

# WORKERS' fight



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<http://www.w-fight.org>  
[contact@w-fight.org](mailto: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)*

# ENOUGH OF THIS CAPITALIST PARASITISM!

The bosses'politicians have been quite busy lately. Some have been playing musical chairs to fill the gaps left by sacked and resigning ministers, others have been posturing as if they knew how to end the Brexit deadlock. And most have probably been worrying about being engulfed by the sexual harassment scandal.

In the meantime, the working class is confronted with other problems. While annual inflation has reached 3.9%, wage increases remain stuck at an average 2.2%. But since this average lumps together the wages of the low-paid with the salaries of the fat cats, it only conceals a much starker reality: our real wages are plunging, once again!

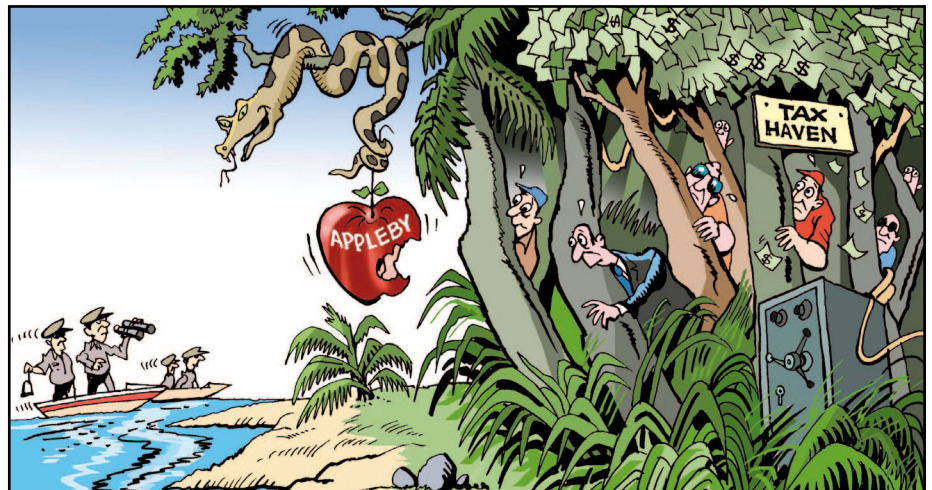
## **Once again we would have to pay...**

Yet this was the moment chosen by the "independent" Bank of England to increase its interest rate.

Of course, a 0.25% increase doesn't sound like much. But against the backdrop of today's Brexit inflation, even this is not as innocuous as it may seem.

The pound immediately reacted by taking a plunge - meaning more inflation. Besides, mortgage lenders intend to pass on this rise in full to 5 million households on variable rate mortgages. Private landlords will seize the opportunity to increase rents and manufacturers will pass on the rising cost of their own borrowing to consumers. And within this system, what is there to stop them from grabbing this opportunity to force a much larger increase down our throats? Nothing!

Over the past decade, the borrowing costs of banks and mortgage lenders have been under 1%. And yet, up to now, the average interest rate was 2.55% for mortgages, 8.04% for a



£5,000 personal bank loan and 18.33% for credit card lending! No wonder the banks are able to pay an anticipated total of £26bn in dividends this year!

So, no ifs, no buts - this "tiny" interest rate hike is certain to boost inflation even more. And yet, we are told that it is designed to reduce inflation! Who do they think they're kidding? The truth is that the only beneficiaries of this hike will be, once again, the profiteers - as if their parasitism was not crippling enough for society!

## **... While the parasites thrive**

The Paradise Papers showed the extent of the fat cats' parasitism so crudely that they should be called the "Parasite Papers". While pointing at the usual suspects - the royals, politicians, show-business and sporting stars - they expose the web of bogus shelf companies that corporations have woven across mainly British tax havens in order to minimise their tax bills.

But what's most striking about the tricks revealed by these Papers is that

they're all more or less "legal"! Which is kind of strange for PAYE workers!

The capitalists are notorious serial thieves who rob workers of the wealth they produce. But, in addition, all governments, Tory and Labour, have kept tax loopholes open for them. Cameron even blocked the EU from making it compulsory for tax haven-based trusts to reveal their beneficiaries!

The result is huge state-sponsored theft! For instance, British companies are able to cut their corporation tax bill by an estimated £20bn/yr - or 28%! How many hospitals and social homes could be built with that money? So, while inflation and shrinking wages force us to dig deeper into our pockets, the rich get richer, come what "May"!

As long as the fat cats own everything and their politicians hold the reins of power, society will remain an instrument for the few against the many. It is more than high time for the many - the working class - to take over control of this failed system, in order to change it! ☐

**Crisis watch**

The big six energy companies made profits totalling £1bn in 2016, according to their regulator Ofgem. This was despite two of the six suffering losses, while all six lost millions of customers to the growing number of small suppliers. Among those, several have been set up by local councils, which now have 20% of the distribution market, but a much smaller share of generation.

Ofgem said profits of energy suppliers had grown significantly during the crisis, owing to high prices charged to about 12 million long-term customers on high tariffs. These most-ripped off consumers of energy are mostly the poorest; nearly half of people who are unemployed or in low-skilled work have never switched their energy supplier.

May's temporary cap on energy bills was supposed to offset these injustices. However, not only is it unlikely to be implemented this winter, but it may

**• When sub-contracting and budget cuts stink**

An investigation by the Press Association news agency this month shows that 248 out of 326 local authorities [76%] across England run only fortnightly general rubbish collections! Some have gone further, with six local authorities picking up general rubbish only once every three weeks in Wigan, East Devon and in four councils

**• Flying free... of their tax obligations**

Linked to the Paradise Papers leak is the bizarre case of 957 business jets bought and registered on the Isle of Man in order to avoid paying VAT! Among the rich and famous who have come under the spotlight is racing driver Lewis Hamilton. It seems a £3.3m VAT refund was given to him after his bright red Bombardier Challenger 605 was imported into the

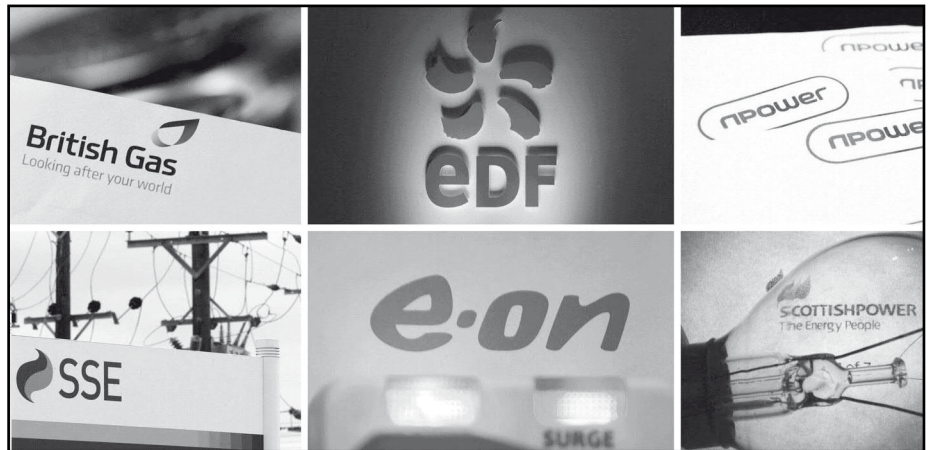
**• Help to Buy... and to profiteering**

May's announcement of another £10bn for the Help to Buy scheme at the Tory conference had one immediate result: the biggest housebuilding firms saw their stock market value increase by about £1bn within a day. No wonder: they have been the main beneficiaries of Help to Buy's government-subsidised mortgages. For instance, 60% of buyers from Gleeson Homes, which builds in the east Midlands and northern England, use Help to Buy. What's more, housing experts reckon that by artificially maintaining a regular flow of buyers, the scheme has

**• Trillions to spare**

The world's billionaires increased their wealth by almost a fifth last year to reach a record £4.5 trillion. To give some idea of the scale of this, it is more than twice the GDP of Britain, France or even Germany. And for someone earning £40,000 a year, it will take 25 million years just to earn £1 trillion! Yes, Britain's health, pensions and education budget or the so-called

**Energy bill cap or pat on the fat cats' heads?**



not even reduce the bills of the poorest. And how would it be otherwise? Wasn't the energy "market" privatised precisely to allow the capitalists to make profits

out of the past investment paid out of public funds? If the big six ever get a "cap", it will be a very comfortable one to wear! ☐

in Greater Manchester!

This, of course, is the price for the systematic sub-contracting of refuse collection, followed by the on-going cuts imposed by governments on councils over the past decade. For example, bin workers in Doncaster voted overwhelmingly to strike against waste management company

Suez's plans to sack 100 workers, reduce bin collections and end the collection of medical waste and asbestos! And 90% of bin workers employed by Birmingham City Council voted to strike over planned cuts to a fifth of the workforce! They are right to do so - because this rotten system is turning cities into garbage dumps!

Isle of Man in 2013!

Appleby, the shadowy law firm at the centre of this serial tax cheating by high fliers, claimed that no law had been broken, even if so many jets registered on one tiny island may seem a little excessive: allegations of wrongdoing were "unfounded and based on a lack of understanding of the legitimate and lawful

structures used in the offshore sector". And that's probably quite true. Because all British governments have had a policy of turning a blind eye to the growing web of tax avoidance schemes. What, after all, would Britain's claim to fame amount to, if it lost its reputation as a world-class tax haven and money-laundering shop?

only helped to inflate housing prices - a boon for developers!

May's promise of a "new generation of council houses" in the same speech was, if anything, more hyped in the media, despite only £2bn being allocated to it. This is enough for about 5,000 homes a year. Hardly a response to a housing emergency with 77,000 families now in temporary accommodation! But then, the construction giant wouldn't make as much profits on social housing as they do on homes for sale, would they?

"cost" of child poverty at £29bn seems a mere drop in this ocean of billions. Even pulling the 900 million world's poorest out of extreme poverty shouldn't take until 2030 with these trillions available!

Meanwhile the standard of living of so-many workers is going down. We don't have to look any further to see how good the crisis is for billionaires... nor to see which pockets to delve into.

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## The gathering storm

The job of institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is to keep a watchful eye over the world economy on behalf of the rich and powerful. So, of course, they won't question capitalism. Nevertheless, in its annual "Global Stability Report" and "World Economic Outlook Report" for 2017, the IMF shows how little confidence it has in the future of its own system.

In a nutshell, the IMF experts admit that just about every indicator is now deep into the red. In fact, they acknowledge, although not in so many words, that despite all the past hot air about an "economic recovery", what's likely to be round the corner is just another crisis. Except that they are at a loss to know what might trigger it and, therefore, what can be done to pre-empt it.

### A banking powder keg...

Of course, the IMF is keen to stress how banking regulations have been tightened up since 2007, supposedly to contain the bankers' chronic greed. So, yesterday's "too big to fail" banks, which were bailed out on public funds, have now been given a brand new name - "global systemically important banks", or GSIBs - and they are meant to be far "safer" than ever before.

Except that these GSIBs are now even bigger than in 2007. Their number has been cut by almost a third worldwide, down to 30: 13 in the EU (including 4 in Britain), 8 in the US, 4 in China, 3 in Japan and 2 in Switzerland. But although there are fewer of them, not only do these 30 GSIBs account for over one third of the entire planets' banking assets and loans, but they also control the bulk of international financial transactions.

In 2008, the fact that just one of these banks (Lehman Brothers) had caught a cold was enough to freeze the entire world banking system. So what will it take for the same (or

worse) to happen again tomorrow? That one of these mammoth GSIBs starts sneezing?

### ... and many potential sparks

In 2008, Lehman Brothers collapsed as a result of a shock wave which had been sparked off by the implosion of speculative bubbles in real estate - first in the US and then in Britain, Spain, Ireland, etc.. But today, according to the IMF, a whole number of different factors could spark off a similar shock wave.

For instance, the so-called "electronic money" used by the rich countries to bail out their banking system may well be hidden in the accounts of supposedly "independent" central banks, instead of being logged in governments' accounts. However, this is just a trick designed to conceal a colossal increase in public

## Crisis watch

### Unaffordable absurdity

In fact, the same absurd excess of money which was driving speculation in 2007, has got even worse. As the IMF reckons, "there is too much money chasing too few yielding assets" - too much money because companies sit on huge piles of unused cash: in Britain alone, this cash mountain is estimated to be worth over £600 billion!

Having no confidence whatsoever in their crippled system, the capitalists use this cash in financial speculation, instead of investing it in useful production - thereby flooding financial markets. The fact that such colossal flows of money are competing for the same limited bounty only results in an even more frantic race for higher profits. So, there is, once again, a rising craze for very risky "financial products", which can produce high gains, but also very high losses. And the more risky



debt. But how long will it work?

Likewise, other debt mountains have already been growing well above their pre-crisis level - for instance, credit card debts as well as car and student loans. And what will happen when speculators decide that the IOUs behind these debt mountains can't really be trusted, after all?

the speculation, the more likely it is to end in tears and to destabilise the whole financial sphere.

Of course, no-one can tell when or how this castle of cards will collapse. But collapse, it will, one way or another - that is, as long as the capitalist system remains, allowing the fat cats to wreck havoc in the economy, for the sake of satisfying their greed. □

### • Household debt: another time bomb?

Recent research for a price comparison website indicates that the average personal debt in Britain is £8,000, without even counting mortgages. Of 2,000 adults surveyed, about 200 had reached their credit limit on a credit card within the last year and a similar

number had been overdrawn at some point. Meanwhile, an estimated 4 million people are in serious financial difficulty according to the Financial Conduct Authority.

Consumer debt has risen to £200bn, with the outstanding debt on car, credit card and personal loans (often to buy basic necessities) increasing nearly five times as fast as wages. In England

and Wales, 15,523 Individual Voluntary Arrangements (which are merely a thin cover for personal bankruptcy) were organised in July-September, a record, since their introduction in 1987. In 2008 it was mostly mortgages that led to the banking collapse; now credit for smaller items has swollen to a level that threatens to crash the system again.

## Brexit watch

Up to now, Theresa May has been succeeding in balancing herself, more or less, between the hard-line Brexiters in her government, the softer Leavers and the minority of Remainers. After her Florence speech - intended to appease soft-Brexiters and to show the government's willingness to meet its financial commitments to the EU and offer some guarantees to EU residents in Britain - she also apparently managed to silence the most vociferous Tory nationalists by reiterating that there was no turning back from Brexit, even if a transition period would be needed beyond 29 March 2019. Some are even prepared to accept that the Brexit bill will cost a lot more than the £20bn she initially offered.

But now there have been several new blows to her fragile cabinet status quo. On 1 November, defence secretary Michael Fallon resigned (before he could be sacked) over allegations of sexual impropriety. Exactly a week later, Priti Patel, International Development secretary,

### • The Brexit dividends

So what about the world outside of Westminster? While the politicians indulge in their inappropriate behaviour - in every respect - the working class is experiencing job cuts, falling wages, rising prices and unaffordable rents. Not to mention benefit cuts and the bureaucratic log jams linked to Universal Credit.

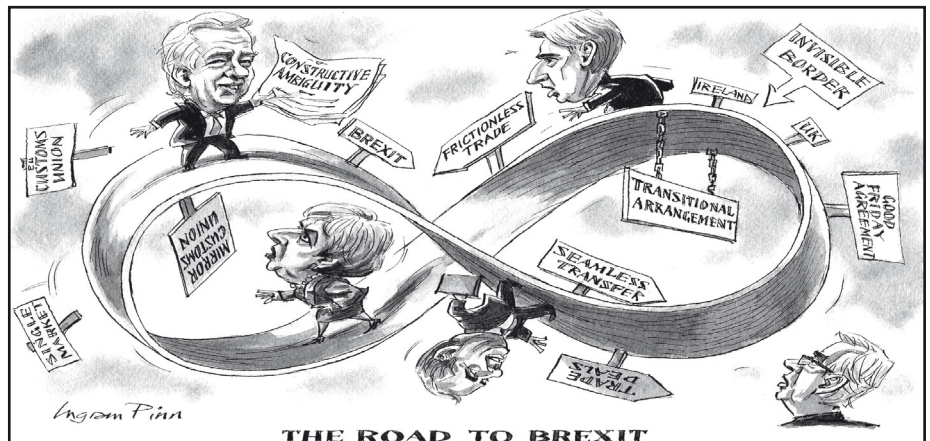
### • Profiteering on a shrinking economy

The CEO of WPP, one of the world's biggest advertising companies, has good reason to be pleased. In 2016, Britain's advertisement market was estimated to be worth £21.2bn/yr and it is expected to grow by 5.5% this year. In fact, Britain is the world's 4th biggest advertisement

### • Vultures thriving thanks to Brexit?

In October, Monarch Airline went into administration leaving 110,000 passengers stranded and the taxpayer paying £60m to fly them back, while 2,100 employees

## Is May's Brexit tightrope fraying?



was sacked for having a private honeymoon with the Israeli government behind May's back. Buffoon Johnson has made a serious gaffe which potentially means a longer sentence for a dual British-Iranian national imprisoned in Iran, falsely accused of spying. What's more, May's deputy, Damian Green, is also facing an inquiry for "inappropriate behaviour".

Inflation reached a five-year high at 3.9% (RPI) this month while real wages have fallen by 1.7%! This means an ongoing fall in living standards. The Bank of England (which is supposed to know) said prices are going to rise even further.

It's not the same for the City, nor big business however. Speculators are

market.

And this bounty can only get bigger for WPP. With sales which are likely to shrink because of inflation and Brexit, British companies are increasingly relying on advertising to back up their frantic competition to nick each other's share of

were made redundant without notice.

The last straw for Monarch was the fall in the pound after the Brexit referendum, since fuel and aircraft costs are

Whether May can prevent an irreconcilable split in her party over the Brexit negotiations, remains to be seen. But the last thing the Tory Party - and no doubt the City too - wants, is for the government to fall at such a critical point. And if May manages to stay, it is only because there is no-one in her party who can credibly jump into her shoes. □

having a field day as share prices, profits and dividends soar. This is because overseas profits for a British company are worth more when they are translated back into pounds and the big companies listed in the City earn around two thirds of their profits overseas... The rich always find a way to skin their cat, regardless.

the market - which "is not good for the long-term economy but has a temporary benefit for us", says WPP's boss. Indeed, while production has fallen by 0.3% in the second quarter of 2017, advertising profits are soaring - despite the fact that it has no useful social value whatsoever!

paid in dollars. But the airline had been in trouble for a long time already. It had been bled dry by Greybull Capital ever since it bought the company from the Swiss Mantegazza family, in 2014. Greybull made cuts to the workforce, increased working hours and proceeded to drain Monarch of its capital. For example, it got Monarch to buy new aircraft from Boeing at a time when there didn't seem to be any prospects for the airline to expand - while getting Boeing to inject enough cash into the company to make the sale possible!

Greybull's owners will now be first in line for the kill, as privileged creditors who, although they've probably never done a day's work for the airline, have more rights over its assets than its own workers, although it was they who produced every penny of its revenue!



Monarch Airline  
passangers re-directed to  
Malaga's airport

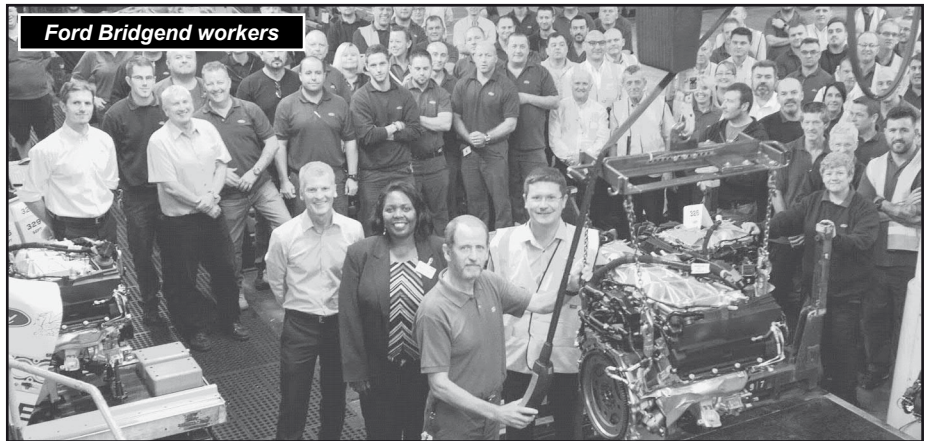


## Why should car workers pay for Brexit?

## Brexit watch

**B**rexit is causing a major restructuring of the auto industry. Ford is to cut 1000 jobs at its Bridgend plant in Wales. Vauxhall is to cut 400 job at its Ellesmere plant, with the parent company PSA saying that the future of the plant will depend on the outcome of the Brexit negotiations. Toyota has put the future of its Derbyshire plant, which employs 3,000 people, into question, because of the uncertainty over the future of Britain's relationship with the EU - where they export 85% of their UK products.

Does this really come as a surprise? Given that car production is organised on a European scale, Brexit and potential tariffs on EU trade were always going to



mean trouble in the industry. In any case, the car companies could always be expected to seize this opportunity to turn the

screw. But this does not mean that it has to be this way: the car giants can also be made to pick up the Brexit bill! □

### • **BAE: hands off workers' jobs!**

Defence company BAE is to cut 2,000 jobs at its Warton, Samlesbury and Portsmouth facilities in aerospace and naval servicing operations.

The company blamed the cuts on a shortfall in orders for its Eurofighter Typhoon jets. As to Unite's response, it was to blame the government for not

spending enough of its defence budget to buy from BAE. As if it was the business of a union to find customers for the bosses' merchandise!

Yet, as far as workers are concerned, isn't the real issue the fact that BAE has long been one of the most profitable British arms manufacturers, with £938m

profits this year alone - and, what's more, mostly from taxpayers' money? Why shouldn't all available work be shared out between all available hands, with loss of jobs nor loss of pay? Surely, BAE has the means to pay back all its workers with the accumulated profits that THEY have produced!

### • **A passport to healthcare?**

The government has introduced a system whereby patients can be asked for their passports before they receive medical treatment - and if they are migrants, refugees or asylum seekers, they can be asked to pay 150% of the cost of the treatment to the NHS.

This discriminatory policy is supposed to be aimed against "health tourism" - a lie concocted by the government for the sole purpose of having someone to blame for the catastrophic underfunding of the NHS. Never mind that the care received by foreigners from the NHS represents a negligible cost compared to its total budget! Never mind either that this new policy will have serious implications, not least that of racially profiling patients and deterring the sick from getting treated for infectious diseases. This is madness. Free healthcare should be a right for all humans just like the air we breathe - regardless of the passport they might carry!

### • **Deporting the homeless**

For migrant workers, it is enough to have fallen on hard times and to be homeless, to be deported (who needs Brexit?!). Migrant groups are rightly challenging this in court.

Predictably, along with the constant "abuses" of bosses paying the minimum wage or even less, by employing workers on zero-hours contracts, part-time, or so-called self-employment and the "abuse" of rich landlords overcharging on

rent, it is obvious that EU workers will join the ranks of those who cannot afford a roof over their heads. In addition, EU migrants are increasingly denied housing benefits even if they qualify.

A report by Corporate Watch in March, shows that charities and local councils can apply for funds if they work in collaboration with the home office, "sharing data", with joint visits by charity workers and immigration officers to many London Boroughs! This has allowed the home office to target EU rough sleepers. Analysis of government data shows deportations of EU citizens are at their highest since records began, with 5,301 removals in the year to June 2017. This is punishing the victims of what is the real crime - the absence of adequate housing for the working class.

### • **Brexit damage: an open secret already**

Apparently the government commissioned studies from experts regarding the likely effect of Brexit on different sectors of the economy.

But these were to remain secret. However, now Labour MPs are trying to organise a vote to force Theresa May to release 58 of these secret studies. Apparently, even if the government wins the imminent binding vote on the Commons' floor, it could be forced to come clean by MPs invoking a 19th century parliamentary rule which says they can demand papers which are in the possession of ministers "by passing a motion".

The problem remains of course, that the "motion" has to win the vote and Labour cannot summon a majority if the DUP carries on supporting the government. And who is to say that the "secrets" would not be redacted out of the reports anyway? That said, surely it is no "secret" that Brexit will damage the economy, but clear and certain fact? Isn't it already doing so?

### • **Reinforcing Fortress Britain**

While the NHS struggles with severe staff shortages, Home Secretary Amber Rudd is creating new jobs... to police the borders! She is recruiting 1,200 new immigration caseworkers (at the cost of £50 million) and an additional 300 border staff. Her permanent undersecretary, Philip Rutnam, even said that troops might be used at the borders!

Apparently the government wants to look "serious" about erecting its Brexit wall! Which is ironical, in the context of the serial cuts in border security and Home Office budgets, since 2010, initially by 25% over 4 years, which were made under May. A further £2m was cut May again, in April 2016 - just 3 months before she became Prime Minister. One can only wonder if this sudden turnaround has to do with the embarrassment over the "mistaken" deportation orders served on EU residents - undoubtedly due to on-going chaos caused by severe staff shortages.

**Social**

Work and Pensions secretary David Gauke insists that the roll-out of Universal Credit (UC) should carry on. It will be extended to 8% of claimants in November, 10% in January, and will be fully implemented by 2022.

The government claims it will simplify benefit payments, but what lies behind the new system is, of course, more welfare cuts. According to the Resolution Foundation, by 2022, UC will result in 1.1m working families losing £2,770/yr and 700,000 single-parent families losing £2.955/yr!

In fact, UC has already caused havoc in the areas where it's been piloted. Southwark council, for instance, has reported that among the households moved onto UC, 36% were unable to pay their rents in the first week. Overall they now owe £1,178 on average in unpaid rents!

Of course, Gauke has made gestures to "smooth" out the transition to UC - for instance by dropping the 55p surcharge on the system's helpline. There are also suggestions that the 6-week waiting time before a

**• Legal aid cuts bite below the breadline**

Cuts of £1bn to the legal aid budget since 2012-13 dramatically reduced the legal assistance available to people in several areas of law. Last year 145,000 people got legal aid in family and civil cases, down 74% from 545,000, while 42% more were forced to represent themselves in the family courts. The figures are all in the government's own review of the cuts, which merely says the cuts succeeded in reducing expenditure on legal aid! The Ministry of Justice announced a further review to run until next summer, which will

**• Hospital bed... and breakfast**

In the new NHS Mandate 2017-18, health secretary Jeremy Hunt has set a target for the NHS to reduce "bed blocking" - to no more than 3.5% of all hospital beds - whatever this really means. Of course, the government cynically blames patients for "blocking beds", while in fact these are mostly elderly people who have nowhere else to go due to the collapse of social care.

But if the NHS is asked to free hospital beds, is also because Britain has one of the lowest number of hospital beds per inhabitant compared with the rest of Europe: with only 2.6 beds for 1,000 inhabitants, it has fewer even

**Pushing workers into worse poverty**



payment is made could be shortened. But these token measures are not going to solve the real problem that working households are facing, which is that most workers don't earn enough to be able to afford the basic needs of life! ☐

invite the views of "interested parties".

The biggest collapse of all - of 99.5%! - has been in the legal aid granted to benefit claimants, mostly contesting refusal of Employment Support Allowance or Disability Living Allowance. Only 440 claimants were granted legal aid last year, down from 83,000. Yes, another government cut has struck the hardest blow at the poorest and most vulnerable in society, despite ministers' hypocritical claims to be targeting spending at the people "who need it most"!

than Turkey and much fewer than Poland and Greece.

In order to make up for this chronic shortage, the NHS "Clinical Entrepreneur Programme" has come up with the "innovative idea" of paying landlords £50 a night for putting patients up while they recover. No, this is no April fool joke: the scheme is already piloted in Essex, where it is run by start-up company CareRooms. It is a win-win situation for the government: it frees hospital beds while awarding yet another subsidy to shark landlords!

**Letter from the North**

Sunderland's 2021 bid for the city of culture was launched on 2nd November 2017. All the rhetoric used to legitimise the bid aims to portray the success of winning the award leading to a "renaissance" for Sunderland! From being a major ship builder and coal mining area for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it will apparently follow the so-called post-industrial success of Liverpool, the first City of Culture and the most recent, Hull. At least that's what is being sold to the people of Sunderland. The renaissance would have a long way to go: Sunderland just got graded bottom of PricewaterHouseCoopers "Good growth for cities 2017" index of economic well-being, which looks at indicators like jobs, health, housing and incomes...

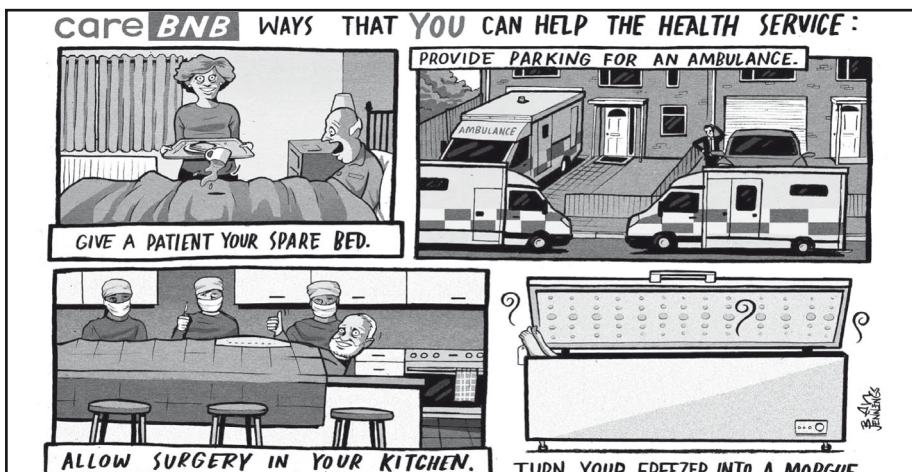
The City of Culture was introduced by Labour's Culture Secretary Andy Burnham in 2009 following the perceived success of Liverpool's European City of Culture. Justifying such a scheme, he argued that "culture and creativity should be viewed as part of the answer to tough economic times and not as a distraction or a luxury".

However, like most rhetoric justifying capitalist reality this has proven to be just a little narrow! When other cities won there was no real benefit to the working class population. But there was an improvement for businesses: in the case of Liverpool it was estimated that the local economy benefited by some £800m.

Sunderland has a lot to boast about: food banks, 17000 children living in poverty, and it has been a pilot area for the disastrous roll-out of Universal Credit!

In terms of unemployment and low wages, the northern workforce in general is hit harder: in Sunderland, unemployment is 7.6%, compared with the national average of 4.6%.

So given the nature of the kind of jobs boosted by "city of culture" activities - that is short-term service jobs - it is likely that the only boost will be to zero-hours contracts and "poverty-in-work"!





**1967 Abortion Act, 50 years on - going backwards? Women's rights**

Twenty-seven October 2017 marked the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Abortion Act. Back in 1967 it was regarded as a progressive piece of legislation allowing lawful abortions in England, Scotland and Wales (not Northern Ireland!) as long as "certain conditions" were met. The "certain conditions" being, that a woman needing an abortion had to be examined by 2 doctors, and prove to both that her mental or physical health would be at serious risk if she had a baby! This was society's way of denying women the basic right to decide for themselves.

There were 2 more politically-motivated and anachronistic features of the Act. Firstly, that abortion wasn't allowed in Northern Ireland in order not to upset reactionary religious lobbies. To this day, women must come to the British mainland for their abortions and only just this year(!) have they been promised these abortions on the NHS!

Secondly, abortion remains a crime under the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act. Before that, it was a "misdemeanour", dealt with by the church. But the persistence of the 1861 law means that women could go to jail if they decided to have an abortion without fulfilling the conditions laid down by the state. And today that's a problem, because



abortions can be carried out by simply taking pills and intravaginal tablets and thus no longer (in most cases) need medical intervention. So the 1861 law is rearing its head again - with women in Northern Ireland in particular being threatened with prosecution for choosing a simpler DIY method rather than an

expensive trip abroad...

And it's not just Northern Ireland. Today abortion rights are under attack everywhere. So while the working class has to fight to prevent any dilution of existing rights, the fight for the "free abortion on demand" which women need must be rebuilt! □

**• Sexual harassment: speaking out isn't enough**

The inappropriate and sometimes violent behaviour of certain men towards women - whether in the workplace or not - is nothing new. It suddenly hit the headlines however, thanks to Hollywood's spotlight on film producer Harvey Weinstein. But now, similar accusations are emerging daily, aided by Twitter's "#Me Too" from just about everywhere, including the British parliament. In most instances, men in positions of power are accused of sexually harassing colleagues, workers, or aspiring employees, knowing that their targets won't say a word for fear of losing their jobs or their potential employment. Of

course such harassment has always been worse for working class women and mothers, because the more precarious your situation, the worse the consequences.

Understandably, therefore, much of the debate is around the issue of feeling safe to "speak out" and having legal process in place. But that can't tackle the root cause of the problem, which lies in the social relations developed thousands of years ago, when "male ownership" of most wealth replaced communal ownership. This patriarchal society has led women to be regarded as men's property in legal, economic and sexual terms. And

while the lucky few (mainly in the rich countries) may have liberated themselves as individuals, the majority of working class women in the world remain subject to abuse and double exploitation - first as workers, just like men, but, also as mothers and housewives, working at reproducing the next generation for free and dependent on the say-so and economic support of men.

In other words, women will only be liberated when the whole of society is freed from the property relations which capitalism imposes. And yes, it will take a revolution.

**• A return to the Dark Ages?**

Reinforcing a general slide backwards into crude right wing bigotry, this October the US voted against a United Nations Human Rights Council resolution which condemned the "imposition of the death penalty for apostasy, blasphemy, adultery and consensual same-sex relations". There are currently at least 6 countries where people in same-sex relationships can be executed: Iran, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Yemen, Nigeria and Somalia. The UN resolution had also condemned the imposition of the death penalty against persons with mental or intellectual disabilities, persons below 18 years of age and pregnant women - and expressed "serious concern that the application of the death penalty for adultery is disproportionately imposed

on women".

Of course the US government is in an equivocal position: Saudi Arabia, among other backward countries on the list, is an important client state. But the second part of this UN resolution could easily apply to the US itself. After all, today, 31 US states out of 50 still impose the death penalty. And what's more, there have been several cases of execution of men with mental disabilities.

This resolution passed despite US opposition, but another resolution concerning the urgent reallocation of existing funds to tackle the consequences of the ongoing cholera epidemic in Haiti, was blocked by the US, Britain and 3 other members of the Security Council.

The epidemic was actually caused in the first place by infected UN personnel sent to help after the devastating 2010 earthquake.

As if this was not enough, the US has also now refused support for the UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (Unesco), accusing it of "bias" against another US client, Israel, because it (rightly) listed Hebron as a Palestinian heritage site and called Israel an "occupying power" in Jerusalem!

It's hard to believe that this is happening in the year 2017. But these are just further examples of the bankruptcy of the capitalist system. More than ever today the choice is between socialism or barbarism.



## Russia 1917

In October 1917, the revolution reached a tipping point. So far, a dual power had been in operation: on the one hand, a provisional government bent on preserving the privileges of the propertied classes and, on the other, the Soviets, the democratic organs of the emerging power of the working class. This situation could not last forever. The need for an insurrection was openly discussed and the Military Revolutionary Committee, which had been elected by the Petrograd Soviet to organise the insurrection, finally set its date: October 25th (November 5th in today's calendar), for the opening of the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets.

On the 24th, wrote the Bolshevik sailor, Raskolnikov, the headquarters of the Petrograd Soviet in the Smolny Palace was converted into a defensive camp: "Cannon were in position out in front of the columns. Machine-guns alongside them... And through all the corridors... the swift, loud, happy tramp of workers, soldiers, sailors and agitators... In the Factory and Shop Committee room, delegates from the plants stood in line to get orders for rifles. The capital had seen many people waiting in lines during the war years - now for the first time it saw them waiting in line for rifles."

### A bloodless insurrection

That evening the uprising was launched. Raskolnikov described how the revolutionaries took control of the central telegraph station and the government's telegraph agency: "Two soldiers from the regiment, standing by the commutator with rifles, proved sufficient to attain a compromise with the hostile telegraph officials.... The main operation began at two o'clock in the morning. Small military parties, usually with a nucleus of armed workers or sailors under the leadership of commissars, occupied... the railroad stations, the lighting plant, the munition and food stores, the waterworks, the Palace Bridge, the Telephone Exchange, the State Bank, and the big printing-plants. The Telegraph Station and the Post Office were completely taken over. Reliable guards were placed everywhere."

Within a few hours, the city's strategic points were under the control of the revolutionaries, practically without resistance, fighting, or victims. The insurrection, which had been openly announced and organised in countless meetings held by the Bolsheviks, was everywhere welcomed enthusiastically.

During the day of October 25th, some skirmishes broke out around the Winter Palace, where the Provisional Government was entrenched, protected by the last troops that were still faithful to it. Several dozen victims fell on both sides. However, a few rounds of cannon fire from the cruiser *Aurora* and the determination of the revolutionaries were enough to carry the victory. The ministers of the Provisional Government

## The working class seize power

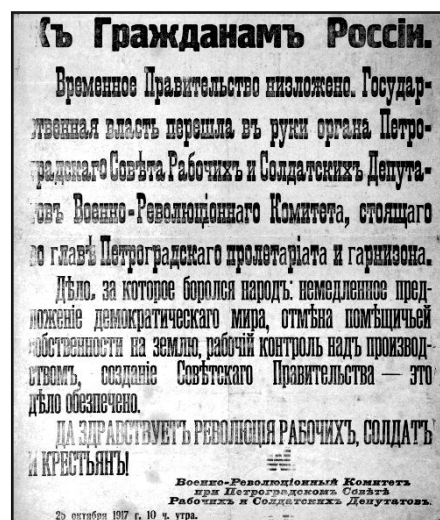


Lenin and Trotsky in Moscow's Red Square after the insurrection

were arrested. Kerensky was able to escape and fled to the front, where he still hoped to rally the troops. The second Congress of Soviets, acclaiming the victorious insurrection, took power into its own hands. Meanwhile, a proclamation signed by the Military Revolutionary Committee circulated in the capital:

"To the citizens of Russia!

"The Provisional Government has been deposed. State power has passed into the hands of the organ of the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies - the Revolutionary Military Committee, which heads the Petrograd proletariat and the garrison. The cause for which the people have fought, namely, the immediate offer of a democratic peace, the abolition of landed proprietorship, workers' control over production, and the establishment of Soviet power - this cause has been secured. Long live the revolution of workers, soldiers, and peasants!"



### The first decrees

As Trotsky recalled later: "In the evening an executive session of the All-Russian Council of Soviets was held. Lenin introduced two decrees: on peace and on the land question. After brief discussion, both decrees were adopted unanimously. It was at this session, too, that

a new central authority was created, to be known as the Council of People's Commissars... The decrees on land and peace... were printed in huge quantities and - through delegates from the front, peasant pedestrians arriving from the villages, and agitators sent by us to the trenches in the provinces - were distributed all over the country."

The decree on peace called for an immediate settlement of the war, "without payment of indemnities or annexations". The decree on land said: "Private ownership of land shall be abolished forever; land shall not be sold, purchased, leased, mortgaged, or otherwise alienated. All land, whether state, crown, monastery, church, factory, entailed, private, public, peasant, etc., shall be confiscated without compensation and become the property of the whole people, and pass into the use of all those who cultivate it." They were followed by a workers' decree which outlined measures for minimum wage, limitations on workers' hours, and the running of factories by elected workers' committees.

But the work had only begun for the new workers' state. As Trotsky recalls: "Simultaneously the work of organizing and arming the Red Guards was carried on. Together with the old garrison and the sailors, the Red Guard was doing hard patrol duty. The Council of People's Commissars got control of one government department after another, though everywhere encountering the passive resistance of the higher and middle grade officials... Our enemies felt certain that the whole affair was a mere episode, that in a day or two - at most a week - the Soviet Government would be overthrown. The first foreign councillors and members of the embassies, impelled quite as much by curiosity as by necessary business on hand, appeared at the Smolny Institute. Newspaper correspondents hurried with their notebooks and cameras. Everyone hastened to catch a glimpse of the new government, being sure that in a day or two it would be too late."

But, as it soon turned out, the new workers' power was there to stay! □



**Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**

**Royal Mail: their justice and ours**

On 12 October, Royal Mail won a court injunction against a 48hr strike. The strike had been endorsed by an 89% majority on a 73% turnout - which was far above the thresholds imposed by the latest Trade Union Act. But RM was able to use a trick against this decision: what amounted to an anti-strike provision which was part of the agreement on its "Agenda for growth, stability and long term success" signed in 2013 by union officials, behind our backs.

Of course, at the time, the CWU leadership claimed that the compulsory mediation clause they had signed up to wasn't a "no-strike deal" - and indeed they presented it as a good thing: "although we retain the right to strike, a fresh approach to industrial relations will help create industrial stability"! This is precisely what allowed RM and the High

Court to rule against last month's strike.

So now we know what the CWU's top leaders meant with their "fresh approach to industrial relations". It was just another pretext to sit on their hands while RM is trying to cut pensions, sick leave, job allowances and working conditions. But as the recent "unofficial" walkouts



in Distribution Offices have shown, RM workers can ignore the bosses' legal obstacles in order to fight back! ☐



**CWU march reaches Mount Pleasant, 19th October**

**• Behind our backs**

Yes, RM bosses and the union officials are back at the negotiating table, behind closed and double locked doors - where talks will be "confidential", as always, for 7 weeks plus and we'll be left in the dark. It doesn't have to be this way. We made a decision to strike, knowing from bitter experience that this is the only way to gain anything from the bosses. So the question for us is what we do next. [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 1/11/17]

**• What is the real difference?**

We're told the difference now, (what a big deal!) is that the union and RM have jointly agreed a "mediator" (academic and professional HR advisor, Lynette Harris). But it's hard to imagine what she will add to the mix... or is it best described as a "mix-up": of the union leaderships' interests, our interests, and RM and its shareholders interests? But these interests can't be "reconciled". They gain, we lose; we lose, they gain. Simple, really. [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 1/11/17]

**• Business as usual?**

As for that little online video with RM bosses explaining to us that they're "pleased to enter a new phase of talks" that will take "close to Christmas to be completed" and that till then, it's "business as usual": it was a joke! As if it can be "business as usual" when we stand to lose most of what we've fought for over decades? [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 1/11/17]

**• We aren't puppy-dogs, however**

Of course, the bosses may have every reason to be pleased. They think they've got an obedient union leadership on a leash and the courts on their side - so what else can they ask for?!

Maybe we should remind them that we, the workforce, are not "obedient" and certainly not on their leash! [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 1/11/17]

**• Fearing the grill?**

We were very angry that the CWU HQ organised a march ending here, at HMP, without telling us! Even our reps were only told at the last minute, if at all!

Were Dave Ward and Terry Pullinger afraid of having to answer some awkward questions? Like, for instance, why did they lie about signing that no-strike agreement?! [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 1/11/17]

**• Upstairs/downstairs**

Yup, upstairs is the nice managers' offices and in the basement... the mess, inside a mess, and we cleaners are in the middle of it! Our changing rooms have no heating, a jig-saw puzzle of carpet for women and no carpet at all for men and a wide open space above the walls where all the dust from building works blows in... it's a hazardous "mess"!

We're told it's temporary, but we know that "temporary" for RM can last forever! So we need improvements now! [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 1/11/17]

**• Double standards**

Yes, why should our fights depend on the say-so of a judge? He says the union broke the agreement by calling a strike without trying external mediation first... as if it would have made a difference! (By the way, it's not going to now, either!)

But in fact, the agreement has been broken by RM bosses hundreds of times already - for instance, by introducing casuals! Justice is blind only when it is convenient for the bosses... [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 18/10/17]

**• Another kind of junk mail**

And most of the cleaners' yorkies used for rubbish aren't in much better shape either: broken and unusable. We're told to use mail yorkies instead, as we are all "one RM", after all! But couldn't this result in the mailing of garbage and the binning of mail?! Wait... RM is already doing this, isn't it? [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 1/11/17]

**• Waiting for Xmas to plan for Xmas?**

We're still waiting to hear from management what is going on with Xmas pressure overtime. Can someone tell us who's going to cover for the extra work? And when are the casuals coming, if indeed they are coming... Because we really can't see where and how they'll be accommodated? [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 1/11/17]

## King's Cross railway station (London)

**Striking against driver-only-operation**

There were coordinated strikes called by the RMT on Wednesday 8th November and Thursday 9th on Southern, Greater Anglia, South Western Railways, Island line, Northern and Merseyrail (the last 2 being on Wednesday only) "over attacks on the role of the safety-critical guard and the extension of Driver Only Operation (DOO) in the name of increased profits." And a good thing too, because usually the unions stick to separate sectional strikes (if they call strikes at all), company by company.

However, on Greater Anglia and Southern's Gatwick Express, Driver Only Operation has already existed for some time, while on the rest of Southern, the DOO dispute started more than 18 months ago and in the course of it guards were forced to sign a new contract, renaming them On Board Supervisors and removing their responsibility for door operation.

The Southern drivers however, stood firm against DOO, nevertheless, and have since rejected 2 pay increases linked to accepting DOO, despite their union, Aslef, recommending they accept. The 3rd offer, raising pay by 28.6% over 5 years has finally been agreed by 731 votes to 193, a majority of 79%. It means allowing DOO under certain exceptional

circumstances. Many are unhappy about this because it opens the door to further erosion of safety while putting the sole onus on drivers.

Of course, the real issue is the rail companies' greed for profits which means cutting as many workers as possible to cut their cost. They're all busy closing ticket offices, sacking dispatchers, station workers, as well as those few guards who still remain on trains. So having co-ordinated strikes against these cuts not



only makes sense, but is the only way to stop them. But the co-ordination needs to happen across the whole network! □



- **No to VTEC's pay cut!**

Really?! An extra 0.2% rise (instead of 3%, it's 3.2%) to keep the "strings"? This is an insult! But it's just not the strings - it's everything: job cuts, roster-shambles, trains and equipment falling apart, the list is endless. Everything we've been expected to put up with. We're awaiting the strike ballot!

PS: Maybe the RMT's Mick Cash thinks "it's not about the money", and yes, it's not about his. But after being kept waiting for 7 months: we do "miss what we haven't got" (as he put it)... in our bank accounts. [Workers' Platform King's X 1/11/17]

- **Time to react!**

Another of our ISS mates was sacked without even a disciplinary hearing; our rep is still suspended on an unspecified "charge" (how convenient!) and 2 other mates are threatened - awaiting results of disciplinaries. ISS bosses have pushed their luck too far! It seems they think they can pick us off, 1 by 1? We intend to show them what we can do, collectively... [Workers' Platform King's X 1/11/17]

- **The too-long working day**

As if ISS can manage with fewer hands to clean and tank the trains! We're

already drastically short. So it means them putting on overtime, which many of us agree to work, because our wages aren't high enough. But why on earth should we have to rely on this damned OT to get a decent living wage? [Workers' Platform King's X 1/11/17]

- **No job losses!**

On top, ISS plans to cut office cleaners, claiming Virgin wants a cheaper contract. Same with Grand Central which is dispensing with ISS cleaners in favour of another exploiter, possibly Churchill. What we demand is that none of these workmates should lose out - neither in wages nor Ts&Cs. Anyway they're needed here, especially since there will be all these extra trains! [Workers' Platform King's X 1/11/17]

- **More trains? more hands!**

Yes, with these new Virgin trains coming on weekends, we're glad to hear that even ISS managers thought a 4th shift was needed on Saturdays... of course, it was pretty obvious to all of us! Because eight of us per shift on weekdays and Saturdays aren't even enough! [Workers' Platform King's X 1/11/17]

- **Despatch these job cuts!**

And what about dispatchers' jobs? They're all but gone from Southern, and now GTR is coming for dispatchers on GN

north of Blackfriars and City Thameslink. There's surely a fight to be had here - drivers, despatchers, gateline and ticket office all together! [Workers' Platform King's X 1/11/17]

- **Explain that!**

We're already p\*\*\*ed off enough about being so badly short-staffed on GN gate-line, without meddling managers asking us to submit "Please Explain" forms as to why the gates are open. Well there's an easy explanation: not enough recruits! So it's the managers who've got some "explaining" to do! [Workers' Platform King's X 1/11/17]

- **There's more where that came from!**

The fact that GTR, after pleading poverty, upped its offer to Southern drivers from 23.8% to 28.5% over 5 years (5.7% ave per year) proves that when forced, the bosses can find "hidden resources". We should all take note and demand the higher pay rises we need! [Workers' Platform King's Cross 1/11/17]

- **Rail gormless?**

Apparently, Rail Gourmet bosses did hear our complaints about not getting a pay rise. They came up with the grand amount of 2%. Obviously they don't know the meaning of "rise". Enough said. [Workers' Platform King's Cross 1/11/17]



**Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)****Ford pay offer: the real issue is the multi-tiered workforce**

Unite the union has called the 2-year pay deal Ford is offering to its 9,000 hourly-paid workforce an "industry leading" and "inflation busting" offer, and is recommending acceptance. Ford has proposed a 4.5% increase in year 1 and 2% or RPI + 0.5%, whichever is higher, in year 2. It has added a "sweetener" of a taxable £750 "signing bonus" as long as the deal is agreed in a timely fashion.

But if you subtract inflation - the RPI is 3.9% you get an "increase" of just 0.6%, in real terms. So all in all, the deal is

not a 6.5% increase over 2 years as Ford claims, but a 1.1% "real" increase! In addition to this, Ford remains totally silent on the 1000 job cuts at its Bridgend plant - and of course the 2-tier workforce it introduced in 2012 (and which the union officials themselves asked to be "phased out") is to be left intact. All new recruits thus start on a wage which is 25% or so less than their first tier counterparts (doing the same work) and have a 2nd class pension scheme to match!! Ford invokes Brexit, even though it's supposed



to operate globally as "One Ford" and its British plants are tiny. It says times are tough - so tough that it had its best quarterly profits (£1.5bn) since 2011! - and shareholders saw a 65% increase in their dividends! So, "no" to this deal: there are jobs and equal pay for equal work to fight for! ☐

- **"£200 on the pay, one hour off the day"**

Let's remember that any effective action taken at this plant - in 1978 when, with rampant inflation we won 17%; or 1988 when we won 7%+7% - was always unofficial (illegal!), but with enough of us together, we were able to ignore Ford's threats and walk out and start a strike, and then the union officials had to run after us to catch up. Just like then, today we just can't wait for these official guys if we really want to win anything... [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 8/1/11]

- **FORD-US never abolished 2nd tier**

Meanwhile, we spoke with Ford US workers who said we're wrong to think Ford ended 2-tier over there. Their 2015/16 agreement just provided for a "pathway" taking 8 years long, before 2nd tier workers on \$17 (£12/hr) would gradually reach what Ford over there calls the full "traditional wage" of \$28 (£21.37).

But Ford-US then introduced a 3rd tier of new hires on \$9/hr (£6.87). No wonder Ford's hit record profits! There's a rumour that's what Ford wants here, while keeping 2nd tier, subbies (4th tier) temps (5th tier)! NO! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 8/1/11]

- **Temp contract hell**

The other big issue is temps. To have contracts extended for just 12 mths, or be kept in the limbo-land of a 23-mth contract, puts our lives on hold. How can we plan the future, apply for a mortgage or even have a child? We can't even be absent or sick without it counting against us! When we're inducted we're told to join the union, coz it's going to have our backs. So "having temps' backs" means signing up to more temps, more tiers, more exploitation? Let's turn this around for a full-frontal fight! Casualisation is killing us! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 8/1/11]

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

- **Slow down, grow up**

Assembly managers have always competed with each other unofficially to screw the most cars out of their shift, hoping to be noticed by their seniors. Of course they don't give a damn about how this may affect us out nor, for that matter, the problems thus created further down the line. A fortnight ago the night shift knocked out 383 cars. A new record? It certainly left us longing for a breakdown. Do these idiots need telling that Record Breakers hasn't been on TV for years? Or have we got to call a halt to this competitive silliness ourselves? [Workers' Fight Bulletin BMW Oxford 1/11/17]

- **Slashed to the bone**

One area where the pace feels especially brutal is doors-off, where BMW cut a third of positions - 60 down to 40 - and distributed our mates around the rest of the tracks. Much more of this and it's the doors out we'll be needing... [Workers' Fight Bulletin BMW Oxford 1/11/17]

- **We're not bailing BMW out!**

This can only fill up the Work in Progress (where repairs are done), yet

management doesn't seem to see the connection. They have the cheek to come round saying we "have to do better" when the inevitable faults show up. The right level of speed and the right number of people are matters for them! [Workers' Fight Bulletin BMW Oxford 1/11/17]

- **Our needs and their convenience**

With one hand management put pressure on us to book any unused annual leave before mid-December. With the other they come back rejecting our requests for individual days when we actually need time off! Shortages, they say - but then they push us to take off a single block of days like a whole week. Sounds more like they're too lazy to cover more than one absence per person! [Workers' Fight Bulletin BMW Oxford 1/11/17]

- **Holidays needn't worry us**

No wonder there's a lot of talk about next year's holidays already; getting out of here is more than ever what we live for. But as always the BMW way makes holidays a double-edged sword. Will we be able to cover BMW's planned shutdowns - whatever they are - with our annual leave and stagnant



WTA credit? And anyway, why should this be our problem? If BMW needs the plant closed, it should give us more leave. End of story. [Workers' Fight Bulletin BMW Oxford 1/11/17]

- **Their word and ours**

Giving his presentation at the Frankfurt Motor Show last month, BMW's CEO Harald Krüger fainted after a spectacular wobble. Overcome by the occasion, with so many new models on show? He was immediately surrounded by other men in blue suits who got him to a doctor and suspended the presentation. Nice, but nothing like the hustling out-of-the-way to keep the line going when one of us collapses on the line! [Workers' Fight Bulletin BMW Oxford 4/10/17]

## Catalonia *From Catalonia to Scotland and Brexit: nationalism is a dead-end for the working class!*

From May to Merkel and Macron, all European leaders have rallied behind Spain's right-wing prime minister Rajoy, in his clamp-down on the Catalan pro-independence movement, following its attempt to proclaim a Catalan Republic.

Predictably so, as all these governments fear a snow-ball effect, should the Catalan secession be successful. From Scotland to Northern Italy and Flanders, among many others, there is no shortage of aspiring nationalist forces which aim at gaining some form of independence in order to cut out a fiefdom for themselves.

But where are the interests of the working class majority in all of this? Are they represented by the likes of May and Rajoy, who are only concerned with the interests of their capitalist masters? Obviously not. But are they represented by the pro-independence camp? Not any more so, in fact.

### **How the crisis propped up nationalism**

In many respects, there are striking similarities between Catalonia and Scotland.

In Catalonia, the leading nationalist force - the Catalan European Democratic Party (CEDP) led by deposed president Carles Puigdemont - is a right-wing party. It represents the interests of the well-offs and businesses, whose only aspiration is to increase their parasitism on the provincial state. In that sense, it is quite similar to Scotland's SNP which was formed by Scottish Tories in the 1930s, to represent the same social interests.

But with such a narrow social base, neither party had a chance in hell of getting anywhere close to political power. So they sought to capitalise on the discontent caused by an on-going crisis which was decimating jobs. They used populist language designed to appeal to working class voters who were alienated by the pro-business policies of the main parties in central government.

In Scotland, this allowed the SNP to take over the regional institutions, in 2007, thanks to the revulsion against Blair's policies. In Catalonia, it was the high unemployment caused by the 2008 crisis and Madrid's austerity policies which eventually allowed the CEDP to form a ruling coalition in Barcelona, in 2016.

In both cases, these two parties made political capital by riding on the



discontent generated by the crisis. Waving their respective nationalist flags, they claimed that independence would allow their provinces to weather the crisis which was affecting the rest of the world, thanks to their taking over control of their economic resources.

This was a con, of course, since the world capitalist crisis is not likely to be stopped by yet more national borders. But the real potential beneficiaries, the two regions' better-offs, had everything to gain from this!

### **From Catalonia to Brexit**

In Catalonia, the working class is faced with a choice between two dead ends: either the nationalism of the Catalan politicians, or the nationalism of the Madrid politicians! The anti-independence protesters marched massively behind the Spanish flag to show their support for Rajoy! But wasn't this flag soaked in workers' blood, during the 38 years of Franco's brutal dictatorship? How can it ever represent the interests of the working class? Of course it can't!

And here, what springs to mind is... Brexit. Ironically, in this case, the roles are reversed. Those who want to go it alone and erect more borders around workers are politicians harking back to Britain's grandiose imperial past. They want the working class to line up behind the Union Jack against the rest of Europe. But isn't this same flag the

bloody symbol of the looting and massacres carried out by British colonialism across its empire and, more recently, in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria? As if it was in workers' interests to align themselves behind politicians who celebrate the crimes of British capital, for the sole purpose of promoting their narrow-minded, petty ambitions!

Look at these politicians who are posturing as great negotiators, when they're making a complete mess of everything! They are so terrified of exposing their incompetence and irresponsibility that they don't even dare to disclose what their own officials tell them about the chaos that Brexit will cause in the economy!

Of course, they talk about the need to "regain control". Yes, working people need to regain control, but not to be pushed into yet another nationalist dead end. They need to regain control - or rather to take it, once and for all - from the hands of those career-hungry politicians and from the hands of their capitalist masters.

And to this end, here in Britain, just as much as in Barcelona and in Madrid, the last thing the working class needs is the delusion of a national flag. What it needs is to have its own voice, its own party, which will, at last, represent its class interests - the party that we need to build! □

*[Editorial of the Workers' Fight workplace bulletins - 1st November 2017]*

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.