

# WORKERS' fight



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<http://www.w-fight.org>  
contact@w-fight.org

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

# VOTING CANNOT "MAKE HISTORY", FIGHTING CAN!

Cameron's EU referendum gamble has flopped. His attempt to pull the Eurosceptic rug from under Ukip's feet to contain his party's unrest, finally backfired. With Remain winning just 48.1%, Cameron knew that his party's grandees would be going for the kill. This gave little choice but to announce his resignation for the autumn, thereby opening the race for his succession.

As a result, the very same Tory infighting and overbidding which led to this referendum and permeated its campaign, will carry on. And, predictably the Brexiter Boris Johnson - Britain's own Donald Trump, with just a thin varnish from his time in Eton and Oxbridge - is a strong contender among Cameron's aspiring heirs.

## **Backward-looking lackeys of the City**

Meanwhile, a considerable amount of hot air was generated by Brexiters about what a "great nation" Britain is going to be, now that it is "free to go it alone". Never mind that this country is a dot on the map, with less than 1% of the planet's population - or that its social and economic fabric depends on the rest of the world, Europe included!

Only those harking back to the "great" days of the British Empire can talk such nonsense. Unable to turn the clock back to those days, these politicians hail this referendum for turning it back by 43 years, as if this could possibly be "making history"!

What these Brexiters will do with what they describe as their "mandate" to leave the EU, is another question, as it depends on factors beyond their control. Who can tell, for instance, what the fallout of the speculation generated by this referendum will be? The 24/7 mobilisation of the big financial institutions failed to prevent hectic



**Striking French workers on 14th June: our strength is in the streets not in the ballot box**

movements in the value of the pound and acute turmoil on stock markets, in London and elsewhere. No-one can predict what the fallout will be.

Besides, whoever replaces Cameron will have the City breathing down his neck. Brexiter or not, his successor will have to toe the line laid down by British Capital - including ensuring that it retains its present full access to the EU market, whatever the price.

## **What now for the working class?**

For the working class, this means more of the same attacks on jobs and conditions and more of the same cuts - if not worse. But then, in this respect, whichever way the referendum went made little difference.

The fact that the staunchest Leave strongholds were in Tory heartlands did not stop commentators and politicians from blaming working class Labour voters for the Leave victory. Some Labour right-wingers are even demanding

Corbyn's resignation, for being "too soft" on migrant workers!

But in Labour's strongholds, most of the Leave voters mistakenly thought this was a chance to say that they'd had enough of seeing their living standards fall due to Cameron's policies. It's not for nothing that the strongest Leave vote in working class areas came from industrial graveyards like Bolsover, Barnsley, Corby, etc.

What's left after this campaign and after years of scapegoating migrant workers, is a divisive, poisonous climate which could become dangerous if the working class doesn't deal with it.

Voting has never brought about any change for the working class. But direct action against the bosses' offensive, their politicians and their system, can bring change - if it unites all its forces behind common fighting objectives. Then and only then will the working class really "make history", by taking society forward! ☐

**Crisis watch**

**Sports Direct Workhouses**

Mike Ashley, the billionaire owner of Sports Direct and Newcastle United, has admitted that "at a specific time" his workers were paid less than the national minimum wage (£6.70/hr for 20-25 year olds and £7.20/hr for over-25s). The average wage at Sports Direct worked out at £6.50/hr because workers were made to go through lengthy security checks after their shift, which was unpaid time.

Then there was a "6 strikes and you're out" sacking policy. Fearing for their jobs, workers were afraid to take medical leave. At one warehouse in Derbyshire employing 200 permanent and 3,000 temporary workers, there have been 110 ambulance call-outs, including for one worker who gave birth in the toilets.

After these facts appeared in newspaper reports, a parliamentary



committee summoned Ashley to give evidence. Ashley refused, calling the committee a "joke". When the committee threatened to bring him by force, he agreed at the 11th hour. There, he admitted the truth about the pay and conditions, but claimed that he hadn't known it at the time.

So is he going to pay all his workers the money he's stolen from them? The thief claimed he's not "Father Christmas". So he's only paying the permanent workers their arrears - i.e. just 7,000 out of his 27,000 workers! ☐

**• BHS collapse: Green's getting away with it!**

The BHS closure is threatening the jobs of 11,000 workers and the pensions of 20,000. Green, the former owner, squeezed out £807m worth of dividends from BHS during his tenure of 15 years. And then last year, knowing full well that the company was in very dire financial straits, he happily sold it to a

little-known asset-stripping group owned by three-times bankrupt, Dominic Chappell.

After months of negotiations and after being called before a parliamentary committee, Green agreed to pay not more than £10m a year towards the pension fund's £571m deficit. He has shamelessly promised

just one thousand jobs in his other retail stores, when he's more than wealthy enough to ensure that no BHS worker loses anything out of the mess that he and his partners in crime have managed to create.

**• The dishonourable "Sir" Philip Green**

So who is this "Sir" Philip Green, who is responsible for the BHS scandal?

His family is apparently "worth" £3.2bn. But how was this money made? His Arcadia empire includes chains like Topshop, Wallis, Dorothy Perkins and Ms Selfridge - employing over 44,000 mostly low-paid workers. But Green is also a consummate tax dodger. His Arcadia group is owned by Taveta investments - which is registered in Jersey's tax haven. What's more Taveta is in the name of his wife, who is a resident of the principality of Monaco, where no income tax needs to be paid! In 2005, these and other

tricks allowed Green to net a £1.2bn tax-free dividend, at a time when Taveta's profits were just £253m!

For such "renowned abilities", Green was even granted a knighthood by Tony Blair in 2006 and appointed as an advisor by David Cameron to help with making cuts in the civil service in 2010! His special connections with the Tory government are probably the reason why some MPs want to hold him to account (although rather gently and politely) and expose him for his greed and tax evasion. But then, he is only one among many. Isn't this what capitalism is all about, after all?



**Insecure jobs for millions**

According to research by the Citizens Advice Bureau, 4.5m workers are in insecure jobs. These include just over 2.3 million working variable shift patterns, 1.1 million working on temporary contracts and 800,000 people working on either zero hours or agency contracts. Predictably, these workers are more likely to earn less

money and work longer hours. Those who can do so, often rely on overtime to make a living. Sound familiar?

Even the number of professional or semi-professional workers on temporary contracts has increased compared to 5 years ago. But the biggest increase in temps is in low-paid leisure, care and basic skilled jobs. In fact, a third of temporary workers want to work full-time but no

such jobs are on offer. So it's low-paid and insecure jobs which are on the rise.

No wonder the number of people living below the poverty line is so high: around 2.3m in London alone or 27% of its population! And yet, we are told that the London economy is doing so much better than the rest of the UK ... certainly not for working people.

## Ripping up the education system

The Tories have frozen school funding per pupil in cash terms till 2020. A report released by the Institute for Fiscal Studies last month found that a 10% increase in pupil numbers in British schools had already resulted in a 4% drop in spending per pupil in secondary schools. The study estimates that this new freeze is going to aggravate this trend and will result in cuts of 7% on the amount spent per secondary school pupil by 2020! After attacking the teachers, now the Tories are coming for the pupils! ☐

### • State McSchools

The state education system is undergoing outright privatisation with academisation. Many of these academies, though registered as charities, are now subsidiaries of profit-making parent companies.

Take the Bright Tribe Multi-Academy Trust. Its parent company is called Equity Solutions. Its owner, Mike Dwan, started off as a low-key property developer based in Manchester, but used the opportunity of PFI to become a multi-millionaire. He built PFI schools and leased them to the government for



decades. One such school in Speke, Liverpool, closed down in 2014, 10 years after it was built, but the government will continue paying for the lease till 2028! By this time, Dwan will have been paid £90m for a building that cost him only £22m!

Now, Bright Tribe has its finger in another publicly-funded pie: academies. It makes profits from "managing" state schools, and charging the government for its "services". Among these, is charging the taxpayer a fortune (at perfectly arbitrary rates) for writing spurious

## Crisis watch

"reports" which say "nothing can actually be done". It also helps its profit-making sister companies by parcelling out administrative departments of the school like IT, maintenance and HR to them.

Introduced by Labour, there were only 203 academies by 2010. Today, 2,075 of 3,381 secondary schools and 2,440 of 16,766 primary schools are already academies. For Dwan and his Tribe, the cash machine is ringing.

### • HS2: white elephant in the making?

The High Speed 2 line, a project born in 1982, received governmental consent in 2010. It is meant to run for 335 miles and link London to Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds. In theory, its trains, travelling at 250mph, will bring Manchester within 1 hour of London. But there is an obstacle in its way - money. Its initial estimated budget of £55bn was increased to £72bn in 2013, but could reach as much as £80bn!

The main factor behind this soaring cost is a galaxy of parasitical interests which are trying to get their share of the cake. For instance, HS2 Ltd, a private company which was created in 2010 to lobby the government, received £25m out of public money for its first year (but why should the government pay a company to lobby itself??). Then there is the myriad of overlapping contractors who need to be coordinated. Last and not least, there are all those seeking compensation - the landowners whose land will either be used for the line or will lose some of its value due the line being nearby; the private train companies which will lose business, etc. In fact, the government's Major Projects Authority gave HS2 the rating "Amber/Red" - meaning there is a "high risk" it won't deliver

value for money.

Due to budget cuts, the HS2 route may now be cut, and start in Acton and end in Crewe - which would give Britain's first domestic high-speed train the official status of white elephant! In the meantime, working-class commuters in London and Manchester will still have to travel in over-priced, delayed, sardine tins. For them, there's no money!

### • Trident: we don't want it

The fact that the nuclear "deterrent", Trident, will be obsolete soon after or even before it is actually renewed has not deterred the government from pledging to do just that - and at the cost of an ever-increasing sum of money - currently £205 billion and likely to increase. Even military scientists have repeatedly pointed out that it is a white elephant serving no purpose other than to line the pockets of those who are contracted to manufacture it.

There will be a way to prevent the project to proceed - in theory at least - via the vote to be taken in parliament. However, despite his vocal opposition to Trident, Corbyn is bowing to the pressure put on him by the leader of the trade union Unite, Len McCluskey, in the name of preserving jobs, to allow a free vote on the renewal. Which means it would go through, against Corbyn's own

principles... But given how Labour's parliamentary party (past and present) is lining up to knife him in the back, what would he have to lose by whipping them to vote against?

### • Blackmailing social tenants

The Housing Bill remains a serious threat to the provision of social housing, despite some government concessions. Among other things, it involves limiting social tenancies to between 2 and 5 years, with continuation subject to "reviews". A House of Lords' amendment raised this limit to 10 years, which is still no safeguard against tenants being blackmailed into either buying their homes or, if they can't afford it, having to move into private rented accommodation. Especially so, if the homes in question would fetch a good price on the open market - in which case the Tories want councils to sell them, to fund discounts on sales of housing association properties.

With mortgages and private rents getting increasingly beyond the reach of most working people, a secure social rented sector is clearly more necessary than ever. Just as clearly though, the Tories' only real policy on housing is to maximise the stock available for speculation.

**EU referendum**

**Brexit or not, British capital will get its way**

Those expecting rapid changes following the EU referendum will have been disappointed: the British isles didn't start drifting away from Europe into the Atlantic and the rain kept pouring as usual - in fact, even more. But this disappointment may well increase as the hidden hand of big business regains control.

Since a little-known provision of the referendum bill says that its result is only "advisory", Cameron could still declare that Parliament must confirm it. With Labour's support in the Commons and the help of the Lords' pro-EU majority, he could get a vote against Brexit. But then this would certainly precipitate a crisis within his party and cause dozens of right-wingers to join Ukip. It is, therefore, unlikely that Cameron will take this risk.

Of course, the government won't unilaterally sever its links with the EU, as this would spell disaster for British-based companies doing business in Europe. Instead, it has to follow article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty which outlines the procedure for a member-state to leave the EU. However, this

**• Sham "democracy"**

This referendum was described by all and sundry as a "historical political decision". Yet, Brexit won by just a derisory 3.8% majority of the vote - which is hardly a "historical" majority! No wonder that, within less than 48 hours of the result, over 3 million people had already signed an e-petition demanding a re-run!

What's more, taking the 72.2% turnout into account, this "historical

**• The media barons' elastic views**

The media played a prominent role in this referendum campaign - especially the newspapers - by spreading the lies peddled by both camps. But this does not mean that the media barons believed in these lies, of course. They just stood for what they believed would be "selling" best, gambling on the prejudices of their target audience as they more or less always do.

Some of them did adopt a firm line, like the porn millionaire Robert Desmond whose main titles (Daily and Sunday Express, Daily Star) were all pro-Leave, just as those of the billionaire Barclay Brothers (Daily and Sunday Telegraph, Spectator).

Others were careful to hedge their bets. Among the main titles owned by Lord Rothermere, for instance, one,



procedure is untested and subject to interpretation. So whichever way it goes, it will take a long time - in fact, years of horse-trading over Britain's future economic relations with the EU, during which it will retain all the obligations of a member-state.

Ultimately, British capital will get its way - an agreement allowing it to retain free access to the EU market. But there will be concessions in return, including the free movement of labour which is vital for a number of

British industries, like construction and retail. Some prominent Brexiters have already hinted at such an outcome, turning Britain into an "associate" EU member, with the same obligations as before, but fewer rights. By then, the whole referendum charade will have gone full circle. And the only thing that will be left will be the dirt and poison of a campaign that would never have taken place, were it not for the political establishment's infighting! ☐

decision" will have actually been taken by just 37.5% of all registered voters! If this was the result of a strike ballot in the public sector, any action taken by the 37.5% who voted in favour would be illegal according to Cameron's latest Employment Bill.

In this EU referendum, however, the remaining 63.5% will have no choice but to live with the consequences of the Brexit decided by the 37.5% minority.

Daily Mail was pro-Leave, while the two others - the Mail on Sunday and Metro - were both pro-Remain. But the most opportunist of the whole lot was unquestionably Rupert Murdoch. Among his two "serious" titles, the Times was pro-Remain while the Sunday Times was pro-Leave. Murdoch's Sun newspaper took an even more chameleon-like stance: although it was pro-Leave, its famous headline "beLEAVE in Britain" was published in England, but mysteriously disappeared in Scotland and Northern Ireland, no doubt for fear of upsetting Scottish and Irish readers!

In any case, while ordinary voters were given only one so-called "choice", this shows how, with enough money it was possible for the media barons to be on the winning side whatever happened!

This is what they call Britain's "great democracy"! But then, is it any wonder, when this country has been ruled for over 6 years by a government which was elected by just 24% of the electorate?

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## They all have Jo Cox's blood on their hands

Regardless of her killer's mental state, the murder of West Yorkshire Labour MP Jo Cox reflected the poisonous climate built up by years of xenophobic overbidding by politicians and governments. As the EU referendum got closer, this climate became loaded with fear and hatred, causing Jo Cox's murderer to turn his nationalist far-right infatuation into action, shouting "Britain first" as he shot her dead. Why? Probably just because she had supported the refugee children who Cameron wanted to bar from Britain!

Thereafter, a repulsive festival of hypocrisy took place over Jo Cox's coffin, when the very same politicians who

had fanned the flames which prompted her killer to act, fell over themselves to shed tears over her death.

One of the factors in creating today's poisonous atmosphere was, of course, the vicious anti-migrant campaign waged by most components of the Brexit camp.

But Cameron was just as responsible for spreading the poison. After all, didn't he, for years, blame his public service cuts on the "burden" of migrant workers "abusing the system", when the only "burden" was the cost of the banks' bailout? And when Cameron's blame game finally propped up Ukip's nasty profile, rather than

## EU referendum

trying to counter its crass anti-migrant demagoguery, didn't he go along with it all the way, to the point of calling this fake referendum for the sole purpose of allaying his MPs' fears of losing out to Ukip? And then didn't Cameron indulge in months of anti-migrant overbidding with his Brexiter rivals?

So, yes, all these politicians have Jo Cox's blood on their hands. They couldn't care less about the poison they've spread as part of their political rivalries. But the working class should. It is in its interest to fight any attempt to introduce more divisions in its ranks. □

### • Farage - politics of hatred...

In the run-up to the EU debate Farage went so far as to say, in an interview with the BBC: "It's legitimate to say that if people feel they've lost control completely, and we have lost control of our borders completely... and if people feel voting doesn't change anything, then violence is the next step."

In earlier interviews, he has said that he agreed with the "principal points" of the famous 1968 "Rivers of blood" speech, in which Enoch Powell, a Tory politician then bidding for the leadership of the party, had claimed that "...like a Roman, I seem to see the River Tiber foaming with much blood" as a consequence of immigration into Britain. At the time, his speech was deemed "racialist" by the whole political



establishment and he was sacked from his position as shadow defence secretary by his own party.

Today, however, in the context of an on-going economic crisis, xenophobic ideas are a convenient

way for the political establishment to divert attention from anti-working class policies. This is why rambling fools like Farage were allowed to set the tone in the referendum campaign, and more generally, in British politics.

### ... and of lies and fear

According to Farage, there was one major reason for Britain to leave the EU: he claimed that British women would be under the threat of "sex attacks" from immigrants if the Brexit vote didn't win! He used the example of the events at Cologne's central

station, on New Year's Eve 2015, where over 1,000 women were hemmed in by gangs and some were robbed while others were sexually assaulted.

Never mind that the latest report from the Cologne public prosecutor

had already announced that only 3 out of 58 of those arrested after these attacks were refugees, the rest being German citizens. But then, the likes of Farage rely on lies, and the more far-fetched the better, in order to inflame prejudices.

### Blairites, knives out

That Labour's Blairites would attempt a coup against Jeremy Corbyn was never a question of "if?", only a question of "when?". Having failed to get their chance after the party's relatively good showing in last May's elections, they have seized on the outcome of the referendum.

The result has been a devastating storm in Labour's parliamentary teacup. So far, no fewer than 19 shadow cabinet members either resigned or were sacked for declaring that they couldn't work under Corbyn; 5 declared their

continuing support for Corbyn and 6 still have to make a decision. In passing, this shows how much Corbyn conceded in order to maintain party "unity" and keep his sworn enemies onboard!

Of course, this attempted coup has got no more to do with the EU, the referendum, or its result, than the on-going in-fighting in the Tory party. It's all about the perks of power. While Labour members elected Corbyn because they thought he would be able - and willing - to articulate their discontent, many - if not most - Labour MPs want a leader who can improve their career prospects in Downing Street. The trouble is that

one is not compatible with the other. A prime minister's job is to serve the interests of big business, not to expose its greed and parasitism.

Today, Corbyn is once again dragged into the mud by his own party peers, for his refusal to go along with the repulsive anti-migrant demagoguery which dominated the referendum campaign. This is to his credit. But he is stuck in an insoluble contradiction - between the generous ideas for which he was elected and a party machinery whose only ambition is to serve the interests of British capital in office and which will do anything to achieve this aim.

**EU referendum****Workers have the same interests across Europe**

To back up his Remain campaign, Cameron had made a big show of depriving EU migrants who have been in Britain for less than 4 years of some of their benefits. In fact, this was opening an open door. Although EU regulations ban discrimination between EU citizens on the basis of nationality, a long series of judgements by the so-called European Court of "Justice" has allowed member states to ignore this regulation when it comes to benefits.

The latest of these judgements, which was passed just nine days before the referendum, backed Cameron's plan to subject child benefit payments to unemployed EU workers to a "residence test". Of course, such a vague formulation opens the way to all kinds of interpretation - and that's exactly its



**Dock workers in Athens,  
February 2016**

purpose.

The truth is that the EU institutions, whose role is to serve the interests of European capitalists, are going along with the governments' attempts to cut welfare budgets

across the EU. And, Brexit or not, that's just another reason for workers here and throughout Europe to unite their forces, across all nationalities and borders, to oppose these cuts! □

**• Scaremongering over the NHS**

Among the scare stories of the Leave campaign, was Gove's warning about the NHS. First, he argued that by 2030, the migrant population will have increased by 3.1 to 5.2m. As if anyone could make such prediction! Did his government predict the refugee crisis that Britain's policy in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria, helped create? But this didn't stop him from adding: "The idea of asking the NHS to look

*after a new group of patients equivalent in size to four Birmingham is clearly unsustainable... the NHS will need.. tens of thousands of new doctors and nurses."*

But so what? Assuming this figure of 5.2m was reached by 2030, or even double this number, wouldn't this mean millions of pairs of hands available to build hospitals, houses, schools and other infrastructure, as well as to

staff public services, for the benefit of all? Wouldn't this mean millions more households paying taxes to fund this infrastructure?

As to shedding tears over NHS staffing levels, isn't this pure hypocrisy from the Justice minister of a government which, last year alone, turned away 2,700 non-EU nurses, thanks to its punitive immigration policies?

**• The cuts were always there - and they had nothing to do with the EU**

During the EU campaign, both camps carefully avoided mentioning that the cuts introduced to pay for the banking bailout, had nothing to do with the EU. Nor did they mention that more cuts would be coming, regardless of the referendum result.

Osborne, however, has always planned to go on cutting in order to reduce social expenditure by £3.5bn/yr by the end of this parliament. And

whether or not he retains his post after Cameron is gone, these cuts will go ahead - assuming they are not even worse due to the economic fallout of the referendum.

To give an idea of what's in store, the Resolution Foundation produced an analysis estimating the impact of the full roll-out of "Universal Credit" - the Tories' new in-and-out-of-work benefit. It shows that 3 million

working households will no longer get any in-work benefits, thereby losing an average £42 a week, while another 1.2 million, although still getting some benefit, will be £41 a week worse off on average.

For over 6 months, the EU referendum has been a convenient way of diverting attention from these attacks. Now that the diversion is out of the way, they need to be opposed.

**Triggering mayhem?**

The politicians who dismissed what they called "Project Fear", claiming that a Brexit vote would not cause a financial backlash, should be made to pay for their stupidity - or rather their lies - out of their own pockets and future fat salaries.

Anyone in sane mind knew that this was an absolute certainty, because of two factors. The first one is the operation of the capitalist system itself. With hundreds of billions of floating capital in search of a quick profit, speculators

were bound to gamble on a likely imbalance on the markets, thereby creating a snowball effect whose evolution was impossible to predict. The second factor, which could only compound the first one, was quite simply that the world economy remained in crisis, with an unusual abundance of unused capital due to the capitalists' reluctance to invest in the real economy, at a time when markets appeared to be saturated.

The results are there to be seen. Despite the £250bn worth of liquidities made available to the financial system by the Bank of England, despite the

bankers' general mobilisation of their staff, the share market and the pound have been more severely affected by the referendum than by any other event since the 2008 banking crisis. And the ripple effects have now been felt in just about every one of the world's main financial centres.

Those who hail Britain as a "great nation", will probably draw pride out of this turmoil, as proof of their self-importance. The truth, however, is that it only shows the terminal fragility of this capitalist system and the total irresponsibility of its politicians.

## Trade Union Act - what does it change?

On May 4th, the Trade union Bill became the Trade Union Act 2016. It requires the same ballot thresholds for strikes to be "legal" as in the original draft: a minimum 50% turnout and, in the case of "important public services" (such as health or education) the endorsement of at least 40% of the membership. Not that Cameron is specially concerned about the health or education of the population, but since this is where his cuts are bound to hit, he wants to pre-empt any resistance!

Cameron did drop his plan to allow agency workers to be used as strikebreakers. But bosses must be given 14 days' notice ahead of a strike - instead of the previous 7 days. As for pickets, in addition to the possibility for the bosses to ask a court for an injunction against them, they now need to have an identified "leader" responsible to the police.

The union machineries, however, have been spared what seemed to worry them most. In public



Protest against the Bill at Mount Pleasant, February 2016

services, in particular, the threat of having fewer union full-timers due to limitations on facility time has been lifted, as well as the threat of losing members due to check-off systems being ended. That the TUC leadership was more concerned about these issues than the attacks on the right to strike, was shown by its general secretary Frances O'Grady, who

said she was "proud" of "these positive changes"!

For workers, however, what matters is that their collective strength is intact. If and when they decide to move, what will be decisive is not whether their action is "legal", but their ability to change the balance of forces in their fight with the bosses. □

## • NHS playing doctors and nurses

While Jeremy Hunt had to back down on forcibly imposing the junior doctors' contract after their unprecedented strike action, the deal they're now voting on (result is due 1 July) isn't much improved. On pay they have given up the time+50% for nightwork for time+37%, among other things. In other words, they've a net pay cut at worst, or the cut is partly compensated by a basic pay rise of 3-10%. But the deal certainly can't and won't address the main problem: too few doctors stretched over too many

hours, with 1 doing the job of 2 or 3. And yet Hunt is adamant that he's now going to get the "7-day NHS" which he pledged.

To "plug the gap", there is talk of nurses being used and already there are associate physicians doing a 3-year fast-track training, to act as "sub-doctors" or "supra-nurses" in the meantime. But who knows, maybe this will mean fewer doctors, not more of them, in the future! For an NHS increasingly in deficit, doctors on the cheap is a choice it is already making...



## • Tube workers won't toe the Tube's line

London Underground is planning to start the night tube in August. But maintenance and engineering workers (previously under Tube Lines) are to be given different conditions than other tube workers, when the night tube is launched.

In fact these workers have been part of TFL since 2011, but were not entered into the TFL pension scheme, nor were they given travel facilities. Now with the advent of the night tube, they will be expected to be a lot more flexible. They certainly don't agree with this. So, on the 24th May, 1,500 maintenance and engineering Tube Lines workers voted by 86% in favour of strike action on a 40% turn-out.

TFL has now backed down on the issue of travel facilities. But workers want

the right to opt out of night tube work, with extra workers employed to cover. They're also suspicious, as the new agreement speaks of "24-hour running", implying this could be every day, when the night tube is meant only for Friday and Saturday nights (and holidays). Worse: in order to get included in the pension scheme they are supposed to agree a no-strike deal! Understandably it's a no-no!

## • Profits before safety

The death of Richie Anderson on the 17th June, at Boulby Potash Mine, East Cleveland, occurred after a gas "blowout" at 3am, around 1km underground and 5km out to sea. This is one of Europe's deepest mines. Gas blow-outs are quite common: the plant manufactures fertilizers, after all. But this one follows several

incidents in which workers were put at risk: in 2012, the roof caved in and the mine was issued with an improvement notice; on 14 April 2016, 7 workers were trapped by an underground blaze and "thought they'd be cooked alive", but luckily were rescued. The ruling by the Health And Safety Inspectorate was that its owner, ICL, had put workers at risk and should carry out a full assessment by 27 June 2016. Had it done so?

Today 800 workers are employed at Boulby. But 360 jobs were cut just last November, including 140 subcontractors. Simon Hunter, ICL UK's safety manager claims that the previous incidents were unrelated to the cause of Mr Anderson's death and that any suggestions that job losses had impacted on safety were "misconstrued". All the more reason not to believe him.

**Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)****Managers (almost) show the way?**

It is ironic that the majority of the 15,000 managers working for Royal Mail actually voted to strike against a pay deal of 1.3% this May!

Of course nobody in the workforce expected them to walk out. A one-day strike was cancelled at the last minute when a new 2-year offer was put on the table - of 1.6% from last September to this September and another 1.3% after that.

So now the union CMA-Unite has withdrawn their overtime ban and "work to rule" (who ever saw a manager actually "work"?) and put the new offer to the vote with their recommendation to accept even though it barely meets inflation - in May the RPI was 1.4%. The result is not out yet, but with Royal Mail registering a 5% rise in adjusted operating profit before transformation costs (its



preferred measure ) to £742m and a 1% revenue increase to £9.2bn-hailed as a "resilient performance" by the company's chief executive, Moya Greene - well, maybe her "loyal" managers could have expected more? ☐

**A no-strings deal? No such thing!**

As for postal workers' pay, things couldn't be worse. A 1.6% offer was immediately recommended by the union (CWU) executive, because it came without strings! Never mind that the strings - or rather ropes to hang the workforce with - are scheduled for negotiation in a few months time and include new working conditions like 6-hour delivery spans, new start and finish times and jobs cuts and closures due to new automated

parcel sorting technology.

The changes have fancy names like "one wave" and "one plan" as if something unifying will take place, when it just means one worker doing the job which many did, before!

The ballot is almost a formality, given the union leadership's acceptance.

This is not the first time they've separated attacks on conditions from the pay issue in order to allow

the management a free hand. It happened when pensions were "decoupled" from the pay deal in 2007, after the first national strike in 11 years. It ended up with us losing part of our defined benefit pensions and all post-2008 new recruits put into a defined contribution scheme dependent on the ups and downs of the financial markets.

We should vote no!

**• Not enough!**

We're told that the Processing fit-up started on Monday the 6th, but frankly we don't see the difference! What we need is new faces, hands and legs, not the sharing of even more duties! It's been incredibly busy - especially last week when parent took half-term leave. But the workforce should be large enough so that these predictable, regular "holidays" don't result in chaos! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 15/06/16]

**• LOL?**

The clearing and works in the basement has started for the new van parking area and we're already thinking of the mess ahead... We anticipate even more chaos (and maybe some laughs), when managers try hard to fit the same number (??) of vans in a shrinking space. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 15/06/16]

**• Cuts behind their fancy words**

In fact that's a question. Because behind the "new way of working" and so-called One Wave-One Plan there are yet more big cuts coming, so that profits can rise. It means fewer workers, fewer vans, when we are too few drivers as it is! We

should be clear about RM's plans and find our own way to oppose them, along with other offices - since the top union officials are undoubtedly already signed up to them! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 15/06/16]

**• Royal mayhem**

We remember when RM planned for separate "arrivals" and "exit" platforms, but it never happened in practice, as there weren't enough platforms. RM's made such a mess of it that sometimes it's literally impossible to even walk the platform! And when the development cuts the space even more? Well, we know where to get a cuppa while managers try to solve their own (insoluble) mayhem! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 15/06/16]

**• Who's to blame?**

And let's not forget that RM and RM alone engineered this present chaos. When they closed Paddington, East London, Nine Elms, Rathbone Place, etc., to please future shareholders! We were happy to welcome the workers here - it "saved" MP, in a way. But unfortunately an army of useless managers ended up here as well - each with their own (crazy) obsessions! So we'll not allow management to blame the worsening mess on us. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 15/06/16]

**• New faces?**

So transfers from Greenford, Romford and HMP are open and we expect to see some new mates coming over here. For our mates leaving, we wish them all the best, and the new comers, a warm welcome to HMP... and if you find it chaotic, don't worry, we'll explain over a cup of rosy... [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 15/06/16]

**• Well, it works well on TV!**

So we got RM's letter last week, re the Parcel Sorting Machine going operational in Swindon. Now we're meant to provide Swindon with an "automatable" parcels selection... The instructions - correct 2D barcode, no odd-shaped packets, etc., make us wonder if this strange beast is really going to "do the job"... We suspect manual sorting will have to do more than "help out"! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 01/06/15]

**• The rejects and missorts about**

Yeah - we all keep saying too, that for anything like this to work RM has to re-educate the public as to wrapping, post codes and addressing... We predict big jams: they've cut all the special jobs dedicated to correcting such problems.[Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 01/06/15]



**BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)****BMW's tiers of exploitation**

BMW has used agency workers at its Oxford plant since the Mini went into production there in 2001. The first recruits were told that after 6 months they would be eligible for permanent contracts, leading to an angry reaction when very few were actually given them. Some agency workers have waited 10 years or more for BMW contracts and those starting now are told they must wait at least 5 years. Never mind that the law entitles directly-employed workers on fixed-term contracts to automatic permanent status after 4 years!

Workers employed by the agency Gi Group are expected to be able to work all the jobs in their teams, yet face all kinds of discrimination. Subject to lay-off at any time and not entitled to sick pay, management takes advantage of their insecurity to exploit them to the maximum. When looking to cut jobs, as BMW is now, managers pick on agency workers for absence or timekeeping. Until the agency regulations entitled them to full pay after 12 weeks they were permanently paid lower wages; even now, at Oxford they are paid less for the first 2 years and are



excluded from voting on pay deals or shift changes.

While agency workers are expected to join the Unite branch, Unite stewards are rarely prepared to support them in challenging discrimination. Moreover, the movement of labour agreement, which allows BMW employees a choice of jobs appropriate to their abilities and so prevents the company from forcing older workers to retire, is maintained on the backs of agency workers who are excluded from it.

Dividing the workforce into tiers allows BMW to play divide and rule, but the real point is to boost its profits at workers' expense. In fact throughout the factory, agency workers are integral to production teams bound together by shared experience and respect - a good starting point for raising common demands and fighting for them together!



- **New vacancies or new targets?**

Management bullying and harassment of agency workers is not just in Assembly. A Gi workmate in B-i-W with over 5 years service was in process of being given his BMW contract. Suddenly he was marched into the office and told that he had a poor timekeeping record. Now he's been sacked with a month's notice! This is an attack on all of us. [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 15/06/16]

- **2pm Thur, 16 June: ready for "kick off"?**

Concerning watching Euro 2016 matches, BMW spokesman, Steven Wrelton, was quoted in the Oxford Mail as saying: "because we operate a three-shift pattern, many of our associates will be able to follow games during the tournament

depending on when they kick off." Is that when the games kick off, or when we do? [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 15/06/16]

- **A compromising agreement**

Since BMW replaced Voluntary Early Retirement (VER) with less generous Compromise Agreement leaving packages, it's been hit and miss who gets them. Some mates aged 60+ and even with 40 years' service have been let go, shamefully, "for free". Now, BMW doesn't seem to want to offer any CA packages in Assembly though plenty of us have been asking. We're in no mood to give up! [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 15/06/16]

- **Wanting their cake and eating it!**

So June is the last month that workers with BMW contracts will be paid on the 15th. We'll then have to wait 6 weeks until our next pay packet at the end of July. Although BMW has offered a month's

take-home pay to each of us, it is not a gift and has to be paid back. So over the following 12 or 24 months we'll all be going short. And all because BMW wants to accumulate more interest by paying us at the end of the month. In fact if they paid us our wages up front, instead of in arrears, it would probably cost them less than administering their loan scheme! [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 01/06/16]

- **Mystery visit**

Last Monday two BMW top dogs came to Cowley, for who knows what? They wanted to meet a dozen native English speakers. Campaigning for an EU Remain vote, perhaps? Surely they know BMW's urgings are a turn-off for us! Explaining the virtues of payment at the end of the month? But they already know that if they pay us a month in advance it won't cost them a penny after the first month. They must be up to something else, then! [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 15/06/16]

**King's Cross railway station (London)****Train bosses' plans need to be derailed**

Guards on trains have the responsibility for safety as well as checking tickets. So they need to check that no one is stuck in the doors, or jumps on, as the train is leaving the platform. They must walk the length of the trains to ensure there are no problems, double check door and brake function, and generally "keep the peace" on board.

Recently, there have been strikes over the threatened removal of guards from trains (Driver Only Operation or DOO) or the downgrading of the guard's role, removing safety responsibilities.

But whether it is First Great Western, ScotRail, or Southern (Govia Thameslink Rail) which are

making these threats, it is all about cutting jobs and saving money. The companies claim that all that's needed is a conductor on the train for revenue purposes, as if safety wasn't vital! Already Southern has more than 41 uncovered vacancies on the guards' rosters. They rely on overtime working. So when trains could not run due to an absent guard, the company told lies about staff sickness levels to hide their staff shortages.

GTR's Great Northern service out of King's Cross is already operating DOO with Revenue Protection Inspectors jumping on and off trains and no-one taking care of safety.

Great Northern has closed 80



ticket offices; Virgin East Coast is planning ticket office and guard restructuring (read job cuts!) and so far says it won't run DOO trains, unlike its GTR and FGW counterparts - but guards and drivers know better than to trust them! It's clear workers need a concerted fight across the whole network to resist these cuts and stop these sharks in their tracks. ☐

**• Turning a few into many?**

Apparently GTR workers are expected to work magic to dispatch trains. Between 22 dispatchers, we've only got 8 radios. So we're already doing a juggling act between us - when the radios are needed somewhere else, the rest of us have to run around the platforms carrying messages! What next? Will they expect us to acquire telepathic powers? Not only should we have 22 radios, but also some spares for when they stop working (which is often)! This is a multibillion £ company - a couple more radios is peanuts for them. [Workers' Platform King's Cross 15/06/16]

**• From one millionaire to another**

Yeah, even the "commuters champion", the Evening Standard and its millionaire boss were shocked by the £2.15m that Go Ahead's CEO David Brown got paid in 2015 with the headline: "Boss of worst rail franchise sees pay package soar beyond £2m". Shareholders dividends rose from £35m to £37m! The GTR franchise includes Govia Thameslink - and now it's lying about the cuts and causes of the DOO dispute on Southern... [Workers' Platform King's Cross 15/06/16]

**• Southern's fight is our fight!**

In fact the fight on Southern by guards and drivers against DOO should not be left isolated like it is. We all have reason to jump in and support them. Guards here have real worries about the future - especially with this thinly-disguised attempt to get rid of them by "merging functions" of Crew Leaders and Guards. And what happened on First Great Western a propos the Hitachi trains? A union worth its salt would be busy co-ordinating our actions (as in France!) instead of handing out pro-Brexit leaflets outside the station! [Workers' Platform King's Cross 15/06/16]

**Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)****• This goes in our black book**

On the subject of the referendum, we heard the Dragon deal for which Bridgend workers made all kinds of concessions is on hold: Ford's using the fear of Brexit as an excuse and putting pressure on Bridgend workers over this. It's playing politics with the livelihoods of our mates. Something Ford can't be allowed to get away with. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 20/06/16]

**• Let's update working conditions!**

Is this the 21st century? Or has this factory been sucked back in time to the 19th? The stress of standing for a long time, having to work too fast with aching limbs, while a foreman sits on your

back (no rest, no sit, no drink) - can only raise all of our blood pressures sky high! The answer? All 140 of us Panthers acting as if we're shop stewards in order to introduce the healthy and safe working conditions that we all surely need, by our own collective force! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 20/06/16]

**• So, once more: sit-down strike needed!**

Actually nobody was really surprised to hear that someone collapsed on Panther. Dehydration already caused others to faint. But now, to make up for Ford cutting wages which leaves so many of us out of pocket, we're presented with the possibility of working 12 hours-a-day for 7 days-a-week!! They're trying to get us to dig our own graves. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 20/06/16]

**• Helping cover Ford's cover-up**

Well, it looks like the Panther head gasket disaster was bigger than Ford admits - a lot more than 6000 engines need stripping down. So they're also creating down-days on Tiger so that mates can go work on Panther. But the worst irony is that they're also sending mates back to Puma! After cutting the Puma workforce to a minishift, Ford's now manning up Puma, on down time! (and cancelling Puma overtime!). It's incredible. Why should they get away with that? Union officials may agree. We don't. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 20/06/16]

## State-sponsored killing and verdict

On June 17th the verdict was delivered on the accused in a massacre that took place on 28 February 2002, in the Indian city of Ahmedabad. The Gulbarg Society residential complex, a predominantly upper-middle class Muslim neighbourhood, was attacked by a 5000-strong mob organised by the BJP party and its affiliates, killing 69 people. This attack has been in the media because a Muslim Congress MP, Ehsan Jari, was its prime target - but

it was just one, and by no means the bloodiest, among a number of massacres across the state of Gujarat which were engineered by members of the BJP state administration led by the current Prime Minister, Narendra Modi.

In the Gulbarg Society massacre, 24 of the 66 accused have been convicted - but all the big fish have been acquitted, including a BJP municipal councillor and the local leader of one of the party's affiliates, who were both

## India

active members of the mob. The local police inspector was also acquitted, despite the police's failure to respond to numerous distress calls made for 10 hours. Significantly, the court ruled that the attack was not organised - which lets the state administration, the BJP and its associates off the hook. Meanwhile, the biggest fish, who is well known to have orchestrated the killings, sits in the Prime Minister's chair. □

### **The 2002 Gujarat massacres: the BJP's bloody road to power**

The mass killings orchestrated by the right-wing Hindu party, the BJP, and its affiliates in the Indian state of Gujarat, in February-March 2002, claimed more than 2000 lives and left 150,000 homeless. Narendra Modi, then head of the state's administration, stoked the anti-Muslim sentiment generated by the torching of a train carriage carrying Hindu devotees, the culprits of which have never been properly identified. Hindu right-wing groups went into action. Firearms and inflammable material were gathered, lists of addresses to be targeted were drawn up and right-wing politicians openly goaded on the rioters.

The BJP's aim was to build support for itself before the upcoming state election, at a time when its rule in the state was under threat. These

riots were also used by Modi as a springboard for his larger political ambitions, by asserting himself as the strong man of the BJP right.

The Hindu right used the fear and violence which is the product of a society stricken by poverty, to trigger these riots. Rather than these organisations and their leaders being

put on trial for attempting to climb up the ladder of political power on the dead bodies of the riots' victims, they have been allowed to do just that and are now sitting at the very top of the Indian state - a state that British politicians dare to call the "world's largest democracy"!



## Dirty war then, dirty tactics now

A claim for compensation by 40,000 Kenyans for the British army's brutality - including, torture, rape, wrongful detention and forced labour - started in the High Court on 23 May. The case, in preparation since 2013, relates to the "Kenyan emergency" which took place between 1952 and 1961.

The suppression of the Mau Mau rebellion in one of Britain's most fertile and lucrative African colonies was

brutal. The army bombed forests, herded 1.1m of the Kikuyu people into concentration camps and detained and beat thousands of others in military camps. In a previous case, in 2013, the government agreed to pay £19.9m compensation and costs to 5,228 Kenyan (less than £4,000 each!), with foreign secretary William Hague conceding that "abhorrent human rights abuses" (which included castration) - took place. Yet Hague

## Kenya

also denied government liability and made clear that further claims would still be contested.

Due to the time the current action has taken to come to court, at least 1,500 of the claimants have died and many of them are in their 90s. No doubt the British state will go on playing for time hoping to minimise the payout - compounding its past brutality with new brutality. □

## Football

### **Walking, talking billboards**

There is a reason why Rooney looks like a salesman for American car manufacturer Chevrolet, Vardy for Thai travel retail group King Power and Kane for pan-Asian life insurance group AIA - and why they all look like salesmen for either Nike, Adidas or Puma!

This is because sport sponsorship deals are big bucks! To have their logos emblazoned across players' chests, companies are willing to dish out millions of £s. Clubs from Europe's top six divisions made £640m through shirt sponsorship deals last season, with Barcelona earning £115m and Manchester United £75m!

That's just shirt sponsorship; TV

rights and other brand sponsors bring in many millions more! It's clear where the money goes - partly into the pockets of the star players, but mostly into those of the biggest clubs' shareholders. But if the big brands are prepared to fork out all these millions, we can be sure it's not out of love for footie - but because they expect to reap enormous profits from their investment!

**40 years ago****When Soweto's youth fought for their lives**

Forty years after the Soweto uprising, which began on 16th June 1976 and was the catalyst for risings of youth and workers all over the country, South Africa is burning in protest once again (see the article below). But today, the government is not one dominated by white Afrikaner nationalists trying to force black school children to learn all their lessons in these white men's language, Afrikaans, as it was in 1976. No, it is the "government of the people" - the inheritors of the black majority rule finally won in 1994 by way of the ballot box, led by the African National Congress under Nelson Mandela. By then the Apartheid regime, with the collaboration of the ANC had effectively negotiated a "peaceful" outcome after 18 years of relentless struggle by youth and workers through the 1980s. But what they got was not what they had given their blood for.

In 1976, when the clouds of tear-gas began to blow across the roofs of Soweto's brick houses and the sounds of police gunshot fire rang out - it seemed like the revolution had begun. Collecting each other from school to school that morning, eventually 20,000 pupils were on the march through



Soweto's streets, with placards saying simply "to hell with Afrikaans". They fearlessly faced armed police, pelted them with rocks and killed their dogs. Buildings and police cars were systematically set on fire. Most looting (liquor stores were destroyed) was prevented by the student leaders and within days they were calling on workers to stage stay-away strikes. The regime backed down over teaching in Afrikaans, but not before ruthlessly repressing the uprisings - having realised the deadly threat that they represented to white rule itself.

It was the first time ever, that the

massed ranks of youth and workers had stood up and fought without any fear, aware of their collective strength. Chanting "amandla awethu!", "power to the people!", they'd been inspired, not by the African National Congress or Communist party in exile, but by the black consciousness movement, as well as by the stirrings of an underground independent trade union movement, influenced by revolutionary Marxism. And even though hundreds were shot, many wounded, jailed, or forced into exile across the border, this event was to signal the beginning of the end of Apartheid - finally abolished in law in 1991.

The revolution - to get rid of an exploitative capitalist system which still uses brutal repression against strikes and protests - still has to be undertaken. Its delay for 22 years has seen the degeneration of the "old" political leadership and the death of reformists like Mandela. Let us hope that a new political movement can arise, in the spirit of 1976, but this time clear about the need to rid society of exploitation and based on the unity of the only class that can do this - the working class - across all divisions and across all nationalities. □

### • South Africa today: Tshwane on fire

"Burning institutions and private property seems to be the only way to get the government to listen, and rage knows no space. The people are speaking and historical militancy is coming back to haunt the ANC." These words of a militant black youth, describe the riots in Tshwane (previously Pretoria) - South Africa's administrative capital - which erupted when the ANC announced a new mayoral candidate, Thoko Didiza, on Monday 20 June. The spark was the sidelining of Tshwane's current mayor, Kgosientso Ramokgopa who openly called for President Zuma to resign.

Buses were burned, streets barricaded in central Tshwane and outlying townships; the main highway to the far-north blocked by protesters, police attacked and journalists chased away.

By mid-week, looting of shops and attacks on owners - often "foreign" immigrants from other countries in Africa - began.

Whether incited by Ramokgopa's supporters or not, this is a symptom of deeper anger against the corrupt, arrogant Zuma regime and the sidelining of the whole population. For 22 years the South African working class and poor trusted the ANC and its Communist Party and trade union partners in government to deliver a better future. They rightly feel betrayed. It points to a further blow being dealt to the ANC in the 3 August local elections. But perhaps also, that many know very well that a better future won't come out of the ballot box. They will have to fight for it. □



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.

If you wish to find out more about our ideas, activities and publications, contact the Workers' Fight activist who sold you this issue of our paper, or write to us either by e-mail, at [contact@w-fight.org](mailto:contact@w-fight.org), or by postal mail at:

BM Workers' Fight - LONDON WC1N 3XX.