

# Build councils of action

WORKERS POWER / 17 August 2022 / [www.workerspower.uk](http://www.workerspower.uk)

- Support all strikes for inflation-proof pay deals
- Build the unions where they don't exist
- Rally the community and resist price hikes

**Enough Is Enough! is calling for local groups to be set up so trade unionists and community activists can link up and form a united front against the Tories and the bosses. We agree. In fact these are already taking shape in the form of strike solidarity committees but they need to spread beyond a few committed activists and draw in representatives – or delegates – from all the local unions, workplaces, educational establishments and working class neighbourhoods or housing estates.**

If the non-payment campaign takes off or the TUC calls a general strike, then such councils of action will be crucial to their success.

Today our immediate task is to support those unions – the RMT, TSSA, Unite, Aslef, CWU – already taking strike action and to encourage those balloting – NEU, Unison, PCS, RCN – to join them.

Together we should encourage all unions to coordinate their actions: uniting their claims, striking together and striking for longer. Instead of a day here and a day there, why not all out together for a week? – longer if they don't concede.

## **The fightback has begun**

CWU (Communication Workers Union) members are striking across all three of its major sectors: post offices, BT and Royal Mail. Not only a first in the union's history but also the biggest call centre strike ever in the UK.

Sharon Graham of Unite has said, 'Workers are growing in confidence and becoming more assertive. Since I was elected [last August] 63,000 Unite members have gone into dispute

winning over £50 million. There could be hundreds of disputes involving tens of thousands of people over the coming months if workers are made to pay the price for inflation.'

She's right. Shell and BP have made more than \$35 billion profits in the last six months, while millions simply cannot afford to pay their bills. They should be expropriated – nationalised without compensation – so that energy bills can be capped at an affordable level.

Certainly, wages need to rise at least in line with inflation. There has been no sustained increase in real wages for the better part of two decades. As well as such catch-up claims, we need a system of regular pay increases that keep up with future increases in the cost of living. Unions should call for a sliding scale of wage so that every month our pay is increased by the same amount as inflation: a penny on the prices, a penny on our wages!

## **Whole working class needs a lift**

This should also fully apply to pensioners, the disabled, the unemployed on universal credit, housing and disability

benefits etc. Students should see their debts cancelled and grants restored; trainee nurses should have their bursaries restored.

The question about what can be done to stop the energy price rise on 1 October needs to be addressed. Trade unions should work with the Don't Pay UK campaign, which is appealing for one million people to pledge to cancel their direct debit payments to the energy companies when the increase approaches.

As for restraint on profits, the only sure way to achieve this is to increase the tax on them, not – as Liz Truss and Rishi Sunak are promising – to cut them. As well as a windfall tax on 100% of the energy firms' profits, the government needs to raise corporation tax and introduce a wealth tax on the rich.

## **Class-wide councils of action**

A mighty combined movement of the trade unions, pensioners, students, and working class communities hit by soaring inflation can bring the Tory government and its new leader, to their knees.

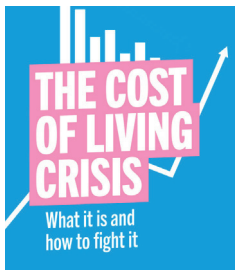
By drawing in young people from the estates, the schools and the environmental movement, as well as housing activists and those from the women's, LGBT+ and anti-racist movements, and linking them to rank & file trade unionists – all our actions can be amplified so that no one is left behind.

In the process we can revive and rebuild the trade unions and create a political movement in the process that can challenge Starmer and the right wing Blairites who have taken over the Labour Party.

# Renationalise public transport

THE GOVERNMENT argues that the railway needs to be ‘modernised’. But many of their claims about ‘outdated’ working practices are in fact critical to safe railways — or a consequence of privatisation. The argument that the pandemic has dramatically reduced railway use is overstated. But in any case, tackling climate change, reducing pollution, and improving infrastructure for work and leisure requires expanding the railways and public transport — not their managed decline.

The Tories want to blame unions for the railways’ problems. But the government and rail bosses aren’t interested in modernisation if it hurt their profits. The railway is not run as a public service — it is run in the interest of private profit. And what goes for the railways goes for bus services too. The fight to defend jobs and conditions must go hand in hand with the fight to kick out the profiteers and return the railway to public ownership, run under the democratic control of workers and passengers, and funded by taxing the profits of Britain’s billionaires. ■



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## Defend the right to strike

IN THE dying days of the Johnson government, a new law has been passed allowing bosses to break strikes by employing temporary agency staff. Business secretary Kwasi Kwarteng boasted, “This was a criminal offence. Now it’s an option for business.” Tory policy summed up in a tweet!

The new attack represents a serious tightening of what Tony Blair enthusiastically described as “the most restrictive anti-union laws in Europe.” As if this wasn’t enough, Tory leadership candidate Liz Truss has promised a further crackdown if she wins. Her proposals would institute minimum service levels on “critical national infrastructure”—effectively removing the right to strike for millions of workers in transport, energy, education, health and the post.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch described the changes as “the latest step in a clampdown on democratic dissent, which every trades unionist and democrat must oppose”.

Too right—but how? 12 trade unions have filed a legal challenge to the new law. We should use every means to overturn the changes—but we don’t have to wait for the bosses’ courts to decide.

We have to make the law unworkable through mass, militant and decisive action the minute it is resorted to. This means mounting mass pickets outside workplaces. Elected strike committees should organise stewarding of pickets to defend them from police harassment.

Skilled workers like engineers, train drivers or teachers are unlikely to be affected immediately. But cleaners, security guards, retail and hospitality workers are under threat. We need to be prepared to take solidarity action to help any section of workers targeted by this new law. Almost all effective trade union action—solidarity strikes, mass pickets, workplace voting—is outlawed. But enough is enough. If we all act together, they can’t arrest us all! ■

# Strike to win: spread the action

WHILE THE government is enjoying a long summer holiday, workers are taking action to fight the cost of living crisis. 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, there is little sign of the strikes being coordinated.

## Coordination

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. 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. Other workers, not in the frontline today, will demand their union ballots and join the strikers tomorrow.

Now is the time to pile in with wage demands and recruit

non-union workers into the movement.

## Escalation

But coordination 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 decisive.

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, forcing the CWU to organise a fresh ballot. Liz Truss has escalated by calling for more anti-union laws.

When the class enemy ups the stakes, we have to respond in kind. All unions in dispute need to coordinate their strike dates from now on and if possible their claims too.

We need to strike to win. Every union needs to call sharply escalating strike action: three days in the first week; then a whole week; then 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.

Strike committees should be elected and develop regional and national links to ensure strategy and negotiations are democratically controlled by the strikers themselves.

## WHAT IS WORKERS POWER?

THIS BULLETIN is produced by the revolutionary communist organisation **WORKERS POWER**.

We support all workers in struggle against the bosses. We fight to turn every struggle into a conscious fight against the whole profit system. It is the system that is the problem, not just this or that boss or government.

Behind the Tories and their billionaire media backers lies the capitalist system. It is a system that puts millions on the dole, seeks to drive down wages and destroys the environment. It is a system that diverts attention from its crimes by bloody wars, and by dividing up the workers amongst themselves by promoting racism and sexism.

We want to destroy that system and replace it with one where production is guided by the needs

of the many, not the profits of the few. That means taking the wealth of society; the banks and the major firms, into the hands of the working class and drawing up a democratic plan of production under workers’ control.

To get this we have to smash the capitalist state; the police, courts, army and judiciary and replace it with a new kind of state based on democratically elected and accountable workers’ councils.

The working class has the power to do this. It is rediscovering its enormous power to defeat the bosses through strike action. We think that power should be used to smash capitalism and build a new kind of society without poverty, oppression and war.

If you agree with what we say—join us.