

- Campaign for escalating strikes under rank and file control
- Build councils of action to coordinate the resistance

STEP UP THE ACTION TO SMASH THE PAY CAP

THE WORKING class is facing the most serious attack on its living standards in a generation or more.

Workers have responded with the biggest wave of strike action since the 1980s. Millions of workers in the private and public sector have struck for pay rises to keep pace with the soaring price of food, energy, rent and bills.

Hiding behind Pay Review Boards (health, schools) or spurious claims that it is not the employer (transport), the government has obstructed negotiations and agreements for months. Wealthy and greedy employers, like Royal Mail and Abellio, are refusing to pay inflation-proof rises despite healthy profits.

With no plan to deal with the crisis of British capitalism, exacerbated by years of falling productivity and the self-harm of Brexit, the Tories are resorting to an offensive against the trade unions and migrant workers, driven by the need to appease the party's populist right and membership.

Now Sunak is rushing the Strikes (minimum service levels) Bill through parliament. This would outlaw all effective industrial action in health, education and transport, threatening to bankrupt the unions and sack strikers.

We have to stop this attack on our living standards, working conditions and our only means of defence, fighting unions.

Today must be the beginning—and not the end—of a real campaign to defeat the anti-strike laws and secure pay rises that

really compensate for double digit inflation. Over half a million teachers, lecturers, civil servants, train and bus drivers are on strike today. In many schools support staff are going to respect picket lines and take unofficial action.

Others, like the train crews, posties and nurses should be standing with them,

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shoulder to shoulder. But their leaders have not called them out despite firebrand words about the class struggle and coordinated strikes. The rank & file must make it clear that in future all calls for solidarity action will be taken up by all unions in dispute.

Likewise local solidarity committees are organising picket support, rallies and benefit gigs to support the strikers. Meanwhile the General Secretaries are parading their branded campaigns, like Enough is Enough,

People's Assembly and Unite for a Workers' Economy, without setting up any local campaigns or supporting existing ones.

Every worker, every union is under attack. We need an equivalent response from our side to repel the bosses' and Tories' offensive.

This means escalating our strikes now, so that the employers and government feel the heat of our anger and are forced to concede our right to a decent standard of living. They should know that all-out indefinite strike action is coming their way if they don't.

This means more coordination of strike action. The next day of joint strike action is tabled for 15 March, Budget Day. This is too far away. We need to hit them every week and for more than one day at a time. We need more unions, more sectors of workers to join in. We need to target the government explicitly.

Finally this means being prepared and organised to defy undemocratic laws preventing us from taking effective action—mass pickets to stop scabbing, workplace meetings and votes for action, solidarity strikes up to and including a general strike.

Key tasks for the movement:

- Follow up 1 February with more joint strikes.
- Strike committees in every workplace.
- A rank and file movement in the unions.
- Councils of action to unite the resistance.
- Smash the pay cap: 15% or £15ph for all.
- Index pay, pensions, benefits to inflation.
- General strike to smash the anti-union laws.

We need to strike to win

OVER TWO million workers have taken strike action over pay since last June. You have to go back to the 1980s to find similar figures for working class resistance.

Millions more support the strikers and would join them if they could. Indeed doctors and firefighters are already queuing up to strike and many more will follow as inflation remains high and energy prices are set to soar again in April.

This is testimony to the bravery and self-sacrifice of workers faced with unfair real pay cuts in a time of runaway price rises.

But six months on we are no nearer to winning inflation-proof deals than we were six months ago. That is because the strategy of the union leaders—even ‘lefts’ like Mick Lynch, Sharon Graham and Dave Ward—is

not working.

This strategy consists of a few weeks of one or two-day strikes, followed by weeks or months of no action so that secret ‘talks’ (which inevitably break down) can take place. This is a mug’s game. We need to strike to win.

Rank & file workers need to organise workplace meetings to debate strike strategy and take control of their own union and their own disputes.

All strikes need to escalate swiftly towards all-out indefinite action. Let the bosses know we won’t be coming back till we win decent pay for all.

We need to coordinate our strikes every time, so the Tories feel the heat. Sunak and Co. are already reeling under the weight of economic collapse and corruption scandals.

Let’s direct our joint strikes at the government and demand they pay all public sector workers a cost of living pay rise.

And we should not simply whinge about Keir Starmer’s Labour Party and its pro-big business agenda. We must demand the unions put forward their own demands for a workers’ government: real rises in pay, pensions and benefits; price caps on all essentials; investment in public services paid for by taxing the rich; abolition of all the anti-union laws.

Left to their own devices the union leaders will eventually push settlements, one by one, that fall far short of this. Only the rank & file have the interest in winning these strikes so no one is left behind. Only the rank & file can lead the strikes to victory.

Anti-strike laws rip up workers’ rights

RISHI SUNAK and Grant Shapps are rushing the Strikes (minimum service levels) Bill through parliament in order to deny workers the right to strike in six named sectors: health, transport, education, fire and rescue, nuclear power decommissioning and border security.

If passed it will immediately apply, even to strikes that are already underway. Despite Sunak’s insistence that the new law is the same as those in place in France and Spain, union leaders there have denied this is the case. It marks a new level of dictatorship in the workplace.

What is the minimum service that must be provided on strike days? Well, that depends entirely on what Grant Shapps decides. He may consult as many—or as few—people as he decides. There are no set criteria—the words ‘health’ and ‘safety’ do not appear in the Bill.

The employer can name the workers prescribed to meet this service level. The striking union is instructed to take ‘reasona-

ble steps’ to ensure workers comply with this ‘work notice’. Given the number of suspended shop stewards and reps being victimised on the buses, in the post and elsewhere, we can expect local strike leaders to be named.

If for whatever reason the service level is not maintained, the strike will be considered immediately unlawful, even if postal ballots and strike notices were all squeaky clean.

The union will lose immunity from prosecution for losses by employers or customers; employees issued ‘work notices’ may be fired and lose their right for this to be considered unfair; even other strikers not called into work that day can be dismissed as their strike is declared ‘unofficial’.

Implications

If the Bill is passed it would represent a huge increase in the powers of the state to undermine the effectiveness of strikes in all the major areas of the current strike wave. So-called Henry VIII powers will reside in Grant Shapps not only to decide what parts of the services must run, but who has the right or not to strike across entire industries.

Strikers could be picked off by vindictive employers and sacked, even if the strike is legal.

To date the TUC—even its ‘left’ wing in the shape of Mick Lynch, Dave Ward and Sharon Graham—have resigned themselves to the Bill passing, only threatening legal action and ‘a mass campaign’ after the Act.

This is a recipe for defeat: fighting talk and nothing more. Britain is already breaking ILO conventions and the EU Charter of Rights—nothing has happened!

We demand a mass campaign and mass action now—political strike action—before the blow is struck. This was the key to the Pentonville dockers release 50 years ago and the killing of the In Place of Strife Bill before that. It is key today.

- Kill the Bill
- Mass demos and political strikes against the Bill
- Co-ordinate and escalate the strikes
- Build local councils of union delegates to decide democratically on action
- Build for a general strike

WHO ARE WE?

WORKERS POWER organises for democracy, workers’ control and class struggle methods in the labour movement. We are revolutionary communists: against capitalist war, poverty, oppression and climate breakdown, we fight for a socialist economy democratically planned to meet human need.

**AGREE WITH US?
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**@WORKERSPOWERL51
WWW.WORKERSPOWER.UK**