

WORKERS' fight



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

WAGES, JOBS, PENSIONS: ACTION NOW!

The Olympics fever is finally over. At Team-GB's parade in London, Cameron had a last chance to catch the media spotlight and win applause, to make up for the unceremonious boing rightfully earned by Osborne, at the Paralympics. But the days when these politicians hoped to use a bit of grandiose ceremony and hysterical flag-waving, to divert attention from their lurching crisis, are over.

While volunteers may return with some regrets to the daily grind of their lives, most of the tens of thousands of temps who had been hired for the Games will be returning to the dole queue. The crisis is now front-stage again, with a vengeance.

Fiery speeches, not much behind

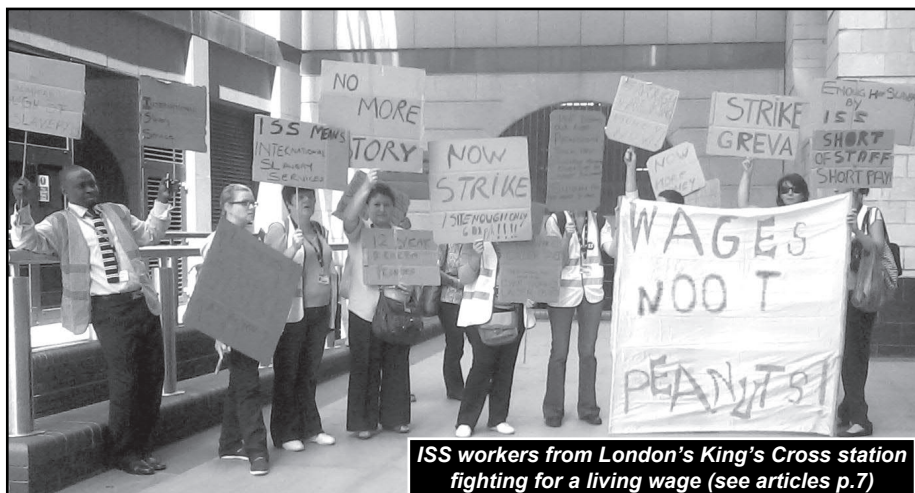
It was against this backdrop that the TUC conference started on September 9th. Like last year, the keynote speeches called for "co-ordinated strikes". Only, this time, instead of focusing on public sector pensions, they targeted pay - against the public sector's 3-year wage freeze and the threatened introduction of regional bargaining.

It's certainly about time pay was at the top of the agenda. But what about jobs? It seems that union leaders still do not consider that the hundreds of thousands of public sector jobs under threat - and related services - are worth fighting for!

But how do they propose to go beyond their fiery resolutions?

Despite having a mandate for strike, the teachers' union, NUT, has called a work-to-rule from the end of this month - the most ineffective way of using its industrial muscle, since it won't even allow teachers to show their strength in the streets.

Meanwhile, unions like Unison and



ISS workers from London's King's Cross station fighting for a living wage (see articles p.7)

the GMB seem more concerned with forming a new "mega-union", than with the urgent need to organise a fightback against the ConDems' austerity.

Leaving aside the mass protests planned by the TUC on October 20th - which should at least be an opportunity for workers to be heard - there is no plan for strikes before next Spring! In the meantime, public sector workers are supposed to tighten their belt in silence and look the other way, when their workmates get the sack!

Setting our own agenda

Unite leader Len McCluskey let the cat out of the bag when he told delegates: "I see the issue of strikes and protests actually increasing as we move closer and closer to a general election. It is the only way democracy can work."

So, for all his militant talk, McCluskey ties workers' conditions to the 2015 general election - and, presumably, to Labour coming back into office. And this, just as Labour's Ed Balls, was heckled by delegates for

endorsing the ConDems' attacks on public sector wages!

Nothing surprising there, though. The likes of McCluskey may talk tough on public sector wages, but they have nothing to say to the majority of workers, who are in the private sector. Worse, haven't unions like Unite and the GMB, endorsed deals involving wage and pension cuts for new recruits in big private companies - as they did at Ford and Vauxhall?

So, yes, the working class needs to take "co-ordinated strike action", not just in the public sector but across all industries, public and private. It needs to build up its collective strength around common demands that can unite its ranks - a general wage increase across the board with decent pay for all, living pensions, all job cuts to be made illegal and all available work to be shared out between all available hands.

These demands could be the basis for an emergency fighting programme for the working class, one that needs to be fought for now! ☐

After the Olympics Britain's flag-waving medal

On the face of it, the biggest beneficiaries of the Olympics must have been manufacturers of Union Jack paraphernalia. Never have so many Union Jacks been flogged, in every shape and form - small and big, on T-shirts, bags, hats, you name it - than for these games.

The Games' opening ceremony itself, although an impressive show

and a technical feat, was little more than a self-centred celebration of the "grandeur" of "Britishness" and, by the same token therefore, of Britain's past imperial role. As if, in such Games, which are supposed to bring together all nationalities, in a spirit of mutual respect and fair-play, there should be space for any sort of nationalist nonsense!

Of course, it would be naive to expect anything else from the powers-that-be. They are bound to grab all opportunities to distil any poison they may find to divide the working classes of the world. Nationalism, in whatever shape or form, is one of these poisons and this is why the working class has every reason to oppose it! □

Paralympics - gold for government hypocrisy

No-one could fail to be impressed by the courageous performances of Paralympics athletes. This makes the hypocrisy of those in charge of the event all the more infuriating.

For instance, there was all that sophisticated technology on display, which would improve the quality of life for many disabled. But most will never have access to it - because in this society, it's unaffordable.

Then there was the way the Games were used to celebrate the occupation of Afghanistan - as if the ex-soldiers involved wouldn't have preferred to be physically whole - rather than heroic amputees, thanks

to their "tour" in Afghan killing fields, for the sake of the rich countries' conception of "world order".

Finally there was the sponsorship of the Games by Atos - the company which runs the government's "fit for work" tests, whose primary objective is to deny benefits to as many disabled as possible. 1,100 people have actually died shortly after being assessed as "fit". Protesters booed Cameron, Osborne and Theresa May when they went to hand out medals. They expressed the anger of many, not just against the cuts aimed at the disabled, but against this Olympic-scale hypocrisy. □



• G4S gets away with murder

G4S made the headlines for its bungling of the Olympics security contract, but not the final verdict on its responsibility in the killing of a 46 year-old Angolan deportee, Jimmy Mubenga, 2 years ago.

G4S had claimed that Jimmy had "become unwell" on the flight. But witnesses testified that while G4S guards were restraining him, he had cried out for help saying he could not breathe. Informants gave evidence that G4S trained its guards in potentially lethal techniques. Yet, 2 years on, the Crown Prosecution Service now says there is "insufficient evidence" to prosecute. No wonder G4S bosses think they can get away with anything - including what Jimmy Mubenga's family describes as murder!

• Outsourcing's golden days

Despite G4S's fiasco and others, like A4E forcing jobless "clients" to do unpaid work in its offices, outsourcing still has golden days ahead. The value of outsourcing contracts is expected to jump from £80bn to £140bn within 3 years. G4S itself is tendering for a 15-year contract to run 5 prisons for £2bn/yr!

So, yes, outsourcing has become a massive gravy train for a handful of companies that are making mega-bucks from the taxpayer - and the armies of "outsourced workers" on low wages, no pension and doing crippling-long hours.

• Sharks on the starting blocks

The LLDC was set up 3 years ago to provide big business with profitable

opportunities under the pretext of "re-developing" east London. Now the likes of Taylor Wimpey are queuing up to get their share, following in the footsteps of the Qatari royal family which already bought half of the athletes' village.

However, only 10,500 homes are to be built on the Olympic site... and over the next 20 years! We're told this is to avoid depressing house prices - understandable, since developers intend to sell some of these houses for up to £650,000!

Some "affordable" homes are planned, but most won't be affordable for those on the waiting list, who are most desperate. In short, this will have little or no impact on the housing shortage - particularly severe in Stratford, where families were thrown out of their homes in the run-up to the Games.

Fare increases make commuters see red

From next January, rail fares are to be increased by 6.2% - reflecting a 3.2% increase in RPI plus another 3% supposedly to fund investment. To sweeten the pill the ConDems announced a £9.4bn investment programme? According to Cameron, this is supposed to create a "world-class network" thanks to the electrification of some main lines. But for the time being, all we have is "world-class" fares, for the sake of filling the rail sharks' pockets!

In fact, some commuters may even face up to 11.2% increases as rail companies can add another 5% on some fares, if they cut others. This is the case at St Albans, where commuters already pay £2,988 annually for the privilege of a 27-minute journey into London. Yet, standing-room only remains the norm on that line, delays and cancellation are frequent and coaches are often dirty, due to chronic understaffing!

But it doesn't have to be that way.

Last January, commuters on the St Albans line staged protests against what they denounced rightly as an "un-fair fare" increase (6% at the time) and they are now getting vocal about the latest increase! If this was to be repeated across the network, it would be a start, at least - a first step towards taking the railway out of the hands of the profit sharks!

Sixty years ago, the Kenya emergency

On October 21st 1952, an Emergency was declared in British-occupied Kenya, following the assassination of a hated tax collector and gang master for white bosses, "Chief" Waruhiu. Thus began one of Britain's last colonial wars, but one of the bloodiest.

Half-a-century earlier the land of the country's largest ethnic group, the Kikuyu, had been taken over by white settlers. Most of the dispossessed Kikuyu had been forced to barely survive by working for the white settlers on what had been before their own land. In the aftermath of WW2, British ex-servicemen were welcomed with land and cheap loans, but not the demobilised Kikuyu who had risked their lives for "King and Country". Many ended up in the slums of the capital, Nairobi, where around 100,000 working-class families lived.

The demand for "Land and freedom" (Uhuru) crystallised Kikuyu opposition around the Mau Mau movement - which was promptly demonised for protecting itself against spies by requiring supporters to take an oath of allegiance. The movement spread like wildfire with around 90% of the Kikuyu taking the oath and it undertook to get rid of all pro-British dignitaries among the Kikuyu, like "Chief" Waruhiu.

In the overcrowded slums of Nairobi, most had taken the Mau Mau oath. There, the uprising took the form of strikes and boycotts. In 1954, the British retaliated with "Operation Anvil". Working class areas were cordoned off, with a "pass" system to allow armed police to screen every single worker who entered or left designated area. Thousands of workers were arrested and thousands expelled from Nairobi for not having the right passes.

In the countryside, as more British forces were used against them, around 20,000 Mau Mau guerilla retreated into the forest - which made the army powerless against them, despite carpet-bombing entire areas. Eventually, the army tried to seal off the area, using terrorist methods against captured Mau Mau fighters - torture, castration and female mutilation, among others.

By 1960, long after this "victory", the colonial authorities were still facing regular local outbreaks of rebellion and land occupations of rich white farms. Eventually, with an increasingly difficult situation in Kenya, and growing US pressure on Britain to give up its colonial empire, the government developed an exit strategy. Jomo Kenyatta, a liberal nationalist leader who had never



Kikuyu prisoners during the Emergency

It took 27 months of war and 12 British army battalions before the government felt it could claim "victory" and declare a general amnesty, in January 1955. Over that period, 1.1m Kikuyu were forcibly resettled into 854 "villages" - in fact, concentration camps built under pain of death by the prisoners, who were, in addition, subjected to systematic malnutrition, torture and summary executions. Mau Mau defence lawyer, Fitz de Souza, reckoned "100,000 easily" were killed.

been supportive of the Mau Mau, was pulled out of jail in 1961. Two years later, Kenya was declared independent, under a regime run by Kenyatta's party, which was committed to protect the interests of the country's remaining 30,000 rich white farmers.

The Mau Mau's heroic struggle had helped to free Kenya from Britain's rule, but its poor population remained (and still remains) to be freed from capitalist exploiters - whether European or African. □

• No, this is not a crowded island!

This month, MPs are meant to "debate" a post-population census motion demanding that the government should take "all necessary steps" to stabilise the UK's population "as close as possible to its present level". Yes, one of those anti-immigrant resolutions thinly disguised as concern that there isn't enough space in Britain for us all, given slightly rising

fertility, increased longevity and positive net migration into the country. Never mind that if young immigrants hadn't been a steady factor over centuries, renewing the genetic pool of this island, there would be a very unhealthy set of ageing Britons, hobbling down the pavements.

In fact, population experts say that

if the population reached 70m, at optimal density, it would occupy an area of just under 6,000km²: less than 5% of England. And if enough housing was built for everyone (unlike today!), far from concreting over the whole of England, it would only increase the developed area from 10% to 12%! There's plenty of room to spare, and then some!

• London Met Uni students attacked by UKBA

The Home Office's revocation of London Metropolitan University's "highly trusted status" as a sponsor for (paying-through-the-nose) foreign students made waves. So far, the Home Office/UK Border Agency had mostly targeted small private colleges, accusing them of some misdeed. When this happens, students have to find alternate sponsors or they lose everything invested in their

education and must go back home. But even if they manage to find a new sponsor, they still have to reapply for their study visas - and find the extra money to do it (a fee of £400 plus a minimum of £800 in their bank account). And still the visa could be refused.

This is why London Met students and staff have mounted determined protests, pickets and finally a legal challenge

against the Home Office. So for the time being there is a temporary stay of execution. But this is one more example of how the government's anti-immigration rhetoric can come back to bite them. Foreign students, through the exorbitant fees they pay, have become the backbone of higher education funding. What happens if the government starts breaking this backbone?

Crisis watch

Will public sector unions have another "day of action" this month?

Officially, the crisis entered its 6th year in August. Its first shock hit in March 2007, when the housing speculative bubble burst in the USA, then in Britain and then in the rest of Europe.

Real estate speculators covered their losses by withdrawing massive amounts of cash from the banks, thus drying up their liquidity reserves. Thereafter, borrowing

Five years into their financial crisis

became increasingly difficult - at best, very costly - and the world economy started going down the drain.

Everywhere governments rescued the banks - and the big companies which depended on them - out of public funds.

This was a huge bonanza for the banks which lent back their bailout money to governments at extortionate interest rates! Public indebtedness soared, offering speculators an opportunity to make profits on the

back of the weakest countries.

Someone had to be pay for this crazy vicious circle. So although profits were quickly restored on the whole,, everywhere the capitalist classes increased workers' exploitation, while imposing public expenditure cuts. The aim was, and is still, to get the working class to foot the bill for their crisis. But not all has yet been said, nor done, by far. The working classes' collective strength is intact - it just needs to be used to stop the capitalist offensive!

• Speculation on starvation

Since April, soya prices on the world market have increased by over 60%, wheat by 50% and maize by 30%. As in 2008-9, this trend was kick-started by speculative funds, fleeing share markets to look for a quick buck on commodity markets, like those for food and oil. On top of that, in June, experts began to predict a drought in the US and Russia. Now, farmers are watching their crops shrivel in the fields.

Foreseeing another, even bigger, wave of speculation heading their way, traders were ecstatic. At Glencore, the world's biggest commodities trading company, a director was quoted as saying "*the environment is a good one*" - that's "good" for Glencore, of course, which has a 9% share of the international grain market.

Due to the rise in grain prices, the price of animal feed goes up... and so does the price of meat. In the rich countries, it means another sharp rise in the cost of living - and yet more tightening of belts for the working class. In the poor countries, it means the difference between life and death. The speculators are literally making a killing.

• They'll never learn!

New York firm Knight Capital lost £275m in on 1 August after installing a faulty "high frequency trading" computer program, which generated 40,000 loss-making transaction per second for 45 minutes. This automated computer trading, the preferred technique on the world's financial markets these days, enables firms to make a (very) quick buck - but sometimes high-speed losses!

Already, in 1987, the stock market crash had been blamed on automated trading. Ten years later the (inappropriately named!) Long Term Capital Management fund - created by one of the inventors of the mathematical "magic" behind computer-driven speculation - went bust. Again, in May 2010, "high frequency" trading caused the Dow Jones to plunge 1,000 points (9%) in the so-called Wall Street "Flash Crash".

Despite this, hundreds of firms still use this blind "high frequency" trading- simply because behaving responsibly in this capitalist society, even for the sake of its own financial health, means taking the risk of losing out to one's competitors. And in a system where private profit is everything, that's the one risk the speculators won't take!

• Money printing bonanza

In July, the Bank of England started printing an additional £50bn, bringing the total of its cash injection into the banks' coffers since 2009 to £375bn - more than the government's annual social and health expenditure!

For the working class, this "quantitative easing", or QE, will just have pushed the cost of living up, while resulting in a 24% pension cut on average, for many workers reaching retirement age! QE was meant to facilitate new loans, especially to consumers. But far from increasing lending and reducing interest rates, the banks just hoarded 58% more cash since last September. And there's no sign of this changing, even after the government offered £80bn worth of extra-cheap loans to the banks this summer.

The Bank of England boasts that QE has increased the value of financial assets by £600bn. Except that the main beneficiaries are the wealthy - since 40% of these assets are owned by the 5% richest households - together with the banks which own much of the rest! No wonder the politicians of the capitalist class, whether Con-Dems or Labour, are so fond of QE!

Centrica's double whammy

In the first 6 months of the year, Centrica's revenue from supplying gas through British Gas rose 21%, to £3.2bn, even though the amount of gas it supplied to households rose by only 3%. Meanwhile, Centrica also earned £1.6bn from electricity supply - a 10% increase - while electricity consumption actually fell by 0.1%!

But Centrica has a finger in

almost every energy pie. Its Centrica Energy subsidiary owns oil and gas fields from the North Sea to Trinidad and is a big player in electricity production, with 8 power stations and a share of British Energy's nuclear facilities). This dual role provides Centrica with a double bonanza.

In the case of gas, for instance, when wholesale prices increase, as

a producer, it gains from sales to other suppliers - and, as a supplier, it adds a premium to the bills sent to consumers!

Now Centrica is preparing another whammy. In May, British Gas announced that "*wholesale gas prices were about 15% higher than in 2011.*" Household gas bills are going up yet again!

Stop this rot!

More than a fifth of Britain's workers are now officially considered as low-paid, the highest proportion in any rich country except the US. The downward trend began long before the crisis, three decades ago or so, and this is where the bosses' on-going offensive against workers' wages and conditions, under all governments, has led.

Unpaid work is a form of slavery!

In August a judge rejected a claim by two unemployed that making them to work for free under Work Programme schemes amounted to using them as forced labour in breach of their human rights. According to this judge, these schemes "are a very long way removed from the kind of colonial exploitation of labour" targeted by the Human Rights Convention!

But that's the biased point of view of a justice system bent on protecting capitalist exploitation. From its very inception, the working class movement has always denounced paid work as a form of modern slavery or "wage slavery". So how should unpaid work be described?

However, the judge had no option

• Free schools - a costly diversion

In 2010 Education Secretary, Gove, predicted free schools would bring "a superb new school in every community". However, many failed to establish themselves.

For instance, Beccles' free school claimed start-up funding for 300 pupils - to be siphoned off from the small town's sole comprehensive - but only managed to attract 37. Other free schools also had their state funding withdrawn at the last minute for lack of enough students, like in Newham and Bradford. So much for Gove's prediction!

Of those opening in 2013, over a third are religious and/or former private schools - but why should public money be used for brain washing, religious or otherwise?

True, some free schools are set up to make up for the shredding of local special-needs provisions - for instance, to cater for excluded pupils, whose numbers are reaching record levels thanks to the new "academies".

But that's the point: free schools catering for tiny numbers and mainly for the benefit of a bigoted, right-wing electorate, only divert more money from a public education system, which needs more funds, not less!

The current crisis has accelerated the trend, giving the bosses a pretext to freeze public sector pay, to increase further the proportion of workers in zero-hour, minimum-wage non-jobs and, in the private sector, to cut the wages of new permanent recruits. Just in the last two years of crisis, "real" wages - taking inflation into account - have fallen

but to blame the DWP for failing to make clear that these schemes were not compulsory. But did he use his powers to rule against the DWP, after learning during the hearings



• Watch for more cuts

Osborne is proud of himself. Not only does he boast of having achieved the £5bn cuts planned in the civil service last year, but he claims to have exceeded his target by half-a-billion. Of this total, £1.5bn was due to civil service job cuts - no doubt a cause for joy in Toryland, regardless of the consequences!

But there's more to come. Another £10bn is meant to be cut from the welfare budget by 2016, allegedly to meet projected spending in other areas.

Now that the ConDems' "private sector-led recovery" - which was meant to create more jobs and tax revenue - has proved to be a dead duck, they're returning to what was always their real agenda - getting the poorest to foot the bill.

Never mind that the richest few hundred people in the country could hand over £10bn and still be collectively richer than they were last year.

But the capitalist class has nothing to fear. As long as their politicians can help, their wealth and their ability to use the crisis to increase it, are secure.

Cuts watch

by an average 7%.

This race to the bottom must be stopped. To reverse the tide the working class will have to unite in a fight for a general wage increase across the board, a living wage for all and the sharing out of all available work between all available hands.

that 22,000 people had been deprived of their benefits for refusing such unpaid work placement? No! Apparently, the DWP can break the law and get away with it! □

Letter from Sussex

Sussex hospitals are again under threat, with proposals to "merge", i.e., close some departments. In a full-page NHS advert in a local newspaper, stroke specialists argue for the centralisation of all East Sussex stroke units. The advert bristles with dubious claims and comparisons. It is, for example, claimed that centralisation will make clot-busting drugs more freely available. Why would it? It also points out that "no-one expects to have heart or brain surgery at their local district general hospital." Maybe not, but these are not emergencies, whereas a stroke is.

The main hospitals are in Brighton, Eastbourne and Hastings and the road links between them are dire. Centralising an emergency service can only kill people. The cat is let out of the bag, when the advert states that this (and, by implication other) mergers will put the hospitals "for the first time, on a financially sound basis."

Another anti-NHS cuts demo is coming in Eastbourne. This town with its many retirees certainly needs a well-resourced stroke unit - and, what is more, all the cuts already made at the District General reversed!

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**• Health&Safety up in smoke?**

We had the smoke, we had the fire, we had the fumes, but none of the safety procedures! Yes, that's what happened in Body Subassembly last week, when equipment which applies volatile sealant caught fire. Firefighters came, but the building wasn't evacuated, even tho' the fumes caused eye & breathing problems. There are questions to answer! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 18/7/12]

• Goodbye and good luck!

We'll miss the many (~150!) mates in both plants who are taking EVR and will leave at shutdown. That said, we're all for early retirement. Actually, more of us older ones would have liked to get it and be replaced by new, young *permanent* workers on equal pay - all the more so, given the sky-rocketing

youth unemployment. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 18/7/12]

• No DV-VD concessions allowed!!

This beauty contest over the new Panther engine has really got out of hand: even Truckfleet has now got a list of 10 so-called "efficiencies" to make - and this affects things like breaks and other hard-won conditions of work which are hardly 'luxuries' that we can or will give up! So what secret deals are being cobbled behind the backs of everyone else? [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 18/7/12]

• Hands off these mates

It's unbelievable that Lion and Tiger management dare to harass medically restricted workers - making their lives a double misery when the restrictions are mostly due to damage from working for



Ford in the first place. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 18/7/12]

• Halt, who's there? friend or foe?

So, we may soon have soldiers at our gates checking us in and out, after our old security mates are gone! Because after all, Ford awarded the contract for security to G4S. Presumably they decided it before the olympic sized cock-up, when G4S began subcontracting to the red berets... [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 18/7/12]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**• Same old lies**

When workmates, mainly from BiW, went to Germany for 6 months, BMW instructed Gi to recruit agency replacements. At the induction pep talk the new starts were encouraged to come in whenever BMW wanted as they "could get a contract out of it". Last Monday many of these workers were being handed dismissal notices.

Once again BMW's and Gi's words are shown to be hot air and lies. [BMW - Cowley - 11/07/2012]

• Extras in BMW's PR stunt

BMW have used their official sponsorship role as an opportunity to roll out the PR as the Olympic flame meanders across the country.

Over 100 torch bearers were sponsored - mainly from dealerships and suppliers. Six management and 4

workers were included from Cowley but not a single track worker. Our role on Monday was supposed to be standing around like cheering muppets.

Mind you, when the brollies and flags with the Olympic logo appeared in boxes, they disappeared like hot cakes! [BMW - Cowley - 11/07/2012]

• BMW should be paying us

No sooner are we back than BMW is announcing the next 4-week shut out - 21 Dec-21 Jan this time.

BMW "strongly urge" us to take annual leave to cover the time off. In the middle of winter? Too late for a relaxing holiday break, but allowing plenty of time to "enjoy" the dead of winter and spend extra money keeping warm at home!

If they need this time for yet more facility work, why should that be our problem? [BMW - Cowley - 5/09/2012]

**• Assembled in Cowley**

Currently loads of staff and even workers are being flown to Munich to give their tuppence-halfpenny worth of input into the Mark 3 Mini. Though whether this is mere window dressing with decisions already made in Munich remains to be seen. In any case compared to the Mark 2 and particularly the Mark One, decreasing numbers of skilled engineers working at Cowley is a fact. [BMW - Cowley - 5/09/2012]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**• Conveniently "in profit" now?**

Royal Mail's financial results, published as a supplement to Courier on 29 June, include a letter from CEO Moya Greene. She was paid £1.1m this year in salary and bonuses(!), for smashing the "business" into shape! (She also gets 2 free flights home to Canada...). And for getting set to float RM on the stock market next year, after destroying another 4,000 jobs, and probably more to come.

She complains that although the "UK business broke even for the first time in 4 years", that most of the £211m profits (a 5-fold increase!)

came from GLS, the European Logistics business and Post Office Ltd... We thought POL always needed heavy subsidies? No doubt she thanks her insane 40%+50% stamp price rises, even if it's far too soon to tell.. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 10/7/12]

• Literally on our backs!

Another thing. Letters are down 6% and parcels up 6% - so where's the provision for this in any of the "investments"? There are still no parcel-sorting machines - they're still in the "development" stage! As for the merged walks and reduced number of postmen/women on deliveries - this took no account of the increase in



bulk and weight due to all these packets, which have more than "replaced" the 6% fewer letters (if we can even believe that)! Apparently CEO Moya's way of "growing the parcels business" is to make us carry it on our backs, literally. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 10/7/12]

King's Cross railway station (London)**ISS workers take up the fight!**

ISS workers from King's Cross and stations outside London served by East Coast, who clean and prepare East Coast, Hull and Grand Central trains, have launched a fight for better pay and conditions. And no wonder. ISS hasn't offered a pay rise for 12 years at King's Cross, except when they had no other choice, because the statutory minimum wage went up by a few pence. Sick pay is also the bare legal minimum. There's no pension scheme, no shift allowances, no London allowances

nor travel concessions. ISS even begrudges providing basic facilities – it had to be forced to put drinking water in the King's Cross mess room.

It's not as if ISS is short of cash. Its revenue was £8 billion last year and its huge worldwide empire employs 520,000 people. But for years, ISS has refused to even talk about pay. Recently, it pretended to recognise the RMT but, ever since, has been finding excuse after excuse to avoid meeting union reps.



Losing patience, we have taken matters into our own hands. In an RMT ballot, 98% voted for strike action, on a 70% turnout, and we are determined to force ISS to clean up its act.

Showing our determination

On Monday 10th September, workers at King's Cross and Newcastle joined ranks for a 24h strike. At King's Cross, we turned up in force – around 70 of us, from 4 shifts – to make our voices heard. And not just our voices – with all the whistles and vuvuzelas as well, there was no way we could be ignored. From 7am until late afternoon, we were encircling the station, making sure that everyone who passed by would notice our strike and know what it was about. Our leaflets and placards denounced the poor pay and conditions imposed by ISS, on behalf of train operators, and some of the dirty tricks they use to cheat workers.

We didn't forget our workmates from other companies, who – unfortunately for them – still had to work. At one point, we marched through the whole station with our placards and were received with enthusiasm, especially by the equally poorly-paid workers from the cafes and shops, who wanted to join in.

Managers from all sides – East Coast, ISS and Network Rail – were obviously rattled. They haven't seen anything like this in King's Cross

for a long time. They sent a couple of British Transport Police to run around after us and we kept them on the hop all day.

Some of these managers had to work a lot harder than normal (for them) on that day – those from ISS who tried to cover for us. But they were not quite up to it. It took

three of them to clean one carriage, whereas we often have to clean three carriages each. They still have a lot to learn – and we'll happily give them another opportunity!

In any case, we remain determined to spread the fight and win it. As far as we're concerned, this is just the beginning!

**• No place for them to hide**

In the build-up to the strike, King's X ISS workers mounted a campaign against the company's practices. We got hundreds of rail-workers' signatures on a petition demanding a decent wage for all and a vast improvement in our lousy conditions.

The top bosses weren't going to come to the station to read it. So we decided to

take it to ISS headquarters, in Docklands. To make sure that everyone on our way would know what it was about, we made a banner and placards exposing the dirty practices of ISS – causing quite a stir in the swanky surroundings of Docklands.

Other workers in the area welcomed the demonstration. Not so the ISS

bosses, who looked distinctly sick when they saw who was on their doorstep, raising hell. They turned tail as soon as they could and scurried off to hide behind the security guards in their plush offices. But there was no escape for them – much to their dismay, we came back a couple of hours later with another shift.

South Africa

On 16 August, the South African police, assisted by the army, encircled striking miners from Lonmin's Marikana platinum mine, who had been meeting daily on a rocky outcrop and had taken spears, sticks and knives to defend themselves. The cops put up barbed wire to prevent workers escaping, fired tear gas and rubber bullets and when the workers tried to run away they let loose with live rounds killing 34 and wounding 78. 270 were arrested and charged with the murder of their own comrades, slaughtered in cold blood (many shot in the back) by the police.

This was the worst massacre perpetrated by state forces since the days of apartheid. And it was carried out because the struggle of these workers was seen as a threat, not only to the mine bosses' profits, but to the government itself and to the official union, the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM). Lonmin miners no longer recognised the NUM leadership and were taking control of their own fight. State forces answered their challenge with a hail of bullets.

At the time of writing, 4 weeks later, the workers are still on strike. Their jailed brothers are now released. Over the past weeks, thousands of other mineworkers have also

After the Marikana massacre, the fight goes on

Striking Marikana miners demonstrate after the 16th August massacre



struck - in neighbouring mines but also further away, as in Westonaria's Gold Fields where 12,000 gold miners were out for over a week.

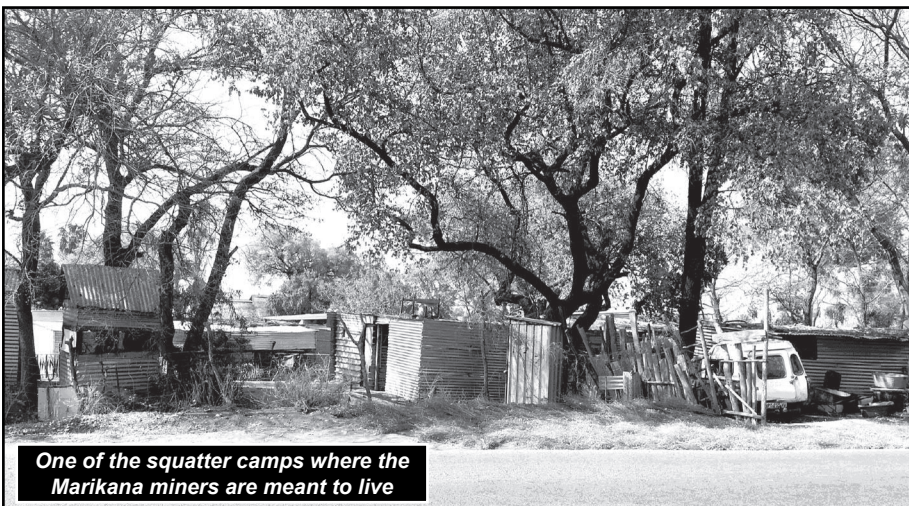
The demand uniting them is for a living wage of R12,500 (£955) per month. Lonmin currently pays £418/m which includes £137 "housing allowance", since housing and amenities are no longer provided by mine-owners. Food and basics cost only around 20% less than in Britain.

Yet above all, what unites miners is their refusal to be represented by the NUM which, as part of the official

union federation COSATU, is "in government" with the ruling party, the ANC and in bed with the mine bosses. The last national miners' strike was in 1987! Cyril Ramaphosa, one of the bosses sitting on Lonmin's board, was leader of the NUM at the time. Now he can bid £1.8m for a buffalo bull for his private game farm. It is for these reasons that many miners have joined a rival union, Amcu. And this is why the NUM supported (if it did not encourage) the violent police intervention on the 16th August.

Platinum profits (thanks to catalytic converters in motor cars) have soared to billions over the past years - Lonmin's net revenue reached £200m in 2011. But its workers are expected to live in squatter camps next to its mines, miles away from any amenities, without running water, toilets, drains or waste removal.

In the last 18 years since the end of apartheid mine workers' conditions have gone down as much as profits have gone up. They not only demand a living wage - but have taken to leading their own struggles. That is what makes them so dangerous to the bosses. and their ever-pliant ANC government. □



One of the squatter camps where the Marikana miners are meant to live

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

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

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