

workers power

**TUC
London
Rally**

02.11.22

www.workerspower.uk

As Tory divisions grow: workers' action can win

- **Smash the pay cap: 15% indexed to inflation on all claims**
- **Councils of action to unite fights over pay, rent and bills**

SIX WEEKS was all Tory MPs needed to put an end to the Truss experiment. This time they did not make the mistake of consulting their members. Having already installed Jeremy Hunt as Chancellor, the election rules were blatantly rigged in favour of the bankers' man Rishi Sunak.

The forces of chaos, in the guise of Boris Johnson, were determined to spoil Sunak's coronation, but Tory MPs threatened to split the party rather than accept his leadership. This concentrated enough minds to scupper his bid. But the fact that they resorted to such desperate measures is indicative of the depth of the crisis British capitalism and its traditional ruling party, are in.

Britain has been subjected to a constitutional coup, carried through with the encouragement of the bond markets, the Bank of England and the IMF. The democratic case for a general election is clear. But the Tories won't be driven from office unless and until their plan to make workers pay for the crisis is comprehensively defeated.

Truss' departure concludes the third act in the Tories' attempt to make Brexit work. After the paralysis of Theresa May's Brexit-lite, then the detour through Johnson's populism, Truss heralded the rise to power of the free-market fundamentalists who knew what Brexit was really about: unleash-

ing economic growth by ripping up the welfare state, employment rights and regulations. The appointment of the multimillionaire ex-banker Rishi Sunak has merely delayed the detonation on the depth charge which Brexit has laid in the foundations of British capitalism and its party.

Kwasi Kwarteng's budget was designed to justify the ongoing suffocation of the health service by creating a hole in public finances. Although he fell or rather was pushed into the hole, his sacrifice was not in vain; our public services face 'painful', 'eye-watering' cuts.

The new budget will set out the precise balance between spending cuts and tax rises but, like every budget since 2010, austerity will decimate the welfare state and impose severe cuts to people's living standards with pay, pensions and benefits pegged way below inflation.

The wider government programme consists of attacking the working class' ability to resist these attacks, and intensifying exploitation: attacks on trade union rights, intensifying the hostile environment, expanding free ports and deregulation.

Labour's 'alternative'

The courting of Britain's bosses by the Labour Party leadership, a re-run of Blair's infamous 'prawn cocktail offensive', is an attempt to sell Labour to the bosses as a

responsible steward of British capitalism.

As proof of this Starmer has abandoned Labour's 2017 and 2019 manifestos and reneged on the pledges made during his leadership election. His recent speech to the TUC Congress was a blunt warning that Labour is committed to being the party of 'sound money' that will take 'difficult decisions'. The TUC top table enthusiastically applauded him.

Labour's pitch rests on its links to the top levels of Britain's pro-capitalist trade union bureaucracy, allowing it to more effectively pacify and police working class resistance to the restoration of 'economic responsibility'.

That is why, in the mouths of the Labour and trade union leaders, the call for a general election now is a diversion. Not only does it rely on the illusion that a Labour government would protect the working class against the economic crisis, it also has no means of achieving its aim... unless it is tied to a strategy of raising the level of class struggle.

Only mass workers' action—demonstrations, strikes, civil disobedience—can drive the Tories from office. And only a government that rests on workers' organisations—strike committees, councils of action, defence guards—can become a real workers' government that rules for the many, not the few.

Royal Mail takes hostages

AT LEAST thirty CWU reps and members have been suspended, often on trumped up charges, by managers. This is a calculated attack on the union's strength, taking the reps out of the workplace to try to weaken the strike. Royal Mail has every interest in dragging these out, effectively taking reps hostage until the end of the strike and whatever amnesty is put in place as part of a deal.

Where workers can they should challenge this with sit-ins and walk-outs, but until the rep is freed, it makes it even more important that workplace committees are built of reps and militants that can fill the gap and oversee the strike, keeping people informed, addressing the concerns of members worried about money, approaching agency workers to convince them to respect the strike.

Unison's yellow attack on NEU

THE NEU has won an impressive mandate to call an official strike ballot for a cost of living pay increase. Over 250,000 teachers and 50,000 support staff members backed action by large majorities.

But because the NEU does not have bargaining rights for school support workers, it has been dragged before the TUC by Unison claiming they have breached an agreement not to actively recruit or seek negotiating rights for school support staff.

Unison bureaucrat Mike Short has instructed branch secretaries to stop all collaborative work with the NEU at every level of organisation unless there are ongoing campaigns or members' direct interests would be harmed—as if this would not be the natural outcome of this ludicrous decision.

Worse, he has written a model letter for branches to send to school employers informing them of their breaking off of relations with the NEU, saying, 'Where possible we are asking school employers to support UNISON's position in relation to the NEU.'

This is yellow unionism. It crosses the line of the class struggle. It is calling on the employers to side with them against a union that is on the verge of taking national industrial action.

It is calling on its members not to support a legitimate strike by a fellow trade union for purely selfish, monetary reasons—the membership subs they fear they will lose and which form the basis of their high-paid positions.

All local government Unison branches should condemn such behaviour, call for Short to be sacked and urge their members to respect NEU picket lines at the least or to take out dual membership of the NEU so they can participate in the strike vote and walk out with them.

Where the barriers between teachers, educational and office support staff, cleaners, caterers and premise officers are broken down, there trade unionism is stronger. The logical conclusion to this is to build one industrial union that speaks for all grades and defends every worker. Unity is strength; an injury to one is an injury to all: these are not age-old trade union slogans for nothing.

There is only one response to yellow unionism—industrial unionism waging the class struggle.

BRIEFING: ANTI-UNION LAWS

TUC talk is cheap. We need action to defend right to strike

IN THE dying days of the Johnson government, a new law was 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." The Tory programme summed up in a tweet!

The change also raised the maximum penalty a union can be fined for unlawful action from £25,000 to £1 million. This represents a serious tightening of what Tony Blair described as "the most restrictive anti-union laws in Europe," and that wasn't meant as a criticism!

As if this wasn't enough, one of the few things achieved by Liz Truss was the introduction of further anti-strike legislation. The Bill proposes to institute minimum service levels during transport strikes.

Further measures will give employers the whip hand by compelling unions to suspend action and ballot the membership on every new pay offer. Any trade unionist can tell you that that this would effectively outlaw all strikes, because the bosses would simply offer slightly different versions of the same terrible deal over and over again.

Addressing the TUC Congress in October, outgoing General Secretary Frances O'Grady said:

"Today I give ministers notice. We've already taken legal counsel and we know you're in breach of international law and trade deals that enshrine labour standards. So read my lips: we will see you in court."

The idea that the bosses' courts will come to our rescue is a dangerous illusion and shows how the unwilling the union leaders are to stand up and fight. We must do that ourselves.

Almost all effective trade union action—solidarity strikes, flying pickets, workplace voting—is already outlawed. But enough is enough.

Action, not words

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch described the proposals as 'the latest step in a clampdown on democratic dissent, which every trades unionist and democrat must oppose'. Too right—but what are the unions going to do about it?

This summer, Lynch threatened a general strike if minimum service laws are brought in. But this fighting talk was just that; the left union leaders will never act without the TUC—and the failure of these "lefts" to put a general strike on the agenda at the recent TUC Congress shows they won't act unless there is pressure and organisation from below.

We call for the creation of cross-union rank and file committees in every workplace to prepare the necessary action: mass pickets to stop scab labour breaking strikes, stewards' groups to defend pickets from police harassment, wildcat action against victimisation.

Any tightening of the anti-union laws or their use to outlaw strikes or penalise unions must be met with the full solidarity of the entire labour movement—a general strike to smash the anti-union laws.

WE FIGHT FOR WORKERS' POWER

WORKERS POWER is a revolutionary communist organisation.

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 employer or government.

Behind the Tories and their billionaire backers lies the capitalist system. It is a system that puts millions on the dole, drives down wages, and destroys the environment. 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.

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.

Scan the QR code
to find out more

