

WORKERS' fight

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

OUR "PLAN B": MAKE THE CAPITALISTS PAY!

Never mind that all economic indicators keep falling. Osborne remains adamant that his "deficit-reduction" policy is "working"! But this apparent state of denial has a logic of its own.

Because Osborne's aim was never to stop the upward trend in unemployment, nor the downward trend in workers' wages and living standards. As he always said, his priority is to restore "confidence on the markets". By this he means restoring the conditions under which a small number of very large banks and investment funds, which control the financial markets, can resume their destructive, speculative activity, without putting their profits at risk!

Labour's "alternative"... for the bosses

All the capitalist's conomists probably agree with the ConDems' aims, but not all agree with their methods. So 50 "experts", including some of Osborne's former advisers, published an open letter in the Observer, on 5 June, criticising the ConDems' policy for being "self-defeating even in their own terms". Instead they advocate a "plan B for the economy", identical to the so-called "alternative" put forward by Labour and trade-union leaders. And while this may well provide the bosses with an "alternative", it is no "alternative" for the working class.

Indeed, haven't Ed Milliband and his shadow Chancellor, Ed Balls, repeatedly stated, like Cameron and Osborne, that the budget hole should be plugged by cutting expenditure on workers' backs?

Of course, Labour says these cuts should not be made at such "break-neck" speed. But wasn't it under Brown that these "neck-breaking" cuts were first launched, slashing tens of thousands of public sector jobs and initiating the drive against the unemployed, long-term sick and disabled? No wonder neither of the two Eds has ever committed himself to reversing cuts made by the ConDems, if and when Labour returns to office!



Likewise, Labour's "alternative" may well argue - discreetly - for closing tax loopholes through which public funds subsidise the biggest companies and super wealthy. But wasn't it Labour which created many of these loopholes? And isn't it significant that Labour does not even propose to restore the tax on company profits to its pre-Osborne level, let alone its pre-Blair level?

What policy for the working class?

If there is a way forward for the working class, it has to be one which puts the onus for footing the bill for the crisis, squarely on the capitalist class.

Against this crisis which they caused, the banking system - which is piling up billions again, while hiding the losses of its speculation - should be wholly nationalised, without compensation. And unlike under Brown's government, it should be merged into one single bank, under the control of its employees and the population, instead of being handed over to former bankers!

Against the rising threat of unemployment, cutting jobs, public or private, will have to be banned. There is enough to be done in this society to occupy all hands, from building much-needed homes, to taking care of the elderly, the disabled and all those left on the sidelines. And where there are too many hands, the work should be shared between everyone, so no-one is left aside.

Against the threat to workers' living standards, wages must be raised to a decent level, regardless of any cut in working hours due to the crisis. And since inflation is raising its head, wages should be protected by increases in line with real prices, according to a verifiable index, controlled by workers themselves.

These measures are the minimum needed to ensure that the working class does not pay for the crisis. They are not utopian. The capitalists are, collectively, awash with cash. Forcing them to pay is the only way for the working class to protect its interests in this crisis. □

PPI - another banking scam bailed out on public funds?

The mis-selling of "Private Protection Insurance" (PPI) came to a head in April - similar in scale to the mis-selling of personal pensions in the 1980s-90s, except that the villain is not big insurance but big banking!

For years, millions of mortgage and credit card holders paid for PPIs, supposedly to cover their bills if they lost their incomes due to redundancy or, in some cases, sickness. Except that PPIs were forced on some people unknowingly or despite the fact that they could not

benefit, because they were self-employed or already on long-term sickness, for instance. The PPIs' small print, which few ever noticed or even saw, was often so restrictive that claims were virtually always turned down. No wonder the banks made an estimated 85% profit on the PPI rip-off!

Banks will now have to pay some compensation to PPI victims - that is, those who manage to put together the mountain of paperwork required. But the top bankers who designed this multi-billion de facto

insurance theft will not even be put in the dock.

What's more, since state-controlled Lloyds and RBS face 2/3 of the estimated £6-10bn compensation bill, the shareholders who benefited from this scam won't pick up the tab - the taxpayer will!

A system which is only capable of robbing millions among the poorest in order to line the pockets of the wealthy few, does not deserve to survive! ☐

Fire engines - PFI fire sale?

AssetCo, the company that leases 500 fire engines and 50,000 items of equipment to the London Fire Brigade, via a PFI deal, may go bankrupt. It could be wound up on 29 June if its £1.3m debt to Northern Bank - a fraction of its total debt - isn't paid.

AssetCo was originally a subsidiary of British Gas. Getting the 20-year PFI contract to supply London Fire Brigade, in 2001, was its big breakthrough. It also had contracts to supply vehicles to London Ambulance Service, and manage fire

and rescue services in Abu Dhabi.

Now it may be bust, but where have its past profits, paid for from the public purse, all gone? The shareholders and banks who shared these profits should now share today's losses as well.

The fire engines and equipment which are vital for the Fire Brigade, should be taken back into public ownership - period.

It's not an idea which Boris Johnson will want to consider, but it's the only one that makes sense.

• From fleecing the youth....

Tory-controlled Wandsworth Council in South London aims to save £55m this year.

So, from October it will be charging children £2.50 at weekends to use its adventure playground in Battersea. This is a pilot scheme so if it is a "success", it will be extended. If not, the playground will be closed.

As if playgrounds were not one of the necessary elements in building up a child's life, whether rich or poor!

The pettiness of such a tax on children is yet more striking evidence of the politicians' social prejudices.

• ... to policing the youth

By contrast, when it came to fighting "youth crime", no resources were spared in Chalgrove, Oxfordshire by Thames Valley police.

Two policemen investigating a broken greenhouse window asked a police helicopter flying nearby to

help detain the culprit. This turned out to be a 15-year old boy playing football in the local pub's garden, whose ball had inadvertently flown over the fence and smashed a single pane of glass. The owner didn't press any charges and the boy said he'd pay for the damage.

A police spokeswoman denied any "overreaction". Nor did she mention the cost of it!

• Dangerous combination

The ConDem minister Eric Pickles may well get himself pickled after agreeing to 250,000 tonnes a year of nuclear waste being dumped in a landfill site in King's Cliffe, near Peterborough.

Everyone was against it and a local referendum gave a 96% majority against. But Pickles declared that the "risk of actual harm would be very low".

The waste management company awarded the contract is Augean. Whether they deliberately named themselves after the dirtiest stables

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in Greek mythology or not, this company has a filthy record.

In 2006, they were fined for causing a chemical fire after excavating an overfilled site. In 2009, they used the exemption given to waste from the London Olympic site to dump 200 tonnes of hazardous waste in their Thornhaugh site. Finally, last November, there was an explosion in their facilities in Bridgetown!

Mixing profit-making and radioactive waste is already dangerous, but asking Augean to handle it is a catastrophe in the making!

The truth they want to hide

The "listening exercise" over Lansley's NHS bill was only meant to last until the end of May, but it is still on. Just about everyone concerned is against this bill, from patients and NHS workers to GPs, including the senior doctor appointed by Cameron to head the "exercise", for whom the bill is "unworkable and destabilising". Moreover, the coalition

itself is divided: the Lib-Dems are trying to regain some credit by opposing some aspects of the bill, while Tory backbenchers are worried about a likely backlash at constituency level.

Cameron wasn't helped by one of his own "health advisors", Mark Britnell, a former NHS bureaucrat who joined the private consultancy firm KPMG. Last October, Britnell told

Health Service

a conference of private health executives in New York that "*in future, the NHS will be a state insurance provider, not a state deliverer*", that it would offer big opportunities for private profits and that free health care should be replaced with co-payment, where patients share the costs of care. Cameron did not like it one bit: some truths are best kept hidden! □

Labour's legacy

In an interview published on 20 May in the Guardian, shadow health minister John Healy tried to distance Labour from Lansley's bill. While denying that Lansley is following on from Labour's privatisation by stealth, Healey had to admit that Labour "*may have pursued the involvement of private providers for its own sake*".

Indeed, how else could he explain that private healthcare companies

and PPI contractors, living off the NHS budget like leeches, mushroomed under Labour? Necessity? As if the NHS couldn't invest in the facilities it needed - which would have been much cheaper, than having to fund the profits of the private sharks! The reason, of course, had everything to do with helping shareholders to line their pockets.

The case of the Hinchingsbrooke

hospital, in Cambridgeshire, is a telling example. This supposedly "failing" hospital is about to be taken over by a "social enterprise" called Circle - in fact, a for-profit company set up by people hailing from such well known "social enterprises" as Goldman Sachs, Tesco or Argos. And all this is taking place even before the ConDems have changed a comma in Labour's health legislation! □

Letter from Sussex

• Criminal "oversight"

GPs are being asked to save money by referring fewer patients to hospital and looking for "alternative care in the community"! But what might that be? The case of a psychiatric patient from Eastbourne DGH has just shed some light on this. This patient had been in hospital many times and made repeated suicide attempts. But to "wean her off direct hospital support" she was classified as "low risk" and put on temporary leave. Two days later, she was rushed into A&E, having overdosed on her diabetes medication, and begged to be re-admitted to psychiatric care. But as her bed was no longer available, she was sent back to A&E. The next day,

she threw herself in front of a train travelling at 70 mph. The coroner said he was "baffled" at the oversights. But this is no oversight - just a system in which saving money is more important than saving lives!

• A cynical ploy

5 years ago, huge protests stopped the closure of the Eastbourne District General Hospital's maternity unit. But now this threat has been revived after the Care Quality Commission blasted this hospital for poor patient care. Corpses were left in sight of the resuscitation area, patients were left lying on the floor after falling - all the horror stories we've become used to hearing in



the media! The ploy is transparent: first they drive care standards down to unacceptable levels and then they use this as a pretext to close hospitals! It's high time we revive our protests and stand up to say "no more"!

Ministers need sex education!

The government has invited Life - an organisation which advocates abstinence from sex to prevent pregnancy, rather than contraception - to sit on its "sexual health education forum". At the same time it has excluded the British Pregnancy Advisory Service (BPAS, a voluntary organisation).

BPAS has, for 40 years, been providing pregnancy (and contraception) counselling, while undertaking almost one abortion in 4

in England and Wales, mostly on behalf of the NHS - because no government has had the political will to provide the NHS with the resources needed for these essential services!

Cameron is just wooing the anti-contraception, anti-abortion lobby. He suggested lowering the abortion limit from 24 to 20 weeks and is allowing debate on an amendment by Frank Field and Nadine

Dorries, which would require women seeking an abortion to be counselled by an organisation which doesn't perform abortions - taking a similar position to Life, which advocates a "cooling off period" when considering abortion - yes, when time is of the essence! And too bad if this increases the teenage pregnancy rate, which had only just started falling! Clearly, it's access to contraception which cuts unwanted pregnancies and therefore abortion rates. Abstinence? It's their wet dream!

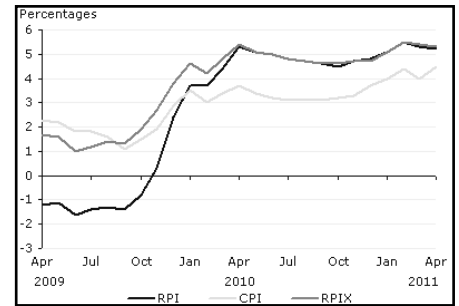
Inflation, another way of making us pay for their crisis

The rate of Inflation in April increased to 4.5% on the CPI index - the government's measure of inflation which does not include housing costs. If those are taken into account it is 5.2% and way higher than the 2% "average" pay rise of most workers. Even if homeowners' mortgage costs have fallen, owing to lower interest rates, those renting have not been so lucky with rents up by 10% since March 2008. Mortgages apart, everything has risen, led by

energy bills at 19.5% higher.

This is not a problem for the bosses. Rather, they benefit from the higher prices they charge, while paying workers reduced pay in real terms. So inflation becomes one more mechanism by which the cost of their crisis is passed on to the working population.

Against this, the only way for the working class to protect its standard of living would be to impose automatic wage increases in line with real price increases, as



often as required, with workers enforcing their own verifiable inflation index on the bosses. □

• Energy - daylight robbery!

To explain away the rise of prices at the petrol pump, the oil majors and their politicians always find "good reasons".

This year it was first the wave of protests in the Arab world, then the earthquake and the subsequent nuclear disaster in Japan and now, it is the military standoff in Libya. This, they claim, keeps pushing up oil prices and, therefore, petrol prices at the pump.

Except that it's a lie: in May

this year, oil prices in pounds were actually 10% lower than their all-time peak, in 2008. However, petrol prices at the pump were 13% higher than they were at the time!

This cover-up applies just as much to household utility bills.

The average annual bill is now 23% higher than in 2008, despite lower gas and electricity wholesale prices. And, as if this was not enough, the utility companies now have the nerve to float the idea of

a 5-10% increase, allegedly made "necessary" by "costly environment targets" which they are supposed to meet!

It's not hard to figure out where the proceeds of this daylight robbery have gone - shareholders' pockets. It's no coincidence if, for instance, Shell has increased its profits by 40% and Centrica (which owns British Gas) by 30%, over the past three years!

• Pay gap, a widening ravine!

It's official, top executives are earning 145 times the average wage (and how many times the minimum wage?!). According to a "High Pay Commission" report, it would take the average person 11 lifetimes to earn the £14 million which Rich Ricci from Barclays is rumoured to have earned in just one year!

But this is not an isolated case! In fact the 1,000 highest paid executives of the 100 largest companies in Britain have increased their pay packets by 14 times more than average pay.

And workers who are refused inflation-proof pay rises (or a pay rise, full stop) will be pleased to know that some CEOs have actually doubled their pay packets over the last year!

Yes, quite obviously, pay restraint for workers is "essential" - how else would the dogs at the top buy their golden bones?

• Give them a rocket

The Sunday Times' latest "Rich List", published in May, showed that

the wealth of Britain's 1,000 richest individuals is almost back to pre-crisis level. In fact, with £396bn in their coffers, just 12% of their wealth would cover the expenditure cuts that the coalition wants to push down the throats of millions of working class families over the coming 5 years!

And it is not just the case of outrageous "fat cats" like the Duke of Westminster, whose £7bn property empire is spreading far beyond Mayfair. Boardroom pay at Britain's top 350 companies soared by 45% last year. Three years on from the crisis, how many workers saw such a jump in their pay packet? How many even got their jobs back after being made redundant?

After the short-lived slump in share prices, therefore, and despite the on-going crisis, the parasitism of the capitalist class has resumed its upward trend at the expense of the working class.

In fact, the rich have so much cash to waste that over 400 of them have signed up in advance for a £123,000 trip in Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic, where they will fly

to the edge of space. If only they would stay up there...

• Private jet lag

Top business executives are really hard up these days. At least, this is what official statistics seem to imply, by showing a sudden £2bn drop in the amount they spent on private jets during the first quarter of this year.

But don't worry, they're not anywhere near the point of having to increase the overcrowding of peak hour trains by using public transports. It's just that they rushed to replace their private jets in the last months of 2010 to beat the deadline of the VAT increase from zero to 20% from January 1st.

Yes, you read correctly. For decades, private jets have benefited from a zero VAT rate, just like food and children's clothes for the rest of us! These people live in such high places that their private jets are as "essential" to them as food. Time they were grounded for good!

June 30th - raising our voices

The ballots for industrial action held by the PCS (civil servants) and NUT (teachers) - both over pensions and, in the case of PCS, over wages and redundancy arrangements as well - were set to close by 15 June. In Unison, however, although some branches are holding local ballots - and others are already taking industrial action, like in Sheffield and Southampton - no national ballot has been organised. As if Unison members were not facing exactly the same issues, especially in the NHS and local government! As to the UCU leaders (university and college teachers)

they have decided to hold a strike ballot later!

So, which "co-ordinated strikes" will take place on June 30th and on what scale, remains to be seen. Especially as the PCS leaders' vague recommendation ("vote yes for strike action and yes for action short of a strike") and their failure to even argue for stopping the ConDems' job slashing, hardly shows a clear will to fight.

However, workers have no alternative but to fight back. Any strike or protest organised on June 30th will be an opportunity to raise

our voices against the ConDems' attempt at making workers pay for the bosses' crisis. It must be used! ☐

• Public sector pensions: pay more, get less

In May the government told public sector unions that it intended to implement most of the recommendations of former Labour minister "Lord" Hutton's report on pensions.

This means, for example, that it would take about 15 more years of work to earn a pension equivalent to half of one's salary - 45 years instead of 30. Moreover, the salary used to compute the pension would

no longer be one's final salary, but a lower "career average" - which, according to the PCS, would reduce pension payments by 30 to 50%! In addition, pensions are meant to be upgraded on the basis of the lower CPI index and retirement age increased to 66! And for this pension theft, public sector workers are supposed to increase their pension contributions by 3.3%!



Not only are workers meant to pay for today's crisis, but the ConDems want them to go on paying right up until they die! Why should they get away with it?

• BT's raid on pensions

BT was one of the first companies to follow the government's lead and link its workers' pensions to the consumer prices index (CPI), instead of the retail prices index (RPI) which includes housing costs. At a stroke, it reduced its pension liability by £4.3bn - four times what it paid into its pension fund last year to reduce its deficit! Add this "saving" on the back of workers to the 35,000 job cuts over the past 3 years and it's not hard to understand how BT was able to announce quarterly pre-tax profits of £1.7bn! And this was despite a fall in revenue of 4% due to falling demand for landline services.

After this, BT's share price rose sharply, indicating that shareholders expect a big payout. But their cash bonanza will have been entirely paid for by past and present BT workers, with their jobs and pensions!

• The anger of the disabled

Thousands of disabled descended on London last month for a national protest against attacks planned against their already inadequate benefits. A combination of local authority cuts and changes in assessment for incapacity benefit and the disability living allowance (DLA) threaten to deprive many

of their resources, making a cynical farce of the government's claim to be "protecting the most needy" and "helping the disabled to help themselves".

Charities estimate that 700,000 people will be affected by these cuts and that £9bn will be taken out of the disabled budget over the lifetime of the current parliament. This gives the lie to the government's use of the Paralympics as a showcase for their benevolent "concern" for the disabled: for two weeks of glory once every four years, they are meant to suffer in silence for the remaining 206 weeks!

• Another empty scheme

Clegg and Cameron jointly launched a new £60m youth unemployment "initiative" which, they claimed, will boost work placements, help with childcare, improve presentation skills and guarantee a job interview at the end.

But haven't we heard it all before? How many such schemes have already served to push people off the register, by getting them into non-jobs or by discouraging them from claiming?

And the fact that, on the very day following this launch, 2,400 job cuts were announced in JobCentres, or 1/5 of the very workforce meant to oversee this scheme, probably says it all!

• Unpaid work increases

Short term work experience placements or internships for white collar jobs are now widespread. According to one survey, HSBC has taken on 180, and 17% of all businesses are using them routinely. The government itself has increased the use of interns.

As part of his "social mobility strategy", Clegg had asked firms to pay interns rather than leaving them to the "sharp-elbowed and well connected". But this did not prevent his own party from advertising for an internship paying only pays for travel and lunch! As to the Tories' exclusive "Black and White Party", it auctioned 2-week internships at city firms for an average £3,000 donation to party funds.

In fact, over 1/3 of internships are paid less than the minimum wage, many are still unpaid and some even have to be bought! Rather than "tackling privilege" as Clegg's strategy claimed to do, it helps bosses find cheap, pliable workers according to their needs - something that looks very much like Blair's old "flexible labour market". No wonder the ConDems have chosen Alan Milburn, one of Blair's old faithful, as their "social mobility tsar".

King's Cross railway station (London)**• East Coast's first class chaos**

After 132 years, the restaurant car on the London-to-Scotland, state-controlled East Coast mainline, has been cut.

Bosses have replaced fresh food on the train with free "airline style, at seat" food for First Class passengers only. They reckon it will attract more 1st Class passengers and increase profits! Never mind if, as a result, other passengers can no longer get proper meals.

But worse, to achieve this so-called "Welcome to..." "service", they've

heaped chaos on workers' heads. Chefs have been cut (demoted to waiter) and everyone is meant to be to-ing and fro-ing from kitchen to seat with wobbly carts, trolleys and trays in a frantic rush.

There's no time for breaks on board (on shifts up to 12 hours!) and we're dealing with hazards in the kitchen where fridges de-ice 3-hourly, creating slips and slides on the floor, while oven doors burst open spraying steam in our faces.



It looks like East Coast's plan to deliver a profitable morsel to the private sharks when it is re-privatised, has already gone belly-up.

• Deep purple

East Coast rolled out the purple carpet for the "Welcome to" launch - all along Platform 1. A purple-painted "Flying Scotsman", with a tacky plastic "crest" stuck on the front, was greeted by pipers piping and drummers drumming. Bemused passengers didn't know what to make of it as they struggled to leave the train, their way blocked by hordes of managers crowding round the cameras. Having made all this effort, what a shame it was that the train limped in late, in front of all

those journalists. Purple faces, too, then? [King's X Workers' Platform - 31/05/11]

• Starting as they'll go on?

And how smoothly the big launch went. On the 1st day, Sunday, there were delays between Dunbar and Edinburgh, but not a manager in sight to advise workers what was going on. That was just a taster - last Saturday, overhead line problems caused 3-4 hr delays and cancellations. Might as well not have wasted all that advertising on the new faster service... [King's X Workers' Platform - 31/05/11]

• Welcome to... chaos

Railgourmet hired too many managers, who're just creating confusion. But they didn't hire workers until the last minute; there weren't enough and there wasn't time to train them on the new food supplies. With more train crews ringing the Railgourmet office to place orders, there was no one in the office to answer the phones. To top it all, the new lifts for all deliveries to the station are constantly out of order. It's a miracle any food gets to the trains at all. [King's X Workers' Platform - 31/05/11]

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**• Ford's visit to Ford**

William Clay Ford Jnr ("Bill"), the great grandson of Henry Ford arrived in Britain the same week as Obama, and paid a visit to the Dagenham Diesel Centre (DDC), accompanied by Sky TV and assorted film crews. Quite unaccountably, just as he drove up to the plant in a vintage Ford, the fire alarm went off! Everyone had duly to assemble outside, much to the bosses' dismay.

"Bill" was attending the centenary of Ford production in Britain - Model

T assembly began in Trafford Park, Manchester in 1911. His interviewers had nothing but praise for his greenness (he only drives "hybrid and electric") and dedication to shareholders (best quarterly profit for 13 years). Not one of these bootlickers asked him why Ford was cutting the pensions of 30,000 retirees and future pensioners by applying the government's CPI rate to all increments. They paid no attention whatsoever to the workforce, seen in the background, making engines in



an area nicknamed the "Chicken Farm" - where workers feel worse off than battery hens, which can at least sit on a perch. In DDC, there's no sitting down and any slacking sets off buzzers and flashing lights! That's 100 years of "progress".

• This is jaw-dropping!

Check this out!! You'll fall off your chair... Ford website (6/5/11): the "Happy Seat, an ingenious swivel chair designed by a team of occupational physicians, other experts, plus disabled employees' reps "to address the issue of an aging work-force and the physical tolls of long-term-working on the line". It allows workers to sit in comfort on the production line (1st used in 1998 in Genk!) while assembling cars... "leading to reduced in-juries and illnesses, fewer lost work

days and improved quality of the operations". What unbelievable hypocrisy. [Workers' Fight - Ford Dagenham - 24/5/11]

• It's just insult to injury!!

And just where are our happy seats? Many of us are well over 50, even 60. But younger mates find "21st century" Lion&Tiger conditions a killer. In fact we'd say production on these 2 lines is deliberately "designed" to wear us out and damage our backs, shoulders and arms - how many serious injuries already? And heart attacks?! [Workers' Fight - Ford Dagenham - 24/5/11]

• We aspire to a better union

We got a blank piece of paper from the union with 5 lines, 1 to 5, to put down our "aspirations for the pay claim". DEP JWC wanted it back next day, even tho' the pay talks aren't till Sept/Oct. So stuff like "get rid of all foremen" to barbecues and deck chairs went down. On the Chicken Farm we put CHAIRS as points 1,2,3,4, and "Improve working conditions!" for 5. But what probably should go down as 1-5 is "a fighting union which we can use to get the pay claim we need!" [Workers' Fight - Ford Dagenham - 24/5/11]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**• Fight all redundancies, all cuts, all closures!**

Postal workers at the 4 London offices (East London, Nine Elms, Rathbone Place and Mount Pleasant) have voted to take strike action. There was a 79% majority on a 54% turnout - lower than usual because the Communication Workers Union completed the postal ballot in just 9 days, in order to announce the result at its annual conference. The CWU has confined the issue to opposition to "compulsory" redundancies and the fact that Royal Mail has "broken" the agreement it made in

2010 to involve the union at every step in deciding the cuts.

This "Business Transformation 2010 and Beyond" agreement was a rotten agreement. If bosses are breaking it (of course!) surely it's a good time for it to be thrown in the bin? At the time of writing, union officials are still having talks with Royal Mail bosses, using the strike vote as a bargaining chip. But workers in other offices (not balloted) up and down the country are experiencing similar attacks, if not the



same ones, and there is every reason for a general fight to be launched to put a stop to all job cuts, closures and what's more, to halt the government's privatisation plans!

• Post Offices: don't mutualise, renationalise!!

When the ConDems announced their plan for Royal Mail privatisation, many were surprised by their pledge to keep the Post Office network in government hands. But now it seems the cat is out of the bag. Ed Mayo, the head of Co-operatives UK has just produced a report on its possible mutualisation, as a means of "spinning it off" from government, under one co-operative type

umbrella. The John Lewis partnership has been mentioned as a model.

Ironically, a few years ago, it was the Royal Mail which was meant to be thus transformed under so-called "workers' ownership", while post offices were to be sold into the private sector! Now, apparently, the government has decided to cut its subsidy to post offices after all. Even if the survival of at

least 9,000 out of 11,500 post offices depends on it, while more may become unviable if privatisation removes guaranteed "Royal Mail" business. This merely exposes how inextricably linked the Royal Mail and the Post Office network is. Ensuring both are kept fully in state ownership, as a public service, has to be our aim.

• Romec's ghost pickets, all out together...

Romec engineers took industrial action 27 May-1 June against the use of tracking devices to try to catch them out, discipline and sack them. It wasn't a strike, but a ban on answering calls-outs/emergencies. Which didn't stop Romec's Cleaning boss from sending cleaners a letter to say it was "unacceptable" to "join the engineers' picket line"; and if we did, our pay would be stopped! Which planet

has she been living on? [Workers' Fight - Mount Pleasant - 30/5/11]

• ... If only!

Ironical isn't it, that in her fear and ignorance this Romec boss expected pickets - but also expected us to act in solidarity with each other, when our very bold and clever union doesn't even expect it? Case in point: were Romec cleaners, engineers, or canteen workers included in the latest London ballot over the closures, which obviously affects us too? Do union officials even think that it might

be a good idea? [Workers' Fight - Mount Pleasant - 30/5/11]

• Big cheats and liars

By not paying ColleagueShare RM said it'd save £200m! But RM says the shares are "worthless", so how can it save money by not paying them? And where did they find the £1,400 "worth" to pay mates who left on severance or retirement, or Post Office Limited mates? Maybe bosses should go look in the same place, so they can pay the rest of us! [Workers' Fight - Mount Pleasant - 30/5/11]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**• Said the spider to the fly...**

Some of the last group of former agency workers to get permanent BMW contracts had a so-called offer a few weeks ago. BMW would buy them out of their contracts with a lump sum, in return for some kind of promise not to sack them! Could BMW have really expected any one of them to say yes? If they did, they were disappointed. [Workers' Fight - BMW - Cowley - 31/05/11]

• Home-made cock-up

The recent breakdowns in BiW are entirely of BMW's own making. First they installed recycled (i.e cheap), accident-prone robots. Instead of

training extra maintenance, they not only sacked the workmates who were doing the job manually before, but also got rid of many of the skilled men too! [Workers' Fight - BMW - Cowley - 18/05/11]

• Rob Peter to pay... no-one

BiW's robots aren't the only example of BMW's cost-cutting reaching crazy depths. Painting the floor with anti-static paint is supposed to go hand in hand with earthing the floor stud. But BMW reckoned this wasn't necessary, so didn't bother. Result - the floor was duly painted, but the static discharges continue! [Workers' Fight - BMW - Cowley - 18/05/11]

• **Cutting corners** Cutting costs by not earthing the floor studs against static (as BMW has recently done) is a health and safety issue. Quite apart from



the unpleasant effect of getting a shock when you touch metal, in the past people have died when static has ignited with flammable liquids - for instance in the old E Block where a cleaner died while cleaning pipes with white spirit. [Workers' Fight - BMW - Cowley - 31/05/11]

Libya - a dangerous escalation

More than two months after the first western strikes against Libya, and despite the resulting paralysis of Gaddafi's air force and armoured units, little change has taken place in the country. So the main NATO governments have now decided to bring in Apache combat helicopters to destroy targets more effectively, especially in urban areas.

The hypocritical pretext originally provided for the West's intervention in Libya - to "protect civilians from Gaddafi" - is now all but forgotten. Targeting urban areas can only cause huge casualties and terrorise the population. What seems now to be on the agenda is the very same "regime change" which was behind the Iraq invasion, back in 2003.

The western governments hoped to get Gaddafi to withdraw gracefully,



with former dignitaries of his regime joining ranks with the insurgents' Transitional Council to form a "western-friendly" administration. This has failed so far. Hence their escalation of the conflict. If this fails too,

only one thing will stop them from staging a full-blown invasion - the fear that it might trigger a backlash among their own populations and those across the Arab world. So it should! ☐

• A fat subsidy to big business

The colourful pie-chart of public expenditure released with Osborne's last budget shows no entry for the war in Afghanistan, let alone the intervention in Libya. This is because most of the cost of these wars comes out of so-called "special reserves" for which the government provides no accounts.

At the beginning of the intervention

in Libya, Osborne claimed in front of the Commons that its cost would be "in the tens of millions". But defence experts quoted by the Guardian estimate its real cost to be in the region of £38m... per week! At this rate, if the intervention carries on beyond the end of September, which seems likely, its price tag would increase to over £1bn!

"Special reserves" or not, this will increase Osborne's famous budget deficit - meaning more cuts to fill the gap! But for the politicians of the capitalist class, this is an "investment" well worth making - to boost the profits of weapons manufacturers like BAE Systems and those of the oil majors, like BP and Shell, which hope to gain out of this intervention.

Afghanistan - this war must be stopped!

The war in Afghanistan slides into an ever-deadlier quagmire. Last June, NATO commander, US general Petraeus, launched an all-out offensive. Special forces raided villages, terrorising the population by carrying out house-to-house searches, lining up villagers for questioning and taking many "suspects" away.

How many died in these raids? No-one will ever know. Western generals "don't do body counts"!

Why should they care? Poorer countries' thugs, like Serbia's Mladic may face show trials at The Hague. But neither the politicians who order the slaughter of populations as part of the rich countries' wars, nor the generals who carry out their orders, need fear being brought to account! In fact, while yet another air strike was claiming the lives of 12 Afghan children, Petraeus was in Washington, being promoted to head the CIA!

The father of a British marine killed recently, asked in *The Independent*: "Was my son's death in Afghanistan a price worth paying?" No, it wasn't. No life should be put at risk to reinforce the stranglehold of western capital over the world! Marx once wrote that "a people who oppresses another cannot itself be free". It is in the interests of the working class of this country to oppose this bloody war. Troops out of Afghanistan, now! ☐

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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