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FREE/DONATION

Catalyst

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British section of the International Workers' Association



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Stop work:



to stop the cuts?

WHAT DOES it take to stop the cuts? June 30th represents the first co-ordinated strike action against austerity, under the pretext of defending pensions, due to the legal restrictions on joint strikes. But how do hundreds of thousands of people stopping work help stop the government?

At first glance, it might not seem to make sense. Cuts, we are told, are a response to a struggling economy. So why try and harm the economy by shutting large parts of it down for the day? But turn

the question around, and what other option do we have?

Millions marched peacefully against the Iraq war and were completely ignored. We could wait four or five years and vote for Labour, but by then it's too late. And anyway, Labour are committed to a cuts programme too. So striking is one of the only weapons ordinary people possess to go toe-to-toe with a state determined to force the costs of the financial crisis onto us (see centrefold feature).

This is not a question of there not being enough money

anymore; it is a question of power. If ordinary people stand together, we can beat the

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government. They know this, and will try and divide and rule with stories of "greedy"

public sector workers with "gold plated" conditions. Such words from the mouths of millionaires deserve nothing but contempt.

It will take more than one day strikes to defeat austerity. One need only look to the sustained strikes, non-payment campaigns and social resistance in Greece to see how far we may need to go. But by standing together and saying 'no', refusing austerity by refusing to work, we can beat the government by making the country ungovernable.

International round-up



India: Suzuki strike

AROUND 2,000 workers at the Maruti Suzuki car plant in Manesar, India have been taking unofficial strike action demanding the recognition of a new union formed by workers in the plant. Around 1,000 other workers from other workplaces have been rallying outside the plant in solidarity.

Meanwhile a committee of representatives from workers' organisations in the Gurgaon-Manesar region has been formed to support the strike, and has declared its intention to join the strike if their demands are not met.

"If the issues are not resolved immediately, then a similar strike can happen in other factories in the Gurgaon-Manesar industrial belt," AITUC Gurgaon District Secretary Harjeet Grover, who is also the General Secretary of HMSI Employees Union, told the Indian press.

Chile: Dockworkers

walk out, blockade port

STRIKE ACTION at Puerto Lirquen, Chile has seen workers blockading the port with barricades made from burning tyres. Guillermo Ascuí, the treasurer of the workers' union said the company was guilty of serious labour abuses which had motivated the strike.

Around 300 workers attended a mass meeting and decided to continue the strike until the authorities intervened to force the company to negotiate. They have so far been refusing to meet with workers' representatives to discuss their demands.

Serbia: repression of activists continues

EIGHT PEOPLE were arrested at a peaceful anti-NATO march in Belgrade on 12 June. Charges are being pressed against six arrestees for "obstructing police officers in their line of duty". Amongst those arrested was Ratibor Trivunac, an activist with the union initiative ASI. He has been charged with "organising an unreported demonstration" despite only returning from Macedonia - where he had been for several days - on the day of the march.

Last year Trivunac was one of the 'Belgrade 6' framed on bogus charges of 'international terrorism', and spent 6 months in prison awaiting trial, where he was subjected to abuse and torture. At trial, the charges were dropped for lack of evidence.

This time his trial took place behind closed doors and with only police officers as witnesses. He was immediately sentenced to 15 days in prison. A supporter commented that this "is a continuation of the constant harassment, intimidation, criminalisation and slurs that the libertarian movement faces in Serbia." Serbia, an aspirant EU member state is sensitive to criticism of its human rights record.

Canada: locked out postal workers occupy depot

FOLLOWING WEEKS of rolling strike action in a dispute over 'modernisation', Canada Post locked out its 50,000 workers on the night of 14 June. The last time the union went on strike was in 1997 when the workers were off the job for two weeks before being forced back to work by federal legislation. Winnipeg postal worker Michelle Fidler explained "nobody ever got rich working at Canada Post in the position I'm in. I make ends meet. I don't have a fancy car or a big house, and I work hard. And I don't think the general public knows exactly how difficult that job is."

A flashpoint in the dispute has been Edmonton. Tensions have been rising since widespread unofficial action in April was branded "illegal" by company bosses. The following is an account by an Edmonton striker.

In June Canada Post declared a series of service cuts that reduced the Letter Carrier work week down to three days a week. On the first day of the service cuts there were several early morning actions where hundreds of Letter Carriers showed up for work and demanded to deliver mail that had piled up inside their depots. In Edmonton several depots took this one step farther by sitting down inside the depot and refusing to leave. Several other depots rallied outside and marched around outside their workplaces.

Following these actions the Canadian Union of Postal Workers held a demonstration where over 300 Postal Workers marched on Depot 9,



one of the largest and most militant depots in the city. The workers staged an occupation, with management locking themselves in their office to hide from the angry mob. Workers with cameras photographed piles of mail stuffed into the depot, exposing Canada Post's lie that there was no mail to be delivered.

As the workers filed out of the plant they noticed that about ten members of management were staying behind, many putting up tarps over the windows so no one could watch them operate mail

equipment. Incensed, they turned around any trucks coming in and parked a 5-ton Canada Post vehicle in the truck gate and padlocked the mail inside.

Several hours later the management team started sending their people out to go home. The pickets locked arms and chanted "no one in, no one out". Management was informed that the workers sincerely hoped management had brought pyjamas. When management finally left the building they were jeered and heckled.

The day was the high water mark in years of struggle for several militants in the Post Office and there is no doubt we will carry this story with us for the rest of our lives. But it is also just the beginning. Yesterday workers got a taste of their own power and made the first step towards taking back control over their own work. This won't end with a new collective agreement and it will continue when we all walk back into the post office with our heads held high.

More: recompositionblog.wordpress.com

Out of Iraq and into Libya: where there's oil there's war



BRITISH TROOPS only ended operations in Iraq at the end of May, and already a new conflict is underway in Libya. The new war has been a game-changer in a number of ways. Most obviously, it marked the "second wave" of the Arab Spring, the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt appearing smooth and rapid in comparison to the drawn out street battles in Bahrain, Syria and Yemen. But it also proved to be the point at which support for "humanitarian intervention" was once more acceptable after the Iraqi quagmire.

This time, the protests were so small as to barely warrant news coverage. There were no millions on the streets of London. "Anti-war" newspapers such as the Independent contained editorials pondering "the sensitive politics of humanitarian intervention"

and urging the West to "win the propaganda war." Where they once labelled the death of Dr David Kelly a "whitewash," they are now only concerned "if civilian deaths are verified" because it "undermines the legitimacy of the mission."

Those touting the "humanitarian" credentials of this war make the same mistake as those who supported entering Iraq because it meant getting rid of Saddam Hussein. They presume that states can act on an altruistic basis. But, as the US and EU's initial opposition to a no-fly zone demonstrates, the only question of any merit is "national interest." It was when Gaddafi became too much of a liability to play his former role for western oil interests - indeed, losing control of the Eastern oilfields to rebel forces - that all parties quickly turned against him. European refineries are heavily dependent on Libyan crude oil, which is cheaper to process than most other grades.

The same is true when Western powers turn a blind eye to Saudi intervention in Yemen and Bahrain, or side with Libyan rebels whilst supporting repressive regimes elsewhere. The only guiding principle of all world powers in their foreign policy is to serve the interests of the political and economic elites.

The result is another protracted conflict, with heavy casualties on both sides and an uncertain outcome. Despite any intentions towards democracy, Western intervention leaves Libyans caught between a dictatorship, so desperate to cling onto power that it is using rape as a

weapon of war, and Western free market policies which increase misery, poverty and inequality in the name of profit. Lofty talk of humanitarian intent simply doesn't match up to reality.



Temp agency bows to the power of direct action

Campaign of “disruptive action” wins temp’s unpaid wages



APRIL AND May saw the Solidarity Federation (SF) engage in an escalating campaign of “disruptive action” against a part of the world’s largest employment agency. A successful international campaign of pickets and communication blockades resulted in an Office Angels temporary worker being paid wages withheld from him since last December.

The worker, Dan, contacted SF in March after trying to negotiate with Office Angels by himself. He had worked as a temp for them for three days in December but had not been provided with a time sheet. When he queried this, he was assured that this would not be a problem. After the job finished, he called in to Office Angels to collect his wages. To his surprise he was told that he had worked one day, not three – this despite having received a call from Office Angels at work on the third day.

SF responded to Dan’s request with a picket and a delegation sent to the Wimbledon Office Angels branch where he was initially employed - resulting in Dan being banned from all Office Angels premises. Next the London Locals of SF chose to picket the most visible Office Angels branch – Oxford Street, central London – where they spoke to management, demanded Dan be paid and

informed them that action would continue until he received his full wages.

Following the visit to Oxford Street and a public call-out for escalation, Office Angels contacted Dan. He was told that “this has gone on long enough” and he would “definitely” get paid. When that didn’t happen pickets spread to branches outside London, and a ‘communications blockade’ was organised with support from around the world. The blockade saw hundreds of phone calls and emails sent to the Office Angels managers by individuals and groups, expressing their dissatisfaction with Office Angels’ unscrupulous employment practices. Thousands of leaflets were also distributed, highlighting Dan’s case and urging anyone who had suffered similar mistreatment to contact SF.

A national week of action was called, and preparations began for an international week of action against Office Angels’ parent company Adecco. The national week of action began with pickets being announced around the UK: numerous pickets in London, Northampton, Reading, Brighton, Oxford, Nottingham, Leeds, Newcastle, Manchester, Bristol, and Liverpool. On the Tuesday, Dan was again contacted by Office Angels. This time they told him they had documentation confirming that he had worked two days and

would pay him for those. Still not satisfied, the next day’s communications blockade went ahead as planned. Wednesday morning saw Dan contacted again. Office Angels offered to pay him for the full three days – but with strings attached. Dan refused, and the pressure was kept on. The next day, Office Angels gave in and paid Dan the wages they owed him.

SF has a long-running campaign against casualisation and precarious employment. The fight against employment agencies is, predictably, at the forefront of such a movement. While this was just a small victory, it shows how ordinary workers can turn the tables on powerful exploiters by taking action together. The pickets even got the attention of Office Angels’ Managing Director David Clubb, who issued a statement regretting the “disruptive action”. Dan’s case is just the tip of the iceberg – but it shows that temp workers can stand up for themselves with collective direct action.

The Solidarity Federation would like to thank all the individuals and groups who took part in communications blockades and organised pickets as part of the campaign, with particular thanks to the Anarchist Federation (AF), Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and The Commune as well as our sister-sections in the International Workers’ Association (IWA).

Lies, damned lies and unemployment statistics

ACCORDING TO the headlines, UK unemployment fell 88,000 in the three months to April this year to 2.43 million, the biggest drop since the summer of 2000. This was heralded as proof that the government’s policies are working, and that the private sector is creating more jobs than the 143,000 public sector positions slashed during the same period. But dig a little deeper and the spin unravels.

The Office for National Statistics is open that the fall “was mainly due to an increase of 80,000 in the number of students not active in the labour market.” This seems to have been due to them simply being reclassified, rather than them all suddenly finding jobs. So that leaves just 8,000 jobs ‘created’.

Here too the picture is not so rosy. The number of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) increased to 1.49 million. This was partly due to people being forced off other benefits such as Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), by the use of a computer program to reclassify seriously ill people – including those with suicidal depression and lost limbs – as ‘fit for work’.

Meanwhile, the number of people working part-time because they could not find a full-time job increased to 1.21 million, the highest figure since records began in 1992. Here the reality becomes clear. Seriously ill and disabled people are being forced to sign on to JSA and look for work, while those on JSA are forced onto workfare



programmes to work for their dole money – for less than £1.70 an hour – or to take part-time jobs they can’t afford to live on.

These casual, low-paid jobs, including the rise of ‘zero hours’ contracts where someone is technically employed but with

no guaranteed hours, have grown to record levels, whilst hundreds of thousands of relatively stable public sector jobs are being axed. Behind the headlines of falling unemployment is rising insecurity for all of us, whether in work or not.

Dale Farm eviction funding confirmed

BASILDON MP John Baron has announced that £9.5million has been ‘found’ to fund the eviction of 500 people from the land they own in Essex.

Financial constraints had been delaying the process as Basildon had been required to find a total of £17.5m for the eviction and ongoing security costs to stop people getting back on to their land afterwards. The sum represents around £35,000 per person evicted.

Health and safety award slammed

TRADE UNIONISTS and anti-blacklisting campaigners have criticised the awarding of a top health and safety honour to the construction firm Balfour Beatty. The company was recently awarded the Royal Society for the Protection of Accident’s most prestigious award at this year’s Occupational Health and Safety Awards.

Steve Kelly, spokesperson for the Blacklist Support Group, described the award as “offensive”. He commented: “At first I thought this was a joke. Balfour Beatty are the construction company with the WORST record of sacking and blacklisting Safety Representatives in the entire industry.”

Steve Acheson, a blacklisted electrician, said: “A very good friend of mine, Jim Lafferty was the safety rep at the Royal Opera House and raised a number of safety issues as part of his role. For his troubles, Balfour blacklisted him and made it almost impossible for him to find steady work.”

“Jim is only one of 3,000 workers who have had their lives ruined by this covert blacklist but because we are building workers rather than celebrities, no-one seems to be concerned about us.” More than 40 building firms were found to have illegally paid the Consulting Association for sensitive information on the trade union activities of potential employees.

Posties wildcat in London & Liverpool

STAFF AT a London delivery office have taken unlawful strike action and won the reinstatement of a colleague. Around 90 postal workers at the N1 sorting office took unofficial strike action in support of a long-standing worker suspended for “willful delay of the mail”. After three hours of strike action managers caved in and reinstated the worker. “It’s a complete victory,” said Mark Dolan, a senior CWU union rep in north London.

Postal workers at two Liverpool sorting offices also took unofficial strike action in response to the unfair dismissal of six colleagues. Around 200 workers walked off the job at the Sandhills and Brunswick depots. Meanwhile, London postal workers have voted to strike in an official CWU ballot in a dispute arising from the closure of mailcentres in Vauxhall and Bow which are expected to result in over 500 job losses.

London Tube strikes confirmed

STAFF ON the London underground are walking out in a series of strikes in June and July in two overlapping disputes. The dispute on with the private Tube Lines firm covers the Piccadilly, Northern and Jubilee Lines but will effect the whole tube network as the Emergency Response Unit, providing cover for the entire network, is also striking. Tube Lines shareholders are walking away with £310 million of public cash in a “golden-goodbye”, after a disastrous privatisation.

The second dispute involves drivers across the entire underground, who are walking out in support of sacked RMT union activist Arwyn Thomas in what General Secretary Bob Crow describes as “a clear cut case of victimisation.” Thomas has been at home on full pay since winning relief at an appeal.

STRIKING BACK: after industrial front, strike act

‘Don’t work!’ - a very dangerous idea



THE CO-ORDINATED strikes on June 30th have put strike action back on the agenda. Business Secretary Vince Cable recently threatened to tighten the law if big strikes take place, while media commentators have been falling over themselves to label strike action a relic from a bygone age. So what are strikes, and why are they important now?

Put simply, a strike is a co-ordinated stoppage at work. In response to a grievance workers act collectively, refusing to work and attempting to prevent others from working. This can take the form of persuasion or, in instances where more is at stake, physically preventing those who seek to continue to work (“scabs”) from doing so. A picket line is a group of strikers (“pickets”) who congregate at the entrance of the workplace and attempt to enforce the strike. Usually, strikes are organised and led by trade unions – however, many of the

most important and militant actions have either started out or later spread beyond union control. These unofficial actions are known as “wildcat” strikes.

Historically, the strike has been one of the most powerful weapons available to workers (see timeline below). The idea behind strike action is simple and powerful: if the terms and conditions of work are not acceptable to workers then no work shall be done.

Strikes have been recorded as long as there have been class societies. The earliest recorded strike was documented in Egyptian scrolls from 1152 BC, when artisans on Royal tombs demanded wage increases and won. Strikes have been important in winning significant reforms such as the eight-hour day and in toppling dictators (like recently in Egypt).

Much of Europe is currently seeing vigorous strike action in response to

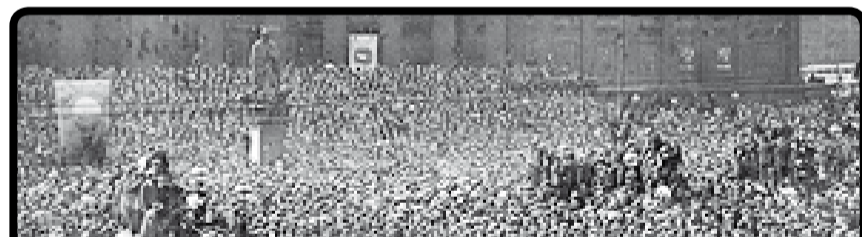
austerity measures. The rhetoric from politicians, mainstream media and captains of industry make one thing clear: bosses are terrified of strikes. Few topics muster the same hysterical, blustering condemnation than the threat of strike action. Even nominally left wing newspapers such as the Guardian are only supportive of strikes once they’re safely in the past. This fear is well founded. Their wealth and power derives from our labour. This is never more clearly illustrated than when we withdraw it, disrupting the economy and shaking the foundations they rely on.

A strike is a direct challenge to capitalist society – a society where we sell our lives hour by hour to a boss who will profit off of us. Denying them this and their control over our day to day lives is a challenge to their

domination of society, and is an expression of our collective power as workers. Where normally we feel powerless and out of control of our own lives, collective action such as strikes show us the potential for change.

Most strikes begin under union control, and some union controlled disputes win significant victories. However, they also impose limits upon just how far strikes can go. Trade unions need to preserve their positions as ‘respectable’ representatives of the workforce. They are forced to act within a strict legal framework, which prevents them from escalating to more militant tactics such as occupations, or spreading the dispute to sympathetic workplaces. Often, union leaderships will only call strikes in the face of mass pressure from the membership, and these

strikes often such as the tol most modern (see chart to th limited power on employers. when people r status quo mai When bosses strike spreading Lindsey Oil R they rush to o to be truly e controlled dire spread as wide Workers can’t own union lea



The 1911 Liverpool General Transport Strike: The working class in Liverpool brings the country to its knees. A warship sails up the Mersey, the army is on the streets (though Liverpool regiments are confined to barracks as the government doesn’t trust their loyalties) and running battles are fought with the police through the summer.

The “general strike” was actually a series of separate disputes which started with a seaman’s strike and soon escalated in a wave. As each group of striking workers won their battles, they vowed to stay out until others had won. This show of solidarity saw the reinstatement of the railwaymen who had been sacked for joining in the action. It also terrified the ruling class, and it is often said that this was the closest Britain has ever come to revolution.

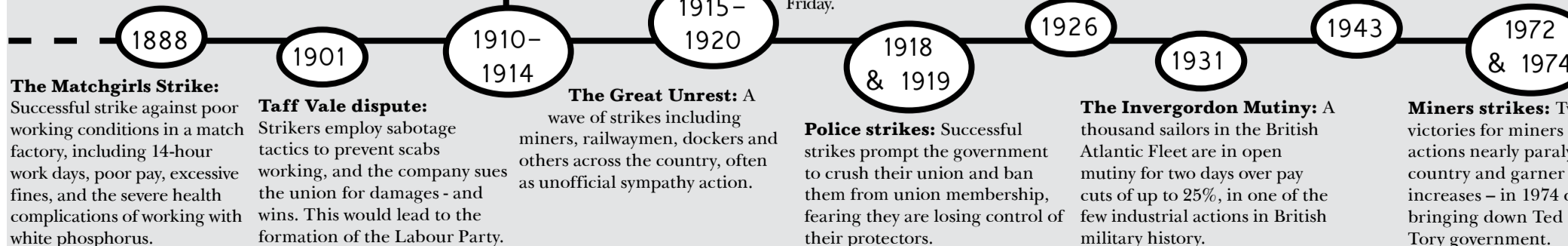
What we mustn’t forget is that this struggle was defined by the rank-and-file. The city’s labour movement had a strong anarcho-sindicalist current, whilst the ship workers had been heavily influenced by the radical IWW. The government ultimately called in national union leaders to negotiate an end to the strike, but the dispute occurred entirely beyond their control.



The 1926 General Strike: In response to mine owners’ attempts to cut wages, the Trades Union Congress (TUC) organises a General Strike under the slogan of “Not a penny off the pay, not a minute on the day”. However, the TUC quickly realise the danger it has unleashed with this display of working class power, and works with the government and Labour Party to undermine the strike. The ruling class united in terror at the power of workers organisation, with Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin stating “the general strike is a challenge to the parliament and is the road to anarchy”. Hundreds of thousands of workers took part in the strike, and there were pitched battles against government forces, scabs and fascist militias. After 9 days, the TUC attempted to call off the strike with no agreement. Yet the tenth day saw more people on strike than before. However, the perceived TUC betrayal killed the strike momentum and left working class organisation in disarray for years to come.

Red Clydeside: A series of actions including a 1919 strike of 100,000 for a 40-hour week which is savagely attacked by the police on what became known as Bloody Friday.

Glasgow Rolls Royce strike: Women at the Rolls Royce factory in Glasgow went on strike for equal pay, which was being denied in the name of wartime patriotism.

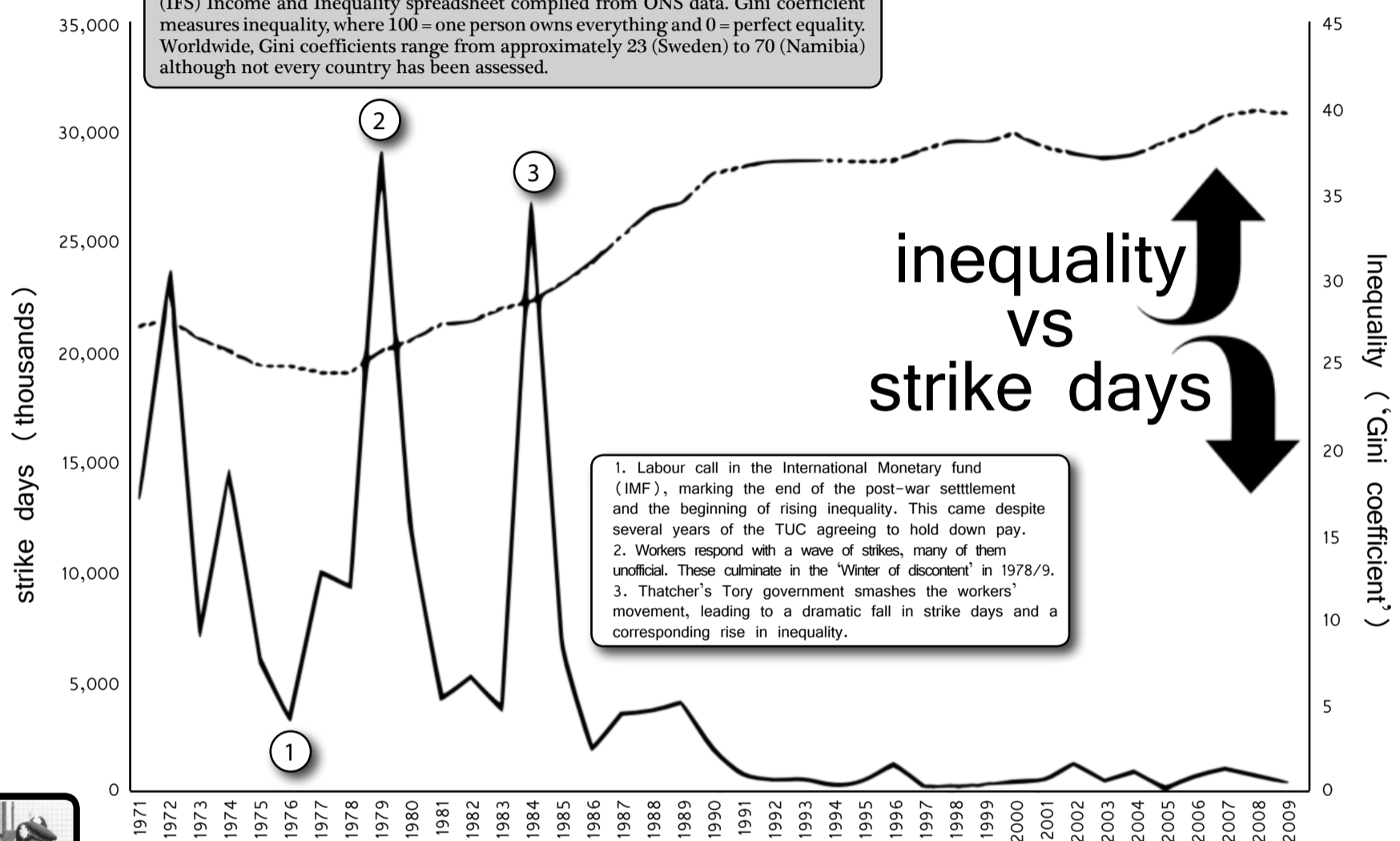


After decades of quiet on the picket line, industrial action is back on the agenda



take on ineffective forms, characteristic one day strikes that industrial action consists of (see right). Short strikes have become more common as they put little pressure on employers. Work can be 'caught up' and workers return to their jobs and the status quo is maintained. As employers and the government see a picket line as 'out of control' - like the refinery wildcats in 2009 - they offer concessions. For strikes to be effective, they need to be controlled by those involved, and they must be as quickly as possible. Workers must not rely on anyone, even their leaders, to win for them.

SOURCES: Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) Income and Inequality spreadsheet compiled from ONS data. Gini coefficient measures inequality, where 100 = one person owns everything and 0 = perfect equality. Worldwide, Gini coefficients range from approximately 23 (Sweden) to 70 (Namibia) although not every country has been assessed.



1. Labour call in the International Monetary fund (IMF), marking the end of the post-war settlement and the beginning of rising inequality. This came despite several years of the TUC agreeing to hold down pay.
 2. Workers respond with a wave of strikes, many of them unofficial. These culminate in the 'Winter of discontent' in 1978/9.
 3. Thatcher's Tory government smashes the workers' movement, leading to a dramatic fall in strike days and a corresponding rise in inequality.

Grunwick dispute: The largely Asian and female workforce at the Grunwick photo processing plant go on prolonged strike demanding improved conditions and union recognition.

The Miners' Strike: In a turning point of British labour relations, the Thatcher government announces a massive programme of pit closures. The miners having long been amongst the most militant section of the British workers movement, the government was obsessed with smashing their power. Workers from the pits affected sent out flying pickets to nearby pits, and quickly spread the dispute to a national level. The dispute lasted a year, before the miners were eventually starved back to work. This set the tone for over 25 years of working class defeat in Britain.

Liverpool Dockers dispute: Liverpool dockers are fired after refusing to cross a picket line set up by workers employed by a different company. They then fought a high profile campaign for reinstatement for over 3 years, with support from around the world.

June 30th co-ordinated strikes: Up to a million teachers, civil servants and other workers take part in co-ordinated one-day strike action. Small fry compared to some of the big disputes of the past, but are we seeing a return of strike action to combat rising inequality?

Timeline of events:

- 1976-1978
- 1978-1979
- 1984-1985
- 1986-1987
- 1995-1998
- 2002
- 2011

two massive... as their... use the... huge wage... directly... Heath's

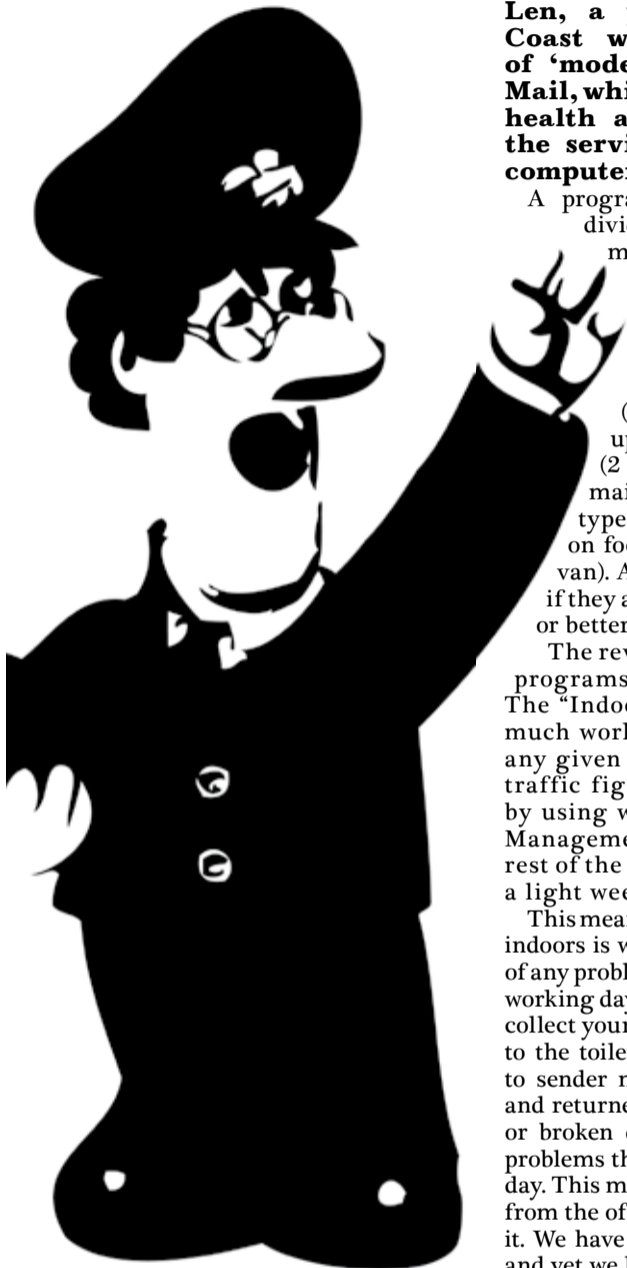
The Winter of Discontent: In response to government wage restraint, inflation and IMF austerity measures, a massive wave of industrial unrest spreads across Britain.

Wapping: Rupert Murdoch's News International launch a massive assault on conditions of 6,000 print workers. Supported by the scab EETPU union, a new plant is secretly equipped and put into operation in Wapping. A sometimes violent ongoing protest is launched in opposition to the move.

Firefighters strike: Over 30,000 firefighters vote overwhelmingly for prolonged strike action demanding a wage increase of nearly 40% to make up for years of inadequate pay settlements. Scab cover was provided by the armed forces. After several days of action, despite high levels of support and morale, union leadership accept a three year deal which provided wage increases barely above inflation.

Industry focus:

Problems in the postal service



Len, a postie from the South Coast writes about the effect of 'modernisation' in the Royal Mail, which looks bad for workers' health and safety and bad for the service - all run by what a computer deems 'optimal'.

A programme of revisions has been divided into three phases. In our medium sized delivery office we are now in week five of our revision using the "new delivery methods" (NDM).

These new delivery methods are high capacity trolleys (HCTs) with one postie pushing up to 105 KGs, and shared vans (2 posties in a van taking all the mail with them and using golf type and sized trolleys to deliver on foot in a loop from the back of a van). All bikes will be scrapped - even if they are more efficient, cost effective or better for the health of the workers.

The revisions are based on computer programs used to 'optimise production'. The "Indoor Work Tool" works out how much work you can achieve indoors on any given day. It is primarily based on traffic figures which management get by using what is called a 'model week'. Management then base work for the rest of the year on that week. Obviously, a light week is often chosen.

This means that every second of your time indoors is worked out but takes no account of any problems that might happen during a working day. Things like having to find and collect your own mail before sorting, going to the toilet, badly addressed mail, return to sender mail that has to be marked up and returned, late mail because of weather or broken down wagons and many other problems that happen in a normal working day. This means they can (and do) cut hours from the office and we know nothing about it. We have not as a Union agreed to this - and yet we lose thousands of jobs!

The outdoor element is done with Pegasus Georoute to plan walks in much the same way. A model week is used again (often a light one) and the program tracks a walk (going at about 6km an hour), calculating how many drop points you can deliver to in the given time, how many face-to-face meetings you have with the public for oversized packets and how often you sign for letters and packets. This has three terrain settings that are used to judge garden size and other relevant information that increase or decrease the amount of calls a postie can make. So again settings that allow more calls mean more hours lost from the office.

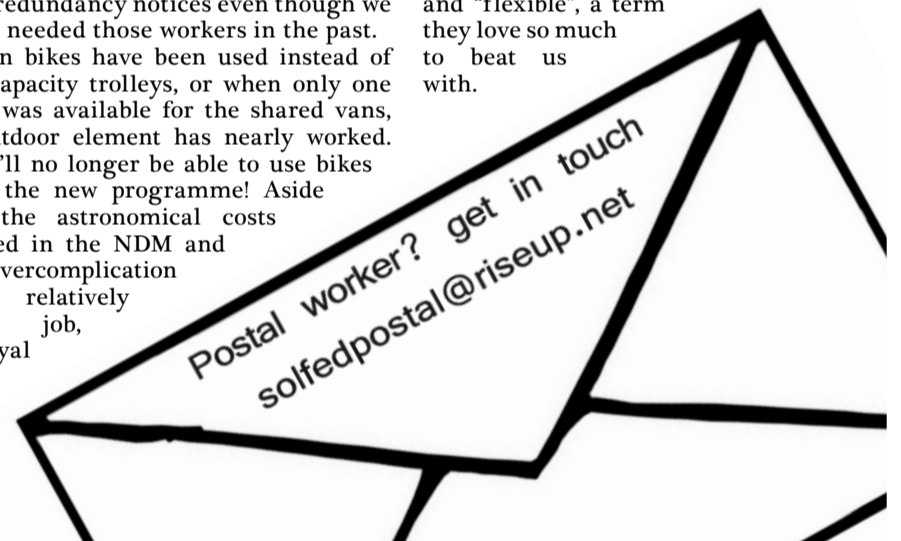
As we all know, at the sharp end, "optimising production" is about culling our jobs. In our office they ran these tools and came back with a cut of over a 30 jobs for the workforce of around 110. Since we had no choice but to work with these tools as ordered by HQ, our rep began feeding the programs information that resulted in a more realistic level of work. Yet we still ended up with seven temp workers being given redundancy notices even though we always needed those workers in the past.

When bikes have been used instead of high capacity trolleys, or when only one postie was available for the shared vans, the outdoor element has nearly worked. Yet we'll no longer be able to use bikes under the new programme! Aside from the astronomical costs involved in the NDM and the overcomplication of a relatively simple job, if Royal Mail

is ever flogged off the first thing a private company will do is put many posties back on bikes. The impact of these NDM duties will have major health issues in the coming years with many leg and back joints suffering strain and permanent damage.

I believe there is a place for NDM. Say in the winter, if a Postie has to cycle for 3 or 4 miles, then of course it would be safer and more effective to have a couple of posties working from a van. Though we have had them for years, HCTs have never been used properly by Royal Mail.

In the past when we had large loads, say over Christmas, we were kept on bikes. Instead we should be able to look at the workload and decide what would be best for us to deliver, be it HCT or bike. We could make those decisions if allowed and effectively serve our customers and owners, the public. If we could just get rid of the parasites that make a fortune off our backs, the idiots who screw up, put their foot down and say you will do as you're told. That is how it is going to be instead of being smart and "flexible", a term they love so much to beat us with.



Know your rights: *at work*

Regardless of work status (temporary or permanent, agency, full or part-time) or our contracts of employment, most of us have certain basic rights. These include:

1. The right to be told in writing how much and when we are to be paid.

The Minimum Wage for those over 22 years of age is set at £5.80. For 18-21 year olds it is £4.83 and for 16-17 year olds it is £3.57. For agency workers, wages must be paid on the agreed day, even if the hiring company has not paid the agency.

2. The right to at least 28 days paid leave per year.

Any employment contract should set out leave entitlements. If it doesn't, then 28 days must be given (which can include public holidays). All workers,

agency workers, homeworkers, trainees, so-called casuals and most freelancers are included in this. Holiday entitlement starts immediately, e.g. on day 1, we get 2 days leave, and, after 6 months, we get 14 days (for part time workers it is less, and it applies to jobs started since October 2001).

3. The right to breaks of at least 20 minutes after each 6 hours of work.

We are entitled to at least 11 hours' rest in each 24 hours and a minimum of a day a week off. Rest breaks for under 18s are minimum 30 minutes every 4 1/2 hours.

4. The right to refuse to work any more than 48 hrs each week.

We cannot be forced to work over 48 hours per week unless we have agreed to it in writing (note that

this is averaged over any 17 week period, so we can be forced to do more in any one week).

5. The right to sick pay when we are ill.

We are entitled to statutory sick pay if we normally earn over £77 per week and we have been working for over 3 months (or are deemed to have been in continuous employment for 13 weeks).

6. The right to maternity/paternity leave when we have children.

From April 2003, most mothers are entitled to 26 weeks' paid maternity leave and an additional 26 weeks' unpaid leave. To get maternity pay, we must earn over £77 per week and have been working for over 6 months by the time the baby is 15 weeks from being due. For

the first 6 weeks, this should be 90% of average earnings, then a flat rate of £100 for 20 weeks. If pay can't be claimed, Maternity Allowance may be claimed from the DSS. Fathers/male partners get 2 weeks' paid paternity leave (subject to the same qualifying conditions as for maternity).

7. The right to be free from harassment.

We are all entitled to a workplace where there is no racial or sexual harassment, bullying, prejudice or discrimination. Agency and part-time workers have the same rights as full-time workers.

8. The right to defend ourselves.

We all have the right to protection from dismissal for asserting our statutory employment rights. We also have the right to join with our fellow workers and organise

ourselves collectively, and to join a trade union.

9. The right to refuse work that is unsafe or where training is not provided.

We all have the right to refuse to work if we find ourselves in imminent danger. Also, laws governing agencies mean they should not send us to jobs for which we are not qualified, and they must ensure that proper training is provided.



Opinion & Letters

Southern Cross: profiteers don't care

Have others been following the results of the near-bankruptcy of this major player in the private sector 'for profit' care homes business in Britain?

In addition to major changes of ownership and some home closures causing disruption to the residents, the Guardian 17 June reported on the company's current proposals to slash the already poor working wages and conditions of its staff on top of cutting some 3,000 jobs.

My friend who works in one of their homes has indicated that even prior to this, non-filling of vacancies and 'requests' for more flexible working were common, but this seems to be a whole new level of attack.

The GMB union is supposed to be

'negotiating' with the company but I don't think the full impact of all this has got across to all the workers involved, or those in other or no unions, as far as I can tell.

Also a 'Quality Care Commission' report just recently claimed about 25% or more of the homes were failing the minimum standards required. On top of that another similar report indicated many severe failings in 'home support' for the elderly and there are severe cut backs in local authority funding for home help.

Before my mother died a few years back she received mostly excellent, if time limited, home care from some dedicated, but poorly paid staff whose employer had recently been outsourced from the local authority to a non-profit trust, but since then reports have indicated further deterioration of staff and 'client' conditions. It still needed me to provide daily care in addition - which not everyone can give.

Conditions for the poor and elderly in this country are getting even

worse but it is difficult for these workers to organise or strike and for the residents and others receiving help to be active in opposition to all this. If others in the 'care industry' or anyone receiving or trying to receive this kind of assistance can add more information or ideas that would be helpful.

Mike, Manchester



I write about the 70,000 people directly affected by the financial situation of the country's largest care home operator. Southern Cross, which employs 42,500 staff to care for 31,000 vulnerable adults, has proposed plans to save £20 million in labour costs by making 3,000 redundancies and changes to terms and conditions. These include, but are not limited to, opting out of the European Working Time Directive, reductions in pay, an increase in hours and temporary lay-offs when there isn't 'enough work'.

It also seems likely that many of Southern Cross' landlords will take over the running of the homes they own, meaning a further change in management, terms and conditions for staff. The GMB union, which represents 25% of Southern Cross workers, is in negotiations with the company but for what? Nicer pay cuts? This is what happens when we leave our most vulnerable people in the hands of profiteers.

Laura, Bristol



Beating rape culture is up to all of us

In the news recently, there have been a few articles about a cop and various politicians downplaying the seriousness of rape. These unfortunately aren't only the words of a few 'out of touch' old sexist men, they reflect a wider culture that blames women being 'provocative' for rape, and excuses rapist men on the grounds that they have uncontrollable sexual drives.

This inspired a series of quickly organised - mainly over the internet - massive protests, starting in Canada and the United States, called 'SlutWalk'. However, SlutWalk seems to consciously object to looking at sexism as a fundamental part of our society. They do not see themselves as part of a wider feminist tradition, and they ignore the context in which blaming women for being raped is taking place, and consequently they don't see it as a social issue or a gender issue, but one of individual, personal choice.

The idea that women are to blame for rape is disgusting and should be challenged wherever it is found, by men as well as women. It is not a standalone issue, it is a symptom of a society engrained with sexism, on economic and cultural levels, as well as in our personal relations with each other. The occasional nod to gender equality is not enough; parliament isn't going to hand out equality, even if it could - it's up to us.

Jon, Oxford



Letters catalyst@solfed.org.uk

A message for you Vinnie!

Dear Dr Cable,
We noted with interest and contempt your warning to trade unionists that a rise in industrial militancy in the UK will result in a hostile response from the State.

Our message to you is simple: BRING IT ON! The day the working class is intimidated by mediocre ruling-class lickspittles like you is the day 'Hell' freezes over.

Unkind regards,
Liverpool SF

Obama's secret Yemen war

Dear Catalyst,
For any reader who thinks that Obama is any better than any other torturing, murdering capitalist president, both The Wall Street Journal and The Washington Post report that the Obama administration is planning to exploit the disorder from the civil war in Yemen by dramatically escalating a CIA-led drone bombing campaign.

In a sense this is nothing new as the US has been bombing Yemen for the last two years, including one attack using cluster bombs that killed dozens of civilians. But what's new is that this will be a CIA drone attack program that

is a massive escalation over prior bombing campaigns.

All this under the leadership of the man who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009!

Gladys, Bognor Regis

We're all 'extremists' now

Dear Catalyst,
I'd like to bring it to your attention that the Metropolitan Police have branded your North London Local an "extremist organisation". Also on the list were student campaigns, socialist groups and even the Bootle Labour Party!

The Met made this claim in response to a Freedom of Information request about possible police involvement in the synchronised take-down of around 50 activist, anarchist and socialist Facebook pages on the eve of the Royal Wedding.

They refused to confirm or deny involvement on the grounds that it related to "operational policing of extremist organisations". If this is how the police view political activity, it's hardly comforting to learn that a quarter of the population will be on the new police national database, including millions of people with no criminal record

at all. George Orwell turns in his grave.

Tim, Leeds

Catalyst: Thanks for spotting this! We have to say, very little surprises us from the Met these days, a police force which literally gets away with murder. And they recently charged Alfie Meadows, who needed life-saving bleeding on the brain after an unprovoked baton attack with violent disorder. The state belongs to the rich, and if you don't like it you're an 'extremist'. See you on the streets!

Congrats on wildcats

Dear Catalyst,
The North London Solidarity Federation wishes to congratulate our fellow postal workers in Islington on their successful three hour wildcat strike last week.

Unfortunately, Royal Mail's harassment of workers who refuse to cut corners is nothing new and, regrettably, keeps going on up and down the country on a daily basis. Unreasonable cuts to duties coupled lay-offs have created impossible workloads. Management's response to

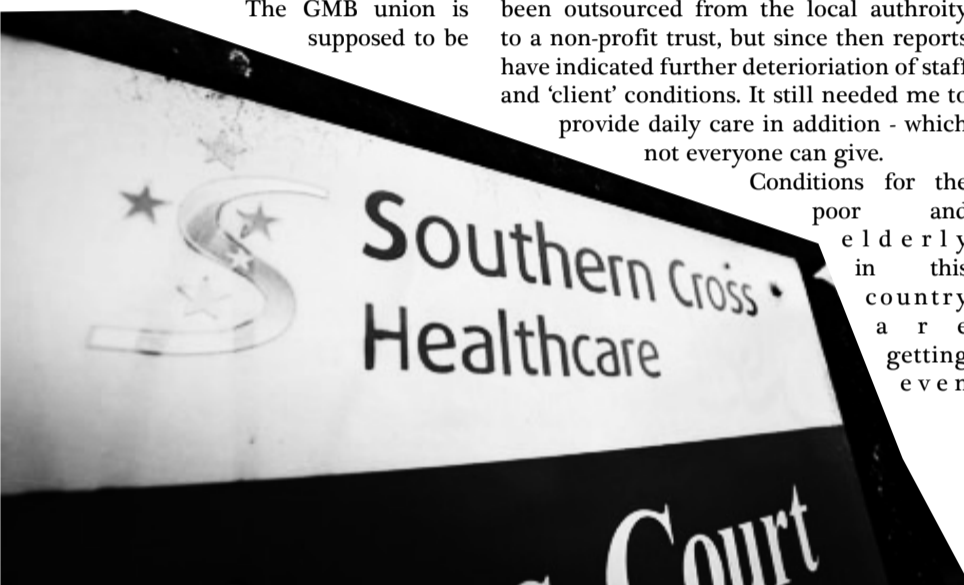
this situation - a situation they created - is to bully their workforce. Everyday at Royal Mail centres around the country, management try to make us work through our breaks, begin work before our shifts start, and stay on late without compensation. When we refuse—when we do our job properly—we are threatened with dismissal.

Enough is enough! Wildcat strikes are our most effective weapon and both management and our so-called union leaders know this. It is time to step it up and Make Royal Mail unmanageable. The Islington posties have taken the first step. All that's left is for the rest of us to get on board. Congratulations again fellow workers.

(by a NL Postie)
North London SF



Write to Catalyst at catalyst@solfed.org.uk We try to publish a range of views, with responses where possible. Comment on articles or current events is welcome. Letters may be edited and names will be anonymised by default unless you specifically request otherwise.



Whether you've got a union or not, join us for a workshop on how to create strong organisation in your workplace.

Learn the basics of organising. Topics include: building a 'shop committee', cross-union activity, collectivising grievances, and building for direct action. What our attendees have said:

"This is great! I can't wait to start talking to my co-workers and get my organising committee up and running!"

"I've been a union rep for 15 years. I've learned most of these things in that time, but it makes so much sense to have it all collected all in one place."

"I love the practical advice. Some of it's so simple, but you don't realise it until it's there in front of you. I can't wait to go apply it at work."

SolFed is happy to offer our one-day workplace training to any interested groups. We've all got grievances at work, so why not gather some pissed off workmates and get organising? Contact the SolFed national training coordinator at training@solfed.org.uk

Graduates taking more low-skilled jobs



UNIVERSITY LEAVERS are increasingly taking low-skilled jobs, according to new research. A study by the Centre for Economics and Business Research found that 6 months after graduation around 40% of 2010's graduates were "underemployed" in lower-skilled jobs, up

from about 30% in 2006. The information casts further doubts over the controversial tripling of tuition fees, which provoked mass demonstrations across the country at the end of last year, as well as a spate of university occupations.

The fees hike was justified on the grounds that a degree is an "investment" in a career, and that the £9,000 per year would only be paid back out of earnings. However, studies have shown that due to interest building up on student debt, students could end up paying back double the headline amount. This could mean students being saddled with mortgage-sized debts of between £60,000 and £80,000 for a typical undergraduate degree.

The new report confirms many graduates' fears that the promised high-paid jobs to make taking on these kind of debts worthwhile simply do not exist for most. And things are predicted to get worse, with 55% of 2011 graduates expected to be in lower-skilled jobs 6 months after graduation. Graduate unemployment has also risen from about 11% in 2007 to 20% for those graduating in 2010.

Stokes Croft: after the storm



APRIL'S RIOT in Bristol's Stokes Croft is fast fading from memory, but for residents in the area the underlying issues have not been resolved. The flashpoint Tesco Express store - opposed by many residents as out of character for the area - has reopened, although campaigners have been granted the right to a Judicial Review. But the resentment towards the police remains, as does the background tension of austerity measures.

As Colin, a nurse and Stokes Croft resident says, "even now it seems difficult to fully understand what led to the riots."

"Would you really risk ten years in jail for violent disorder to ensure the area's distinctive character survives? The anger was aimed at easily identifiable agents of the state, a state that is enforcing austerity on us all."

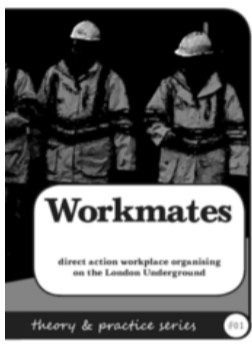
While the battle over Tesco looks set to rumble on through the courts, more than the fate of a single store is at stake. "I believe the media overplayed the whole Tesco thing. There is so much more to be angry about than a poxy little supermarket. The 'coolness' of Stokes Croft is also overstated. The graffiti covers of the cracks of neglect."

Sudoku

Fill the grid so that every column, row and 3x3 square includes all the numbers from 1 to 9.

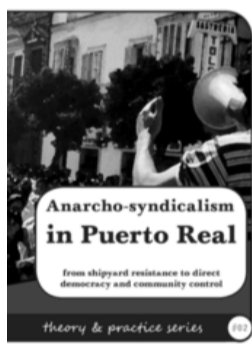
			4	9				8
		9	7			4	2	6
1					5		9	
	6		1				5	2
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5	3				2		8	
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6			3	1				

New: Theory & Practice series pamphlets



#1 Workmates: direct action workplace organising on the London Underground

In the late 1990s, plans to outsource track maintenance on the London Underground were being pushed through by the government. Workers at one depot responded by forming a new workplace group, both inside and outside the existing union, the RMT. This pamphlet charts the highs and lows of the Workmates collective, highlighting their successes and failures, their radically democratic organising method and their creative forms of direct action. We hope it can provide an inspiration to other workers frustrated with the limits of the existing workplace organisations.



#2 Anarcho-syndicalism in Puerto Real

The 1987 struggle against threatened closure in and around the shipyards of Puerto Real, Spain, in both workplace and community witnessed the anarcho-syndicalist union CNT playing both a prominent and decisive role. The CNT's involvement meant that the methods of organising and the forms of action taken departed from those common to reformist unions - with dramatic consequences. Mass assemblies both in the yards and surrounding localities involved workers, their families, neighbours and all supporters.

www.solfed.org.uk/?q=pamphlets

About the Solidarity Federation

www.solfed.org.uk

The Solidarity Federation is a revolutionary union initiative: an organisation of workers which seeks the abolition of capitalism and the state. Capitalism because it exploits, oppresses and kills working people and wrecks the environment for profit worldwide. The state because it can only maintain hierarchy and privilege for the classes who control it and their servants; it cannot be used to fight the oppression and exploitation that are the consequences of hierarchy and the source of privilege. In their place we want a society based on workers' self-management, solidarity, mutual aid and libertarian communism.

That society can only be achieved by working class organisations based on the same principles - *revolutionary unions*. These are not trade unions only concerned with "bread and butter" issues like pay and conditions. Revolutionary unions are means for working people to organise and fight *all* the issues - both in the workplace and outside - which arise from our oppression. We recognise that not all oppression is economic, but can be based on gender, race, sexuality, or anything our rulers find useful. Therefore, revolutionary unions fully support and encourage organisation in all spheres of life that consciously parallel those of the society we

wish to create; that is, organisation based on mutual aid, voluntary cooperation, direct democracy, and opposed to domination, hierarchy and exploitation in all forms. We are committed to building a new society within the shell of the old in both our workplaces and the wider community. Unless we organise in this way, politicians - some claiming to be revolutionary - will be able to exploit us for their own ends.

The Solidarity Federation consists of Locals and Industrial Networks which seek to take on the functions of revolutionary unions - supporting our organising efforts where we live and work. Our activities are

based on direct action - action by workers ourselves, not through intermediaries like politicians and union officials; our decisions are made through participation of the membership. We welcome all workers - including the unemployed, retired, stay-home parents and students - who will work within our Aims and Principles and seek to create revolutionary unions to fight the class struggle.

