

WORKERS' fight



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contact@w-fight.org

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

LET THE STEEL BOSSSES PAY!

The possible closure of Tata Steel's main operations means that up to 40,000 workers are under threat - 15,000 employed by Tata and 25,000 by its suppliers.

This is the latest attack on steel jobs in a long series. Already, in the run-up to privatisation, in 1988, almost 2/3 of the industry's 156,000 jobs had been cut. And, by the time Tata Steel bought most of what remained of the privatised steel industry, in 2007, the workforce was down to 29,000.

Then, between last October and January, SSI, Caparo and Tata Steel made more than 6,100 workers redundant. If this new round of closures goes ahead, there will only be about 9,000 steelworkers left.

Real causes and red herrings

Today, almost everyone - from Cameron to Corbyn and union leaders - blames the steel industry's crisis on China, which is accused of dumping its excess steel onto the world market at bargain-basement prices.

The real cause, however, is linked to the workings of the capitalist system itself. For a long time already, there has been a worldwide overproduction of steel, partly due to massive speculation on commodities and partly due to the consequences of the banking crisis. Today, production capacity is estimated to be 600m tonnes/yr more than actual demand. Compared to this, China's exports of just over 100m tonnes/yr are hardly decisive!

This overproduction creates cut-throat competition between the steel giants. In order to protect their profits, they cut investment to the strict minimum while cutting the wage bill to the bare bone. And when, despite this, a plant does not produce enough profits to their liking, they just close it down.

The reality is that the capitalist



economy is in the middle of an on-going crisis. Being based on the permanent competition between rival capitalists, its inability to plan its production according to need is already, in and of itself, a cause of chaos. But the fact that, in addition, the capitalists are able to make huge profits by speculating on everything that can be bought and sold - thanks to the sophisticated tools made available by financial markets - only results in increasing this chaos on a colossal scale.

Beware of blind alleys!

The response of the steel unions was to present a plan to make the steel industry "viable". They demand that "the government must invest in our steel industry to give it a future".

As if it was in the steelworkers' interests to make this industry "viable" - i.e. profitable for the capitalists! As if profits didn't only exist because exploitation does! As if offering to make an industry "viable" wasn't volunteering to be more exploited!

Likewise for phrases like "our steel industry" or "save our steel". As far as we, workers, are concerned, steel belongs to the capitalist class - and it still would if it was nationalised, as some suggest. Otherwise, working in a steel mill would not be one of the hardest and most dangerous jobs!

Of course, if the Tata Steel workers lose their jobs, it will be a disaster for them - and a devastating blow for their communities. But does this mean that the only prospect they can be offered is to hang on, at all costs, to their dangerous jobs?

Instead of begging the government to bail out Tata, as the union leaders do - and using the bank bailout as an example (as if we weren't all still footing the bill for it!) - why shouldn't Tata pay its debt to the workers who made its profits? And, with £5bn profits last year on assets worth £82bn, it could easily pay all its workers their full wages for as long as it takes for them to find another job or retire on a generous pension! ☐

Our history

This Easter Monday marked the centenary of the 20th century's first armed rebellion against British imperialism. On 24th April 1916, armed detachments formed by the workers of the Irish Citizen Army (ICA) and the nationalists of the petty bourgeois Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) took over the city of Dublin and proclaimed an Irish republic.

This was a landmark in the fight against Britain's occupation of its Irish colony. But it was much more than that. Taking place in the middle of WW1 and in the backyard of one of the main warring powers, it was a warning to all European capitalist classes.

The Easter Rising was the first time the Irish working class took part in the fight against Britain under its own class banner. But it was not the first time it occupied the political stage. The ICA was born out of one of the most brutal and longest industrial confrontations of early 20th century Europe - the 1913 Dublin lockout.

In August 1913, Jim Larkin's Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, struck against the Dublin United Tramway Company's refusal to allow its workforce to unionise. The strike spread to involve 20,000 workers right across Dublin. The Dublin bosses retaliated with a 5-month lock-out and ferocious repression. This prompted Larkin to ask fellow socialist, James Connolly, to set up the ICA, as a workers' defence militia against police attacks. But the "first and last principle" of its constitution was: "the ownership of Ireland, moral and material, is vested of

1916: the Dublin Easter Rising

right in the people of Ireland" and its main objective was "to arm and train all Irishmen capable of bearing arms to enforce and defend its first principle." The strike was eventually defeated, as workers were literally starved back to work. But the ICA remained, as a militant, socialist, workers' militia - which Lenin was to describe later as "the first Red Army in Europe".

When World War I broke out, Connolly, Larkin and their comrades joined the minority of

until the last throne and the last capitalist bond and debenture will be shrivelled in the funeral pyre of the last war lord." Against the narrow nationalism of the IRB, Connolly's outlook was internationalist and saw the interests of the Irish working class as identical to those of the international working class.

On the day chosen for the uprising, the armed insurgents numbered only 1,600 - facing 2,500 heavily-armed British soldiers. British reinforcements kept being brought in day after day. Within six days, the insurrection was overwhelmed by the British army's heavy artillery. Martial law was declared across the country, 15 leaders of the uprising were shot immediately after the end of combat, including Connolly, and over 3,000 supporters were arrested.

Today, the only tribute paid to the victims of the Easter Rising involves waving the tricolour and singing nationalist hymns in front of Irish politicians who represent the same capitalist interests that the founders of the ICA were fighting against during the Dublin lockout. But what revolutionaries should remember of this event, is the attempt of the Irish working class to change the course of history by standing up in the middle of the turmoil of a world war in the hope of sparking off a revolution against the system that had caused it. They didn't succeed. But others did, less than a year later, when the Russian working class overthrew the czarist regime and triggered a revolutionary wave across Europe - thereby paying the best possible tribute to the victims of the Easter Rising. □



The British army facing the crowd outside Mountjoy prison

European revolutionary socialists, like Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky, who denounced the conflict as an imperialist war, which the working class should oppose. Moreover, both the ICA and nationalist IRB saw the war as a chance to strike at British imperialism - which was what led them to jointly plan an uprising. But, for Connolly, this was purely a circumstantial alliance. Unlike the IRB, whose aim was limited to achieving Irish independence, Connolly hoped that the Irish working class would be able to "set the torch to a European conflagration that will not burn out

What they said about the Easter Rising

Leon Trotsky - July 1916: "But the historical role of the Irish proletariat is only beginning. Already into this uprising - under an archaic banner - it has injected its class resentment against militarism and imperialism. That resentment from now on will not subside. On the contrary, it will find an echo throughout Great Britain. Scottish soldiers smashed the Dublin barricades. But in Scotland itself coal-miners are

rallying round the red flag, raised by Maclean and his friends. Those very workers, who at the moment the Hendersons are trying to chain to the bloody chariot of imperialism, will revenge themselves against the hangman Lloyd George."

Lenin - July 1916: "It is the misfortune of the Irish that they rose prematurely, before the European revolt of the proletariat had had time to mature. Capitalism is not so harmoniously built that the various sources of rebellion can immediately merge of their own accord,

without reverses and defeats. On the other hand, the very fact that revolts do break out at different times, in different places, and are of different kinds, guarantees wide scope and depth to the general movement; but it is only in premature, individual, sporadic and therefore unsuccessful, revolutionary movements that the masses gain experience, acquire knowledge, gather strength, and get to know their real leaders, the socialist proletarians, and in this way prepare for the general onslaught."

Junior doctors - out again, alone again?

NHS

At the time of writing junior doctors intend to strike again, on 6th April for 48 hours - providing emergency cover - and will strike "all-out" on 26-27 April with no emergency cover. It is this second strike which is provoking condemnation from Royal Medical Colleges and from the usual suspects among politicians and media. They accuse doctors of putting lives at risk, as if lives were not already at risk thanks to conditions in the NHS!

Health Secretary Hunt still insists on imposing the contract regardless. He claims this new contract includes a 13.5% pay rise, despite the fact he's cut out-of-hours and weekend payments by around 17%. The 24/7 working which Hunt expects, is already too much for overtired doctors. "Unsocial hours" can make up half their working week, meaning a



de facto pay cut for many.

Sure, the doctors are right to strike - but what about being more effective? They could organise their own emergency cover and really go "all-out" - staying out until they win.

But above all, it's their isolation that needs to be broken - by the "all-out" participation of other health service workers (and the rest of us!), affected by the same cuts and with the same stake in this fight. □

• Nor should nurses fight alone!

It's pretty unbelievable that the government plans to cut nurses' training bursaries as part of its £8bn NHS cuts "package". Especially when there's such an acute and long-standing nurses' shortage - estimated to be around 11,000 in England alone. And why? because the last ConDem government actually cut the number of training places by 17%! But previous Labour governments were just as bad, while promising more nurses and doctors - overall training places were cut by 20% between 2009 and 2012. And now, instead of being able to recruit 3,000 nurse-trainees for 2016/17 Health Education England has funding for just 331!

The huge gap is being filled with overseas-trained nurses, as it always was. But even they are hard to retain in the NHS, given the dire cuts, which mean overwork, overtime, exhaustion and low morale.

Student nurses have decided to join the junior doctors in their action - staging a "die-in" outside parliament. Indeed, the NHS, its staff and its patients are under lethal threat. The working class surely needs to fight - with all its might - a system that puts profit before lives.

• NHS critically ill

Few people probably noticed the Private Members' Bill to undo NHS "reforms", presented by Green MP Caroline Lucas, on 11 March. It got "talked out" of time, by Tory MPs and thus dismissed. Such is British "democracy"!

The Bill aimed to abolish the NHS "market" and reinstate the Health Secretary's duty to provide a free NHS throughout England, removed by the 2012 Health and Social Care Act. Many saw this Act as a final blow, opening the NHS fully to privateers, and worse, introducing charges.

The NHS is at a critical point. In the context of 75% of Hospital Trusts in deficit (total=£2.8bn this April), the worst performance figures since records began were posted in January: 212,136 patients waited over 4 hours in A&E; 263,445 waited more than 18 weeks for procedures; 20% of cancer patients waited more than the 62-day target (already far too long!) for treatment. A fourfold increase in 5 years.

What's to be done? The money is there to fix the NHS. But as Caroline Lucas discovered, parliament is impotent. The working class is big and strong enough to force a turnaround, however. But first, junior doctors' and nurses' struggles need to be reinforced from all sides.

• Meningitis and NHS rationing

The Department of Health has rejected an online petition calling for the meningitis B vaccine to be prescribed to all children under 11. With 810,000 signatures, the petition is the largest ever submitted to parliament.

The new vaccine Bexsero, made by GlaxoSmithKline, has been available in the NHS since September 2015, but only for babies, being given at 2 and at 4 months, with a booster at 12 months - so as to ration it on cost grounds. Parents of older children have to pay to have them vaccinated.

Britain has about 1,800 cases of Meningitis B each year. It is infectious and strikes children and adolescents disproportionately, with a 10% mortality and a 20% chance of permanent disability through limb amputation or organ damage. GlaxoSmithKline is clearly making the NHS pay through the nose with its undisclosed, "commercially sensitive" pricing of Bexsero. Yet the NHS, as its largest customer, could surely impose better terms - if the government had the political will to back it! But Osborne and Hunt would rather have more children severely disabled by a preventable disease than hurt GSK's shareholders in the pocket!

Bloody tax gone; women still paying

So the 5% tax on tampons is to be abolished. That women's sanitary-ware was ever taxed (let alone not given out free) may be surprising. But in fact it was taxed at the full VAT rate (at the time 17.5%) until 2001. The reduction to 5% was a compromise, agreed after a campaign in the 1990s for a zero rate.

So now tax on women's sanitary-ware

will be zero. Not thanks to Cameron, despite his triumphant (and astonishing) claims of a victory over the EU Commission, but because the EU was already about to change its VAT rules anyway. As a result, the lowest rate permissible will no longer be 5%. But tampons were already zero-rated in Ireland and since the 1970s, in Britain,

food and children's clothes - and men's razors (!) - never had VAT added.

A question still remains, however: what happens to those women's services (mainly for victims of domestic violence) which are facing cuts, and which were supposed to receive the proceeds of this 5% tax in Osborne's budget?

Budget

As part of what he dared to call his "*Budget for working people*", Osborne announced an increase in the personal allowance from £10,600 to £11,500, from April 2017. Of course, he conveniently forgot that those who already earn too little to pay tax - and are the most in need of help - won't benefit at all!

Another of his new gimmicks was

• **The hidden cuts**

Behind the budget's new cuts, "old" ones are going ahead, worth £12bn over the next 4 years. In particular, the £30 per week cut affecting many disabled ESA claimants will be implemented, thanks to a parliamentary trick, despite being voted down twice in the Lords.

Almost 2/3 of these cuts (£7.5bn) will come from capping most benefits, both for the unemployed and the low paid. The cap

• **Sacked "patrons"**

While Duncan Smith was (allegedly) resigning over disability benefit cuts, a few other Tories were losing cosy jobs too. The London mayoral candidate Zac Goldsmith, one of the richest MPs, was effectively sacked as patron of local charity Richmond Advice and Information on Disability (AID), after he voted in favour of the £30 per week cut in ESA for the unemployed disabled. Of course, with

Help to get into debt

the "Help To Save" scheme. Those on low incomes will get 50p from the Treasury for every £1 they put aside, although they will have to wait at least two years to get this bonus and it will be capped at £600. In order to cash in that miserly £600, though, they will have to save £50 every month for two years. Of course, Osborne failed to say how

low-income households already struggling to make their money last until the end of the week, are supposed to make such savings!

The most cynical aspect, though, is that this scheme is supposedly targeted at the same working families facing a real loss in benefits - of at least £1,600 a year - due to the rolling out of Universal credit! ☐

will be £500 per week for a household and £350 per week for a single claimant. At first, this cap will affect housing benefit. This will be a severe blow for the 300,000 families having to pay extortionate private sector rents - many of which may face eviction as a result. Then, with Universal Credit (UC) being phased in nationwide over the coming year, the cap will extend to other benefits. Child benefit will be

limited to the first two children, so families with three or more children will lose as much as £3,000 per year by 2020.

In addition, the 'earnings threshold' above which UC is reduced has been lowered, so that even those on very low incomes will lose out, just because they manage to do a few hours more paid work in the week. Never mind that UC was supposed to "help the poorest into work"!

an estimated fortune of £280m, even if he ever becomes disabled himself, Goldsmith need never depend on ESA! But every disability group protested before the vote, that at its existing level, ESA barely covers essential living costs, let alone at a lower level!

Goldsmith is only the most prominent case. MPs Kit Malthouse and James Cleverly, who voted for the same cut,

were also ordered to step down as patrons: Malthouse by the national Multiple Sclerosis Society; Cleverly by Advocacy for All, which supports benefit claimants in his Braintree constituency. For MPs, the "beauty" of the job is that they very rarely get held to account for supporting attacks like this. At least these three didn't get off scot-free, for once!

• **Handouts for business and the wealthy**

Despite Osborne's own target of operating a budget surplus by 2020, he insists on handing out tax cuts to businesses and the rich. Cutting corporation tax to 17% by 2020 amounts to another £6bn handout to big business - from a chancellor who wanted to take £4.4bn from disabled PIP claimants! He also cut capital gains tax from 28% to 20%. This tax, on profits made from sales of assets worth

over £11,000, is paid mainly by the rich and big business on property and financial investments, with about half the £5bn raised on profits of more than £1m in 2013-14 - meaning that this tax cut is a real boon for wealthy speculators.

Small businesses will gain from lower business rates. Councils, having been told last year that they were to keep the proceeds in future, will now face a £7bn

shortfall in the amount collected over the next 5 years, on top of all the other cuts they've had to face. Osborne has said that they will be compensated from the Treasury - but he has not said *how*!

• **The cost of tax-feeding big business**

Contrary to last November's OBS forecast that the deficit would fall, it went up by £4.5bn. George Osborne reacted by blaming the world economy, arguing that "*the world is a more uncertain place than at any time since the financial crisis.*" As if foreign markets determined government receipts and spending choices!

Osborne's choices were already outlined in his 2010 "Corporation Tax Road Map", which set out to cut the rate of this tax from 28% to 24%. But by 2014-2015, the rate was already down to 20%! All this was supposed to encourage the

capitalists to invest. But of course, it didn't, since they won't invest as long as profits are not guaranteed.

However, had corporation tax rate remained at 28%, receipts over the last financial year would have been in the region of £51.5bn. Instead, they were only £42bn, meaning that over £9bn went straight into the pockets of big business over that year alone! No wonder the deficit increased - and this had nothing to do with the world being "*a more uncertain place*"!



Feeding their masters in the City

Attacking the disabled



In his original budget announcement, Osborne said he would slash £4.4bn from Personal Independence Payments (PIPs) over 4 years.

That meant that 370,000 disabled people - more than half of those on PIP - would have lost £3,500 a year. PIP is meant to pay for aids which help the disabled with mobility, access the toilet, to get dressed, etc. This cut was to be made by cynically re-classifying many of these vital aids as luxuries!

Planning for chaos

Osborne's budget proposals include one that is sure to cause chaos across the education system for years to come. Behind phrases about "parental choice", "school autonomy", "raising standards" and "ending a Victorian approach to education" lies a plan to turn all schools into academies within the next 6

years. Since, currently, only 21% of schools - and less than 15% of primaries - are academies, this implies an enormous upheaval in education!

In addition, the government has set up a fund for schools wanting to provide an extra five hours' teaching or activities each week. This can only mean more work and pressure

• **This Bill shall fail!**

Delegates at the annual conference of National Union of teachers (NUT) overwhelmingly backed a ballot for industrial action against the government's plan to convert all schools into academies. One of the delegates was quoted as

saying: "at the end of the day, if this white paper goes through and becomes law, we will have no negotiation rights, we will have no national pay and conditions agreements".

To the original motion in favour

• **What? Run-down state schools, by Gove!**

In 2014, education secretary Michael Gove made grand speeches on how British state schools should be the "best in the world" - indistinguishable from the best fee-paying schools, like Eton.

But this didn't mean more resources, teachers or facilities for state education. On the contrary, the education budget shrunk. The only result was more bureaucratic paperwork, to prove that state schools were maintaining "high

standards", so that teachers had to spend more of their time churning out statistics on meeting "targets", instead of focusing on their students.

The "remedy" invented by Gove and his army of top civil servants - almost all public school products, no doubt - for the resource-starved state schools was arbitrary. Changes to curricula, assessments and exams only weighed down already exhausted

Budget

For now, Osborne may have shelved this disgraceful attack. But this is only in order to deprive the Tory Brexit faction of the "compassionate" mask they had adopted following Duncan Smith's resignation. And he can be expected to come back with more cuts against the most vulnerable, one way or another, since he has to find some way of funding his handouts to the capitalists. □

Schools

on already hard-pressed teachers! Another measure, which will remove parent representation from school boards, ensures that decisions can be made behind closed doors.

Teachers, parents and students are facing a savage attack on education. But they could stop it, by opposing it together! □

of a ballot, the delegates added an amendment calling for strikes both in summer and autumn, as well as coordinated action with junior doctors. Let's hope that they teach the government the lesson it needs!

teachers. Since these changes were introduced last year, 50,000 state school teachers (more than one in 10) have left their jobs due to overwork and stress. State schools are now struggling with a severe and chronic shortage of teachers, a deteriorating teacher-to-student ratio and no other choice but to cut extra-curricular activities like theatre and sports. Gove's "remedy" hasn't cured state schools, it's been killing them!

Academies: another privatisation by stealth?

Academies are state-funded schools, run by academy trusts. Their main purpose was to destroy teachers' national agreements, thereby cutting the wage bill; to reduce local authorities' powers over schools because they tend to be too sensitive to parents' pressures for electoral reasons; and like for every public service, to create opportunities for private subcontractors to parasitise

public funds.

When Blair first introduced academies, he claimed they would improve education standards. The results are hardly convincing, even by the government's own yardstick. Only 15% of them are above national average for pupil progress, as opposed to 44% of state schools.

There is some logic in this: teachers are under even more pressure in academies, with some working up to 60hrs per week, while others are

perpetually trapped in temporary contracts. Academies do not have to follow the national curriculum - the British Humanist Association reported last year that 91 were teaching creationism despite a governmental ban! "Improved education standards" indeed!

The next thing they'll do, is to introduce commercial relations between academies - an "education market" as they've done with the NHS "health market" - allowing profiteers to sneak in, in a big way. No thanks!

European Union *IDS resignation - just a crutch for Brexit*

Duncan-Smith's resignation had nothing to do with benefit cuts and everything to do with the infighting among the Tories. IDS's posturing as a champion of the most vulnerable was just a cynical ploy. As if it wasn't he who presided over the introduction of the notorious "bedroom tax" and the recent £30/week cut in ESA - both of which target the disabled! Just as it was he who boasted that his 6 years in

government had "saved" £30bn/yr through benefit cuts. And more will be "saved" on the backs of the working poor, with the rolling out of his "Universal Credit".

However, by resigning, Duncan-Smith killed two birds with one stone. As a long-standing Eurosceptic and Tory heavy-weight, he propelled himself to the head of the party's Brexit faction and appears now as a frontrunner in the race for Cameron's

succession. At the same time, by claiming the moral high ground over disabled benefits, he provides this faction with a "benevolent" banner, in supposed contrast to the EU's ruthlessness, exposed by the fate of Greece.

In any case, for all their posturing, both anti- and pro-Brexit factions are on the same side of the barricades - the side of the wealthy, against the working class. □

• *EU referendum: all about business interests*



The "in" and "out" campaigns are now in full swing. But if working class voters are looking for a reason to support either of the two sides, they won't find it in their arguments: both seem only concerned with business interests.

The "in" camp boasts of having the support of 80% of CBI members. No wonder, since the CBI is dominated by big companies which are worried by the prospect of losing access to a tariff-free market of 500 million people!

As to the "out" camp, it has cobbled together a list of 250 business

supporters - some of whom withdrew as soon as the list was published - who have set up a Business Council to counter the CBI's pro-EU stance. Bizarrely, they claim that Britain (meaning British business) would be better off following the examples of Switzerland or Norway, whose populations are 1/8th and 1/12th of the size of the population here! Maybe, if the "in" vote wins, they'll move to Jersey and declare independence??

In any case, neither camp has anything to say to the working class: Workers have no stake in this referendum!

• *The EU's Turkish border police*

Turkey is now paid by the EU (£4.6bn in total) to be its border police, by taking those refugees refused entry by Greece. In return, the EU will take one Syrian refugee from Turkey for every Syrian deported from Greece to Turkey - but only up to a maximum of 72,000. Never mind that Turkey is already host to over 1.8m Syrian refugees; that 184,000 refugees have landed in Greece over the past 3 months alone, or that there is no end in sight to the wars causing the crisis! As to those who do not come from Syria, they will be repatriated - regardless of the fact that this may

put their lives at risk, from war or extreme poverty!

The rich European powers are passing the buck by "subcontracting" the resolution of the refugee crisis. This is all the more cynical as the Turkish regime, which is notoriously dictatorial, is defending its own interests in Iraq and Syria - by attacking the Kurds in both countries and supporting Islamic forces in Syria.

These latest measures will not stop desperate people who have nothing to lose, from finding refuge. And nor should they.



Minimum wage

Osborne's so-called "National Living Wage" came in on April Fool's Day. And if anyone is a fool on this day it is Osborne himself - to imagine that by changing the name of the minimum wage after a derisory 50p increase to £7.20 per hour, the workers who benefit (only those over 25 years) will feel this is a real "step up", as per government propaganda.

"Living wage"? A cynical misnomer!

Outside London it is reckoned that workers need a minimum of £8.25 per hour to live and inside London, £9.40. Yet despite the ridiculous fanfare over this NLW, the 4 different rates depending on age - at the old minimum wage level - remain! And so does the £3.30 per hour starvation wage paid to apprentices of any age! So 21-24

year-olds are still on £6.70/hr, 18-20 year-olds on £5.30 and under 18s on £3.87! It's not hard to guess what bosses are going to do to keep paying the lowest minimum! And by the way, those who do receive the new NLW for a 40-hour week, rise above the personal allowance threshold of £11,500 per year - and thus this pittance is actually taxed!

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**A pay rise 3 months overdue, "sorted" in one week?**

A week after it was recommended by Unite, having been negotiated behind workers' backs, as usual, BMW's pay offer at the Mini assembly plant was accepted by a majority of three-to-one in a ballot. The deal is actually phased over three years, starting with 3.25% in 2016 plus a one-off £150. In 2017, we get 2.75% or the November RPI rate, if higher, plus another £150; in 2018, again 2.75% or RPI. In return, we lose any right to book leave for the following year until BMW announces

the plant shutdowns in November - and there's a clampdown on taking single days of flexi leave, for which we now have to give 3 weeks, not 2 weeks notice!

The deal also fails to compensate most of us for the pay cut which was imposed when BMW cancelled Friday night shifts until next February - especially the agency workers who lost most through this and don't even get a vote on pay. So why did work-mates vote for it? Apart from the rise already being 3 months overdue,



the Unite branch leadership's recommendation closed down any discussion of what we actually need: an increase that reflects BMW's ever-rising profits, with no strings - and the same permanent BMW contracts for *all* workers here!

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**• Preparing for another standstill?**

So management is going to full-production of the new Panther engine after a break of 8-9 weeks - during which the head gasket, if not the head itself, was meant to be redesigned. But guess what? We hear that they haven't completed the testing to 60,000(?) miles, as is required! So what now? Cross their fingers and their legs and hope they don't produce yet more (costly

for them!) cock-ups, plus chaos for us, or worse, Transit engines bursting into flames when out on the road? [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 31/03/16]

• Yes, fear the walking dead

Given the 12-hour shifts we usually work, most of us Puma machining workers are probably walking around this plant with eyes half-shut, so to tell us, yet again, after our mate didn't see the forklift coming and had his foot run over - to: "Stop, Eye contact, Acknowledge,



Thank" is a bit useless. With the manager-made havoc and manager-induced fatigue in this place, it's managers who need to SEAT. [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 31/03/16]

King's Cross railway station (London)**• Asbestos kills**

This is just scandalous: asbestos is all over the lower ground offices and in tunnels of the Northern City Line. Instead of removing it, the cheap answer was cover it and test the air regularly. And tunnels stopped being cleaned in 1989! SGTR tests claim the air's "safe". But we know we're inhaling air thick with particles (and asbestos fibres?)

At Moorgate, we're now wearing our own pollution masks on the platforms. We're thinking of distributing them to passengers too, with an explanation!

But the bottom line is that GN has to remedy this - it's fundamental, and mandatory. No ifs, no buts. [Workers' Platform King's Cross 23/03/16]

• Keep GN cleaning fully in-house!

We just cannot believe it: GN/Southern is trying to go ahead and outsource the remaining GN in-house cleaners to Churchill - by 1 May - and has now told us to hand back our travel passes before their chosen company takes over!

We're the last remaining in-house cleaners. And we refuse the degrading of our wages and Ts&Cs this would mean for



us, but we also think all outsourced operations should come back in-house - to begin a collective fight for decent conditions for all! There's time to stop this move by GN. Let's join forces and do it! [Workers' Platform King's Cross 23/03/16]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**• Moya the destroyer**

Re the coming pay "deal": in fact we know Moya Greede has "previous" - we can see what she did to the Canadian Post. Their equivalent of the Universal Service Obligation is gone... And if this government can get rid of its legal obligation to provide a free NHS for all - which it has done - it can also dump RM's USO. That fight we didn't

have in 2013? We'll have to have it soon. [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 27/01/16]

• Missing hands

After the last series of EVRs at the beginning of the month, we sure miss our mates - and we don't know how many will go next. It seems that RM has kept the overall redundancies secret. So we don't know how many - or how few - hands will be



doing the work in HMP tomorrow. But one thing we're sure of - there aren't enough! [Workers' Fight Mount Pleasant 27/01/16]

France

March 9th, 24th and 31st were days of action across France, involving strikes and protests. The most successful saw 260 marches and over a million protesters - both workers and youth. They were opposing the draft "El Khomri law" - which the Socialist government claims is designed to "boost job creation" (haven't we heard it all before!) - but whose real objective, of course, is to boost company profits.

In France, unlike here, working conditions are almost entirely defined by law. Like here, this is true for the minimum wage (£7.60/hr for the over-17s). But it is also true for employment contracts, working hours (a 35-hour week), paid holidays (5 weeks), overtime premiums (at least 25%), unfair dismissal, retirement age, health and safety, etc. In addition, most industries are covered by legally binding national agreements setting better conditions. Workers can get legal aid in order to seek redress from tribunals which have more enforcement powers than Britain's employment tribunals.

Much of this is the result of over many decades of struggle by the French working class. And now, the bosses want to use the pretext of the unemployment created by their own crisis, to repeal these rights.

Terrorism

Hardly 4 months after the Paris attacks, the bombings which shook Brussels on 22nd March, killing 24 and injuring over 200, have brought a sense of terror back to the capitals of the rich European countries.

ISIL claimed responsibility, presenting the suicide bombers as heroes. But their choice of target - air passengers and commuters - only highlights the perpetrators' utter contempt for all populations - including their own. They are enemies of all oppressed - particularly in Syria and Iraq, where they are trying to impose their brutal rule.

Over the past 5 years, hundreds

Against the bosses' and government's attacks



Demonstration in Paris on March 31st

Under the draft law, a permanent contract would become little more than an open-ended temporary contract which could be terminated at any time. Companies could make workers redundant without any possible redress by just showing a fall in turnover for two quarters. They would be able to increase the basic working week to up to 60 hours, while reducing the compulsory rest time between two shifts. Overtime would be calculated over a period of 3 years and only paid at the end of that period, possibly at a rate as low as 10%.

Even more fundamentally, what is put into question, is that employment rights would apply collectively

to all workers, whatever their circumstances, as they do now. In particular, companies would be legally able to by-pass industry-wide collective agreements by organising "in-house referendums" - for instance to blackmail workers into agreeing to wage cuts under threat of closure.

This is an all-out attack against the working class and both workers and youth are rightly determined to stop it. Opinion polls show a 70% opposition to this law! At the time of writing, another day of action has been called for Tuesday 5th April. Let us hope that the French working class will show its mettle by derailing this law! □

The ugly cost of the imperialist order

of thousands have lost their lives in Syria and Iraq, but also increasingly so in Libya and some neighbouring sub-Saharan countries. While many were victims of ISIL or its local siblings, they are, in the first instance, the victims of decades of brutal imperialist intervention across the Middle East, primarily aimed at the looting of its oil.

Significantly, by contrast with the Brussels attacks, there was no such media outrage over the suicide attack which killed 60 people in the Pakistani town of Lahore on 24th March, or over the 3 terrorist attacks which claimed 89 victims over the previous

days in Iraq - all carried out by groups claiming allegiance to ISIL. As if it should somehow be more "acceptable" for these terrorists to strike in the poor countries, rather than in the rich countries which produced them.

Whether in Brussels or Baghdad, in Paris or Lahore, the victims of these attacks are first and foremost victims of the imperialist world order. This is what the working class needs to remember whenever Cameron urges the public to close ranks behind his government against the "enemy". Because the "enemy" is also here - in the government and in the City.

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:

BM Workers' Fight - LONDON WC1N 3XX.