

# WORKERS' fight



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

# MIGRANT OR NOT, WE'RE ALL WORKERS!

The refugee crisis goes on unabated. Hundreds of women, men and children are still found every day in the Mediterranean on unseaworthy ships. The lucky ones are saved by rescue ships - not thanks to Cameron who withdrew most support for this operation. But on August 28th, the rescue came too late: 200 refugees drowned off the coast of Libya, bringing the total of recorded deaths this year to 2,500, with probably many more unrecorded.

Meanwhile, the TV shows footage of thousands of refugees fleeing, many on foot, towards western and northern Europe, via Serbia or Hungary. They often have to fight their way through all kinds of walls set up to stop them - like the 110-mile long, 13 feet-high barbed wired fence built by Hungary along its border with Serbia. As to the small minority who manage to reach Calais in the hope of crossing over to Britain, they are faced with yet another set of fences and yet more riot police - courtesy of the British and French governments!

Never has the phrase "Fortress Europe" more aptly described what Europe has become for the poor majority of the world's population.

## **Criminal, class contempt**

Yet, this continent includes most of the world's richest countries. Its capitalist classes built up their wealth by plundering the world and are responsible, one way or another, for the present on-going wars and chronic poverty from which these refugees are trying to escape.

But instead of acknowledging this fact and helping them, most European leaders refuse any responsibility in this crisis and will not lift a finger to resolve it. Worse, they whip up xenophobic fear among their domestic populations to shore up political support. What do



**There's only one working class and it is international!**

they care about the consequences for the refugees?

Cameron's government is among the most vocal exponents of such criminal policies. Its playing up of the migrant "flood" across the Channel is simply to scaremonger, as is its latest raft of anti-immigrant measures. And then they have the nerve to claim that their aim is to protect jobs and wages from migrant workers - in fact, stealing one of Labour's own themes!

As if any of these politicians gave a damn about workers' wages, any more than they give a damn about the refugees' plight! In fact they have the same contempt for them - the "swarm" in Cameron's words - as they have for the benefit claimants who Duncan-Smith blames for being poor - the contempt of the haves for the have-nots!

## **Our class interests**

Their policy is not only criminal and inhuman, it is absurd. No amount of repression will make the refugees disappear into thin air. Driven by despair, they can only go where there's hope for them to survive - Europe. Their condition illustrates Marx's famous words:

"workers have no fatherland". Indeed, what is the fatherland of the Iraqi who was chased away by ISIL or for the Syrian whose village was bombed into the ground in the civil war? Yet, although these women and men can no longer live where they come from, they are rejected everywhere in Europe.

In this Europe where goods and capital can move freely, the states are raising more and more obstacles to the free circulation of workers. Wealthy foreigners who can invest millions in London's housing market - thereby inflating the housing bubble - are given the red carpet treatment. But migrants who dream of rebuilding their lives by doing some useful work for a decent wage, are treated like criminals. This is insane and shows how rotten this society is.

As for us, workers, we can only choose the side of the refugees against the capitalists who are responsible for the rise of poverty, here and across the world. By doing so, with the understanding that we are part of the same international working class, we will only be stronger. □

## Crisis watch

Cameron's government has released a whole package of reforms targeting the 14% of under-21s who are unemployed. From April 2017, they will be forced to take any non-job, or non-paid "work experience" that they are offered or lose their benefits. In addition, housing benefit for under-21s is to be cut.

### • Department for Weasel Propaganda

The Department for Work and Pensions was caught recently fabricating statements from claimants on disability benefits, explaining how they had "benefited" from having these payments sanctioned. As if anyone would really say how good it was for them to get a cut in what is already a pittance! Answering a freedom of information request, the DWP admitted that neither the quotations, nor the claimants quoted,

### • They're loving it?

McDonald's boss, Paul Pomroy actually boasted on TV that 80,000 of the company's 100,000 employees, who are on zero-hours contracts were totally happy! He claimed this "happiness" was because "his" workers had 2-week's notice of their shifts so they could arrange their times to work elsewhere ... So he wasn't planning to change any of this - however he admitted having a hard time figuring out how McDonald's will pay the £7.20 promised by Osborne as the "National Living Wage" from next April. Its profits "fell" to a puny £0.8bn in the second quarter of this year, while its shares rose 4%!

Of course "his" happy McDonald's workers would need to have (at

## Jobless youth targeted again

Last month, Matt Hancock, the paymaster general, went further, explaining that unemployed youth would have to attend a "boot camp" within 3-weeks of first receiving benefit payments, otherwise they'd receive no further payments. This will involve doing 71 hours of "mock interviews" and CV writing sessions,

originally with photographs, were real.

Iain Duncan Smith's claim that benefits sanctions are "effective" in getting people into work is challenged by the ONS - which criticises DWP statistics - and by the DWP's own advisory committee on social security, which has called for an urgent review. No wonder, as the unemployed continue to get sanctioned for the most ludicrous reasons

and then being pressured to look for jobs which don't actually exist, under the scrutiny of welfare officers.

This scapegoating of the young is apparently quite acceptable to Labour too, even in opposition: acting Labour leader Harriet Harman, didn't oppose these proposals when they were put to a vote in July. ☐

- including, for instance, clashes of jobcentre and work programme appointments! But as far as Duncan Smith is concerned, public knowledge of these arbitrary and degrading punishments is just fine, as this will help ensure that the unemployed take the first low-paid non-job that comes along, to avoid similar treatment.

least) 2 week's notice of "free" time: with a wage just a few pennies above £6.50 and hour, part-time work at MacDo is hardly going to keep the wolf from the door. Mr Pomroy knows full well that his employees have to have several different jobs at the same time!

But at least these are "permanent" zero-hours contracts. Even worse off are Sports Direct workers, whose zero-hours contracts are temporary, meaning they don't even get the minimal perks of the job - the odd tiny bonus, holiday and sick pay. Unions are filing for them to be made permanent. Many workers also had to go on standby which prevented them from working elsewhere



- something now outlawed. But happy with zero-hours? That's a whopper, whether at McDonald's, or anywhere else.

### • Railway robbery

In the last 5 years alone, regulated rail fares have increased 3 times faster than pay: while fares increased by 25%, average pay (which includes those of the highest paid!) increased by just 9%. A season ticket from Reading into London, for instance, now costs nearly a quarter of an average London salary. This amounts to a big pay cut for these commuters and an even bigger one for the majority whose pay rise is nowhere close to 9%.

But while the government graciously "allows" regulated fares to rise by no more than 2% over and above inflation (!), companies more than make up for it with extortionate increases on unregulated or uncapped fares which make up

over half of companies' revenue, and include advance and first class fares.

With British rail fares the highest in the world, and rising, no wonder that the Bransons of this world find investing in rail companies so profitable.

### • Example? No, fall-guy...

The judge who sentenced 35-year old former Citibank and UBS employee Tom Hayes - the first person ever to be convicted by a jury for rigging the Libor (interbank) interest rate indices - to 14 years in jail, said he was making an example, to deter others: "The conduct involved here must be marked out as dishonest and wrong and a message sent to the world of banking accordingly."

In Hayes' defence, he has a mild

mental disorder. But what about the judge? Where has he been for the past 8 years, since the banks precipitated the present ongoing crisis? Asleep on the bench? Rigging financial markets and indices is how banks make their profits. But the bank CEOs don't go to jail, their banks just pay the fines for them - no matter how eye-wateringly high. So, 9 banks, including RBS paid £1.3bn to settle a currency market rigging charge in a US court. The 5 biggest British banks have set aside £27bn for their mis-selling of PPI. 5 US and 20 European banks have already paid a combined £170bn in compensation and fines for fraudulent rigging, mis-selling and other misdeeds. Next to them, Tom Hayes is innocent as a babe.

## Anti-strike laws won't protect them

The Trade Union Bill, unveiled in mid-July by business secretary Sajid Javid - which could be implemented next year - is supposed to prevent unionised workers disrupting "the right of millions of people to go about their daily lives." As if the austerity measures of the past years hadn't been disruptive - and destructive - for millions of workers in their daily life!

So while big business and the government continue to slash real jobs and promote non-jobs, they want to introduce new obstacles to any fight-back. Strikes would be illegal unless 50% of those being asked to strike, vote in the ballot. In public services, 40% of those eligible to vote would have to support a strike for it to be legal. Illegal picketing - more than the present maximum number of six - would become a criminal offence. Unions would



The working class has the power to derail Javid's strike busting



have to give at least a fortnight's notice before any strike action and employers would have the right to hire temps as strike-breakers.

While the law of the bosses has always favoured them against workers, these new proposals are designed to convince workers that

taking strike action is even less an option for them than it ever was. Fortunately, workers by their sheer numbers and key position in society, can and will break down all these new obstacles erected against them! □

### • The hypocrisy of Labour and union officials

The Trade Union Bill will also introduce new measures regarding the political levy which trade unions use to fund political campaigns or parties - especially the Labour party. An estimated 4.5m members pay an annual total of £25m. While union members can at present opt out of this levy, under the new Bill they will have to opt in, which is predicted to decrease political funds and make less cash available to union officials and the Labour party. As expected, all four Labour candidates have criticised the measures, while Paul Kenny, general secretary of the GMB, said: "It is clear the Tory party high command intends to make the Labour party bankrupt by cutting off its main source of funding."

However, the Labour party itself has long been trying to demonstrate its independence from the unions and reduce its reliance on union money. Under Ed Milliband, for example, Labour removed automatic Labour affiliation of trade union members so that those union members who wanted to be affiliated supporters of the party had to opt in. And union officials have done their bit as well: in 2013, the GMB executive decided to cut its Labour party funding from £1.2m to £150,000. The same GMB whose leader accuses the Tories of trying to bankrupt the Labour party?! Indeed, Labour is doing a good job bankrupting itself - in more ways than one...

### Housing - through the roof

House prices are typically 8.8 times the average local salary in England and Wales according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), a record level. This mismatch is far greater in the most expensive areas. Westminster tops the list with house prices averaging 24 times local annual wages, up from "only" 12 times in 2002! Camden and Hammersmith & Fulham are not far behind, with houses costing more than 20 times average earnings. In Cornwall, Herefordshire and north Norfolk they cost more than 10 times, reflecting the high demand for second homes for the well-off.

Not surprisingly, the ONS also found that rental levels as a proportion of local incomes continue to rise, as landlords ruthlessly cash in on demand. In Westminster again, rents are at 78% of local salaries. Even in two much poorer London boroughs, Brent and Newham, private rents are equivalent to 65% of local wages. Nor are social rents immune - Newham's average weekly rent for social housing is among the highest at £128.90. Successive governments' housing policies, promoting home ownership and private renting, without building new social homes - these are the ingredients for a worsening housing crisis!

### • The busy bridge between finance and politics

While the Trade Union Bill may be approved by MPs during the autumn, announcing it, fell to the business secretary Sajid Javid, a politician supposed to be close to workers because his father was a bus driver. But that's all the only thing that links this ex-City trader to workers.

After having studied at Exeter University, he became a banker with Chase Manhattan for a salary that quickly rose from £500,000, to over £1m/yr. Javid's job was to sell Mexican bonds. His reputation as a trader rapidly grew when he built an order book of £1.6bn, more than 3 times what his

bosses expected! However, the 1994 currency crisis in Mexico caused losses of around £6.5bn - including for Chase Manhattan! But Javid had made his reputation by then and was later hired by Deutsche Bank to lead its credit trading in Asia. He was in charge of dealing in complex financial products that soon resulted - again - in huge losses for the bank! Then, in 2009, when the financial crisis was spreading across the world, debt-traders like Javid looked for shelter. He gave up an estimated salary of £3m, crossed the bridge to politics and won the seat for Bromsgrove in 2010 thanks to his Tory connections. Yet another product of the revolving door between the City and Westminster.

## Their politics

As we go to press, most commentators predict that Islington North MP, Jeremy Corbyn, will win the Labour party leadership contest. Together with the other candidates, they claim that Corbyn owes his sudden rise to prominence to the 160,000 or so who signed up as registered supporters for a token £3 in order to vote in the leadership election.

However, leaving aside "Tory conspiracy" theories against Labour, Corbyn's anti-austerity language seems to have generated a real wave of interest, especially among the youth. Some of his supporters may just wish to express their rejection of Labour's pro-business policies while in government and its despicable failure to stand up to the ConDems while in opposition. Others, however, may hope that his election will lead to major changes in the party and its policies. But, either way, their hopes are based on an illusion.

First, because, for over a century, the Labour party has been an integral part of the institutions used by the capitalist class to preserve its social interests. Changing the man at

## Whoever leads it, Labour will still serve capitalism

the top of the party will not change the myriad of more or less powerful MPs, trade union leaders and functionaries of all sorts, who run the party machinery on a day-to-day basis. These people will do anything to avoid rocking the boat in order to preserve their cosy partnership with the capitalist class and its representatives, be it at Westminster, in local government or in their dealings with big companies - whoever their leader may be and whatever the membership may want.

Second, because the austerity policies that we have seen over the past 8 years are not a matter of "bad" policies or "bad" government - but because of the class which is running the show. The capitalist system is in a state of permanent crisis - not just here, but all over the world. And, shocking as they may be, these austerity policies are just some of the weapons - and, by no means the most brutal - that the capitalist classes use to preserve their profits in every country. This is why fighting austerity on its own is hopeless. It is the capitalist system itself which must be replaced,



something that Corbyn certainly never claimed as his objective!

So, yes, the austerity policies of the capitalist class need to be fought. But the "radical" rhetoric of a well-meaning politician like Corbyn can, at best, serve as a "left" fig-leaf by a discredited Labour party. What is needed is a fighting, working-class party, accountable to its members and to the working class as a whole - a revolutionary, communist party which represents the future of society by aiming to overthrow the profit system itself. □

## • There are no supreme saviours

Jeremy Corbyn has undeniably generated illusions among those who would like to see real opposition to the Tories' austerity measures. Spineless former Labour leaders contributed to his popularity as an "anti-austerity" champion. But those who hang on to the belief that Corbyn may represent a way out of austerity, should look at the recent events in Greece and think again.

Syriza's electoral success earlier this year followed a wave of relentless strikes and protests. By voting Tsipras - Syriza's leader - into office the Greek population defied the threats of the rich European governments. But this did not prevent Tsipras from selling out in the end - not because he was a "bad" guy or a

"rightwinger", but because he had chosen to find a compromise with the international capitalist institutions rather than to seek the active support of the mobilised workers against them.

So it's not hard to imagine what Corbyn's election as Labour leader would really change. Nothing. Not only is his language even more moderate than Tsipras' past radical-sounding rhetoric, but, unlike Tsipras, he wouldn't even have to contend with the pressure of a mobilised working class. And without this pressure, Corbyn, no matter how much of a "good" guy he may seem, would sing to the tune of the class which rules over this society - the capitalist class, of course.

## • Renationalisation is energy-saving

After Jeremy Corbyn suggested renationalisation of the energy companies, by the state acquiring majority shares to control them, a "shock-horror" figure was given by City analysts regarding the cost, estimating it at £185bn. This is because they say the government would have to offer to buy whole companies at current market value if it owns more than 30% of shares, according to EU law.

But why should the government have to buy back the shares in the first place?! Shareholders have already been

paid back several times over in dividends over the years, while the companies have often demanded - and obtained - state subsidies or tax rebates to help with their investments. Not to mention that the gas and electricity prices for consumers have increased, even when fuel prices have gone down, to add to their systematic ripping off. So there is certainly no need to buy back shares. Not only would confiscation be in order, but large shareholders should be forced to compensate consumers.

## Greece

### The cost of compromising with the profit system

Syriza leader, Alexis Tsipras, was finally disowned by nearly one-third of his 149 MPs, in the vote over the conditions imposed by the EU governments and IMF in return for the next stage of the country's bailout. This had been widely predicted since it meant that Syriza was reneging on most of the social measures it had promised in January.

A week later, on 20th August, Tsipras responded by resigning his post in order to trigger a new election, due to take place at the end of September. With no parliamentary majority to support him, he had to find a new one and this is what this snap election is about.

Tsipras had always made clear that he wanted to reach a compromise with the rich countries, without going as far as challenging the stifling straitjacket of the profit system. This is what he did and, as a result, the population will go on paying for the parasitism of the capitalist system. Nevertheless, Tsipras hopes that, for lack of any better option, he will find enough support among the population.

As to the rich countries' governments, they have proven that they will tolerate no obstacle to the profiteering of their bankers - and that they will squeeze the population dry, especially its poorest sections. As a response to their ruthlessness, fake election promises cannot replace a genuine fightback.

## Protect us from this protector!

In August, Cameron made a point of making a number of insulting statements against migrants trying to enter Britain, describing them as a "flood" and then a "swarm". This was calculated politicking. The whole point was to scare the population here, into thinking that they are under threat and that only Cameron's "tough" measures can "protect" them.

All this scaremongering centred on the premise that Britain is being overwhelmed with migrants as no other country in the world. Which

is a blatant lie. 86% of the world's refugee population is in poor countries, up from 70% a decade ago. Of the remaining 14% who came to Europe in 2014, over half were taken by Italy, Germany and Sweden. Britain had the lowest number of applications for asylum, very far behind Sweden, while France had twice as many and Germany more than six times. If there is any group of people that the population needs to feel threatened by, it is the lying politicians in power, certainly not migrants nor refugees! ☐

## • Hammond the pot calls the kettle black

UK foreign secretary Philip Hammond's comments about "millions" of "desperate migrants" from Africa "marauding around the area" and threatening "European standards of living and social infrastructure" is not only vicious scaremongering aimed at whipping up anti-immigrant prejudices, but also calculated misinformation.

Indeed, the majority of those seeking

refuge in Europe today come from Syria, Eritrea, Afghanistan and Iraq. Most are fleeing wars and dictatorships in whose making the governments of Europe had a direct hand.

In fact, the real "marauders" are not these penniless refugees. Western capitalists are marauding whole regions of Africa and Asia, piling up wealth by plundering their resources. In doing

## • A "welcoming" country

According to new plans announced by the government, asylum seekers who have lost their appeals to stay in the UK will have 28 days to leave the country, or have their support withdrawn. More than 10,000 people would be immediately affected by this withdrawal of support.

However, talking about "support" is a bad joke. Failed asylum seekers with families who have no money to pay for living expenses are allocated

accommodation that they cannot refuse and a mere £5/day per person. This money is not received in cash, but on a prepaid card that can only be used in certain stores to buy essentials.

Another repressive measure involves separating children from parents who refuse to leave the country after being refused asylum, recalling the controversial statute which the 2004 Labour government was forced to revoke. Moreover,

## • Human touch?

So Yvette Cooper, the shadow home secretary and one of the contenders for the Labour leadership has added her wisdom to the debate on the Calais migrant crisis. She is calling for a "UN intervention"! Apparently the UN High Commission for Refugees should be brought in to register and process the migrants.

In her view it would be a more

"mature and humane response" for the thousands of refugees living in dangerous conditions and, no doubt for inconvenienced freight companies whose trucks are delayed on the other side of the Channel! No mention of course, of the stranded would-be immigrants being given decent facilities, decent medical care, proper clothing and food, etc.,

## • Paper or brick millionaires?

According to a report by Barclays, the number of millionaires in Britain has increased from 508,000 to 715,000 in the past 5 years, of which 191,000 reside in London. That is 1 out of 45 London residents! In fact, the wealth consultancy firm WealthInsight claims that Barclay's report is an underestimate and that there could be as many as 289,500 millionaires in London - or 1 out of 28 Londoners!

But what is really behind these

figures? Well, not much. In fact, a lot of the "new millions" are thanks purely to skyrocketing house prices - and the owners can't really use their wealth. There are now 400,000 to 500,000 houses in Britain estimated to be worth £1m or more and house prices are expected to keep rising 20-30% over the next five years. Just as the Bank of England predicted back in 2011: "*Purchases of financial assets financed by central bank money should initially increase broad money*

## Immigration



so, they have been spreading poverty among their populations, shoring up dictatorships and stoking up wars - and all this, for the sole purpose of boosting their profits. If Hammond wants to see "marauders" threatening "living standards and social infrastructure" he need not look further than his colleagues in government and his masters in the City.

individuals without families would receive nothing and have no right to work in the country.

Having been deprived of any means to survive, those who still persist in remaining in Britain would be deported back to the countries they fled because of war, poverty, and repression, without a court order or any possibility of redress. This is inhuman. No other word for it.

instead of being treated like animals and criminals.

No, she doesn't go that far. Or even suggest that the British government like other European governments, takes in a fair share of those who are fleeing wars and persecution, since it shares so much in the responsibility for stoking war across the world.

*holdings, push up asset prices and stimulate expenditure by lowering borrowing costs and increasing wealth."*

In other words, by printing money, the Treasury ensured that house prices, bond prices and equity prices would go up. So the rise in the number of millionaires in Britain doesn't reflect any kind of economic recovery - it is due to housing speculation, pure and simple, boosted by low interest rates and quantitative easing. Not sustainable at all!

**Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)****Post box frenzy**

The "Letter Box Study Group" - a very serious association specialising in the history of the letterbox in Britain - has estimated that 200 post boxes are stolen every year. Not surprising, considering the price some people are ready to pay for one: up to £6,000, but probably much more on the black market, depending on the size and historical value of the post box in question.

But now Royal Mail is apparently seeing red: an internal security team is to look at the possibility of forensic tags, permanent metal-marking systems or even electronic tracking in order to keep tabs on the huge network of post boxes. In fact, there are 115,500 in total, i.e., one post box within half-a-mile of every populated area, which, for the time being remains a legal requirement for



Royal Mail under the provisions of its universal postal service monopoly. But no doubt RM bosses rather see this as securing disposable "assets" which, together, could fetch at least £6.9m at auction! □

**• Are we people too?**

So we read on the CWU website that Dave and his mates are going to "get tough" with the Tories! They launched a "People's Post" campaign "to defend postal services and decent employment standards"... By hanging a protest banner over Westminster bridge, meeting in Westminster Hall with "speakers from other unions, celebrities and leading figures from politics" and rallying in front of the dept for Business,

Innovation and Skills...

If the idea is to show our strength and start the fight so much needed to win back the ground lost, we can think of thousands of useful things to do... instead of mobilising Dave's union official and MP friends! Or is that what he means by "people"? [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 15/07/15]

**• Playing the doctor**

What about this "early intervention and case management system" for

sick absences which RM is introducing? Which in plain English means that managers will be harassing us even more during our sick leave to get us back to work, even when our GPs have advised otherwise. So we think RM should provide every manager with GP training first... that will get them out of our way for at least 8 years! Otherwise, this new system is not on! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 15/07/15]

**Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)****• A start**

Whatever else we may say about the union pay claim (see union notice-board...!) "shift pay for life" as a demand is at least something - if night shifts are abolished into the bargain!! And if they add: equal pay for equal work!! After all, doesn't Brollywood (a la "Made in Dagenham") think we already have it?! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 21/07/15]

**• Not good enough...**

Nice to know union officials can still sound militant! But why do they think just putting up a notice at the clocks, to boycott the canteen from this Monday,

is enough? Where were the meetings, the suggestions from the floor, the alternative eating arrangements for hungry workers? They didn't even appear at the canteen door on Monday to "picket" themselves, even tho' their office is just downstairs! [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 21/07/15]

**• Point proven**

Yes, indeedy. The 27% price increase already happened last week. Boycotting from this Monday was like closing the stable door after the horse had bolted. All this meant the canteen was as crowded as ever on the day. Too little, guys, and too late. [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 21/07/15]

**• Something can be done!**

PS: will the food now improve by 27%? Last week some chicken was seen which looked as if it had died and been cooked many weeks ago. This isn't the chef's fault - it's the company's. So we know we need better all round - and since the JWC has a canteen rep(?) Can he/she (yeah, ha, ha) please report back? [Workers' Fight Ford Dagenham 21/07/15]

**BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)****• Making us pay**

The seven cancelled shifts at the beginning of July were just the latest example of the fragile basis of BMW's just-in-time sourcing. When parts come in from all over Europe by road, there are endless possibilities for disruption. That's BMW's problem - or should be. But what do they care, if they can get away with shutting us out and making us pay back the lost hours when they choose? [Workers Fight BMW Oxford]

**• Penalised twice**

Not that it will be that easy for BMW to get their pound of flesh: the bigger the so-called debt, the bigger the problem getting it repaid. In any case that fight lies in the future. What bothers many of us now is that BMW is using the excuse of minus hours to block perfectly legitimate requests for time off for one-off events. It doesn't matter how many hours we're in deficit, that's no excuse for bosses to stop us from going to special events.



It's BMW - not us - who cancels production. [Workers Fight BMW Oxford Cowley 15/07/15]

**King's Cross railway station (London)****A bad deal**

Virgin Trains East Coast (owned by Stagecoach/Virgin), which operates the East Coast mainline, has made its first pay offer since taking over in March this year. These 2 profitable companies (which have a combined revenue of £14bn) started by offering less than 1% to the workforce. Yet they employ some of the lowest paid station workers nationwide in the railway. For instance gate workers in London's King's Cross station start on the minimum wage. Worse, a lot of these workers are employed on a part-time basis, or zero-hour contracts - meaning their wages are even lower. And, on top of that, certain travel concessions

for the workforce have just been cut which, in effect, amounts to a pay cut.

After months of "negotiations" with all 4 railway unions, VTEC eventually offered a 2% pay rise - the worst pay offer we've had since privatisation! Unfortunately the driver's union Aslef, broke ranks by recommending the deal to their members. But the rest of the workforce opposed a resounding "no" to this derisory offer and, this time, VTEC came up with a slightly increased offer, but only for the lowest paid.

Now another referendum vote is being organised - except that, this



time, the RMT union is "strongly recommending" the deal! Of course, whatever the RMT leadership may say, this deal must be rejected. But voting it down once again won't resolve our problem. Only fighting will - despite and against the RMT leaders' spinelessness if necessary! ☐

**• Not on**

We hear those sack-happy bosses dismissed one of our VTEC workmates in Scotland, for forgetting an item of lost property on-board after having to

rush off a cancelled train. We all know how little time we have to jump off when a train is cancelled, so we're lucky if we don't leave our own stuff behind, let alone anyone else's! We also heard a cleaner was sacked for handing in lost

property a day late! So we're punished for trying to be helpful!? What's wrong with these managers? We need to make them sad-sack, by fighting to reinstate these mates. [Workers' Platform King's Cross 15/07/15]

**• First Great Western strikers fight on!**

A third, 3-day strike took place over the August Bank Holiday weekend against First Great Western's plans to introduce driver-only operation (cut all guards), cut buffet cars, squeeze in more passengers and out-source maintenance (cut in-house skilled jobs) when it introduces its snazzy new (government-funded!) high speed Hitachi intercity trains in 2017. This follows a 48-hour strike in July, timed by the RMT to coincide with the first London Underground strike and another which took place on 23rd August. But still FGW refuses to back down.

The irony is that East Coast mainline (now jointly run by Virgin and Stagecoach as VTEC), is introducing the same Hitachi

trains courtesy of the taxpayer, but has agreed (so far) to keep guards on board, keep the buffet (lose some seats, therefore) and retain maintenance depots, thus avoiding a dispute...

Of course, FGW - part of the First Group (dubbed "Wirst") - is in reality probably no worse than the other rail franchisees like VTEC. But if it gets away with its dastardly plan, VTEC and the others will try to follow suit. All the more reason to stop FGW now, before it's too late.

**• Network Rail's not fine**

It's unreal: on 19 August, the government's "Office of Rail Responsibility" announced a fine for Network Rail, the government's own rail company, of £2m. So in effect the government is fining itself...

This was allegedly for the disruption caused all over the network, but especially at London Bridge Station. NWR is criticised for its inability to anticipate increased passenger volumes and more trains. But isn't it responsible for the infrastructure carrying said passengers and trains? And isn't its board made up of the bosses of the private train operating companies, who supply the trains? Who else could possibly anticipate these numbers other than NWR itself?

NWR can however, choose to pay compensation to passengers and the train companies affected, instead. A more comfortable option for the government, since then at least some of the money would go into the pockets of its friends, the rail profiteers, at taxpayers' expense, of course.

**Underground - rise up together!**

It happened yet again: the rail union (RMT), called off a tube strike at the very last moment on the 23rd of August, claiming that talks were finally getting somewhere. Which would be all well and good, if it were true - and if the issues which caused workers to vote for strike in the first place were resolved. But is it? The strike action - there has been only one actual 24-hour stoppage and another postponement of a strike (also just before a bank holiday) is over two different issues: first, the disruption caused by the "restructuring" due to the

closure of ticket offices and the loss of over 800 jobs and second, the introduction of the night tube service, which was due to start on 12 September which LUL tied to this year's pay deal.

Initially the drivers' union ASLEF joined with the RMT in calling for action against the proposed terms of night working. But after the introduction of the night tube was postponed, they revoked their action and left the RMT on its own. No doubt this was a factor in the RMT's decision to call off their planned strike which would have badly affected the tube from the 23rd August through to the 31st. But there has been little account given to workers who are left to

contend with being pushed onto untenable shifts at all hours of the day or night and having to work several stations which could be much further away than is acceptable. London Underground bosses even dared to take on temps to work in stations while implementing their redundancy programme!

Underground workers have every reason to fight the plans of the bosses and it is in the interests of tube travellers too, that they win this fight. More staff are needed on platforms, guards should be on every train, there must be more carriages, more seats and above all, radical fare cuts!

## China

Following the beginning of the financial crisis, in 2007, we were told that the so-called "emerging economies" would give the capitalist system a new lease of life. In particular, China, with its fast growth, huge population and "rising middle class", was supposed to enlarge the world market to such an extent, that it would more than make up for the reduction in consumption caused by the crisis elsewhere.

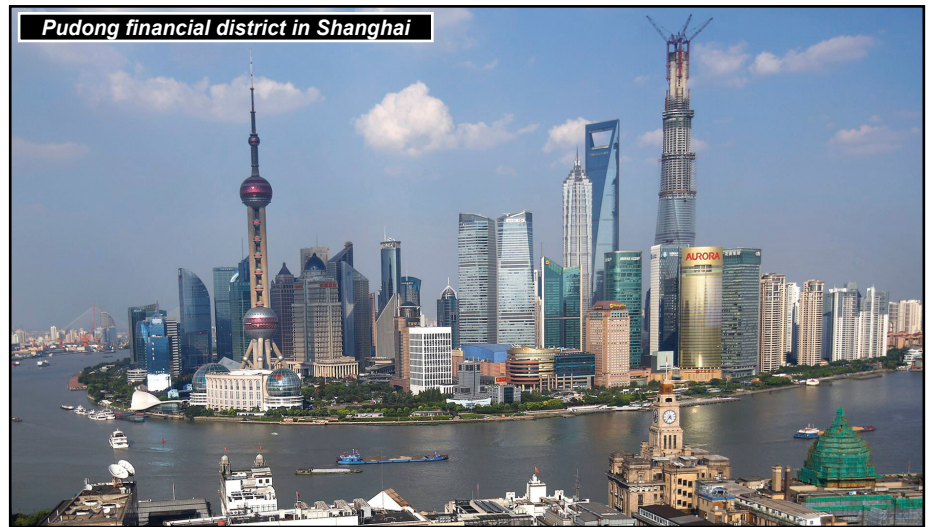
But that was what we were told yesterday. Today, the story has changed. After a series of brutal falls, the Shanghai stock market has lost 37% of its value since June, despite massive injections of cash and other measures by the government. Now, the economic experts suddenly discover that the Chinese economy is not in such good health after all. But never fear: Osborne went on TV to blame the country's failure to "reform" - which, in his book, means that it hasn't opened up its economy wide enough to the profit sharks!

However, exactly the opposite is true. China is paying the price for its massive reintroduction of private property. It made its economy entirely dependent on the rich countries' markets and gave free access to the speculative capital roaming the world in search of a quick buck. After 2007, the rich countries' markets shrank, thereby reducing China's exports. Meanwhile, it became a target for speculators

## Iran

In late August, following the nuclear deal reached with Iran, Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond rushed to Tehran with a plane-load of businessmen, to re-open the British embassy. It had been closed in 2011, when it was stormed by protesters after Cameron banned all transactions with Iran's central bank. So, now, British companies will be able to trade openly with Iran, without fearing the threat of British or US sanctions. Hence the plane-load of businessmen. The odds are that the

## After the Shanghai crash



- especially as, unlike in the rich countries, interests rates remained high. Lending to Chinese companies or playing on the Shanghai stock market, was a much more profitable business than investing in productive activities - but it also led to an astronomical 150% increase in share prices in Shanghai, by 2014. Eventually, the chickens came home to roost. Since the end of 2014, this speculative capital has begun to flee the "emerging markets" - almost £700 billion worth of it, over the past 13 months - and China has been the worst affected.

The financial hurricane threatening China immediately sent shock waves across the world. In the last two weeks of August, the world's

main stock markets were hit. At one point, the value of the shares quoted in London fell by £46 billion in just one day. Several economists compared the Shanghai crash to the 1929 Wall Street crash. This highlights the instability of the capitalist financial Ponzi scheme - and the threat it represents for all the populations across the world. Who knows what comes next? Will the governments find, once again, ways of papering over the cracks in their system? Only the future will tell. But whether they do or not, it is the working class majority of the population which will be presented with the bill - that is, as long as this parasitic system remains in place. □

## Iran - the sharks are back

US, which only has a reduced representation hosted by the Swiss embassy, will follow suit.

Whether the Iranian population will gain anything out of this "normalisation" is another question, though. After all, 62 years ago, in 1953, the CIA and MI6 engineered a coup to overthrow the regime of prime minister Mossadegh. A moderate nationalist, Mossadegh had dared to demand a bigger share of the country's oil, then controlled by

the forerunner of British oil giant BP, and had threatened to nationalise its assets following its refusal. Mossadegh's overthrow paved the way for 26 years of a bloody dictatorship under the pro-western regime of the Shah, while BP and the US oil giants shared out most of Iran's oil between themselves. The Iranian population won't have forgotten the many who paid with their lives for the plundering of their country by the western oil giants! □

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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