

# WORKERS' fight



No 174 - 12 June 2026  
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ISSN 2040-400X

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

## THE MENTAL ILLNESS COVER-UP

Anyone who watches the news will know that the current wave of anti-immigrant protest and xenophobia is being witnessed right across the globe. Its root cause is increasing deprivation and poverty, "no future" which is pitting poor, "left behind" youth - and their fathers - against the neighbour who's just as poor, but who above all, looks different.

Then, there are the stabbings. But if there are more dangerously crazy people wandering the streets today, it's precisely because of this economic crisis. It's because of deliberate cuts in social spending on the NHS and social services as the government runs short and is afraid to raise taxes. Mental health provision was always

the Cinderella service. Today, it's reduced to almost nothing, no matter the real public threat that paranoid psychosis might present. Because that's undoubtedly the cause of the current spate of random killings, and not the superstition-ridden, backward "diagnosis" of devilish "evil" which politicians keep repeating as if it's an explanation. When all it is, is them avoiding their own responsibility.

However, what's hard to understand, is why anyone might be fired-up by tweets on X from a trillionaire like Elon Musk, or from an opportunistic property millionaire like Farage - or even the pathetic born-again Christian and "white victim", Tommy Robinson... Maybe the answer is that it didn't need

any of these rich thugs or poor, sad, Tommy to fuel anything.

The anger of those who have nothing and have nothing to lose, is so close to the surface that it doesn't take much for it to break out. The real pity is that it's not directed against the cause of their poverty, i.e., the capitalist system, which has always doomed a whole layer of society to permanent deprivation and joblessness. But that would require organising a revolution, not a pogrom. And the active participation of politically conscious workers, prepared to use their power not only to halt the economy, but replace it with a socialist system - and then, to govern. ☐

## ROYAL MAIL & TFL: ORGANISING A FIGHT BACK FROM THE GROUND UP!

Thirteen years after privatisation, Royal Mail bosses have rid themselves of the Universal Service Obligation (USO) to deliver mail to all 32m addresses, 6 days a week. Instead, they're prioritising profit-making parcel delivery and have cut the workforce by 40,000.

There was no fight against these latest USO cuts. Union leaders organised a "consultative" ballot over their joint agreement with RM bosses. After years of their betrayal, only 32.9% of union members even voted. This meant that the 65.4% vote for the cuts, which the leaders had engineered, was actually only a 22% acceptance. Clearly, such a result must be invalid.

Being let down by union leaders isn't only a problem for postal workers. On London Underground, train drivers' union leaders from ASLEF have agreed a lengthening of night and weekend shifts, while RMT leaders have (rightly!) refused. So now RMT drivers are left to strike against a longer working day on their own. That said, however, the RMT could have involved the rest of its Underground members in the dispute - it affects everyone - to strengthen the strike. But they didn't.



The officials' excuse is that the law doesn't allow "solidarity" strikes. But the law doesn't stop them calling multiple strikes simultaneously! This kind of justification is nothing new. During the strikes of 2022, the RMT, ASLEF, CWU, UNITE, NEU, UCU, etc., leaderships all called for strikes separately, afraid of upsetting the status quo and being

accused of fomenting a general strike. And that's precisely why they're accepted by the political establishment as "leaders" in the first place! The lesson for the rest of us is that we'll have to organise our own fight back when and where needed - and there's no time like the present! ☐

## International

### Iran, Israel, Lebanon: Trump's prevarications

At the time of writing, it's still not certain whether the war against Iran is over. Trump has been claiming it is, while the Iranian leadership has insisted that Israel's war on Hezbollah, which is still devastating towns and villages in Lebanon, should cease, before a peace agreement can be signed.

What the Israelis say about their war is basically a lie. Their current policy - the expression of the Israeli far right - advocates the extermination of all those who stand in the way of an expanded Zionist state "from the river to the sea". And the Israeli army under Netanyahu's generals is a willing instrument of this wanton murder and destruction.

At least 4,000 Lebanese men, women and children - almost exclusively from the Shia Muslim population - have been killed and thousands more injured. Over a million have been forced to flee northwards. Today parts of Lebanon - and now even the ancient coastal city of Tyre - are beginning to look like Gaza, where the Israelis are still bombing and shelling homes and so-called "Hamas targets". Indeed, for the Palestinians too, whether in Gaza or the West Bank, there is no respite.

#### The new yellow line

The IDF has occupied South Lebanon up to the Litani River and parts of the Bekaa valley. On 7 June, despite a US-brokered ceasefire with the Lebanese government (but not Hezbollah) - the Israelis bombed two apartment blocks in South Beirut, killing 2 and injuring 11.

This attack on Beirut prompted a response from the Iranians, who sent 30 missiles into Israel. A tit-for-tat began with the IDF bombing so-called strategic targets in Iran. The US joined in after



claiming one of its helicopters had been shot down over the Strait of Hormuz.

So all in all, Trump, who has been trying to turn peacemaker after his failure as a warmonger, is not having much success, so far...

#### War versus the World Cup?

Of course, Trump has reasons to get this war over and done with. It's unpopular amongst his political base and mid-term elections are looming. The cost of gasoline at the pump is up by 30-50%, thanks to the blockade of the Strait. The public is upset. And then there's the FIFA World Cup...

As for Netanyahu, he's also facing elections, and corruption charges. So

they're both grasping at the one big lie left - that they're saving the world from Iran's nuclear threat. Forget that a Fatwa against a nuclear bomb has been in place for the past 37 years, thanks to the Supreme Leader they killed on 28 February. Forget too, that Iran's nuclear facilities have already been bombed to smithereens.

Yet again, the increasing rottenness of political leaders and the increasingly degenerate capitalist political environment, means that facts are replaced by absurdity. Indeed Trump himself said it, accusing the Israeli and Iranian warring protagonists of "ignorance and stupidity" - even while he is the prime example of both. □

### Cuba under US imperialist pressure

Will Trump and his Cuban-American Secretary of State Marco Rubio - whose parents fled the island in 1956 - now invade Cuba? The US Navy has docked in Jamaica; an aircraft carrier is nearby.

The island is already under heavy sanctions. On 30 January the US imposed a total oil embargo. There is now hardly any fuel available. At night there are no lights. Due to energy cuts, water can't be purified. Waste collection has been suspended as municipal trucks cannot operate. There have been outbreaks of dengue fever and chikungunya, both carried by mosquitoes, which breed in stagnant water. By now more than 60% of basic medicines are unavailable. Out of 11m inhabitants, 5m live below the poverty line; 20% of its population, mostly youth, have left the island.

Just as he went after Venezuela's Maduro, abducted and charged with

cocaine trafficking, Trump has got his Justice Department to indict 94-year old Raúl Castro and brother of Fidel, Cuba's former president and leader of its revolution. Raúl is accused of authorising the shooting down of two civilian aircraft in 1996 and killing four Americans. Kidnapping him, on the other hand, may not be so simple.

#### Undoing the revolution

Trump's "other" option is to do a deal, something which the large and mostly very well-off Cuban diaspora in Miami (and Rubio) are pushing for. They want to take back their property, lost after the revolution in 1959 sent the corrupt US puppet Batista and his rich backers packing.

To lift the blockade, Trump demands that the Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel steps down, purges officials close to the Castro family, and that the regime

breaks relations with Russia and China. With its usual hypocrisy, Washington also demands the release of 1,000 prisoners of "conscience" while continuing to operate its own detention facility at Cuba's Guantánamo Bay, where US prisoners are tortured and detained indefinitely!

#### Another kettle of fish, entirely

But Cuba is not Venezuela. And while the population has been experiencing hardship for years, the deal with US imperialism which Trump and Rubio want, is most likely a deal too far for the majority, no matter how fed up they are with the current regime and with the sanctions. So while the Cuban regime may agree to some of the conditions for the lifting of the blockade, whether Rubio and the Florida Cubans will get everything they hope for is questionable. If they do return, they are likely to meet resistance on the ground. □

## Their society

### Unemployment, NEETs, and welfare cuts

At the end of 2025, almost 1 million young people in Britain were NEETs - Not in Employment, Education, or Training, according to the government report, undertaken by former Labour minister Alan Milburn.

But the unemployment rate is not only increasing for young people. The overall unemployment rate is 5% and has been steadily increasing since Covid. And of course it only measures those who are actively seeking work in the period under consideration.

Over 1.8 million people are unemployed in Britain. And the main and most obvious reason is that there aren't enough jobs to go round. Even at its peak, the highest number of job vacancies in recorded history(!) was 1.3 million, during Covid in 2022. Today, it is around half of that, at 700,000, and it continues to shrink. There are 2.5 unemployed people competing for every

job vacancy! And most of these jobs pay barely enough to survive on anyway...

Nevertheless, the bosses and their media blame workers for refusing to take the worst jobs under the worst conditions. They portray people on benefits as freeloaders. Yes, as if welfare payments between £85 to £96 per week are enough

to live on. Already new claimants' disability allowances are being cut by half. And now the government is likely to yield to pressure to cut the welfare budget even more, in order to increase defence spending. Which has nothing to do with a Russian threat (there isn't one) and everything to do with lining the pockets of the arms merchants. □



### It's not a matter of choice...

The proportion of 16-24 year-olds in Britain who are "NEETs" is 12.8%. In fact this is only lower than one EU country - Romania, which has a NEET rate of 16.5%. The rest of the EU has an average of 9% youth unemployment. Of those surveyed in the Milburn Review, the vast majority of unemployed young people - 84% - said they wanted to find employment, education or training. They are certainly not NEET by choice! What's more, it is youth from

the poorest working class families who are most likely to find themselves stuck in a perpetual unemployment trap.

According to Milburn, more and more young people report poor mental health as a key contributor to their inability to access the job market, with 42.6% citing it as a main reason they are NEET. This number has nearly doubled since 2011.

Obviously this is a situation exacerbated by the extremely poor state

of mental health services provided by the NHS. And then there's the problem of trying to balance needs against the low wages on offer and the possible loss of disability benefits as a result. Taking a minimum wage job on a 35-hour week, would not provide enough to live on - let alone provide for any special needs. No right-thinking NEET would voluntarily go for cutting their already poverty-level income!

### To get a job, it's one obstacle after another

"I sent out exactly 525 job applications. Thirteen interviews. Two unpaid half-day trial shifts for waiting and serving roles. That was the cost of finding work in London while unemployed.

The interviews went nowhere. The trial shifts? I showed up, worked for

free, smiled, and never heard back. Each rejection stung a little more than the last. But I kept applying, morning after morning, because there was no other choice.

Finally, something gave. I landed a job in a sort of cafe. It's part-time. At least it allows me to do some training, try to get

a certificate of qualification for better job, in the meantime. One can always hope...

Five hundred and twenty-five applications. Thirteen dead-end interviews. Two free shifts. It shouldn't be this hard just to get a wage you can only barely live on". [Letter from an exasperated NEET]

### Apprenticeships: from "jobs for life", to uncertainty

Since finding a decent, stable job, is so difficult, more workers are taking up apprenticeships. In the academic year 2025/26, there were 226,620 apprentices in England - up by 11.9% compared with the previous year.

However this is still nothing like the 1960s, before de-industrialisation, when apprenticeships were at their peak. Back then, most apprentices were school-leavers aged 15-17. Around a third of all school-leaving boys entered apprenticeships, and most went on to get "jobs for life" in manufacturing or transport.

But things changed with the onset of crisis and industrial decline. Worse, under the Thatcher government, support for apprenticeships was cut and most of the state's technical colleges were closed. By

1995 there were half as many apprentices as there were in 1979.

#### The shortage of "skills"

As a result, from the 1990s onwards, due to a shortage in skilled workers, governments were obliged to promote apprentice programs. In 2015, "degree apprenticeships" were introduced as an alternative to university.

Today, these "degrees" (or diplomas) qualify workers for hundreds of occupations, from construction and engineering, to nursing and digital technology. Not that there's any guarantee of a job on completion!

Another difference from the 1960s is that half of trainees today are 25 or older, and only a fifth are 19 or younger. In fact,

since 2015/16, the number of 16-18 year-old new apprentices has dropped by 40%. And no wonder: employers used the "Apprenticeship Levy" funds introduced in 2017 to train existing staff, instead of recruiting new young workers.

#### Helping the youth? More like "helping the bosses"...

This year, the government - obliged to be seen "tackling youth unemployment" - is introducing reforms and investing £725 million.

Measures include new "foundation apprenticeships" and faster approval processes, but also, more "flexibility" for the bosses in how "training" is delivered. And never mind that they're already getting a hefty subsidy!

## Their economy

### The affordability crisis

Living standards continue to fall. The cost of everything has gone up while wages and incomes are trailing behind.

The inflation index - which measures the increases in price of a basket of goods compared to the previous month - may be coming down, but that doesn't mean prices are coming down. They're just going up more slowly! The latest Consumer Price Index or CPI, showed an increase of 2.8% for April 2026. This was considered good news for the government, since it is down from 3.4% in March...

However for the rest of us, the bad news of an ever-increasing cost of living remains, even if Rachel Reeves politely asked supermarkets to cut their prices! Official figures show "grocery" inflation to be up 3%. But for instance the price of olive oil has more than doubled since



2020 (even if most of us couldn't afford it in the first place). Eggs, which almost everyone needs, have increased in price by 57% and butter by 53% in this same period.

As for energy - the worst burden of all - from July 2026 Ofgem is increasing the price cap by 13%,

so an average household bill will go up by £18 a month. Gas bills alone are rising by 24%. And petrol has jumped in price by 23% since the war in Iran.

There's only one way to deal with this surge in prices - our wages have to "surge" up accordingly! ☐

### Wages, lies and statistics

The government's official statistics show that average wage growth since July 2020 is 16% above CPI inflation. Of course, we're not all 16% better off! The CPI measure of inflation is deliberately used because it's less than RPI, while the figures for wage growth are skewed by the high number of lawyers, bankers, executives etc., in the City and elsewhere!

Some statistics give a different view on what's happening, however. The Living Wage Foundation reports that as

many as 4.4 million people were paid below the "Living Wage" (£14.80/hr!), accounting for nearly 15% of all jobs; up from 3.7 million three years ago!

So what's really going on? For the past 4 years, for instance, over 100,000 workers at Royal Mail have had below-CPI pay rises, and new workers have been employed on a "second tier" with lower pay. On the railways, where pay deals used to be based on RPI, they are now based on CPI. And in the BMW

Cowley factory, workers had a 0% pay "rise", on top of an hours cut, which has in fact reduced their pay below what they were getting in 2024!

Bosses not only refuse to give proper wage increases, but they are finding ways to cut wages, by cutting hours or creating a "two-tier" workforce! Strangely enough, though, the government doesn't publish statistics about that!

### A long slide into a casualised nightmare: the example of BMW Oxford

The financial press often praises BMW Group for its pioneering and profitable use (i.e., abuse) of temporary labour.

And yes, it's a past master at

manipulating temps. Some agency workers are being hired at the Oxford Cowley plant for the third time or more, and are likely to be sacked again as soon

as the company no longer requires a production push. BMW rarely issues new permanent contracts, and not to anyone with less than 10 years' service! It takes two years even to get to BMW levels of pay. No such thing as equal pay for equal work, of course!

Today, Staffline agency provides around 80% of the Assembly workforce. Like BMW workers, they're forced to bank hours in "working time accounts" to be used as overtime on the cheap. BMW's on-site contractors have their own agency workers, who don't get paid during BMW's frequent closures.

Quality control contractor G&P uses an agency which often phones workers to cancel shifts while they're on their way to work - and then might ask them back in, just a couple of hours later. What began as "temps" doing the same jobs on lower pay, has, 25 years later, become BMW's very own super-exploitative "gig economy"!



**Their politics**

**10 years after Brexit - Northern Irish Unionists demand a hard border**

On the 23 June it will be 10 years since the vote to leave the European Union or remain inside it took place - although, of course economic and social Brexit was only imposed at the end of December 2020, 4 years later.

It's worth recalling how small the margin of the Leave victory was: 51.89% to 48.11% or 17,410,742 against 16,141,241. Moreover, the turnout - 72.21% - meant that almost 13 million registered voters didn't cast a vote either way. So, although much is made of a political reversal today, with a majority of the public "regretting" Brexit, at the time of the referendum, those who made a positive choice "for" Brexit were a minority of the registered electorate; 75% were either against Brexit or didn't vote.

**Opportunist reactionaries**

In Northern Ireland the feeling was clear, however. The vote to remain in the EU gained a decisive majority of 56% to 44%. But today, there's an ugly blast from the past - and it comes from the Brexit-supporting minority, in the shape of Unionist leaders who've always wanted a

hard border with the rest of Ireland.

They've seized on the 8 June knife attack in North Belfast carried out by a Sudanese man, who had apparently arrived on a bus from Dublin, to complain that the open frontier between Northern and Southern Ireland was (implausibly!) a contributing factor, and thus poses a danger.

**No borders, neither hard, nor soft!**

Democratic Unionist leader Gavin Robinson told Keir Starmer in the Commons: "People... want to see

action. The government must now demonstrate that it is prepared to defend our borders". Never mind that most migration in Ireland is actually from the "British" North to the "Irish" South, in search of employment and better conditions! And it occurs across a border which remains open, without any controls, despite Brexit, since the agreement made after Irish partition in 1921 and the Good Friday Agreement of 1998, which ended the Troubles, supersedes any Brexit arrangement. And just as well. □



**Royal Mail's privatisation needs urgent reversal**

A BBC investigation in February exposed what postal workers already knew: Royal Mail (RM) bosses have been prioritising profitable parcel deliveries while letters pile up in delivery offices. Parliament's Business and Trade Committee even used this evidence to grill RM's owner,

Daniel Křetínský.

The Financial Times reports that the supposedly "independent" regulator, Ofcom, has launched yet another investigation into RM's service levels. Last year, RM delivered just 75.7% of First Class mail on time, against a target of 93%, and only 90.2% of Second Class mail within three working days, compared with a target of 98.5%. For those of us on the receiving end of non-deliveries, even these figures seem an overestimate!

conditions!

And now, the bosses' (and union leaders are colluding) proposition is to cut the Universal Service Obligation, so that Second Class mail is delivered only every other weekday and not on Saturdays, while also lowering delivery targets.

**USO, "the last post"**

This USO, RM's legal obligation to deliver to all 32m addresses across the whole country, is the only protection against the final disappearance of postal delivery as a public service. Maintaining the USO is expensive and unprofitable. So saving it can only mean renationalisation. That will require the fight which was averted back in 2013, thanks to the union leadership's betrayal.

Despite privatisation, however, RM remains one of the country's few remaining large bastions of "public service" employment, alongside the railways and NHS. Nevertheless this large workforce cannot wage this fight alone. The rest of the working class will need to be prepared to walk out alongside their postal workmates, in order for this battle to be won.

**Undelivered letters are due to cuts in working conditions!**

Media reports directly or indirectly blame Křetínský for mismanaging the postal service, but not a word is said about the destructive cuts to jobs and working conditions - imposed long before Křetínský had even set eyes on RM.

Before privatisation in 2013, RM employed 150,000 postal workers. Today, that workforce has been cut to 110,000. New delivery workers start on lower wages, creating a second-tier workforce. Fewer workers are expected to cover longer rounds and handle growing parcel volumes - all for lower pay and worse

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**King's Cross railway station (London)****Privatisation madness: we can't allow it under GBR!**

What's the plan for cleaning on the railways under GBR? Does the DfT intend to retain private companies?

With privatisation, the number of cleaning privateers mushroomed and a division of labour was created which has often had quite hilarious, but always senseless consequences.

At King's Cross for example, at one point nobody knew which cleaning company was actually meant to clean the ticket office! Was it Mitie, the station-cleaning company, or OCS which cleans LNER trains, but also does some office cleaning? As a result, for a whole period of time, the ticket office wasn't cleaned

properly! Eventually, management dug out the contract and found that the back of the ticket office was meant to be cleaned by OCS, while the front was the responsibility of Mitie! Next, came a dispute over where the line of separation was to be drawn!

More recently, the contract for cleaning LNER trains was split between OCS - which would clean trains in daytime and Churchill which would do the night-cleaning. But managers didn't think to provide Churchill workers with access to the cleaning equipment... So this had to be shipped from Hitachi's depot and a trolley space "negotiated" to store it. And



more "negotiations" followed to ensure they didn't lose access to the messroom they'd all been sharing for decades! So yes, we want full renationalisation, including of all cleaning and an end to these absurd divisions! ☐

- **Why are we waiting?**

We've been told that RMT and ASLEF negotiators are still waiting for "full and final offers" from the different TOCs. They say these are delayed because each pay proposal has first to be negotiated/accepted by the DfT before being presented to union officers. We already know what it will be: not enough! So why wait before taking action? [Workers' Platform 10/06/26]

- **We need to beat inflation!**

What we aren't hearing about is the across-the-board pay increase for everyone, which on our estimate - both to catch up after lousy past "increases" and to cover the huge rise in the cost of living - should be at least £300 extra per week... As for their changes to our Ts&Cs, we're already saying NO! [Workers' Platform 10/06/26]

- **Delay season = danger season**

Almost daily, there are LNER delays due to broken-down trains, technical faults, signalling problems, overhead wiring issues, cable theft, etc. No wonder, since there aren't enough skilled NR maintenance workers. And they want to cut our numbers further, rather than increase them? They're asking for trouble! And we can make it. [Workers' Platform 10/06/26]

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

The working class in the armed forces often remark "respect the rank, not the w\*\*k". Our workplaces have been full of rankers peddling their version of our reality. And 65.4% voted "yes" to accept the latest management/union Delivery Model 2026 "agreement" (a.k.a. Delivery Madness 26) to cut the Universal Service Obligation and our Ts&Cs. But then, the turn out was low, very low: 32.9%... which means that in fact, only 2 out of 9 of us voted "yes".

After the minority have forced DM26 on us all, we're meant to be getting set up for the rankers' way of working. Just

like the top brass in the first world war, Commander Dave and his lieutenant Walsh sit in their comfy union office demanding we go "over the top". We'd love the rankers to spend a day in the trenches. Getting a full serving of the slop they've agreed we swallow.

Lieutenant Walsh further insulted those of us brave enough to vote "no", or to not vote at all, by mocking the opposition and acting like a carrier of white feathers, dishing out his opinion like an aristocratic lady handing feathers to the shell-shocked during WW1. All they had to sell was capitulation. Donkeys



leading lions.

So DM26 it is? In fact another way of working that will be remembered just like all the other ways of working that went before it. They were all the "be-all" and "end-all"... until they weren't any longer. As ever, we intend to keep resisting..! ☐

- **They need us**

DUMs (delivery managers) in East Central are trying to cut wages - starting by cutting 130 hours of overtime and trying to pile more work into our contracted hours. But we are not having it! Anyway their plan will just end up adding to the mountain of undelivered mail... [Workers' Fight bulletin 10/06/26]

- **We need to decide!**

Distribution drivers who start their shifts between 11.30pm and 12.15am have had enough. There's no proper transport to come to work that late and the traffic

at 8-9am when we try to return with our 7.5Ts is impossible. We get back home so late, that our entire day is messed up! Management cut air mail to save money and now lorries transporting mail arrive too late at the Mount - which is why we've had these late starts. But why should we pay for RM's cost-cutting?! [Workers' Fight bulletin 10/06/26]

- **Let's meet!**

And it's not just Distribution managers who are screwing up our shifts: on Processing, they keep trying to push more and more of us to work weekends! And then managers have the cheek to talk (and put up posters)

about the importance of the "work/life balance"? Sure, we do mind about our work/life balance, which is why we are the ones who need to decide which shift patterns and start/end times are convenient for us! [Workers' Fight bulletin 10/06/26]

- **They have no plan**

In fact, regular shift patterns have gone out the window: we do not start at the same time, we don't have breaks all together, etc., etc... And we know this is due to managers trying to fill all the gaps in their chaotic postal service (non-)plan - and they're still failing! [Workers' Fight bulletin 10/06/26]

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

**The union? It's us (or should be)!**

"It's not a union any more" was one of our workmate's verdict on the latest disgraceful charade that will be used to say that us Cowley BMW workers "accepted" a new shift pattern and a "shorter working week". When in fact, the only thing shorter about the first week worked under the new conditions (1-5 June) is the pay!

The Unite officials' ballot, let's remember, offered a "choice" between two equally lousy 35-hour week "options", each loaded with more slots of extra

working time than before. For the first time, it was the company that published the results. "Participation" (turnout?), they said, was 86%. Apparently, 56% voted Option A and 42% for B, with 2% of ballots spoiled. But 86% of how many? The total eligible number isn't there. But anyway, only union members with BMW permanent contracts could vote - and thanks to BMW hardly ever issuing new contracts, we're a shrinking minority!

Clearly, this "union" leadership cannot be of any use whatsoever in fighting



BMW's relentless degradation of our conditions. Whether we're in the union or not, we're going to need an organisation of our own in order to stop the rot. ☐

• **"Shortening" shifts to shorten wages**

In this first month of the "shorter" working week, BMW has added 30 mins Working Time Account (unpaid overtime) at the start of every early shift, 45 mins Volume Protection Overtime (unpaid overtime) on late shifts, and a full WTA shift on the first two Fridays (for now). So in June we're working nearly 20 hours more, for less pay, than in May! No one voted for this! [*Workers' Fight bulletin 02/06/26*]

• **A cycle of shafting us...**

All this unpaid VPO and WTA overtime, is free labour for BMW. Managers say we have to fill up our working time accounts to "get paid" for shutdowns again. Of course, they're planning to shut us out again in the future, throwing us all back into negative WTA to start this vicious cycle all over again! [*Workers' Fight bulletin 02/06/26*]

• **Putting a stop to it**

Apparently managers are so desperate for production now, that they even called for an overtime shift last Saturday. Obviously we weren't interested, so all the managers

and their friends & family were in. Let's see them try to keep production running if we all refuse to turn up during the week as well! [*Workers' Fight bulletin 02/06/26*]

• **Down tools!**

Again, we're welcoming back some Staffline mates who were sacked in BMW's last round of job cuts... some for the third time or more! We've had enough of BMW's revolving door, and how managers use our dismissed mates as a "reserve pool" of labour to call back when they need them... We're the ones holding the tools, so we can make it stop. [*Workers' Fight bulletin 02/06/26*]

**Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**

**Ford's e-Fiesta revival: zero-emissions maybe - but also zero-jobs**

In December 2025, Ford confirmed that the Fiesta would return to production in 2028, as an electric vehicle. Said CEO Jim Farley: "*Ford missed Japan. Ford missed South Korea. We can't miss China*". He later added that "*...countries which failed to plan for Chinese competition saw their factories and their jobs vanish*". Well actually, when Ford stopped making Fiestas in the EU in 2023 over 5,000 jobs vanished. And it had already ended Fiesta assembly in Dagenham in 2002, cutting 2,000 jobs.

This new Fiesta will be produced

at Renault's "ElectriCity" complex - a big plant exclusively for EVs in Douai (North of France, near Lille). It's already producing the electric Megane, Scenic and Renault 5, but also the Nissan Micra and the Mitsubishi Eclipse Cross. The new electric Fiesta has been designed to use the existing battery pack assembly and whole vehicle assembly lines in Douai. So, no new jobs!

The Fiesta was the best selling car in Europe in 2023, but Ford deliberately chose to shift production to more expensive electric SUVs (+£34.5k)



- the Explorer and Capri EVs produced in Cologne - since it considered the "cheap" Fiesta "unprofitable". Now, given the global cost of living crisis and plummeting car sales, Ford has decided that after all, it can squeeze a profit out an electric Fiesta. And at "guess who's?" expense! ☐

• **Down tools?**

On Panther machining, a few new foremen are messing up our shifts! After laying off blocks workers on Mondays for weeks, they shut the line down for two days, and sent some of us to work a smaller "swing shift" on the head line! The time has surely come for us to force some "order" into their shambles... [*Workers' Fight bulletin 02/06/26*]

• **Everyone should be replaced**

What's more, 16 of us will be retiring in July... but not only are we still waiting

for the necessary information from Ford, but we're also waiting to hear about the training to be given to the new mates replacing us..! [*Workers' Fight bulletin 02/06/26*]

• **Enough rolling!**

On 31st May, Ford temps on a "rolling" 1-year contract got another year extension... Except that Ford dismissed some of us, supposedly on grounds of "timekeeping" or "absences"..! This was just made up, petty, nonsense!

If we'd had proper contracts in the first place Ford wouldn't have got away with it. [*Workers' Fight bulletin*

02/06/26]

• **This is peanuts!**

The final pay "rise" of Lineside's 3-year agreement is due on 1 July - but are we even going to notice it, when it's only 2.5%? No surprise that the bosses always choose to link pay to the lowest possible index of inflation.

About time we demanded our pay-rise in hard cash every year, according to our needs, rather than these stupid indexes (err... indices!)... [*Workers' Fight bulletin 02/06/26*]

## International

### Who's the "foreigner"? 50 years since school pupils rose up in South Africa's townships

On 16 June 1976, plumes of smoke and tear gas rose into the air above the huge black township known as Soweto, just outside Johannesburg. Then came the sound of loud and constant gunfire. Dozens of bleeding - and dying - school students began to arrive at the gates of the township's main hospital.

This massacre - which killed at least 176 teenagers on the first day of the uprising and injured at least one thousand, is commemorated today as a rather sanitised "youth day". Yet it was a turning point in the struggle against Apartheid and against the violent oppression meted out by one of the most right-wing and racist Afrikaner Nationalist governments seen yet, under Prime Minister John Vorster. This was the first time that there had been such a concerted mass protest of youth, which, despite the police and army's bloody repression, spread around the whole country, and was joined by workers on strike. The government declared a state of emergency. Many hoped that it would be the end of the Apartheid regime, but that would take another 14 years. It was, however, the beginning of the end.

#### Why "Afrikaans"?

The uprising was organised by pupils in Soweto's main schools against a decree issued by the government that all subjects (history, science, etc.,) should be taught in Afrikaans, the language of the white descendants of Dutch settlers who had arrived in the 17th century. Organised in the Nationalist Party, they had held state power since 1948, when they imposed Apartheid as the law of the land.

This law stripped all black and brown people (who outnumbered whites six to one!) of all citizen's rights, the right to vote, the right to move about freely (they had to carry passbooks) and forced them to live in segregated townships (in ghetto-like conditions) or barren "homelands" (Bantustans) in the rural hinterland. Their role was to provide cheap labour - on the mines, the farms and as non-skilled factory workers and servants... nothing else. In fact one could say they were treated as foreigners in their own land...



Hector Pieterse in the arms of Mbuyisa Makhubu in Soweto on 16 June 1976

#### The massacre

On 16 June 1976, after going from school to school to gather all the school pupils ready to resist, up to 20,000 students gathered in Orlando stadium to attend a rally - but when they marched into the main street, the police released dogs on them and opened fire. Many were deliberately shot in the back with buckshot as they fled, paralysing them for life.

One of the first to be shot dead was 12-year-old Hector Pieterse. The total death toll of the uprisings around the country which followed, is thought to have been at least 700. For months afterwards the townships were patrolled by "Hippo" armoured cars. Students were actively pursued by the police and many had to go into hiding - some crossing the border into Botswana to escape.

#### Pupils against "foreigners" today?

By now the participants in this uprising are in their 60s and 70s. Maybe they are too old to tell their stories, or to intervene in the latest protests which are being seen around the country - against "foreign" workers and migrants. Yes, to remind today's generation of youth that not so long ago - within one generation - all of the country's black and brown

population were treated as foreigners by their government!

That is why the current anti-migrant movement is all the more shocking. In Kraaifontein at the end of May school pupils - also from a school named after Hector Pieterse - walked from school to school to gather protesters against foreign students and migrant workers.

Of course, this current "xenophobic wave" is taking place in the context of local elections and is promoted by well-funded individuals backed by Jacob Zuma's Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK) and the Inkatha Freedom Party's leadership, who have always promoted a "Zulu First" ethnic policy. Also appealing to youth is the young, pretty, Jacinta Ngobese-Zuma with her "March and March" organisation among others, calling for the sacking and deportation of all "foreign workers".

Just like in Britain, the US and Europe, the governments of all colours decide to try to win votes by going along with xenophobia. When the only answer to the current refugee and migrant worker diaspora, the inevitable outcome of a declining capitalist system spawning a permanent state of war, famine, unemployment and competition for fewer and fewer jobs - is to replace it, open all borders, and throw all concepts of "nationality" and "foreignness" into the dustbin of history!

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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