

WORKERS' fight

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

ONLY ONE "ALTERNATIVE": MAKE BIG BUSINESS PAY!

For the first time in 30 years, official figures acknowledge that the standard of living of households has dropped by 0.8%. But for working class households which do not have bonuses, nor fat dividends, this drop is much steeper.

Welfare cuts, wage cuts and wage freezes, rising unemployment, an increased proportion of part-time and casual jobs, higher inflation - all this has already taken its toll, even before the government's cuts.

This is the cost that the working class has been made to pay for the bosses' crisis over the past years, while the bosses' profits were booming. But now workers have had enough of footing this bill!

Building on our collective strength

This is why it is vital that the show of strength made on March 26th, at the TUC protest in London, should be followed by even larger protests.

So far, TUC leaders have chosen to focus only on the public sector. And just on that basis they managed to mobilise hundreds of thousands in the streets. This is a measure of the discontent among workers. But it should be the starting point for a much wider mobilisation.

All sections of workers have been directly hit by the bosses' and politicians' attacks. Their objective cannot be just to stop the ConDems' cuts - it must also be to stop the on-going attacks taking place in the private sector and to start reclaiming the ground lost to all bosses, public and private.

For this, workers cannot rely on the "alternative" put forward by some union leaders. This is just the programme of the Labour party which, having bailed out the bankers, now says that the problem is the way the cuts are made, not the cuts themselves! The working class cannot expect anything from a party whose leader was declaring last week, in front of the British Chamber of Commerce: "I am determined that Labour will continue



to be a pro-business party"! Doesn't that say it all?

Any "alternative" for the working class has involve the millions who make up its ranks, not rely on politicians whose only ambition is to serve big business. And the "alternative" we need must be aimed squarely at meeting the needs of the working class majority of the population, not the greed of the tiny minority of the profit sharks!

The need for radical measures

The capitalists, their greed and their parasitism have brought about the current crisis. The capitalist class as a whole should be made to pay for it, out of its accumulated wealth and its fat profits. And achieving this requires radical measures.

Against unemployment, all the work available should be shared out between all workers, without loss of pay. Isn't high time that workers stop killing themselves with long hours and crazy shifts?

Against the erosion of workers'

purchasing power by rising inflation, wages should be uprated as often as is required, to take into account the real increase in the cost of living - not according to the massaged indexes, but on the basis of real prices where workers do their shopping.

The financial system represents an on-going threat for society - as the latest hiccups of the crisis show in Ireland and Portugal. Society should be protected from speculation by the nationalisation and merger of all the banks into a single one, under the control of bank workers and the population as a whole, without compensation for shareholders who have already benefited far too much from the largesse of the state.

These are the kind of objectives which would constitute a real "alternative" for the working class by addressing the problems it is confronted with - an "alternative" which would be worth fighting for, using all its collective strength! ☐

Cuts watch

Chris Grayling, Con-Dem Work and Pensions minister announced a 1/3 cut in the Health & Safety Executive's budget from April which will cut H&S inspections accordingly. A new "rule" means bosses don't have to report injuries at work if they result in less than a week off sick. In the event of a complaint, they'll have to pay the HSE's investigation costs and if found to have endangered workers or the public,

• Cameron needs an aspirin

The government is facing mounting opposition to its attempt to open the door much further to private health care providers. So they say they're stopping to "pause, listen and reflect", while they scrabble around for a way to appease the medical profession and MPs (including Coalition MPs) who are worried about the public's reaction.

On top of that, there are problems over the NHS budget, which the ConDems promised to ring-fence, meaning that its annual increase should take inflation into account. But now that inflation is predicted to be higher

• Care for their ConDem friends

A group of health workers and medical students demonstrated outside the headquarters of Care UK last month, in opposition to the government's plans for the NHS.

This is a private health firm which stands to make a fortune out of the ConDems' proposed NHS "reform". But it was targeted for an additional reason – the wife of its former head made a generous donation to Health Secretary

they'll be fined. But as bosses have complained bitterly about this, it will be no surprise if Grayling dumps it.

The government, echoing the bosses' CBI, claims that sticking to H&S rules ("too many tick-boxes") interferes with growth. They point to Britain's good safety workplace record. In fact, this so-called "good" record includes 80 bone fractures plus 2 eye or limb amputations daily, and a total 1.3m recorded

than expected, the NHS budget will barely keep up and could even fall by £1 billion in real terms between 2012 and 2015.

Just to make Cameron's NHS headache worse, he found one of his own ministers, Iain Duncan-Smith, protesting on the doorstep of number 10, to save A&E and maternity services at King George's in Ilford. Having demonstrated against these cuts when they were announced under Labour, IDS could hardly reverse his position just because his own government hadn't reversed the cuts!

Lansley's office, when he was in opposition. And this former boss himself is a founder of a private equity firm called Sovereign Capital, which has interests in the healthcare business. He also happens to be part of a group advising Osborne on spending, and has lobbied for "efficiency savings" in the NHS.

Not that this sort of thing is unique to the Tories. Labour's ex-Health Secretary, Patricia Hewitt, ended up as

• We need our own party

Ed Miliband launched Labour's campaign for the May local elections promising that Labour will be "your voice in tough times". Really? The campaign booklet spells it out: "Labour does not oppose every cut", only cutting "too far and too fast". No voice, then, for anyone who thinks that since the rich caused this crisis, they should be made to pay for it!

Miliband says that the cuts being lined up "will divide our country and our communities" – as if the class divide did not already exist, and as if it didn't grow to a record-sized gap under Labour! He doesn't disagree with Cameron that "we're all in this together"; just worries that "it doesn't feel like that".

Labour claims to be the "first line of defence" against the cuts. Presumably this is so that they can be the ones to front the bosses' offensive in the future! No, the working class needs its own team, and its own line of defence!

Bosses to get away with injuring workers

injuries/yr! But how many injuries go unreported, especially on construction sites operated by subcontractors, employing workers "informally" and via gangmasters? Not to mention the silent killers called "stroke" and "heart attack", whose accomplices are overtime and night shifts! The best way to implement H&S at work has always been to down tools. □

Class Struggle n°91 is out!

In the April-June issue of our journal:

- After the 26th March, what next?
- Pension cuts are wage cuts!
- The wave of protests in North Africa and the Middle East.
- Hands off Libya!
- Italy - Behind FIAT'S attacks, an offensive against the working class.
- USA - The banks' repossession feast

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a "consultant" to both the parent company of Boots and a firm which bought BUPA's British hospitals. The private sharks have long fed on the NHS budget. Now, they feel the time has come for their meal to turn into a banquet.

• Councils: cut but not yet dried

As the new financial year approached for local authorities, cuts and closures identified have not all materialised.

Some councils have still not decided how to cut their budgets, like Hounslow, which is proposing to "close down" for a week's unpaid holiday. Others had to go back to the drawing board. Three community groups in Birmingham got their proposed funding cuts reversed in the High Court, because the council had not assessed the impact properly. The city's five Citizens Advice Bureaux will also be able to stay open and apply for funding from a different council budget as well as a central government "big society" fund for voluntary groups. Oxfordshire County Council hastily scrapped its plan to stop funding about half its libraries.

It seems that by announcing such radical cuts, councils were testing the water. Having found it too hot in several places, they pulled out. So we know what we have to do!

• Much AV about nothing

On 5th May a referendum on AV (Alternative Voting) is due to take place. A simulation comparing the 2010 election using AV, to the actual results shows the impact AV would have had: the Tories would have won 281 seats instead of 306, Labour 262 instead of 258 and the Lib-Dems 79 rather than 57. Hardly shattering differences – with "others" unchanged at 28!

In fact under AV, Labour and Tories will still dominate government. The cost of mounting a national campaign with full media exposure will still prohibit all but the big three parties. Nor will there be any way for voters to bring to book MPs who break their promises. Not surprising in the circumstances, that popular interest in the referendum is barely noticeable. And while Cameron and Clegg argue against each other, one part of the coalition gains, whatever voters choose in this referendum – if they bother to vote!

Behind the unemployment figures

Unemployment rose to 2.53m by the end of 2010 – the highest number since 1994. Although the number of people in work also went up, the bulk of this rise was among men over 50. The over-65s in work are now at a record 900,000 – growing numbers of pensioners simply can't afford to stop working. At the other end of the scale, it's the young who are suffering most: the number of 16-17 who are out of work rose by 8% last year and youth unemployment has reached 20% in inner cities.

Surprisingly, there are fewer people claiming out-of-work benefits. This was explained by a whistleblower, who revealed how Job Centre workers were given targets for the number of claimants "sanctioned" – meaning deprived of JSA as a punishment for allegedly "not looking

for work", maybe for something as trivial as being late for a Job Centre interview. As a result, the number of claimants sanctioned soared to

75,000. The government is quick to point the finger at so-called "benefit cheats", but its policy is to cheat people out of their benefits!

Letter from Sussex

The latest nonsense being directed at the unemployed is the revival of something tried under Thatcher: get them to set themselves up in business. Presumably, this is part of Cameron's "Restart Britain" initiative.

Here, the Job Centre decided that, because the local Countryside Rangers had made use of some of my photographs, I could set myself up in business as a photographer and they sent me on a self-employment seminar, although I told them that I had no intention of setting up in business. This seminar was sponsored by Barclays, who were clearly angling for customers.

The group was almost comically disparate. It included someone planning to open a "One Stop Dog Shop", someone who wants to become a guitar teacher, another intending to be a Health and Safety consultant and someone about to qualify as a "Jungian psychotherapist" (using astrology to assist his therapy!).

Judging from how much they are disconnected from reality, maybe that's what the Job Centre strategists are into – Jung and astrology...

• Will-it shut him up?!

David Willetts, the Con-Dem universities minister clearly needs educating. But who would give such a Neanderthal a university place, even at £9,000 a year, after he claimed that it is women, and "feminism", which have contributed to male unemployment! Yes, women took university places and jobs which could have gone to working class men!

He quickly retracted, but he is

probably expressing a commonly held view among certain Tories and other right-wingers including the religious lobby: he was quickly defended by Christine Odone former editor of the Catholic Herald who accused feminists of being responsible for "man-hatred"...

It's hardly "feminism" which is responsible for the fact that women earn 18% on average less than men,

mostly work in part-time jobs; lose out on pensions, are left holding the baby, literally, etc...! But these cheap politicians will say anything in order to deflect blame from the bosses and their capitalist system, which depends on unemployment in order to be able to exploit the employed, whether they are men or women!

• What statistics don't show

British households' spending power in 2010 declined for the first time since 1981. The decline was 0.8% as opposed to only 0.2% in 1981.

In fact statistics only tell one side of the story. The figures conceal the rise of real unemployment and casualisation due to the crisis and its consequences. In particular the fact that many of the workers who were made redundant and subsequently found another job, took a pay cut in the process. And the current round of public sector cuts – with local authorities pulling out of some areas wholesale – can only make things far worse in that respect, never mind what the government says about the private sector creating new jobs.

Ministers have the nerve to congratulate themselves that pay settlements remain low despite increasing inflation. But they don't take account of the one thing that can explode all their statistics, and which their policies make more inevitable – a long overdue counter-offensive of the working class.

• Plenty of scope for fiddles

The Office for National Statistics underestimated inflation between 1997 and 2009. The Bank of England admitted that published measures of inflation for this period did not reflect price rises for clothes and shoes. According to its February inflation report, the retail prices index (RPI) should have been 0.6 percentage points higher each year, and the lower consumer prices index (CPI) 0.3 points higher.

That might not sound much, but the indices are used to calculate wage rises. A worker earning £10,000 before tax in 1997 who received RPI-based increases (which itself is assuming a lot!), would have earned £14,000 last year, but according to the revised way of calculating RPI it should be £15,000. Over 13 years, that's £7,000 of lost earnings! Slip or outright swindle, where did that money go, if not into the pockets of the bosses?

• Students left out of pocket

Education secretary, Michael Gove, has won the dunce's cap. Having promised, along with Cameron, before the election that he would not scrap the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA), he allowed it to become casualty in the autumn spending review. Then, due to protests from sixth-formers, but also from various Tories (including Boris Johnson), he staged a double climb down. £180m will be set aside to fund a bursary scheme for 12,000 youngsters in care or on income support and to give to schools and colleges for hard-up students. Existing EMA recipients claiming £30 will receive only £20 until they finish their A-levels – costing another £130m.

This £310m will have to come from some other part of the Education budget – but at whose expense Gove didn't say. EMA may not have been all that much, but these belated half-measures mean that even more working-class children will join the ranks of the NEETs – 18-25 year olds not in employment, education, nor training.

Pensions

Newspaper headlines that Work and Pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith will introduce a higher, simplified universal state pension, without means-testing, of £140/week - already very low - just conceal what he's really up to!

Firstly, his proposals would ensure that the cost of state pensions to the budget would remain unchanged

State pension: simply not enough!

over the years, never mind that the population of pensioners is likely to rise. Secondly, presumably to help achieve this objective, state pension age will increase according to "life expectancy". Except that those with increased life expectancy are the better-off, who have had a comfortable working life and can afford to wait for a comfortable pension, well

above the state pension. Whereas the majority of working class people who are worn out from overwork and could use an early retirement, will not only be unable to take it, but when they eventually do retire, will still have to survive on pittance pensions. "A simpler, fairer pension for the 21st century" says Steve Webb, pensions minister. If only! □

Public sector: "fairness" means sink everybody!

Ex-Labour minister "Lord" Hutton presented his "Independent" Public Service Pensions Commission report on 10 March. It recommends that public sector pensions (for 6m civil servants, NHS workers, teachers, firemen, army, police) are reduced by changing from final salary-based, to "career average" based pensions by 2013. Retirement age would rise to 65 years by 2018 and 66 by 2020, following the state

pension age.

Along with the government's change from April to the Consumer Price Index (4.4%, compared to the RPI's 5.5%) for pension increases, £17bn/yr is supposed to be saved for "us taxpayers" - but at what cost for pensioners!

Hutton claims this will make public pensions "fairer", compared to private pensions. But why should public workers' pensions be cut on

the grounds that private bosses have driven down their workers' pensions to such indecently low levels? As to the "gold plating" of public schemes, it only ever meant a "best" average of around £625/month to live on - a lot less than the minimum wage! What is really needed, instead, is a universal pension system, funded by the accumulated profits and wealth of the capitalists, capable of ensuring a decent retirement for all! □

Budget

• A big boost for shareholders

George Osborne said his first budget as chancellor was designed to make Britain "a place international businesses go to". So he cut corporation tax by an extra 1%, so it fell to 26% - and it will go down another 1% each year, until 2014! This will make Britain's tax on profits one of the lowest among the rich countries. It amounts to a £3.2bn handout to the bosses over the coming year alone - a lot more than the £2.5bn that Osborne claims he'll take from the banks through his levy (a tiny tax on their short term borrowing), over the next 3 years.

At a time when the coalition claims there's no money for public services

used by tens of millions, there's obviously plenty of it for a few tens of thousands shareholders. This places the world on its head, but that's the logic of big business.

• From loopholes to black holes

The chancellor did say that he was taking measures to cut tax avoidance by £1bn, just as the last Labour government had pledged, and as the Lib-Dems promised before the election. However, his budget is actually paving the way for new huge tax avoidance schemes. From now on, profits originating from overseas activities will be taxed at only 5.75%, 1/4 the corporation tax rate. Which is just another way of encouraging bosses to be even more creative in

their use of tax havens to "recycle" profits made in Britain!

Tax avoidance is already a huge phenomenon - a report by Tax Research UK calculated that only a third of British companies paid tax in 2009. To tackle avoidance wouldn't be all that hard. The civil servants' union, PCS, estimates that there's a "tax gap" (uncollected taxes) of up to £120bn. If HM Revenue and Customs, restored all the jobs they've cut, it says workers could retrieve this money! But giving workers resources to tax big business is exactly what neither the ConDems nor Labour have ever done: under their watch, big business has always written the tax laws.

• Northern Rock doesn't rock, it sucks!

Remember Northern Rock, the first bank to be taken over by Labour using public funds, after going bust, back in February 2008? To increase its market share, the bank had been offering 125% mortgages on expensive houses, which it funded by selling so-called CDOs (financial instruments which concealed the nature of the underlying loans) that greedy investors scrambled to buy, because of the high returns

they paid.

This was just another pyramid scheme. When house prices crashed, investors became suspicious and the bank was unable to find fresh cash to service its debt - as a result, the pyramid collapsed.

Three years on, state-owned Northern Rock has been split in two: a so-called "bad bank" keeps the remaining "bad debt" to be shouldered by public funds, while a

profit-making part is earmarked for privatisation under the Northern Rock brand.

And guess what? The revamped Northern Rock has resumed selling the very same kind of CDOs that caused its downfall! Proof that not only does the banking system need to be taken out of the bankers' clutches, but also out of the clutches of politicians - and brought under the control of the working class!

After March 26th

On the 26 March, working people took to the streets to demonstrate in force against government cuts. Official statistics said there were "between 250,000 – 500,000" protestors. Even the police and the Tories had to admit it was huge. And it showed that those who say the

A first step!

working class is "finished" are making a big mistake!

Everybody felt a sense of unity under the vast array of banners and balloons of various unions. The many bands, drums and the mini vuvuzelas plus the loud booing when passing government buildings expressed the

buoyant mood. The sheer number of demonstrators impressed the participants - as well as those who did not get a chance to come, making them feel they had missed out. There was a feeling that it was worth it, worth making our voice heard, loud and clear! □

• From words to action

Workers at 500 universities and colleges across the country went on strike on 24th March over threats against their pensions. In the week running up to this, there were one-day strikes in universities in Scotland (17th March), Wales (18th March), Northern Ireland (21st March) and England (22nd March). Then, on the

24th, they were joined by lecturers in FE colleges for the first national strike of the University and College Union (UCU) for 5 years.

Six million public sector workers are facing similar attacks on their pensions. In response, union leaders are threatening "strike action together across all of our public

services", as Mark Serwotka of the civil service union (the PCS) put it. The sooner they match their actions to their words the better. If this government retreats in the face of a few rumblings of dissent over the forests, what would they do if confronted with millions of angry and determined public sector workers?

• Public and private sector workers – same attacks, same fightback

The 26th March demonstration proved one thing at least: that when TUC leaders decide to organise a protest, they are capable of doing so on a massive scale. But why did they confine it to the public sector? Why didn't they invite private sector workers or, better still, organise to get as many as possible to come along. After all there are 23m private sector workers as opposed to 6m in the public sector. Imagine how big such a march could have been!

Many thousands of workers from the private sector did come, however, though mainly as individuals rather than marching behind their own banners. Of course, the media, if not some union officials, had encouraged them to think that after they had been through years of job losses and pay cuts, it was "only fair" that the public sector should now take the pain. But after all, it's the role of working class organisations to organise and fight against this kind of divisiveness.

• TUC's "alternative" is no alternative

The TUC asked workers to march for an "alternative", without spelling out what they meant. In fact, their only concrete proposal is to support Labour, i.e: the "not-so-deep, not-so-fast" cuts! But why go along with the idea that working people have to pay for a crisis they are not responsible for?! The only cuts which there should be are cuts to the profits of



big companies which have accumulated them over decades at workers' expense – not to mention the banks' billions directly subsidised by all of us... These huge resources could provide jobs as well as the necessary investment in essential services. This is the only viable "alternative" for working people - one worth fighting for.

• Talks the talk, but can't walk the walk

Of course, some Labour leaders were

quick to try and jump on the bandwagon – literally! Like Ed Miliband who came to deliver a speech in Hyde Park. Easy with his tongue, but quite heavy on his feet, as nobody saw him marching. No doubt he was afraid to be accused of being the "unions' puppet", again. And despite pretending to support the march, he still managed to sneak in his usual: "There is a need for difficult choices, and some cuts", and got the heckles he deserved.

King's Cross railway station (London)**• Potters Bar: profiteers in the dock but the public is sentenced**

On the 10th May 2002, a train bound for King's Lynn mounted the platform at Potters Bar station, after derailling at faulty points, causing the death of 7 people (6 passengers and a passer-by) and injuring over 70.

8 years - and 1 more major crash also involving a set of points later, Network Rail is being prosecuted and fined. But at the time, the now state-owned Network Rail did not exist. Its privatised predecessor, Railtrack, was then in charge of track and signals. And at the time of the accident, it had

subcontracted most of its maintenance work. A company called Jarvis was responsible for maintaining the Potters Bar points.

Subsequently Jarvis, which got rich on privatisation, conveniently went into administration. Since it no longer exists today (like its sponsor, Railtrack) it therefore "cannot" be prosecuted! So instead, Network Rail is "admitting safety breaches" and those who were responsible for Jarvis' criminal mess get away scott-free.



An even worse irony is that since Network Rail is now funded to the tune of £4bn a year by the taxpayer, it is all of us who will be paying the expected multi-million pound fine, when sentence is passed on 12 May!

• How could this happen?

We heard that a maintenance worker was electrocuted on the overhead lines while working near Cricklewood last Sunday.

We don't know how it happened, but it raises serious questions over Network Rail's safety procedures - just after they claimed (at the Potters Bar case) to be so much better than Railtrack. Answers are needed urgently. [King's X Workers' Platform 5/4/11]

• One year on and still a scandal

Last Thursday, a rally was held in York by former employees of Jarvis rail maintenance, to mark the fact that one year has passed since they lost

their jobs. 1,200 workers found themselves suddenly out of work after Jarvis went into administration last year and Network Rail transferred the work - but not to the workers - to other contractors.

Neither Network Rail nor Jarvis has made any effort since to re-employ them elsewhere. It's profits that matter to the companies, not lives or livelihoods. [King's X Workers' Platform 5/4/11]

• Beam me up, Scotty

On the Eureka training, East Coast On Board catering workers were informed that the company expects us to meet and greet at the doors, prepare the kitchen and equipment, count the stock and maybe set up tea cups - all in our 25 minutes booking-on time, which includes getting to the train.

But we're not expected to be robots, they add.

No - just to be in 3 places at once! And even robots break down if they're over-worked. [King's X Workers' Platform 5/4/11]

• If it's not safe, don't fix it

The FCC (First Capital Connect) ticket office manager has got a new job elsewhere in FCC, as a Health and Safety manager.

Interesting. He never got any of the H&S issues in this place fixed - and we brought lots of them to his attention. Maybe he misread the "if it's not safe, don't do it" slogan and thought it said "if it's not safe, don't do anything"... [King's X Workers' Platform 5/4/11]

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**• Even the administrators are on our side**

The letter we all got from the pension trustees outlines why they had "no choice", but to pay increases at CPI from 1st April. It says they thought it was wrong and asked Ford to change the rules of the pension scheme (which tie increases to the government's inflation measure) so that rises could be tied to RPI, but Ford refused. Force is required. No other way. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 29/3/11]

• No cuts in the retirement "wage"

For pensioners, the CPI link means that every year their purchasing power is less. No way Ford should be allowed to cut "real wages" - pensions - after anyone retires! And no to any deal which selectively hits those

already retired or any other section on the pretext that "we" will be OK. "We" will always be the next target. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 29/3/11]

• It's down to us "active workers"

It's only us at work who have the muscle to fight Ford. And we should use it to fight for one-year "deals" so we can force Ford to increase both wages and pensions each and every year in line with the rise in the cost of living! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 16/3/11]

• Essential transfers

Quite a few Lynx mates are meant to go to the Puma. But guess what: letters were handed out telling people they were turned down because of their sickness record, including a mate who hasn't had a day off sick in the past year! But even if he had been sick, why should that stop a



transfer? A decent job, decent conditions with decent pay (unknown on Lynx) are what helps prevent sickness. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 29/3/11]

• Lions we refuse to cross

Lion group leaders are right to refuse loan-outs away from their teams. It's only due to Ford's under-manning that they're being asked to cover full jobs elsewhere. But what about foremen? They've no boundaries whatsoever. Maybe they can be asked to clean the toilets, too? [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 29/3/11]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**• Time to hit back!**

On 22 March, Royal Mail announced 3,500 further job cuts, while claiming that the so-called "colleague share" scheme, meant to bring workers £1,400 each is worth nothing - all due to the "sad state" of RM's profits, falling letter volumes, and the old bugbear, the "pension deficit". Strange, since RM still posted a profit of £52m last November, after doubling profits in 2009! Anyway, this is a public service and profit should not come into it!

RM will close 2 London Mail Centres plus Rathbone Place

delivery office. Mount Pleasant, which was under threat for years, will become a central hub for sorting and distribution. Nationally, half of the remaining 64 mail centres are threatened with closure. Since 2002 there have been 65,000 job cuts - 25% of the workforce!

The CWU says it will ballot for London-wide strike if RM resorts to compulsory redundancies. As if "voluntary" redundancies were any more acceptable, especially given the present acute shortage of hands and resulting



degradation of working conditions! But a London-wide strike would be a start, at least. However, for RM/government attacks to be stopped, postal workers will have to make it all-out and spread the strike themselves, as they have done so often in the past!

• Find something to do!

Given the jobs' guillotine is also aimed at the heads of managers, they're being watched and monitored, and if they aren't, they imagine they are!

Hence their irritating weight on our backs the whole time. They want to be seen to be busy, making us busy... even if there's nothing to be done!

They're becoming World Class Pains in the Tail. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 5/4/11]

• Illusions in the Lords?

The RM Privatisation Bill, which union leader Billy Hayes explains is at present with the House of Lords (he's

trying to convince their nobbly selves to stop it!), is now held up due to the AV voting issue.

But why is this treated as a separate issue from the MC closures, job cuts (not just in London!), or the World Class Mail efficiency drive, which are all about turning RM into a lean, mean, machine for private sharks.

We need to get our harpoons out before they've swallowed it! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 5/4/11]

• Will they call on the ghost(s)?

Indeed, when Dumbo Jumbo broke down last Thursday, bosses expected us to stay and sort manually until 22h10 to help

them clear.

So we're just wondering who they think will do that when breakdowns become contagious in the new "age of machines", and when, according to their plan, they've sacked the lot of us? [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 5/4/11]

• Few hands make light go out

Having most processing on the ground floor makes sense, given the hassle of moving work up to the 1st floor and down again, in the ageing lifts.

What doesn't make sense is the number of job cuts bosses plan for the new all-in-one floor Mail Centre. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 5/4/11]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**• When no means no**

With one voice BMW tells us to take time off, with another they constantly ask us to do extra shifts, especially on days!

These requests are often repeated several times if the answer is no, thus proving that their "lean machine", which depends so much on manipulating our working time accounts, isn't working.

Their system, their problem! [Workers Fight, BMW Oxford, 5/4/11]

• Labour shortage: already here

How ridiculous that Team Coordinators and Process Area Managers are spending hours scrabbling about for labour when we have the lowest annual production target for years (193,000).

BMW has cut our numbers to the bone (again), yet some areas in Assembly have seen line speeds

reaching record levels.

The only reasonable solution is to slow down and build in some slack. [Workers Fight, BMW Oxford, 5/4/11]

• Time to turn the tilt into a spin?

One area where a slow down in production is urgently needed is Processing Area 4. BMW gave itself huge pats on the back for getting rid of the pit and introducing slings that tilt cars on their side so we didn't strain our necks. But they forgot about our backs! And the nature of many of the jobs involving cables, brakes, fuel tanks etc.

Of course if they don't help us, we can always help ourselves. One thing's for sure - they won't find many people volunteering to replace us! [Workers Fight, BMW Oxford, 5/4/11]

• Only one workable solution

BMW doesn't like the "untidiness" of bags on the line. Yet they're not



prepared to invest in lineside lockers (unlike Toyota @ Burnaston, for example) so that we can access our belongings when we need them (i.e. in breaks).

Of course, if BMW like to give us an extra 15 minutes paid break to traipse up and down stairs and round the houses, that's their affair. Otherwise we prefer to keep things as they are! [Workers Fight, BMW Oxford, 5/4/11]

NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST***Hands off Libya! Western troops out of the region!***

There is nothing "humanitarian" in the Western intervention in Libya, which is already taking its toll in lives and destruction - no more than there was in the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq which, under the pretext of "freeing" these countries from dictatorial regimes, resulted in a bloodbath and propped up another set of brutal strong-men.

That Gaddafi was a bloody dictator never stopped Western leaders from doing profitable business with him, nor from using his henchmen to stop immigrants fleeing the desperate poverty of Africa from reaching Europe - by locking them up in prison-camps, in atrocious conditions. It was only when the protests threatened Gaddafi's ability to continue to act as gatekeeper of fortress Europe, that the rich European countries decided to intervene, not to "protect" the population, but to restore order.

By the same token, they wanted

to make a show of their military might in front of the region's protesters, to warn them that no matter how strong they feel after defying their Western-sponsored dictators, Western weapons are still there, watching them and ready to intervene should the

interests of imperialism be threatened.

This intervention is nothing but an act of terrorism by the rich countries' states against the population of Libya and of the whole region and it should be opposed as such! ☐

***The significance of the wave of protests***

Four months on, the wave of protests has spread to most of the region, from north Africa to the southern tip of the Arabian Peninsula, as well as to Iran and Iraq. Due to its duration and scale, it is one of the

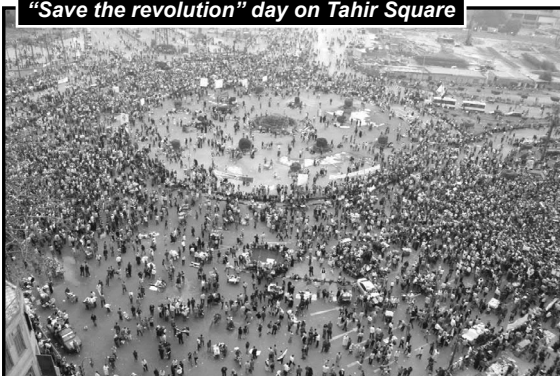
most important political events in many years.

However, what is happening in Egypt shows that, in and of itself, the departure of a dictator does not deliver the changes that protesters hoped for. Mubarak's old ruling party, the army and the religious Muslim Brotherhood, seem to have manoeuvred themselves into a position where they will be jointly in control, after a "democratic" election due in September, leaving no space for the political currents which emerged from the protests. In fact, on April 1st, an estimated 100,000 had to stage a

"Save the Revolution" protest, to demand the end of the state of emergency, the dismissal of Mubarak's former henchmen and the repeal of a brand new law criminalising strikes and the promotion of strikes. During a similar protest held on April 8th, a protester was shot dead by the same army which has been posturing so far as the "people's army".

Due to its regional dimension, however, the wave of protests retains colossal potential, provided it seeks to weld together the collective power of the regions' working classes and poor masses, in a fight not just against dictatorship, but also against the cause of dictatorship - capitalist property, both domestic and imperialist! ☐

"Save the revolution" day on Tahir Square



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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