

WORKERS' fight



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

WORKERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!

Now that the general election is over, Cameron can admit openly that he will call for a "yes" vote in his in/out EU referendum. Of course, he still has to pretend that he's seeking a "good deal for Britain in a reformed EU". After all, the Eurosceptic "Conservatives for Britain" faction of his party which already has 110 MPs could put him in a pickle if they chose to "rebel".

So, Cameron carries on posturing here and abroad as a champion of "EU reform". But everyone knows that Britain hasn't got the clout to get much out of the other 27 EU countries. So, he's merely looking for something he can portray as a "major concession", even if it's purely token.

British capital and the EU

The bottom line is that Cameron will do the bosses' bidding. And British companies do not want to lose the free access they have to the EU market.

Of course, the City wants to have its cake and eat it. They want Britain to remain in the EU, but also to be able to opt out of the most irritating EU regulations - especially those which, like the working-time and the agency workers' directives, curtail their ability to exploit workers.

But even if they can't get this opt-out - and they know they are very unlikely to - they'll still prefer to remain in the EU. Ultimately, its 500 million potential customers matter far more to them than all the minor regulatory nuisances in the world.

This was the message that the bosses' organisation, the CBI, had for the Eurosceptics. To their claim that the British economy would be better off outside the EU, its deputy director general, Katja Hall, recently replied: *"While we could negotiate trade deals with the rest of the world, we'd have to agree deals with over 50 countries*



from scratch just to get back to where we are now, and to do so with the clout of a market of 60 million, not 500."

This, in a nutshell, is the position of British capital. It explains why so many big companies have complained about the uncertainty created by Cameron's referendum - and also, why so many of them, both British and foreign, have stated that should Britain leave the EU, they would have to consider leaving Britain themselves.

The working class and the EU

For the working class, the issue of "Brexit" - Britain's withdrawal from the EU - is not a matter of economics. Who in his sane mind would want to rebuild barriers to the circulation of people and goods in and out of Britain in today's world?

So why the big hoohah around "Brexit"? In fact, it is all about the class war waged by the bosses against the working class. It is about promoting the idea that there's such a thing as a "British national interest" - when, in

fact, those who are using this language are really promoting the interests of British capital.

It is in the name of this "national interest" that the working class is supposed to tighten its belt, because "we're all in the same boat", as they say - that is, in the same boat as the fat cats whose profiteering caused the crisis. But we're not!

It is also in the name of this "national interest" that politicians want the working class to see migrant workers - wherever they may come from - as its enemies. But of course, they're not!

The only enemies of the working class are the capitalists who live off the exploitation of its labour here and off their bloody wars and looting of the poor countries. And against these class enemies, the best allies of the British working class are precisely the migrant workers that politicians treat as if they are criminals. As the old slogan of the working class movement goes: "Workers of the world unite!" and so we should! ☐

Labour leadership: like blue peas a pod

At the time of writing, there are still several days to go before the 15 June deadline for nominations for the Labour leadership. And whether all the aspiring candidates, who just, bizarrely, attended a hustings in Dublin, will get their required 35 nominations from MPs isn't yet sure. So far the field-leader is Andy Burnham, shadow health secretary, with Yvette Cooper second, the surprise newcomer, Liz Kendall, third and in the rear, Jeremy Corbyn, who was nominated to maintain what may remain of Labour's long forgotten "left" credentials - Mary Creagh having already given up.

As comedian Mark Steel pointed out - it is really not possible to be serious about this fiasco - it seems the party has decided it lost the election to the Tories because it wasn't the Tories! All for nothing were its efforts to have exactly the same



Andy Burnham, Yvette Cooper, Mary Creagh, Tristram Hunt and Liz Kendall

boss-friendly austerity policies. So now, with the exception of Corbyn, we hear all these candidates agreeing with the EU referendum which Labour previously decried; endorsing welfare cuts and benefit sanctions - including, in the case of Liz Kendall and Mary Creagh, the proposed 4-year qualification period for

welfare benefits for migrant workers. As for privatisation of the NHS - well apparently that too, is something Kendall, the "new kid on Labour's block" would agree to. It's amazing. Their take on Labour's losses is that it was too "left-wing"! One might well conclude: who needs the Labour party?

• Labour's false split over the EU

Labour's acting leader, Harriet Harman, has shifted the party's policy to supporting Cameron's in/out referendum on the EU - which it had previously opposed.

Labour has historically been divided on the issue. But today, both pro- and anti-EU Labour factions agree that Britain needs a "new deal" with the EU and their statements are often indistinguishable from Cameron's. For example, Andy Burnham, the leading contender to the party leadership, stated that EU migrants should not be allowed to claim benefits for the first two years they are in the UK and should be prevented from undercutting the wages of British workers. As if it wasn't British bosses who were responsible for exploiting foreign workers!

For the working class, there is nothing

to choose between these two camps. Both only whip up nationalism at the expense of migrant workers, thereby fueling divisions within our class.

• Toff world

When the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA) awarded MPs a 10% pay rise for this year - about 10 times as much as most workers are offered - even PM, David Cameron (salary £142,500), put on a show of embarrassment. But, as he said, it's nothing to do with him or his government, since the IPSA is an independent body and will pay them the 10% whether they like it or not! What else could he do but wring his hands impotently and say... thank you very much?

But in these austere times it doesn't look good, does it? So contenders for the Labour leadership thought better of it

and rushed to say they'd give their 10% to "charity".

Ironic though, that the IPSA was created in 2009 just after the MPs' expenses scandal precisely because they were taking the biscuit, the cake and the cherry on top! So instead of them voting for their own pay rises and claiming vast expenses, these matters were taken out of their hands by this "lay" body which comprises a judge, 2 ex-MPs, a lawyer and a business consultant (no workers, of course). They are responding to the complaints of many MPs who claim they can't manage on annual pay of £65,738, plus max expenses of £268,265 (in London)! The IPSA cited MPs' "pay freeze since 2012"... For comparison: public sector workers (some on less than £15,000) have had a pay freeze since 2010, or at most a 1% pay rise. Never mind, though, MPs need to "catch up"!

Ireland

Gay rights today, women's rights tomorrow?

When the 22 May Irish referendum on gay marriage went in favour by 62.07% some people called it a "social revolution"! It was certainly a convincing ballot, with a 60.52% turnout and has made Ireland, previously known for its bigoted Catholicism and conservatism, the first country ever, to adopt gay marriage by popular vote.

So how come? Well, for one thing the Catholic Church is discredited by a long series of horrific scandals over the abuse of children and "unmarried

mothers" and cover-ups going back decades, if not centuries - with the celibacy of its officials undoubtedly a related factor. In the run-up to the ballot, sermons against gay marriage were thus listened to by a dwindling congregation. But this result could, paradoxically, also be the legacy of Ireland's forced religious conformism, buttressed by the state, which favours marriage per se, against "living in sin" whatever gender your partner may be.

All of this said, the elephant in

Ireland's room - now thrown into prominence by same-sex marriage legalisation - is the country's abortion laws, among the most restrictive in the world. Irish law even criminalises abortion in the case of foetal impairment. It became legal only in 2013, in the case of the threat to the life of the mother.

Now the case for a new referendum to extend abortion rights is being pushed to the fore. Whatever happens, it's certainly high time Irish women got the abortion rights they need!

Crisis watch

The Queen's speech, Cameron and his Tory "rebels"

Above all else, the Queen's speech was an attempt by Cameron to placate the right-wing of his party, now organised in a faction calling itself "Conservatives for Britain", to which 110 out of 330 Tory MPs are

said to have signed up. So, it was a series of measures designed either to uphold Cameron's Eurosceptic credentials - including, of course, the organisation of his in/out referendum - and to show his determination

to keep a tight screw on the working class. This being the one thing, at least, on which all factions of the Tory party agree. We detail below some of these measures.

• Laws to tie us up... if we let them!

One of the Tories' plans is to set a turnout threshold of 50% for strike ballots to be valid. There is a further condition that 40% of eligible voters should support industrial action in the case of public services such as health, education, fire and transport. Which is a bit rich, coming from a government which was elected by just 24% of eligible voters!

It's yet another addition to the laws designed to tie up the working class. But, as a former "chief conciliator" at Acas, Peter Harwood, warned: "If you make it too difficult to take official strike action, you might just get

unofficial strike action. People will just think - I'll walk out".

Harwood will be proven right. All too often the bosses have tried to prevent strikes in the past. In the 19th century it was a crime to strike, or even to form a union. But this never prevented workers from organising and fighting! And when, in the coming period, the working class starts regaining confidence by responding to every blow with a fight back, all the anti-strike laws will find their way to where they belong - the dustbin of history!



• Cheap apprenticeships

To tackle youth unemployment, 3m apprenticeships are meant to be created in the next 5 years, partly funded by cutting the benefits cap - which is a particularly hypocritical way of "justifying" turning the screw on the poorest households.

But hasn't the government already spent £1.5bn, over the past 5 years, to subsidise 500,000 apprenticeships

each year? And what is the result? 13% of the under-25s (over 940,000) are jobless. Nothing to write home about!

But is this any surprise, since 42% of these apprenticeships went to over-25s? Only 25% went to under-19s, among which 24% were paid below the minimum apprentice wage of £2.73/hr! Last but not least, many

of these "apprentices" were already employed in a company before being offered the training - in other words, more often than not, no job was created, not even temporarily.

Far from "helping the youth", the government is just providing the bosses with an extra pool of ultra-cheap labour!

• Migrant or not, we're all workers!

Another measure is an immigration bill clearly designed to pander to xenophobic prejudices. It would turn landlords, doctors and NHS staff into auxiliaries of the Border Agency in charge of checking the immigration status of tenants and patients. In addition, it would empower the police to seize the wages of undocumented workers as "proceeds of crime". In short, these workers would not just be branded

"illegal", but treated as criminals!

As if the real criminals were not the big companies - British among others - which have been looting the poor countries for so long, reducing their populations to abject poverty, and, more recently, the governments which have been responsible for causing so many devastating wars in these countries.

This finger-pointing against migrant

workers is obviously aimed at making up for Cameron's failed pledge to reduce annual immigration to "tens of thousands". But why should migrant workers foot the bill for Cameron's demagoguery? All those who come to live and work in Britain, with or without documents, should have the same rights as those who came here a few decades ago - or a few centuries before, like all our ancestors!

• Nothing to do with "human rights"

Included in these measures is a "consultation" on proposals to replace the 1998 Human Rights Act with a "British Bill of Rights". This is aimed at the Eurosceptics who see this Act as a European infringement on British internal affairs simply because it is the expression in British law of the European Convention on Human Rights, which Britain signed up to.

Instead they want to make the British supreme court "sovereign" on human rights, arguing that this will "repatriate" powers - but also implying that "British justice" is somehow superior to "European justice".

As if cases like the Birmingham Six, Guildford Four and Maguire Seven never happened! Weren't these 17 people all framed, convicted on

falsified confessions and jailed for 15 years or more, by a British justice system determined to support the state's clampdown on any opposition to its occupation of Northern Ireland? What a human rights record! But, of course, Cameron and the xenophobic right of his party couldn't care less about human rights, anyway.

Recovery? Even the bosses don't believe in it!

According to the latest business survey by the manufacturer's organisation the EEF, companies are scaling back investments and recruitment. The EEF expects manufacturing output to increase by 1.5% in 2015 - half as much as in the previous year. In fact, manufacturing capital investment has been in free-fall since 2007, and as a result, the

sector's output remains well below pre-crisis levels.

Of course, economists at the service of the capitalist class, always find a "good excuse" for the failures of their system. In the past few months, they have been fueling illusions that the oil price slump would definitely boost economic growth, and now they are saying

that manufacturing output is down because of fewer orders from the oil and gas industry!

But, of course, they won't state the obvious: that the bosses themselves do not believe the official hot air about a "recovery" and therefore, are not ready to risk investing in an economy still deeply mired in crisis. □

• Eye-watering profits

Despite its profits being up 29.5%, to £335.8m, Thames Water is set to raise its household bills. Regulator Ofwat expected most water companies to lower their bills by about 5% this year. But it is making an exception for Thames because of the £4.2bn cost of the Thames Tideway Tunnel, a new sewer from west to east London due to

begin construction next year.

Never mind that this investment will save Thames a lot of money in the long run, by replacing decrepit old sewers - and that, by offsetting this investment, Thames will avoid paying corporation tax on its inflated profits and will probably be able to do so until the tunnel's completion, in 2023!

In the meantime, Thames Water's 14 million customers in London and the Thames valley know where its profit rise really comes from - not only their bills, but its chronic underinvestment in basic maintenance to reduce leakage in its supply mains, which last year stood at 644 million litres a day!

• Legal tax dodgers

800 British-born residents have "non-domicile" tax status - they do not have to pay tax on overseas earnings. But how can they be "non-doms" if they live in Britain? They just have to declare that their "domicile" is another country. This can be where their father was based when they were born, or a country where they intend to transfer their home - in some cases, buying a burial plot overseas in order to

convince HMRC that they mean it! In addition, in order to enjoy this special status, these "non-doms" have to pay an annual tax of £30,000 to £50,000.

Who are they? Well, among them, are super-rich individuals such as Lord Rothermere, chairman of the Daily Mail, the Conservative MP Ben Goldsmith, and Stuart Gulliver, the chief executive of HSBC. Even though he was born in Derby and lives in London, Gulliver's

"domicile" is listed as Hong Kong, giving him non-dom tax status, while he does his financial business through a company based in Panama, a tax haven.

All of this is perfectly legal, of course, according to Britain's laws - whose primary aim is to protect the private property and parasitism of the capitalist class.

• Private landlords worry for their benefits

Private landlords are said to be worried by the government's plans to cut the benefits cap, especially those with a lot of tenants claiming housing benefit. Suddenly, landlords' spokespersons sound very socially concerned, pointing out that since about a quarter of private tenants claim housing benefit,

the poorest will only find housing even harder to come by, if landlords start to believe that taking them on might reduce their incomes.

Of course, landlords' real worry is the threat to the easy profits they make from the housing crisis. HMRC figures showed they got a record £14bn in tax

breaks last year - added to the estimated £9bn they get in housing benefit. Yet in this society, it is the poorest who get stigmatised for living off benefits that they can barely survive on - much of which goes straight into the pockets of private landlords who make a killing at state expense!

What corrupts the beautiful game

Following the arrest of FIFA officials and corporate executives, last month, corruption charges have been brought in relation to the 2010 South Africa World Cup, the 2014 Brazil World Cup and the future Qatar 2022 World Cup. But the bribes involved are only the tip of an iceberg of corruption.

Hosting the World Cup means billions for the western companies which build new stadiums, transport systems and other infrastructure. In South Africa and Brazil, these were mostly paid from public funds which could have been put to far better use serving a population which has barely anything to live on. In both cases, once the Cup was over, these stadiums have become useless white

elephants, while the transport system and hotels built for the games are too expensive for most. And now, in Qatar, these stadiums are built by workers employed under a bondage system, in such terrible conditions that it is estimated that 4,000 of them will have paid with their lives by the time the Cup starts!

If this is not corruption, what is? But neither the media nor the courts will object, because this corruption is built into the profit system itself.



Job slashers on the rampage

The government's so-called "recovery" may well apply to company profits, but the working class has still to see any sign of it. Worse, even, the same big companies whose profits have "recovered" are still finding excuses to shed jobs - like HSBC and the Magnox nuclear consortium.

- In May, HSBC chief executive, Stuart Gulliver, announced 25,000 job cuts worldwide, including 8,000 in Britain - on top of the 39,000 job cuts since Gulliver took office, in 2011. This, he said, was because HSBC had to pay a total £7.5bn fines over the past 4 years due to money laundering for Mexican drug gangs, the mis-selling of PPI and other dodgy, but very profitable, activities. But each one of those brought big dividends into the pockets of the bank's shareholders! So why aren't they paying for the fines, rather than



the workforce?

- Meanwhile, the Magnox nuclear consortium - the Anglo-American private partnership in charge of decommissioning 11 of the 12 Magnox nuclear power plants - announced plans to cut 1,600 jobs, for "the implementation of a more streamlined operating model for delivering decommissioning".

Crisis watch



Ironically, though, it is demanding extra subsidies from the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, claiming that the workload will be heavier than anticipated. So, a heavier workload to be carried out by fewer workers? It seems that the state will be subsidising both the job cuts and a turn of the screw on the remaining workforce! ☐

• Hidden NHS cuts

A new "nurse associate" grade is to be introduced in the NHS. These workers would be less skilled than fully-qualified nurses (State Registered Nurses, or SRNs) and on lower pay. But given the current shortage of SRNs, training and recruiting a significant number of these "nurse associates" could, at least, relieve overstretched SRNs of some of their tasks and improve patient care.

Except that this is not the aim of the exercise, which comes against the backdrop of £22bn annual savings which the government aims to achieve in the NHS, including by cutting wage costs.

This isn't the first time a lower paid grade of "nurse" has been

introduced. Most recently "health-care assistants" - with minimal training were meant to relieve SRNs of some of their tasks. But this "relief" went so far that, today, health-care assistants provide an estimated 60% of patient care in hospitals!

The odds are that, once again, the government will just use the new grade as a cheaper alternative to SRNs, thereby avoiding having to train and pay more fully-qualified nurses - especially if it tries at the same time, as it pledged, to implement 7-day-a-week operation in hospitals. This plan is all about cost-cutting at the expense of NHS staff and, therefore, patients' health - and it should be opposed.

• Criminalizing the homeless

Homelessness and rough sleeping has increased by 55% in England since 2010 and in London as much as 79%! So what have enlightened London councils such as the supposedly left-wing Hackney done? They imposed £100-£1,000 fines on people sleeping rough - by way of something called a PSPO - a public spaces protection order! Apparently it's the space which needs protecting, not the person who has nowhere to lay his or her head! This PSPO also gives anyone served with one, a criminal record. In Oxford, campaigners

successfully petitioned the council to stop this inhuman treatment of the vulnerable and now a similar campaign has received over 80,000 signatures in east London. This has impelled the council to back down and agree not to criminalise the homeless. But it's not the first time Hackney has been among the most proactive boroughs against the poor - it is notorious for evicting those who are late with rents and for spying on benefit recipients. No doubt the consequence of its recent "gentrification"..?

Steelworkers fight back?

Tata Steel may be about to trigger the first major strike in three decades, because of its decision to downgrade its final salary pension scheme. As a result, the company's 17,000 workers would either have to work till 65 instead of 60 to get their full pension, or they would face a pension cut of 5 to 25%. Tata claims this is the only way to make up for its £2bn pension fund "hole". As if, with £16bn worth of assets, it couldn't fill the gap without robbing workers of the pension contributions they have already paid!

Members of the company's 4 unions voted overwhelmingly for strike action. But so far, union leaders have just called for a 24-hour strike on 22nd of June, as a bargaining chip - which is unlikely to impress Tata.

But it doesn't have to remain this way. In the last steel strike, back in 1980, it was unofficial action which resulted in a 14-week national strike, forcing Thatcher to increase the then nationalised British Steel wage offer from 5% to 16%. At the time, though, union leaders eventually managed to take control of the strike and sign productivity deals resulting in job losses.

So, yes, the determination of workers to fight till they win, can force Tata to give in, but workers will also have to ensure that they retain control of their fight, to prevent union leaders from stitching them up behind their backs.

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)

Not yet made in Dagenham

There's half-good news for Dagenham. 56 temps taken on in the first "new" batch of recruits a year ago, just got permanent contracts - but on 2nd tier wages (26% less) thanks to the agreement made in 2011 with the unions. Since there hadn't been new recruits before, this agreement wasn't implemented on engine assembly. But it's ironic that management should do this now, when, in the US, Ford is busy making up some of its 2nd tier workers (on 29% less), to 1st tier!

Indeed, it seemed like times were a-changing when the UAW (US car-workers' union) said the contract this year would focus on ending the 2nd tier workforce they agreed to in 2008, to help "save" GM, Ford and Fiat Chrysler, from the brink. But no change: the UAW is up to yet another trick!

While it's true that some 2nd tier workers are getting pay rises to "narrow the gap" due to pressure from the shopfloor, the UAW leaders say that provided they'd gain new



union members out of it, in-house sub-assembly work could be paid at lower, 3rd tier rates! Of course here, there are already 3rd tier workers - doing outsourced work like forklift driving and parts sequencing. So no question: the fight for equal pay for equal work is on the agenda, both sides of the Atlantic! □

- **Ford's keeping quiet**

We hear our fellow-workers who were occupying Ford's Otosan plant in Kocaeli went back to work on 4 June, after 15 days on strike for higher pay and against the metal workers' union leadership! Mates occupying the Eskisehir plant re-started work on the 3rd.

Ford has refused to reveal the details of the agreement it signed directly with the workers. Of course, they don't want to talk about their defeat and workers' victory. But given the Renault deal, (see backpage, this newspaper) we can be sure that Ford workers didn't go back to work without winning major concessions! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 10/6/15]

- **We can do the same**

So let's take heart: these workers demonstrated that it's possible to fight and win by relying on the "resources within

their own ranks". They rejected the existing union leaders, who refused to represent their interests time and again and pushed forward their own leaders. Like we'll have to, if we want a decent pay deal this year. [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 10/6/15]

- **Blaming us for absence**

Why weren't ALL the older, 3rd-time round temps made up? It's the usual excuse: sickness record. This is another battle we must wage - because bosses still treat us like we're machines. Never mind that if we come to work sick, we can make other workers sick. Or that back and joint injuries abound, due to their badly designed work processes... Then there's night-working, but don't even get us started..!

No, Ford won't begin to respect us as the flesh and blood human beings we are, unless we hurt its nasty and inhuman profit machine. [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 10/6/15]

- **Already got 3rd tier**

Let's not forget the pale-faced 2nd tier 23-month-ers who're meant to have super-immune systems and bodies of steel to eventually "qualify" for a permanent job - maybe... after 2 years... Or the many Lineside workmates who applied for "Ford" jobs (3 times, too!), but not one was accepted! In fact these Lineside mates are Ford's de facto 3rd tier workers! Should be in-house and made up, too! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 10/6/15]

- **OT=fewer jobs, bad health**

It's outrageous, this flat-out overtime on Puma machining the past few weeks (is it worse than before, tho?! Of course, there may not have been much to do when the machines broke down, which was often, but being awake and away from family for 12 hour shifts and 6 or 7 days in row, that's bad for everyone - except Ford shareholders, of course. [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 10/6/15]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)

- **Textbook Stabletakt**

The job reorganisation in engines is already having crazy results, even though the jobs haven't been cut as intended. That's because many of the jobs, as redesigned by Stabletakt, actually need 2 or 3 people to do them.

As it is, with this so-called extra manning, we're barely able to walk by the end of a shift. There's even talk of going back to how we were doing it before - but since BMW put Stabletakt in the area for 8 weeks before drawing up proposals, we can't bank on the common sense of senior managers. If they start to get nasty when we miss targets, we'll need to be prepared. [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford 20/5/15]

- **No "fat" to cut**

When Stabletakt came into engines the first thing they told us was "we're not here to cut your jobs". We took that with a pinch of salt then. Not only have they cut jobs, but there's no margin of error to stay within cycle and far more moving around to get jobs done than ever before. In some sections they've shaken up so much that we're basically learning the jobs from scratch - at full speed! BMW seems to think that if a job can be done at a pace for 5 minutes it can be done for 7 hours. It can't. [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford 20/5/15]

- **Hazards ahead**

The last 18 months have seen many changes and now that we're building all F models, more changes are planned. As problems are sorted, BMW will want



speed-ups and/or job cuts - as the Stabletakt programme has already set out (though without cutting the jobs, so far, as management knows that would mean chaos!). Yes, there's every reason for all of us to be on our guard. BMW's "experts" will swear blind that all is safe and sound. But they're thinking about BMW's profits, not about our safety. [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford 3/6/15]

King's Cross railway station (London)**The fight that never was**

After Network Rail offered a 0% pay rise this year, £500 one-off payment and a rise equal to RPI for the next 3 years the RMT, Unite, and TSSA union leaders organised a strike ballot. The RMT result said it all: 80% for industrial action, 92% for action short of strike on a 60% turnout. A 24-hour strike was called, to start at 5pm bank holiday Monday 25 May - and for the first time in 20 years some 14,000 vital track, signal and station workers from 3 different unions were to bring the whole railway to a halt, together.

But "a revised 2 year pay offer"

of 1% in year 1 (or £250) and RPI in year 2 was enough for TSSA, UNITE and then the RMT to suspend the strike. Then, for the RMT only, it was back on : 4th and 9th June, while Unite and TSSA, despite calling this offer "derisory", had already broken the united stand.

Nevertheless, the RMT's new strike threat resulted in a new offer, so they called their strike off again. It's now 2% in year 1, RPI year 2 - and no compulsory redundancies (only) until 2016 - which all unions are using as a pretext to recommend the offer. But the small print



commits them to help find efficiencies, i.e. *voluntary* redundancies, cuts, more work, worse conditions...

It remains to be seen whether NR workers will accept this offer. It's still "derisory" from state-subsidised NR which made £1.2bn profit on their backs last year. We hope they will say no. ☐

• "No" to tied hands!

By the way, even if the deal is now 2 years, instead of 3, it still means we officially tie our hands instead of being free to demand a new deal if circumstances change.

As for being tied to percentage increases and RPI for year 2, that will never improve the wages of the lowest paid among us.

[Workers' Platform, King's Cross, 3/06/15]

• As for temps and subbies?

And speaking of low pay, there's one glaring deficiency in the whole dispute over NR Ts&Cs for the workforce as a whole: a large number who are not even covered by this agreement because they're agency temps (0-hours included!) and/or sub-contractors, many of whom aren't even unionised. We know that a directly employed, fully integrated workforce on the same pay and conditions is necessary. So if not now, when? [Workers' Platform, King's Cross, 3/06/15]

• Their bluffing game

As for this on-off-on-off business, sure, we know that union leaders use strike calls as a bargaining chip rather than the fighting weapon they should be. But it's really not OK! It's almost a cliché nowadays to say "we are the union", but we are! So it's up to us on the ground to start the ball rolling. After all, whenever strikes have been won, it's because we didn't wait for full-time union officials to tell us what to do. [Workers' Platform, King's Cross, 3/06/15]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**Final Royal Mail sell-off?**

As promised during the election campaign, Osborne is selling the government's 30% stake in Royal Mail. Already City institutions have been given half of these shares (£750m worth) to sell. The government is ensuring that the private sector does the best out of RM's rising profits, up 35% on the previous year!

These profits are partly due to the increase in stamp prices since privatisation - by 5% for 1st class and 8% for 2nd class stamps. The sale of part of the real estate portfolio also contributed to last year's profits. Royal Mail bosses can't keep increasing stamp prices nor sell property indefinitely. It will try to keep squeezing most of its profits



out of the postal workforce. But the privatisation of RM has not taken away the postal workers' capacity to fight, nor the possibility of winning back the ground lost! ☐

• Pennies for piggy-banks

What a lot of boasting in RM's new *Courier* - "a good year", "we're number one". In fact profits have increased by £11m to £740m! So sure, the bosses and big shareholders can be pleased. As for us, we're getting a dividend amounting to £3 a week - if we're full-time that is. It's less - about £1.50 - for part-timers. Privatisation worth it? Certainly not for us and certainly not for the general population. We still have miserly wages, are delivering mailboxes full of junk and can't afford to post a letter ourselves, not anymore... [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 3/6/15]

• Equal conditions for all...

We all know how RM has tried to stop the "finish and go" practice - by keeping us in as if we were naughty schoolkids until the "bell goes" even if the work is cleared. But some managers on Lates aren't so silly and let us go - except if we're unlucky enough to work in the bull-rings...

There they want us to sweat to the last minute (and beyond!). Have these managers been taking buzzing lessons from nightshift's prize obsessive B the B? [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 3/6/15]

• Bullying ring

Yes! Stop this interference! This job is bad enough - but managers keep crowding in behind our backs and then they dare to ask us to stay behind and do even more of this hazardous packet-throwing. "The bull is not an aggressive animal, and the reason he is angry and attempts to charge at the matador whilst in the bullring is mainly because he has been horrendously abused for the previous two days" : from "Bullfighting, the facts". [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 3/6/15]

Turkey

There was a lot of media coverage of the Turkish June 7th general elections, with quite a few commentators voicing their disappointment that the ruling right-wing religious AKP party lost its absolute Parliamentary majority. But there was much less coverage of a wave of illegal strikes in the car industry during the preceding month, even though, in the context of Turkey's oppressive society, these strikes had far more political importance.

Growing discontent

Discontent had been brewing for a long time. With inflation at 25%, workers' living standards were falling fast. On an average wage of just over £350 a month, production line workers just could not manage. Adding to this, was the repressive anti-working class legislation inherited from the days of dictatorship in the 1980s, whereby strikes could be declared illegal at the drop of a hat and companies could impose their own puppet "unions".

In the car and metal industries, this "yellow" union was Türk-Metal-Is, a pro-bosses outfit whose leaders are close to the political far-right. At the end of 2014, it signed a 3-year deal for a miserly 3% wage increase - causing great anger among these workers. But a first attempt by the reformist confederation, Disk, to call a general strike against it in January failed. After 41 factories stopped work, the strike was declared illegal.

From a spark to a fire

But after a breakthrough by Bosch parts workers, who won increases ranging from 12 to 60%, following a strike in April, new strikes broke out right across Bursa province, where much of the car industry is located.

On 13th May, 5,700 workers occupied the Oyak Renault plant, one of the biggest. Within days, the strike spread to FIAT, Ford, Case New Holland, Valeo, Delphi. Many local component factories were also hit. By May 18th, 15,000 workers were on indefinite strike, with the numbers still rising.

The working class raises its voice



Renault bosses caved in on May 27th, agreeing wide-ranging benefits which included all workers, not just union members. New pay rates will be negotiated with the strikers' elected representatives within a month. Workers are to receive new bonuses and full compensation for wages lost during the strike. They gain the right to join and be represented by the union of their choice, as well as to elect their shop stewards. And all threats of criminal charges and disciplinary action against any striker are to be dropped.

Since then, similar agreements have been made in order to settle the other strikes. The last workers to go back in the car industry were at Ford's plants on 3rd June. But now workers in other industries have been encouraged to make similar demands - like at the giant Petkim petrochemical complex, in Izmir province and Arçelik LG factory, the country's largest appliances manufacturer. In other words the strikes are not over.

Another way of striking

Of course, these strikes were and are illegal. But this has not stopped the workers, despite police using force to try to evict them from occupied plants and despite the threat of criminal prosecution. Against the strikers' determination, the repressive

machinery of the bosses has proved useless.

Another feature of this strike wave has been the role played by so many workers in organising it. Right from the beginning thousands of strikers tore up their union cards. They set up their own elected commissions to run their strikes in each factory, to talk to management under their collective control and to coordinate the action between different factories - for instance, in order to show up in force where the police tried to remove strikers. It was this democratic, militant organisation which strengthened the strikers' determination.

Back here, in Britain, indefinite strikes until demands are met, have long been replaced by push-button, token 24-hr stoppages which union leaders switch on and off, as bargaining chips, without workers ever having any control over these decisions. Instead of seeking to reinforce workers' collective confidence, union leaders have been telling workers for far too long that this country's comparatively lenient anti-strike laws actually made collective action pointless, if not impossible! Yet Turkish strikers have shown that no amount of repressive legislation can stop a determined fight back. The British working class could do worse than to take a leaf out of these workers' militant book! ☐

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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