

Europe Solidaire Sans Frontières > English > Europe, Great Britain > History (modern) (Europe) > History of people's struggles (Europe) > **Britian: Bob Crow (1961-2014) - an appreciation. His death is "a huge blow (...)**

## **Britian: Bob Crow (1961-2014) - an appreciation. His death is "a huge blow to militant class-struggle unionism' -"**

Wednesday 2 April 2014, by [MAC UAID Liam](#) (Date first published: 11 March 2014).

**The conclusion that most union leaders in Britain drew after the defeat of the miners' strike was that militancy, strike action and class struggle didn't work writes Liam Mac Uaid. A generation later most of them still hold that view. As a direct result most working class people have seen their wages driven down in real terms, their pensions shredded and job insecurity normalised.**

Bob Crow's enduring legacy is that he and his fellow RMT members refused to accept the counsels of pessimism and capitulation from the Labour Party, the TUC and the general secretaries who carried on drawing huge salaries while their members' jobs were being cut, outsourced and downsized. While their memberships were falling Bob increased the number of RMT members from 60 000 to 80 000. This was done by an uncompromising struggle to defend jobs and conditions as well as organising the most exploited groups of workers such as the cleaners. Thanks to their membership of the RMT they enjoy wage levels above the living wage. His commitment to his class was passionate and absolute. Under his leadership drivers on London Underground have won salaries of £50 000. At a time when skilled workers are being forced to work for poverty wages that is a real victory for working class organisation.

There have been two secrets to the RMT's success. The first of these is that its members work in a strategically important industry. When trains and the Tube don't run British capitalism pays a heavy price in lost production. The second is that the union had a leadership which encouraged working class self organisation and action. You can't have successful and continuous strike action unless you've built up local and national leaderships which understand that the balance of class forces can be swung in our favour by a willingness to fight. As a result wages in the railway industry have consistently risen faster than the average.

Bob Crow was one of the rare union leaders willing to openly break with Labour. The RMT leadership is supporting No2EU in the upcoming European elections. Socialist Resistance thinks that this is a misguided and unsupportable project. However it is a rare example of a significant union investing money and effort in an open challenge to the main parties which, as Bob often pointed out, all support privatisation, anti-union laws and illegal wars.

He was a defender of the Cuban revolution and a friend of the Palestinian liberation struggle. He was passionately opposed to the Trident nuclear weapons system and whereas a Labour politician or many other union leaders would have commented on how many jobs this weapon of mass murder creates he said "What about when we used to hang people? We had chief executioners - we had to diversify and find new jobs for them." A pugnacious wit is a weapon of class struggle too.

People who worked with Bob say that he was a unifying figure within the union. He give backing to those who had opposed him and always thought of himself as a worker. His tragically premature death is a terrible blow to his family, friends and RMT comrades. It's a loss too for the entire labour and radical movement in Britain and across the world. His entire life was devoted to defending the idea that a comfortable secure home, a wage on which a working woman or man could raise a family, a dignified retirement and the entitlement to be treated respectfully at work are rights which we fight for and not privileges that can be taken away.

We stand with his brothers and sisters in the RMT in this tragic moment and, like them, we say that the best tribute to Bob's memory is to carry on his fight.

**Liam Mac Uaid**

---

---

**P.S.**

\* Socialist Resistance, March 11, 2014 7:01:  
<http://socialistresistance.org/6017/bob-crow-an-appreciation>