

WORKERS' fight



No 60 - 16 Jan 2015

price 30p

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

ISSN 2040-400X

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

After the Paris attacks

AGAINST ALL TERRORISM

Following the terrorist attacks in which 17 people were killed in Paris, on 7th and 8th January, the British media were quick to insist that no such thing could ever happen in Britain. As if the 2005 London tube bombings and the Woolwich attack had never taken place!

But whereas the London attacks were essentially random, in Paris the terrorists killed most of their victims because of their stance against prejudice, social, religious, racial and political. It was a bigoted attack.

Those who carried out these attacks are not only enemies of the freedom of expression, but also of the oppressed, on whom they want to impose their own conception of society. In poor countries like Iraq, Syria or Nigeria, their aim is to build repressive states which deprive the oppressed masses of their right to a voice and their right to organise. Their terrorist methods are no different from the state terrorism of the imperialist powers they claim to be fighting.

People's solidarity hijacked

The attacks caused huge shock in France. But when more than a million people took to the streets in Paris on Sunday 11th in solidarity with the victims, their march was hijacked by western leaders.

Among them was French president, François Hollande, who sent troops to Africa to protect the mining interests of French capital. Next to him was David Cameron, who supported Blair's occupation of Iraq and the bombing of Libya. And both marched shoulder to shoulder with the butcher of Gaza, Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Trailing behind them were some of France's puppet African dictators, such as Gabon's Omar Bongo and Mali's Ibrahim Boubacar Keita. And with them were a host of leading officials from the western



The state terrorists on 11th Jan

countries who all have a share of responsibility in the wars which plague the poor countries, especially in the Middle East.

As if these politicians gave a damn about the victims of terrorism, when their own troops bomb whole populations into the ground! Their only aim was to drum up support for their criminal policies. In fact, Hollande has already used the Paris attacks to justify his wars and Cameron's sidekick, Theresa May is now clamouring for all-encompassing surveillance across Europe.

The camp of the working class

In 2001, Bush used the shock of 9/11 to justify his invasion of Afghanistan. In 2003, Bush and Blair used the scaremongering of their "war on terror" to invade Iraq. Will the imperialist vultures use this latest shock to step up their aggression in the Middle-East?

For the working class movement the western leaders are just as much enemies as the Paris and London terrorists. It should not fall for their "unity in grief",

which is aimed at lining up workers behind their terrorist operations against entire populations. Its first responsibility, therefore, is to oppose the bloody military ventures of our imperialist rulers by all necessary means.

Beyond that, let's not forget that the London bombers were disaffected youth, born and bred in Britain, who had been pushed into terrorism after being marginalised by a combination of economic deprivation and racism. And the responsibility of the working class movement is also to give these youth a stake in this society, by engaging them in the struggle for a better world, free of capitalist exploitation and all its by-products - poverty across the world as well as racism here.

We are all part of the same working class, whatever our origins. And we will only shape the future by uniting around our class interests against the capitalists and their governments whose system threatens the world with barbarism. □

Austerity Osborne chasing his own tail

George Osborne had to admit in his Autumn statement that he's still having to borrow far more than he'd planned, in order to balance the budget. One of the reasons he gave is that what's come in, in tax revenues, has failed to meet the 2010 forecast. No wonder! Hasn't he cut corporation tax rates year after year, so that the capitalists can keep an ever higher share of their record profits? These profits came, not from

productive investment, but from stepping up exploitation through low pay, zero-hours and other casual employment - very often under HMRC's radar. And all with the enthusiastic backing of a government which forces the unemployed into this sort of work!

As a result of this policy, workers' incomes have gone down the drain. Which means the take from income tax was £17bn less than forecast. Even

Osborne's further projected spending cuts of around 5% of GDP will not balance the budget, without a rise in income tax receipts - which won't happen if wages remain flat. But despite his plans being sabotaged by his own policies, Osborne signalled no change of course. Deficit reduction may matter to the ConDems, but not as much as guaranteeing the capitalists' profits! ☐

• As if we hadn't had enough!

In his "Autumn Statement", George Osborne announced his new "deficit reduction" target. According to the Treasury's spending watchdog, the Office for Budget Responsibility, this target can only be reached if cuts amounting to a cumulative total of £60bn are made by 2020 - on top of the total of £35bn that have been already made since 2010!

The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) estimates that to achieve this, the next government will need to cut welfare expenditure and/or increase tax revenue by an average £21bn each year until 2020 - that is, £2bn more each year than since 2010! This, says the IFS, would reduce public spending to its lowest level relative to GDP since the 1930s!

To put this in more concrete terms, Osborne's plan would result in one million job cuts in the public sector and a further degradation in household incomes. Osborne thinks he can get away with this? One more reason for workers to fight and regain the ground lost!

• Local government cut to the bone

Over the four years of the present government, total central funding for local government has been slashed by 40% - or £20bn in total. As a result, councils have been cutting jobs and services ranging from refuse collection to personal care.

Birmingham city council, the largest in Britain, has been driven to the brink of collapse. By March 2015, it will have made cuts worth £461m over these four years, and is planning to "save" another £117m by 2016, and then a further £338m by 2017/18. 6,000 employees directly employed by the council have already been sacked since 2010, and it

is planning to cut another 7,000 jobs by 2018. The cuts in local welfare schemes have torn away the last shreds of a safety net by cutting children's services, assistance to women fleeing domestic violence and those with chronic physical and mental health issues - among others.

A Newcastle councillor summarised today's situation when he warned: "you can see the embers of social unrest beginning to smoulder". If by "social unrest" he meant workers using their collective strength to reclaim the ground lost, then yes - and the sooner the better!



October 2014 protests

• Cameron's anti-EU saga

In December, Cameron made yet another big electoral show of his plans to deprive EU migrants of most welfare benefits. And there were not many objections to this on the part of EU governments, if only because none of them gives a damn about the conditions of EU workers, wherever they may live.

But, as a cherry on his xenophobic cake, Cameron toyed with the idea of introducing quotas for the number of migrants allowed to come to Britain from each EU country. This time, however, at a "summit meeting" with Cameron, German Chancellor Angela Merkel made it clear that she would not allow electioneering to infringe on companies' "freedom" to employ. So Cameron had to backtrack, returning from this meeting with his tail between his legs, while his spin doctors embarked on a face-saving exercise by claiming that Merkel had nothing to do with his about-turn.

Meanwhile, some cheeky commentators have pointed out that Cameron's planned

"in-out referendum" - assuming it does take place - will coincide with Britain's presidency of the EU. This would be the first time a president asks the electorate to vote for his own ousting!

• No tweets for twits

Nigel Farage is having problems with UKIP supporters airing their unsavoury views on the networks and in public. He claims that some are just "agent provocateurs". Yet, one of his new MPs, ex-Tory Mark Reckless, is living up to his name and talking of sending European migrants back home - although consideration might be made, he said, for the ones who settled here a long time ago...

Mind you, compared to some of the other racist and homophobic comments from other characters in UKIP, Reckless was almost mild. So UKIP now wants to ban its members from using Twitter... Especially since Farage - who, not so long ago, claimed to be a "voice for British workers" - is now targeting hedge fund managers for donations and would certainly not want these billionaires put off...

Letter from Sussex

Just before Christmas, a 5 year old African girl, Andrea Gada, was mowed down and killed by a hit-and-run driver in Eastbourne. The local paper, the Eastbourne Herald, printed heartbreaking headlines when it transpired that her family was struggling to find funds to bring relatives over from Zimbabwe for the funeral. Immediately, donations poured in from readers and quickly exceeded expectations.

All the same, the Home Office has decided that it serves the public good to deny Andrea's Zimbabwean grandparents the necessary visas to attend her funeral - which has been postponed as a result. The local press and local MPs are up in arms, so there's probably going to be a "rethink". But how many other such cases are going unreported?

Cuba - the failure of the USA's strong-arm policy

On 17 December, US President Obama and Cuban leader, Raul Castro issued a joint statement resuming diplomatic relations between the two countries, after 54 years of a US-imposed embargo on Cuba. Obama admitted that "isolating Cuba had not worked" - or to put it another way, he acknowledged the fact that the US had failed to force the Cuban population into submission.

But why was the USA still keeping Cuba at arms length, more than 20 years after the official end of the Cold War? It was certainly not due to the Cuban regime's reluctance to make friends, as the collapse of the USSR - its main lifeline after the US imposed its embargo in 1960 - had left Cuba in dire economic straits.

Of course, back in 1960, it was the USA's determination to make an example by "punishing" the Cuban population for Fidel Castro's overthrow of the corrupt, US-backed Batista regime, which pushed the regime into the arms of the USSR. It was only then that Castro discovered his "communist" leanings and



the myth of socialism on one island was born. Faced with repeated US-driven attempted coups, the regime turned increasingly into a dictatorship - but with genuine mass popular support among the population. On this basis, which had nothing to do with "communism", Cuba achieved real development in certain areas, like public health and education, thanks to the Soviet Union's limited help. So much so, that it has been able to provide medical aid to poorer and less developed countries in the past - and still does. And throughout the Cold War, it

remained for many a symbol of anti-imperialist progressive nationalism.

What is now in store for the Cuban population? The odds, unfortunately are, that those who will really benefit from this normalisation are the US multinationals which, since 2000, have already been selling their products to Cuba. After 54 years of blockade, they will soon be able to resume their looting of the country. The question is whether the Cuban working class will allow the multinationals' corrupt, exploitative rule to shape their lives again. □

• Ebola: magic bullet needed against imperialism

Out of an under-recorded 20,747 Ebola virus infections in West Africa so far, there have been 8,235 deaths. The mortality rate is almost 70% in parts of Sierra Leone which is the hardest hit and as poor, if not poorer, than the other African countries in the epidemic's epicentre - Liberia and Guinea. And this poverty and deprivation is the key - because without adequate hygiene, for which clean water on tap, drains and sewerage is paramount - let alone health facilities and enough trained staff, plus an infrastructure of good roads and communications, Ebola can only spread. In other words, if it had been possible to properly isolate those infected and disinfect and protect contacts as well as trace all of them, in an environment where education is a priority, this epidemic could have been contained.

So now the focus, in the short-term, is on finding the "magic bullet" to kill the

virus. Extraordinary trials of 2 new drugs (brincidofir and favipiravir) have just started on infected patients in Liberia and Guinea as well as plasma from recovered patients and a vaccine - even if the effectiveness of these experimental treatments (and perhaps their medium and long-term side effects) are unknown. Sure, it may be worth the risk, and with a 50-70% death rate, it probably is. But the most effective "treatment" is the fight to end the looting of the poor countries by rich companies - like Britain's big mining companies - whose aim is to keep their populations poor, the better to exploit them. Only that can end the poverty which spreads disease.

• Oil: crisis of plenty!

An abundance of oil in the world, causing a 40% fall in oil prices since June, should surely be good news. But not so in this irrational capitalist system.

First of all, it's not a symptom of health, but one of crisis. It reflects the fact that demand for oil is down, due to a

fall in investment and production. So the oil majors too, are now planning massive cuts in investment and production facilities. BP, for instance, has announced a plan to spend £1 billion on job cuts over the next year.

The consequences of all of this are catastrophic for the populations of the poor oil-producing countries, like Nigeria, Venezuela, Gabon, etc. They're facing brutal cuts in public expenditure and jobs, and cuts in government subsidies on basic necessities. In Venezuela workers responded with demonstrations. In Nigeria, oil workers went on a 4-day general strike demanding, among other things, a cut in fuel prices.

Meanwhile, the same speculators who made a fortune in the past by gambling on rising oil prices, are now massively moving their capital to safer markets, thereby threatening the stability of the whole financial system. Just as the abundance of credit was a cause of the 2008 crisis, the abundance of oil could cause the next crisis of senile capitalism!

Philae: no borders but the Universe!

The Philae probe became the first unmanned spacecraft to land on a comet. This landing was, in and of itself an extraordinary feat of technology, as this tiny comet travels at speeds up to 84,000 miles/hr and is several billion miles away from the Earth!

But the most important aspect of this mission, is that it could not possibly have been carried out successfully by one single country. It depended entirely on the co-operation of

tens of thousands of people of every nationality, united in the same aim: more than 50 institutes, from 15 different European countries were involved in the design and production of the launcher, the carrier and the lander, with an army of skilled and unskilled workers behind the scenes. 300 scientists shared their knowledge across Europe's national borders to ensure that the mission would be successful. And many more still, will analyse the

data collected by Philae, which they will share across the world.

This collective effort will give us a better understanding of the formation of the solar system and the origins of life on Earth. But it also shows us the enormous potential for progress which is within our reach, provided we get rid once and for all of these obsolete national borders which have long been an unbearable straitjacket for the whole of mankind!

Their profits City Link's Xmas gift to workers

It was unbelievable. City Link workers were told on Christmas day that their parcel delivery company had gone into administration, and operations were suspended. Then on New Year's eve they were told they were redundant. Without a job. 2,760 were directly employed and entitled to redundancy pay (underwritten by the government), but another 1,000 who are "self-employed" (so that the company could avoid paying pension, holiday and sick pay), are thus not even entitled to this.

City Link actually fined these self-employed drivers when they were sick (£150 for a half-day, the estimated loss to the company) - so they had to recruit and pay replacements for themselves when they took sick or holiday leave. One driver explained how it was thus a "double-whammy" if he got ill.

It was therefore no surprise to hear that City Link was owned by Jon Moulton,



whose private equity fund "Better Capital" bought it from Rentokil for £1, in April 2013. Back in 2000, Moulton was behind the failed buy-out of Longbridge MG Rover for £1 by his previous venture called "Alchemy". The Financial Times recalled an interview with him where he described his "three best features"

as "Determination, curiosity and insensitivity - it lets you sleep when others can't". He sleeps in tax-haven Guernsey, and has £100m to his name. The collapse of City Link may be a catastrophe for the workforce, but for Moulton, it is (we quote) no more than "a pain in the rear". □

• Record profits feed on record exploitation

Chances are that British capitalists are popping the champagne corks - at least more than usual - because the profitability of British companies has reached a 16-year high, according to the Office of National Statistics. The rate of return on shareholders' investment is now 12.1% for manufacturing and 15.6% for services.

But, of course, these profits do not come out of nowhere - nor do they come from Osborne's self-proclaimed recovery. Quite simply they come from squeezing the working class to work harder and for less money - in casual employment, zero-hours contracts and second-tier jobs - after using the pretext of the crisis as a means of blackmailing workers into accepting worse conditions - that is, until workers decide to put an end to it by flexing their collective muscle.

• Banks: only execs come "cheap"

Most people would be happy to get a bonus double or equivalent to their annual salary, but not the top bankers! After an EU ruling was meant to limit their bonuses to this level from 2015, the big 4 UK banks (HSBC, Barclays, Lloyds and RBS) found a way of bypassing this little restriction: they decided to hand out £30m in shares to their top executives.

Because, of course, if they did not pay their top management "enough", they would not get the "best", the "crème de la crème". And by the "best" they must mean those responsible for the misdeeds which led these very same banks to be among those fined a

• The new non-jobs

Job cuts are still piling up. In November, Rolls Royce announced 2,600 job cuts, mostly of engineers who had developed two new engines. Then Lloyds Bank cut 1,250 insurance sales jobs, (the first instalment of a further 9,000 cuts announced last October, on top of 45,000 since 2008!). Then came City Link's collapse in December, making 2,700 workers redundant.

Jobs like these have simply not been created during the recession, despite the much-vaunted "official" rise in employment. Of the 1.08 million so-called new jobs since 2008, only 26,000 were full-time and directly-employed - just one in 40. More than a third were part-time and nearly two thirds were categorised "self-employed"! In 2008 only 1 in 16 men and 1 in 20 women worked in casual employment; but now it is running at 1 in 12, for both men and women. Recovery? Certainly not for the working class!

record £1.1bn this year?

RBS, which is 79% state-owned, handed out shares worth almost £5.5m to each one of its 10 most senior bankers. Yet, just a year ago, the same RBS announced plans to cut 20-30,000 jobs, in order to "cut costs".

Apparently, the higher your salary in the banking system, the less "costly" you are!

• Rail profits have never fared so well

The rail fare rises which came into force on 2nd January, increased the cost of train journeys by an average of 2.2% and season tickets by 2.5%. Michael Roberts, representing private rail operators, said: "At 2.2%, the average increase in fares in 2015 is the lowest for five years." Maybe so, but

• Whipping the jobless into food banks

More than 900,000 benefit penalties, or "sanctions", were imposed on Jobseeker's Allowance claimants in the year to March 2014. The sanctions were overwhelmingly on young claimants - over 370,000 of them were between 18 and 24, and more than half were under 30. The largest numbers of sanctions were imposed on those claiming for less than 13 weeks. Not surprising, since new claimants have to sign up to a barrage of petty requirements which are intended to catch them out.

The DWP says sanctions are a "last resort" and only a minority of claimants are sanctioned. If so, the sanctions must have been applied repeatedly to the same claimants, since the claimant count for the year concerned was 1.51m and 900,000 out of 1.51m means 66% were sanctioned - which sounds like a majority to us! No surprise that benefit sanctions have become the biggest reason why people apply to food banks.

he forgot to say that over the past 5 years, rail fares have increased by more than 20%, while household incomes fell by 8.5%.

Transport secretary, Patrick McLoughlin, backed the rail fare increase: "We are investing in the biggest rail modernisation since the Victorian era and fares have a crucial role to play in funding these improvements." But he omitted to say that taxpayers contributed £4bn to the railways in 2013/14 alone, while the rail companies paid out more than £200m in dividends to shareholders during the same financial year!

Yes, the government's subsidies pay for the investments that the rail companies refuse to provide, while the rising fares line the pockets of shareholders!

"Blind justice", yes it is!

Firms which are not paying the minimum wage are getting away with it. Under the whole of the ConDems' tenure there have been just 2 prosecutions, despite the fact that, according to the official estimate produced by the Office for National Statistics, 287,000 workers are paid less than the minimum wage. Not that Labour's record was better in this

respect. Despite having introduced the minimum wage, Labour carried out only 7 prosecutions against Scrooge bosses!

The official excuse for such leniency is that a criminal prosecution is too expensive and therefore, apparently not worth it! So even if they are caught, criminal bosses get away with small, affordable fines. And since at the same time, the

• Recovery for whom?

The annual survey of hours and earnings by the Office of National Statistics shows that the rise in wages last year was the smallest since the ONS first started collecting data, in 1997. Average weekly wages for full-timers rose by just £1. In fact, when adjusting for inflation, real wages have actually been going down for the sixth year running, bringing them back to the level of the early 2000s.

The growing growing casualisation of work by the bosses, is the main factor in falling real wages. As a result, the numbers living in low-income households has risen to 21%. The level of indebtedness is soaring too. Last year, borrowing on mortgages, credit cards, overdrafts and

consumer credit reached a 7-year high, at 115% of average annual earnings per household and, on every working day, Citizen Advice Bureaux had to deal with 6,389 new debt problems! So much for Osborne's "recovery"!

• Evict landlords, not tenants!

Over the first nine months of 2014, 30,000 tenants were evicted in England and Wales (that's more than 100 evictions on any single day!). The total number for 2014 is expected to overshoot the previous year's total of 37,792. Most of the repossessions are carried out by "social landlords" - i.e., local councils or housing associations - which are evicting households unable to pay their rents due to cuts in housing benefits.

• NHS emergency: it's the cuts

Another "new" year, another winter crisis in the NHS - but this time ambulances are queuing up at A&Es and waiting times are the worst in a decade. On average, 20% of patients wait more than 4 hours in A&E before being seen. In Cardiff, a footballer was left with a badly broken leg for 6 hours on the pitch, waiting for an ambulance!

By 6th January 2015, "major incidents" had been declared at 12 hospitals, while others did so in practice, but dared not say it. Public notices went up, even on London Underground, telling people not to go to their local A&E unless they had a life-threatening condition, implying that people were turning up needlessly.

• NHS, going, going....

So, Circle Holdings, the first private consortium to run an NHS hospital, wants out. It took over "failing" Hinchingbrooke Hospital in Cambridgeshire to much fanfare, in 2012, but couldn't make it pay. And especially not, when ConDems' "efficiency savings" (actually announced under Labour) meant it lost 10% of its expected "per patient treated" public funding. Then there was the Quality Care Commission report which puts Hinchingbrooke in "special measures" because of severely inadequate patient care - all due to staff shortages (read: "efficiencies") in crucial areas like A&E and paediatrics.

Which brings us to other aspects of the NHS privatisation programme, boosted as never before by the ConDems' Health and

However, some hospital chiefs were more honest, blaming cuts in social care which prevent mainly elderly patients from being discharged (one woman had been in hospital for a year). While true, it's only part of the story. Beds have been cut and departments closed, including A&Es and there's a drastic shortage of trained staff. Walk-in centres, meant to take pressure off A&E have also closed, while GP surgeries are overburdened. 40% of hospital doctors and 73% of GPs say their workload is unmanageable and 86% work outside their regular hours.

And Cameron complains that the NHS is being turned into a political football before the election? And what else could it be?

Social Care Act 2012. Some would say this Act abolished the NHS in England, leaving behind simply a public (for now) "funding stream" for patient care, paid to private providers and ever-shrinking public ones, thus ending public health provision as we know it. Private health firms have so far won £2.6bn worth of contracts (131 out of 195) for health services and may get £9bn-worth - over 50% of the total since 2013 - with the idea of making a profit, of course. Circle Holdings, already a private provider of clinics, by the way, has won two more contracts. Lethal or not, profiteering from health is now official policy.

• NATS: chaos puts lives at risk

Thousands of passengers were left stranded for hours as chaos gripped air traffic control in the south east of England on

Their profits

ConDems' reform of industrial tribunals has made it unaffordable for low-paid workers to file a suit against their employers, workers find themselves with no means of redress. Yes, the bosses' laws serve only those who make them! And yes, the working class can only rely on its own collective strength to defend its material interests! ☐

Meanwhile, an estimated 610,000 homes are lying empty across the country - homes which could be taken over by the state and refurbished to meet the needs of all those on housing waiting lists, especially when they cannot afford to pay rent. But that would require the political will to by-pass the property rights of absentee landlords by, effectively, evicting them - a will that no government has ever had. Instead, they've been cutting local councils' social housing budgets and, in the case of the ConDems, using public funds to subsidise the construction of unaffordable housing, for the benefit of buy-to-rent landlords who charge extortionate rents - thereby generating even more evictions!



12-13 December. Runways at Heathrow and Gatwick were closed and 108 flights cancelled. Not for the first time, though: in December 2013, hundreds of flights had been grounded due to "software failures".

There is a history behind this. Back in 2001, having said "our air is not for sale", Blair sold 46% of NATS via a public-private partnership to a consortium of airlines (British Airways, British Midland, Virgin, Britannia, Monarch, EasyJet and Airtours), for 1/15th of the estimated price. The "new" NATS immediately proceeded to cut jobs. Cost-savings have been made regularly to squeeze profits out of the operation ever since - including subcontracting of vital IT maintenance. In 2012, another round of job cuts was launched, involving 6% of the technical staff. It's not just delays which are a potential issue here. But crashes.

King's Cross railway station (London)**• New company, old fight**

The East Coast train service has been "re-privatised". It had been operated by the state since November 2009, after the private National Express made a mess of it. But the government always intended to hand it back to the private sector as the most attractive franchise on the books. The bid was won by a partnership between Stagecoach (90%) and Virgin (10%) and the new joint company, Inter City Railways, will take over on 1 March 2015.

Of course, this re-privatisation

will allow the private monopolists (Stagecoach already controls 16% of the bus market and 25% of the rail market in Britain) to help themselves to even more assets. But this is not to say that East Coast was anything to write home about, when it was operated by the government. As a matter of fact, East Coast workers faced the same worsening of conditions, subcontracting of jobs to agencies and arbitrary sackings under "public ownership" as they did - and will continue to do - under private



franchisees. So the only way to protect our conditions - and to better them - will be to fight tooth and nail, because that's the only language the bosses understand, whether they're "public" or private.

• Network Rail's engineered chaos

On Xmas and Boxing Day (when the entire rail network is shut) Network Rail had 300 infrastructure projects planned at 2,000 sites at a cost of £200m. It boasted of its "biggest improvements yet", in record time. The "improvement" was quick indeed. By the 27th December, engineering work between King's Cross and Finsbury Park had overrun, shutting down King's Cross, with so many passengers redirected to Finsbury

Park that it also had to close due to overcrowding. Signals and track had "problems" at Paddington and Great Western trains out of Euston failed to run the whole weekend. Result: chaos at these major rail hubs in the middle of the festive holiday! It took over 5 hours to crawl between Finsbury Park and Peterborough (usually the first stop after King's Cross), while passengers queued for hours in freezing temperatures and

staff were left at a loss...

There will be an investigation into this total mess-up. But we already know its real cause: the 1,000s of maintenance job cuts by Network Rail over the past few years. Not to mention the various agencies and subcontractors used by Network Rail interested in maximising profits at the expense of jobs and conditions. Is it any wonder that its grandiose plans can only create havoc?

• All in the same lousy boat

Since November Interserve (Initial's new name) cleaning staff at Waterloo have been taking strike action against the sacking of 6 workmates, and against the constant bullying and the low and always incorrect and late wages they're paid! Sounds familiar to all of us cleaners here at KX! So we'll try to support them in every way we can...

These huge multinationals behave like the worst cowboys and deserve to be taught a "multinational" lesson! We

could make a start, couldn't we, with co-ordinated action across all stations, nationally? [Workers' Platform 17/12/14]

• Not-so-subtle difference!

So the RMT, Aslef and TSSA spokespersons all call East Coast's "reprivatisation" a calamity; EC was 'a public service success story' under the government's DOR, which made £1bn for the Treasury... But what about the "workers' success story", which EC certainly wasn't, and which should have been their concern? [Workers' Platform King's Cross 2/12/14]

• Taking the bean?

As for the EC newbies' "great plans": a 10% fare reduction on std anytime between London and Stevenage, Leeds to London 10 mins faster, bean-to-cup-coffee, (are they taking the pea?)... And for us workers - well, zilch - unless you count the con-suggestion of "employee shares"... Well, we're in for a bumpy ride unless we put some large obstacles on their track, to smooth our path... [Workers' Platform 2/12/14]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**• Medical cover, or no nights**

When a workmate in rectification collapsed on the line on nights, hitting his head, it was half an hour before anyone medically qualified got to see him. Fortunately it wasn't as serious as it might have been - though there was no way for management to know that while they played it down, hoping to keep it in-house. It's unacceptable that our safety should be left to chance on any shift. [Workers' Fight 17/12/14]

• Go slow

Two nasty accidents occurred in APU4 recently, leaving mates with a crushed chest and permanently damaged

fingers. We wish them speedy recoveries. Both accidents had common features. First, there were no first aiders to be found; second and crucially, they happened under intense pressure to work quickly. As APU4 is a tough area fitting rear suspension, fuel tanks etc, this is a recipe for disaster. By speeding up the line while cutting shifts before Xmas, BMW shows just how recklessly it pursues profits - at our expense. [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 17/12/14]

• The "holiday" shocker

No wonder BMW wrote to us a fortnight ago warning us not to book holidays in advance of the talks proceeding at the time between the company and union



officials. If the New Year shut out is taken into consideration as well as shut outs in February, April, June, July and August there are no free days left for any of us to book "our own" holidays in 2015 - as opposed to being forced to take them during BMW-imposed shut outs. [Workers' Fight 17/12/14]

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**• Fat lady still quiet...**

So they did it. Ford brought forward the end of a Ford-run logistics (MP&L), although a few Ford MP&L mates are still carrying the torch. Can LineSide even cope? Not yet, that's for sure, but Ford's prepared to pay the price, it seems, for what it sees as long term benefits to its profits. As for us, the workforce, we'll have to fight for our wages and conditions all over again. And we will. [Ford Dagenham Workers' Fight 10/12/15]

• This is the pits

And as far as LineSide is concerned, we hear its workers are 3/4 agency temp, on £7/hr, and must do 4X6mth contracts, blemish free, to get a permanent job offer, on £3/hr more... Not to mention conditions of work! It's freezing in some areas, and not just for LineSide. If it's too cold, we can't work. [Ford Dagenham Workers' Fight 10/12/15]

• Ford watch your step

We know Ford really wants to turn all the jobs here into contractor jobs. So it would be Ford's worst nightmare if

it saw us - contractor and Ford worker - fighting against their attacks and their deliberate erosion of pay and conditions - together. We look forward to giving Ford bosses sleepless nights. [Ford Dagenham Workers' Fight 10/12/15]

• Flop show!

That "Made in Dagenham" musical is now nominated for awards. But as former Ford sewing machinists and male workers pointed out, this show (like the film) is very far from reality.

It's about the 1968 strike, which led to the 1970 equal pay act, but not only did this law have no real effect but it took 26 years and another strike to win equal pay for women at Fords. What's more, neither strike was a "heart-warming" comedy: in 1984 it was a tough 7-week fight by a minority of women strikers. But they won! [Ford Dagenham Workers' Fight 07/01/15]

• Stinking hypocrisy

Given all the hype, Ford's first female European HR Vice President jumped on the chance to boast of Ford's progressive outlook on pay, diversity and gender. Let's gloss over the fact that only 6% of the workforce is women (and try not to



notice there's not even a token female among the shop stewards!). For her, the 1968 strike is "history", and today at Ford, she claims there's equal pay for equal work. What a sick and ignorant joke! [Ford Dagenham Workers' Fight 07/01/15]

• It makes you sick

Actually, there's never been equal pay for equal work: previously, because of the grade system, which operates in parallel with "mobility of labour" which sent us to work anywhere without regard for our grade, or due to the different pay for different shift systems and lack of harmonisation.

Having paid women less before, Ford just spread its inequality among the whole workforce, "equally"! [Ford Dagenham Workers' Fight 07/01/15]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**• Showing the way**

Just to show nobody needs to take the managers' nonsense - this comes from someone posting on the Royalmailchat from Brentwood DO last Friday: "Walked out Friday over managers trying to go against the Christmas deal. Told do what they say or the office was off pay, 99% then left the office as refused to back down to managers' demands. Back to work as normal on Saturday with the issues resolved from Friday. Massive back-log, so working Sunday doing packets was offered, but only a few went in and it was mostly managers that were in." Managers, everywhere, beware! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 17/12/14]

• Bosses' casual attitude

It's a bit shocking that over the last couple of years, casuals have only had a 3-week Xmas contract - on the minimum wage. A brief spell of work like this may help a (tiny) bit with Xmas bills, but that's only if there aren't the usual problems with getting paid. Last week we got no payslips, so we've no way of checking yet if we're being under-paid "correctly"... [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 17/12/14]

• Where are the 3 ghosts?

Yup, Scrooge has already visited. No party, no boat trip, no goodwill... A cup

of cheer is sorely needed - to provide some real Christmas spirit here. It would be nice to have it in the canteen during a long break, with all of us together, plus turkey and trimmings... [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 3/12/14]

• Power sharing in Romec

As the old African proverb says: when 2 elephants fight, it's the grass that suffers. In this case, it's the Romec bosses who're fighting. And we, the grass, may be suffering, but we're also laughing our heads off. One boss has moved from the main office to find his solace in a cleaner's store room! Perhaps the best place for both, would be the zoo? [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 17/12/14]

• Spot the lack of insight

Are these guys for real? Romec offers a "safety prize draw" for £1,000: they write, "the great news is that staff will automatically qualify ... if they do not have an accident at work which results in time off during the period 1 December to 31 March 2015." We can safely say that managers have lost their marbles - so careful, don't slip or trip on them, or you won't qualify for their draw... [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 17/12/14]

• Stamped out

The only thing that's left of Romec's and Quadrant's past RM status is the Xmas



stamps RM gives us every year... and maybe we shouldn't even mention that, because they might take them back as well, like they took away our £5 Xmas lunch voucher. Nobody gets that anymore, not even postmen/women... [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 3/12/14]

• Shot themselves in the foot

We're surprised RM's profits haven't gone down even more, because who can afford to send mail packets at current prices? This Xmas they gave some obscure parcel discounts but how did that help? Of course, screwing the workforce, office closures, not to mention property sales, might do the trick... In the short term... [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 3/12/14].

• So what?

On a linked subject, Vince Cable said he'd not sell the 30% government share of RM "any time soon". Maybe - but he's likely to disappear next May. And anyway, how can it really help us, unless RM becomes 100% public again, and, what's more, under workers' control?! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 3/12/14]

France

In the first and most devastating attack carried out in Paris on 7th January, 12 cartoonists, journalists and cleaners were shot in the offices of "Charlie Hebdo" - a well-known satirical magazine. But contrary to what the attackers claimed, "Charlie Hebdo" did not insult people's beliefs. It merely exposed the hypocrisy of those who use religion for their own ends - any religion - just as it exposed the use of racism and other prejudices. And whether people liked its provocative humour or not, no-one could say that it was not even-handed in this respect.

The attackers' cold-blooded execution of the magazine's workers was a blatant attack on the freedom of expression, which caused a general feeling of shock and indignation and largely spontaneous solidarity rallies that evening.

Two seemingly random attacks followed these executions - against a municipal policewoman and a Jewish grocery store - causing 5 other deaths, only added to the shock. In these cases, the victims were just bystanders and murdering them was totally gratuitous. This only added to the shock among public opinion. The general feeling of shock, grief and disbelief led to the

A barbaric attack in a barbaric system

mass mobilisation of millions on 11th January which the French government managed to hijack for its own benefit in the name of "national unity" (see our editorial).

By the time our paper went to press, the French media and police claimed to have found evidence that these attacks were all directed from Yemen by Al-Qaeda. True or not, though, this is just shifting the blame away from the actual culprits.

The real issue is that Islamic fundamentalism is able to recruit on the basis of its terrorist policies in the rich countries - and far more so in the poor countries. And religion has nothing to do with it. With their

on-going, devastating wars against the world's poor populations, the rich countries' governments have been and continue to be the most effective recruiting agents for Islamic fundamentalism. And its second best recruiting agent is the disaffection of a section of the youth which is both at the receiving end of racism and marginalised by the underemployment resulting from the crisis.

All the ingredients of an explosive situation are there. And the criminals who stoked up the explosives are the governments of the world's richest countries, with their imperialist system of world oppression and their decaying capitalist economy.



The Paris solidarity march on 11th January

CIA torture report: "redacted" barbarism

The US Senate's report on the CIA's torture of "terror" detainees in 2001-06 was finally published in December, although most of it remains classified - out of 6,000 pages, only 525 are public.

It details the most horrific, cruel treatment, supposedly aimed at making prisoners "compliant" - in special facilities in Afghanistan, Guantanamo, but also other undisclosed locations. How detainees were forced to stand on broken limbs for hours, kept naked, in total darkness, deprived of sleep, subjected to loud noise, had their arms shackled above

their heads; were forced to defecate on themselves; were subjected to so-called "rectal feeding", leaving them with irreversible physical damage, or to water-boarding, beating, mock executions, hypothermia. Some died.

It is known that the British government was involved - although Jack Straw, Blair's foreign secretary at the time, still denies it. References to Diego Garcia - an Indian Ocean island which, although a British territory, was turned into a US military base after its population was forcibly removed - have been "redacted". But it was certainly used by British

agents, colluding with the CIA, for rendition of detainees.

British politicians are no strangers to the use of torture: exactly the same methods were used on Northern Irish IRA suspects in the 1970s. But the catalogue of "unsafe" convictions of Irish prisoners some of whom were tortured to obtain "confessions" had already confirmed that these methods were useless. This inhuman treatment is pure brutality, designed to terrorise people, nothing else.

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, or by postal mail at:

BM Workers' Fight - LONDON WC1N 3XX.