



Support the Strikes!

Defy the anti-union laws!

2022 saw more strikes in Britain than any year since 2011 as workers continued to fight back against an on-going cost of living crisis that is set to see poverty, foodbank use, and homelessness hit even wider sections of the working class.



Over half a million workers took strike action together on February 1st. In a clear indication of rising militancy and confidence, teachers, civil servants, train drivers and university lecturers co-ordinated their strikes across the country. On March 15th, 700,000 workers again took co-ordinated action this time joined by junior doctors striking for the first time in their union's history. There have been countless local strikes, many winning above inflation pay. After decades of union passivity workers are re-learning from each other the power of collective action.

The Tories are rattled by the scale of working class resistance but they aim to break it. Sunak's Minimum Service Bill goes way beyond all previous anti-union laws. It allows ministers and employers to sack selected workers who refuse to work even if their strike is lawful. Offers of talks to public sector unions if they call off strikes seek to play on sectionalism and the inherent conservatism of union officials. The intention is to divide unions, break momentum and undermine solidarity. Shameful scapegoating of refugees and asylum seekers aims to further divide workers. Worse it legitimises fascists like Patriotic Alternative peddling their racist filth in our communities.

Don't let the Tories divide us!

Public sympathy remains with the strikers, and the Tories have failed to stop the strike wave so far. Many unions including the NEU,

PCS, UCU, and Junior Doctors plan to continue strikes into the Spring and Summer. Many new local disputes are breaking out, notably Unite offshore workers. But RCN and Unison have now recommended members accept a sub-inflation deal. There is an obvious danger of fragmentation and loss of momentum if other unions follow suit. This will be compounded if union leaders or sections of the Left start to focus on getting Labour elected next year.

Labour is no Solution.

In Left Unity we believe that Labour offers no solution. Since the Corbyn period it has shifted sharply to the right. Starmer has consistently refused to support the strikers, to challenge neoliberalism or to confront hostile refugee and asylum policies. The pressing question now is whether Britain's revived union militancy can combine with social movements and community campaigns to become the nucleus of a genuinely transformative political alternative. We will do all we can to make this happen.



As a first step we encourage all socialists and activists in the trade union movement to:

- **Demand more co-ordinated strikes** to overcome sectionalism and build solidarity across unions.
- **Escalate the strikes.** Time limited "demonstration strikes" have helped re-build workers' sense of collective power. But escalated action up to and including all out strikes will be

necessary to put serious pressure on employers and government.

- **Defy the new laws** The TUC's legal review strategy is unlikely to work. Judges are no friends to the working class. The new laws are a threat to democracy as well as trade union rights.
- **Rebuild rank and file networks** within and across our unions. This is now top priority for union activists.

Why Rank and File Organisation is Key.



A new generation of militant union leaders such as RMT's Mick Lynch and Sharon Graham of Unite has been instrumental in reviving militancy, winning public sympathy, and inspiring rank and file worker confidence in collective action. But even militant union leaders have historically been reluctant to allow strikes to become direct political challenges to government. Overcoming this reluctance means rebuilding the kind of confident and combative rank and file networks that existed in the past at high points of industrial struggle. These enable workers to put pressure on leaders, overcome sectional differences and act independently of officials if necessary. There's no magic formula but rank and file organising always involves:

- **Workplace organising:** Rank and file organisation starts in your workplace.

Make sure everyone has an elected workplace representative for their section, try for regular workplace meetings of all reps; set up WhatsApp or other social media groups for 24/7 coordination; Strikes are attracting new members in many sectors (50,000 in the NEU!). This can be a springboard for renewing workplace organisation. Hold regular workplace meetings for all members. There's always Zoom! The key is not to let "the Union" become separated from the members.

- **Democracy.** Ballots and re-ballots can be used as a focus for organising in and across workplaces. This is happening already in some unions like NEU and UCU. It can open opportunities to build locally elected strike committees.
- **Solidarity:** Building solidarity for other workers taking action, organising support for strike funds etc can be another focus. Recent strikes and rallies were often co-ordinated locally through union branches or trades councils. Building on such links lead to more permanent rank and file networks.

Britain's cost of living crisis will not go away anytime soon. Living standards are predicted to go on falling and poverty and inequality to rise faster than at any time since the Second World War. Left Unity is on the side of all those fighting back. Our trade union caucus meets monthly. We are small but we have members covering the country from Aberdeenshire to Cornwall. You don't have to be a Left Unity member to take part (contact details below). We focus on all aspects of trade union activity. Particularly how to link it with wider struggles for transformative change. At their best, union struggles give us a glimpse of a society based on equality, solidarity, and collective action, in contrast to a system which puts profit before people and the planet.

Left Unity is a radical Ecosocialist Party

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