted in favour of industrial action over the new pay offer, and it's likely any future strike days will fall during freshers and welcome weeks in September. Standing shoulder to shoulder with striking academic staff in UCU, we can shut universities down and win a better pay rise.

All workers need an inflation-proof pay rise. A coordinated strike of Unison members in the public sector - universities, schools, local government and the NHS - would be a massive step forward.



University support workers on strike. PHOTO: HUGO PIERRE

South London hospital strike "Mitie is a liar! Mitie is a thief!"



Striking Mitie workers march with rail strikers to a rally at King's Cross. PHOTO: DEJI OLAVINKA

DEJI OLAVINKA
LAMBETH AND SOUTH WEST LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

Cleaners and ward hosts at St Georges Hospital in Tooting went on a full week of strike action over pay and conditions. Francis Dwum, the GMB branch secretary, said the workers have three main demands:

- An end to the two-tier workforce, one contract for all Mitie workers
- Compensation for the members because they changed their contract without consulting them
- An end to the pay cycle change, which forces them to work seven weeks before they get paid for four weeks' work



The Trust and Mitie are collaborating against us. But we are taking our destiny into our own hands to fight for our rights

According to Francis, this final issue is "driving their members to poverty and causing families to starve".

One key issue in the two-tier workforce is that those on the lower grade "don't have proper sick pay and are compelled to go to work when they are ill."

"The Trust and Mitie are collaborating against us. But we are taking our destiny into our own hands to fight for our rights. It doesn't matter how long it takes. We will be out here to make a noise until our voice is heard."

And they certainly made their voices heard. In a powerful show of solidarity, the hospital workers were joined by representatives from the RMT strike, as well as other trade unions, in a march from the hospital into Tooting High Street.

The workers chanted: "Mitie is a liar! Mitie is a thief!" and "No money - no work!"

After their own rally finished, they travelled down to St Pancras station to join the RMT strike rally.

Care homes staff fight back

MIKE LUFF
BRISTOL UNISON (PERSONAL CAPACITY)

At the Bristol rally in support of the RMT strike, Josh Connor, branch organiser for Bristol Unison, spoke of the coming strikes at St Monica's care homes. The clapping at the rally was in support and solidarity, unlike the hypocrisy of the St Monica's Trust who publicised the clapping of the same care staff only two years ago for their sacrifices during Covid.

Three months ago, the staff at four care homes were told that they had to accept new inferior contracts or be fired. Bristol Unison balloted its members, resulting in an 84% vote for strike action.

The proposed changes threaten many members with cuts to pay, cuts to sick pay for all staff, making house-keeping and catering staff do jobs they never signed up to, telling night staff to reduce hours, and cutting the amount of time staff can spend with residents.

Some face a pay decrease of as much as £400 a month. Trust managers have targeted the longest-serving and more experienced workers at the homes for the biggest cuts.

Meanwhile, the trust is advertising for agency staff at an hourly rate that is £7 more than workers doing the same jobs currently earn!

St Monica's Trust recently reported its financial position as 'strong', with net assets of £306 million.

- The strikes are taking place on 29 June, and 2, 5, 10 and 11 July. A rally will be held on Saturday 2 July at 11.30am at the Greenway Centre in Southmead, Bristol.



PHOTO: LONDON SP

Union membership booms at finance regulator strike

JAMES IVENS
LONDON SOCIALIST PARTY

"You know things are messed up when the regulators are striking"! That placard describes the mood of many staff at the Financial Conduct Authority, regulator for the finance sector.

A year ago, Unite only had around 50 members at this white-collar workplace. At the time of this strike it had around 700 and counting! Workers in all sectors are hungry for a

fightback and ready to organise if the unions lead.

Members of general union Unite walked out for the second time on 9 and 10 June. Their dispute began when management restructured pay, such that workers have received pay cuts of up to 12%!

Strikers are demanding the reversal of that cut. But their main battle is over union recognition. Staff are fed up with management making adverse decisions about their pay and conditions over their heads.



WHAT WE STAND FOR

Capitalism is an ailing, crisis-ridden system based on the exploitation of the majority of the world's population by a small, super-rich elite who own most of the wealth and the means of producing it. This way of organising society, in which the pursuit of profit comes before everything else, causes poverty, inequality, environmental destruction, wars and oppression across the globe.

The Socialist Party organises working-class people to fight against the attacks from this rotten system on our lives and livelihoods, and for a socialist alternative: a society which takes the wealth out of the hands of the super-rich and is democratically run by working-class people to meet the needs of all not the profits of a few.

Building fighting democratic trade unions in the workplaces and a new mass workers' party is a vital part of the struggle to change society along socialist lines.

Because capitalism is a world system, the struggle for socialism must also be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International which organises across the world. Our demands include:

WORK, PENSIONS AND BENEFITS

- A £15-an-hour minimum wage for all without exemptions. For the minimum wage to automatically increase linked to average earnings or inflation, whichever is higher.

- Share out the work. A maximum 32-hour working week with no loss of pay or worsening of conditions. The right to flexible working, under the control of workers not employers. An end to insecure working, for the right to full-time work for all who want it; ban zero-hour contracts.

- All workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness, parental and holiday rights from day one of employment. End bosses using bogus 'self-employment' as a means to avoid giving workers rights.

- No to austerity through inflation. For all wage rates to be automatically increased at least in line with price rises.

- Open the books of all companies cutting jobs or claiming they can't afford to pay a real living wage. State subsidies, where genuinely needed, for socially-useful small businesses.

- For trade unions independent of the capitalist state, with members having democratic control over their own policies, constitutions and democratic procedures. For all trade union officials to be regularly elected, subject to recall by their members and paid a worker's wage.

- Reduce the state retirement and pension age to 55. For decent living pensions.

- Replace universal credit and the punitive benefit system with living benefits for all who need them.

- Visit socialistparty.org.uk/join or call **020 8988 8777**

- or text your name and postcode to **07761 818 206**

- to find out more today!

PUBLIC SERVICES
• A massive expansion of public services including the NHS and council services. Reverse all the cuts, kick out the privateers. Bring private social care and childcare facilities into public

ownership under democratic control, in order to provide free, high-quality services for all who need them. Expand services for all women suffering violence.

- For local councillors who are committed to opposing austerity and all cuts to local services, jobs, pay and conditions.
- For a socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs, including dental and eye care – free at the point of use and under democratic control. Kick out the private companies! Nationalise the pharmaceutical industry under democratic workers' control and management.

- Renationalise privatised utilities – including rail, mail, water, telecoms and power – under democratic workers' control and management.

- Free, publicly funded and democratically run, good-quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees and write off student debt, end marketisation, and introduce a living grant. No to academisation. For all schools to be under the genuine democratic control of local education authorities, school staff, parents and student organisations.

- The right to a safe secure home for all. For the mass building of genuinely affordable, high-quality, carbon-neutral council housing. For rent controls that cap the level of rent. Fair rent decisions should be made by elected bodies of tenants, housing workers and representatives of trade unions. For cheap low-interest mortgages for home buyers. Nationalise the privately owned large building companies, land banks and estates.

- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.

- For a new mass workers' party, based on the trade unions, and drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplaces, and community, environmental, anti-racist and anti-cuts campaigns, to provide a fighting, socialist political alternative to the pro-big business parties.

- For proportional representation and the right to vote at 16.
- For the right of nations to self-determination. For an independent socialist Scotland and for a socialist Wales, both part of a voluntary socialist confederation of Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland.

- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.

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all workers involved in the production, processing, distribution and retail of food.

DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

- For united working-class struggle to end discrimination on the grounds of race, gender, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice and oppression.

- Repeat the anti-trade union laws and all others that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest and to strike! End police harassment. For the police to be accountable to local committees, made up of democratically elected representatives of trade unions, local community organisations and local authorities.

- For the right to choose when and whether to have children – for the right to access abortion, contraception and fertility treatment for all who need it.

- For the right to asylum – with democratic community control and oversight of emergency funding resources. No to racist immigration laws.

- Expand democracy. For the abolition of the monarchy and the House of Lords. For all MPs to be subject to the right of recall by their constituents at any time, and to only receive a worker's wage.

- For the right of nations to self-determination. For an independent socialist Scotland and for a socialist Wales, both part of a voluntary socialist confederation of Wales, England, Scotland and Ireland.

- Oppose the dictatorship of the billionaire owners of the media. For the nationalisation of newspaper printing facilities, radio, TV and social media platforms. Access to these facilities should be under democratic control, with political parties' coverage being allocated in proportion to the popular vote at elections.

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Colombian presidential elections

Left candidate's victory marks new era of mass struggle

TONY SAUNOIS
COMMITTEE FOR A WORKERS' INTERNATIONAL SECRETARY

In a major blow to the rich oligarchs and the ruling class in Colombia, the left-wing candidate, Gustavo Petro, won the presidential election, taking 50.5% of the vote to 47.3% for the maverick, right-wing populist, Rodolfo Hernández. The victory of Petro is a historic turn in Colombia, which has never had a left government in its 214 years of existence.

The victory of Petro is also a blow to the interests of US imperialism. Colombia has been US imperialism's closest ally in the region, led by a series of reactionary right-wing regimes which have ruled the country. On trade, the drugs war, and regional alliances, Petro is in opposition to the policy of US imperialism. This latest political earthquake is part of a new period of upheaval and struggles rocking Latin America.

The Colombian ruling class has been panicked at this historic result, which has been greeted with wild enthusiasm by the working class, the poor and the most downtrodden in Colombian society. Part of the enthusiasm has been driven by the radical reformist programme of Petro, and also the election of Francia Márquez, the first black woman, from a much-oppressed layer, as vice-president.

This victory represents an important step forward and will have repercussions throughout the Americas. All of the centre-right pro-capitalist parties, the ruling class, and landowners swung behind the maverick Hernández, who, among other things, has described Adolf Hitler as a "great German thinker".

Petro has promised "true change, real change", saying: "We will not betray this electorate, which has cried out to the country... for Colombia to change from today". His radical programme includes a wealth tax on the richest 400,000, an increase in the minimum wage, the introduction of unemployment payments, a public health system, radical land reform, and other reformist measures.

Like his counterpart Gabriel Boric in Chile, Petro has been swept to power on a tide demanding the transformation of society. His victory, like Boric's, is in part a product of the mass movements which erupted in both countries - in Chile in 2019 and Colombia in 2021. In Colombia, the mass movement was triggered by a tax reform by the right-wing government. It then exploded into a wider social movement against inequality, poverty, unemployment and corruption.

A tremendous general strike developed and the masses challenged for power. Brutal repression, resulting in the deaths of dozens of protesters,



Gustavo Petro PHOTO: GUSTAVO PETRO URBECQ

took place in response. The movement ebbed and retreated, as the leadership failed to carry it forward to overthrow the regime and establish a government of the workers and the poor. However, the thirst for change was not crushed, and the movement was not demoralised. This has now been expressed in Petro's election victory. A new chapter in Colombian history has begun.

Petro, a former guerrilla fighter in M-19, which disbanded in 1990, was arrested and tortured by the military. He has a lengthy history of struggle, and was eventually elected as mayor of the capital Bogotá, a position he was removed from for a period for attempting to end the privatisation of rubbish collection in the city. He is hated by the far right and the paramilitaries which still operate in Colombia.

The vicious civil war which raged between the military, paramilitary gangs and the guerrilla organisations, Farc, M-19 and the ELN, was formally ended in 2016, leaving 260,000 dead and seven million displaced. Farc took up arms in 1964, mainly as a struggle for land reform.

However, the peace agreement that was signed in 2016 has been cautiously implemented by the right-wing regimes which have ruled since. Today, drug cartels and the ELN continue fighting in some regions of the country, which remain scarred by bloody conflict. The brutal violence of the drug cartels has not stopped, as groups like the Gulf Clan continue to

operate. This paramilitary drug cartel enforced a 'strike' and ordered the population to stay at home in protest against the arrest and deportation to the USA of its leader, Dairo Antonio Úsuga, in May. This was enforced in 11 of the 32 departments, or states, of Colombia. There is a yearning for peace in these areas.

Petro's victory has aroused the confidence of millions who now look to his regime to carry through 'real change'. However, the question is can he deliver on his radical programme of reform? He faces major obstacles and needs a revolutionary socialist programme to overcome them. Any serious attempt to implement land reform and other measures will arouse the wrath of the ruling class. His party, Pacto Histórico (Historic Pact) only has 15% of the seats in Congress. The traditional right holds a majority. It is the same obstacle faced by the left President Castillo in Peru, who recently won its presidential election.

To enact the reform programme, it is essential to go beyond Congress and not seek a constitutional road that will be blocked by the right. The threats of economic sabotage and a flight of capital by the ruling class are present from the very beginning. The far right and the paramilitaries could attempt an assassination should Petro take measures to threaten their interests.

Unfortunately, in an attempt to placate the market, Petro is already considering the appointment of a 'centrist' finance minister. Such

attempts to appease the ruling class and moderate his programme will not satisfy the masses. Neither will it satisfy the ruling class and oligarchs. In Chile, Boric, after only a few months in power, has seen a collapse in his approval ratings as he has sought compromise after compromise with the ruling class and 'centre' political parties.

Mass action committees of workers, the urban and rural poor, and others who want radical reforms and change, need to be democratically elected. A national plan of struggle is needed to implement the programme that Petro was elected on and how to build a mass party of the working class with a socialist programme to break with capitalism. Such a movement can form the basis for forming a government of the workers and the poor. It would need a programme to break with landlordism and capitalism and introduce a democratic socialist plan.

Unfortunately, Petro dropped some of his most radical demands during the campaign to 'win the centre'. Even since his election, he has declared he wants national unity. This road will give the right time to regroup and organise. If he rolls back his reform programme it will lead to disappointment and erosion of support.

However, his victory can boost the confidence and determination of the working class and poor to struggle and fight, and open a new era for the struggle for a socialist alternative in Colombia.



US: Out in the streets to defend abortion rights!

The International Socialist Group, sister organisation of the Socialist Party in the US, has been protesting against the Supreme Court's decision to overturn the 1973 Roe v Wade ruling that recognised a constitutional right to abortion. This is the most devastating attack on women's rights in the country for the last five decades and will deny the right to abortion to up to 40 million women. And it will be poor and minority women whose lives will be most affected. Here we print the leaflet that the ISG has been distributing at the protests.

Workers won't go back to the past

Stop the right-wing attack on civil rights

On 24 June the Supreme Court in the US overturned the precedent set by Roe v Wade that protected the legal right to abortion nationwide. As a result, millions of women in the United States will lose access to abortion as trigger bans kick in. This latest attack follows a host of oppressive laws against women and the LGBTQ+ community pushed by the Republican Party in state legislatures across the country.

Over the last month and a half since the Supreme Court draft opinion was leaked, Biden and the Democratic Party failed to pass a federal abortion rights bill, despite the Democratic Party currently controlling the legislative and executive branches, and Biden's campaign promise to make Roe v Wade the "law of the land". Nor

has the Democratic Party mobilised any mass protests or movements that could have offered a real opposition to this assault.

Almost 60% of people in the US believe that abortion should be legal, and unelected Supreme Court judges should not decide the fate of hundreds of millions of Americans. Only an independent working-class movement can lead the charge against these attacks on our rights.

The Independent Socialist Group (ISG) calls for:

- Mass protests and workplace actions by workers and youth to defend and extend access to abortion. We demand a real right to choose, including the legal right, the resources, and the freedom from social pressures when deciding to have or not have children.



200-strong rally on 25 June called by ISG in Worcester, Massachusetts against the Supreme Court ruling PHOTO: ISG

- Unions, left groups, and progressive organisations must organize an independent movement of workers and youth, separate from the two corporate parties, that relies on mass mobilisations, not lobbying, to demand universal, legally protected, and accessible reproductive rights. Unions should organise workplace actions, including shutdowns, pickets and strikes, to defend the rights of their members and fight for universal healthcare, including access to abortion care.

- Expand access to reproductive healthcare. Replace the broken for-profit healthcare system with comprehensive universal healthcare that provides inclusive healthcare for women, LGBTQ+ people, and people of colour. Create good union jobs by building new public healthcare and childcare facilities and expanding public transit, especially to rural areas.

- We need a workers' party. Democrats have used the promise of defending abortion rights to try to convince workers to vote them into office for the last 50 years. Workers, activists and left organisations must break from the Democrats to build an independent workers' party, free of corporate money and accountable to its members. A party for working people can unite with mass movements and labour to fight for civil rights and help organise to defend and extend abortion rights. It could also fight for other reforms like universal healthcare, universal childcare, fully funded and staffed schools, affordable housing, and a future free from climate catastrophe.

- A new, democratic justice system. Replace the Supreme Court with a judicial system that is directly elected by workers in the US, with judges accountable to the people and subject to recall.

50 years since Britain's first LGBTQ+ Pride march

Half a century battling for our rights

MICHAEL JOHNSON

SOCIALIST PARTY LGBTQ+ GROUP CONVENOR

On the 1 July 1972, 2,000 people gathered in London – the first official Pride march in Britain. Part of a global upswing in militant action from LGBTQ+ people, Pride marches would become a major point of reference on the issues of the day for the community, and mark a period of change for the rights of LGBTQ+ people in Britain.

Just a few short years before, male homosexuality was still criminalised. This had a dampening effect on the ability of gay people to campaign for their own rights.

Even living as an LGBTQ+ person had to happen in secret to avoid being arrested for homosexuality, which could be life ruining. In 1967, the decriminalisation of homosexuality was a turning point for campaigning in Britain.

On one hand, the legal reforms did not end prejudice, far from it. In 1968, homosexuality started being formally treated as a 'mental illness'.

Between 1967 and 2003, 30,000 men were convicted of crimes related to 'treatments' for homosexuality – peaking in the 1960s and early 1970s. Decriminalisation actually saw an increase in police repression.

New confidence

However, on the other hand, with some risks removed, there was a new confidence among LGBTQ+ people. In 1969, the first open campaigning organisations – the Campaign for Homosexual Equality and the Scottish Minority Group – were formed.

In line with the global upswing of militant campaigning for civil rights, anti-war activism and mass student protests in 1968, there was a similar movement for more radical action for LGBTQ+ people – culminating in the Stonewall riots in the US in 1969.

This battle against police repression in New York served as the birth for the gay liberation movement. One campaigner estimated that in the year after Stonewall, groups across the US increased from around 60 to at least 1,500. A year after Stonewall – to mark its anniversary – a march that

London Pride 2021 PAUL MATTSOON



would eventually become known as Pride was held in the US.

The Gay Liberation Front (GLF) came into existence following the Stonewall riots, including in London in 1970, as a response to growing debates about how to tackle oppression. The GLF quickly became a campaigning organisation.

It protested against harassment by the police in 1970, and in 1971 against the Christian Nationwide Festival of Light organised by the likes of Cliff Richard and Mary Whitehouse against what they saw as the 'permissive society', especially around sexuality. Also in 1971, the GLF launched its own radical manifesto for social change and tackling oppression, as part of wider social struggles.

These developments, alongside the growing social struggles, set the stage for the 1972 Pride march. Despite worries about the impact Pride could have on their lives – teachers, who for example, attended feared the effect of being recognised would have on their jobs – the march attracted thousands. It culminated in



Legal reforms did not end prejudice, far from it. But, with some risks removed, there was a new confidence among LGBTQ+ people.

a kiss-in at Trafalgar Square, defying the law at the time.

Attendees spoke about the impact the visibility of LGBTQ+ people had for them. One person said the march showed "we are here. We exist. You will never make us feel ashamed again without resistance".

Pride marches saw the beginning of a new period of activism in Britain. They were a crucial focal point for campaigning and working out key issues for LGBTQ+ people. For example, in 1978, faced with increasing attacks on gay people – including the attack on the Royal Vauxhall Tavern by the far-right National Front – Pride was an opportunity for LGBTQ+ people to show strength.

Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (LGSM) was formed out of activism at Pride events. As chronicled in the film *Pride*, LGSM had a major impact on the struggle for LGBTQ+ rights.

With the help of LGSM activism, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) turned out in support of Pride marches, and used its vote at Labour

Party conference to ensure LGBTQ+ rights were made part of the Labour Party programme. The increased visibility and campaigning of LGBTQ+ people had a major impact in changing social attitudes for the better.

Despite its radical roots, Pride has been increasingly diverted to a non-political carnival. This year, corporations like Tesco – who have cut sick pay for workers, straight and LGBTQ+ – will slap a rainbow on their logo and pretend to be a friend to the community.

Companies will have lines of Pride products, whose profits will not go to helping us in any real way. And, unfortunately, the self-appointed leadership of Pride events has encouraged this, arguing Facebook selling itself at Pride is a sign we've won real equality.

Fighting back

But, faced with attacks like the failure to ban conversion therapy and still existing prejudice in society, alongside the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, there is a mood for a fightback from some LGBTQ+ people. We've seen strong protests, including 'Reclaim Pride' demonstrations, showing the understanding of the need for a political fightback.

We need to take lessons from the history of our movement, such as Pride, to help us prepare for the struggles we face today. The Socialist Party calls for Pride to return to its political roots.

As part of that, we call for an organised movement to fight for LGBTQ+ rights, and the resources and services we need – building together with other movements of workers and groups entering struggle. This needs to be linked to the trade unions launching campaigns to fight back against the Tory government, austerity, and discrimination, and to fight for a real socialist transformation of society to end oppression.



TV review: Sherwood episodes 1-4

Drama tells the story of murdered striking Notts miner Keith Frogson

WENDY AND STEPHEN MINNEY

NOTTINGHAM SOCIALIST PARTY MEMBERS AND STRIKING FAMILY DURING THE 1984-85 MINERS' STRIKE

Sherwood portrays the two murders that took place in Annesley Woodhouse, Nottinghamshire in 2004. The opening disclaimer informs the viewer that characters and events have been fictionalised. I suppose this is to excuse the writer from using two traumatic real-life events, and making their own adaptation for TV. This is an entertaining drama but far from accurate.

The opening sequence shows news footage of one of Arthur Scargill's speeches from the 1984 miners' strike. Like a flip of a switch, we're back there, in 1984, when we, the strikers and their families, were hungry for information from Arthur to keep us strong.

In real life the murdered 1984 striking miner was Keith Frogson, known to his friends as Froggy. He was not killed by a deranged youth who locked himself in a garage as shown in the series. He was murdered by a 1984 scab miner, Robert Boyer who

was a member of the UDM, a breakaway scab union, formed in Notts. Froggy was not only attacked by a crossbow, but also hacked to death on his doorstep with a knife.

This was deep seated resentment that had not gone away because the strike had ended. Lives had changed course forever, some families on opposite sides of the battle have never spoken to each other again. After the strike Froggy, like most strikers, continued to call the 1984 betrayers of the working class by the only label they deserved: scab.

Annesley Woodhouse, like most mining communities, had been torn apart by the strike. The feeling was still raw in 2004, when the real events happened; the mining jobs had not been replaced. The scene where the fictitious Sparrow family bag up Class A drugs on the kitchen table is a realistic nod to how some miners turned to drugs after the strike to deal with their depression or a way to pay the bills.

It was difficult to watch the scene when some striking miners arrived from Barnsley to pay their respects to Gary Jackson, the character based on Froggy in the series. The drama



PHOTO: BBC

implies they were not welcome by the family or the staff at the 'clubby'. The club is the Annesley Woodhouse Working Mens Club and would not have turned away any National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) strikers. In 2004, the club was managed by Keith Stanley, who was Notts NUM general secretary. Keith gave a reading at Froggy's funeral. To suggest the NUM would not have been welcomed is insulting.

The most accurate part of the storyline for me so far, is the animosity still felt towards the Metropolitan Police by both strikers and the local police force. In 1984 police forces from other areas were sent into mining communities in the hope that the police would not have any divided allegiances.

Some police forces sent to our local area in Notts tried to build up a friendly relationship, but this all stopped when the Met were sent in. They behaved like animals, always looking to raise their batons, wrongfully arresting strikers on trumped-up charges, and were brutal on the picket lines.

The intrigue of discovering who the Spycop is in the fictionalised village is interesting. I guess we'll not be given a character's name and the community will be left looking at their neighbours with distrust. The state did use many undermining tactics in the 1984 strike, some very clumsily: tapping house phones that

sometimes replayed your last conversation when you picked up the phone, for example.

I don't recognise any connection between the second murder of the newly-wed with what actually happened. It's a shame the true story wasn't depicted instead of the fictional father-in-law next door scenario. The actual bride was murdered by her own father, who allegedly had a history of being violent to his family. This could have been an opportunity to explore how the events developed, from walking his daughter down the church aisle two weeks before murdering her.

I look forward to viewing the final two episodes, and hope they accurately depict Froggy's funeral. On that very sad day, the main street of Annesley Woodhouse was thronged with hundreds of NUM supporters who came to pay their respects. The church was full to capacity, with a tannoy used outside for the crowds who listened to the service.

I personally remember Froggy at the Durham Miners' Gala where we walked with pride with the NUM banners. He was like his character portrayed in the series, a warm-hearted gentleman who could always make you smile. Rest in peace Froggy.

● Episodes 1-4 of *Sherwood* are available on BBC iPlayer, episodes 5 and 6 air on 27 and 28 June on BBC1



From left to right Steve Minney, Froggy, Eric Eton and Keith Stanley at Durham Miners' Gala in 2002 PHOTO: WENDY MINNEY



Nigeria: Celebrating an outstanding revolutionary socialist

Segun Sango (born Segun Aderemi), the founding general secretary of the Democratic Socialist Movement (DSM), the CWI in Nigeria, sadly died in May. On 23 June, the CWI held a memorial meeting followed the next day by a 'Tribute Session' before he was laid to rest. The Tribute Session which was attended by over 300, including prominent Nigerian trade unionists.

● 'Segun Sango - an appreciation' an obituary by the CWI, can be read at socialistworld.net

the Socialist

formerly **Militant**

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30 June - 6 July 2022

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Karl Marx

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UNITE AND STRIKE TOGETHER

ROB WILLIAMS
NATIONAL SHOP STEWARDS NETWORK CHAIR

The last week or so has been a game changer as far as the trade union movement is concerned. Up to 100,000 of us marched through the streets of London on 18 June on the Trades Union Congress (TUC) demo. And last week, 50,000 RMT members shut down the national rail network and London Underground, where they were joined by 1,000 Unite members.

It was a vivid demonstration of the power of workers and, as we have seen during Covid, confirmation that we are the key force in society. From being constantly told that unions are too weak, the right-wing media are rabidly demanding that anti-union laws are beefed up further, and the Tories are threatening to introduce measures against strike action.

I was proud to stand with the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) banner on the RMT picket lines and the solidarity protest outside Kings Cross, with thousands of other workers. This included outsourced, low-paid striking GMB members from St George's Hospital in Tooting, demanding to be brought back into the NHS.

CWU general secretary Dave Ward brought solidarity greetings as his union ballots for national action in British Telecom and Royal Mail, while its members are striking in the Post Office.

This is part of a strike wave that has developed and grown out of the pandemic - firstly against bosses' attacks such as 'fire and rehire', and now for an inflation-proof pay rise to keep workers' heads above water during this cost of living crisis. It's why there is particular support for the rail strike: we, the working class, really are all in this together.

When workers look at this crisis-ridden Tory government, they know they can be defeated. But the most sure way to do that is to bring together workers across private and public sectors in a joint fight on pay and jobs.

It is absolutely essential that, as well as supporting each other's disputes, all the unions urgently meet together to coordinate industrial action ballots to build the widest possible action.

The NSSN was initiated by the RMT in 2006 under its late, great general secretary Bob Crow. We continue to build solidarity and support for unions and their members taking action. 2 July will be the 15th national NSSN conference.

This year, we have leaders from some of the key unions on our platform.

More than ever before, this year's NSSN conference is a vital forum for union members and reps to come together to talk about their struggles, and discuss the strategy, tactics and programme needed for the fight of our lives. Strike together!



Striking RMT and Unite Coventry bin workers, side by side LEN SHAIL

NSSN 2022 conference: Saturday 2 July, 11am - 4.30pm
Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL www.shopstewards.net

WHAT WE STAND FOR: THE SOCIALIST PARTY'S MAIN DEMANDS >>> see column on p12



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