

WORKERS' fight



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

"UNSUSTAINABLE" WELFARE? NO, THEIR PROFIT SYSTEM IS "UNSUSTAINABLE"!

While "Winston" Starmer is posturing as peacemaker on the world political scene, by putting himself forward as the "bridge" between Trump, Zelensky and the EU, here at home he's declared war on welfare: a war on the working class poor, the low-paid and the unemployed. His first target is those youth who're "not in employment, education and training" - an estimated one million so-called "NEETs".

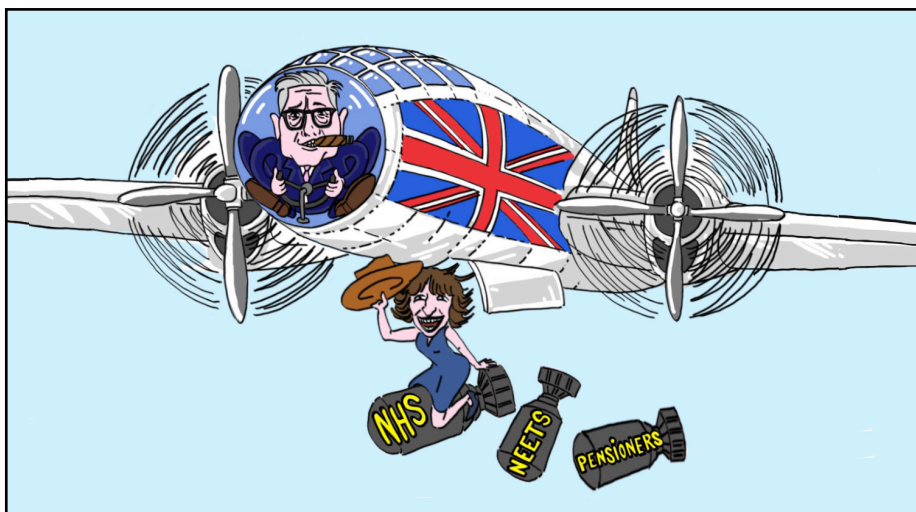
Starmer said the current welfare system is "unsustainable, it's indefensible and it is unfair, people feel that in their bones"... By "people", does he mean the working class? Because what workers feel deep inside their bones is a painful ache from the long hours, speed-ups and doubling of work without the doubling of the workforce! And they have a hollow stomach because of the starvation rates of pay compared to the cost of living - which keeps rising and rising!

NEETS rightly reject McJobs

Starmer added that it was the payment of benefits which was "discouraging people from working"! So to answer this most right-wing of arguments, let's spell it out: youth aren't "discouraged" from working because they receive pittance-level welfare payments, but because of pittance-level wages on zero-hours contracts with no prospects. And if there is a part of the welfare budget which is indefensible, it's the tax credits low-paid workers need, which de facto allow Scrooge bosses to pay starvation-wages.

The Living Wage Foundation says that "2024 saw the largest annual rise in the number and proportion of jobs paid below the real Living Wage ever recorded": 4.5 million! Yes, as many as 16% of the workforce does not get paid enough to live on.

Starmer never attacks these bosses - who also protest bitterly over



the National Insurance rise and the Employment Rights Bill. They accuse Mr "Deregulation" Starmer of creating more red tape for them, when this bill is so full of loopholes that these bloodsuckers will easily crawl through them. It should be renamed the Employers' Rights Bill.

The welfare cuts aim to save the government £6bn, including by making it harder for disabled people who cannot work(!) to qualify for Personal Independence Payments. Starmer has dismissed this concern. He claims that paying "living" levels of benefit "runs contrary to those deep British values that if you can work, you should". As if! Back to the scoundrel's refuge: nationalism and a patriotic song. You'd think that a war was approaching!

Trump's and Macron's "British" values?

So what are these "deep British values"? Because it seems that Donald Trump, the new German Chancellor Merz, France's President Macron and Georgia Meloni share them too!

All these leaders are taking a chain-saw - à la Elon Musk - to the public

sector and civil service of their own states. They're all cutting welfare spending, bringing in increases to retirement age and cuts in pensions or pensioners' allowances.

And is it a "British" value to be anti-immigrant, and to preclude refugees and migrants from applying for citizenship if they've survived a trek over deserts and a precarious boat-journey across the sea? This is the latest contribution to anti-humanitarianism, nationalism and "keeping up with the Reform Party" from Yvette Cooper, Starmer's far-right Home Secretary.

Cooper also boasts of forcibly deporting 19,000 "illegal or undocumented" people since July! A British value?

Anyway, at least workers are being reminded almost daily by the obliging Starmer that their values are about as far away as they possibly could be from his - and from those of today's ultra-nationalist line-up in Europe and the USA. Our class, from Europe to Britain to the USA, can and must fight their reactionary agenda - against their wars, against their attacks on migrants and against their cuts! ☐

Ukraine/Russia war: Western imperialism's looting plan

Ukrainian president Zelensky met US representatives in Saudi Arabia on 10 March, to discuss a Ukraine/Russia peace agreement that complies with US interests. So now the press talks about the "defrosting" of US-Ukraine relations - "frozen" when Zelensky was given the "rough treatment" by Trump during his February visit to Washington.

Yes, Zelensky was useful to Western imperialism in leading their proxy war to weaken Putin's regime - at the price of countless Ukrainian and Russian lives. But today the US administration can drop him as cynically as it co-opted him yesterday.

US interests laid bare

By demanding that Ukraine hands over \$500bn-worth of its resources and infrastructure to the US, Trump simply formulated what was at stake in the war: the looting of Ukraine's wealth!

Ukraine has hundreds of thousands of hectares of fertile agricultural land which, before the war, made Ukraine the fourth largest agricultural produce exporter in the world. During the war, Zelensky passed a law authorising agro-holdings run by Ukrainian oligarchs, but controlled by Western capital such as Goldman Sachs, to acquire these lands.

But the Ukrainian subsoil is also full of minerals, including "rare earths", which are essential to the production of high-tech chips used in virtually all modern devices, from smartphones to cars - and Ukraine has uranium, which is essential for nuclear power plants: US company Westinghouse has already taken over parts of the Ukrainian nuclear sector!

So in the current "peace" negotiations,



Titanium mine in the central region of Kirovohrad, Ukraine

what's being discussed, or rather imposed on Ukraine, is the financial and legal conditions under which US capitalists will be able to exploit, and perhaps own, these resources.

EU capitalists left behind...

It didn't take long for the media to claim that Trump's rebuff of Zelensky and siding with Putin was "one of the greatest diplomatic disasters in modern history" (*The Guardian*). And Starmer pitched in, saying that the West was at a "crossroads"!

But the West has even backed Putin in the past. Before Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Putin sent troops to suppress a popular uprising in Kazakhstan - saving the Kazakh bureaucracy and with it, the economic interests of Russia's oligarchs and Western capitalists. At the time, western leaders applauded Putin's intervention!

In fact, what upsets European leaders is that by negotiating with Putin, Trump is leaving them with just a few crumbs of the Ukrainian bounty! So for example, Nord Stream 2, the 767-mile-long gas pipeline from Russia to Germany, initially financed by Russia's Gazprom and several European energy companies, was partly blown up during the war. Now, US energy companies are likely to finance its reconstruction, leaving European companies in the lurch.

Yes, Trump and his US capitalist masters have chosen to come to an agreement with Putin, having decided that this serves US capital better. And European leaders, who have their separate capitalists to serve, throw their hands up in the air, not because they give a damn about the many lives lost, or about their little brother at arms, Volodymyr Zelensky, but because they feel left out!

Behind Trump's "rare earths" worries

"Rare earths" is the name given to 17 elements, none of which is well known, including gallium, germanium,



Children at work in a mine in the Katanga region of DR Congo

beryllium, promethium, samarium and neodymium. In fact these 17 elements are vital for making today's microchips for computers and smartphones, catalytic converters, and for the new green industries which manufacture wind turbines and solar panels - as well of course, as electric vehicles.

These rare earths are not actually difficult to find. What makes them "rare" is the fact that they are "rarely" found in concentrations large enough to make extraction profitable. The mining and refining process is complicated, due to the chemical properties of the elements and the fact they can occur with radioactive substances, potentially causing radiation contamination and generating radioactive waste. Today, nearly half of the accessible deposits of rare earths are found in China, but it processes 90% of the world's supply, wherever it is mined.

In fact, the US Geological Society has as yet found no economically viable deposits of rare earths in Ukraine.

Older Soviet surveys suggest they might exist, but no one really knows for sure. There are other so-called "critical minerals" present which are not rare earths, such as lithium, titanium, and zinc, copper, lead, silver, nickel, cobalt and manganese. Other elements found in Ukraine include beryllium and uranium, which are both crucial for nuclear weapons and reactors.

It would be simplistic to imply that the reason for the war in Ukraine was control over mineral wealth. However it is a factor in ending it, for sure. In other parts of the world, war for power over such resources are tearing populations apart - as is the case in North Kivu in East Congo. Moreover, control over rare earth mines in Myanmar, which supplies China, is currently what is keeping the civil war going.

What is for sure, however, is that China currently dominates rare earths processing - and that is what explains the anxiety of US capital to get in on this vital - and lucrative - game.

The future of the Palestinians of Gaza - and the West Bank - remains in the balance

Israel's war on Gaza continues. At the time of writing, the ceasefire which Trump boasted of achieving, no longer holds. Its second phase, during which all 58 remaining hostages, alive and dead, were meant to be returned, after which the Israeli army (IDF) was meant to leave, has been abandoned.

The IDF is randomly killing people in the streets again. Trump has sent a new envoy, billionaire banker, Steve Witkoff along with Secretary of State Rubio, to negotiate a new agreement, while all aid into the Strip is being blocked by the Israelis. They've also cut the electricity supply to Gaza's only water desalination plant, which is now running using generators.



IDF demolishing homes in the West Bank's Nur al-Shams refugee camp, March 2025

Waiting for more hell to break loose

The only real concern of Witkoff is for the hostage release, of course. For "afterwards", Trump - with Netanyahu's enthusiastic agreement - has already revealed a plan to expel Palestinians from Gaza and build "an eastern riviera by the sea" once the rubble is cleared - as depicted in his video posted on "X". It's so gross, it's hard to take it seriously, with gold effigies of Trump, Elon Musk stuffing his face and dollar bills floating down over the heads of Palestinian children.

Another plan for Gaza's reconstruction has been submitted by the Arab League States - also above the heads of the Gazans, who have no say over their own future - but who knows if even this plan will see the light of day.

Ethnically cleansing the West Bank

In the meantime, the IDF is implementing "Operation Iron Wall" in the West Bank's 4 main refugee camps. So far 40,000 Palestinians have been forced to flee from Hebron as armoured bulldozers demolish their homes.

The Israelis say that "cleansing" these refugee camps will take a year... There are no red lines at all for the Israeli soldiers. They shoot at anyone young or old, men, women, children. In Jenin, 18 children have been killed in recent weeks. When paramedics rush to rescue the injured, IDF snipers fire at them. Residents say things have never been so bad. Vast areas of the West Bank now look like Jabalia in Gaza; they're reduced to rubble.

BBC turns truth on its head

Here at home, the BBC continues to put forward a blatantly pro-Israeli version of events. This reached absurd heights when a documentary called, *Gaza: How to Survive a Warzone* was shown and then immediately withdrawn, because of complaints that the main narrator - a child of 13 - was the son of a deputy in Gaza's agriculture ministry, which is naturally run by Hamas, as is every Gazan institution! The BBC's head was even called to answer to a parliamentary committee because of this "scandal".

On the 13 March, Trump reportedly contradicted himself to say he doesn't want anyone to be expelled from Gaza. Of course, it's he and not Netanyahu who ultimately will decide the Gazans' fate. So for now, it hangs in the balance...

• British International Aid becomes "National Defence Aid"!

At the insistence of Trump, NATO countries are all scrambling to increase their defence spending to 2.5% or 3 % of Gross National Income (GNI).

Starmer decided to pay for this increase entirely out of the £15.3bn International Aid budget. So it's been cut from the already paltry 0.5% of GNI, to and even more paltry 0.3%.

International development minister Anneliese Dodds, resigned in protest - although she very considerably, didn't send her letter until Starmer had returned from Washington from his first official meeting

with Trump.

She wrote that "Ultimately, these cuts will remove food and healthcare from desperate people...". She added "the reality is that this decision is already being portrayed as following in President Trump's slipstream of cuts to USAID".

She said it would be "impossible" to maintain support for Gaza, Sudan and Ukraine, as well as vaccination programmes and climate support, "given the depth of the cuts".

Does that mean she didn't know that almost a third of this budget was not even

going overseas, but was used to pay for housing asylum seekers - a "flexible usage" introduced by the last Tory government? And that £250 million was sent as military aid to Ukraine? In fact genuine overseas aid amounted to just 0.17% of GNI in 2023/4 - the lowest in the G7! So much for the remonstrations of Anneliese Dodds!

In full war mode, Labour frontbenchers proceeded to applaud the choice to spend Aid money on defence - claiming that the poor would thus be "encouraged" to "develop" their own health and food programmes and that they actually preferred to do so!

• In Trump's USAID slipstream

Dodds was right about the British government following in the US "slipstream". As part of his flamboyant "America First" antics, Trump announced that the US Agency for International Development (USAID) was to be shut down. Elon Musk joined in the chorus claiming USAID was a "criminal organisation"! More than 90% of USAID's foreign aid contracts and \$68 billion in overall US assistance around the world would be cut, which no doubt sounded

good to Trump's fanbase.

But for all this hype, the Federal aid budget is tiny - just 1% of its \$4.9 trillion (2024) total. However, that \$68bn or so, provides indispensable food, water and healthcare that would otherwise be entirely absent in some of the poorest countries in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. So the removal of this "drop in the ocean" is a catastrophe!

It also means huge job losses: 10,000 US employees have already been recalled

and sole breadwinners all over Africa have received termination notices. The consequence for a country like South Africa which relied on USAID for HIV-AIDS and TB management could be half a million deaths over the next decade.

For the moment the Federal and Supreme courts are fighting off injunctions against Trump's decree, which lawyers argue is illegal. But in the meantime it's not just havoc that his regime is sowing in its former aid projects, but death.

Their economy

The crash threat: a game of "pass the parcel"

Recession? What recession? "The economy" appears to be chugging along quite nicely... if you're a banker! The 6 biggest banks in the US just posted a 20% rise in their collective profits from 2023 - to £110bn. This makes 2024 their second best year since the 2007-8 crisis. Not to be left behind, British banks are also on the up. Barclays profits rose 24% to £8bn and HSBC (the biggest bank in Europe) made profits of £25bn.

But at the same time, the measure of stock market volatility, the VIX index, has been rising, and the financial press is worrying about an economic crash.

At the Davos meeting of international capital in February Jamie Dimon, head of the biggest US bank JP Morgan, said that he thought there was a bubble in the US stock market. No one knows when that bubble will burst. Even Trump's ex-Fed advisors are queasy.

The capitalists at least have a sense that they haven't solved the problem of crises in their system - and of course they can't. In the meantime Mr Tariff Trump and his mate Mr Tesla Musk have been causing sudden ups and even more downs in Wall Street every time they open their mouths. Nobody knows what's coming

next, as Trump switches his threatened 25% tariffs against Canada on and off, pauses them for Mexico and increases them to 35% on some goods exported to the US from China.

And this isn't just a problem for US speculators, let alone ordinary working class people whose cost of living will increase. It matters to all capitalists everywhere and their government protection squads, given that US capital is the world's biggest player. No wonder Starmer and his big business masters are waiting with bated breath for Trump's next move. ☐

• The cost of living crisis isn't over: it's alive and kicking us!

Workers' "class war" against the cost of living crisis isn't over by any means. While the "official" Consumer Price Index (CPI), is back down to 3%, prices remain 25% higher now than they were 4 years ago!

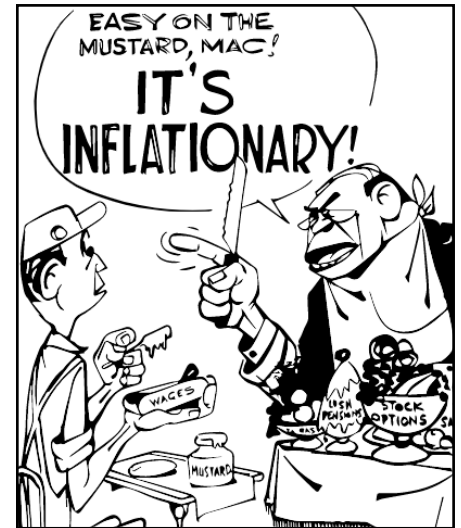
Energy costs continue to skyrocket, with the price cap rising by 6.4% next month, meaning an average increase of £9/month. Council tax is going up by the maximum - 4.99%. In fact, struggling councils will increase it by even more - like Newham by 9%, or Bradford by 10%. And all these increases hit the poorest the hardest.

Rail fares in England and Wales went up by an average of 4.6% on 2 March and most types of railcard by £5, the first above-inflation rise since 2021. And bus fares outside London have gone up by 50%! Water bills are set to

rise by £10 per month on average, but by nearly twice that (£224 per year, or 47%) at Southern Water, for instance. Some Thames Water customers already report bills rising by as much as 78%. Both those companies are servicing high levels of debt, which they would not have accrued had they not paid eye-watering shareholder dividends. And of course they're still emitting sewage into the rivers and the sea!

Most vehicle tax bands will rise, some drastically. Small low-emission petrol cars will see their tax increase from £30 to £135! Electric cars will lose their exemption too.

Yes, inflation is back, eroding wages again. The government may be pushing "growth", but the only growth is in the holes in our pockets!



• Youth unemployment? Help the bosses, says Reeves!

It's estimated that 13.4% of 16 to 24 year-olds (987,000) are "NEETs" - i.e., not in education, employment or training. And their number is rising fast: there were 110,000 more NEETs compared

to last year. But of course, the poorer the household, the higher the likelihood that children will become NEETs... it is certainly not the idle children of the wealthy who are counted in this group.

But for Reeves, rising poverty and job cuts have nothing to do with it. No, she claims it is the youth who simply "sit at home, often doing nothing". And while acknowledging that the proportion of young people out of work due to mental illness has increased (nearly doubled since 2012), she says that they can actually work, with the right "treatment"... for instance, by cutting their benefits!

And since the not-so-many jobs on offer are badly paid and precarious, Reeves also proposes to... incentivise businesses to take on more apprentices! Apprenticeships will now be even shorter (minimum duration cut from 12 to 8 months) and the over 19 year-olds won't have to pass GCSE-level Maths and English. As for the apprentice wage rate, it will increase in April by 18% - from peanuts (£6.40/hour) to ... peanuts (£7.55/hour)!

Reeves claims these "incentives" will create 10,000 new apprenticeships - a drop in the ocean. All that her government has done, is to provide the bosses with "legitimate" slave labour.



Their society

Home Secretary Cooper's hostile environment

At the end of last month, Home Secretary Yvette Cooper published a press release boasting of her office's "achievements". "Nearly 19,000 failed asylum seekers, foreign criminals and other immigration offenders have been returned since the election to countries across Africa, Asia, Europe and South America" she writes.

The home office has not even taken on more staff. She claims that by redeploying 1,000 workers to work on immigration enforcement (in other words not actually clearing the huge backlog of applications for asylum) there has been the "highest rate of returns seen in the UK since 2018". We are told that she has chartered 4 of the biggest plane returns in British history with over 850 people on board!

Showing off on "X"

Shamelessly, she also boasts of the video images released by the Home Office to show "the inner working of the removals process" in exact emulation of Donald Trump's brutal forced deportations to Colombia and Venezuela of manacled migrant workers, which were shown on US media. This caused some shock among Labour's supporters, although she blithely explained that it was intended to "provide further understanding of this important work"! Or allow her to upstage the anti-immigrant Reform Party and the Tories' "hostile environment"?

Cooper doesn't want to "stop the boats" and thus prevent migrants from drowning, by offering a free, safe, "legal" alternative - which would make a "smuggled route" redundant. No, her idea is the complete opposite: "tougher law enforcement powers than ever before" to remove anyone here illegally, which she asserts blindly, "will break the power of the people smuggling gangs and end the false promise of jobs which is used to sell spaces on boats"! There's no logic to this - it is twisted, far-right irrationality.



In trying to compete with racist, anti-immigrant far-right politicians, she has morphed into one of them.

These rules will strangle their economy

It gets worse. In February this year, new rules were announced which will mean that anyone who has arrived in Britain via an irregular/illegal route is to be automatically barred from applying for citizenship. And Tory leader, Badenoch, has let it be known that her party, if it gets into government, will double the required period of legal residence before a migrant worker can claim the permanent right to stay, to 10 years.

Despite the estimated shortage of 700,000 workers in the economy, the rules have also been changed for skilled workers' visas. The required earnings have been increased by 47% - from £26,000 to £37,800. The only exceptions are for healthcare and social care workers - and just as well, since the average wage of a care worker is just £18,084!

Away with all borders!

Apparently government bigotry might soon even extend to tourists, who might have to prove they have enough funds before visiting! So only rich tourists will be welcome?

Already, in the name of "securing the borders", all visitors to Britain are meant to have an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) from the 2nd of April.

One could be forgiven for thinking that the government was trying to go one better than Trump when it comes to pulling up the drawbridge - and in search of popularity... After all, Reform has overtaken it in the opinion polls.

But restricting immigration and deporting asylum seekers when there is an acute shortage of workers is just shooting the already-struggling British capitalist economy in the foot. It's reactionary and backward to boot, since the population is ageing and shrinking and new blood is desperately needed to revive it! The best remedy for all these ills, would be to open all borders to allow everyone to move around freely, wherever they come from! □

Grenfell: too little, too slow

In early February, Deputy Prime Minister Angela Rayner announced that the Grenfell Tower would be demolished. Of course, many agree that the burnt out tower, covered in white and green cloth-cladding can't be left like that forever. That said, if it remained untouched, at least it would provide a physical reminder of the homicidal, regulation-avoiding profit motive.

The inquiry into the fire presented its final report last September, making 58 recommendations. The government has accepted 49 of these "in full", and 9 "in principle", but it hasn't set any deadlines for implementing them. It

also announced the creation of a single construction regulator which is meant to prevent such avoidable disasters in the future.

However, it looks as if this regulating responsibility is going to be contracted out to a private company! So it will need to make a profit? And how? Apparently it won't even be responsible for testing construction products or certifying whether they are compliant with the legal requirements. So what exactly would it be regulating? This already goes against the first recommendation, which says that "the government [should] draw together under a single regulator all the functions

relating to the construction industry [...]".

The government has said that it will investigate the seven companies which are implicated in causing the deadly fire. But until anyone faces trial (the earliest prosecution may be in 2027) or is banned from public contracts, these companies can operate as they please. It's clear that the government is in no rush to prevent another fire. Seven years on, there are a potential 7,200 buildings with cladding which still needs to be removed, meaning that the Government might miss its own cladding removal completion date of 2035 - yes, that will be 18 years after Grenfell.

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)

From our friends in the North

We're all welcoming the "future of our delivery jobs" under the new USO with a resounding message - "get stuffed"! They call it the "optimised delivery method" (ODM), we call it "organised destruction mayhem". We already can't manage to do what we're told to do. With even fewer of us we've got no chance.

Days and days of letters just sitting there untouched... The old hands can't believe what they're seeing. Before the pandemic a single letter left behind led to a major investigation and serious

consequences! Today you can do whatever you want because they just don't care. Seven billion letters blowing in the wind.

Only the postal industry could cut its own throat and still say there's not enough profit. The regulator, Ofcom, only too gladly sticking the knife in, whilst the Communication Workers' Union leadership sharpens the blade. Well we're not having it. Our jobs matter and we're proud of what we do. Stick ODM up yer a**e!

The only people who are going to



save our jobs is us. We won't be told we are a drain on the bosses' profits. We're standing together, young, old, blue shirt, red shirt. United we say no to ODM, yes to decent work and more of the billions our labour creates! ☐

- **We have our list**

A pay rise is well overdue! We've asked the union reps, but they're as much in the dark as we are. There is that letter from top union officials circulating on WhatsApp, telling us they're ready to sit down with the new boss to negotiate pay and working conditions... Should we march up to union HQ to tell them what we want? They seem to have forgotten to ask us! [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 05/03/25]

- **Prices up? wages up!**

We're also told that since Kretinsky's EP Group take-over is being delayed, a pay offer might be delayed as well! But prices are going up everywhere (transport, council tax, energy, food, etc., etc., etc.) - we cannot afford to wait! [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 05/03/25]

- **Who do they think they are?**

There's a poster circulating which lists what the union leadership will be "negotiating" with management, and there are things there which sound like the bosses talking... like a "reduction in agency costs"... but not: "no more agency workers, permanent jobs for all"! And what about this "performance incentive scheme"? When we've always been dead against performance related pay! And then there's the last point, "pilots of new ways of working". They've already agreed the diabolical USO pilot against our wishes. So does this mean they've got more of these "pilots" up their sleeves? [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 05/03/25]

- **We're all super-needed**

Last week managers asked night shift workers on the Parcel Sorting Monster to

show casuals how to feed it. Just proving that there are just not enough of us on the job. And yet they still label many of us "supernumerary"! It goes without saying that we should all be in proper, permanent jobs, "supernumeraries" and casuals. [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 05/03/25]

- **Who are our holidays for?**

What's going on with Processing annual leave at the moment? Some of us got the paper application form for next year given back, but when we reapply, RM tells us there are whole periods of the year which are "unavailable". What this amounts to, is managers choosing when we can take our holidays and when we can't - totally regardless of our own choices and needs. Can we choose when they take theirs? [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 05/03/25]

King's Cross railway station (London)

- **Their forever disruption...**

What's going on with LNER's railway network between London and Peterborough? Almost every day something goes wrong, whether it's delays due to broken down trains, signalling problems, overhead wiring problems, cable thefts etc... And on top of it all there is constant, regular, engineering work without any obvious improvement... [Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 05/03/25]

- **... breaking working time regulations**

Last Friday night, for instance, there was major disruption. It meant some of us on board got back only in the early hours of Saturday morning - but we were nevertheless expected to work our next shift on the same day. Given how long it took us to get back home, some of us had less than 6 hours between shifts. By rights, we should have had the day off! [Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 05/03/25]

- **Where's the spare cover?**

Of course these days, with such a shortage

of staff - or should we say a refusal of management to recruit enough workers - they don't and won't tell us to take our required rest period between shifts, because they'd have to cancel even more trains as a result... [Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 05/03/25]

- **Victorian england**

How can GN continue to roster us on consecutive 12 hour night shifts? What's shocking about this, is that this roster has been in place for years and that RMT union officials signed up to it - "selling" it to workmates because of the 3 days off in the cycle - which in reality, isn't enough time to recover and can never compensate for the harm done to our health. [Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 05/03/25]

- **All on the same side**

The general messroom for LNER workers is being redesigned, so we've been kicked out and split up into separate temporary messrooms, with Guards, Senior Hosts (not the juniors!) and drivers on the East side, top floor, while "lesser ones" like station workers and junior Hosts are meant to be on the West side. But we don't agree with



this apartheid and all the more so because the West side is further away. So in practice, we're all to be found on the same side... Of course! [Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 05/03/25]

- **Need a "use this!" notice?**

...BTW, who did they ask about the new design? Because, we certainly haven't been consulted. And will we finally get a dishwasher? We need it. Only the managers on the 2nd floor have one - although they don't seem to know how to use it, considering the amount of dirty dishes in the sink over there... [Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 05/03/25]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)

Bosses turn the screw, and blame it on EVs

Once the media got wind of the fact BMW was delaying its investment in electric vehicle (EV) production in Cowley, reporters immediately put into question the future of the plant! They're always willing to play the bosses' game of spreading doubt and insecurity!

In fact BMW's announcement was no surprise to us. You don't have to look far to see what's happening in the EV market. Tesla's sales fell for the first time in 2024. It sold 1.97m, and is still the largest EV manufacturer (just ahead of China's BYD) thanks to US sales. But sales of EVs fell 8% at the end of last year in California, the fourth largest EV market, and in Germany, the third largest after China and the US as a whole, sales

were down 60% compared to last year.

So the EV market, it turns out, is quite limited. And of course the lack of a cheap, fast-charging network doesn't help. This is a problem for all the car companies who a few years ago suddenly rushed to grab a slice of this pie for themselves.

And now there are thousands of unsold EVs piling up. It's the inevitable result of the anarchy of production - each company competing which the others, none of them knowing what they'll sell until they try. But by that time, it's too late.

As for us workers, we've no stake in the capitalists' competition with each other. Their decisions to produce this or



that car are based on what makes them profit. If they screw up, too bad for them, we still need our wages. They say they are not making a profit? But what happened then to the zillions they made out of our labour, over the decades up to now? They had better start digging! ☐

• **Offer, or provocation?**

We finally heard what BMW's pay offer is... 0%! What?! Incredible! We're blown away... at how this multi-billion pound company can dare to make us such an offer! And also that Unite officials could recommend we say yes to BMW's pay cut of 3.5% (or more if inflation goes up)!

PS: We hear that managers above grade 7 will not go without a pay rise of course... [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 11/03/25]

• **Cut their strings...**

The "sweetener" for this deal, according to the union officials, was meant to be that we also have "zero strings". Sure, we know that managers have long wanted to take some of our break time, and also talk of ending the movement of labour agreement based on seniority. But even if this offer is accepted, we know it won't stop them coming back for their new "strings" as well... [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 11/03/25]

• **Lies, damned lies and statistics**

Managers showed us some graphs last week, which were meant to show how Cowley production has been going down compared to other plants, and how pay has apparently been rising more than others! We don't trust their graphs. Why don't they show us the graph of profitability?

[Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 11/03/25]

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)

Ford's claiming poverty, axe in hand!

At the end of last year, Ford announced 4,000 job cuts across Europe - of which 800 are to be "made in Britain", targeting the Dunton Research and Development centre near Basildon. There are to be 2,900 job cuts in Germany, mainly in Cologne's Electric Vehicle Centre. These job losses come only one year after Ford announced 3,800 cuts across Europe (1,300 in Britain)!

Already between 2019 and 2021, Ford closed plants worldwide (in Wales, France, Brazil, India...) and used the excuse that it needed to switch fast to

making EVs cars. It pointed out until recently that it took 40% less labour to make EVs and so workers were meant to pay for their EV transition with their jobs. But now, workers are meant to pay for the weaker-than-expected demand for EVs... and Ford's cock-ups and bad judgment over the EV market!

Despite gross profits of £20.6bn, not to mention the attacks on our jobs, Ford's UK chair Lisa Brankin is now "urging" the government to introduce consumer incentives of up to £5,000 per EV - claiming that this would help Ford



face the EV market challenges, including facing up to the cheaper Chinese EV cars. So, while Ford cuts workers' livelihoods, it has the cheek to ask for (even more) subsidies from the government! ☐

• **Against cuts anywhere!**

A Ford "notice" on WhatsApp entitled "Plan to achieve long term competitiveness in Europe" once again explains that Ford's planned "restructuring" - in other words chopping heads - won't affect Dagenham, Halewood and Transport Ops... They obviously don't want any trouble from "Dagenham, Halewood and TOPs". A very good reason for us to give it to them! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 12/03/25]

• **Production anarchy**

Ford's Lisa Brankin adds that "these sites

will continue to experience volume-related adjustments". Thanks for that info, but we've kinda noticed already!

PS: Apparently Tiger assembly is going back down again to 300 engines per shift next week. The volume see-saw continues! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 12/03/25]

• **Believe this!**

It seems Ford bosses still can't implement the super-complicated "voluntary redundancy" plan at Dunton - because workmates are simply not prepared to go on the current lousy VR terms... And then we hear that despite claiming TOPs is not "impacted", in

desperation, they're asking TOPs supervisors if they'd like to leave instead?! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 12/03/25]

• **Dodging the invisible?**

Another letter making the rounds on WhatsApp is about the new "Attendance Improvement Programme". If we have 100% attendance in the year, we'll get a £300 attendance bonus. If less than 4 days, £100... Strangely enough, we don't know anyone who got the 100% bonus last year, even if they came to work every day and generously shared all their viruses with their workmates... [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 12/03/25]

International

German election: one dangerous rightward shift to the next

The Centre-Right Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) won the parliamentary elections on February 23 with 28.5%. The hard-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) doubled its votes to 20.8%, making it the second-largest party in the Bundestag, beating the Social Democratic Party (SPD), which came third with 16.4%.

Since the CDU and SPD refuse to work with the AfD, the outcome is a new coalition led by the CDU, along with the discredited SPD. It was the SPD's crumbling coalition under Olaf Scholz, which forced the dissolution of parliament last December and the general election.

These results show the same rightward political shift which is being seen throughout the developed western world, as a consequence of the failure of nominally "left" or "centre-left" governments (like the SPD) to deal with the economic and social crisis. The AfD now has 152 out of 630 parliamentary

seats, the highest for a far-right party since before WWII. However the left, "Die Linke" also benefited from the discredit of the mainstream parties, doubling its vote-share to 8.8%.

In the election's run-up former Blackrock senior advisor, Merz shocked even some of his own CDU party members when he accepted the support of AfD to pass a five-point migration plan, which restricts the rights of asylum-seekers.

Merz delivered another dramatic "moment", after Trump's shouting match with Zelensky over the war in Ukraine, when he promised to "do whatever it takes" to defend Europe against "threats to freedom and peace". Within days, he had announced a plan for major rearmament, which required a complete about-turn in his party's fiscal policy. With the agreement of Centre-Left coalition partner, the SPD, Merz is loosening the country's constitutional two-decade old

debt brake and potentially pumping 1 trillion euros into Germany's military, and its infrastructure.

Business commentators are celebrating the move. Britain's Financial Times wrote: "the race to re-arm could be a much-needed boost for manufacturing and for an economy stuck in a rut". The KNDA, a Franco-German tank maker, has already agreed to take over a factory from Alstom in the eastern town of Görlitz to produce parts for battle tanks and other military vehicles.

These elections have not only confirmed the growing impact of a resurgent far-right, but also signalled the unprecedented strengthening of Europe's military-industrial complex, a dangerous cocktail whose catastrophic consequences in the last century are ever-present in this one. □

Greece: a general strike against the government's rail crash cover-up

On 28 February, the second anniversary of Greece's most deadly train crash, a 24-hour general strike paralysed the country. Train drivers, air traffic controllers, seafarers, teachers, lawyers and doctors led by relatives of those killed, gathered in their hundreds of thousands to protest in every large town and city.

In Athens, striking cab drivers gave free rides to protesters to assembly points. Streets empty of cars, with people all walking in the same direction, gave the feeling of an entire city converging towards the centre. Half-a-million people (a sixth of the city's population!) assembled in Syntagma Square. One huge banner read: "Government of murderers".

The protesters rightly hold the conservative Mitsotakis administration responsible. The collision between a freight train carrying inflammable liquids - illegally - and an InterCity 62, operated by the privatised Hellenic Train, with 352 passengers on board, derailed both trains and engulfed them in a fireball. Most of the 57 victims were burnt to death. At least 180 were injured. Both drivers and 8 train crew were killed.

Three weeks before the crash, the railway workers' union warned "we will not sit and wait for the accident that is coming, to see them [the government] shedding crocodile tears...". Workers knew that the systematic underfunding of the railway, understaffing and lack of maintenance, which privatisation only

made worse, was lethal.

The massive demonstrations and calls for prime minister Mitsotakis to stand down, took the political establishment by surprise. But the anger of the working class is entirely understandable; it's fuelled by 15 years of brutal austerity, which has seen wages cut by 23% since 2009.

The Mitsotakis administration is accused of a deliberate cover-up: the crash scene was hastily cleaned-up to destroy evidence; the investigation was delayed and reports pointing to the illegal fuel cargo on the freight train were dismissed. But the government blames "human error" and has taken out criminal

charges against railway officials. This has caused national outrage.

The anger on the street and determination of the protesters to stand their ground despite police violence, echoes the anti-austerity struggles of 2010-2013.

This time, it is Mitsotakis' right-wing "New Democracy" which is presiding over the crumbling infrastructure while defending private profiteers. We can only hope that workers and the public who took to the streets on the 28th will keep up their fight. And that they'll draw the conclusion that change won't come via parliament, but only through their own struggles! □



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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