

Trade Unionism: A Moral Imperative

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This Talk:

Section 1 - Privatisation

Section 2 - The practical resistance
of trade unions

Section 3 - There is no rational
choice

Section 4 - Trade Unionism
as a moral imperative

1. *Privatisation*

- Privatisation: Policies that restrict the role of the public sector and increase that of the private sector (Calnan, 2023)

The NHS

- Goodair (2024) documents and illustrates a rise in privatisation in the NHS from 4% to 6% of services between 2013 and 2020
- These changes are often gradual, starting with soft services such as cleaning, catering, facilities services, and certain administrative roles.
- As can be seen in other countries, this then moves on to clinical services; and the development of public-private partnerships to build and manage new hospitals (Lethbridge, 2009)
- Goodair (2024) finds that a 1% increase in outsourcing to for-profit firms results in a 0.38% increase in 'treatable morality', which is 557 treatable deaths between 2014 and 2020.

Energy

- It has become clear that the liberalised energy markets of the 90s and 2000s have not resulted in reduced prices or decarbonisation. (Fearn, 2023)
- Labour have since reneged on the £28 billion climate investment fund, as well as enforcing cuts to the winter fuel allowance for pensioners.
- “Increasing renewable generation into a privatised network does not necessarily mean lower energy cost” (Fearn, 2023)

Transport

- In 2004, fares in the UK were among highest in Europe (Mayer, 2004), and this fact has not changed. Fares have grown by 46% in last 10 years, while wages only grew 23% (TUC, 2019).

Waste Disposal

- Private waste contracts breeds the conditions for rabid exploitation from rogue employers.

2. *Trade Unions and Resistance*

- Does the new labour government have the ability, or the will, to reverse public sector privatisation?
- Can we entrust the future of our public services to the handful of left wing Labour councilors and MPs that are left? Was that ever the correct strategy to begin with?



2. Trade Unions CAN Resist

- Trade Unions can be successful because they exert power exactly where capitalism is weakest - at the point of production.
- Although it should be noted that other struggles not organised by trade unions should lose focus.
- Studies such as Coderre-Lapalme (2018) and Vernell (2013) show empirical evidence of this.
- Posing an alternative that can cut through the viscosity of capitalist logics is key.



3. Is Privatisation ever rational? Can there be a rational without ideology?

- Where does Ideology enter the equation?
- “A moral critique of capitalism... only reinforces capitalist realism.” - Mark Fisher, 2012
- The ‘reality principle’ and the real

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