



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

EGYPT: MUBARAK IS GONE, NOT HIS GENERALS

It did not take long for the Egyptian generals who took over from Mubarak, to show what they had in store. Their first public statement was clear enough. It did not condemn the bloodshed and torture under the dictatorship, but it paid tribute to Mubarak's "services"!

And how could it be otherwise? Isn't the new ruling "army council" led by top brass who were in Mubarak's government? Wasn't Mubarak himself one of these generals before rising to the top? Didn't his dictatorship rely over the past 30 years on their loyal support?

The army turns on the protesters

Within 24 hours, the generals were implementing a "return to normality". The military police proceeded to clear Tahrir square and stop protesters who were coming back.

In doing so, the generals are meeting the demand of their Washington paymasters for an "orderly change". They are doing the bidding of the small but greedy Egyptian capitalist class and the shareholders of western companies - all of whom want "order" to return to Egypt and to the region.

In their attempt to restore order, the generals may well get the support of many of yesterday's protesters. In particular, of the better-off middle class, who wanted Mubarak's corrupt lot out, but became terrified for their property after the police disappeared. It may also be the case of young graduates who were just hoping to improve their careers. It is probably from this social milieu that the youth shown on TV, cleaning the streets of Alexandria's affluent areas, in the name of what they call the "revolution", have been recruited.

The generals may even get the support of naive young protesters, who might be fooled by their promise of



"freedom" and "democracy", without realising what a mirage this is for the vast majority.

Because, for the tens of millions of Egyptians living in slums, for the one in five of the under-25s who are unemployed, or for the over-exploited workers who must survive on £40/month or less, the generals' constitution will mean no change!

The working class needs its own banner

In fact, the generals were quick to turn against the exploited. The army's 5th public statement made a very explicit threat, this time not just against protesters in general, but against unions and strikers, in the name of working towards "affluence" for all! Except that the working class and the poor know all too well that this "affluence" is not for them.

During the course of the protests, no-one could tell how many protesters came from the slums. Even if there were some slogans against poverty and unemployment and even if, during the last days, public sector workers were on Tahrir square.

However, during the last week, a wave of strikes broke out in several industries, public and private, in various parts of the country. It seemed that, encouraged by the resilience of the protests, workers felt this was the time to come out on strike with their own demands.

As these strikes are not threatening capital for the time being, they may not really worry the generals or the capitalists. But exploitation, unemployment and poverty have been so brutal and naked, and for such a long time in Egypt, that an upsurge of mobilisation and organisation within the working class could turn into a full-scale social explosion which might threaten much more than the short-term profits of capital.

In fact, for those who do not want the generals and Washington to produce yet another dictator, rallying behind the banner of the working class, the banner of social revolution, is the only way forward - and not just for Egypt, but for the whole region. □

(see also p.4)

Cuts watch

Cameron's NHS "Big Reform" (everything Cameron announces is "Big"!) is contained in the "Health and Social Care Bill" which had its 2nd reading in the Commons on 31 January. It spells out how 80% of the NHS budget will be used by GPs to buy care from private companies, NHS Hospitals or "charitable foundations", which will all compete to treat patients. The Financial Times wrote a spoof of

NHS deform

this as a version of a Monopoly game, with good reason, because the game is on all of us! In fact, patients will have no choice but to submit to the roll of a GP's dice, to decide where they get their scans, their operations, etc., and no choice when it comes to the risks involved (a new private clinic run by some upstart privateer, doing it on the cheap, for example!).

On top of this, £20bn of

"efficiencies" are to be found (20% of the budget) - Cameron's strange way of "ring-fencing" the NHS budget! The screw is already being turned : hospitals in London just announced they were cutting frontline jobs - like 250 nursing posts Barts and the London. So NHS workers and users had better get ready to tip up the Monopoly board! ☐

• Private companies ready to pounce

Councils set their budgets this month. Even those who blew their mouths off over Cameron's BS (aka Big Society) like Liverpool's leader, did the dirty. Not one dared to stand up to the government. Over 115,000 job cuts have been announced with more to come and private subcontractors are lining up for contracts to deliver what will remain of local services.

Indeed, Cameron's "Big Society" is just the same as Thatcher's "No Society": private capital should replace the public sector to make a profit, with all that entails (worse services delivered by fewer workers on casual terms and conditions).

• Want rid of this postcode lottery?

According to a January "Which? Money" survey, the care of the elderly, like certain treatments on the NHS, is subject to a "postcode lottery". Social care (like help to get to get out of bed, wash and eat) is already means tested. It's free for those with less than £14,250 savings. Those with less than £23,250 but more than £14,250 pay a reduced rate. But after that, where you live makes all

Already, thanks to past governments, both Tory and Labour, companies like Serco, Capita, Sodexo (and many smaller ones) swallow 40% of local budgets (£42bn/ year!). This is likely to increase by at least 4% in the next 3 years. Some claim that this is because the government's "skint" and the "private sector can offer hard cash which the government can't". No. It's because the government is the government of Serco, Capita and Rentokil-Initial. It is there to guarantee the profits of these parasites and would rather cut public services and make us pay, than take hard cash off them.

the difference. Those with savings over £23,250 could pay £60/week in a place like Barnsley, but as much as £850/week in Brighton, even though these councils both cap the maximum payable. But some councils have no cap at all. And 70% of councils now restrict their supply of home care services to those with "critical and substantial needs" or even just "critical needs", which are provided



Biffa, "the power behind waste" and.. lots of profits to top it all

for very short periods only.

With the latest cuts, it's expected that over 50% of all councils will reduce their social care budgets, making the "postcode lottery" worse. But shouldn't social care be provided according to need, full stop? How much you can afford to pay or where you live shouldn't come into it.

• Teacher shortage ahead

The number of trainee secondary school teachers will be cut by 14% next year, with 2,200 fewer university places for them - and the cuts falling most heavily in English, music and art. At the same time, the government is cutting the £6000 bursaries designed to attract graduates into teaching, for all but a few subjects.

Apparently, Education Secretary Michael Gove thinks you don't need to be trained to teach. He favours the "Teach First" scheme, which takes "exceptional" graduates and plonks them into "challenging" schools, where they are supposed to just "learn on the job" without

any training - which certainly sounds like a challenge for the unfortunate pupils.

The Con-Dems' justification for these cuts is that the number of children of secondary school age is currently falling. But the number at primary school level is rising. Hasn't it occurred to them that these primary school pupils are going to grow up and swell the numbers at secondary schools in just a few years' time?

• Wouldn't you Adam and Eve it?

Of the 8 proposals for "free schools" which Education Secretary Michael Gove formally approved on 29 January, half are faith-based. Publicly funded but independently run, like Labour's "academies", the free

schools are supposed to be the flagship of Cameron's "Big Society". But in fact, and like the academies, the bids come disproportionately from religious organisations and individual reactionaries. One such bid, in Newark-on-Trent, would teach the fairy tale of Adam and Eve as an "alternative theory" to evolution - which is just like putting the belief in a flat earth on a par with knowledge of the solar system! And Gove, while claiming to want to raise standards in school education, is just as happy as Labour was to hand over teaching to these shady quack philosophers. They shouldn't be allowed to brainwash the young at all, even less be given our money to do it!

The only "alternative" is to fight!

The government was planning to make public sector workers pay higher pension contributions in the March budget. But now they have deferred the decision to the summer, when "Lord" Hutton, the former Labour minister, is due to unveil their other attacks on public sector pensions.

• Sniping at workers' rights

One of the planned anti-working class measures leaked by the Con-Dems, aims at reducing the possibility for workers to turn to employment tribunals for redress. Every case would have to be first submitted to ACAS, making the whole process even longer. Workers would have to pay a fee just to file a case. And to submit an unfair dismissal claim, a worker would have to be employed

• CAB-cutting

Citizen Advice Bureaux are facing drastic cuts. A large part of their funding comes from big local councils, which are much keener to cut subsidies to CABs and other services to the poorest, than to dispense with grossly overpaid chief executives or exorbitant prestige developments. So, Birmingham's five CAB drop-in centres will close next month, while CAB funding will drop by 70% in Nottingham and by 100% in the City of London! Meanwhile, as part of his "bonfire of quangos", Osborne plans to sack 900 debt advisers funded by the state, who were mostly working

Nevertheless, trade union leaders have decreed that the pensions issue is going to be the focus for any coordinated industrial action. Yes, a fight on pensions is needed. But it shouldn't be a pretext for ignoring the wage, job and welfare cuts which are happening right now.

in the same job for 2 years instead of the current one year. That would increase the number unable to claim compensation on such grounds from around 4.2m to 7m (a quarter of all workers!).

Statistics show that only 6% of employment tribunal cases result in compensation for workers. So they don't provide much redress anyway. Ultimately what is really decisive

through CABs. How are advisers supposed to do their jobs without premises and means to survive? By setting up shop on the pavement and expecting to be fed by the population in return, as they do in Africa's impoverished towns?

Ironically, considering the Con-Dems' "crusade" against "red tape", most of the CABs' work is to help unwind the legalistic "red tape" tied around the necks of indebted families by banks, credit card companies and other bloodsuckers, in order to squeeze even more cash out of them. But the bankers' politicians

Cuts watch

At the end of March, there is the long-awaited "march for the alternative" that the TUC has called. But if their "alternative" doesn't involve organising the fight that is urgently needed against the cuts which are going through at the moment, what use is it? □

against employers is how much they fear workers' reactions to their dirty tricks. Nevertheless, if this measure is passed, it would be yet another way of denting workers' rights - predictable, coming from politicians so bent on serving the bosses. But this won't save the bosses' necks when the working class decides that enough is enough!



would be blind to that kind of "red tape", wouldn't they!

• Union leaders on a slippery slope

The expensive ski resort of Davos has been host to the World Economic Forum. This annual gathering of the rich and powerful brings together business leaders and heads of state, to discuss how to further the interests of big business.

Why would union leaders attend this billionaires' jamboree? Yet there was the head of the International TUC, feeling very important, no doubt, to be described by the media as "tackling rising global unemployment", with capitalists and politicians whose only concern is to squeeze more profits out of workers' labour.

Union leaders rubbing shoulders with bosses and politicians in the middle of the Swiss Alps is of no use to the working class, whereas the world's workers, organised and fighting, could move mountains!

Letter from Sussex

Here, as elsewhere, there are cutbacks all over. East Sussex County Council is cutting 400 jobs between now and 2015 and 315 of these will be in Children's Services. Perhaps they're expecting charities with Cameron's Big Society volunteers to take over. East Sussex Hospitals Trust is cutting over 50 posts in the so-called ring-fenced NHS.

Although the privatisation of Forestry Commission woodlands has been suspended, this is only temporary. The government promises that public access will not suffer. But already there are cases of car parks and paths closing. The Forestry Commission actively encourages cycling in many of its woodlands. Why would a private operator do that? At least one of these woods, Friston Forest falls entirely within the new South Downs National Park. There has already been talk of privatising parts of the national parks. Will this be a further avenue for that? The furore over the privatisation of the Forest of Dean needs to become general, if we are to retain our right to roam the countryside. Perhaps the "great trespass" movement of the 1930s needs to be revived.

EGYPT

No-one will question the fact that it was the massive mobilisation of protesters, who stood up to the bullets of the police in the streets of Tunisia and Egypt, which initiated the process leading to the exile of Tunisian dictator Ben Ali and to the resignation of his Egyptian counterpart, Hosni Mubarak. But, despite the protesters' anger and courage, neither in Tunisia, nor in Egypt, were the dictators overthrown by their action. In both cases, it was Washington's direct intervention which pushed the dictators out of the power that they were still clinging to.

Regional imperialist policies

Long before Ben Ali's and Mubarak's departure, Obama had already indicated, in no uncertain terms, that the US wanted to see what he called a "peaceful transition to democracy" in these countries.

Not that the US leaders were in the least concerned with the democratic rights of the populations. No such thing can be expected from imperialist powers which have bombed the populations of Iraq and Afghanistan into the ground in the name of what they called "democracy" - only to prop up puppet dictatorships dressed up in "democratic" clothes.

No, after decades of providing their unwavering military and political support to the corrupt dictatorships of Mubarak and Ben Ali, the US leaders simply decided that it was too risky to go on betting on worn out horses, which seemed no longer capable of keeping order in their own houses.

Hence the hypocritical line-up of the rich countries' leaders behind

The long arm of imperialism

Obama, calling for "democratic change" in Tunisia and Egypt.

The military, a reserve weapon

All along, however, the US leaders were preparing contingency plans. In so doing, they must have remembered their own past mistakes. How, for instance, they lost control of the

mere fact that it remained apparently "neutral" seems to have been enough to fuel the illusion that it was on their side - which was exactly the aim of the exercise.

However, the army remains what it has always been - the main instrument for the ruling classes (both local and imperialist) to impose their



situation in Iran, three decades ago, after most of the Iranian army was thrown into a violent battle against the students, youth and workers, to prevent the collapse of the Shah's regime.

So, this time, the US mentors of the Tunisian and Egyptian generals made sure that they would not be discredited by shooting on demonstrators. All the dirty work was left to the police and special forces. Meanwhile, although the army did nothing to defend the protests, the

social order on the working class and poor. In Egypt, in particular, the military is even more than that. In addition to being the region's largest army and the guarantor of the US Middle-East policy, particularly in Palestine, it is also the centre of a web of corruption which extends into many industries.

These are the instruments on which the capitalist classes are now relying to ensure that nothing significant changes in the Middle East and North Africa. □

From British to US rule

In 1945, the Egyptian monarchy was Britain's chief puppet regime in the Middle East. There were 40 British military bases just in the Suez Canal zone, capable of servicing an army of half-a-million. 100,000 British soldiers were stationed around Cairo alone.

However, when, in January 1952, British Canal Zone troops killed 40 local police in Ismailia, riots broke out in Cairo, targeting anything related to Britain.

In July that year, the discredited

Egyptian monarchy was finally overthrown by a nationalist coup, led by junior army officers - among them Gamal Abdel Nasser.

Nasser went on to negotiate Britain's partial withdrawal from the region - first from Sudan, in 1954, and then, the same year, from the Canal Zone - in a deal which still allowed British forces to use their old bases if the canal was threatened.

But when, in 1956, Nasser proceeded to assert Egypt's rights over the Canal by nationalising it, Britain

and France immediately retaliated with air strikes.

However, this was to be the last stand of the ageing European imperialist powers in the region. Within 24 hours, they were ordered by Washington to call back their aircraft. US imperialism stepped in to take on their role in the Middle East, providing aid to the Egyptian army - to the point where, today, it has become one of the world's largest recipients of American military aid. □

20 years ago: operation "Desert Storm" unleashed on Iraq

On 23rd February 1991, almost a million soldiers in a 34-country, US-led UN Coalition, invaded Iraq and Kuwait. This was preceded by weeks of relentless aerial bombardment that destroyed much of Iraq's air force and tank corps.

The land invasion defeated the Iraqi army within 100 hours, inflicting

heavy casualties, but with negligible Wllosses for the coalition. Ostensibly this was merely to free Kuwait which had been occupied in August 1990 by the forces of Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi dictator.

In fact much more was at stake. During the recently concluded Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) Saddam had

served as a pawn in the US game to check the regional influence of Iran, following the overthrow of the Shah. Although Iraq had fulfilled this task, it had paid a high price: over a million dead and financial ruin. It was against that background that Saddam had invaded wealthy Kuwait - hoping to compensate himself for his services to imperialism.

The US had no intention of allowing him to become a regional strong man. For Washington, this was an ideal pretext to cut him down to size and to send a signal to all aspiring regional strong men that they could expect the same treatment if they annexed territory without imperialism's consent.

The hollowness of the US leaders' claim to be "freeing" the Kuwaiti population was shown by the way they abandoned the Iraqi Kurds and the southern Shias. Long repressed by Saddam, these populations used Iraq's defeat as an opportunity to assert their aspirations. When Saddam turned his guns against them, the imperialist leaders looked the other way. Their only objective was to enforce their world order regardless of, and against, the interests of the populations. □

WORKERS' FIGHT PUBLIC MEETING

Egypt: the banner of the working class has yet to be raised

**Saturday 26th February 2011
Wesley's Chapel - upper meeting room
49, City Road, London EC1Y 1AU
(tube: Old Street)**

• **A speculative smokescreen**

At the end of January news stories suggested that the standoff in Egypt would push world oil prices even higher, by threatening oil operations along the Suez Canal. So protesters demanding Mubarak's resignation were to be blamed if the average price of a litre of unleaded went over 130p!

In fact, only 4.7% of world oil production passes through the Suez Canal, and the Egyptian army has sent extra troops to protect the canal since the start of the crisis. But speculators are certainly betting on

fears that the revolt might spread to oil-producing countries in the Middle East like Saudi Arabia, and reduce oil production.

Last June it was reported that one London oil futures broker had driven the price of oil up to an 8 month high, by buying 7m barrels - equivalent to 90% of a day's production in Saudi Arabia - in a single night. This story gives an idea of the scale of speculation on commodity prices. It was said at the time that this broker had been drunk. In fact, it's this whole system which is "drunk"!

• **Oil majors' profits gush again**

Across the world, oil producers' profits are rising. This may not have put BP back into the black yet, following its massive oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico. But its £3.1bn loss hides the fact that it is well on course to plug the £27bn(!) bill from the Deep Water Horizon disaster. Haliburton, which did the drilling in the Gulf disaster, more than doubled profits in the last quarter to £375m. As for Royal Dutch

Shell, even though its £11.5bn profits "did not impress" the City, its fourth quarter profits of £3.54bn (that's £1.6m /hour!) were almost five times last year's and its CEO promises "unprecedented" growth in profits and production in 2012. Once again oil producers, not to mention speculators, rub their hands as they make a killing. A levy on their super profits should be the order of the day.

Class Struggle n°90 is out!

In the January-March issue of our quarterly journal:

- The bosses' offensive and the necessary fight back
- Youth vs the Con-Dems: the "street" can undo what politicians have done...
- Ireland - the working class as "collateral damage" of the on-going tremors of the crisis
- Afghanistan - a bloody search for an elusive political settlement
- USA - school privatisation: an attack on the working class

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price: £1.50

King's Cross railway station (London)**• What we need is our own "network"!**

The "independent" Rail Safety & Standards Board (RSSB) has just confirmed what had already leaked, thanks to a Network Rail whistleblower - the under-reporting of 40% of accidents since 2005! Network rail workers were afraid to speak out.

But while this was obviously linked to the fact that managers' bonuses relied on achieving targets (including safety targets), the RSSB claims this is an "unintended consequence"

of Network Rail's good intentions on safety!

What is more, even though the RSSB is funded by NR and the Train Operating Companies and therefore hardly "independent", it had to admit that both the high level of injuries and the fear of reporting them is a direct consequence of NR turning the screw on workers' sick leave and its reliance on contractors who use agency staff to cut costs (and



increase profits, which they don't say!). We rail workers aren't surprised. We know we need to catch these sharks in our own net.

• Eureka! This reeks of something...

East Coast management has revealed what's behind their "Eureka!" project, due to start in May. They want to offer 1st Class passengers free food. This means much more work for catering workers but because management know they're aren't enough of us to deliver the service as it is, and they don't want to recruit any more of us, they're planning to cut other parts of the service instead - like the number of trains on which proper, freshly-cooked food is available, and the number of trolleys in Standard. This means cutting chefs' jobs and making them into Customer Service

Assistants. The company council reps walked out on these proposals. When are we following suit? [Workers' Platform - King's X - 25/01/2011]

• No to these cuts!

When East Coast took over from NX, they said they wouldn't be making redundancies. But now they are threatening to cut 29.4 jobs in the Travel Centres up and down the line, 7 of these at King's X. It's crazy - they want to get rid of nearly 1 in 5 of us, when we can't even manage with the number of workers now. We've heard their stories of internet ticket sales so many times, but strangely the queues in the Travel Centre don't get any shorter. And if they want more people to use the

Fast Ticket machines, they're going to need even more of us to help them out. [Workers' Platform - King's X - 25/01/2011]

• Driving us to distraction

FCC is so short of drivers on the Great Northern side that they didn't manage to train most of us for the new 521s. Now the new units are in operation, they've got even more of a problem. It seems that their preferred method for dealing with it is to move drivers onto different diagrams, without so much as a by your leave. And if these diagrams are longer, they think we'll happily work them without a murmur? No chance! [Workers' Platform - King's X - 25/01/2011]

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**• They must be reinstated!**

Last week on nights 2 Hamton's cleaners, (long serving agency temps) were maliciously accused of sleeping in DDC's Costas, when in fact they'd just sat down after finishing a job. And even if they were asleep, so what?

They got no chance to tell their side, nor was there any intervention from the union (neither Ford nor Hamton stewards were called). The next night they were just sacked and marched out of the plant, like that. We want this lousy, unjust action exposed and these mates back at work with us, on permanent contracts this time! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 31/1/11]

• We are all temporary workers!

The flouting of our rights, established in Ford by many decades of struggle, is happening more often, and especially to subcontracted workers. But Joint Works Committee-Trade Union officials use artificial divisions in our ranks - which they agreed to - as an excuse to do nothing, while Ford's anti-union cowboys hire and fire agency temps, and trample all over wages, terms and conditions. If we want to

put a full stop to this, it's going to be up to the shopfloor to stand up - all of us together, Ford and contractors. And not just because we'll be next. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 31/1/11]

• Trying to scrap our contract

EMR (the scrap merchants) have been trying in every way to cut wages and conditions in the Press Shop basement (where we've fought to maintain Ford terms). First, the Xmas bonus went and now, the attendance allowance is cut (HR says there's only 49 weeks in the year!). We know what's made them "change their minds" in the past. Is that what they want? [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 31/1/11]

• This house ain't in order

The 2-yearly stewards elections (should be every year!) in the engine plant only serve to remind us what a joke this so-called "representation" can be. And no offence meant to those mates who stand for election in "good faith". It's not just that Production areas haven't got enough stewards and that the Craft areas are top-heavy with them. No, it's that this feeds the present cronyism and privileges of the TU top dogs - those with a



full-time position on the JWC - who act as a cushion for management to sit on. Whether they can always protect Ford bosses from getting the kicking they deserve is another question, tho! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 31/1/11]

• It's a basic h&s issue...

In the old engine plant the temperature's often below 13°C let alone the statutory minimum of 16°C. It should be 16° or over on the coldest part of the line, even if the middle (as is the case on Puma) is warmer. So at both ends there needs to be a thermometer, plus one in the middle... Just so we can check if we're OK to start work or if we need a hot drink and a delay until the place heats up! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 31/1/11]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**• Collect Minus**

"Collect+" delivery network has been set up in competition to Royal Mail parcel delivery and it's meant to allow people to send parcels more cheaply by paying online, printing a label then taking the parcel to any corner shop with a PayPoint terminal - the advantage being that these shops are open all hours.

Problem is that the Collect+ distribution network (called Yodel, formerly HDNL, before that, part of DHL) could never have even close to

the capacity of Royal Mail's network - even after all the cuts that Royal Mail offices have been subjected to by the government, precisely in order to allow private business to take a chunk out of this public service.

Indeed, Yodel is already in trouble. There are reports of items going missing or being damaged. Last year the company was investigated by the BBC's Watchdog programme for its poor service.

Yodel hopes to deliver 200m



parcels/year, but compared to Royal Mail's 18bn letters and parcels/year - even its ambitions are somewhat derisory! But if it's a race, it's clearly a race to the bottom!

• Deliver double the jobs!

We hear that management wants to expand the new evening delivery service and take on more drivers. Well and good. But drivers are delivering from 3pm to 11pm... on their own. Surely they should have a co-driver for safety reasons - especially if they're going around at 5-11 pm in the dark? That would double up the new jobs on offer - to (we reckon) around 16 full-time jobs. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 7/2/11]

• Poverty of their minds

Romec, we hear, says they just aren't profitable enough - on the cleaning side... They say it's because cleaners are paid "too much" - way above the national average for cleaners. Yup, when we actually can't manage on

this pay, and when many of us have to do 2 jobs, even with the London Allowance!? (And how can cleaners earning below, or on, the national average manage?) Romec bosses are mad. But we already knew that. We just didn't realise how bad they were. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 7/2/11]

• Sit tight!

Inward Foreign mail was supposed to have gone to Royal Mail's Langley "factory" in January - but some is still coming in... Is that because nobody's agreed to go to Langley and it can only move WITH us? Well then, we know what to do to keep it here... [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 7/2/11]

• Obvious way out

Of course, as usual, RM's bosses act

idiotic. If they offered part-timers full-time jobs with all the enhancements necessary maybe they'd solve their self-inflicted problem. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 7/2/11]

• Alan Johnson's "very good" son

Billy Hayes (aspiring Labour politician) was re-elected as general secretary of the union - unopposed. 5 branches would have had to nominate an opponent - but nobody heard about this. So he's still there, despite agreeing, above our heads, to everything against our interests - the D2D, flexibility, job cuts and wage and pension cuts, not to mention the multiple closures - over the past many years! That said, we aren't born yesterday and never relied on him to fight on our behalf anyway! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 7/2/11]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**• R4S rumbled and forced to backtrack**

Right4Staff (the temps agency) got a sharp lesson after they sacked a worker for a few missed jobs, despite the fact that the buy-off records, suspiciously, only seemed to record his errors. Moreover, the process had just been changed and the parcel shelves he had to fit were too far from his workstation.

Stewards in TO4 promptly boycotted further R4S disciplines until the matter was reviewed. Not wanting a backlog of disciplines, R4S caved in, and this workmate got his job back! [BMW Oxford Cowley 9/2/11]

• Enough of being messed around

The February shut out makes even less sense now - at least for those of us in Body-in-White.

Not only was a full shift worked on

overtime last Sunday, another is planned on 27th (when we're still on holiday!) We need to have regular hours in order to plan our lives and not be mucked about all the time and anyway, overtime = not-enough-workers-employed. Not only do temps need permanent status, but we need more hands to work decent hours. [BMW Oxford Cowley 9/2/11]

• Employee gripes' survey

After a couple of years gap (no surprise why!) BMW have reintroduced their "anonymous" Employee Survey. Now that it's online and we get time off to do it, most of us were happy to comply. Not that we allowed the little skive to influence our answers. "Completely disagree" was the favourite box for many of us, particularly if we have a problem with our manager!

We'll be interested to see if our comments about lack of notice about holidays and inappropriate shut outs are reflected in the results. [BMW Oxford Cowley 9/2/11]

**• Finessing Right4Staff**

R4S's standard return to work interview includes a question whether we "considered what the consequences were for BMW". Like we should care!

But the trick is to answer yes. "Yes, I couldn't risk half my area coming down with flu". Or, "Yes, but I needed to rest my injury to avoid taking longer off", etc.

If this is all they ever get, they'll soon get tired of asking! [Workers Fight BMW Oxford Cowley 9/2/11]

No magic in GDP, just a sleight of hand!

There were very long faces among coalition politicians in January, when official statistics produced by the ONS showed not the predicted increase, but a fall in GDP - this magic figure measuring the no-less magical "size" of the economy that politicians of all stripes worship so much. GDP had dropped by 0.05% in the last quarter of 2010 - which reflected badly on the Con-Dems' boast that they were succeeding

in getting the economy to "grow" again!

But why would it matter to the working class? Whether GDP grows or shrinks, workers' jobs, services and standard of living keep being cut anyway! The working class never had any stake in this "GDP growth", which does not reflect who really benefits from the economy - particularly not the fact that all value produced in society comes out of

workers' labour, while most of this value is stolen by a tiny layer of rich capitalist parasites.

GDP graphs belong to the realm of profiteers and are best left to them. What belongs to the working class is the responsibility to build a society organised to cater for the needs of all, rather than the greed of the few. ☐

Pension theft: the crooks of the matter

Companies can use all sorts of accounting tricks to estimate their pension "deficit" or "surplus" - that is, how much less or more they need to have today in order to be able to pay their retired workers in the years to come, based on estimation of life expectancy, return on investment, inflation, etc.

Of course, workers themselves have no way of checking these figures. So when it has suited businesses, they have pleaded poverty, announcing black holes in their pension funds so as to cut final salary schemes. Now that so many workers are excluded, they can safely announce better days - which the government is helping them to do, by allowing them to index pensions on the lower Consumer Price Index. This allows companies to cut pension payments on the one hand and on the other to "discover" a surplus in their pension funds. Indeed, FTSE 100 companies have landed a £15bn pension fund windfall as a direct result! Win-win for government-aided thieves, all the more so as they can now try to pocket this "surplus" - that is, unless the working class locks them all up first!

• Who started the Balls rolling?

The new shadow chancellor, Ed Balls didn't waste any time in ducking it... meaning the issue of confronting Tory economic policy. You could say that straight after taking on the job, he lost his ball(s) completely.

Having previously argued that Miliband's policy of halving the deficit in 4 years was too fast - let alone that of the Coalition which is to cut it completely in one parliament, he now suddenly agrees with his boss.

Said Ed number 2: "I am clear if there was a Labour government today we would be halving the deficit over this parliament". Shadow cabinet? More like a mirror image...

• The PFI con "revisited"

A Commons committee, chaired by Margaret Hodge - ex-Labour minister and, as such, former PFI champion - has just "discovered" that PFI allowed large firms to make huge profits at the expense of taxpayers.

For instance, this report says that due to having won many contracts, these firms made economies of scale, saving millions, which were not passed on to the tax payer in the form of reduced fees. As a result, the widening of the M25 cost £1bn more than it should have.

Likewise, the cost to the state for services provided as part of PFI

contracts (like hospital cleaning) have shown huge variations.

The report concludes that PFI was not used because it provided value for money but because there was "no realistic alternative".

But then, of course, why would politicians of all stripes resort to the cheaper (and more rational) alternative of employing state workers to carry out the work - since their real concern is only to channel state funds into the pockets of the profiteers?

• The rule of the credit sharks

Credit card interest rates now reach 19% on average, a 13 year high. This, at a time when the cost of borrowing for banks is at a historic low in Britain!

However, more and more people depend on these cards to pay for their day to day expenditure: 11.5 million in January relied on them for their groceries. 2 million are even using credit cards to pay their mortgage or rent.

This is a measure of how much the banks have managed to increase their colossal racketeering of embattled working class families thanks to the crisis.

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.