

SOCIALIST★APPEAL

"Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, the point however is to change it." - Karl Marx

CAPITALISM'S CLASS DIVIDE **TOPPLE THEIR SYSTEM**



SOCIALIST★APPEAL

WHO ARE WE? and WHAT ARE WE FIGHTING FOR?

Socialist Appeal is the paper of the International Marxist Tendency in Britain. We are seeking to organise class-conscious workers and youth around a Marxist programme to change society.

The Tories are the political representatives of big business. As defenders of capitalism they are the sworn enemies of the working class.

Neither do we have trust in the Starmer's right-wing leadership of the Labour Party, who are taking the party back to Blairism.

The capitalist system, which is in a complete impasse, cannot be reformed but must be overthrown.

We are fighting for bold socialist policies to defend workers and challenge the capitalist system.

- Answer the cost of living crisis with a £15 per hour minimum wage. For a sliding (rising) scale of wages, with wage increases automatically tied to the rise in prices. The rise of pensions and benefits should also be linked to inflation.
- If the bosses say they can't afford it, we say: open up the books! Let the working class and the labour movement see the accounts! If firms plead bankruptcy, they should not be bailed out, but nationalised under workers' control.
- For a fully publicly-owned and free health service, under workers' control and management. Reverse all privatisation and outsourcing. All private health and care services must be nationalised without compensation, and integrated into the NHS.
- Fight the climate catastrophe and inflation with expropriation and socialist planning. Nationalise the energy monopolies, big supermarket chains, and distributors, without compensation.
- Ban evictions and cancel housing debts. Give local authorities the power to cap rents at affordable levels. And bring empty properties and the assets of the big landlords and management companies under public control.

■ For a crash programme to build a million council houses a year. Nationalise the land, construction companies, and banks to provide the resources to accomplish this.

■ To fight job cuts and unemployment, work should be shared out without any loss of pay, in order to lower the hours of the working week.

■ Repeal the anti-trade union laws. No to class compromise. All union officials to be regularly elected with the right of immediate recall by the membership. Officials to receive no more than the average wage of a skilled worker.

■ Fight for the real emancipation of women. Remove all barriers to women working: provide free nurseries, after-school childcare, and care for the elderly. End all forms of discrimination. Equal pay for work of equal value.

■ Abolish the relics of privilege and feudalism: the monarchy and the House of Lords. The assets of the parasitic landlord class and aristocracy should be expropriated for the public good.

■ Scrap tuition fees and student rents. Free education and full maintenance grants for all. End marketisation – kick the profiteers out of education. Put staff in control in schools and universities.

■ Many small businesses are faced with bankruptcy – squeezed not only by the banks, but by the big monopolies. By nationalising the banks we can supply these small businesses with the lifeline of guaranteed low-interest credit.

■ The financial resources required to fight the crisis must not come from increased taxes or more austerity, but through the nationalisation of the banks and finance houses. Rather than a 'wealth tax', we call for the expropriation of the monopolies.

■ Instead of building up the national debt through government borrowing, the money needed should be obtained entirely from expropriating the accumulated profits of big business and the billionaires.

- No to austerity! Reverse the cuts! The working class must not pay for this crisis!
- For a mass campaign to bring down this criminal Tory government and do away with this rotten system.

It is clear that the market has failed and capitalism is in a deep crisis. It is the anarchy of capitalism that prevents the rational planning of society's resources, in Britain and internationally.

- We therefore stand for the nationalisation of the 100 biggest monopolies, banks, and insurance companies – under workers' control and management – without compensation. They have stolen enough from us already. On this basis, the economy can be democratically planned in the interests of the majority, and not for the super profits of a few billionaires.
- As internationalists we fight for a Socialist Federation of Britain linked to a Socialist United States of Europe and a World Socialist Federation, in order to plan resources internationally for the benefit of all. This would allow humanity to begin solving the urgent issues of climate change, disease, and poverty that face society and our planet.

There is, however, a crisis of leadership in the labour movement. Those who have attempted to patch-up capitalism have been found wanting. It is therefore time to energetically build the forces of Marxism, embodied today in the International Marxist Tendency, which alone offers a revolutionary way out of this crisis. ■

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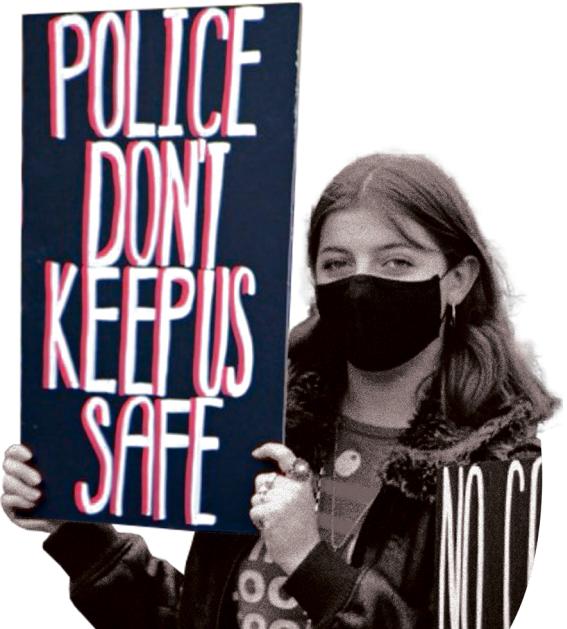
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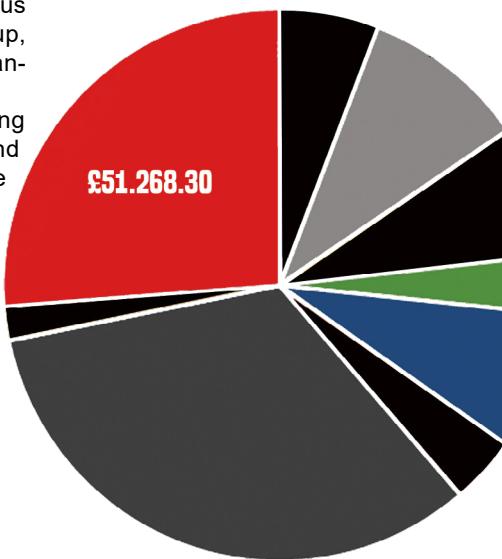
CAMPAIGN FOR A NEW OFFICE

THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

NEEDS YOUR HELP!

What stage in world history are we passing through? Serious class battles are opening up, with revolutions exploding from Myanmar to Sri Lanka.

In Britain, we are also entering this stage. The country's new PM and monarch are ascending to the throne at a time of extreme instability and uncertainty. The establishment is as discredited as we have ever seen. There is a deep-seated anger and desire for change in society.



We are living in a time of crisis, war, and revolution. In times like these, there is nothing more fulfilling, more rewarding, or more important, than preparing for our war – the class war and the socialist revolution.

And we need your help!

The movement is crying out for clear ideas and perspectives, and for revolutionary leadership. That is what the International Marxist Tendency and Socialist Appeal are trying to build.

There has never been a more important time to build the forces of Marxism. The deepening crisis of capitalism is giving us opportunities to build the Marxist tendency that we must seize with both hands.

But in order to grow, we need more meeting rooms, more space for desks, more space for books and newspapers. And most importantly of all, the Marxist tendency needs stability in these unstable times.

For this reason, Socialist Appeal have launched a campaign to raise the necessary funds to purchase our very own office space.

The target of this campaign is to raise £200,000 by the end of 2022, to be put towards this investment.

Launched in May, the campaign is well underway. At the time of writing, existing pledges and donations have taken us up to a total of £148,731.70. This is testament to the level of commitment and revolutionary sacrifice of our activists and supporters.

We would like to extend a huge thank you for these contributions, and to issue an appeal to all of the rest of our readers and supporters. Please help us to achieve this vital milestone by digging deep and donating what you can.

Whether your means are large or small, please donate what you can.

Forward to a permanent office! Forward to the socialist revolution!

To donate please click the link or visit – socialist.net/donate ■

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TO DONATE**

COMMUNISM ON CAMPUS

Marxist Student Federation

In Britain, the Marxist Student Federation had an excellent start with the first week of freshers' fairs. We were present at four universities and collected over 170 sign-ups. We were in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Hull, and Brunel University in London.

Our comrades received a lot of enthusiasm from many students about our societies. It was amazing to hear so many students excited about learning Marxist theory specifically.

Those interested were asking important questions such as 'What would socialism look like?' 'Was the USSR socialist?' and 'How can I help fight capitalism now?'.

We aim to cover all of these questions over the course of our meetings in the coming weeks. In many cases, those who approached our stalls simply asked: "I'm a communist/Marxist, how do I join?".

We endeavour to have a wide selection of theoretical material on display at

our stalls. This allows interested students to grab a copy of the most important Marxist classics, from the Communist Manifesto to Lenin's State and Revolution in advance of our reading groups. In all cases, our theoretical material received positive feedback with a lot of material sold.

Several students informed us they were actively looking for our stall! In Glasgow a couple of people said that they have been following our Marxist Society for a while and were eager to join. Another student in Edinburgh told us that he reads our international website marxist.com every morning and couldn't wait to get involved!

The topic of our first meetings on "Why We Are Communists" was also met with great interest! We had an excellent turnout with over 40 people in

Glasgow and over 20 in Edinburgh. The leadoff by one of our comrades was followed by a very engaged discussion.

This is a great start for the MSF freshers' campaign!

We can't wait for our second week of Freshers, when we will be present at a whopping 24 different university fairs up and down the country.

We will be at Leeds Beckett, Newcastle, Hull, KCL, Portsmouth, Suffolk Uni, UEA, UEL, Birmingham, Falmouth, Nottingham Trent, Sheffield, Reading, Sussex, Manchester, LSE, Queen Mary, Bristol, Kent, Liverpool, London Met, Oxford Brookes, Guildford, and Goldsmiths.

And in the weeks following that, we will be at a further 21 universities. This is shaping up to be our biggest freshers mobilisation yet!

#CommunismOnCampus is very much alive and the MSF is excited to be the only organisation to battle for genuine Marxist ideas on campus! ■



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EDITORIAL

TRUSS' ECONOMIC AGENDA: 'UNCHAINED' OR UNHINGED?

Editorial

Following ten days of enforced national mourning at the Queen's passing, the country has returned to 'normality'. But despite all the pompous establishment rhetoric about 'Great' Britain, this 'normality' offers nothing to look forward to – for workers or the Tories.

The coming weeks will bring pain to millions: not over the loss of dear Lizzy, but over the jump in energy costs on 1 October, as the cap on domestic bills rises to £2,500 per year – double the level of twelve months ago, even with government controls on prices.

With catastrophe looming, incoming prime minister Liz Truss was forced to announce this energy price freeze within days of obtaining the keys to Number 10. Even so, many vulnerable households will still be plunged into fuel poverty, as inflation continues to climb.

The government's energy package is estimated to cost around £150 billion over two years, funded through additional public borrowing. And the Tories have made it clear who is expected to foot the bill: not the profiteering monopolies, but the working class, through further austerity.

Tory gamblers

Details of this latest intervention – even greater than the COVID furlough scheme or the 2007-08 bank bailout – were announced by Truss' new chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng, as part of an emergency mini-Budget.

The Chancellor also used this latest Treasury statement to outline the government's strategy to boost economic growth.

Truss and Kwarteng, both committed libertarian zealots, believe that such growth can be realised by slashing taxes (on the rich and corporations), cutting regulations (on big business and polluters), and taking on the unions (with further restrictions on the right to strike).

But even the strategists of capital have denounced such plans as delusional. Martin Wolf of the *Financial Times*, for example, described this pair of poundshop Thatcher clones as "gamblers on a huge scale" when it comes to their ambitions for tax-cut, debt-driven economic growth.

Casino capitalism

The Prime Minister and Chancellor are certainly living in a dreamworld. But their deranged fantasies are only a reflection of the wider lunacy that has gripped the Tory Party.

The degeneracy of the Tories, in turn, mirrors the decline of British capitalism, which has long since been able to provide progress – either in terms of productivity, or in terms of living standards.

Instead, British capitalism has been run into the ground by the short-sighted capitalists and their equally myopic political representatives, with investment in industry replaced by all manner of speculation in the City of London.

The "gamblers" now residing in Downing Street, in this respect, are perfectly fitting frontmen for the casino that is British capitalism.

Class divide

The establishment spent the entire period of official mourning farcically attempting to spin a story of 'national unity'. Meanwhile,

a fortune was lavished upon endless parades and pageantry, all to

maintain the shining splendour of this family of royal parasites.

Millions will spend this winter sitting in the cold, while the monarchy sits on millions.

Truss and her crony government are doing everything they can to expose this gaping class divide in British society – and to widen it further.

The Tories have announced, for example, that they will lift the cap on bankers' bonuses, as part of a 'Big Bang 2.0' of financial deregulation.

This news will no doubt come as a huge relief to all the nurses, posties, cleaners, bus drivers, and bin workers who have been striking in recent months, struggling for a proper wage increase. It is reassuring to know that someone out there is going to be getting a pay rise.

Revolutionary leadership

The ruling class thought that Boris Johnson and his reckless, self-interested antics would be the low point. Well, things are about to get a whole lot worse.

Energy costs are soaring. Prices are rising. And so are interest rates, with the Bank of England set to announce a 0.75 percentage point increase, which will likely push the UK economy into recession. Indeed, the latest data suggests that the country is already in a recession.

"Britannia is not 'unchained', " concludes Martin Wolf in the *Financial Times*. "It is instead sailing in perilous waters" – entering into a perfect storm of 'stagflation', strikes, and social explosions.

Such a tempest requires the ship to be "managed by sober and responsible people", the FT columnist continues. Instead, however, the ruling class is lumbered with clowns and charlatans such as Truss and Kwarteng – the leadership they deserve.

"Can the new captain and first mate even see the rocks that lie ahead?" Wolf rhetorically asks.

After the quiet hiatus following the death of the Queen, the class struggle will resume its crescendo.

What is required, and what workers and youth deserve, is a Marxist leadership – armed with a clear perspective and a bold socialist programme – that can bring about a revolutionary finale. ■





THE ESTABLISHMENT'S MONARCHIST MYTH

Editorial

During the 10-day-long period of official national mourning, the establishment inflicted the British public to a barrage of jingoistic propaganda, all in an attempt to artificially whip-up a mood of 'national unity'.

The aim of this effort was clear: to distract from the deepening cost-of-living crisis; paper over the glaring class divide in society; and cut across the rising tide of class struggle.

A central part of this was the consciously-created spectacle around the Queen's 'lying in state', with news channels providing a 24-hour livestream of 'The Queue', showing the supposed hoards of mourners flocking to pay their respects.

But scratching at the thin royalist veneer reveals a gaping chasm between reality and the establishment's monarchist myth.

For starters, the numbers queuing to see Her Royal Highness' coffin were greatly exaggerated. BBC commentators, amongst others, attempted to portray it as a case of the entire country making a pilgrimage to Westminster Hall. But even the Tory culture secretary – no doubt a devoted patriot – estimated that around 250,000 had queued to see the royal coffin.

To put this in context, this is fewer than the numbers who came to see Winston Churchill or George VI, Queen Elizabeth II's father, after their passing.

More importantly, it is far fewer than the numbers of workers and youth who regularly come out onto the streets of central London to protest against the Tories, austerity, and war. And yet such mass demonstrations – sometimes with crowds of half-a-million or more – are rarely given more than a moment's coverage on the BBC, or in the pages of the Murdoch press.

Similarly, around 115,000 postal workers have been on strike in Britain in recent weeks, taking action over pay and privatisation, as have around 50,000 rail workers across the country.

Yet these striking workers barely get a mention in the mainstream media – except when it comes to vilifying them for causing disruption to people's lives (i.e. the bosses' profits). Never mind the disruption caused by 10 days of enforced national mourning!

Furthermore, research reveals that the mood amongst those in The Queue was not exactly one of enormous grief and devastation towards the loss of Queen Lizzy.

Over half of those queuing in the 'Elizabeth Line' lived in London, and had not travelled very far to pay their respects. A significant number – 4% – were tourists,

no doubt enjoying the views provided by The Queue.

Most of those surveyed, meanwhile, said that far from feeling 'sad' or 'anxious', they felt 'excited' and 'calm'. And 'being there for a historic moment' and 'feeling part of a wider group' was said to be as much of a motivation for those queuing as any pro-monarchy sentiment.

"Gratitude rather than grief seems to be the best summary of what we're finding," commented Essex University politics professor Robert Johns, discussing the results of his team's research on BBC Radio 4. "And it's a huge contrast from, for example, the case of Princess Diana."

For most people, therefore, the Queen's death was mostly an excuse for a nice day out, walking along the Thames and seeing the sights of London; more of a pleasant break from life's toils, than a case of wrapping themselves in the Union Jack and trekking to mourn the death of the monarch.

All of this stands starkly at odds with the picture of universal patriotism painted by the establishment and their mouthpieces.

And now, following the fervent flag-waving and ceremonial circuses, the return to reality will be all the more painful – further shaking consciousness, and sowing the seeds for explosive events in Britain and beyond. ■

ESTABLISHMENT DEMANDS LABOUR MOVEMENT TRUCE OVER LIZZY'S DEATH

Dylan Cope

The days following the passing of Queen Elizabeth II saw a wave of over-the-top displays of 'grieving', with Britain in an enforced period of official national mourning.

This pomp and pageantry pushed everything else off the news channels and papers, including the cost-of-living crisis, which one tin-eared BBC presenter even declared to now be "insignificant".

Starmer

Unsurprisingly, Labour Party leader 'Sir' Keir Starmer joined in with the establishment's extravagant gushing of grief.

"Today, our country, our people, this House are united in mourning," Starmer bombastically stated in Parliament. "Queen Elizabeth II was this great country's greatest monarch, and for the vast majority of us it feels impossible to imagine a Britain without her."

Such nauseating 'national unity' nonsense sings from the same hymn sheet as the rest of the jingoistic ruling class.

Listening to such claptrap, you'd forget that Lizzy was a millionaire monarch who presided over colonial atrocities and the impoverishment of her dear subjects, and who even audaciously claimed from the state's poverty fund in order to heat Buckingham Palace.

This adulation for the death of 'our' unelected head of state is hardly surprising, coming from this knight of the realm who leads His Majesty's Most Loyal Opposition. Starmer has long proved himself a devoted, patriotic servant of the British establishment.

More than that though, by joining in the chorus of 'national unity', just at a time when the class divide in society is being evermore starkly revealed, Starmer shows his true role as an agent of the ruling class.

Strikes

As well as the postponement or cancellation of sporting events and cultural

festivals, a number of trade unions – such as the CWU and RMT – were also pressured into postponing strike action.

This truce in the class war was completely one-sided, however. The bosses, the Tories, and the bankers never paused in their attacks on workers and youth.

The capitalists are stinking hypocrites from start to finish.

Workers are expected to halt strikes and break off their struggles. But there has been no announcement from Royal Mail bosses about any real pay rise being offered 'out of respect'; no statement from Network Rail bosses, calling off their planned cuts to jobs to honour Her Royal Highness.

And nor have the energy monopolies stopped their profiteering, in recognition of the nation's collective grief.

In fact, the bosses and billionaires have used this hiatus to prepare their next offensive against the working class, with incoming prime minister Liz Truss threatening to introduce new repressive anti-union legislation.

Illusions

Accompanying these announcements of postponed strikes, unfortunately, were a slew of obsequious statements from the tops of the labour movement, 'paying their respects' to the Royal Family.

"The UK's trade union movement sends our condolences to the Royal Family on the death of the Queen," tweeted the TUC, for example, "[recognising]

her many years of dedicated service to the country."

Similarly, left Labour MPs also wrote cringingly patriotic messages, repeating the establishment's line about how the Queen "united us all", and even blacking out their social media profiles in tribute.

Such language plays right into the hands of the ruling class, with their calls for 'national unity', which are consciously designed to demobilise and disorientate workers. Furthermore, it sows dangerous illusions in the monarchy, which is no friend of the working class.

Instead of singing the praises of our class enemies, the Labour and trade union leaders should be explaining and exposing the real reactionary role of the monarchy – a reserve weapon of the ruling class, which will be deployed against the labour movement when the time comes.

Forwards

Up until now, momentum was clearly building across the trade union movement, as militant strikes by rail workers and posties breathed confidence into the working class.

The Queen's death – and the response of the trade unions – has temporarily cut across this. But it can, and will, be regained.

Just as King Canute could not turn back the tide, no one can hold back the rising wave of class struggle.

None of the problems facing workers have gone away. Indeed, they are likely to get even worse.

Already, union leaders have announced plans for coordination action between rail workers on 1 October, accompanied by a strike of postal workers in the CWU. And these strikes will be augmented by rallies and demonstrations on the same day, under the banner of the 'Enough is Enough' campaign.

This should be the first step in uniting the struggles and building a mass movement, with the explicit aim of bringing down the Tories and the entire bosses' system.

This is the only way to appropriately mark the death of dear Queen Lizzy – to overthrow the old order that she, the monarchy, and the rest of the rotten ruling class represent. ■

ANTI-MONARCHY ACTIVISTS ARRESTED DEFEND THE RIGHT TO PROTEST

Mia Foley Doyle,

Oxford Marxists

A wave of clampdowns against those expressing anti-monarchy views followed the death of the Queen.

In Edinburgh, for example, at a ceremony for the accession of King Charles III, a young woman involved with Revolutionary Students and other student activist groups at Edinburgh University was arrested for holding up a placard that said 'abolish the monarchy'.

Police argued that this constituted a 'breach of the peace' – the same charge given to a man who was later arrested in Edinburgh for heckling Prince Andrew as he passed.

Similarly, Socialist Appeal comrades running a street stall in Nottingham on Sunday were instructed by police officers not to use anti-monarchy slogans, which might 'cause offence'.

Elsewhere, at another ceremony for King Charles' accession in Oxford, a man was arrested under the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act, simply for asking 'who elected him?'

Reactionary weapon

The ruling class attempts to frame the monarchy as just a harmless tourist attraction. But this draconian response to those voicing republican criticism reveals the real reactionary role of the monarchy – that of a key pillar of the establishment, which must remain sacrosanct and irreproachable.

The monarchy is a reserve weapon for the ruling class, to be called upon in times of crisis to uphold the status quo.

And now we see the ruling class deploying this weapon: cynically using the Queen's death to try and cut across the rising class struggle – silencing the left and subduing the labour movement.

The establishment has piled pressure on the trade unions to cancel strikes. They have waged a relentless propaganda war to whip up a mood of 'national unity', mourning, and grief. And now basic democratic rights, such as freedom of speech and the right to protest, have been pushed to one side in order to stifle any anti-monarchy sentiment.

Right-wing hypocrisy

The hypocrisy stinks. The right wing constantly accuses the left of undermining free speech, screaming hysterically about so-called 'cancel culture' and no-platforming. Yet it seems that these same people find no issue with a complete curtailment of freedom of expression when it comes to the monarchy.

The heavy-handedness of the state following the Queen's passing, and

the nationalistic foghorn provided by the mainstream media, come as no surprise.

The monarchy is a weaker and blunter weapon for the British ruling class than it once was – increasingly rotten and mired in scandal. But sensing the tide of social and economic upheaval already at its feet, the establishment will attempt to make use of any weapon it can.

Yet in its fragile state, leaning upon the monarchy offers diminishing returns, particularly as the class struggle in Britain continues to intensify.

Explosive anger

Going forwards, the ruling class will try every trick in the book to hold back workers and youth.

This includes restricting democratic rights like the right to protest. Already, they have happily made use of the new Police, Crime, Sentencing, and Courts Act to silence protestors. And similarly, Liz Truss has threatened to introduce pernicious new anti-union legislation to prevent strikes.

But with the crisis of British capitalism only deepening, pulling more and more of the population into misery, attempts to keep a lid on the explosive anger that is brewing in society are futile.

No amount of legislation and repression will be able to stop workers and youth when they begin to organise and mobilise *en masse*.

And when this does happen, the ruling class won't just have to worry about calls to abolish the monarchy, but calls to abolish the entire capitalist system. ▀



CHARITY SECTOR IN CRISIS

NO PAPERING

OVER THESE CRACKS

Glenn Ryan

On 6 September, the YMCA warned incoming prime minister Liz Truss of a potential "meltdown" in the charity sector.

After decades of austerity, rapidly rising living costs, and the biggest fall in out-of-work benefits for 50 years, charitable services have become an important safety net for a society pushed to the brink by the crisis of capitalism.

Food banks are a visible and daily reminder of the crisis in Britain. But charities can be found everywhere: from mental health counselling and legal advice; to palliative care and stem cell transplants.

In fact, public services are so eroded, and private support so costly, that many people are entirely dependent on charities for a whole range of essential services.

On the brink

But as Britain's social crisis deepens, charities are in no position to address huge social problems like mental health, obesity, or the housing crisis. In fact, the sector is itself on the brink of crisis.

The Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) recently reported that almost five million fewer people had donated to charities in the first quarter of this year; and that millions more – around one-in-eight people – are planning to reduce or stop their donations.

This spells disaster for the charity sector, since cuts to government

funding have left the sector increasingly reliant on donations from the public. The CAF called rising demand and falling income a "perfect storm", which is so dire that one third of charities fear bankruptcy.

This mood is reflected in a crisis of public confidence too, with only a third of people believing charities are effective.

They are right to be doubtful. Charities attempt to address the symptoms of a crisis-ridden society, but leave the root cause untouched.

And when all is said and done, charity is merely a way for the ruling class to make the working class pay to paper over the cracks – or fill in the gaping holes – in the capitalists' rotten system.

Them and us

Many charity workers are heroes: working long hours on low pay; helping vulnerable people across the country, from homeless shelters to mental health units. One-in-seven charity workers earn below a living wage.

But while frontline staff take the hit, senior management receive huge salaries, with many charity CEOs earning over half-a-million pounds every year.

Far from embracing the 'spirit of sacrifice' they impose on staff, the bosses are only in it for their personal gain. This summer alone has revealed many such examples, including the trustees of a poverty charity who paid out nearly £130,000 to a company they were partners in.

Indeed, the list of examples of corruption and greed at the tops of major charities is long. And that is before even mentioning the 2018 Oxfam sexual abuse scandal.

Making workers pay

Whilst the bosses at the top reward themselves with massive paychecks and perks, the charity sector is dependent on volunteers, unpaid interns, and low-paid staff.

It is no surprise then that charity bosses are increasingly attacking their workers. In

turn, charity and aid workers are increasingly getting organised in unions and taking action.

Last spring, workers at homeless charity St Mungo's went on strike over pay, unfair disciplinary procedures, and a "bullying and anti-union culture". And this summer, housing workers at crisis-support charity Hestia were threatened with disciplinary action if they continued to engage in trade union activity.

In this light, it is clear what charity bosses' big salaries, accolades, and OBEs really are – their rewards for defending the status quo.

Socialism

That so many ordinary people dig deep into their own pockets, to try to help others in need, is a sign of the instinctive sacrifice and solidarity of the working class.

But, unfortunately, such good intentions ultimately come to nought. Charities do not address the real causes of social problems and inequality, which are deeply rooted in the capitalist system.

And why must we, the working class, who produce all the wealth in society, be forced to take on this burden, while parasitic bosses, shareholders, and landlords amass huge private fortunes?

With a socialist plan of production – an economy based on need, not greed – we can eradicate many of the social diseases that charities currently cater for, which ultimately are a product of the decaying capitalist system.

And all the other necessary services, which today are left to a patchwork of increasingly inadequate charities and volunteer networks, could be provided as public services, run under the control of workers and the communities they serve – and properly funded by expropriating the billionaires and bankers.

With a crisis in the charity sector looming, it is clear that philanthropy and aid can no longer paper over the cracks. Instead, we must fight to overthrow the whole rotten system, and for the socialist transformation of society. ■



RISING CRIME AND THE COST OF LIVING A PERFECT STORM

Emma Stanhope,

Norwich Marxists

The cost-of-living crisis is putting ordinary people in increasingly dire situations. Headline inflation rose by 9.9% in August – only slightly down from 10.1% in July. Bank of England forecasters, meanwhile, have made it clear that such eye-watering inflation is capitalism's grim new normal.

Food prices, fuel, and energy bills: as all these living costs rise, millions more are facing in-work poverty, and the devastating prospects of choosing between heating or eating this winter.

The government's attempts to deal with the cost-of-living crisis have been pitiful.

Even Liz Truss' energy price freeze will prove cold comfort for the millions who will still wind up unable to pay.

The Tories would rather see children malnourished and the elderly freeze to death than pose any serious threat to the bosses' profits.

Crime and punishment

With unpayable energy bills, soaring food prices, and astronomically high fuel costs, a perfect storm is brewing for working-class households across Britain.

Desperate times call for desperate measures. And many see no other choice than to resort to crime.

Consequently, police chiefs have expressed concern over a likely rise in crime, and are making preparations to respond accordingly.

Crimes related to theft, such as shoplifting and burglary, are expected to see the sharpest increase. Alongside these, the force also fear that more children will become involved in county-lines drug gangs, and that more women will be at greater risk of sex-trafficking.

Law and disorder

All the while, the law and order system is embroiled in its own issues, unable to keep a lid on the social explosions that are brewing.

Following twelve years of Tory austerity, fewer crimes are being investigated due to

cuts in policing budgets. The result is approximately 10,000 fewer officers now compared to 2010.

Similarly, criminal courts are grinding to a halt as a result of indefinite strike action by barristers, in response to Tory cuts to the justice system.

The ruling class and its representatives, in other words, are cutting the very apparatus that exists to protect *their* system. At the same time, trust in the police is at an all time low.

The scandals never end. After every sexual assault, every shooting of an unarmed black man, they promise to change. But the police are rotten to the core. They cannot be reformed.

It is increasingly evident for all to see that the police do not and cannot protect us.

Taken together, this plainly reveals the sheer depth of the crisis – and the deep cracks in these key pillars of the capitalist establishment.

Overthrow the system

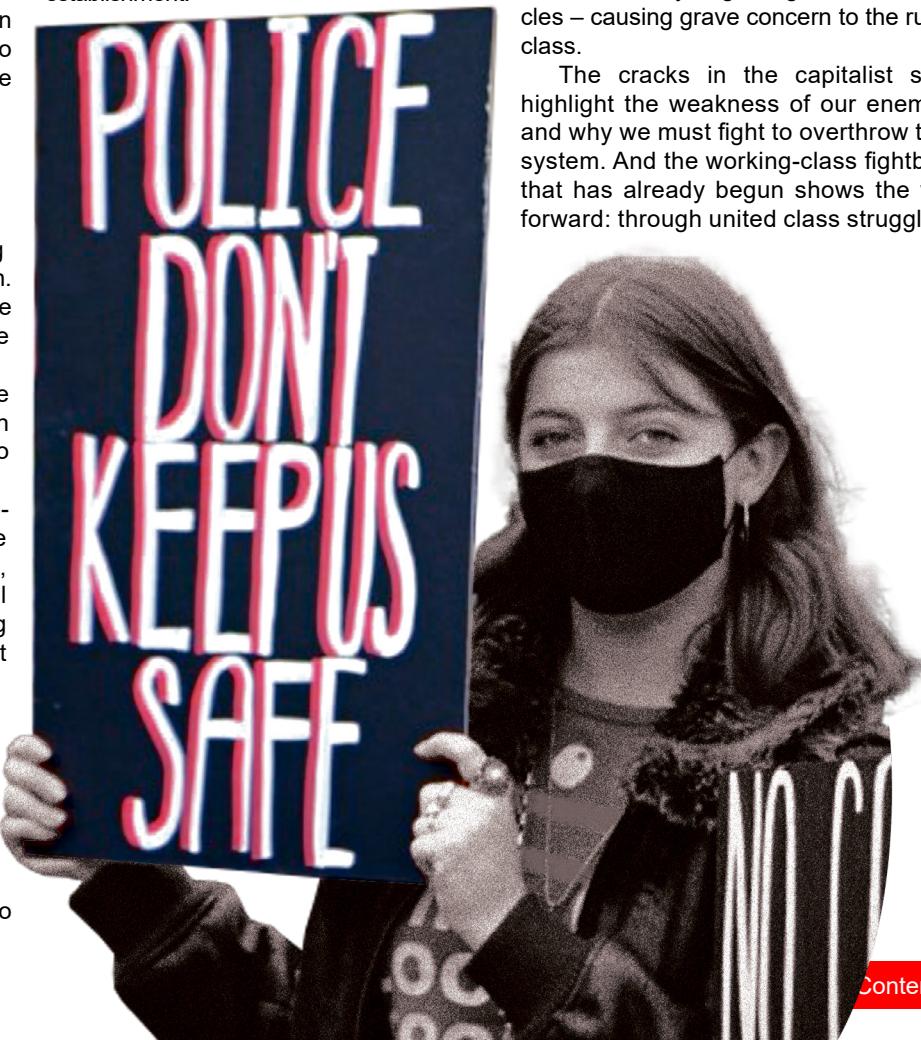
Instead of sticking plasters, we must get to the route of the problem: poverty, desperation, and the hopelessness that many endure, as our standards of living are hurled backwards by capitalism and its crises.

This means organising and fighting for bold socialist demands: nationalisation of the energy companies; expropriation of the bosses' profits; and toppling the Tories and the system they represent.

Only then will our lives be free from the caprices of the market, with ordinary people able to provide food for their family, without having to steal; able to heat their home, without fear of bankruptcy.

The pillars of the state are crumbling. At the same time, there is immense social anger bubbling beneath the surface, threatening to boil over. And the working class is already beginning to flex its muscles – causing grave concern to the ruling class.

The cracks in the capitalist state highlight the weakness of our enemy – and why we must fight to overthrow their system. And the working-class fightback that has already begun shows the way forward: through united class struggle. ■



UNIVERSITY COURSE CLOSURES MILITANT FIGHTBACK NEEDED TO SAVE EDUCATION

**Chris McIntyre,
UCU Marxists**

In the wake of the retreat by the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) earlier this year, education bosses have gone on the attack.

Roehampton University has confirmed that it is scrapping 19 courses across the arts and humanities, for example, forcing 100 academics to reapply for their jobs. Elsewhere, Wolverhampton University has announced the closure of their School of Performing Arts, 'pausing' 47 courses and axing 250 jobs.

Marketisation

To understand what is driving these closures, we need to look at the economics of higher education. This leads us to the Office for Students (OfS) – the government body in charge of distributing state funding for universities and colleges.

Since the passing of the 2017 Higher Education and Research Act, the OfS has been mandated to "encourage competition between English higher education providers", and to promote "value for money".

In other words, it has been transformed into a weapon by which the government can push through the marketisation and privatisation of the sector, cutting state funding to the bone with each attack.

Cuts

In 2021, the OfS approved the cutting of 50% of arts courses funding, redirecting it into

STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects. Thus the government gave the green light to the bosses' turn towards investing in courses that attract overseas students.

This policy triggered a wave of 'restructurings' and closures. Going into the 2021/22 academic year, the sector had lost dozens of courses, and hundreds of jobs, primarily in the arts.

Nadhim Zahawi pushed these attacks further when he took on the role of education secretary in September 2021. With the Tories frantically searching for more budget cuts, Zahawi answered with his crackdown on 'low-value courses', as a means of further pulling funding from universities.

This began in January this year with the OfS launching a consultation on new 'minimum acceptable' standards. The new rules under this consultation threaten to remove funding for courses where fewer than 75% of undergraduates complete their courses, or where fewer than 60% are in 'highly skilled' jobs, or studying for a further degree within 15 months of graduating.

Notably, the University of Wolverhampton had the highest number of subjects judged to be 'low value' according to these criteria, and is now facing the largest number of course closures.

Unsurprisingly, working-class students will be most affected by these course cuts. Those from rich backgrounds, meanwhile, will find their access to the most prestigious institutions largely unaffected. This is the inevitable logic of the market when applied to education.

Attacks

The government and university VCs have been lying through their teeth, claiming that there is no connection between course closures and this Tory policy. Instead, they state that they are doing what is best for staff and students.

Socialist Appeal interviewed staff at Sheffield Hallam University, who provided a very different picture.

Hallam staff were told – without warning – that eighteen courses were going to be closed either this or next year. So instead of investing in staff, Hallam is pushing ahead with its campus redevelopment plan.

Chris Husbands, the Hallam VC, stated that the purpose of these closures are to "re-energise our humanities offerings". Yet these closures have been so top-down, so out of the blue, and so aggressive, that a number of staff we spoke to are now planning to tender their resignations. What a wave of re-energisation!

Fightback

The same picture is now faced by post-92 universities across the country. It amounts to a wholesale attack on access to education for working-class students, as well as to the jobs and conditions of the thousands of staff at these institutions.

This war on education must be fought tooth and nail by the labour movement.

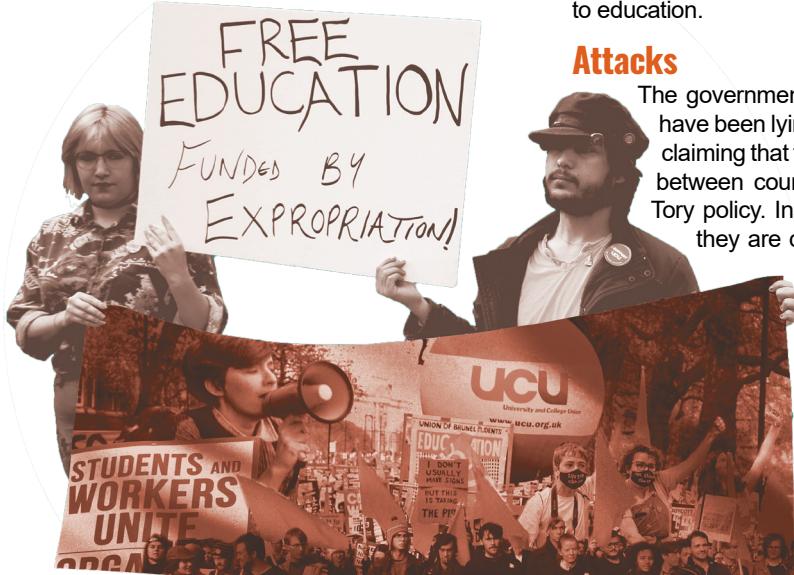
Unions in the education sector need to learn the lessons of this year's UCU strikes and come forward with a bold, militant campaign – coordinated with unions across the sector – with one clear goal: the complete reversal of the marketisation and privatisation of higher education.

Already, Unison members at 22 universities are set to strike over a pathetic below-inflation pay offer. And national ballots covering UCU members have begun at 150 HE institutions across the country, which could lead to UK-wide action over pay, conditions, and pensions.

This points the way forward, paving the way for possible coordinated action between the unions – both within universities, and across the entire public sector.

But at this point we cannot limit ourselves to just treating the symptoms of the marketisation of education. Universities run for profit will never subsidise working-class education; nor will they pay their staff a decent wage. Instead, the bosses will abandon both at the first chance they get.

Therefore the struggle to save education must explicitly be linked with the struggle for socialism – and for the funding of free education through the expropriation of the billionaires. ■



TEACHER RETENTION

CAPITALISM'S CRISIS IN EDUCATION

Louis Michaels, NEU Marxists

Coming on the back of years of cuts and attacks, schools are now facing an acute crisis in staffing. Recruitment of new teachers stands at an all time low, and existing experienced teachers are leaving the profession in droves.

In July this year, the number of teachers set to start training was 15% lower than in 2019, with secondary school trainees down 20%. Staffing is also a massive problem for support staff, who are paid so badly that potential recruits are being drawn into other sectors rather than enter education.

It doesn't take long working in a school to see why this is the case. The most recent government survey (conducted in 2018) found that teachers are working around 50 hours per week on average. A 2016 NEU survey had the figure even higher, at 55.4 hours.

And as workload increases, this pay is also falling in real terms, with teachers' income declining by 7-9% on average in the last decade, according to the National Foundation for Educational Research.

Schools exist on the sharp edge of the crisis of capitalism, with years of austerity and privatisation having brutally eroded conditions in schools. Budget cuts mean less resource spending, declining wages, and fewer staff being hired.

Strike action

To face down this crisis, the NEU and NASUWT are balloting teachers and support staff members to reject the government's insulting below-inflation pay offers. Unions are instead demanding a 'fully funded, above-inflation pay rise'.

There is palpable buzz around this pay campaign. The commitment to strike action was hugely popular at the NEU and NASUWT conferences in April. And after witnessing a summer of union activity, members are asking 'are we next?' with increasing urgency and enthusiasm.

Union meetings are being held across the country to build for the ballots. To guarantee a successful ballot, it is key that every rep and activist is mobilised to reach teachers, and to ensure that they know they will be supported by their communities and their unions.

Time to fight

A successful pay campaign will give an immense boost of confidence to educators, and will form an important first step in the fight against declining conditions and standards in schools.

After winning on pay, we must take the fight to workloads, and build a movement with the energy to demand genuine, lasting reforms.

One full decade of austerity – and four decades of marketisation – have left us with an education system on life support. It is so archaic and wrought with problems that the reforms needed to fix it stand far outside of what is possible within the confines of crisis-ridden capitalism.

Funding must be secured by the expropriation of the monopolies and the billionaire class. And the necessary resources must be allocated under the direct democratic control of teachers and communities, in order to guarantee small class sizes, full-staffing, plentiful support for all educational needs, and a massive reduction in teacher workload, so that no teacher is ever again expected to take work home

Moreover, teachers do not have to fight this battle alone. Staff in universities and colleges are also mobilising and striking. And the problems in education are faced by workers in every industry and sector. We should face them down as one united movement.

Armed with a socialist programme, and committed to coordinated strike action, we can build a mass campaign to bring down the Tories and overturn the rotten system they defend.

Only this can save our schools, ensure that children get the proper education they need, and put this to use in the socialist society they deserve. ■



HINDUTVA FASCISTS MARCH ON LEICESTER

A WARNING TO THE WORKING CLASS

Ravi Mistry

On 17 September, far-right Hindu nationalists and fascists, masked and armed, marched through primarily working-class Muslim-majority areas of Leicester.

By evening, these Hindutva-inspired extremists were facing-off against Muslims who had responded to their surprise march.

Intimidation & escalation

This followed months of attacks in the city, specifically targeting Muslims.

All of this intimidation led to a big mobilisation of the Muslim community earlier in September, with hundreds rallying.

With police failing to act, local Muslims had taken matters into their own hands, forming self-defence patrols in response.

A relative calm emerged, until 17 September, when a clearly-planned march of around 200-300 Hindutva fascists – mostly masked; some armed – stormed through the streets, with only a few police escorting them.

Organised and planned

Unlike other far-right organisations in the UK, like the EDL or BNP, this Hindutva group – on the face of it – has no clear public leaders or demands. There have been no speeches or placards on these marches in Leicester; nor any public calls for people to join.

They are, however, clearly well-organised. To secretly mobilise hundreds of armed and masked men – without the local community's knowledge – requires planning, resources, time, and money.

Unconfirmed reports have suggested that some were bussed in from London and Birmingham.

Opportunists & extremists

What is the nature of these marches and attacks? Blasting religious Hindu music outside Muslim houses and mosques.

Marching intimidatingly through Muslim-majority areas, actively looking for a fight. Provoking and goading communal violence and hatred. Questioning and confirming if a target is Muslim before launching attacks.

Do these people represent Hindus in Leicester? Absolutely not. The overwhelming majority of working-class Hindus are just as horrified at the sight of the city's streets being overtaken by masked, armed men.

The far-right Hindu organisations that like to pretend that they are somehow representatives of Hindus in the UK are in fact unelected and small. In truth, they represent nobody but themselves.

Muslim extremists also certainly exist. And opportunists amongst them have no doubt exploited these events for their own cause. Again, like their Hindutva counterparts, many of these elements have reportedly come to Leicester from other areas of the country.

The mainstream media have portrayed this violence and aggression as being solely related to cricket; simply a question of India versus Pakistan. But this is false. Leicester itself actually has a majority of Muslims who are from India – not Pakistan. And these attacks began well before the infamous cricket match.

Hindu far right

Stepping back, it is clear that events in Leicester are an imitation of the provocations and attacks seen in Narendra Modi's India, where Muslims have become second-class citizens.

Taken altogether, things become clearer. Rising attacks against Muslims in India have inspired copycat acts in the UK. And far-right Hindu organisations, already established in Britain, have taken it upon themselves to mobilise their supporters to carry out this aggression.

They have money and are politically well-connected, with established links to the Conservative Party, and even to some local right-wing Labour councillors.

This form of Indian fascism – Hindutva – has been exported onto the streets of Leicester. Its aim is also to divide the working class; to destroy the unity that has existed between Muslims and Hindus since Asians moved to the city in the postwar period.

For these thugs, victory means seeing Hindus turn against Muslims, and Muslims turn against Hindus. Some opportunist Islamic fanatics will no doubt also be rubbing their hands with glee at such a prospect too. This cannot be allowed to happen.

Class struggle

Leicestershire police have been impotent when it comes to bringing peace. The 'armed bodies of men' of the capitalist state only ever take a light touch towards the far right, and can often even be seen actively protecting these mobs and their marches.

Working-class Muslims and Hindus, therefore, can only truly rely on their own strength and organisation.

The working class in Leicester – most especially amongst Asians, Hindu and Muslim – has fought off fascists and racists together many times over the years.

A united front of working-class organisations must be raised to fight back against the far-right menace wherever it rears its head. If this group marches again, they must be blocked by a mass movement of united workers, as was the case with the Battle of Cable Street in 1936.

If the organised working class of all backgrounds came together, and raised even just their little finger, these far-right thugs and mobs could be easily crushed.

The far right has to be fought on the basis of united class struggle. They represent a threat to us all. And until they are defeated, driven off our streets by organised workers and youth, they will remain a danger – one that could easily spread to other cities in Britain and beyond. ■



CHRIS KABA MURDER NO JUSTICE UNDER CAPITALISM

Khaled Malachi

On 5 September, Chris Kaba – a young black man from London – was gunned down by the police in Streatham. The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) has since launched a homicide investigation into his death.

Details have been slow to emerge, with the Met dragging their feet to suspend the officer involved; not releasing footage of the fatal shot; and potentially kicking the investigation into the long grass.

This will undoubtedly fan the flames of indignation towards the police.

Kaba, a 24-year-old father-to-be, is the latest in a long and lamentable line of unarmed black men whose ‘crime’ is simply the colour of their skin.

His murder coincides with a change at the top of the Met Police, as Sir Mark Rowley takes over the role of Commissioner, following the

resignation of his predecessor, Dame Cressida Dick.

Dick stepped down in the wake of a slew of scandals that have eroded public trust in the Met: from the murder of Sarah Everard by a serving officer; to the sharing of vile, misogynistic messages between officers at Charing Cross police station; to the case of ‘Child Q’ – a black schoolgirl who was subjected to a traumatising stripsearch by police in Hackney, London.

The new Met Commissioner has set out a plan of priorities, in an attempt to indicate that a ‘new’ direction is underway.

But the Met’s ‘journey’ will lead nowhere. After all, since being placed under ‘special measures’ earlier this year, and coming under new management, no fundamental difference has been made to the safety or security of ordinary people – particularly people of colour.

No matter what superficial steps are taken, the Met remains institutionally

racist. And no amount of hollow words will stem the tide of anger that workers and youth feel towards everything the police represents.

Met chiefs have offered plenty of hand-wringing, with Assistant Commissioner Amanda Pearson stating that she “absolutely understands that this shooting is a matter of grave concern, particularly for our black communities”.

But what really concerns the Met and the rest of the establishment is not the racist murders and repression by the police, but the social explosions that they could ignite.

After all, it was only eleven years ago that Mark Duggan was murdered in Tottenham, north London, in a very similar fashion, sparking riots and protests that spread like wildfire across the country.

And the rancid and reckless actions of the police – combined with the endless attacks on living standards due to the crisis of capitalism – are preparing the conditions for similarly explosive events today.

Day by day, more and more workers and youth are realising that there can be no justice under capitalism for Stephen Lawrence, Nicole Smallman and Bibaa Henry, and all the other victims of the state’s systemic racism.

It is not a case of a few ‘bad apples’ within the Met. This is an institution that is rotten to the core, not one that can be meaningfully reformed.

The role of the police is not to rule by consent, but to defend a system that relies on division, bigotry, and racism, in order to protect the profits, property, and privileges of the elites.

To deliver justice for those who fall victim to the henchmen of the state, therefore, we must link the struggle against racism and repression to the struggle against the system that spawns it – channelling our fire and fury not only into abolishing the Met, but into the capitalist system itself. ■



Image [altered]: Steve Eason, Flickr

THE DEMISE OF CAPITALISM AND THE TASKS THAT CONFRONT US

Rob Sewell,

Editor of Socialist Appeal

Once again, despite being told that the 2008 slump was a once-in-a-century event, we are in a severe crisis. All young people today have ever known is instability and crisis. While the older generation may harbour illusions in some return to a more prosperous past, young people have no such feelings.

The youth are therefore far more in tune with the realities of capitalist crisis, which is adversely impacting their lives on a daily basis. On the basis of capitalism, the future is increasingly bleak.

No wonder that young people, who have nothing to lose, have always been at the forefront of revolutionary change. It was the youth that provided the backbone of Lenin's Bolshevik Party – the greatest revolutionary party in history.

"We are the party of the future, and the future belongs to the

youth," explained Lenin. "We are a party that is waging a self-sacrificing struggle against the old rottenness, and youth is always the first to undertake a self-sacrificing struggle."

Decline and decay

Britain today can be characterised as "the old rottenness". The decline of British capitalism is gathering pace. Britain has again become the sick man of Europe.

"Even the British term 'omnishambles' cannot capture the current despair," stated the *Financial Times*, a reliable mouthpiece of the capitalist class.

The responsibility for this decline rests with

the ruling class, who have become increasingly degenerate. Rather than invest their wealth in industry, they prefer to salt their ill-gotten gains abroad, engage in speculation and gambling, or storing it in Swiss banks and tax havens.

At the same time, in times of crisis, the ruling elite demands that the working class shoulder the burden.

Ever since the slump of 2008, capitalism has been propped up with massive eye-watering state hand-outs. In effect, the ruling class

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nationalised their losses and privatised their profits.

Now, once again, billions are being poured into the pockets of the major monopolies – this time the energy companies and their friends.

Class divide

"We are all in it together" is the Tory refrain. But this is completely laughable, as the rich get richer and the poor poorer.

This year, the bosses of the UK's biggest corporations made more money by breakfast time on Friday than the average worker will earn in the space of twelve months!

At the same time, the ruling class wants to impose more pain on the working class by engineering a slump, in order to squeeze out inflation. Either way, tens of millions will suffer as a result.

While workers are forced to scrimp and go to food banks, the tycoons are laughing all the way to the bank with their bloated profits and salaries. They are simply putting up two fingers to the rest of us.

The Tories now promise to freeze energy prices for a period. But we are already paying massively inflated bills. Tens of millions will still face hardship and even destitution.

"A catastrophe is coming this winter as soaring energy bills risk causing serious physical and financial damage to families across Britain," says John Marshall, senior economist at the Resolution Foundation. "We are on course for thousands to see their energy cut off entirely, while millions will be unable to pay bills and build up unmanageable arrears."

No wonder people are fuming. The mass of workers are facing a disastrous cost-of-living crisis. It is this that is driving them to take industrial action.

'Britannia Unchained'

At the same time, the Tory government under Liz Truss wants 'Britannia Unchained' – the same title of a book that she and Kwasi Kwarteng, the new Chancellor, co-authored, which espouses the primacy of free markets and the power of capitalism.

Truss wants capitalism in the raw, where workers are all at the mercy of the employers. We have already gone far down this road over the last forty years. And the results are clear

to see: a low-skill, low-wage, burned-out workforce. No wonder hundreds of thousands have given up work.

Liz Truss has attacked British workers as "skivvers".

Yet workers in the UK work longer hours than anywhere in the European Union, with the shortest holidays, while

many families have to work two or three jobs.

The joke is that Truss is presiding over, not 'Britannia Unchained', but capitalism relying on state handouts and taxpayers' money! They are the real skivvers!

Militancy

These Tory leaders are as thick as two short planks, even more degenerate than their predecessors.

Truss, who models herself on Thatcher, is threatening to bring in tighter anti-union laws, in order to "tame" the trade unions who she alleges are "holding the country to ransom". But as Unite general secretary Sharon Graham has warned: "If you force our legitimate activities outside of the law, then don't expect us to play by the rules."

Today's militancy is coming from below, not from the leaders.

Gary Smith, the general secretary of the GMB, the country's biggest industrial union, said that the number of workplaces voting for strikes reflected a deepening mood of anger.

"These ballot results are off the Richter scale," Smith stated. "There are just a lot of pissed-off people saying something has to give."

The Tories are stumbling from crisis to another. By their actions, they could easily stumble into a general strike – the first in nearly a century.

Sharon Graham has already warned that: "There could be hundreds of disputes involving tens of thousands of workers over the coming months if employers continue to offer real term wage cuts presented as pay rises."

"Summer of discontent?", she rhetorically asked. "We've had the spring, summer, autumn and winter of discontent with austerity every single season."

Establishment servant

Such is the parlous state of British capitalism, it can no longer afford lasting reforms. In fact, all the gains won in the past are under threat. This is a recipe for all-out class war.

The Labour Party under the royalist Sir Keir Starmer, however, has nothing to offer but surrender. Our knight of the realm is a loyal servant of capitalism and the establishment, and will seek to work in their interest (the 'national' interest, of course).

Starmer has perfected the art of grovelling before the powers that be. He

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is, after all, the leader of 'His Majesty's Most Loyal Opposition'.

"I was proud to underline the commitment of the Labour Party to serve its King," Starmer has said. "Because service is the permanent bond between sovereign and subject."

"At a time of uncertainty at home and abroad, the King is ready to renew his bond. Politics will unite behind him," Starmer continued, waxing lyrical about his beloved monarchy.

These words sum up graphically where the loyalties of the leader of the opposition lie. He is a brown-nosed yes-man of the establishment.

Leon Trotsky accurately summed up the role of such creatures:

"The proletariat itself is restrained by precisely its own top leading layer, i.e. the Fabian politicians and their yes-men.

"These pompous authorities, pedants and haughty, high-falutin' cowards are systematically poisoning the labour movement, clouding the consciousness of the proletariat and paralysing its will.

"It is only thanks to them that Toryism, Liberalism, the Church, the monarchy, the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie continue to survive and even suppose themselves to be firmly in the saddle.

"The Fabians, the ILPers and the conservative trade union bureaucrats today represent the most counter-revolutionary force in Great Britain, and possibly in the present stage of development, in the whole world." (*Where is Britain Going?*)

Lackeys of capitalism

We can expect nothing from Starmer but submission. If he comes to power, he will act in the same way as the Tories, always putting the interests of capitalism first. But he will reap the whirlwind as the crisis of British capitalism deepens.

In carrying out his 'duties' he will tread the same path as Ramsay MacDonald, who stabbed the labour movement in the back in 1931, decamping to a Tory-Liberal national government. In passing, it should also be noted that the King at that time was involved in this conspiracy.

From where Starmer stands, there is a short step to a peerage and a seat in the House of Lords, dressed in their finery with the other privileged flunkies of capitalism.

"Workers must at all costs be shown these self-satisfied pedants, drivelling eclectics, sentimental careerists and liveried footmen of the bourgeoisie in their true colours," explained Trotsky.

"To show them up for what they are means to discredit them beyond repair. To discredit them means rendering a supreme service to historical progress. The day that the British proletariat cleanses itself of the spiritual abomination of Fabianism, mankind, especially in Europe, will increase its stature by a head."

Nobody can have any illusions of this score. The right wing in the labour movement have sold themselves to the bankers and capitalists. They are indistinguishable from the Tories and the lackeys of capitalism.

Epoch of revolution

The deepening crisis of British and world capitalism poses enormous challenges before the working class. This is no ordinary, temporary crisis, but an organic

Now the capitalist system has exhausted itself, as can be seen on a world scale. British capitalism is in terminal decline. Of course, it will not give way on its own account, but will need to be overthrown.

But it is precisely the impasse and decline of capitalism that prepares the conditions for its eventual overthrow. We will reach a point when the masses cannot live in the old way, and where the ruling class cannot rule in the old way. Then opens up the epoch of socialist revolution.

We are at the beginning of this process. Nevertheless, all the signs are there. The institutions and pillars of capitalism are in deep crisis. Public trust in them has plummeted. According to a recent opinion poll, 47% of people have lost trust in British politicians over

The continuation of capitalism will be a nightmare for the working class. We are not interested in sugary-sweet fairytales of reforming the capitalist system to make it nicer and fairer. There is no possibility of that whatsoever. The heyday of capitalism has long gone. The epoch of lasting reforms has disappeared.

one. We are facing the death agony of capitalism, which will be protracted.

Everything is now being thrown into turmoil. The old certainties have disappeared. The past idea that tomorrow will be better than today, and the day after that better than tomorrow, no longer applies. This dream has now collapsed and consciousness is being transformed.

While we whole-heartedly welcome the reawakening of the British working class, as reflected in the present strike wave, together with the class language of some of the trade union leaders, our main task is to offer a programme and perspective that can offer a real way forward.

The continuation of capitalism will be a nightmare for the working class. We are not interested in sugary-sweet fairytales of reforming the capitalist system to make it nicer and fairer. There is no possibility of that whatsoever.

The heyday of capitalism has long gone. The epoch of lasting reforms has disappeared. The high-point of reformism has passed, when many held the belief that society could be progressively changed bit by bit.

the last 12 months. That view is much greater amongst the youth.

A feeling of doom is present in ruling circles. "We have dealt with one crisis that was supposed to be once-in-a-generation, and we have just walked into another one," explained one commentator at the Treasury. And there are more crises to come, we should add.

No middle road

What is required is not this or that sticking plaster, but a root and branch overturn of the system.

But this is precisely the failings of the left reformists, who seek a solution within the confines of capitalism. They think that by tinkering with the system, they can solve its problems. But no amount of 'taxing the rich' or 'closing the loopholes' will eradicate the deep-seated crisis.

The 'lefts' look to Keynesianism, pump-priming the economy, and 'boosting demand'. They fail to understand that capitalism has reached its limits, and exhausted its role. The entire capitalist

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system is in a blind alley from which it cannot escape.

The left reformists have no perspective of overthrowing capitalism. As a result, they tend to compromise with the right wing, the open agents of capitalism.

This was the sad experience of Corbynism in the Labour Party. Instead of launching an all-out struggle against the right wing, the left leaders chose appeasement instead. This then sealed their fate.

Likewise, the example of the 'left' in Unison, who scandalously abandoned Paul Holmes – the left-wing former president of the union – to his fate at the hands of the bureaucracy.

At the Unison conference, these 'lefts' (organised under the 'Time For Real Change' banner) capitulated to the pressures of the right wing, and criminally covered up their retreat with concessions to identity politics.

As Trotsky explained:

"The woddness of the British 'lefts' together with their theoretical formlessness, and their political indecision, not to mention cowardice, makes the clique of MacDonald, Webb and Snowden master of the situation which in turn is impossible without Thomas. If the bosses of the British Labour Party form a bridle placed upon the working class then Thomas is the buckle into which the bourgeoisie slips the reins."

MacDonald, Webb, and Snowden were the equivalent to the Starmers of today. Thomas was a right wing trade union leader who sold out.

Sadly, today's lefts are little different from those Trotsky referred to in

his time. In the face of the aggression of the right wing, they tend to run for cover.

If we are to really change society, we must learn from these humiliating retreats and capitulations. What is required is a firm leadership with a Marxist understanding; one that grasps the seriousness of the situation and draws the necessary conclusions. There is no middle road.

Marxist leadership

The period we have entered is one of storms and stress. On the basis of mighty events, as night follows day, the working class will be pushed in a revolutionary direction.

Unfortunately, the current leaders are not up to the task. They are continually looking for an easy way out, which does not exist.

They have no faith in the working class; and they have no perspective of revolutionary change. When faced with a revolutionary situation, such leaders will inevitably retreat and seek to compromise. That is the road of defeat.

What is needed is a revolutionary leadership that is prepared to go all the way. Of course, such a leadership will not fall from the skies; nor can it be improvised. It has to be built now, in preparation for the future.

In the dark days of the First World War, all the socialist internationalists of the world were able to meet and fit in a small room in Switzerland. Within two years, the Bolsheviks had come to power in Russia. This transformed the entire position internationally.

The situation today is certainly more protracted. However, the task of constructing such a leadership has already begun, in the building of the International Marxist Tendency.

We are under no illusion that our forces are small, while our tasks are enormous. We base ourselves on the unfolding crisis, and on the revolutionary legacy of physical force Chartism and the best traditions of the working class.

"Today in Britain," wrote Trotsky, "the question is not one of assigning a 'day' for the revolution – we are a long way from this! – but in clearly understanding that the whole objective situation is bringing this 'day' closer, and into the ambit of the education and preparatory work of the party of the proletariat, and at the same time creating conditions for its rapid revolutionary formation."

Not so long ago, those who raised the possibility of revolution in Britain were regarded as deluded. Today, given the cataclysm facing the working class, such an idea is not so easily dismissed. In fact, with or without us, the revolution is being prepared by the objective situation.

The 1920s and 1930s was a classic period of revolution and counter-revolution. Today, we have again entered such a period, but on a higher level. The question is not 'is there going to be a revolution in Britain in the years that lie ahead?' but, more importantly, 'will it be successful?'

For that to happen, we need to build an alternative leadership now.

We therefore appeal to workers, and especially the youth, to come and help us.

Our future is at stake. ■



HAWKS, HIKES, AND HARD-LANDINGS

A NEW CHAPTER IN THE CRISIS OF CAPITALISM



Adam Booth

Last year seems like a whole different era for the world economy. Rewind twelve months, and nonchalant central bankers were describing creeping inflation as a 'temporary' phenomena. Supply chain disruptions and labour shortages, in turn, were considered an ephemeral nuisance by the capitalists – one that would soon be resolved by the omnipotence of the market. And economic forecasters were still predicting a robust post-lockdown rebound.

How the tune has changed. Fast forward to today, and everyone can see that prices are now spiralling out of control. Hopes of recovery have given way to fears of recession.

And in place of laissez-faire hubris, the ruling class is now looking to pull the proverbial monetary handbrake, in a desperate attempt to prevent themselves from careering over a cliff-edge.

But an equally acute abyss confronts them on the other side: that of a new world slump. Indeed, in an effort to tame inflation, a wing of the ruling class is even pushing for this cataclysmic outcome.

The fact is that, under capitalism, all roads lead to ruin. Revolutionary explosions impend.

Provoking recession

Inflation is certainly no longer considered transient. Instead, with the war in Ukraine continuing to push up energy prices, and other core costs rising, policymakers are increasingly concerned that inflation is becoming entrenched, spreading to every industry and commodity.

Consequently, decision-makers at key central banks – such as the US Federal Reserve, the European Central Bank (ECB), and the Bank of England (BoE) – have all taken a decidedly 'hawkish' turn of late: affirming their hardline commitment to bringing down prices.

The Fed, ECB, BoE have all recently announced large interest rate hikes of 0.75 percentage points, as they seek to tighten monetary policy. All three, meanwhile, have told people to expect further rate rises before the end of the year.

"We must keep at it until the job is done," stated US Fed chair Jerome

Powell, discussing the recent rate rise.

But cutting away the thicket of euphemism, what does this mean concretely? It means a conscious attempt to provoke a recession, in order to dampen economic demand, increase unemployment, and push down wages.

In other words, workers are scandalously being blamed for inflation, as they chase after prices and struggle for higher wages. And it is workers, one way or another, who are being asked to pay for this crisis.

No solution

Powell has insisted that he and the Fed can engineer a "soft landing": slowing the economy (and reducing inflation) gradually, without crashing it into the ground. But others are less optimistic, noting that such a manoeuvre has rarely been pulled off in the past – particularly not at this level.

Already, both Europe and Britain are predicted to be heading into a prolonged recession, as soaring energy costs and

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rising interest rates bite into consumer demand and push small businesses into bankruptcy.

Even a hard landing, however, is unlikely to achieve the desired aim of bringing down inflation to the 2% target pursued by most western central banks.

For starters, inflation in Europe and the UK is primarily being driven by the shock to gas supplies. And raising interest rates will clearly do nothing to address this, but will simply cause devastation across the economy, and wreak havoc on society.

In the USA, meanwhile, whilst inflation is more demand-driven there than elsewhere, the fault for this does not lie with workers' wages, which are still lagging behind prices. Rather, it is the consequence of repeated rounds of Keynesian stimulus by the White House, which have artificially injected trillions into the American economy.

At the same time, monopolistic 'pricing power' has allowed US corporations to continue pulling in record profits, at the expense of workers' purchasing power.

In other words, when it comes to rampant inflation, the finger should be pointed firmly at the capitalists, their political representatives, and their system – not at workers struggling to make ends meet. And hawkish monetary policy, interest rate hikes, and hard landings offer no solution.

Tug of war

What we are seeing is a veritable tug of war taking place between hawkish (unelected) central bankers, looking to spark a recession and subdue inflation, and anxious (elected) politicians, fearful of the social and political impacts of going down this path.

The *Financial Times*, for example, described incoming UK prime minister Liz Truss as being "on a collision course with the Bank of England" over her plans to subsidise energy bills and prop-up consumer spending through further government borrowing, at an estimated cost to the public purse of around £150 billion.

The ruling class everywhere, put simply, is increasingly split. One wing, pursuing a monetarist creed, wants to raise interest rates – and to hell with the consequences. The other, finding this bitter medicine too much to swallow, leans on Keynesian methods, grasping for state stimulus and government bailouts.

The former seeks to confront the working class head on immediately. The latter, meanwhile, tries to kick the can down the road. But in doing so, they merely prepare the conditions for an even-deeper crisis – and a sharper class struggle – down the line.

And for workers, either avenue amounts to the same thing. It is a 'choice' of death by slow hanging, or death by a thousand cuts.

Gordian Knot

The monetarists and Keynesians are both right – and they are both wrong. Whatever decision the ruling class takes will end in disaster.

If they continue to hike interest rates, they will push the world economy into a new slump.

If they continue to intervene through state support, however, they will fan the flames of inflation even further, whilst also adding to the already-mountainous pile of debt.

In fact, the most likely outcome is a combination of both: so-called 'stagflation', with prices remaining elevated, whilst the economy grinds to a halt or falls.

Similarly, the 2008 slump was declared to be a 'financial' crisis, caused by greedy bankers and lax regulation.

In 2020, ignoring all the existing warning signs, we were told that the global economy would have been in rude health, were it not for the damage inflicted by the pandemic in the 'corona' crisis.

And today, all the blame is heaped on Putin's invasion of Ukraine, which has led to an 'energy' or 'cost-of-living' crisis.

Taken together, however, we can see that all these 'accidents' reflect an underlying necessity: the contradictions of the capitalist system, which inherently lead to chaos and crisis; a rebellion of the productive forces against the straitjacket of private ownership and the nation state.

A vibrant, virile system would be able to withstand these knocks and shocks. But capitalism – a system in its twilight years; in the midst of senile decline and decay – is

The menace of inflation that is ravaging society today is no random occurrence, but is an indication of capitalism's accumulated contradictions coming to the fore; of the chickens coming home to roost for the ruling class, after years and decades of reckless Keynesian policies; and of the myopic pursuit of short-term profits by the capitalists coming back to bite them.

All the while, the class war will intensify in all countries, as the bosses go on the offensive, in an effort to boost their profits; and as workers move into action to defend their living standards.

Such developments echo and underline what Leon Trotsky profoundly explained over one hundred years ago, when he noted that:

"Every effort by the bourgeoisie to restore the equilibrium in production or in distribution or in state finances must inescapably disrupt the unstable equilibrium between the classes."

In other words, every attempt by the ruling class to bring about economic stability only serves to provoke social and political instability – and vice-versa.

There is no way out of this impasse under capitalism. Only the socialist revolution can cut through this Gordian Knot.

Accident and necessity

For the apologists of capitalism, and the empirical reformists also, capitalism's various crises are nothing but a series of unfortunate accidents.

In the 1970s, it was an 'oil' crisis and various other secondary factors that supposedly lay behind the world recession.

instead thrown from pillar to post by these hammer blows.

Each new stage in the crisis, in turn, heightens the contradictions built up in the period before, accelerating the existing processes, and further pounding away at consciousness.

The menace of inflation that is ravaging society today, in this respect, is no random occurrence, but is an indication of capitalism's accumulated contradictions coming to the fore; of the chickens coming home to roost for the ruling class, after years and decades of reckless Keynesian policies; and of the myopic pursuit of short-term profits by the capitalists coming back to bite them.

And it is the working class in all countries who are forced to suffer the consequences.

The 'cost-of-living' crisis, therefore, is not an isolated problem – one that can be solved through a patchwork of piecemeal reforms. Rather, it is another symptom of a sick system; the latest chapter in the ongoing crisis of capitalism.

But the end of this story has yet to be written. It is beholden on us to get organised, build the forces of Marxism, and provide it with a revolutionary conclusion. ■

ITALY: ELECTORAL SWAMP AND COMING CLASS STRUGGLE

Alessio Marconi,

Sinistra Classe Rivoluzione

(IMT)

The fall of the Draghi government in Italy has resulted in snap elections being called for 25 September. While panic abounds about the inevitable victory of a right-wing coalition led by Meloni's 'Brothers of Italy' party, the fact is that workers and youth have few illusions that a change at the top will improve their situation.

In the abstract, the elections on 25 September should be attracting a lot of attention. Instead, these elections will see the lowest turnout in history.

According to a recent poll, one-in-three Italians is not following the electoral campaign 'at all'. 18 percent follow it 'a little', 27 percent 'in part' and only 22 percent follow it 'closely'. Among young people, the polls predict an abstention rate of 55 percent.

This data should not be confused with a lack of interest in politics in the broad sense. On the contrary, today it is almost impossible to have a conversation without ending up talking about politics.

However, the mass of working people are also becoming aware that current political institutions are unable to solve their problems, and therefore there has been a profound detachment from institutional politics. They are seen as mere theatrics, where a privileged political elite says black today and white tomorrow, ready to change their political colours overnight with the sole intent of preserving their personal careers in the service of the ruling class.

It is a feeling that has accumulated over time, strengthening from crisis to crisis, from disappointment to disappointment.

The general elections of 2018 were the last occasion in which the masses used their votes to punish the mainstream political parties through the channels of parliamentary democracy, with an avalanche of votes for the Five Stars Movement (M5S), and to a lesser extent for the League (Lega).

In the following four years the M5S was absorbed into the discredited swamp of mainstream politics, in a process that provided a healthy degree of clarification for the masses.

Today, the same sentiment, of rejecting the political establishment, is being expressed in declining participation in elections, deepened by the upheavals of recent years (pandemic, war, inflation). There are no parties within the electoral system that arouse any real hope of change.

Opinion polls and election results should be read in this context. The likely victory of the right-wing coalition, and in particular of the Brothers of Italy, does not represent a reactionary turn within the people as a whole.

Rather, it is an electoral shift towards the only option that has visibly remained in opposition to previous governments, in an era in which anyone who governs according to the rules of the capitalist system can only ask for sacrifices from the workers, and therefore quickly loses support.

If elections were all that mattered, this scenario would indeed be disconcerting. But the electoral field is only one on which the class struggle is expressed, and not even the main one.

The economic situation we are heading towards is catastrophic. The cut in energy supplies will have dramatic consequences on the living conditions of millions of workers.

All this while inflation continues to rise. The cost of living for the average family grew by 9.4 percent in July on an annualised basis. Put simply, it is becoming impossible to make ends meet.

We have to ask ourselves: what will be the effect of a right-wing government in such an economic and social scenario?

The programme of the right-wing coalition will clearly be to shift wealth even more towards the privileged layers of society, with attacks on workers' incomes, attacks on trade union rights, further job insecurity, and cuts in education and healthcare, all in favour of private companies.

And all of this will be accompanied by reactionary provocations of all kinds: racism, sexism, homophobia, police repression, etc.

This combination of economic and political factors is inevitably preparing an unprecedented social explosion in our country.

Blocked on the electoral front, the workers will be forced to take to the field of direct mobilisation – with strikes and protests – to defend their living conditions. Mass explosive mobilisations of the youth against reactionary provocations, on issues that have already mobilised them in recent years, are implicit in the situation.

The opulence that has been accumulated at the top of society is a further provocation, so much so that even the government has had to denounce so-called 'super-profits'. There comes a point where workers say 'enough is enough'.

The present sense of frustration, the lack of any point of reference, the gloomy outlook for the future, the detachment of the masses from institutional politics will all turn into their opposite, in the eruption of collective and direct action.

The swamp will be swept away by the entry on the scene by the youth and the working class. ■



UKRAINE WAR

THE IMPLICATIONS OF RUSSIA'S DEFEAT ON THE KHARKIV FRONT



Jorge Martin

and Alan Woods,

13 September

In the first weeks of September, Ukrainian forces made significant advances on the Kharkiv front, forcing the Russians into a disorganised retreat.

What is the meaning and significance of this counteroffensive and how is it likely to impact the course of the conflict?

Firstly, it is true that the collapse of the Russian forces on the Kharkiv front was a serious defeat.

In only a few days, Ukrainian troops made important inroads in the Kharkiv front. Analysis by the US-based Institute for War talks of 2,500 square kilometres having been retaken from the Russian forces.

The Ukrainian forces have pushed back the Kharkiv frontline about 70km eastwards to the Oskil river and conquered key strategic points, chiefly Izyum and the western bank of Kupyansk.

The propaganda war

In the last few months, as the winter approaches, there was increasing worry amongst Ukraine's western backers about the development of the war.

Billions of dollars, euros and pounds being sent to Kyiv in ammunition, artillery pieces, equipment, intelligence sharing, etc. seemed to have no real impact on the frontline, with the Russians advancing slowly but relentlessly on the basis of significant firepower superiority.

The question started to be raised: is it worth pouring resources into a war which, it seems, cannot be won? This was posed starkly as Russian supplies of gas to Europe were cut off and governments in the EU feared that high energy bills might provoke mass discontent.

Increasingly anxious that the West would lose interest in Ukraine and disengage under growing pressure from public opinion, or at least reduce the flow of arms and money to a trickle, Zelensky was becoming desperate. He needed to show his bosses in Washington that their money

was not being wasted, that the war was still ongoing, and that Ukrainians were ready to launch a great counteroffensive.

In other words, he needed some kind of dramatic stunt that would make his donors sit up and pay attention. He needed a quick victory. But how to get one? That was the question.

The 'Kherson offensive'

Before these latest events, all attention was concentrated on the so-called 'Kherson counteroffensive' of Ukrainian forces in the south, which started on 29 August. This had been publicly announced by Kyiv for months.

Thus, while all the attention was concentrated on the Kherson front, on 8 September, the Ukrainian army launched a surprise offensive on Balakliya, north of Izyum. This clearly took the Russians completely by surprise.

By 12 September, Russia had been forced to withdraw its forces from the strip

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along the border, north of Kharkiv region and moved the front from the Siverskidonestk river back eastward to the Oskil river.

This was a far-more humiliating defeat than the earlier withdrawal from Kyiv. That was a more-or-less orderly affair. But not so here. This was not an orderly retreat, but rather a rout. The Russians fled, abandoning their positions, leaving behind large quantities of weapons and equipment.

Consequences

What will be the consequences of this Russian defeat in the Kharkiv region? From the Ukrainian point of view this is a much-needed morale booster. The propaganda element has been key for the Ukrainian-Western side since the beginning. But propaganda has its limits; unless it is followed up by concrete advances on the ground it becomes empty and counterproductive.

As one might have predicted, the men in Kyiv are now puffed up with their own importance.

There is now talk of Ukraine preparing a similar counter-offensive in Vuhledar, on the Zaporizhzhia front. However, the real situation is shown by the latest appeals from Kyiv, demanding that the West speed up the delivery of arms and vastly increase the quantities.

For what purpose? Not to stage a triumphal march to Moscow, or Crimea, or even Mariupol, but *merely to hang on to the territory they have just won*.

To win one battle is not to win the war, which consists of many battles. The Ukrainians may win one battle, or ten battles. But such victories can be ephemeral and do not necessarily signify a change in the general balance of forces.

An existential question

These are very dangerous developments for Putin. The war in Ukraine is an existential question for him and his regime. The collapse of Russian defences in Kharkiv was perhaps the most serious set-back for Russia in this war.

Military and Russian reactionary nationalist commentators, who have supported the invasion of Ukraine, are now openly voicing their criticism of the leadership of the campaign, some questioning even Putin himself.

So far, these cracks are only mild, but unless the situation on the ground in Ukraine is turned around and Putin has some victories to show, then dissent will grow, particularly amongst those who supported the war so far. This could become very dangerous for Putin's position. Defeats in war often lead to revolution.



Imperialists face problems

Considered objectively, the recent rout is a setback and has led to serious difficulties in the Russian campaign, but whether this will have any lasting effect on the overall balance of forces is open to doubt. Some military and political leaders in Kyiv and the West are striking a note of caution.

It might seem that Zelensky is now in a stronger position to demand even more military and financial aid from the US and Europe.

But Zelensky has his own domestic problems. Rumours abound in Kyiv that the military high command was not too keen on the Kherson offensive. Western analysts were sceptical and advised limiting its aims and scope. Zelensky nevertheless pushed ahead with it. The reason was not so much military but political.

Temporarily, this victory will have an impact on the morale of Ukrainian soldiers and public opinion, which had until now only seen defeats and retreats since April. It allows Ukraine to keep alive the hope of further advances in the war after the winter period, which is likely to bring warfare to a standstill.

But all is not what it seems. Paradoxically, the recent military success of the Ukrainian side has created difficulties for the imperialists and what you might call the Peace Party. In fact, several Ukrainian newspapers report that during the visit by US Secretary of State Blinken to Kyiv, he "brought a message from Joe Biden about the need to start negotiations with Putin." (*Ukrainska Pravda*).

But Putin will be in no mood to negotiate with anybody so soon after a humiliating defeat. The recent attack took the Russians by surprise. But that is unlikely to be repeated. The Russian forces will regroup and they will be reinforced by new and fresh divisions.

Russia still has considerable reserves to draw upon. For example, on 1 September, tens of thousands of Russian troops were involved in military exercises in the Far East, which could have been destined for the Ukrainian front.

Putin will do whatever is necessary to be able to present a victory in Ukraine. For that he needs, as a minimum, to keep the territory he holds in Kherson, Zaporizhzhya and Lugansk, and complete the takeover of the Donbass by reaching the administrative borders of Donetsk.

And there is no question of Putin giving up as a result of temporary setbacks, which are inevitable in any war. On the other hand, Ukraine is in an extremely difficult situation from an economic point of view, having been almost cut off from foreign trade (despite the grain export agreement) and completely dependent on Western help for its day-to-day budget.

The imperialists – especially the Europeans – are thus faced with a stark dilemma. Winter is approaching, without any guarantees for the supply of gas and oil. This is fuelling a cost-of-living crisis with potentially explosive social and political effects. The pressure towards reaching some sort of deal or compromise will continue to grow.

The massive protests recently in the Czech Republic are highly symptomatic of changes in public opinion which are taking place across Europe.

It is impossible to predict what will happen in the next few months. As Napoleon said: war is the most complex of all equations. It is a constantly moving picture with many unknown variables.

Our task as Marxists is to follow the course of events and patiently explain to the advanced layers, to agitate against the war from a revolutionary point of view, addressing our opposition first and foremost against the enemy at home: *our own ruling class*. ■



Jorge Martin,

21 September

On 21 September, a series of important announcements were been made by Russia regarding the war in Ukraine: partial mobilisation affecting 300,000 people, referendums in the Russian-occupied territories in Ukraine about their annexation to Russia, stiffer sentences for crimes related to military service and the warning that Russia will use "all means at its disposal" to protect its territorial integrity.

In a televised address, which was originally scheduled on the evening of 20 September, but was finally postponed to the 21st, president Vladimir Putin announced partial mobilisation in Russia.

This is a significant step aimed to address the main Russian weakness in the war in Ukraine: its limited amount of manpower.

The announcement was followed by a pre-recorded statement by Russian Defence Minister Shoigu. The details of the mobilisation are as follows. Only reservists "who have served in the armed forces, have certain military professions and relevant experience", will be called.

Shoigu added that mobilisation will start with those "with combat experience". Those called up will have the same status and pay as contract servicemen, which also means they cannot leave until the "special military operation" in Ukraine is over.

Putin also announced referendums not only in Donetsk and Luhansk, but also in Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, on the question of annexation to the Russian Federation. These will take place between 23-27 September, and, of course, Putin said that he will "support their decision about their future".

The day before, the Duma rushed through legislation providing for harsh jail sentences for a series of military service related crimes: disobeying orders, absence without leave, desertion, voluntary surrender, etc. The commission of these crimes "during mobilisation or martial law, during wartime" will be considered an aggravating circumstance. This is designed as a threat to the newly mobilised troops to obey orders.

What does it mean?

Putin also addressed the heads of the military industrial complex, instructing them to speed up production of military hardware.

In explaining these decisions, Putin said that Russia is fighting "the entire Western military machine".

Referring specifically to nuclear weapons, Putin issued a clear warning: "If its territorial integrity is threatened Russia will use all the means at its disposal. This is not a bluff."

It is clear that the Ukrainian offensive on the Kharkiv front, which resulted in a Russian rout in that section, starkly revealed the main weakness Putin faces in this war: the limited number of soldiers it has deployed.

This was a factor all along, but the situation became worse with the Western delivery of rocket launchers and artillery pieces, particularly the HIMARs. These are not enough to reverse Russian superiority in firepower, but have allowed the Ukrainians to strike at the rear of the Russian operations.

The limited deployment of troops (about 170,000) by Russia was designed to contain the impact of the war in Ukraine. By calling it a "special military operation" Putin wanted to give the impression that this was going to be a short lived, limited affair and insulate public opinion from the war.

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After the Kharkiv offensive, that was no longer sustainable. Full mobilisation would carry important political risks for Putin. If the war is prolonged and the number of body bags returning from the front starts to pile up, then opposition to the war will inevitably grow amongst the families of the soldiers. This is the reason why he went only for a partial mobilisation.

The calculation is that 300,000 troops, almost trebling the current number, will be enough to achieve his objectives in Ukraine while at the same time limiting the potential political implications in terms of popular opposition to the war if things go wrong.

Furthermore, these are people with certain military experience who will not require a long period of training. Some of them can be used in logistical tasks and to protect the rear, thus releasing the more skilled and professional troops to deal with the actual fighting at the frontline.

Referendums

The decision to hold referendums in the four regions has a dual purpose. On the one hand, once these regions are annexed to the Russian Federation, the status of the war changes. If Ukraine makes any further advances or bombs these territories that will be considered as an aggression on Russian territory. It will also allow for the more regular Russian army formations to be deployed in these areas in order to free up more forces for offensive actions.

Secondly, Putin needed to reassure the population and officials in these regions that Russia is there to stay and will not flee as happened in Kharkiv Oblast. The Ukrainian government has threatened those that collaborated with the Russian forces with severe consequences, and several have already been assassinated. These referendums will go some way to reassure these officials, on whom Russia relies to carry the civilian administration.

Of course, these referendums will take place under armed occupation and in the middle of war. That doesn't change the fact that a large proportion of those who remain in these regions are likely to be pro-Russian, with the majority of those opposed to Russia having already fled to Ukrainian-controlled territory.

The fact that Kyiv has threatened those who participate with jail sentences of up to 12 years and confiscation of property, or the earlier threat of 15 years jail for any Ukrainians in the Russian occupied territories who applied for a Russian passport, would confirm that this is the case. If Kyiv was convinced of the anti-Russian sentiment of the population in these regions, they would surely have called for resistance rather than having to resort to threats.



When Putin talks about facing "the whole of the West", he is trying to shore up support for the war amongst the Russian population, but he is not the only one to have made such a statement. There have been constant statements from Washington about being at war with Russia and even Biden declared that the aim was regime change in Moscow.

Even on 21 September, Spanish PM Pedro Sanchez declared that "Putin is at war with the whole of Europe".

A predictable response

The aim of partial mobilisation is to allow Russia to achieve its immediate aims in the war.

In the last few days since the Kharkiv offensive there has been constant prodding by the Ukrainian army along the Oskil river, crossing it at certain points, and several back-and-forth battles for control of the eastern side of Kupiansk, on the right bank of the river (Ukraine controls the western side).

Also in the area around Lyman, Ukrainian forces have crossed the Siverski Donets river in two or three points, though the Russians have so far been able to hold the line at this crucial town. Finally, the Ukrainian forces have been pushing towards Luhansk at Bilohorivka.

Therefore, Russia's first aim is to stabilise the frontline along the Oskil and Siverski Donets rivers.

Once that is achieved, then Putin needs to continue advancing in the Donetsk Oblast, as control over the whole of the Donbass could be presented as having achieved the aims of the "special operation".

The veiled threat Putin made of the use of nuclear weapons was aimed at the West. He was basically telling them "the

ever-increasing military and logistical support for Ukraine has a limit, and if you cross it, be ready for the consequences".

In comparison to NATO or US imperialism, Russia is only a middle-sized regional power. However it is one which possesses nuclear weapons, and as Putin reminded them, some very technologically advanced means of delivering them.

The crocodile tears of Europe complaining that Russia is "weaponising" the world's energy supply are cynical and hypocritical in equal terms. After all, it was the EU which got involved in the Ukrainian war by using sanctions against Russia as a form of economic warfare. They cannot impose sanctions on Russia and then complain Russia is cutting off their gas supply!

Putin is certainly using economic means to put pressure on Europe. He is calculating that the social turmoil caused by high energy prices and the cost of living crisis in general will push European governments towards a more conciliatory position, for fear of being removed.

The West has openly expressed the desire to use the war in Ukraine to put Russia in its place (that is: subordinate to Western imperialism) and to carry out regime change. There have even been discussions about breaking up Russia.

The war in Ukraine is an existential question for Putin. He has gambled his power and prestige on it. His staying in power depends on winning something which he can present as a victory and above all on not being defeated nor humiliated.

Any hint of a defeat would be the end for Putin, who could be removed either by a popular uprising from below or a coup from above. His latest response to the defeat in Kharkiv Oblast was completely predictable. ■

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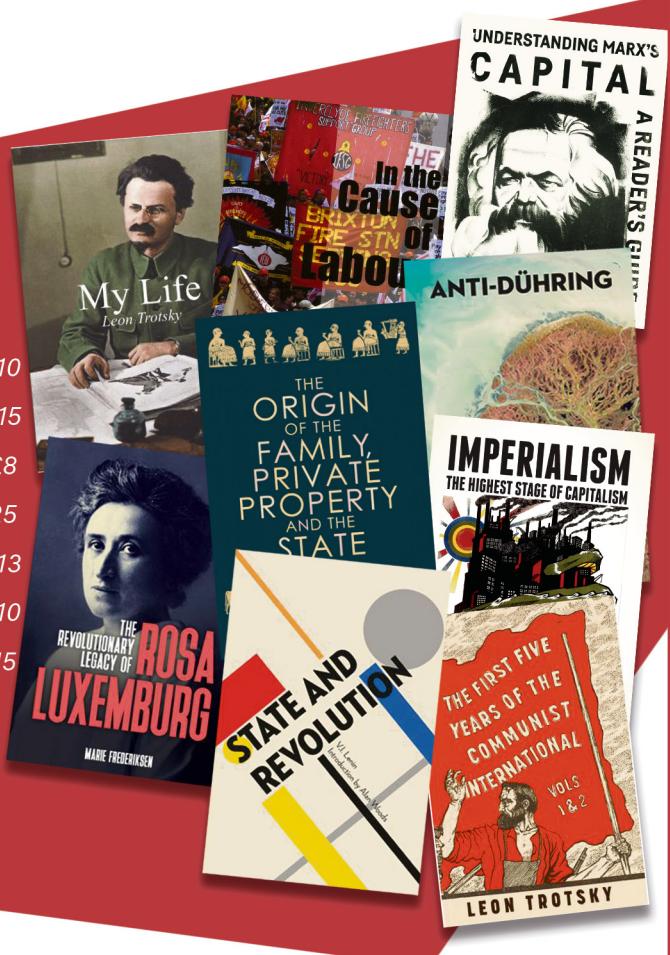
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Letters

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PATRONAGE

Dear Editor,

Since the Queen's death I have been hearing lots of people highlighting how charitable the Queen was, often in response to criticism.

One TikTok even went viral of a man claiming the Queen helped people more than any left-winger because she was "the patron to over 600 charities".

Despite the obvious fact that any charitable donation does not make up for the pillaging of the world by the British royals, this 'patronage' is not as kind as it seems.

In fact, the royal family has profited off supporting these charitable causes. Being a patron does not actually involve any of the royals donating any money.

It is difficult to find evidence of the Queen donating to the charities she is a patron of, other than the £2 million donation to Virginia Giuffre's charity as part of Prince Andrew's settlement.

The charity I work for was contacted by a palace correspondent last year. We were offered the opportunity for our organisation to be promoted in a booklet which would be shared with many at a charity event at the palace.

This came at an extortionate cost of several thousand pounds but we were reassured the publicity we'd receive from being associated with the royal family would be very worth it!

Far from the excitement I'm sure this correspondent assumed of us, we were extremely unimpressed. We turned the offer down.

My charity works with refugees. Not only couldn't we afford the exorbitant cost, but we didn't feel that it was helpful to have the patronage of a woman who is the very embodiment of British colonialism.

Given the crimes of British imperialism, another several thousand is small change in what the royals have robbed from people in the ex-colonies.

The royal family are parasites, happy to exploit even those who support the most vulnerable in society. We must be clear that the transfer of wealth is not from the royals to the working class but the other way around. We must overthrow the system that creates the

need for the existence of charities in the first place!

Comradely,
A charity worker

DISRUPTION

Dear Editor,

Thanks for the recent article on the TUC congress and the Queen.

Next time anyone complains about 'strikes disrupting essential services' can we please not forget that the Queen's death has cancelled food bank services and hospital appointments. And this in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis, when food banks have already seen such an increase in demand that they struggle to serve everyone.

The labour leaders should think about that, next time they declare that the class struggle can wait. Millions of people can't wait!

We're not in this because it's the hip thing to do and because there are sparklers at the picket lines; nor because we fetishise the labour movement. We're fighting because we *have to* and we need socialism *now*, not in some distant future.

Comradely,
Elena, Sheffield

HOMELESS

Dear Editor,

Tories have always said that poverty is the fault of the individual. That people just need to pull themselves up by the bootstraps, get out on their bike, and look for work. Such is the useless verbal diarrhoea these wretches spout.

If you look at the FACTS then you see giving it belt and braces, bootstraps and bicycle isn't enough under capitalism. Record numbers are now homeless despite being in paid full-time work. As one paper aptly put it, it's 'all work and no place'.

People are working every hour they can. Some people work two or three jobs, just to make ends meet. But the capitalist crisis makes the gulf between the ends unbridgeable.

I remember the exhaustion my mum, a single mother, had to battle through when she worked two jobs to make

ends meet. I remember how tired she was, physically and mentally, and it fills me with rage. Rage that won't subside until capitalism and the ruling-class have been kicked into their graves.

Around 74,230 families in England, in the first three months of the year, became homeless or were at risk of it.

The Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities stated that this figure included 25,610 families with children, and 10,560 where people were in full-time work.

This confirms that capitalism is the most wretched and depraved system that has ever existed. It cannot even afford shelter to those who play by its rules. No amount of 'cancelling Netflix', 'getting fewer takeaways', or using hand-me-down clothing, can overcome this.

When people work full-time and still end up homeless it is clearly not a budgeting issue, but a system issue. Capitalism needs to be extinguished and replaced with socialism.

Plans to build millions of social homes, whilst expropriating the hundreds of thousands of empty properties of the rich, would rapidly eliminate homelessness.

A system run by workers would never see workers out on the street.

Tom Wood,
Merseyside

SICK OLD MAN

Dear Editor,

The Queen's death has seen the return of the paedophile Prince Andrew to the limelight, much to the disgust of ordinary workers. One brave Edinburghian said what we were all thinking when he yelled "sick old man!" at the disgraced Duke of York.

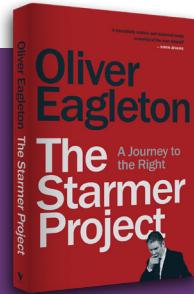
It reminded me of reports that Buckingham Palace aides had put a new twist on an old rhyme to mock him:

"Oh the Grand Old Duke of York,
He had 12 million quid,
He gave it to someone he'd never met,
For something he never did!"

Comradely
Darren Pexton

Reviews

The Starmer Project



Andrew Lambirth,

York Marxists

The 25-28 September sees the annual conference of the Labour Party, taking place in Liverpool.

Given the Queen's recent death, and 'Sir' Keir Starmer's loyal subservience to the British establishment, this year's event is likely to be a four-day festival of fervent flag-waving and nauseating nationalism.

This marks the culmination of the counter-revolution inside the Labour Party, following the demise of the Corbyn movement – a process that is detailed in a recently-released publication from Verso Books.

Oliver Eagleton's *The Starmer Project: A Journey to the Right* leads readers through the path that Keir Starmer took to become the leader of the Labour Party.

Eagleton's book provides plenty of useful examples demonstrating the shenanigans of the Labour right wing, and the breathtaking compromises of the left leaders.

Yet despite this, *The Starmer Project* lacks a class perspective on the civil war that has taken place inside the Labour Party in recent years. Consequently, the book fails to adequately explain Starmer's real role in the Corbyn era – and therefore cannot fully draw out the lessons that the left must learn from this episode.

Compromise

Eagleton documents the Corbyn team's early attempts to compromise with their critics.

The new leadership quickly faced a series of challenges from the right wing and their billionaire friends in the media. And we learn from Eagleton how Starmer played a star role in many of these attacks.



Yet, instead of mobilising members to sweep out the saboteurs, Corbyn consistently extended an olive branch to his ruthless opponents. But these were never enough for the right wing, who wasted no time in resuming their plots.

As we have repeatedly explained, without a clear class understanding of the challenges they were facing, the left leaders were beaten into making repeated concessions to the right wing and the establishment, buckling to the outrageous smears and slanders thrown at them.

Compromises over Brexit, in particular, were the Corbyn leadership's ultimate undoing.

The 2019 election came as a hammer-blow for the Corbyn movement, provoking a muddled reaction from left commentators, as Eagleton describes.

Unfortunately, at the time of the 2019 leadership election, many prominent left commentators sowed illusions in Starmer, with his assertions that he would maintain Corbyn's core policies, whilst 'ending factionalism'.

As Eagleton shows, however, these naive hopes were sorely misplaced. Although the author never explicitly says so, Starmer was clearly running on behalf of the capitalist class, to win Labour back for them.

Counter-revolution

In the *The Leader* chapter, Eagleton describes Starmer's wholesale betrayal of the many well-meaning leftwingers who voted for him.

In addition, the author shows how Starmer set out to build trust with the general public, by presenting himself as a 'respectable' statesman. This was less about building trust with the public, however, and more about working to cement the approbation of the capitalist press and the establishment.

Starmer represented a counter-revolution compared to the leftward transformation of the Corbyn years. And like all counter-revolutions in history, Starmer knew that he had – and still has – the full support of the establishment in his endeavours. As a result, he and the Labour right have shown no mercy in purging the left from the party.

Eagleton describes in great technical detail the measures – in terms of policy and expulsions – that Starmer has taken to move Labour to the right; and how, like night follows day, the left leaders have continued to appease the right in the face of these attacks, all to no avail.

Titanic events

The book's *Afterword* suffers from a pessimism that is common to those on the left who only look at the superficial appearance of events, rather than the underlying process.

Eagleton sees the measures taken by Starmer as being possibly "irreversible". Similarly, he suggests that if another left leadership candidate managed to emerge in the future, they "would again be pressurised to make damaging compromises and concessions".

The downfall of Corbynism certainly represents a huge setback for the left. But the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader in 2015 demonstrated starkly how things can – and will – turn into their opposite; how the subterranean pressures building below will eventually burst to the surface.

Capitalism is in the deepest crisis it has ever faced, particularly so in Britain. Workers are beginning to move on the industrial front, taking militant strike action across the economy. And the youth are being radicalised like never before – on campuses and in the streets.

Future political earthquakes will shake the whole of society, including the labour movement. And on this basis, we can safely predict that Labour and the unions will be transformed and retransformed.

Rather than wallow in defeat and pessimism, we must intervene actively in the struggles taking place – and prepare for the titanic and tumultuous events that lie ahead. ■

THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

A MARXIST PERSPECTIVE

IMMANUEL KANT

Immanuel Kant (1724 – 1804) was a hugely influential Prussian idealist philosopher.

Kant continued the trend set by Berkley and Hume in his critique of the one-sided materialism of the early empiricists, and raised this criticism to its highest level. Although the materialism of the empiricists was one-sided, the trend Kant belonged to only emphasised and exaggerated this flaw. As such it was fundamentally reactionary, as we can see in Berkley's attempt to destroy atheism and materialism.

Although Kant was not immune from this limitation, there is still much to be learned from his ideas and he had many profound insights. For instance, he was able to correctly deduce that the solar system was formed from a nebula, which is now accepted as fact.

A major step forward made by Kant was to view the acquisition of knowledge via sense-perceptions not as a passive process, but an active one. We do not simply *acquire* a heap of information through sensing our surroundings, but we *interpret* this information. We cannot have a single thought on the basis of raw information alone. We rely instead on generalisations and abstractions.

But Kant goes wrong when he argues that humans must have some innate, *a priori* knowledge through which we interpret the world.

Kant argues that abstract ideas such as time and space are inherent to our minds, and not properties of the objective world. He argues that we bring these ideas to the table when interpreting our sense-perceptions, and thus cannot truly grasp reality as it actually is, independent of these ideas. Therefore the so-called 'thing-in-itself' is inaccessible to us.

Yet there are plenty of things we cannot observe directly with our senses that we know to exist and can understand. We can understand them because of the

effect they have on the things we can perceive. If some thing, or some aspect of a thing, is completely inaccessible to us, since it cannot interact with and change anything we can detect, in what way can it meaningfully be said to exist?

To assert that knowledge is exclusively subjective as Kant does, is at its heart a pessimistic philosophy. Hegel commented on this that "it marks the diseased state of the age". No wonder then, in this era of capitalist decline, it is these arguments of Kant – the weakest parts of his philosophy – that resurface in the form of postmodernism and identity politics.

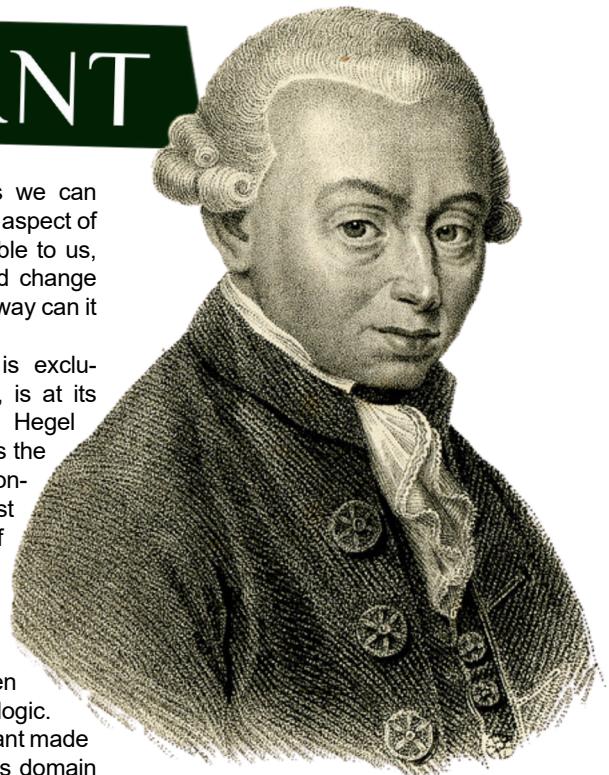
Things improve greatly when we examine Kant's criticism of logic. By rediscovering the dialectic, Kant made the first real steps forward in this domain since Aristotle.

Aristotle viewed his laws of logic as fundamental laws of matter, whereas Kant viewed them as laws of thought, which were then applied to matter. An example of this can be seen when he asserts that since mathematical series always have a first term, time must have a beginning and space a limit. Thus we see that the material world is made to conform to our systems of thought.

However, as dialectical materialists we understand that laws of logic, mathematics, the natural sciences, etc. are derived from the material world, and then applied onto the material world when we consciously change it.

Kant's antinomies (i.e. contradictions), despite their flaws, were important steps forward in moving on from formal logic by showing that contradictions were inherent in thought.

In his four antinomies, Kant uses formal logic to derive contradictory conclusions. Kant used this as an attempt to justify the unknowability of the 'thing-in-itself', as he argued that since our knowledge is



self-contradictory, it therefore cannot be objective.

It wasn't until Hegel that these contradictions could be explained. Hegel later went on to thank Kant for reintroducing contradictions as "one of the most important steps in the progress of modern philosophy".

Despite all the steps forward made by Kant in breathing a new lease of life into philosophy, his methods were ultimately unsatisfactory. His greatest merits were in his thorough criticisms of the traditional forms of logic, but he was only able to grasp at their replacements. This task was left to Hegel, and only consistently and fully completed by Marx and Engels. ■

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ENOUGH IS ENOUGH:

ALL OUT ACTION TO BRING DOWN THE BOSSES!

Socialist Appeal

Following a brief pause during the official national mourning period, this summer's strikewave is set to continue into the autumn, with workers across the board set to take action in October.

Notably, Britain's 'striketober' will begin with *coordinated* action on the country's railways, as the RMT, ASLEF, and TSSA unions walk out together on the first day of the month, in their long-running dispute over jobs, pay, conditions, and safety.

They will be joined on 1 October by posties in the CWU, who are also fighting over pay and conditions, against belligerent Royal Mail bosses.

At the same time, dockers at Felixstowe and Liverpool will be in the middle of joint action, with strikes taking place from 27 September to 5 October, and from now until 3 October, respectively.

The beginning of October will also see bus strikes at First Bus South West in Somerset and Cornwall, and at Arriva in London. The latter will involve 2,000 drivers bringing the wheels on the bus to a halt, as Unite members take indefinite action in their struggle for a real wage rise.

This follows successful strike action at Arriva North West this summer, with union members in Unite

and GMB joining forces to score a victory against bus bosses, securing an above-inflation pay increase.

All the while, criminal barristers organised in the CBA will be continuing their all-out strike in protest against Tory cuts to the justice system.

Alongside these live strikes, workers across the public sector are being balloted for national strike action.

This includes PCS members in the civil service; NEU members in schools; RCN members in the NHS; and UCU members in higher education, paving the way for potential joint action with campus colleagues organised in Unison.

All of these simultaneous struggles demonstrates the possibility of – and need for – mass coordinated action across the trade union movement.

This is what union leaders must boldly call for when they meet at the postponed TUC Congress, due to take place in Brighton on 18-20 October.

Motions are on the agenda calling for joint action between the unions, as part of a united fightback against the Tories and bosses. These must be enthusiastically passed and energetically acted upon.

As suggested in Unison's TUC

Congress motion, coordinated industrial action should be part of a national campaign of protests and strikes, linked to local rallies and demonstrations.

The 'Enough is Enough' protests organised to take place in 13 cities across the country on Saturday 1 October, in support of the strike action occurring on the same day, show the way forward.

The whole of the labour movement – including union branches, trades councils, and local Labour parties – must galvanise rank-and-file members to maximise the turnout for this mass mobilisation.

And student activists should organise to join the protests and picket lines, offering their full support and solidarity, and bolstering the numbers and dynamism on the demonstrations.

This must be the platform for a mass campaign of rolling, escalated joint action across the unions and across the country – uniting all these struggles into one unstoppable force, capable of pushing this criminal Tory government from power.

For starters, with so many public sector unions balloting for action, a one-day public sector wide strike is inherent in the situation. And with Truss'

Tories threatening to bring in even more draconian anti-union laws, trade union leaders have raised the idea of a general strike.

The Tories and bosses have declared class war on workers. It is time to take the battle to these class enemies, and fight to overthrow their bankrupt system.

Enough is enough. Tinkering around the edges will not suffice. Only the struggle for socialism will do. ■



UNIVERSITY STAFF TAKE ACTION UNITE STRUGGLES ACROSS EDUCATION!

Harry Ewing,

Unison higher education

Thousands of university workers – organised with Unison – have begun a campaign of strike action over a pathetic pay offer from the employers. This includes cleaners, administrators, library, catering, and security workers.

Staff demanded a 2% pay rise above inflation. But bosses rejected this call, offering a measly 3% overall instead. And with inflation hovering around 10%, this means another real-terms pay cut.

No surprise, then, that Unison members in higher education (HE) have rejected such an insulting offer.

Breaking point

As a result, workers from 22 different universities across the UK are walking out over the next three weeks, including staff at institutions in London, Manchester, Belfast, and Glasgow.

As part of this announcement, Unison head of education Mike Short stated that, much like the UCU workers who went on strike earlier in the year, staff across HE are at a “breaking point”.

The pressure of rising prices is already bearing down on workers; and it is forecast to get worse, with some predictions suggesting that headline inflation will hit somewhere between 18-22% early next year.

On top of this, there is complete demoralisation within HE, with poverty wages forcing many staff to skip meals. As such, seven out of ten staff say they are looking to leave the sector if conditions do not improve.

Many of the workers striking with Unison are ‘invisible’ – and yet vital to campus life. They may not have a front-facing role with students, but without them, universities would not run.

It is these workers – and their colleagues in other unions – who keep the education system running. Yet it is university bosses who rake in eye-watering salaries, all while pleading poverty when it comes to paying ordinary staff a decent wage.

Struggle together

Across education, workers are having to mobilise to defeat the bosses’ attacks.

In the further education (FE) sector, the UCU has successfully balloted for strike action at 26 colleges in England. This will lead to an unprecedented 10 days of strike action.

This shows the bitter mood being created amongst workers by the marketisation of education. More and more staff – at both universities and colleges – see profit being put before the interests of workers and students alike.

Fat-cat education bosses are seeing massive pay rises. Meanwhile, we scramble to make ends meet from month to month.

This is why it is such a welcome step for Unison members in HE to take strike action.

It's high time we took the fight into our own hands. But we don't have to do it alone!

UCU are currently balloting for strike action across the university sector. The potential for joint strike action is therefore clear.

This would enormously strengthen any action, and demonstrate that we – not the vice-chancellors and CEOs – are the ones who really run things on campus.

Workers' control

It is not just staff, but students also, who are having to struggle in the higher education sector. It is true that teaching conditions are learning conditions. But it is also true that a good education relies on decent facilities, well-run libraries, and properly-stocked cafeterias.

That's why student activists need to link up with the labour movement, show solidarity, and help us win this fight. At the end of the day, we are all facing the same struggle, against the same enemy: the bosses and their profit system.

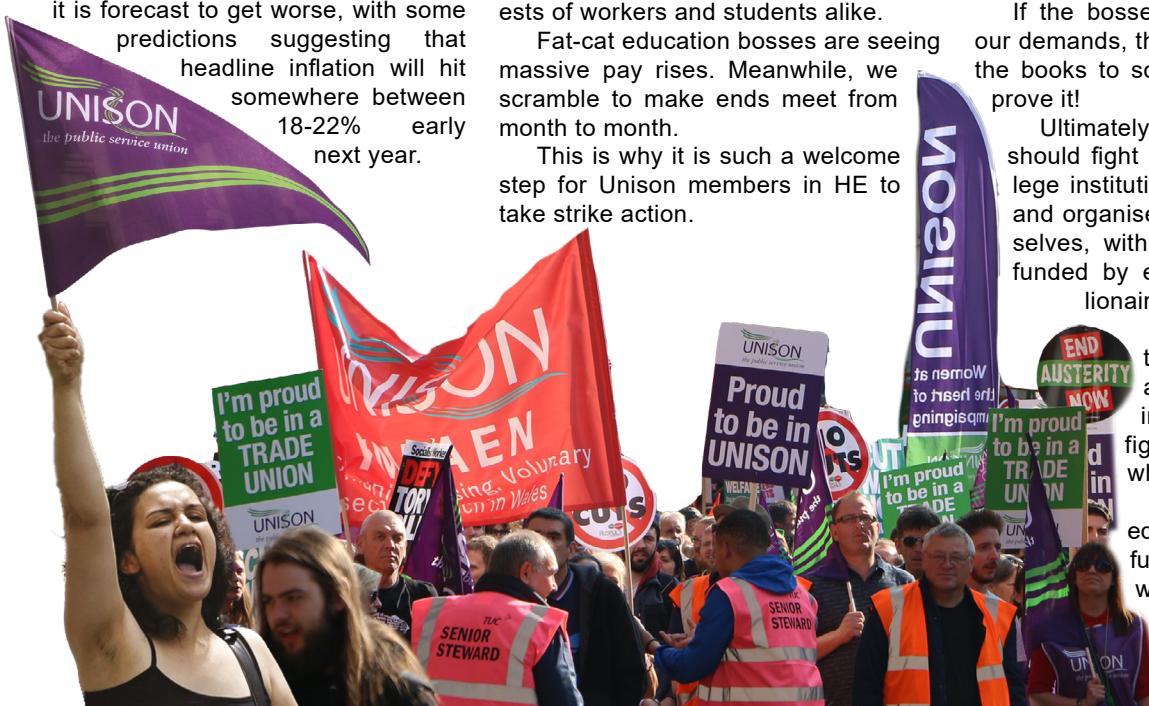
Students are saddled with enormous debt thanks to the ever-increasing tuition fees. And workers and students have the right to know where that money is going.

If the bosses say they can't afford our demands, then they should open up the books to scrutiny by the unions to prove it!

Ultimately, workers and students should fight for universities and college institutions to be run, planned, and organised by the workers themselves, with free lifelong education funded by expropriation of the billionaires.

The first step towards that is coordinating our action, and demonstrating our strength as one fighting force across the whole sector.

After all, who is better equipped to ensure the future of education: those who line their pockets from it? Or those who work to keep it running every day? ■



UCU MEMBERS ON THE MOVE

RISING TIDE OF CLASS STRUGGLE LIFTS ALL BOATS

UCU Marxists

You could forgive employers for breathing a sigh of relief. The Queen's death seemed as if it would bring a hot summer of strike action to a pause, with union leaders declaring a one-sided truce during the official mourning period.

But this relative peace could only ever be temporary. None of the issues that have provoked the recent strike wave have been resolved.

Change in mood

Just two days before the Queen passed away, the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) formally launched its new campaign, 'UCU Rising': a massive get-out-the-vote drive for a ballot of members in higher education (HE), which opened on 7 September.

The energy around this campaign is distinctively radical. UCU is threatening to bring the entire UK university sector to a standstill, with an "unprecedented" 150 HE institutions potentially in line to see strike action.

Such a development would not have seemed likely only a few months ago.

At the end of the last academic year, the most recent wave of UCU strike action went down to defeat.

Failure to prevent cuts to the pensions scheme, or to force university management to agree to any of the demands included in the 'Four Fights', left many members demoralised.

But this mood now appears to be turning around, thanks to the inspiring example set by striking workers in other unions.

The militancy of unions like the RMT, alongside successes in local strikes, has demonstrated to members what is possible on the basis of determined action.

Insulting offer

University management have offered a disgraceful 3% pay rise – in reality, a massive

pay cut, given that inflation is hovering around 10%.

This comes on the back of more than a decade of austerity for UK universities, despite soaring tuition fees, which – even before the current spike in inflation – left academic workers more than 20% worse off in real terms than before the 2008 crash.

This explains the renewed radicalism amongst UCU members, which is forcing the national leadership to come out more boldly after their rather reluctant performance in last year's strike.

Lessons to learn

It is encouraging to see that lessons from the last strike have been learnt. The ballot, this time, is being conducted on an aggregated basis.

This is clearly a step forward from disaggregated balloting, which left striking universities feeling isolated.

The ballot period is also being extended to almost two months, allowing members more time to campaign and increase the turnout.

These are excellent first steps, and will galvanise members. With Unison members on campuses also striking, the time has never been better for us to mobilise.

We should also ask,

however: how should UCU members conduct this struggle, if and when they do obtain a mandate to strike?

The bosses were able to wear UCU members out on the basis of a strategy of limited strike action, with the union announcing exactly when staff would be returning to work.

This time, our programme must be one of indefinite strike action. The bosses have to know that we are not going back to work until our demands are met.

Unite and fight

This strategy must not only be put to existing union members, but should also be the basis for a massive recruitment campaign.

The UCU must also appeal to other unionised workers to join this struggle.

Members of Unite and Unison on campuses face exactly the same problems as us. It is time for all university workers to come out on strike together.

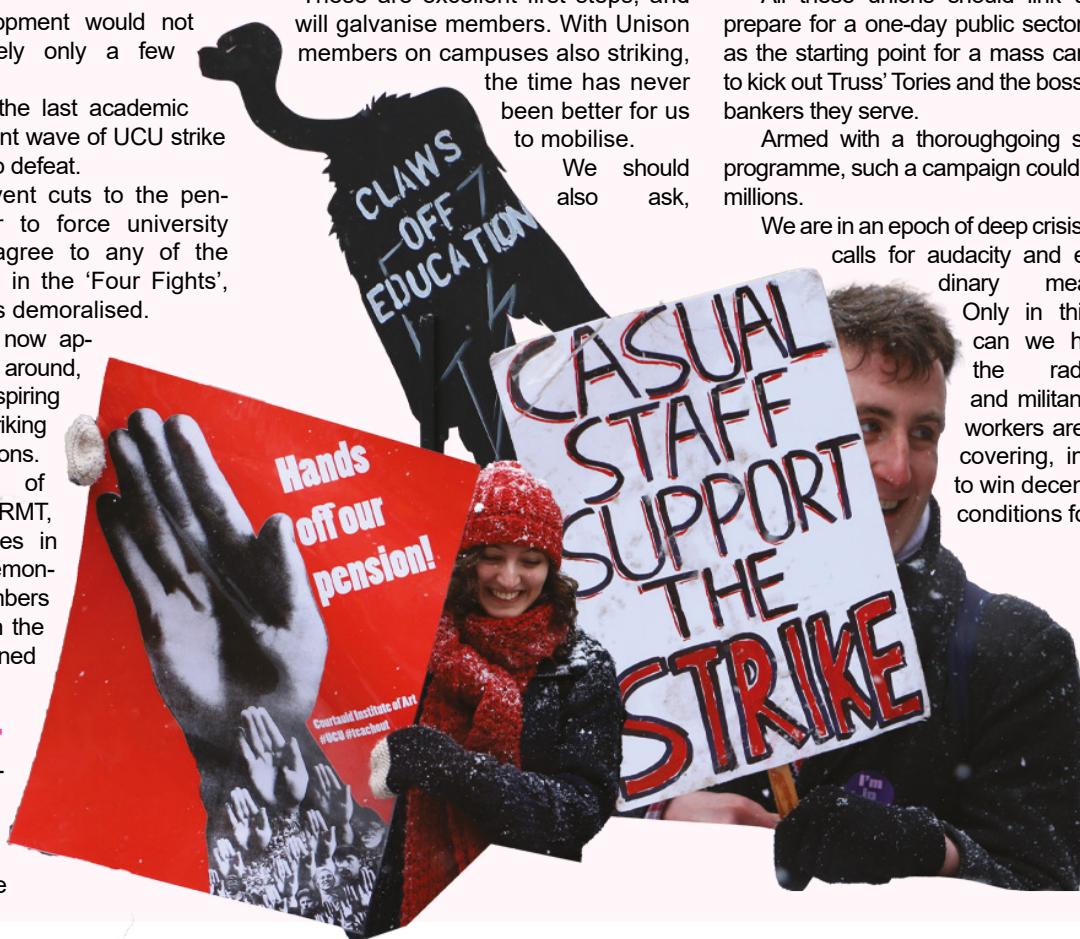
This, in turn, should be part of coordinated strike action across the trade union movement nationally, especially across the public sector.

All these unions should link up and prepare for a one-day public sector strike, as the starting point for a mass campaign to kick out Truss' Tories and the bosses and bankers they serve.

Armed with a thoroughgoing socialist programme, such a campaign could inspire millions.

We are in an epoch of deep crisis, which calls for audacity and extraordinary measures.

Only in this way can we harness the radicalism and militancy that workers are rediscovering, in order to win decent living conditions for all. ■



TORIES WAGE WAR ON WHITEHALL TIME FOR COORDINATED ACTION!

Helena Moreno,

PCS Marxists

During her Tory leadership bid, Liz Truss pledged to 'wage war' on so-called 'Whitehall waste'.

In concrete terms, this means attacking regional pay, ending paid time-off for union officials, and scrapping roles on diversity and inclusion.

Continuing the crazed plans of her predecessor, Truss is determined to slash 91,000 civil service jobs over the next three years.

This is being dressed up as saving the taxpayer £11 billion, and cutting back the supposedly over-bloated Whitehall 'blob'.

In tandem with these job cuts, the government is planning to sell off £1.5 billion of office space, as announced recently by the new Tory business secretary, Jacob Rees-Mogg.

In fact, the figure cited by the Tories would only be possible if the proposed cuts were "to be adopted for all public sector

workers," stated Ben Houchen, the disgruntled Tory Mayor for the Tees Valley.

Such proposals could prove a perilous gambit, as the Tories themselves are forced to admit, given the rising tide of discontent.

The backdrop to this slew of attacks is staff shortages, administrative backlogs from the pandemic and in the justice system, and the uncertainty still surrounding Brexit.

Distraction

In order to distract from their mounting problems, the Tories have attempted to fan the flames of the 'culture war' – throwing dust in the eyes of the millions already reeling from the cost-of-living catastrophe.

We are told that the Tories' shake-up proposals are required to halt the 'indoctrination' of wokeness in Whitehall, and to return money to the taxpayer. We are spoilt for choice as to which one of these claims is more ridiculous.

In order to further their own careers, it is clear that those at the top of the Tory Party remain committed to picking fights with everyone, with total disregard for the ruptures this is creating within the state itself.

Divisions

The civil service exists, we are told, to fulfil the administrative functions of the ruling party. But whilst this might have been the case in the past, this has become increasingly untenable.

Notably, Whitehall officials were implicated in the campaign to force Johnson out of office; and the Tories are now telling the

civil service tops that they must settle for reduced redundancy.

But frustrations amongst the upper echelons of Whitehall should be the least of the Tories' worries. The ferment amongst the low-paid, mostly younger workers in the civil service is beginning to come to the fore.

The Tories' scandalous Rwanda deportation plan led to the threat of mutiny amongst civil servants, for example, with one writing that it is "clear that the things we are now ordered to put into place... are doing real harm to many people".

It is these workers that are beginning to organise and mobilise in order to halt the ruling class' offensive.

Mobilise

In PCS, the civil service union, members are incensed by these proposals. The PCS national strike ballot, which opens on 26 September, must serve as a lightning rod to mobilise members against the Tories' unrelenting attacks.

Union leaders must make clear that the problems facing civil servants are not unique, but are part of the wider offensive by the employers.

In fact, Truss has promised class war, with her threats directed towards the unions. The success of each industrial battle ahead, therefore, concerns the entire labour movement.

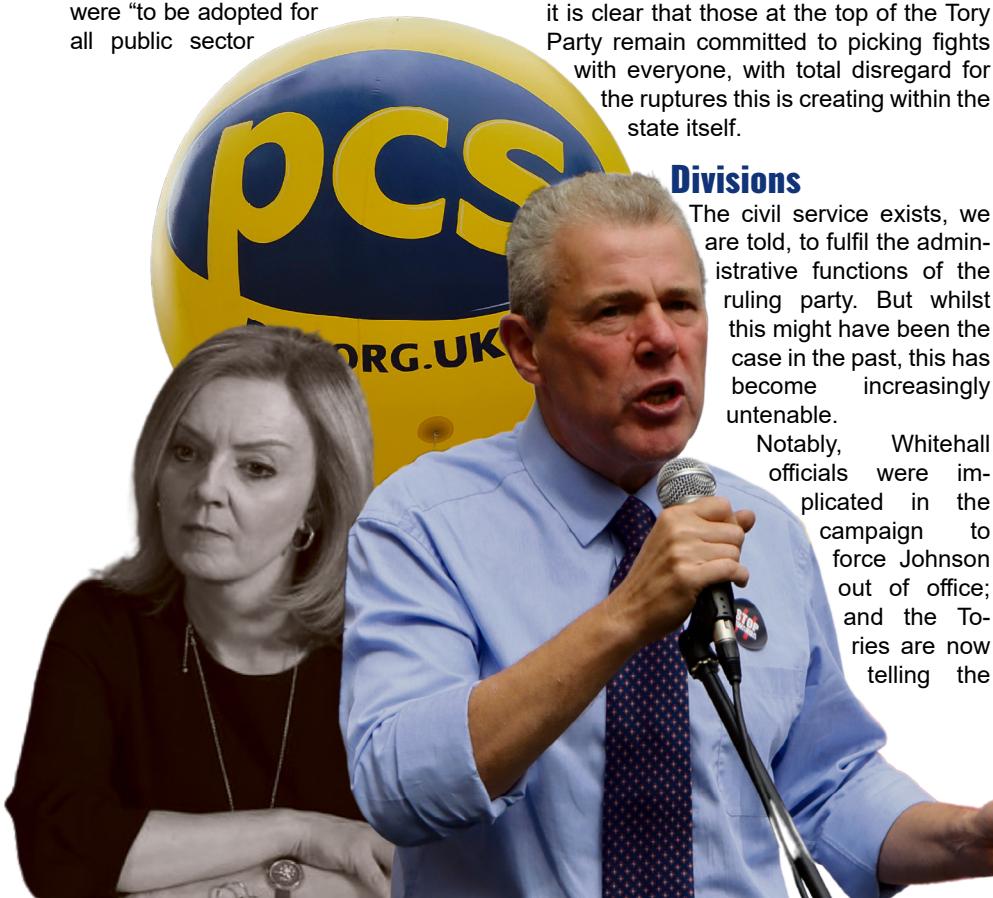
As the recent RMT and CWU strikes show, workers have had enough, and are prepared to move into action in large numbers and fight back.

PCS must again take up its militant traditions, built through years of struggle against Truss' idol, Margaret Thatcher.

Clearly, the Tories are not prepared to offer us anything but cuts, privatisations, and hardship. The potential is there, however, for the unions to coordinate as never before in our lifetimes.

A united mass campaign, built around a bold socialist programme, with a one-day public sector strike as its spearhead, could topple this rotten government and upend its capitalist backers into the bargain.

Workers in the civil service and elsewhere are increasingly looking for a way out. PCS must now pick up the gauntlet and take the fight to the Tories. ■



UNITE AND MILITANT TRADE UNIONISM LESSONS FROM THE STRUGGLE

Gavin Rebeiro,

**Unite the Union member
(personal capacity)**

Just over a year has passed since members of Unite the Union elected left-winger Sharon Graham as their general secretary.

This period has coincided with a surge of industrial action sweeping across Britain. And Unite has played a big part in this rising tide of strikes and struggles.

Now, with new prime minister Liz Truss at the helm, workers are set to face an even more hostile government, prepared to make workers pay for the crisis of the capitalist system.

Already over the past year, Unite's members have mobilised and come out fighting in over 450 disputes. And this militant activity shows no signs of slowing, regardless of the threats made by the Tories and bosses.

"There could be hundreds of disputes involving tens of thousands of workers over the coming months," Graham stated recently, "if employers continue to offer real-terms wage cuts presented as pay increases."

Militancy pays

One such strike is that of bin lorry drivers at Coventry City Council, who were engaged in six months of continuous industrial action, which ended in victory in July.

After five weeks of striking on selected days, the strike was escalated to an all-out strike

from the end of January, showing the determination of the workers – and the confidence they had that the union would back them.

In February, a strike committee was also established. This allowed the workers themselves to decide on the most effective action.

On 9 March, council bosses suspended Pete Randle, the drivers' shop steward, in a blatant act of trade union victimisation.

But the strikers and the union immediately got behind their comrade, and the following day there was a defiant rally outside the Council House.

This showed the local community that the workers were determined to continue their struggle, whilst also exposing the council as bully bosses, drawing further support for the strike.

In the end, the drivers won an inflation-busting pay rise of 12.9%, along with Christmas bonuses, and disciplinary charges against shop steward Pete Randle were dropped.

Elsewhere, many other Unite members have seen victory on a similarly militant basis, including: outsourced hospital workers in London; bus drivers in Manchester and British Airways workers at Heathrow Airport; and pallet workers at CHEP.

Coordinated action

Another important dispute was won on 19 August by bus drivers at Arriva North West, who secured an above-inflation pay rise. This was after 29 days of continuous strike action, coordinated between Unite and GMB members.

Workers across eleven depots and – importantly – across both unions

came together in solidarity, fighting back against the bosses' divide-and-rule tactics.

Unite has also announced fresh strikes at the port of Felixstowe, starting on 13 September, following on from action taken last month. This time, however, Felixstowe workers will be coinciding their action with a strike at the Liverpool docks.

It is through such collective action that workers realise their common interests and become stronger, drawing more workers into struggle as a result.

Workers' economy

These inspiring industrial struggles have provided invaluable experience to a whole new generation of workers. It is militant methods such as these that hit the bosses where it hurts, and which deliver the goods.

The most crucial lesson, however, is that a political struggle is also required: to turn isolated battles against individual bosses into a general class war on the whole bosses' system.

Unite's new campaign 'Unite for a Workers' Economy' appears to recognise this need.

"Our economy isn't working for workers, only for corporate Britain and its rich backers," Graham has said.

"It's time for workers and communities to fight back. It's time for us to build a movement for real change based on a unity of the workplace with local communities – popular working-class power."

To achieve a true workers' economy, the trade union movement must fight for a genuine socialist programme: the expropriation of the banks and top monopolies, without compensation, to be run under the democratic control of the working class, as part of a socialist plan of production.

This is what workers and youth must fight for to establish genuine popular working-class power. ■



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