

# WORKERS' fight

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

## ONLY WORKERS' ACTION CAN "MAKE TOAST" OF THE BOSSES AND THEIR POLITICIANS!

In the run-up to Johnson's confidence vote, opinion polls reported that 60% of the population thought he should resign: he's a proven liar, caused Brexit havoc in Northern Ireland and he broke his own Covid laws. The last straw for some Tory MPs was him being booed by royalists at the Jubilee thanksgiving service...

But in this "mother of all democracies", the public don't and won't get a say. "The People" only have the privilege of voting every 5 years on who should mis-govern them. And since this government is only halfway through its term of office, it's Johnson's own Tory MPs who decide. So 211 voted for him to stay, against 148 who said he must go.

### **Humpty dumpty didn't fall - not yet**

But 148 MPs equals 41% without confidence in Johnson - more than expected. And now civil war in the Tory party has broken out again. Only this time it's Anti-Johnsonites against Pro-Johnsonites; i.e., MPs in unsafe seats against MPs in safe seats...

On 23 June, the party is due to lose another 2 seats in by-elections: in Wakefield and in Tiverton and Honiton. If there was an election tomorrow, the Tories would hold onto only 3 of the extra 88 seats they won in 2019.

Glowing with victory, Johnson wasted no time in repeating his choice lies: the confidence vote was "convincing and decisive" and thanks to him, the economy is "robust" and unemployment the lowest in 50 years!

In fact the latest ONS figures show that the economy - measured by Gross Domestic Product - shrank by 0.1% in March 2022, after no growth in February! But that doesn't prevent Johnson from claiming it's among the fastest growing economies in the world!



As for unemployment, it's true that it's low. Brexit has helped to create an acute labour shortage - adding to the current chaos at airports! Anyway, the ONS defines anyone aged 16 or over, who completed at least 1 hour of work in its reference week, as "employed". In other words "officially employed" doesn't mean being in a proper job, let alone getting a living wage - the case for fewer and fewer workers. And by the way, "Brexit Opportunities" Minister Rees-Mogg intends to do something about this "low unemployment", sharpish: by sacking 91,000 civil servants! And Transport Secretary Shapps will do his bit, by cutting railway and Tube jobs!

### **The urgent fight that is needed**

It is just these problems - earning decent pay, keeping permanent jobs and retiring on adequate pensions which workers are having to wage a real fight over, once more. Tube workers, railworkers and now postal workers, are starting the ball rolling - some already taking action and others

preparing to ballot for strike.

But it's a long time since any significant industrial action has taken place, let alone since workers won a real victory against the bosses and their government.

For years, union leaderships have avoided confrontations, using even overwhelming votes for strike as mere bargaining chips: calling sectional one-day stoppages, rather than opting for all-out strikes across all sections.

They are afraid workers will feel their own collective strength and launch real struggles which they will be unable to control. In which case the bosses might no longer see the point in "negotiating" with them.

But a big working class push across all sections, beyond union leaders' control, is exactly what is needed, if workers are to turn the tide against the government's and bosses' latest attacks.

This is the only way to defend our class interests - regardless of who or what is in power in Westminster. □

## Ukraine

The British and US governments continue to pour more and more arms into Ukraine. Now they're sending long-range "M270 multiple launch rocket systems" which have a 50 mile range, while saying that they should not be used to blow up "targets" inside Russia, even if they can - with the implication that this is precisely what they will be used for. Biden and Johnson are, of course, consciously fuelling this war, which is in fact, their own proxy war against Putin and never mind that Ukrainian and Russian soldiers are being used as cannon fodder.

In the meantime, conveniently, the war generates huge profits for the arms and "alternative" oil and gas industries, including in the Arabian Gulf, in the context of the deepening world economic recession. So it not only provides a new source of wealth for the richest capitalist companies, but can be used as an additional excuse for the austerity currently being imposed on populations.

### Sanctions which devastate

The sanctions against Russia are not only affecting ordinary Russians who bear no responsibility for this war, but are causing devastating food shortages and price hikes in the poorest countries of Africa and the Middle East, which means malnutrition and in the worst case, death from starvation. So now Putin is asked to remove his blockades so that wheat exports can be resumed.

## NATO's proxy war against Russia escalates



### Killing the youth

A US military source reports a casualty rate of more than 65% for Ukrainian "recruits" (they get only 2 weeks training)! In truth, they are "conscripts", since no men between 16 and 64 are allowed to leave the country. The Ukrainian parliament has twice been asked to pass a law which punishes refusal to fight. Fortunately, so far its MPs have not agreed to this. But Zelensky continues to proclaim "glory to Ukraine" and that they will win the war, as yet more towns and villages in the Donbas are turned into rubble.

### With friends like this...

This is the same Zelensky, who, when elected president by a landslide in April 2019, was the "peace candidate"! At the time, he declared that he'd work towards ending the

fighting in eastern Ukraine: "...we will continue in the direction of the Minsk [peace] talks and head towards concluding a ceasefire...", he was quoted as saying by the BBC. It was generally expected that relations with Russia would begin to improve. But the opposite happened. Not only did he go along with the anti-Russian far-right agenda, rejecting peace negotiations, but he sidled up to NATO, with its promises of financial and military support, and in December 2021 - two months before the invasion - he refused the draft treaty proposed by Russia which might have avoided this war. Anyway, avoiding the war was clearly not NATO's objective. And if Johnson is admired today by his supporters in the Tory party (and by Labour's Starmer!) as "the best friend" of Zelensky, it is all the more reason to condemn him. □

## • Russian oil ban: re-shaping the market and remaking several fortunes!

Responding to pressure from the US and Ukraine, on 31 May, the European Union agreed a ban on up to 90% of Russian crude oil imports, by the end of 2022.



The ban will be in place only for oil that is transported by sea and will exclude oil that is sent via land pipelines like Russia's Druzhba pipeline, or refined products (till 2023). But that's not the end of the story...

The ban includes plenty of loopholes such as "emergency measures", should those exempted pipeline deliveries stop, or "exemptions" like the one for the Czech Republic which is allowed to resell Russian oil products through to mid-2024. In other words, the EU leaders are making sure not to burn their bridges...

Nevertheless they claim that by enforcing the ban Russia will have to stop producing oil, as there'll be fewer EU buyers available. They say this will cut £8 billion from Russia's monthly income and force Putin to stop the war.

At the same time, however, this opens the door to a new round of profiteering by smaller and bigger non-Russian

capitalists... A number of big Greek shipowners have stepped in and earned an absolute fortune by taking on oil from sanctioned Russian vessels at sea and re-routing it to oil buyers. And there has been a more than 50% increase in exports from big Saudi Arabian oil companies, who are delighted to step in and supply the newly available EU market... at higher prices! That was already the plan back in 2019 according to Aramco's senior vice president: "I am going to bet on Europe... We believe that Europe is a market that we are going to stay in for a long time"...

Robert McNally, an energy adviser to ex-President George W Bush, described it as a "historic, big deal... This will reshape not only commercial relationships but political and geopolitical ones as well". So while the oil sharks claim new markets, the prices of fuel for all consumers soars!



## ***The Jubilee: there was nothing to celebrate!***

The British people were given two extra public holidays to celebrate the 70 years-too-many reign of "their" monarch: the Platinum Jubilee of 96-year old Queen Elizabeth, who has been head of state longer than any other.

She is not just a figurehead. Even if, for over 300 years, no British monarch actually used his or her powers (for example, to declare war, refuse a law, or dismiss parliament), this queen still holds such "rights" and heads the armed forces.

But the main function of this gold-encrusted monarchy is as a lavish distraction from the brutal class system which it shields - and which in case of an emergency (like a general uprising of the working class!) it can defend by usurping power...

Of course the class rule, which the queen presides over, is today not immediately under threat - and more's the pity.

And while the Queen isn't one of the 177 billionaires in the Sunday Times Rich List, (her personal fortune is £370m), the whole institution has a total net worth of £72.5bn! So the celebrations - apparently costing the



public an estimated £1bn - could be said to be outrageous in the context of today's crisis of poverty among the working class. Because the gap between rich and poor is wider than ever. During the pandemic, the richest 250 saw their combined wealth rise by 8% to £711 billion in 12 months!

It would be just as well if this archaic institution, which hides the ruthless exploitation and deep poverty in this country, dies with this Queen. But finally toppling the rotten system she presides over will require a strong collective push by the working class: and the sooner the better. ☐

## ***• Northern Ireland's assembly in suspended animation yet again***

Since Sinn Féin won the Northern Ireland election - for the very first time - on 5 May, the far-right Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) has blocked the election of a deputy speaker. And so the new parliament's MLAs have been unable to take their seats as yet and Michelle O'Neill, SF's speaker, has been unable to take charge.

The DUP claims that this is all on account of the Northern Ireland Protocol which it wants Johnson to scrap completely. But that is also a pretext. They are very sore losers, having led the NI Assembly since 2007. As for the Protocol, those who claim it undermines the "union" are not concerned with the checks on goods; their fear is that today's virtual border between North and South is rubbed out completely, just as it should be.

In the meantime several motions to recall the Assembly have been filed. The latest is from Gerry Carroll of People before Profit, who is calling for support for the striking Caterpillar workers at the Springvale, Belfast and Larne sites, who are taking 4 weeks of action over a below-inflation pay offer - and the very profitable company's decision to cut 700 jobs in Larne. And though it's unlikely to help win the strike, it does give the strikers welcome publicity.

So far the DUP is refusing to swallow its sour grapes. And on top of it all, adding insult to Unionist injury, during the "Platinum Party at the Palace", the BBC used the Irish tricolour (yup, the flag of the Irish republic and Northern Irish Sinn Féiners), to represent Northern Ireland, when it was illustrating the 4 "nations" of the United Kingdom! Whoops!



## ***• Irish language recognition: better late than never...***

On May 25, an Irish Language Act introduced by the British parliament recognise the official status of Irish in Northern Ireland - at least on paper. This will allow the use of the language in courts and in the civil service with a translation service - repealing the repressive 285-year-old colonial law, which denied the Irish the right to speak their own language.

In fact it's precisely this recognition,

promised in 2019 as part of the "New Decade, New Approach" under which "power-sharing" at Stormont was to be re-established, which has been the cause of repeated stalemates between Sinn Féin and the DUP, which emphatically opposed it.

However, the "An Dream Dearg" Irish language campaign also involves a section of the protestant community, where figures like Linda Ervine (daughter

of Progressive Unionist Party leader David Ervine) lead the Turas project, which 400 people from East Belfast (a working class protestant district) are a part of.

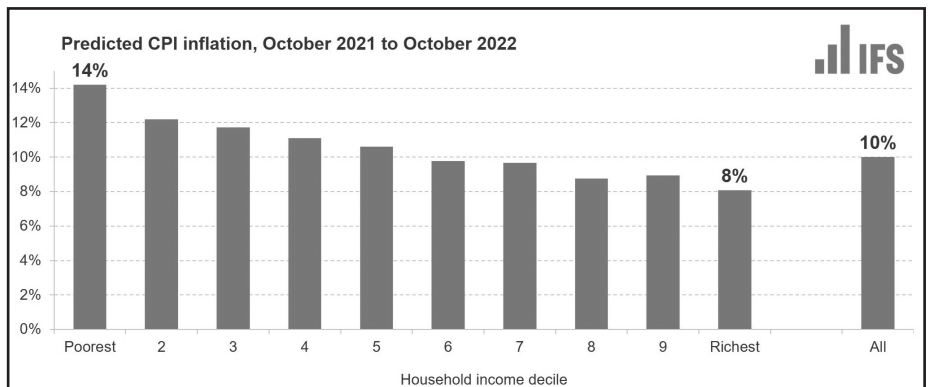
That said, this official recognition will remain largely symbolic, at least for now, given the continued Unionist boycott of Stormont, under pretext of the NI Protocol, despite the pro-Gaelic Sinn Féin victory.

## Their society

Inflation is at its highest rate in 140 years. The Retail Price Index for April was already 11.1% - and even the government's preferred Consumer Index Price, which takes no account of housing costs, was 9%. But of course, these indexes are an average across the country, thus averaging-out the differences between rich and poor households.

However, the poorer the household, the worse the inflation. So for instance, the poorest 10% of households spend almost three times as much in gas and electricity as the richest 10%. Indeed, rich households can afford proper insulation and efficient heating technology, which the poorest can't. So when the energy tariff cap increased by 54% in April (and

## Cost of living crisis: hitting the poorest hardest!



could jump by another 46% in October!), the poorest households are disproportionately hit harder: by October, the CPI inflation for the 10% poorest households will likely hit the 14% mark, while for the 10% richest households CPI will only be 8%! The cost of fresh food jumped

by 4.5% in April. And private rents rose by 2.7%!

So while a disproportionately bigger share of the poorest household incomes go into a disproportionately bigger energy bill, they still have to deal with the rising prices of everything else! ☐

## • Behind the cancelled flights and messed-up holidays: attacks on workers

During the June half-term break, hundreds of flights were cancelled or delayed across Britain. While transport secretary Shapps blames airlines for overselling flights, behind this is the ongoing labour shortage and the refusal of the bosses of both airports and airlines to pay workers a decent wage.

When airports emptied after the Covid-19 outbreak, these same bosses got generous handouts from the government, while attacking workers' jobs, wages and conditions. Over the two pandemic years, tens of thousands of cabin crew and ground staff jobs were cut. British Airways alone, sacked

12,000 workers under fire-and-rehire in 2020, while that year it got a £300 million bailout! The following year it got another £2 billion in strings-free loans. And Easyjet got £1.4bn!

The majority of these lost jobs across the industry have not been restored, with the remaining staff expected to just cover the work. Many of them are leaving. And anyway, new employees can't start working until they pass all sorts of security checks, which can take up to 14 weeks - and that's if there are enough trainers to put them through their paces!

Of course, Brexit immigration

restrictions have made matters worse. Trying to patch up their mess, some flight firms asked the government to give special immigration visas to EU workers to ease the shortage of staff, but Shapps has so far refused.

Unite is now balloting 500 check-in workers at Heathrow airport to reverse a 10% pay cut from 2020. One can ask "why only these particular ground staff and why only at Heathrow?" The workforce right across the industry has cause to get together and fight for decent pay and conditions! And with the bosses on the back foot, they've a very good chance to win!

## • Summer of strikes, or one big fightback?

A strike of 4,000 London Underground station workers against 600 job cuts on 6 June closed many Zone 1 stations.

Around the country, workers are rejecting below-inflation pay offers and voting to strike. Arriva Yorkshire bus drivers and engineers started an indefinite strike also on 6 June, against a 4.1% pay offer.

Waste collectors have voted to strike in Chesterfield and Rhondda Cynon Taff. In Wealden, East Sussex, a bin strike has been ongoing since 25 April and will continue at least until 11 June, since

GMB members rejected the latest offer from Biffa by 98%. Unite opens a strike ballot of cleaning and school support workers across Scotland (offered 2%!) on 10 June. The list goes on!

All these strikes remain separate, section-by-section. Yet they are nearly all against the bosses' attempt to impose the cost of the deepening crisis of the capitalist system on workers. Generalising and linking these struggles, turning them into a united response of our class, can only strengthen them. But the initiative will have to come from us!



## Student debt ballooning

Amongst the many hidden "taxes" in Sunak's Spring budget was a big hit on university students. From 2023, the annual income threshold for paying back their student loans will be lowered from £27,275 to £25,000. Obviously paying loans back sooner and when in low-paying jobs, means all other expenses like rent etc., become harder to afford, if not impossible! The 9% repayment "graduate tax"

on earnings above the set threshold will now have to be paid for up to 40 years instead of 30, before outstanding amounts can be written off!

However, the problem was that loans increased with Retail Price Index +3%. So now a concession has been made to cut that rate of interest to RPI alone. Except that RPI for March, which is their indexed month, is 9%!

The 2022-23 students will be left to pay 12%.

Student debt reached £160bn last year. The government is determined to claw back repayments. These so-called "reforms" mean students will face hardship sooner and could well be in hock for life! This, when their education - a vital asset for the whole of society - should be free. That's what students need to fight for!



## "Super bad" forecast for their economy

The World Economic Forum held at Davos ended on 26 May, but it was scarcely mentioned in the news this year. Does that perhaps have anything to do with the fact that capitalists all over the world are contemplating a recession within the next year, due to rising inflation and the ever-growing food and energy crises?

Elon Musk, who didn't attend, is not the only capitalist who has a "super bad feeling" about the economy. Jamie Dimon, CEO of biggest US bank JP Morgan, has warned of a "hurricane... down the road", which other US banks have agreed with.

Indeed, there is, as the speculators put it, "serious volatility in stock markets" at the moment - that is, they are swinging up and



down wildly. In mid-May, the US stock market saw a fall in stocks as bad as that which pre-empted the 2008 crisis. However, the last week of May was the 19th best week for the stock market since 1950! What is

## Their society

for sure is that, as ever, the markets are a spinning roulette table, which gamblers and speculators are making huge gains on, while hoping not to be the ones caught out when it stops. □

### • Sunak's U-turn

At the end of May, Chancellor Rishi Sunak finally announced extra help for households to pay their energy bills, and a new tax on oil and gas companies. Even though energy bills rose by 54% over two months ago, and the price rise was known well in advance.

This about-turn was not because Sunak wants to help anyone, except himself. His party needs rescuing from the political crisis it finds itself in, thanks at least in part to Boris Johnson. There's been Sue Gray's report into Downing street parties, booing at Jubilee celebrations, and polls showing at least 60% of the population think Johnson should resign... Worst of all for them, polls now indicate Labour would win if a General Election was held today.

So Sunak has miraculously found £15 billion, £5bn of which will come from an extra "windfall" tax on oil and gas

companies. Of course, he denies this is the same "windfall tax" which Labour has been promoting (he points out that it's £3bn more than they proposed...). Every single household will now get a £400 grant, replacing the previous £200 loan (this goes for rich households too, and for those people who might pay bills in multiple houses they own - they'll get £400 for each house!). So Sunak certainly has in mind winning support from richer voters too!

Poorer households will get up to £1,200 in financial help: 8 million households on benefits will get a one-off extra £650 (but that won't replace the lost £20/w Universal Credit uplift!); pensioners will get an extra £300 Winter Fuel Allowance; 6 million disabled people will get an extra £150.

However, most of this will not come through until the autumn, when energy costs will have gone up again... So whether Sunak's U-turn will yield

miraculous results for the Tories, as he hopes, remains to be seen.

### • Useless, like Johnson

The media got wind of a plan concocted in Downing Street to "bring back" imperial measurements in shops. For a week, it became the "key" issue being discussed, in the papers, on radio talk shows, etc!

Some in the media wondered whether it was perhaps intended merely to distract from Johnson's current leadership problems? If it was, the journalists themselves certainly gave the story a helping hand. For most people, however, this is a non-issue. Food can already be priced in pounds and weighed in ounces, as long as the metric equivalents are displayed as well.

In fact, it is hardly necessary to "bring back" imperial measures - when we haven't been able to get rid of them in the first place!

## Champions League carnage: it should never be a dangerous game!

The incident at the Stade de France ahead of the Champions League Final on 28 May,



involving the reaction of the French police against Liverpool fans, has invoked a chorus of anti-French reaction and finger-pointing at the "bad" French police. True, they were bad. They laid into Liverpool football fans, parents and children included, with tear gas and pepper spray, injuring more than 230 and arresting over 100! But are they any worse than British police?

French Interior Minister (Home secretary) Darmanin and his Chief of police Lallement, excused their actions, blaming pushy English fans with fake tickets and... French transport workers, for being on strike on the day and "disorganising" transport!

But the event's organisers and above all the police, knew well in advance that a transport strike was taking place and that a large number of football fans would try

to attend the match. However, on the day, they took no measures to ensure there were enough staff to let football fans through the gates. So after waiting for more than 3 hours in overcrowded areas, fans inevitably tried to jump through. This was the cue for the cops to go for it. They just waded in, assaulting anyone in their path. Incredibly, Darmanin's response was to commend them for not having caused any deaths... "thanks to the French law enforcement doctrine"!

A Liverpool fan whose brother died at Hillsborough in 1989, when 97 fans were crushed to death and no policeman nor FA boss was held responsible, said the treatment of fans in France "brought back everything" and that "the police said exactly the same thing then". Yes, a cop is a cop, whether here or in France.

**King's Cross railway station (London)****Yes, we must fight - and all out!**

At the time of writing Mick Lynch, RMT leader, has announced 3 strike days, the 21st, 23rd and 25th of June. ITV news says it'd be "the biggest rail strike since 1989"; it's meant to involve 40,000 of us. But of course that excludes the agency workers which companies like GTR in particular, have taken on to cover our work and they hope - work during a strike.

Johnson (how much credibility has he got left?!) says that he'll force us (in the future!) to keep a minimal service running during a strike (Good luck for that!).

For us though, this strike isn't just

about stopping all the trains. It's a demonstration of our collective strength and the fact that we're indispensable to their system.

As for Mick Lynch, he says the right things - yes, we worked during the pandemic, and we had a 3-year pay freeze... And yes, no job cuts whatsoever can be allowed, especially not in safety-critical Network Rail! But Lynch isn't calling the ALL-OUT strike for as long as it takes we need - to end the selfishness and greed of bosses and mismanagement by this utterly delinquent government. He could still call it off - as RMT leaders have before, playing purely on threats



rather than action.

But at least Tube workers plan to walk out with us on the 21 June. And Aslef and Tssa brothers and sisters? We're still waiting to hear... As for our fellow-worker passengers, who won't be able to travel during our strike - we're sure they need a pay rise too, so join us! □

- **Churchill strike is back on!**

Churchill cleaners are out again on strike for five days starting Thursday 2 June, over pay.

Unless the bosses agree sick pay and travel allowances - and £15/hour (plus....), they're ready to keep fighting! And what about the rest of us who're in the same boat? [Workers' Platform King's X, 31/05/22]

- **Delaying tactics**

Indeed, Atalian "little" bosses aren't letting us know if we got even that pathetic 20p (!!) pay-rise. They said they need to confirm with the "big" bosses... They keep telling us they will let us know "next week". But it's been at least 2 months already. Should we "help" them to hurry up and come up with the pay rise we need? (And travel and OSP etc...!) [Workers' Platform King's X, 31/05/22]

- **"Smoothest ride yet"?**

We're fed up with receiving complaints about "jerky" rides from managers and passengers alike. We sometimes come up to a double yellow signal and have to slow down abruptly. Of course, if we could see it sooner, we could brake smoothly...! This is the reality though. So managers - and not drivers - should have to explain themselves... to themselves - and to the passengers. [Workers' Platform King's X, 31/05/22]

**Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)****This fight needs to be in our hands!**

After offering us just 2% pay rise, but only on condition all of our remaining allowances etc., went out the window, Royal Mail bosses have come back with what they call a "revised" offer! Except it isn't, of course! They now say we can have an "unconditional" 2% pay increase and another 3.5% if we accept all their attacks on our terms and conditions! They add compulsory Sunday duties, annualised hours (also allowing them to change our weekly hours according to their whims), a new two-tier workforce, cuts in sick pay, etc., etc., etc...

These attacks come after the 2020-2022 "Pathway to change" agreement,

which, according to Communication Workers Union officials themselves, introduced "the biggest number of revisions in decades"! In fact, RM's CEO Simon Thompson admitted that this allowed RM to make £59m-worth of cuts last year, but added that it was just not enough! In the meantime, Royal Mail Plc announced an all-time record £758m in operating profits this year (up 8% from last year) and £12.7bn in revenue. Big shareholders have every reason to celebrate!

For us, however, there is every reason to fight. Not only because the Retail Price Index was already 11.1% in April,



meaning the pay "offer" is a real wage cut of at least 9.1%, but because all the improvements we fought for over many years are to be taken away. So while union officials waste their time in their one-month long "resolution procedures" with RM management (as part of a no-strike clause included in their "Pathway to change" agreement!), we need to prepare to make this fight a struggle to win! □

- **Has to be different this time!**

The gate meeting turnout during morning shift 2 weeks ago was good - about 200 of us, including some who didn't have a break at that time. The union official told us he was angry about the insulting pay offer, and so are we, obviously!

But then what? The usual "support your union", and "get the bosses back to the table" (behind closed doors!)? We know where that has led us in the past. This time we have to find a way to break those doors down, and really have our say! [Workers' fight bulletin Mount

Pleasant Mail Centre 31/05/22]

- **Our own organisation**

Why was the gate meeting organised only for the early shift? We all want to have our say. So if the union officials won't bother, we need to organise our own meetings, and discuss what we want to do! [Workers' fight bulletin Mount Pleasant Mail Centre 31/05/22]

- **Better late than never?**

Unite/CMA have finally announced that they'll be having a formal strike ballot for

the managers facing job cuts.

But as RM bosses said themselves, "We are unclear why Unite/CMA would plan to issue a formal ballot at this late stage when managers are already in their new roles, the new structure has already gone live, and many managers impacted by the programme have already left the organisation under voluntary redundancy."

Indeed, weird timing, but never too late for managers to join us on the picket line. [Workers' fight bulletin Mount Pleasant Mail Centre 31/05/22]



**BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)****R&H: the fight has still to be won!**

A narrow majority (53%) of Unite members at Rudolph & Hellmann logistics, voted to accept the R&H pay offer after just one day of strike! It's an increase in the hourly rate for day-shift to £12; and £13 for nights - but still 50p less than we demanded. There's another big catch: a 3-tier system of pay linked to length of service: year 1 gets a pay rise from £10.30 to £11; year 2 gets £11.20; after year 2 you get £12. As for the shift-lengths: 12-hour nights and 10-hour day shifts - our demand to cut them wasn't even discussed. No wonder 47% voted against!

We should remember though, that it was only our spontaneous stoppages which

got us to this point. And there's a good and bad side to it. Because management couldn't control our "outbursts"(!), they were pleased to welcome union officials to "manage" our fight in an orderly fashion. But Unite's professional "organisers" took everything out of our hands. Negotiations happened behind closed doors. Our own agency workmates (the majority of workers!) were completely excluded. There was not even a suggestion of extending the struggle to ALL BMW workers! And then after a 24 hours strike the union officials cancelled the other 3 strike days and put this lousy offer to a ballot - of just a couple of hundred permanent workers!

Yet agency workers at R&H remain



the majority of the workforce. And R&H is again resorting to recruiting from the North because of a labour shortage! So we can (and must!) carry on the fight, official union or no official union agreement! We want permanent contracts for all, no tiers, no 10-12 hour shifts! Equal pay for equal work! ☐

Oxford Mini, 17/05/22]

**• All-out strike?**

Why didn't Unite call us all out on strike at the same time as our workmates in Rudolph & Hellmann? Aren't we all part of the same union after all? Many of us wanted to join the picket and we welcomed every single line stoppage. But full shifts of stopped production would have got us closer to the goal! [Workers' Fight Oxford Mini, 17/05/22]

**• Together we are stronger**

Aren't we all faced with the same

attacks? Unpaid or paid-back shutdowns, a massive increase of workload and skyrocketing inflation eroding our wages! It's a crisis calling for an exceptional response - starting with a mass meeting where we all get to say what we need! [Workers' Fight Oxford Mini, 17/05/22]

**• No way**

During the strike, some of us in BMW/Gi were asked to stay, and work overtime as "water spiders". None of us did, of course - no way would we help BMW to undermine the R&H strike! [Workers' Fight

**• We'd like a pay rise too!**

At MITIE we are paid way below minimum wage! How is this possible? It seems this British giant which bought up Interserve in June 2020 wasn't aware that the minimum wage had gone up from £8.91/hr to £9.50/hr in April... Of course, we aren't surprised, since we always have to get make a fuss to get the right pay. Given inflation, the minimum wage hike of 6.5% is a pay cut of 2.5%. It's time for us to strike too! [Workers' Fight Oxford Mini, 17/05/22]

**Ford Dagenham Engine Plant****New Ford bicycle models soon?**

After making a green-friendly presentation of Ford's Electric Vehicle series in March, newly converted environmentalist Stuart Rowley, president of Ford Europe, launched a "Park your car" initiative, which encourages car drivers to walk or cycle instead of using their cars! Indeed, Rowley probably knows better than anyone else that most people won't be able to afford Ford's EVs - so for this majority, Rowley's advice is to park your polluting car and ride a bike!

In fact, this recalls Ford's "cycle scheme" at Dagenham during the pandemic: management was supposed to help us with the cost of buying a bike (and only 47% at that!), so that we could ride to work. Never mind that for most of us, it would take several hours and anyway, we'd have no energy left after 12-hour shifts or nights!

But then, Rowley also tells us that "just 30 minutes of walking or cycling [per day] can help us live a healthier, longer



life". As for the sort of shifts worked at Ford, which have direct consequences on our health and shorten our lives, born-again environmentalist and new health champion Rowley has nothing to say, of course... ☐

**• No to all pay cuts!**

We hear management wants to transfer workmates from Panther Assy to the Chicken Farm. Maybe 14 of us. How can this be right? Unless our pay is protected? There is no way we can suddenly have our wages cut from 3-shift to one shift money! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 08/06/22]

**• A fight is long overdue!**

This cutting of pay has already happened, bit by bit, to far too many of us. We've "swallowed" the bitter pill of losing sometimes hundreds of pounds a week, maybe not in silence, but there's

been no suggestion of a collective fight back against Ford's impoverishment policy. It's a principle for the working class: nobody should ever get a pay cut. And all those of us now working single or even 2 shifts, have a whole lot of back-pay due to us... [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 08/06/22]

**• Beyond All Reason?!**

Every week, more lay-offs are announced with no credible reason, or no reason given at all. But this week we hear that Den mates will be laid off next week - or moved to Darkside - and for once, we get 2 reasons! First, we built too many engines and there are no racks

left to store them on! Pretty outrageous! And second, that "parts ran out due to wrong stock take". But enough parts would surely mean too many engines for too few racks!? [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 08/06/22]

**• Wasting their time**

TOPs managers found a good excuse to have a little stroll on the Jetty last week - they called it a "safety walk" and were supposedly checking H&S. But of course, it was more like a "snoop walk"... These people have far too much time on their hands! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 08/06/22]

## Sri Lanka

After almost two months of mass protests, Sri Lankans succeeded in forcing the resignation of the hated Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa. However the other notorious member of this parasitic family - which has monopolised positions in government since 2005 - Gotabaya Rajapaksa, still remains President.

### Run up to a crisis

Protests first began in April, amid the global post-Covid inflationary food and fuel crisis, aggravated by the war in Ukraine. But the policy of the regime pre-pandemic with its huge tax cuts for the rich and a ban on chemical fertilisers (later reversed), which critically cut rice output, helped to send the economy into near-terminal bankruptcy with the regime defaulting on a £41bn IMF loan.

An initially peaceful "Gota Go Home" sit-in was organised in Colombo's posh Galle Face neighbourhood, near the Presidential Secretariat, calling for President Gotabaya Rajapaksa to resign. But soon a whole "protest city" had been set up, with thousands attending daily demonstrations.

Then on 9 May, police and thugs of the ruling Sri Lankan People's Front began their attacks on protesters, demolishing the camp, leaving 9 dead and over 300 injured. The protesters responded by burning down PM Mahinda Rajapaksa's governmental and ancestral houses, forcing him to flee to a naval base in the east of the country, but protesters quickly found him and continued their protests there! They burnt the houses of more than 30 MPs who similarly fled Colombo.

## The Rajapaksa regime isn't the only problem



### The PM resigns

In an attempt to defuse the protests Mahinda resigned, making him the fifth Rajapaksa to resign in a month. Two days later, the 73-year-old Ranil Wickremesinghe of the opposition United National Party (UNP), was sworn into office. This was hardly a change - Wickremesinghe (an MP for 43 years) became PM for the sixth time! Today, despite the army patrolling the streets, protests have continued.

Sri Lanka, which also lost most of its tourist industry during Covid, remains in deep economic crisis. It is now requesting emergency food aid to avert what is a rapidly developing humanitarian crisis.

"New" Prime Minister Wickremesinghe has said he'll try to borrow more money from the IMF and China. But IMF loans come with conditions: huge cuts in public spending and privatisation of state-owned companies - a price which



the population is always asked to pay. Wickremesinghe has already spoken of privatising public companies such as Sri Lankan Airlines, Ceylon Electricity Board and the Ceylon Petroleum Corporation.

### The working class is yet to speak

As for the protest movement, which focused solely on getting the Rajapaksas out of power, it will now have to face the fact that the same rotten political system remains. Workers and their organisations have been active in one-day general strikes against the government in past months, but have so far not played a leading role in the protests, despite their key role in the economy. Unless they do, and what is more, seek their allies in their neighbouring working classes, the Sri Lankan capitalist class, with the help of the army, will just replace the voracious Rajapaksa parasites with parasites with different faces. □

## Rwanda deportations: Patel's provocation

It's been widely announced that on 14 June, the first flight to Rwanda is set to leave Britain carrying migrants who crossed the Channel via "irregular" means. This is following that deal signed back in April with Kigali, to take in single migrants who arrive in Britain in small boats or lorries. Their asylum applications are then meant to be processed in Rwanda and if successful, they'll "be allowed to" stay there! For its part in the scheme, Rwanda's government gets £126 million.

Patel claims that deportations to Rwanda will help "break the evil

people-smugglers' business model" and that appropriate support will be given ahead of the deportation. No doubt by "support" she means a document in English (no translation available!) entitled "I'm being relocated to Rwanda: what does that mean for me", which is being distributed in Calais among refugees from Sudan, Iraq, Yemen etc. Or the 7 days (or 14 days if in detention) to argue against the up-coming deportation flight?

The BBC obligingly provided a visual tour of the hotel in Rwanda where refugees are meant to await their fate,

as if it was some kind of holiday resort! Refugees know better, of course. Anyway the intention of Johnson's xenophobic and bigoted government is to play to its electorate. It is showing how far it is prepared to go in punishing and criminalising migrant refugees, who dare to enter Britain by the *only* means available - which yes, are "illegal" - by sending them 4,376 miles away. Of course, there is no way that British workers, the allies of all refugee migrants, should allow any of this. There are many ways to prevent planes from taking off.

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

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