

The Rich get Richer

Daylight Robbery!

Huge gaps have opened between rich and poor. Company bosses, especially those in arms and fossil fuel companies, saw their pay soar last year. Those on the FTSE 100 index, which lists the UK's largest companies, had average pay rises of £500,000 a year. The average pay for Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) of these companies had average pay increase from £3.4 million in 2021 to £3.91 million in 2022.

Top CEOs were paid 118 times the pay of an average worker. This rose from 108 times for the year of 2021. The highest paid of these fat cats was Pascal Soriot, CEO of AstraZeneca, who trousered £15.3 million last year. Other big bosses who received massive pay rises included Bernard Looney of BP, Ben van Beurden of Shell, and Charles Woodburn of BAE Systems, the last getting fat on the profits of war. These figures have been supplied by the think tank the High Pay Centre.

Whilst they are getting richer more and more people are resorting to pawnbrokers to survive, by hocking their possessions. The biggest

pawnbroker in Britain, H&T Group, made a pre-tax profit of £8.8 million in the first half of this year, rising by 31% from



the previous year. Another big pawnbroker, Ramsdens, also posted big profits of £3.7 million for the first six months of this year, rising by 68% from 2022.

Meanwhile, Integrated Debt Services (IDS) a company created by the government to claw back unpaid council tax, fines and loans (including student loans) saw its pre-tax profits rise to £18.1 million in 2022, a rise of 132%. This is making profit out of those who have got into debt over the last few years, especially as a result of the pandemic and the cost of living crisis.

As other articles in Jackdaw point out, the ruling and owning class is ruthlessly pursuing a class war against us, amassing vast profits, not just through the above

means but through their property development and land groups. They pursue their programmes of gentrification, eagerly assisted by both Tories and Labour councils, driving us out of the cities and forcing our rents up.

We include various examples of resistance in this issue of Jackdaw. May these acts multiply, whether strikes for higher pay or opposition to gentrification.

Organise, agitate, resist!

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A Plague on both their Houses!

We have no time for Coutts Bank, a private bank company exclusively for the rich - "Coutts offers private banking and wealth management services for high net worth individuals and their families, with the human touch". We shed no tears for the forced resignation of both Peter Flavel, head of Coutts and Dame Alison Rose, chief executive of NatWest, Coutts' parent company.

But neither do we have any sympathy for Nigel Farage, who now positions himself as a knight fighting finance capital. Farage has always been a fervent supporter of capitalism. He was a City trader up until the big crash of 1986. His father was a stockbroker and his brother was a broker too. He was a member of the Conservative Party before he founded UKIP. It is ironic that Farage, who looks to stop freedom of movement, portrays himself as a champion of freedom.

He is no voice of the poor and oppressed, he is as much a supporter of the system as Flavel, Rose, and indeed the billionaire Sunak, who waded into the controversy on Farage's side, afraid of losing more votes to right-wing populism.

Back in 2015 the Co-operative Bank closed down many bank accounts, including that of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, twenty local groups involved in similar work and charities involved supporting women's education in Gaza. There was no massive outcry in the media then. In the meantime many small charities and community groups often face great difficulties in obtaining accounts. It's the same with local allotment associations and joint freeholder associations.

The Sunak government is now considering legislation to "protect free speech" by threatening to



remove licences from banks if they blacklist those with controversial views. We doubt if this planned legislation has anything to do with protecting any of the groups mentioned above.

Since Brexit, Farage has been looking around for a soapbox issue to attempt to claw back his influence. UKIP crumbled in 2018, and Farage went on to form the Brexit Party, which became Reform UK. It and Farage failed to gain traction over various campaigns, including over migrants crossing the Channel. Farage now hopes that the Coutts controversy will re-ignite his populist appeal, with its fake anti-establishment rhetoric. remains to be seen.

Building a debt mountain

One of the consequences of the rising rate of inflation and the cost-of-living crisis is a resort by many people to getting enmeshed in debt. Credit card debt stands at £65 billion, rising from £54.9 billion in 2022. Mortgage debts stand at £1,457 billion up from £1,349 billion from the previous year. Consumer debt has risen to £147 billion from £141.5 billion in 2022. Student loan debt is up to £181.6 billion from £140.1 billion in 2022.

In addition, payday loans and utility bills debts have shot up. These are all according to figures supplied by the Bank of England, the personal finance firm AJ Bell, and the consumer lender Fluro. The Covid pandemic put many in a shaky financial position, and high inflation, rising energy bills

and food prices have aggravated this further.



There was a 22% increase in requests for loans in April 2023 from the previous April, and a 29% increase in loans requested by homeowners with a mortgage, due to rising interest rates. The Office of National Statistics reported that 1.4 million homeowners have their fixed-rate mortgage deals expiring this year, with monthly repayments rising massively. These fixed-

rate loan deals were mostly five and two-year deals taken out in 2018 and 2021 respectively when mortgage rates were at all-time lows at around 2%.

A succession of eleven rate rises by the Bank of England since December 2021 means that fixed-rate mortgage rates now stand at an average 5.28 % for two-year deals and 5% for five-year deals. The Bank of England did this in attempts to slow down inflation.

This situation is also reflected among renters with an 18% increase in loan requests. A recent report from Zoopla showed rents rising by 11%. More than 1 million people borrowed money from loan sharks in 2022 up from 310,000 in 2010, according to the think tank the Centre for Social Justice.

Inflation Myths: Wage rises don't cause inflation

What is inflation?

It's a relative increase in the cost of living- the cost of goods and services- and in Britain is usually measured by the Retail Price Index (RPI) and the Consumer Price Index (CPI). These base their figures on a "basket" of goods and prices of clothes, fuel, energy etc. The RPI differs from the CPI in including mortgage interest payments and so takes house prices into account. There are other ways of measuring inflation like RPIX which leaves out mortgage payments, and CPIH, which factors in some elements of housing costs including council tax.

All these registers signal the biggest increase in inflation in the UK since 40 years ago.

But why is it happening?

During a period of growth, bosses compete to invest where they think they can make a profit. Capitalists compete to buy the same raw materials, and so drive their price up. This affects their profits. To compensate, they raise prices on the goods they produce. This then impacts on other capitalists, who in turn raise their prices.

Is inflation caused by wage rises?

Inflation is a weapon of the capitalists to reduce the real value

of wages in order to maintain and increase profits. In fact, there has been a huge surge in profits. For example, the banking corporation HSBC made a profit of nearly £17 million in the last six months. They are double what they were last year. Its CEO Noel Quinn gets £6 million a year, which could rise to £10 million depending on increasing profits.

The oil and gas corporation BP saw their profits double last year to £23 billion. Shell saw its profits go up 53% for last year to £68.1 billion. Sixty per cent of the current rise in inflation is caused by this huge increase in profits. True, the COVID pandemic had a big effect on the supply chains, which was further aggravated by shortage of labour and the war in Ukraine had its effects on energy and food prices, but the main culprits for inflation were the corporations.

It's not just the banks and the oil giants, it's the supermarkets and manufacturers. Tesco made a profit of £56.7 billion in 2022, Sainsbury's £327 million, and Asda made £886 million. Manufacturers like Rolls Royce made a profit of £206 million.

The capitalists themselves know that wage rises don't cause inflation. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

Development released a report in June admitting that the main driver of inflation was UK business and its thirst for massive profits.

Yet Rishi Sunak and the Governor of the Bank of England, Andrew Bailey, are intent on furthering the lie that wage rises cause inflation. But wages have remained static for ten years but inflation has been on the rise. To put it bluntly, prices are rising because profits are soaring.

The CPI in the UK rose by 2 points in April to 9%, the biggest monthly increase since June 1979. At the same time, prices rose in the USA and the eurozone. The International Monetary Fund made the prediction that inflation on a world level will go up during this year and next, twinned with minimal economic growth.

In Britain more and more people are getting themselves into debt to pay for increasing prices. An additional £1.7 billion of consumer debt was run up in June, £600 million of which was on credit card spending (Bank of England monthly money and credit report).

Meanwhile, Bank of England bosses, (Andrew Bailey excepted) awarded themselves pay rises averaging £4,300 a year, whilst exhorting workers to refrain from demanding higher wages. One of these fat cats, the Bank of England's chief economist, Huw Pill, said that people "need to accept" that they are poorer.

More and more workers are realising that rising inflation is not caused by higher wages, that it is a lie. Workers must now take effective action to win wage demands, making sure they start organising at grass roots level to avoid the sell-outs of the union bureaucrats.



Cost of living crisis hits students



With UK inflation currently at 6.4%, the cost-of-living crisis is forcing thousands of British people into poverty as profiteering continues and the gap between the rich and poor grows ever wider. The ONS reported that 49% of students are having financial difficulties due to the cost of living despite 68% of students receiving maintenance loans which 58% of higher education students say does not cover rising living costs (rent, food, transport and bills) Landlord greed and the lack of rent caps add extra weight to students shoulders, dreadful living conditions and extortionate rent

It is not too late to get a win in universities!

The dispute in British universities has been running for years, with workers from a number of unions - UCU, Unison and Unite - taking part in many days, or even months, worth of industrial action.

Union members who have already taken lots of action and lost chunks of pay (in some cases thousands of pounds) workers are still determined. Unison branches at some institutions were out on strike recently targeting clearing. UCU members are still engaged in a marking and assessment boycott, and shouted their commitment to win the dispute by voting to take strike action prior to the end of September, and to make sure they continue to have

a mandate for industrial action by re-balloting members.

Members have been let down by union leaderships. The lack of coordination between different unions has hindered effectiveness. The leadership of UCU has ignored the policy passed at its congress for a re-ballot to extend the mandate for industrial action. This may have the effect of UCU members having to mark the work they

have boycotted since May (and lost so much pay over). These are serious failings and longer term it is crucial workers build rank and file organisation that can take control of their struggles.

Despite being let down from above there are still opportunities for workers to make gains. Induction weeks are a key point in the university calendar and by strategically targeting strike action at the beginning of term the

effect on universities could be powerful, especially where union branches representing different categories of staff can coordinate with each other.

This dispute is not over and can still be won. With smart hard-hitting action workers and students can make universities better places to work, to study and to learn.



and university staff

eat up students' maintenance loans in a matter of months with little to no money spare for food or utilities.

Examples of dreadful landlord behaviour go all the way back to 2017 where a London based landlord was charged £4,485.17 for failing to deal with 13 glaring maintenance issues at a Birmingham student property. While the cost-of-living crisis rages on, Universities continue to turn a blind eye to student cost of living issues while the salary of vice chancellors remains upwards of £386,000 a year in some cases. Staff at universities have fared no better, despite months of

continued strike action 68% of research staff are on casualised contracts while 3,545 academics remain on zero-hour contracts, SOAS university went as far to deduct pay from a lecturer who was having open heart surgery during a set of UCU strikes at the university.

Greed, profiteering and rampant free market capitalism in education, housing and energy has led to thousands more workers being pushed into poverty while the profits of the ruling class skyrocket under continued Tory rule. With Labour pushing themselves further to the right in a desperate attempt



to win the next election the only people left to help the workers are the workers themselves. Only through direct action, mutual aid and solidarity can we overcome the evils of free market capitalism which oppress us today. No forces from above will ever liberate us, an end to oppression and tyranny from the capitalist ruling class will come from below.

Night Buses Axed in Glasgow

On the 10th of July 2023, First Bus Scotland announced the withdrawal of Glasgow Night Bus services. Following much protest the withdrawal date was pushed back from the 31st July to the 20th August 2023. The announcement quotes Duncan Cameron, Managing Director of First Bus Scotland, stating the importance of 'all stakeholders' in First Bus Night Buses. Whilst the 'stakeholders' that Cameron was referring to were no doubt the managers of the transport industry, businesses and the government, for us there is only one relevant stakeholder in this question, which is the working class (and particularly its most

vulnerable members) who rely on night buses for safe and reliable transportation.

First Bus Glasgow excuse for the withdrawing of Night Bus services is the 'operating losses' caused by 'low passenger numbers'. They said that 'passenger numbers remained between 30% and 35%.' The Night Bus services cover an extensive area each weekend, operating across the city and surrounding areas and play a crucial role in the lives of working class people living in Glasgow who use the bus to commute to work and for leisure. McGill's Buses have stepped in since August 25th, but with a reduced, weekend service.



the accumulation of profits over the safety of the working class. The result of the Night Bus withdrawals/reductions will be: more problems for people travelling to and from shift work and a further decrease in their participation in leisure activities, already curtailed by the condition of being working class (i.e. low wages, limited days off, exhaustion etc.).

Capitalism fails to ensure us access to the enjoyment of life, which is deemed too 'expensive' for those who generate the profits upon which the capitalist class feed. As anarchist communists we assert the right of the people to own and direct their own labour and to produce goods and services to meet the needs of the entire working class.



The threat of a withdrawal of service and now the introduction of a significantly reduced service remains an example of how the capitalist system prioritises

Who Owns London?

Property developers have been gobbling up land in London and the rest of Britain for decades, often from local authorities and other 'public' bodies. It is the value of the land that makes up the major part of the value of the buildings on it, 70% of residential properties on average. It is a major source of wealth and power and gives owners control over how that land is used. Unfortunately, as land is largely in private hands, it used to make a profit for the owner rather than for the common good. We can see this all over London as property developers buy up chunks of London for 'redevelopment', putting up skyscrapers and other tall buildings, vandalising local neighbourhoods and bringing pollution and disruption to local communities.

The Crown and aristocracy have been the traditional owners



of London, with huge slices of central London in their portfolio. However, corporations are now overtaking them. Canary Wharf Holdings (Qatar and Brookfield-registered in Bermuda), is number one on the list of Who Owns London (see: <https://www.propertyweek.com/data/who-owns-london/5088280>. article). Other corporations with major holdings include Aviva, a British insurance company and BNP Paribas, a French bank. Foreign governments are also targeting London. Kuwait is the 16th biggest landowner and even owns City Hall. Qatar, in addition to their Canary Wharf property owns the Shard, 20% of Heathrow, 10% of London Stock Exchange, Harrods, the Olympic Village, and the massive Chelsea Barracks development.

However, so-called public bodies rival the corporations in the amount of London they own. This includes the City of London and Transport for London, the second and third biggest landowners. Local authorities own around 20% of London land.

Though much of this land, in theory, is used for the public good, eg parks, schools and council homes, these bodies are increasingly becoming property developers themselves. Transport for London is behind the massive Earl's Court development and the City of London built so many office and luxury flat towers that the older streets and buildings are swamped, with communities displaced.

Fortunately, people are fighting back. These victories will hopefully encourage others to resist the property developers' plans.



Troublemakers at

ACG members attended the Troublemakers at Work Conference in Manchester in the summer. The event was called by a number of activist groups focused either on struggle in the workplace or helping to organise unions. The conference

was organised into a series of sessions, including Building the Rank and File Today, which featured talks from trade unionists recently involved in industrial action. Then the assembled were divided into sectors: health and social care, education, transport etc. to discuss the situation in their

sector. ACG members took part in the education and health and social care groups and discussed the strengths and weaknesses of their own struggles, and the place of the rank and file in them.

Many attendees argued that working within existing union structures was the only way to do things: "with the officials if they are on our side, and without them if they are not"

Local Residents Resist Developers

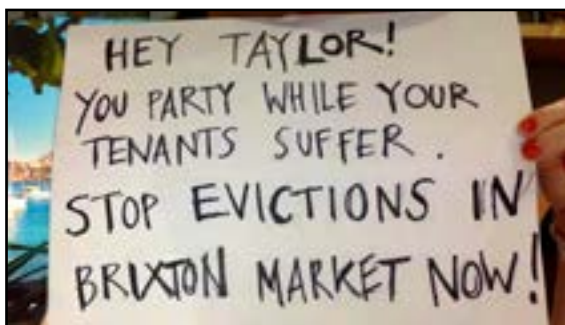
Islington

Islington residents gained a temporary victory when they stopped an office development going ahead. Residents from Clero Street, Paul Street and Epworth Street demonstrated at Islington Town Hall against the plans by Lion Portfolio to demolish the supported housing block Castle and Fitzroy House, where many disabled and elderly people live, and replace it with yet another office block two stories higher with two new basement levels. The residents also argue that it would take 1.7 million trees to offset the carbon emissions from the office block. In addition, they are concerned about the loss of light. As one resident said: "We know it's all about money- we don't come into it."



Brixton

Fight the Tower was formed in 2020 in Brixton. It finally won its campaign to have the building of Taylor Tower withdrawn in late July 2023. Hondo Enterprises, owned by Texas billionaire Taylor MacWilliams, developer



and part-time DJ, wanted to build this 20 story luxury office block on Pope's Road. It would have stood as twice as tall as other buildings in the surrounding area.

This is not the first time that residents and traders have had to fight the plans of developers. MacWilliams bought most of the market in 2018 from London and Associate Properties, who had in turn bought it from another real estate company, APL Ocean Ltd in 2007. (LAP is involved in the Orchard Square

development in Sheffield, which they are now seeking to sell for a whopping profit, despite having received almost £1 million in public money). They presented redevelopment plans in 2009 but this was successfully resisted.

Residents from the campaign:

"Today we celebrate, but tomorrow we organise to take our neighbourhoods and cities back."

Hondo, as the main owner of the market, will not go away. It is time that Brixton and other cities around Britain, are put in the hands of local communities.



They need to be managed collectively for the common good, rather than being bought and sold like squares on a Monopoly Board.

For more info see:

<https://www.savenour.com/>

and that we must find a way to "use the bureaucracy". There was opposition to splits in the unions and breakaways and arguments that the trade unions must be "captured" by the rank and file – an approach that failed dismally when the left was much, much stronger in the 70s and 80s. There were positives coming out of the meeting: notably a rejection of depending upon the 'left' union leaders and the need

for activists to link up independently of the official channels.

There was a broad realisation that the strike wave of the last year was receding that significant victories were few and far between and also that organisation from below is needed. Hopefully rank and file co-ordinations such as



this will see increasing numbers of militant workers choose self-organisation of their struggles outside the limitation of the trade unions.

For more information see:

<https://troublemakersat.work/>



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WHO WE ARE...

The Anarchist Communist Group (ACG)

is a revolutionary anarchist communist organisation which is dedicated to seeking a complete transformation of society, and the creation of anarchist communism.

This will mean the working class overthrowing capitalism, abolishing the State, getting rid of exploitation, hierarchies and oppressions, and halting the destruction of the environment. To do this, we believe it is important to be organised.

We are committed to building an effective organisation that works towards the common goal of anarchist communism, in cooperation with other working class organisations and in grass roots campaigns.

We strive to base all our current actions on the principles that will be the basis of the future society: mutual aid, solidarity, collective responsibility, individual freedom and autonomy, free association and federalism.

If you want to join the ACG, then look first at our Aims & Principles on our website

www.anarchistcommunism.org

You can also drop us a line at

info@anarchistcommunism.org

New ACG stickers:

anti-militarism, Down with the Crown, anti-austerity and cost of living, anti-sexism.
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Health Workers United

For working class independent action

healthworkersunited.wordpress.com



Home and Away- ACG presence at Anarchist Bookfairs in Britain, Ireland and on Continent

ACG members ran stalls at the Balkan Anarchist Bookfair over 3 days, and at the five-day Saint-Imier International Anarchist Gathering. Over £600 of ACG literature was sold at these two events in July. In addition, an ACG member spoke alongside members of the Italian Anarchist Federation at an anti-war meeting at the St-Imier event, and was interviewed by a local progressive paper. Another member was interviewed for a German-produced podcast and also led a meeting on land justice that was attended by 60 people. They also participated in a meeting on Organised Anarchism held by Die Platform, an anarchist communist group in Germany.



Previously the ACG ran stalls at the Bristol Radical History event in April, at the Dublin Anarchist Bookfair and at the Red and Black Bookfair in Glasgow, both in May, and at the Hull Radical Bookfair in August. We were very pleased by the interest in our publications and the fact that people are keen to learn more about anarchist communism.

We will be running literature stalls at the forthcoming Anarchist and Radical Bookfairs, at Dorset, London and Peterborough in October, at Manchester and the London Radical Bookfair, and at the Amsterdam Anarchist Bookfair, all in November.

Bookfairs are an important way of spreading anarchist communist ideas more widely and we thank all those who put so much effort in to organising them.

Against Nationalism New ACG Pamphlet

Order your copy from the ACG website.
healthworkersunited.wordpress.com



Stormy Petrel

ACG theoretical journal

Available from our website at

anarchistcommunism.org/stormy-petrel



REVOLUTIONARY CLASS STRUGGLE NEWS