

# Unity!



October 2022  
**TUC CONFERENCE SPECIAL**

**Defence diversification**  
**Manifesto goes global**  
**Confedrence motions**

## We've had enough Nationalise gas, electricity, rail, water and mail

**NICK WRIGHT**  
**CLASS STRUGGLE**

**T**HE RISING TIDE of industrial action – combined with an increasingly militant mood in the working class – is presenting our divided ruling class with serious problems.

Liz Truss took office as prime minister with a majority of the parliamentary Tory Party decidedly lacking in confidence in her ability to handle the dangerously unstable political system.

The latest U turns and Kwesi Kwarteng's botched budget has demolished both his and her credibility and both are on borrowed time.

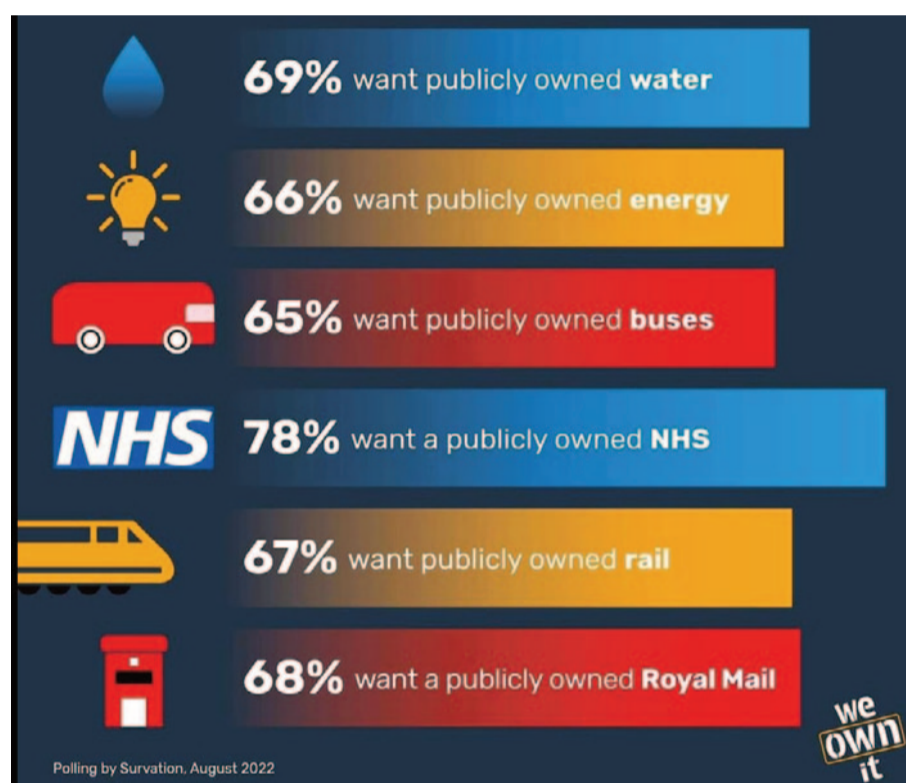
Anger at the proposal to subsidise the energy companies already excessive profits with a multi billion dollar loan which we are expected to pay back over the next decade has already forced a concession in the form of these profit-hungry sharks 'offering' to take a tax hit on the profits.

In doing so these fat cats have confirmed the point made by the union leaders of rail, mail and industrial workers over recent weeks – **profits are unpaid wages.**

When the government sanctions the offer by energy bosses (and their corporate shareholders) to take one for the (capitalist) team it shows that the government is little more than a committee of the ruling class. But also that they want to control the process rather than let it be driven by public opinion.

With price-inflation already running to two figures and projected to rise to near 20 per cent the battle for wages is key.

When combined with a rising citizens' movement against price rises and impossible energy costs we can see opening up the prospect of politics being conducted in the workplaces and the streets, on picket lines and protest meetings rather than in sterile debates in parliament.



Just as well because Starmer's conference bid for cheap popularity has unravelled as Labour publicly owned energy company is shorn of any crowd pleasing features and provides no challenge to an energy sector that gorged with massive profits now seems safe from nationalisation.

The Communist Party has thrown its members and resources into this rising movement.

The slogan 'Tax the rich' encompasses a practical list of demands that millions will support. Workers want a real pay rise. Workers want energy bills slashed and an end to food poverty. Faced with a housing crisis and runaway rent rises they want housing security and decent homes for all.

It is within the grasp of any government – even a Tory government under mass pressure – to make concessions.

But without tackling the question of ownership these issues are never resolved.

This is why the Communist Party argues that the demand for public ownership is raised now – in the midst of the campaign, when popular anger is rising and when the government is in difficulties.

Solid majorities – including on some issues a majority of Tory voters - want public ownership.

It is a policy for the people before profit that opens the way to socialism

NICK WRIGHT IS EDITOR OF UNITY!

## Welcome back to Brighton and the fightback

**Anita Halpin**  
**TUC CONFERENCE**

**O**VER 150 years ago, the first TUC Congress declared it 'highly desirable that the trades of the United Kingdom should hold an annual congress, for the purpose of bringing the trades into closer alliance, and to take action in all Parliamentary matters pertaining to the general interests of the working classes'.

While not every Congress since then has lived up to this ideal, this year's agenda has many strong motions and amendments that, if carried, have the potential to do so.

Not surprisingly, the charge is led by unions in the front line of struggle.

Of course, as always there are amendments seeking to weaken or wreck the strong actions called for. It is crucial that delegates ensure that these are defeated

But it is equally important that the incoming General Council, our General Staff, speedily implements our demands in full and takes us forward into battle to win.

Frances O'Grady will be retiring at the end of the year, and we wish her and her family well. Hopefully Congress will present her successor Paul Novak with a strong mandate that can guide him for the struggles ahead.

The first Congress was before the formation of the Labour Party but those supporters of the initial mission statement would surely have expected a mutual respect between the party of Labour and the labourers and expect Starmer and his parliamentary colleagues to be out on the picket line.

The RMT (motion 65) is absolutely right to point out that the Labour Party should not stand on the sidelines but be on the picketlines. If delegates reject this view then the TUC could well end up on the sidelines.

ANITA HALPIN IS A FORMER MEMBER OF THE TUC GENERAL COUNCIL AND FORMER CHAIR OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY

## TUC structures

We have already highlighted that Congress decisions could potentially be, in the words of the CWU in its motion 71, a turning point in the history of the British trade union movement.

The CWU and Equity (motion 72) call for a top-to-bottom review of the whole of the TUC - including trades union council and regional TUCs - to become structurally fit to deliver the current aspirations of the great majority of affiliates.

We commend these motions, but warn delegates of a wrecking amendment from the NASUWT whereby the General Council (GC) would first examine, rather than implement, even the minimum changes proposed.

The workers need this review urgently. Historically, internal reviews and consultations are very slow to get off the ground so it is crucial that affiliates put maximum pressure on the GC now to ensure an early 'kick off'.

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## Wages and the cost-of-living crisis are the key issues for workers

**ANDY BAIN**  
**DEBATES AT TUC**

**M**OTIONS TO the TUC conference this year reflect the intense anger working people feel at the way this latest crisis of capitalism is playing out. That the political system is in trouble is in no doubt. As one delegate put it: 'The Queen – who reigned for seventy-odd years – saw the back of fifteen prime ministers. My six-year old has seen four Tories in Number 10.'

After the 2008 financial crisis and capitalism's failures to deal with the Covid-19 crisis the confidence of the ruling class is shaken and the understanding by millions of workers that capitalism is a system in crisis is growing.

At his first outing as Chancellor, Kwarteng brought the divisions in our ruling class into

stark relief and managed, along with the vanishing Liz Truss, to crash the pound.

Motions on coordinated action over the cost of living crisis, nationalisation, investment employment rights, political education and equality (1, 2, 47, 48 57, 62, 64, and others) are likely to be composited and there will be arguments over emphasis but a strong policy lead combined with clear calls to action will get a good response.

The Bakers and Food Workers (3) want to raise awareness on zero hours and education union NEU (6) wants solidarity action. TSSA (9) are clear on public ownership and Community surely will accept their amendment.

Unite's position (17) on a just transition for green jobs is a timely look to the future.

RMT's lead (21) on employment rights – highlighted by the P&O experience – and UCU's opposition to fire and rehire (23)

along with ASLEF's position in Motion 29 on maximum working temperatures deserve support.

Motion 8 on abortion rights and GMB's equal pay motion should find majority support. The debate on gender identity, as always, will see sharp differences. The Communist Party has a collective view grounded in its marxist materialist outlook but its advice in this discussion is to find as many points of unity and conduct the debate with respect.

CWU (63) highlights union engagement with of Enough is Enough. The impact of outspoken union leaders and Labour MPs at mass rallies shows the potential.

An inclusive approach – united union action with social movements must have a firm organisational footing. The cost-of-living crisis and the wages battle are class issues that go beyond the moment.



**GROUCHO SAYS**

Labour's leader faced rebellion in the ranks with up to seventy Labour MPs pledged to join pickets alongside six hundred Labour councillors.

ANDY BAIN IS THE COMMUNIST PARTY'S INDUSTRIAL ORGANISER AND A FORMER PRESIDENT OF TSSA.





**Manufacturing war**

A policy motion before this year's TUC tries to link cuts in defence manufacturing jobs to the TUC's Defence Diversification policy, arguing that the cuts and the policy have impeded the British government's support for Ukraine in the current war.

**HUGH KIRKBRIDE**  
**DEFENCE DIVERSIFICATION**

GMB is absolutely right to say that "the world is becoming less safe" but this is due to increased militarisation (not less). Since 2017, the USA's share of global arms production has leapt from 32% to 39%. Increased arms expenditure around the world has simply sucked more US arms into Europe and other war zones. Increased military expenditure doesn't mean more jobs in Barrow.

There has been no shortage of material support to Ukraine, either in terms of arms or money. This enormous input of Western support has actually hindered the prospect of a negotiated peace, and an end to the war. It is the people of Ukraine who are suffering as a result.

And no British government has ever had a consistent defence diversification policy. The closest was in 1997 when the establishment of a Defence Diversification Agency was a Labour manifesto commitment. Once elected, Tony Blair ditched the Shadow Defence Minister and appointed a former GMB

official, George Robertson (later NATO General Secretary), as Defence Minister.

A Defence Diversification Agency was nominally established in 1999, and placed within the Defence Evaluation and Research agency, while porton down and other 'chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear' establishments were kept under state control, three-quarters of DERA (including the DDA) was then privatised, becoming Qinetiq. No staff were ever assigned to the DDA, and no reports on its work were ever presented. Qinetiq then derecognised all the trade unions, including the GMB.

So despite recent TUC policies, diversification has never been pursued. The opposite is the truth. The motion quite rightly notes the defence dependency of towns like Barrow. Job losses in Barrow have actually been down to a lack of diversification.

Despite the many well paid and skilled jobs at BAE Systems, Barrow is a town in decline. The population is getting older and declining. Life expectancy is significantly lower than average, and the town is completely dependent on one employer. For decades, MPs and councillors in Barrow have followed the VSEL/BAE Systems line, and left the town dependent on the whims of private capital invested in nuclear war.

In 1987, the trade union based Barrow Alternative Employment Committee (BAEC) argued for diversification in Barrow. VSEL rejected the proposals and in the next 20 years the shipyard workforce shrank from 12,000 to 3,000.

On the other hand, defence trade unions persuaded Babcock, who run Rosyth dockyard in Fife, to try diversification into other areas of marine repair in Scotland, particularly the oil industry. This led to a joint initiative between employer, trade unions and local authorities that has been more successful than the Barrow dependency strategy.

Experiences in the USA and France also show that diversification initiatives will only be successful if there is a joint commitment from national and local governments, trade unions and employers. Defence dependent communities such as Barrow, must not allow employers to veto diversification schemes. Defence workers should challenge their employers, not blindly support them.

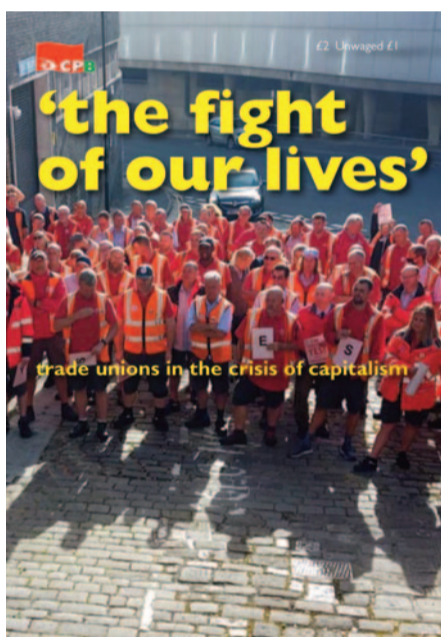
In terms of job creation, defence spending is one of the least productive areas. The Watson Institute report (Brown University, 2019) shows that the same spending on health and education creates twice as many jobs,

and renewable energy creates 50 per cent more jobs than defence spending.

Between the 2017 Congress (when the Defence Diversification policy was agreed) and the start of the Ukraine war in 2022, UK defence spending increased by over 15 per cent, double the rate of inflation in that period. The proportion of GDP spent on defence is now higher than 1997, and the Armed Forces are about half the size. So the money is going to private companies in defence manufacturing, who at the same time are shedding jobs. The issue for workers is profits in defence manufacturing, not the number of unusable arms.

The GMB argues that the AUKUS pact is a boost to Australian and British defence manufacturing. There is hardly any manufacturing industry left in Australia, with well over 90 per cent of exports being raw materials and some agricultural products. The pact is really a concession to US hegemony in the Pacific (and in defence manufacturing), linked to the threat of a US-led war against China. If this war happens, it won't support jobs in Barrow, it will destroy the world. If you want to help Barrow, defend TUC policy on Defence Diversification oppose GMB motion 4.

HUGH KIRKBRIDE IS MEMBER OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND FORMER T&G/UNITE OFFICER FOR DEFENCE WORKERS



▲ Latest from the Communist Party *Trade unions and the crisis of capitalism* Available in print and e pub form [www.comunistparty.org.uk](http://www.comunistparty.org.uk)



**Cuba Solidarity Campaign**  
**TUC fringe meeting:**  
**Supporting Education**  
**Resisting the blockade**

**Tuesday, 18 October 2022, 6pm Room 1d, Brighton Centre** with Her Excellency Bárbara Montalvo Álvarez, Cuban Ambassador  
● Kevin Courtney, NEU ● Mick Whelan, ASLEF ● Mariela Kohn, TUC  
● Grahame Morris MP **Chair:** Rob Miller, Director CSC

**50 YEARS AFTER THE PENTONVILLE FIVE**  
Now is the time for a New Deal for Workers

**The Old Ship Hotel, Brighton**  
**Tuesday 18 October 2022 6:30pm – 8:30pm**  
**Speakers:** ● Prof Keith Ewing, IER & CTUF ● Dr. Jo Grady, UCU  
● Lord John Hendy KC, IER & CTUF ● Esther Lynch, ETUC  
● Mick Lynch, RMT ● Doug Nicholls, GFTU ● Mark Serwotka, PCS  
● Dave Ward, CWU ● Yvette Williams MBE, Justice for Grenfell  
**Chair - Sarah Woolley, BFAWU & CTUF Refreshments provided.**



Followed by a celebration of the tenure and retirement of Cad Jones from her long-standing role as director of the Institute of Employment. Thanks to her for her many contributions to Unity!

Brought to you by the IER, Campaign for Trade Union Freedom and the GFTU. Live music and refreshments provided. Sponsored by Morrish Solicitors, GFTU and Old Square Chambers

**MORNING STAR FRINGE**  
@TUC2022

**TUESDAY 18 OCTOBER, 12:45**

Meeting Room 8, Brighton Centre  
Food and drink provided

Educate, Agitate, Organise – The Labour Movement Media's Role in the Fight for a New Deal

Chair: Carolyn Jones, Vice Chair, Morning Star Management Committee Speakers: Ben Chacko, Editor of the Morning Star | Gail Cartmail, Unite | Sarah Woolley, BFAWU | Kevin Courtney, NEU | Dave Ward, CWU | Dave McCrossen, USDAW

**COMMUNIST PARTY**  
**TUC Public meeting**  
**Trade unions and the crisis of capitalism**

12.50pm Thursday 20 October  
Friends Meeting House, Ship Street, Brighton BNI IAF

**Speakers: Nigel Flanagan, Gawain Little, Andy Bain**



**The Great Money Trick**  
Adapted from Robert Tressell's *The Ragged Dicks*  
Illustrated by Andy Vine  
Essay by Jenny Farrell



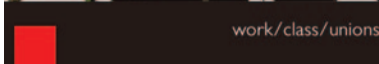
Nigel Flanagan  
**Our trade unions**  
What comes next after the summer of 2022?



Mike Squires  
**Class against class**



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C Ritchie  
**Marx, work and the 21st century**



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**Paul Macgee**  
**PUBLISHING**

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