

## ALSO IN THIS BULLETIN

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# LABOUR, BACK THE STRIKES! UNIONS, START FIGHTING IN LABOUR!

By **Tony Byrne**, Newark CLP secretary, conference delegate and RMT striker

**2022** has already had more strike days than any year since 1989. There will soon be many, many more. Despite all the legal restrictions imposed on workers and unions – restrictions Truss is seeking to make much worse (see freeourunions.org) – we are being driven to struggle by capitalism's dire "cost-of-living" crisis. If we start to win serious victories, these struggles can begin to turn the political tide.

If Labour is serious about defending living standards, raising wages and representing working people, it must back the strikes. Many members are, but the leadership isn't, as shown by the farce of Keir Starmer trying to ban MPs from picket lines.

The leadership is refusing even to support inflation-matching pay rises (or increases to Universal Credit). Is it saying it wants workers to take a pay cut?

Using conference as a launchpad, in the coming weeks and months we must mobilise the largest possible layers of Labour organisations, members and leaders to support strikes and help them win.

My CLP's motion been ruled out by the Conference Arrangements Committee, as have many others on supporting strikes. At time of writing we are fighting to get it back in.

A lot depends on what our unions do politically, at conference and after.

Starmer has been able to get away with swinging to the right, dropping policy after policy that conference has demanded and that he promised to support, in part because unions have done little inside or outside Labour structures to challenge him or push their demands. Some on the left (eg in Unite) argue it is somehow militant for unions to disengage from Labour and focus solely on the workplace. That's disastrously wrong. Workplace/industrial struggle and political struggle must go together.

A strong stand by unions to

shake up Labour – in support of workers' struggles and for pro-working policies, including a rebuilt public sector and expanded public ownership – can, alongside the strike wave, help reinvigorate thousands of political activists who've faded since 2020. A weak stand, letting Starmer get his way, will help Truss regain her balance and rally Tory support against a Labour Party whose only response to the economic turmoil is "Don't worry, we won't change too much!" ✂

## LIVERPOOL DOCKS

### Support the picket lines.

Unite members at Liverpool docks are striking for better pay, as part of the same wave that has seen rail, Royal Mail, BT and many other strikes. Watch out for delegations to the dockers' pickets, and join them. Port of Liverpool, L21 1LA ✂

## NUM SAYS STAND WITH UKRAINE

**The National Union of** Mine-workers has submitted a good motion, strongly backing Ukraine's resistance to Russian imperialism and the Ukrainian labour movement. Unfortunately other motions submitted muddy the waters by trying to link support for Ukraine to support for NATO and higher military spending. ✂

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## WILL YOU BE SINGING "GOD SAVE THE KING"?

**The leadership has decided** – did Conference Arrangements Committee approve this? – that conference should sing "God Save the King". As democratic, secular, internationalist socialists, we certainly won't be, and we suspect a lot of other delegates won't either.

This is what another Keir, Labour's founder Keir Hardie, had to say about the monarchy (on Victoria's 60th jubilee):

*"Democracy and monarchy are an unthinkable connection... If we are for the Queen we are not for her subjects. The throne represents the power of caste – class rule... In this country loyalty to the Queen is used by the profit-mongers to blind the eyes of the people. We can have but one feeling in the matter – contempt for thrones and for all who bolster them up."* ✂

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# STARMER VS PUBLIC OWNERSHIP

**Expanding public ownership** is a test of whether a Labour government is even minimally “progressive”. It’s a scandal that the last Labour governments, under Brown and Blair, extended privatisation. Now Starmer’s leadership, having promised to push public ownership, has wretched – on energy, water, Royal Mail and, in all but words, on rail. Even on reversing privatisation in the NHS.

This month a Survation poll for LabourList found that 94% of Labour members want water and rail in the public sector, 87% energy and 85% Royal Mail.

Survation has found the wider public strongly pro-public ownership too. 66% want public ownership of energy – including 74% of Labour voters and 60% of Tories.

Now Conference Arrangements Committee has ruled out the motion promoted by Labour for a Green New Deal calling for expanded public ownership to tackle the cli-

mate crisis. Evidently the leadership is afraid of having the argument. (LGND: labourgnd.uk. For labour movement climate campaigning, also check out XR Trade Unionists: bit.ly/xrtuists)

Conference should hear motions on public ownership of energy – a vital part of a socialist answer to the cost-of-living and climate crises. The leadership’s policy would do little

to help the badly off (indeed leave some slightly worse off), subsidise high energy usage and fossil fuels, and leave the private energy industry making vast profits at the expense of people and planet.

» *We’ve produced a special bulletin on energy and the cost-of-living crisis. Ask a Labour Left Internationalists supporter for a copy.* 🌱

## MOTIONS TO LOOK OUT FOR

**There will be many** good left-wing motions; here are some key ones to look out for, fight to ensure are taken and debated, and support:

- » Public ownership of energy, submitted by (at least) Eastleigh, Elmet & Rothwell, Nottingham East and Penistone & Stocksbridge CLPs
- » Support the strikes – cut profits, tax the rich, raise wages, from Newark
- » Migrants’ rights and free movement, from Cardiff North
- » Support for Ukraine and its labour movement, from the National Union of Mineworkers
- » There are a lot of good motions on housing
- » For notes on these and other motions, see bit.ly/lab22motions

## FIGHT FOR FREE MOVEMENT AND MIGRANTS’ RIGHTS

**Attacking migrants has been** central to the rise of the nationalist right; standing up for migrants’ rights and freedom of movement is essential to humanitarian, working-class and socialist politics.

In 2019, after campaigning by the Labour Campaign by Free Movement (LCFM), conference passed strong policy to challenge the “hostile environment” and defend and extend migrants’ rights.

Some of the demands made it into the 2019 manifesto, though the Corbyn leadership was reticent. And Starmer’s leadership has back-

tracked heavily from its promises on these issues.

LCFM, which recently relaunched with an excellent conference, again

has a motion to Labour conference this year, plus an event at The World Transformed (see p4). 🌱

» *More: bit.ly/lcfm-22*

## INDIA LABOUR SOLIDARITY

**We welcome the new** India Labour Solidarity initiative to support workers’ movements against the anti-worker, anti-people, anti-democratic labour and other policies of the Indian state, and to build links between the Indian and UK labour movements – including in the Labour Party. It’s crucial Labour stands with the labour movements of a country that is aiming to become a significant trade partner of the UK. 🌱

» *bit.ly/inlabsol*

## LABOUR LEFT INTERNATIONALISTS

**Labour Left Internationalists** – previously Momentum Internationalists – is a network of Labour Party members founded in 2020 by supporters of left anti-Brexit campaign Labour for a Socialist Europe. We stand for:

- » Aggressive support for strikes and workers’ struggles;
- » Consistent internationalism, including fighting for free movement and to reverse Brexit;

» Arguing to replace capitalism with socialism, a radically new society based on common ownership and democratic and workers’ control, not profit-making;

» Radical policies so the labour movement can serve working-class interests and push towards socialism;

» Democratising Labour, making conference the party’s sovereign decision-making body.

## CONTACT US

Contact us at conference:

- » Phone, text or whatsapp 07775 763 750
- » momentuminternationalists.org
- » team@momentuminternationalists.org
- » twitter.com/LabourLeftInt

# JUSTICE FOR CHRIS KABA! FIGHT TO CURB THE POLICE

**The murder of an** unarmed young black man, Chris Kaba, by police in South London on 3 September reposes the question of what the labour movement should say about the police – as should have a hundreds of police crimes and outrages, big and small, over the years.

The first thing is to mobilise the labour movement, trade unions and Labour, for the demonstrations demanding justice – from which it has largely been absent, as it was from the 2020 Black Lives Matter protests.

We also need more immediate demands – making changes now and moving the struggle forward – to curb the police, hold them more accountable, and narrow the sphere of criminal justice in favour of social provision and democracy. And to push away from a punitive, draconian and racist “criminal justice” towards something

radically different.

Thankfully “Labour Friends of the Police” seems to have gone nowhere, but pro-police, authoritarian tendencies are very strong in the party. Under Blair and Brown policing and criminal justice actually became more authoritarian.

We need a socialist vision for transforming policing and criminal justice as part of transforming economics and government. We also need more immediate demands, to move this struggle forward. ✊

» *What should we demand? After the BLM protests, some of us put together ideas which we’ve started to promote in the Labour Party with a motion (it also deals with attacks on the right to protest). Take a look: [bit.ly/curbthepolice](https://bit.ly/curbthepolice)*

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## STAND WITH UKRAINE

**The Tories are supporting** Ukraine in their own way and for their own reasons. But the labour movement has every reason to support Ukraine too.

This is an anti-imperialist and democratic struggle. Putin’s brutal war has led to tens of thousands of deaths; many millions fleeing and internally displaced; and horrendous war crimes and human rights abuses by the Russian army.

For the sake of resisting growing right-wing authoritarianism globally, Ukraine must win.

The UK labour movement has a problem with political forces like the *Morning Star* and the Stop the War Coalition, which oppose support for Ukraine.

That Ukraine has a neo-liberal government does not change the basic issues at all. We can stand with Ukraine while also standing with its labour movement – which is strongly committed to the war against Russian imperialism – against the Ukrainian ruling class.

Alongside more military aid to help Ukraine liberate itself, we demand cancellation of its external debt to facilitate both its liberation and just post-war reconstruction.

The NUM motion on Ukraine is good. Unfortunately the other, more right-wing motions submitted on this muddy the waters by trying to tie support for Ukraine to support for the NATO military alliance and, in the case of the GMB motion, increased

UK military spending.

Conference should be able to vote on support for Ukraine without having to vote for NATO and higher military spending in the same motion. ✊

» *More: [ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org](https://ukrainesolidaritycampaign.org), plus see fringe meetings, p4*

## SPEAK OUT AGAINST BREXIT!

**The motion on Ukraine** from Keir Starmer’s CLP, Holborn & St Pancras, supports Ukraine’s application to join the EU – highlighting the absurdity of Starmer’s stance on Brexit.

Far from making the arguments to reverse Brexit, as we should, the leadership has worked hard to say as little as possible.

As Brexit has proved more and more disastrous, the party has stayed silent.

Rejoining the EU would probably require another referendum –

and first, some serious discussion in the labour movement and left. We need to have that discussion.

Immediately, Labour should fight for the UK to rejoin the Single Market and Customs Union. Otherwise we’re supporting the extreme form of Brexit the Tories have undemocratically pushed through. Rejoining would allow us to reverse some of the damage caused by Brexit and mitigate the economic chaos that is worsening the living standards crisis. ✊

## PR IS NOT MAGIC

**We support proportional representation** because, in general, it’s more democratic than first-past-the-post. There’s a problem with the amount of focus and energy this issue has absorbed. Over one hundred CLPs have passed conference motions on PR, to the exclusion of other issues that may not be raised or discussed as a result.

PR is not some kind of automatic or radical solution for the left and labour movement’s problems. Plenty of countries with PR have right-wing politics and weak labour movements.

Moreover, a widespread idea among PR supporters is that Labour should form a coalition, in government and perhaps in elections too, with the Lib Dems. The Lib Dems are a right-wing, straightforwardly capitalist party. Coalition with them would mean shifting Labour even further right. ✊

## PAKISTAN FLOODS

After the horrendous climate-driven floods in Pakistan, we are promoting the call from Pakistani socialists to support the relief appeal launched small farmers' organisation Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee. See [bit.ly/pakistansolidarity](http://bit.ly/pakistansolidarity) ♪



# FIGHT FOR LABOUR DEMOCRACY – STOP THE PURGE OF SOCIALISTS

**L**abour Party democracy has been under attack for two years – from undemocratic rule changes (we'd guess there are more coming from the NEC this year) to changes to the party's culture shifting it even further away from membership control.

Part of that has been a renewed attempt to purge organised socialists for being organised socialists, targeting Workers' Liberty and Socialist Appeal.

We need to put a stop to this, overturn bans and exclusions of socialists, and fight for rule changes and cultural changes to create a democratic, pluralist party.

This goes alongside refusal to allow the membership any say in deciding party policies and direction.

Even under Corbyn, arguably the most democratic-minded leader the party has had for many years, there was an issue of conference decisions (for instance on repealing all anti-union laws) being ignored. Policy was often still regarded as something decided and announced from

above by shadow ministers and their staff. The problem is obviously now much worse.

We must insist the party's membership – including crucially its affiliated unions – decides party policy. The only way that's possible is by making

party conference really sovereign, so its decisions automatically become active policy.

We must call Starmer and the whole leadership to account, insisting they acknowledge, respect and argue for conference policies. ♪

## ABOLISH THE MONARCHY!

**T**he degree of the leadership's doubling down on monarchism is remarkable and almost comic – telling MPs not to say anything except about the queen's death, tweeting "God Save the King" and now deciding we should sing "God Save the King" at conference. (So now we're a Church of England party too?)

This performance at a time when more and more people have started to question the monarchy – particularly in the UK's former colonies, but increasingly here as well.

The monarchy is a powerful

symbol of privilege and inequality, including racism and colonialism, and a powerful anti-democratic factor in UK governance and politics.

At the very least Labour should speak out against the suppression of anti-monarchy protesters and for democratic reforms to cut the monarchy down to size.

We will be arguing to abolish it. Well done to Clive Lewis MP for speaking out forcefully for republicanism. ♪

» *Labour for a Republic: labourforarepublic.org.uk. We need Trade Unions for a Republic!*

## RADICAL FRINGE MEETINGS

**A**mong many good conference fringe meetings, we particularly recommend:

» Saturday 24 September. **Beyond borders: is it possible and how do we get there?** Labour Campaign for Free Movement at The World Transformed. 11am, The Studio School, 41 Greenland St, L1 0BS. Speakers include Nadia Whittome MP, Ben Towse, Ana Oppenheim, Zehrah Hasan

» Sunday 25 September. **Black members protest!** In response to silence on Forde Report Allegation 6. 3pm outside Liverpool confer-

ence hall

» Monday 26th. **Public ownership and picket lines: which side is Labour on?** Fire Brigades Union and LabourList. Hall 2 room 5, ACC conference centre (open only to those attending conference itself). Matt Wrack (FBU General Secretary), John McDonnell MP, Cat Hobbs (We Own It)

» Monday 26th. **Fighting for the right to strike.** Free Our Unions campaign. 7.30pm, The Liverpool pub, 14 James Street, L2 7PQ. Bell Riberio-Addy MP, Riccardo la Torre (FBU National Officer), Tony Byrne

(RMT striker and delegate)

» Come and **meet Labour Left Internationalists** – 9pm Monday 26 Sep, The Liverpool pub, 14 James Street, L2 7PQ. After Free Our Unions meeting

» Tuesday 27th. **How can Labour help Ukraine win?** Ukraine Solidarity Campaign. 6pm, Quaker Meeting House, 22 School Lane, L1 3BT. Including Olesia Briazgunova (Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine International Secretary), Alex Sobel MP, Simon Weller (ASLEF Assistant General Secretary) and more...