

# WORKERS' fight



No 87 - October 2017

price 30p

<http://www.w-fight.org>  
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ISSN 2040-400X

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

## Against their crisis and Brexit OUR FUTURE DEPENDS ON OUR FIGHTS!

The politicians' world is in turmoil again. At the time of writing, the Tory conference is exposing the same rivalries which have driven British politics for the past two years.

May's Florence speech, which was meant to unlock the Brexit process, was just a balancing act designed to placate her party's warring factions. But they already had their guns out.

Boris Johnson, the buffoon, had fired first. He had pulled his tired old "£350m/wk" out, to reassert himself as the cabinet's leading hardliner - in case one was needed to replace a stumbling May. Then came David Gauke, a May "loyalist", stating his ambition to take Hammond's post. Meanwhile, Hammond was getting the press to quote his refusal to support May for a second term.

### **Corbyn ready to serve... the City**

For its part, Labour made a point of producing "new ideas" for its conference. But then, it was easy to draw up the list of emergency measures needed - in the here and now - to reduce the burden of the working class.

Renationalising utilities, rail and postal services? Of course! Abolishing zero-hours and other casual contracts used to drive wages down? That goes without saying! A massive programme of state-funded social housing? An obvious need! But then, these promises won't materialise before the next general election, in 2022 at the earliest - if they ever do. In short, the working class just has to bite the bullet and manage in the meantime!

But what was most significant in this conference lay elsewhere: delegates were denied a chance to debate Brexit, the one issue which dominates the political scene! This is because,



like May, Corbyn wants to have his cake and eat it. His pro-Brexit policy is packaged differently, but it's just as divisive: he "welcomes" EU workers already in Britain, but opposes their free movement. He wants the EU's billions to carry on feeding the profits of the City, but not EU plumbers and nurses to come and work here!

In short, Corbyn is offering Labour's services to oversee the Brexit the City wants. And by preventing any Brexit debate at his party conference, he's proved that, unlike May, he won't allow dissenters to get in his way!

### **Our fighting capacity will be decisive**

Corbyn's promises may sound like a big change from the Blair days. But like Blair, Corbyn wants to protect capitalist profits - for instance, by granting some form of compensation to the private sharks in case of nationalisation!

In any case, such promises are of no use for the working class. It is now that workers need to start regaining the

ground lost over the past decade. And now that they need to fight attempts at turning the screw of exploitation, using the crisis and Brexit as a pretext.

Yes, it is now, and not in 5-year's time, that workers need to end the bosses' use of casual jobs. It is now that they need really affordable homes - and many recruits, to stop the collapse of the NHS, among others.

And it is now that workers need to protect wages against the Brexit inflation. Just as it is now that they need to stop bosses from slashing thousands of jobs, like chains Asda and Aldi, or like Monarch - all blaming Brexit inflation.

Above all, what the working class needs is a party which sets itself the task of replacing this rotten capitalist order. It needs a party which leads its fights against the bosses - and which will unite its ranks, across sectional and national divisions, in order to build up its collective strength. Because, ultimately, it is only its collective strength which will shape its future! ☐

**Russia, 1917**

July 1917 saw the Provisional government launch a brutal offensive against the revolutionary forces. The Bolshevik party was banned, its publications closed down, many of its activists jailed or forced underground. In August, the political tension increased further. By the end of the month, Kornilov, a czarist general who had been appointed army commander by the Provisional government, ordered his elite troops to march on Petrograd. However, the revolutionary masses stood up to the challenge. A general strike blocked the railway tracks in front of Kornilov's troops and the Petrograd Soviet's militias, the Red Guards, launched a successful counter-attack. Within less than 3 weeks, the coup collapsed and the Bolsheviks were freed by the revolutionary soldiers. The pendulum of the class struggle was swinging back to the side of the revolution, with a vengeance. The time for the working class to seize power was approaching fast. Below is the account of these events, written by Leon Trotsky, in 1919:

In the Petrograd Soviet, the domination of our party was definitely strengthened from that time on... One after the other the provincial Soviets joined the Bolshevik position (...).

Here it will not be out of place to note, in a few words, the difference between the political role of the Soviets and that of the democratic organs of self-government [the urban and rural local authorities, known as *dumas* and *zemstvos* - WF] (...). The significance of the Revolution lies in the rapid changing of the judgement of the masses, in the fact that new and ever new strata of population acquire experience, verify their views of the day before, sweep them aside, work out new ones, desert old leaders and follow new ones in the forward march. During revolutionary times, formally democratic organizations, based upon the ponderous apparatus of universal suffrage, inevitably fall behind the development of the political consciousness of the masses. Quite different are the Soviets. They rely immediately upon organic groupings, such as shop, mill, factory, district, regiment, etc. (...) A *duma* or *zemstvo* member is supported by the amorphous mass of electors, which entrusts its full powers to him for a year and then breaks up. Whereas the Soviet electors remain always united by the conditions of their work and their existence; their deputy is ever before their eyes, at any moment they can prepare a mandate to him, censure him, recall or replace him with another person. (...)

In the meantime, the internal situation was becoming more and more complicated and threatening. The war dragged on aimlessly, senselessly and interminably. (...) At the front, the situation grew worse day by day. Chilly autumn, with its rains and winds, was drawing nigh. And there was looming up a fourth winter campaign. Supplies deteriorated every day. In the rear, the front had been forgotten - no reliefs, no new contingents, no warm

**On the eve of the October Revolution**

Moscow's Red Square,  
October 25, 1917

winter clothing, which was indispensable. Desertions grew in number. The old army committees, elected in the first period of the Revolution, remained at their places and supported prime minister Kerensky's policy. Re-elections were forbidden. An abyss sprang up between the committees and the soldier masses. Finally the soldiers began to regard the committees with hatred. With increasing frequency delegates from the trenches who were arriving in Petrograd and at the sessions of the Petrograd Soviet put the question point blank: "What is to be done further? By whom and how will the war be ended? Why is the Petrograd Soviet silent?"

The Petrograd Soviet was not silent. It demanded the immediate transfer of all power into the hands of the Soviets in the capital and in the provinces, the immediate transfer of the land to the peasants, workers' control over production, and immediate opening of peace negotiations. So long as the Bolsheviks remained an opposition party, our slogan - "all power to the Soviets" - had primarily a propagandistic value. But as soon as we found ourselves in the majority in the main Soviets, this policy imposed upon us the duty of a direct and immediate fight for power.

In the country villages, the situation had grown entangled and complicated in the extreme. The Revolution had promised land to the peasant, but at the same time, the leading parties [supporting the Provisional government - WF] demanded that the peasant should not touch this land... At first the peasants waited patiently, but when they began to lose patience, the government showered repressive measures upon them... The peasant masses were growing more and more impatient. What we had foretold at the very

beginning of the Revolution, was being realized: the peasants were seizing the land of their own accord. Repressive measures grew, arrests of revolutionary land committees began. In certain districts, Kerensky introduced martial law. A line of delegates, who came on foot, flowed from the villages to the Petrograd Soviet. They complained that they had been arrested when they attempted to carry out the Petrograd Soviet's programme and to transfer the estate holder's land into the hands of the peasant committees. The peasants demanded protection of us. We replied that we should be in a position to protect them only if the power were in our hands. From this, however, it followed that the Soviets had to seize the power if they did not wish to become mere debating societies. □

**WORKERS'**  
fight

**PUBLIC MEETING**

**Russia - October 1917**

**WORKING CLASS  
POWER!**

Saturday 21 October 2017, 1.00pm,  
Wesley's Chapel  
Kwanglim room  
49, City Road - EC1Y 1AU  
tube: Old Street

BM WORKERS' FIGHT - LONDON WC1N 3XX - contact@w-fight.org

## Losing its head, or just its cap?

At the beginning of September, the government announced it would lift the 1% public sector pay cap. But then, only cops and prison officers were offered a minimal 2% and 1.7% rise, which they rejected as an insult. For the rest, the pay cap was to remain.

However, this set a cat among the pigeons. For 7 long years, real wages have fallen. NHS/civil service workers have lost between £2,000-£3,500/year in real terms and ambulance workers over £5,000. To the point where, in 2015/16, private sector earnings overtook public sector earnings, reversing a pre-crisis trend.

So the civil service union, the CPS, is balloting for strike and others are making threats. Now the government's starting to talk about being "flexible" over teachers' pay. The irony is, that a rise in line with inflation would cost only £6bn by 2019-20 (says the Institute of Fiscal Studies), which is nothing, considering that the government "gives" corporations



£2.6bn/yr for every 1% cut it makes in their corporation tax. Of course it'd rather feed the bosses than workers. Or even cut them further as Boris Johnson

"helpfully" suggests, to fund a rise. Never mind that the most pressing problem in public services, is precisely, staff shortages! □

### • Statistics and profit

A new price index, called CPIH, has finally been accepted by the Office for National Statistics. Unlike the two previous indices (CPI and RPI), CPIH is meant to take into account all forms of housing costs, while better reflecting modern consumption habits. However, whether or not this is good news for working class people is another question, given the government's knack at cheating with statistics.

Who can forget, for instance, how

Cameron helped the bosses make savings on pensions and the government to make savings on benefits by replacing RPI with the lower CPI to calculate inflation-linked adjustments? And how, at the same time, the higher RPI index was retained to update train fares, student loan repayments and interest payments to the wealthy owners of some government bonds?

In other words, whether or not this

CPIH is a more reliable measure of inflation, the best way for workers to protect their purchasing power will always be to ensure that all wages, pensions and benefits are automatically - and verifiably - adjusted, in real time, to reflect real price increases. And to win such protection against inflation won't be a question of choosing one index over another, but a question of using their collective strength.

### • The number of precarious jobs isn't falling

According to official statistics, the number of workers employed on zero-hours contracts has dropped by 20,000, to 883,000 this year.

But the small print of the ONS report tells us that: "there is no single agreed definition of what zero-hours contracts are", adding that the real number for this year may be anything between 815,000 and 952,000. In fact, another measure gives an estimated number of around 1.4m!

Besides, the number employed on zero-hours contracts gives an incomplete idea of the number of those in insecure jobs, on low pay and with no guaranteed income. In particular, this is the case for

many, if not most, self-employed workers, although they aren't classified as being on zero-hours. And based on the ONS's own figures, the number of self-employed workers in the first quarter of this financial year increased by 88,000 compared to last year, to a total of 4.85m! So, the alleged decrease in zero-hours contracts which made the headlines in late September, is more than made up by an increase in self-employment. Behind the pseudo-scientific blur of official statistics, the screw of casualisation is still twisting full speed!

### • McDonald's telling whoppers

Last month, workers at two of McDonald's restaurants - in Cambridge and Crayford - went on 24hr strike over pay and working conditions. These are the first strikes

in McDonald's since it was established in Britain in 1974, as a well-known hire-and-fire, anti-union company.

McDonald's boss Paul Pomroy has the nerve to boast that if more than 7 out of 10 of his workers are on zero-hours contracts, they must be "loving it". Although he doesn't dare to say that they "love" their wages too: while those who are 25+ get the "national living wage" of £7.50/hr, due to a policy of saving on wages by employing under-25s, the average hourly wage of a "team trainer" is £6.70 and that of a "fast food attendant" £7.36 - far from enough to make a living!

In any case, regardless of the claims of their boss, McDonald strikers made sure their point of view was heard - by striking for an end to zero-hours contracts and a minimum of £10/hr!

### Housing subsidy - to banks and landlords

An annual review by the Chartered Institute of Housing found that the government now gives four times as much subsidy to private housing than it gives to the building of new social housing for rent. Of a total committed housing budget of £40bn until 2021, just

over £8bn is earmarked for affordable rented housing. Public investment in building by housing associations more than halved from £3.8bn in 2010 to £1.3bn in 2016 and the number of new social rented homes fell from 37,000 to 1,100!

By contrast, over £5bn has already been spent on programmes aimed at boosting home ownership

- thereby adding as much as 10% to house prices. This primarily benefits mortgage lenders whose loans are effectively underwritten by the Treasury. Meanwhile, most of the housing benefit bill (over £25bn/yr) goes straight into private landlords' pockets. And while the banks and landlords thrive on public subsidies, the housing queues are getting longer and longer!

**Brexit****Brexit fantasies, economic realities**

Since the Brexit referendum in June last year, the pound has fallen by around 13% against the dollar and the euro. So what about the grandiose claims of the Brexiteers that this fall would be beneficial, since 'British' products would be cheaper for the rest of the world? Their "reasoning" was that Britain would gain far more from its trade with the non-EU world than it would lose in the European market - so Brexit could potentially buoy up the economy. Nothing of the sort has happened, of course. The deficit in the trade in goods with non-EU countries increased by £2 billion, as the rising cost of imports offset any income from exports. Ironically enough, exports to the EU grew to cut the trade gap by £1.3bn, making the EU an even more important export market for British companies!

### • **The immigration racket**

Britain is becoming a more and more hostile environment for anyone trying to come here to live, unless they have unlimited cash. Since 2011 the Home Office has raised the charges for immigration applications to levels far above what they actually cost to process, making profits of up to 800%. Since the enquiries service was outsourced, even an enquiry by email to UK Visas and Immigration



The only tangible consequence of the fall in the value of the pound has been rising inflation, which is hitting the already shallow pockets of the working class. As

for politicians being held accountable for spreading such lies, that just won't happen within this political system. It has to happen outside - on the streets! □

### • **May's Big Brother banking**

From January, banks will check the immigration status of all current account holders. The details of anyone found to be "illegal" will be passed on to the Home Office which can then apply to the courts to freeze the individual's account.

Of course, big account holders have nothing to fear. Millionaires are always "legal" in May's scheme of things. But anyone with a small balance and a non-English name

from overseas incurs a charge of £5.48! And then there are the upfront charges for visa applicants for the use of the NHS. In April it became mandatory for NHS hospitals to check patients' immigration status so that those "not entitled" to treatment could be charged.

Registration for British citizenship costs £1,163 (£973 for a child) but many visas cost even more. An application for indefinite

leave to enter for a vulnerable adult dependent relative is charged at £3,250, though its processing is estimated to cost £423! And if the application is refused, it costs about the same to resubmit - meaning the Home Office can profit twice by refusing even on spurious grounds. And in the current climate of Fortress Britain, who would bet against them doing that?

### • **Amber Rudd: sending survivors to their deaths**

Home Secretary Amber Rudd trampled on three court orders to send an asylum-seeker back to Afghanistan, which he had fled after being threatened with beheading by the Taliban. 22-year old Samim Bigzadi was put on a flight to Kabul, despite the fact that his case was still under review. Another judge took out an injunction ordering the government to take Samim off

the flight and return him to London. This order too was ignored. Once he was landed in Kabul, a third judge ordered that he be returned to London. Rudd even appealed against this order, but she lost.

The courts have demanded an explanation from the government. But what explanation can there be, except that Rudd is trying to be seen "acting tough"

environment for migrants" she promised pro-Brexit voters. This siege and persecution mentality can only create a climate of fear affecting the whole population, "legal" and "illegal" alike. The working class of this country won't be free, so long as it allows the government to oppress other workers, just because they're not rich and not British enough.

on immigration in front of her electorate? And what does it matter to the likes of her whether this means that people fleeing war and persecution - wars in which the British military and her own party have a bloody hand - are not only prevented from reaching safe shores, but when they manage to do this, are actually forced to return to these war zones?

### • **Parliamentary posturing**

Having failed to even disrupt the passage of May's "Great Repeal Bill", Labour boasted of a couple of "victories" for getting two motions passed in the Commons - one against the raising of the cap on university tuition fees from £9,000 to £9,250/yr and the other, for the 1% cap on pay rises for NHS workers to be lifted.

Of course what Labour didn't spell out was that these two motions were not binding on the government anyway

- which was why the DUP was prepared to support them, since this wouldn't breach its deal to keep May afloat.

But isn't that the "beauty" of parliamentary "democracy"? Parliament is "generously" allowed to express its opposition, but only in votes... which the government can legally ignore. And that's precisely why relying on parliamentary politics has always been - and will always be - a loser for the working class!



## A florid May in Florence

May's speech in Florence on 23 September tried to set the record straight over Brexit, after Boris Johnson had just claimed, yet again, in an article in the Daily Telegraph, that among other things, leaving the EU would save Britain £350m/day. And after David Davis had said that transitional European Economic Area status (like Norway's) was the "worst of all worlds".

So this attempt to be conciliatory and get negotiations going after 9 months of stagnation, saw May reverse

### • Henry the VIII-th she isn't

The "Great Repeal Bill", now called the "EU Withdrawal Bill", passed into its first parliamentary phase on 11 September. But May should probably stop saying, as she did in Florence, that it ensures that "we have the same rules and regulations as the EU... (and) they are carried over into our domestic law at the moment we leave the EU." Because it might appear to some, that as a result, Brexit won't result in the changes that Brexiteers say they want!

her Brexit-mobile on two main issues: first, she said that while Britain was to leave the EU on 29 March 2019, there would indeed have to be an "implementation" period, during which "access to one another's markets should continue on current terms". In other words, during which Brexit wouldn't actually mean Brexit. This would have to be time-limited, but what limit, she couldn't say: it would last for at least two years!

Secondly, in contrast to the usual "we won't pay" rhetoric her Brexiteers spout,

In fact this is why, under this Bill, the government has apparently decided it must assume so-called "Henry 8th powers". Under the guise of reclaiming "sovereignty and control" from the EU institutions for the "British people", it actually centralises this control, placing it into the hands, not even of parliament, but the government itself. Ministers will thus be allowed to amend what was formerly EU regulation, without the usual referral to parliament for a vote.

## Brexit

she said, "The UK will honour commitments we have made during the period of our membership." And on shared EU projects, "we would want to make an ongoing contribution to cover our fair share of the costs involved". She used the word "creative" multiple times, appealing for a specially-designed non-membership status for Britain, whereby she had her cake and ate it, providing single market, tariff-free access without any of the necessary concessions. Much like the Labour Party's latest fence-top position? ☐

Which could well effect some of the few laws which have offered workers protection, like the Working Time Directive. All in all, the bill incorporates some 12,000 EU regulations. And while it was voted through by a majority of 36, with several anti-Corbyn Labour MPs voting with the government and several Remain Tory MPs voting against, it already has a huge number of amendments, meaning it may end up being far too big to ever get anywhere at all...

## Plunging wages, mounting debts

The level of debt in Britain has reached its highest level on record, at £297.3bn. Ten years of rising unemployment, casualisation and wage cuts have left a large section of the working class relying on credit to cover the gap between rising costs and shrinking wages. According to StepChange, a debt advice charity, an estimated 8.8m people have used credit cards and loans to pay for everyday household expenses over the past year. More than 5 in 10 among them were in employment, with 4 out of the 5 in full-time work.

### • Preying on the poorest

Since the financial crash in 2007-08, there have been sharks preying on those worst hit. Back then, payday loan sharks like Wonga lent small amounts at rates as high as 4,200% to people who could not borrow from banks because they had lost their jobs or taken a severe pay cut. Between 2006 and 2009, the number of people taking out these loans quadrupled to 1.2m, even including professionals like teachers and nurses. The government's

### • The system's 101 rackets against the poor

After a decade of crisis, an increasing number of cash-strapped people are relying on borrowing to make ends meet. And all sorts of schemes have appeared to make profits out of their misery.

One of the biggest of these schemes is the "Personal Contract Purchase" (PCP) car loan, which is now used to buy four in five new cars. It's a bit like a mortgage system for cars, with a low deposit (anywhere between 0 and 10%), except you don't own it, nor do you know in advance how much you'll have to pay to keep it at the end of the contract. It's

In fact, this piling-up of debt is set to surpass the levels registered just before the financial crisis in 2007-08. The average household unsecured debt at that time was £13,300, compared to £13,200 last year. This growing bubble of debt will lead to more economic turmoil if and when it bursts. This system can never "regulate" itself. It can only go blindly from crisis to crisis, leaving chaos and destruction in its wake. That is why it is unaffordable for the working class and needs to be overthrown! ☐

financial regulatory body finally stepped in, in 2014, to make Wonga cancel the debts of 330,000 customers and stipulated that borrowers should never have to pay back more than double (!) what they originally borrowed.

Since then, 1.8m people who had been refused credit by mainstream lenders have been forced into the clutches of other crooks, like doorstep lenders operating on council estates. One such

just designed to be attractive for people on low incomes.

Another, even more vicious scheme involves offering to transfer your debt onto a credit card with a zero interest rate for a set period (up to 43 months). It's designed to push people to borrow, before getting trapped when the interest-free period ends. So much so that today, 45% of the £65bn of credit card debt is on zero balance transfers!

Other lending rackets are more conventional. For instance, people pay for necessary household items, like washing

## Debt



lender, Morses Club, with 233,000 customers, has loaned out £82.2m so far this year, charging interest rates of between 50-82%. Behind these "legal" racketeers are even more dodgy loan-sharks offering money "informally", and whose repayments never end. Proof that regulating small crooks like Wonga, cannot possibly work, not as long as the "legal" big crooks are in power.

machines, on a weekly basis. At the end of the "rental" term, they own the product. But the interest charged is so steep that the total paid can easily reach three times its market price.

What an economic system! It not only pushes millions of people into dire poverty and turns their poverty into a source of profits for racketeers, but, just as with the subprime mortgages which triggered the 2007 crisis, it generates multiple new credit bubbles waiting to implode.

**King's Cross railway station (London)****It's no Virgin when it comes to exploitation**

Virgin Trains East Coast, has just offered us a 2-year pay deal with 3.2% in year 1 and RPI in year 2, conditional on the acceptance of cuts in the terms and level of sick pay: new starters would be denied it completely for a year, and then placed on 50% of the current level.

Virgin's justification is the £4m they paid in sick pay last year, which they want to cut. Given that sickness absences were not unusually high, is it that they expect this to become an issue? Because the staff cuts implemented since March have meant a very overworked workforce - a situation exacerbated by

badly-organised rostering! Apparently, having created the conditions for a rise in sickness, they don't want to pay for the consequences!

So far, this offer has been rejected by the leaders of the main union, the RMT, while Unite and TSSA are organising a referendum recommending rejection.

Since 2015, when VTEC made £733 million in revenue, it has consistently paid inadequate rises, delayed by at least 9 months. Yet Virgin, which also runs the West Coast line, is not short of money. It just registered the highest return ever in tickets sales and profit on that line and



has a virtual monopoly on the Anglo-Scottish service.

For 3 years, VTEC workers have been struggling on low wages which haven't kept up with the cost of living. It is high time we went into battle: the bosses will always ignore our needs until we force them to pay attention!

**• These aren't pearly gates**

It's too much that there are all these vacancies on the gatelines at Great Northern and Southern - between 40-50 along the line.

No wonder we're going crazy on the job with too few hands! We suspect that one reason is that they're expecting the ticket office guys to come and work on the gateline once they've shut the ticket offices. As if. [King's X Workers' Platform 20/9/17]

**• The bosses' wishful thinking**

Yes, this idea that ticket office workers are going to fill all the many GN gateline vacancies is outrageous. We never accepted that the ticket offices should close in the first place. The workers

need to stay where they are. [King's X Workers' Platform 20/9/17]

**• Permanent contracts now!**

But we have a problem: many mates have been working on the gatelines on a temp and agency basis, sometimes very short term - and with all the uncertainty that comes with it.

They're on inferior Ts&Cs and sometimes lower wages! We want them on permanent contracts and equal pay and conditions - NOW! No more messing about. [King's X Workers' Platform 20/9/17]

**• More trains = more hands**

ISS managers must be dreaming if they think we'll clean 12 more trains per day

on weekends, from December - when we're already struggling with the ones we have! So yes, we may be very pleased to see the new recruits they promise, but these trains won't be cleaned unless we see even more of these new faces around! [King's X Workers' Platform 20/9/17]

**• No to weekend marathons**

Apparently ISS managers have got it into their heads that on weekends, we should take our breaks very early during the shift, and then work 6 to 7 hours non-stop, when it is busy.

But what they want and what they'll get are two different things: we have to take our breaks when we need them most, and that's what we intend to do! [King's X Workers' Platform 20/9/17]

**Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)****• Solidarity to them!**

Some good news! We've heard that workers in Hungary who make the turbos for supplier Honeywell are on strike!! While it may mean some of us are laid off, there couldn't be a better reason than that our fellow workers somewhere in the world are fighting against the bosses' exploitation! We hope they win! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 27/9/17]

**• What's up at Bridgend?**

On the subject of other plants - mates at Ford Bridgend, are very worried about their situation as they hear rumours of impending closure, again. We need to be quick to support them in such an event, by any means necessary... [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 27/9/17]

**• The unity we need**

We're hearing ugly rumours about the plant union organisation - the split in the JWC has happened, tho' it's not officially recognised (yet).

But since the shopfloor's a union-official-free-zone, what are we to make of it? Personal rivalries, or principles, or neither? It's true that unity is strength. But when this unity concerns a body which is totally unaccountable to us, elected by stewards, not the shopfloor, and which is only there to get us to agree Ford's screwing of us, maybe it's not the "unity" of the JWC which is at issue, but the kind of "union" we, on the shopfloor, who face Ford's nonsense every day, actually need. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 27/9/17]

**• Respect for our collective selves**

Yeah, if we want to fight the company - for a change(!) and have our ballots respected (D'ham always rejected Ford's lousy pay offers and cuts), we need to think about this! With the pay negotiations coming, we sure will need the means to fight. And that would mean having our own shopfloor committee (linked to the other plants!) for the purpose, which we elect and which we can trust, because it gives account to us



every day. Not an extra JWC. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 27/9/17]

**• Ford's second class**

So here's the harm of 2nd tier: most Ford temps are made up to permanent, but they're still 2nd class citizens! They're doing equal work (or 10x harder!) on £100 less pay. It's as disgusting today as it was when the union negotiators signed the 2nd tier betrayal-agreement with Ford in 2012. As for more temps coming to do equal work on unequal pay - NO. We need permanent mates on full pay. BTW: re the recruitment of 40 temps - just 17 passed the "dexterity test". Were applicants asked to thread a needle? Or was this the friends&family effect? [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 27/9/17]

**Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**

**No to their attacks on pensions and conditions!**

At the time of writing a positive vote for strike by the 100,000-strong CWU membership in Royal Mail is anticipated against the latest attack on their pensions, wages and conditions.

Already, back in 2008, RM ended its final salary pension scheme and created a two-tier pension system: existing workers were placed into a career average (CARE) scheme, while new entrants were forced into a defined contribution (DC) scheme (with pensions depending on the ups and downs of the financial market). It now became impossible for us to know in advance by how much our standard of living would be cut on retirement.

This year RM announced that it would end the CARE scheme and that all workers would be put into a DC scheme. The

CWU responded by producing an "alternative pension plan": it would end the 2-tier system, placing all workers in a "Wage in Retirement Scheme" (WinRS). But retirement age would increase to 65 and pensions would be reduced compared to the current CARE scheme - WinRS being designed to save money for RM by "sharing risk". The CWU went along with RM's claim that retaining the existing system would soon become "unaffordable"!

RM wasn't interested in WinRS. It has now offered another scheme (Cash Balance at Retirement) which they call defined benefit - but lyingly, since it only defines the lump sum payable at retirement and nothing else!

As for pay, there's no increase:



merely a lump sum there too, of £375 and an additional 1.25% next April, but only if productivity targets are hit! And this depends on a long list of radical changes in working practices, automation and the introduction of "team working". New starts are to have worse conditions in every respect, creating a fully 2-tier workforce. RM justifies this by saying "times have changed". We'd be right to reject this out of hand and show RM that indeed times have changed and we'll fight back until we win!

**• Our say**

We were happy to see the 725 "yes" vote for strike in the MP consultative ballot with only 18 voting "no"... Yes, RM's "reviewed" offer was not just insulting - it is a declaration of war on everything we've won in the past, with our own blood, sweat and tears! This was just the first opportunity to express our anger and those who voted did! But of course, we know it's not words, but deeds, that will count towards winning this fight... [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 20/9/17]

**• Dear boss, I'm not your "colleague"**

We had the dubious pleasure of receiving Moya Greede's "vote no" letter, addressing us as "dear colleague"...

How nice! Unfortunately, that was followed by a list of more badly-worded insults: "greater flexibility for existing colleagues", "new shift patterns for new starters", "new Defined Benefit scheme", "giving up contractual legacy payments on a voluntary basis", "attendance policies fair for all" - in other words, cuts in working conditions, precarious jobs for new starters, cuts in pensions, black-mailing over legacy payments, cut in sick leave, etc. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 20/9/17]

**• When H&S comes last**

We were very worried after we heard a heavy sack had hit one of our workmates - who's fortunately back in good health. But why were the 1st Aiders not allowed to accompany our injured workmate to hospital, as used to happen? This time

the boss refused to allow them to leave the Mount! Apparently the argument was that 1st Aiders were needed here, on their jobs!! Is this due to a shortage of hands or a shortage of compassion? [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 20/9/17]

**• We'll record every incident!**

We think there's a serious issue over health and safety. The naturally hazardous nature of the work environment is being made worse by the fact that we're so short-handed and are told to rush around by management with one person doing a job usually done by two, thus increasing risk! On top of it all, managers are trying to avoid recording accidents to play down the situation, because if the truth were told, they'd be in big trouble! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 20/9/17]

**BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**

**• The line goes on, whatever the cost**

We were shocked at how the manager behaved when one of our mates on line 40 was injured as a result of a machine tool accident. With paramedics standing by ready to use oxygen etc., all he could say was, "clear the line, get him out of the way". His only preoccupation was to get production moving again asap. Yup, that's the bosses for you... [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford 20/9/17]

**• The too-long week**

Most of our weeks of early shifts this autumn look like being six days long, with BMW looking to add Saturdays. So we lose the relatively long week-end before a week of nights. BMW has got rid of guaranteed pensions, claiming they were costing too much.

We need to be getting rid of what costs us too much, too! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford 20/9/17]

**• BMW's expensive electric cars**

When BMW's big boss Harald Krüger cast doubt on whether the "E-Mini" would be built here, it was seen as something to do with Brexit. At the time, all the car bosses were asking May to give them a Nissan-style deal with guarantees over their investments in Britain.

But in fact the car just happened to be "awarded" to Cowley after the company had reduced the cost of our labour (even further!) by ending our final salary pension scheme!! That said, local bosses are now telling us that it will be a 3-year trial and that maybe only 20-30 cars would be built per shift. So it's not a serious project? Do they expect too few buyers? [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford 20/9/17]



**• Judging a book by its cover**

The design of the E-Mini building will give us some idea of what they intend. For instance, when BMW built the new plant in Leipzig, they went the full Monty. Hiring one of the world's top architects, Zaha Hadid, they paid for a state of the art design which wows every visitor and provides wonderful facilities (canteens, gymnasiums etc) that we can only dream of.

If they go for low-cost, slabs of concrete buildings with IKEA-style finishes... we'll get the message! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW Oxford 20/9/17]

## USA

### ***US players take a knee against Trump and the racists, but workers can stand up and fight those who try to divide its ranks!***

On Sunday 24 September, a year-long protest by American players, crossed over the Atlantic to reach Britain: at Wembley Stadium, 27 Jacksonville Jaguars and Baltimore Ravens players refused to stand during the US national anthem, taking a knee instead. A week later, at Wembley again, two other American teams made similar gestures of defiance.

It all started 13 months ago when San Francisco quarterback Colin Kaepernick sat on the benches during the US national anthem. This was his way of making a stand against the serial killing of young American blacks by trigger-happy white cops. As Kaepernick said later: *"I am not going to stand up to show pride in a flag for a country that oppresses black people, and people of colour, to me, this is bigger than football. There are bodies in the street, and people getting away with murder."*

Since then, the protest has escalated, especially after Trump referred to the far-right murderers of an anti-racist demonstrator at Charlottesville as *"very fine people"*, while calling for the protesting players to be *"fired"*. So much so, that by now, the protest has spread well beyond football, to baseball and basketball players.

#### ***Their politics versus ours***

Predictably, the media and political establishment accused the players of being unpatriotic, claiming that politics should be kept out of sports.

As if their politics wasn't all over sports, in the first place! The politics of big money, to start with, whereby sports events are, primarily, huge money spinners for shareholders. And the politics of flag-waving, whereby professional teams are supposed to carry the "flag" for a club or country, as part of a grotesque, artificial rivalry. As if the talent of players, who are bought and sold for a fortune on a multi-billion international "market", had anything to do with their birth place or their nationality!

So, yes, the politics of the ruling capitalist class are all over sports. And as



far as their politicians, like Trump, are concerned, the expensive show business which surrounds sporting events should only be used to advertise their commercial brands and to celebrate their poisonous nationalism - the same nationalism that they have been waving all over the world in order to justify sending soldiers to their deaths in the killing fields of their dirty wars, in Iraq, Afghanistan, and so many other places.

But, for once, whether they like it or not, their politics has been swept aside. Instead, thanks to the players' protests, the need to defend the rights of the oppressed has taken centre stage. And this is something that we, workers, can only welcome, both because we've had enough of all that big bucks business around the sports we like and because our side is the side of the oppressed, against the Trumps and their capitalist masters, who are our own exploiters. Yes, for once, it is our politics which have been heard at a British sports event!

#### ***A reminder of the fight to come***

Of course, the US players' protest is symbolic. It cannot force the likes of Trump to mend their ways. Nor can it change the racism and social injustices of a capitalist system which targets all those it aims to exploit with the same vicious contempt.

But the fact that this protest has been

heard in the heart of London, should be a salutary reminder. Indeed, what is so different between Trump's nationalistic, racist rants and the anti-migrant, flag-waving rants of pro-Brexit bigots in this country? May hasn't dared to issue a blanket ban on people coming from all sorts of poor countries, as Trump has done, but hasn't her Home Office already deported over 5,000 EU workers, just for being homeless? Haven't thousands of other EU workers been told that they had to leave, or face deportation, allegedly "by mistake"? And how many times have we heard politicians claiming that migrant workers are driving our wages down, when, in fact, the culprits are British bosses?

Whether here or in the US, the name of the exploiters' game is to drive a wedge within the ranks of the exploited, by scapegoating one minority of the working class or another, to weaken the working class as a whole. And whether here, in the name of putting "Britain first" in the Brexit process, or in the US, in the name of putting "America first", they are waving the flag of nationalism in order to cover what is really a determined attack against our class as a whole. But unlike the US players whose protest can only be symbolic, the working class of this country has the collective strength to stand up and fight back - and, at some point, it will have to use it!

In addition to this monthly paper, we publish fortnightly bulletins in several large workplaces in the South East, a quarterly journal, "Class Struggle" and the "Internationalist Communist Forums" - a series of pamphlets on topical issues.

If you wish to find out more about our ideas, activities and publications, contact the Workers' Fight activist who sold you this issue of our paper, or write to us either by e-mail, at [contact@w-fight.org](mailto:contact@w-fight.org), or by postal mail at:

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