

# WORKERS

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## WHAT FUTURE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE?



**Nursing** Victory for training, but attack remains

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# WORKERS

## “ State funding for terrorism

**IMPERIALISM** is playing a murky role across the Middle East and North Africa – aiding Al Qaeda terrorists, jihadists and foreign mercenaries preparing to overthrow the Syrian government. It did this well before the “Arab Spring” protests in March 2011, and the Syrian government actions against them cited by Western media as the “cause” of the civil war.

As far back as 2007, Seymour Hersh was writing in *THE NEW YORKER*, “The U.S. has also taken part in clandestine operations aimed at Iran and its ally Syria. A by-product of these activities has been the bolstering of Sunni extremist groups that espouse a militant vision of Islam and are hostile to America and

sympathetic to Al Qaeda.”

And not just the US. Britain, too, has been bolstering Al Qaeda to subvert Syria as it did to topple Gaddafi. Directly, or indirectly via the Gulf tyrannies, Western arms are streaming into jihadist terror gangs. Meanwhile, any secular Arab country has become a target for subversion.

It’s Afghanistan all over again – anything to defeat the “enemy”. Now Al Qaeda pops up to murder gas workers in Algeria, and bands of terrorists maraud in northern Mali. Having been a prime mover in the chaos, Cameron now warns of a decades-long battle against Al Qaeda – in North Africa alone. What a surprise! ■

## Referendum: force the issue

**CAMERON** and indeed all the parliamentary parties are running scared about a referendum on whether Britain should leave the European Union. They all want to dodge the issue as long as they can. Capitalists love the EU, and why not – its free movement of labour and goods weakens the working class and pours profits into their pockets. They would trample Britain into the dust to protect those profits.

Cameron says that if he won the next election he would renegotiate our terms of membership, and only then would he let us have our say. So a referendum would depend

on two unlikely conditions: a Conservative election win, and a renegotiation that could mean anything. And even then we’d have no referendum until 2017 at the earliest. Cameron offers not a pledge, just a delaying tactic.

Any referendum from Labour, the “party of Europe”, would be about staying in the EU, but on new terms. Whatever the government said it wanted, the EU would just say no. We’d still stuck in the European Union.

We must have a clear yes/no referendum: Britain’s future depends on leaving the EU. Workers must force the issue. ■



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# Council pay impasse



THREE YEARS of a pay freeze in local government coupled with an estimated 65,000 job losses in the past 12 months and attacks on terms and conditions covering everything from weekend enhancements, shift allowances and overtime to mileage rates, car allowance and contracted hours, etc – it all adds up to a grim picture for local government workers.

Pay negotiations are at an impasse, with a theoretical 1 per cent pay offer plus strings – the strings being even more cuts and moves locally to try to undermine existing national agreements. The

Twitter campaign and postcard lobbying over pay has obviously not got the employers quaking in their boots.

Initial analysis of workers receiving benefits to top up low wages shows over 800,000 receiving Council Tax benefit and over 900,000 receiving Housing Benefit – 93 per cent of all new Housing Benefit claims are now from workers in work. As many as 60 per cent of the workforce could be in receipt of some form of “benefit” – housing, childcare etc.

So workers face a real reduction in income: with the value of local government workers’ wages having dropped by at least 13 per cent since 2009, the reduction in state benefits, mounting debt and rising utility, food and transport costs will mean very hard choices. Either workers will re-learn how to fight for wages or face ever-growing impoverishment.

There is an eerie silence within the trade unions as straws are clutched at: the living wage, fair-pay-now campaigns, appeals to the conscience of Coalition ministers. More than ever we are going to have to delve into our history and recognise that we have been here before. Nothing has changed in the stone hearts of employers and Cabinet members. The resolution rests in our hands and our thinking: getting organised and picking our time and place for a fight. ■

## SLUMP

### Incomes squeezed

THE OFFICE for National Statistics (ONS) has found that 37 per cent of people do not have enough money to meet an unexpected but necessary financial expense – a huge leap from the pre recession 2007 figure of 27 per cent.

At the same time, the number saying they cannot afford a holiday has soared from 21 per cent to 30 per cent over the same period.

Since 2000 average pay has increased by 40 per cent while the official inflation figure over the same period (which many think underestimates price rises for people on lower incomes) has been 43 per cent, representing a real pay cut.

The really big hit has been in the past five or six years. Since 2007, prices have risen by 18 per cent but average wages by just 10 per cent. Taking all factors into account, including unemployment, national income per head has fallen by more than 13 per cent since the start of 2008. ■

## GERMANY

### Bringing back the gold

THE BUNDESBANK, Germany’s central bank, is bringing a large part of its gold reserves back to Germany. Those reserves are the world’s second biggest – 3,396 tonnes, worth £115 billion. It is calling back all 374 tonnes of its Paris holdings and 300 tonnes from New York, a total of £22 billion.

One analyst said that it was the beginning of the end of the dollar as a reserve currency. But given the withdrawal from France, it was not exactly a statement of faith in the euro either. ■

**If you have news from your industry, trade or profession we want to hear from you. Call us on 020 8801 9543 or email [rebuilding@workers.org.uk](mailto:rebuilding@workers.org.uk)**

## EUROBRIEFS

## The latest from Brussels

**Open border**

UNDER EU rules Britain must open borders next year to Bulgarian and Romanian citizens. The Labour government did so for Polish and other eastern European immigrants in 2004, predicting that a few thousand would arrive; the eventual total was over 400,000.

Would new migrants have jobs to come to? No, many will end up on benefits or begging or both. There are already 2.3 million EU nationals living here, 551,000 of whom are unemployed or economically inactive.

Mass immigration is not to meet our economic or social needs, but to obey the EU's imposition of free movement of labour. Immigration is an economic issue. A greater supply of labour forces wages down further and puts more strain on our housing, healthcare and education.

The government says it cannot go against the EU; instead it will tighten benefit rules – no doubt hitting British workers again in the process. Only by leaving the EU this year could we stop a repeat of what happened after 2004.

**The slump zone**

EUROZONE UNEMPLOYMENT hit a record high of 11.8 per cent in November 2012; that's some 18.8 million people, with youth unemployment a record 24.4 per cent. Unemployment in the whole of the European Union climbed to 26 million, at 10.7 per cent.

Trade figures also suggested that economic growth in the eurozone was very limited towards the end of 2012. In November German exports showed their sharpest drop in over a year, down 3.4 per cent.

**Spanish practices**

THE SPANISH government has been quietly tapping the country's Social Security Reserve Fund. The fund is meant to guarantee the future payments of pensions but is being used as a buyer of last resort for government bonds.

**'Insanity' of fiscal union**

NOBEL PRIZE-WINNING economist Robert Mundell – who is considered to be the intellectual "father of the euro" – has warned against a fiscal union in the eurozone, arguing, "It would be insane to have a central European authority which controls all taxes and expenses of states ... in the union." ■



Students at the Institute of Education in London spell out their message to Gove.

## Plant science in peril

BRITAIN'S ABILITY to contain ash dieback disease (*Chalara fraxinea*) has been compromised. Not only was the Forestry Commission slow to react to the science, in deference to the European Union and the World Trade Organization, as reported in WORKERS in December 2012, but also by a scandalous shortage of plant pathologists.

Parliament's Environment Committee heard from senior plant scientists that we are unable to quantify, never mind control, imports of potentially infected firewood.

An audit of plant pathology training and education, published late last year by the British Society for Plant Pathology, reports a serious decline in teaching and research on plant diseases in British universities and colleges. Plant pathology has been lost completely or greatly reduced at eleven universities and colleges, while fewer than half the institutions which teach biology, agriculture or forestry offer courses in plant pathology, the audit found. There are only ten qualified plant pathology experts active in research on tree diseases in Britain and only one research programme on tree pathology in a British university.

British universities have appointed very few plant pathologists in the past 20 years. Many of those who remain are aged over 50. The report attributes the loss of expertise to a shift towards subjects that bring more short-term income into universities.

Those who do manage to graduate with plant science qualifications frequently find themselves unemployed, or forced to take work in other occupations, wasting their skills and knowledge. ■

## TREE CONSERVATION

### Apprentice scheme

WITH SO many talented young people out of work and with a British economy foolishly cutting back on skills and expertise, we need to ensure our industries and sectors replenish the stock of skill and nurture the next generation of trained workers. We can't survive on the back of an ageing workforce: we have to force a future.

A small yet positive example is now in its fourth year of operation. Using funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, the management of Epping Forest on the edge of east London has trained nine apprentices as conservation arborists since September 2009 and is currently training its fourth batch of three young workers in a project due to last five years.

The Epping Forest Arborist Team mentors and coaches three apprentices annually, sharing its knowledge to ensure they become fully qualified arborists with valuable work experience, able to work

confidently and safely in their chosen field. College classes complement the work-based learning in the environment of Epping Forest and the apprentices achieve an NVQ in Trees and Timber along with three nationally recognised chainsaw operation certificates. ■

## BANKS

### Pleading poverty

APPARENTLY, the Royal Bank of Scotland and Lloyds need another £30 billion of our money to survive. The regulators have given them until March to balance their books. Other banks and building societies have £60 billion hidden losses, in bad debts and in the cover they need to pay fines and compensations for their various criminal actions.

The Labour government overpaid the banks when rescuing them in 2008. Brown paid twice the going rate, losing us £18 billion. The taxpayer will never gain from the bailout. ■

**OPEL****Throwing down the gauntlet**

GERMANY IS presented as the manufacturing heart of the European Union. Its dependency on manufacturing and heavy industry is contrasted with Britain's deindustrialisation as the reason why Germany is not facing the crisis engulfing most of the eurozone. That is changing, with the announcement in December of the closure of the Opel/GM plant in Bochum and the threatened loss of 3,200 jobs.

The psychological impact of this threat is that it is the first such proposed closure in recent German history. It singles out what is seen as one of the best union-

organised industrial plants in Germany. It is not an accident but the throwing down of a gauntlet to German labour.

The fight is now on to save the threatened jobs and turn the 2016 closure date into a rout of the employers and German state backers. Already, lightning strikes, marches and rallies have occurred throughout the plant.

Workers are reminding the employer that when closure was proposed in 2004, the result was a European-wide Opel strike involving over 100,000 workers in nine countries and 15 locations, with factory occupations and blockades – not only in Europe but worldwide as Opel's globalism was met by workers in plants in Brazil and Korea. German workers are clear: save the jobs and make Opel/GM profits pay. ■

# Agreement at Camden NSL

LAST YEAR the NSL pay dispute involving Camden Traffic Wardens was teetering on snatching defeat from the jaws of victory (as reported in *WORKERS*, October 2012). The members have now accepted an offer that had been on the table for months – 4 per cent from 1 September 2012, 3 per cent from 1 April 2013 and 3 per cent from 1 April 2014.

The settlement flies in the face of those in the local Unison branch who were trying to promote ever-escalating but undeliverable industrial action, while scurrying around desperately behind the scenes in search of someone to bail them out of their failed industrial action strategy. Such strategies implied pegging workers' wage rates to the London Living Wage – which would have left members at the mercy of London Mayor Boris Johnson's charity approach to wages. In fact, they would have delivered a wage cut compared with the position once the percentage increases start to lift the basic rate for the job.

The Camden Traffic Wardens dispute is another sad, repetitive, year-on-year example stretching back into the fog of history of wrong tactics, wrong strategy, manipulation and the cynical use of inexperienced, poorly organised groups of workers for others' agendas and politics. NSL workers must now think hard about how to lift union density on the back of the successful pay increases in Camden but also across other London boroughs paying less – whether the national minimum wage or Johnson's London one.

Another task is to build real union organisation in NSL, and not be linked to old council union structures that do not reflect the real world of outsourcing and privatisation. Struggle must be conducted by applying thought through strategy and tactics, and leave aside those obsessed with mindless mantras and chants or superficial explanations about low pay, migration and race. Organised workers as one can overcome all such divisions. ■

**NHS****Regional pay abandoned**

THE TREASURY has now abandoned its proposal for regional pay in the NHS, one strand of the Coalition's strategy to undermine the National Health Service. It is not clear whether this is a body swerve, or whether they'll be back. It may be a feint: by retreating over the NHS, can they attack teachers and civil servants instead?

The challenge is still there. The Coalition will return to attack higher cost supplements in London – but that will be an interesting challenge as London health trade unions remain better organised than elsewhere in Britain.

Despite the diversion of regional pay, the NHS still remains trapped in the government's pay freeze, aided by the dependency by health trade unions on the pay review bodies for the best part of the past 20 years and the attack on national bargaining – the Agenda for Change Agreement.

The drive to save £20 billion and get all NHS trusts to foundation trust status by 2014 is causing massive conflict. Wholesale "down-banding" of grades is taking place across the service, with an estimated 20,000 nursing posts lost or not filled. All this is set within the deliberate planned madness of the Health and Social Care Act and the drive to destroy the NHS by the use of the market. ■

**WHAT'S ON****Coming soon****February**

Tuesday 12 February, 7.30pm. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL.

**"Britain, not three nations"**

For more than three centuries Britain has been one nation, united by a common language, a common culture and a common industry and economy. Now, encouraged by regionalism stoked by the European Union, some are seeking separation. What would that mean for the British working class? Public meeting organised by the CPBML. All welcome.

**ISLE OF WIGHT****Threat to ferries**

A PACKED public meeting in January called by the Isle of Wight Trade Union Council to discuss Wightlink Ferries' reduction in service from the Isle of Wight to the mainland attracted a cross-section of island residents who use the ferry regularly. They included trade unionists, business people, road hauliers and people who travel to work.

The ferry (part of British Rail before everything was privatised) is a lifeline for the island, carrying goods necessary for the survival of all islanders. But it was noticeable that although the island's MP was in attendance, only one local councillor bothered to turn up.

Many people related the difficulties they are now encountering with the revised timetable. One Wightlink worker has had to buy a camper van: he can't clock on at Lymington to start his shift because there is no ferry to take him from Yarmouth to Lymington, and he is not alone in this.

A railway worker, travelling to Portsmouth for his work, has been banned from using Wightlink for twelve months, for complaining about the cuts in the service in a letter to Wightlink.

Wightlink, owned by Australian company Macquarie Bank, was said to have made a profit of £8.5 million, but still claimed to be making a loss. That "loss" can be accounted for by the inter-company loans, charging itself 17 per cent interest.

A number of speakers called for the ferry to be taken back into public ownership as the only certain way of maintaining the service. The trades council now plans to talk to ministers and the island's MP with a view to reinstating the service, using subsidies – or taking it back into public ownership. ■

## After the Olympics

SOME £300 million in public money has now been committed to the conversion of the London Olympic stadium into new uses. That means stripping out various facilities and reducing the quality of Olympic provision.

The Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park is scheduled to reopen in July 2013, with other changed stadia due in 2014. The Qatari royal family, having taken control of the athletes' village, plans to rent out nearly 3,000 homes.

The London Legacy Development Corporation estimate at least £1.1 billion income from elaborate building plans pencilled in over the next 20 years as the site is in-filled with housing.

Lloyds Bank estimates that £13.5 billion income was generated from the construction and services provided by the Olympics. The truth is public money funded the Olympics, poured in a torrent into private construction and multinational companies' pockets. That wasn't income generation – it was publicly funded profit for parasites.



Photo: Workers

In an even more cynical move the London Mayor's office is funding the conversion of the main stadium for future football use, whether West Ham United, Tottenham Hotspur or lowly Leyton Orient wins control. £200 million is being given to these private companies – in Tottenham's case a tax-exile-owned, tax-haven-registered foreign company.

There are severe doubts that the 5,000 jobs promised from the conversion of the Olympic press centre into the equivalent of Newham's Silicon Valley will materialise. In fact, job creation figures only in the small print, dwarfed by housing and associated rents, and bank and mortgage company returns.

What remains of the site will be part of the capitalist vision of London as a centre of sporting circuses and entertainment for the "elite" from across the world. The multinationals and the state have learnt the lesson of previous bankrupt Olympic sites – Greece, Spain, Australia, etc – and intend exploiting London to the hilt for decades to come. The campaign to send the Olympics back to a permanent site in Greece needs to be reignited, and Londoners need to reclaim London. ■

The attack on the NHS takes many forms... make sure we win...

## A victory in the battle for r



Nurses on the TUC's October 2012 march against government policies.

Photo: Workers

FOR TWO YEARS, despite clear and mounting evidence that the policy endangers public safety, training places for student nurses working in the general adult nursing field in London have been reduced. Since 2010 this has amounted to a 20 per cent reduction. It was due to be reduced by a further 10 per cent in September 2013 but this has now been withdrawn. There will not now be a reduction on the 2012 numbers. It is important that this small but significant victory is put in a wider context.

It cannot have escaped anyone's attention that the nursing profession in Britain is under the most sustained attack in its history. This has taken a number of forms. Firstly, a reduction in nursing posts: the NHS Information Centre has reported that 5,216 nurse, midwife and health visitor posts have been lost in England between May 2010 and July 2012. Although the Department of Health claim that support posts are being increased, 5,967 nursing support posts have been cut in the same period. A particularly underhand form of enemy attack is the reduction of nursing specialists, for example, diabetic nurse posts. As these nurses tend to be the most experienced, this strategy dissipates pools of expertise and standard setters from a locality.

Another form of attack is more insidious and involves highlighting examples of poor care, which certainly exist, attributing these to individual nurses for

ms, and a lot hinges on our ability to choose fights wisely and

## nursing education – but the attack continues

being “too academic”. Take one example of poor care which has been formally investigated, namely the Mid Staffordshire hospital. What were its conclusions?

Certainly patients died, and poor nursing care was a factor in many of the deaths. But the conclusion of the report highlighted managerial and financial decisions which had been catastrophic to care standards, workplace culture and organisation. (See Box below for just one example from many). There was no reference in the report’s recommendations to overly academic nurses.

So the nursing profession is under attack on many fronts but from the enemy perspective, the cleverest form of attack on the nursing profession is the one which has not hit the headlines: namely the reduction in student nurse places. If you can strangle the flow of recruits to a profession, then that profession and the service it sustains dies. There are parallels in the attack on the teaching profession in Britain.

In 2011 all the higher education institutions which provided nursing programmes for London students were obliged to bid for the ability to continue to receive their Department of Health funding. This very bureaucratic competitive tendering process resulted in the reduction in student nurse numbers in London in September last year with one institution, the University of West of London, losing its contract altogether. Many others had their student numbers reduced. As a result, very experienced nursing lecturers lost their jobs through a combination of compulsory and voluntary redundancy.

No one knows how many posts have been lost as only the compulsory redundancies are counted. Even trade unions apparently only count compulsory redundancies, but surely the equation is: compulsory redundancy + voluntary redundancy = the total loss of skill. Now that the planned reduction in student numbers for 2013 has been withdrawn, this victory for students and the service may also provide an opportunity for lecturing staff to regroup.

The attack on student nurse numbers has not been limited to London, and other

NHS professions have been affected. There have been reductions to training numbers in the allied health professions, with physiotherapy and occupational therapy particularly hit. Every health region in the country except one has seen reductions in student nurse numbers in the past two years. It is not yet clear whether the ability of London to challenge this trend for the next academic year will be replicated elsewhere.

The situation in Scotland continues to be very worrying despite the frequent assertions from the Scottish Nationalist Party that they are better at looking after the health service compared to England. This year 2,430 student nurses started training in Scotland compared with 3,060 two years ago – a reduction of 20 per cent. Now a report to the Holyrood parliament health committee shows that the overall bursary budget for student nurses is dropping from £69 million to £67 million next year. So Scotland is clearly planning further reductions despite a third of its nursing workforce being over 50.

### Fighting back

The tactics involved in fighting back against this attack have not involved any demonstrations but they have involved trade unionists, professional bodies and local organisations working in a variety of ways. The under-rated trade union and professional tool of “marshalling the facts” was used and needs to be taken up by workers in many different workplaces. In an

age of “career politicians” (whatever that means) any worker who understands the nature of their workplace is always more knowledgeable about that workplace than the average politician.

One rough and ready tool in this fight was for nurses to constantly ask “how come we need fewer nurses when a) the population is going up, and b) the population that makes most demands on the NHS – those 85 and over – is rising sharply for at least the next couple of decades? (According to the Office for National Statistics, the 85+ population rose from 660,000 in 1984 to 1.4 million in 2009, and is projected to rise to between 3 and 5 million by 2034.)

The other part of the argument focused on detailed knowledge that all the health trade unions have about the age profile of the NHS workforce. One of the myths promoted in the NHS is that “workforce demands cannot be predicted at all” and therefore we must all go on “local knowledge”: if local employers are currently reducing posts, then students should not be trained. However the NHS, more than many other employers, has very detailed information on its workforce and certain things are entirely predictable. In fact Britain has one of Europe’s leading health workforce experts James Buchan working at Queen Margaret University, Edinburgh. He published a report in July 2011 on the nursing workforce, “The

*Continued on page 8*

## ‘A concerning lack of clarity’

EXTRACT FROM the executive summary of the Francis Report Inquiry into care provided by Mid Staffordshire Foundation Trust:

“The Inquiry could not trace any record of the medical floors part of the plan being considered or approved by the board. In particular, the changes of nursing skill mix, which resulted in a predominance of healthcare assistants over qualified nurses,

are not recorded in any Board minute seen by the Inquiry. There were differences of account between executive directors as to who was involved in the decision and the change was disowned by the Director of Clinical Standards, and [the] only nurse on the board, in evidence to the Inquiry. There was a concerning lack of clarity about the process by which this important decision was taken.” ■

*Continued from page 7*

Decisive Decade”, which stated that Britain then had 352,000 qualified nurses, midwives and health visitors. As it stood even that figure was below the European average for the population served. He predicted that unless the current trends can be reversed this number will reduce to 253,000 in a decade. The full report can be read at [www.rcn.org.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/394780/004158.pdf](http://www.rcn.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/394780/004158.pdf)

### The EU and nursing education

As well as documenting what has happened to Britain’s nursing workforce, the other aspect of James Buchan’s work has been to highlight how periodically the NHS has relied on plundering the nursing workforces of other countries to fill the politically created gaps.

After the Thatcherite period of supposed “over-provision” of nurses in the 1980s, NHS managers travelled the world recruiting from countries such as the Philippines and Zimbabwe. Even the Deputy Leader of the Scottish Conservative party was recently quoted in the DAILY RECORD saying that the current reduction in student nurse numbers in Scotland is

## “Is the current government relying on the free movement of labour in the EU to fill the predictable shortfall?”

“severely short sighted” and “we will have to hire significant number of nurses from overseas to account for this deficit and that is something the public will not find acceptable”.

Is the current government relying on the free movement of labour in the EU to fill the predictable shortfall? For three decades EU legislation on mutual recognition of qualifications for regulated professionals has allowed EU nursing qualifications to be recognised in Britain. But the UK Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) as the regulator could set its own regulations. This meant that nurses with qualifications below British standards could not join the register without further training.

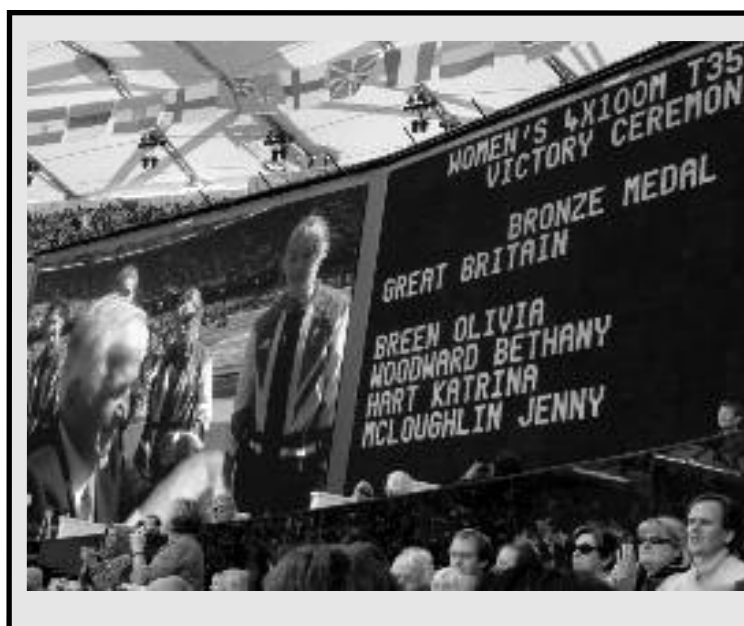
In 2010 the government agreed to adopt EU proposed changes to that

directive making it easier for employers to employ EU nurses. But nursing trade unions and the regulator continued to highlight the risks of recognising inferior qualifications and, in particular, the fact that testing English language skills under the directive is solely the responsibility of the employer rather than the regulator. In June 2012 the University and College Union annual congress passed a motion which brought together the attack on student nurse numbers and the risks to patient safety from the directive.

Exactly why the Department of Health has changed the stance in relation to student nurse numbers in London is not clear. But the persistent questioning about workload, the ageing workforce and the dangers of relying on staff with inferior qualifications and poor language skills have all probably played their part.

Many questions remain: What is happening to student nurse numbers outside of London? What is happening to lecturing posts? Do NHS staff and the rest of the working class truly understand why the fight for student numbers in all of the professions is important for all workers now and in the future?

So yes, an important victory – but there is much work to be done. ■



### CPBML/Workers

## Public Meeting, London

Tuesday 12 February, 7.30 pm

### “Britain, Not Three Nations”

Bertrand Russell Room, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL. Nearest tube Holborn.

The Olympics and Paralympics showed our unity as a nation, but with the Scottish referendum on independence looming, are we to be left with a country called ‘England and Wales’? Shouldn’t everyone in Britain be able to vote on whether it should be broken up? And why is the European Union pushing regionalism on Britain? Come, discuss. Everybody welcome.



**What future for young people? We need to shape and change the future – what we have is death but what we want is life, hence the next generation taking responsibility...**

## What future for young people?

**This article is an edited version of a speech given at a CPBML public meeting in London last November.**

ALL THE TALK about youth, young people, anything which creates special people or divides people, people who live to shop, people who cannot communicate without “social media”, really gets up my nose. So I want to say from the beginning that I’m looking at a continuous process, a sense of generation – passing knowledge from the older to the new and from the new to the yet to be born.

We are all walking contradictions: we are for change but like continuity; we want the next generation to have a better lot than we did or our mothers and fathers had but we don’t want to forget our roots. We don’t want them to make the same mistakes we made. But we want people to learn and you learn from practice and experimenting. So we trust the next generation to take up the weapons that we did, hone them, refine them and move the world forward. Do better than us.

What future for young people? We ask simply because we need to shape and change the future – what we have is death but what we want is life, hence the next generation taking responsibility.

### Forwards or backwards?

Is the world going forward or is it going backward? The period from 1945 to 1979 was dubbed as a period of great social democratic compromise. We, the working class and they, the capitalist class, could all find an accommodation and live together. One grand happy home. That 34-year period, born out of the Second World War, has to be now seen as an aberration in capitalism’s history. An illusionary era where people thought real social progress and justice was occurring not only in Britain but across the world.

What changed in 1979? The election of Margaret Thatcher and a bunch of ideologues basing their ideas on an ignored Austrian economist, Hayek, is what happened. No more living together. The great divorce. It wasn’t an accident:



**November 2012, London: students march against cuts and fees.**

Photo: Workers

the ruling class had analysed class struggle in Britain during the previous decades, our strengths and weaknesses. And then we, organised labour, voted for her pie-in-the-sky, get-rich-quick, beggar-your-neighbour, greedy illusion that we didn’t have to be workers any more.

Hayek had one idea: all power to the market. In practice that means – because

it is still being pursued by Cameron, Osborne and previous and present Labour Party leaders – the unprecedented domination of capitalism over us and the complete roll back of everything we, as workers, have ever achieved.

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Millions of workers uprooted, cast adrift, cast on the scrap heap. Millions of people who are now so accustomed to being made redundant that they are anaesthetised and accept it.

So a future for hundreds of thousands of young people means no jobs, or non-productive jobs. No education. No housing. And no pension. No work means not in the union – no aspiration, no expectation, no hope

You can add all the European Union dimensions as discussed at our last meeting and covered in *WORKERS*. But mass importation of cheap labour, as with cheap goods, destroys our ability to build, plan and direct our future. What period in history has weighed down the next generation with millstones round their necks before they start as now?

### **Rolled back**

What may have been won in the 1960s, 1970s but then rolled back in the 1980s, 1990s, to today, is not just because of some obscure fascist economist. Nor is it because we have some guilt trip about how we've let this generation down and not done enough. How silly. We'll never have done enough until we've finally won. We'll never finally win because struggle is dynamic: what you achieve today is not enough for tomorrow.

We have no more let this generation down than those workers one hundred years ago, who led such militancy and near-revolution – “The Great Unrest” – only to be slaughtered in the First World War. We are part of an on-going class war which has ebbed and flowed for hundreds of years. We are in retreat, and we have never faced such a period as this before. But we don't need sackcloth and ashes and moaning about our lot in the world.

The TUC held a massive march on 20 October 2012 – and it was basically ignored across all media. What was the TUC calling for? “A future”, “You can make a difference”, “A better world is possible”. All motherhood and apple pie,

**“We need to look to ourselves. We are workers, we know that ideas change the world. We know that ideas fight, ideas make things happen...”**

business trade unionism and let's have more flags and giant balloons.

### **Junk language**

So frightened are the trade unions that we don't dare challenge the ideas of Hayek, the market, so-called neoliberalism and all the other junk language that they use.

We need to look to ourselves. We are workers, we know that ideas change the world; we know that ideas fight, ideas make things happen. We should be saying capitalism does not and never has worked. We must replace it. We must work out what socialism means for us in 21st-century absolutely declining, failing, dying British capitalism. This is not Russia, China, Cuba or wherever, it's here, it's us, it's now, it's Britain the first capitalist country – and it will be the first capitalist country to destroy itself.

At the Armistice Day commemorations last November, Cameron said he wants every school to visit the cemeteries of France, and £50 million has been found to commemorate the forthcoming 100th anniversary of the First World War in 2014.

We should not let them steal our history. The millions of dead were workers, millions were young workers. We cannot allow them to commemorate a war among slave owners fighting to be the biggest slave owner in the world whereby we were the cannon fodder.

What solution for a generation without hope and work? Have another

war! We cannot permit that.

A future for young people means we fight for peace not another re-division of the globe amongst the rich and parasitic.

For young comrades and friends in the audience I want to say a few words about the Party. As a Communist Party we do not divide our class, we do not divide our members over superficial difference. We do not have and do not need a youth wing, a women's section, a gay and lesbian group, a black members' section, an unemployed section. We are communists in a Communist Party. We have workers who understand the vital importance of being a Communist and being organised to deliver as a collective.

We work on the basis that clarity of thought and unity of purpose is what is necessary for today, tomorrow and the future. Today's youth is tomorrow's pensioner; the battle remains the same only the point in time changes.

### **Protracted**

The future for young people is and will be grim if we do not tackle today's battles. We cannot understand today's battles without understanding the protracted timeline of the struggles that we are engaged in, where we have come from and where we need to go. What we are fighting for has run over centuries, it will run over more.

The question is have you joined in the battle or not? Do you understand what needs to be done or are you looking in the wrong direction? Do you take the right decision or flounder around chasing diversions and cop-outs? Are you brave enough to make a lifetime's commitment to struggle, and winning the future?

The Party needs to bring into its ranks the next generation; all bring some contribution, some experience, some value, all learn. Better that we keep mixing old and new wisdom to constantly create a heady, vibrant, dynamic and forward looking mind-set.

Clarity arises from studying, discussing and applying ideas, Marxist ideas. You get that focus of intensity and clarity by being in this Party. ■

Under capitalism, libraries in the 21st century have, like every other indication of civilisation, been called into question...

## Save libraries – essential for civilisation



Photo: Bikewordtravel/ Shutterstock.com

The British Library, London: jewel in the crown of Britain's public library system.

SINCE PEOPLE invented writing, they have made documents, and collections of those documents, to transmit ideas and knowledge to others, and preserve them for future use. The physical form of documents has changed, from clay tablet to papyrus, to the codex, to the printed book and the journal article, to electronic journals and books in recent years.

Whatever their form, there have always been collections of documents, and around the larger collections scholars gathered, the first universities.

In the 21st century under capitalism, libraries have, like every other indication of civilisation, been called into question.

Across the country libraries have

taken a beating as never before. In universities and colleges, the growth of electronic resources has been used speciously by vice-chancellors as an argument to remove the physical spaces libraries occupy (and turn them into something more lucrative).

In schools professional posts in secondary school libraries have been deleted or demoted. (There never were any in primary schools – why not?)

The catastrophic reorganisations of the NHS following the Health & Social Care Act, which came into law last year, threaten the future funding of libraries throughout the service. And at local level hospital closures and mergers lead to the

closure of the libraries hosted there.

Commercial organisations, blind to anything but the balance sheet, gladly send to the skip the intellectual memory of the organisation.

For academic libraries, they have had to face not only cuts in funding, but huge increases in the cost of scholarly journals, that form the major part of their collections,

It was the late and unlamented Robert Maxwell who first spotted the potential of academic journals as money spinners. He noticed that the academics who write for

*Continued on page 12*

*Continued from page 11*

them expect no fee from the journal – indeed they are required to publish to prove they are still research-active. The same academics, when not writing articles, will offer their services as peer reviewers and editorial board members, expecting no reward other than a plate of sandwiches at the editorial board meeting.

Since the academics are funded by the taxpayer through their salaries, and through mostly public funding in research grants, the only workers needed are those few involved in editing and the production process. Though the advent of the electronic journals should have reduced institutional subscription prices, instead they have continued to grow far ahead of inflation.

Some libraries have pinned their hopes on the open access movement, whereby journals make their content available freely, or authors deposit preprints in institutional repositories, but open access has yet to realise its promise.

### **Barbarian**

But it is the public library, open to everyone since the 19th century, local yet part of a national network of inter-lending, which shows most clearly the nature of the barbarian attack.

At a national level, Museums Libraries and Archives (the MLA), the arms-length body that sat between the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), and did such national planning as there was, has been disbanded and libraries handed over to the Arts Council, or Arts Council England (ACE) as they are now known. Despite many fine words of assurance that this was their proper place, ACE dismantled the MLA's structure of library advisers, and in November ACE cut its staff by a fifth, closed four of their nine regional offices and deleted the post of libraries director.

According to the authoritative Public

Libraries News website, 324 library buildings and mobile libraries have been closed since April 2012, or are at risk of closure, while 201 service points were lost in the financial year 2011-2012.

That is to say nothing of the more insidious cuts to budgets, opening hours and staffing around the country which bring a slow rather than a quick death. Across London public libraries, for example, 562 full-time posts have been lost between 2007-8 and 2011-2012.

Among those currently affected are major British cities such as Newcastle-upon-Tyne, who propose a 40 per cent cut in the libraries budget over three years, planning to close or hand over to volunteers 10 out of their 18 libraries, and Sheffield who propose the same fate for 14 out of the 27 libraries in their system. In the past 3 years we have seen the London Borough of Brent close half its libraries, 6 out of a total of 12, while neighbouring Barnet is to sack 18 of its librarians, leaving a total professional establishment of 6.5 to run one of the biggest boroughs in the capital.

When tackled about closures, some councils and the government have pointed to newly opened "mega-libraries", inevitably funded by Private Finance Initiative, such as the Birmingham Central Library.

But looking at the plans for 13 new or refurbished libraries from 2013 onwards, it is hard not to see these as vanity projects designed to allow government and councils to kid themselves that they're doing something. And large, city centre libraries, while they are important parts of a system, can't replace the other part of a public library system, the local, easily-accessible branch library.

### **Privatisation**

Some authorities are looking at privatisation as an option. Private company John Laing has run Hounslow in west London for several years, and is now set to take over Croydon. The US firm LSSI has been making approaches to several local authorities, but seems, for

**“Some authorities have sought to secure the future by replacing professional librarians with volunteers...”**

the moment to have been scared off by the fear of adverse publicity.

Any number of self-appointed experts, consultants, crooks and charlatans are pontificating about how libraries need to change, ignoring that public libraries are probably the most innovative part of local government, the first to use computers on a wide scale, and the first to see the potential of the internet.

If anyone needed proof, look at e-books. As soon as e-books became available, public librarians knew this was something they wanted to offer to their readers, in addition to print lending. Over two-thirds of Britain's library authorities now offer an e-lending service. But the publishers took fright and the largest ones acted in unison to embargo their titles from appearing in the aggregators' lists from which public libraries choose their stock, just as publishers opposed the very idea of the public library in the 19th century. A DCMS enquiry into public library e-book lending is expected to report soon. Librarians have made it clear in their evidence that they expect to be able to lend e-books to their readers.

Some authorities have sought to secure the future by replacing professional librarians with volunteers. This deprofessionalisation seriously misreads the complexity of library work, caricatured by the ignorant in government as "stamping books". In other cases, libraries have been sold off to "social enterprises".

Some campaigners have welcomed these solutions, arguing that to have a library open, no matter how poor the service it offers, is better than no library

at all; but it is questionable how long these “community” libraries, as they are styled (what library is not a community library, pray?) will survive. And how will they interact with other parts of the library network?

Scandalously, new entrants to the profession are told that, if they can't find a paying post in a library, they should volunteer, in order to gain professional experience. Employers then have a professionally qualified and enthusiastic young librarian, without the nuisance of having to pay their salary.

## Two-tiered

But the volunteer, big society rhetoric was dealt a blow when that volunteering organisation par excellence, the National Federation of Women's Institutes, came denounced the use of volunteers as a “sticking plaster” approach and said it would lead to “the creation of a two-tiered system of library provision that undermines the benefits of skilled and trained library staff”. They say it underestimates the role skilled staff play “in both delivering an effective public service and supporting communities”.

One library in North London, Friern Barnet, has been taken over by occupiers, who claim to be continuing to run it as a community library, and who claim to have stripped away the professional mystique of running a library. It is hard to see that there is any objective difference between this approach and that of the volunteer-run libraries. Both play into the localism, we-won't-fund-it, run-it-yourself, approach.

The current statutory basis for public libraries, the Public Libraries and Museums Act, requires every local authority with library responsibilities to run a comprehensive and efficient service. Much ink has been spilt, and test cases taken, to define what comprehensive and efficient might mean.

Previous governments introduced library standards which, for all their faults, did offer some way of measuring them. Ed Vaizey, Britain's current Minister

for Culture, Communications and Creative Industries, is known to campaigners as “E-Vasive for his refusal to use the powers he has under the Act to compel local councils to restore cuts.

There are now signs from the Local Government Association that councils look to the government to release them from the burden of having to provide public libraries. Indeed, some council leaders already talk as if public library provision were optional rather than statutory.

Unison, the Library Campaign, CILIP (the professional organisation for librarians), authors, publishers and others have come together with library users in the Speak Up for Libraries campaign, to bring together everyone who values public libraries.

School librarians, teachers and others have been involved in the Shout about School Libraries campaign, which demands that school library provision be made obligatory.

Side by side with these, many local

campaigns, wherever cuts have been threatened, whether in rural Gloucestershire or urban Lewisham, have shaken local councillors.

## Strength

Sometimes we don't know our own strength. Every announcement of Vaizey, of Hunt before he was packed off to Health, and of Miller (Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, and Minister for Women and Equalities) contains some spin trying to project an impression that the government loves libraries and is fostering beneficial and needed “reform”.

These protestations are a reaction to widespread concern for the fate of public libraries. We know now, as well as we knew in 1850 when the first Public Libraries Act was passed in the teeth of fierce opposition from those who feared an educated, literate, working class, the value of public libraries to individuals and communities, for education, culture and recreation. ■

## Meet the Party

**The Communist Party of Britain's new series of London public meetings began on 27 September, with further meetings on 15 November, 12 February and 11 June; all are held in the Bertrand Russell room, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1R 4RL, nearest Tube Holborn, and start at 7.30 pm. Other meetings are held around Britain. All meetings are advertised in What's On, see page 5.**

**M** The title of the next meeting, on Tuesday 12 February, is “Britain, not three nations”. Details of further meetings will be announced in **WORKERS** and at [www.workers.org.uk](http://www.workers.org.uk).

**M** The Party's annual London May Day rally is always held on May Day itself, regardless of state bank holidays – in 2013, Wednesday 1 May, in Conway Hall, Holborn. There will also be May Day meetings elsewhere in the country.

**M** As well as our regular public meetings we hold informal discussions with interested workers and study sessions for those who want to take the discussion further. If you are interested we want to hear from you. Call us on 020 8801 9543 or e-mail to [info@workers.org.uk](mailto:info@workers.org.uk)

# When Japan withdrew from Malaya after the end of the Second World War, Britain resumed imperial control of its former colony...

## 1948–1960: Britain's war in Malaya

MALAYA – NOW Malaysia – was the great material prize in South-East Asia, possessing precious minerals and resources – above all, rubber and tin, but also coal, bauxite, tungsten, gold, iron ore and manganese. Its tin and rubber industries were important to imperial Britain's recovery after the Second World War, being the biggest dollar earners in the British Commonwealth. Seventy per cent of Malayan rubber estates were owned by European, primarily British, companies.

After the war Malaya had high unemployment, low wages and high levels of food inflation. A large number of strikes by increasingly powerful trade unions broke out between 1946 and 1948. The social unrest was met with arrests, deportations and curfews. The colonial authorities' desire to uphold the old ways of ruling meant people had no option but resistance, which the Malayan Communist Party organised.

The origins of the conflict lay in the failure of the British colonial authorities to advance the cause of the Chinese in Malaya, who made up nearly 45 per cent of the population. Britain, in line with its usual imperial tactic of divide and rule, traditionally promoted the rights of the Malay community over those of the Chinese.

In 1948 Britain promoted a new federal constitution that would confirm Malay privileges, consign about 90 per cent of Chinese to non-citizenship and see the colonial High Commissioner preside over an undemocratic centralised state where the members of the Executive Council and Legislative Council were all chosen by him.

Three European plantation managers were killed in June 1948. Britain declared an Emergency, not just to defeat the armed rebellion but also to crack down on workers' rights. The colonial authorities banned some trade unions, imprisoned their members, outlawed the Malayan Communist Party and gave police powers to imprison without trial.

Retreating to rural areas, the newly formed Malayan National Liberation Army led a guerrilla campaign to disrupt the tin mines and rubber plantations. The British

military despatched 40,000 troops to fight 8,000 guerrillas to ensure British business could exploit Malayan economic resources.

The MNLA was partly a re-formation of the MCP-led Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army, a guerrilla force which had been the principal resistance against the Japanese occupation and that had received training and arms from Britain. The Malayan Chinese had offered the only active resistance to the Japanese invaders.

In December 1945, guerrillas were encouraged to disband and hand in their weapons to the British Military Administration in exchange for economic inducements; around 4,000 refused.

The guerrillas were drawn almost entirely from disaffected Chinese in the tin mines and rubber estates and received considerable support from over half a million Chinese "squatters". The MNLA attacked rubber plantations, sabotaged installations, destroyed transportation and infrastructure. The Malay population supported the MNLA in smaller numbers.

### Brutal measures

Initially, British military strategy was to guard important economic targets, but soon it aimed to cut off the guerrillas from their supporters among the population and restrict the MNLA's food supply. Declassified files reveal how British forces embarked on a series of brutal measures.

Beginning in 1950, 500,000 rural Malaysians including 400,000 Chinese from squatter communities were forcibly relocated into guarded camps called "New Villages", which were surrounded by barbed wire, police posts and floodlit areas in order to keep inhabitants in and guerrillas out. Before the "new villagers" were let out in the mornings to go to work, they were searched for rice, clothes, weapons or messages.

It was described by the Colonial Office as a "great piece of social development", but the Empire had used this tactic before in the Boer War. Where people were deemed to be aiding the guerrillas, "collective punishments" of house curfews and rice ration reductions were inflicted on villagers, as at Tanjung Malim (March 1952)



Gurkhas on patrol during the Malayan war.

and at Sengei Pelek (April 1952).

In the first five years of the Malayan war, Britain conducted 4,500 air strikes and trialled a 500 pound fragmentation bomb. Chemical agents were also used. From June to October 1952, 1,250 acres of roadside vegetation at possible ambush points were sprayed with defoliant. There were also cases of bodies of dead guerrillas being exhibited in public.

At the Batang Kali massacre in December 1948 the British army killed twenty-four Chinese, before burning the village. The British government initially claimed that the villagers were guerrillas, and then that they were trying to escape, neither of which was true. A Scotland Yard inquiry into the massacre was called off by the Heath government in 1970.

Dyak headhunters from Borneo worked alongside the British forces and decapitation of guerrillas occurred. A



photograph of a marine commando holding two guerrillas' heads caused an outcry in April 1952 and the Colonial Office privately noted: "there is no doubt that under international law a similar case in wartime would be a war crime".

Repressive British detention laws resulted in 34,000 people being held for varying periods without trial in the first eight years of the war; around 15,000 people were deported to China.

British capitalism achieved its main aims in Malaya: the guerrilla army was defeated and British business interests were essentially preserved; the extent of foreign control over the economy hardly changed, even after independence in 1957. By 1971, 80 per cent of mining, 62 per cent of manufacturing and 58 per cent of construction were still foreign-owned, mainly by British companies. A resort to war had protected the economic order. ■

More from our series on aspects of Marxist thinking

# B BRITAIN AS A NATION STATE

**Is the British nation state still needed, or is the case for it transcended? Debate about this crucial matter has at long last moved out of the shadows into the glare of media concern, which is positive. Yet this very development has generated the current phoney war to 'renegotiate Britain's position inside the European Union', as a spoiling tactic to derail growing opposition and safely confine argument within an endless EU cul-de-sac.**

Admittedly dwindling, the historical identity, cohesion and sovereignty of Britain still outweighs and threatens EU pretensions to incorporate us in a capitalist super-state, to reduce us to a mere collection of pliable, governed regions. Consider, above all, the weight of time: England, the essential core of Britain, has existed as a national entity for over a thousand years; the destinies of Wales and England have intertwined for 700 years, whilst Scotland merged its fate to Britain 400 years ago. These are seriously lengthy periods during which countless generations have combined to shape common and shared interests. Most important, the working class has organised as one class across Britain to further its interests and ambitions. These things are deeply rooted; by comparison, the EU has had a mere 41 years to erode British identity. The British people's consistent opposition to joining the Euro has not emerged just because that disastrous currency would have had destructive economic consequences for us; it stems too from our deep reluctance to ditch completely all control over our national economy. Our past informs our present.

Once, centuries ago, capitalism broke down feudal barriers to make national economies. Now some capitalists (though not all) favour an EU super-state that promotes freedom of movement for capital and labour, strengthening employers and weakening workers. A centralising EU state functions for the benefit of the strongest, particularly German capitalism's, interests. So for British workers, and for workers in the other nations of Europe, the potential of protection only resides within the national framework. We cannot afford to let our nation go.

In the distant future, there will undoubtedly come a time when, following successful socialist revolutions in many adjacent countries, there will be proper moves to fashion growing economic cooperation between states on the basis of mutual benefit, which no doubt will lead gradually to supranational agreements and higher forms of cooperation. That time is a long way away but even then care will still have to be taken to protect national interests of all the state partners.

For now, the working class needs the protective shield of the national state against the destructive incursions of the EU. Out of the EU – trade with the world. Rebuild Britain – reconstruct an industrial economy.

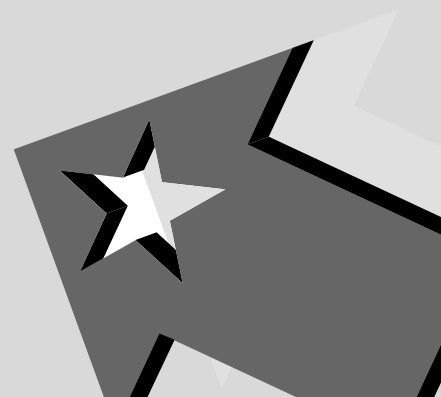
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- Go along to meetings in your part of the country, or join in study to help push forward the thinking of our class. Get in touch to find out how to take part.
- Get a list of our publications by sending an A5 sae to the address below, or by email.

#### **WORKERS**

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# Back to Front – Helping themselves

**‘The City’s role as an engine to raise money to finance industry is long gone...’**

WHEN ALL the political parties agree on something, you just know there’s something fishy going on. Miliband and Cameron, Livingstone and Johnson, they all love the City of London. What a jewel it is, how vital it is to the British economy. But the reverse is true.

The City squats on Britain like a toad, flicking out its tongue from time to time to snaffle titbits. It has turned parasitism into an art. It takes our money, swirls it round, skims it off and lo, the money has gone. Its role as an engine to raise money to finance industry is long gone.

Note how all its admirers talk about the City as a “global” centre. The fact that London is the capital of Britain is downplayed, a geographical anomaly. The City does not serve Britain, nor does it aim to serve Britain – it serves “the world”. But “the world” is a comfortably vague concept: actually, the City serves itself. As they say in the best Mafia films, it’s nothing personal, just business.

Last year Aditya Chakraborty reported in THE GUARDIAN on how little of financial lending goes towards production. Citing figures from the Manchester-based Centre for Research on Socio-Cultural Change – funded by the Economic and Social Research Council – he wrote: “In March 2008, just over three-quarters – 76.2% – of [the value of] all bank and building-society loans went either to other financial firms or on property for mortgages. Less than a quarter – 23.8% – went to what you might call the productive part of the economy – non-financial businesses.” And of that 23.8 per cent, how much went to manufacturing industry?

In December, a report by the TUC provided more evidence about the real effect of the City of London on Britain’s wider economy. Despite the increase in financial services in the past 30 years the wages share of national income has fallen from 59 per cent to 53 per cent, whereas the share of profits has risen from 25 per cent to 29 per cent – a massive redistribution of wealth.

The report’s authors put this down to the decline in manufacturing (where more organised workers managed to make inroads into the value they created). They also found that the financial services share of total profits has risen from 1 per cent in 1980 to 15 per cent now, while research and development has fallen in the same period.

So rising profits for the City have benefited only a small number of investors and not the wider economy, while starving industry of investment.

The banks played a big part in causing the economic crash and even now are resisting any reforms. Given the huge bail-outs the banks have had, Britain clearly can’t afford them. It’s not even obvious that we need capitalist banks like these to finance the economy.

Given the urgent need to overcome the influence of the finance sector and rebalance the economy towards manufacturing and engineering, why are we pumping yet more money into their maws in the shape of quantitative easing? Instead, a sensible, rational government would be investing directly in real production through a bank run and controlled by the state. ■

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CHANGE BRITAIN, EMBRACE YOUR PARTY

This pamphlet brings together the statement from the Party’s 2009 Congress with those from two former Congresses in 2003 and 2006. Also included is a statement on the European Union: “The fascist dream of a united Europe resurrected.” (£2.75 including P&P).

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