

WORKERS' fight



No 102 - 8 April 2019
price 30p
<http://www.w-fight.org>
contact@w-fight.org

ISSN 2040-400X

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

AGAINST THEIR BREXIT CHAOS AND POLITICKING!

Short of having a crystal ball, no-one can guess (at the time of writing), where the Brexit saga is going, or even whether it is going anywhere at all!

May has tried everything to get MPs to endorse her deal. She has tried blackmail and bribes -and even offered her resignation in return for the votes of hard-Brexit-teers.

Nothing worked. Three times her withdrawal deal was defeated - thanks to the opposition of her party's warring factions.

So now she is making a show of "national unity", by having talks with Corbyn to find what she calls a "compromise agreement".

More political games

"Compromise"? As if this word was ever in May's vocabulary - except when it meant conceding ground to her hard-Brexit bigots. So what is she up to? Is she trying to convince EU leaders that she hasn't entirely wasted their time over the past 2 years of negotiations? That by granting her a longer, "flexible" Brexit extension, she might have time to produce a credible alternative plan, which she can persuade Parliament to pass?

Or is this simply about protecting her party's electoral future, by shifting the blame for the Tory's Brexit mess onto Labour? After all, it wouldn't be hard for May to accuse Corbyn of blocking Brexit and causing more mayhem, if she offered no concessions to Labour. That way she would make sure that these talks go nowhere - which is exactly what she seems to have done so far.

In fact May is probably pursuing both these objectives, plus some others - including, for the time being, protecting her own position.

In any case, none of these objectives has anything whatsoever to do with the "interests of the British people", which May



refers to ad nauseam, as if it was a magic spell.

As for the "national interest" politicians on all sides keep invoking - this is utter nonsense in a capitalist world defined by opposing class interests!

Time to stop their mess!

For the working class Brexit was a con, right from the start. The referendum was designed to preserve MPs' seats after the sudden rise of UKIP, who they chose to adapt to, instead of to challenge.

Today, Brexit is still a con. It deceives us with false hopes in an otherwise increasingly grim world; and, more than ever, it is serving the careers and ambitions of its mostly Tory promoters!

After 3 years of posturing by ministers and MPs, it's clear that the mess caused by Brexit cannot be stopped by parliament. Those opposed to Brexit, who signed online petitions and joined demonstrations were right to voice their opinion. But getting politicians to listen, let alone yield to their

demands, is quite another matter.

In this respect, the working class has an advantage that no other social layer in society has: it produces all the wealth. Without its labour, there is no transport, no electricity; there are no goods in supermarkets, no vehicles made.

With such a lever in its hands, there is no limit to what the working class could achieve, just by using its collective muscle.

Faced with today's political crisis and against the threat that Brexit represents for jobs and living standards, the working class is the only force which has the capacity and strength to collectively stop the politicians' mad drive into chaos and the bosses' plans to use the Brexit-induced situation to attack jobs and conditions.

But having the ability to do this is one thing, using it is another. For this, the working class needs political organisation - its own party, a workers' party, which aims at using its collective strength to build a better world. ☐

Northern Ireland

On the 14 March this year, 47 years after the event, the Public Prosecution Service of Northern Ireland (PPS) ruled that one solitary British soldier - for the time being known as "Soldier F" - will be prosecuted for the notorious Bloody Sunday massacre in Derry, perpetrated by Britain's occupying army during the height of the Northern Irish "Troubles".

On the 30 January 1972, in Derry, a 20,000-strong, peaceful protest march against internment was fired upon by members of a parachute regiment support unit, killing 13 and wounding 15. Pictures of a bleeding 17-year old and Father Daly waving his scarf to try to get the wounded through the hail of bullets were famously captured on film.

Soldier F is one of the few of the paras involved who is still alive. The PPS claims there is "sufficient evidence" in only this one case for a prosecution. But one can only wonder why is it that once again, the uniformed minions who're expected blindly to "follow orders" are meant to

• "British" justice for victims of terror?

It's probably no coincidence that, just as the issue of the Bloody Sunday massacre was coming back into the news, an inquest was being held over the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings which killed 21 and injured 182 - again, over 40 years later! The jury found that it was an IRA operation "gone wrong": the usual warning telephone call designed to prevent casualties was "botched". Now, in almost symmetrical retribution for "Soldier F", there

carry the can for their officers and the government responsible for this murderous situation in the first place.

The commanding officer of the British forces in Northern Ireland was General Robert Ford. Just weeks before the march he wrote in a memo to his superior that he was "coming to the conclusion that the minimum force necessary to achieve a restoration of law and order is to shoot selected ringleaders amongst the DYH (Derry Young Hooligans), after clear warnings have been issued". Seven of those shot and killed were Derry teenagers. Ford died in 2015 and always denied he wrote this.

As for the government - today's Tory armed forces minister, Gavin Williamson immediately stated that the government would pay for Soldier F's defence, pledging that in future soldiers would nowhere, including in Iraq or Afghanistan, have to "live in constant fear of prosecution". Of course he didn't offer to stand in the dock in the soldier's place, which is where



government ministers and their top army officials should be. It is their policies, first to turn humans into killing machines and then to deploy them round the world, which make soldiers capable of perpetrating atrocities - whether against other soldiers or against civilians, adult and child, as in this case. □

Schools

• Knife crime rises as youth support is cut

Home Office figures show that the number of knife attacks in England and Wales has risen sharply, surpassing the previous high in 2011 by 23%. Along with this, the rate of deaths by stabbing has also risen to an all-time high. And the newest victims have largely been young people. As of last year, 1 in 4 of those killed in a knife attack was between the ages of 18-25.

Under pressure to respond, May and Home Secretary Javid called a "Knife Crime Summit". And what came out of it? The incredible pronouncement that "teachers and nurses" should be held "accountable" for failing to prevent attacks!

This, from politicians who bear responsibility for the closure of nearly half of London's youth centres since 2011 and the sacking of 560 specialist youth workers. Meanwhile, schools are increasingly permanently excluding students from the most deprived backgrounds: those eligible for free school meals account for 40% of permanent exclusions, those with special educational needs account for nearly

half and Afro-Caribbean pupils are 3 times more likely to be excluded than others.

In 1974, six men were falsely accused of this bombing and served almost 17 years in jail, thanks to "British justice"! Judicial miscarriages, when it came to Irish terrorist bombings were the norm, rather than the exception. It was government policy: terrorise the whole Irish community, while allowing the

cops and courts to be seen to "do their job", no matter how mendaciously.

So how can even this latest "true" version of events be credible? And what is more, is that the real issue? When "peace" in Ireland - as shown today by the current backstop deadlock - still depends on a political agreement which maintains a border between North and South and built-in sectarian divisions in the "British" North?

half and Afro-Caribbean pupils are 3 times more likely to be excluded than others.

Youngsters who feel they have no future and are left to wander the streets, are easy prey for local drug gangs which offer an income and "protection" from older boys. And so the poorest end up being educated in crime and violence, or being wounded or killed. The system can only fail these young people: getting rid of it is the only way to stop this cycle of violence.

• Schools are being run into the ground!

Teachers' unions' recent analysis of cuts to school funding pointed to a £5.4bn shortfall since 2016. Last year alone the shortfall was £2.8bn, based on the government's own estimates, but the reality of government cuts is of course much greater than they admit. Indeed, the Department for Education (DfE) still dares to claim that it has been "protecting the schools budget overall for 5 to 16 year olds in real terms since 2010"!

Most schools struggle to afford even basic classroom equipment and many are forced to increase class sizes, cut out subjects from the curriculum completely

or even reduce hours. Cuts have already meant the almost total disappearance of specialist support for pupils with special educational needs, or indeed for any pupils who do not fit in with a narrowing definition of what "education" should offer. This is what has, above all else, contributed to the rising number of exclusions of pupils - now almost 5% of all school enrolments. A symptom of an increasingly broken education system.



Capitalism manufactures poverty!

According to the government's own figures, in 2018, 100,000 more children were living in poverty in Britain than in 2017 - bringing the total number of children living in households earning less than £300/week up to 4.1m. However, what these official figures don't show is that child poverty is a direct consequence of the on-going squeeze on workers' pay and that this is due primarily to under-employment in the worst kind of casual jobs.

In fact, among the children living in poverty, 70% belong to working families. Poverty used to be the preserve of the

jobless. But no longer. Since the latest crisis, chronic poverty has become solidly entrenched among those in work. Today, 4m working adults live below the poverty threshold. While the government boasts about having achieved a "record level of employment", the reality is that more and more jobs don't even allow workers, not to mention working parents, to make ends meet. For a growing section of the working class, having a job has become a direct, guaranteed gateway to poverty. Proof that this profit system is just too sick and rotten to be allowed to survive! □

• Hostile environment as ugly as ever

Nearly a year after the Windrush scandal, May's Britain remains a hostile and precarious environment for those without money or the documents required to prove their "right" to be here. In February a charter flight took 29 deportees to Jamaica, the first such since 2017. There would have been 50 on that flight, but for last-minute legal challenges by lawyers which halted 21 deportations. Indeed last year 15,200 of the 24,674 deportations ordered from

Britain were cancelled - with 45% of these cancelled at the last minute! Yet the policy is still to deport as many as possible - could it be to meet some secret "deportation target"?

Home Secretary Sajid Javid defended the February deportations to Jamaica on the grounds that a few of the victims were convicted of rape or murder. But Chevon Brown from Oxford, deported on the February flight to a Jamaica where he knows nobody, after

Social



serving an 8-month sentence for "dangerous driving", is probably more typical. Among those whose deportation was cancelled, one had lived in Manchester for 41 years, while another was a former soldier suffering from PTSD after two tours of Afghanistan! And how many more have been deported just because they had no lawyer to take their case, or no newspaper to publicise it - or because they were too poor to be recognised as having any rights?

• The need to take back control of our playgrounds

In the Baylis Old School estate, a multi-million pound housing development in Lambeth, social housing tenants' children were prevented from entering the playground areas reserved for the more well-off homeowners.

This situation was denounced, and rightly so, as outright 'social segregation' in the press. The developer, Henley Homes, unapologetically declared: 'This is for [a] very good reason... that [social housing

residents] do not contribute towards the service charges'. And to rub it in: "This is in no way discriminatory but fair and reasonable." The uproar was such that the developer was forced to back down and dismantle the "segregation wall".

This case is far from unique, however. Other developments across London separate play areas for richer and poorer children. What's also common practice, is the use of "poor doors" - i.e., separate

entrances for tenants, whereby well-off owners access their homes via hotel-style lobby areas, while social housing tenants enter from an alleyway backdoor.

On paper, the point of social mixing was to force developers to include affordable housing along with the posh bits and break down social barriers. But it turns out that developers and some of their rich clients don't want to have anything to do with their "social inferiors".

• Cumbria's deep coal mine: Unbelievable!

Britain's first new deep coal mine in 30 years has been given the go-ahead by Cumbria county council. The mine is due to begin production in about two years' time and is expected to employ 500 people, with an estimated 2,000 more jobs created by its supply chain. Unsurprisingly, the £165m Woodhouse

colliery as it's called, was applauded by Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat councillors alike, who said it would bring 'vital jobs' to the area.

But why should jobs that involve workers going down deep underground, exposing themselves to inherent dangers, be considered jobs at all in the 21st century? And why should we need to use coal, the prime fossil fuel anyway, at a time of impending environmental catastrophe?

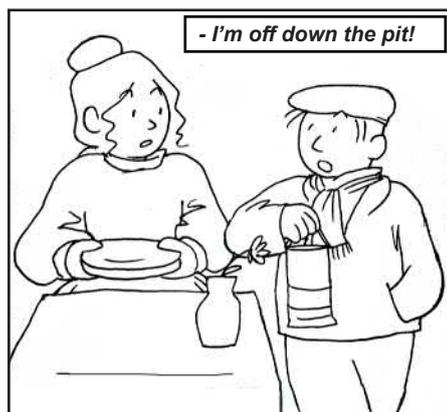
As for jobs, there are many vital jobs to be done in Cumbria, for instance, in health-care, education, social services, to name a few. But, of course, today job creation has nothing whatsoever to do with the real needs of society and is totally dependent on what creates profits for the bosses.

• InHealth preferably out

When Oxford University hospitals opposed NHS England's decision to outsource cancer screening services to the privateer, InHealth, NHS England's response was to threaten to sue the NHS Trust for "libel"! But after

months of campaigning against the private company InHealth taking over, staff and patients from Oxford University Trust have scored a minor victory: InHealth, which has a contract to provide scanning for the whole Thames Valley, had wanted to appropriate and remove the Churchill Hospital's scanners to their own private site several miles away. Now the scanners will remain at the Churchill and NHS staff will continue to operate them, which is, of course, in patients' best interests. Unfortunately InHealth still has its contract and still stands to make lots of profits at NHS and patients' expense.

Indeed, private companies can damage health, or even kill. Which is why NHS England has brought cervical screening services back in-house after privateer, Capita failed to send 43,220 women their cervical screening invitations and reminder letters and failed to send 4,508 women their results. The British Medical Association referred to "Capita's frankly shambolic running of GP support services" which put patients at risk. Yes, it's called profits before health. And why would it be any different with InHealth?



Brexit watch**Parliament's Brexit pantomime**

May's recent overtures to Corbyn, to help her out of her mess, are just the latest way she has tried to overcome the problem of numbers presented by the internecine war in the Conservative party.

The driving force behind the Brexit saga has always been Tory MPs' in-fighting. The 'Hard Brexiteers' may position themselves as "defenders of democracy", but they care only about defending their own seats in Parliament! And at the moment, these hard Brexiteers are forgetting themselves, by putting their own careers ahead of the interests of their capitalist masters, which is causing the present paralysis of May's government in the face of Brexit.

To solve these problems with her own party, May supposedly let Parliament have a say in the Brexit process at the end of March. MPs were said to be "taking control", through a "full debate" and a series of votes on various alternative Brexit options. However, it was immediately apparent

• **The working class needs its own voice!**

On March 23rd, up to a million protesters flooded the streets of London, to demand a "people's vote" on Brexit. Meanwhile over 6m people were signing an online petition demanding that Brexit be reversed. For the second time since the 2016 referendum, those opposed to the chaos of the Brexit process and to the reactionary xenophobic overbidding that came with it, tried to make themselves heard.

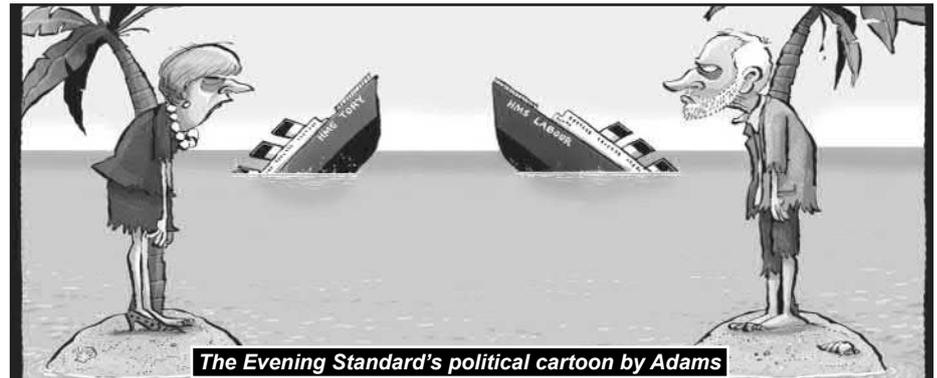
However, those who have been most affected by the Brexit saga, that is the working class, were just not represented in these protests. From BMW and Nissan, to Honda and Fujitsu, the bosses have already shown how they intend to use the on-going economic crisis and the chaos

• **The NFU, Michael Gove, and the toxic pesticide cash!**

A recent report from the EFSA (European Food and Safety Authority) banned the pesticide chlorothalonil, the most widely-used pesticide in Britain. This is rather late in the day. Scientists proved many years ago that this chemical accumulates in our bodies causing kidney failure, food poisoning and that it also indiscriminately kills bumblebees which are essential for pollination of crops.

This ban immediately triggered a reaction from the National Farmers Union (NFU). Since Brexit, these champions of protectionism, with their "Back British farmers" campaign, have been confronted with the need to maintain their EU subsidies (amounting to billions), their access to the EU market (their main market) and an EU workforce (mostly seasonal workers), while trying to get rid of EU regulations limiting their profits.

Ironically, Environment Minister and



that this was pure pantomime, given that MPs choices would not be binding on the government. Yes, Brexit may have been heralded as Parliament "reclaiming sovereignty from Brussels", but the reality is that Parliament isn't even "sovereign" over its own government!

Despite these parliamentary theatricals, behind the scenes, Tory ministers

and big wigs, up to 12 of them in fact, are preparing to fight it out for May's job. Her promise of "Vote for my deal and I'll quit" merely gave them their cue.

At the time of writing the farce continues with another request for an extension till 30 June - the date the EU previously refused. OK then, what about until the twelfth of never? ☐

of Brexit as a cover to reorganise their production, cut jobs and turn the screw of exploitation on the remaining workers! To oppose these attacks and defend

its material interests, the working class needs to make its own voice and demands heard, loud and clear - as a matter of urgency!



hard-line Brexiteer, Michael Gove, announced in 2017 an alternative "British scheme" for farmers' subsidies which was "more focused on environmental concerns", in contrast to the damage to "our forests" he claimed was caused by the EU... And now he is pretending that he is "taking back control" over "Britain's environment standards" by... retaining a toxic pesticide for the sake of big farmers' profits (and his own) - and never mind the risk to humans and bumble bees.

• **How Brexiteers plan to live?**

The government has spent £12m on a seven-bedroom luxury apartment in Manhattan for the British trade commissioner for North America and consul general for New York! Close to the UN headquarters, it is supposed to give this senior diplomat a convenient pad for "winning and dining" officials from around the world. So much so, that they will have to "stay over" afterwards? No

doubt the idea is that officials should try to help a post-Brexit Britain to punch above its weight in trade negotiations with the Trump administration!

In passing, though, one should note that under the Brexit "new order", not everyone will have the same rights: two of the bedrooms are for live-in staff and both of them are smaller than one of the apartment's three walk-in wardrobes.

In any case, no doubt plenty of optimistic Brexiteers will be trying to wangle an invitation, if they are not setting their sights on the job itself!

ICF forum pamphlet n°100

• **Trade war, Brexit, CONVULSIONS OF A CAPITALIST WORLD IN CRISIS**

price: £1.00

Get your copies from the Workers' Fight activists you know or send us your order by mail.

Emergency prep for no-deal disaster

Brexit watch

Operation Yellowhammer is the government's name for its contingency plans for a "no-deal Brexit" - aptly named after a bird on the "red alert" conservation list because it has gone into near terminal decline and whose song is said to sound like "a little bit of bread and no cheese"!

Anyway it seems even this little bit of bread is now in question: last month the Guardian newspaper revealed a secret document that warns of "a critical three-month phase after leaving the EU during which the whole planning operation, (Op YH) could be overwhelmed". We are told that the Cabinet Office is "desperately war-gaming" scenarios of chaos where there are power cuts, planes grounded, thousands of lorries parked up in Kent, shortages of food,



medicines and even toilet paper! Plans include stationing 3,500 troops on standby and appointing senior police officers to oversee 38 "local resilience forums". They

are also going to set up an underground military bunker beneath Whitehall! Is that meant to provide all those pro-no-deal Brexit MPs with a hiding place? ☐

• NHS 'gagging order' to protect the bosses

It's reported that NHS hospitals have been issued with gagging orders, so that they don't reveal the impact that a hard Brexit may have on healthcare, for fear of hurting "commercial interests"! The Department of Health claimed that releasing such information could cause "premature financial harm and put public well-being at risk".

So, apparently requests for information about the impact on the supply of goods and services, and on EU staff numbers, should be

refused. But of course it's already known for instance that 80% of radio-isotopes used in treatment and diagnosis of cancer and other common diseases like thyroid overactivity, are imported from Europe. And that they cannot withstand delay, since they must be used within hours of being produced.

Tariffs which would be instituted in the event of a hard Brexit or a no-deal Brexit, would also mean the rationing of many treatments due to increased expense in an

already cash-strapped NHS. Because of the fall in the value of the pound since the referendum, there have already been shortages or even total non-availability of some types of insulin and, for example the "epi-pens" used for emergency treatment of systemic shock due to allergic reactions. This is a critical situation and Britain hasn't even left yet. No wonder Hancock doesn't want the NHS revealing the catastrophic truth...

• Insulin manufacturing: how can this be the best way?

The issue of stockpiling medicines before Brexit raised the question of Britain's capacity to produce medicines locally. But is there such a thing as a "locally-produced medicine" in this day and age - and should there be?

Novo Nordisk, the biggest insulin manufacturer, produces and purifies its insulin in Denmark. It is then dried into powder form, for transport to the US where it is transformed into liquid form again, and put into

ampoules. Then it is sent to Brazil where the parts of the syringe together with the ampoules full of insulin are assembled. Finally these syringes come back to Denmark - again! - where the packaging happens.

In the EU and the US, Novo Nordisk finds skilled labour more easily and cheaply, while in Brazil assembly requires only unskilled workers, who are much cheaper there. Also, they locate processes where the regulations

on quality control are looser or aim at avoiding trade tariffs.

Overall, production spreads all over the world because it's more profitable for the bosses, but obviously not less time-consuming, since workers transport insulin all around the globe, on a regular basis. This is why local production and rational planning cannot be achieved - not in a profit system!

• NHS nurses still haemorrhaging

Between 2010/11 and 2017/18, 200,586 nurses resigned from the NHS. The number of those leaving due to poor working conditions has almost tripled. By 2017, 58% of NHS doctors and nurses felt that their workload was unmanageable!

Indeed, the nurse-to-patient ratio, which is one way of measuring the workload of nurses, is one nurse for nine patients in England - one of the worst ratios in

Europe! Back in 1967, the British Medical Association recommended a ratio of one nurse to one patient in intensive care units. A ratio of one nurse to two patients was the recommendation for other units.

The government's own official guidelines warn that patients are at a higher risk of harm if nurses have to care for more than 8 patients at a time. But the mere fact that the government should officially

issue such an obvious warning, is, in and of itself, a damning indictment of an NHS in which being overworked has become the rule.

But never mind. While health secretary Hancock claims that solving the NHS workforce problems is his priority, he stops short of even mentioning the obvious: the need for far more staff!

Unite fiasco : saving jobs by... getting more money for the bosses??

The demonstration against the closure of the Honda Swindon brought 600-800 workers from the plants as well as locals onto the streets. Unite's half-hearted "national mobilisation" resulted in few union officials from the region and beyond attending. But it was a lively protest, nevertheless.

Unite's leader, McCluskey, covered up Unite's shrinking credit among the workforce by a boastful speech proposing to find an alternative way to make Honda "as profitable as they've been over many years", adding there should be "government money to invest in Swindon". Instead of pledging to fight for what the workers were owed, he pleaded for mercy to be shown by the bosses to the "devoted and loyal workforce"...

Unite's usual nationalism was on

display on the tee-shirts: "Save Honda UK", with the "UK" in large bold letters. And having mentioned that Honda pays "significantly above the regional average wage", it sounded like McCluskey was preparing the ground to negotiate a pay cut in exchange for "staying in the UK"... Which would be no surprise.

To defend their interests, workers will definitely need more than this echo of the bosses' voices from the mouth of a union bureaucrat.

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)

- **Armstrong at it again**

We saw Ford made another statement on Tues threatening that "no deal" Brexit would make them reconsider their British ops. Only 13,000 of us are now "Ford" workers, but subcontracted mates are almost as many again! So ~20,000 jobs at risk? We know that what they lose through increased costs, they gain by selling more, due to the low pound. It's swings and roundabouts, but Ford makes sure it's never out of pocket! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 3/4/19]

- **Don't come crying to us!**

We need to remember this when Ford comes with its usual nonsense in response to our pay-claim this year. We need a really big pay rise to cover our increased costs (including more pricey food and medicines from abroad!!) It's us who make all their profits - which they've piled up "for over a century", as Armstrong reminded everyone of, on Tuesday... So, we shall be deaf to Ford's cries of "poverty"! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 3/4/19]

- **Society of the future**

So now Ford is using drones to do inspection work! Indeed, mates doing inspections on overhead gantries and in roof areas are better off piloting drones with cameras, than having to do a balancing act 40ft up in the air!

Lots of the unsafe work we do could be done by high tech machines instead - as long as it's to our benefit and not at our expense! But since Ford can't squeeze machines to "work faster" (cf Puma machining!!) they usually prefer to have us humans taking the risks - and the wear and tear! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 3/4/19]

- **Another technical fiasco**

These £100,000 (?) cameras on Panther which replace human eyes for quality controls apparently were not expensive enough... They don't work! So instead of saving on workers' wages, Ford is paying for workers and cameras... Proving once again that they're incapable of making good



use of technology - even for the sake of their own profits, let alone to make our lives easier... [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 3/4/19]

- **Truth about subcontracting**

How is it that G4S mates aren't all on the same pay rate? If one is on £9/hr - all should be - since we all do the same work? But even that's too little. The so-called "London living wage" £10.55/hr! And we got only 12p/hr "raise" this year! Rubbish!!

PS - we still don't get free drinking water and at one box the toilets are blocked so we can't use them. This literally stinks!! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 3/4/19]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)

- **Jam today!**

We get the feeling something is going on behind our backs. We still haven't been told anything about the pay deal. Apparently it could be after April and these bosses will have a list of Brexit excuses ready to palm us off with a cheap deal! Whatever 'problems' BMW try to claim they have, it's nothing to do with us. We have our own problems - the rising cost of living and rents being one of them! [Workers' Fight Bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 13/03/19]

- **2 Fast...**

This speed-up in production is really getting on our nerves! We are producing

so much that in some areas of the line we are even told they may bring extra people to 'help'. Not so that they can slow the line down again of course! But with more mates, we can slow the line down ourselves. [Workers' Fight BMW Mini Oxford 13/03/19]

- **...(We're) 2 furious!**

What's this rush in production for anyway? They're pushing us to work harder now, only to leave us, in April, with no work AND having to owe time to BMW on account of THEIR shutdown!

If the bosses had to pay us fully from their pockets, maybe they would avoid playing around with our holidays? [Workers' Fight Bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 13/03/19]



- **A job for life!**

GI advertising 150 temp jobs for the summer is pretty crazy, given all the mates BMW have gotten rid of over the last years! We need more mates here permanently, all year round! And at the same time, all us 'permanent' temps need proper BMW contracts! [Workers' Fight Bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 27/03/19]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)

- **A wage cut is a wage cut**

Does RM really think we'll accept this 2% "rise" and regard ourselves as "lucky"? It's not even an increase in real wages: RPI inflation was above 3% from April to November last year and was 2.5% from last December to February this year! Our pay rise has to be well above it to make ends meet! And that's it! [Workers' Fight Bulletin Mount Pleasant Mail Centre 27/03/19 - re-edited]

- **Where are our full-time contracts?**

It is only now that us Part-Timers are being called to sign for our part-time duties. And yes, it's good that those among us on fewer than 25 hrs/week can choose

to increase our hours to 25. But still, who can get by on part-time pay anyway? We've been saying this for some time now, but we'll keep repeating it: those among us who want to increase our hours to full-time should be able to do so! [Workers' Fight Bulletin Mount Pleasant Mail Centre 27/03/19]

- **Headless chickens**

We see that managers are now in a frenzy trying to find enough senior mates to sign up for a second wave of early retirement... And yet, no mention of much-needed recruitment to fill in the gaps! We know that Royal Mail bosses aim to get more out of fewer of us. But unlike the managers, we're not going to rush around for the sake of RM's profits... [Workers' Fight Bulletin Mount Pleasant Mail Centre 27/03/19 - re-edited]



- **Keeping down emissions**

RM has bought a whole new fleet of 7.5T vans for HMP Distribution - which meet the standard of the new 'ultra low emission zone' coming into force on the 8th of April... otherwise RM would have had to pay the ULEZ daily charge. Let's hope this is not another of their bad investments and that the vans run OK for us. But so far, so good. [Workers' Fight Bulletin Mount Pleasant Mail Centre 27/03/19 - re-edited]

King's Cross railway station (London)

Tiny trains, big profit

NER was "pleased" to announce that the long-delayed Azuma trains, built by Hitachi, will start as a passenger service this May, on the East Coast mainline.

They are pleased, but should their passengers and workers be? The number of seats crammed into each coach is 96 - compared to 78 on the already too "compact" current fleet. The lack of space is compounded by badly designed stabilisation handles on seats which actually obstruct the aisles.

To get around the absence of

electrification after Edinburgh, 2 engines with 5 cars each, attached to each other, are to be used, but there is no access between them in case of an emergency. But Health & Safety officers haven't yet had a chance to review the trains, just one month before their introduction.

It also seems that the drivers may well be given the responsibility of opening all the doors - even though this has been contested by both drivers and guards as unsafe.

So it seems that even this delayed

• LNER: the old-new model?

Chairman of John Lewis Partnership, Keith Williams, who is commissioned by the government to review the railways, has already given us a glimpse of his "vision" for the future of railway franchises. After the fiasco over Virgin's failure to deliver last year, obliging the government to take back the East Coast line and after the timetable fiasco last May, when thousands of trains were delayed or cancelled, his review is meant to come up with better ways to operate the system...

So far, his announcements propose the end of "fragmentation", "short-termism" and "lack of accountability" caused by the rail franchises. He hints towards introducing "new models of franchising" or "greater public control of contracts". But what are these "new" models which will be under "public control"?

One obvious possibility is the option which the government chose when it re-launched East Coast as London North Eastern



introduction is too soon: these trains may well have to be stopped before they have even started. ☐

Railway (LNER) last year, and its management was given to a consortium of three private companies, viz., Arup, Ernest & Young and SNC-Lavalin. They didn't go through a competitive tendering process; they were selected and then paid a £2m-plus fee.

One thing is certain. Whatever the "new" model, the government will make sure that the rail sharks can continue to feed on public money..

• LNER: getting us for cheap

Last year, LNER announced a new 4-year Degree Apprenticeship programme for posts in what they call customer experience, human resources or safety & operations. The scheme was officially launched this Spring. The new apprentices will have the chance

to study and have a job while LNER is "preparing" them for their future careers. What LNER is not telling us, though, is the amount of money the apprentices will earn!

The legal rate is as low as £3.90 per hour. If the apprentices are doing jobs,

rather than just shadowing staff - and the chronic staff-shortage makes that more likely - it'd mean LNER bosses getting a dirt-cheap workforce by paying well below the rate for the job! But only if the rest of us allow it!

• This is how LNER bosses show their respect

We'd been told that the 1st run of the Azuma with passengers was meant to be last week. The guard allocated to this train had done 43 years on the railway, and this was meant to be his last day at work. But the train didn't turn up. It wasn't as much of a let-down as you might think, since we've grown to expect such failures by LNER. And we got more time to say goodbye to

our long-service workmate. Enjoy your retirement! [Workers' Platform King's X 27/03/19]

• 0 does not equal 14, nor does 8

Seems LNER bosses didn't learn maths: they've recruited 8 new on-board mates to fill 14 vacancies... But, it will take at least a whole month before these 8 finish their training and start the job. So this means that we are still short of 14 workers for another month, and never mind that we will be short by 6 for the next

who knows how long. [Workers' Platform King's X 27/03/19]

• Still more staff needed

Talking about staff shortages in LNER and the subcontractors, it would obviously make sense to hire the proper number needed. But instead, we see more and more jobs filled by managers, supervisors, master coordinators, etc., which do not lend us the pairs of hands and feet that we need to do the work! [Workers' Platform King's X 27/03/19]

Subcontracting

• Interserve - will it be Carillion 2.0?

After years of reporting losses and accumulating debt in order to keep afloat, it was no surprise that Interserve went into administration on the 15th of March. Having written off £830m of gross debt, the lenders - banks and hedge funds - have repossessed Interserve from its other shareholders.

So far, Interserve isn't totally bankrupt as happened with Carillion in January 2018, despite the fact that what caused its collapse is very similar. Just like Carillion, Interserve got its fingers into just about every public sector pie: winning long-term PFI and PPP contracts for everything from school meals to the maintenance of overseas military bases. And just

like Carillion, Interserve borrowed more and more from the banks in order to build its subcontracting empire.

So, will this be a Carillion 2.0? For now at least, it seems the banks have stepped in to "save" their investment. What's more, the government has guaranteed to continue to offer contracts. On the other hand, lenders could still try to recoup some of their loan capital by "restructuring" Interserve to make more profits, or by selling some of its subsidiaries. Moreover, rival vultures, like Mitie and Serco, are already circling. What's certain is that neither Interserve workers, nor society as a whole, can afford the parasitism and profiteering of these giant subcontractors.

• Plan B: bailing out the profit sharks

Literally right after Interserve entered administration, it was handed £660m worth of public contracts by the government! And that's not even the end of it: in a leaked document, it was revealed that ministers drew up plans to nationalise parts of the services that Interserve were running, in case of a Carillion 2.0! Of course, many of these services happen to keep government facilities running!

Meanwhile, Carillion's bankruptcy has left 46,000 workers and 2000 apprentices to their fate, and the government couldn't care less. This only goes to show what was already obvious: in this society, the role of the government is to spin profits for the capitalist class, and that's that.

Algeria

On February 16th, the announcement that president Abdelaziz Bouteflika would be running for a 5th term at the age of 82, sparked off the largest and longest wave of protests ever seen in Algeria. Since then, week after week, protesters have been demanding not only Bouteflika's departure, but that the clique of politicians around him who have clung to power for 20 years, also leave. In fact at the time of writing, the protests are continuing, despite the announcement that Bouteflika will now resign before the end of his term, by the end of April.

Fuelling this anger is the severe degradation of living conditions over the past years. There is a 30% unemployment-rate among the youth; the minimum wage is just £110 per month and casual jobs are generalised. Meanwhile public services, like transport and health, are left to rot. And yet this former French colony is rich in natural resources, especially oil. However French and British companies like Total and BP have plundered these resources - with the help of the regime and local companies. No wonder therefore, that protesters do not

US and Britain

Last month, the United States announced its decision to revoke or deny visas to International Criminal Court (ICC) personnel seeking to investigate possible war crimes by US forces in Afghanistan. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo went on to argue that "the ICC is attacking America's rule of law," and justified the action since: "we are determined to protect the American and allied military and civilian personnel from living in fear of unjust prosecution for actions

Letter from Delhi

In April and May, India will go to the polls. Five years ago, prime minister Narendra Modi and his right-wing Hindu-nationalist BJP party came to power with the enthusiastic support of big Indian and international capital, which were expecting him to facilitate their looting of the country. So what is Modi's record?

His BJP administration met the bosses' expectations with a policy designed to help the bosses to make the working class and poor foot the bill of the economic crisis. So, an estimated 20m jobs disappeared over the past two years alone, in a country where there are 400m employed workers. The government's own figures show that

The population shakes the ruling order



discriminate between the regime's politicians and big business when they condemn corruption!

After nearly a month of protests, increasingly accompanied by strikes, the army generals must have felt that the mobilisation was threatening to reach a dangerous tipping point, where the masses might feel strong enough to take things into their own hands and settle their accounts with the regime themselves. In any case, at that point,

the generals decided that the time had come to change to "damage limitation mode": they abandoned Bouteflika and even started arresting some of his big business associates.

But judging from the protesters' response to the army's intervention - with the slogan "we want all of them out!", in which they clearly included the army general staff - the generals' fear of an uncontrollable social explosion, could still materialise! □

Imperialist partners in crime

taken to defend our great nation." In other words, the US government made it clear that nobody has the right to even raise a finger against US imperialism's war crimes around the world. In fact, the US has never joined the ICC.

Britain has also, time and again, refused to recognise the ICC's authority, when the crimes of British armed forces were under investigation. In 2018, when the international law against aggression, under which politicians and

military leaders can be held individually responsible for invasions and other major attacks, came into force at the International Criminal Court, Britain refused to be a signatory. The British government along with France and Japan even attempted to delay the ratification of the law, to protect the likes of Tony Blair who many feel should be tried as a war criminal, for his invasion of Iraq alongside US President Bush. □

unemployment is at its highest in 45 years! And these figures do not cover the country's shadow (or "unorganised") economy, which employs 92% of all workers in the most exploitative and uncertain conditions!

To allow for the more intensive exploitation of workers, the Modi government substantially weakened the employment legislation regarding industrial safety, limits on overtime, ease of hiring and firing, workers' savings and insurance. In the case of overtime, for instance, the pre-existing legal maximum of 50 hours of overtime per month has now been increased to 150hrs! New legislation has opened the door to the employment of a larger proportions of casual workers and legalised

short fixed-term contracts in industry.

India's workers have not taken these attacks lying down. For instance, in 2016, in the City of Bangalore, restrictions on workers withdrawing money from their employee saving fund led to strikes and roadblocks by more than 15,000 textile workers. The protests were so successful, that the government had to back down on the legislation.

Of course, today, starting to regain some of the ground lost in the last five years, will take more than an election in which the main contenders share the BJP's pro-capitalist policies. But struggles such as the Bangalore strike show how the young Indian working class could begin to tilt the balance of forces in its favour. □

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.