



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

Brexit overbidding, A THREAT TO THE WORKING CLASS

There was not a chance in hell that the Tory Party conference would rally behind Theresa May - and it didn't. It was likely to be used as a platform by the party's warring factions - and indeed, it was.

Despite repeated calls for unity behind May, most of the conference did not even take place in the official hall, which was apparently half-empty a lot of the time. No, it took place in a bewildering array of fringe meetings addressed by the many contenders to May's mantle.

Some have already crossed the Rubicon by resigning from government, others are still in government, supporting May like the rope supports the hanged man. But either way, the last thing they want for now is to jump into May's shoes (not yet!) and thus risk facing the discredit attached to presiding over Brexit.

For now, they're just positioning themselves for a post-Brexit leadership contest. As to the "policies" they claim to defend against May, whether it is a "no-deal" Brexit, a "Canada-style deal" or whatever else, it's just overbidding, with no relevance whatsoever to the real world.

May dances to the Brexiteers' tune

And yet it is this meaningless overbidding which, for years, has been driving politics. It first produced the Brexit referendum itself and now it is shaping the Brexit saga.

But at what cost? More and more concessions to the party's right-wing factions! The "Chequers' deal" itself was a concession to the hard-Brexiteers' overbidding, even if it was not enough for the likes of Boris Johnson. Not only did it enshrine the break-up of vital links woven over decades with



the Continent, but it added ridiculous demands which the EU could not possibly agree to.

May's championing of the "Chequers' deal" at the EU Salzburg summit was, therefore, just posturing to keep the Tory right on her side, but knowing that she would get nowhere. And so was her vengeful speech on the way back from Salzburg.

Then, in the run-up to her party's conference, she made another concession to the Tory right. Not only did she refuse to end her "hostile environment" against migrant workers after the Windrush scandal, but she outlined a new immigration policy which, if implemented, will deprive millions of their rights and put them at the mercy of their employers.

Workers won't pay for their Brexit

Of course, right from the beginning of the Brexit saga, the working class has always been a legitimate target for its promoters - if only by driving a wedge

between British and EU workers and between EU and non-EU workers. But it's becoming even clearer now.

For instance, May's Brexit minister, Dominic Raab was already known for proposing to scrap all EU regulations on workers' rights. But at a Tory party conference fringe meeting, he came up with a proposal of cutting the rate of corporation tax to 10%. At other fringe meetings, hard Brexiteers advocated more tax cuts for the wealthy. Meanwhile, from the conference platform, Hammond was sticking to his welfare cuts - this, despite the fact that poverty is officially on the rise!

Brexit means that the rich stand to get richer on the backs of the working class. But it will also increase the competition between British and European bosses. It won't take long before these politicians tell workers that they must make themselves "competitive". While companies will pay less tax, workers will be expected to work more for less! □

Crisis watch

On 15th September 2008, the fourth largest US investment bank, Lehman Brothers, filed for bankruptcy. This marked the official beginning of the present crisis - the longest that the capitalist world market has ever seen. But, contrary to what some still claim today, this crash did not come out of the blue.

The financial system had been piling up astronomic debts for a long time. The size of the world's debt mountain had increased more than 4 times faster than its production over the previous decade. The capitalist system was in a state of simmering crisis: more and more funds were competing for profits, but their capitalist owners no longer trusted their system enough to invest their money in production for any length of time.

A large part of this debt was made of mortgages which were unrecoverable. Indeed, in their frantic competition for business, the banks had been flogging so-called "sub-prime" mortgages to borrowers who could not possibly repay them. To fund this lending frenzy, the

Ten years after the Lehman Brothers collapse

banks had also managed to lure investors into lending their own money, by promising them guaranteed high returns.

However, all this was based on a real estate bubble which was bound to burst one day or another. The first cracks appeared in March 2007, when several real-estate investment funds went belly-up in the US. Then, over the following year, the real estate debt market went

down and down - until September 2008, when Lehman Brothers went bust. Cash dried up across the banking system. The banks which remained afloat were no longer prepared or able to lend. Bank lending - the bloodstream of the capitalist market - froze. A frantic oversupply of capital competing for profits had finally brought the system to a standstill! □

• When Britain "led the world"... into the abyss

It is often said that the 2008 crash was "made in the USA". But was it? In fact only in the sense that, once the crash had engulfed the US financial system - by far the world's largest - it immediately spread to the rest of the world. But, in fact, the world's first bank to go bust in this crisis, was not American, it was British: Northern Rock turned to

the Bank of England for help on 12th September 2007, causing a wave of panic among depositors which forced the bank to close down.

In fact, by 2007, the rich countries were littered with speculative real estate bubbles, just like the US. Britain's housing bubble was, by far, the most inflated in Europe. And it was only logical that it

should be among the first to burst.

But the British banks' criminal role in the financial crisis extended far beyond Britain's borders. In particular, the largest US "sub-prime" lender was not an American bank, as one might expect, but a British one - namely, HSBC, thanks to its acquisition of US lender Household International for £9bn, in 2003!

• The banks' crystal ball

Today, the world's mountain of debts is higher than before 2008. The oversupply of parasitical funds competing for a quick buck is also larger, thanks to the cheap money splashed out by the rich countries' central banks, under the pretext of bailing out the financial system.

As a result, the emerging countries have been flooded with speculative money, which have pumped up huge

real estate bubbles. Meanwhile, in the rich countries, the big companies' indebtedness has reached stratospheric levels, after massively borrowing in order to boost their share prices and shareholders' dividends.

So, it is not a question of "if", but a question of "when", the next financial crash will happen. This is so obvious that a recent report by US bank JP Morgan even gives a date - 2020! But,

in fact, this report is primarily aimed at reassuring investors and convincing them that it won't be as bad as the last one and that, therefore, they should not panic and should carry on speculating, using the services of their favourite bank! As if anyone, let alone the banks themselves, could credibly predict the future irrational behaviour of this chaotic capitalist system!

Trump's dangerous game

Trump's latest round of tariffs (10% on £153bn worth of China's annual exports to the US) came into force in September - at least, on paper. Indeed, many US multinationals, including General Electric, Apple and other electronics giants, whose profits are heavily dependent on Chinese-made components, filed for exemptions. So, no-one knows to what extent these tariffs are actually being enforced and Trump isn't in the habit of showing his hand in his endless game of liar's poker!

Domestic politicking was the main factor behind the timing of these measures. In the run-up to the November mid-term elections, Trump had to convince voters that he was delivering on his pledge to "put America First" and "bring US jobs back". Although,

whether this will really happen is another question: by pushing prices up, these tariffs can only shrink domestic consumption and provide US bosses with another pretext to cut even more jobs!

Beyond this, though, Trump also aims at reasserting US capital's dominant position over the world. The fact that US multinationals were allowed to squeeze massive profits out of the sweat of the Chinese working class has been a bounty for shareholders. But this does not mean that Chinese capitalists should feel entitled to be treated as equal partners. Trump is reminding them that they are subordinates and that only US imperialism can set the rules.

However, this is all taking place against the backdrop of an on-going world crisis. It may be true that even if the tariffs ordered by Trump against China (and the EU) were

fully enforced, this would still only affect a small part of world trade. But, despite this, it is estimated that the impact of these measures on the richest countries' production could be comparable to what happened in 2008-2009 - and significantly worse in countries which are either poorer or smaller. And this is without taking into account the risk of a panic. Indeed, the capitalists are so fearful of the chaotic operation of their own system, that such a drop in production may trigger a massive flight of capital at any time, with totally unpredictable consequences.

The international working class cannot afford the imperialist leaders' posturing - whether it be Trump's protectionism or May's Brexit. In fact, it cannot afford to allow this rotten capitalist system to carry on messing up society either!

An NHS "under water"

The NHS is not getting any better. Half-a-million patients in England wait longer than the 18-week limit for a specialist appointment or operation and many wait over a year. One in 7 major ops are still cancelled on the actual day of surgery. The winter crisis, when 25,475 operations were cancelled in the first 3 months of the year, just flowed straight into a summer crisis - the worst on record. In July, only 78.2% of cancer patients referred urgently for treatment were able to start it within 9 weeks.

• A&E: phone before you expire

You really couldn't make it up: now patients with a "life-threatening emergency" may have to make an appointment to be seen in an emergency department? Yes, this is the latest "measure" which NHS England is proposing in its next 10-year plan, so that its delays in A&E - beyond the 4-hour waiting target - don't look so bad. Indeed since severely ill patients can wait 12 hours to be seen, a 4-hours wait is considered "good"!

This new appointment system would be borrowed from Denmark, where it sounds highly *unsuccessful*! Patients phone ahead before going to A&E and book an appointment so as to be seen within 4 hours. In the meantime, what? They bleed to death?

• Employment statistics can't hide reality

The government keeps boasting about its record employment figures. And this September's Office for National Statistics report claims public sector employment is actually growing - led by the NHS - with 34,000 more workers than last year. What they don't say is that nationally, the NHS remains short of almost 200,000 workers and that there's such a shortage of admin staff to process applications that applicants are being kept waiting for months on end before they even see the inside of a hospital.

But even the government's own official figure-masseur cannot hide the truth behind the "damn lies". It says 5.34m workers in total are employed in the public sector - and if the shift of housing association employees into the private sector is excluded, this is "up". However, dig into the figures and you find that since 2009, when public sector employment "peaked" at 6.4m, over one million public service jobs have been

The lack of beds and staff shortages continue, exacerbated by the flight of EU NHS staff back to the Continent and immigration controls preventing foreign professionals from taking up posts. The supposed increase in NHS staff shown by the latest government statistics is evident nowhere at all. One in 10 vacancies remain unfilled (11,576 vacancies for doctors and 41,722 for nurses in English trusts).

With winter arriving soon, GP surgeries are pushing the new flu vaccine like

What happened in practice is that often they couldn't get through on phone lines and if they did, serious injuries and illnesses were misdiagnosed because the assessor had no contact with them.

By definition, patients coming to A&E need urgent attention. This idea of appointment-pre-booking is a symptom of a sick service in need of A&E itself.

• Why is life expectancy stalling?

Britain's life expectancy, especially for women, whose life expectancy hasn't increased since 2011, is lower than many "comparator" countries. According to the Office for National Statistics, a girl born

lost. Local authority employment is at an all-time low of 2m. Compare this with the "record" 27.06 million people working in the private sector, 383,000 more than in 2017 and 83.5% of all employment! What public service loses, private profit gains! In England alone, around 600,000 jobs have disappeared (many contracted out) from local government since 2009. And this goes hand-in-hand with casualisation and the infamous zero-hours contract, which, in turn, goes hand-in-hand with the growing poverty of the working class.

• British prisons, way beyond reform

Prison officers, who aren't allowed to strike, nevertheless resorted to protest action outside prisons on 14 September, over the ever-increasing overcrowding, violence and the danger to both themselves and the prisoners "in their care", as their Prison Officers Association (they aren't allowed a trade union, either) puts it. But it's only the violence and drug-taking (never mind the cause of

NHS/Public sector

never before, hoping against hope that it will help! If only it was as simple as that. ☐



between 2015 and 2017 will live until she is 82.9 years old, and a boy until he is 79.2 years, which is no change on the figures for 2014-16.

However, in Scotland and Wales, life expectancy has fallen by around six weeks. This has been linked to many factors including austerity, and even excessively cold winters. But with widening social inequalities, and lower healthcare expenditure and resources it is no surprise that Britain's life expectancy is not improving. Indeed, women born in the poorest areas of the country are likely to live as many as 20 fewer years than women born in the richest areas. The experts state that "we need to know why". But isn't it obvious?

both) that interests the media and indeed prisons minister Rory Stewart.

So when the protest was called off the same day, Stewart met the POA to propose the use of "rigid bar handcuffs" for violent prisoners, photocopying of mail, teams to search cells, "better" isolation of difficult prisoners and protective gear for officers.

Forget about the drastic overcrowding, cuts in staffing and disgusting state of British prisons, many now in private, profit-seeking hands. Nothing has changed in almost 30 years, since the damning 1990 Woolf report! Prisons are way over capacity - Wandsworth by 155%, Leeds by 156%, Durham by 157%, Bristol by 167%... Prisoners spend up to 23 hours locked in cells. Their suicide rate is 10 times higher than the general population. Yet 12,000 people (a rise of 250% since 2001), are serving "indeterminate" prison sentences in England and Wales, more than in the other 46 countries in the Council of Europe combined. An indictment, as if it was needed, of this rotten, punitive system.

New measure of poverty, but who and what is behind?

A registered charity called the Social Metrics Commission, which is linked to the Tory right, is advocating a new measure of poverty and wants the government to adopt it. The new measurement claims to take costs such as housing and childcare as well

as savings and shares into account.

The SMC set out to forge a consensus of experts "across the political spectrum". But two of its commissioners including its chair, Tory baroness Phliippa Stroud, were advisers to Iain Duncan Smith when he was drawing up Universal Credit, which viciously fuels the rise of poverty! Whatever their intentions, all of them know

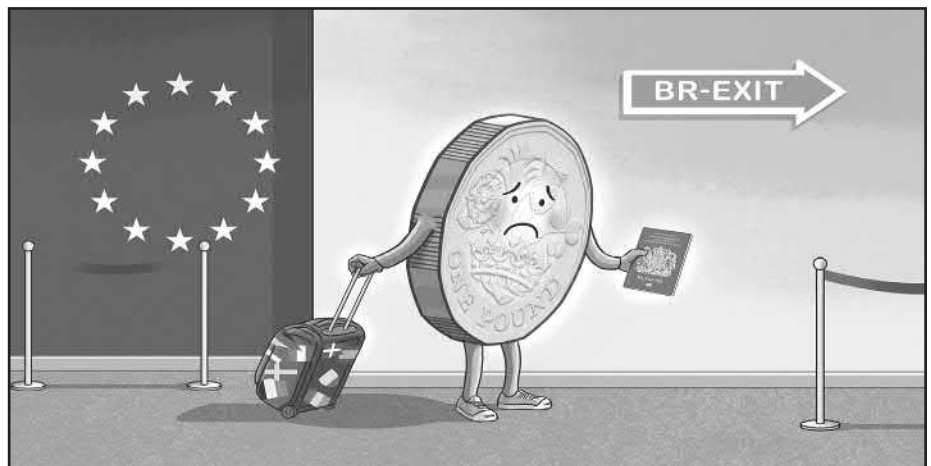
that if government uses their figures it will be to allocate priorities for future cuts. For instance, their report says 1.4m pensioners are in poverty, half a million fewer than in 2015. How long before ministers use that to justify ending the exemption of state old age pensions from the pay and benefit freeze?

Brexit watch**Deal or No Deal, Brexit is a threat!**

May keeps repeating that the government is preparing for a "no-deal" scenario and spelling out how bad it would be. Now, she's even appointed a "food supplies minister" - as if we were in the middle of a war! Of course, this is just a way for her to shift the blame for the Brexit mess onto the hard-Brexiteers, on the one hand, and, on the other, the EU governments, which she accuses of ganging up against Britain.

But, leaving aside this futile posturing, May and her ministers deliberately ignore the much wider threat that Brexit represents, not just for little Britain, but for a world economy which is deep in an on-going crisis!

The impact of Brexit on the British economy has already been highlighted by various bodies, including the International Monetary Fund, which warned that, "all likely Brexit outcomes will entail costs for the UK economy" and as a result, Britain "faces the highest



risk of recession" among the rich industrialised countries. But what will the destabilising effects of Brexit be on the European economy, the world's largest economic entity by far, and therefore, on the world economy as a whole? No

British Conservative politician ever dares to even ask the question. Simply because it would not only expose their own irresponsibility, but also the endless crisis of their capitalist system! □

• A no-deal referendum?

The so-called "People's Referendum" which would require legislation to be voted through in parliament is hardly a way out of the Brexit mess. Anyway, what's the point of a re-run of a no-choice referendum? To appease the anti-Brexit business lobby? Or the hard-line Brexiteers who think May is selling them out?

The reason for the first vote - Cameron's (failed) attempt to resolve Tory in-fighting, caused by MPs' fears of being eclipsed by the success of anti-immigrant Ukip - still overshadows today's constant squabbling and regroupings

among Tory ministers, former ministers and MPs. Except now, it's over Chequers (May and Hammond), versus a Canada-style free trade deal (Boris Johnson and David Davis) or just crashing out with no deal (Rees-Mogg and maybe Fox and others). All equally bad for workers. And that line-up will probably change again, before the crunch-summit at the end of October!

The truth is, that no politician nor any vote in this political system provides the working class with an alternative. Whatever negotiators arrive at in the end,

followed or not by another referendum, the precariousness of today's workers' conditions, due to rampant casualisation and the severe erosion of services, and health, and the lack of housing, which have nothing to do with Brexit or the EU - all these will be unchanged. Yet workers' situation must and *has* to change, and soon! But only a really determined, collective fight - against all these capitalist politicians - on the ground, can make that happen!

• May's other road to zero...

May's so-called "Birmingham Zero Emission Vehicle Summit", on 11 September, was meant to be an "international" event signifying Britain's "world-leading" role in low carbon emission/electric vehicle technology. Of course it wasn't. But anyway, the aim was elsewhere. She wanted to reassure the Brexit-anxious car industry bosses that there'd be generous state subsidies for them to develop their electric and hybrid prototypes, in the context of the (promised) end to petrol and diesel engines in vehicles by 2040. So far only £106m has

been announced, but no doubt there's more to come. Which is just what these bosses are aiming at - with their threats about cutting production or pulling out altogether, ever since the Brexit "uncertainty" began. JLR's already proposed a 3-day week at Castle Bromwich, Ford's implementing a 2/3-day week at Dagenham diesel engine plant, BMW's announced a 4-week closure from the day after Brexit at its Mini plant, in Oxford, and Toyota has warned of severe disruption of its production in Derby.

The industry's Bedfordshire Cenex

Low Carbon Vehicle 2018 conference - the definitive event - followed May's "summit", addressed, among others, by Graham Hoare of Ford Motor Company. May is, in fact, left struggling to appear the leader of anything, let alone the technology that she boasts about. Only 14 "governments" signed up to her puffed-up zero emissions "Birmingham Declaration" (which sets no dates) among them Barbados, Belarus and Malta, and the US state of Washington - all well known for their car production...

Labour, the party of capitalism

Labour, in a nutshell, is trying to prove that it, not the Tory Party, is the real "party of business". After slating "greed-is-good capitalism" and outlining his vague "green jobs alternative" (wasn't that in the 2010 Tory manifesto?) at party conference, Corbyn said reassuringly that "it's nothing for business to be afraid of". And of course it isn't.

After Corbyn's speech, the bosses'

daily, the Financial Times, said: "It offered a coherent analysis of the challenges facing the nation. It echoed the demands for radical change. It offered a vision for life beyond Brexit. The prescriptions may be populist and anti-business by nature - all broad soundbites, little substance - and major announcements were absent. But it succeeded in making his radicalism appear like the new normal." And the Economist's Bagehot column explained how Corbyn is really the "pillar of the establishment"

behind his left-wing rhetoric...

What's more, on Brexit, Labour's just as guilty of wanting to have its cake and eat it as Theresa May. It's not even challenging tighter immigration controls and thus points at foreign labour as the cause of workers' ills as if the cause isn't the bosses of all nationalities, but especially British ones. To this end, Corbyn chose Diane Abbott, the first black woman MP and of immigrant background, to strike the first blow of Labour's anti-immigrant policy. Nasty.

Medicines against borders

Health secretary Hancock joined the government's chorus against the possible side-effects of a no-deal Brexit, by asking drug companies to pile up six weeks of supplies. And yes, deal or no deal, Brexit will have an impact on the movement of medicines across borders.

So while big pharmaceutical companies like AstraZeneca pledge to increase their stocks, they cannot guarantee that they will be able to make their drugs available in the EU. Indeed, all drugs sold in the EU go through a checking process which is overseen by the European Medicines Authority (EMA). But with Brexit, not only is the EMA moving its headquarters from Canary Wharf to Amsterdam, but it will also apply more stringent checks on British-produced medicines until Britain develops its own independent, reliable system for quality checks!

• May with her begging-bowl in Africa

In her desperate quest to find a way of preventing Britain's economy from crashing post-Brexit, May made a great show of visiting the African continent last month and even did little dances to please her audiences. Meeting politicians in South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria, she attempted to win them over to trade with the old imperial masters - as if they don't do that already. Of course, the fact that politicians like her are now talking about



In other words, Brexit will make it harder to export medicines from Britain to the EU. And of course, EU patients will be first to suffer from this! What better

Brexit watch

illustration is there of the fact that, today, national borders are not just obsolete and irrational, but actually dangerous for mankind? ☐

saving Britain's future by relying on more trade with the world's poorest continent reveals the weakness of their own position.

Moreover, the politicians of African countries nowadays are not so interested in a little island which has lost its economic might. They have more to gain by giving preference to other rich countries. In 2015, Africa's trade with Britain amounted to £28bn, compared to

£234bn with the EU as a whole, £144bn with China and £41bn with the US. In other words, Britain is still dancing at the very far end of the queue!

May's claim to build on Britain's "historical (but in fact she really means former colonial) relationship" with Africa is laughable! As for the rest, African politicians and businessmen are clear which side of their bread is buttered.

• MAC report: lies exposed!

In July 2017, the then Home secretary Amber Rudd commissioned a report from the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) on "the overall role of migration in the wider economy" - particularly the role of EU migrants. After months of being kept under wraps, this report was finally released by the government in September.

Against the official claim that EU migrants are a burden on the NHS, this report finds that "migrants contribute much more to the health service and the provision of social care in financial resources and through work, than they consume in services." In fact, EU migrants pay in £78,000 more, on average, than they take out in public services and benefits over the course of their stays in Britain! And the report further dismantles the usual xenophobic lies, by showing that EU workers have little impact on British workers' wages, have no negative impact on schools and are not linked to

increasing crime!

In and of themselves, such findings are not new. But they have never stopped politicians from indulging in xenophobic rants against migrant workers. And this MAC report won't either, since it manages to make recommendations which totally contradict its own evidence. For instance, it argues for a cut in the numbers of non-skilled workers from Eastern Europe, claiming that there is "some evidence" showing that they have a "small negative effect"! What negative effect and where is the evidence? The MAC report does not say. But what's glaringly obvious is that its authors have chosen, willingly or not, to align themselves on May's "hostile environment" policies!

• Children unwelcome here

Anybody who needs to apply for British citizenship needs to prove to the Home Office that they are of "good character". This "good character" test was

introduced in 2006 by the Home Office and, unbelievably, is applicable to children as young as 10 years old.

So if a parent or a carer wants to register a child born here, they will have to pass this ill-defined "character" test, through a series of questions. Petty theft, traffic fines, debts or simple omissions... are some of the reasons that can make an adult fail the test. And if parents are not considered of "good character" their children can be denied citizenship too!

Since this test was introduced in 2006, as many as 400 children have been denied British citizenship. And as carers and lawyers have reported, it has mainly affected children of poor background, often in care or with special needs.

This also means that teenagers who have committed any minor offence may be refused citizenship. But when it comes to 10-year olds the justification is that after all, 10 years is considered by British courts to be the age of criminal responsibility. Yes, barbaric courts!

Poverty swelled by the hard-working poor

More than 14 million people are poor in Britain, including 4.5 million children, about 400,000 more than three years ago. The report that made this estimate also found that more than half the poor, 58.6%, or 7.7m people, had been

in poverty for at least two of the previous three years. The causes it points to are no surprise. Poor families are likely to have at least one working age person disabled and/or out of work, or else are increasingly reliant on insecure work such as zero-hours jobs.

Yes, behind the government's boasts of more people than ever in work, is the

reality that being in work is less and less a way of getting out of poverty. Casualisation and underemployment through zero-hours or fake self-employment and a benefits regime that forces workers to accept these jobs or face punitive sanctions - such as the main causes of today's rising poverty!

King's Cross railway station (London)**The chaos of rail privatisation**

The Office of Rail and Road has finally published its 189-page report into the Summer train timetable chaos, as requested by the Department of Transport, after the embarrassment of delays and cancellations nationwide. The worst performers, by far, were Northern Trains and GTR, the monster private company covering lines across the whole of the South East and part of East Midlands. On Northern, up to 310 scheduled trains per weekday did not run and on the GTR network it was at least 470.

The ORR concludes that all of the parties involved, that is, Network Rail, the train operators, the Department of Transport and themselves, the ORR, were collectively

to blame for this giant mess-up. Network Rail apparently didn't anticipate the delays in infrastructure upgrades. The train operators didn't recruit enough train crews, nor give enough time to train them. In fact, in 2016 GTR already knew that it wouldn't have enough drivers, but did nothing about it. And then there was the reluctance (or inability) to inform passengers about cancellations and delays until the very last minute, and the lack of co-operation between Network Rail and the Train Operating Companies... the list goes on.

But would the ORR draw the obvious conclusion? That is, that the root problem is the profit motive, leading to penny-pinching,



corner-cutting, and short-termism thanks to railway privatisation based on fragmentation of the railway - in short, capitalist profits in an industry which requires long term planning and investment.

Yes, only the collective ownership of the railways, under the control of its workers and commuters, could prevent this kind of chaos - but this will also require a different kind of profit-free, social organisation... ☐

• To the scouts' boot camp

What happens when the Great British Railways and the Great British Weather meet each other? Yes, last Wednesday, LNER trains were delayed by 5-6+ hrs! For some of us, this was the worst delay ever. And to add insult to injury, the responsible managers didn't even bother to contact the crews involved. We had to contact them.

Are managers incapable of understanding a weather forecast? The winds were predicted well in advance. So why weren't they prepared? [Workers' Platform King's X 26/09/18]

• So, an apple it is...

And the on-board situation is getting worse... Already we've been having to do a full catering service with fewer CSAs and the chef working with only one oven. Now, we don't have any cookware!! There is no way we can save their bacon if they can't even provide pots and pans. We can only assume that managers took seriously our (unserious) idea last week of only offering the passengers an apple!! [Workers' Platform King's X 26/09/18]

• Talk to us, instead

That was entertaining to watch! GN managers came down from their offices for yet another "meet the manager day" urging passengers to "come and talk". Yes,

they rightly feel that passengers deserve answers about all the delays. But they were unable to explain whose fault this whole mess was. Well, what if passengers "come and talk to us" at the GN gates and we point them in the right direction!? [Workers' Platform King's X 26/09/18]

• When delays are good

Of course, we are more than happy to welcome our new ISS workmates. But ISS needed a kick in the backside from LNER to employ them in the first place - after things had gotten so bad that their trains were being delayed. Ahhhh... so now we know what's needed to get managers to take on more workers... [Workers' Platform King's X 18/09/26]

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**• Lay-offs?**

We were a bit shocked to get that letter about 3 days of lay-offs for all shifts on Tiger Assy next week - entitled "Market Driven Volume Reduction". And especially since it came after Ford had just said it wanted 1200 engines a day and was changing the shifts round to achieve this!!

Well, as the Scots poet Robbie Burns wrote: "The best laid schemes o' mice an' men / Gang aft a-gley." In other words, go belly-up! Of course, Ford's plans are never "best-laid". They make it up as they go along, without having a clue what they're doing. [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 19/09/18]

• Looking after shareholders

Going back to the Tiger "reduction". We wonder what next? Trump's tariffs into the US will affect Ford there, just as EU tariffs hitting supply chains, due

to Brexit, will affect Ford here... But as we've said before, what Ford loses on the swings it gains on the roundabouts. The weaker £ gives it a competitive edge on selling diesel engines - which are not so demonised in markets elsewhere. What's more, Ford had 4.1% more US sales (its biggest market) this year in August compared to 2017. So while it's cutting our incomes and jobs, shareholders' dividends are just fine, thank-you very much! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 19/09/18]

• What are they after?

Some of us think that whenever Ford does something like announce down days or lay-offs or job cuts that what it really wants is to get a hand-out from the government. And for sure, Ford wants the government to compensate for any Brexit-related losses. That's just keeping up with the BMWs, JLRs, and Nissans, etc., of this little world! [Workers' Fight



bulletin Ford Dagenham 19/09/18]

• Kicking us when we're down

The crucial issue for LLL (logistics subcontractor) and other workers under similar contracts is the absence of Occupational Sick Pay. This has to change. If you get hurt or get sick, suddenly you're on just £92.05 a week Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) and only for up to 28 wks! We need full sick pay now! In other words, we need to kick LLL right back! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 19/09/18]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**From golden hello to Long goodbye**

Last month, Peter Long resigned from his £300,000/yr job as chairman of Royal Mail. This follows a "shareholder rebellion" against which Long had defended an £8.5m pay package awarded to RM's new CEO, Rico Back.

No wonder Long defended this package. Back in 2014, he was himself awarded a £13.3m package as CEO of TUI Travel, one of the world's largest travel operators! Since then, he has been collecting boardroom positions at RM (chairman since

2015), Countrywide (Britain's biggest estate agency, chairman since 2016) and at TUI! All combined, Long has been building up a cosy "basic" of £850,000/yr! Eventually, RM's shareholders decided that Peter Long and Rico Back were showing far too much interest in their own pay packages and not enough in the "shareholder value" that they were supposed to look after.

In any case, both shareholders and boardroom members definitely live on another planet, where



it is normal to pocket salaries that are tens or even hundreds of times larger than those of RM workers! And yes, from the point of view of the 140,000 postal workers who are supposed to have their pensions and conditions cut, so that these fat cats can get even fatter, there is definitely something rotten in RM's Kingdom of Capital! ☐

• A threat...

Re the union notice over compensation for us having to work on a building site (initially for W1+WC). They say managers don't want to pay up and since the construction for the MP development will carry on at least another 4-5 years that we all need "recognition" for carrying on "so professionally" in the face of such "disruption/inconvenience". And if managers don't pay up they won't cooperate with "the revisions/saving plans"... [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 12/09/18]

• ...and they should add...

OK, we'd hardly refuse extra on our pay. But surely the main issue is that

health and safety is biting the dust here? Inhaling dirt damages our eyes, noses, sinuses and lungs, and what about the constant noise pollution? Then there's the burden on HGV and other drivers due to the site contraction. Managers knew all of this was going to happen, but made no alternative arrangements at all. And that should be enough for us to be in dispute with them. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 12/09/18]

• ...plus this...

As for the union offering to refuse the "revisions/saving plans", but only if managers don't pay up, shouldn't we be refusing these anyway, regardless of the filthy and dangerous work environment

they've wilfully "provided"? No, the CWU is being far too nice and lenient on these delinquent bosses who never face their responsibilities towards us. But the proposals of cuts and the latest turn of the RM screw thanks to the rotten new agreement - we have to refuse, no matter what! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 12/09/18]

• Wasted space!

BTW, there are enough local vacated RM premises, given all the closures, for HMP bosses to find us a clean, healthy and safe alternative workplace - and what about that empty Fire Station across the road?! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 12/09/18]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**• BMW: just freeloaders**

Re BMW's stated 'reason' for shutting for 4 weeks in April, to mitigate "any supply chain interruptions" in case of a no-deal Brexit, we don't buy it. Obviously, besides the politics, it's yet another pretext to pump the government for subsidies. And maybe a chance to introduce the new electric Mini lines (also duly subsidised by May) earlier, rather than later? [Workers' fight BMW Oxford Mini 26/09/18]

• Payrise needed across the whole plant

We hear it's pay deal time for BMW permanents. We know that's usually a stitch-up. But what about the pay of all the rest of us? In fact, there must be dozens of different pay-rates amongst us with all the varied "gig" contracts and non-contracts and cowboy contractors operating here. So maybe it should be pay-deal time for the whole plant. And time to fight together for equal pay for equal work... [Workers' fight BMW Oxford Mini 12/09/18]

• "I predict a riot"

Of course all this negotiating normally gets done behind our backs. Why don't we get asked for our opinions? Probably because they'd be totally unable to handle our response... [Workers' fight BMW Oxford Mini 12/09/18]

• Said the joker to the thief

We've also heard that shift changes will be tied to the BMW pay offer, like, for instance, permanent Saturdays... Hmm. No way to that!

And what other blackmail will they come up with this year? The location of the electric mini production is already a standing joke, so that won't work! There's Brexit of course... Because they're definitely figuring out ways to make us pay... [Workers' fight BMW Oxford Mini 12/09/18]

• Down with overtime!

Not only have we been dealing with compulsory overtime - even on Saturday! - now we are more and more blackmailed by the bosses and the managers to take overtime as a "guarantee to keep



our jobs"... We are not stupid, it's not by making the same amount of people work for longer that allows us to keep our jobs - nor our backs and legs! Quite the contrary. Overtime allows the bosses to cut jobs. The fact that the bosses have been allowed to make it compulsory in this plant is beyond belief! [Workers' fight BMW Oxford Mini 12/09/18]

• Autoscam

In the case of Autoscan (maybe the worst of all), we don't know in advance when we're meant to be working, as they don't bother to tell us. Since even permanent staff are on zero-hour contracts (!), we can turn up for work, just to be sent home! [Workers' fight BMW Oxford Mini 12/09/18]

Germany

On the night of 25th August in the eastern German town of Chemnitz, several men were injured in a street brawl. One was later to die of stab wounds. The far-right, which has long been present in this town was quick to take opportunity of this incident.

It appears that the police informed far-right leaders, that two of those involved in the brawl were young refugees (an Iraqi and a Syrian). They then proceeded to sow rumours and outright lies about what happened, calling for an anti-migrant demonstration. The irony is that the man who died was of mixed immigrant extraction, a German-Cuban, and if he hadn't died he might have been a victim of the far-right's race-hatred himself.

The Chemnitz racists decided to call all far-right organisations (including the Neo-Nazis) from all over Germany to gather in Chemnitz in an unprecedented demonstration of force - which they did, openly making Hitler salutes. An 8,000-strong violent

Chemnitz: racist thugs in action



Far-right thugs go on the rampage

protest expressing racist hatred and calling for the hunting down of all immigrants took over the streets of the town, rioting for 2 days and 3 nights. The right-wing political establishment appeared impotent against the racist thugs. But it later turned out that senior members of the state apparatus had actually encouraged and facilitated this demonstration of force.

Subsequently, there have been

counter-demonstrations against the Chemnitz far-right, as well as concerts against racism attended by many thousands more than the far-right can muster. But given this rising reactionary tide and the backdrop of increasing social degradation, it is urgent that the context is understood and that working class solidarity is put at the centre of the fight against racism in all its forms. □

Sweden

The Sweden Democrats - a far-right, anti-immigrant party - won 17.5% of the popular vote in the September general election - something which doesn't seem to fit in with the benevolent "social democratic model" that Sweden is supposed to be.

In fact, this far-right party made its first breakthrough in the 2014 general election, when it doubled its score to 12.9%, by capitalising on the discredit of the main parties. Indeed, in Sweden, just as in Britain, governments attacked jobs and welfare provisions, from the 1980s onwards. In Sweden, these

The far-right thrives on politicians' discredit

attacks were mostly carried out by governments led by Social-Democrats. So much so, that they lost the 2006 election to a right-wing coalition. This coalition responded to the 2008 crisis with brutal cuts. But when the Social-Democrats got back into office, in 2014, they just carried out the same austerity policies as their predecessors - also using the same anti-immigrant demagoguery which their predecessors had already borrowed from the far-right.

What happened in Sweden is not very different from what has happened in Britain. Here, the crisis, the discredit

of the main parties' pro-business policies and the legitimacy they had given to the scape-goating of immigrant workers, provided UKIP with an electoral springboard. In Sweden, the same factors boosted the scores of the Sweden Democrats. In fact, this is exactly the same process which has already allowed the worst enemies of the working class to raise their profile far too much for comfort in a number of European countries already, from Hungary to Greece, Austria and Italy. And this should be seen as a warning for the future here, in Britain, as well! □

Insulting crumbs for social housing

May's speech to a housing association conference last month was supposed to be a break with the Tory past, promising a new generation of social homes that people are "proud" to rent. Behind the rhetoric, though, is a paltry investment of £2bn in social housing for rent, over 10 years! It is expected to fund just

40,000 homes in total, a mere 4,000 a year when the shortfall is 1.2 million!

This is drip-feeding compared to government spending to promote home ownership for the better-off. Last year funding of the five-year Affordable Homes Programme, subsidising shared ownership schemes for housing association properties, was increased to £9.1bn. Help-to-Buy, the scheme of government loans for buyers of new homes, will have

swallowed £20bn in 8 years, by 2021. Never mind that some wealthy households used this cheap credit to buy second homes or that it fuelled house price inflation for new-builds.

As to building social housing on a scale that would even start addressing the housing crisis, this is not on the agenda, since, unlike Help-to-Buy, it wouldn't be profitable for lenders or developers!

In addition to this paper, we publish bulletins in several large workplaces in the South East, a journal, "Class Struggle" and a series of pamphlets on topical issues. If you wish to know more, contact Workers' Fight by e-mail, at contact@w-fight.org, or by postal mail at:

BM Workers' Fight - LONDON WC1N 3XX.