

WORKERS

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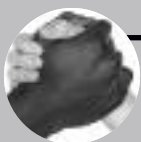
THE NHS: UNDER EU ATTACK



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WORKERS



Lessons from the academies

THE WHEELS are starting to come off the academies programme, and not before time. It was back in 2000 that Blair's Labour government introduced them, keen like all governments to cut down the role of all possible centres of opposition, such as local authorities.

Predictably, academy schools have become a magnet for dodgy characters on the make, each handling millions of pounds a year with precious little accountability (see article on the Kings Science Academy, Bradford, page 5). The ensuing publicity hasn't helped Education Secretary Michael Gove. Nor has the indifferent performance of many academies.

Meanwhile teachers and parents are still putting up dogged resistance, even after a decade and a half. And now the judiciary is joining in, blocking the attempted automatic conversion into

an academy of The Warren School in east London. Mr Justice Collins said at the end of January that Gove "thinks academies are the cat's whiskers, but we know some of them are not".

The free schools programme – Gove's invention – has been panned by the National Audit Office for spending money like water. The brakes are being slammed on a number of pre-approved free schools as the general election looms.

Recent governments have been ever keener to centralise and control education in the hope of asserting power over the minds of the young, probably a vain hope.

But the dismantling of the state education system is turning into a shameful, chaotic mess. It is only where professionals take control in their workplaces that sanity can prevail and they can get on the with job of educating. ■

State subsidies are alive and well

WHO SAYS state subsidies have gone out of fashion? British taxpayers generously gave Britain's biggest banks £38 billion last year. At the same time, the financial services sector has, since 2007, halved the corporation tax it pays – to just £6.5 billion last year.

So those who caused the crisis have done very well out of it, out of us. We take the losses; they take the gains. Perhaps we should take a leaf out of Iceland's book. Four Icelandic bankers whose misconduct helped cause the 2008 crash have been jailed for up to five years. ■



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Tube staff set to strike

STATION STAFF on London Underground are to take industrial action in February in their fight to keep ticket offices open. Mayor Boris Johnson is seeking to close all of the 260 ticket offices on the capital's network by 2015 – a direct reversal of the policy on which he was elected.

The action follows a ballot of RMT union members in which 77 per cent voted for the action. The first wave will see action from Tuesday 4 February until Friday 14 February with two 36-hour strikes, while in between the strikes staff will refuse to carry out "revenue collection duties".

The dispute, said RMT general secretary Bob Crow, is "wholly about cash-led cuts plans that would see the axing of nearly a thousand safety critical jobs and the closure of ticket offices at a time when the tube network is under growing pressure from customer demand and needs more staff and not less to ensure safe and efficient operation".

The effect of the action could be heightened if coordinated with strikes on the Docklands Light Railway, run by Serco. In January the RMT reported that its members had voted by more than 9 to 1 in favour of industrial action over stalled pay talks, abuse of disciplinary and attendance procedures, the use of agency and contract staff to undermine conditions, and failures in training and promotion procedures.

In October last year an opinion poll by Survation revealed that 71 per cent of tube users (and 81 per cent of tourists) were concerned about ticket offices being closed down – and that 52 per cent had experienced being unable to buy tickets because a machine was broken.

- Londoners face years of above-inflation fare increases, according to research uncovered by the RMT. In what the union calls a "ticking bombshell", the small print of Transport for London's Draft Business plan for the next ten years, presented to the Transport for London Board on 11 December, reveals that after 2014 fares will be going up in excess of inflation until 2021.

The Plan says, "The Mayor announced his decision on fare increases for January 2014 on 3 December; this will be an average of RPI+0%. For the purposes of this Business Plan, annual increases of RPI+1% have been assumed for future years. The actual increases for these future years will be decided by the Mayor in due course."

Bob Crow said: "The Mayor's entire transport strategy is dependent on above inflation fare increases for seven years tied in to a programme of job cuts, attacks on safety and the closures of ticket offices that will combine together to make services a no-go zone for the vulnerable, low-paid, those with disabilities and women travelling alone late at night." ■

ENERGY

Wind runs out of steam

IT HAS NOT been a good three months for wind farm investment. In November German RWE utility subsidiary Innogy scrapped plans for what was then described as the world's largest planned offshore wind farm – Atlantic Array.

This announcement was followed in December by Scottish Power's cancellation of what was planned as the largest offshore wind farm in British waters.

In January RWE reduced planned capacity at the Triton Knoll North Sea wind farm site by 50 per cent. Wind farm contraction might soon only leave only Rutland Water left to boast about.

The reason for the collapse: wind is the most expensive, inefficient, uncompetitive way of generating electricity, prospering because of European Union aid, edict and massive subsidies. The private marketeers, more acutely tuned in than the free market ideologues, have had enough and are taking their toys home. ■

PRICES

Running ahead of wages

INFLATION IS down to 2 per cent a year, while wages are rising by all of 0.9 per cent a year. So living standards are still being cut. But when necessities are counted over a realistic period, then the rate of inflation is far higher.

Total weekly average pay rose from £439 to £476 between March 2008 and October 2013 – 8.4 per cent over 5.5 years, while the overall Consumer Price Index rose by more than 20 per cent. ■

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

EUROBRIEFS

The latest from Brussels

Life sciences threatened

THE FRESH START Project – a “moderate” eurosceptic organisation that wants the EU treaties to be renegotiated – warns that an increasingly anti-science culture in the EU is holding Britain’s life sciences sector back, particularly in biotech. Major medical research projects, including those on cancer and Alzheimer’s, are at risk from pending EU data protection legislation. The report recommends ten measures to redress the situation, including an option for member states to go it alone in designing appropriate regulatory frameworks for GM crops.

Now we cap it, now we don’t

HOME SECRETARY Theresa May is now playing down reports the government is to put a cap on EU migrants, saying she wouldn’t introduce a cap now, just “the possibility of reform in the future”.

Megalomaniac Merkel

A POLL by Survation in early January found that 50 per cent of people in Britain would vote to leave the EU and 33 per cent in favour staying in – the lowest ever number wanting to stay in polled by Survation on the issue. The chief concern over Romanian and Bulgarian migrants is how schools will cope with extra children.

United States of Europe

VIVIANE REDING, vice-president of the European Commission, has called for political union, “a United States of Europe with the Commission as government and two chambers – the European Parliament and a Senate of Member States”. She said the British government was raising scares about migration as a distraction from “real subjects”.

Backing down on banks

A DRAFT European Commission proposal shows the EU is to drop plans to force big European banks to split their lending operations from risky trading. These controls were proposed by the Liikanen Report after the financial crisis of 2008, but are to be watered down after resistance by the major banks involved in the crisis. ■



Workers

Thirty years ago miners fought against a government conspiracy to wreck the industry.

MINERS’ STRIKE

NUM vindicated

THE OPENING of state files relating to the 1984-85 Miners’ Strike vindicates every statement made by the National Union of Mineworkers.

That goes for the pit closure list, the intention to use troops to move coal, that the much lauded return to work by scabs was a fiction, the machinations by the security services, the smear campaigns, the threat of a state of emergency, the attacks on dock and rail workers, the police riot at Orgreave, the police occupation of many mining villages especially in Yorkshire, and so on.

Thatcher led the government during this period. Responsibility for the destruction of the coal industry and the decimation of the coal and steel communities lies with her and her minions. Future generations will judge her actions in the same context as other war crimes against humanity.

It took 80 years for the war crimes committed by the British armed forces in Kenya to see the light of day. How many years before class crimes on British soil are fully revealed? ■

EMPLOYMENT

Lack of full-time work

According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS) the number of people working part time or on temporary contracts because they cannot find full time work (known as “underemployment”) is the highest since 1992. Some 1.46 million people are now officially underemployed, 18.5 per cent of the workforce.

Even for full time work separate TUC research indicates that 80 per cent of the jobs created in the last five years have been in low wage sectors, typically retail, restaurant and residential care, with an hourly rate of less than £8. ■

Journalists fight subbing hub

JOURNALISTS AT three local newspapers in Yorkshire are to ballot for industrial action over plans to move their subediting to Newport, Wales, more than 250 miles away. The workers, members of the National Union of Journalists, are employed in Bradford, Doncaster and York by the US-owned Newsquest group. Existing subeditors have been told they will have to move to Wales or lose their jobs.

Subediting has proved a popular target for newspaper owners looking to boost profits. In September, Newsquest announced that its Worcester “subbing hub” was being moved to Newport, affecting subeditors at *Berrow’s Worcester Journal*, the oldest continually published newspaper in the world.

Meanwhile, other publishers have been finding that subbing hubs are not the profit machines they thought. At the end of November, Northcliffe Media said it was shutting down its North East subbing hub in Hull and returning to locally based subeditors for its titles in Hull, Lincoln, and Grimsby.

Mark Stead and Tony Kelly, joint fathers of the chapel (office branch) at Newsquest York, said “Subbing hubs are a proven failure. They cause nothing but damage to the quality and integrity of local journalism while sacrificing talented and dedicated journalists with irreplaceable knowledge of their papers and their community, all so a parent company can continue to scoop up profits.” ■

Arrest at academy

KINGS SCIENCE ACADEMY in Bradford was chosen for one of Cameron's photo opportunities as he and Gove launched and promoted their "free school" programme in 2011 and 2012. So the arrest, charge and bailing of the headteacher in January on fraud charges has prompted a flurry of comment. Newsworthy though this aspect of the story undoubtedly is, other aspects have a more far-reaching and general importance for the free school initiative.

Just before Christmas 2013, Gove was forced to admit that there were problems with the school's finances. He acknowledged that a vice chairman of the Conservative Party, Alan Lewis, has a central relationship with the school.

A later investigation by journalists discovered that within the Department for Education, two reports into the running of the school had found problems with finance and governance but reached far different conclusions about the remedial action needed.

Earlier in 2013, after having sat on the first of these reports, Gove strove to divert attention by castigating the performance of Bradford Education rather than the performance of the school and his own department (by extension himself). It was the same trick he had tried when the Al-Madinah Free School in Derby went into free fall in October 2013 – talking about alleged failings in Derby City Council rather than facing up to the inherent failings in his own pet project.



An anti-academy march in Haringey, north London, January 2012.

Since then, we have had the closure of the Discovery Free School in Crawley in December. Lord Nash, Gove's schools minister, pointed to unqualified teachers as one reason for its poor Ofsted report. He didn't point out that it was Gove who deliberately allowed free schools to start up with just one qualified teacher on the staff.

The faults found in these schools are not universal. But the facts that the King's Academy is paying at least £6 million in rent to one of Alan Lewis's companies over 20 years, and that one of the reports identified Lewis as Chair of Governors while the other did not – and he denies ever having been Chair – indicate a major challenge to good governance.

- Grace Academy, which runs three schools in the Midlands, was set up by Tory donor Lord Edmiston. Journalists at *The Guardian* have discovered it has paid more than £1 million either directly to or through companies owned or controlled by Edmiston, to trustees' relatives and to members of the board of trustees. Conveniently, such payments to businesses in which trustees have a beneficial interest are allowed if the trust has complied with the procedures and conditions set out in its articles of association.

The costs of setting up academies have been scrutinised by *The Guardian* too. School Partnership Trust Academies, which has converted more than 30 schools to academies, revealed payments of £424,850 over two years for legal services to Wrigleys Solicitors, where the SPTA director Christopher Billington is a partner, and for education consultancy to Elmet Education, where another SPTA member is a director.

All these payments are made possible on the back of public money directed to academies and are reducing the budget for schools still within the state system. ■

WHAT'S ON

Coming soon

MARCH

Tuesday 4 March, 7.30pm. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL. "Class in the 21st century"

CPBML public meeting. Some people say class is dead. Or that there are too many to count. Really? The CPBML says there are only two classes in Britain – workers and capitalists – and that an understanding of class is central to any analysis of modern Britain. Come and discuss. Everybody welcome.

EDUCATION

Brent teachers fight ARK

COPLAND COMMUNITY School in Brent, London, took an unprecedented fifth day of strike action on 14 January and remain solid in their determination to stop the ARK academy chain taking over their school in Wembley. The Interim Executive Board (IEB) placed in charge of the school continues to refuse to take part in any negotiations let alone even reply to communications from the unions.

Hank Roberts, Immediate Past national President of ATL said, "The IEB have yet to respond to an offer of further talks nor [are] even yet able to respond to staff and parents' demand to be given a proposed timetable for the proposed conversion! The massive strength of feeling is because staff know that this is really about privatisation and Gove intends to allow those running academies like ARK to make profit out of state education. Their intention is to impose a third world education system in England. Our intention is to continue and increase the level of resistance to stop them".

Jean Roberts, Joint Brent Teachers Association NUT Secretary said, "By standing firm staff have won on a collective grievance over job titles and also, through the threat of further strike action, the threat of compulsory redundancies for teachers has been withdrawn. At the well-attended joint unions meeting last week the staff were upbeat and fully behind the campaign to defeat ARK."

Leaflets have been handed out outside Copland for pupils to take home to parents explaining why action is taking place. The NUT and NASUWT are united in the action being taken and discussion is under way on what further action is needed to widen the campaign. ■

Why do people think the minimum wage is there to provide a safety net?

Politicians and wages

THE NATIONAL minimum wage came back into the headlines in January with the declaration by chancellor Osborne that he is in favour of increasing the amount set – though not for anyone below the age of 21 – above the rate of inflation.

Osborne didn't spell out exactly what he meant by "above inflation", but even a 10 per cent increase would not restore its buying power to what it was before the onset of the current financial crisis in 2008.

The chancellor's declaration was welcomed by TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady, though she added, "But while this would help many, the chancellor should be more ambitious about achieving decent pay rises across the whole of the UK workforce."

Such rotten thinking typifies the thoughtlessness of many in our unions. No good will come of asking chancellors to be "ambitious" about achieving pay rises. Their only desire is to make it easier for capitalists to make greater profits. We should be calling for an end to state intervention in wages, not for more of it.

More like a maximum

Why do people think the minimum wage is there to provide a safety net? Its real role is to help lower wage rates across the board. In many sectors of the economy, it functions as a maximum wage, with plenty of employers paying less.

The minimum wage currently stands at £6.31an hour – slightly under half the average annual worker's wage of £26,500. To put that in perspective, the chief executives of the top 100 companies listed on the London Stock Exchange averaged a take-home pay of £4.3 million in 2012, taking 24 hours to "earn" that average annual wage.

Who is pricing who out of a job? Who is bleeding companies dry? Politicians drone on about the need for "balance" in



August 2013, London: GMB members working for OCS Housing Estates Cleaning Contract in Kensington & Chelsea picketing during their strike for the London Living Wage.

supporting their concept of recovery. The only balance on the scale of wages is brutally weighted towards the rich – the capitalists and their corporations.

Meanwhile, 1 per cent of the population pockets 10 per cent of national income paid, and 50 per cent of the population get 18 per cent – so much for balance.

'We should be calling for an end to state intervention in wages, not for more of it'

The January edition of *Workers* looked at the "living wage" and trade union began to grapple with the wages question. But there is no need to invent entirely new answers. Two Marxist works written back in the 19th century clearly define wages and our fight for them: Karl Marx's *Wages, Price and Profits* or Frederick Engels's *The Wages System* – they deserve a read.

The living wage and the minimum

wage are part of a system that subsidises employers. The various formulae used to arrive at the "living wage" or national minimum wage – and there are various versions – all factor into their calculation that the recipient of low wages will receive state benefits.

Without the state benefit element the real figure for the "London Living Wage" would be £10.80p not £8.80p (the level proposed for April 2014).

Effectively all workers who pay tax subsidise the incomes of the over 60 per cent in employment who have to have their

low wages topped up by benefits.

The real subsidy

Workers whose pay is bolstered by state benefits because of the aptly described "in-work poverty" are subject to a further cruel con: the real subsidy is to the employer's profits. The state pays that element which should come from the employer's pocket.

And, of course, while Osborne calls for rises in the minimum wage, he and his Treasury chums are attacking the level of benefits paid to those 60 per cent. Give with one hand, take with the other.

Workers should not be tolerating the laziness of our trade unions, which campaign for the "living wage" without bothering to determine what the rate for the job is – and rely upon the philanthropic generosity of companies making billions to toss a few scraps in our direction.

Such a mind-set denies the history and origins of our unions and further reinforces the alienation of members from their own organisations.

Why be in a trade union if you cannot influence or determine your own wages? Why be in a trade union if we are on our knees with the likes of Boris Johnson and his banker friends at Canary Wharf determining the pittance we earn? ■

In theory our health service is safe from the European Union. In theory...

If you use the NHS, watch out for the EU



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THE NATIONAL Health Service is part of the culture of Britain. So it should come as a relief to note that the treaties underlying the European Union specifically leave health systems as an area of national competence. Brussels, you might think, can't tell us how to run the NHS. Think again. The NHS is in fact under threat from the EU in at least three major ways.

First, the EU's policy of the free movement of labour has led to requirements on NHS hospitals to recognise nursing and medical qualifications from EU countries that are lower than existing British ones. It has also removed the requirement for incoming health professionals to prove to regulators that they have English to at least GCSE standard.

Some organisations have been speaking up about this, like the Patients Association. "We are concerned that some healthcare professionals from non-English

speaking countries are not proficient enough in the English language to provide safe and effective care in the NHS hospitals," it said in 2011.

Second, the EU's free trade negotiations with the US threaten to allow US corporations to bid for any NHS contract. Worse, the operation of any trade agreement, once signed, will be taken out of the control of national governments and legal systems and handed over to secretive arbitration panels run by corporate lawyers.

All power to corporations

These so-called "investor-state dispute settlement" mechanisms will allow corporations to sue governments, bypassing the World Trade Organisation rules that only allow governments to sue governments. US health corporations would be able to sue for profits lost (now and in the future) if these panels rule the firms have been

"unfairly" excluded, or challenge the NHS's decision to remove them as a provider.

In practice, this is likely to mean that once a service is privatised, the government would be unable to take it back into public ownership. Parliament would be powerless.

'Britain already has to recognise inferior European qualifications in health'

What regulations are being discussed in the negotiations? Since the talks are secret, no one can be sure, but they will almost certainly include regulations that can prevent US-grown GM seeds and food being sold, and that allow countries to grant defence contracts to their own companies, or that determine how a health service might be run – and about the kinds of employees multinationals can shift around the globe without having to satisfy normal immigration controls.

Ominously for health, they include public procurement – whether a country can give preferential treatment to its own nationalised (or even private) suppliers – and which professional qualifications a country will recognise. Britain already has to recognise inferior European qualifications in health, but with the free trade agreement it faces having to recognise qualifications from anywhere in the world.

It's no surprise that the threat of the free trade agreement is prompting concern and opposition around Europe. But what is a surprise – though perhaps it shouldn't be – is the utterly supine and collaborationist

Continued on page 8

Continued from page 7

attitude of Britain's TUC. In August it gave written evidence to the Department for Business Innovation and Skills endorsing enthusiastically the surrender of Britain's sovereignty in trade to the European Union.

Control over budgets

The third threat is direct EU control. Brussels has used the economic crisis it helped to make to set up new rules allowing it to pore over national budgets in great detail and force countries to follow its "recommendations". It is doing this through the little-known "European semester".

The European Union has a distinctive way with language. It takes a word you think of as meaning one thing, and uses it to mean another. "Semester" – to most people a university term – has become something completely different: it is now

the EU's principal mechanism for extending its control of national budgets well beyond the limits set in European treaties.

The process starts in November each year, and it works like this. First the European Commission presents its Annual Growth Survey, defining its economic priorities for the coming year. Then the European Parliament and the Council of Europe have their say, so that in March they set overall "policy orientations".

In April national governments submit their plans to the Commission, which responds with country-specific recommendations on all budget areas, including those like health (and education) that are not supposed to be part of the EU's remit.

Only then, and only after they have done the EU's bidding, are Eurozone governments allowed to submit their plans to their own parliaments. Britain, being outside the zone, still has to submit its plans,

but not before parliament has looked at them. Eurozone countries that ignore the recommendations can be forced to adopt them.

The result: "The health system is no longer viewed in exclusively national terms," said Paolo Testori Coggi, Health and Consumers Director General at the Commission, whose tentacles now reach into every health ministry in Europe.

And if you think the European semester sounds ominous, then spare a thought for debt-stricken Portugal, Greece and Cyprus (and, until recently, Ireland). The semester doesn't apply to these countries, because they are under what the EU coyly calls "financial assistance" and under direct rule from the "troika" of the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Their instructions don't even come under the cover of "recommendations". ■

The propaganda war over the free trade negotiations

FACED WITH growing disquiet about the European Union/US free trade agreement – known as TTIP, for Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership – which is currently being negotiated in conditions of such secrecy that even in Brussels almost nobody knows what is going on, the EU is responding with the (likewise secretive) organisation of a public relations campaign to soothe opposition.

The details were revealed by the Corporate Europe Observatory, a research and campaigning group dedicated to exposing how the EU works in the interests of large corporations. At the end of November it put the Commission's PR strategy online for everyone to read.

The strategy talks ominously about outreach and management of stakeholders, social media and transparency. It will "localise our communication effort" at national level in order to provide "convincing arguments on all aspects of the negotiations".

What the EU wants to do is coopt the debate and turn it into an adoration of

free trade. "The aim is to define, at this early stage in the negotiations, the terms of the debate," says the document. It will do this "by communicating positively about what the TTIP is about (i.e. economic gains and global leadership on trade issues), rather than being drawn reactively into defensive communication about what TTIP is not about (e.g. not about negotiating data privacy, not about lowering EU regulatory standards etc.)".

You only have to look at its definition of "communicating positively" to see what the EU is trying to do. The assertion that the TTIP is not about lowering regulatory standards is a lie. The opposite is true: the free trade talks are almost entirely about regulation, and, contrary to the impression created publicly, have almost nothing to do with lowering trade tariffs.

EU officials acknowledge that the average tariff barrier in EU/US trade is a mere 4 per cent. What they are really talking about are the "non-tariff barriers", the rules and regulations, that amount to an

estimated 20 per cent of the cost of doing business between the US and EU countries.

At the European Health Forum in Bad Hofgastein, Austria, in October, one EU official told delegates that this makes the TTIP negotiations different: unlike most trade talks (which are about tariff barriers), these are about "the rules and regulations that apply", said Bernard Merkel, from the EU's Public Health Directorate. "There are thousands of these, and the issue is not only what applies in the EU and the US but how these rules and regulations are made."

So when the TUC asks, as it has, for investor-state settlement procedures not to be used in trade negotiations "where alternatives already exist", and calls for the trade agreement to exempt government procurement from these procedures, it's living in cloud-cuckoo land. One of the principal non-tariff barriers that the trade agreement is intended to dismantle is precisely government procurement policy. ■

The greatest challenge to public health in Britain is the wellbeing of children and young people...

The young, our future

DAME SALLY DAVIES, the Chief Medical Officer, published her latest annual report last year, entitled *Our Children Deserve Better*. It makes demanding reading. As the title suggests, the CMO argues that the greatest challenge to public health in Britain is the decline in the physical and mental wellbeing of children and young people.

Beyond doubt it is in decline both relatively and absolutely. Fewer under-25s in England and Wales with Type 1 diabetes achieve good control of the disease than in broadly similar European countries. Here the figure is 16 per cent, while in Germany and Austria for example it is 34 per cent. The increase in vitamin deficiency here, leading to the inevitable return of diseases like rickets, is avoidable and preventable. It should not be allowed in a country that did so much to discover the role of vitamins in the body's metabolism.

International comparisons are usually invoked to demean us. Health and education league tables in particular often conceal more than they reveal. For example young South Koreans do remarkably well in science and maths tests, but at the price of a shockingly high and growing suicide rate resulting from a culture of 12 or more hours a day cramming. But neither can comparisons be ignored. Our mortality rate for children aged up to 14 years was among the best in Europe in the 1980s; now it is among the worst.

Inequality at home is even more telling. In England the under-17 mortality rate is 8 deaths in 100,000 for the five best performing local authority areas; it is 21 deaths in 100,000 for the five worst. The highest death rates are unsurprisingly in deprived areas of the North West, northern cities and some of the poorer London boroughs.

Affluence is the factor that bears most strongly on wellbeing in health as with education. It is also true that the moribund economic and political system which prevails in Britain accentuates the poverty that leads to ill-health. We do not have the luxury of waiting until we have a fairer society – children are dying today. If we are to have a working class healthy enough to work and to fight for the better pay that brings health we must act now. Davies's report confronts the government with a checklist of con-



Britain's mortality rate for children up to 14 years is among the worst in Europe.

cerns and makes a series of 24 recommendations for action now.

One recommendation has hit the headlines, namely that all under-5s should receive free supplements for vitamins A, C and D. Such an early intervention has attracted criticism, for example questioning whether the body metabolises synthetic vitamins as well as those in their natural state in food. Try telling that to a family for whom poverty comes in the form of an inadequate diet.

Evidence

There is a debate to be had about the form of intervention, but there is a great deal of evidence to support the idea it should take place at an early stage. As the report states, "...to try to impact on the diseases of adult life that make up the greatest burden of disease, it makes sense to intervene early". It makes economic sense too. The long term costs of obesity in England are around £580 to £680 million a year. The long term costs associated with mental health disorders are estimated at £2.56 billion – for the under-15s alone. The CMO's response to those who ask if we can afford to fund this, is that we can't afford not to.

Alongside early intervention, another theme which runs through the report is "proportionate universalism". That's a clunky title for an important principle that identifies the combination of universal and

targeted provision. The cervical cancer vaccination programme for all 15-year-old girls is universal, whereas flu jabs for at-risk groups is targeted. There is a place for both. The approach by both local and national authorities runs counter to that principle. Their aim is increasingly to fund services only for the poorest sections of society, usually sanctified with the label "protecting the most vulnerable".

This report is a challenge to us all. Why do so many of us encourage our children to be idle when the natural condition of childhood is activity? Just 15 minutes of daily summer sunshine supplies all the vitamin D necessary. But improving health overall will need coordinated action, including the fight for better pay.

This report is awkward for the government because it seeks to replace disorder with planning. The CMO along with medical bodies and health organisations are snapping at the government's heels with this report. The government should not be allowed to damn its recommendations with faint praise and then do nothing. ■

The full report is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/chief-medical-officers-annual-report-2012-our-children-deserve-better-prevention-pays>

The financial turmoil since 2007 is a crisis in the making since the beginning of the period of capitalist globalisation...

The crisis hasn't gone away

IT'S CLEAR to most people that government talk of an economic upturn, largely unchallenged in the media, is fanciful. But equally fanciful is the view of many workers that the crisis must be fatalistically accepted and is one which will set itself right in the end.

To encourage this outlook the government has spread the falsehood that its borrowing has only been possible due to low interest rates that show the confidence institutional investors place in its ability to run the economy.

The reality is that the government has been buying political time through the monetary device of quantitative easing (QE). Since 2008 we have had one government department, the Treasury, issue a total of £375 billion of IOUs (gilts) to another, the Bank of England.

This circular flow of money printing between two government departments was played out further during 2013 when the Treasury accepted the transfer of £34 bn of "interest" that had accrued in the Bank of England account. The interest had arisen from the debt the Treasury itself had issued in the first place.

The £34 billion of fictitious "interest" plus the proceeds from the "fire sale" of the Post Office has since been used to bolster the 2013/14 public accounts.

The book keeping deception has allowed "honey I shrunk the deficit" Osborne to announce that he has narrowed this year's budgetary shortfall (deficit). More to the point is the recent comment by the UK Debt Management Office stating that Britain will find it hard to convince investors to buy government debt in the years ahead.

'The government has been buying political time through quantitative easing'

Put another way, it's saying that now that the Bank of England is maxed out to the tune of £375 billion, who will step in to cover the yearly deficits from 2014/15 onwards and what assets will they demand in return, using the cloak of privatisation?

Britain is not alone in this type of false economy, but in terms of relative scale we are head and shoulders above the other governments and their central banks which have been issuing vast sums of money to prop up balance sheets.

This has led not to a reduction in debt, nor to the hyper-inflation we were always told would immediately follow (that may come later as if out of the blue), but to huge private gains enriching the finance capitalist class. The combined net paper worth of the world's billionaires has doubled since 2009.

Writing on 11 November in the *Wall Street Journal* under the headline "Confessions of a Quantitative Easer", former US Federal Reserve official Andrew Huszar admitted, "the central bank continues to spin QE as a tool for helping Main Street. But I've come to recognize the program for what it really is: the greatest back-door Wall Street bailout of all time."

Huszar wrote, "Trading for the first round of QE ended on March 31, 2010. The final results confirmed that, while there had been only trivial relief for Main Street, the US central bank's bond purchases had been an absolute coup for Wall Street. The banks hadn't just benefited from the lower cost of making loans. They'd also enjoyed huge capital gains on the rising values of their securities holdings, and fat commissions from brokering most of the Fed's QE transactions. Wall Street had experienced its most profitable year ever in 2009, and 2010 was starting off in much the same way."

EU bailouts also enrich the rich: 77 per cent of the €207 billion of the so-called



CPBML/Workers

Public Meeting, London

Tuesday 4 March, 7.30 pm

"Class in the 21st century"

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

Some people say class is dead. Or that there are too many to count. Really? The CPBML says there are only two classes in Britain – workers and capitalists – and that an understanding of class is central to any analysis of modern Britain. Come and discuss. Everybody welcome.

similar to pre-1914, which marked the end of the first

away – it's still growing

“Greek bailout” went to large investors to prevent them incurring a huge capital loss due to a spike in Greek bond yields. The bailout did not go to the people whose savings and pensions have been shattered.

Meanwhile, here in Britain household debt is at a record level according to figures from the Bank of England. Individuals now owe a total of £1.43 trillion, including mortgage debt. The previous high was in September 2008, just before the effects of the financial crisis began to bite.

Families are having to borrow to deal with the higher cost of living. But workers' impoverishment can appear to be masked when like now there has been a recent rise in asset values in the form of speculative newbuild housing (plonked in fields) and rising stock markets.

Paradox

This apparent surge in some workers' personal wealth can be so great that households substantially increase consumption out of current income. If stock and real estate ownership is widely distributed we can experience the seeming paradox of households assuming that their savings are rising significantly even as the country's actual savings rate declines.

As savings decline relative to GDP and with inward capital flows being used partly to satisfy speculative demand for additional housing, the consequence must be that imports grow much faster than exports and the country's trade deficit will expand. This explanation neatly sums up the “recovery” set against the backdrop of Britain's ever-worsening trade deficit.

This summary comes from *The Great Rebalancing* by Michael Pettis, who in his book dissects in far greater detail contemporary balance of trade theory. He shows that we are living through a massive balance of payments crisis that is hiding under the meaningless title of a “credit crunch”.

Even the new Bank of England Governor admitted that the so-called recovery was based on a new housing boom, not on real growth: “Right now in the UK as a whole the recovery is being led by the housing sector”, he said in October in an interview in the *Western Mail*. But he still claimed that the property market is “not in a



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Just 3 per cent of bank assets are earmarked for investment in industry.

bubble”.

The big five banks hold £6 trillion in assets, but have earmarked just £200 billion to invest in our industries – 3 per cent. As of August, bank loans outstanding to UK residents were £2.4 trillion, 160 per cent of GDP. Out of this, wrote Martin Wolf in the *Financial Times* in January, 34 per cent went to financial institutions, 42.7 per cent to households, secured on houses, 10.1 per cent to real estate and building, and just 1.4 per cent to manufacturing. So banks mainly used their existing property assets to finance new loans. And three-quarters of loans to business went to finance and property firms.

Privatisation

In the 1990s, Germany and France privatised their banking sectors. In 1997 the World Trade Organization opened up trade in financial services. Then, when the EU introduced the euro, the banks could use their easy access to money to try to win new business by lending to the poorer

countries of the EU, which could use euros and get cheap foreign loans. These countries are now tightly bound in keeping with the EU's political intent, which comes straight from the drawing boards of 1940s Nazi Germany. There the common currency was first thought up and discussed, rather than the post-1945 project portrayed by today's euro-fanatics.

It is up to workers of other countries to sort themselves out but we British workers have been stuck in the wrong groove for far too long. A country that runs a trade deficit has to have foreign capital inflows to meet its balance of payments.

In Britain these inflows have been euphemistically called inward investment, but countries that export capital to Britain do not do it as a favour. They export it as a way of importing demand for Britain to buy their goods and maintain their employment levels at British workers' expense.

Having been politically anaesthetised by credit, we are now on course for an overdue collision with reality. ■

The word “race”, as applied to variation among human beings, is an indiscriminate label to cover ignorance...

Race: a way out of control

IT IS HARD to go a week without hearing of an attack on someone because of their racial origin. And there are frequent accusations of racism because of comments about immigration, national origin, or religious customs and observances. But it's race, however you define it.

Worse, the labelling of legitimate debate as “racist” closes down discussion from the start. Jack Wilshere, an England footballer, commented on the qualifications for representing the country at football saying that players should be English. He was condemned in some quarters for being “racist”. His accusers in their own mind took that to mean “English-born” and not about recent passport qualification – a debate in many sports.

Similarly, any proposal to restrict immigration runs the risk of being branded “racist”. Opposition to open-door, unrestricted immigration is frequently conflated with racism.

A few years ago in Southwark, south London, 30 per cent of youth were without work, the majority of them black. Later Czech, Russian and Polish white workers settled in the borough in rapidly increasing numbers, taking many jobs that were available.

Self-styled “anti-racists” welcomed migration with enthusiasm matching that of gangmasters and the London hospitality trade. But here were black workers out of work because of cheaper foreign, but mainly white, workers. Local (true) racists who had always opposed migrants on account of colour now found the majority of new migrants were white. Ideology based on race left both “racists” and “anti-racists” alike confused about the stance to take, regardless of how they styled themselves.

At times the term “race” is supplanted by “community”. What a hateful, divisive concept that is – as if everyone can be defined in this way as having a common world view and attitudes. This is applied to immigrant “communities” in the main; as if they all behave in the same way and somehow don't really belong to Britain.

Until recently, most parliamentarians thought this was ok. We have the “Asian” community – or Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Muslim, Catholic, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh,

Suzanne Tucker/shutterstock.com



Roma – the list is nearly endless. In the run-up to the separatist referendum will we start to hear more about the Scottish “community”? And what a diverse part of Britain Scotland is anyway: the subdivision would not stop with the creation of a border.

Community?

“Community” means you don't really belong to the country and you're not expected or encouraged to belong either: “stick to your old ways, don't become British workers”; “stay rooted in the past and your own ghetto”.

The furore in Sheffield over the behaviour of recently-arrived Slovakian Gypsies is a good example. Some definitely don't fit with the understanding of many people in Sheffield. But, they're not homogenous any more than the people living in Park Gate before they came. David Blunkett may not be right to predict riots but he is, somewhat belatedly and hypocritically, right to say what he did about adapting to life in Britain. Now on the one hand he's condemned as racist, and on the other real racists have a

‘Science shows there is only one race – the human race’

new target group.

As workers, we have to sort out some clarity on race, on racism, on immigration and communalism. “Outsiders” are almost always endowed by other human societies with negative or positive attributes depending on the conditions at the time. However in the 18th and 19th centuries the expansion of capitalism meant that imperial conquests and exploitation of material and human resources required ideological underpinning.

Slaves and the imposition of slavery were best served by a description of the human condition that allowed for different “grades” of humanity and the de-humanis-

gs, never had any scientific justification. Now it has become

fusion and distortion



ing of many. It is easier to treat people as slaves if their skin colour, hair and other superficial characteristics enable them to be typified as sub-human. That developed into the mid-20th century Nazi ideology of "Untermensch" and is evident in many current conflicts.

New characteristics are now ascribed to Russians, Chinese, Afghans and just about everyone in the Middle East; the better to reduce opposition to the next "honourable" attack on behalf of this corporation or that. So we go back to the future with the ideology of the East India Company of the 17th and 18th centuries.

In 1998, the Archaeological Institute of America [AIA] published a statement on race. It helps any worker engaging in advancing class interests against those who say we're not all human in the same way: "In the United States both scholars and the general public have become conditioned to viewing human races as natural and separate divisions within the human species based on visible physical differences. With the vast expansion of scientific

knowledge in this country, however, it has become clear that human populations are not unambiguous, clearly demarcated, biologically distinct groups. Evidence from the analysis of genetics indicates that most physical variation, about 94 per cent, lies within so-called racial groups." And following the sequencing of the human genome, it is now clear, as the US National Institutes of Health explains, that (apart from identical twins) between any two humans "the amount of genetic variation—biochemical individuality—is about 0.1 per cent". Science shows there is only one race – the human race.

Muddle

The AIA statement goes on to explain how we've ended up with the muddle on race and on the dangers that it brings. It exposes the idiocy of racists and the inherent mendacity of its obverse, multi-racism. If racial differences are minimal to the point of insignificance, why do some workers wed themselves to the notion that there are a multitude of races that should be lionised and "celebrated" in their differences? Such ideas underpinned apartheid.

In a speech in Cuba on 26 July 1991,

Nelson Mandela excoriated those who thought they could continue to maintain the apartheid system. He quoted from the South African Congress Alliance Freedom Charter of 1955: "South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white."

Mandela explained, "This was an unambiguous rejection of the racist state that had existed and an affirmation of the only alternative that we find acceptable, one where racism and its structures are finally liquidated... There is reason to believe that we have not yet succeeded in bringing this home to the [South African apartheid] government, and we warn them that if they do not listen we will have to use our power to convince them. That power is the power of the people, and ultimately we know that the masses will not only demand but win full rights in a non-racial, non-sexist, democratic South Africa."

The AIA came up with a working class view on race and racism through study and scientific analysis. South Africans through the practice of class struggle, led by the SACP and ANC, saw their way through to victory over the apartheid state. In Britain it behoves us to similarly base our views in class struggle and science. ■

Meet the Party

The Communist Party of Britain's new series of London public meetings continues in 2014 on Tuesday, 4 March, 5 June, 14 October and 18 November; 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 theme of the meeting on Tuesday 4 March, is "Class in the 21st century". Details of further meetings will be announced in **WORKERS** and at 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 2014, Thursday 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

This month we review two books, one about Scotland's past and its possible future...

How speculators ruined

The Price of Scotland: Darien, union and the wealth of nations, Douglas Watt, hardback, 312 pages, ISBN 978-1-9-0522263-6, Luath Press Limited, 2007, £19.

DOUGLAS WATT has written a splendid account of the Darien disaster and its influence. In 2008, this book won the Hume Brown Senior prize in Scottish History, Scotland's most prestigious history award. From 2003 to 2006 the author was a post-doctoral research fellow in the Scottish History department of Edinburgh University, funded by the Stewart Ivory Foundation to research the financial aspects of the history of the Company of Scotland (Darien Company).

It was at Darien in modern-day Panama that Scottish speculators – landlords and nobles for the most part – planned a colony, to be called “Caledonia”. Its rapid ruin played a large part in persuading Scotland to accept the Act of Union, and nationalist mythology still presents it as some kind of English trick.

In 1695 the Scottish Parliament passed an “Act for a Company Trading to Africa and the Indies”, the Company of Scotland, a joint-stock company which promised to develop colonies and boost Scotland's economy. A large number of investors – nobles, landowners, merchants, ministers of the Kirk, lawyers and institutions - invested in the Company.

With the financial revolution of the 1690s and the explosion of capital markets, the first stock market boom became a true mania: they raised £400,000, four times the Scottish government's annual revenue. Then followed the financial storm of 1696-97, and harvest failures in 1695, 1696 and 1698, causing dearth and famine. The Company ran out of money in 1701.

The Company was badly managed: “in order to persuade investors that the shares were a worthwhile investment, an expensive fleet was constructed, but in order to pay for the impressive fleet, foreign investors were required. This was a very high risk circular strategy ...” No



A map of Isthmus of Darien made in 1697. The disastrous colonial speculation by Scottish investors ended with a Westminster bailout on advantageous terms.

‘The bailout of 142 pence in the pound was a truly incredible result for the directors’

assets were insured and the location was not surveyed.

Watt comments, “The second ‘management’ phase was truly disastrous... Significant mismanagement of the cargo and provisions on the first expedition followed and the climate and location proved calamitous... The failure of the colony and the loss of all the capital was principally the result of decisions taken by the directors... The directors lost touch with reality, influenced by the manic overconfidence of the nation.”

Darien was “a disease-ridden jungle

with a poor harbour abandoned by the Spanish nearly two centuries before”. The venture proved to be a fiasco. It cost 2,000 lives, eleven ships out of 14, and more than £150,000.

The directors, unsurprisingly, tried to blame it all on the English: “A vigorous propaganda campaign was launched by the directors to deflect blame from themselves onto the English government.”

The Westminster government gave the shareholders of the Company back all that they had invested in 1696, plus 43 per cent in interest payments, by the 15th article of the Treaty of Union.

“This was an extraordinarily handsome return for the shareholders – a bailout of 142 pence in the pound – and was a truly incredible result for the directors, who had squandered the capital of the Company and now, as major shareholders, were to be generously rewarded for their mismanagement.”

As Watt observes, “the directors who were responsible for squandering the capital received the largest payouts.” ■

st, the other about Scotland

Scotland's Choices: the referendum and what happens afterwards, by Iain McLean, Jim Gallagher and Guy Lodge, paperback, 223 pages, ISBN 978-0-7486-6987-5, Edinburgh University Press, 2013, £14.99.

THIS EXCELLENT book is a study of the implications of the referendum for Scotland's, indeed Britain's, future. Iain McLean is a Professor of Politics at Oxford University. Jim Gallagher and Guy Lodge are both Gwilym Gibbon Fellows at Nuffield College, Oxford.

They point out that EU treaties oblige member countries to have a central bank. The SNP says the Bank of England would be Scotland's central bank.

'The Scottish government clearly supports the present anti-trade union laws'

The SNP says that its 3 per cent corporation tax cut would lift output by 1.4 per cent, jobs by 1.1 per cent (27,000) and investment by 1.9 per cent – by 2034! But to take advantage of lower corporation tax, all a company has to do is set up a shell company to move its taxable profit, not any jobs or actual production, to the cheaper country.

The Scottish government has made no effort to devolve labour market law. It clearly supports the present anti-trade union laws.

Scotland also has higher levels of public spending than the rest of Britain. Its domestic tax revenues per head are the same as the British average. It would rely on current oil revenues to support its public spending. As the authors conclude, "with oil revenues at their 2009-10 level, an independent Scotland would have either to raise taxes or cut services, or both." ■

6 SIX CALLS TO ACTION

Worried about the future of Britain? Join the CPBML.

Our country is under attack. Every single institution is in decline. The only growth is in unemployment, poverty and war. There is a crisis – of thought, and of deed. The Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist has recently held its 16th Congress, a coming together of the Party to consider the state of Britain and what needs to happen in the future. Here we set out briefly six Calls to Action for the British working class – for a deeper explanation, see www.workers.org.uk.

1: Out of the European Union, enemy to our survival

The European Union represents the dictatorship of finance capital, foreign domination. The British working class must declare our intention to leave the EU.

2: No to the breakup of Britain, defend our national sovereignty

Devolution, and now the threat of separation, are both products of only one thing: de-industrialisation. Any referendum on the break-up of Britain must be held throughout Britain.

3: Rebuild workplace trade union organisation

Unions exist as working members in real workplaces or they become something else entirely – something wholly negative. Take responsibility for your own unions.

4: Fight for pay, vital class battleground

The fight for pay is central to our survival as a class, and must be central to the agenda of our trade unions.

5: Regenerate industry, key to an independent future

The regeneration of industry in Britain is essential to the future of our nation. Our grand-parents, and theirs, knew this. We must now reassert it at the centre of class thinking.

6: Build the Party

The task of the Party is singular: to change the ideology of the British working class in order that they make revolution here.

Interested in these ideas?

- 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.
- Subscribe to *Workers*, our monthly magazine, by going to www.workers.org.uk or by sending £15 for a year's issues (cheques payable to *Workers*) to the address below.

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Barristers join the working class

'It turns out that for the average criminal barrister taxable income is only around £32,000 a year...'

FOR THE first time in the history of legal chambers across Britain, bewigged and cravatted barristers, accompanied by solicitors, defied the threats of the Bar Standards Board and walked out in protest at proposed cuts to the criminal legal aid budget.

On 6 January Crown and Magistrates' Courts closed their doors across England and Wales. The Old Bailey came to a standstill in mid-trial, leaving one judge to explain pathetically to the jury: "You can see the rather lonely position I am in." In fact judges also helped to facilitate the strike by cooperating with the Criminal Bar Association in rescheduling trials on the day.

In addition to the Criminal Bar Association, several other august bodies have combined to oppose the government: the Law Society representing solicitors, the barristers' Bar Council, and Treasury Counsel, an organisation of elite barristers prosecuting the most serious crimes.

The response was massive and unanimous, with placard-waving barristers outside some courts, warning the public to "be afraid without legal aid". Their aim was twofold: to defend British justice for rich and poor alike, and to express anger at attacks on their professional pay by ignorant ministers.

It has been recognised since the 19th century that under capitalism legal aid is the only way most of the working class can afford to bring a case, but funding has been relentlessly slashed since 2008. Solicitors have in the past taken effective action of their own. In April 2013 Parliament provoked action when it passed the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act (LASPO), whereby divorce and custody battles, and immigration cases will have funding removed.

In September the government was forced to back down over its plans to put legal

advice out to competitive tendering. If it had got its way, 1,200 law firms stood to go out of business, and the public would have been denied the right to choose a lawyer.

In what lawyers say is the most serious threat to the British legal system in over 400 years, justice minister Chris Grayling is now proposing a cut of 41 per cent in real terms by 2018. This in spite of the fact that the legal aid budget was underspent by £56 million in 2013.

The Howard League for Penal Reform said this was politically motivated. True. It's also economically illiterate, leaving people like teenagers and mothers separated from their babies in jail for longer at public expense if they cannot get legal support for the courses needed to "move through the prison maze". An Oxford Economics report said the declining crime rate will save £80 million a year, so there is no need for cuts.

In the row over barristers' earnings, legal aid minister Shailesh Vara tried to give the impression of a profession of "fat cats". This is a slur, which all self-employed groups have to contend with, as earnings are often quoted before tax and before such things as professional rents, insurance and pension contributions, and the expense of "tools of the trade" have been taken into account.

The trade journal *The Lawyer* points out that barristers compare with students. The cost of their training is around £17,000. They start out saddled with debt and proceed with loans of up to £70,000 before they can get a tenancy in chambers, as during pupillage fees are slow to come through. It turns out that for the average criminal barrister taxable income is only around £32,000 a year. For the hours put in, many are working below the minimum wage.

As Marx pointed out in the Communist Manifesto, capitalism forces all workers into one class – the working class. Lawyers are wage slaves like the rest of us. ■

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Workers on the Web

• Highlights from this and other issues of WORKERS can be found on our website, www.workers.org.uk, as well as information about the CPBML, its policies, and how to contact us.

Publications

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).

To order...

Copies of all pamphlets and a fuller list of material can be obtained from CPBML PUBLICATIONS, 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB. Prices include postage. Please make all cheques payable to "WORKERS".