

# WORKERS' fight



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

# TIME WE RAISED OUR VOICE!

The Tory leadership puppet show has exposed what really underpinned the past years of Brexit chaos. It has shed the crudest possible light on the chronic in-fighting, bickering, overbidding and sniping by Tory factions, which has been driving the Brexit saga, right from its very inception.

Significantly, no fewer than twelve candidates made an initial bid for May's mantle. But these aspiring leaders did not come out of nowhere. One way or another, all of them had already been using the Brexit process and its underlying guerilla warfare in order to position themselves and promote their own careers.

Significant too, was the fact that on the whole, these contenders had no ideas nor policies of their own to defend in this leadership contest. They just proved to be chameleons, who could adjust their views - or, more accurately, their lies - to any audience, according to needs.

## **A fatal reactionary attraction**

There was one thing that all these contenders had in common: their endorsement of the absurd idea that there can be any logic in little Britain cutting itself off from Europe. But this has other consequences.

Lest we forget, Brexit was born out of the main parties' attempt to divert attention from their bailing out of big business after the 2008 banking crisis. Britain's economic ills were blamed on the EU and the rise of poverty on migrant workers. The logical conclusion of all this scape-goating was the whole Brexit lunacy.

As a result, supporting Brexit today also means de facto condoning the xenophobic scape-goating which underpins it. And this has consequences.

It is not for nothing, for instance, if Hunt rushes to support Trump's



threats against Iran - even though they are strikingly reminiscent of the run-up to the invasion of Iraq! Nor is it a coincidence that the same Hunt makes a point of endorsing Trump's racist slurs against London Mayor, Sadiq Khan! Hunt's unconditional support for Trump's policies is merely consistent with the xenophobic logic of a Brexit he unconditionally supports.

And the same is true of the other leadership contenders. Whatever their position on "no deal", their support for Brexit determines the reactionary nature of the policies they champion.

## **A bankrupt system**

As the second TV debate highlighted, none of the contenders had anything to say on the rise of poverty and foodbanks - not to mention the threats on jobs or the on-going rise of casual employment.

For years now, the issues which directly affect the working class have been swept under the carpet. Instead, the Tories' internal warfare and the

Brexit saga have occupied most of the political space.

Of course, this is largely due to the fact that the political scene remains mostly confined to parliamentary institutions, which are designed to be used by the political personnel of the capitalist class as a means to keep the working class out of politics altogether.

But the working class hasn't made its voice heard yet. Nor has it used its fighting capacity, in the streets and in the workplaces, to defend its collective interests.

It is this capacity that the working class needs to start building up right now, in particular by pre-empting any attempt by the bosses and politicians to divide its ranks along the lines of nationality.

What matters today is not so much what form Brexit will take, nor whether it will really happen or not. What really matters is the capacity of the working class to prevent big business from using Brexit as a cover for yet another turn of the screw in the months to come. □

## Women

When the US state of Alabama placed a ban on abortion in May this year, there were justified protests around the world. But Alabama is just one of 9 US states which this year, have passed laws severely restricting women's abortion rights. Its law makes no exception for victims of rape, only allowing abortion if there's a lethal fetal abnormality or threat to a mother's life. It threatens doctors with life in prison for performing the procedure.

One month later, Louisiana has passed a law limiting abortion to the period of pregnancy before a fetal heart-beat is detectable, i.e., the first 6 weeks, which is another way of imposing a near-total ban, as most pregnancies won't be detected until 6 weeks. Five other states already impose this.

### The erosion began straight-away

In fact ever since the 1973 US Supreme Court decision to legalise abortion made abortion a woman's constitutional right (the Roe vs Wade case), anti-abortion activists have been trying to overturn it. In 1992, the Supreme Court itself restricted abortions to the period of "unviability" (before a fetus can survive outside the mother's womb) i.e., 24-28 weeks.

Since the late 1970s anti-abortionists, mis-named "Pro-Lifers" have murdered 11 abortion clinic personnel and carried out 41 bombings and 173 arson attacks. Not to mention their constant intimidation of women and picketing of clinics in pursuit of their reactionary "cause". Every year on the anniversary of the Supreme Court ruling they parade up Constitution Hill in Washington, lately much-bolstered by the rightward social shift which was exacerbated by the financial crash of 2008 and its consequences.

Between 2010 and 2016, 338 new

## US: abortion rights under attack

restrictions on abortion were legislated out of a total of 1,142 since 1973. For instance "Targeted Restrictions on Abortion Providers" specifying absurd requirements like the width of clinic corridors, size of rooms, minimum distance from a school, etc., etc. Some states impose mandatory counselling and waiting periods, or require that 2 doctors must be present when a woman takes the abortion pill. Five states require fetal remains from abortions to be cremated or buried, at the patient's expense. Forty-six states allow healthcare providers to refuse to provide abortion services. Forty-four allow health insurances to deny payment for abortions. All these measures make it virtually impossible for clinics to function.

By 2014, for the whole US population (168m females!) there were only 780 clinics offering abortions. Today, out of the 50 US states, 7 states only have one such clinic and Missouri has none. There are only 5 states (California, Washington, Oregon, New York and Vermont) which still recognise the full legal right to abortion, while 21 states are "hostile or very

hostile", applying varying degrees of anti-abortion legislation.

### Women's rights trumped

In 2016, along came the misogynist President Donald Trump, declaring himself opposed to abortion and pledging he'd appoint judges to the Supreme Court, with a view to reversing Roe vs Wade.

When a pro-choice judge retired last year, he duly appointed the anti-abortion right-winger, Brett Kavanaugh, so the court now has a majority of anti-abortion-minded judges who could make just such a ruling.

This is the context which anti-abortion campaigners are exploiting today, while Trump and his Republicans are using the issue to mobilise votes for the 2020 election. But they've also succeeded in mobilising all those who support women's rights: so far 7 states have been pressured into passing laws to maintain abortion access if Roe vs Wade is reversed. Women and indeed the whole working class, have every reason to fight this reactionary tide! □



## • Abortion restrictions in Britain and Northern Ireland's exclusion

Women in Northern Ireland are even worse off than women in Alabama - they're denied abortions even in cases of severe fetal abnormality. What's more, the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act, which is the law which makes abortion in Northern Ireland under any circumstances a criminal offence, is also still in force in the rest of Britain!

Of course the 1967 Act did legalise abortions on the British mainland, but in exceptional circumstances: if 2 doctors both agree the woman's mental and/or physical health to be at risk. Today this means that anyone obtaining an abortion outside

of these criteria, eg., by using abortion pills bought online, theoretically risks imprisonment for life!

So far, it is only women in Northern Ireland who have been prosecuted for this "offence" - precisely those women for whom self-administered abortion pills are the only reasonable way to abort a pregnancy - since their only other alternative is to travel to Britain at great cost, even if the abortion procedure itself is now funded by the NHS.

Despite vigorous lobbying by pro-choice activists, the Westminster government

refuses to pressurise the devolved Northern Irish Assembly to legalise abortion. One obvious reason is that anti-abortion Unionists have held the balance of power in Westminster since 2017. But given that most candidates for the Tory leadership hold anti-abortion views, even the conditional exemption allowing abortions under the 1967 Act could be put at risk in the future.

Anyway, it's not only the fight for abortion rights for Northern Irish women which the working class has to win, but also the right to abortion without restriction and the trashing of the 1861 Act for everyone.

## 75 years ago: D-Day's killing fields

This year's celebration of the anniversary of D-Day was unusual in that it was held both in Portsmouth (the starting point of some of the ships used for the Allies' landing) and on the French coast (where the landing actually took place, on 6th June 1944). But, as usual, little was said about the real (hidden) story behind this gigantic operation "Overlord", in which one and a half million soldiers from all over the world, were dumped on France's beaches, under heavy German artillery fire.

Officially, D-Day is described as the beginning of Europe's "liberation" from Hitler's armies. For the local French population, however, this "liberation" began as a massacre: under the pretext of paralysing the German army, neighbouring towns were systematically carpet-bombed by the US and British air forces, killing an estimated 30,000 civilians!

Nor was D-Day the turning point in the war that it is often claimed to be. In fact, the course of the war had already been reversed the previous year by two Red Army victories: first, in February 1943, at Stalingrad, in Southern Russia and then, in July, at Kursk, closer to Moscow. But these victories had come at an enormous cost: in the battle for



Stalingrad alone, the Soviet Union suffered more casualties than the US army during the whole course of the war!

But operation "Overlord" was not even designed to relieve the Soviet Union from Hitler's pressure on the Eastern front. On the contrary, the aim of US and British leaders - especially of Churchill - was to ensure that their own troops should be first to reach Germany and its Central European allies, before the Red Army. As it happened, they failed. But, under Stalin's orders, the Red Army did the imperialist leaders' dirty work for them, by pre-empting and repressing any attempt to put the existing social order into question after the end of the war.

## Our history

So what should be said about the 425,000 soldiers who died, in more or less equal numbers on both sides, during the 3 months it took, after D-Day, for operation "Overlord" to force the German army into retreat? Of course, many of them died thinking they were fighting fascism. But in reality, they were used as canon fodder by the Allied governments in order to preserve at all costs, the very same imperialist order which had caused this war in the first place. Only by asserting this reality - the true face of this imperialist war - can we pay tribute to the memory of the millions, soldiers and civilians, who lost their lives on its killing fields! ☐

## British Steel: state subsidies for job slashers?

The collapse of British Steel threatens 5,000 jobs, of which 3,000 are at its Scunthorpe steelworks, in Lincolnshire, and up to 27,000 more are in the supply chain.

Brexit seems to have contributed to the crisis, by putting off customers from placing orders. But in addition, British Steel bosses seem to have failed to note that, due to Brexit, they would no longer be entitled to an EU-funded scheme designed to provide industrial companies with an incentive to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. As a result, they were faced with an "unexpected" £120m carbon tax bill.

As it happened, this bill was immediately covered in full by a government loan. But despite this, just a fortnight later, British Steel announced that it was going into administration. So British Steel workers are now expected to foot all the company's bills themselves,

at the cost of their jobs, wages and pensions!

The only alternative, of course, is for these workers to organise themselves to ensure that the bosses don't get away with all this. If they did, they might soon find that, ironically in these days of anti-European hysteria, their best allies against the greed of their British bosses are the French workers at the Ascoval steelworks in northern France, which British Steel bought just as it was facing bankruptcy, and those at the Hayange steel mill, in eastern France, which it already owned!

### • Casualty of a serial parasite?

British Steel's collapse put the spotlight on its owner - private equity firm Greybull Capital, which bought the company from Tata in 2016, for £1. It claims to have invested £20m in British Steel, but about 1,000 jobs have been

## Social

cut at Scunthorpe, while wages and pension contributions were cut by 3% in Greybull's first year of ownership.

Greybull is a classic capitalist parasite - in fact, what amounts to a payday shark for companies facing financial difficulties. Greybull "rescues" its prey for peanuts. Then, rather than providing it with the investment it needs, it lends it funds at extortionate interest rates while charging large fees for its so-called "management services".

Several of Greybull's victims have gone bust in the past. But each time, Greybull was able to use its position as creditor to make a neat profit out of their collapse. For instance, it collected £50m from the winding up of Comet stores, in 2014, and almost £60m when Monarch Airlines went to the wall, in 2017. And today, the fact that Greybull is a British Steel creditor, puts it in the queue for yet another parasite's payout!

### Playing politics with football

English football had a great run last month when four teams in the Premier League contested two European cup finals. May was so proud of the English teams' performances that she boasted about them in the Commons, declaring that she too, would make a dramatic comeback in her Brexit negotiations, just like Liverpool did against Barcelona!

Isn't this highly ironical when, at the same time, May and her Brexiteers are so adamant that Britain is not really "European", after all? Besides, what's really "English" about these teams? Aren't Liverpool's leading players from Egypt, Senegal, Belgium, Guinea, Brazil and the Netherlands and their manager from Germany? The truth is that this "English" sport is far more international than May would care to admit!

May bears some responsibility for this

relative lack of home-grown players. Her party's austerity measures have created a hostile environment against young football enthusiasts. Since 2010, 710 council-owned football pitches and 210 school pitches have been axed due to cuts, thereby preventing many young people from developing their football skills. In fact, May's policies may well succeed in preventing the emergence of tomorrow's Harry Kanes and Trent Alexander-Arnolds in Britain...

**Brexit watch****Tory history repeats itself as farce**

Predictably, the Tory party collapsed in the EU elections, getting less than 1 out of 10 votes and coming fifth behind the Green party. And how could it be otherwise, after 3 years of paralysis in government, due to the party's internal disagreements, and 3 years of intensified austerity?

The government finally came full circle when, on the 24th of May, Theresa May announced her resignation. Indeed, Farage's victory in the EU election this time round, had exactly the same effect as Ukip's win in 2014: a seat-saving offensive launched by the Tory right-wingers... Back then, Prime Minister Cameron tried to restore order in the party by organising the 2016 EU referendum, miscalculated, and had to resign, thereby opening a succession crisis and causing even more bitter infighting between Tory factions.

Today, just like in 2016, Theresa May's

### • **Tory contenders out-Farage-ing Farage**

Far from being a pro-Brexit landslide, the EU election results actually gave the edge to the campaigners for a second referendum - even though 2 out of 3 registered voters felt that there was no stake in turning out to vote.

So only 13.2% of all registered voters cast their ballot for parties that clearly campaigned for a hard-Brexit - less than the 15.4% voting for "hard" remain

### • **Hunt is also one of them**

As second favourite in the race to be Prime Minister, Jeremy Hunt is keen to use his record as Foreign Secretary in order to show how good he is at defending the interests of British companies, as he did in the case of BAE System's £2.5bn/yr arms contract with the Saudi monarchs.

But who can forget his record as Health Minister? He resolutely attacked the junior doctors conditions, with outrageous demands for overtime, insisting that they cover a 7-day/week working on less pay. The outcome of Hunt's "victory" over the junior doctors is that the number staying in medicine fell from 71% in 2011, to 43% in 2017. There are now 9000 vacancies for doctors in



resignation and the competition for the Tory leadership has once more exposed the Tory factional battlefield. And at the time of writing, hard-Brexit Johnson is leading the field for her crown. If a hard-Brexit is the result, it will mean that once more the electorate - indeed the whole population - will have paid the price for the

parties.

But despite this, most contenders in the Tory leadership race are trying to out-Brexit Farage and his Brexit party - when in fact Farage only managed to mobilise 11.66% of all registered voters.

But never mind. Boris Johnson has declared that he would prepare for a "no-deal" Brexit scenario and "ditch" the Irish backstop - which ensures no hard border

the NHS.

Hunt may be seen as an alternative to Johnson just because he doesn't look too Trump-ish. But his views (for example, he thinks abortions should be restricted to before 12 weeks!) and his record in government place him firmly in the British Trumps' box!

### • **Should all politicians be put in jail?**

In the run-up to the Tory leadership contest, all kinds of scandals surfaced, including multiple confessions of previous drug use. But what really stole the headlines from Brexit, at least temporarily, was Boris Johnson being found guilty of lying over the £350m bus-claim campaign. In his defence, his lawyer,

resolution of the Tories' squabbling and their attempted salvation of their party. Up to now it has been 3 years of deadlock with everything more or less suspended in mid-air thanks to this internal Tory political crisis. But if and when Brexit happens, the more profound problems affecting all of us, will start. □

in Ireland - and replace it by... unspecified "alternative arrangements". As for Dominic Raab, he was more specific: he would suspend parliament "to make sure we leave by October".

To jump into May's shoes, the Tory contenders have adopted Farage's agenda, indulging in yet another wave of right-wing overbidding!

a Mr. Darbishire, told the court that making false statements "must be as old as political campaigning itself".

And true to his lawyer's words, Boris is already back at it, pledging that every secondary school would receive £5,000 per pupil per year (or an increase of £48.6 million) if he wins the crown. Meanwhile, former education secretary Michael Gove bids even higher, promising an extra £1 billion for schools. But considering that the school budget currently stands at £43.5 billion, Gove's plan means an extra 2.3% in extra spending, while Johnson's equals a measly 0.1%...

So one might as well accuse both Boris Johnson and Michael Gove of being nothing more than the politicians which this system wants them to be!

### **Labour's "Take it AND Leave it"**

Labour Party MPs are still arguing about which position they should take over Brexit in order to best defend their Parliamentary seats come the next General Election.

Corbyn, for now, is sticking more or less to the position he "clarified" at the end of April, i.e., that Brexit "has to" be delivered. This position was shaken after Labour were beaten into 3rd place in the European elections at the end of May, and then somewhat reinforced after they

won the Peterborough by-election at the beginning of June.

So, while some MPs are pressuring Corbyn to openly support Remain, the Labour Party, for the time being, is back where it started, trying to be "the only party which represents both people who supported Leave and Remain", and all the while completely ignoring the xenophobic poison of the Brexit saga, and the threat this poses for the working class.

Not that Labour even tries to be a voice for the working class or represent its interests. Rather than denouncing the

whole 2016 referendum, its lies, and the myth of the "Will of the People", Labour is determined to play the political game, with the hope of one day taking over the management of the capitalists' affairs.

Of course the working class has no interest in maintaining this system. A working class policy would, on the contrary, expose the sham "democracy" of the political institutions designed only to conceal the rule of big business... specifically what Corbyn avoids doing.

## Trump and the Brexiteers agree

Beyond his megalomania and tweeted provocations, Trump's posturing has a purpose - which has nothing to do with protecting US workers' jobs conditions, and everything to do with protecting the interests and profits of US multinationals. And of course that goes just as much for the claims of Tory Brexiteers and former Tory, Nigel Farage.

Trump's "war" (which some Tory backbenchers echo) against China's telecom's giant Huawei, is a case in point. China may still be a poor country, but due to the size of this population, its state could pool colossal resources, allowing the emergence of a company like Huawei which rivals the US Apple. And importantly, it's ahead of the US company Cisco in the race to supply heavy duty equipment for tomorrow's 5G mobile networks. This

### • Taking on our own Trumps

Britain has its own home-grown Trumps: like the Tory hard-Brexiteer contenders to May's mantle, from Johnson to McVey and Leadsom. They all want to imitate Trump, with tax cuts for companies and the rich and social spending cuts for the working class. And they want to negotiate "free trade deals" with the world. Except that an isolated, crippled British economy, hasn't got the might of the US economy. And this means that Britain's Trumps will try to get the working class to compensate British companies for their inevitable

### • Britain earns the international silver medal for inequality

Last month, the Institute for Fiscal Studies launched a 5-year review of inequality in Britain. The introduction to the IFS Deaton Review, as it's called, confirmed that the rich are indeed getting richer and the poor getting poorer - to the point where Britain (almost) leads the world in terms of social injustices, right after the US! According to the review, the "average chief executive pay at FTSE 100 firms has risen to 145 times that of the average worker, from 4 times as recently as 1998".

The IFS also points at other indicators which expose how social conditions have gotten worse over the past two decades. Such as the doubling, since the 1990s, of suicide rates and drug and alcohol-related problems among men. And the fact that young people today are poorer than previous generations, nullifying expected improvements in life expectancy.

Concerned that inequalities "may pose a threat not just to capitalism but also to our democratic system", the IFS Review undertook the task of recommending policies to the government. But when capitalism is so obviously rotten to the core, the only worthwhile policy would be for the working class to overthrow it...



is what's bugging Cisco and, therefore, Trump.

What's more, if Trump is slapping sanctions on Iran and Turkey, it's because these countries are in a position to put up some resistance to the dictates of US multinationals. So if Trump

losses.

So when it comes to Trump's "incredible free trade deal", there had been warnings - including from Labour - that it could also target (and damage) the NHS. This is certainly true, but it's nothing new. NHS services are already bought by from big US companies like HCA Healthcare and the Centene Corporation, which specialises in the privatisation of GP surgeries and home healthcare "solutions". But these are just 2 US players in an ocean of private British companies which were

### • A return to the dark ages?

A recent UN report on the impact of austerity measures in Britain has shown a shocking increase in poverty since 2010. Currently, one fifth of the population (14 million) are living in poverty, with 1.5 million unable to afford basic essentials. While the government boasts about the "all-time high" employment rate, living standards continue to go down the drain for the working class.

Half of working-age adults in poverty are currently working! One in 6 of those reliant on foodbanks are in work. No wonder: 10% of all workers are employed on precarious terms. And today, wages remain below the pre-2008 crisis level, while the cost of living has skyrocketed, including higher rent, food, electricity and gas prices.

The UN rapporteur's criticism was especially harsh against the measures implemented under Universal Credit, calling this "a return to the 19th century workhouse". DWP Secretary Amber Rudd is now lodging a formal complaint against the UN, claiming that this is "a barely believable documentation of Britain"! The working class can certainly believe it: this is its life!

## Brexit watch

favours a no-deal Brexit, it's only because US corporations could easily take advantage of the comparatively small and isolated British economy, which would not be able to resist US demands nor indeed the threat of sanctions from Trump, or his successor. □

milking the NHS budget long before Trump arrived on the scene!

Indeed, it's high time to reverse the privatisation by stealth of the NHS carried out under Blair and under the Tories before and after him. And to avoid the further damage Brexit will do to the NHS!

So, yes, there are big battles ahead. But first of all, against the home-grown Trumps - those who undermined public services in the past, as well as those who plan to do more of the same in the future, as part of Brexit!

### • EU settlement status: a fiasco in the making

The Home office's, new settlement scheme which came into force in March, requires all EU citizens to apply for "settled or pre-settled status" if they want to remain in Britain after Brexit. If they can prove their identity and that they have lived here for 5 years (by 31 October 2019 - for now!) and have no criminal convictions, they're eligible for settled status. If they haven't been here for 5 years yet they can get pre-settled status and convert it to settled status once they've reached the 5-year requirement.

But it all depends on what deal - or no deal - is struck at the end of the day. If the existing Withdrawal Deal eventually goes through, for instance, EU citizens would be able to apply until 30 June 2021, but only until 31 December 2020 if there is no deal.

According to the Home Office just under 750,000 EU citizens living in Britain have applied so far - which is just 20% of the 3.6 million EU citizens living here, which could well put the other 80% in a precarious position. And given the Home Office's dubious record, highlighted by the Windrush scandal, this has all the elements of another scandal in the making.

**Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)****The fight for Bridgend workers: an injury to one is an injury to all**

Graham Hoare, new Ford of Britain chair announced on 6 June that he was bringing forward the closure of the Bridgend Engine plant, which employs 1,700 of our workmates.

He claimed there were 3 "key reasons" (over and above the requirement that Ford Europe should achieve a 6% profit margin): the end of the contract to supply Jaguar Land Rover, the end of life of the 1.5 GTDi Ecoboost engine and what he claims is "reduced global demand" for its replacement, the new so-called Dragon engine. He also

claimed there was "no other Ford product available to Bridgend over the business plan period". On offer are what he calls generous separation terms and relocation - the totally unrealistic idea that mates from Wales should move to Dagenham for instance! As for the money on offer - even up to £90,000 for long-service mates won't last more than a few years and can't make up for the loss of a job, especially in the desert for employment that South Wales now is.

Anyway shop stewards were told



that workers in Mexico can make the Dragon engine for half the cost! No doubt that applies to Dagenham's Panther engine too, which is also made in India..

No, what we say is we won't be played against each other; there should be no loss of jobs; workers can share all available work and get the wages they need. Full stop. □

- **So, when is the strike ballot?**

We heard that the convenors of all plants met on Wednesday to discuss about what to do against Ford over this decision to close Bridgend - and what to do about all the other cuts... So by now we should have heard something from them? And didn't they already say (in writing, several weeks ago) that if Ford carried out its threats that no plant should be left alone to fight? What they definitely implied was that a ballot for strike would be carried out across all the plants! So what's more to discuss? [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 12/06/19]

- **It's obvious: we need a mass meeting!**

Given the fact that some stewards are better than others and we don't all hear vital news, nor what's going on from one side of the estate to another, we really need to have mass meetings - so that what one person (or union official!) knows, everybody knows! Contract workers from LLL and Hamton included!! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 12/06/19]

- **"Reset" and "redesign" the bosses**

So Ford says it wants 350 job cuts in Transport Ops - 150 right away as "voluntary" redundancies, (but no replacements - so these are jobs lost), for the so-called

"Reset" phase of job cuts. Then it's another 209 "VRs" for "Redesign", by June 2020. Including cutting the Ford railway.

It's a fact that nothing Ford says can be believed. It'll probably change the goalposts again, just like with Bridgend. So we should say "bollocks!" to this now - and start a blockade of all sites! We can - so surely we must! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 12/06/19]

- **This is not up for negotiation!**

How can the officials in TOPs agree to anything that Ford wants? Why discuss these cuts at all? We heard that the policy was to withdraw from all joint meetings until Ford withdraws its threats. So what about it? [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 12/06/19]

**Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**

- **Royal Mail piling up profits**

RM bosses are at it again - they like to complain that they aren't making as much profit as they'd like, yet this year's pre-tax profits are £241million! Up 13.6% from last year! Of course, a large part is thanks to their cuts to pensions and Ts&Cs - plus our labour. Now we hear news of new boss Rico Backward's "5-Year Plan" for RM... [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 22/05/19]

- **We need our own "plan"!**

...clearly, this boss has been picking up tricks from Amazon. Managers are trying to attack our Ts&Cs further, with the excuse that all large parcels have to be processed "outside normal operations".

What does this mean? They plan to process all large parcels (format 3&4) in 3 big warehouses. Then they'll use the opportunity to make our delivery

walks longer (!!), to push delivery drivers' finishing times later in the evening, cut jobs, and have offices which only process smaller parcels. This "Becoming Amazon strategy" might please shareholders but makes us see red! [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 05/06/19]

- **When pigs fly...**

According to new top boss Rico Backward, £1.8bn investment into Royal Mail is going to fund the technology and infrastructure to allow a second daily parcel delivery... This includes "new fully-automated parcel hubs". Wouldn't that be amazing: machines that sort without any help at all! [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 05/06/19]

- **Nice try, but no**

Calling all Part Time Night-owls... The offer for the new 33hr shift means turning nocturnal one night a week! This "option" means doing a 12hr shift - we weren't even asked about alternative arrangements.



As for the fortnightly Saturday 8hr shift option, have the management agreed to go back to paying a premium for incorporating these unsocial hours? [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 05/06/19]

- **We're not falling for it**

On top of it all, this offer of more hours for us Part Timers is meant to be temporary! And why? Apparently because the EVRs aren't finished, and this would result in a "surplus" of staff! And yet, there are more casual mates around than ever before. Management think we can't see what's going on in front of our eyes. [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 05/06/19]

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

**New trains, new problems**

On 15th May, the long-expected Hitachi Azuma train was officially launched for passenger service by London Northern Eastern Railways. However, so far trains only travel between London and Leeds and are unable to run all the way to Scotland.

Despite a delay of over a year, only 1/6th of the fleet has been introduced and there are a host of problems. One significant issue is the incompatibility of the new trains with the current signalling system. And during a trial by Great Western, which is also introducing them, an Azuma blocked access to Paddington

station for hours after it pulled down several miles of overhead cable, causing another train almost to derail in the process! Then there are minor problems, like too narrow aisles, kitchens too cramped, and if the train needs to be 10 cars instead of 5, two 5-car-trains have to be linked together, but there is no access between them.

Indeed, these Azumas trains were designed for a modern railway, like in Japan, where they originate. But here in Britain, trains are running on a Victorian network. What



is more, the government cut the program of electrification of the line past Edinburgh, up to the Highlands, hoping that Hitachi's hybrid Azuma, which is both electric and diesel, will be able to run on these old un-electrified lines... But that still remains to be seen. ☐

• **Strike and strike again**

Everyone's seen that this June might be a month of rail strikes! Well, that's if strike ballots don't turn into behind-closed-doors deals done by ASLEF, RMT, and TSSA leaders... In the meantime, guards are striking on South Western and Arriva Trains Northern, and we have to wonder why this long-standing action excludes the rest of us who have every interest in keeping guards on every train and fighting against all attacks by the rail bosses. [Workers' Platform King's X 6/06/19]

• **Dreaming on planet LNER**

So we have this booklet of LNER called "Ride with Pride" which lists all the things which us catering workers are

supposed to be doing on these fancy new trains. It's just how things would be in an ideal world. But of course, the real LNER world means none of this is even remotely possible. Just one example: "ask customers their preferred dining times". We nearly fell about laughing (again) when we read that. Picture this. One hundred passengers in 1st class waiting for breakfast, and one of us asking them one by one what time they want to have their breakfast. Do we need to say more? [Workers' Platform King's X 6/06/19]

• **Not nearly enough**

What a joke! Network Rail has been boasting about the new pay deal: an increase equal to RPI instead of CPI (3.2%) for now and RPI for January 2020. Maybe

we should remind them, since the union reps did not, when they agreed this deal, that prices go up more than inflation and whether with RPI or CPI, it's not bl\*\*dy enough. [Workers' Platform King's X 6/06/19]

• **Holiday time?**

No way! Platforms 9-11 will close soon for refurbishment but Great Northern managers haven't yet announced where are we supposed to go? We've heard maybe St. Pancras, maybe different gates at KX and maybe even stations far away from here. It seems management don't know if we're coming or going... But we're not going... [Workers' Platform King's X 6/06/19]

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

• **Only fit for unpicking**

We finally got the pay offer then, fully 6 months late. And what have the bosses and the union been doing in that time? Knitting? Because they've sure attached a lot of strings to it! Are they trying to tie us up in knots? Either they give us a pay rise, or they don't, but they won't even give it to us straight any more. We guess we need to give it to them straight: what we think of their attempts at stitching us up! [Workers' Fight bulletin 05/06/19 BMW Mini Oxford]

• **'Strike' their ear-drums**

The rise is not enough of course, but what can we expect from BMW? After changing the processes all over the line to make us work more, putting our permanent contracts on hold and playing games with our holidays, this is what they 'offer'. Sure, they won't give anything up just like that, and they're expecting us to just take it. But, since

we weren't asked by either the bosses or the union about any of this, we will have to find some other way to make ourselves heard... [Workers' Fight bulletin 05/06/19 BMW Mini Oxford]

• **Friday night fever**

Is this for real? If the Friday night shift is cut, are they actually going to keep it running using our WTA 'owed' hours instead!? That would be a pay cut, AND we'd still be working the same number of hours! If that's what they're thinking, they've got another think coming! But we don't mind having Friday nights off, and we'll just need a big hourly wage increase to make up for the lost shift! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 22/05/19]

• **As see-through as a chalk stream**

We sense a scam... Are BMW trying to palm us off with a lump sum instead of a back-dated raise? It reminds us



of the pension 'deal' three years ago: BMW taking advantage of the fact that our wages barely cover living costs to bribe us. On top of it, will they try to use Brexit (again!) to blackmail us further? [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 22/05/19]

• **"Sit-down time"**

We haven't forgotten that we used to have 'stand-down' time between the shifts when the line stopped. So NO to their break-cuts and time-squeezing - we have plenty to bring back! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Mini Oxford 22/05/19]

## Yemen

In November last year, the German government banned arms exports to Saudi Arabia in protest at the assassination of journalist, Jamal Khashoggi. This ban did not even mention the previous 4 years of Yemen's systematic carpet bombing by the Saudi air force, which said something about its hypocrisy. But at least it happened, and Germany was the only European country to take such a stance. However, the stance did not last very long.

In March this year, Britain's Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt lobbied Berlin, arguing that the ban would hurt the European defence industry. After all, the Tornado and Typhoon aircraft used by the Saudi air force to bomb Yemen are made and serviced by a consortium of European companies (including Britain's BAE Systems) and some of the parts on which they

## Hunt's blood money



depend are made in Germany. Hunt's argument was so persuasive that, within a week, the German government introduced an exemption to its ban for joint European projects.

So, Hunt can now boast of having single-handedly ensured that

British missiles and bombs will carry on slaughtering the Yemeni population, while fat dividends will carry on filling the bank accounts of BAE's shareholders. Never mind that these dividends are stained with the blood of a whole population! ☐

## Chagos Islands

Britain has once again refused to give the Chagos Islands back to the Chagossians! After widespread condemnation for their occupation of the archipelago, the UN International Court of Justice demanded that Britain should withdraw. And on the 22nd of May, the UN General Assembly gave its support to the ICJ ruling by 116 votes to 6.

However, the British government is determined to retain its ongoing deal with the US military, which uses the largest island of Diego Garcia as an air base. This is thanks to its strategic position in the middle of the Indian Ocean - close to Africa, the Middle East and South-East

## Britain out of the Indian Ocean!

Asia. No surprise then, that the US voted against Britain's withdrawal! All this, however, leaves the former population, who were brutally removed from the islands in 1967, high and dry. Even today, they are denied the right to return. On top of it, many who are resident in Britain are also refused full citizenship rights here. And why? Because they do not have the correct papers... due to being summarily expelled, back in 1967!

After 200 years of colonial occupation by Britain, the Chagossians nevertheless continue their fight to get their islands back. They deserve all the support they can get. ☐



## Letter from India

### Hindu nationalism and big business

Judging from the Indian stock market's strong rally, big business got just what it wanted in last month's general elections.

Indeed, Narendra Modi's ruling Hindu nationalist BJP won 37% of the votes. With its coalition partners, the party now controls 353 of the 543 parliamentary seats, giving it a clear majority. By contrast, the Communist parties lost more ground, with 5 seats and 2.5% of the votes, down from 10 seats and 4% in 2014.

In other words, in parliamentary terms at least, Modi will be free to carry on with his anti-working class agenda. Already, over the past five years, his government has changed labour laws regarding provident funds, overtime and employment safeguards and begun the privatisation of nationalised industry. Since the election, the new government has promised more of the same, but faster, declaring that they will change forty-four labour laws and privatise forty-two public sector companies!

As to the new parliament, it is quite literally a gang of rich thugs and parasites.

It would take the average Indian taxpayer three and a half centuries to earn the assets of the average MP - and this, in a country where less than 7% of the population earns enough to pay tax! What's more, almost half of the sitting MPs have been charged with criminal offences, including rape, murder, terrorism and hate speech!

With such a bunch of crooks in office, there may be less space for electoral illusions among the working class and poor masses - and a growing realisation that any change will have to be won through their fights.

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

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