

# WORKERS' fight



No 61 - 9 Feb 2015

price 30p

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ISSN 2040-400X

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

## After Syriza's victory in Greece THE NEED TO FIGHT AUSTERITY

Whatever British politicians may claim, the Greek vote for Syriza was not a vote against the euro, but a vote against the pro-business austerity policies of the past and for the pro-working class measures contained in Syriza's manifesto.

Did workers only want to show their rejection of the old parties, hoping that new faces in government could stop the social catastrophe they face? Maybe. But the fact is that they did this by voting for Syriza - and not for a local equivalent of Ukip. It is possible, therefore, that their votes express a determination to regain the ground lost to the profiteers. After all, hasn't the Greek working class repeatedly demonstrated its fighting capacity? In any case, there is no doubt that the coming period will be shaped by its militancy and mobilisation.

### **Horse-trading over the debt**

Today, the focus is on the negotiations between Syriza, the rich EU governments and the international financial institutions. Syriza is trying to loosen the stifling noose of the Greek debt while the European states want to preserve the huge profits made by the big banks out of this debt - i.e. out of the Greek working class. However, both sides would rather find a compromise - for fear of workers' reactions in Greece and, above all, of another financial meltdown in the eurozone.

The rich governments and their banks may be willing to give Greece some leeway, provided they do not lose out - which they would, anyway, if Greece went to the wall. But they do not want to be seen conceding under the pressure of the street. Nor do they all see eye to eye. So, even though it would be in their common interests, there is no guarantee that they will reach an agreement.



Public Power Corporation Workers protesting in 2010

As to Syriza, its leaders are not enemies of the capitalist system - nor have they ever claimed to be. Like all "responsible" politicians they are concerned about the stability of financial markets and respectful of capitalist property. They will not rock the capitalist boat.

### **In the hands of the working class**

Nevertheless, Syriza has also announced concrete measures which would resolve some problems faced by the working class. But whether Syriza can deliver the goods or not, is not the issue. The best guarantee the working class has in this respect, will be to intervene on the political scene on the basis of its own demands.

For instance, what guarantees are there, that the promise to increase the minimum wage will be implemented? Who is going to impose this on the Greek capitalist class? A simple decree won't be enough to force big companies to comply, when they are used to doing whatever they like and when their profits

depend so much on paying low wages.

Likewise, for the funds that Syriza has promised to raise, by taxing the huge accumulated wealth of the Greek oligarchs and the assets of the Church. How will a simple law be enough to make them pay their due, when the unelected senior civil servants in charge of overseeing taxation have been at their service for so long?

Ultimately, whether these measures - and many others - are implemented, will depend on the capacity of Greek workers to organise themselves as a class to control their implementation.

The danger in the present situation would be that the working class remains passive, while the horse-trading over the Greek debt takes place. Only by using its collective strength against the international and Greek capitalist classes will the working class ensure that its demands are not swept under the carpet. It has shown its capacity to fight many times in the past. Today, it needs a policy aimed at organising, in order to use this capacity. □

See our articles on the back page

## Crisis Watch

This year's World Economic Forum took place in January, as usual, in the luxury of the mountain resort of Davos, Switzerland. It attracted 2,500 participants, including 40 heads of state and 1,500 top businessmen - at an average (miserable) cost of £40,000 per head! Osborne, Blair and the governor of the Bank of England, Mark Carney, rubbed shoulders with the likes of Goldman Sachs CEO Lloyd Blankfein, Microsoft's Bill Gates, and many other billionaires.

The main point on the agenda was "climate change" - admittedly an important issue if only these people

### • *Un-living wage*

Ironically, however, one character showed some concern about social inequalities - John Cridland, the director general of the Confederation of British Industries, CBI. When asked to comment about the fact that one third of those who were on the minimum wage when it was first

### • *Apple - taking its bite out of the working class*

Apple has just announced the highest profits in corporate history: £11.9bn in just one financial quarter. What's more, this figure represents just a tenth of the £116bn in cash that Apple made in the same period. This means one company, Apple, has made in 3 months the equivalent of half of what a whole country like Finland makes in a year!

Behind these record-breaking profits is a story of grim exploitation: in 2010, 14 workers at Apple's Chinese manufacturer Foxconn committed suicide. Only recently, in December 2014, a BBC Panorama programme exposed the working conditions of Apple's workers in China: workers doing 12-16 hour shifts for 16 days continuously, and exhausted workers falling asleep on the line.

And for squeezing such profits out of these workers, Apple bosses award their top executives fat - no, very obese - bonuses. The president of retail, for instance, was given £47.82m as a little thank you. That is the equivalent of the earnings of 15,327 workers on the minimum wage in Britain and 83,837 workers on the minimum wage in China.

### • *The 6 big energy crooks*

Energy companies, according to an ICM opinion poll are more disliked than banks. They're hoarding their profits and lying about their costs, in just the same way! The year started with the news that oil and gas prices were tumbling down. But never mind that, the 6 major energy companies which supply us punters with electricity and gas pretended

## Davos, a gathering of criminals

took it seriously. But they don't. Moreover, there was no time allocated to far more urgent issues which are affecting the planet's social and political climate - such as the social catastrophes generated by the crisis in so many countries or the devastation caused by the countless wars which are raging across the planet.

Yet if anyone is responsible for these catastrophes and devastation it is these people who, between them, control most of the planet economy and richest states, and their capitalist system. But then the criminals

established in 1999 are still on it, he said: "*Business has to look at how it can help people up the escalator.*" As if "climbing the ladder" was an option for the majority of workers, let alone those on the minimum wage!

The truth, of course, is that the 1.2m workers earning peanuts are

they hadn't noticed. Then, one by one, they announced price cuts. But by how much? The consumer watchdog said that if these companies passed the price cut on to us, our bills should be slashed by £140 per year. Compare this to the £9/yr an average household will now save with EDF (prices down 1.3%), £28/yr with SSE (down 4.1%), E.On's £24/yr (3.5% cut), Scottish Power's £33/yr (4.8% cut), British Gas's £37/yr (down 5%) and npower's 5.1% cut.

The companies say they can only afford such tiny price-cuts because they bought the gas at a higher price. Never mind what they are already gaining from the fall - right now! And while 5 companies will reduce prices from February, SSE is waiting till April. The Citizen's Advice Bureau is right: this is a "phoney price war". The firms raise prices as quick as a shot, but lower them like snails, if at all. And today, their sky high profits are already rocketing higher. Win-win-win, for them!

### • *Capitalist screws*

Prison privatisation began back in 1992, under John Major's Tory government. There are now 14 privately-run prisons in England and Wales, holding 17% of the total prison population. The three main companies lining their pockets out of running these prisons are G4S, Serco and Sodexo. Other private companies make profits by giving prisoners what they call "constructive work" to do - i.e. they get prisoners to work for them on slave wages.

On 27th January this year, the Prisons Inspectorate published a report on HMP Northumberland. Privatised in 2013, it



were unlikely to be interested in discussing their own crimes! □

simply unable to make ends meet. And, whatever he may say in Davos, they're certainly not helped by the likes of Cridland, judging from the CBI's vocal protest whenever there's any talk of increasing the minimum wage!

is one of the 6 prisons run by Sodexo and its prisoners make machine parts for Nissan's Sunderland factory. Within a year of its privatisation, a third of HMP Northumberland's staff was cut. The level of violence increased inside the prison, a riot broke out as well as a fire, which damaged six cells. Moreover, as the report noted, there had been three suicides since the previous inspection in 2012.

Should it come as a surprise, therefore, if according to the Ministry of Justice's own figures, 82 prisoners committed suicide in British prisons in 2014 - the highest level in seven years? Profiteering does kill, including in prison!

### Letter from Sussex

What's more important than anything other than air and water? Food. But never mind this fundamental truth. Keeping food production alive is no concern of the local powers-that-be in East Sussex, as this sad little tale which starts in Hailsham tells... This town has the last remaining actual livestock market in the county and it achieved fame in July 2013, when a dairy farmer on its outskirts starred in a documentary film called "The Moo Man". An unexciting subject, maybe, but it attracted international attention. At the premiere - in the town's restored 1930s cinema - there was a red carpet and a cow in a lorry. Not a big deal, though, compared with profitable development. The farmer, Steve Hook, rents the fields he grazes and it turns out that the landowner now wants to sell the land to Wimpey developers. Watch this space. Many of the locals are rooting for this local hero and his cows!



**Bus strike: against the bosses' divisions**

**Strikes**

The recent 24hr strikes on the London buses (on 13th January and 5th February), involving 20,000 drivers according to Unite, paralysed more than half of the bus services despite the companies' efforts to bring in strike breakers. But they have been remarkable in another respect: drivers from 18 different companies - who were scattered over many depots all over Greater London - have joined ranks behind common demands despite - and against - the artificial divisions created between them by privatisation.

The strikers are fighting for "equal pay for equal work" - a basic principle of the working class movement that union officials seemed to have long forgotten. So this struggle is well overdue! The present atomisation of the London buses means that the 27,000 drivers of these 18 companies are employed on the basis of 80 different types of contracts.



And the difference in pay for the same work can be significant, sometimes as much as £3 per hour. To all intents and purposes, the companies have managed to create a two-tier workforce, with the newer drivers earning much less than those who have been employed for some time.

At the time of writing, more 24-hour strikes are planned for the 13th and 16th of February. The bus

drivers are right to stand up against the divisions that the bosses would like to create between them. Their best bet is to escalate their action, for instance by including other sections of bus workers who are just as much affected by these divisions. Because the threat of escalating strikes, and the consequences for their profits, is the only language that the bosses are ever likely to understand! □

**• Yes, we mind this gap**

Is it really possible that London Underground could turn ticket offices into Tesco Express stores? Despite the strikes last year (called off mid-fight), against shutting 250 ticket offices and cutting 900 jobs, London Underground bosses began the closures on 2nd February - ahead of the expected timetable. They say the public wants a modern transport system, contactless payment, ticket machines and to do its shopping on the Underground...

So now South Wimbledon and Queensway ticket offices are shut for good. And Transport for London says it will bring forward the night tube service - starting September. But with fewer workers on the Underground?

This can only mean longer shifts. And this is precisely what is being imposed already, including on workers being transferred to stations beyond the agreed distance limits from their homes. They are supposed to choose jobs without seeing the work roster - when it can include consecutive long shifts without days off and night shifts. And it's "take it or leave

it!". As for the new technology training - former ticket office workers apparently need it to be able to run up and down (overcrowded) platforms with an i-Pad, "giving info" to "customers". As if!

**• Re-launch the action?**

Union leaders talk about safety concerns and the fact that their "negotiations" with managers hadn't even concluded before the ticket office closures started. They are right to raise health and safety - as the stabbing in the face of a worker at Lancaster Gate station on 23rd January proves. But workers have learnt from bitter experience that it's not talk, but action that works. Shouldn't the strikes be re-launched? Most of the sardines (sorry, "customers") would probably support that view, if they thought about it - and maybe even join in!

**• Union leaders' election year**

With two days' notice, Unison, Unite and GMB called off a 12-hour strike of NHS workers in England planned for 29 January, although 3,000 workers were left to strike on their own in Northern Ireland - but without Unison's support.

At the same time, union leaders called off a 4-week work-to-rule and a 24-hour strike scheduled for 25 February.

These cancellations were allegedly justified by the need to consult the membership over a new pay offer from the government. But, apparently, union leaders didn't see the point of consulting members over the cancellation of this action, planned long in advance, despite the fact that keeping the pressure on the government, while examining its new offer could only have reinforced the balance of forces in workers' favour!

Union leaders credited the 24-hour strikes of hundreds of thousands of public sector workers last October for what they describe as new "concessions" by the government. But what do these "concessions" really amount to? No more than around £4/week more for the lowest wage-earners, which, Unison's head of Health's own admission, is "not a great deal". That's the very least that can be said. Not rocking Labour's boat in election year is certainly more important to these union leaders than allowing workers a chance to measure their strength.

**Marching for a roof**

On 31st January, around 5000 people marched to the London city hall to protest against the catastrophic housing situation in London.

According to the National Housing Federation, house prices increased 14 times faster in London than average wages in 2014 - an on-going trend which is set to continue for the next few years if nothing is done about it. Of course, this rise is feeding into the level of rents, which are rising even

faster than house prices.

The government has made the situation even worse by subsidising buy-to-let landlords without introducing any rent cap, while, at the same time, allowing the social housing stock to shrink and deteriorate. As a result, homelessness is increasing, housing waiting lists are reaching a shocking level - officially 344,000 households, but that's probably an understatement - and more and more households, which cannot afford

mortgages, are forced to pay exorbitant private rents or to go and live in overcrowded conditions with relatives or friends.

Many of the protesters on the 31st January march, were part of local campaigns which have been fighting to defend existing council estates under threat - like in Southwark or Newham, among others. They demand a cap on rents, the cancellation of council estate demolitions and the building up of new social housing. Too right!

**Their crisis**

Several former job-centre employees who blew the whistle on the current policy of "bullying people off the [unemployment] register" by first bullying jobcentre workers were, called to "give evidence" to a Work and Pensions select committee, which has been inquiring into the government's benefits sanctions policy. The final evidence was heard on 4 February. The Committee is meant to assess how well the recommendations of the Oakley Review, which reported last July on sanctions against benefit claimants, have been implemented.

Oakley had found that half of the sanctions imposed, which were appealed against, were overturned. And that many of those targeted for punishment by cutting off their only income, were disabled and vulnerable and/or unable to understand the requirements of the Work Programme or other such compulsory work scheme.

But now the Committee has been told that the vulnerable are still penalised and that workers for the Department or its private

**• European Unemployed, Unite!**

In his attempt to outbid Ukip in the run-up to the coming elections, Cameron has been blaming the EU for all of Britain's ills. This was how he came up with his scape-goating of EU workers for allegedly practising "benefit tourism" in Britain, thereby putting an "intolerable burden" on the welfare state. As if being harassed by job-centres for derisory benefits - under the constant

**• Sun & sand... on the dole?**

The OECD stats comparing countries' 2014 social expenditure as a proportion of GDP are very revealing. David Cameron's sound-bites about how Britain is a welfare paradise for those who wish to come here and do nothing but sunbathe, are exposed as downright silly. Actually, this country as a whole spends less on welfare than

**Non-job centres**

Queuing for what?

subcontractors (often temps on dubious contracts!) are themselves forced into implementing sanctions for fear of losing their own jobs. For instance these were reasons quoted for recent benefit cuts: a man who could not read or write failed to upload his CV onto the Jobmatch website; a man with poor English took English and maths courses instead of looking for a job; a single mother

with 2 young children missed a target of 20 job searches a fortnight by only managing 16!

Of course this inquiry is just the government investigating itself. And the purpose of these committees is precisely to uphold the sham accountability that this government of the rich, for the rich, uses to disguise itself. But that also means it sometimes has to show its ugly face. □

threat of "benefit sanctions" - was anything like a holiday!

However, Cameron always stopped short of mentioning the fact that only a tiny proportion of EU workers in Britain were actually getting any benefits. And he was even more careful to avoid any reference to the 30,000 British nationals who are claiming unemployment benefit abroad, in

various EU countries.

Yet this fact highlights the obvious: that unemployment is everywhere, and the working class across Europe has every interest in joining ranks and fighting against unemployment - and against all the Camerons of Europe - to win back the jobs that have been lost through the crisis!

some relatively poorer (Italy and Spain) and some very poor European countries: Portugal, Greece, Hungary, and Slovenia.

And aren't we told that Britain overtook France (which spends way more than Britain on welfare) in December's GDP rankings to become the fifth richest country in the world? By comparison, in these

rankings, Italy is number 8, Spain number 13, Greece number 43, Portugal number 48, Hungary number 59 and Slovenia way down at number 82. Of course all statistics need to be taken with a pinch of salt, but even so, it seems welfare spending is really lagging. It needs to catch up!

**Frack now, fret later**

The Commons debate on fracking was farcical. The Tories made no secret of their enthusiasm. Cameron called those opposing fracking "irrational" - so "irrational" that "Climate Change minister", Amber Rudd, refused to release in full a government report on the impact of fracking, presumably for fear that it might trigger "irrational" reactions (like riots maybe?).

In a leaked letter to his cabinet colleagues, Osborne said fast-tracking fracking was a "personal priority" along

with delivering, as he put it, the "asks" of fracking company Cuadrilla. But isn't Cuadrilla's CEO, "Lord" Browne, the former CEO of BP, held responsible for violating safety after BP's Texas plant exploded, killing 15 and wounding 170? And wasn't his long-term cost-cutting program blamed for the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010? Hardly reassuring!

Labour made some noises - they had to, in view of the coming elections - but only in support of minor amendments.

However, when it came to voting over a moratorium pending a scientific analysis of the consequences of fracking, Labour abstained. Nor did they oppose fracking companies operating under people's homes without their consent.

Never mind the many protests against fracking across Britain. Both Tory and Labour are far more concerned with opening the tap of a new source of profits for the energy sharks.



**A&E: the ConDems don't do "body counts"!**

The College of Emergency Medicine estimates that, out of the 18,539,369 patients who were admitted to A&E departments last year, 500 died for lack of adequate treatment - because these departments were paralysed by overcrowding. Of these 500 patients, 350 died because they were made to wait for more than 12 hours before being attended to, while the other 150 died due to being sent home prematurely

because of a shortage of beds. Has anything changed since? Not at all. This December alone, more than 1,700,000 patients went to A&Es. But these departments remain as overcrowded as ever - too many emergency calls for too few ambulance crews, hospital corridors overflowing, exhausted NHS staff, no available beds, etc... The resulting chaos is unjustifiable and, in fact, criminal, as shown by last

**• "Bed-blocking"? No, social care in crisis!**

January's cold weather brought the usual winter crisis in NHS hospitals, prompting several overloaded A&E departments to declare "major incidents". But instead of addressing the root causes of the problem - the chronic shortage of staff and facilities - this was yet another pretext for the media to embark on a campaign blaming patients themselves.

So, fingers were pointed at "bed-blockers", whose discharges are delayed because the support they need after discharge is not in place. Then came those anecdotes about other patients supposedly clogging A&E with trivial complaints. All conveniently ignoring 13 A&E downgrades already, under the ConDems, another 6 not yet implemented and 10 more downgrades or closures being considered! Over 5,000 people were in NHS beds waiting for suitable

social care in November. At Addenbrooke's in Cambridge there were 87 of them - including 21 who had been waiting for three weeks.

But isn't this all too predictable when, despite a growing elderly and vulnerable population, ConDem cuts forced councils to cut social service budgets by more than a quarter in 4 years? With inadequate social care in the first place, more people end up in hospital for longer, waiting for the social care they need in order to go home - or rehabilitation, which itself might be compromised by a long



wait. But never mind, the victims still get blamed for the chaos!

**Election blues**

**• Cameron's tax bribes**

Cameron entered the election hand-out season with a commitment to cut more taxes, saying that "after years of sacrifice, the British people deserve a reward". According to him, "the people whose hard work and personal sacrifices have got us through these difficult times should come first". So what does he propose? To raise the threshold of higher-rate income tax (ie., for those who pay 40p in the pound), from £41,865 to £50,000 - a gift of £70/week to high earners, costing £7bn. For low earners, Cameron would raise the income tax threshold to £12,500, meaning that they would be just under £10/week better off, at best.

Reward for sacrifice? He's not serious. Haven't all the sacrifices been made by those workers who produce all the wealth

**• Iraq: Too many skeletons in the closet**

The Chilcot Committee Report on the Iraq war is being kept carefully under wraps, six years after it began. The pretext is that politicians against whom accusations have been made will first be allowed to respond, and that they are dragging their feet until the election.

Despite this charade, it is not this or that politician that was responsible for the war. After all, the invasion was based on cross-party agreement according to

while getting the lowest incomes? In fact the value workers produce is already stolen by the bosses for profits, boardroom pay and shareholders' dividends. That's what should be taxed in the first place, not wages!

**• Labour for toffy students**

Ironic that Labour should now pledge to cut university tuition fees from £9,000 to £6,000. It was Labour in 1997, under Tony Blair, which first brought them in. It implemented proposals made by the previous Tory government's Dearing Review, that students should pay 25% of their education costs. So in 1997 a flat rate fee was introduced of £1,175, later changed to a means-tested fee. But after Blair scraped through his education bill in 2003, against opposition from Tories and

the interests of British capital, and the oil companies in particular. These elected "representatives" showed who they were really responsible to, when the war was so widely opposed.

But behind these politicians is a whole unelected state machinery - the army, MI5, MI6 and the Foreign Office - which stays in place irrespective of which party is in power, whose function is to protect the interests of the tiny capitalist minority.

LibDems, as well as rebels in its own ranks, it took another 3 years to get agreement on charging fees up to £3,000/ year.

We all know how the LibDems reneged on their promises and helped introduce the present £6,000-9,000/year rate in 2010 (for British and EU nationals in England and Wales - non-EU students pay even more!). But the fact is, since fees are paid by way of student loans, only a third of students - the lucky ones who find well-enough-paying jobs - are paying these back.

So here's another irony: by capping fees at £6,000 Miliband will only be helping the richest students - because they are the ones who pay upfront in the first place, or if they took loans, they're most likely to have top jobs and therefore, to pay back what they borrowed...

It is this machinery which, among other things, is blocking access to the most damning details - like the conversations between Blair and the then US President Bush or the ins and outs of Blair's infamous "dossier" on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. The wheelings and dealings of this secretive body must remain hidden at all costs, while the charade of "democracy" is played out on the stage for our benefit.

**King's Cross railway station (London)****• Partners in mess**

Govia, which only took over Thameslink railways a few months ago is already being nicknamed 'Slovia' by passengers and staff alike: only 55% of trains run on time.

It managed to infuriate commuters so much that they have started an e-petition against it, which already has over 3,000 signatures. Passengers complain that

they are met with staff shortages, broken down trains, signal failures and a chronic lack of communication. What's more, because delays often just fall short of the 30 minute limit to reclaim a fare, commuters are cheated out of their reimbursements.

So far, Govia has agreed to improve the refunds system. But since



it is a railway, it would be quite nice if it also improved the running of its trains!

**• Ensuring a double whammy**

This doesn't make sense: on-time GN trains are being held at signals at some stations, but not others, apparently so that later trains can run in "booked order"- which means that both trains run late! (No wonder only 55% of GTR trains are on time!) Anyway, since managers never answer any questions satisfactorily, the best approach would probably be for signallers and drivers to tackle this unreasonable situation and the unsatisfactory bosses, together. Could it be something to do with not wanting to pay the reimbursements claimed by passengers if a train is more than 30 minutes late? [King's Cross Workers' Platform 27/1/15]

**• No more cuts!**

Isn't it enough already? Now GN is trying to cut staff on the barriers to just 3 at peak hours and 2 at off-peak. Obviously, for them, less staff = more £££s. For us, less staff = more danger. [King's Cross Workers' Platform 27/1/15]

**• Letting dodgers go free**

As for the situation here with RPIs, the cuts in our numbers pose a serious safety hazard, since we're expected to impose penalties on very reluctant punters. Never mind, tho', managers still want to make "lone working" the norm, expecting fewer of us to cover more trains. Well that's easy to fix. If, instead, we make sure their "penalty yields" go down to

zero, they'll have to think again. [King's Cross Workers' Platform 27/1/15]

**• They are crooks!**

We'd really like to know how ISS bosses think they can get away with defrauding us! Some of us have noticed that on our pay-slips we have half of our basic pay put as overtime hours (and paid flat rate, of course!), as if our full-time contracts had been cancelled behind our backs and re-written as part-time!! Did they hope we wouldn't notice? Is it so they can claw back the (miserly) pay "rise" we eventually forced out of them? This trickery has to be stopped immediately; the correct pay needs to be re-instituted and workers compensated, with interest!! [King's Cross Workers' Platform 14/1/15]

**BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)****• Hiring and firing at will**

Why should we accept the de-manning that's going on all over, from non-production to Assembly or the lines to the sack? Temps who've been working just weeks are being terminated: workers sacked in December had only been taken on in November, for instance. This may be normal behaviour for BMW, particularly when it's launching a new model. But that doesn't mean we accept it! [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 15/01/15]

**• Ground to make up**

We remember how, 23 years ago (well some of us remember!) there was an agreement between union officials and Rover-British Aerospace, that there would be never be any compulsory redundancies. BMW bought the company 2 years later, in 1994. Instead of repudiating the deal, which they could have done, they decided to have a parallel workforce of temporary workers who would not benefit from any redundancy agreements. Then, with union officials' consent, they effectively outsourced all recruitment for assembly work to temp agencies. Result

- some get treated like fodder for new models and fired at will, while the "lucky" ones get strung along for 12 years or more waiting for a permanent contract. [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 15/01/15]

**• Built on our sweat and blood**

It's obvious to us that BMW's longstanding use and abuse of agency workers and the so-called Working Time Account, which saves on overtime payments, big-time, are the two main factors which have fuelled BMW's huge profits here. We've heard that the group as a whole (including Mini), sold over 2m vehicles last year - a new record; also that the BMW share price shot up from £72.50 before Xmas to over £81 this week! A sure sign of higher profits to come in 2015... [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 15/01/15]

**• Was the wait worth it?**

After temps' long wait for permanent BMW contracts came a similarly inordinate wait for uniforms. For instance one mate who got his contract in July only received his uniform a week or so ago - 6 months late! Even so, there's no jacket - and what are those trousers with no side pockets all about? An anti-scratch



measure, says BMW. More likely it's so we can't put our hands in them! [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 15/01/15]

**• Shorter nights at our expense**

Hardly have we got back after shut-out when BMW cuts the night shift by 1½ hours. That would be fine by us - who wants to work nights anyway? Except that, of course, BMW is charging the time to our working time accounts. And this could go on until the end of February! Since it's impossible to make up time during the week now, BMW is probably trying to ensure that we have no choice but to work weekends when they want us to, when production hits top gear in August or September. Well, we've some time to figure out a way to stymie that, haven't we ...? [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 15/01/15]



**Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)****• Gone too far already**

According to the "Go Further" plant bulletin, the No.2 Manager, Will-cut, is looking forward positively to 2015 - but we're not sure what he means about a drive to "Best in World"? Who's driving there and where is it? Or does he mean "the" best...?

Anyway, all production is increasing... a bit... with Panther job 1 in November. But what about the contracts of new workers who're going to produce all these engines? Of course, we realise that he's happy to employ temps on lower wages, but that makes us very unhappy. It should be equal pay for equal work, or, no work at all. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 4/2/15]

**• Yes, it needs rubbing in...**

On this subject, we've been looking at the 2nd tier rates which came in, in April 2012. Anyone employed after by Ford on a permanent contract, gets a lower standard rate. And so far it affects Grade 5s. So what is the difference? Well a lot more than Ford made out initially: £14.78/hour compared to £17.41 per hour. And all your other allowances are also less, proportionally. Daylight and nightlight robbery! Sweetly signed and delivered by the robbers' assistants in the union office and Unite HQ. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 21/1/15]

**• Confrontation required**

Again, we ask about the temps who've already been here a year. When will they be made up to permanent? This is no joke. Because there's absolutely no way that Ford can give our workmates their marching orders - and especially not, while at the same time, it's taking on new temps on those (unacceptable!) 23mth contracts!

Ford deserves to be confronted over this by the whole workforce. We can't expect the temps to deal with this on their own. We can all down tools. Much easier done, than said! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 4/2/15]

**• Tea strike?**

Actually the JWC is meant to be representing the temps over this issue. But without involving the rest of us, how can they be effective? Besides, we'd really appreciate it if they told us what they are doing... [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 4/2/15]

**• That's the way they think**

As for Mr Sheep-shearer's "Safety Talk" column, in the DEP bulletin, here we read: "unfortunately we had four lost time accidents in 2014". Come again? Lost time accidents? Yup, lost fingers, lost toes, lost limbs, even lost heads, these are nothing, compared to lost minutes! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 4/2/15]

**• Too many near-misses**

Things are just plain dangerous with the newly outsourced driving and logistics department. No surprise, of course. LineSide agency workers are being put at risk every day (and maybe the rest of us too), because of the pace they're expected to keep up - without enough experience, training, not to mention pay... they're just thrown in the deep-end! And when someone's badly hurt or worse, then what? Blame the worker? [Workers' Fight 4/2/15]

**• What they breathing in?**

By the way, the contractors busy installing the new Panther engine lines, cutting, grinding and welding, seem to be there all hours. There are 2 questions we have: first, we'd like to know how long their working day is, since there are meant to be legal limits! And 2nd, what about the noise, dust, smoke and fumes, which they and probably us too, are subjected to? We're not reassured by Ford's "supervision" of these ops, nor their pretence that they're concerned for "contractor safety". We see another "accident" (which will be no accident) in the making. [Workers' Fight 4/2/15]

**Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)****• Assortment mis-sorting**

The "Mondays situation" is being "sorted" by managers coming in and working on the Processing floor. They think they can retrieve their bonuses by putting their own inept hands into the mix? What a mix-up they create! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 27/1/15]

**• Wheels on our heels**

We hear that finally EC managers are sending out special walk-measurers with a little wheel to measure the distance of our walks precisely, which should have been done long ago. Not that we trust management to cut our walk times!

Exercise scientists say that 20 minutes walking per day is good for the human body, but what about 6-8hrs on the run, with heavy bags and/or HCTs to push? [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 27/1/15]

**• We can be flexible, but...**

Thurs and Fri, on Lates last week, Letters was told we could leave 25 mins earlier than usual - at 9.35pm, instead

of 10pm. Of course, we're quite happy to leave early, let's get it straight: we're never happy to leave late, obviously. But they better not think that this HMP "early release" means that they can take back the minutes in the future. As the old French proverb says "repandre, c'est voler" - to take back what you've given, is theft. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 27/1/15]

**• The silliest theatre**

We remember the time when HR asked people to audition for the role of acting manager, sending forms to fill in, etc. But now, HR doesn't even bother, let alone give the pay that goes with it. It's in the hands of managers to put their favourite actors here and there, getting in our way, play-acting on OPG pay! This farce can't get any sillier!! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 27/1/15]

**• Action mad**

Doesn't Romec's Action Elephant know that every action(plan) creates a reaction...? She's irritating everybody. So she should stop her stomping - it's only



raising the dust - before this Action Plan craziness drives us all outside... [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 27/1/15]

**• Oh dear we might kiss her!**

When she arrives, if she sees dust she asks: "what were the night shift doing?" Does she want us to wear special infrared glasses (or a little lamp like the miners?) OK! Spec-savers, here we come - in working time - and we're sending her the bill! [Workers' Fight 27/1/15]

**• Freshly baked or uncooked?**

We see that RM is recruiting managers. In the ad for the job they boast that: "we offer managerial responsibility from day one". No wonder everything's in such a mess... and no wonder managers grow such big and ignorant heads. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 15/1/15]

## Greece

Several measures have already been announced by the new Syriza government. The minimum wage, which had been cut by a third in 2011, is to be raised back to its previous level of £600/month - although it will remain lower than in 2006, when it was £700/month. A bonus amounting to one month's pension which used to be paid to the poorest pensioners will be restored. 10,000 sacked public sector workers are to be taken back. Collective bargaining rights which had been terminated, are also to be restored. New welfare provisions are to be introduced, to meet the most urgent needs of the poorest - especially the 27% of the working class which is jobless - covering food, healthcare, transport and utility bills. Plans for a moratorium on personal debt and evictions are being thrashed out. Finally, the privatisation of the Piraeus deep sea harbour, the regional airports and the national electricity monopoly are to be cancelled.

These measures, which were part of Syriza's election manifesto, are explicitly designed to reverse anti-working class measures which were

## After Syriza's first announcements

introduced by the previous governments. At the time, all these attacks were met with a militant response by the working class - including those targeting pensioners who massively took to the streets in April last year - but without success. In some cases, however, the workers' mobilisation managed to force the pro-business governments to give up on their attacks. Such was the case, for instance, for the water privatisation planned in the country's two largest

cities, Athens and Thessalonica.

In the same way, today, the real question is not so much whether Syriza has the political will to deliver on its announcements. The real issue is whether the Greek working class will find the energy and determination to oversee their implementation, by using its collective strength and the methods of the class struggle, if and when it is necessary - as it has done so many times in the past. □



Tsipras, Syriza's leader, after his party's victory

## The capitalists and wealthy who should be made to pay

Syriza will need funds to implement its social programme - funds which will have to be raised by a state whose coffers are empty. But if these coffers are empty, it is due to the parasitism of the European bankers and Greek capitalists who have been plundering the resources of the Greek state ever since the beginning of the crisis.

The large European banks - mainly British (HSBC and RBS among others), German and French - had long made a fortune out of their loans to Greece. But, when the Greek state went bust, not only did a large part of the bailout money go straight into their vaults, but they were able to borrow on the

cheap in order to lend more funds to Greece at exorbitant interest rates. Yes, the international banks made a killing out of the Greek financial collapse and they should be made to pay for it.

Meanwhile, in Greece itself, the small wealthy layer was doing very well out of the crisis, in particular thanks to massive tax evasion, resulting in an estimated £30bn annual loss to the Greek Treasury. The country's top capitalists, however, are its shipping magnates. They control the world's largest fleet while having all kinds of other businesses. The Latsis family, for instance, the richest in Greece, controls the largest oil refinery, a bank

(which was bailed out) and a large real estate business. What's more, as a testimony to their power, these shipping magnates are legally exempt of any sort of tax. Only in 2013 did they agree to pay a "voluntary contribution" - but for only 3 years - which was expected to bring in a mere £80m a year!

As to the established Orthodox Church, which is the country's largest landowner, it only pays a pittance in tax compared to its real estate assets which, according to some estimates, could be worth several billion pounds. Meanwhile, the state goes on paying the wages of its priests, to the tune of £180m per year!

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](mailto:contact@w-fight.org), or by postal mail at:

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