

APRIL 2023

Budget Day of Action



Massive demonstrations were held in **London**. The head of the NEU march with the junior doctors reached Piccadilly Circus before the tail had left Park Lane. A separate PCS march joined in Trafalgar Square, more than filling the square.



Leeds University



While the **Glasgow** strike rally was smaller than on Feb. 1st, as the teachers have settled in Scotland and the junior doctors are currently balloting, there were several hundred there nevertheless, mostly from UCU and PCS.

Speakers called for more coordination, defiance of new laws and that Scottish Government stop passing on Tory cuts! Speakers also linked the divide and rule scapegoating of asylum seekers to a government strategy of distraction and creeping authoritarianism.

There were expressions of solidarity from non-striking unions including CWU, RMT, Unite and Unison.

Craig Lewis, LU

In **Leeds**, LU and Breakthrough members joined UCU pickets and the BMA junior doctors with Keep Our NHS Public and Unite Community. There were speakers from NEU, UCU and PCS.

Teaching is struggling as a profession. Many teachers would accept smaller pay increases for more planning and preparation time to make workloads manageable; average working weeks can be 60 hours. Class sizes are creeping up, bullying leads to vacancies that go unfilled, and schools cannot recruit specialists so classes are taught by teachers without subject specialism.

For supply teachers, especially if taking solidarity action, the situation is particularly difficult; as they are not employed by schools, they are not eligible to participate in strike ballots, and are already not paid holiday or sick pay, causing significant financial losses. This highlights the need to tackle the conditions of agency workers.

In health too, overtime and workloads are exhausting GPs, junior doctors, nurses, midwives and ambulance drivers, leading to physical and mental illness.

A recently retired consultant retired at 60 as they could not cope with 12 hours shifts and too many decisions being made by the minute and hour. Many consultants retiring at 65 do not live much long after.

These scandals are replicated across our public services and must be challenged!

Nick Jones, LU



Leeds BMA Strike

Link to interview with a patient on the picket line, **Colchester**: [Picket Line 15 3 23](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

Strike Wave Entering a New Phase.

The strike wave has entered a new phase, and both employers and the Tories have been rattled by the explosion of trade union militancy since last summer. This is why Sunak's government has dropped its hard-line refusal to talk to public sector unions.

As a result, some unions have called off planned strikes in exchange for negotiations, some are considering new offers and some have recommended them to members. We must be clear though: none of the deals on offer represent increased real pay. They are all below inflation, often staggered over a number of years and involve non-consolidated "one-off" payments, not permanent increases in pay. Some, like those offered to rail workers, include changes to working conditions that mean some workers will have to accept increased workloads to fund their pay rises.

There is now a real danger that worker resistance will become fragmented, and momentum will be lost. Those unions still taking action will come under increased pressure to settle for far less than could be achieved by maintaining the strikes.

The civil servants union leader, Mark Serwotka, warned other union leaders recently not to grab at shoddy compromises and to maintain solidarity so that no group of workers gets left behind. He's right!

Polls show continued public support for the strikes, unsurprising given the latest rise in inflation, in rents and in foodbank use. More unions are joining the action, and not just in the public sector either – action is spilling over into significant areas of the private sector such as the offshore oil industry.

Other unions are rejecting below inflation offers. College lecturers have resisted leadership attempts to call off planned strikes, and junior doctors have walked out of fruitless talks and called a four day strike after the Easter weekend.

In an even more positive development, there has been a marked revival in rank and file trade union organisation. [Health workers across different unions](#) have mounted a campaign to reject a divisive and below inflation deal recommended by their leaders. UCU lecturers have organised within the universities to stop their leadership pushing through a deal which would have ended action without any of their key demands being resolved.

Socialists and activists in the unions must give priority to encouraging such developments. If we don't, there is a real danger union members will become demoralised as their efforts and commitment are squandered by leaderships' haste to do deals. We need to rebuild rank and file organisation both within and across the trade unions to overcome sectional divisions, keep the pressure on union leaders and give union members the confidence to act independently of union leaderships if necessary.

Whatever happens next, the cost of living crisis will not go away anytime soon. Workers can have no faith in a Labour Party that has failed to back their struggle for decent living standards as poverty and inequality rise faster than at any time since the Second World War. Confident, combative rank and file trade unionism will be vital over the coming months. Left Unity will do all it can to help build and strengthen it.

Craig Lewis, LU

Events

21-24 April XR, The Big One: 100,000 continuous presence outside Parliament. Join the Left Unity/Breakthrough bloc.

<https://extinctionrebellion.uk/the-big-one/>

Celebrate the 75th Birthday of the NHS with politics and protest!

Saturday 1st July : assemble 11.00am Leeds Town Hall for the march.

Wednesday 5th July : (tbc)

Saturday 8th July: Durham Miners' Gala

Local Elections May 4th



Breakthrough Party candidates are standing for local elections on the 4th May. We encourage LU members in those regions, if they are able, to support their campaigns. You can contact the candidates at the email addresses below.

Hucknall West, Ashfield District Council: Andrew Meikle
andrew4hucknall@btparty.uk

Chatteris South, Fenland District Council : Matt Jeal
matt4chatterissouth@btparty.uk

Laindon Park, Basildon Borough Council: Phil Rackley
phil4laindonpark@btparty.uk

Otley and Yeadon, Leeds City Council & Manor Ward, Otley Town Council: Elliot Nathan
elliott4otley@btparty.uk

