



ENOUGH IS ENOUGH FIGHT FOR COORDINATED ACTION!

Editorial

Across every sector, workers are facing the same attacks: pay freezes, redundancies, lengthening hours and attacks on pensions. We are facing the biggest drop in living standards on record.

At the root of every attack is an attempt by the government and the bosses to increase profits at the expense of workers' safety, conditions, and pay. Meanwhile, profits for big business have never been so high.

It is no wonder that we are seeing so many workers take industrial action as wages fail to keep up with inflation and rising living costs.

With the Bank of England predicting the UK economy will enter recession for five continuous quarters, heralding no end in sight to inadequate pay packets to meet the cost of daily living, what option do we have but to fight back?

Mood of discontent

This summer has seen 40,000 RMT members taking multiple days of action, rejecting a 4% pay offer and fighting to stop redundancies, protect pensions and ensure safety for workers and passengers.

Underground workers fighting against 600 lay-offs and pension cuts have been out. In the CWU 115,000 postal workers took action over an insulting and impossible 2%

pay offer despite Royal Mail announcing profits of £568 million.

Dock workers, BT staff and exam board workers all took action. Even criminal barristers, workers not typically associated with militancy, have voted for an all out strike against the underfunding of the criminal justice system.

Outside of the traditional unionised workforce there are signs of militancy too, as a series of wildcat strikes have emerged in recent weeks. Fresh layers of previously unionised workers being drawn into the struggle highlights how close Britain is to a huge explosion in the class struggle.

In the space of just two weeks workers from Amazon, construction sites and food production sites have defied anti-trade union laws and organised themselves.

Everywhere we look, workers are fighting back - when wages do not cover the bills we are only going to see far more of this kind of action.

Schools

In our own union, an indicative ballot opens on the 24th September. We must deliver a resounding yes vote to taking action, before using the momentum to propel us immediately to a live ballot.

Over the last 10 years teachers and support staff have seen a real terms cut to their pay of over 20%. This year's pay offer will deliver a 7% real terms cut on last year, given inflation. To rub salt in the wound, the current pay offer is unfunded, meaning that already over-stretched school budgets will be forced to cut funding to other areas of the

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school in order to cover wages, affecting our pupils.

It is not just NEU members who have had enough. ASCL (Association of School and College Leaders), NAHT (National Association of Head Teachers) and NASUWT (National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers) are also being balloted, and there is every chance they will join the strike wave.

Teachers and education staff know that inadequate pay is just the tip of the iceberg. That is why this ballot on pay can only be the start of a fightback. We need to tackle excessive workloads, chronic underfunding, the crisis in SEND and the many other problems inflicted on schools by capitalism's inability to provide.

Knowing the negative impact days away from school can have on young people, teachers do not take action lightly. As with every other sector of the working class who have been drawn in to struggle, though, we cannot afford not to fight back.

Crisis of capitalism

For workers to be so widely drawn into struggle highlights how much strain they are under. Whilst it is true that many companies are making super profits, the cutting back of workers' pay and conditions is

a necessary step to maintain profitability in the current system.

The crisis of overproduction and the already overstretched supply chains have been compounded by the impact on food and fuel of the Ukraine war, and rising inflation which Citigroup are projecting will hit 18.6% next year.

The British economy is facing recession and stagflation - the ruling class has completely lost control of the situation and the clowns in government are a clear reflection of this.

But it is not just mismanagement or the greed of a few that is the problem, it is the capitalist system itself. Unable to develop the means of production enough to modernise the British economy, bosses are instead cutting pay and conditions to the bone.

In order not to have to repeat the struggle for fair pay, and for workers wages to keep pace with inflation year on year, the only answer is to control the wealth and wages ourselves. We must expropriate all of the wealth, democratically owning and planning production and its output for the benefit of all, not a few.

Fight for workers' power!

The coordinated action in the Enough is Enough campaign spearheaded by Mick Lynch, Sharon Graham and Dave Ward is

a step forwards. To progress, this campaign needs to organise the working class around socialist policies and transform the labour movement into a tool to fight for them.

As Trotsky said, "In the last analysis a workers' state is a trade union which has conquered power." Workers have shown that they are prepared to fight both through organised unions and illegally through wildcat strikes. The will is there, what is needed is organisation.

For a start, we need coordinated cross-union workplace committees, increased activity and action from Trades Councils, and a general shaking up of the TUC so as to transform it into a fighting general staff for the trade union movement.

It is on the basis of such organisation that we could campaign and launch a one day general strike - the opening shot of the trade union movement against the government and capitalists.

What's needed to achieve all this is a leadership with the gumption and political perspective to lead us forwards to fight: not just for 'inflation-plus' pay rises that will only last till Christmas, not just to overthrow the barbarous Tories, but to overturn the capitalist system itself. The will for change exists in the working class - it is time to forge a way. ■

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WHO DECIDES TEACHERS' PAY?

Alex Randall

Nottingham NEU

(personal capacity)

This September the NEU, along with other education unions, will be ballotting its members for strike action in response to the derisory pay offer from the government.

Initially the government offered a 3% increase, but facing pressure from the unions this was generously increased - to a whole 5%!

Of course - and as the unions have pointed out - with inflation rising to 12% (though some estimates put it as high as 18% by next year) in real terms this is effectively a 7% pay cut.

Facing this attack on conditions, alongside massive workloads, teachers and education staff are faced with little choice but to strike.

Recommendations and 'rises'

This pay 'rise' was made on the recommendation of the School Teachers Review Body (the STRB). This 'independent' body produces the School Teachers Pay and Conditions Document each year, setting out recommendations to the government on how much teachers should be paid.

So who sits on this body and gets to determine teachers' living standards and working conditions? Is it the teachers

themselves? Representatives from the teacher's unions?

Of course not. The current body is chaired by the director of a real estate company, and the rest of its membership is a similar mix of CEOs and corporate types, all from or closely tied to big business.

In other words it is big business that gets to decide how teachers are paid, with teachers getting no say. Of course the STRB are not expected to make the same sacrifices. While proposing what amounts to a 7% pay cut for teachers, they are generously rewarded for their time. For the 25 days they work they are paid £300 a day, amounting to £7500.

This shows the supposed 'independence' of this body for the sham it is. What this really means is that it is independent from the workers!

The state

We are told the state, which the STRB is part of, is a neutral arbiter fairly representing the interests of all. But this clearly exposes the real situation.

This is just one instance of the general picture we are seeing in the current crisis. Inflation skyrockets and workers wages are pushed down across the board all while corporate profits continue to skyrocket.

The capitalist class is making the workers pay for the crisis of capitalism, all

while they get ever richer. And in order to ensure this remains stable, the state steps in to "manage" the expectations of workers in the hopes of keeping them compliant.

The Tory government at the head of the state ultimately acts in the interest of big business, and a so-called 'Labour' government led by Keir Starmer would be little better, as Starmer has shown again and again he is a loyal servant of the same people.

Workers' Control

So long as teachers' pay is left in their hands to decide, teachers will remain at the mercy of big business.

The state is, as Lenin said, 'bound by a thousand threads' to the capitalist class. The capitalist class needs to push down workers wages to keep their huge profits, and the tory government is more than happy to oblige.

Instead of the bosses earning thousands for deciding to cut teachers' pay, the bosses should be the ones to pay for a fully funded education system - and more! - through the nationalisation of the top 100 monopolies.

However, to get to that point workers' confidence, including that of teachers and education staff, must be built up. They must see clearly the strength they possess - and that can only come about if they flex their muscles. A complete mobilisation in these ballots has therefore never been so important. ■



STRUGGLES OF AN EARLY CAREER TEACHER

John Howard

Merseyside NEU

I have recently begun my first year as a qualified secondary school teacher. I enjoy working with children, and I love my subject, but I have apprehensions about the year ahead. These worries are to do with my Early Career Teacher (ECT) position and the state of teachers' workloads more generally.

The average teacher workload is 54 hours per week [1], but ECTs work longer hours than average for various reasons like having fewer pre-prepared resources and lesson plans. I conservatively expect to work 60 hours per week during term time, and some amount over holidays.

Working Hours

This puts a damper on what many non-teachers announce when I mention my profession: "you're so lucky to get so much holiday". Yes, I get holidays, but squeezing my working hours into 39 weeks of term time causes stress, strain and burnout.

I am only being contracted for 32.5 hours per week, a laughable figure that

does not account for time spent on lesson plans, marking, break/lunch duties, mandatory training, communicating with parents, reporting safeguarding concerns and so on.

As such, I and all other teachers cannot help but work dozens of unpaid hours per week so that our students get an acceptable education – as far as it is within our power to provide one. Measuring by

We should not be so easily fooled. ECTs must stand in clear solidarity with the rest of the profession and reject the ever worsening conditions as one united force.

Academisation

Academies and the commercialisation of education underpins this short-termist plan, as profits can only be increased

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a more accurate estimate of 60 hours per week, I am being paid around £11.25 per hour, little more than minimum wage.

Cheap Labour

At the bottom rung of the payscale, ECTs are sometimes seen as cheap labour for a school – particularly one that Ofsted deems poor-performing, with high staff turnover. Teachers like myself risk being overstretched and burning out: one in three teachers leave the profession within five years of qualifying.

With an immense workload for less than the median salary, this should not be surprising. However, it is not a competition as to who is most overworked and least supported – all education staff need better working conditions. Half of teachers report that their workload is unmanageable "all" or "most" of the time. Increasingly, support staff such as teaching assistants are expected to do unpaid work to plug the gap.

The government is attempting to play divide and rule with teachers as the School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) recommends larger pay increases for those at the beginning of their career than experienced staff.

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Teacher pay in multi-academy trusts (MATs) is £1,300 less than community schools, and it is obvious where the money goes: 64% of MATs have an executive on a £100,000–£150,000 salary, and 17% have an executive on a salary in excess of £150,000.

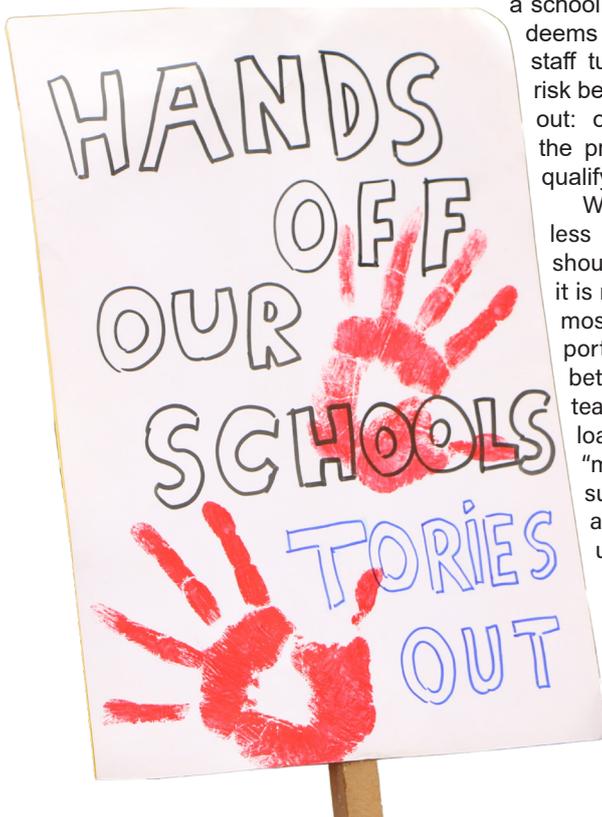
Without elected local authorities or parent representatives as governors, the MAT is incentivised to maximise profit to the detriment of students and staff. The Conservative government wants all schools to be in a MAT or joining one by 2030.

Strike!

Strikes are not just a chance to see teachers' pay stand still – i.e. to increase by the rate of inflation – as we should not accept the decrepit state of education moulded by Tory austerity.

They are a chance for all school staff to demand appropriate pay and working conditions, which will bring an influx of new teachers, and to show that we will not put up with the privatisation of education through MATs.

We demand a socialist future for education in which the aims are not to maximise academy bosses' profits but for children to learn about the world, form aspirations for the future and develop as well-rounded human beings. These are the goals that, despite my working conditions, I strive towards in my classroom. ■



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THE CRISIS IN SEND

James Baird (Durham NEU)

and Natalie F. (Surrey NEU)

After years of attacks on working conditions, jobs and pay, special education needs and disability (SEND) provisions nationally are reaching breaking point. Those with special education needs and disabilities are being failed by the bosses' system as schools are faced with an array of crises.

For several years, the government has cut funding for education. From 2010-2019, total public spending for education fell by 8%.

In an attempt to halt this cycle, the government announced that schools in England would receive an additional £4bn in funding. However, with the current cost of living crisis, the spend per pupil in schools is set to be 3% lower in 2025 than it was in 2010.

Furthermore, SEND schools now face a £2bn annual shortfall. This has left SEND schools at risk of providing insufficient provision i.e. not having the appropriate resources to teach with, and with many children receiving no support at all.

No support

The crisis of British capitalism has greatly impacted the quality of support present in SEND schools and their pupils. Since 2019, there has been a 10% increase in pupils receiving Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), now totalling to approximately 473,000 children and young people.

EHCPs are legally binding documents designed to offer the best provisions and outcomes for SEND children. They cover a range of areas such as support for learning and cognition, social, emotional and mental health, and sensory needs.

EHCPs can provide meaningful and beneficial assistance when used effectively. However, government cuts impacting local authorities has meant that EHCPs are not being used to their maximum potential.

In London alone, a full third of boroughs fall below the national average to complete EHCPs on time. This has resulted in children and young people with special needs being given a fraction of the provisions they require, some children being placed in inappropriate provisions, and even lacking a provision altogether.

Additionally, SEND school staff and SENCOs (Special Education Needs Coordinators) are being stretched to their limits. SEND school staff have reported feeling both overworked and underappreciated. The National SENCO Workforce Survey found that only 40% of primary school SENCOs and 20% of secondary school SENCOs

felt their role was manageable for one person.

Link up the unions

In response to this situation, the NEU is campaigning to increase staffing and funding levels for SEND pupils. We completely support this campaign. However, we must point out that such a campaign needs to be backed up with militant action.

Fundamentally, it must link up the problems in SEND with the problems in teaching as a profession, and with the problems faced by the working class as a whole in order to mobilise to solve this crisis.

Historically, the working class has shown the way forwards when it comes to fighting for proper rights, pay and conditions. Only through collective action and struggle can the bosses be made to pay for the crisis facing SEND provisions.

Ultimately, the only way that the crisis facing special education needs provisions can be resolved is through fighting to change the system that places education and SEND at the bottom of the pile.

Fight back!

If the NEU votes to strike this autumn, this could act as a line in the sand and provide an opportunity for all staff working in education to unite and fight.

Militant action across the entire SEND sector is what will lead the struggle forwards. The NEU, NASUWT, and other unions such as UNISON and GMB that represent teaching assistants, must come together and fight to bring education under workers control.

If those with special education needs and disabilities are to reach their full potential, appropriate facilities and adequate resources must be provided.

A socialist society would see schools run under workers control and management, in collaboration with parents. Education in the age of capitalism, crisis and austerity will never flourish.

Under workers control, a nationally planned socialised economy could create high quality education for all, paid for by the expropriation of the capitalist class. To defend SEND provisions and the wider education system, we must fight for the socialist transformation of society. ■



LETTER FROM A YEAR 11

Tom W.

Decades of cuts, mistreatment and academisation are reaching a boiling point, school staff are poised to vote for powerful strike action against the government.

Whilst nominally on the issue of pay, in reality this strike is the drawing of a line in the sand and crying out “no more gutting of education at the altar of profit and austerity!” For this reason school students must give their full support. Their working conditions are our learning conditions!

At first, it may be difficult for people who aren't in school to grasp why the teachers are striking. However, as a 15-year-old secondary school student, it is clear as day. Last year saw 8 of my teachers resign. The overwhelming cause: burnout. My case is not unique, as 8% of the total state school staff have left the profession in 2021 and 44% plan to do so by 2027.

The statistics prove that teachers are fed up. They are especially fed up with the Tories simply stealing the school funding to line their own pockets.

Since 2010 we have seen a 10 billion pound decrease in school funding. Critics of teachers striking state that “Teachers striking will affect the students in their final

year and cause disruptions.”

However as a student going into my final year of GCSEs, a few days of disruption will be nothing in comparison to the sheer disruption of everyday life under the Tories' tyranny over the school system.

From my own personal experience I did not have a maths teacher for 4 months

which would require putting the interests of students above those of the monopolies and billionaires, school leaders are instead forced to resort to cookie cutter pre-planned lessons.

Teachers are reduced to attendants on the factory line of education, who can be easily replaced at any point. The inevita-

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during year 10, I had teachers swap around in my English lessons for another month - and in some lessons we did not even have a teacher assigned to us! What is more disruptive to my education: a few days or weeks of strike action or years of depressed, burnt out and absent staff crushed under the heel of academy CEOs and callous Tory ministers?

Rather than tackling this question through properly funding education,

ble result though is that classrooms are depersonalised and teachers are forced to teach to fit spreadsheets, not the classroom in front of them.

Education becomes focused around exams, rather than encouraging free and creative thought. This is all part of a philosophy in which the goal of education is to produce a new layer of workers to exploit rather than education for its own sake. The result is extreme levels of stress for students.

The main point I would like to get across to the people reading this is that students support this strike, students want a better education, students don't want months without quality teaching and students don't want to be taught in a rundown building.

It is the role of students to support their teachers during this volatile time. Only through supporting each other and fighting together can we turn this situation around! ■



NEU Marxists' Charter for Education

In addition to the typically long hours and comparably low pay that teachers endure in order to deliver the best education possible to the learners in our care, we have worked throughout all lockdowns during the pandemic, putting ourselves at risk, and providing our own PPE the entire time. Yet teachers are the first to be attacked as 'lazy' for having a holiday or 'greedy' for asking for more pay.

Both the need for more time and better pay are just two symptoms of the chronic underfunding of education, which has led not only to worsening working conditions for education workers, but worsening learning conditions for pupils. Some schools are forced into closing early and others ask for money from parents simply in order to operate as normal. This needs to end.

We demand socialist measures to arm education workers and young people against the bosses and their political representatives, who will always prioritise profit before proper education, improving our working conditions, or even protecting our lives.

We demand:

- A broader curriculum developed by educators that allows an array of subjects and skills to be explored including restoring music, drama and more sports to the curriculum.
- Allow teachers the freedom to teach a curriculum that reflects the reality of history, oppression and exploitation rather than reflecting the narrow interests of the ruling class.
- An end to one size fits all high stakes testing and an exploration of alternative systems to measure progress and attainment that does not cause unnecessary stress to pupils
- A reduction in class sizes through investment in buildings and more workers to increase capacity and the quality of education we are able to deliver
- A fully funded training programme with grants to increase access to education roles thus increasing staffing levels
- An end to academisation and privatisation in education with all schools including private and free schools being brought back under local authority control
- For the immediate abolition of OFSTED. Local authorities must be run by democratically elected representatives with a full right of recall and for decisions about education to be made by educational professionals and trade unions, in conjunction with parents and learners organised under workers' committees
- For all school leaders to be democratically elected
- For workplace safety to be in the hands of the workers and their democratically elected H&S representatives including consultation on Covid safety measures in schools
- An absolute upper limit on the number of hours taught by all education staff with the remaining hours shared out to new staff without any loss of pay in order to achieve this
- An immediate increase in pay for all education workers who have worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic and are now facing a pay freeze
- Collective bargaining rights for all workers in schools and education settings including support staff, supply staff and any other workers involved in the delivery of education
- Fight for the emancipation of women (and parents) by removing barriers to work, providing free nurseries, after-school care, and care for the elderly as well as ensuring flexible working hours.
- End all forms of discrimination ensuring equal pay for work of equal value and equal opportunities to progress
- End performance related pay which unfairly discriminates against women, parents and people from BAME backgrounds
- An immediate return of the Education Maintenance Allowance to ensure all learners can access learning
- No to austerity! Young people and workers have suffered cuts enough, they must not be made to pay for this crisis. Make the bosses pay through nationalisation of the top 100 monopolies!
- End prioritising profit before pupils ensuring free access to education for all for life and an immediate increase in funding per pupil paid for through the expropriation of big business and the super rich
- For the organisation of a mass struggle to bring down this criminal Tory government and begin to build for the socialist transformation of society

WHY YOU SHOULD JOIN US

Marxists are class conscious fighters for socialism. As Marx explained, we should be regarded as the most resolute section of the working class.

Marxism arms us with a conscious understanding of society and the class struggle. Only by absorbing this outlook can we lay the foundation for the overthrow of capitalism.

For us, Marxism is the science of social revolution and therefore needs to be studied.

Our tendency therefore stresses the need to educate and train our members in Marxist theory and the struggles of the working class. This gives us considerable advantages. First and foremost, Marxist theory is a guide to action, a guide to the class struggle.

As isolated individuals we can do very little. However, organised together

we can achieve a considerable amount. Organisation allows us to concentrate our forces to much greater effect. Based on correct policies and perspectives, we can intervene effectively in the class struggle.

The present reformist leadership of the labour movement has led to one retreat after another. In practice they accept capitalism and its limits.

The leadership of the Labour Party is now in the grip of the right wing, who serve the interests of capitalism. This revival is due to the weakness of the left to act decisively, which in turn is a reflection of the weakness of reformism.

Likewise, the reformist trade union leadership has failed to meet the challenges we face. They are lagging completely behind the objective situation. For them, it is simply 'business as usual.'

But the crisis of capitalism is posing massive challenges in front of the working

class. We will fight shoulder to shoulder with those prepared to fight. In doing so, we will point to the future needs of the movement.

Our task is to provide the necessary clarity for the struggle. Capitalism cannot be reformed; it needs to be consciously overthrown by the working class in Britain and internationally. That is why we are internationalists and proud to be part of the International Marxist Tendency. ■

