



British working-class history: the struggles of the past and how to win today

A socialist study group on the history of the British working class, run by Workers' Liberty on the Isle of Wight.

We'll be looking at the four great upsurges of working-class struggle in British history so far, discussing why they didn't end in socialist victory, and drawing the lessons for today and for the next time round. All welcome.

The discussions will take place **every other Sunday, 11.30am, upstairs at the Wheatsheaf, 16 St Thomas Square, in Newport.** For more information ring Duncan on **07840 750 508** or email Cohan cohan_@hotmail.co.uk

We're encouraging people to do the reading, but if you can't please feel free to come along, listen and take part in the discussion.

1. 18 October: When workers fought for the vote (1832-48)

We will look at the Chartists, Britain's first mass working-class movement, whose campaign for everyone to have the vote created a social crisis; and at the movement associated with Robert Owen, which pursued a different strategy for overcoming capitalism.

Reading: GDH Cole and Raymond Postgate's book *The Common People*,* chapters 22-25 (6 and 11 also relevant)

2. 1 November: After the defeat of Chartism (1848-1880s)

Looking at the period after the final defeat and demise of the Chartist movement, and the rise of a new model of trade unionism.

Reading: Chapters 30-32

3. 15 November: "Waking from forty years sleep" (1881-1918)

Looking at the revival of socialist ideas, the development of working-class political representation and, from the late 1880s, the huge struggles which created the "new unionism" organising precarious and unskilled workers.

Chapters 34, 35, 37, 38

4. Britain on the brink of revolution? (1919-26)

In 1919 and especially in 1926, in the General Strike, Britain was shaken by revolutionary crises. We will be looking at how different socialists inspired by the Russian Revolution united to create the Communist Party, at the workers' movements the Communists helped build, and at why the General Strike ended in defeat.

Chapters 42-44

5. Depression and retreat (the 1930s)

Looking at the 1931 split in the Labour Party, the domination of 1930s politics by the right and the Stalinisation of the Communist Party, which wrecked revolutionary politics in Britain.

Chapters 45-46

6. The golden age of capitalism (1945-1968)

Looking at the 1945 Labour government, which built the NHS and welfare state but also maintained capitalism, the post-war Labour-Tory consensus and the slow growth in working-class confidence and struggle.

7. "The fire last time" (1968-late 1980s)

Looking at the huge wave of strikes and struggles throughout the 70s, particularly those which defeated and brought down the Tory government in 1972-4; the Wilson-Callaghan Labour government of 1974-9; the Labour Party upheavals of 1979-82; the miners' strike of 1984-5, and the aftermath of the miners' defeat.

8. Workers' struggle and the fight for socialism today

Reading for the last three sessions: our book *How Solidarity Can Change The World*

***A note on the reading**

The basic reading for the study group will be *The Common People*, by G D H Cole and Raymond Postgate. We can let people have copies for £1 each or lend them out.

How Solidarity Can Change the World includes writings by Friedrich Engels, Karl Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg and Leon Trotsky, with an introduction. It costs £4, or we can lend you a copy.

Get in touch if you'd like copies.

www.workersliberty.org