**WITH BANNERS HELD HIGH 2019**

***A Land Fit for Heroes?***

**Saturday, 18 May 2018**

**Wood Street, Wakefield 11am-5pm (March assembling Smyth Street (11:00am).**

Our 2018 event was highly successful, with the largest gathering of former miners, trade unionists, campaigners and community groups, march on the streets of Wakefield since the days of the Yorkshire Miners’ Gala over thirty years ago. With Banners Held High is well on its way to becoming Yorkshire’s largest trade union event and we are delighted to announce that the event is to return in 2019 for our biggest gathering yet!

At 11:00 am, we will open With Banners Held High with a procession through the City’s streets with bands playing and with your banners held high. Following this we will have a FREE full day of entertainment consisting of educational workshops, music, poetry, comradery and political speakers. The line-up is jam packed with individuals from throughout the trade union and Labour movement.

For the first time we are also offering trade union officials and reps the facility to hold their own rallies in a space aside from the main stage. Organise your own rally and bring full time officials, reps and members together to march with you!

Every year we have a different theme for the day and this year’s focus is; A Land Fit for Heroes? Last year the majority of countries around the world marked the centenary year of the end of the so called Great War and Britain was no exception.

The period 1910 to 1918 was marked by a rising level of trade union organisation, membership, and industrial militancy. There was an increasing tendency towards the development of a more orderly and institutionalised pattern of industrial relations which enhanced the position of the British trade union movement in its relation to employers and the government. An increasing number of negotiating arrangements were set up between employers and unions, culminating in the formation of numerous joint councils during the war years. The government was increasingly forced into working with trade unions, ultimately to the mutual benefit of both during the Great War.

During the 1920s unemployment posed serious problems for the British trade union movement, Wages fell rapidly and the unions, despite their involvement in many long and protracted disputes, were unable to staunch the outward flow of members and funds or to stave off the savage monetary wage cuts which occurred. Ironically, the situation changed remarkably after the General Strike which sounded a warning to employers that trade unions would resist further wage incursions and that the cost of too muscular an industrial policy could be high. Thereafter, despite high unemployment between 1922 and 1932, trade union membership remained remarkably resilient and recovered sharply during the improving trade situation of the late 1930s.

While the General Strike might be viewed as a watershed moment by some who feel that the trade union position worsened considerably after 1926, this was clearly not the case; trade unions were less frequently attacked by employers after 1926 than they were before and the pace of wage reductions slowed considerably. What is remarkable about the inter-war years is the consistency of trade union policies and the forthright manner in which the TUC’s General Council pursued its intention of forging an effective industrial alliance between its member unions. Far from bringing about the denouement of inter-war trade unionism, the General Strike reaffirmed, in the fullest form possible, the potential power of trade unionism within the capitalist system.

Through a seminar series taking place within Wakefield Town Hall, With Banners Held High 2019 will look at various aspects of the aftermath of the Great War and broader inter-war years. We will consider the impact the conflict had on working class communities and the state’s failure to fulfil promises made to returning soldiers and their families of a land fit for heroes. By harnessing historic struggle of a hundred years ago we will draw parallels with contemporary socio-economic pressures facing our communities today including discussion around political policing, the academisation of schools, energy policy and the landscape of the labour movement.

With Banners Held High welcomes the Labour Party pledge to repeal the restrictions placed on trade unions by the Trade Union Act 2016 within the first one hundred days of being in Government – an Act which originates in the inter-war period (1926) – and that the fulfilment of this could and should be our ‘Red Friday’, which, as in 1925, has the potential to unify and strengthen the Labour Movement.

Bring your banners; bring your flags; bring your instruments, bring your friends, family and comrades but most of all bring solidarity and help make With Banners Held High 2019 our biggest event yet!

For questions or further information please send see our social media page or contact us directly at withbannersheldhigh@outlook.com