

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 NEED DECENT WAGES!

Following the last large public sector strike, on July 10th, union leaders are organising more industrial action over wages in the public sector, starting from Monday October 13th. This week of action is to be followed, on Saturday October 18th, with a national demonstration called by the TUC in support of a general increase in wages for all workers, public and private.

Needless to say, any initiative which allows workers to express their opposition to the erosion of real wages imposed on them - both by the government and by private bosses - since the beginning of the crisis, can only be a good thing. And everything should be done to ensure not only that these initiatives are massive successes, but also that they are followed up, as soon as possible, by others - so that they can mark the beginning of a fightback. It is long overdue!

What co-ordinated action?

Union leaders will have waited no less than 3 months before organising a follow up to the July 10th strike. As if the government had shown any intention to concede on the wage freeze imposed by Osborne in the public sector - let alone to compensate workers for their losses since 2010!

What's more, the union leadership's call for action is reluctant. In fact they have gone out of their way to minimise the impact of the strike and prevent strikers from measuring their real strength: while a million and a half workers are called out, they are not meant to strike all at the same time!

So, UNISON members in the NHS (who hadn't been called out on July 10th) are striking on Monday 13th, but only for 4 hours, between 7am and 11am! Over the following 4 days they



July 10th march in London

are only meant to "take action" by taking their breaks!

Local council workers and FE lecturers are also called out, but only on the Tuesday - for 24 hours. As to civil servants they are meant to strike on the Wednesday, also for 24 hours, while teachers are not called out at all!

Union leaders call this "co-ordinated" action - but it really looks more like disjointed action!

For a general, effective fightback!

Of course, there is a logic in this disorganised way of organising a fightback - the same logic which presided over the TUC's organisation of its national demonstration over wages, on October 18th.

This national mobilisation was first announced by the TUC five months ago! Apparently the issue of wages wasn't a matter of emergency for the TUC leaders, who haven't bothered to organise any national mobilisations since October 2012!

What's more, the TUC's demands are remarkably minimal - just like those of the public sector union leaders. They would be satisfied if bosses "volunteered" to pay the so-called "living wage" - which is part of Labour's electioneering for 2015. But, at £8.80/hr in London and £7.65 outside, this "living wage" is still far from enough to make a decent living - especially for those in casual jobs. It seems that the TUC is more concerned with providing an election platform for Miliband, than really organising a fight for wages.

Of course, everything should be done to ensure that these strikes and demonstrations are well supported. But workers need to strike and march with their eyes wide open, without relying on the union leaders to build on their mobilisation: nothing will come out of it unless they themselves ensure, that it is followed up with more action, bringing together all their collective forces, across all sections, from the private as well as the public sector! □

Tories/UKIP *A housing subsidy - to developers*

Cameron stated that an all-Tory government would get 100,000 homes built for first-time buyers at a 20% discount. As if what caused the present housing crisis wasn't a catastrophic lack of really affordable homes to rent, i.e., social housing! As if the only way to deal with this crisis wasn't a massive housing construction programme by the state, aimed at containing the profiteering

of developers and landlords which is driving rents to the sky!

But, of course, this is not on Cameron's agenda. His new housing plan is just a means to throw more state subsidies at real estate developers and construction giants. So, for instance, these homes would be built on previously-developed or "brownfield" land, including some owned by government departments.

They would be exempt from some taxes and regulations. In particular, developers taking part would be exempted from the quotas of councils' "affordable homes" which are normally enforced - if anything, compounding problems elsewhere. But what does Cameron care, so long as shareholders in the construction industry can pocket even more public funds? ☐

• *Human rights - the real targets?*

Repealing the Human Rights Act 1998 and removing the right to appeal to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in Strasbourg, will be in the Tories' manifesto for next year. Cameron has talked about this for years, even when in opposition. His government has been initiating strident campaigns against any ECHR judgements which contradicted those of the British Supreme Court. Such cases, which the ECHR

considered breaches of human rights, are held up as examples of "British justice overruled". They read like a UKIP bogey list: for instance, there was the drawn out attempt, finally successful, to deport Abu Qatada to Jordan for a terrorism trial (where he has now been acquitted!) and the blanket deprivation of prisoners of their civil rights, without any right of appeal.

Cameron is obviously hoping

to prevent some Tory voters from switching to UKIP by playing to reactionary prejudices.

But, since the Human Rights Act and the ECHR have often been used to challenge decisions made by, among others, employment tribunals and the NHS, Cameron's nationalist rhetoric may well also be aimed at giving government departments and companies a much freer hand against the rest of us.

• *Blue-collar Farage, or just nasty blue?*

In the run-up to next year's general election, Farage and his UKIP crowd desperately want to win working class votes. But no matter how hard they try, they end up looking just like the nasty face of the Tory Party.

At UKIP's party conference, last month, Farage started by promising a 25% tax on super-expensive cars and shoes. But this seems to have

upset some of his super-rich donors since, within a day, he was apologising, cringing and promising that this was not in fact going to be part of UKIP's policy. Farage then went on to pledge that under a UKIP government, workers on the minimum wage would be exempt from income tax. Of course, an ex-City broker like Farage wouldn't know that most workers on the minimum wage earn

too little to pay income tax anyway!

The conference ended with UKIP peddling its usual anti-immigrant poison, pledging to slash immigration by 80% and allow businesses to discriminate against immigrant workers. Ultimately, that's all that UKIP policy really boils down to: a stream of venomous xenophobic, anti-immigrant demagoguery.

• *Cowboys in the British wild*

The private sector was brought into bus transport in 1985 by the then Tory government. This was justified by claiming that a competitive market would bring down fares. A report (by the think-tank IPPR) now reveals that outside of London, this has been proved miserably wrong. There was neither thriving competition, nor did bus fares decrease.

The result of this deregulation was a kind of sharing-out of routes among the companies which meant that on many, there was no competition at all, and the lone operator could charge what it pleased. In the years between 1995 and 2013, bus fares rose 35% above inflation.

And according to this report,

this has created an absurd situation, whereby many of those who really rely on buses because they cannot afford to buy their own cars, are forced to take taxis due to the buses' unreliability and high fares!

• *Rail fares soar, as do profits*

Contrary to what is said about competition in the railways benefiting the passenger, Britain's rail companies are charging extortionate fares. Ticket prices have risen nearly 25% under the present government - well above inflation and at least four times faster than wages. According to the Campaign for Better Transport, commuters are now spending up to a fifth of their incomes on season tickets. If this

continues, many commuters may have to either give up their jobs or move home (if they can!).

While squeezing the commuter, private train companies have been paying fat dividends: a total of £200m in total. But to pay these out, they were subsidised to the tune of £4bn by the government! And while the companies were putting millions into the bank accounts of their shareholders, what did they put back into the services they operate?

Over 2010-12, their spending on running the railways rose by a paltry 0.1%. Which means worn out equipment and consequent safety hazards. A disaster waiting to happen.

Labour and business: on track

Labour

At Labour's National Policy Forum, Miliband said, "Let's together set a new course for our railways which will be better for the taxpayer and properly serve passengers." What did he mean? Perhaps a full renationalisation - i.e. a return to British Rail, with the government taking over "wheels and steel", as the general secretary of the train drivers' union put it? After all, didn't Labour oppose privatisation in 1993, even if the subsequent Blair government did nothing to reverse the process?

But no. Renationalisation would, in Ed Balls' words, be "anti-business", and in shadow transport secretary Mary Creagh's words, "a step too far". Instead, they propose

that public sector, cooperatives and mutually-owned companies compete with private companies to bid for "franchises", within the existing privatised railway framework. These tenders (which would include big companies like, for instance, Nationwide, John Lewis, etc..) would, of course, have to bid lower than competing private bidders in order to win the franchises. In other words, it would mean



Taking care of big business

cost-cutting, poor safety standards, low wages for employees, etc. Same old sorry story. ☐

• Miliband's "Proper Plan for your future"!

Finally, Labour has made what it portrays as a commitment to working people: Miliband announced last month that if Labour got elected next year, the minimum wage would be raised to £8.00/hr...

There's no question of Miliband delivering the goods straight away though! Low-paid workers will have to wait for

another 5 years, until 2020!

This promised increase amounts to just 4% rise per year, so it's only 2% above the 2% target inflation rate of the Bank of England - and economists expect that inflation is likely to exceed that level!

Even today £8.00/hr would be

peanuts - let alone in 5 years' time! Yet that's the most that Labour has to offer the working class! It just goes to show that voting for Labour - or any of the parties trying to woo workers' votes - will change nothing; only a determined fight will do that.

• Balls' idea of "fairness"

Shadow chancellor Ed Balls' speech at the Labour party conference made the headlines when he announced that if Labour gets into office next year, it would cut ministers' salaries by 5% - thereby reducing the public deficit by a grand 0.003%. If we all had ministerial level salaries, we probably wouldn't mind a 5% pay cut too much..!

What a poor attempt by Labour at pretending that it is different from the ConDems! Because that's not what the rest of Labour's policies say, according to Balls' own announcements. So, Labour intends to out-Tory some of Osborne's austerity measures - for instance, by extending until 2017 the 1% cap on the annual child benefit increase that Osborne

planned for 2015-16! Above all, Ed Balls went out of his way in his speech to stress that, once in office, Labour will not reverse the ConDems' welfare cuts. The poorest will be expected to make even more sacrifices to pay for the public deficit, while, in the City, it will be profitable business as usual!

• Expecting the thieves to report their thefts?

Labour has announced that it will introduce a "mansion tax" on houses over £2m, supposedly to resuscitate the resource-starved NHS. This is supposed to raise a projected £1.2bn for the NHS. Not that they want to reverse the £20bn worth of cuts in the NHS imposed by the current government. After all, Labour were themselves responsible for helping the private sector gain a real foothold in

healthcare during the last Blair government with their so-called "Independent Sector Treatment Centres", and diagnostic centres run privately and paid for by the NHS.

But even leaving that aside, this projected £1.2bn is built on sand. House-owners, it turns out, are supposed to voluntarily pay this "mansion tax" by reporting the value of their houses

themselves. As if the rich didn't know their way around this one! Don't companies routinely use tax avoidance schemes? And how often does the government check their returns? So no-one should be surprised if this "mansion tax" turns out to be just another election gimmick and the £1.2bn never appears from out of the pockets of the "mansioners".

• Birmingham: Labour's "ticking time-bomb"

Birmingham council Labour leader, Albert Bore, admitted that his council is sitting on a "ticking time-bomb" due to past and future budget cuts. Bore complained that, by 2018, the council will have made £800m worth of cuts and, over the coming 4 years, will be "forced" to slash another 6,000 jobs (since 2010, 7,000 out of a total of 21,000 jobs have been chopped!). The council says it

would struggle even to provide essential services like collecting rubbish, childcare, youth centres, social care for older people etc.. and plans to outsource even more of these to private companies, including crucial functions like child protection. According to its own estimates, the average cost of the cuts per household in Birmingham is twice as high as the national average.

Bore blamed this on the Tories' "unfair practices". Sure, Cameron reduced council funding. But what did Bore's council do against this? Did they even try to mobilise the hundreds of thousands affected, in order to oppose the government's cuts? On the contrary, they made the choice of implementing these cuts despite all the protests staged by those affected!

Crisis watch "Self-employment" is bad for our wages

According to a report by the Institute of Public Policy Research, "self-employment" in Britain has grown by 8% in the past year alone and now stands at 14% of those in work, the highest proportion in Western Europe. The government might claim it's a sign of 'entrepreneurial zeal' and a healthy economy, but what this trend represents is something quite different.

In fact the incomes of the "self-employed" have fallen by £2,000 on

average since May 2010 - a 14% drop, compared with a 9% fall for employees. The IPPR says that "around 2,000 people a month are moving off benefits into their own business." In other words, reading between the lines, it is the unemployed, who are increasingly being moved off benefits, who are forced into self-employment.

That said, a large part of the increase in "self-employment" can be accounted for by the fact that many

employers impose self-employed status on workers who are in reality employees, so as to save on national insurance and pension contributions, as well as to avoid paying sick pay and holiday pay.

Which all goes to show that this rise in self-employment is just another manifestation of the turn of capital's screw on workers' conditions. And it must be reversed. □

• The newly-impooverished ENDIES

Rising costs of living in London are engulfing even those on low-to-middle incomes and thus not entitled to any means-tested benefits, according to a new report. Rents are about 50% higher than those in the rest of the country, while over the decade to 2011, average fuel bills in London rose by 50% above inflation. Oyster fares have increased 61% on buses and 47% on the tube since 2008. Wages, of course, lag far behind, leading to the new acronym "Employed but with No Disposable Income or Savings" - the ENDIES.

London is thus an extreme example of the sharp fall in real wages - their value decreasing against uncontrolled rising costs. And most of the "new jobs" that the ConDems boast so much about will do nothing to change this. 68,000 of the 74,000 jobs supposedly created in the last quarter are part-time and low-paid! The Centre for London, which published this report, advocates investment in low-cost housing. Sure, but wages need to catch up as well!



• Monarch Airline: there is another way!

Low-cost operator Monarch Airlines announced it was in talks with investment companies to keep its finances afloat, while asking its workforce to accept wage cuts (up to 30%!) and worse working conditions. Apparently, Monarch's slogan - "The low fare airline that cares" - applies to its shareholders but not to its workers.

Even the general secretary of the

pilots' union BALPA and the Unite national officer in charge of Monarch, have joined the chorus to argue that the only way for Monarch's workers to secure their future was to agree to these cuts. But why should they pay for the company's financial problems? After all, it was these workers who produced Monarch's profits in the past, thereby lining the pockets of its shareholders. How about

fighting back to make the shareholders pay, for a change?

Because a fight back is indeed possible. Recently, Air France's pilots staged a 14-day strike against the hiring of new pilots on much worse terms and conditions. And Air France together with the French government - its controlling shareholder - had to withdraw their plans when confronted with the pilots' determination!

• Jobs4nobody

Phones4U, owned by an equity firm, BC Partners, went into administration on Sunday night, the 14 September.

The next morning, most of its 5,596 workers arrived at work to find their shops (550 of them!) were closed.

BC Partners took out £225m in dividends last year and seemed to be doing well. But then the major mobile phone companies decided to use a cheaper distributor or sell their phones in their own shops and get more of the profits for themselves.

The mobile phone

market which was new yesterday, is starting to age. Since the number of people willing to buy their 100th mobile is limited, there are now too many competitors vying for this smaller market. As nothing is produced for real demand in this world, the way the market 'regulates' itself is by the bigger fish putting the smaller fish out of business and never mind the dire consequences for the workers concerned.

This rotten system has nothing to offer. Even its most dynamic sectors only end up bringing misery to workers. It needs to be eradicated.



a closed Phones4U store

Scotland - A vote against Westminster's politicians

The 55.3% "no" vote against an independent Scotland - compared to the 44.7% "yes" vote - was hardly the massive victory that the ConDems and Labour hoped for. Hadn't they joined forces to campaign for the "Union", on the strength of their century-long monopoly over British politics? So, the real surprise in this referendum was the size of the "yes" vote and, more importantly, the unprecedented high turnout of 84.6%.

Scottish "Independence" is, of course, a mirage, because an independent Scotland would have remained dependent on City of London sharks, on top of being ripped off by its own home-grown sharks. So no-one should shed any tears over the failure of the Scottish nationalist

project.

But isn't the "Union" as much of a mirage for everyone in Britain, when a handful of filthy rich can bust the financial system, get governments to bail them out and decide, at the stroke of a pen, to write off tens of thousands of jobs? There may be territorial "union" between the bits and pieces that make up Britain, but there can be no "union" between the tiny minority of super-rich and the working class majority.

Significantly, the "yes" vote was in a majority in four counties covering the working class heartlands of greater Glasgow and Dundee - which account for almost 25% of Scotland's electorate. Does this amount to an endorsement of the

narrow nationalism of the SNP? This is unlikely. Scottish workers wouldn't want their relatives working in England to become immigrants there. But they saw in this referendum an opportunity to express their rejection of the pro-business policies of the Westminster politicians.

Of course, things would have been different had there been a workers' party fighting for the common class interests of all workers - whether in Scotland, England or across the world. Such a party would have exposed the bogus choice of the Scottish referendum and offered Scottish workers many other ways of expressing their political rejection of Westminster and its politicians. But such a party remains to be built. □

• Little England politicking

To take the sting out of the "yes" campaign in the Scottish referendum, the strategy of the Westminster parties was to promise more devolved powers for Scotland - especially in the field of taxation. However, once dust had settled after the referendum, Cameron linked these new powers to constitutional changes which would mean that only English MPs would have a real say over so-called "English" issues. Not to be left out, Miliband went on to declare

cautiously that he was "not against greater scrutiny of legislation by English MPs."

So, having campaigned against the territorial fragmentation of the "Union", the Westminster parties are now advocating its political fragmentation. Of course, the Tories have obvious reasons for this - since they only have 9 seats outside England (and only 1 in Scotland), against Labour's 67. As to Miliband, he wouldn't take the risk of being accused of

opposing "local democracy".

Except that regional devolution never had anything to do with "local democracy", anyway. It is merely a gravy train for regional politicians by giving them the power to allocate a significant share of public funds. "Local democracy" would be quite something else - the working class majority exercising direct control over every aspect of social life, at every level. But that's not on the agenda of the devolution fan-club.

Northern Ireland - They still shoot to kill

As happens with all misdeeds perpetrated by the British army and police - inquiries are held as long as possible after the event, to ensure both the appearance of a "legal process" and an effective whitewash. Such is the case with the "shoot-to-kill" policy of the British army and the Royal Ulster Constabulary in (still-occupied) Northern Ireland, even if, this year, there has been renewed pressure for evidence to be made public and new inquests to be carried out.

Seven years ago, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) was supposed to hand over files concerning the summary execution of 9 men by the SAS 17 years ago, on 8 May 1987, at Loughgall - an "extrajudicial" execution of members of the "enemy" Provisional Irish Republican Army. Two Sinn Féin councillors, 6 members of the East Tyrone Brigade of the IRA and a building worker who drove into the SAS ambush by accident, died in a hail of bullets - 1000 rounds of ammunition were fired by

36 SAS and RUC members. They then went home to their barracks and celebrated with champagne. But, today, the complete files concerning this bloody event are still missing.

The official story is that the IRA was about to bomb a police station. It was later suggested that the SAS had successfully prevented a split from the IRA which could have sabotaged the later peace negotiations. But in reality this was just part of a systematic policy against anyone considered by the army or police to be engaged in the armed struggle against British rule. It began in the early 1970s with death squads (the so-called "Military Reaction Force"), internment without trial, progressed to the torture and removal of political status for Republican prisoners, and ended in the 1980s with "shoot-to-kill" - executions without any attempt to arrest, charge and try suspects in court. Among the many such killings was the shooting in Gibraltar of 3 IRA members in broad daylight. The

British state also used secret agents placed in loyalist paramilitary organisations - thus also managing to execute those who got too close to the truth, like Pat Finucane the human rights lawyer who was murdered in his home, in 1989.

Two respected senior police officers, John Stalker and John Stevens were officially commissioned to carry out inquiries into "shoot-to-kill" in the late 1980s. Stalker's findings were considered so dangerous that he was quickly removed from the inquiry and accused of consorting with criminals to totally discredit him. Most of Stevens' findings remain secret to this day. Such evidence is protected by sections 19 and 20 of the Inquiries Act (2005) which restrict public access to information and allow parts of inquiries to be held in private. In other words the state committed and will continue to commit murder with impunity. Why should we be surprised? □

King's Cross railway station (London)**• Profit diversion**

East Coast, the London to Scotland railway, returned a record £225m to the government, one of the highest amounts repaid by a train operator. No wonder it's earmarked to go back to the private sector in April 2015. The government had taken it over five years ago, when the then franchisee, National Express, couldn't meet its payment obligations. This will be the 3rd time it's franchised out. But what have all these various franchises meant for the workers?

First, there was the Great North Eastern Railway, formed in 1996. It got large direct subsidies from the

government and proceeded to make drastic cuts - even targeting drivers and its prestigious dining car services. It outsourced most cleaning to the Danish multinational ISS, which meant cuts in these workers' terms and conditions. When National Express got the franchise, in 2007, it promised to repay extraordinary sums to the government but instead, demanded more subsidies using the crisis as a justification. After running down services and cutting more of the dining services, they were allowed to hand the keys in without even a penny in fines.

• Super franchise for super profits

Govia, a joint venture owned 35% by Keolis, (the largest private sector French transport company, 70% owned by the state railways, SNCF) and 65% by Go-Ahead (the British bus company) has just been awarded the Thameslink Southern Great Northern franchise, the biggest ever in the railways, for 7 years. It is taking over from First Group which was running FCC (Thameslink and Great Northern franchise out of

King's Cross and St Pancras station). This franchise will grow further in 2015, when it will absorb the Southern franchise which connects Central London to the South Coast, Sussex, Surrey and parts of Kent and Hampshire.

The irony is that privatisation split the railways into many franchises, on the grounds that "competition" would supposedly drive fares down. Yet fares have not got



Of course fares rose with each new franchise... And the re-franchising will just allow another shark to take over and squeeze out yet more subsidies and profits. Never mind the consequences, for the workers and passengers alike, as long as the gravy train carries on running...

cheaper, quite the contrary. And this new super franchise, which will have a monopoly over many of the routes into London, can only mean even "better" opportunities for train operators to increase fares. Not that they really need it, since even if passenger numbers shrink, they will be compensated by the government - leaving them with just one task: eating up their profits.

• We vote no!

What an insult! ISS, rich multinational that it is, now tells us it's making a "full and final offer" which doesn't even pay a living wage - not even when their joke roadmap is supposed to end - now the date is 2016, and we're meant to be impressed? We need to live now! [Workers' Platform 23/09/14]

• For a true living wage

To summarise our situation: ISS makes a ludicrous offer and the union officials

are hoodwinked by it and recommend it. But we're not conned: we're the ones who have to live on these poverty wages and we know that it'll get worse every year. The other low-paid workers on this station are in exactly the same boat. ISS has always tried to play the fool with us. Why should we accept it this time? This isn't the end of it, we can still stand up and fight them, all of us together, up and down the line. And we should. [Workers' Platform King's X 23/09/14]

• Blinded by the bucks

We have to wonder if the shortage of hands across EC, including the "high profile", "sought-after", guard's jobs (see the latest CoastLife) and shortage of hands in the ticket-office - is due to a deliberate policy in the run-up to the franchise? That is, keep it as cheap as possible? Apparently it doesn't matter if the "service" becomes seriously unstuck in the process - not when your eyes are replaced by £-signs... [Workers' Platform King's X 23/09/14]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**• The bonus con trick**

How does BMW do it? On the one hand, record sales and production and a Car of the Year award for the Mini Hatch, prompting a thank you from the director. On the other, the team brief reports 9 "adverse" results relating to production, cost and quality - meaning the team bonus is on course to be reduced through missed targets. As if the botched launch of the new Mini was somehow our fault! But that's the whole trouble with bonuses - management can withhold what should be part of our wages for spurious reasons, manipulate the targets and when we do meet them, raise the bar. [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 8/9/14]

• Only 3 million?

Transport minister Susan Kramer was the minister present for the 3 millionth Mini on Tuesday. Her speech rather weirdly implied that the government and BMW are one and the same. The car, she said, was down to "the exceptional workforce we have here in Oxford, a workforce that we have nourished and nurtured". Oh yeah? Of course, she didn't stay around for a week on the tracks, to see just how nourishing and nurturing it is. [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 8/9/14]

• Profit is at the heart of any mini

If "quality is at the heart of Mini", why is BMW already planning a de-manning at the end



of the year? That can only mean more work for each of us, not to mention sacking people who've become our mates. The prospect of managers getting massive bonuses for cutting the wage bill is another reason to oppose it! [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 8/9/14]

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)

• Back to the 1970s?

The Dagenham Engine Plant is expanding - which should be good news at last, after the closure in 2013 of the Press Shop and Toolroom. But just like last time when a new engine plant was added to the old - with new style moving lines and old style Taylorism - the arrival of the new 2-litre "Panther" Engine has allowed Ford to blackmail union officials (on pain of losing the new work and jobs) with a new contract which further degrades working conditions and this time will result in all driving, line-supply and ancillary jobs being subcontracted into the bargain.

For months underpaid Romanian contractors have been preparing the foundations and floor - and two nearly paid with their lives for it, when they were crushed under a

falling load from a lorry. The machining and assembly lines are now being installed and 90 new recruits are to start in December and then further batches are to come in - we are told up to 900. But they'll be on 23-month contracts, paid £13.30/hour - a lot less than the average pay of shift-workers on permanent Ford contracts, who are on £21.41/hour.

The advert says recruits must be prepared to stand for periods of time and work hard... In other words we can anticipate that conditions will be just like those on the Tiger Engine Assembly area - nicknamed the "Chicken Farm" - where workers stand all day, must keep up a rapid speed and get lights flashing and foreman running to them if they don't. Much like the notorious



Toyota factories in Japan in the 1970s where workers regularly dropped dead on the line. It's happened in the Dagenham plant. Yet just up the road is Dunton R&D centre, where the most sophisticated line machinery - including seating for workers - is designed. But it's not for everyday use, apparently. Ford foremen are only told to use the whip... And by the way, this "expansion" is part-paid by public taxes from the Regional Development Fund, while Ford was making record profits this year of £6.8bn!!

• Let's point!

After the accident 2 weeks ago when a tow motor hit a workmate on the crossing by Puma machine lines, we got safety stand-downs. We're told safety is a 2-way street. But shouldn't it be a 3-way street? Drivers and pedestrians alike should be given the time to move around the plant safely - which is up to the third actor in this scene: Ford management. They say drivers and

pedestrians must "point" where they're going - but we "point" at Ford which is making safe walking and driving impossible with its continual screw-turning, for more, and faster, production! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 1/10/14]

• Not "worker" error!

In fact some of us who work close by can say this: Our mate was nearly at the other side of

the pedestrian crossing when he got hit. The lighting in this area is very poor due to the building work going on. Could the tow-motor driver and our mate see each other? And another "point": the rule used to be that all traffic stopped during shift changeover, to give people a safe exit. Ignored now, to keep everything including us moving, i.e., rushing!! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 1/10/14]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)

• USO under threat?

Since the privatisation of Royal Mail, in October last year, its Chief Executive Moya Greene is complaining that its ability to comply with the Universal Service Obligation (USO) - i.e., the obligation to deliver mail to all 29m addresses in Britain, 6 days a week - is under threat. Such a threat, still according to Greene, is the result of the "unfair" competition Royal Mail is facing from other delivery companies, which are not bound to the USO and thus can

"cherry-pick" profitable areas.

Ironically, in a previous life, Moya Green was president and chief executive of Canada Post for 5 years, during which this company geared up to make changes to its delivery policies. Now, Canada Post has announced that thousands of homes will no longer get door-to-door deliveries and, in some towns, people will have to retrieve their mail from "community mailboxes", which are not easily accessible for the disabled



or elderly - especially in winter!

So what is Moya Greene complaining about? It's not as if she's suddenly realised that the best way to make postal services profitable is to downgrade the service itself. Cynical hypocrisy is what it's all about!

• Take them on permanently

What's really going on with this business of casual cleaning workers in Romec? Now we're told they aren't on zero hours contracts, after all. Was that a quick rewriting of Ts&Cs by frightened Romec bosses? Anyway our temporary fellow workmates are still with us and we think they should be on the same terms and wages as us - and made permanent. There are never enough hands to do this job! [Workers' Fight 17/09/14]

• Whistle for it

We thought it was a joke when we heard that RM's Enemy Number 1, TNT, was changing its name to... "Whistl"! And they spend money to find such brand names?! It's supposed to represent "the natural reaction when people are happily going about their work". Well, first, somebody has to tell them they've spelt it wrong. And second, there's nothing natural about being happy going to work! Sounds like RM's "we love parcels"... [Workers' Fight 23/09/14]

• Surplus? what surplus?

Why are EC being denied the holidays we ask for? We're told to take "unpaid leave", when we've annual days left and service days and lieu days which we're entitled to!! Of course, it's because RM has got rid of so many of us that they're now getting into a big panic whenever they can't cover the work. But that's their problem, not ours. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant Mail Centre 23/09/14]

Hands off Iraq!

The RAF is back bombing Iraq. Not just for weeks, but for years, according to Defence Secretary's Michael Fallon. And just as Blair and Brown before him, Cameron claims that this war is all about the "threat to Britain" that ISIS is supposed to represent.

But what produced this alleged "threat" in the first place? What, if not the US and British invasion of Iraq back in 2003; their repression of the Sunni minority and the "divide and rule" game they played by propping up regimes led by right-wing Shia politicians? And, more recently, what helped ISIS to emerge as a powerful army, if not the weapons supplied by the West's regional allies to anti-Assad forces in Syria, with the approval of the British and US governments?

As for any real threat to us here in Britain, it is not from the likes of ISIS, but from politicians at the service of the City, who will stop at nothing to protect the profits of British multinationals operating in the Middle-East. This is what is happening again today. And this will again cause devastation and despair, which will push yet more recruits into the arms of ISIS.

However, what makes this new war even more revolting, is the

Another disaster in the making

The Commons' motion ordering the British army to join US-led operations in the Middle East explicitly rules out any bombing in Syria and rules out putting boots on the ground. This, we are told, is not really a war, but a "targeted bombing" campaign aimed at containing the rise of the ISIS militia. Since this militia has no anti-aircraft defences to speak of, there should be no casualties among "our boys" - which is supposed to make us feel good about the whole affair.

Except that this is all a pack of lies. The motion states that no troops will be deployed "in ground combat



ISIS - a by-product of Western aggression

electoral posturing which underpins it in the run-up to next year's election. Cameron is clearly hoping to win back voters to his right by appearing as a "strong man", determined to preserve Britain's status as a "world power". Meanwhile, conveniently forgetting his past opposition to the Iraq war in 2003, Miliband has made sure that Labour isn't left behind, by getting his MPs to support this new dirty war.

So what this war is really about, is the shedding of Iraqi and Syrian blood in order to protect City shareholders' dividends and to advance British politicians' careers. This is why it is in the interests of the working

class of this country to oppose this war by all possible means. In fact if the British working class movement was worth its salt, it would be leading protests in the streets to stop it. But the leaders who claim to speak in the name of the working class are just as spineless when it comes to opposing bloody military ventures, as they are when it comes to protecting the material interests of workers against capitalist profiteering. Opposing this imperialist war and opposing the bosses' offensive against the working class is one and the same task, because it's the same rotten system which feeds both. □

operations", but defence sources say that special forces may be sent in for "intelligence and training purposes" - as if there could be such a clear dividing line on a battle field! Besides, according to Defence secretary Michael Fallon's own admission that this bombing campaign will last "at least 2 or 3 years", if it isn't a war, what is?

As to the claim that Britain's participation in this war is designed to protect the populations against ISIS, it is a cynical lie. What about the long trail of blood left among civilians by the West's past "targeted bombings",

from Iraq to Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, Libya and Yemen, to mention just a few of its "targets"? Who can forget the disastrous results of these bombings in Libya? Didn't they pave the way for the rule of brutal Islamic militias quite similar to ISIS, which split the country right down the middle, while expanding their influence into neighbouring countries and sparking off civil wars there? And what is this new Western aggression in the Middle East likely to achieve, except the same kind of catastrophe, but on much larger scale?

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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