

WORKERS' fight



No 159 - 13 Jan 2025

price 50p

<http://www.w-fight.org>
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ISSN 2040-400X

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

THEY CAN PUT OUT A FIRE IN CALIFORNIA, BUT WHAT ABOUT THE FIRE IN GAZA?

Standing in front of her family's burnt-out home in Altadena, a woman said, "now I think I know what it feels like to live in Gaza". She went on to speculate about the difference between these two catastrophes: in Gaza, an entirely "man"-made war and in California, a natural disaster aggravated by human acts.

California's leaders did very little to prepare for the inevitable. They even made direct cuts to the fire service. During economic crises, public services are always first on the chopping board: in the US, just like in Britain. Politicians were loath to upset the super-wealthy who vote for them, in the richest state in the USA... which, if it was a country, would be the world's 6th largest economy.

So all that wealth which could have been mobilised to implement preventive measures, was left in the owners' private piggy banks. Those responsible put cost and expediency (and corruption) before safety. There's a parallel with London's Grenfell Tower fire, even if the scale isn't anywhere near comparable.

And let no-one ask either, whether the vast conurbations of San Francisco and LA, should exist where they are in the first place, given that the whole Californian West Coast is at risk of major earthquakes! Humankind has the knowledge to avoid such catastrophes. But this will never happen under a system based on capitalism's anarchy and "private profit before safety"!

Gaza turned into ashes and rubble

So what about ruined and burnt-out Gaza? At the time of writing a time-frame is being discussed for a cease-fire and captive exchange.

Fifteen months since this one-sided war on the Palestinians escalated, dozens are still being killed every single



On the ground in Gaza (Reuters)

day. Of course, there's no credible comparison between California's "most destructive" fire ever - with a death toll (not final) of just 24 - and the carnage in Gaza. The Gazan authorities report 46,600 deaths to date, although the Israeli regime claims this to be an exaggeration.

Quite the contrary. The Lancet medical journal said the death toll by June 2024 was 41% more (over 64,000), explaining that officials in Gaza cannot identify many of the dead, due to the increasing attrition suffered by the population.

Anyway, for the Israeli army, everyone is a "justified" target, men, women, children, doctors, nurses, aid workers and in particular, local journalists.

The blood on their hands

Israeli Cabinet Ministers Smotrich and Ben Gvir say they'll collapse the government if a cease-fire deal is reached. But that would cut the branch they sit on (and ring a political death knell for Netanyahu) so this is most likely an empty threat.

However, it's precisely this "empty threat" which has prevented a cease-fire up to now. Biden, Starmer, Macron, Scholz, etc., went along with this. Biden could have stopped this war any time he chose. By not doing so, he has allowed the Israeli far-right to dictate an agenda which aims openly at the genocidal annihilation of Gaza's population, so that Israeli settlers can move in.

Trump's threat that "all hell will break loose" if a hostage release isn't sealed before his inauguration, concentrated minds. Of course, hell already reigns in Gaza, so it's no doubt the hell at home that Biden fears.

Unlike the Californian wildfires which can be quelled when the wind stops blowing, the quelling of the war in Gaza won't come out of a hostage deal. It depends on the future collective victory of the workers and poor of the whole region against the imperialists and their Israeli proxy, alongside the Palestinians, coming together to build a united socialist states of the peoples of the Middle East... ☐

International

Trump's presidency: one face for his electorate, another for the capitalist class

Trump, who'll take office as US president on 20 January, has already announced a host of controversial appointees to his administration. Tesla/SpaceX/X billionaire Elon Musk is making sure he gets the most attention, especially here in Britain, with his far-right tweets, support for Tommy Robinson (ditching Nigel Farage) and unhinged attacks on Starmer and MP Jess Phillips who he accused of being responsible for allowing genocidal rape by grooming gangs (X-code for Musk's whipping up of anti-Muslim hatred), while also asserting his support for Germany's hard-right AfD party...

Everything and its opposite?

But Musk, for one, hasn't even been offered an official post. He and the slightly less rich tech multimillionaire, Vivek Ramaswamy are meant to lead a new Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE)... Musk is already claiming that he'll find savings of over \$2 trillion, while Ramaswamy is rooting for abolishing the government's tax agency - the equivalent of HMRC - and doing away with taxes altogether. And no doubt Musk wants any spare government cash to subsidise his Mars project!

Making Greenland great?

As for Trump's grandiose statements - from taking back the Panama Canal, buying Greenland, suggesting that Canada become the USA's 51st state to avoid his tariffs (and why not Britain too?) - these are no doubt designed to maintain his outrageous populist image.



Behind the scenes, Washington's officials will be ensuring that the US capitalist class and Wall Street are not disturbed too much by any of this.

In fact since Trump's re-election in November, US stock markets have reached record highs. US bosses certainly expect more deregulation and generous state handouts. In other words, Trump's presidency will be "business as usual". Anyway, in the state offices which take care of the capitalist economy, Trump has put in place competent bankers and hedge-fund managers.

Anti-war appointee

On the other hand, Trump appointed as National Intelligence Director, Tulsi

Gabbard, an ex-army officer who used to be a supporter of the left-reformist Bernie Sanders. Her view is that the Ukraine war could have been avoided, but instead was deliberately provoked by Biden and Nato. Similarly she is against the US intervention in the Middle East. Perhaps not such a stupid appointment...

For the moment though, Musk can hog the limelight with his outbursts on "X" (in the first week of January, he posted on "X" 1180 times - that's 7 posts, every single hour, for a week straight!) at least until Trump is sworn in at the end of January. But at some point, Trump will rein him in - and in turn be reined in himself by his own "boss", US finance capital... and who knows, his anti-war Intelligence chief?

Ukraine/Russia war: the resistance against being slaughtered

On a trip to Kiev in December, British Secretary of State for Defence John Healey met with his Ukrainian counterpart and promised to ramp up supplies of maritime drones, artillery and air defences to "accelerate lethal aid" to Zelensky. But the plan doesn't stop there. Healey also

suggested that Britain could send troops to Ukraine for training missions. In fact, under operation Interflex, British armed forces and 12 other partner nations have trained, sometimes on Ukrainian soil, over 50,000 Ukrainian soldiers.

In the third year of this war, Zelensky,

like Putin, is facing issues of soldier recruitment. Putin has resorted to borrowing troops from North Korea. On the other hand in Ukraine, videos have shown Ukrainian brigades dragging off the street men who had not registered for service. There have been protests at recruitment centres, with families demanding the release of men that were theoretically exempt from conscription, yet were forcibly detained by these "recruitment brigades".

And no wonder resistance to recruitment is increasing - on both sides. According to Zelensky, 43,000 Ukrainians have been killed in this war so far - certainly an underestimate. And with more long-range missiles, drones and glide-bombs in use, the number of Ukrainian civilians killed has now reached 12,300. So while Ukrainian and Russian soldiers continue to be slaughtered at the front, British politicians, from the comfort of their offices, continue to support this bloodbath!



Railways

Avanti workers strike... separately!

Two sections of Avanti West Coast workers have been taking strike action against the company - but separately and for different reasons over the past weeks.

Revenue Protection Officers walked out from 27 to 29 December because they have not received a long-overdue pay rise. Their counterparts in the other Train Operating Companies were included in the collective RMT union-negotiated pay rise which was awarded in November - albeit after a protracted delay. However these RPOs were left out, because they were mistakenly regarded as coming under management collective bargaining. For now a 4.5% pay increase remains on the table but the multi-tier and temporary employment contracts have not been scrapped. So this dispute is not over.

The guards try to take care of themselves

In the meantime, the guards - AKA "train managers" have been on strike, on 31 December and 2 January, and more strikes are planned every Sunday from 12 January to 25 May. But on their own...

This strike is about rest day working, because the real managers, their bosses, have been working on guards' rest days since there are not enough guards to cover. And these managers have been paying themselves a premium of £300 for the shift! So the RMT union has called a dispute on guards' behalf demanding that they are offered the rest-day work themselves and paid the same as the managers.

Aren't rest days for rest?

What was conspicuous about the stance of the full-time union official (in fact John Leach, Deputy General Secretary of the union) in a TV interview, was that he did not mention the underlying problem - which is not enough guards on the trains due to Avanti's preference to save money on labour costs rather than pay for a large enough workforce. Nor did he even mention the fact that no trade unionist should be arguing for MORE unsafe, unhealthy overtime! No, he complained that it was unfair that the management was hogging the rest-day overtime, "which my members are



Avanti strikers in Glasgow Central

quite prepared to work" and then unfairly paying themselves more for it!

And they're also for sectional strikes!

Yes, this is level to which trade-unionism has sunk! And that's not to mention the fact that these same RMT full time officials consider that there is no reason to bring the guards and RPOs together, to strike on the same days, preferring maximum disruption (for passengers!) to maximum working class force! Yes, as if a combined strike of guards and RPOs would not only make for a stronger strike, but also make it harder for the bosses to run the few trains they still manage to put into service... So for now, the separate strikes drag on...

The media muddle

The media has made a big fuss about the disruption caused by these strikes, but this is nothing compared to the "normal" chaos caused by the Avanti bosses' record underinvestment.

According to the Office of Rail and Road, while train cancellations across Britain's rail network averaged 4% in the year to 9 November 2024, Avanti had the worst record, with 8%! In fact Avanti passengers may well not have noticed that the trains were not running due to the strikes because they are so used to

being let down by "normal" delays and cancellations!

... and it reacts...

Despite the minimal impact of the Avanti strikes, the right wing media decided to make a meal out of them. No doubt it is still suffering apoplexy over the train drivers' 3-year pay settlement which the then Transport minister Louise Haigh made in September - which it says "cost the taxpayer" £135m! An article duly appeared in the Times on 29 December entitled "Rail unions have the country in a choke-hold. What's their secret?" blaming the unions for the state of the railways! "For many commuters, the railway unions' resistance to modernisation, coupled with demands for ever higher pay, explain the persistent omni shambles endured by commuters"!

In fact low pay prevails

The reporter claims that "Rail sector salaries have outstripped counterparts elsewhere", citing high wages paid to drivers. But of course they are an exception and some of the lowest paid workers are to be found in the railways with some - even in London - paid the minimum wage or just above it. And these are not only those who are subcontracted, like cleaners, but also those directly employed by the Train Operating Companies, like, for example, gate workers for the now government-owned LNER!

Managers... on strike?

The media had a problem however, when it came to the Avanti guards' strike. As mentioned above, they are called "train managers"... So for instance City AM's reporters couldn't make head or tail of the strike, reporting that one group of "managers" were striking against another group of "managers"... and Times radio reported on this strike very sympathetically - since, after all, it's managers, not lowly workers, who are on strike!!



Educating us?

World leading education? Not really!

At the moment, the government's "Children's Wellbeing and Schools" bill, is passing through parliament. It's quite a big deal, in fact.

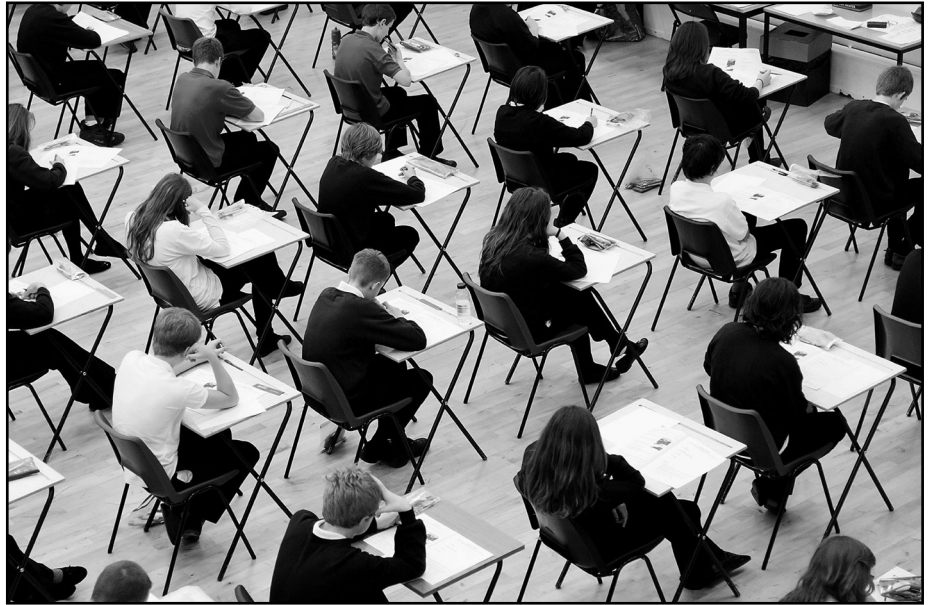
It proposes, among other things, to reform some aspects of the academy school system. These "academy" schools would now have to follow the national curriculum, and pay their teachers the same salary as teachers in Local Authority (LA) schools. Also, "failing" LA schools will no longer be forced to convert into academies.

While the academy system was first brought in under Tony Blair, it was the Tory governments which really expanded academies, so that today, they make up 80% of all secondary schools. With a Labour government now proposing some changes, most of the media (and most of it is Tory-supporting) has leapt to academies' defence!

The leaning tower of PISA

They say that Tory education ministers did a sterling job, improving pupil outcomes over the past 14 years. In particular, the "PISA" results are quoted - a survey done every few years of 81 countries' education systems.

In 2009, England ranked 27th for maths, and 25th for reading. The last survey was carried out in 2022, reporting its results in December 2023. It ranked English school pupils 11th for maths and 13th for reading. And this is now quoted repeatedly (as recently as the beginning of January 2025 in the *Economist* for instance) as evidence of the Tories' good work in educating our kids!



However, the government website reveals the truth: it states that the 2022 PISA sample was too small to be regarded as accurate and that "higher performing pupils may be overrepresented in the final sample". This means that "some of the PISA results may therefore be somewhat higher than they might otherwise be".

No general knowledge

Anyway, if pupils' performance in "PISA" had actually improved, what would that mean?

Every year, 35-40% of 16 year-olds still don't pass English or Maths GCSE.

And this is despite the fact that schools have been turned into exam factories. Students in England spend 31.5 hours taking GCSE exams, more than most other countries (e.g. 10 hours in Canada, 4 in Australia). Even one of the main exam boards, OCR, says that there are too many exams and that students' education is too narrow.

Unfortunately, abolishing exam-obsession and broadening education - especially the final two school years (A levels) which only require students to study a minimum of 2 subjects - is not part of the government's Schools Bill.

• Dis-educating the population

Last month, the OECD (an organisation of rich countries) published its "Adult Skills Survey". In the 31 countries studied, literacy skills only improved in two countries (Finland and Denmark), over the past ten years. In every other country, adult literacy skills stayed the same or got worse. In the US, one in

three adults scored the lowest level, equivalent to the expected ability of a 10 year old. In England, this was one in five adults.

Nonetheless, according to the survey, even though nearly 20% of English adults can only "understand short texts when information is clearly indicated", this is

enough to put England in the top ten performing countries (behind Finland, Norway, Sweden, Netherlands, Belgium, Estonia and Japan)! So what this survey really shows, is that the richest countries in the world do not teach the basics of human culture to a large proportion of their populations!

No family... no home?

Last October, the charity *Become* - for children in social care and the youth leaving social care - reported that in England, young adult care leavers aged 18-25 are over 9 times more likely to become homeless than their peers (a 9.13% chance compared to 0.97%). Moreover, over 4,300 young care leavers aged 18-20 were reportedly homeless by April 2024, a jump of 54% in five years. However, this number is likely to be even higher, because some young people might not report their housing situation, and might instead sleep rough, or sofa-surf.

In fact, when children turn 18, they

are no longer the responsibility of local authorities, and many are forced to move out of their foster homes - despite them still having the right to stay with their foster families, if both parties agree, until they turn 21. However, the report by *Become* found that in many cases, young people are not aware of this right.

Councils are predicting that rising costs in social care will mean that across England, they might have a funding gap of £54bn over the next 5 years, unless the government offers them extra money. That means that in the meantime, councils might decide to cut

spending on everyday services such as libraries, buses, road maintenance, and youth services.

At the Labour Party conference in September, Starmer said that young care leavers, military veterans and victims of domestic abuse will be exempt from local connection tests, which most councils use to decide who qualifies for social housing. However, the precarious situation of these three groups is just part of the wider economic and social crisis for the working and poor, which Labour has neither the plans, nor the intention, to solve.

Their society

Labour loses... to mass resignation

Labour has lost control of Broxtowe District Council, an area on the western edge of Nottingham combining residential suburbs and former coal mining towns along the Derbyshire boundary. Twenty councillors out of 26 abandoned the party whip to become independents on 2 January and are running the council as a minority administration.

Already several groups of councillors in north-west England and elsewhere stepped back from Labour in the autumn of 2023 in protest at Starmer's unconditional support for Israel's mass murder in Gaza. The Broxtowe councillors, however, are focused on Labour's social policies at home, citing the scrapping of winter fuel payments, raising the bus fare cap by £1, maintaining the Tories' two-child benefit cap and renegeing on a promise to compensate women for the raised pension age.

Rayner's reform rejected

They also took aim at Angela Rayner's plans to abolish two-tier local government and establish larger authority areas, headed by directly-elected mayors with sweeping powers (which could threaten Broxtowe's existence). They say that one of them, deputy council leader Greg Marshall, who had been selected by the local constituency party to fight the Broxtowe seat at the general election (with Labour odds-on to win it back from the Tories) was barred by regional officials who "imposed" Juliet Campbell instead.

Broxtowe council leader Milan Radulovic told the press: *"The hope over the previous 14 years of austerity and mismanagement of this country's finances and resources was that there was an opportunity for a new beginning. The word was change. What we didn't realise was what they meant was change for the worse. What we have seen since July is*

the abandonment of the working classes".

He predicted that under what he called Labour's proposed super councils, *"local elected members and local residents will have no say over the type and level of service provided in their area"*.

The last straw, apparently

Radulovic was a Labour member for 43 years, remaining loyal to Labour throughout the leaderships of Kinnock, Blair and Brown among others, despite the fact that they attacked the working class.

However, 14 years of austerity cuts have left council services decimated. Today, a Labour government is not only promising more (or worse) of the same but pulling the rug from under Labour councillors elected on the basis that things could only get better... And indeed, stealing their powers away from them. Whether this will seriously rock the Labour government's boat, however is another question... ☐

• Social care isn't an urgent priority?

Social care is in crisis. But there is no urgent plan to do anything about it. Instead the government proposes an independent commission to identify the issues (as if they are not obvious!) and first *"build cross-party consensus"* for a national care service. Which of course is

condemning the whole project to failure in advance.

As if there will ever be a consensus to take elderly social care out of the hands of the private sector - the mainly "for profit" private sector, at that - and "renationalise" it. And it makes tidy profits, too: to the

tune of £68.1 billion last year, in England alone, up 13.2% from the previous year.

If the problems are ever going to be sorted out the private sector has to be kicked out: and not only that, but elderly social care needs to be brought back under the NHS and made free at the point of use!

• As the NHS collapse continues...

Today, 7.5 million people are on NHS waiting lists and 40% are waiting longer than 4-5 months to see a consultant. Hospitals up and down the country have announced *"critical incidents"* due to the winter crisis. Flu cases have quadrupled compared to last year. Patients are waiting 50 hours in corridors to be seen.

But never mind: PM Starmer has personally announced a "solution": an *"Elective Reform Plan"*. Under his plan, healthcare comes DIY: patients with chronic conditions will have to monitor themselves at home, and GPs will get £20 every time they keep patients out of hospital. And never mind the 120,000 healthcare job vacancies, obviously the main problem. As the doctors' union

said: *"without the workforce to meet constantly rising demand, we will not see the progress we all hope for"*. The government isn't prepared to recruit, since, says Starmer, *"the NHS can't become the national money pit"*...

So, money being in short supply, existing NHS workers will have to increase their productivity! According to Starmer, the real problem is that *"NHS productivity can't bump along 11% lower than it was before the pandemic"*! So the workers need to work harder and longer - doing unsafe, back-breaking 12-hour shifts, evenings and weekends - as if healthcare provision was comparable to factory production!



Junk food is not the problem

The government apparently aims to reduce childhood obesity (a "huge" problem today!) by banning TV adverts for junk food products from October 2025.

One in five "Year 6" pupils, aged 10-11, were classified as obese in the last school year - an 18% increase since 2009. But how banning junk food

ads will help prevent kids from eating unhealthy food is unclear. Studies have been done. And what they find is that "healthy" food is three times more expensive than unhealthy, "junk" food. The poorest fifth of the population would need to spend half of their disposable income on food if they tried to stick to the government's recommended

healthy diet! The fact that they cannot afford good food is reflected in the fact that 12.9% of children from poor areas (2023/24 data), were classified as obese compared to 0.6% from the least-deprived areas. And ever-growing poverty that puts both adults' and childrens' health at risk - is all that's on offer, junk food ads or none.

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)

Ford's Lineside workers ballot for strike... alone?

In November last year, Lineside (LLL - subcontracted logistics) workers rejected the company's miserly 2.5% pay offer. 89% of 115 of us in the union Unite (out of a total workforce of 220, including temps) voted for strike action. We're not just refusing the miserly pay offer but also still demanding full occupational sick pay and full lay-off pay! In fact, we want parity with Ford workers.

True Christmas and New Year intervened, but it's now more than 2

months since we rejected the pay offer and Unite hasn't notified a strike date. Union officials say that on 16 January, they have a meeting with management and if a new offer is made, we'll be balloted... again! This is exactly the same garden path Unite officials led us up last year: we voted for strike, Unite officials took over control, misled us for 9 months (!) and then called the strike off!

This time, we will need to elect our own, fully accountable, strike committee



and control the strike ourselves. And since Ford, which pulls Lineside bosses strings, has announced 800 job cuts at the end of last year - joint action with Ford workers is in order! ☐

- **Enough fire and rehire!**

We were happy to find out last week that some former temp workmates who were sacked back in May are back in. The issue is, however, that it's still on "temporary" basis... and it's not even clear if their previous months' (or years!) of service will be counted! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 18/12/24]

- **We want to retire gracefully**

We can't really understand why these temps too, shouldn't get permanent

jobs. Management could start by getting them to replace, one for one, all those of us who just cannot wait any longer to retire. Of course we first want what's our due: a nice, beautifully wrapped, generous, special retirement package! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 18/12/24]

- **Not our problem**

Panther Machining has been chaotic lately! There were issues with the crank shafts, parts were badly washed and covered with chemical traces, and tests on new tools showed they were no good... So we're more than ready

to have a break and leave management to sort out this mess! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 18/12/24]

- **A new floating dock?**

It seems the jetty pontoon is about to float away as the brackets holding it to the jetty have rusted away and had to be removed.. The pontoon itself is filling with water too. Supervision were already told last January about this. But now the bollards are starting to fail.... Maybe when the ships refuse to berth they'll finally get it - in more ways than one? [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 18/12/24]

King's Cross railway station (London)

- **The snowman cometh**

Due to "bad weather" (of course, highly usual at this time of year!) the trains are suffering cancellations, delays etc. It seems that the railway bosses have just dropped down from another planet and have no idea what "typical British winter weather" looks like... nor what "on earth" to do about it. [Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 08/01/25]

- **Organising chaos**

Since LNER workers living in Peterborough have to rely on GN/Thameslink trains to go home they need these trains to be running when they finish work... But on Xmas eve, the last GN/Thameslink trains were scheduled to stop running before the last LNER trains - which would have left staff and passengers stranded. Do the managers of these two companies actually communicate their plans with each other? Ever? [Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 08/01/25]

- **The solution?**

At least this is one problem which could - and should - be resolved by the forthcoming "renationalisation", which is meant to put all companies under one central management (except nobody is providing any real detail!). But if not, it can be resolved by us putting our feet

down (or up)! [Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 08/01/25]

- **Back to the full monty**

The last day for on-board LNER train Christmas Menu was the 6 January, i.e., Twelfth Night! But there was no traditional "galette des rois" or "Roscón de reyes" (Kings' cake or ring) on the menu, to mark this day! And why not? After all, we can bake a cake in the on-board kitchens - if the oven door isn't falling off!

PS: Jokes aside, punters are looking forward to going back to the usual menu... since for instance, and inexplicably, the full English breakfast wasn't offered over Xmas... [Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 08/01/25]

- **Wasting our time and energy**

EMR gate workers were sent to Euston between 21 and 29 Dec, because no trains left St Pancras. But we'd never been to Euston before, and had no idea about any of the emergency provisions on the station - we should have been shown where safety equipment like fire extinguishers was, and first aid, resuscitators etc... We didn't even have a place to leave our stuff. Yes, the bosses thought we should stand like robots at the gates for 4 hours... [Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 08/01/25]



- **Staying put**

For passengers, the cancellation of EMR trains in fact meant that the best alternative was to catch a train from KX to connect for East Midland destinations - so we should really have been sent to KX. Next time we'll follow the example of the guards who just refused to go anywhere else - and stayed in the St Pancras mess-room! [Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 08/01/25]

- **Making matters worse**

By the way, EMR managers said that during the 4 days when the trains weren't running the gates would be "refurbished"... But when we came back, the desk we use - and the heaters (!!)- had been removed! Is that "refurbishment"? Or management vandalism? [Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 08/01/25]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)

Our Friends from the North

That was the worst Christmas we've ever endured. Nothing is limitless but you would not believe it from what we put up with. Our job has become the dumping ground for the final delivery mile. All the other firms have a limit. Not us at RM; they just keep piling the work into the offices. So our breaking points were reached - and the whole thing fell apart!

None of us believe that the sale to Kretinsky is going to make our lives

better. All we can see happening is a raid on our pensions, a dash for cash and the government left with the "golden liability". Christmas 2025 will be completely different to 2024. Many of us won't be here any more. Nor will letters.

And now our seniority has been thrown in the bin. No one knows of anyone who is going to get the full time jobs which have become vacant. They should have gone to letter carriers in order of seniority. However it appears



the office favourites will be rewarded for their obedience. The part timers are rightly furious. Here comes the year of chaos. ☐

• He's committed, or should be...

When the government signed-off Daniel Kretinsky's EP Group deal to buy RM last month, it claimed it had agreed "legally binding commitments". According to Business Secretary Jonathan Reynolds, the most important of these were to keep RM HQ in Britain and "protect the brand"...! And, when he was asked repeatedly in parliament to confirm that jobs were protected, he merely answered that the CWU was "speaking positively" about the deal too... [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 08/01/25]

• Already in bed with Daniel

In fact CWU leaders have made their own deal with EP Group, details of which they have sent to us on WhatsApp. It runs to 12 pages, and also claims to be "legally binding" (unless of course "the very future of the business is threatened", hmm, where have we heard that before) - like the "commitment" to "no compulsory redundancies"...[Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 08/01/25]

• We can't accept this!

Worst of all, union leaders have now signed up to piloting the "new Universal Service Obligation" (to deliver to all addresses), even though Ofcom has yet to publicly confirm any changes! So, 37 DOs next

month (including "W" Deliveries here, and North Finchley and Stoke Newington) will only be delivering 1st Class and parcels 6 days a week - and 2nd class and DSA on alternate days of the week... that is, 2 or 3 days per week! And of course, cutting deliveries would mean getting rid of jobs. How can we agree to this pilot!? [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 08/01/25]

• Cheaper to fly to france!

First class is so expensive (£1.65!) that someone on LBC summed it up like this: if you have 100 Xmas cards to post, it's cheaper to buy a return flight to France, post the Xmas cards in France, and fly back! We also reckon, much quicker... [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 08/01/25]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)

• Bosses and shareholders must pay out!

As far as we know, bosses and union officials have been "negotiating" our pay deal, due this year, for months already. All we've heard are rumours. Of course, we know the bosses will try to justify some low offer, by referring to all sorts of "economic headwinds". But how can the attitude of any union official be to go along with this (as we've heard), saying "let's be thankful we don't get a pay cut"?! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 14/01/25]

• We need a cash injection

Just because the bosses claim poverty,

we're meant to give up our own economic interests? We have our own "economic headwinds", and our pockets are not as deep as the bosses! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 14/01/25]

• Sit down, sit down!

We have barely come back, and already we're building "over the target"! Instead of the 380 cars, by the end of the shift, we'd made 420... As auto workers in Detroit used to sing: "Sit down and rest your feet, sit down you've got them beat"! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 14/01/25]

• It had better be good

As for R&H's pay offer, up for discussion



behind closed doors on Wednesday, it's going to have to do two things to be acceptable to us. First, it must more than compensate us for cuts in our wages from shift changes and inflation. And second, it must scrap the periodic raids on our wages to "pay for" BMW's shut-outs. [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 14/01/25]

Luton Stellantis plant closure - real fightback needed!

On 26 November, Stellantis (parent company of Vauxhall) announced the closure of the Vauxhall Motors factory in Luton which produces the Vivaro van. Stellantis wants to make the 2,000 workers on site redundant by April.

The company, which made £18.6bn in profits in 2023 (an 11% increase), blames the closure on the required 2030 deadline for EVs and "Chinese competition". There is talk of 600

workers to be transferred to the Vauxhall Ellesmere Port factory (Cheshire) where electric van production, originally planned for Luton, is already starting. One worker commented: "very few of us will be transferred!". Another added: "the plant's future has been threatened for 25 years!". In fact since car production stopped on site in 2002 with the loss of 2,000 jobs, many workers are now temps, contracted by

"Flexistaff" - the main agency on site.

On 17 and 18 December a protest against the closure took place, but Unite has not called any further action. It has just: "called for the Labour government to oppose the closure", which it might, but that will also mean nothing. One of the first steps would surely be for Luton mates to talk to mates in Ellesmere Port about how best to throw a spanner in the Stellantis bosses' works...

International

SYRIA: INTO THE IMPERIALIST CAMP

The entry of the Islamic militia, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) into Damascus on 8 December has been portrayed as a moment of "liberation" for the Syrian people. True, brutal dictator Assad and his family have fled as his loyal Syrian Army "melted away". The new HTS rulers have not yet secured the whole of the country, despite the fact that recognition of their legitimacy has almost immediately been bestowed upon them by Washington and Westminster... and, ironically, by imperialism's regional Israeli client state...

Supporting al Qaeda: not even a U-turn!

Known in a previous incarnation as the "Al Nusra Front" AKA Al-Qaeda, HTS has been involved in fighting the Assad regime since 2011. The militia is funded by the Qatar ruling family among others, behind which stands the US and Britain: they share the Qatari Al-Udeid air base, the largest imperialist military facility in the Middle East.

In fact the Emir of Qatar's visit to Britain on 3-4 December, just as the HTS march to Damascus began, was surely no coincidence. Al Qaeda may have perpetrated the 9/11 (2001) terror attack against the US, but one shouldn't forget that it was US funding and weapons which created it in the first place - as part of imperialism's front against the former USSR's presence in Afghanistan.

Within days of HTS declaring its victory, British officials had arrived to hand over £50m in "aid" to Mohammed al-Bashir the "instant" HTS interim prime minister (ex-leader of the Sunni Salvation Government of Idlib). By 14 December talks on Syria's future (deciding who was going to pull which strings) were being held in Jordan between British, US, EU, Turkish and Gulf State officials...



HTS leader Mohammed al-Jolani meets Stephen Hickey, the British Foreign Office's Middle East director, 16 December 2024

Erdogan takes a chunk

In the meantime, US bombers are allegedly preventing the "resurgence of ISIL", by continuing to drop bombs in the North-East, where the US still maintains troops on the ground, supporting Kurdish militias (and where US company Delta Crescent Energy was exploiting the Deir al-Zour and Hassakeh oil fields until 2021).

The Israeli military has occupied further territory in the Golan Heights ("illegally" annexed in 1981), including a UN-monitored buffer zone, while its aircraft have been pulverising what it insists are "military installations funded by Iran" - in its largest aerial bombardment of a neighbouring country ever. Nothing is said about the death and destruction this is causing.

Turkey's President Erdogan, has taken opportunity of the Syrian "liberation" to go after the militia of the PKK (Kurdish Communist

Party) - his most-hated enemy - and seize territory along the Syria/Turkey border with the help of the "Syrian National Army".

An early warning

On the same day that the Assad regime was declared overthrown, the governments of Britain, Germany, Belgium, Denmark and the Czech Republic announced they were "pausing" the processing of all Syrian political asylum applications.

Of course these politicians never had anything but crocodile tears for war-torn Syrian, (or any other) refugees. Obviously, the Syrian people cannot look to imperialism nor its latest (temporary) best friends, the HTS for resolution of the chaos which reigns in Syria - and all the more so because it cannot be resolved in isolation from the rest of the Middle East - Iraq, Palestine, Lebanon... This will require the concerted and united effort of the whole region's working classes and poor. ☐

Mayotte: Cyclone Chido's destruction - and Macron's

In Mid-December, Cyclone Chido hit the Indian Ocean island of Mayotte with gusts of 225Kmh and within 12 hours, 5 months' worth of rain fell. It was the worst storm this small Comoros island off Mozambique had seen in 90 years.

The official death toll was 39, with 200 missing and 5,600 hurt. But Mayotte's (estimated) population of 321,000 doesn't include ~100,000 undocumented migrants residing in the island's shanty-towns, which were worst-hit. The Prefect of Mayotte admitted: "the death toll could be in the

hundreds or thousands".

Still a colony

These "migrants" come from the same Comoros archipelago which Mayotte belongs to. So they are not real "migrants" at all, but fellow Comorans! But the French colonial authority which took over the islands in 1841, gave them all except Mayotte independence in 1975. Mayotte was kept as a strategic military base. Never mind, however that they live in a "province" of France, 84% of the population is under the poverty line, and if they are in work,

they earn a third of the French minimum wage!

After the hurricane French President Macron visited the island to tell Mayottians that if they'd not been "French" they "would be 10,000 times deeper in shit"! The 1,500 soldiers and gendarmes sent to help to "secure the island" won't be rebuilding storm-proof houses though. The French colonial authority is aiming to use the opportunity to demolish the migrant slums and carry out mass evictions and deportations. Let's hope, thanks to the mutual solidarity of the Comoran people, they don't succeed. ☐

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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