

# WORKERS' fight

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

## YES, WE DO NEED A "SUMMER OF DISCONTENT"!

Starmer has promised to "rethink" some of his anti-working class policies. But only since Nigel Farage, the billionaire, revamped his "worker" image and said he'd restore pensioners' winter fuel allowance and scrap the two-child benefit cap.

In fact Starmer's winter fuel allowance cut left 10.3m pensioners worse off - including 2.5m who were already under the "Minimum Standard of Living" and struggling to make ends meet. To have announced this as one of Labour's first austerity measures was always going to cause uproar - but Reeves and Starmer thought they could get away with it.

### **Badenoch not bad enough?**

They didn't expect Farage to capitalise on their cuts, however! Now even Tory leader Kemi Badenoch says "her party" would never have touched the pensioner fuel allowance. However, unlike Nigel (since she also has to distance herself from him!) she is 100% against scrapping the two-child benefit cap. She says families shouldn't have children if they can't afford them. On the other hand, given Britain's falling birth rate, there are those who would argue that the state should pay them to have kids - and the more the merrier!

So far, Starmer hasn't given any details as to which pensioners might have their winter fuel allowance restored. And as for when this might happen, apparently it's only due to be announced in the October budget - too late for this winter!

As for the two-child benefit cap, one of Starmer's ministers told a news programme that "it is on the table". But which table that might be, nobody in Starmer's Cabinet seems to know!

### **And who needs a "Nigel"?**

In the meantime, Nigel Farage is going all out to try and steal Labour's thunder (if there is any working class thunder left in the Labour cupboard),



while Starmer is doing an excellent impression of Enoch Powell.

He is announcing yet more measures against immigrants - which will prevent overseas workers from getting visas to work in social care, for instance, when there is no other way to cover these jobs! As for his and Yvette Cooper's campaign against asylum seekers, by not providing safe entry routes, which is the only way to "stop the boats", they continue to promote death by drowning.

### **Talking up war...**

As if this were not bad enough, now Defence Secretary John Healey is talking up war. In the year of the 80th anniversary of the nuclear bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he has announced a second nuclear "deterrent" for Britain. And he boasts about the government's "historic" commitment to increase its defence budget to 3% of GDP.

And why? Because he says that "Russia" poses a threat to Britain. He told the BBC that "Putin" attacks Britain on a daily basis, apparently referring to

cyber warfare. Of course, an assertion which is hard to verify. He did not explain how a nuclear bomb - or a "British-made" Storm Shadow missile - might stop "weapons" in cyberspace, however.

### **...against the working class**

In the meantime, the cost of living spirals upward while wages stagnate. At the time of writing, Birmingham refuse workers, who are fighting against a pay cut of up to £8,000 a year(!) imposed by the council, have been on strike for 12 weeks already, without a result. But what's just as significant is that no other section of the working class has joined forces with them...

So what about it? All workers - wherever we work - are being squeezed every which way, today. There is a shared interest in fighting the bosses and their war-mongering, anti-working class government. Across both public and private sectors, we would all do well to prepare for a "summer of discontent"! ☐

## International

### Gaza: Imprisoned, starved and bombed

Netanyahu has intensified his bombing campaign in Gaza. He calls this "Operation Gideon's Chariots". On 16 May, airstrikes killed 93; on 26 May, 54 were killed, most in a school in Gaza City sheltering refugees; on 29 May, airstrikes killed 19 in Bureji refugee camp. The list goes on and on...

To add to the horror, the total blockade of food and medical aid imposed by the Israeli army on Gaza since March had, by the end of May, starved 57 children and elderly Palestinians to death. And once the Israeli army let some food in - to be distributed at their "Secure Distribution Centres" in Rafah on 27 May, their soldiers opened fire when thousands of desperate people rushed to get a box of food. This resulted in more deaths and more wounded.

Netanyahu boasted that "we are destroying more and more homes" and that "the only inevitable outcome will be the desire of Gazans to emigrate outside of the Gaza Strip". In fact he is openly admitting that his policy is one of ethnic cleansing!

#### Their gross hypocrisy

Only now, when more than 61,700 mainly civilians have been killed and when famine is spreading, have Western leaders issued a few words of "caution" to the Israeli terror state. Starmer, President Macron and Canada's Carney have urged Netanyahu to stop military operations and allow humanitarian aid into the Strip, saying that "the level of



Israeli anti-war protesters carrying photos of Palestinian children killed by Israeli bombs

human suffering in Gaza is intolerable". Apparently it was tolerable up to now?

On 20 May, Starmer suspended free trade agreement talks with Israel and "summoned" the Israeli ambassador in London. But a British trade envoy was sent back to Israel just one week later!

#### For a world without borders!

Amid the current bloodshed, a glimmer of hope lies in the small fraction of the Israeli population protesting against the war crimes being committed in their

name.

At the end of last year, hundreds of people gathered in Tel Aviv with placards reading "Stop the genocide in Gaza" - while dozens held signs in Jerusalem reading "Stop ethnic cleansing". In May, 400 people marched towards the Gaza border, chanting "Security won't come from starving and killing children, women, and the elderly!".

Indeed, those in Israel who understand that a nation that oppresses another cannot be free, may play a role in changing the course of events. □

### Capital Jewish Museum shooting: Netanyahu's powder keg

On 22 May, Elias Rodriguez, a 30-year-old employee of the Chicago-based American Osteopathy Information Association, shot dead two Israeli embassy staff members - Sarah Milgrim and Yaron Lischinsky. As Elias was taken away by the police, he held up a red keffiyeh and shouted "free free Palestine".

This happened during an event for young diplomats in Washington DC's Capital Jewish Museum, hosted by the American Jewish Committee (AJC) - a Jewish civil rights organisation. The press widely reported it as an event aimed at providing aid to the Middle East. However, IsrAID, the NGO speaking at the event had been collaborating with IDF military operations in Gaza.

#### Lethal anti-communism

In fact the Zionist AJC is hardly a progressive organisation. After WW2 it endorsed the McCarthyite House UnAmerican Activities Committee and its persecution of "communist Jews" - including Julius and Ethel Rosenberg's live electrocution in 1953. Rosenberg, a Jewish technician accused of being a

Soviet spy, wrote from death row of the AJC: "self-appointed leaders of Jewish organisations are behaving like an American Judenrat".

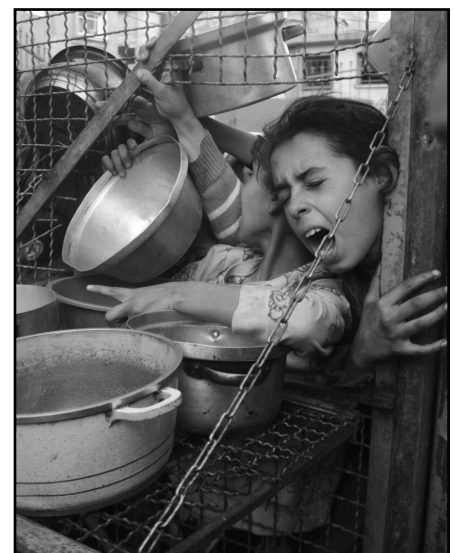
The police found a picture of Wadea Al-Fayoume stuck on Elias' office window - the 6 year-old American-Palestinian who was stabbed 26 times by his landlord in Plainfield Illinois. Anger against the hatred expressed against Muslims and the horrors of over 61,700 Palestinian and Lebanese civilians killed by the IDF, combined with Elias' own social alienation, probably fuelled his attack.

#### Netanyahu's war is to blame

Needless to say, such individual acts can change nothing to the situation in Palestine. By now, most people have forgotten the self-immolation of Aaron Bushnell in protest against the IDF's bombings in February 2024.

What's more, this shooting allowed Netanyahu to exploit the death of a young Jewish couple for his own political agenda, when he had just been reprimanded by Starmer, Macron and Carney over the IDF blockade which was preventing humanitarian aid reaching

Gaza. He accused them of fuelling anti-Semitism - as if that was not exactly what his brutal war against the Palestinian civilians of Gaza has been doing. Instead of bringing "safety" to Israel, his war is only building another powder keg! □





## Their society

### Starmer outdoes Farage

Less than two weeks after the local elections, and under pressure from Nigel Farage's Reform Party which "won" the most seats, Starmer gave a speech announcing his government's plan for "Restoring control over the immigration system".

He said he wanted to "reduce immigration significantly", claiming this would "release pressure on housing and our public services", because immigrants "put downward pressure on wages". He said: "Britain is an inclusive and tolerant country, but the public expect that people who come here should be expected to learn the language and integrate". And then he added: "In a diverse nation like ours ... we risk becoming an island of strangers, not a nation that walks forward together".

While all of this is taken directly from the play-book of Farage's Reform Party, for those old enough to remember, it recalled the notorious "Rivers of blood speech" made in 1968 by the then Tory MP Enoch Powell (for which he was dismissed from the Shadow Cabinet).



Of course these overtly racist arguments are nonsense - bosses, landlords and government cuts are to blame for low wages, poor housing and healthcare.

That said, Starmer's move to the right began even before the general election last year, when not only Reform, but the Tories, had made immigration the "number one" issue of their election campaigns. At the time, most opinion

polls were finding that it was in fact the cost of living that was top of the electorate's priorities and that second on the list, was the NHS.

Today wages, housing and healthcare are still what concern people most - which is exactly why Starmer would rather talk about immigration, playing the far-right trick of scapegoating - since he has no policies to offer which would even begin to tackle any of these issues. □

### • "Foreign" workers: the health system's backbone!

In its white paper titled "Restoring Control over the Immigration System" the government announced plans to stop issuing social care visas to new migrant workers, aiming to train and employ British workers instead. One would wonder what planet Starmer and Home Secretary Yvette Cooper live on, as the NHS and care system has always relied on immigration, and would collapse without it.

The fact is that Britain was always able to recruit part of its workforce from its ex-colonies (like the Windrush generation from the Caribbean) and therefore it never bothered to develop its

own staff training facilities on the scale needed. So successive governments have had no choice but to employ trained doctors, nurses, carers, etc. from abroad. Today, about 20% of NHS staff and 30% of adult care workers are non-British.

Despite this, there are 131,000 care staff vacancies, leaving 3.5 million adults without the care they need. So will ministers "magic up" British workers to fill that gap? Of course they will not, and especially not, given the ongoing economic recession. In July, soon after it was elected, the government halted plans to spend £50 million to further

train 37,000 carers.

Now ministers have announced 120,000 apprenticeship training opportunities - including healthcare roles - before the next general election (in 2029!). But at the same time the Department of Education has removed funding for higher level skills training for nurses and carers. So much for tackling the domestic skills gap!

Until a fully funded and public care system exists, these staff shortages will continue. And the government's restrictions on immigration will make matters much worse.

### The day Spain and Portugal stood still

On 28 April at 12:33pm, a power cut left the Iberian Peninsula (most of Spain and Portugal, and part of the South of France) with a blackout. Power returned gradually during the evening and in some areas, only by the early morning. Meanwhile, everything - except essential places such as hospitals, which had back-up generators - came to a halt.

As in many countries (including most of Europe), the Spanish and Portuguese energy grids are "synchronised" internally and across borders with continental Europe (although Britain, for example is only synchronised internally). This means all generators operate at the same frequency (50 cycles per second). That day, a loss of synchronisation between generators in Spain caused a 60% drop in power production within five seconds. This triggered the network to shut down automatically. A full European blackout was

likely avoided, because France disconnected from the Spanish grid just in time.

The exact cause remains unclear, although some experts point to the "saturation" of renewable energy at certain Spanish generators. Renewable sources such as wind and solar are harder to synchronise than nuclear, coal, or gas. A physicist from the Spanish National Research Council said that, to avoid such issues, when renewable sources are being used, "more stabilisation systems [such as batteries or a type of back-up "combined cycle gas" plant] need to be integrated into the network, but that costs money and has not been done". On the day of the outage, Spain's back-up gas plants were shut.

In Spain, nearly the entire energy system is privately owned. The state holds only 20% of the national electricity grid (Red Eléctrica de España), which is responsible for electricity

transmission and oversees the entire electricity sector. Privatisation of production, distribution, and most of the transmission began under the Socialist Party's government in the 1980s and was completed by the Conservatives, mostly during the late 1990s. Last year, 56% of electricity generation in Spain came from renewables (with wind power providing 23% of the total electricity mix); 20% came from nuclear, and around 24% from fossil fuels.

In 2024, Red Eléctrica warned investors of "severe generation disconnections" that could affect electricity supply, due to the high share of renewable energy. Well, this planet and society certainly need renewables, but the capitalists involved in any "energy transition" will always try to do things on the cheap first - and it looks like what happened in Spain might be just such an example.

## Their society

### Birmingham workers carry on with their fight

At the time of writing, the indefinite strike by Birmingham council's refuse workers and lorry drivers against massive pay cuts, is in its twelfth week. The council was so scared the strikers might convince agency workers - who actually make up a 40% of the council's refuse workforce - to join them in their walkouts, that as many as 1,800 police officers have been deployed to the pickets at the three refuse depots since March. In fact the council ended up sacking three agency workers who dared to talk to their striking mates on the picket line.

In late May, the council was even granted an interim injunction in order to be able to prevent picketing outside the depots, after pickets delayed lorries being driven by agency workers. However, strikers insisted they were only stopping lorries leaving if they had safety concerns about the trucks.

The city council has still not put any new offer on the table. Instead, it's now offering striking bin lorry drivers voluntary redundancies. One of them told Birmingham Live: "E-mails have



*been going out [within the last week] with [redundancy] figures. They [the council] are trying to break the strike that way by offering the VR. They are rushing it through. I just think they are trying to reduce the numbers on the picket lines".*

Despite all this, and despite Unite leaders refusing to extend this struggle to other sectors, it seems that morale is still high - as a striker told ITV news in April, they're ready to strike "for months" and "until the very end". □

### • Railway renationalisation: "new dawn" - or business as usual?

The transport secretary, Heidi Alexander, hailed the nationalisation of South Western Railway (SWR) as the beginning of a "cultural reset". But as much as Alexander intended this step to be a symbolic move "away from 30 years of inefficiency, delayed services and failing passengers" it rather backfired, given that passengers had to be transferred to a replacement bus at Surbiton due to engineering works! And thus exposing the dysfunctional state of the railways which have been serving as profit-making machines for private companies, literally at passengers' and railway workers'

expense.

There are other problems which are looming. Only 5 out of 90 new "Arterio" trains built at Alstom's Derby plant for SWR are currently in service. Originally scheduled to enter service in 2019 at a cost of £1 billion, their rollout has been delayed by six years (!) due to ongoing manufacturing faults. Issues have included windscreen wipers obstructing drivers' views, coupling problems, faults with the Train Control and Management System, and inconsistent alarm triggers, among other problems...

Despite 85 trains still not being

deployed, leasing fees to Rock Rail - the private rolling stock company (ROSCO) - have continued to be paid. And by the way, there are no plans to renationalise the ROSCOs. When SWR was nationalised, these payments were simply transferred to the government, which now also pays the ROSCO for storing the unused trains!! On top of that, there are extra costs for keeping older trains in service to cover the absence of the Arterio fleet. So in the end, surprise, surprise, public money is still being funnelled into private hands...

### • Civil service job cuts begin

The cuts by Chancellor Reeves to departmental budgets, to the tune of 15% in the next decade, have already started. The first job cuts (she announced her intention to cut 10,000) will be in the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) where 15-25% of its staff of 17,000 - i.e., 2,500 to 4,500 workers are facing redundancy.

In fact all government departments have been told by the Treasury to cut back on their spending. Reeves just like her Tory predecessors, has blamed the Covid pandemic as having been responsible for the increase in the civil service workforce, and since it is long over, the jobs can go. Never mind that one obvious reason why more civil servants will be needed into the future is the ongoing administrative

hurdles of Brexit.

And never mind either that more than 110,000 civil service jobs were cut between 2007 and 2017 and that the number of civil servants today (548,000) is still below what it was 20 years ago (566,000). And this, despite an overall increase of the British population, which civil servants are meant to serve, by nearly 8 million during the same period.

But according to Reeves, it is "time to realise efficiency savings" by "leveraging advances in technology and artificial intelligence".... A chainsaw in the form of AI automation? As for the savings she claims she'll make by cutting jobs and departmental budgets, they're just £2.2bn annually - a drop in the ocean of public finances.

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## Their economy

### Winter fuel allowance, benefit cap: Labour's not for turning

Under much pressure from backbenchers and party members, Starmer and Reeves claim to be "rethinking" some of their anti-working class policies, or at least they want to give that impression. So for instance Starmer has announced that there will be a review of the ill-judged cut which they made in pensioners' winter fuel allowance as one of their very first policy announcements on 29 July last year - just a few weeks after they were elected. Is it a U-turn? No, not at all.

#### Taking from Peter to pay Paul?

Never mind that 10.3 million pensioners lost out on the £200-300 winter allowance last year. And never mind either that the means test the government has introduced excludes all but the very poorest: the threshold it sets is £11,344 for a single pensioner and £17,313 for a couple! This is well below the "Minimum Income Standard" to meet essential needs - at £17,200 per year (single pensioner) and £27,800 per year (pensioner couple)! In other words they cut the fuel allowance of many pensioners who are actually living in poverty.

As for the "rethink", no details whatsoever have been forthcoming. If there is any back-peddalling it will only be included in next autumn's budget which will be too late for payment to be made before the winter. What's more, government officials have already



announced they might "recoup" any cost of a "U-turn" by increasing taxes on... "wealthy" pensioners!

#### Reeves' ejectable seat?

Education Secretary Phillipson said that "scrapping" the two-child benefit cap is apparently also "on the table". But, she added that this will "cost a lot of money", hinting that Reeves' "hard choices" to meet her "fiscal rules" will have to be revised... So is Reeves, along with her "hard choices", about to bite the dust?

Apparently, the International Monetary Fund in its yearly assessment of the British economy, has advised her to "refine" her fiscal rules.

In any case, the aim of Reeves' Spending Review scheduled for 11 June is clear: departments will be asked to implement cuts and the extra money for defence will come from cuts in the international aid budget. In other words, the government's austerity 2.0 policies will continue eating into workers' incomes! ☐

#### • The growth in our living costs

The inflation figures for April - released on 21 May - confirm what everyone already feels in their empty pockets - that the cost of living is going up: the RPI is 4.5%, up by 1.3%.

Food price inflation has risen for the fourth month running - prices are now 2.8% higher than last year.

The Food Foundation reports that since April 2022, the cost of a basic weekly food basket has increased by over 27%. Meat has become unaffordable for many families. For example, at Asda, the price of a sirloin steak rose by 47.3% following three price hikes since early March.

Water bills are also going up by the highest amount in 20 years, to an average £603 annually, up by £123 from 2024.

This is a 26% increase, to supply water through mains so poorly-maintained that they regularly burst.

The "winning shark", Southern Water, however, has increased its charges by a whopping 47%! But never mind.

Since privatisation in 1989, water companies have done some "good": they have paid out £78 billion in dividends to their shareholders!

#### • Their lies and statistics...

At the end of May - just before the parliamentary recess, the latest figures for GDP growth apparently indicated that Britain's economy was "growing at the fastest rate in the G7". At last Angela Rayner had something positive to boast about when appearing on the BBC's Laura Kuenssberg show: and she repeated it three times, at least.

But what does it actually mean? In Britain, between January and March this year, total economic output was £646bn, compared to £642bn in October-December last year, an increase of 0.7%, which just happens to be the biggest change, for these three months, in the G7. Of course, this fact says nothing about the change in the previous three months (when, by the way, Britain had the 3rd worst growth rate), or indeed the year before, etc. And for good reason!

Because in that case Britain would come 5th in the G7 for economic growth between 2019 and 2025. According to parliament's own research department, post-pandemic US economic output grew by 12%, Canada's by 8.8%, Italy's by 6.3%, France's by 4.2% and Britain's by 4.1%, only ahead of Japan and Germany. And by the way, no one wants to talk about how Brexit is one of the chief causes of sluggish growth!

#### • The Brexit cake is long past its "eat by" date!

At the end of May, Starmer announced his self-proclaimed "historic" agreement with the EU. In reality, it changes very little. The biggest change is the alignment of Britain to EU food standards. This is an obvious move, because checks on food imported from the EU had been delayed for years until they finally began in a limited way last year, and contributed to the sky-high food price inflation in this country.

Everything else pretty much stays the same. So, while there may now be free movement for beef and cheese, there still isn't when it comes to humans. In the future, there may be an agreement for a bit more freedom of movement for young people and students, but even that is not finalised yet.

Starmer can claim he has stuck to his "three red lines" on Brexit which were in his manifesto - no single market, no customs union and no free movement. He thinks that will win over some Reform voters, while at the same time, show that he is "resetting" the relationship with the EU, to win over voters who were against Brexit. He, just like all the Brexit-era politicians before him, still thinks that he can have his cake and eat it!



## Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)

## Letter from our Friends in the North

We've been thinking back to the last time we went through a huge change like the one looming with this "outrageous delivery madness" otherwise known as ODM. Nothing has been right in the last 20 odd years. Each time the bosses come with a new upheaval. This time, with 25% fewer of us, we feel even less urgency to deliver the mail on time.

We were unlucky enough to host the union wallahs in our neck of the woods recently. They even invited the

bosses along to tell our representatives that everything is rosy. Maybe our reps felt like walking out when they saw the bosses there. We hope so. But despite the blanket ban on reporting what was said, we know that the bosses were told plain and simple that their ODM will not work!

What we can be sure of, is that it will be up to us on the ground to get this message across. Just like all the other times we've been presented with changes that don't work. They expect



us to put up with the unequal duties, the pressure, the bullying, the overtime, the long days. But why should we? We've seen off the likes of Leighton, Crozier, Green, Thompson. And when it all goes tits up, we will see off Kretinsky too. Up the workers! ☐

## • This pilot will never take off!

The pilot for the new cut-down version of Royal Mail's Universal Service Obligation started in W1 last week and surprise, surprise, it's mayhem: delivery managers are running around like headless chickens, asking the 13 of us they call "supernumeraries" (i.e., surplus to requirements!) to help out indoors and on deliveries! And despite bringing in agency drivers, many vans come back with undelivered items... Particularly when we have 2-3 days worth of accumulated 2nd class to "deliver"...

[Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 29/05/25]

## • Making a Royal Mess Again!

And while delivery managers were tearing their hair out trying to square the circle, top managers we'd never seen before came to the shop-floor Monday last week, hung up golden "USO"-shaped balloons and stuffed themselves with pastries, chanting "U.S.O! U.S.O!" between mouthfuls. Which of course, confirms two things: first, that the bosses want to roll out their USO plan regardless of the "results" of these "pilots". And second, that the higher the level of management, the lower the behaviour.

[Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 29/05/25]

## • Who's it good for?

In the May update from the union branch (good if these become monthly!) we read that "the decline in workload of many of the other Mail Centres" means that management will reduce hours there, "whilst we gain a new workload" here... As if we hadn't been through a cut in hours and all the "supernumerary" nonsense ourselves already.

This is management's old trick, playing us off against each other, pretending that what's bad for our workmates in other MCs is good for us! [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 29/05/25]

## King's Cross railway station (London)

## Renationalisation anti-climax

The grand launch of the first train company under the government's "renationalisation" - South Western Railway - was a bit of an anticlimax... a bus had to replace the train from Surbiton, due to engineering works! Nevertheless Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander called it a "watershed moment"...

While renationalisation of the private TOCs is supposed to go ahead - to complete in 2027 - it seems that the "open access" companies like First's Lumo and Hull trains (also Grand Central) will run their private services for the foreseeable future, despite objections made to Heidi Alexander by rail union leaders; their "cheap" fares depend on

workers' wages and conditions which are even worse than ours. And where is the plan to renationalise freight?

As far as one can tell, however, the Department for Transport is keeping all of our current pay and conditions agreements unchanged until all the TOCs are renationalised under its umbrella, by 2027. But battle lines are already drawn to turn the screw judging from the transcripts of debates among MPs and the Lords...: "the conditions of service, which require work on only six days a week and rest days on the seventh, are no longer appropriate for a modern railway. We will have to change that..."

In fact a truly modern railway should



have truly modern working conditions. And yes if trains run 7 days a week there will have to be enough drivers and other staff to ensure that no railway worker has to work 7 days a week... ☐

## • "18 year olds are safe..."

What a load of bollocks the Rail Safety and Standards Board has come up with when it says that age is no factor in road and rail safety. So why do under-25s have to pay huge insurance premiums if they want to drive a car? Anyway there aren't enough teenagers driving trains for the RSSB to have had a large enough study sample to draw any such conclusions! We know why they want teenagers in the cab: to pay them

less. It's that simple. And unacceptable. [Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 29/05/25]

## • We need it now!

We've not heard anything so far from LNER bosses about a pay rise this year! Shouldn't talks have started months ago (at least back in January!), so we could actually get our pay rise when it's due, in April? So we're expecting a well-above-inflation pay rise... with back pay and interest, too, at this rate! [Workers'

Platform bulletin Kings' X 29/05/25]

## • United we stand

In fact, there hasn't been a whisper about our pay from GN, Grand Central or Lumo bosses either. Since we're all waiting on our pay offers together, it makes sense to demand a big rise together (the RPI inflation rate this month 4.5%!) and to organise a big fight together to win it!

[Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 29/05/25]

**Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**

## Beam Park: Housing "paradise"... on Ford's polluted wasteland!

In 2018, the development plan for the Beam Park housing project on Dagenham & Barking riverside land was approved. By 2030, this supposedly "affordable" housing estate (worth £1bn, with studio flat prices starting at £225,000!) will have the capacity to house as many as 3,000 residents.

At the time of writing, what's left of the Ford Dagenham plant are the buildings by the river - where engine production is still on!! But these are already surrounded by (19-storey tall!) tower blocks built on former Ford land - where the Body plant and Stamping and

Tooling Operations plant had previously stood.

Ford Dagenham sold an area equivalent to 28 football pitches - consisting of Beam river marshlands and industrial wastelands - to Countryside Properties and London & Quadrant Trust.

Careys, the contractor employed to make this ground "liveable", had to set up "land washing facilities" for the polluted soil: filled with heavy metals, solvents and oil - the result of industrial activity on this site since 1931!

Despite soil removal, there's still obvious contamination - there is a



persistent smell of chemicals emanating from the ground! In 2022, two years after the first residents arrived (!), geological surveys were still trying to determine the direction in which the chemicals underground were slowly moving... This, despite various attempts at containment, like ground capping and the addition of tons of new soil. □

### • Pacing while waiting

Many new temps are meant to start on 9 June, in both DEP and DDC engine plants. But the required engine score hasn't gone down anywhere, so management's now saying they're going to bring in some temps a week earlier... Well, they might as well bring all of them in earlier, because we're not keeping this speed up in the meantime. [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 20/05/25]

### • Down with "temp" status!

Apparently the temps have been put on a 1-year contract... They'll be expected to "roll" year after year. When what's good for them - and us - is that they are given permanent contracts from day one! One workforce, all on the same Terms and Conditions!

[Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 20/05/25]

### • Brown is the colour...

And while we're waiting to welcome the new temps, new group leaders in the Den (Lion engine assembly line) have popped up, out of the blue... we knew this was coming at some point, since 5 positions were vacant. But what we didn't see is the usual advert and interview process... Or was this all decided beforehand amongst family&friends? Not that we'd have applied anyway - we prefer to keep our noses clean.

[Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 20/05/25]

### • "One Ford" pace wanted!

On Panther machining we're expecting more lay off days (we supposedly produced too many parts!), but on Lion machining we're far too busy - and are asked to do overtime! Let's even it all out, so everyone works the same easy pace!

[Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 20/05/25]

### • The dirtiest of employers

ISL (maintenance) management has sent us a message saying: "don't talk with the union guys"... They're such ignorant scaredy cats, trying to defend the indefensible - that is, their zero-hours contracts... They're afraid the new employment law will ban them outright (unlikely!)... so they're thinking of switching to using recruitment agencies, to have a loophole in place!

[Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 20/05/25]

### • More pay, less overtime

Andr-who(?)'s 6% pay rise for cleaners was clearly not enough... we're still dependent on overtime to top up our wages to make ends meet! We've had enough of extending our working day to get a wage we can live on.

[Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 20/05/25]

**BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**

## They owe us!

We've been laid off for two weeks this May, which follows a week of lay-offs in each of the last two months, plus a few extra days here and there. The additional lay-off this month was announced at the last minute. There was a rumour that it was because of a shortage of magnets coming from China. But we know BMW thinks it can lay us off whenever it likes, whether there are shortages of parts or not.

Each time we get some variation of the same non-excuse from management: "external influences", which usually

means they don't think they're selling enough cars. The bosses don't even bother to blame Trump's tariffs. Instead, they say they "need lasting flexibility", whatever that may mean (lasting how long?) - and assume that we'll just accept them messing us around like this!

BMW never loses a penny during its lay-offs, because it just passes the cost on to us. Thanks to their work-time account, they claim that we "owe them" those hours we should have worked! So now, because of all these lay-offs recently, they've even increased the limit



of this "debt" to 400 hours, or nearly £10,000! When in fact it's BMW who owes us!! □

### • Making space for nothing

You couldn't make it up. BMW postpones electric production here by 3 years because electric cars aren't

selling. But then it installs 100 charging spaces in the car park, cutting down on spaces for normal cars, and now there's not enough room for us to park before the shift changeover! And it tells security

to put warning notes on any "ineligible" car parked in these empty acres because it's the only free space!

[Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 06/05/25]

## International

### South Africa's president meets Trump: from the sublime to the ridiculous

The absurd attempt by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa to appease Donald Trump in Washington, and refute his nonsensical "white genocide" claim fell rapidly into farce.

Ramaphosa had brought along a few selected fellow- (but white) "Rand billionaires" with whom to back himself up. But Trump and the South African-born Elon Musk where this absurdity originated and who looked on in delight, just upped the mendacious ante: old video footage was shown of Ramaphosa's oppositionist and former fellow party member, Julius Malema (and others) at Economic Freedom Fighter rallies dancing and singing songs from the Apartheid struggle days which translate as "kill the boer" - meaning kill the farmer. Which was not even a proposition in those repressive apartheid days, let alone today, when in the context of increasing poverty, criminal gangs rule the townships and their main victims are from the majority black population.

#### Yes, land to those who toil it!

As for land expropriation - well it would only be fair in a country where 30 years after white domination and Apartheid rule was abolished, 72% of farmland is still owned by whites who make up just 7% of the population. In fact like much of the restitution measures to change the inequities of the past, the law allowing land expropriation "in some cases" has not even been put into practice.

No, Trump and Musk brought over a planeload of South African white "refugees" claiming "genocide", to the US as payback. First, for the South African-led legal case being made against Netanyahu's Israeli government over genocide in Gaza at the International Court of Justice. And second, because Musk's "Starlink" which he is "selling"



all over Africa, fell foul of laws which stipulate that at least 30% of Space X's South African operations would have to be sold or donated to stakeholders from "historically disadvantaged groups", because it is an international company - not because of Musk's race... Musk calls this racism, and this Nazi-saluter and funder of the far-right knows exactly what he is stirring...

#### They stand for the same interests

The irony of this farcical episode is that the ineffectual Ramaphosa has more in common with Trump than Trump realises. Before he ascended into the presidency of South Africa Ramaphosa was one of the richest men in Africa - and as with Trump, who inherited much of his money, Ramaphosa was no "self-made man".

His wealth was acquired under the same "black empowerment" laws which Musk has fallen foul of - thanks to his leading position in the ruling African National Congress, back in the day. This is how Ramaphosa found himself on the

board of the mining giant Lonmin - and in 2012 it was he who gave the order "shoot them" to the South African police when they killed 34 striking mineworkers at the Marikana platinum mine.

#### Trump's promotion of HIV "genocide"

Ramaphosa's public humiliation at the hands of Trump, however, was a foregone conclusion. And indeed his real mission to the Oval Office was to try to get Trump to reverse his decision to cut all US aid to South Africa which leaves HIV-Aids sufferers at risk of death and thousands of US-funded health workers unemployed.

What's more, South Africa's mainly agricultural exports to the US are also in question - worth \$14.7bn (£11.6bn) a year. The "joke" is that this will affect the same white farmers that Trump claims to be protecting - who are, to quote a South African commentator "far more worried about this punitive act on our trade deal with the US than they are about land expropriation"! □

### An anti-terror-campaign... against rappers!

On 28 May, Kneecap - the Belfast rap trio - was removed from the participants to TRNSMT - a Glasgow music festival. This, after a member of the group was accused of supporting a proscribed organisation. The cops used as "evidence" of an offence under the Terrorism Act, an old video they had obtained with footage showing one of the group "waving" (!) a Hezbollah flag during a concert in London, in November

2024.

During their latest concert, Liam Og O hAinidh, known as "Mo Chara", explained: "We went for an interview with the counter-terror police, and within days, they came with the verdict that they were going to charge me". In fact, on April 22, the crown prosecution service authorised the charge. So Mo Chara, must attend Westminster Magistrate's Court on June 18..!

It's obvious why Kneecap is being singled out. Not only do they talk about Gaza, but they support a united Ireland: they say "26 + 6 [counties] = 1". They claim to be anti-monarchy and anti-imperialist: "Get Your Brits Out"! This, when both the British and Irish governments are deliberately delaying the referendum on a united Ireland, promised in the 1998 Peace Deal! □

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

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