

WORKERS' fight



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

ALL HELL NEEDS TO BREAK LOOSE OVER TRUMP'S AND STARMER'S HEADS

The actions of Starmer's government are certainly opportunistic, pro-business, even populist. But who'd have thought he'd announce that his government was going to "deregulate", in his "mission" for growth?

"We will kick down the barriers to building, clear out the regulatory weeds and allow a new era of British growth to bloom". He wrote this in the *Times* newspaper, concluding his piece by doffing his hat to Tory "heroine", Margaret Thatcher: "In the 1980s, the Thatcher government deregulated finance capital. In the New Labour era, globalisation increased the opportunities for trade. This is our equivalent. For too long regulation has stopped Britain building its future".

The "tribute" to the late Thatcher, 50 years after she became leader of the Conservatives, is to be Starmer's "bonfire of regulation". Never mind that deregulation was one of the direct causes of the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017, which killed 72 people when its cheap inflammable cladding caught alight.

In fact without any sensitivity whatsoever (no surprise there!) Starmer's deputy, Angela Rayner announced early in February that the Tower is to be demolished, without even ensuring this was properly discussed with the survivors of the fire.

Trying to emulate Nigel Farage

It gets worse. Starmer has embarked on his own version of "Trumpism" - apparently in order to try to "trump" Nigel Farage's right-wing Reform Party, which, according to opinion polls is either level with Labour or a few points ahead. So "Sir Keir" is making a big show of arresting "illegal migrants" and deporting them.

He may not have sent the army and air force to patrol the border at Dover, but who knows, he may still do so - aping Trump's sensational and very



nasty anti-migrant "enforcement".

Of course Reform is a single-issue party - obsessed with immigration. When in fact the movement of people across continents is the only way that the increasingly uneven distribution of wealth which characterises this decadent phase of declining capitalism is being challenged, albeit unconsciously and out of desperation. It's being challenged in the only way open to the poor and wretched of the earth, displaced by war and famine: take your life in your hands, walk, swim, run, climb, take a leaky boat: find a way to get to the wealthy and safer North-West...

From outer space no borders are visible

This is not even a moral issue, even if the anti-migrant enforcement by Starmer, Trump et al, is immoral - and inhuman. Indeed, Trump has already "opened the doors of hell" on the Mexican border for those desperately seeking work and refuge in the USA after fleeing places like Haiti, where homicidal gang rule prevails (while

also promising more hell and ethnic cleansing for the devastated population of Gaza).

No, the reason to offer free passage to all migrants and refugees is because ultimately, opening all borders and sharing the dwindling natural resources of this ever-warming planet among the whole population will soon become a matter of survival for the human race.

The world's population quite obviously needs redistributing over the still-environmentally habitable surface of this earth - at present mostly the Northern Hemisphere - in order to create a sustainable population balance.

This will first require that the capitalist system, which today provides wealth only for the few, is eliminated and replaced by socialism. Then it will be possible to implement planned production for everyone's needs - the only efficient economic solution - on a world scale. And if assisted by Artificial Intelligence (under the working classes' intelligent control!) its efficiency can only keep on growing! ☐

International

Gaza ceasefire: is this the end of Israeli terror?

Following the ceasefire agreement between Netanyahu's government and Hamas, effective from 19 January, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians began returning to North Gaza - to a scene of utter devastation.

To appease his far-right cabinet which is opposed to any ceasefire, Netanyahu immediately claimed Hamas had breached the ceasefire and ordered the "Netzarim Corridor" to the North to be closed. For 24 hours, refugees were stopped and shot at by the Israeli army. All traffic including aid was prevented from entering the Strip, until finally the corridor was re-opened on 27 January. Other hitches have followed. At this rate the 42-day first stage is going to continue well into March.

One-sided ceasefire

The agreement for stage one is that 33 Israeli hostages are released in exchange for 1,000 Gazan hostages detained without charge by the IDF, 734 Palestinian prisoners from the West Bank and 230 Palestinians serving life sentences who are (bizarrely) to be exiled to Turkey, Qatar or Algeria. These include many elderly prisoners, jailed during the First Intifada of 1987-1993, 30+ years ago, led at the time by youth armed with stones.

It's enough to see the images of the emaciated Palestinian prisoners - or to hear their testimonies - to get an idea of the conditions in Israeli prisons. Although it's only the emaciated state of Israeli hostages released on 8 February which got western media attention.

Trump's bluster

Because of Israeli army infringements (100 Palestinians have been killed since the ceasefire while aid, tents, diggers and bulldozers were held up at



the Rafah crossing), Hamas initially said it wouldn't release the 3 captives due to be exchanged on Saturday 15 February. And then US President Trump waded in, after meeting Netanyahu, to impose his own conditions off the top of his head, threatening "hell to break loose" - that is the war to resume - if all captives held by Hamas were not released by... "hummm ha... 12pm Saturday... that seems like an appropriate time!"

It seems this proposal was treated with the contempt it deserved: for now the Israeli army has backed off, aid is flowing in again and the deal is back on course.

From Gaza to the West Bank

It remains to be seen of course, if stage 2 of the deal will proceed. It will mean the release of the remaining live Israeli hostages and total withdrawal of Israeli troops. Of course there's no deal to release all the estimated 3,400 Palestinians held in Israeli prisons without charge... let

alone 10,000 political prisoners!

As to the final stage, the "reconstruction of Gaza", Trump's proposal to take over the Strip, deport Palestinians to Egypt and Jordan and build resorts to transform Gaza into a "Riviera of the Middle East" can hardly be taken seriously. Although US ally, King Abdullah of Jordan had to hasten to Washington in person to humour the President while refusing such a crass absurdity.

In the meantime a renewed offensive against Palestinians on the West Bank is turning parts of Jenin and Hebron into rubble - not with bombs, but "armoured bulldozers", while more Israeli settlers move in. For now.

Ultimately though, Netanyahu has been unable to eradicate Hamas in Gaza, i.e., failed in his objective, despite razing large parts of Gaza to the ground and killing over 47,000 Gazans. He and his political allies will pay for this, sooner or later. □

Trump's new order: a warning for the working class

Trump promised to sign 100 executive orders on the day of his inauguration. While he "only" managed 24 on day 1, in his first two weeks he signed a record 54.

Several "orders" declared "national emergencies", which, Trump explained, gives him the "right to do whatever I want". Obviously, what this real estate billionaire "wants", is to serve the interests of his class of capitalists, while keeping up the pretence of caring about "the forgotten men and women", that is, the American working class, he spoke of (and to) during his election campaign.

So, first he has announced tax cuts. A number of "orders" cut regulations that protect workers' health and safety in industrial jobs. Others are designed to reduce public spending, cutting the number of federal employees in departments that deal with Social

Security and Medicare benefits. Elon Musk is helping...

Shooting his economy in the foot

Many decrees attack immigrants: he's ordered an end to birthright citizenship (promptly blocked by the courts); stripped the legal status of thousands who entered the US legally; ordered the military to send planes of deportees - in chains - to Colombia and Brazil and issued new "quota" limits.

On the ground, these orders haven't amounted to much, yet, although US troops and airplanes have been sent to the Mexican border. The Canadian and Mexican governments are now meant to reinforce their borders, in exchange for a pause in Trump's imposition of tariffs on their exports.

The class war will escalate

In the meantime Trump is engaged in "ending the killing" in Ukraine (if he does, all the better), engaging with Putin to do so, but at the same time threatening more killing in Gaza.

So, second term round, Trump is more grimly farcical than ever, a fitting product of the decadence of this capitalist system in its late imperialist phase. His "trade war" tariffs (some already suspended, but which will fuel domestic inflation), his intention to annex Greenland and the Panama Canal (and maybe Gaza) seem unhinged. But he's nevertheless the leading actor in the imperialist world today. And in the context of the ongoing world recessionary decline, he will be presiding over an intensification of the class war, which workers in the US - and around the world - will need to be ready to confront.

Their economy

Britain: economic "growth", by Reeves, amateur magician

During her many recent trips, Chancellor Reeves hasn't uttered a sentence without mentioning "growth". Accompanied by a delegation of business executives and financiers, including the HSBC chairman, she travelled to China on 10 January and claimed to have secured agreements "worth £600m over the next five years". Not much to boast about, so she was at it again a few days later at the rich countries' summit held at the Swiss ski resort of Davos. She met more bankers there, such as the CEOs of JPMorgan and Goldman Sachs, telling everyone that

Britain is "one of the most exciting places in the world for them to put their money".

While wooing investors, she made a series of announcements meant to "unlock further growth, boost investment", etc., etc. So in her "growth" speech on 29 January, she gave the go-ahead for the third Heathrow runway (also signing off the expansion of London City and Stansted airports)... because after all, growth "trumps" the government's own 2050 net-zero target. She also jumped onto the AI bandwagon, saying she'd build "Europe's Silicon Valley" between Oxford and

Cambridge, expediting planning approvals to build data centres in so-called "AI Growth Zones".

The result so far? Growth in the last quarter was a magnificent 0.1%... Apparently Reeves thinks the Brexited British economy is somehow excluded from the effects of the world economic recession. If she'd understood anything, she'd never have promised "growth". So the question now is: how will she massage her figures to "magic" this growth out of a slump? □

• Labour's Thatcher-style deregulation

Prime Minister Starmer, ahead of Reeves' "growth" speech of 29 January, said he would "clear out the regulatory weeds" to "encourage" businesses to invest. And in case businesses were not convinced about Starmer's readiness to please them, he invoked one of their historically favourite PMs, saying that "in the 1980s, the Thatcher government deregulated finance capital" - and that the current deregulation "is our [Labour] equivalent".

The Labour government is going to introduce a string of subsidies. It is going to

"relax" rules to open up the bond market to retail investors - in other words, facilitating the issuing of small-size loans. It is going to ease mortgage rules to encourage first-time buyers - and of course, please the banks issuing those mortgage loans. It will "streamline planning approvals", to incentivise the building of infrastructure for high-tech companies. It will "adjust regulation" to encourage pension funds to invest in Britain. And these are only a few of Starmer's Thatcher-style deregulation measures!

And will businesses have to worry about about the minimal "deregulations" of the rules against unions and workers contained in Labour's Employment Rights Bill? Not at all: loopholes are many so that the bosses have plenty of flexibility. For instance, only "exploitative" zero-hours contracts are banned, but fire-and-rehire can still happen and collective bargaining over pay is not made compulsory... Indeed, Starmer and Reeves have established Labour more firmly than ever as Britain's "natural party of business".

• USA: the Los Angeles fires weren't "caused" by climate change...

Most of the Press blamed this year's California wildfires on climate change. That there is global warming is not debatable. And California's abundant dry vegetation is an ideal fuel for fires, once they start, while winds of up to 130km/h mean the spread of a fire is hard to control.

That being said, while temperatures were warm for winter this year, 20°C wasn't enough for dry grass to catch fire... In fact the Hurst and the Eaton blazes were sparked, literally, by the electricity company, Edison. A video showing sparks on a power line at the location where the fire started made this quite obvious to the 600 residents who've filed lawsuits. Edison's faulty, unmaintained, 136-year-old power grid also sparked the Hurst fire.

Edison has refused to bury power lines to prevent wildfires, on grounds that: "[if so] there would be electricity rate hikes"... But these increases are imposed anyway. And year on year Edison is compelled to pay compensation: there were 6 "Edison-made" fires in 2017-2018...

The serial cuts in Fire Department budgets meant it was severely overstretched when fires initially broke out. It had to leave several to burn. The dire shortage of firefighters means that 1,870 prison inmates on low wages (\$2.9-\$5/hr, when the minimum wage is \$16.50/hr!) make up 30% of the firefighting force. In addition, unmaintained water pumping systems failed.

Yes this is "rot and decay" in the richest state in the US: California, which, if it was a country, would be the sixth largest economy by GDP, in the world. But

capitalism dictates profit first, public services second. So this year, 25 people died in the LA fire, 8,000 buildings were destroyed and an area of 233km² - equivalent to the city of Birmingham - got burnt.

• DeepSeek: US monopolies... hiding behind anti-Chinese propaganda!

On 27 January, the Chinese Artificial Intelligence (AI) company, DeepSeek, released its first free chatbot (the R1 model).

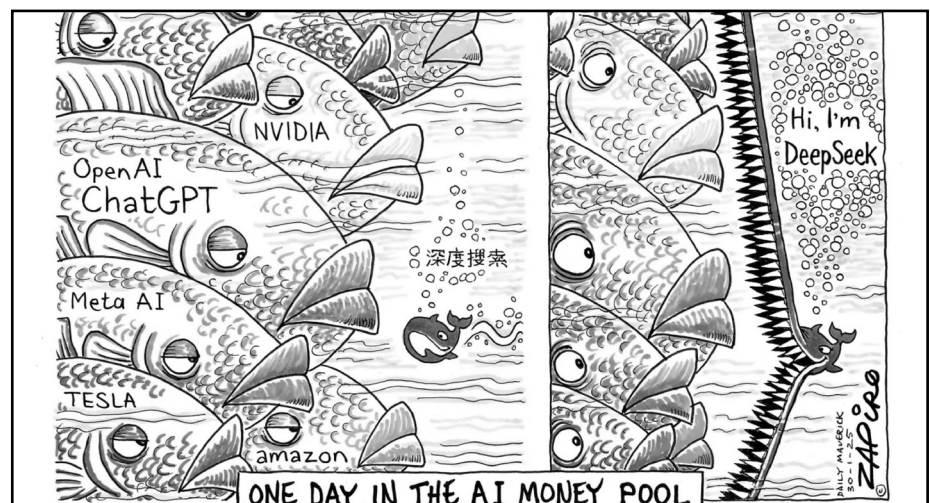
Upon its release, the US high-tech stock exchange saw its overall value drop by \$1tn! Stocks of Nvidia, the leading microchip maker, were hit hardest - losing 18% (\$593bn!) in a single day.

In fact, Nvidia monopolises 95% of this market, presiding over a cartel including Intel and the Dutch AMD, which together hold the "keys" of high-end microchip production.

This is how they manage to fix microchip prices 75% above production costs!

Here's where DeepSeek and the Chinese state come in. Their chatbot at just 2% of the cost, outperformed Microsoft's ChatGPT, using less powerful microchips. And to top it all, its code is open source - available free, for modification and distribution!

In fact DeepSeek had no real choice over its use of these microchips due to the serial US bans on exports to China, compelling it to find power-efficient ways to compete with US tech, using the huge scale of the centralised infrastructure (like the 5G Network) provided by the Chinese state. That said, it's estimated that by 2030 the computational power required to stay in the AI race will be tenfold. So, despite DeepSeek's success, the future of these nouveau-riche Chinese tech capitalists and rational technical progress is in no way guaranteed. That would take socialism.



Their society

Poverty and unemployment is rising...

The latest report from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation estimates that 14.5 million people in Britain today live in poverty - as many as 22%. With food prices still rising by more than inflation (despite the official index falling), food bank usage by the poor has hit record levels: the Trussell Trust gave out more than 3.1 million emergency food parcels last year, the highest number ever distributed.

And this is not surprising, given that by the end of 2024, 1 in 4 businesses had downsized, while many shut up shop completely, leading to the highest number of job cuts since the pandemic. Retail lost 170,000 jobs - mostly due to big store closures. Then there is the closure of Tata Steel's two blast furnaces at Port Talbot plant, resulting in 2,500 job losses and the Vauxhall (Stellantis) closure of the Luton factory, with the loss of 1,100 jobs - among others.



In fact, the Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), which measures the prevailing direction of economic trends in manufacturing and which surveys supply

chain managers across 19 industries, hit its lowest score - 45.8 (scores below 50 mean companies are shrinking) - since 2009, the year after the banking crash.

... homelessness soars...

Homelessness has skyrocketed across England, with 123,100 households living in temporary accommodation - up 4.9% from the previous quarter and 16.3% higher than last year. In London alone, 1 in 47 people are homeless, forced out of their homes and onto the street because they just can't afford their bills.

Labour's solution is to "*deliver the largest increase in affordable and social housing in a generation*". To do that, Starmer is asking local councils to build 370,000 homes each year, with a goal of completing 1.5 million new homes by the end of the parliamentary term. OK. But will these homes be rented out

directly by councils at controlled rental rates? Unless the "privatisation" of rented property for the working class is fully reversed, billions of public money in subsidies and housing benefit will continue to flow straight into landlords' pockets.

... while Labour plans to cut benefits!

The government is looking to cut welfare payments. After her appointment as Secretary for Work and Pensions, right-wing Blairite Liz Kendall immediately announced she was going to clamp down on "*welfare scroungers*" who refuse to work. She intends to weed them out.

Kendall will change the definition of what it means to be sick and mentally unwell. Under her plan, the "Limited Capability for Work or Work-Related

Activity" category will be scrapped, meaning thousands of people currently deemed too ill to work will soon find themselves "employable" by government decree! Never mind that many can't access the care they need to get better. Or that employers aren't exactly queuing up to hire workers with complex health conditions...

By squeezing the poor and unemployed, the government aims to

save £1.3 billion annually until 2029. By then it's estimated a record one in three children in England will be living in poverty. What's more, wages are expected to stagnate through 2029. So with rising housing costs, and welfare benefits barely above poverty levels - the only solution for the working class is to organise to fight in order to force through changes in its interests.

Lucy Letby, unlikely killer: the collapsing NHS is guilty!

Lucy Letby is considered by the "great British legal system" as one of the worst serial killers in history, after being convicted of killing 7 babies and attempting to murder another 7 while working as a nurse at the Countess of Chester hospital. But now an investigation by a panel of 14 world experts into the cause of the deaths - led by Shoo Lee, whose research work on neonates was used to convict Letby - has found "*no medical evidence to support malfeasance*". The babies deaths, they found, were the result of "*either natural causes or just bad medical care*"!

And this isn't the first time that the entire system, NHS management,

justice system, the media and the state itself, has tried to find a scapegoat to cover up preventable deaths in a crumbling NHS. A nurse in Stepping Hill hospital in Stockport, Rebecca Leighton, was arrested in connection with patient deaths - only to have her charges dropped for lack of evidence. In fact, the Criminal Cases Review Commission, which is reviewing the Letby case to decide if she can appeal against her life sentence, is currently reviewing the case of Colin Norris, a nurse convicted in 2008 of murdering 4 elderly patients in Leeds with similarly thin evidence.

So yes, what these cases certainly highlight is an increase in preventable deaths. At 4 infant deaths per 1,000

live births, Britain's infant mortality rate is higher than most European countries, including Ireland, Spain, Italy and Greece. And last year, 41 out of 121 NHS trusts were rated "red" for neonatal mortality!

The brutality of the austerity measures which have led to the collapse of the NHS can only compare to the brutality of the witch hunt Lucy Letby has been subjected to. A witch hunt against a working class woman in many ways worse than the witch hunts of the Middle Ages, that aims at blaming NHS staff for an underfunded, understaffed NHS!

Their society

Public inquiries, the only British growth industry

No government body is ever any good at social policy, but they're excellent at announcing inquiries into the consequent failures of their policies... and into the multiple failures of famous "British Justice"... which is in reality, famously unjust. What did the contaminated blood scandal expose? Actual lying by ministers?

And grooming gangs, well maybe they are not going to have another inquiry, but who knows? Southport, yes, but will it actually expose any of

the real issues? As for the Covid and subpostmasters inquiries? Still ongoing? Any "results"?

And now the latest, on the 1998 Omagh bombing! But does anyone really expect a public inquiry to resolve questions, 27 years later? Certainly, nobody who can remember the longest one of all, into Bloody Sunday 1972, which took until 2010 (!) to report that the 13 marchers killed and 15 injured were innocent and that the Paras fired first - which everyone knew anyway.

Trigger-happy cops continue to shoot suspects dead, so what "lessons were learned"?

In the end the function of these inquiries is to keep the very same out-of-date wilfully ignorant, biased anti-working class system going - indeed, fuelling it with these copious floods of hot air. But it does little more than provide an income for so called experts and legions of lawyers. It's a growth industry! (Tell Reeves!).

Yes, the Southport killer was - and is - "ill"

Axel Rudakubana, the teenager who stabbed and killed little girls attending a dance class in Southport pleaded guilty to all charges. Since then, politicians, the media, and the Crown Prosecution Service continue to vilify him without any attempt to provide an explanation of why individuals may carry out such horrific acts. According to Starmer, he was "obsessed with violence" and "meticulously planned" and carried out "with intent" the attack. There have been biblical and horror film references made. The judge who sentenced Rudakubana to 52 years in prison called the killings

"evil"; the prosecutor described them as "sadistic".

Rudakubana is none of these things. He may well have an abnormal brain; is definitely mentally disabled, if not borderline psychotic. He cried out during his trial, begging the court to stop the case saying over and over that he was ill and hadn't eaten for 10 days. Nevertheless he was deemed fit to stand.

Social and mental health services, the police, safeguarding teams and "Prevent" - the government's counterterrorism program - all had contact with him at various points since he was 13. However,

not one took the responsibility of seeing his case through to diagnosis and management. Of course mental health and social services remain critically underfunded...

Starmer and Home Secretary Yvette Cooper now talk only about strengthening "Prevent". Cooper wants to make attending its courses compulsory for all those who are referred - with prison sentences of up to two years for youngsters who refuse. Welcome to the 17th century: "Bedlam", courtesy of Labour.

Assisted dying: a right to choose...?

Last November, MPs voted for a private member's bill which proposes to legalise assisted dying in England and Wales. If this "Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill" becomes law, it will allow adults over the age of 18, who are expected to die within six months, to receive assistance in ending their own lives if they so wish. A doctor would prepare an "approved" substance (though the bill does not specify which one), and the patient would take it.

For some, assisted dying is the last resort. The alternative, that is spending the final months of life in a fully-staffed, free, and high-quality health and palliative care system, is just not

available as a choice for most people. And that is one reason why agreeing to assisted dying will be to offer a "choice" which will ultimately be determined by one's class.

There have always been too few hospices and palliative care services. Hospices are severely underfunded, receiving only a third of their finance from government, with the rest having to be supplemented by charity. Of course private facilities for the rich are always available!

And to make matters worse, from 2021 to 2023, government funding for end of life care fell short by £47 million. The government has now announced it

will invest £100 million for 2025/2026, though how the funds will be allocated remains unclear.

This capitalist system, which neglects the sick and elderly - those considered "economically inactive" - can't be trusted to offer "unbiased" assisted dying. This would be the case even with a highly functioning health system, which we certainly do not have. For sure, all human beings should be able to control their lives and their deaths. However, achieving this in a dignified manner, however individuals may choose to approach the end of their lives, will first require a social revolution.

NHS cleaners (try to) take a stand

Dozens of cleaners at Guy's and St Thomas' hospitals in South London are in dispute with the NHS trust over pay and conditions. These workers carry out vital "ultra cleans" in the most highly infectious disease areas, helping to control disease outbreaks.

One of the strikers' grievances is that they have been denied the new national minimum wage, which is meant to go up to £12.21/hour in April. Currently, their base pay is only £12.08/hour, with an additional £2.77/hour as the London Weighting.

Moreover, according to Unite the union, workers have reported a lack of access to sanitisation areas to clean

themselves thoroughly after working. They have also been denied permanent contracts and refused overtime pay whenever they are forced to cover staff shortages.

Unite the union had initially called for strikes from the 27th to the 31st of January, but called them off as a "goodwill gesture". Are the union leaders expecting a "goodwill gesture" in return from the bosses? They know perfectly well that for anything significant to be won, there needs to be real fightback and what's more, the involvement and solidarity of the rest of the hospital (and wider!) workforce.



Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**Royal Mail: no to cuts in the USO; no to this trial!**

Ever since the privatisation of Royal Mail in 2013, its board, representing shareholders, has been wanting to shelve the statutory Universal Service Obligation (USO). Currently, the USO means that Royal Mail has to deliver letters and parcels to all 32 million addresses in the country 6 days a week. In January, Ofcom finally agreed with bosses that the USO was "too expensive" and has put forward a plan to cut it, which is being "consulted" with the public until April. Ofcom proposes to reduce 2nd Class deliveries to alternate weekdays, and to cut the percentage of 1st Class post

delivered next day to 90%...

The new Royal Mail owner Daniel Kretinsky and the Communication workers' Union (CWU) have jointly agreed to begin trials of this new regime in 37 Delivery Offices around the country. One of these trials is meant to take place here at Mount Pleasant in W1 deliveries.

Of course, getting rid of the USO is a way for Kretinsky to move fully into the profitable parcel delivery business, without the unprofitable drag of letter delivery. It will be the end of a postal "service" as we know it. And the corollary is to strip postal workers of the terms and



conditions won through past struggles.

It's a very long time since we postal workers took our struggles into our own hands. But it has been done before and can be done again. Our refusal to carry out this trial could be the first step in the fight to take the entire postal service back into public hands - and moreover, under our control!

• Unbelievable!

The CWU leadership claims to have made a great bargain. They helped Kretinsky and the Board with their plan to kill letter-post - which involves thousands of job cuts, but then say oh, we have got a commitment for some part-timers to be made full time! How does such a "bargain" even work? As for saying some of us will get more Saturdays off, that's also a joke: Didn't they agree to Sunday- and late-working delivering parcels?! [*Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 05/02/25*]

• Full-time jobs for all!

We've heard some rumours concerning the bosses' plan to offer part-timers on

Processing full-time jobs... (is this part of that USO bargain?). Of course, it goes without saying that part-timers need these jobs. Ever since management forced us into cutting our shift hours and/or allowances last year, it's been impossible to make ends meet! [*Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 05/02/25*]

• They're losing it already

DUMs (Delivery managers) in here think that those extra 2nd class flats/letters they want us to deliver if USO is cut won't make a difference, just because we do more business than residential routes?

They know we've literally been playing "Tetris", trying to fit packets on the vans - and that it's got harder and harder with all those ParcelForce packets

we're supposed to deliver as well. So more 2nd class flats and letters is Game Over! Already the USO trial is a no-go, by DUMs' own doing! [*Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 05/02/25*]

• What about the boardroom?

Who was the bright spark that decided to move the learning centre room to the first floor, by management's offices and the book-room? The area is busy with people coming and going; the space is tiny and we don't even have room for books and dictionaries... it's obviously not a space where we can focus and learn IT skills or English lessons. Surely there is a nice big office somewhere in the Mount which we take over? [*Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 05/02/25*]

King's Cross railway station (London)**• Mitie the outlaw...**

Since Mitie took over Lumo cleaning services, it's been trying to get cleaners to work outside of their previous contract, which was to clean trains and nothing else... It wants to force them to clean parts of the station as well - and never mind that it's clearly in breach of TUPE law! [*Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 05/02/25*]

• ...And leading miser

And here's one unreasonable "reason": Mitie has one of the station-cleaning contracts but employs only a skeleton staff to do the job. So they want Lumo's train cleaners to step in? We've honestly never heard of such a cheek!

Oh and by the way, poor little Mitie which says it "needs" to stretch one worker over two or three jobs, describes itself as "the UK's leading facilities management and professional services company" and made profits of £210m in 2024, up from £162m in 2023. [*Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 05/02/25*]

• Close open access!

As for Open Access company Lumo, it's another member of the cowboy club, profiteering by screwing down costs and imposing poor conditions on the rest of us. And now we see that the "renationalising" Labour Transport Minister is "considering" Worst-First's request that private companies' Open Access not only continues, but be opened up even more! [*Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 05/02/25*]

• Not born yesterday?

Avanti West Coast guards went on strike again on 2 February over rest-day pay. In fact 2 strike days were already cancelled by RMT officials this month for "talks" with Avanti. But then Avanti bosses said they'd only talk if they cancelled this strike as well. You give a finger they take an arm... Union officials should know that by now. [*Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 05/02/25*]

• Still missing the point

The RMT produced placards for this strike saying: "Rest day work needs fair pay!". But the real issue is the refusal of the company to recruit enough workers - to



save on wages - which led to this situation in the first place. Anyway, what is "fair" pay for rest-day working? If the bosses ask for it, we must make it unaffordable! [*Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 05/02/25*]

• Left in the dark

Over the past two weekends, engineering works have left the Hornsey and Bounds Green depots without power, including to the tracks, leaving us to do "dead" work, like fixing seats on trains. Obviously all work involving electrical repairs couldn't be done since there was no power to test anything afterwards. Next time, how about they give us the days off, instead? [*Workers' Platform bulletin Kings' X 05/02/25*]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)

Let us undo BMW's screw

When BMW cuts jobs, Unite the union leaders turn a blind eye. You would think nothing is happening! This was the case in 2023 when half a shift - about 400 jobs - were cut. And it's true again now, with this round of cuts, without bosses even saying how many they'll sack between now and April. For union leaders the company is "only cutting temps" so it's no big deal, but we know how BMW uses and abuses so-called "temps"!

In fact, our "temp" mates who're threatened with the sack now, have been working full-time in the plant for up to seven years! And this is just the "cut off" point - "temps" who have longer

service (!), which can be 9, 10 or 11 years without a permanent contract, are not threatened with the sack, yet...

Of course, the bosses blame "market conditions", lack of orders, etc. They've already begun merging jobs on the line, so that we're facing another increase in work intensity. And they are hoping to cut the length of breaks in the upcoming pay deal...

None of this is acceptable. There is no point, however, in waiting for the union officials to say no to the cuts. For more than a decade they've swallowed in silence the abuse of workers' terms and conditions (and abuse of the English dictionary) and stood by while workers



with 11 years in the plant are designated "temporary".

With the upcoming pay deal, now is surely the time to begin to discuss among ourselves how to begin a fight back, under our own direction and control. We can surely do it! □

• A date... for what?

Last week, managers got us together to tell us that changes are planned for mid-April. But not what they are, or when management will tell us what they are! Some R&H workmates got a message to say that "Plant Oxford will be moving to a different operating point", and that there would be adjustments to line speed and breaks. Of course, we know they're always looking for ways to turn the screw more... but we have ways to unscrew it. [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 11/02/25]

• Our breaks: not for sale

The word is that, as part of the pay deal, BMW wants to cut our breaks, and give us a paltry lump sum in exchange.

It's tried this many times before, why would our answer be any different this time? [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 11/02/25]

• Let us stop you now...

Not only that, we hear rumours of changes to our breaks in Painted Body, like changing from slip relief back to block, everyone together at the same time. Sure, we'd prefer to take our breaks all together, but for longer, not shorter! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 11/02/25]

• A chance for 10 winks

Management and LAs have been using 10-Com meetings to update us on their "quality" measurement, boring us with

percentages. One day we're supposed to feel threatened because they're down, and then "safe" when they're up. But we know quality is always sacrificed for quantity! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 11/02/25]

• Phones down?

Sometimes we're told our shifts are cancelled just 30 minutes before they're meant to start, by G&P agency Planet Recruitment. And on some of these days, our phone rings again, an hour later, begging us, actually, to come in after all! We wonder if this nonsense would stop if we put our phones on "silent" and just turned up demanding to be paid anyway! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 11/02/25]

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)

• The slow-down we need..!

On Panther Assembly mini-shift we finally got the sort of a production target we approve! 10 engines per shift! But it was only because Ford managers upped Tiger engine targets and thus wanted to yo-yo their production again, between DEP (Panther engines) and DDC (Tiger/Lion engines)... Yup, sending most of us to become Chickens for 6 weeks... [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 12/02/25]

• Restore this lost pay!

However, there's another point to this: Panther mini shift mates will retain their 3-shift pay while on the Chicken Farm (Tiger assembly). Good! But we'll be working next to brothers and sisters who lost theirs many moons ago - and there was no proper fight against that! So... if the latest increased Tiger scores are so vital to Ford isn't it a good moment to demand the reinstatement of lost shift pay for all (or else)? [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 12/02/25]

• We know what we want

Us LLL workers in DEP-Panther, hear we might be packing away machining parts instead of sending off engines... Whatever it will be, what really matters to us is to pack fewer and easier! For the rest, we leave it to Ford to sort out... [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 12/02/25]

• Only way to sort out a mess...

As soon as we saw Lineside's announcement on the new rate for the backdated pay, we got a flashback of the mess it was last time! Our eyes had nearly popped out when we compared our payslips. We'd all received different sums, with big chunks taken out in tax!

Whether this Thursday's payslip will be a repeat mess remains to be seen... But we all know these peanuts won't last for long anyway - our accounts with LLL bosses are definitely not settled. [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 12/02/25]

• Cleaners lives first!

We've heard that Ford has asked the new



cleaning contractor (Andrwho?) to replace their cleaning products because they're too "weak", soft, or "eco-green"! Instead, Ford has insisted we use strong industrial products to clean the grease off the shop floor... So strong that they're going to "clean" us off the shopfloor and all..! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 12/02/25]

• Tough times

Ford's 2024 financial results are out and guess what? They've made a killing. Compared to 2023, revenue's up 5% to \$185bn (£150bn), net income up 35% (!) to \$5.88bn (£4.75bn) and earnings per share "exceeded analyst estimates by 8.6%! So much for management's doom and gloom talk! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 12/02/25]

International

Congo: M23's war of plunder, fuelled by rich countries' demand...

On 23 January the "Congo River Alliance" (CRA), a coalition of militias which includes the March 23 Movement (M23), invaded Goma, the capital of the mineral-rich North Kivu province in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

This latest escalation of the war between the CRA and the official Congolese Army has killed at least 700 and displaced over 500,000. M23's leader, Corneille Nangaa, who is an outlawed Congolese politician opposed to the DRC government, declared that the offensive will continue all the way to the capital Kinshasa...

Casualties this time included 14 South African army personnel who were part of the 12,276-strong multinational "United Nations Organization Stabilisation Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo" (MONUSCO). These UN "peacekeepers" have been present since 1999, since the so-called "Second Congo War". But their ineffectiveness in protecting civilians (and themselves) has meant that M23 and other militias have had a free hand to plunder the territory and murder and rape at will. M23 has the support of the corrupt and homicidal Rwandan and Ugandan regimes of President Paul Kagame and President Museveni respectively - both of them loyal allies of Britain.

Indeed, Rwandan President Paul Kagame is feted by British politicians. He played host to the Commonwealth Heads of Government in 2022 and agreed to accommodate Tory Home Secretary Priti Patel's deported asylum-seekers - receiving a £290m down-payment for this now defunct scheme, on top of £80m in annual Foreign Office aid.



Civilians flee Goma, January 2025

While this ongoing, 25-year incursion into East Congo by the CRA is often said to have its roots in the Hutu-led Rwandan genocide of 1994 (when fleeing ethnic Hutus were pursued by Kagame's avenging Tutsi forces across the DRC border), today it's nothing but a bloody - although highly militarised and well-funded - looting operation. The prize being control of the trade in Kivu's precious minerals: gold, diamonds, copper and tin; and the "rare earth" coltan, cobalt, titanium, lithium, all essential for making components for today's high tech computers, electric vehicles, cell phones, etc... For which the demand can only increase as AI takes off, which may even be a reason for the current escalation.

The huge cache of expropriated ores are channelled mainly through Rwanda and finally bought by Big Tech companies: Apple, Intel, Nvidia, Microsoft, Samsung, France's Mistral AI, etc..

The conflict could certainly be seen to reflect the old imperialist rivalries, but in reality, the imperialist governments (US, France, Britain), while serving the interests of their tech companies, play both sides in order to get the best deal. This February, the politicians and technocrats were enjoying a summit on their "AI future" in Paris, while the people of Goma were suffering the further bloody consequences of their "tech revolution". □

Letter from India: Maruti Suzuki workers on the move again

On 5 January, 3500 laid-off temporary workers from India's largest carmaker Maruti Suzuki, travelled from the states of Rajasthan, Bihar, Jharkhand and Orissa to the industrial belt of Gurgaon-Manesar on Delhi's border to attend a meeting organised by the recently-formed Maruti Suzuki Non-Permanent Workers' Union. Workers from nearby factories and former permanent Maruti workers also attended. This is the first time these workers have organised themselves since a series of sit-down strikes in 2011-2012, when they became the focal point for the workers' movement in what's known as "India's Detroit" due to the concentration of car production.

The new union is demanding the creation of 30,000 permanent jobs across the company's 4 plants, a 40% pay hike

for temporary workers, and a 'clearance amount' of the difference in pay between permanent and temporary workers for every month they've worked in the factory.

Maruti defines 8 different tiers of workers: permanent, 3 temporary tiers, 2 casual tiers, apprentices and "student trainees" whose wages are paid by the government. Non-permanent workers make up 83% of the workforce and receive less than a fifth of permanent workers' wages.

The local government and Maruti management are clearly worried about a repeat of 2011-2012 when there was a sit-down strike and occupation to force the company to recognise an independent union and reinstate laid-off temporary workers. At the time, solidarity strikes in Manesar brought out as many as 100,000 workers

in their support. However, shortly after the strike, workers were accused of killing a manager and police and private security personnel were deployed inside the factory. Over 500 workers were fired.

For now, in response to this new attempt at unionisation, police have been posted in the area and the company has taken out an injunction preventing demonstrations within 500 metres of the plant. A colonial-era order prohibiting the assembly of more than 4 persons is imposed. The crucial question now is whether this latest struggle for "equal pay for equal work" and permanent jobs in Maruti will succeed in involving permanent workers inside the plant and moreover, spread to other workplaces in the region. □

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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