

WORKERS' fight



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

Behind the Brexit delusion, A CRISIS-RIDDEN PROFIT SYSTEM!

The Brexit saga has been in a state of suspended animation ever since May suffered that first bruising defeat in January. The 20-plus months she spent negotiating with her own warring party factions over her withdrawal deal were to no avail. So now she is digging her heels in. She claims that "further negotiations" are taking place with the EU to amend the "Irish backstop". Everyone knows this to be a lie, but never mind! At least it allows May to blame the EU for her own failures.

And now she seems to have decided to "run down the clock", dragging out parliamentary procedures until, sometime in March, MPs will be presented with two options: either endorse the withdrawal deal, or else take the blame for crashing out of the EU.

Ironically, this blackmail is all part of the great Brexit project, "allowing the British Parliament to regain its sovereignty" - but obviously not from the irresponsible, factional overbidding of self-serving British politicians!

May and... workers' rights

Before choosing to go down this road May did try to pull some tricks out of her hat, in an attempt to poach the votes of MPs across the House.

So some Labour MPs were promised exceptional funding for their constituencies. But whether this will make up for the loss of EU regional funding post-Brexit, is an open question.

May went through the motions of seeking Corbyn's support for her deal. Her aim was not, of course, to find a compromise with Labour, but to drive a wedge between Corbyn and his own Labour hard-Brexiters!

She went on a charm offensive to win over union leaders, by posing as the ultimate guarantor of workers' rights after



Brexit, including those introduced by the EU. Except that Parliament will be responsible for protecting workers' rights after Brexit. Which says it all! First, because if it wasn't for the EU's social chapter, workers here would have a lot fewer rights. And second, because if it wasn't for the cross-party pro-business bias of British politicians, things such as zero-hours contracts would be illegal here, as they are in most EU countries!

In any case, whether May's charm offensive succeeds in convincing Labour MPs or not, it won't cut any ice with the low-paid, over-worked workers subject to her "flexible labour market"!

The true face of the Brexit chaos

May's posturing is even less credible at a time when the economy is contracting. Of course, in this unpredictable capitalist economy, no-one can be sure that this contraction is only due to Brexit - and not to the on-going crisis, which makes the world economy unstable. But by unravelling the complex links created

between Britain and Europe over 4 decades, Brexit adds a disruptive effect. And no-one can say how far this will go, nor how severe the damage will be.

In any case, today's economic contraction is a better indicator of what the future has in store, than the hard-Brexiters' fairy tales about Britain's "bright future" outside of the EU!

The fact that business investment has been decreasing further each quarter, is, in and of itself, a warning. The bosses don't trust their own system - and so whatever form Brexit takes, they will use all the means at their disposal to boost their profits at the expense of the working class.

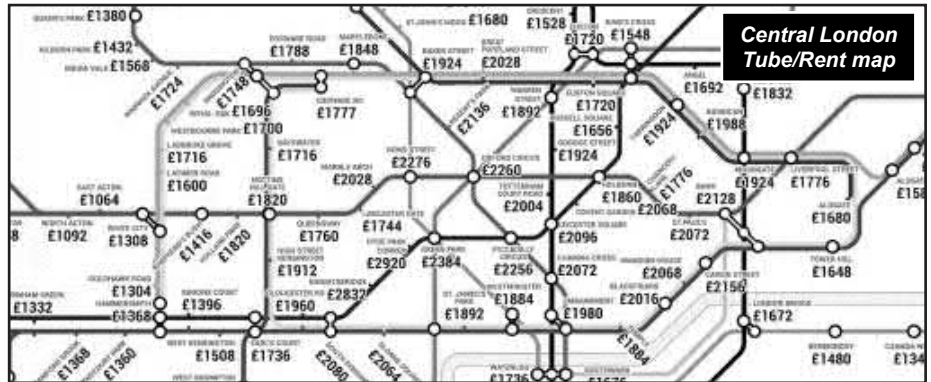
In fact, they have already started by attacking jobs and conditions in some industries, using Brexit as a pretext. This sets the scene for battles to come: these won't take place in the comfort of parliamentary institutions, but in the workplaces and in the streets. If workers are to defend their interests in the coming period, Brexit or not, they will need to use the weapon of class struggle! □

Social

Rent controls, or tinkering?

London Mayor Sadiq Khan wants to impose limits on the rents private landlords can charge in London. He campaigned on this basis for the Mayor's job in 2016, floating the idea of pegging rents to average local incomes. But that would still mean unaffordable rents for the low-paid. And anyway, as mayor, Khan does not have the statutory power to impose rent controls.

That said, would controlling rents provide an answer to today's crisis? In fact private landlords would respond by simply letting out fewer properties while failing to invest in new rentals or to repair existing ones. The only answer to high rents and the on-going, never-ending housing shortage has to be the building of new, good quality social housing on



a grand scale. Unsurprisingly, there are no plans for this. Only 11,000 council rented homes are meant to be "started" by 2022. This is a drop in the ocean - and much fewer than the already inadequate 30,000 a year built in London at the peak of

council-house-building in the 1970s.

There is no getting round it. The real problem under this capitalist system is the very idea that any profit at all should be made out of such a fundamental need as having a roof over one's head! ☐

• Prisons: a rotten expression of a rotten system

Scotland, England & Wales have the highest imprisonment rates in western Europe - 40% more in proportion to the population than France and 75% more than Germany. In total, over 91,000 people are incarcerated here, 77% more than in 1990!

It's not only that more people are sent down - but because sentences are so long. There are more "lifers" here - 8,000 - than in France, Germany and Italy combined! What's more, their average jail-term went up from 12.5 years in 2003 to

21.3 years in 2016. Nearly 2,600 prisoners don't even have a release date!

No wonder the prisons are overcrowded to bursting point. Nearly 20,700 prisoners are held in grossly overcrowded and understaffed accommodation - two in cells designed for one and locked up 22 hours a day. Deaths in prison including suicides have doubled in the last 10 years; rates of self harm are the highest ever recorded and there were 32,500 assaults last year, often

drug-related. Yet there has been a 26% cut in staff over the last 7 years.

All studies show that the number of crimes committed and the number of people in prison bear no relation to one another. The Prison Reform Trust is right when it says: "The state of our prisons is a fair measure of the state of our society". Yes, crime is a social disease of this sick society and its "remedy", if anything, makes this disease worse.

• Low wages are the rule

According to research done by the TUC, wages are worth a third less than in 2008, when the financial crisis hit. That's an average loss of £11,800 in real terms. And since this is calculated on the basis of average earnings it grossly understates the situation for the low paid, who are even worse off.

In poor working class areas like in the North West, the cumulative loss in real pay over the past 10 years is as much as £14,230. And in London, where the cost of living has skyrocketed, the average loss amounts to £20,390 - with the workers in

the borough of Redbridge being the worst hit!

The government might claim that wages are now growing at their fastest rate in a decade, based on close to "full" employment (their damn lies and statistics!), but since 2008, casual, zero-hours, precarious employment has become widespread across the economy. This is why 20% of the working age population is living under the poverty line and 1m of those in poverty are actually in work. With today's ever-rising cost of living, aggravated by Brexit, this can only get worse.



"Cheap" degrees, exorbitant tuition fees

This January the government approved legislation for two-year university degrees. This 2-year degree already exists in a few universities, but by this September, it could be introduced more widely - at a fee of £11,000/year. So, despite being promoted as 20% cheaper compared to the current 3-year degree (at £9,250/year) and as saving one year's maintenance costs it

still sets a precedent for a tuition fee increase. And indeed that is what has just been agreed by the government: that the £9,250 cap on annual tuition fees is now set at £11,000 for British students (overseas students already pay £17,000-38,000 per year!). So much for the government's claim that it wishes to reduce student debt!

Universities will apparently increase teaching to 45 weeks in each of the two years - as opposed to the current 30 weeks per year for "normal" degrees. This means

that 2-year degree students will still get 90 weeks of teaching altogether. But how many hours per week is so far unspecified, so it is possible that this could allow universities to economise, by reducing teaching hours and therefore saving on staff pay.

Anyway behind this new shortened degree course the aim is undoubtedly to cut costs and increase profits, now that universities have become commercial institutions - aided and abetted by government.

Davos fuelled by hot air

Ahead of the Davos Forum, a global risk report claimed that the failure to tackle climate change was the top danger facing the world economy. In fact Climate Change featured as one of the main items on the Davos agenda, with naturalist David Attenborough invited as star attraction. He pointed out that humanity had to act urgently, because so much damage is already done. The 5 years from 2014 to 2018 were the hottest on record, causing the extreme weather conditions that led to the melting of polar ice, devastating storms, floods and wildfires.

Taking this message to the heart

• **Brexiting to Switzerland?**

After May's defeat in the Commons over her Brexit deal, a quarter of the cabinet promptly fled the scene to attend the Davos World Economic Forum in Switzerland. Corbyn was right when he called this a "billionaires' jamboree". And that is exactly why May's ministers, including Chancellor Hammond, showed their faces. They were all there to wine and dine along with "(very) big

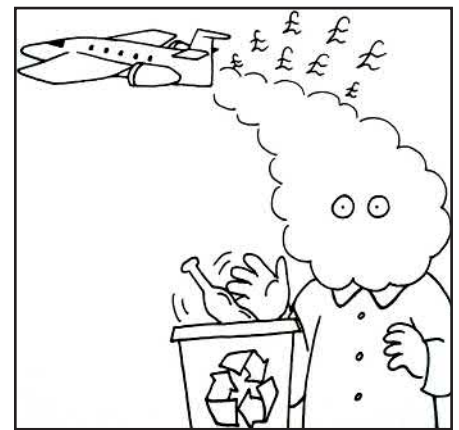
of the capitalist system, which puts profits before everything, including the well-being of planet earth, was perhaps a worthy effort. But quite useless, given the hypocrisy of the voracious capitalist beasts. The Air Charter Service recorded 1,500 private jet flights arriving in Davos - a record number this year! For each "VIP", up to 300kg of carbon dioxide was pumped out into the atmosphere every hour - 5 times more than the carbon emissions per passenger on a regular commercial flight!

It's been obvious for some time that this toxic profits-first system is neither capable of regulating itself

business", to try to promote their puny British wares to this international bosses' club. Yes, in the unlikely event that some of them might want to risk their capital in Britain...

Brexiters like Liam Fox obviously had something to prove, given their claim that there are trade deals to be done all over the shop, outside the EU! To this end, a banner reading "Free Trade is Great" (under the

Profit watch



nor of saving the planet. The only way to stop the destruction is for the plug to be pulled on it! ☐

Union Jack, of course...) was plastered onto the front of the Davos Belvedere hotel... As if the era of "free trade" had not ended in the 1880s! But of course that's the hallmark of the Brexiters - living in the past while trying to enforce Victorian working conditions on the rest of us. Even so, it was a foregone conclusion that they'd come back empty-handed.

• **So long and thanks for all the cash!**

In its decay, capitalism is 'developing' a 'new' industry: tearing down old (or unprofitable) offshore oil rigs. Shell, the Anglo-Dutch oil giant, reckons 470 rigs are due to be 'decommissioned' in the next 30 years, and that's just in the 'British section' of the North Sea. And, to 'help' the oil companies with their 'decommissioning', the British government is due to issue £24bn in tax relief!

Of course, the companies with rigs in the North Sea - like Shell, BP, or the American ConocoPhillips and Esso - are anything but cash-strapped! In fact, Shell boasted last month that it had paid its 'entire dividend in cash'. Its profits for 2018 alone rose to £16.5bn. As for BP, it doubled its profits to almost £10bn. Not hard to imagine how much these companies have made since drilling began in the 1960s.

As Shell itself points out, it's not just the decommissioning costs which are tax deductible, but also the cost of setting up the rig and even operating it! From beginning to end, the government has bent over backwards to boost these companies' profits. After all, this is governments' role under capitalism... until we get rid of the whole system.

• **Crossrail and HS2 fiasco**

In December, Terry Morgan chairman of Crossrail and HS2 resigned after both projects had sunk into trouble. Crossrail, the 73-mile railway line from Shenfield to Heathrow and Reading and serving central London, was supposed to cost £14.8bn and open its doors to commuters in December 2018. Instead, the final bill won't be less than £17.6bn and its revised delivery date of autumn 2019 is already ditched as "no longer viable".

As for the HS2 rail project, a 330 mile-long high-speed railway line linking London to Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds, it was supposed to cost £32.7bn. But while private contractors and landlords have already pocketed billions, the government has revised the HS2 budget to £56bn - although documents leaked last year, suggested it could reach £90bn!

The government argues that, since a competitive market can deliver "value for money" contracts such as these should be given to the private sector! Yes, despite its catastrophic record in delivering public projects, which now includes Crossrail and HS2! In reality, all this talk of "the wonders of the market" is just a cover for providing the capitalist class with opportunities to make profits - no matter the intolerable public cost!

Increasing parasitism of the bosses

By the first Friday of 2019, the bosses had already earned more in under one week, than the average annual wage of £29,574! Their salaries rose by 11% over the past year, while 30% of workers got an increase of 1% or less. So top executives now earn 133 times more than the average worker! In 1998, the ratio was 47. The salary of the average FTSE chief executive is now the same as the combined income of 386 workers on the minimum wage.

The collective wealth of the richest is even more mind-boggling. Dividends rose 4.1% to £32.3bn in the last reported quarter of 2018, breaking a record, according to the latest UK Dividend Monitor. In fact, the total 2018 dividends were almost £100 billion! Yes, absurd levels of wealth in the hands of the few, when the vast majority of the population is only just managing to make the ends meet and while many - one in 4 - are falling below the breadline!

Brexit

Dysfunctional political institutions for a dysfunctional social organisation

It was ironic that, having suffered the biggest government defeat in the Commons since the 1920s, May "defeated" a vote of no-confidence the very next day - 16th January. Since then, the on-going parliamentary debacle has exposed the fractious nature of the capitalists' political personnel, with hosts of warring, self-serving factions on all sides. There lies the cause of the present Westminster paralysis. But that's what produced the (so far) 30-month-long Brexit saga in the first place!

Gross mismanagement

It recently came out that Cameron had viewed his 2016 Brexit referendum as a mere "matter of party management", designed to restore order among Tory

backbenchers.

But his scapegoating of EU migrants and May's "hostile environment" had already given respectability to the Leave camp's anti-migrant dirt. And discontent generated by austerity caused some voters to imagine that voting Leave would bring some kind of "change".

To Cameron's disbelief, the referendum returned a small Leave majority. His "party management" had backfired, turning a pro-Leave vote by only 37% of all registered voters into the "Will of the People"!

A question of class

In filling Cameron's shoes, May saw her task as a damage limitation exercise to protect company profits. Since then, she's

played the nationalist, anti-EU card, to appease the most reactionary elements among her party factions! But adapting to hard-Brexit hysteria, hasn't worked. Today, some of these characters hold key positions and would be quite prepared to cause mayhem, if only to feed their delusions.

But whether "Remainers", "Soft" or "Hard" Brexiteers, all these politicians serve one ultimate master: the capitalist class - which gets the servants it and its exploitative, chaotic system deserve - ambitious, self-serving, competitive, unpredictable and reckless. The dire state of their political institutions today is just a reflection of the dire state of their social order. □

• Gibraltar: yes it's a colony!

British ambassador to the EU, Tim Barrow, is on a crusade. A footnote in a document published by the European Council, describes Gibraltar as "a colony of the British Crown". This upsets and embarrasses Mr Barrow. He would rather that Gibraltar is known as "part of the UK family"! But of course if you call a spade a shovel, that doesn't change what it is. Three centuries ago Gibraltar was taken forcibly from Spain and proclaimed a British colony and that is how it was known - officially - until the late 1960s.

In fact this tiny enclave populated by a mixed population of 35,000 Spanish natives and British settlers is just one in a long list of "Overseas Territories". According to the UN, these are territories which "remain to be decolonised" and include Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, the Falkland

Islands, Montserrat, Saint Helena, Turks and Caicos Islands and Pitcairn.

And what have most of these islands become under British colonisation? Tax havens! Gibraltar today also offers British companies 10% corporation tax, compared with 19% in Britain and is home to online gambling and betting businesses thanks to the enclave's low level of regulation. So of course, British capital wouldn't want to lose control of such a profitable member of the "UK family"!

• Super-Exploitation-Zone

The politicians' latest post-Brexit scheme is the creation of so-called "special economic zones" (SEZs) and "free ports" in Britain.

Companies operating in these areas are supposed to get a variety of tax breaks and exemptions from certain rules, including, potentially, the (already few) rules governing workers' rights. Near

Middlesbrough in the North East, the local mayor, Ben Houchen, and several MPs, want to make Teesport a 'free port', further exempting companies from customs duties.

These politicians claim that "free ports" will "cure long-term industrial decline". Except that capitalism itself is in long-term decline, surviving only by feeding on itself and the state. And that's just what SEZs and "free ports" are all about - giving the decrepit capitalists a lifeline.

Of course, the bosses claim these schemes will bring more jobs, or cure "any trade friction caused by Brexit". But their "vision" is actually to pay no rent, no tax and have a free hand to exploit workers as much as possible!

In fact, this is and was always the capitalists' "vision", with or without Brexit. Still, Brexit is obviously a handy justification to turn the screw - but only as tight as the working class allows...

• May's wooing of Labour and trade union leaders

Theresa May has suddenly remembered the existence of Labour MPs and trade union leaders in her desperation to get her Brexit Deal endorsed. So she's now promised an injection of funds to Labour constituencies with a majority of Leave voters. And after meeting the general secretaries of the TUC, Unite, Unison and GMB, she also promised a bill guaranteeing that British workers' rights will keep pace with those in Europe...

Whether she'll deliver is, of course, another question. After all, she also has to try to appease her party's hard Brexiteers, who're as opposed to workers' rights as they are to the EU... As for soft Brexiteers like May's erstwhile Brexit minister, Dominic Raab, who's now vying for her mantle, he's known to be against the EU Social Charter and current (lesser) rights British workers "enjoy", calling them a "straitjacket" for the bosses!

Anyway, rights conferred by the EU have never provided workers here with a full protection against the greed of British

capital. Despite the EU's Working Time regulations, limiting the length of the working week, British workers still work longer hours on average, than workers in the rest of the EU! What's more, the working class has nothing to expect from May's dodgy promises! Rights have always been down to the balance of forces between workers and bosses, rather than politicians' goodwill - they can only be won or defended through fights.

• Labour against free movement?

The Immigration bill which would end free movement was voted in by 297 to 234 on its 2nd reading - with 76 Labour MPs absent from the vote, after Labour imposed a single-line whip against the government. In other words, it passed thanks to their abstention.

In fact Labour's policy on free movement spelt out in the 2017 election manifesto clearly states: "freedom of movement will end when we leave the European Union" and that "working with businesses, trade unions, devolved governments and others", the Labour party "will institute a

new system which is based on our economic needs, balancing controls and existing entitlements." In other words, the Labour party also promises to clamp down on immigration. But given that Labour MPs (especially in London) could lose votes from a large Labour-supporting constituency of former and current immigrants, they're deliberately ambiguous over their policy. And then there are those MPs representing "Leave" voters "up North" who're reputedly against free movement. So they're afraid to appear in favour, whether this was the real reason that their electorate voted "Leave" or not.

The fact is that, from Gordon Brown's "British jobs for British workers", to Ed Milliband's mugs with the phrase "Controls on Immigration", Labour has a long tradition of refusing to challenge the reactionary prejudices that this exploitative system tries to whip up among workers, the better to divide their ranks and weaken their ability to fight back. But then, challenging these prejudices would mean challenging this exploitative capitalist system itself - which is not what Labour is about!

Cutting jobs while making billions

The British Retail Consortium estimated that last year alone as many as 70,000 retail jobs were lost. This January, a further 20,000 job cuts were announced in both retail and in the car industry. According to Jaguar Land Rover, Npower, Tesco, John Lewis and Santander who announced these latest cuts, this is the "right decision for the financial sustainability of their businesses". They blame the costs of Brexit as well as changes in the market.

Whether these are the real reasons or not behind the job cuts, is hard to tell. But the fact is that companies like Tesco, which are cutting jobs, still make huge profits: it announced £1bn in profits for 2018 alone, while claiming it "had to" cut jobs!

This certainly can't be "the right



decision" for the thousands of workers employed by these companies who'll be left to their fate. Against the background of the ongoing economic crisis, bosses are undoubtedly using Brexit as a justification to cut

Brexit

costs - employing fewer workers to do more work for less. They are ensuring that whatever happens, the working class will pay for them to stay wealthy. As long as workers allow it, of course. □

• Nissan Brexits Britain

Nissan's recent announcement that it will not produce its X-Trail model at its Sunderland plant only exposes the Brexiteers' promises of the lucrative trade deals they would sign after Brexit for the fairy-tales they really are. In 2016 Nissan promised to build the X-Trail

at the plant after they signed a secret deal with the government. Despite denying for two years that there was any money involved, it has now emerged that Business Secretary Greg Clarke offered them £80m to continue production in Britain!



But wasn't Nissan only in Britain in the first place, because it gave them access to the EU market? They have faced increased costs due to the weakening of the £ due to the Brexit situation and now the new EU-Japan trade deal will allow them the access they need to the EU market. So why should they bother to increase production given the uncertainty of what the Brexit deal will look like? And in this rotten capitalist system isn't it perfectly normal for the big companies to slash thousands of jobs and destroy communities, just because it isn't profitable enough for them any more? The Nissan story only reveals Brexit for what it really is: a way for the state to line the pockets of the big companies in a capitalist system designed to serve their destructive profiteering.

• The City's Bankxit: they don't trust their own politicians

In this climate of "Brexit uncertainty", the City has wasted no time in ensuring its cherished profits will be safe. Banks and other financial companies have already shifted at least £800 billion-worth of assets out of the country and into the EU! This January, Barclays announced that it will move another £166bn from Britain to Ireland. A couple of months back, Royal

Bank of Scotland applied to transfer a third of its own investment portfolio to Amsterdam.

The City certainly has lost confidence in its own politicians at Westminster! All these asset transfers are meant to allow the banks to continue serving their European customers regardless of the chaos created by the Brexit saga. Given

that the euro is the second most traded currency in the financial world, the big banks will simply do their own version of Brexit: if they can't trade from London in the same way as before, they'll just trade from the EU. After all, they can't afford to be as deluded as their irresponsible politicians about the place of Britain's economy in the world market.

• EU CAP or Brexit "alternative" : free money for agribusiness

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), was an EU policy introduced in 1962 creating a system of subsidies for farmers. To some extent, it allowed the mechanisation of farms and reduced the uneven development in agriculture across the Common Market. But above all, it allowed the bigger farms to increase their competitiveness. In fact, since its very beginning it has just been another way of filling the pockets of agribusiness with

billions in EU funds.

In today's context, this is even more true. In Britain, 60-90% of the profits from farms came from EU subsidies in 2018. This explains why the value of farm land is expected to collapse after Brexit.

However, millions of funds from the CAP have directly benefited MPs or Lords who are themselves part of the big landowning bourgeoisie, historically represented by the Tory Party. So it is

ironic that it is this party which is behind the Brexit saga and that many of those calling for an end to the CAP, are Tory stalwarts. "Alternative funds" may have been proposed as a replacement for the CAP after Brexit, but farming (or keeping land set-aside!), is unlikely to be as profitable as before. By promoting Brexit these little Englanders may prove to have shot themselves in the foot.

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

Rail companies have just awarded their shareholders a cool total of £218m in dividends. So at least we know where the money from their exorbitant fares goes. Because it was certainly not used for investment in the train service, as testified by the timetable chaos, unprecedented delays and cancellations over the past 12 months.

But the sharks topping the list are Virgin West Coast. Partners Stagecoach and Richard Branson's Virgin received the most of all: £51m! Never mind that it was these

same suspects who, only a year ago, had to hand back the keys of the East Coast franchise to the Department of Transport, after claiming they could no longer "afford" to pay their franchise commitment. Apparently their "difficulties" were very short-lived!

It's not as if these companies actually pay their own costs either... government subsidies for the rail network for 2017-2018 were £6.4bn - up by 48% compared with 2016-2017!

Paul Plummer, chief executive of



the Rail Delivery Group, which represents private train operators and the publicly-owned Network Rail, believes that the public and private sectors "should share the financial risks" of the train service... but obviously, not the financial benefits! ☐

- **Who knows?**

We hear that Great Northern (GN) bosses will close platforms 9-11 from December onwards for reconfiguring, but what will happen to us? Will we be transferred to the other platforms or maybe St. Pancras? We know very little and they tell us nothing!! Maybe they don't even know themselves? [Workers' Platform King's X 30/01/19]

- **Guards should be guards**

Why do LNER managers keep asking us guards if we're going to run a trolley every journey? First of all, we don't run trolleys and second of all, there

aren't enough catering workers to run them. So, are they just trying to push those of us resisting the unacceptable extension of our role, to cave in? But never mind, when we get so many calls from managers about trivial matters, we just stop hearing... [Workers' Platform King's X 30/01/19]

- **More like "find the managers"**

We thought that 'meet the GN manager' would be a chance for passengers' complaints to be redirected from us gateline workers to managers. Unfortunately, it turns out that managers not only hid their name tags, but also decided to 'meet' in not-so-visible corners of the

station. At a time of record poor service and with the fare rise, they're obviously wetting their pants in fear, in front of angry passengers... [Workers' Platform King's X 30/01/19]

- **One lounge for all**

We're constantly on the receiving end of LNER (London North Eastern Railway) 1st class passengers' complaints, because they can't use the lounge if they arrive more than 2 hours before their journey. They're right to be angry... The real problem is that the lounge isn't big enough and open at all times for everybody. [Workers' Platform King's X 30/01/19]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)

- **Tweeting after the horse has bolted**

So, according to the CWU twitter page, CWU HQ is campaigning yet again for the renationalisation of Royal Mail. Dave Ward wrote: "For staff, privatisation has meant 13,000 job losses [actually 30,000+!], increasing pressure on workload, and the deterioration of working conditions."

But he adds that thanks(!) to the CWU's partnership deal with RM bosses (i.e. 'Four Pillars' agreement), things have stopped getting worse! Really? An agreement which pushed the stable door wide open for further casualisation, job losses and cuts to working conditions, proceeding everywhere, right now! Cheers Dave. [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 30/01/19]

- **TP'S Samson delusion**

Oh yes, and apparently we should feel "reassured" that new RM boss Richie Rich is committed to this "Four Pillars" agreement (as Terry Pullinger wrote in the CWU's Voice). But aren't there

only 3 of his 4 wonderful 4 pillars left?

Pensions are cut; placed in a temporary defined contribution scheme, until the CDC scheme materialises, if and when. And this is a DC scheme by another name, which if RM goes bust, won't be eligible for Pension Protection. [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 30/01/19]

- **We know what's coming**

We were expecting this: union officials and managers have agreed on the terms of the re-sign for Processing (behind closed doors, of course) and will be asking us to endorse it... But should we?!

Didn't we read last month in their "joint" letter that it was all about completing redundancies before the end of March to avoid... a "surplus" of workers?! What surplus? We're fed up with hearing about this surplus when there are clearly not enough of us. [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 30/01/19]

- **New faces welcome**

Here's proof: management has brought in Angard casuals on Processing to work



one day a week, for the 4th week in a row!! And as we keep saying, yes we need them and they need to be offered in-house, permanent contracts! [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 30/01/19]

- **HMP! Killing us slowly?**

And yet more proof: they've been distributing overtime like there was no tomorrow. Some part-time workers have been doing 12-hour shifts, up to 3 nights in a row (maybe more?!). So yes, maybe senior workers need to take their retirement/VR from this dirty, hazardous building site, but they need to be replaced by enough of us so that unsafe hours of work are never on the agenda!! [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 30/01/19]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)

Flat out through summer? No way!

BMW's "Brexit" shutdown for four weeks in April won't be followed by the usual summer holiday closure. Not that the company told us. The bosses, no doubt fearful of our reaction simply produced a new schedule which had no holiday break indicated any more between April and December. And then they left it to their junior supervisors to face us.

Many of us had already booked summer holidays. In fact last year we'd been told we'd get a 5-week summer break this year. So now

BMW says we can take these vacations, BUT we'll only get paid if we can cover them with annual leave and credits under the "working time account" system.

How many of us will have enough credit in this so-called "account" after the imposed 4-weeks we're supposed to take in April? Not many. True, BMW extended the maximum working time "deficit" from 200 to 300 hours, but only for permanent workers. The over 1,000 agency workers (with only 100 hours), could end up with no pay at all!



So now BMW thinks we'll be forced to agree to working one Saturday a month to earn time credits. But even so, we'd still "owe" BMW hours by the end of the year. When in fact, all we really owe BMW is a long-overdue strike! ☐

• More cars means more... mates!

Is BMW going to embark on a huge hiring programme then? Because before Xmas it announced to us that their production target for next year was being raised to 240,000. We sure are fed up with working faster and faster, setting new 'records' for the number of cars produced each shift... So we really look forward to welcoming lots of new workmates. [Workers Fight BMW Oxford Mini 30/01/19]

• Plan A, B, C, D?... enough!

So what's gonna happen now with the April shutdown? Brexit may be

deMayed, oops we mean delayed, after the 29th March. Can this get more absurd? The bosses will probably try to play all kinds of games around this, so we should prepare to demand the shutdown that we want. [Workers Fight BMW Oxford Mini 30/01/19]

• Shall we seize the time?

In fact we knew the bosses might be trying to kill two birds with one stone when they announced they were moving the summer shutdown to April. They were making a "political stand" over Brexit and they thought they wouldn't lose more production than usual. But actually this "political stand" was also an excuse to re-arrange production to a more profitable

time - and screw us more. Maybe this summer will turn out to be a good time for us workers to force a complete halt to production? [Workers Fight BMW Oxford Mini 30/01/19]

• Bring back and bring more

We heard that when these limited edition Minis come in, the bosses will bring jobs (which had previously been cut) back to some areas of the line. Of course there should be hundreds of new workers! But the jobs should not be 'limited edition'! They must stay. After all, these are jobs which went because of changes in the processes, at our expense. [Workers Fight BMW Oxford Mini 30/01/19]

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)

• Asking us to "sprint to strike..."?

Ok, we (but not all of us!) got those (brief) notes from the meeting between union full-timers and top Ford-EU boss Armstrong. Huge cuts everywhere including here at Bridgend. What a cheek Ford has: if they think they can get 6% operating profit in the short term, they can't possibly be doing as badly as they say. They're just lying (as always?) behind that snappy slogan "Sprint to 6..." [Workers' Fight Bulletin Ford Dagenham 23/01/19]

• And who will man the barricades?

Of course, they plan to cut their costs and increase their profits by closing Bordeaux transmission, winding Bridgend down, terminating C-Max, putting Saarlouis under threat and they're even planning a hit on Cologne, Sollers in Russia, etc... But it seems Armstrong left his brain on the seat of his Mustang beforehand, because he can't cut even one Transport Ops job, let alone 150, while expecting 18,000 Fords and who knows what else,

to be delivered here before 29 March... Or anything delivered here at all... [Workers' Fight Bulletin Ford Dagenham 23/01/19]

• No way, Mister Armstrong!

Yup, he doesn't mind the brown stuff being sprayed everywhere by his big fan - we're told this year's pay deal should be brought forward and he's proposing a pay freeze (yes, for all of us, including 990 Bridgend workmates faced with redundancy!) and he's proposing an (official) THIRD tier to the workforce! His brain is definitely on the seat. [Workers' Fight Bulletin Ford Dagenham 23/01/19]

• One tier or nothing!

We know Ford has the cash to fund a decent wage rise and to keep all of us in good jobs, getting equal pay for equal work. If the £s aren't on the balance sheet right now, bosses can go collect them from their shareholders. Anyway, they've always kept a large piggybank in reserve. So not only do we say no to another tier of workers - but we also want the 2nd tier abolished and no more temps - only permanent recruits. And that is worth fighting for. [Workers' Fight Bulletin Ford Dagenham 23/01/19]



• Flushing jobs down toilet

BTW for our own reference, Flushing isn't anything to do with toilets but a place in Holland where there are 22,000 unsold Fords being stashed. What it means that we'll be getting "work" from Flushing over here, goodness only nows. But it certainly can't mean they can cut TOPs jobs!! [Workers' Fight Bulletin Ford Dagenham 23/01/19]

• News black-out here!

Weird that on Puma we haven't had any information at all. Not even a steward's report from the meetings they had about Ford's "plan". Puma Assembly is due to shut in weeks and we don't know where we're going - there were 'aspiration meetings', but we bet they'll simply ignore what we said. If we let them. [Workers' Fight Bulletin Ford Dagenham 23/01/19]

Oxfam report

The combined fortunes of the world's 26 richest individuals reached £1 trillion last year, equal to the total assets of the world's 3.8 billion poorest. These figures, published by the NGO Oxfam, graphically sum up the distribution of wealth under this capitalist system.

Despite the fact that the financial crisis of 2008 caused world production to slump and unemployment and poverty to surge, the number of billionaires went up! Top of the list is Jeff Bezos, Amazon's founder, who saw his fortune grow to £86.5 billion. To give some measure of this, Oxfam explains that just 1% of his wealth is equal to the whole health budget of Ethiopia, a country of 105 million!

According to Oxfam: "the world's billionaires saw their wealth increase by 12%, while the poorest 3.8 billion people on the planet lost 11% of their wealth". This results in increasing inequalities in access to healthcare, education and life expectancy,

United States

The Trump administration has suspended US participation in yet another of the Cold War-era arms control treaties - this time, the Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty. Predictably, Trump justified this by claiming Russia was in violation of the treaty and was deploying mid-range missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads. But he also pointed a finger at China, which isn't even a signatory to this treaty!

Of course, Trump and his

Northern Ireland

What happened to a 12-year old Northern Irish girl, pregnant as a result of rape exposes once more the consequences for Northern Irish women of Britain's backward policy in these six



The world's wealth in the hands of a few



in both poor and rich countries. So here in wealthy Britain, there's a 21-year difference in life expectancy between Mayfair, one of the richest neighbourhoods in London, and

West Ham, one of the poorest.

Yes, that's capitalism: the extreme enrichment of a few is paid for by the extreme impoverishment of the many. □

The death merchants and their warmongering politicians

entourage love to peddle the laughable belief that the US is somehow in danger from countries like Russia and China. After all, how else to excuse, in the middle of the crisis, his ongoing increase in defence budgets, including for nuclear weapons. Of course, he's feeding the profits of death merchants - the American arms companies.

In fact, the Congressional Budget Office issued a report projecting nuclear weapon costs over the next decade at nearly half-a-trillion

dollars, up 23% from the last estimate, two years ago.

It is absurd that the US, the unrivalled leader of the arms race, is crying wolf, when it already spends more on defence than China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, India, France, Britain and Japan combined!! But then who would expect Trump to give a damn about the risks involved? Wasn't he quoted asking one of his advisors: "Why can't we use our nuclear weapons?". □

The "hard Irish border" for Northern Irish women

counties. Because abortion isn't allowed, even in cases of rape, and despite the fact that she was a child, this girl had to come to Britain for an abortion. What's more, she was escorted, as if she was the

criminal, by police officers who then attended the procedure in order to "seize" tissue samples for evidence!

After abortion was legalised last year in the Irish Republic, Theresa May was asked by MPs to allow a free vote in the House in order to extend legal abortion to the North. But she has refused - to avoid upsetting the DUP - the same DUP which is holding her government hostage over the Irish backstop! Indeed for women in Northern Ireland, a "hard" border already exists, excluding them from sharing the same rights as women both in the rest of Britain and in the Irish Republic. All the more reason for this border - virtual since the 1997 Peace Agreement - to be rubbed out once and for all! □

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:

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