

Time to escalate and coordinate

WORKERS POWER / 27 July 2022 / workerspower.uk

The end of July and the heat wave of strikes shows no sign of abating. Wednesday — RMT national rail strike; Thursday — BT Openreach engineers strike; Saturday — Aslef national rail strike; Monday — BT engineers in the CWU at it again! Plus we have declared ballots for strike action in Royal Mail, in 39 Further Education Colleges, Post Offices, Arriva Northwest, London tube workers... even the barristers have judged their pay offer to be criminally low!

In September others are likely to join the queue for a slice of the action: civil servants facing job losses and pay cuts; NHS workers clapped in the pandemic, now having their pay clipped; council workers and teachers, likewise; and London buses facing huge cuts.

You don't have to be Tomasz Schafner to know that we're in a period of high pressure!

COORDINATION

While all this reflects a growing anger at the bosses and the Tories' refusal to protect our living standards in a period of high and rising inflation (11.9% June RPI), there is little sign of the strikes being coordinated.

Mick Lynch of the RMT and Dave Ward of the CWU have both talked about the need to put in similar claims and set joint strike dates. But actions speak louder than words. This week there is not one day when two different unions or two different sectors are on strike together.

We understand there are reasons for this. Some sections have only just finished their ballots; others are back in negotiations after previous action; and yet more have a set timetable of strikes.

However none of these reasons outweigh the need for the current wave of strikes to turn into a tsunami. If we keep striking on different days, making claims and settling for different amounts, then

a few of us will win real pay rises, some of us will mitigate our losses, settling for 5–7%, and most of us will face years of poverty or even destitution.

By striking together we can dominate the news. Everyone will notice. Other workers, not in the frontline today, will demand their union ballots and joint the strikers tomorrow. Millions will want to join a trade union!

We need to take advantage of the fact that strikes for more pay are hugely popular. When wages are turning to dust while profits and City bonuses are turning in double digit growth, people instinctively know the unions are right. Now is the time to pile in with wage demands and recruit non-union workers into the movement.

ESCALATION

But coordination also logically poses the question of escalation. If we want to make the strikes bigger so they can become a rallying point for every other group of workers, then we also need to make them last longer.

Some RMT members have rightly criticised the decision to follow up the three days of action in June (the first of which was coordinated with the tube strike) with a single isolated strike day at the end of July.

The bosses and the Tories know how to escalate their response to us. Royal Mail threw down the gauntlet by

unilaterally tearing up posties' terms and conditions, necessitating the CWU to organise a fresh ballot. Liz Truss has escalated by calling for more anti-union laws.

It is a law of the class struggle that when the enemy ups the stakes, we are ready to respond in kind.

All unions in dispute need to coordinate their strike dates from now on and if possible their claims too.

Every union needs to call sharply escalating strike action: three days in the first week; then a whole week; then all out indefinite.

Every trade unionist needs to demand their union ballots now so they can join the fight. Those who are not in a union should join and recruit their workmates too.

We all need to form local strike support committees—councils of action—that can draw in representatives from every union branch and workplace, every school, college and university, every housing estate and neighbourhood. Their task is simple:

- To turn the strike wave into a class struggle;
- To make the bosses pay for the cost of living crisis;
- To turn these defensive struggles into a united offensive against the capitalist system that is the root cause of exploitation and poverty.



**RAISE PAY
CUT PROFITS
TAX THE RICH
STRIKE TO WIN.**

COUNCILS OF ACTION
In every town, city and workplace, school, workplace, set up a council of action to coordinate the struggle. Take the fight to the Tories.

INFLATION PROOF PAY
15% or 25, whichever is greater, on wages, pensions and benefits, indexed to inflation, as determined by workers' price watch committees every month.

END THE UNION
For workers' control of the unions—mass meetings to elect our able delegates to strike committees to meet all demands, what the class is able to do, all negotiations, spreading the action.

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