

# WORKERS WILD WEST



WORKERS **WILD WEST** DARMOWA GAZETA - GREENFORD, PARK ROYAL, SOUTHALL, HEATHROW. ISSUE 7. NIKT NAS NIE ZBAWI, DLATEGO MUSIMY POLEGAĆ NA SOBIE!

Srodka:  
Strona 2: Batagan, w którym jesteśmy  
- i jakie mamy wyjście?

## Solidarity Network

Jesteśmy kolektywem pracowników z zachodniego Londynu, wspierającym się nawzajem w problemach w pracy, z job centers 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](mailto:angryworkersworld@gmail.com)

Spotykamy się regularnie na Southall, Greenford i Park Royal, gdzie możesz przysiąc i skonsultować z nami problemy z pracą lub mieszkaniem. Naszym celem jest budowanie sieci wzajemnej pomocy i solidarności - nie jesteśmy ekspertami ani organizacją charytatywną - ale możemy działać razem aby rozwiązać nasze własne problemy.

Zadzwoń na 7544 338993 lub odwiedź naszą stronę, żeby dowiedzieć się kiedy i gdzie się spotykamy

[www.workerswildwest.wordpress.com](http://www.workerswildwest.wordpress.com) | [angryworkersworld@gmail.com](mailto:angryworkersworld@gmail.com)

# WORKERS WILD WEST



WORKERS **WILD WEST** - FREE NEWSPAPER FOR GREENFORD, PARK ROYAL, SOUTHALL, HEATHROW. ISSUE 7  
**NOBODY'S GONNA SAVE US, SO LET'S LOOK OUT FOR EACH OTHER!**

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## Who are we?

We are a coordination 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. 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. Together, we will try and find a way to solve it. The idea is to build a local network of mutual aid 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 or check out our website for meeting times and places.

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# LOW WAGES, LONG HOURS, MANAGEMENT BULLIES: NOTHING CAN BE DONE?! - SOMETHING IS BEING DONE!

## Examples from Adelie in Southall, Royal Mail in Greenford, Sofology in Park Royal and XPO/House of Fraser in Milton Keynes

**"All you do is complain. If you don't like it, you can find another job."**

**"Things are bad, but that's how things are."**

**"You would need unity amongst workers, but that will never happen."**

**"I would do something, but no one else will."**

We hear this a lot. We also see people looking for so-called 'experts' to help them.

**"Perhaps a lawyer could use the law to improve our situation."**

**"The politicians will raise the minimum wage again."**

**"We need journalists and the media to write about us!"**

What we don't hear much about is groups of workers taking steps together to show management that they've had enough. We don't hear about this, because it happens behind closed doors. The media doesn't know about it and are not so interested unless it involves some big-name companies or there is an all-out strike, which in these parts, is rare...

During the last few months we have met workers from four companies who have told us about small steps they have taken together. Not all workers got involved, but enough workers to show some strength to management. They didn't need any outside help for this, no expensive lawyers. It had some results and it created a better atmosphere at work because workers trusted each other more.

Groups of workers refused to work overtime without an extra break. Groups of workers went to the management office together, asking for better work uniforms. Group of workers complained about not being paid for their overtime. There are a thousand things groups of workers can do to create more space for themselves and get back some dignity.

We have to hear and share more of these stories. We have to start from these small steps and discuss how we can make them bigger. If you have a story to share, send it to us:

**angryworkersworld@gmail.com**

## Adelie sandwich factory workers in Southall walk on the boss

Adelie is a medium sized factory that makes sandwiches, wraps and salads that are sold in shops, supermarkets, cafe's, aeroplanes and other businesses across the UK. They

are behind lots of different brands so you've probably eaten something from Adelie without even realising it. They make 3 million products every week...

**adelie**  
a fresher way

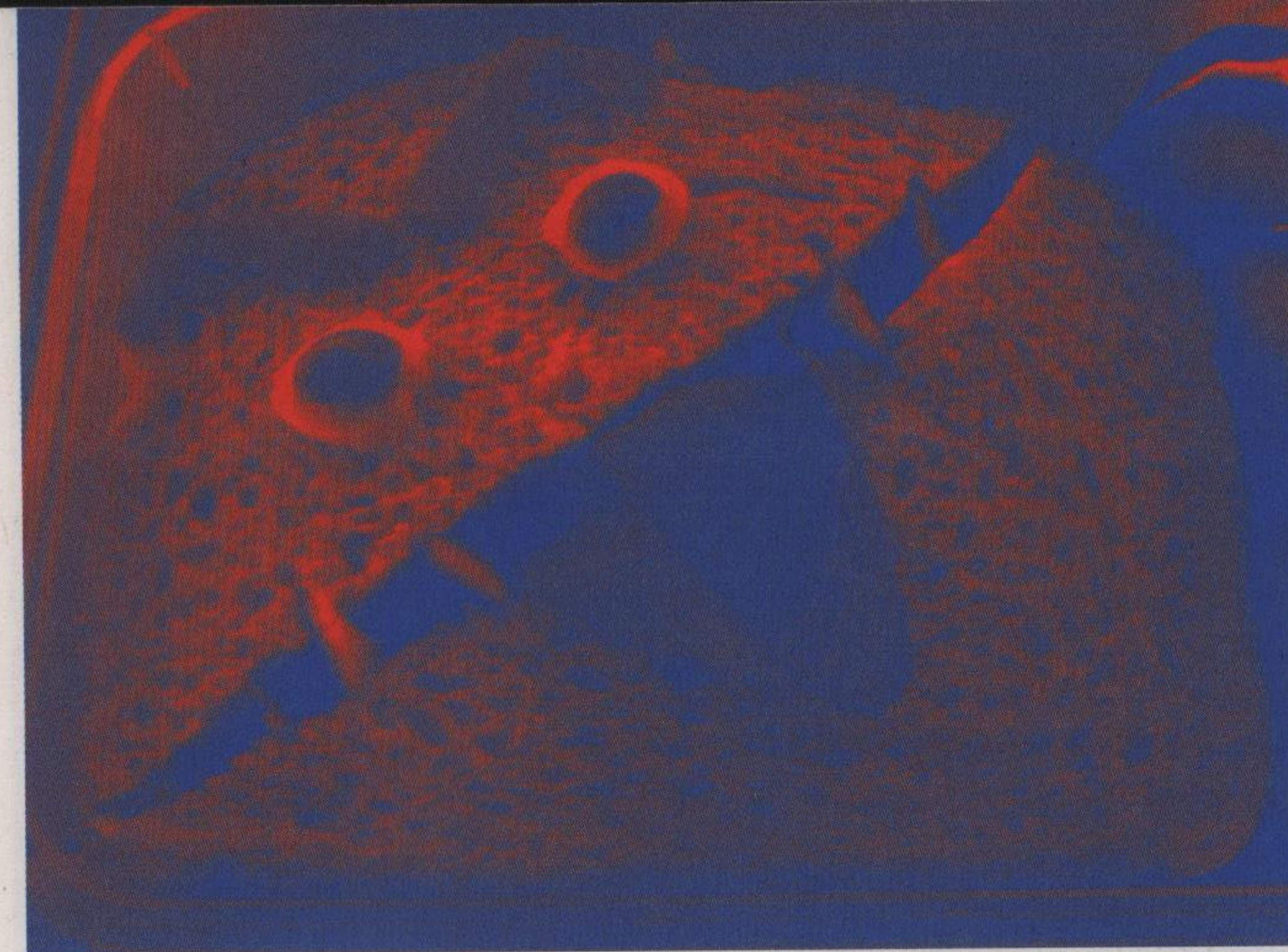
So they're not some back-yard company! But it is ironic that they promote an anti-slavery statement on their website when workers we've spoken say they are treated like slaves. The conditions at the site in Southall are probably as bad as they can get when companies largely operate legally. This means:

- minimum wage of £7.50 for most workers on the assembly lines who prepare the food; after working for the company for 5, 10, 15 years!
- no regular working hours even though most are permanent staff. They never know when they will finish work - it could be 4pm or 9pm, which makes childcare and family responsibilities difficult to juggle;
- overtime is paid at single rate;
- when orders are down, they are told they have to take the day off as holiday;
- they get one half an hour break and one 15 minutes break during the shift which can sometimes last as long as 14 hours. If they stay for 'overtime' they do not get an extra break;
- break times are also rushed because the time it takes to get through the changing room and into the canteen cuts into the break time;
- it is cold in the food prep area where workers stand for 8-14 hour shifts.

**Can things get any worse?!**

## What workers did

- People want to work overtime because this is the only way to make ends meet. But their situation is being exploited by bosses who are getting away with paying their workers peanuts. One time, when some women workers decided to stay for overtime they asked for a third break after 10 hours. Managers refused. So workers on two lines got fed up and all clocked out at the same time. The next day, nobody said anything to them about leaving.
- Because it is food production it is cold in the factory, plus things are transported in and out, so it is also drafty. The uniforms that are given to workers don't protect them from the cold and the rubber boots are often way too big or small. Shop-floor managers ignored many complaints about this. A group of a dozen workers had enough and went straight to the office of the main factory manager to demand better uniforms. This caused a big stir, the shop-floor manager screamed their head off, but things got moving.
- Workers decided to come together and write a letter to management about the short breaks, irregular shifts and long hours that left no time for family and a life outside work. Around 90 workers signed it, from all language groups, both temps and permanents. Management tried to invite single workers for a meeting,



but initially workers were clear: "This is an issue of all of us, so speak to all of us." Finally a meeting was called by HR. They wanted a meeting with just one worker but they insisted on at least 3. So 3 of them went, but it seems the meeting had no further results.

These workers - most of them women and migrant workers - have shown strength! It is a great achievement to get together nearly 100 colleagues to sign a letter to management. But a letter will go only so far: management is good at finding this or that reason, to quote this or that law that gives them the right to do what they want. In this situation we have to continue acting in groups, e.g. all take the full break together, all refusing to just be sent home unpaid. We can also try to form a real union, where the workers decide themselves what to do. The IWW is one such union - for more information see page 5.

## Don't believe in Santa! - Temp workers at Royal Mail Greenford Sort Centre don't take it lying down

Royal Mail hires casual workers for the Christmas period, mostly to sort the large number of parcels at this time of the year. Many parcels are from Amazon.

Most 'Christmas casuals' are hired directly by Royal Mail through a rather complicated and lengthy process. Shifts are from 6am-2pm, 2pm-10pm and 10pm-6am. The hourly pay is £8.55 for Monday to Saturday day shifts, £9.55 for Sunday day shift and £10.55 for night shifts. The 40-minute break is not paid, so you only get paid for 7 hours and 20 minutes per day (which is not clear on the contract). Conditions are those of a zero-hours contract: if you have a 48 hours weekly shift (eight hours over six days), you are supposed to be available for these 48 hours, but Royal Mail does not guarantee that they will provide you with 48 hours of work.

This year, at the Greenford Parcel Sorting Centre, the morning shift was sent home early (after 4, 5 or 6 hours) many times during the first few weeks. Although workers grumbled a lot about this to each other, they did not say anything publicly when managers announced it. When management saw it was so easy to cut our hours, they did not hesitate to use the morning shift as a buffer. Apparently, the night shift always had its eight hours. Maybe the workers on night shift were a bit less accommodating. In fact, in previous years, when managers tried to send people home early on the day shift, some people did make fuss out loud at the time and it definitely had an effect: after that, many times they kept people on for much longer, even if there was not much to do...

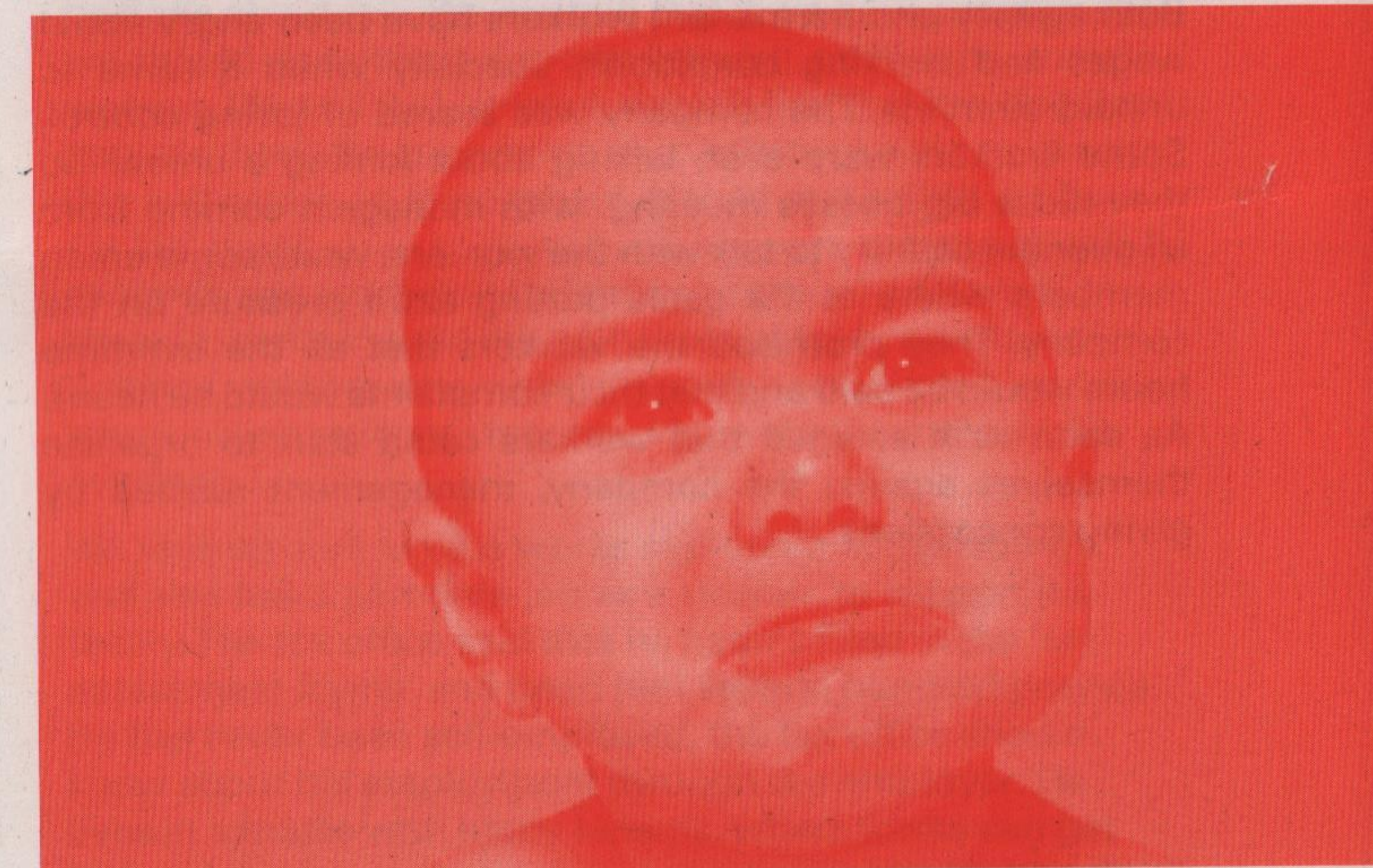
Only the last two weeks, close to Christmas, did we get our full shifts, and suddenly plenty of overtime was available. With the small amount of money we made over the first weeks (around £200 per week), the incentive to accept as many overtime hours as possible was strong. Overtime is paid at the same

rate as regular hours though, so you have to take many hours before it really makes a difference. On the other hand, we had a bit of power now, because they really needed us to accept the overtime: the warehouse was overcrowded with parcels that had to be processed before December 23rd, and the time was too short for them to hire new staff. Also, the managers would lose their Christmas bonus if targets were not met...

Hence, the pressure increased: 'Ladies and gents, we need your help!' - 'Two more hours today! Everybody, two more hours!' - 'Those who stay two hours raise their hands... I want to see all hands up!' etc. At some point, probably encouraged by the absolute power he had used over us during the first few weeks, the line manager went a bit too far. He pressurised several women by telling them: 'You stay two more hours! I don't care if you have to go home and take care of your baby. You still have time to arrange for another carer.' - 'What do you mean you have other things to do? Change your plans then. It's all about flexibility here.' - 'You can't stay for two more hours? Then don't come back tomorrow! What's your name?'

One day, a group of us, mostly women, had had enough. Being on a zero-hours contract does not mean you are a slave - you do have rights: for example, overtime is not mandatory, and one should not be bullied for refusing it. A British co-worker went to speak with the shift manager in front of all the other managers. She told him he had no right to bully us. He said she could not talk for the others - but she rightly answered that she could very well talk for us as we all agreed on the matter (only, her English was better than ours).

Discussions between us began on the shop floor and were continued in the canteen during the break. We thought about bringing all the kids to the warehouse and organising a



nursery there. We had a good laugh thinking of the managers having to manage all these kids! We talked about a collective letter of complaint signed by all of us. Several women who had accepted the overtime under pressure decided not to stay after all. Despite all the pressure, around one third of the workers left at the end of the normal shift.

As a result of this collective protest and our visible anger, the pressure for overtime decreased slightly in the following days. But more importantly, we changed as a result of this confrontation: we would go and talk to each other, asking a colleague if she was asked to stay, or telling someone she had the right to say no, that nothing would happen to her, etc. It felt much better! Two days later, they even offered to pay the break for those accepting at least one hour of overtime. Not all workers established a link between this concession by management and our anger of the previous days - but it certainly was not Santa Claus who had decided to pay the break... We had forced them to make this concession, and there is no reason why we could not have got more out of them!





## Sofology drivers in Premier Park, Park Royal: Road rage

Workers in the Sofology warehouse in Premier Park (Park Royal) don't have an easy life. Sofology is a sofa company that delivers furniture all around London. Workers must start working very early and sometimes they don't know when their shift is going to finish, specially if they have to deliver goods to places that are far away. But if workers arrive 5 minutes late management gives them big trouble! Disciplinary are used to spread fear amongst the workers. Because the wages are low, workers need to do overtime to make ends meet, but Sofology doesn't always pay the overtime hours.

Both agency and permanent workers have been angry about wages and working conditions, specially when it came to unpaid overtime. The company was scared of losing control: Some workers were even talking about joining a union! So they did a big bosses meeting, with managers coming from all over the country to talk with the workers, while some union members where at the gates putting extra pressure on the company. They promised the workers that all the overtime hours would be paid and that their complaints would be heard. As soon as it seemed that workers could start to organise themselves against the company, management reacted by giving concessions.

## XPO / House of Fraser warehouse in Milton Keynes: Workers from Bulgaria draw a line

House of Fraser is a major department store chain with around 60 stores in the UK. Their warehouse in Milton Keynes is run by the logistics company XPO - the same company that runs the M&S warehouse in Neasden - which they want to close down. XPO hires agency staff through an agency called StaffLine. During peak season, between October and December, StaffLine hires a large amount of workers directly from Bulgaria.

House of Fraser, XPO and StaffLine hope that they can squeeze the workers from Bulgaria to the max. They do this by making the workers more dependent on the company:

- In the contract between StaffLine and House of Fraser they say that only 1/4 of the 500 workers from Bulgaria have to be able to speak English. Without proper language skills they think you are less likely to speak up or change your job;
- StaffLine organises the accommodation for the workers. The side-entrance door of the hostel in Luton town centre even has a sign saying 'StaffLine'. They hope that the fear of not only losing your job, but also your room would keep workers quiet.

- Although they don't expect workers to speak English they don't issue them contracts in Bulgarian and they don't explain their 'banked hours' system to them.
- They say that workers are guaranteed 30 hours pay every week, even if they initially work less hours. It is difficult for workers to get proof of how many hours they actually worked. When the peak season starts, the company says that workers 'owe the company hours' and ask them to work overtime. Workers said that they worked up to 72 hours per week.
- StaffLine also kicked people out without notice or disciplinary procedures. A group of four workers were kicked out for allegedly 'giggling' during the one minutes silence on Remembrance Day, when workers were gathered on the warehouse shop-floor.
- With all this pressure on people you would expect that workers do whatever management tells them. But at some point a group of eight workers had enough. They spoke to their co-workers and at the end of November they told management that the majority of workers - 60 to 70 of them - would stop working crazy overtime. They also asked to see their 'banked hours'. Management reacted by easing the pressure on workers and making promises.

Nevertheless, at the end of December a lot of workers were not paid their last week's pay and their outstanding holiday pay. Some workers went back to their husbands and children in Bulgaria, some workers moved to different towns in the UK. We left it too late - it would be easier if a bigger group of workers would still be in Milton Keynes to demand the outstanding wages. We should be prepared for the next peak season, when new workers come from Bulgaria and tell them right from the start what last year's problems were.

**WORKERS  
WILD  
WEST**

**UNPAID WAGES?  
UNSAFE WORKING/HOUSING CONDITIONS?  
BULLYING FROM BOSSES OR LANDLORDS?  
INJUSTICE AT WORK OR THE JOB CENTRE?**

**CONTACT THE WEST LONDON  
SOLIDARITY NETWORK!**

London life is tough.  
Instead of dog-eat-dog, we want to support each other.  
There is no money involved in our network, there are no leaders.  
Nobody will fight for us - it is up to us and our fellow workers!

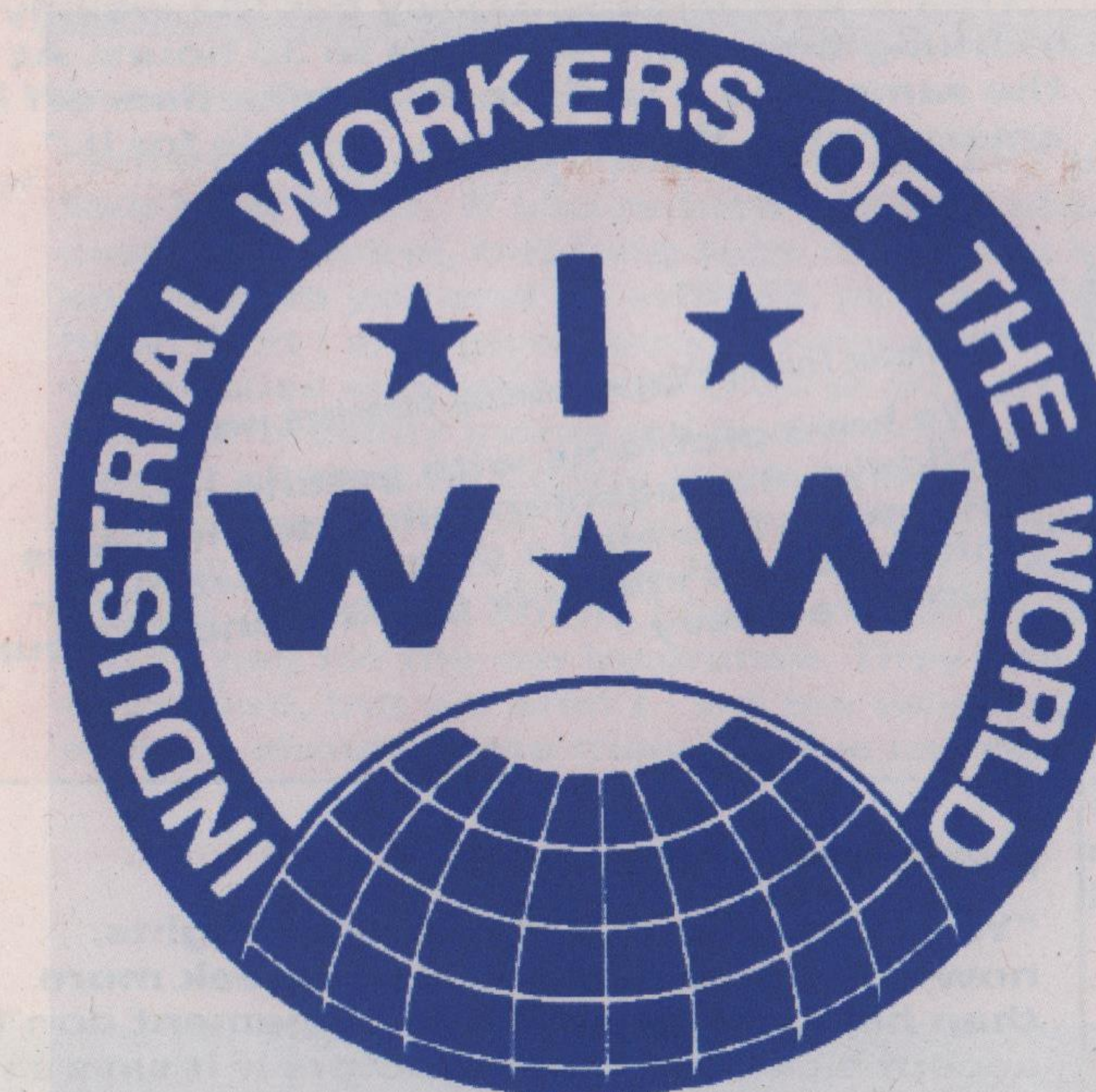
Call/text us on 07544 338993  
angryworkersworld@gmail.com  
Read our newspaper:  
workerswildwest.wordpress.com

## AN INTRODUCTION: WEST-LONDON SOLIDARITY NETWORK AND IWW UNION

The jobs we do don't tend to give us much joy. If a working class person cannot keep their head held high, we get depressed. There isn't much else in life, but dignity and friendships. If we always have to bow to the authorities and if we cannot trust our fellow workers, life will be depressing. In these days of crisis, Brexit, austerity, we have to defend ourselves and our fellow workers. We need to build groups, circles, networks of trust, support and working class solidarity. We need groups that are not dominated by leaders or by financial interests. This is why we organise the West London Solidarity Network and are part of the IWW union.

### SOLIDARITY NETWORK

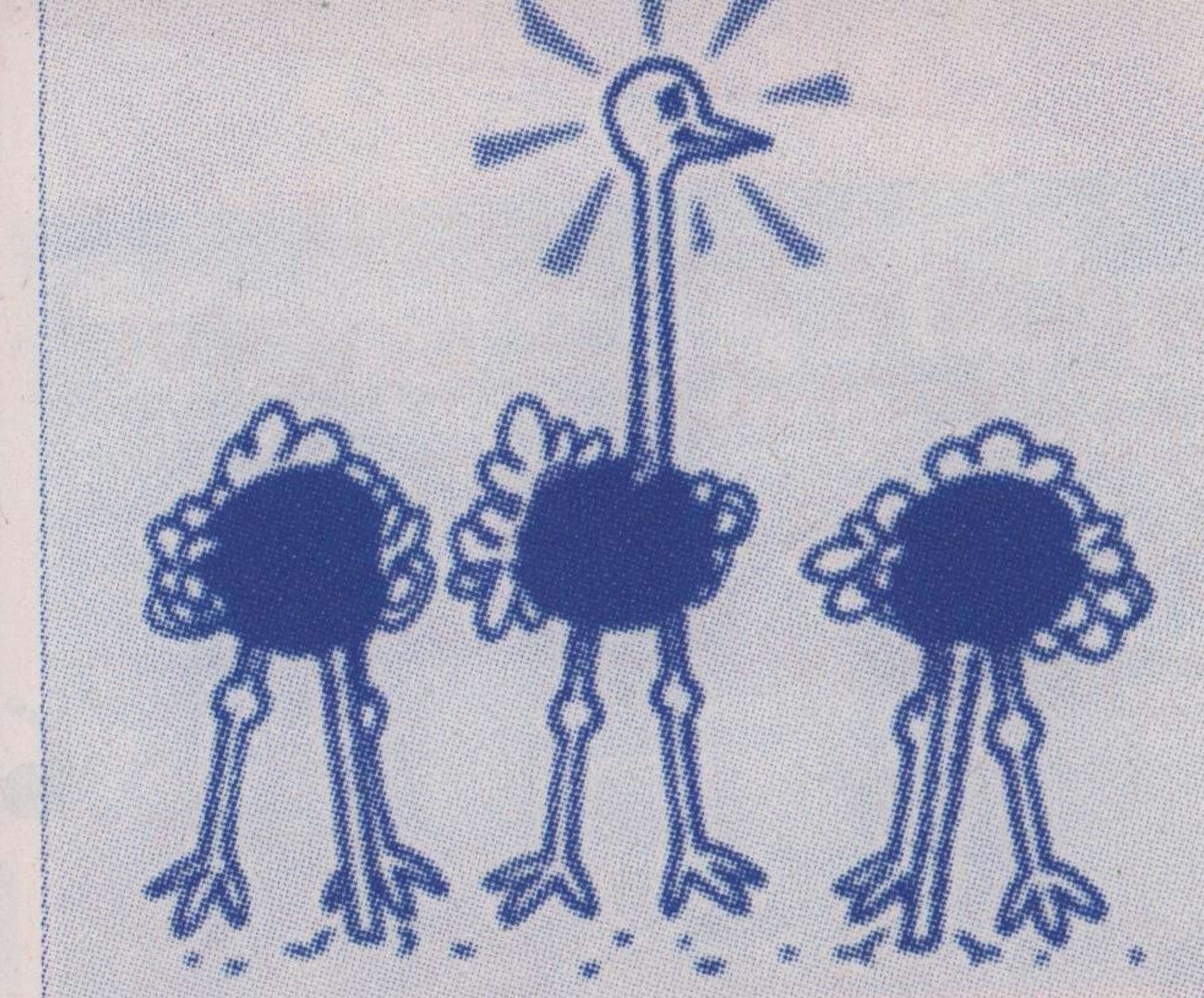
We meet once a week. People can come with their problems: unpaid wages, trouble with the boss, problems with the landlord or job centre. We look at the legal means we have. We write a letter to management or the authorities, asking them to get a move on. If letters and the law don't help we put more pressure on the bosses, for example by giving them and their business a bad name in public. This usually works.



### IWW UNION

This union is different, as we, the workers and members, run it ourselves. We are not after membership fees. There are no paid officials or swanky offices. We use the union as a way to get together and as a legal organisation. If we get enough people together in a workplace we can use some official and legal ways to demand better conditions. If you have trouble at work and want to form a union, get in touch.

We meet once a month on a Friday evening to socialise, eat and enjoy some tunes together. For dates and venue, please check the website or come to our weekly drop-ins.



## WEST-LONDON SOLIDARITY NETWORK: TROUBLE WITH YOUR LANDLORD, YOUR BOSS, THE JOB CENTRE? - WE SUPPORT EACH OTHER

The idea behind the solidarity network is easy. We meet every Monday - in Greenford, Southall and Park Royal. If people have problems with their boss (unpaid wages, unfair treatment etc.) or the authorities, we help each other.

As a first step, we usually write a letter.

If this doesn't work we go to the boss in a group. Often it is enough to tell them that we will make their behaviour public. Why do we do this? Poor, working class people are often treated with disrespect. We are told that nothing can be done about this. We are told that if we have problems, we should go to some experts: lawyers, politicians, social workers. We still feel isolated, we still feel that it is dog-eat-dog out there. By supporting each other we want to change this and create an atmosphere of trust and solidarity. Over the last months we have met and supported many people: students and teachers of a language school who were cheated; canteen workers who were unfairly dismissed; building workers who were not paid; unemployed workers who were sanctioned; tenants who were threatened with evictions...

We recently met E. who works night-shift at Sainsbury's and also has a part-time job as a cleaner, to support his family. The tax office said that he hadn't filled in the 'self-assessment forms' and fined him several hundred pounds. He has never been self-employed, the tax office should know about his employment through the employer. He lives in a house with many tenants, where forms can get lost and the forms themselves are intimidating for people whose written English is not that good. Currently we can see how local councils and the government try to use all kind of 'penalties' to make extra money and usually these penalties (for littering, for not filling in forms) target poor people. We wrote various letters to the tax office and in the end they dropped the penalties...

This was a lucky case. In general just writing letters doesn't work and we need to get together in bigger groups to put pressure on the bosses directly... Things are not sorted overnight, and we need your involvement. But together we can try and fix them.

If you face problems, come to our weekly meetings.  
Mondays, 5pm to 6pm.

First Monday of the month:  
McDonalds Greenford, Retail Park, UB6 0UW

Third Monday of the month:  
Asda Café, Park Royal, NW10 7LW

Fourth Monday of the month:  
Poornima Café, 16 South Rd. Southall, UB1 1RT



# MANY FACES! SNAPSHOTS FROM DISTRIBUTING WORKERSWILDWEST

Brakes, Premier Park, Park Royal, Warehouse worker

"I work on night-shift. Workers do voice-controlled pick in ambient, chiller and a freezer. You have to wear a head-set and a computer voice tells you what to pick. The pick-rate has been increased from 160 to 170 pieces per hour recently. We are paid around £11 for nights."

Millenium Food, Metropolitan Park, Greenford, Agency worker

"ASAP agency sent me to this factory last autumn. They make pizza bases, amongst other things. The agency fork-lift drivers were paid only £7.50. The work is stressful, they make you operate different machines at the same time - machines that flatten dough balls."

EBP factory, Park Royal, Production worker

"Management knows that people are not too happy, because wages are low. Even after 10 to 15 years, you are still close to the minimum. Atmosphere was bad around Christmas, so management announced a £100 bonus, something they haven't done in years. It pays if more people show that they are not happy."

Amey, Greenford depot, Refuse worker

"They recently introduced time-sheets that we have to fill in - it causes even more problems with pay and overtime pay. Many guys have not been paid for their hours. The work load has increased after the job cuts. Yesterday I came back from my round at 4pm, having started around 5am - and management had already left."

Sainsbury's Superstore, Ladbroke Grove, Nightshift worker

"The guys on the older contracts were called in by management and it was announced that they will cut our break time during nightshift. People were angry, but then also scared to do something. Some weeks later the Sainsbury's higher-up management announced that they will reduce the number of store managers by more than half."

24-hour Asda supermarket in Park Royal, Cafe worker

"They recently cut our hours and at peak times it is not enough to have just two people working here."

Amazon Flex, West-Drayton, PMP Agency worker

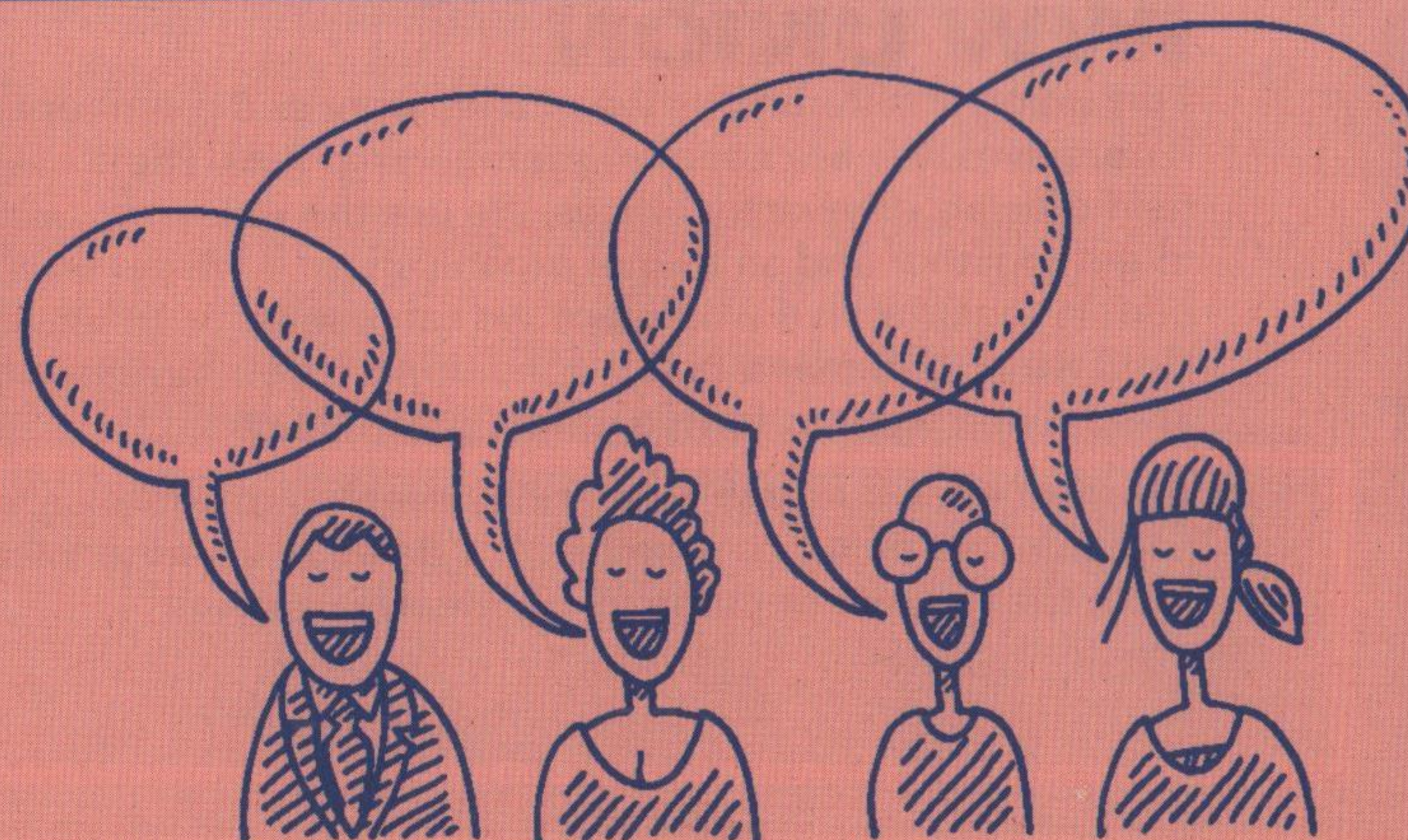
"After the peak-season they cut the weekly working time from 40 hours to 30 hours. At the same time it is difficult to take time off in emergencies, they give you trouble for it."

Wealmoor, Fruit and Veg warehouse, Greenford, worker

"We have problems with getting our holidays, management allocated holidays arbitrarily. It is also a disgrace that night-shift workers still only get £8 - and 12 hour shifts are heavy."

McVities, Park Royal, Production worker

"You used to earn 33% extra for nights, now you make hardly £30 per week more than being on day shift. Management don't accept sick-notes from doctors if it says that you should be put on lighter work. 12 hour shifts are a killer."



Park Plaza Hotel, Park Royal, Room worker

"Initially they only paid the minimum, then raised the wage by 50 pence, because many people left. The pressure on the room maids is high. They use the zero-hour contracts to keep the pressure on. You cannot see this from outside, just the colourful neon-lights."

Sainsbury's Depot, Greenford, Truck driver

"I have been working at this place for more than seven years. A lot of people come and go, the agency workers leave quickly, as they don't get holidays. They don't get holidays, because they don't have enough drivers. They don't have enough drivers, because the agency pays badly..."

Kolak, Crisps factory, Park Royal, Production worker

"Many languages in the factory, Romanian, Polish, Gujarati, ... And divisions between permanent and agency staff. There have been quite a few smaller and bigger accidents recently."

Amazon Flex, West Drayton, driver

"When I worked there you were paid £52 for a four hour block. If you reduce not only short-term costs like petrol, but long-term costs like insurance and repairs you end up with £8, perhaps £9 per hour. First I was given good routes close to the warehouse and only around 30 to 50 parcels. This number steadily increased and it was impossible to deliver all parcels during the four hours. They give you warnings if you bring parcels back and they give you worse routes. In the end the number of blocks also went down. I had to take on an extra-job to pay for the car insurance. They call us self-employed, but we aren't - we are working for them and we should force them to give us regular hours."

London Linen, Iron Bridge, Southall, Laundry worker

"Over hundred workers clean linen for hotels and restaurants. Even after years of working here, wages are still around £8. The agency workers from StaffMatch get even less and often wait for more than a year before getting a permanent job. The drivers pay is pretty okay. The company had been a family-run business, but it has been taken over recently. There is a GMB union, but we don't hear much from them."

Palletways, Greenford Auriol Drive, Truck driver

"There is a lot of pressure on drivers, they sack people for minor mistakes - while increasing the number of self-employed drivers. They pay a bonus if you go on a second round (20 pallet plus), but they pay the bonus according to their mood, you can't rely on it. They also give drivers unequal routes. You leave the depot late, because you can't find your pallets - the fork-lift drivers are overworked."

Job Centre Ealing, Unemployed worker

"I think it is outrageous that the job centre allows private temp agencies to set up a stall inside the job centre to sign people on. They shouldn't give free space and advertisement for private companies that pay peanuts. It also puts pressure on people: if you don't sign on for the minimum, you might get sanctioned."

## REPORT FROM WAITROSE NATIONAL DISTRIBUTION CENTRE (KUEHNE & NAGEL), MILTON KEYNES

The Unite union has just concluded a 2% pay rise with K & N, together with some changes to the absence policy. Pay is now £11.94 per hour for days (6am-2pm), roughly £13.30 for backs?? and £14.45 per hour for nights. This doesn't sound too bad - especially because rents are much lower outside London.

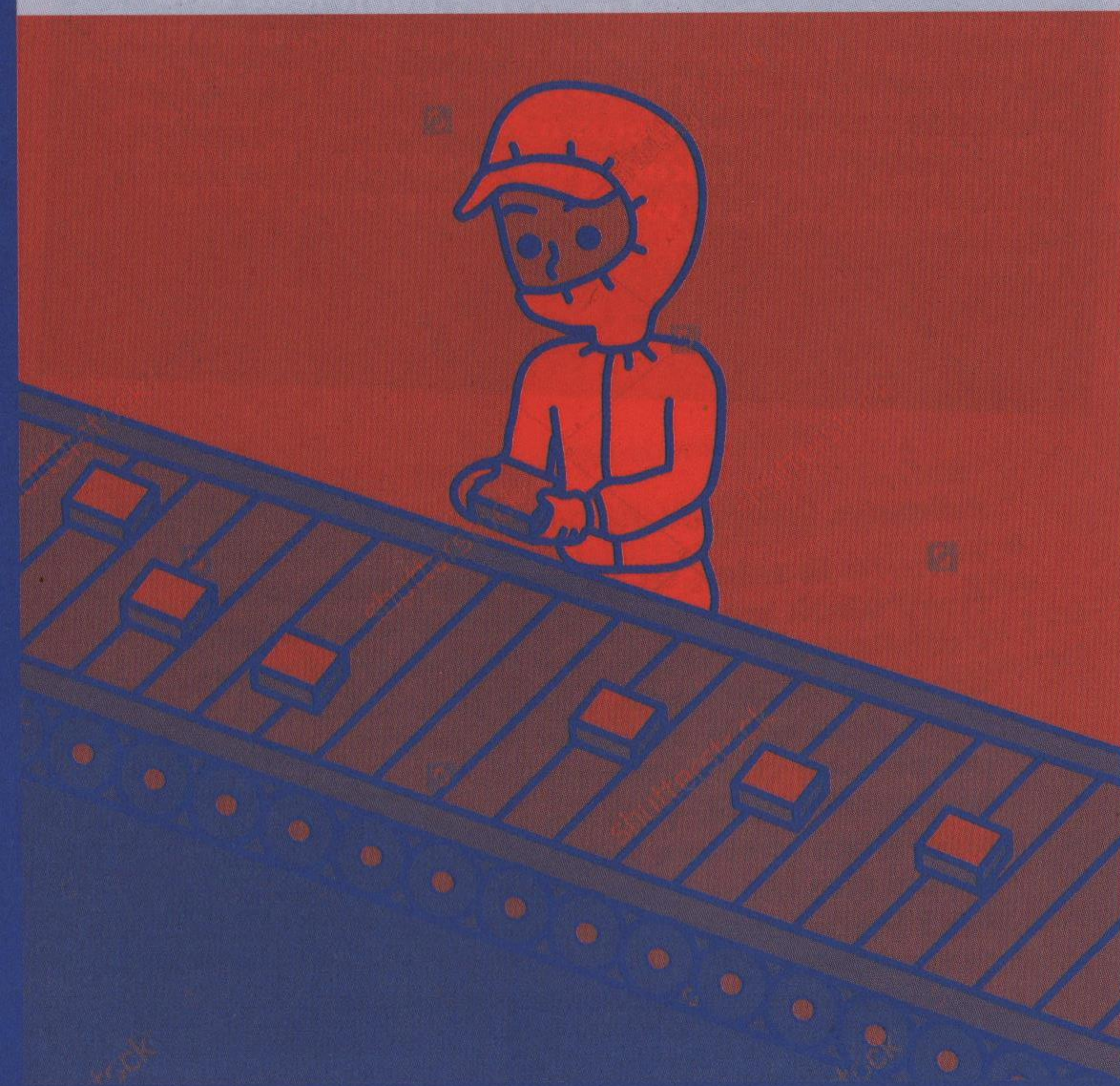
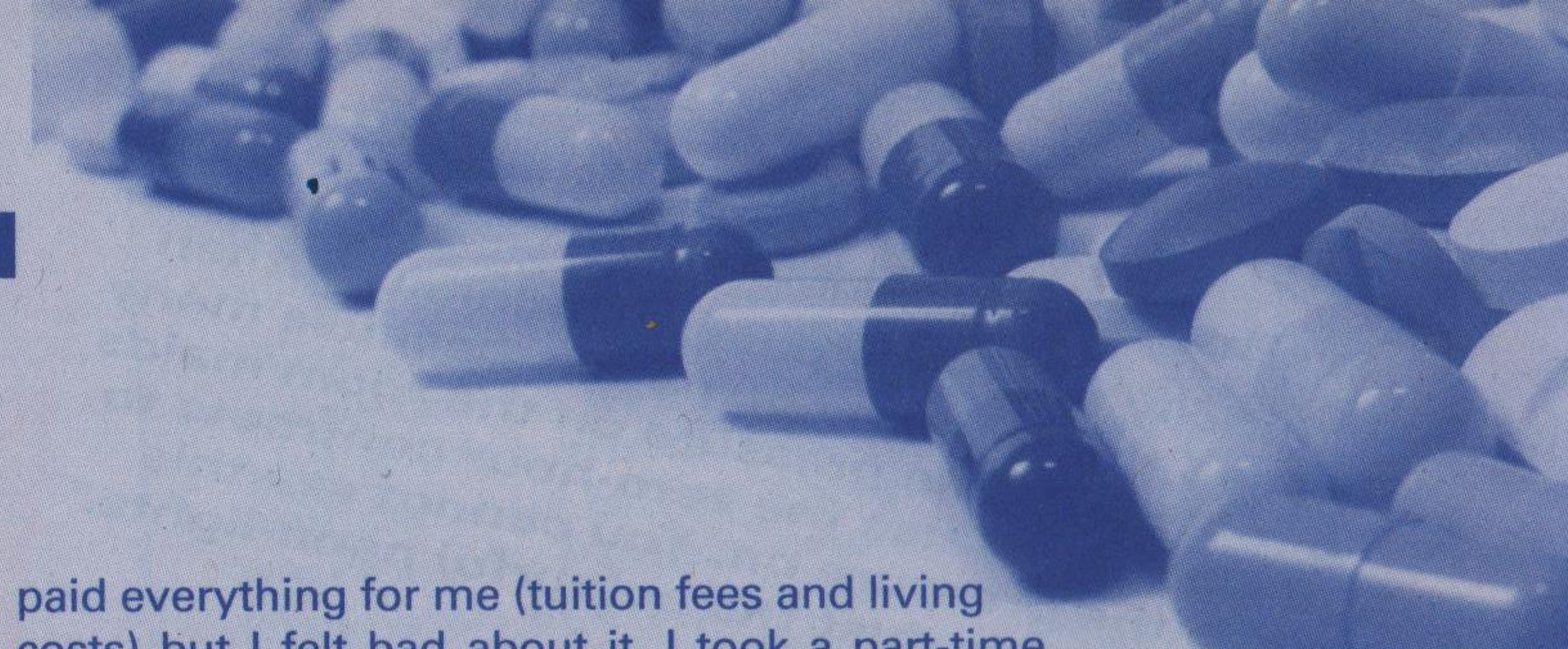
The rates of pay were renegotiated in September 2015 and were quite 'favourable'. But if workers started at the company after this date they only got a new base rate of £8.34 per hour rising to £9.50 after an induction period (backs and nights will accrue an additional

bonus). Agency staff get £8.00 per hour (base rate, with bonuses for backs and nights). So this builds a two-tier workforce.

More and more people are unsatisfied with the fact that workers doing the same job are getting paid a higher amount. This has led to the contract having trouble recruiting full-time and agency staff this year. To cover the shortfall, the NDC (Waitrose) are paying an additional £5.00 per hour for overtime; agency staff are being promised a £500 bonus in February if they attend work every rostered day.



# THE LIFE AND LOVES OF A YOUNG WOMAN FROM HUNGARY



Here in west London we rub shoulders with people from many different countries and in recent years many people from Eastern Europe have come to work here - to make and save some money, perhaps learn English and make the most of the job opportunities here. They are mostly either demonised in the media or seen as victims of the system, prepared to accept any pay or conditions. But we rarely hear their voices, talking about their own experiences. In many cases, they have worked in other European countries before reaching England and have an interesting experience of life and work. One thing they do have is their feet: they are mobile, and can move job if things are not good at work - especially when they have been in the country for a while, know some people, and can perhaps speak a little English. But the grass is not always greener...

Here is one such story of a young woman from Hungary:

I was born in Hungary in 1989. After high school I studied 'tourism and catering' for one year in Budapest. My parents

paid everything for me (tuition fees and living costs) but I felt bad about it. I took a part-time job at Tesco. I was working night shift, shelving clothes and things like that. After one year, I wanted to stop studying but my parents wanted me to continue. I shifted to a financial course. It was quite mathematical, which I did not mind, but it was very boring. At the same time I found work as a room attendant in a five star hotel. I liked the job but it was paid less than £300 per month. Of course, in Hungary the rents are less expensive than in London, but the food for example is just as expensive. During my time in Budapest, I was living in a big private dormitory. We were four girls in a room. The showers were at the end of the corridor. I paid £90 per month for this accommodation. In the end, they closed the dormitory. I lived in the family of an ex-boyfriend for a while, but they were so poor that I felt bad about staying there.

I decided to stop attending college and find a job. With a friend of mine, we registered at an agency who sent us to work in the Netherlands. This was in 2011. We were picking in a huge warehouse near a town called Oss. We all lived in bungalows. The accommodation cost around £50 per week. The agency would pick us by car in the morning and bring us back in the evening. Every day you would learn if you had work or not. There were many Eastern Europeans there. At the beginning it was okay, but then they chose a Polish guy to be the supervisor and he would only give work to the Polish. My friend and I asked for another job. We worked in a chiller for some time. Then they sent us to a place close to Düsseldorf. We lived in dormitories in an old military base. There were people from Poland, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Czech Republic. There was not enough work there, we could not pay for the accommodation. It was always harder for women, because some jobs they would only give to men. So we came back to Hungary.

In the summer of 2012, I went to Cyprus with my mum's colleague who worked as a manicure-pedicurist in Cyprus. I was paid £750 per month and worked 5 days a week. The rent was £200 at my mum's colleague's house. The job was good but I was lonely there. I tried to learn a bit of Greek but I did not have lots of motivation as I did not really want to stay. I could not even go to the sea because we were in the centre of the island and there was almost no transportation. My mum's colleague made me pay for a lot of things. The house got very cold in the winter. When my mum came to visit me, she saw the situation and took me back to Hungary.



Most of my friends and cousins have left Hungary. Of the ones who have stayed, one works in a Mercedes factory, one as a mechanic and one as a welder. Those are skilled jobs and the pay is a bit higher. But it's harder for women because they just put you on the assembly line. A cousin of mine works at a reception desk. She works 60 hours per week but is only paid £4 per hour and this is not even the worst hourly rate you can get. I think the minimum wage is around £200 per month in Hungary.

In 2013, I decided to move to the UK. A cousin of mine fell in love with a guy from Azerbaijan who had lived in the UK for a long long and had a UK passport. He found a room for us in Brentwood. The room was huge and I paid £210 per month. I found a job as a room attendant in a hotel. I liked the job. The staff was all British and they were extremely nice with me. When I left they gave me lots of presents and I cried.

In January 2014, my cousin moved back to Hungary. She had split with the guy and found a Hungarian boyfriend online. I could not keep the huge room on my own so I found a boxroom online for £65 per week near Bank station. The flatmates were nice. They were from Italy, Spain, Romania. I applied for a job in the Hilton Hotel but had a bad feeling there. Then I got a room attendant job in the Park Plaza hotel. It was a full time job, but paid at the minimum wage through the agency. I was working from 8am to 4:30pm with a 30 minutes unpaid break, but at least they would give us food. What was unfair was that if you could not finish the rooms you had to do in this time frame, then you had to do unpaid overtime, which happened regularly. I do not regret that I worked there though, because I met my best friend in this place.

After a couple of months, I decided that I wanted a Monday to Friday job. I ended up getting a minimum-wage, 6 days-a-week job in a chocolate factory in Park Royal through another temp agency. I met my second best friend in this factory. There were many Polish, Lithuanian, Romanians. They put me in production.

I was not happy with working 6 days a week because I paid too much in taxes and it was not worth it. I complained to the head of production. I thought she would fire me but in fact she offered me a contract. The hourly pay was £6.66 at the beginning but it went up to £8.75 after six months. This was in February 2015. I had a lot of responsibilities. In the morning, I was supposed to plan everything for the day, the order in which we would make each type of chocolate etc. There was a lot to think about, for example not doing black chocolate before white chocolate, because it is harder to clean and will contaminate the white chocolate. But although I planned everything carefully, the packing manager would always change all my plans, which was really annoying.

I loved the job and was really dedicated. But the head of production, a German lady we called 'Hitler', was really terrible. I cried almost every day after work because of her. In February 2016, I decided to leave, but I still miss that job.

In October 2015 I moved to Greenford with my boyfriend. I like the area. After a while though we split up. Life was not easy when I was working day shift and he was working night shift. After a while he could not stand the night shift any more and had a mental breakdown. It was also the drugs, it all got too much.

After the chocolate factory, I did a few jobs here and there through temp agencies and then got a care job through a friend. I was supposed to take care of a disabled lady. I would stay at her place for 24 hours, 2 or 3 days a week. When I was there, I had to wake up at 4:30, take care of her four dogs, wash the clothes of his 19 years old son, etc. Lots of things which had nothing to do with helping the disabled lady. I think you have to be submissive to do this type of job. I did not like it. I stayed only for one month. I was paid cash in hand there.

In 2017, I found a packing job online, through the 'Indeed' website. I had a contract but the pay was still only £7.20 per hour, the minimum wage then. I was working for a pharmaceutical company in Park Royal. But it turned out to be more than just a packing job: we had to operate lots of different machines, and they wanted us to read all the regulations concerning these machines, because they were afraid that an inspector would come and realise that we were not trained to use them. I felt very lonely standing on the side of a machine for hours. We had to learn so much but we were still paid very badly. I thought it was not fair. They seemed very disorganised. After a few months I decided to leave and shortly after everyone in production was fired.

Now I have found a job as a cleaner, near Oxford Circus. I feel relaxed there. I think it's a good sign where you are not stressed going to work.

I do not want to go back to Hungary. Of course, I miss my family a bit, but I couldn't live their lives. My parents live in a small flat in my home-town. I could not live with them. My friends at home can't save anything. They don't even have money to go out. The only thing they do is get drunk every weekend. A friend of mine works in a printing company for £2 per hour. Another one works in customer services in a kind of B&Q store; sometimes she works 18 hours a day. My cousin's boyfriend has a very good job, he is a web developer, but lately I learnt that the company does not pay his salary. In Hungary, you can only afford to go in holidays once a year, and only in a nearby country, Croatia or Bulgaria, maybe Turkey. In August last year, I went to Ibiza: I would not be able to go if I was working there. And you can have a much healthier life here. For example, the oat milk I like to drink is £1 here but £2 in Hungary. Here I can easily go to the gym, but in Hungary I could not afford it.

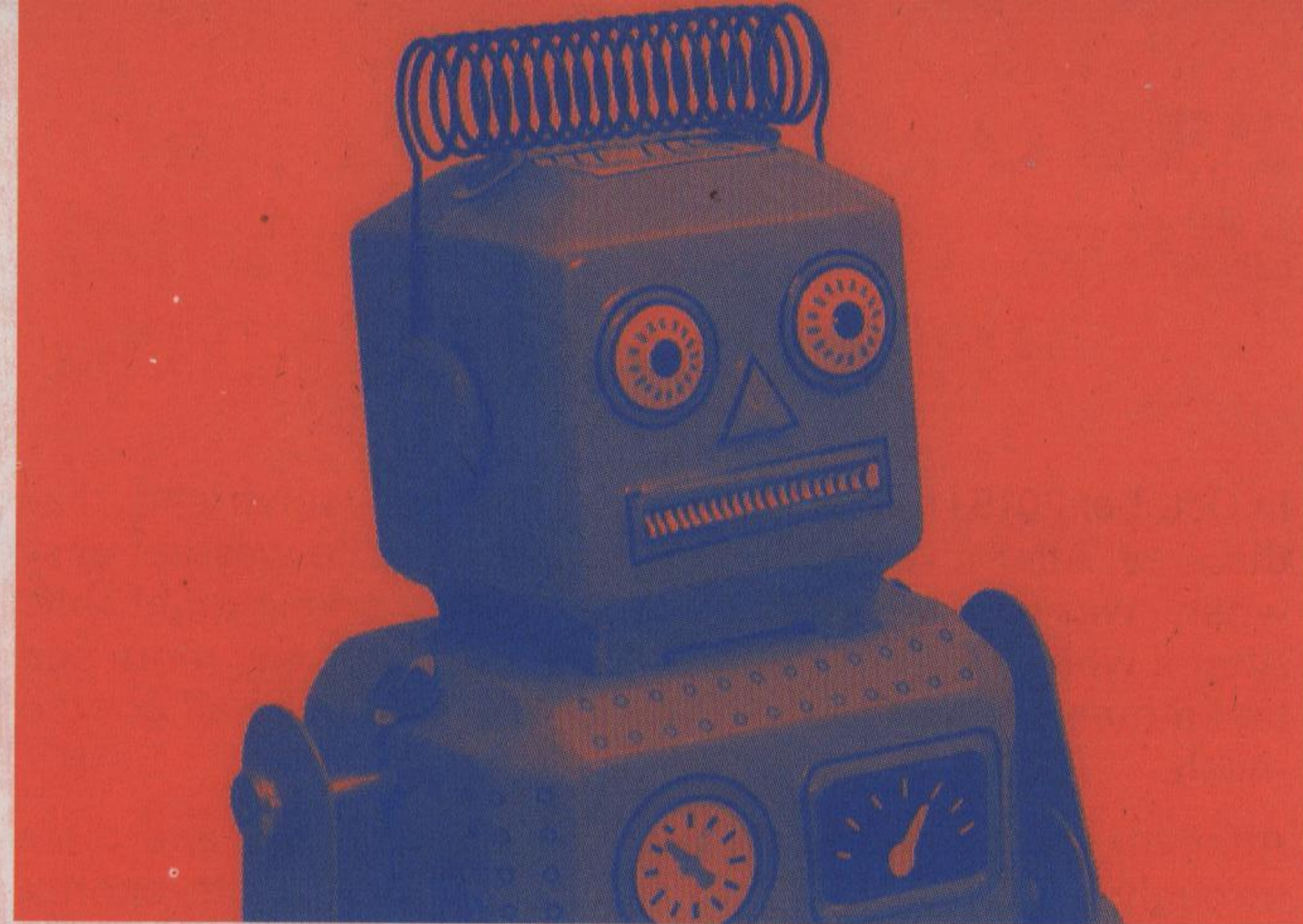
For all these reasons, I want to stay here.

But you have to be strong when you are alone.

**This interview is part of a series of interviews we published for international women's day - for more interviews with working class women from west London check out our website:**

**WWW.ANGRYWORKERSWORLD.WORDPRESS.COM**





## THIS MESS WE'RE IN - AND IS THERE A WAY OUT? PART 2

Whether we like it or not, what happens on the other side of the globe affects us - even in remote places like Greenford or Southall. We feel that most things in life are out of our control: we have little to say at work, our influence on 'politics' is reduced to a token vote every four years and climate change, financial crisis and 'war on terror' are hanging over our heads. Does it have to be this way? Why is society like it is?

In the first part of this series we looked at how the current system emerged around 300 to 400 years ago. The struggle of serfs and poor peasants against the landlords came to a breaking point, the feudal system had to change. The poor remained poor, but many of them gained the freedom to leave their lord and chose more freely who to work for. Most of them had no other chance, as they had lost their land. The serfs and peasants turned into wage workers. The landlords kept the wealth taken from the poor and changed into bosses. The new link between workers and bosses seems like a contract between two free parties. The worker has nothing and needs a job to earn money. The boss has the money to buy tools, raw materials, buildings and so on, but needs workers. The exchange of money seems like a fair deal: the worker gives their work and receives the money that they need to buy the things to survive. This seems very different from the exploitation of the lords, who used the threat of violence to make their serfs work or to make the peasants give a part of their harvest...

In this part of the series we look behind this seemingly free and fair deal of 'wage for work' that dominates our lives today. We don't write this as experts, but as workers who want to understand what's happening around us. If you think there is anything wrong in what we write, please get in touch and send your comments...

[angryworkersworld@gmail.com](mailto:angryworkersworld@gmail.com)

**"IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE JOB, THERE IS THE DOOR, YOU ARE FREE TO GO..."**

Even if conditions vary a lot, we all share a common condition with most people in the world: we have to sell our time and energy to someone - in most cases a company of some sort - to receive a wage to buy the stuff we need to live. They have the money - the building, the machines, the material - we have nothing, but our hands and heads and some time to sell. We don't really ask why all the money and stuff is on one side,

leaving those who do the work with little to nothing. We all accept this, we often see it as the outcome of good or bad luck. "The father of the founder of the company had a brilliant idea." Or, "these guys got lucky on the stock market." In most cases the original money was less based on luck, but on violence. Even today a lot of the companies' wealth can be dated back to big landowners, who ripped off the poor peasants; to fortunes made through child-labour in work-houses; through opium and the arms trade during the times of the Empire; or, last but not least, through the slave trade and exploitation on the plantations. BUT the main point is that through the exchange itself - the seemingly fair deal 'wage for work' - pretty much all the produced wealth ends up on one side!

### "FAIR PAY"?! - BAD JOKE...

When we make ready-meals on the line, stack pallets or program software - the wage we receive is not for the work we have done or a share of the profit the company makes. Even if it might look like it, for example if we work on piece-rate or get a company bonus. With the wage the company buys our time and our strength and creativity to work. The wage has to cover the cost of living: our food, rent, our kids' school uniform. The wage is paid to keep us alive, so that we can work again. If the wage from the company is not enough, the state pays on top out of taxes (working tax credit, housing benefit). Wages sometimes go up, particularly if there is a lack of workers or of a particular skill. AND the wage can go up if workers fight for it. BUT in general the companies will push down wages back to the minimum to pay for the local living standard. This is important for us to think about: for a short period of time we can earn more working overtime, but looking at the general situation, after some time we will earn the same working 50 hours compared to working 40 hours. The companies will try to lower the wage back to cover the basic living costs, no matter if we work 8 or 12 hours a day.

### EXPLOITATION IS NO SCANDAL...

Every company exploits their workers. Why? Because we have to work a part of our working-day unpaid, which goes into the pockets of the company. How does that happen? The wage they pay us covers our living costs, let's say £60 a day. Management makes us work, let's say, producing face creams. In general we produce goods worth £60 within a few hours, let's say three hours. The rest of the day we work unpaid - and once the cost for the buildings and material are paid for, the company makes a profit. It is in the company's interest to make the part of the day that they don't pay us for, longer. There are two ways to do this:

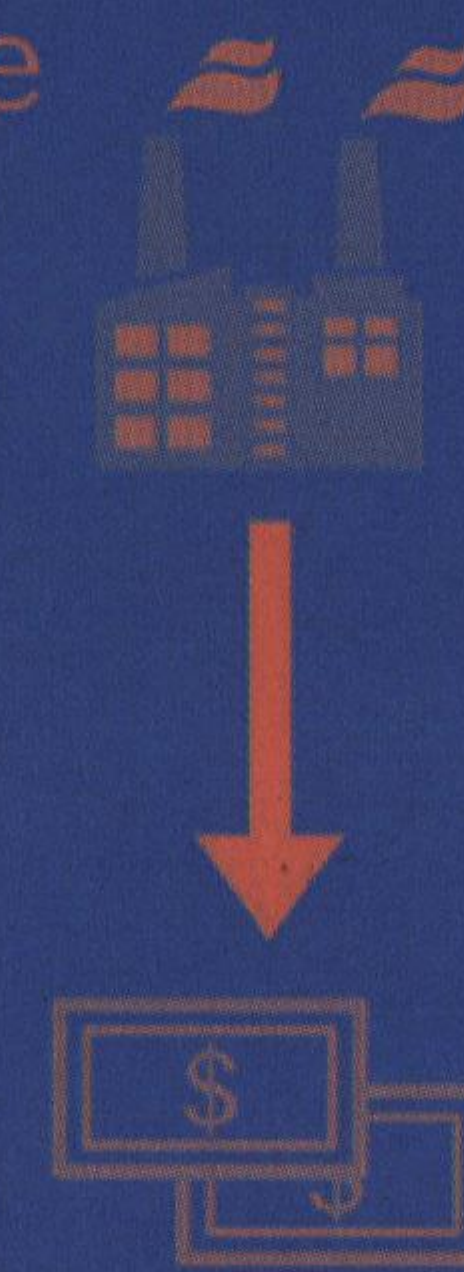
**1** The easiest way to increase the unpaid part is to make us work longer hours. In the 19th century 12 or 14-hour days were common. They were so common that workers died too early and the army only found few people strong enough to become soldiers. More importantly, workers themselves got fed up and started fighting for shorter working days. This sets a limit to how long they can make us work, although 12 hour shifts are quite common again (ever worked at McVities in Park Royal?)

**2** The most effective way to make the unpaid part of the day longer is to make us work more productively, for example by using machines. If more machines are used in general, our living costs go down and we can also produce more face creams per hour. Instead of three hours it might take us only two hours to produce enough to cover our living costs. This would leave the company with six hours unpaid work, instead of five. This is the main way the system works and it has three important outcomes:

# Exploitation

All workers create more value at work than they receive in wages.

The extra, "surplus" value goes into the boss's pocket as profit.



- the company has to spend increasingly more on machinery than on workers, which puts pressure on profits;
- the company will try to reduce the numbers of workers, because work got more productive;
- this will increase unemployment, which will put further pressure on wages, leaving few people with enough money to buy face cream.

The profit that the company makes from the unpaid work is normally invested again. The bosses take the money they made with the face cream and buy new raw materials, pay the rent, and workers' wages. This time the wage of the worker comes out of their own (or their colleagues' own) unpaid work from the week, month or year before. There is no fair deal in this! We are paid with our own product! BUT this becomes more important if we look at the whole of society: not only the wages that we are paid come out of what we have already worked for. Everything that the company owns, from buildings to raw material to machines, are also products of workers. This is the cycle of exploitation:

- we are forced to work for them, because we have nothing;
- we have nothing, because they only pay us enough to buy food, school uniforms etc. that other workers produced; we



consume what we earn and are left with little to nothing;

- all the things that are necessary to produce (buildings, machines etc.) are kept by the companies; these things necessary to produce are also products of our work.

The fact that they own our products gives them the power to tell us what to do as soon as we enter 'their' company. This gives them the power to kick us out. If we try to take what should be ours, meaning, if we don't accept their ownership they can call the judges and cops. We produce their power.

People say "the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer." The main reason behind this is not corruption or nasty politicians, but it is result of the normal fact that we have to work for a wage...

### GREEDY BOSSES?!

So is it all because of the greediness of the bosses? Because of their addiction to luxuries and power? They surely like their Chelsea penthouses and Maseratis, but as managers of a company they also have no other chance but to increase the exploitation of their workers. They have to compete with other companies on the market. You can only survive as long as you sell enough products and services at a profitable price. How can you do that? As a company you have less control over the price of raw materials or rent. The main way to lower production costs per sold item and to increase profit is to put pressure on wages and increase the productivity of workers, either through direct pressure or new technology. This is the way the market system forces each boss to increase the exploitation of their workers. But there is not only pressure from the market, but from the workers, too...

### ANGRY WORKERS...

If we look back at history, we can see that workers are not pure victims in the game. There were battles in each country to reduce the hours we have to work: who wants to spend 12 hours a day slaving away?! This forced the bosses to make us work harder, rather than longer. But then many workers also started questioning why they would need a boss at all: as tailors, weavers, blacksmith etc., workers knew best how to produce things. In order to break the power of skilled workers the bosses had to put more money into machines that would allow them to employ unskilled workers (often women, children, migrants). A single tool or small workshop can be operated by a few workers and they can imagine a life without a boss. But a big factory with more complex machines seem to give the boss a new power: someone had to bring all these workers together and coordinate their work. And if the power of the boss is not enough to make workers work, there is always the power of the state. The state apparatus (prisons, work houses, police force, state-run infrastructure) grew together with the big industrial companies...

### A BIG SPIRAL...

The competition on the market and the increase in taxation to pay for the growing state apparatus forces the bosses to increase productivity. In order to increase productivity the bosses have to break the power of skilled workers by introducing new technologies. The struggle with workers who want to work shorter hours and better living standards also forces them to invest more and more into machinery. So is it not a win-win situation?! Workers want a better and easier life and they get it by forcing the bosses to invest into machines?! Doesn't an increase in productivity also give us cheap goods?! We can see that in the long-run things are looking less rosy. With an increase in investment into machines you also have to make more profits - and the only way to make more profits is to produce more with less workers. This is why in the current system, - where production happens for profits and not for the needs of everyone - an increase in productivity has destructive results for most people and nature:

- To make profit machines are used to replace workers and often employ less skilled workers. This leads to an increase in unemployment. Unemployment puts more



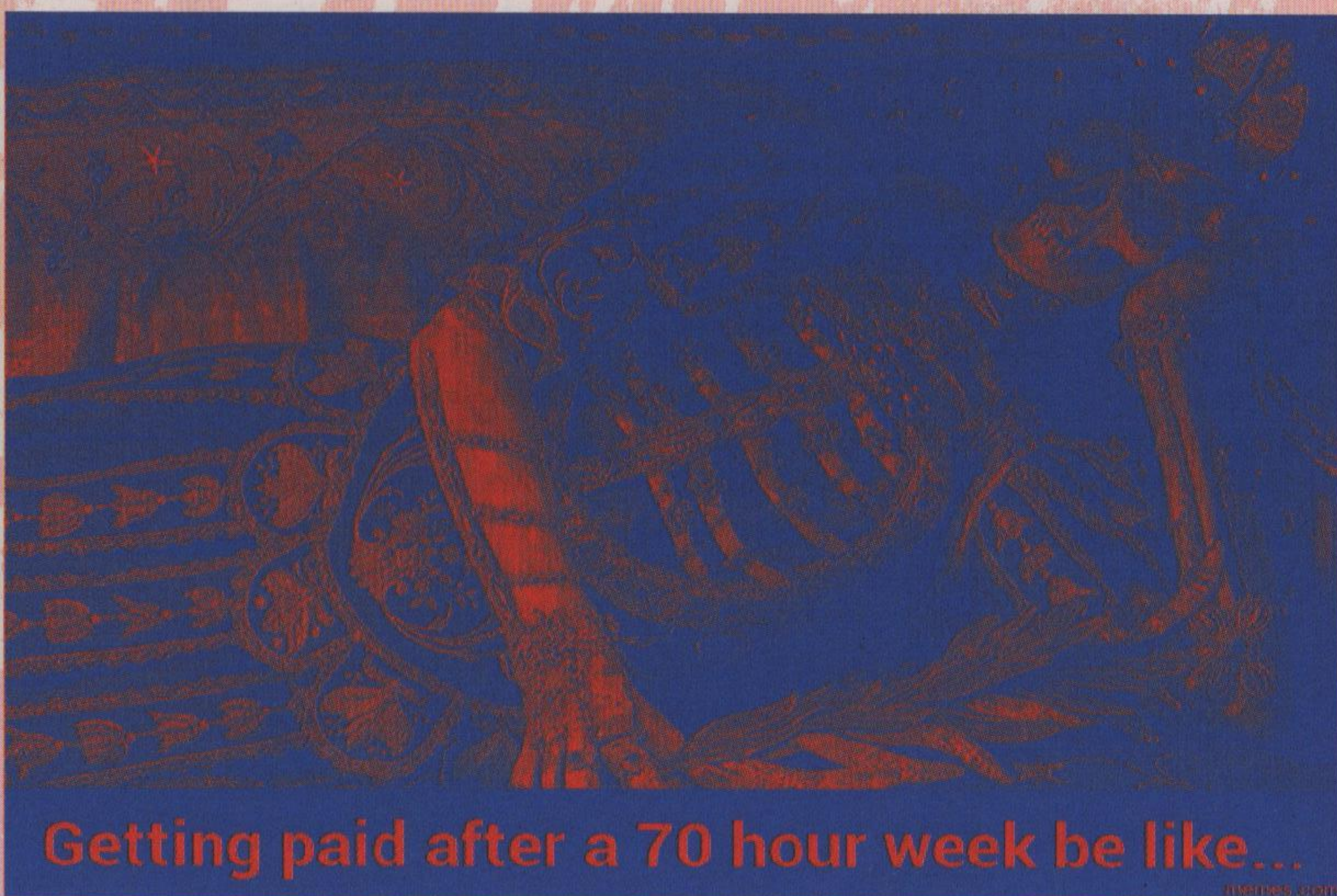
pressure of the remaining workers to accept lower wages and longer working hours.

- To compensate for higher costs of machinery, production has to be accelerated more and more. Workers become the slaves of assembly lines, machines and production targets. Instead of making our lives easier, machines are used to give us more stress. Machines have to run 24 hours to be cost effective. But the race for profits does not only damage our health at work, nature in general is plundered and polluted (plastic in water, chemicals in food, toxic air), because it is treated as a cheap resource for short-term goals.
- Companies produce more in a shorter time, more products swamp the market. This means that the competition between companies and the competition between countries increases. Companies that cannot compete go bust and sack workers, which also increases unemployment.

- Regularly we see an overproduction crisis, where too much stuff is produced and no one is able to buy it or too much money is made, but there is no way to invest it profitably. People lose their jobs or small business. This leads to mass poverty. People starve, not because there is not enough, but there is too much! We see empty homes and heaps of unsold products, because workers are too poor to buy them. We see idle factories and workplaces, because bosses don't want to use them if they don't bring profit. This system is absurd: production for profit creates overproduction, which in turn creates poverty.

- Tensions inside society grow: why should the poor be poor if there is enough wealth and idle factories? The bosses and politicians have to look for someone to blame: the unemployed, the single mothers, the migrants, other nations, aliens. Often the economic crisis also leads to more tension between nation states which all try to grab markets and cheap raw materials. The outcome of many economic crises is war. The state creates demand by expanding the army. The rich are safe, because the poor battle each other. More raw materials, more social resources and human labour are invested into the military. Social productivity goes into social destruction: war becomes a profitable business.

Crisis is a normal outcome in a system that produces for profit and where the mass of the working people don't decide how and what for we produce. In the next part we write more about how these economic crises happen and what the role of the state is...



Getting paid after a 70 hour week be like...



## BAKKAVOR UPDATE

A new pay deal negotiated between the GMB union and management late in 2017 was not great news for workers. They decided to create 4 new skill grades:

- **unskilled (mainly for women on their feet for 10 hours on the assembly line and hygiene workers dealing with toxic chemicals) £7.65/hr**
- **semi-skilled (mainly for men who can operate some kind of basic machine) £8.30/hr**
- **skilled (line leaders and forklift drivers) £9/hr**
- **supervisory (team leaders) £10/hr**

Many people were angry. Is this the great deal we've all been waiting for?! Even the team leaders, who now get £10/hr actually take home less weekly pay because their overtime has been cut. Never mind the fact that women in general come off the worst - doing the hardest job but somehow it is categorised as the least skilled. What a joke.

Many people left the union afterwards.

Then, the management had a falling out with the main GMB union guy at Bakkavor, so a new guy was drafted in by GMB bosses. He gave a militant speech and seemed to want to change things. He said he never would have agreed to this shoddy pay deal.

Fresh union rep elections were called. But the persistent presence of the old guard within the union makes it difficult to develop a more rank-and-file voice. Without this, the union will have no teeth, and trust in the union will not grow. We wait to see what workers will do in response.

## Rebel City News and Views from London Town

Angry workers all over London are fed up with the endless work, the terrible pay, the unbearable rent. They are not just rebelling in factories and warehouses, but in schools, universities and in the streets!

### #nocapitulation

University lecturers across the UK have been on a number of strike days over cuts to pensions. A couple of weeks into their strike, their union (UCU) struck a crap deal. University staff were furious and did not want their union to agree to such a deal. So they demonstrated, students occupied in support of their teachers, local branches rejected it. And now the union are forced to go back and get a better deal.

### University and School Workers: Out of the Classroom, into the Class Struggle

Senate House is a huge building that casts a cold shadow over the heart of London. It is a big university library and also serves as the administrative centre for University of London (UoL). From the outside, its concrete walls look impossible to penetrate. But today its foundations are desperately swaying, as the workers are rocking the building from the inside! Together, the security workers, cleaners, porters, and post room staff of UoL - who are subcontracted to Cordant - have started to revolt, and have announced a campaign to get rid of Cordant once and for all.

The workers of UoL don't have to travel far to see that this strategy works... directly across from Senate House, in SOAS University of London, cleaners, caterers and security guards managed to kick out the subcontracting companies that hired them. After putting pressure on the bosses through strikes, protests, and student occupations, they improved their hourly pay to £10.20, won 30 days of holiday, and 6 months full sick pay plus 6 months of half pay. If the workers keep up the pressure, the pensions are expected to rise to 16% like the rest of the university staff, once the subcontracting companies are gone next August.

Similar stories are popping up everywhere in London. LSE cleaners have also successfully kicked out their subcontractor, Noonan, after 7 days of strike. In Hackney public schools, cleaners organised strikes to protest irregular work periods and unfair wages, and recently won both cases. They also rid themselves of their subcontractor, the OSC group, and are now employed directly by Kier... another private company who subcontracted them in the first place. These struggles are showing that subcontracting companies and agencies are just a way to control and underpay workers. Let's knock them all down!

### Up the Elephant!

The most frustrating part about working for a wage in London is how quickly it disappears. We spend hours commuting back and forth to where vampire landlords suck the wages out of our pockets. Even if you work enough to spend, London life can be pretty dreary. Unless we take control and make it good for ourselves.

African, Caribbean and Latin American migrants in Elephant & Castle (South London) started to carve out an area of their own in this sea of greyness. A place where they could live and socialise, while still managing to afford it.

But the local council, together with the Delancey development company, has made plans worth £154 million to demolish Elephant & Castle shopping centre, replacing it with luxury apartments and retail spaces and destroying the social lives of thousands of people. These plans are part of a larger movement of gentrification, raising rents and prices for the local working class.

In the past month, residents have protested together to defend their community. Students of the London College of Communication - a university which is participating in the redevelopment - occupied part of their campus in solidarity. Some of those protesting are the same cleaners who won struggles in the workplace, and are now taking it out into the streets. In response to this pressure, the council has suspended its plans. No victory is certain yet, but the backtracking shows that if people come together they can defend what is rightfully theirs.

### Save Southall Town Hall

First it was Southall Job Centre, now it is Southall Town Hall that is next in the council chop-list. They want to sell it off, which means it will no longer be a publicly accessible, secular building for the local community. There was a lively protest in February 2018 where campaigners blocked all the streets and raised their own community flag over Southall Town Hall.

Those pesky migrants - coming here and stealing, er, trying to increase their wages!

Outsourced cleaners at the Daily Mail, predominantly from Latin America and Africa, have demanded to be paid the current London living wage of £10.20 p/h and threatened strike action, if their demands are not met. Check out the United Voices of the World website for updates: [www.uvwunion.org.uk](http://www.uvwunion.org.uk)

### Mega-squat!

An empty four-storey building in central London was squatted in early March 2018 and opened up for homeless people to stay out of the cold. This building has been empty for 15 years! And 150 people were able to be fed and housed there during the cold snap. But the court has just announced everyone must be evicted.

And some news from home...

### Battle over the minimum wage in Bulgaria

Bulgaria has the lowest minimum wage in Europe. But employers in Bulgaria are still trying to abolish it. Four employers associations filed a law suit against the government when they tried to raise the minimum wage slightly.

### Wildcat at Ford in Romania

In December 2017 auto workers at a Ford factory in Craiova, Romania, stopped work and marched out. Their wildcat (unofficial) strike was because they were disgusted with their union, who negotiated a bad deal for them after the government increased their tax contributions. The union leader was forced to quit.

### IP organising at VW in Poland

Solidarnosc has a tight grip on power at the VW factory in Poznan. It is Poland's largest trade union, known for complacency and corruption. Workers got sick of their lack of militancy and started a discussion about it on Facebook. Some workers were fired as a result but they managed to find another union willing to support and fight with them, called Inicjatywa Pracownicza. <http://www.ozzip.pl/>

### Amazon strike in Spain

Amazon workers in Madrid are planning to go on a 48-hour strike on March 21st and 22nd 2018. 75% of the workforce voted in favour of walking out because the company is blocking salary increases, cutting wages and reducing weekend and bank holiday pay.



# BAŁAGAN, W KTÓRYM JESTEŚMY – I JAKIE MAMY WYJŚCIE?

Niezależnie od tego czy nam się to podoba czy nie, to co dzieje się po drugiej stronie globu ma na nas wpływ - nawet w tak odległych miejscach jak Greenford czy Southall. Przybiera to różne formy. Widzieliśmy 'globalny kryzys finansowy', który spowodował to, że ubodzy Amerykanie nie byli w stanie spłacić swoich kredytów mieszkaniowych co spowodowało efekt domina i załamało światową gospodarkę. Widzimy jak call centers przenoszone są z Sheffield do Bombaju. Widzimy również globalny wymiar zmian klimatycznych, gdzie uprzemysłowione regiony produkują zanieczyszczenia a biedne regiony odczuwają konsekwencje. Widzieliśmy globalną 'Wojnę z Terrorem', która doprowadziła do zniszczenia i chaosu w Iraku i na Bliskim Wschodzie i która doprowadziła do kryzysu uchodźczego. Zrozumiałym jest, że pogarszająca się sytuacja sprawia, że ludzie czują się zagrożeni.

Patrząc na to wszystko, zaczęliśmy uświadamiać sobie, że te wydarzenia są ze sobą połączone, więc zaczęliśmy szukać odpowiedzi. Niektórzy uważają, że to rząd amerykański wszystko kontroluje, inni mówią, że to winna banków a stąd już niedaleko do żydowskich teorii spiskowych; jeszcze inni winią Internet lub powołują się na wolę boską. My jednak uważamy, że odpowiedzi należy szukać w historii. Zaczniemy zadawać podstawowe pytania: kiedy mieszkańcy z jednej półkuli ziemskiej zaczęli być zależni lub bardziej powiązani z mieszkańcami drugiej? Kiedy i w jaki sposób zaszły owe zmiany?

Spojrzenie w przeszłość może również pomóc w zrozumieniu sytuacji, w której znajdujemy się obecnie. Codzienne problemy zdają się być dla nas naturalna kolejną rzeczą, zawsze tak było i nie można tego zmienić. Musimy wstać rano, iść do pracy, aby zdobyć pieniądze na opłacenie rachunków. Mamy ograniczone pole manewru w tym przypadku, wszystko co możemy zrobić to zmienić pracę - jeżeli znajdziemy nową. Naszą jedyną rolą jest postawienie krzyżyka na karcie wyborczej co cztery lata, co niewiele zmienia...

W tej serii artykułów chcemy spojrzeć na system, w którym żyjemy. Zobaczymy, że rzeczy które uważamy za niezmiennie lub uważamy za pewnik są w gruncie rzeczy zjawiskami dość nowymi - w większości regionów świata nie są starsze niż 500 lat:

- praca dla kogoś dla pieniędzy
- bycie 'obywatelem' danego państwa
- kupno produktów, szczególnie wytworzonych w odległych krajach

Sprawy nie miały się świetnie w dawnych czasach, lecz sytuacja była zdecydowanie odmienna. Widzimy zmiany, które zaszły. Nie zaszły one poprzez 'naturalny postęp' lub 'spisek', ale przez walkę ludzi takich jak my - walkę przeciwko uciskowi i opresji. Te serie skonstruowaliśmy w następujący sposób:

- Cześć 1: Jak to wszystko się zaczęło?**
- Cześć 2: Jakie są cechy składowe nowego systemu?**
- Cześć 3: Co wydarzyło się w ostatnim stuleciu?**
- Cześć 4: W jaki sposób widzimy sytuację dziś?**
- Cześć 5: Czy możemy znaleźć rozwiązanie?**

Nie piszemy tego jako eksperci. Piszemy to jako ludzie pracy z zachodniego Londynu, którzy nie chcą być biernymi obserwatorami czy wręcz ofiarami globalnych wydarzeń. Jeżeli nie będziemy kwestionować obecnego systemu, będziemy zmuszeni do walki o okrucieństwa, które są nam rzucane, istnego wyścigu szczurów. Piszemy to aby rozpocząć dyskusję z innymi ludźmi pracy i sąsiadami. Nasz punkt widzenia może nie być poprawny i nie mamy nic przeciw przemysłowi na nowo opisanym tu zagadnieniom. Daj nam znać co Ty o tym myślisz:

[angryworkersworld@gmail.com](mailto:angryworkersworld@gmail.com)

## Kiedyś...

Rodzaj ludzki zamieszkuje tę planetę od około 1.5 miliona lat i w tym czasie interakcje i migracje miały miejsce na wszystkich kontynentach.

Chcemy skupić się na bardzo niedawnej przeszłości, na warunkach sprzed około 500 lat temu. Powodem jest to, że jest to okres o którym wiemy dość dużo i ponieważ może on nam pomóc uświadomić jak bardzo życie i społeczeństwo zmieniło się w stosunkowo krótkim czasie. Gdybyśmy my - nisko opłacani pracownicy w 2017 roku - żyli 500 lat temu, nasza sytuacja prawdopodobnie wyglądałaby następująco:

- żylibyśmy w małej wiosce;
- pracowalibyśmy jako chłopstwo pańszczyzniane lub jako biedne chłopstwo, które musi opłacać właściciela ziemskiego częścią swoich plonów;
- pracowalibyśmy za płace, która byłaby zapłatą w naturze (żywność lub przedmioty) lub musielibyśmy sprzedawać część tego co wyprodukowaliśmy;
- w wielu przypadkach ziemianin miałby prawo decydować o naszym życiu prywatnym, czy możemy zawrzeć małżeństwo i czy trzeba nas ukarać jeżeli uzna to za konieczne;
- nie moglibyśmy po prostu 'zmienić pracy', ponieważ byłibyśmy związani z jednym ziemianinem, jako chłopstwo pańszczyzniane lub poprzez dług;
- dom byłby centrum nie tylko życia rodzinnego ale również pracy;
- bogate ziemiaństwo stosowałoby wyzysk, ale po to żeby finansować swój dobry styl życia, a nie aby inwestować pieniądze gdzieś indziej;
- w większości przypadków nie było państw tylko małe, lokalne społeczności zarządzane przez możnych;
- nawet język był sprawą lokalną, około 300-400 lat temu ludzie posługiwali się więcej niż 30 lokalnymi językami we Francji i mieli oni problemy w porozumiewaniu się między sobą.

Mielibyśmy małe szanse na ucieczkę przed tym wszystkim, ponieważ zostalibyśmy ukarani lub nie byłoby dla nas alternatywnej 'pracy', która moglibyśmy łatwo znaleźć. Taki porządek rzeczy nazwany był 'Bożym Ładem Naturalnym'. Religia, poprzez kościoły i ich duchownych wspierali możnowładców, aby utrzymać swój status majątkowy i wpływy. W ten sposób porządek taki można zmienić?

Od kiedy człowiek zaczął rządzić drugim i zaczął żyć z jego pracy, często skutkowało to oporem. Około 500 lat temu miało miejsce wiele rebelii chłopstwa i biedoty przeciwko możnym - szczególnie po fatalnych zbiorach na polach. Ludzie zaczęli pojmować, że to oni uprawiali ziemię i zbierali plony, więc czemu mieliby utrzymywać możnych swoją pracą. Szlachta zobaczyła, że masy coraz częściej kwestionowały jej pozycję jako tej z boskiego przykazania. W związku z tym szlachta potrzebowała nowego uzasadnienia dla swoich wpływów i pozycji, więc użyła 'ochrony' jako wymówki. Tylko możnowładca i jego zbrojni mogli ochronić biedotę od innych możnych i ich zastępów przed najazdem i złupieniem. Szlachta zaczęła podnosić podatki, aby sfinansować swoje prywatne armie. W końcu również możni zaczęli zabierać wydzierzawioną ziemię chłopstwu, aby pokryć swoje rosnące wydatki - w Anglii przeznaczili tą ziemię na hodowlę owiec na produkcję wełny. To tylko pogorszyło sytuację, wzmagając powstania i doprowadzając do krawiedzi wojny domowej. Moment ten był punktem zwrotnym w historii: możnowładcy nie byli w stanie opanować mas biedoty, ale czy masy chłopstwa mogły odebrać władzę z rąk szlachty?

Na kontynencie europejskim możemy wyróżnić trzy rezultaty chłopskich rewolt, które zadecydowały o przyszłości każdego z regionów Europy:

- Na ziemiach będących dziś terytorium Niemiec, Polski, wschodniej Europy i Rosji rewolty chłopstwa i biedoty nie były wystarczająco silne. Biedni nadal pozostawali bez własnej ziemi jak również nadal byli związani z kaprysami możnowładców, wspieranych przez monarchię.
- Na ziemiach Francji rewolucje, szczególnie ta z 1789 roku, wyzwoliły chłopstwo z większości prześladowań ze strony szlachty. Ponadto



zdobyli oni prawo do posiadania i zakupu ziemi. Oznaczało to, że większość mas chłopskich była w stanie 'pracować na siebie' na własnej ziemi, chyba że zostali zaciągnięci do wojska w czasie wojny. W ten sposób relacje między panującymi i podwładnymi we wschodniej Europie jak i Francji, choć bardzo różniące się, pozostały całkiem stabilne.

- Jednak sprawy miały się inaczej w Anglii. Tutaj chłopci byli w stanie obalić pańszczyznę, lecz ich rewolta nie była wystarczająco silna, aby zdobyć ziemię na własność jak stało się we Francji. Coraz więcej poddanych była 'wolna', co oznaczało, że nie mieli zobowiązań wobec danego możnowładcy, ale nie mieli też ziemi do uprawy czy dochodu. Taka sytuacja społeczna w Anglii pod koniec XVII wieku była niestabilna. Istnienie tak dużej liczby ludzi wolnych lecz biednych i głodnych, był jednym z głównych powodów dlaczego tak mały kraj jak Anglia stała się powiększającym się imperium i kolebką industrializacji.

## Inny rodzaj systemu...

Opór chłopstwa wobec rządom szlachty zmienił system w fundamentalny sposób: biedni chłopci byli okradani ze środków do życia i zamienili się w robotników najemnych; małe dominia zamieniły się w zcentralizowane państwa narodowe będące w stanie kontrolować rosnącą masę buntującego się chłopstwa; aby utrzymać w ryzach rosnącą liczbę robotników najemnych, władcy musieli nieustannie powiększać swoje ekonomiczne i polityczne wpływy. Powstał nowy system oparty na globalnej produkcji dóbr i globalnym handlu. Społeczeństwo pracujące nie było już zależne jedynie od jednego możnego, ale od wykonywanego zawodu aby zarobić pieniądze - byli wolni ale zmuszeni zostali do sprzedaży swojego czasu i energii bogatym.

- Sami możni uznali, że chcą uciec od bezpośredniego i brutalnego związku z własnością ziemską, więc zaczęli inwestować w handel i przemysł - to co zostało zrabowane biednemu chłopstwu, zainwestowali w model biznesowy wykorzystujący dzieci chłopstwa.
- Biorąc pod uwagę olbrzymią migrację biedoty (nazywani waga-bundami) szukającą zatrudnienia, państwo zostało zmuszone do zbudowania i zcentralizowania administracji: budowania domów pracy(przypis?); zwiększania nakładów finansowych na policję; wysyłanie biedoty do nowych kolonii zamorskich.
- Władcy nie mogli już uzasadniać swojej władzy boskim nadaniem czy poprzez militarną siłę, musieli udawać że są oni źródłem 'rozwoju społecznego': jako przedsiębiorcy, politycy, ludzie nauki czy mecenas sztuki - jak również to, że biedota ma szanse na awans społeczny.
- Pierwszy raz w historii ubodzy mają szansę, przynajmniej w teorii, aby zmienić przynależność klasową i stać się bogatym i wpływowym. Ta 'wolność' była jedynie metodą marchewki i kija, którą możni zaczęli używać jako narzędzie do dzielenia i rządzenia: tylko mężczyźni, nie kobiety, mieli prawo wykonywania pewnych zawodów (później również głosowania i bycia wybieranym); w nowych koloniach murzyni pozostawali niewolnikami, kiedy biała biedota mogła zostać 'wolnymi ludźmi' po jakimś czasie.

W podręcznikach historii możemy przeczytać, że 'industrializacja' była swego rodzaju procesem naturalnym lub że narodziła się w głowach wielkich wynalazców, ktoś bystry nagle pomyślał o silniku parowym i to zmieniło świat. Jeżeli jednak spojrzymy uważnym okiem na historię, okaże się, że było to bardziej skomplikowane. Biedne masy, które straciły ziemię lub uwolniło się od pańszczyzny zaczęło pracować w nowo rozwijających się gałęziach przemysłu. W większości było to chałupnictwo, pracując we własnym domu lub w małym przydomowym warsztacie. Często praca wykonywana była przez osoby uznawane za niezależnych wytwórców, używających własnych narzędzi. Byli oni zależni od dużych przedsiębiorców dostarczających

surowców. Ci wcześnie pracownicy, wiele z nich kobiety, organizowali się. Organizowali strajki, gdy ceny ich produktów spadały lub gdy ceny chleba za szybko wzrastały. Najczęściej praca była przerywana, gdy pracownik zarobił wystarczająco dużo, żeby przetrwać pewien okres. Ich rebelie nie były rozdrobnione i wyizolowane na terenach wiejskich jak te organizowane przez chłopów, były one blisko ośrodków władzy na terenach miast. W 1848 roku Europa była na krawędzi rewolucji i ci wyrobnicy byli w samym centrum wydarzeń.

## Industrializacja: złamać siłę wytwórców...

Ich rosnąca siła jako klasa robotników stała się zagrożeniem dla zysków generowanych przez właścicieli nowych przedsięwzięć. Możliwość złamać najważniejsze atuty wytwórców: ich indywidualne umiejętności i kontrolę nad własną pracą. Pierwsze maszyny robiły właśnie to: kopiowały ruchy wytwórców i transferowały je do urządzeń, tak jak w przypadku koła tkackiego czy kołowrotka tkackiego. Duże nakłady finansowe potrzebne były, aby uruchomić silniki napędzające te maszyny, przy czym pracownicy je obsługujący mogliby być znacznie tańsi, zwłaszcza, że byli niewykwalifikowani. Wytwórcy płci męskiej zostali sprowadzeni, aby objąć rolę nadzorców, którzy pilnowali, aby kobiety i dzieci pracujące przy maszynach wykonywały daną pracę. Pierwsze fabryki zmusiły dziesiątki, jeśli nie setki ludzi do wspólnej pracy obsługując maszyny pod nadzorem. Był to system o wiele bardziej produktywny od wcześniejszego modelu, jak również sprawił on, że indywidualna praca wytwórców umarła śmiercią naturalną - tracąc wytwórcze zajęcia, jedynym alternatywnym zatrudnieniem była praca w fabryce. Przegrali oni nie tylko w konkurencji z dużymi fabrykami, ale również z rozrastającym się handlem międzynarodowym, do którego nie mieli dostępu, na przykład do bawełny produkowanej przez niewolników w nowych koloniach.

Niezwykły wzrost produktywności oznaczał również zalanie rynku towarami. Rywalizacja o rynki zbytu stała się zaostrzała, nie tylko w Anglii, ale coraz bardziej na poziomie globalnym. Rozwijające się gałęzie przemysłu potrzebowały surowców jak i nowych rynków zbytu dla swoich produktów - od bawełny do opium. Państwo podniosło podatki, aby finansować flotę i armię. Połączenie większej ilości wysiedlonych chłopów i biedoty, handel wykraczający poza lokalny rynek jak i rosnąca konkurencja o nowe rynki zbytu dla towarów oznaczała przymus państwa do zcentralizowania swojej władzy. Państwa narodowe w formie jakie znamy je dziś zaczęły formować się w okresie od 1750 do 1850 roku. Od tego momentu pieniądź stał się swojego rodzaju niezależną siłą: większość społeczeństwa, która wcześniej była opłacana w naturze lub konsumowała własne produkty pracy, teraz była zależna od płacy; ziemiaństwo zmieniło się w kapitalistów, którzy potrzebowali pieniędzy na inwestycje w nowe maszyny, aby pozostać konkurencyjnymi; państwo pompowało coraz więcej środków z podatków na finansowanie rozrastającej się biurokracji i profesjonalnej armii. Życie w lokalnych społecznościach ubogich zostało związane z sytuacją globalną: odkrycie złota w Peru mogło skutkować wzrostem ceny chleba na Śląsku.

To co zaczęło się w Anglii, rozprzestrzeniło się po całym świecie, czasem różnymi sposobami, ale w większości z takim samym rezultatem: chłopci stali się robotnikami a pieniądź związał wyzyskiwanych z wyzyskiwaczami - a państwo stało w cieniu z kajdanami, gdyby robotnicy nie zaakceptowali swojej nowej 'wolności' jako zarobkowi niewolnicy. Walka biednego ludu wiejskiego przeciw opresji i wyzyskowi zmieniła system. Kajdany, którymi biedni byli przykuci do jednego wyzyskiwacza zostały zerwane. Lecz nowo nabyta wolność jest tylko powierzchowna. Nowe kajdany, w postaci pieniędzy zmuszają pracowników do sprzedaży siebie nowym wyzyskującym. Jako biedni nie posiadają nic oprócz własnych głów, rąk i dusz. Wytwarzają oni dobra, które stają się źródłem własnego wyzysku: nowe budynki fabryk, nowa maszynaria i broń dla rozrastających się armii. Pracownicy szybko zorientowali się, że można to zmienić: jeżeli wytwarzamy wszystko, możemy również wszystko zmienić. W następnej części spojrzymy jak system, który ukształtował się w XVII wieku, funkcjonuje i co ważniejsze, jak nie funkcjonuje. Postaramy się zrozumieć, dlaczego produkuje on regularne kryzysy ekonomiczne zagrażające milionom istnień i jak prowadzi on do brutalnych wojen.

