

THE RIGHT TO STRIKE

By Mike Swadling ([Website](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [Gettr](#))



Source: Robert Koehler, Deutsches Historisches Museum, [Wikimedia](#) (Public Domain)

Over the past few weeks, we have seen industrial action and strikes hit the news again for the first time in a few years. The RMT has been holding a series of strikes on the railways, Arriva and Stagecoach workers have strike action planned. Despite Mayor Khan's pledge to end London Underground strikes, they are going ahead – and now teaching unions are threatening to ballot.

Strikes are never popular, but it does seem these are even less popular than most. Perhaps this is hardly surprising as we look forward to our first free summer

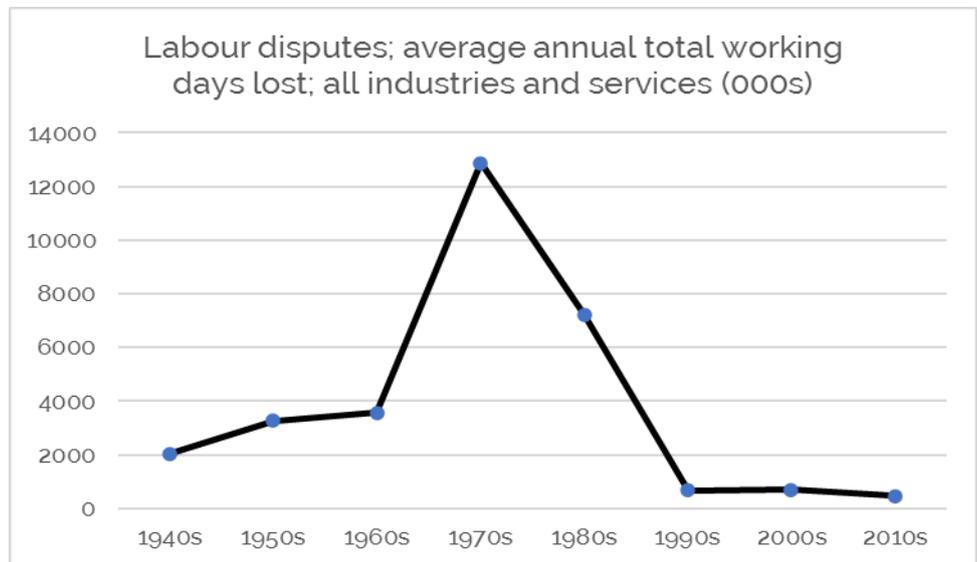
for a couple of years, and with people worried about rising costs, these strikes could hardly have come at a worse time. The government has come out strongly against them, as have many commentators, and it's fair to say the zeitgeist generally has been against the strikes. However, after two years of having our freedoms suspended not least our right to assemble, and with further threats to our rights to free speech coming along, it's more important than ever to support the rights of those striking, even if you don't support the reasons for the strikes and find some of the union barons unpleasant.

The craftsmen of the ancient Greeks formed loose associations. In the Roman Empire, Collegia Opificum (unions of workers) included guilds of weavers, doctors, teachers, and painters. Guilds survived in the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire and then flourished across Europe in the later Middle Ages. The history of guilds working in the interest of their members and to maintain standards for goods is a long one.

As a result of the Industrial Revolution, growing numbers of workers joined unions and fears of the French Revolution spreading to these shores led to Combination Acts in 1799 and 1800, which outlawed "combining" or organising to gain better working conditions. In 1824 these were repealed and Trade Unions became legal, but a new Combinations Act severely restricted their activities in 1825.

A century and a half of Parliament overreach in restricting the rights of workers to act collectively saw the formation of the Labour Party, the General Strike, and on the other side, years of union overreach with restrictive practice, closed shops, wildcat and nakedly political strikes. The 1980s saw an end to mass private sector union membership, and whilst the public sector has maintained large unionisation, as the chart below shows industrial disputes are at their lowest numbers in decades.

As someone who campaigned for Brexit in part to allow us to take control of our borders and reverse the twenty years of stagnant working-class wages, I don't want to complain when workers collectively bargain to get a pay increase. We all know inflation is a massive issue right now, and public sector workers getting bumper pay increases will make that situation worse not better, however that doesn't negate the right of unions to strike for better pay.



Source: Mike Swadling, [Office for National Statistics](#) (used with permission)

Misinformation abounds on the train strike, [with train drivers being paid an average of £59,000 while the strikers on average reportedly being paid a more modest £33,000](#). The strike is also about redundancies. It seems to me reasonable considering that passenger numbers not recovering from lockdown that staff numbers are reduced, but it's also reasonable for unions to fight for their members. [Teachers and healthcare workers are now threatening strike ballots over pay](#). These strikes could possibly illicit even less public sympathy than those on the railway. As many who have tried to book appointments with their GP will know, we now have an NHS that seems reluctant to actually see patients. Two years of intermittent lockdown and [school closures, often egged on by teaching unions](#), may find the public unsympathetic to demands for pay rises many in the private sector are not getting themselves. As is often the case, in the long term these strikes may hurt rather than help members.



Source: Bibliothèque Nationale de France, [Wikimedia](#) (Public Domain)

Strikes provide one other important balance, with low unemployment and high worker mobility, strikes provide a release mechanism. They point to a failure in relations and allow people to act without leaving their role or industry.

[Libertarianism.org describes libertarian views on Labor Unions \(in the US context\)](#) as "the libertarian principle on which the legitimacy of labor unions depends is freedom of association". It goes on to say that the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) "forbids workers individually to choose whether a union represents them in bargaining with employers about terms and conditions of employment. Instead, a union is granted monopoly bargaining privileges", and as such it considers much union activity in the US largely illegitimate.

Closed shops are illegal in the United Kingdom, although arguably de facto closed shops do exist since ninety-seven per cent of teachers and ninety-six per cent of train drivers are in a union. People do have a choice, it is much more common for people to change careers, and many sectors have large casual or agency working which often pays a premium in exchange for reduced benefits and security. After a few years of repressed democracy and freedom, as someone who believes in an individual's liberty, I can't think of a more important time to stand up for the rights of people, who I disagree with, who's politics I may dislike, to combine and peacefully associate, as they see fit.

THE NEXT PRIME MINISTER'S POISONED CHALICE

By Christopher J. Wilkinson ([Website](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Telegram](#), [MeWe](#))



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By September 5, the country will know who their next Prime Minister is; it will either be Rishi Sunak or Liz Truss. Neither are particularly suitable for the job since neither have been particularly successful in their respective positions as Chancellor of the Exchequer and Foreign Secretary. Neither offer a unique vision for the future. Neither inspire hope for national renewal after a decade of economic strife, division over Europe, and the destruction of liberty presented in the guise of a pandemic. There will be no new dawn after twelve years of Conservative-led government.

Are we entering a new age of political apathy? The outgoing leader, Boris Johnson, [placed style above substance and sat idly by as political scandals mounted](#) triggering memories of sleaze during the 1990s. The underlying economy is in turmoil, [with inflation at its highest level in forty years, supply side issues resulting from the breakdown of globalisation being blamed on the Ukraine intervention](#), and [a rash of](#)

[summertime strikes](#) painting a picture similar to the failed Keynesian era of the 1970s. It says a great deal when [at least four times as many viewers tuned in to watch presenter Kate McCann faint live on air in an excised video clip](#) than [watched the debate broadcast as a whole](#).

And then there's the task of winning the next election, due by January 2025. On the surface, this seems an unlikely feat but there are reasons for the Conservatives to be encouraged. Still effectively unreformed since the days of Jeremy Corbyn, the Labour leadership [is being held to ransom by the socialist left who are engaging the party in a muted civil war](#) which has seen Sir Keir Starmer referred to as a neo-Blairite. Barring tidal waves and assuming a continuation of Labour infighting, [Scotland will vote overwhelmingly for the SNP](#) meaning that [a change of government will likely only be possible with a Labour-led coalition](#). At little over forty per cent of the vote in the latest opinion polls, [Labour will not win a majority of English constituencies](#) – and that lead may soon disappear again as election day draws closer. No third parties are presenting themselves as a credible threat to the political orthodoxy. Libertarian alternatives in particular are struggling to convert anti-establishment feeling into byelection and local election successes.

I suspect a great degree of reluctance to confront these serious challenges exists with both leadership contenders. Whoever wins will need to hit the ground running and reform quickly, but neither possess suitable reforming credentials. [As Peter Hitchens once remarked, we've had the same government in office since 1990](#) – high spending, high taxing, over-regulating, over-legislating, pandering to ideological opponents, and meandering according to the latest social fad or trend that might increase their poll ratings. Unfortunately for Britain, there's no sign of a course correction coming from any major party. The new leader shall inherit a poisoned chalice, but the risk of poisoning themselves and the country further is high. There's an appetite for real change, but it's not on the menu...



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A NATIONAL DAY FOR BRITAIN

By Mike Swadling ([Website](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#), [Gettr](#))

With the Platinum Jubilee having passed, it's a good time to think about who we are, what we are, and how we celebrate ourselves as a nation. The Jubilee proved a great opportunity for local neighbourhoods to come together in street parties, for local communities to decorate town centres and hold festivals, and for the nation to celebrate as a whole.

We all know July 4 when the USA celebrates, and most of us have heard of Bastille Day which is France's national day. Thailand, the Netherlands, and Belgium all celebrate days associated with past kings as their national days. In the latter case, it is more confusing since Belgium is really a country of two nations who frankly don't get on. Like the US, Sri Lanka, Botswana, Nigeria, Malaysia and Burma, and many others all celebrate their national day as the day they gained independence from Britain. Brazil celebrates its independence from Portugal, while most other South American countries hold national days to celebrate their independence from Spain. Australia celebrates the landing of the First Fleet at Sydney Cove, New Zealand celebrates the Treaty of Waitangi, and Canada celebrates the British North America Act of 1867. Whatever the reason of the country in question, only two nations in the world – the United Kingdom and Denmark – don't have national days of celebration.



Source: Dr-Mx,
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As a nation and as a community, we benefit from coming together and celebrating what unites us. As a fast-changing country we need to find opportunities to come together as one and celebrate our commonality. What's more with a nation with the history of the United Kingdom, a national day can be used to celebrate many of the values we as liberty lovers hold dear. Now I should start by saying we will likely be asked to celebrate the NHS, this happens at every opportunity and to be fair it does unite many in the nation as a cause for celebration, but a national day would go further than that. I would propose a national day should as a starting point celebrate the British values as laid out in the National Curriculum, these being:

- Democracy
- Rule of law
- Individual liberty
- Mutual respect
- Tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs

These already have political acceptance, are being taught in schools, and are hard to disagree with. They are key British traits. I would hope all readers of this journal could get behind them. After a number of years of government and politicians trying to overturn a democratic vote, removing our liberty, and showing no respect for those with different beliefs on medical treatments for instance, it might be good to have these values brought to the forefront once a year. All this leaves to decide is when we have the day. We already have Mayday and Spring Bank Holiday days that are hardly celebrated, so we could simply move one of these to early September or late June or early July to give us a reasonable chance of a warm day to celebrate our nation. And if all else fails, it's just a better-timed excuse to have a day off and maybe, just like the Jubilee weekend, raise a toast to the Queen.

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