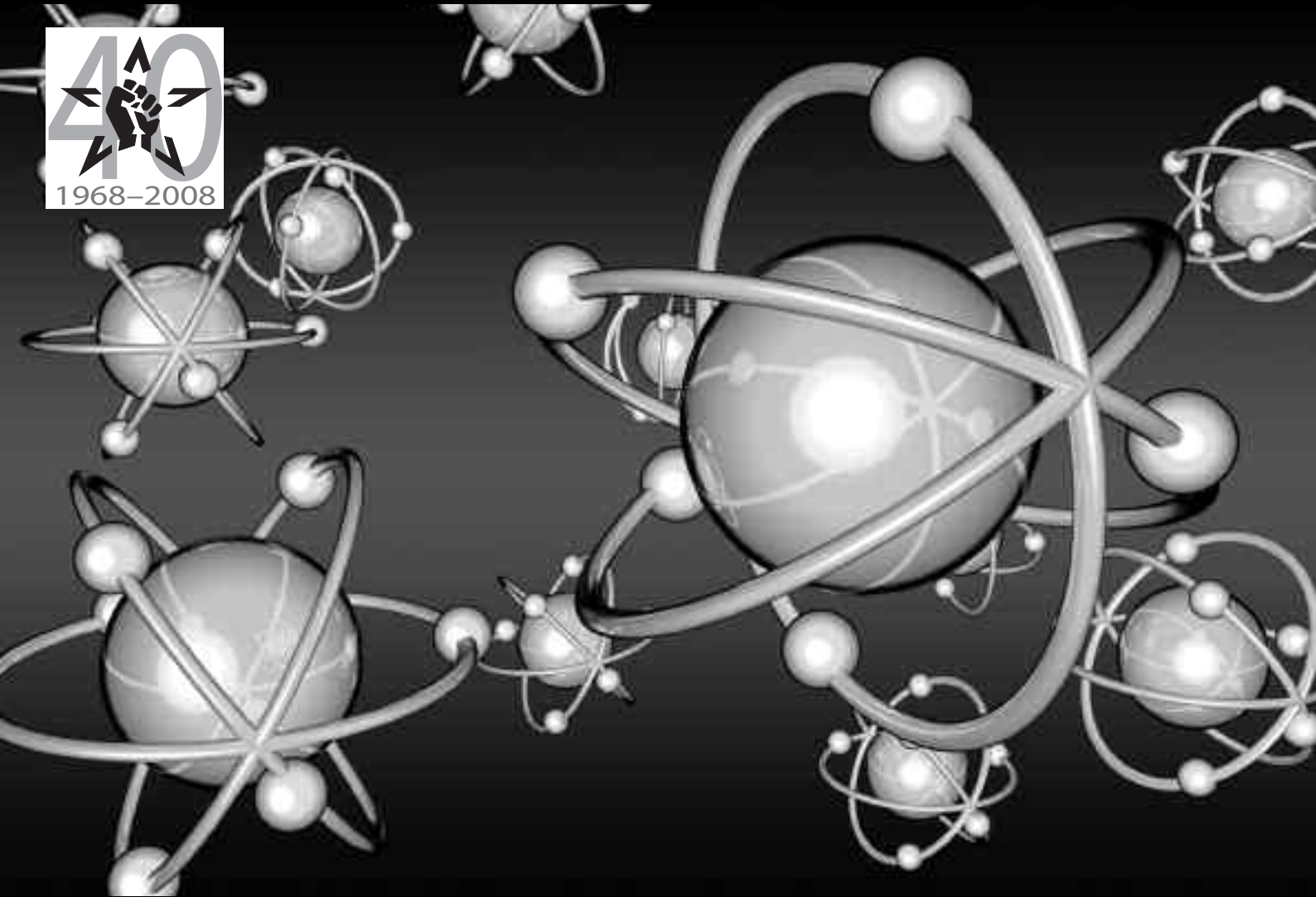


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WHY BRITAIN NEEDS NUCLEAR



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WORKERS

“ Out of control

PHIL WOOLAS, the new Immigration Minister, has said, “This government isn’t going to allow the population to go up to 70 million.” Fine – but how can this be achieved when the EU allows free movement to all its citizens?

Figures from the Office for National Statistics show that the population grew by nearly two million between 2001 and 2007 to 60,975,000. At this rate, we would reach 70 million by 2034.

The estimated number of people arriving to live here for twelve months or more was 577,000 in 2007, against 591,000 in 2006, according to the Office for National Statistics. An estimated 340,000 people left for 12 months or more in 2007, down from 2006 when a record 400,000 UK citizens left the country.

So net immigration was 237,000 in 2007, up from 191,000 in 2006.

About one million migrants from Eastern Europe have arrived here since 2004 and there were still 665,000 of them living here in the last quarter of 2007. The government told us that just 5,000 to 13,000 would arrive after 2004. Between July and September 2008, 38,000 Eastern Europeans registered for work here, 21,000 fewer than in the same period in 2007, but still a large number.

The supposedly humanitarian call to “Let the poor come in” assumes that the poor can only improve their lot by leaving their own country, that poverty in other countries is forever and that there is no alternative to the current system.

Boost industry, not banks

THE FRENCH government is planning to put 20 billion euros directly into a strategic investment fund designed to protect key French industries, bypassing the banks.

The German and Italian governments have both warned that the EU’s controversial climate and energy package will force manufacturing to move out of Europe to countries that have less restrictive policies

towards the industries.

And what is the Brown government doing? Giving billions to the banks to enable them to reward themselves for their failure! It is more wedded to neo-liberal dogmas about free trade and free movement of capital than any other government. Far from leading the world out of the slump, the Brown government is the most backward of them all.



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Unite? Anything but united...

DIVISION AND DISHONESTY are beginning to appear among health trade unions over pay. Some 80 per cent of NHS trade unionists voted to accept the three-year 8.1 per cent deal. Unite, posturing as the largest union in the western hemisphere, rapidly accepted the 2.75 per cent year one offer but in true prima donna style refused the rest.

The union is now campaigning for industrial action to undermine the implemented deal for the other NHS trade unions. This has very little to do with pay in the NHS but everything to do with internal faction fighting within Unite.

Unite, with a minuscule membership in the NHS, has entered into a divisive and cynical exercise aimed solely at poaching other trade unions' members so that it can position itself as the "Left" trade union in Britain.

Faction fighting within the TGWU and Amicus wings of Unite has now forced their merger to be put on hold for at least six months and has produced – following presentations to the Certification Officer – statutory intervention in the internal affairs of the union. That statutory intervention was brought about by ultra-left candidates and groupings using anti-trade union legislation. So much for principle, so much for the proud Amalgamated Engineering Union's resistance to the Industrial Relations Act in the 1970s.

All three candidates for General Secretary are outbidding one another to be "Leftie of the Year". Hence this phoney war around pay in the NHS. Having secured a miserable ballot result for industrial action these armchair revolutionaries have announced a day of action on 3 December across the NHS. Their stunning tactic? They will not use their mobile phones on NHS premises! Who has not noticed the innumerable signs in hospitals asking you not to use your mobile phone as it could endanger patients?

• Meanwhile, the fiasco around pay in local government is descending into farce. After accepting a strategy driven primarily by rhetoric from Unison at national level and then handing over the leadership to the ultra-left to deliver, the 2008 pay campaign has dissolved into tears, blame and sneaking off to ACAS.

After "privately" asking the employers to pay their final 2.5 per cent offer "on account", everyone looks to going to ACAS for arbitration and mediation to save themselves. In the past such payment on account would have been seen as the employers going over the heads of the unions and enforcing their offer. Outcry would have followed. But not now. What is even more ludicrous is that the same generals are now consulting on next year's pay claim and next year's industrial action plan. Meanwhile, the NUT has now decided against further action on teachers' pay, after a poor ballot result.

If you have news from your industry, trade or profession we want to hear from you. Call us or fax on 020 8801 9543 or e-mail to rebuilding@workers.org.uk

CREDIT CRUNCH The group that hides its name

THE "RESCUED" American International Group (AIG) organised a seminar for executives and financial advisors in a luxurious and exclusive hotel in Phoenix, Arizona, on which it spent \$343,000, the Cuban news agency ACN reports. It had previously organized a week's vacation for executives in the exclusive Saint Regis, in Monarch Beach, California, paying over \$440,000.

According to reports from ABC television, the insurance company tried to see that the event went unnoticed and even avoided using the company's logo or any other element that would identify the group with the convention, and hotel personnel were not allowed to use the name AIG.

Still, AIG has plenty of money, courtesy of the US government, which put \$85 billion its way late this summer when the credit crunch started to bite, then another \$65 billion when it blew through the first handout. For comparison, that's six times what the US car makers are (so far unsuccessfully) asking for.

EU CONSTITUTION Luton votes No

ITV'S TONIGHT programme on 20 October featured a mock referendum on the Lisbon Treaty and EU membership held in Luton. Asked how they would vote on ratifying the Lisbon Treaty, 27 per cent said yes, 63 per cent voted no and 10 per cent were undecided. People were also asked about membership of the EU – 35 per cent voted to stay in and 54 per cent to come out, with 11 per cent undecided.

EUOTRASH

The latest from Brussels

Sarkozy calls for blank Czech

FRENCH PRESIDENT Nicolas Sarkozy wants to be President of Europe. He is campaigning to extend his current role as "conductor of the European Union economic orchestra" until 2010. His stint as President of the European Council to expire in December with the end of the French Presidency of the EU and extending it would give Sarkozy powers beyond every EU treaty. The Czech Vice-Prime Minister, Alexandr Vondra, was miffed: "No one can cancel the Czech Presidency. You can't change the official rules of the game without everyone's agreement."

Astral ambition

Brussels spin doctors will send a ballot box into space in a bid to raise turnout in next June's Euro elections. The stunt is part of a £21 million PR contract to come up with a "campaign concept and visual identity" for the EU Parliament.

Hutton's barmy army idea

John Hutton, the new UK defence secretary, has publicly supported the idea of a European army. That is a key ambition of the French EU presidency and a U-turn for British policy.

One rule for them

The UK government claims it will strengthen rules to deny entry to individuals who "preach hate". The new rules could prevent UK nationals from returning to Britain after stints abroad – but they would breach EU rules requiring free movement of EU citizens ... so hate preachers from the EU are welcome?

What's "too much" illegality?

The annual report from the European Court of Auditors, published on 10 November, gave an "unqualified" opinion of the Commission's internal account – but for the 14th straight year they could not say the EU accounts were clean for "most spending areas".

The report showed that 92 per cent of EU budgets, worth £93 billion, were tainted by "too high levels of illegality and irregularity". There were "material errors" in 54 per cent of Structural Funds projects and 31 per cent of agricultural transfers. The EU wrongly paid out €6 billion last year from Structural Funds alone – the highest cash total ever queried by the auditors.



Downtown Havana.

Photo: Workers

CUBA

Scientists call for cooperation

IN A HISTORIC step, *SCIENCE*, the journal of the independent and influential American Association for the Advancement of Science, has said "It is time to establish a new scientific relationship between Cuba and the United States, and not only to pay attention to common challenges such as health, climate, agriculture and energy."

Significantly, the editorial was jointly written by the Foreign Secretaries of the Cuban and American scientific societies.

The article notes that, in spite of the geographic proximity between the two nations and many common interests, the US blockade and other laws such as the Helms-Burton Law of 1996, have

obstructed the scientific exchange between the two countries.

The authors stress that the scientific community of the United States could benefit from the improvements and high-quality science developed in Cuba while Cuban scientists could take advantage of American research facilities, which cannot be found in developing nations.

The magazine also praises Cuba's results in the management and mitigation of natural disasters. "Sharing our knowledge in this field could benefit us all," the editorial reads.

Finally, the text refers to Cuba's vast experience in the treatment of tropical diseases such as dengue and its advances in the field of biotechnology, including the production of vaccines and monoclonal antibodies.

EU revenge on Ireland

IRELAND'S BRAVE refusal to ratify the EU Constitution was a step towards true national independence, but it means that all sections of Irish society – for example, Irish farmers – now have to face up to what independence entails. As the EU budget is launched, it looks as though they will lose all or most of their EU grants, and will be forced to become more self-sufficient.

That can only be good for Ireland's future, but Irish Foreign Minister Micheal Martin is using it as a veiled threat that other sectors too will lose their bargaining power. Ireland is said to have 'punched above its weight' in negotiations with the EU. The truth is that Ireland was bribed with an offer of membership on favourable terms compared with Britain, for instance. Irish politicians were desperate after years of sectarian violence to get their country on a stronger economic footing – but there were always strings attached. The EU was equally desperate to have a compliant country close to Britain to hold up as a flagship member state.

Even greater pressure is being applied to the Czech Republic, which takes over the EU Presidency on 1 January. British MEP Andrew Duff said that the sooner the Czechs ratify Lisbon "the better the prospect for persuading the Irish to alter their mind".

UNIVERSITIES**Nottingham Trent 'greylisted'**

PRESSURE on Nottingham Trent University (NTU) management is rising now it has formally axed its recognition agreement with the University and College Union (UCU). Following a successful one-day strike on 21 October, the union has decided to "greylist" the university.

Greylisting entails academic staff across the country, other trade unions, labour movement organisations and the international academic community supporting the UCU in any way possible.

The action will include not attending, speaking at or organising academic or other conferences at the university; not applying for jobs there; not giving lectures; not accepting positions as visiting professors or researchers; not writing for any academic journal that is edited from

the university; and not taking up new contracts as external examiners for taught courses.

This type of action is only taken by UCU members in exceptional circumstances. It requires discipline and the exercise of peer pressure. If conducted systematically it has the potential to undermine the whole quality assurance of the university as contracts for external examiners come up for renewal throughout the year.

The greylisting is due to start on 1 December, so management at NTU has every opportunity to return to the negotiating table and thereby protect their reputation, students and staff.

The UCU website has a countdown clock reminding members of the days, hours, minutes and seconds to the start of the action. NTU managers would be well advised to have it as the screen saver on their computers.

FOOD**Inspectors vote to strike**

MEAT HYGIENE inspectors have voted two to one in favour of strike action in a dispute over cuts to overtime payments and the introduction of a "work anytime" system, says Unison. The union members – who make sure that the meat on our plates, including the traditional Christmas turkey, is safe to eat – voted for strike action by 2 to 1.

They also voted by around 4 to 1 for action short of a strike, with a 70 per cent turn-out in a ballot which ended on 21 November.

"This is a decisive vote for strike action and shows the strength of feeling of meat inspectors," said Unison national officer Simon Watson. He warned that without an agreement the industry could lose millions of pounds in lost meat production in the run up to Christmas.

London needs manufacture

ON MONDAY 17 November, the London Chamber of Commerce and Industry held an important meeting on "The Future of Manufacturing in London". About 90 people attended, including members of the Greater London Assembly, local businessmen and representatives of Unite, UCU and the South-East Region of the TUC.

The keynote speaker was Alan Duncan MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Business and Enterprise. He pointed out that the economic model of recent years was broken, so Britain was one of those economies least able to cope with the economic downturn.

He decried "the deeply irresponsible practices of our banks" and deplored our being so "heavily dependent" on finance capital. He said that we needed to get "back to an economy that is genuinely constructive" and "manufacturing needs to be at the centre".

Will Butler-Adams, the MD of Brompton Bicycle Ltd, based in Brentford in West London, stated that his firm had grown by 25 per cent last year and was on course to achieve the same rate this year. He observed that his firm did not compete on costs, but succeeded by adding value through making innovation and design central to the manufacturing process.

The Brompton bicycle consists of some 1,200 parts, over three-quarters of which are unique and are designed in-house. The firm also designs and builds the machines and tools needed to make these parts, including over 500 purpose-made press tools, moulds, braze jigs and assembly fixtures. The firm continually refines its manufacturing methods and invests in new machinery and equipment every year.

The union representatives pointed out that Britain had for 40 years lived an economic fantasy of relying on finance rather than industry. The government has thrown billions of our money at the banks, with no guarantee that any of it will go to industry. Now we need to boost demand and invest in industry, services and infrastructure projects.

Those attending the meeting agreed to do all they could to ensure that manufacturing in London does have a future.

AFGHANISTAN**Troops out, says poll**

WITH THE OCCUPATION of Afghanistan mired in crisis, a recent BBC opinion poll showed that 68 per cent of the British population want the troops out of

Afghanistan. For under-24s the figure was 75 per cent.

Despite this Gordon Brown looks set to support calls for an intensification of the war by NATO forces, with Britain sending more troops. Since the so-called liberation in 2001, tens of thousands of civilians and 125 British soldiers have been killed.

EDUCATION**Portability threat**

TWO YEARS AGO the government launched a consultation exercise on the funding of nursery education. The stated reasoning behind the consultation was to equalise funding between state-run school nurseries and the private, voluntary and independent sector.

Now, with all 3- and 4-year-olds due to be entitled to 15 hours a week free nursery provision, the government is tilting the scales against school nurseries.

Traditionally, schools have had nurseries funded on the basis of the number of places, covering costs of staffing on a minimum ratio of 13 children to each adult. Typically, a 52-place nursery could operate with 47 children taking up their places. The new funding arrangements will work out at £3.40 an hour. This is the key to the shift toward private provision. Instead of schools knowing how many places they can plan for over a full year, the private model of hourly rates tied to how many hours a child is signed up for each week will obtain.

Ofsted acknowledges that 56 per cent of private provision is "good". The figure is much higher for state nurseries. The reason is that private providers typically employ much lower qualified, less experienced and cheaper staff than state schools.

Breaking the link between places and funding and replacing it with hourly, "portable" payments will pose a long-term threat to the quality of our children's early education.

Independent Sector Treatment Centres

WE HAVE before in WORKERS chronicled the ill-fated programme of so-called Independent Sector Treatment Centres. These are the institutions that the Government decided some years ago were necessary in order to reduce, and eventually eradicate, waiting lists for patients in the NHS. In practice they are private sector milch cows, owned often by foreign companies, but in all cases greedy for money and who have found a way, through this scheme, of free access to public funds.

These centres have a guaranteed contractual number of (standard, uncomplicated) operations to fill and get paid whether or not they do them. If that isn't bad enough, they also obtain a guaranteed amount, usually 11 per cent, above the tariff, which is the amount NHS providers get paid under the internal market mechanism (Payment By Results) to undertake this work for the NHS. Although we have chronicled this over a period of time, the government has constantly said that the situation is improving. Is it?

The most recent figures available say that they have still only delivered 85 percent of their contracted value (up to the end of May 2008). That is an increase of just 1 per cent on the figure for September 2007. Because the NHS Primary Care Trusts have to pay the full contract value regardless of how many patients use the centres, this means that treatment centres are likely to have delivered less than 90 per cent of the work needed under their contracts from September to May. It now seems inevitable that the first wave of these centres will not deliver 100 per cent value over the five years of their contract. The King's Fund recently predicted that by the end of the five year period of these contracts "the value delivered to the Health Service will be 10-15 per cent short".

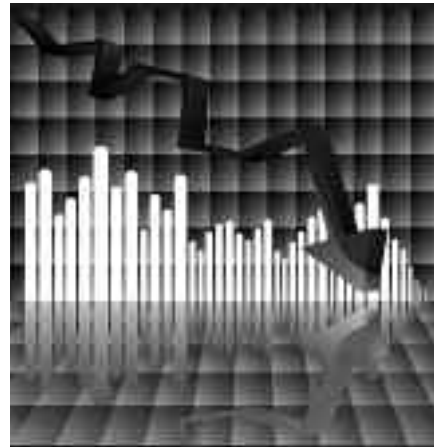
£220 million for doing nothing

These figures look disarmingly simple. Anything running at 90 per cent, you might think, is pretty efficient. Let's look at the money involved. The first-wave ISTC programme cost a massive £1.5 billion. That means that if it runs at only 85 per cent capacity, its current figure, then this will mean that £220 million of the contract will be unused. In other words the private contractors will have pocketed £220 million (of an already inflated figure) for doing absolutely nothing at all. If the fact that they are being paid for work in excess of the NHS tariff is taken into account, then the total cost is around £350 million higher than paying an NHS unit for doing the same work. The number of clinical procedures originally planned to be carried out by ISTC was 1.25 million; it looks now that just over 700,000 will in fact be carried out.

So much for the efficiency of the private sector. So much for our needing to have the cutting edge of competition to improve our sluggish public services. A licence to print money would more accurately describe the ISTC programme.

In fact the situation might be even worse. The Greater Manchester Surgical Centre has to date only delivered 63 per cent of the contracted value, and that contract was originally costed at £86.1 million over five years. If usage carries on at the present level, then the NHS will, in this one ISTC alone, have paid nearly £332 million for work that has not been carried out.

None of the desperate measures b
destined for the dustbin of history
facing something worse...

A crisis out of control -

AS WE WATCH the daily reports of the credit crunch and the recession, two main thoughts strike most of us. Firstly, governments are unable to control this crisis of capitalism, and secondly, what do all these huge sums of money mean and where do they come from?

We are told that the British government

will make available £0.5 trillion – that's £500 billion to you and me, because the scale of this credit crunch is forcing us to think of previously unimaginable numbers like trillions – to bail out the banks who refuse to lend to one another because they think the borrowing bank is about to go bust.

Meanwhile, around the world the figures total trillions – and Brown tells us that the cupboard is bare and there is no money for public sector pay rises! And despite this, it's still impossible to get a mortgage, leading to massive layoffs in the construction industry.

Losses in the trillions

While all this has had little, if any, impact, we then learn that the five biggest British banks are set to lose £2.5 trillion while the government is part-nationalising some of them without exercising any control. Brown flies off to the Gulf States and Saudi Arabia, begging for loans for Britain and for petrodollars to prop up the IMF. Meanwhile, stock exchanges crash, with some speculating on the consequences of the FTSE 100 index reaching zero. Despite the parlous state of the US economy, we see the value of the US dollar rise as if it is seen as some safe haven whilst the Pound slumps. And we see Hedge Funds losing millions as their reckless gamble over the future of the Volkswagen motor company fails spectacularly.

Brown and Darling say that they are going to spend their way out of the recession with construction and infrastructure projects, but when pressed, only talk about bringing forward the construction of aircraft carriers and a new generation of Trident nuclear armed submarines – both of no value to Britain. Wages are held down using the bogeyman of inflation whilst economists insist that workers need to spend more money on consumer goods to minimise the effects of recession. Hence, the rundown of the retail industry and of manufacture of consumer goods. The motor industry is set for huge layoffs.

Then we have the spectre of Brown telling Parliament that the US is

This article is an edited extract of a speech delivered to a packed audience at Conway Hall, London, on 6 November. The detailed account given by the speaker of Cuba's struggle out of its Special Period will be published separately in the next issue of WORKERS.

being taken can prevent the absolute decline of capitalism. It is
y. But without a strengthening of the working class we could be

- and it's a crisis for the working class, too

in recession, some European countries are in recession and inevitably "we in Britain are not immune from this foreign alien contagion", as if it's an accident, not Britain's fault, like catching a cold from a neighbour.

Welcome to the world of capitalism in absolute decline!

Of course it's the responsibility of this government, controlled by capitalism and serving capitalism. Brown is also directly responsible, by handing over power to an 'independent' body to set interest rates, by deregulating the finance industry in this country and by destroying manufacturing industry in favour of basing the British capitalist economy on the finance sector.

Lending to those who can't pay

Who else is responsible for dreaming up and allowing the practice of lending mortgages to poor Americans without the ability to repay them and then selling on those loans to every other bank including British banks such as Northern Rock? Who else is responsible for banks lending British workers 130 per cent mortgages or loans worth six times their salaries, and who now have no chance of repaying them and are faced with repossession of their homes?

Who else is responsible for the record level of personal debt, greater than any other country because of the easy credit? We all know how credit card companies work, i.e. banks, to push their credit cards with interest free transfers and unsolicited cards making it so easy to run up debt. We all know about the exorbitant penalties for late payments on loans or credit cards or overdrafts that make the debt worse.

Soak the young

And today, it is the young who are shouldering the burden of debt. Today, it is not possible to be a student without massive levels of debt. It was once the case that no bank would lend money to a student. Now banks are throwing debt at them and the government is forcing hundreds of thousands into debt through student loans.

But what about us – the working class? What is our responsibility? Did our class



really believe that this debt represented wealth creation? Were we foolish enough to think there would be no price to pay for this desperate capitalism? Few British workers are more than one pay packet away from destitution. Personal debt is a weapon of capitalism to enslave workers.

So now that the government is giving away our money to prop up capitalism after this spiral of debt has got out of control, what are we to think? The half a trillion pounds that Brown is handing over to the banks is our money, our future assets. He has mortgaged our future at our cost just as he has with his Private Finance Initiatives to build hospitals, schools and the Tube – all have stored up more debt for the future. Our entire future under capitalism is based on a huge gamble at our expense and is doomed to collapse. Surely this is a case of our class propping up its enemy.

What is our class to do or think about this situation? What do our trade unions have to say? Well, the TUC Economic

Statement presented to this year's TUC says, "The economic downturn is not made in Britain." This is the same line as the British government – it's not our fault. No British banks have been moving dodgy loans around. Deregulation of the city has nothing to do with the British government. The fact that Britain has the highest level of personal debt in the world is nothing to do with Britain or the government.

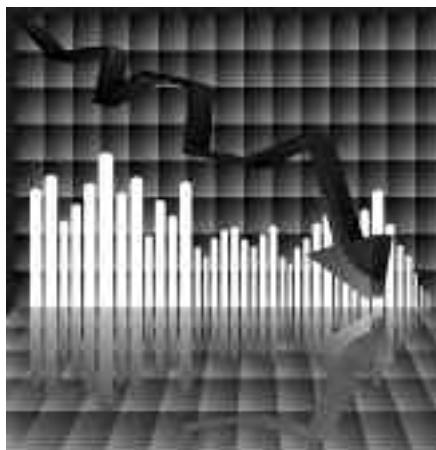
Bankrupt thinking

The TUC calls for tax increases for the rich, a windfall tax on energy companies, more government borrowing and an increase in the winter fuel allowance. What kind of woolly thinking is this? It confirms that our unions are simply an extension of this morally, as well as financially, bankrupt government. Since the TUC Conference in September, they have been conspicuous by their silence.

Our Party has said for many years that

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7



capitalism is in a process of absolute decline. When you understand that, it's easy to understand all the mechanisms that capitalism employs to try to survive. Free movement of labour in the EU, deregulation of everything from the financial industry in the city to transport, privatisation, war, destruction of well unionised industries, are just a few examples. Immigration and

record high levels of personal debt along with anti-trade union laws are intended to weaken the working class.

What we see today, however, explains why none of these measures can prevent the absolute decline of capitalism. It is destined for the dustbin of history. But without a strengthening of the working class we could be facing something worse. Without a working class alternative to capitalism, there is the probability that we will get dragged down with capitalism and face disaster. Such alternatives do not magically appear. They must be fought for by workers and they will come about only by a working class taking responsibility for its own future. It may sound a hard thing to do but there are examples of workers taking responsibility for their own future that we can learn from.

The history of Cuba during the Special Period is of the highest level of the dictatorship of the proletariat in a country that is impervious to the credit crunch and the recession, just as the Soviet Union was impervious to the effects of the Great Depression during the 1930s. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the East

European bloc around 1990, Cuba's economy went into free fall and its economy shrank by a massive 40 per cent. (And our government is worrying about -0.5 per cent.)

A wartime footing

The Special Period put Cuba on a wartime footing, not unlike our own Special Period during the Second World War. Despite severe hardship, there was a strong sense of class collectiveness and faith in the working class leadership. Cuba has now emerged from the Special Period and looks forward to a brighter future. (See the account given of Cuba's experience in next month's issue of WORKERS.)

How can we learn from this example? Why is Cuba so important to us? Well, it's about taking responsibility and taking charge. It's about understanding that it is possible for a working class to hold state power. It's about understanding that in capitalism's current crisis, no one is in control or in charge.

So why can't we take charge? Well first, we must take charge of our own organisations – our trade unions – not as



New pamphlet: The Special Nature of British Trade Unions

As part of the 40th anniversary celebrations of the CPBM-L, this pamphlet publishes – for the first time – an analysis of the British trade unions by founding Party Chairman Reg Birch. Available now, price £3 including p&p, from Bellman Books, 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 8EB. Please make cheques payable to “WORKERS”.

In Britain, the trade unions were created, uniquely, as the “weapons of a working class”. They were an “organic coming together of a class out of the conflict of class relationship” – a necessary tool for survival, built for defence not attack, against the employer in an economic system based on class exploitation.

This is the starting point for this speech, given by Reg Birch in 1982, which goes on to outline the history of our trade unions – tracing them back to at least the 14th century – and to analyse their development, peculiar to Britain.

The CPBM-L is re-issuing the text of this important speech by its founding Chairman, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Party, not as an academic exercise or a historic curiosity, but because Reg Birch's analysis raises important questions for us today.

Read it, consider it, and discuss it with your fellow workers.

individuals, but as a class. That a working class exists is a given. But so long as our class thinks of its existence as simply a fact and nothing more, as a class in itself, then the working class will not take power. Only when the working class sees itself as a class for itself is there the remotest possibility of it taking power. This is the ideological change that is our task.

In Cuba, they were able to change the ideology of the working class after having made revolution. In Britain it is the other way round. We have to change the ideology of our working class before we can make revolution.

Surely, we can run the banks better than they can. Our class has a banking history. It's called the building society, where members can deposit money to save, whilst others can borrow money to build. No need to gamble on stocks and shares. Money lent never exceeded the deposits, consequently no chance of a crash. In the 1820s, our class gave birth to the mutual societies that became Building Societies. They were outside of capitalism and so would eventually have to pay the price. That price was "demutualisation", begun under Thatcher and ending with their collapse today. And workers went along with it in order to get a payout.

Similarly, we have a history in retail. It was called the Coop. From the Cooperative Wholesale Society which grew the produce, made the shirts and trousers, and sold

“ First, we must take charge of our own organisations...”

them to the Cooperative Retail Society that gave us members a dividend at the end of the year. These institutions represented all that was good in working class culture, epitomised by the attitude of collectivism during our Special Period during the Second World War. That's probably when we came nearest to being a class for itself rather than a class in itself, and resulted in Britain's wartime leaders Neville Chamberlain and Winston Churchill being thrown out of office as workers recognised Chamberlain's collusion with Hitler over Czechoslovakia, and Churchill's attacks on workers before the war.

A start to changing the ideology of our class would be for it to recognise that it is propping up its own enemy and that it is not rocket science to see how we could run things ourselves as a working class. For the trade unions to recognise this would be a big step forward.

There is no point in a trade union sending a 30-strong delegation to Cuba for Mayday, as happened this year, if they return to Britain and continue to support our propping up a dying capitalism with our own money or if they don't even recognise

that capitalism is our enemy. Imagine if they came back and said 'we've seen how the dictatorship of the proletariat works and we can do it here'. It's as if such things can only happen in other countries. It's the same with the concept of a national working class. It's OK for Cubans to be patriotic – “patria o muerte” is their national slogan: homeland or death. But here in Britain it's almost impossible to stand up for the British working class consisting of every worker in Britain without being accused of racism or chauvinism by those who believe that everyone in the world has a right to live here and work here. We've spoken to some Cuba Solidarity Campaign activists in London who, while praising the Cuban Revolution, have no interest or desire to change things here by following their example. Not acceptable!

This attitude that revolutions only happen in other countries shows a complete lack of responsibility for our country and our working class, as does a doomed trade union merger between our Unite union and the United Steelworkers of America. By hiding behind the fantasy of creating a “global super union”, Unite is neatly avoiding its responsibility to Britain and its working class. Copping out! Running away! Heads in the sand!

The only ideology that allows us to take responsibility and that unites us with Cuba is Marxism Leninism.

BADGE OFFER – Referendum now. No to the EU superstate!

DESPITE ALL THE promises, Labour is trying to take us into a European superstate without giving the people of Britain a chance to say what they think.

The so-called Constitutional Treaty is just the despised Constitution in another form, as even Giscard d'Estaing, author of the first attempt, has admitted. In backtracking on the referendum promise Gordon Brown is trying to wipe out a thousand years of independence and sovereignty using his tame party in Parliament.

The will of the British people has been clearly expressed in opinion poll after opinion poll. Now it is time for a poll of a different kind, a referendum. The TUC is already trying to renege on its September vote for a referendum. Don't let power slide over to Brussels.

FIGHT BACK with a Referendum Now badge (actual size 25mm), available from Bellman Books, 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB, price 50p each, or £4 for 10. Please make cheques payable to “WORKERS”.



The maths are simple: by 2020 Britain will need 120 gigawatts of generation – that might be available. As of now, we generate 76 gigawatts, running out of time...

Light, not darkness: rebuild all our electricity

IT IS NEARLY 30 years since the dismantling of Britain's state owned energy industries started – first gas, then coal, then electricity generation and all the twists and turns over nuclear, the National Grid etc. The concept of an integrated energy industry, with a mix of fuels guaranteeing heat, light, industry, protection against the elements and nature is in tatters.

The result is that the ownership of Britain's energy industries has passed not just to foreign energy companies but foreign financial houses. The future of energy in Britain is perilous: the driving interests are the market and greed, not the interests of the people of Britain.

Workers in Britain need to face up to reality. By the year 2020 Britain is forecast to need 120 gigawatts (GW) of generation from whatever source – gas, nuclear, oil, coal, etc – that might be available. Leaving aside that all energy forecasts are notoriously inaccurate we still have to deal with an accurate figure of 76 GW of generation as of now and a closure of 25 GW of that capacity by 2020.

The market response

The market responds to this impasse by higher prices, effectively rationing supply, despite making unprecedented profits. The government stalls and refuses to challenge the multi-national energy companies with whom it has been in cahoots for the last 30 years, be it a Tory or Labour administration.

The government hides behind EU directives that carbon emissions must drop by 80 per cent by 2050. No other government in the EU has signed up to this proposal in deeds rather than lip service. Britain has said it will generate 35 GW from wind power. That will require 15,000 wind turbine generators festooning and polluting Britain's countryside. Each wind turbine will be nearly 350 yards high – dwarfing most buildings.

Ironically, the wind farm turbine makers are already going out of business due to the capitalist economic crisis. In Germany court cases still rumble on as to



Coal stations on the Trent (above) and the Ouse were the response of the 1960s and 1970s to the approach is needed now.

who actually owns the wind and is one wind farm stealing the wind of others! Let alone the impossibility of these wind farms being built, do the people of Britain want to be surrounded by 350 yard high monstrosities across every moor, fell, highland, dale and theoretically windswept beauty spot? The answer will be a resounding NO!

A rational response

The rationalisation of power station building in the 1960s and 1970s, in answer to the last major energy shortfall crisis, was to build the networks of stations on the Trent and Ouse – linking water to coal. Giant stations were built of

“If we are going to rebuild our nuclear industry then the decision has to be taken now...”

almost gothic size, beauty and originality, plus nuclear stations in remoter quarters – Dungeness, Sizewell etc. The tiny inefficient and inadequate pre-First and Second World War power stations were closed and Britain moved into a situation of guaranteed stability and supply. This

of generation from whatever source – gas, nuclear, oil, coal, etc and by 2020 25 gigawatts of that capacity will be shut. We are

Electricity-generating industries



energy crisis then. A similar coordinated

has been destroyed by privatisation and market forces.

The argument that renewable sources of energy – wind, wave or sun – will replace nuclear, coal, oil or gas, fails on grounds of intermittent and unpredictable supply versus constant, consistent and reliable. The wind is not guaranteed to blow. The sea becomes becalmed. Britain has had its worst summer for years. You cannot bottle electricity. The renewables argument is that of anti-science, anti-industry, anti-working class and reaction. Leaving that aside, the simple fact is that the costs of such science fiction dreams are undeliverable. It is estimated that such unreliable renewables would cost an

estimated £25 billion more than the already estimated £100 billion required to rebuild Britain's required generating capacity.

To guarantee Britain's sustained and improved standard of living, let alone that of the other 5 billion human beings on the planet, real long term planning and commitment is required in the energy arena. To build a new power station takes approximately ten years. The energy gap, when power cuts will kick in, will be 12 years. That 10-year figure assumes planning, logistics, skills, design being ready to proceed. It does not assume blocking and resistance by the anti-industry lobby.

In the 1984–85 miners' strike the slogan which unified the working class was Coal not Dole. Posters, stickers, badges covered Britain. This is now counterposed by Stop Coal stickers and posters from so-called climate change campaigners. This slogan equates with green fascism. These are the same who clamour under the green agenda that Britain's only sustainable population should be around the 6 million figure – a return to medieval days and presumably genocide in the process.

Clean coal

Only industry can resolve the shortfall of energy in Britain and the world. The coal industry has developed clean coal technology (despite brutal opposition and closure under both Tories and Labour) coupled with carbon capture and storage technology. This is a more serious contender to stopping carbon emission than any wind turbine, trading in carbon footprints on the stock exchange or tree-planting tax fiddle dreamt up by a Canary Wharf whizz-kid. Why ignore it when Britain is an island of coal with 1,000 years of reserves?

If we are going to rebuild our nuclear industry then the decision has to be taken now. It has produced safe storage for nuclear waste supplanting any previous designs. The only drawback is that the government has deliberately excluded any British company or design from any potential construction. The government

defers solely to the US where no new nuclear generation has been commissioned for nearly 40 years.

Britain cannot rely on a strategy of imported gas, as political instability abroad and soaring price increases lead to further chaos. Likewise to call for windfall taxes on the gas and oil companies is very worthy and pious but is not going to resolve the fundamentals of the energy crisis. What is a life and death choice to a pensioner – paying the food or the gas bills – should be removed from the equation by the energy industries being returned to working for the national interest.

The energy crisis is no more a crisis than any other difficult problem we have to resolve. We require clear decisions and a long-term strategy to grasp the issue. The first is commitment to rebuild and re-equip our generating industries. This challenges the very core of who owns these assets and where the decisions are made.

To commit £100 billion to rebuilding electricity generation is small change compared with the trillions used to bail out the banks. Commitment to rebuilding requires skilled workers, construction, science, industry, education, design, planning, taming the atom and recycling waste. Reliable energy to meet need should be the slogan, light not darkness, heat not cold, conquering nature not being dependent on it, progress not medievalism.

Bring out your badges

Do you have any old labour movement and political badges in odd containers and drawers? Put them to good use and send them to the CPBML – we'll sell them at labour movement events during the year to raise money for the Party. Please send them to:

Badges
78 Seymour Avenue
London N17 9EB

The realisation is dawning that urgent action on transport is needed soon if Britain is to keep moving. ...

Invest now in a future for rail

MASSIVE FARE INCREASES well in excess of inflation will hit rail passengers once again at the New Year. Tickets will cost between 6 per cent and 11 per cent more, hitting workers already having to contend with the effects of the financial crisis.

Announcing approval for the increases, the Brown Government has the audacity to talk about "value for money" to the many rail users whose everyday experience tells them that trains are getting even more overcrowded. With passenger journeys up by over 45 per cent since rail privatisation, the railways are in many cases simply not a realistic alternative to using Britain's congested roads, notwithstanding the recent hike in fuel costs.

Brown's new-look team of transport ministers is beginning to admit that massive investment in the railways is necessary. The prospect of building more high-speed rail lines to match those of countries such as Germany, France and Spain seems to have improved as the realisation dawns that urgent action is needed soon if Britain is to keep moving. A year ago, a new high-speed electrified rail line was opened from the Channel Tunnel to London St Pancras, and this has resulted in a huge increase in passengers carried in and out of the country, despite the recent fire in the Channel Tunnel itself. It shows what investment can deliver.

Running out of capacity

An increase in capacity is desperately needed. As Virgin starts running trains from London to Birmingham and Manchester every 20 minutes, the lack of capacity means that the stops previously made at Watford are to cease. Watford is an important town in its own right as well as a convenient interchange for services to west and south London, Gatwick Airport and Brighton. Now, all those passengers will have to go back to crossing London by tube, an inconvenience that will completely negate the introduction of improved train frequencies.

But the Brown government wants to cut subsidy to the railways by 40 per cent by 2013. It's not difficult to understand why! Subsidies have increased by 120 per

"The profits are coming straight out of the pockets of the passengers and tax payers..."

cent since privatisation, and fare income has risen by over 50 per cent. So the railways are swallowing nearly double the income, but with only modest improvements in the service.

Why? Well, British Rail was not nearly as inefficient as many politicians would have us believe. The private rail companies are mostly doing very nicely out of the industry, and their profits are coming straight out of the pockets of the passengers and tax payers. First Group has just announced huge increases in profits, with rail making a large contribution to those profits. This led to a £55 million dividend payout to shareholders.

The squeeze is coming

However, watch out for at least some operators struggling during 2009. With the government squeeze on spending on the railways, and some companies being in difficulties, many rail workers can expect to be faced with employers seeking cuts in staffing, coupled with attacks on pay, pensions and conditions. But during 2008, the rail unions have shown that they are more than capable of dealing with the challenges ahead.

The biggest union, RMT, continues to grow both in membership and effectiveness, its membership and leadership often demonstrating the sort of discipline and class consciousness that is a shining example to all unions. The union can claim a number of important victories during the last year, the most significant of which is returning back into London Underground the infrastructure and other staff forced into the private and now failed Metronet company. RMT also called 12000 maintenance members out on strike in

Network Rail in defence of hard won conditions, and scored a major victory for the low paid when it won a campaign to dramatically improve London Underground contract cleaners' pay.

Recently, RMT recognised the continuing threat the European Union poses to the railways by taking a trainload of protesters to Paris to demand an end to EU-led rail 'liberalisation' policies. RMT general secretary Bob Crow rightly pointed out the part that EU directive EEC/91/440 played in the Tories' rush to privatise British Rail. He criticised further moves by Brussels to roll out their dangerous and failed privatisation model across the continent, splitting control between train operations and rail infrastructure to facilitate competition in rail freight by 2006 and full liberalisation of international passenger services by 2010.

Rail unions across Europe along with European transport union body ETF demand an end to rail privatisation and a new future for nationalised, democratically controlled, publicly owned railways and more public investment in railways for economic growth and the environment.

Failing to learn the lessons of the privatisation of the national rail network, the Brown Government now wants to privatise the publicly owned Tyne & Wear Metro, a move that flies in the face of logic, and RMT is mounting a vigorous campaign of opposition.

RMT is currently balloting Eurostar train managers in partnership with TSSA, the second largest rail union. The dispute is over the failure of the company to adhere to normal procedures and negotiate over rosters, and transferring weekend working from French and Belgian staff to British colleagues. Threatening disruption of services in the run up to Christmas, RMT and TSSA called on the company to negotiate fair rosters for the staff that have demonstrated a great deal of flexibility and commitment following the disruption caused by the Channel Tunnel fire.

Close cooperation between RMT and TSSA has increased greatly during the year, with a number of other joint ballots



Demonstrating against rail privatisation at the 2007 TUC.

Photo: Workers

being run, and joint campaigning against ticket office closures in London Underground and South West Trains. A recent TSSA strike by around 30 managers in Wales elicited solidarity action from RMT and ASLEF members who refused to cross picket lines, causing massive disruption in South Wales and the Bristol area. Increasing union cooperation and solidarity is a welcome development as rail workers face more vociferous attacks by employers during 2009.

Battle ahead over fares

A looming battleground will be ticket offices. The new franchises which came into being a year ago were let through on the basis that there will be more ticket machines, more smartcards (like the Oyster card now being used in London), and more automatic gates at stations. It is clear that the rail companies want to use these developments to reduce ticketing staff to the absolute minimum. It is already becoming much harder to buy pre-bookable cheap tickets in person at the stations, and passengers travelling there

and then are often having to stand in queues behind others who need large amounts of time to buy cheap tickets with the necessary seat reservations for future travel. The unions have been working much more effectively with rail passenger users' groups to oppose cuts in station staffing.

All the rail unions, along with Unite which has a small number of rail members, have worked together during 2008 to defend the Railways Pension Scheme, a final-salary pension scheme inherited by the industry from British Rail. Battle lines are being drawn for early 2009, with Network Rail, by far the biggest rail employer, leading the charge to undermine the scheme.

Privatisation has justifiably been blamed for undermining safety in the rail industry. Network Rail has been heavily criticised in the recent Rail Accident Investigation Branch report into last year's Grayrigg train crash, when a train was derailed at nearly 100mph. It is clear that Network Rail failed to give the maintenance workers the resources to

carry out essential checks on the points involved, and then sought to blame them for the fatal crash. RMT criticised funding cuts, unrealistic workloads, long hours, excessive reliance on overtime and dubious working practices. It was particularly scathing of the railway police who have kept members under suspicion of manslaughter for nearly a year. As has been the case following past accidents, senior managers responsible for this state of affairs – and who undoubtedly knew how bad things were – have so far got away with it.

Safety notices

Network Rail has at least been served with safety improvement notices relating to the accident. Unions and safety enforcement authorities will need to be even more vigilant next year as cost cutting and staff cuts will almost certainly undermine safety still further.

The government now states that they want to spend much more on infrastructure projects to stimulate the economy. The railways, faced with massive increases in traffic, are crying out for investment. Britain's rail network compares very unfavourably with that of most European countries, where most of the railways are electrified. Many people are now demanding electrification for key routes like London–Bristol and London–Sheffield, which would facilitate the introduction of faster, more efficient trains. Coupled with a commitment to build new electric railways capable of supporting 200mph trains, the railways could then ensure that many more would use trains instead of cars and even planes, with obvious environmental benefits.

It is notable that the people of California have voted to build a 200 mph electric railway to link San Francisco with Los Angeles. They already have the sort of publicly owned public transport in many places that Britain so desperately needs. Car-loving Americans have recognised that they cannot build more and more massive highways in order to tackle congestion. How long will it be before the penny drops with the Brown Government?

In our final article to mark the 40th anniversary of the CPBML by four decades through the eyes of WORKERS and its predecessor, THE WORKER, we look back at the fight against the European Union.

No to the Common Market, the EEC, the EU



From Edward Heath's flirtation with the EEC in the early 1970s, our party discerned the dangers to our national sovereignty and to our class's ability to influence the direction of our country. Later, in the run-up to the 1975 referendum on Common Market entry, THE WORKER of 15 May combined a powerful graphic of the EEC encircling Britain with a large campaigning heading - 'Common Market NO!' The editorial opened:

“Capitalism is aggressive and expansive or it is nothing. The Common Market is the way the declining capitalist powers of western Europe in their abysmal stupidity believe they can create a new imperialism.”

A number of articles in the paper covered different menacing aspects of the EEC. 'Mobility of Capital' stated "The key to EEC plans for industry in Europe hinges on Article 67 of the Treaty of Rome. This provides that '...Member states shall progressively abolish between themselves all restrictions on the movement of capital' ."

The 'Common Market means migration' article pointed out:

“The 'freedom of movement' and 'mobility of labour' protected by the Common Market is as old as capitalism itself. Wage labourers have always had the 'right', when robbed of their



Graphic from The Worker, 15 May 1975

livelihood, to seek work elsewhere or else stay put and starve.” The article concluded: “A fine thing, ‘freedom to move’. Far finer, the freedom not to have to!”

Two weeks later on 29 May 1975, THE WORKER's lead article, headlined 'No to EEC', identified the threats to our class likely to emanate from European capitalist integration:

“We, the CPBML, are in favour of the workers of Europe fighting our common class enemy, of aiding one another in revolution.

But we are opposed to the Common Market.

The EEC, though purporting to be a fraternity of nations, is merely a community of monopoly capitalist states, dressed up in the clothes and concealed in the jargon of a false internationalism – purposely to confuse the response of

organised workers. It is the internationalism of big business arraigned against the power of workers throughout Europe. Its motto is the free movement of capital and labour; firms, now multinational, take European-wide decisions, and in their wake come rationalizations, mergers, closures, depressed regions and an enlarged army of unemployed.

...Mobility of labour across the continent is seen as a tactic to break the unity of our class, to dilute the level of its trade union organization (still unique in Europe) and import the worst features of industrial relations current in the EEC.”

In the November 2000 edition of WORKERS, we warned that the latest political trends in the European Union of joining the euro and closer constitutional and political integration would have dire consequences and that we should have a referendum to reject joining the euro. A highly edited version follows:

By looking at the past
THE WORKER, we look at

European Union!

“BRITAIN YES, EURO NO

The drive towards creating a single European state motivates everything that the European Union's leaders do. These leaders, including Blair and Brown, have decided that Britain should join the euro and that Britain should become part of a single European state. "Monetary union is the motor of European integration" as Jean-Luc Dehaene, former Prime Minister of Belgium, said.

The EU's leaders aim to form a single state, with a single currency, a single government, a single frontier, a single army, a single flag, a single system of criminal law, a single system of tax and spending, and a single citizenship. Every EU initiative follows a federalist agenda, moving ever towards merging Europe's independent states into a single European state. The goal is political unification, the unification of separate states into a single political entity.

Britain

The euro's supporters across the Continent all openly support these policies of political integration. Only in Britain do they hide the obvious truth, because they fear that if they admitted it, even more of us would oppose entering the euro. So they play 'softly, softly, catchee monkey' and claim that their decision to join the euro is solely an economic judgment.

Our trade unions, particularly those in manufacturing, have traditionally backed Britain's manufacturing industry, recognizing that it is vital to Britain's future. How can they then argue for a policy that would mean dissolving and merging Britain into an EU state?

The Danish people have voted to keep their national currency: that was their decision, as it would have been had they voted to end the krone and adopt the euro. It does not affect us here. We must make our own decision, and that must be to insist that any British Government rejects Economic and Monetary Union. We should call for a referendum now, to say NO to the euro and YES to a prosperous independent Britain.”

WHAT'S THE PARTY?

We in the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), and others who want to see a change in the social system we live under, aspire to a society run in such a way as to provide for the needs, and the desires, of working people, not the needs and desires of those who live by the work of others. These latter people we call capitalists and the system they have created we call capitalism. We don't just aspire to change it, we work to achieve that change.

We object to capitalism not because it is unfair and unkind, although it has taken those vices and made virtues out of them. We object because it does not work. It cannot feed everyone, or house them, or provide work for them. We need, and will work to create a system that can.

We object to capitalism not because it is opposed to terrorism; in fact it helped create it. We object because it cannot, or will not, get rid of it. To destroy terrorism you'd have to destroy capitalism, the supporter of the anti-progress forces which lean on terror to survive. We'd have to wait a long time for that.

We object to capitalism not because it says it opposes division in society; it creates both. We object because it has assiduously created immigration to divide workers here, and now wants to take that a dangerous step further, by institutionalising religious difference into division via 'faith' schools (actually a contradiction in terms).

Capitalism may be all the nasty things well-meaning citizens say it is. But that's not why we workers must destroy it. We must destroy it because it cannot provide for our futures, our children's futures. We must build our own future, and stop complaining about the mess created in our name.

Time will pass, and just as certainly, change will come. The only constant thing in life is change. Just as new growth replaces decay in the natural world, this foreign body in our lives, the foreign body we call capitalism, will have to be replaced by the new, by the forces of the future, building for themselves and theirs, and not for the few. We can work together to make the time for that oh-so-overdue change come all the closer, all the quicker.

Step aside, Capital. It's our turn now.

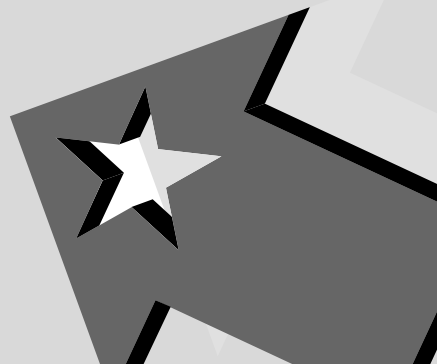
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Back to Front – Capitalism’s carte blanche

‘The government has thrown billions of our money into restoring banks’ balance sheets, but never asked for a guarantee that any of that money will go into productive industry ...’

NOW EVEN capitalism’s apologists are saying this crisis could be worse than the Great Depression of the 1930s. Finance capital is entirely parasitic on production, and as it now devours itself it will also devour its host, if we let it. Britain depends far too much on finance, and we have far less industry now than we did in the 1930s, so we are less able to cope.

With capitalism in absolute decline, the ruling class is using the crisis to attack industry and services. Industry and services are the flesh and blood of the working class, but capitalism in its decline no longer needs them.

Nationalisation used to mean that the working class seized assets from the capitalists and for the nation. Now under Labour it means that the capitalist class seizes assets from the nation to save itself, looting like Russian oligarchs.

Life is proving for all to see that capitalism doesn’t work, but as long as workers think that socialism doesn’t work either, we will be stuck with capitalism.

The government has thrown billions of our money into restoring banks’ balance sheets, but never asked for a guarantee that any of that money will go into productive industry. With all the money that we have put in, we demand investment in the real economy - invest straight into industry and services, plan the use of our natural resources and stop thieving public assets.

Repossessions are up by 70 per cent. Local authorities should stop the banks from repossessing homes. Local authorities should reassert ownership, let people stay in their homes and let them pay rent. And not just local authorities. After all, the banks only exist because taxpayers have shovelled billions upon billions into their sagging balance

sheets. If the government can intervene to stop boardroom excesses, then it can intervene to stop citizens being made homeless and thereby becoming a charge on the state.

The G20 governments have embraced even more tightly the policies that have driven us into slump. The leaders of the G20 countries agreed a joint statement on 16 November, “We underscore the critical importance of rejecting protectionism and not turning inward in times of financial uncertainty”, committing themselves to free trade. Gordon Brown described protectionism as a “road to ruin” and told Mandelson to tell Obama not to protect US industry. But protection is not the enemy: the system itself is the problem.

Pakistan, Turkey, Ukraine, Belarus, Hungary and Iceland are all getting ‘help’ from the IMF, which imposes its usual conditions – liberalise trade, cut welfare and slash public sector wages – sure to make things worse.

Asia won’t escape the crisis, never mind pull us out of it; its countries are too dependent on export markets, foreign debt and overseas investment, unlike in the 1930s when the socialist sixth of the world was safe from the slump.

All over the world, capitalism has decided that the way to deal with the stunning waste, miscalculation, greed and amorality of high finance is to give it even more of our money to play with.

The questions for workers is these: Are they right? Is saving finance capital the only way to save the world? Is propping up Wall Street and the City of London with taxes screwed out of working people what working people want to see? If not, then it’s time to stop moaning and start doing.

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