

WORKERS' fight



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contact@w-fight.org

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

FOR A WORKING-CLASS COUNTER-OFFENSIVE!

Having welcomed the cuts in the "emergency budget", the bosses' organisation, the CBI, also wants "measures to ensure Britain's labour market is best placed to sustain businesses and jobs during the recovery", with "more flexible working, blocking regulations that will cost jobs and changing industrial relations legislation."

Never mind the fact that there is no recovery in sight! But then, the CBI's aim is not to create jobs, but to boost profits. In short, the bosses only want to step up the exploitation of workers!

The bosses' wishlist

They want the "consultation period" for collective redundancies to be cut from 90 to 30 days. Not that "consultation" has ever stopped them from slashing jobs whenever they wanted. But this certainly shows that the bosses expect their "recovery" to include job cuts!

They also want "simpler rules around the employment of agency workers to ensure existing jobs can be maintained and new posts created." As if using agencies was not, on the contrary, aimed at cutting the permanent jobs on which workers can really rely to make a living!

Likewise, they want the present limited TUPE protection for workers transferred collectively from one company to another, to be "reviewed" - that is, they'd like to slash their conditions straight away!

The CBI also wants the individual right to opt-out of the 48-hr week, to stay. But this so-called "right", which only remains because Labour clung to it on behalf of British companies, is just a means for the bosses to blackmail workers into working crazy (and dangerous) hours.

For workers, this opt-out "right" is a slave charter. And at a time of rising unemployment which would require all



existing work to be shared out between all workers, without a cut in wages, this slave charter should be thrown out for good!

The backlash will come!

The bosses are not stupid to the point of believing that workers will not respond to their offensive. So the CBI also wants even tighter anti-strike laws.

Apparently, these laws, that Labour inherited from the Tories and then kept in place, are no longer enough for the bosses. In addition to the present majority of "yes" votes required for a strike to be legal, they want this majority to include at least 40% of those entitled to vote - at best difficult to achieve and, in some industries, virtually impossible, due to postal ballot hurdles.

So far the government has denied it had any plan on these issues. It is most definitely lying. But Cameron may still think that it could be dangerous for him to introduce too many attacks at the same time. Not that he has much to fear from union leaders, who often

use the anti-strike laws as a fig-leaf for their reluctance to fight back. But the big unknown for Cameron is how far he can go in his attacks without sparking off a reaction of anger.

And for good reason. Because, if and when this happens, no anti-strike legislation, no court, no riot police even, will have the capacity to contain the frustration accumulated in working class ranks since the beginning of the bosses' crisis.

In the meantime, any new attack on workers should - of course - be opposed. But ultimately, it is the whole rotten system that caused the crisis which will have to be challenged. By standing up collectively, behind organisations and leaders whose fighting determination it can trust, the working class will need to impose on the capitalist class its own solutions to the crisis - in particular, the collective control of the population over all economic activities in society. □

Afghanistan

British troops are to be withdrawn - not from Afghanistan, but from the deadly Sangin area of Helmand province, where almost a third of the 312 British casualties have been killed. They will be replaced by US troops, in the latest of many "final offensives" in Helmand. All have failed, despite the West's overwhelming superiority in hardware and its monopoly of the sky - including the largest offensive ever, which, from last February, involved 20,000 US soldiers in addition to the 8,000 British troops. The fact that each offensive has resulted in civilian deaths and the destruction of villages has only reinforced Afghan guerilla activity.

Nor is this quagmire confined to Helmand. In addition to many "no-go areas" where the insurgents are in total control, they have re-emerged in strength in eastern areas where they had been declared "defeated" long ago. By occupying the country, supporting Karzai's notoriously corrupt regime and training Afghan police and army units, whose main activity seems to be to racketeer the population, the rich countries

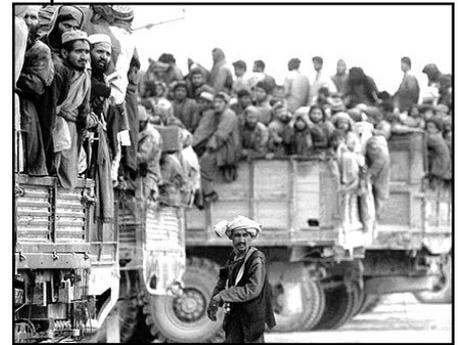
enough of this deadly endgame!

are pushing more and more Afghans into the arms of Islamic warlords. Officials may blame "improvised explosive devices" (IEDs) for western troop casualties, but the growing number of IEDs only reflects the population's growing anger at the western occupation.

Lately Cameron has responded to the increasing hostility to this dirty war among the British public, by hinting at plans to withdraw troops "earlier rather than later". But in Cameron's own words at the Toronto summit, this only means before... 2015. Assuming that casualties remain at the same level as this year (although they increased every year since 2007), Cameron is effectively underwriting in advance the killing of close to another 500 British soldiers - and the even more damaging devastation caused to the Afghan population by another 4 years of occupation! And all that, for absolutely no reason other than to allow the rich countries to show their muscle to the poor majority of the world! ☐



9 years in the killing fields of Afghanistan - but what for, except to produce more deaths and more refugees?



• Terrorist production isn't being cut

It was ex-Labour minister Alan Johnson who first raised the spectre of an increased threat of "terrorism" if the Con-Dems cut the Home Office budget. But what can one expect from an ex-poacher (ah, postman) turned gamekeeper, like him? He revealed there are as many as 4,000 personnel involved in looking for terrorists under our beds and argued that cutting their

nice earners would expose all of us to the terrorists! Then top guns from the coppers themselves objected and the Con-Dems conceded straight away!

But that doesn't stop this government from carrying on spending billions on breeding terrorism in Afghanistan, by exposing the lives of 10,000 troops there for no reason other than to be part of the

big powers' attempt to impose their world order! Since they're looking for cuts, that's definitely one area where big savings could be made. Bring back the troops and help anti-terror cops make a career change. They could become useful community workers instead - "lollipop ladies", for instance.

• Welcome to Britain... if you're rich or reverend

Theresa May, Con Dem Home Secretary, duly announced a "cap" on immigration from countries outside Europe, for April next year - with interim measures this July, to prevent people trying to beat it. In line with Tory pandering to anti-immigrant prejudices, but against Lib-Dem pledges, immigration is meant to be reduced by 100,000 within 5 years.

But the number of people coming to work and live here has been

falling anyway: 15% fewer applications were made by non-EU skilled workers so far this year. Indeed, businesses who routinely recruit workers from abroad are complaining that the measures will damage them. And May also upset university chancellors over the promised restrictions on student visas, because they've come to depend on the £12bn in funding provided via these over-exploited students' fees!

So now May is emphasising all

the exemptions to her cap: multinational companies transferring staff, elite sportsmen and women, and... ministers of religion! As a Cambridge academic quipped on Question Time, "we've advised our applicants to take religious orders!" The truth of the matter is that these restrictions are only aimed at keeping out people from the poor countries, unless they belong to the very tiny rich minority.

• **Barking-Dagenham: the fight is not over!**

Barking and Dagenham featured prominently in the May election when the British National Party - which had occupied 12 council seats and was said to be threatening the 2 sitting Labour MPs, John Cruddas and Margaret Hodge - was totally routed. Now the council is 100% Labour-held and both Labour MPs were re-elected. Whether this resolved the underlying issues, is another question, though.

If the BNP had achieved some electoral success, it was not due to their politics, but to deterioration in the social fabric of the borough, during decades of neglect and corruption under Labour.

Over the years, whistle-blowers

have found themselves sacked, their cars damaged, or worse. But the methods used by the council were never challenged. Which makes it all the more ironical that Barking MP Hodge is now heading parliament's "Public Accounts Committee" to scrutinise corruption, among other things. Far be it from her to scrutinise her own constituency council!

Yet, corruption lives on, as the local press revealed over a scandal in parking and traffic enforcement management. Huge sums were siphoned off while the public was bled dry via draconian penalties. All over the borough, super-exploitable agency workers have

been replacing permanent workers - with union officials, supposedly representing council workers, signing up to all of this.

Now, this unaccountable Labour council is enforcing further cuts in the workforce, while privatising the few remaining "council" care homes and services for the elderly, the young and infirm.

So the fight in this borough isn't over by a long shot. But this time local workers will have to take up the reins of this fight themselves, kick up a stink and kick out corruption from the council. They will have to find their own voice to express their demands - which won't sound anything like the BNP. □

• **BT is still calling the shots**

Ofcom has been consulting on cuts in mobile phone charges - but the pay-back would be a return to time limits on pay-as-you-go top ups.

It has all to do with reducing the price that networks charge each other and charge land line companies - the biggest of which is BT - to connect calls. Ofcom wants these charges reduced from 4.3p to 0.5p a minute by 2015. In fact BT has been fighting these charges for some time, calling them an "unjustified subsidy to the mobile phone industry". And Ofcom seems to be fighting BT's battle for it!

Over 10 years ago, when mobile phones first came in, some companies had a "use it or lose it" top up voucher system, which

they had to drop due to user protest - so all time limits on top-ups disappeared. Ofcom's move to reintroduce them would affect pay-as-you-go mobile users (half of all users), who often only use their phones to receive calls and for emergencies. So it could mean millions losing out, or even being unable to afford a mobile at all.

In the meantime, BT increased its payphone rates from 40p to 60p per call - with Ofcom's blessing. And who uses pay phones except those calling in an emergency, or those already too poor to have a mobile?

• **Network Rail: publicly owned, privately decided**

Ian Duncan Smith, now Work and Pensions minister, was happy to say that he could not interfere in the scandal over huge bonuses worth £2.4m paid to senior managers in Network Rail. As he told a Radio 4 interviewer, he was afraid the government had no jurisdiction over "private" companies! Has anyone told him that Network Rail is a state company? Presumably he forgot that the bankruptcy of

privatised track and signals infrastructure company, Railtrack, happened while he was Tory leader, in 2002, after which the state took it over.

Whether this gaffe was blind ignorance on his part or not listening to the question, IDS at least has a good excuse: Network Rail sure behaves like it's private - and is meant to. Its "board" includes several private train operating

company directors and its own "CEO" was Iain Coucher (parting bonus, £641,000), formerly the CEO of private consortium TubeLines which was contracted for tube maintenance - and before that the shady EDS which contracts for the MoD. In fact today state-owned Network Rail cuts jobs and maintenance just like any old private company would, putting profits before peoples' lives.



A "typical" BT phone box with... no phone, but never fear - they still put up the cost!

Economic crisis

The G20 crisis summit, held in Toronto in late June, produced nothing except.. a huge bill - over £100m!

Since then, international economic bodies have issued contradictory reports on the crisis. In fact, they only agree on two things:

- the "need" for the anti-working class austerity measures introduced in all the rich countries across the world

- and the fact that unemployment will go on increasing in the coming years - possibly by an extra 23 million says the IMF! Hardly the "recovery" hailed by politicians!

In fact, despite the huge injection of public money into the system, stock markets have experienced another series of epileptic fits lately, with share prices falling by 14% over 4 months in London.

The banks are still concealing a large quantity of dubious loans, which may well have to

they're drifting in the storm!

be written off, leaving public finances with another huge bill as part of the bank bailout. This is particularly true in Britain given the guarantee provided by the government to the banks it controls.

This makes government bonds look even more risky. The Bank of England admits that, as a result, credit is tightening again.

So, the profit system may be heading back to square one - or worse, who knows? In any case, neither Cameron nor Osborne do.

On the contrary, they are steering their ship like drunken sailors in a storm, doing what they can to boost their City captains' profits on workers' backs - but with no chance in hell of reaching safe waters.

Simply because there aren't any "safe" waters left in this bankrupt system! ☐

Class Struggle n°88 is out!

In the July-September issue of our quarterly journal:

- Stopping the cuts means fighting this rotten profit system!
- Cost-cutting in local services to feed capital's parasitism.
- South Africa - behind the vuvuzelas.
- USA - the cost of Obama's pro-business policies.
- Italy - mafia, state and capitalist economy.

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Public "deficit"

All the politicians claim that the public deficit is due to "too much" being spent on welfare, pensions, health, education, etc... But bizarrely, they never mention public handouts to the wealthy!

The public deficit is the difference between all government spending and its earnings - in taxes, duties, etc. The deficit grows, either due to a reduction in earnings, or to an increase in spending. And on both accounts, the small layer of capitalists, especially the biggest, contribute disproportionately to this deficit.

On the earnings side, the on-going cuts in corporation tax and the numerous "loop-holes" and tax rebates allowing big companies to pay far less tax than they should, reduce public earnings while boosting company profits. The same is true of the low income tax paid by the very rich, the derisory tax rate on dividends

a measure of capital's parasitism

and speculative gains, etc.

On the expenditure side, the explosion of subcontracting in public services and infrastructure, means that layer upon layer of capitalists take their profits from public expenditure, over and above the real cost of the service they might provide.

Collectively, their cut is huge - and has been ballooning over the past decades. Today, the profits of many British companies are entirely paid out of public funds! In fact, a whole industry has developed out of nowhere over the past three decades or so, for the sole purpose of "offering services" to the state - that is, of grabbing some of the much coveted public funds.

Moreover, a large part of so-called "social" expenditure is, in reality, a hidden handout to the bosses.

Much of the benefits budget, for instance, allows bosses

to hire and fire as they please, to pay rock-bottom wages and to channel their profits into financial speculation, instead of investing in new, useful activities, which would create jobs.

Just as the same benefits budget allows the bosses to dump workers they have exploited all their lives, without taking any responsibility for their upkeep, once they have taken retirement. What do the capitalists care if retired workers can't possibly survive on their derisory pensions - won't the state take care of them?

Even before taking the colossal cost of the banking bailout into account, therefore, the "welfare to the capitalists" tag is written all over the so-called "public" deficit.

Get rid of the capitalists' parasitism on the state and you'll get rid of the public deficit! ☐

"Emergency budget"

Osborne's "emergency budget" has striking similarities with the budget that Darling announced in March, but had no time to implement. For good reason too, because there aren't that many ways to skin the working population - which was the aim of both budgets - nor to line the pockets of the wealthy.

Indeed, when it comes to offering handouts to the capitalist class, Osborne shows as much pride in his "rich ideas" as his Labour predecessors did. It is not for nothing if, just as Labour did after coming back to power in 1997, one of Osborne's first gestures has been to announce a cut in corporation tax and further tax reductions for so-called "entrepreneurs".

As to what affects directly

Osborne implements Darling's cuts

the working class majority of the population, the differences have more to do with packaging than substance. Labour has a long record of making cuts worth many billions, behind the scenes - especially on the backs of public service workers. And Darling's March budget was yet another exercise in trying to play down the real consequences of the huge cuts it really implied.

Osborne, on the contrary, makes a point of being upfront about his cost-cutting plans and whom they target - all working class people, but especially the poorest and most vulnerable. The VAT increase, for instance, is all the more cynical because the poorer you are and the more you spend of your income in the shops.

In his cost-cutting enthusiasm, Osborne even chooses to go over the top, by threatening cuts of up to 40% in some departments. But, ultimately, the objective of the Con-Dems is the same as Labour's was - to get the working class to foot the bill for the crisis.

In and of themselves, the Con-Dems' cost-cutting figures are meaningless, since they have no idea what the crisis has in store, nor, more importantly, how much resistance workers will put up against their attacks.

These figures only tell us something we already knew: the Con-Dems are at the capitalists' beck and call - just as Labour was when it was in office - and, as such, they are enemies of the working class. □

• "Income support" for the rich

The Con-Dems don't like welfare, but since times are "tough" for the rich, Osborne's "emergency budget" dished it out - but for them only. Among his hand-outs: an increased limit on tax-free profit for businesses from £2m to £5m; a cut in corporation tax by 4% over 4 years which will eventually amount to a cool £7bn/yr give-away, which'll more than compensate for the tiny levy on banks (not even a fraction of the profit of one of them!). Also, employers' NI contributions increase will be offset by higher thresholds (but workers will pay it in full).

As for CGT - the "capital gains" tax on income from the sale of assets like 2nd homes or shares - it will only rise to 28% and only for individuals (not businesses) on the higher rate of income tax. The Con-Dems didn't even return to past Tory policy (pre-1997) when capital gains were taxed at the same level as income - i.e. at 40%! After the budget was announced, shares rose, including even retail shares, despite Osborne's VAT rise to 20%. The rich know what's good for them. But when working people decide it's pay-back time they'll discover that we don't like welfare either. We only want our due. And since we produce all the wealth in society... we'll take it all back.

• Privatisation of rail network back on the agenda

High Speed 1 (HS1), the rail line linking St Pancras to the Channel Tunnel, is for sale. The government hopes to make £1.5bn from selling a 30 year concession to operate the line and stations (the infrastructure, that is, not the train services, which are run by Eurostar and Southeastern).

Fourteen years ago, London and Continental Railways (LCR) won the contract to build the high speed link from London to Folkestone. They were also handed the government's stake in Eurostar, whose profits were supposed to help finance the project. But the company quickly ran into financial difficulties and had to be rescued by Labour - so the £5.8bn cost of building the country's only high speed line had to be underwritten by the state.

Last year, LCR went bust and was taken into state ownership. But despite the fact that HS1 is currently managed and maintained by Network Rail, there was no question of integrating it into the rest of the rail network.

Brown announced that it would be sold off - and now the Con-Dems are finishing the job. The sorry history of privatisation of the rail network, under Railtrack and the private sector failure in the saga of HS1 itself, should have been enough to stop such nonsense,

which can only result in putting lives at risk in order to allow shareholders to gobble up fat dividends.

• Stagecoach boss should be on the stage

The boss of bus and train company Stagecoach, Brian Souter, is upset about proposed 25% cuts in the Department for Transport budget, which would hit rail and bus subsidies.

Most helpfully, he proposes that the cuts should fall elsewhere - like on road and motorway building, even though this would affect his buses! Souter talks of the "big social implications" that cuts in concessionary fares (pensioners' free bus passes) and fuel subsidies would have.

And no wonder: the Stagecoach bus division managed to increase its operating profits slightly to £126m for the year to April, despite the recession, thanks to the "little help" provided by the Department of Transport, which gives the bus companies £1bn to cover pensioners' bus passes, £400m for fuel subsidies and an additional £1bn for other "costs", like uneconomic routes!

Does Souter really think anyone will fall for his sudden social concern, when he's the most notorious of the sharks benefiting from bus and rail privatisation?

Cuts watch

• *Every job cut is one too many!*

The Treasury itself estimates that George Osborne's budget will destroy 1.3 million jobs in the next 5 years.

In a document leaked by the press, the figure was 500,000 to 600,000 public sector jobs, plus another 700,000 job cuts in the private sector - which shows just how parasitic the private sector is on state contracts. The yearly loss was put at between 220,000 and 260,000 jobs, although one

official has claimed this was an error and the annual figure was meant to represent the whole 5 years.

But the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development had already predicted earlier in June that the Con-Dems' plans would mean 725,000 public sector job cuts, so this belated "correction" wasn't very convincing!

Osborne claims that job losses caused by his budget will be

more than compensated by his "private-sector driven recovery" creating 2.5 million jobs over the same period - thanks, in particular, to new tax perks for the bosses, like his cut on corporation tax.

But since when do companies reinvest higher profits into creating new jobs? Unless, of course, the working class gives them a big kick where it really hurts, i.e., in the moneybags! ☐

• *The real swindlers*

From next April, tax credits, benefits and public sector pensions will be indexed on the CPI (consumer prices index) instead of the RPI (retail prices index) - and even private sector pensions will be affected, since the government intends to use the CPI when it sets the minimum annual amount by which they must rise, as well.

These two measures of inflation differ in that the RPI includes housing costs, whereas the CPI does not. And the sole reason that the government prefers the CPI for its cost of living rises is that it is usually significantly lower - for example, in May, CPI was 3.4% but

RPI was 5.1%.

A difference of 1% or 2% may sound small but it is compounded over the years. Benefits, tax credits and pensions would be at least 9% lower now had this indexing been applied over the past 10 years. And if it had been applied for the past 20 years, the TUC has worked out that a pensioner on a typical public sector pension of £5,500 a year would be £655/yr worse off by now. So this is an outright cut.

It's not for nothing if the Con-Dems expect this sleight of hand to cut expenditure by £6bn over the next five years! ☐

• *Triple indexation con*

Although Osborne promised "no nasty surprises in the small print" of his budget speech, it didn't take long for the state pension's "triple indexation" con to come out.

Initially, Osborne made it seem as if he would restore the link between the state pension and earnings - something that had been removed by Thatcher in 1980 and never restored by Labour, thereby contributing to the increase in pensioners' poverty. Even better, apparently, from April 2012, a new "triple guarantee" was to be given: from then onwards, the state pension was meant to increase

in line with earnings, prices and a fixed 2.5% - whichever was greater.

Except that the price index used will be the CPI (which does not count housing costs), while the earnings index is currently at a rock-bottom low of 1.9% - due to the bosses' attacks on wages. Since the odds are that unemployment will keep depressing wages for the foreseeable future, this "triple guarantee" is just there to ensure that the real value of the state pension keeps going down. That's "nasty small print" alright, but hardly a "surprise"... coming from the bosses' politicians! ☐

• *The disabled under fire*

From 2013, Disability Living Allowance (DLA) claimants will face more medical assessments, supposedly to target spending on those with the highest needs, while providing "incentives to work" for the others. But by accusing DLA claimants of being "workshy fraudsters", just because their number has tripled since 1992, Osborne is the real fraudster: since DLA was only introduced in 1992, there's nothing abnormal about this increase!

True, neither the threat of more "assessments", nor this slanderous rhetoric are new - Labour used it all before, with the same aim of cutting costs. What is new, is the Con-Dems' cynical target to cut as much as £1.4bn out of the £11bn DLA budget. This would mean restricting eligibility for new claimants and disqualifying existing ones, to cut the headcount by one eighth. The disabled would be hit doubly hard, since their carers' specific allowance also depends on DLA entitlement.

As to how depriving the disabled of their benefit will provide "incentives to work", it is a mystery - since DLA is designed to help them with their day-to-day care needs, regardless of work status or income.

It's not bad for everyone, though. ATOS, the private company which does the medical assessments, stands to gain extra work - and can no doubt be relied upon to carry out the Con-Dems' cost-cutting agenda with great zeal. ☐

Cuts watch

• **Housing: no cuts for greedy landlords**

From next year, housing benefit will be capped according to the size of the house - this when nearly half of all claimants are struggling with a shortfall of around £100 a month to pay their rent. To add some "legitimacy" to their cut, the Con-Dems dare to add that claimants should only live in an "appropriate" sized home for their family. As if, like the wealthy, poor families lived in mansions, instead of being crammed into housing which is usually far too small for them!

Only one in eight housing benefit claimants is unemployed - the rest are pensioners, low-waged working families, etc. But for those on Jobseekers Allowance, the Con-Dems want to bring in an especially punitive measure

from 2013 - a 10% cut on housing benefit for those who have been jobless for over a year. This is billed, as usual, as an "incentive to work", rather than what it really is, which is pushing people onto the street.

The real problem, of course, is the drastic shortage of affordable housing, which allows private landlords to make a killing out of huge rents. But then why not cap private rents, or start an "emergency" programme to build the social housing which is so desperately needed? That would cut much of the need for housing benefit. But this government is not about stopping landlords from lining their pockets! ☐



Luxury towers to "solve" the housing shortage in East London??

• **NHS: Lansley's sleight of hand**

The Con-Dems promised to ring-fence the £105bn annual NHS budget, although the NHS was expect-

cuts - but not in so few words!

He wants to get rid of the "bureaucracy" of the 151 Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) who're in charge of managing and allocating, according to local needs, the 80% of the total NHS budget (or around £80bn) which goes to primary care (the part of the NHS everybody goes to first, i.e., GP, nurse, physio, etc.).

First off, he'd only save the running costs of the PCTs - and put several thousand staff out of a job. But Lansley says he wants to give the £80bn

ed to come up with £20bn in "savings". Then in early July, Health Secretary Andrew Lansley came up with ...NHS

directly to GPs who should join together to form their own GP "consortia"... or "trusts?" (haven't we heard this

all before...about 20 years ago from Major's Tories?) who'd then supposedly "buy in" all the diagnostic tests and specialist consultations, as well as the needed treatments for their patients.

GPs are already saying they aren't managers and don't want to. But Lansley has a plan "B" and this is the nub of the thing: private health companies, who don't only "help" GPs get together, do the "bureaucratic" work, but also actually sell the diagnostic and treatment services as well... for a profit!! There are some already set up. This will not only cut the NHS, but it's a huge opportunity for the private sector to get their unwelcome hands on the biggest chunk of NHS funding. It should be scuppered! ☐



• **Letter from the jobless' front in Sussex**

Attempting to remain sane during unemployment, I started doing voluntary work with the local Rights of Way and Countryside Management Rangers. So far, rangers were normally assigned to specific sites, so that they could get to know them and build relations with locals. But now, as part of the latest cutbacks, 3 posts are going in the department. So the Council has started shuffling the rangers about and they are also all getting a pay cut.

This is happening everywhere. At the other end of the country,

Northumberland County Council is cutting the same number of posts. The government is cutting the national parks budget by 5%. At least one national park authority, that of the Peak District is considering selling off one of its most popular sites.

More cuts are coming. Countryside management is "non-essential", they say. However, rights of way will quickly become unusable if neglected and work aimed at increasing bio-diversity will quickly be undone. Endangered species may disappear and, if free

public access to the countryside is reduced, people's health will undoubtedly suffer.

Some say that the "emergency budget" is taking us back to the 1930s. Well, it was in the 1930s that the right of the public to walk in the countryside really started to be asserted, such as in the famous "mass trespass" on Kinder Scout in the Peak District. Are we going to let them snatch the countryside back from us, like everything else? ☐

BP leak

BP's English CEO, Tony Hayward, who was managing the Gulf oil spill, was replaced by an American late in June after he'd upset everyone, including President Obama, with his nonchalant attitude. "I need my life back", he said, forgetting the 11 oil rig workers killed in the explosion of BP's Deepwater Horizon platform, who'll never get theirs back. Then he went to watch a yacht race on the Isle of Wight, never mind that oil continued (and still continues) to spew - damaging the Gulf's marine and coast ecology, not to mention the

Cameron's greasy union jack

damage caused from chemicals and burning of oil in the vain and belated attempts to control what seems, up to now, to be uncontrollable!

But never fear, British media barons and bosses have come to BP's rescue. "There is a sense that these attacks (against Hayward and BP) are being made because BP is British", complained the boss of insurance giant Sun Alliance in a letter to Obama. When BP's ongoing spill threatened to sink its share price, Cameron leapt to BP's defence, covering himself in a dark and sticky

cloak of good old British patriotism, hailing BP's "economic value" for both countries. Indeed, BP is only British in name: its 1999 "acquisition" of US oil major Amoco was, in fact, more like a merger between equals.

Finally, BP shares rallied, having plunged to a 13-year low - proof that the stench of oil remains more attractive to speculators than ever. As for Hayward, he was last heard from visiting Azerbaijan, where BP is looking forward to spilling more oil, if not blood. □

Buncefield fire

Hertfordshire Oil Storage Ltd (HOSL), owned by oil giants Total and Chevron, and 4 of its contractors were found jointly responsible for the explosion at Buncefield oil depot on 11 December 2005 - which caused the largest peacetime fire in Europe. 43 people were injured, homes seriously damaged, water supplies polluted and the resultant plume of black smoke drifted hundreds of miles.

This enormous fire was caused by the ignition of a vapour cloud, after 250,000 litres of petrol had leaked, undetected, from one of the depot's tanks. A crucial safety switch failed to alert staff that the tank was overflowing. Both the company which designed the switch and Motherwell Control Systems, the company meant to maintain it, were found guilty of negligence. But this Motherwell took itself into liquidation just after the fire and then reappeared at a nearby address "under another guise"! As for HOSL, it had failed to carry out risk assessments, its training manuals were out of date, contracts with contractors were unclear and its supervisors untrained and unsupported.

All the companies are due for sentence on 16 July. The charges carry large fines which apparently could run into millions. But the company directors will remain scott-free, despite having put thousands of lives at risk and having caused dangerous environmental pollution. That's their system! □

Total and Chevron in the dock



• You can't keep a "good" Browne down

Yes, he's back again. Blair's favourite boss, the ex-CEO of BP, Lord Browne of Madingley (!) has been appointed by Cameron to occupy an "important new role" as a lead Non-Executive Director for the government!

What's that, you might well ask?! Well he is meant to appoint other "Non-Executive Directors" to each government department, from the ranks of private industry, who will then "*galvanise departmental boards as forums where political and official leadership is brought together to drive up*

performance". So now we know!

These Non-Elected bods will include the likes of the bosses of GlaxoSmithKline, New Look, and Reed Elsevier, apparently... Browne won't be paid for his "role", but it's not sure about the others yet.

So Cameron is following in the exact footsteps of his predecessor Blair, in every possible way. Getting "commercial expertise" into government really made all the difference: the rich got filthy rich and the "deserving" poor got tax credits.

So it's just more of the same then.

Bloody Sunday

Cameron had no choice but to offer token apologies for the killing of 13 protesters, on Bloody Sunday, 30 January 1972, when the British army opened fire on a peaceful protest in Derry - quite simply because the findings of the 12-year Saville inquiry into this event leave no space for doubt.

Contrary to the lies peddled by top spheres of the British state for almost 4 decades, no shots were fired by the marchers, nor was there any armed IRA presence. But former soldiers quoted officers saying, on the eve of that day, "we want some kills tomorrow". These were state murders committed by an occupation army whose hierarchy consciously designated civil rights protesters as "fair targets".

Yet, there is no question of anyone being held responsible for these murders - whether among the senior officers in charge or the politicians whose policies sparked off the protest. Nor is there any question of mentioning the responsibility of the British state which, after centuries of colonising Ireland, "resolved" the Irish question by slicing off and occupying 20% of Ireland's territory. How would it feel if instead of Northern Ireland being annexed by London, Wales and the West Midlands had been annexed by Dublin?

Northern Ireland's colonial set-up

After the 1921 partition of Ireland, Northern Ireland had a devolved parliament in Belfast, while being run by London, which resorted to "divide and rule" to enforce its domination. Every possible means was used to set the local Protestants (who were settled there from the 17th century, under a deliberate policy to deprive the Irish of their land) against the Irish Catholics.

Catholic workers were barred from many skilled jobs, their families could only have access to the most derelict housing. The social gap between the poor majority of the Catholic population and the Protestant section of the population was deliberately widened, to convince the latter that it would lose everything should London withdraw from the North.

This policy was reinforced by corrupting Northern politics. The right

Britain's colonial past isn't dead!



to vote in regional and local elections was heavily biased to favour Protestants and, among them, the better-off layers. Only those with seven years residence and some property could vote, which excluded the poor, who either owned nothing or had to spend long periods working "on the lump" in Britain. Gerrymandering was the rule and businessmen were even entitled to several votes. As a result, for instance, Derry city council was solidly dominated by Protestants, despite Derry being 70% Catholic.

London faces a social explosion

By the late 1960s a wave of protest marches for civil rights and decent housing began. The protest grew despite bans and brutal attacks by police. The anger of a whole population, pushed for so long into poverty, was turning into a social explosion which had the potential of uniting the ranks of all the poor, Catholic and Protestant.

London could not afford a social explosion which would inevitably threaten its domination in the North. Government officials and Protestant politicians conspired to drive a wedge among the poor. So-called "loyalist" paramilitaries, armed by the British state, attacked Catholic areas, shot people, burnt houses, to terrorise their population. Residents responded with mass riots and many Catholic areas became "no-go areas" for the police, like the Creggan estate in Derry.

In August 1969, London's Labour government sent in the army under the pretext of protecting Catholics. But its real aim was to break the back of the civil rights movement, by getting the army to take over the "no-go areas". When this failed, internment was introduced by the Tories, in August 1971, thereby giving the authorities a licence to lock up anyone. It was to protest against internment that the "Bloody Sunday" march was organised.

London's brutal repression disorientated the civil rights movement. This allowed the IRA to fill the vacuum as the self-proclaimed leadership of the discontented, and to replace their collective mass action which had terrified London so much, with an "armed struggle" over which the poor had no control. Ironically, in the end, the nationalists used this to bargain their way into the institutions of a still British-dominated Northern Ireland.

While the Irish question could have been resolved by the civil rights movement of the 1960s, through the re-unification of Ireland, today it remains unresolved. After 40 more years of decay of the capitalist world, the odds are now, that it will only be resolved by the joint, conscious, efforts of the British and Irish working classes, within the framework of a future Socialist United States of Europe run by its working class population. □

King's Cross railway station (London)**• Gravy trains for them, sore feet for us!**

The government is considering removing the cap on rail fares (which limits rises to 1% above inflation), under the pretext of cutting the annual £5bn (!) hand-out to private rail companies. With 1 billion passengers annually, private train companies have a captive market. And since they're discussing ways to increase profits, aren't uncontrolled fare rises a no-brainer for them - and a killer for a public already ripped off by the highest fares in Europe? And never mind

the tricks already used by train companies to increase fares above the odds already, like by extending "peak periods"!

It's no surprise that the removal of the cap is supported vocally by National Express, one of the big 5 transport groups. Despite defaulting on its East Coast franchise agreement last year, this company will now be able to extend its C2C and East Anglia franchises for another year. Yes, while transport minister Philip Hammond works



out new ways to help the privateers in the meantime, with longer contracts, and fewer specifications as to their responsibilities to passengers. So, it seems we'll be saying "hello" to a worse service which costs even more!

• Barrier woes to come

FCC obviously doesn't care about the potential dangers of over-crowding. They're so keen to get their revenue that they've revived the crazy idea of installing barriers at Finsbury Park, despite the restricted width of the platforms and the huge crowds at rush-hour. [King's X - Workers' Platform - 15/06/10]

• Safety admission

East Coast management has admitted that they are the worst of all the rail companies for safety at work. It doesn't surprise us, when, for instance, a train turns up with a hole in the floor right where catering workers are supposed

to be working. That's just one example of many. East Coast is promising to pull their socks up but we know full well that we are going to have to pull THEM up if we want to avoid accidents happening to us. [King's X - Workers' Platform - 15/06/10]

• Managers' booz-nanza

Some of the wines on the East Coast menu were also discontinued and management offered the surplus stock to catering workers at cost price (no, not free, in return for all our hard work serving the stuff!) But if you wanted a case, you had to go to the EPOS office between 10.00 and 14.00 - a time when most On Board workers are... on board. Managers, though, on the spot and with nothing much to do, would be well placed to be

at the front of the queue. Hiccup? [King's X - Workers' Platform - 29/06/10]

• Down the tubelines

TfL is taking over the maintenance work done by Tubelines, after the latest "Public Private Partnership" disaster - which cost the taxpayer £310 million. But the jobs and conditions of the workers who will be transferred back to TfL are not guaranteed. 535 out of 2915 jobs are under threat, according to the RMT. Tubelines workers stopped work for 48 hours last week and another strike is planned for July. We back them 100% but with all of us facing uncertainty over our jobs, why aren't we ALL out to defend every job? [King's X - Workers' Platform - 29/06/10]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**• It can't be "trained" out of them!**

Some managers have been away on a 2-day training course. Was this to learn how to consult with the union for the 2010 and Beyond Belief Agreement? Apparently they're now supposed to turn the screw on us, "politely", and in partnership with the CWU. Can they change their spots? No question about it! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 28/6/10]

• New revision? It's designed to fail!

In DOs up and down the country, D2D's been "in load" for 3w now and the cap will come off the length of delivery span soon (if it hasn't already) - increasing to 4hrs, 5hrs, or more! One has to wonder how far this can go, since we've more rubbish to sort, leave later, and will probably

end up cutting off more often than not, thus reducing the walk span back to 2-3 hours! Full circle? [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 28/6/10]

• Back to the future

The new vans, meant to make up for stopping using your own car and lengthening walks, haven't even arrived in most DOs. As for walk sequencing machines (still sitting in a warehouse somewhere), they're hardly going to speed things up because many smaller DOs will have to wait for the last load of sequenced mail to arrive before mates can even go out. No wonder they want us to work 10 or 12-hour days. When what they should do (but won't) is bring back more posties and a 2nd daily delivery. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 28/6/10]

• Fruitless exercise

2 weeks ago, Romec called a special



meeting for cleaners after receiving a grievance letter from a worker. The bosses were worried enough about it to try to placate us all, even calling in the director, but they still didn't dare show us the letter! One issue was how some of us weren't even getting our statutory rest days. It was more or less implied that we had to accept lousy conditions and low pay, because cleaning wasn't the profitable part of Romec! Come off it! So, was it fruitless? Probably not even worth one rotten banana. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 28/6/10]

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**• The growing subcontracting scandal**

At Dagenham, Ford has subcontracted work since the late 1980s to reduce labour costs and increase profit margins. This meant that contract workers never benefited from the "Ford" terms and conditions, hard-won in strikes in the 1960s and 1970s.

Today a small subcontractor called Hamtons seems to have scooped itself a near monopoly - first with cleaning, and lately, driving. Initially the driving jobs in the new Engine Plant were contracted to a company called ACR, whose workers had slightly better conditions - like sick pay. Hamtons undercut their bid for renewal of their contract, launching an offshoot called LineSide to win the tender. LineSide now gets away with murder.

It delivers sequenced parts to Lion

and Tiger Engine lines, employing an increasing number of agency temps (70+) and a decreasing number of permanents (50-ish), some of whom transferred from ACR. Permanent drivers for LineSide get £8.32/hr, compared to around £16/hr for "Ford" drivers doing the same job in the old Engine plant. The principle that everyone should be on the same terms for the same job has gone by the board. And because of LineSide's policy to keep numbers to a bare minimum, workers are expected to do overtime, sometimes with only an 8hr break between 8hr shifts - never mind the law, or workers' health and safety!

What's more, there is more to Hamtons/LineSide than meets the eye. Ex-Ford managers and even ex-union



officials suddenly pop up in Hamtons management posts. Sweetheart deals are done with the Unite regional office. "Ford" union officials take no notice, allowing this division in the workforce to become a gulf. But this gulf will have to be bridged before matters get any worse! Because any meaningful fight will have to aim, among other things, at getting subcontracted workers to be employed directly by Ford, at the rate for the job and with the same terms and conditions.

• Will the HSE ask the right questions?

The Health and Safety Exec is inspecting the plant this week, starting with the Lynx line-from-hell on Monday (cleaned up to create a false impression). Turnip however, is still taking refuge on Tiger, so maybe he can answer for the backward "stand-up-and-jump" conditions over there?

Will the HSE ask about the constant flouting of the Working Time Regulations by Ford and LineSide? Like when they ask workers to come in for an extra 8-hour shift after finishing

just 8 hours before, whether it be Fri-Sat, Sat-Sun or Sun-Mon? [Ford Dagenham Workers' Fight 22/6/10]

• Words can't hide reality

So is this the implementation of the "Improved Competitiveness Agreement" (gesundheit!) for Stamping Operations? Loan outs to the Wheel Plant to stockpile those (certainly not obsolete) steel wheels, whose production Ford aims to kill by September? Staggering lunch-breaks on SubAssembly to boost numbers of high load side doors? The only problem is, machines don't understand the words "efficiency" or "competitiveness". They

break down just the same. Maybe that's because they do understand the words "cost cutting"? [Ford Dagenham Workers' Fight 22/6/10]

• Covered in grease

Imagine how filthy Tiger Machining must get if Chicken Farmhands were asked to do 12hr cleaning there, on overtime? And isn't it proof that Tiger machining is very short of hands? So much for the JWC's "master-stroke" to save Ford a whole shift of workers by suggesting that crazy 12hr/day, shift pattern! It's bad, all round. [Ford Dagenham Workers' Fight 6/7/10]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**• Giving with one hand...**

BMW only gives heat relief when the plant average is above 27° and a certain humidity threshold. In the Paint Shop we are getting 5 mins per hour heat relief. But then the line speed is turned up to make the time up. The situation gets a lot worse though. BMW have programmed the heating to come on when the lights are switched on! [Workers' Fight, BMW Oxford, 29/6/10]

• Robots know their limitations

So much for the £6m auto bolt-on line in B-i-W. Not only is it over 6 weeks behind schedule; every time they try to turn the linespeed up the robots will have none of it, and off piles a fresh load of rejects. So BMW haven't even reached a speed of 30 cars per hour yet, though they were aiming at twice

that. It looks to be a while before they get the return on investment they expected! [Workers' Fight, BMW Oxford, 29/6/10]

• "Demand" is a smokescreen

The talks on shifts are still ongoing, we hear, with no details except that BMW wants the change in October. When they didn't even know how many cars they wanted to produce last Saturday, how come they're so certain about market conditions three months ahead? Or perhaps the change is another attempt to get two crews to do the work of three? [Workers' Fight, BMW Oxford, 29/6/10]

• Where's the catch?

So BMW wants more "turnaround" space for the next generation of Mini, it claims - so that new facility work need not disrupt production in future. This would involve constructing a new B-i-W production



facility that would replace the existing B-i-W while allowing BMW to go on producing current models. But with BMW assuring us that it will "not mean an increase in the workforce", some workmates are pretty sceptical. Didn't BMW ask for Roman Way to be closed on the promise of expansion - and got council permission? Nothing happened, but the value of the site increased enormously. [Workers' Fight, BMW Oxford, 15/6/10]

China

For 30 years massive industrialisation of China's coastal regions has created a working class numbering over 200 million. Most of the investment came from rapacious foreign firms which sought to reduce costs by cutting jobs in the rich countries and switching part of the work to China. For Chinese workers, this meant sweatshop conditions together with a military-style regimentation of their lives. But, although the western media always looked the other way, there has always been resistance against this ruthless exploitation.

The past two months saw a wave of strikes and protests, which prompted the government to increase the minimum wage by 20%, twice the amount planned (to a monthly £97 in Beijing and £114 in Shanghai). The origin of this wave seems to have been the protest strike caused by a spate of suicides at Foxconn – a subsidiary of Taiwanese company Hon Hai, the world's largest electronics components supplier with 800,000 workers in China, which produces Apple's iPhone, among other western toys. Attempting to stave off anger, Foxconn raised wages by 30% (from around £60pm).

Thereafter, strikes spread along the Pearl River delta to cities such as auto-city Foshan where Japanese-owned Denso was forced to raise wages by 30% plus a monthly bonus worth the same amount. Strikes

The rise of the working class?



Striking workers at Honda's Foshan factory

produced similar outcomes at part-manufacturers owned by Honda, Toyota and Hyundai, not to mention a Taiwanese rubber manufacturer in Shanghai and a Carlsberg factory in Chongqing. Another strike broke out in response to the death of a worker on the job, in one of the world's largest soccer ball factories - owned by Taiwanese group Si Maibo, which as a subcontractor for Adidas, is the manufacturer of this year's World Cup "jabulani" ball.

The big multinationals hoped they'd found the holy grail, by creating what seemed to be an infinitely expandable working population in

China. Instead, they are now beginning to see the emergence of a modern, urban working class, which has discovered its collective strength and is learning how to use it against capitalist exploitation - just as it happened in the 19th century, in Europe and the USA. It will not take long for this young Chinese working class to develop its own independent class organisations. And instead of having weakened the international proletariat, as they thought, the capitalists will realise - too late - that they have only managed to reinforce it! And this, should be a reason for all workers to rejoice! ☐

Football

The winners of the football World Cup, could hardly be any happier than its official sponsors or "partner" companies. For an outlay of about \$110m, Emirates airline, for instance, calculates that it gets exposure at matches equivalent to a normal advertising cost of \$3bn. Adidas (supplier of the controversial match balls) was already claiming a strengthening of its market position

proves its worth as a milch cow again

in football kit after just ten days of the tournament.

Yet while companies continue to regard football sponsorship as an excellent investment, the clubs themselves lurch from one financial crisis to the next. In early August, Cardiff City will face a winding up order in court unless it pays outstanding taxes of £1.3m. That is a little less than the club paid its own ex-chairman, Peter

Ridsdale, in "consultancy fees"!

Manchester United, saddled with more than £700m debts to the banks which lent the cash to the Glazer family to buy it, now looks like the family's best asset, as their US shopping malls business runs into trouble. Even mighty Barcelona is seeking a loan to pay its players. Football is as popular as ever – but the parasitism of business is killing it. ☐

In addition to this monthly paper, we publish fortnightly bulletins in several large workplaces in the South East, a quarterly journal, "Class Struggle" and the "Internationalist Communist Forums" - a series of pamphlets on topical issues.

If you wish to find out more about our ideas, activities and publications, contact the Workers' Fight activist who sold you this issue of our paper, or write to us either by e-mail, at contact@w-fight.org, or by postal mail at:

BM Workers' Fight - LONDON WC1N 3XX.