

Large Print guide – Booklet Three

On The Line: 100 years of strikes & solidarity

Sections: Frontline, Where is the line?, Lines of thought and Acknowledgements.

Text size: 18pt



Transcription

This guide contains:

- Large print of the wall texts and labels within this exhibition section.
- Short descriptions of the objects and images within this exhibition section.
- Transcripts of any larger amount of text included in objects.

Magnifiers and colour overlays are also available.

Please ask a staff member if you need any further assistance.

Booklet Three: Frontline, Where is the line?, Lines of thought and Acknowledgements

Contents	Page number
Section: Frontline	6
[Section Introduction] - Frontline	6
Stand Together! poster, 1977	7
Grunwick Strike Committee Defend the Right to Strike banner, 1976	8
Ambulance strike shelter, 1989	9
Deceptioncon, 2023	10
The Union in Action poster, 1962	10
No To Private Practice No to Cuts in the NHS poster, 1976	11
The occupied lodge at Gardner diesel factory in Eccles, Salford photograph, 1980	12
The occupation of Gardner diesel factory in Eccles, Salford photograph, 1980	12
Occupiers in the Gardner diesel factory canteen photograph, 1980	13
Photographs of The Doctors Laboratory (TDL) courier strikes, 2019	13
Photographs of courier and Deliveroo strikes around the country, 2021-2022	15
Cased objects: Frontline	17
UNISON hat with badges, 2023	17

Contents

Night time picket at Rossington Colliery, near Doncaster postcard, 1984	18
Deliveroo Strike Manchester! leaflet, 2019	19
Section: Where is the line?	20
[Section Introduction] – Where is the line? .	20
Demonstration against the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act photograph, 1927 ...	21
Communists Say Crush Anti-Union Laws poster, 1971	22
Pentonville five demonstration photograph, 25 July 1972	23
Wanted Out poster, 1972	23
No Troops in Glasgow poster, 1975	24
A Royal Highland Fusilier holds up a dead rat during the clearance of rubbish in Glasgow photograph, 1975	25
Defend The Right to Strike placard, 2023 ..	25
Resident doctors in England, strike picket line at St Thomas' Hospital, London photograph, 17 December 2025	26
Section: Lines of thought	27
Section: Acknowledgements	28

This guide follows the order of the displays within these sections of the exhibition.

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Section: Frontline

[Section Introduction] - Frontline

This section looks at the spaces where strikes have played out. The picket line is often the frontline of disputes, serving as a physical or symbolic blockade to enforce the strike; it has been a site of both conflict and solidarity.

Many connections and friendships are formed on the picket line. Despite the Grunwick Strike ending in failure in 1978, the strength of solidarity transformed the politics of race in the trade union movement. What began with six pickets, grew to crowds of 20,000 gathering outside the factory.

The success of mass picketing in the 1970s led to stronger policing in the years that followed. The Employment Act 1980 outlawed the use of flying pickets, who travelled to bolster picket lines.

The occupation of a workplace is another tactic employed during industrial action, with workers taking control of a building. One of the most successful examples is the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders 'work in' of 1971 to 1972. Workers occupied the shipyards to halt job losses while continuing to work and complete orders. The

1980s would see 40 workplace occupations including one at Gardners diesel factory in Eccles, Salford, which is included here.

Stand Together! poster, 1977

By Chris Thomas

The Grunwick Strike was a landmark in British labour history. Not only did the strikers challenge their employer's racism and poor working conditions, they also fought for union recognition for migrant workers.

This poster advertises Stand Together!, a film made by the Newsreel Collective documenting the 'mass day of solidarity'. The film illustrates the growing support for the strikers from across the trade union movement and the public

[Object description]

A vibrant poster framed by a green filmstrip border, with each film frame containing an individual headshot in a two-tone red and white image. The central image is a red and yellow two-tone image of a crowded protest scene with multiple banners. The front banner reads 'WE DEMAND UNION RECOGNITION UNITE + OVERCOME'. At the bottom bold red text reads 'STAND TOGETHER!'

Frontline

Grunwick Strike Committee Defend the Right to Strike banner, 1976

Jayandi, one of the striking workers at the Grunwick Film Processing Laboratories who had art school training, designed this banner and painted it with the help of Vipin Magdani, a member of the strike committee.

[Object description]

Banner measuring approximately 1.6 metres wide x 1.4 metres high with a bold graphic design. Centre left is a large red circle with red and grey geometric shapes to its left. The circle is positioned on sections of white and black, which are split diagonally from top to bottom. Text crosses diagonally from the centre reading 'GRUNWICK STRIKE COMMITTEE', 'DEFEND THE RIGHT TO STRIKE'.

[Guidance]

As you move around the corner to the next object, please be aware that there is a shin height plinth that extends approximately 1.5 metres from the wall. The plinth extends the full length of the wall.

Ambulance strike shelter, 1989

This makeshift shelter is constructed of pallets, hardboard and polythene. It stood outside Deansgate Ambulance station in Manchester during the ambulance workers' dispute of 1989 to 1990. The strike involved 19,000 workers seeking improved pay. After rejecting a government offer, the strike escalated, leading to intervention by the British Army. The strike ended in success for the workers, when a 16.9% pay deal was reached.

[Object description]

A crude wooden shelter measuring approximately 2 metres wide x 2.3 metres high. Inside is a two-seater bench with a cane back and rust coloured cushion. Next to the shelter is a rusted metal drum and red plastic bucket with yellow text reading 'SUPPORT AMBULANCE STAFF'.

Frontline

Deceptioncon, 2023

Deceptioncon is a robot costume made by members of the GMB Union for their strike action at Amazon's BHX4 warehouse in Coventry on Black Friday in November 2023. It was worn on the picket line by a GMB member named Stuart who said: "The robot costume symbolises the feelings of the workers where they felt like they were being treated like robots. This led to the slogan of the campaign becoming 'we are not robots'."

GMB members were joined on the picket line by workers from trade unions in the USA, Italy, and Germany.

[Object description]

A silver robot costume made from foil covered boxes and duct tubing. The head features a single slit for the eyes and orange downturned Amazon smile logo for the mouth. The body has 'DECEPTIONCON' on the chest, which is printed on a sheet of A4 paper

The Union in Action poster, 1962

The most common images of picket lines are often outside factories or in industrial settings. But disputes also played out on the high street. This poster shows women striking for union recognition outside a branch of Woolworths, a once popular retail chain.

[Object description]

The Central to the poster is a monochrome image of a woman holding a sign 'TO BE REPRESENTED BY A TRADE UNION IS EVERY WORKER'S RIGHT. WHY NOT AT WOOLWORTHS'. The background is split into two sections. The top has black and white images of women outside Woolworths, several holding signs. The bottom, in white text against vibrant purple, reads 'the UNION in Action'.

No To Private Practice No to Cuts in the NHS poster, 1976

In the 1970s, private practice within NHS hospitals began to grow. Many consultants on part time NHS contracts could treat their private patients in the same hospital, with 'pay beds' made available. This poster advertises a picket held outside Hammersmith Hospital, London. The hospital would see many other disputes over the next two decades.

[Object description]

A red and white poster. The central image is a simplified illustration of a bed. A sign on the bed bars has hand drawn text 'NO TO PRIVATE PRACTICE' and 'NO TO CUTS IN THE N.H.S.' Below this text advertises a 'PICKET' at the Hospital's main gate.

The occupied lodge at Gardner diesel factory in Eccles, Salford photograph, 1980

The workforce occupied the Gardners factory for over six weeks. The occupation was a response to 500 compulsory redundancies. Delegations were sent to other workplaces to raise support and funds. The dispute ended successfully after the redundancy notices were withdrawn. This photograph shows the lodge at the main gate, which was occupied day and night. The strikers slept here, with using a brazier for warmth and cooking.

[Object description]

Black and white photograph showing five men in and around a makeshift shelter and table. At the front is a placard which has been attached to railings. It reads 'WORKERS SIT IN'.

The occupation of Gardner diesel factory in Eccles, Salford photograph, 1980

This photograph shows Tommy Macafee, joint shop stewards convenor, on the left. Margaret Hulme, member of the Joint Shop Stewards Committee, in the middle. George Sainthouse, works convener at Massey Ferguson, Trafford Park, on the right. They are handing over a solidarity cheque for the occupation fund.

[Object description]

Black and white photograph of Margaret Hulme standing in the middle of a street with a man standing either side of her. The men are holding a piece of paper between them. In the background are several strikers under a makeshift shelter. Behind the shelter is a large building with a 'GARDNER' sign.

Occupiers in the Gardner diesel factory canteen photograph, 1980

This photograph shows Mike Mishall, occupation delegations committee member on the left. Mike was very active during the dispute, collecting donations from around the country. In the background you can see the workforce occupiers in the canteen.

[Object description]

Black and white photograph of two men in sleeping bags, lying on mattresses on the floor posing for the picture. A group of people is gathered informally behind them, some sat on plastic chairs.

Photographs of The Doctors Laboratory (TDL) courier strikes, 2019

By James Graham-Ramstein

These protests were part of a successful wave of strikes by TDL couriers who went from piece

Frontline

rate contracts to becoming some of the best paid couriers in London, with full employment contracts. The images show a motorcade and picket outside the Halo building in central London, one TDL's main sites. The couriers organised themselves with the support of the Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain (IWGB). The IWGB is one of the main trade unions challenging employment law around the gig economy.

Image courtesy of Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain

[Object description]

Three colour photographs. Two of the photographs show people wearing red coats on motorbikes holding flares which are emitting red smoke through streets lined with buildings. In one photograph red flags are attached to the back of the motorbikes.

The third photograph shows a group of protestors in red coats, holding banners and signs. At the front a protestor holds high above his head a flare emitting red smoke. Red text on a large white banner reads 'TDL BLEEDING WORKERS DRY!'. A placard reads 'DODGING DEATH FOR DEADLINES'.

Photographs of courier and Deliveroo strikes around the country, 2021-2022

Here are images from a number of different strike actions. They include the Sheffield courier strikes in 2021 and 2022, triggered by a pay cut on the Stuart delivery platform which included Just Eat couriers, and a series of strikes from when Deliveroo launched on the Stock Exchange in 2021.

Images courtesy of Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain

[Object description]

Four colour photographs showing strike action.

One shows a flyer tucked under a car's windscreen wiper. The flyer is dark and light blue, with white text reading 'SHEFFIELD DELIVEROO COURIERS DEMAND BETTER PAY, RIGHTS & SAFETY, RIGHTS4RIDERS,' The Deliveroo logo is subverted to read 'ROOVOLT'.

Another shows a group of press photographers crowded around a group of people who are holding red flags and signs with a person's face printed on them. The group are outside a building that fills a red brick archway. There is red smoke in the air.

A photograph of a group of people lining a street with buildings and trees in the background. Most of them are wearing

Frontline

facemasks. They are holding signs that are light and dark blue which demand better pay, rights and safety.

In the last photograph a small group of people are on a retail street. They are stood with bikes around a handmade 3D version of the Deliveroo logo and are holding placards.

Cased objects: Frontline

UNISON hat with badges, 2023

This cap was worn during a 24 hour ambulance strike that took place on 11 January 2023. It was part of series of industrial actions over pay.

[Object description]

A dark green knitted beanie hat, adorned with five badges. The beanie has a white embroidered 'UNISON' logo. The badges are of varying sizes, mainly round. Two of the badges are the same. Text on the badges includes 'SAFE STAFFING SAVES LIVES', 'BORN IN THE NHS' and 'LONDON AMBULANCE SERVICE SUPPORT THE AMBULANCE SERVICE'.

Cased objects: Frontline

**Night time picket at Rossington
Colliery, near Doncaster postcard,
1984**

By Howard Sooley

Black Miners are rarely represented in images of coal mining, despite many hundreds working in the industry since the 1950s. This postcard was printed by Leeds Postcards for the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM).

[Object description]

A grainy black and white photograph of a black man in a vest reading 'WAS JUDAS A NOTTS MINER'. He is holding a 'STOP the police STATE' sign. In the background two men are sitting down.

Deliveroo Strike Manchester! leaflet, 2019

The rise of the gig economy, and companies such as Deliveroo, poses new challenges to worker's rights. The digital platforms they use often bypass standard protections. This strike was organised by the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) union and Deliveroo couriers. It was a response to pay cuts, with delivery riders increasingly forced to deliver outside their area for less money.

[Object description]

A teal coloured Deliveroo strike flyer advertising an upcoming protest and demanding better pay and conditions for delivery riders. The text is primarily white, with 'WE DEMAND' highlighted in red.

The demands include '£5/DELIVERY AND £8 FOR DOUBLE ORDERS-MINIMUM! £1 FOR EACH ADDITIONAL MILE TRAVELLED! £10/HOUR WAITING TIME! NO DELIVERIES OUTSIDE OF ZONE! ALLOW MOTORBIKES TO WORK IN THE CITY CENTRE! NO MORE TERMINATIONS!'

Where is the line?

Section: Where is the line?

[Section Introduction] – Where is the line?

Over the last century many have challenged the right to strike and questioned the influence of trade unions. Debates around public order and the impact of strikes on wider society continue to rage today.

Soon after the 1926 General Strike, Stanley Baldwin's Conservative government introduced the Trade Disputes and Trades Unions Act 1927, which prohibited sympathetic strike action and mass picketing. It was overturned by Clement Attlee's Labour government in 1946.

The Industrial Relations Act 1971 established a National Industrial Relations Court, which limited trade union powers. The court was responsible for the arrest of the Pentonville Five featured in this exhibition.

Public support for strike action frequently fluctuates during long disruptive disputes. These shifts in attitude can be informed by media coverage. The Winter of Discontent, from 1978 to 1979, was a period of widespread industrial unrest driven by inflation and government imposed wage limits. Images of uncollected rubbish and unburied coffins

dominated coverage. Liverpool's gravediggers, who went on strike in January 1979, became a media scapegoat for the country's problems.

In the years that followed, Conservative governments would introduce restrictions to curb union power, with Labour governments subsequently repealing or softening them to restore rights.

Demonstration against the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act photograph, 1927

This photograph shows a procession of trade unionists protesting the introduction of new government legislation. The Act was a response to the 1926 General Strike. It outlawed general strikes and sympathy strikes. It also banned civil servants from joining Trades Union Congress (TUC) affiliated unions. The Act was repealed with the passing of the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act 1946.

[Object description]

Black and white aerial photograph of a large and very long line of protesters marching down a wide street lined with trees and tall buildings. Multiple banners are held up by the crowd. There are pedestrians along the pavements and two vehicles alongside.

Where is the line?

Communists Say Crush Anti-Union Laws poster, 1971

By Ken Sprague

This poster features Prime Minister Edward Heath, the leader of the Conservative party and prime minister from 1970 to 1974. During this time many anti-union laws were written in response to the strike actions of the previous decade. This poster was created in opposition to these new laws. It caused controversy when it first appeared, with some believing its imagery was too violent.

[Object description]

Black and white photocollage. An oversized hand is grasping Edward Heath, who is depicted waving his hand. A top hat appears to be about to topple off his head. One red blood drop is below the fist. White text with a mix of black and red outlines reads 'communists say CRUSH ANTI-UNION LAWS'.

Pentonville five demonstration photograph, 25 July 1972

By Peter Arkell

This photograph shows thousands of dockers and trade union members marching across London towards Pentonville Prison. Five dockers, known as the Pentonville Five, were imprisoned there after they refused to obey a court order to stop picketing. The five were all released the day after this protest.

Copyright Peter Arkell/Reportdigital.co.uk

[Object description]

A black and white aerial photograph of a large protest march on a city street. In the dense crowd many people hold placards and posters, including 'Wanted Out' posters.

The front banner reads 'Royal Group of Docks Shop Stewards Committee Arise Ye Workers'.

Wanted Out poster, 1972

During the 1972 dock strike, five members of the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) were arrested on the picket line. Bernie Steer, Vic Turner, Derek Watkins, Cornelius Clancy, and Anthony Merrick were all imprisoned under new powers linked to the Industrial Relations Act 1971. This poster was part of a campaign demanding their release from Pentonville Prison. It has been signed by each of the men.

Where is the line?

[Object description]

Graphic poster in which 'WANTED OUT' appears in bold large black text above and below an illustration of five pairs of red hands gripping black prison bars. The names 'MERRICK', 'TURNER', 'CLANCY', 'STEER', and 'WATKINS' are positioned beside each pair of hands, together with corresponding signatures.

No Troops in Glasgow poster, 1975

This Socialist Worker poster was produced to support the dustmens' strike of 1975. The intervention of the military in industrial disputes is often controversial. While some objected to troops breaking the strike, the majority of residents welcomed the clearances.

[Object description]

Black and white poster. Along the top reads 'Socialist Worker' and 'Support the Dustmens' strike'. Dominating the poster, in bold black underlined text, it says 'NO TROOPS IN GLASGOW'. Below is a photograph of a vast pile of rubbish.

A Royal Highland Fusilier holds up a dead rat during the clearance of rubbish in Glasgow photograph, 1975

Troops cleared 70,000 tons of rubbish which accumulated in Glasgow during the dustmens' strike.

[Object description]

Black and white photograph of someone in a camouflage cap and belted cargo jacket.

Wearing a builder's glove, they are holding a dead rat by its tail. The background is housing and tower blocks.

Defend The Right to Strike placard, 2023

This placard was created in response to the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act 2023, which required some workers to provide a minimum service during a strike. This applied to six key sectors: health, transport, border security, fire and rescue, education, and nuclear decommissioning. Many saw it as an attack on the fundamental British right to strike. The Act was repealed in December 2025.

Where is the line?

[Object description]

A black poster with large bold white and green text reading 'DEFEND THE RIGHT TO STRIKE'. The People's Assembly logo is at the top and a QR code at the bottom, alongside 'JOIN THE PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY TODAY'.

Resident doctors in England, strike picket line at St Thomas' Hospital, London photograph, 17 December 2025

By Guy Bell

This ongoing dispute over low pay and working conditions, started in 2023. Many resident doctors, known as junior doctors in the past, have reported struggling to cover basic living expenses and student debt. Recent strike action has seen a decline in public support due to the impact of cancelled appointments.

Copyright Guy Bell/Alamy

[Object description]

A colour photograph of a group of people in orange hats holding multiple orange placards reading 'PATIENTS NEED DOCTORS, DOCTORS NEED JOBS' and one white placard 'TAX THE RICH AND FUND THE NHS'. A white British Medical Association logo is on the hats and placards. Big Ben is visible in the background.

Section: Lines of thought

What does solidarity mean to you?

How have you helped to make change?

Do you have memories of a strike?

[Panel Description]

A wall with three shelves, with questions and comments cards at the end of the exhibition. Visitors are encouraged to respond to the questions.

Acknowledgements

Section: Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements

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- Hannah Warrick
hannahwarrick.com

The end

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