

TUC anti far-right statement



Photo Morning Star

We stand together in peace and solidarity with the people of Southport following the horrific events that took place on Monday 29th July have left us all in shock.

Our thoughts are with the families and loved ones of those who have died and are receiving treatment for their injuries. They should be the priority for everyone who cares about what has happened

Instead some have sought to use the tragic event in Southport to divide and spread hate - based on mistruths and false information. Far right thugs have taken to the streets of Southport, Hartlepool and London to attack Police and emergency service workers, to target Muslim communities with xenophobic hatred and to despoil the memories of those whose lives were so tragically cut short.

We must not let them get away with their lies and division. Trade unions have always been at the heart of efforts to unite communities and stand against hate. But the challenge feels even more urgent now.

Whilst what took place in Southport leaves a dark shadow, we have seen some of the best of us. Our emergency service workers who rushed to danger, who provided and continue to provide life-saving care. Our public service workers providing ongoing care and support and practical help. Our teachers and support staff in the schools

attended by young people affected and our community organisations who have stepped up to help and provide counselling.

So many other individuals, local businesses and organisations who are giving their time and expertise. They all deserve our gratitude. They have discharged their duty professionally, diligently and with compassion for their community.

Once again, it is a diverse range of front-line workers and community activists who have stepped up to repair the damage – material, physical and emotional.

Southport and our communities across the country do not need to meet violence with further violence. Whipping up hate and fear is not acceptable.

As trade unions, we will continue to work with our members in workplaces across the country, to provide practical support and solidarity and defeat the narrative of hate.

Our unions call for an end to the violence and intimidation, and for all those who perpetrate these acts to be brought to justice.

Unity is our strength, and we will stand firm against those that aim to pit different workers and communities against each other.

2 August 2024.

The 156th annual TUC Congress will be held on 8- 11 September 2024, Brighton

Climate change Greener Jobs Alliance /Trades Union Congress - Special out now! On the right or wrong side of science and history?

Essential reading for anyone interested in the debate on climate change at the **TUC**. Even more essential for anyone going to it and in a position to take part. Includes comments on core motions from **UNISON, PCS, GMB** and **UNITE**. Will our movement be on the right side of the science and the right side of history after the TUC Congress this year? <https://greenerjobsalliance.co.uk/news/>

Email the editor (paulatkin54@hotmail.com) with any thoughts or comments.

More about this year's congress including reports and documents at:
<https://www.tuc.org.uk/Congress2024>

Transport

Train drivers working for LNER the state owned company which runs the passenger service on the East Coast main line between London and Edinburgh (including Leeds to London) – will strike on every Saturday between 31 August and 9 November [inclusive] and on every Sunday from 1 September to

10 November [inclusive] in a two year dispute about working agreements. Details at: <https://aslef.org.uk/publications/aslef-drivers-strike-1ner>

The dispute is separate from the two year row over pay, one of the longest in the history of Britain's railways, which centred on pay increases for drivers who had not received a pay rise since 2019.

The last pay offer in June 2023 was rejected by **ASLEF**. The deal that was offered by the previous Conservative government included pay rises of 4% but also included conditions related to training and rostering, which proved to be too much of a hurdle to clear at the time.

However, following negotiations with the Department for Transport, which took over negotiations from the Rail Delivery Group when the Labour government took office, **ASLEF** secured a three-phase pay offer of 5% for 2022-2023, 4.75% for 2023-2024, and 4.5% for 2024-2025 with the deal backdated and pensionable. Members are now voting on the offer, which is being recommended by the union.

The **RMT** union started pay talks with the Department of Transport on behalf of the train operating companies on Tuesday 20 August and Network Rail on Thursday 22 August as well as talks with the Ministry of Defence on behalf Royal Fleet Auxiliary (RFA) members in order to settle long running pay disputes.

RMT general secretary Mick Lynch said that all offers would be dealt with by the union after talks are completed with Network Rail and the MoD on Thursday.

"We really need to move on from the belligerent and hostile attitude of the last government and reset industrial relations to allow rail workers and RFA seafarers to get on with the job," he said.

Unite members at Gemini rail maintenance company, based in Wolverton, Buckinghamshire, have called off further strikes after receiving reassurances from the company and a change to the policy that meant staff could not be represented by their trade union in grievance meetings.

Up to 60 staff had walked out earlier this month when the company had refused to allow workers to be represented by their **Unite** workplace rep over a long standing pay grievance as he was also attempting to raise his own grievance for loss of pay.

Following strikes and continued negotiation by **Unite** and its members, the company has reversed its decision and committed to allowing union reps in all grievance meetings. More at:

<https://www.unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2024/august/further-gemini-rail-strikes-called-off-as-employer-agrees-to-allow-union-representation>

More action over the G4S dispute

Public and Commercial Service Union (PCS) members working as security guards at Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) sites and jobcentres are to take a further 14 days' strike action in their ongoing dispute over pay.

Over 400 **PCS** members employed by G4S for the DWP will walk out for fourteen more days during the weeks beginning 9 and 23 September. They have already taken 22 days' strike action and are also on strike next week from 27 August.

Membership has more than doubled during the dispute and members have been holding well-supported picket lines outside jobcentres, many of which have been forced to close during the strike action, which also includes **GMB** members.

PCS general secretary Fran Heathcote said: "When will G4S get the message that our members will not sit back and accept a pay rise that is 23p above the National Living Wage while G4S rakes in millions? Our members risk their safety every day to protect Jobcentre workers and visitors. G4S can afford to pay them a decent wage, so why don't they?"

Meanwhile Border Force staffs at Heathrow are to take further strike action. The 650 **PCS** members who work in passport control at terminals 2, 3, 4 and 5 at Heathrow have been in dispute with their employer after a new roster was imposed in April. New strike dates announced are four days from 31 August to 3 September, which will be followed by another work-to-rule and overtime ban until 22 September. More at:

<https://www.pcs.org.uk/news-events/news/border-force-staff-heathrow-take-further-strike-action>

Win for NATS staff in Scotland

PCS members have received a substantial pay rise after threatening to vote on industrial action.

Thirty six **PCS** members working as air traffic service assistants at **Prestwick Control Centre** were preparing to vote for industrial action after learning they were earning £2,349 less per year than their colleagues doing the same job elsewhere in the UK. But before the ballot opened, employer National Air Traffic Services agreed to raise their pay to the same level.

Unite successes

Read about successful actions in Leicester, Redbridge and Sellafeld and updates on other disputes at: <https://www.unitetheunion.org/news-events>

Education

On 22 August the **GMB** announced that fifteen additional Birmingham City Council schools were set to vote on joining industrial action, following the Council's ongoing failure to resolve the City's equal pay crisis. The result is expected mid-September.

The escalation comes after support staff in thirty five schools across the city took strike action earlier this year. More at:

<https://www.gmb.org.uk/news/birmingham-schools-begin-equal-pay-strike-vote>

Meanwhile the **GMB** members have lodged a first tranche of 400 legal claims against Brighton and Hove City Council. The claims centre on sex discrimination over the pay of members in predominantly female job roles.

The value of the claims identified is estimated to be tens of millions of pounds but could be much more. More at:

<https://www.gmb.org.uk/news/400-gmb-members-lodge-equal-pay-claims-against-brighton>

Retail

Asda, once a major player in the UK grocery market, finds itself in troubled waters as its market share falls to a historic low. The supermarket chain, which is part of the traditional "big four" alongside Tesco, Sainsbury's, and Morrisons, [has seen its sales drop by 6.4% over the last three months](#). This decline has pushed Asda's market share down to 11.8%, putting it just slightly ahead of the rapidly growing discounter Aldi. More at:

<https://www.tutor2u.net/economics/blog/asdas-market-struggles-debt-and-competition-in-the-uk-grocery-sector>

GMB Union reaction:

<https://www.gmb.org.uk/news/asda-plummeting-market-share-due-to-failing-financial-engineering> and

<https://www.gmb.org.uk/news/bristol-asda-workers-protest-over-asset-stripping>

Local Government

Staff in social work teams across Lancashire who are **UNISON** members walked out for five days starting on 9 August in a second round of strike action over salary grades and working cover. As many as 200 social care support officers and hearing impairment officers, employed by Lancashire Council, took part in the action. This follows four days of action taken at the end of July.

UNISON says that staffs want to be paid at the correct rates for the jobs they're doing but the local authority has so far refused. More at:

<https://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/24506885.lancashire-social-care-support-workers-strike/>

Meanwhile **UNISON** members in England, Scotland and Wales have voted overwhelmingly to retain the union's political fund, which enables UNISON to take part in political activity. Of the 187,598 members who participated, 96.7% voted to keep the political fund.


UNISON's political fund has two sections: Labour Link and the Campaign Fund. Labour Link takes the union's campaign objectives into the Labour party and supports members to become MPs and councillors. More at:

<https://www.unison.org.uk/news/article/2024/08/unison-votes-to-renew-political-fund/>

UCU/ Unite dispute 2024

UCU currently has a dispute with one of its staff unions, **Unite**. During the dispute the union will share updated frequently asked questions members may have:

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/UniteDisputeFAQ>

 **Latest 23 August 2024: UCU management** was notified on Wednesday 21 August of a change to the planned **Unite** strike action, now postponed from Monday 2 September to Monday 9 September. While we are pleased that there will not be strike action starting on 2 September, we remain of the view that there is no justification for the action at all and that it should be called-off completely not merely postponed. **UCU management** had made clear our availability to meet at Acas on Tuesday 27 August and/or Wednesday 28 August, but **Unite** declined to meet on those days, which is why Wednesday 4 September is now the earliest date for a further meeting with Acas.

An earlier **Unite** statement giving the background on this dispute may be found at:

<https://www.unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2024/may/workers-at-ucu-to-s-trike-over-working-practices> and

<https://www.unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2024/june/ucu-workers-escalate-dispute-with-trade-union>

Universities

UCU has confirmed that no staff at Goldsmiths, University of London, will face compulsory redundancy in the next academic year, as it reached an agreement that ends the long-running dispute over brutal job cuts.

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/13708/UCU-beats-back-Goldsmiths-compulsory-redundancies>

Meanwhile Staff at Sheffield Hallam University will take four days of industrial action in September in defence of jobs and employment conditions, the **UCU** has announced. Members at the university will strike from Monday 23 September until Thursday 26 September following a ballot that saw 87% of those voting agreeing to take action. <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/13703/Staff-at-Sheffield-Hallam-University-set-to-strike>

Coal board chiefs were Arthur Scargill's source of secret "hit list" for pit closures.

Arthur Scargill revealed the source of a secret pit closure "hit list" from 1982, shedding light on internal coal board tensions during the miners' strike. Read Nick Jones in Yorkshire Bylines at: <https://yorkshirebylines.co.uk/region/coal-board-chiefs-were-arthur-scargills-source-of-secret-hit-list-for-pit-closures/>

Stop Press

Difficult decisions are coming

In a speech in the Rose Garden at 10 Downing Street on Tuesday 27 August, the Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer promised to end politics as usual, telling voters he was levelling with them that Britain's problems would only get worse before getting better. He blamed the last government for leaving a £22 billion 'black hole', something he said was unexpected and which had forced the government to take some difficult decisions such as limiting fuel payments to the elderly.

He reminded his audience that he planned to stick to the pledge that taxes would not go up for 'working people' but there would be short term pain in what he said would be "unpopular decisions" for the long term good.

He emphasised trying to stimulate growth in the economy instead of just relying on tax rises or spending cuts.

"There is a budget coming in October, and it's going to be painful. We have no other choice ... Those with the broader shoulders should bear the heavier burden," he said, referring to the budget on Wednesday 30 October. Full speech at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/keir-starmer-s-speech-on-fixing-the-foundations-of-our-country-27-august-2024>

Responding to the speech **Unite** general secretary Sharon Graham said: “We need change. A bleak vision of Britain is not what we need now. It is time to see the change that Labour promised. The chaos of the previous government is clear but we can make different choices to fix our nations. Britain can't wait for growth. Our industries can't wait for investment.

“Britain is in crisis, yes. But to say there is no money to rebuild our industry and infrastructure, or to restore our public services, is simply not true. The top 50 families have more wealth than half our population. The profit margins of the average British firm have rocketed by 30 per cent since before the pandemic. If we taxed 1 percent on the wealthiest 1 percent, the so-called black hole would be gone.

“The money is there. It's time for a wealth tax on the super rich and a tax on excess profits. We don't need more excuses about fiscal responsibility or talk of wealth creation. We should not pit pensioners against workers, that is not a choice that should be on the table.

“We now need Labour to have the courage to make the right choices. To be Labour and fight for change for workers and our communities.”

This edition was finalised on the evening of 27 August 2024. So far the TUC has not issued a statement on the Prime Minister's speech.