

# WORKERS' fight



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

## After the June election, THE CLASS STRUGGLE IS OUR ONLY WEAPON!

The "nasty party" has now turned into the "nasty losers' party". After Cameron's lost referendum gamble, last year, not only has May failed in her bid to win the landslide victory she was hoping for, to shore up her party, but she's shrunk its 20% lead over Labour down to just 2.3% - and lost her Commons majority!

Not only that, but in order to retain her job and force through her Brexit agenda, May has chosen to form an alliance with Westminster's most reactionary, bigoted party - the far-right DUP! So, after posing as a bulwark against Islamic fundamentalism and accusing Corbyn of being a closet IRA supporter, May is happily teaming up with a Christian fundamentalist-dominated party which has notorious links with loyalist terror gangs in Northern Ireland! Nor is May too bothered by the fact that the current DUP leader, Arlene Foster, stands accused of lining the pockets of business supporters with public funds. Yet, part of her deal with the DUP is likely to involve pouring more public funds into the hands of Foster's lot!

But then, for the likes of May, power means power - and, of course, beggars can't be choosers!

### **A weak, unstable leadership**

May hoped that her snap election would offer more cushy jobs to her party, thereby restoring some order amidst its warring factions. Except that May shot herself in the foot: the Tories won't be grateful to her for having presided over the defeat of 25 sitting MPs, mostly by Labour, even if another 12 newcomers were elected in Scotland!

Until June 8th, May's Tory opponents had kept relatively quiet. But no more: a growing number of party heavyweights, including 5 ministers, predict that she's on her last legs, when they don't call for her resignation!



So, the chances for May to be able to restore any kind of stability within her party are very slim. And inviting her past leadership challengers, like Michael Gove, into her government, won't make much difference - it only exposes the weakness of her position.

In any case, this means that despite May's efforts to put on a brave face and pretend that she's ready for the Brexit horse-trading with the EU, she's not coming out of her snap election in a stronger position, as she hoped, but in a much weaker one.

### **Behind Brexit, the capitalists' offensive**

Ultimately, May got her comeuppance. She lost votes because of her pig-headed, ultra-nationalistic stance on Brexit, because of her arrogant campaign, but probably even more because of her denial of the problems faced by most, whether it be poverty, the collapse of the NHS and social care, or the underfunding of schools.

Whether or not May sticks to her "no deal is better than a bad deal" policy, Brexit will cause a mess anyway. Against the backdrop of a world crisis which is getting worse, not better, Brexit will hit the financial system and may cause mayhem here, across Europe and beyond. It's not a question of "if", but of "how bad" it will be.

What is certain, though, is that Brexit will be used as a pretext for May to keep cutting public budgets and for the bosses to attack jobs and wages. The negotiations will be only about protecting shareholders' interests. Ultimately, it will be workers here, together with our fellow EU workers, who will be expected to foot the bill.

Now that the smoke and mirrors of the election have gone, what is in store is yet another capitalist offensive against the working class - an offensive against which ballot papers are totally useless. Our only effective weapon against it is the class struggle and we'll have to use it! □

**Social**

The Department of Work and Pensions set a target for staff to uphold a minimum of 80% of all benefit refusals which had been submitted for a "Mandatory Reconsideration". This "MR" was a new obstacle to appealing to a tribunal, inserted into the process in 2013, no doubt in the hope that more claimants would just give up and not pursue their entitlement because it was just too complicated, time-consuming and exhausting to do so. It certainly inserted even more delays. The fact is though, that fewer than 10% of submissions for an MR succeed, while over 60% of refusals are overturned at tribunal.

Between April 2016 and March 2017, staff refusing the MRs exceeded their target, turning down 87.3% of all applications! Many of these came from people who were denied Employment Support Allowance or

**• The earlier we die, the fatter they get**

Life expectancy is falling for 65-year olds. A woman aged 65 in 2013 was expected to live another 25.1 years on average, but those reaching the same age in 2016 could only hope to live another 24.1 years - 12 months less! The figures for men were respectively 22.9 years and 22.2 years, that is, 7 months less. Besides,

**The system requires "Mandatory Reconsideration"!**



Personal Independence Payment, on the basis of the notorious Work Capability Assessment, having been pronounced "fit for work" after a ludicrous tick-box exercise performed by "medical practitioners", who are themselves under pressure to proclaim the unfit, fit!

This system of assessment is

the length of time that people live in poor health increased between 2013 and 2015, by 5 months (to 19 years) for women and by 4 months (to 16 years) for men. But, since these are averages, the deterioration is even greater for low-paid workers doing long hours of heavy work, for instance!

For the working class, this step

only efficient in one respect - it delays benefit payments sometimes for months, leaving unfit claimants without income. They're told to apply for Job Seekers Allowance, despite being in this situation precisely because they are incapable of work! It's not just absurd, it's inhuman. □

backward is part of the unacceptable price it is made to pay for capitalist crisis. But for the life insurance giants, it represents a bounty! As one CEO said, the insurance industry is "more impacted by longevity risks than by mortality risks". Of course, for them, the earlier people die, the more profits they can make on their backs!

**Fighting back**

In a poll organised by the RCN (Royal College of Nurses) in May, 78% of the 52,000 responding NHS nurses voted for taking strike action over wages.

According to the RCN, nurses' real pay was cut by 14% over the past 7 years. In 2015, after a 5-year public sector wage freeze, the government introduced a 1% cap on annual wage

**• Challenging "gig" exploitation**

Deliveroo issued a new contract to its takeaway delivery riders, aimed at answering some of the criticisms of MPs on the Work and Pensions Committee, who had slammed the company and other leading gig economy exploiters. Some of the most unpopular clauses were taken out of the old Deliveroo contract, which required that "self-employed" riders with no guaranteed hours should work for no-one else and that they give two weeks' notice before stopping work.

But Deliveroo has only removed these conditions because they made its imposition of self-employed status harder to defend. Riders in Camden, backed by

increases. Despite this, and despite the now rising inflation, May has just decided to keep this cap for at least another year.

So no wonder nurses are angry, to the point of prompting the RCN, which is hardly known as a militant organisation, to organise this poll and even talk about a strike. Of course, for the time being, this is just talk.

their union, are taking a case to the government's Central Arbitration Committee so that they can be reclassified as employed workers - with entitlement to paid holidays and the national living wage. The court heard that Deliveroo threatened workers with the loss of any flexibility over their hours. Ironically, this flexibility is precisely what is supposed to attract people to work for such companies - or, at least, that's how the bosses justify proposing these non-jobs on such lousy contracts. In any case, we can only hope that these riders succeed in bringing these Scrooge bosses to book!

**Nurses have had enough!**

The RCN won't consider real action before a strike ballot which may take place in the Autumn - if it does.

In any case, what's certain is that public sector workers will need to take industrial action in order to regain the ground lost - and if they are to be successful, they will need to make sure that all sections of the public sector are involved! □



## House building: myth and reality

The whole period since the ConDems took office in 2010 has seen an average of just 127,000 new homes built each year - the lowest number since another, Tory government, way back in 1923. By contrast the 13 years of Tory rule from 1951-64 saw an average of 271,748 homes built per year, while the figure peaked under the succeeding Labour government at 343,783 per year. The steady fall from Thatcher through to Gordon Brown deepened after the financial crisis.

More to the point, a great part of the post-WW2 building programme was council housing. Social, rented housing accounted for 30% of tenures nationally (about 5.7m households) in 1982, while fewer than 2m households rented privately. By 2012, the private rented sector had overtaken the public sector - only 17% were in social housing by then.. The Tory manifesto promises 2.5m



new homes by 2022 - but without mentioning tenures, meaning that new social housing will most likely

be allocated to a small section of big private developments. So, no end in sight to the housing crisis! ☐

### Letter from Sussex: Barbie the Builder

It's often been said that the chief qualification for Tory MPs and councillors is overweening arrogance.

Barby Dashwood Morris, former Tory Chair of Wealden District Council has an exclusive home; the 14th century Priest House in Hellingly, 9 miles north of Eastbourne. Belonging to the party that "conserves" our traditions, you might have expected her to respect the house she lives in, especially since she has also been chair of the planning committee! Not a bit of it, though.

She has been prosecuted by her own council for making drastic and irreversible changes to this ancient building - but since the changes she made were internal, she was only caught when she tried to sell the place. Pressed to fall on her sword and resign, she refused. Perhaps she assumed that her colleagues would turn a blind eye? Not so. Another councillor tried to trigger an election, by resigning himself. And now she has been thrown off the council for "failing to attend meetings"...

### • The growing sharp end of the housing crisis

Government homelessness figures show a dramatic increase in the numbers of families with children housed long-term in bed and breakfast accommodation - nearly seven-fold in as many years. In June 2010, 160 such families had been housed for longer than six weeks in B&Bs; by December 2016 it was 1,260. The number of children living in all types of temporary accommodation rose by more than 46,000 over the same period, to nearly 119,000. Even workers still holding down jobs

are made homeless, driven out by private landlords raising rents to cash in on the shortage.

This is what happens when wages don't meet housing costs and when private sharks are allowed to lay their hands on a growing part of the rented sector - and when the benefits of the most vulnerable are cut or capped regardless of need: the working class finds itself in situations that cannot and should not be tolerated!

### • Fighting pollution or.. subsidising car companies?

A recent consultation document published by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs suggests that local councils can consider introducing a diesel scrappage scheme whereby they pay car owners to scrap their polluting cars and

contribute between £2000 to £4000 towards a new hybrid or electric car, or towards having their cars fitted with emissions control "retrofit" technology.

Certainly, reports from the campaign group Doctors against Diesel show that diesel is harmful and, according to one study, responsible for 400,000 premature deaths in the UK every year! So if diesel is bad for health, why not just ban it outright and get the car giants to replace their polluting vehicles? But the diesel scrappage scheme is not only about air pollution, it's also about profits. After all, where will the money the government pays to motorists to buy new cars or have the old ones "retrofitted" go, if not into the pockets of the shareholders of the big car companies? Yes, in this society, even environmental protection schemes are made into money-spinners for the capitalists!



## May's snap election

When she announced her snap election, May bragged about her "achievements": "record growth that exceeded expectations" had kept "consumer confidence high", she said. But was that true? Hardly!

With the pound still 13% below its pre-referendum value, inflation has made a comeback: in May prices were up 2.9% on the previous year. In fact, the consumer confidence index has fallen by 40% since the beginning of 2017. So much for keeping "consumer confidence high"!

As to Brexit secretary David Davis, who had claimed that a low pound was good news for British exports and growth, he was contradicted this month by his own official figures: Britain's trade deficit in industrial goods has jumped 188% from £2.6bn in February to £4.9bn in March, meaning that imports are

## Their Brexit fairy tale



growing faster than exports, and not just in value but also in volume.

Facts are facts and they are stubborn, regardless of the politicians'

electioneering agenda.

And it is not by repeating the same lies again and again, that they will become true! ?

## • Social care: when May shot herself in the foot

May's proposals on social care turned into farce. The Tory party manifesto said that the elderly requiring social care at home would pay for it till their savings and assets, including their homes, hit a "floor" of £100,000. Having been accused of targeting those with conditions requiring long-term care, May backtracked, saying that, in fact, there will be a cap on

the amount the elderly will pay for social care! However, she hasn't defined where this cap will be - and won't, until well after the election!

Was this backtracking due to a sudden change of heart? Of course not! If this policy caused such uproar, including within her own party, it was only because the Tories' lower middle-class electorate

felt particularly hard hit. In other words, she was shooting herself in the foot!

In any case, the real problem remains. With local councils facing a combination of long-standing pressures to privatise their care homes and the past years of budget cuts, social care provision has shrunk to the bare bone, particularly for the poorest.

## • Schools: the art of packaging cuts

The Tory manifesto did announce an extra £1bn to fund schools. However, not only did this fall short of the existing £3bn funding gap in schools, but £650m of it was to be raised by.. replacing free lunches to infant pupils, with cheaper

free breakfasts!

So after the coalition government itself introduced universal free school meals 3 years ago, now parents were told it was not "a sensible use of public money" any more!

But then came the cherry on top: "savings" worth another £160m from "departmental efficiencies", i.e. by cutting staff working conditions and schools' material needs. Some "additional funding"!

## • "Rights" we can't afford!

As part of her manifesto, Theresa May had also pledged to preside over the "greatest expansion of workers' rights" by any Tory Government in history. No less! So, what did she have to offer?

A "right" to request leave for child bereavement, for taking care of disabled relatives, or for training - for instance... Only the first of these would be statutory and bosses would be under no obligation

for the others. But more importantly, this would be unpaid leave. Too bad for the low-paid if they can't afford to exercise their "rights"! But what would May even know about it?

## • Bosses as workers' reps?

What a farce! To promote the Tories' jingle of "a country that works for everyone, not just the privileged few", May promised to "change the law to ensure employee's interests are represented at board level". But this was condemned by the bosses' CBI.

Faced with the opposition of the "privileged few", May then proposed that one company director could pose as a workers' representative on the company board, or that companies should create a specific directorship for the job and appoint someone to this position! Taking

May's reasoning to its logical conclusion, companies could just invite their HR manager to attend board meetings in order to "represent" the workforce. It wouldn't fool anyone, of course. But nor did May's proposals!

## • Pulling the drawbridge higher

Not so long ago, Tory Brexiteers were claiming that EU freedom of movement rules discriminate against non-EU migrants. However, May's manifesto showed that she intended to extend the British governments' long-standing

discrimination against non-EU migrants even further after Brexit! For instance, she pledged to double the Immigration Skills Charge levied on companies for each non-EU worker they employ - to £2,000/yr - and treble the Immigration

Health Surcharge that these workers must pay to access the NHS to £600/yr - even though they already pay for the NHS through income tax, like everyone else!

**Labour's resurrection... thanks to JC?**

**Labour's campaign**

Labour may have lost a general election for the 3rd time running, as opponents point out, but it certainly experienced an unexpected surge in its vote. Overall it increased its share by 9.5% - to 40% - adding some 30 seats to make 262. And it took ultra-safe Tory seats - like that of Kensington and Canterbury.

Some of those trying to make sense of this - "despite" Jeremy Corbyn's consistently bad press - put it down to the youth vote. However, new registrations were up only 0.1% on 2015. Others say it was an anti-austerity or even an anti-Brexit vote against May. Perhaps. Still others claim that it was a positive vote for what they call a "modest social democratic manifesto".

Below, some aspects of this manifesto are outlined. It was "modest" indeed - and certainly not "socialist"! In fact, former "principled" positions



which Corbyn had held were abandoned: Corbyn wanted to be seen to support a softer Brexit perhaps, but the freedom of movement of workers - such a fundamental condition for the unity of the working class - was one of the first principles to go. Equally shocking was his reluctance

to scrap all welfare cuts.

That said, now that JC has pretty much washed Labour clean of Blair's nasty taint, whether his former critics will be grateful for that is another question. The odds are still that they will seize the first opportunity to dispense with him! ☐

**• Just a "little more" taxing for the fat cats**

Corbyn's election pledges on taxes caused a flurry of indignant responses from business papers. But, in fact, "large corporations" were to be asked to pay only "a little more, while still keeping corporation tax among the lowest of the major developed economies." Likewise for income tax. Only the 5% richest taxpayers (earning at least £80,000/yr) would pay more tax - but how much more was also

not specified. Corbyn didn't even dare return to the rates enforced by Thatcher in 1986: 29% for corporation tax (compared to 19% today!) and 60% for the highest rate of income tax (compared to 45% today for the richest 1%).

Yet surely the rich should pay for this crisis of their making? And not just "a little more"! They should be made to pay for all of it! The billions they use today

to gamble on the stock market came from tax breaks paid for by cuts in public services. This money should be used to fund these services. But it would require a head-on confrontation with the capitalists that only a mobilised working class can win - the last thing that Corbyn and his party want to see.

**• Migrants only "welcome".. to be exploited?**

Labour's commitment to ending the freedom of movement of labour was stated in no uncertain terms in the first line of their manifesto. Of course, Corbyn had

bowed to the pressure of being "strong" on a key Brexit issue.

However, in an attempt to please both pro-migrant and anti-migrant voters in the same sentence, Corbyn promised both "fair rules" and "a reasonable management of immigration". But how can there be "fair rules" in a policy which, by definition, can only result in discrimination against migrant

workers and divisions in the ranks of the working class?

The manifesto said that this immigration policy would be designed in conjunction with businesses and trade unions, on the basis of specific labour and skill shortages. In other words, the "fair rules" governing Labour's "reasonable management of immigration" would be determined by the bosses' needs - that is, by their avidity to make profits and the greed of their shareholders!

**• What DID happen in Kensington?**

This is one of the richest constituencies, but it's also very diverse: Kensington and Chelsea has a greater proportion of EU nationals than any other London borough. And 69% of voters voted for Remain last year. So Conservative candidate and MP since 2015, "Lady Victoria Borwick", an aristocrat

by marriage, president of the British Antiques Dealers' Association(!) and prominent in the Leave campaign, whose slogan was "Standing with Theresa May", was not really onto a big winner! On the other hand, Labour's Emma Dent Coad, against "gentrification", and for protecting the rights of EU nationals and jobs for those who rely on the EU, managed, albeit just by a hair's breadth, to beat Lady Borwick by 20 votes! And in this case, it was being anti-Brexit "wot won it"!

**WORKERS' fight**

**Public Meeting**

**After the June election  
THE TORIES TUMBLE  
INTO BREXIT  
WITH LABOUR ON  
THEIR TAIL**

**Saturday 24 June 2017, 1.45pm,  
Wesley's Chapel, Kwanglim room  
49, City Road - EC1Y 1AU  
tube: Old Street**

**Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)****Royal Mail's stingy gig**

Royal Mail profits are up 25%, to £335m. Yet, not only does it plan to cut workers' conditions, but it now has a finger in the gig economy pie - although not all that successfully, judging from the case of eCourier, its same-day deliveries subsidiary.

Having threatened to take eCourier to an industrial tribunal, one of its couriers forced the company to admit that he had been unlawfully deprived of holiday and sick-pay, by being treated as self-employed.

In fact, like many companies in the gig economy, eCourier employs 350 couriers as self-employed, when they actually do a waged worker's job. And it's not as if the company was unaware of it. Its latest report mentioned that the "principal risk" for the business was if couriers were to be classified as employed "workers" instead of "self-employed"!

The company is now meant to review its policy. But eCourier's CEO, Ian Oliver, has already let



the cat out of the bag by declaring that: "Employment status is a matter of interpretation". Well, yes, of course, for bosses who are prepared to break the law to boost their profits. But it can also become a matter of balance of forces, when workers stand up together for their interests!

**• The WinRS revealed**

We see that finally (!) the summary of the "alternative pension plan" which the CWU is putting forward to the RM bosses is now available online (Google "WinRS CWU"). And of course there's still that video from Plymouth CWU branch. Just so we know...!! And now we wait till August for RM to say no and for the "threatened strike ballot"? [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 10/05/17]

**• Not a credible defence**

Yes, faced with that very naff CWU "4 pillars" campaign, (who comes up with these ideas? Yes, we know, they hire consultants!) and a "maybe" strike ballot, RM must be absolutely terrified ...

Yeah, RM openly declares it's going to shred our Ts&Cs and the CWU replies with... petitions, postcards, polite complaints and dubious threats. Can we leave it to these lambs to organise our defence against the wolves, or do we have to start preparing strong resistance here in the ranks?[Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 10/05/17]

**• June election blues (or reds?)**

We saw that RM and the CWU's (now retired) Bob-Junk-Mail-Gibson exchanged letters over the delivery of election material. Quite obviously, we won't be able to deliver our usual mail, let alone D2D as well. But the extra payment isn't for the extra time, its for the special "duty" to democracy (hee-haw)! So yes, if normal

mail is to be delivered, we have to be paid for all the time it takes - at premium OT rates....[Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 10/05/17]

**• Moya's greedy hopes**

We saw last week in George Osborne's Evening Standard that Moya Greede is having "constructive discussions" over our pensions... but with whom? Top union officials? Certainly not with us postal workers - since we've not heard a dicky bird about pension negotiations nor how Greede "hopes to avoid strikes"! We can, however, contribute to the "constructive discussion" from the shop floor: "don't you dare touch our pensions, period"! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 24/05/17]

**King's Cross railway station (London)****• All of us have an interest**

So we hear that drivers on Southern, still refusing to agree to DOO, have reinstated their overtime ban. The RMT has now called off a guards' strike for the 30th of May due to the Manchester terrorist attack. But surely now, more than ever, the rest of the rail workforce needs to intervene? Why is it that the union leaderships are not discussing this with us? We're for guards on board all trains, no job cuts, full stop. [Workers' Platform KX 24/05/17]

**• KX signal box to close?**

We're told the KX box will close and operations plus all jobs move to York in March 2020! Yes, that's the "reward" for years of facing increased pressure and worsening conditions, with staffing levels being kept as low as 60%! You don't need to be a maths genius to work out that staff are either working ever more hours, increased work loads, or both, to cover the shortage!

And now with the proposed closure, uncertainty about the future must be added to these pressures? Will PTR&R

be fully engaged and implemented? Will current rights and benefits be retained? Let's hope staff say "enough is enough!" [Workers' Platform KX 10/05/17]

**• The real issue**

So, now, after the cancelled VTEC on-board strike, we're told on-board rosters are being "reviewed" to "smooth over" all the problems. But the list is unending: some of us still don't know where we get on and off, others have to hop on, off, on, off... like crazy rabbits, playing musical trains. We're still owed hours and days off from their March mess... but the main issue is barely mentioned. So let's remind managers - and the union - what we need: more workers and reversal of all these changes! [Workers' Platform KX 10/05/17]

**• Churchill by name...and nature!**

This is really dirty business. Churchill cleaners on GN are on £7.50/hr while GTR boss Charles Horton is on £274.73 per hour! But does he do any cleaning? No! He just "cleans up" ... at our expense! [Workers' Platform KX 10/05/17]

**• Catering-less trains...**

Thanks to job cuts, we can find ourselves rostered (??) alone on a train with up to 800 passengers! We're now advised to contact managers to find us a new train! But how can that be practical? No, if we're alone we'll just have to open the buffet for free and sit down with a book in first class and enjoy the journey! [Workers' Platform KX 24/05/17]

**• ...to driverless trains!**

Anyway, if a lone CSA gets off a train, it will leave the "train manager"/guard alone. So he/she would need to get off. But that means the driver will also have to! And VTEC will then have the "driverless trains" it aspires to... but a lot earlier than expected! [Workers' Platform KX 24/05/17]

**Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)****Another tribute to the stock market**

Ford has recently announced that it will cut 10% of its salaried workforce, or 1,400 jobs, in the US and Asia-Pacific. Why? Because shareholders at the company's recent annual general meeting clamoured for Ford "to do more to support its share price". And, of course, after the announcement, the share

price rose!

Not that these shareholders had any reason to complain. After all, they have been receiving fat dividends because of record profits in recent years. But this wasn't enough - they wanted to have their cake and eat it too! They demanded both higher share prices and fat



dividends! And if this means 1,400 workers losing their wages, why should they care?

- **They cut jobs to boost share price**

One minute Ford's profits are up (at record levels) and the next they're down, and shareholders "clamour" for Ford to "do more to support its share price". So what does Ford do? It announces 1,400 (10%) salaried staff job cuts in the US and Asia-Pacific! This is the kind of system capitalism is: job cuts boost share prices! Apparently European jobs aren't targeted (yet). But we know Bridgend is meant to cut 1,160 jobs soon and that Unite promised a strike ballot over this in May. So when is the vote? Because we insist that we're all included and that Bridgend is NEVER left to fight alone! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 17/05/17]

- **So the ghost-town might come to life?**

Oh and what's this about the Turkish plant not wanting the Panther engine anymore? And that Puma might have to be restarted, to replace it in the Transit? That won't just be egg on Ford's face, that would be a whole omelette! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 17/05/17]

- **Conflicting unlikely stories**

Yeah, but for the moment, the reason we're given that Puma's going up to 12 hour shifts is so that Ford can get the full quota of engines out and begin work on new engine lines! That's for the electric engine and for another one - which we've heard may be built inside

a new factory on the old PTA site?? Really? We'll believe it when we see it... [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 17/05/17]

- **Ford's routine inhumanity**

This was shocking! When our workmate on Panther Assembly collapsed last week, he was on the ground for well over an hour. Medical attention only arrived after 10 mins (which would've been too late for a cardiac arrest). The Group Leader was told to make us get back on the job and keep the engines moving, despite our friend still lying there. But of course, we refused until we were sure he was going to be OK. If Ford thinks this callous attitude from supervision is acceptable, they'd better think again - very carefully. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 17/05/17]

**BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)****One day's strike and... another ballot**

The planned 8 days of strikes at BMW's factories in England against the closure of its final salary pension scheme were to have culminated in 24-hour walkouts at all four plants on Tuesday 16 and Thursday 18 May. But on the Tuesday, BMW simply locked out the workers not involved in the strike - they were paid, but made to "owe" the hours back. And then Unite called off the strikes scheduled for the Thursday, as well as a strike of Cowley and Swindon weekend maintenance crews meant to take place the following Sunday.

The pretext was BMW's "new" offer of a bribe to accept the scheme's closure, of either £22,000 paid over 3 years, or £25,000 if paid into the replacement defined contribution scheme. A consultative ballot opened on 24 May. But given that Unite negotiators had already rejected BMW's initial offer of £7,000 and dismissed another one of £15,000 as insulting, it is not clear why the latest offer "had to be" balloted over at all. After all, Unite had always claimed it was fighting to keep final



salary pensions. However, officials made no recommendation for the ballot.

But, in fact, the workforce voted to reject the offer by 57%. So now Unite has been obliged to set new strike dates for the 20 and 21 June.

- **The only serious offer**

We're in no mood to give up - which is what accepting this offer would be. And we showed it in the mass meetings on Tuesday (23 May). So BMW better listen hard: we demand to retire on the income we expect (if not more!!) and which has always been guaranteed in advance! No surrender: defined benefit is all we will accept! We've worked for it and it's our right. [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford Mini 24/05/17]

- **Time for a second front?**

Of course all of us have a stake in a fight over pensions, including those in the GPP (DC) pension scheme. Union officials may have agreed to sacrifice our chances of having a decent pension before we got our permanent contracts, but they never consulted us! It's not too late for us to join the fight with our own demands, to be included in BOPS - but we cannot rely on union officials to take the initiative on this - it will have to come from us. [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford Mini 24/05/17]

- **No money for us!**

In the Paint Shop a special area was created at top-floor level to carry out quality checks. With heated bodies arriving and no air conditioning, how could we work, let alone breathe? BMW ignored us for years until a worker had to be rushed to hospital following dehydration. Worried at possible fallout, BMW finally put in air con. Now, just a few months later, they've announced they're installing robots to take over these jobs. Is this an acknowledgement that this was no job for humans? [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford Mini 24/05/17]

## Terrorist attacks

### The deadly cost of the British state's criminal policies

In the space of less than 2 weeks, 12 terrorist attacks killed 30 people in Britain and injured another 108 (including one who was hit by a police bullet). These attacks are all the more shocking as no-one can possibly understand what could have been the purpose of targeting innocent passers-by, not to mention concert-going youth, as was the case in Manchester, on 22 May.

The 4 attackers seem to have left no explanation as to why they chose to become killers and face certain death in the process. But while their actions are unquestionably abhorrent, a common pattern has emerged from both attacks, which points, just as unquestionably, to the fact that the British state itself must share the blame.

In the case of the Manchester carnage, the father of the attacker,

Salman Abedi, had been part of the Islamist opposition to Gaddafi's regime. For many years, British security services found it expedient to use British-based Libyan Islamist groups in order to destabilize a regime which had committed the ultimate crime of nationalising BP's oil fields. Eventually, in 2011, western forces facilitated the murder of Gaddafi, during their Libyan bombing campaign. Thanks to the western intervention, Libya fell into the hands of these Islamist factions - whose rivalries turned the country into a permanent war zone.

Likewise, one of the 3 London Bridge attackers turns out to have been associated with al-Muhajiroun (the Emigrants), a group formed in the 1980s by exiled members of the Islamic opposition to the Syrian regime. In this case again, the British state was quite happy to host

opponents to a regime which was not pliable enough to its taste - that is, until the 1990s, when Blair banned the group for seeking to recruit fighters on behalf of the Afghan Taleban.

Eventually, these Libyan and Syrian factions turned their weapons against their former mentors. The murderous plans carried out at the Manchester Arena and London Bridge are by-products of this. Except that instead of targeting the former mentors themselves, the victims are innocent civilians, just like the victims of the bombs dropped by the West over Libya, Iraq and Syria. And yes, the result is horrifying and intolerable - just as intolerable as the power games of the politicians and generals who are pulling the strings from the cosy comfort of their offices in Britain's ministries! ☐

### Evading the question "why?"

After the 3rd June attack at London Bridge, the cause of these shocking events was simply not up for discussion. Campaigning for the election, due within days, may have been temporarily suspended, but politicians jumped at the chance to pose as champions of "law and order" - usually the Tories' domain.

Labour's Corbyn promised to recruit another 10,000 officers and 1,000 security service agents exclaiming that: "You cannot protect the public on the cheap. The police and security services must get the resources they need, not 20,000 police cuts... Theresa May was warned by the Police Federation but she accused them of 'crying wolf'." As if these attacks could possibly have been prevented if there had been even 100,000 more police on the beat!

This time Corbyn also made sure he was not going to be associated with "terrorists" or with opposing "shoot-to-kill", saying: "I will take whatever action is necessary and effective to protect the security of our people and our country. That includes full authority for the police to use whatever force is necessary to protect and save life as they did last night." He also demanded the publication of a report, which apparently had been

withheld, on Saudi Arabia's support for terrorist groups and called for funding of "Islamic organisations" to be stopped. Which was yet another way of ducking the real issue. May herself has announced tougher measures to deal with so-called "Islamic extremism". It is no coincidence that hate crimes against Muslims increased fivefold in the aftermath of the

London Bridge attack.

Of course, it would be naive to expect the politicians to point a finger of blame at themselves and at their Middle East policy over the past decades, where the carnage continues, day after day. Previously, Corbyn at least, dared to speak out against it - but now he too, holds his tongue.



In addition to this monthly paper, we publish fortnightly bulletins in several large workplaces in the South East, a quarterly journal, "Class Struggle" and the "Internationalist Communist Forums" - a series of pamphlets on topical issues.

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