

# WORKERS' fight



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

# THEIR POLITICS ARE NOT OURS!

The closer we get to the general election, the more the political scene is turning into a pantomime.

We've had the usual party overbidding and their usual promises which everyone knows will be forgotten once the ballot results are announced.

But, in addition, we have seen Cameron playing hard-to-get and squabbling over the proposed TV election debates. There has been endless bickering over who should or should not be invited and how the debates should be organised.

Of course, Cameron has reason to fear a public confrontation with his rivals. Painting his party's abysmal record in rosy colours is unlikely to be very credible. But Miliband is in the same boat despite his attempts to stop voters from remembering Labour's own record in office, until just 5 years ago.

This is all a game of liar's poker, in which the protagonists seem to believe that voters are idiots, incapable of figuring out whose interests they've been defending over the past 8 years.

As if workers were likely to forget how the main parties have made them pay a heavy price in order to bail out the bankers and boost the profits of big business, while the wealthy were hoarding their cash in tax havens!

## **Enough of their austerity!**

As we go to press, Osborne's last budget is about to be announced and the media have been frantically trying to guess what "giveaways" he might find to buy votes for his party.

But these "giveaways", if any, won't be for the working class. The bosses' paper *Financial Times*, has let the cat out of the bag by revealing that the Tories already have plans to cut 30,000 jobs in the DWP alone (over one-third of the workforce) on top of the 40,000 jobs cut since 2010! And the odds are,

that there will be cuts elsewhere.

But it doesn't mean that Labour would be a better choice. The same paper estimates that, on the basis of Miliband's economic commitments, Labour would need to cut 20,000 jobs in the DWP over the same period!

Whichever way we look at Britain's political scene, we only see parties and politicians who, given a chance, will implement some form of austerity. Their only concern is to repay the public debt to a delinquent banking system which should have been nationalised once and for all rather than bailed out. And to this end, they will make savings at the expense of public sector jobs, welfare payments, healthcare and public housing, no matter what.

## **No future in the ballot box**

This means that, on May 7th voting Tory, Lib-Dem or Labour will only be endorsing the past and future anti-working class policies of these parties. The more votes they get, the more they will claim to have a popular mandate for these policies. This is not in the interest of the working class.

As to voting for the smaller parties,

what can it achieve? Ukip is no more than a bigoted, ravingly anti-working class appendage of the Tory party. Voting for Ukip will just give Cameron a pretext to concede more ground to the right-wing of his party.

The Greens may seem to have a more decent position against austerity. Except that having nice-sounding proposals is one thing, imposing them on the capitalist class is another. How this will be done, the Greens do not say, because they are just as respectful of the capitalist system as the other parties. So voting Green would be like crossing one's fingers and hoping for the best...

This election can change nothing. And workers won't even be able to use their ballot paper to voice their refusal of any austerity and their determination to see the capitalist class foot the bill of this crisis, out of its profits.

But no matter. Elections come and go and no election will ever, in and of itself, force the capitalists to pay up. Only the working class can, by using its collective strength in the class struggle. And this is what working class politics, our politics, are really about. ☐



## Their politics

Miliband chose to launch Labour's 79-page "Economic Plan" during a visit to Jaguar Land Rover in mid-February. Funnily enough, Cameron decided to go and electioneer at Goodwood's Rolls Royce plant just two days later. Of course, they're putting out exactly the same friendly message to the bosses. The packaging even looks the same! So it took the Financial Times newspaper to supply the subtitles: it labelled Miliband "business unfriendly" just in case CEOs forget that their "natural party" is the Tories.

But they need not be worried. Miliband told his audience at JLR how

### • Mixed signals

The new Shadow transport secretary Michael Dugher has made more "radical" noises about a publicly operated railway than his predecessor Mary Creagh: "we're going to rip up the old model of franchising and I want to see more public control." Maybe he's hoping that working class voters will think he wants to end private franchises altogether?

But Dugher is careful to slip in, for the investors' ears, that it's only an

### • Farage, just another politician

Recent opinion polls suggest that more people think Ukip is racist, nasty and just not credible, compared to one year ago. Other polls show that Ukip has lost ground to the main parties. So Nigel Farage has now appealed to delegates at Ukip's spring conference in Margate to avoid "negative campaigning". But it seems his pleas fell on deaf ears, judging from the many

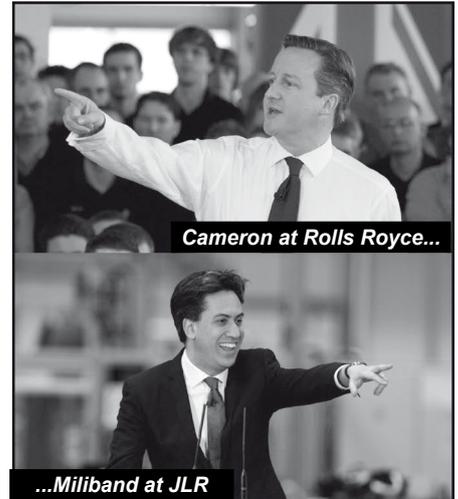
### • Back to the Cold War?

The growing atmosphere of anti-Russian rhetoric seems to have reached Cold War levels across the west. Barack Obama referred to the Russian "threat" in warning Cameron not to cut military spending any further. NATO troops paraded with armoured vehicles in Narva, Estonia, yards from the Russian border. An RAF operation to escort Russian military planes off the coast of Cornwall was highly publicised. And, of course, there is the rhetoric about Russia's "aggression" against Ukraine.

This hype is a convenient cover for the real content of western policy towards Russia and its sphere of influence. The imperialist powers want free reign for their banks and multinationals to tap the profits available in this huge market and need to weaken Russia's

## Hoo will woo business best?

Labour is dedicated to business "making bigger profits" (and at whose expense can that be?). It will cut taxes for small business and entrepreneurs, but more importantly, won't touch corporation tax, "the most competitive in the G7" - leaving big business, City finance and the banks with their super-exploitative profits entirely intact! And there wasn't any difference between Cameron and Miliband on the thousands of new apprenticeships which both pledge - and of course, neither mentioned raising the minimum apprentice pay rate of £2.73 per hour... Same difference. □



aspect of this old model that he's got a problem with. In fact, he repeats Creagh's proposal that a public sector operator should be able to bid alongside the private sector. What, like East Coast, which was run as a public operation until its recent "sale" to Virgin-Stagecoach? While "public", it had had the same exorbitant fares, poor staff conditions and cost-cutting so-called efficiencies as any private company!

Dugher also said that "privatisation

was a mess". But lest the City conclude that this means Labour wants to reverse privatisation, he hastily added, "I'm not saying let's go back to some sort of 70s and 80s British Rail". In the 80s, even Thatcher was said to have thought twice over the rail sell-off! Today, despite its long-forgotten championing of rail renationalisation, Labour considers that this would be "a step too far"!

speeches full of anti-immigrant gripes.

And after the conference, Farage announced that Ukip was abandoning its commitment to an annual cap on immigration of 50,000, because "targets don't work" - although this was later denied. In any case, he did announce his support for a points-for-skills system like Australia's, which would be just another way of banning

unskilled workers. He also promised to step up enforcement with a new "Migration Control Commission" and increase Border Agency staff by 2,500.

This former City banker presents himself as a regular bloke down the pub, different from mainstream politicians. But like them, he's just chasing after votes.

ability to limit their penetration. To this end, the EU and NATO triggered the present Ukrainian crisis and the coup that brought to power the current pro-western, anti-Russian government, which recently received British military equipment and training advisors. The government says this equipment is "non-lethal", but its policy has already been "lethal" for the Ukrainian population!

### • Bomber Blair back in Belgrade

Former Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair has landed another advisor's job, this time with the current Prime Minister of Serbia, Aleksandar Vucic.

In 1999 Blair sent the RAF to bomb Belgrade, ostensibly to "save" the Kosovars. But saving the Kosovars wasn't likely to be achieved by bombing hospitals, factories and homes in Belgrade. The aim was "regime change" - which

was indeed achieved.

However, it did not change much to the nature of the regime whose former politicians, police, officers, etc. remained in place, including most of those who had been deeply involved in the ethnic cleansing of the war. A case in point is Vucic himself, who was Information Minister in Milosevic's government at the time, in charge of political censorship!

But for the Blairs of this world, what changed everything is that the likes of Vucic no longer claim to have any independent policy towards the west and are now willing to show all due servility, in order to be allowed into the EU.

This is where Blair comes in. Just as he came in to advise so many more or less overt dictatorial regimes in the past - so long as they toe the imperialist line.

## HSBC: the tip of a capitalist iceberg

The HSBC story started eight years ago when a Swiss whistleblower sought asylum in France bringing with him the details of 30,000 accounts with HSBC's Swiss subsidiary, holding a total £78bn. More than three quarters of these accounts were held by non-Swiss citizens hiding their cash behind Swiss bank secrecy. And among these, the largest group of non-Swiss were 8,883 British customers holding £14bn among them, or an average of £1.6m each!

This £14bn is what can be found in just one bank and in just one tax haven. But what about all the other dozens of billions hidden away to evade tax? It is just the tip of the golden iceberg of wealth hoarded by the capitalist class.

### • **Governments and finance: a love story**

So, HMRC only managed to bring one single prosecution for tax evasion out of 8,883 wealthy delinquents listed in HSBC's Swiss files, which it had received in 2010. Yes, just one in 5 years! But rather than being a case of extreme inefficiency, this was the result of a deliberate policy determined by Osborne himself. He said: "*I don't think it would be right for a Chancellor of the Exchequer to direct prosecutions against individuals or individual companies.*" Of course, it is the job of the chancellor to cut

### • **Gulliver's Travels**

Stuart Gulliver, HSBC's chief executive, put out a full-page apology in the papers for the bank's shady behind-the-scenes dealings which have come to light; among other things: helping wealthy clients to avoid tax to the tune of billions of pounds, and providing banking services to criminals, drug smugglers, and friends and families of dictators. A day in the life of the financial world.

But Gulliver's apology rang rather hollow when it came out that he is a

### • **Enough of their parasitism!**

According to the Office of National Statistics, £40.5bn worth of bonuses were handed out in 2014 - and a staggering total of £241bn since 2007! To top it all, companies paid a record £97.1bn in dividends to shareholders last year - a total of £550bn since 2007. This, at a time when companies were crying poverty, slashing jobs left, right and centre, and cutting real wages. These huge sums were, of course, stolen from the wealth produced by the working class and then either hoarded in bank coffers - Swiss or otherwise - or used to pay for the luxurious lives of the ultra-rich.



By the same token, this scandal exposes the lies that we have been told again and again over the past 8 years of crisis - that there is no money in this society to create the jobs, pay

## Thieves & robbers

the wages or build the houses which are needed. The money is there and more than enough of it. The problem for the working class is to get the capitalists to cough it up! □

the benefits of the poor, but not his job to see to it that the unpaid taxes of the very rich are recovered!

But is this any wonder, given that politicians, senior civil servants and business high fliers all come from the same small circles? Politicians have no problem with their wealthy mates resorting to tax evasion. Didn't Cameron appoint former HSBC chairman Steven Green as trade minister in 2011 - just 8 months after receiving the HSBC tax evasion files?

seasoned tax avoider himself. Firstly, he is rewarded for all the "hard work" that his bank does in shielding the super-wealthy criminals with the humble pay of £7.5m. Secondly, he is domiciled in Hong Kong for tax purposes (No international borders for the fat cats!). Thirdly, he is paid through an anonymous company registered in Panama. Just the man to be heading a bank which makes sure no government can get its hands on their clients' wealth - he's got personal experience!

It may therefore seem surprising that, despite this bonanza, business investment in the last quarter of 2014 should have fallen - by 1.4% - which is the sharpest fall since 2007, after years of shrinking investment. The proportion of company profits reinvested in production keeps going down - which explains the lack of decent jobs. In and of itself, this is not new. But this trend has been accelerating since the beginning of the crisis and, for all the government's claims about a return to growth, it is not improving. If anything, it illustrates the capitalists' increasing parasitism on the economy - and the fact that this parasitism is becoming increasingly unaffordable.

And vice versa: banks are all too willing to open their arms to former senior civil servants or politicians: in 2012, HSBC took on Dave Hartnett, a previous HMRC permanent secretary, to advise the bank on "financial crime governance" (was it to help HSBC to cover its back?!). The revolving door between top political and business circles only reflects a well-known truth: that in this capitalist world, governments are run by the rich, for the rich!

### **Who needs Wonga?...**

Credit cards, which are supposed to help people to borrow more than they can afford (with interest of course) are really helping ... the banks, to make a killing out of borrowers. While the Bank of England base interest is 0.5%, banks charge, on average, nearly 36 times this rate! The average APR rate on a credit card from the major banks has been creeping up from 14.5% in 2009 to 18.9% today. And the interest charged on money drawn from cash points is even higher.

Of course, not everyone gets such a "good" rate. Many credit card holders have to pay 29.9% or more, because when they applied, they had a lower credit score. The worst cases are those of credit cards marketed as a way "*to help you rebuild your credit rating*" with rates of 34.9% for Capital 1 and 39.9% for Vanquis!

Regulation was introduced supposedly to keep payday lenders like Wonga under control. But was it just a way of allowing the banks to take over?

## Housing

After announcing that there had been a 1.7% increase in private rents in 2014, the ONS revised its figure to 2.1%, although even that was a huge understatement.

Indeed, the pattern of renting is changing due to tenants' standards of living going down the drain. Housing agencies report huge increases in searches for flat/house-shares - by over 100% over the past 2 years. This means that rent

### • Officially-created homelessness

So what happens these days if you are homeless? You go to your local council housing office. You meet the criteria for getting help - that is, you're not a recent immigrant, you're habitually resident in the country, you are working, but on low pay, or unable to work and/or have dependent children, and haven't deliberately made yourself homeless... In some councils you are required to have been living or working in that precinct. But then you should be housed.

The problem, however, is a long waiting list in most councils. And

### • Empty powers to use empty homes

Despite 600,000 homes lying empty in England, only 17 were brought back into use last year under council powers designed for that purpose. Only one of those was in London, despite Boris Johnson parading his concerns about the poor being priced out of housing.

Council powers involve issuing "Empty Dwelling Management Orders" (Edmos) allowing them to take temporary control of unoccupied housing, provided they follow a long procedure and "work with" landlords. But the ConDems made the process even

### • Extending the right to debt?

The Tories would like to extend the right to buy a council house at a discount to the tenants of housing associations. To their minds, Thatcher's introduction of right-to-buy was one of the great vote-winners of the 1980s, "encouraging aspiration", as they like to say. The reality of course, was that a lot of working class council tenants became tenants of the banks instead and they also had to take on the maintenance bills of often deteriorating properties. But if the Tories think they can gain some votes by selling the same con again, they will try.

Before Thatcher, 20th century

## A landlord's kingdom

statistics are no longer comparing like with like. However, the fact that the 42,000 tenants evicted in 2014 was an all-time record, says it all!

As to landlords, they're doing very well, thanks to the extortionate rents paid by their nearly 5m tenants, of course, but also thanks to massive state subsidies. Campaign group "Generation Rent" worked out that landlords enjoy almost £19bn worth in tax cuts per year. If, in

thanks to the ConDem's law change in October 2012, you no longer have the right to a council home if you are homeless. You only have the right to get help with rent, in either the private or social sector. The effect of this has been that councils get away with sending homeless families and individuals to the private sector, sometimes not even accepting responsibility for them as homeless and without vetting private accommodation. This is not quite the same as turning homeless people away, which is illegal, but it is almost as bad.

more convoluted, by increasing the period a property had to be empty to qualify for an Edmos, from 6 months to 2 years!

Tory housing minister Brandon Lewis congratulated himself for this, priding his government on having tightened checks and balances to prevent "abuse" of Edmos, described as an "ineffective and unpopular [Labour] policy which undermined civil liberties". Obviously, for him, the "civil liberties" of low-income households on council waiting lists count for nothing!

governments of whatever party recognised that public investment in subsidised, public rented housing was the only way to meet needs. But since the right-to-buy policy, new council house building has virtually stopped. Housing associations took over some councils' entire stock and have become the only large developers of social housing. If a Tory government forces them to sell homes like councils, it will probably have to underwrite their massive debts to the banks, which are secured against the rent from their properties. The banks, meanwhile, will be rubbing their hands at the extra business!

addition, one adds the housing benefits without which many landlords would find it difficult to have tenants, the total they get directly or indirectly from the state is £27bn per year!

The £1bn question is - how many really affordable council flats could be built with that sort of money every year? But don't hold your breath: the main parties won't tell you! □

And perhaps even worse, is the practice of Newham Council in London, among others, which has closed down hostel accommodation claiming penury, and which now relocates homeless families, including single mothers to distant areas where rents are cheaper, the excuse being the exorbitant private rents charged in all parts of London - the "right" of landlords, which is never challenged! Small wonder that rough sleeping in London has increased 79% since the coalition took power in 2010!

### Subsidising profits

The profits of rail companies come straight out of the public purse. In 2013-14, they got £5.3bn in subsidies from the government, £227m more than the previous year. Out of these, they paid out more than £200m to their shareholders.

Subsidies were at their highest in 2006, at £6.3bn, and decreased until 2012, when there was a slight increase. To compensate for losing their pocket money from the state, the companies are now letting passengers pick up the tab. Just as subsidies were decreasing after 2006, rail fares shot up. By January 2014, passengers - who had to manage on lower wages due to the crisis - were paying about 55% more than in 2006! And this is not the end of it: since subsidies were cut by 8% last year, companies are going to make up their profits out of passenger's pockets.

Whether this money comes from passengers or the taxpayer - it amounts to stealing from the working class. Why should shareholders be allowed to live as parasites off a railway system funded by working class passengers and tax payers?

## Under-employment, up!

Actually, it's sickening to hear the politicians crow over the supposed record number of jobs "created" in Britain compared to the other EU countries. Because these jobs are almost without exception nasty, low-paying, casual, part-time jobs - and shouldn't even exist in the first place! Yes, even official figures show that most of the new so-called "jobs" are zero-hour contract jobs. The same zero-hour contract jobs that aspiring politicians like Miliband declare they will abolish, if elected in May! If he does what he

promises, maybe the true situation behind these bogus figures will finally emerge!

Indeed, the Office for National Statistics reported at the end of February that there were 1.8m zero-hour contracts (mostly in pubs, hotels and restaurants), and 697,000 zero-hours workers, meaning each one of these workers must have several of these jobs. Apparently many have been on these contracts for 2-5 years.

So "record employment" of 73.8% - 30.9m - is actually record

## Employment

under-employment. TUC research shows that the proportion of full-time permanent jobs is still less than pre-recession levels: 64.4% in 2008 and 62.5% today - meaning to get back up to those levels would require the "creation" of 600,000 "proper jobs"! Also, 10% more people are working part-time and almost 17% more are categorised as "self-employed" (many of whom are agency temps) than in 2008. No surprise there, of course. ☐

## • Youth unemployment, up!

While the government boasted, at the end of February, that employment had gone up by 103,000 compared to the previous quarter, according to their massaged official figures, that still wasn't the case for "youth employment" even with the massage! Officially, for 16-24 year olds unemployment increased by 30,000 compared to the last quarter - reaching 764,000 - which is higher than pre-recession levels. In fact the number of NEETS (not in

employment, education or training) increased by 102,000, to reach 1.194m! The figures tell one bad story. Youth tell another, which is even worse: their wages have fallen by 10% in real terms, compared to the bad-enough 7% of older workers!



## • Social care should be re-socialised

Those people who do the one of the hardest jobs in our society - that is caring for the elderly, the disabled and the chronically sick, have the worst working conditions and lowest wages of all workers.

Yes, this is a social disgrace! About 160,000 care workers are paid less than the minimum wage! Of course, this is illegal. But never mind. The successive governments who privatised this vital social care sector had the conscious aim of handing huge wads of money to predatory profiteers - of the worst kind! So why should we be surprised that they are stealing around £130m a year from their employees and around £9m worth of national insurance contributions from the state!

The way this theft is perpetrated is to refuse pay to workers when they journey between clients, to refuse on-call payments and payment during training. Thus keeping paid hours to a minimum. Last year one so-called care "provider" was forced to pay £600,000 in wage arrears to 3,000 workers, after it was found not to have paid its staff for travelling time and other hours worked. Last November, 60 Care UK workers from Rotherham and Doncaster who took 90 days of strike action altogether finally won a

small pay rise and some compensation after they had seen their pay fall 35% after being transferred from the NHS. But new recruits will still get only £7 per hour - barely above the minimum wage. These worse-than-scrooge "care" companies should be abolished.

## • Class war in action

UCATT, the Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians union recently revealed that the union had been infiltrated by police spies from the Metropolitan Police's Special Demonstration Squad to keep a close watch on its activists.

This comes after a lengthy investigation into the blacklisting of workers by the construction industry. It revealed that more than 30 companies, including the biggest, used the "Consulting Agency", a secret company that did not appear on any official records, to check the backgrounds of workers who applied for jobs. Files were kept on shop stewards who raised health-and-safety issues and were involved in left-wing organisations. Ian Kerr, who ran the organisation, admitted that the British state helped the agency gather material and that the National Extremism Tactical Co-ordination Unit, an organisation funded by the Home Office and linked with the police, often briefed industry bosses.

We should not be surprised. The

capitalists wage their class war against the working class using all the resources of their state. Thatcher's pointing to the miners as the "enemy within" was not just rhetoric: the working class is the enemy that the state of the capitalist class is organised to fight.

## • Paradise on earth?

Church attendance may be going down, but not the standards of living of the Church of England's top circles. It seems that the 42 bishops have not made vows of poverty: by the end of 2013, their houses (provided by the CoE) had an average value of £2.26m. Among them, 26 had more than six bedrooms and their average maintenance cost was £61,079/year. Oh, and 11 of these bishops had chauffeur-driven cars.

The 26 bishops sitting in the House of Lords can also claim expenses. As to the Church as a whole, it gets public funds from the National Heritage and for running schools, as well as an income from its own assets - worth over £4bn! Those working for the CoE and paid below the Living Wage might well not appreciate this ...

**King's Cross railway station (London)****• Due pay in due time**

So EC Virgin bosses will take over on 1st March. Virgin or not, they ought to know, that come April, we expect a fat pay rise. So, if they don't have time to "negotiate", we can give them a list of our demands, they'll just have to sign at the bottom... [Workers' Platform, King's Cross 10/2/15]

**• We're being sold!!**

We're told that the new EC companies are buying us as if we are shares... or slaves..?! The transfer is not going to be via TUPE, but we are going over to Virg-Coach lock, stock and existing Ts&Cs...as a "share sale". Is that good or bad? Probably neither. Unless we do a Spartacus - in which case it will be good... [Workers' Platform, King's Cross 10/2/15]

**• One out, all out!**

We couldn't believe the RMT decided that the sacking of one of us was not an injury to all of us!! Yes, they've organised a ballot over the sacking of Mark Doughty, the EC crew leader who was scapegoated for management's short-staffing and equipment failures - but this ballot is only for Edinburgh catering workers!!

We expected to all get a chance to strike over this - up and down the line! Of course, if Edinburgh goes out, we'll have to strike anyway, otherwise we'd undermine their fight and ours. We're

all in the same boat (sorry, train!): totally peeved off about working in such conditions. [Workers' Platform, King's Cross 24/2/15]

**• Ec's "fast-track" recruitment**

Did we hear right? We have mates who applied for on-board catering last year and were accepted, but still haven't yet appeared on the job! Now, after applying online, you must wait for the answer, then wait for a video interview, then a day assessment in York, and then... we don't know - is there some training? A medical? An induction...? It seems that to master this process, applicants will have to graduate in rocket science! Is management recruiting for its own Space Odyssey 2020, or the 2024 Mars One Mission, to be sponsored by Virgin? [Workers' Platform, King's Cross 24/2/15]

**• Ballot for one, ballot for all**

Of course, this crazy recruitment process would be funny if short-staffed, on-board crews weren't at the receiving end. And on top of it all, the bosses blame us for the consequences, to the point of sacking work-mates like Mark Doughty. Isn't it about time we considered a strike over the lack of staff? Taking action over Mark's sacking can be the starting point. [Workers' Platform, King's Cross 24/2/15]

**• Victorian excuse**

Level crossing deaths are in the news again. There were 10 fatalities last year, up on the previous 2 years. The Network



Rail spokesperson says these are a legacy of a Victorian Railway and a risk "we want to remove". The Victorian era finished 111 years ago (when "she" died) so we understand what he means when he says closing these crossings is a slow process... As many as 500 are considered a real danger and "should" be closed. "Should" there even be one left after all this time? [Workers' Platform, King's Cross 24/2/15]

**• Twit for twats**

Only managers can think this way: while they cut useful jobs on gates, ticket offices, maintenance and on board trains, they hire Twitter-spies! Okay, so we can play their game too. If we have even one more case of an investigation based on a twitter-accusation, we can all take photos of managers and put them all over Twitter! That'd give them some work to do! [Workers' Platform, King's Cross 10/2/15]

**BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)****• It didn't work!**

It seems that the cost overrun of the botched launch of the new models caused BMW to put pressure on managers to claw money back - by introducing early demanning, at least in the Paint Shop and other areas. However this led to a sharp rise in rejects. So what was meant to save money was leading to even more overtime and cost overruns! So now the lines have been remanned. Question is: will the boss now be gunning for managerial scalps to save face? [Workers' Fight bulletin, BMW Mini Oxford 25/2/15]

**• Gi can't help themselves!**

Even where it has paid out to settle claims for withheld back-pay, the temps agency, Gi, has been less than open-handed. To book off a 3-shift week on earlies, we had to book 4 days holiday. But when we claimed the holiday pay, Gi withheld the fourth day's pay as a "zero day". The back-pay settlements haven't corrected this, though it goes to the heart of the "equal pay" provisions which the ET found Gi had breached. Time for another, collective challenge? [Workers' Fight bulletin, BMW Mini Oxford 25/2/15]

**• They're being frozen out!**

One worthy cause for diverting BMW's profits, apart from into our hands, from where they came, could be the Pressed Steel sports and social club in Roman Way. It's not gone yet, but is on its last legs and due to close in 2016. Among the few remaining users, a bingo club (with plant connections) is looking for new accommodation after a recent meeting. Complaining of the cold, members were told the club can't afford to turn the heating on in the afternoons any more. Just think, though. This was a club where "past greats" like Acker Bilk and Humphrey Lyttleton used to play! (Well, some of us do remember who they were!!) [Workers' Fight bulletin, BMW Mini Oxford 25/2/15]

**• Can't decamp down the road**

In fact, until a couple of years ago there used to be two social clubs, Morris's in Crescent Road and Pressed Steel - both with massive facilities - connected to the factory. That is, until Morris Motors went bust, thanks to corrupt management, and its site was sold for a song to the current free school. One retired branch member noticed its bowling green being dug up last



week... [Workers' Fight bulletin, BMW Mini Oxford 25/2/15]

**• Who's being indiscreet?**

Yet again BMW are worried about "indiscretions" being committed by employees on Facebook. A recent communication from the company to workers on the shopfloor contained veiled threats of getting the sack for discrediting BMW on social media. Not surprisingly BMW doesn't "spell it out". But it seems they are frightened that it might come to light how they (discreetly!) encourage a culture of bullying in here. Or that agency workers who dare to complain are likely to get the sack. We suggest BMW officials take a look at Twitter too, while they're about it... [Workers' Fight bulletin, BMW Mini Oxford 25/2/15]

**Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**



**Working together should mean same status**

Royal Mail said it is prepared to sell its 51% stake in Romec - the subcontractor that provides RM with cleaning and engineering services - to service provider company Cofely, which will then become Romec's sole shareholder. Said RM: "there is a need for a new contract with a revised specification of the services [Romec] provides to ensure the best service and value for money."

created Romec (Royal Mail Engineering and Construction) in 1989, to provide "dedicated facilities and engineering related services to the Royal Mail Group." But this was just the first step towards the part-sell-off of Romec, which eventually happened in 2000. This allowed RM to deprive part of its engineering workforce and its cleaners of their previous terms and conditions.

Ironically, RM itself artificially

Now, RM wants to drop Romec altogether. Behind its "best value for

money" talk, however, it is just preparing to get Cofely to do its dirty work by screwing more out of a smaller workforce. For Romec workers, however, the only acceptable "value for work" is to be on equal terms with their RM workmates. ☐

**• Clueless**

How much are letter volumes down? Moya uses this as the excuse to force cuts on us. But we don't know how the hell they can tell, given how letters are counted in this place! It's a fix! They're scanned randomly, at any stage of the journey - and a lorry ¼ full can be counted as full or vice versa. So how can these scans be accurate? Volumes probably have gone down. But they wouldn't even know how to measure it. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 24/2/15]

**• Half-cocked**

Apparently none of the HMP wardens has any kids, because the half-term wasn't

anticipated and we were short of hands again... Yup, sent all over the shop to work, which made the unsynchronised arrival of mail to sort (now it always comes higgledy-piggledy) an even worse pain in the butt... [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 24/2/15]

**• Expensive junk**

From Royalmailchat.co.uk - we see John Lewis sent junk adverts in mistakenly unfranked envelopes to its customers, who were well un-pleased to be charged £1.53 to collect them.

Should we give them the address of Mr Junk Mail Gibson, the CWU's own unlovable Del Boy, responsible for signing the junk deal with RM? (BTW it seems he's also officiating over RM's potential Romec

share sale. Bad!). [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 24/2/15]

**• Patting their own backs**

RM bosses were boasting about the latest "trading figures". But what are they "trading"? Anyway, we hear they're proud of steering the privatised (but still "Her Majesty's") Ship into the choppy seas of the UK parcel market; proud of how they delivered 4% more parcels this Xmas; and proud of how they're doing better than competitors, etc, etc... So why are they talking about job cuts? Well, the same old excuse: competition. But who said WE are in competition with our mates in Yodel, Whistl, DPD...?! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 10/2/15]

**Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**



**• Two-tier out!!**

Well, well, well! We see that in the US, Ford has decided to raise the pay of 300-500 second tier workers at its F-150 truck plant in Detroit to the same as first tier workers - from £12.55/hr to £18.41/hr! Except that this won't apply to the 1,550 new recruits it's taking on. Not yet. But their union (UAW) has now seen the light! Having signed up to this discrimination in 2007, it now says it wants to end two-tier pay in the new contract this year! So, they've rediscovered the principle of "equal pay for equal work"?! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 4/3/15]

**• ... and two faces, in!**

Another quotable quote from the top boss of Fiat Chrysler, Sergio Marchionne, on this same issue, heard at the Detroit Motor Show: "There can't be two classes for people who do the same work. It's impossible. It's almost offensive." He's offensive too, on other worker-screwing techniques, but on this we can agree. Ford offends us. But so do the union officials from UAW and Unite who signed up to 2nd tier there, and here, in the first place. We, on the shopfloor, never agreed. Let's tear up this agreement. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 4/3/15]

**• Let's ask Dora!**

Yes, but since we've no confidence in the union officials (BTW our US workmates don't trust theirs' either), we'll need to act on our own behalf on this matter. It's not difficult to figure out how. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 4/3/15]

**• 200/120**

At least Ford is offering us our health checks and we can see how high our blood pressure is shooting up, thanks to the speed-ups. But there's a problem: the nurses and medical department are cut to shreds and so if the nurse is called away, then there's no-one to do the check.

Can you believe it that on lates and nights there's only one nurse? (And still nobody to drive an ambulance!) [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 17/2/15]

**• Fish for breakfast?**

It seems the bosses actually got up early 2 weeks ago to host a breakfast meeting of the local Chamber of Commerce at Barking's Vue Cinema. Top boss Mark Ovendon was pushing diesel to them before coming here to push us. We hope the boys from JWC\* Pty., Ltd., had a good meal. (\*The union committee) [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 17/2/15]

**• Crash this computer**

Anyone out there with good hacking skills? Seems that's what's going to be needed in the Lion's Den. Every time there's a hitch or breakdown the "computer" increases the line speed to "catch up". It's too fast, and we need to slow it down. No point in asking the robo-foreman - we need to go straight to his "boss", Mr Microchip... [Workers' Fight 4/3/15]

**• Again: add more workers!!**

Why is the Puma mini-shift not manned- and womanned-up to a full shift before the word "overtime" is even spoken? Yes, we might go on a lot about the "old days", but then, overtime would have been refused - including by the union officials - on the principle that there should be enough workers doing "normal shifts" before hours are increased for anyone! Besides, it would also prevent the inevitable arguments which follow week-end overtime allocations - because it's never, ever, seen as "fair"... [Workers' Fight 4/3/15]

## Greece

The conditions imposed on the new Syriza government by the main European powers and the international financial institutions, in the 25th February agreement, left prime minister Alexis Tsipras with little room for manoeuvre - at least if he is to comply with them.

Meanwhile, nevertheless, Tsipras has begun to implement some of the measures which were included in his election manifesto. In particu-

## What way forward for the working class?

payments still to come will only be used to repay the country's debts to the international institutions, the question is, where can these funds be found? Especially as the same EU governments which are putting so much pressure on Greece to repay its debt, did absolutely nothing to stop an estimated £15 billion worth of bank deposits belonging to Greek and European capitalists from scrambling out of the country (some

companies - by the banks in particular - were to organise themselves in order to control the accounts of their employers, they would easily find out what profits they make, where they put their money and how to make them pay their taxes.

Of course, Tsipras did not call on the Greek working class to carry out such a radical infringement on the capitalists' privileges - nor could he be expected to. But if the Greek working class is to start regaining the ground lost, it will have to ensure that the capitalist class sees its collective strength as a threat to its profits. And, to this end, regardless of any illusions they may have in what Tsipras can or cannot deliver, Greek workers need to start organising themselves, to defend their immediate interests against their own bosses. □



The yacht Alexander, owned by the billionaire Latsis family

lar, more details have been disclosed about his emergency plan to deal with the "humanitarian crisis" facing the country.

Among the measures announced: 300,000 among the poorest households will receive free healthcare together with food stamps to meet their immediate needs; 150,000 households, which have lost access to electricity because they could not afford the bills, will be reconnected and provided with free electricity until the end of the year; 30,000 households will receive a £100 monthly allowance to help them pay their rents.

To implement these measures and many others which were included in its election manifesto, Tsipras will need funds. But since the bailout

are probably sitting in the vaults of the City's delighted banks, by now!).

For the time being, the Syriza government is targeting the estimated £55 billion backlog of tax arrears owed by the Greek wealthy and the companies operating in the country. But according to a note written by Tsipras leaked to the *Financial Times*, the tax administration would probably only manage to recover little more than 10% of this amount, due to being demoralised and understaffed. Hence the idea, massively ridiculed by the media here, to mobilise the help of "non-professional" tax inspectors, in order to catch the offenders.

Whether anything will come of this remains to be seen. But if the workers employed by the big

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