

WORKERS' fight

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

THE NEED TO "REGAIN CONTROL" OF ALL OF SOCIETY!

At the time of writing, just after the 2nd rejection of May's deal, speculation over the Brexit saga is rife.

Additional votes are scheduled. But these are just more banana skins thrown by one Tory faction against another. Nothing will come out of this - except more point-scoring and grandiose posturing by the hard-Brexiteers.

As to the rumour of a possible 3rd attempt by May to get her deal endorsed, it just beggars belief. This would involve the same old blackmail - that it's either her deal or else "no deal", or "no Brexit"!

At this point, no-one can tell what's next - except that the Brexit process is sinking even further into farce and threatening increasing chaos for the working class.

Hypocrites calling the shots

This is the balance sheet of the past 9 years: 6 years of nationalist, anti-migrant posturing by Tory factions; and then almost 3 years of "negotiations", against the backdrop of the same posturing by the same factions!

These self-serving politicians devoted all these years to peddling fantasies about Britain's affluent future outside the EU. And to make their claims more attractive, they spread outright lies about the so-called Brexit "dividends" for the NHS and public services.

With the crassest cynicism, the Tory Eurosceptics - and their twin brothers-cum-rivals in UKIP - used and abused the disorientation and frustration of voters who felt left out by the general social degradation. They blamed the EU and migrant workers for all the ills that were piling up here.

Never mind that the rise of poverty, job insecurity and the running down of under-funded public services - were all



direct by-products, first of the capitalist financial crisis and then of the austerity used by Tory governments to get the working class to foot the bill of this crisis!

But as there was no organised political force prepared to put the blame on the real culprit - capitalism itself - these hypocritical pro-Brexit politicians managed to hijack the political scene for all these years. And it is the result of this, that we are facing today.

The enemy is capitalism

Ironically, the Brexit saga has been driven by politicians who claimed they were "regaining control" on behalf of "the people". But what they call "the people", is just the number of votes cast. Once the ballot over, "the people" are meant to abide by the dictates of political institutions they have "elected" but over which they have no control.

By calling on "the people" to "regain control", these politicians only wanted

more power, including the power to attack the conditions of the working class majority of "the people".

By now, workers have seen what happens when Westminster "regains control" in their name. They saw the chaos that the politicians' rivalries can generate, just to promote their interests and those of their capitalist masters. And they saw the disastrous impact that their "regaining control" had on workers' living standards and jobs.

So yes, given the damage already caused by Brexit and the attacks that must be expected from the bosses, in order to make workers pay for their Brexit costs, it is high time the working class "regained control" - not from the EU, not even from the Tory party and its Brexit bigots, but from the capitalist class itself.

There lies the future - a common future for the planet and its working classes - by joining forces across borders in order to build a new, profit-free world. □

Social

Ofgem, the energy regulator, will raise the cap on household bills by £117, to £1,254/yr, from April 1st. In fact this hike breaks the cap it had just set in January! Ofgem itself blamed a rise in wholesale gas and electricity prices for this speedy price rise. But now it seems to be doing the energy companies' PR for them!

In the days following the raising of the cap, all six of the major energy firms announced they would increase their tariffs by 10%, affecting 15 million households, and collectively adding £1bn to bills! This would be the biggest single-day energy price increase ever.

Yet according to Ofgem, the big energy suppliers made just over

• *Rising inequality*

According to official statistics, the incomes of the poorest fifth of households fell by 1.6% over the past year, while the incomes of the richest fifth of households grew by 4.7% in the same period.

This is a direct result of the ongoing freeze on benefits. For millions of families, including those in work, these have been frozen since 2015, under a policy launched by then chancellor, George

• *Scrooge lenders on the way out?*

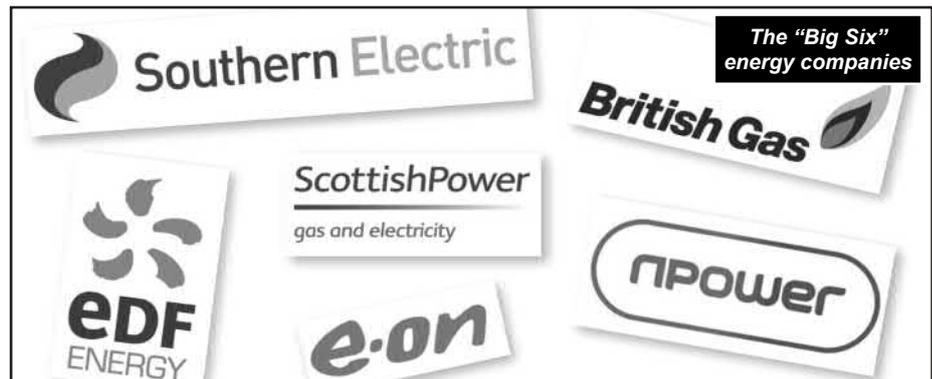
Sub-prime lenders and rent-to-own companies are finding themselves in financial difficulties. Partly, they blame these problems on new Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) regulations, which come into force in April. Rent-to-own lender BrightHouse has said that it will therefore cut 10% of its jobs and close 30 of its stores. Provident, a sub-prime doorstep lender, already lost £123 million last year.

• *Persimmon's "Help to Buy" jackpot*

Persimmon Homes' profit of £1.09bn last year was the biggest ever for a British housebuilder, representing a £66,000 profit on every house it sold. So much so, that the company's chief executive was awarded an unprecedented bonus of £110m last autumn - causing such a scandal that he was finally forced to resign.

Nearly half of Persimmon's 16,449 sales last year were to buyers using the government's "Help to Buy" scheme, which is targeted at new home sales. But Persimmon's huge profits have turned the spotlight on complaints about poor building standards and its increasing sales of houses on leasehold terms. Leasehold allows the builder to sell the freeholds to investors and charge ground

Time to protect wages against inflation



£2bn in profits in 2017. So why should this extra £1bn have to come from households, rather than from shareholders? Especially as the increase will be accompanied, also in April, by a 5% increase in council tax and a 2% rise in water bills!

Osborne. This policy, in place until 2020, means household benefit payments do not rise in line with inflation.

In 2015 inflation was officially 0%. But it rose steadily after that (mainly due to the fall in the pound's value after the Brexit referendum) reaching 4.1% (according to the RPI measure) in December 2017, to fall back to 2.5% in January this year. The Equality and Human Rights

Provident charges interest rates of 535% on its cash loans, and sends its (self-employed) agents to the houses of its debtors to collect the money owed. BrightHouse provides loan schemes with rates of up to 1500%, for households to buy essential goods, such as refrigerators and cookers. Customers can end up paying 4 times the cost of an appliance!

The 'business' of sub-prime lending

rent to the buyers, often subject to crippling increases hidden in small print, which make the properties unsaleable.

Now the government says it will investigate whether Persimmon should be excluded from "Help to Buy" for milking it - as if this scheme had not always been meant to subsidise the profits of housebuilding companies and mortgage lenders through the crisis!

• *Victorian diseases return*

NHS figures for England for 2017-18 show that diseases common during the time of Charles Dickens have made a comeback and are increasing. The reported cases of contagious diseases such as scarlet fever, which had all but disappeared, have doubled over the last decade - as have cases of whooping cough, which are up 59%. Diseases linked to malnutrition

For the working class, of course, there is another way of getting shareholders to collectively pay their share - by "uncapping" wage demands and making sure that this year's wage increases are well above the real rise in the cost of living. □

Commission warns that child poverty - already affecting one in three children today, stands to double by 2022 due to the government's welfare "reforms". Even Tory former ministers have called for the benefit freeze to be lifted, but so far, to no avail.

Clearly the Brexiteers' "affluent future for Britain outside the EU", was never meant for the poorest!

and exploitative rent-to-own schemes has long been a way of making money off the poorest: Provident has been in existence for 130 years. Yet it is only now that the FCA has done something about it. Workers only turn to these blood-sucking companies because of low pay and casual jobs. And against these, they cannot count on government regulators, only on their own collective struggles.

have also shown an alarming rise - like rickets, due to lack of vitamin D and even scurvy - something history books told us was suffered by sailors spending months at sea, deprived of fresh fruit and vegetables. But now this is being seen among children in England - and no wonder, with the increase in poverty, which affects one in 5 households today.

Since 2010, when food banks first made an appearance, to today, when 1.5m people regularly rely on them, hospital admissions for malnutrition-related diseases have gone up by 54%. It is worth mentioning too, that sexually transmitted infections like syphilis and gonorrhoea have respectively increased in incidence by 20% and 22% on the year before - and that this is put down directly to the £800m being cut from public health budgets.

Brexit: beware the ides of March

It doesn't seem to make the slightest difference to Theresa May that B-day, the 29th of March, is just around the corner. Or that parliamentary institutions are fragmenting further by the day. She has already lost 3 leading "Remain" MPs to the Independent Group and another two (Greening and Grieve) are threatening to jump. All this, while she claims to be able to do the impossible, by getting the EU to put a time limit on the Irish Backstop - and never mind that this has never been on offer. For effect though, Attorney General (and Brexiteer) Geoffrey Cox trotted

fruitlessly off to Brussels to have a go, amid lewd jokes about his "cod-piece".

May's playing to the Brexiteers' gallery seems to have softened a few, like Rees-Mogg. But her "plan B" remains as foggy as ever: if her deal is voted down for a second time, and no deal is also then voted down, the offer of a short delay in Brexit till June solves nothing for the government. It might make a second referendum more likely, but this only means more delay. And even if her deal is passed, Brexit won't be happening any time soon, since there's the

Brexit watch

2-year transition period anyway! As all commentators agree, Parliament is increasingly paralysed, thanks to the complicated manoeuvres of both Tory and Labour politicians, who are first and foremost trying to save their own careers and/or avoid a knife in the back.

But then the capitalist class' parliamentary institutions do not (and never have) reflected the interests' or views of the working class majority, which is already at the receiving end of their Brexit chaos. Yes, it's a rotten system, offering rotten policies, out of the mouths of rotten politicians. ☐

• The parliamentary pigs' trough

MPs have been awarded a pay rise, taking their salaries up to £79,468/yr. It's an increase of £2,000/yr or around £1/hr (assuming they "work" a 40h-week)! This has triggered another Commons melodrama: those who're scared of being even more discredited are refusing the pay rise. But those who just want to pocket it as soon as possible, claim they deserve it, since it's a "very depressing time" for MPs, with all the present instability...

Of course MPs don't decide their own pay rises any more. This is the responsibility of the Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority (IPSA), created to cover their backs, after the expenses

scandal in 2009. So now the IPSA can be blamed for the fact that MPs have been getting substantial pay rises every year since 2013! On top, of course, of their free homes, the £400 of "no-questions-asked" spending per month, the golden pensions, etc.

Their pay rises and perks are even more disgusting given the huge cuts which these same well-paid MPs are presiding over - causing household incomes to fall, up and down the country. A £1/hour wage increase would definitely do some good for workers, especially those on the minimum wage who, unlike MPs, really need it!



• Cultivating one's career in the Brexit era

Agriculture minister, George Eustice, who resigned in protest against May's plan to allow a vote on delaying Brexit, was a career Eurosceptic. After standing unsuccessfully as a UKIP candidate in the 1999 European elections, he decided that the Tory party would offer him better career prospects. In 2010, he was elected Tory MP for Camborne & Redruth and, the following

year, he was among the founding members of the Eurosceptic "Fresh Start Group". At the time, however, he was still arguing that "Britain would do better to drive reform from within [the EU] than leave and risk losing all the benefits". And by "benefits", he was probably referring to the agricultural subsidies his family-owned farm received from the EU!

In his recent resignation letter, Eustice claimed that, as a backbencher, he would try "to salvage this sorry situation". But in fact, he has just joined the long queue of Tory hard-Brexiteers who abandoned May's ship, to avoid having to share the discredit of the Brexit chaos, and are now waiting on the sidelines for her downfall - and a chance to "salvage the situation" of their own careers!

• Where did little Britain's medicine industry go?

If there's a no-deal Brexit, the delays at the border are likely to cause shortages of vital medicines. Hence the need to stockpile medical supplies and in particular drugs like insulin, which keep Type 1 diabetics alive. But despite Britain being so boastful about its "world class research & development" it produces no insulin! In fact 99% of the insulin used here is produced outside Britain by three EU-based pharmaceutical companies (Sanofi, Novartis and Novo Nordisk).

Would it be so difficult to make insulin locally? Insulin can be made by yeasts (or bacteria) into which the gene coding for human insulin has been inserted. And there's no lack of labs or breweries around! This would just mean obtaining

some chemicals, lab technicians and scientific instruments. But most of these come from overseas too - including the scientists!

So all of this just underlines how impossible it is for the small island of Britain to exist on its own - contrary to the child-like fantasies of Liam Fox, David Davis, Boris Johnson and Co...

• Failing Grayling's serial fiascos

The incompetence of Theresa May's loyal (Brexiteer) Minister for Transport is, by now, a standing joke. Grayling's notoriety even made it to the other side of the Atlantic. The New York Times featured him in an article entitled "How does he survive: the curious case of failing Grayling". In fact, thanks to present and past "failings" he's estimated to have wasted upwards of £2.7bn of taxpayers'

money. So journalists are asking what "kompromat" (compromising material) he has on May, since she hasn't yet sacked him.

By now, having cancelled the £13.8m ferry contract awarded to Seabourne, the company with no ferries (compensation undisclosed), he's had to hand over another £33m to Eurotunnel to get it to drop a lawsuit over his "uncompetitive" way of awarding cross-channel contracts. And that's in addition to the £800,000 paid to the law firm tasked with extricating the government from the fine mess he's created. The fact that he's presided over the highest hikes in rail fares, the worst record of delays, cancellations and overcrowding and a can of worms as regards the awarding of rail contracts, seems eclipsed in the light of his Brexit misdemeanours. Other revelations are no doubt yet to come.

Brexit watch**Hostile and illegal**

A key plank of Theresa May's "hostile environment" policy against immigrants has been ruled a breach of human rights law in the High Court. The judgment explicitly said that the Right to Rent scheme in England, which has made landlords liable for checking the immigration status of housing tenants since February 2016, was causing discrimination against tenants from minority ethnic backgrounds, regardless of their right to live here and in some cases their British citizenship. Even the Home Office's own research found that a quarter of landlords would not be prepared to rent to someone without a British passport!

May always found the Human Rights Act a nuisance when she was Home Secretary and the Tories



proposed to scrap it, if they won the 2015 election. Yet the Act was only meant to enshrine into British law the principles of the European Convention on Human Rights, which

a British Tory government had signed up to, back in 1953! Is this now May's vision of Brexit, dumping everything "European" just to maintain her hostile environment? ☐

• Javid's untarnished anti-migrant profile

At the end of February, Home Secretary Sajid Javid found himself on the wrong side of Theresa May, by supporting the so-called "Costa amendment" - before discovering that she was opposing it! This amendment called on the government to protect the rights of EU workers in Britain and British workers in the EU, particularly in the case of a 'no-deal' Brexit. There are no specific guarantees over what

this would mean in practice, which is perhaps why Javid felt he could give his support to the amendment.

Javid's embarrassment was all the more ironical because he has been notorious among May's rivals for his whipping up of anti-migrant prejudices. So for instance, last December he sent the Navy into the Channel to 'deal' with a few migrants in flimsy boats. And this February, he stripped

Shamima Begum of her British citizenship without a second thought. As to his "concern" for EU workers' rights, he was recently criticised by MPs over the 'shambles' of his settled status scheme!

If Javid is concerned about anything, it's about being seen as ready and able to jump into May's shoes. In the meantime, he's preserving her anti-migrant "hostile environment".

• Corbyn's second referendum U-turn?

After over two years of declaring that "Labour accepts the referendum result", Jeremy Corbyn now seems to have decided to support a second referendum - at least, if the withdrawal deal on offer fails to pass Labour's own "tests". Although this policy was formally adopted as a possible option by Labour's last conference, Corbyn had never really pushed it up to now.

What's changed is the launch of the Independent Group by 8 Labour MPs and 3 Tory MPs, with the ostensible objective of building a cross-party majority in favour of a second referendum. Not only is this new group threatening to attract some of Corbyn's many opponents among Labour MPs, but it could also pull the rug from under Labour's feet by initiating a vote of no-confidence against May's rejection of a second referendum as a means to end the current Brexit deadlock.

In short, this is all about parliamentary manoeuvring: rather than offering a way forward to workers, a second referendum would present them with yet another set of fake choices, which will

not help them to fight the politicians' irresponsible recklessness nor the attacks of their capitalist masters!

• Anti-Semitism or anti-Corbynism?

The accusations of anti-Semitism against Corbyn by former Labour MPs in the new Independent Group (or Labour right-wingers still in the party, like Margaret Hodge), might be loud, might be backed by the media and might be echoed by the likes of Theresa May, but that doesn't make them true.

Racist ideas are ever-present in society, lurking under the surface. And the Brexit campaign, championing nationalism and xenophobia in the context of deep austerity, helped unleash overtly racist acts - like the murder of MP Joe Cox by a deranged "Britain First" protagonist. Today, fake history/fake news linked to the far-right on the internet has proliferated with, for example, the promotion of the pseudo anti-capitalist anti-Jewish "Elders of Zion" conspiracy theory - just as it was used in the 1920s by the Nazis. However, even if some among the over half-a-million Labour party members believe this trash, it doesn't make Corbyn, nor the Labour

party, anti-Semitic.

Most of today's Labour's MPs were first elected as supporters of Blair, Brown or Milliband and were utterly dismayed by Corbyn's win in 2015. They've been trying to get rid of him ever since. Not only do they hate his socialist-sounding rhetoric, but they also hate his apparent equivocation over Brexit. His solidarity with the Palestinians against the brutal policies of the state of Israel (which is ludicrously conflated with anti-Semitism), has zero support among the majority right-wing parliamentary Labour party. These MPs know full well Corbyn isn't prejudiced against Jewish people. But they are definitely prejudiced against him. They also know how much the accusation of anti-Semitism sticks. And hurts.

ICF forum pamphlet n°100

• Trade war, Brexit,
CONVULSIONS OF A
CAPITALIST WORLD IN CRISIS

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The City doesn't trust its own politicians!

Brexit watch

While May was bickering endlessly with her warring Tory factions over her withdrawal deal, the top US, EU and British financial regulators and institutions were quietly negotiating their own "deal" behind the scenes. And, unlike May, they came to an agreement well in advance of March 29. What's more, they even claim that this will protect big finance against Brexit, whichever form it takes!

So, on February 25th, it was revealed that US regulators had agreed to include post-Brexit Britain in the financial arrangements they currently have with the EU. A few days later, the Bank of England reached an agreement with the European Central Bank which will help banks to buy whichever currencies they need, even if financial markets were to freeze after B-Day. At the same time, the two sides reached another agreement specifically designed to protect the



insurance industry from Brexit's toxic side-effects.

The big City firms made up their minds long ago: while most have already increased their physical presence in the EU to retain local customers, they have also ensured that, for them, Brexit will change as little as possible. Of course, whether their "financial deal" will work as intended, is another question - if only because

they have no idea of what their crisis-ridden capitalist system has in store, anyway.

But the fact is that the big City firms chose to take their interests into their own hands rather than leave them at the mercy of politicians' irresponsible posturing. And that's something that the working class would have every reason to do as well, to protect its own interests! ☐

• **Ratcliffe leaving his Brexit ship?**

Jim Ratcliffe, the CEO of petrochemical giant Ineos, is moving his wealth to Monaco - a tax-haven with close ties to the EU. Britain's richest individual (worth an estimated £21bn) claimed that this was due to "personal matters" - presumably linked to the prospect of saving up to £4bn in taxes!

Ratcliffe is also known as a staunch supporter of Brexit, who argues that: "The Brits are perfectly capable of managing the Brits". As if Brexit was about choosing who "manages" Britain, when in fact, the same tiny layer of rapacious capitalists like Ratcliffe will remain in control of the economy, whatever happens!

That said, there is no doubt that Ratcliffe knows how to manage Ratcliffe's interests: advocating Brexit in Britain the better to screw workers and siphon state subsidies, while using the cover of the EU and Monaco to protect the proceeds of his profiteering from HMRC!

• **Brexiters' trade delusions**

The Department for International Trade (DIT) recently had to admit that it could not guarantee international trade agreements

after Brexit.

The DIT had originally claimed that it would be straightforward to "roll over" agreements which Britain had with non-EU countries through EU trade deals. However, to date, only 7 countries out of a total of 69 have agreed to such a "roll-over" - Chile, Switzerland, Mauritius, Zimbabwe, Madagascar, the Faroe Islands and the Seychelles, which, together, account for only about 15% of Britain's foreign trade.

Predictably, the biggest of the 69 countries, like Japan, are holding out for more favourable terms from little Britain, than those they got from the EU. But then what else did the Brexit demagogues expect, since this is a simple question of the balance of forces in the cut-throat competition of the world capitalist market! So much for their deluded image of Britain's "great independent" future!

• **Honda closure, the first domino?**

On 19 February, Honda announced that its Swindon factory would close in 2021 - threatening 3,500 jobs - just five months

after it made a commitment to stay in Britain, regardless of Brexit. By coincidence, an agreement between the EU and Japan allowing Japanese car firms to export direct to Europe tariff-free had been reached just weeks before. Which prompted Brexiters to claim that Honda's decision had nothing to do with Brexit and that after all, it planned to switch to electric car production which would be based in Japan.

Yet Honda could hardly ignore the prospect of a no-deal exit disrupting its sourcing of parts from Europe. Likewise for the Toyota plant near Derby, and Nissan in Sunderland. Isolation from the European single market and customs union would remove the main reason why their plants were built here in the first place. As a result, both of these companies have put into question the future of their production. Nissan just cancelled its plan to build the X-trail SUV in Sunderland. With BMW repeating warnings that it could transfer Mini production to Austria and the Netherlands, will Honda be just the first of the dominoes to fall?

Capitalist greed drives their system... right into the wall

The OECD, which brings together the world's 36 richest countries, has issued the latest in a long series of warnings about the deteriorating state of the capitalist economy. In a new report, it highlights the fact that, overall, the level of company indebtedness is now more than twice what it was just before the 2008 bank crash. Of course, the richest countries account for nearly 80% of this colossal debt mountain. Nevertheless,

corporate indebtedness is rising even faster in the more fragile "emerging economies", where it is now nearly 5 times higher than it was in 2008.

What the OECD experts find particularly worrying is that the proportion of this debt which is unlikely ever to be repaid is also at an all-time high. Just as in 2008, but on an even larger scale, the world financial system could once again be paralysed by a flood of irrecoverable, "toxic" debt!

But what are companies doing with these borrowed funds, since productive

investment is at a record low? A good hint is provided by the fact that, last year, while companies borrowed around \$1,700 billion worldwide, the 500 largest US companies spent, on their own, over \$1,000 billion just to boost the earnings of their shareholders. There lies the mystery of today's corporate indebtedness: companies are borrowing in order to satisfy the colossal greed of their capitalist owners. And it is their greed which is threatening their system with yet another crash!

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**• Puma engine assembly: 1999-2019**

We're sad to see Puma Engine Assembly go: the end of being able to sit while working; the end of our control over moving the engines on, and therefore our control of the production speed... and if managers' absurd targets weren't met, no loud bells or flashing lights to freak us out.

Yes, Puma (also known as the Duratorq 2-litre-2.4-litre diesel) was the last "fairly decent" engine assembly line to be built in this place. We could even call it "worker-friendly", when compared with the new Diesel Centre's standing-room-only Chicken Farm (where the 1.4-1.6-litre Tiger engine is assembled) or Darkside (for the new 1.5-litre "Ecoblue" Panther engine), where the fake flashiness disguises conditions which hark back to the nasty 1960s! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 6/03/19]

• The un-neighbourly Puma wake

But then we get that hypocrite man from NextDoor (aka plant boss Mr Neighbour) holding a funeral ceremony over the Puma line (btw, what were the Costa Boys from Darkside doing there?) and videoing the whole thing. When he must have hated Puma, given it "trained" us into expecting a different way of working and, worse, allowed us to sit!! On display was an old Mondeo (RIP) with its bonnet open showing off this long-lived engine which had been designed for it. But did he crack open a bottle so we could enjoy this wake? No way! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 6/03/19]

• For a much slower Panther

So mates have just arrived here on Panther from Puma and Doggy Styles (the foreman) is already trying to push them around, because of the ridiculously fast line speed which they aren't used to at all! Just goes to show



how much pressure we're under to make 120 (!) engines per hour. So why not take the opportunity to push back against Ford, along with our new "old-school" Puma mates, against "new-school" Styles and petty Burger... [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 6/03/19]

• This is really a scandal

We've said it before and we'll keep saying it: Lineside Logistics Limited (LLL) must pay Occupational Sick Pay! No way can we survive on the miserable Statutory Sick Pay at £92.05/week! After 28wks we're left with nothing! It's the poverty of Victorian times all over, just for being sick or injured, and usually due to LLL's unsafe working conditions. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 6/03/19]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**• We need them here**

Of course, we were pretty upset to hear our brothers and sisters in Swindon will lose their jobs in a couple of years, if Honda's plan goes ahead. But we'll be glad to welcome them here, to relieve the pressure, as there are far too few of us, working far too hard. And if there are more of us coming from Swindon in the future, what about BMW laying on a free shuttle bus service? [Workers' Fight Bulletin BMW Oxford Mini 27/02/19]

• Any old excuse will do

We know companies will use anything to up the ante, and make us feel insecure.

Honda claims this time it wasn't Brexit, but so what? They'll make their profits, no matter which excuse they use, because they'll make sure we pay. If we let them get away with it! [Workers' Fight Bulletin BMW Oxford Mini 27/02/19]

• Slow down!

Why has the line been going so fast lately? Of course the number of cars in rework piles up as a result. At this rate there will be more cars to repair than to assemble. And don't let them try and blame us for the mistakes. The ones to blame are the manajerk-speed-freaks! [Workers' Fight Bulletin BMW Oxford Mini 27/02/19]

**• Rework? more work?!**

So now managers are calling people to come in on Sunday to do extra hours in rework. When they used to have to pay us double time they weren't so keen, so what about demanding they pay triple time? [Workers' Fight Bulletin BMW Oxford Mini 27/02/19]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**• They only want to make cents**

We have to wonder why managers are pushing this Processing resign as if there was no tomorrow? Apparently they want to sign 50 of us per day! In their haste they're pushing some of us off duties we've been doing for yonks, even when seniority should apply. And when it would make far more sense to leave well alone. But then "sense" isn't their strong point, is it? [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 27/02/19]

• Three jobs into one won't go

Yes, this is the real objective of their grand, very delayed "re-sign". They may claim that after 7 years, "duties have changed". But what's actually changed, is what they think they can get away with: in other words,

more cuts to the workforce, on top of all the automation-related decimation of our numbers. And that means trying to force one of us to do the job of many. When we're already working to the max. No, can't be done. [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 27/02/19]

• Short of hands and feet

Are EC managers having a joke? They're sending workers back to Processing, claiming they were only on "temporary loan" to deliveries. So a too-stretched EC workforce is expected to stretch even further? It's definitely a recipe for the elastic to snap! [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 27/02/19]

• A wave of action

Talking about snapping, it's happening all over: this Monday, workers at Leytonstone



DO (E11), walked out unofficially - but in fact, every day there's something which proves to be the last straw for delivery workmates. And at DOs in Bangor (Northern Ireland BT19) and Wythenshawe (Manchester M22) official strikes have taken place, after managers issued disciplines for, among other things, "non-completion of a duty", sickness due to stress, and for posting about manager's harassment on social media! Haven't we in EC got ample cause to join this wave? [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 27/02/19]

King's Cross railway station (London)

Driverless trains don't move

The 35,000 train cancellations last year, were, according to data from the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), due to staff shortages, mainly of drivers. In fact, to run a full timetable most Train Operating Companies (TOCs) have relied on drivers to work overtime. A GTR spokesperson even admitted that drivers are expected to work rest days to cover sickness, training and annual leave. He claimed this is standard practice, resulting in a driver shortage only on extremely rare occasions. Except that these "rare occasions" seem, on

the contrary, to have been extremely frequent over the past year!

The other way these TOCs save on staff recruitment is by imposing "flexibility" on the rest of us. Which means changing workers' shifts at the drop of a hat. So for instance, LNER swaps drivers' shifts at short notice from morning to evening or vice versa and expects fewer workers to work longer hours. Long night shifts are endemic: Network Rail customer service workers, in charge of station safety, routinely do 12 hours; LNER drivers do 9 hours...



No, the only way to get the railway running properly would be to take it away from these private sharks. Rail workers themselves could make sure there are enough of them to run trains safely, while working reasonable hours. ☐

• Williams wants a new model railway franchise

Under the spotlight for last year's timetable chaos, failed franchises and delays, transport secretary Chris Grayling got British Airways' former boss, Keith Williams, to lead a review of the rail network. This Rail Review will be published in autumn, but a speech made by Williams to the railway sharks on 26 February, gave a taste of what's in store.

After 5 months (so far) of analysis, Williams considers that the current franchising model is no longer "fit for purpose". For both passengers and workers that might sound blindingly obvious given the ever-rising cost, cuts and chaos that privatisation has brought to the railways, but never mind that. What

Williams went to great lengths to point out is that franchises, which have encouraged "fragmentation", "short-termism", and a "lack of accountability", inhibit reform and investments. What his corporate jargon really means is that the escalating costs of the railway are down to the greed of all the private parasites who are taking their cut - the only purpose franchising was fit for!

So far, aside from suggesting "new models of franchising", "greater public control of contracts" and "integrated concessions", it's not yet clear what the plan is. What is clear though, is that there is nothing to expect from a government that, reform after reform, has only been

creating new avenues for increasing the parasitism of the capitalist class on the rail system.



• Did they say final offer?

This is serious: after all this time Network Rail has come up with a joke of a final offer for signal workers. And it doesn't even guarantee that we won't be made redundant. This "non-compulsory redundancy" situation would only last up until December. Well, our box is due to close in March 2021, so to accept this pay deal would leave us all vulnerable. It's quite clear: we say no. [Workers' Platform King's X, 27/02/19]

• Shall we hop on?

The Azuma train hasn't yet made an appearance. Instead, we had a nice surprise last week: a steam train put on display in the middle of the station. Apparently, it's an ad campaign for a railway-camping tour in the Snowdonia National Park in Wales. Let's get on board! [Workers' Platform King's X, 27/02/19]

• Wind-train...

We hear HS2 is claiming that some of its trains could be run on wind power, aiming to please the green-minded. Yeah, they're trying hard to get everyone on board this ridiculously overpriced project... too big to fail? [Workers' Platform King's X, 27/02/19]

• More night workers needed

How come GN managers won't let us take leave days when we're on night shift? In fact we know why: they haven't employed enough night cover. So we should take our entitled time off when we need to - and leave them to deal with the problem they've created. [Workers' Platform King's X, 27/02/19]

• If they want us at work...

Enough is enough for staff living in Peterborough trying to get to work at weekends. Due to endless engineering work, we're expected to get up at the

crack of dawn to get a coach replacement (with changes!) or/and, god-knows-what, to get to work on time! A 45min journey becomes a 4-5hr nightmarish expedition! What happened to trains dedicated to pick up staff (which could be allowed to run as an exception), or dedicated staff taxis? [Workers' Platform King's X, 27/02/19]

• Let's recycle those booklets

How dare LNER imply that on-board catering workers don't know how to "handle cash" - a job we've been doing without problems for years (except when the cursed EPOS machines play up)! Yes, that's what's implied with this rushed-out booklet on cash-handling, supposedly to spell out a policy they don't have, but actually to cover their own backs, after they instituted searches and accused some among us, without cause, of stealing! Seems to us the only way to answer them is to stop handling any cash at all. [Workers' Platform King's X, 27/02/19]

Kashmir

Why the current "escalation" between India and Pakistan over Kashmir? It was sparked by a suicide bombing which killed 40 Indian soldiers in Indian-occupied South Kashmir. The attack was claimed by a far-right Islamist group, Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), which is based in Pakistan.

Kashmir has been a permanent conflict zone between India and Pakistan ever since British imperialism partitioned the Indian subcontinent, in 1947. Since that time, extremely poor Kashmir has itself been partitioned and occupied by the Indian and Pakistani armies. This situation has given birth to a host of armed groups: some demand an independent state; others just want peace and all troops out; others still, like JeM, use religion as a cover to justify their aim of expanding their political influence to the entire subcontinent.

Kashmir is usually forgotten until violent tensions flare up between

A whole population caught in a colonial trap



India and Pakistan across its borders - tensions which are used on both sides by politicians for their own ends. As was the case this time, for India's right-wing nationalist Prime Minister Modi. In the middle of an election campaign, he immediately retaliated "against Pakistan" with air-strikes over the Pakistani-occupied part of Kashmir,

while inciting anti-Pakistani hysteria in India. Fortunately, it seems that for its own reasons, the Pakistani regime chose to de-escalate the tensions. But what about the next time? How much longer will the population of the subcontinent have to suffer from the painful left-overs of British colonialism? □

Chagos

The UN International Court of Justice (ICJ) has called for Britain to end its occupation of the Chagos archipelago in the Indian Ocean - at last!

Back in 1965, Chagos was carved out of Mauritius to form the "British Indian Ocean Territory". Thereafter, the British

British and US imperialism in the dock

government proceeded to deport the entire Chagossian population (over 1,500 people), to make way for a US air base on the archipelago's largest island, Diego Garcia.

Ever since that time, Chagossians have been fighting their deportation through the

British justice system. Over the past two decades, the High Court has even found in their favour on three occasions. But each time the government has produced some legal trick to reverse these judgments.

Unfortunately, the Chagossians are unlikely to have more luck with the ICJ than with the British justice system. Since the ICJ has only an advisory role, its condemnation of colonial crimes has always been purely symbolic. This is precisely what "international law" is really about. It is an instrument at the service of the imperialist powers, to justify their wars of aggression against the poor countries, as they did in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya. But it is certainly not a means for the victims of their imperialist order, such as the Chagossians, to defend their interests! □



A shield for the bosses' lethal greed

The Serious Fraud Office just dropped its case against Rolls-Royce over bribery and corruption. It wasn't able to prove anyone personally guilty, so top R-R managers escaped unscathed. The SFO said there was "either insufficient evidence to provide a realistic prospect of conviction ... or ... it is not in the public interest to bring a prosecution...". Yes, this is how British law "works" - to protect the bosses!

Never mind that Rolls-Royce had

already admitted that it had been paying bribes to politicians and officials for the past 30 years, in at least 12 countries, to secure its lucrative business deals! As long as "British" shareholders' profits are flowing, leave them be! And it doesn't matter where the profits are made, either... Rolls Royce just announced 4,600 job cuts at its Derby plant by 2020 and is shifting production of its Trent XWB aircraft engines to Germany in the light of Brexit!

Meanwhile, Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt reacted against Germany's decision to halt weapons exports to Saudi Arabia because of the Yemen catastrophe. Unlike German officials, he's "standing up" for British arms companies, like BAE Systems, while shoring up the role of Saudi Arabia as imperialism's regional policeman, no matter the cost to the region's population, in Yemen and elsewhere. That's what Hunt means by "defending British business"! □

In addition to this paper, we publish bulletins in several large workplaces in the South East, a journal, "Class Struggle" and a series of pamphlets on topical issues. If you wish to know more, contact Workers' Fight by e-mail, at contact@w-fight.org, or by postal mail at:

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