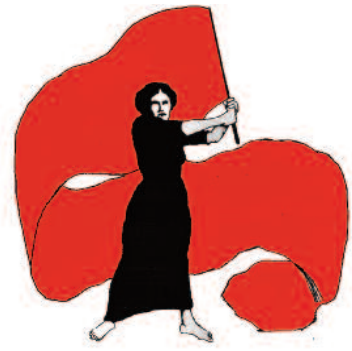


july 10: STRIKE

bulletin produced by Workers' Liberty - 4 July 2014

www.workersliberty.org



Make 10 July the start of the fightback!

Nearly two million workers could strike on 10 July. Unions in local government are striking to oppose a 1% pay deal, and are demanding an increase of at least £1 per hour or to the “Living Wage”, £7.65, or £8.80 in London; and other unions have pay demands.

According to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the cost of maintaining a decent standard of living in the UK has increased by 46%

since 2008; wages, only 9%. It's the worst squeeze on real wages since records began. According to TUC figures, around five million workers in Britain are paid less than a living wage, around 20% of the workforce.

The 10 July strike can be the start of an ongoing working-class counter-offensive that challenges the capitalist logic that workers must pay for the financial crisis.



A plan, not a day at a time

One-off strike days, each followed by a long wait until union leaders report back or call further action, aren't enough.

The remedy is not just to convert one-day protest strikes into two-day protest strikes, but to plan ongoing programmes of action discussed and decided in advance by union members. These should include selective action as well as all-out strikes and be directed by local strike committees.

Local joint strike committees should continue meeting after 10 July, and the Executives of all the unions involved in the strike should meet together.

How to turn around low turnouts

The turnout in some ballots for 10 July was very low. In Unison particularly, union officials were sluggish and ineffective. The low turnout makes unions vulnerable to attacks from the Tories and the right-wing press.

Cameron has already promised new anti-union laws in the 2015 Tory manifesto. He has called for a 50% minimum turnout for ballots to be valid; and the Tories want to require unions to re-ballot for every individual strike, rather than using a single ballot as a mandate for several strikes in an ongoing dispute.

The labour movement needs to prepare a counter-offensive, arguing for a return to workplace ballots and a positive charter of workers' and union rights.

The majority should decide in strike votes, as the majority decides in local government votes however low the turnout. Low turnout in strike ballots is partly due to methods of balloting imposed by the government (you

get a ballot paper at home, and little reminder about it unless your workplace union organisation is strong, unlike with parliamentary elections where the vote gets much media publicity). It is partly due to sluggishness of union leaderships. It is sometimes partly due to workers being unsure: they will strike with a majority, but want to wait and see if there is a majority without them. Low turnout does not mean that workers are against striking, or that an anti-strike rule imposed by the government should replace the democratic vote. The answer is a return to workplace ballots.

Unions must rebuild working-class confidence from the workplace up. That means a “communications offensive”, blanketing workplaces with leaflets, bulletins, and updates from the dispute and any negotiations, holding regular workplace meetings, forming cross-union committees.

After 10 July?

Unison's leaders have already talked about further strikes on 9 and 10 September. Unions should liaise with one another in order to pin down the most effective day, and other actions should be planned between now and then - even small, local actions like lunchtime rallies and picnics, demonstrations and meetings, and public street stalls.

NHS workers should come into the dispute. Unison should act on its 2014 Health sector conference decision to ballot for strikes

over pay. Strike funds should be levied at both local and national level to ensure the lowest-paid workers are supported in taking sustained and escalating action. Workers in every sector should formulate clear demands for their disputes.

On strike days every workplace should be picketed, with pickets actively approaching non-striking workers and attempting to persuade them not to cross. In 2011 activists in some cities held strike day members' meetings with discussion and voting, not just rallies. We should organise real meetings now, too.

FOR A WORKERS' GOVERNMENT

Sustained industrial action can force employers into concessions. We can also fight for political shifts: immediately, for taxing the rich, and fight for a post-2015 Labour government to do that. As Thomas Piketty points out in his recent book, "a flat tax of 15% on private wealth would allow for immediate reimbursement of all outstanding public debt". In 1945 France collected an exceptional tax on capital to clear public debt. Why not now?

To win radical measures and consolidate them will require a fundamental shift in social power. It will require a different form of government, and a different way of organising society. Workers' Liberty fights in the labour movement for the idea of a "workers' government", a government which fights as hard for our class

as the current government does for the rich. Such a government would rely for its power not on the existing Parliament and state, but on mass democratic bodies of working-class people in workplaces and communities.

It would strip the rich of their wealth by expropriating banks and big businesses, placing them under social control, and use their vast resources to finance working-class social policies such as living wages, free education, and the reversal of NHS cuts and privatisation.

To win such a government, we need to make our movement fit to rule - and, first, fit to fight. Workers' Liberty fights for radical democratic reform inside every union. Building rank-and-file power within our unions is the first step to building our class's power within society.

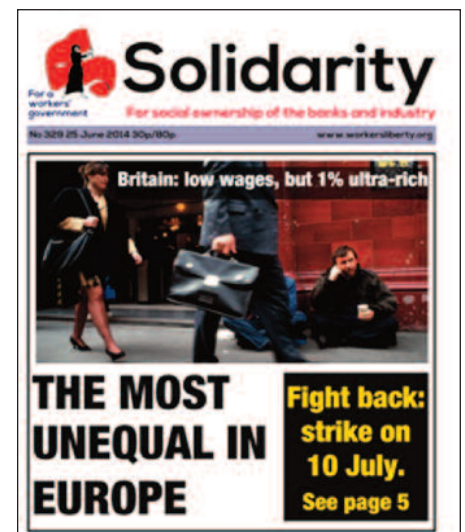
Fight back against inequality

The *Sunday Times* "super rich list" shows the UK has more billionaires than any other country per head, and London the most of any city worldwide.

Their collective wealth has risen by over 20% in one year. Britain is the most unequal of the larger western European countries, second only to Portugal. A *Daily Mirror* study showed the overall increase in non-basic pay (bonuses, overtime, and other perks) for senior NHS staff in 2013 was 36%.

Meanwhile, Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt has refused pay health workers even the 1% recommended by the NHS Pay Review Body. Chief Executives of some local councils are paid nearly £300,000 per year, more than 16 times what a council worker earning the "London Living Wage" rate of £8.80 an hour would earn.

Transport for London Commissioner Peter Hendy is paid more than £650,000 per year, 22 times more than a London Underground Customer Service Assistant, and 35.5 times more than a cleaning worker.



The image shows the cover of the 'Solidarity' newspaper. At the top, the title 'Solidarity' is written in a large, bold, black font. Below the title, there is a red logo featuring a stylized figure. The text 'For a workers' government' is on the left, and 'For social ownership of the banks and industry' is on the right. Below this, it says 'No 329 25 June 2014 30p/40p' and 'www.workersliberty.org'. The main image on the cover shows a group of people in a dark setting, with one person sitting on the ground. A text overlay on the image reads 'Britain: low wages, but 1% ultra-rich'. At the bottom, there are two boxes: the left one says 'THE MOST UNEQUAL IN EUROPE' and the right one says 'Fight back: strike on 10 July. See page 5'.

Workers' Liberty

Workers' Liberty is an organisation active in the labour and student movements in Britain, which fights for a revolutionary socialist alternative to capitalism and Stalinism based on common ownership and working-class democracy.

Subscribe to *Solidarity*, our weekly newspaper.
www.workersliberty.org/sub