

# WORKERS' fight



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

# FIGHTING THE LIARS IN POWER!

On Tuesday 11th February, a charter plane to Jamaica took off from London, with 17 deportees on-board. This was the 2nd such flight since Theresa May apologised for the Windrush scandal, in 2018.

Yet, these deportees are descendants of the Windrush generation. Most came to Britain decades ago and have lived and worked here ever since. They are entitled to British nationality and should never have been deported!

However, Johnson's political posturing comes first, no matter what. Since he wanted to make a show of his determination to clamp down on immigration and to be "tough on crime", he got the Home Office to find Jamaican-born individuals who had been sentenced to at least 12 months in jail, at some point in the past. Their sentences were for petty crime and had been served many years ago. But this did not stop Johnson, the serial liar, from branding them as "foreign criminals" on TV!

## **Anti-working class environment**

In other words, the Windrush scandal has been given a new lease of life by Johnson, to show what a "tough" prime minister he is!

Of course, May's Windrush apologies were loaded with hypocrisy, as was shown by her compensation scheme. Claimants had to fill complex forms and produce legal documents they could not get. 2 years on, the Home Office has only managed to award compensation to 36 claimants, out of the over 1,100 who managed to meet all the requirements to submit a claim!

But this is only the visible aspect of a much more serious problem. The 2014 Immigration Act which introduced May's hostile environment has never ceased to be in force and can still be used against migrant workers, exactly



as before, to deprive them of the right to have a roof over their heads, a job, or access to benefits and the NHS.

What is more, the new immigration bill which is being concocted by the government is designed to extend this hostile environment to EU workers and to tighten it up for all migrants. It will make the existing environment even more "hostile", by making a large section of the working class even more exposed to being blackmailed by their employers, landlords, etc.

## **A "fat cat's government"**

So this self-proclaimed "people's government" is beginning to show its real face. Just as it does by announcing a new round of austerity, or by admitting that their future "free trade" will involve checks and tariffs! Now that he no longer needs votes, Johnson is dropping some of his lies!

Of course, a government which was voted in by less than 30% of the electorate hardly represents "the people", let alone the working class, regardless

of the size of its Commons majority!

Scapegoating foreign workers and clamping down on them, the better to divide workers - this has been Tory policy since 2010. The fact that Johnson is now taking these policies even further, only reflects his hope that this will help to weaken the resistance of the working class, at a time when the capitalists are worried by the impact of the crisis on their profits.

This is why Johnson is now focusing on his grandiose plans. HS2 and his "Boris-bridge" with Northern Ireland, are not designed to "invest in the North" - but certainly to offer public funding to big companies. Nor are his 10 planned "freeports" designed to create jobs. But they will offer a way for the bosses to cut their wage bills by cutting workers' conditions.

So, yes, this government has declared war on the working class. It is a government of liars and of fat cats. This makes it all the more urgent for the working class to organise itself for the necessary fight back! ☐

## HS2

High Speed 2 (HS2) rail has turned out to be the mother of all gravy trains. Before the project is even properly underway, it's predicted that it's going to cost as much as 10X the original estimate, with over 10% of that already "spent"! And by the way, the EU, where many countries built fast train networks decades ago, had nothing whatsoever to do with this! If British governments failed to invest in modern railways it was their "sovereign" choice: they chose to pour public money into the feeding trough of private capitalists, rather than into public services. And if today they're making a mess of it, it's entirely their own mess! Even under pressure of public opinion, they're still determined to carry on splashing out on the spongers who rely on these government handouts and compensation payments.

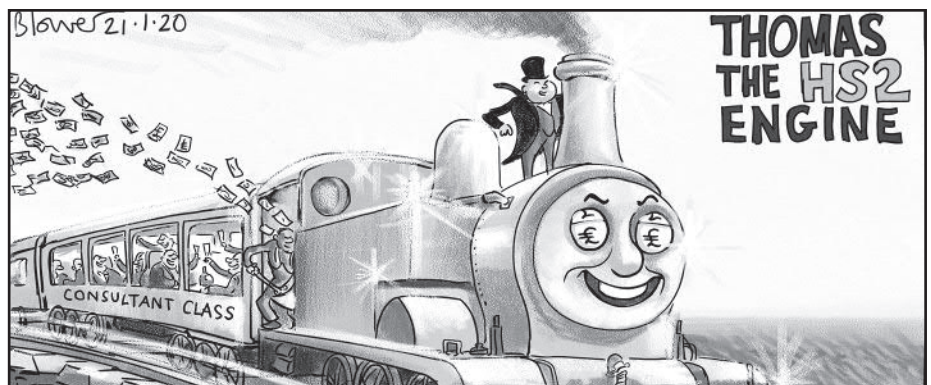
Of course, what they could do, would

### • For high speed or high spending?

Britain has long stood out among the rich countries, for its lack of high-speed trains. The first one, the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (HS1), was completed in 2003. It took 6 years for the Department for Transport (DfT) to propose a second high-speed line (HS2), in 2009, and another 8 years for Parliament to approve the start of its first phase, from London to Birmingham. By then, the estimated overall cost had already risen from £13bn to £56bn.

Since then, this cost has jumped to £107bn, with the National Audit Office saying last month that it was impossible "to estimate with certainty what the final cost could be". In fact, parliamentary approval was given without any extensive geological study of the planned route, while the cost of acquiring the required land was hugely underestimated. Lord Berkeley, in his report

## The mother of all gravy trains



be to find out exactly who is responsible for this HS2 planning mess and budget overshoot. They could nail the greedy crooks, who've been filling their pockets before their turn and get them to pay back all the cash they've nicked. And then they could take the whole project

into government hands, while keeping all profit sharks out of the loop. This is just common sense. But unfortunately we live under the dictatorship of capital and today, with Johnson in the driver's cab - all sense has flown out of the window. □

on HS2 published in January, stated that project managers "and ministers... continued to keep the true costs from Parliament until it was almost too late to stop the project".

While, according to the *Financial Times*, the first metre of track still had to be laid out in September 2019, a solid mountain of contracts had already been built around HS2. About 2,000 companies, including Kier, Balfour Beatty and Vinci, have been awarded almost £7bn in construction contracts from public funds. HS2 is undoubtedly the largest job on the industry order book!

Then, there is HS2 Ltd, the private company set up and funded by the DfT, to deliver the project. Its CEO, Mark Thurston, on £651,488/yr, was described by *The Times* as topping "the list of highly paid executives and civil servants funded by the taxpayer".

What's more, there are strange links between HS2 Ltd and its contractors. So, engineering giant CH2M was forced to hand back a £170m HS2 contract, in March 2017: it had been pointed out that Thurston had been CH2M's managing director for Europe just before joining HS2, two months before! Nevertheless, the Manchester Evening News reported at the time that "dozens of CH2M employees are also on secondment to HS2". And CH2M was probably just following common practices among the big contractors.

In short, private capital has spun a tight web around HS2, with which it is squeezing as much profits as it possibly can out of state funds. And whether HS2 eventually gets to run or not, we can be sure that this small layer of profiteering parasites will come out of this venture with their pockets full, thanks to their friends in government.

## 5G

### • Johnson's dilemma

According to the media, Trump was "apoplectic" over Johnson's decision not to impose a total ban on China's telecoms giant Huawei getting a share in the development of Britain's 5G network. And it did not take long for Britain's very own Duncan-Smith to get a few Tory right-wingers to join him in threatening Johnson with a Tory rebellion, unless the government cancelled its decision.

Yet, the arithmetic behind it is hardly questionable. Huawei is the world's biggest, most advanced and cheapest manufacturer of 5G equipment. Around 40% of Britain's existing 4G infrastructure is already based on Huawei equipment. And a large part of this 4G infrastructure is meant to be re-used to build the future 5G infrastructure.

In short, it's a no-brainer! A ban on Huawei equipment would have meant an estimated 3-year delay in rolling out 5G services, as well as high additional investment for Britain's four mobile network

operators: BT-EE, O2, Three and Vodafone. The odds are - therefore - that these operators used all their lobbying power to stop Johnson from imposing a total ban. And the government's compromise decision to grant Huawei a 35% market share shows that they've been heard.

Whether Johnson will stick to it, however, remains to be seen: between the White House and the City, he's got many masters to serve!

### • From trade war to "red" baiting

What makes the Huawei affair particularly ironical, is the scaremongering which underpins it. According to Trump and his fellow conspiracy theorists, banning Huawei is all about protecting the world from the Chinese state, which would otherwise have super-hacking powers over huge swathes of Britain via its 5G network.

Yet, to date, the biggest ever state-sponsored hacking operations, have been

those orchestrated by the American NSA and Britain's GCHQ. Back in 2014, former NSA specialist, Edward Snowden, explained that nothing could stop these state agencies from hacking into private communications. He also revealed that they were able to develop very effective hacking techniques to take control of any kind of communication equipment, regardless of its manufacturer.

On the basis of these revelations, it is now obvious that any communication system can be hacked by any state which has the necessary skills and equipment at its disposal. In this respect, though, the US and British states are probably far more of a threat to the entire world than the Chinese state, quite simply because they've got much longer hacking experience!

In other words, the scaremongering used by Trump to justify banning Huawei, was just another fake, whose sole purpose was to conceal the fact that this was a means of pressure used by the US in its trade war against China!



## Grenfell inquiry - a cynical buck-passing game

After the first part of the Grenfell inquiry, which shamelessly blamed the Fire Services and didn't go beyond confirming what was already known - i.e. that the cladding was dangerous - what is there to expect from the second part?

It was supposed to look at the reasons why the building was covered in inflammable cladding. But only two weeks after it started, in January, the companies concerned were already denying any responsibility and refusing to give evidence unless they were given a guarantee that this would not be used against them in criminal proceedings.

Harley Façade, which was contracted by construction company Rydon and architect firm Studio E, to refurbish Grenfell, claimed it couldn't have known that the cladding was a fire risk. It blames the manufacturers - Arconic, which supplied the cladding and Celotex, which supplied

the inflammable synthetic insulation. But these companies, in turn, blame Britain's building regulations, which allowed them to sell their lethal materials!

But what about the responsibility of the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (KCTMO), which contracted Rydon to clad the building, because it was cheapest, without even ensuring it complied with fire regulations? KCTMO was also in charge of the tower's regular fire safety checks! And which part of the enquiry will hold to account the council officials who set up KCTMO as an arms-length company to manage their housing stock in the first place and then looked the other way, without checking what it was doing? Or expose the responsibility of successive governments and housing ministers, who ignored a series of warnings against the dangers of combustible cladding over the years?

### • Housing crisis fuels overcrowding

Government figures show that almost twice as many households are in overcrowded private-rented accommodation as ten years ago, with the current figure at 283,000. Overcrowding is defined by three standards, reflecting whether rooms are shared by people of different sex, the floor space in each room and the number of people per room. Children aged 1 to 10 count as half a person each and babies not at all!

The overall number of households renting privately has grown by nearly half in ten years, to 4.5m: more than 11m people. Private rent consumes on average 40% of a tenant's income, a higher proportion than any other type of tenure. A quarter of families with children are now private renters, an increase of 84% in ten years.

No wonder then, that a rising proportion of households are crammed into properties

## Housing



In fact there is no intention to address any of these questions. The Grenfell tower survivors won't find their answers in this inquiry! ☐

that are too small for them. A chronic shortage of social housing exacerbated by government cuts and policies, has driven people into the arms of landlords charging uncontrolled rents, when they do not deliberately use overcrowding as a means to increase their incomes. Drastic council budget cuts leave councils overstretched even in their capacity to regulate this growing sector of the housing stock, which is now valued at over £1 trillion!

### The mask comes off

The Tories' promise of an "end to austerity" is already dead in the water. No big surprise there: this was one of the most obvious lies, first invented by May and then recycled by Johnson, to make Brexit sound more palatable.

In any case, Johnson has now publicly demanded that cabinet ministers identify 5% of their departmental budgets to cut by March. On the basis of last year's budget, that would mean a cut of £42bn for the coming year alone. That sort of saving can only be made by

cutting a lot of jobs and not just reducing spending on services, but cutting entire programmes. In other words, Tory austerity, which had never really stopped, is now back on the agenda.

By comparison, the 24% cuts imposed by Osborne in 2015 were to be achieved over the next four years - which means that Johnson's cuts would be more or less equivalent to a year of cuts under Osborne. Except that these cuts are going to be imposed on budgets which are already vastly

## Johnson watch

overstretched, after a full decade of previous cuts.

Johnson's promises of money for hospitals, more NHS nurses, more funding for schools, etc., have already been exposed as smoke and mirrors. But he forgot to explain that, under his watch, even smoke and mirrors would have to be paid for by the poorest, through real cuts in other services and benefits! Welcome to austerity 2.0! ☐

### • The shrinking economy

The economy, by the GDP measure, shrank more than expected in November, with a 0.3% contraction following 0.1% increases in the previous two months. This was not made public in time for the general election, though the figures were available a week before. Of course, they will say this is normal and that, in any case, the rules of civil service silence or "purdah" around general elections might have kept them under wraps anyway. But who can believe that Johnson wouldn't have found a way of leaking these figures, had they shown unexpected growth which was bound to work in his favour?

In any case, leaving aside the election,

the facts are there, once again. While Johnson and the Tory Brexiteers have been hailing the economic prosperity that they claimed Brexit would inevitably bring to Britain, it has only caused chaos and economic stagnation according to their own "economic growth" criterion. And all this while measures more relevant to the working class, like homelessness, poor housing, poverty, under-employment, life expectancy, etc., have all got much worse under their watch!

### • His special picture-popper

Boris Johnson has yet another new special advisor: the photographer Andrew Parsons - who's been snapping top Tories for more

than 12 years and snapping Johnson in a most flattering manner, during his latest leadership and election campaigns.

He takes pretty good pictures: he's a former Press Association photographer and co-founder of i-images picture agency. However, when Cameron employed him as his personal photographer (aptly called his "vanity staff") in 2010, he was obliged to let him go, as it created a minor storm because he was being paid by the taxpayer at a time of public austerity. So should Johnson get away with his own "vanity" appointment, likely to cost around £145,000/yr - which is the going rate for his "advisors"? After all, nobody would disagree that he needs professional air-brushing...

**Brexit watch****After B-Day, a lot more of the same nonsense!**

On the evening of B-Day - 31st January - TV screens were flooded with Union Jacks and nationalistic sound-bites. But despite this grotesque fanfare, opinion polls published over the next few days, showed that only around 15% said they believed Brexit was "done". Unreliable as polls may be, this means that Johnson failed to fool that many people, after all!

The truth, of course, is that B-Day only announced the second leg of the Brexit process, which should now start in March. This is the much harder bit - meant to dismantle and redefine the myriad of economic ties woven over the past 47 years between Britain and Europe. How long will it last? Above all, how much more chaos will it create? These are the real questions.

Johnson pledged to reach a "free trade deal" by the end of the year. But his insistence that Britain won't be a "rule-taker" and that, therefore, his government will not carry on following EU regulations on food standards, transport safety, the environment, etc., as Britain has done for nearly half-a-century, is just another of his nationalistic postures. Just as his call for a so-called "Canada plus, plus" deal

### • **Ditching the B-word**

Now that "Brexit" day has come and gone, Johnson doesn't want anyone using the "B" word any more. So entire departments are rebranded. The "Department for Exiting the EU" (DExEU) was closed down and rebranded "Taskforce Europe", with the ex-Secretary of State for Exiting the EU, Stephen Barclay, receiving a £17,000 (Br)-exiting gift! Rumour has it that

### • **Fisheries: hot air and blue waters...**

The contribution of Britain's fishing industry to the economy is just under 0.1% of GDP - compared with 4% for cars and 7% for financial services! You'd never guess it was so minimal, given the way fishing "rights" have taken centre-stage in the Brexit debate, with fishermen carping over their "betrayal" back in 1973 when Britain joined the EEC.

Peter Aldous, the Tory MP for Waveney in Suffolk, explained on BBC Radio that Brexit would bring a "sevenfold growth of our quota stocks in the southern North Sea". But in reality, it wouldn't be possible to catch half as many fish as this in the "southern North Sea" these days, if it ever was! In fact one feature of this strident fishing lobby is its attitude to sustainable fishing, enforced by the EU, so as to allow fish to reproduce themselves, instead of being decimated by over-fishing.



is yet another "cake and eat it" scheme, whereby British goods and services should be allowed to flow freely into the EU market without having to follow any rules in return.

Everyone knows this negotiating position won't wash with the EU. Just as everyone knows that Johnson's attempt to justify his strong-arm stance by claiming the high moral ground and boasting that Britain's regulatory standards "lead the world", is a bare-faced lie. After all, where did Britain's current regulations on paid holidays and working hours, among

others, originate - if not in EU regulations which filled a gaping hole in British employment legislation?

But never mind. Whether or not his position makes sense, this kind of nationalistic posturing has always been a favourite hobby for Johnson and his hard-Brexiters. And, as long as they are allowed to get away with it, they can be expected to carry on causing economic mayhem and threatening workers' jobs and conditions during the second leg of the Brexit process, just as much as they did during its first. □

even No.10's Brexit press team will be renamed "Europe and economy". And according to government officials, the future UK-EU free trade agreement is from now on not a "Brexit deal" but "a negotiated future relationship".

For all Johnson's blustering, however, Brexit is anything but "done", "baked", or whatever else his spin-docs may invent. The British economy

remains just as dependent as ever on the vast EU market and its freedom of movement of workers, goods and funds. In fact Johnson has only managed to complete the first leg of Brexit - the easy bit - after playing a significant role in paralysing it for 3 years and 7 months! And no matter what Johnson calls it, Brexit and its consequences will remain the same.

The loudest noise comes from the large and rich trawler-owners, but even the smaller boats would be affected if Johnson's Brexit negotiations deprived EU fishermen of most of their current fishing rights. Because two-thirds of the fishes, shellfish, lobsters, crabs and langoustines caught by British fishing boats are currently sold to the continent and such posturing would only mean that British catches would lose their overnight market! Johnson's xenophobic Brexit overbidding threatens to sink these fishermen's livelihoods, if not the whole industry, altogether.

### • **British Steel: just nationalise it!**

Nine months after British Steel's collapse last year, its future still hangs in the balance and so, therefore, does the fate of the 4,000 workers in Scunthorpe - an already shrunken workforce, serially cut from over 30,000 twenty years

ago. The latest hitch is opposition by the French government to a take over by the Chinese conglomerate, Jingye. Over 7 months, a deal with Jingye was drawn up involving efficiencies, including a 10% cut in the workforce, which was ready to be agreed (except for the 500 job cuts) by the Community Union.

But now the French government says no. And it can do that, because British Steel's French operations are "a strategic national asset" which manufactures track for the French rail network. So if it vetoes the sale, a Turkish firm, Cengiz Holdings, which was not first choice due to an association with the Turkish military, might be back in the picture. Especially since it claims "a strong trading relationship with French industries"!

This on-off rescue saga means workers are kept on tenterhooks over their future livelihoods. A simple solution would be for these essential steel-making plants to be nationalised, both here and in France!



**The old blame game is back**

Johnson and other Brexiteers often claimed that, past January 31st, politicians would no longer be able to blame the EU for their failures - there would be no more "hiding from the voters", in Michael Gove's words. In short, Johnson and his supporters would then be able to show their real mettle.

Never mind the fact that those who first invented the blame game against the EU were the same Tory right-wingers who support Brexit today. They used it to justify their austerity measures against the working class, when they took over the bailing out of big business after the 2008 crisis.

And in fact, it took only 48 hours after "B-Day" for Johnson to start the same old game again. This time, while he was accusing the EU of supposedly



trying to impose its regulations on Britain, he pointed the finger of blame at all foreigners, by launching the draft of a new bill to restrict immigration, due to come into force next year.

So the scapegoating has resumed. Once again, migrant workers will be

blamed for the collapse of the NHS, the housing crisis, the crisis in education, etc. And politicians will use this to try and divide workers' ranks in order to weaken their capacity to fight back. It is in the interest of the working class to make sure that they fail! ☐

**• Windrush 2.0 for EU citizens**

The EU settlement scheme introduced on 21st January 2019 allowed EU citizens living in Britain to apply for the right to live and work here permanently after Brexit. But out of 3.5 million EU citizens in Britain, only 1.5 million have been granted settled or pre-settled status (temporary leave to remain), while most of the remaining 2 million will have to apply before the end of June 2021.

The process should be straightforward. But this is underestimating the Home Office's ability to create bureaucratic obstacles. To date, 7,600

people had their applications rejected outright and among the people concerned were highly skilled workers who had lived and worked in Britain for decades and had families here! Home Secretary Priti Patel - whose family was expelled from Uganda in the 1960s just because they were Asian - is the architect of this scandal.

But what makes this even worse is the fact that, so far, the Home Office refuses to provide EU citizens with any documents confirming their status. If they are required to prove their right to live and work in Britain, or to get

access to NHS treatment, they will have to get their landlord, employer or doctor to go online to check!

In other words, once May's hostile environment will have been extended to them by Priti Patel's new immigration bill, EU citizens will be caught in the same trap as the Windrush generation: having no means to prove their status on the spot, they will face losing their homes or jobs, being refused NHS treatment, re-entry into Britain, or even the possibility of being deported!

**• The schools crisis will only get worse**

In response to the ongoing teacher recruitment and retention crisis, the government announced that starting salaries for new teachers will rise by 6.7% in September. The recruitment target for new teachers has been missed for the past 7 years, and last year there was a shortfall of 3,510.

If it's this shortfall which the government are trying to solve, their post-Brexit immigration plans will instead make the

situation worse. Last year, the number of applications from EU teachers fell by 25%. And if EU migrants in the future need a Tier 2 visa (costing £1,220), while having to pay £625 a year to use the NHS, in total it would cost them £4,345 to teach in the UK for 5 years: they're not likely to queue up for the "privilege"!

So while Johnson hopes to recruit a few more "British" teachers, with higher

starting salaries, the real problems in education remain untouched. The rest of the teaching profession has only been offered a 2.5% increase this year, which is around the expected level of inflation - i.e., not a pay rise at all! And that comes on top of 5 years (2013-18) of a 1% pay freeze! Between low pay and teacher shortages, schools and staff are being pushed to breaking point.

**Prevent, Priti and Drax Power**

The latest police list of extremist groups posing a "terror threat", has included climate change protest group, Extinction Rebellion (XR), as well as Greenpeace! But never mind, despite current and former police chiefs, including those in charge of the Force's "Prevent" strategy, apologetically saying this was an error of judgement, Home Secretary Priti Patel still vigorously defends it as "quite frankly... the proper thing to do"!

XR is also included in a Prevent guide entitled "Safeguarding young people and adults from ideological extremism", alongside neo-nazi and Islamist terror groups, which teachers and community workers are meant to follow. But with several people "cured" of their "bad ideas" turning out to have held firmly onto them, it seems "Prevent" programmes have not prevented very much...

But what Priti Patel and Boris Johnson did "prevent" is their CO2 emission pledges from having any

consequences! The government has agreed Drax Power's application to build Europe's biggest gas power station in North Yorkshire, which will lead to a huge increase in CO2 emissions.

According to the very broad definition of terrorism included in the Terrorism Act 2000 - "action which [...] creates a serious risk to the health or safety of the public" - Drax Power seems, in fact, a much better candidate than XR or Greenpeace for Patel's list!

**Ford Dagenham Engine Plant****• 2035 Dead-line?**

So how does the week begin? With the announcement that diesel/petrol engines are to be banned in Britain 5 years sooner than expected - from 2035! Obviously, it puts this plant's future into question, even if Africa/Asia may still need diesels. So what is Ford's PLAN for D'ham? The bosses know exactly what's coming, going, and what they'll do about it. By keeping us in the dark, they show their contempt for us. It's not new. But why should we accept it? [Workers Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 5/2/20]

**• "Any answers" this Friday!**

So we hear there's to be a visit this Friday by either a Ford top knob. So we expect - in fact we demand! - that we get the chance to put these job-slashers and cost-cutters on the spot. We want their answers! [Workers Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 5/2/20]

**• Ford always lags behind**

It seems that Nissan aims to build - free of possible Brexit tariffs and customs duties - the cars it needs for the British market,

in Britain, to save money. You'd think Ford, which still dominates the British car market, would do the same... But don't count on it! [Workers Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 5/2/20]

**• Ford lies**

We see that the 4th Quarter Ford financial report showed losses (£1.3bn), which will be used to excuse yet more cost cutting at our unaffordable expense. But these aren't "real" losses. Merely redesign investments, and usual pension and insurance payments - altho' warranty issues, i.e., poor quality leading to vehicle failure, due to corner cutting(!) - surely had an effect. Hmmm. "Ford Truths"... [Workers Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 5/2/20]

**• He's enjoying the BBC's gravy train...**

We saw that D'ham's Panther production (again) featured on BBC - this time in "Great British Railway Journeys", Limehouse to Rochford. But it also showed 1936 footage of Cable Street's fight (including workers who'd been to Spain to fight Franco) against Mosley's fascists. Strange that



presenter, ex-Tory and ultra-right Brexit advocate, Michael Portillo, failed to mention that his own father was a socialist republican who fled fascism in Spain in the 1930s. Nor (of course!) was there any mention of the Brexit- or diesel-related crisis facing us workers! [Workers Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 5/2/20]

**• Arctic plant**

So this "state-of-the-art" (ha-ha) Panther assembly area was still bloody freezing when we came in last Monday! We know this big place is difficult to warm up - and the roof is leaking everywhere! But they could at least start heating up the place early on Sunday to have it warmer for us when we come in. We cannot handle frozen tools any more! And Ford knows very well that we're ready to do something about it... [Workers Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 5/2/20]

**BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)****• Workers & robots vs the profit-machine**

There are quite a few robots spraying in the paintshop, but no robot to clean up the mess they make! How is it possible that the worst jobs - where sub-contracted workers crawl on dirty grids scratching off chemicals and grease by hand - are not even automated?

The answer is simple, if BMW could get away with paying everyone the same low wages as these super-exploited mates, there'd be no robots in this place! So let them invest their billions into robots and share the rest of the work between us. [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford Mini 29/1/20]

**• Test failed**

Are these "stress tests" giving us a view of the future which BMW imagines for us? When they increase the number of electric cars which come down the

line to 1 in every 4, we are rushed off our feet. There is simply not enough time to complete the work, so if 1 car in 4 is missing parts, we know who's to blame! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford Mini 29/1/20]

**• Why rush?**

But what is this rush even for? Isn't there already quite a large stockpile of finished cars hanging round here? Another good reason to slow down and take longer breaks. [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford Mini 29/1/20]

**• Exploiter of the year?**

We saw that BMW picked up three awards at a ceremony the other day, including Manufacturer of the Year. Members of the judging panel went into ecstasies over the Electric Vehicle operation and "ingenuity, vision and drive". But our favourite has to be "people and technology poetry in motion". Which planet do they live on? [Workers' Fight



bulletin BMW Oxford Mini 29/1/20]

**• The answer is in their pockets**

Bloody outrageous that R&H expects us to work harder to fill the gaps caused by the lack of mates, as if that was our responsibility!? BMW/R&H forced our agency mates to leave by not paying them over Xmas. So the under-manning is their problem... ours is not breaking our backs. [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford Mini 29/1/20]

**Any excuse to boost profits**

JLR's 500 job cuts at Halewood, announced in January, is just the latest episode in their "cost-saving" plan of £2.5bn, including 4,500 job cuts, announced last year. Ford will close Bridgend engine plant in September and Honda will close plants in Britain next year. As part of global "cost-saving" schemes all over the car industry, companies are closing factories and cutting jobs. The fact is, car sales both

in Britain and the rest of the world have fallen for the last two years, as a result of the ongoing crisis.

This crisis, coupled with the uncertainty of Brexit and the change to electric cars, provides each car manufacturer with a pretext and an opportunity to boost its profits. They use all kinds of dirty tricks to increase the exploitation of their workers, so as to reduce their costs, increase their profit margins and enlarge their market share, while at the same time crying poverty to obtain state

subsidies.

But at the same time, productivity - the value produced by (and mostly stolen from) each worker in a year - in the car industry, has tripled in just the last two decades, so that each worker produces a value of about £100,000 per year. Yet instead of this wealth being used to improve the conditions and increase the wages and pensions of workers, it's being stuffed into shareholders pockets!



**Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)****A fight is long overdue**

At the end of January, Royal Mail started rolling out their national "Parcel Strategy". Bosses want to decommission letter-sorting machines and close Mail Processing Units, while cutting jobs in at least 600 Delivery Offices. They want to try large parcels-only deliveries in Swindon, transferring smaller parcels to existing delivery duties and, therefore, increasing overall walk lengths. And they want to introduce a clocking system already trialled in the West London's Greenford Mail Centre, allowing managers to find "efficiencies" - i.e., more job cuts!

In fact such attacks have been on-going

since before privatisation. Final salary pensions were ended, tens of thousands of jobs went and casual workers have become a fixture. This latest round of cuts/restructuring was meant to take place with union consent, after the so-called "4 Pillars Agreement" was signed between RM and the CWU 2 years ago. But with a new top boss in place on the RM Board, the CWU officials feel that they're no longer being consulted over RM's strategy.

Eventually, last November they called a strike ballot. However the 97% vote for strike was invalidated by the courts, most likely because of the impending



general election. And instead of re-balloting straightaway, union leaders went back into talks with RM! One month later, they tell us that RM still isn't treating them with the respect they deserve, so another strike ballot is "on" between 3-17 March. Well better late than never: we need to make the best of this opportunity to regain lost ground! But we'll only do so by taking the fight into our own hands.

**• No real mystery**

Walkouts in DOs continue. A couple of weeks ago, the media reported a "mystery" walkout in Havant (PO9 and PO10). It's strange that nobody's talking about why it happened, but of course we can guess the reason... Yes, the managers everywhere are pushing their luck and bullying workers and we all know it. Yet another reason for a national strike ASAP. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant bulletin 29/1/20]

**• No pillars, no gimmicks!**

We have to say something about this fixation that the CWU has with the 4 Pillars Agreement - nothing good has, nor will, come out of such thinking. Remember, the "Shorter Working Week" was in that agreement, and where's it gone now? As for job cuts and casualisation, this is happening in front of our eyes. So let's talk about fighting for more permanent jobs, shorter hours and better conditions on our own terms. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant bulletin 29/1/20]

**• Caring about our health?**

So now we hear that RM is screening the health of RM-PFS engineers... only? But what about everybody else? Cleaners also work with hazardous chemical products and the rest of us have been working in a construction site, breathing in silica dust and who knows what, for over a year now! In fact, all of us should be screened, x-rayed, hearing tested, blood tested, etc.! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant bulletin 29/1/20]

**King's Cross railway station (London)****Welcome back to the Mark 4!**

LNER's Azuma trains were meant to have been purpose-built by Hitachi. And they're great, just as long as no-body's on board: neither workers, nor passengers - and as long as passengers don't bring luggage!

Space to move, let alone store suitcases doesn't exist. Aisles are blocked, preventing staff from walking through and cases have even been stacked against doors - threatening to fall out whenever the doors open. When the Azumas went to Scotland for the first time in busy December, the problem came to a head. Managers allocated

2 seats at the end of the row temporarily, in each carriage, for luggage. Except seats are meant for people to sit on and piling suitcases on them just led to a dangerous tottering tower which could topple onto someone's head: which is exactly what happened!

After several hazardous incidents (including involving drivers' controls) due to the faulty design, managers have now decided to "pause" the receipt of further new Azumas, "... enabling a catch-up of heavy cleans and some modifications/defect clearance". And they've now announced they'll



bring back the old Mark 4 coaches and class 91 locomotives - with their guard's van, and plenty of vestibule space. The bosses claim it's because they need more trains than expected. They wouldn't admit their colossal, costly, cock-up, would they?

**• Northern Rail "renationalised"?**

So the "Operator of Last Resort" (OLR) is taking over Northern "Fail". The government points to the fact that only 56% of its trains arrived on time. But for all other lines, it was still only 65%. In fact over 50% of delays everywhere are due to failures by Network Rail - which now has a government "warning"! And then what? Does it take itself over? This is absurd. The whole rail system needs taking over and re-integrating. But not under control of an "OLR", (we LNER workers know it changes nothing!) but under rail worker and passenger control. [Workers' Platform King's X 29/1/20]

**• Only keeping up appearances...**

Incredible! LNER managers have announced that they'll be coming on board the Azumas from March onwards to check on our appearance and "uniform standards"! Not to check on the state of the trains, the seating, lack of space, luggage anarchy, lack of staff, lack of equipment, lack of stocks, or to see for themselves how chefs cope without prep time, or what happens when the 2X5 car has no senior host, etc., etc!! Of course not! Why should they care about all these fundamentals, when what's really important is whether we're wearing a name badge or not...? [Workers' Platform King's X 29/1/20]

**• 8 hours is 8 hours**

Most of us Atalian cleaners aren't exactly keen to work 12-hour shifts, especially when we get told that if we refuse, we may suffer "consequences"! Nevertheless, when we were sent to Peterborough at the weekend - our shift was extended to 12 hours! Well, in case Atalian forgot, our contract says 8 hours. So if going to Peterborough takes 2 hours back and forth, for future reference, we should be working there for only 4 hours. And that's that. PS: BTW, if the night shift could be laid off (on full pay) because there was no work at KX, why weren't the rest of us just laid off too? [Workers' Platform King's X 29/1/20]

## Palestine

What happens when two crooks awaiting public "trial" get together? This was the scenario on 28 January, when crook number one, almost-impeached US President Trump, facing elections on 3 November and crook number two, Israel's PM Netanyahu facing 3 criminal indictments and an election re-run for the 3rd time in a year on 2 March, unveiled their "Deal of the Century" for "Middle East peace"!

This 80-page, "Vision to Improve the Lives of the Palestinian and Israeli People" aims to "end the conflict, and unlock the vast human potential and economic opportunity that peace will bring to Israelis, Palestinians and the region as a whole", with \$50bn supposedly offered for investment and real estate deals!

The (only) 30 pages devoted to practical politics, explain that since Israel's "security" is the main priority, Israel will not only continue to control the whole territory, but must expand into the Jordan valley (bringing illegal Israeli settlements there into Israel) and take over the Palestinian-controlled area along the West bank of the Jordan river.

So Palestinians would now be left with only 15% of the country, instead of the (already unacceptable) 22% objective of the UN's "2-state solution" (endorsed by all previous US

## Trump's plan: "apartheid" is too nice a word



administrations!). Their territory would now comprise 4 enclaves, 3 in the West Bank separated by Israeli settlements, plus Gaza. New small enclaves in the southern Negev desert - as special economic/agricultural zones - are proposed. Palestinian refugees would be denied the right of return and East Jerusalem, up to now retained as the Palestinian capital, would be handed to Israel.

Trump's one-sided, bigoted policy isn't new: in 2018, the US moved its embassy to Jerusalem, closed Palestine's Washington delegation and cut Palestinian aid funds. Last November, Secretary of State Pompeo declared Israeli settlements on Palestinian land to be "legal".

Unsurprisingly, this Trump/Netanyahu "apartheid-bantustan" for Palestine was rejected out of hand by the Palestinians. Arab League countries including Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan have retracted their previous conditional support for it. It has provoked angry protests on the West Bank and stone-throwing Palestinian youths have been shot by the Israeli army. Blood is flowing.

And all for the sake of self-serving politics: Netanyahu's play for the Israeli far-right and settler vote and Trump's refurbishment of his tarnished image as a "world peacemaker", looking to November's election. Never mind the fuel they pour on the raging Middle East fire. □

## Letter from India

The recent election campaign for the regional assembly in the Indian state of Delhi, which was held on 8 February (the results of which were still pending when we went to press), exposed once again how India's political parties are whipping up communal prejudices for the sake of electioneering - and the dangerous consequences this can have.

In this election, the leading contenders were the right-wing Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP or Indian People's Party), which forms the government at the Centre, and a relatively new, anti-corruption party, the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP or Every Man's Party) which forms the regional government in Delhi. The BJP wanted to reverse their humiliating defeat in 2015, when the AAP had almost completely wiped them out, including by resorting to the dirtiest tricks.

## Communal electioneering at work in Delhi's elections

So, it chose to target a peaceful sit-in, in the predominantly Muslim neighbourhood of Shaheen Bagh. This sit-in has been held since December, as a protest against the BJP federal government's plan to introduce legislation which threatens to deprive Indian Muslims of their citizenship. In speeches delivered at election rallies which were broadcast on all the major news channels, BJP campaigners linked this sit-in to every "enemy" they could find, from "Kashmiri terrorists", to Pakistan and even ISIL, and portrayed the protestors as suicide bombers, rapists and murderers. They even called for these "traitors to the nation" to be shot.

Far from taking a clear stand against these provocations, the AAP has remained silent, while its leader, Delhi's current Chief Minister, Arvind Kejriwal, was visiting Hindu temples and boasting

about his knowledge of Hindu religious scriptures in an effort to win more Hindu voters. The result of all this poisonous electioneering was that three gunmen linked to far-right Hindu groups, showed up at Shaheen Bagh and another protest site and shot at protestors, injuring one. A gunman shouted that in India, only Hindus can have their say.

While the politicians are thus fanning the flames of communal divisions in their rivalry for posts and power, what is supposed to happen to Delhi's 3 million slum dwellers and growing army of unemployed workers? As far as these politicians are concerned, the poor can just as well rot in poverty - or get shot, if they happen to be at the wrong end of their communal demagoguery. □

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](mailto:contact@w-fight.org), or by postal mail at:

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