

# WORKERS' fight



No 68 - 5 October 2015  
price 30p  
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ISSN 2040-400X

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

# STOP BOMBING, REFUGEES WELCOME!

Bombing Syria is back on the agenda, as foreign secretary Philip Hammond said at the Tory party conference: "there is a beginning of consensus... that we have to take the fight with Isis in Syria". Last time Cameron tried this in the Commons, he was defeated and he hasn't dared risk it since. But this didn't prevent British drones from being used in Syria - and at what cost to the population?

But, what does this government - or any of its rich partners - care about the population? It dares to invoke "humanitarian" motives, but its only concern is to maintain its "order" in the poor countries, so that profits keep flowing from natural resources there, into the coffers of the rich multinationals.

In fact, a measure of the "concern" for the population is the 20,000 bombs dropped over Syria and Iraq by western aircraft over the past year and the casualties and destruction this implies!

## **West out of the Middle East!**

Cameron will probably tell us that bombing Syria, or sending troops there, will restore "stability" in the region. As if bombing Libya hadn't turned the country into a war-zone between rival militias! And isn't Isis itself a blowback from the occupation of Iraq?

But Cameron has already inadvertently let the cat out of the bag by denouncing Russia's "classic asymmetric warfare" and accusing Putin of wanting to save Assad's skin. Whereas he, Cameron, makes no secret that he wants to see "regime change" in Syria, because Assad has "butchered his own people". But apparently, "butchering" the Syrian people is alright when it's done by the RAF!

The truth is that there will be no "stability" in the region as long as it remains a playground for the rivalries



and manoeuvres of all sorts of protagonists - from the US and its sidekicks like Britain, to Russia and various regimes hoping to establish themselves as regional powers, like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iran, etc. By propping up dictators and militias - and playing them off against one another, they feed the bloody chaos which has swept the region. Nor is this happening just in Syria and Iraq: a US-backed, Saudi-led, bombing campaign is being waged in Yemen, almost unreported.

Far too much damage has been done in the Middle East. Any military venture there should be opposed, whether it has UN backing or not - contrary to the abject policy adopted by the Labour party conference!

## **Welcome refugees!**

The same rich countries involved in these bombings tried to stop the flow of desperate refugees created by their criminal policies. They closed their borders, sent them their water-cannons - in some cases, even their tanks!

True, unlike his Hungarian colleague Orban, Cameron didn't set up a razor-wire fence around Britain, nor

prisoners' camps for the refugees. But he doesn't need to: being surrounded by heavily-patrolled waters, Britain has a very effective fence and 10 ill-famed refugee detention centres.

Cameron dared to offer shelter to 20,000 Syrian refugees over 5 years, out of 4-5 million! This, from the government of the country which played, by very far, the second biggest role in destroying Iraq and turning it into a training ground for militias like Isis!

To justify this insult to humanity, Cameron tries to whip up fears that refugees would threaten workers. This is a lie. Jobs, wages and conditions only depend on the balance of class forces. If there are more hands, all work can be shared out and the capitalists can be made to foot the bill out of their colossal profits. The working class can only be reinforced by the refugees because it has the same enemies - the capitalist class, which is also responsible for their plight.

Yes, all refugees should be welcome to enter and settle in Britain. This government keeps saying that it has to pay its debt. It should pay its debt to the Syrian and Iraqi people! ☐

## Wealth watch

Five years ago HMRC was given details of 3,600 UK nationals who had stashed away nearly £20bn in HSBC's Swiss bank accounts - an average of £5.5m in each! For five years, it did nothing. Then in February after a BBC Panorama programme exposed the scale of tax avoidance, it became an embarrassing election issue. The HMRC hastily "re-opened" the investigation with much fanfare.

But now that the dust of the election has settled, the investigation is being quietly shelved. And what came of it? Two-thirds of the avoiders were let off the hook

## Letting off the rich cheats

immediately, because of their non-dom status. 1,100 of them used an agreement between HMRC and the Swiss government which allows them to be taxed only 10%, instead of the stipulated 100% on undeclared wealth - therefore still getting away with paying much less. While it let the majority off the hook, HMRC did however have to try to put the scandal to rest. It declared 150 avoiders as "serious candidates" for prosecution, of which the number of "serious prosecutions" was... just one! Meanwhile, its hunt for "benefit cheats" continues... ☐



### • Taking the money from capitalist hands

Big companies went on a colossal spending spree this year, splashing out £2,000 billion worldwide on deals such as mergers and acquisitions just during the first 9 months - more than for the whole of 2006, the last all-time high.

After 2008, these companies had been using their spare cash in speculative activities without investing in production, lining the pockets of their shareholders and waiting for conditions to improve in the real economy. But since conditions did not improve, they've been looking for longer-term ways to boost their profits. Some merged, in order to corner a larger share of the world market - like the world's two largest brewers, AB InBev and SABMiller. Others made acquisitions designed to cut their tax bill - like American fertiliser giant CF Industries which, by buying a big slice of its European rival OCI, will be able to move its tax headquarters to London, where corporation tax is 20% compared to 35% in the US!

So, whatever politicians may say, the money needed to deal with under-employment, poverty, the housing crisis, poor public services, etc., has always been - and still is - there, but in the wrong hands!!

### • Overcrowded? Only by wealthy landowners!

Land prices across Britain rose 277% in the last ten years, making land the best guaranteed investment - for those with a few spare millions to start with. Even prime real estate in London "only" rose 127% in price over the same period. Though much of British land remains agricultural, which as such is worth an average £10,000 per acre, planning permission for housing development can increase this to as much as £2.5m an acre.

These very high values are stopping development rather than promoting it. Landowners with planning permission and property developers with "options" to develop land often have no intention of cashing in by building. They prefer to speculate on the land value appreciating even more and benefit from generous tax relief on agricultural land, especially as land does not attract inheritance tax, as long as it is farmed. A whole trade has thus arisen in underused land based on its future potential of being sold at a high price. So little confidence do the largest investors have in their famous market economy, they would rather bank on rising land values than invest in production on any scale that would make a difference.

### • Fast and furious

Automobili Lamborghini - the Volkswagen owned company that produces high-tech super-fast cars - has announced record sales this year, up by 19%. The Sant'Agata Bolognese based company, which employs 1,175 permanent workers, sold 2,530 cars this year. After a short slow-down during the crisis in 2008, when sales dropped from 2,430 to 1,302 per year, the company recovered at a record speed: it took them only 2 years to return to pre-crisis levels, resulting in today's record turnover of £466m!

According to the Volkswagen group, this is due to "a continuing high demand for the Lamborghini Aventador and the very successful market introduction of the new Huracán" - both car models are sold at £200,000.. without additional gadgets. The crisis was certainly no more than a short blip for the super-rich! Lamborghini's success is part of a boom in luxury goods: the rich, who have become so much richer during the crisis, are just spending pocket money on a Lamborghini...

### • Who wants to be a Euro millionaire?

You may not have seen any sign of "recovery" and your wages may still lag far behind what's needed to meet your bills, but this is not the case for British bankers in the City.

Indeed, their bonuses top the European league. In 2013, more than 2,000 of them got more than £730,000 and one even got more than £13m in bonuses alone! Their European counterparts felt like poor cousins in comparison: more bankers in the UK got a bonus worth a million (in Euros) than in the rest of the EU combined.

So, while we are told we need to "reduce the deficit", this obviously does not apply to top bankers...

### Which side are they on?

Maryam Namazie, a member of the Worker Communist Party of Iran, is an outspoken opponent of the Iranian regime and of religious fundamentalism. In the last week of September, she was denied permission to speak at Warwick University by the student union. The reason it gave was that her speech would 'incite hatred'.

Namazie has often said that her aim is not to incite hatred of people, but of oppressive ideas. She is right to stand up for this. 'Tolerance' in today's political context often becomes a tolerance of the most regressive ideas. How can ideas which preach the oppression of women be "tolerated"? In Iran, the law not only allows women to be stoned to death, but also specifies the size of stones: not too small, lest the crowd get bored, nor too large, lest they be deprived of the satisfaction of a public spectacle.

By refusing to stand in solidarity with those who are fighting against political or religious oppression, whichever it may be, the Warwick student union condones this oppression and becomes its accomplice.

## Europe's rising borders

How is the so-called developed world dealing with the biggest refugee crisis since 1945? Mostly, in the most backward way possible. While Germany began by offering any refugee who made it to the country the chance to settle there and started to make provisions to accept up to 800,000 refugees, Hungary put the finishing touches on a 120-mile razor-wire-topped fence along its border with Serbia and implemented penal laws against migrants.

But Europe is by no means "suffering" from too many refugees - it hosts just 0.1% of the total refugee population of the world. By the end of last year there

were 59.9m "forcibly displaced persons" worldwide, due to wars and repression - just less than Italy's total population. But 86% of all of them were in developing countries and 2/3 remain displaced within their own countries. Of the over 4 million registered Syrian refugees, 1.7m are in Turkey, 1.3m in Lebanon and 1m in tiny Jordan. Europe has only received under half-a-million formal asylum applications this year. Yet barriers are being made even more impenetrable to keep out what British politicians call a "flood". When the only solution is to open the borders and start building a society where nobody needs to seek refuge. □

## Britain tops the hypocrisy league

A co-ordinated plan to handle the refugee crisis was meant to be agreed at an EU summit on 22 September. However, 4 of the 28 EU countries (Hungary, Slovakia, Romania, Czech Republic) voted against taking their share of just 120,000 refugees out of the over one million who have come into Europe so far this year. As to Cameron, he refused any quota at all! He had his own exclusive plan: to resettle 20,000 refugees of his choice, directly from camps in the Middle East, but not

even in one go - at the rate of just 4,000 a year, over 5 years!

Even Ireland, which could have opted out just like Britain, volunteered to take an extra 600 refugees from the first round of 40,000 for resettlement, as did right-wing Denmark, offering to take 1,000. This means Britain stands out as the only one among the better-off EU countries to refuse to participate in the scheme. But this didn't stop Cameron from pouring scorn on the other countries. He claimed that unlike

## Refugee crisis



"great" Britain, they weren't supporting the refugees in their camps in the Middle East, boasting that the £1bn allocated by his government to help them was the largest contribution of any EU country. Except that this £1bn was budgeted in 2012 and only about half has actually been paid out so far! But Cameron's rhetoric may well pay, when it comes to his "little Englander" electorate at home.

### • Refugee or migrant, both the same

Drawing a line between "respectable" asylum-seekers - who deserve sympathy - and "economic migrants" - who don't - is an old ploy which today's politicians are using again, to whip up xenophobic prejudices. But this is also loaded with prejudice against the working class and the poor.

Never mind that the root cause pushing refugees and "migrants" into exile is exactly the same: the rich countries' exploitation, which generates wars in the poorest countries - either directly, as in the Middle East, or by proxy in Africa - and which generates poverty by looting natural resources. So the fleeing millions of refugees from Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan, are joined by the starving and wounded from north and central Africa - in leaking boats which drown them and on long marches on foot across Europe. As one young man living in the Calais "migrant" camp said: "you don't leave your home without a reason". And this applies, no matter where you come from.

As for the British government, it places many of those who made it over, often at great risk to their lives, in detention centres reminiscent of concentration camps, pending deportation. Yet having been forced into exile by the same capitalist system which exploits us in Britain, this qualifies them, at very least, as our class brothers and sisters.

### • Against Cameron's immigration bill

Cameron's new Immigration Bill is aimed, unashamedly, at making the already "hostile environment" the government wishes to create for immigrants, even more hostile. He wants to: "introduce new sanctions on illegal workers and rogue employers, prevent illegal migrants in the UK from accessing housing, driving licences and bank accounts and introduce new measures to make it easier to enforce immigration laws and remove illegal migrants"...

So for instance, landlords who already had to check the immigration status of their tenants, will now be expected to evict them - and this will be made easier. If they're found to be knowingly renting to "illegal" migrants they can be fined and/or jailed. Banks and building societies will now have to check the status of account holders (who'll be charged for the privilege) and those considered illegal will have their accounts closed or frozen by court order.

Even the existing miserable support for asylum seekers whose applications are refused, which was already cut this August (so that now a single parent with two children receives £110.85, compared to the previous £149.860), will be removed, and "deport now, appeal later" will apply to anyone not in immediate danger of torture or death (persecution is "OK"! ) when returned to their country of origin.

These attacks are not just aimed at immigrants, "legal" or not, they are aimed at the entire working class - in order to split

and weaken its ranks. This is why it is in the interest of all workers to stand by their migrant brothers and sisters, not just out of basic solidarity, but because this can only make the working class stronger against its exploiters!

### • The politics behind euro-scepticism

Despite having said that he'd lead the "in" campaign for his EU referendum, Cameron also claims he will "reform" the EU single-handedly!

First, he wants to secure Britain's opt-out from all EU directives concerning workers' rights: eg., the working-time directive, which at least somewhat limits mad working patterns, or the agency workers directive, which (in theory) gives them the same rights as permanent workers.

Then he wants to protect the City and big British companies from EU financial regulations - such as the capping of directors' bonuses.

And last but not the least, he wants to prevent EU workers who come to Britain from having the same rights as all other workers, in particular in terms of welfare provisions.

Cameron knows he doesn't have a chance in hell of obtaining all his "reforms". But he'll keep spouting his "euro-scepticism" in order to appease the right-wing of his own party over which he has little control. And what does he care if his xenophobic rhetoric poisons the air and gives ammunition to the likes of UKIP?

## Labour election

### Opposing austerity without challenging capitalism? A non-starter!

Jeremy Corbyn's victory was mostly due to his radical stance against Tory austerity and the striking contrast it made with the usual spinelessness of Labour's leading figures. For once, the champions of austerity have been challenged in public and this can only be a good thing - but only on the understanding that the real battles are still to come and that there should be no illusions as to what Corbyn can deliver.

Indeed, despite his new position, Corbyn doesn't have much more control over his own party than its members have. He doesn't control Labour MPs, most of whom are openly hostile to his agenda, nor Labour's leading body - its NEC. Even his present trade-union "backers" may well try to gag him, if he fails to toe their line. In fact, Corbyn is more than likely to end up being a hostage of the party machinery, which will dump him when and if he's reversed Labour's discredit among working class voters.

But even if he gets into Downing Street, what would he do? His right-hand man, John McDonnell, tells us that "austerity is not an economic necessity, it's a political choice". True, "austerity" is not an economic necessity, but it is a



necessity for the capitalists, who are so scared of their crisis-ridden system that they have stopped investing in production and rely on grabbing a growing share of the state resources to maintain their profits. This capitalist parasitism is the real cause of "austerity", which cannot, therefore, be opposed without fighting the capitalists' stranglehold over the economy.

But Corbyn and McDonnell aren't proposing to challenge this stranglehold. They're not suggesting, for instance, that

job cuts should be banned under threat of expropriation without compensation - which would be necessary to fight under-employment and prevent factory closures, like that of Redcar steel mill. They want companies to pay their "fair share of taxes", but they're not suggesting that the capitalist class should use its profits, past and present, which it owes to the exploitation of workers' labour, to fund whatever may be necessary to provide workers a decent health service, housing infrastructure, a welfare system, etc... Not to mention guaranteed incomes on which they can really live.

No, Corbyn and McDonnell are not in the business of rocking capitalism's boat - which is why there's nothing to expect them from regarding "anti-austerity" and why the working class will have to fight its own battles, regardless of who is in office. □

## Greece

### The cost of failing to take on the system

By resigning on 20th August, following a rebellion within his own party, and calling a new election for 20th September, the Syriza leader Alexis Tsipras wanted a free hand for the further turn of the screw required by the rich countries, on behalf of the international banks, and already agreed by him during the summer.

The election showed voters' disillusion: compared to last January, the turnout dropped from 63% to 56%. Having broken its promises, Syriza lost 320,000 votes. But it retained all but 4 of its 149 seats, mainly because Tsipras' seemingly bold stand against the rich countries had managed to convince many voters that there was no other possible policy.

Tsipras has now a stable coalition government with the populist ANEL party, which will make the population pay with more austerity as agreed with the country's lenders. Already unemployment is at 24.6% and rising. Pensions - which had been slashed by 15 to 30% since 2010 - are to be cut by another 8%. More taxes are planned, including a VAT increase from 13 to 23% on many products. The health and education budgets are to be cut even further, etc...

What's left of Tsipras and his fiery speeches? Nothing! Because as a reformist, no matter how well-meaning, he would never dream of calling upon the collective mobilisation of the working class in order to challenge the dictates of the capitalist classes, European and Greek - a useful lesson for the supporters of Britain's Tsipras, Jeremy Corbyn!

#### • The need for a fighting workers' party

Three things about Corbyn's victory are worth noting. First, the mostly young 114,780 "£3" registered supporters who were eager to show their opposition to austerity: 92% voted, 83.7% voted for Corbyn. Second, turnout was also very high among the 303,110 full party members: 81% voted, 49.6% for Corbyn. Third, by contrast, turnout was much lower among those who were members through Labour's affiliated organisations: only 45% of these 158,991 affiliated members voted, although 57.6% chose Corbyn.

In other words, overall, there was an unusually high turnout in this election - 76.3% - higher than in any general election since... 1974! And, contrary to frequent claims, even without the newly registered supporters' votes, Corbyn would still have been elected with 51.4%.

However, the comparatively low turnout among affiliated members, especially in the trade unions, also reflects the distrust of many working-class Labour supporters for their own party. And rightly so, because what's really needed is not a Labour party hiding behind Corbyn's radical-sounding words, but a fighting workers' party which seeks to lead the struggles of the working class and build up its collective strength, with the ultimate aim of getting rid of this rotten profit system, once and for all!

#### • The trap of "party unity"

At the Labour party conference, Corbyn and McDonnell advocated "doing things differently", "kinder politics and a caring society", "fair play", etc.. which did not commit them to much. But both bent over backwards to avoid upsetting Labour's Blairites.

So, when the party machinery prevented a debate and a vote on Trident, the very issue over which he had been battling for years, Corbyn didn't even try to call on the delegates to oppose this bureaucratic stitch-up. And then, this erstwhile pacifist swallowed his own beliefs by stating that "Britain does need strong, modern military and security forces to keep us safe" - as if the army's function hadn't been to attack others for decades! Worse, even, McDonnell argued that Labour MPs should have a free vote "on the basis of conscience" over Cameron's likely attempt to bomb Syria! And neither of them dared to criticise Labour's past policies in office.

As if "doing things differently" could be achieved by sweeping Labour's past failures under the carpet in the name of "unity", instead of subjecting them to ruthless scrutiny! Ultimately, Corbyn is merely proving that you cannot really oppose capitalist profiteering within a party which has such a long tradition of managing the profit system.

## Why the anti-Corbyn hysteria?

For many of us, the Corbyn hysteria appears ridiculous, if not downright irritating. From the various front pages of the Tory press, straight after his election, like the Sun title "Leader nightmare", to the statement made to the BBC by Michael Fallon, Cameron's defence secretary, calling the new Labour Leader a "risk to the security" of this country, there has been an ongoing flow of dirt against Corbyn.

So why is Corbyn so vilified, even by the Labour grandees themselves? The champions of the capitalist market, Tory and Labour alike, would like

the working class to allow, willingly, that its living standards should be reduced, in the name of what they call "austerity", in order to help the fat cats to get even fatter. No wonder they could not stomach the fact that a politician like Corbyn should dare to say that the wealthiest should pay more. And they could stomach it even less that a quarter-of-a-million ordinary people voiced their opposition to "austerity" by supporting Corbyn. This was what triggered their response - the class hysteria of the profiteers against the working class! ☐

## What it takes to be "electable"

What's the big uproar about Corbyn being "unelectable" really about? Well, first of all, a would-be Prime Minister is meant to abide by certain "values" and follow certain rules. In particular, he is meant to bend his knee in front of the Queen, sing "God Save the Queen" and attend the Privy Council, while following the foreign policy of the City. If

he is ever to get into Downing Street, he is meant to put the interests of British capital first.

Of course, Corbyn doesn't fit the bill for the champions of this political system. So far, he has opposed the anti-working class policies of all past governments, as well as their military ventures. He is a republican and gives

### • **Corbynomics: what it is and what it's not**

A key element in Corbyn's "alternative" economic policy for Labour was his "People's Quantitative Easing" (PQE) - i.e. printing money, just like previous governments, but instead of this money going to line the pockets of financial institutions, it would be used for investment in infrastructure.

But would the state directly hire the workers required for this work, or would it subcontract it to private companies? In other words, would PQE be yet another source of capitalist waste and profiteering, or a means of sharing out all the work available between all workers, on decent wages, while building the collective infrastructure which is so badly needed, such as social housing?

Corbyn didn't provide an answer to this question. For all his fine words

about getting big business to pay a "fair share of taxes" (although no British company was in his "name and shame" list, only foreign ones), he certainly did not want to be seen as depriving them of this new opportunity to use the state as their milch cow!

### • **Corbyn's slow track renationalisation**

As it turns out, Corbyn's rail renationalisation only involves taking over private franchises as their terms run out. At this rate, only a third would be taken over by 2025 and full renationalisation would not be completed before 2030 at best, after Corbyn's second (hypothetical) term in office!

Why this piecemeal "renationalisation", when all of it could be restored as one integrated entity? Because in Corbyn's book -the markets' rule book - it would require compensation for the train operators and would, therefore, be too costly. But why compensate them when they already owe their past profits to the government exchequer?

For instance, in 2007-11, the five largest private train companies paid out to shareholders over 90% of their combined £504 million operating profits. But over the same period, these companies had received almost £3 billion in subsidies! In 2014-15, subsidies to all the companies amount to £1.89bn! That these companies should be compensated at all is absurd!

But then, this is Corbyn's choice - to respect the rules of the profit system. On this basis, there's nothing the working class can win.

## Labour election



speeches at left and trade union meetings, sometimes sharing the platform with "sulphurous" third world nationalists. Corbyn's opponents argue that he will never change and this, therefore, makes him "unelectable". But if they turned out to be right, this would actually be to Corbyn's credit!

### Letter from Sussex

East Sussex NHS Trust, which runs Eastbourne District General and Hastings Conquest hospitals, has been in trouble for years. Budget deficits and "rationalisation" (closure) of departments have worked poisonously with a culture of bullying, making staff afraid to speak out. Then the unpopular Chief Executive Darren Grayson refused to resign under any circumstances, even when the County Council's Overview and Scrutiny Committee passed a motion of no confidence in the Trust in May. If staff felt intimidated, he said, they should "take possession of their issues".

In July, something "took possession" of Grayson and he suddenly did quit. Despite demands that his colleagues on the Trust board follow him, none did. We now hear that the Trust has been placed in special measures, the biggest problem being the "continued disconnect between Trust and staff". It looks like Grayson knew what was coming and didn't feel like explaining his disconnectedness. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, meanwhile, shows a disconnect with its own track record. It's full of criticism for the Trust now, but, in 2014, it caused outrage by rubber-stamping the removal of A&E, pediatrics, trauma, and special maternity to Hastings, 20 miles away. Finally, the Trust Chairman has bowed to pressure for him to go: immediately before the AGM, held on 30th September. And these managers wonder that people see them as wreckers?



**Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)****• What was the blackmail?**

After all those rumours about our mates at Bridgend losing their jobs, eventually last Friday, Ford confirmed it would build a new "clean" petrol engine there, after all. (The "Dragon", or something else?). The announcement is late - it was meant to come months ago. But we'd like to know what new blackmail screws the workforce has been signed up for by Unite's Roger Maddison and the GMB's full-timer, behind their backs? [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 1/10/15]

**• The bosses' emissions**

Since everyone is saying that the diesel engine is going to suffer as a result of VW's massive deception over nitrogen emissions, management here are in a bit of a flap. We now see posters in the plant, asserting their honesty and the cleanliness of Ford's diesels... But of course, we know by now that their "honest" emissions should also come with a health warning. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 1/10/15]

**• Don't speak for us!**

Some of us saw the pay claim the union leaders put in: a claim that apparently "has the full endorsement of our

members". Oh, really? Circulating a "priority list" among a few, is NOT asking us what we think! The only thing that we can 'endorse' is that this 'claim' isn't "ours". [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 1/10/15]

**• We can speak for ourselves!**

Indeed many of us think it's deliberately designed to be a con. A "substantial" pay increase? Really? And how much is that? Eliminate two-tier? Yes, but what about for once, establishing the principle of "equal pay for equal work" and abolishing the grade system - in real honour of the Sewing Machinists everyone always patronises so much? And the pension demands don't even include restoring RPI increases and proper defined benefit pensions for all (ripped off from new starts 4 years ago!!)

Why don't the union officials come down to hear what we think about these issues? We'd be quite happy to tell them - LOUD AND CLEAR. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 1/10/15]

**• An insulting offer**

Maybe we shouldn't be too surprised therefore, at the pay offer Ford made on 1st October - a 1.1% rise in year 1 and RPI in year 2 - plus zilch on anything else (and a bunch of lies about their hardship



in pulling profits out of us), even if it felt like a kick in the teeth. Ford made its highest profits ever in July led by US sales of the F150 truck at £29,000 a piece! We're all part of the "One Ford" family, we're told - so no problem to eliminate all inequalities here then - and raise pay by £600/month, so we can keep up with the cost of living. It's not even equal to one truck. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 5/10/15]

**• It's stress, pure and simple**

With Ford trying to push production on Puma and with machines breaking down left right and centre, no wonder workers and even foremen are totally overstressed - in fact pushed over the limit! As with the C shift foreman who was taken by ambulance to hospital last Friday with chest pains. We hope he recovers soon - and what's more, that Ford pays for it! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 5/10/15]

**King's Cross railway station (London)****• Keeping us uninformed**

We're still waiting to hear why that Govia train on platform 11 collided with the buffers last Thursday. It's all hush-hush. Is RAIB investigating? Or is it MI6? [King's Cross Workers' Platform 23/9/15]

**• Fatal insensitivity/ killer job**

So we had to deal with 6 "fatalities" last week (no thanks to cuts in the mental healthcare services, we're sure) plus the slow-speed collision. After all this, we could do with a bit of mental health service ourselves or at least time off. But managers, who think we're just gate-opening machines with no feelings and who got plenty of tea plus(?) sympathy to calm their nerves, offered us nothing... [King's Cross Workers' Platform 23/9/15]

**• Lutta continua**

So the RMT's East Coast (Virgin Trains) pay ballot result unexpectedly registered acceptance of the 2-3% rise. But when you look at the figures, less than one third actually voted "yes". Seems not many of us responded to the "strong recommendation" of the RMT officials, after all. And of course, the fight for decent pay continues... [King's

Cross Workers' Platform 23/9/15]

**• Same company same pay rise**

What's going on with GTR (GoviaThameslink) station staffs' pay rise, due in April? Under FCC (First Capital Connect), station staff got the same % as drivers - who've already got 8% over 19 m. So we're waiting. No more of this charade of measly 1%-1.5% rises. This mega-company is a money spinner for its shareholders, so no less than 8%, now! [King's Cross Workers' Platform 23/9/15]

**• Not so smart**

What a con these new un-smart GTR key cards are! They only let us travel on Thameslink, Gatwick Express, Southeastern, GN, covering only parts of the South and South-East. What about the whole North (Virgin East&West Coast)? What about our Scottish holiday? What about the "one big rail family" we're meant to be? [King's Cross Workers' Platform 23/9/15]

**• Ongoing hysteria**

Once more the proposed anti-strike law is invoked when the RMT announces a strike vote (not a strike yet, mind!) on TfL - this time Waterloo&City Control Room mates who're refused regrading. But



again, RMT leaders' sectionalism leaves strikers isolated. What about all the other threatened Control/station staff having their Ts&Cs turned upside down? A lot to strike over, and more chance of winning if workers use their numbers and collective strength. [King's Cross Workers' Platform 23/9/15]

**• FGW: we should be joining the fight**

The same could be said for the current dispute against FGW (Great Western) over conditions for workers when the new Hitachi trains arrive in 2019. RMT officials claim that East Coast (VTEC) was OK, unlike FGW, as it agreed to retain the buffet car. But the status of engineers who maintain the trains is still unagreed with both companies. So why's the dispute only with FGW? Is Mick Cash befuddled by Richie's Virgin love "charms"? [King's Cross Workers' Platform 23/9/15]

**BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)****• The magic disappearing carpet**

What's BMW's excuse for the "shortage of carpets" that caused the early shift to be cut on Thursday? The accident on the A34 that morning could only have disrupted production if just-in-time sourcing works to ridiculously narrow margins. Whatever the reason, it can't possibly justify another hit on our working time accounts! [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 23/9/15]

**• BMW's two-way emails**

Back in July BMW sent us an email preaching doom and gloom owing to problems in the small-car markets in the USA and China. Now we've been

told that shift changes will be announced by end-October but, since they also mention the F54, it's unclear whether they want to increase or decrease hours - or do both in succession. Is that because the PJC (full-time union officials) have refused to agree to a cut to two shifts, as some shop stewards say, or because BMW doesn't have a clue what it wants? [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 23/9/15]

**• Certainly "win-win" for BMW!**

The recently signed "deal" between BMW and Oxford City Council allows the company full control over Roman Way sports fields - to develop them as they wish - for a paltry £4.9m (the profit that BMW,



if not Mini, makes in one day...) While the £4.9m is supposed to replicate existing facilities with additional five-a-side courts and a 3G surface, no timetable has been set for completion - whereas they say all the existing sporting facilities will be closed within the next 6 months! [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 23/9/15]

**Capitalism pollutes**

German car manufacturer Volkswagen admitted to installing software in over 11 million supposedly "clean diesel" cars that could detect when they were being tested, and as a result temporarily reduce their toxic emissions count. Under normal conditions, these cars spewed out 40 times more pollution (in this case nitrogen oxide) than VW was declaring.

Apparently, though, such cases are hardly exceptional in the car industry - Ford, KIA and Hyundai are all said to have cheated on emissions tests in the past.

Ironically, the VW case shows that such technology could probably be used to reduce the emissions permanently. But instead of being developed for this purpose, it is only used to cheat the regulators

for the sake of profits. Never mind that air pollution is estimated to kill 52,000 people a year in Britain UK alone - while leaving many others with countless health problems. If that doesn't prove that the profit system is the main obstacle to the progress of human society, what will?

**BMW: concealing pollution?**

After Volkswagen's admission that it used software to produce exceptional environmental performance in diesel engines, but only in roller test conditions, BMW was the next car company pulled into the scandal. Its share price dropped 9% on 24 September, when the German car magazine Bild Auto reported that one of its X3 diesel models had failed an emissions road test,

exceeding European limits for nitrogen oxides by eleven times. BMW must have wondered which one of its rivals had set it up.

BMW denies using any software that can detect test conditions and has asked for details of the testing, conducted by the International Council on Clean Transportation. But this is short of a full denial of manipulating the test results in any

way at all. For the moment the heat of full scrutiny remains on VW, but BMW still has a lot of explaining to do, and it won't be alone. Workers will certainly want to know what sort of diesel emissions they are subjected to, when the cars in question are tested and driven off the end of the assembly lines!

**Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)****• Delays all over the land**

What on earth is happening with deliveries? Maybe EC is not so bad, however we're always short of drivers... But we hear that punters from Mull and Stirling in Scotland to Redbridge in Havering had no mail for ten days or more! Sounds like the Dutch-TNT mail scenario already! Where are all the delivery postmen and women we need? [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 23/09/15]

**• Door 2 dust bin**

According to the CWU's second-hand car salesman Bob Gibson, the new D2D

junk mail contract is "great news". We'd be with him if it was indeed about protecting jobs and not about breaking our backs for the sake of delivering trash. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 23/09/15]

**• Making us sick**

When we're off sick, the idea is to get better... Something that becomes almost impossible when we receive texts and phone calls from management to "check" on us, almost every day! Maybe we can show them how well we feel, by organising collective messaging and multiple calling next time one of the managers gets sick... we could organise a rota to make sure their phones don't stop



ringing! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 23/09/15]

**• Turning red**

So now we'll see the 1st class stamps turning purple for the next 12 months, thanks to the perseverance of the old Queen at her "job"... when what we'd like to see is them turning cheaper! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 23/09/15]

## Crisis watch

It took 7 years before the Work Capability Assessment process (WCA) - the "fit to work" test introduced by Labour in 2008 and subcontracted to Atos - was found to be directly responsible for the death of 60-year old Michael O'Sullivan. In September 2013, he had committed suicide after being found "fit to work" despite suffering from depression and agoraphobia. The coroner's report said: "the intense anxiety which triggered [O'Sullivan's] suicide was caused by his recent assessment by the DWP as being fit for work and his view of the likely consequences of that."

In fact, since 2012, the DWP has itself ordered at least 60 internal investigations following suicides related to changes in benefits. Between 2011 and 2014, 90 people died per month, after having been declared "fit to work"! Rather than getting the disabled into work, the DWP's WCA policy pushed them into destitution and despair - and,

## A criminal test



in some cases, into taking their own lives.

Blair had introduced WCA with the cynical aim of saving £3bn/yr on the backs of the disabled. Today, Atos may



have been replaced by Maximus, which is also involved in the Tories' ill-famed "Work programme", but the WCA remains as dangerous as ever. It must be scrapped! ☐

### Profiteering kills

A recent study by Public Health England found that life expectancy among the rich has been rising since 1990, while it has been lagging behind for everyone else. So, average life expectancy in the relatively affluent South West, South East and West of the country is comparable to that of Norway, while in the North West it is lower than in some of Europe's poorer countries such as Greece!

There are, of course, variations within these regions. ONS figures show that within London, life expectancy in Croydon's (poorer) Selhurst ward is 74.1 years for men, whereas in Chelsea's (richer) Courtfield ward, it is 91.9 years - an 18-year difference!

These figures (and there is nothing new in this) merely bear out the fact that this class system kills those who are poor and especially those who do hard manual work - and especially with long hours and shift work - a lot sooner than the rich.

### Daraprim scam; NHS scandal

The case of Martin Shkreli and the scam around the drug Daraprim in the US, exposes the mindless greed and racketeering involved in the incredibly lucrative pharmaceutical sector.

As CEO of Turing Pharmaceuticals, he

acquired the rights to Daraprim, first discovered in 1953 and used for malaria and later for a parasitic infection causing brain and eye damage, especially in HIV patients. He jacked the price up over 5000% (£8.90 to £490!) per pill causing an immediate scandal, including Hillary Clinton's promise to "drive drug prices down" - which wiped \$55bn off the value of US biotech stocks that week.

But Shkreli, a 32-year old hedge fund operator, is now into his second "pharmaceutical venture", not to find new drugs, but just to speculate on them. He has never been held to account for his sociopathic games, which he describes as "kind of fun". Previously, US authorities declined to investigate another hedge fund he set up to bet against biotech groups' stock. Today, hiking the prices of drugs for "rare" diseases, is Shkreli's answer and his new company, Turing's, speciality...

Of course, Daraprim in its generic form is made in India and elsewhere, where it can be bought for \$0.04 per tablet, and is freely available on the NHS. But no generic form has been approved in the US so far!

In Britain, NHS drug prices are "negotiated" with pharmaceutical companies. But today, many new drugs are being withheld from NHS patients due to cost, despite the billions handed over on a plate to the pharmaceutical sector - a huge bargaining

potential which the "business comes first" government chooses not to use. This is the NHS' own, quieter, scandal.

### Help to get richer

Osborne's "Help to Buy" policy not only did nothing to ease the housing crisis - it has already made it worse. Asking prices for new homes on the market reached a high in September, whilst a new report says house prices have risen on average by £8,250 as a direct result of "Help to Buy" loans and guaranteed mortgages. No wonder Barratt Homes, the largest builder of new housing, reported an annual 45% rise in pre-tax profits to £566m! As for social housing, the situation is getting even worse: after years of drastic cuts to local government funding, Osborne's imposed 1% cut in council rents has resulted in councils cancelling plans to build more than 5,000 homes.

So, higher prices have put even more houses beyond the reach of first-time buyers, who are least likely to be able to raise the 5% of a home's value required to qualify for "Help to Buy". But the big construction companies are having a field day - and even more so, the mortgage lenders, including banks, for whom the growing mountain of housing debt means a steady stream of income. But wasn't this precisely, Osborne's aim?

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:

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