

WORKERS' fight



No 93 - May 2018

price 30p

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ISSN 2040-400X

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

ONLY OUR FIGHTS WILL SHAPE OUR FUTURE!

Fifty years ago, in May 1968, the European wave of protests reached its peak in France. According to today's media, what happened then was just a gigantic rave party: French youth rioted for two months simply for their own pleasure. Or so the media want us to believe!

In fact, May 15th 1968 saw the beginning of Europe's largest general strike ever. At its peak, it involved nearly 10 million workers, many of whom occupied their plants and offices.

The riot police disappeared from the streets and the general strike turned into a festival of freedom and democracy. Above all, it showed the colossal power of the working class when it uses its collective strength.

A display of working class power...

Whether the capitalist media like it or not, this is what really happened in May-June 1968: the working class gave a bloody nose to its exploiters.

Companies which, for years, had been keeping wages down, were forced to give ground: the minimum wage was increased by 35% and all wages by at least 10%, while around half of the strike days were paid for. This fell short of the strikers' demands, but it was the first time in decades that the bosses were forced to concede so much. And all this, thanks to the workers' massive mobilisation.

Ironically, before May 1968, the media and politicians had been dismissing the very possibility of a militant mass mobilisation of the working class. They claimed that workers had long been "bought off" by what they called the "consumer society" and that working class consciousness and solidarity were gone forever.

Well, they were proved wrong. The



1968 strike posters: "Starting a prolonged struggle" and "We will go all the way"

general strike demonstrated, with a vengeance, that all the capitalists' attempts to con workers into believing that they had a stake in their profit system had failed! And this illustrates another strength of the working class - its ability to see through the lies of its exploiters, because exploitation always means exploitation and nothing else!

... that will be needed here soon!

It is precisely this demonstration of working class strength that everyone wants workers to forget, once and for all. But they won't.

Today also, bosses, politicians - and some union leaders - dismiss collective action as a thing of the past. They hope that after decades of attacks and reams of anti-strike laws, workers will have forgotten the power they can wield by using their numerical strength.

But they will be proved wrong. Nothing would function in this society without the working class - and there's nothing they can do about it. Besides, workers' fighting potential remains

intact, if only because it has never been used in any real fight back. And they are going to need this fighting potential.

As Brexit closes in, its Westminster promoters are exposing their anti-working class, anti-foreigner and racist agenda. The abhorrent treatment of so many migrant workers, the criminal neglect which cripples the NHS, the vicious policy which pushes workers into casual jobs in order to boost company profits - all these are part of a general offensive against the working class. And this is even before Brexit gets underway.

After Brexit, this offensive is bound to become far more aggressive. Whichever government is in office will try to get the working class to pay for the losses incurred by British capital.

At this point, like in France fifty years ago, the working class will need to mobilise its forces in an all-out fight back. Then it will show that, far from being a spent force, it is the force of the future! ☐

Social

Breast cancer scandal: Hunt says sorry

The abject apology to the House of Commons on 2nd May over 450,000 women not getting a final breast screening for cancer due to a computer error, is a first for arrogant Health Secretary, Jeremy Hunt. He suggested that 270 women could have died unnecessarily. But that is just a guess. Regular mammograms (breast x-rays) can reduce deaths from cancer by 20%. In Britain, women aged between 50 and 71 are offered one every 3 years. Hunt claimed this programme is "one of the most comprehensive in the world" - as usual Britain is better than everywhere else... But in France the screen is done every 2 years until women are 74!

The "computer glitch" dates back to 2009 - 8 years ago - and only now, when IT systems are being updated, they find it? So, since 2009, women between 68 and 71 just weren't invited for a screen!

• Schools-turned-soup kitchens?

With deepening cuts to social services and benefits, more families are being pushed into poverty. So much so that they cannot afford adequately to feed and clothe their children. In this context, schools in deprived areas say they are often left having to plug the gap left by axed government services. School teachers are giving meals, clothes and shoes to children or washing their laundry because families can't pay for hot



water. In winter, they are buying warm coats and boots for children. One head-teacher from Cumbria, said her pupils "have grey skin, poor teeth, poor hair, poor nails. They are smaller, they are thinner." As a result, many schools have been acting as informal food banks, giving the children food parcels on Friday so that they won't go hungry over the weekend. On Mondays, children often return to school hungry and tired after a

of radiologists to interpret them. There are just 7.5 radiologists per 100,000 population, compared to the EU average of 12.7 per 100,000. Recruiters have gone once more to India. So will they also ensure that these Indian medics get given the visas - and the welcome - they deserve? □

• Capita: disaster in the making

Capita, the government subcontractor which registered losses of over £500m last year and is £1.1bn in debt, has had to issue shares worth over £700m to shore up its finances. Now boss John Lewis claims that it's no longer heading for a crash. But who really knows?

Capita, with a workforce of 70,000 (double that of Carillion) is involved in core government IT functions, plus areas like school administration, disability benefit assessments, army recruitment, BBC licence fee collection, congestion charging, 'digital policing' and, through its subsidiary, Tascor, it escorts deportees for the Home Office, as the Windrush scandal exposed.

Already when Carillion went bust in January, Capita, G4S, and several other companies which depend heavily (if not exclusively) on public sector contracts, were looking shaky. However, for now, Capita is covering its losses. But cooking the books won't change reality - a heavily-indebted company hit by the public sector squeeze and avoiding collapse only

as long as it has the "trust" of its creditors. As for the government, it is praying for a miracle.



weekend with little food.

A recent survey estimated that 4.1m children are living in extreme poverty - nearly a third of the children in the country! The Institute of Fiscal Studies estimates that this will rise to 5m by 2021. In a country like Britain, a virtual tax haven for the world's super-rich, allowing malnutrition to spread among the working class, is criminal!

• A threat to public services

Another outsourcing company is in deep financial trouble. Allied Healthcare is seeking a restructuring of its debts to keep it in business. Allied, which employs 8,700 people, claims to be the largest provider of social care to people in their homes, caring for 13,500 people on behalf of 150 councils. It is also a major contractor to the NHS, providing medical centres, end of life care and 111 telephone services.

Allied's owner, through a series of shell companies, is Aurelius, a private equity investor which bought it in 2015. Care UK, the NHS's largest subcontractor, is also owned by a private equity fund, Bridgepoint. And it is looking to sell its operations bit by bit. It has already put its 114 care homes up for sale.

Outsourcing of vital public services puts them at the mercy of irresponsible speculators. It is a constant threat to the services themselves and their workers, as well as to the patients and others who depend on them. Only bringing them all back into public hands with the funding they need, can protect them from the worsening crisis.

The horse-trading goes on

Much to the dismay of the Westminster Brexiters, little Britain doesn't carry much economic weight against the rest of the EU. Britain's economy depends far too heavily on the EU market, with 43% of British exports in 2016 going to the Single Market. This was the reason why May had no option but to request a transition period after Brexit and accept that it would be on the EU's terms.

• Help-to-sack...

Over the past month, more high-street retail chains have announced job cuts. They include Shop Direct (2,000), Poundworld (1,500), Marks and Spencer (450), 2 Sisters (450) and Carpetright (300). This comes after months of job cuts in the retail sector, with the bosses making workers pay for falling high-street sales due to Brexit.

Companies such as New Look, CarpetRight, Poundworld, Toys R Us and Prezzo have been using what are known as CVAs or Company Voluntary Arrangements. Under this scheme, the government's Redundancy Payments Office pays the company's redundancy costs until the company can pay them back. Since CVA makes downsizing costless in the short term, it's effectively an incentive to cut jobs!

Their wars

• May's diversion

What do Prime Ministers do when stuck in political mud, as May certainly is over Brexit? Well they find something "impressive" to obscure the public's view.

So first, May accused "Russia" of a "chemical weapons attack" in Salisbury (never mind the absence of motive or evidence). But that only had limited political mileage. So a "chemical weapons attack" in Syria, and what's more, accompanied by footage showing children in distress, was uncannily timely - allowing her to call for air strikes and placing her alongside (or behind!) Trump and Macron... Again, no evidence was produced, of course. But these air strikes and the parliamentary stir caused by her refusal to first ask the Commons, was enough to boost May's image. And she even picked up some support from anti-Corbyn Labour backbenchers! As for Trump, this alleged "use of banned chemical weapons" by Syria gave him a pretext to keep US troops in Syria - which is what his state department wants - despite his promises to voters to pull them out. Very convenient,

Corbyn silent on atrocity in Gaza?

Who are the real anti-Semites? Surely those who drag the name of the Jewish people down into a bloody mire - as does the Israeli Defence Force under the ultra-right-wing leadership of prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu? Yes, when it shoots Palestinians inside their own fenced enclave - the Israeli-enforced "concentration camp", called Gaza?

Now the Brexiters' claim that it would be a breeze getting a "free trade deal" is turning out to be the fairy tale it always was! There is more and more speculation that May will have no choice but to keep Britain in the same EU customs union which she has always insisted Britain would leave. The issue of the Irish border, among others, says it all: it's glaringly obvious that she cannot have both customs duties being

Even before Brexit, therefore, the bosses already have a state-sponsored loss-protection system in place. As to the workers whose jobs are cut, the only state-sponsored arrangement for them, is a punitive benefit system which doesn't provide a decent living. And, with Brexit closing in, this only means that the working class will have to design its own loss-protection system - through collective action!

• The car bosses' bottomless begging bowl

Last month, Jaguar Land Rover got rid of 1000 temporary workers at its Solihull plant. Vauxhall then announced it was considering closing 100 dealerships, threatening up to 3800 jobs. As to Nissan, it plans to cut hundreds of jobs at its Sunderland plant.

all round.

For the Syrians who still live in and around Damascus, fortunately these strikes were more about politics than war, hitting buildings and killing nobody (or so we're told). And given that this is likely to be the endgame of this 7 year long Syrian catastrophe, it is in fact the West's way of upping the stakes against Syria's Assad, since he has clearly all but "won" the war against Daesh. They are ensuring that when the final settlement is made and reconstruction contracts are awarded, they are in the best position to dictate their terms and to pick their preferred chestnuts out of Syria's bloody fire.

• Boris and his blustering bombshells

After Britain's 4 Tornado jets launched missiles over an alleged Syrian chemical weapons factory in Homs, Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson told the BBC's Andrew Marr Show, that Russia could launch a "dirty war", including a cyber attack, in retaliation! "You have to take every possible precaution, and when you

On May 15, Palestinians mark the Nakba, or catastrophe, as they call the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 - when 750,000 Arabs were forcibly removed from their land in Palestine. Building up to this, Palestinians in Gaza have been protesting near the fence, outside of which are armed Israeli army blockhouses. And 41 Palestinians have so far been killed and

Brexit

imposed around Britain and a "frictionless border" between Northern Ireland and the Republic!

So yes, the to-ing and fro-ing and horse-trading between London and Brussels is nowhere near ending, nor are May's face-saving fantasies and posturing. But ultimately, what will prevail is the reality of the balance of forces - whether the Brexiters like it or not! □

Aren't these the same companies that, not so long ago, were pledging to increase investment regardless of Brexit? Of course, at the time, they were seeking guarantees that the government would compensate their losses afterwards. And several of them did get what they were hoping for, although the details were concealed in the name of commercial secrecy.

However, this has not stopped them from resuming their job cuts on the basis of the anticipated shrinkage of the British car market. But now, since they can't openly blame Brexit any more, they're blaming the "demonisation of diesel". In fact, they may well be trying to get even more state help - like state subsidies for the electric cars they are all preparing to launch. Whatever the case may be, there is no reason why workers should accept to pay for the bosses' manoeuvres with their jobs!

look at what Russia has done, not just in this country, in Salisbury, attacks on TV stations, on the democratic processes, on critical national infrastructure - of course we have to be very, very cautious indeed." So for Johnson, this attack by Britain on Syria, was really a proxy attack "in retaliation" against Russia?

One really has to wonder what on earth is going on in Boris's brain, let alone with the government's foreign policy. And even more so, when it appears that the chemical attack in Douma (and also perhaps the others which Syria is alleged to have carried out) was a false alarm, caused either deliberately, or simply because of the panic possessing those under attack.

That said, don't all bombs kill? So can anyone be fooled by the hypocrisy of the West's politicians when they shed tears over alleged child victims of sarin gas? These same politicians or their predecessors sanctioned the use of Agent Orange in Vietnam and they used depleted uranium tipped shells, cluster bombs, and white phosphorus in Iraq - and now they say it's fine for Saudi Arabia to do the same in Yemen!

more than 7,000 wounded.

That nobody in the British political establishment dares to stand up and speak about this outrage for fear of being called "anti-Semitic" is an indictment also on Corbyn and his supporters - because that is the only way those who imply he is an anti-Semite (which he clearly is not) can be exposed as anti-Palestinian.

Windrush scandal **A corrupt, racist, anti-working class system**

So far, little more than an apology and the promise of future compensation has been on offer in response to the Windrush scandal. Tens of thousands of workers from the Caribbean may have been detained like criminals, deported or refused the right to return, despite having worked and paid taxes here for decades! Many have been sacked from their jobs, evicted from their homes or refused vital treatment by the NHS. How many paid with their lives because they could not prove their right to be here? But this doesn't stop May from sticking to her policy.

The Windrush scandal is the just the tip of the iceberg: that is, a punitive system that targets migrants from all over the world. Instead of being innocent until proven guilty, migrant workers have to prove that they are "legal"

• **How Amber Rudd saved May's neck**

Home secretary Amber Rudd finally resigned over the Windrush scandal. But, in fact, her resignation was primarily aimed at saving May's neck. After all, Rudd had merely been implementing policies designed by May under Cameron - in particular her 2014 Immigration Act and its "hostile environment" against migrant workers. Rudd only resigned to divert the storm away from May and her government.

All this brought to light the real meaning of May's deportation targets. Lucy Moreton,



Caribbean workers arrive, 1957

to employers, landlords and the NHS - otherwise they are deemed "illegal". In much the same way, the jobless are required to prove that they are looking for work and the sick and disabled that

they cannot work - otherwise they are assumed to be spongers and skivers. This system is not just xenophobic and racist. Above all, it's anti-working class and always has been. □

• **Immigration controls: a cross-party consensus**

Rules on citizenship and rights of settlement for people from poor countries and former colonies have repeatedly been changed since the 1960s. Their purpose was always to supply bosses with the workforce they needed, while imposing a precarious status on migrant workers, designed to keep them compliant. Then, in 1971, Heath's Tory government introduced the first system of comprehensive controls, which have been constantly tightened ever since.

Britain was already a hostile environment for political asylum seekers in the 1990s. Appeal rights for short-term visitors and students against refusal of entry were restricted and selected benefits were denied to asylum seekers, including those who were appealing against refusal. In 1996 the infamous White List of "safe" countries was introduced and rights of appeal curtailed against deportation.

Under Blair and Brown, Labour consolidated this approach. In 2002 came the "Life in the UK" and language test qualifications for citizenship. The right of appeal for asylum seekers was further restricted. From 2006 rights of appeal against refusal of entry to work or study were cut and from 2008 a 5-tier, points-based system, was introduced for migrant workers. Labour didn't want anyone accusing it of being a "soft touch"!

leader of the Immigration Service Union, explained that, due to these targets, "enforcement teams... are aiming to remove a certain number of individuals in any given month". And an internal Home Office memo, leaked by *The Guardian*, boasted that "we have exceeded our target... of achieving 12,800 enforced returns in 2017-18".

The constant pressure on immigration personnel to boost deportation numbers at any cost, means that the most vulnerable are targeted: the aged, the poor and,

more generally, those who don't know how the system works nor where they can get help. This was how, among many other cases, Paulette Wilson and Anthony Bryan, a cook and a painter, both in their 60s, were locked up in detention centres, pending deportation. Both had come to Britain over 50 years ago. Both had worked and paid taxes for decades. And yet both were treated like criminals. And today, Rudd may be gone, but May and her racist policy are still there!

• **The politicians' cowardly capitulation to xenophobia**

By 2012, faced with the rise of UKIP, many Tory MPs feared for their careers and sought to outbid their new rivals. UKIP's xenophobic rhetoric was allowed to set the political agenda. As a result, under May's watch as Home Secretary, the 2014 Immigration Act was brought in. It subjected relatives of those already settled in Britain to tough financial and literacy tests. Immigrants' access to services, jobs and housing was restricted by passport and identity checks. The number of appeals they could submit was reduced from 17 to 4! Cutting immigration became an official obsession.

What did Labour have to say then about these policies? In effect, nothing. Ed Miliband dared not be seen to stand up for migrant workers. Following his lead and increasingly fearing UKIP themselves, nearly all Labour MPs abstained in the vote. Only six voted against - including Diane Abbott, David Lammy, John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn. The most draconian immigration regime since WWII was supported by just 45% of MPs, with 3% voting against and 52% abstaining! Nevertheless it was passed into law, thereby providing over-zealous Home Office officials with the vicious weapon which was to produce the Windrush scandal!

• **Outsourcing the state's dirty work**

Outsourcing company Mitie recently won a £500m, 10-year contract with the Home Office to "escort" deported migrants. This contract has changed hands several times in the past - including in 2011, after Angolan refugee, Jimmy Mubenga, died at the hands of three G4S "escorts". The contractor was changed, but no charges were ever brought against G4S!

Private outsourcing companies also run immigration detention centres. So for instance, Mitie currently runs 4 of them, including one at Heathrow. G4S, which runs another detention centre near Gatwick, had its £150m contract renewed, despite a BBC Panorama programme exposing the brutal conditions imposed on migrants: in this centre initially designed to detain migrants for a few days, some have been held for almost 2 years, with prisoners being locked up for over 13 hours a day, in degrading and insanitary conditions! Last year, 6 migrants are known to have died in detention centres - including 4 who committed suicide.

There is method in this inhuman madness, though. By subcontracting its dirty work to private contractors, the government covers its back in case things go wrong - which is bound to happen when unleashing thugs on the most vulnerable. But, at the same time, aren't these barbaric conditions also an integral part of May's "hostile environment"?

Driven onto the streets

The number of households in temporary accommodation - such as hostels and bed & breakfasts - went up to nearly 79,000 in the last quarter, an increase of 64% in 7 years! Even worse, nearly three times as many people were sleeping rough in England in 2017 as in 2010. The official number was the highest ever at 4,751 - although it is probably an underestimate. In any case, due to the cold weather earlier this year, people have died, in cities and even in small towns where rough sleeping was previously unknown.

The rise in homelessness - and especially in rough sleeping - comes overwhelmingly from tenants being evicted by private landlords. They are being squeezed out by rising rents and often benefit cuts.

• **Micro-flats and mega-profiteering**

Private landlords around London are exploiting a loophole that since 2010, allows them to convert family houses into five or six so-called "micro-flats" - and pocket vast subsidies, though the housing benefit system! If each flat has a cooker and shower, landlords can call it "fully self-contained", charge twice as much and pocket up to £56,000 a year for a property of six "micro-flats".

A "hostile environment" for the NHS

Since December last year, hundreds of doctors recruited overseas by the NHS have been refused a visa to come to Britain - including a hundred who should have been coming last month from India to fill vacancies in the Northeast.

As if the NHS wasn't already far too understaffed as it is, with over 100,000 vacancies to fill! And this figure doesn't even take into account shortages in GP practices! Of course, the largest number of vacancies by far, are nursing jobs. But there are also a large number of unfilled doctor posts: nearly 10% for specialists and over 10% in mental health. In London, there is one vacancy in community health care for every 3 filled posts!

The problem, of course, is that the government has capped the number of visas for doctors and other skilled workers from non-EU countries to just 1,725 per month. For May and her cronies, cutting immigration figures comes first. As to the health and lives of NHS patients, they don't seem to count!



A homeless camp near Piccadilly station, Manchester

Landlords' freedom to cash in on the housing shortage has allowed them to become a parasitic plague on society, with the blessing of a government happy to stuff their pockets

Bexley council counted up to 140 of these conversions on its territory, while 80 have been identified in a single ward of Lewisham!

Some "micro-flats" have as little as 10 square metres of floor space - less than a third of the 37 square metres minimum provided for by the national space standard for a studio flat. But government rules have made it difficult

• **Fuel bills through the roof**

After making 4,000 job cuts this February, Centrica, British Gas's parent company, has announced that BG will hike energy prices, adding an extra 5.5% to bills. Meanwhile, EDF is also planning a 2.3% increase - for dual fuel consumers. This will affect those who are already on the standard variable tariff, which is also the most expensive.

In fact energy bills have doubled over the past decade. The companies claim

• **A case against the tribunal?**

In July 2017, the Supreme Court abolished tribunal fees on the grounds that they were unlawful. So far, so good. As a result, single claim applications for employment tribunals between October and December 2017 increased by 90%, compared to the same quarter in 2016.

Unsurprisingly, Employment Tribunal staff have been unable to process the avalanche of new claims. The backlog has risen by 66%. And no wonder. After the precipitous fall in claims when charges were brought in 4 years ago, staff were cut, and not only at the ET itself but at ACAS, the arbitration and conciliation service which has been acting as a kind of filter for all claims, advising applicants whether they can or should proceed. But now the workers in both organisations

Housing

and those of the banks by subsidising buy-to-let. For the working class, more than ever, a large new supply of social housing is a matter of urgency! □

for councils to oppose such conversions. Besides, many councils are reluctant to clamp down on developments where they can "dump" single homeless people. A government report which showed how little was being done was suppressed, of course. May would rather subsidise these Scrooge landlords than build proper social housing at affordable rents!

this is due to the cost of wholesale energy prices going up and their having to invest in renewable energy and smart meters. But even when the cost went down, back in 2016, most consumers got only a tiny cut in prices - and not after the winter period. And the government's promised cap on price rises - which the energy giants claim is the reason they have to make their cuts and selective price increases - will only come into effect in 2019... at the earliest!

are just unable to cope with the load.

So irony of ironies, ACAS the organisation that is meant to stop workers from striking, is now faced with a 83% vote for a strike by its own staff!



Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**• Only robots need apply**

Some of our temp mates who've been here for a while didn't have their contracts renewed recently. And why? Because they took some sick days off over... the last several years! Yes, temps aren't human beings who fall ill or have emergencies. You can't be a temp AND a human being - it's against the rules! [Workers' Fight Bulletin Ford Dagenham 2/5/18]

• Health and well-being at work: the irony!

So there's this research survey just out (by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development - CIPD). It found that 86% of workplaces "had observed staff attending work while ill". They call it "presenteeism". We couldn't find anywhere in the report that this was actually a policy, forced on temps as a condition for getting a secure job! But "manufacturing and production" had the lowest absences - 6.2 days/year on ave, per person. Says it all really. But it also says that we should all be "allowed" 6-7 days sick at the very least - and more! [Workers' Fight Bulletin Ford Dagenham 2/5/18]

• Bad-being

A point on this survey: it was given to HR managers to answer! So in fact they painted a much rosier picture of "well-being" in their workplaces. We

wonder how the new "Jailer" in the HR office here would have responded, if she had been asked? [Workers' Fight Bulletin Ford Dagenham 2/5/18]

• Urgent medical care needed!

All this makes us think about the awful state of the Ford Medical Department - drastically under-staffed with agency nurses and the occasional doctor, under strict orders to find us "fit"! So what happens in a life-or-death emergency? There isn't an ambulance driver, one nurse is on her own on lates, and at night... nobody? It needs full-time, permanent staff! [Workers' Fight Bulletin Ford Dagenham 2/5/18]

• Class system!

Where were all the hourly-paid women when Ford held its International Women's Day event? Excluded! This beano was only for white collar and senior personnel! No way was Ford going to liberate blue collar women - and definitely not from production! Some sisters are apparently more equal than others. [Workers' Fight Bulletin Ford Dagenham 2/5/18]

• Pensions in question

Ford got "private advisors" to come in and explain (in our own time!!) how we can leave the final salary pension scheme and take the money. But if the idea is "freedom and choice" to take out your pension money and spend it or invest it yourself in a "defined contribution scheme",



which offers NO certainty and could lose you your money, then it's "freedom and choice" to starve in old age. If we ever get there! [Workers' Fight Bulletin Ford Dagenham 2/5/18]

• A guarantee remains

It's true that we can't trust pension funds these days. But at least the Ford defined benefit (final salary) scheme, which older workers still have - guarantees us a definite pension - and the government covers us if the scheme goes bust, to almost the full amount! So maybe taking out a part of it early could make sense to pay off a mortgage for eg., but leaving the scheme altogether? No, it doesn't make sense. [Workers' Fight Bulletin Ford Dagenham 2/5/18]

• Insecurity of DC schemes

Of course if you're in a defined contribution scheme - (newer recruits were cheated by Fords!) and take out your money to invest yourself, in stocks, shares and bonds... then it might not be a worse gamble than before. But it's definitely a gamble either way. [Workers' Fight Bulletin Ford Dagenham 2/5/18]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**• What about our policy?**

We hear heads are for the chop in some sections of the line - and they say it's "company policy"? Well wouldn't it be nice to see the line stopped (or at least slowed down) as "company policy"? But we've been told this would only happen over the boss's dead body. So which boss is volunteering to put his head on the block? [Workers' Fight BWW Oxford Mini Plant 25/4/18]

• Brexit at the gate

So now BMW wants to institute "border controls" at the gate of the factory? They've posted "guards" to stop us from coming in together or from using each other's "passports"... Do they want to exclude us? Don't they know that one out means all out? [Workers' Fight BWW Oxford Mini Plant 25/4/18]

• Chilling out at the checkpoint?

With the bag checks, the card checks, the go back and find your ID, the waiting at the border, etc... it seems they don't want us to work around here! Well they can check us from top to

bottom, we don't care, as long as it's in their time and they pay us. In which case what about some mood music with snacks and drinks at the checkpoint? [Workers' Fight BWW Oxford Mini Plant 25/4/18]

• Bees in our bonnets

Isn't it amazing how managers just can't leave us agency temps alone for even a minute? They're like bees to honey! They keep buzzing in our ears for no reason, hoping we'll worry for our jobs. But they're just provoking our slapping reflex. [Workers' Fight BWW Oxford Mini Plant 25/4/18]

• Best at losing

Is Autoscan trying to beat BMW/Gi at losing workers the fastest? Some days they haven't even got work for all of us to do and we get sent home at 8.30 - unpaid. Even supervisors are jetting out of here faster than you can wrap a car! What can we say? Congratulations? [Workers' Fight BWW Oxford Mini Plant 25/4/18]

• Puzzling

How can Rudolph and Hellman Logistics expect only 2 workers to unload and scan



200 pieces from 2 pallets in 30 minutes? Then to make matters worse they spitefully removed the sequence screen, so we can't even find the pieces we are looking for. Obviously they don't want their job done, so why don't we just sit down and let them solve their jigsaw puzzle themselves? [Workers' Fight BWW Oxford Mini Plant 25/4/18]

• Rude & hellish

Are R&H bosses actually trying to sabotage their own operation? We hear they fired one of our young mates for making a predictable mistake, which briefly stopped the line. But errors are part of learning aren't they? And all the more so, when you ask new trainees to do the training! [Workers' Fight BWW Oxford Mini Plant 25/4/18]

King's Cross railway station (London)

Broken rail franchises? Just renationalise!

The Department of Transport's Chris Grayling got his knickers in a painful twist over the failure of the government's "model" for private rail franchises. So he's now promoting a "new public-private partnership" for the future...

So, first up for this newness, is the boastful "biggest franchise ever", Thameslink, Southern and Great Northern run by GTR. Having cut staff and dismissed guards, while implementing Driver Only Operation and causing the longest strike ever (it's still on!) it just can't run a train on time - less than 2/3 hit targets.

So the DfT is planning to break this franchise into 2 or more companies and implement a "partnership" with Network Rail.

As for the delinquent Virgin Trains East Coast franchise, it will hear the DfT's verdict on its future any day now. It blamed poor economic forecasts and Network Rail's intransigence for its losses and thus its refusal to meet its payment commitments to the government. But in fact despite East Coast being "the jewel in the crown" of the railways, not one private company has so far succeeded in making its predicted



profit on this line. Yet another reason to put franchising contracts into question. So a "new partnership" model will be found for this failure as well... at public expense! And that, of course, is the beauty of it all for these private capitalists who, win or lose, can smile like Cheshire fat cats, all the way to the bank... ☐

• Faking it

Did you hear the one about the train which Virgin Trains East Coast (VTEC) hired from Cross Country, coz all the VTEC trains are so knackered? They said "there will be limited catering facilities on board"... But it turns out there was no kitchen, no bar - no facilities at all! Then again, maybe that's better than having trains with all the facilities there, but all of them malfunctioning - and advertising a "full service"...[Workers' Platform King's Cross 25/4/18]

• Can't manage, won't manage

When we were working a Virgin train with a leak from the ceiling and asked "managers" what we should do, we couldn't believe our ears at their reply!

They wanted us to manage... Were they wearing the wrong badges? Then we saw big boss, David Horne... so we thought we'd ask him: but no luck there, either... Does anyone still wonder why the place is falling apart? Apparently, no-one is managing... [Workers' Platform King's Cross 25/4/18]

• "8 hours work, 8 hours play, 8 hours sleep"?

How can we get 8 hours sleep in a job like this? VTEC bosses actually deliberately rostered KX catering crews with 2 Edinburgh shifts in a row, up to 12 hours (not including delays!) and with just 40 mins turnaround. OK they've now cut the length of the 2nd day's shift - but they haven't given us an automatic day off as we used to get by right. And that's what we need! [Workers' Platform King's Cross 25/4/18]

• ISS tea leaves

Can we believe ISS bosses? We just got a "payrise", yet some of us have got even less take-home pay than before! Yes, as happens only too often, they managed to mess up our pay, "forgetting" the hours that we worked... How about we "forget" to work? [Workers' Platform King's Cross 25/4/18]

• We already have GPS!

By the way, we heard that ISS reps will meet soon to negotiate pay, since this was the last instalment of the famous ISS "Roadmap". Well our demands are ready already: real payrise, proper sick pay and free train and tube travel. Can we wait any longer? [Workers' Platform King's Cross 25/4/18]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)

• She has a lot to thank them for

So Royal Mail's Chief, Moya Greede, confirmed she's retiring after only 8 years. She said it had been a "great privilege to serve as CEO of this cherished UK institution". A great privilege to turn it from a public service into an "uncherishable" private business, and a shadow of its former self. Good riddance to her. But we guess the CWU's TP and DW might miss her. Has she maybe been invited down to their Bournemouth Conference this week, to kiss them goodbye? [Workers' Fight Bulletin Mount Pleasant 25/4/18]

• Money makes her world go around

Apparently Moya's level of destruction is hard to beat! It's worth £547,800

base salary plus £367,000 in lieu of bonus. A cool million, plus her pension... of another cool million. Along with her other directorships (Easyjet, Rio Tinto) she's likely to have a few quid to spare. Anyone need a sub? [Workers' Fight Bulletin Mount Pleasant 25/4/18]

• Just as easy to schmooze?

So this guy Rico Back-wards is taking over from Greede and for some reason he's getting £790,000 in pay and benefits and £1.3m bonus (more because... why?). A seamless transition, which will see the union leaders carrying on presenting themselves on bended knee, we're told! But we hear RB's going to be commuting from Switzerland - where RM's stash will be kept safe and sound in his account? [Workers' Fight Bulletin Mount Pleasant 25/4/18]



• New CDC pension still not certain!

Looking at the proceedings of the Select Committee of the House of Commons on the viability of the CDC pensions, it seems that the extra legislation needed for the new pension to come into being is not at all a foregone conclusion! MPs ask: Why should they make new regulations just for one company? Maybe they will do it, maybe they won't. But we're losing out either way. [Workers' Fight Bulletin Mount Pleasant 25/4/18]

Marxism

Having declared Karl Marx and communism "dead" so many times in the past, the capitalist media barons can't help it: they have to unearth his corpse again and again, the better to bury it once more!

So, the bicentenary of Marx's birth (on May 5th) generated a flurry of articles, TV and radio programmes. Even *The Economist*, felt it necessary to feature an article entitled "Why Marx was right". Not that this arch-pro-capitalist magazine has turned communist, of course! Predictably, this article contains the usual slanders which have so often been thrown at Marx's memory in an attempt to discredit his ideas.

So why do the capitalist media keep reviving the long-dead Marx? Quite simply because, in the first part of the 19th century, Marx was, with his life-long comrade, Friedrich Engels, part of a generation of young intellectuals who refused to be satisfied with the idea that poverty or social and political privileges, were necessary features of all societies. Instead of accepting that "things are what they are because this is the way they are", they devoted their energy to seeking how society could be changed in order to cure its ills - and by whom this could be done.

Out of their efforts grew a new science - historical materialism - to explain the evolution of society throughout history and in particular its operation under capitalism. They showed that under this system, the private ownership of the means of production was the cause for the exploitation of the majority by a shrinking, but increasingly wealthy minority. They proved that the system's chronic economic chaos, its recurrent, devastating crises and the persistence of widespread poverty in a society which had the scientific and

A vital fighting weapon to prepare for the future

technological means to cater for everyone's needs - all of this was to be blamed on the frantic race for profits between individual capitalists.

For Marx and Engels, this new science was designed to be a weapon in the hands of the only social force that had both a direct interest in freeing society of capitalism's irrational chaos and the nec-

Ever since that time, Marx's ideas have provided a vital instrument to those who seriously wanted to change the basis of this increasingly rotten capitalist world. Generation upon generation of working-class fighters used them as a weapon in their struggle to free the world of its capitalist straitjacket. The Russian revolution first showed the way forward, in 1917, and then, after its hijacking by Stalin and the Soviet bureaucracy, it showed the pitfalls that the working class will need to avoid the next time round.

And there will be a next time round, because there is no other choice for the international working class - and, in fact, for the overwhelming majority of the world population. The social diseases generated by capitalism - its crises, chronic wars and criminal neglect of the environment - will only be cured by addressing their root cause. If mankind is to have a future, the working class will have to overthrow capitalism!

Even the capitalist apologists writing in *The Economist* are worried about the threat that Marx's ideas represent for their cherished profit system: they conclude their article by urging politicians "to reacquire themselves" with Marx's ideas, "not only to understand the serious faults that he brilliantly identified in the system, but to remind themselves of the disaster that awaits if they fail to confront them".

Yes, just as Karl Marx wrote in 1847, in the preamble to his "Communist Manifesto", "a spectre is haunting Europe - the spectre of communism". Except that, today, it's not just in Europe but across the world that the capitalist parasites are haunted by the fear of communism - and so they should be! ☐



essary collective capacity to do it - the international working class. And they put all their efforts into spreading their ideas among workers and building new fighting working class organisations on this basis. Predictably, from this point onwards, the pair were treated as dangerous traitors by the capitalist class - something that they always proudly acknowledged!

Wages

The number of zero-hours contracts in use across Britain rose by about 100,000 last year, according to official figures. The Office for National Statistics (ONS), said the number of employment contracts without a minimum number of guaranteed hours increased to 1.8m in the year to November, a growing proportion of the over 7.1m temporary and casual jobs which make up a fifth

• Equal pay for equal work!

The current minimum wage for over-25s, at £7.83/hr is itself not enough to live on: the Living Wage Foundation estimates that living in London requires a minimum of £10.20/hr to survive. But workers under the age of 25 are paid even less than this amount: between

Zero Hour Contracts - a real fight needed!

of all British jobs today. A survey by the TUC found more than half of the workers on zero-hours contracts have had shifts cancelled less than 24 hours before they were due to begin. What is this if not a return to daily wage labour from a century ago?

The TUC's national demonstration on the 12 May under the slogan "a new deal for working people", demands among other

£4.20 and £7.38/hr for the three separate tiers of under-18s, 18-21s and 21-25s. And then there is yet another tier of "apprentices" who get paid less than half the minimum wage at £3.70! A TUC report in November last year revealed that 135,000 apprentices were not

things, a ban on zero-hours contracts and an increase in the minimum wage to £10/hr.

But it will take more than one day's demonstration to end precarious jobs. A century ago, the working class fought the bosses collectively to improve its conditions. Today's working class will have to fight again to do the same. ☐

even paid this measly amount! These different rates of pay only allow the bosses to get away with creating more tiers within the same workforce, thereby driving down wages as a whole. The working class can only fight the bosses by uniting as a whole against these divisions.

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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