

**Twentieth Annual Historical Materialism Conference
9–12 November 2023, SOAS, Russell Square, Central London**

Workers' Inquiry Stream

Deadline for abstracts: Monday 12 June 2023

Notes from Below is hosting the “Workers’ Inquiry” stream at this year’s Historical Materialism London Conference in November 2023.

As in previous years, we are inviting contributions that build on workers' inquiries and try to understand class composition.

We understand "Workers' Inquiry" as a Marxist method that combines research with organising. This involves trying to understand the labour process at work, forms of exploitation, technology, management strategies, socialising, union participation, class relations, capitalism, from the perspective of workers. It can also explore workers' struggles and ways of organising. As a method, it may involve traditional forms of research, like interviews, surveys, ethnography and autoethnography (presenting own experience). We also welcome more collaborative methods of co-research with or led by workers, such as worker testimony or a campaign presentation.

Neoliberal reforms met a global pandemic and workers now find themselves in the grip of a cost of living crisis we are told we must pay for. This year has seen a wave of strike action and a reinvigoration of the trade union movement internationally. For the stream, we are particularly interested in trying to understand how rank-and-file workers have organised to resist, both in their workplaces and in their trade unions. We want to understand the new moments of class composition, both in the UK and internationally. The international working class has been subjected to a succession of crises of international capital. From these shared conditions we see avenues for workers to share their experiences from across industries and across nations.

The stream is open to contributions from participants with any or no experience of presenting at academic conferences. As with previous years, we hope to have a stream that brings together organisers, workers, and Marxist researchers. We will, of course, be organising a social event as part of the stream too.

We are particularly interested in contributions on the following areas:

- Inquiries into workplace experiences of trade union activity
- Shop floor experiences of national and local trade union disputes
- Struggles within/against unions
- Shop floor experiences of state and management repression of trade union activities
- Experiences of official and unofficial industrial actions: strikes, slow-downs, walkouts, sabotage etc.
- Experiences of coordinated activities across and beyond workplaces
- Experiences of rank and file organising inside and outside of formal structures

- Exclusions from trade unions and working class defeat: redundancies, discontinuous employment, sackings and sell-outs etc.

We are not inviting submissions to the stream that are about work or theory in general. Abstracts must involve workers' inquiry in some way or be connected to workers' struggles. Other approaches or topics may be suitable for the general call or streams at the conference.

If you want to take part, you can submit an abstract (a short explanation of what you will talk about) to the Historical Materialism call for papers (<https://conference.historicalmaterialism.org/>) and indicate that it is a submission to the "Workers' Inquiry" Stream. If you are interested in taking part but have any questions about the process you can contact the Notes from Below editors at the email address below.

At Notes from Below we are always keen to support participation, including developing initial ideas, helping draft abstracts for papers, the preparation of presentations, or anything else that can support new speakers at the conference. While many papers at the conference take the form of a panel of speakers each talking for 15 minutes or so, we have used different formats like roundtables, shorter talks, Q&A, and so on in the past and are open to alternative suggestions.

For further information, any questions, or support with taking part, please email [**editors@notesfrombelow.org**](mailto:editors@notesfrombelow.org)

Please feel free to share this call with others you think might be interested in participating.

The deadline for submissions is Monday 12 June 2023.

To submit an abstract visit: <https://conference.historicalmaterialism.org/>