

# Yet Another Winter of Discontent

## Whose crisis? And who is paying?

GOVERNMENT POLICY IS to maximise profit and reinforce control over the working class. The tried and tested method to achieve these aims is to demonise striking workers and attempt to turn the rest of us against them because of the 'suffering', 'inconvenience' and 'misery' inflicted upon virtuous non-striking people. Going on strike is not undertaken frivolously. The toll taken in hardship, loss of wages, pressure on families and uncertainty is enormous. Nobody goes on strike because a 'militant' union leader tells them to. It is a last resort and measure of desperation. Thankfully, so far, government and media seem to have largely failed to wind up public hatred against 'greedy' striking workers.

Racism and anti-immigrant rhetoric is also designed to make us fear each other and imagine that 'we' would be better off with desperate migrants being shipped off to Rwanda or imprisoned or returned to unimaginably difficult and dangerous situations.

### Over a million strikers

At the moment over a million workers are involved in strike action, fired up by totally inadequate pay rates which have fallen desperately behind the cost of living and inflation, but also fueled by the conditions facing the whole working class: fuel/heating costs, food costs, rent

and general price increases. In addition, striking workers have emphasised their concern to protect their services to the public.

### Class war

All this amounts to comprehensive war against the working class - it is not an accidental by-product of Brexit, the war in Ukraine or an unavoidable result of inflation.

Each day on the TV news, there are more stories of harassed and exhausted medical staff. There are pictures of ever-growing queues of ambulances

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## Welcome to the latest issue of *Jackdaw*!

IN THIS EDITION the Anarchist Communist Group offer some thoughts on the current threats and opportunities as the class war escalates in intensity. In their workplaces and communities working class people are seeking effective responses to the latest profit-driven assaults on standards of life. Our political and financial lords and masters consider soaring household debt, inflation-fuelled wage and benefit cuts, freezing homes and crippled public services a small price to pay to ensure profits for big business.

They say that the state should avoid debt but encourage working class people to embrace it because even when incomes fall goods must be sold! They ruin the NHS then vilify the 'heroes' of lockdown when they reluctantly strike to defend it!

Amidst this market-driven chaos the basic ideals of solidarity and organisation have never been more important for working class people. There is a big picture, a pattern of exploitation and impoverishment, which requires a response uniting individual, community and workplace struggles. This will take commitment, effort and a willingness to communicate beyond our own political ghettos.

# Clampdown on all protest



IT'S NOT ENOUGH to sow mayhem and havoc in our lives by subjecting us to pay cuts, price rises, impossible fuel and utility prices, climate chaos, wrecking the health service, education system, railways and so on. They are now going to restrict even further our ability to go on strike. Health workers have always operated emergency cover during strike action - but now the government will extend restrictions on strike action further by making it a legal issue and extending this 'emergency cover' to other workers to limit 'disruption'.

Since Thatcher, Tories have made it increasingly hard for workers to exercise the only power that they have - to withdraw their labour. We now have some of the harshest anti-strike

legislation in Europe.

On top of attacking our ability to strike, they will also severely limit our capacity to demonstrate with increased police powers to arrest protestors BEFORE they have caused any disruption, just in case they inconvenience anybody. Both of these things are a serious attack on our ability to protest and a step towards a police state.

Whether you are a worker striking to achieve reasonable pay and defend your service, or climate, housing or land activist, the rights to strike and protest are fundamental. Get together with neighbours, colleagues and community activists to organise and protest against these restrictions. Take every opportunity to organise with others to support strikers and protestors.

# Debt: the Festive Hangover

WITH THE RISING COST of living most people needed to cut back on spending for Christmas. Figures from the Office for National Statistics showed that people intended to cut spending with more people hunting for bargains and/or buying less as well as cutting down on going out to restaurants and pubs. This is not surprising. Wage increases are far below price increases- the reason so many workers have been out on strike.

Still, people will still have spent an enormous amount of money. **The pressure to spend at Christmas, both on presents and socialising, means that people will try and forget about their bank balance and carry on.** For many, this means using the credit card and increasing their debt.

## Personal debt is already very high.

The Money Charity gives figures up until October this year- this will certainly have increased as a result of Christmas.

- People in the UK owed **£1,827.2 billion** at the end of October 2022.
- This is up by **£73.7 billion** from £1,753.5 billion at the end of October 2021, an extra **£1,393.86** per UK adult



over the year.

- The average total debt per household, including mortgages, was £65,746.
- Per adult this was £34,547, around 107.4% of average earnings.
- Based on October 2022 numbers, the UK's total interest payments on personal debt over a 12-month period would have been **£51,786 million**, an average of **£142 million** per day.
- The average annual interest per household would have been **£1,863** and per person **£979**, **3.04%** of average earnings.

## The consequences of debt are:

- You have to work more to finance the debt.
- If you have a mortgage you are at risk of losing your home. The reason banks and credit card companies are so keen to lend to you is that they know they can always take your home.
- You are handing over money to the banks and finance companies, making them richer and yourself poorer.

**Why are we encouraged to go into debt?**

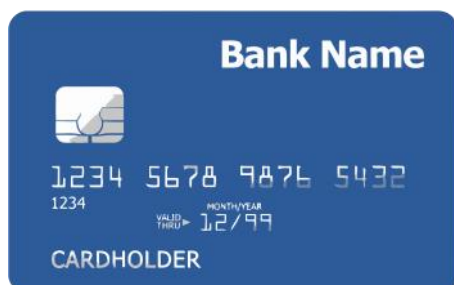
It is all due to how capitalism works. Wages are well below inflation and bosses not want to increase wages and this will reduce their profits. But, they need to sell their products. Getting people to go into debt is a way of doing this- no need to pay workers more wages and no consequences for profits - in fact, more profits for banks!

In the public sector, the government also does not want to increase wages- they don't want to have to increase taxes on corporations or on the wealthy.

## What can you do?

It is difficult because for many working class people, they are already struggling to survive on very low wages. It is impossible to cut down on spending as they already spend the bare minimum.

- Join with other workers and fight for higher wages.
- Fight for higher benefit payments.
- Join campaigns for lower rents and more public housing.
- Support other workers who are on strike. If they win it will open up possibilities for other workers to win.
- Join campaigns to fight against price increases in food and energy





# What Price a Secure



AS USUAL THE soaring costs of heat and food are disproportionately hitting the most vulnerable. Low income households - those of the ill, elderly or disabled, the jobless, and those on low wages - spend a high percentage of their meagre finances on the essentials that make life viable. The current market-driven assault is pushing those already facing a daily struggle for a decent life into crisis.

The UK government's "cost

of living" payments are falling well short of what is required to keep household budgets merely trading water\*. They are a sticking-plaster designed to make the managers of our class-ridden political culture appear compassionate. They hope that these gestures will stave off deep, angry responses. But these injustices are neither temporary nor accidental. They result from a short-sighted, profit-driven failure to ensure that even the essentials of life are

distributed for the benefit of all.

As the situation worsens in the times ahead various responses are available to those most affected. People can opt to lie down and take it hoping somehow to scrape by until better times come along. Others rant against the Tories and put their faith in the next Labour government, despite the lack of evidence that Labour is willing to do anything beyond managing their Public Relations strategy. The ACG argue that both of these responses are paths to isolation, di-

## *The Idea:* Anarchist Communism Past, Present and Future New book out by Nick Heath

This book seeks to rehabilitate the current of anarchist-communism and make it better known and understood; and to renovate and modernise it. It offers a prehistory of the idea, its origins in the First International and extensive chapters on the history of anarchist communism in Europe, the Americas, and Asia. As such it will be the first comprehensive work on anarchist communism, one where it is not sidelined or where it ends up as a footnote. As Brian Morris has correctly asserted, anarchist communism has been the main current within the body

# and Decent Life?

minishing morale and increasing unhappiness.

## Defying despair one step at a time

But other responses are available. Overcoming feelings of despair may not be easy, but small steps in the right direction can bring rewards in themselves while laying the foundations of something much bigger. Getting involved in, for example, community-based claimants' rights groups, food solidarity initiatives or cost-of-living campaigns can bring positive changes for individuals by expanding social circles and creating a sense of achievement and belonging through shared endeavour. Such acts of social solidarity lay the groundwork for potential mass movements that could make a difference in the big picture as well as helping to overcome isolation.

A welcoming environment in which a wide range of people can feel comfortable fosters genuine respect and solidarity. Results spanning from better mental health for individuals,



through small local victories and beyond to expanding networks pointing towards a changed political culture can bring us closer to a decent society. The most poverty-affected people are usually not in a position to strike or to withhold payments for essentials but that does not mean they must remain helpless victims. Campaigns against Workfare (unpaid forced labour for those on the benefits), for the right of claimants to be accompanied at jobcentre interviews and against the iniquitous

sanctions regimes have achieved some success. Resistance by claimants and precarious workers may be dissipated and at a low ebb currently, but the ACG believes that, in parallel with the upsurge in union militancy, this can and will change.

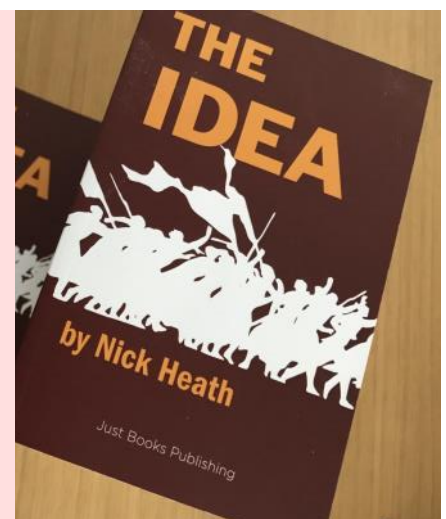
**Get involved:** <https://www.fuelpovertyaction.org.uk/>  
\* <https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/gaping-1000-gap-worst-families-energy-price-cap-rises>

of anarchism and this book aims to stress that and to bring it out of the shadows.

"It is a good substantial book, and much needed. Lucidly written, it provides a rich brew of engaging discussions of the "Idea" (anarchist communism as a political philosophy) interesting vignettes of the life and ideas of many individual anarchists, and a great historical account of the many anarchist communist organisations over the last 150 years. **Brian Morris**

"I think the parts of The Idea based on personal experience will be a useful source for other histories of anarchism. But mainly The Idea is a full (and honest) history of anarchist communism...It's an epic achievement." **Review from Kate Sharpley Library**

We are offering a special deal on the book. Normally it retails at £18.99 but the ACG is offering copies at 12.50 including postage for a limited period. Contact: [londonacg@gmail.com](mailto:londonacg@gmail.com) direct to order.





# They Profit Whilst We Suffer

MANY COMPANIES AND corporations increased their profits over the years 2021-2022. For example, energy companies took advantage of the increasing price of energy to trouser loads of money. Eon made a profit of £3.4 billion in the first half of 2022, whilst its chief executive paid himself £1 million for the year 2021. National Grid made £3.4 billion in 2021-2 and its chief executive paid himself £6.5 million. RWE made profits of £2.2 billion in the first half of 2022, Centrica made £1.3 billion in the first half of 2022, Ørsted made profits of £1.5 billion, SSE made £1.2 billion in 2021-2, Uniper raked in £1 bil-

lion in 2021, Scottish Power profited to the tune of £925 million in the first half of 2022, and Drax got £225 million in the first half of 2022.

It was the same for the water companies. Thames Water made a staggering £2.18 billion for the financial year 2022. Second was United Utilities with profits of £1.86 billion.

Nearly 100 of the biggest U.S. publicly traded companies published 2021 profits that were at least 50 percent higher than their 2019 levels. Profit margins for the UK's biggest listed companies were 73% higher in 2021 than before the pandemic in 2019. Even with

sales plummeting in 2021, profits soared. It's not workers asking for higher wages that is driving inflation it's the fat cats in the companies and corporations price gouging. Company profits accounted for at least 60% of inflation rises.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) indicated company profits soared 11.74% in the six months from October 2021 to March 2022. In the same period labour costs fell by 0.8%, accounting for inflation. This jump in UK wide company profits is responsible for 58.7% of inflation in the last half year – as opposed to just 8.3% due to labour costs.

Between 2020 and 2021 average pay for the highest paid directors of the UK's biggest listed companies leapt a colossal 29% from £2.01 million in 2020 to £2.59 million in 2021.

Meanwhile the employers and the government and standing firm on not responding to workers' demands for pay rises that barely keep up with inflation. Many workers have suffered what are in reality pay cuts as wages have been frozen for years.

On top of this we are suffering huge hikes in energy bills and food prices. Oh yes, and it's the same for the supermarkets. Whilst they are raising prices, In the first half of 2022, Tesco made £1.25bn profit, while Sainsbury's made a profit before tax of £340 million and Marks and Spencer made £71.8 million from its food business. Asda's profits topped £1bn last year, while Morrison's made roughly £388 million.

As to MPs, they earned £17.1m on top of their salaries starting at £84, 144 in this parliament, with two-thirds of the money going to just 20 MPs. Former prime minister Theresa May received the most earning £2,550,876 since the session began in December 2019. The next highest paid MP for work outside of parliament was Sir Geoffrey Cox, who grabbed £2,191,387 from nine different law firms and a local Conservative association. For Labour, biggest earner was shadow foreign secretary David Lammy with additional earnings of £202,599.

**It's time to fight. Support the strikes. Show the fat cats how angry we are!**



Source: Fortune Global 500, 2022 Edition. All logos belong to their respective corporations.

## King Charles and his multi-billion pound property empire

AS MOST OF us struggle to pay housing, food and energy costs, the new King is doing pretty well. He has a good choice of where to live, owning seven palaces, 12 castles, and 10 homes. He is also well-fixed for making money and generally amusing himself.

“Charles now also oversees \$12.9 billion in commercial, residential and agricultural properties throughout the U.K., ranging from Ascot Racecourse and the Oval cricket ground to at least three golf courses, a private airfield and the Savoy Chapel in Westminster, the private church of the reigning monarch” ([tinyurl.com/2akhyrdb](http://tinyurl.com/2akhyrdb)).

Though in theory, many of the properties are owned by the “Crown Estate”, it is still Charles or other members of the Royal Family who have control and reap the benefits.

The Crown has had this land ever since the Norman Conquest in 1066 when William the



*Balmoral Castle*

Conqueror invaded Britain and divided up the land among his noble supporters. The current unequal landownership comes from this initial theft.

Anarchist communists believe that land is the source of all wealth and should be a common treasury, a gift of nature available to us all. We are horrified that one family could own so much land whilst so many

are struggling to survive.

It is time to take back the land and rid ourselves of those who have put us in the position of beggars for the wealth that is rightfully ours.

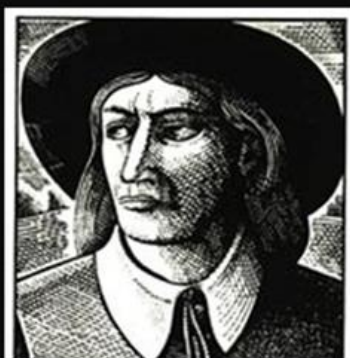
For more info and to get involved in land rights struggles see:

[www.peopleslandpolicy.org](http://www.peopleslandpolicy.org)

[www.righttoroam.org.uk](http://www.righttoroam.org.uk)

[www.whoownsengland.org](http://www.whoownsengland.org)

Gerrard Winstanley



Was the earth made to preserve a few covetous, proud men to live at ease, and for them to bag and barn up the treasures of the Earth from others, that these may beg or starve in a fruitful land; or was it made to preserve all her children?





## Anarchist Communist Group

Email: [info@anarchistcommunism.org](mailto:info@anarchistcommunism.org)

Facebook: AnarchistCommunistGroup

Twitter: Anarchists

Instagram: anarchiscommunistgroup

Post: 84b Whitechapel High St, London E1 7QX

[www.anarchistcommunism.org](http://www.anarchistcommunism.org)

### WHO WE ARE...

The Anarchist Communist Group (ACG) is a revolutionary anarchist communist organisation which is dedicated to seeking a complete transformation of society, and the creation of anarchist communism.

This will mean the working class overthrowing capitalism, abolishing the State, getting rid of exploitation, hierarchies and oppressions, and halting the destruction of the environment. To do this, we believe it is important to be organised.

We are committed to building an effective organisation that works towards the common goal of anarchist communism, in cooperation with other working class organisations and in grass roots campaigns.

We strive to base all our current actions on the principles that will be the basis of the future society: mutual aid, solidarity, collective responsibility, individual freedom and autonomy, free association and federalism.

If you want to join the ACG, then look first at our **Aims & Principles** on our website

[www.anarchistcommunism.org](http://www.anarchistcommunism.org)

You can also drop us a line at

[info@anarchistcommunism.org](mailto:info@anarchistcommunism.org)

## Zero For Conduct



Rebel Education Worker Soapbox

[educationworker.wordpress.com](http://educationworker.wordpress.com)

## Health Workers United

For working class independent action

[healthworkersunited.wordpress.com](http://healthworkersunited.wordpress.com)



## Yet Another Winter of Discontent

(from front page)

unable to admit their patients to the hospitals; young mothers unable to return to work because of the rising costs of child-care; nurses being forced to use food banks and leaving the profession; outrageous fuel bills and people freezing in their homes whilst energy companies make record profits. It is not surprising that many of us feel depressed and helpless.

### Enough is enough

This doesn't mean we should just roll over and accept the misery. However helpless we feel, we can link up with striking workers, with other tenants, with mothers, with local community activists, with migrant/immigrant support groups, with health workers.

Neither the Tories nor the Labour Party, offer any comfort or solutions. Elections will not change the assault upon the working class. Those with some economic power (unionised workers) can combine with users of services, with tenants, with migrants and immigrants, with all those struggling to make ends meet so that we can challenge and oppose the ruling class attacks upon our lives with solidarity. We can support the strikes and ask the strikers to support us.

## SUPPORT THE STRIKES!



## THEIR FIGHT IS YOUR FIGHT!



[www.anarchistcommunism.org](http://www.anarchistcommunism.org)



## Stormy Petrel

ACG theoretical journal

Available from our website at

[anarchistcommunism.org/stormy-petrel](http://anarchistcommunism.org/stormy-petrel)



**REVOLUTIONARY CLASS STRUGGLE NEWS**