

ESCALATE, CO-ORDINATE, AND ORGANISE TO WIN



The strike movement in general and the school strikes in particular stand at a crucial point. With the end of our first seven calendared days of strike action, we have seen some movement but no offer from the government. So is it just time to give up and go home? Or is there a path to victory?

Escalation, escalation, escalation

The current strategy of odd days spread out over different pay months was a credible starting place for the strike action. In the past, with a responsible government, it might have worked to focus negotiations and force some sort of compromise settlement. But we are not dealing with a competent government, we are dealing with the rump of a corrupt, short-termist and self-serving posh boy's club. This a zombie government - already dead but unwilling to accept it. In these circumstances, we will have to outlast the government on the picket lines and force them to the table.

That means a campaign of escalation. We must call more strikes as soon as possible and not wait until Conference - a pause now gives the government breathing room. We also need to reballot support staff as soon as possible and ensure that they can come out with us after Easter. This should be done with the other local government trade unions if possible, but in spite of them if not.

The experience of the EIS in Scotland and in other sectors shows that we can only hope to win a serious victory if we are willing to escalate and keep on striking. Conversely, the experience of the RCN, whose leadership has remained aloof from united action and consistently sought to do a separate deal, shows that where you entertain the government's 'talks,' you get nowhere.

A strategy of escalation may be difficult to win with some sections of our membership but as long as we can orientate on the most active sections and bring them with us, the effectiveness of the strikes can be maintained.

Co-ordination, co-ordination, co-ordination

Most of the current strikes have the twin objectives of raising pay and protecting crucial public services (everything from trains, to post, to schools, to the NHS). They are all dealing with the government in some way or other. We have a common

enemy and a common struggle, so why not common action? As well as escalating our action, we need to co-ordinate it wherever we can. The NEU bureaucracy has made a lot of effort on this and we need to support that with local co-ordination where it is possible. At the same time, we need to be encouraging those we are working alongside in local strike solidarity campaigns to start putting pressure on their own leaderships to co-ordinate action. The quickest and simplest way to win the current strike wave is to show that the country is ungovernable by our cabal of out of touch posh-boys. If we can't continue this way, in our schools, in the NHS or in our public services, we need to show that by striking together and making business as usual impossible for the Tories.

Organisation, organisation, organisation

The last, and most crucial, ingredient for victory is to organise in your workplaces and in your districts. Where the current strikes are strong it is because workplace organisation is strong. For many people, this will be their first experience of strike action and the sense of power it can deliver - it is up to everyone to ensure that, whatever happens in this specific dispute, this sense of power isn't lost. That local

power can be crucial when negotiating on issues such as workload or curriculum provision. It also builds a sense of confidence around individual work again - giving education workers the sense that they can exercise professional control over their work. Wherever we can, we should be encouraging workplace organisation and networks of activists and reps.

Next steps for NEU activists

- Organise a workplace meeting in your school as soon as possible.
- Put the argument for escalation: we need to be naming the strike days before Easter and these need to be serious enough to win.
- Support staff should be balloted as soon as possible.
- Email the results of your meeting to your local Executive member to give them the confidence to call more action.
- Join the school workers organising network whatsapp to shape the intervention in the current dispute and lay the basis for rank and file organisation in the future.

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