

WORKERS' fight



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"The emancipation of the working class will only be achieved by the working class itself" (Karl Marx)

NO VOTE FOR ANY OF THESE POLITICIANS!

Railway workers' union leader Mick Lynch of the RMT, has been appearing on various media platforms in the run-up to the election.

Since he isn't a member of the Labour Party and the RMT is not affiliated to Labour, unlike most other unions, he might have felt free to attack Keir Starmer, along with all the other political leaders and their manifestly anti-worker manifestos! But did he?

No deal for workers

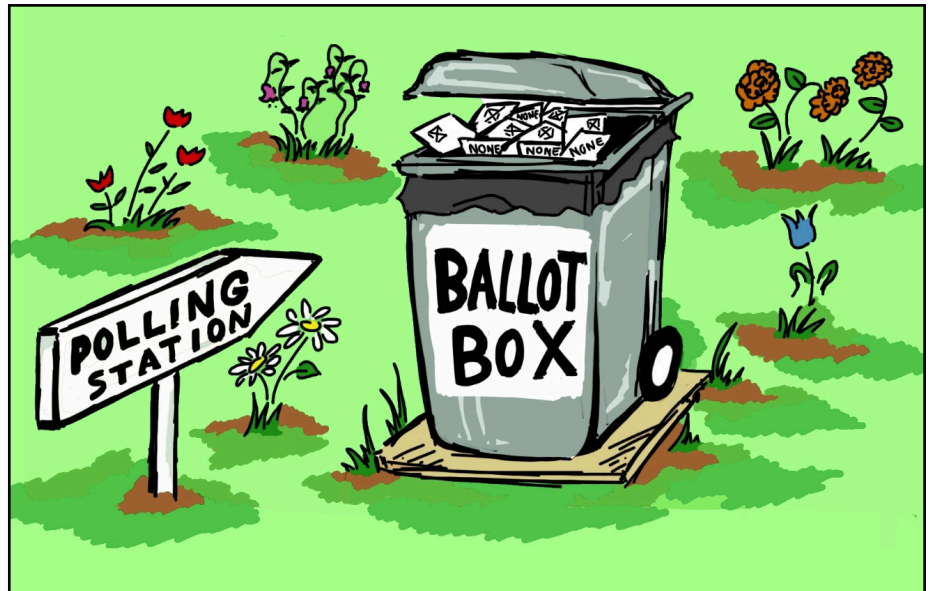
There was plenty to remark upon. For instance Starmer even joked that the Tory Manifesto was just like Jeremy Corbyn's in 2017, because it "*promised everything and costed nothing*". Never mind that Starmer had just copied and pasted Corbyn's (suitably iffy) chapter on railway re-nationalisation!

However, the most Mick Lynch dared to say was that Labour's policies may be "*a bit bland*", or that they should "*be bolder*"... In the meantime he has republished the RMT statement on the election, saying "*It is objectively in the interests of working people to get the Tories out which means getting a Labour led government in, and our members will need to campaign and vote accordingly*".

One reason to vote Labour, says he, is Labour's "*New Deal for Working People*"; because it will repeal the 2016 Trade Union Act, the Minimum Services Act and "support" public ownership... of the railway - well, "in large parts", anyway!

But his fellow union leader, Sharon Graham of UNITE, begs to differ. She says Labour is diluting its New Deal to suit the bosses, whom it's been wooing with smoked salmon breakfasts, to get support - and money!

Apparently Labour has so impressed British business that it's donated a record £14.4m, doubling last year's amount, compared to just £5.9m from the trade union movement, which used



to be Labour's main source of funds.

Feeling snubbed, Sharon Graham wrote in the *Guardian* how Labour refuses to enshrine in the New Deal the right to collective bargaining; that is, the bureaucrats' right to seats at the bosses' table to "negotiate", while the collective of workers waits outside!

But at least she highlighted the fact that Labour won't ban zero-hours contracts outright, only offering a "*theoretical right*" to a contract with regular hours! There will be no blanket ban on "fire and rehire", either.

What does Graham say after her exposé of Labour's transgressions against the working class, however? That she'll vote Labour, but "*eyes wide open*".

Our fights will make the change

Not one union leader has the gumption to escape from Labour's tent and tell it like it is. Or admit that there is no future under Labour and moreover, no future under this capitalist system! Of course anyone who seriously defends

socialist ideas and talks about the need for a party of the working class won't be invited twice to BBC studios!

Today, while many sections of workers still have active mandates for strikes over wages and job cuts, union leaders have put everything on hold for the sake of Labour's election image.

This won't be the first time they've put the interests of the Labour Party ahead of working class interests - one of the most scandalous examples was when postal workers voted by 96% against the privatisation of Royal Mail in June 2013 and the CWU refused to call a strike because it might embarrass "the Party"!

The lesson of this sorry tale is that the working class can't rely on union leaders to organise its defence: it can only rely on itself. And at election time, it's not a question of voting "*with eyes wide open*": votes in a ballot box cannot and will not transform society. Only our collective fights can do that. □

South Africa's election - the loss of (some) illusions?

Before polling day, on 29 May, South Africans said "2024 will be our 1994" - referring to the first time the black majority got the chance to vote after the end of Apartheid. Over the past 30 years under the ruling African National Congress, the working class has only got poorer, while the rich got richer. Today, South Africa is the most unequal country in the world. Youth unemployment is 70%. Youngsters take the only job on offer - with one of the many armed gangs run by crime-syndicates. Water and electricity provision to cities and regions have collapsed. In March, the plight of 800 young qualified doctors hit the news while President Ramaphosa was still "looking for his pen" to sign the National Health Insurance Bill, supposed to provide a system of free health care in this critically failing, but vital sector. So much for the "exemplary democracy", led in its first 1994 parliament by the much-feted Nelson Mandela, whose peaceful compromise averted revolution.

In this year's election run-up, political assassinations outdid those of Mexico. On 5 June there was another: the leader of Steve Biko's black consciousness organisation, AZAPO, was shot dead outside his house.

Remember the "butcher of Marikana"?

Indeed, the population has found that the capitalist utopia offered "for all" by the African National Congress' so-called "Freedom Charter" is a pipe dream. Apartheid might be gone, but the good old class system of exploited versus exploiter is alive and well. Black majority "self-rule" has never exempted any African state - not even the richest ones - from the plunder of imperialism and its local bourgeois representatives.

One of the main beneficiaries of the ANC regime's "black empowerment", (meant to reverse Apartheid's empowerment of whites), is current ANC president Ramaphosa, a millionaire businessman, who got all his wealth on a plate from the post-apartheid ANC leadership. This failed university student, ironically serving briefly as leader of the National Union of Mineworkers in his youth, is also the butcher of the 34 Marikana miners, brutally shot dead while on strike for a decent wage in 2012. By that time Ramaphosa was sitting on the Lonmin Mining Board and it was he who gave the police the thumbs up to open fire. But as they say, memory can also die.

GNU: as dumb as the antelope...

Despite the parlous state of the country, the ANC still polled 40.1% on 29 May. Now it is trying to set up a "Government of National Unity" (or GNU) through



a deal with equally self-serving and corrupt political parties: the Democratic Alliance, (21.81% of the vote), a "white boss" party; uMkhonto we Zizwe (MKP), which surprisingly, (since it was formed only last December) came third, with 14.58%, led by disgraced, corrupted, 82-year-old Trump-like former president, Jacob Zuma, arch-enemy of the gormless Ramaphosa, and other parties, which may or may not agree to join in.

Zuma wants Ramaphosa to stand down; he demands a ballot recount and holds in reserve the threat of mobilising his supporters in KwaZuluNatal. In 2021 they sparked lethal riots (330 people were killed) when Zuma was jailed for contempt of court.

Low turnout = few illusions

Unlike 1994, when 87% voted, turnout was only 58.55%: just 16m out of 27m registered voters. Obviously, despite a record 70 different parties standing, the electorate didn't feel spoilt for choice. And only 6m voted for the "party of Nelson Mandela".

Paradoxically, this may be a positive sign. If the majority of the working class feels alienated from the false democracy it "won" after Mandela's collaborative betrayal in 1994, the insurrectionary period of the late 1980s is recent enough for a new generation to learn from the mistakes made - and take up the fight again. Next time, "1994" could be "done right" by a fighting working class, seeking to overthrow the system and spread the struggle to the rest of Africa.

Postscript

In the end it seems that the GNU will comprise the ANC, the white-led privatisation Democratic Alliance and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). The IFP got only 3.85% of the total national vote

which gave it 17 seats in the Assembly. But it's really a provincial party whose constituency is almost exclusively in KwaZuluNatal (KZN) and whose voters are 90+% Zulu-speaking. In this election Zuma's MKP took a huge chunk of its votes getting almost 46% in KZN, while the IFP came third with 16.28% - behind the ANC...

So the IFP has grabbed the offer of joining government with both hands and never mind the bollocks - that is, any negative effect of association with the DA. Anyway, its politics are just as right-wing. And it knows how to "do" GNUs since it was part of one, both under Mandela in 1994 and Thabo Mbeki in 1999. What remains to be seen is how MKP and its twin, the Economic Freedom Fighters respond.

In the meantime the electricity cut-offs, now called "load reductions" instead of "load shedding" continue. It's winter, so South Africa is cold and dark. ☐

Class Struggle n° 121

Spring 2024

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Election circus

Starmer's patriot game

Labour's Keir Starmer is occupying the Tories' political space fully. In every respect, whether on the economy or immigration, Labour claims it will govern within the same financial constraints outlined by Jeremy Hunt, the Tory Chancellor, echoing Tony Blair's 1997 adoption of Tory public spending plans.

But above all Starmer is playing the patriot game. He has appropriated the Union Jack and England flag. So the old red posters of the Labour Party (even if Labour's politics were never more than a light pink) are all edged with the

red, white, and blue of the British flag. Starmer dresses in a military uniform for photo opps, and lets it be known that he wouldn't hesitate to use nuclear weapons against "Russia"...

Of course, Labour was never different in substance to the Tories - only in appearance... But lately "appearances" have broken some new ground, even to the point of caricature!

It shows just how out of touch the party leaders and advisors are. Labour's 21 point lead in the polls is largely thanks to the "fed up with the Tories vote", especially

over the NHS. But Starmer doesn't get it. He won't win because punters admire his policies, but by default. Bar a couple of defections of MPs from Tory to Labour, Conservative loyalists prefer the real thing, no matter how disappointed they may feel over Sunak, Truss and Johnson...

So why try to outdo the far-right? Is Starmer adapting to what he perceives as Red Wall preoccupations because Farage is nipping at his heels "up north"? Maybe. After all, he's sticking with Brexit, despite the fact that 56% now think it was a mistake. □

• Purging the left, safe seats for the clones

Meanwhile the Labour Party machinery has been scrambling to remove "unsuitable" candidates, ahead of the election and put in place its own choices, using the snappiness of the elections as the excuse not to follow proper procedures.

So those critical of Labour's Gaza policy or remaining survivors of Corbyn's period of leadership (2015 - 2020) like Faiza Shaheen, are barred from standing for Labour. She will now stand as an independent in the safe Tory seat of Chingford and Woodford Green. She is accused of liking a tweet which allegedly played down anti-Semitism... The left-Labour Lloyd Russell Moyle, a Brighton MP since 2017, was also dropped, inexplicably in this case, to be replaced by a former Starmer advisor, in Labour's safe Brighton seat.

In Cardiff West and Swansea West, Alex Barros Curtis, Labour's executive director for legal affairs and Torsten Bell the liberal-minded advisor from the Resolution Foundation have been parachuted in as Labour candidates without any local consultation, much to constituents' dismay. Apparently Starmer is now to be known as Keir Stalin. But really, why should we care?

• Who are the racists?

It says it all about the "neutral" BBC and all the other media outlets when you see how the Labour "left" is dispensed with and the far right welcomed! Farage (and the ever-rightward-shifting) Piers Morgan

have been seen everywhere, including on BBC Question Time... Nevermind that Farage claimed that 46% of Muslims support Hamas and are causing danger on the streets every Saturday to honest law-abiding British people - referring to the demonstrations against the war on Gaza!

But has Diane Abbott been given any airtime or screen time? Was she invited to a "panel"? Maybe she was - and she refused to go. But what's certainly true is that Wes Streeting and other Labour right-wingers referred to her as "substandard". And they are not investigated for racism?

• Labour's way on how (not) to solve the housing crisis?

The Little London estate in Maltby in South Yorkshire came (once again) to everyone's attention because of the upcoming election. The estate is called Little London, since its original purpose was to re-house World War 2 munitions workers from Enfield. There are 138 homes on the estate: 88 houses and 50 flats. The flat-roofed, porous concrete-walled houses

were never meant to be permanent, but most are still standing - just about - 80 years later! Now privatised, big landlords, including Rivergrove and Probex, own 120 of them of which 11 are derelict and have been boarded up since Christmas 2015. But all these flats are damp, mouldy and unfit for human habitation.

The tenants of Maltby have been ignored. Most abstained in the recent by-election (26% turnout). Said one resident: "I blame the council for letting them [the landlords] get away with it. I blame the government for having all the laws on the landlords' sides, so that the little people like us don't have any rights". That's it, in a nutshell.

In its election manifesto, Labour promises planning reforms. Rivergrove recently submitted a planning application to knock down the "derelicts" on Little London, and replace them with 15 new homes (no defined date). Obviously reforms are needed. But leaving this in the hands of political clones, crooks and profiteers, won't change anything.



Water and energy: only problems, no solutions

Under the energy price cap, due to come in this July, an "average household" will pay £1,568 a year for gas and electricity, £400 more than in 2021. At the same time, all the water companies have asked regulator Ofwat to let them increase prices, by up to 91%! Ofwat will probably reject such big rises, but bills are already unaffordable.

Labour plans to launch "Great British Energy". This is meant to sort out the

problems with high energy costs. But this isn't a renationalisation. "GBE" won't produce any energy. It will be a new, state-owned investment vehicle, to put public money into the renewable energy projects which private capital refuses to touch, because the risk is too great, or profits too small. As to cutting our energy bills, sorry, but no. Ofgem said energy bills would remain high at least until 2030!

Unlike the Lib Dems whose Ed

Davey keeps jumping into rivers and lakes to highlight dirty water, Labour is silent on the subject. Water companies claim to be in crisis, after decades of paying dividends to shareholders rather than investing in infrastructure. There's a shortfall of billions. A way to retrieve the missing investment would be to make them pay back what they've taken. But no politician would dare to demand it.

Their society

The cost of living crisis: it continues, and it's getting worse!

In the midst of the election campaign, Rishi Sunak congratulated himself on the fall in the inflation rate - with the CPI (official) down to 2.3%, RPI (unofficial) 3.3%, supposedly the lowest in three years. In fact, Sunak, we are told, called this election so suddenly precisely because of the "good news on the economy". A tiny up-tick of "growth" after the "technical recession". But now, sadly for him, the economy has decided to flat-line...

The reality for the working class however is far-removed from these damn lies and statistics. When people have to queue in the early morning outside grocery stores to get cheaper deals on almost-expired products, when meat and fish is displayed in anti-theft security boxes, and



there is a mushrooming of security guards in local shops, this says more than any

statistic or the words coming from the politicians' mouths. ☐

• Junior doctors escalate their action

Junior doctors in England are set to strike from the 27 June to the 2 July. This would be the eleventh walkout since March 2023.

In the meantime, doctors in Northern Ireland have also been on strike - for

4 days - after a derisory 9% pay "rise" offer, while in Wales, they've had 10 days of strikes after an offer of just 5%. All NHS doctors demand that their pay is "restored", i.e., that they catch up with the RPI inflation pay rises they should

have been getting since 2008, but didn't. In Wales and Northern Ireland it would amount to a 30% pay rise, while in England this is 35%.

The newly-announced strikes in England come after talks between ministers and the British Medical Association (BMA) - with a mysterious mediator - collapsed. The BMA is now escalating its action before the general election since, you would think, candidates consider the state of the NHS as one of their priorities... But do they?

Unbelievably, to deal with the over 7.5m on NHS waiting lists, Labour wants to pay NHS staff more to work evenings and weekends! But of course, meeting doctors' pay demands - so that they actually stay in the NHS and no one has to work killer shifts - is out of the question - both for ministers and for aspiring ones!



• VAT on private schools: a hullabaloo over nothing...

Labour has said that by imposing VAT on private schools, it will be able to raise £1.6bn for 6,500 new teachers. Strangely enough, nobody mentions that Theresa May put forward this very same idea in 2018 when she was prime minister!

So, what about it? In fact it has been condemned from the left and the right, with claims that "thousands" of pupils will have to move into the state sector (even "flood it!") as their parents won't be able

to afford the 20% increase in fees. And there are those who say that this policy means working class kids will no longer get the "transformational" opportunities offered in the private sector.

But what is the reality? First, only around 7% of all British pupils attend a private school - the figure this year is around 593,000. The Independent Schools Council says the average cost per pupil (non-boarding) is £18,064 per year. No ordinary working class parent can

afford that anyway. And very few have the chance of a bursary to go private: only 1.8% (10,674) get scholarships. This is a big hoo-hah over nothing.

Not that 6,500 teachers will do much of a trick in state schools. This number of new teachers wouldn't even make up for the shortage of new teacher-trainees (the government missed its target by 8,540 this year), let alone fill the huge gaps in schools!

• They've no answer to teacher shortages

A recent survey for the Sutton Trust showed that 32% of headteachers had cut teaching staff this year and 70% had cut teaching assistants. In other words, the teacher crisis is not just one of "recruitment", but also of schools being unable to pay their existing staff! While education funding has increased, costs have gone up. The Institute of Fiscal

Studies says the government would have to provide £3.2 billion in extra funding just to make up for the loss due to inflation since since 2010, let alone pay for more teachers.

As for ever-growing special educational needs (SEN) catered for in special schools, funding for this has been frozen at £10,000 per pupil since

2013! So the inflation deficit alone is already huge; local councils, who fund these schools, are in deficit to the tune of nearly £2bn. To keep things going, local authorities have had to take money out of mainstream school budgets. It's a dire situation - and none of the political parties competing against each other has any answer to it.

Their economy

Their economy doesn't turn corners...

Sunak might claim that the economy "has turned a corner" after the Office for National Statistics announced that gross domestic product (GDP) had "grown" by 0.6% in the first quarter of 2024. But of course, 0.6% can hardly be called an increase - and specially after GDP actually fell in the third and fourth quarters of 2023! Anyway the slightly better measure of GDP per head of population shows an even lower 0.4% rate of increase - and this was negative for every quarter of 2023!

So no, the economy is flat-lining or even shrinking, not growing. But these figures tell us nothing about the situation the working class is actually facing. The measure of material deprivation, i.e., the proportion of households unable to afford important items such as basic food, has risen sharply since the pandemic, from 15% in 2019-20 to 19% in 2022-23 - that is, nearly 1 household out of 5!

In the same period, the number of households which were unable to keep their homes warm enough rose from

4% to 11%; those experiencing food insecurity rose from 8% to 11%; and those unable to save £10 a month or more rose from 19% to 23%! And despite today's high rate of employment, median household disposable income is still 1.6% below pre-pandemic levels! But what is the response of the Department of Work and Pensions? Is it offering to increase welfare payments to poor families? No, it's revising the way material deprivation is calculated... so that it doesn't look so bad! □

• Taxing the wealthy till the pips squeak?

In the Sunak vs Starmer head-to-head broadcast on ITV on 4 June, Starmer said "the super rich should be paying their tax". And then he went on to explain what this means for Labour: introducing VAT for private schools, private equity taxes, ending the so-called non-dom tax-free regime and a windfall tax on oil companies. Nothing more.

Labour has been trying hard to woo business leaders and above all, Tory voters. Quite obviously it's afraid to raise taxes since it's been advised that voters won't tolerate this. But the pundits (for instance the reputable Institute of Fiscal Studies) are saying it will not be able to carry out its spending plans no matter what Rachel Reeves says about these being fully costed, without access to some more cash...

The Financial Times implies that Labour hasn't mentioned capital gains tax (cgt) for a reason. And that it could be increased; capital "gains" on assets including businesses, second homes and shares are taxed at only 10%-28%, much less than income tax rates, which range from 20%-45%. Labour is already closing a "loophole" used by private equity bosses, whose current interest payouts on successful deals are taxed as capital gains - rather than income. In fact the Lib Dems have proposed to increase cgt, to raise an extra £5.2bn.

Starmer is already sweating because Sunak continues to accuse Labour of costing everyone an extra £2,000 more in tax. And given he is better at making these accusations than Starmer is at answering them, it's likely that the FT would turn out to be wrong and cgt won't

rise. No pips will be squeaking after 4 July!

• Their lies about wages and migration

According to Reform UK's election proposals, if it won, (impossible!) businesses would have to pay a 20% rate of National Insurance for employing foreign workers - up from the current 13.8%. Richard Tice, its chairman, said this would help end Britain's "addiction to cheap overseas labour" which he claims, depresses wages.

He isn't the first politician to scapegoat foreign workers (read: "immigrants") to try to win votes. During the Brexit campaign, Boris Johnson and a series of other Tory ministers claimed that big corporations had held wages down because they had access to so many workers from other countries.

This "access" however, has been reduced more and more, due to the recent increase in the minimum salary requirement for visa applicants from

£18,600 to £29,000. It's going up to £34,000 in late 2024 and £38,700 in early 2025! So, if anything, this should actually drive wages up!

Obviously the responsibility for low wages lies entirely with the capitalists of Tice's class. And this drive to cut the wage bill is being stepped up as more and more work is contracted out and as part-time employment and casualisation are generalised.

• Postal workers - and letter delivery - in the firing line

Billionaire Daniel Kretinsky and his EP Group, which already owned 27% of Royal Mail's parent company International Distributions Services, now wants to buy RM's remaining shares for £3.57bn. In fact, he has been steadily buying more shares since 2020.

He told Bloomberg TV that he intends to "speed-up" RM's transformation into a profit-making, parcel delivery company. This can only mean cutting the Universal Service Obligation (RM's obligation to deliver mail to all addresses in Britain, 6 days a week) and continuing attacks against the workforce. In the past two years alone, over 15,000 jobs have been cut, delivery walks extended, processing duties made "flexible" so that workers are moved from one area to another according to managers' needs, etc., etc., etc.

Having agreed to these attacks, postal workers' union leader Dave Ward has now met Kretinsky's representatives to tell them that they can rely on him to deliver his full cooperation. Kretinsky's takeover still needs to be reviewed by the government, as stipulated under the National Security and Investment Act 2021, but it will most likely agree. Postal workers have new struggles ahead.



US elections: criminal convictions are not the problem!

The working class in the United States has, for the second election in a row, the (non) option of either voting for Donald Trump, or for Joe Biden, both representing the rottenness of this capitalist system. Of course, many voters trust neither of them and won't vote. However, polls seem very tight, with Biden losing popularity because of his consistent support for

Israel's "self defence", i.e., bombing to death the ordinary Palestinians of Gaza.

As for Trump, he was found guilty in the "hush money" trial, for falsifying business records. Some Republicans have thrown up their hands in horror at the idea of a presidential candidate having a criminal record. But in reality, having "someone like Trump" running for

president is not that much worse than any other candidate representing a crooked system, rigged in favour of big business...

And whether in the US or in Britain, whether Republican or Democrat, Tory or Labour, that's precisely the con which voters, to the dismay of the politicians, are getting wise to.

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)

Letter from the North West

Today, tens of thousands of pounds are being saved by not paying delivery workers any more for unaddressed mail to be delivered, by not paying for breaks - in fact, by not providing any breaks! Every new starter is being over-exploited. Extra hours are being worked without pay. Full time jobs are filled with part time hours.

The CWU officials can't argue it's not their fault. Weekly meetings are held

where they have a chance to say NO. The three tiers of representation, local, area and divisional, are fully aware of what's going on. They do not even report back to us, so that we can build resistance to management's attacks.

It's full time workers out, casualised exploited part-time workers in. And the CWU leadership agrees to it. In fact what's happening in the postal industry



is exactly the same as happened at BT under these guys' predecessors. Of course they need booting out. But in the meantime the attacks can be fought, if we decide to lead the fight ourselves. □

...and just one more thing: sharks have no nationality

The xenophobic attack by the CWU executive on the group buying IDS, the owner of RM, is disgusting. The race or nationality of any individual should form no part of a fight against them. Then again, this behaviour by CWU leaders is a continuation of their shocking record on every other issue.

Yes, they have form: they also attacked the German nationality of Rico Back, former RM boss.

Pretend class warrior Terry Pullinger showed his true colours when he led the

divisional and area reps in a sing-along of the Dad's Army theme tune, with the amended lyrics of "who do you think you are kidding Mr Rico?" Classic dog-whistling, while avoiding all the real battles we need to wage to defend jobs and conditions.

Us workers have a strategy to counter the sale of the Royal Mail group, and it's simple: fight for renationalisation and don't stop till our jobs and conditions plus the 6-day USO are assured! Dave Ward says the postal service is a critical part of

the country's infrastructure just like the railways. We agree. Both should be in public hands - not the government's hands to farm out once more, but our hands, the workers' hands!

So no, we don't support the CWU HQ's bigoted attacks on Daniel Kretinsky, a Czech national. Instead of their backward, small-minded racist nationalism we expect the "union" to do what we tell it to do and follow our fight to take the postal service back.

• No way, Jose

Even though managers have again tried to pressure us into agreeing to buy-down our hours, i.e., cut our hours with minimal compensation, most of us part-timers have refused. They tried this cheap trick last time, threatening to move us away from the Mount and into deliveries if we didn't comply. It was blackmail then and it's blackmail now. So there is no way any of us can agree to this! [*Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 12/06/24*]

• This isn't a "job"!

Hardly anyone signed for the sub-20-hour per week duties, why would we? Not even students looking for a summer job would take these! If we can hardly make ends meet on 25 hours

per week, how can we manage on 20, 18 or 15! We're sick of this penny-pinching over our jobs while RM shareholders play with billions of pounds! [*Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 12/06/24*]

• Mount Pl-everest

And no sooner have we got our new duties, than we already hear that workmates are taking Voluntary Redundancy in July... So who's going to replace them? Managers, who we've seen, more and more, covering for the lack of hands? Or are they just trying to break the record of the highest mountain of un-processed items in MP's history? [*Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 12/06/24*]

• Supply him with a brain

Funny how that "production supply manager" has been complaining about

mis-sorts... How difficult is it for him to understand that if jobs are cut, the work can't be done properly, if done at all - no matter how much pressure they put on us to cover? He wants fewer mis-sorts? Then try doubling the number of full-time jobs, instead of cutting them... Simple, really.

• What we want!

What's this us cleaners hear through the grapevine? That RM-PFS bosses claim the only way they can afford to increase our wages is by cutting our weekly work hours? True, a 40-hours week is too long. So we could do with a shorter working week, without loss of pay, of course. And we need a generous increase in our wages to catch up with inflation. [*Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 12/06/24*]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)

• No "back to the start"!

Some, but not all, Staffline workers who were sacked are now being brought back by the bosses. But we've all had all our service reset to zero! And this, after many of us were working here for years, before BMW's latest quasi-"Fire and Rehire". So now we're back to the beginning in the wait for a permanent contract... [*Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 04/06/24*]

• A kick up the backside?

But the prospect of permanent contracts is constantly kicked down the road by the bosses - some of us have been waiting ten years or more! In the meantime we're

stuck on these fake-self-employed/zero-hour agency "contracts". It's this kind of contract we have to get rid of once and for all, to be replaced by a contract which gives us a decent pay! [*Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 04/06/24*]

• Down with the agency system

It's the same for mates in R&H and G&P, where numerous agencies supply workers. If the bosses here don't like us, we barely hear from the agency again. Or maybe we're given a few hours of work a week. [*Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 04/06/24*]

• Blast them into space

G&P agency workers are even getting



"banned" or suspended for whatever petty things management doesn't like! Planet Recruitment won't tell us why, so we can't defend ourselves. This leaves defending each other, collectively, as the only option! [*Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 04/06/24*]

King's Cross railway station (London)**• We are not waiting!**

Since the snap election announcement and suspension of parliament, it seems the union has suspended the class struggle too. Do they have to do so? Not at all. The rise in the cost of living is not waiting until after the 4th of July (or Aug, Sept, Oct, Nov...)... We need the pay rise which is due now - and the one we didn't get last year and the year before, as well. *[Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 12/06/24]*

• It has to change...

We want better pay and more jobs and more workers, because they're needed, as simple as that!! Why don't we fight for jobs and pay straight up, instead of trying to reason with GTR, LNER and all other bosses on whose behalf the DfT has already rejected or watered down our original proposals? *[Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 12/06/24]*

• ... So, all out, together!

Yes, they're only in favour of saving money and helping private companies increase their profits! At the stations, violence is up, accidents are up, but that's not going to make these guys bat an eyelid. They need to get (again!) a

big shock! And from all of us workers, together. *[Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 12/06/24]*

• Robin hood in reverse

Some OCS cleaners in Euston have still not received the April pay rise. When we log in to our OCS accounts, we see that our hourly rate is still only £11.95/hr, instead of what it's meant to be, i.e., £13.15/hr! Which isn't enough, either!! *[Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 12/06/24]*

• KX-OCS DITTO

KX OCS workmates are one step further down this road of cocked-up pay, because we finally got the (small) rise, but we are still waiting for the April back-pay. *[Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 12/06/24]*

• Sorry, late train, no service

LNER trains are delayed every *!!* day. So we should just delay the first catering service too! No rushing shall be needed! And if managers want to, they can just do their usual apologies. Which by now they are very well-practised at doing... *[Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 12/06/24]*

**• No cards**

Why don't we just forget the card payments for food and drinks entirely on the Azumas? Enough, already, of this waiting for an internet signal which never comes, on these rubbish hand-held (EPOS) terminals. And since no cash payments are accepted - all food and drink will have to be complimentary for all (and not just 1st Class)! *[Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 12/06/24]*

• Squeaking machines

The ticket machines are very old and need replacing. They are constantly breaking down. And since rodent families have taken to nesting inside them, punters are more likely to get a mouse out of them than a ticket... Where are the fat cats when you need them? *[Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 12/06/24]*

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**• Doing the dirty on all of us**

This is typical: management gets rid of Temps and a few weeks later, tells us on the Darkside that we have to produce 2,000 engines per day! And since they're short of workers, they say they'll bring new Temps! It's obvious why the bosses don't want to make up temps to permanent. And it's also obvious that us permanent workers are the only ones who can force them to change their minds... *[Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 05/06/24]*

• Letter (shortened) from a sacked temp

"I've been working Tiger assembly, contract for a year, learned almost every job on the CMLs, supervisors praised my work. Then I got injured lifting the flywheels, no equipment in place to help. Got 1st restriction from medical, when restriction ended placed me back on same job. This happened TWICE more till medical sent me to hospital; signed off for 3 months..."

Time for contract renewal, no contract! HR said they had enough numbers etc... But it was a lie; they were borrowing mates from other lines... Ford will use you, break you, then toss you aside".

Says it all, until we say NO, not any more!

• Time for a break and a cuppa

Us LLL machining workers are meant to fill out forms in order to log-in for each vehicle, every time we drive them! Managers insisted on this in order to prevent us sharing cards - so they know who drove which vehicle and when. Fine, then it's their problem if their red tape compliance takes us a very (very) long time... *[Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 05/06/24]*

• No to the speed-up

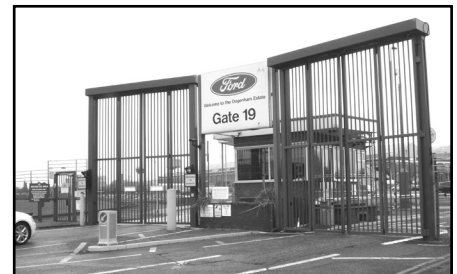
The time allocated to some processes in the Den was cut by 2 seconds - all to try to get us to make more engines per shift. But as far as we're concerned, timings should only ever be increased. *[Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 05/06/24]*

• We're mini, not octopi

On the Panther mini shift, the target is (only) 150 engines, but if the other shift doesn't get its score, we're supposed to make up for it. Except we're called "mini" for a reason, and that means we cannot grow extra arms. *[Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 05/06/24]*

• We know the outcome

We're already in the midst of the year 2024 and LLL and Hamton workers have only just been told that pay negotiations



might begin?! Given last year's shenanigans, let's cut to the chase, and just go on strike NOW. *[Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 05/06/24]*

• They weren't "redundant"!

Since LLL made Panther team leaders redundant, workers who were on permanent mornings for health reasons have been under pressure to rotate! But why should they? If the place can't run properly because of LLL's cuts, so be it. *[Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 05/06/24]*

• Time to take a "rest"!

On Lion mach, we hear that management might be short of 5,000 cranks for the parts going to Argentina, due to breakdowns! The machines we're using just aren't up to the job. but nevertheless managers accept these orders. On heads it's worse: 25-year-old machines and broken gauge benches; running machines 24/7! We are all totally kaput! *[Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 05/06/24]*

International

Gaza: it's not world leaders but the Palestinian workers and poor who will find a way forward

The Israeli war cabinet under Prime Minister Netanyahu claimed on 11 June that it backed a ceasefire proposal put forward by President Biden. The very same deal it had refused less than two weeks before, on 31 May, but which now is re-proposed by the UN...

US Secretary of State Blinken, visiting Israel for the 8th time, even called this deal the "Israeli government's proposal"! And claimed that the only obstacle to it was "Hamas". Even though Hamas has never refused to discuss any of these deals; it expects that Palestinian hostages in Israeli prisons are released as part of any exchange and that a ceasefire is permanent.

But this latest proposal wasn't a "ceasefire" deal. Netanyahu accepted it only if he also was given free rein in Gaza to "defeat Hamas". So Hamas is meant to agree to ongoing war and its own destruction.

What's more, this so-called ceasefire deal comes after the Rafah offensive, which saw some of the worst bombing so far, including of refugee tents, where whole families were blown to pieces - and after the 8 June massacre of 274 people in Nuseirat (400 wounded), in order to rescue 4 Israeli hostages.

In the meantime the whole border area between Rafah and Egypt has been



ploughed up. As always there is no way out for any Palestinian and no safe place.

World leaders, who've presided over this slaughter for nearly 8 months in the name of Netanyahu's deranged "war on Hamas" - supporting a madman who is losing even his own cabinet members (Benny Ganz, the only representative from an opposition party, just walked out) are now also supporting this latest,

umpteenth ceasefire proposal. The Gazan house has already burnt down; 37,000 of its residents are already dead; and now they want to turn on the fire hose!

If this catastrophe has any positive outcome at all, it is that it exposes the politicians who rule this world, whether in the USA, Britain, Germany or France, as no better than the depraved Israeli Zionists they support. □

Letter from India: voters delivered a blow to Modi & Co.

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) boasted it would win 370 seats and its National Democratic Alliance (NDA), would win 400. In fact, it won only 240 seats. The NDA got 293 seats, and so Modi has had to make a deal with Bihar's Telugu Desam Party and Andhra Pradesh's Janata Dal, to form a government.

On the other hand, the opposition alliance led by the Indian National Congress, (acronym, INDIA!) won 232 seats, almost as many as the BJP.

The Economist calls this "a triumph for Indian democracy", showing how the political system works for "everyone"(!), since "the people spoke" and prevented Modi from proclaiming a "Hindu Raj" and crowning himself maharaja... That said, Modi didn't forgo a grand ceremony to swear himself in as prime minister on 9 June, for a 3rd term!

Modi's party lost 29 seats in its Uttar

Pradesh stronghold (it now has only 33 seats out of 80) including those of several sitting cabinet ministers. Modi himself got 152,000 votes compared to 480,000 in 2019.

This was despite the fact that the BJP had stacked the odds in its favour. It got the full backing - and generous funding - of big business. It arrested and jailed two popular opposition leaders - the chief ministers of Delhi and Jharkhand - and it had the funds of the opposition Congress party frozen!

Where it faced a close contest, as in Surat and Indore, it used threats to force opposition candidates to withdraw. And in Uttar Pradesh, police and BJP workers assaulted Muslims and lower-caste Hindus on election day, confiscating their IDs so they couldn't vote...

If the BJP lost seats, the main reason

was the real anger among workers over unemployment. In Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan the working class depends on public sector and Army jobs, which Modi has slashed. Price rises fuelled this anger further; "Hindutva" doesn't put food on tables.

As the economic crisis gets worse and bosses demand more attacks on jobs and workers' rights, there is a worry that Modi could try to impose the mandate he didn't get in the election, on the street, using the police and his ever-present RSS thugs.

However, if the election results have shown anything, it is that the population is less and less prepared to tolerate Modi's divisive bigotry and use of force. Hopefully workers (and farmers) will unite their ranks and prepare a fightback against the offensive to come! □

In addition to this monthly paper, we publish fortnightly bulletins in several large workplaces in the South East, a quarterly journal, "Class Struggle" and the "Internationalist Communist Forums" - a series of pamphlets on topical issues.

If you wish to find out more about our ideas, activities and publications, contact the Workers' Fight activist who sold you this issue of our paper, or write to us either by e-mail, at contact@w-fight.org, or by postal mail at:

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