

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

JOHNSON, SUNAK AND THE G7: WORLD-BEATING HYPOCRISY

The hypocrisy of Johnson's government knows no bounds. It openly boasts of getting one over on almost every other government in the world, having cornered the drastically short supply of vaccines for "Britain first". Yet Johnson still has the nerve to tell his G7 fellows that "we must all" be generous and share our vaccines with the poor countries!

As some will point out, in a poverty-stricken country like Nepal, where Britain recruits Gurkha soldiers for its army, fewer than 3% of its 30m population had been vaccinated by 3 June.

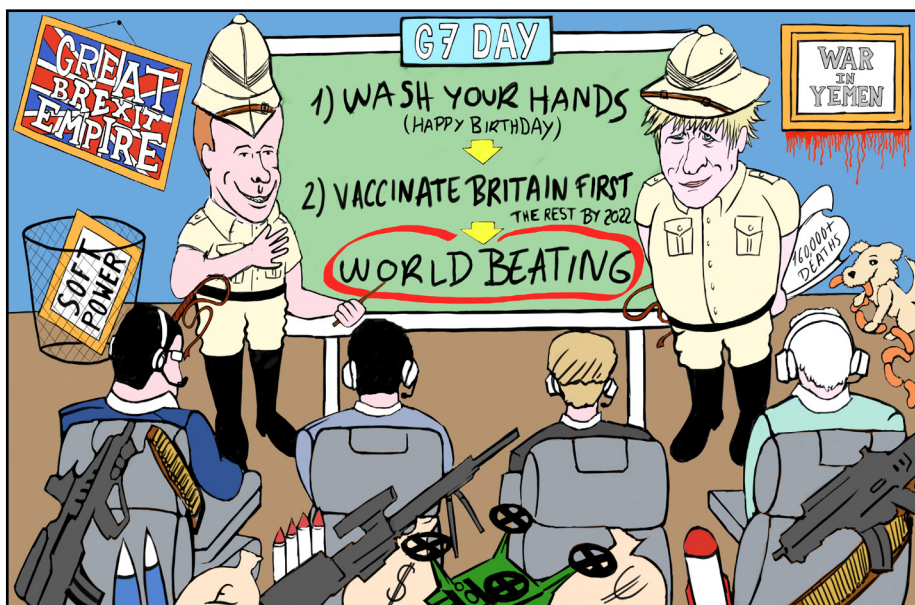
There's no doubt, of course, that Johnson uses his domestic "vaccine triumph", to distract from his government's criminal mishandling of the pandemic. The only thing he did get "right" was to save his political neck by gambling with public money on vaccines and giving venture capitalist Kate Bingham a blank cheque to beat off all competition. And now even Dominic Cummings' horror-tale-telling seems to be water off a duck's back. So much so, that liar Johnson and liar Hancock are now taking to lecturing others on how to handle a pandemic!

Incentive for more tax loopholes

Of course, the government needed to look at least mildly competent given its hosting of the G7 Summit.

So, as a prelude to the "big show" Sunak led a tax "coup" against the Big Tech giants. These serial tax evaders will be asked to pay (up to!) 20% tax on sales in countries where they have a market. How exactly this will be implemented and policed - and when (or even whether!) - is another question! Which did not prevent some commentators from proclaiming this as the biggest achievement in the G7's lifetime!

Ministers also committed to trying to implement a "global minimum tax rate"



of 15%. This could be a much bigger problem, as it potentially threatens tax havens. In fact, it's yet more hypocritical hot air. Especially so, given that Sunak presides over one of the biggest tax havens of all, that is, the City of London. Not to mention the "Freeports" he is building - nothing but mini tax havens - in an effort to try to paper over Brexit's economic cracks and attract back some of Little Britain's lost foreign investment!

British soft power vs workers' power

It is the big hoo-ha over Britain's overseas aid budget which probably takes the hypocrisy biscuit.

The government decided to cut this tiny 0.7% of Gross National Income to 0.5% last year. Tory backbenchers claim that such a cut will lose Britain its "standing in the world", undermining Britain's "soft power". And, they add, Britain gets back a lot more than it gives.

Despite what ministers claim, this cut had nothing to do with a shortage of government cash. Throughout the pandemic the Treasury has been printing money. It could not have done otherwise: Britain suffered one of the worst economic hits out of all the rich countries. But it still has the world's 6th largest economy, thanks precisely to said "City"!

A cut of £4bn from the total aid budget is chickenfeed. But Johnson decided it was a "popular" move in front of his xenophobic voters. So now the population of Yemen, devastated by Britain's "hard power" in the form of British-made Saudi bombs, will now get less than half the humanitarian aid it expected.

The British Empire may be long dead, but "international" imperialism lives on to oppress, exploit and kill the poor of this planet. This is why there has to be a class revolution to overthrow it - and why, ultimately, this revolution has to be international. ☐

Covid-19 crisis

By mid-June, the "Delta" ("Indian") variant had become the dominant Covid strain. And cases were rising fast in localities in the North of England, Scotland and around London, making 21 June Freedom Day less and less likely. The infections are mainly among schoolchildren and so far the hospitalisation and death rates remain low. So Hancock claims that the vaccine is beating the virus, even though only 43% of the British population is fully vaccinated (but against 6.3% worldwide!).

Hancock's "testimony" in front of a Parliamentary Select Committee to answer allegations made by former

Covid: the blame game starts

Johnson advisor Dominic Cummings has disappointed the press. When asked, "Did you lie to the Prime Minister?" he said "no". Of course he never lied to the PM. Johnson was in on the lie, in fact all of the lies! And it's likely that Dominic Cummings was too. So all the mud being thrown now in the Covid blame game, is not going to be allowed to stick on anyone. As for the Cummings "revelations", there was nothing new there. Everyone knows that the elderly in care homes did not have a "protective ring around them" and that yes, tens of thousands died needlessly.

We didn't need him to tell us that

"It is completely crazy that I should have been in such a senior position... just the same as it's crackers that Boris Johnson was in there". The only surprise was perhaps the fact that Cummings was so willing to come forward and stick the knife in. But he was quite selective in his targets. No doubt he is hedging his bets for the future. In the meantime, the G7 summit has given Johnson a chance to make grandiose speeches yet again, the latest being to vaccinate the whole world along with Joe Biden. After vaccinating all "Britons" first, of course. □

• Their "love" of the NHS

Intensive care nurse Jenny McGee, who had cared for Boris Johnson when he was in hospital with Covid, resigned from her job last month. She is not alone in this decision: 38% of NHS nurses are thinking of quitting in the next year. They struggled through the pandemic, despite 40,000 nurses' vacancies, not to mention to the lack of equipment and other shortages.

According to the Office of National Statistics, 886 NHS workers have died of Covid and at least 122,000 are suffering from long Covid. And today the number of vacancies has gone up: it now stands at 90,000!

When Boris Johnson left hospital last March, he effusively claimed that the NHS was powered on "Love". It has had to be. But no longer. Nurses have been protesting

up and down the country against the fact that they are not even being offered a pay rise (1% amounts to a 1-2% pay cut with RPI inflation hitting 2.5%!). They're exhausted after fighting this pandemic, as it were, with their bare hands. In Jenny's words: *"We're not getting the respect and now pay that we deserve. I'm just sick of it"...*

• Exporting Covid?

One might well ask what UEFA was thinking, locating the Champions' League final between two English clubs (Manchester City and Chelsea) in Oporto, Portugal? It was moved at short notice from Istanbul after Turkey got placed on the British government's "red list". Portugal's sudden and short-lived green-listing looks rather suspicious in this light! Anyway, it meant that Oporto's population

and 12,000 football fans had the chance to catch the B1.617.2 "Delta" variant. And this match has no doubt played a part in Portugal being taken off the green list, only five days later!

UEFA said it discussed holding the final in England but *"it was not possible to achieve the necessary exemptions from UK quarantine arrangements"* - for whom? As it happened, each fan had to take 3 tests, but of the least reliable lateral flow type. In fact the testing policy for travellers was (and still is) in disarray. Tests ordered online from private government-accredited contractors and costing up to £390 (!) did not arrive on time. Returning travellers were able to book tests at clinics after Day 2 and Day 8, only to be told that attending them would breach their quarantine. No wonder self-isolation does not work!

Investigating Wuhan's labs: looking for scapegoats

The theory that C-19 started because of a leak from a lab in Wuhan has been revived. The head of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and US President Joe Biden have joined others (including British politicians and a few odd scientists) in starting where Trump left off. Of course it's one way to divert attention from

the fact that the WHO and all leading western governments were caught totally unprepared for this pandemic. And that thanks to the ridiculous profit-first system we all live under, none of them could respond to the Covid virus in an effective way. So hundreds of thousands of lives have been lost, many needlessly. The global death toll is now 3.76m. In the context of the ongoing trade war against China, what better way than to revert to

the "Chinese virus" blame game?

The initial WHO investigation into the Wuhan outbreak (done by a team of 25 scientists from around the world) said a laboratory accident was "very unlikely" and that a natural origin of the virus (jumping from wild animals into humans) was "likely to very likely". Nor did they find any evidence that SARS-CoV2 had been recorded in any of the Wuhan labs prior to December 2019 or that lab staff had contracted any mysterious illnesses. The safety of the labs was as good as any in the West. As for this being a man-made virus, all accredited virologists say this too, is nonsense!

That hasn't prevented politicians, conspiracy theorists and anti-Chinese xenophobes from wading in with all kinds of "evidence". So no doubt there'll be more investigations and those who understand little about the complex lives of viruses will make more exorbitant claims. The politicians and have their own agenda defined by capitalist competition. They will bend the truth or even lie blatantly just as they do on other vital matters - and in this case, knowledge and science be damned!



• Hillsborough: still no "closure"

The abandoned trial of 2 retired cops and a solicitor for altering police statements to the Taylor inquiry into the 1989 Hillsborough disaster, was another rebuff to the families of the 96 Liverpool football supporters who died. The defendants removed anything in the statements which could suggest police negligence. South Yorkshire Police had blamed the fans for the disaster, instead of the late opening

of turnstiles, inadequate stewarding that led to the crush in the central pens, the strong fences trapping the fans, or the delay registering the emergency. West Midlands Police, charged with investigating South Yorkshire's conduct, just joined the cover-up.

The judge ruled that since the Taylor inquiry wasn't "statutory" with full powers to question witnesses, this doctoring of

This society

statements "*did not pervert the course of justice*"! For the families who've fought for the truth to be told, this is a 3rd failed trial out of 4. The police forces have now agreed to compensate 600 complainants financially. But the bereaved families' losses, added to by exhausting decades of fighting official obstruction can't ever be compensated.

• The housing crisis just gets worse

The government recently announced £200 million to be given to councils (in total!) towards eliminating rough sleeping. According to the Combined Homelessness and Information Network (CHAIN), last year there was a 21% increase in rough sleeping in London alone.

The £200m is meant to fund 14,500 placements and 2,700 support staff. But councils have seen their funds progressively cut since 2010. In 2020,

9 out of 10 local authorities didn't have enough cash to cover their spending plans: the total estimated shortfall for England and Wales was £3.7bn!

To make matters a thousand times worse, the government "Covid" ban on evictions came to an end on 1 June 2021. The National Residential Landlords Association estimates that as many as 850,000 private tenants are in arrears, with half facing eviction.

Councils already have tens of

thousands of households on waiting lists or living in temporary accommodation. And many of these temporary premises are in an appalling state of repair. This is the root of the problem: the drastic lack of decent social housing. But instead of councils erecting good quality prefabs as was done after WW2, private developers are left to build "unaffordable" homes and the destitute remain without a proper roof!

• Windrush compensation: a hostile scheme

Back in 2019, Theresa May's government was forced to offer compensation to Windrush generation victims of her "Hostile Environment for Immigrants" policy.

But 3 years later only 400 claims out of 2000 have resulted in any payment at all, with each claim taking at least 14 months to process! What is more, the initial minimum amount the Home Office was trying to get away with was just £250! Current Home Secretary, Priti Patel, has nevertheless proudly boasted that the

scheme has paid out almost £30 million. One wonders to whom? Nine of May's victims have died while waiting for some kind of payment.

And who knows how many more immigrants have suffered harm under Patel's reinforced version of this "hostile environment"? What with her forced deportations of refugees before they can exert their rights to apply for asylum and her placement of migrants in squalid and unsafe conditions.

The 30 June deadline for the post-Brexit migrant Settlement Scheme will inevitably mean that Patel ramps up her campaign against foreign workers and refugees. Her aim is to use off-shore "prisons" to hold would-be immigrants, who, if they don't use official routes to come to Britain will be denied financial support or permanent status. Patel covers herself by saying she is targeting criminal people smugglers. But she is actually criminalising all migrants.

• Ballymurphy and Johnson's hypocritical apology

Fifty years ago, on 9-11 August 1971, British paratroopers killed 11 unarmed civilians on the streets of Ballymurphy in Belfast. A new inquest has only now forced the government to admit this.

The soldiers responsible were from the same 1st Battalion Parachute Regiment that shot dead 13 demonstrators in Derry just a few months later, on Bloody Sunday, 30 January 1972. Around 600 soldiers occupied the poor working class Catholic area of Ballymurphy from early morning on 9 August 1971, raiding houses. For the first time "internment" law was used, which allowed any "suspect" to be incarcerated without trial. Nine men and

one woman were shot dead; one man died of a heart attack when a soldier put a gun in his mouth. After the event, blatant lies were told to cover up what had happened, leaving it to relatives to fight for the truth.

So this new ruling, albeit 5 decades late, was a victory for them. But when Johnson apologised to families in the Commons on 19 May he still did not acknowledge that British soldiers had killed innocent civilians. He wouldn't. He plans to go ahead with legislation exempting British soldiers from prosecution for crimes committed in Northern Ireland before 1998...



They're after the Beeb

Over 25 years after the event, the BBC Panorama interview with the late princess Diana conducted by Martin Bashir has again come under the spotlight. The Dyson review raised all the old questions and asked why Bashir had been re-employed by the BBC after his misdemeanours. Of course this isn't even the BBC's worst transgression.

One only has to recall the sexual predator, Jimmy Savile operating under its auspices for years.

The real reason for this scandal-revival is, of course the drive to commercialise the Beeb, whose charter for renewal comes up next year. So the ground is being prepared and prince William, son of Diana has obligingly stepped in to claim that "that interview"

even had a role in killing his mother, who died one year later in a car crash while being pursued by paparazzi...

There is no doubt that those high up in the BBC organisation are unaccountable and overpaid, even though the BBC is meant to be a public broadcaster. But turning it to a profit-making machine with advertisements every 10 minutes will only make it worse.

Our society

Strikes win against "fire and rehire"

Since the start of the pandemic bosses have been using the opportunity to cut jobs, pay and conditions. British Gas, British Airways, Heathrow Airport, Tesco, Go North West buses, coffee company JDE, have all tried to force new contracts on workers who've been told to sign, "or else". The TUC reckons that 10% of all workers had been threatened with this "fire rehire" blackmail. But workers haven't taken it lying down.

Last July, Centrica, owner of British Gas, having made £901m profit in 2019, told its 20,000 workers that they were to have their pay cut by 15%, their working hours increased, and if they didn't accept it, they'd be fired. So on 7 January, 7,000 engineers went on strike and were out, intermittently, for 43 days. They held pickets all over the country, including outside British Gas HQ in Leeds, and they burnt the



new contracts!

The policy of their GMB union leaders was, however, to negotiate with the bosses throughout the strike period - and behind closed doors. Workers were told nothing, while new contracts were accepted with minor adjustments. On 14 April, 500 engineers who still refused to sign these contracts were sacked.

The outcome was different for

400 Manchester bus drivers who took all-out, indefinite strike action at the end of February, lasting for 85 days. They stopped fire and rehire, but the offer which Unite eventually agreed with management on their behalf, still included cuts to conditions. In both cases, the control of the strikes was left in the hands of the union leaderships. To avoid future sell-outs, strikers need to take over full control themselves. ☐

• Politicians' lip-service

A House of Commons debate over "Hire, fire and rehire" was called by Labour MPs in April. Even Tories stood up to call this practice "unscrupulous". However, only 75 out of 650 MPs in parliament signed a motion calling such tactics "an unacceptable abuse of power by rogue bosses" and demanding that the practice

be outlawed. The right-wing Father of the House Jacob Rees-Mogg added his two-pennies of advice: *"I would say to my capitalist friends: that capitalism works when capitalists behave well and treat their employees well"*.

Of course this was ahead of the May elections. And not only did MPs want

to be heard standing up for working class constituents - some of them on strike - but many of them even went to the picket lines, including Keir Starmer himself! Two months later, while some of these workers are still fighting for their jobs, MPs are nowhere to be seen.

• Fighting the bosses... and the union leadership!

Given workers' militancy over "fire and rehire", union leaderships seized upon the issue to try to win back some of their lost credit. Their big problem is, of course, that this tactic completely bypasses the need for negotiation with them. They have a direct interest in getting it outlawed, so that the bosses are forced to talk to them!

At the same time, candidates in the upcoming Unite general secretary election

appeared on picket lines, to boost their own campaigns. One of three so-called "left-wing" candidates is Sharon Graham, whose election slogan to replace outgoing Len McCluskey is *"Let's get back to the workplace"*! Which is an unfortunate admission that the unions are indeed somewhere else! She turned up on the Manchester bus drivers' pickets, to point out that without her *"leveraging department"* (!)

they wouldn't have got such a good deal! Hmmm.

In fact whichever leader ends up replacing McCluskey in Unite, or any other union, it is the fights on the ground, with workers electing their own fit-for-purpose strike committees, accountable to all workers, (regardless of which union they may, or may not, be in), that will count. It's the only way forward.

• Taking Liberties with workers' jobs

Liberty Steel plans to sell off three British steel plants, as part of the fallout from the collapse of Greensill Capital in March. Liberty employs around 3,000 workers in Britain, including 1,400 at the threatened plants in Stocksbridge, Rotherham and West Bromwich.

Owned by GFG Alliance, it's a global conglomerate that owed Greensill £3.6bn. The investment bank Credit Suisse is now trying to claw back this money - partly by making debtors such as GFG sell 'assets' like the steel plants.

Steelworkers' jobs have been repeatedly threatened in recent years, including when British Steel and Tata plants were sold to the Jingye Group and GFG. These deals are touted as 'rescues', but they treat plants and workers as "assets", to be sold off when the financial world demands it.

Even if the government steps in, as Labour MPs (including Ed Miliband) are suggesting it should, it will just be using taxpayers' money to prop Liberty up until a new asset stripper comes along, who may or may not save the jobs. The only way workers can truly protect their jobs is to kick out these parasitic owners altogether.

• Getting a-"Uzura-way Ltd" with it

The government's response to the pandemic, including the Test-and-Trace service, created tens of thousands of precarious, low-paid jobs in call centres, testing centres and laboratories. Huge companies, including Serco and G4S, which received £37bn 3-year contracts for Test-and-Trace, usually outsource tasks like recruitment and employment of temp workers. This creates a massive, complex web of companies, which can include "Mini

Umbrella Companies" (MUCs). MUCs are almost always created just to exploit a tax "loophole" that gets them out of paying National Insurance contributions. They've existed since 2014, in every industry that includes low-paid, precarious workers - especially construction, warehouses and factories.

To keep exploiting the loophole, new MUCs have constantly to be recreated. Often dozens are registered at the same address, with obviously fake names. And so workers find that the company paying their wages can change every week! Because of this, they don't accrue holiday pay, often don't receive pension contributions, and can end up constantly overpaying on emergency tax codes. The jobs themselves are already precarious, but MUCs make them even worse. Who could trust that a company called "Aeonofwhitewashing Limited"* would continue to pay you?!

* Yes, there is one!

The G7, Northern Ireland and a sausage

Johnson has renamed the special relationship with the USA the "Indestructible Relationship". It needs to be, given the current attempts to dismantle the relationship with the EU - over sausages. Or to be more precise, over checks on chilled meats going from Britain to the EU single market, into which Northern Ireland was placed by Johnson under the terms of Brexit's Irish Protocol. This Protocol is currently back in dispute and the EU-British Brexit deal seems to be unravelling. And all the more reason for Trump's successor to be Johnson's new best friend!

Biden, who has Irish roots, is said to have an interest in the NI protocol - which upholds the 1998 Good Friday peace agreement after 30 years of the "Troubles". And while sorting out the Irish border after Brexit might not be comparable to this, the easy answer of rubbing it out completely, is obviously not on the cards of these reactionaries.

In the meantime Johnson and Biden are signing a new "Atlantic Charter", allowing Johnson to posture as Churchill, who signed this with Roosevelt in 1941, paving

the way for, among other things, the global trade referee known as the World Trade Organisation. At the time it was meant to "*further the enjoyment by all States, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity*"! Never happened of course! But today, with goods like semiconductors in short supply around the world, not to mention supplies of vaccine doses being hoarded by rich countries, it'll be interesting to see if this new charter makes the slightest difference.



Their Society

In this context Biden and Johnson have vowed to "*vaccinate the world... by the end of 2022*"! And Johnson has defended his offer of just 100m surplus vaccines when the total world need is at least 10 billion! In fact the government claims it already did its bit by promoting the AstraZeneca vaccine and ensuring it is available to poor countries at cost price! "*We will have a colossal sum of vaccines that we'll be distributing - the fight against Covid would not be possible without the UK's efforts on vaccines*," said Johnson. Meaning the poor countries will get "not a sausage". ☐

• Crypto-currencies: one of many asset bubbles...

A trillion dollars was wiped off the value of cryptocurrencies, hitting Bitcoin, Ethereum and Dogecoin, in a market-wide crash on 19 May. This wasn't the first crypto-crash. These have happened almost from day one of the existence of these virtual "currencies" - referred to as a "fraud" by some and "shitcoin" by others. This time the free-fall followed the withdrawal of recognition for cryptocurrency by Chinese regulators and also by Elon Musk, who said he'd no longer accept them as payment for his e-cars.

And now it's happened again: on 8 June, speculators started selling crypto assets after the US Department of Justice seized 63.7 Bitcoins, worth \$2.3m, from

an online hacking ring called DarkSide. Part of this haul was ransom paid after this criminal ring hacked into the computers of the major US gas Colonial Pipeline. Indeed, the "cracking" of the secret codes which keep the currency anonymous further undermines Bitcoin's status.

Virtual currencies were invented by computer scientists a decade back, precisely for anonymous internet transactions - perfect for tax evasion, money-laundering, etc. And thanks to their volatile price they became a target for speculators. But they're not like other tangible speculative assets, like gold, for instance, nor "real" currencies, which governments guarantee. Of course, the

value of *all* assets goes up and down according to confidence in the market, but cryptocurrencies, even if paid for with real currencies, are based on thin air! This really says everything about the degenerate state of world capitalism. If this system, based purely on what turns a profit was irrational and inhumane to start with, it is now totally insane.

Given the huge amounts "invested" in crypto, around 1.8% of the world's money (maybe now \$1 trillion), it's unsure whether further crypto-bubble-bursts could precipitate a world-wide financial crash - and whether this would have the same effect as a crash in "real" assets. But we may be about to find out.

• Bosses' "British made" labour shortages!

ONS figures this April show that 1 in 10 hospitality workers left or were sacked in 2020 - accounting for 660,000 jobs! And now that the economy is "reopening", there's a desperate labour shortage. It's the same situation in social care, logistics and security.

UKHospitality, the bosses' lobbying group, also blames the shortage on Brexit, since migrant workers (many from the EU) found themselves unemployed or on furlough in an insecure job, and decided to try their luck back in their own countries. And it's now much more difficult for them to return due to

the new immigration conditions.

So economists are sounding alarm bells! They say that since the price of labour follows the same law of supply and demand as the price of all other commodities, and supply is down, its price (wages!) will go up! And this might give workers some "bargaining power"!

However, after falling by an average 5%, wages still haven't risen to pre-pandemic levels. In fact wages advertised for hospitality jobs have risen by just 1%, to £9.35/hour, and by 2% in social care (to £9.71/hr). This may well reflect the reality of unemployment,

hidden by the massaged statistics, in the context of the underlying recession, which the pandemic only exacerbated.

What's more, there's talk of reducing "demand for labour" further (as advocated by Brexiteer Tim Martin who owns Wetherspoons pubs) by introducing a special "flexible" visa scheme. Certainly the 30 June deadline - after which EU workers will have to prove "settlement status" might force even more to leave. And heaven forbid having to pay decent wages to this over-exploited workforce!

King's Cross railway station (London)**Not that Great British Railways**

On 20 May, transport secretary Grant Shapps finally announced his plan for transforming the way the railway operates. So this new body called Great British Railways (GBR) will now be in charge of timetables, fares and infrastructure. Franchises (well most of them...) will be scrapped, to be replaced by passenger service contracts for private companies to run the train services, for a guaranteed, fixed fee. In other words no more risking investment for a profit they may not accrue... now the government takes the risk and they take the money. And of course, this isn't nationalisation as Shapps kept reassuring everybody..!

As for the suggestion by some critics

who advocate renationalisation using the "successful" example of East Coast Mainline (when the government took it over), they don't know or care that this "success" was based on continuing over-exploitation of workers and passengers. Sky high fares were charged, while passengers were (and are still) treated like subhumans; standing for hours during rush hour. Unless, of course, they paid double the price for a first class fare... This is how East Coast Directly Operated Railways managed to pay £1 billion to the Treasury between 2010 and 2013!

The new passenger service contracts with fixed fees will mean that private bosses will try to increase their incomes



by cutting labour costs. And with driverless trains looming, nobody's Ts&Cs will be sacred - not even those of train drivers, who up to now have remained relatively untouched by cuts. A fightback is on the cards, bringing every section together, to prevent the attacks to come! ☐

- **Can they make up their minds?**

We still don't know how, or what kind of catering service LNER expects in a couple of weeks, when the timetables change. If management can't decide, we can - and we think it's best to provide a very socially distanced service... [Workers' Platform King's X, 03/06/21]

- **Run out of workers**

Anyway, the trains are getting busier,

but our numbers are still at pandemic minimum levels. OK. Minimum staff equals minimum service. [Workers' Platform King's X, 03/06/21]

- **Go away**

We see GN managers observing our every move while we're at work on the platform... It's almost as if they're jealous of us, since they've nothing useful to do themselves... Well, if they're so keen to watch our performance, we should insist they buy tickets. [Workers' Platform King's X, 03/06/21]

- **Vested interests**

Are we meant to be impressed by LNER/Atalian's claim that Stabilised Aqueous Ozone (SAO) spray is effective against viruses, bacteria, etc. and "lab tested"? Obviously they think so - and they've even produced laminated "advertising" for it, which they've left in the messroom. But when we go online to check, we only see private companies vouching for SAO. The same ones who sell it. [Workers' Platform King's X, 03/06/21]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**Royal Mail's super-profiteering**

On 20 May, Royal Mail reported a record £702m operating profit for 2020-21 - a 116% increase compared to last year. It also announced it would re-start paying dividends, at 10p per share for 2020-21 and 20p for 2021-22. Undoubtedly, RM has made the most out of the lockdown, thanks to the surge in online shopping and parcel deliveries.

These super-profits, however, are also due directly, to cuts in our conditions. In this same year, our pay "increased" by just 1% - which, with inflation, is a real pay cut! And despite workloads skyrocketing, management

kept implementing Early Voluntary Retirement programs without replacing anyone. They've brought in agency workers all year round, to fill gaps on the shop floor (but we've still struggled!) on lower pay for equal work, of course. And they're "revising processes and guidelines" to "improve efficiency/productivity", including by automation. So for instance, Parcel Sorting Machines are being installed in 8 Mail Centres, including here at the Mount. Although their plan for "efficiencies" (i.e., job cuts!) might come a cropper, as these machines aren't all they're cracked up to be!



There are signs that RM's "super" profiteering might already be curtailed, as the end of the lockdown looms. But that's not our problem. Our problem is to find a way to fight to regain the ground lost over the past years and reinstate the jobs and conditions which the union leaders have signed away. ☐

- **What it would take**

So RM's made unprecedented profits out of our sweat, blood and tears - a record £702m (operating profit) squeezed out of us in just one year! And of course, we saw this bonanza coming in the form of a packet "tsunami" that hit us at the beginning of the pandemic.

But we've certainly not seen it in the form of an increase in real pay - compare RM's 116% increase this year to our miniscule 1% "rise"! We need to shake their (giant) piggy-bank!

[Workers' fight bulletin Mount Pleasant Mail Centre 3/6/21]

- **Making light work**

Yes, in processing we've gone through one whole year non-stop - many of us do feel it in our bones and muscles. And this recent slight fall in the packet workload is welcome, but who knows how long it'll last.

What's certain, is that we could do with many more hands. [Workers' fight bulletin Mount Pleasant Mail Centre 3/6/21]

- **Whose moment?**

In the meantime, TeePee (General Secretary, Terry Pullinger) was very happy to be the first union official to be invited to the shareholders' Annual General Meeting. He tried his best to blend in, but didn't quite manage. So when RM's chief exec Thompson asked him "you feel okay, Terry?", he answered, "I'm feeling, this is our moment, that's how I feel". Oops, a little awkward... Pity he doesn't realise he would blend in better with us on the shop floor - if he remembers how to get here. [Workers' fight bulletin Mount Pleasant Mail Centre 3/6/21]

Ford Dagenham Engine Plant

Ford electrification: works' committee shocked!

After Ford announced its "Go Electric" plans in May, which excluded mention of any electric projects for Dagenham, Joint Works' Committee union officials issued a report. They felt betrayed. Germany's Ford Cologne will make the 1st all-electric passenger vehicle by 2023 and plants in Romania and Turkey will make e-vehicles and battery packs. The only British factory included is the former Getrag-Ford Halewood plant which will produce e-transmissions.

However, Ford wants Dagenham engine plant to carry on building diesel engines until well into the next decade. A figure of 40,000 engines/year is

mentioned. But given the ban on petrol/diesel from 2030, this is the deadline for our jobs too! There'll be an order for Panther engines for the VW van built in Turkey from 2024 and for Tiger engines for a light commercial vehicle built in Romania from 2023...

The union leaders write: *"We made all the efficiencies asked for... Outsourced Our Laundry, Our Cleaners, Our Security, Our MPL department, Panther Subassembly's, Our Battery House & Our Orders. All of this done to secure a future for Dagenham"*. And now Ford dares to offer nothing?



In fact the sell-out union officials fell for Ford's blackmail every time. Their outsourcing threw subcontracted workers to the wolves. Now they again become abject - saying DEP could have a future in the new Freeport! Really? And at what price our (barely retained) Ts&Cs? It's true we could have a future, but only if we on the ground fight for it - and find true allies among our fellow workers in other plants and industries. ☐

• What, exactly, is he for?

We saw a story this week about a 1980 Ford Escort Mk111 Ghia made in Halewood, up for sale - newsworthy, apparently, because Prince Charles bought it as a gift for Diana, to make publicity for Ford...

So this Tuesday, Charles drives an electric mini off the line at BMW Oxford to "celebrate 20 years of modern mini production" and his campaign against climate change. He called the mini "silent but deadly" - deadly? For jobs, workers, pedestrians? Has he even got a clue? [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 10/06/21]

• Make up your minds

We can't understand what Panther machining managers are up to. We were supposed to be laid off last week and then some of us were asked to come back for 3 full days! We'd planned better things, like making the most of the sun. Some of us even ended up on Assembly! And then even more "surprising", mates were asked to come in on Saturday... [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 10/06/21]

• We can't drive... and load

It's just impossible to drive and load the truck at the same time as LLL mates are now asked to do on Panther machining.

We used to have another mate loading. He/she was taken away after a "helpful" suggestion, apparently... But it's unsafe. [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 10/06/21]

• Hands off our annual leave!

We (LLL Panther) rejected the furlough-annual leave deal, whereby we were told to use leave days during furlough! Trust LLL to try this on. It's even against the so-called "rules" for obtaining government money! Nobody here signed up to it. [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 10/06/21]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)

• Crumbs from the table

BMW must have made their shareholders happy! While they made £5bn of profits last year and they have increased their car production in the 1st quarter by 30% - the number of electric cars made having doubled! And now BMW has just paid an £86 bonus to the workers in the plant... [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 09/06/21]

• Lay off pay, now!

Did BMW think it could get away giving us peanuts - or nothing - for the lay off days? The loan & pay cut leaves BMW permanent workers with £15 per lay-off day and Gi agency mates with nothing! Now they want to "gift" us +30 hours in our Working Time Accounts, i.e., only 4 days' worth.... If this "gift" was meant to damp down some of the anger on the shop floor, it's having the opposite effect! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 09/06/21]

• To be cancelled

We may have been blackmailed into accepting the "loan" pay cut for now,

but who says that means we're paying it back? We can think of ways not to. They want to cut our pay for 2½ years or more from July? How long can they go without Minis? [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 09/06/21]

• Just our time!

Last Wednesday on the night shift a lorry was late, and Assembly had to stop because there weren't enough parts. That says something about their "just-in-time" system, but also about how short of stock BMW is right now. What would happen if we refused to make cars when BMW gets hold of some parts, now that it's craving more Mini production? [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 09/06/21]

• Pocketing the furlough money?

R&H (the logistics subcontractor) called some workers to come in last Thursday - when we were meant to be at home on furlough! So what money did they pay us with? Was it furlough money? That would mean that R&H is pocketing 100%



of their contract from BMW without paying wages... And we wouldn't be surprised! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 09/06/21]

• We want our holidays back

Now our new Gi workmates are told they would have to use their annual leave to cover for the lay-offs! Many of us, permanent or agency, were actually told to use practically all our holidays during the last winter shutdown... But no company can force us to take all our annual leave when they want, whatever the shutdowns! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 09/06/21]

India

In May, Covid cut through India. As it spread, the skeletal health infrastructure collapsed. Hundreds of decomposed bodies dumped by municipal authorities floated down the Ganges river to hide the number of deaths upstream. According to official statistics, between 5 May and 5 June alone, 116,000 people died. With negligible monitoring, testing and research, India has become a giant petri-dish for the mutation of new potentially vaccine-dodging Covid variants. Black fungus began to spread too; especially lethal in patients with compromised immunity and the result of the unregulated use of immune-suppressing steroids which

The fight against Covid-19, Modi and the bosses

can be bought on the internet, under-resourced health facilities and conditions where fungal spores can proliferate.

Despite the dire health crisis, workers and farmers protests continue: on 5 June farmers organised demonstrations. And since industrial production went on unabated, turning factories into Covid incubators, workers took matters into their own hands to protect their health. The strike of 16,000 workers at the Chennai Hyundai plant forced the closure of the plant for five days. The nearby Renault-Nissan plant was also shut for five days after workers threatened a boycott.

How will Modi's BJP government

respond to growing opposition due to its criminal mismanagement of this Covid wave? The BJP already did badly in local elections in Uttar Pradesh (UP, the largest state) which up until recently was its stronghold. Assembly elections are only nine months away. In what could be a sign of things to come, UP's BJP administration demolished a mosque in Barabanki. With nothing to offer the population, Modi's party is resorting - as many times before - to communal incitement against religious minorities, "illegal immigrants" and "anti-nationals". We can only hope that the working class calls their bluff. □

Palestine-Israel

After the May bombing of Gaza in which 240 Palestinians were killed - and the Hamas retaliation, in which 12 Israelis were killed - the ceasefire is holding.

But the issues which provoked this latest confrontation are far from resolved. It began with the Israeli courts' decision in April that 300 Palestinian residents of the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah could be "legally" evicted. In response, the families held protests and sit-ins and busloads of fellow Palestinians came in solidarity, blocking highways. The movement spread to the

Stopping evictions in East Jerusalem

so-called 'mixed cities' of Lod and Jaffa, and the West Bank, with the population holding back attacks from the Israeli police and army. And then came the use of stun grenades and beatings at the Al-Aqsa mosque during Ramadan, to make way for a far-right Zionist 'Jerusalem Day' demonstration which escalated the situation, leading to the bombing of Gaza and the 4,000 rockets fired by the Islamist Hamas into Israel.

Israeli prime minister Netanyahu may have hoped this escalation would reinflate his popularity ratings, in the

light of a 4th failure by his party to win a majority in the space of just 2 years. But his strategy has backfired. It looks as if Netanyahu's 12-year rule will now be replaced by a "fragile coalition", of eight opposing parties. In the meantime the East Jerusalem evictions are on hold and the Palestinians - who have also staged a general strike - remain mobilised. The first step on their road to freedom has to be the removal of the barbed wire around Gaza and the Apartheid "Wall" along the West Bank. □

Spain-Morocco

On 16 May, the Moroccan government decided to relax border controls between Morocco and Ceuta - an 18Km square Spanish-"owned" enclave in Northern Africa. This was in response to Spain's decision to provide medical treatment to Brahim Ghali, leader of the Polisario Front - a militia fighting the Moroccan regime for Western Sahara's independence. In fact Western Sahara has been occupied by Morocco since Spain's withdrawal from its former colony in 1975.

In the space of 48 hours, over 12,000 migrants - mostly teenagers - tried to reach Spanish territory by swimming across the sea. However when they arrived they were held at gunpoint by Spanish authorities and 7,500 were immediately deported back to Morocco, with only a few granted refugee status. At least three children drowned, 100 had to be rescued from the sea (some as young as 6 or 7!) Hundreds were then crammed into a warehouse in "quarantine", awaiting their fate.

Spanish Prime minister Pedro Sanchez

Refugees swim for freedom

jumped on the occasion to condemn the Moroccan government for provoking the situation, insisting on its "responsibility to keep the border closed, as part of its duties towards the EU". But this crisis exposes yet again the murderous policies

which Spain and the EU (like Britain in the Channel) inflict on youth who are condemned to starve in their countries or risk drowning (or being shot) when they try to escape to a better life. □



In addition to this paper, we publish bulletins in several large workplaces in the South East, a journal, "Class Struggle" and a series of pamphlets on topical issues. If you wish to know more, contact Workers' Fight by e-mail, at contact@w-fight.org, or by postal mail at:

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