

Britain: Million say 'enough is enough', as Tories plan massive attack

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Phil Hearse looks ahead to a bleak Autumn and argues the left must mobilise and shout together 'Enough is Enough'

Last week the [Mirror](#) newspaper exposed the case of an 87-year-old man, a sufferer of prostate cancer, who waited 15 hours for an ambulance after falling outside his house in Cornwall. Unable to move him, his family built a makeshift tent to keep off the rain. Conservative Party leadership contenders Rishi Sunak and Liz Truss have solutions for the NHS crisis—lots more privatisation. This means that you will now only wait 15 hours for an ambulance if you don't have the right health insurance—in other words, if you are poor.

According to polls of Tory members — who are mainly male, beyond middle-aged and residing in the South of England— are right, Liz Truss is going to be the next Prime Minister. Her government will continue and massively deepen the attack on working people; Sunak would be no better. Standing in the way of the extreme right-wing, anti-working class, policies of the two Tory candidates are the tens of thousands of striking workers, led by the 40,000 RMT members in the rail industry and the thousands of bus, tube and postal workers who are also now on strike. Unite members at the Port of Felixstowe, join the ever-growing list of striking workers, with the 8-day strike resulting in Britain's biggest port being shut down.

As the heads of more than 100 NHS Trusts [explained](#), if no relief is given over energy prices, people are either not going to eat, or not going to heat their homes. During the winter this will result in a 'humanitarian crisis', and a health crisis which will overwhelm the underfunded NHS.

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'Humanitarian crisis' is a phrase we normally associate with the Global South ultra-poor countries. Under the Tories, Britain is heading towards joining them, as the relentless march to the bottom continues.

Liz Truss wants to cut taxes—especially corporation tax which big firms pay—which is going to throw the economy even further under a bus, impoverishing millions. One prediction is that the energy ‘price cap’ will rise next year to more than £6,000 per household! In addition, the Tories will launch new attacks on democratic rights, the headline of which will be a Bill to ban strikes in key parts of the public sector, certainly including transport, but possibly also the NHS and education, and other frontline workers.

In RMT leader Mick Lynch, the Tories confront an eloquent trade union leader who has massive public support. Facing shockingly anti-union questioning on [Channel 4 news](#), he repeatedly explained that the employers’ offer of 8% over two years, while accepting a thousand job losses, ticket office closures and many changes to working practices, would drive down rail workers’ living standards and make the railways less safe. Most of all, he said, it was about what sort of country we want to be.

Margaret Thatcher’s 1980s attack on the unions was prepared over a five-year period before the 1984-5 miners’ strike, but Liz Truss intends to take a different approach and smash the transport and other unions immediately after she takes power, finishing off the job started by Thatcher and Johnson. At the same time, she will offer no significant financial relief to millions forced to choose between eating and heating their homes.

Many millions will see the injustice of all this. People must pay astronomic rates for their basic energy needs, while energy companies make vast profits, even after so-called windfall taxes. In fact, the previous windfall tax imposed by then-chancellor Rishi Sunak was a fake. Companies could avoid paying it if they promised to ‘invest’ large sums of it.

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Liz Truss says she will aid poor people by reducing taxes, which will grow the economy. In fact, lowering real incomes will wreck the economy as people struggle to meet their bills. Most people will first attempt to pay their rent/mortgages, food and heating, and transport costs—and anything beyond that is going to take a hit. Many more city centres will see shops, cafes, pubs and cinemas closing.

Truss is also going to remove the green levy part of taxes, abandoning the already inadequate plans to help households with insulation and energy transition. Any Green agenda is out. Also down the memory hole is anything noticeable by way of ‘levelling up’ to help northern and Midland’s cities? Sorry, that was just to win some seats from Labour, we never really meant it. Promises from Truss that ‘there will be more help’ for cash-strapped people—the vast majority—are a fraud.

The light-touch attitude to big business is shown by what happened to P&O ferries, after it sacked 800 workers and replaced them with casual labour, paying less than the national minimum wage.

Business secretary Kwasi Kwarteng asked the Insolvency Service to investigate whether any crime had been committed. And, would you believe it, the Insolvency Service said no criminal charges could be brought because there was little chance of a conviction. And Kwarteng just had to accept their judgement. Of course.

Deputy Prime Minister Dominic Raab is pushing a new Bill to prevent judges from interfering with government policy. While judges are of course overwhelmingly pro-business, the Tories' have been stung by High Court decisions which have temporarily immobilised their plans to deport migrants to Rwanda. But already, persistent Tory criticism of the judiciary has produced a [drastic decline](#) in successful challenges to government policy in the High Court.

The cost of living crisis is producing desperation and leading to a massive wave of revulsion against the Tory government. Now they have decided to unleash the right-wing media as 'dogs of war' against the unions and striking workers. Union leaders like Mick Lynch of the RMT, a highly capable communicator who has gotten the better of Transport Secretary Grant Shapps multiple times, are likely to be the victim huge media 'monsterring' campaign. Union leaders are being painted as 'union barons' who want 'to hold the country to ransom.' Millions won't believe this nonsense, but the Tories want to mobilise the ultra-reactionary forces who are the basis of their power. But this will be difficult.

The idea that 'union bosses' are responsible for the astronomic fees being charged by universities, rural poverty, the price of food, the housing crisis, the staffing crisis in small and large businesses, or the fact that boardroom pay for top executives is going through the roof, chronic underfunding and a staffing crisis in the NHS, the mega-tide of sewage that is coursing through the rivers, or any of these things, is preposterous. But the unenlightened section of British society, as the crisis gets deeper, can be influenced and then mobilised as the right-wing mass media campaign gets underway. Already the Sun newspaper has started a 'Liz will Do the Bizz' campaign which suggests tax cuts could help tradespeople and give relief to workers. Fat chance of both.

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As [Susan Pashkoff reports](#) in an article on this site, the economic policy response of opposition leader Keir Starmer to the crisis has been pathetic. Warning off Shadow Cabinet members from standing on picket lines, and indeed sacking Sam Tarry from his shadow cabinet position, is just a small glimmer of the full hopelessness of right-wing Labour's response to the crisis. Just one period of price capping at already astronomic levels, and another single windfall tax, Starmer's proposal, will only bring very temporary relief.

Now the labour movement, the Left and all progressive forces must be mobilised to defeat the Tory offensive. The wave of the right-wing hatred that hit Tony Benn, Arthur Scargill and Jeremy Corbyn

are now underway for Mick Lynch and other union leaders. The right-wing will use anything they can, including the Ukraine war, to demonise and divide the left.



The launching of 'Enough is Enough' is a brilliant initiative, with nearly half a million people signed up already, and launch rallies attended by thousands.

At the same time, 100,000 supporters of 'Don't Pay UK' have pledged to cancel their standing orders to energy companies. 'Can't Pay, Won't Pay' is not just a political slogan, it is the inevitable truth for millions.

In the coming battles, the left of the labour movement must put aside secondary differences and unite. Unity and solidarity have to be the watchwords of this battle. No one is going to give up their own positions on important questions, but they cannot be allowed to divide us. The Left must unite inside and outside the Labour Party, and collectively demand that 'Labour backs labour', and support striking workers.

Socialists should press forward with the demand for the nationalisation of oil, gas and water. This will not 'cost billions' as the Labour leadership allege. Labour nationalised two giant banks at the height of the 2008 banking crisis, by the simple device of awarding itself a 'golden share' of 51%, which gave it complete control.

Arguments that we 'cannot afford' to boost incomes to grow the economy are ridiculous. Only the victory of the strikers and defence of living standards can save workers from disaster and the economy from crashing.

This crisis poses the question of government. Socialists now have to push forward the demand 'Bring down the Tories' not as a long-term demand, but as an urgent need for the majority of this society.

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The 'Enough is Enough' campaign is a brilliant initiative and every effort should be made to hold local meetings and build local groups to support the strikes – whether they call themselves 'Enough is Enough' is not the crucial question. The situation will be different, depending on local conditions. Sometimes the campaign will be led by union branches sometimes trade councils, and sometimes campaign groups, all can be mobilised into the 'Enough is Enough' campaign and win support for it – and solidarity with striking workers locally. And of course, the demand to support the strikes and nationalise the utilities should be raised everywhere in the Labour Party.

The Tory offensive is going to create the biggest social and economic crisis since the 1920s. We must raise our sights beyond the crucial core of the trade unions, towards unity with all those communities and mass movements fighting to defend the environment, defend democratic rights, defend women from attacks, defend the NHS and defend immigrants and asylum seekers. As Mick Lynch told Channel 4 News 'This is about what sort of country we want to be.'

Phil Hearse

P.S.

• Anti*Capitalist Resistance . 22 Aug 2022:

<https://anticapitalistresistance.org/million-say-enough-is-enough-as-tories-plan-massive-attack/>