

WORKERS' fight



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contact@w-fight.org

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

MORE THAN EVER, WE NEED A WORLD WITHOUT BORDERS!

When Trump's "victory" in the US election became clear, there was a huge "rally" of shares in Tesla, cryptocurrency, banks, prison "operators"... and the dollar.

Apparently the President-elect's proposals for tariffs against foreign imports and mass deportation of "illegal" workers didn't have the expected dampening effect on the financial markets. Which only confirms that whichever clown wins the race to the White House, or indeed 10 Downing Street, capitalism will always "rally". Because the one thing the candidates never put into question is the profit system. If they did, they wouldn't get elected.

And forget about the puzzling contradictions - Trump inviting in a billionaire advisor like Musk whose factory makes electric cars, while he's into fossil fuel drilling, or the crypto boost, when this virtual currency rests on no real value...! It's all such a con!

The revolutionary alternative

Electorates are promised everything and when they get nothing, they're meant to keep calm and carry on. Put up with a class system which swaps around political leaders every few years in an ever-more-transparent pretence of "democracy". All in the vain hope of keeping a moribund world capitalism alive.

In most recent elections - whether in Britain, the USA, even Japan, the "incumbent" party either got kicked out, or kicked in the teeth... Turnouts have been falling, with failure to register to vote and exclusions increasing. The working class majorities of this world understand perfectly well about the binary political non-choices they are offered!

What is the alternative? The system places a minority in power over a majority; relying on "armed bodies of



men" to keep the powerful, richest few, in place. But the police and army are recruited from the majority. As history shows, they cannot always be relied upon to protect capitalist "democracy". If the working class mounts a collective challenge, in order to build a totally new system, these "armed bodies" may prefer not to fire on their own working class sisters and brothers. They may even join their side.

We're all "legitimate" earthlings!

Political economists talk about the coming threat of world war. But the biggest threat to existence on this planet today - aggravated by climate change - is the total inability of worldwide capitalism to sustain human life in the poorest 2/3 of the globe - where there already are multiple wars.

As a result, millions of people are trying to move across borders to the rich 1/3, fleeing wars due to rivalries to seize mineral wealth and power; fleeing catastrophic famine and economic hardship; risking their lives.

And what does this pernicious and bankrupt system offer in response?

Every single political leader wants to "strengthen borders", and bring in anti-refugee measures - and like Trump, mass deportations. They claim to be targeting "illegal" immigrants. But their concept of "legality" is absurd.

How can there be a "right to remain" anywhere on this earth when our degenerate planetary social systems have got to the point where there can be no further "evolutionary progress", unless the earth's territory is managed as one whole land-mass whose resources are shared among all inhabitants?

But just at the precise moment in human history when it's become critical to open all borders, reactionary forces are closing them!

In 1919, Russian revolutionaries who'd just overthrown the czar, held a conference in Baku - obviously, not about climate change (!), but in the name of revolutionary internationalism.

Their object - already 105 years ago - was to build a world without borders, starting with the oppressive Russian Empire. They didn't succeed. But today the task of getting rid of national borders can surely not be delayed any further! ☐

International

UKRAINE/RUSSIA - US/GERMANY: WAR AND POLITICS COME TO A HEAD

Everyone expects that Trump's election on 5 November will end this war which is entering its 3rd year. Trump has already been on the phone to both sides, with "new buddy" Elon Musk on the line. So has Germany's Chancellor Scholz. These are the number one and number two arms suppliers to Ukraine.

Germany's coalition government collapsed the same week Trump was elected. The cutting off of its gas supplies (Russia's pipeline was blown up) sent its economy spiralling down. Scholz now faces a vote of confidence on 11 December and possibly an early election in February. The German economy remains in crisis. By negotiating an end to the war, Scholz could steal some of the rising German far-right's nationalist thunder...

Sending the North Koreans into the bloodbath

Of course these cynical players behave as if they're playing chess, no matter the hundreds of thousands of dead Ukrainian and Russian bodies which are piling up. In early October, Putin launched his "autumn conscription campaign", to last until 31 December, to recruit an extra 130 to 180,000 soldiers. In addition to Russian soldiers, 10,000 to 12,000 North Korean soldiers are already deployed in frontline areas.

Western politicians have accused Putin and Kim Jong-un of crossing a red line. But this isn't the first time red-lines have been crossed in this war! Tanks and fighter jets and even long-range missiles were supposed to be excluded from NATO's military aid to Ukraine, until they weren't excluded any more. And since August, the Ukrainian army has been inside the Russian region of Kursk,



North Korean soldiers receiving Russian uniforms in a military base in Russia's far east

although they are now having to retreat under fire.

The "victory" plan will be rewritten

In the latest escalation, Putin's regime has relied on North Korea and Iran for military supplies. But the total military aid from North Korea has been estimated at between £1.3bn to £4.2bn; small change, compared with the £139bn that the US has already provided to Ukraine (£84bn directly aids the Ukrainian government, the rest funds US activities associated with the war and a small portion supports other affected countries in the region).

With the pulling up of the drawbridge by the new regime in the US and soon too, in Germany - Zelensky's main sponsors - it is obvious that Ukraine's "victory" plan will have to be rewritten.

Nothing great about dying nor about nationhood

Zelensky talks about "Ukraine, the great nation", that will "only end the war from a position of strength". One can only hope that the people who live in Ukraine and who he sends to the killing fields of this proxy war don't swallow this infantile and reactionary nationalism. There is nothing great about dying in imperialist wars: as the communist revolutionaries of 1914 said, "they tell you you are dying for your country but you are dying for the bankers and the capitalists".

Keir Starmer here in Britain may push out his chest and pretend that Britain will step in to compensate for cuts in military aid to Ukraine by the US or Germany. But the economy here is in an even worse state than the US. Britain has so far "committed" £12.8 billion: £7.8 billion in military support and £5 billion in non-military support. Starmer would find it hard to justify adding more - and he will not. ☐

GAZA-LEBANON: ISRAELI STATE TERROR CONTINUES

The war against Lebanon and Gaza is escalating, just as political leaders - "negotiators" - talk of "new" ceasefire proposals. The Israeli government seems to want to raze to the ground as much of Gaza as possible before backing off. Even refugee tents are targeted. And

no doubt at all: Netanyahu is reinforced by the election of his good "come-back" friend Trump in the US.

His army allows less and less humanitarian aid into the territory. Having banned the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees

- UNRWA - from operating throughout occupied Palestine he is removing the only organisation with the expertise and means to provide food and medical services to Gaza's 1.9m population.

As for the extension of the war to Lebanon, Israeli strikes have already destroyed 100,000 homes. It almost seems a useless exercise to talk about the ever-rising death toll. But so far across Lebanon 3,445 are dead and 14,599 injured.

The southern suburbs of Beirut are now bombed daily. The Israeli army and Intelligence services are determined to eradicate Hezbollah; an organisation that yes, is everywhere, since it enjoys widespread support in the population. So just as in Gaza, nowhere is safe. Of course the actors in this horrific war will have to sign a peace deal. But in the meantime there is storm before the calm. ☐



Israeli attack on a tent camp in Gaza's al-Mawasi, November 2024

LABOUR'S FIRST BUDGET TIGHTENS THE TORY SCREW

Their society

The first budget delivered by Labour's Chancellor, Rachel Reeves had been leaked by all the newspapers beforehand. But while most reputable economists (Institute of Fiscal Studies; Financial Times, etc...) had pointed out that tax rises would surely be necessary in order to fix the £22bn black hole she claimed to have found ("thanks to the Tories' mess"), let alone to make a start on getting the NHS back on its feet, Reeves remained adamant that she'd stick to Labour's manifesto commitment "not to raise taxes for working people".

Reeves stuck to her word...

In fact she did keep to that commitment, to the letter! Despite all the media and Tory voices claiming she had been dishonest. She increased employers' National Insurance Contributions by 1.2 percent - but not even back up to the level it had been in April, before the Tories cut them by 2%! And by the way, this cut was supported wholeheartedly by Labour at the time, ever-keen to take the Tories' place as the "low tax party".

To lighten employers' burden, the NHS and the rest of the public sector were exempt. Although so far, GPs, hospices and care homes are not - and this is causing much upset. She also lowered employers' thresholds for paying these NICs, which makes the NIC rise much worse.

... and kept her hands off the bosses' profits!

The bosses and their media chorus haven't stopped weeping and wailing - including over the increase in the minimum wage by 6.7%. And they're



now expected to pay increased Capital Gains Taxes, Inheritance Taxes, and Non-Doms will have to pay tax on the profits made abroad - after 4 years of residence.

But totally untouched is the income tax for high-earners and, more significantly, the tax on company profits - "corporation tax" which at 25% remains one of the lowest in Europe.

The other ways to skin a cat

Reeves introduced 70 different policy measures all in all. Many will indeed hit "working people". But the real problem is that employers always pass on their own tax increases to their workers through wages and conditions cuts and job cuts - or to customers. And nobody has caught up yet with the rising cost of living. Adjusted for inflation (if only they were!), we're told that average earnings by 2029 will only just have returned to

the level they were in 2008! So, this means (another!) fall in living standards for the working class, equivalent to going back in time by 16 years!

The only alternative is a new system

We are told that this £40bn tax-take by Reeves is the largest increase as a proportion of GDP since World War II - or, as former Chancellor Jeremy Hunt put it, "in British history". But with a lower GDP, obviously the £40bn will represent a larger slice of it. Today it's becoming more and more obvious that the breakages in this system can't be fixed. For "things to get better" an entirely new system is needed. That isn't a "policy" option. It will require the combined force, action and preoccupation of the entire working class to build it. It's called "socialism".

• Schools: more bricks in walls needed

An overall extra £6.7bn for the education sector in England for 2025-26 was announced in the budget. For schools, funding will increase by £2.3bn - which, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies, will raise per-pupil spending in England by only 1.6%!

£1.3bn will go to mainstream school funding - where payments for teachers' 5.5% pay rise are included, as well as any other school expenses. This amount is the lowest since 2018-19 and less than half the annual increase for the last three years. The remaining £1bn is meant to go towards special educational needs - which, again, will not even begin to cover the big deficits which local authorities have accrued.

The remaining money will be distributed as follows: £3.5bn for repairing and rebuilding schools; £600m for further education - £300m of which to improve colleges' facilities; the remaining £300m to pay for free breakfasts for the

poorest children, and to fund some social care expenses.

All this money will be rapidly swallowed

up by past and present inflation. Anyway, after years of underfunding in education it isn't even a drop in the ocean of need.



Crumbling schools plagued by leaks and so cold children have to learn in their coats

Their sick-fare • No change for social care

In her budget Reeves failed to address the crisis in social care. And now care home owners and home assistance providers say they won't be able to afford higher NI contributions. Community Integrated Care, for example, one of the largest social care charities, says it cannot find the extra £12m it will cost, except by charging local authorities more. Proving once again that leaving this huge sector to a patchwork of "for profit" and charity organisations billing local government was always a stupid and care-less idea. The profiteers have always ensured that they get their returns, by hook or crook (mainly the latter) but care has never ever been even close to adequate, while at the same time being extortionate.

Councils covering nearly half the population of England have already warned of a £54bn funding shortfall over



Homeless forcibly removed by the police, St Peter's square, Manchester

the next five years due to rising costs of children's services, adult social care and school transport. Facing increasing social dereliction in their patches, they cannot even afford to bring 34,000

empty council homes back into use. Many more of them are likely to join the six that have already declared effective bankruptcy.

• They always want to cut "Welfare"

Ahead of the budget, nearly every journalist who interviewed a Labour minister asked why the government was not going to cut "out of control" welfare spending. They point to the large number of "economically inactive" people - around 9.26 million - claiming Universal Credit. The implication being, of course, that too many people are pretending to be unable to work because it is more "comfortable" for them to be on benefits.

None of these journalists is particularly interested in breaking down what that apparently large chunk of "welfare" spending is exactly. What the government calls total "welfare" spending came to £260 billion in 2022/23. And yes, that is more than the £212bn spent on health. It comes to 22% of total government spending. But £140bn of it was paid to pensioners, through the state pension. There is another £30bn which

goes to pensioners through their public sector pensions, pension credit, and other benefits. The remaining £90bn, includes a lot of different things, such as (a pathetic) £30bn for social care.

Only £60bn out of the £260bn is actually spent on benefits for working age people. And of course Reeves has already agreed to maintain a Tory welfare cut by not removing the 2-child benefit cap.

• Nothing "generous" about welfare benefits... unless you're a landlord!

The idea that benefit payments are "out of control" is quite the opposite of reality - they are very tightly controlled! Since 2014, there has been a cap on benefits, which this year is £1,413.92 a month for a single person in London (less outside London), or £2,110.25 for families. Everything, including housing costs, must be paid from this amount, which is usually given to claimants monthly through the Universal Credit system, which has replaced most of the old, separate benefits.

However, while that might be the

maximum amount one can receive, the average monthly payment was actually much lower - just £900. In fact, the Resolution Foundation think tank says that compared to 2010, working age households on benefits are £1,500 worse off per year.

And what also goes unsaid most of the time, is that actually nearly 40% of people receiving Universal Credit are in work! If they are getting benefits, it's because their monthly pay is too low to survive on.

Even then, almost half of benefits paid

to working age people - £27bn - actually just went to subsidising landlords who have an assured income from tenants on benefits since the state pays their rent. If any minister really wanted to cut the "welfare" bill, increasing the social housing stock would be "job done"!

Instead, Reeves main welfare highlight is a crack-down on "fraud"! Apparently it will involve hiring thousands more staff to investigate claimants including by gaining direct access to their bank accounts. All in order to "save £7.5bn over the next five years"...

• Sick and disabled workers under attack again

The other main money-saving measure which Reeves committed to, is aimed at the disabled and long-term sick. Work and Pensions secretary Liz Kendall will target these 9.26 million "economically inactive" (not working, but not looking for work, and therefore not counted as "unemployed") with her "Get Britain Working" plan, due to be published soon. Never mind that this includes 4.35 million disabled people, and nearly 3 million long term sick.

The disabled have plenty of past experience of government plans like this which penalise them further rather than do anything useful to help them into work. Reeves has already said she'll stick with Tory plans to reform the "work

capability assessments", that is, find more people "fit for work" and therefore cut their benefits.

In fact, if the number of economically inactive people has risen by over 700,000 since the pandemic, that is not least due to the fact that businesses have been pushing the disabled and long term sick out of employment! Just one example among many: the sickness procedure at Royal Mail was changed two years ago, which allows workers just 3 absences (or 12 days) a year. If they are sick too often, they are sacked. And anyone who has in the past had light duties due to a disability is pressurised to take redundancy.

Class Struggle n° 122

Autumn 2024

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25 YEARS ON FROM THE PADDINGTON CRASH: "LESSONS LEARNT"?

Railways

The Paddington-Ladbroke Grove train crash was one of the worst disasters in British railway history. On 5 October 1999 at 8.11am, a Thames train from London Paddington to Bedwyn collided with the high speed Great Western train from Cheltenham to Paddington, two miles outside Paddington Station. The combined speed of impact was 130mph (209km/h). The leading carriage of the diesel multiple unit was largely destroyed. The fuel it was carrying ignited, leading to fires on both trains. In all, 29 passengers and both the train drivers were killed and 417 were injured - some with horrific burns.

At the memorial which was held for the families of those killed, the general secretary of train drivers' union Aslef, Mick Whelan, said: "As an industry we will never forget ... the Ladbroke Grove rail crash.... and we should never forget the lessons that we learned in what is, and what will always be, a safety-critical industry". But these lessons were not learnt. And as leader of a train drivers' union (and surely not spokesperson for the "industry"!), Whelan knows this very well.

What happened and why?

In fact the Thames train passed a red signal, which had been repeatedly complained about by drivers since it was placed too high and obscured by nearby poles, masts and cables; it had been passed at danger eight times in six years.

There was a warning system fitted to the trains, but this was old technology, introduced in the 1950s. It was supposed to alert drivers if they passed a signal at yellow or red, by sounding a klaxon, once, twice, or three times, which had to be cancelled by the driver in order to prevent the brakes being applied automatically. It is not hard to imagine how useless such a system was along a stretch of track such as Ladbroke Junction, where trains were passing multiple signals in a matter of minutes.

What's more there had been other devastating crashes before this one, all caused by the inadequacy of train protection systems: the 1996 Watford



crash (1 dead, 69 injured), the 1997 Southall crash (7 dead 193 injured), the 1999 Spa Road Junction and the 1999 Winsford crash.

The lessons not learnt

In the days and weeks following, the extent of the criminal decade-long cost-cutting of the private train operating companies and Railtrack at the expense of safety became evident. (Railtrack, the track and signal company was taken back by the state as Network Rail in 2002)

This crash may not have happened if an active safety system, such as Automatic Train Protection (ATP), which prevents any train from passing through a red signal, by enforced braking, had been fitted on the Thames turbo. This was the conclusion of the enquiry led by Lord Cullen (and others). He advised that all trains should be fitted with the most modern (at the time) European Train Protection Warning System. But this wasn't done on grounds of cost: £27 million (in today's value) for every life saved - wasn't considered "value for money"!

What they did

By 2003, the cheaper Train Protection Warning System (TPWS) which introduced "speed controls" was fitted only at key junctions, BUT it is only effective if trains are travelling at under 70mph. Never mind that most intercity trains reach 125mph...

Last year, according to the Office of Rail and Road, there were 287 signals passed at danger. That's compared with 593 in 1999/2000. This is portrayed as "success" when this number and hence the probability of a crash happening could have been close to zero if state-of-the-art Automatic Train Protection had been fitted.

Today automated digital systems like the European Train Control System (ETCS) eliminate signals altogether and give drivers constant feedback thanks to computerised "intelligent boxes" installed on the track. So far only the Chiltern line has piloted this and it will only be operative by 2035! Meanwhile LNER trains to Edinburgh or GWR trains to the north west and south west are relying on drivers' and signallers' vigilance because the current Automatic Train Protection still can't protect them at their usual speeds. □

The brutal exploitation of India's railway "track maintainers"

India's PM, Narendra Modi, constantly boasts that the Indian Railways are "world class". Like most of his boasts, it's a blatant lie. The railway's 400,000 track workers, are still fixing rails manually and with picks and shovels - primitive equipment. Workers are treated as the lowest of the low. They aren't issued with protective gear, even though temperatures can rise to over 50C in summer and drop below zero in winter. And since 95% of Indian trains have no chemical toilets or sewage disposal system, the tracks are covered

with faeces and dirt. Obviously workers get sick.

But even worse, track-side safety is non-existent: 40 track maintainers are hit and killed by trains every month! When a gang is working on the tracks, railway protocol requires that two track maintainers with red flags keep a look out for trains and blow a whistle if they see one. However, due to the shortage of workers (315,000 positions are deliberately kept vacant), no lookout is kept; workers are run over by trains which are sometimes

travelling at 140km/hr.

The union has been demanding a device which would warn track workers when a train is nearby, since 2016, but the government claims it doesn't have money for this! On the other hand, these workers HAVE been issued with a high tech GPS device which sends their location to the foreman, who can monitor their movements minute by minute, through an app on his phone, to make sure they stay on the job!

Their politics

Now they're in opposition it probably doesn't matter who the new Tory party leader is. This is typically a period of caretaker leadership - until, of course, a new general election arrives. Nevertheless, this shrunken party, whose flagship policy focused on immigration, is now led by Kemi Badenoch, who was born in Nigeria and describes herself as a first generation immigrant...

The party has shrunk

Apparently her victory over Robert Jenrick, by 53,806 (56.5%) votes to 41,388 (43.5%) was the closest margin in Conservative Party leadership election history. But the party isn't what it used to be. As few as 95,194 cast their votes in the contest (turnout 73%). Membership has fallen by over a third, compared with 2 years ago, when it was already down.

What's more, ever since Johnson cleansed the party of EU "Remainers" in 2019, thus ridding it of old traditional "Home Counties" Conservatives, the party has changed. The 2019 election brought in many aspiring middle class MPs from diverse backgrounds. No doubt, having a series of black and Asian

• Kemi Badenoch: apparently going for woke

cabinet ministers (Patel, Braverman, Javed, Zahawi...) and then Prime Minister Rishi Sunak himself - all from immigrant backgrounds - to voice and implement its anti-immigrant and "anti-woke" policies served the Tories well in government.

Further right?

Badenoch is a champion of the anti-woke. She supported the Rwanda deportation scheme, although unlike Jenrick, didn't think Britain should leave the European Court of Human Rights. She said she'll

renew the party. Given that its main rival is the further-to-the-right Reform, she has a lot of rightward lurching to do. Which is no doubt why she appointed Priti Patel as her shadow foreign secretary - the architect of the Rwanda policy - and Jenrick, the human rights law-slayer, as her shadow justice secretary! There is no rush, however from her party's point of view, to prepare for government. This 4th Tory leader in 5 years is unlikely to be the last to face Starmer in his first term as PM.



• King Charles and Prince William revealed as crooked shysters

On 2 November the *Sunday Times* published a big investigative story that took 5 months to compile: "Revealed: the property empires that make Charles and William millions... the *Sunday Times* has uncovered every plot of land owned by the ancient Duchies of Lancaster and Cornwall and the business deals with the NHS, schools and military that help fund the royals". Dispatches on Channel 4 TV followed with "The King, the Prince and their Secret Millions".

The incredible and endless rights to extort payments from the population - indeed anyone who sets a foot on their "property" - totally belie the Royal image of modesty and service.

This dodgy father and son duo control 5,410 landholdings and properties across 180,000 acres, including seashores, through the Duchies of Cornwall and Lancaster - which are their own private commercial businesses. The duchies, acquired after 1300 by the then royal family (not actually the same one!), have remained in each successive king's and

queen's possession ever since.

The meaning of the royal prerogative

Last year the Duchy of Lancaster raised £27.4 million for the King. And the Duchy of Cornwall raised £23.6 million for William, which they can use as they see fit, for example to fund their private homes, personal income and staff. Then they get an annual income of over £24m mainly through the leases they own on land or seashores (!)... even the air above part of Merseyside Harbour belongs to Charles, and cranes must pay if they move into it while loading or unloading ships.

The King and Prince will be receiving £11.4 million from the NHS in rents, over £28 million from wind farms and even (!) £60 a year from the Council of the Scilly Isles for a lavatory on the Island of St Martin's. No surprise then, that ancient feudal rules regarding leasehold and freehold never get reformed. But neither is there the least transparency whenever

any parliamentary body tries to delve into Royal financial arrangements. It's literally a huge hidden heist and extortion, which they justify by medieval property law.

They are tax-free Doms

Although the Duchies are registered as corporations, they do not pay corporation tax, nor capital gains tax nor inheritance tax!

Never mind that though, the King and his household are still eligible for the £132m annual sovereign grant to help them along, on top of all this hidden income. The worst about it is that they dare to portray themselves as "public servants" and William even has the cheek to say he's supporting the homeless; when he could house every single homeless man and woman, himself in one of his many properties or those of his father. But he doesn't. The royals must go - the whole parasitic lot of them! They should be expropriated and all their property opened up to free public use.

US poverty and British poverty

Just before the US elections, *The Economist* ran an editorial entitled "America's glorious economy should help Kamala Harris", saying that the increase in the gross domestic product (GDP) of 2.8% in the 3rd quarter of 2024 meant that "voters are starting to notice the good news just in time for the election".

Glorious economy? According to the US government's own figures, there were 43.3m people living below the poverty line in 2023 - and 2m more than the previous year. Like in Britain, foodbanks have reported an explosion in demand and homelessness is skyrocketing: by 2023 a record 653,104 homeless were identified in the US' annual federal survey - a 12% jump over the previous year!

And like in Britain, poverty does

not only hit the unemployed - it hits increasingly, workers with precarious jobs that do not pay a living wage! Median wages have, when adjusted to inflation, decreased by 4% in the past 2 years. When everything else has increased in price - official inflation was 8% in 2022, 4.1% in 2023 and is still 2.4% this year! Indeed, like in Britain, working full-time, or two or three jobs, does not even guarantee being able to afford the basics!

VALENCIA'S FLOODS: THE WORST NATURAL DISASTER IN SPAIN'S HISTORY

Europe

The floods across Spain on 29 October, affecting the low-lying plain of Valencia, Castilla-La Mancha and Andalusia, caused the deaths of 224 people. There are still 23 missing. Infrastructure and thousands of homes were destroyed. This was one of the deadliest natural disasters in Spanish history.

Three days of continuous heavy rain, had saturated the soil, ravines and rivers. In the town of Chiva 20 months-worth of rain fell in just 8 hours, turning roads into rivers. A 3-metre wave described as a "tsunami" carried with it debris and vehicles which crashed into buildings. Over 1.8m inhabitants of the region were affected; 700,000 had no water, food or electricity, and many remained trapped at home by the waters for 3 days.

Though similar torrential rain events had happened in the past in the region, the flooding was more intense due to climate change. Its catastrophic effects, however, were severely aggravated by the delayed and in fact careless disaster response of the regional and the national governments.

The failure of the local authority

It transpires that at least some of the devastation, drowning and harm, could have been prevented. The State Weather Forecast AEMET only switched to a red alert at 7am on the third day of rain when flood waters had already built up. But at least they did alert the public. That was not the case for the region's Conservative president Carlos Mazón. He was entertaining a journalist to lunch when authorities tried to call him, but he didn't answer his phone. An emergency alert was only sent to all cell phones after 8pm that day, when the water level was already high enough to reach the window of a lorry - and in fact many people were already drowning.

During the first 3 days of the flood there was no sign of firemen, policemen or soldiers - the first firemen who arrived were from Romania and France! In fact, soldiers stationed in barracks 40 minutes away from the affected areas were told



Volunteers at work sweeping up the mud

by their "superiors": "if you want to help, you will have to go during your days off".

This was Mazón's direct responsibility. After he was elected in 2023, he had shut down the Valencian Emergencies Unit which had been set up after floods killed 6 people in September 2019, in Vega Baja del Segura. He had considered it a "superfluous expense".

But not only that. On 25 October, a state agency AEMET meteorologist warned that the upcoming "cold drop" could become a high-impact storm. This was ridiculed and described as "alarmism".

Local people step in

Hundreds of volunteers walked for hours to reach the affected areas carrying backpacks with supplies. When these ran out, people had to "help themselves"; by taking supplies from flooded malls and shops. Big chains like Mercadona and Repsol (Spanish retail and gas giants) gave out nothing for free. They even called the police to intervene against "looting".

On Friday 1st November, the local government took over the aid effort. But did that mean actually helping the flood victims? In fact police started preventing volunteers from entering affected areas and tried to send them instead to clean up a Burger King or a Zara clothes shop. The volunteers refused to get out of the coach.

In many towns affected by the floods, volunteers arrived before the Military Emergencies Unit or the police. The army was only mobilised very late - and in fact the only explanation given for this was that it required president Mazón's formal request and he did not make it.

Throwing mud at the King

On Sunday 3rd November, when the worst was over, the King of Spain and his wife, Mazón, and "socialist" prime minister Pedro Sánchez were to visit Paiporta, one of the worst affected towns, where 62 people died. But crowds who had gathered to voice their grievances clashed with the police.

The visitors were welcomed with missiles of mud, shouts of "murderers!", "pick up a shovel and do some work too!". In an interview, a local said: "it's good they get some mud on them too! They are all the same dog with different collars - they just come here to get photographed!".

Sanchez and Mazón fled. But the King and Queen stood their ground in front of the angry crowds, which earned them some respect. Despite the king's "courage", his latest visit on 12 November took place at an army base.

On the weekend of the 9 November, protests against the government took place all over Spain. As many as 130,000 people marched in Valencia alone, calling for the resignation of Mazón, holding placards saying: "and you expected us to go to work?!"

Helping the bosses but not their workers

Articles in the media blamed the high death toll on people trying to move their cars to safety as the flood-wave approached. But in fact companies like DHL and Ford told their workers they must come to work - and many had to drive to get there, despite the red alert. Ford's huge factory is built on the Valencia flood plain to be near to the port. It had to evacuate its workforce when it flooded on day 3.

By now the working population is very angry. What has the government done except arrest over 100 people for "looting", and bring in 40 buses in order to ensure workers make a (quick!) return to work by 14 November. An "emergency" meeting with the Association of car manufacturers agreed a government subsidy for 100,000 replacement cars. But people will be forced to buy these to go to work. The government also said it would pay the wage bill for the emergency furlough period - workers will receive 70% of their wages with a contribution of 0% from companies. Has anything concrete been offered to ordinary people who lost everything due to the flood? No, at time of writing, they're still waiting for official help! □



King's Cross railway station (London)**• They leave us in darkness**

On 26 October this article appeared on the union website: "Night shifts are wrecking rail workers' health and family lives, RMT warns". So we wonder: why does this article not mention that union officials actually AGREED that we should work 12 hour night shifts, back to back? For instance in the case of GN station staff? We've complained about this over and over. We're told that "nobody" wants change. So we're "nobodies"? And our health doesn't matter? [King's X Workers' Platform 13/11/24]

• Joined-up fight needed

There's all the evidence needed to argue against such absurdly long and damaging shifts. Especially for older workers over 45/50 who're much more likely to have a stroke or heart attack.

Are we all working so much overtime and so many nights that we're too tired to do anything about it?! It's about time the whole union movement woke up and fought for workers' interests - and not only on this issue. No use the RMT banging on about it and doing nothing. [King's X Workers' Platform 13/11/24]

• Where is our pay rise?

Avanti West Coast RPOs still haven't had their pay rise! They were told that the fact that they are on a "management

contract" meant they'd be dealt with separately. This in itself is a little crazy because they certainly aren't treated like "managers". Anyway, one way or another they need their pay rise. In fact, they're already (over-) due another one! [King's X Workers' Platform 13/11/24]

• We are all "everyday people"

One of the problems of the fragmentation of the railway - which we fully expect the new government to sort out (ha-ha) - is that it's resulted in too many "different strokes for different folks" (Sly and the Family Stone; 1969, Everyday People - have a listen!). So RPOs on LNER, unlike GN, got their pay rise - even with a "management contract"... [King's X Workers' Platform 13/11/24]

• Unfit for purpose

Given that Network Rail has turned stations into shopping malls, passengers have almost nowhere comfortable and warm to sit and wait for their trains. At St Pancras there's only a small space inside the ticket office. But given us workers share the problem of nowhere to rest our feet, perhaps a petition demanding proper mess rooms and waiting rooms in all stations is overdue. [King's X Workers' Platform 13/11/24]

• The information we need

By the way, why are the seats for passengers at the Euston shopping mall



in places where the information screens can't be seen? We think it's time to bring the big screens on the main concourse back... and change them to their original purpose, which wasn't advertising, but to be a huge arrival and departure board. As would surely be expected in a railway station? [King's X Workers' Platform 13/11/24]

• No "safe" food...

Thermometer probes which LNER onboard catering workers are meant to use to check the temperature of hot foods and the fridge temperature, either don't work or are missing... How are we meant to serve "safe" food without this test?? [King's X Workers' Platform 13/11/24]

• ... No service

Btw, managers come around checking to see if we are using these probes. So we know what we have to do: we should go check why they don't provide them! [King's X Workers' Platform 13/11/24]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**• Slower line, fewer lay-offs**

Most BMW and Staffline pay packets were docked last month because we're nearly all below the -300 hours limit now. And all because BMW keeps cutting our shifts! They say it's because they don't need so many cars. Well then, cut the line speed, not our shifts! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 05/11/24]

• From piranhas to sharks...

Rudolph contract workers are in no better position. We can't stay in negative WTA indefinitely, so the bosses say they'll take back what we "owe" next year. Working time account and this constant stop-start production, work for no-one but BMW's shareholders. [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 05/11/24]

• Same problem, WTA or no!

R&H agency and anyone else not given work when the lines aren't running, have also lost money again, as our hours were short. So we all want the same thing - pay for lay-offs! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 05/11/24]

• Open the doors!

As usual, R&H workers are being kept in

the dark about the pay negotiations - and even what "our" pay claim is! Apparently, it will be "put together and presented to the company" on our behalf... For the time being, all we know is that a meeting is scheduled for the 21st November - a Thursday, so maybe we can all go along and find out what's happening. [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 05/11/24]

• Where's our pay rise?!

Us agency workers at Planet Recruitment, get paid as little as £11.50/hr! And the few who've got a permanent contract at the quality control contractor, G&P, don't get much more - £12.50/hr... but we haven't had any sign of a pay offer yet!

PS: Since we're all (agency and permanent) doing the same job... why are we not getting the same pay?? [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 05/11/24]

• A collective "holiday"?

This year, hardly any of us have had any choice over when we take our holidays. Either we've had to use them to cover for shutdowns, or BMW tells us when we have to take them. Now we hear that next year they might all be fixed for us! And Unite union leaders are just going to wave this through! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 05/11/24]

**• More "rework" than "work"**

Apparently convertible production is going to increase, with more of these models due to come down the line, until every third car is a soft-top. As far as we're concerned, it's going to end up the same as the last new model - in Rework! The line is too fast! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 05/11/24]

• We can't grow more limbs

Do managers get confused by the name "water spiders" [workers delivering parts to the assembly line]? They seem to think we actually do have 8 limbs, and can therefore move twice as many parts! In fact, when they realise we don't and can't, they try to move us around to fill in for their shortage of workers. But that doesn't work either! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 05/11/24]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**From our friends in the North**

We're heading into the busiest time of the year wondering just how much busier it can get. Every bit of our working day is full and just keeps getting fuller. It's no wonder not all the deliveries go out and if they do, they get brought back. We could spend all day every day out until past our bedtimes, but no one wants to do this overtime, and it's the same the next day.

Mind you it might be warmer staying outside for longer. Turns out the heating is being rationed now. It comes on if the

"centralised heating controller" decides to put it on. What a job that must be. We wondered if this master of the heating shares an office with the keeper of paper hand towels. Another cost saving exercise. How long before the penny drops that we're now using more toilet roll to do the job of the paper towels?

We know it's the same everywhere but the amount of workers who arrive one day and never come back is astounding. This used to be a job that workers



wanted. It takes a few glances to see that the new arrivals are gobsmacked by what they are seeing and hearing. It's nothing like they were promised on the zoom call interview. Can you believe these workers were lied to? They can't and they return the favour by voting with their feet. ☐

• This is a collective issue!

That tiny compensation that management promised part-timers who were forced into cutting their shift hours and/or shift allowances earlier this year hasn't been paid fully to all of us yet!

So now there is a grievance form going around, which we're supposed to fill-in individually. But this is a collective grievance! So shouldn't we demand payment collectively?

PS: In fact what we all want is for the bosses to reinstate our previously contracted hours and allowances! We never agreed for these to be cut!

[Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant Mail Centre 30/10/24]

• No to these tests!

We can't believe management's latest: they want to introduce random alcohol and drug tests! And managers have the cheek to tell us that this is because they "care" about our health?! We would laugh, if we weren't so angry! We know perfectly well that they will use this to lie and sack us - that's what they do. We will not agree to these tests, full stop. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant Mail Centre 30/10/24]

• No answer to the real problems

Of course management couldn't give a monkey's when it comes to our health. We are all sustaining injuries to our joints, backs, and muscles from the bloody repetitive movements we do in processing, and the heavier and heavier

parcels we have to deal with! Yet all that's on offer from RM in response to the damage they do to us, are physio videos which are not just useless, but in some cases could make things much worse!

[Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant Mail Centre 30/10/24]

• Prices need pruning!

The newly-refurbished canteen could have done with serious "refurbishment" of its prices too. Now that we pay per item (per portion of rice or meat or vegs), our wallets feel the pain... We're paying up to, or even sometimes more than, £5 per meal. Cheaper than restaurants outside, but still too high for the wages we get in here!

[Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant Mail Centre 13/11/24]

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**• Let's hear every word!**

The union leaders didn't even bother to put management's 1% joke pay offer to the vote... It would have been a waste of time and paper. But while we agree with them on this one point, we don't agree they should hold meetings with management behind closed doors or take decisions - not even the smallest ones - behind our backs.

The talks on the pay deal need to be held with our full participation; technology today would, after all, allow full transparency! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham Engine Plant 06/11/24]

• A bit of a surprise

Last Wednesday, we were quite pleasantly surprised to see some of the foremen on picket line duty at Thames Avenue and Ceme gates - along with the few remaining staff members. And it was good to hear how angry they are against Ford bosses. We look forward to seeing them on our picket lines soon... [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham Engine Plant 06/11/24]

• Anarchy needed

In fact Ford managers' pay offer isn't

resolved yet - not since last year. So one has to wonder what's in it for Ford bosses to allow a situation to develop where their supervisors and managers are in dispute? Aren't these the guys Ford relies upon to maintain discipline in the plant?

PS: by the way, if everything runs smoothly without the suits' and blue shirts' usual "motivation", they'll be proving they're not really needed... So they'd better ensure it doesn't! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham Engine Plant 06/11/24]

• The wrong options

The so-called Valencia trains are finished and gone. These were the trains transporting 3rd-party goods from the swap-pitch area (between DDC and DEP) to Europe. It means that at least 8 of our Transport Ops Rail workmates are meant to be given other jobs. But different options are being offered to them, with different Ts & Cs! When they need equivalent options on exactly the same terms! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham Engine Plant 06/11/24]

• Enough "rolling"!

Us temps were told there will be a review of our rolling contracts in late November...



But why should we be "reviewed" in the first place?! Many of us have been here for 2 years - some of us even 3...! In fact, we were told we would be given a contract after 2 years, but the wait keeps getting longer... It's a long time since we've discussed how to stop them from taking the p**... [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham Engine Plant 06/11/24]

• Gearing up for strike

LLL workers are still waiting to hear the result of the ballot on the pay offer which most of us rejected. What's taking so long? Anyway, what's obviously needed is a serious offer this time from LLL: a decent pay rise this time, full, unconditional OSP and lay-off pay included!! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham Engine Plant 06/11/24]

International

SUDAN'S ENDLESS CIVIL WAR AND
IMPERIALISM'S RESPONSIBILITY

On September 6, the UN called for a 'peacekeeping' intervention in Sudan's civil war - a brutal conflict which began in April 2023 between two rival army factions, the Sudanese Army Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), contending for power. Now the UN has discovered evidence of "crimes against humanity". Satellite images revealed an estimated 150,000 bodies piling in the streets of the capital Khartoum, trucks getting rid of bodies in the river Nile and fires ravaging harvests meant to feed 18m people. This, as 10m people have been displaced and 5m are already starving.

An article in *The Economist* entitled "Why the catastrophic war in Sudan is the world's problem" highlighted what the British ruling class is really worried about: Red Sea trade - 17% of which is British trade, worth £129b/year and the fact that all South Sudan's oil passes through Port Sudan in the North. Then there's the ever-worsening refugee crisis: "60% of refugees in Calais are already Sudanese"... As of 14 November 2024, at least 61,000 people had been killed in Khartoum State alone. Over 7.7 million have been internally displaced and more than 2.1 million others have fled the country as refugees. The Economist did not, however argue that "the world" (read world imperialism) may have helped cause the problem.

British colonial cause and effect

Several countries are intervening in the war to stake their claims, ending up on different sides in the conflict. The UAE supports the RSF and Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iran support the SAF - which is largely the old state army. In recent months Ukraine, armed by America and the EU, is apparently supporting the SAF, to counter Russian influence exercised through the Africa Corps, the new face of the Wagner Group, which supports the RSF! Anglo-American imperialism is probably arming both sides, to be sure to benefit when the war comes to an end.

A word on the US-Britain "special relationship"...

Today around 10,000 US soldiers and air personnel are stationed in 13 RAF-US bases around the country. They're not going anywhere. The British military hosts US operations in the Mediterranean and Near East via its base in Akrotiri Cyprus and the



Sudanese family waits at the Chad border after fleeing Darfur

If the UN is suddenly making an issue out of ongoing mass slaughter, it is probably only due to the stoppage of crude oil deliveries to Port Sudan (worth £7.1m/day) by the Sudanese Petroleum Ministry, due to an RSF attack on the Petrodar pipeline this summer. The South Sudanese government also recently blocked the sale of Malaysian company Petronas to British Savannah energy, taking over its assets instead in a quasi-nationalisation; which doesn't go down well with G7 politicians and the capitalists behind them.

No possible side

The RSF which is largely based on "irregulars" and rebel forces, has been the only side to turn up to the "peace" talks in Geneva - when it is actually the main target of genocide accusations. In fact, after its major role in the 2003 Darfur genocide, it followed this up by intervening in Yemen against the Houthis in 2014 - sending 6,000 soldiers on

behalf of the US/Saudi Arabia. It also intervened in Libya's civil war.

The SAF's record is scarcely better: it upheld the Sudanese dictatorship until Omar al-Bashir was overthrown by a popular movement in 2019, seizing power from the civilians who tried to form a government. By 2021 it had temporarily allied with RSF leaders to stage a coup. Now the two forces are fighting each other for top-dog position. And the powers of the region and beyond want to ensure they're on the side of the victor - and never mind the catastrophe bequeathed upon the population.

The Sudanese working class movement was one of the most powerful in the region - it even had one of the largest communist parties. It is the only force which could turn this situation around by fighting for all workers against all those who act to preserve the interests of the local and regional wealthy players and behind them, the imperialist thieves. □

Chagos Island, Diego Garcia. US jets and drones routinely take off from all of these airfields - whether to bomb Yemen, or supposed Al Qaeda-linked groups in North Africa, Syria or Iraq.

Trump won't change any of this. And Starmer will continue to take his orders, just as all British PMs took orders from Biden, Obama, Bush and Clinton... This may sound like bad news for all those

peoples on the receiving end of US-British combined gun power, like the Houthis in Yemen or the Palestinians in Gaza... But help for their struggle was never going to come from any of the imperialists (obviously) nor either from those other poodles of the US running semi-feudal dictatorships in the Arabian Gulf, who Trump intends to sign up as friends of the Israeli government.

MARTINIQUE: FIGHTING THE HIGH COST OF LIVING

Since the 1st September, hundreds of working class people and poor in Martinique, a small island in the French West Indies, have taken to the streets to protest over price increases. Martinique is an overseas department of France and integrated into the French political system. Yet prices there are even higher than on mainland France. A pack of milk costs 6.30 euros (£5.26) in France but 9.95 (£8.32) in Martinique. Or the staple dessert, apple puree, which only costs 1.49 euros (£1.25) in France costs 5.49 (£4.59) in Martinique - nearly 4 times as much!

Demonstrators blocked roads and the entrances to superstores belonging to wealthy capitalists, as well as blocking industrial estates. In mid-September, young people in the Sainte-Thérèse district of Fort-de-France clashed with police. The mobilisation spread to workers' organisations. On September 20, the CGT union of Martinique (CGTM)

filed a 24-hour renewable strike notice that is still running to date.

Negotiations between protesters and state representatives, plus large retailers and the CMA-CGM shipping group, are ongoing. An agreement to cut prices of only 6,000 products out of 40,000 was signed in mid-October, but it was rejected by the organisation leading the protests - the Rally for the Protection of Afro Caribbean People and Resources. They want prices aligned with France at the very least. And incidentally, CMA-CGM, made more than £19bn in profits last year!

The achievements made so far in getting prices down are entirely thanks to the "street" protesters and workers tipping the balance of power in their favour. They can achieve even more by extending their fight to nearby Guadeloupe, Guiana and even Reunion - which all still remain, incredibly, under French rule and under the same

Police advance toward a roadblock erected by anti-cost-of-living activists, Case-Pilote, Martinique



extortionate pricing regime. The workers and poor of Martinique have shown the way forward. □

HAITI: GANG-RULE CONTINUES

Haiti's powerful armed gangs hold political power. Their violence has forced more than 700,000 people from their homes and killed over 4,000 this year alone.

The interim Conille government has been fired and a new prime minister has just been sworn in: Alix Didier Fils-Aime, who owns a dry-cleaning business, sits on the board of a bank and will now have to take over the utterly corrupt political mess

which is presided over by the so-called presidential council. Critics say "he has no political experience" but that will hardly be a problem, since he's presiding over gang-warfare and corruption, not politics! He is the 7th PM since 2020.

His predecessor, Conille had been trying to restore a semblance of law and order so that businesses could resume, but the UN-backed security force led by 400 Kenyan

police officers which arrived last month has, very predictably, had little effect.

Indeed, the gangs operate with the complicity of the elite, politicians, and the police. They are an integral part of state operations. And today, they are better armed, better organised, more experienced.

But they're still only a tiny minority compared to the vast number of working class and poor people who oppose them. When people have organised to take action against them, they've managed to fight back and force the gangsters to flee. Regardless of the current anti-gang rhetoric of the police and government, they know very well that it is naive to trust them.

In the end, effective resistance against the gangs will involve workers and poor developing and implementing a general plan, going beyond rooting out petty gangsters; they will need to root out the system of brutal capitalist exploitation run by the crooks at home and in the US - which is killing them just as surely, through the violence of poverty. □



Residents flee their homes during clashes between police and gang members in Port-au-Prince, Haiti

How borders kill, from east to west

This year more than 50 asylum-seekers died crossing the English Channel - the highest number for any year since 2018. But 32,900 crossed safely. The odds on dying are only 0.15%.

Before any refugee ever gets to Britain they must find routes out of their own countries. Many who flee war and poverty in Africa and the Middle East undertake the so-called "Eastern route", to reach the Gulf states. And they end up in rusty boats which often sink. In October two such boats carrying 310 migrants sank off the coast of Djibouti;

45 were confirmed drowned and another 62 unaccounted for. Last year, this route was taken by an estimated 400,000 migrants - and 700 died in the process.

The "Western route" across the Mediterranean is heavily patrolled these days by police coast guards from both the EU and Libya. Nevertheless crossings happen every day. This year alone, as many as 1,721 people are known to have drowned, adding to the "known dead" since 2014, totalling 30,625. But it's impossible to ascertain the real number since many drown without any one knowing about it.

Nevertheless, refugees are willing to risk everything. And not because

"people smugglers" persuade them to do so as Keir Starmer insists. Migrants existed long before there was such a trade as people-smuggling.

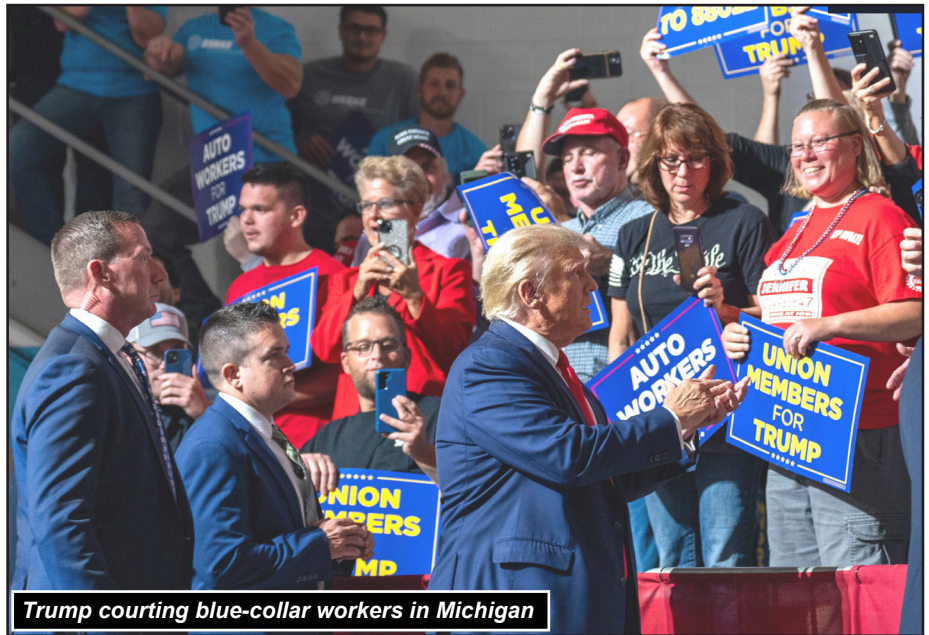
There are "illegal" migrants all over the world (including from Haiti) because the rich countries' politicians have closed all legal routes of access for them. The criminal gangs who exploit them would collapse overnight, the minute migration became free and legal. And spreading all over the wealthy "North" the migrants would reinforce the working class in ways which Starmer and his counterparts dread. Which is probably why, despite their rhetoric, they'd prefer the gangs to keep going.

US ELECTIONS: A NO-CHOICE FOR THE WORKING CLASS!

It wasn't a surprise that Trump won the US presidential election; the polls had been predicting all along that he'd beat Democrat candidate, Kamala Harris - but maybe by a smaller margin. Although this wasn't the slam-dunk for Trump it is made out to be. The final result gave him 76,412,135 votes (50.1%) and Harris 73,706,991 votes (48.3%) - so in fact there's not even 5% difference. Nor was the turnout a "record high", even though pollsters said it was: 62.3% of the electorate voted compared to 65% in 2020 when apparently a record was set...

So, not much enthusiasm for US "democracy" in the Land of the Free and the Brave, after all. One in three potential voters didn't vote and 20m (out of a total US population of 346m) didn't even make it onto the electoral register: either because they're not yet US citizens or, in the case of certain states, they were disqualified from voting because they've been convicted of a felony (would Trump himself have been able to vote in this election?! But this means that almost half of those of voting age did not even participate in this "democratic" charade!

The two main parties, Republican and Democrat, didn't fare well. Trump did not get many more votes compared to 2020, when he lost the



Trump courting blue-collar workers in Michigan

election to Biden. As for Harris, she got 7.5m fewer votes than Biden did in 2020... reflecting the contempt that voters felt for the party in power. Around 2m people voted for independents, Greens or socialists, even a "Working Class Party" (see below) knowing this was a mere gesture, but at least it was a way for them to express their opposition to this dead-end, two-party system which actually ensures no change.

Because, despite the media's constant refrain that this was the

"most divisive" election in US history, the reality is that both candidates stood on the very same side of the class divide. Harris never questioned the interests of big business; nor of course, did Trump, a big businessman himself! And if the capitalist class wants the screw turned harder today on the working class, whoever is president will comply. That's how the system is designed and that's how the system works! And that's why it needs changing! ☐

For the building of a Working Class Party!

There was, however, one "party" standing - well actually a small group which talked about the need for a different kind of politics... which took the opportunity during these elections to address itself to workers: The Working Class Party. Supported by the Trotskyist organisation known as "Spark", its candidates - fifteen in Michigan, one in Illinois and one in California - exposed the two big parties as "defenders of the capitalist system, ruled by its drive for profit". And they argued for a "working class program to combat the crises of capitalism": to fight against inflation by "increasing wages and pensions whenever prices increase"; to fight against unemployment by "dividing

the available work among everyone who wants to work"; to fight over the control of the economy and to "defend our own class as capitalism moves toward war".

These activists took the opportunity of this election to say that workers' conditions won't change with an election, but that "we can use this election to speak, to show there are tens of thousands of people who want to fight for a program like this". Where they were, they got a very warm response. In the end their candidates received a total of 109,100 votes in nine congressional districts where they were present: seven in Michigan, one in Illinois and one in California.

Seven other candidates ran for State Representative in districts around Detroit and received 10,179 votes. And 408,942 voted for two Working Class Party candidates in Michigan for statewide education positions. In fact their votes were all up on last time they stood!

Compared to the Democrats' and Republicans' armies of campaigners and the record \$4bn spent on their campaigns and with the whole capitalist media on their side, the Working Class Party could never have competed. But that wasn't its aim: it provided the opportunity for hundreds of thousands of workers to say that they want to build their own party!

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:

BM Workers' Fight - LONDON WC1N 3XX.