

M DAILY Mirror

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THEY'RE BLEEDING US DRY..

First it was the banks ripping us off. Then the energy companies. Now BP and Shell are accused of price-fixing petrol for 10 years. Why is it always ordinary people who foot the bill?



Oh, and by the way, Amazon took £4.2 billion in UK sales last year and paid just £2.4 million in tax

SEE PAGES 4&5

INQUEST



▲ TRAGIC Anthony & Amanda
Fireball hell
dad's £1,600
pay day bill

By **PAUL BYRNE**

A DESPERATE father died when he poured petrol all over his body and set himself ablaze after struggling with debts to pay day loan firms.

An inquest heard Anthony Breeze, 36, owed £1,600 and on the day of the tragedy got three texts and two phone calls from loan firms.

He was found on fire by electrician Paul Tunnah, who said: "I took my top off to try to put out the flames. He was conscious throughout. He basically said, 'I've had enough. I'm in debt.'"

Mr Breeze, 36, of Horwich, near Bolton, died later in hospital from 73% burns.

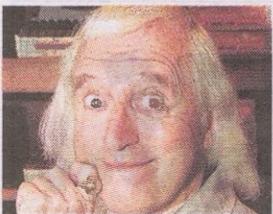
He had worked six days a week as a driver to provide for his partner Amanda Lowe and their daughter aged six, the inquest in Bolton heard.

After his death, letters from companies asking for money were sent to his dad's home.

But a police probe, begun after the inquest opened in October, found no evidence he was threatened.

Verdict: Open.

PERVERT



▲ MOLESTER Vile Savile
Savile abuse
on kids aged
5 in hospital

By **LUCY THORNTON**

JIMMY Savile abused three children aged five as they lay sick in their hospital beds.

In its report five days ago, West Yorkshire Police said four victims were five, but did not reveal that three of them were on wards.

The force yesterday issued a clarification and denied using misleading information. But June Thornton, 82, who saw Savile molest a helpless patient as she lay recovering from brain surgery said: "I think it's disgusting that they didn't mention this when they released the report."

"The whole thing stinks. They knew for sure and the fact they didn't reveal it five days ago means people will have no trust in the police."

Savile carried out 29 sex attacks on vulnerable patients in hospitals near his home, according to the report.

A separate investigation by Leeds health chiefs into the extent of Savile's abuse at their hospitals is already under way and is due to report later this year.

FUEL PRICE

JAIL THE



£10.7bn
BP's profits for first 3 months of this year

£5.1bn
Shell's profits for first 3 months of this year



BY **JASON BEATTIE** in New York and **GRAHAM HISCOCK**
jason.beattie@mirror.co.uk

THE bosses of oil giants engulfed in a price fixing scandal could be jailed if they are found guilty, David Cameron warned yesterday.

Mr Cameron said new legislation means the firms and their executives would face "major consequences" if they have ripped off drivers by fiddling wholesale oil prices.

His stern words follow raids on the London offices of BP and Shell - companies which have both raked in multibillion-pound profits this year - by investigators probing accusations of price rigging.

There are fears that millions of drivers have been paying well over the odds for petrol and diesel for a decade.

The investigators said if oil prices had been made artificially high it would have led to rocketing costs at the pumps.

The alleged price rigging has been going on since 2002. Between then and now petrol prices have risen by an astonishing 80% to an average of 135p a litre.

It is not just motorists who would have been clobbered by the scandal. The probe

relates to a pricing process used by information specialist Platts. Figures produced by the firm and other agencies are used as a guide for pricing a wide array of oil-related products.

So price rigging may have affected the cost of everything from gas to chemicals used to make plastic in products we all use. Platts in London was also raided on Tuesday as part of the probe across the continent by the European Commission's competition authorities.

The AA and the RAC last night demanded to know the truth - as haulage firms said they would demand compensation if claims of price fixing were proved.

Speaking on a trip to New York, Mr Cameron said yesterday the allegations were "very serious".

He added: "It is hugely concerning and an investigation is under way. It's totally unacceptable for firms to fix prices and force consumers to pay more. That's

why we are looking at how to extend this criminal offence to the energy sector to make sure those who manipulate benchmark prices feel the full force of the law.

"So let's let the investigators do their work, but it's very concerning. If this has been happening it is very, very serious and major consequences will follow."

The raids came months after Britain's Office of Fair Trading gave the oil giants a clean bill of health.

The watchdog, which investigated claims that lower costs were not passed on to drivers at the pump, said there was not enough evidence to

look at whether wholesale prices were fixed. But Mr Cameron yesterday held back from criticising the watchdog.

Asked if it had been asleep on the job, he replied: "The OFT is involved in this investigation as I understand it but we have to get to the bottom of what happened first before I think we can pass judgment on the way regulators have worked in the UK."

The investigators - who also raided Norwegian oil company Statoil - said several companies may have colluded in manipulating the price of oil and green "biofuels".

This could have happened if oil companies provided false information to Platts.

The developments came as Tory MP Robert Halfon called for firms found guilty of price fixing to be hit with a windfall tax on profits - with the money given back to motorists.

Mr Halfon, who has led a crusade against rip-off petrol prices and previously claimed that companies were conspiring to set pump prices, accused the OFT of a "limp-wristed lettuce leaf" inquiry after Parliament had voted for a full probe.

The MP for Harlow, in Essex, said: "We need tough action from the Government on this and that means putting the oil price fixers in prison if they are found guilty."

"And it means huge financial penalties or



It's totally unacceptable for firms to fix prices and make us pay more

DAVID CAMERON

SCANDAL

FIXERS

▶ PM threat as EU raids BP and Shell

▶ Motorists 'being ripped off for 10yrs'

▶ Oil cost affects everything we buy

PUMP IT UP
Delivery arriving at garage



▲ FORECOURT Garage worker

even a windfall tax on those found responsible with the money given back to the motorists."

The European Commission probe comes after one of Europe's biggest energy trading groups, Total Oil Trading, warned about "inaccurate pricing" of crude and oil products.

Investigators have refused to give many details about the inquiry.

But yesterday European Commission spokesman Antoine Colombani said: "Even small distortions of assessed prices may have a huge impact on the price of crude oil, refined oil products and bio-fuel purchases and sales, potentially harming final consumers."

James Hookham, at the Freight Transport Association, said it would demand compensation if allegations of price fixing are found to be true.

He said: "Our members are surprised and shocked at these claims. They are altogether different from what was being talked about by the Office of Fair Trading."

"This is a serious, long term conspiracy to defraud. We would be

hugely concerned that people have been ripped off and if these allegations are proven, if there was a successful prosecution, I am sure redress would be looked at. We would be looking for compensation."

AA president Edmund King said: "Maybe, just maybe, this investigation will expose the truth. It's about time."

Pete Williams, RAC head of external affairs, said motorists would be "gutted" if the rigging claims were proven. He added: "Learning that prices may have been artificially inflated is shocking, especially for many of the country's motorists who are suffering fuel poverty."

"We recently estimated that 800,000 of the poorest car-owning households in the UK are spending more than a quarter of their disposable income on petrol and diesel. What's more, we found the social lives of 54% of people are being negatively affected by the high price of fuel."

"One in 10 people told us they have stayed with friends near work,

while some have even slept in their cars to save money." Shell said its companies are assisting the European Commission's inquiry.

It added: "We are fully co-operating with the investigation. For legal reasons we cannot make any further comment at this stage."

BP said: "BP is one of the companies that is subject to an inspection that was announced yesterday by the European Commission. We are co-operating fully with the inspection and are unable to comment further at this time."

Shares in BP closed down 1p, or 0.2%, at 467.6p last night while Shell had fallen 55p to 2300.5p or 2.3%.

Four months ago the Office of Fair Trading ruled out launching a full probe into allegations of petrol price fixing, insisting the sector was "working well".

A spokesman said yesterday that the watchdog had received "no credible evidence" after it called for information about price fixing in January in its provisional report into the market.

Speaking in the Commons, Energy Secretary Ed Davey said: "The OFT is an independent body. It's a strong body, it has powers, it made its investigation."

"It had a call for evidence, for information, and it is responding to that."

Voice of the Mirror: Page 10



▲ PACKET Amazon made over £4billion

£2.4m tax on £4bn in sales at Amazon

By GRAHAM HISCOTT, Business Editor

AMAZON pocketed more in government grants than it paid out in company tax in 2012.

Accounts show the online shopping giant's UK arm handed over just £2.4million in corporation tax to the Treasury, despite overall sales of £4.2billion. But it received just over £2.5million in state support.

The money is believed to have come from the Scottish Executive, part of the Scottish Government, to help fund a massive new distribution depot in Dunfermline.

Margaret Hodge, chairwoman of government spending watchdog the Public Accounts Committee, described Amazon's tax contribution as "just a joke".

The Labour MP said: "Its behaviour is not only unfair, it is anti-competitive - putting British businesses that do pay their proper tax at a disadvantage."

£2.5m

firm received in state support for a new depot

US firm Amazon, run by Jeff Bezos, has faced questions over its decision to transfer ownership of its British arm to tax haven Luxembourg.

Its UK subsidiary, which employs 2,265 staff, was able to avoid tax by re-classing itself as being for "order fulfilment".

Amazon has paid just £6million in corporation tax in the past 10 years. It is expected to reignite the row over how the firm and other US giants such as Starbucks and Apple pay so little into the UK's coffers.

£6m

corporation tax paid by Amazon in UK in 10yrs

Matthew Sinclair, chief of the Taxpayers' Alliance, hit out and said: "Tiny corporate tax bills for firms like Amazon at a time of huge ones for hard-pressed families will go down like a lead balloon, but only serious tax reform will fix our broken tax system."

Amazon hit back and said: "Amazon pays all applicable taxes in every jurisdiction that it operates within."

The row comes as Google bosses will be grilled by MPs today to clarify earlier evidence about its tax status. They will face the Public Accounts Committee amid doubts over the way the internet giant sells advertising here.

Meanwhile, David Cameron yesterday insisted Britain was ready to take action against tax havens which have helped companies avoid paying billions of pounds.

The PM said he was looking "to go further" to stop major firms and banks exploiting places such as the Isle of Man, Jersey and the Cayman Islands to keep money from the taxman.

He said in New York: "I accept that we need to take further action with regards to the crown dependencies and overseas territories."

▶ THE High Court is due to rule today on whether HM Revenue and Customs acted illegally in letting off Goldman Sachs with £20million in tax. It was claimed the deal was struck after the Wall Street giant threatened to snub the Government's new tax code for banks.

◀ ROW Amazon boss Jeff Bezos



THE Sun SAYS

Oil be damned

BRITAIN'S motorists don't need to be told that fuel prices are cripplingly high.

In the last ten years, the average price of a litre of unleaded and diesel has nearly **DOUBLED**.

A hefty chunk of that goes to the taxman of course. But even though George Osborne has listened to our Keep It Down campaign and frozen fuel duty, the price at the pumps has continued to rise.

That's why the European Commission's decision to launch a probe into claims of price-fixing in the oil market is welcome.

The allegations levelled at the likes of BP and Shell could hardly be more serious. They are accused of hatching a decade-long plot to keep wholesale oil prices artificially high.

Millions of families may have been ripped off every time they filled up their tank. It has disturbing echoes of the Libor scandal and the disgraceful mis-selling of payment protection insurance by banks.

If found guilty, we agree with David Cameron that those responsible should face jail.

Their companies should also be hit with massive fines, with the money being used to slash fuel duty.

The Prime Minister must be ready to turn his tough talk into action.

Block the filth

MONSTER Stuart Hazell fuelled his sick fantasies by watching horrific child abuse images online.

Experts believe his twisted obsession with paedo sites pushed him from petty crook to the fiend who murdered Tia Sharp, 12.

Labour's Diane Abbott yesterday warned that online porn is breeding a generation of boys with a twisted, depraved view of women.

Images found in the internet's darkest recesses are fostering a sick "Viagra and Jack Daniels culture".

Now Tia's brave mum Natalie wants ministers and cops to act before another youngster dies.

She is urging David Cameron to pile pressure on global internet firms to block access to illegal material.

Ministers must respond. We need urgent action to tackle this hidden scandal.

BBC must pay

The BBC finally says sorry today for its shameful smear of Help for Heroes.

Newsnight had accused the charity of squandering cash and being "too cosy" with the Ministry of Defence.

It was a shocking slur – and completely wrong.

Today's grovelling apology is the very least we would expect.

BBC bosses should back it up by dipping into their own pockets – and making a donation to an outstanding charity.

PETROL GIANTS

By RHODRI PHILLIPS and KEVIN SCHOFIELD

MOTORISTS have paid up to £300BILLION too much for petrol in the last decade, it was claimed last night – as a price-fixing probe was launched into Shell and BP.

The two oil giants face criminal charges and massive fines if they are found guilty of rigging the cost of fuel.

Their alleged actions have falsely pushed up petrol prices for Britain's 30million drivers – potentially costing each one thousands of pounds.

The Petrol Retailers' Association yesterday estimated that if each motorist lost £10,000 over the decade the overall cost would be close to £300billion.

A petrol industry source said: "It's impossible to put an exact figure on the loss but it will be hundreds of billions – £300billion is a fair estimate."

Protest groups said any petrol price fixing would also have raised the cost of food, clothing and everyday goods, shut businesses with the loss of jobs – and helped spark the UK recession.

BP and Shell's offices in London were raided on Monday as part of a Europe-wide investigation.

The giants are accused of working together to fix the price of oil and green biofuels for their own gain – pushing up the cost of petrol and diesel at the pumps.

The oil price reporting agency Platt is also being investigated, along with the Norwegian company Statoil.

The shock European Commission probe has echoes of the Libor scandal when banks fixed interest rates for their own gain – but potentially has much more of an impact on the average consumer.

It comes after YEARS of campaigning by The Sun to cut the cost of fuel. Petrol prices have soared by more than 80 per cent to 136.24p per litre since 2002 – prompting our Keep It Down campaign.

Suffering

Former haulier Peter Carroll, a founder of campaign group Fair Fuel UK, said: "Even the tiniest fraction of a penny on the cost of petrol multiplied up by the billions of litres sold will be a huge amount of money and will have caused huge suffering."

"Businesses will have been lost, livelihoods destroyed and families will have been under the cosh longer and harder than they needed to be."

"The price of everything could have gone up because of this. Fuel is to the economy what oxygen is to the body."

"Every part of everyone's lives, even if they don't drive, is affected – 97 per cent of everything we eat, drink, wear or build will be carried by a diesel truck."

Mr Carroll said the price of crude oil surged from \$93 to \$147 a barrel within a few months in 2008, which "could have kicked parts of the world into recession".

The group's spokesman Quentin Willson said the alleged scandal is worse than the Libor fixing. He insisted: "This has potentially cost the UK economy hundreds of billions of pounds. There are costs to businesses and families which they wouldn't have had to pay otherwise."

"Globally it has cost trillions." The Petrol Retailers' Association said it had long been suspicious of freak wholesale price rises – jumping as much as 5p in less than a week.

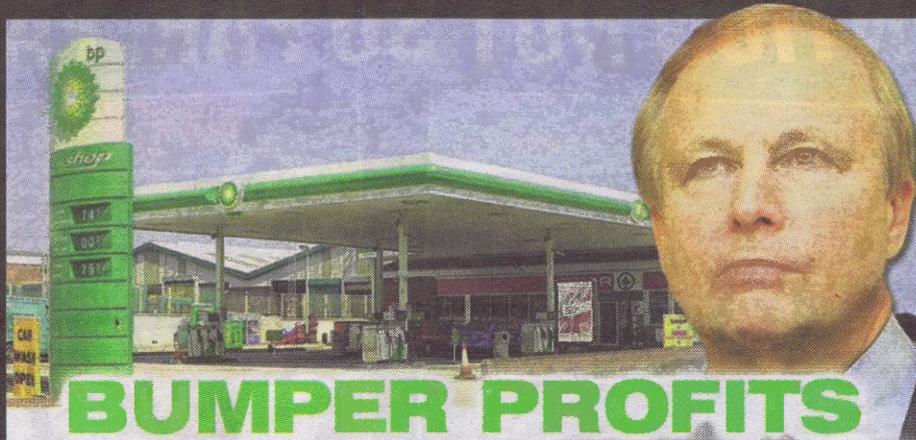
Chairman Brian Madderson said: "Such volatility has been a relatively new unwelcome market phenomenon which cannot be explained to confused and irate customers on our forecourts."

"We hope this Europe-led investigation will help to provide the proper price transparency that consumers and businesses deserve and need."

The Road Haulage Association welcomed the probe. Chief executive Geoff Dunning said: "This is extremely encouraging for the motorist, the haulage industry and the UK economy."

"At a time when businesses are desperately trying to get back on their feet after several very difficult years, there finally appears to be a light at the end of the oil pricing tunnel."

The European Commission suspects firms "colluded in reporting distorted prices" to agencies that publish oil



BUMPER PROFITS

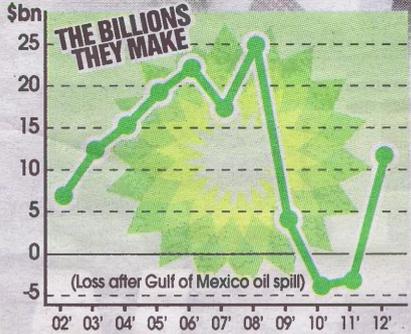
BP has bounced back from the 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill to deliver huge profits.

The British firm reported a loss of £3.1billion in the year of the disaster – its first time in the red since 1992.

But in 2011 it made £16.1billion. Profits fell last year to £7.2billion.

Current chief exec Bob Dudley, above, took over from Tony Hayward, who was in charge during the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, which killed 11 people and was the largest accidental leak in the history of the industry.

Previous boss John Browne, who joined BP as an apprentice in 1966, helped deliver record profits before standing down in 2008.



SHELLING OUT

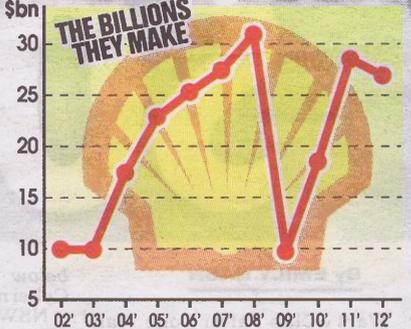
ROYAL Dutch Shell made a £17billion profit in 2012. The previous year it notched up a record £18billion – when the oil giant was making a £2million an hour.

Peter Voser, 54, above, head of the Anglo-Dutch firm since 2009, announced this month he will leave early next year.

He was widely praised for turning Shell into a top supplier of liquefied natural gas, which now makes up half its business.

Last year, the company sold more gas than oil for the first time.

It is planning to increase its output of oil and gas from the current 3.3million barrels a day to four million by 2018.



PM: JAIL THEM

Continued from Page One

European Commission investigators probing an alleged "cartel". Mr Cameron branded the shock claims "hugely concerning" and "very, very serious". He insisted: "Major consequences will follow."

Speaking in New York before a United Nations meeting on aid, Mr Cameron warned: "It's totally unacceptable for firms to fix prices and force consumers to pay more."

"There is the full force of the law available."

On top of current fraud laws, the Coalition also brought in the Financial Services Act last year to make interest rate price fixing illegal.

It was rushed through Parliament to tackle the outrage at bankers fixing the Libor rate so they



could line their pockets. The PM added: "That's why we are looking at how to extend this criminal offence to the energy sector to make sure that those who manipulate benchmark prices feel the full force of the law."

He said of the new alleged scandal: "It's very concerning particularly because this Government

is trying to do so much to help people with the cost of living, including council tax, making energy companies put people on the lowest tariff and so on."

UK markets regulator the Office of Fair Trading has been attacked for failing to spot the suspected fixing for years.

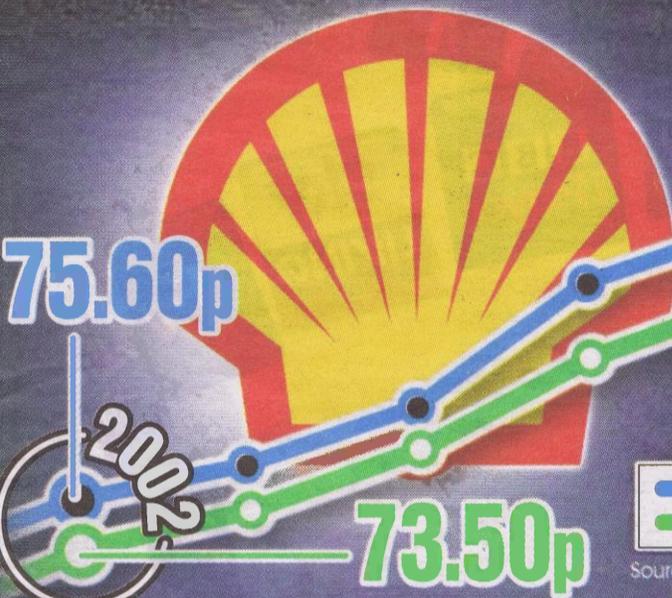
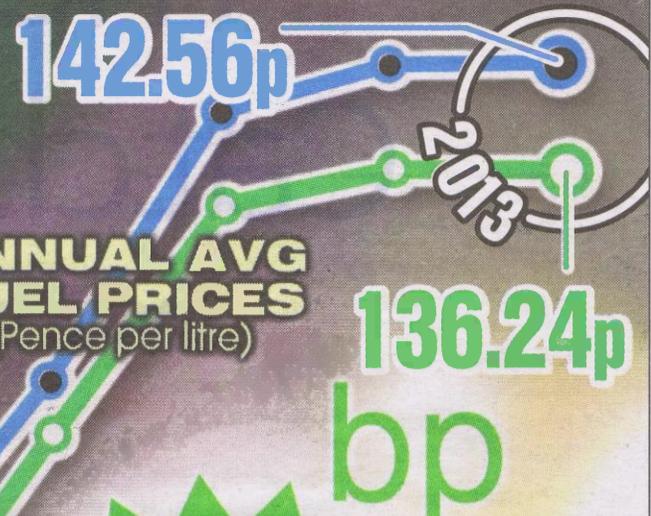
But the PM said: "We have to get to the bottom of what happened before we can pass judgment on the way regulators have worked in the UK."

Oil giants are suspected of getting together in 2002 to keep oil prices artificially high – leading to soaring pump prices and The Sun's Keep It Down crusade.

Tory MP Robert Halfon, a long-term campaigner for fairer petrol prices, said the claims, if true, were a "national scandal".

FACE CRIMINAL CHARGES

PUMP



— Diesel
 — Unleaded
 Source: Experian Catalist

FICTION

- Price 'fix' cost motorists £300BN
- 'Scam worse than bank scandal'

Rip-offs law lets you sue



ONCE an abuse of a market has been established, then it's inevitable people who have suffered losses can bring compensation claims. However, these cases are not straightforward and at the present time they have to be brought largely as individual claims. The Government has indicated it intends to bring in changes to the law to allow class actions — group compensation claims — for the first time for breaches of competition law, as this might be in the oil industry. That will make it easier for businesses such as haulage companies which might have suffered losses as a result of this to bring claims. They should make sure they keep invoices going back at least six years so they can prove their claims. Individual drivers will find it more difficult as we will have to show we actually bought the petrol from this or that organisation. It may take 18 months to two years for the investigation into alleged price fixing to be carried out. Hopefully, by the end of that time the new legislation will be in place.

and petrol figures. It added: "Even small distortions of assessed prices could have a huge impact on the prices of crude oil, refined oil products and biofuels purchases and sales, potentially harming final consumers." The Office of Fair Trading was widely criticised yesterday for not probing price fixing fears more thoroughly. In January it said it found "no credible evidence" of wrongdoing. BP and Shell said they are co-operating fully with investigators. They could face billions of pounds in fines if found guilty of price fixing. Dr Andrew Pressey, head of marketing at the University of Birmingham, said in the last two decades firms in general have paid out a total of more than £198BILLION in fines globally for price fixing. r.phillips@the-sun.co.uk

Cabbie: It's unfare

TAXI drivers' chief Grant Davis branded the scandal "disgraceful" — and said it had cost pals their livelihoods. Grant, 49, head of the London Cab Drivers Club, said: "How can oil prices fall and pump prices go up? If the claims are true, it's a complete con. The book should be thrown at them." The cabbie, of Bromley, Kent, added: "I know drivers who sold cars as they could not afford fuel. Cash should go back to the people petrol firms took it off."



Firms 'left in ruins'

WINDOW firm boss Gregg Price voiced fears that oil giants were raking in profits while sending small businesses to the wall. He rapped: "Firms like mine scrimp and scrape to combat ever-rising fuel costs. We can't raise prices as we're a local company, so it comes off the bottom line. To hear claims that BP and Shell were lining their pockets the whole time makes me sick." Gregg, 45, of Luton, Beds, said: "Think of all the firms they may have killed off. It's a disgrace."

