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# the Socialist

Issue 1240

31 August - 6 September 2023

formerly **Militant**

## SAVE TICKET OFFICES



## SUPPORT RAIL WORKERS



## RENATIONALISE RAIL

ADAM HARMSWORTH  
COVENTRY SOCIALIST PARTY

**T**rain ticket prices rose 5.9% last year, higher than many workers' wages.

So far this year, passengers have only been promised they won't go up by more than 9%! At the same time, the privatised Train Operating Companies (TOCs) make gigantic profits, funded by us and by attacking rail workers' jobs, pay and conditions.

Privatisation has been

horrendous for everyone except the rail bosses who will always put profit over running a decent service. In the first 18 months from the beginning of the Covid pandemic, they made over £300 million while leaving staff and passengers worse off.

Worse still, the Tories funded those profits with our taxes. The government also directly compensates companies for losses from strike action. So far £1 billion has been funnelled to the rail companies to pay them for the ongoing dispute. Rail workers in RMT and Aslef unions continue their determined industrial action on 1 and 2 September respectively.

The recent wretched plans to shut

nearly every ticket office illustrate how privatisation is running the rail system into the ground. Capitalism's mythical promise is that the market inspires bosses to invest and improve services. Most workers can see this is a blatant lie. The largest poll ever done on the issue shows two thirds support public ownership of the railways.

Such is the failure of privatisation that one third of the TOCs are already back in public ownership but run top-down with bosses still attacking workers. When British Rail was in public ownership in the past, it was run top-down - underfunded and poorly maintained.

Bringing rail into democratic public ownership, run by the working class who actually have an interest in an affordable high-quality rail system, the money currently going to rail company profits and bosses' bloated salaries could be put to good use. We could cut ticket prices, and improve staff wages and conditions including fewer hours with no loss in pay.

By taking into public hands the mega-profits that have been siphoned off by big business bosses, and by nationalising those major companies and banks too, investment can be planned to provide all that we need. That could include

an expanded public transport system, democratically planned and free to use - along with other measures to tackle the climate crisis.

A socialist rail service under workers' democratic control and management must be the future of railways. The rail unions must demand that an incoming Keir Starmer-led government pledge to nationalise rail immediately, maintaining ticket offices and workers' pay, terms and conditions. And if those pledges aren't made, then prepare to back candidates at a general election that will, independently of Labour.

OUTPOURING OF OPPOSITION TO SEXISM IN SPAIN, FOOTBALL AND SOCIETY >>> p8-9

US: FISSURES PREPARE ERUPTION OF CRISIS AND STRUGGLE >>> p6-7

PRIGOZHIN DEATH INTENSIFIES TENSIONS IN RUSSIA >>> p11











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## nationalshopstewardsnetwork

# LOBBY THE TUC FIGHT THE ANTI- UNION LAWS DEFEND JOBS AND PUBLIC SERVICES



**1pm, Sunday 10 September**

**Premier Meetings, Albert Dock, Liverpool, L3 4AD**

**MICK WHALE**  
HULL SOCIALIST PARTY

**O**ver the last year or so, up and down the country, Socialist Party members have stood in solidarity with strikers on picket lines. In Hull and the East Riding one question has been raised on every picket line and demonstration: “Why isn’t the TUC (Trades Union Congress) coordinating the strikes to make them more effective”?

When the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN) called a lobby of the TUC conference in Liverpool, it was a no-brainer that we needed to be there to support it. Hull and District Trades Council voted unanimously to both support the lobby and send a coach.

The NSSN lobby is focusing on the need to coordinate a fightback against the latest Tory anti-trade union ‘minimum service level’ laws. If we don’t stop them, bosses will be able to decide who is allowed to strike and who has to go into work.

What hypocrites these Tories are! They have been happily cutting public services for the last decade and their cuts have forced dangerously low levels of care provision. The British Medical Association (BMA - which organises doctors) points out that over seven million people are now waiting for treatment. It is not strikes to blame for this mess, it is the Tories and their rotten system that puts profit before need.

The TUC has got to get its act together and organise a clear response to defend workers’ rights. TUC conference has to agree that a coordinated fightback be planned, publicised and organised. Such a strategy should include generalised strike action. The stakes are too high not to use strike action if the Tories try and implement their plans.

This lobby is a chance for grassroots union members to put pressure on union leaders to make a stand. Make sure you’re there on 10 September.

## Why we are going on the lobby

**JOYCE MARSHALL, HULL AND DISTRICT UNITY SHOP COORDINATOR AND UNITE ACTIVIST**

“I am going because I see the devastation that this government has caused to working and unemployed people. Our food bank is doing the best it can but we need a change in government. The TUC has to play its role in pulling workers together to stop the Tories.”

**STEVE SCOTT, EAST RIDING NATIONAL EDUCATION UNION**

“It’s critical that we keep up the pressure on the TUC to ensure they perform the role they should in uniting workers against this government.”

**MIKE HIRST, UNITE MEMBER**

“My branch (Unite NSec2) agreed to support the NSSN lobby. It will be good to hear Sharon Graham, our general secretary, speak at the rally. I hope the TUC will organise a campaign to stop the anti-trade union laws.”

**MATT, NHS NURSE IN UNISON, IN A PERSONAL CAPACITY**

“The Tories are trying to use safe staffing levels against the trade unions but it is the trade unions that have fought and campaigned to stop the destruction of the NHS. We must stand together to defend all public services and the organisations with the potential to do that are the trade unions. I’m going to Liverpool on 10 September to make sure that message is taken on board by every delegate to the conference.”

• To see the list of trade union bodies that are supporting the lobby of the TUC, and to add your branch or trades council, go to [shopstewards.net](http://shopstewards.net)

