

# WORKERS' fight



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

## The capitalists and their politicians are THE ENEMY WITHIN!

The Tory bigots are back on the offensive. Ex-Tory leader, now "Lord" Michael Howard, was first to pull out his battle axe. Posing as a champion of Gibraltar against Spain, he invoked Thatcher's ghost, celebrating her Falklands war, in 1982, "to defend the freedom of another small group of British people against another Spanish-speaking country" - and predicting that May would do the same.

All this, because the EU wants decisions concerning Gibraltar to be agreed by Spain! So what? Isn't Gibraltar an enclave stolen from Spain by Britain 300 years ago? And today, it's merely a tax haven offering British companies 10% corporation tax, with over half of its workforce having to commute to work every day from Spain.

But, of course, the likes of Howard do not give a damn about the "freedom" of workers, whether Spanish or British, for that matter!

### **Behind the farce, a lethal threat**

Howard's jingoism may seem to be farcical nostalgia. But, significantly, May hasn't disowned Howard - nor did Labour's "spokesman", Keir Starmer. Because they all want the population to line up behind what they call the "national interest".

But, wasn't it in the name of this "national interest" that Thatcher sent the Navy to the Falklands and got a thousand soldiers killed? And just to "punish" a poor country, Argentina, for daring to lay claim to an island which should never have been "British"!

Wasn't it also in the name of this "national interest" that, later, Blair waged his Afghan and Iraqi wars. And, this time, the human and material cost of these adventures was catastrophic for the populations - and they're still paying an intolerable price for them.

When the politicians of the capitalist



class talk about the "national interest", they never have the interests of the populations in mind - but only the interests of their capitalists who want to squeeze ever more profits out of their looting of the world.

Twice in the past, the defence of their "national interest" has led the world's richest countries to go at each other's throats - in two world wars which have claimed millions of victims - for no other reason than to steal each other's markets and colonies. Their "national interest" has always been and remains, a lethal threat for the working class!

### **Facing up to the danger**

Over the coming months, politicians will invoke the "national interest" to try to whip the working class into line behind Brexit.

For years, they blamed the EU and migrants for the degradation that the capitalists' profiteering was generating. They will carry on through the Brexit process, by pointing at other countries and their workers, as the enemies of the working class - and by whipping up

anti-foreign prejudices.

Even before their horse-trading with the EU has really started, the result of their scape-goating can already be seen. The brutal beating of a 17-year old asylum seeker, on March 31st, in Croydon, by several dozen thugs, was no accident. It is the by-product of an atmosphere consciously created by the likes of Howard and May.

Whatever the outcome of Brexit, the profits of British capital will be protected, while the working class will be expected to foot the bill. And they will make workers pay with their jobs, wages and conditions - in the same way, or worse - just as they did over the past decade of financial crisis.

This is what the working class needs to prepare for, consciously, by realising that its only enemies are the capitalists and their politicians. Whereas, whatever their jobs or nationality, all workers share the same interest in fighting off the greed of their exploiters. Workers have no "national interest" - they only have a "class interest", common to all workers across the world. And it is their greatest strength! □

## Ireland

The sudden death of the 66-year old former deputy first minister of Northern Ireland, Martin McGuinness, in Derry on the 21 March 2017, caused a carnival of reactionary hypocrisy. While he was being called a "mass murderer" by many in the media, who pointed to his past as an IRA commander, ironically it was a real mass murderer, Tony Blair, who was called upon to reminisce about how McGuinness had been a "man of peace". On the other hand, Norman Tebbit, whose wife was a victim of the IRA bomb which blew up the Brighton Tory Party Conference in 1984, said he hoped that McGuinness would rot in hell. While some likened McGuinness to Nelson Mandela, the establishment's favourite terrorist turned saint, others considered this an insult!

Yes, McGuinness was a "terrorist". Like many who witnessed the persistent denial of civil rights of Catholic working class Irish by a sectarian, divide and rule system, set up to impose British rule in the northern Irish six counties, using Protestant against Catholic, McGuinness joined the organisation which he believed was fighting this injustice.

He was an Official IRA member in Derry as early as 1969. He was present in Derry when the Bloody Sunday Massacre of 14 civil rights

## Primodos

Last month Sky news featured the scandal of Primodos, a hormone "pregnancy test" used in the 1960s and 1970s, which caused severe birth defects. Women whose babies died or were malformed never received compensation, nor even acknowledgement of their claims. The drug was made by Schering, now taken over by Bayer, and Bayer is finally providing some of the evidence previously withheld. Adequate laboratory tests weren't ever done to verify its safety. However

• **"Too fragile" to test themselves!**

Finding a quick pregnancy test was, of course likely to be a big money-spinner for drug companies. Which is probably the reason why Schering pushed the Primodos "test" onto the market before its safety was proven.

Up to the 1970s, mice, rabbits and frogs were the successive recipients of injections of women's urine - and if they then produced eggs, the test was positive! In fact frogs' eggs appeared after just 24 hours, but this test required a whole laboratory set-up, which an oral pill did not.

Then came the "instant" test-tube

## Martin McGuinness - an Irish Mandela indeed!



protesters took place on 30 January 1972. As part of Sinn Fein (the IRA's political wing) he was involved in "secret" talks with the British government to find a way out of the "Troubles". By the late 1980s and 1990s Sinn Fein's policy had switched from terrorist attacks (the bullet) to the ballot and McGuinness was one of the artisans of this shift.

Under the famous Good Friday Agreement of April 1998, leading Republicans became respectable, giving up their weapons in return for the social status attached to participating in the British political system. The "socialism" of their "New United Ireland" movement had never existed beyond the realm of rhetoric. But after the Agreement, it was totally

forgotten in a compromise which entrenched a sectarian divide in politics and gave lucrative positions in the 6 counties' political machinery to the likes of McGuinness and many others among the Republican leadership. The bottom line of a "united Ireland" finally disappeared when they shook hands with the likes of the bigoted Ian Paisley and even the British Queen.

McGuinness certainly did metamorphose into a "man of peace". In this transformation he even outdid Nelson Mandela - who had never gone so far as to use any of the weapons he'd collected, before being caught and imprisoned. McGuinness did use a gun - and then he put it down for good. □

## A "killer" pregnancy test

there's also evidence that Britain's then Ministry of Health bears responsibility: clear warnings against its use were provided by experts as early as 1966.

In fact foetal abnormalities caused by Primodos resemble those caused by Thalidomide, which had also been inadequately tested before being given to pregnant women suffering from morning sickness in the early 1960s. But what's additionally shocking about today's revelation is that the very same hormones

contained in Primodos were being used in the 1960s in some countries (e.g. Japan) as "emergency contraception" - a "morning after" pill - to prevent pregnancy! Nevertheless, British doctors seemed to have no qualms about administering such a high dose hormone pill to women, as a "quick" pregnancy test! Primodos was eventually withdrawn from use only in 1978 - after much harm was already done. The women affected are still awaiting answers from Bayer. □

pregnancy test - which would have allowed women to test their urine themselves at home. But guess what? A huge controversy was sparked since women were not considered "competent" nor "psychologically equipped" to do a pregnancy tests without medical supervision! Fortunately, that battle was quickly won!

• **Women denied control**

As for emergency contraception, which stops ovulation and prevents pregnancy if taken within 72 hours of intercourse, this is how Primodos was already being used in the Far East at the very same time it was being marketed in Britain as a pregnancy test!

But thanks to the still ever-present prejudice against women and their unequal social status, even though it was already well known in the early 1960s that hormone pills could be safe "morning after" treatments, they only became available to women 20 years later, in the 1980s! And not until 2000, were they available over the counter - and even then, at a price! This, in a society where over 45% of pregnancies are still "unplanned"!

So on the one hand drugs have been released prematurely in order to beat rivals to the bank, and on the other, deeply entrenched misogyny has prevented women from accessing treatments which would help liberate them.

## A bureaucratic nightmare

The climate of fear created by Brexiteer politicians has led many EU workers to apply for permanent residence. This status used to be granted more-or-less automatically to anyone who had worked here for 5 years. But, now, May is forcing applicants into an impossible bind: on top of having to fill a bewildering 85-page form, they have to produce piles of documents, including pay slips from previous jobs, details of past periods of illness, proofs of entries and exits from the country, etc..

Some applicants have already been turned down under the most spurious pretexts - like having no private health insurance, having been in receipt of benefits or having taken maternity leave. Some have even been threatened with deportation! Of course, so far,

### • Carswell's UKIP farewell

Douglas Carswell, the former Tory who was the only UKIP MP (for Clacton), resigned last month from this party and is now an sitting as an "independent". By way of explanation, he said he had originally left the Tory party to join UKIP, since he desperately wanted to get Britain out



such "requirements" are illegal and wouldn't stand up in court. But how many applicants would risk attracting attention with an appeal, assuming they can afford the exorbitant legal fees?

Is this treatment of EU workers an unofficial pilot scheme in

## Brexit

preparation for the post-Brexit days? Or is it just due to the over-zealousness of bureaucrats whose anti-migrant prejudices have been boosted by Brexit? Probably a combination of both. In any case, this gives a foretaste of what the Brexiteers are cooking up. □

of the EU (what a lofty aim!). But now that this has been achieved, he no longer sees any point in being a member of UKIP.

Or is it that he is already preparing the ground to secure his position as an MP for the next general election, where

UKIP doesn't stand a chance? He has even hinted that he may re-join the Tory party (which he hasn't done for now, but only to avoid a by-election). Of course, politicians like that jump sinking ships faster than rats. They are only in politics to make cosy careers.

## A system run by and for parasites

Last year, the chief executives of the top 100 British companies "earned" on average 386 times more than workers on the National Living Wage. Their average salary was equivalent to an hourly rate of £2,780/hr - and the CEO of advertising giant WPP, Martin Sorrell, topped the fat

cats' league, with £21,000/hr! In this society, these CEOs are considered to be worth as much as hundreds, if not thousands of workers. But for doing what exactly? Not for producing any wealth themselves, but only for sweating their employees into producing enough

## Fat cats watch

wealth to pay for their own fat salaries and the dividends of their shareholders!

What can be said of a system in which such parasites are valued far more than the workers who produce all its wealth? Four words: it should be overthrown! □

### • The rich never had it so good!

According to latest list published by Forbes magazine, there are now 2,043 dollar billionaires on the planet. This is 233 more than last year - the largest annual increase recorded since this list was first published, 31 years ago!

Not only are there more fat cats, but

they are getting fatter: they are 20% richer compared to last year, with a combined fortune of £6,180 billion. What's more, whereas last year, the 62 richest among them owned, between them, as much wealth as the poorest half of the world population, this year this super-rich clique has shrunk to just 8 individuals!

Britain's wealthy aren't left behind. Today, there are 54 British dollar billionaires; 4 more than last year, sharing £123.19bn between them. Here, as everywhere else, the rich never had it so good. Their extravagant wealth, however, is built on the impoverishment of billions of workers. They even manage to thrive on the crisis of their own system. But this won't go on forever, because at some point the working class is going to pull the rug from under their feet!

### • Filthy profits

Thames Water has been fined £20.3m for dumping 1.4bn litres of untreated sewage into rivers. The company ran pumps at levels that sometimes left half of incoming

sewage untreated, despite the alarm raised by both employees and warning systems! As a result, fish were killed and sewage spilled into nature reserves. Ammonia levels were breached, threatening humans with potential respiratory problems.

Judge Francis Sheridan, who delivered the sentence, said: "It should not be cheaper to offend than to take appropriate precautions". Sure, except that this fine isn't going to hurt Thames Water, which made around £2m in profits every day last year, earned £742m in operating profits and paid out £82m in dividends to shareholders!

This fine comes after more than 300 people were evacuated from their homes in London last Christmas due to flooding because of burst water pipes. The company wasn't fined a penny for this! Thames Water owns 10,000 miles of Victorian-era pipes in London, of which it has only replaced 1,700! Cutting maintenance and operating costs is how Thames makes its profits - which is why essential services such as water provision should never be left to the greed of the profit sharks!



## Social

According to the Resolution Foundation, average earnings will be no higher in 2022 than they were before the 2007 financial crisis. Inflation is expected to keep eating away any wage increase for the foreseeable future: having already jumped to 2.3% in March, it is predicted to reach anything between 2.5 and 4% by the end of the year and, this, even before Brexit becomes a reality. In short, by 2022, workers will have effectively gone through 15 years without an increase in real wages!

Household income is predicted to be £12,000 lower on average by 2020. Added to this, is the impact of Osborne's £12bn in welfare cuts, which are now being implemented by Hammond. This will be the worst decade in terms of income growth for more than 200 years! Moreover,

### • Record employment; record exploitation

Everywhere you look, there's a big company that has come up with some new trick to cut its wage bill. B bogus self-employment has been under the spotlight, with the latest invention being outrageous "fines" of £150-£250 imposed on self-employed drivers by DPD and Parcelforce if they miss a shift through illness and cannot arrange cover. UK Mail charged one driver over £800 when

### • Hammond's budget U-turn

In his attempt to maximise government income, Philip Hammond announced a hike in the National Insurance Contributions (NICs) of the self-employed, claiming that it was unfair that the self-employed should contribute less compared to the employed. But the income range among the self-employed is very large (from the "self-employed" agency worker on £6,000/yr to a successful "consultant" earning £6m/yr). How could they all be bunched together in order to impose "fairer taxes"?

But even as some of his colleagues were defending his policy in public,

### • When retiring is less and less of an option

Is there such a thing any more, as being able to take a well-deserved retirement? Well, less and less: already, in 2012, among the over-70s, 10% of all men and 5.6% of all women were still working. By the end of last year, the proportion had increased by 50% among men (to over 15%) and it had doubled among women (to over 11%).

This has nothing to do with "choice" and everything to do with pensioner poverty: the real value of pensions fell by 12% after 2007 and it has never recovered since! And for women, who often have no other choice than to take breaks to raise

## Wages on a cliff edge



the losses incurred during the present parliament by the poorest third of households will be worse than over the years following the financial crisis!

However, this on-going fall in

workers' living standards only reflects the parallel sharp increase in company profits. It is high time that wage increases were put back at the top of the working class' agenda! □

he could not work after being hit by a car, while doing his job! Meanwhile, with an estimated 910,000 now employed on zero-hours contracts, the country's 4th largest bank, Santander, has taken hundreds of people on a relief cover, on 1-hour-a-month contracts!

And then there is unpaid work. Prêt a Manger's "Big Experience Week", this summer, which was aimed at recruiting

young workers, caused a media backlash because the teenagers were to be unpaid except for free sandwiches - but also because the company complained that Brexit was making make recruitment harder. Eventually, Prêt backed down on this - but the bosses will go on undermining working conditions until, sooner or later, an explosion of workers' anger forces them to pay what they owe.

### Letter from Sussex

The romantic poet Tennyson once wrote about "green Sussex fading into blue, with one grey glimpse of sea". Today, one might think of Sussex fading into concrete grey, as more and more green-field building schemes are approved. The biggest furore so far, though, has been over Eastbourne Borough Council's plan to sell off the farmed downland bought by its predecessors, in the 1920s.

Initially, the Council said that it would invest the proceeds in "capital projects"; but when the depth of local opposition became clear, it changed tack. It organised a "poll", giving residents a "choice" between the sale of the downland and cuts to council services. It claimed that it could raise up to £20m for the land, but few believed this; rent on the tenant farms brings in only around £60,000 a year. The Council's costings were obviously dubious.

The blackmail backfired. Opposition became even fiercer and there was, by Eastbourne standards, a large march and rally through the town. The results of the poll showed a clear majority against the sale and, amazingly enough, the council has listened (for now!) and scrapped the sale. Perhaps councillors suddenly realised that they may lose their seats - and their expenses?

children, wages can be even lower than the already inadequate £155.65/wk full state pension! Which is why the proportion of over-70s in work is rising so much faster among women.

In fact generally, the lowest paid, male or female, often do the hardest jobs while getting the smallest pensions. A significant number do not even live long enough to retire. But, instead of providing such workers with the rest they deserve, this profit society only manages to force more and more of them into slaving away well beyond retirement age, thereby, effectively, sentencing them to die on the job!

## Making youth homeless

Days before the Budget, the government announced that it would withdraw entitlement to housing benefit from the under-22s from April. Never mind that the savings will be insignificant compared to the handouts of public funds to profitable companies and the rich! But May's government, already hell-bent on forcing the poorest young people to study or take any low-paid non-jobs, is cutting any support for them to live independently, too.

Exemptions are promised for claimants with children or those judged to be vulnerable, or unable to live with their parents. But since the aim is to cut spending regardless of housing needs, there will be pressure to keep

### • **Benefits Britain? Only for the rich!**

A new wave of welfare cuts worth £3.2bn will hit people with disabilities this month. From April, anyone classed by the Department for Work and Pensions as part of the "Work-Related Activity Group" (Wrags) - i.e. people judged to be so ill they can only begin to prepare for future work rather than actually apply for jobs - will see their benefit shrink by £30/week

### • **You were raped? Prove it!**

Another cut in welfare payments hits families who have more than 2 children - now they'll no longer be able to claim for a 3rd child. For working families on up to £15,000/year, this could represent a loss in benefit of £2,780. There is an exemption in the case of multiple births. And then there is this notorious "rape clause" which says that a woman whose 3rd child was the result of rape, will have to prove

### • **Social care cuts not reversed**

Hammond's £2bn additional funding for social care amounts to a recognition that the system is in crisis. After ignoring the problem in his autumn budget, he had to be seen to do something - especially after the Tory county council in his own affluent Surrey raised council tax by nearly 15%, citing social care costs as the main reason. Besides,

### • **Education - attacking a broken system**

Recent reports exposed the dire state of schools and the future effects of the government's cuts in education. Schools are drastically cutting teaching, counselling and support staff, increasing workloads and using unqualified staff such as cover supervisors to deliver lessons. The number of subjects offered are being cut, IT equipment has not been updated - in some cases for years - and cleaning is less frequent! Last year's National School Census showed that nearly 18,000 pupils are now in classes of 36 or more, yet schools have plans to enlarge classes further!



exemptions to an absolute minimum. So this policy will result in yet more young people being forced to sleep on the streets. Already, rough sleeping has risen dramatically, as government

to match Job Seekers Allowance (JSA). The DWP cynically claims that this cut will "incentivise" a return to work! For most claimants, this amounts to a £1,500 cut over the year.

On top of this, the government has disqualified 160,000 claimants by overturning the ruling of a tribunal which stated that mental health disability qualifies claimants

this, to qualify for payments!

And since the so-called British "Justice System" is so reluctant to hand out rape verdicts against men, it's hardly likely that women will be able to provide such proof. What's more the DWP wants verification of women's rape "credentials" to be done by a DWP-appointed "professional" who could be a health worker, police person, or social worker - no-one knows

old age voters make up a big slice of the Tories' electorate.

In any case, a £2bn injection will not end the crisis, as Hammond has effectively admitted, by announcing a review of social care funding - if only because the sector has already suffered £4.6bn in cuts since 2010, despite having to meet ever-increasing needs

What's more, the Education Policy Institute estimates that the government's new national funding formula will result in net gains for primary and secondary schools with less than 30% of students on free school meals, but a net cut in secondary schools with more than 30% of students on these meals. The biggest funding cuts will take place in schools in the poorest parts of London. What's more, while better-off parents will always be able to afford to make up for funding shortages if need be, poorer parents won't. This is what's really behind May's claims to stand up for the JAMS!

## Cuts watch

cuts to local council funding have forced closures of hostels and support programmes for the homeless. This new benefit cut, which will cause yet more homelessness, is unacceptable! ☐

for Personal Independent Payments (PIP). These benefit cuts are on top of those already implemented in 2012 and 2016, to the tune of £28bn, and affecting 3.7 million disabled people! Yet at the same time, the government has handed a £1bn reduction in inheritance tax to 26,000 rich families, quite apart from other costly handouts. And guess who's paying for it!

exactly!

The lone campaign of one Scottish MP to get the "2-child policy and rape clause" debated in the Commons (it has been sneaked into law using a so-called "statutory instrument" without parliament voting on it) was rejected on March 20th. Of course, ultimately, it's the fight outside parliament which can make a difference.

as the population ages. The result is hurried or cancelled home care visits, understaffed care homes and more old persons having no choice but to turn to hospitals for basic care, thereby aggravating the shortage of beds. Hammond's sticking plaster to stave off collapse is all that this system run by and for the rich is prepared to offer.



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

**DOO: the fight ahead**

Southern drivers rejected GTR and S(driver's union) Aslef's "deal" for the second time in two months. And no wonder: this "new" deal was almost identical to the old one - which allowed for trains to leave without guards - in a move to Driver Only Operation (DOO). With this rejection, a majority of drivers (51.8% on a 75.4% turnout) have shown yet again that they're not prepared to go along with GTR's plan to cut guards' jobs, nor with the Aslef leaderships' readiness to endorse these cuts.

What next? Southern guards are called out (alone) on strike against DOO by the RMT union on 8 April - their 31st day of action in 12 months! For now, Aslef hasn't called drivers out on the same day, and neither has the RMT called on its other members to strike. The sectionalism of both these union leaderships has prevented them from coordinating any action over the past year. And yet, to get the guarantees against DOO they want, drivers and guards - and other workers to



boot - can't allow these union leaders to call the shots. It's not enough to vote against deals. They'll have to take matters into their own hands and act together. It's the only way to kick out DOO for good.

**• Unworkable, unreadable**

Why didn't Virgin Trains East Coast managers tell on-board workers that their new job-cut rosters were "up on the wall" - and what's more, show us how on earth we were supposed to read them!! Is it because they were afraid that if we did understand how terrible they were, we'd tear them down and refuse to work? [King's X Workers' Platform 29/03/17]

**• Virgin crew unrostered**

But we haven't either received individual rosters - when according to VT's own rules they were meant to be given out 2 weeks ago! The roster starts this Friday, but who knows when or where we're working?! Managers shouldn't be surprised if we don't arrive for our trains... And we've still no idea how to get to work or home from their too early and too late shifts. [King's X Workers' Platform 29/03/17]

**• Depots talk together!**

Just like Edinburgh, all of us rejected these changes - implemented in these b\*\*\*dy rosters. But we didn't co-ordinate our rejection. It's not too late. We can now register our opposition together! [King's X Workers' Platform 29/03/17]

**• Their maths and ours**

We can only be surprised that Signals bosses are against us doing 12hr shifts. Because for once, they could be right - 12 hours in row, needing 16+ hours awake in a day, leads to lower concentration/higher risk. That's proven, but so is the answer: increasing time off, between and within shifts and shorter shifts overall. Our problem is that to get longer stretches off, we have to work 4x12-hours! So, since our good concentration is crucial, our total working hours need to be cut radically, with no loss of pay! [King's X Workers' Platform 29/03/17]

**• Overt discrimination!**

It's incredible! this 15 minute HOT test (for spotting suspicious packages) is meant to be more of a training session than an exam. So you shouldn't be able to fail it, never mind be sacked for not "passing" it by an upstart manager! But worse, it seems it's been used specifically to get rid of immigrant-origin workers! This is totally outrageous. [King's X Workers' Platform 29/03/17]

**• Trivialising our work**

Last week's Ch 5 TV series, *Inside Kings Cross*, made the work of Interserve cleaners look like a breeze... never mind the 36 tonnes (!!) of rubbish moved every week! This week's episode made out that a whole EC traincrew had "buggered off" leaving passengers stranded, after a track suicide. As if they would! This flimsy nonsense is anything but an "inside" view! [King's X Workers' Platform 29/03/17]

**Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**

**• One way to sort it**

Fantastic! Doncaster Mail Centre workers walked out last Friday over the rude and unruly behaviour of managers. They said the last straw was when a workmate of 28yrs service was sacked over the phone, while off sick. He was told he had to take ill-health retirement - just the same as many of us are now being told! An "unofficial walkout" focused managers' minds immediately. They've undertaken to reform themselves(!) within 2 weeks. If they don't, the strike will be back on. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant Mail Centre 29/03/17]

**• Who's it from?**

This card which "is not a ballot paper" from the CWU says that "our branch" wants us to vote for certain candidates for the union leadership, i.e., the National and Postal Executive. And in case we're unable to understand this, they placed a red cross by each name.

Incredible. They give no introductions, reasons, nor justifications, just tell us how we must vote. What do they think of us? [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant Mail Centre 29/03/17]

**• Not fraternal but paternal!!**

But it's worse when you read the back of the card where they offer an update on national negotiations. Yet again we're asked to blindly back the CWU's "alternative pension scheme", as it's "a fair deal... and addresses RM's concerns over cost" (???) but we've still had no details! Whereas RM has!

On all the rest, they say "Back your union". Yes, we're all for "union"! But what kind of a union asks for blind trust - as if members are kids and unable to judge for themselves!? We DO want to fight RM's cuts and attempts to turn us into a cheap, part-time, workforce! But collectively, consciously and with a full say over HOW we go about it! Surely. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant Mail Centre 29/03/17]



**• Trust me, I'm a leader**

Maybe one reason for this lack of accountability is that CWU top leaders (not local ones!) now need to defend their "Ground-breaking" Agreement, signed at the time of privatisation in October 2013. They tell us that this was why RM didn't break up and that legal guarantees protect us till 2019. Never mind that preventing privatisation was the only cast-iron guarantee! We voted overwhelmingly for a strike. Yet instead, they signed this Agreement. It was a groundbreaking mistake. They know it. Relying on a new "legal" guarantee would be another one. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant Mail Centre 29/03/17]

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

**BMW's Brexit gambit**

A week before Theresa May gave notice to leave the EU, BMW became the latest car manufacturer to warn that its manufacturing in Britain depends on the outcome of Brexit: it said it was considering "different scenarios", pointing out that its production network already gives it the flexibility to switch production.

The Oxford plant employs 4,600 assembling the "Mini" with panels pressed in Swindon and engines from Hams Hall near Birmingham.

**• Strike vote or bargaining chip?**

Members of BMW's final salary pension scheme at its four British plants making engines and the Mini and Rolls Royce cars, voted for strike action against BMW's plan to close it - with 93% for strike on a 72% turnout. This is the first vote to strike since BMW bought the former Rover Group, in 1994, but also the first strike ballot!

Unite's announcement of the result was primarily addressed to

But other parts are sourced from all over Europe, some crossing the channel more than once as part of the production process. The first 4x4 "Mini" was built under licence in Austria and since 2014 some "Mini" models have been assembled in the Netherlands.

The company is keeping its options open, including that of expanding the Oxford plant. To this end, it has closed sports pitches and a social club and had the land allocated for plant expansion in the Oxford local

management. General secretary, Len McCluskey called on BMW to negotiate rather than "robbing [workers] of tens of thousands of pounds of retirement income". Yet, when BMW began to force new entrants into a new defined contribution (DC) scheme, in 2014 - robbing them of tens of thousands - Unite leaders did not lift a finger to oppose it!

One can only be suspicious of McCluskey's fiery words. For



plan. But BMW won't commit itself unless it is sure, either of equivalent trading conditions in Europe post-Brexit, or of getting the same compensation that all car companies operating in Britain are demanding from the government.

instance, at the Cowley plant, more than half of the workforce didn't get a vote. In fact, over the 6 months since the dispute began, Unite hasn't proposed anything to workers in the DC scheme nor to the plant's 1000+ agency workers (although most are union members). As if it wasn't in everyone's interest to force the company to pay decent pensions for all!

**Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**

**• They're certain about their profits**

Poor old Ford - it pretends it doesn't know what to do - playing on "uncertainty", due to Trump, Brexit, etc., leaving Bridgend workers wondering if they have a future at all, and the rest of us not knowing what's round the corner.

But Ford's gross profits tell a different story. They're growing steadily year on year - in 2014, £13.13 Billion, in 2015, £18.52 Billion in 2016, £19 Billion... In fact Ford knows exactly what it wants to do and how to do it: screw even more out of us, and pay even less for it. So it's up to us to make sure that this pay-deal year, we're the ones who profit - it's our due! [Workers' Fight Bulletin Ford Dagenham 22/03/17]

**• Stay well, fare well!**

Hmm, at last, escape! This week and next, those of us who're leaving - mostly long-service Puma workers - will be saying goodbye. Just a week or so to go, and close to a lifetime of sweat, tears and even some blood - is over. Woody Guthrie said it in a song - so here goes, we say to all those who're unable to escape yet:

*"So long, it's been good to know you,  
This dusty old dust is a-gettin' my home,  
And I got to be driftin' along."  
And from those of us left behind in the dust, to departing drifters: goodbye and good luck! We'll miss you! [Workers' Fight Bulletin Ford Dagenham 22/03/17]*

**• Trying to cut coat with too little cloth**

So, how to man up Puma and the rest of the lines, when mates are leaving, in the context of an already dire labour shortage!?! Managers are already resorting to ridiculous overtime including overlaps and Sunday nights on Tiger... But now we hear they're going to try concentrating all the Chickens onto just 2 shifts instead of 3, for the duration of about 6 weeks. We can see the eggs breaking already... [Workers' Fight Bulletin Ford Dagenham 22/03/17]

**• More workers, always welcome, but...!**

Well, the other thing is that they'll take on more temps. We hear that there might be 40 newbies coming. So have they made ALL current temps permanent? No, of course not! Ford just loves to play on feelings of insecurity...

But we could try to subvert this: how



about each of us oldies pair up with a new temp, to show them the ropes... Giving one-to-one "mentoring" on how to use these ropes to hang supervision, for instance. Some graphic posters on the wall might also help... We're all very good with paintbrushes, after all... [Workers' Fight Bulletin Ford Dagenham 22/03/17]

**• Treated with contempt**

In fact we can't say this enough: temps have been and are being, treated like crap: like the way Ford pushed an 11 month extension in the faces of workmates who'd completed their 12 months and should have been made permanent. And this 23 months total, of course, means Ford doesn't have to pay any redundancy if it decides to get rid of them. How are temp workers supposed to plan their lives, let alone pay their growing bills?! [Workers' Fight Bulletin Ford Dagenham 22/03/17]

## From the Westminster attack to the madness of state terrorism

On March 22nd, in just 82 seconds, the Westminster attack claimed 5 casualties - the perpetrator himself, 3 passers-by who were hit by his car as he was racing towards the entrance and the police officer on gate duty.

But what was really on the mind of the attacker, Khalid Massood, when he attacked one of the country's most heavily-protected buildings, with just a knife in his hand? Was it politically motivated, or was it a demented act of despair? No-one will ever know, since he was shot dead on the spot.

### From revolting hysteria...

Shocking as they were, these deaths were, above all, absurd and pointless. But what followed was just as absurd and shocking. The publicity-mad ISIS/Daesh claimed responsibility - which proved nothing. Nevertheless, the media launched an hysterical campaign about a conspiracy orchestrated from abroad "against British democracy". Meanwhile, in a series of raids across the country, the police arrested a dozen "suspects", only to admit a week later that it had no evidence that the attack had been premeditated, let alone that it was the result of a conspiracy, and that its "suspects" were all innocent.

In turned out that the 52-year old Massood, who converted to Islam 15 years ago, was born and bred in Britain. Apart from short terms in prison following pub brawls when he was younger, the police had nothing on him. Lately, he had lived a quiet life, with his wife and 3 children, in a suburb of Birmingham. That is, until last December, when he had been forced out of his home, apparently for lack of money.

In and of itself, of course, this makes no difference for the victims and their families. But there was something nauseating in the hypocrisy of the media. For instance, being unable to point a vengeful finger at a "terrorist migrant" as it so often does, the Daily Mail carried a giant



An RAF Tornado



Family fleeing the bombs

headline denouncing Massood as a "benefit cheat"! For the gutter press barons, the poor are criminals, if not terrorists. This was just a repetition, on a larger scale, of the campaign which followed the December 2015 Walthamstow tube stabbing, where the attacker turned out to have a long psychiatric record.

### ... to cynical hypocrisy

Meanwhile, political leaders - from May to Sadiq Khan - were calling for "national unity". But against what? While they were shedding hypocritical tears over the fate of the victims, their British RAF was terrorising the populations in Syria and Iraq - all in the name of their famous "national interest".

In fact, there was barely any mention in the media - and none at all in the politicians' speeches - of the 33 Syrian civilians who died on the very same day, 22nd March, when the school in which they had taken refuge with their families was bombed by western coalition aircraft, in the Syrian town of Tabqa.

Nor was there any mention of another 52 who had died, 4 days earlier, trapped in a mosque, during another western bombing operation.

Whether these bombs were American, British or whatever else, makes no difference. Dozens of innocent civilians get bombed day after day in Syria and Iraq by western coalition aircraft. And this large-scale state terrorism of the rich countries has no other purpose than to impose their order and the looting of their multinationals on the populations of the Middle East - as if the brutal terrorism of ISIS was not enough! ☐

### ICF forum pamphlet n°96

- Syria at war - between the militias, the imperialist powers and their regional stoges.

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