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**Communist Party  
of Great Britain  
(Marxist-Leninist)**



# Support the postal workers!

# Break the link with Labour!

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The fact that over 95% of postal workers supported the first of the one day strikes called by the Communication Workers Union (CWU) was welcome proof of the continued readiness of workers to offer resistance to capitalism's efforts to impose its crisis burdens onto their backs – even when hamstrung by the least auspicious leadership.

This well-merited slap in the face for Leighton, Crozier and co., provoked by their insulting offer of a 2.5% rise (a cut in real terms), the threatened loss of 40,000 jobs, and the progressive undermining of the public postal service, gives us a small taste of the much weightier blows that will be struck when organized labour at last frees itself from its bondage to social democracy.

## **Labour: the enemy within**

But assuredly that day has yet to dawn, as has been clear from the credibility gap which separates the militant speeches of union leaders from their craven support for the very Labour government which is imposing the public service cuts.

As battle approaches, common sense dictates that battle lines need to be drawn up in good time. Friend must be distinguished from foe. Yet so far from pointing out to the working class the indelible class-treachery of an imperialist Labour party which continues to leech upon the subs of union members even as it orders pay cuts, privatization and the retention of union bashing laws, such trade union leaders have done all within their power to keep everyone mesmerized around the phoney Labour “leadership challenge”. For precious weeks, the hot political issue for the labour aristocrats running T&G, Amicus and UNISON was not how to break the link with Labour, but how best to use their block votes to help revive Labour's fortunes, by backing one or other of the opportunists vying to be leader or deputy.

When it came to it, just 8% of those eligible to vote through their membership of a Labour-affiliated union actually bothered to vote for ANY of the charlatans who lined up for the deputy leader beauty contest. In stark contrast, when the postal workers balloted to strike, 60% of the membership voted, and a full 75% of those votes backed the strike. Clearly, the view from the sorting-room floor is at odds with that of the leadership.

Some flavour of this discontent emerged when the postal strike came up for discussion at the recent founding conference of the National Shop Stewards' Network. The comment was heard that nobody really wanted a one-day strike, that people were looking for a more serious approach to striking, and were prepared to vary legal with illegal forms of action. The CWU leadership drew criticism for having in the past accepted successive job cuts in exchange for the promise of a gradual advance towards national average earnings, making it harder to resist when management finally turned around and demanded pay cuts as well as job cuts.

## **The material basis of opportunism**

Sadly, this recital of betrayals could not see its way beyond a vague denunciation of time-serving bureaucrats and phoney

lefties, supposedly best cleared out of the way by the adoption of grass roots democracy and the strict avoidance of all political theory and political parties – a familiar retreat into anti-theory prejudice which does no favours at all to the working class whose spontaneity it flatters.

What is required in fact is not less theory but more and better theory. What is required is revolutionary theory that can explain both the role that opportunism has played in undermining workers' struggles and the material basis of that opportunism in imperialist super-exploitation. Armed with such an understanding, a grass-roots revolt will learn to break with not only the Labour party and all those union leaders which still huddle under its wing, but with the whole trend of social democracy which blocks the path to the emancipation of the working class, keeping it tied to imperialist apron strings.

## **Capitalism creates its own gravediggers**

The deepening crisis of the imperialist system, currently finding its sharpest international expression in the humiliating defeat inflicted upon the invaders by the Iraqi resistance, is a time of great danger and great opportunity for the British working class. If we allow ourselves to be lulled into yet another bout of wishful thinking about “reclaiming the Labour party”, or yet more workerist dreams about salvation through grass-roots militancy “without parties or theory”, we will continue to play into the hands of our exploiters.

But if we can learn to distinguish friend from foe in the coming struggle, if we can find the courage to break the link with Labour and ally ourselves instead with those around the world who are seriously fighting imperialism, then the prospects for a revival of grass roots militancy in defence of the class look a good deal more promising.

It is the capitalist crisis itself which has upset the smooth operation of the social democratic racket, undermining the welfare state concessions by which Labour reformism sought to reconcile workers with their exploiters after World War II and forcing the Labour party to ditch all pretence of “socialism”. The crisis itself has exposed Labour as the enemy within. It is now up to the working class to break with it once and for all. Or as Bob Crow put it at the stewards' conference, “The marriage is over, so get the divorce out of the way and move on”.

## **A move in the right direction**

The attempt to revive the national shop stewards movement is a welcome step in the right direction, and should be supported. It is only through such efforts that the rhetoric from the top about coordinating industrial action in defence of public services can be backed up by genuine solidarity. But to fight capitalism with full efficiency, we need to overcome the real “enemy within”: social democracy. For this, it is necessary to undertake another “revival” – that of the British communist movement.

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