

FEBRUARY 2023

Defend the Right to Strike!

The strike wave looks set to continue with teachers and others across the public sector joining or planning more action. Beyond the headline national disputes, hundreds of local strikes are achieving considerable success. The Tories are rattled but rather than resolve disputes, they are going on the offensive; however, recent polls show that vile media campaigns have had only a limited impact. Popular support remains high for most public sector strikes.

Sunak hopes a new law requiring “minimum service” levels will divide workers and force officials to settle on employers’ terms. Sunak’s bill threatens the right to strike, breaks International Labour Organisation Conventions, and is a threat to democracy and civil rights. Along with restrictions on protests, it marks a further slide towards authoritarianism. For more detail see: [here](#) and [here](#).

Claims that the new law guarantees minimum safety levels for staff and public and is no different to those of other European countries are total nonsense. Coming from a party that has presided over life threatening levels of understaffing in the NHS and social care, they are also sheer hypocrisy. Minimum service levels in other European countries are determined by collective agreement not government dictat!

Union leaders and the TUC must up the ante and turn the pay struggles into mass political defiance of the law. This was the lesson of the 1970s struggle against the Tory Industrial Relations Act.

So far the TUC is co-ordinating legal challenges to the bill and has launched a petition: <https://www.megaphone.org.uk/petitions/protect-the-right-to-strike>.

“Protect the Right to Strike” protests called for February 1 are a start. There will be over half a million workers on strike that day with unions co-ordinating marches and rallies. But rallies, marches and petitions will not be enough. Nor have high court judges traditionally defended strikes!

After February 1st activists must continue to call for maximum coordination.

But to defeat the law and actually start winning national disputes we must demand that union leaders escalate the action.

Pushing union leaders to co-ordinate and escalate strikes will not be straightforward. It will require an [effective grassroots rank and file strategy](#). Historically rank and file organisation amongst union members outside official union structures has always been necessary to build the mass political defiance needed to defy anti-union laws. [Such organisations have existed in the past at times of heightened industrial struggle](#). They are beginning to re-emerge as workers re-learn the power of collective action and solidarity. Left Unity will do all in our power to help build grass roots organisation and rank and file confidence. [See here for more on this:](#)

Craig Lewis, Left Unity TU Officer





7th Congress of the European Left

From December 9th to 11th the Party of the European Left (EL) held its 7th Congress in Vienna, Austria. It welcomed over 350 participants from over 40 parties from all around Europe as well as international guests from overseas (including Jeremy Corbyn for the Peace & Justice Project).

The motto of the Congress was "Peace, Bread and Roses": Peace, for our commitment to peace and disarmament; Bread, as we fight for decent living conditions; and Roses, for our fights against discriminations and for a good life for all. It sums up our main objective for the next few years: the creation of a social, ecological, democratic and peaceful world.

This weekend of constructive debates and decision-making, in 4 sessions, had plenty of topics on its agenda as well as decisions to take:

- Discuss and adopt a political document, marking its main political axes for the next 3-year cycle
- (Re-)Elect its leadership
- Propose, discuss, and adopt motions on many fields and topics of European as well as international politics, from the viewpoint of the EL and its members
- Hold an evaluation of its functioning in the past three years and make recommendations to its improvement for the new cycle
- Invite international guests in order to deepen the internationalist exchange with leftist forces worldwide.

For more information, you can read the documents adopted at: <https://www.european-left.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Adopted-Documents-EL-Congress-2022.pdf> "

Events

Wednesday 1st February: Protect the Right to Strike rallies:

Cardiff, Central Square, 11.30am
Glasgow, Joint union strike rally Feb 1st Buchanan St. Steps, Glasgow 11.30am

Glasgow, STUC / TUC public meeting: Glasgow Trades Hall, 1 Glassford St, G1 1 UH

Find your Right to Strike rallies here:
<https://www.tuc.org.uk/righttostrike/rallies>

Saturday 25th February – Stop the War Coalition National Demonstration – 12 noon Central London:
<https://www.stopwar.org.uk/events/top-the-war-in-ukraine-national-demonstration/>

Saturday 11th March – SOS NHS National Demonstration - 12 noon Central London:
<https://keepournhspublic.com/event/sos-nhs-national-demonstration-sat-11-march/>