

UK Threatens Unions With Army of Scabs

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Minister Zahawi addresses striking unions.

US.POLITSTURM.COM

2022-12-06

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British Conservative minister Nadhim Zahawi has claimed that the nurses who are due to strike must drop their demands (i.e., accept a large real-terms pay cut) and stay at work to “send a clear message to Putin”. The minister proceeded to claim that the nurses demand for higher pay would “embed inflation for longer and hurt the most vulnerable”, however Marx, in *Value, Price and Profit* has demonstrated the utter falsity of these claims, concluding; “The general rise in the rate of wages would, therefore, after a temporary disturbance of market prices, only result in a general fall of the rate of profit without any permanent change in the prices of commodities.” The minister is clearly unbothered by the skyrocketing cost of basic necessities, himself being a multi-millionaire and representative of the capitalist class of Britain; he is far more concerned about their profit margins.

“Our message to the unions is to say, ‘this is not a time to strike, this is time to try and negotiate’”, Zahawi also said, however ignoring that, after successfully balloting for the strike, the nurses’ union gave the government five days to consider their demands and negotiate before announcing strike dates. The state failed to respond adequately, thereby laying responsibility for the disruption to the National Health Service squarely on the shoulders of the minister's own government. The real message Zahawi seems to get across is one of class collaboration, by force or guile. Nurses struggling to pay for rent, heating and food should happily grin and bear it, out of their faith in his government’s leadership and loyalty to their nation's capitalist system that causes their continued immiseration.

General Secretary of the nurses’ union (Royal College of Nursing), Pat Cullen, has described these comments as “a new low for this government”. Meanwhile the government begins to train the army to drive ambulances, amongst other things, in order to act as strike-breakers, for not just the nurses and NHS workers, but many other striking workers too. This militarization of economic and civil life is a crucial step for the development of fascism, which in this case clearly seeks to undermine the negotiations of the workers by using direct state forces as scabs who will violate union-approved work stoppages with complete unaccountability. With one hand, the state offers nationalism to appease the worker's hunger, and with the other he holds up the tools of force- both violent and economic strike-breaking. As is proven time and time again in the history of the world, the only way for the workers to resist immiseration is to exercise their own independent power as a class. Only a powerful working class, led by a party that genuinely fights for its interests, can they achieve liberation from the exploitation of their rulers by abolishing class society.

Sources: 1, 2