

WORKERS' fight



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

ONLY ONE ENEMY: OUR OWN BOSSES!

With the general election in just a year, the main parties are afraid Ukip might disrupt their cosy system, which allows them to take turns in office, to defend the interests of City.

Not that this should bother the working class. The main parties and Ukip, whatever their language, share a common aim - to manage business interests against workers, and to get the largest share of the political cake.

But Ukip is able to sell itself as being "different" because, unlike the others, it's never been in the position of having to get its hands dirty.

What worries the main parties is how many voted Ukip in disgust against their policies in government.

So, following their poor performance in the European election, Cameron and Miliband jumped on Ukip's bandwagon for another spell of demagogic overbidding on the EU and immigration.

Demagogic promises

But both attack EU migrants in the name of a very unusual "concern". Yes, a concern over low-paid workers, whose wages, they claim, are being undercut by EU migrant workers supposedly willing to work on the cheap.

Cameron promised that bosses who pay workers under the minimum would face a fourfold increase in the fine, to £20,000 - still not much, of course...

This is ironical, since his government never provided enough inspectors to police bosses' adherence to the minimum wage, nor to prosecute transgressors - despite a (government!) estimate that hundreds of thousands of workers are paid below the minimum!

It's even more ironical when one considers the explosion of zero-hour contracts, meaning bosses can by-pass paying a full wage, minimum



Striking against zero-hours at Hovis

or otherwise, by switching their use of workers' labour on and off as they please!

As to Labour, wasn't it when they were in office that the minimum wage was set at such a low level that no-one can make a living on it?

But never mind. Both the Tories and Labour are considering ways to reduce this dismal minimum, by introducing different levels in different sectors and different regions. As if there aren't enough loopholes which allow bosses to undercut wages!

A question of balance of forces

All these politicians - from the main parties as well as Ukip - choose to tell the same lies about EU migrants, blaming them for low wages. As if any worker chooses low pay!

Since the beginning of the crisis, bosses have gotten away with murder, by cutting wages. They've been helped by all governments, which have systematically forced the unemployed into

non-jobs under threat of losing their benefits. And the likes of Ukip would be only too pleased to do the same, given the chance.

Quite obviously, EU migrants aren't responsible for the explosion of all the forms of low-paid under-employment, which are now a major feature of working class life. The only criminals in this regard are the bosses, their politicians and the big capitalists who control everything in this society.

And there lies the real issue - control. Allowing the bosses and their politicians to control our jobs, our wages and, ultimately, our lives, is a recipe for disaster, as the present crisis shows.

But there is another option for the working class: to challenge the capitalists' mis-management and to take steps to impose our own collective control over the economy. To do so, we'll need to mobilise our forces and unite all workers, regardless of nationality or origin, behind this objective. But that's something well worth fighting for. □

Free abortion rights trumped if you're Northern Irish

When it comes to women's rights Britain's laws are bent - literally and figuratively. Take the issue of abortion in Northern Ireland, which is still a province of Britain, albeit with its own quasi-parliament at Stormont. Here, women do not have the right to free abortion - unlike in the rest of Britain and what's more the 1967 Act which allowed this (with conditions) has never applied to Northern Ireland, in an

abject adaptation to the backward, reactionary Catholic and Protestant establishments. Two Northern Irish women who took this discriminatory situation up with the British High Court just lost the case. Meanwhile, Stormont politicians also refuse to bring abortion laws into line with the rest of Britain, leaving women over the water high and dry.

1,000 terminations a year are

done in British clinics for Northern Irish women - NHS and private. This case now rolls back women's rights (and the clock) even further, because it is now explicitly against the law to give a Northern Irish - British - woman a free termination in England, Scotland or Wales! They can only "go private", if they have the means. So much for equal "national" women's rights! ☐

Tamiflu: it was good for Roche

Near to half a billion was paid by the government to Roche and GlaxoSmithKline for Tamiflu and Relenza, which were stockpiled, waiting for a bird or swine flu epidemic to break out. These drugs were supposed to prevent people catching flu and cure it if they did. But at the time, it was only the drug companies which had vouched for their efficacy. And they refused to allow scientists access to the data from their clinical trials.

Now, 6 years later, independent researchers have been able to evaluate the use (or uselessness) of

these expensive anti-virals. And the verdict is that the best one can hope for, is that they will shorten an illness by half-a-day. You'd be better off taking a lemsip.

The scientific establishment is up in arms, as are certain government advisers, over the waste of money and lack of rigorous guidelines to prevent such rash decisions. But ensuring that the big corporations get as much public money (and as many tax breaks) as possible, is surely what "good" government under capitalism is all about... Isn't it?

• Education, Gove and god

Con-dem education minister, Michael Gove is caught in his own deregulation trap. This government, but also the previous Labour government, allowed schools to self-regulate, teach their own curricula (within some limits) and govern themselves. The Con-Dems went further, initiating "free schools", run by parents, teachers or any one else, with state money!

But now Gove wants to regulate, because he doesn't like all this freedom when it comes to the growing number of so-called madrasas, or Islamic schools (which mainly teach religious practice to kids after school, but are also fully-fledged schools) after allegations that 21 such schools in Birmingham were "taken over by extremists". So there's to be another "voluntary code of practice"... But how to implement it, if many already subscribe to voluntary self-regulation?

Anyway, what do they mean by "extremists"? Somehow the terrorism squad has got involved! But if this is to investigate the teaching of sharia in schools, is counter-terrorism also going to investigate Christian schools, which proscribe sex education, contraception and abortion and say "God made the world in 7 days"...? It's certainly a *kind* of "terrorism": against knowledge and against women's rights...

• Frack the law?

When it comes to fracking and the potential of big profits for the City, Cameron has totally ignored the high-profile anti-fracking protests of Tory-voting south-east England.

The Con-Dems even plan to change trespass law, so that it will now allow drilling under people's property without their permission! A princely £20,000 compensation for each horizontal well will be paid, in return for this assault on the Tories' sacred principle of private property.

While the pollution of aquifers is the main danger from fracking, much of the most promising area in the South-east has rocks that are full of faults, which might be shifted by fracking fluids, producing tremors or even earthquakes. As a result, anger in Tory heartlands is rising. It's not just the thought of losing their homes; it's the thought of what nearby fracking might do to market values...

The British Geological Survey has just estimated that about 200 million barrels of oil or gas might be recoverable from south-east England; compared with the 4 billion that the North Sea has yielded so far. That might sound like a small prize for undermining one's own bedrock, but joined-up thinking is not something we can expect from Cameron & Co...

• Economics and story-telling

The Bank of England (BoE) recently made three contradictory assessments of the future of the economy. Its official inflation report talked about "robust economic growth" and "strong performance". However, BoE governor Marc Carney produced his own interpretation of the report, saying that, with economic output having "only just begun to head back to normal", no one should "underestimate the difficulty of turning this recovery into a sustained and balanced expansion". As to the Bank's third assessment, which is said to contain different, "private" views, it remains unpublished. Could it be because the Bank has something to hide, like for instance the fact that to steer its way in the chaos of the capitalist economy, it only uses a good old crystal ball?

However, according to the media, there's one thing on which all three assessments agree - that the housing bubble is the biggest threat to the economy. Having recognised that, Marc Carney prudently passed his crystal ball - sorry, the buck - on to the government, on the grounds that, after all, the Bank isn't responsible for building houses!

• Mighty Osborne vs tiny FTT

Osborne went to court against a European Union Financial Transaction Tax and... lost. He was trying to kill two political birds with one stone in front of his City audience. At least that's what he hoped for: it was at once a challenge to his favourite scarecrow, the EU, and a flamboyant tax cut...

Only it wasn't either. Because the tax doesn't yet exist! No figure has been set, the requisite number of EU countries haven't agreed it and even if they do, it will be such a tiny tax and only charged on excessive speculation that it's hardly worth mentioning. What's more, if it is ever agreed, it would only start being charged in 2016.

So the City's knight in shining armour has been tilting at windmills again, but after all, it's about appearances and grand gestures, even if they are completely empty...

The ConDems heavily censured

May elections

The main feature of the local elections was the heavy losses of the ConDem coalition, which paid dearly for its policies - especially, for the cuts in local government.

In total, the ConDems lost almost a quarter of the seats they were defending - 540 out of 2327. The LibDems paid an even higher price for their association with Cameron, losing 42% of their seats.

The main winner in these elections was Labour, which made the most of the ConDems' discredit by winning two thirds of the seats they lost. The number of Labour-controlled councils went up from 76 to 82, with Labour regaining control of Bradford, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire county councils, Amber Valley, Cambridge, Crawley, Croydon, Harrow, Merton - and even of Cameron's flagship council, Hammersmith & Fulham.

Unfortunately, of course, Labour's



gains will change nothing, if only due to the way in which Labour-controlled councils bend over backwards to implement Osborne's cuts,

regardless of their impact on the working class. But at least, these results did show the extent of voters' discontent. □

• Ukip's showing - not earth-shattering

The media's furore over the European election overshadowed the results of the local elections. Yet, these results put Ukip's so-called "earthquake" into perspective.

Ukip had chosen to play safe by fielding candidates for just over half of the contested council seats, mostly in relatively well-off wards - thereby focusing their campaign on discontented ConDem voters.

• A demagogic drift

Back in 1993, Ukip's academic founder, Alan Sked, stated that it did not "recognise the legitimacy of the European parliament and will send representatives only to the British parliament in Westminster". Sked soon dropped out. But for many years, Ukip survived as a single-issue party - to demand Britain's withdrawal from the European Union, although its nationalism also attracted far-right elements.

Despite this, even after having gained 161 seats (in addition to the 2 it already had), mostly from the Tories, Ukip's count of councillors was still less than 10% of Labour's 2,101 and even far below the 427 seats that the discredited LibDems had managed to save from disaster.

But most revealing of all, is the fact that according to the national projection made by the BBC, Ukip

came third in terms of votes, with 17%, well behind the two main parties and just 4% ahead of the LibDems.

In other words, a very significant number of voters who cast their vote for UKIP in the European election appear to have felt that the UKIP candidates could not be trusted with responsibilities in local government - and understandably so!

But Ukip's political drift really started with the crisis. In order to divert attention from their austerity policies, the main parties started whipping up anti-immigrant prejudices, thereby making them more "respectable".

UKIP then added a hysterical anti-immigrant slant to its anti-EU obsession and went on to capitalise on the discredit of the main parties in the crisis.

Yet, Ukip represents the same capitalist interests as these parties. The fact that it may appear to some as a kind of alternative only reflects the absence of a working class movement capable of presenting society with a real perspective against the capitalists' parasitism.

Rebuilding such a movement is the only effective means of fighting against the divisive prejudices peddled by Ukip and its likes.

• Labour's closet Tory

For fear of being left behind, Miliband joined the anti-immigrant bandwagon in his final speeches before the May elections.

He told AirBus workers at Broughton, North Wales: "I don't believe it is prejudiced to worry about immigration. We said that people needed to change their attitudes. But in fact, we needed to change ours". According to Miliband,

Labour's attitude should be that, given the rising cost of living, it is legitimate for workers to fear that the arrival of immigrants might threaten their wages and conditions.

So, Miliband wants to impose restrictions borrowed straight from Cameron's own anti-immigrant arsenal: a 6-month wait for new EU migrants before they can have access to benefits and longer

transitional controls for the citizens of new EU member states.

Of course, just like Cameron, the only thing that Miliband would never even consider is to impose any restrictions on the real culprits - the very British bosses who are responsible for the job slashing and wage cutting experienced by all workers, regardless of nationality!

Housing crisis

One in ten households in London is officially overcrowded (with adults sharing bedrooms) and as many as 4 in 10 in Newham, due to escalating prices and rents. Unsurprisingly, the national figure for owner-occupiers with a spare room, is 8 out of 10, whereas it's just 4 out of 10 in social housing, exposing (as if it was needed) the absurdity of the "bedroom tax" as a "solution" to the lack of social housing!

• The buy-to-let plague

Buy-to-let landlords spread like a plague during the crisis. For them, property is a "safe investment" and a path to riches. So there are an estimated 1.4m buy-to-let landlords. Some with one property, others with many. They borrow against existing properties to get more. Many pay their mortgages out of the rents extracted from tenants. These flats and houses are their cash cows. The "yield" is usually more than 5%/yr on the "investment".

• Building up developers' profits

Originally, section 106 of the "Town and Country Planning Act", gave local authorities the power to impose a minimum ratio of "affordable homes" in any housing development. These homes were not really affordable for low-income households, but, at least, this could be used to prevent developers from building exclusively for the wealthy.

In April last year, however, the ConDems watered down these provisions. Developers were allowed to

The madness of private property

The hard fact is that an estimated 250,000 new homes are needed each year. Yet, last year, 635,000 homes were empty, including more than 216,000 for over 6 months! Of course, with full council tax now charged on empty homes, there may be fewer. But why not give councils the powers to requisition them?

As for new builds, only 109,000 new homes were completed last

year. Those built thanks to Osborne's "Help to Buy" stood at just 17,000. An earlier 'incentive' scheme, "Get Britain Building", which aimed at 16,000 homes, produced only 715!

Crazy? Yes. But this is the price to pay for leaving the provision of housing to private profiteers and, ultimately, for having a social organisation based on private property rather than social needs. □

Banks target these landlords specifically, offering them cheap mortgages while refusing loans to families in need of a home. The lenders may specify short lets, however, so the tenant can be kicked out and the property sold quickly, if the landlord gets into trouble.

The Institute of Housing says few landlords spend on maintenance: properties they let for sky-high rents (inner London average rent is £2,371/m, outer London £1,106) are damp, uninsulated,

leaky and worse. And since there are tax allowances to claim (for maintenance they don't do!), this is another way to rake it in (£7bn a year is claimed!). There's scope for tax avoidance too - an estimated £550m is undeclared as landlord income and millions more as capital gains, from sold properties. Yes, this buy-to-let is a parasitic disease, and if there was real social housing - and rent controls - we'd see it eradicated.

challenge a council's requirement of affordable homes under "section 106", on the grounds that this might damage their profits!

Since then, the proportion of expensive homes built by big construction companies has increased. Berkeley Group, for instance, has invoked the pretext that its 17-20% profit margin would be threatened otherwise! Never mind that the same Berkeley Group posted a neat £200m in net income last year!

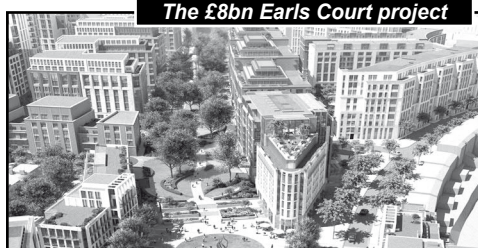
So, councils are now struggling to meet affordable housing targets - including Tory councils. In Milton Keynes, for instance, the Tory-led council had to agree to renegotiating a 211-home development on grounds of profitability, with the result that its 63 affordable homes requirement was reduced to... none! So, this Tory council is now complaining that the government's policy is too biased in developers' favour! If they say so...

• Save council housing!

Before being won by Labour in this year's May election, Hammersmith and Fulham in west London was Cameron's pet council. It was leading the way in attacking council housing.

First it sold 64 vacant homes that were either worth more than £450,000 or needed more than £30,000 for refurbishment. A new policy from April 2011 widened these criteria and by the end of 2013 the council had sold 210 more homes at auction, compared to only 46 sales to tenants under "right to buy". The council's support for the enormous Earls Court redevelopment scheme confirmed that it wanted social housing tenants off its patch. The plan was to demolish two neighbouring council estates with 761 homes and to build more than 7,500 flats, 20% of them "affordable" - but not for social tenants.

Before the election, Labour pledged to stop selling council houses on the open market. Since then, they have



The £8bn Earls Court project

promised to stop the Earl's Court scheme, if necessary repaying £10m the developers already gave the council. But will they deliver? The determination of council tenants to resist the destruction of their homes and mobilise support will be crucial.

• Labour's petty rent reform

Rents have been rising much faster than wages over the past years, by 13% on average since 2010. So, Labour has come up with what it calls a "far-reaching" rent reform.

This would include a 3-year tenancy

agreement, but with a 6-month probationary period during which landlords could evict tenants without notice if they decide that they're in breach of the agreement. Landlords would have to pay letting agencies' fees, instead of tenants. As to rent levels, Labour is only going to "examine" different "options" to link rent rises to inflation or... to average rent rises! In other words, landlords would still be able to increase rents regularly for existing tenants, and to increase them massively when a new tenant moves in.

So this "far-reaching" reform is still far from reaching the point of bringing rents to affordable levels for working class households. But then, Labour was unlikely to upset landlords by really containing their greed, or to upset the City by proposing the massive social housing programme which would make extortionate rents a thing of the past and resolve the housing crisis.

The recovery we need

Since the crisis began in 2007, we were told every year that a recovery was on the way. First we had a "jobless recovery" - which failed to create any job. Then, economic experts started puzzling over the fact that while production was stagnating, the number of jobs was increasing.

Of course, what was really going on, was a rise in under-employment, with more part-time work and a rise

• Zero tolerance for zero-hours

The government announced that when Universal Credit replaces the Jobseeker's Allowance and other benefits, the jobless will be subjected to a new turn of the screw. JobCentre advisers will be able to force claimants to take jobs on zero-hours contracts.

This will be a new power: so far, no-one claiming JSA can be sanctioned

• More self-employed = more working poor

More than half of the 239,000 newly "employed", in the three months to April - a figure hailed by the ConDems as evidence of their "recovery" - were actually *self-employed*. This was said to be thanks to Osborne's New Enterprise Allowance to the long-term unemployed, which provides them with a route to self-employment, and away from the Jobcentres.

While self-employment means having

• Miliband's Super-Minimum Wage

In the run up to next year's election, Ed Miliband argued that the minimum wage would be "fairer" if it was set as a percentage of average earnings. How "fair" (whatever that means...) obviously depends on what percentage - but Miliband didn't say. Besides, what if the average wage goes down? Will the minimum wage go down too - thereby becoming even more "minimum". In fact, this is a possibility already considered by the Tories.

This idea clearly goes against workers' interests. But it's quite logical knowing that Miliband has chosen Alan Buckle, a former deputy chairman of KPMG International, one of the big four business consultancies, to "advise" him on this issue!! Another of Buckle's suggestions is that the minimum wage could be set at different levels in different sectors, by councils involving representatives of the bosses and unions. As if workers had different needs in different industries! But isn't that, once again, another version of a proposal already floated by Osborne, arguing for regional differences in the level of the minimum wage?

There's a cross-party consensus

of the infamous "zero-hours" contract.

Now the same experts tell us that there's a "low-pay recovery"! What's more they blame workers for it, claiming that if their wages remain low, it's because they're not productive enough! As if under-employment wasn't an on-going phenomenon and low-pay its consequence! Besides, a TUC shows, 77% of all jobs created since June

for refusing such a contract - even if the Work Programme has put plenty of people into short-term or relief jobs, on zero-hours.

Since last autumn the Office for National Statistics' estimate of the number of zero-hours contracts has more than doubled, to 1.4 million. The decision to recognise these contracts as real

to pay one's own tax and NI and having no sick pay, nor paid holidays, it does not necessarily mean having any paid work! In fact, as recent research found, the earnings of the self-employed have fallen by 20% since 2007, compared to a 6% drop for wages. Self-employment is long-standing in construction. But lately, more employers have been cutting costs by only recruiting workers as self-employed. One such courier company

when it comes to finding a justification to

• Rising inequalities

The Sunday Times "Rich List" says that Britain has 104 billionaires, more than three times as many as a decade ago, and the world's highest number per head!

These "ultra-rich" are doing very well despite the crisis. For the first time since 2008, the wealth of the top 50 exceeds £1.7bn. Their total wealth adds up to £301bn - up 30% since 2008 - equivalent to Britain's annual budgets for welfare and education, both of which are supposed to cater for the needs of tens of millions!

The colossal wealth of the ultra-rich comes from their parasitism - primarily from the exploitation of the working class and from the very same speculation which caused the current crisis. On top of it all, thanks to their politicians in government, they manage to pay a ridiculously low level of tax, compared to the rest of us and to what they earn or own.

Meanwhile, more and more working class families are relying on food

Crisis watch

2010, have been in industries where the average wage is less than £7.95 an hour.

Of course, if there's any recovery at all, it's a recovery for the capitalists - who've been using the excuse of the crisis to turn the screw on us. High time for the working class to turn the table, and transform the bosses high profit/low-pay recovery into a low profit/high-pay one!

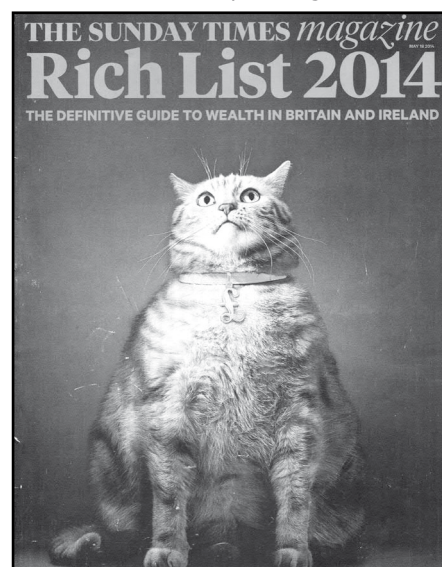
jobs and penalise the unemployed for not taking them, amounts to the government officially encouraging the bosses to transform more and more existing jobs into zero-hour contracts. It will force even more workers to find several jobs in order to make ends meet. This is unacceptable!

employing self-employed drivers through the Work Programme last year even required them to pay £110 a week for van hire!

A Bank of England economist was quoted as saying that self-employment is a "refuge of the desperate" who cannot find jobs with employers. Yes, the mirage of the government's rising employment figures only conceals the real rise of exploitation.

cut workers wages!

banks and poverty is growing, including among those in employment. Worse even, the mortality rate among children under-5 is now the second highest in Europe, after Malta! Social inequality is the name of the capitalist game.



Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**• Safety "concern"**

It was significant that the none other than Jeff Wood, the Ford Europe vice president, wrote in Ford Views (April) about the accidents involving contractors this year.

5 workers were injured; 3 could have been killed - 2 of them employed (on what Ts&Cs?) by the Romanian company cheaply contracted to install the new Panther engine. No doubt thanks to Ford's Craiova "relations"... But at what real cost? [Workers' Fight, Ford Dagenham 15/05/14]

• As if Ford cared...

Yes the irony couldn't be worse: Ford workers are given awards for safety excellence here, even for load security! We don't detract from their achievement, but aren't they also part of departments Ford is out-sourcing or planning to??

Even Transport Operations is under threat! Then what? Accidents every day? And blame the contractors and/or their workers, as in the case of the almost fatal accident here? We quote Jeff Wood: "they incorrectly unloaded a truck". But why? [Workers' Fight, Ford Dagenham 15/05/14]

• More than jobs at stake

At the end of the day it's Ford management, and Nosey at the top, who's responsible for what happens under Ford's roof. They decided to "go cheap", didn't they? And they want to "go cheap" on MP&L (driving-logistics) too? We can't let them. [Workers' Fight, Ford Dagenham 15/05/14]

• Farewell, said he...

So Ford Worldwide Chairman and Chief Executive Doolally came to say bye-bye? We hear he made a brief farewell tour to Britain, prior to his retirement in July. Flanked by "minders" he visited both Warley Headquarters and Dunton Design Centre, where, according to the Evening Standard, staff were in tears! Sure, we can really believe that! [Workers' Fight, Ford Dagenham 29/05/14]

• ... but not to Dagenham

Of course he didn't dare to visit Dagenham on his Goodbye Tour, but in speeches stated, "We did the right thing" when commenting on Ford's UK closures during his watch - and added there was still "overcapacity" in Ford's European markets!

Funny how these capitalists never imagine how, if fewer cars are needed, hours of work could be cut accordingly, so that our lives might become just as



"socially friendly" as theirs'.... [Workers' Fight, Ford Dagenham 29/05/14]

• Upside-down calendar

What's Ford up to, regarding sickness absence? One mate we heard of had two "3 month reviews" for a sickness 6 months ago, within the space of one week! It sounds like a clampdown on the sick, but a very odd one! Has Ever-nasty decided to do a year's work in a day? Or even a week? [Workers' Fight, Ford Dagenham 29/05/14]

• Let's grind them down

Yes, it seems some bosses think it's their job to grind mates down, make them even sicker and then use the so-called absence procedure to sack them. This is the classic behaviour of bullies - kicking someone who's already down. But confront these guys collectively and they crumble - because underneath, they're cowards. Workers' delegation to the office next time? [Workers' Fight, Ford Dagenham 29/05/14]

King's Cross railway station (London)**• Back to the picket line!!**

We on ISS cleaning feel we're back at square one. We won a further pay rise, but ISS decided that the workers outside London should get a lower rate than us. It's a big difference, and neither inside nor outside London are we offered a decent wage - i.e. at least £10 per hour (yes, everyone should be on a wage above this and who gets it?) Plus sick pay and travel allowance...

So now that management has withdrawn the little pittance they offered, what choice do we have but to go back onto the offensive... all together - and why not all workers, not just cleaners, here and up the track? It's the only language these bosses understand. [King's Cross Workers' Platform 19/05/14]

• Swiping our pay

Remember what the big ISS boss told us when we confronted him over all our grievances, including mistakes in our pay? He promised that a new swipe card system would sort everything out...

But we've got more pay errors than ever! What will sort everything out for us is a generous and adequate pay rise asap!!! See above! [King's Cross Workers' Platform 19/05/14]

• Grilled manager with tomato

Us chefs are well annoyed! Every time managers decide off the top of their heads that there's to be a new menu, we're the last to hear about it. They should be careful - we may just write our own menus... [King's Cross Workers' Platform 19/05/14]

• Lift strike

We can't believe that people got stuck in the lift by Platforms 6-7 for 2 hours! It was not the first time but probably one of the worst times. It was last week, Friday, and it was made worse by the fact that it was sunny (reflecting on a glass lift!) and packed.

Firemen had to be called in. These lifts are used by both passengers and staff alike. Yet there aren't any resident engineers on site anymore. And that's the real problem. [King's Cross Workers' Platform 19/05/14]

• Yes2all workers!

We don't understand why the RMT has a "no2EU" campaign. As if the EU is the problem! We seem to remember it was a rather anti-EU British government under Thatcher that privatised the railways... And was it "Brussels" which decided to part-privatise the NHS, create "free"



private schools, sell off council houses, cut millions of jobs, create zero-hour contracts, etc., etc..?

Our ranks are strengthened and revitalised by "foreign" workers. The more the better against the bosses and the politicians who keep this capitalist system alive by attacking workers. [King's Cross Workers' Platform 19/05/14]

• Award-mad

Honestly, this is ridiculous - we read in EC news that "our" managing director "scooped the prestigious director of the year award" from the Institute of Directors.

Was it for having outsourced cleaners on the minimum wage (now just above, due to their strikes), was it for wonky trolleys on board, was it for cutting the dining car and for charging some of the highest fares in Europe? Yes, "well done!" as they say... [King's Cross Workers' Platform 19/05/14]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)

• Abandoning the Universal Service Obligation?

After saying that the Universal Service (USO) would be safe under the newly privatised Royal Mail, we are now told that it is not. Other mail companies like TNT, UK Mail, etc., which are not bound by the Universal Service Obligation, have been delivering mail for some time in areas where they could do so profitably. In other words, cherry-picking the best bits. Of course RM has the duty of delivering everywhere, 6 days a

week. But it is now arguing that delivering mail to "unprofitable" rural areas is not good for business and is trying to find ways to get out of it. Obviously, from shareholders' point of view, the USO is better dispensed with. But just as obviously, from the point of view of the workforce and the population, the USO must be maintained.

However, keeping it will be used as an excuse by RM to make further



cuts in jobs and conditions until they decide to give it up themselves. As usual, they'll say this is to compete with their rivals. And given the new cosy relationship between CWU leaders and RM, the union officials will go along with it! The workforce has to be ready for that.

• Another landmark deal?

So, 3,000 Crown Post Office workmates took 15 days strike against 70 Offices closing and the loss of jobs, for union officials to present them with a small pay rise (3.9%, then strings attached to 3.4% over the next 2 years - 1% increments as cost-cuts are met!) + a bribe to vote "yes", dependent on: 70 (or more) Crown Offices closing and the loss of jobs! And the officials are bragging about it! POL delegates at CWU conference tried, but failed, to win a "no confidence" vote in Andy Furey, the responsible CWU negotiator. At least they got heard. The struggle against official sell-outs continues... [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 19/05/14]

• Give them a gong

According to the two women who act for RM's brain-Washing Time Show (WTS), the "Have Your Say" survey results are

a great success, 85% filled it in and an amazing 75% just love to work in RM! These look just like the results they gave us last time, and the time before.... Are they recycling the results year after year? At least they're being green... [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 19/05/14]

• Forgetting RM's dirty linen?

We see from the CWU website there's a campaign against "zero-hours" contracts and for "living" wages - partly in response to the Ts&Cs which TNT imposes. They're also trying to unionise workers in such companies. A good thing. But what about the temps being employed on deliveries and driving - on virtual zero-hours contracts, in RM??? And what about part-timers here who don't take home a living wage? [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 19/05/14]

• Singing together again

We also see in Courier, how bosses and

union officials are joining in a chorus of scare-mongering over the "end of the universal service" and cherry-picking of deliveries, by competitors. Are they preparing us for (more) sacrifices "in the name of RM's interests against competitors"? What next? [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 19/05/14]

• Not proud, just tired

So, according to the news, we're delivering "above and beyond targets" since privatisation... RM's boasting about a +0.2% on first class deliveries and +0.4% on second class. What a very huge increase! But enough to please shareholders, apparently, and make managers salivate for their bonuses... As for us... well, according to CWU partner, Dave Ward, we should be "proud", as our hard work and dedication (?) is paying off! For whom? [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 19/05/14]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)

• Gi pays up at last

The long running saga of underpayment of holiday pay to agency workers is finally reaching its conclusion. Some of us were paid as little as £8+ an hour and should receive around £700. Much credit is due to a handful of workmates who refused to let this issue die and made sure that Gi were not allowed to "forget" about it. And let's not forget the mate who took the Gi cheats to tribunal! [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 19/05/14]

• Hands off Saturdays!

Last Saturday BMW tried and failed to get a volunteer workforce to work on Saturday - with some Lead Associates refusing particularly robustly. Clearly BMW want to boost production and sure enough, along they've come announcing 12 compulsory Saturday shifts, 4 for each crew - all 12 for permanent early workers. For overtime

plus a poxy £40 a pop. Didn't they get the message the first time, that 5 days a week here is more than enough! [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 19/05/14]

• Some "short shift"!

Last week Vehicle Protection Overtime was on every night - including on Friday. It's on again this week and looks like becoming a permanent fixture. Aside from the fact it was never intended to be used like this, if any shift should not be extended, surely it's nights when our body clocks are telling us to sleep. At least we should have a proper lunch break! [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 19/05/14]

• Handle with suspicion

Now Gi has sent a letter and a new handbook claiming it's changing our contracts "from zero-hours to flexible employee" - without much explanation of what that means, practically. This, says Gi, followed a discussion with Unite officials, so where's their explanation of why it's good



for us - or not? And whoever told us before that we were on zero hours contracts? [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 05/05/14]

• BMW goes kinky

We've grown used to BMW's clunky sense of humour when advertising. This year's April Fool's "joke" in the papers verged on the kinky: kinetic energy from the car engine was supposed to deliver "gentle electric shocks to the occupants' posteriors" when the car was travelling at under 20mph. And when it's going over 80? [Workers' Fight BMW Oxford 05/05/14]

India

Deprivation, corruption and nationalist bigots

The fact that its 5-week long general election, in April-May, involved 554 million voters did not make India the "world's largest democracy" as the media here claimed. As if there could be any "democracy" in a country where two thirds of the population lives on less than \$2 a day and where violence and corruption dominates the day-to-day life of the poor majority!

A parody of democracy

In fact, the western-style election campaign, complete with giant posters, TV broadcasts and SMS shots, was more like an insult to the poor masses. Its estimated cost reached half the entire annual welfare budget allocated to the 90 million poorest households - without adding the "black money" used to buy votes!

As to the election process, this is how an Indian civil rights organisation saw it: *"booth capturing, fake voting, stopping voters from getting out of their houses..., not allowing them to vote when they reach polling station, threatening of dire consequences if votes are not cast in favour of the candidate favoured by the goons, beating up... supporters and workers of opposition party candidates, liberal use of sticks, bullets, bombs - all these were part of the elections."* So, who can tell what was really behind the 68% turnout boasted by the authorities?

Eventually, after having been in office for 54 years out of 67 since independence, the incumbent Congress Party got its worst score ever - 19.6% of the votes and 44 seats out of 543. This was a well-deserved retribution for its chronic corruption and pro-business policies, at a time when the population was paying a heavy price for the crisis.

But this, alone, is not democracy. Because the poor masses could not vote for a party representing their social interests. And this allowed Congress's main contender



among the national parties - as well as the richest and best organised - to step into the vacuum. The BJP (Indian People's Party) won 31% of the votes and an absolute majority in parliament, while its rising star, Gujarat's chief minister Narendra Modi, became prime minister.

The BJP victory

The BJP is the political wing of the Hindu, nationalist, far-right - which includes cultural and religious associations, groups similar to western neo-nazi thugs, a trade-union confederation (which is more like a company union), etc... But its most important component is the RSS (Organisation of National Volunteers) which, under the cover of promoting national and cultural traditions, organises millions of people under a quasi-military discipline.

In the early 1990s, the Hindu far-right was at the forefront of anti-Muslim pogroms. In 2002, Narendra Modi, himself an RSS heavy-weight, was personally compromised in a pogrom which left 2,000 casualties in Gujarat, where he was chief minister.

Having thus whipped up anti-Muslim feelings, Modi managed to get a discredited BJP re-elected and retained his position. Predictably, no tribunal ever dared to bring charges against him!

In this year's election campaign, the BJP promised to get rid of corruption - which was ironical given the long series of corruption scandals when the BJP was in office, between 1996 and 2004. But, above all, the BJP promised to pull India out of the crisis by resorting to the same methods that Modi used to turn Gujarat into what western media call an "investors' paradise" - meaning more Special Economic Zones where foreign multinationals get subsidised to do more or less what they want, lower wages, the freezing or ending of social programmes, etc..

In other words, while the Congress defeat is good news for the working class and poor, the BJP's victory is not. And this was why the Bombay stock market welcomed this victory with such enthusiasm, with a 5% jump in share prices! □

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, or by postal mail at:

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