

Labour Internationalist

Monthly publication of the British supporters of the Organising Committee
for the Reconstitution of the Fourth International (OCRFI)

Issue No.15, February 2021

Price: £1

Who we are, What we stand for

We believe that the working class needs to rely on its own efforts, both at home and around the world, to defend its interests against a capitalist system that is determined to extract maximum profit regardless of the human and environmental cost.

We believe that the capitalist system, based on private ownership of the means of production, cannot be reformed and has to be abolished by means of a proletarian revolution that will introduce socialism.

We stand on the founding programme of the Fourth International, the *Transitional Programme*, which says in particular: "It is necessary to help the masses, in the process of their daily struggles, to find the bridge between their current demands and the programme of the socialist revolution. This bridge should include a system of transitional demands which stem from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class, and invariably lead to the same conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat."

The working class's struggle against the capitalist system – on its own account as well as on behalf of all of the oppressed – needs to be united and based on class independence from capital and its national and international institutions.

This means defending the organisations which the workers have built, and helping the workers themselves to build new forms of organisation to carry out their struggle in ways which they decide on freely and which they control.

Often, this also means opposing those in the labour movement who ignore the mandate of their membership and co-operate with capitalism's plans, at the workplace, institutional or State level.

Labour Internationalist aims to be part of the fight against that process of integrating the working-class organisations into capitalism's plans.

Labour Internationalist therefore focuses on helping to advance the struggle by the working class in its own interests – locally, nationally and internationally.

Consistent with this view, *Labour Internationalist* defines itself as a forum of class struggle that is open to all individuals, groups and currents in the labour movement that are committed to political independence of the working class and to internationalism.

**There is
political fakery, and
then there is what the
workers need to be
done**

**The workers should
not pay for the
failures of the
government and the
capitalist system**

EDITORIAL

It would be hard to point to anything positive in the current crisis, but we can say that today there is much less room for the kind of fakery that politicians might get away with in more “normal” times. When people’s livelihoods across the country are being attacked and destroyed using the crisis as a pretext, then the gap between what politicians say and do and what needs to be done in the interests of working people becomes clear much more quickly.

Let’s take the strike by around 7,500 workers at British Gas as an example.

First of all, we should bear in mind that British Gas was created after Attlee’s Labour government nationalised the gas industry in 1948. It was privatised in 1986 by the Thatcher government and then kept in the private sector by successive Tory and Labour governments.

Today, British Gas is owned by Centrica and employs around 20,000 people. Last June, the company announced restructuring plans which included the loss of 5,000 jobs. This was after 3,800 British Gas employees were “furloughed” in April 2020. So, despite benefiting from taxpayers’ money, Centrica is trying to force British Gas workers into a “fire and rehire” situation in order to reduce labour costs.

But as we know, this doesn’t only apply to British Gas. British Airways, Go North West in Manchester and many other companies are using the epidemic as a pretext to cut wages and worsen working conditions.

According to a recent survey, a total of 9 per cent of the British workforce has been affected. In sectors where workers – particularly working women – are paid the least, earning less than £15,000 a year, this figure rises to 30 per cent. (1) Nearly all of the workers surveyed said they had seen their working hours or pay reduced since last March – a full-frontal attack across all sectors.

How did this happen, and what can be done about it?

In 2016, the working-class constituencies – mostly Labour – where the workers, the unemployed and the youth had borne the brunt of the consequences of the EU’s policies (“free and undistorted competition”, privatisation, destruction of all the post-war gains, reduction in public spending, the driving down of the cost of labour) that had been enforced by all governments regardless of their political labels, voted massively to leave the EU.

They voted to leave the EU and its policies. They did not vote to get the same policies outside of the EU.

What is happening to workers in this country, like those at British Gas, is the result of the continuation of EU policy – free and undistorted competition, privatisation of public services, etc. – but outside the EU.

After turning its back on the will of the majority of the working class to break with the EU and its policy, the Labour leadership has embarked on a shameful

“national unity” policy of constant support for the government, which can only lead to the destruction of the Labour Party as a party of the working class.

Pursuing a policy in line with the interests of the workers – for example, safeguarding British Gas by renationalising the company, or safeguarding the NHS against the government’s plans for further regionalisation and privatisation – requires breaking with the policy of this government.

There is growing support by thousands of Labour Party and trade union members for the recent call for an immediate Labour Party Recall Conference, based on the wish to take back control of the party and ensure it serves the workers’ interests (see “Open Forum”, pages 9-11). Logically, the social content of this campaign would be to fight to reclaim and advance further the gains made by the labour movement after the Second World War, many of which were lost due to successive governments’ collusion with the pro-capitalist policies of the EU.

But this cannot be achieved with a “national unity” policy. It requires an end to the policy of privatisation, cuts in public spending and the driving down of labour costs, as expressed by the working class vote to leave the EU in the 2016 referendum.

A *Labour Internationalist* reader involved in the campaign for a Recall Conference wrote to us: “*The idea of “national unity” diverts working people away from class solidarity and towards the false view that workers and bosses are on the same side just because they are British.*”

Right now, there are dozens of strikes taking place across the country, despite the crisis situation. The workers at the grassroots are ready and willing to fight back, but what are we seeing at the top?

Some of the leaders of the British Gas unions have signed new agreements that accommodate the bosses’ demands, others are promoting rolling strikes (which everyone knows are always short-lived), while others (like GMB National Secretary Justin Bowden) prefer writing to British Gas’s shareholders (including investment companies like Schroders, Standard Life Aberdeen and Blackrock) to say: “*I believe that we have a joint interest in persuading Centrica’s senior management from changing its current course, before more damage is done to the company (and, consequently, the value of your investment). (...) We want a sustainable future for Centrica.*”

Speaking on behalf of the workers, they dare to tell the looters of the utility, which was nationalised by Labour and privatised thanks to Thatcher, and only remained privately-owned thanks to successive governments complying with the EU rule that forbade renationalisation, that they have “*a joint interest.*”

They dare to add that they want “*a sustainable future*” for the privatisation of British Gas!

At the same time, just when the *British Medical Journal* has accused all governments – including the Johnson government – of “*social murder*” in the handling of the pandemic (see pages 5-6), we saw Shadow Health Minister Jonathan Ashworth failing to oppose Health Minister Hancock's new proposal to dismantle the NHS. To the point where Hancock felt able to say: “*I will take this as a cautious endorsement.*”

The solution to the situation at British Gas lies in its immediate renationalisation; the solution to save jobs and prevent “fire and rehire” lies in banning layoffs and job-cuts.

This and the other measures we have been arguing for over the last 10 months, the measures needed to directly protect working people, require a workers' government. Such a government can only happen when those who claim to represent the working class break with the demands of big business and international finance.

Labour Internationalist intends to contribute towards organising this struggle in all sectors and organisations where this question arises.

Let us open the debate and plan the next steps.

23 February

(1) This is why *Labour Internationalist* is fully supporting the campaign for endorsements of the appeal for an International Working Women's Conference (see page 13).

SNAPSHOTS OF THE CRISIS

2 February: What they say and what they do

Responding to Boris Johnson's suggestion that England might not return to regional Covid tiers, Shadow Health Secretary Jonathan Ashworth says: “*Whether it's tiered systems, localised whack-a-mole strategies or national rules, Boris Johnson will never truly break transmission chains in the coming weeks unless he provides decent financial support to allow people to isolate, makes workplaces Covid-secure with guidelines on ventilation and mask-wearing, and puts local public health teams in charge of contact tracing rather than expensive failing private-sector outsourcing companies.*” So, why has the Starmer leadership supported every one of the government's measures over the last 11 months?

2 February: Most applicants rejected for meagre financial support to self-isolate

A study of 171 local authorities (around half of all England's councils) carried out by the TUC finds that 70 per cent of people who applied for meagre financial support to self-isolate due to Covid-19 were rejected. The data show that only 36,000 people received a one-off £500 payment out of more than 120,000 applications. In addition, one in four councils rejected at least 90 per cent of applications for payments from the discretionary fund, which councils can use to

support those who are not eligible for the main scheme. Just 20 per cent of applicants to the discretionary fund were successful overall.

The study also finds that demand for payments is massively outstripping the funding provided by the government. Some 35 per cent of 169 councils had run out of their main funding allocation by 6 January, just four months after the programme was launched, while nearly one in five had run out of discretionary payments. There was a £20.2 million shortfall between the amount councils needed and what the government provided.

2 February: Flag-waving to cover for Starmer's “fence-sitting”

A leaked internal Labour Party strategy presentation, based on extensive focus groups conducted across the country in September 2020 alongside nationwide polling, concludes that Labour must make “*use of the flag, veterans [and] dressing smartly*” as part of a radical rebranding to help win back the trust of disillusioned voters in “red wall” seats. According to *The Guardian*, when presenting the strategy in January the LP's head of research said that voters were confused about “*what we stand for, and what our purpose is, but also who we represent*”. Other comments from the focus groups included: “*I don't know anything about the Labour Party at the moment, they have been way too*

quiet”; “*he [Starmer] needs to stop sitting on the fence*”; Starmer and his team are “*not being forthright and honest (...) about where we want to be*”; Labour is “*two different parties under one name*”.

6 February: Road haulage industry condemns government's inaction

A survey by the Road Haulage Association (RHA) of its international members shows that the volume of exports going through British ports to the EU fell by a massive 68 per cent in January 2021 compared with January 2020, mostly as a result of problems caused by Brexit. It emerges that RHA chief executive Richard Burnett wrote to Cabinet Office Minister Michael Gove on 1 February to express the RHA's anger at the fact that Gove had largely ignored repeated warnings of problems and calls for measures to lessen difficulties, made over several months by Burnett and his officials.



Burnett told *The Observer* that in addition to the 68 per cent drop in exports, some 65-75 per cent of vehicles were going back to the EU empty because there were no goods for them to return with, due to hold-ups on the UK side, and because some UK companies had either temporarily or permanently halted exports to the EU.

8 February: Twelve months later, the Starmer leadership condemns the Tories' "cronyism and waste"

A full year into the pandemic, Shadow Minister Rachel Reeves pens an article for *The Guardian* to criticise the Tory government's "outsourcing obsession". Reeves writes: "It's been increasingly frustrating to witness the government's reluctance to learn from its mistakes during the pandemic", then lists "actions that can be taken right away to fix this mess" (such as reintroducing proper competitive tendering)... tens of billions of pounds and many months too late.

11 February: Starmer finally tweets support for a union – then deletes it

Independent news website *The Skwawkbox* reports that after meeting Unite reps at Heathrow Airport, Keir Starmer tweeted support for Unite and its members in their fight against Heathrow Airport Ltd's drive to "fire and rehire", adding: "It has made me even more determined to outlaw fire and rehire". Within a short time that same day, the tweet had been deleted.

11 February: GMB publishes its letter to British Gas shareholders

The GMB releases a letter to British Gas shareholders signed by almost 5,000 members, "urging some of the world's most high-profile investors (...) to protect their investment and help secure a negotiated end to the industrial dispute" (GMB website). GMB National Secretary Justin Bowden says: "British Gas bosses don't seem to be able to see what everyone else can – that the plan to fire their entire workforce is damaging to the company, customers and the workforce. So now thousands of people have written to shareholders to see if they can use their influence and get CEO Chris O'Shea to do what is best for the company."

14 February: Government and HSE downgrade Covid-19 risk to keep workplaces open

The Observer reports that following the decision by the government and its Health and Safety Executive (HSE) not to place Covid-19 in its highest risk category, classifying it as "significant" rather than "serious", the HSE has failed to shut down any of the 3,549 workplaces shown by Public Health England to have had an outbreak of the virus since July 2020. HSE inspectors are reported as saying that the lower-risk designation restricts their ability to issue prohibition notices and mount prosecutions, despite employees clearly being put at risk. According to the TUC, no employers have been prosecuted for Covid-19 safety failings since the start of the pandemic.

18 February: Starmer pledges Labour support for capital under his leadership

In a much-touted keynote speech, Starmer says: "But, if we're honest, for too long Labour has failed to realise that the only way to deliver social justice and equality is through a strong partnership with business. Under my leadership, that mind-set will change. I believe in the power of active, enterprising government working alongside British business. (...) And that a new partnership with British businesses is the only way to build a secure economy, strong families and a prosperous country. (...) A new partnership with business – one where we have high expectations of business and where business can have high expectations of Labour – is pivotal to my leadership."

19 February: Supreme Court recognises Uber drivers' rights as workers

The UK Supreme Court dismisses Uber's appeal against a landmark employment tribunal ruling (in October 2016) that its drivers should be classed as workers with access to the minimum wage and paid holidays. The decision means that the case goes back to the employment tribunal, where compensation levels will now be set. One legal firm suggests tens of thousands of Uber drivers are now set to be awarded an average of £12,000 each.

24 February: Starmer opposes proposed corporation tax rise

During Prime Minister's Questions, Starmer commits to opposing the Tories...over the government's proposed 4 per cent corporation tax rise, saying: "Now is not the time for tax rises on families and businesses." While the Labour leadership opposes a windfall tax on large companies that have profited from the pandemic, outsourcing "specialist" Serco announces pre-tax profits of £153 million last year, up from £80.7 million in 2019 (a 90 per cent increase). Thanks to its £350 million "test and trace" contract, Serco shareholders will receive a total dividend of £17 million. This means that the company's four biggest shareholders (all of them investment funds) will receive £3,124,600 between them, while the 50,000 frontline staff that did the work during the pandemic will get a £100 annual bonus each. Meanwhile, a poll conducted by Kekst CNC (17-18 February) shows that 67 per cent of all 2019 voters support a rise in corporation tax, including 65 per cent of Tory voters and 76 per cent of Labour voters.

25 February: Starmer enforces Tories' local government cuts

Independent news website *The Skwawkbox* reports that Labour councillors are being warned by their regional offices that any councillors who dare to vote against budgets set in line with the Tory cuts, which have blighted the lives of the poor and vulnerable for more than a decade, will face "very significant" disciplinary sanctions and likely deselection.

25 February: TUC General Secretary appeals to the Tory Chancellor to defend jobs

In an article for *The Guardian* on the government's budget to be presented on 3 March, TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady writes: "At next week's budget, working people across the UK need the Chancellor to set out a new vision of good jobs for everyone. (...) Covid-19 has shone a light on the insecurity and inequality rife in our labour market. That is why the TUC believes that we must have a workers' budget next week."

The *BMJ* condemns Covid-19 “social murder”

In its 4 February issue, world-renowned weekly medical journal the *BMJ* (previously the *British Medical Journal*) published an editorial entitled “Covid-19: Social murder, they wrote – elected, unaccountable, and unrepentant”. While it condemned the “social murder” perpetrated by those in power, the editorial (available at www.bmj.com/content/372/bmj.n314) did not go so far as to call for an end to capitalism. But from the strict point of view of political democracy, it emphasised that “the “social murder” of populations (...) cannot be ignored or spun away” and that “politicians must be held to account”. We reproduce below an abridged version.

Labour Internationalist

Murder is an emotive word. In law, it requires premeditation. Death must be deemed to be unlawful. How could “murder” apply to failures of a pandemic response? Perhaps it can’t, and never will, but it is worth considering. When politicians and experts say that they are willing to allow tens of thousands of premature deaths for the sake of population immunity or in the hope of propping up the economy, is that not premeditated and reckless indifference to human life? If policy failures lead to recurrent and mistimed lockdowns, who is responsible for the resulting non-Covid excess deaths? When politicians wilfully neglect scientific advice, international and historical experience, and their own alarming statistics and modelling because to act goes against their political strategy or ideology, is that lawful? Is inaction, action? How big an omission is not acting immediately after the World Health Organization declared a public health emergency of international concern on 30 January 2020?

At the very least, Covid-19 might be classified as “social murder,” as recently explained by two professors of criminology. The philosopher Friedrich Engels coined the phrase when describing the political and social power held by the ruling elite over the working classes in 19th century England. His argument was that the conditions created by privileged classes inevitably led to premature and “unnatural” death among the poorest classes. In *The Road to Wigan Pier*, George Orwell echoed these themes in describing the life and living conditions of working class people in England’s industrial north. Today, “social murder” may describe the lack of political attention to social determinants and inequities that exacerbate the pandemic. (...)

A pandemic has implications both for the residents of a country and for the international community, so sovereign governments should arguably be held accountable to the international community for their actions and omissions on Covid-19. Crimes against humanity, as adjudicated by the International Criminal Court, do not include public health. But David Scheffer, a former US ambassador for war crimes, suggests that we could broaden the application of

public health malpractice “to account for the administration of public health during pandemics.” In that case, public health malpractice might become a crime against humanity, for leaders who intentionally unleash an infectious disease on their citizens or foreigners. Others have argued similarly for environmental crimes.

If not murder or a crime against humanity, are we seeing involuntary manslaughter, misconduct in public office, or criminal negligence? Laws on political misconduct or negligence are complex and not designed to react to unprecedented events, but as more than two million people have died, we must not look on impotently as elected representatives around the world remain unaccountable and unrepentant. What standard should leaders be judged by? Is it the small number of deaths in countries such as New Zealand and Taiwan, or the harsher standard of zero excess deaths? Deaths do not come as single spies but as a battalion of bereaved families, shattered lives, long-term illness, and economic ruin. (...)



More than a few countries have failed in their response to the virus; the global missteps are many and well-documented by the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response. (...)

But the global picture does not absolve individual leaders and governments from responsibility. Many of the independent panel’s conclusions place the blame squarely at the doorsteps of rulers, although you will be hard-pressed to find a single politician who has

admitted responsibility for the extent of premature death, let alone resigned. Several have expressed contrition, but “sorry” rings hollow as deaths rise and policies that will save lives are deliberately avoided, delayed, or mishandled.

Others say they have done all they can or that the pandemic was uncharted territory; there was no playbook. None of these are true. They are self-serving political lies from the “gaslighters-in-chief” around the globe. Some attempt to defend their record by claiming that their country has done more testing, counts deaths better, or has more obesity and population density. All of these may contribute, but counting methods or population factors do not explain the sheer scale of the variation in performance.

If citizens feel disempowered, who might hold negligent politicians to account? Experts in science might do so, but official scientific advisers have often struggled to convince politicians to act until it is too late or kept silent to avoid public criticism. So might doctors, with their responsibilities to public health.

The media might help here, remembering their duty to speak truth to power, to hold elected officials accountable. And yet much of the media is complicit too, trapped in ideological silos that see the pandemic through a lens of political tribalism, worried about telling pandemic truths to their readers and viewers, owners, and political friends. In fact, truth has become dispensable as politicians and their allies are allowed to lie, mislead, and repaint history, with barely a hint of a challenge from journalists and broadcasters. Anybody who dares to speak truth to power is unpatriotic, disloyal, or a “hardliner.”

Ministers in the UK, for example, interact with the media through sanitised interviews, stage managed press conferences, off-the-record briefings to favoured correspondents, and, when the going gets tough, by simply refusing to appear. It is this environment that has allowed Covid denial to flourish, for unaccountability to prevail, and for the great lies of “world beating” pandemic responses to be spun. (...)



How many excess deaths does it take for a chief scientific or medical adviser to resign? How long should “test and trace” fail the public before a minister of health or chief adviser steps down? How many lucrative contracts for unscientific diagnostic tests that are awarded to cronies, or errors in education policy, will lead to a ministerial sacking?

Where, then, should citizens turn for accountability, if they don’t find it in their leaders and feel unsupported by experts and the media? The law remains one form of redress, and indeed some legal avenues – including criminal negligence and misconduct in public office – are being explored, although proving any such claims will be difficult and drawn out. But the notion of murder, at least “social murder,” is hard to shake emotionally, and strengthens with every denial of responsibility and every refusal to be held accountable or to change course.

That leaves three options. The first is to push for a public inquiry, as *The BMJ* and others argued for in the summer of 2020 – a rapid, forward-looking review rather than an exercise in apportioning blame that will identify lessons and save lives. The second is to vote out elected leaders and governments that avoid accountability and remain unrepentant. The US showed that a political reckoning is possible, and perhaps a legal one can follow, although research suggests that mishandling a pandemic may not lose votes. The third is for mechanisms of global governance, such as the International Criminal Court, to be broadened to cover state failings in pandemics.

In the UK, which was responsible for about 1 per cent of global deaths in the 1918-19 flu pandemic and now accounts for 5 per cent with a smaller proportion of the world’s population, elections are a few years off. As the current government holds a parliamentary majority, avenues for redress seem blocked. What’s left in these circumstances is for citizens to lobby their political representatives for a rapid public inquiry; for professionals in law, science, medicine, and the media, as well as holders of public office, to put their duty to the public above their loyalty to politicians and to speak out, to dissent lawfully, to be active in their calls for justice, especially for disadvantaged groups.

The “social murder” of populations is more than a relic of a bygone age. It is very real today, exposed and magnified by Covid-19. It cannot be ignored or spun away. Politicians must be held to account by legal and electoral means, indeed by any national and international constitutional means necessary. State failures that led us to two million deaths are “actions” and “inactions” that should shame us all.

Bolton TUC calls for opposition to £37 million council budget cuts imposed by the Tory government

By Stefan Cholewka, GMATUC Secretary (personal capacity)

Bolton TUC has called for a broad coalition of trade unions, political parties, service users and community groups to oppose the £37 million cut to Bolton Council's budget over a 12-month period, and instead to campaign for huge public investment in the town. The budget cuts, of which £18 million are costs resulting from the Covid-19 crisis, represent 18 per cent of the total budget. The budget will see across-the-board cuts in all council departments, including job-cuts, and will also result in a 3.8 per cent increase in council tax.

Secretary of Leigh Unite and Bolton TUC member Stephen Hall thinks that a number of projects, such as building more social housing and insulating people's homes, "would not only not be wasteful expenditure burdening future generations with increased debt, but on the contrary would represent the best public investment we could possibly make right now, not only in the interests of our children and future generations, but of everyone else living in the here and now. This is because what we are proposing will, among other things, help to address the huge housing shortage and growing threat of climate change. It will also help to alleviate the widespread financial pressures presently being felt by many households due to the Covid-19 pandemic, by creating thousands of new jobs and putting money into local people's pockets, and thereby boosting the local economy.

Any proposed cuts right now are simply unacceptable in our view, and will only heap even greater misery on to already overstretched households. They will only worsen the care of our elderly and severely damage other vital public services. They will also suck money and spending power out of the local economy, all of which will detrimentally affect local businesses. Worse than that, they are a completely false economy which will cost the public purse more in the long run as a result of a loss in tax revenues, increased payments of Universal Credit and the additional cost of addressing many other social problems that will result.

As well as organising locally to mobilise public opinion in support of a policy of investment rather than cuts, and calling on our local councillors and our local MPs to join us in demanding the necessary funding from the Government to enable that to happen, in order for us to realistically succeed, it is vital we unite and campaign with other council areas facing a similar situation in Greater Manchester and beyond."

In December 2020, Bolton West Constituency Labour Party unanimously endorsed a motion opposing cuts and calling for a broad campaign across the Borough to achieve those objectives. Bolton Council is controlled by the Conservatives with the co-operation of a number of smaller political groups. Ahead of the vote on 18 February to set the budget, Bolton TUC issued another call for councillors of all political affiliations to reject the

massive cuts, saying: "Councillors should be under no illusion that such cuts will reduce the quality of life of many of our neighbours and put unimaginable pressure upon carers and other statutory services which are already buckling under the pressure of the pandemic. The hundreds of council job-losses will be compounded by the job-losses of those who rely on those council staff to buy their services in the struggling retail and service sectors. (...) It is time for councillors to set aside party politics and consider what their vote will mean, and it can only mean one of two things: either they want to send a clear message to central government that enough is enough and central government must intervene; or they are happy to put hundreds of workers onto benefits and the most vulnerable people of Bolton into the worst hardship of their lifetimes."

Bolton UNISON wrote to Council leader Cllr David Greenhalgh and all councillors, saying: "Public-sector workers paid for a banking crisis that was not made by our cleaners, waste collectors, teaching assistants, social workers and care staff. However, the government bailed out the banks and called it austerity, and made public sector workers pay. But workers and the community will not be fooled twice. This crisis is not of our making. As we have seen during this crisis time and time again, there is plenty of money, it is simply about where the government chooses to put it. Local government workers are demanding adequate budgets to help run vital public services for our community. We ask that as our elected members you make those same demands, for your workers and for the community in which you serve."

Bolton TUC's public campaign had a major impact on the full council meeting to set the budget. It resulted in the council having to prepare a 19-page dossier on the proposed cuts to be made available to all council members.

The Conservative-led coalition narrowly won a vote of all councillors after a three-hour debate. The budget was carried by 28 votes to 22, with councillors representing UKIP and other small political groups voting in favour, and the Liberal Democrats abstaining. All Labour councillors voted against the budget.

Opposition leader Cllr Nick Peel branded the proposals "immoral" and said: "Labour will have no part in these plans." He added: "The unjustness of this budget is staggering. (...) Covid-related costs amount to around £18 million of the £37 million worth of cuts, and we have consistently argued that this is an immoral and irresponsible situation that the Tory Government have placed us in. When they promised that no council would be out of pocket as a result of Covid, they had no intention of keeping to that promise. They are guilty of a dereliction of duty towards Bolton."

Tweedledum and Tweedledee

By John Sweeney

If the Labour Party (LP) is not prepared to challenge the priorities and inequalities of capitalism, then it's just a case of Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

The LP is in deep crisis. The right wing of the Parliamentary Labour Party is actively engaged in what can only be described as a purge of the LP's left-wing membership. The victory of Sir Keir Starmer as Labour leader represented a swing away from socialist-based policies and a return to Blairite neoliberalism.

What the party faces now is the same combination of subterfuge, bureaucratic manoeuvres and autocratic top-down decision making that was the hallmark of the Blairite era.

Starmer and his Shadow Cabinet have fully co-operated with the government's handling of the Covid-19 crisis. They have abandoned the fight for safe working conditions – teachers are a case in point, where the lives of educators and students are being put at risk for the sake of political expediency.

Many members are outraged by the party leadership's actions and a growing number of local Labour parties are passing motions demanding a Recall Conference. In the face of this opposition, LP General Secretary David Evans has engaged in gagging the membership from expressing its views with thinly-veiled threats of disciplinary action, suspension or expulsion from the party. LP Deputy Leader Angela Rayner has expressed the view that she would be happy with such an outcome.

As for flag-waving and patriotism: the idea of “national unity” diverts working people away from class solidarity and towards the false view that workers and bosses are on the same side just because they are British.

At times of crisis, like 1914, the cry of “national unity” leads “left” parties to line up behind the flag-waving ruling class, and support the sending of millions to their deaths. Patriotism and nationalism, along with racism, sexism, homophobia, etc., are used by the ruling class as part of their “divide and rule” tactic.

Starmer Labour's vision of “win votes first, then decide what you want to do” is the mark of a party in terminal decline. Draping the party in Union flags and adopting the Tories' dog-whistle slogans failed in 2001, and will fail again this time. Labour is trying to occupy the centre-right which they think has been vacated by Johnson's rightward lurch, but no one will be fooled by such empty posturing.

Starmer is an ideological vacuum and a principle-lite pragmatic technocrat who is both unwilling and unable to address the hideously serious structural problems within the LP, which only radical change could even begin to address meaningfully.

As far as I can see, Starmer's only claim to an identity is that he isn't Johnson and he isn't Corbyn. Unfortunately,

he doesn't seem to be anyone at all – “simply a hole in the air”, to use George Orwell's phrase about Baldwin. In the meantime, he's re-making Labour into some neoliberal project, devoid of answers on how to tackle class inequality.



The LP needs to present a counter-narrative rather than aping Tory ideology, rather than the playbook Starmer is using: family, flag, and Christian values. I wouldn't be shocked if Blair is the PR guru behind the retro campaign Starmer so slavishly follows. By the time Labour is electable again, it will be just another set of capitalists who believe in charity and compassionate capitalism, which is a contradiction in terms.

The Labour Party came about as a movement with a mission to defend the working class. The party's original mission no longer exists, and the ideas and ways of communicating with voters that went along with it have also disappeared. Starmer and others have resorted to focus groups, and aspire merely to manage the existing system rather than drive change.

As with all right-wing Labour leaders, Starmer has to appear to distance the party from the capitalist establishment rhetorically, while eventually moving closer to them ideologically. New-New Labour and Starmer might manage the country slightly better than the Tories, but ultimately will only press the pause button on its ever-increasing rightward shift.

Starmer is attempting to hold the working class hostage to a bunch of flag-waving xenophobes. There is no such thing as a left-wing version of patriotism. Socialism is only socialism if it is internationalist. “Workers of the world unite” might sound corny, but it is an essential formula for the left.

The current system is such that voting is a pantomime: only the parties which misrule are allowed to be a legitimate choice. In seeking to abolish capitalism and replace it with socialism, the fight we find ourselves engaged in as socialists is to protect the rights of the working class of the world. It is in the common interest of the working class to bring about this revolutionary change, democratically, through a political movement whose sole aim is socialism.

Support the call for a Labour Party Recall Conference, but build a grassroots resistance network

Labour Internationalist readers meeting, 23 February 2021

On 23 February 2021, *Labour Internationalist* held the first of what will be a series of meetings aimed at giving our readers the opportunity to discuss the topics addressed in our bulletin and to shape the content to be published in the future.

Why are we defending the existence of the Labour Party (LP), which is threatened by the Starmer leadership's "national unity" policy?

– We think that in the situation that the working class is facing, the working class needs political representation that clearly breaks with the system based on private ownership of the means of production, since the LP quite obviously does not fulfil this role. However, we also do not think that the death of the LP – which would be the inevitable result of the "national unity" policy being implemented by the party's leadership – would be a positive thing for the British working class and youth. The LP's roots are deeply embedded in the history of the British labour movement, and the struggle to break with the capitalist system is also being waged inside the LP. This is why we stand in complete solidarity with those who are fighting for the immediate convening of a Recall Conference.

– Founded more than a century ago as the political and parliamentary representation of the working class organised in the trade unions, the LP is organically linked to the trade unions. The disappearance of the LP would necessarily have serious consequences for the trade union movement itself, and therefore for the struggle for the satisfaction of the day-to-day demands of the working class.

Democracy demands that the workers themselves should be the ones who decide what party they need in order themselves to establish a government that will serve their interests. It is not up to one party, whichever that may be, to make that decision in place of the working class and youth. Democracy demands that LP members and affiliated trade unionists should be able to freely debate this in an Extraordinary Conference.

It is within the framework of this debate that we are publishing the discussion on the Recall Conference that took place during our first online meeting of *Labour Internationalist* readers, in addition to the position of *Labour Internationalist* as expressed in this month's editorial:

"There is growing support by thousands of Labour Party and trade union members for the recent call for an immediate LP Recall Conference, based on the wish to take back control of the party and ensure it serves the workers' interests. Logically, the social content of this campaign would be to fight to reclaim and advance further the gains made by the labour movement after the Second World War, many of which were lost due to successive governments' collusion with the pro-capitalist policies of the EU.

But this cannot be achieved with a "national unity" policy. It requires an end to the policy of privatisation, cuts in public spending and the driving down of labour costs, as expressed by the working class vote to leave the EU in the 2016 referendum."

Labour Internationalist

CC: Regarding the health crisis: while the government pats itself on the back for the current success of the vaccination programme – and gets a boost in the opinion polls – it is worth remembering exactly why it has been successful so far. The simple reason is that it is being carried out by trained and dedicated professionals in the NHS and the GP network, supplemented by local initiatives involving pharmacies, volunteers and some logistical support from the military. In other words, it is not being carried out by unqualified private-sector entities linked to the Tory party making disgustingly large profits from the public purse while not even getting the job done, as has been the case with PPE and then "test, track and trace". But as usual, the Starmer leadership is avoiding saying anything on this particular aspect, for fear of breaking the "national unity" consensus.

Meanwhile, there is no sign of the capitalist offensive on jobs, wages and conditions easing off – quite the opposite. The working class is fighting back (e.g., the strike action at British Gas and many other workplaces, involving tens of thousands of workers overall), but that resistance is being compartmentalised and isolated by the various union leaderships at the national and regional level.

But the LP leadership is still completely silent on the ongoing working-class resistance; more than that, it is actively siding with the government (a prime example is the teaching unions confronting the government on the re-opening of schools and the issue of remote teaching in universities).

The Times published a column yesterday with the title: "What is the point of Sir Keir Starmer?" A lot of people, both inside and outside the LP, are asking the same question about a Leader of the Opposition who won't

oppose the government. At a time when the Tory government is implementing the EU's "free-market" policies outside of the EU, at a time when even business and trade associations are publicly criticising the government for not addressing the practical reality of Brexit, we hear that the Starmer leadership has told Labour MPs and the wider party that they should not even talk about Brexit, for fear – we are told – of antagonising Labour voters who voted for Brexit in 2016. But working-class voters rejected both the EU and its pro-market, pro-privatisation rules and policies in 2016, and the Starmer leadership refuses to even address this, after having voted in favour of the government's Brexit deal in the so-called "national interest".



This is the context for the Recall Conference initiative, and for me, there are two key questions:

Firstly, you have the initial call for a Recall Conference by "Don't Leave, Organise" (with its three founding bodies: Red Labour, the Labour Representation Committee and Jewish Voice for Labour), Momentum, the FBU, BFAWU and others. You also have the Labour In Exile Network, which was founded by suspended CLP officials. Then you have a range of groups and forces on the left – which could be cynically referred to as "the usual suspects" – that are each giving their particular take on the initiative: Labour Left Alliance, Labour Against the Witchhunt, Labour Party Marxists, Socialist Appeal, and so on. The problem is that some of these groups and forces have a history of antagonism and sectarianism towards each other. So the first question has to be: what is the likelihood of a genuine united front campaign for a Recall Conference to "Reclaim Democracy" inside the LP?

The second basic question is both political and practical: given the fact that the LP apparatus has an iron grip on the whole process and life of the party, especially now that we are all confined and isolated from each other, how is the fightback inside the LP – including the Recall Conference campaign – going to be organised, when we are being purged from meetings and even being purged from the party itself?

PK: The Recall Conference initiative is one expression of the divisions on the left. The feedback to this particular initiative that I have been getting from people who are very active in the LP in London is mixed, to say the least. Even some of its public supporters are saying off-the-record that they realise there is little chance of achieving it, partly because of

the stranglehold that Starmer has over the NEC, so why appeal to the NEC for a Recall Conference when the NEC itself is another obstacle? This is actually a sincere and constructive response. They are saying: if the left is serious about making a challenge to the Starmer leadership, then it would be putting more consistent effort into organising for the Annual Conference in September, which would mean organising to get left-wing delegates and to get motions put to Conference. It is apparent to some that the Recall Conference initiative is a particular rallying-point, there will be support for it, but it risks being a diversion if it isn't backed up by organising for the Annual Conference in the way this has been done historically. But of course, as has already been said, the big dilemma is: how do you organise when local parties are being closed down? This is why we should avoid suggesting that the Recall Conference is the only game in town – because we know that it isn't going to happen, and there are longer-term strategies that need to be put in place in order to make the challenge to Starmer a real challenge, to move beyond simply seeking to recruit to a particular group or organisation. We can give critical support for the Recall Conference, but at the same time there also needs to be a longer-term organising of grassroots activists.

JS: I agree that the Recall Conference is a distraction; what is said there will make little or no difference to what confronts the labour movement at the present time. I fear that if it takes place, it may actually strengthen Starmer's position. We will be treated to an echo chamber of "we have had the debate and its time to move on and get behind the leadership". There are right-wing Labour MPs who don't fully support Starmer, but not for the reasons we oppose his leadership. With what can only be described as a fertile imagination, many of them believe he is a centre-left type like former LP leader Ed Miliband, wanting to take the party a little more to the left – something they can neither accept or tolerate.

We are dealing with a push for a "unity government" involving the likes of the CBI. Rachel Reeves (Shadow Cabinet Office Minister) has already said that "for too long, Labour has concentrated on the working man and woman rather than trying to go into partnership in a constructive way with business". This is where we are now.

Back in May 2020, I talked to a group of trade unionists and said that unless we are prepared to show that when Covid-19 starts to take a political dimension and workers are being exploited because of it, unless we are prepared to take action – including the right to strike – this will carry on and on and on. In 2021, we will see the start of the mass job-cuts. I'm representing people in UNISON now who are losing jobs one after the other in the social care sector. At the same time as they are being praised verbally and getting "Clap For Carers" applause, a lot of them are being laid off and told: "That's it, job's over". So, we should be wary of a Recall Conference, because I

believe that it won't change anything for those suffering from the lacklustre response to the Covid-19 crisis from both the government and the LP.

HM: I am not up-to-date with who supports the Recall Conference initiative and who doesn't, but I agree with the basic position of staying in the party and fighting back. But it is a question of choosing where to fight and organise in order to win. As a Unite member, I know that we are having successes, but also setbacks. The problem is division. The recent education sector strikes in Hackney (east London) are one example. The teacher's strike was a big battle for the NEU, and Unite also went for it straight away in supporting the drivers and passenger assistants in their dispute, but UNISON was reluctant. So both strikes were isolated, and at the same time there was no LP support, which might have helped win more people over. Regarding the Recall Conference initiative, we shouldn't be afraid of swimming against the tide in relation to the left groups that have been mentioned, by talking honestly about the probability of a defeat and what else should be done.



SC: We are seeing the likes of Socialist Appeal and the Socialist Party promoting motions for a Recall Conference without any real supporting rationale: in effect, a tactic without a strategy. I heard of the motion through my union branch, which passed it and sent the resolution to my local CLP. It would be easy to throw up our hands in advance and say "it's bound to fail, so there's no point in doing anything about it". But the point is that this can be a vehicle for organising across CLPs and trade union branches, and for being seen to be doing something rather than simply stating the need for a Recall Conference. We don't know in advance what kind of elements might be there, bubbling under the surface; and of course, there will be illusions regarding the Labour Party, especially among younger workers, but by being present we would be able to address and dispel those illusions.

Our method has been shown to be successful in the past, and we know we can still experience defeats while having the correct method. But we can't just be bystanders and commentators, we need to engage with those who are looking for answers, and organise them.

CC: I don't think there is any major difference or contradiction in what has been said so far. None of us has any illusions regarding where the Recall Conference initiative is likely to go, and I am sure we all agree on the need to build a grassroots resistance network. We can stand in solidarity with those calling for a Recall Conference and argue in favour of organising on common ground, but at the same time we can be honest about our own positions and speak out if we feel that people are being fed illusions. We can be critically supportive while focusing on the positive potential. The crucial issue is that at this point, the initiative for a Recall Conference offers a rallying-point for all those LP members and affiliated trade unionists around the country who are fighting for their livelihoods and disagree with where the Starmer leadership is steering the party. Right now, at the grassroots level, we need to organise, organise, organise.

PK: The tactics surrounding the Recall Conference is one thing, and the common thread so far seems to be a model resolution being passed by LP and union branches that calls for a Recall Conference to be held "*with the purpose of ending the impasse, restoring party democracy and achieving genuine unity*". But the lack of party unity is precisely due to the Starmer leadership's "national unity" policy and his purge of anyone who disagrees with this. We mustn't lose sight of the strategy that involves the Annual Conference and beyond - putting forward the key demands that we have been stating in *Labour Internationalist* over the last few months: no cuts, wherever they come from; no lay-offs or job-cuts using Covid-19 as a pretext, and so on. These should be formulated in motions feeding up from CLPs and unions to the Annual Conference, and fought for after that - they are the wider context, and represent the true challenge to the union leaderships and the LP leadership, because they resonate with most working people.

Subscribe to *Labour Internationalist*: £10 for 1 year (12 issues)

Email labour.internationalist2019@gmail.com for details



INDIA

After 70 days, the farmers' protest movement is still going strong

**By Nambiath Vasudevan, Joint Co-ordinator of the International Workers Committee
Against War and Exploitation, For a Workers' International**

A panicking federal government has just deployed huge numbers of police and paramilitaries around Delhi, the capital city, where the main access roads are blocked by trenches, beds of iron rods and spikes, razor wire, barricades and concrete blocks put in place to prevent farmers from moving from the encampments they have set up around the capital since late November. For 70 days now, the farmers have been demanding the repeal of the three anti-farmer laws that threaten the minimum prices guaranteed by the State in the sale of agricultural produce. From 26 January, the government shut down the internet on the outskirts of Delhi and the surrounding areas. The water and electricity supplies were also cut off.

This panicked reaction is due to the success of the farmers' rally on 26 January (Republic Day) and the government's failure to divide the farmers' unions. Some individuals sympathetic to the [governing far-right] BJP who were present at the rally carried out acts of provocation. In order to disrupt the farmers' patriotic mindset, some troublemaking elements who were allowed by the police to enter the Red Fort in the heart of the capital placed a Sikh religious flag alongside the national flag [Thus trying to give the impression that the farmers, some of whom follow the Sikh religion, have religious rather than social demands – Editor]. Some clashes took place between the protestors and the police.

In the evening of 26 January, some trade unions expressed their displeasure at the protestors' "lack of discipline", and four of the 500 trade unions decided to withdraw from the movement. The government then felt encouraged and sent in the police to surround the farmers. It accused some farmers' leaders of being "anti-national" traitors. The police proceeded to arrest them under the anti-terrorist laws. The media in the pay of Prime Minister Modi declared that the farmers had lost the battle. BJP thugs arrived, carrying iron bars and sticks, threatening the farmers and ordering them to leave.

This news quickly spread around the campaigns in the regions nearest the capital, and the farmers returned that same night in considerable numbers. The BJP thugs were forced to retreat.

The farmers' unions announced that they would carry on until all of the anti-farmer laws have been repealed.

The opposition parties did not fail to condemn the BJP government's decision to derail the farmers' protests. The Punjab state government, which is controlled by the Congress Party, and the Delhi state government, controlled by the Aam Aadmi Party, re-established the water and electricity supply to the protest areas.

The unexpected turn of events forced the Prime Minister to announce that the federal government would suspend the disputed anti-farmer laws for 18 months if the unions agreed to resume talks and end the protest. Rejecting the Prime Minister's offer, the farmers' unions announced that they will carry on until all of the laws are repealed.

Already, 150 protesting farmers have lost their lives, and 120 others went missing on 26 January; 200 farmers have been arrested on various pretexts. The farmers' unions are demanding the release of all the detained, the reappearance of those who have disappeared, the unblocking of the roads and the re-establishment of the internet network. Parliament, which began its budget review session this week, is being blocked by the combined opposition which is demanding a debate on the questions relating to the farmers, and by the government which is stubbornly opposed to this demand. Since 2 February, the sessions in the Lower House and Upper House have had to be adjourned every day.

The farmers' protest is challenging the federal government's policy, which is favourable towards capital. The budget presented by the government on 1 February shows to the whole population that the sole objective of the BJP government is to unfairly enrich a small number of capitalists and corporations. The budget does not include any of the social measures which the large majority of the population need while they have to bear the brunt of the virus and lockdown, unemployment and the loss of wages. On the other hand, the budget contains many provisions for the privatisation of public enterprises solely in order to profit the rich minority.

2 February 2021

Support the International Working Women's Conference!

The following international appeal was launched in mid-January with 278 initial signatories from 31 countries, including 11 signatories from Britain. We fully endorse this appeal and invite our readers to add their signature (contact details below) and circulate it as widely as possible for further endorsement.

Labour Internationalist

"Our proposal is to hold an International Conference of Working Women"

All around the world, women are mobilising more and more in the fight for true equal rights between women and men.

Subjected to double oppression and double exploitation in every domain, as working women but also as mothers and as women, women are standing up against all forms of oppression, discrimination and violence, and against patriarchal domination.

We, engaged as we are in those struggles and mobilisations in our respective countries, know that the particular demands of women are part of the more general struggle of the working class for its emancipation.

However, and this is not contradictory, women have specific demands: equal pay, professional equality, legal equality, the setting up of structures for childcare, the right of women to self-determination, the right to choose regarding reproductive rights, and an end to the harassment and acts of violence they are subjected to as women.

This is why we propose that an international meeting be held before the workers' conference called by the IWC*, involving working women engaged in the struggle to defend their existing rights, to win new rights and to win back the rights that have been lost.

In 1910, the Second International Conference of Socialist Women, held in Copenhagen, decided to organise the first annual International Women's Day on 19 March 1911, to commemorate the Revolutions of 1848 and the Paris Commune. And on 8 March 1917, Russian women marked International Women's Day by demonstrating in St. Petersburg to demand bread, peace and freedom. From 1920 onwards, International Women's Day has been celebrated on 8 March.

We propose that on the occasion of the initiatives taken in each country to celebrate on 8 March 2021 (public meetings, demonstrations, rallies, etc.), the proposal to hold an international meeting of working women be put to the participants and discussed, and that delegations of working women begin to be formed and mandated to attend it.

Rubina Jamil, General Secretary of the All-Pakistan Trade Union Federation (APTUF), Pakistan
Christel Keiser, National Secretary of the Democratic Independent Workers Party (POID), France

* The International Workers Committee Against War and Exploitation, For A Workers' International (IWC) was set up at the end of November 2016 in Mumbai (India) at an international conference that brought together 350 delegates, workers, trade union and political activists from some 40 countries. Website: coi-iwc.org

Initial endorsers in Britain (all personal capacity)

Sarah Woolley, General Secretary, BFAWU; **Jane Doolan**, UNISON NEC, Secretary, Islington UNISON; **Cllr Jane Gebbie**, Bridgend, UNISON; **Cllr Mouna Hamitouche**, Islington; **Fiona Monkman**, Chair, Islington UNISON; **Margaret Kristin Taylor**, Treasurer, Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Trades Council; **Doreen McNally**, member, Unite Community Branch, Liverpool; **Sophie Dodd**, member, Liverpool Wavertree CLP; **Sussan Rassoulie Khataie**, Branch Committee member, Islington UNISON; **Ann Green**, British Pensioner Magazine; **Diana Leach**, member, Brighton & Hove UNISON; **Pauline Bradley**, member, Unite Community Branch, Glasgow; **Jackie Yems**, Unite member; **Charles Charalambous**, Unite member and Editor, *Labour Internationalist*; **Mike Calvert**, Deputy Branch Secretary, Islington UNISON; **Nick Phillips**, Southwark Unite member; **Henry Mott**, Southwark Unite member; **Stefan Cholewka**, Secretary, Greater Manchester Association of Trades Councils; **John Sweeney**, UNISON and Labour Party member; **Justin Trias**;

To endorse the appeal for the IWC's International Conference of Working Women, please email owcmumbai2016@gmail.com (CC labour.internationalist2019@gmail.com), stating your name and organisation in the form they should appear publicly, and indicating whether you are signing in a personal capacity or on behalf of your organisation

CHINA/HONG KONG

We reproduce below the call for support issued by the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU) on 13 February, as the trial of HKCTU General Secretary Lee Cheuk-yan was set to begin on 16 February, and following the arrest of HKCTU President Carol Ng on 6 January.

We invite you to respond with a short message to hkctu@hkctu.org.hk (please CC owcmumbai2016@gmail.com and labour.internationalist2019@gmail.com), specifying your name, organisation and location.

**Full support to the independent labour movement in Hong Kong!
Drop all charges against Lee Cheuk-yan and Hong Kong trade unionists!**

Call for support for Hong Kong's independent labour movement issued by the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU) 13 February 2021

Dear Comrades,

Shortly before the 2019 movement against the extradition bill started, the Beijing regime had, little by little, restricted Hong Kong's political space, and the people's demands – as well as the defence of working conditions – were constantly ignored.

Throughout the past year, in the name of national security and the fight against the pandemic, the government has been increasingly ruthless in depriving the population of their political rights, and workers of their rights. Public gatherings have been banned by police for over a year now. Even simple street outreach activities to publicise the trade union have been prosecuted.

This repression has swept through the workplace, threatening Hong Kong workers and their professional integrity. Here are a few examples:

- Civil servants, who have only served the public interest and respected political neutrality, are today under pressure to pledge allegiance to the Basic Law;
- Members of healthcare sector trade unions are being prosecuted and denounced by hospital management for their participation in the strike that was demanding the total closure of borders to prevent the pandemic;
- A teacher was dismissed for citing political issues in an effort to stimulate critical debate among students;
- A journalist was arrested after researching information material on a public services portal;
- Social workers, who had mediated the mobilisations, were arrested and even charged with rioting – a charge too arbitrary to be admissible.

This harassment of workers in the exercise of their jobs led to protests from their respective trade unions, but as usual their complaints were ignored by the authorities.

State repression of workers was also evident in the prosecution of trade union leaders. In July 2020, some

of them were candidates in the pro-democracy primary for the Legislative Council elections. Among these leaders, Carol Ng, president of the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU), and Winnie Yu, president of the Hospital Administration Employees Alliance (HAEA), were arrested for alleged subversion of the State's power. More than 10,000 people have been arrested since 2019 because of the movement related to the new National Security Act, including Lee Cheuk-yan, HKCTU General Secretary. The latter is facing nine charges, all related to four unauthorised pro-democracy mass rallies, such as the 4 June candlelight vigil. His first trial begins on 16 February. The others will be held later.

Yet, in terms of our willingness to fight, these challenges will but push us to fight harder, until victory.

Video in English:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gVLbeCsUBXo>

In addition, we invite you, in your personal capacity and as an organisation, to:

- Spread your message or photo of support in your social media, with the hashtags

#WeLoveFreedominHK

https://twitter.com/hashtag/SolidarityWithHKUnion?src=hashtag_click

- Send a letter of solidarity to HKCTU;
- Follow the latest news on channels such as HKCTU's Twitter page

To see the actions proposed by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), visit <https://www.ituc-csi.org/welovefreedominhk>

With our best greetings,

Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU)