

WORKERS' fight



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

OUT WITH "DONALD" STARMER, PICK-POCKET!

White smoke suddenly appeared out of 10 Downing Street's chimney on 8 May, announcing Starmer's "triumphant" US-British trade deal. No, not really..!

But the current self-appointed "pope" of world capitalism, Donald Trump, and his Oval Office conclave did unexpectedly bump up the "United Kingdom" to first place in the deal-queue - making a trade agreement in record time... And of course blew this pint-sized deal out of all proportion in order to claim it was something "very special" if not earth-shattering!

Quite obviously, Trump needed to manufacture some good news - given that his scheme to "change" the world and bring peace everywhere within days of taking office has so far fallen flat, while his on-off tariff announcements have injected unprecedented uncertainty into the financial markets. The capitalist class has been tearing its hair out...

Of course, for British PM Keir Starmer, whose popularity is rock bottom and whose party got its worst ever vote share in an election, on 1 May, this was indeed a "godsend"!

Keir goes to Solihull

Starmer chose to pop up again at the Jaguar Land Rover factory to present his "achievement" to the workforce - who were shown on TV standing behind him, looking unimpressed; not a smile among them. And why should they have been pleased? As if the workers - exploited, "tiered", casualised and overworked - actually receive any "fruits of their hard labour"!

The leader of the "party of business" presented a deal which was good for the bosses of JLR etc., and as regards workers' interests lied through his teeth. It was almost like hearing Trump boasting, as he claimed to be "Starmer the deal-maker" who would first and foremost "always put money



in people's pockets". He should tell that to the pensioners and disabled who just had money picked out of their pockets by his government - and as one of its first priorities!

In fact Starmer's only answer to the poverty which affects one in five households is "free breakfast clubs for primary schools", so far established in some 750 schools out of 21,000...

As for the agreement with Trump - it's not a free trade deal, even if tariffs on steel, and aluminium have been cancelled. The tariffs on car exports which Trump had threatened, have only been reduced: from 27.5% to 10% and only for the first 100,000 vehicles. Last year roughly 132,000 British-made cars were exported to the US, so the quota doesn't even cover all of them.

Partners in imperialist crime

For now, the showbiz in Washington and Solihull seems to have worked. The dollar hit a 4-week high after the trade deal announcement - after having slumped "dramatically" since Trump's tariff threat on 2 April.

He did have to correct himself on who won WW2 though, having claimed victory for the USA on the 80th anniversary of "Victory in Europe Day". Though he can definitely own the unspeakably cruel nuclear "experiment" which historians claim caused the final Japanese surrender 3 months later, in August 1945.

As part of this new agreement, Starmer reaffirmed the special relationship in "security and defence". That is, alignment with Trump's support for the annihilation - and now, starvation to the death - of the Palestinians of Gaza, while sending British jets to join those of Trump and Netanyahu to bomb Yemen.

So never mind the trade deal. The US-British partnership in bloody imperialist crime is as deadly as ever. If only for this reason, the working class - here, in the US and across the world - needs to organise itself in clear opposition to these policies. Because as history has proven, it is only a working class revolution which can and will change this world. ☐

The Palestinians of Gaza are running out of time

Two young political activists wearing t-shirts that said: "Youth Demand: Stop Arming Israel" jumped over the barriers at the London Marathon and threw red paint in front of the men's elite race, trying to disrupt the race.

They said they were targeting the runners, "...because the people in Palestine are running out of time... thousands are being killed in Gaza, our Government is making no effort to stop it and no other course of action, marches or rallies, has worked". They are right that the Palestinians are running out of time. But wrong to imagine that the government, international law or any other official institution is going to protect them.

Not only does the government "do nothing", but whether under Tory or Labour, it hasn't changed its position of full support of "Israel" behind the US - even if today Starmer feels obliged to issue a few words of caution to Netanyahu, given the opposition in Labour's own ranks due to his complicity in the deadly anti-Palestinian Zionism espoused by Trump/Netanyahu. And let's be clear, this war to the death waged by the Israeli "Defence" Force is not about Hamas and its terrorist tactics. It's about a denial of the equal right of Palestinians to exist and live alongside Israelis, in their ancient land.

The Strip under siege

Since Israel broke the latest ceasefire in March, the killing has become even more indiscriminate - if that were possible - adding daily to a total of almost 62,000 identified Palestinian dead and many others missing.

Netanyahu, while facing huge demonstrations in Tel Aviv against his war, including by families of hostages, is calling up 60,000 reserves for his "endgame". By now, there are deaths



Charity kitchen at the Nuseirat refugee camp

from starvation as the total blockade of all humanitarian aid into the Strip enters its third month.

On 2 May, a "Freedom Flotilla" ship carrying humanitarian aid for Gaza was bombed by Israeli drones 14 miles out at sea from Malta.

Having achieved none of his war-aims so far (i.e., the eradication of Hamas and the freeing of all hostages), Netanyahu has announced that the IDF will occupy the whole of Gaza and push its over 2m population into a zone in the south, no matter that this too, seems unsustainable or that his call-up of army reservists may fail.

Bombing Yemen "against Iran"

In the meantime, Houthi military bases in Yemen are being systematically bombed, by US, British and Israeli jets. By now, these supposedly "targeted strikes" have killed dozens of civilians (300 since March alone) as well as 70 African

migrant workers who'd been living in an encampment near Sanaa.

Trump tweeted in March that "Iran will be held responsible [for the attacks by the Houthis aimed at Israel, in support of the Palestinians] and suffer the consequences, and those consequences will be dire!". This is no doubt aimed at intimidating Iranian leaders as talks with US officials over their nuclear program begin...

Today, US imperialism and its partners in crime against the Middle Eastern populations, in collusion with the rulers of the Gulf states, and Egypt and Israel, are attempting to reassert their dominance over the region, having failed so dismally in the recent past. The Middle Eastern working classes have the combined power to prevent this. But only if they overcome their nationalist and religious divisions and build their own class-based organisations across the artificial boundaries which separate them. □

Ukraine war: Trump still trying to "deal" a peace card

Trump boasted how he'd end the Ukraine war within his first 24 hours in office, but more than 100 days later, the war continues. A deal which will allow the US to exploit Ukraine's critical minerals has now been signed, supposedly also guaranteeing the continued US aid which Trump had threatened to withdraw. But so far, even a temporary truce seems unlikely.

Of course, the Russian military is "winning" this war, albeit at great human and economic cost. For Putin this war always had limited aims, although one would not think so, listening to Zelensky ("Putin wants to destroy Ukraine..." etc.): that is, to prevent Ukraine from establishing itself as a hostile NATO/EU satellite on the border of Russia, thus completing Moscow's encirclement.

It was probably never Putin's wish to

get into a full-blown war - he was always a Europhile, hoping for Russia's inclusion as part of Europe. But he had already stepped in to support Russian-speaking Ukrainians against far-right Ukrainian nationalist paramilitaries in the Donbass region in 2014 - and then his troops re-annexed Crimea.

It is this Russian-occupied territory in eastern Ukraine which the Russian army has enlarged since its invasion in 2024. And it is this territory which the Ukrainian government would have to concede to Russia in any peace deal, despite Zelensky's remonstrations, and despite the supportive posturing by Starmer and Macron behind him. Indeed, another perverse outcome of Trump's "US-exit" policy which seemingly places Starmer's "coalition of the willing" at odds with their US NATO partner! But only seemingly. □



Local elections: the largest "party" is unrepresented!

The elections held on 1 May in England were hyped up as a "first big test" of Labour's (un)popularity. Except that they involved mainly Conservative-held councils where Labour did not even aspire to win seats. In fact the main contender for Tory seats was Nigel Farage's "Reform" - just as it was on 4 July last year, but even better-prepared this time, with a brand new party apparatus.

And as predicted by opinion polls, it won the Runcorn parliamentary by-election (beating Labour by just 6 votes), took a "record" 677 council seats, and won two mayoralties. Excited political commentators claimed that Reform's (relative) success (along with a much smaller increase in votes for the Lib Dems and Greens) represented a "sea change" in British politics and heralded the end of the 100 year-old 2-party system!

However this political "storm" has taken place in a very tiny electoral teacup! In fact the biggest "party" in this election was made up of non-voters - those who saw no point in voting and/or nobody worth voting for: turnout was an average 35%!

Dark blue became pale blue

The first result counted was the parliamentary by-election in Runcorn, a little old working-class town near Liverpool (population 61,635) where the Labour MP had been forced to resign after punching a constituent. Reform's "winning" 12,645 votes - 6 more than Labour's - only represented around 18% of Runcorn's electors. Labour's loss is probably mostly accounted for by voter abstention. However a Labour activist told the BBC of voters' anger against Starmer: "On every door it was the same story - [the cuts in] winter fuel [allowance] and PIP [personal independence benefit]" - that is, Reeves' attack on the most vulnerable in society, pensioners and the disabled, in aid of her "tough choices" budget.

However out of 23 councils up for grabs, almost all of them previously



controlled by the Tories, Reform now controls 10. Three were won by the Lib Dems and 10 are now "no overall control" - also reflecting the loss of Conservative votes to other parties.

No, this doesn't herald a 5-party system!

Reform also won two mayoral elections, including for a new "Greater Lincolnshire" mayor. So yes of course Farage's and Tice's single-issue anti-immigrant party did well on this occasion; but whether voters voted to support its reactionary policies, or out of protest against the Tories' post Brexit debacles under Johnson and Truss, is a question which the voting statistics cannot answer.

As for Reform's current "advent" spelling the end of the 2-party system as "experts" like psephologist John Curtice argue, weren't the Lib Dems already present as a significant 3rd party? They even ruled in coalition with the Tories from 2010 to 2015 - and have run local councils for years.

Indeed, unless the "first past the post" voting system itself is replaced with proportional representation, the success of smaller parties will remain the aberration it is today.

A partial breach of Fortress Grantham!

The Reform "surge" raised the spectre of a defeat for the Tories in always-true-blue Grantham in Lincolnshire, the birthplace of Margaret Thatcher and one of the county's biggest market towns - where the Tories have never been defeated!

Lincolnshire was thus a prime Reform target. And yes, it managed to take control of the county council, winning 44 of its 70 seats. It also won 3 of the 5 council wards in Grantham itself, breaking the Thatcher spell! However the "dear leader's" birthplace and home of her father's grocery shop, is in Grantham North ward, where Tory Paul Martin held on to his council seat with 980 against Reform's 901 votes... □

Trump and Musk; a chainsaw attack on the working class!

At the end of April, Trump reached his 100-day mark in power. He could already boast of at least one record: the fastest fall in second-term approval ratings of any president ever, from 51% to 42%. Only his ratings in "border security" are above 50%. But then, this does not mean that approval rates on his anti-immigration policies are high - quite the contrary! They're just as bad as the rest and no wonder, when the families of deported people manage to tell their stories - or when Trump's administration tries to deport citizens for being pro-Palestinian activists!

And while claiming to defend American workers' jobs against

"foreigners", Trump is attacking all workers! Elon Musk's "DOGE" (Department of Government Efficiency) has made 4,000 job cuts in the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which will affect an estimated 3.5m low-income households. Axing 20,000 jobs in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) will put millions of workers at risk of losing their health insurance. And then, there are the cuts in departments providing nutrition assistance, energy assistance, education, legal help... In total, an estimated 275,000 federal jobs are cut, affecting vital services which workers depend on!

Musk claimed DOGE would help him cut \$2 trillion off the federal budget. He ended up "revising" this figure to \$160bn. Independent reports say it's even less - but regardless, this is a significant drop in the US federal budget (~2.5%). And while Musk had to take leave to try to save his Tesla operations, whose shares have plummeted, his cuts have left behind chaos and delays in departmental services, paid in real terms by those workers who have lost their jobs and by those who depend on these services. And even more so, at a time when the cost of living has gone through the roof - not least thanks to Trump's tariffs!

Their society

Birmingham bin strikers: but what about all the others under attack?

On 29 April, around 200 skilled bin lorry drivers were told that just like their fellow refuse workers, they would now also be downgraded - slashing their pay by £8,000! So instead of the negotiations to end this strike coming to some kind of conclusion after 8 weeks of all-out action, Birmingham Council has ensured that the strike will escalate! One has to wonder if, for this bankrupt council, the strike itself is not "desirable" since it saves on paying strikers' wages...

Hitting profits, not services

Unite the union, representing the strikers, has had a lot to say all along - and now it blames the Labour government: *"The council's financial problems are directly linked to its £3.9 billion debt, which is owned by the government. If the government restructured or reduced the debt the council would not need to cut workers' pay"*.

Which may be true, but what the union has not proposed during this strike is the involvement of the many other sections of workers whose jobs, pay and conditions have come under attack by this council - but also other councils in the region... And even more importantly, what about the Midlands' manufacturing working class - whose pay, terms and conditions, are constantly squeezed and whose industrial



muscle, hitting profits, could have helped (and can still help) bring this dispute to a speedy victory for the council workers?

After all, service workers when they strike (even those outsourced to private companies like Veolia) by definition, do not hit profits directly, but merely stop the service they provide to the public. And the public is not the target; the employers are. So shouldn't it be the objective - even the duty - of a large union like Unite to find ways to extend the strike as far and wide as possible and especially to the commercial and productive sectors?

Graham's shameful tactics

Unfortunately the tactics of Unite

leader Sharon Graham are well-known. She usually aims for the opposite, specialising in small sectional strikes which she deliberately keeps isolated and separate. Her aim is not to use workers' numbers or their militancy to win a strike by instilling fear into the bosses, far and wide, but to employ her own "unique" bargaining technique - which revolves around "shaming" the bosses into submission. As if their shame can ever be real anyway!

That said, many of the Birmingham refuse workers are seasoned strikers and know how to organise themselves. It would not be beyond their ability to send "flying pickets" around the country! ☐

• Homes into profiteers' hands

Average monthly rents have gone up to £1,349 outside London (a 43% increase) and as much as £2,698 inside the capital (up 28%). Property agents forecast a further 17.6% increase by 2029.

This increase is driven by landlords and would-be landlords buying houses and flats to rent out (buy-to-let) - and now there's even a "rent-to-rent" market! Yup, self-styled "entrepreneurs" will rent a property in order to sub-let it at a profit by, for instance, renting out rooms individually and/or converting them officially into HMOs - i.e., houses in multiple occupancy.

It's estimated that 17% of buy-to-let investors - who own five or more properties each - control almost half of the rental market. Even with mortgage interest rates still relatively high, landlords have still managed to increase their rental incomes by 7%. So in the last quarter of 2024, buy-to-let loans actually rose by 39% from a year earlier.

At the same time, rent-to-rent schemes push profit-seeking even further. For example, one rent-to-rent investor made £1,085 in profit each month on a five-bedroom house - a 122% return - without owning the home or doing any major repairs. With private rents rising faster than real incomes and the private rented sector dominating over half of all rented accommodation in England, growing numbers of people are left unable to rent a room, let alone a flat or a house.

• Reallocation of NHS... cuts!

The Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust, which runs both Queen's Hospital in Romford and King George Hospital in Ilford, has announced it is cutting 115 jobs, on top of the 40 already axed last year. And that's just the beginning: health Secretary Wes Streeting, who is also North Ilford's local MP, told the chief executive of the Trust that he expects another £60m to be cut from the trust's budget - which would mean another 800 administrative and frontline jobs gone! And this, at a time when Queen's Hospital actually needs £35m to expand its A&E, which was built to handle 300 patients per day, but sees 750!

Streeting claimed that by abolishing NHS quangos, he would "relocate resources to frontline services". But so far, only job cuts have been announced: 10,000 expected as a result of the abolition of NHS England and 12,500 from cutting Integrated Care Boards (which oversee NHS Trusts). But Trusts have also been instructed by the government to cut service staff, which health charities say might result in another 100,000 job cuts - including frontline workers! And of course, the staff losing their jobs thanks to Streeting's cutting spree won't be offered equivalent positions (or further training) to fill-in the estimated 125,000 NHS vacancies. So much so for "reallocation of resources"!

• Water companies: full of s**t!

The government has no plans to nationalise water companies, despite many calls for it, and despite on-going releasing of sewage into rivers and the sea... Instead, it has allowed judges to jail water bosses for up to two years if they "impede" or "obstruct" investigations of water pollution. What good that will do is anybody's guess.

James Wallace, head of campaign group River Action, says this is an "empty threat" anyway, since "the Environment Agency [the government's regulator] has too few resources, too little legal expertise, and most importantly, too little access to court time to actually prosecute water companies". Since 2009, funding for the agency has been cut by up to 50%! It has 9,000 fewer employees than in 2016. Court backlogs mean it can take up to 5 years to bring cases against companies.

Earlier this year, Labour MP Clive Lewis presented a bill to nationalise those water companies which have had 3 major sewage spills - without compensation. But the government claims it couldn't afford to run these companies if it did take them over - while announcing a £104 billion subsidy for the private companies to make improvements! It wouldn't dream of forcing shareholders to pay back their dividends - which have never dried up despite this stinking scandal.

Their economy

Starmer face-saving trade deals

Starmer got two trade deals done in one week, first with India on 6 May, and then, on 8 May, unexpectedly, with Trump's USA - which he no doubt hopes will overshadow his dismal electoral record and rock-bottom poll ratings.

The agreement with India, said the bosses' *Economist*, "will add a useful boost to trade between the world's fifth- and sixth- largest economies". Really? This "boost" is calculated to be 0.1% by 2040, equal to just £4.8 billion!

What's more, the "fifth largest economy" happens to be one of the poorest in the world. Its "largeness" being spread over a population of 1.4 billion - placing India, in reality, at number 136 in the league table of GDP per head. The same table puts Britain, not at number 6, but at number 18 (\$54,949 per head)... But that still makes Britain nearly 20 times richer!

So this is hardly a deal between equals. And neither can Starmer take all the credit, since the Tories opened negotiations with Modi's government over 3 years ago, in order to cover their own backs after their Brexit deal shot the City and British manufacturing/ agriculture in the foot. No doubt that's why this deal is described by the press as the "biggest since Brexit".

Cheap booze, cheap deal

Of course it won't be the millions of Indian workers who will now be able to sip cheaper glasses of Scotch and British gin, thanks to the halving of the tariff imposed by Britain from 150% to 75%! It says it all about this agreement that the cut in the duty on whisky is first on the list!

However, the right-wing anti-immigrant gallery has already attacked a clause exempting Indian workers who come to Britain (and only those on intercompany transfers) from paying National Insurance

Contributions. This is so that they are not "double taxed", since they have to carry on paying social security contributions at home. Anyway, British workers abroad get similar concessions. At the same time, however, the request for the number of visas for Indian IT workers to be increased (who are much-needed!) has been refused, a predictable response from this government, which increasingly adopts far-right postures in its attempt to become "popular".

Showbiz in the Oval Office

Two days later came the deal with the US. Chancellor Reeves must be heaving a huge sigh of relief. Everyone thought she had been cold-shouldered the week before.

This deal doesn't reset the trading relation back to its tariff-less, pre-Trump state. The new 10% (in effect 13%) tariffs remain on most goods, although steel and aluminium are now at 0% and exported British-made cars - the Jags, Land Rovers, Bentleys, Aston Martins, Minis and Rolls Royces (just over 100,000 of them) - will now have a 10% duty imposed instead of 27.5%. But they are not back down to zero...

Starmer returned to the Indian-owned Tata Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) factory in the Midlands to announce the deal in front of the workforce. They were even less impressed when he used them for his photo-opp and "live" thank-you to Trump on speakerphone. Having told these workers "I have your backs", he stood with his back to them - and failed to see their stoney faces.

Beefed-up quotas

American and British beef farmers may now sell a quota of 13,000 tonnes/year tariff-free to each other's markets, but of course Trump was quite right when he boasted that American



Starmer visits Solihull JLR plant

beef, "the most beautiful in the world"... and other agricultural products like ethanol would now have a pretty large commercial edge over Britain's much smaller-scale industry.

The White House press conference was Trump TV at his best (or worst, depending on where you stand) - pretending a mouse was a lion... Britain, the 9th in order of trade volume with the US had been pushed to head of the queue for a reason: Trump needed Starmer just as much as Starmer needed Trump after his own falling ratings. So the special relationship was back on.

"We blew up the whole system," said Trump. "Because of that, this worked out so nicely". Except that he and Starmer - having also renewed US-British defence and security agreements - are blowing up a whole people and their infrastructure in the Middle East. This turns the Oval Office farce into tragedy, and these two actors into criminal perpetrators whose hands are dripping with human blood.☐

US bans on China: imperialism's choke-hold on science!

On 2 April, Trump blocked internet access to the USA's National Institute of Health (NIH) databases thus preventing Chinese, Cuban, Iranian and North Korean researchers from using it. As Pedro Valdés, a researcher at the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, studying genetic brain disorders in children commented: "these databases are fundamental to pinpoint the causes and cures of disease, [this move] seems like a pointless expression of spite".

The China-bogeyman

The NIH databases are created and used by thousands of researchers worldwide, including the Chinese. This latest measure - which was actually part of an 8 January ruling made under Biden's administration - was justified on grounds that "[these databases] might help [foreign adversaries] develop new bioweapons"! Yes, going along with the conspiracy theory that SARS-cov-2 was a "Chinese-made weapon"...

This is not new. Since 2018, the US's "China Initiative" has aimed at: "preventing economic espionage and intellectual property theft from Chinese agents". In fact, British governments have likewise made use of anti-Chinese chauvinism, pointing to bogus "threats" to "national security"; notably when China's 5G technology was banned - even though their technical expertise was needed. Another case of British politicians shooting their own capitalist class in the foot...

Western chauvinism, Chinese generosity

Because of the West's refusal to engage with, and share scientific and technical advances with China, the Chinese have had to rely on their state-centralised economy and their own intellectual and technical resources to develop their research. So, for instance, after NASA prohibited collaboration with China, excluding Chinese

astronauts from the International Space Station (ISS), they developed their own space program. Including their own Tiangong Space Station (TSS), completed in 2022. They have also been able to carry out missions like Chang'e-4 (2019), the first landing on the moon's far side - and the first mission collecting lunar samples since the Soviet Luna 24!

On 24 April, China allowed NASA access to these lunar samples despite the still-existing 2011 ban against them. It is worth remembering that China shared - as early as January 2020! - the SARS-cov-2 genome. In the meantime, while Musk (and other US oligarchs) turn spacecraft into a money-spinner by sending super-rich celebrities into the high atmosphere, the West's International Space Station has not been replaced and will be decommissioned in 2033. That will leave the Chinese TSS as the only one in the sky... Fortunately for western space missions the Chinese are not like them and are likely to invite them in.

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**From our friends in the North**

Jackanory, tell us a story. Everything we see and hear these days is pure fantasy! However like a Hans Christian Andersen story, dark horror lurks. Our mates even further north are telling us the true outcome of the profit-driven delivery method that the union leadership loves. The victims of the cruel pilots have been sharing their experiences with us.

We've heard about the bosses demanding they deliver a week's worth of adverts in two days. Bags and bags of overweight mail that do not stop until the end. Completely unsafe work that

has not been risk-assessed. Workers so abused that they have had to be fitted with health surveillance equipment to see exactly how the torture affects their bodies. It was no surprise to us when we were told that the practitioner doing the monitoring could not believe the results. Hearts working so hard it's dangerous.

History always repeats itself, nothing under the sun is new. The union wallahs and the bosses may think their delivery method has never been done before. We know it is simply a variant of their favourite technique - exploitation.



Workers everywhere should try to hear our brothers and sisters north of Hadrian's wall and listen to their testimony. Then demand that we stop this rerun of the past. We've stopped them before and we can stop them now. We will not go back to the dark days of working until we drop. Enough!

- **They expect us to believe them?**

Managers say that the casuals who've been brought into Processing are here because of the bank holidays... As if they don't bring these workmates in at other times - and at weekends, especially. Yes, they've cut, cut and cut our permanent jobs and now they're surprised when work fails - and not just when it piles up during bank holidays, by the way, but on an every-day basis! [*Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 30/04/25*]

- **Down with their 2nd tier!**

We know management is de facto

creating a 2nd tier workforce in Processing made up of casual workers, who they think they can use and abuse according to their whims... But we're not having it! "Equal pay and Ts&Cs for equal work" - that's always been our principle and we're prepared to fight for it! [*Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 30/04/25*]

- **Jobs and hours for all**

Many of us part-timers want full-time duties. Nobody can make ends meet on 25 hours (or even less so on 20, or fewer!). And yes, many of us had our hours cut last year after we were threatened with being sent to heck-knows-where or becoming "supernumerary". But since

now managers are now forced to row back on this, we want all of our hours restored! And that's just for a start..! [*Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 30/04/25*]

- **Going at our own pace**

Managers have cut jobs on the Platform. On Nights there are only 3 of us left on one Platform and just 1 on the other! But the number of yorks keeps going up! So obviously, we're loading and unloading slower than before. So - incredibly - they tell us to push 3 yorks at a time! Yes, an absolute H&S transgression which has always been a disciplinary offence! [*Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 30/04/25*]

King's Cross railway station (London)**Let's revive the £15/hour campaign ourselves**

RMT union officials are patting themselves on the back after Churchill cleaners on the Merseyside rail contract just won a pay rise to £15/hour over two years (backdated to April 2023). They also now have 20 days of occupational sick pay - but only compared with most other cleaners, who only get Statutory Sick Pay.

But we can't help recalling the RMT's 2022 campaign for £15/hr for all cleaners, when union officials brought out various sections of train and station cleaners on strike - but never organised

a general strike of all cleaners... The campaign just petered out. Three years on, most cleaners are still not earning £15/hour. In fact most still earn little more than the minimum wage, or at best the "Living Wage Foundation" rate which is a bit more. They don't get proper sick pay, no travel concessions and working conditions are mostly just plain bad.

Reviving the £15/hour campaign could only be a good thing - but leaving it to RMT full timers would not. If OCS, Mitie, Churchill and other cleaning workers can get together and organise



collective action themselves - and keep it under their own control, with their own elected strike committee, they are much more likely to win.

- **The computer (and the driver) says no**

Before each journey, GN/Thameslink drivers have to first set up the European Train Control System (ETCS). But since turnaround times have been reduced from 10-15 minutes minimum to just 6 minutes, we don't have enough time to do it! Plus there are compatibility problems with the newer trains.

And if we try to hurry the system, it freezes! Yes, by making their cuts and "economies" GTR has effectively proven that it needs to reverse them! [*Workers'*

Platform bulletin Kings' X 30/04/25]

- **"Black" Thursday**

Two weeks ago when no GN trains were running due to problems with overhead wires, GN managers (eventually) decided to "help" stranded passengers by telling them to go to stations up the line, where they could get a taxi (paid by GN) to bypass the affected area. But nobody informed us station staff, and the passengers just kept coming... At that point, coaches, let alone taxis, would have been needed... [*Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 30/04/25*]

- **Not on the first class menu**

LNER's latest ad for 1st class passengers goes as follows: "sit back and get comfy ready for a delicious (and complimentary)... meal or snack brought straight to your seat!" But given the failing equipment on almost every train (grill out of commission, no hot water, no power in the kitchen, etc.), these passengers will be lucky even to get a sandwich! (Of course, it won't be just any sandwich - it will be an LNER sandwich...) [*Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 30/04/25*]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**Speak for us? They didn't even speak to us!**

Four Oxfordshire Liberal Democrat MPs visited the Mini plant in March. They got the plant director and union officials together(!) to talk about the uncertainty of the electric car market that prompted BMW to postpone its £600m investment in electric car production at Cowley until 2029.

They followed up with a joint press statement and letters to the transport and business secretaries. They wanted "clarity" on government plans for the car industry and urged approaches to the EU to "remove the red tape".

Their statement explained that "*the Oxford Mini ... is more than a car to*

people in Oxfordshire, it's something to be truly proud of and part of our history". And "Generations of people have worked at the plant in Cowley"... Clearly, they arrived and left with no grasp whatsoever of the reality of working here!

No mention of the "red tape" that BMW has almost entirely removed already. i.e., most of our terms and conditions won over forty years of hard struggles. Nor the fact that fewer than 1,000 production workers have permanent BMW contracts; and that BMW and its outsourced contractors use and abuse "flexible" agency workers, hired one day and laid off the next (and have been doing this



for years). And now that "banked hours" from previous unpaid overtime are exhausted (despite the six hours' worth of wages docked every month to "top them up"), even permanent workers are being laid off, unpaid! ☐

• Fed up of their chaos

Last Thursday, one hundred more Staffline mates were given one week's notice that they would be sacked. But when it came to it, some of us were asked to stay on, and go to the Paint Shop or BiW! Managers' incompetence would be funny, except that we're the ones affected by it. [*Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 06/05/25*]

• Should I stay or should I go?

Some mates in Rework, who were meant to be moved to other areas, have instead been told to stay put, as managers there

suddenly realised they were short of labour! We could have told them that weeks ago... [*Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 06/05/25*]

• Secret under-floor component

When bodies have been sitting around in the buffer over the weekend, they arrive in Assembly already worked on by seagulls! Yes, they seem to just love these fancy toilets! Managers don't bat an eyelid, though. If we point out all the guano on the bottom, they say, don't bother - the flooring will cover it up! [*Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 06/05/25*]

• They really take the mick!

One morning Planet texts us, "You're required at BMW tomorrow. Please confirm your attendance." The next, at 5 or even 6.30am, we're told, "you are not needed today. Sorry for the inconvenience!"

Would Planet continue this 19th century, casual, daily hiring, if, once we accepted a shift, it had to pay us? Or if managers had to deal with us just turning up, as no-one can stop us from doing. [*Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 06/05/25*]

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**• The missing holiday**

We definitely needed that extra one-day holiday which Ford so generously (haha) "granted" us as compensation(?) for that rotten pay-cut deal last year... But so far, we've not been able to "find" this day anywhere! Has anyone seen, heard, or maybe even taken, it? If so, please let the rest of us know its whereabouts... [*Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 07/05/25*]

• Lion on a precarious ramp

Where are the new Ford temps? We're now told they'll only arrive in June... just before the (Lion's) ramp up! However, it seems nobody told the line manager, who is already trying to ramp things up over here. Fortunately, we know how to ramp down. [*Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 07/05/25*]

• Ford's land sell-off

Ford is planning to sell the land on which Autotech sits. Will that be the end of



Autotech? And what will happen to the workers? It would surely make sense for us to meet together, to decide what we want to do about this? [*Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 07/05/25*]

The US auto workers' union leader backs Trump's tariffs

(This article is adapted from the fortnightly Spark bulletin at the Ford Rouge plant in Detroit, USA)

On March 4, Shawn Fain, the president of the UAW (the largest US auto workers union), announced his backing for Trump's 25% tariffs on imported cars! He declared that "[Trump is taking] aggressive action on ending the free-trade disaster that has dropped like a bomb on the working class".

Fain made a point of opposing the

North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) - the US-Mexico-Canada trade bloc which has removed all tariffs since 1994. He referred to the: "*giant sucking sound of jobs leaving due to NAFTA*"...

Of course this is nonsense. It's the car bosses who've been "*taking jobs*" year after year. They've blackmailed workers into accepting falls in real wages, stripped out Ts&Cs, and cut jobs while outsourcing and casualising the workforce!

In Canada the leader of the auto

workers union, Unifor, (who endorsed Mark Carney) took the equal and opposite view - adding her own dose of patriotism: "*Canada didn't take US jobs, and we won't let [Trump] take ours*"...

In the 1980s, the UAW and Unifor were the same union. One retired union official said about Fain's posturing: "*it's a very, very serious breach of international solidarity because it's an acceptance of some of the ideological BS coming from Trump*". He's not wrong.

International

Letter from India - and Kashmir

Modi's government is talking up war with Pakistan over Kashmir - and maybe even trying to start a full-blown one. The trigger was the shooting of 26 tourists near Pahalgam by militants of an unidentified terrorist group. Modi wasted no time in (groundlessly) accusing the government of Pakistan of being behind the attack, instantly instigating retaliation aimed against all Pakistanis and Kashmiris from Pakistan-administered northern "Azad Jammu and Kashmir" (AJK). And now he has bombed what he claims are "terrorist bases" in Pakistan and AJK - after his initial announcement of the suspension of the Indus Water treaty, the severing of diplomatic relations with Pakistan and the revocation of visas of Pakistani citizens.

While social media is flooded with memes of the inability of Pakistan to fight any wars as it reels under severe economic crisis, its army chief has claimed it is "ready" to respond. Obviously, launching a full blown war - instead of the "tit-for-tat" which followed the previous clashes between these two nuclear-armed entities - would have far-reaching consequences.

Less than three weeks before the Pahalgam attack, India's minister for home affairs, said that the Modi government had "crippled" the "entire terror ecosystem nurtured by elements against our country" in Kashmir. This attack exposed (which may have been its purpose), on the contrary, how the situation on the ground remains



India's strikes in Muzaffarabad in Pakistan-administered Kashmir

highly dangerous and volatile, against Modi's claims too, that his revocation of Kashmir's autonomy in 2019, "stabilised" the region. As if his completely lopsided "development initiatives", and the influx of millions of tourists could make up for the lack of political rights that has been the cause of resistance in Kashmir for many decades.

The attack has served as yet another excuse for the Indian military to terrorise the Kashmiri population. Houses of "suspected militants" have been razed to ground and thousands arrested. Kashmiri

students in India have been harassed and forced to leave. A wave of sectarian violence has been sparked; in one case, a Muslim man faced a brutal axe attack to the cry of: "Twenty-six were killed; twenty-six of yours will die too". The citizenship status of Muslims living in India has come under question again. Individuals with links to Pakistan have been told to leave the country.

The legacy of British imperialism's partition of the subcontinent in 1947 - and the unresolved question of Kashmir - remains alive and lethal. □

War in Sudan - in whose interests?

Since the civil war in Sudan broke out on 15 April 2023, at least 150,000 people have been killed, mostly civilians caught in the crossfire between the two rival military factions, the SAF (Sudanese Armed Forces) and the RSF (Rapid Support Forces).

The latest brutal attacks in Darfur province by the RSF, which controls most of the eastern region, have seen barbaric levels of killing, torture, and rape. Already barely existing in the camps for displaced people, the population has been forced to flee, with nothing but leaves and charcoal to eat on the journey, many dying before they reach safety. While the conflict had initially seen the capital, Khartoum, taken by the RSF, recently the SAF has won back control. For the population, however, this does not mean peace or freedom.

Against the population

It should be obvious that neither the SAF (the "official" army of ousted former dictator, Omar al Bashir), nor the paramilitary RSF, formed of militias originally used by the SAF to suppress an uprising in Darfur, can possibly act in the interests of the Sudanese population.

After the 2018-2019 popular revolution overthrew the hated Bashir, these military forces formed a temporary alliance to seize power for themselves through a violent coup. Today's civil war is result of their conflict over which faction is to rule - and thus control Sudan's resources - which is also why each side has its own regional backers aiming to extract their own "share". What's more, the RSF has "form" having been willingly used as a mercenary force by the UAE to back its interventions in Yemen against the Houthis.

Two sides of the same imperialist coin

The UN describes the situation in Sudan as the world's largest humanitarian crisis. The International Court of Justice seeks to charge the UAE, due to its backing of the RSF, with genocide. When David Lammy pats himself on the back for sending aid, the question of where the UAE gets the weapons to arm the RSF is not asked, because the answer would lead straight back to the imperialist powerhouses, Britain and the US! While for most of the imperialist players, the SAF seems a "more legitimate" choice for their support, their tactics have been to divide, conquer, and back the winner! And of course, their concern is simply for show: what their "most-moral" allies in the IDF do in Gaza, is a "masks-off" demonstration of their hypocrisy. □

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

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

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