

# WORKERS' fight



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<http://www.w-fight.org>  
contact@w-fight.org

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

## AGAINST THIS WAR ON GAZA, FOR THE FREEDOM OF ALL THE PEOPLES OF PALESTINE!

Netanyahu's war against Gaza - retaliation for the incursion by Hamas fighters into Israel and the murder of 900 mainly Israeli civilians on 7 October - immediately got the overwhelming backing of western leaders.

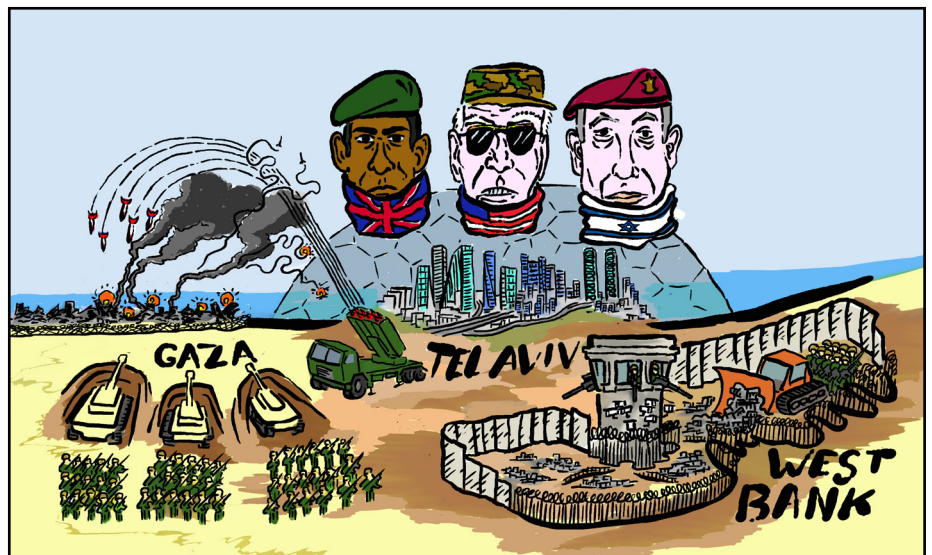
By now, just six days later, the world's number one imperialist power has already sent an aircraft carrier to bolster Israel's military. On US heels, Sunak has sent two Royal Navy ships, surveillance aircraft and a contingent of Royal Marines.

Netanyahu says this is a "war to destroy Hamas". Which is patent nonsense - and he knows it. Israeli bombs and missiles, even "intelligent" ones, cannot pick out Hamas fighters in the maze of streets and crowded buildings in the most densely-populated region on earth. At the time of writing, 6,000 bombs have been dropped on tiny Gaza. At least 2,000 Palestinians (including 500 children) have been killed, many thousands wounded, and much of the infrastructure reduced to rubble.

### **Who are the real terrorists?**

The Israeli government knows from its previous bombing raids that there are tunnels underneath Gaza's streets. Indeed, they say they have to bomb buildings - and therefore ordinary men, women and children, to get to these tunnels... In other words the real target is indeed the population. This is Israeli state terror, perpetrated against Palestinians who have little or nothing to do with Hamas, but have been forced by Israel's 16-year-long blockade of Gaza to submit to its dictatorship, secured, de facto, with Israeli consent.

In fact the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas "monster", was the Israeli state's own creation in the late 1980s. When it wanted to break the agreement signed (after international



pressure) with Yasser Arafat's secular Palestine liberation organisation Fatah, which would have forced it to give back a small portion of the land it had taken by force from the Palestinians 75 years ago, Hamas was a useful tool. Its rise in Gaza allowed the virtual destruction of Fatah and with it, the "peace" accords.

Just 3 days into the bombing of Gaza, Israel's Defence Minister, Yoav Gallant imposed a complete siege - cutting the electricity supply and allowing no water or food in, because "we are dealing with human animals"... That says it all about Israel's apartheid regime. But it says even more about the likes of Labour's Keir Starmer, former public prosecutor, who defended the siege as "just", since "Israel has the right to defend itself"! So this merciless offensive - collective punishment - is "retaliatory justice" in his view?

### **Fighting their "divide and rule"**

There have been wars carried out based on lies and exaggeration before, in fact most of the imperialists' wars

are; NATO's proxy Ukraine war being no exception.

But in forming this line-up alongside the extreme right-wing government of the USA's oldest proxy, western leaders are committing possibly one of the worst travesties in post-WW2 history. Whether or not this unanimity is meant to act as a warning to Hezbollah and the Iranian regime to keep out of the conflict, since they wish to avoid another escalating Middle East war, this greater war is precisely what they may be stoking.

The world's working classes have no choice but to take on the task of kicking out the imperialists and their proxies - indeed, humanity's future depends on it - with the aim of ending this iniquitous system which divides to rule. On the way, they will need to seize the leadership of their ranks out of the hands of all those who advocate terror. Just like Palestinian West Bank workers today, they'll have to declare general strikes, while they build their own communist revolutionary parties to lead the fight. □

## UAW STRIKE: CAR WORKERS NOT IN THE DRIVING SEAT!

The United Auto Workers union (UAW) in the United States, began a national strike against the Big Three car manufacturers - Ford, General Motors and Stellantis (owner of Chrysler) on 15 September. This is the first national strike against the Big 3 since the 1976, so a long time coming! In those almost 50 years, the auto workforce has been cut from nearly a million to 150,000 due to speed-up, automation, employment of temps and above all, subcontracting and outsourcing. Directly employed workers had everything cut: guaranteed annual pay rises, cost of living payments in line with inflation, pensions, medical care, even 12 days of holiday! The effect: in just the last ten years, the Big 3 companies have made over £200 billion in profit!

### ***New leader, new promises...***

Earlier this year, UAW members threw out the "old" leadership of the union that had overseen the smashing of their conditions. A new president, Shawn Fain promised a "fight", even "breaking the law", to regain what was lost. He spoke about the "working class", in much the same way as RMT leader Mick Lynch and Unite's Sharon Graham did last year.

Fain went into negotiations with the Big 3 car companies demanding a 40% pay increase over 4 years, an end to a



multi-tiered workforce on different pay and conditions, an end to temporary contracts, and a 32-hour working week. When the bosses (predictably) said "no!" Fain called a strike.

However, Fain's tactics are to call a few sections of workers out at a time - the latest (at time of writing) being 8,700 workers at Ford's Kentucky truck plant. The full force of the 150,000 car workers at the Big 3 is yet to be felt by these bosses.

### ***Workers need their own voice***

At the beginning of the 4th week of the strike, on October 6, Fain announced "significant" progress in talks with

bosses, but said that there were no plans to expand the strike which remains within "respectable" limits. Even Biden and Trump were welcomed onto picket lines..!

The outcome of the strike is still not certain. What's missing in this fight is the sound of the workers' own voices. Fain says he is different - but like his predecessors, he sees himself as an entirely self-sufficient substitute for workers' collective voice, let alone their collective strength.

And that is a shame. Because a victory for this strike will boost not just car workers, but the US working class as a whole and car workers everywhere. □

## LONDON ARMS FAIR 2023: WHY THEY ALL LOVE WARS

The Defence and Security Equipment International (DSEI) arms fair took place in mid-September in London's Docklands. Since 1999, arms buyers and dealers from all over the world have been meeting every two years to do business at this event - or as DSEI puts it, to display their "best-in-class advancements and innovations" in weaponry.

This year, attendance records were broken (up by 23%), with 1,600 exhibitors and 35,000 "visitors", including delegations from foreign governments, companies, dealers, reporters; etc... And no wonder: European defence expenditure is estimated to have risen by 13% in 2022, bringing total global spending to an all-time high of \$2,240 billion (£1,839 bn) - up by \$40 billion (£33bn) since 2022. A year after the war began in Ukraine, and due to the embargoes on Russia, its defence exports fell by 21% with the result that more Western weapons manufacturers are getting a chance to trade with its former "clients".

### ***The blood on their hands***

Both the Armed Forces and London's Met Police protected the event - at some expense: in 2021 policing apparently cost £3m. Outside the fair, different

protest groups held demonstrations against the event and tried to stop lorries carrying arms. At least 12 people were arrested. However, it's worth mentioning that some of these protests pointed a finger at countries like Saudi Arabia accusing them of "war crimes". Undoubtedly the Emirates and Saudi Arabia are responsible for the slaughter



of civilians in Yemen and are also feeding the war in Sudan. But where did they buy their weapons?

### ***...arming their proxies***

Indeed, the imperialist countries - starting with the US and Britain - are the main exporters of military hardware and software to the Middle East. If the Saudi state has blood on its hands, the US and Britain are covered in blood. And not just the blood of victims of the wars they started directly, whether against the Afghan Taliban or Saddam Hussein in Iraq, but the wars fought by their proxies, like Ukraine. And they've just done it again. They are sending war ships and weapons to the Israeli government - the USA's main Middle East proxy, to help it exact its merciless revenge by bombing and shelling the imprisoned population of Gaza.

Just days after the DSEI event, Zelensky had a meeting with over 250 international weapons producers, asking them to team up with Ukrainian producers to develop the country's capacity to build and repair weapons. So far, different companies have said they plan to do just that. This is what it's all about. Britain-based BAE Systems is first in the queue. □

**Our society**

**NHS: staff keep on fighting, minsters couldn't care less**

NHS doctors continue their fight for "pay restoration". Junior doctors walked out on 21 and 22 September, and together with consultants on 20 September and 2, 3, and 4 October - during the Tory Party Conference in Manchester. On these last three days, they were joined by 1,000 workers from Barts Health Trust in East London including porters, nurses and domestic staff who are also striking over pay and staffing levels.

On 3 October, thousands of doctors gathered in Manchester to rally in front of the entrance to the Tory conference. On the other side of the building, Sunak and health secretary Steve Barclay pretended they weren't there, hoping to distract with re-announcements of NHS investments like the £30m for "new technology", the "NHS Workforce Plan" (an increase in staffing levels by 2037!), 800 new ambulances and 5,000 additional hospital beds... The problem with the latter being that only 900 of these new beds will be available by this winter. But as striking workers point out, first and foremost is the issue of pay...

**Will it go to ACAS?**

In fact, the government has said absolutely nothing about any new offer. Since doctors have had a 26% cut in real wages since 2008/09, once you account for RPI inflation, it means they are still owed another 20%... The British Medical Association (the doctors' union) wrote to Sunak the day before the

conference, saying it would wait 4 weeks before announcing any new strikes, and that it was ready to include ACAS (the independent arbitrator) in future negotiations.

In the meantime, doctors in Northern Ireland will be now balloted for a strike over pay, after their Department of Health said "there is no funding" - not even for the 6% "pay increase" that doctors got in England.

**Starmer offers doctors even more overtime!**

After the Tory Conference, one would have thought that Keir Starmer would have come up with a plan to show how

much more tuned-in Labour is to the NHS and its staff. But no. Instead, he wants to tackle the staff shortage by getting everyone to work 24/7 and he would offer better overtime rates. You could not make this up.

So what is this shortfall? Well, as of June 2023, there were 125,572 hospital vacancies in England alone: 10,855 doctors short and 43,339 nurses missing. So cover this with overtime? Starmer needs his head read. So no, there is no help to come from Westminster, whoever is in power. It's going to be up to NHS staff, but also the rest of the working class to wage a concerted fight for the pay rises and improvements in conditions which NHS staff all need.



**• More education cuts; more education strikes?**

The teachers' strikes ended earlier this year after union members agreed to a 6.5% pay rise. But schools' funding was in fact the major issue - and the government and union leaders had to promise that the pay rise would be "fully funded", that is, would not come out of already squeezed school budgets. But now, a Department for Education (DfE) error means that school budgets will in fact be even tighter next year! Funding will be 1% lower than the DfE originally calculated, amounting to £370 million, or

£50 per pupil.

These school budgets were already forecast to be 3% lower in real terms than in 2010. At the same time, schools are asked to do more - feed, clothe and equip children for the classroom, for example. Teachers even sometimes do this with their own money. Schools also have to find funding from these budgets for their Special Educational Needs children. But 90% of special schools, for those with the highest needs, are predicting they'll be in deficit next year. Last month the

Observer newspaper revealed that the government had "quietly signed a contract targeting 20% cuts to the number of new education plans for children with special educational needs and disabilities (Send) to bring down costs".

More government cuts will condemn even more generations of kids to a bare-bones education and children with special needs to outright exclusion. So, will teachers go on strike to demand proper funding?

**• Tube workers: union leaders' dirty deal**

Tube workers have been fighting London Underground Limited (LUL) over the latest cuts to expenditure, which are targeting 600 station jobs as well as their pensions. A first strike was cancelled, and they therefore demanded that a second strike should be called. It was, on the 4-6 October. But this to, was cancelled at the last minute - as well as the planned overtime and rest day working bans from the 15th to the 21st. The RMT union told workers that there was

"progress in negotiations".

But what "progress"? Only 200 of these jobs will be "saved". The other 400 will be cut through non-replacement of retirees and leavers. As for pension cuts, these may have been postponed until 2026, but they are not cancelled!

If that wasn't enough, some grades (such as Customer Sales Assistants) were told to re-apply for their jobs, which meant workers could be demoted and lose pay.

All this, when many stations are already minimally staffed and lone working is common.

One can only wonder why union officials called off this strike with such a dirty deal on offer. Unless it was the political context: keeping Labour's face clean and especially that of the mayor Sadiq Khan who is facing re-election and doesn't want to be accused of bringing London to a grinding halt as a result of tube strikes.

## Their society

### Forcing those on benefits into work

On the eve of the Tory party conference Chancellor of the Exchequer, Jeremy Hunt, described the welfare system as a "mix of carrot and stick", with more "assistance" (read coercion) required to help people find work! This is because a record two million workers are off sick, unable to work and receiving incapacity benefit. It's easy to understand of course. It's to do with the pandemic and the effects of Long Covid, which left many people with disabilities - both physical and mental.

But never mind that. Both the Tories' Work and Pensions minister, Mel Stride and his shadow, Labour's Liz Kendall made exactly the same reactionary points about these two million working class people, implying that they are malingering and need to be forced back to work. Said Kendall "Conference, Britain

isn't working... Under Labour, this will change. Our top priority will be ensuring everyone who can work, does". Stride said "So we are reforming our sickness and disability benefit assessments for the first time in over a decade, to take account of the modern workplace".

The welfare budget is the government's largest expenditure (£231 billion last year) and it wants to cut it, so that it can offer bigger tax cuts to the rich... So "work capability assessments" are yet again going to be tightened up. The last time this happened, people who were terminally ill were actually assessed as "fit for work". Others had strokes or heart attacks. Or relapses of psychosis. Because those who are not in work because of incapacity are usually incapacitated. ☐



### • A non-welfare state

Anyway, for the last 10 years, the unemployed have received no carrots, only beatings with a stick, thanks to the serial cuts in benefits.

It started in 2013, with then Chancellor George Osborne's bedroom tax. This cut housing benefit by 14% for the first "under-occupied" room and 25% for the second. So if rent was £400 a month, benefit would be cut by £56 a month for 1 extra bedroom, or £100 for 2! And this, even if the extra room was uninhabitable due to damp or mould.

### • Ever-increasing child poverty

By the latest 2021/22 measure (from the "End Child Poverty Coalition"), the number of children in relative poverty has reached 4.2 million or 29% - almost a third of all kids in Britain today. And in certain regions child poverty is even higher than the average, like the West Midlands where it is 38.4% or the London borough of Tower Hamlets where it's reached 47.5%!

### • Bed poverty: back to the Victorian era!

The children's charity Barnardo's released a new study on "bed poverty" on 29 September. They estimated that 894,000 children (11%) are sharing beds and 440,000 (6%) sleep on the floor - on a mattress, on a carpet, or on the bare floor; with or without sheets or duvets!

Shelley, a single mum from Carlisle and a part-time charity worker, explained how she had to sleep the whole winter on a sofa in the living room with her daughters on a double mattress on the floor, as she was unable to pay for the heating and fix mouldy and broken beds: "the girls' mattress was right next to the sofa, so the body heat from all of us was just enough to keep us warm through the night".

Someone else explained on LBC how he heard that his neighbour's baby sister slept in a pram every night, so he gave them a

The 2-child cap, also introduced by Osborne, in 2017, prevented parents from claiming child tax credit for a 3rd or subsequent child born after April 2017. This cut amounted to around £3,000 a year for every child after the first two.

When the pandemic was over, the government cut the meagre £20/week Universal Credit top-up which was given to help families out, pushing them back under the poverty line. On the other hand, a £25 top-up which was maintained in Scotland, has allowed families there to

"just about manage" to use former PM Theresa May's words.

Benefits have been cut to the point that nobody can live decently on them. The average cost of living, with housing costs, for a single person is around £2,005/month. But a single person's Universal Credit allowance is just £368.74 per month. With housing benefit - say for a rent of £674/ month - this comes to a total of £1,042, i.e., a monthly shortfall of £963... This amount is not just indecent, but impossible to live on.

Worst of all, the majority of children in poverty live in working households! The number of children in low-income working households (meaning a family where at least one adult works) went up, reaching almost 3 million (or 71% of children living in poverty) - an increase of 6% - since 2020. And then there's the category of "the poorest of the poor" children - those where the parents, in

or out of work, receive below 50% of median income. This number is the highest in 13 years with 500,000 children living in severe poverty today.

These figures show just how "successful" British governments have been in pushing the cost of labour down as low as possible. And now they have pushed it way below the poverty line.

cot, but then saw it advertised "for sale". When he angrily challenged the mum over

this, she told him in tears that she could not feed her kids a cot.



## Their economy

### The recession has already "loomed"

During his Tory conference speech, Rishi Sunak boasted about how Britain "had one of the fastest recoveries from the pandemic of any major economy in Europe" and how its economy has "grown faster than France and Germany". One wonders where he gets his figures from. Among the G7 countries, Britain was the hardest hit by the pandemic-triggered crisis. Official statistics show that annual production (measured by Gross Domestic Product or GDP) is barely above recession levels - just 0.2% in the second quarter this year, while it actually fell by 0.5% in July!

The reality is that taking into account

inflation (the Retail Price Index for August is 9.1%! ) and the fall of the pound (by 0.5% against the dollar), the economy actually produces less per head than it did before the pandemic. The Purchasing Managers' Index - a sort of referendum among businesses on the question "do you consider that economic conditions are improving?" - fell this September to its lowest level in almost 3 years: only 47.2% of business managers in services and 44.6% in manufacturing think the economy is doing well.

In view of all this, the Bank of England Monetary Committee said it would keep the interest rate at 5.25% and not

increase it further, for fear of pushing the economy into recession (they won't admit that a recession is already upon them!). By keeping the rate high, the Bank hopes to get a grip on inflation. But of course, they have a grip on nothing: even taking the official inflation measure, it is still 3 times higher than the BoE's own 2% target.

The simple fact that the experts of the capitalist class keep their eyes riveted on these economic measures just shows how wary they are about their own economy - but above all, it shows their total inability to steer their economic ship into safer waters! □

### • Car companies milking the state one way or another

Sunak's announcement that the 2030 ban on the sale of new petrol and diesel cars would be delayed by 5 years, to 2035, was presented as a big deal. Of course, he hopes that this will generate votes from the millions of workers who, for lack of decent public transport, rely on their cars to get around. He also hopes to attract voters who're against the Mayor of London's ULEZ and "Low Traffic Neighbourhoods".

But who actually took Boris Johnson's 2030 target seriously anyway? It was the

Tories usual nationalistic boastfulness. Ahead of the UN Climate Change conference (COP26) in November 2021, Johnson claimed that this ban would "put the UK on course to be the fastest G7 country to decarbonise cars and vans" - never mind that the infrastructure to support EVs would never have been ready anyway!

However, by the third quarter of 2021 car sales had shrunk by 30% - a combined effect of recession and Covid. Johnson and Chancellor Sunak obligingly handed

over a "world-leading" (of course!) "£2.5 billion package" to car makers and "new tech" companies to subsidise the electric transition!

Since Sunak's extension of the petrol/diesel ban, these same companies are now claiming compensation... After all, they'd cleared their decks for electric... or so they say (Ford-UK has a whole plant devoted to making diesel engines in Dagenham!). But then again, any excuse to get more government money will do!

### • No longer too few workers?

We were told a short while ago that Britain had too few workers. Well, it's no longer the case. Job cuts are announced daily. Tata Steel just announced 3,000 jobs to go. It is replacing its coal-fired blast furnaces at Port Talbot with electric arc furnaces - to be used to melt scrap to make recycled steel, so the 4,000 Port Talbot workers will be reduced to 1,000 and never mind that Tata just got a £500m government subsidy.

Then, there are the 500 BMW Mini

Oxford agency workers given the sack while BMW was putting a £75m government subsidy into its pocket.

If railway ticket office closures go ahead it will mean another 2,300 job losses. And Jeremy Hunt's plan to reduce the civil service to its "pre-pandemic" size over the next 5 years would cut at least 63,000 jobs!

The last of Wilko's 400 stores closed on 8 October. But only 200 of its employees

have been offered work by Poundland, which is taking over 71 of its shops. B&M, taking over 51 has no plan to re-employ Wilko workers. So that's 12,200 workers more added to the dole figures. And Royal Mail, after cutting 10,000 jobs over the past year, said it's making another 1,500 workers redundant. And they say the recession is still around the corner? For the working class it's already here.

### • HS2 North, all gone

At the Tory Conference in Manchester, held in the old Central Railway station building - a monument to the Beeching rail cuts of the 1960s - Sunak announced that he was cutting the Birmingham-Manchester leg of the high-speed rail link, HS2. Yes, regardless of the anger this was likely to cause among Mancunians and everyone else who lives further North - and especially people in run-down Crewe who had hoped the new rail link would boost the town.

Spending on the project had reached £98bn, £16bn more than the original estimates. Which in the scheme of such things is probably not a lot. The Channel Tunnel link went 5 or 6 times over original estimates. Apparently much of the overspend was for tunnelling through the Chiltern Hills, north-west of London. However, sparing the landscape as a result of popular pressure did not save the Tories from losing a by-election in the area, in

2021.

It seems this dramatic policy about-turn was well-calculated and Sunak is unlikely to lose any votes as a result. Apparently northern constituencies only voted for the

Tories because of Johnson's pledge on Brexit - nothing to do with trains, fast or otherwise, nor even the need to level up... Which is just as well, since levelling up seems also to have been ditched.



## Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)

## We need to strike again!

After cutting 10,000 full-time jobs last year, Royal Mail management has just announced a further 1,300 job cuts in Processing areas across the country. Earlier this year, it sent letters to hundreds of us saying we were "supernumerary", meaning our duties weren't needed any more. But since the newly implemented "Business Recovery, Transformation & Growth" agreement specifically states that "RM commits to no compulsory redundancies" (at least until April 2025), management is finding all sorts of dirty tricks to push us to resign beforehand.

The hours of "supernumerary" part-timers have been cut, leaving their wages short by

up to £150/week. A crazy duty of one 8-hour night shift during the week, plus Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning (25 hours) has been created, and another of only 20 hours per week, which means that someone with 20 years seniority gets a wage of just £300 per week! And if anyone refuses to sign for one of these duties, we're asked to attend "redeployment" meetings in order to be sent to another office that can be miles away from our original workplace.

RM bosses claim this is to "process the parcels we are receiving more efficiently" - which in ordinary language means "more cheaply": fewer of us, on worse conditions,

## • Letter from the North West

Not a week goes by without another workmate leaving. We're all fatigued from the leaving parties! And that's not a good thing. Now that the lump sum payment has gone into bank accounts, we'll no doubt see even more mates walking away. No one wants to stay and join in the race to the bottom.

We're seeing lots of new faces. These new workers are struggling to match up what

they were promised at the interview with what they're experiencing. They weren't told they'd be treated like workers in the gig economy - RM's competitors... with the difference that unlike Amazon, we can't just dump parcels on doorsteps - we have to wait and get a signature or take a photo.

We were all surprised when the sprung red containers were replaced by plastic white solid



processing an increasing volume of parcels. And no doubt, they'll want to bring in casual workers to fill the gaps! Some workmates in other offices are reacting against these attacks, like at Peterborough Mail Centre, where they demanded a union gate meeting to decide what to do next. What we need, is to get together and organise a collective response! ☐

containers, with resulting lacerations and (worse) bad backs. All to save money and so that they fit in the new sorting machines.

Our mates in the letter carrying jobs tell us that a new "app" has been put on their trackers that will give RM constant feedback about their performance. We really are entering the age of AI. If these computers are so "great", maybe RM can get them to put letters in letterboxes instead of us doing it.

## • Feet not tongues

Union leaders now say (in a Letter To Branches) that talks have broken down with management over the issue of the "supernumeraries" and "redeployment". Then they ask us what we think the best way is, to "put pressure" on RM!

Honestly! This is playing the fool with us. They know very well that it's not talking, but walking, that's needed. [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 04/10/23]

## • Their mess!

Processing managers are staggering our breaks,

so that the work carries on without stopping, as if this was factory assembly line. It means we can't have tea and a chin-wag with our mates... So, must we bring a picnic basket, thermos, and folding table and chairs to our work stations? [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 04/10/23]

## Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)

## Ridiculous pay offer as Ford lines its pockets

It isn't clear why Ford-UK complained so loudly over the postponement of the ban on diesel and petrol cars. The statement on its app claims that this undermines the "£430m investment in Ford UK for electrification". You'd think the company would be happy, as Ford isn't making any electric cars in Britain, only a few transmissions... And it got a government subsidy. But Ford-UK chair Lisa Brankin does admit that there were problems facing electrification, as "infrastructure remains immature, tariffs loom and cost-of-living is high"... No kidding! So

after all, the delay suits her?

Then on 5 October came this year's pay offer: a lump sum worth 1% of our annual base rate, i.e., 300 non-pensionable quid! Justifying this insult, Ford tells us that "the pace of EV adoption is slowing". As if this has anything to do with us! And by the way Ford made a gross £19.6bn profit in 2022!

What was also breathtaking was Ford's claim that we've had a "34% increase above inflation" in our wages during the past 20 years?! Even if this was true that would only



mean we averaged 1.7% increase per year. So what was their point? One year it was 0.5% and a subsidised bicycle for a cycle to work scheme, if we remember rightly! We could take a leaf from the US workers' book and strike for a 40% rise, and end to tiers and temps, and a 32 hour week! ☐

## • Tips for next time

A few more things on the pay offer: Ford might still have a defined benefit scheme but they closed it to new starts many years ago - so its on its deathbed. If they want to boast that it's "amongst the best in the country" they should relaunch it for those who missed out.

Ford also says its provisions to recognise long service are "appropriate". Really? A framed certificate and a cup of tea and a biscuit for 25 years, upgraded to coffee and a cookie for 35? Lastly, on realigning the

Apprentice Hiring "footprint" we wanted to correct that to "toe-print". Yes, all in all, an "F" you, and we don't mean "F" for "Ford"! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 11/10/23]

## • We need a real pay rise!

Yes, those of us in LLL, have never even seen anything close to an inflation pay rise! None of us could possibly take seriously that lump sum which LLL said was worth a 7.5% pay rise and then didn't even pay it in full! Since the pay gap between us and Ford workers is still not bridged, we will surely have no choice but to go on strike alongside our blue

oval brothers and sisters... [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 11/10/23]

## • Back to 1979?

Den managers told us that when we came back from the Summer shutdown, the long block test in Lion (which checks for inconsistencies in half-assembled engines) would be replaced by a fancy camera system... And of course when we came back, the long block test was indeed gone, but was replaced by... absolutely nothing. So checks had to be done manually, like in the good old (1900s?) days! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 11/10/23]

**BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**

**The bosses' petrol-electric screw... and the shopfloor's short-circuit!**

BMW bosses were far less outspoken than Ford UK over the postponement of the petrol/diesel ban - just asking for "clarity on the zero-emission vehicle topic". Maybe they were genuinely confused: they'd just been granted a £75m government subsidy "for electrification"... What's more, the plant can easily switch from petrol to electric as it produces both models on the same assembly line!

Only 10 days before Sunak's announcement, the factory hosted Kemi Badenoch to celebrate £600m investment and government subsidy - which had secured production of the electric

mini for Cowley (instead of China). Never mind that at the same time BMW was literally turning the screw on us on the shopfloor. But nothing was mentioned about 500+ job cuts to come as early as November, along with a new shift pattern and extreme speed-ups on the line. In fact BMW's got absolutely no clue how it will keep the line running full blast with 20% fewer of us... Staffline (BMW's main recruitment agency) has been asked to find agency workers to fill the gaps right now, but these workers will be kicked out as soon as the new shift pattern comes in!



And to top it all, our workmates in the logistics contractor, R&H, have been offered a pitiful 2.75% pay rise and are told if they don't accept it, they'll face the same job cuts as BMW/Staffline! The only way we'll keep our all our jobs intact, is by organising a plant-wide walk out! ☐

**• Crisis? what crisis?**

BMW's global car sales are up 5.8% from last year, according to their results for the third quarter of this year. But this figure hides even greater increases. Sales of the most expensive BMW models - the M series - rose by 58% in Europe. Electric car sales are up 100% globally from last year (200% in the U.S.!). Meanwhile, Mini production is higher than last year - and that's with 500 fewer workmates! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 10/10/23]

**• Don't push our buttons**

Every now and then we notice the speed has increased to get the number of cars over the 449 target. We guess management is trying to test how fast they can get the line going... They'd better be careful if they don't want loads of breakdowns... [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 10/10/23]

**• Absolute nonsense!**

How does it make any sense to call overtime when we've got workmates getting sacked?

If there's more work to do there's obviously more people needed to do it, full stop. [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 10/10/23]

**• Insect repellent?**

Where does it say that we can't take our annual leave whenever we'd like?? Managers keep getting bees in their bonnets. Now they are trying to find an excuse why we can't take our holidays. They can buzz off! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 10/10/23]

**King's Cross railway station (London)**

**Train drivers' isolated strike-days**

At the time of writing, the ASLEF drivers' pay dispute with 16 train operating companies is still on. So far, the we've been on 14 one-day strikes and have taken 26 days of action short-of-strike - i.e., refused rest-day working - during this 16-month dispute. The latest strike took place during the Tory conference. As General Secretary Mick Whelan put it, it was a "political strike driven by the government". Because as everyone knows it is ministers who are calling the shots in this dispute.

The last offer received from the bosses' Rail Delivery Group (RDG) was back in April for a below inflation pay increase

of 4% plus 4% over two years (covering 2022 and 2023) and a postponement of compulsory redundancies until 31 March 2024. Although we cannot see how compulsory redundancies could have been on the table in the first place, given the long-standing driver-shortage.

It's obvious that what the bosses main target is our terms and conditions. They want to introduce flexible rostering across the board and a 7-days-a-week railway. If these changes - which we are against - are negotiated separately with each TOC, it will divide our ranks and weaken our resistance. The fact that we don't strike alongside fellow



workers in the RMT, who are also still in dispute, already diminishes our collective strength.

This is why many of us feel it is high time to step up our fight and join all the other railway workers on the picket lines and in the streets, until we ALL win. ☐

**• Trying it on**

LNER has been trying to get back against drivers for the strikes, by targeting leave requests. So if we need to take individual days (ad-hoc leave), they tell us that we can't - or even that we'll have to find our own cover. Sounds as if we really do need to go in stronger, harder, and longer. They obviously haven't understood that we can be much more bloody-minded than them. [King's X Workers' Platform 04/10/23]

**• 8 or nothing**

We've heard rumours that Atalian wants to cut the 8-worker crew cleaning the trains

down to 7. They never get it into their thick skulls that we're already too few! Did they not learn their lesson from what happened earlier this year, when tanking and cleaning workmates were sacked/redeployed only for bosses to discover they were needed after all? Anyway, we say it's 8 of us... or none of us. [King's X Workers' Platform 04/10/23]

**• Killer shifts**

What is to be done about the 11/12-hour shifts - and on nights! - which GN workers are rostered for? It's a fact that just working nights, let alone such long shifts, increases the risk of heart attacks and strokes - both fatal and non-fatal. These rosters must be rewritten

as a matter of urgency! [King's X Workers' Platform 04/10/23]

**• It's a crash course!**

LNER managers are now passing trainee drivers out like a production line so as to have more drivers available during the industrial action (provided they don't join the union first)! But it seems that the speed-up of their training didn't include training on the Hertford branch, which is the main diversionary route! If there's a problem on the usual route south of Stevenage, they have to wait for another driver to come and rescue them... And that's only one aspect of this highly unsafe haste. [King's X Workers' Platform 04/10/23]

## Letter from India

Over the next year, Modi faces five regional elections (in Chhatisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, Rajasthan and Mizoram) and then in mid-2024 there is the general election. So his government is busy finding bogeymen to blame for all of its problems. After targeting Muslims and "illegal immigrants", Modi is now trying to consolidate the right-wing nationalist vote and intimidate protestors by building on the anti-China sentiment propagated by Biden's administration.

The latest target is NewsClick, a left-wing media company sympathetic to the Indian Communist Parties. This hits two birds with one stone - media freedom to criticise the government and the Chinese "threat".

Citing a New York Times article which alleged that NewsClick was part of a "global web of Chinese propaganda" funded by American businessman Neville Singham, the government opened a propaganda campaign against it. Never mind that the only proof of NewsClick's role as a Chinese propaganda website was a video it published on the Chinese Revolution of 1949 with the conclusion that "China's history continues to inspire the working classes".

### NewsClick arrests

On 3 October, police raided NewsClick's Kerala office and employees' homes, arresting the editor and head of HR, and seizing laptops and phones. NewsClick is charged under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act of 1967, with conspiracy to "disrupt supplies and services essential to the life of community in India".

This relates to NewsClick's exposure of army repression in the border states

## MODI'S CHINA BOGEYMAN



of Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh, its criticisms of the government's "fight" against Covid (when tens of thousands of migrant workers were forced to walk from cities back to their villages and patients died due to the lack of oxygen cylinders), its exposure of the profiteering of pharmaceutical companies and its sympathetic coverage of the 2021 farmers' movement against Modi's three pro-agri-business farm laws. These "terrorist acts", says the government, disrupted the "sovereignty and territorial integrity of India". Yes, all and every criticism of the Indian government is now illegal and leads back to ... China!

### What lies ahead

It should be added that the Adani Group, closely allied to the Modi government, last year bought a controlling stake in

New Delhi Television (which previously criticised the government's role in stoking religious hatred), and has just bid for 51% of Quintillion Business Media. It's probably no coincidence that NewsClick's journalists recently exposed the corruption involved the Adani Group's involvement in the French company Dassault Aviation's deal to supply Rafale jets to the Indian Defence Ministry.

There is increasing resentment against Modi's party, the BJP, in the context of worsening poverty. The BJP just lost the state election in Karnataka. No doubt as the general election approaches, other media outlets will be accused of links to China to prove that "India is under threat", while Modi's thugs resort to their barbaric trademark of communal and xenophobic attacks. Let's hope that this time there will be effective resistance. □

## UKRAINE FEVER AND FORGETTING HISTORY

One can only wonder how on earth the entire Canadian parliament, including Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, ended up applauding a 98-year old veteran of a Ukrainian unit commanded by the Nazi Waffen SS, as a war hero?

The embarrassing scene was instigated by the speaker of Canada's House of Commons, Anthony Rota, who had invited Yaroslav Hunka to attend the ritual fêting of president Zelensky. He was there to beg for the usual missile launchers, tanks and bombs, to use in his increasingly destructive and bloody US proxy war against Russia, which he continues, nevertheless, to conduct enthusiastically.

### Their ignorance of history

The speaker of the Canadian House was forced to resign after a backlash from Jewish Canadians. He said he "did not know" of Hunka's Nazi connections. He hadn't realised that Hunka's "brave fight" during WW2 in Ukraine "against the Russians" for which the House was honouring him, could only have been as part of the Ukrainian Resistance organised by the occupying Nazis and on their side...

Incredibly this fiasco had been arranged to please Zelensky, who would thus be able to share a moment with a fellow hero who also fought Russians! It seems Ukraine war fever has wiped out both common sense and common

knowledge among Canadian politicians and sent them into a second childhood. Of course, the Canadian army was part of the WW2 allied fight against the Nazis and against the Ukrainian Resistance, alongside the Russians...

### The far-right is back

Even more bizarrely, Trudeau apologised to Zelensky, who had blithely joined in the applause for Hunka. Should that be a surprise? Zelensky may be Jewish, but his government is a virtual hostage of the far-right successors of those same militias - who for instance venerate the likes of the rehabilitated far-right ultra-nationalist, Stepan Bandera - "heroes" who, during WW2, did the Nazis' dirty work in Poland and Ukraine.

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:

BM Workers' Fight - LONDON WC1N 3XX.