



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

# EU VOTE OFFERS NO REAL CHOICE

The May 5th elections certainly caused some grief within the two main parties.

After the Tories' spectacular defeat in the London election following a campaign verging on outright racism, the party's warring factions blamed each other and resumed their in-fighting.

Meanwhile, Labour did relatively well outside Scotland. This has left the party's anti-Corbyn faction without the pretext it was hoping for, to initiate a leadership contest. However, its guerrilla war against Corbyn will carry on unabated.

All this seems to be taking place on another planet where politicking and posturing are the only things that really matter.

## **Back to the EU again**

Since the May 5th elections, the politicians' wrangles over the EU referendum have resumed.

But no-one should forget what this referendum is really about. It has nothing to do with giving voters a real choice on the issue - but everything to do with the politicians and their careers.

Fast track back to 2015, when Tory backbenchers were running scared of losing votes to Ukip: it was then that Cameron announced this referendum. But it was merely a ploy, to pull the carpet from under Ukip's feet.

Despite his claims that he was "keeping all his options open" and would only support a "reformed EU", there was never any doubt that, since the City wanted in, Cameron would find a good reason to call for a "Remain" vote.

And he did. After months of claiming that he was strong-arming the EU into "reforming itself", Cameron finally said that, having "won" what he wanted, he would lead the "Remain"



campaign.

In fact, Cameron had "won" nothing new. Except for one thing - that EU migrants would have no benefit for 4 years. This "concession" has yet to be approved by the EU parliament, but it fitted in with his xenophobic overbidding with Ukip, which was all he really needed.

## **No "choice", but a trap**

So, now, 30-odd million voters are meant to vote in this referendum for the sake of helping politicians to sort out their rivalries! How irresponsible can these people get?

They tell us this is giving voters a "choice". But what kind of "choice"?

For the "Leave" camp, Britain would be better off by going it alone. But without free access to a large market, its industry will be unable to stand on its own feet - except by drastically cutting wages and conditions!

As to Cameron's "Remain" camp, it represents the continuation of the past years' attacks on public services and

welfare and the bosses' drive against jobs, wages and conditions.

By voting for either of the two camps, workers would be endorsing the capitalists' on-going offensive to make the working class foot the bill for their crisis! To make matters worse, they would be condoning the attacks on EU workers promoted by both camps, when what's needed is more rights and freedoms for all!

There is nothing intrinsically democratic in a referendum. Not only does this one offer no "choice" at all, but it is a trap into which it would be dangerous for the working class to fall. Indeed, the winning camp, whichever it may be, can be expected to use its success as a justification for the next offensive against the working class. It cannot be in workers' interests to give them more ammunition!

The ballot box is not and has never been a means for the working class to bring about change. Only using its collective strength can - and will - do so! ☐

**Crisis watch**

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation reports that 1.2m people were living in destitution last year, including 312,000 children. Their weekly income was so low (£70 for a single adult after housing costs, or £140 for a couple with children) that they couldn't afford some basic essentials - such as eating two meals a day, heat or light every day, or even a roof.

The most common causes of destitution, according to this report, were unsustainable debt repayments to public authorities, such as council tax arrears, together with high rents and benefit delays and sanctions. In other words, thanks to the government's turn of the screw on claimants and the unhelpful attitude of local

**Third World Britain**



Easington, County Durham

authorities, the safety net provided by the welfare system is just not there any more, leaving 2% of the population in

a situation not very different from that of so many people in the poor countries - this, in one of the world's richest! □

**• Food banks - on-going scandal!**

The Trussell Trust, the biggest charity organising food banks, last month reported that it supplied over 1.1m three-day food parcels in 2015-16, up from 41,000 in 2009-10. 42% of referrals were attributed to delayed benefit payments or sanctions on benefits. But three quarters of the trust's 424 food banks reported low wages as a problem: 56% of working people who used a food bank were in insecure work and nearly half blamed high living costs and/or problems claiming in-work benefits.

Hundreds of thousands of people now work for so little money that they are forced to rely on charity just to survive - so that a tiny minority can live off their labour, in luxury and idleness!

**• Ever-rising homelessness**

According to the latest official figures, there were an estimated 3,369 people sleeping rough in England on any one night in 2015 - up by a third, compared to the previous year. Over the same period, English councils added 54,000 households to their homeless lists, while giving some form of housing help to 220,000 others. Overall, after five years of decline until 2009, the number of households on local councils' homeless lists have gone up by 42%.

Significantly, however, over recent years, one third of the households which were provided with housing for at least a year by councils (as part of their statutory duty toward the homeless), were unable to find a local affordable rent after being evicted by private landlords. This is the cost the working class has to pay for this system in which vital necessities like housing are just a bounty for the profiteers!

**• No job-centres in the surgery!**

A "Working Better Scheme" funded mainly by the DWP is being piloted in Islington. It involves embedding "job coaches" in GP surgeries, in order to get unemployed mental health patients back into work with the GPs' backing - under the pretext that "employment and good health go together"!

Never mind that work reassessments commissioned by the DWP are already known to have pushed people to suicide! As if this wasn't enough, they want to put even more pressure on patients. If people are sick and what's more, if they are mentally ill, and thus more vulnerable to stress and pressure - they should be left alone. It's the responsibility of society to take care of its members and if they are considered unwell by their GPs, no job coach (nor DWP assessor) should be allowed anywhere near them. Period!

**• Brother can you spare a billion, please?**

Did you know that even the richest are suffering from the crisis? Well, a bit! According to Forbes magazine, the 20 richest people on the planet are now more than £50bn "poorer"! Even Osborne's deficit doesn't reach that level, at a "mere" £42.5bn.

So yes, everything is relative and the combined wealth of these hugely obese cats, after their loss, is still more than £576bn! This sum is equivalent to three quarters of the whole British budget - which is designed to cater for the needs of 64 million people, not just 20!

One can only wonder how these people can have so much money when the rest of us are constantly told that there's no money available and that we have to face more cuts? But that's the logic of this system: the obscene wealth of a few capitalist parasites feeds on the poverty of the working class majority. That's why this system needs to be overthrown, once and for all!

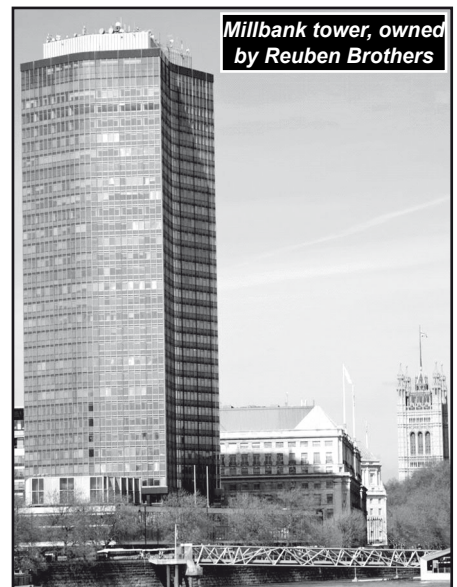
**• A system upside down**

Predictably, this year's Sunday Times Rich List shows that the rich are getting richer: Britain's 1,000 wealthiest residents are now £28.5bn richer than last year. Altogether, they now own £576bn - which is more than the combined assets of the country's 10.3 million poorest households!

Leading the fat cats' pack are the Reuben brothers. They initially built their fortune on metal trading, before switching to real estate speculation, 16 years ago. In fact, one third of the 20 richest owe their wealth entirely to such parasitical activities, including the Duke of Westminster, who's now climbed into 6th position. The same can be said of Martin Sorrell, who recently made the headlines with a £70m pay package and increased his wealth by more than 20% this year. As CEO of advertising giant WPP, his activity can hardly be described as socially useful!

These are the very same people whose parasitism was instrumental in

causing the crisis. And while the working class is still paying for it, they manage to thrive on it!



Millbank tower, owned by Reuben Brothers



## Junior doctors fight suspended?

After the successful junior doctors' strike of 26-27 April, supported by over 78% of doctors, the BMA Junior Doctors' Committee made public its intention to consider an "indefinite strike". It seems this may have pushed the government to propose 5 days of new talks - which in effect means that it has (for the time being) backed down on just imposing its new contract on doctors this August, regardless.

The contract itself, aimed at stretching the current 5-days-a-week workforce to cover a 7-day NHS, is bad enough. But there is a clause in it which gives the government a blank cheque for the future: "we [the employer, NHS England] reserve the right in our absolute

discretion to review, revise, amend or replace any term or condition of this contract". In other words, as the BMA chairman paraphrased, the Health Secretary is saying: "Just sign here and you won't need to worry about negotiating changes to your contract ever again. When we decide what's best for us, we'll change it, and we'll let you know."

Let us hope the doctors give no ground and indeed fight on, in the context of an NHS which is "underdoctored, understaffed and overstretched", screwing all its workers - and thus patients, too. But let's also hope that when they next go into battle, they are joined by the huge ranks of other health workers - and the working class at large! □



### • Zero-hours on the rise

Over the past year, the number of zero-hours contracts (ZHCs) officially went up from 697,000 to 801,000 - 4 times more than in 2007! Worst hit are youth, with 38% of ZHCs held by 16-24 year-olds. However, these figures probably understate the reality, given the way they are compiled.

On average, the income of workers on ZHCs represents just under 40% of the income of permanent workers. In addition to costing them less, ZHCs give bosses the flexibility to hire and fire according to need. An official of the bosses' Institute of Directors dared to justify the existence of these contracts by saying that "employers have been able to adopt zero-hours contracts instead of having to make redundancies."

But there's a third option: that the capitalists take out of their accumulated profits the necessary resources to share all available work between all available hands, without cutting wages or conditions. Of course, it's a question of balance of forces - but the working class has the collective strength to shift this balance of forces in its favour again.

### • The "spirit" of the NLW

Since April 1st, the introduction of the new National Living Wage (NLW) has meant that workers aged 25 and over cannot be paid less than £7.20/hr. So this should have resulted in a 50p increase for those on the previous minimum wage rate. Significantly, though, Osborne felt it necessary to tell bosses to "live by the spirit of the law", and not try to offset this increase by using other means to cut wages.

Nevertheless, many companies have done just that. For instance, DIY chain B&Q, car parts manufacturer Toyoda Gosei, retail chains Tesco, Wilko, Morrisons - among others - cut Sunday and bank holiday pay and/or paid breaks. Chains like Eat and Le Pain Quotidien ended paid breaks altogether, while Nero stopped providing free food to its workforce. As to pizza chain Zizzi, it is planning to cut workers' earnings from tips!

Of course, that's just what you would expect from these profiteers. Especially as, regardless of his good words about

## Crisis watch

### Letter from Sussex

On 1st April, Sussex clinical commissioners transferred the £60 million ambulance contract to privateer, Coperforma, which also operates in London and Hampshire. Immediately, there was a huge increase in complaints from patients who had not been picked up for procedures like dialysis or chemotherapy. In Brighton's main hospital, staff were staying up until midnight, to provide dialysis to patients arriving late; often by taxi.

Amongst the excuses Coperforma came up with was that mobile phone reception in Sussex is poor and that patients were booking for appointments weeks ahead, instead of according to their "shorter booking timeframe". These "weeks ahead" patients were "blocking" other patients. However, dialysis or chemotherapy patients are on long term treatment and need to book weeks ahead. Coperforma covered up its cost-cutting and understaffing by blaming patients and the (cheap) mobile phone "app" it had chosen to use. Never mind the potential risk to patients - its profit comes first.

Now that it has been exposed, it remains to be seen whether the situation will improve.

the "spirit of the law", Osborne set an example by excluding millions of under-25s of the NLW!

### • DWP must pay!

First, Ian Duncan Smith's DWP tried to get the jobless to work for their benefits. Companies happily took the free temporary labour of JSA claimants who feared losing their benefits if they refused. But they faced a lot of protests and to avoid the resulting bad publicity, some companies withdrew from the scheme.

Eventually, the government abandoned the scheme altogether after two claimants who got sanctioned for refusing these slave "placements" (one of them in Poundland) challenged their sanctions in court and won. However, the DWP appealed the ruling and rather than refund thousands of claimants who appealed against their sanctions, it tried to change the law retrospectively. Now, it's lost the appeal and been told it is liable for compensation. About time too!

## Our history

This May marks 90 years since the 1926 General Strike. As many as 1.7m workers went out on strike, in solidarity with coal miners, locked out by coal bosses intent on imposing a wage cut. It was the first general mobilisation of the British working class.

The capitalist class was determined to make the working class pay for the deep recession which had plagued the economy since WWI. To resist their attacks, the working class would have needed a strong leadership in the form of its own workers' party. The Labour party, which had been serving British capital during WWI, could not be such a party. The only alternative was the Communist Party. But despite organising many militant workers in its ranks, this party was still weak.

### Solidarity with the miners!

To break the resistance of the working class, the bosses chose to target its largest section first. Numbering over one million, the miners were present almost everywhere across the country and had a strong militant tradition. On 30 April 1926, the coal owners announced they would cut wages by 13.5% and lengthen the working day. The same day, Baldwin's Tory government declared a state of emergency. Faced with a government which wanted nothing short of surrender, the TUC was left with no choice but to call a "national" strike, "with regret", as its official statement pointed out!

Right from the start, it was clear that the TUC leaders only planned to use the strike as a bargaining chip. Its General Council took the strike leadership firmly into its hands, without the various unions having any say - let alone their members. And if, despite

## The 1926 General Strike

this, the strike turned into a militant explosion, it was only thanks to the determination of the strikers themselves.

On 3rd May, what the TUC called the "first line" was called out - transport, printing, steel plants, sections of the building trade, gas and electricity power supply. The second line of engineering and shipbuilding workers were to wait a whole week before coming out, while many other sections of workers were not to come out at all!

It didn't quite work out that way, though. On the first day, sections of

strike at local level, often taking over tasks such as organising food supplies, transport and self-defence against the police. These democratic organs of the strike could have become the building blocks of an alternative working class leadership, capable of replacing TUC leaders who were only seeking a compromise with Baldwin - and, above all, willing to challenge the capitalist order itself.

The Communist Party, whose activists had been instrumental in setting up the Councils, could have been a driving force in building up this alternative leadership, despite its relative weakness. But, under instruction from Stalin, its policy was to woo the "left" of the TUC leadership - deceiving its activists into believing that these "left" leaders would take the TUC General Council down a more radical road.

But, of course, this did not happen. On 13 May, the TUC stated that it had "obtained assurance that a settlement of the mining problem can be secured". Except that this "assurance" was a lie. The miners' lockout carried on and the capitalist class proceeded to attack every section of the working class, one after the other.

Nevertheless, the experience of the 1926 General Strike shows the immense fighting potential of the working class - and this is even more so today, at a time when it is much larger. It also shows that, the day they start moving, workers will have to build their own democratic organs to run their fight and to form out of these organs an accountable leadership, capable of freeing their collective strength from the straitjacket of trade-union leaders whose only concern is to restore an "orderly status quo" with British capital. □



Strikers meeting in Manchester

workers from the "second line" came out as well, together with workers who were not unionised. On the second day, 2.5m workers were involved in the movement. The government had organised middle-class and unemployed "volunteers" to break the strike and keep essential services running. But despite the high profile of the police and the use of the army's armoured vehicles, pickets made sure these efforts were unsuccessful.

### The "Councils of Action"

Across the country, the most militant strikers used the existing Trades Councils as the basis for setting up "Councils of Action", which ran the

### Trotsky on the General Strike (May 5th, 1926)

"The mass strike arose from the imbalance between the current position of the British economy on the world market and the traditional industrial and class relations within the country. Formally the question at issue was one of reducing miners' wages, lengthening their working day and throwing part of the sacrifices necessary for a serious reorganisation of the coal industry onto the workers' shoulders. Put in this way the question is insoluble. It is

perfectly true that the coal industry, and indeed the British economy as a whole, cannot be reorganised without sacrifices on the part of the British proletariat, and substantial ones at that... The General Strike is the answer of the proletariat... [It] is the sharpest form of class struggle. It is only one step from the general strike to armed insurrection. This is precisely why the general strike, more than any other form of class struggle, requires clear, distinct, resolute and therefore revolutionary leadership.

"[However], the strike cannot of itself

alter the position of British capitalism, and the coal industry in particular, on the world market. This requires the reorganisation of the whole British economy. The strike is only a sharp expression of this necessity. The programme for reorganizing the British economy is the programme of a new power, a new state and a new class. The fundamental importance of the General Strike is that it poses the question of power point-blank. A real victory for the General Strike lies only in the winning of power by the proletariat and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat."



## No choice for the working class

The EU referendum does not give workers anything to choose between. Both the "Leave" and the "Remain" are twin salesmen whose main selling argument is what's best for British bosses. To make their respective arguments more attractive to working class voters, they try to repackage their campaign by peddling all sorts of myths, in the case of the "Leavers", or threatening apocalypse in the case of the "Remainers".

But, ultimately, because both camps aim to represent the same social interests - those of British

capital - their referendum is just a classical case of "tails they win, heads we loose". Whichever way it goes, the winning side will use workers' votes to justify the same policies, dressed up in pro- or anti-EU clothes depending on the winners, but with the same nationalist innuendo, the same attempt to divide working class ranks and the same objective of boosting the bosses' profits on workers' backs. And, surely, workers have no interest in allowing them to use their votes for that! ☐

### • No to their divisive demagogy!

Despite the fact that both camps in the referendum tell voters that they represent a "better" - but wholly different - future for Britain, they are cynically playing the same game of whipping up anti-migrant prejudices and trying to split the ranks of the working class.

Both are more or less vocal in blaming EU migrants for low wages and the

### • Jobs and the EU

According to Osborne, 3m jobs would be lost if there was a Brexit - or almost one job in ten. This, he claims, is due to the fact that 44% of Britain's exports go to the EU.

Of course, judging from the warnings given by some big employers that they would move out of Britain in case of Brexit, it is likely that some jobs would go. How many, though, is

anybody's guess and Osborne's figure is probably about as accurate as a crystal ball can be.

But, on the other hand, what guarantee do workers have that staying in the EU will protect their jobs? None whatsoever! After all, being in the EU did not stop bosses from cutting millions of decent jobs over the past decade, nor did it prevent their

### • When myths become "facts"

In their scaremongering, the "Leave" camp are grasping at straws. One of their favourites is the myth that Britain pays £55m a day to the EU as a hand-out. This claim is based on a figure published online, without taking into account Britain's rebate. Since then, this figure has been corrected and revised down to £17m a day. Despite this, the "Leave" camp still use the £55m/day figure.

What's more, this is hardly a "hand-out" to the EU. In fact, nearly the whole of this is ploughed back into British business - partly as subsidies for agribusiness and companies (for research) and partly as the price to pay for the free access they get to the EU market.

In the end, far from a handover to the EU, this is a handout to British capital! Of course, Mr Farage, ex-banker, would rather not draw attention to that little fact. But nor would Osborne, even though it would be easy for him to debunk this myth - but then the last thing he wants, is to attract attention to the fact that his government is lining the pockets of big business in this way!

### • Eurosceptic "Remainers"

The EU referendum is a showcase for the Tory leadership hopefuls. Gove and Johnson have joined the "Leave" camp, while Theresa May stuck with the 'Remain' camp. But to make sure that no-one forgets her hawkish xenophobic rhetoric, she is calling for Britain to withdraw from the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR).

Apparently May objects to any recourse against the British justice system. But what is its record? What justice did the Birmingham Six, Guilford Four and Maguire Seven get in the 1970s? They were 17 innocent men who were framed up and made to serve over 15 years in jail, for the sole crime of being Irish! Were their human rights protected by a British justice system which was hell-bent on turning the screw on all those who might be opposed to the occupation of Northern Ireland? No, the interests of the British state came first!

But for May, who certainly has no sympathy for the past victims of the justice system anyway, their human rights do not count - especially when what is at stake is her own political career!

## EU referendum



the real issues! But what about the responsibility of their masters, the very-British bosses, who keep pushing wages down? And what about the policies of their past and present governments which have been starving public services and housing of vital funding, in order to increase their handouts to the capitalists class?

replacement with all sorts of casual non-jobs, such as zero-hours contracts!

The truth is that, whether inside or outside the EU, the only guarantee workers have that their jobs will be protected, is their ability to use their collective strength and fight against the bosses' greed.

### • Priti poisonous!

As part of her campaign for Brexit, Tory Minister of State for Employment Priti Patel stated she wanted to scrap the EU's Working Time Directive. According to her, this directive "prevents the NHS from treating patients".

As if the collapse of the NHS was due to staff not working enough hours! Never mind that the crazy hours and understaffing of the NHS have been underlying the junior doctors dispute for months now. Apparently, Patel hasn't noticed!

Of course attacking the working class is nothing new for Patel. A few years ago, in a Eurosceptic book called "Britain Unchained", she described British workers as "some of the worst idlers in the world". Before that, she'd been working for PR company Weber Shandwick as a lobbyist for British American Tobacco. Her "job" was to revamp the company's image after a scandal broke out over its Burma factory, where it was paying workers £15 a month. Patel's pay while on the project was £165 per hour! For a government which seeks to destroy employment rights, she's certainly fits well into the post of employment minister!

## Steel closures

Just over 6 months after the first steel closures, most of the 50,000 workers whose jobs are directly or indirectly threatened, remain suspended in mid-air, not knowing how long they'll have a wage to live on.

Predictably, politicians swept the issue under the carpet, for fear that it might influence the outcome of the May 5th elections and June referendum. But the industry's union leaders didn't perform any better.

### • "Saved" jobs? But are they and at what cost?

The union leaders promoted a "plan" supposedly able to make the steel industry "viable" - in other words, profitable for the steel bosses. However, against the backdrop of worldwide overproduction in steel, this necessarily meant turning the screw on workers, to make them more "competitive".

This was precisely what the union leaders endorsed when an investment fund called Greybull Capital, took over Tata's Scunthorpe steelwork, for a nominal £1. However, in return for a vague promise to invest "up to £400m" at some point in the future, Greybull demanded an immediate 3% wage cut, an end to the workers' final salary scheme and a big increase in their retirement age, to 65.

Following the union leaders' recommendation and having no other perspective, 65% of the workforce agreed to Greybull's blackmail and voted for the deal. Ironically, though, in an interview to a local paper, the plant's Unite convenor admitted that he couldn't understand why only 22% of his own members had voted for the deal - as if this was hard to guess!

## BHS collapse

### • The bosses must pay!

Last month, retail chain BHS went bust, with up to 11,000 job losses. In addition, hundreds of jobs at the associated distributors are at risk too! Not just that, 20,000 current and former BHS employees face losses in their pension entitlements - a 10% cut - due to a big hole in the pension fund.

The BHS collapse is only the latest in a series which has affected retail stores recently. This reflects falling consumer spending due to the fact that incomes still remain well below their pre-crisis level. The most recent statistics confirm this picture: the value of sales in non-food stores in March was down 0.5% compared with the previous year.

## The fighting perspective that was never there

Right from the start, Community, the main steel union, together with Unite and the GMB, have pushed for a "Save our steel" campaign. As if the steel industry had ever belonged to the steelworkers who slaved away to produce the steel bosses' profits! But, of course, this was just a pretext for the union leaders to demand a government "bailout" on the steel bosses' behalf! They were so concerned about not rocking the boat

that they never even raised the possibility of a fightback!

Yet, if the steel companies had made the choice of pulling out of the industry in Britain, why couldn't they be made to pay for this choice, out of their accumulated profits, by forcing them to guarantee an income to all the workers affected? In any case, this would have been an objective well worth fighting for! ☐

### • "White knights" or cold-blooded sharks?

Greybull Capital, the Scunthorpe "white knight" was hailed by union leaders, describing its "transformation plan" as "robust". But did they really look into Greybull's record?

For instance, in 2011, Greybull was one of two partners who bought the troubled, 236-store electronics retailer chain Comet for £2. But, exactly one year later, Comet went bust, with 7,000 workers losing their jobs - while the two partners managed to recoup over £100m from the insolvency. Then, in 2014, Greybull bought the ailing Monarch low-cost airline for a few pounds. This time it managed to turn the company around, but at the cost of 700 job cuts and a 30% wage cut! In other words, so far, Greybull's "transformations" have amounted to just stripping the assets and sweating the workers! But did the union leadership warn the Scunthorpe workers against this threat?

Another "white knight" - known as Liberty UK - is now bidding for Tata's largest plant, at Port-Talbot, after having bought a few small facilities. Strangely enough, so far, this obscure family business had only been involved in shipping and trading commodities, not steel production. But then, hasn't the government

promised to provide funding to whoever takes over Port-Talbot?

These vultures should recall the fate of the once huge Rover plant, at Longbridge. After an 89-year turbulent history, it finally ended up in the hands of BMW, in 1994. But in 2000, having decided that the plant wasn't profitable, BMW sold it for £10 to a purpose-created investment group, Phoenix Consortium, with the backing of all and sundry - including that of the then TGWU leader. However, just five years later, Phoenix put Longbridge into liquidation and the remaining 6,000 workers lost their jobs. Of course, the five businessmen at Phoenix's helm had managed to line their pockets with over £40m, before the collapse!



This results in a cut-throat competition between retail chains, with the bigger fishes eating - or putting out of business - the smaller ones. This may be the logic of this capitalist system, but there is no reason why workers should be made to pay for its chaotic operation!

### • And of course, they can!

Surprise, surprise, the owners of BHS have still managed to make a killing! From 2000-2015, it was owned by luxury fashion magnate Philip Green - number 29 in the latest Sunday Times rich list, with an estimated wealth of £3.22bn. Green is also known as a non-dom tax evader thanks to his wife being based in the tax haven of Monaco.

Last year, Green sold BHS for £1 to an obscure outfit called Retail Acquisitions, whose partners had already been involved in shady bankruptcies. Green was obviously getting rid of a company which he no longer expected to generate any profit. But then, he had already squeezed £807m worth of dividends out of BHS over his 15-year tenure - which was more than 4 times the £200m he had originally paid for it!

BHS' present cow-boy owners may really be bust - although this still has to be proved. But it would be only right that Green should guarantee a secure income to both BHS workers and pensioners for as long as they require one, out of the considerable profits he made on their backs in the past!

**Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)****Ford's profits galore - and our wage cut?**

Ford has just achieved "the most profitable start to a year in its history"! Its first quarter results doubled its income from £0.8bn to £1.9bn. It's even made a bonanza in Europe: last year "losses" were £29m (though we all know the books are cooked), but now profits are £299m! CEO Mark Fields says it's a "terrific start to the year".

But it's not "terrific" at Dagenham where hundreds of us

face a one-third cut in our wages, for an indefinite period into the future, because Ford is replacing one engine with another. So we're told to work day shifts only, for the foreseeable future and unsocial hours payments are cut.

Never mind that we work the same total hours, or that we produce the same amount of value as before (the engines are sold for the same money, aren't they?).



Ford even refuses the 13 weeks' pay protection we should be entitled to according to its own rule book. Mind you, we haven't tried a strike yet - just a protest. Nothing like a total work stoppage to open their pockets!

**King's Cross railway station (London)****DOO: stop it in its tracks!**

For the past 30 years, railway companies have been axing guard jobs. "Driver Only Operation" (DOO), makes the driver wholly responsible for safety on a 12-coach train carrying about 600 passengers.

But what if a problem occurs which could endanger lives? Many investigation reports have pointed to incidents that could have been avoided had there been a guard present. Despite this, those rail

companies that haven't already introduced DOO yet, plan to do so in the near future.

This is what the recent Southern Railway guards' strike was about. There is a fight that concerns all rail workers and passengers.

So why are the rail unions leaving them to fight their corner alone?

When what is needed is to unite all our forces across the different private companies in order to put a



stop to the extension of DOO, where it is on the agenda, and get guards back on all trains everywhere else.

**BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)****• We are being mugged...**

Since the new shift patterns were introduced last month, Volume Protection Overtime has become an almost daily event in the paint shop on early and afternoon shifts. But VPO exists "to cover any circumstances which prevent the build programme being achieved". For example, a breakdown where VPO is used to catch up on lost production. It's not there to bail out BMW's attempt to cut one shift a week without losing

the equivalent amount of production, by imposing extra hours in the one area of the plant that can't keep up! [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 4/5/16]

**• Gizza break!**

Furthermore, our shifts are effectively being extended to 8 hours all the time. Surely then we are entitled to the 30-minute lunch break, albeit unpaid, that BMW arbitrarily cut from the day when it instigated 7½ hour shifts? At very least, 8 hours should entitle us to longer breaks!



(In a 7.5hr day we get only 2 paid breaks of 20 mins and 17 minutes). [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 4/5/16]

**Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)****• Conference rounded up**

What's been going on between the top union guys and RM, behind the scenes? At the end of the CWU annual conference Beano they summed it up: after 2 sessions talking with the bosses, their 4-point plan has "set the agenda". The 4 points are: 1. Current agreements, 2. Future Design (?), 3. Pay, Hours and Leave, and 4. Pensions...

But the only concrete aim they mention is this "phased-in 35-hour week"... so, is that not only with no loss of pay,

but including the big pay rise? [Workers' Fight Bulletin Mount Pleasant 5/5/16]

**• This partnership stinks**

Apparently we'll be having our support "won" by union officials coming round - but for what? If they represented what we need - they'd surely not have to "win" our support.

And why do trade unionists feel compelled to talk like bosses? Like "new product development" or "growing the business"? "Efficiencies"? Where are



our workers' aims in all this? Eg., full-time jobs for part-timers; a commitment to enough hands at all times and better rates of pay, so that overtime becomes a thing of the past? [Workers' Fight Bulletin Mount Pleasant 5/5/16]



## Refugees

Even Tory backbenchers and the right-wing Daily Mail have been pressurising Cameron to agree to take in unaccompanied child refugees from Europe. There are thousands who have made it over on their own - many even to the Calais "Jungle". But up to now, Cameron refused them admission - sticking to the policy of cherry-picking a selected few from Syrian refugee camps in the Middle East. His pretext is that having an open door to any refugees - including children - would "encourage them to undertake a perilous journey". As if they aren't fleeing "perilous" bombed-out countries because if they don't, they risk death!

Apparently Cameron's policy is about to change and "some" children may be allowed in on a 5-year visa. The numbers aren't mentioned. But

### Can't discriminate? Price them out!

Back in 2014, the then Justice Secretary Chris Grayling tried to introduce a 12-month residency qualification for entitlement to legal aid. The whole point was to court the xenophobic vote by discriminating against immigrants and asylum seekers. Two years on, this blatant discrimination has finally been thrown out in the Supreme Court. Seven judges hearing the case

## Hillsborough

It took 27 years for a jury to finally admit that the 96 football fans crushed to death at Hillsborough, in 1989, were "unlawfully killed". The evidence had been known for a long time, but it was only thanks to the tireless efforts of the relatives of the victims that the courts finally admitted there had been a cover-up and that the police was to blame.

The inquest conclusions also mentioned defects in the stadium, the fact that its capacity had been overestimated and that health and safety certifications were incomplete. However there was no

## All refugees deserve a welcome



the question still remains - what about the many more adult refugees with nowhere to go, including their own parents? Will they also be

allowed in, at last, if they make their way to Europe? If not, this special treatment for children will remain a hypocritical token gesture. ☐

stopped the two-day hearing after one day and took only a few minutes to reach judgement.

But not to be denied their public display of xenophobia, within days the Tories had conjured up another way of doing the same thing: they've increased the fees for asylum and immigration tribunals by 500%! Fees for the most basic applications - i.e. decisions on paper

submissions - are to go up from £80 to £490; for a full tribunal, they will go up from £140 to £800. In addition there will be a new charge of £455 just to apply for leave to appeal to the upper tribunal! Exactly the same discrimination - only, even crasser! ☐

## Twenty seven years on

indication that action would be taken against the profiteers, for whom such considerations are just as many obstacles to making money!

The "Great British justice system" is known to be quick to throw scapegoats in jail for many years, using false evidence, when it is politically convenient for the powers-that-be. But when it comes to putting the police in the dock, let alone the profiteers who were responsible for the stadium's unsafe facilities and the fans' deaths, it is quite another question!

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