

# WORKERS' fight

No 54 - May 2014  
price 30p  
<http://www.w-fight.org>  
[contact@w-fight.org](mailto:contact@w-fight.org)

ISSN 2040-400X

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

# Beyond the EU, WE HAVE A WORLD TO WIN!

The odds are, that when the results of the May 22nd European election - the only nation-wide vote on that day and, therefore, the most significant politically - are announced, the biggest "party" will be the party of abstention.

And how could it be otherwise, when for the working class electorate, there is absolutely nothing to choose between the parties standing in these elections and nothing to expect from them?

## **Spokesmen for the City**

Voting for the main parties - whether for the ConDems or Labour - is no choice at all. It would be endorsing the way these parties have made the working class pay for the capitalists' crisis and condoning their support for big business at the expense of the poorest. What's more, it would be giving them a blank cheque to do more of the same in the future!

This is why opinion polls point to Ukip as the front-runner in the European election. But what is Ukip, if not another electoral con? After all, it is nothing but an opportunistic party trying to get a share of the parliamentary cake, by capitalising on the frustration caused by the policies of the main parties, while wooing prejudices and feeding fears.

And is it a coincidence that Ukip's leader is a former City broker or that its logo is the City's favourite symbol - the pound sterling? Behind its

populist, "anti-establishment" demagoguery, Ukip is just another fig leaf for the profiteers, whose role is to mislead voters into believing that they do have a choice in this election, after all.

## **Unaffordable capitalist burden**

If workers are not represented by the parties standing in this election, why would they endorse the interests they represent by voting for them?

There is nothing new in this situation, of course. Working class interests have seldom been represented by parties or candidates in past elections. But this is especially true in this election, because every party is resorting to some form of scapegoating against one section or another of our class, in order to divert attention from the crisis.

Whether it be the scapegoating of welfare claimants, under the pretext that they are an "unaffordable" burden on public funds, or the scapegoating of migrant workers - from the EU or beyond - under the same pretext, or on the grounds that they are a "threat" to British workers. Either way, this scapegoating is designed to split workers' ranks and divert their attention from the real issues.

The only "unaffordable" burden on society today is the parasitism of a capitalist class which uses the state as a milch cow and piles up massive wealth at the expense of our jobs, wages and conditions.

## **The working class is international**

As to the political football of Britain's membership of the EU, it is just another electoral con.

The EU was designed to suit the interests of Europe's biggest capitalists - including Britain's - so that they could do business across its territory without questions asked. That's all there is to it and the politicians who whine about Britain's "loss of sovereignty" to Brussels are lying.

Besides, why should this "sovereignty" concern workers? Are they better represented by the Commons than by Brussels? It wasn't Brussels which organised the privatisations of the 1980s-90s, nor the more recent attacks on working conditions and welfare - it was the British Parliament and its very "British" politicians!

The British working class has nothing to fear from the EU, nor from an inflow of EU migrant workers. Didn't it built its strength, through history, thanks to waves of migrants coming from Ireland, Eastern Europe, the West Indies, Asia and Africa?

The more fresh blood comes into this country, from the EU - and from beyond - the more workers' ranks will be reinforced and the stronger they will be, the day they decide to take on British capital in order to regain the ground they have lost during the crisis!

## Their crisis *Stopping all job cuts is possible!*

Mega-mergers are back. This is not altogether new, of course - economic crises always result in the weakest sharks being swallowed by the strongest ones, as was the case for troubled banks a few years ago. But now, it's the turn of giant profitable companies which have been relatively unaffected by the crisis.

These are some of the acquisitions announced over the past two months alone: car giant Fiat, by

General Motors; engineering firm Alstom, by General Electric; mobile operator SFR, by Altice; advertising company Publicis by Omnicom. Biggest of all, a mega tie-up was announced between pharmaceutical companies, GlaxoSmithKline and Novartis, while Pfizer made a bid for AstraZeneca.

Each one of these deals involves tens of billions of pounds in cash. There is so much unused cash in

search of a quick buck that, for instance, Aldice's £10bn bond issue to buy SFR was seven-times oversubscribed! There's a lesson in this. To companies which claim that jobs "have to be cut" - whatever the pretext they use - the answer should be: with all that cash floating around aimlessly, they can certainly find a way to share out the work between all existing workers (and more!) and without loss of pay!

### • *London's mega tax-haven*

Ian Read, the CEO of US giant Pfizer, let the cat out of the bag by explaining that his aim in bidding for AstraZeneca was to avoid paying the 38% US corporation tax on a £40bn stash built up by Pfizer out of the profits of its foreign subsidiaries. By using this stash to buy AstraZeneca, it would only be subjected to Britain's far more lenient tax regime, allowing Pfizer to reduce its tax bill by at least £7bn!

Pfizer is no exception. The new holding company set up by GM to control Fiat will be listed in the US, but its "fiscal headquarters" will be in London - just as that of the world's largest advertising company created by the merger of America's Omnicom and France's Publicis.

Osborne's claim that this is "good for the British economy" because it will "create jobs" is an obvious con. But this will certainly be good for Britain's big tax avoidance consultancies!



Big tax bucks to be made in London!

### • *Behind Osborne's boasting*

According to a recent IMF announcement, Britain's GDP is set to grow by 2.9% in 2014, making it the fastest growing economy in the G7. Of course, Osborne has been taking kudos for this "flattering" report. But what does this rising GDP really mean (if anything)?

In fact a large part of the increase is accounted for by the growth of a real estate bubble,

which is hardly something to boast about. Moreover, if one looks at the figure for GDP per head, which should be a more accurate way of measuring the wealth created in the economy, it is still 8% lower than it was before the crisis.

What is more, Osborne stopped short of mentioning other less "flattering" comments in the same IMF report. For instance, among other

negative signs, this report noted that the British economy spends less of its GDP on investment than any other G7 country - only 15% of its GDP compared to 25% in France, the highest performer in this respect. But, hang on, isn't investment the main driver of "economic growth and job creation"? No wonder Osborne had nothing to say about this!

### • *Debt: on the verge of another precipice?*

Britain's massive indebtedness was one of the factors which precipitated the banking meltdown in 2008, and the present crisis. Yet, despite Osborne's chronic "optimism", indebtedness is as high as ever - if not even higher in some respects. In fact, Britain is actually the second most indebted among the world's 10 richest countries - just after Japan with 514% of GDP.

Indeed Britain's total debt

- government, companies and households - is still officially a mind-boggling 484% of GDP. According to economic experts, it has fallen over the past three years. But a large part of this fall is due to the banking meltdown itself, with debts being either written off or paid for with new money printed as part of the banking bailout. However, to back up Osborne's "optimism", official debt figures never take into

account the cost of this bailout. But if it is taken into account, Britain's real debt reaches an even higher level - equivalent to around 530% of GDP, a world record!

So, are we on the eve of yet another financial meltdown? No-one can tell. But should we take the risk by allowing this crisis-ridden profit system to carry on playing with our livelihoods?

## No to pension poverty!

According to pension provider Liverpool Victoria, the average annual pension income is now £8,774 - equivalent to just 67% of the income provided by a full-time job on the minimum wage. For women, this average is even lower, at £6,580!

Given that workers on the minimum wage can barely make ends meet, how can a pensioner survive on such an income?

In fact, among workers aged 60 to 69, 1 in 4 has already delayed his/her retirement date - this, when so many young workers are in casual jobs or jobless! As to those over-60s who would need to carry on working, but cannot, whether because they cannot find a job or because they are worn out, their only "solution" is to slide into poverty and indebtedness.

In this system, workers are

thrown onto the scrapheap of poverty when the bosses no longer consider them profitable enough to feed their profits. Isn't it time the whole system was reversed - and the capitalists' accumulated profits were used to pay decent pensions to all - or, even better, that it was overthrown - and replaced with a social organisation which caters for the needs of all, instead of the greed of the few? ☐

### • Food banks and official hypocrisy

Almost a million people resorted to food banks over the last year, according to the Trussell Trust, which runs Britain's largest network of food banks. And half of those who had used them had suffered a delay or cut in benefits. Indeed, over the past three years, 1.75 million people have seen their incomes cut due to the government's welfare "reforms" - especially the cuts in housing benefit and council tax benefit.

Predictably, the government's reaction was to dismiss these claims as exaggerated. A DWP official claimed the rise in food banks was down to the fact that they were "aggressively marketing their services"! Meanwhile Works and Pension minister, Ian Duncan Smith, accused



Queue at a foodbank in Newcastle

the charity of scaremongering and furthering its own political agenda. As to Cameron, his only reaction to the rise of food banks has been

his promotion of "Christianity" - as if capitalist profit wasn't Cameron's only "god" and the City his favourite cathedral!

### • Cameron and "Christian Britain"

David Cameron's Easter was all about telling Britain to be 'more confident' about calling itself a Christian country. At a Downing Street reception and later writing in the Church Times, he credited Jesus with the idea of the 'Big Society' and renewed his call for a bigger role for faith-based charities. In fact Muslim and Hindu leaders lined up to agree with

Cameron that a state-sponsored religious atmosphere makes them more comfortable too.

Cameron wants to salvage any votes he can from the UKIP challenge with an appeal to Christians on the basis of their religion, however reactionary. But being patted on the back like this didn't stop some Christians from protesting that the

huge rise in referrals to food banks is overwhelmingly due to benefit changes and sanctions. Delivering a letter to his Witney constituency office in person, about 40 people, led by the Bishop of Oxford, found cops waiting for them and the door barred!

### Letter from Durham

against those councillors who might have the guts to defend services which people depend upon. One recent example of these bureaucratic methods was that of a Sunderland councillor who was suspended after voting against austerity cuts. The same would probably happen in County Durham.

Of course, a successful strategy against such attacks would require broader objectives - aimed at forcing all local councils to adopt budgets based upon their area's social needs, rather than according to the government's diktats. Such a strategy would require a campaigning workers' party willing to put forward a radical fighting programme aimed at addressing the needs of the working class and providing a basis around which it can be mobilised - a party that needs to be built.

### • Labour closes care homes

County Durham's Labour council has decided to close its five remaining care homes - which will result in some forty residents being transferred to a privately-run care home. Not only are the residents affected but also 172 workers, who will lose their jobs.

This comes on top of all the services that have either been lost or reduced since 2010. One of the bitter ironies in this, is that this council has recently been given an award as the best local government of the year!

The ostensible reason given for these closures is to save money. The savings required by the ConDem government is £220m by 2017. The leader of the council, Simon Henig, was quite clear that the reason for the closure was

that it's no longer "financially possible" to run care homes when the job could be done much more cheaply in the private sector. For Henig, council-run care homes are "simply not value for money" - never mind what residents and care workers may feel about it!

### • Fighting against the cuts

In response to these cuts against the most vulnerable, a "Save Our Care Homes In County Durham" campaign has been formed and a small, but determined, demonstration involving the residents was organised on 24th April, outside the council's offices in Crook.

There may be a chance that the decision is voted down when it goes to a full council meeting. But this chance is slim as Labour's machinery will be busily working away to threaten sanctions

## May Day is International Workers' Day

From May Day 1909 in New-York...



... to May Day 2014

in Bilbao (Spain)



and in London



Istanbul (Turkey)

Here in Britain the politicians of the capitalist class would like 1st May, which for the working class is, or should be, "International Workers' Day", done away with. In 1978, already, a Labour government changed the traditional workers' holiday on the 1st May, to a "Spring Bank Holiday", on the first Monday of May. And in 2011, the ConDem coalition said it would like to "transfer" this bank holiday to October, to lengthen the "tourist season" - whatever that may mean. But it's no surprise at all, that they want to get rid of a tradition representing the workers' class struggle against people like themselves.

Indeed the first "formal" May Day demonstration was instigated by the Second International - the international organisation based on the tradition created by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, which brought together the workers' and socialist parties of the time from around the world. It took place on 1st May 1891, having been put forward as a way to honour the memory of the 4 "Haymarket Martyrs" who had been hanged in Chicago in 1887.

These activists were anarchists and trade unionists, who had participated in a general strike on 4 May 1886, with as many as 400,000 workers involved, calling for the 8-hour day. In the evening, when speeches were still being heard, the

police marched in, ready to attack. But a bomb was thrown into their ranks, resulting in the death of 7 and injuries to at least 70. The vengeance of the police went on unabated for weeks: workers were shot, beaten, arrested and a wave of repression against anarchists and trade unionists was launched. Eventually 8 anarchists were put on trial accused of throwing the bomb, even though three of them had not been present on the day. 4 were found guilty in a sham trial and sent to the gallows. 600,000 workers turned out for their funeral.

So, while May 1st is Workers' Day all over the world, in the USA, "Labor" Day is on 1st September, to blank out the memory of the Haymarket events. In 1904, a congress of the Second International passed a resolution making it mandatory on all its members to stop work on May 1st "to agitate vigorously for the 8-hour day, wherever it is possible without injury to workers". Since we still don't have that 8-hour limit on the working day, this is surely a tradition we need to revive!

But there is another reason which makes Workers' Day an important tradition to revive. Indeed, the fact that it is celebrated by marches - and, in some cases, strikes - in hundreds of cities and countries across the world, is a reminder that the working class is the only truly international

class in this society - the only class with no stake in defending the antiquated national states still used today to divide the populations as well as to repress them. In that sense, Workers' Day is also a celebration of this idea popularised by Marx's Communist Manifesto: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win." □

### • Miliband's minimal promises

According to Ed Miliband, Scottish workers should vote "No" to independence because of the threat that both Westminster and Edinburgh governments "would be under intense pressure from powerful interests to undercut the other by lowering tax rates for the richest or worsen wages and conditions for everyone else". Is Miliband seriously suggesting that this hasn't been every government's policy for years, whether under pressure or not?

Miliband's "alternative offer" to British workers, and what his speech was about, is a new curb on zero-hours contracts. He proposes to guarantee contracts with a fixed minimum of working hours - but only after one year on a zero-hour type contract, at the beck and call of employers. This tame proposal should surprise no-one, since Miliband commissioned a former HR director from Morrisons supermarket chain to come up with it. But as a reason for Scottish workers to vote "No" and bank on a Labour government, it's a real joke!

## For a common fight back across all sections!

Since the financial crisis, all sections in public services have faced similar attacks. Recently, the government came up with an insulting 1% pay offer for NHS and council workers - after years of pay freeze across the public sector! Teachers are also involved in a pay dispute. Meanwhile every section has its own lot of on-going job cuts - the latest of this long list being the 1,000 job cuts in the London Underground and the 200 jobs under threat on the Heathrow Express line. By now these workers have had enough of these cuts and they all have every reason to want to regain some of the ground they have lost!

So the union machineries finally

decided that they had to be seen to do something - and started balloting millions of discontented members. Against this backdrop, common sense would dictate that since all public service workers are facing similar attacks from the same employers, their interests would be to act together on the basis of common demands. But, apparently, these union leaders cannot see beyond what they consider as their own backyard.

So, Unison and Unite are balloting 500,000 NHS staff, with a day of "action" planned for June 5th, while the same Unison is balloting 600,000 council staff members separately with no plan announced. Meanwhile, 4,000 RMT Tube workers have been

involved in a series of strikes, independently from Heathrow Express workers who have taken action on almost, but not quite, the same days, called out by the same RMT. As to the 230,000 members of the teachers' union NUT, they had their own one-day strike in March and should have another one in June.

No change in the balance of forces can be achieved as a result of such disorganised, sectional action. Only if workers in public services, and in the private sector too, take the organisation of their fights back into their own hands, uniting their ranks across all sections in action, on the basis of common demands, will their action be effective. □

### • London Underground strikes - all over?

London Underground workers belonging to the RMT union were due to take industrial action for 72 hours on 5-8 May, over the planned closure by Transport for London (TfL) of all ticket offices, with the loss, by 2015, of 953 jobs. But the strike was called off at the last minute.

So what's the deal? The RMT said that the station by station review it had previously been promised will now take place. But TfL says that it still plans to close all ticket offices, as part of its so-called "Stations Fit for the Future" "modernisation", meant to save £50m a year. It appears that union leaders only secured a commitment that no ticket office worker would be forced to leave, and if re-deployed to another job, his/her pay would stay the same. The review is meant to be complete pretty soon - by 23 May!

So what about the 953 job cuts? "Redeployed" workers would apparently be given flexible and moving jobs, as extras, standing at barriers and wandering up and down platforms. They could thus slowly, but surely, be dispensed with. TfL's claim that its "Stations for

the future" will "deliver better service for customers" is quite obviously hypocritical hogwash. Presumably the RMT will be going to put this "deal" to the vote of Underground workers. Let us hope it is not accepted.



The Picket at Leytonstone Tube during the last strike (29 April)

### • Heathrow Express workers slam on the brakes

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has announced cuts amounting to £600 million at Heathrow airport. As part of this plan, there would be £6 million worth of cuts on the Heathrow Express line, which would include freezing wages, cutting conditions and halving the workforce (201 jobs cut). According to the RMT union, the job cuts would, in addition, have serious consequences for passenger safety.

In response, the Heathrow Express workers went on a two-day strike on April 29th, forcing the CAA to use a skeleton staff, with many office-based workers, to run the trains.

Of course, these workers are right to defend their jobs by using the only language that the bosses understand! However, one can only wonder why the

RMT, which had called an overlapping strike in the London Underground over a similar issue, did not bother to try to coordinate the two strikes, neither by ensuring that they took place exactly at the same time, nor by organising joint protest marches for the two groups of strikers. Ironically, the banner of RMT still carries the International Workingmen's Association slogan - "Workers of the world, unite!" But, apparently, for the RMT leadership, this doesn't apply to their own members...

### • Fat lies & skinny wages!

Wages, we are told, are on the increase, having gone up 1.7%, just 0.1% above the Consumer Price Index (CPI), (used to calculate inflation) which was 1.6% in March. This minuscule "change" didn't stop Chancellor George Osborne from boasting it was evidence that his economic policies are (finally) working!

But of course the CPI doesn't include housing costs, whereas the Retail Price Index which the government no longer uses, for obvious reasons, does. And it increased by 2.8% over the same period - meaning that real wages are still falling.

However, if this is the first "increase" in wages since 2008, as they admit, how much have workers lost over these years? According to the Office of National Statistics, average wages have fallen by 7.6% over the last 6 years, after taking inflation into account - and by as much as 13.4% for construction workers!

Profits have not gone down during that time. Lying ministers can pretend everything is getting better, but working people can measure their real cost of living. And we know exactly how much we need to take out of the profits of the rich to make up for what has been stolen from us.

**King's Cross railway station (London)**

- **The Great Train Robbery (cont'd)**

Taxpayers are still directly subsidising the private train operating companies, to the tune of as much as £4bn a year, thanks to unchanged government policy since privatisation was completed in 1997. But despite this, and indeed out of this free government handout, these companies paid their shareholders a total £200m in dividends last year!

Only South West Trains and East Coast paid £5m and £16m respectively back to the government. But East Coast is currently under government management anyway, awaiting re-franchising

to the private sector, after its previous owner failed to meet its commitments.

Yet aren't all of the companies failing in their commitments, if they "need" public subsidies? The Office for Rail Regulation rightly called this financing system the "economics of the madhouse"! If you add what the government gives privateers - in the form of direct subsidies, capital investment or by paying the fees for their use of the tracks (to the publicly-owned Network Rail!) - and what passengers pay in extortionate fares (the highest in Europe!), train



companies make a total £7.7bn "in revenue".

The only way to inject some sanity into this system is make transport free: funded by all the bosses who directly benefit from it, when we arrive, on time, at work.

- **Pay up or face us**

So the ISS pay saga is still on. We thought they might be bluffing when they send us a letter saying they could not pay us the April pay increase after all. This is the ISS of old - dragging out any excuse to delay paying us what they owe us. The point is, our patience is wearing very thin. Do they need a reminder that we won this pay rise (and more, in fact!) through our past strikes...? [Workers' Platform King's Cross, 21/4/14]

- **Either way, not safe**

Out of the East Coast "safety week", we got stats to tell us that 62% of accidents On Board are due to the non-use of "safe systems of work", i.e.

East Coast blames us for them. As if the pressure and lack of staff were not their responsibility. And what about the other 38% of accidents, the cause of which they don't mention? Faulty equipment and/or their UNSafe systems of work? Again, their responsibility! [Workers' Platform King's Cross, 21/4/14]

- **Hopping mad?**

Something very unusual must have happened in the highest spheres of FCC. They're not usually known for their generosity, so we were quite surprised to see them provide little boxes of Easter eggs to hand out to passengers last week. Were they bitten by the Easter bunny? [Workers' Platform King's Cross, 21/4/14]

- **Yes, a mess**

ISS night cleaners in Bounds Green are cooped up in a storage room with cleaning chemicals and equipment. Here we are supposed to get changed and take our breaks, despite the fact that there aren't even minimal amenities, like drinking water! After complaining last year, and reminding both ISS and East Coast of the health and safety regulations, we thought the problem had been resolved: a decent mess room would be built for us and, in the meantime, we could use the East Coast workers' mess room for breaks. So how come, months later, we're still using this storage room? Do we need to get this place closed down?! [Workers' Platform King's Cross, 21/4/14]

**Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**

- **Whose MP&L?**

Not one acceptable answer yet, on the MP&L (driving and logistics) outsourcing... So shouldn't we have a meeting of the whole department, across shifts, to hear exactly what the company has in mind for us? And so that we can discuss what we might have in mind for the company? Because whatever anyone may say, this is literally the last remaining off-line department inside Dagenham Engine Plant, so isn't it worth fighting Ford for it? [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 14/4/14]

- **United we stand**

Let's make history. Let's do something nobody's done before. Let's go and talk to LineSide workers in the DDC ("new" engine plant) and convince them to fight together with us. For a permanent Ford MP&L covering new and old engine plants! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 14/4/14]

- **Bring in new hands!**

Instead of manning up the mini-shifts to full shifts on Puma and Tiger, Ford asks

us to work overtime. Of course. And it's overlaps as well, making it 12 hours for some, working on the Chicken Farm?! Not good for our health and not good, either, for the health of the large number of unemployed queuing up for a job outside! If this continues, we'll just have to ensure that it will not be good for the health of managers... Unless they man up! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 1/5/14]

- **Churning ghosts!**

This is bad: the canteen goes down to a skeleton crew at night and there's hardly any food on offer. Of course, the big union bods never work nights, so they probably don't know or don't care. We'll all end up as skeleton crews, if we have to rely on this state of affairs... [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 1/5/14]

- **Propelling profits**

We see that Vince Cable turned up at Dunton for the launch of the so-called ACTIVE (Advanced Combustion Turbocharge Inlive Variable Valvetrain Engine bless you) project... The government's given poverty-stricken companies like Ford, Unipart,



Continental, BP, etc., £1bn, for projects administered by the Advanced Propulsion Centre which is meant to come up with (yet more) low carbon emission engines for cars (no, not spaceships). Our taxes. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 1/5/14]

- **...and Ford's profits ok**

Ford'll probably be using its "fall" in first Quarter profits ("down" to \$1.4bn!) as another excuse to turn the screw on all of us, while telling shareholders not to worry, because the extreme winter in the US was to blame. The snow and ice didn't stop US car bosses from paying starvation wages (just over half the wage of 1st tier) to 2nd tier workers who are now 25% of their workforce, and who struggled to heat their homes, let alone feed their kids. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 1/5/14]

**Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**

• **CWU leaders: selling POL workers, literally!**

CWU officials just did another dirty deal at Post Office Ltd (POL), bartering Crown post office jobs and closures for money! They now brag of another "landmark", so "difficult" to "achieve" claiming they won a 7.3% pay rise. They avoid mention of the strings attached.

The 3-year deal gives a 3.9% rise for 2014 (including backpay-bonuses as a "rise"), and a "potential increase" of 3.4%, paid in 1% increments, but "subject to the delivery of agreed savings, over and above the Crown

transformation [closing/franchising remaining offices!] programme" over the next 2 years. A bribe for a "yes vote" is payable - £2,300. And once an unknown number of "voluntary redundancies" - i.e., job cuts - are complete, another £500. If the targeted "savings" are thus made, another £500 will be paid in March 2015.

3,000 Crown office workers went on strike for 15 days last year, against job cuts/closures. And this is what abject union officials "won" for them: a small



pay rise+bribe, dependent on 70 Crown Offices closing completely and jobs (how many?) disappearing forever. While infuriated POL delegates at CWU conference failed to win a "no confidence" vote in Andy Furey, the CWU negotiator, at least they were heard. The struggle against official sell-outs continues.

• **Golden rules, not golden standards**

Here's an action plan for Romec bosses:

- 1) stop shouting
- 2) listen to us and learn
- 3) watch your manners
- 4) PROVIDE MORE CLEANERS.

[Workers' Fight 21/4/14]

• **Free for what?**

In case you didn't know, a PDMR is a "Person Discharging Managerial Responsibility". Which may sound a bit disgusting. But apparently, it warrants getting 116 free RM shares! For doing what exactly, we're not sure. But definitely it's not for getting the job done! We haven't seen any PDRMs pushing a delivery trolley or sorting letters or packets - ever! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 21/4/14]

• **Mis-lead standards?**

So much for golden standards. Romec

just can't get over the fact that it lost the POL contract. So much so that it is now involved in endless self-analysis. It even felt it had to write a Q&A about it! But funnily enough, without addressing the problems of the engineers who're being left high and dry.

And guess what? Romec called the union officials from CWU and Unite, to help it find a way to make itself more attractive... i.e., even cheaper! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 21/4/14]

• **Attax on drivers**

According to the Daily Star newspaper, (seen on the royalmailchat), Somerset RM delivery drivers got parking tickets after their permits were delayed in the post.

The Star thought it was funny. But it's no joke the way councils everywhere are dishing out parking fines and tickets like confetti, to make up their revenue, after the huge central government cuts to local budgets. It's a tax on drivers. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 21/4/14]

• **Reshuffle**

With RM management so famous for its cronyism, the advent of a new boss for HMP will probably bring a few other new faces along with it... Meaning that others will disappear. Not that we care. But some managers are getting nervous: maybe the new boss won't like them? We suggest they organise a "Mount's Got Talent" contest to show themselves off, with B the B selling tickets... [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 21/4/14]

• **Into Alan Johnson's shoes**

The ding-dong in PM's Questions at the beginning of April, over the "underselling" of RM (around £5.50 after starting at £3.30) gave CWU leader, Billy Hayes, the chance to be "flattered" (his words!) after the PM quoted him. But he was "disappointed" that the Tory PM got his facts wrong... on Labour policy! He goes on to say that the public schoolboys' name-calling club, a-k-a "parliament", is "what democracy is all about"! Help! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 7/4/14]

**BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**

• **Not cut and dried**

Despite the 77% vote in favour of the pay deal, the mandate for acceptance was anything but overwhelming. That's because 30% of us didn't vote at all! If you count up the votes, the vote was more or less 50-50. And if 800+ votes of agency workers in Assembly alone were added, the outcome might have been very different. [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 7/4/14]

• **A call to rally behind**

Isn't it high time that we insisted that agency workers, of whom many, if not most, have been here much longer than the senior managers, got a vote on pay? BMW may want the advantages which agency contracting brings it, but for us workers, it's against everything we stand for... Whatever BMW pretends, we're all working for BMW here. [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 7/4/14]

• **Rubbing salt in the wound**

With a grand total of 2,179 cars in the WiP, production has become a logistical nightmare. But how is slapping overtime onto the Night shift and making the Early shift come in on Saturday, going to help? Isn't 37.5 hours spread over 5 shifts without a lunchbreak already too long? [Workers' Fight 7/4/14]

• **Proper breaks now!**

BMW have tried to shorten our tea breaks many times. Of course, we've been right to defend them. But now they have taken to cutting some half-hour lunch breaks to 15 minutes - hardly enough for a tea break! As we're all working extra shifts and we all need a reasonable lunch, shouldn't we be getting at least an hour's worth of breaks per shift? [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 7/4/14]

• **Two shots in the foot...**

Questions have been asked about the 800



diesel Minis mothballed in the car park for more than a fortnight. BMW admitted there was a problem with a defective engine part that packs up after 8,000 miles causing engines to vibrate, but not that the supplier company had gone bust! So what now? Apparently a complete new power train will have to be fitted. But because the mechanical section in Rework has been dismantled and mechanics dispersed, the job can't even be done in-house. Cars will have to go to the dealerships and have the work carried out there... [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 7/4/14]

## Britain's wars

Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), the premier think-tank of British imperialism, recently released a report on the cost of the wars in which the British military has been involved over the past 15 years: first Gulf war and blockade (£1bn); Bosnia (£1.5bn); Kosovo (£1.1bn); Sierra Leone (£76m); Afghan war (£20.6bn) and Iraq war (£9.6bn). If the cost of the long-term medical, psychological and social rehabilitative care of veterans is added, the total almost doubles to £65bn.

This is the blood money of the capitalist class: fat profits for private defence contractors, arms companies and local auxiliaries and life-long physical and mental damage for all sides involved. That's their "humanitarian intervention".

As for the "war on terror", did it bring any positive results at all? The report goes on to say that because of

## Intolerable cost of the imperialist order



the devastation caused, Islamic radicalisation has increased in Britain as well as in Iraq and Afghanistan, with several new armed groups. And Britain's much publicised war on the drug trade has actually resulted in

increased opium production in the Afghan province of Helmand.

This report might as well have concluded that mankind has only one alternative: socialism or barbarism! ☐

## South Korea

On the 21st of April, 302 of the 476 people, mostly school children, aboard the South Korean ferry Sewol, sunk to their deaths.

The killers were neither the crew, nor "Nature" - but profiteering. The ferry was an old, decommissioned Japanese boat - virtually a piece of junk recycled by the Chonghaejin Marine Company. It was filled beyond capacity with cargo, and the structure built for passengers on its deck was too high and heavy to ensure that the ship would keep its

## Sewol disaster: murderous profiteering

balance. Amazingly, the boat had been checked and cleared by South Korean authorities in February. But a newspaper found that the average inspection time was just 13 minutes and that the governmental department in charge was especially cozy with shipping companies. This disaster was just waiting to happen.

Capitalist profiteering causes periodic disasters. South Korea had buildings crumbling because of poor construction and a plane of the South Korean company Asiana Airlines

crash-landing in San Francisco. The Sewol disaster is yet another case of capitalists gambling with peoples' lives for the sake of their profits.

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### • **Gutter politics**

As part of its election campaign, Ukip released posters arguing for migrants' benefits to be cut. One poster says, under the picture of someone begging: "EU policy at work - British workers are hit hard by unlimited cheap labour".

Several Tories have attacked this poster campaign as "racist", while Labour has made parallels with the Nazi's anti-Semitic posters of the 1930s!

But haven't both parties used this

same rhetoric, and even implemented a host of anti-migrant policies? What about Theresa May's "Go Home" poster campaign; or Miliband's admission that Labour had been "too soft" on immigration or, further back, Labour's David Blunkett blaming migrants for the collapse of the NHS? Ukip is just continuing the electoral overbidding of the Tories and Labour, who have been anxious to cover up their servility towards British capital by scape-goating migrant workers - only with a more rabid language!

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](mailto:contact@w-fight.org), or by postal mail at:

BM Workers' Fight - LONDON WC1N 3XX.