

WORKERS' fight



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contact@w-fight.org

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

NO BAILOUT FOR THE BANK CROOKS!

Once again, the world's entire banking system has come under the spotlight - much like during the "credit crunch", back in 2008, when governments bailed out collapsing banks with public funds, following the implosion of their speculative bubble.

The scandal triggered by Barclays' "Libor-fixing" escalated to include, in addition to Barclays and all three other big British retail banks, another 16 international banks, from all over the industrialised world.

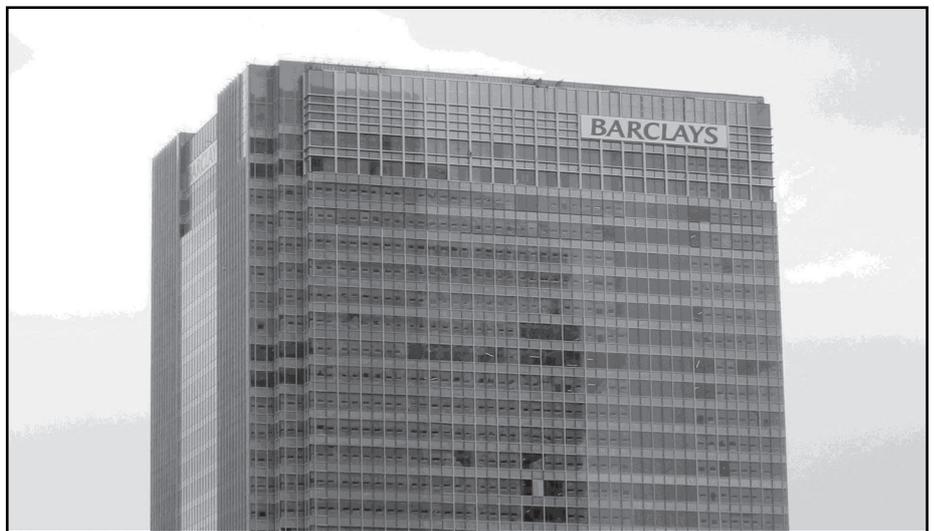
Closer to home, the Bank of England's governors themselves, together with high-ranking civil servants and possibly ministers - i.e. the very people who were meant to be "regulating" the banking system, stand accused of having encouraged - if not instructed - Barclays to break rules they were meant to enforce.

Subsidising the crooks

Ironically, this scandal broke out only weeks after the ConDems' latest bailout - whereby the Bank of England would pump another £190bn worth of cash into the coffers of these delinquent banks - enough to cater for the needs of millions of children, low-income households and pensioners, for a whole year!

After months of bragging about the success of their austerity policy in preserving the health of British banking, the ConDems have effectively admitted it is in a dire state: the big banks are so overloaded with toxic assets that, just as in 2008, they may be threatening the economy with another credit crunch.

But how will splashing out more public funds on the banks resolve the problem? What has been achieved by the hundreds of billions already handed out to the banks in the past, except to provide, first Labour and then the ConDems, with an excuse to turn the



screw on the working class?

The cash from this new bailout will only feed the banks' speculative spree. It will certainly not be invested in the real economy when there's no compulsion on them to do so.

So how on earth can these crooks be trusted to take care of the interests of the economy as a whole, using public funds? When all the evidence shows, that right in the middle of the credit crunch in 2008, their only concern was to appear to be in better shape than they really were, by fixing the Libor rate!

A bankrupt, criminal system

To "mend" this corrupt banking system, politicians can only offer yet another set of regulations and regulators. But neither Osborne's plan to split retail from investment banking, nor Miliband's rather baffling proposal to replace the existing four retail banks with seven new ones, will make the banks less corrupt.

Barclays' fixing of Libor was treated as criminal cheating. But what is financial speculation, if not a kind of cheat

poker, in which everybody tries to deceive everybody else, regardless of the consequences for the real economy. From the point of view of society as a whole, speculation is criminal - and yet it is treated as a "respectable" banking activity!

Only full nationalisation of the banking system, without compensation, and its consolidation into one single bank under the control of the working population, can end its corrupt profiteering!

But while the spotlight is on the banks today, their behaviour only reflects the criminal nature of capitalist profiteering in general.

What about Britain's big non-financial companies? Do they use their huge cash reserves to invest in useful production that would create jobs? No. Instead they pay higher rewards to shareholders, while taking advantage of the crisis to increase the level of exploitation of the workforce, in order to maximise their profits. ☐

Immigration rights - for the well-off

The ConDems want to further tighten immigration rules on people from poor countries. This time they are targeting those who form a relationship with and/or marry British citizens - and the British citizens themselves.

They will have to prove they are rich enough ("not to be a burden on taxpayers"), speak English fluently

enough and show enough "combined attachment" to Britain, before they will be allowed to live here together as a couple!

Home Secretary Theresa May has set a figure of a combined income minimum of £25,700 for a childless couple. There will be an especially stringent English test for any foreign-born husband, wife or partner

wanting to come in on a family visa.

This kind of crude anti-immigrant demagoguery can only give heart to bigots. Meanwhile, May is more than happy that the wealthy who really "burden the taxpayer", by stashing their vast fortunes offshore to avoid paying taxes on them altogether, can come and go as they please! □

Miliband plays to a bigoted gallery

Ed Miliband says it was wrong of Labour to dismiss "concerns" about immigration as prejudice. "Admitting" that Labour governments allowed too many immigrants to Britain from new EU countries, he supports much stricter controls when countries like Croatia join the EU. Likewise, Miliband criticises Brown's promise of "British jobs for British

workers" - but only because Labour "could not deliver it", not because it helped to divide workers' ranks!

This doesn't stop Miliband from presenting his anti-immigrant rant as a "class issue", claiming that the arrival of workers from eastern Europe drove down wages and put strain on public services. But didn't Labour's

policies, including their paltry minimum wage and their punitive drive against the jobless, help the bosses to casualise work? Didn't Labour cut public services? Since Miliband can hardly admit that much, the only real change in his policy is to go further than his predecessors in pandering to nationalist prejudices. □

• Nanny state or nanny cops?

The police in Amesbury in Wiltshire have invented a new scheme, whereby they go and fetch kids from home who haven't gone to school. Apart from the fact that kids will probably boast about being driven to school in a police car, this scheme which

started at the end of July, can hardly solve the many problems which result in "truancy". Like for instance kids looking after their younger siblings while the parents are working (because they can't afford childcare) or bullying at school, etc.

It might be easy to claim success in Amesbury, a town of around 8,000 inhabitants, with only 4 schools, but we can imagine that kind of scheme in London : playing nanny could be a full-time job for cops..!

Letter from Sussex

Up until now, East Sussex County Council employed highly specialised rangers to manage specific countryside sites. On "task days", they worked with trainee rangers and volunteers, boosting bio-diversity and helping to protect endangered species.

The problem is that there is no statutory requirement on local authorities to do such work. Even if it's an educative experience for all involved - including volunteering school student and jobless. Benefits such as these, count little with the brace of old-Etonians

running the government. Their axe has fallen, rangers have been cut and those remaining are centrally pooled, going out on a daily basis to do rights-of-way maintenance, which is a statutory requirement. Volunteer "task days" have been stopped as they no longer fit in with this ad hoc arrangement.

The council's "invisible" way of making cuts is to ensure that those in charge of sites don't have a detailed knowledge of them. So sites will deteriorate and bio-diversity will be lost. Staff were even forbidden to write to volunteers warning them that task days were being halted. This kind of thing is happening all over the country. Merseyside police recently criticised Sefton council's decision to slash its coastal parks rangers, pointing out that they'd rescued large numbers of people from the soft coastal sands there. No doubt the ConDems think rangers are just "gamekeepers" and can therefore be dispensed with. They couldn't be more wrong.

Beach shingle plant survey on a "task day"



2012's big bucks!

The message from LOCOG - the London Organising Committee for the Olympics Games - is that this big circus will "benefit Britain". Yup, for a few weeks in July-August, the cost has been £11bn (we're told) - "only" 4 times what the original bid estimated - but Cameron says it will "boost the economy" by £13bn on tourism, retail sales and "investment"...over the next 4 years!

OK, but who gets boosted? Shareholders, or the rest of us? The Games are certainly good for big corporate "sponsors" - like Adidas, official TeamGB sportswear supplier, BMW, BP, BA, BT, EDF and Lloyds! And more so for big corporate partners, like MacDonald's and Coca-Cola - not as official TeamGB caterers, but by making billions feeding off the event! As will Visa, Dow, General Electric, Proctor and Gamble, and Samsung... And what about ATOS, the insurance "partner" of the Paralympics, a company already notorious for disqualifying the disabled from welfare benefits! Is



this a sick joke or what?

Oh, and by the way, Stratford, the location of the Games, is a "temporary tax-haven" for July-August! During that period, companies and athletes will be exempt from taxes

on profits and earnings - probably equal to around £600m. Tax avoidance courtesy of the man who criticised Jimmy Carr's. One big lousy swindle! ☐

• G4S's golden bonus

G4S are one of the main private security providers for the Olympics. Originally it was only 2,000 guards for which they were to be paid £84m (£43,000 per guard!). Following security concerns, the government and the Olympic committee agreed a new contract with G4S to provide 10,400 guards and training for all 23,700 security staff including the army. Their bill for the fortnight has risen to £284m - a £200m increase.

What this won't mean is decent pay for security staff. Most will be recruited for the fortnight from the young unemployed and can expect minimum wage where they're not volunteers. Oh yes, part of G4S's security contingent will be supplied by Close Protection UK, which was behind the recruitment of unpaid claimants during for the recent jubilee...

• Bonus beats Boris

At the time of writing the dispute by London bus drivers over a £500 Olympic bonus per worker is in arbitration - via Acas. The strike which took place on the 21 June was solid. In all but 3 out of 20 companies, where bosses succeeded in getting injunctions, hardly a bus moved. The threat that each further strike day would add £100 to the £500 demand, also seems to have focussed minds.

On 5 July, £585 per driver was on

• Local exclusion zone

The Olympics arrived early. Signs changing parking rules were already up in parts of Hackney in June, when they only apply from July 27th. In Newham, parking rules posted from late June were indecipherable. Already cars have been impounded and fines issued, simply because locals can't figure out what not to do!

By early July, "Olympic Driving Lanes" had been painted on the roads. Cycling/walking towpaths were shut. We're told to forget about bus, tube or train and "walk to work", avoiding the Olympic zone! All kinds of prefabs-buildings and security walls have been erected (missiles atop buildings?) in unlikely places - like a police HQ on Wanstead Flats!

And what about Stratford's "face-lift", with huge, heavy and exorbitant "lozenge

the table and £700 for the most affected garages, so the 2nd strike day was postponed. Unite's officials said the extra £100 was "strike pay". It would be a real step forward if every strike demanded that the bosses not only met strikers' demands, but also compensated them for lost pay due to the strike. The problem with the bonus however, is the problem with all bonuses. They're a one-off and no real solution to the long hours, poor conditions and low pay that many transport workers are subjected to.

sculpture" round the shopping centre - ugly and useless!

Well, maybe we can all take some consolation: hotels, restaurants and theatres are registering a drop in bookings from 35% to as much as 90% for July-August compared to "normal" years. Tourists are avoiding London. The Olympics are a turn-off. If LOCOG did its homework on previous Olympics, it knew this would be the case. Is that why it's fallen so short on essentials like transport, which is already way too overcrowded?

• Just the ticket, if you're loaded

The "Olympic ideal" is supposed to be sport for all, with teams selected on merit to produce the world's best competition. So will the spectators be those who best appreciate the sports on view?

In June LOCOG announced a new sale of thousands of tickets for Olympic events. Only online, and a Visa card is the only payment accepted. As for prices for most competitive events, they "start" at £20. Even that would be beyond the reach of many people in work, never mind on benefits. But since they range up to £720, those applying for cheaper tickets are much more likely to be disappointed.

As to those wanting to attend the opening and closing ceremonies, they will have to pay at least £995 for the privilege. Sure, it's sport for all - provided you've got the cash.

Their crisis

Osborne claims he wants the banks to lend to the economy in order to create jobs. But is more public money splashed out on the banks going to do the trick? The banks are already sitting on £500bn of cash, while non-financial companies are hoarding £230bn. If they intended to invest in the real economy, they could have done it without more public funds. But since

Nationalise these banks!

Barclays' Bank has been fined £290m by British and US banking authorities for its role in rigging the Libor or daily-calculated inter-bank lending rate between 2005 and 2009. This rate determines what borrowers pay for their mortgage or credit card fees and influences outcomes of trillions being gambled daily on the world's financial markets. Barclays' got off lightly because it owned up first (and grassed up its rivals). Twenty banks are currently

• Snake oil salesmen

At the same time as the fixing of the Libor rate was exposed, another mis-selling scandal broke. It's not long since many high street banks had to pay compensation to customers who had taken out loans and been conned into buying expensive and useless Payment Protection Insurance. Now four household names - Barclays, Lloyds, HSBC and RBS - face having to compensate 28,000 businesses after duping them into buying products which were supposed to protect them against interest rate rises - except that they weren't told about the risk of losing money, if interest rates went down, nor about the cost of getting out of such arrangements.

In both cases, the banks' scams only came to light because some of the customers affected could afford to fight expensive battles through the courts. Otherwise these scams would probably have been brushed under the carpet. But what about the much larger numbers

Osborne won't force them to invest, why should they?

The ConDems' new round of financial largesse announced in June is worth a total £190bn in fresh cash for the banks: the government will either lend them money (at a rock-bottom 0.75% interest rate - compare that to what you pay on your credit card!) or buy back some of the bonds they have (more so-called

being investigated including all four big British banks!

So in addition to the criminal speculation on mortgages that sparked off the crisis in 2007, these same banks have been caught red-handed again. Not that the British banking authority - the FSA - was particularly anxious to stop them. They claimed these crooked practices, although known, weren't covered by British law. However it was forced to act when the scandal was

of low-income customers who routinely get entangled in growing indebtedness by extortionate interest and penalties? What chance do they have to force the banks to back off?

• The not-so-helpful bank

The computer failure at banking group RBS, which owns NatWest and Ulster Bank, meant 13m customers lost access to their accounts. Some didn't get their wages paid into their accounts and others had payments which went out twice. A private hospital in America even threatened to turn off a British patient's life support machine because a payment hadn't been made.

The bank tried to reverse a software update, but in the process, large numbers of transactions were permanently lost. It turned out that RBS had got rid of the entire team of 60 workers who were responsible for this and outsourced the work to a team half the size and with less experience. Thereafter, the bank's

"quantitative easing").

Unless, of course, the truth is that despite Osborne's boasting about the splendid health of British finance, thanks to his austerity measures, the state of the banks is just as dire as it was back in 2008. And that, after all, this package is just another bank bailout in disguise, which the ConDems will want to make workers pay for, sooner rather than later? □

exposed in the US media.

Once again, the banking system has been proved uncontrollable - at least as long as it's being regulated by ex-bankers and friends of bankers. Only its full nationalisation, without compensation, and its consolidation into one single big bank under the control of the population can end its reckless operation once and for all. □

counter staff, who have also had their numbers slashed, had to work seven days a week to pick up the pieces.

Whatever the profiteers may think, workers are, indeed, indispensable to make their system work. The more they cut our numbers, the more of a mess they create!



The bigger you cheat, the better

For most of us, paying tax isn't negotiable. But different rules apply if you're rich. The Times recently exposed a list of rich individuals "protecting" their money from the taxman. Cameron made a big deal out of such "immorality", even though it's his government which allows it. Next, without blinking, he was offering Britain as a tax haven to

French millionaires!

But the dodges of this wealthy elite pale into insignificance when compared with the sheer scale of tax avoidance practised by corporations. The tax office, HMRC, has just been criticised by the National Audit Office for a series of deals with big companies, in which the companies kindly agreed to stump up only

a fraction of what they owe in tax. So there you have it - a woman in Leeds who fraudulently claims benefit of £45,000 gets jailed for 16 months; tax avoiders get told off by Cameron; but big business gets a handshake and the blessing of the HMRC for swindling the state out of billions.

"Double-dip recession" or on-going crisis?

For many months now, a growing number of economic experts have been predicting that the British economy was in (or on its way towards), a "double-dip recession". Or to put it another way, that instead of going into "recovery" after the previous recession, the economy was going to enter another recession. Today, this is officially admitted by the government's own statisticians, following a

series of quarters in which GDP has been falling.

Of course, this assumes that there was, in fact, any "recovery". For well-paid economists who look at the economy through the distorting glass of Excel spreadsheets, maybe that was the case. But if there was such a "recovery", workers have certainly failed to notice it, since there has been no let-up whatsoever

The eurozone bogeyman

Months ago, the ConDems discovered (or rediscovered) a convenient bogeyman - the eurozone's on-going crisis. Since then, everything that went wrong in the British economy - especially when it contradicted the government's own optimistic predictions - has been blamed on the eurozone crisis. In particular, the fall in British GDP since the end of last year was duly blamed on the fact that the

eurozone countries (which make up the bulk of the European Union) were no longer buying as much from Britain. Hence Cameron's call for British companies to "find markets outside the EU".

Except that the facts tell a very different story. The latest figures published in June by the Office of National Statistics show that while Britain's exports of goods to non-EU

Their crisis

in the bosses' attacks against jobs, wages and conditions over the past four years.

As far as the working population is concerned, regardless of whether this is a single, double, treble or whatever-dip recession, the reality is chronic crisis - caused by the irrational profiteering which is built into the very operation of the capitalist system. □

countries have fallen by just over 10%, those to EU countries have dropped by less than 7%. So, after all, despite the eurozone crisis, the EU is holding out better as an export market for British goods than the rest of the world - showing that the euro-scarecrow was just made of straw. Surprise, surprise. □

• Austerity parasites

Security firms like G4S and Serco are getting their tentacles into public sector outsourcing contracts worth £4bn in 2012 alone, as prisons, police, defence and the NHS implement George Osborne's cuts.

For years G4S (with 675,000 employees - only Wal-Mart and Foxconn are bigger private employers) and Serco (110,000) grew fat as everything from security to nuclear decommissioning was privatised. Already 15% of prisoners languish in private jails, while immigrants are arrested and deported by private guards. They run academy schools and even outsourced education authorities. Out-of-hours patients are visited by their doctors.

Now, under the blanket of austerity, outsourcing is to be extended into new areas such as the police force. Everything from forensics to HR and even PR could go. G4S's contract to build a new police station and run Lincolnshire's police authority could be one of many.

Outsourcing means huge profits to providers - at the expense of workers' pay, pensions and conditions, as well as public funds. Could it backfire on these private parasites of the state? You bet!

• PFI's deadly medicine

The South London Health Trust (SLHT) is about to go into

administration. Its three hospitals are running a deficit of over £1m per week - a tripling of debt from 2009. But a look at the finances shows that its problems stem from the way it has been financed.

Two of the trust's hospitals were rebuilt under the Private Finance Initiative. The Princess Royal cost £118m in 2002. The consortium supplying the finance included Barclay's Private Equity and builder Taylor Woodrow. However in return for also supplying power and medical equipment over the lifetime of the contract, SLHT is expected to pay back £1.2bn over 35 years! With a similar expenditure for rebuilding nearby Queen Elizabeth, the trust

faces impossible debts.

The 1m public served by SLHT are rightly up-in-arms about the situation. Immediate termination of the contract, with no compensation of creditors (already bloated by a decade of high interest) and full NHS control are essential. A concerted campaign by trust employees and the public to maintain all existing services would pave the way.

• More untrustworthy Trusts

Barking, Havering and Redbridge NHS Trust, notorious due to deaths in its maternity unit last year, was also heading for the danger list of "unsustainable providers" this July. It lacks trained staff, and falls short of care standards set by the government watchdog, especially in A&E.

The Queen's Hospital PFI deal in 2004 was known to be full of holes, involving the closure of one hospital and a huge reduction in the number of beds in an already inadequately-resourced borough. But despite operating on a shoestring for years, the Trust's still in deficit, facing a £50m PFI payment for 2012 alone. Like another 17 NHS Trusts, and 4 Foundation Trusts, it's being bailed out by a special government fund. Another 34 trusts reported deficits in 2011/12. Minister Lansley however, claims the NHS is "in robust financial health". When did he last see his psychiatrist?



Cuts watch

David Cameron chose the Bluewater shopping centre as the venue for a "True Blue" speech on the Tories' longer-term ideas for slashing benefits. His tirade was obviously aimed at positioning his party in preparation for the next election, by showing that the Tories still have quite a few (reactionary) tricks up their sleeves and by trying to steal a march on those to his right,

like UKIP.

Hence Cameron's deliberately provocative tone, designed to placate right-wing voters - stoking up resentment against those dependent on welfare, blaming the poor for their poverty and just stopping short of treating them as criminal.

Despite the extreme nature of these proposals, Labour did not condemn them outright. They merely

criticised the Tories for coming out with yet more plans, when their current welfare "reform" is "in chaos" - by which they meant that it isn't succeeding in saving money at the expense of the jobless, sick, etc., thanks to rocketing unemployment. But on Cameron's other "proposals", they had nothing to say! □

• *Harassing the jobless*

Put in a nutshell, for Cameron, every pound spent on welfare is, as a rule, one pound too much. That pound must be scrutinised and only given to "deserving" claimants. And, according to Cameron, there aren't many!

So, for instance, he complained that *"if someone is signed off work with a bad back there's no requirement to take steps to get well to keep on receiving (sickness) benefit - even if they*

could be getting free physiotherapy." How idiotic can these politicians get? That's not even true, given the stringent "attendance procedures" in most workplaces! For these people, if someone with a bad back doesn't get him or herself treated, it must be because he or she chooses to be in pain! But then, of course, a toff like Cameron could never imagine that it may take weeks even to get a physio appointment.

Likewise for jobless claimants.

Cameron mentioned Australia as an example, because there *"work for the dole is standard after just six months"*. But this is increasingly what's already happening here with long-term unemployed, who get forced into zero-hour or even unpaid "job placements" as part of the ConDems' "Work Programme". Apparently, Cameron hasn't noticed. Where was he during the Queen's jubilee?

• *Benefit cuts bite*

Cameron's attack on benefit recipients comes at a time when signs of increasing poverty are everywhere. Food banks are experiencing an explosion in demand and homelessness is on the rise. The number of homeless households accepted by councils went up by 14% last year and two-thirds of those were families with children. The number of tenants more than 2 months in arrears is also going up rapidly.

The effects of the crisis are made worse by the cuts to benefits already made under the government's welfare "reform". Private landlords are not reducing their rents as a result of housing benefit caps, they're just evicting the tenants who can no longer pay. But never mind, Cameron would still like to remove housing benefit from most under-25s! And how are parents supposed to accommodate their adult children, when they might already have had

their housing benefit cut for having a "spare" room?

At the heart of Cameron's argument, which contrasts the unemployed who "choose" to rely on benefits with the working poor who don't receive any "handouts", is a huge lie. In fact, 7 out of 8 households getting housing benefit are in work. This is an assault on the whole working class, unemployed or otherwise.

Striking at strikers

In mid-June, Work and Pensions minister Iain Duncan Smith announced new measures against strikers, as part of his Universal Credit benefit system. Maybe it's because last year, more than a million workers took strike action - with 1.4m days lost!

In future, if low-paid workers take part in a strike, they'll no longer get the (minimal!) benefit "top-ups" which they qualified for, under

the 1948 National Assistance Act. Up to now, benefit top-ups are paid for the first 10 days of a strike, and though most strikes just last for one day, recent strikes which went on for several weeks involved precisely the workers IDS is targeting: the so-called "working poor", newly unionised - like cleaners on the minimum wage! Almost all of them would be on tax credits to "top up" their low wages now and

will be shifted onto Universal Credit next year.

IDS says that since "striking is a choice", workers "should pay the price" for it. As if living on starvation wages were a choice! And as if there was any other weapon except a strike, with which to fight the bosses who pay starvation wages and their parliamentary lackeys! □

Unemployment down or up? It depends...

Unemployment may have fallen for 3 months from February-April, to 2.61m (8.2%), but May's count for those claiming Job Seeker's Allowance was up by 8,100, to 1.6m.

The "experts", who take these figures at face value, are "baffled" as to why the economy didn't show signs of recovery, if unemployment was falling. They considered 3 options: first, that the improvement is

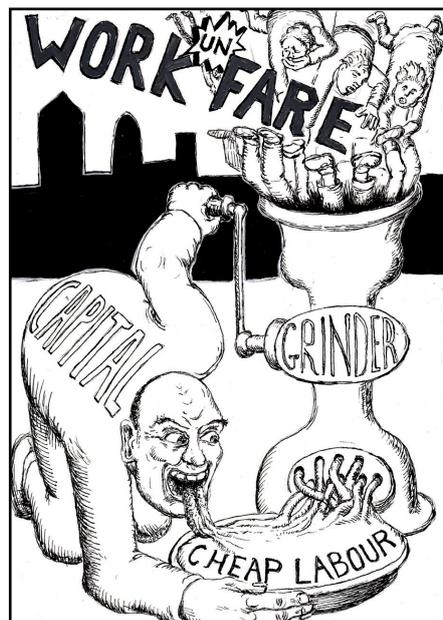
just a temporary blip; second, that the economy is really performing better than growth statistics show; and third, "and perhaps most worrying" (!) says the Financial Times, "it is possible that we are seeing a transition to a lower wage economy, in which jobs bounce back, but at a lower level of pay and productivity". The FT adds that it's too soon to tell which outcome is correct!

• Royally screwed!

Close Protection UK, the company which got the stewarding contract for the queen's jubilee, used a so-called "charity" run by a Tory peer, Baroness Stedman-Scott, to recruit 80 jobless from outside London. They were made to work 16-hour shifts in the worst possible weather conditions, without shelter, proper protective clothing or decent food, and their "accommodation" was a wet camp site!

Fifty of those jobless were paid the "apprentice" rate of £2.80/hr - to learn which skills, in 48 hours???. The remaining 30 were taken on under the workfare scheme and not paid at all. In fact, they were blackmailed into agreeing to these conditions with the promise of a steward's job at the Olympics - which may or may not materialise!

One would have thought that, given the absurd extravaganza of the queen's jubilee, those hired to steward the event would have



been paid, if not a royal, at least a decent wage and guaranteed decent conditions. But no. This was, in every aspect, a grotesque celebration of social inequality.

Cuts watch

Well it isn't too soon for the working class! We can tell that we're in a "lower wage economy" made up of non-jobs! The 1.4m unemployed for more than 6 months, the 1.41m mostly low-waged part-timers, and the record 4.17m "self-employed" (the only option for some jobs) - will testify to it! Employment minister Chris Grayling said he'd "remain cautious" for now. He should! □

• A desperate response

On 29 June a man came out of the Selly Oak Jobcentre in Birmingham, chained himself to the railings, doused himself with petrol and set himself alight. Eyewitnesses said he had not received a benefit payment which he was expecting. But DWP insiders suggested the delay resulted from a benefit rule change, after he was passed fit for work and had his incapacity benefit cut off. Jobcentre workers knew he was "vulnerable" with ongoing health problems - but decisions on his benefit were out of their hands, and part of a programme which was aimed at cutting the benefits bill, nothing else.

Earlier this year another suicide attempt was reported in a Liverpool Jobcentre. And it should be no surprise if the government's continued harassment and criminalisation of the poorest, aimed at driving them off benefits and into the worst jobs, drives more and more over the edge.

Pension "Nest": for the birds

Surely a government-backed pension scheme, allowing all workers to consolidate their contributions into one place regardless of employment history would be a good thing? So what about "Nest" (National Employment Savings Trust), invented by Labour, supposedly for that purpose, and soon to be launched by the ConDems?

From October, workers in companies without a pension scheme will be auto-enrolled in Nest - unless they opt out. But "Nest" isn't as safe as it sounds. It offers a "defined contribution" scheme - i.e., you know what you put in, but what you get out depends on the ups and downs of the stock market. And

since you won't qualify for Nest unless you earn above £7,475pa, the low-paid are excluded. Anyway, workers in smaller companies won't be enrolled until 2017-18.

On top of it all, it now transpires that you won't be able to carry over a pension from a former job to Nest, so you'd have to keep paying into both schemes - which defeats Nest's original purpose. When the government was told to allow carryovers, it said it couldn't, due to "EU rules"! A lie: EU rules won't apply to Nest. But "insurance industry rules" will - in the sense that it "rules" what ministers do...

Working longer, a free choice??

According to official figures, the

number of pensioners working after retirement age has increased by 85% in the past 20 years!

What is striking is that the majority who retire so late are women - 61%! And there's a big class divide too: 2/3 of them are in low-paid jobs like cleaning, often part-time for health reasons. Many had to stop work to bring up children. And since the state didn't pay these women's contributions while they were doing the hard work of reproducing the next generation of workers, they now have too few "contribution years" to get a decent pension - or any pension at all!

As if this society wasn't wealthy enough for everyone to retire when they need to, on a decent income!

40 years ago **The jailing of the Pentonville 5: no law can hold back those who are determined to win**

This July mark 40 years since 5 dockers - the "Pentonville 5" - were jailed for breaking an injunction against the "unlawful" picketing of the Chobham Farm container depot, at Temple Mills, in Newham. They were the shop stewards - Vic Turner, Bernie Steer, Conny Clancy, Tony Merrick and Derek Watkins, identified by private detectives hired by Midland Storage Company - and convicted on 21 July 1972 of "contempt of court".

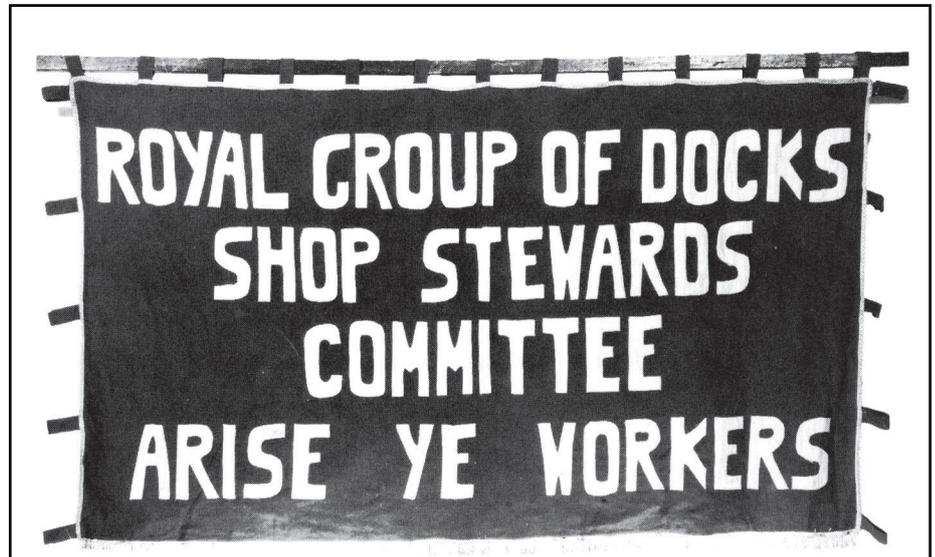
The background to these events was the passing of the Industrial Relations Act into law by Heath's Conservative government in 1971. The draconian (by the standards of the 1960s!) Act, emphasised the rights of the individual, and set up a National Industrial Relations Court to try cases of "unfair industrial practice", with the obvious aim of reducing the level of strike action. This law had originally been designed by Wilson's Labour government in the late 1960s - causing a huge backlash against it, probably helping to usher in the Tories. Labour repealed it in 1974 - but the 1980's union legislation of Margaret Thatcher brought it back - with a few more anti-union measures thrown in.

In July 1972, the jailing of the "5"

sparked a wave of strikes among the dockers themselves. Print workers, miners, airport workers at Heathrow and car workers, were all about to join in on unofficial strike, when the TUC decided to take control by calling a one-day general strike for 31 July. The unofficial strikers in the meantime marched on Pentonville Prison. Fearing further reaction, the government called in the Official Solicitor, in order to get the arrest warrants overturned. The dockers were released within a week of their

arrest and carried out of jail shoulder-high.

An award-winning film of the events - called "Arise Ye Workers", after the slogan written on the dockers' union banner - was made in 1973. Given that such militancy may seem a thing of the past, seen through today's eyes, it is certainly worth watching. Because, as Vic Turner said at the 35th anniversary of this fight, "when a situation arises where the working classes have to muster, they will". □



• **Unite leader's "militancy": we're not convinced**

Unite's conference, in June, gave the media something to talk about. Like the £25m strike fund leader Len McCluskey announced. He told delegates that the union would support them "come what may" and added several huffs and puffs - even quoting Bob Dylan, "to live outside the law you must be honest". After which he was inevitably asked "does that mean you support illegal strikes?" To which he inevitably replied, that Unite would defend its members by whatever means necessary! Well, almost. Actually, he's not yet ready to quote Malcolm X!

Those "members" trying to fight against the bosses' attacks know about Unite's hot air - and how it's not about winning strikes, but about helping recruitment. After all, didn't Unite recommend pay cuts and 2-tier at Vauxhall and Ford this year? And as for the token criticism of the Labour party: "we need a radical alternative" and "don't support public sector pay restraint" - well, it could well help Ed Miliband to appear to have "fallen out" with "the unions"...

• **Squeeze on workers' incomes gets tighter**

Even though RPI dropped to 3.1% in May, it's predicted that disposable incomes (money left to spend after tax) will fall again in 2012 - having fallen 1.5% in 2011 and another 0.2% in the first 3 months of 2012. Many workers have had their wages cut or frozen, however, so their income drop is even greater.

Yet food prices already rose by 4.3% this year. How are poor households meant to eat? Choices have to be made as to which bills pay first - electricity, gas, rent, council tax?

Despite the freezing of council tax, arrears increased more than 25% across England - when non-payment is considered such a serious offence, it can mean home repossession and/or prison. But this didn't stop the ConDems from deciding to cut the grant to councils for council tax benefit by 10%! This benefit is claimed by 5.9 million low-income households, more than any other means-tested benefit/tax credit. Councils will now have to "design" and fund their own benefit systems - paid for by cuts.

Yet another way in which the working class is made to foot the bill of the crisis!

• **Osborne's duty to truckers and farmers**

The government's latest U-turn, on fuel duty, postpones the planned 3p/litre rise from August to next January. Chancellor George Osborne's decision was so rushed that it was a surprise to most of his own party, including the front bench. One Tory MP, having been told to defend the rise until hours before it was scrapped, said "It was absolutely bloody stupid, treating us like idiots." Osborne himself didn't bother to defend his about-face on Newsnight, throwing a junior Treasury minister to the Paxman wolf instead.

According to Osborne, his aim was to help "working families and businesses". Sure, the interests of the road haulage and farming industries are close to his heart - but since when has he cared about the standards of living of workers? As to workers, they don't need Osborne's 3p/litre-type "help". What they need is a system which protects wages automatically from all increases in price, whatever their cause.

King's Cross railway station (London)**• We'd welcome a wage rise**

Rail companies in London and beyond are using the Olympics to promote themselves and their so-called "international welcome". At King's Cross, East Coast has taken on extra workers - agency temps on £6.50/hr (30% less than the lowest grade on-train staff and less than the £8.30 "London Living Wage") - with minimal training and without even providing them with a uniform. They've introduced a special night shift for the period and they're relying on permanent on-board catering workers to volunteer to work nights for

the grand sum of £25 extra a shift!

But some companies, like Railgourmet which supplies food for the trains and which is already short-handed, are making no provisions for extra staff, nor extra pay. And their permanent workers are on only £6.50/hour! It's the same case with the cleaning companies, Mitie and ISS - except the wages are worse - permanent workers get the £6.08/hr minimum wage! Unlike these two, Initial cleaning is making a grand gesture of paying the London Living Wage - but just for



the Olympics! And that's probably thanks to the successful Initial workers' strike next-door at Eurostar and the one that's anticipated down-below, in the Underground!

All these companies deserve an Olympic-sized wake-up call from us workers!!

• No cuts!

On East Coast, we're supposed to see the 3.7% pay rise at the end of this month. But the company is forcing a 1.3% increase in pension contributions on us, unless we want to see our pension reduced if we retire before 65 (and the reduction would be big - e.g. before, we could get a full pension at 60, but now this would be reduced by 24%). Why have the union officials been completely silent? We don't accept either a pay cut or a pension cut! [Workers Platform King's Cross 12/6/12]

• Hiding in the boardroom

East Coast has started holding online forums, so we can quiz the directors (obviously, they prefer the safety of a computer to meeting us face to face).

Not a lot of staff got their questions in - it was mainly managers. Not surprising, since the forum only lasted 3 hours and how many of us have access to a computer while we're working?

But a few managed to raise serious issues. Is that why the forum was shut down an hour early - before we got on to the really important questions, like our inadequate pay rise and the downgrading of the pension scheme? [Workers Platform King's Cross 26/6/12]

• Bring in Banksy!

It's been exposed that when FCC clean graffiti off trains, they don't have a way of stopping the chemicals used from contaminating ground water. So they've had to stop doing it, except when it causes an actual hazard. It can't be enhancing their image, during the chase for the new franchise, but they're still too mean to pay another train company, which does have the facilities, to do it for them. Perhaps they think it's art? [Workers Platform King's Cross 12/6/12]

• Not even a bronze

FCC has produced some gold and silver badges of the Olympic logo. At least, so we're told - they're harder to come by than Olympic medals. Should we look on eBay? [Workers Platform King's Cross 12/6/12]

• Taste of what's to come

We had a small foretaste of what things might be like later this summer, as crowds of music fans going to see the Red Hot Chili Peppers at Knebworth passed through the station last weekend. As usual, there weren't enough of us to cope in the Travel Centre. When the FCC ticket office was closed, those workers were sent to stations all over the place. We need them to come back and join us in here! [King's X Workers' Platform - 26/06/12]

• Don't lounge about here

In the vast new concourse, they didn't want to make space for a Standard lounge.

So if you haven't got a 1st Class ticket, your only option is to sit at one of the over-priced cafes or restaurants, most of which are out in the open. Was it really designed as a railway station, to serve passengers? Or is it just a shopping centre with trains? [King's X Workers' Platform - 26/06/12]

• No, non, nein

It was suggested to FCC that they should suspend issuing penalty fares for the duration of the Olympics, so we could concentrate on giving excellent customer service. But FCC refused. They like to talk about customer service but it goes out the window when there's money involved.

They're rubbing their hands at the thought of the "bonus" THEY'LL be making from all those visitors. Welcome to London! [King's X Workers' Platform - 26/06/12]

• Virtual world

When the East Coast directors were travelling to and from Scotland for a meeting, the crew manager made sure there were 6 On Board workers on that train. This is so the directors did not see what it is really like to go out short all the time. Oh, and where did they get the extra workers from? Yes - other trains, which meant we went out short AGAIN. [King's X Workers' Platform - 26/06/12]

• Cloud cuckoo land

On FCC, managers have been running "The Big Picture" sessions. Perhaps it should have been called "Playtime" instead - first up was a jigsaw which showed FCC as a race track. They may think they compare to Formula One; we'd say stock-car racing would be more appropriate. Then they wanted to hear from us about areas of concern. They would take more than an hour or two to list, but to sum up - we hope First is out of the picture asap! [King's X Workers' Platform - 26/06/12]

• Looks aren't everything

The multi-million pound roof on the new concourse is a bit of a tourist attraction. It does look impressive, it's true - provided it's not raining, that is.

Because then it leaks and it's back to mops and buckets, just like with the old roof. [Workers Platform King's Cross 26/6/12]

• Door closed

Thanks to the fact that the planners didn't foresee the need for doors on the new Travel Centre, we have had to suffer the noise and disruption of them being installed while we're working here. And we wonder if they've got it right now. The doors look very narrow. After freezing this winter, are we going to boil this summer? [Workers Platform King's Cross 26/6/12]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**• BMW's "Oxford derogation"**

What's this about temps agency Gi agreeing a deal with the union to circumvent equal pay?

New starters from 12 June onwards, stewards were told, will start on 85%, rising to 90% after 18 months and full pay only after 2 years! It's totally unacceptable - another, lower, tier of pay and conditions?

If Gi pleads poverty despite its operating profit of €32m, BMW certainly can't. [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 26/06/12]

• Their glossy leaflet was all bluster

Never before has an agreement regarding agency workers set out such long timescales - making a mockery of the use of agencies altogether.

In 2001 the first agency workers were told they were "eligible for" BMW contracts after 6 months. The rest is history: BMW rationed new contracts before freezing them.

Now they slip in yet another "probation" of two years! When Unite put out a leaflet declaring "we cannot allow

management to work towards the extinction of the permanent worker", it now seems they meant "unless we're included in the talks". [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 26/06/12]

• There's catching up to do!

Rudolph & Hellmann have not responded to the rejection of their "non-offer" in 4 weeks. Isn't this an insult in itself? Last Thursday BMW stewards handed out union leaflets on the gates; this week we're expecting a ballot for industrial action. Let's be clear: our wages are only half those of our workmates in BMW and Gi - yet our hours are longer, our breaks much shorter. We've contributed as much as everyone else to both BMW's and R&H's massive profits. We certainly need a payrise to reflect this and we know the money's there! [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 26/06/12]

• Going for gold

BMW has booked all 142 rooms of the Four Seasons hotel at Canary Wharf for the entire Olympics according to the Daily Telegraph. With rooms ranging from £250 to £617 per night (that's without breakfast and before VAT!), it could cost easily cost the company £1m. Not



that they will worry about that: last year BMW made more than £10m per day. As BMW's bosses will be wining and dining the world's politicians and business leaders, they will be aiming at a golden return. [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 12/06/12]

• BMW's chariots of fire?

On Monday 9 July BMW wants us all here to cheer on the Olympic flame on its 16 minute journey through the plant, between 5.17 and 5.33pm. So they just decided the day shift will start and finish an hour late and the night shift 30 minutes early, bringing both the crews together for pictures showing what a great and funky place this is to work. In their dreams, at least... [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 26/06/12]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**• What are we signing up to?**

What are we supposed to make of the long-awaited EC re-sign - which cuts jobs yet again. We're told that managers wanted more of our scalps than they eventually got - at least on paper. But how can it be acceptable for even fewer of us to carry the present overload? Don't they ever learn? [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 26/06/12]

• Somebody please muzzle Bob Gibson

The union's Voice tells us that officials will "fight to prevent RM bringing over the Dutch model" for deliveries. But what about fighting the "British model" - which coerced us to carry junk mail (on pain of losing the jobs which they sold anyway!) and which has thrown all limits on length of walks, load and working time, out the window!? [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 26/06/12]

• Get real!

So, surprise, surprise, 6 weeks after the Processing resign, work can't be cleared without those of us called "surplus" giving a hand. And on nights the staffing level is so low that part-timers are routinely helping by doing "overtime" hours in order to prevent routine failures - and without even getting the statutory 11 hours break between their

shifts! Isn't it blindingly obvious that MP needs them on full time contracts, permanently? [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 26/06/12]

• RM's contemptuous attitude

As for us "surplus" ones, who're meant to be sorting foreign inward packets from Langley in the basement, how can we be "surplus" when we're continually being dragged onto other duties? (That's a rhetorical question!) So the foreign bags are opened and it's left at that...and once again, foreign mail becomes 3rd class mail. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 26/06/12]

• ...one big, fat, failure

Yes, instead of facing reality - i.e that the restructuring-resign was a resounding failure - and creating more full-time jobs here, managers are telling mates to apply to Jubilee MC (for full-time jobs?! Which will make MP's current mess even worse! Couldn't they have worked that one out? Or is this (yet more) deliberate sabotage? [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 26/06/12]

• Another kind of bumping needed

Cleaners' mops have to be on the ready 24/7 thanks to the constant flooding and building works. But there's no rest for



the bones of us overworked few. The only possibility is to be "bumped out" by someone who wants to replace us from elsewhere. When what we really need is our number "bumped up" by new recruits! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 26/06/12]

• Question of a bonus...

We're wondering where the princely £100 "bonus" (a little tip!) came from. Some of us heard it was for money saved on wages, thanks to mechanisation!! That's a laugh (and an insult) if ever there was one! Others thought it might be something to do with "colleague share" - but didn't they tell us that the "share pot" was empty? Or is it our "Olympic Bonus!?" Well, that would be a good idea - but we'd be asking a lot more, and for it to be in the pay packet every week! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 26/06/12]

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**• Pickets respected**

Hats off to those lorry drivers who turned round at the staff picket lines on Monday 18th - and hats off to hourly paid mates who refused to cross! For some of us, no matter what, it's a principle!

Is that why there was no picket on the busiest, Kent Ave entrance to DEP? Or is it because staffs' union officials actually don't think this fight concerns the hourly paid? That sectional idea fits with the divisive approach of many union officials - allowing Ford bosses to rub their hands with glee! But the bosses would be wrong to rejoice. It ain't over yet! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 19/6/12]

• Sectionalism gone mad

Actually the staff bulletin handed out at some gates wasn't that bad. It explains that closing the Defined Benefit pension to new starts threatens the scheme to current members. It also points out that all wage levels are threatened by a cut in wages for 2nd tier recruits.

But what left us totally speechless was that it was signed by the very same Roger Maddison from Unite who recommended in February

that the hourly paid should accept 2-tier and the closure of the pension scheme!! So, he could find the right arguments for them, but not for us, who're even more threatened by these attacks? It's beyond belief. No wonder some staff think we aren't even in the same union!! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 19/6/12]

Fighting Ford and the union officials

Whether union officials like it or not, the result of the hourly-paid ballot over the very same issues in February wasn't acceptable to many, if not most, of us - because we certainly understood how this will undermine conditions for all.

We know they sold us out - the same officials from Unite and the GMB who're spouting such "militant" hot air on behalf of staff right now. Nobody believes that a token 24-hour strike by a fraction of the workforce will be effective in defeating Ford's wage and pension cuts. It's all about what happens next! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 19/6/12]

• ...and the lion ran clean away

In fact most of the Lines ran like clockwork without any loss of



production for the 24 hours. So the key has to be for all workers to go out together, indefinitely - doesn't it? [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 19/6/12]

• We hope staff hold out!

One of those unsubstantiated rumours is grinding out of the mill: that staffs' union officials may sign a deal - and we guess, as usual, the "rank and file" will be the last to know.

The CPI "bonus" (which they also got) may not have cut any ice with staff union officials, unlike with Codfather and his lot, but we wouldn't put it past Ford to try some kind of cheap blackmail to undermine resistance. We hope not, because staff are right to refuse to allow Ford's 2-tier and pension murder. Many of us hourly paid would have liked to be resisting with them. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 2/7/12]

• Line up with lineside!

Hamton-LineSide logistics workers in the new engine plant (DDC) are being cheated out of their wages by the trick loophole of the Swedish Derogation. But aren't we ALL in Unite? Didn't Unite vow to prevent this loophole from being exploited?

Of course, full-time union officials will do nothing. It's totally down to us Ford stewards and Ford workers as much as the LS mates to stop this asap!! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 2/7/12]

• ... and it could be one of them

Every few days one or two mates are taken off Lynx (engine line) to go to the Den - and we're told another 3 must go next week.

Yet for now we're still doing around 300 engines/day. We hear Ford plans to finally kill off the Lynx some time next year, but if managers carry on this slow blood-letting, who knows, they may find themselves with a corpse a lot sooner. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 2/7/12]

• We're ready to fly our perch

The Chicken Farm's mini-shift must be doing as many engines as the full shifts - with one of us doing the job of two, the standing up seems unending - we're so tired, we're ready to fall asleep on our swollen feet. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 2/7/12]

• Too many shifts

We've had one reshuffle too many on Puma. In fact in the whole of DEP/DDC this endless shifting from one line to another is enough to make us see stripes. At least around 40 of us, that is... who're meant to go back to the Chicken Farm to man up 3 full shifts to make an order for Russia... So, management wants that we stand up all through a (possibly) Siberian winter? No way! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 2/7/12]

• Hands off the temps!

We hear the temps may be sent to back-fill on Lion and Lynx for the time being, so they lose money and Ford gains? It's not ok! And then what? Will they be kept on? We demand a permanent

contract for all - right now, on equal pay, and with all benefits including DB pension. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 2/7/12]

• Ford is afraid to recruit

It's obvious all this shuffling is due to the on-going labour shortage in DEP. But vacancies are deliberately not being filled. They say they're waiting for mates from Press/Subs to come... after Xmas!! In the meantime the DDC lines just eat us all up? Mates are even shifted there from what's left of MP&L, despite a driver-shortage. Is Ford afraid to recruit to its new 2nd tier? Indeed, it should be! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 2/7/12]

• Useful "old hands"

Maybe we've been working in a deafening and oily hell here in the Press Shop - but from what we hear from mates already in DDC, you're just line-fodder over there, ordered around by ignorant-stupid supervision and managers. Then again, one thing we could look forward to, is teaching those upstarts some real "respect". [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 2/7/12]

Egypt

On June 24th, the election to the presidency of Mohammed Morsi, candidate of the Freedom and Justice Party (the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood), was finally proclaimed, after a significant delay.

Beforehand, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, which has been running the country since Mubarrak's downfall, had ensured that Morsi would only have limited powers. It got the Constitutional Council to invalidate the new parliament which had just been elected with a large Muslim Brotherhood majority.

As a result, while Morsi may have won the presidency, he owes his position to the army and has few instruments at his disposal to exercise any power independently from the military.

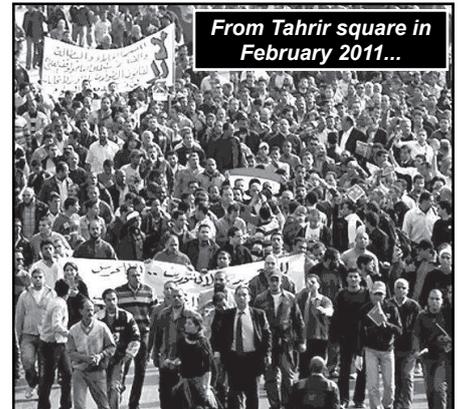
Commentators have reported on the frantic horse-trading taking place between the top circles of the army and the Muslim Brotherhood, in order to reach a power-sharing agreement - and on parallel horse-trading between the Muslim Brotherhood and various imperialist powers, particularly the US, which have some influence over the Egyptian army.

A division of labour between the army and the Muslim Brotherhood

It is thought that these negotiations could result in the parliament being reinstated and, in return, the Muslim Brotherhood committing itself not seek to form a Muslim-only government, nor to use the shariah as the basis for legislation.

In many respects, such a power-sharing would be the continuation of the Mubarrak period. Behind the dictatorship, the army had already chosen to allow the Muslim Brotherhood to gain influence, thanks to its network of mosques and charitable activities, as long as it helped to keep a lid on the explosive potential of Egypt's poor population.

In any case, neither of these two partners represents way the social and democratic aspirations which had begun to be formulated during the Egyptian protests, from January 2011. Those who really want to change the face of Egypt's society will have to fight those partners, who are just the two faces of the Egyptian and imperialist capitalist class. □



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