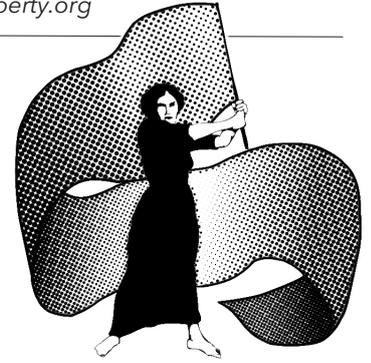


# Unite the working class against the Tories



## Strike together on 15-16 March!

**Firefighters in the UK** have voted for the first nationwide strike on pay since 2003. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) says it will not start walk-outs until 9 February at the earliest, to "allow employers further time to make any new offer". 88% of members voted for industrial action, with an impressive 73% turnout.

1 February is the biggest single day of strikes for more than a decade. Schools, rail, universities, and the civil service are all coordinating action. On 6 February nurses and ambulance workers strike simultaneously for the first time.

Further united strikes and big trade-union street demonstrations look possible on 15-16 March, 15 March being Budget day. The National Education Union (NEU) has set those days for the next strike for teachers across England and Wales, and school support staff in Wales, with regional strikes in the interim The PCS civil servants' union is likely to call action then, and the UCU university workers' union has set 16 March.

Activists will press for firefighters, transport workers on rail and the London Underground and buses, postal workers and NHS workers to join them, as part of a comprehensive escalation. ■

## NEU: set action now for after 16 March!

**Reports suggest that the** National Education Union (NEU) has continued to recruit significant numbers of members in the run up to our first strike day on 1 February. This shows the real and growing appetite amongst school workers to fight back for pay rises and against cuts.

The union's demand for full funding of a pay rise is vital. Schools' budgets have increased less than inflation. The result is more school cuts, and, most often, reductions in support staff numbers.

Support staff members in Wales beat the union law thresholds and will strike alongside teachers. Support staff in England missed the anti-union laws threshold, with a 84.13% "yes" vote on a turnout

of 46.46%. Support staff in England should be re-balloted as soon as possible to enable them to join the fight. Support staff members who refuse to cross picket lines should be assured of the full support of the whole union.

It is imperative that the union sets dates beyond its existing calendar, and for soon after 16 March, now. Most schools have only two weeks of term after 16 March, so waiting until after 16 March to give the legally-required 14 days' notice of further strikes means delay until the third term.

It is also critical that the action announced is a significant escalation. We will not win with a strategy of a day here and a couple of days there. ■

## Kick the Tories out, make unions fight Starmer

**The Tories are engulfed** in scandal and recession. If we step up the strikes and other struggles towards winning victories and making Britain "ungovernable" for the Tories, we can tip them into an early election as in 1974.

Industrial battles and street protests must be combined with an effort to mobilise the unions and the Labour rank-and-file to turn round Labour politically, towards taxing the rich, public ownership of the whole energy sector and of high finance, and restoration of the NHS.

Without that we are preparing the way for worse in future, as the failures of the 1974-9 Labour government prepared the way for Thatcher. ■

## For a national union protest against anti-strike laws!

**Free Our Unions supporters** are taking part in picket lines, strike rallies, and other actions and protests on 1 February, as part of the mass strike and TUC day of action against threatened new anti-strike laws. The campaign's next open organising meeting, on Tuesday 7 February at 7pm, will discuss the next steps and a push for a national trade union demonstration against the laws.

Free Our Unions also has plans for a meeting later in February exploring the history of solidarity strikes with NHS workers in 1982 and 1988, cosponsored by NHS Workers Say No, a grassroots, cross-union network of health workers.

More: [freeourunions.org](https://freeourunions.org). ■



## PCS: step up after 1 February

**John Moloney writes:** We are aware of at least 350 PCS pickets being planned on 1 February; over a thousand members attended a digital meeting with our General Secretary last week; and in a meeting of branches who are on strike, over 140 delegates attended. These numbers are unprecedented.

In conjunction with Trade Councils and other unions or on our own, we have set up rallies across the country.

Following 1 February, we must think urgently of what next. To begin that discussion, there will be an emergency National Executive Committee (NEC) on 7 February.

My consistent position is that along with as much selective action as we can afford - through a temporary increase in subs, we are generating extra hundreds of thousands of pounds a month for such action - there must be as much mass action as possible. I would like to see a further all-out strike in February followed by strikes in March. Where we can these should be held in conjunction with other unions, but of course PCS must work to win on its own if necessary.

We also now need to make a decision regarding a rebalot of members. The strike mandate ends in May, and therefore if we are to have seamless action we will need to start the re-ballot in April. I am in favour of that though that still leaves questions of whether it should be one ballot, rather than disaggregated, whether action short of strike action should be included as a question, etc.

• John Moloney is assistant general secretary of the civil service workers' union PCS, writing here in a personal capacity. ■

# Respect the NHS picket lines!

**The next NHS strikes** are on 6-7 February, when members of the RCN from acute, specialist and ambu-

lance trusts across England and Wales will come out. This will be the biggest action in the health dispute so far.

GMB ambulance members will be striking along RCN members on the 6th. The physiotherapy union, CSP, will strike on 7 and 9 Feb, and Unison ambulance workers again on 10 February.

We need to ensure the picket lines in this next round of action are full of talk about a strategy that can win. That means escalating strikes, co-ordination between the unions, and even more Unison



members and others refusing to cross RCN picket lines. ■



## Broaden fight to restore NHS and defeat anti-union laws

**We will work to** make the unions and Labour run political campaigning alongside the strikes. Restoring the NHS, defeating the anti-strike laws, increasing benefits and public-sector pay, and nationalising rail transport and energy are all popular political demands with little current street campaigning. ■

## Reviving the whole movement

**M**any workers are being brought into union activism for the first time.

We can't assume a big and lasting revival of combativity and confidence of the working class, but we can say that will be more likely if some big disputes win. To win significant disputes requires an intensification of action.

"Marathons" of sporadic striking are not an effective strategy. Employers can weather that kind of action more easily than workers. The schools dispute has an inbuilt time-limit - it has to be brought to crunch-point before the school summer holidays, and probably earlier - and there comes to be an air of unreality about disputes over 2022-3 pay when they run past the settlement dates for 2023-4. ■

## CWU rebalot closes 16 Feb

**C**WU members in Royal Mail close their rebalot on 16 February, and we can hope for further strikes there after that. The pressure is increasing, with many CWU reps being victimised and many local managers pushing through work-conditions changes unilaterally. ■

## Strikes

**2-3 Feb:** Abellio bus workers in South West London (Unite) strike

**3 Feb:** Train drivers at multiple TOCs (Aslef & RMT)

**4 & 11 Feb:** Drivers on the Bakerloo Tube line (Aslef)

**9-10, 14-16, 21-23, Feb, 27 Feb-2 Mar, 16-17 and 20-22 Mar:** Higher Education workers at 150 universities (UCU) strike. Unison HE members at 12 universities will strike on various days in Feb.

**6 Feb:** Ambulance workers (GMB) strike

**6-7 Feb:** Nurses (RCN) strike

**9 Feb:** NHS physiotherapists (CSP) strike

**14 Feb:** Teachers and support staff in Wales (NEU) strike

**15-16 Feb:** Teachers on the Isle of Man (NASUWT) strike

**20 Feb:** Ambulance workers (GMB) strike

**28 Feb:** Teachers in the Northern, North West, and Yorkshire and Humber regions (NEU) strike

**Feb and Mar,** including national all-out strikes on **28 Feb** and **1 Mar:** Teachers in Scotland (EIS) have 22 strike days

**1 Mar:** Teachers in the East Midlands, West Midlands, and Eastern regions (NEU) strike

**2 Mar:** Teachers in London, South East, and South West regions (NEU) strike

**6 Mar:** Ambulance workers (GMB) strike

**13 Mar-20 April:** 20 further days of rolling strikes by teachers in Scotland (EIS)

**15-16 Mar:** Teachers in England and Wales and support staff in Wales (NEU) strike.

**20 Mar:** Ambulance workers (GMB) strike

**Mar, date TBC:** 72-hour strike by junior doctors (BMA), pending outcome of ballot

**Until 3 Apr:** Discontinuous strikes by workers at drinks manufacturer Diageo's plant in Leven, Scotland (Unite).

## Ballots

**9 Jan-20 Feb:** Junior doctors (BMA) ballot for action over pay

**23 Jan-16 Feb:** Royal Mail postal workers (CWU) re-ballot for action over pay and conditions

**31 Jan-21 Feb:** Transport for London workers (RMT) ballot for action over pay and conditions. (I.e. workers employed centrally by TfL, not employees of London Underground Ltd. or other TfL subsidiaries.)

**Until 27 Feb:** HMRC workers (PCS) re-ballot for action over pay and conditions. ■

## About Workers' Liberty

**We are a socialist** group active in the labour movement and in campaigns in Britain, fighting for a revolutionary alternative to capitalism and Stalinism based on common ownership and workers' democracy.

To find out more about our ideas and activity visit [workersliberty.org](http://workersliberty.org), email [awl@workersliberty.org](mailto:awl@workersliberty.org), or phone 020 7394 8923. ■