

WORKERS' fight



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

THERE IS AN "AXIS OF EVIL" AND STARMER'S AND BIDEN'S STATES ARE PART OF IT!

It's already one year since the war on Gaza started. "Israel's right to defend itself" as Starmer, Biden and the rest call it, has already laid total waste to this tiny strip of land. Its shell-shocked and terrorised people - minus the 10% who are by now dead, missing under rubble, or wounded - have nowhere left to hide.

"Self defence" they say? Let us ask, then, how many Hamas invaders did the Israeli army eventually defend itself against, on Israeli soil, on 7, 8 and 9 October? That is, when it finally turned up, 12 hours after this attack began? By definition, this was the one and only opportunity for "self defence".

... just who is proxy of whom?

Now Lebanon, just like Gaza, is being attacked by Israel's army - for the 3rd time in recent history. Netanyahu claims this is in response to Hezbollah's rocket-fire into northern Israel (easily intercepted by the Iron Dome) and to return 60,000 Israelis who had been evacuated. Had Netanyahu responded to the only demand of Hassan Nasrallah, the now-assassinated Hezbollah leader, for a cease-fire in Gaza, the rockets would have stopped. But in the West's view Nasrallah was a "designated terrorist" and "Iranian proxy"; his demand was ignored.

When the secular Lebanese ambassador to London was interviewed by Sky's Trevor Phillips, he refused to condemn Islamic Hezbollah, adding that it was de facto, his country's only defence against Netanyahu's attack, recalling its roots in the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982.

In 1982, 3,500 Palestinian men, women and children residing in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps of south-west Beirut were slaughtered in the course of just one night, by a fascist Christian militia known as the Phalange, facilitated by the Israeli army. In command was General Ariel



Sharon, later to become Israel's Prime Minister, despite being tried as a war criminal.

Sharon supplied the lime, bulldozers and body bags to cover up the massacre. At the time, Hassan Nasrallah was a young recruit in the army fighting the IDF. Hezbollah was born in this war as a pro-Palestinian force - with the aim, not to exterminate "Israelis", but to overthrow a Zionist, Jewish-supremacist, apartheid state.

Class struggle, the only answer

Netanyahu has warned the Iranian regime that "There is nowhere in the Middle East Israel cannot reach", boasting of his superior - US-backed - nuclear, military capacity.

But an existence which is guaranteed only by constantly imposing military superiority on the region - and what's more, as proxy for the USA - means a permanently insecure military state, and that's precisely what Israel is and always has been, ever since its artificial creation in 1947 after the expulsion

of Palestine's Arabs. As long as the fundamentalist, religious Israeli state remains, solely recognising the right of Jewish people to live as equal citizens on its soil - it can never be secure. The oppressor is never free.

But the West's politicians - indefensible as it may seem - cannot do otherwise than support their Israeli monster. Bloody horror is the only future that capitalism in this phase of imperialist degeneration has to offer - and in fact this may be just the beginning.

That said, the world's working classes have the power to turn around this headlong dash into the abyss, by fighting the capitalist class and its political representatives. We may not be able to stop the war in the Middle East today, but if we decide to fight collectively for our class interests and we win, it will be one step towards averting further death and destruction for our Middle Eastern sisters and brothers tomorrow. □

Their wars

Their making of Hezbollah

Whenever western politicians mention Hezbollah, they add that it is a designated "terrorist organisation". But like Hamas, it was their creation; the product of the murderous interventions of the Israeli army (IDF), always with full US and British backing, against the Lebanese and Palestinian people. And if the UN passed resolutions condemning these interventions, they were always just useless pieces of paper; just as they are today, in the face of the slaughter of these peoples on a scale never seen before, thanks to the powerful weapons supplied by the US, Germany, and Britain.

So, on 27 September, Hassan Nasrallah, secretary-general of this Lebanese Shia-Islamic resistance organisation - was killed by an IDF air strike in Beirut. Finally, one of the 100 US-made BLU-109 "bunker buster" bombs provided to the IDF in late 2023 - 80 tonnes of explosive - reached an 18m-deep bunker where he was awaiting his inevitable death. US President Biden called this: "a measure of justice for his many victims".

Their bombs always kill civilians

The strike reduced to rubble 6 residential tower blocks of Haret Hreik, a mixed Shia and Maronite Christian municipality, in the Dahieh suburbs, south of Beirut. It damaged buildings in a radius of 30Km.

Now the bombing over Lebanon is constant. At the time of writing a total of 1,974 people have been killed, including 127 children, and over 9,000 injured. There are no reported deaths from Hezbollah's rockets into Israel.

Najib Mikati, leader of the secular Azm Movement and Lebanon's caretaker prime minister asked the population to: "stand



Bombed residential buildings in the Dahieh district of Southern Beirut

united against aggression" declaring 3 days of mourning for Nasrallah. And ex-PM, Michel Aoun, a Christian born in Haret Hreik said: "Lebanon has lost an exceptional leader that led the national resistance". Interestingly, Lebanon has never declared Hezbollah a terrorist organisation.

A dangerous refuge

Dahieh grew out of a rural settlement into the most populous district of Beirut after the displacement of at least 1,250,000 refugees due to the various IDF occupations of South Lebanon in 1978 and 1982-2000. Many of these displaced refugees were Palestinians who had themselves escaped to South Lebanon after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war due to the Nakba - the forced eviction of Palestinians from their homes and the seizure of their land to make way for today's Jewish state.

In 2006, the IDF invaded South Lebanon again, carrying out air strikes across the

country, destroying 700 buildings in Dahieh alone, including tower blocks, schools and hospitals. Unsurprisingly, the area became a Hezbollah stronghold, particularly after Nasrallah made its reconstruction a priority.

Wilful destruction

Since the 2019 crisis of the Lebanese economy and after serial corruption scandals, the parliamentary coalition led by Hezbollah has won 72 out of 128 parliamentary seats. It should be no surprise that Hezbollah's armed struggle against the IDF has allowed it to gain support amongst the Lebanese population as a whole, despite its reactionary Islamic Shia fundamentalism.

Given the collapse of the state, it has been the only stable political force - a state within a state, as they say - which has been able to keep society functioning. This is what the Israeli regime backed by Starmer and Biden have chosen to wipe out. □

Ukraine/Russia: "victory" for whom?

Ukrainian President Zelensky's "victory plan" which he has presented to US president Biden, amounts to a new list of demands for more and still more, weapons. No surprise there: Zelensky asserts that Russia must be "forced into peace" and that all negotiation attempts with Moscow are futile. Whether he really believes that is another question, however. Or rather whether he is allowed to believe it - since he is fully tied by puppet strings to US and NATO whims.

But an end to this lethal war of attrition is an urgent question. First there is the terrible human cost. But then there's the economic cost: the weapons and arms industries may be benefiting, but this war continues to cause disruption to European and poor countries

which relied on Ukrainian grain and Russian fuel.

By now, half-a-million Ukrainian soldiers are at the front. Since May, when a new drafting law came into force, 30,000 new recruits have arrived every month. Three in four Ukrainians know someone who has been killed and one in five has lost a relative. On the Russian side, half-a-million soldiers are involved and it's estimated that one in fifty of the male population has been killed or wounded; a new recruitment drive is expected to bring 180,000 new troops to replace them.

The war of the peace plans

Zelensky's latest US visit coincided with the meeting of the UN General Assembly, which

has sponsored several peace plans during the course of this nearly 3-year long war. In fact 25 competing "peace plans" have been proposed, by the Swiss, Chinese, Brazilian and African delegates, but neither the Ukrainians nor the Russians have participated. They have their own stalemated "peace plans" in which neither agrees to concede any territory.

The presence of Russia's Foreign minister Lavrov at the last UN general assembly, which Zelensky addressed, was said to be a first step towards new talks to end the war. But in the meantime, the butchery continues. In fact, it might even intensify, as Kiev and Moscow try to fend off the opposite side for long enough to avoid being cornered into an unfavourable peace agreement. No matter the human cost.

Stepping in when the (micro) chips are down

The MoD has bought a semiconductor factory in County Durham, which was threatened with closure after the company, Coherent, lost a contract with Apple. It was originally opened by Fujitsu in 1991 and employed 600 people. But Fujitsu closed it in 1998, attracting much attention as the site was

at Newton Aycliffe, in then Labour prime minister Tony Blair's constituency!

Since then, various owners have maintained micro-chip production there, while the workforce has shrunk to just 100. According to defence secretary John Healey, the plant's capability to make gallium

arsenide semi-conductor components used in fighter jet aircraft, is unique in Britain and the £20m purchase is to safeguard national security. "We simply can't afford as a country to let this company get into the wrong hands or to go under", he said - so he's keeping it in the hands of the "right" warmongers!

Their politics

Starmer's Labour government didn't get a honeymoon

On 29 September, an *Economist* editorial "*The sinking feeling: the Labour government is paying the price for the sins of its election campaign*" summarised some of the worries of the capitalist class when it comes to Labour in power.

Its main problem is that the government boxed itself in by promising not to be "*painted as a tax raiser*", and "*fearful of reopening the wounds of Brexit, it rejected the idea not just of rejoining the single market and customs union, but even (...) a youth-mobility agreement*".

On the other hand the *Economist* talks positively about "*planning*" regarding onshore windfarms and housing targets. However, it looks like the bosses seem a bit nervous about what will happen next.. More specifically, the bosses are concerned that "*productivity*" won't grow much in the next five years - *The Economist* worries, for example, that the future Employment Rights Bill "*is more likely to deter hiring than increase mobility*". In fact enough loopholes have been inserted to give the bosses



plenty of flexibility. For instance, only "*exploitative*" zero-hours contracts are banned, fire and rehire can still happen and collective bargaining over pay is not made compulsory.

In fact, Starmer and Reeves have placed themselves firmly in the bosses'

camp as Britain's "*natural party of business*"! While this year's Tory conference took place under a modest banner reading "*Review and Rebuild*", Labour's took place under a giant-sized Union Jack. □

• Granting workers new rights?

So, what has Labour done so far? Reeves claims there will be "*no return to austerity under a Labour Government*". However, in July, MPs voted against the scrapping of the two-child benefit cap - when 30% of children in Britain live in poverty. In September, the vote to cut pensioners' universal winter fuel allowance passed (by 120 votes) in the Commons, with 52 Labour MPs abstaining, and one voting for the Tory amendment against. Indeed, in the political centre, the Tories have swapped places with Labour..

Having scrapped the Rwanda asylum

scheme, Starmer is still looking for "*alternatives*" to "*deter*" migration, and to this end paid a visit to Italy's far right PM Meloni, following in Sunak's footsteps. As for the 20% VAT on private schools, this has already created a minor furore and was only meant to fund 6,500 teachers - a drop in the ocean of educational need.

As for the "Employment Rights Bill", according to the Institute for Public Policy Research, 68% of senior managers approve of it. In theory, it should benefit 7.4m workers, since it will bring in entitlement to statutory sick pay from

the first day a worker is ill (instead of the fourth); and certain rights from the first day into a job, like paternity leave. But workers know that whenever anything is gained this way, it can just as soon be lost - unless it is something they fought for.

Finally, of course, Great British Railways has been launched, which is almost identical to the project which the Tories proposed but didn't develop. It will be fully fledged - maybe - but only when all the franchises with the separate train companies expire.

• Unite the Union's token gesture

Unite the Union's motion to Labour conference, calling on the government to reverse the winter fuel allowance cut, and tax the richest 1% instead, was postponed to a 10-minute slot on the last day of the conference. For decades such motions and resolutions have been non-binding. And they are done by show

of hands so nobody counts the votes! Nevertheless according the chair, it won the vote - showing that even the loyalist conference attendees disapproved of Reeves' and Starmer's "*tough decisions*".

Unite's leader, Sharon Graham, not a party member, knows how to grab the headlines, however. Sadly that's

her method of choice when it comes to fighting the bosses on behalf of her members... an "on behalfism" which means that workers are deprived of applying the force they have to stop the bosses - and governments in their tracks. So far, a strike over these austerity measures has not been proposed...

• Labour's "hostile environment"

At the G7 at the start of October, Home Secretary Yvette Cooper signed up to an "*Anti-Smuggling Action Plan*" to stop "*criminal gangs*". Yup, this "gang" of leaders of the 7 richest countries in the world, are discussing yet again how to close their borders.

Cooper has also announced a new plan to "*tackle the root causes behind the UK's long-term reliance*

on international recruitment", i.e., immigrant workers. Yes, roots that go very deep indeed! These islands have always been populated from abroad, generation after generation. It's how the workforce has been built and replenished.

However, it's clear that she wants to maintain the "*hostile environment*" for immigrants which former Conservative

Home Secretary Theresa May is famous for. Even if this phrase was first used in 2007 by Labour immigration minister Liam Byrne. No real surprise there. Byrne, no longer a minister, currently chairs the House of Commons Business and Trade Select Committee. No doubt he'd be up for a new ministerial post, helping Cooper "*secure the borders*"...

Their society

Railway re-nationalisation: private profiteering carries on...

The Passenger Railway Services (Public Ownership) Bill is going through its second reading in the House of Lords. If it becomes law, it will allow passenger railway services to be provided by public sector companies instead of private franchises. Railway management and control will be taken back by the state and re-centralised under a public body called "Great British Railways" (GBR). Of course this recentralisation under one umbrella - also called GBR - was first proposed when Tory Grant Shapps was in charge. So, what's different?

Well, Transport Secretary, Louise Haigh, told the Labour party conference that she was "ripping up the roots of Thatcherism" and services would now "work for passengers not profiteers". Yet GBR constitutes only a change in form, not content: the government has no intention of kicking private companies or profiteering out of the railways. Firstly, the bill's loopholes allow for "temporary continuation of existing franchises" and for the "Secretary of State [to] enter into a new franchise agreement" by "making a direct award of a public service contract".

And there is nothing in the Bill which stops state companies from buying-in services like cleaning and catering from private providers

What's more, the government is planning to "compensate" current private operators once their contracts come to an end (by October 2027) - with up to £1.5m per franchise! They certainly need it: in 2023/24 Govia Thameslink Railway paid out £82.4 million in dividends to the shareholders - a 268% increase on the previous year!! ☐

... with cuts in workers' conditions at the "heart" of reforms

So what about the workforce? In the plan itself, despite the fact that the system relies on 240,000 railway workers, they get little mention. At the same time, a rail reform programme is underway, aiming to "restore performance" again, with "passengers at the heart". But it is the workers' conditions and moreover, worker and passenger safety that will be targeted in order to deliver these "reforms". They are just cuts by another

name.

Due to acute train driver shortages, the Department of Transport (DfT) is looking into speeding up drivers' training while lowering the minimum age for drivers from 20 to 18. The DfT argues that in this way GBR will attract a more diverse and younger workforce. Well, it definitely will be younger..

The truth is that there would be no driver shortage if private companies

hadn't cut the number of (more costly) drivers to the bare minimum over the years. To do so, they increased the length of turns (10 and 11 hour turns are common) removed the second driver in the cab of high speed trains and shortened breaks - all of which compromise safety! As for training, the idea of "speeding it up" is not new; training had already been cut to 11 months from 2 years. And neither is that safe.

... and at Euston station ...

The HS2 extension into London Euston Station, which is expected to be approved by Rachel Reeves, will also include a multi-billion-pound transformation of the station itself. When it opens, in about 10 years' time, up to 1,100 passengers per train will be able to travel between London and Birmingham, effectively doubling the

capacity between the two city centres. Said Transport Secretary Louise Haigh, "we'll get HS2 back under control, and give people faith that Britain can build again".

Only last week, the transport watchdog warned that passengers using London's Euston railway station are being put in danger by high levels

of overcrowding with last-minute announcements causing passengers to rush to platforms while staff "appear overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of people". Clearly sorting out this hazardous situation is a matter of urgency - it certainly can't wait 10 years!

Chagos Islands belong to the Chagossians, full stop

The Chagos Islands were handed over by Britain to the government of Mauritius on 3 October. This was meant to be the end of British colonial possession. It isn't, of course. And in true coloniser fashion, the British government did not even consult the Chagossians!

The former inhabitants of these islands were in fact forcibly expelled in the 1960s and 1970s to allow the USA to establish a military base on the largest island of the archipelago, Diego Garcia - under a 99 year lease. And this lease still stands!

What's more, there is no indication what will happen to the Sri Lankan Tamil asylum seekers who have (incredibly) been held for three years in a fenced camp on Diego Garcia!

The British member of parliament for Crawley where some Chagossians eventually settled says he "hasn't heard a single voice in favour of Mauritian sovereignty". Obviously the islanders want to take back what is rightfully

theirs.

However, apparently Britain's "colonial rights", bizarrely, give the Commons a say over this "deal" with

the Mauritian government. British MPs can vote against it. But the Chagossians would not be better off remaining under British sovereignty, either.. ☐



Chagossians protesting in front of the Houses of Parliament, October 2024

Their economy

The crisis continues; cost of living, poverty, homelessness...

According to government spokespersons, the crisis is "over". Really? But certainly not for workers. The high point of the inflation rate - when RPI hit 14.2% in October 2022 - is still affecting prices; they still haven't fallen back to previous levels and many costs, like energy, are still rising.

• Wages still haven't caught up

It's not only rising costs which cause so many to struggle. Wage rises have not kept up, not only in the past few years, but for decades. The average "real wage" (that is, the real value of wages in terms of what they can buy) is down to the level it was in 2005!

During Labour's conference the

• Black-hole budget?

Chancellor Reeves and PM Starmer don't stop going on about the surprise "black hole" in government finances left for them by the Tories. It's a convenient excuse, especially when your promises to be "fiscally responsible" and not raise taxes will make balancing the books impossible, even if you've already said - as Starmer did - that "things can only get worse".

The Institute of Fiscal Studies, on the other hands claims that "The £22bn black hole was obvious to anyone who dared look" concluding that "nobody comes out of this smelling of roses. Not the Conservatives who really did leave a lot for the new government to clear up, and were not honest about the challenges ahead. Not Labour, which knew the broad outline of these challenges, but refused to confront them in its manifesto and pre-election statements".

The two main areas where costs were unfunded were £2bn for pay rises for the public sector and the £6.4bn costs of asylum. About 100,000 asylum-seekers get support for accommodation (50,000 are being put up in hotels at a cost of £3 bn/year). The IFS calls this "a monumental policy failure", adding that

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) data shows that around one in six people (11.4m) in Britain were in relative poverty, earning less than 60% of the median income, before housing costs in 2022/23. This rises to just over one in five people (14.3m) once housing costs are accounted for.

nurses' vote to reject a 5.5% pay rise which was already imposed on them, was announced. They've not as yet voted to go back on strike, however. As Starmer and the media would have it, this was an "above inflation" pay rise.

However, nurses know - as do the railway workers, teachers and other

In fact 5.4 million are in "deep" poverty without enough food to put on the table every day. And with the energy price cap rising by 10% this month, and the withdrawal of winter fuel allowance from 780,00 pensioners, 8m (over 8%) of households will struggle to heat their homes this winter.

public sector workers who've now voted to accept similar pay rises - that this 5.5% cannot make up for years of falling real wages. They will also know that to regain what's been lost a new wave of militant - and this time, real - strikes will have to be on their agenda.

"whatever the numbers coming in, the failure to process them and the failure to find better-value accommodation is unforgivable".

But this cost didn't even appear in the Treasury's accounts. It was meant to come out of a reserve, which had already

been spent by the Tories "on a veritable hotchpotch of demands".

At the time of writing, Labour's Reeves has not yet delivered her first budget (due on 30 October), so it remains to be seen how she'll manage to balance her unsurprising black hole.



• Sticking plaster for housing emergency

In September the Labour government published their version of the Tories' Renters' Reform Bill, called the Renters' Rights Bill. Its main proposal is the same: to scrap "no-fault" evictions by landlords. Instead, landlords will only be allowed to evict tenants in order to sell a property. The biggest problem is, however, the extortionate cost of renting a property. But the government has no intention to impose rent controls.

In fact the housing emergency remains unaffected by any measures

taken so far by the government. London boroughs report that there are 175,000 people in temporary accommodation and predict a £700m funding shortfall to house them next year, threatening more council bankruptcies. In Scotland, Shelter reports that more than 10,000 children are in temporary housing. Edinburgh council already declared its homelessness an "emergency" last November. It recorded 1,515 failures to offer temporary accommodation in 2023-24, a more than threefold increase on

the previous year. In Glasgow this figure rose from only five to 6,260!

Starmer said he "wants" more homes built and blames the "slow" planning system. Angela Rayner has reinstated national and local house-building targets and announced some policy adjustments to prioritise building social homes for rent. But nothing concrete - in the true meaning of the word - is being done! Apparently neither Starmer nor Rayner knows the meaning of the word "emergency".

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**• It's not rocket science...**

Last Monday, Tracked Parcels failed big-time. There's no way these parcels can get where they need to go in 24 hours! And managers try to make it our problem - "you need to work weekends, and then this wouldn't happen" they say. The real problem, if they want to know, is that they've cut so many jobs during the week. [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 02/10/24]

• It's simple: speed=D/T (distance over time)!

The other problem, by the way, is that postal flights (like to Scotland) have been cut. So of course north-bound tracked parcels are delayed; they're being sent by much-slower-road! And actually, since everyone knows they won't make it on time, we see Tracked 24s and 48s being loaded on lorries, de facto downgrading them to 2nd class! [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 02/10/24]

• WhatsApp-ening here?

And then we get that voice message on WhatsApp from the local union branch telling us that Processing managers are offering more VRs for mates to leave by New Year - and that this is because there is a surplus of us! Yes, VRs while managers bring in casuals!

That speaks for itself... [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 02/10/24]

• A fight is needed

By the way, many of our workmates have already left - some who we were really surprised to see go! But then, we can understand how fed-up they were! Surely now's the time to draw a line and refuse further redundancies point blank? For 2 (obvious) reasons: first, because the VR lump sum was outrageously cut to just 9 months wages; and 2nd, because we just cannot afford any more mates leaving: we need our fighting force intact! [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 02/10/24]

• Missing the bonus?

Given the shortage of hands, managers are increasingly stressed, poor things! Some of them are doing our vacant duties, trying to clear, without any hope of success... which means they'll most likely lose their cherished bonuses! It's a sorry sight indeed! [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 02/10/24]

• Worrying...

Sunday the fire alarm went off and we all had to go out in front of the, now closed, fire station building... Which is ironic indeed, since a place like the Mount could do with a fire engine close-by! And by the way, we weren't told why the fire alarm was triggered... [Workers' Fight



bulletin Mount Pleasant 02/10/24]

• Royal parcels (and occasional mail)

Every delivery worker out with tracked parcels and specials gets asked the same question - when are the letters coming? This week, next week? When management decides that bit of the frame must be cleared? Who knows?

PS: However when a customer asks what's "special" about tracked delivery, that's easy to answer: the price! It's £7.29 for a medium (less than 2kg) parcel! [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 02/10/24]

• It's the new first class!

And that's not the only overpriced postage service offered by RM: the price of 1st Class stamps is going up (again!) by 30p to £1.65 - that is a hike of more than 20%! This can only be an attempt from parcel-maniac bosses to kill letters off completely! [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 02/10/24]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**• Nothing to lose**

Those of us "employed" by Staffline (the majority on the line!) are getting really fed up. We've had enough of working years (some as long as a decade, or even more) without a contract, and being messed about, with all these layoffs, shutdowns and job cuts. Not to mention the work itself becoming impossible. But it's up to us, together with permanent BMW mates, to make managers stop their nonsense! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 24/09/24]

• Permanent jobs wanted!

Apparently Staffline/BMW are so short of workers, that they are asking Staffline office workers to go and do jobs on the line. And we see that Staffline are putting out job adverts again for more workers for BMW. But often BMW wants these new starters just to fill in gaps, so they don't even stay a month until BMW gets rid of them again. [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 24/09/24]

• What's the paint?

For example, in Paint, new Staffline

mates spent 4 weeks training. But after their training was done, they were told that there was no job for them in Paint, and if they wanted to keep working in the factory they could move to Assembly. So what was the point in all that training? Just a waste of time! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 24/09/24]

• BMW turns smart into dumb

Now BMW has replaced the guns used in some areas with a "smart" version. So "smart", it won't function at all without exactly the required number of screws per job! So, more trips to reload, adding to the time of process! It also shuts down if we "stray" from our own workstations, so we can't help our mates out either when things are busiest. [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 24/09/24]

• The flying countryman

And now we've got to scan a barcode on the front of the car to track where it's at... Another bright idea from people who've never worked on the line! This also means that every now and then some cars don't show up on the screen, so we just shout to the buyoff - the ghost car is coming down! Straight to rework. [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 24/09/24]

**• Not fit for purpose!**

The new company-issued safety shoes seem designed for extreme discomfort. Or to promote sales of socks - we need two or three pairs to stop them chafing our feet! Management says they were tested. Yes, by office staff, and not for nine hours a day darting around cars on a moving track. [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 08/10/24]

• We're not "ironman"

On the new model, we have to fit two iron bars weighing 6kg each to the underbody. At the moment, the job requires one of us to hold up the bars crossed, above our heads, while someone else screws them in. Except that now, management wants it to be done by just one person! But we're not willing to get knocked out by 12kg of iron bar... [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 08/10/24]

King's Cross railway station (London)**• Pay up!**

Drivers just got their first pay rise and surprise, surprise, the pay for extra hours/overtime has been calculated on the old rate of pay! A separate agreement increased our pay for rest days and OT, but management hasn't coughed this up! Since delays are so frequent, we frequently work over our normal hours, like everyone else here, whether we like it or not. This pay is overdue. [Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 02/10/24]

• Can't get their act together?

As for the rest of us, even though the vote to accept the pay rise "won", we're also not yet getting the full amount which we're owed! We heard from the RMT that they were awaiting the TSSA vote. So, yet again the union leaders haven't bothered to talk to each other in order to co-ordinate their actions in the interests of ALL the members - whichever union they are in! [Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 02/10/24]

• Staggering excuse!

And when we do eventually get paid, LNER management told us in their Q&A that "due to the complexity of the pay", it will be paid over several pay dates. Complexity? And why exactly should it be more complex than previous pay

deals? Should we also stagger the amount of work we do each day? [Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 02/10/24]

• We don't do miracles...

On-Board staff like to make fun about the state of the Azuma trains and how the equipment is so often broken and in need of repair. Yes, despite fitters trying their very best to keep up with all the big and small jobs that constantly need doing - due to poor design and cheap quality. It's pretty much impossible. And even more so, because there aren't enough fitters on stations and in depots to manage to fix everything. [Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 02/10/24]

• We want good masks!

What happened to the masks within the biohazard kits which Atalian/OCS used to provide us cleaners with? They're nowhere to be found anymore. Apparently the makers of these kits don't consider masks necessary - but we do, given the smelly (if not infectious) nature of some of the mess we have to deal with. [Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 02/10/24]

• Hands off our rosters!

Avanti West Coast workers have heard that managers are trying to change our rosters - even though the pay deal was (meant to be!) without strings. The bosses are trying their luck, it seems, but in fact they know they can't get away with this.

**• No show**

About six months ago, Mitie managers told us that 14 more bins would be installed around King's Cross station. That sounded like it would be an improvement... But no surprise, these bins have not shown up, and neither have the extra workers who are needed, either! [Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 02/10/24]

• Euston station unsafe!

Euston workers can only agree with the Sunday Times article (29 Sept) entitled "Worst station in Britain? Welcome to the Battle of Euston". It describes how overcrowded and dangerous this station gets, given it's operating with "six times as many trains as it did after its 1960s rebuild". A passenger described the situation as "an accident waiting to happen". But so far, Network Rail is doing nothing to improve matters. It even sacked an engineer for exposing the problem. [Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 02/10/24]

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**• Ford, Hamton, ISL, LLL, G4S... one workforce!**

Us Lineside workers are suddenly getting lots of attention from Unite the Union... "Factory Voice" newsletters are appearing, and a meeting at the Millhouse is advertised for this Saturday at 12pm to talk about our pay deal. It said "all welcome". OK! Good start! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 09/10/24]

• Strength in numbers!

But it's a Ford pay deal year, Hamton mates face a takeover, G4S jobs may be cut and ISL mates (on zero-hours) aren't even unionised! The bosses of all these companies are "united" in keeping us divided, all the better to screw us! So, isn't "uniting" ourselves the first thing we need to do? Yes, definitely, ALL welcome to this meeting! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 09/10/24]

• Why consult after the event?

As for Unite the Union's last newsletter which says that "the union" already (without any meeting) rejected LLL's 2.5% and made a counter "offer" (they

mean "demand"!) of 8% and paid "stand down" (they mean "lay-off") days... we are flummoxed! Why on earth, if they rejected 2.5%, are they "issuing a consultative ballot" on this 2.5% below-inflation offer? [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 09/10/24]

• The workers' voice...

Indeed, we wonder who in the union is behind this out-of-touch attempt to seem in touch! Real shopfloor control of negotiations would mean our spokespersons, elected by us, here, on the ground, talking to the bosses in front of us - full transparency - and demanding and deciding nothing without the rest of us being involved. [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 09/10/24]

• Anyone for teaaa?!

Here in the Den, the line's still full speed ahead! We thought production might go down, but some of us are meant to be reassembling 3,000 recalled engines! Seems we'll need to take a few extra breaks... Oh and BTW, what was the "verdict" of that huge team (who were they?) who came to scrutinise each job on the line? [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 09/10/24]

**• More "break" downs**

On Lion machining, we've also been at it non-stop 7 days on 7 with overtime... So the machines took a "break" and we expect they will "need" to take more breaks. We quite understand and support their choice fully. [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 09/10/24]

• We can set "limits" too

When temps asked management if they'd be made permanent this Xmas, they were told that Ford has an upper limit on the number of workers it can employ as temps... If they're implying they'll keep on firing and rehiring, the rest of us are happy to help bring this "limit" down to zero... along with the number of engines produced! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 09/10/24]

International

Letter from India: Chennai's Samsung workers refuse to back down

On 9 September, 1100 of the 1800 workers in Samsung's Chennai factory went on indefinite strike demanding union recognition, higher wages and shorter working hours. They erected a tent in the nearby village of Echoor and gathered there every day. The factory, which produces refrigerators, washing machines and TVs, is in Sriperumbudur, a large industrial area where automotive and electronics factories like Hyundai and Yamaha are located.

This dispute first began in July 2023 when the "Samsung India Workers Union", part of the CITU, Centre of Indian Trade Unions, demanded recognition by the company. The CITU is the union federation affiliated to the Communist Party of India (Marxist). Samsung, well-known for its anti-unionism, responded by forming a "workers' committee" and refused to deal with independent union reps.

On 19 August, the union sent a strike notice with demands for recognition, reduction of working hours from 9 to 8, a wage increase from 25,000 rupees (£227) to 36,000 rupees (£327)/month, and equal pay for equal work across the plant instead of the present system of dividing the workforce into 5 separate tiers. The workers also protested the company's humiliating rules, like being made to stand for an hour next to the production line if they are late. But one day later, Samsung registered a case against the union... for illegally using the company's trademarked "Samsung" in its



Samsung workers on strike meet near the plant in Sriperumbudur

name!

During the strike, the state and Samsung tried everything to get workers to return to work. On 16 September, 118 workers were arrested for planning a march. That day, workers from JK Tyres, Apollo Tyres, Hyundai, Yamaha and BMW held gate meetings condemning the arrests. On the next day, 600 Samsung workers nevertheless showed up for the march. On 18 September, police denied permission for a planned protest by 10 trade union federations and arrested assembled workers. Samsung sent fruits and chocolates to workers' homes and offered TVs and refrigerators to those who return to work! But the strike has

remained firm.

The amazing solidarity that Samsung workers have across the whole state of Tamil Nadu was shown when, on 1 October, when nearly 12,000 workers belonging to various companies were arrested for supporting their strike.

Tamil Nadu's government (ironically, under a chief minister called Stalin!) is still (at time of writing) trying to break the strike - and all the more so because it's backed by the "communist" CITU. Anti-union Samsung is also still holding out against its South Korean workforce who were on strike in July for recognition. But it cannot hold out forever. ☐

Sri Lanka's election: a divisive, left-wing cover for the capitalists

On 21 September Anura Kumara Disanayake of the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) - People's Liberation Front - which led the "National People's Power" electoral coalition, became Sri Lanka's President. After the dramatic popular protests of 2022 over skyrocketing inflation brought down the despised Rajapaksa regime, this was the first time the electorate had the chance to vote in a new president.

Dissanayake portrayed himself as a political outsider, committed to rooting out corruption. Due to his party's quasi-Marxist rhetoric, the international media portrayed him as a "firebrand rebel", alongside hammer and sickle flags! But Dissanayake is no Marxist. The JVP was formed in 1965 by a dissident from the Ceylon Communist Party (Peking Wing), and led two failed uprisings of Sinhalese

rural unemployed youth in 1971 and 1987-1989. Right from its inception, it represented the interests of the nationalist Sinhala petit-bourgeoisie, claiming the peasantry was the main force of the "Sinhalese revolution" and characterising a major part of the Sri Lankan working-class, Tamil plantation workers, as tools of "Indian expansionism"! Anyway, in recent decades the party has distanced itself from its former rhetorical commitment to class struggle.

Despite what he claims, Dissanayake is no outsider either: he has been in Parliament since 2001 and was once briefly agriculture minister. He will try to force the population to foot the bill for a new loan from the IMF to repay the country's huge debts. The imperialist powers know this: the voice of British big business, *The Economist* wrote: "he isn't

as bad as he sounds"!

But he is bad. His party represents a threat to the working class, especially given its stance against Tamil workers. It is still unwilling to allow an investigation into the atrocities committed during the 1980s civil war and near-genocide against Tamils. In 2005, it opposed government help for Tamils in the aftermath of a devastating tsunami. In the 2010s it supported the Presidential bid of Field Marshal Sarath Fonseka, the military mastermind of Tamil mass-murder.

However, Dissanayake's election has clearly generated hopes among a section of the Sinhala population who believe he will "liberate" them from the country's corrupt elite. If any workers share that illusion, it will soon be crushed, when he turns the screw. And then, they will know what to do... ☐

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 "International 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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