

A 'COST OF CAPITALISM' CRISIS: inequality, climate chaos and war

Inflation is higher than it has been in the last 40 years; OFGEM have announced that the annual energy price cap will rise to around £2800 a year; and real-terms wages remain lower than in 2008. We are almost all seeing an impact on our quality of life. More people are being driven into poverty, with serious impacts on physical and mental health.

While the super-rich get ever wealthier, the ruling class lecture us on our finances: Tory MPs claim that people are in poverty because they don't know how to cook properly, and the governor of the Bank of England urges us not to push for higher wages - to put up and shut up.

We are told that we have to accept higher energy costs because of Russia's indefensible invasion of Ukraine, while energy companies report record profits. The rise in inflation predated the invasion, though both the war and Western sanctions (which do more to enrich bosses and drive up fuel prices than to help Ukraine) have made it worse.

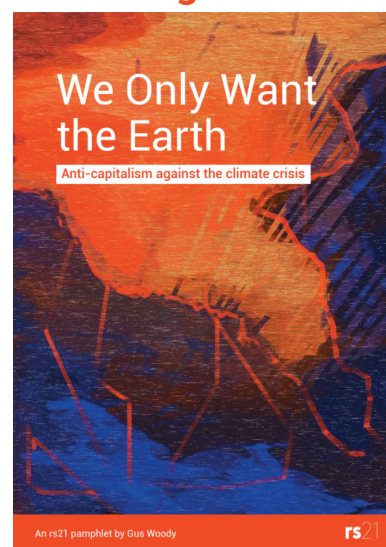
The government's 'solution' to spiralling energy costs, a grant which is lower than the planned price rise, is accompanied by plans to prolong Britain's reliance on fossil fuels by keeping coal power stations open, and a doubling of 'tax relief' for British energy companies to incentivise yet more fossil fuel production. The government has approved a large new 'Jackdaw' North Sea gasfield. In other words, Sunak's policies lock Britain and the world into a carbon bubble. The cost of these grants has not been put on fossil fuel companies, it has been put on the global working class of today and tomorrow, as we face escalating climate breakdown.

To tackle the cost of living crisis, climate breakdown and imperialist wars we need a stronger and more radical working-class movement in every workplace and community.

Working-class people can't rely on employers, landlords, governments, the courts or the Labour Party to protect us, let alone improve our lives. It's a disgrace that Starmer's Labour can't even bring themselves to back rail workers striking to defend their jobs and living standards. Johnson is wounded and the Tories may be in a shambles - but they are still vicious. Their disarray creates opportunities for successful resistance - we have to take them.

Neither are occasional demonstrations enough. We've always had to rely on collective action. Strikes are one of its most powerful forms.

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STRIKES BRING HOPE

While strike levels remain low, there has been some increase since the start of the pandemic - and most of these strikes win at least something. School staff fought for Covid safety. Workers have struck to try to keep up with inflation by winning improved pay in industries from transport and outsourced public services to manufacturing and logistics.

The impressive strike vote by RMT rail workers has scared the Tory government. The announcement of just three strike days sent them into a rage. Reckless, wanton, selfish and irresponsible are good words to describe Johnson - not workers fighting to defend their jobs and livelihoods.

The Tories are making noises about concessions at the same time as threatening yet more anti-union legislation - requiring transport strikers to provide a level of scab services and encouraging non-union individual representation in schools.

Workers take action in defiance of anti-union legislation all the time - such as May's wildcat strike by North Sea gas workers. If the courts come for any of us we must all back them, just as we must back those targeted by the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act and other repressive legislation.

We could also see big strikes by CWU postal and telecoms workers in the next few months. The more workers who win, the more it gives hope to the rest of us. We are seeing this process at work in the USA where successful unionisation at Amazon and Starbucks is inspiring more workers to have a go.

We can all help grow this wave of workplace resistance by organising where we work and by giving solidarity to everyone who fights back.

WORKERS CAN WIN A GUIDE TO ORGANISING AT WORK IAN ALLINSON

Many workers can see the need to organise at work, but don't know how to do it effectively. This autumn Pluto Books is publishing *Workers Can Win: a Guide to Organising At Work*.

For more info or to pre-order a discounted copy, visit rs21.org.uk/workerscanwin or use the QR code below.



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