

# WORKERS' fight



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

## FORGET "NATION AND FLAG", IT'S OUR CLASS AGAINST THEIRS!

Beneath the flurry of flags, the queen's jubilee was nothing but a grotesque diversion from today's social reality.

With the parasitical, outdated institution of the monarchy portrayed as standing above class divisions and above the deep social and economic crisis of this decaying profit system, the jubilee was aimed at conveying the idea that "we're all in it together" - as part of their "nation", supposedly united behind the royals and the Union Jack.

Well, we're not. This is a class society in which we have no interests in common with the monarchy or the profiteers hiding under the British flag.

### *The nationalist mirage*

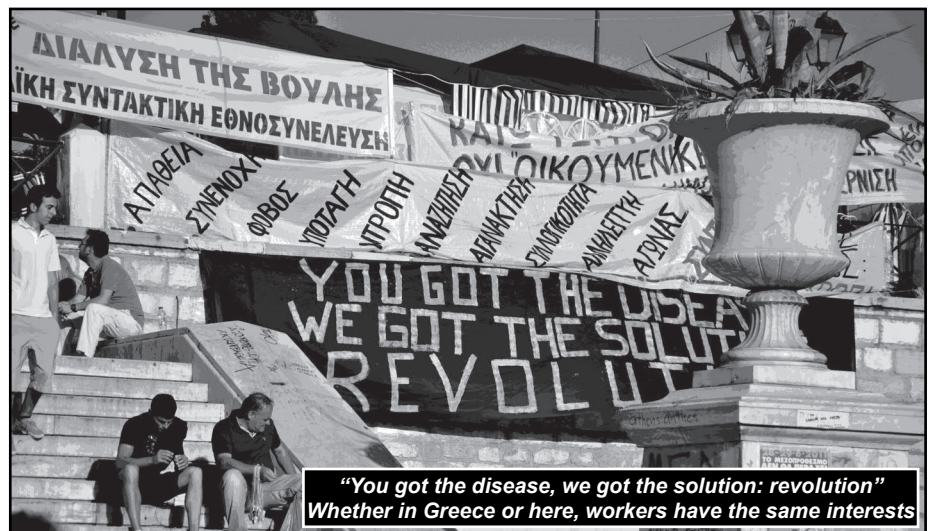
If this flag-waving had no purpose other than to celebrate a worn out symbol, it would be a costly, but harmless exercise. But there's more to it.

How often have we heard that Britain's pound and "national interest" were our best protection against the crisis? But did that prevent the British economy from being the first victim of the banking crisis, back in 2007?

Hasn't the working class here been made to pay for the subsequent bailout of the bankers, through the expenditure cuts implemented both by Labour and the ConDems? Didn't the pound lose almost 25% of its value against the euro at the time, causing huge price hikes? Haven't jobs and wages been cut ruthlessly, while the unemployment hidden by casualisation was soaring, despite the "protective shield" of the pound?

Today, the government blames the recession here on the crisis in the eurozone. Cameron parades at EU conferences, admonishing European countries to turn the screw even tighter on their populations.

Meanwhile, "eurosceptics" of all stripe



*"You got the disease, we got the solution: revolution"  
Whether in Greece or here, workers have the same interests*

are pointing with glee to the crisis in the eurozone, predicting its imminent explosion and boasting "we told you so". As if the eurozone crisis had anything to do with the euro in the first place! As if it wasn't the latest devastating aftershock of the very same worldwide capitalist crisis which has already blown away Northern Rock, RBS, and Lloyds, together with so many jobs in Britain!

### *For a working class response*

We are told that after the June 17th election, Greece will leave the euro. Maybe, maybe not. But whatever is the case, whether in Greece, in the eurozone or here, national boundaries are no protection for workers against the crisis.

Of course, the bosses and their politicians tell us that we must defend the British economy by making ourselves "competitive". They claim that by agreeing to cuts in wages and conditions, we will "save British jobs". And, unfortunately, they have the support of many

union leaders - as is shown by the recent series of deals recommended by the unions in the car industry.

But for the working class, this policy is a con. Not only because it can only drive our conditions down, just to boost the profits of British bosses. But also because it diverts our attention from our real enemies - who are not the foreign workers with whom the bosses want us to "compete" for jobs, but our own capitalist profiteers.

Only by fighting back collectively and imposing on the bosses our solution - that all available work is shared among all of us without loss of pay - will we be able to defend ourselves. And in this fight, our best and only real allies are workers in other countries, who are confronted with the very same attacks.

Whether here or in the eurozone, this crisis reflects the degeneration of a system which keeps limping from one crisis to the next. No amount of nationalist nonsense can protect us from such a system - only the class struggle will! ☐

## A storm in a teacup

Another day, another ConDem U-turn. Under pressure from the various interest groups, the government has backed down, in quick succession, on VAT on pasties (as long as they cool down) tax on static caravans, taxing donations to charities

### • The injustice system

With its Justice and Security Bill, the government wants to expand the system of "secret courts" - court proceedings where evidence supplied by intelligence services is heard in private, so that a defendant doesn't even know what he/she is accused of.

Some elements of the Bill were watered down, after much criticism. But it still allows closed proceedings when ministers or government agencies are accused of wrong-doing. This way, the government hopes to avoid the kind of embarrassment it had recently, when it was sued by former Guantanamo prisoners. It chose to pay them millions to drop their cases, rather than make public

and... a planned cull of buzzards!

Labour is crowing, calling the budget an "omnishambles". But what reversals Cameron has made, have been on minor issues. The big stuff, like the cut in corporation tax and automatic increases in pension

age, remains. And Labour can hardly say anything about those, when it did, or would have done, exactly the same in government. Anyway, big changes will be achieved only by big and determined forces - outside of parliament. □

the documents which would, allegedly, have proved their complicity in the whole dirty business.

Proof of the British state's involvement in rendition was first provided by the case brought by another Guantanamo inmate, Binyam Mohamed. The government may think it's shutting the door on future revelations like this. But the truth about its shady dealings usually comes out in the end.

### • Cash for (a lot of!) access

When newly appointed Tory treasurer cum betting-shop owner, Peter Cruddas, boasted in March that a £250,000 donation to the party was "premier league" and would secure an "intimate dinner" with Cameron and Osborne, he didn't

know he was being filmed. Cameron said that such behaviour was "unacceptable" and promised a "proper party inquiry". It's taken over 2 months for him to appoint 3 Tory peers headed by Lord Gold to do this.

It is highly unlikely that the facts of the matter will be exposed. Said Mark Adams, PR exec who assisted the sting operation, this is "rather like asking the Kray twins to investigate gangland crime in the East End". He expects "a spectacular whitewash, full of waffle". Labour have also criticised the Gold inquiry. But then, they can't make too much fuss about it. Remember the Cash for Honours scandal under Tony Blair? Not to mention the Labour MPs imprisoned for fiddling their expenses.

## We should be charging them

A director of the Bank of England has revealed that the regulators are considering putting an end to free banking. They pretend it's to protect customers, since, supposedly, if banks don't charge for current accounts, they will be tempted to mis-sell other things, like they did with Payment Protection Insurance. As if these sharks aren't always looking for ways of extracting more money from their unsuspecting victims - sorry, customers.

Regulators also claim that to pay for the free services that customers who are in credit enjoy, banks

are obliged to overcharge customers who are in the red. This is a lie. True, banks overcharge the poor. But the cost of current accounts, plus handsome profits on top, is covered by using people's deposits to play bingo on the financial markets. Then they say that Britain is one of a very few countries which has free banking, the others being India and Australia. Another lie - most of continental Europe operates this way.

Two lies don't make even a half truth, but what's clear is that they're preparing the ground for another raid on our pockets. □

### • The "cure" is killing the patient

The economy is in a deeper double-dip recession than first thought. Preliminary figures from the Office of National Statistics for the first quarter of 2012 show that output shrank for the 2nd quarter running, meaning this is "officially" another recession.

The government pinned its hopes on these estimates being unduly pessimistic. But when the figures were revised, as more data became available, they revealed the contrary - the economy is actually contracting faster than they realised. To compound the doom and gloom, this was confirmed by another report showing that manufacturing production is going down at an alarming rate.

The ConDems are incapable of predicting what's going to happen in the economy - and of course they won't admit it! But what they are trying to do is keep the money flowing into the coffers of the City by cutting the flow off almost everywhere else. Since the capitalists won't invest, it's obvious that such hand-outs can't result in "growth" - but not to them, apparently.

### • Long faces

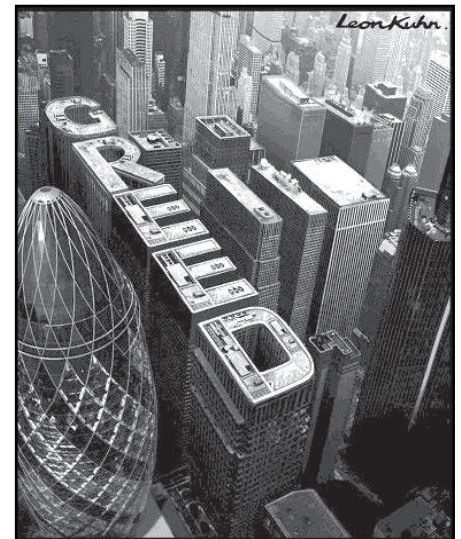
The much-hyped flotation of Facebook on the US stock market turned into a farce. The company managed to market itself to the point where it claimed to be worth over \$100bn - 25 times its turnover.

But within minutes of the start of public trading in Facebook shares, the

price began to drop like a stone. And over the following days, it continued to fall... and fall. By the beginning of June, the shares remained at 22% below their original face-value.

Big investors, who'd bought their shares before the public offering and off-loaded them quickly, didn't lose out. And, thanks to the gullibility of the speculators, Facebook insiders made a killing. Its founder, Mark Zuckerberg, enriched himself to the tune of \$1.13bn.

Now the lawyers are lining up to cash in as well, as those who lost out prepare to sue Facebook, for not revealing that they had downgraded their revenue forecasts. But why complain? That's just the way the cookie crumbles in their system.



## Bosses want blood

In the last week of May, Vince Cable published a new "enterprise bill" - meant to make Britain "one of the most enterprise-friendly countries in the world"! It makes it harder for workers to go to employment tribunals, cuts red tape for the bosses and also gives shareholders binding votes on executive pay. But bosses' organisations like the CBI and the Institute of Directors were

furiously that he hadn't included more proposals from the "hire and fire" report by venture capitalist, Adrian Beecroft, commissioned by Cameron and completed last autumn.

Beecroft - known for buying Somerfields for £1.1bn and reselling it to the Co-op for £1.6bn, after slashing 8,000 jobs - recommended that employers should be able to sack "under-performing" workers

and, under "no-fault dismissal", not face employment tribunals. He thought redundancies shouldn't require more than 5 days notice and wanted to abolish the Transfer of Undertakings provisions (TUPE) which can protect workers' pay and conditions (but not pensions) for 1 year if they're transferred from one employer to another. ☐

### • Sick and tired of it

Bosses always complain about time lost due to sickness. But according to the Office of National Statistics, absence from work due to sickness or injury has decreased since 1993 - and since 2008, sick days have fallen every year to a record low of 4½ days a year per worker.

So what does it mean? Are we all getting fitter and healthier? Are our working conditions constantly improving? Obviously not!

In fact, TUC research shows that people are increasingly coming to work while sick. And some companies pressurize workers into making up for time off sick, so that these days are not actually recorded as "sickness absence" - not to mention the pressure not to record accidents or injuries.

State-owned Network Rail was caught red-handed last year after a whistle blower working in the East Anglia area denounced the culture of "under reporting minor accidents".

In fact, the number of accidents and sick days should actually be on the rise, due to the general increase in work intensity, i.e., fewer workers forced to work faster and harder.

So, sicker and more tired, yes we are, even though reports might say otherwise.

### • Abolish night work!

Since at least 1871, when it was banned in Paris by a workers' government, night work has been known to be a killer.

In recent years different studies have underlined the increased risk of heart attacks and strokes, as well as the danger of falling asleep on the job. Not that any of this has dented the bosses' unabated enthusiasm to "sweat their assets".

Now a new study by Oxford epidemiologists will develop evidence from the Danish Cancer Society showing that women night workers had a 40% increased risk of breast cancer, providing yet more ammunition against this silently murderous form of exploitation.

Of course, some work - in hospitals or transport, for example - will always be necessary. But that could be compensated by days off, short shifts and early retirement.

But for the rest of us, don't we work to live, rather than to die early from occupational disease? Non-essential night working must go - it should have been abolished long ago!

### • 20% success "a good start"

A report by the Employment-Related Services Association, which represents companies running the government's Work Programme, says that 66,000 people have "been found jobs" through the scheme since its launch last year.

But even the ERSA is cautious about presenting this as good news. 66,000 is only 20% of the total enrolled in the programme, and the researchers weren't able to say how many were still in work.

The report also cast doubt on how many of those "jobs" will last, or (most obviously!) whether enough new jobs

are being created.

It warns that the programme may miss its target of getting 36% of those who have been unemployed for more than a year into work.

Back-to-work contractors have no doubt heard ministers' rhetoric about paying them by results and firing them if they don't perform. They hardly need worry though - Employment Minister Chris Grayling, commenting on the report, commended them for a "good start"!

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### • Pensioners worse off here

Britain's pensioners are more hard-up and in poorer health than those in Germany, The Netherlands or Sweden, according to a study commissioned by volunteering charity, WRVS. In Britain, more than one-fifth of pensioners are living in poverty (i.e. with an income which is less than 60% of the median), whereas in The Netherlands, it is less than 1 in 16. The elderly in this country have higher levels of life-limiting illnesses than in the others

and fewer pensioners here feel "active and vigorous". They also socialise less.

If this is the situation now, what will it be like if the government is allowed to get away with its cuts in pensions, and further cuts in the funding for social care, health care, day centres, meals on wheels and all the other services - many already fee-paying - on which pensioners currently rely?

## Public sector

Will public sector unions have another "day of action" this month? While doctors are getting ready to "strike" for the first time in 40 years on June 21st, some public sector union leaders can't seem to make up their minds what to do next! Yet all received an overwhelming mandate from their memberships against the government's pension "reforms" and working till 68.

May 10th's 24-hour, 300,000+ strong strike was confined to civil servants, university lecturers and NHS staff in Unite union. Yet many workers are frustrated by such token, sectional action. The London rally (no demo!) organised at Westminster Central Hall was poorly attended. This timid policy appears more and more like fiddling while Rome burns - not just in terms of what's proposed, but also the aims.

In contrast, the Police Federation mobilised over 32,000 off-duty cops to march on the very same day, waving placards against job and wage cuts and privatisation.

### **TUC: new policy like old policy**

Despite the on-going cuts, for the TUC, there's no urgency whatsoever in fighting them. Its "plan of action" is a "mass demonstration" on.... Saturday 20 October - i.e., in 5 months time and a whole 19 months after the 500,000 strong London "March for the Alternative" on 26 March 2011! Nothing more.

October's march is to be entitled "For a future that works". Which for the TUC's Brendan Barber, is a future where the government presents "bold policies for investment and growth", because, says he, "with the USA and France now setting out the alternative, it's time the UK also changed course." Well, we all know what he really means - electing a Labour government, at the next general election, on 7 May, 2015! Another long wait - but never mind, it's nothing compared to the wait there'd be for an abracadabra policy to make capitalism function!

Yes, their "future that works" is much like the "past that didn't work" under Blair-Brown. There has to be - and is - another way: forcing the capitalists to foot the bill for their own crisis - right now!

## Common cause

It was unprecedented - and further highlighted the choice by the public sector union leaderships to make 10th May about pensions only!

This month will see other "rolling" - 2-hour (!) - sectional strikes by driving examiners and Coast Guards, as well as a possible strike by tax office workers, which are at

least also opposing job cuts and office closures.

But those who see the point of overcoming sectional boundaries to organise a collective "all-out" against ALL the cuts should not expect union leaders to show the way. They will need to take the initiative themselves. ☐



**A world upside down: cops calling for general strike and union leaders for rolling strikes!**

### • **Council pensions: miserable deal**

On 31 May, local government (GMB, Unison, Unite) union negotiators agreed a pensions deal which they'll put to a members ballot - after 5 months of talks interspersed with half-hearted protests.

The deal proposed replaces the final salary pension with a lower-paying career average scheme for 1.6m council workers - starting a year early, in 2014. In exchange, the government won't increase the contributions of lower paid workers (6.5-7.5%) but only for those earning over £43,000. Pensionable age, however, will increase in line with state pension age (66 by 2020, 68 by 2046).

In other words, they've accepted that pensions should be cut, for no other reason than to help pay for the handouts to bosses and bankers by this and previous governments. There is, and was never, even the slightest justification for this.

### • **Cheshire council workers need DIY**

Like for all council workers, the 2-year wage freeze has hit Cheshire council workers hard. 70% of them are earning well below £21,000. But they've also had payments for unsocial hours and premiums (for overtime, weekend and bank holidays) cut. Many will see pay cuts of up to 20%! If they don't sign up to these cuts, the council has threatened them with dismissal - so that they'd be forced to sign up in order to be re-employed.

Rightly, they have been taking repeated strike action over this - at Easter and during the weekend 12-13 May. Other

council workers (like in Birmingham and Southampton) are in the same boat - and in the same unions. It would make sense for all to row together. But not only are these fights waged separately (or not at all) but there are no plans by the unions to co-ordinate them. And since that's the least that it will take - council workers will have to organise to do it themselves.

### • **Work for free - in the NHS**

After being forced to stop the "slave labour scheme" whereby the likes of Tesco got the use of the unemployed for an unpaid 8-week placement, it seems that government-appointed agencies have decided to try it on in the public sector - more specifically, the NHS! Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals Trust is extending an 8-week pilot to all 3 of its hospitals and young unemployed benefit claimants are undergoing 2 weeks "training" before working on hospital wards for free.

The Trust insisted that the claimants do not provide patient care. But as well as tidying up, welcoming visitors and running errands, their duties include helping patients to eat and drink. Since many of these tasks are already carried out by volunteers in some hospitals, it is not easy to imagine just how the placements will improve their job prospects. But the Trust, facing cuts of £125m over five years, gets a supply of free labour in return for helping the local JobCentres to massage the unemployment figures - which are especially dire in the West Midlands!

## Oiling the bosses' wheels...

In recent months, in various car plants up and down the country, union leaders from Unite and the GMB have been busy recommending dirty deals to car workers. The culmination was the deal which supposedly "saved" the GM Vauxhall Ellesmere Port factory by allegedly ensuring it will get to produce the new Astra model in... 2015!

And the price of this "salvation" for the workforce? An immediate 2-year wage freeze (i.e., cut in real wages), a 2nd tier of workers on 70% of the wage for the job, without the right to join the final salary pension, 2 hours more on the working week, Saturday working, the return of night shifts, plus a "working time account" whereby lay-off-time is repaid in kind, on flat rate. Ellesmere Port workers are

## ... until they slip up

Roger Maddison, Unite's National Officer for the car industry is getting good at underwriting a 2-tier workforce. He recommended that Ford's hourly-paid workers accept 2-tier, plus the closure of their occupational pension scheme to new starts, this February, negotiating several bribes including one in exchange

### • **Unite's 10 point patriotism..**

When, on 29 May, Jaguar Land Rover announced £1.5bn profits, sales up by 29%, Unite's Roger Maddison explained how it was due to workers' sacrifice (negotiated by the likes of him) in helping JLR save £70m by "voluntary" cuts to wages and conditions. So, says Maddison, "It proves that investing in the UK motor industry and working positively with the union does create wealth." He advises other companies to follow the JLR example.

But what is this example? Cutting conditions and abusing temps, by avoiding equal pay for equal work via the so-called "Swedish Derogation", whereby they're employed "permanently" by an agency on the minimum wage or less! No wonder Tata's profits are up!

Yet in its glossy "Driving Growth - a strategy for the car industry", Unite claims it refuses the Swedish derogation, 2-tier and the closure of occupational pensions!! However this "strategy" predictably places workers in the same boat as the bosses, for the sake of car manufacturers' profits and competitiveness - asking the government to "support UK industry". Adds Maddison: "it is outrageous that 72% of police vehicles are built outside the UK. This would never happen in Germany or France"! In other words, "buy British". Spoken like a true scoundrel!



told to be pleased with this radical cut in their conditions: by accepting it by a 94% vote, they won the beauty contest between them and other

for accepting the lower inflation CPI measure for pension upgrades.

Sadly for him though, Ford's salaried workers are proving to be a fly in his ointment, having voted in May to strike over this same deal! Similarly, at Jaguar's Castle Bromwich plant, workers went against Unite's recommendation to accept compulsory

### • **Luxury cars race ahead**

When car sales aren't going anywhere fast, luxury brands are flying off the floor: JLR, BMW, Mercedes, Audi, and even the Toyota Lexus, which increased its European sales by 34% in the first quarter. British sales of Jags and Land Rovers were up 39.2% and Land Rover sales were up 48% in Europe. Hence JLR's record £1.5bn profit. Top of the range BMW increased operating profits by almost 20% to £1.7bn - a record for the first quarter. So did Porsche with £428m. Not everybody is tightening his belt... not when it costs £55,500 for the cheapest Jag XJ or £74,000 for a BMW M3 M, whatever that is.

### • **China - hype and reality**

Explaining why JLR sold 76% more cars in China last year, Coventry University's David Bailey said "There's a big middle class there that wants to drive upmarket cars and what better way to do that than, say, drive a Range Rover Evoque?"

Really? A big Chinese middle class providing an ever-expanding market for luxury car makers? In fact the "big increase" in sales for JLR meant a total of 50,994 Land Rovers sold - compared to 60,022 in the same period in Britain - or put another way, 1 sold for every 1,000 inhabitants in Britain, but only 1 for every 26,000 in China. The reality is

## Car industry

European plants, one of which will close "instead". At least the 6% who voted against and many who didn't vote knew a con when they saw one.

Saturday working and drink and drug testing - ignoring the threat of loss of investment and 1,000 new jobs if they refused! What next, in both these cases remains to be seen. But it looks like it won't be plain driving for the Unite officials, who aim to help steer the bosses' limo! ☐

that the vast majority in 3rd World China can't even afford a bicycle.

### • **Another union merger?**

The PCS, the largest civil service union, is to "explore" how to co-operate with Unite, the biggest private sector union with view to a future merger. Union officials say this would enable them better to defend members where public sector jobs have been outsourced.

If only. However, judging from past union mergers - like that between the TGWU and Amicus to form Unite, the main motivation was shrinking membership and thus shrinking finances. And the result has been years of infighting between rival bureaucrats.

So, while better defence of workers against the attacks being faced today is vital, this is not going to be achieved via a merger. Anyway, the best defence has always been to attack. And it is a long time since any kind of counter-offensive has been organised. Of course, it would be good if, at last, the trade union movement was stripped of its sectional divisions and organised all workers into a single, big union, under their own control - especially in today's crisis. But union leaders can't be expected to do this. The unity of the working class will have to be built by workers themselves.

**King's Cross railway station (London)****• ISS dispute: the fight carries on**

Multinational ISS (International Service Systems), operates in 50 countries, has 550,000 workers worldwide and 45,000 in Britain. But this giant company acts like a cowboy. At King's Cross station, its 108 cleaners, paid at the minimum wage, didn't even have drinking water, changing rooms or lockers.

But ISS isn't having a smooth ride. Recently cleaners in the London underground and Tyne&Wear metro decided to strike over their conditions. Meanwhile, the other multinational

cowboy, Initial-Rentokil has just had to increase cleaners' pay at St Pancras International after a strike.

Now ISS workers in King's Cross are demanding a long overdue pay rise. They've been on the minimum wage for 12 years! After meeting together, they decided to distribute leaflets for passengers and other station workers explaining their demands. ISS and East Coast train bosses (who employ ISS) got embarrassed. First they threatened discipline, but then quickly sorted



out the messroom's drinking water! ISS is now meant to have pay talks, but is using delaying tactics. The workers can't wait. Since other cleaners have shown the way to these greedy bosses' pockets, they are determined to follow.

**• We will have the final say**

East Coast's "final" pay offer - 3.7% or £675, whichever is the greater - is not acceptable to us. It goes nowhere near covering the increase in our living costs, especially since our pension contributions are going up by 1.3% if we want to keep our benefits. So why is the East Coast website saying it's been accepted? Where's our vote? Or are we going to have to vote with our feet?

[King's X Workers' Platform - 12/05/12]

**• Olympic bribe**

The "sweetener" of the £300 Olympic bonus doesn't impress us either. It's a one-off, so doesn't help us next year. And it's effectively an attendance allowance for this period - it's paid weekly and we only get it if we're not on leave or sick for that week. That's a bad precedent. [King's X Workers' Platform - 12/05/12]

**• Hobson's choice**

East Coast's giving us a "choice" on pensions - either pay the same contribution and lose out on benefits if we take early retirement (which many have to do, due to shift work), or keep the same benefits but pay 1.3% more. Why should we lose out when the private companies who took over all benefited from years of "pension holiday"? They should pay! [King's X Workers' Platform - 12/05/12]

**Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)****• Royal Mail rejuvenates its cashpile**

The privatisation of Royal Mail was badly-timed from the government's own point of view. For obvious reasons, there aren't many serious prospective buyers out there - not even after the Treasury took over the pension fund (allegedly in deficit), to make the "business" look more attractive.

But another card is also being played, to increase RM's charms and the cash on its balance sheet: the sale of disposable assets - like RM's small goldmine in land and buildings. The

closed and soon-to-close Nine Elms and East London Mail Centres are on prime land. Rathbone Place - the site of a large delivery office adjacent to Oxford Street is already sold to Great Portland Estates for £120m. The car park next to London's huge Mount Pleasant sorting and delivery office and half its present truck yard is going to developers - for around £1bn. Then in addition, the government has already paid for full modernisation and automation of postal sorting, costing millions, cutting the



workforce by half, so that costs can be minimised for future postal profiteers. Never mind that workers get a postal "service" which is no longer fit to work in, and the public one which isn't worthy of the name.

**• For a non-profit public service**

The load on many deliveries staff all over the country has become more and more intolerable. There is no longer any limit to the length of a turn and some are out delivering, without a break, on average 4½ hours! And for what - to deliver what RM and the CWU's Bob Gibson call their "lifeline"? i.e Door2Dustbin and other junk? How can a profiteering "lifeline" which is strangling the workers involved, be worth having? [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 30/5/12]

**• Do unto others...**

We see that managers in Unite the union are again being faced with redundancy as RM undergoes "senior operational management restructuring". The CMA/Unite which represents the lower management (apparently 9,000 members) complains of "their long hours, stress, command and control management and excessive workloads" and says the RM Board is going to cut more managerial jobs to prepare for privatisation. We suggest managers ballot for strike action. We will be happy to help them organise their strike. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 30/5/12]

**• Extra chair needed**

RM's Courier feature on MP ("Mounting Excitement") announced the work on the ground floor here complete (it isn't!) and has a shot of some of us in a pod, suitably praising the changes... but we notice that it says there are now "smaller meeting rooms for one to ones". Does that mean for when we want a private word with a fellow worker? Because it can't possibly mean a manager and worker meeting one-to-one - since there always has to be a witness - a rep or a friend. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 30/5/12]

**Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**

- **No spy-cameras on the farm!!**

We're shocked by the letter from Engine Plant union officials to Tiger assembly workers. It says Ford intends to install cameras on Tiger Assembly line due to "alleged sabotage", and that the stewards and JWC haven't "sanctioned" it. Of course they shouldn't! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 21/5/12]

- **Ford's practices should be exposed!**

But it goes on: "We do however want this sabotage to stop. This... has cost the Tiger Assembly \$180,000 and is becoming a real health and safety issue for the workforce ...in that area." So they accept the sabotage "allegation"? For them, engine quality issues/blow-ups aren't from the pressure and speed-up, making it impossible to do the job? Or non-spec con-rods? Shouldn't their letter have asked "who are the real saboteurs?" and gone on to accuse managers of sabotaging our health now and into the future, purely as a result of the outrageous way they run this line. These bosses should

be filmed, to show up Ford's 19th century exploitation in the 21st century! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 21/5/12]

- **Good news**

Results we heard from the salaried Staff Pay ballot indicated that 68% were for strike! So it looks like staff may soon be deciding on whether they're picketing the plants or not! A tentative first date was the 18th, apparently. As we said before, we can show them how to do it! And get a 2nd chance to chuck out 2 tier and save our pensions... This is no time to get queasy about standing next to the foreman on a picket line! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 6/6/12]

- **Why it's hush-hush**

What's this hush-hush "special package" for early retirement being offered? Is it to clear the decks of older workers so the cheaper 2nd-tier can come in? Because we simply don't buy the story of "enough" labour in DEP! We know there's a shortage! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 21/5/12]



- **So help us stop this!!**

Unite the union is officially opposed to the so-called Swedish Derogation. It says it won't allow bosses to use it - so what about Hamton-LineSide in the new diesel engine plant, who are abusing agency workers precisely in this way? [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 21/5/12]

- **What's cooking for us?**

The Press Shop scrap contract is delayed again, to the end of this month. There ought to be no question of our jobs being safe. But when goalpost-changing Ford and EMR bosses are involved - you never know what crooked tricks they might try, in order to cut their costs even further... [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 21/5/12]

**BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**

- **"Swedish derogation" by the back door**

Last winter, when BMW proposed to hire new agency workers at its Oxford plant on contracts that would deny them equal pay after 12 weeks' service, Unite the union leafleted the factory saying that casualisation must not be tolerated. BMW quickly shelved the use of this "Swedish derogation" of the Agency Workers' Directive - at least until the launch of the 3rd generation Mini next year. But nevertheless, new agency workers who started as early as January

did not find their wages rising to BMW levels after 12 weeks, as they should have.

Then, in May, within a week of BMW pay offer being accepted, giving an immediate rise of 52p per hour for a typical permanent worker, new agency temps were being asked to sign contracts stipulating a pay rise of only 19p per hour!

Rather than raise the alarm again about this, it now emerges that senior Unite officials are "talking" about these new contracts



with agency Gi group.

But if their policy is to insist on equal pay after 12 weeks, derogations and the like be damned, then what's to talk about?

- **Cancelled shift shambles**

This time there was no external excuse for the cancelled shift on Wednesday (and Thursday?) - it was problems in Body-in-White that caused it. After all it wasn't working extended shifts for no reason. So how on earth does BMW get away with charging this to our working time accounts at a mere 7¼ hours notice? Many of us got no notice at all, being fast asleep by the time BMW sent its blanket text message! [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 30/5/12]

- **R&H - overwhelming rejection of... 0%**

Rudolph & Hellmann's mocking attempt

to get away with a 0% pay rise this year got the rejection it deserved - more than 90% against.

Now we'll see whether R&H is prepared to make a serious offer - inflation proof and reducing the unacceptable differential with BMW. We know it can afford to, even if it means touching the Hellmann brothers for some of their private fortune! If R&H won't come up with the goods, there is already an expectation of a strike ballot to further concentrate their minds. [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 30/5/12]

- **Rooster coming home?**

Clearly a strike against R&H would hit BMW too - and rightly so. It outsourced these operations precisely in order to pay

less for them. Now that its cowboy sidekick has gone too far, this chicken might just be coming home to roost. [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 30/5/12]

- **The rulebook ain't the half of it!**

According to stewards BMW is "covered" to raid our WTA for such last minute shut outs even if it failed to contact us, as long as it puts notices up at all entrances to the plant. Likewise to let us know whether Thursday's early shift is on or off, they say all it has to do is provide a recorded phone message and put info on the internet! Maybe so, but won't necessarily see it, will we?! [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 30/5/12]

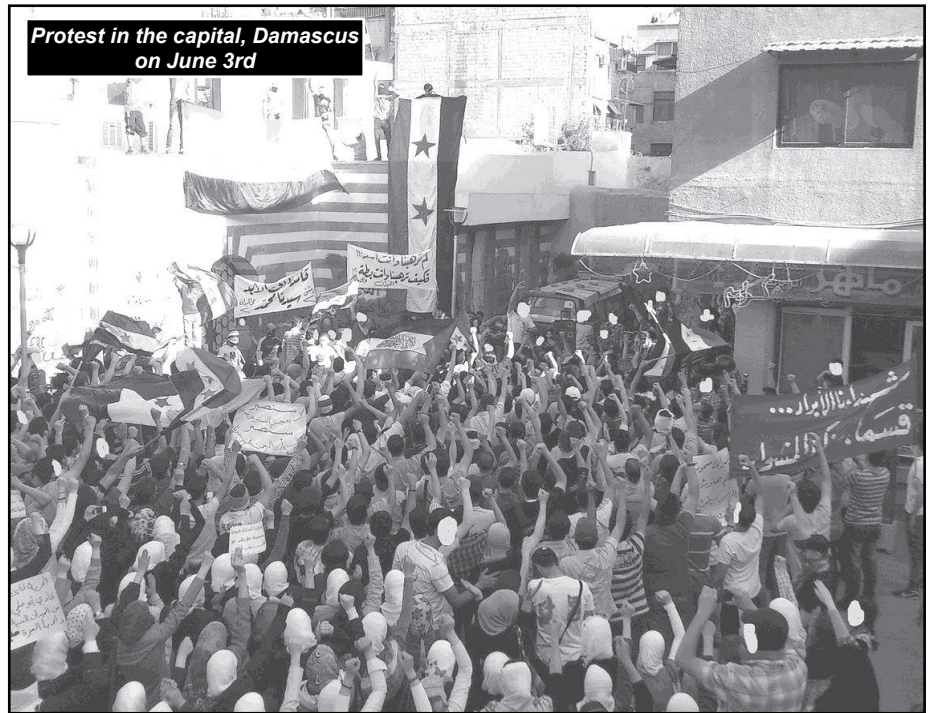
## Syria

The killing of 108 civilians by government forces in the central Syrian town of Houla, on May 25th, has led to renewed calls by the so-called "international community" for tougher action against the Syrian dictator, Bashar al-Assad. The usual accusations of "crimes against humanity" are being made against Assad by the very same Western leaders who were responsible for mass murders against the populations of Iraq and Afghanistan. And now, both foreign secretary, William Hague, and the newly-elected French socialist party president, François Hollande, are insisting that "a military intervention in Syria cannot be dismissed".

Another "intervention"? More bombs and bullets against the Syrian people? And what next? Another Libya, or Afghanistan - or another Iraq maybe? As if there were not already enough weapons flooding Syria from the neighbouring countries, and enough rival, anti-Assad militias vying for the favours of wealthy, foreign patrons!

Once again, the Western powers are playing with fire. For decades, they have used the Syrian regime and its strategic position at the heart of the Middle East, to police the Palestinian population. But now that the Assad dictatorship has become unstable, Syria's strategic position is threatening the stability of the whole

## A powder keg waiting to explode



Protest in the capital, Damascus on June 3rd

region.

Already, several Lebanese towns have seen gun battles between local supporters of rival Syrian factions. The camps set up for tens of thousands of Syrian refugees, on the other side of the Turkish border, have become recruitment grounds for the anti-Assad militias. Renewed nationalist tensions are simmering in the Kurdish region, which covers parts of Syria, Iraq, Turkey and Iran.

Against such a backdrop, a military intervention in Syria would almost certainly set alight the whole of the Middle East and result in terrible bloodshed for the population of the entire region. This is not acceptable. It is the responsibility of the working class movements of all the imperialist powers concerned, especially in Britain, to stop this before it's too late. □

## Afghanistan

Western troops should be out of Afghanistan by December 2014, according to the timetable set by Barack Obama. The British contingent is being reduced by 500 this year, to 9,000, before being completely withdrawn.

But then comes the small print. Following the Chicago NATO summit, in May, it emerged that not only would British officers remain there in a "training capacity", but several

hundred SAS would be retained. An army source was quoted as saying that the role of the SAS would not be "combat" but "counter-terrorism". Spot the difference? Didn't they tell us, back in 2001, that the Afghan war was not really a war, but an operation aimed at "protecting Britain from terrorism"? What's new?

The plan, therefore, is that, by the end of 2014, Western troops will be replaced by an army of "private

contractors" of comparable size, together with US and British "special forces", to protect the corrupt, puppet regime put in place by the West. As to the Afghan people, they will remain caught in the cross-fire between Western armed gangs and local warlords!

The only acceptable "role" for western forces in Afghanistan, is to leave - now! out regime change, anyway? □

## Withdrawal? Not really!

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](mailto:contact@w-fight.org), or by postal mail at:

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