

WORKERS' fight



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

USING OUR FULL FORCE TO STOP THEM!

Tens of thousands of workers are still taking strike action. And now many more are preparing to join them: 150,000 civil servants and 300,000 nurses are being balloted by their unions. Workers are facing the worst cost-of-living crisis in 60 years and they know there is worse to come: there is no choice except to fight back.

While the economic crisis isn't confined to Britain, this country is the worst-off in north-west Europe. Even before the energy price hikes, one child in four was living in poverty. More than a third of households couldn't pay bills without resorting to loans. But never mind, the government mouthed platitudes about "levelling up" and then took 3 months "off" to elect its 4th new leader in 6 years, just as energy bills were about to increase by 400%... Many Tories now regret they chose Truss but are resigned to losing the next election; which leaves her free to do her worst...

Her loony tunes...

Truss and Kwarteng will probably never live down their 23 September "minibudget" which crashed the pound, forcing the Bank of England to launch an emergency purchase of gilts to save pension funds and calm markets. It also brought forward its planned interest rate rise, hitting mortgages. Which didn't prevent Truss from denying all responsibility for the financial chaos! "It's a world crisis", she said and anyway, "everyone's increasing interest rates!".

True, the world economy is suffering from a serious bout of "stagflation": absence of growth, while prices shoot up. It's back into recession. But Truss declares that she'll buck this global trend by cutting taxes - and magically, there'll be "growth, growth, growth"! Not even her own Tory MPs believe this. The British economy has been more stagnant



than most, but on top of that, it's also suffering a 4% contraction due to Brexit. All indicators point downward: bad news for capital, of course, but also the working class, unless it turns it around.

... and her damaging cuts

In order to fund her promised £43bn-worth of tax cuts, Truss intends to slash public spending. Her "supply side reforms"/repeal of EU laws target trade union rights. And while a section of Tories might favour increasing Universal Credit in line with inflation, Truss has intimated that the majority of claimants won't get it. Far-right caricature, Home Secretary Suella Braverman (who said it was her "dream" to see a flight deporting migrants to Rwanda by Christmas!) has called for cuts to UC for all those "who can go out and get another job"! She'd like to twist the knife in the wound of 41% of UC claimants who already work as many hours as they can, juggling kids and/or caring, and resort to food banks because their incomes are so low!

There's already a cut for the NHS

and Social Care, and never mind that they're in a state of near-collapse; Truss is reversing Johnson's 1.25% National Insurance increase, which was meant to provide this sector with an extra £12bn/year.

However, all these reactionary policies could all be rendered harmless if the working class uses the full collective force of the current wave of strikes, to push back against the capitalists and their government.

So far, the bosses are holding out together against paying wages above inflation and want to turn the screw to increase profits. But railworkers, dockers, postal and BT workers, teachers, civil servants, council workers, nurses... by confronting the bosses collectively, could break their resistance and maybe even collapse the Truss regime... Of course, using the "full collective force" of the working class means organising it on the ground, without relying on the union leaderships to do it. That's the next step. ☐

• Leicester clashes: importing communalism as poverty deepens

On Saturday 17 September, 300 young British-Indians wearing balaclavas, gloves, and armed with sticks marched across Leicester East shouting "Jai Shri Ram" which simply means "Glory to Lord Rama", the Hindu god. Except that this slogan is the battle cry of the RSS, the Rastriya Svayamsevak Sangh, a fundamentalist paramilitary organisation linked to the ruling Hindu nationalist BJP of Indian President Modi. Many go so far to call the RSS "fascist"; it has been responsible for communal violence against Muslims in Gujarat (Modi's home state) - burning their homes and killing them (but also attacking Hindus, Sikhs and others who oppose them).

The youths in Leicester marched to North Evington, a majority Muslim area, where they proceeded to attack locals outside a mosque and set alight a Halal food shop. It was the kind of communal violence normally seen in the BJP's India, systematically instigated by Modi's bigoted Hindu nationalist government. So how did this overflow into Britain? In fact this incident followed the visit to a local temple



by RSS leader Sadvi Rithambara, who was on a speaking tour. She is known for helping to organise the demolition of Babri Masjid mosque in Ayodhya in 1992 and the violence which followed when at least 2,000 Muslims were murdered. As a result of the North Evington attacks, community activists ensured that the rest of her speaking tour was cancelled.

This incident shocked Leicester's mixed Indian community. Usually it's only after cricket matches between India and Pakistan that opposing supporters get

over-excited. In fact it was a such a match which was initially blamed for the rising tension on the streets, until its far more sinister cause became evident. It's also the case, however, that local Gujarati religious organisations and businesses have been a significant source of funding for Modi and his reactionary BJP. However, if young men are easily swayed to turn on former neighbours, then it is also because these parts of Leicester, where unemployment is twice the national average, are depressed areas, offering them nothing. □

• Italy: Meloni's election is a symptom of a sick system

The election of Giorgia Meloni of the far-right party Fratelli di'Italia (FdI, "Brothers of Italy") as prime minister may be bad political news, but it's the consequence of the lack of a credible alternative against the backdrop of Italy's ongoing social and economic crisis. The election was precipitated by the sudden collapse of the so-called "national unity" government led by former banker, Mario Draghi after his measures to counter the crisis were boycotted by the populist Five Star Movement. Thanks to the alliance of three far-right parties headed by her Brothers of Italy, Meloni has become Italy's first female prime minister.

Alarm bells were rung at Meloni's victory, even if it's not the first time a far-right politician has won an election. Berlusconi, doddering today at the age of 86, but supporting Meloni this time, was after all, 4 times prime minister. Both Meloni herself and Salvini from the extreme right Northern League, are past cabinet ministers.

Meloni says she will not ban abortion or gay civil partnerships and nor will she try to take Italy out of the EU, as some of her supporters would wish. That said, her election slogan "God, Homeland and Family" harks back to Mussolini and indeed her political career began in the "Italian Social

Movement", founded in 1946 by his former associates.

The election of her coalition, on a record low 64% turnout, above all reflects disillusionment with the traditional parties - as well as Italy's peculiar voting system. In fact Meloni herself received only 26% of the vote. Of course, the Italian working class will need more than a ballot to fight against the growing attacks it faces. Italians are experiencing a cost of living crisis, with inflation at 8.9%, the highest in 40 years. The battle against austerity and political reaction will have to be fought on the streets and in the workplaces, just as everywhere else!

• Putin's attempts to keep a grip

The results of Putin's hasty referendums in East and South Ukraine were predictable. Whether fraudulent or carried out at gunpoint, it's possible that the already secessionist "republics of Luhansk and Donetsk" with predominantly Russian populations and, since 2014, administrations under Moscow's orders, would have voted for succession anyway. As for Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, their status is still unsure. Fighting and shelling on the ground has recommenced and the advancing Ukrainian army claims to have taken back significant territory.

It seems that Putin's aim in holding these referendums was to give himself a stronger hand in negotiations with Kiev and Washington - if indeed they take place. In the short term, it helps him reinforce his "strong leader" image among Russian nationalists and the bureaucracy at home - which he needs urgently, after a series of (ongoing) catastrophic military setbacks. He hoped that extending Russia "back" into Ukraine might gain him popularity and

authority in the context of growing discontent among the Russian population.

Instead, anti-war protests in Russia have spread, particularly since announcing the drafting of 300,000 reservists, which is supposed to replace the 50,000 soldiers who've died. Despite arrests (1,300 on 21 September alone) and imprisonments, protests continue. In fact, they are becoming more violent, if the shooting of an enlistment officer by a reservist in the city of Ust-Ilimsk in Siberia is anything to go by.

The determination of the protesters, including among workers and peasants who are particularly targeted for army recruitment, is one of the reasons why Putin hasn't dared to call for a general military draft. But he also wants to avoid the mass exodus of young men and women from Russia - 500,000 have left since the beginning of the war and they are still queuing up at the border posts - which threatens to disorganise even further a Russian economy in crisis and under siege from Western sanctions.

Class Struggle n°116

Autumn 2022

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Will Truss fall off her roller-coaster?

Truss ended up prime minister after just 81,326 members of the Tory party, representing 0.0017 of the electorate, voted for her. Such is British democracy... In fact she won by the lowest margin of any Tory leadership candidate so far. So now the right-wing libertarian Brexit government of Johnson, which had been forced to resort to heavy state intervention during the pandemic, despite itself, is replaced by the even more right-wing explicitly anti-state, "Tufton Street Gang" under Truss.

Tufton Street, near Westminster is home to a host of right-wing, Thatcherite think-tanks like the Institute of Economic Affairs, the Centre for Policy Studies, the Adam Smith Institute, the Taxpayers Alliance and "Leave means Leave" (Brexit Central). They vigorously

oppose "One Nation Toryism" which advocates paternalistic, social policies alongside traditional Conservatism, today represented by a minority inside parliament, since most were kicked out by Johnson for not supporting Brexit.

True belief...

Truss has assembled a Cabinet of low tax, small state, free market, Thatcher-worshippers, harking back to the dizzy days of the 1840s! Jacob Rees Mogg, who harks back further, to the 1700s, is now Secretary of State for Energy and Fracking. Chris Philp is chief secretary to the Treasury, and advocate of forcing the unemployed to work for benefits and banning strikes. Suella Braverman, new Home Secretary has vowed to stop all small boats carrying refugees across the

Their society

Channel and ensure that planes carrying deportees take off for Rwanda asap.

...is only skin-deep

Whether Truss can pull it all off and for how long is another question. She has re-opened the bitter warfare between Tory factions which had been temporarily carpeted over by Johnson. And now even her own Cabinet is rebelling over her intention not to increase welfare benefits in line with inflation: Penny Mordaunt, Robert Buckland and Chloe Smith have all come out publicly against her. To cap it all, Johnson's former culture secretary, Nadine Dorries, known for her anti-abortion stance and opposition to same-sex marriage, accused Truss of "lurching to the right"! Yes, it's tragedy morphing into farce! □

• "Trussonomics" - crashing the economy

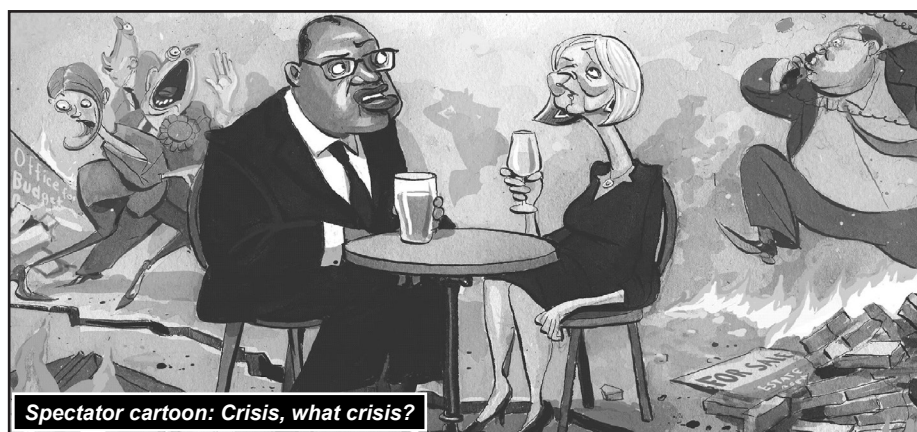
Within 3 days of Kwasi Kwarteng's 23 September mini-budget, proposing the biggest package of tax cuts in 50 years, the pound fell to its lowest ever rate against the dollar: near-parity at \$1.03. This budget, promising £45bn in tax cuts on top of the subsidy to households and businesses for energy costs, was unfunded. Having got rid of the top civil servant at the Treasury who might have opposed him, Kwarteng also refused the forecasts usually provided by the Office for Budget Responsibility.

Did he know what he was doing? Hedge fund managers who bet against the falling pound made a few quick fortunes; Kwarteng was seen later than night attending a drinks party with them...

The BOE steps in

Meanwhile there was a sell-off of government bonds. The Bank of England had to step in to buy gilts to shore up pension funds. It's not even certain that the 14-day Quantitative Easing (QE) which the BOE initiated will be enough to support the bond market. And that's a problem, because the underlying issue worldwide, is rising inflation, which QE makes worse... To try to control this, the Bank had already increased interest rates; it will now need to increase them further.

Global markets freaked out - hence the ticking-off from the IMF, which told Kwarteng that "we do not recommend



large and untargeted fiscal packages at this juncture" and advised him to "consider ways to provide support that is more targeted and re-evaluate the tax measures, especially those that benefit high income earners".

Kwarteng responded by reversing the 5% top income tax cut (it only saves £2bn) which was apparently enough to help the pound recover its pre-budget rate. But that is hardly anything to write home about.

Only his beard might grow

His promise of achieving economic growth is a fairy tale; the British economy is not an island and even Brexit couldn't make it one! It's integrated into a world economy

which is currently in turmoil and veering into recession. Economists say that a crash on the scale of 2007/8 could be imminent. This recession was on the horizon when Covid arrived, but Covid effectively froze economic activity. Now economies are defrosting; the recession is back, but conditions are even worse.

So the market turmoil which Kwarteng has helped to fuel is definitely not over. His economic policy against the backdrop of world crisis will still try to put more money in the pockets of the rich, by taking it out of the pockets of the working class. That said, workers certainly have the collective power to stop him...

No reunion for the Britannia Unchained gang

Truss is one of five Tory MPs who co-wrote the book, "Britannia Unchained" 10 years ago. It argues that Britain had "a bloated state, high taxes and excessive regulation", and looked to Third World and authoritarian "tiger" economies from Taiwan and Singapore, to Brazil for inspiration. Canada was also admired for reducing government

spending by 20% in the 1990s! It also lamented the fact that only 15% of British students study maths at A-Level. And judging from the mini-budget of 23 September Truss and Kwarteng were among the 85% who didn't...

The book's most quoted paragraph labelled Britain's workers "among the worst idlers in the world. We work among the lowest hours, we retire early and our productivity is poor". As if low productivity wasn't the result of bosses' reluctance to invest in technology and preference for

high-profit, labour intensive production! Clearly, British right-wing politicians are some of the laziest thinkers in the world! But Truss only appointed one of her co-authors to cabinet: Kwasi Kwarteng. She left out the backbencher Chris Skidmore, and Johnson's deputy PM Dominic Raab, who had nominated her rival Sunak for the leadership. As for Priti Patel, she has so far kept to herself the reason why she resigned as home secretary, the day Truss took office!

Labour

At the end of their conference in Liverpool, polls showed Labour with a 33 point lead over the Tories - the largest lead of any party since the late 1990s, according to pollster, YouGov.

Of course this was mostly down to a spectacular collapse in confidence in the Truss-led Tories - after the collapse in the value of the pound on 3 October. As Peter Mandelson, former cabinet minister in Blair's government, put it, "Now *that* creates an opportunity for Labour to occupy the centre ground".

His Majesty's loyal opposition

Labour certainly seized the day, trying to win over as many usual Tory voters as possible. For the first time at their conference, delegates stood up to sing "God save the King" under the Union Jack. And there appeared to be not one murmur of dissent among members as the socialist "Red Flag" was relegated. Especially not when they've sniffed a chance of getting into government!

In his speech, leader Keir Starmer made sure to demonstrate beyond any doubt his sense of responsibility towards the capitalists. He called Labour the "party of home ownership" and of "sound money". It had taken over from the Conservatives as the party of "fiscal responsibility"... And yes, that might mean "not being able to do things - good Labour things - as quickly as we might like. But that's what responsible

Labour's "clear blue water"



government looks like"!

Looking responsible to the bosses

So for the time being, it looks like this: maintaining the 45p top rate of tax, but no new taxes on profits or corporations; no commitment to a minimum wage of £15/hr despite conference voting for it, and no commitment either, to changing the General Election voting system to proportional representation, despite conference voting for this too!

Starmer did say the railways would be "nationalised", but only when the current private contracts come to an end, which is straight from Corbyn's

play book. And instead of an anticipated plan to nationalise energy, a new public company called "Great British Energy", would be created (plagiarising Tory Grant Shapps' "Great British Railways!"): "the biggest partnership between government, business and communities this country has ever seen". Public money would pay for the transition to a "green" economy, leaving intact the immense wealth of energy companies and their shareholders.

Commentators spoke about the "clear blue water" now visible between Conservative and Labour! Sure, the Tories have moved so far to the right, that for clear (blue!) water to open up, all Labour had to do was stand still. ☐

• While Graham keeps her distance from Labour...

Unite General Secretary, Sharon Graham deliberately didn't attend Labour conference for the second year in a row. But the union still tabled motions. It called on Labour "to take effective measures to solve the cost of living crisis, to prevent profiteering and reshape the economy to the benefit of workers and communities", and demanded that when in government it should take back control of essential services and utilities.

In response to leader Keir Starmer's

speech, Graham tweeted that Labour needed to be "bolder". Criticising Starmer from the left probably serves Graham's own aims. She wants to distance herself from party politics, given her main aim of rebuilding union membership. And she definitely doesn't want to fall into the trap of being linked to any Labour leader, given how her predecessor Len McCluskey got his fingers, if not his and his union's reputation burnt, because of his close association with

the "disgraced" Jeremy Corbyn.

She is still keeping her distance, saying that "political promises don't mean anything to my members' pockets". She did, however, call on Labour to "show that you are holding the hands of workers, putting your arm around them" - an unfortunate turn of phrase, since it was Johnson who repeatedly boasted during the pandemic that the Tories were putting their arms around workers...

• ...Lynch engages in "wishful" thinking!

As for Mick Lynch of the RMT, which is not affiliated to the Labour Party, he did turn up at a few "fringe" events. Like Graham, he "wished" Starmer was more "bold and radical". Also like Graham, he said that he'd support the Labour Party if they "stand up

and say 'enough is enough'".

However, he pointed out that even if Starmer doesn't do more for workers, despite the pressure from the likes of himself, "we cannot have division. We've only got the one labour movement, we've only got the

one working class". He doesn't even fully believe himself when he says: "they'll still be accountable to us when they're in government, hopefully". Not that union leaders like Lynch with their push-button strikes can give lessons in accountability!

Talk the talk, but what about the walk?

Mick Lynch said in an interview with LBC that "by severely curtailing workers' rights", the government would be on the way to becoming "a repressive regime". Adding that it was the most right-wing government this country has ever seen and had "declared class war on workers".

That may be true, but if so, shouldn't the working class be organising the

biggest mobilization possible against such an enemy?

In fact the RMT, which has big battalions in the railways and the other trade unions which have already been on strike or are balloting workers, have, as far as can be seen, not even got together to organise real co-ordination. When the question has been raised with them, they say that it is not up to them, but "up to the TUC"...

But isn't the TUC really just a general council which brings together these very

same leaders? Given its past dismal record when it came to supporting one or other section on strike by mobilising other sections, there is nothing to be expected from it. In the words of the "Internationale", the working class anthem dating to the 1871 Paris Commune, "No saviour from on high delivers"; the working class can only rely on its own resources. Which might not be what one of the speakers from the teachers' union, who called Mick Lynch "near to God" at the 1 October rally, would like to hear!

These laws deserve to be broken!

During her Tory leadership campaign, Liz Truss promised new anti-strike legislation "within months" of being elected. It would impose "minimum service levels" during strikes, not just in the transport sector, but also in energy, education and health. Strikes by different unions in the same workplace would be banned and there would be new picket line restrictions. The 2 week minimum notice period for industrial action would become 4 weeks. There would have to be "cooling-off" periods after each strike. And she promised to increase the strike ballot threshold to 50% of support among all union members. Never mind that following these criteria, she wouldn't have been elected leader by her own party membership!

Unions facing anti-union legislation

These planned attacks, however, are only the latest in a long list of attacks against trade union rights. During summer, a new law was approved to allow agency workers to cover for strikes.

So what are the unions planning to do about this? Under the auspices of the TUC, 11 trade unions are now arguing that the new regulations are unlawful because "the then Secretary of State for

business failed to consult the unions" and "they violate fundamental trade union rights protected by article 11 of the European convention on human rights". As if capitalist law, with or without union officials' agreement, and whether drawn-up here or in the EU, could guarantee the protection of workers' right to fight! The choice which they don't make is to mobilise workers to fight on the ground.

Accidental co-ordination

In an interview to Sky News, Unison's general secretary Christina McAnea argued that "there is very tough legislation in this country that makes a general strike virtually impossible (...) if I was to say we call a general strike, my union funds would be sequestered". But despite carefully abiding by the rules, under membership pressure, union leaders like Dave Ward of the CWU, have been forced to agree that they "should be looking at co-ordinated action". So far, however, co-ordinated action has been mostly accidental, like the Royal Mail and Railway Workers strike on 1 October! Although it must be said that the train drivers' union Aslef and the railway workers RMT have managed to strike on the same day, once!

In fact, take the CWU "action plan" for

The strike wave

example. The same union is organising mainly one or two-day strikes among Royal Mail, BT/OpenReach and Crown Post Office workers. But on only two occasions have these turned out to be on the same day!

Dysfunctional

Now 19 more days of "functional" strike action have been announced at Royal Mail, spread out over the next 3 months! Workers in different sections (or "functions"), i.e., deliveries, collections, distribution, network, etc., will be out on strike on different days - although for 4 out of 19, they'll be together. The CWU leadership says they'll lose less pay and the loss will be equalised, as each worker will strike for 9 days total! But what stops the leaders from demanding that the bosses pay for the strike days? As for Royal Mail cleaners, engineers and administrative staff, while having voted for strike, have not been included!

Union leaderships are unwilling and unable to organise the kind of strike which will win for workers: all-out until the bosses back down - including them agreeing to pay for strike days. Clearly this task is now down to the strikers themselves. □

• Liverpool dockers escalate

After taking 2 weeks of solid action from 20 September to 3 October, 600 Liverpool port workers are out again for 7 days beginning on 11 October. It seems the bosses at Merseyside Dock and Harbour Company are holding out against workers' demand for a rise in their real wages. They've been offered 8.3%, which is a good 4% below inflation.

So now control room operators have voted to join the strikes and a ballot of the port's dock masters, shift managers and vessel traffic services officers, will mean that the combined impact of the strikers will render the entire port inoperable!

Will that be enough to force these bosses to cough up? Up to now some ship traffic could go to other ports. But at least 60% of all port traffic was stopped when Felixstowe's and Liverpool's strikes overlapped at the beginning of October. What's surprising is that the Unite says

nevertheless that the strikes at Felixstowe may continue till Christmas. It's the same old problem: union leaders are afraid to go

all out, and what's more, all-out together, so that the strikes can have maximum effectiveness in minimum time!



• Separate strikes continue - where's the general one?

At the time of writing, refuse loaders, sweepers and drivers are on a two-week long strike in Newham. For the second time in a month, 130 workers are out over pay - they earn less than the London living wage. Unite the union is asking for a pay rise, for workers to earn £2,300 per month; however, this demand is the same as the one the union made back in May - when inflation was 3% lower! Other

strikes, on the other hand, continue. For example, Unite has announced 52 days of strike for the West midland metro!

In the meantime, 2,500 criminal barristers who have been on indefinite strike since the end of August demanding a 25% pay increase are staying out while they ballot on a new offer - which many say is still derisory. Their pay has been cut by 28% since 2006 - meaning that it can be as little as

£12,000-£13,000 per year. It's ironical that these upholders of the law should also be the only section of workers taking indefinite strike action... However it's not much good if they are out on their own. "Secondary", solidarity strikes may be illegal; but with so many sections of workers striking today, surely "accidental" co-ordination is relatively simple to achieve?

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)

Let's all strike together!

An overwhelming 93.51% of us, cleaners, engineers and administrative staff working for Royal Mail Property and Facilities Solutions (RM-PFS) have voted for strike action over pay. Our pay is the lowest among permanent Royal Mail Group workers! So low in fact that RM was forced to promise, back in April, to increase it to the Living Wage Foundation rate of £11.05/hr in London and £9.90/hr elsewhere - but this is still not enough to meet the huge rise in costs which we all face!

But after the Communication Workers Union leaders announced our ballot results, they immediately called on the bosses "to get in the room and negotiate an agreement, before we have to take strike action". We do not understand this! These are the same bosses who are attacking postal workers currently on strike. And the same CWU which has called for a further 19 days strikes as a result. So what's so different about us? We should be part of this fight - in fact we should have been part of it from Day 1!



Separate strikes of small sections are not effective. Obviously, the more of us on strike together, the stronger the strike. And more than that: when we fight together collectively, WE ourselves become stronger! So no question: let's ALL go for it!

- **Welcomed...**

The union has announced 19 more days of strike action, which include what they call "functional strikes", so that it'll mean each one of us will in fact be on strike 9 days. Yes, management is digging their heels in, so we welcome more strike days. And of course, we should definitely be out during Black Friday week, which will hit RM where it hurts!

- **...But we need our say!**

But once again, these strikes were decided well above our heads, without any discussion whatsoever. The next strike will be Thursday 13 October, almost 2 weeks after our last strike day.

In fact, all these strikes are all spread out over 2-3 months - which makes no sense to us. We have nothing to gain with this fight dragging on indefinitely!

- **All out until the bosses back down!**

The only thing we've got from the union officials is a letter to branches (circulated among some of us on WhatsApp), with 5 bullet points explaining why they've decided to escalate the dispute... including the attacks on our sick pay, allowances, and the lot. We knew this already! Our real problem, however, is not being able to choose when and how we strike. For instance, why do we go back in between strike days to help clear the mess for

them?

PS: One of the bullet points raised by the union is apparently about the bosses threatening to de-recognise the union... Really? Who can believe that sort of stupid bluff?

- **Let's work to rule**

It was obviously pretty busy on Monday, after we've come back from our strike. And there is no reason why we should help management clearing the workload! Some of us on Deliveries had the idea of taking our breaks for as long as possible, so that we can meet in the canteen and discuss what we want to do next... [Workers' fight bulletin Mount Pleasant Mail Centre, 05/10/22]

King's Cross railway station (London)

From King's Cross picket line

The pickets on Saturday 1 October were as lively as always. In fact better, since this was the first time since the beginning of the dispute that Aslef train drivers were on strike alongside rail workers in the RMT and TSSA. And then at midday, postal workers and other railway workers from around London marched into the square in front of the station for the rally organised by the "Enough is Enough" campaign.

The huge banner with a large portrait of Mick Lynch - and with Lynch and fellow leaders holding it up - which led the contingent from Unity House was, however, definitely over the top, so we hope that this isn't a sign already of a

personality cult!

In all there were several thousand (5,000 or so), people, but more from the general public than actual strikers, who crowded in to hear speeches from Dave Ward from the CWU, Mick Lynch and Eddie Dempsey from the RMT and others, like Jeremy Corbyn or actor Robert Delaney. It was a very much hyped-up affair, with pink smoke flares and loud hooting interspersed with chants like "enough is enough" and later, "f**k the Tories". The speakers all warned Labour's Starmer to support the strikes, or the strikers wouldn't support him...

Some of us felt this was more about



business than a real attempt to rally the fight which is needed to get the bosses and their politicians to take their hands off our jobs, pay and T&Cs. Well, we always knew it would be up to us on the ground, so we shall just have to get cracking...

- **Not yet there**

Here in Gate Gourmet, we've not even been balloted - in fact the union hasn't said a word to us! Yet we have some of the worse conditions on the station. Time to take things into our own hands?

- **No pleasant chats with them!**

We thought the rally last Saturday where railway workers and postal workers came to join us at Kings Cross was a success... It was a chance to hear the union leaders

talking about the fight back: the RMT's Mick Lynch said "it's them or us" and that's dead right! So we fully expect that we'll be hearing about an all-out strike - and no more talks until the bosses back down!

- **Left in the dark**

That said, some of us have been taking action for 6 months already, on odd days, here and there. One case in point is Churchill workers! And now we feel like we've been left high and dry by the union officials. We've heard nothing for over 2 months since our last strike day. And

that's following 22 strike days in total since February!

- **Why are we waiting**

We hear that the delay is due to an attempt by RMT officials to coordinate strike action with Atalian workers and Mitie workers(?) who haven't even been balloted yet! Of course we should go on strike together. We're all in the same boat. But this is taking far too long. We should have been out on strike with everyone else last Saturday already! [Workers' Platform King's X 05/10/22]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)

No to these cuts!

On 26 September BMW announced they were cutting a whole assembly shift. The 3-shift pattern would change to 2 longer shifts of 9¼ hours each, to be worked over a 4-day week. It meant that 400-500 of Staffline agency workers were given notice almost immediately. Some of them might be able to stay on - but only if older workers take up voluntary early retirement packages which would be 50 at most.

The new shifts cuts the working week, which means wages are cut by £28 a week! It's even worse for Rudolph

& Hellmann logistics workers (they already went on strike this year for better pay) who stand to lose £400 a month on nights!

We didn't hear a dickie bird from Unite officials about what they thought of this. As far as they're concerned the shift "gear" as BMW calls it, is one of many already agreed with the union, so that's that!

BMW is one of richest car companies in the world. It made half-yearly profits of £16bn, despite supply chain difficulties. It can not only keep everyone on the payroll



by reducing hours, but even increase all of our pay! That 5.5% this year was more than swallowed by inflation! As for our conditions, chronic overwork and understaffing, more of us sharing less work is the only answer. So no to these job cuts! ☐

• **Better out than in!**

It feels like a serious accident could happen at any moment in ILC. There are too many pallets and parts falling off reach trucks and shelves. Of course managers don't care about the risk to us at all, either pickers or drivers! Well then, the safest place for us is outside!

• **Let's keep our "head and shoulders"**

Reach truck drivers are always being pushed to go faster and faster by management, but then get blamed by H&S if anything goes wrong! H&S need to start investigating managers, and leave us alone.

• **Diy training**

How about H&S start with the kind of training we're getting on reach trucks? There are plenty of things we're not told, which we have to find out for ourselves. And we don't have time to learn our way around before we're thrown onto the job full speed.

• **Off-road reach trucks?**

Then there's the poor state of the premises, which causes even more accidents! Over in NW store, the floor has so many holes in it that reach trucks (and tow trains) bounce and wobble about all over the place - it's amazing more pallets don't fall off!

• **Singing in the rain...**

The sprinkler system in main assembly went off in the middle of our shift... so we had to stop production for a couple of hours. In fact it was a false alarm... however, it was very nice to have a break. So at least now we know a plumbing trick to stop the line...

• **Let's make R&H sick**

So where's R&H's sick pay? Last we heard, Unite and R&H were "committed to continue ongoing discussions on sick pay and the company sick pay policy"... Four months later, many of us have got sick and unpaid - or sick and still working. It looks like we'll have to take care of this ourselves... [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini plant Oxford 27/09/22]

Ford Dagenham Engine Plant

• **Disappearing trick**

Ford hiring as many as 119 production temps on 12 month contracts - at the same time as it's running down the plant and making us redundant (on cheap terms) is already bad enough! Then, last Monday we got given a link so our kids/friends could apply... but when we tried to open it, it just disappeared! So the jobs were already all taken within 3 days? Impossible! Randstad either cocked up, or already had its own people waiting, pre-recruited!

• **Plus, lying through their teeth**

It gets worse: in 2019 when bosses here "let go" 80 temps, they promised to give them first refusal if any new jobs came up. But as far as we know, Randstad hasn't made contact with any previous employees and is hiring "new" guys... Of course, we shall see... It's not as if they can hide it!

• **You 'll just love it!**

We wonder who wrote the ad for this temp job! Sounds like he/she was trying to put off applicants! It said you'd have "to stand for long periods of time doing a repetitive

but important manufacturing task". Could have added that supervisors will also be buzzing around like annoying flies, to try and get you to "keep up to speed"...

• **Equality, our foot!**

There was the usual "Ford is committed to diversity and equality of opportunity for all and is opposed to any form of less favourable treatment"... Sure, that's why Ford's totally committed to have temps on unequal Ts&Cs! As a cheap, 3rd Tier workforce. And don't get us started on the subcontractors...

• **This is not a yoke**

It's been 800-odd eggs/day that we've been asked to lay down at the Chicken Farm for the past 3-4 weeks! However the machines didn't like it too much and they keep breaking down... some are still not working. So Damagement has reduced the score to 600 eggs/day, hoping to increase it again to 800 when the ovipositors are fixed... good luck with that!

• **OT... OD**

Yes whether egg-score is up or down production is just non-stop! And they keep asking us to come on Saturday to the Farm and Sundays to the Den - it's been already



more than 4 weeks of this!... Even for overtime addicts, it's an overdose!

• **We have the munchies**

As usual LLL seems to be waiting for Ford's pay offer to be announced to give us even fewer crumbs! Since Ford's pay deal says clearly that the pay rise must match inflation, same should go for us at LLL. What's more, to fill up the pay gap, we'll need the whole "cake".

• **The bosses' king**

Those of us working for Hamton/LLL still don't know whether last Monday's bank holiday will be paid or not. Hamton workmates were told not to expect a penny, and at LLL it was up in the air too... (And agency mates could just forget it!) Security guards were told the extra day would be added to 2023's annual leave days. Was it KC3's idea that his "national holiday" tribute to his mother should deprive workers of a full day's pay? [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 28/09/22]

Iran

Despite violent repression, demonstrations in the streets of Teheran and Iran's other main cities continue to grow. They began after Kurdish-Iranian Mahsa Amini, died at the hand of the country's notorious morality police; she had been beaten until comatose (although the regime denies this) for not wearing her hijab modestly enough. Protests erupted in Teheran and Kurdish towns and have spread to all the 31 provinces, with women burning their hijabs, dancing in the street and publicly cutting their hair and shouting "Women are oppressed from Kurdistan to Tehran", "we will not forget nor forgive" and "Death to the Oppressor!".

Across all classes, demonstrators have registered their defiance by tearing down pictures of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the assassinated general Qassem Suleimani. By the beginning of October, even school girls were starting to protest inside their schools - with the same chants.

Khamenei's regime has reacted brutally: his security forces have killed more than 83 by now. Their special targets are the oppressed minority of Kurds, who are known for their opposition to the regime. Offices of the Komala Party of Iranian Kurdistan and the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan have been attacked with drone and missile "precision" strikes in the bordering Kurdish region of Koya in Iraq, killing 14 people. Nevertheless Kurds have formed the leading sections of the



Iranian school girls remove their hijab

demonstrators and have even taken over towns in the border regions, for instance, Oshnavieh in West Azerbaijan.

The protests are by far the fiercest demonstrations directed against the regime for decades. They have now gone beyond demanding equal rights for women. Strikes have begun to spread - even among Bazaaris of Shiraz and Teheran who are chanting "freedom" and "Death to the dictator"! The long-awaited fightback can only be celebrated - and as the protestors say, "zindagi" and "azadi" (life and freedom)!

All Iranians are affected every day by

inflation, supply shortages, corruption and unemployment. The sanctions imposed by the US and tightened exponentially by the Trump regime between 2017 and 2020 are the background cause. Under Biden they continue, despite the fact that the US is now meant to be rejoining the Iran Nuclear Deal and relaxing them. There is no doubt that working class support exists for the protests and now the word "revolution" is on many people's lips. Can the fight escalate and reach this point? And who will lead it? For now these questions remain open. □

Pakistan

In the past three months Pakistan experienced unexpectedly heavy monsoons, in some states seven-times heavier than usual. A third of the country was under water, affecting 33 million people or 15% of the population. Coming during an economic crisis and clashes between political factions for control of the state, this has spelt disaster for the Pakistani poor.

In a country with minimal infrastructure, poorly constructed housing, and primitive agriculture, the impact of the floods was cataclysmic. More than 1,600 people died, primarily in Baluchistan and Sindh, the country's worst affected and poorest provinces. Two million homes were destroyed, 2m acres of crops ruined and almost a million farm animals perished. The floods swept away railway lines, 13,000 kms of road and 390 bridges, making regions inaccessible.

Half a million people are today living in makeshift relief camps. And now there

Disastrous floods amidst an economic crisis

are fears of a second disaster. Waterborne diseases have already killed 300 people. Mosquitoes breeding in the vast pools of standing water, are spreading malaria and dengue fever, while mosquito nets and chloroquine are in short supply.

This destruction comes while the IMF and the ruling Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) party are making the population pay for the country's economic crisis. Unable to service its debt, the IMF demanded the government increase taxation and remove fuel subsidies earlier in the year. These measures left half the population 'food insecure' by June. And today inflation is 27.5%, the highest in 50 years. Yet the PML(N) and Imran Khan's Tehreek-e-Insaaf (Movement of Justice) continue to clash on the streets, with nothing to offer the population. All this while the money is there to provide relief to Pakistan's poor - in the hands of its military establishment, corrupt politicians and bourgeoisie. □



In addition to this paper, we publish bulletins in several large workplaces in the South East, a journal, "Class Struggle" and a series of pamphlets on topical issues. If you wish to know more, contact Workers' Fight by e-mail, at contact@w-fight.org, or by postal mail at:

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