

WORKERS' fight

No 34 - May 2012
price 30p

<http://www.w-fight.org>
contact@w-fight.org

ISSN 2040-400X

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

THE BALLOT BOX CAN'T REPLACE A FIGHT BACK

In the first week of May, in just three days, the governments of three different European countries have been heavily censured by their electorates.

In France, right-wing president Sarkozy became the first French president to be kicked out after just one term in office. In Greece, the ruling coalition's share of the votes was slashed from 77% to 32%. And here, in the May 3rd local elections, the combined score of the ruling ConDem coalition fell to 47%, down from 70% in the last comparable elections, back in 2008.

And these are not isolated results. They follow the earlier downfall of a string of European governments, for the very same reasons, first in Ireland, in February last year, then in Portugal, in March, and finally in Italy and Spain, in November.

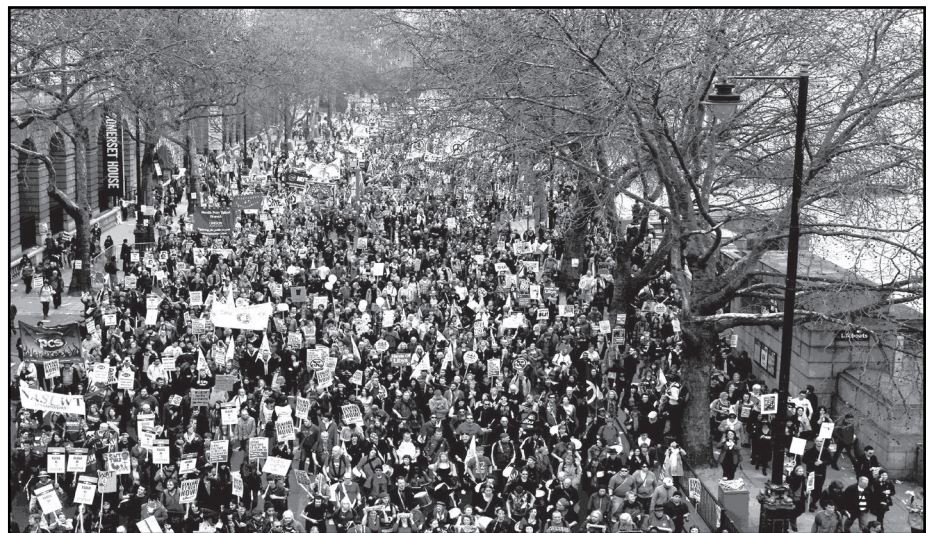
In short, the worn out slogan "we're all in it together", which has been used for so long by every government to cover up their policies in favour of the capitalist class, hasn't fooled anyone. Whenever the electorate is given a chance to have a say about these governments' policies, its verdict is an unmistakable: "enough is enough!"

Against the bosses' austerity

And how could it be otherwise? For all the nonsense peddled by the ConDems about Britain being somehow "better off" than the rest of the world, the working class here is facing exactly the same attacks as in the rest of Europe.

In Greece, France, Spain, etc.. just as much as here, the politicians of the capitalist class have been busy making workers pay for the bosses' crisis. Beyond the different languages and currency, and the different levels of hardship, the same war is being waged by the bosses and their politicians against the conditions of the working class.

Everywhere, social expenditure and



services have been cut in order to divert a larger share of public resources towards the coffers of the capitalist class.

Everywhere, the bankers are making a killing out of public debt and everywhere, politicians are helping the bosses who take advantage of the crisis by increasing the level of workers' exploitation, in order to boost their profits.

Everywhere unemployment is soaring, wages and pensions are shrinking, while the parasitism of the very rich, parading their luxury, is becoming increasingly unbearable.

So, is it any wonder if the managers of big business' interests in government get censured by voters? Of course not - they should!

From the polls to the streets

But then what? What more can the working class expect from the ballot box? Nothing, in fact.

Where other parties took over, they just carried on with the same austerity policies - or worse. The new "Socialist" president in France will implement

another version of Sarkozy's austerity, just as Labour did here, before the ConDems came in to do more of the same - and just as Labour will do again if they get back into office.

No real change can come out of the ballot box, because, once in government, politicians always do what they're told by big business. But what can and will be decisive is a change in the balance of class forces.

The same capitalists who dictate to governments can be forced to change their tune - but only if they feel that their rule is under threat. And since they haven't suffered much, as shown by this year's dividends explosion and the stockpile of cash hoarded by companies, they can pay.

The working class produces all the wealth in society. By pulling together all its forces, it could hit the tiny minority of capitalist parasites where it hurts them most and threaten their control over the economy. Then, and only then, will it become possible to regain the ground lost and make them foot their own bills! ☐

Inflation – lift real wages accordingly!

It's not just GDP which is "worse than expected", inflation is too. Last year, we were told that it would go down to the Bank of England's 2% target by the end of this year. But it's going the other way. In March, annual inflation went up again, to 3.5%. We are told this is mostly due to rises in food and clothing prices - in other words, basic necessities for all wage earners!

Meanwhile, wages are lagging far behind. Officially, the average pay increase over the past year was 1.4%, meaning a 2% cut in purchasing power. Since this has been going on since 2008, the cumulative loss in purchasing power is now almost 11%! And this is without taking into account the drop in income for those who have lost their jobs or have

been forced into a lower paid job.

Inflation is just another way for the bosses to cut workers' real wages. The working class can only protect its standard of living by fighting for the inclusion in every wage agreement of provisions guaranteeing the automatic upgrading of wages in line with prices - in real time. □

• Tracking poverty

The March edition of the monthly "Income Tracker" sponsored by supermarket chain Asda, provides another example of how the crisis is bearing down on workers' living standards. It computes what it calls the "spending power" of an average household - i.e. what's left of the weekly net income once necessities like food, clothing, housing costs, health, children's costs, transport, etc., are paid for. It says this average "spending power" is now worth £144 per week - down 11% in real value from what it was at the beginning of the crisis. Moreover, this is an average across Britain - in Northern Ireland, the country's worst off area, "spending power" shrinks to only £83!

However, while Asda's "Income

Tracker" reflects the general downward trend, it doesn't "track" the full reality. Its "average household", which is assumed to be on £696 per week gross, is supposed to spend £431 per week on necessities - which is way beyond what many households, even in work, can afford. But then, they're probably the kind of low-spending households Asda is not much interested in, anyway!

• Paying no tax and proud of it

This April, Osborne's Treasury itself produced statistics showing the extent of tax avoidance of his good mates. Instead of paying the 50% rate (now cut to 45%) over 1,000 millionaires have been paying 30% or less in income tax! 300 managed to pay between 10% and 20%!

Robert Peston, the sometimes comical

BBC financial commentator, worked out that those with incomes above £15m could, via ("legal") tax avoidance, including by giving to charity, cut their tax to 10% - resulting in a loss to the Treasury of £6m from each one of them. In fact an estimated £42 billion is lost annually through tax loopholes. And since it's become so well-known, the Con-Dems have to try to restore some trust in the system. What if everybody copied the rascals at the top? So now they're clamping down - to a degree - on tax relief for charitable donations.

That doesn't mean that there aren't many more ways to avoid tax, and new ones being worked out by armies of tax lawyers. But it does mean that the only efficient way to get the rich to pay is to expropriate them...

Police racism and the class system

Following several racist incidents, the Metropolitan Police has suspended eight officers and one civilian worker. The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) is investigating 20 Met officers. One officer, accused of racially abusing Mauro Demetrio in Newham last year, is now facing prosecution.

Not for the first time, the problem

of police racism in London is too big to ignore. Now, we are meant to believe that declaring "there is no room for racism at the Met" and removing a few "bad apples" as a result of the current investigations, will rid the police of any trace of racism, once and for all. If only!

But racism doesn't come out of the blue. It feeds on capitalist

exploitation and is whipped up to divide the ranks of the exploited and divert their frustration away from their exploiters. That the police, whose job it is to protect the private property of the capitalist minority against the working class majority, should be a breeding ground for racist prejudice, is merely part of the filthy logic of this class system. □

• Investigation hits a brick wall

The light has still to be cast on Mark Duggan's murder, last August, in Tottenham. First, it was revealed that the gun Duggan was accused of carrying had never existed. Since then, the few witnesses of the murder described how they were shooed away from the scene before Duggan's cab was stopped. The spot was not covered by CCTV (was it by chance?), but mobile phone footage showed it was swarming with cops, thereby putting the lie to the police's initial claim that it had been acting in self-defence.

It was Mark Duggan's death that set alight the frustration caused by rising poverty and unemployment, first in Tottenham and then across London and beyond. But Cameron blame the consequent riots on "criminals" and "gangs", before turning the courts against the

rioters.

Today, the marksman who shot Mark Duggan in Tottenham last year and 30 others involved in the operation are refusing to be interviewed on the written statements they provided to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC). But you won't hear Cameron condemning this obvious attempt at covering up the criminal activity of the police gang which killed Mark Duggan!

• Another Stephen Lawrence?

In July 2010, Kester David, a 53-year old black man, died of burns and inhalation of fumes in Palmers Green, north London. The Enfield police investigation concluded that his death wasn't suspicious, ignoring a witness who heard cries of terror. That witness was not even interviewed until a year after the death - three months after Kester David's mother complained about

the inept investigation. This April, the Met re-opened the case and published an internal report criticising senior officers in charge of the first investigation for "a catalogue of errors".

It seems that the Stephen Lawrence case keeps being re-enacted again and again, despite all the Met's "promises". After Stephen's murder, in 1993, the evidence was ignored and it took 13 years before 2 of his racist murderers were finally convicted. Likewise in the case of Michael Menson, burned to death in 1997 in Edmonton, who Enfield police originally claimed had committed suicide - before eventually pursuing his death as a murder case. Ten years on, as Kester David's killing shows, police still fail to investigate properly when it comes to black men's deaths!

Local councils

May 3rd - the ConDems' austerity censured

Just before the May 3rd local elections, Cameron insisted on TV that voters should forget about national policies and focus on local issues. This last-ditch attempt to avoid a disaster, flopped. The Tories lost almost one-third of the seats they were defending and the Lib-Dems nearly half. Voters clearly tried to use their ballot papers to condemn the ConDems' austerity.

However, voting Labour - the only option for working class voters in most cases - wasn't voting against the bosses' austerity as such. After all, wasn't it Labour which, while in office, bailed out the bankers and launched austerity measures? And aren't Labour-led

The London mayoral election was the only exception to the anti-ConDem vote



councils currently implementing the ConDems' cuts without any qualms?

This may well have been a reason why, overall, the turnout went down to 32% - a record low since 2000 - and even less in large working class cities,

with the exception of London, probably due to the mayoral election.

Now, the problem will be to ensure that Labour doesn't use this anti-ConDem vote as a blank cheque for its own austerity, present and future! □

• Council workers on the breadline

Many council workers are on the minimum wage - working as they do on temp contracts for agencies, thanks to systematic job cuts followed by outsourcing of most essential service provision. And the minimum wage itself has fallen in real terms back to what it was in 2004!

But a study by King's College London shows that as many as 200,000 care workers don't even get that minimum - as they have to pay all the costs associated with their work: half of all councils set 15 minutes as the maximum time for elderly clients' "home help", for instance, and workers have to pay for travelling between residences, obligatory phone calls, etc.. Both client and worker lose.

In this context, the reneging of Osborne on a pledge to compensate the lowest paid council workers for the 2-year pay freeze with a £250 one-off payment each year is even more scurrilous - he now says that it's up to councils themselves to fork out!

• Birmingham: reverse the cuts!

Labour may have reversed its fortunes on Birmingham council by winning back control after 8 years of ConDem rule - but this is unlikely to reverse the cuts forced on workers providing council services, not to mention users. In 2004 the coalition began closing facilities like care homes and this was accelerated after 2008, when a so-called "Martini flexibility contract" was enforced to cut jobs and

force remaining workers to work more.

Though there were two initial strikes, eventually crucial aspects of the contract were accepted and those workers who refused to comply were left isolated. From 1 November 2011, all workers lost on shift pay, weekend pay and night rates. The March 2012 budget announced the closure within 12 months of the last few kids', and elderly persons' homes.

Ex-union leader and now local MP, Jack Dromey, promised to "unpick" the contract while electioneering this month, explaining that "it would take time..." But neither Birmingham workers on pittance wages, nor the population which is losing its vital care services can afford to wait.

• The housing crisis is the issue

The east London borough of Newham, was accused of "social cleansing" for having written to housing associations in Stoke-on-Trent and Walsall asking if they could house 500 families who can no longer afford to live in Newham - due to the housing benefit cap. One claimant in temporary accommodation received a letter telling him to report at once to an address in Walsall, 130 miles away and in one of the areas worst hit by recession.

Housing minister, Grant Shapps dismissed this as local elections politicking. Ironically, though, Tory-controlled Westminster, well-known for its past "social cleansing", when it moved poor people out of Tory-held wards, is similarly considering trying to relocate benefit claimants to Derby and Nottingham!

The truth is that both at central and local level, politicians of all shades are just as determined to make the poorest households bear the brunt of the budget cuts. Meanwhile, the growing shortage of social housing is making the situation of benefit claimants increasingly critical!

• The Olympics cash machine

London 2012 is billed by organisers as the "most ethical Olympics ever". So how come Adidas, Olympics sponsor and the British team's kit supplier, pays workers in Indonesian factories only 34p/hr for a 65-hour week in appalling conditions?

Adidas isn't the only company to milk the Olympics. For instance, MacDonald's will have exclusive rights to sell its "food" on the site. Local restaurants will not be allowed to hand out flyers. If they do, they'll face prosecution. As to Coca Cola and Cadbury's, they promise free tickets - for draw winners buying their products. Other big names are cashing in too - like Balfour Beatty and the constructions giants sharing the £9bn building budget, or the multinational Westfield, which owns Stratford's giant new shopping centre.

Meanwhile, many residents of local council and housing association flats were forcibly relocated. London won the Olympics with plans to "regenerate" East London, in practice it has boiled down to preparing the area for post-Olympic gentrification. Not that we should be surprised. The Olympics has long been a great big money-making machine.

• Fuel tanker drivers could still park and walk

After the conciliators at ACAS jumped into the dispute between tanker drivers and the various oil companies and their subcontractors, who're responsible for drivers' lousy and unsafe conditions of work, their strike was put on ice. New proposals were made after 8 days of "intensive talks" - but these have

already been rejected by senior stewards. The result of a consultative ballot of the 2,000 drivers, due May 11th may well put industrial action back on the agenda. In fact to retain the legal "right to strike" dates will have to be set on the same day. So far, it looks as if the stickiest issue is pay and pensions.

But let us remember that behind the various subcontractors who impose such poor terms and conditions on drivers, stand the oil giants like Shell, with £18bn profits last year and BP, which just upped shareholders' dividends by 14%. The buck should really stop with them.

Jobless watch

• "New" (old) job scheme

Nick Clegg's latest little job is to push yet another scheme whereby "big business" is subsidised to offer jobs to 16-24 year-olds. It's to be linked to the government's "Youth Contract" which initially aimed at handing £2,275 to companies for each youth they employed, whether they were given a real job or not, or whether they were paid or not.

This time, companies like Barclays, E.ON, Phones4u and Morrisons together with training charities are to first provide young workers with literacy and interpersonal skills, etc., to justify sharing the (you guessed it) £2,275 which, yes, they'll still be getting! But they are now meant to place the lucky youth in permanent jobs.

Of course, this government has a lot to live down after the "slave labour" scandal (companies using free labour on JSA). This new scheme won't help the army of unemployed very much – it goes without saying. But it will help the bosses, given the "permanent" low wages and poor conditions which accompany any job, "permanent" or otherwise, which they offer these days. Assuming they offer any at all.

• Casual work programme

Under the Work Programme for the long-term unemployed, contractors like Maximus and A4E are paid to put claimants in touch with "recruiting" employers. Often these new jobs are through agencies, pay the minimum wage or slightly more, and only provide limited employment.

One such "recruitment" organised through Maximus, for waste collection in West Oxfordshire (David Cameron's patch), provides such irregular work that recruits have to sign on again within 2 weeks. Sometimes they're told that they're not required the next day, only to get a phone call at 5am (!) asking them in! This short notice makes it impossible to know until late in the week whether they'll have worked 16 hours, the upper threshold for claiming JSA. Yet the JobCentre does not see this as "good cause" for making a backdated JSA claim.

Theoretically, DWP's contractors like Maximus only receive payment if they place claimants in regular work for at least two years. One wonders how Maximus and its like still exist.

• Richest banks slash jobs

HSBC – one of the world's wealthiest banks with £13.6bn profits last

• No to Remploy closures!

At the same time as screwing the disabled out of benefits if they don't get a job, the government is withdrawing funding from Remploy factories. Set up in the 1940s to provide jobs designed for the disabled, there are now only 54 which remain open. The latest cuts threaten 36 sites and 1,752 jobs!

The government says cynically that Remploy doesn't provide value for money, given the "few" people provided with a job. It's amazing: they were quite happy to subsidise the likes of Tesco and Sainsbury when they took on the unemployed for free! But not

factories which employ workers who have special needs?

90% of those who lost their jobs in the previous round of Remploy closures are still unemployed 3 years later. In fact, small and medium companies don't even have to make adjustments for employing the disabled, provided they prove it's too costly for their businesses! Not only will sacked Remploy workers be unlikely to find another job, but with the new stringent conditions for ESA, they're also likely to face cuts in their benefits. It's outrageous!



year – announced that it would cut 10% of its workforce by next year. This means another 3,167 job cuts in Britain. 1,400 jobs in the Clydesdale and Yorkshire banks are to go as well, even if owner, Australian banking group NAB, made £1.31bn in the first 6 months of the financial year.

It's all about making even more profits for shareholders and that's what capitalism's about. But it's all the more obscene when the very banks which precipitated the crisis take a lead in aggravating it! And on top of it, HSBC, for instance, pays 192 of its top managers £1m each!

• Enlarging the benefit trap

Over 200,000 working couples have probably by now lost their entire Working Tax Credit. Just because it's highly unlikely they've managed to increase the hours they work.

Since the 6th April, the government made it mandatory for couples who used to get WTC for working 16hrs/wk to increase their hours of work to a minimum of 24hrs before they will qualify for the WTC top-up. Which would amount to losing up to £3,870/year. Of course, it won't do if they each have 12 hours – one must

have a minimum of 16 hours!

This is blatantly fleecing the poorest in order to cut the welfare bill: only half the jobs offered in job centres guarantee enough hours to qualify for WTC and there are around 22 applicants for each job!

• Politicking with poverty

Instead of children poverty being halved in 10 years – and ended by 2020, which is what the politicians promised – the opposite trend is now predicted. Thanks to the ConDems' cuts, and, in particular, their "Welfare Reform", which radically cuts benefits, the officially recognised Institute of Fiscal Studies says poverty will rise by 2020. Today, an estimated 3.5m children live below the poverty line. By 2020, this will have risen to 4.3m!

But what's the government target? 1.3m! Less than half the predicted level. Osborne and his fellows just pull any old figure from their hats – or maybe their sleeves – when needed. Why bother with reality? And these are the guys who tell communists that we are "utopian dreamers"!

• 10 May strike - and after?

The 10 May strike day over pensions included civil servants in several unions, university and college teachers in the UCU, health workers in Unite and even Royal Fleet Auxiliary workers in the RMT. In all, 470,000 public sector workers were called out.

The ConDem attack on pensions, which begun over a year ago, was forced through in most sections despite no agreements actually having been struck. So the fight continues, but without the participation of several unions like Unison and the teachers' unions.

The government wants all public sector workers to pay higher pension contributions, retire at 68 instead of 60 or 65, and take cuts in pensions of 15-20%. And all this when an average civil service pension is



a pittance of £4,200 a year - while 100,000 receive even less, with just £1-2,000/yr! Not only pensions, but pay itself is under attack with the current 2-year pay freeze and the threat of more cuts through the

introduction of regional pay.

So, yes, just as in the private sector, public sector workers have every reason to be out on the streets, and not just for one-day protests, but for as long as it takes! □

• Teachers sent out of class

The teachers' unions didn't join the strike call for 10 May. Yet teachers had shown unprecedented willingness to fight pension proposals - and now there is mounting anger over the Education Select Committee's "payment by results" proposals, to force teachers to put exam scores before learning.

On November 30 last year, the Association of Teachers and Lecturers struck for the first time in its 120-year history, joining the national public sector protest over pensions. Yet as a "follow-up" the largest teachers' union, the NUT, called only London teachers to strike for 1 day last month, which left a lot of teachers feeling almost more angry with the union than the government. Especially now, after it just bulldozed through consultations with union negotiators and imposed the pension cuts.

A teacher in one inner-city school said; "I looked at my last pay slip and found it forty quid short. At first I thought they deducted the strike day, but then I realised it was the pension contribution increase"! If the fight is to continue - and it surely must - it may well have to be without the union leaders' consent.

• "Regional pay", national headache

"Regional pay" is the ConDem flavour of the month, and all public sector workers are meant to have their pay "adjusted" to local private sector rates! For teachers, says education minister Gove, it will "make pay more market-facing" in local areas.

But which workers in the private sector are comparable to teachers except other teachers? In private schools, in the state-funded academies and now in the

growing number of state-financed "free" schools, there is already a "market", because they don't have to recognise national union pay agreements. Teachers are therefore usually paid less, with worse terms and conditions.

So Gove wants teachers in those fewer and fewer state schools where pay is still protected by national agreements, to have their pay cut by other means and join everyone else in the downward spiral. He claims this "freedom to innovate" - i.e. freedom to cut pay - will allow schools to "raise standards".

This logic for some reason doesn't apply everywhere, though: the same ConDems tell us that banks need to pay exorbitant bonuses to keep the "best people in the job". And who knows what might happen if they don't get their millions? A banking crisis? *

• Bordering on madness

With the recent queues at Heathrow's Terminal 5, the job cuts imposed on Border Agency staff (1,900 in the last year) were discussed in Prime Minister's Questions. It's astonishing, but ministers denied that job cuts could possibly have anything to do with there not being enough workers available to process arriving passengers! They said it's just a matter of "reorganising" working patterns!

Of course it's true: if you double the hours of work, for instance, you can halve the number of workers - that's simple arithmetic, isn't it? The fact that workers, being human beings, require refreshment breaks, time for sleep, exercise, social intercourse, eating... etc., well, why should that come into it?

The Immigration Services Union

(ISU), which represents 4,500 staff at ports and airports and PCS (which represents 600) said their members will join the strike on 10 May over plans to raise the retirement age. They have no intention of working till they drop, and they're too right!

Letter from Sussex

The site of an old Eastbourne public school used to be occupied by Eastbourne's biggest employer, the Dental Estimates Board - which administered NHS dentistry for England and Wales. By 2006 it had been cut to ribbons, subsumed by the "Business Services Agency" and all but disappeared thanks to Blair's reorganisation of NHS dentistry. But now it looks like the site is set to become a school again!

It won't be a "public" school, but it will be an elite school - one of Cameron's "free schools", basically publicly-funded private enterprises, designed to appeal to the "better sort" of parent, "free" to cherry-pick their pupils and choose their curriculum... and "free" of any union-regulated terms and conditions for teachers!

Recently, the local press reported that the Sussex Free School Group had toured the site, accompanied by Toby Young, driving force behind the first, "West London Free School". Young may be remembered as the author of: "How to lose friends and alienate people". After the tour he twitted that "The Big Society is alive and well in Eastbourne". Well at least he still remembers how to alienate everyone.

King's Cross railway station (London)**• Strike for equal rights**

The 72-hour strike by Tube Lines workers (24th-27th April) was first and foremost over equal rights on pensions and travel passes for all workers. These 1,000 workers cover maintenance and renewal on the Jubilee, Piccadilly and Northern Lines, plus the Emergency Response Unit, Distribution, and Trans Plant across the whole tube network.

Disparities arose in their conditions after Transport for London took

Tube Lines back into public hands, after the "public private partnership" failed in 2009. TfL however, refuses to allow several sections of the present workforce into the TfL pension scheme and to grant them all equal travel concessions (free underground passes and 75% off rail travel). Only 40% at present are in the TfL scheme.

Since this fight is also taking place in the context of the threat of full privatisation of tube maintenance,



which has been proven to be a financial disaster twice over, never mind the danger to passengers, these workers deserve everyone's full support!

• Pay games

East Coast have upped their pay offer ... by a whole 0.3%. That takes it to 3% - ridiculous, especially since they want to increase our pension contributions too! They even had the cheek to say that they couldn't guarantee that the next private shark to get the franchise will honour everyone's travel facilities. It's a joke - but we're not amused. Their delaying tactics are only making

us more angry. Do they need us to remind them that, whoever's in management, we keep things moving... or not? [King's X Workers' Platform - 17/04/12]

• Robbing Peter to pay Paul

When East Coast changed the On Board menu last winter, there was lots more for catering workers to do. We let management know there was no way it was going to carry on and they put extra workers

on a few trains - for a trial period. Well, we've had the trial and we definitely need these "extra" hands - especially since it's going to get even busier as we go into summer. But management has decided to cut them instead, only partially replacing them with some assistance pinched from other crews - ie robbing Peter to pay Paul. Do they need another show of anger to bring them to their senses? [King's X Workers' Platform - 01/05/12]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**• Reasons to keep it public and universal**

Last month TNT began a trial of residential deliveries to 250,000 addresses in West London with 400 workers, for the first time actually taking on the "final mile", which up to now, has been a Royal Mail monopoly. Deregulation of the postal service had already allowed private companies like TNT and UK Mail to cherry pick "business post", for instance - but they all still used Royal Mail delivery postmen for that last

mile.

So now, does this mean it's "open season" for private companies? The irony is that Royal Mail itself is meant to be sold off to a private buyer now, which could even be TNT! Of course it's highly unlikely that any private company could ever come close to "competing" with the universal residential delivery service of Royal Mail - and nor would it want to. What profit could be made out of delivering



post to a farm in the Outer Hebrides? None at all. And that's precisely why the "post must be kept public", so that everyone gets it.

• Beating the market?

Who can blame those people who bought hundreds of 1st and 2nd class stamps after the announced price rise of 30% and 39%? However, one does wonder why they would need them, if, as we are told, nobody sends letters anymore and therefore the postal service should be cut, drawn and quartered (and all of us with it) and then sold off!! According to Channel 4 a "speculators' market" in stamps could develop! Let Moya put that in her pipe and smoke it! [Workers Fight Mount Pleasant 17/4/12]

• "Human error" = manager's error

Was that industrial sabotage?

Jumbo-Dumbo (TOPs) broke down for the whole of Friday-a-week-ago's late shift! And it was panic stations! 60 yorkies had to be diverted to Greenford/Jubilee because there was nobody to sort flats. But the truth is that we can't even cope when J-D's working fine! And breakdowns are aggravated because bosses' rush-mentality means we aren't allowed enough time to clear jams properly - for them, it's self-defeating. But why should we mind? [Workers Fight Mount Pleasant 2/5/12]

• Jim, no Bob, won't fix it!

Bob the Builder on nights and also Chiefs 1-4 on days - are still on the floor their whole shifts, in their shiny shoes, pushing yorks, sleeving them, and explaining

to us all the things we don't know... (like how to open a bag). But still the work fails. Or maybe that's why the work fails? [Workers Fight Mount Pleasant 2/5/12]

• What a cowboy job!

Last Wed due to the stormy weather, the basement (among other wet-rooms) sprung a leak - and continues to trickle... But where is the water from? Well, nobody will be surprised to hear that the "roof", which is made of that newly-paved yard - months in the making - is the culprit!! Now we have a sneaking suspicion that those cute, spanking new walk-sorting machines aren't designed to be waterproof... [Workers Fight Mount Pleasant 2/5/12]

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)
• The 1st strike since 1988 would be good!

It's a mystery. The media and Unite officials alike, talk of the current white collar (salaried staff) strike ballot as if it was a ballot of all of us and again repeat the nonsense that it might result in the "first strike since the 1970s" (the last national strike was 1988)!! But this ballot only concerns 2,500 admin staff, engineers and foremen, voting over the introduction of 2-tier and the closure of the pension scheme to new starts,

for their own sections! Never mind that the blue collar (hourly-paid) strike ballot against these very same attacks was lost just 2 months ago, after which this dastardly deal was signed by the very same officials!!

So what now? If staff vote for strike, the officials are highly unlikely to call one. But if there was a strike, it would be a way for all workers, from all sections, to put the fight against 2-tier/closure of the pension



scheme, right back on the agenda. Many of us were sick to the stomach when our ballot was lost. We've every interest in helping the white collars bypass the union collaborators, to start the fight which is needed - and to join them.

• They're playing with fire

DDC bosses aren't just bad, they're downright dangerous! There's no line they won't cross! They decided that after all the "lost"/damaged Tiger engines (their own fault), they'd hot test them! But first, the place is designed for cold test, and second, didn't some of the engines blow up?! In fact when we saw what these idiots were doing, we nearly blew up! They then brought in fans - and did it anyway. The smoke didn't blow away and caused immediate breathing problems - a serious H&S breach. Whatever "permission" these upstarts may claim to have from the carpet-union, will not protect them. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 23/4/12]

• Lineside's loophole game

Due to the Agency Workers Regulations, agency mates are eligible for equal pay and other equal conditions, after 13 wks on a job. So the Hamton-Essex Cowgirl outfit, Lineside Logistics called mates on 17 Dec 2011, to say they were laid off. Then on the 19th LSL told them to come back on a Swedish Derogation contract! No shame at all! It means a quasi "permanent" part time contract on lower pay with a few hrs/wk "guaranteed". A scam, devised purely to by-pass the law. How can we allow this in Dagenham? Or anywhere? [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 23/4/12]

• They're sabotaging themselves!

The Chicken Farm isn't hitting schedule

- even with the reduced 600/shift target from 3 mini shifts now. Managers needn't ask themselves why. They shove us around, treat us like mechanical hens and sack temps - what do they expect? [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 23/4/12]

• All in it together

4 more Press shop down days planned while BodySubs wasn't in this Monday. Things are a little slack, but Ford's profits aren't - March US sales were the "strongest in 5 years"! So no reason for any of us to lose money - not wages, nor allowances! This year the EU is down and the USA up. Last year it was the other way round. But it's ONE FORD, right? [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 23/4/12]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)
• The pay issue - an unfolding battle

This year's union pay claim which highlighted BMW's wealth (£2.357bn profit from Britain alone in 2010) and asked for 11% on pay, contracts for agency workers and extra holiday, was brushed aside by BMW. The company's reply was to say it "had to" wind down the pension scheme and turn agency workers into permanent temps! Their bluff was called immediately, so then they proposed new shift patterns - also swiftly rejected. Next, a 6% pay

"offer" appeared, knocking 20% off breaks and giving BMW the right to move anyone, anywhere, anytime! After 97% voted no, BMW quickly came up with a new offer: a 2-year "no strings deal": 4.5% in year 1 and 2.3% in year 2, or inflation, but only if productivity targets are met - in other words, a string!

To the dismay of many workers this was approved unanimously by negotiators who claimed "victory" at mass meetings. Financial hardship,



excessively long hours, constant bullying of agency workers has given many a new resolve to dig in their heels. The ballot result is due after the Spring Bank Holiday.

• MG Rover - 7 years' wait for £2.50!

6,500 ex-MG Rover workers have waited 7 years for compensation following the closure of the Longbridge factory, in 2005. The High Court finally decided on May 1 that all monies should go to HBOS, a creditor of MG Rover. The ex-workers will get the grand sum of £3 - minus 50p postage!

By contrast, former CEO John

Towers and his co-directors - the Phoenix Four - milked MG Rover's assets to set up an untouchable £42m pension fund.

It is obscene that unscrupulous, failed businessmen should be living in the South of France on the backs of these workers.

Ultimately, however, those responsible for this fiasco are BMW,

MG Rover's former owner, for selling MG Rover to the Phoenix Four for £10, and the then Labour government, for endorsing the sale. This allowed BMW to walk away from Longbridge with the new Mini - and make a fortune out of it - while not having to pay a penny in case the "rescue" failed.

Bahrain

There was no way Formula One boss (and ex-Blair sponsor) Bernie Ecclestone would cancel this year's Grand Prix in Bahrain, after it had been cancelled last year, because of the mass protests against the repressive Al-Khalifa monarchy.

Never mind that this provoked more protests and more bloody repression.

It's all about big money. Formula One makes hundreds of millions from advertising, commercial and TV rights, and has just announced plans for a stock market flotation worth £6bn! What does it matter for the likes of Ecclestone, if protesters get killed and political opponents tortured, so long as that sort of money keeps flowing in?

Formula One, the stench of big money

As for Cameron's "Bahrain is not Syria" comment, well, of course!

Isn't Bahrain a close ally of the West, so close that the Saudi army intervened to put down protesters last year? Doesn't Bahrain host a naval base for the US 5th Fleet, which patrols the Persian Gulf to protect western oil majors' assets in the region? Isn't Bahrain the region's largest financial hub, where British banks do profitable business with Middle Eastern billionaires?

February 2011 - protest in Bahrain



No, Bahrain is not Syria - because, for western governments, the sweet smell of big money covers the stench of blood! ☐

Libya

In a recent report, researchers at Goldsmiths College, London, using forensics and satellite technology, pinpointed the path of 72 African workers on a motorboat, who were seeking to escape the Libyan uprising in March 2011. After running out of fuel, the boat drifted for 14 days before landing back in Libya, with only 9 survivors.

It turns out that owing to the blockade of Gaddafi's regime and

The untold casualties

NATO's military surveillance, the boat came into repeated contact with NATO helicopters and ships. A British helicopter even dropped some water and a few packets of biscuits without raising a rescue alarm. A French frigate came within 10 metres and photographed the boat while ignoring desperate cries from passengers.

At that time, Cameron and French President Sarkozy were organising

24/7 bombing of Libya's infrastructure under the pretext of "saving lives". However this did not extend to saving the lives of these black Africans who were caught in the cross fire. Altogether 1500 drowned last year in the Mediterranean while fleeing from Libya. Not that the warmongers will lose any sleep over this. Wasn't their intervention always about regime change, anyway? ☐

A tribute to the "Shrewsbury 6" is overdue

In 1972 the first and only successful national building strike took place, (lasting 12 weeks) thanks to the militant efforts of trade unionists like communist organiser, Des Warren. The strikers won a huge pay rise. 5 months later 24 strike activists were arrested and 6 were jailed, among them Warren, who got 4 years, and the now celebrated actor, Ricky Tomlinson, who got 2 years, for "conspiracy to

intimidate". Of course, they were just involved in normal strike picketing.

Now, almost 40 years later an attempt is being made to get the convictions quashed as a miscarriage of justice. Archive material is available, which clearly exposes the prosecution's "conspiracy" to convict these activists, to deter others... Sadly, Des Warren has not lived to see the day - having defied

the screws in prison for 4 years, he was given sedative drugs (a liquid cosh) which caused Parkinson's Disease and he died in 2004. A fitting tribute to him would be to rebuild a building workers' movement against the criminal casualisation, de-skilling, de-unionisation and hazards of today's construction industry. There were 50 (officially recorded) deaths on sites in the last one year. ☐

In addition to this monthly paper, we publish fortnightly bulletins in several large workplaces in the South East, a quarterly journal, "Class Struggle" and the "Internationalist Communist Forums" - a series of pamphlets on topical issues.

If you wish to find out more about our ideas, activities and publications, contact the Workers' Fight activist who sold you this issue of our paper, or write to us either by e-mail, at contact@w-fight.org, or by postal mail at:

BM Workers' Fight - LONDON WC1N 3XX.