

Stand with Ukraine: UK TUC backs their right to resist Russian aggression

Fred Leplat reports on the UK TUC Congress in Liverpool

The TUC congress on 12 September adopted overwhelmingly a [motion in solidarity](#) with the people Ukraine in their war of liberation from Putin's invasion of their country. Three major unions, the RMT, the UCU and the NEU, abstained while the FBU spoke against the motion. It commits the TUC to support "The immediate withdrawal of Russian forces from all Ukrainian territories occupied since 2014" and "A peaceful end to the conflict that secures the territorial integrity of Ukraine and the support and self-determination of the Ukrainian people". The motion also states that the TUC notes "That those who suffer most in times of war are the working class, and that the labour movement must do all it can to prevent conflict; however, that is not always possible".

TUC Resolution Affirms Solidarity with Ukrainian People

The position now adopted by the TUC, which has unions representing over 5.5 million workers, is a huge boost for the morale of the Ukrainian people, and the Ukrainian unions in particular. The TUC policy is now to support "The full restoration of labour rights in Ukraine and a socially-just reconstruction that ... rejects deregulation and privatisation," which is the opposite of what the Tory government was pushing at its [Ukraine Reconstruction conference](#) in June with its neoliberal emphasis on private investment and reforms.

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The TUC resolution is pro-Ukraine, not pro-war. However it was [caricatured by Andrew Murray](#) of the Stop the war Coalition as “a call for the trade unions to align in support of the most hard-line elements among NATO policy-makers and push for the war to continue until Russian surrender”. The StWC [denounced](#) the vote as “A vote for war that Sunak and Starmer will welcome”, while the [SWP declares](#) that the “TUC backs war and clears the way for more arms spending.” These responses fall into the binary trap set by Blair and Bush to win support for the war in Iraq: “Either you support the war or you support Saddam Hussein.” It is entirely possible to support the people of Ukraine in their armed resistance, be critical of Zelensky’s neoliberal government and also oppose NATO.

No to NATO Expansion and Arms Escalation

Internationalists cannot condemn Ukrainians because they are using every means available for their self-defence. If the war is one mainly for liberation of the country from Russian imperialism, Western imperialism is also involved for its own geostrategic interests. Of course, NATO and Western imperialist countries have not suddenly been converted to being fighters for democracy. They happily support and sell arms to many dictatorships, such as Saudi Arabia, provided they are loyal to their interests. While the TUC motion is silent on the role of NATO, conversely, it does not repeat the Starmer position of “unshakable” support for NATO. The spurious accusation that support for Ukraine also means support for NATO and militarism should be unashamedly rejected. Describing the conflict as only a “proxy war” by NATO removes from the Ukrainians any self-determination, and erases Putin’s responsibility for the military aggression and the brutal treatment of Ukrainian civilians.

“The spurious accusation that support for Ukraine also means support for NATO and militarism should be unashamedly rejected.”

The position adopted by the TUC is a welcome contrast to that adopted a few days earlier by the G20 summit in India. The G20 stepped back from the support they gave to Ukraine in 2022. The G20 summit last year [declared](#) that it “deplores in the strongest terms the aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine and demands its complete and unconditional withdrawal from the territory of Ukraine”. This year, it did not directly mention Russia or Ukraine, and [stated vaguely](#) that states should “refrain from the threat or use of force to seek territorial acquisition.”

Eighteen months after the beginning of the war, there seems to be no quick end. While the Ukrainian army has made some gains recently, it has not yet routed the Russian troops. Arms continue to be supplied by the West, but not in sufficient quantities. Internationally banned cluster munitions and dangerously toxic depleted uranium shells are being supplied to Ukraine. These risk the war escalating into a direct inter-imperialist conflict.

The Ukrainians desperately want peace and freedom. But a ceasefire for peace negotiations without simultaneously a withdrawal of Russian troops is in reality and annexation of parts of Ukraine. This will not bring lasting peace. While there have been several attempts at peace negotiations, some were not encouraged by Western leaders who see the war as an opportunity to marginalise Russia. However, Russia’s position has remained that any peace plan can only proceed from Ukraine’s recognition of Russia’s sovereignty over the regions it annexed from Ukraine in September 2022, and that Ukraine should demilitarise and “de-Nazify”. While Ukraine, quite reasonably, wants recognition of its territorial integrity along internationally recognised borders. Putin is unlikely to make any moves for peace any time soon as he has already suffered two defeats. He failed in a quick war for regime change in Kyiv, and NATO has expanded further with Finland and Sweden joining the alliance. Putin’s naked aggression and

invasion of Ukraine has been a gift to NATO which has found a new purpose in a fight for democracy, replacing the failed war against terrorism. Hence the push for increases in defence spending and the possible return of US nuclear weapons to Britain, both of which should be opposed.

The Ukrainians have made tremendous sacrifices and suffered enormous [casualties](#) with over 70,000 dead and 120,000 injured. Russia's casualties are even higher, with close to 300,000 of which 120,000 have been killed, [according to the Guardian](#). A staggering total of 500,000. Apart from the ecological devastation, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and homes, Ukraine is now the most mined country in the world.

TUC Congress 2023 Fringe
ukraine
Tuesday 12th September 4:00 - 8:00 pm,
Quaker Meeting House, 22 School Ln, Liverpool L1 3BT
WHY WE MUST SIDE WITH UKRAINE

OLESIA BRIAZGUNOVA
International Secretary of Confederation
of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine

IVANNA KHRAPKOVA
Head of the Youth Council of the
Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine

CHAIRMAN: **DEBBIE BIRD** Chair of ASLEF Women's Committee

JOHN McDONNELL Labour MP for Hayes and Harlington

CHRIS KITCHEN NUM General Secretary

GARY SMITH GMB General Secretary

SIMON WILLET ASLEF Asst General Secretary

JOHN MOLONEY PCS Asst General Secretary

Logos for UCU, GMB, PCS, and UNISON are visible at the bottom.

The mood of Ukrainians is resigned and sombre, but support for the war effort is still there. A [Gallup poll](#) conducted a year ago in September 2022, showed that 70% of Ukrainians wanted to

continue the war with Russia until victory. Political solidarity and humanitarian aid are necessary to demonstrate that the Ukrainians have not been abandoned. There have been many spontaneous and independent efforts of [practical support](#) for Ukrainians. Today, 64% of [Europeans agree](#) with purchasing and supplying military equipment to Ukraine (it is 93% in Sweden). With the US presidential elections in 2024, Trump's continuing electoral threat and his isolationist policies are affecting the mood in Washington. How long will NATO's support for Ukraine last if the economic cost for western capitalism is too high a cost to pay for the Ukrainians fight for democracy? That's why it was always right to say "don't trust NATO". No peace deal should be imposed on Ukraine. As long as the Ukrainians are prepared to fight, we should be in solidarity with them.

"No peace deal should be imposed on Ukraine. As long as the Ukrainians are prepared to fight, we should be in solidarity with them."

What you can do:

- Circulate the [motion from the TUC](#), and amend it as necessary.
- Invite Ukrainian trade-unionists and socialists to speak to your organisation.
- Twin your workplace or trade-union with a similar organisation in Ukraine.
- Raise funds for medical and humanitarian aid.
- Support the anti-war activists being persecuted and imprisoned in Russia.
- Affiliate to the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign. info@ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org
www.ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org
- or in Scotland
- uscscotland@gmail.com
<https://ukrainesolidarityscot.wordpress.com/https://www.facebook.com/groups/USCScotland>



Ukraine Solidarity Campaign
Fringe meeting at TUC
Liverpool. Included in the
picture: Maria Exall TUC
President, Gary Smith GMB
National Secretary, Barbara
Plant GMB President, Chris
Kitchen NUM General
Secretary, Simon Weller
Assistant General Secretary
ASLEF, John Moloney PCS
Assistant General
Secretary.

*This article is reposted from Anticapitalist Resistance:
<https://anticapitalistresistance.org/stand-with-ukraine-tuc-backs-their-right-to-resist-russian-aggression/>*

Headline picture: Ukraine refugees hold GMB We Stand with Ukraine placard, George Square, Glasgow, August 2023 (M Picken)

Save The 13th Note! Fundraising Gig, Glasgow, Sun 6 August 7pm-late

A gig ran by and in support of the workers of The 13th Note

Sunday, 6 August 2023

7:00pm - 11:00pm

Classic Grand

[18 Jamaica St, Glasgow, G1 4QD](#) (Public Transport Planner: <https://www.spt.co.uk/journey-planner/>)

Advance Tickets here: [Save The 13th Note! – Buy tickets \(citizenticket.com\)](#) [also available on the door]

Information

We the workers of the 13th Note, since hearing of owner Jacqueline Fennessy's decision to close the venue in direct response to worker led trade union organisation and strike action, have decided that our jobs, livelihoods and the great cultural legacy of The 13th Note is far too important to give up on.

This gig is part of our larger crowdfunding campaign to support the workers left destitute by the closure of The 13th Note. Classic Grand has kindly agreed to waive hire fee so all money made on ticket sales will go directly to supporting the workers and their goal of rescuing The 13th Note from neglectful, money-hungry owners who are blindly ignorant of the vast importance of this most cherished cultural institution.

Performing on the night will be:

- [Apostille](#)

- [Calum Baird](#)
- [SIANNEN](#)
- [Vos Rough](#)
- 1 more tbc

Please come down, enjoy the bands, support our cause and share this event!

SAVE THE 13TH NOTE!

**CLASSIC GRAND
06/08
DOORS 7PM
8ADV/10OTD**

**VOS ROUGH SIANNEN
CALUM BAIRD +1 TBC**

**A NIGHT OF OF MUSIC AND SPEAKERS TO ENTERTAIN AND EDUCATE
ALL PROCEEDS GOING TOWARDS THE FUND TO SAVE THE 13TH NOTE**

Trade unions oppose Glasgow's drastic cuts in museums services

Glasgow City Council Unison's branch has launched a campaign against the SNP leadership of the Council's proposed cuts in museum services. Rallies are being held at the Burrell Collection gallery and the Gallery of Modern Art in the city centre (Saturday 5th August 12 noon). The rally at the Burrell Collection was addressed by Unison workers in conservation and collections whose jobs are at risk and also by representatives of the Unite and GMB unions at the Council. Below we publish the leaflet issued by the Unison branch – please support the campaign.

Shredding Services quicker than a Banksy Auction!

Banksy's Cut and Run exhibition, Mary Quant at Kelvingrove and the Burrell Collection winning the prestigious award of Art Fund Museum of the Year. These are just some of the successes Glasgow Museums have delivered this summer.

So visitors and tourists to Glasgow's Museums will be shocked to know that the city's Museums and Collections department, run by Glasgow Life, will see nearly a third of jobs cut with 37 posts from a total of 128 to be lost this year to save £1.5M.

The jobs cull affects the behind the scenes staff across Glasgow Museums and the City Archives and Special Collections

staff at the Mitchell Library. Posts to go include Curators, Conservators, Technicians, Outreach and Learning Assistants, Collections staff, and staff from Photography, Editorial and Design.

The Museum Conservation department is being reduced by 40%. Curatorial staff and Collections Management are facing heavy cuts. Savaging cuts to the professional teams will result in a loss of skills, knowledge, creativity and essential care of Glasgow's world-renowned museum collections. Public programmes, displays, exhibitions and online content will be vastly reduced as a result. Losing the technical and specialist staff who prepare objects and loans, manage and move the collections, design and build the displays and temporary exhibitions will result in diminished public experiences, empty exhibition spaces and stagnant galleries.

A move towards the privatisation of technical and specialist skills is expensive and diminishes both the public offer and public purse.

Cuts to Glasgow Life's Open Museum and Learning and Access provision will see a reduction in services to marginalized communities in Glasgow. Activities such as free facilitated weekend activities for families will be greatly reduced. Successful initiatives such as dementia and autism friendly programmes are much less likely to happen in the future. The cuts risk shifting a dynamic museum services towards spaces of elite privilege.

[UNISON](#) demands Glasgow Councillors stand up for Glasgow Life services, not pass on the funding attacks from the Scottish and UK governments.

We call on Glasgow City Councillors to reverse these devastating cuts to our Museums and Collections.

Our Museums and Collections are world renowned and internationally lauded. They need to be protected and cherished.

Want to vent a little?

We suggest you contact:

Councillor Susan Aitken (Leader of Glasgow City Council)

Susan.Aitken@glasgow.gov.uk

Councillor Annette Christie (Chair of Glasgow Life)

Annette.Christie@glasgow.gov.uk

Leaflet published by Unison, 84 Bell Street

Glasgow, G1 1LQ Tel: 0141 552 7069



Photos of protest rally at The Burrell Collection by M Picken for ecosocialist.scot





'Tsunami' of industrial action to hit oil and gas operators as 1400 offshore workers set to strike – from Unite the Union

From [Unite the Union](#):

Dozens of platforms in UKCS set to be brought to a 'standstill' with BP, Shell and Total hit

Unite the union announced today (Monday 20 March) that major oil and gas operators in the UK Continental Shelf (UKCS) face a 'tsunami' of industrial unrest within weeks as around 1400 offshore workers across five companies demand a better deal on jobs, pay and conditions.

Unite, whose members will take action at companies enjoying record-busting profits, predicts that platforms and offshore installations will be brought to a 'standstill' due to the specialised roles its members undertake.

The action will hit major oil and gas operators including BP,

CNRI, EnQuest, Harbour, Ithaca, Shell and Total.

Unite general secretary Sharon Graham said: "Oil and gas companies have been given free rein to enjoy massive windfall profits in the North Sea; drilling concessions are effectively licences to print money.

"1400 offshore workers are now set to take strike action against these employers who are raking it but refusing to give them a fair share of the pie. This will create a tsunami of industrial unrest in the offshore sector.

"Unite will support these members every step of the way in their fight for better jobs, pay and conditions."

The prospective action includes electrical, production and mechanical technicians in addition to deck crew, scaffolders crane operators, pipefitters, platers, and riggers working for Bilfinger UK Limited, Stork construction, Petrofac Facilities Management, the Wood Group UK Limited and Sparrows Offshore Services.

John Boland, Unite industrial officer, added: "Unite has received unprecedented support in favour of industrial action in the UK Continental Shelf. It is the biggest mandate we have received in a generation in the offshore sector. There is no doubt that this is directly linked to oil and gas companies reaping record profits while the workforce gets scraps from the table.

"Unite's members are angry at the corporate greed being shown by offshore operators and contractors. Now these major global companies are set to face the consequences as dozens of offshore platforms will be brought to a standstill in a matter of weeks."

Details of the disputes

Around 700 offshore workers at Bilfinger UK Limited are set to

down tools after Unite members voted in favour of taking industrial action as part of a pay dispute. Bilfinger workers are demanding an increase above the base rate of pay set in the Energy Services Agreement (ESA) for 2022.

Meanwhile, 350 Stork construction workers are set to take strike action after Unite members also supported industrial action in a dispute over working rotas and rates of pay.

Unite members employed by Petrofac Facilities Management Limited on the FPF1 platform also voted in favour of strike action. Around 50 workers are involved in the dispute over holiday entitlements. Offshore workers can be asked to work at any time for no additional payment. The operator, Ithaca Energy, has a 'clawback' policy of 14 days, double the industry norm of 7 days.

Unite members employed by the Wood Group UK Limited on TAQA platforms similarly voted to take strike action. Around 80 members are involved in the dispute which is focused on a 10 per cent cut made to salaries in 2015 worth around £7,000 a year.

The mandates for industrial action follow the recent announcement by Unite that around 200 Sparrows Offshore Services workers will take strike action across more than 20 oil and gas platforms in disputes over pay. Strike action is set to hit various platforms from 29 March and until 7 June in a series of 24, 48 and 72-hour stoppages. This action will hit a number of major operators including BP, Shell, Apache and Harbour Energy.

A further two industrial action ballots are due this week at Petrofac BP involving around 80 workers (21 March), and at Worley Services UK Limited on Harbour Energy platforms involving around 50 workers (24 March) in disputes over pay. The pending ballot results could bring the final total to around 1500 offshore workers taking industrial action.

Unite [recently blasted](#) the UK Government's inaction on taxing oil firms as BP posted the biggest profits in its history as it doubled to £23 billion in 2022. BP's bonanza profits come after Shell reports earnings of £32 billion, bringing the combined total profits of the top two energy companies in Britain to a record £55 billion.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

Ballot results in full

1. Bilfinger – Yes to strike action – 97%
2. Stork – Yes to strike action – 98%
3. Petrofac Facilities Management Limited – Yes to strike action – 100%
4. Wood Group UK Limited – Yes to strike action – 93%

Republished

from:

<https://www.unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2023/march/tsunami-of-industrial-action-to-hit-oil-and-gas-operators-as-1400-offshore-workers-set-to-strike/>

Cymru/Wales – “Strike: Our collective future depends on this movement”

[Robat Idris](#) writes on the [Undod website](#) about the importance of the current strike movement for Welsh/Cymraeg struggles and

relates it to the history of the nation's struggle.

Strike: Our collective future depends on this movement

Introduction

“Public sector workers are not on strike because they want to break the system. They’re on strike because the system is broken.” – Mick Lynch, RMT leader, Aberdare, 21-01-2023

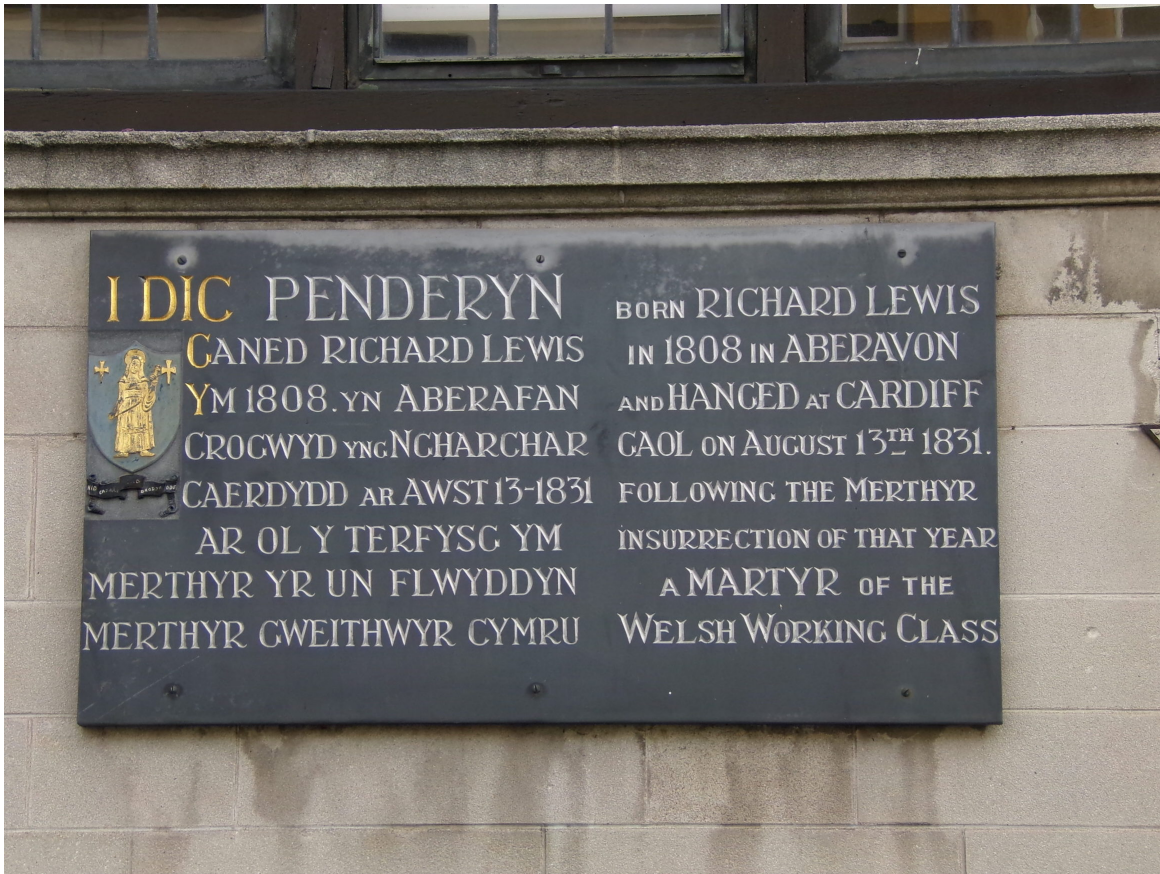
Sometimes, saying nothing and doing nothing tells a lot about who you are. It shows which side you’re on. It shows if you understand what a crisis is or whether you don’t. We live in such a time at the moment. That is why we must support those workers who are on strike. Because in the end, our collective future depends on what the outcome of this fateful battle will be. Do we want our people to live without the threats of poverty, cold, hunger and unemployment or undignified work being hanging over them constantly? Do we want to continue to suffer under the tyranny of capitalism owned by the few? Do we want to surrender our basic rights to strike and protest?

The current strikes are much more significant than just seeking more pay for specific workers. They are all fighting to benefit the wider society, and protect the services the public treasure. They are a cry that echoes from the hospitals and the schools and the railways and the mail vans and the colleges that proclaim quite clearly: “Enough is enough”. The strikers know very well that one in three children live in poverty in Wales, that the use of food banks is on the rise, and that fuel poverty is rampant. All this following over a decade of austerity, with more to come. The strikers know that wages do not keep up with inflation, especially in the public sector – this was not the case when such inflation was seen in

the 80s of the 20th century.

Do we want to lose even the partial freedom we have? Such are the implications of Tory anti-strike legislation. Or do we want to act according to the heroic traditions of workers of the past?

Historical background



Dic Penderyn plaque, Merthyr Tudful

Cymru saw the Red Flag raised for the first time in Merthyr in 1831, followed by the unjust execution of Dic Penderyn – and up to 24 people were killed during the fighting as well. “Cheese and bread” and “Down with the King” were some of the slogans of the rebellion.

In 1839 Cymru saw the Chartists fighting for rights, when around 20 people were killed by the authorities in Newport.

Cymru saw the longest strike ever, and one of the bitterest,

when Bethesda quarrymen rose up against the brutal working conditions of the owner Lord Penrhyn, whose estate had profited enormously from slavery in Jamaica. The strikers would display posters in the windows of their houses with the words "*Nid oes bradwr yn y tŷ hwn*" ("There is no traitor in this house"). The strike lasted from 1900 until 1903, and many had to move to the Valleys to work in the coal industry.

The coalfield, of course, has been the cradle of the workers' strength, and where there was a continuous dispute between the coal masters and the peasants who lost their health and sometimes their lives in the mines. In 1910 Churchill sent the army to Tonypany to quell the efforts of the miners to stand against the masters. Churchill's name is still hated in the area. Closer to our time, came the great miners' strike in 1984, which gave Thatcher the opportunity to defeat her main enemies – namely the miners – and change the political course of the United Kingdom in the direction of individualism, privatisation, and a squeeze on rights. A post-industrial desert was created in the South Valleys. Thatcher's heirs are the current Westminster government, and what we see these days is a continuation of her ideological war.



Tonypany

Today's strikers

Who are in an industrial dispute today? Ambulance Workers, Nurses, Midwives, Physiotherapists, Royal Mail, Teachers, Railways, Civil Servants, Academics, Buses. It is possible that others such as fire workers and junior doctors will also strike.

Striking is not something to undertake thoughtlessly. People have reached the end of their tether. Perhaps it is the wages that have not risen much for ten years, and therefore more and more people who work full time have fallen into the pit of poverty as inflation is rampant, which on the surface has triggered them to strike. But there is much more to it than this. Time and time again over the last few years, we heard about unbearable working conditions with targets being elevated above service. In different occupations, workers have suffered from mental and physical illness, until people are completely exhausted and have to leave their work. This is true for many occupations other than those who are on strike.

The fight against the employers is not just about protecting wages. All of these strikes are battling against fundamental changes to workers' rights, such as holidays and sick leave, and the much devalued terms offered to new staff.

At the same time we see that corporate profits and payments to corporate chiefs and directors of companies rise and rise to incredible levels.

National Health Service

Hooray! These workers were heroes during Covid! Deserving of being clapped in the street! But clapping doesn't buy a loaf or keep the house warm. It does not hide the mismanagement of the NHS which is tottering on the brink of failure. And it certainly hasn't done anything at all to convince us that the Government's aim in Westminster is not to privatise the NHS.

So the Government is trying to blame the failures of the NHS on the heroic and dedicated workers who are doing their best to look after us. The Government wants to pass anti-strike legislation in order to maintain a “minimum level of service”. Of course they don’t reach the lowest level of service when there is no strike – the service was on its knees a long time ago. So the the nurses and the ambulance workers are scapegoats. The Government’s tough new law could mean that nurses are sacked. We cannot accept that – especially bearing in mind the scandals about friends of the Government getting contracts worth millions at the time of Covid, and providing equipment of an unacceptable standard, and without anyone being called to account. Do we want the Health Service to be privatised? In the context of Cymru, our Government says that it is grateful to the Health Service workers, but that it cannot pay the workers more without more financial support from the Westminster government. You decide if that is a sufficient reason. Incidentally, this is at the core of the contradiction which characterises Welsh Labour – on the one hand, it believes in the Union with England; but on the other hand it complains when there is not enough money or sufficient attention being given to Cymru. And undeniably, the Health Service is Labour’s main article of faith, yet it cannot protect it effectively.

Royal Mail

The service is 500 years old. Since its privatisation years ago, it has been under siege. “Competition” is one of the holy words of capitalism – and so the competition of the free market means that a multitude of companies deliver parcels to us. It appears that the van drivers of these companies suffer from poor working conditions, with targets that are almost impossible to achieve. No doubt this enables a cheaper service, but at what cost? Not only in human terms (attacking the working conditions and wages of Royal Mail workers, and taking advantage of workers from the other companies), but

also the environmental cost – where one vehicle used to bring goods to us, now there can be several in day.

Teachers and Assistants

These are workers who had a very difficult time during Covid, carrying responsibilities that were almost impossible at times. Combine this with an increase in their workload, lack of support and resources, discipline problems, an oppressive system of inspection, the fear of losing your job when a complaint is made about you, and it's no wonder things have come to an end. We know that many leave the profession for these reasons. Do we really want a society where our children are taught by teachers who have fought, are looking forward to retirement or aspire to leave teaching for a different career?

Railways

Mick Lynch, the leader of the RMT, has become prominent in this troubled time. He led his union, and to all intents and purposes the labour movement in the absence of leadership from Starmer, the leader of the post-socialist Labour Party (although there are many good socialists amongst its ranks) who condemned one of his own shadow cabinet for daring to go on a picket line. Mick Lynch is certainly particularly effective in standing up for his own employees, and also in explaining the wider picture. Don't be surprised if we see relentless attacks on him by the Government and the media. It is worth reading an article about his visit to Aberdare in [Voice Wales](#), and watching a video of his speech there. The Government has clearly shown which side they are on, by ensuring that the companies that run the railways have not lost a single penny since the dispute began – and it has cost the country more than if the dispute would had been settled. This is an ideological battle. As in the case of other workers, the protection of service users and their safety is one of the main reasons for striking. Do we want an inferior rail service

with the increased risk of accidents?

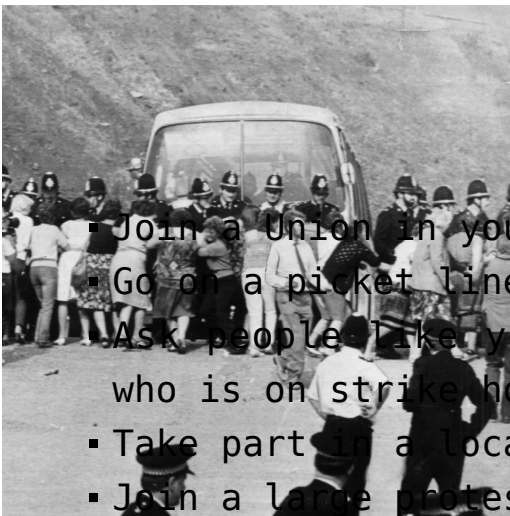
Academics

The world of colleges changed beyond all comprehension in a generation. Where there used to be students, today there are “customers” who want “value for money” for their fees. Learning institutions were turned into profit making factories by expanding the numbers of students beyond the ability of the job market to employ them in their respective fields. Lecturers and researchers were changed into machines to try to please administrators, and work contracts were downgraded to being insecure and short-term, as well as changing pensions for the worse. We have even heard of some lecturers sleeping on library floors. Do we want to continue to disrespect learning?

Oppression by Westminster

Squeezing the right to strike and intimidating the workers is the purpose of the Act which is currently going through the parliamentary process. The official name is the “Minimum Service Level Bill”, but unofficially it is known as the “Anti-Strike Bill”. According to the Government, they want to ensure a basic level of service in the public sector, by forcing people to work even if the union has won a vote to strike. If people strike in violation of the law, then they can face losing their job. This is a completely unreasonable threat, and shows a complete lack of understanding of things as they are. Because this is the truth – there is no basic level of service in the Health Service when there is no strike of this kind in the world. The troubles of the ambulance service, shortage of nursing staff and doctors, waiting lists, and lack of care in society all testify that the Government is guilty. And in Wales, our Government is dependent on Westminster for resources. This is a cynical attempt to portray the true heroes and essential workers of our society as

selfish and unscrupulous people. The truth is that because the Health Service is on its knees the strikers are acting to protect it, as well as for their own benefit. We can say exactly the same thing about the other public sector workers on strike. This law will be a blunt instrument in the hands of the rich. The intention is to keep the worker in his place, that is, to be obedient, quiet, and not complaining. The publicity machine will try to divide the strikers, try to turn the public against the strikers, and pave the way for even more privatization and relaxing of safety rules as well as returning the worker to insecurity, poverty and illness. Couple this act with the "Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act" or the Policing Act as it is called, and there is a real attempt to attack our most basic democratic rights. It is not impossible to imagine circumstances where both laws would be implemented at the same time. Is a General Strike the only way to get this obdurate Government to listen?



Support

We can show our support in many ways.

- Join a Union in your workplace.
- Go on a picket line.
- Ask people like your postman or nurse, or anyone else who is on strike how you can help.
- Take part in a local protest.
- Join a large protest if one is organised.

The ~~Write to your Member of Parliament and Member of Parliament for Wales (maybe that's asking too much!).~~

- Support the strikers on February 1st when several unions work together to strike on the same day.
- Continue to support throughout the strike period.

Conclusion

Fundamental questions about the nature of work, sharing the reward for our labour, and the relationship between employer and employee are driving these strikes. Grimly ruthless capitalism is steamrolling it all, and an ideological agenda that is driven by a Government in the hands of a small group of right-wing extremists.

So the question must be asked – is a General Strike the way to force the Westminster Government to listen? The feasibility of such mass action will depend on the ability and willingness of all unions to work together. It would certainly be a big step to take. But what is the alternative? Watching the employers and the government divide the labour movement. The strikers surrendering little by little, union by union, so that individual disputes are separated from the others, weakening the strength of the whole enterprise? If that happens, it's not just the strikers who will lose out, but every section of society apart from the rich.

There are so many lessons to be learned by comparing the situation here now with the history of the growth of fascism in the past, that it is truly a scary time. That is why we cannot be silent, and not say or do anything.

The country is tired. The people are exhausted. Poverty and austerity are rampant. Let us begin, here and now, to restore dignity, to raise spirits, to fight for justice and to defeat the forces of greed and oppression.

If a General Strike is called then I would like to think that Undod members will support in whatever way is practical for each individual. Members of an organisation campaigning for a radical future for our country cannot avoid taking sides. This crisis is so serious that we cannot expect to win without fighting to the extreme. Justice is on the side of the workers!

“Trech Gwlad nac Arglwydd!”

(rough translation: “The people overcome the state!”).

Originally published by Undod on 30 January 2023:
<https://undod.cymru/en/2023/01/30/streic/>

For more information about Undod and to support their struggle for a better Wales, visit: <https://undod.cymru/en/>

Scottish nurses to strike for fair pay and the future of the NHS

Nursing workers across the whole of Scotland, *writes Connor Beaton at [Heckle](#)*, are set to join postal workers, teachers, railway workers, university and college workers and others next year [2023] in striking for increased pay – a historic move which reveals the extent of popular discontent over wage cuts and austerity imposed from above. With thousands of unfilled vacancies for nursing roles, the looming strike also forms a front in the struggle to defend the free, universal provision of quality healthcare in Scotland in the long-term.

Against the backdrop of consumer price inflation in the UK reaching 11% in November and being set to remain at historically high levels for at least months to come, the Scottish government has offered NHS workers a one-year deal providing for pay increases ranging from 11.32% for the lowest-paid workers to 2% for the highest-paid workers. The average pay increase on offer is 7.5%, translating to a real-terms pay cut of 3.5% for the average NHS worker in Scotland.

“When you take a decade of real-terms pay cuts and then you add such a significant one at a time when there’s a cost of living crisis in the country – people are really worried about their energy bills, especially with Scottish weather and the recent cold snap that we’ve had, it’s really prominent in people’s minds – and I think there’s been a perfect storm really, between that and the pandemic,” Siobhan Aston, a rehabilitation nurse and grassroots activist with [NHS Workers Say NO](#), tells *Heckle*. “I think that’s why Scottish workers have decided no, enough is enough.”

Aston, who qualified as a nurse in 2014, is a rank-and-file member of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), the largest nursing union which represents over 40,000 nurses, midwives and support workers in Scotland and has taken centre stage in this dispute. Members of unions Unite and Unison, who between them represent most NHS workers in Scotland including a minority of nursing workers, have already accepted the Scottish government’s latest pay offer. GMB and the Royal College of Midwives (RCM), which represent smaller numbers of NHS workers, have joined the RCN in rejecting it.

This month’s decision by RCN Scotland members to strike for a better pay deal, with [a massive 82% in support](#), is historic for a number of reasons. An important one is that the planned strikes will mark the first time nursing workers have taken industrial action across all of Scotland’s 14 regional health boards, rather than taking part in localised action. It is also, however, a dramatic move for the RCN, which for decades

rejected the prospect of strike action.

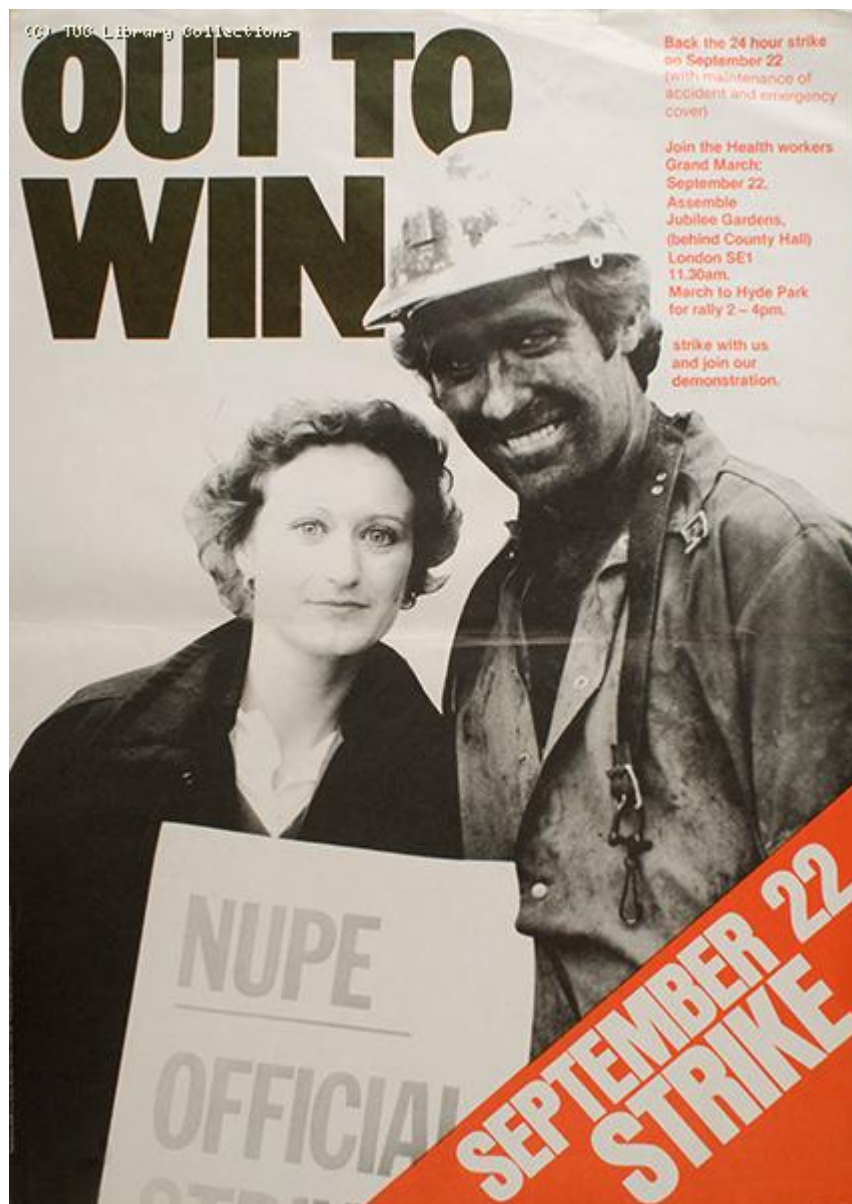


Nursing workers on the march in London. (Photo: [Guy Smallman via NHS Workers Say NO](#))

For most of its 106-year history, the RCN was not a trade union but a professional association aimed primarily at improving standards in nursing. In the 1970s – a tumultuous decade in which the NHS was [rocked by a wave of strikes](#) – the RCN registered as a trade union, but maintained in its constitution an outright ban on its members taking part in strike action and refused to affiliate to the Trades Union Congress (TUC) alongside the other unions representing NHS workers.

When the biggest strike in NHS history took place in 1982, with workers across the UK walking out for a 12% pay increase, RCN members joined mass demonstrations but stopped short of striking; a [critical account from Dale Evans](#) recalls how the “split between TUC-affiliated bodies and non-affiliated unions such as the RCN was to prove crucial in the conduct of the dispute, and its final resolution”. Though unions NUPE and

COHSE (both now part of Unison) wanted to continue the dispute, it came to an end when the RCN accepted a government offer including pay rises and the establishment of a pay review board for nurses. Thatcher's policy was that pay review boards were on offer only to workers who did not strike; the RCN's stance was rewarded.



A poster issued by NUPE during the 1982 pay dispute.

Since the professionalisation of nursing in the 19th century, generally credited to aristocratic social reformer Florence Nightingale, nursing work has been identified as “women’s work”, best suited to women because of their supposed natural inclination towards care and empathy. This diminishing label has been leveraged by patriarchal capitalism to undervalue and

undercompensate nursing workers, who continue to be overwhelmingly women. Tory minister Nadine Dorries, herself a former nurse, last year invoked that vision of nursing as an extension of women's natural instincts [when she insisted](#) that nurses did not require a significant post-pandemic pay increase because they "do their job because they love their job".

This perception of nursing has also found expression in the trade union and socialist movements. Evans' article argues that the 1982 dispute, the largest pay dispute during Thatcher's premiership, has been written out of trade union history because most of the workers involved were women, who fit less comfortably into narrow, masculine visions of working class struggle. Socialist newspapers of the day derisively attributed the RCN's no-strike policy to the "Florence Nightingale mentality" of its members. This was challenged by the likes of the feminist-influenced [Radical Nurses Group](#) (RNG) of the 1980s, whose members criticised their union branches as dominated by men and/or managers and reproducing the oppressive hierarchies of their workplaces.

Forty years later, the picture has changed dramatically. For starters, it is now the RCN – having abolished its no-strike rule in 1995 – whose members have refused to buckle under pressure and have diverged from the TUC-affiliated Unison and Unite unions in voting to strike. This has cut short a period of triumphalism from Scottish ministers after nurses walked out in England, Wales and the north of Ireland. Humza Yousaf, the Scottish health secretary, [said in November](#) that his "constructive engagement with [trade unions] is one of reasons why Scotland is only part of the UK where we are not seeing nurses go on strike today". Only weeks later, he [faced condemnation](#) from the RCN for planning to impose a pay deal rejected by its members.

Siobhan Aston, despite having voted to strike, is still sympathetic to the position in which the Scottish government

finds itself. "I do believe that they are more left-leaning [than the UK government] and are trying to accommodate us," she tells us. "Their response to this has been that the money's not there through the Barnett consequential, and I do understand that argument. But realistically, we're at an impasse. We can't afford not to settle this and not to find a compromise." The UK government "does need to allocate more funding to the devolved nations", she concedes, while at the same time rejecting some of the more passionate defences of Scottish ministers from SNP supporters. Aston points out: "I'm pro-indy, but it's very possible to be pro-independence but not agree with the government on absolutely everything. I think that's widely misunderstood."

"We're at an impasse. We can't afford not to settle this and not to find a compromise."

That Unite and Unison members voted to accept the pay offer is particularly disappointing to Aston. "There's division, frankly," she admits. Though acknowledging that the other unions represent a higher proportion of workers on lower bands, for many of whom the pay offer was "close to inflation", she notes the narrowness of the margin in some of the ballots. Just 57% of voters in Unison's last ballot accepted the pay deal, with many of the union's own members incensed at the outcome. "The word that I'm hearing is that a lot of people are leaving, registered staff are leaving, and moving to a trade union that they feel represents them better," Aston says. "That's not my personal opinion, that's out there for people to see – it's all over Facebook groups."

Heckle spoke with Stevie, an NHS mental health worker in Clydebank who resigned from Unison after 18 years' membership and joined the RCN. "I've been speaking to a lot of nursing colleagues over the last few weeks as pay negotiations continue with the Scottish government and I have to say that I've never known such unity of opinion and determination among them with regard to rejecting real-terms pay cuts and standing

up for the NHS," he says. "I know several long-term members of Unison who resigned in disgust at the union's cheerleading for a real-terms pay cut. People support the RCN position of demanding fair pay and support for our NHS."

Aston is confident that public opinion is firmly behind the nurses, paying tribute to the work of other unions, including the RMT and the CWU, in forcefully making the case for inflation-busting pay rises in recent months, including among NHS workers. The other driving factor, she believes, is the strength of public feeling around the NHS. "Staff feel – and I've been a patient too in the last year – that standards are declining," she explains. "There's not enough of us to do the job. That's the reality." There were over 6,300 nursing and midwifery vacancies in Scotland at the end of September, according to [NHS Scotland figures](#), and the number is growing. "We need more people in order to do the work well, but the problem is people are leaving," Aston says. "Realistically, if we don't look at the wages, we're never going to solve those staffing issues, those retention issues and those recruitment issues."

Her work with NHS Workers Say NO, a grassroots organisation established at the height of the pandemic in summer 2020, has helped Aston to build a formidable online following which she has used to further the campaign for better pay and conditions for NHS workers. She has nearly 47,000 followers [on Twitter](#) and her [TikTok videos](#) about the pay dispute have collectively racked up tens of thousands of views.

Although new to the RCN, Aston is looking forward to getting more involved and joining her colleagues on the picket line. She has already visited striking nurses in Belfast as well as picket lines with other striking workers, and is effusive about the work of [StrikeMap](#), a worker-led project helping people find out where and when pickets are taking place locally so they can show their support. "It's really, really important because it's tough going," she says. "It's tough

going, campaigning, and it's hard work. I've seen it from my colleagues across the UK setting up strike committees. When people go to their picket line, it really provides an important psychological boost to the people that are standing there."

RCN Scotland has said it will announce its strike dates early in the new year. The RCM and GMB unions have indicated that they could follow suit if the Scottish government refuses to return to negotiations. In the spirit of working class solidarity and in defence of the NHS, the full strength of the trade union and socialist movements should be prepared to come out in their support.

Originally published on 30 December 2022 by Heckle, online publication of the [Republican Socialist Platform](https://heckle.scot/2022/12/scottish-nurses-strike-for-fair-pay-and-the-future-of-the-nhs/) – <https://heckle.scot/2022/12/scottish-nurses-strike-for-fair-pay-and-the-future-of-the-nhs/>. You can join RSP here: <https://join.republicansocialists.scot/>

Refuse to be slaves: defend the right to strike!

With Scotland's teachers holding a one day strike on 10/11 January followed by a rolling series of one day strikes thereafter, and Scotland's NHS workers discussing launching strike action following rejection of the inadequate Scottish government-backed pay offer, the strike wave in Scotland and across the UK state shows no signs of abating.

Ongoing disputes and further strikes across the UK are still affecting the rail industry, Royal Mail, civil servants, the university sector and many other industries. The Tory UK government response to the cost-of-living crisis afflicting workers is to publish a Bill at Westminster this week to

restrict trade union rights even further.

ecosocialist.scot is republishing below an important analysis and call for action across Scotland from the [Scottish Socialist Party](#)'s Workplace Organiser, Richie Venton, as a contribution to the sort of fightback we urgently need in Scotland.

Refuse to be slaves: defend the right to strike!

By Richie Venton, Scottish Socialist Party Workplace Organiser

The Tories are hellbent on turning workers into slaves. They are rushing through legislation on so-called Minimum Service Levels that would effectively ban the right to strike for countless workers, and drastically undermine the effectiveness of any attempts by any workers to stand up for themselves against pay cuts, job losses, slashed working conditions, dangerous safety levels, and decimation of public services.

Under their long-trumpeted new laws, the Tories would empower employers with the weapon of naming workers who must go to work during any strike action, even after their union has gone through the entire rigmarole of postal ballots, outrageous voting thresholds and 14 days' notice of strike action to make the strike legal. Any named worker would face potential dismissal from their job if they declined to come into work on strike days, after being handpicked by the employer – with no legal protection from unfair dismissal, which workers currently enjoy for the first 12 weeks of a strike. And unions could be sued unless they obeyed the employer-imposed minimum staffing levels on strike days.

A Human Right

The right to strike is a fundamental human right, one that separates the wage-slaves of capitalism from the literal slaves of the ancient slave empires of Rome, Greece and others. It's a right enshrined in the European Human Rights Commission, ILO and other international bodies. The human right to withdraw your labour, rather than being chained to the demands of profiteering employers.

It's the difference between being able to take collective, agreed industrial action to stop the relentless assaults on jobs, pay, workplace health and safety, and indeed the quality of services provided to the public – or abject capitulation to the profit-crazed attacks by big business and austerity-driven governments.

The British government has been quick to condemn SOME regimes abroad as dictatorships when they outlaw the right to strike – unless they happen to be their allies in world exploitation! They are now poised to imitate the actions of the worst dictatorships.



Tories Threaten Minimum Safety – not Strikers!

When the smiling snake Grant Shapps – Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy – appears on TV reassuring viewers this is all about protecting ‘Minimum Safety Levels’, he is indulging in his customary, deceitful, barefaced lies. The same creature cried crocodile tears and muttered faux outrage at the on-the-spot sacking and replacement of 800 ferry workers by the gangster capitalists of P&O Ferries last March – and then helped his Tory government rush through emergency legislation that now allows any employer to do fundamentally the same thing: replace strikers with agency workers.

Back in his days as Tory Mayor of London, Boris Johnson pioneered the call for a ban on strikes in transport – because workers on London Underground dared defend themselves and the vital service to the city’s economy they provide.

Last year, when railway workers were (and are) to the fore in fighting back against over a decade of pay cuts and vicious assaults on safety standards for the travelling public, the chorus of demands for de facto strike bans on transport grew louder in the Tory ranks and their hired assassins in the right-wing media. We repeatedly warned at the time that if they got away with this against railway workers – under the guise of Minimum Service Levels legislation – they would inevitably extend their assault on the right to strike to other sectors. It didn’t take long for that warning to be totally vindicated. As ambulance workers, NHS staff, border security civil service staff and teachers strike in defence of themselves and their services – and firefighters ballot to follow suit – the Tories’ legislation proposes to include all of the above, plus workers in nuclear decommissioning.



Unions Already Provide 'Life-and-Limb' Cover

The Tories' claim that these laws are to protect Minimum Safety Levels is rampant hypocrisy and downright lies. Unions in key sectors have for years agreed and organised 'life-and-limb cover' when they plan strike action. Over recent decades, I've discussed with umpteen groups of workers in the likes of council services and the NHS who are taking or preparing strike action, who not only explain they are busy organising, through their unions, for 'emergency cover' or 'life-and-limb cover', but add that in many instances the slaughter of staffing levels actually means they are putting more staff on duty during this exercise than would be there on a normal working day!

And that's before the eruption of the current, life-threatening levels of understaffing in the NHS, social care, fire and rescue and other vital services. That's before the Tories succeed in driving train companies into imposing Driver

Only Operated trains across the board, or slash rail maintenance by at least 43%, as they want to do right now in return for below-inflation pay offers. It's the Tories and their pals in the boardrooms who threaten 'minimum safety levels', not strikers. In fact, many of the strikes, such as on the railways and NHS, are precisely in defence of safety levels.



Tories' NHS Cuts Threaten Lives

When Schapps et al trot out the lie that their new anti-strike laws are to prevent people having to wait for an ambulance, which planet does he think we all live on? Before any strikes by ambulance workers – or other NHS staff – people have been suffering life-threatening delays, due to decades of conscious refusal to invest in the NHS, with bed cuts, staffing level crises, exacerbated by drastic pay cuts and crucifying overwork and burnout. In fact, one of the main drivers behind strike action by ambulance workers is the daily crisis of understaffing and chaos caused by the impact of austerity on our hospitals – well before Covid added a further twist to the spiralling NHS crisis, of which the government themselves are the chief architects.

No doubt Grant Schapps has – like his boss, Rishi Sunak – a gold-plated private health scheme, so he won't be worried about the delays in treatment of the sick, made daily worse by his regime.

Their new, even more vicious anti-strike laws will do nothing to avert that crisis, and by undermining workers' ability to resist their austerity cuts will actually make things worse in the frontline services the Tories want to spearhead their de facto strike ban within.



Class War on Democracy

Britain already has the most repressive anti-union, anti-working-class legislation in the entire western world. Laws that were especially ushered in by the hated Maggie Thatcher Tories in the 1980s but retained absolutely by 13 years of New Labour governments; made even worse since by Tory and Tory-LibDem regimes; now being drastically added to by the current, unelected Tory government, presided over by the 222nd richest person in Britain, Rishi Sunak.

In their mission to crush workers' pay and conditions to turbocharge profits, the Tories want to destroy the collective power of organised workers by breaking the unions. They must not succeed.

The Tories have embarked on their escalated war on the working class because they've had a fright, with currently a million workers either taking strike action or having already balloted to do so.

For decades, the employers and their political puppets got away with murder, with the help of defeatist union leaders who told us there was nothing we could do to resist. Now workers have begun to rise off their knees and fight back, the British ruling class are unleashing their customary class brutality. They must not succeed in their war on democracy, workers' rights, pay, jobs and services.

Defeat Divide-and-Conquer Tactics

The employers and government are desperate to divide and conquer workers. They hope – in vain – to whip up 'the public' against strikers, to paint themselves as the saviours of public safety through these laws. But who are the public? It's the railway workers, posties, teachers, university staff, civil service staff, coffin makers and a host of others who have had enough and are striking back.

That widespread solidarity across multiple sectors of the working class is the chief weapon of defence against the attempt to convert workers into slaves. The TUC has threatened legal action against the government's plans. Fine, explore any avenues of self-defence. But it's a dangerous myth to think legal action is the main, let alone only form of resistance. Legal challenges have sometimes been useful, but the most fundamental means of defence of the right to strike is... to strike back, together!



Bring Out a Million Strikers – Together!

One million workers are already either striking on (mostly) separate dates or have live ballots to do so. Alongside the appropriate tactics in each union or industry – with full input to decisions by shop stewards and conveners – the unions embracing these million members should urgently name the day for at least a partial general strike of one million workers, around their common demands on pay, jobs, conditions, services – and in opposition to this attempt to ban strikes. Better still, and simultaneously, the union leaderships – starting with those already engaged in action, putting relentless pressure on the timid TUC – should name the date for a full-scale 24-hour general strike of the entire seven million trade unionists in the UK, including over 600,000 in Scotland.

With proper preparation in workplaces and communities – mass meetings, public meetings, rallies, street activity, media, etc – this could win massive support, including amongst people currently not in a union, not in a job.

Defending basic democratic rights, opposing measures that amount to modern slavery, would find powerful resonance amongst millions of working-class and young people.

Call Mass Scottish Demo and 24-hour General Strike

That is perhaps even more so in Scotland. We never voted in this Tory government – and never have given the Tories a majority since 1955.

The STUC and individual union Scottish leaderships should urgently draw up plans, including a mass Demo at the Scottish parliament, welcoming the SNP government's stated opposition to these new Tory laws, but calling on the Holyrood government to declare its outright refusal – in advance – of ever implementing these anti-strike laws in Scotland, in either the sectors they directly or indirectly employ workers, and outlawing them in contracts they hold with private employers.

Such a Demo – with such an aim – would also add pressure on the Scottish government to end its public sector pay cap and cough up the funds for decent pay for teachers, NHS staff and others currently in dispute. It could pound the Holyrood politicians with demands to defy Tory cuts and instead demand back some of the £5 billion stolen off Scotland by Westminster since 2010, to avert the looming carnage in areas like local government.

Combining union demands on pay and conditions with defence of the basic democratic right to strike – through determined action – is the best and only guarantee of success.

Time is short. Prolonged legal wrangling in mostly hostile Courts is not the means to defend the working class. A mass Scottish Demo, and proper preparations for combined strike action – on the same day by all those currently striking and

on an urgently named date for a complete 24-hour general strike – are the routes we need to travel.

Refuse to be slaves! Strike together, march together, win together!



[Republished from Scottish Socialist Party 6 January 2023](#)

Corrected 9 January 2023 to indicate ONE million workers across the UK with strike mandates, not two; and that EIS strikes are 10/11 January (10 primary, 11 secondary)

Towards a global week of action for solidarity with

Ukraine

ecosocialist.scot members have endorsed the following statement calling for the week of 24 February to be made a global week of action against the Russian invasion and for solidarity with Ukraine and added our name to the appeal. The statement was prepared by the [European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine](#) which represents a wide range of socialist, labour movement and international solidarity organisations across Europe.

We urge the widest possible support for the statement in Scotland, across the rest of the UK state and internationally.

Stop the Russian war of aggression! Peace for Ukraine!

Friday February 24 will mark one year since the Russian army invaded Ukraine on the orders of Putin and his regime. A year of indescribable suffering and bloodshed for the Ukrainian people.

The completely unjustified invasion has already cost the lives of many tens of thousands of Ukrainian civilians and military personnel. Every day the Ukrainian people face brutality and violence. Millions of civilians have been forced to flee abroad, millions are internally displaced.

Entire towns and villages have been reduced to rubble by Russian bombing and airstrikes. Civilian infrastructure (electricity and heating networks, schools, hospitals, railroads, ports, etc.) is being systematically destroyed, making the country unlivable.

Putin wants to make an independent and livable Ukraine impossible:

- *The Russian army has committed mass murders of civilians and Ukrainian soldiers in many places. The*

fate of many thousands is still unknown. Mass rape campaigns and killings by rape, are established attack strategies. With every liberation of a Ukrainian village or town, new crimes come to light.

- *A great many Ukrainian citizens (including many hundreds of thousands of children/ over 700 thousand children) have been deported, without permission and often by force, to the territory of Russia.*

The Ukrainian people rightly refuse to be passive victims of this war of aggression and actively and massively resists the invasion, with or without arms in hand. Very widespread mutual solidarity and self-organization of the population plays a crucial role in enabling this resistance to continue, as does international support in many different forms.

The killing of the Ukrainian people before the eyes of the world and the destruction of independent Ukraine must stop! The loudest possible international protest against the Russian invasion and the widest possible solidarity with the Ukrainian people is more necessary than ever

*We, organizations and individuals from all over the world, launch a **call to make the week of February 24 a global week of action against the Russian invasion and for solidarity with Ukraine.***

- ***Peace for Ukraine, no to the Russian war! Immediate cessation of bombing by the Russian military and withdrawal of all Russian troops from Ukraine.***
- ***The widest possible support for and solidarity with the Ukrainian people in their justified resistance to the Russian invasion.***

*To add your organisation's name to this appeal, please write to us at **info@ukraine-solidarity.eu***

Edinburgh Ukraine Solidarity Book Launch – Sat 21 January 7pm-8pm

[Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland](#) are holding an important launch of a book in solidarity with the resistance of Ukraine to the Russian invasion. The meeting will be hosted by [Lighthouse Books, Edinburgh's radical bookshop](#), on **Saturday 21 January from 7pm-8pm**.

Register to attend and buy the book here:
<https://lighthousebookshop.com/events/ukraine-voices-of-resistance-and-solidarity>

The book is “Ukraine: Voices of Resistance and Solidarity” and is a collection of recent writings by Ukrainians and socialists around the world.

ABOUT THE BOOK

This is an extremely important book published at this tragic moment when our country has been invaded. It builds a bridge of solidarity between the people of Ukraine and the working class around the world. The contributions make it easier to imagine a better future without imperialism and injustice.

Vitalii Dudin, President of Sotsialnyi Rukh/Social Movement.

Ukraine: Voices of Resistance and Solidarity is a contribution to understanding what Ukrainians think, feel and need. Their voices are a call for solidarity, peace and progress. Above all, it is about the Ukrainian people deciding their future and an end to Russian imperialism.
Mick Antoniŵ, Member of Senedd Cymru.

There is an independent review of the book republished on the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign website – [here](#).

The book is published by [Resistance Books](#), with whom [ecosocialist.scot](#) is proud to be associated.

The Facebook event is [here](#) and the details and text of the leaflet for the meeting are below.

We urge all our readers to support this important meeting and to buy the book, which in Scotland can be bought or [ordered from Lighthouse Books](#) (Opening hours: Mon – Sat 10am – 8pm Sun 11.30am – 5pm) directions below or ordered by mail order from Resistance Books [here](#)

UKRAINE: VOICES OF RESISTANCE AND SOLIDARITY

[Lighthouse Books](#), 43-5 West Nicolson Street, Edinburgh, EH8 9DB – [directions](#)

Saturday, 21st January, 7.00 – 8.00 pm.

Speakers:

Chris Ford, [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign](#) and co-editor of the book

Taras Fedirko, [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign](#), Edinburgh

The world is becoming an ever more violent and oppressive place. Competing imperialisms, some growing in influence, others declining, are jockeying for place in an increasingly unstable global order. Whole nations and peoples have been repressed or invaded, either directly by imperial powers or by their local allies. We have seen this in Iraq, Syria, Kurdistan, Palestine, Yemen and Xinjiang. Most recently, we have witnessed the bloody invasion of Ukraine, launched by Putin's Russian empire on February 24th, 2022.

Putin thought that this invasion would be walkover, and the USA and leading European powers initially thought so too. However, Putin's invasion was met by the resistance of ordinary Ukrainians. Initially they were often unarmed, or only lightly armed. This in the face of Russian heavy artillery, air strikes and then tank-led troops. Women have been to the forefront of these communities of resistance and have been some of the main victims of the continuing occupation. The Donbass miners, with their history of opposition to exploitation and oppression by Ukrainian oligarchs, are also now in the front line of resistance against Putin and his kleptocrat backers. They have already won widespread international solidarity.

*This meeting, organised by the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign (Scotland), invites people to hear the arguments presented in the book, *Ukraine: Voices of Resistance and Solidarity*. USC(S)'s New Year resolution is to help organise the solidarity necessary to support the people of Ukraine and end the Russian occupation. Self-determination whether, national, social or individual, needs to be defended wherever it is threatened. Please come to this meeting and bring others along too.*

[*Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland*](#)

Statement: The rich make us pay for their profits! Let's mobilize against the rise in the cost of living

The following statement on the cost-of-living crisis across Europe has been prepared by sections of the [Fourth International](#) and is signed by [ecosocialist.scot](#).

The rich make us pay for their profits! Let's mobilize against the rise in the cost of living

For several months now, strike movements and popular mobilizations have been developing in Europe – both inside and outside the European Union – to resist the explosion in the cost of living.

The price of energy, food, rents, transport has increased over the past two years in all countries, aggravating the living conditions of the working classes already under heavy attack in recent years by precariousness, job cuts with Covid and a fall in real wages and benefits.

After inflation in the EU-27 and the UK of respectively 2.6% and 2.5% in 2021, in August 2022, the CPI year-on-year inflation rates reached at 10.5% and 9.9%, with 12.0% and 13.1% for food, 37.5% and 32.0% for fuels (44.6% and 48.8% in 15 months), (sources STATISTA and ONS). Electricity prices began to rise last autumn across Europe, with gas prices exploding during the same period (well before the Russian

military invaded Ukraine), tripling over a year in Germany and the Netherlands, while energy prices doubled for households in Britain. In the all-Ireland energy market, prices have risen across the board, north and south, including in the important cost of heating oil, with government interventions stalled in the north by the collapse of political institutions and the ongoing impact of Brexit.

The driving force of this inflation is found in the stock market speculation on raw materials since the recovery in demand since the height of the Covid pandemic, in the context of an oligopolistic market. The catastrophic climate situation in recent months, drought and heat, explicit consequences of climate change, have worsened this situation, as of course the invasion of Ukraine by Putin's army. Global oil supply is set to tighten, intensifying concerns over soaring inflation after the OPEC+ group of nations (including Russia), faced with falling prices, announced at the beginning of September its largest supply cut since 2020. The move comes ahead of European Union embargoes on Russian energy over the Ukraine war. Speculation on energy prices and an explosion of profits distributed to the shareholders of large companies have resulted. Underlying all this, there is an epochal reduction in the availability of fossil fuels.

Marginal rates of profit have risen, not only in large transport, energy and pharmaceutical companies. Profits in 2021 have been historic. In an unprecedented move, [the five largest French banks](#) generated more than €31 billion in profits in 2021. [Spain's Santander](#) recorded €8.1 billion in net income, Italy's Intesa San Paolo €4.2 billion and [Germany's Deutsche Bank](#) €3.4 billion. Volkswagen's operating margin almost doubled to €20 billion. In the first half of 2022, Shell (Netherlands) leads the way with profits of \$20.6 billion, followed by BP (UK) with \$21.5 billion and TotalEnergies (France) with \$14.7 billion.

These few examples of dazzling enrichment, which is also

accompanied by the personal enrichment of the propertied class, especially by distribution of dividends and increase of shares value, contrast with the low wage and benefit rises, the drastic loss of purchase power and labour rights, which have increased the impoverishment of the popular classes. The unequal distribution of wealth worsened during the beginning of the Covid years. This inequality has sharpened even more, particularly for women, young people, the racialized working classes, disabled people, and those populations living in the most deprived areas. [A study](#) predicts that by the end of the year 80% of households in the UK will be in energy poverty and a further explosion of energy prices is anticipated in 2023.

In this period, neoliberal governments have stepped up tax measures in favour of corporations, cut social spending and significantly increased military budgets – with the concomitant impact on inflation – further worsening the living conditions of the most precarious. The Ukraine war is instrumentalized by reactionary forces, multinational firms and imperialist powers to push their own agenda, arguing that all military budgets are aimed at helping Ukrainian resistance, which is obviously false. Solidarity against the Putin invasion does not prevent fighting against neoliberal and imperialist agendas and austerity policies directed against the working classes.

Governments at different levels (national, regional, local) have introduced support aid systems, energy price ceilings or transport packages, so the weight of inflation on popular classes is uneven depending on the state, but these systems are temporary and do not make up for the increase in the cost of living.

Material conditions, including the interminable wait for the next pay or benefit cheque, have become the essential concern for the vast majority of the working class. Energy, food, housing costs are essential for everyone and these costs are all increasing to unbearable levels

Such a situation is intolerable.

Many struggles have taken place in recent months:

Across the UK state there has been a significant increase in national strikes since the spring despite the most repressive anti-strike laws in Europe – particularly in transport, on the post, in telecoms and in several major ports. A significant vote has just been won for strikes by university lecturers, while schoolteachers and health workers are also balloting. On the other hand, there have been signs of fragmentation of action on the rail and mail by the leaderships of those unions. There is a significant level of public support for the strikes that are taking place. This is combined with political action especially around the right to food and the right to housing. A six months' rent freeze has been imposed across Scotland by the devolved government there.

At the same time, we have seen the development of a movement to boycott the payment of energy bills with "[Don't Pay UK](#)" across Britain and in Italy, especially in Naples. In Germany, the demonstrations on the left have so far been limited to the oppositional left and some trade unions. This weakness is due mostly to the fact that the leadership of the big industrial unions, the chemical workers union and the metal workers union, are embedded in a tripartite structure which is proposing relief measures for the population. The far right tries to profit from the huge price increases with demonstrations that outnumber those of the left. Huge demonstration occurred in the Czech Republic on 3 October. Several days of strikes called by the trade unions, demonstrations against the high cost of living have taken place or are scheduled (in France 29 Sept, 16 and 18 October, 21 September and 9 November in Belgium). In France, strikes developed around the oil refineries, with workers on strike for four weeks.

Attacks on living conditions will worsen further in the coming

months, particularly with the planned increase in contracts and energy prices, and the end of measures which partially cushioned their impact.

In Italy, Germany, the Czech Republic, France, we see different political currents with different motivations attempting to divert popular classes' anger away from the capitalists responsible for this crisis and moreover refusing concrete measures to be taken immediately to protect and improve the level and conditions of life for the poorest and most precarious part of the population. At the time when the far right is seeking to exploit this situation, it is our responsibility to seek to organize the broadest class, social and political fronts to impose social demands, the requisition of the wealth produced and the organization of public services for the benefit of the popular classes by aiming at capitalist profits. We particularly want to see the whole movement devoting resources to organizing and supporting the most precarious.

In these mobilizations, we stand for:

- Increase in wages and benefits at least in line with inflation, with particular protection for those on low incomes, and "uberized workers", who are de facto employees of capitalist groups
- For automatic increases to keep pace with inflation – a sliding scale of wages and benefits with real measures of inflation determined by organized workers and benefit recipients themselves.
- Abolition of gender inequality at work; give effect to the principle of equal pay for men and women for work of equal value
- Access to free childcare for any child that needs it
- Abolition of VAT on food and energy and reduction and freeze

of rents and prices of basic necessities

- Increase of effective tax rate on wealth and profit
- Free local and regional transport, growth of public transport systems
- Free power and heating corresponding to people's basic needs
- Energy, banking and transport companies, to be socialized under democratic control by workers and users
- Audit of the public debt with citizen participation leading to the cancellation of the illegitimate debt as a way of finding more room for an increase in social spending and in the struggle against the ecological crisis.
- Massive investment into renewable energy, no new fossil fuels – for the decommissioning of nuclear.

At a time when ultraliberal governments are developing, attacking democratic rights, including in alliance with neo-fascist forces as in Sweden or Italy, it is vital that the anti-capitalist forces, the workers' movement as a whole, develop an emergency plan against the high cost of living and inflation to support all the already existing popular mobilizations and develop them while fighting attempts by the far right to exploit popular anger.

16 November 2022

Signatures

Belgium: -SAP-Antikapitalisten / Gauche anticapitaliste

England and Wales: – Anticapitalist Resistance

France: – Ensemble ! (Mouvement pour une Alternative de Gauche et Ecologiste)

– NPA (Nouveau parti anticapitaliste)

Germany: – ISO (Internationale Sozialistische Organisation)

Greece: – TPT (Fourth International Programmatic Tendency) & Magazine “4” – Greek section of FI

Italy : – Sinistra Anticapitalista

Norway: – FIN (Fourth International in Norway, Forbundet Internasjonalt)

Portugal : – SPQI : collective of FI activists

– Toupeira Vermelha: collective of FI activists

Scotland: – ecosocialist.scot

Spanish State: – Anticapitalistas

Sweden : – Socialistik Politik

Switzerland : – BFS/MPS (Bewegung für den Sozialismus/mouvement pour le socialisme/movimento per il socialismo)

– solidarités

Originally published on the Fourth International website:
<https://fourth.international/en/485>

Socialists contest Glasgow

Council By-election

The Scottish Socialist Party is standing George MacDougall in a Glasgow Council by-election, *writes Mike Picken.*

The by-election in the Linn Ward, on the south east edge of Glasgow, takes place on Thursday 17 November and is caused by the death of a Labour councillor, Malcolm Cunning, a former leader of the Labour group reelected only in May.

At the heart of the Linn ward is the vast Castlemilk area – a remote housing scheme/estate established in the post-war period. At a well attended SSP election meeting on 8 November in the heart of Castlemilk, socialist candidate George MacDougall explained that poverty is a massive challenge in Castlemilk, particularly due to its remoteness and lack of infrastructure with few shops or cultural facilities, no rail station and a poor and expensive bus service. Housing standards are varied but some older tenements are afflicted with inadequate insulation and damp. George has lived in the area and explained that it had a strong community ethos with a previous local group, Castlemilk Against Austerity, campaigning for improvements and standing independent candidates in the elections with some success. During its successful early period twenty years ago the SSP won around 13% of the vote in Castlemilk.

The SSP campaign is focussing on the need to unite working class communities against the Tory UK government and point out the inadequacy of the response of parties in the Scottish Parliament – SNP, Labour and Green. SSP Industrial Organiser, Richie Venton, told the public meeting that the SSP demands were to “End Fuel Poverty” by cutting energy bills and calling for the nationalisation of the entire energy system. Venton explained that the SSP demanded a ‘Socialist Green New Deal’ that involved challenging the Tory government at Westminster and demanding the Scottish Parliament and Scottish councils

campaign for a massive insulation programme with retrofitting of working class homes, combined with a move to clean green energy, an end to fossil fuel extraction and free public transport to end reliance on private cars and reduce pollution. While these demands are massively popular across Scotland, none of the parties in the Scottish Parliament are prepared to confront the Tory government at Westminster to get them implemented.

The SSP also called for massive solidarity with those workers currently struggling against the Tory wage cuts and cost-of-living crisis. A highlight of the public meeting was a speech by Gordon Martin, the RMT union Scottish Organiser. The RMT has been leading the battle across Britain to defend wages through strike action on the railways. Martin explained that although the strike action had been temporarily suspended following recent developments by the Rail Delivery Group employers, the RMT was still committed to a further ballot for strike action in the event of no reasonable inflation-matching offer on pay and conditions coming forward. Also addressing the meeting was Melanie Gale, an NHS nurse and workplace representative of the GMB union. She spoke about the struggle in the health service for decent pay and welcomed the likelihood of industrial action by the RCN and other unions (two small health unions in Scotland had already voted for strike action, while the RCN Scotland confirmed on 9 November they had also voted for strikes). Melanie demanded the SNP/Green government in Holyrood put their money where their mouth was and come forward with a pay offer that matches inflation.

The by-election takes place under the transferable vote system used in Scottish councils, so there is no question of the SSP 'splitting' the left or pro independence vote. There are nine candidates in the by-election, including not just the five parties at Holyrood (Labour, SNP, Green, LibDem and Tory) but also the Alba Party, a largely reactionary splinter from the

SNP, and the ultra conservative UKIP and Freedom Alliance parties.

This by-election marks a welcome return by the SSP to contesting elections and providing a voice for working class politics of solidarity, socialism and environmentalism. While it is unlikely to make a major breakthrough in terms of numbers of votes at this stage, as the SSP has not stood in an election in the area for 12 years, the SSP campaign focusses on key class issues of the day. To help the SSP election campaign use [this form](#) to contact them.



Gordon Martin, RMT Scotland organiser addresses SSP election meeting in Castlemilk, 8 November

Solidarity with Ukraine!
Solidarity with the Workers

of Ukraine! Glasgow Public Meeting Sat 22 October 10.30am

Speakers from the recent Ukraine Solidarity Campaign delegation to Ukraine will address a public meeting in Glasgow called by Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland on Saturday 22 October 10.30am at John Smith House, [145-165 West Regent Street Glasgow G2 4RZ](#).

The leaflet advertising the meeting is available in PDF form [here](#) and reproduced below. The Facebook event is [here](#).

Solidarity with Ukraine! Solidarity with the Workers of Ukraine!

Public Meeting:

10.30am, Saturday 22nd October

John Smith House 145-165 West Regent St. Glasgow

Speakers from the recent Ukraine Solidarity Campaign delegation to Ukraine:

- Chris Ford (Ukraine Solidarity Campaign)***
- Alena Ivanova (Another Europe is Possible)***

The war in Ukraine continues to dominate headlines: Ukraine's counter-offensive, Putin's escalating rhetoric, sham 'referendum' in Russian-occupied regions of Ukraine, and Putin's military mobilisation decree.

The focus of the media is primarily on the extreme cost to

human lives and the Ukrainian economy as a result of the Russian invasion. But Ukraine's labour movement is not just fighting at the front.

It is also fighting to defend and extend rights and protections for all. As it struggles to continue to fund its military resistance, the Ukrainian government and Parliament has also proposed emergency measures dramatically weakening employment rights.

With rising inflation, energy insecurity and the urgent need for more military and humanitarian support, Ukraine needs our solidarity more than ever. At the same time, global powers are already initiating discussions about reconstruction and pushing their agendas. But what kind of Ukraine are Ukrainians bravely fighting for?

A recent USC solidarity delegation to Ukraine met with trade unions and left groups in Ukraine. It discussed recent developments in the war, workers rights and the future reconstruction of Ukraine. Organisations met by the delegation included:

The Federation of Trade Unions; the Confederation of Free Trade Union; the State Employees Union; the NGPU Miners Union; the Free Trade Union of Rail Workers; the Education Workers Union; Sotsiyalnyi Rukh and the Social-Democratic Platform.

This meeting has been organized to provide first-hand accounts of the struggles of the Ukrainian people and of Ukrainian workers, and to help build labour movement solidarity with those struggles.

Organised by Ukraine Solidarity Campaign(Scotland). PCS, ASLEF, and the NUM are affiliated to the USC at a national level. Affiliates in Scotland include local GMB, Unite, NUJ and ASLEF branches. To invite a speaker from the USC (Scotland) to your branch meeting, e-mail:

uscscotland@yahoo.com

Ukraine Solidarity Campaign (Scotland): [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign Scotland |Facebook](#)

Ukraine Solidarity Campaign National Website: <https://ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org>



Public Meeting:
10.30am, Saturday
22nd October
John Smith House
145-165
West Regent St.
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Solidarity with
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Organised by Ukraine Solidarity Campaign (Scotland), RSC, RUCF and the RUCW are sponsored by the USU of a national trade solidarity in Scotland, including USU, USU, USU and RUCF members. For more a contact from the USU (Scotland) to post address: uscscotland@yahoo.com

“Socialism: Endorsed by James Connolly” tee shirt and other new items at Calton Books, Glasgow

In his tour of TV studios this week, RMT General Secretary Mick Lynch was asked on ITV's Peston show who his political hero was and immediately answered “James Connolly”.

The presenter looked quizzical and Lynch had to explain that Connolly was an “Irish, Socialist, Republican ... trade unionist

... hero of the Irish Revolution”.

“Who’s your political hero?”

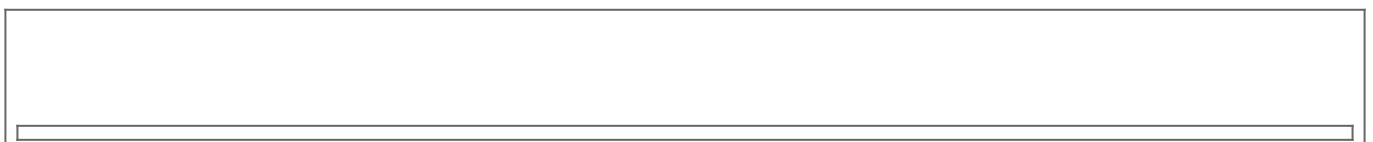
“James Connolly, an Irish socialist republican”
pic.twitter.com/JAUkY9G5Nd

– Ronan Burtenshaw (@ronanburtenshaw) [June 22, 2022](#)

Although of Irish descent and describing himself as an “Irishman”, Connolly was also a Scot, born in Edinburgh, he spoke with a Scottish accent throughout his life. After serving in the British Army and deserting, he became a socialist and the secretary of the Scottish Socialist Federation, standing for local elections. He moved to Dublin for work at the age of 27. In Ireland he founded the Irish Socialist Republican Party. After several years working in America he returned to Ireland and helped found the Irish Labour Party before opposing the First World War and taking part in the Easter Rising against British rule over Ireland in 1916. He was executed by the British State for his part in the Rising.

ecosocialist.scot thought it was therefore highly appropriate that this week, Calton Books in Glasgow launched a new tee shirt: “Socialism – endorsed by James Connolly”. It looks like we are going to have more RMT picket lines over the summer before their battle is won, so what could be a better picket apparel than this Socialism – Connolly tee shirt?

We encourage all our readers to get down to Calton Books in Glasgow’s east end – the **‘best wee radical bookshop in the world’** – and get themselves kitted out for a summer of protest, alongside many of their other new items.





SOME OF THE NEW ITEMS AVAILABLE FROM CALTON BOOKS



Calton Books quality postcards now available
including We Still Hate Thatcher!

*As always many thanks for supporting the 'best wee radical
bookshop in the world'!*

[Visit the Shop](#)



**Ukraine: Report of
International Conference of**

European Solidarity Lviv May 2022

On May 5 and 6, 2022, a two-day international conference of the European Solidarity Network with Ukraine with the support of the Ukraine-based organisation “[Social Movement](#)” ([Соціальний Рух – Socialny Rukh](#)) was held in Lviv, Ukraine.

The international delegation included left-wing politicians, parliamentarians, trade unionists, journalists from Austria, Argentina, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Spain, Germany, Poland, Finland, France and Switzerland.

Below is a report originally published by [Ukraine Solidarity Campaign](#) by Tom Harris an activist of the [Public and Commercial Services Union](#) who attended. ecosocialist.scot proudly supports the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign and is engaged with others in forming a Scottish branch. You can join or get your organisations to affiliate to Ukraine Solidarity Campaign here: <https://ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org/join/> For regular news about solidarity with Ukraine from a labour movement perspective, see Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières English language news site here: <http://www.europe-solidaire.org/spip.php?rubrique2>

On 3rd May, I travelled with other British trade unionists on a delegation to Ukraine. We did this to show solidarity with the Ukrainian people against Russia's vicious imperialist assault, and to try and learn from and make practical

solidarity with the Ukrainian left and trade union movement. The delegation was organised by the European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine, and was made up of trade unionists, left-wing parliamentarians, journalists and social activists from Europe and South America. At the conference, we met with Ukrainian trade unionists, leftists and activists from a broad range of feminist, ecologist and human rights organisations.

Before reporting on the conference, I imagine readers will be interested in how Lviv feels and looks at this stage in the war. In Ukraine's far west, the city is less than 50 miles from the Polish border and many hundreds of miles from the battlefronts in the east and south. As a result, Lviv feels eerily peaceful and 'normal', especially compared with the horrific images of destruction from elsewhere in the country. If you didn't know otherwise, you might suppose you were in any other elegant old Austro-Hungarian city with its pretty cathedrals, Renaissance architecture and streets lined with restaurants and cafes doing a decent trade.

A deeper look reveals the truth, though: the military roadblocks here and there, the enlistment points, the soldiers in uniform waiting for trains and buses, the sandbags built up around monuments and sheets of metal bolted over churches' stained glass to protect them from bomb damage.

And then there's the air raid sirens, which sound several times a day. We'd been told in advance what the protocol was (get two walls between yourself and the outdoors, head for a basement if possible) but we'd also been told that virtually everyone in Lviv ignores it. This isn't quite as reckless as it sounds: whenever a missile is detected heading for Ukraine, alarms sound in every city it could potentially hit. The vast majority of times the sirens go off, nothing is heading for Lviv. "Reassuring!", we thought, until we learnt that missiles had hit the electricity and rail infrastructure

on the outskirts of town the day before we arrived. Two were injured and electricity was cut off to part of the city.

The disconnection between how we visitors felt we should react to an air raid warning and how the locals reacted was almost funny at times. On our first night at the hotel, we heard the sirens and dutifully made our way to the basement. No one else was there, and eventually some faintly amused security guards turned up to investigate. We reckon they thought we were up to mischief down there.

Many Ukrainians we interviewed told us that this surreal contrast between Lviv's relative normality and the horror elsewhere is a terrible thing to endure psychologically, especially if you have recently lived through a siege, or if, as was true of many we spoke to, your friends and relatives are still being shelled or living under occupation. Lviv's population has been swelled greatly by refugees looking for safety, many of them now living in awful, cramped conditions in cellars or small rooms.

The conference began by hearing from Ukrainian trade unionists. Oleksandr Skyba, a railworker from Kyiv's Darnitsya depot and activist in the Free Trade Union of Railway Workers and Transport Builders, described the incredibly dangerous conditions that he and his colleagues had been working under when Russian forces attempted to besiege the capital. The railways are essential for supplying the Ukrainian war effort and consequently were targeted by the Russians, with trains and tracks bombed and rail workers fired upon by Russian troops. Many rail workers have died. In a theme that would crop up again and again at the conference, Skyba described how the work of the union had become centred on keeping its members alive – moving humanitarian supplies, rescuing workers in peril, providing food and support for the many railway workers now fighting in the territorial defence units and the armed forces.

Oleksandr later told us how he and the union had been visiting members now enlisted in the armed forces to try and make sure they had basic training in first aid and military skills, including identifying mines. Many older Ukrainians have experience of the army, but the war has thrown many less experienced younger workers into army life for the first time, and their old trade union networks are proving crucial sources of support. This was echoed by Yurii Samoilov, a miners' leader who joined us via Zoom from the industrial city of Kryvi Rih, not far from the front line. He described his union's efforts to relay information and supplies to their members engaged in combat.

Other themes emerged from the speeches by trade unionists. Many pointed out how clear it was to workers that their independent organisations stood little chance of survival under Russian occupation. The comrade from Kryvi Rih alluded to the total crushing of trade unionism and all other forms of independent civil society in the Russian puppet-regimes in Donetsk and Luhansk. Serhii and Oksana, trade unionists in the health sector, reported that health workers in the occupied zones had been forced to leave their unions and ordered to join Russian ones instead. This piece of coercion was tied up with the occupiers' demand that the workers sign new, worse employment contracts. Some of these workers managed to contact their old union. They asked what they should do: risk their lives by refusing, or end up looking like collaborators when Ukrainian forces returned? The comrades from the health unions called on the international union movement to condemn Russian trade unions for their complicity in this.

Before the war, health workers were already suffering low pay and poor conditions. These workers – four in five of whom are women – are struggling on salaries below the Ukrainian average, and austerity policies had depleted the capacity of the health service to cope with Covid-19. Volodymyr Zelenskiy

issued a presidential decree to increase health workers' wages but cuts to the sector's budget meant this never materialised. The outbreak of war, and the subsequent ban on health workers leaving the country, has left them caught in a perfect storm of poverty, danger and the struggle to meet the dire need for medical treatment in a system buckling under pressure.

The conference also heard from various unions in the energy sector. Vasyl Semkanich from the Independent Trade Union of Miners in the city of Chervonohrad told us how decades of Russian political intervention had made the Ukrainian economy dangerously reliant on imported fossil fuels from Russia. But he didn't want to absolve Ukraine's native ruling class. He also pinned blame on the Ukrainian oligarchs, who drag the country's energy sector further and further from public interest and scrutiny and use it to line their own pockets. He talked about his union's demands for the industry to be brought into democratic public ownership.

Pavlo Oleshchuk from the atomic worker's union gave an alarming speech about the nuclear industry during the war. The Russian army has repeatedly fired explosives around nuclear power stations, and in the early days of the war the Zaporizhzhia plant complex, Europe's biggest, actually caught fire. The plant is now under Russian occupation. Pavlo said that he had worked at the Zaporizhzhia plant for 17 years and was familiar with the meticulous and careful safety measures that had been developed, many on the union's insistence, to keep the station and its workers safe. He shuddered to think how many of those measures were still in place. As he understands it, the Russians have imported their own managers to oversee the plant, but the original Ukrainian staff are still operating it and are resisting some of their orders. We were also shown slides of the damage the Russians inflicted on the briefly occupied Chernobyl site. Not only were workers' facilities completely trashed, but important

safety infrastructure like laboratories, health and safety records and computer databases had been destroyed. Pavlo said he couldn't believe how recklessly the occupiers were behaving, as if "they don't understand where they are or how dangerous it is."

We also heard from feminist activists and campaigns for women's rights. The war has had a profound effect on women's lives. Sexual violence has been used as a weapon of war by the invading Russian forces, creating enormous suffering and trauma. The ability for women to access abortion is far from guaranteed. Though abortion is legal in Ukraine, those trying to get one can face social stigma and religious prejudice. Shamefully, many traumatised Ukrainian women who succeed in escaping to Poland discover that they are now in a country where abortion is effectively banned.

According to Yana Wolf, an activist from the feminist group Bilkis, the militarisation of society has also emboldened some men to abuse women. 'When men join the army, they don't just get a uniform,' she explained. 'They get a sense of power, including over women.' She explained that women and children often face the fall out when traumatised men get back from the front. 'That trauma turns to rage when they return,' she explained, 'and violence provokes more violence.'

The Ukrainian women's movement has achieved much in recent decades, but the infrastructure it has built has been imperilled by war. Marta Chumalo of the group Women's Perspectives described how some women's refuges had to close in the face of the invasion. The conditions of many refugee women, including those who have fled to Lviv, are a perfect breeding ground for domestic violence. Marta's organisation had been helping women, one of whom who'd been living 17-to-a-basement, with scant ability to feed and provide for themselves or their children and little recourse to escape violent partners.

But while women face grave challenges, they have also fought back, both against the invasion and against the oppression of men on their 'own' side. Many women have volunteered to fight the Russians, and the percentage of women in the armed forces has shot up to over 15%. A lot of women have demanded they be allowed to take the fight to the enemy, resisting the army's attempts to allocate them to roles far from combat. Meanwhile, the exodus of refugees to the safer towns of Ukraine's west has allowed previously disparate campaigners to forge new connections, with Lviv becoming an impromptu centre for feminist and LGBT activism. In Kyiv, a feminist collective fighting for LGBT rights votes each month on which military unit they want to donate to.

Ethnic minorities, too, have been drawn into a common struggle against the occupiers. We heard from human rights activist Yulian Kondur about the high numbers of Roma people volunteering in the armed forces. The participation of so many Roma soldiers in the war is a big source of pride for the community, he said. And yet the Roma are one of the most marginalised and oppressed groups in Ukrainian society, a systematic disadvantage that has by no means disappeared during war. The collective struggle of the war, Kondur said, has presented new opportunities to combat prejudice, but the difficulties are harsh. Roma continue to find it harder to migrate, including internally, and often struggle to access social provision designed to help the victims of war. Roma have also been the victims of vigilante justice amid the chaos of the conflict, and the speaker drew our attention to a particularly horrible incident in Lviv where Roma girls from Eastern Ukraine were tied up, painted and humiliated for the alleged crime of petty theft.

To get a sense of where the socialist left finds itself in Ukraine, we spoke to activists from Sotsialniy Rukh (Social Movement). On the one hand, the war has presented enormous challenges. When the government introduced martial law, the

right to strike or organise demonstrations was closed off. The Zelenskiy administration also cut taxes on corporations and diluted workers rights in what it described as an attempt to stabilise the economy. Social Movement are calling for the restitution of the rights that have been suspended, and positively demanding an expansion and deepening of labour and social legislation, levelled up to the standard of those enjoyed in the EU.



For some years, Ukrainian governments have implemented 'de-Communisation' measures aimed at preventing political parties from positively invoking the Soviet past. Earlier in the war, Zelenskyy also banned a series of pro-Russian parties, some of them nominally leftist. We asked Social Movement for their view on this legislation. The problem, they said, is not so much that any of the banned parties were seriously struggling for socialism or workers' rights (on the whole they were thoroughly rotten bodies of Putin-sympathetic, USSR-nostalgic conservatives, broadening their appeal through Orthodox Christian chauvinism and a few gestures of opposition to benefit cuts). Nevertheless, Social Movement oppose the legislation that banned them. This is partially because of a general interest in democracy and freedom of association, but also because crude bans on leftist iconography and terminology can also be used to crack down on genuine socialists and fighters for workers' rights.

Social Movement activist Denys Pilash told us that, in

general, it can be difficult to talk about socialism or anti-capitalism in a country which suffered so terribly under a regime that claimed to be a 'Socialist Soviet Republic'. And yet, most people in Ukraine are keenly aware of the big social inequalities, the hoarding of wealth by the rich, the robbing of society by the oligarchs. Disgust at the rich is so common that anti-oligarch rhetoric is employed even by the oligarch's parties themselves!

That sentiment hasn't disappeared in time of war, either. Social Movement have been able to make progress by pointing out the unfairness with which some aspects of the war are being managed and by telling workers how to invoke their rights. They highlight how the bosses' selfishness and disregard for workers' living conditions will weaken Ukraine's chances in the war. Pilash said that while Zelenskyy's popularity is very high because of his role as commander-in-chief, many ordinary Ukrainians view the meaner and more unjust policies of his government as somehow unconnected. In this way, popular opinion can be both very pro-Zelenskyy and simultaneously critical of the government.

In enormously difficult conditions, Social Movement and other genuine leftists are struggling to outline an egalitarian and democratic alternative that the Ukrainian public can grasp, clear and distinct from both the corrupt present and from the dictatorial Soviet past.

I spoke briefly at the conference, along with Ruth Cashman from UNISON. We outlined the aims we felt needed to be taken up by the trade union movement and left internationally: for arms for Ukraine, for the abolition of the country's international debt, for the opening of borders to refugees, for our unions to make meaningful and practical links with the Ukrainian labour movement. Some aid convoys are coming from European unions, but more needs to be done. We also discussed the challenges that face us. These include the sluggishness and bureaucratism of a union movement that has

been badly demoralised by decades of defeat. We also need to confront the legacy of the Stalinist politics, still present in our movement, that is only capable of seeing imperialism when it comes from NATO, and which turns a blind eye to the imperialism of Russia or China.

That will be a difficult task, but a necessary one. We talk a lot in the labour movement about international solidarity and mutual aid. If any of that is real and sincere, we need to act on it now. The Ukrainian left is in a life or death struggle. We owe them any help we can give.

STATEMENT of solidarity with Ukraine as adopted at the end of the Lviv conference.

On February 24, 2022, Russian imperialism launched an open aggression against Ukraine. For more than two months, the people of Ukraine have been fighting an unequal battle with the occupying forces, losing thousands of lives and enduring massive destruction. While a lot of politicians in the west as well as in Russia argued that Ukraine will fall in a few days, great mobilization of Ukrainian people in all spheres of life and heroic fight of the Ukrainian resistance show how misguided this take. Many European Many European countries continue to finance the Russian war machine buying Russian oil and gas.

At the same time, the people of Ukraine are harmed by reforms adopted in the interests of the richest, before and even during the war. These political decisions result in shifting the burden of war to the majority of the population. Examples are the reduction of labor rights guarantees for employees and the reduction of taxes for business owners. These changes are accompanied by an increasing reduction in the social sphere, which creates unbearable conditions for the people of Ukraine affected by the war. In such circumstances Ukraine continues to meet its debt obligations to the IMF and other creditors. Instead of enriching creditors and world bankers,

this money should go to the defense of the country and the fulfillment of the basic needs of the population,. Through its policy, the IMF continues to promote anti-people reforms in Ukraine and is increasingly dragging Ukraine into bondage, undermining its independence and making it difficult to rebuild the country.

The destruction of infrastructure, production, and residential neighborhoods raises the task of rebuilding Ukraine, under what conditions and at what cost rebuilding will take place after the war is an urgent question. Reconstruction based on the primacy of neoliberal politics will lead to even greater poverty and oligarchization. Comprehensive restoration of Ukraine and its role in providing basic goods for the world's most disadvantaged populations is impossible without changing the course of socio-economic policy at the national and world levels.

The response to Russian aggression must be the solidarity of the peoples of the world. Ukraine's victory in the war will weaken authoritarian regimes in Syria, Belarus and other countries, and this will give the world a real opportunity to move towards democratic development with social and environmental justice.

Writing off Ukraine's foreign debt will be a step against the dominance of neoliberalism, built on inequality and exploitation. The precedent of such a policy will pave the way for other countries to have stable development policies that will not punish the poorest people in favor of the richest through unfair lending.

Our left, trade union, feminist, and human rights communities, fight to promote Ukraine's victory and its post-war prosperity, including:

- *Withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory of Ukraine, in particular, from the occupied territories*

of Donetsk and Luhansk regions and the Autonomous Republic of Crimea.

- *Military and humanitarian aid to Ukraine, as well as the imposition of tough sanctions against Russia.*

- *Introduction of a socially-oriented program for the reconstruction of Ukraine, aimed at helping the country's population, rather than enriching business elites.*
- *Renouncing the purchase of Russian fossil fuels entering a real energetic transition in order to replace fossil fuels with h t for , entering without replacing them with purchases from other sources.*
- *Abolition of Ukraine's foreign debt and impossibility of withdrawing funds offshore.*
- *Support for all refugees, regardless of their nationality, ethnicity, religion, etc. Abolition of all discriminatory laws and practices.*
- *Stopping anti-social reforms in Ukraine and abolishing high administrative fees that hinder the participation of the working class in political life.*