

WORKERS' fight



No 18 - 11 Oct 2010

price 30p

<http://www.w-fight.org>

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ISSN 2040-400X

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

ALL TOGETHER AGAINST ALL CUTS!

Osborne's cuts, announced at Tory party conference were designed to shock and to please - to shock the working class which is the main target and to please the Tories' business backers.

The two main announcements - the capping of total household benefits and a wholesale attack on public sector pensions - are justified by a crass demagoguery, against "cheating" claimants and "gold-plated" public pensions.

Never mind the fact that there would be no need for benefits if it were not for the soaring number of part-time jobs, the low wages paid by the bosses and their on-going shedding of jobs. Never mind either that, a majority of public sector pensioners earn less than £110/w - not much "gold" there!

Unaffordable profiteering

The poorest will be hardest hit by Osborne's plans. This, despite his demagogic gesture of withdrawing child benefit from higher rate taxpayers: the really well-off won't even notice; whereas some close to the cut-off point, will feel harder up!

But, of course, there is no question of "capping" private profits - cuts in corporation tax will "uncap" them even more! Nor is there any question of denting directors' luxurious "pension nests"!

Meanwhile big finance goes on enjoying fat profits from speculation, all paid for by billions in public funds handed over to them by Labour! Never mind that this risky profiteering deprives production of job-creating investment!

Politicians of all persuasions are lining up to tell us that the working class "has to make sacrifices" in order to reduce the budget deficit created by the bank bailout.

But look at Ireland. Twice over the past 2 years, Irish workers tightened their belts under the same pretext. Only to be told, at the end of September, that more public money would be poured into the banks and more cuts would be implemented.

A similar situation may be looming here. Experts are talking about more "quantitative



easing", meaning more public money poured into banks' coffers - at least £50bn. Will this be added to the deficit we are supposed to pay for? This is a vicious circle! The black hole of capitalist profiteering is just unaffordable.

Responding in kind

Some years ago, in an interview with the New York Times, US billionaire Warren Buffet explained: "There's class warfare, all right, but it's my class, the rich class, that's making war, and we're winning." With all due cynicism, Buffett was putting in a nutshell the situation we face today.

Yes, the capitalists and their politicians are all engaged in a class war against the working class. And so far, they are winning it - not because they are stronger, but because, to date, the working class hasn't been using its collective capacity to resist their attacks.

Organising collective resistance, should be the role of the unions. However the TUC conference showed the union leaders' reluctance to consider any real fight back. They'd rather negotiate with ministers. Except that negotiating from a position of weakness is a recipe for defeat.

The TUC's "strategy" of waiting for the cuts to bite is also a non-starter. It is now, while the cuts are a threat but not yet a fact, that the working class needs to throw all its forces - from the public and private sectors - into opposing the class war waged by the bosses and their government.

On 23rd October, several unions are organising marches and rallies in London, Edinburgh, Sheffield, among others. Workers' Fight calls on its readers to seize these opportunities to voice their opposition to the present attacks, and demonstrate their conviction that the only response is a united counter-offensive involving all sections of the working class. □

**LONDON MARCH
23rd October**

Assemble at 11am

outside Unity House
39 Charlton Street
(NW1 - Euston station tube)

• **Cap this nonsense!**

The bosses are complaining about the "emergency cap" placed on immigration because they want to be able to pick and choose immigrant workers for their own needs, when they want. They say the Con Dem cap prevents this. But they're quite happy, if at the same time, it's immigrants who're scapegoated for rising unemployment - as the whole demagoguery around this "capping" ensures - rather than take the blame themselves.

So, with both Cameron, who stands for the Tory party's manifesto

commitment to cap immigration, and Vince Cable, who has expressed his own opposition to this cap, in the very same government, the bosses can seemingly have their cake and eat it. As for immigrant workers, they are subjected to yet another minefield of rules and regulations to negotiate themselves through, at risk of being deported. When the best solution would be to welcome all immigrants, while capping the parasitic bankers and bosses and deporting them to outer space!

• **Full crisis for part-timers**

While over the recent months, official statistics have managed to produce a slight fall in unemployment, the level of long-term unemployment is at its highest. But so is the level of part-time employment. At 7.93 million, it's 27.2% of the total workforce - an all-time high and up from 24.4% at the start of the recession. In fact the number of people who said they were working part-time because they couldn't find full-time employment rose by 21,000 on the

quarter to 1.07m, while the number of full-time employees dropped by 22,000.

Comparison with earlier crises is telling: there were 4m part-timers in the 1970s and never more than 6.2m under Thatcher. So, even before the Con-Dems' attacks have really started, job prospects are already at a record low. All the more reason for the working class to do something about it - before it is totally casualised!

• **13p + peanuts = peanuts**

The adult minimum wage is to be raised by 13p to £5.93/hr with lesser increases for 16-20 year-olds. This 2.2% increase is in line with current pay rises, if not a tad more. And that's what government and the bosses want to emphasise. However, the Rowntree Foundation says that the new minimum is far short of what's needed for a single person working a 40-hour week to live a decent life - i.e., £6.95/hr. And even that's only sufficient if you claim all eligible benefits. As for families with two children and only one parent working, the minimum wage is less

than half what's needed - meaning poverty.

Labour politicians still boast that creating the minimum wage was one of their "great achievements". When it was introduced in 1999, it was set at a low £3.60/hr - but workers were told to be patient and that it would be adjusted upwards as the economy grew! Obviously, this never happened. Instead the minimum wage was used as a benchmark for bosses to push all wages down. The Con-Dems are only following in the footsteps of Labour's Scrooge regime.

• **Letter from the jobless front in Sussex**

As one of the "long-term unemployed", I was put through the New Deal, run by the Carers' Development Group "charity" (CDG), which mostly consisted of sitting in a room, with nothing to do.

I am now on the Flexible New Deal, run by US-based company, Maximus. Job Centre Plus puts you on a job-search "agreement", which

is really imposed, and Maximus tells me that I have "agreed" to apply for 4 jobs/week, regardless of what's out there. I'm also expected to tell employers that I'm willing to do a work-trial - i.e., do a "Statutory Work Related Activity" without pay, assuring the employer that he won't have to give me a job afterwards!

We, "customers", are not getting

Class Struggle n°89 is out!

In the October-December issue of our quarterly journal:

- TUC leaders' determination.. not to rock the boat
- South Africa - the working class strikes back
- USA - from the 2009 anti-concession vote at Ford to the 2010 UAW convention
- Iraq - the making of a dysfunctional pawn in the imperialist game

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price: £1.50

• **Royal "poverty"**

The Independent newspaper, using a request under the Freedom of Information Act, discovered that in 2004, the Queen was so hard up that she was finding the £1m/yr heating bill for Buckingham palace and Windsor Castle "untenable". As a result, she applied for a grant out of the energy-saving fund intended for schools, council homes and housing associations, etc. True, electricity and gas bills keep going up. And after all, the Queen "only" gets a £38.5m grant from public funds! Nevertheless her application was turned down for fear of "adverse publicity".

There might be another solution to the Queen's dire financial hardship, though. Buckingham Palace has 600 rooms and Windsor Castle, 1600, while 554,000 families are living in overcrowded homes, 100,000 in temporary accommodation and tens of thousands are homeless. Inviting some of them to move into all this wasted space would allow the Queen to share her heating bill, wouldn't it?

much of a "deal" out of this, but Maximus is. Their revenue has risen by 19.4% since the 3rd quarter of last year and their "sales pipeline" is now \$1.8 billion (£1.1bn). How, delightful, then, to learn that Maximus and CDG have now launched a joint bid to run the new "welfare to work" programme for southeast and southwest England, London and the East Midlands!

IDS in sick overdrive

Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith is already busy cutting the welfare budget. His prime targets now are the 2.2 million existing claimants on incapacity benefit - or, since 2008, Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

Labour had already intended to cut IB/ESA by 20%, but the DWP's contractor for the testing, Atos,

exceeded expectations - perhaps because tests of claimants' fitness for work don't have to involve any medically qualified staff! But by May this year, appeals against refusal of ESA were running at 8,000 a month - and 40% of those were successful.

Now, a new test, the "work capability assessment", has so far judged

• **Child benefit - universal or not, is not the issue**

The debate over whether child benefit should or should not be universal, following the Tory announcement at their party conference, is both demagogic and hypocritical.

It is demagogic because, behind the pretense of showing "fairness" by withdrawing this benefit from higher rate taxpayers, Osborne will also withdraw it from some large single-earner families for whom it is essential to make ends meet.

Above all, it is hypocritical, because no-one would need such benefit if it were not for the inadequate wages paid by all employers, public and private, to the majority of working people. And in this, the government bears a direct responsibility by retaining a minimum wage which is barely at starvation level for a single

person, let alone a family.

So yes, a big wage increase across the economy would help to sort out some problems: it would remove the need for child benefit for most, increase state revenue through taxes and shift part of the cost of the crisis onto the capitalists who caused it. But no-one expects politicians to promote that kind of fairness!

• **Osborne's quango "bonfire" was lit by Brown**

Last month the BBC published a leaked list of 180 quangos (ad hoc public organisations separate from, and reporting to, government departments), which the government intends to scrap. With the future of another 100 more still undecided, an estimated 22,000 jobs are under threat.

The closure of the Audit Commission was already known. Ironically, the Audit

Cuts watch

only 6% of claimants eligible to receive IB, whereas 83% would have qualified under the previous test. At this rate, Duncan Smith will have no difficulty meeting his target of forcing half-a-million off IB within 3 years. But where are the jobs for them? All he's likely to do is add another half a million people to the dole queue! □

Commission was a Tory creation, set up in 1983 to turn the screw on local councils' social expenditure. But it was also this commission which exposed the gerrymandering of the Tory-led Westminster council in the early 1990s. Other quangos earmarked for closure include the Food Standards Agency and the Health Protection Agency - both of which stand up for public health, and were criticised by bosses for whom anything getting in the way of profits is dispensable "red tape".

That said, most quangos already had their budgets and jobs cut under Labour. From 2007, the Environment Agency froze recruitment and cut jobs piecemeal before implementing a massive "restructuring" with even more job cuts. Maybe someone should tell Osborne that he may as well cancel his promised "bonfire" of the quangos - Labour arsonists got there first.

Against council cuts!

With budgets in billions, tens of thousands of employees and responsibility for education and social services, big city councils are a prime target for Osborne's £83bn spending cuts. Now they've begun the process of cutting in earnest, anticipating the coming cuts, if not using them as a cover for the cuts they've always wanted to make.

Birmingham sent letters to all of its

26,000 non-school employees, notifying them of revisions to their contracts, imposing cuts in pay and conditions. Soon after, Sheffield sent similar forms to 8,500 workers warning of attacks such as reduced sick pay and suggesting they reduce their hours of work or retire early. Brighton and Hove are about to follow with planned cuts of £45m.

Behind these moves is the

blackmail of job cuts if workers refuse. Birmingham's letter explicitly threatened just that. At the TUC conference, a regional GMB official said that the different unions would co-operate to fight the cuts in Birmingham. But since this is now a national pattern, it can only be stopped if confronted with a swift national response from workers! □

• **Going overboard**

In Suffolk, cuts are still at the planning stage, but they are the most drastic to date. Having talked about a "new strategic direction" since coming to power, council leaders now propose privatising their entire budget within 4 years, thus threatening the future of all 27,000 employees. "Just a few hundred people" would organise the farming out of contracts.

Oxfordshire has tried to be a bit more subtle by carrying out a misleadingly-titled "Big Debate" to soften up the public. A travelling circus of councillors and highly-paid council officials went from town to town talking about the "need to save more than £200m" while claiming

that "we're all in it together"...

In Surrey, the careers budget for schools has been slashed by 50%, while secret talks with Education minister Gove propose turning all secondary schools into academies. At one stroke councilors would offload 60% of their budget, though whether that would forestall cuts elsewhere, is another matter!

• **Islington: education in the firing line**

Education grants to councils were cut almost as soon as the Con-Dems came to power and the consequences are already being felt. In Islington, school budgets have been cut by 10% across the board. Schools have responded by cutting

teaching assistant posts, which straight away exposes the lie that "frontline" services will not be affected by the cuts. One primary school alone wanted to get rid of 25 teaching assistants. Although they eventually retreated, and cut "only" 10 jobs, the 15 remaining teaching assistants will lose their jobs if they don't manage to gain qualifications by December.

Over 20 teaching posts are also under threat in the borough and 43 of the education authority's central support workers (more than 1 in 10) are being made redundant. And all this is before the effects of the Comprehensive Spending Review are known. For the rest of the workforce, this is an alarm call - the time to start resisting is now!

Labour's "new" opposition? Pull another one!

In the unlikely case that anyone was hoping that opposition to the Con Dems would be forthcoming from the new leader of the Labour Party - well, no such luck! Ed Miliband's first speech spelt it out:

"Let me say, I believe strongly that we need to reduce the deficit. There will be cuts, and there would have been if we had been in government. Some of them will be painful,

and would have been if we were in government. I won't oppose every cut the coalition proposes. There will be some things the coalition does that we won't like as a party but we will have to support."

Which amounts to saying that he agrees it is "necessary" for the working class and the poor to pay for the bail-out of the capitalist class and the banks! In fact, his only "difference"

is one of timing. According to Ed, the screw must be turned a little slower! And when Cameron says the deficit reduction will come 70% from cuts and 30% from tax increases, Miliband says he'd prefer it to be 50-50. Either way, we pay!

There's nothing for it, but to make our own opposition. Loud and clear! ☐

• Blue Ed?

The Miliband brothers' saga during the Labour leadership contest wasn't even worth a B movie rating. Portraying it as a contest between right-wing David and "Red Ed", as the media did, was just stupid. The reason for Ed Milliband's label was that his tiny majority was due to an even tinier share of the trade union vote - in fact, just over 3% of members entitled to vote. Even Unite's turnout, despite its leaders' efforts to mobilise voters and the fact that most members pay the political levy just scraped over 10%.

In fact, when it comes to unions, Milliband's language is hardly different from Cameron's. Having described the appalling working conditions experienced by Twickenham's school dinner ladies, in his maiden speech at the Labour conference, he went on to advocate "responsible trade unions... not rhetoric about waves of irresponsible strikes". In other words, workers have to wait for "responsible bosses" to negotiate with "responsible trade unions",

while the capitalists responsible for the crisis create more chaos with their profiteering!

• Miliband and Iraq

Ed Miliband made a point of saying that the war in Iraq was "wrong" - no doubt to stress the "new course" he wants to represent for Labour. But how come he was never heard protesting against this war when he was in Brown's government?

Then again, saying that the war was "wrong" doesn't mean Miliband was against it. His problem with the Iraq war was that it "was not a last resort, because we did not build sufficient alliances and because we undermined the United Nations." But when these conditions are met, wars are alright - as in Afghanistan.

Now that British troops are out of Iraq, it's easy for the likes of Miliband to distance himself from the invasion and occupation, especially as it was so unpopular among the electorate. But as his support for the Afghan war shows, he's not about to rock the imperialist boat.

• Burnham' front-bench hypocrisy

Andy Burnham - former Health secretary and one of Labour's unsuccessful leadership candidates - was reported giving an "impassioned" speech on the NHS at the Labour party conference. He accused Cameron of wanting to privatise the NHS and allowing "markets to rule, private giants to outbid the NHS" and putting profits ahead of patients.

Many at the cutting edge have been scratching their heads in disbelief. Aren't Burnham and his predecessors responsible for ramping up the "public/private partnerships" to a degree never dared by previous Tory governments? Aren't taxpayers in hock to greedy PFI contractors like Carillion and Jarvis for over £200bn for the next 35-40 years, thanks to Burnham and his ministerial mates? This is the agenda that the likes of Burnham have had for the NHS. The Con-Dems are only taking over from where they left off.

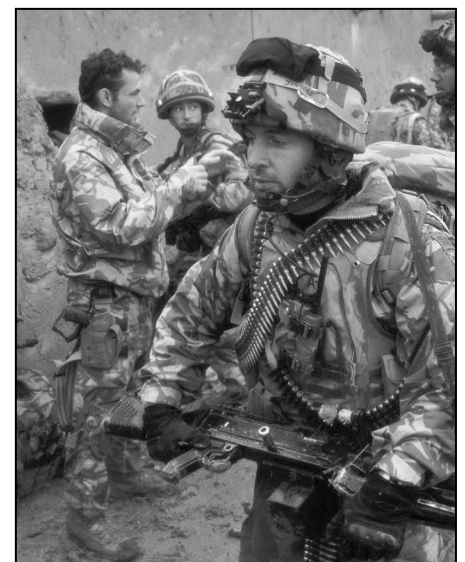
• Afghanistan: too "complex", too lethal

While British troops continue the war in Afghanistan - and scale it up, with special forces going behind the lines and killing Taliban [sic] commanders on an 'industrial scale' according to one report - the supposed deadline for withdrawal of July 2011 is being put back further and further. Clegg and Cameron in fact now speak of 2015 being the end of a "combat role".

It's surprising that they even believe there can be a stable situation where "Afghan forces" take over. Especially when their so-called "intelligence driven" campaign which kills 4-6 "targets" (who knows if they

are civilians or "insurgents") per day, only increases hostility against the imperialist powers and their Afghan puppets.

But maybe they don't believe it: Lieutenant General Nick Parker, who is Nato deputy commander in Afghanistan thinks the significance of the July 2011 deadline is "overstated", and says "This is a highly complex counter-insurgency with a very complicated regional dynamic. This is not a win-lose war". Which makes one wonder why they don't simplify matters for all concerned, save lives, and pull out now.



Empty threats from the TUC

At the TUC conference in September, union leaders lined up to condemn the policies of the coalition government and to vow to fight them. Unison leader, Dave Prentis, promised they would "lead the fight together, united, fierce defenders of our members." But behind all the huffing and puffing, is this really what union leaders are up to?

Significantly, this rhetoric referred

to public sector cuts only; the private sector was left out. No wonder, given the way union officials have been helping private bosses to force pay cuts down workers' throats under the pretext of "saving jobs" - which the bosses then cut anyway! But also because they did not want even to mention strikes in the private sector, which, as they hit profits directly, are potentially more damaging than

in the public sector.

Yet if there was ever a time for private and public sector workers to join ranks, it is now. The capitalists' offensive is directed against the whole working class, after all. Finding common objectives for workers across public and private sectors would not be hard. That the TUC makes a point of not doing so shows the emptiness of their threats. □

• The best defence is attack

The TUC anti-cuts campaign, "All Together For Public Services", puts the emphasis not on workers fighting for their jobs, but on public protests against cuts in services. Union leaders claim the "public" cannot be won over before the cuts start to bite. So, the national demonstration they are planning isn't going to happen until next March.

In the meantime, their only proposal is to lobby MPs - as if that has any chance at all of stopping the cuts. The claim that it was this kind of campaigning which led to the repeal of the Poll Tax is a gross distortion of the facts. Anyway, it won't be possible to simply "repeal" hundreds of thousands of job cuts after they've been made!

The real point, for the TUC, is to

ensure that "the cuts become the issue that decides the next election". What - in 5 years? A response after the event, amounts to no response at all. And the only possible response to these attacks is for the working class - which, after all, makes up most of the "public" - to mobilise and fight collectively to defend all jobs, before the job slashers get their way.

• Desperately seeking "partnership"

Even before the TUC conference, union leaders were calling on the government to seek their co-operation. General Secretary Brendan Barber said in an interview that he hoped Cameron would meet TUC leaders before the spending round and his wish has been granted. A conference document spelt out that "unions do not oppose negotiated change or genuine efficiency savings". So attacks on jobs and services are ok by the TUC leaders, provided they get to "negotiate" them! No wonder Tory minister Francis Maude responded to this by offering a "genuine partnership" of government and unions in a BBC radio interview. He even said that unions have what he called a "legitimate stake" in the government's cuts programme. But unions are made of members, none of whom has any stake in negotiating these cuts - only in fighting them. Our only possible partners are other workers facing the same attacks!

• Against all job cuts!

While the TUC conference was passing a resolution pledging co-ordinate strikes against the cuts, the GMB and Unite, two of the biggest unions, were signing up to 500 job cuts among British Airways' Heathrow customer services workers. And this, just after Unite had started talking about "co-ordinated" action by all BA workers in support of the cabin crew dispute - against the sacking of 13 union activists and the withdrawal of travel allowances from workers who

took part in previous strikes.

And the TUC leaders would want workers to believe that they are seriously committed to fighting job cuts in the public sector? No, whether at BA or in the public sector, the job-cutters will only be stopped by workers taking the fight into their own hands.

• Growing spark from London firefighters?

London's firefighters are currently taking industrial action "short of a strike" and balloting for a full strike - because fire bosses insist on forcing through new shift patterns which would allow them to cut jobs, hours and de-man fire stations at night. To succeed in their cuts' plan,

which turned violent when police tried to force protestors to leave Trafalgar Square. They held their ground. Hundreds of cops were injured, many protestors arrested and the West End looked like a tornado had hit it.

The determination to refuse the poll tax and the potential threat posed by the mobilisation of so many ordinary people in the streets scared the City, and therefore the Tories, into backing down - and introducing a slightly fairer, "council tax". So yes, such a fight could be a model. In the sense that what's needed, is to scare the day-lights out of the Con-Dems and the bosses! But somehow we don't think that's what the TUC had in mind!

bosses would have to sack all 5,500 firefighters and then re-employ them on new contracts because there's no way they'll agree voluntarily. Just the refusal to cover overtime, meant 91 of 169 engines were out of service on 114 occasions on Monday 4th October, some for almost 11 hours at a time, due to staff shortages or mechanical defects.

The Fire Brigades Union leaders say they plan to join forces with the RMT and TSSA unions to co-ordinate a walkout with the next Tube strike, due on November 2. Let's hope they do it, but that for once the leaders listen to the strikers and co-ordinate a real strike. Industrial action "short of a strike" or one day a month, like the current tube strikes, is doomed to be "short of success".

Poll tax: can't pay, won't pay

The fight against the poll tax was the example revived by the TUC when it spoke about opposing today's cuts. Which is all the more ironical since the TUC had nothing to do with the huge mobilisation behind that fight!

Tory PM Thatcher tried to introduce the poll tax 20 years ago - a flat local tax which meant a millionaire in a mansion paid the same as a worker in a council flat. Understandably, it provoked huge anger, at a time when the Tories were increasingly unpopular after 11 years in power. "Can't Pay, Won't Pay" Anti-Poll Tax Unions sprang up everywhere. The culmination was a 200,000-strong national demonstration in London on 31 March 1990,

King's Cross railway station (London)**• Poor safety=big bonuses**

A Network Rail employee blew the whistle on safety in the East Anglia region. Having put her concerns to senior managers without result, she went to the Office of Rail Regulation, the rail watchdog. Her dossier shows that safety figures might have been faked for up to 3 years! It suggests that at least 13 level crossings were wrongly recorded as "risk assessed" and auditors were deliberately misled over the site inspections carried

out by managers. One may ask whether last month's train collision, which injured 21 people in the area (near Sudbury), had anything to do with these failures?

Even Rick Haythornwaite, Network Rail's chairman, admitted in August that accidents had been under-reported. In fact, managers have an incentive to under-report: the more minor incidents they report, the more they lose points



counting towards their bonuses and promotion! The only thing such a cynical system can achieve is to put everyone's lives at risk, be they rail-workers or passengers.

• Falling apart at the seams

Some stations are falling apart around our ears. Take St Albans. We've been waiting over 6 months for the roof canopy on platforms 2 and 3 to be fixed properly. The phone next to the barriers has been out of order for months. An area of the booking hall is out of bounds to passengers because of a leak. And just last week, a big light fitting fell off and was hanging there for 4 days before anyone from Network Rail came to deal with it. Network Rail has cut hundreds of maintenance jobs when hundreds more workers

are needed! [King's X - Workers' Platform - 05/10/10]

• The 3 East Coast monkeys

East Coast management is always banging on about us reporting faults and accidents on trains. And yet when we do report an accident, they turn round and blame us! They suggest it shows there's something wrong with us or even threaten us with disciplinary action, as if we'd done it deliberately. The truth is that accidents are usually caused by faults with their trains. But that fact, they don't want to see, hear or talk about - or, above

all, pay for. [King's X - Workers' Platform - 21/09/10]

• All washed up

On East Coast, we have a telephone line to report equipment faults. But when we called a couple of weeks ago, regarding a broken dishwasher On Board, we were told that it probably wouldn't be fixed since the dishwashers are all going to be removed from the trains. The plan is to take the dirty dishes off the train in modules and wash them at the depots - from next May. And in the meantime...?! [King's X - Workers' Platform - 05/10/10]

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**• Inequality still the name of Ford's game!**

The "Made in Dagenham" movie is fiction, not fact. Sure, it admits the 3-week sewing machinists' strike in 1968 didn't get them the full skilled wage they fought for, and for that, they had to strike again, in 1984. But why? In fact neither in 1968, nor in 1984 was the rest of the workforce mobilised to strike alongside the women - which could have helped them win outright! Besides, the much-vaunted "Equal Pay Act" of 1970, which is presented as a victory of the 1968 fight, did not prevent an industrial tribunal from ruling against

the sewing machinists - forcing them to strike again!

As for "sex equality" - one might wonder why, except for the sewing machinists, the workforce was all-male until 1981, when Ford organised a vote over the admission of women to the lines. Against union officials' expectations the men voted "yes".

The sewing machinists were finally shafted however, when Ford subcontracted seat production to Johnson's Controls - with union agreement, behind everybody's backs, so there'd be no fight to keep these jobs in-house.



Today women may be on the same rates, but inequalities in pay and conditions between temps, permanents, contractors and "Ford" workers, one line and another, are rife. "Equal pay for equal work"? We're still fighting for it!

• Ford OK?

Ford top boss Mulally came to tell the CBI in London how great he was to "save" Ford from the crisis. He boasts he'll expand Ford UK... with 120 new jobs! After all the cuts? What an insult! But fine, expand! Replace the Wheel Plant which shut doors for the last time on Friday! Stop the

undermanning, (=overtime) and early death through overwork and night shift working when over 50 years of age! Modernise the Chicken Farm and Den where Victorian conditions force mates to stand all day! And what about the theft of Visteon pensions? We can go on, but we know he'll only listen if we stop the profits flowing in...[Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 28/9/10]

• Spy ring broken

Engine plant bosses wanted to spy on forklift drivers by fitting tracking devices to our trucks. How far away do they think we might go? Anyway, for once the union committee put down a collective foot and said no to it. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 28/9/10]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**• Fighting against the closures**

Royal Mail's latest targets for closure are Stevenage and Watford sorting and delivery offices in the South-East, and Bromley-by-Bow, Nine Elms and Rathbone Place in London. These closures will play havoc with jobs: workers would be expected to transfer (for Stevenage and Watford posties, a round trip of 50 miles to Hemel Hempstead), and another 1,000+ jobs could disappear.

London's union officials are outraged that RM dared break the agreement signed with the CWU

in March, whereby all such closure plans should be fully consulted with the union first - suddenly discovering "partnership" with RM is a sham! But their proposal is a mere "political and media campaign" - they will only consider a fight if RM makes "compulsory" redundancies.

In Stevenage, workers have already held meetings and decided on a rally and march on 30 October to protest their closure - and are inviting others to join them. They're right. In the past, offices like Gloucester's



were saved by mobilising support from local workers. Besides, postal workers have a long tradition of spreading unofficial action. It's this experience which could be the basis for stopping this latest wave of cuts.

• We intend to keep this work in MP!

If we stop Royal Mail taking Inward Foreign to Langley then we immediately prevent space being created, and stop yet more (300+) full-time jobs being cut on Earlies and Lates! (Most Foreign Inward is done before 17h00 and on Sundays). Allowing Foreign to go will only hasten the day when MP's workforce is almost all hard-pressed part-timers. When in fact our aim is to get all existing part-timers made up to full time! And let's not be misled into

thinking that workers can transfer "with the work" to HWDC. They'll cut jobs. And anyway, it's 2½-3hrs at least added onto the working day there and back. No, this is completely unacceptable. We just won't allow it. [Workers Fight Mount Pleasant 4/10/10]

• Driving us crazy!

There's certainly something to be done about the current overwork which the EC DUMs try and impose on us - especially drivers. We finish our own job and then are sent out again! It's bloody minded. They now want us to do a re-sign and

yet the jobs don't even match what's required, nor the available workforce! And so again, it can neither be fair, nor improve the situation for the majority of us! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 20/9/10]

• A meeting would be good

Did we hear that MP branch officials mentioned industrial action to prevent the last of the foreign mail from going to Langley, the poor conditions in the EC/PSA dungeon and the mail centre closures generally? Let's hear more! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 20/9/10]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**• Expose BMW's crocodile tears**

Altogether between 140 and 180 "temporary" contract workmates have been earmarked for sacking next month, including some with as much as 6 years' service. Given the constant shortage of labour and the pressure to cover for absentees, for the plant boss to say that these sackings are "regrettable" is downright hypocrisy. His only concern is BMW's PR image. Expose them for the lying, thieving job-slashers they are by opposing their plans, and BMW really would have something to regret! [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 5/10/10]

• "Sweating the assets", part umpteenth

The new shifts next month and the half-hour extension make up a substantial change in terms and conditions for Body-in-White: to a 38.5hr average week of 11 hour shifts. Yes, despite BMW's much-vaunted ongoing investment in the whole new "Painted Body technology", we're going backwards!

And BMW dares to claim that "regrettably" it needs to cut jobs? [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 5/10/10]

• Don't hold your breath!

Around one third of junior managers will be displaced by the change of shift. If they end up returning to the line and working under the regime they have introduced, it would only be poetic justice. We could run a book on how long they last before they go off sick! [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 5/10/10]

• When it suits them

Some managers don't want to pay line workers the proper rate for the job when they cover for TCs, rectifiers, maintenance and machine minders. Their attitude would soon change if they found no-one willing to do it! [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 5/10/10]

• Out of order

Body-in-White workers were told that as of 4 October we must work an extra half-hour each shift, to put us back in synch with the Paint Shop. After all the quality



and productivity improvements in both B-i-W and Paint Shop, the only synchronisation in order is for us all to work a shorter day! Any lengthening is an attack on our health. [Workers Fight BMW Oxford 7/9/10]

• Good for lining the bird-cage!

With pathetic questions like "We are proud to work in manufacturing" ("Strongly agree?!"), it's hardly surprising that the Team Coordinators distributing the multiple choice questionnaires from BMW were not actually asking us to give them back! [Workers Fight BMW Oxford 7/9/10]

France

As this paper goes to press, French workers are about to stage a third day of strikes and protests across the country, on 12 October, against the government's threat to pensions.

This time round, however, not only have strikes been called for the day, in many public and private sector workplaces, but calls to carry on striking from 13 October have been issued in several industries: in transport (from the national railways to the local underground and bus companies), in electricity and gas, in oil refineries and in some government

The anger is growing

departments.

These strikers will be joining the dock workers who have already been on strike since the end of September, over separate attacks by the government. And there are indications that the youth, in schools and universities, are also preparing to join the movement against the government's cuts. Another national day of demonstrations is already planned for Saturday 16 October, to allow those who are not yet on strike to join the strikers.

The determination to stop and reverse the bosses' and politicians'



attacks - not just against the pension system, but also against jobs, wages and conditions - is growing among French workers. Let's hope it will soon cross the Channel! ☐

Ireland

On 29 September a cement mixer with "toxic bank" painted on it in huge letters, crashed into the gates of the Dublin Parliament: angry Irish workers were responding to the announcement of a 3rd bank bailout. On that day, protest marches took place in Dublin, Galway and Cork.

In 2008, Ireland was the first European country to make wholesale "deficit reduction" cuts. Like Darling and Osborne here, Irish politicians claimed this would create jobs. Public

Against another round of cuts!

sector wages and jobs were cut as well as pensions and benefits for all workers and vital infrastructure investment. Two years on, workers' living standards have collapsed, but unemployment has doubled and emigration has soared.

But today, with another £12bn of public funds disappearing into the banks' vaults and the budget deficit at a record 32% of GDP, the government dares to demand more cuts to fill this black hole!

So, yes, Irish workers should be angry! Not that they did not try to fight off the past rounds of cuts. But union leaders, who wanted to maintain their partnership with ministers at all cost, signed up to the cuts. Let's hope that, this time, the Irish working class will not allow these leaders to paralyse their fight back. And let's make sure that here, in Britain, we learn from its experience and that we do not fall for the politicians' lies nor for the union leaders' lullabies! ☐

India

For the opening of the 19th Commonwealth Games, on 3 October, Delhi was full of soldiers while helicopters hovered above the ceremony and its 7,000 performers. But nothing could conceal the sordid reality lying behind.

While a large part of the population has no regular electricity nor sewage system, £5bn was wasted on useless infrastructure, partly funded by budgets earmarked for the poorest. Meanwhile, the government leaves grain to rot in granaries rather than give it away to the population

Commonwealth Games - with the blood and sweat of the poor

- on grounds of cost!

Land was acquired by brutally ejecting families from their homes - without compensation, re-settlement or even forewarning. Most construction workers earned less than half the minimum wage. Many slept on roadsides or in makeshift tents - without basic amenities or protection from the monsoon rain - and some were overrun by vehicles in their sleep. Building sites lacked basic safety. The crash of a 311-foot overbridge which injured 27 workers on 21st September, was

only one in a long list of accidents: 47 workers (officially) paid with their lives for these Games!

After that, construction workers and roadside vendors were taken off the streets, while some industrial areas were closed. Paramilitaries were sent out to warn workers not to enter central Delhi during the Games: the sight of poverty wasn't to be allowed to tarnish the glitter of this outdated celebration of Britain's colonial past! ☐

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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