

WORKERS' fight



No 46 - July-Aug 2013

price 30p

<http://www.w-fight.org>
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ISSN 2040-400X

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

A WORKERS' PARTY TO FIGHT THIS PROFIT SYSTEM

What is the balance sheet of the past 3 years, since the last general election?

In 2010, what was evident to anyone who had the patience to listen to the parties' leaders, was how little difference there already was between them. The cross-party consensus was that workers were to pay for this crisis - and that austerity policies were vital to plug the public finance black hole due to the bail-out of the bankers.

Today, what has changed? Cameron and Clegg have dropped their "modernising" masks, and drifted to the right, attacking the most vulnerable sections of workers - the jobless, the disabled, and foreign workers, accusing them of being "parasites on hard-working people". Never mind that their aim is to line the pockets of the only real parasites - the wealthy - as never before.

Meanwhile, Labour's Ed Miliband is chasing behind the Coalition's policies. The more they drift to the right, the more Miliband bends rightwards, endorsing every new turn of the screw and even suggesting one or two - as he did over the so-called "welfare cap". On most issues relevant to workers, Labour sings loudly to the ConDems' anti-working class, pro-bosses tune!

Where is the workers' movement?

While this reactionary overbidding takes place between the parties, the workers' movement is conspicuous by its absence. Long forgotten are the national initiatives taken by the TUC, which enabled workers to express their opposition. This isn't just because TUC leaders were uncomfortable with their success. It is also because their agenda never went beyond supporting Labour and therefore channelling workers' anger into the ballot box, behind a



Like in Greece, fighting the bosses' austerity is our right and a necessity

future Labour government.

But now that Labour wants to be seen as a tough-talking champion of austerity, who doesn't rely on workers' support - not even in the ballot box - union leaders are carefully to avoid any shows of strength. Not that Miliband appreciates their slavishness, judging from his attacks against Unite! But, as a result, they deprive workers of any chance to measure their strength.

The banner of the working class

What is at stake here, is more than just removing the disgusting sight of these politicians competing to do the profiteers' bidding. Far more important is the ongoing degradation of living conditions and the demoralisation caused by the absence of any perspective.

On average, real wages are now almost 10% below their pre-crisis level - and even lower for the record number of workers cornered into part-time or zero-hour contracts. Yet, in the meantime, companies are sitting on mountains of cash, the banks have returned

to their past fast profits and speculators have resumed their pre-crisis bingo games. The continuing crisis is cynically used by the profiteers and their politicians as a weapon to squeeze even more out of the working class.

But social degradation combined with the right-wing drift of the entire political spectrum, is a fertile ground for forces which are the enemies of the working class - like UKIP and its less respectable twin, the EDL.

The only alternative to this, is for the working class to return to the political scene, not as electoral cannonfodder, but by asserting itself independently - and by using the full power of its collective strength. To this end, it will have to rebuild its confidence in this strength, by fighting for its interests every day. But it will also need to organise a party which really represents its political interests - a workers' party which sets itself the aim of replacing this rotten profit system with one which is free from exploitation and capable of catering for the needs of all. □

Yes, migrant workers should be welcome!

The OBR (Office of Budget Responsibility), the Treasury watchdog created by the ConDems in 2010, is not known for contradicting the government. Yet, this is exactly what it does on the issue of immigration, in a recent economic forecast.

The OBR has found that economic growth is being dragged down by the government's zero target in net

immigration. And it goes on to argue that if, on the contrary, immigration was kept at the same level as over the past decade, it would boost public finances by £40bn - and that, therefore, the government's anti-immigration policy should be scrapped. In this, the OBR is in agreement with the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, the economic forum

of the industrialised countries) which also thinks that continuous immigration into all European countries is a vital economic necessity.

So, despite all the rhetoric about how much immigration is supposed to "cost" to the economy, the reverse is actually true: it is the anti-immigrant policies of this government which are unaffordable! □

When a full wallet is the best (and only recognised) passport

From November, the Home Office plans to pilot a "bond scheme" for visitors from some countries (to be precise, from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Ghana). They will have to post a bond of £3,000 before they can enter Britain, which they will get back on leaving the country. And if this pilot scheme is found to be conclusive, the scheme may be extended to students from the same countries.

This scheme so obviously discriminates against the poor countries, that the government has already had complaints from Asian politicians and businesses. But really, what it means, is that only rich people from these countries are welcome here - whatever the cause of their visit, including for a holiday or a family visit.

Just imagine what an uproar there would be, here, including from

Cameron and Theresa May themselves, if Spain or France were to introduce such a bond scheme for the millions of British tourists visiting these countries (or settling there, as so many do)!

But then, of course, these bonds sound like a win-win for the ConDems: they appear tough against immigrants, while keeping the poorest at bay...

Minister of Regressive Education

Education secretary Gove plans to scrap GCSEs in their present form. From 2017, instead of coursework and modules contributing to the final grade, pupils will be judged solely on end-of-course written exams. These will be similar to the old-style O-levels scrapped to make way for GCSEs. It's all part of his desire to return to more - what he calls "traditional teaching" and away from any modern methods - that the Tories claim are responsible for bad educational outcomes, if not all of society's ills.

But schooling is only one of many influences on children and cannot

be separated from social conditions, home life, family income, housing, etc. With so many of these indicators in sharp decline, thanks precisely to government policies, it's no wonder that children's education has suffered.

So, no, Gove trying to turn back the clock won't help kids at all. Only a social organisation free from today's social inequalities, in which everyone - children as well as adults - has the same access to education and culture and plenty of time to devote to it, would do the trick. □

Gove gets a history lesson

Gove wanted to make the state history curriculum inward-looking in the extreme. It was to concentrate on British history, with school kids forced to swallow stuff about "heroes" of the British empire, like Clive of India, and concepts such as "nation" and "monarchy". Ordinary state schools were going to have little choice about this, as many of the edicts were mandatory (academies and so-called free schools must, on the other hand, do what their particular "sponsors" and governing bodies want).

These ideas were met with such an outcry from teachers, educationists and historians that the government has been forced to back down. The proposals have been completely rewritten. The narrow focus on British history has been dropped. So have figures like Winston Churchill and Margaret Thatcher, in favour of ones such as Charles Darwin and the American anti-segregation campaigner, Rosa Parks. Gove would do well to study this curriculum himself - it might broaden his mind.

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Morecambe Bay scandal: no exception

Is the cover-up of deaths of babies and mothers in Morecambe Bay Hospitals Trust maternity unit "the worst so far", since the birth of the NHS 65 years ago - as the media suggest? Maybe - but it's part of a picture that has been developing in NHS trusts (like Mid-Staffordshire where elderly patients were neglected to death) over a long period.

At Morecambe Bay, 30 deaths, some dating back to 2008 - 6 years ago (!) - are being investigated by the police. But who would be prosecuted - and which heads would

roll - as ministers now threaten? The government's "regulator", the Care Quality Commission (CQC) - which gave the maternity unit a clean bill of health in 2010? The government itself - which pushed the CQC to declare so many NHS trusts adequate, so that they could become part-privatised, "foundation" trusts? The maternity unit staff, who were told by management to change their records to conceal drastic problems?

For the time being it's the CQC executives who are likely to lose their jobs - except their new boss.

CQC's cover blown

The irony of the Morecambe Bay scandal is that it only saw the light of day, because of a private investigation of the official public investigators! The Care Quality Commission (CQC), meant to inspect hospitals' quality of care, was under inspection itself, by private consultancy Grant Thornton.

Grant Thornton then released a 320 page report which revealed the whole sorry story - or part of it. And it also found that the CQC had told one of its directors, Kay Sheldon, to suppress a review which revealed the hospital's failings, so that it could

go ahead and approve the trust for foundation status.

Sheldon raised concerns with then Health Minister Andrew Lansley - who actually threatened to sack her. But she had the guts to take

Another case of CQC "blindness"

A report into NHS hospitals with "abnormally high death rates" is due on 16 July. One such - Tameside in Manchester - has already been under the spotlight. Even its junior doctors have complained that they cannot cope, due to low staffing

levels. Patients are left waiting for basic pain relief and have to spend the night in chairs before being seen by a doctor. Night after night, they are cared for in a corridor outside the hospital's A&E unit because it's too overcrowded to allow entry.

For a fit NHS!

Will the CQC now be "fit for purpose" with its new boss who came clean and said it hadn't been, up to now? And which purpose would that be? Inspecting an NHS which is slowly being eaten up by the private sector, is disjointed and patchy in the way it delivers care and which has dumped

almost the whole budget and responsibility onto GPs who are meant to commission services? When they admit that they are not fit for such a purpose?

The only outcome can be that private companies pick up the pieces - eventually - but only the profitable

NHS

But there's little doubt that the midwives will come under fire too. Never mind that the scene was set by attempts to cut costs to fit in with "market finance", resulting in chronic staff shortages, reliance on agency workers and thus discontinuity of care, poor working conditions and pay, and abysmal morale... Yes, since there is no other way to run any part of a semi-privatised, commercialised NHS - except at half mast, with inadequate care. □



him to court and won. Now that (almost) all has been revealed, she's finally been assured by Lansley's successor, Jeremy Hunt, that her job is safe. Let's hope she's kept hold of her whistle!

The Chief Executive, Christine Green's head, has rolled already, but strangely enough, the CQC, which apparently "inspected" the hospital's A&E in May, still has to issue its report...!

pieces. Then those who can pay may get some medical care. And the rest of us be damned... that is, if we allow this state of affairs to proceed. But the rot can be stopped - through the concerted efforts of NHS workers alongside the rest of the working class who are the NHS users...

Jailed for daring to choose

Sarah Catt, the 36-year-old mother of two, who was given an 8-year jail sentence for terminating a 40-week pregnancy has now had her appeal heard - and had the sentence reduced to 3½-years. The judge who originally sentenced her was a known bigot who justified the heavy sentence by calling her "cold and calculating". As if he, or anybody else, knew what Sarah Catt

went through, during her secret, unwanted pregnancy! But this judge was not interested in her personal circumstances. He just wanted to make an example.

This story seems to come straight from Victorian times, when women were jailed for having or performing abortions - often, risking their lives, such was their desperation. In Sarah

Catt's case, appeal judges admitted her sentence was "excessive" - but still considered she had committed a crime, rather than having made a desperate though belated attempt to exercise her right to choose not to have a baby. In a society freed of all prejudice against women, no-one would even think of depriving Sarah Catt of 3½ years of her life for this.

• *Lights out?*

The gap between energy supply and demand has been narrowing. According to energy regulator, Ofgem, the risk of having a blackout has now trebled to once in every 4 years. To avert this possibility, the (privatised) National Grid is pinning its hopes on a reduction in demand, thanks to energy efficiencies. Unfortunately, the government's "Green Deal" scheme for homes hasn't proved very efficient, so far.

Another of National Grid's proposals involves asking big business consumers to reduce their usage between 4pm and 8pm on weekdays in the winter, when domestic demand

is highest. In return, they'd get compensation - paid for by consumers, whose bills would go up.

But why is demand threatening to outstrip supply? Gas-fired power stations have been mothballed because they aren't as profitable as coal-fired ones. And with a supply of cheap coal coming from the US, they've been burning it like there's no tomorrow - despite the fact that EU anti-pollution laws are supposed to limit this by 2015. So the "shortage" has nothing to do with inability to generate, or with fossil fuel running out - but simply with profiteering!

• *20 years after privatisation...*

Hospitals have always had emergency electricity generators - primarily to avoid life-threatening consequences in the event of a power cut. Thanks to criminal lack of investment in Britain's privatised energy industry, they are now being asked to bail out the energy companies. Within the next 2 years spare capacity in the system will have halved to 2% - too close for comfort in case of a big surge. So KiWI, the commercial partner of National Grid, is approaching hospitals asking them to produce their own electricity

between 4pm and 8pm. KiWI suggests they will be "well-placed" to do this owing to existing stand-by generators and could also save up to £200,000/yr in the process.

But between the capacity of emergency generators - which is limited - and generators which are meant to cover the entire needs of a hospital for 4 hours everyday, there's a world of difference - and a big difference in cost. And who's going to foot the bill? The NHS - which would be paying for 20 years of profiteering by the privatised utilities?

• *Fracking up the profits*

Centrica, the parent company of British Gas, plans to invest £160m in shale gas exploration near Blackpool. Recent estimates suggest that there could be reserves of 130 trillion cubic feet of extractable shale gas in the north of England. But there are serious safety questions about the extraction method, known as fracking, which involves pumping fluid, containing toxic chemicals, at high pressure through the bedrock. So what about the population living above this gas?

In the US, where the industry is much more developed, there have been hundreds of accidents

recorded, including well explosions, spillages and contamination of local water supplies with chemicals such as benzene, a carcinogen. Water wells in the vicinity of fracking operations have even been known to blow up, because of a build up of methane. Fracking has also been linked to earth tremors, including two in Lancashire already.

As for the claim that fracking could be a new source of cheap energy for years to come - where have we heard this before? For the energy giants, who are expert in fleecing consumers, this is just a new source of profit.

Letter from Sussex

• *Local austerity bites*

Some expected the Greens to be different, when they took over Brighton Council and got an MP elected. Well, the "Green" council responded to the Con-Dems' cuts by slashing its employees' wages. This meant a £4,000 a year pay cut for bin-men who went on strike, causing piles of rubbish to build up in the streets of this tourist resort!

To her credit, the Green MP, Caroline Lucas, condemned this policy and joined the bin-men's picket lines. But as far as we know, she's still in the same party as the wage-slashers.

Since then, there was some kind of "compromise", but nightmares of this kind are being unleashed by many councils doing the government's dirty work and doing more than just make dirty work of Brighton's streets.

Eastbourne Borough Council chose a different approach. They started prosecuting council tax defaulters, less than 3 months into the fiscal year.

Amongst their 1,300 victims, is a local Tory councillor, who is reported in the press as saying that there may be little sympathy for him. Yes, well, he's in trouble, because his business went bust, due to creditors defaulting. So, he's probably a victim of his own party's policies! Sympathy?

• *Primary privatisation*

Everywhere, the privatisation parasite gnaws, including in education. In Hailsham, to the north of Eastbourne, staff in two primary schools have been told "in strict confidence", that there are plans to merge them into an academy. If this move is so beneficial, why isn't it being trumpeted to the heavens, instead of being "in strict confidence?"

Well, closing one of these schools - a new school, built when Tesco took over the older, much more suitable site - would provide road access to prime building land - farmland right on the edge of town. If the plan were made public, people would immediately realise this and protest.

Sounds familiar? The backhander culture, with its total disregard for people's needs permeates this society, from its corrupt crown, to its rotten roots.

August 1913: the Dublin Lockout

At 9.40am, Tuesday, 26 August 1913, Dublin's tram workers in the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU) responded to the sacking of union members by going on strike. This was to spark the famous 5-month Dublin Lockout, which pitted 20,000 locked out workers against the Dublin bosses.

At the time, after more than 700 years of direct British rule, the conditions for workers in Ireland were far worse than in Britain. In Dublin, 20,000 working-class families lived in single rooms. The annual death rate was appalling, higher even than Calcutta, with its plague and cholera infestations. Meanwhile, an increasingly affluent Irish capitalist class was exploiting Irish workers on behalf of British capital.

A new militant union

Up to the launch of the ITGWU, most organised Irish workers had been affiliated to British trade unions, without getting much in return. This changed following the arrival in Belfast in 1907 of James Larkin. Born in Liverpool of Irish parents, Larkin was angered by the poverty he saw all around him and decided to use his experience as a trade-union activist in the docks in Britain. In December 1908 he set up the ITGWU - an Irish-based union open to all unskilled workers. Two years later, Britain's 1910 strike wave spread across the Irish Channel and, in 1911, there were 54 major strikes in Ireland, mostly involving the ITGWU. By 1912, the ITGWU membership had risen to 41,000.

At this point William Murphy entered the ring. A Catholic nationalist, he was then the richest Dublin businessman. His empire spanned the manufacture of trams, the running of public transport in Irish towns, as well as newspapers, hotels and finance. His workers were low paid, spied upon and subjected to a regime of fines and instant sackings. Larkin rightly described him as a "foul and vicious blackguard, a modern capitalistic vampire".

Murphy had vowed to "smash" the rising ITGWU. On 15 August he had sacked 60 newspaper workers in the union and 200 tram men who refused to handle his newspapers. Murphy urged his fellow employers to renege on their agreements with

the ITGWU, which responded in kind by calling tram workers to strike.

The confrontation

Workers were locked out and Larkin was arrested with other ITGWU leaders, though later freed - the British didn't want martyrs at this stage. On Saturday 30 August, rioting developed, following police baton attacks on 6,000 demonstrators. As the rioting spread, inhabitants from nearby slums reinforced the rioters. The Lockout claimed its first fatalities. James Nolan and John Byrne were killed by police batons. Three days later, Nolan's coffin was followed by a mile-long procession.



"Bloody Sunday" in Dublin

The next day, a planned rally in Sackville Street was banned. Thousands nonetheless turned up hoping to see Larkin - who appeared disguised as an old man. But he was quickly arrested and the police went on the rampage - injuring 460 workers within a few minutes. As news spread, rioting broke out all over the city in working-class areas. Police targeted the poorest tenements smashing anything they could with their batons. Sunday 31st August became known as "Bloody Sunday".

Hoping that the situation would resolve itself, the British government waited another 3 weeks. Then it called in George Askwith, who had negotiated with the unions during the 1910 strike wave in England. Although Askwith condemned the employers' attack on workers' rights, Murphy boasted that he would continue eating three square meals a day. If the workers chose to starve, it was their own choice.

In the aftermath of "Bloody Sunday", Larkin had called for the setting up of a workers' militia, capable of protecting demonstrators against the attacks of the police.

100 years ago

This militia came into being at the end of September, in the form of the Irish Citizens' Army (ICA), which trained by night in Croydon Park.

TUC betrayal

By October, Larkin was again free and touring Britain to mobilise support. In front of crowds of 25,000 he called on workers to refuse to handle Dublin's "tainted" goods. Workers responded with protest strikes in Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham. But the last thing the TUC leaders wanted was any kind of collective action, leading Larkin to note that the TUC leaders were "about as useful as mummies in a museum". Using the excuse that the Lockout was "purely Irish" they defused the spontaneous wave of solidarity which was growing among the British working class. Instead, they offered their financial assistance to the Dublin workers and funded food ships for the strikers, leaving British workers in the role of passive spectators.

For the Dublin workers, however, this support was a double-edged sword. In January 1914, the TUC leaders felt it was now safe to turn off their funding. In the end, having been isolated by the TUC leadership from their only natural ally - the British working class - the Dublin workers were starved back to work.

Despite its defeat, the Irish working class had demonstrated its ability to fight, regardless of religion or sect, using its own organisations - the ITGWU and ICA - for its own class interests, and not just against the British, but also against the Irish capitalists who claimed to represent the "Irish nation". As Lenin wrote in the early days of the Lockout, "The Dublin events mark a turning point in the history of the labour movement and of socialism in Ireland. Murphy threatened to destroy the Irish labour unions. He only succeeded in destroying the last remnants of the influence of the nationalist Irish bourgeoisie over the proletariat in Ireland." And even if this tradition was largely drowned in blood, first by the British after the 1916 Easter Rising and then by their Irish stooges after the partition between the north and the south, the struggle of the Dublin workers remains an example of class independence for today's and tomorrow's battles. □

Labour party

Labour is bending over backwards to out-ConDem the ConDems. They've let it be known for some time now, that a Labour government would aim at "plugging the deficit" and would not reverse the ConDems' cuts. Just like the ConDems, Labour will want the working class to pay for the black hole left by the bank bailout - with some logic, since it was

• **Gift to the bosses, whip for the jobless**

Among the series of anti-working class policies floated by Labour, some just amounted to support for the ConDems' attacks against the jobless: for instance, when Miliband instructed Labour MPs not to vote against the Coalition's policy of forcing the jobless to work for free as part of the "Work Programme".

Other Labour policies anticipated attacks announced by Osborne - like the "welfare cap" which was first proposed by Miliband in the speech

• **Fishing in UKIP's murky backwaters?**

In fact, Labour also seem to be fishing for the votes of wavering Tories who might be tempted to vote UKIP. Hence, for instance, Miliband's hasty support for Cameron's "in-out" referendum over Britain's membership of the EU.

But Miliband went even further than that. For instance, we heard him apologising profusely for Labour's past "lax" policies on immigration. Never mind that this is absurd, since

• **Miliband googling for votes**

Ironically, Ed Miliband chose tax-dodging Google's Big Tent event, in May, to give a speech on "responsible capitalism". From his point of view, it made sense: Google is one of the biggest players in the internet scene and Labour is keen to follow any vote-winning "trend". No matter that the company does not actually produce any real value.

Nor did Miliband entirely duck the

Labour running after Cameron

Gordon Brown who engineered this bailout!

Labour's response to Osborne's "spending review" just added another brick to this wall of anti-working class policies, by promising that it would implement the cuts announced by Osborne.

Of course, Labour's programme is first and foremost designed to

show that it will be even more effective than the ConDems in defending capitalist profits - and, by implication, at least as vicious as them in turning the screw on the working class. These are not empty words, as Labour's record under Blair and Brown shows. These are the words of politicians in full service of the capitalist class. □

he made in Newham, on 6 June, three weeks before being included by Osborne in his spending review.

Others still, haven't been matched so far by the ConDems - like, for instance, the plan to introduce new, more stringent measures against some unemployed single parents; or another which would create a two-tier system of jobless benefit, in which casual workers who are constantly forced in and out of jobs, may lose heavily.

By contrast, it's worth noting, that while telling workers they must bite the bullet, Labour still manages to find money to subsidise bosses, by offering them some cash back for every penny they pay their employees over and above the minimum wage.

As if the real problem was that bosses couldn't afford it - rather than the fact that workers can't afford to live on it!

Labour was anything but "lax" when it came to migrant workers. In fact, it was Blair's Labour party that first accused foreigners of indulging in "welfare tourism". It may not have used this exact phrase, but Labour ministers repeatedly went on record accusing migrant workers of being responsible for the increasing failures of a health and education system which was failing because of Labour's underfunding and, in the

case of the NHS, its insistence on adhering to the "market".

More recently, Miliband followed Theresa May's attempts at wooing potential UKIP voters, by suggesting that "there may be too many foreign students in Britain".

Spineless it is, certainly. But this spinelessness should be a warning for all workers. How far will Miliband go, in this anti-working class over-bidding?

under the previous Labour government, of which Miliband was a member!

In short, Miliband's celebration of "responsible capitalism" was just a way to advertise himself as a "responsible capitalist politician", primarily concerned with the interests of big business - no matter how dodgy.

Young or old - all short-changed

New statistics show that more than 1m over-65s are in work. But is that so surprising? Most don't have occupational pensions but get the state pension, currently £110pw. By itself it is not enough to live on but combined with part-time work, even if it's low-paid, life becomes a bit more bearable.

For the bosses, of course, such

employees are a godsend. They need any hours they can get, even if only a few, and may, therefore be used to fill gaps on the cheap - something that younger workers wouldn't accept, either because they've got a family to feed, or simply the legitimate ambition to earn enough to make a living.

What can be said of a system which

is incapable of catering for the needs of its older workers, forcing them to spend their old age chasing the odd job in order to make ends meet, and which is incapable of catering for the needs of its younger workers, forcing 20% of its under-25s to survive on the dole? That it's crazy and must be changed!

Osborne's turn of the screw

With his "spending review" Osborne wanted to calm the fears of better-off voters that they may have to contribute more towards the workings of society. And under the cover of heralding "growth", the review was meant to reassure big business that, austerity or not, there'd still be many ways for them to parasitise public funds.

So, for the benefit of both, Osborne pointed a vengeful finger

More attacks on the jobless

Osborne turned the austerity screw by another notch (can it be tightened any further?) on the unemployed.

In order to save a paltry £350m out of the extra £11.5bn he has now decided "must" be cut from the budget in 2015 - he wants the jobless to pay up, out of their meagre benefits! So they will not be able to

Cutting welfare benefits - an end in itself

Osborne promises a cap on welfare spending, set every 5 years. Osborne has excluded old age pensions from the cap, making clear that the poor, and especially the unemployed, are his target. Apparently this cap wouldn't be binding on future governments, but they'd have to explain why they exceed it. So far, so vague. Osborne has left it to April

- yet again! - at welfare recipients, jobless and public sector workers, who, according to this millionaire government, are responsible for its failure to fulfil its promise of plugging the deficit!

But then isn't it ironical that the ConDems - whose chances to remain in office after the May 2015 General Election are slim, at best - should commit themselves to £11.5bn of cuts in 2015-16? Ironical - yes, but

claim dole money for the first week of unemployment - a 7-day delay.

Why, one might ask? "Those first few days should be spent looking for work, not looking to sign on", he said!

And once they sign on, they will have to do so every week instead of every fortnight.

spending review

not illogical: they know that none of the main parties will challenge them on this. Because doing so would mean questioning the right of the capitalist class to live off the sweat of the working class majority.

Only a workers' party setting itself the task of bringing about social change, would challenge them. And such a party still needs to be built - urgently! □

As for those who may be utterly skint and starving - well, there'll be no last resort any more. Since this April, emergency grants have been given to local councils to administer - but since they're not ring-fenced, cash-strapped councils can dispense with them. And they very likely will.

2015 to actually set this cap - just before the general election - which doesn't really commit him to anything, but leaves the threat hanging over the heads of the poorest.

Nevertheless, Osborne and many other Tories would love to have something to show their well-off supporters who resent their taxes being used for welfare. The very

vagueness of the cap, while allowing room to backtrack, is also meant to justify, in principle, all benefit cuts. Regardless of the consequences, cutting benefits for the poor is now government policy, and an end in itself. Meanwhile benefits for companies and the wealthy, which society really cannot afford, go on rising unchecked!

• Demagogic headlines

It's no surprise that this government has turned against immigrants who claim benefits or use the NHS. Immigrants are now among its favourite scapegoats. So, Osborne wants Jobseekers' Allowance to be conditional on a standard of spoken English, and Health Minister Jeremy Hunt wants GPs to screen non-British patients for entitlement to NHS care and refuse it if they don't qualify.

The amount of money such measures could save is tiny. "Unauthorised" use of the NHS is estimated to cost £33m per year out of the £109bn NHS budget, a lot less than the systematic screening of patients. The Treasury claims 100,000 JSA claimants would have to take English classes - when only 138,000 among the whole population, including children, speak no English. Anyway, how many claimants could get on to free courses? But no matter, the ConDems obviously think that sort of crass racism is a vote-winner.

• Scapegoating - again

Osborne also played to the Tory gallery by announcing the end of annual

increments or "progression pay" for public sector workers. This used to serve as a compensation for low wages, when some public sector workers might have been earning more in the private sector.

But many public sector workers never had it or lost it long ago. Where it survives, for instance in the NHS, a recent agreement links it to skills and performance. In some arms-length bodies, negotiated rises - frozen for years already - were always performance-related. Anyway, if wages were adequate, the only annual increments needed for anyone would be inflation-proofing!

The truth is that this is yet another cynical attempt to portray public sector workers as "unfairly privileged" compared to private sector workers. And, of course, the fact that Osborne uses this worn-out trick just as he announces cuts that may result in another 144,000 public sector job cuts, is no coincidence!

• A question of packaging

To show his "commitment" to investment, Osborne included a £50bn "envelope" for 2015-16. Ironically, though, this is lower than the investment announced in the last budget! Not much

of a "commitment", is it?

As to the use to which these billions will be put, the only certainty is that they will end up in the deep pockets of some big companies. And as to their resulting in any socially useful projects like new libraries or swimming pools, let alone local housing, forget about it! The review cuts centrally-funded capital investment in local government by another 35% - meaning a massive 83% cut since 2010! But then there is a plan to upgrade the A14 between Rugby and Felixstowe ... which was already announced in 2011! Yes, it's the old trick of recycled promises!

And there's worse. The HS2 railway line is now expected to gobble up a £10bn budget overrun, while the decommissioning of old nuclear power overruns its budget by £2bn every year. No wonder that even the bosses complain, with the director general of the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) moaning that "the government's record on infrastructure announcements remains far better than its record on delivery"...

• **G8 far from the summit**

Cameron hailed the G8 summit in Northern Ireland as a "*chance to recover national self-confidence*". Britain - or rather, Cameron - was going to take a lead in getting an international agreement to prevent tax evasion by big companies. In the event, the only thing Cameron led was a morning dip in the lake, while Osborne was only noticed because Obama got his name wrong.

The headlines after the summit didn't come close to matching the hype before it. The leaders spent a lot of time discussing tax, and all agreed to "move towards" transparency in the ownership of companies that would be key to ensuring they pay tax in proportion to their profits. Even this, which is the merest start, isn't subject to any timetable. So far, Britain's own tax havens - from

the Cayman and Virgin Islands, to the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man - are no more compelled to share information than any others. At best they'll do it "voluntarily" - meaning as little as possible. When it comes to bringing capitalists to heel, why would capitalist politicians show any urgency?

• **Tax havens: symptom of a bigger disease**

Researchers have established that 98 of the FTSE-100 companies use onshore or offshore tax havens. For many the only tax being paid is income tax, deducted from employees' pay packets. Tesco heads the list with 107 tax-haven subsidiaries, but many others, including the big banks, are not far behind.

Bringing the tax dodgers to heel

won't solve the problem of unemployment and social inequality on its own, though. But there's a solution at hand. Because they can make more from gambling and speculation than from investment, British companies are sitting on a cash-pile of £318bn - which would be more than enough to get the wheels of industry turning again, get rid of dole queues

and renew infrastructure.

Of course the capitalist class would resist attempts to coerce them into investing. But given the decrepit state of this crisis-ridden system, there's no other way forward for the working class majority. And if what it takes is to get rid of the capitalists as well, so be it!

• **The 0% tax club**

Cameron, the G8 crusader, is letting good old British companies get away scot-free - or rather, tax-free. Vodafone and Thames Water are just two examples among many. Under cover of making long term investments, they are able to defer paying their taxes for years - or even to pay no tax at all.

Out of a £45bn world revenue last year, Vodafone distributed £4.8bn in dividends. It did pay taxes in various countries - £2.6bn in total - but except for a miserly amount of £24m, as part what it owed for

previous years, it paid not one penny in Britain! And all this, because governments have rewarded its acquisition of airwave licences - without which it wouldn't make any profit anyway - with massive tax breaks!

Likewise, for Thames Water, which had a turnover of £1.8bn while increasing bills by 6.7%. Not only did it pay no corporation tax - thanks to the possibility conferred on companies by this government of deducting interest payments from corporation tax - but they were graciously offered a £5m tax credit by

HRMC!

Managing to milk consumers and the state, all in one go! What a great club they live in...

• **Ultra-high worthlessness**

The saying goes that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer - and it's never been so true as in these times of austerity!! In 2012, the world's "high net worth" individuals (those with at least £640,000 in "investable assets") increased their numbers by 10% (to 12 million) and their wealth to a combined £29.5 trillion - more than 3 times the entire output of the US economy! Meanwhile, poverty in many European countries was hitting the 25% mark - with 14m living below the poverty line in Britain, or just over 5% of the population...

But never mind the poor, because not only is Britain now home to 465,000 of these "high net worth"

individuals, up from 441,000 in 2011 but it has 1,000 "ultra-high net worth" ones (those owning at least £65m). One such fellow, called Charles Shaker, a private wealth manager, was seen spending £330,000 on a 30l bottle of champagne at the Monaco Grand Prix!

These are the main beneficiaries of Osborne's 5p cut on the top rate of income tax over and above £150,000/yr. Unison reckons this tax cut is costing the Treasury £4bn/yr - over one-third of the £11.5bn cuts that Osborne wants to impose on the other 99% of the population in 2015!

Housing: through the roof

The economy is stagnant, with mortgages hard to come by, but in Mayfair and Kensington and the leafy suburbs of Surrey and Buckinghamshire house prices have gone through the roof. So much so that the number of £1m+ homes increases by 1,500 every week. In Kensington where properties sell at an average £2.3m, even the space for a doormat is worth £3,500!

At the other end of the spectrum, houses in Stoke and Liverpool can be picked up for £1 - by those who can afford the refurbishment and running costs. Three million names are on social housing waiting lists and first-time buyers are having to wait 14 years just to save the deposit for a house. Doesn't this show just how dysfunctional the British housing market is?

In fact, would it be that difficult to start an emergency programme of social housing building - to reduce the shortage and, by the same token, the meteoric rise of house prices and rents? After all, even Tory governments did just that in the 1950s, thereby solving the problem for a generation!

How racist cops investigate a racist murder

Teenager Stephen Lawrence was brutally murdered by a racist gang in April 1993. The identity of the murderers was known. But it took another 19 years before just two of them were convicted - and only because those waging a campaign for justice never gave up. This eventually forced an inquiry into the Metropolitan Police, which concluded that it was "institutionally racist".

Now a whistleblower has revealed that the police used undercover agents in an attempt to discredit this campaign. One of them, Peter Francis, posed as an anti-racist activist to try to dig up dirt, including on the Lawrence family itself. One consequence of this was that the police brought criminal charges against Duwayne Brooks, Stephen's close friend and the main witness to

the murder - although these charges were thrown out by the court.

Stephen's mother remembers wondering why police "family liaison" officers were so keen to record the identities of those who visited the family home in the wake of the murder. As it turns out, the police were more concerned with investigating grieving friends and relatives than arresting the murderers! □

The real face of "democracy"

The revelations by Peter Francis are just the latest in a string of accounts exposing how undercover police routinely posed as political activists. In some cases, male police spies even formed long-term relationships with women in the groups they were infiltrating, to win members' trust. On occasion they tried to encourage activists usually committed to peaceful protest to carry out acts of violence.

Peter Francis belonged to a Special Demonstration Squad, disbanded in 2008. Senior officers who oversaw it have retired and the police have supposedly cleaned up their act. But have they? The SDS was succeeded by various shady, unaccountable bodies, like the "National Public Order Intelligence Unit", which employed Mark Kennedy, another

undercover cop, who infiltrated the environmentalists. Now these bodies have been brought together, under the Met, to form the "National Domestic Extremism Unit".

Whatever the name, the game is the same. The police are no more likely now, than they ever were, to differentiate between "extremism" and "legitimate" political protest.

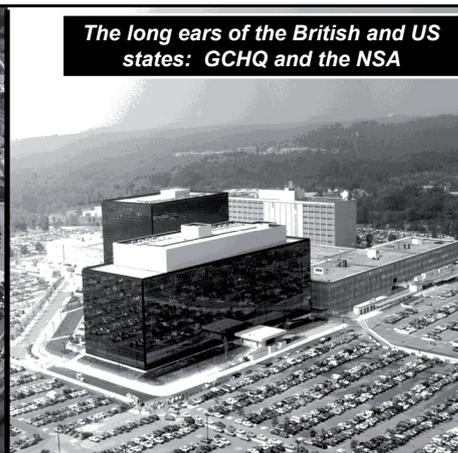
• Big Brother - bigger than ever

It took a US whistleblower to reveal the extent to which the US National Security Agency is monitoring telephone and internet communications. Sweeping laws passed in the wake of the 9/11 attacks already required telecoms companies to comply with demands from the NSA or the FBI for records. But the secret "Prism" programme has for years allowed the NSA direct access to the server data of nine of the biggest internet companies. In March 2013, this enabled spies to monitor 97bn communications and choose which ones they wanted to intercept. This is all far beyond what the NSA has ever admitted to Congress about the scale and scope of its surveillance, and far more than the laws allow.

The laws which are meant to regulate the state, only actually do so as far as it suits state agencies. Anyway, since these agencies, by definition, operate in secret, they've always done pretty much as they please, reflecting the privileged interests they defend. And the smaller the privileged class, the more secretive it is, to mask its real power and preserve the illusion of "democracy".



The long ears of the British and US states: GCHQ and the NSA



• Britain's dirty hands

This snooping scandal engulfed Britain too. When it emerged the NSA was sharing data with GCHQ, William Hague declared it was "nonsense" to suppose that GCHQ and the NSA were colluding to break the law. Cameron claimed that GCHQ's behaviour was "proper and fitting". But then it emerged that it had tapped the transatlantic cables, monitoring 600m phone calls a day and 39m gigabytes of internet traffic. Voice

recordings, the content and direction of emails and use of websites can all be stored and analysed.

Ministers then changed tack, defending the role of snooping in preventing terrorist attacks. But then politicians spend their lives spinning giant lies about how capitalism is the only possible system, how its crises are just facts of life, while helping the rich to get richer. Small wonder that they see everywhere the potential for conspiracies to bring them down!

Blacklisting, a class weapon

In 2009, a raid on the so-called "Economic League" found a list, collected over at least 20 years, of 3,200 men and women considered as trouble-makers by the big construction companies. They were denied a job, often without even knowing why. Most were blacklisted for being union activists or simply for having showing concern over health and safety.

Some were even listed by mistake,

such as Howard Nolan, an electrician, who was denied work for 15 years, simply because he had been wrongly listed as having worked on the Jubilee Line extension project, where there had been several disputes!

In theory, the 2009 raid should have ended such blacklisting. But according to Unite members interviewed on the BBC Panorama programme, on June 10th,

blacklisting remains as rife as ever. Of course, it would, because it's primarily a question of balance of forces. If the bosses can organise against workers across a whole industry, it means workers must be even better organised, across all sections and industries, to defend their collective interests, including against dirty tricks of this kind!

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**• Mail privatisation: of course we oppose it!**

So the ballot which polled 112,414 of us (on a 74% turnout) was overwhelmingly against the sell-off of Royal Mail (96%), against the pay offer (99%), while 92% agreed to a boycott of downstream access mail (we sort and deliver mail for private

delivery companies) and non-cooperation with management. Not really that surprising - as it only amounts to an opinion poll. So now let's see if the union leaders take our replies seriously and propose some real action! Because it seems, so far, we



aren't off to a very good start!

• Just an "exercise"?

First, we hear Royal Mail is going to court over the proposal for a boycott. And second, we hear they want to give us a 7-day ultimatum over the pay offer! They told the union leaders that they have 7 days to consider a 3-year pay deal - whose details are to be kept secret from the workforce!!! And there we were, thinking "we" were giving them an ultimatum by voting in this ballot!!

CWU leaders, Ward and Hayes have told us in the letter sent to branches that they "cannot divulge any more detail at this stage"! So they're already breaking their pledge, by "co-operating" with management in order not to tell the membership anything! They write that the "consultative ballot has been an extremely successful exercise"! But how? Because it's back to

"business as usual" for them? That is, doing deals behind our backs and treating us like mushrooms?

That said, could we expect otherwise? In fact it's no use just complaining: those of us on the ground who're dissatisfied with this kind of "trade unionism" will have to take it upon ourselves to do something about it.

• 2 chietis (yes, we can spell!)

Moya is having a big pay rise: £1.5m this year compared to £1.1m last year. Is that a 45% increase? She's not paid as much as Adam Crozier was, tho. He got £2.4m in his "last year in charge". How unfair! And she's not even the highest paid public service boss. That prize goes to the chief (chiet?) of London Transport... Indeed, how could he or she ever manage on an average postal worker's wage? Wouldn't it be nice to make them try? [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 24/06/13]

• They shouldn't be fighting alone

We do despair sometimes. The first we knew about the Post Office staging another strike day was when someone went out and found the office shut.

It's bad enough that our fellow workers are left to fight on their own - it's like choosing to allow a much smaller mate to take on a big bully with both hands tied behind his back (isn't the union one body?) - but it's somehow even worse when these mates work in an adjoining building!! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 24/06/13]

• Super bad

Beware of fainting spells: if the heat don't get you, the smell from the super-loos will. One day last week, the heaters were tested on the hottest day and some people fainted. There's no ventilation nor air-con working yet (or did they forget to put any in?) and the windows don't open, so imagine the smells... There are now sanitary bins, but no general bins. As for the urinals - they aren't flushing, and a bucket has to be used to rinse them, and they're leaking. Super-yuk! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 24/06/13]

King's Cross railway station (London)**• A wage cut offer**

East Coast has at last come up with a pay rise. They really took their sweet time - the rise is due in April but we are likely to get the back pay we're owed in August. It's a 2 year deal, with 3.2% this year and inflation (RPI) or 2.5%, whichever is higher, next year. 3.2% was Feb's inflation rate, so this is not a rise, but something which barely keeps us up with the increases in our expenses. And considering East Coast made "profits" of £600m over the last 4 years, not much is "trickling down" to us. [Workers' Platform King's X - 25/06/2013]

• Stringing us along

Turns out that the "strings" attached to the FCC pay deal aren't clear to anyone - not even to the negotiators. The details, apparently, haven't been thrashed out. But we hear that one string has to do with drivers' Safety Days - FCC doesn't want us to have

them on Sundays any more (which is outside the working week). Some of us choose not to work Sundays in any case, and already FCC has such difficulty fitting in our Safety Days during the week that they're way behind on drivers' safety briefings. They simply don't have enough drivers to run the service and fulfil their safety obligations. Isn't FCC cutting off its nose to spite its face here? [Workers' Platform King's X - 11/06/2013]

• What's this ramshackle place?

The new ISS cleaners' and tankers' mess room is actually our old mess room, supposedly refurbished. But instead of improving, it's been halved, so even 2 shifts can't sit in there, let alone more. We're sharing with our lockers, with our boots on top, and with the washing machines and cleaning chemicals. There are toilets but no ventilation and only 4 changing cubicles, with no locks, and with a window looking on to the platform! No wonder they shifted our lockers over one night without giving us chance to inspect



the new premises! [Workers' Platform King's X - 25/06/2013]

• Give us a break!

One East Coast manager says that barrier workers should go on joint breaks. But another station manager insists that we should have individual breaks, one after the other. With seven of us on at a time, if you're last in line, that's a long time to wait for your meal break. And if you're first, your "lunch" break's more like breakfast. Back to the drawing board, "chiefs"! [Workers' Platform King's X - 11/06/2013]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**• Cost savings? Not at our expense!**

In November, BMW is planning to begin production of the Mark 3 Mini at Cowley. Despite record profits and a full order book, it is using the investment, mainly in robots, to stress the need for greater "cost savings" - an obvious attempt to spread fear for jobs, particularly among the 800 agency workers.

Meanwhile, having made a big fuss when BMW wanted to end the company pension and reduce agency workers' wages by introducing the Swedish Derogation, Unite is

now silent. Everyone expected BMW to come back again, and so they did, months ago. Talks have continued, but without a peep from the officials - and we smell a rat.

The latest concern has been caused by contracting out two operations - cockpit assembly and quality specialists. Previously the cockpits were assembled in Birmingham. Now they're made up in-house, but in a separate area. As for quality specialists, these are workmates who resolve design problems. Their



jobs will disappear to an outside contractor. What the terms and conditions for those working for the new contractors will be, is not yet known. But if BMW's aim is to have a multi-tiered workforce, it should definitely be stopped!

• What is BMW up to?

For months union negotiators have failed to update us on progress or, rather, lack of progress with BMW over pensions.

But something else is in the pipeline too: a concerted effort by the bosses to outsource and casualise different areas.

Clearly BMW are trying to use the new model to bring in changes which are designed to worsen our terms and conditions only to boost future profits. [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 25/06/2013]

• We're watching you

However the rumour on pensions is that BMW want to close the occupational pension fund to new starts. But with so few new starts, thanks to BMW's refusal to give out contracts, it will seem irrelevant to most agency workers.

That is, unless a fight to keep the pension fund open is linked to a fight to force the company to end its block on giving out contracts. [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 11/06/2013]

• Cut-price version in the wings

What many of us didn't know, is that

BMW already has a two-tier system of pensions. When the law came into force requiring all companies to enrol employees, BMW enrolled anyone who had previously opted out of the main scheme into a new, inferior one. This could be one reason why we are being kept in the dark about talks. That is, if BMW wants to expand it to include any agency worker who is offered a permanent contract in the future (including those so-called "new starts" who've already worked here up to 12 years). We need to know what dirty tricks BMW is up to so we can get ready to stop them! [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 11/06/2013]

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**• Match S'hampton offer's what we wanted!**

So, between 13 March and 20 June the company had a change of heart (?). Well, we know there's no heart there, but that's just a way of putting it!

They've increased the Engine Plant's redundancy offer's "special payment" from 12 weeks to 6 months. So it kind of matches the Stamping and Tooling (S&TO) Plant's offer (but not Southampton's). However, us engine planters won't be able to take it until fellow workers from the sunk boat of Southampton and Dagenham S&TO have been redeployed here, and probably not until mid-September, because they have a month to decide if they really want "their new assignment"... We'd love to know how Fraud will figure out that "skills match" ... for the hard manual labour on the Chicken Farm...? [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 01/07/13]

• A long and difficult haul

Would mates really be coming all the way from Southampton? Even with full expenses paid and housing subsidy? (Which we presume was organised by

the illustrious National Joint Negotiating Committee...???) If there are those who take such a heroic step we will be delighted to welcome them. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 01/07/13]

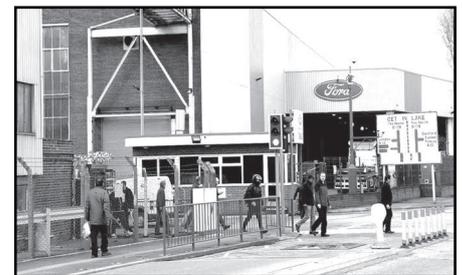
• Lynx jinxed again?

How can it be even possible that Lynx mates who finish this Friday could have been offered less money to go? If so, this is deception of the worst order! It makes no sense at all - and our mates would definitely have a heavy case against this disgusting company - for equal treatment - no matter what they may have been conned into signing.

The way we've been sent from pillar to post and back again, not to mention being forced to live on lower wages ever since Lynx went onto permanent days, well, this would be the last bloody straw! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 01/07/13]

• Falling over principles

So, did the NJNC - or was it Codfather and his wombles (the convenor and full-time union officials) - who would have signed up behind our backs to such different so-called "severance programmes"



operating within ONE plant, let alone within ONE Fraud? We want to call them to account! The same pay for the same work and the same severance for all - that's the principle, full stop. However we know they wouldn't know a principle even if they fell right over it. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 01/07/13]

• Just not coping

According to the bulletin from the company we had to express interest in the 20th June offer by the 24th June and then make up our minds in 3 days - submitting requests for Voluntary Redundancy by the 27th. Which is ludicrous. Especially since Ford's Human Resources is just like HRs everywhere: under-experienced, under-resourced and expected to be inhumane. We know they won't cope and so probably, do they. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 01/07/13]

Egypt

Less than 2 ½ years after the army ousted the former dictator, Hosni Mubarak, and just one year after the election victory of the Freedom and Justice Party, the political wing of the Muslim Brotherhood, the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) stepped in again, on July 3rd, to suspend the constitution and remove president Mohammed Morsi. Its spokesman immediately announced the formation of a caretaker civilian government which will have the task of preparing fresh elections.

Of course, over these 2 ½ years, the country the high surveillance over the country by the military never ceased. By ousting Mubarak - with the encouragement, if not the prompting, of the US, the army's objective had been to defuse the increasingly explosive situation created by months of mass protests against the dictatorship. Its latest intervention has no other cause. Since last February, a wave of protest, often leading to riots, has been growing, to the point, by the end of June, of drawing in millions of people across the country. They shouted the same slogan "Erha" ("Out") as in 2010-11 - but this time addressed to Morsi, and clashed with the police. So, once again, the army is stepping in to defuse a social time bomb.

At first: backwards, not forward

Morsi's election had been welcomed - and even hailed as Egypt's "return to democracy" - by the imperialist powers. They needed a strong political power to contain the energy of the Egyptian masses and a reactionary politician like Morsi, who could rely on the backing of the powerful Muslim Brotherhood, seemed to be a safe pair of hands for the West.

However, despite the 13m votes won by Morsi and his party, the new regime only managed to generate deep discontent, including among many of its former voters, by totally ignoring the old demands of the

The masses and the army are back on the streets

Tahrir square in February 2011...



... and in June 2013

anti-Mubarak protesters - "bread, dignity, social justice". Instead, Morsi was quick to turn his regime into a dictatorship in all but name.

Today, the situation is, in some ways, back to where it was in February 2011, after the downfall of Mubarak. Large sections of the Egyptian masses are mobilised, formulating their demands and fighting those who would like to reinstate Morsi or a revamped version of Mubarak's dictatorship. But illusions in the army seem still to be widespread among them. Yet the army's agenda is certainly not to meet the demands of the poor population. Its only aim is to bring about a strong, stable, political regime, capable of protecting capitalist interests - both Egyptian and imperialist - against the aspirations of the masses.

Reason for hope

The only way forward for the masses

would be to fight for their own social interests. There is cause for hope in this respect. This time, far more than in the run-up to Mubarak's downfall, workers in the industrial centres of Port-Saïd and Mahalla, seem have been mobilising to take part in the protests and occupations of public buildings. And this, in and of itself, could make a world of difference. Indeed, should the working class emerge as a driving force in this fight, under its own class banner and with its own organisations, it would have the capacity of uniting all the oppressed masses into a force so formidable that it could relegate both the religious demagogues and the military to the dustbin of history, thereby rewarding, at last, the courage of all those who have risked their lives - and sometimes lost them - in fighting against the country's successive dictators. □

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:

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