

WORKERS' fight



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

STOP THE CUTS!

If there is a substantial difference between Cameron's and Brown's governments it is only in the fact that Con-Dem ministers boast shamelessly about the cuts they want to make on workers' backs, whereas Labour implemented such cuts behind their backs.

Otherwise, this government shows the same slavishness towards what it calls the "markets" - i.e. the speculators who caused the crisis. It is more upfront about it, because, unlike Labour, it has no need to woo working class voters and every reason to placate the prejudices of the better-off middle class, who form their electorate.

Following in Labour's footsteps

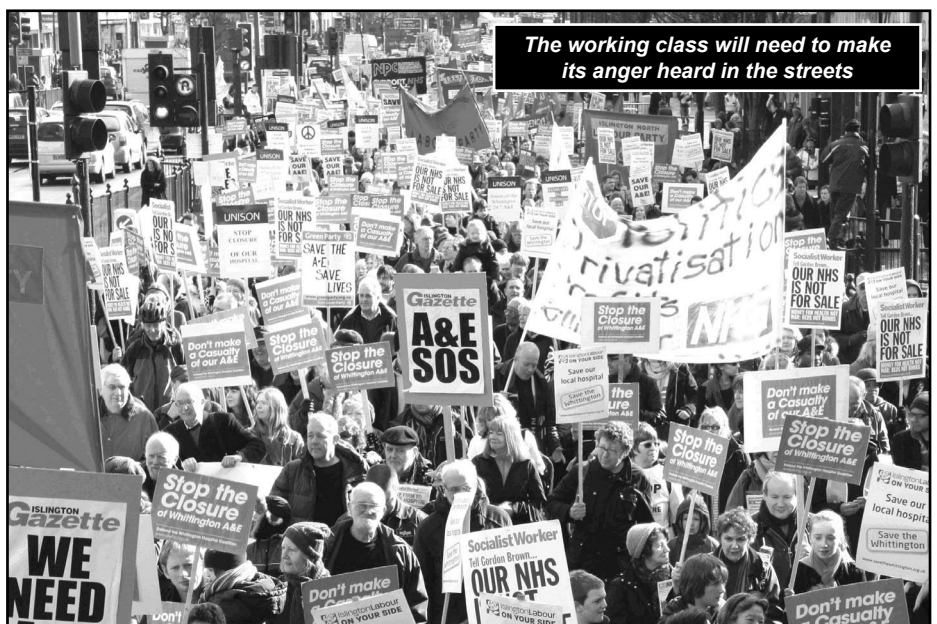
In fact, the Con-Dem's policies are merely the logical continuation of Labour's policies. The same hypocritical excuse of the soaring public "deficit" justifies cutting benefits, jobs and services.

Never mind that this "deficit" was, in fact, caused by Labour's largesse to the capitalist class, with the Con-Dems' support. Never mind, either, that the beneficiaries of this largesse are now speculating once more, thanks to the cash they received from public funds, betting against government bonds and taking the risk of causing more havoc.

Under the pretext of reducing this "deficit", which should be paid for, to the last penny, by the capitalists, the Con-Dems are stepping up Labour's plans against public sector workers and the welfare system.

Labour's "helping the jobless back into work", remains top of the Con-Dem list. Just like under Labour, the only aim is to harass the jobless off the register, possibly by adding the threat of benefit cuts. And just like under Labour, the most vulnerable are targeted - those on invalidity benefit!

The campaign launched by Cameron against public sector workers' pay and jobs mirrors that of Labour. "Cutting inefficiencies" is the watchword, even



though staff shortages already plague so many public services, due to Labour's previous job cuts. Cameron's list of the few hundred highest paid public sector officials is designed to conceal the low wages earned by most public sector workers - the same gimmick used by Brown last December!

Threats aren't enough, action is needed!

Against these threats, there have been few responses, and even fewer initiatives, from the unions.

Some Unite figures, who seem more concerned with the current election for top jobs in their union, made vague threats of a possible "reaction". But these ring hollow, especially as Unite was among a number of unions which signed up to Brown's austerity in the civil service, at a time when the main civil servants' union was organising a national strike.

In fact, after the £6.2bn cuts announcement, which already threatens sizeable cuts in local government grants, the only response of the main

unions concerned, was to stage a symbolic lobby outside the London offices of the Local Government Association. But nothing has been done so far to prepare for a proportionate response among local government workers, nor to publicise the consequences of these cuts among the population!

Yet, for all their tough talk, the Con-Dems, are not so sure that they won't cause a backlash - which is why they went out of their way to try to drive a wedge between public sector and private sector workers. And this lack of confidence should be turned into a weapon in our hands.

Because the only language that these politicians and their masters in big business understand, is the collective determination expressed by whole sections of the working class taking action together. Yes, the anger of the working class and its refusal to foot the capitalists' bill, must be heard in the factories and offices, and in the streets. Then, and only then, will we be able to stop the axe which threatens our collective livelihood! ☐

• **The more things "change", the more they look the same!**

Like every government, the Con-Dems come with a cohort of "advisers" - i.e., "jobs for the boys", used by ruling parties either to reward their friends or secure the loyalty of so-called "independent" figures. Under Labour, the head-hunting of business grandees - like Lord Sainsbury and BP's Lord Browne - was designed as a sweetener to big business. But Cameron seems to have chosen to recruit from the ranks of Labour's own personnel.

So, Will Hutton, a long-time champion of Blair's "New Labour", will conduct a review of public sector pay. Frank Field, a Labour MP and welfare minister under Blair, is Cameron's "poverty tsar", in charge of reviewing the "real level" of poverty in Britain (apparently hoping that by "redefining" poverty, it can be somehow reduced!). As to Peter Gershon who, as Blair's "efficiency adviser", authored a report which led to tens of thousands of job cuts

in the civil service, he was head-hunted by Osborne long before the election and is now carrying on the job he had began under Labour.

But then, why should anyone be surprised by these appointments? They only show how much, behind the rhetoric, the Con-Dems' turn of the screw is but a continuation of Labour's policy of defending big business' interests! ☐

• **Hands off the welfare system, let the wealthy pay!**

Work and Pensions minister, Ian Duncan Smith, wants to use his army officer training to whip benefit claimants into line. For him, the benefit system needs to be cut because "it is a deeply ineffective and costly way of subsidising people's lives".

But wasn't the bank bailout a "deeply ineffective and costly way of subsidising" parasitic bankers who caused the crisis? So ineffective, that the banks have

already restarted their mad speculation and so costly, that public funds are now crippled by the resulting black hole! But we are still waiting to hear Duncan Smith complain about the hundreds of billions wasted on the banking system, let alone propose to cut the government's long list of subsidies to the bosses and to the rich!

Of course, there would be no need for a benefit system if employers did not

strive to pay the lowest possible wages and if they re-invested their profits into improving working conditions and creating jobs for new useful production, instead of lining the pockets of over-wealthy shareholders. And, yes, the day will come when no-one will have to be dependent on state handouts. But by that time, the working class will have overthrown this bankrupt profit system! ☐

• **Stirring up trouble among the jobless**

Ian Duncan Smith's own think-tank, a so-called "Centre for Social Justice", proposes a simplified benefits system, which, they claim, would make work "pay for everyone", by not removing all benefits from people who recommence work. The general idea is not really new and was already used in Labour's "working family tax credits", for instance. But it did not and could not resolve the real issue - the shortage of full-time, decent paying jobs.

In any case, these new proposals are estimated to require an extra £3.6 billion from the Treasury to go towards benefits.

• **Their prison record**

Labour ended its 13 years in office with a record prison population - 85,086 at the end of April, including 20,000, at least, sharing cells designed for one. During his election campaign, Brown had even boasted that Labour had increased the number of prisoners by 20,000. And, with its huge prison-building programme, it was expecting to imprison even more - 96,000 by 2014!

Not that Labour had plans to lock up corrupt MPs caught red-handed in the expenses scandal, nor the rich crooks whose profiteering caused the

However, since Osborne's proclaimed determination is to cut the benefits budget, this extra is unlikely to be granted, and the odds are that Duncan Smith will cut benefits for those not working, for whatever reason. Which, after all, would be consistent with the election poster in which Cameron said: "Let's cut benefits for those who refuse work". Except that the jobless are not refusing work - there isn't any. Harassing the jobless even more won't create jobs, but it will create anger - anger that this government won't be able to cut, once it breaks out!

financial crisis. Having done nothing to stop the worsening of social conditions, Labour just swept the resulting problems under the carpet by putting more petty offenders behind bars.

But even that is not enough for the Tories. They want more people incarcerated. And with the further social degradation they are preparing with their coming round of cuts, it is not hard to imagine what future they have in store for a whole section of the working class youth - no guarantee of a job, but a guaranteed place in jail!

• **The millionaires' austerity**

Just after forming his government, Cameron made a big song and dance over getting his ministers to agree to a 5% pay cut. This wasn't much, in fact, for people who are on 6-figure salaries plus expenses and perks. Nevertheless, what Cameron failed to mention was the fact that 18 of his 23 full-time cabinet were millionaires!

So these are the "needy" politicians who, fresh out of expensive dinner-parties in their multi-million pound mansions, are busy sharpening their knives. These are the people who dare to claim that the public services and pensions, vital for workers and the jobless, cost too much!

Brown's previous government also included its contingent of millionaires - 10, apparently. This may go some way towards explaining the many cuts Labour started to implement, long before being thrown out. Faces and political presentation may change, but not the social interests that politicians defend - those of the wealthy. That is, as long as the working class majority does not replace the whole rotten political machinery of the capitalists, with its own organs of democratic power.

• **Con-Dems' austerity as a profit booster**

The bosses have nothing to fear from the Con-Dem's austerity drive. Chancellor George Osborne told the annual dinner of the CBI that his June "emergency budget" will include a five-year plan to reduce corporation tax – the levy on company profits. Osborne wants Britain to have the lowest corporation tax among the industrialised countries – lower than Russia and Turkey where it is 20%!

Over its years in office, Labour had already cut corporation tax from 33% to 28%, which is the lowest of any major economy in the EU. But this is not enough for the bosses and so the Tories pledged to cut it to 25% in their manifesto. Maybe Osborne feels he has a lot to live up to as the third Conservative chancellor since Nigel Lawson, who reduced corporation tax from 52% to 35% over 5 years

in the 1980s?

So, while the jobs, services and standard of living of the working population will be axed under the pretext of reducing the deficit, the bosses will enlarge it to boost their profits! And they expect the working class to take this lying down? ☐

• **The 1% National Insurance con-trick**

Despite the loud noises made by the Tories during their election campaign against the 1% increase in NI contributions planned by Labour, their manifesto was never very clear about their real plans. However, it did pledge to "stop the most damaging part of the National Insurance rise for employers and for anyone earning under £35,000".

It now seems that this is no longer really on the cards. Of course, they will deliver on their pledge to employers, who won't have to pay any increase - amounting to a £3bn handout to the bosses. But not so for employees, who will still have to pay the additional 1%! And there is apparently no plan to do anything about the fundamental flaws in the NI contributions system: while the

vast majority pays 11% on most of our wages, the rich only pay 1% on any salary over and above £844 a week, and nothing on dividends, capital gains and other financial income! In other words, the working class majority stands to fund the affluence of the better-offs even more than before! ☐

• **The shrinking CGT pledge**

The wealthy and many Tory backbenchers are squealing in indignation over plans to raise the rate of Capital Gains Tax. CGT is the tax paid on profits from the sale of assets, such as shares and second homes. These profits used to be taxed like normal income. But in 2008, in an attempt to woo the better-offs, Labour cut CGT rate to a rock bottom 18%. So, the Lib Dems pledged to reverse this handout, by restoring CGT rate to 40% - a pledge which became part of the Con-Dem agreement.

But the rich resent having to pay for anything at all. Under their pressure, these plans are being watered down before the budget. Cameron and Hague have been at pains to stress that there will be numerous exemptions for "entrepreneurs". The talk is now not of a 40% rate, but of a rate lower than for income tax. Likewise, the proposal to lower the tax-free threshold from the current £10,100 (which comes on top of income tax allowances) might also be shelved. In any case, as the rich can afford tax accountants, they need not worry – there will be, as usual, plenty of loopholes to accommodate their greed!

• **Don't bank on Cameron's tricks**

One of the very few points on which Cameron stood out slightly from his rivals in the election campaign, was his pledge to introduce a tax on the banks which benefited from the government's bailout, regardless of whether it was agreed internationally.

So now that the G20 summit, held in South Korea at the beginning of June, has decided to shelve the issue for the foreseeable future, will Cameron deliver the goods in his "emergency budget" on 22nd June?

Maybe, maybe not - we shall see. One thing is certain, though: it will be anything but punitive. The wildest estimates which filtered out during the election campaign put the annual intake of this tax below £3 billion. This, when on its own, one of the smallest of the bailed out banks, Northern Rock, got a £22bn injection of cash from the government! At this rate, it will take until the end of the century for the banks to pay back what they have been given, if they ever do - without even counting the interest!

• **A "gentlemen's" agreement**

The British arm of US bank JP Morgan has been fined £33m by the Financial Services Authority for indulging in speculation without ring-fencing its customers' money. This is the largest fine ever imposed by the FSA. But given that the total sums concerned peaked at £15.6bn, it is a mere slap on the wrist, which won't even dent JP Morgan's £1.8bn profits in the last quarter!

That banks break the rules all the time, to speculate with as much money as possible, is the name of the profiteering game. And why would the ex-bankers who make up the bulk of the FSA board, like Chief Executive Hector Sants and Chairman Lord Adair Turner, seriously enforce rules that they, themselves, have ignored so often during their careers? In fact, the rich who entrust their money with investment bankers do not normally care, because this is how their nests get feathered. The trouble is that when things go wrong, it is not just the banks' wealthy customers who suffer (moderately), but the whole economy - and the livelihoods of millions - as in the present crisis. "Regulation" of bankers by their peers won't change this - only workers' control over the banks would!

• **Cost-cutting academies**

The Tories always supported Labour's policy of academy schools, only they wanted it to "go further". Now we can see what they meant. While Labour provided academies' private operators with £48.5m (for building and land costs) each, to take over 203 so-called "failing schools", the Con-Dems' "cheaper" version targets primarily the "best" and richest schools.

The 626 "best performing" schools will be allowed to become academies

straight away. Other applicants would be vetted. They won't have a private sponsor and the government won't pay for a rebuild, let alone a new school site. They will receive 10-12% additional funding, be exempt from inspections and, like existing academies, they will be able to employ untrained teachers, opt out of national pay bargaining and ignore the national curriculum. Presumably to avoid being accused of dumping failing schools, the government wants new academies

to link up with another less successful school, although "exceptions" will be allowed. Officially, more than a thousand applications have already been received, no doubt due to the enticement of extra cash.

This being a cost-cutting exercise, teachers will be first in the line of fire. But the children will suffer too, as the quality of education can't possibly benefit from under-paid, under-qualified or over-worked teachers. □

• **The "freedom" to turn the clock back**

Those parents who don't fancy the local state schools or academies for their kids, will be encouraged by Cameron to organise a charity or community-based "free school". Alternatively they can approach an outside provider, though these are supposed to be "non profit making" (for the time being). Based on the Swedish model (except that, there, providers are allowed profits), this will

of course divert resources away from already under-funded local schools.

The Swedish system has been criticised for declining standards overall and encouraging social apartheid (just like Britain's private schools). Naturally, such conclusions are disputed by ministers. But their claim that this will address "inequality" is nonsense. Most working class parents simply do not have the time to

take part in the organisation of such "free schools". In fact, isn't the role of the public sector precisely to take care of the organisation of collective services for the benefit of all, including providing all children with equal access to education? Isn't that precisely why public services have meant progress for society? Not so for the Con-Dems, though, who are bent on turning the clock back! □

• **Rewriting history - they call that education!**

Historian Niall Ferguson has been commissioned to redesign the school history syllabus. He is a favourite of right-wingers in Britain and the USA for his defence of the British empire and his suggestion the US should have taken over Britain's imperial role. His "big idea" is that empires kept the lid on

ethnic tensions and that their collapse after WWII was a disaster. He ignores, or downplays, the atrocities of imperialism that resulted in tens of millions dying from slavery, opium wars or export of grain from areas of starvation. Not to mention simple "divide and rule" which caused bloody conflicts, as, for example,

between India and Pakistan, and its on-going legacy.

Let's hope that teachers will not fall for such a Mickey Mouse view of history and in any case that children are far too streetwise, especially those with connections in the poor countries who can tell it how it really is. □

• **Cuts on top of cuts**

Transport minister Philip Hammond lost no time in declaring an end to the "war on motorists". It seems he intends to start a war on public transport instead. His department's funding is being cut by £683 million and it's already been revealed that £100m will be cut from Network Rail's budget and £108m from Transport for London. In addition, £50m of planned upgrades to the major stations which are in the worst state will be scrapped, and orders for new rolling stock which are in the pipeline will be cancelled.

Even before these new announcements, the decrepit state of rail infrastructure was already getting worse. Network Rail had already made huge cuts in rail renewals, causing its sub-contractors to slash hundreds of jobs, while reducing its own workforce by more than 10%. As for TfL, they were already trying to get rid of 1,200 station workers. The only thing which is "world beating" about the system is the fares - bus fares, for instance, went up by 20% last year. OK for the Philip Hammond's of this world, in their Jags, maybe - but millions of us depend on these services. They desperately

need investment, not more cutbacks!

• **Something "England" must lose!**

The extension of free prescriptions to medicines for chronic illnesses like asthma, depression and heart disease, promised (but not implemented) by Labour in 2008, will now be "delayed" further. The Con-dems say the NHS "can't afford" the estimated £430m it would cost - although this is only petty cash compared to the NHS budget.

The Department of Health estimates 15 million people in England are suffering from chronic illnesses, but many of these are not covered by the totally outdated exemptions list. So, most have to pay the £7.20 per item every month which can make medications impossible to afford.

The doctors' union, the BMA, has called for all charges to be scrapped, because prescription revenue is outweighed by the "many disadvantages of taxing the sick". In Wales and Northern Ireland all charges were scrapped several years ago and they are being phased out in Scotland. But not in England. Yet the cost for those who cannot afford to fill a prescription, could be dire - indeed, a

matter of life or death. And such a cost is unacceptable!

• **The union leaders' gravy train**

The media took ex-deputy prime minister John Prescott to task for accepting a seat in the House of Lords, quoting several occasions when he said he wouldn't. He now protests that it's only because he wants to "influence policy on the environment", as if that will cut any ice.

In fact, Prescott is merely following a long tradition of former Labour grandees (including Kinnock, Hattersley and Mandelson) and trade-union leaders, who have made themselves at home with the unelected aristocrats and bishops. As a former figure in the seamen's union, he will be joining others, like Baronesses Brenda Dean (from the former print union SOGAT), Margaret Prosser (T&G branch of Unite), Bill Morris (ex-T&G leader), Bill Jordan (ex-AEU leader) and Tom Sawyer (from NUPE, now part of UNISON). For all of them, and certainly for Prescott, a seat in the Lords is an ultimate recognition of a job well done - not in the service of the working class of course, but in the service of capitalism.

The spectre of Broadwater Farm

Police have again revived the enquiry into the killing of PC Blakelock, in October 1985, during riots on the Broadwater Farm Estate in Tottenham, north London. At the time, they falsely convicted and jailed Winston Silcott, Mark Braithwaite and Engin Raghip - who were finally cleared by the Appeal Court, 4 years later. Now the police say, not for the first time either, that they've got "new evidence", with one man arrested in February, and another two picked up for questioning on 1 June.

In the 1980s, social dereliction was increasing, particularly high youth unemployment, while jobs were being brutally slashed and the welfare state was being rolled back. Thatcher's answer to protest and resistance was the "iron fist" of police repression - whether against the striking miners or the inner city youth. Saturation policing and "stopping and searching" black youth was meant to keep them in line. But cops often overdid it. In 1985 in Tottenham, they raided the home of a local youth worker, causing his mother



1985 - protest against the arrests of youth from the estate

to have a fatal heart attack. This sparked a protest, escalating into the violent siege of Broadwater Farm Estate by the cops. Fury among local people led to confrontations and during one of them, PC Blakelock was killed.

Under such circumstances pinning the blame on particular individuals was only a way for the police to seek revenge. Is it still revenge which motivates

the cops' reopening of this enquiry 25 years on? Or is it that in the context of a social situation which is fast becoming as bad as that of the 1980s, if not worse, they want to pre-empt future explosions of anger by re-asserting their heavy-handed authority? Either way, they show that they have learnt nothing. □

• **Scrap the weapons budget!**

The government likes to boast of its drive for "openness". So William Hague "revealed" that the number of Britain's nuclear warheads would be kept at a maximum of 225 - including the 160 which are currently operational. At £16.9 million a war head, this means that nearly £4 billion is wasted on nuclear war games. And this is without even counting the cost of the 4 submarines used to launch the missiles!

But Hague's "openness" did not go as far as telling the whole story. In particular he stopped short of mentioning the over £40bn spent by the government on weapons last year - up 6% over 2008, the largest increase among European countries! And they dare to talk of "public sector" waste? Well, yes, the whole weapons budget should be scrapped and instead of funding the death merchants' profits, it should be used to fund the public sector hospitals, schools, housing, services and jobs which are so vitally needed by the working class majority of the population!

• **Capitalism makes crisis into an art**

The world of art knows no crisis - at least, not as far as recognised "investment values" are concerned. Three paintings recently fetched more than £7 million, well above their estimated value, bringing Sothebys's sales to record levels.

Having burnt their fingers in financial and other speculation, the rich no longer trust their bingo machine. So, they recycle part of their wealth into "safer" assets - like old master's paintings, or gold, whose price is at a historical high.

Since the beginning of the crisis, the economy was starved of funds. Factory closed and credit dried up. But this world was always awash with cash. In fact, it was an excess of unproductive cash which fuelled the speculative bubble and led to the crisis. Today, part of this colossal cash has fled the sphere of speculation. It is hoarded away, and is still a waste for society, because its owners won't use it in the real economy. This is why capitalism is an unviable system, whose downfall is long overdue.

• **Behind the landlords' groans, the tenants' plight**

A recent survey shows that the proportion of landlords whose tenants have fallen into arrears has doubled over the past 2 years, from 16 to 34%. Landlords are upset: they expected a tidy earner on the backs of their tenants, thanks to the housing market bubble. Alas, the deflated bubble has deflated their hopes...

This survey does not show the tenants' plight, though. During the "boom", they were at the receiving end of the price explosion: rents went sky high, while utility bills soared. But many of them were low paid and underemployed. These "affluent" days, when the better-offs were cashing in on the "boom", saw a growing number of households making ends meet by piling up credit card debt.

When the crisis came, many tenants lost their jobs and their credit dried up. No wonder they fell into arrears! And they are trapped. With social housing virtually frozen, they can't find a more affordable, roof. For them there is no bailout on offer. Just the constant threat of eviction.

King's Cross railway station (London)**• Eight years on from Potters Bar, what's changed?**

The inquest into the 7 deaths caused by the Potters Bar crash in 2002, which has just resumed, is a reminder of the fatal consequences of rail privatisation.

The first investigation found the cause to be a badly-maintained set of points. But no one was prosecuted for the deaths. Jarvis, the private contractor responsible for the stretch of track at Potters Bar has now gone into administration, meaning that its directors have nothing to worry about.

The investigation highlighted management failures, showing that training,

equipment and maintenance and inspection procedures were all at fault. It concluded that similar failures were probably occurring all over the country. And no wonder, since in the run up to privatisation, thousands of experienced maintenance workers had been laid off.

Since then, the state-owned Network Rail has taken over track management, bringing maintenance back in-house. But it is meant to keep making "savings", to boost the private train operators' profits. In the last year, it has made 1,500 maintenance workers redundant



and cut its rail renewal programme by one-third. And there are more cuts to come due to Cameron's austerity measures, which can only increase the risk of another "Potters Bar". Unless politicians' dangerous cost-cutting is derailed.

• Y, O Y?

The new platform on the main concourse has been unveiled. It's not called "Y" after all, as was originally intended, but "0". Of course, passengers don't believe us when we try to send them to the zero platform. And to make things worse, it is hidden away along platform 1. Two other platforms have been taken out of service now, so that platform zero amounts to minus one!

Nought-y... [King's X - Workers' Platform - 01/06/2010]

• Management kindness?

East Coast is organising "You Matter" roadshow to discuss our "Health & Wellbeing" and give us tips to manage "fatigue and stress". Well, we can give them some tips: shorter hours, more pay, more workers and decent food available at work. And for the stress levels? How about fewer managers around...? [King's X - Workers' Platform - 18/05/2010]

• Spot the pay rise

The East Coast pay rise appeared on our pay slips last month but we had to strain our eyes to see the difference. Firstly, because it's so tiny: 3.7% of not much is not much, and it's already eaten by inflation. Secondly, because the back pay, including on our overtime, was lumped together under "other", making it impossible to tell whether they'd paid us properly or not. Since we don't trust management not to cheat us, the poor accounts clerks were swamped with calls. [King's X - Workers' Platform - 01/06/2010]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**• Cameron is trying a Mandelson on posties**

Despite being a public service, Royal Mail declared an operating "profit" of £404m last year - up 26% on the previous year. In fact, this is literally blood money for the severe job cuts and attacks on working conditions inflicted on postal workers. Like Mandelson before them, the Con-Dems will try to use potential "profitability" to lure private buyers. The plan is to part-privatise 49% of Royal Mail (while keeping the already privately-franchised Post Office network in state "ownership"). 51% would be shared between the state and

"employee shareholders".

Yet it's less than a year since Mandelson dropped Labour's unpopular plan to part-privatise Royal Mail, for lack of buyers. The same Richard Hooper, whose shoddy report was the basis for these plans, is now appointed to do another for Cameron. Even the "employee shareholding" gimmick was already part of previous deal, to try to bribe workers into thinking that their interests coincide with those of the "business". But posties know better. Especially given the attacks they've already had to face



and the new round of cuts they face under the latest "Business Transformation 2010 and Beyond" agreement, which only 35% of the union membership actually voted for. The policies haven't changed, the fight has to go on.

• Did we miss the irony?

Union leader Dave Ward welcomed the appointment of Moya Greene as the new RM CEO, taking over in July. He said it was good to see she wasn't "green", since she's at present CEO of Canada Post Corporation and has a "public sector background". Is he joking? She privatised the Canadian National Railway and deregulated Canada's airlines and then took over at Canada Post Corporation to deregulate, automate and cut it! According to the president of the Canadian postal union, during the

4 years of her tenure, injuries also went up 15.4% and grievances 59.3%! [Mount Pleasant Workers' Fight 01/06/10]

• As if we aren't needed!

The crunch has been threatening to come to EC nights for a long time now. We're down to a very tiny skeleton already. Now we hear that managers want to cut us to 4-6 total. Since all of this is supposed to be negotiated "sensibly" and rationally(!) with RM bosses who're meant to act as if they respect us, well, we've got the chance to tell them it's just not on. Hmm. Why is it that

we don't believe in this cuddly new deal? [Mount Pleasant Workers' Fight 18/05/10]

• Why not cover it?

It's always busy come the "Witching Hour" on Processing Lates - just before most of us are due to go home. But instead of covering this period by having enough of us starting at 8pm for instance, management prefer hysteria to reign instead. To fix it would be so simple, but of course, it would involve paying more of us the night premium. [Mount Pleasant Workers' Fight 18/05/10]

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**• Cuts and closure blackmail**

In April, Ford announced the closure of the Dagenham Wheel Plant (part of Stamping and Tooling) with the loss of 32 jobs, and shortly after, presented S&TO workers with the need for an "improved competitiveness agreement" (!) which would cut 150 jobs. They cited market deterioration, loss of work from Jaguar-Land Rover, "overcapacity" and the cut in Southampton's Transit manufacture. This was their "Sword of Damocles" to force through the "agreement", in order to introduce "flexible working" for the 5 remaining Press shop automated lines.

But it was also the means to get

workers to accept terms of transfer to the labour-starved, very busy, Engine Plant, which would represent a cut in wages and conditions for most of us (further "savings" for Ford!). We'd have the usual contractual terms protecting workers "forced" to move - plus "indefinite grade protection" which means very little, in a context where going from a 3-shift system to a 1 or 2-shift system could mean £100-200/w wage cut after 13 weeks of "shift allowance protection"!

Ford dragged out the whole planning process of these cuts for months, with



the workforce kept in the dark, up to the plant "vote" which took place without most of us even having seen the details in black and white. And no wonder. Ford didn't want us to scrutinise this rotten "agreement".

• One big joke

So Ford bosses happily take government money for "investment" and then allow an acute labour shortage to arise in Dagenham Engine Plant, refuse to recruit, instead splash out on overtime working, while at the same time, creating a closure and redundancy situation - with lay-offs - in the Stamping & Tooling plant! Is this management dishonesty, fiddling, incompetence, or just plain stupidity? At least we now know what that ridiculous "one Ford" slogan means: one Ford plant shall remain totally segregated from every other! Unless we remedy it! [Ford Dagenham Workers' Fight 08/06/10]

• Mad rush for engines

Last week on Lynx and Lion, foremen were actually working on the line and managers were seen pushing engines across gaps! Then this Saturday, 2 welfare officers appeared on the Lynx to do the 10 hours overtime! It was funny tho', to see how absolutely shattered they looked at the end of shift! Will it mean that next time they take a letter to a sick worker's house they'll show a bit of respect by putting it through the letter box instead of following Ford's orders to hammer on the front door until someone answers? Let's hope so. [Ford Dagenham Workers' Fight 08/06/10]

• We'll be back when fit and not before

When someone's known to have a serious injury, why are they constantly called back in by this senseless "Welfare" office, to be seen by someone who hasn't a clue about our injury? Yes, whether it's a broken foot, finger, or back, HR's harassment goes on, and especially, it seems, if the injury happened here at work and Ford's the very one to blame! [Ford Dagenham Workers' Fight 08/06/10]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**• New models but same old rotten conditions**

With much razzmatazz, BMW recently announced two new Minis for 2011 and 2012 and beefed-up performance for its existing models. But Cowley boss, Juergen Hedrich, was quick to stymie any hope for the hundreds of agency workers sacked to get their jobs back: "We don't create new jobs but it's absolutely true that these (new models) will help to secure (existing) jobs."

So, should we expect BMW bosses to

at least offer contracts (i.e. security) to the 1000 "existing" agency staff, most of whom have been there for three or more years? Not at all. Reliance on easily sacked agency workers has become a way of life for BMW. It calculates that there's an inexhaustible supply out there to replace any disgruntled agency workers inside. Yes, this is the bosses idea of "recovery". A recovery of profits by producing more cars with fewer workers



- at least for as long as we allow them to get away with it!

• The cupboard's bare? They're having a laugh!

A fortnight ago BMW reported quarterly pre-tax profits of £250m, three times higher than the previous quarter. Mini sales for the same quarter rose more than 13% on 2009, and April's sales were 75% up! These bosses say they "can't afford" a pay rise one moment, and then don't even try to hide the fact that they're lying! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford 18/05/10]

• To save them holiday cover

Half way through the year, BMW suddenly springs on us that our working time accounts must be 30 hours in credit by the end of the year. And - how convenient - the "main way" we can increase our balances is to cover whole shifts in place of people off sick or on holiday! To "facilitate" this they've given us a form to show when we'd be available for extra shifts. Well, it won't take long to send them back - blank! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford 01/06/10]

• A lucky escape

C shift in Assembly was stopped for several hours on Thursday and we were sent home early after the accident on the tyre bay when a wheel assistor collapsed and struck a workmate on the chest. He was rushed to the John Radcliffe Hospital though his injuries were thankfully not considered life threatening. Of course, once the line restarted, BMW was anxious to make up lost production. It was business as usual - if not faster! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford 18/05/10]

World Cup 2010

There may be reason for South Africans to be jubilant. After all, everybody - poor or not-so-poor, loves football! On the other hand, the 2km exclusion zone around all football stadiums and the "clearances" of small traders from their traditional pitches outside railway, bus and taxi stations deprives thousands of their livelihoods, at the very time when they might have been able to get a welcome boost!

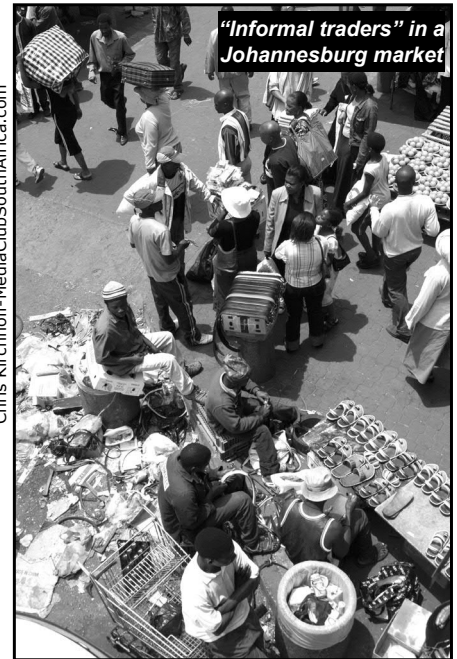
Anyway, the bright colours and happy sounds cannot conceal the poverty and deprivation behind it all: on one side the estimated £4bn cost of the World Cup "circus", on the other, 47% of the population below the poverty line, with one third having no electricity and half of these no clean running water!

The 6 brand new state-of-the-art

Behind the vuvuzelas

stadiums are fantastic - but the money spent on Cape Town's would have paid for 9,000 school libraries in a country where over 15% can't read or write. Why did Durban need bungie jumping and a sightseeing train built into its stadium's top tier? And who can afford the new super underground railway from Johannesburg to the airport at £10 one-way?

South Africa's "economic miracle" was always a "jobless growth". And that's what will be left when the soccer is over: more joblessness. The unofficial figure is over 40% without counting those whose jobs end on 11 July. The poor majority will still have a fight on their hands - not just for jobs, but for the most basic necessities of life. But one thing's for sure, they certainly have the energy for it! □



Gaza

Protest march in London



The Israeli army's bloody raid against a humanitarian flotilla heading for Gaza is another illustration of its terrorist

An Israeli prison for the Palestinians

methods. If it uses such methods against peace activists in full view of the whole world, it's not hard to imagine how it behaves with the Palestinians when there is no-one to report on its brutality!

This attack was "condemned" by the so-called "international community" - with most countries, including Britain, calling for a UN-sponsored enquiry involving Israel. When Israel turned this down, the "international community" just went back to business as usual.

1.5 million Palestinians have been imprisoned by Israel in Gaza since 2007. Having been subjected to Israel's bombings, 18 months ago, which killed 1,400, they were not only deprived of basic

necessities due to Israel's blockade (with Egyptian support), but also prevented from importing the supplies needed to rebuild the infrastructure destroyed by the bombs. Gaza has become a prison camp in which the majority is barely surviving, in abject poverty, under the permanent threat of illness.

One can hope, however, that the reactions of anger across the world caused by the Israeli's raid, are echoed in some way in Israel itself, showing that, at least, a minority among the Israeli population which has understood that, as Marx argued, "a people that oppresses another cannot itself be free". □

Gulf oil spill

The Deepwater Horizon oil blow-out in the Mexican Gulf is still not contained at the time of writing, despite BP's repeated attempts to cap, plug and siphon off the oil billowing out from deep in the earth's crust. President Obama is on the defensive, accused of not getting "angry enough" against BP. Of course, it's not just BP, it's all big companies and their subcontractors who're guilty of putting profits before safety.

Plug capitalism!

Oil companies needn't even bother to make contingency plans for accidents, because while they might be found guilty of negligence, it changes nothing. Exxon's "fine" for the 1985 Valdez tanker spill in Alaska was \$5bn, but by 2004 the appeal court had finally reduced this to \$507m, equivalent to what Exxon made in profits in just 10 days last year. As for BP, it's had 3 criminal negligence convictions since 2000, but not only did it

make no attempt to comply with safety regulations in the Gulf, it actually falsified documents. So despite the known risks of such deep drilling it had no emergency equipment nor supplies at hand when the rig blew - which wouldn't have averted disaster, but which would have reduced its scale. Averting such disasters requires the elimination of the profit motive. And that requires that capitalism is plugged. Permanently. □

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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