

WORKERS' fight



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

The capitalists and their politicians MUST PAY FOR THEIR BREXIT MESS!

By the end of July, Tweedledum-Johnson or Tweedledee-Hunt will be in Downing Street. Whoever it is will make no difference for the working class! But he will soon have to confront the reality: whether "no deal" is on the table or not, will not matter. After over 2 years of negotiations turned into farce by the Tories' in-fighting, the EU will not offer more talks on the withdrawal deal.

May's successor will have no option but to push her old deal - and to get the Commons to endorse it - or else risk a cliff-edge exit from the EU, or a cliff-edge exit from power via a no-confidence vote, if not both.

Another bailout for big business?

At this stage, the City is worried: the pound's downward curve shows that speculators are betting that Brexit will undermine the economy. The bosses and their experts have long warned that Brexit would cause chaos - especially given the on-going world crisis. And, of course, a "no deal" Brexit can only be even more damaging.

So, now that the Brexit is coming to a head, the capitalists want to ensure that they will be compensated for their Brexit-related losses, whichever form Brexit takes. This is why Johnson and Hunt promised tax cuts for the wealthy and companies. These promises were not just aimed at Tory party members. They were designed to reassure the capitalists that the Brexiteers would keep their wallets full whatever happened.

In his usual flippant style, Johnson insisted that even the cost of a "no deal" Brexit would be "vanishingly inexpensive" to business. But Hunt was more cautious, pledging to set aside a one-off £6bn just to cover the losses



that would be expected, in that case, in fishing and farming alone.

However, behind the scenes, experts were churning out the real sums for official strategists at Chatham House: they estimated that the total compensation for the production industries alone would be £22bn - not as a one-off, but per year! And the figure for services, which account for 70% of the economy, has still to be estimated.

The only workers' bailout: fighting back

It's not just the Tories who will loot public funds to bail out the capitalists against the ripples of Brexit, but any government. Lest we forget, it was a Labour government which kickstarted the banking bailout in 2007 and then paved the way for the austerity designed to get the working class to foot the bill.

Today, it is this very same process that is being put into motion. After splashing out tens of billions in compensation to the bosses, ministers will

use their ballooning deficit to justify cutting welfare and vital services like the NHS, as they did after the banking crisis.

Meanwhile, the bosses will attack jobs and conditions to boost their profits - but claiming they "have to" because of Brexit. Exactly as they did after the banking crisis, under the pretext of preventing even worse job cuts - which they often carried out anyway! In fact, this is already what they are doing in the car industry, even before Brexit happens!

The difference with the last banking crisis, however, is that, this time round, workers know what to expect and they know what needs to be done in order to stop these attacks.

There is a choice facing the working class in the coming period. Either it will let the bosses and their politicians get away with murder under the cover of a post-Brexit bailout, or it will mobilise its collective fighting capacity to make the bosses pay for the mess of their politicians! ☐

Social

For almost the entire 20th century, life expectancy had been steadily rising in Britain. This was even used to justify increasing the state pension age to 68 by the late 2030s. Around the beginning of the current decade, however, the rise in life expectancy began to slow down. And, by now, the latest figures show that it has actually gone into reverse, especially

• **BT and Aviva: thousands of job cuts**

Two of the richest companies in the country, Aviva and BT, have just announced thousands of job cuts and office closures. Aviva is planning to cut around 1,800 jobs over the next three years in a bid to save £300m a year. BT is to shut more than 90% of its existing offices in more than 270 locations across the country, in order to cut £1.5bn in costs. In the process, about 13,000 jobs will be

• **Against casualisation!**

Almost 10% of all workers worked in the "gig economy" over the past year - a two-fold increase since 2016. Many are employed through e-platforms, such as Uber and Deliveroo and are usually paid per job, meaning that they cannot rely on a guaranteed income. Nor are they covered by the so-called "National Living Wage". And they only rarely receive holiday pay or sick pay.

In 2017, following the Taylor Review, May promised to give such workers a "fair deal". However, this hasn't gone any further than giving them a "right to request a more predictable contract", which of course doesn't include the right

• **Reversing outsourcing**

The compulsory competitive tendering "revolution" (CCT) introduced in 1980 by Margaret Thatcher, was of course continued by Labour politicians. This privatisation of all public services offered tenders for work to the lowest bidder, making millionaires out of tiny companies almost overnight: they took over whole wadges of formerly council and state-run departments, from IT to rubbish collection and street cleaning.

With CCT, tens of thousands of workers lost their jobs and services deteriorated, contributing to the general social degradation. But now, under the pressure of government cuts in funding, local councils are beginning to reverse this policy, because lo and behold, bringing contracts back in-house actually saves them money and improves services!

According to the Association for Public Services Excellence, which monitors "efficiency", 77% of councils plan to bring services back in-house this year. And this is happening in central government

Cuts and low wages kill!

for the elderly, the new-born and the poor. Life expectancy for women and men reaching 65 years is now six months down on previous estimates.

When this first emerged, the Department of Health blamed harsh winters triggering flu epidemics, but no evidence was ever provided. In fact, this claim was made to divert attention from the impact of £30bn

slashed over the course of next 3 years and BT will make a real estate killing, by selling some of its central London offices.

While spokesmen justify these attacks on jobs as "necessary" restructuring and cost-cutting, these giants have been minting massive profits. Maybe not as much as they would like, of course! BT saw a 2% increase in profits before tax to £2.7

to actually get one!

Instead, casualisation is on the increase. Next to the gig economy, another 10% of workers are self-employed. And this comes in addition to countless forms of temporary employment. In car factories such as Ford and BMW, workers can remain on "temporary" contracts for years, always under the threat of losing their job with just 2 weeks notice.

In this era of continuing capitalist crisis, the bosses' "creativity" in inventing new forms of exploitation seems to know no bounds. It will only be stopped by the workers' showing even greater "creativity" in fighting them back!

too. For instance, the government had to dump its attempt to contract out probation services and cervical cancer screening after profit sharks made a dangerous mess of both. And now even the bosses favourite *Financial Times* is advocating a return to state ownership of public utilities like water and electricity, given the fact that dividends for shareholders (which soared) were paid, while little or no investment to maintain or renew infrastructure was made.

Of course not all council in-sourcing is reversing workers' insecure terms and conditions: some have remained on the same contractual terms as under their former private employers. So that is a battle that still has to be fought.

• **Another outsourcer going the way of Carillion?**

Kier Group, one of the big government contractors in public infrastructure, is in trouble. It tried to raise capital from its shareholders by issuing more shares in December, but only 38% were taken up. After a profits warning knocked 40% off

of cuts in social spending across the board since the banking crisis. One of the first areas to be cut was adult social care. As if that was not enough, the rise in homelessness, rough sleeping and general poverty, due to cuts and low wages, has taken its toll on the health of ever-larger sections of the population - with lethal effects. ☐

billion; Aviva increased its operating profit by 2% to £3.1 billion in 2018. The jobs cuts will place an already overstretched workforce under even more pressure. But of course, the sole aim of the bosses of these companies is to further multiply their billions and please their shareholders with ever more dividends - never mind the cost to society.



its share price in early June, it responded to two more falls and revelations of its indebtedness by announcing 1,200 job cuts. Its "restructuring plan" also includes selling its housing division, which maintains rental properties for councils, housing associations and private landlords.

When Carillion went bust, Kier took on its share of the HS2 project. It is also involved in Crossrail, manages smart motorway programmes on the M6, M20 and M23 and like Carillion, it holds many contracts for construction and management of schools and hospitals. Only in May, Kier won a £253m contract to build a new prison at Wellingborough. New contracts did not save Carillion, as its creditors and shareholders eventually pulled the plug - and Kier may well also go down the same way. And just as with Carillion, billions in public money will have been handed over to shareholders who couldn't give a damn about putting at risk thousands of socially useful jobs!

Two years after Grenfell: what has changed?

Social

Two years after the Grenfell fire which killed 72 people, 12 of the 201 households from the tower and adjacent Grenfell Walk are still to be rehoused, including 3 which are still in emergency accommodation. The public inquiry into the fire is running 2 months behind schedule; it will only resit in October and its second part is delayed until next year. What is more, no criminal prosecutions of those responsible are likely (if they happen at all) until 2022.

After the fire, 393 private and socially-owned buildings (including hospitals, care homes and schools) were found to have Grenfell-type flammable cladding. The government made £600m in total available to remove it. To date, only 3 private tower blocks have had this done. Another 146 remain at risk. Out of 158 socially rented blocks, 102 still have dangerous cladding. And low-rise buildings under 18 metres don't qualify for government funding for cladding removal.

Angry and frustrated Grenfell survivors are now resorting to suing the US manufacturers of the cladding for wrongful death. The



Fire Brigades Union has launched the "Grenfell: Never Again" campaign, pointing out that there are still at least 1,700 buildings with potentially combustible claddings. Even though the Coroners' report after Grenfell called for sprinkler systems to be fitted, so far only

32 out of 837 council tower blocks over 30 metres tall have them! What is more, firefighters themselves have had their numbers cut. Fire brigades nationally in the last 2 years and into 2020 have had 30% budget cuts imposed! All in all, a recipe for more disasters. □

• Yes, it is happening again...



And yes it has "happened again". A fire in Barking on Sunday June 10th - 4 days before the 2nd anniversary of Grenfell - ripped through the external Thermowood balconies of a six-storey low rise, a privately owned building not covered by any of the government's remediation programmes or legislation. There were no sprinklers, no fire alarms.

The residents lost everything, but fortunately this time, not their lives. Not only are contractors like Arconic (panels) and Celotex (insulation) getting away with murder, but the government has done nothing to ensure there are no more Grenfells in the future. The fight is on for the working class to obtain decent housing, and not inflammable cages.

• Criminalising the homeless

There was a 6% rise in prosecutions under the Victorians' 1824 "Vagrancy Act" last year. A total of 1,320 arrests were made under this obsolete law, which makes it an "offence" to sleep rough or beg, criminalising the homeless instead of offering them appropriate support. So if they do get a bed for the night, it's in a police cell.

In fact homelessness is still rising, given poverty wages and hidden unemployment - let alone the total absence of social housing. The Combined Homelessness and Information Network estimates there are 8,855 rough sleepers in Greater London - accounting for 27% of the national rough sleeping total. Across Britain around 32,000 people

are sleeping rough, an increase of 165% since 2010.

London's mayor, Sadiq Khan, rightly calls this a "disgrace" in the 6th richest country in the world. But he hasn't stopped London councils from using the Vagrancy Act against rough sleepers, nor provided the necessary emergency accommodation so urgently needed across the capital, where "tent villages" are mushrooming.

Yes, this is how the system works. Poor people find themselves without a home or a job, and are accused of being criminals for sleeping in a doorway. This is intolerable: this anti-working-class legislation must go!



WE NEED TO STOP MEASURING "THE ECONOMY" BY HOW WELL RICH PEOPLE ARE DOING.

Brexit watch

So, May's resignation finally paved the way for a leadership contest within the Tory party. Significantly, though, it is impossible to see any substantial political difference between the two contenders who were eventually short-listed by Tory MPs.

Indeed, Hunt and Johnson are both seeking to woo the prejudices of the most reactionary section of the Tory membership and, more generally, to appeal to the sizeable section of the Tory electorate which shifted its allegiance to the Brexit Party in the European elections. So they make a point of being most vocal in their determination to deliver Brexit at any cost.

But the truth is that neither of them has the faintest idea of how this can be done. Both boast about their determination to renegotiate a "good" withdrawal deal, but neither has produced any credible means to get the EU leaders to agree to yet another round of negotiations - which they have long said was out of the question! They both say that proclaiming that they are prepared to leave the EU without a deal on 31st October if need be (i.e. they're

• **The only certainty is the crisis!**

Between April and June, Britain's economy shrank for the first time in 7 years. Most commentators blamed this, to some extent at least, on the big car manufacturers reducing production - and even having shutdowns in some of their plants - as a means of anticipating possible headwinds linked to the original Brexit deadline, at the end of March.

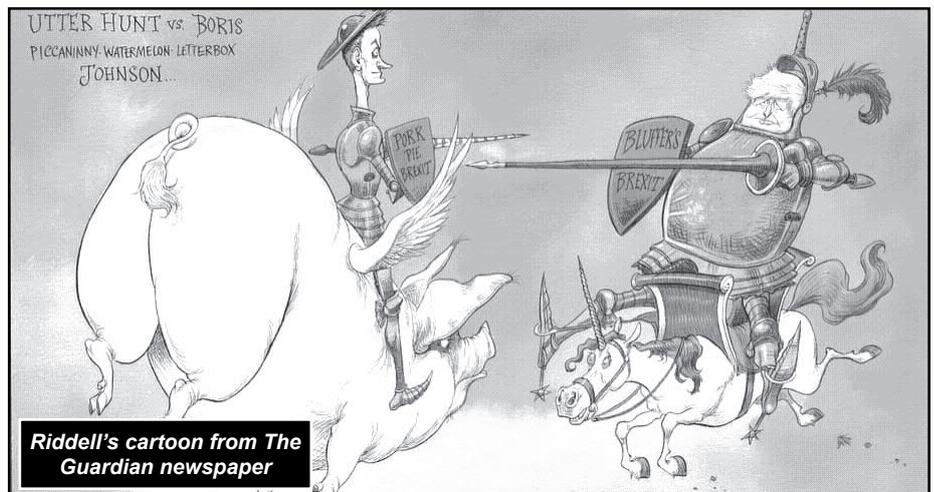
If merely the threat of Brexit caused such a contraction across the economy,

• **Brexit means mad cows and sick chickens?**

Last month, the University of Sussex's Trade Policy Observatory revealed that after Brexit, EU pesticide regulations will be replaced by a new process which gives more control to British ministers and less to independent scientific advisors. Essentially this will allow policy and trade deal makers, together with companies, to define what is permitted when it comes to the food we eat.

It is not just that chlorine-washed chicken might be acceptable in a post-Brexit trade deal with the US. The Food Standards Agency has failed to react to protect the public in anticipation of Brexit-related deregulation. Indeed, already proposed changes in the law for "after Brexit" highlight the intentions of companies and their supporters in

Tweedledum and Tweedledee



keeping "no deal" on the table as a negotiation ploy) should be enough to force the EU leaders to back peddle. But why should it? They do not say!

Ultimately, this is just the continuation of the same sorcerer's apprentice game which has been going on ever since the run-up to the Brexit referendum. Tory politicians keep toying with Brexit, for no other reason than to boost the electoral fortunes of their party and promote their own careers. Never mind the

what will happen when Britain really does sever its economic links with the EU? No-one knows. Because of the endemic anarchy of the capitalist system, nobody can ever predict what the economy has in store.

However, there is one thing that is known and on which even the bosses' experts all agree: that the shrinkage of the economy should also be blamed partly on the fact that we are still in the

government all of which are likely to cut their costs and make food less safe. A profitable deal is a "good" deal for them regardless of the effect it might have on the public. This could mean allowing the use of chemicals with known adverse effects to enter the food chain and lowering the quality and safety of meat: and yes, risking a return to Mad Cow disease panic...

• **The truth behind "free-trade" deals**

After 20 years of negotiations, this June the EU and the Mercosur trade block (Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay) finally signed a free-trade agreement. As a result, the customs duties paid on EU exports to Mercosur countries will be slashed by an estimated £3.6bn annually and EU-based companies will be able to freely access another

chaos this may create in an economy which is already destabilised by a deep world crisis. Of course, companies and shareholders have nothing to fear: both Johnson and Hunt are promising them tax cuts and subsidies designed to make up for whatever losses they may face. As to the working class majority, more than ever it has no option but to rely on its own capacity to fight back against the irresponsibility of these politicians and the parasitism of their capitalist masters. □

thick of an on-going capitalist crisis. In the light of this, Brexit, in whichever form it takes, is just an additional factor aggravating the chaos caused by the system's crisis. The real issue is not Brexit and the chaos it is likely to cause, but the need for the working class to make the capitalists foot the bill for their system's mess, with or without a British exit!

260 million potential customers, without facing any tariffs.

It was precisely for deals like this one that pro-Brexit ministers like Liam Fox did so much canvassing over the past years - but to no avail. Back in 2017, Fox even promised to "replicate the 40 EU free-trade agreements that exist" before Brexit - but so far, only 11 countries have agreed, and they are mostly the smallest!

In fact, the EU-Mercosur deal illustrates why the promises made by pro-Brexit politicians were just delusions. Indeed, in the jungle of the capitalist market, such deals are based on a relationship of forces. If it took 20 years for the EU to complete a deal with Mercosur, it makes sense to ask how many more years it will take for Britain, with an economy one sixth of the size of the EU's, to reach the same result after Brexit?

A mega profit-spinner for the car giants

Britain's car manufacturers have long been very vocal over how leaving the EU would negatively affect them. But these complaints actually conceal - and justify - the restructuring plans they have been preparing in order to protect their profits from the crisis.

The fact is that their domestic market has been hit, given that the level of workers' wages - and therefore their purchasing power - remains 10% lower than before 2008. And the situation seems to be getting worse. The year to June showed the steepest decline in domestic car sales for seven years. As to their sales in the so-called "emerging economies" (like China), they have proved much lower than they hoped.

So, despite their vocal opposition, Brexit has come just in time for the car giants to use it as an excuse to cut jobs and re-organise production on workers' backs.

Combining state handouts...

What's more car manufacturers' cost-cutting exercises are being subsidised by the government. In 2018, following an 80% fall in car manufacturing investment over the previous 3 years, ministers came up with the so-called "Automotive Sector Deal" in which they committed themselves to subsidise electric vehicle manufacturing. This comprises £250 million in direct subsidies to the companies, another £100 million for the plug-in car grant (a state-funded discount on the price of low-emission vehicles), plus various



other Research and Development subsidies.

These funding pledges seem to have done the trick since, the same year, PSA spent £100 million on its plant in Luton and Toyota spent £240 million in Derbyshire. Both these investments attracted a 10% subsidy from the government. And in June this year, Jaguar-Land-Rover (JLR) announced it would make its new range of electric vehicles in Castle Bromwich, requiring additional investment. The amount of government subsidy paid to JLR is not known yet, but like the other manufacturers, JLR can expect at least 10%. Likewise, PSA's announcement that it is considering building the new Astra in Ellesmere Port, is also a way of bidding for more government handouts...

... with a turn of the screw on workers

Significantly, however, regardless of how much funding they manage to extract from the government, none

of the car giants has indicated that it plans to reverse the job cuts already announced or implemented.

So, for instance, JLR's 4,500 planned job cuts remain on the cards. The media may well hail JLR's decision as "a vote of confidence" in Britain's car industry, while the JLR bosses claim that they are investing in the future of their British plant. But the truth is that they have already started to make their workers pay the full cost of their restructuring exercise. In fact, JLR's job cuts were part of a plan to save £2.5bn. So, whatever the "investment" they are putting into electric cars, they are cutting jobs and costs by much more - and still getting the government to subsidise them!

For all their complaints against Brexit, the car giants will definitely be getting a good deal - that is, unless workers decide that they won't let these filthy rich companies get away with using Brexit to attack their jobs and conditions! □

Unite the union, Labour and Brexit...

Len McCluskey, leader of the largest trade union, Unite, plays a central role in determining Labour's position on Brexit. Even though Unite texted its members in 2016 to vote "remain" McCluskey has, ever since, supported Brexit. Apparently those who want to remain in the EU are "in denial" about the result. Never mind the damage Brexit will wreak on jobs, conditions and how it reinforces already dangerous divisions in workers' ranks. He argues that Britain outside the EU can retain a customs union which would allow tariff-free trade and thus job protection even though the EU has ruled this out as "cherry-picking".

Of course, McCluskey warns that

a "no-deal" Brexit would be bad for sectors like the car industry, but all he says is that Labour in power will negotiate a "good for jobs Brexit"! Up to now he has opposed a 2nd referendum, to the dismay of Labour "Remainers", given the clout he has, as part of Corbyn's "inner circle", saying the only "people's vote" is in a general election.

However, on the 9th July, McCluskey, along with the leaders of Usdaw, CWU, GMB and Unison (and under pressure from prominent "Remain" supporters in Corbyn's shadow cabinet, like John McDonnell), came up with a new position. So now, Labour is calling for a referendum on any deal negotiated

by the next Tory government - and vows to campaign to "remain in the EU"! However, if Labour wins a general election, it'll negotiate that fairytale "good" Labour Brexit and then hold a referendum on its deal, with the option to vote remain. And in this case Labour would campaign for Brexit!

Which means that Labour is a "remain" party, but only in opposition! And it is a "leave" party, only if it gets into power. Unite's McCluskey may have his cake and eat it, but the union's membership will have to look to itself if it wants its interests taken care of.

Brexit watch

Brexit watch

Those two aspiring PMs, Boris Johnson and Jeremy Hunt have both been offering a good deal for the rich. Johnson's proposal to raise the higher rate tax threshold from £50,000 to £80,000, amounts to a gift to the rich of £10 billion per year: a £4,000 increase per year per head! And Hunt's plan to cut by 4.5% the corporate tax rate amounts to a £10 billion per year gift to the bosses.

• Sham "democracy"

There's an ironical twist to the political crisis opened up by May's resignation, which exposes the lies on which this political system - so-called "British democracy" - is really based. Because, of course, it is not just the Tory leader that the 160,000 or so, mostly well-to-do members of the Tory party are meant to

Leadership contest: who offers the bosses more?

Unsurprisingly, whoever will be PM in this Brexit mess will help fatten the bosses. On top of it, Johnson claimed that the money given to the rich "would come from the money set aside for Brexit preparations"! So the money for the NHS which he promised would no longer be going to Brussels after Brexit, is also going to the fatcats?

At the same time, both of these

clowns have also proposed an increase in the national insurance (NIC) ceiling. According to them, "increasing the point at which people start to pay NICs is probably the best thing one can do through the tax system to help low earners". When for workers, the best thing that could be done about taxes is to take them exclusively from the rich. □

• Their "vision" for Northern Ireland: a haven for wealthy and bigots!

The more Boris Johnson and Jeremy Hunt scrambled after the votes of the most xenophobic and reactionary members of the Tory party, the more they sounded like identical twins. Predictably, their hustings in Belfast, on July 2nd, did not bring out any policy difference between them, on the future of Northern Ireland. Each in his own style, had already been

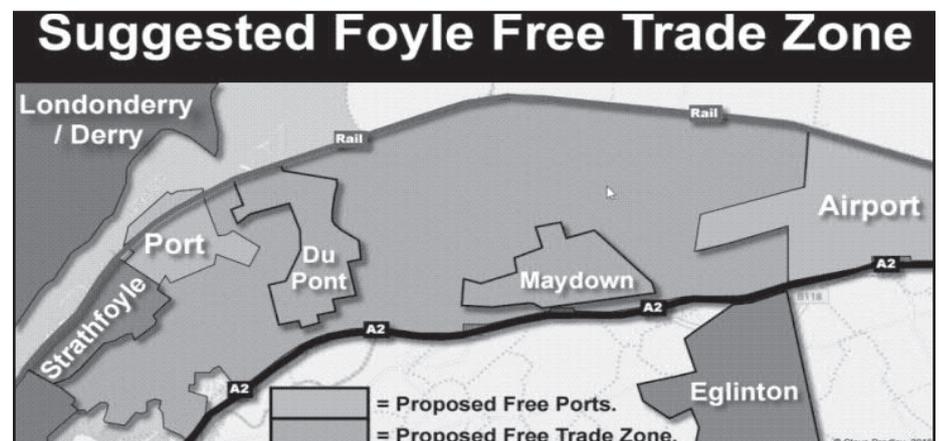
select, from the two millionaires short-listed for them by their MPs. Their vote is also meant to choose the government's future prime minister and also, as a result, the government's composition and political orientation.

It's as if the idle, well-off population of some Middle England shire town was promoting the idea of turning Belfast into some sort of Irish version of Singapore - where there would be ultra-light taxes for companies and no rights for workers!

Both insisted that this could only be done by the Northern Irish regional institutions when they eventually resume normal operation. There was obviously no question for them of upsetting the tiny Northern Irish Conservative Party, which is silent on abortion in its "Positive Plan", let alone the arch-bigots of the DUP, whose support they still need in the Commons!

• Post-Brexit free ports for the rich

On top of promising tax cuts for the wealthiest and big corporations, Boris Johnson and Jeremy Hunt's latest selling point in their contest for the Tory leadership, is to promise to set up "free ports" - as in Singapore, Monaco and Geneva. These are in effect, special zones where companies can move their goods freely in and out, without duties or tariffs. Wealthy individuals would also be able to hoard their valuable paintings, diamonds, and antique furniture, for instance, tax-free. Should Johnson's and Hunt's schemes come to fruition, Belfast, Teeside, Aberdeen, and potentially three other "free ports" will be added to the UK's already extensive network of tax havens (i.e. the Channel Islands, the Isle of Man and further afield, the British Virgin Islands, Bermuda, the Caymans, etc...)



So while the "uncertainty" of Brexit is invoked as an excuse for various companies to make tens of thousands of workers insecure, both Boris Johnson and

Jeremy Hunt - in their race to take May's seat - are trying to outdo each other in their bids to secure the wealth and profits of the capitalists.

Jeremy Hunt would like to deny abortion rights

In his effort to woo the most bigoted Tory members, Hunt, it seems, is ready to do whatever it takes. This former Health Secretary who did a good job of running down the NHS, would also like to turn the clock back on women's rights! In a Sky interview last month, he admitted that he was personally in favour of

cutting the legal abortion limit from 24 to 12 weeks. He said it was a "matter of conscience", betraying his own deeply reactionary views!

As if anybody should rely on the "conscience" of politicians like him to decide on matters of fundamental importance to women's lives! He even suggested that he might consider supporting new anti-abortion legislation. Indeed. What

does he care if this would be a catastrophic attack on women's rights, especially the rights of working-class women, who, in the event of a virtual abortion ban, would be put in the same position of women in Northern Ireland, who have to travel abroad for their terminations when they can ill-afford it. Such politicians, quite apart from their inability to resolve the Brexit crisis, represent a danger society cannot afford.

Fighting back-door NHS privatisation in Bradford

NHS

A turn up for the books! Over 300 porters, domestic workers and security staff at Bradford Health Trust took 7-days of continuous strike action (starting 8 July) against plans to hand them all over to the private company "Bradford Healthcare Facilities Management" - which in fact seems to have been set up for the purpose of backdoor privatisation of these in-house functions.

The Trust says this will save it £28m over the next 5 years, while at the same time claiming it will "protect workers rights"! But the workers concerned are not allowing themselves to be duped by this and for once a very lively strike involving daily pickets has been organised by the local Unison union health branch. So much so that patients complained about the noise!



Day 1 of the Bradford strike, Unison pickets

Everywhere in the NHS this type of outsourcing has led to a deterioration not only in workers' terms and conditions but also in the "services" rendered. Obviously so, since the aim of the private company is to spin a profit out of services which are already cut to the bone! No-one with

any scruples who works in this Trust - nor anywhere else for that matter - can go along with this. These workers have shown that there is way to stop the rot, which is why their determined fight should not be the isolated exception. □

• Junior doctors: stitched up again

Back in January 2016, the first junior doctors' strike in 40 years took place in England. It was the answer to a new employment contract, presented by then Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt, for "a comprehensive 7-days a week NHS", requiring a full complement of doctors and other clinical staff on duty over the weekend. At the time, Hunt justified this by using dubious figures showing that a 7-day NHS would prevent an excess of 6,000-11,000 deaths.

Hunt's "negotiating skill"

What Hunt didn't say was that he had no intention of hiring thousands of new doctors and injecting the new funding needed, in the context of an understaffed and underfunded NHS! His plan was to squeeze the extra hours out of the already extremely overstretched junior doctors by increasing their hours of work and cutting their overtime pay: 30 hours more, with 17% pay cut!

Junior doctors replied to Mr Hunt with an unprecedented 6 days of strike over a period of 4 months. However, without the perspective of extending their fight by gaining the active support of all sections of workers, both in the NHS and outside it (they already had everyone's sympathy!) they eventually

went back to work. Hunt imposed his contract in May 2016. But no agreement was ever signed by the doctors' union, the British Medical Association (BMA).

Hancock's half-cock of a deal

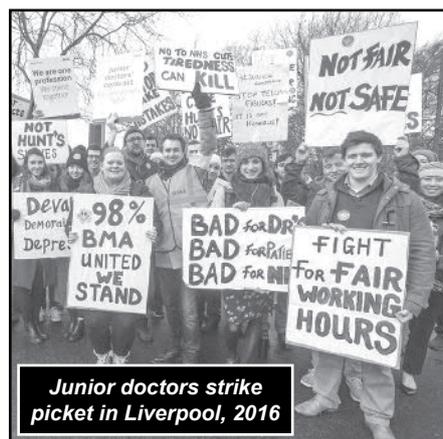
So what has now transpired? On the 27th of June, the BMA finally announced the official end of its 4-year long dispute and accepted a new junior doctors' contract from the new health minister, Matt Hancock. But

only 9,449 out of the 41,116 junior doctors (22%) actually voted for it. Which means that 78% of junior doctors either voted against or did not vote. And the real question is "why?". The deal itself is hardly better than the 2016 deal. And it offers a mere 2% pay rise every year for the next four years, which is 1.2% below inflation now, let alone in 2 or 4 year's time.

So are the junior doctors too tired and demoralised to even say "no"? There is evidence of this: in 2017, 57.4% of Foundation Year 2 doctors didn't enter higher-training posts and 9,000 doctors quit the NHS entirely. The causes put forward are cuts in salaries, too many hours worked, less investment in training, inflexibility in rostering, and ultimately a critically understaffed service leading to burn-out!

As for today's contract, the campaign group, "Doctors' Association UK" said "This contract offers nothing to redress the loss of more than 20% in pay over the last 10 years and it will do little to improve the failing morale of the junior doctor workforce."

Let us hope doctors do not give up their fight - it is in the interests of us all - so first and foremost, it's essential that this time, other workers join them!



Junior doctors strike picket in Liverpool, 2016

• "Virtual A&E"? No way!

There is no question that the NHS needs emergency help. So the latest proposal from failed Tory leadership candidate and health secretary Matt Hancock's department is an online app, offering a virtual A&E! Yes, this has been launched by the University Hospital of Birmingham (UHB) - essentially an online chat service and video consultation with doctors and nurses. According to the UHB trust, the aim

is to cut A&E attendance by 30%.

This isn't the first "virtual" service. A new "GP at hand" app, developed by Babylon, has already been introduced without any proper trials. However, if patients choose to register with this "GP at hand" they have to switch from their GP practice to one of the 5 clinics of the private firm. It isn't clear how,

in these circumstances, access to medical records and follow-up for scheduled screening can be maintained.

Anyway, no app, no matter how smart, can or will be an adequate substitute for the 100,000 flesh and blood medical staff which the NHS is lacking today! And certainly not in a life-and-death situation in A&E.

Ford Dagenham estate (Essex)**Bridgend: where is the Unite-d fight?**

Following Ford's 6th June announcement to close Bridgend Engine Plant by 2020, Unite the union described this as "industrial sabotage, the ramifications of which would be devastation of the Bridgend area and the Welsh automotive supply chain". It vowed "to leave no stone unturned in its fight against the closure".

So what does their "leaving no stone unturned" actually mean in practice? Over one month later they know (surprise, surprise!) that the 1,700 workers don't agree with the loss of their jobs - having held a "consultative" ballot in which 85%

voted for industrial action "to fight for the future of the plant". Prior to this, it should be remembered, Unite had also "vowed" that if one plant was singled out by Ford ALL plants would have to react...

But no. Unite is neither bringing the weight of Ford's 13,000 workers in Britain to bear, nor doing more than appealing to Ford's sense of "moral duty" to "steer [it] away from a catastrophic decision" and accept the "alternative plan" of a so far unspecified "partnership" with the Welsh government.. The threat it offers? "If [Ford] fails to do this the economic consequences for the Welsh nation



will be grave and its customer base in Wales and across the UK will never forgive it." So no fight, then, just a promise of no forgiveness. Never mind that the only way to force Ford to "rethink" is not through appealing to its non-existent "better nature" but to confront it with the strength of the collective workforce to hit the profits which Ford is counting on - in the here and now! ☐

• We cannot accept this!

So Ford temps, who were due to get permanent jobs, were taken into the office one by one... Were managers afraid of a collective confrontation?

Because these mates came out with a 1-year extension! Some got only 6-months! Yes, when they've all done their full 4 years hard labour, which should automatically qualify them for permanent status! Totally out of order! [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 10/07/19]

• Flout Ford!

It seems Ford's blatantly flouting the law (no surprise there!), and as always, has a loophole and 'get-out clause' ready: for instance, quoting the "closure of Bridgend" and the reshaping of its "UK business". But Ford knows damn well that the Bridgend closure is a separate issue, and that most of the other (unacceptable!) "changes" are not even to do with hourly-paid, but to do with staff! On the other hand, we know damn well - and this proves it yet again - how their system is rigged against us! So how about we start discussing what we

(all) do about this? ASAP. [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 10/07/19]

• Plenty of work for all

Now we're told Tiger assembly will be going down to 1 shift after shutdown. (For now, Lion remains on 2). But none of this is set in stone - we know Ford better than that. And as for having "spare" workers thereafter, we all know that the line speed/work intensity have been turned up so many notches that we could have double our number and the job would still only be half-bearable... [Workers' Fight bulletin Ford Dagenham 26/06/19]

King's Cross railway station (London)**Yes, we need to fight for our pensions!**

The RMT union has announced that it is preparing for a national strike over pensions. And yes, we need a general all-out strike - and not just over this attack!

In fact now all of the rail companies are following the lead of Virgin and Stagecoach, refusing to guarantee our pensions for the life of their franchises. They claim this is "high risk", in the same way Royal Mail did pre-privatisation, by using actuarial forecasts of potential future pension "black holes" as an excuse - even if these are completely hypothetical.

Indeed, these companies and

their subcontractors are threatening all those who are still members of the British Rail Pension schemes, which still guarantee a definite sum on retirement as a proportion of "final salary". But the bosses already excluded new starters and most contract workers, who are in inferior schemes. And now it seems the RMT is going to exclude them from strike action, when they are a growing number of our workmates, in fact!

Of course, so far the RMT is only making threats, and we all know it will take a lot more than that to force rail bosses, big and small, to pay us



our due on our retirement. But this could be a chance to overcome the sectional and artificial divisions in our ranks and for once to use our strength across the whole network, and score a much overdue victory over the rail sharks! ☐

• Bring back the 125!

We would have thought that LNER would have planned to keep some of the older trains in service, given that the Azumas are so inadequate. But no, that's not their idea! However, we suspect they're gonna have to. Just one example: the buffet is designed without passengers or workers in mind and there is no space

for anything, let alone people! [King's X Workers' Platform 03/07/19]

• Azuma "chaos" month

And yes, in busy August more chaos is to come, when the new Azumas are expected to run all the way to Scotland. Actually, it's even likely to be quite unsafe. How will the guards get to an emergency when the corridors are obstructed

by normal 'traffic' i.e., passengers, staff, bits of luggage, etc? [King's X Workers' Platform 03/07/19]

• ...plus roof rack

Indeed, what is going to happen with everyone's luggage? As there is no space in the train, are we meant to put it on the roof? [King's X Workers' Platform 03/07/19]

BMW Mini centre (Cowley, Oxford)**BMW & JLR : an electric screw**

The announcement in June of an agreement between BMW and JLR to develop the next generation of electric engines together, was presented by the bosses and Unite union as a "reassurance" of stability for the workers at Cowley and Wolverhampton. But what did this really amount to?

It has been almost 10 months since an electric test line was introduced at Cowley. The use of special "harnesses" required the training of workers, with some eventually

being sent temporarily to Germany. This concerned a very small section of the workforce. So there was not much to be "reassured" about, apart from the fact that the work on the new line was as just as bad as the work on the old lines...

What's more, workers had an extended Xmas shutdown forced on them, paid out of their own pockets, while the facilities for the electric line were set up. The story repeated itself in April, with another 5 weeks of unpaid shutdown for



further set-ups. So the introduction of the electric mini amounts to nothing other than serial lockouts and a massive extension of the amount of compulsory overtime paid for by workers themselves... that is, another turn of the screw. ☐

- **Contracts for all**

What's happened to BMW's warning that Brexit would delay our permanent contracts even further? They now plan to give some contracts "in the coming months". But isn't the future of Brexit still unknown? Or was Brexit only ever a convenient excuse to kick the can down the road? If they can do a U-turn on this, what else can we make them change their minds on? Like the fact we all need contracts, for example? [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW 03/07/19]

- **We've earned a spa**

The permanent contracts are subject to 'medicals'. We're allowed to put our health at risk on a temporary basis without a medical, but to do it permanently we need to jump through BMW's hoops? Rather than being used as excuses to refuse us a contract, medicals should be about checking our health status in order to provide appropriate measures to keep it optimal! [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW 03/07/19]

- **Game over**

Do managers really think we don't know why they turn off the screens? Technical problems they say... We were not born yesterday! We've got better instruments to measure how many cars we have made anyway: the pain in our backs and arms! Since the manajerks feel like playing games, maybe we could see if they can guess how many cars we make with the line stopped? [Workers' Fight bulletin BMW 03/07/19]

Mount Pleasant mail centre (London)**Job cuts + "amazonisation" = Royal Mail 2.0**

After RM's share price lost over 60% in a year, CEO Rico Back unveiled a 5-year "turnaround and grow" plan. This is meant to transform RM into a "parcels-led, more balanced and more diversified international business" and should deliver over £300m in profits as early as next year.

RM says it wants to increase productivity by up to 18% over five years. To this end, an Early Voluntary Retirement programme will remain open. More jobs will be cut. And electronic devices will be used to force us to speed up collections and deliveries. It also plans to lengthen delivery walks, even more!

In addition there's more automation on the way in parcel-sorting and 3 Amazon-style warehouses are to be

opened for parcel processing - which will justify closing down more Mail Centres. What's more, RM is bound to increase its use of casual workers to fill the huge gaps created by years of job cuts.

Such attacks are not new, of course. What's unusual is that this time, instead of asking the CWU to promote their agenda, as they normally do, RM bosses hired the services of a private consultant. As a result, the CWU leaders are worried about losing their cosy partnership with RM. Which probably explains their response to these attacks. In April, a motion threatening a strike ballot was passed by the union's annual conference - even though CWU Deputy General Secretary, Terry Pullinger, immediately declared that



he was available to resolve the dispute with management!

Of course, whether the CWU leaders really plan to do anything or not, is not the issue. Workers know that only a fightback by RM's 110,000-strong workforce can stop these attacks. Whatever the CWU leaders have at the back of their minds is their problem. What we need to have at the front of ours, is the need for such a fight back and more specifically, the need for us to take it into our own hands without delay! ☐

- **What now for Romford?**

Did RM management really not know that the lease at the Romford site was coming up for renewal? They claim they just found out - 9 months before it expires! Hard to believe. But of course, it is easier for RM to blame a possible closure on the leaseholder than to blame themselves.

The question still stands though: what will happen to the workforce? We hear a "joint working group" has been set up - but we've heard no report back so far from the meeting on 10 July... [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant]

- **Convenient for his strategy**

Of course, the announcement at Romford

MC comes at a time when RM boss Rico Backward talks about "efficiencies" and Amazonising RM. Yes, RM wants to continue its drive to close Mail Centres and bring more postcodes into fewer larger MCs... This is not only about Romford MC - it concerns us all! [Workers' Fight bulletin Mount Pleasant 03/07/19]

Immigration**Welcome to Brexit Britain!**

Unbelievably, the British government is charging citizenship fees even to the most destitute of asylum seekers. The International Observatory for Human Rights has analysed figures from the Home office which show it could make up to £5 million "profit" out of charges imposed on Syrian child refugee applicants alone.

These desperate young refugees were only accepted by Britain in the first place, following huge public pressure on the government, after the picture of a drowned child on a beach was circulated in the media. As a result (just) 8,789 minors have been taken in since 2014 under the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS). But they have a 6-year "qualifying period" imposed on them so the first few can only start applying for British



Child refugees, Jordan

citizenship next year. And the application fee stands at £1,012 per child, to be paid whether successful or not!

Application fees have more than doubled since the beginning of the Home Office's hostile environment policy. When the fee was introduced in 1983 it was just £35. By 2011, it was £500. In fact Britain has the

highest nationality fees of any major European economy. In Denmark it's totally free and in Luxembourg, Belgium and France there are just minor local fees, while in Germany, the cost is between £45 and £227. The Home Office makes £2 million a month from child citizenship fees! Not just hostile, but avaricious. ☐

• **The Home Office: institutionally racist**

The Home Office under Sajid Javed has continued May's "Hostile Environment for Immigrants" policy despite all the scandals. In fact if anything, the situation gets worse by the day, with immigrants who come to work and study facing denial of their rights, detention and deportation.

So for instance a South African couple, Fusi Motsomai and his wife Nancy, who'd been living and working in Britain for 10 years, were refused a routine visa renewal and this March faced deportation under "Operation Perceptor". This was

meant to deliver part of the 12,800 enforced removals "target" for the year 2017-18. The Motsomais were regarded as "easy and quick to deport" as they did not have any blood relatives here.

When Nancy told officials she felt unwell before being put on the plane, she was accused of faking illness. The Home Office official said he'd "*handcuff her hands and feet and make her walk to the plane like a penguin*", and "*put her on to the plane even if he had to carry her*". She died 5 days later of the complications of undiagnosed ovarian

cancer. Now Fusi is facing deportation himself despite his horrendous experience and despite his 10-year residence, which would in the past have conferred on him the right to stay.

What is so terrible about this case (but it's just one among many) is not just that immigrants can no longer qualify for the right to remain, but how May's brutal policy has permeated the Home Office and the officials themselves with such crude racism.

• **No apology for the Windrush generation**

Over a year after Theresa May promised it, those affected by the Windrush scandal have still not had compensation nor reparation! In fact by this June, only 13 people had received payment from a hardship fund, and although 6,400 have now received documents to prove they are permitted to stay in Britain,

not one compensation payment for their inhuman treatment - out of the £570m government fund - has been made. Many of these victims of Home Office policy are elderly and some have died before they even got an apology, let alone repayment for the loss of homes, pensions and benefits.



For example, there is Richard Stewart, who came here 55 years ago aged 10 and was a former fast bowler for Middlesex County Cricket. When he applied for a passport in 2012, he was told he was an "over-stayer". After the Home Office's policy was exposed and after filling out reams of paperwork, he eventually received a passport this year. But he died before he could use it. He'd received no apology for his mistreatment nor a penny in compensation. This is increasingly the case in fact - given the ages of many among the Windrush generation. One can almost wonder if the delay is deliberate. No wonder so few celebrated May's "Windrush Day" which she had hypocritically declared on the anniversary of the ship's arrival from the Caribbean, in June 1946.

Hong Kong: another dysfunctional British colonial legacy

Immigration

There are many ironies underlying the protests over "democracy" in Hong Kong and against the now "dead" extradition bill which protesters saw as a slippery slope allowing China to undermine its quasi-autonomy. Twenty-two years ago when Britain handed this last outpost of its East Asian empire back to China, it was agreed that its so called "one-country two systems" political set-up would remain in force for another 50 years. This was in the interests of all sides, allowing Hong Kong (with its super-wealthy capitalists, British and Chinese) to remain China's financial gateway to the world.

"British" rule over Hong Kong was never democratic - certainly not after a brutal invasion in 1839 during the so-called "Opium wars", nor under the 99-year lease which ended at the 1997 handover. Out of the seventy seats of the Hong Kong Legislative Council (LegCo) which rules Hong Kong, (over all matters excluding foreign affairs and defence), only *half* are elected by public vote. The other 35 seats are elected by a closed club of the wealthiest elite among Hong Kong's business/financial class. And this, while Hong Kong hosts one of the most unequal societies in the developed world. One grievance of protesters today



Hong Kong roof slums

is the city's housing crisis. But this is largely thanks to tycoons working with their political allies to artificially inflate housing prices. Without undercutting the power base of the tycoons, there is no way of resolving this social problem, nor many others which confront the Hong Kong working class and youth.

As for the leader of the "Legco" - currently the highly unpopular Carrie Lam - she is currently elected by 1,200 selected voters mostly from the business elite. Eventually, the chief executive is meant to be chosen by universal vote. But neither the Chinese government nor the Hong Kong business tycoons are in any hurry: the present "one country two systems" suits them well.

Of course, this is not the message coming from British Foreign Secretary Hunt, who with shameless hypocrisy lent his support to the protesters and huffed and puffed, Trump-style against China. Neither he nor the media which slavishly echoes this "line" would wish to remind us who conceived this dysfunctional system which allows Hong Kong's (and some of mainland China's) corrupt and crooked super-rich elite to carry on calling the shots - even if this is not recognised by the reformist protesters who get the airtime on British media. This is yet another of those intractable conflicts stoked by Britain's colonial legacy and as always, at the expense of the former colonial populations. □

• The criminal policy of reinforcing borders

On June 29th, a rescue ship belonging to German NGO Sea-Watch, forced its way into the Italian port of Lampedusa. Despite carrying 42 migrants rescued off the coast of Libya, the ship had been refused permission to dock by Italy's far-right

Interior minister, Matteo Salvini, for 16 days.

Having taken matters into her own hands to bring these migrants to safety, the ship's captain, Carola Rackete, was immediately arrested by the Italian authorities. She was

accused of what the Interior minister described as an "act of war" for resisting an attempt by a border patrol boat to intercept her ship - and threatened with 10 years in jail!

Carola Rackete was freed two days later, following a vocal protest by Germany. But, once again, the real criminals are getting away with murder: the politicians who close down borders around the rich countries against refugees from poor, war-torn countries, thereby forcing them to take greater risks in their flight to safety. Over the past five years alone, 15,000 migrants drowned in the Mediterranean. From Salvini to Theresa May, the anti-migrant policies of the rich countries' politicians have transformed the Mediterranean into a graveyard.



Iran

In May last year, Trump unilaterally withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran and reimposed drastic sanctions on the country. Since then, Iran's oil exports have dropped by 2/3, its currency exchange rate has fallen by 60%, while inflation has soared to 37% and the cost of food and medicine has increased by up to 60%.

As if this was not bad enough, the US administration has stepped up its pressure on Iran, accusing the regime of all sorts of misdeeds, including a series of alleged attacks against tankers sailing through the Strait of Hormuz. This narrow passage between Iran and the Arabian Peninsula is one of the international oil trade's most important waterways and it is partly in Iranian waters. Ever since the pro-imperialist Iranian Shah was overthrown, back in 1979, the Strait of Hormuz has often been the focus of a power struggle between the US and the Iranian regime. In fact, one of the reasons for the US and Britain to maintain huge naval bases in Bahrain, off the coast of Saudi Arabia, is precisely because of its proximity to the Strait.

To date, the tit-for-tat between Trump and Iran goes on - and it is already imposing hardship on the

Sudan

On July 5th, the wave of mass protests in Sudan reached another turning point, in the form of a deal agreed by the army's transitional council and the Alliance for Freedom and Change (AFC), which includes most of the political currents involved in organising the protests. But this deal is really a con, which under the cover of a power-sharing agreement between the army and the civilian opposition, amounts to allowing the army to run the country until mid-2022, when general elections are supposed to be organised in order to pave the way for an all-civilian regime.

The protest movement has already come a long way, though. After it began, last December, in response to huge increases in the prices of basic necessities, it quickly adopted the objective of ending the 30-year old dictatorship of general Omar al-Bashir. The scale of the protest soon became unprecedented, as did the relentless determination of the protesters to confront the regime's repression. Nevertheless, it took five months before the army establishment eventually decided to get rid of the dictator,

Towards another US-British war in the Middle East?



Iranian population. But every time a new incident occurs - whether real or manufactured - Trump's tone goes up a notch and more military hardware is sent to the region.

The latest incident in this tit-for-tat, however, was British-made - when Royal Marines hijacked an Iranian tanker off the coast of Gibraltar and impounded it, under the absurd pretext that it might be in breach of EU sanctions against the Syrian regime, dating back to 2011! This was meant to demonstrate the British government's willingness to join Trump in his offensive against Iran. Shortly

afterwards, it was announced that the Royal Navy would take part in a US-led operation - called "Sentinel" - supposedly aimed at "protecting commercial shipping" in the Strait of Hormuz.

Of course, this is all about Trump's policy of re-asserting the dominant role of the US in the Middle East and the determination of British capital not to be left out. But the more tensions rise in the region, the more military hardware is piled up there, the more real is the risk of a spark setting alight this regional powder keg. The experience of the two Iraq wars is there to remind everyone of this danger! ☐

The mass protests at a turning point

this April. However, as it turned out, putting al-Bashir under house arrest and releasing a few political prisoners was not enough to defuse the movement. And the protests went on, this time to demand that the army should



completely withdraw from the country's political institutions.

On June 3rd, the army tried to bring the protest to an end: special forces opened fire against the sit-in which was taking place in front of the capital's army headquarters. Nearly a hundred protesters were killed. But this massacre only succeeded in reinforcing the resolve of the demonstrators. One month later, the army has finally produced this compromise, in the hope that by co-opting a few of its representatives, the AFC will discredit itself in the eyes of the protesters and allow the army to regain full control of the situation.

But there may be another way. The Sudanese working class could choose to refuse to hand over its future to its former torturers. It could seek to build out of the present movement a new organisation capable of providing the poor masses with the leadership they need in order to defend their class interests and to deprive the generals of any means to restore their dictatorship, once and for all.

In addition to this paper, we publish bulletins in several large workplaces in the South East, a journal, "Class Struggle" and a series of pamphlets on topical issues. If you wish to know more, contact Workers' Fight by e-mail, at contact@w-fight.org, or by postal mail at:

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