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WHO ARE WE?

We are a group of workers in west London, supporting each other with problems at work, job centres and landlords. There are no leaders in this network - we are independent and there is no money involved. Some of us are also in a grassroots union. Drop us a line if you want to meet up, get involved with the newspaper or need support!

SOLIDARITY NETWORK

We meet regularly in Southall, Greenford and Park Royal where you can pop by to discuss a work or housing problem. The idea is to build a local network of support and solidarity - we are not experts or a charity - but we can work together to try and sort out our own problems. Call us on 07544 338993.

www.workerswildwest.wordpress.com | angryworkersworld@gmail.com
EDITORIAL:
LIMITS OF YELLOW VESTS
(AND BREXIT!)

As we write this, the ‘Gilets Jaunes’ (Yellow Vests) movement in France is winding down. From November 2018 to April 2019, many hundreds of thousands of angry people have been demonstrating. At the beginning, people were protesting against a fuel tax that would hit people who rely on their cars to get to work. The impact would have been significant, especially because cuts to public transport mean there is often no alternative. They asked, ‘Why are the costs of climate change not being paid by the big, polluting fuel companies? As usual, the government try and make the poor people pay instead!’ Because of peoples’ actions, the government was forced to backtrack and the tax has been revoked. But now, the movement is about much more than the fuel tax. The list of complaints and demands have grown. Basically, the austerity policies of France’s President, Macron, are under fire. Nobody wanted him as President in the first place. Many people only voted for him holding their noses, the alternative being a vote for the far-right leader of Front National, Marine Le Pen. People are angry about low wages and job insecurity. Because of the scale of the protests, Macron said he would increase the minimum wage by 100 euros a month, he cancelled a tax increase for poor pensioners, and said overtime would no longer be taxed.

At the beginning, people from the far-right tried to hijack the movement but thankfully, they have largely failed. Since then, many people have come together and have also gained confidence from movements abroad, such as Sudan, and in particular, Algeria. Many people have Algerian roots in France, and at the same time as the Gilets Jaunes movement, a mass movement in Algeria saw the 20-year dictator in Algeria toppled.

However, what the street movements in Egypt, Algeria, Spain and Greece have surely taught us is that:

a) focusing on getting rid of a particular leader will only get us so far. As we’ve just seen in Sudan, the military took over instead. Power to the people! - it’s great that they also rejected the army takeover, but at some point we have to build what we DO want, rather than just reject what we don’t want. For this, we need to build our own organisations, have the ability to feed and run things ourselves. This will mean doing more than street protests;

b) we eventually come to a limit against state repression. Ordinary people, without weapons, don’t stand a chance against the state’s rubber bullets, real bullets, army tanks and prisons. (This is where the current Extinction Rebellion movement will stall.) But where we can really change things, where we really have power, is our ability to inflict damage on the economy. The economy depends on our work, so the strike is the most powerful weapon we have. Unless we take our street experiences back to our workplaces and daily lives, the movement might get some concessions from government, but won’t fundamentally change things.

Same with Brexit in the UK. We can all sign petitions and go on demonstrations, whether we want to remain or leave. But unless we start taking control of our own lives by standing up for ourselves against bosses and landlords to change the hours we work, the pay we get, the kind of work we do, how much rent we pay - we will still feel like powerless bystanders against the idiots in charge.
We received some emails from workers at the Wasabi food factory in Park Royal, describing what it is like to work there, and the problems they have been having. They mainly talk about the ethnic divisions in the workforce, about how some groups are treated better than others. It is easy to see why people who speak the same language tend to stick together: communication is easier and backgrounds more similar, bonds of trust form quicker and cliques quickly develop. But if workers are divided like this, it often works to the bosses’ advantage. Here’s what this worker told us:

“Most of the key positions - Managers, Supervisors, Team Leaders are held by people from one language group. I’ve seen many situations in which members of the team who belong to the same language group as the managers have been favoured - by being constantly given easy tasks or almost never being rushed to a new task after finishing previous one. People get shouted at by managers or grabbed by their arm. There is bullying going on, one colleague very often found used gloves and pieces of wet paper tissue in his wellies when coming back from break. Another day somebody wrote “muerte” (“death” in Spanish) on his shoes below his name.

There was no proper ventilation in tray wash. Managers make workers from tray wash also work in the yard - getting from 25 to 30 degrees in tray wash into the cold yard messes with your health. Many people get chest infections. Managers sometimes don’t accept GP letters. Sometimes people get holidays deducted when they are off sick.”

With so many problems, and a divided workforce who do not trust each other, what can we do to tackle these issues, without turning on each other?

1. Talk to other workers who have the same problem. Make a plan together, speak to colleagues who you think don’t act right.

2. If you make a verbal complaint to a manager, and nothing changes, hand in a formal grievance. This is something anyone can do, all companies have to have a grievance procedure by law. A grievance is basically a letter to the company setting out the complaint that you want them to address. Get as many people as possible to sign it. The company has to respond within a reasonable timeframe (we would say within 2 weeks). Usually they invite you to a meeting. Try and get as many of you as possible who signed to letter to go to the meeting. Always take at least one other worker and preferably a trade union rep. There does not have to be a trade union recognised at the workplace for you to bring someone. We can provide someone for you if you need. If the problem is not sorted out, you will need to find other ways of pressuring management (see point 3).

3. If managers don’t treat you right, use company rules, health and safety and food hygiene rules to work slower - they will understand the hint and you don’t risk anything.

4. If you want to make a complaint about a bullying manager, you need evidence. Write a diary of everything the manager says and does, with times and dates. Once you have a list, you can take this into your grievance meeting.

5. If you feel rushed off your feet and need a break, you should take it. You are always allowed to go to the toilet, or for a drink of water. If managers know you will always work extra, there is no reason for them to stop asking you. You have to force them to back off. Ideally, you would do this as a group rather than individually so that it has more impact.

6. It is illegal for companies to give you holiday pay if you have not asked for it. If they want you to take holiday, they have to give you double the notice of the time they want you to take off e.g. if they want you to take one days holiday, they have to give you two days notice. If they are not doing this, they are breaking the law.

All these things need courage and strength. You have to talk to your co-workers, find out who has the same problems and think what to do about it. Even if there isn’t a union to support you, workers can still do a lot by themselves. If you need help doing any of these things, get in touch! There is free training and advice available for you!
Two letters from colleagues at Tesco warehouse, Greenford

FLEXI-CONTRACTS SUCK FOR PICKERS

“You’ve forgotten something important for the workers doing picking. The main problem is the flexi-contracts. Most people get only contracts for 16/17 hours a week. You don’t get any guarantee from Tesco that you can work more hours, but they force you to work more if they need you. They tell you on the same day that you have to stay longer, but you have to give them long notice if you can’t take a shift or can’t stay longer. This is totally unfair. You can’t rely on overtime, because there might be no overtime - at the same time you can’t take a second job, because you might have to stay longer. It makes it difficult to plan your life. Some managers have favourites. It’s obvious that this system only works for Tesco, not for us.”

WHAT HAPPENED WHEN WE GAVE OUT THE PAPER LAST TIME..?

We braved the pre-dawn at the dicing-with-death T-junction where Tesco drivers come out. Most drivers took a copy and seems like the word had spread that there was an article about Tesco inside. Drivers were friendly (thanks guys!) which is more than could be said for the mad security guard. “Nobody wants to read your shit!” The Bulldog bellowed, as she stood in the middle of the road barking at drivers to not take the newspaper. What, since when did England become a place where random idiots tell you what you can and can’t read?! Luckily everyone ignored her which is not easy cos she had such a big gob.

Oh, and one driver asked if we were Tesco spies! Nah mate!

HIGHER WAGES FOR ALL!
BUT HOW TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE COMPANY?

“I read your article. It’s good to see people saying what they don’t like. But complaining goes only so far. In the end words are just words. We have had many petitions and signatures about all kind of issues. This won’t change much. The main issue is low pay. As things stand with the union being tied up with the company, our only chance is to apply each and every rule, health and safety regulation and policy to the letter. As a driver that would mean: take your full time to do all van checks, refuse to take out vans that are not 100%, park only where you are supposed to park, take trays up the entry steps one by one, take your toilet break on each run etc.. We would slow things down A LOT only by doing exactly what we are supposed to do. If most colleagues did this, management would start thinking if they better pay us more.”
NOTES FROM DISTRIBUTION:
AMEY, WINCANTON, NOON, GREENCORE, BAKKAVOR

AMEY, GREENFORD
“The contract going back to Ealing Council could happen any time up to July next year. We haven’t been told definitely what’s gonna happen…”

“There’s an ongoing investigation about the loader who died, it should never have happened.”

“They give you overtime only when it’s convenient for the company. We’re behind on our rounds all week so by Friday you need to come in on Saturday to get it all done.”

“All the other councils are paying their street cleaners much better, there’s always an annual pay increase, but here they’re only offering 2%!”

WINCANTON, MULTI-USER SITE
Pay at the Wincanton multi-user site is stuck at around £7.83 - £8.59.

Workers told us about rumours that the site will close down soon because they’ve lost the Waitrose supermarket contract, but we can’t say if that’s true or not. They’re offering agency workers contracts though to get them to stay on.

‘There’s no point becoming permanent for an extra 20p!’

NOON, SOUTHALL
“We’re workers with the GI Group temp agency and we’re always having problems with our pay – especially not getting our pay on time.”

We suggest a group of you go to the office together and refuse to leave until they sort everyone’s payroll problems out there and then! Get in touch if you want support to do this!

Workers got a 2.6% pay increase taking their pay up to £8.67. But team leaders did not and now taking their dispute to ACAS.

GREENCORE, PARK ROYAL
One guy who used to work at Greencore was badly affected by the cold conditions. It brought on his asthma and he had to take time off work. He informed his manager but did not receive any sick pay (SSP), even though he had a (foreign) doctor’s note. It was difficult to get in touch with HR, they did not tell him what he was supposed to have done, they did not contact him to find out if he was okay, and refused to accept his proof for his medical condition. The case has now been referred to the government and they are investigating. If anyone else has trouble with Greencore HR, we suggest you put in a formal grievance. Any worker can do this. And the management has to respond and have a meeting with you. You can bring a trade union representative with you. Call us if you need one!

BAKKAVOR, PARK ROYAL
Looks like pay negotiations are starting up again at bakkavor. After the poor deal workers got last time, let’s hope things are better this time around! The union is demanding £1 more everyone and seems to be sticking to their guns. Several workers at Cumberland told us about a May bank holiday walkout in the houmous department. This shows workers can organise themselves and are prepared to take matters into their own hands. And it certainly gave management a lot of trouble by all accounts. However, two workers were suspended after they threatened to do it again the following week. Workers need to be careful and smart: with leaders, there will always be victimisation.
The recent terrorism charges against activists who tried to stop a deportation flight at Stansted airport demonstrated the highly politicised character most protests have once they take place around airports. The protests are politically charged either because airports are national borders like in the case of the Stansted 15 or because big money is at stake if flights are delayed. Strikes by airport workers are often met with heavy repression because of the massive disruption they can cause the economy. Just look at the damage one single drone did at Gatwick!

Heathrow and its third runway is still a political point of conflict – the local working class population in places like Southall or Hounslow suffer most from the increased air and noise pollution, at the same time they depend on the (low paid) jobs at the airport and together with their 80,000 colleagues they keep the machine running. Currently 300 new airports are planned worldwide and we have seen protests against them in Greece, France (ZAD) and other places. Air travel is a global class issue: between 80 to 95% of the world population has never even seen an aeroplane from the inside.

We want to support fellow workers who work in and around Heathrow – we distribute the newspaper at Heathrow itself, but also at airline caterers such as Gate Gourmet and Alpha LSG and to workers at connected warehouses. We think we should refuse the capitalist blackmail of ‘jobs vs. human and environmental damage’. We need a new society which allows us to take care of each other and nature – globally connected workers like those working in international transport will be crucial to bring this social transformation about.

A friend works as a maintenance engineer at Heathrow airport. Here is his report:

For the last five years CBRE have had the contract to maintain British Airways property at Heathrow and Gatwick Airports. They employ about 130 of us including management. Some days at work it’s easy to think that we can achieve a great deal - hold the bosses to account when they cross a line, work together to solve difficult problems and even extract a healthy dose of pride and dignity from a day’s graft. Other days - looking at our general lack of organisation, trust and fairly regular infighting - it’s easy to imagine that at some point our bubble is going to burst and our contracts, working conditions etc. are going to be drastically changed for the worse. And that we might not have the collective strength to resist it.

One of our more hopeful moments came when our management finally agreed to pay AP money again. AP money is a £100 monthly payment that engineers would get after they completed the training needed to carry out certain special duties. Even though it is quite a large increase in responsibility and workload the payment had been denied to all new starters since CBRE took over from Emcor 5 years ago. But after a lot of moaning and a collective refusal of all new starters to go on the course or carry out the duties for no money, the managers saw sense and reinstated the payment. By working together and refusing to accept things as they were, we won.

We also had a partial success regarding our permit system at work. This system is designed to make sure that any sub-contractors working on site are safe to do so. If all the relevant information is correct a trained member of staff will write out a permit. Once the work is completed, it is checked and the permit is signed off.

It never works like this. Our permit desk is chronically under-staffed and nowhere near the amount of checks that need be done, are done. On two separate occasions, company directors came down to our permit desk and appeared to intimidate our permit team into writing permits that, for health and safety reasons, had been refused. In the face of threats of disciplinary action, our members courageously stood their ground and refused to write the permits until their legitimate concerns had been addressed. On the first occasion we demanded an apology and got a half apology that we settled for. On the second we requested a meeting with H&S management to discuss the issue. Afterwards they agreed to employ more staff for our permit desk. Whether they will or not is still to be seen. But as things stand we have turned a negative situation into a more positive one.

There are many reasons why our workplace still manages to have some small successes and has not degraded to the same extent other jobs
have. Recently it’s partly because we’re employed by a company that for whatever reasons, has been relatively resistant to rocking the boat. We would probably have had far greater struggles in our workplace if a Carrillion or a Mitie, had taken over 5 years ago. CBRE have given pay rises, just high enough to ward off any great ill feeling in that regard. They have taken away payments and benefits but not things that affect everyone, directly. Therefore its avoided the danger of everyone being aggrieved at the same time.

Leaving that aside there are still some things different about our workplace, that, over the long term, lends itself well to a general feeling of resistance. One is the fact that turnover on the shopfloor has always been quite low, meaning that people get confident in their roles and also get to know each other quite well. Because of how large and complex the buildings we look after are, management has, over the years, been reluctant to lose too many of the older hands, due to the amount of knowledge they have accumulated. But turnover of management has been extremely high, leading to a strong feeling of us and them and an inability for management to implement wide-ranging changes. Also, many workers have worked here for 10-40 years. This leads to confidence in their roles and a sense of ownership that’s infectious to new starters. The older staff also bring with them stories of times when things were different, and when contracts used to be better. Older contracts are superior in regards to sick pay, holiday, pensions, life assurance, redundancy payments, entitlements to vehicles, enhanced payments for seniority (called TSE payment £1500) and the AP money mentioned above. The only thing that new contracts even nearly compete on, is overtime rates and basic salary. Average wage for a day worker is £31,000 and for a shift worker £35,000.

New and younger staff working alongside people that have superior contracts leads to a justified sense of injustice. It begs the question, how did these contracts come into existence? And watching and listening to the way the older workers act and talk, its easy to draw the conclusion that it’s not by sitting back meekly and waiting for handouts. At some point, unionised workers fought for those contracts.

All this contributes to a general feeling that you don’t have to accept bullying or intimidation or always do things you don’t think are right or safe or fair. Hopefully, in time it well lay the groundwork for us to rebuild the type of union that won those contracts.

All is far from plain-sailing though. Our relationships are not as strong as they could or need to be. There’s a lot of the bickering about money. In particular, from overtime. It’s easy to say it’s greed, but even though compared to many other people in this country we are relatively privileged, most of us (everyone with a young family) would find it extremely hard to get by each month without overtime. Tempers flaring given these circumstances is understandable, if not inevitable. A short term solution would be to sort out a fair overtime rota that everyone agrees on. However medium to long term we’ve got to realise that our basic pay has to be a great deal higher. We need management begging us to do overtime, not us begging them. We still have engineers today that remember, many years ago now, engineers marching round our workplace with banners demanding management stop forcing overtime on them. Such a protest, in today’s world, is unthinkable. Too many of us, quite literally, depend on the overtime to get by.

Over the last couple of decades wages have not kept pace with inflation. Instead, they’ve been replaced by overtime. This is a precarious position to be in. Overtime can be taken away at any time. A much more secure position to be in is to have a high basic pay with lots of good contractual benefits. But as long as we are fighting each other we are incapable of taking up the fight. It can be broken out of but it would mean lots of discussion about what we want and how we will get it.

We’ve talked about the third runway. A lot of workers that live in the local area know the terrible effects on air, noise and light pollution. However a lot of people are tempted by the argument for jobs. And a perceived increased job security for us. The wider issue of climate change doesn’t figure much when we talk. But some people have an awareness of the contradiction entailed in our line of work. If there was a good pro planet, pro jobs, anti runway union campaign a lot of people would be quite easily swayed.

We all talk to cleaners, security, aircraft engineers, caterers etc. about each others jobs but I’m not sure how often it ever occurs to anyone to work together to solve problems we might have. I don’t think the GMB does anything to encourage collaboration between job roles. I might be wrong, I’m not exactly in the loop with union stuff.

Many workplaces are in similar situations. In one way or another our work and home lives are more precarious. Most of us rely on overtime or debt or charity to make ends meet. By sharing our stories and turning our anger and frustrations away from each other and onto those that are causing and profiting from our situations, we can start to rekindle the widespread, but dormant idea, that we should all have a say in our daily lives.
News about working class people struggling against bad conditions and government cuts often don’t make it into the big media and even more rarely arrive here on the fringes of the city. Below some news against the ‘nothing can be done’ attitude!

WILDCAT STRIKE AT FOOD FACTORY

Okay, technically not a story from the Big Smoke but we thought it was worth sharing because this is an example of workers taking matters into their own hands, amongst mainly workers from Eastern Europe. 200 workers stayed outside the Cranswick meat factory in Preston at 6am back in December 2018 to demand better pay and conditions. One worker said, “The staff is expected to work faster, in stressful and exhausting environment. The pay rates per hour remain the same.”

Sound familiar?! It is risky to do ‘illegal’ walkouts because there is no legal protection for your job, but of course, if there are enough workers who stick together, it can be very effective, especially when the union is not doing what the workers want...

PERIVALE DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Some of us were at the Perivale Ward Forum to discuss the proposals for a new 22-storey development behind the Tesco’s. People have concerns about extra traffic, litter, the new building being an eyesore. The room was packed with over 100 people, and things got pretty rowdy when people discovered that the discussion about the development plans had mysteriously disappeared from the agenda! We found out that AMRO hasn’t actually bought the plot from Tesco yet, and that it will depend on the planning permission whether they buy or not. So there’s everything yet to play for...
SODEXO WORKERS WANT LIVING WAGE AT HAMMERSMITH HOSPITAL

Cleaners and porters who work for the massive outsourcing company Sodexo at Hammersmith Hospital have been protesting about poor pay. Their union is organising this campaign and lots of workers are supporting it. They are making their anger known to management by protesting outside the hospital on their break times - something that is totally legal. Paying minimum wages in London is not acceptable considering that our living costs are high and the work done is important. Without a clean hospital, the place stops running. Solidarity to workers there! Hopefully other migrant workers in west London will support them and get some ideas of their own.

SAVE EALING LIBRARIES!

100 people stopped traffic and marched through the streets of Greenford on a sunny Saturday in June to protest against Ealing Council’s plan to close 7 local libraries including Greenford, Perivale and Hanwell. Their ‘great idea’ is to have ‘volunteers’ carry on running them so they don’t have to pay anything. We need to defend the libraries - not just for peoples’ jobs, but as important working class social spaces. Most recently a motley crew of local residents from all across the borough protested against the Town Hall. Local residents managed to stop Lewisham Library from closure last year so it is possible! Check out the Facebook group ‘Defend Greenford Library and Jobs’ and get involved!

UBEREATS COURIERS STRIKE BACK IN HANWORTH

Ubereats drivers in different areas have been going on strike over the last year (switching off their apps and refusing to deliver at certain times) for better pay. Some drivers, who mainly work for McDonalds, have been victimised and had their accounts shut down, even though they have not done anything illegal. The most successful ‘strikes’ have been where drivers go to the actual McDonalds and have a picket - telling other drivers what is going on and stopping them from delivering too. So on a rainy evening in January 2019 we went to Hanworth McDonalds to support drivers there. This is an ongoing campaign, if you need support in your area, get in touch with us or the IWW union www.iww.org.uk
In this part we want to look at the questions of alternatives. We start by looking into history: at which points in history did the struggle against exploitation and oppression change society? And where did the struggle show alternatives to the current system: a society where we can live more freely and where we can decide together how we run things?

Since the class of the rich exploit the masses who work, there have been revolutions for an equal society. Why did revolutions fail? History tells us that revolutions against oppression and exploitation failed because they remained isolated, which allowed the enemy to crush the uprisings or to starve them. Some revolutions were also betrayed from within. Sometimes the poor formed alliances with the middle-classes against the rulers – and the middle-classes then used the revolution to put themselves in power.

But even failed revolutions had results: they scared the ruling class and forced them to make concessions. Without violent struggles of the working poor in the past there would be no ‘welfare state’, no ‘health and safety regulations’, no ‘freedom of speech’, no ‘equal opportunities’. The struggle of our class forces the state and the bosses to permanently ‘revolutionise’ the way they exploit us. Here are only a few short examples of historic struggles of our class...

Peasant wars and communities – The problem of isolation

During medieval times it was relatively easy for poor peasants to imagine an end of exploitation and oppression: a lot of the land was still owned in common and most of the things necessary to live were produced locally. The lords were only parasites, who owned most of the land and asked for taxes – it would have been easy to just redistribute the land amongst all. No wonder that there were numerous efforts of poor peasant folks to create such liberated communities – from the Taborites in what is now Czech Republic to the Levellers and Diggers in England, to peasant communes in medieval China. Their main problem was that they remained isolated locally – there was no fast transport or social media. They also had only limited access to arms to defend themselves. Most communities were defeated militarily. The revolutionary peasants tried to prove that their communities were ‘following the will of god’ to create an equal society on earth – but instead of supporting them the official church treated them as heretics (disbelievers).

First urban revolutions and slave uprisings – The problem of alliances with the middle class

By the 17th and 18th century many peasants had lost their land and either worked for wages or as slaves on plantations. More and more poor people lived in towns and cities and the global market started to connect the northern and southern continents of the world. The middle-classes (traders, industrialists) became more important economically, but had little political power, which was still held by aristocrats. Under these conditions the struggle of the poor against exploitation changed: unlike the peasants they were less isolated, living in towns and cities. This made them more difficult to defeat. This also meant that their vision of an equal society changed: while the peasants mainly wanted to be able to live off their land, the poor in the cities and on the plantations could not just go back to a countryside idyll. But overall their numbers in the cities was still relatively small and their power as workers limited, as industries were not developed yet. This forced them into alliances with the middle-classes, who wanted more political influence.

For example, the French Revolution of 1789 and the revolution in Haiti (then Saint-Domingue) in 1791 were fought by the poor workers and slaves, but they were won by the middle classes. Both revolutions influenced each other. The slaves in Haiti drew hope from the revolution in France, and the slave rebellions in Haiti shook the entire world: slaves who liberate themselves! In 1789, slaves in Haiti produced 60% of the world’s coffee and 40% of the world’s sugar imported by France and Britain. In 1789, slaves out-numbered white settlers by 10 to 1, there were in total 450,000 slaves. In order to be able to divide-and-rule the state introduced divisions between the slaves: some were given lighter work, some were declared ‘free blacks’ or ‘mulattoes’. A slave rebellion spread across the island, taking on first the French and then the Spanish army. In 1804 Haiti’s new leader Dessalines declared independence – the slave army had beaten the world powers! The problem was that the new leaders mainly came from the more privileged ‘free blacks’ and unlike the slaves from Africa they had education, economic and military connections etc.. They used these connections to put themselves in power and although slavery was abolished, the new rulers could decide on which plantations the former slaves had to work. The whip was forbidden, but the new plantation owners used ropes instead.

This ‘betrayal’ of the middle classes would repeat itself in various revolutions and uprisings, from 1848 in European countries to 1857 in India. The poor sections of these revolutions developed ideas of a free society worth fighting for – but without the power as industrial workers they were forced to take on the enemy
militarily, which often failed. The first time that the poor artisans and workers declared their independence from the middle-class politicians, bosses and traders was in 1871 during the uprising of the Paris Commune – they were defeated by the French and German army, but they had shown to the world that working people can run their own lives.

**The council revolutions 1918 – The problem of international isolation and state power**

Society and work changed rapidly between the mid-19th and early 20th century: more and more workers were employed in big industries. Whole towns were organised around large factories. The system works like this: the only way to keep the poor mob calm is to build bigger bakeries to give them a few more crumbs!

Factory workers knew that society in general depended on their work. They also saw what the current system used their work for: World War I was an industrial massacre of more than 16 million worker-soldiers and civilians for the interest of the rich and powerful. Workers and working-class soldiers ended the war by mass disobedience and strikes: in 1918 revolutions and rebellions broke out in nearly every European country.

Particularly in industrial areas workers and soldiers formed new organisations to organise work and social life: councils. The idea of the councils were that we don’t need professional politicians and a far away parliament to run our lives and no bosses to run the factories. Councils of different factories, industries and areas could coordinate and allow everyone to take part in making the main decisions of society: how do we produce our lives? This experience of liberation was defeated from inside the revolution and from outside – as we can best see in Russia.

In the 19th century millions of people in Russia were serfs: their owners could exploit them without mercy. By the time of World War I few industrial areas had developed. The revolution against war and oppression started from industrial towns like St. Petersburg and the promise of land and peace made many peasants join in. Wealth was distributed amongst all, manual workers took part in planning of production. Poor people could enter theatres which had previously been only for the rich, workers sent cinemas and reading groups to the peasant villages. The news that workers had formed councils and beaten the Tsar (king) spread around the world. The rulers of all European countries were afraid that the revolution would spread and they forgot the fact that they had just all been enemies: they sent arms and soldiers to defeat the revolution in Russia.

**The attack from outside made problems inside the revolution worse:**

* The revolution was started by workers, peasants and soldiers themselves, but the connection between councils in the towns and councils in the countryside was weak. Most of the land that was taken from the big landlords did not enter into common ownership, but was taken by middle-class peasants. Supply from the agricultural areas and from abroad failed – the towns starved. Lenin’s party, which had influence in the councils, said that in this situation the councils have to give up power towards a new ‘workers’ state’.

* The outside attack led the new ruling party to form the Red Army – they disarmed the workers and forced them to join the army. A standing army needs massive resources (food, clothing etc.), so everyone who was not in the army had to work even harder. The new rulers decided to bring back the old generals and the old managers to help squeeze more out of the workforce.

The measures by Lenin’s party took away power from normal workers. They became disillusioned and there were rebellions against the new rulers. The new ‘workers’ state’ reacted by turning the guns on workers.

Could it have been different? Perhaps if the connections between councils in towns and in the vast countryside had formed quicker? If the revolution in more developed countries like Germany had won and sent supplies to Russia? This is speculation, the result of the 1918 revolutions is fact:

* Workers and poor people have proven that even under difficult conditions they can run society themselves. That there is no need to have rich and poor, rulers and ruled. This hope is still alive today.

* Also because of the isolation and backwardness of Russia at the time, the new rulers established a ‘workers state’ which turned into a police state. This has given ‘communism’ a bad name: instead of freedom it meant yet another form of oppression.

* The rulers in the rest of the world were shaken: to prevent revolutions in their countries they gave concessions to trade unions and ‘workers’ parties’ (Labour etc.) and gave money to the welfare state to calm things down; they gave concessions to the local middle-men in the colonies, because if a police state like in Russia can be overthrown, why not British or French colonial rule in India or Vietnam?

**The global uprisings in 1968 – The problem of taking over modern industries**

The defeat of the revolutions of 1918 had tragic consequences. During the global economic crisis of 1929 many workers felt that we cannot take on the rich and their system and we cannot unite with fellow workers abroad – didn’t the failure of 1918 just prove this? Instead the nationalist and racist politicians could mobilise many workers towards a new massacre: World War II killed between 50 and 85 million people across the globe.
But the hope for a different society did not die. By the 1960s a wave of rebellions swept the world – or more precisely, two revolutionary waves that influenced each other.

* In the global north (eastern Soviet Block, Europe, US) the post-war boom and demand for labour had brought many Black and migrant workers and women into the factories. This allowed them to attack racism and women’s oppression in society – e.g. in the US, Black workers questioned segregation; in Europe, women workers questioned unequal wages, being criminalised for abortions and having to put up with the bossiness of their husbands at home. The general development of industries allowed workers to question work: why do we still work like mad and for long hours on assembly lines, producing often useless goods? Is there not more to life than just work-work-work? Millions of young kids and workers questioned the authorities of factory and university management. They took more freedom to be with each other and to be creative. The same happened in the so-called ‘workers’ states’ of the Eastern Bloc.

* In the global south the 1960s saw a massive attack on colonial rule in Africa and Asia. In Vietnam the US sent working class soldiers (many of them Black and victims of racism at home) to drop more bombs on a peasant army than they did during the whole of World War II. Many of the anti-colonial revolts were ‘successful’ in the sense that many countries declared independence. The problem was that in many of the countries there was only a small working class and many people were still peasants – this made it easier for middle-class leaders to establish themselves as the new leaders. Workers and peasants in Cuba, Vietnam, Angola, Algeria etc. quickly had to realise that ‘independence’ mainly meant that only the name and nationality of their exploiters had changed.

The north and south waves influenced each other, but they had different conditions and goals – which explains one of the weaknesses of 1968. The other main weakness was that the changes in production made it much more difficult to imagine how to run society in general:

* The revolution in 1918 was led by skilled workers in concentrated industries and by women workers in urban areas in close proximity to the industrial zones. On the level of a factory town it is easy to imagine how workers’ councils can run the show. That’s why we see from the 1920s onwards how more and more skilled workers were replaced by assembly line work – the most famous example is Ford. By the 1960s the role of traditionally skilled workers was weakened and many factories were built further away from where workers actually lived. In 1968 the productivity of society allowed workers to think more clearly about a world where work is not the main thing in life – BUT while workers in 1918 formulated clear plans and took actions to take over production for the common good, in 1968 this happened in a much more diffuse way. To take over production would have meant overcoming the separation between manual workers and technicians and to coordinate actions across a much larger geographical area.

**What’s left...?**

The rebellions of 1968 created more freedom and equality amongst workers – before 1968 a foreman could beat an apprentice on construction sites in London or Berlin, Black workers in the US or ‘lower-caste’ workers in India could be excluded from skilled factory jobs and women workers could be paid less for the same work. All this was questioned. In the long run 1968 also led to the revolution of 1989, when the so-called ‘workers’ states’ of the Eastern Block finally collapsed.

We often forget all this and we hear a lot of colleagues say that ‘struggle doesn’t change anything’. Yes, the situation in Romania or Poland today is not much better than before 1989. Yes, pretty soon after the ANC in South Africa took power and ended racist Apartheid Black policemen started shooting Black slum-dwellers and workers. Yes, we don’t die of coal-dust in the mines, but we die of stress in Amazon warehouses...

But, the world is changing and today the big divide that separated the two waves north and south in 1968 has largely disappeared: today most poor folks in the so-called ‘Third World’ are not peasants anymore, but modern workers. Today, in order to produce most modern goods workers around the globe have to cooperate. Today, the knowledge of how to produce things is more evenly distributed amongst workers worldwide – which was a weak point of previous struggles. Since the global crisis in 2008 we all face a new revolutionary challenge on a global scale: where will this system go? More nationalism and divide-and-rule? More empty talk of ‘liberal values’ and multiculturalism on zero-hour contracts? Climate chaos? Or another round of struggles to end exploitation and meaningless jobs?

In the next part of the series we ask ourselves about the conditions for a different society today...
We meet on Mondays, 5-6pm at the following places:
First Monday of the month: McDonalds, Greenford Retail Park, UB6 0UW
Third Monday of the month: Asda, Park Royal, NW10 7LW
Fourth Monday of the month: Poornima Cafe, Southall, UB1 1RT
Or call us on: 07544 338993

SECURITY GUARDS, TRUCK DRIVERS, TENANTS AND SANDWICH WORKERS

Recently we helped a friend who had trouble with her landlady. Our friend, her husband and their child share one room in Southall. The landlady put up the rent after the birth of the child, knowing that it is difficult to change room with a newborn. We also visited an agency which provides training for security guards in Park Royal - one trainee felt that they made him pay for the exam twice and that they treated him unfairly. We also tried to get unpaid wages from a removal company, which was difficult, because the boss has neither an office nor his own vans. A worker from sandwich factory Greencore got in touch because he was not paid statutory sick pay. We ended up having to refer the case to the government who will investigate. Last but not least we helped a warehouse worker from Slough to get back-payments for one year of unpaid holiday and hundreds of hours of unpaid overtime: the court ordered the company to pay him over £6,800!

For working class self-help and self-defence!

When I arrived in London I got a job with First Call, in a food factory. But I hated it. Working on an assembly line, being ordered around like a body, was not good for my health. A friend suggested I try working in a hotel because he was working in one. I tried the Premier Inn near Hanger Lane roundabout. Waitressing is usually badly paid, the hours are long, people are coming and going - the longest employee had been there five years. But I had to say, it was still better than in the factory. I felt more like a human being, and the pay was £1 more an hour - around £8.

I had to work a two hours trial shift (unpaid), so that I could “have a better understanding of the job”. I had to agree, otherwise I wouldn’t have got the job. During this time I was under evaluation by the manager. Breaks were unpaid and no bank holidays supplement. One major problem was that there weren’t actually any breaks! As you’re supposed to serve others, your own needs have to be postponed until there is a small gap where you can drink some water, go to the toilet or just stop moving around and rest a bit. In these stolen moments the bar personnel or the cooks used to chat to each other. You can feel like a person again. I also felt disappointed about the fact that they didn’t feed us - which is common in waitressing jobs. We weren’t allowed to eat there for free, even though we worked for eight hours without a proper break. All that physical work demands food! We were just allowed to drink cheap soda or coke, nothing more. I have never been in such a scrooge place! Well, maybe once, when I worked in a hotel where they wanted the workers to eat the leftovers of the customer’s buffet from the day before!!

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Another bad aspect of the job was how the male customers behaved to us women workers. One of my colleagues was grabbed by her waist. We were aware of how some customers were looking at us, with their mouths open and saliva dribbling out. You can’t avoid people looking at you, but maybe it’s good to look back at them as if to say, ‘What the hell are you looking at?!’ When that customer touched my workmate we didn’t manage to respond in the moment. Later, some of the waiters told him that this behaviour was not allowed.

I felt very sorry for my colleague and I started thinking about the pre-conditions for these kinds of things to happen. Basically, as women serving, some of the male customers thought we’d do other kinds of ‘services’. Always having to please and smile at the customers is sometimes wrongly understood, but that is just part of the role of a servant, which already implies a lot of submission. It’s amazing how this society sets some people to serve others, when we could be self-sufficient to serve ourselves and take the plates to the washing point. This way we would break the ideas of some people having to serve others, in favour of being more independent human beings.
W kolejnych częściach podręcznika pojawia się proces zanurzenia społeczeństwa w depresji. Państwo stało się narzędziem pracy, które jest prowadzone przez konsorcjum banków i funduszy. W ten sposób, państwo zostało zaciągnięte w sieć zależności finansowych, które prowadzą do bankructwa.

Zadłużenie posadowe: Zadłużenie posadowe jest jednym z głównych elementów kryzysu. Państwo, zbyt zależne od banków i funduszy, zostało zaciągnięte w długowe narzędzie powodujące depresję gospodarczą. Gdy państwo nie ma kontroli nad swoimi finansami, to spadają rentowność i rośnie ryzyko bankructwa.

Kryzys: Zagrażenie dla planety

Kryzys jest wyrażeniem depresji gospodarczej. W ten sposób, kryzys jest nie tylko problemem ekonomicznym, ale również ekologicznym. Kryzys powoduje zanieczyszczenie środowiska, a także wzrost emisji gazów cieplarnianych, które przyczyniają się do z糗nienia klimatu.

Rolne i przemysłowe produkcja jest jednym z głównych źródeł emisji gazów cieplarnianych. W tym celu, należy zrezygnować z intensywnej produkcji rolniczej i przemysłowej, a także z использовaniem energii z węgla i sztucznych substancji chemicznych.

Finansowe

Kryzys jest również problemem finansowym. W ten sposób, kryzys jest wynikiem nieefektywnej polityki finansowej, która prowadzi do wzrostu długu publicznego i spadku rentowności. Gdy państwo nie jest w stanie kontrolować swoich finansów, to spadają rentowność i rośnie ryzyko bankructwa.

Podsumowując

Kryzys jest wyrażeniem depresji gospodarczej i ekologicznej. W tym celu, należy zrezygnować z intensywnej produkcji rolniczej i przemysłowej, a także z использованием energii z węgla i sztucznych substancji chemicznych. Gdy państwo nie jest w stanie kontrolować swoich finansów, to spadają rentowność i rośnie ryzyko bankructwa.

Nieodwrocne

Dług konsumerski i obligacje skarbowe powinny oliwić maszyny i ją napędzać. Od lat 70. dług powiększa się w zatrważającą szybkością. Jeśli to wszystko zawodzi, państwo stara się kierować gospodarką samodzielnie poprzez nacjonalizację przemysłu. To stało się w Związku Radzieckim w latach 20-tych i w zachodnich gospodarkach w latach 50-tych.

Niezależność polityki

Wybory i politycy to farsa. Problemem wydaje się być brak alternatywy na horyzoncie, co oznacza pesymizm i depresję są najbardziej rozprzestrzenionymi chorobami wśród klasy pracującej. Jaki sens ma życie w świecie kiepskich zawodów i ciągłej rywalizacji? Czym jest przyjaźń bez wolnego czasu? Czy jest możliwe żyć w otwartej społeczności z innymi ludźmi?
W pierwszej części omówiliśmy genezę obecnego systemu. Fakt, że nasze życie bazuje na pracy zarobkowej (pensji), fakt, że musimy płacić pieniędzmi za produkty, fakt, że firmy istnieją, żeby generować zysk i istnienie potężnych państw narodowych – to wszystko jest dość nowymi zjawiskami. Cały ten system zaczął tworzyć się jako rezultat walk chłopstwa i biedoty przeciwko opresji i wyzyskowi ze strony właścicieli ziemskich.

W części drugiej zobaczyliśmy, że obecny system nadal bazuje na wyzysku tych którzy produkują większość towarów i wykonują brudną robotę na tym świecie. To my utrzymujemy ten świat przy życiu, ale nadal mamy mało do powiedzenia w jaki sposób pracujemy.

W tej części będziemy rozważali, jak system, w którym żyjemy jest nie tylko niesprawiedliwy, ale również bardzo niestabilny, irracjonalny i podatny na kryzys. W przeszłości kryzysy zdarzały się z przyczyn naturalnych (klęska nieurodzaju itp.) i oznaczały, że wyprodukowano niewystarczająca ilość pożywienia. Obecnie, kryzysy mają miejsce, ponieważ za dużo produktów zostaje wyprodukowanych, które nie zostają sprzedane i nie zapewniają zysków.

Warunki kryzysu zwiększają konkurencję między państwami o rynki zbytu i między pracownikami, którzy konkurują o pracę. W dwudziestym wieku ta zwiększona rywalizacja dzięki kryzysowi doprowadziła do dwóch wojen światowych, które pochłonęły 120 milionów ludzkich istnień. Od kryzysu w 2008 roku możemy zauważyć zwiększenie narodowych frustracji (Brexit i antyimigracyjna retoryka itp.) i wojen handlowych (USA/Chiny i taryfy handlowe itp.).

Jako pracownicy nie chcemy konkurować ani walczyć z innymi pracownikami, chcemy zrozumieć w jaki sposób powstają kryzysy, które nas dotykają.

FUNDAMENTALNE PODSTAWY WSPÓŁCZESNEGO KRYZYSU

Sytuacje kryzysowe w obecnym systemie zdarzają się dość regularnie. Generalnie nie są one przyczyną naturalnych katastrof, ludzkiego błędu lub wypadku. W przeciwieństwie do wcześniejszych systemów, kryzysy nie są po prostu wynikiem wojen – wręcz przeciwnie, często wojny są próbą rozwiązania kryzysów. Główną przyczyną kryzysu współczesnego kryzysu są podziały w społeczeństwie. System, w którym żyjemy zbudowany jest na tych podziałach. Są nimi:

1. Pieniądze/Dobra materialne

2. Wytwórcy/Środki produkcji i produkty
   Dlaczego pieniądze są tak ważne i zdają się ‘napędzać świat’? Ma to miejsce tylko wtedy, kiedy większość ludzi nie ma innego wyboru jak tylko sprzedawać swój czas i energię dla pieniędzy (pensje). Tak jak każdy inny towar, nasz czas i energia mają przypisaną cenę. I jak każda inna cena, nasze pensje rosną i maleją. Potrzebujemy tych pensji, aby być w stanie kupić produkty, które my (jako klasa ludzi) sami wyprodukowaliśmy. Nie jesteśmy zainteresowani tym, co produkujemy, ale ilością pieniędzy nam wypłaconą. Pieniądze symbolizują relacje, w której ci, którzy produkują nie są właścicielami tego, co produkują.

3. Władza polityczna/masy pracownicze
   Większość ludzi spędza swoje życie pracując i nie ma nic do powiedzenia na temat tego, jak organizowana jest ich praca. To również oznacza, że mają bardzo mało do powiedzenia na temat tego, jak zorganizowane jest społeczeństwo. Państwo jest silną, na którą nie mamy wpływu i robione jest wszystko aby tak pozostało. Aby utrzymać potencjalnie silną masę ludzką w ryzach, stosowana jest metoda ‘dziel i rządź’. Niektórzy z nas zatrudnieni są jako ci, którzy pilnują, kontrolują czy też administrują organizację pracy – to daje im poczucie władzy. Na dłuższą metwę oznacza to rozwój i marnotrawienie zasobów społeczeństwa.

Podział pomiędzy produktami a ich ceną, pomiędzy produkującymi a kontrolą produkcji, jak i pomiędzy masy pracujących a państwem prowadzi do różnych form kryzysów.
Kim jesteśmy?

Jesteśmy kolektywem pracowników z zachodniego Londynu, wspierającym się nawzajem w problemach w pracy, z job centres i właścicielami domów. Nie mamy liderów - jesteśmy niezależni i nie robimy tego dla pieniędzy. Skontaktuj się z nami, jeśli chcesz nas spotkać, dołączyć lub potrzebujesz pomocy! angryworkersworld@gmail.com

SOLIDARITY NETWORK

Zadzwoń na 07544 338993 lub odwiedź naszą stronę, aby dowiedzieć się, gdzie spotkanie można przeprowadzić. Jest to miejsce spotkania, gdzie można wysłuchać problemów, z którymi staniemy, a następnie wspólnie poszukamy rozwiązania. Naszym celem jest utworzenie sieci wsparcia, w której każdy może pomóc innym. Poniżej znajduje się lista miejsc, gdzie spotkania odbywają się regularnie:

- Southall, Greenford i Park Royal, gdzie możesz skonsultować problemy z pracą lub mieszkaniem
- Znajdź nas na Southall, Greenford i Park Royal.

Oferujemy również pomoc w problemach z prawa, prawa do mieszkania i prawa do pracy. W przypadku problemów z job centres, nasza grupa jest gotowa pomóc wobec nich. W tej grupie nie masz doświadczenia, ale możesz pomóc innym. Jedyną rzeczą, na którą polecamy, jest regułarny pośrednik, który może pomóc w rozwiązaniu problemu.

angryworkersworld@gmail.com