

# WORKERS' fight



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

# Coronavirus? THE CAPITALIST VIRUS IS WORSE!

Johnson's performance after his belated Cobra meeting on Covid-19, was appalling. Predictably, he came out with nothing but platitudes - like urging us to "look out for one another, behave responsibly and think about others"!

His medical advisers did, however, elaborate on his "Action Plan" - which amounts to three things: avoid calling upon the NHS for as long as possible (since it is most likely to collapse otherwise); try to delay the epidemic until the winter rush on the NHS is over (for the same reason); and, above all, ensure that, as much as possible, it's "business as usual"!

## Profits come first

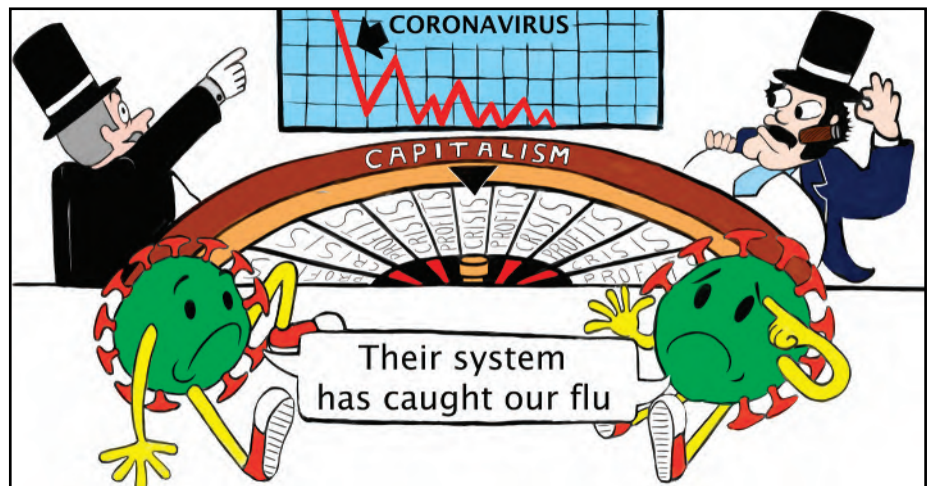
So, the 200,000+ visitors to the 4-day Cheltenham festival were given the chance to catch the virus in the packed stands and then pass it on to the rest of us! But then Boris wouldn't upset his peers in the public school and horse-racing elite, by cancelling their favourite festival! Never mind if this is totally irresponsible behaviour - once again!

The government's main concern isn't people's health, but the health of capitalist profit. Maintaining "business as usual" won't protect a population threatened by Covid-19, but it is a means to protect the bosses' interests.

So, supermarkets will be able to replenish stocks around-the-clock. But this will also allow retail giants to make a killing out of the stockpiling that the government is officially "discouraging"!

In addition, the government has already announced a series of measures to provide relief to "embattled" bosses.

But Johnson showed no such leniency for workers forced to stay home. He said they should get Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) from day one (instead of day 4) - but that's as far as it goes.



As if anyone could survive on £94.25/wk! And what about the 6m+ workers who aren't entitled to it? But Johnson, who was until recently paid £5,000/week by the Daily Telegraph for writing a single article, cannot imagine that such problems exist. He even suggested that self-quarantined workers might apply for Universal Credit... and wait for 5 weeks for it!

## Capitalism and coronavirus

By now, the government is faced with an even bigger problem: share prices have fallen at a rate unseen since the 2008 banking crisis. And capitalists are demanding that their respective governments bail them out of this "coronavirus crisis".

Trump has already promised tax cuts for companies and several central banks have made fresh cash available. Johnson is under pressure from the City to do the same.

However it is not, in fact, the coronavirus which caused this meltdown. The financial system was already sick as a dog. Economists had long been

warning that share prices were hugely overinflated. As recently as last month, the OECD published an alarming report saying that world indebtedness was way beyond the level seen in 2008.

So this meltdown was a disaster waiting to happen. It was triggered by the coronavirus, but it could have been triggered by many other factors.

In other words, the real cause of this meltdown is the sickness of the capitalist system itself, which has gotten so bad that even the capitalists themselves no longer believe in its health. And since their only aim is to make money, they placed bets that share prices would fall as a consequence of the coronavirus outbreak. Their combined bets have turned into a self-fulfilling prophecy!

We are warned. The coronavirus is a threat that can be tackled, but capitalism is a threat that will only become increasingly dangerous. It is this threat that the working class will need to tackle, by curing society of the sick greed of its capitalist minority and overthrowing their rotten social order. □

## Johnson watch

Dave was right when he rapped at the Brit awards "our prime minister's a real racist". Yes, Johnson and his ministers are racists, but above all, they are class racists: they only have scorn and hatred for working class people - of any skin colour or nationality.

Take Johnson's sidekick, Priti Patel. She tried (and partly failed) to deport to Jamaica so-called "foreign", so-called "criminals", when in fact they were entitled to British citizenship. Like the Windrush generation, their rights were ignored because they were poor.

A week later, Patel launched an attack against workers of all origins with her draft immigration bill. It will make it more difficult for migrant

### • Home Office summons the dead

The Home Office at least gave us something to laugh about recently, when a 100-year-old Italian man, who'd lived and worked in London for over half-a-century was told his *parents* (!) had to confirm his identity if he wished to obtain "settled status"! Due to Brexit, Mr Palmiero, like other Europeans who've long since had the

### • Poster kids for racist policies

Proving her devotion to Johnson and his agenda, Priti Patel has devised an immigration points system that would have denied her own parents entry to Britain to live and work! Challenged on this point on Nick Ferrari's LBC show, she made no attempt to deny it. And she is not the only prominent Tory who would not be here under her own preferred system. The parents of Sajid Javid, Suella Braverman, Rishi Sunak and Secretary of State for Business, Alok Sharma, would have found the door closed too! While Patel proudly pulls up the drawbridge that allowed her to grow up in Hertfordshire, Braverman, as attorney general, wants to stop the courts from halting charter-flight deportations.

Like all careerists, these people are

### Governed by nationalism, not science!

On the 3rd February, Boris Johnson delivered a speech in which he championed US food. Not only did he ascribe the resistance to chlorinated chicken to "hysteria", but he declared that "The UK will be governed by science not mumbo jumbo..." adding that Americans all looked healthy enough to him! Of course chlorinating chicken isn't the best way to ensure it's free of nasty germs: the wash is applied to the meat's

## Anti-working class above all!

workers to come and work in Britain - or even retain a job here. But everyone is under threat.

So, for instance, in response to Unison's warning that the new bill would deprive the care industry of the workers it needs, Patel replied that the 8.5m "economically inactive" aged 16-64 will fill these jobs. Never mind that this includes 2.3m students, 2.1m long-term sick, 1.1m in early retirement, and 1.9m looking after their families!

So, is that it? Patel wants more youth, long-term sick and aged workers, to be forced into work? The "hostile environment", Brexit version is coming. And we'll all be legitimate targets this time! ☐



legal right to remain in Britain, has had to apply for this all over again.

In his case the Home Office "app" which was meant to simplify/speed up the application process cocked up. A glitch in its software meant it couldn't recognise triple digit ages and so 100 became 1 and thus 1919 became 2019. The app decided that this

great-grandfather was a baby of only 1 year and therefore his father's details were needed to verify his right to settlement. It then took a volunteer who was helping Mr Palmiero apply, a whole hour on the phone to convince officials of this mistake! The Home Office has since apologised. Their app wasn't available for comment.

only concerned about their own ambitions. They are willing to be pillars of government policies designed to appeal to racist prejudices in the population, while using their ethnic origins to deflect the accusation of racism from Johnson's government. And they have no qualms about this at all.

### • Patel shows contempt for everyone

At the first Prime Minister's Questions in March, Priti Patel calmly sat at Boris Johnson's right-hand, as he defended her against accusations of bullying her staff. It turned out that this wasn't a one-off with Patel. She had in fact faced similar allegations when she was International Development Secretary, and also when she was at the Department for Work and

Pensions, under Theresa May.

For sure, there are no tears to be shed for the Permanent Secretary she apparently drove out from the Home Office: Sir Philip Rutnam oversaw the Windrush scandal, the hostile environment, and all the other abuses of migrants over the past decade. However, Patel's alleged behaviour is indicative of the kind of people Boris Johnson has surrounded himself with: the most right-wing, socially-repulsive, and incompetent. And of course, Home Secretary Patel continues to charter her planes to send "dangerous foreign criminals back to their native lands", i.e. people guilty of minor offences to places like Jamaica, even if they have never lived there. This is no doubt what makes her popular with the right wing of the Tory party. So she is useful for Johnson to have around, at least for now.

the EU, which so heavily subsidised farmers' incomes! Johnson's proposed "Agricultural Bill 2019-2020" would cut incomes by 25%...

Of course the NFU is protecting its own interests against the threat of American agribusiness giants. But the result of turning food production into a money-spinner - whether in Britain, the EU or the US - is that the rest of us are left with a choice between unhealthy cheap food, and unaffordable healthy food!

## Tory hard-right takeover

The Tory hard right is in power. Accusations that the new government is shambolic and run by unelected advisors, or that Johnson is "part-time" (because he avoids public appearances), miss the point. This government, full of contempt and hatred for the working class, is the most right-wing and backward-looking since World War II. And wasn't this what Brexit was always about? The Tories' "hardest" Brexiteers are the same people who have never made any secret of their anti-worker, pro-business agendas.

The likes of Priti Patel and Dominic Raab, in their infamous "*Britannia Unchained*" pamphlet, claimed British workers are "*the worst idlers*". They were part of the European Research

### • Ministerial zealots

Boris Johnson's latest reshuffle has entrenched this right-wing takeover. Anyone Johnson does not entirely trust to toe the line has gone. That's nearly everyone with enough personal standing or independence to be a rival, except Michael Gove.

Others who stayed include Matt Hancock, probably the only person who was prepared to be Health Secretary despite the crumbling state of the NHS, and Priti Patel. Even Sajid Javid resigned as Chancellor, rather than become a prisoner of No 10, by letting all his own advisors be sacked on Johnson's orders.

Right-wingers like Andrea Leadsom, Theresa Villiers and Esther McVey showed no signs of disagreeing with Johnson, but were all senior enough to do so, one day or another - so out they went!

### • Dullness is preferred

Why sack Julian Smith as Northern Ireland Secretary after he restored the power-sharing government suspended for the previous three years? Probably because that made Smith too successful for Johnson's liking, especially as Smith had no noticeable support from Johnson in this initiative.

It also made Smith far too popular both sides of the Irish border. Smith's conciliatory noises to those seeking reparations for British army violence during the Troubles were already provoking a backlash from xenophobic backbenchers like Mark François, a former soldier and a staunch Johnsonite.



Group, whose nationalist overbidding kept rocking the boat under Theresa May. And the ERG continues to set the tone of the provocative stance set out for the next round of negotiations with the EU. As for their

Smith's replacement, Brandon Lewis, a former Tory chairman and immigration minister, can be relied upon to trot out any government line and probably to do the bare minimum in Northern Ireland, just like Smith's predecessor, Karen Bradley.

### • Sunak's meteoric rise

Javid's replacement is Rishi Sunak, the 39 year-old former chief secretary to the Treasury who has only been an MP since 2015. This former City investment banker and hedge-fund manager is estimated to be the richest MP, having married into India's sixth richest family - which co-owns the multinational company, Infosys.

Johnson had already groomed him for promotion by getting him to take his place in two of the televised election debates. Then he brought Sunak into Javid's Treasury and has now promoted him again. Sunak will be on a tight leash. He may have impressed in the City, but there's no shortage of ex-fund managers on the Tory backbenches!

### • Will Braverman brave the law for Johnson?

Suella Braverman, the new Attorney General, replaces Geoffrey Cox, whose advice that proroguing parliament was legal was overruled in the Supreme Court. Undeterred, Braverman promises to "take back control" for the benefit of Johnson. In other words, she expresses King Boris's frustration that his follies were blocked by the courts, or found illegal by judicial review.

Braverman is a barrister and also a former chair of the hard-Brexiteers' ERG.

## Johnson watch

dreams of a "new Britain", the government consultation on free ports, deregulated custom-free zones, recalls an old favourite idea of Britain as Singapore-on-Thames, and probably on-Tees and on-Mersey, too. □

Like Rishi Sunak, she was elected to the Commons only in 2015, meaning she owes her whole political career to the tenant of No10.

### • Green light for the Tory right

The Tory party's right-wing, far from quietening down after the election, has resumed loud posturing. Leading right-wing Tories, including former party leader Iain Duncan-Smith and David Davis, ex-Brexit Secretary, began by attacking Johnson's decision to allow Chinese company Huawei to develop Britain's 5G network. Never mind that Huawei is to provide only 35% of the new technology, and that it's been involved with companies like BT for over 15 years! Meanwhile, the Home Secretary has been playing to anti-immigrant bigotry by proceeding with her Windrush Mark 2 deportations to Jamaica.

But since Johnson owes his position to the support of this right-wing, he is obliged to appease it. So a no-deal Brexit is back on the table, despite his having previously ruled it out. He has also questioned any alignment with EU labour and environment rules, despite agreeing this in the Withdrawal Bill just a few months ago! Indeed, in his recent reshuffle, the only qualification for some posts appeared to be Brexiteer bravado - like, for instance, David Frost, outspoken Brexiteer and former CEO of the Scottish Whisky Association, who is now Chief Negotiator with the EU! Yes, Johnson continues to play to this dinosaurs' gallery, but is completely blind as to where it might lead him... back to that ditch?

### New passport: blue... like the EU

There's been much hype and nonsense around the issuing of the new, post-Brexit, blue passport. As if Britain's departure from the EU depended on it. So we're told that the change from the EU's burgundy colour and the fact that the words "European Union" will no longer

appear on the front, will finally allow "Britons" to express their "independence and sovereignty" - as Theresa May tweeted before she departed Number 10... And what's more, in the words of Priti Patel, it will "re-establish British identity"!

Fair enough, one might think - what's the real harm in having to join a long

queue at the EU border, with all the other "Non-EU" passport holders, instead of walking straight through? All worth it, surely, if "Great Britishness" can reassert itself! But unfortunately that's going to need just a little bit of "foreign" help: this "iconic blue" passport will be made in Poland by Franco-Dutch company, Gemalto. Ooops!

## Social

## Flood defences breached

The combined force of storms Ciara, Dennis and Jorge flooded an estimated 3,300 properties. Ten of thousands were left without power. Existing flood defences were breached. Farms, roads and railway lines were covered with water. And what did the government do? It congratulated itself for its "timely" and "proportional" response!

Environment Secretary, George Eustice, and PM Johnson (when he could be found!) told journalists repeatedly what huge sums of money (billions!) the government had pumped into "flood defences" - without specifying exactly when or where - thus "protecting" thousands of homes which would otherwise have been flooded. In other words, their answer to the many flood victims was, "trust us, it could have been so much worse!" But if they were so "up to speed", why did they avoid visiting affected communities? Eustice claimed it wasn't necessary, since "we've had a



Makeshift flood defences at Ironbridge

*grip of this situation".* When in fact the "situation" mostly got out of hand!

Environmental experts say current flood defences are inadequate. They are certainly not fit for the worse floods to come. But despite this, 20% of planned new builds in just-flooded Midland towns will be built on flood-risk land. Developers claim there isn't "enough"

land available for house-building. But that's only because the current system of private landownership means that vast tracts of land are inaccessible. If land was nationalised, and owned by the population collectively, then planning would be a doddle - and nobody would have to worry about flood-water pouring in their front doors, ever again. □

## • Good times return? Not bloody likely!

The Office for National Statistics announced in February that Average Weekly Earnings (AWE) had, at last, overtaken the high point reached just before the financial crisis in 2007/8, by reaching £474/wk. But AWE does not differentiate between full-time and part-time workers. And this obviously affects real "Weekly Earnings"! What's more, the earnings

of self-employed people are not counted at all. So, given that "a record" 5 million people (up from 3.8 million in 2008) are "self-employed" (which usually means they are subcontracted by agencies), this means that the earnings of 15% of the workforce is not included in this "average"!

Another "record" announced in these

statistics was that the number of people on zero-hours contracts had reached almost 1 million! It's obvious that those working only a few hours a week can earn nowhere near the reported weekly earnings level of £474, which, by the way, is before tax and deductions. As always, government figures only serve to hide reality, rather than show what's really going on!

## Rough sleeping

In the past five years, at least 7 rough sleepers have been crushed to death in waste compactor trucks. Yes, rough sleepers are driven by the rain and cold - and the lack of adequate alternatives - to sleep inside bins!

But these shocking deaths are only the tip of the iceberg. A study by the King's Fund shows that the average age of death for those who died while homeless in England and Wales in 2018, was 44 - more than 30 years less than the population as a whole! But these figures still underestimate the

## Blood on the government's hands!

magnitude of the problem: many deaths are not even recorded as being linked to homelessness, due to uncertainties over the place of death and incomplete investigations. The truth is that the combination of destitution and cold/wet weather is deadly!

Nevertheless, to date, the government still refuses to collect precise data on rough sleeping. So, while official statistics claim that rough sleeping went down by 9%, to 4,266, last year, the figures collated by local councils show a total of 28,000 rough-sleepers for last year. Over 6 times what the

government claims!

But never fear: after a pleasant break in his 115-room Chevening mansion in Kent, Johnson appeared at a homelessness charity in London, claiming he would "end rough sleeping once and for all", by 2024. This is the same Johnson who promised, when he was Mayor of London, to end rough sleeping in the capital by 2012 - but the number actually doubled under his watch! In the meantime, there are 634,453 empty homes in England alone. Enough to solve rough sleeping and homelessness straight away! □

## • Newham's rough sleeper-cleansing

By the end of January, Newham Council's "Rough Sleepers Taskforce" had finally removed the last of the tents which had been put up at Stratford Shopping Mall in ever-increasing numbers over the past 2 years. Up to 100 homeless sought shelter in and around the Mall on any one night. But now they're officially "moved on". Notices on the walls showing a crossed-out tent citing the "Highways Act 1980" appeared, prohibiting the obstruction of "public rights of way" - even though these tents under the car-ramps and stairways obstructed nothing and nobody. But now wooden planters with "greenery" have been situated where

tents used to stand, to keep the homeless away.

The Mall is a "public right of way" through to the station, Olympic Park and Westfield shopping centre, so its doors can't be locked. Shopkeepers constantly complained about rough sleepers on the floor inside and in tents outside. So they have been "cleansed". But as Hope4Newham charity wrote, "Yes the council got rid of their tents and some have been put up in the [25-bed temporary homeless] hub but there are still many sleeping rough in Stratford centre. There are posts going around saying how the homelessness has

gone down around that area but unfortunately it doesn't reflect ...how many we are still serving [in their soup kitchen] on a Tuesday evening".

The fact is that 1 in 25 people in Newham are homeless - the highest number in Britain. There are over 27,000 on the council waiting list and over 5,000 in temporary accommodation. Rough sleeping has tripled since 2010. Newham's mayor, Rokhsana Fiaz, pledged to address these problems and is at pains to prove she has done so, now that she's campaigning for re-election. But all she's done is push the homeless out of sight. Until they return.

**The main threat will always be the profit virus!**

Since new coronavirus (Covid-19) started to spread in China and beyond, its impact has been causing great anxiety in business circles.

Over the past two decades, most western multinationals re-organised their production on a world scale. To maximise their profits, they sought to take advantage of the low labour costs in poor countries like China and of their largely untapped domestic markets. So, now, they have a problem. Not that they give a damn about the human cost of the pandemic. No, they are worried that the lock-down of large areas in China may disrupt their supply chains across the world and dent

their profits!

Other companies have similar worries, albeit for different reasons - oil giants, airlines, tour operators, etc... This is what economists and big business have been warning against, over the past few weeks. And this is what speculators are anticipating, judging from the sharp fall that took place since mid-February, on the largest stock markets.

Besides, the impact of Covid-19 in rich countries like Britain, may also hit their profits. And this is what will determine the choices made by governments in their fight against the coronavirus. In so far as their capitalist masters may face

**Coronavirus**

significant losses should the pandemic get out of hand, governments will put the necessary resources into fighting it. But in the process, they will leave the profit virus - i.e. the bosses' greed - free to take its toll on the working class and society.

So, while Covid-19 itself will eventually cease to be a danger, the profit virus will remain as a permanent threat. There is, therefore, every reason for the working class to be vigilant and to prevent the bosses and their trustees in government to use the cover of Covid-19 as a justification to inject an even larger dose of this profit virus into society! □

**• Can the NHS cope?**

So is the NHS ready, as the government claims, to deal with Covid-19? We're told that Public Health England (PHE) is fully prepared... Well, it can, in theory, carry out accurate tests for the virus. And this is entirely due to the swift sharing by Chinese microbiologists of the Covid-19 gene sequence. But whether PHE has enough test kits remains to be seen. So far, several people who've duly notified NHS 111 emergency helpline to say that they've had exposure to contacts or have 'flu-like symptoms, have been kept waiting at home, without hearing a thing, for up to 5 days. And then there's the waiting time on the phone line 111, which is reported to be several hours to 3 days despite recruitment of additional staff...

**Belated action plan**

It was only on the 3rd March that the government published its "Action Plan" - over a month after the first positive diagnosis of the virus was confirmed. By 9 March, there'd been 5 deaths out of 319 people who'd tested positive, scattered all over the country, so in reality, the virus is set to break out everywhere. And hand-washing obviously won't stop it, since it's mainly transmitted through breathing in virus droplets in the air. So unless everyone stays at home and public



transport is totally closed down (one of the main "large public gatherings" we participate in every day) the incidence is bound to grow in leaps and bounds.

**No beds**

So what about NHS facilities? It's all very well to talk about mobilising retired staff or medical students, but there were already 100,000 unfilled vacancies before Covid-19. Hospitals are operating at full capacity; there are no excess social care beds to discharge patients to. And what really counts in Covid-19 pneumonia is

having acute respiratory intensive care, oxygen and respirators. Yet Britain has the fewest intensive care beds out of all OECD countries, just 4,000 (Germany has 16,000!) with four-fifths occupied. The government claims that if more beds are needed the NHS can "cut back" on procedures/treatments and make choices about who to keep alive! It already has to do that. In fact if just 1% (best case scenario) get the virus, that could mean 70,000 needing intensive care. The consequences of this don't have to be spelt out.

**The Marmot review: austerity kills**

The review entitled "Health Equity in England" by Michael Marmot, Professor of Epidemiology at University College London, is crystal clear in its conclusions. Austerity kills. This review is a follow-up to a report he did 10 years ago, before the Tory-LibDem coalition's drastic cuts to the public sector and local authority budgets and before the roll-out of Universal Credit. In 2010 it was still possible to say that the trend for life expectancy was generally upward.

Not so today. For the first time in

100 years life expectancy is falling in large parts of the country. This is the case for men in the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods in the North East, Yorkshire, Humber and the East of England. But for the 10% poorest women, it is decreasing in every single region except London, parts of the West Midlands and the North West. So men in these deprived regions can expect to live to 73.9 years compared to 83.4 years in the richer regions - 10 years less, while the lifespan for women in the North East is 78.7 years compared to their richer counterparts who'll live on average to 86.3 years - a difference of 7.6 years.

The report shows that the cuts in people's incomes over the past 10 years directly corresponds to the deterioration in their health. Says Marmot: "This damage to the nation's health need not have happened. It is shocking. (...) Poverty has a grip on our nation's health - it limits the options families have available to live a healthy life... Something has gone badly wrong." While it's no great discovery that poverty causes ill-health and that it even kills, it's no bad thing that Marmot has highlighted this once more - and explicitly condemned government policy!

**Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)****Let's take this strike into our own hands!**

On the 3rd and 4th of March, we received our ballot papers to vote (again) for strike action against RM's latest attacks on our working conditions and jobs. It has been one year since RM's CEO Rico Back announced his "Parcel Strategy": since parcel volumes are increasing and letter volumes decreasing, the RM Board wants to axe 20,000 jobs, possibly more, if they can get away with it. And of course, the rest of us would be left with more duties piling up on our shoulders.

But since the announcement of RM's attacks (a whole year ago!) the union leadership has been more

interested in jostling for a place at the negotiating table than organising a fight. A "fact check" leaflet we received recently from the union's London Divisional Committee should be a warning to all of us. To quote: "Fact 7 - Royal Mail have claimed that the CWU is opposed to any change. Fact check - This is complete rubbish. No trade union has seen as much change or agreed as much change as the CWU. This change has included the removal of the second delivery, the creation of a uni-grade, a 50% reduction in Mail Centres and RDCs, amalgamation of Delivery Offices and the ending of both the final



salary and CARE pension schemes. The CWU's position has always been about shaping and agreeing change rather than Royal Mail imposing change." Incredible. Do they have no shame at all? So yes, we will be voting for strike. But we will have to take this fight into our own hands. We have proved in the past that we can organise ourselves. This is the only way we will be able to win back the ground lost! ☐

**• All out strike now!**

RM under the new CEO is obviously trying to bypass the union. Now it's released a pay offer via the media! Yes, in the middle of a dispute: our strike ballot is underway! But since they don't want to play by the rules, why should we? Everything they've been doing is a declaration of class war against us, our jobs, our conditions. There's no time to lose - let's walk! [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 26/2/20]

**• Time to rock!**

By the way, despite all this, we saw that the union General Secretary was at it

again on Facebook, asking RM to "negotiate" with him. He's desperate to try to justify his own existence and that of the union machinery. Because up to now, RM has depended on the likes of him to sign up to the serial destruction of our terms & conditions, while preventing us from rocking the boat. They even boast about it! So no time to lose: let's get rocking! [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 26/2/20]

**• HMP in word and deed**

Management (aka the Parole Board) here wants to go ahead with this "Automated Hours Data Capture" system. It's aimed

at monitoring our movement at all times. So why don't they just put electronic tags on our ankles and be done with it?! [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 26/2/20]

**• Such good Samaritans!**

They even want to spy on our visits to the toilets! The excuse we heard for this, was that it's just to locate us, in case we have a heart attack or something and get stuck in the loo! Sure, all these measures are because they care so much about us... [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 26/2/20]

**King's Cross railway station (London)****• New trains worse than old**

We know that there's a problem generally with the Azuma trains being "lighter" than the Class 91+Mark 4s and therefore being less stable on the track. And the brakes are too sharp, so passengers and workers alike are jolted and thrown about no matter how hard the driver tries for a smooth ride. Some of us have already been hurt as a result. What's going to be done about this? [Workers' Platform King's Cross 26/2/20]

**• The Azuma is the bug**

Among other issues, the Azuma doors don't work properly, so we've now been told we have to wait for the driver to release them before we can board. We're no longer meant to use our own T-keys to open the staff door. Yes, yet another bug in the system! [Workers' Platform King's Cross 26/2/20]

**• Flooding us with B-S**

As for severe delays caused by the flooding, in addition, LNER HQ was shut yet again! And there's more rain and snow on the way. Isn't it funny how trains in

Scandinavia, the Alps, Canada, even Siberia, let alone in the rest of Europe, run perfectly, despite appalling weather? But never mind, Britain has the best of everything in the world - that's what they keep telling us! [Workers' Platform King's Cross 26/2/20]

**• Blame Boris**

Imagine that LNER managers should dare to swap what should be a 9 or 10-car service for a 5-car and at the last minute! So it's standing room only for half the passengers and no room for the catering service! This should never happen. Are they getting away with it because LNER is government-run? [Workers' Platform King's Cross 26/2/20]

**• Our right to free travel**

Since Atalian cleaning and tanking workers have now got LNER written on our shirts and we're meant to see ourselves as part of the LNER "team", when are we going to get free travel on the trains which we service? [Workers' Platform King's Cross 26/2/20]

**• Bad maths**

Interserve bosses don't know how to add or subtract. We lose 5 station cleaning workers



and they only recruit 1 or 2. So what happened to the other 3? And we should have a few more on top if they really want a clean station. [Workers' Platform King's Cross 26/2/20]

**• Our health comes first**

Further to what we've already said about our exposure to diesel fumes - and how they affect gateline workers in particular - what we'd like to know is why filters were not even fitted to cut out the dangerous particles? These trains should be taken out of service. And this cannot wait until NR has "levelled up" the network to full electrification. [Workers' Platform King's Cross 26/2/20]

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

**BMW's sackings: opportunism and profit making!**

At the end of February, BMW's employment agency, Gi, began to sack its workers (who make up 25% of the 4,500 strong workforce), with a target (so far) of 140 job cuts.

Plant bosses have now said there may be a shutdown of production this April, using the coronavirus as an excuse. This, despite the fact that BMW's CEO has said that there has been "no impact due to the virus outside of China", and that BMW is "sticking to our target of achieving slight growth in car sales". This

shutdown will impact all of us, but especially temps, many of whom will not get paid, because they've used up all the "credit" on their so-called "working time accounts".

Of course bosses here always try to blame external factors whenever they makes cuts to squeeze more work out of fewer of us. Last April, they stopped giving out permanent contracts to Gi workers, blaming Brexit; last December, they held a ballot of the workforce which offered the choice between the sacking of a



whole shift (around a 1000 agency workers!) and a pay cut, blaming "economic uncertainty". They'll use every opportunity to turn their screw ever tighter on us, to maintain profits at our expense. Until we decide to turn the tables on them and force them to pay. □

**• Bring them back**

We hear that 30 of our workmates were sacked recently from GI, and BMW still want GI to sack 110 more? BMW says these sackings are because they have "too many workers"... what?! We're too few to do the jobs as it is! These mates must be brought back! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford Mini 26/2/20]

**• No time like the present**

BMW "promised" that agency jobs would be protected, if we voted for their shift change - which cut hours and pay - just a few months ago! Of course, we knew just voting in a ballot like that, wasn't really going to defend jobs. And now we're proved right! So we're going to have to stand up together and fight this abusive,

lying company! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford Mini 26/2/20]

**• The real reason?**

As a cover, the first mates targeted were told they were sacked on the basis of their sickness records, meaning being absent a day or two! Many of them had been working here for 5 or more years and had been led to expect that they were due for permanent contracts. Is that the real reason BMW got rid of them? To avoiding giving these contracts? [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford Mini 26/2/20]

**• Pre-emptive action**

Now we hear that there might be ANOTHER shut-out for two weeks in April. BMW may roll out a sob story about coronavirus and a

lack of parts produced in China. But even if that is so, so what? We're still paying for their shut-outs last year, and there are five weeks to come in August. Let BMW pay for this one in full - and all the others! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford Mini 26/2/20]

**• How many minis each?**

Not many of us can afford the cars we're making here. The electric MINI costs almost £28,000 - we'd never save up that amount when many of us (especially GI or R&H workers) are living hand-to-mouth! But guess what: the car bosses' lobby group, the SMMT, showed that each car worker in Britain produces a yearly value of over £100,000, which has tripled in the last two decades! That's four cars-worth! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford Mini 26/2/20]

**Ford Dagenham Engine Plant**

**• Singing at the sink**

Thank-you(!) Ford, for that "info sheet" about coronavirus... Apparently you want us to read it, but as usual with your "communications", you allocate no time to do so, nor time to question or discuss...

That said, it said nothing we hadn't already heard: i.e., "wash your hands" (even if some, if not most spread is likely to be by breathing in the virus!). But ok. Every time we sneeze/cough we'll need time off the job to get to the sink plus the 20 secs it takes for singing "happy birthday" or "%#@\*\* whatever", twice.

**PS:** But why those maps? There wasn't even anything there about how Ford's own supply chain was or was not affected? Blocks, heads, other imported parts? [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham Engine Plant 4/3/20]

**• Hang the cowboys**

More importantly, when and if our Hamton, LLL, and other mates "self-isolate" will you, Ford, be forcing your

cheap and nasty cowboy contractors to pay these workers - their FULL PAY, since their poor conditions are entirely down to you in the first instance?

They need full sick pay (OSP) in all circumstances, and if these cowboys won't cough up, and not just because of this virus, they should be out of here. [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham Engine Plant 4/3/20]

**• ... Ford: guilty as hell**

Yes, this should be the moment when this disgusting situation ends: Ford's contracted companies to provide vital work, even tho' they aren't fit to operate, nor provide decent working conditions for their workers. They should be dissolved!

Of course, full sick pay - and equal pay for equal work, with permanent contracts for all workers - should be mandatory for all companies... Ford? [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham Engine Plant 4/3/20]

**• Fighting for every single job**

So now it seems the Transport Operations' Old-axeman isn't waiting till Easter for



"redesign": he says 180+ (mainly) truck-fleet jobs are for the chop - maybe 100+ here at D'ham. We sense there is a big hurry to get this all done and dusted for the sake of top bosses. So there's meant to be a "generous" Voluntary Redundancy package to lure us to accept this drastic cut. But no "package" can ever compensate for the loss of these jobs. [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham Engine Plant 4/3/20]

**• Self-isolating for Easter?**

We heard a "good" rumour: that we might get time off at Easter! So can dog-in-the-manger-Ever-rat kindly confirm or deny, and do so now!? Instead of waiting to tell us at the last minute and thus preventing us from booking a nice holiday? [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham Engine Plant 4/3/20]

## Letter from India

As Trump was visiting India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, in the last week of February, the capital city Delhi saw one of the most brutal outbreaks of anti-Muslim communal violence in recent decades.

Several poor districts of North-East Delhi were ravaged. Hundreds of houses were burnt down, together with shops, workshops and 4 mosques. In the process, tens of thousands fled the area and are too scared to come back. An estimated 53 people have been killed and over 200 sustained serious injuries from gunshots, sharp-edged weapons and stone-pelting - although the real number of casualties is certainly higher.

These pogroms started after Kapil Mishra, a local leader of Modi's ruling Hindu nationalist party, the BJP, gave the Delhi police an ultimatum to remove a protest sit-in against the Citizenship Amendment Act - part of Modi's plan to deprive Muslims of their rights.

In fact, by that time, 2,000 thugs had been brought into the area by militant groups connected to the BJP. These thugs were heavily armed, with petrol bombs, iron rods and guns. After Mishra's ultimatum, they went on the rampage against neighbourhoods where Muslims live in large numbers. As to the Delhi police, which is directly under the

## Modi woos Trump by shedding his people's blood



authority of Modi's government, it looked on and, sometimes, even joined the pogromists.

After two and-a-half days of these pogroms, Modi finally issued this statement: "I appeal to my sisters and brothers of Delhi to maintain peace and brotherhood at all times". This was a signal to his party's thugs that the bloodshed had gone on for long enough, for the time being, anyway. And the attacks stopped.

That Modi should have chosen this particular time to engineer such a bloody pogrom was not a coincidence. He had been indulging Trump with enormous, rapturous audiences - far larger than

Trump could ever manage to attract in the US. He certainly hoped that Trump would see his regime as a "special" future trade partner and a counterweight to China. But, above all, Modi was desperate to prove that he could be a regional pillar for Trump's crusade against what he calls the "Muslim threat". By unleashing terror against a Muslim neighbourhood in the capital and stopping it at will, Modi had demonstrated in practice what tight control he had over India's huge Muslim minority and, more generally, his ability to crush domestic dissent. In short, that he was a leader to Trump's liking! □

## Asia Bibi

Asia Bibi, who spent 8 years on death row after she was accused under Pakistan's notorious blasphemy law of defiling a water-cup used by Muslim fellow farm workers, is now being permitted to apply for permanent asylum in France.

This comes 2 years after her hard-fought reprieve in Pakistan. Thereafter she and her family had to go into hiding. They were subject to death threats from vicious hard-line supporters of Thereek-e-Labbaik

## Another of Britain's refused asylum seekers

Pakistan a far-right Islamist political party, already linked to the murder of 2 well-known politicians who'd supported her case.

At the time, Asia requested urgent asylum, but Britain was one of the first to refuse: then Prime Minister Theresa May said it might stir unrest "among certain sections of the population". Not that she didn't face criticism for pandering to religious bigots, even from members of her own party.

Asia eventually got one year's refuge in Canada. She hasn't decided whether to move to France yet, but would ideally like to go back to Pakistan - when it's safe to do so. However, in the context of a capitalist system rotting on its feet, when political rulers are busy scraping the bottom of a barrel crammed with bigotry, nationalism and class hatred, "safe" places will only come into being if there's complete system change. □

## British Museum to lose its marbles - at last?

Now that Britain is exiting Europe, will the British Museum's Parthenon Marbles (aka the "Elgin Marbles") finally be returned to Athens? They were part of the 160-metre frieze adorning the 5th century BC Parthenon temple in Athens, and were systematically hacked off and removed by Lord Elgin in 1802, to decorate his stately home in Scotland. He finally sold them to the British government in 1816, to settle

debts. Since then, the Parthenon Marbles (and others he looted) have been in the British Museum, together with thousands of stolen antiquities from around the world.

Greece has been demanding their return since 1832, when it first began to restore its ancient monuments. But the British government has always refused, despite the unarguable case against it. In fact the Acropolis Museum in Athens has custom-made spaces for the missing pieces, in order to complete the restoration of this magnificent frieze. To this end, Greece, Cyprus and Italy included

a clause in the EU trade negotiations with Britain that would require the "return or restitution of unlawfully removed cultural objects to their countries of origin".

However, Johnson immediately ruled out any discussion of this and Mark Francois, arch-Brexiter Tory MP, trying to sound clever, added that "anybody who thinks this will be a high priority has lost their marbles". Well "high priority" or not for nationalist ignoramuses, it seems that, thanks to Brexit, these sculptures might finally be going back to where they belong!

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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