

WORKERS

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MANUFACTURE OR DIE



IF YOU WANT TO REBUILD BRITAIN, READ ON

WORKERS

“ First thoughts

BRITISH agriculture is in crisis. It is not because ‘townies’ want the right to roam, or because liberals think fox-hunting is cruel. Nor is it because the French prefer to eat their own beef. The truth is that a combination of the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the incompetence of successive British governments has been a disaster.

Even under the Tories supposedly opposed to subsidising lame-duck industries, billions were poured into British agriculture every year and billions more into the CAP. A handful of wealthy farmers and landowners live in the lap of luxury while virtually none of the money goes to small farmers raising pigs, poultry, or producing vegetables or salads. The only money fruit growers receive is to grub up their trees.

Farmworkers get little more than the statutory minimum wage and some small tenant farmers

work up to 100 hours a week for even less. The vast majority of organic produce, where the market is expanding rapidly, is imported because it is uneconomic to convert. Government help to do so is pitifully small and erratic.

Despite enormous public expenditure, British agriculture does not carry out its prime function: to feed us. We now import over half the food we eat, yet 80% could be grown here. We need a complete reappraisal of the policies of the past 50 years, starting with withdrawal from the EU’s CAP, so that we can determine independently the future of farming in Britain.

Training farmworkers, replanting orchards, an expansion of organic farming, encouragement of small farmers, bans on importing food we could grow here, a future for British forestry — all these things become possible once we take our own future in our hands.

Second thoughts

LANGUAGE is a funny thing. The Government allows a free vote on fox-hunting, and the right-wing press calls it “class war”. No, it is not. At most, it is a sideshow.

Class war is what happens when governments and the City rip the heart out of industries (see page 9). Class war is when

millions of children are condemned to poverty (see News Analysis, page 6)

Class war is also when workers fight back, organising their own futures in reply to capitalism’s organised destruction of the future. So forget the fox, and start hunting the real enemy instead.



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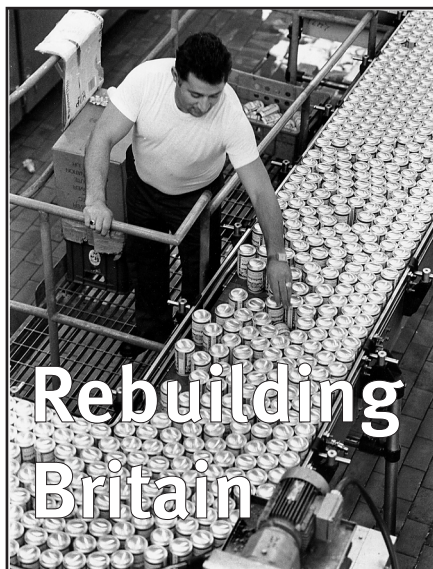
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Rebuilding Britain

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Saving an industry

THE GOVERNMENT has imposed performance-related pay (PRP) on teachers. The first experience of it has been one of confusion, conflicting advice, bureaucratic form-filling and division among teachers — as predicted by the teaching unions, and in particular by the NUT which has led the fight against the whole process.

Teachers in schools and in central services have found that those nominated to assess their performance have been inadequately trained, and given different guidelines by their trainers. The application forms have demanded enormous work from teachers already subject to intolerable workloads — and yet the word on the street is that the Government is keen to pass as many as possible through 'the threshold' at the top of normal pay rates to get them onto the really divisive PRP scales that lie beyond it.

It is these scales that the Government sees as the political prize — hoping to replace national rates of pay for all teachers with individually negotiated pay and conditions packages. But most of the experienced teachers who have applied have been saying they should have the £2000 'threshold' rise anyway, without the competitive divisiveness of the post-threshold scales.

Arising out of this chaos, the two largest teacher unions, the NUT and the NASUWT, look set to collaborate directly on a campaign designed to tackle the workload facing teachers, and the worst aspects of the scheme the Government is imposing. The NUT has even shelved its plans for a one-day strike against PRP — considering it again in the autumn — in order to allow this unity with other unions to develop. Teachers know that if the Government strategy of deregulating pay is to be defeated it will need maximum unity throughout the profession.

- A strong call for unity was the clear message from the Educational Institute of Scotland at its recent conference in Dundee. The EIS, which organises 88% of teachers (over 50,000) in Scotland, has defeated the Government-imposed 'threshold' payment scheme. Even greater unity of purpose would be possible if there was only one union.

Ronnie Smith, General Secretary of the EIS, spoke of his vision of the eight disparate bodies which currently represent teachers in Scotland all coming together. He queried the sense of "having eight different unions for teachers and lecturers competing with each other" and "eight different offices, eight sets of staff, eight membership subscription systems, eight unions devoting time and resources, pitching against each other to attract new members." He added that, in terms of policy, very little separated these unions.

A telling remark by the outgoing education convenor, Norma Anne Watson, was a warning that the Government seemed to be replacing "education, education, education" with "testing, testing, testing."

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

EUROPEAN UNION

French single state call

THE FRENCH and German governments are working hard to change the EU into a fully fledged single European state. In an important development, French President Jacques Chirac has supported the German Foreign Minister's proposal for a European Federation (reported in WORKERS last month). He called for creating "a strong Europe on the international stage", backed by a European Army "able to put 60,000 into combat in out-of-area operations".

POSTAL SERVICES

Brussels threat

BRUSSELS Commissioners are proposing that first class postal services should face private competition by 2003. They want all mail over 50 grams to be open to full competition within three years. The current threshold is 350 grams, comprising mainly parcel post.

The chief executive of the Post Office, John Roberts, said that this would allow newcomers to cherry-pick the most profitable postal business in urban areas and wipe out the Royal Mail's profits. "That will ultimately make it impossible to continue with the bedrock principle of an affordable and uniform postal service available to every customer, no matter how remote their address, and irrespective of what distance domestic mail travels."

In Sweden, where postal services have been open to competition since 1993, the cost of a first class letter has soared by 59% to 71p, compared with 27p in the UK. The cost of sending business mail has fallen.

IRELAND**'Tiger' out of control**

The Irish economy is posing one of the first tests of Economic and Monetary Union under the single currency, the Euro. The rapid growth of the Celtic Tiger is now unchecked by changes in interest rates as the European Central Bank has set interest rates to meet the needs of the Euro Zone as a whole, not Ireland in particular.

In the third quarter of last year, the economy surged ahead by an annual rate of 11%, four times the EU average of 2.4%, outstripping the previous record of 10.7% in 1997. But inflation also rose to 4.9%, alarming economists of the prospects for an inflationary spiral. House prices in Dublin and other cities have soared. People are clearly detecting that the new wealth has been monopolised by a few, with a growing divide between gainers and losers in the economy.

There are fears that a bust will follow the boom. EU Commissioner for Economic Affairs Pedro Solbes warned the Irish Finance Minister, Charlie McCreevy, to take measures to curb inflationary pressures. But the real controls over the Irish Economy lie in the hands of the unelected European central bankers.

USA**They hunt people, don't they?**

WHILE SOME in Britain agonise over whether fox hunting with dogs should finally join bear baiting and cock fighting in the Museum of British Social History, a new pastime has been gaining popularity in the Southwest of the United States — hunting Mexicans.

In Arizona, armed ranchers are tracking down illegal immigrants, using jeeps with powerful lights, or even on horseback, wild West style.

The California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation reports that in the first six months of 2000, 112 illegal immigrants died in California, Texas and Arizona, though not all at the hands of Arizona "sportsmen". Some succumbed to hunger, thirst or exhaustion.

There are even indications that computer operators with the US Immigration and Naturalization Service, who monitor sensors in the border country, tip off the "hunters" when they detect someone in the wrong place.

Such barbarism comes from the habit of regarding the Mexicans as a source of cheap and disposable labour.



Brand of shame: Marks & Spencer, abandoning its former policy of buying British

Action call over textiles

THE GOVERNMENT is to give £15 million of aid in response to a report from the Textiles & Clothing Strategy Group detailing destruction in the industry. This may be followed by further measures. The need for action is clear. An estimated 40,000 jobs in the industry have been lost in the last year. Losses continue unabated. Closures at Laidlaw & Fairgrieve in the Scottish Borders and Berwins in Leeds were announced days before the report's publication in June.

The strategy group is made up of manufacturing employers, unions, retailers and academics. They examined the reasons for the crisis in the industry, which still employs over 270,000 people. The main factors were overseas competition and the strong pound. In response the group made over 50 specific recommendations to secure the future of the industry, which in some regions is the only major manufacturing employer.

The government action plan includes support for closer links between manufacturers and retailers, grants and business advice, help following redundancies, and for exporters. It also proposes to set up a centre of manufacturing excellence and to encourage British designers.

Unions in the sector (KFAT, TGWU and GMB) generally welcomed these support measures. They warned that manufacturers must seize this opportunity to develop the industry. There were many areas where improvements could be made. The government also has a part to play. It refused to act on a call by GMB for an OFT enquiry into the possible abuse by Marks & Spencer of its dominant position. And in the past few months two key government contracts for armed forces clothing have gone overseas.

CUBA**British teachers appeal for aid**

The NUT is to appeal to all its members to raise money for educational aid for the beleaguered Cuban education system, systematically deprived of resources by the US blockade. Cooperating directly with the Cuba Solidarity Campaign, and tying in with the SALUD appeal in which British

trade unionists are raising money to send ambulances to Cuba, the union sees this appeal as important in itself. It is also committed to raise teachers' awareness of the attempt by the US to destroy Cuba's independence

The Union is also to pursue its work in 'twinning' teachers organisations and schools in Britain and Cuba — possibly producing an education pack for schools on Cuba and the life of young people there.

EDUCATION**The authority that failed**

THE NEWS that Bradford Local Education Authority has failed its Ofsted inspection came as little surprise to those who live and work there. Seething discontent with bewildering admissions and funding arrangements, inconsistent and often poor support to schools and a botched re-organisation programme contributed to the Labour group being voted out of office in the recent local elections.

The Government has taken the unprecedented step of insisting that the management of Bradford's education

service be taken out of the hands of the local authority, going even further than the previously mooted public/private partnership.

Consultants have been appointed to draw up a rescue plan, but it is not yet clear which private organisations, if any, will want the responsibility of administering education for this huge municipal authority.

Teachers, parents and governors have long yearned for something better. Now they have an opportunity to make their voices heard. For them, the issue is not to save the council at all costs, but to ensure the children of Bradford get the education they deserve.

UNISON gathers pace

DELEGATES to the UNISON Conference in June left for their workplaces with a raft of positive policies to take the union forward, covering among others privatisation, union organisation and the European Union.

The union now has a new strategy for taking thought and action forward over 'Best Value', privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative — all direct results of diktats from the European Union. This strategy involves the union in campaigning for democratically accountable public services, looking for improvements in quality and quantity based upon investing and improving the skills of those workers who provide such services.

Campaigning with the public is a key factor, but keeping control of those campaigning resources is another. So delegates got to grips with some key organisational issues. They decided on a policy of following the members wherever the services go, whether this is a result of privatisation, sell-off or transfer: where those who provide public services are — so should UNISON be.

They also agreed a recruitment and workplace organising strategy, getting trade unionism back to what members are about, increasing union membership, increasing the number of stewards, and seeing trade unionism on the rise again.

In a key move, the union also decided to strengthen its longstanding opposition to the European Union and its monetarist policies. A motion was carried overwhelmingly resolving to campaign vigorously for the policy in the labour and trade union movement — with a strong rider to the national executive to implement the policy, rather than turn a blind eye.

NHS EURO-FOLLY**Let's talk currencies**

IN HOSPITALS around Britain hard-pressed health workers are being forced to divert their energies into planning for the euro. This is the result of a Government requirement on the whole public sector to prepare for conversion to the single currency.

The Government guidance admits that the decision is yet to be put to Parliament and has to be put to the people in a referendum. But it goes on to say that for the choice in the referendum to be a "realistic one", preparation has to take place in the pre-referendum period.

Every NHS Trust in the country has to form a project group on European Monetary Union conversion and report to their regional office on an agreed timetable. Thus at a time when NHS clinicians and managers have number of pressing clinical issues, not to mention a re-organisation of the service following the creation of Primary Care Trusts, hundreds of conversion committees have to be set up.

The trusts have to submit their project plans by August 2000. Trade unionists in the NHS are already suspicious of the Government's agenda and asking the obvious question: If this is just about practicalities, then why does every hospital and community Trust need such a committee?

WHAT'S ON**Coming soon****JULY****CONGRESS FOR DEMOCRACY**

A broad-based forum which includes trade unionists which opposes the takeover of Britain by the European Union

Friday 14 July

from 9.30am to 3pm
Church House,
Westminster
London SW1

TOLPUDDLE 2000

Near Dorchester, Dorset.

The annual festival and rally in honour of the Tolpuddle Martyrs with speakers, entertainers, beer tent, food and children's fun area.

Saturday 15 July

from 1pm onwards, music and song in the Tolpuddle Village Hall;
8.30 pm till late Ceilidh with the Back Room Band.

Sunday 16 July

11.30 am: The Next Band, followed by Guest Speakers, and parade of banners
4 pm: Billy Bragg
5 pm: The Back Room Band
6 pm: Event ends

SEPTEMBER

TUC CONFERENCE, GLASGOW

Tuesday 12 September**Fringe Meeting: "No to the Euro"**

Speakers include Doug Nichols, General Secretary, CWYU
Boardroom, Moat House Hotel
(adjoining the conference centre)
1pm (buffet from 12.30)

WORKERS Social and Ceilidh

Renfrew Ferry (opposite bank of River Clyde) featuring Whistlebinkies and Fresh Rock Ceilidh Band
9pm — All WORKERS readers welcome.

NHS PAY**Boost for junior doctors**

BRITAIN'S 30,000 junior doctors have won a pay rise following the threat of industrial action. Rises are to be phased in so that the average newly qualified doctor will gain a rise of 28% by December 2001.

The new pay structure will give health trusts financial incentives to implement the agreed cut in junior doctors' hours — it gives the biggest increases to those working the longest and most antisocial hours.

And the children suffer

UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, has just issued 'The State of the World's Children 2000', a report whose statistics show that Britain has an appalling record of child poverty relative to its overall wealth.

The fund has produced figures of the percentages of children likely to be living in a poor family — defined by a household disposable income which falls below half of the country's overall median earnings. In relative terms British children suffer worse rates of poverty than those living in Turkey.

Of the industrialised nations the Czech Republic does best at 1.8%. Other examples are Belgium at 6.1%, Poland at 14.2% and Ireland at 14.8%. The UK comes 22nd down the list at 21.3% with the USA at 26.3% and the Russian Federation at 26.6%. (The Russian Federation's per capita average annual growth rate between 1990 and 1997 was -7.9%, with other parts of the old USSR in even deeper decline — so much for the benefits of capitalism!)

Press coverage in Britain has tended to focus on what is happening here, but the report is also vital reading for anyone interested in the overall impact of globalisation. In 1990 the First World Summit for Children was convened. It drafted an ambitious plan for the last decade, with 27 targets to be met by the year 2000. While there have been some gains, the failure has been far greater.

Over the last 20 years, as the world economy has increased, the number of people living in poverty grew to more than 1.2 billion, or one in every 5 people, including more than 600 million children.

Every day 30, 500 children under 5 die of mainly preventable causes. Every month a quarter of a million children and young people become infected with HIV. Every year over half a million women die of complications of pregnancy and childbirth that could have been prevented.

The report blames globalisation: "The number of people living in poverty continues to grow as globalisation proceeds along its inherently asymmetrical course: expanding markets across national boundaries and increasing the incomes of a relative few while further strangling the lives of those without the resources to be investors or the capabilities to benefit from the global culture."

"The majority are women and children," the report continues, "poor before, but even more so now, as the two-tiered world economy widens the gap between rich and poor countries and between rich and poor people."

The report is highly critical of the lack of work being done on HIV/AIDS: "If the international funds for poverty reduction this decade have been a disgrace, the outlays to fight the global HIV/AIDS pandemic are an outrage. In 1996 and 1997, donor nations gave an estimated \$350 million each year to combat HIV/AIDS, in meagre comparison to the \$60 billion given by the international community to the Republic of Korea during the Asian financial crisis of the late 1990s."

Labour is promising to eradicate child poverty "in a generation". Chancellor Gordon Brown Chancellor has announced money for new to help with childcare, drug and health advice and the under-threes. But these initiatives will not tackle the problems at root. The country requires high-quality jobs that pay proper wages.

British scientists have played a open up a new world for medicine defying corporate ambitions

Victory in the genome

ANYONE WHO DOUBTS the power of science to explain the world and to provide the capacity for improving it should take a look at the Sanger Centre. A few miles outside Cambridge in the flat fenland, the centre, a gleaming set of buildings on the site of a stately home, is the main British arm of an international effort to decipher the human genome — to know the exact sequence of DNA making up every human chromosome. What it finds will revolutionise our world.

The international Human Genome Project has cost over a billion pounds and involved thousands of scientists in 19 countries, from Britain to Japan, from the US to Germany. It has been funded mainly by public money. As such, it represents the greatest collective scientific endeavour the world has ever known. And it has been staggeringly successful.

Towards the end of last year, the first sequence of a human chromosome was published — chromosome 22, primarily the result of work by teams in Britain, the US and Japan. The second chromosome — 21, involved in Down's syndrome — followed in May, this time with contributions mainly from Germany and Japan. And at the end of June, scientists announced that they had completed what they call a "draft" of the whole genome (in general terms, about 95% complete).

Free for knowledge

By the end of the year, the sequence of all the human chromosomes will have been published. The order of 300 million base pairs of DNA will be determined, and the number and position of the human genes will be known. And the data will be freely laid out for anyone in the world to inspect, analyse and to apply to new inventions.

Free access to the results of the project has been a guiding principle, established by the scientists taking part and fiercely defended by them. By putting their results immediately into the public domain they have prevented much of the patenting that people feared would corrupt knowledge into private gain. Where necessary, they have persuaded governments to support them. When it seemed as if private forces would buy their way into a lead in sequencing the genome, they levered vast amounts of money from governments and from charities. And they have insisted, too, that the ethical, legal and social implications be debated widely, with proper funding for research into these aspects.

In Britain the lead has been taken by John Sulston, director of the Sanger Centre. His attitude is crystal clear. As he told THE GUARDIAN earlier this year, "Global capitalism is raping the earth, it's raping us. If global capitalism gets hold of complete control of the human genome, that is very bad news indeed..." Not every scientist might put things like that, but most would agree with the underlying sentiment.

Sulston was one of the driving forces in the early 1990s determined that British science would play a key role in the unravelling of the human genome. Realising that big science needed big money, they fought and won what by British

central role in the genetic revolution that will
ine. And they have done it collectively,

e wars

standards is enormous funding, not from the government but from a charity, the Wellcome Trust. The trust is coy about how much money has gone into the Sanger Centre, but the figure is now well above £100 million.

In a country that truly valued science and knowledge, Sulston and his colleagues would be celebrities to rival pop stars. Yet they are hardly known outside the small circle of people who follow developments in genetics. Even less known is Fred Sanger, the man after whom the centre was named.

Nobel prizes

Sanger, in his 80s and still working, is a unique British scientist — he has won the Nobel prize not once, but twice. The first Nobel came in 1958 after 10 years of study culminating in the determination of the protein structure of insulin, a stunning piece of work which laid the essential basis for synthesis of artificial insulin on which many diabetics around the world depend. His second Nobel came in 1980 after he had developed a technique for determining the sequence

of base pairs in DNA. This was one of the seminal techniques without which the present flurry of chromosome sequences could never have been achieved.

With so much of the history of modern genetics having its roots in Britain — after all, it was in Cambridge in 1953 that Frances Crick and James Watson discovered the famous “double helix” model of DNA — it would have been a tragedy if Britain had not been at the forefront of the human genome effort. Even so, it was left to a charity (albeit a very rich one) to fund the work, with the government playing a minor supporting role.

No one country — not even the US with its vast reserves of scientific personnel and money — could have achieved this feat on its own. In 1988, scientists from a number of countries came together under the umbrella of the Human Genome Organisation to coordinate the international effort. Five years later, they were still a long way from their final goal, but along the way

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The road to the human genome

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| <p>1865
Austrian monk Gregor Mendel discovers basic laws of heredity growing peas in his monastery garden</p> <p>1871
The nucleic acids (including DNA) are discovered, but not yet linked to heredity</p> <p>1890s
Discovery of chromosomes and that they appeared to come in pairs. They are suspected to be related to heredity.</p> <p>1905
Discovery that the X chromosome determines the sex of the offspring — the first hard link between chromosomes and heredity</p> | <p>1906
Scientists coin the word “gene” to describe a piece of genetic information specifying a particular characteristic. Thomas Hunt Morgan shows that chromosomes are chains of genes</p> <p>1944
Scientists in New York show that genes are made of chains of DNA</p> <p>1953
James Watson and Frances Crick, at the Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge, discover the double helix structure of DNA</p> <p>1975
The first human gene is isolated</p> | <p>1986
Development of techniques for automatic DNA sequencing</p> <p>1988
Human Genome Organisation created</p> <p>1999
Sequence of the first human chromosome — chromosome 22 — is published</p> <p>2000
Draft sequence of the entire human genome to be published, probably in the autumn</p> <p>?2002
Complete sequence of the human genome to be finished</p> |
|--|--|---|

they had made some stunning discoveries.

By 1993, the project had isolated a number of genes associated with important, though relatively rare, diseases, such as Huntington's disease, myotonic dystrophy, and fragile X syndrome. Genes that confer a predisposition to common diseases such as breast cancer, colon cancer, hypertension, diabetes and Alzheimer's had been narrowed down to specific areas on known chromosomes. Another five years on, and a stream of discoveries began to flow, including the exact location of genes involved in many of these common diseases.

Private sector

Meanwhile, the private sector decided to intervene. One of the key US scientists in the project, Craig Venter, left the public sector to found his own company, financed by PE Biosystems, one of the world's leading biotechnology companies. The aim was to sequence the genome first, patent as much as possible, and use the results for private profit. But the

private bid failed to dominate, and PE has had to accept that its findings should also be freely available to researchers.

What will the world make of the feast of knowledge that science is spreading before it?

Like any knowledge, it can be used for good or ill, though the potential for good is overwhelming. Doctors will be able to diagnose susceptibility to disease quickly and accurately, allowing early treatment. And couples with a potential for passing on inherited diseases to their children will be able to choose to have healthy babies. In practice, everything will depend on how far the working class can show the same collective spirit and organisation which scientists have used to make their discoveries. Central to this will be the maintenance of the National Health Service and the exercise of control over its resourcing.

This autumn, the Human Genome Project will publish what the draft map of the human genome — 95 per cent of our genes will be sequenced and their positions marked on the chromosomes. But the best is probably yet to come.

Genes are sequences of DNA that contain instructions for the body to grow, sustain itself, and, in time, to die. The instructions create proteins, and it is the proteins that actually do the various jobs — telling bone to grow, making fingers develop, and then stop when they have reached the right size, making sure, most of the time, that we have two of everything we should have two of and one of everything we should have one of.

What next?

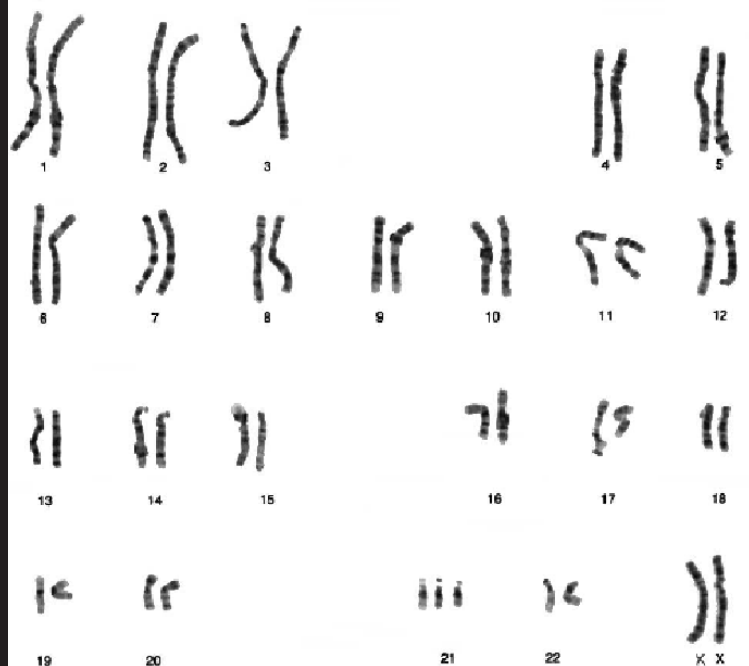
Once all the genes are known, attention turns (and is turning already) to their proteins, numbering some 200,000 to 300,000: what are they, how do they work? If someone lacks a gene, can the protein be inserted into the body to ensure that they do not suffer the lack? In many cases, the answer will be yes, and it will revolutionise medicine. Even now, scientists in Britain and elsewhere are working on solutions to previously insoluble problems — repairing severed spinal cords, for example. And all this from public work done for the public good, unfettered by the need for profit.

Genes and chromosomes

WE CARRY our heredity with us. Almost every cell in our bodies holds within it the 23 pairs of chromosomes (see right: note the extra chromosome 21, an indicator of Down's syndrome) that hold all our genes. The genetic information is held in "base pairs" of amino acids carried on a twisting double helix composed of DNA. Finding the order in which these base pairs appear is called sequencing.

The first human chromosome to be sequenced — chromosome 22 — was found to hold 33.4 million base pairs and between 545 and 1000 genes. All the chromosomes together hold at least a billion base pairs — if it were all printed in an A4 book, it would run to some 500,000 pages.

No one knows quite how many genes we have. Scientists are now betting on numbers between 25,000 and 150,000, though early indications from chromosomes 21 and 22 suggest that the total will be towards the lower end of the scale. With current technologies, an accurate count will not be possible until around 2002.



Industry — making things — has become a life-or-death question for Britain. We either create, or we disappear.

Manufacture or die



REMEMBER HOW IT FELT in the early eighties under the Thatcher blitzkrieg? Control on the export of capital had been lifted and manufacturing capitalists competed with each other to take their assets out of Britain and invest them abroad. As the common market in Europe grew exports destroyed whole sections of our economy.

From fight for pay in the seventies, manufacturing unions were forced to fight first to stop factory closures and then the run down of whole industries in the eighties. It felt at times as though the whole of British history since the industrial revolution was being reversed.

Some academics compiled huge lists of products which Britain no longer made. This then became long lists of industrial and technological skills that we had completely lost.

Picking the bones clean

The feelings of horror should now return. Distinguishing New Labour's rule is the escalated attack on industry. Britain is now living through the most intense programme of deindustrialisation we have ever witnessed. The bones left by the Thatcher period are being picked clean (and new fledglings are being crushed in the nest).

At the height of Thatcher's attack on industry we were losing about 4,400 manufacturing jobs a month. Now we are losing 6,000 a month. Catalogues of factory closures are as big as the mail order catalogues of imported goods that now fill our warehouses.

The tragedy this time is that despite some rhetorical gestures and publicity campaigns the main engineering and niche manufacturing unions are actually looking to the cause of their problems — in Brussels — for a solution.

With the notable exception of the Transport and General Workers Union, which has led much of the resistance to the threats to Ford and Rover, the trade unions most concerned have dreamed that the decline will be halted if we throw ourselves into the single currency. They have minimised the work to mobilise workers in resistance to the daily announcements of redundancy or sought to reorganise themselves from industrial unions to general unions keeping their members in membership regardless of job after they have lost their own industries.

Siren song of the euro

The siren call of the single currency is so patently false that it is alarming to see so many manufacturing based trade unionists seduced by it. Long term interest rates required by manufacturers for investment are lower in Britain than the rest of Europe and have been for many years. The eurozone is the low growth area of the world economy. No more than 5% of Britain's Gross Domestic Product is tied up with other European countries. Countries in the eurozone are far more dependent upon our exports and economy than we are on theirs. Unemployment in the eurozone is double ours.

Manufacturing skills and new technologies are generally speaking more widespread and advanced in Britain than in the eurozone. Our trade links for manufactured products are much more

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global than any country within the eurozone. The pound has been much more stable than the euro. Like it or lump it, the pound is tied in much more with the dollar than any European currency or the euro.

In response to the escalating crisis in staple industries like clothing and textiles and manufacturing generally the TUC and affiliated unions have been putting cogent suggestions together and making strong representations to the government. Attempts by the TUC to use the crisis to argue for early entry into the euro have been temporarily thwarted.

Frustration

But frustration has set in as unions have come to recognise an almost powerless Department of Trade and Industry which lacks any manufacturing strategy. While the government has working parties and task groups galore on social and educational policy areas, and controversial bills on fox hunting and the like, it simply has no strategic

The jobs massacre

According to the Labour Research Department, simply going through press coverage and surfing the internet will reveal a total 170,000 jobs that have gone in British manufacturing since the general election of 1997.

The losses cover the whole gamut of manufacturing, from the "new" industries such as electronics and biotechnology to steel and textiles. (Old industries, we are told, but who heard of a modern society without steel or textiles?). Scotland and the North have been particularly badly affected.

- For more information, see "Factory closures hit heartlands", LABOUR RESEARCH, June 2000.

'At the height of Thatcher's attack on industry we were losing about 4,400 manufacturing jobs a month. Now we are losing 6,000 a month'

approach to industry.

This reflects its complete political rejection of the concept of state intervention in the main levers of the economy. As it prepares to allow unelected bankers to take control over interest and exchange rates in a single currency and to deregulate trade and employment at the whims of the World Trade Organisation, it must relinquish any attempt to control production meaningfully.

An end to timidity

It is one thing to criticise the government's impotence in the face of the multinational companies and their globalised links and growing supranational structures like the European Union. But the real problem now is the timidity and lack of imagination among the unions generally.

Some individual campaigns like those led by the textile unions generally and in relation to Marks and Spencers abandoning of Britain in particular have been well conducted as was the Rover campaign. But in tackling the source of the problems there has been far less clarity. The TUC's recent draft document had a good title BRITAIN CAN MAKE IT - A STRATEGY FOR MODERN MANUFACTURING, and many of its 30 or so recommendations are very important. But ultimately it glosses the cause of the difficulties and does not provide a robust strategy. No one organisation will be able to devise a strategy but a forum within the official body of the movement needs to be established to clarify our collective objectives.

Among the really strategic issues we need to address are the following. We need to recognise that unless we can

sustain ourselves in the world by basing our economy on high tech industrial production based on scientific and technological innovation, we will not have an economy to speak of.

Self-reliance

Secondly, we have to sustain our position as the fourth largest economy in the world by agreeing a planned industrial strategy throughout the nation based on the principles of maximum self-reliance and self-sufficiency. It is the abandonment of these principles by the Labour Movement that is the source of our problems. Britain needs to be able to produce as much of its goods as possible and have a balanced industrial base.

Current plans to introduce a single currency are based on principles opposite to this. A single currency will demand a concentration of specific areas of production in specific regions of the eurozone. No national economy will be permitted to create a balance of manufactured goods. It also requires wholesale privatisation and in the name of competition a denial of government's rights to intervene financially and politically in the economy.

Floods of imports

If domestic economies are to be protected then the reality of import controls becomes a great and pressing need. If we are to plan what we need and want to produce then we cannot have our plans continually undermined by floods of imports.

Last year 2.1 million cars were registered in Britain, only 30% of them produced here, yet Longbridge and Dagenham are under threat. It follows that we have to reimpose controls on the

flow of capital. Surplus value produced by manufacturing workers here, must be reinvested in our economy.

Money still makes money in the British economy and the futures markets and pension fund managers operate with minimal restriction. We should demand a repatriation of pension fund investments and find ways of using the £600 billion in the pension funds for British manufacturing investment. Similarly British customers like the government itself and local government and the major quangos and service industries should be compelled to procure their manufactured goods from British suppliers.

Too much government buying takes place abroad. Local government could be really at the heart of economic regeneration if councils were permitted to raise their own taxes again and to invest in local infrastructure.

Fortunes wasted

Above all the trade unions appear at the moment to remain content to see vast fortunes wasted on unemployment 'benefit' payments. Some social entrepreneurs, as the new breed of community-minded businessmen are known, are creating semi-skilled jobs with decent training and conditions of employment for £20,000 a year. For more skilled jobs estimates from various organisations range between £50,000 and £100,000.

There is within the British economy more than enough money to invest in a sustained national programme of retraining and job creation to the point of full employment for all. In the eurozone there are over 18 million unemployed equivalent to the populations of Ireland, Denmark and Belgium put together.

Join the dole or join a rejuvenated Labour Movement plan for full employment, national independence and rebuilding our manufacturing economy. This is the real choice facing the movement as it approaches the TUC in September.



The call to support Rover, part of the call to support manufacturing. But EU regulations barred intervention to safeguard our own industry

How the EU tied our hands

WHY DID a chancellor who prides himself on his prudence deny Rover financial help when the consequences of closure were a loss of 60,000 jobs resulting in a cost of at least £2 billion a year in unemployment and social costs. Why did the Tories and Liberal Democrats not demand that at least the government provide the overdraft guarantees that eventually were obtained from an American bank?

The answer is that in 1988 when they were selling Rover to British Aerospace the Thatcher government agreed to a demand by the EU commission that Britain abolish its right to provide overdraft guarantees. They also agreed to other restrictions and reduced the finance to cover Rover group losses from £800 million to £469 million.

The EU commission achieved this reduction in British sovereignty by taking advantage of article 93 of the EEC Treaty. This article, now article 88 of the Treaty of Amsterdam, deals with state aid to national industries. It gives the power to the commission to investigate if any state aid is compatible with the principles of the single market. They can demand changes with the threat of court action if the national government does not comply.

In its eagerness to privatise Rover the Thatcher government gave away sovereign rights. Today's politicians in their silence are complicit in that betrayal. This part of our history shows that giving away the control of our economy in joining the euro cannot solve the problems our industries face. Instead we must reclaim what we have lost and use our democracy in our interests. Now that is a true campaign for manufacture.

The medicines are there. What patients need is access to them, and information about them. And what the NHS needs is a way of affording them

The keys to the medicine cabinet

THE NHS SPENDS some £6 billion a year on medicines and the nation invests heavily in innovation, regulation and infrastructure to ensure that people have access to medicines that are appropriate, safe and effective. We have reason to be proud of our achievement in the manufacture and use of medicines in Britain, but access to them has become a hot political issue, often hitting the headlines. (See WORKERS January 1999 on rationing.) With government representing the public purse, and the pharmaceutical industry representing its shareholders, conflict between two such powerful antagonists sometimes makes the patient the casualty.

Government initiatives to modernise the health service, setting the quality and effectiveness agenda, are welcome. But as yet there is no systematic strategy for monitoring and optimising the outcome of medicinal therapy for the millions who take medicines. So far the focus has been on managing the introduction of medicines to the UK market.

The National Institute of Clinical

Excellence (NICE) was set up a year ago to advise the Secretary of State for Health on the nation's access to new medicines. After assessing the cost and benefits of new therapy, or of previously introduced medicines that the government wishes to reconsider, NICE makes recommendations on the value of a particular medicine. It is seen as a new hurdle for the drug industry to get over before its medicines are used in Britain.

Costs and benefits

Doctors and pharmacists have long considered efficacy and safety before using new medicines. But affordability plus value for money, i.e. cost-effectiveness or cost-benefit analysis, is a more recent innovation.

The jury is still out on the credibility of NICE, but so far its judgements have received the support of the health care professions. Access was not given to Relenza, the anti-flu drug, for instance, but those who read the scientific reports agreed that the evidence for benefit did not justify the cost.

NICE has more recently reported on two anti-cancer drugs which they have recommended for use in certain conditions. This decision has increased public access to these valuable medicines in areas of the country that were suffering from what has been called 'post-code' prescribing. This happens when different health authorities come to different decisions about whether they will fund the use of a drug in their area. Now those that had blocked access to these novel anti-cancer drugs have to remove the barriers.

Quality prescribing

But to return to the point about the quality of use of medicines. There is a need to increase the amount of expertise applied to prescribing and the use of medicines generally. Since we spend so much as a nation, or even personally, on medicines, then we should get the best

outcomes possible.

Approximately 7% of hospital admissions are related to illness caused by drugs. Sometimes this is due to side effects; often it is patients being unable or unwilling to take their medicines as planned by the doctor. More doctor involvement and support to patients is required. More support and guidance for doctors is needed too.

Some nurses are now able to prescribe medicines. The number of these is growing each year as more receive the extra training to allow them to prescribe for their patients. The original report recommending this new role for nurses was published over ten years ago, but it is only in the last year that we have seen any real change.

It will speed the patient's access to medicines. No longer will the nurse have to wait for a countersignature of the GP on a prescription she has determined her patient requires. This might have meant a trip back to the surgery from the patient's home. It also meant that the professional responsibilities and accountabilities in the care of the patient were misrepresented. Doctors signed prescriptions for treatments they were not truly managing themselves.

More change of this sort is on the way. The government has just agreed in broad outline with some further recommendations about who should prescribe medicines for patients in Britain. After appropriate training specialist nurses and pharmacists will be able to prescribe. Asthma nurses and diabetes nurses for instance will be able to look after the prescribing needs of their patients in their area of expertise. This should be a huge benefit to patients and doctors.

Pharmacists will be able to prescribe a broad range of medicines. Those people who currently visit their doctor for minor ailments (30%) will be able to increase their access to medicines via the NHS, through their community



pharmacist. Visits to the GP to obtain a free prescription will no longer be necessary. Pharmacists will also be able to look after more serious chronic diseases after the GP has set the plan of action for the patient's treatment. Pharmacists will be able to prescribe the necessary treatments, monitor the response, adjust the therapy and refer the patient back to the GP only if necessary. For patients these changes should offer improvements in access to therapy they need, via the NHS.

Equally important as the worth of the medicines is the question of how they are best used. NICE has a role here too. It will be developing guidelines for the use of a wide range of medicines. It has also asked that guidelines be produced to ensure that patients receive more information about the use of their medicines. Unfortunately, on this question the government has been dragging its heels.

Government versus industry

The issue has led to a huge row between the government and the pharmaceutical industry. The bill for change to 'patient packs', according to the industry was around £20 million. The government refused to pay, so the industry just went ahead in spite of a failure to agree. They made changes to packaging and to plant, adding the cost onto the nation's drugs bill anyway.

In the battle over prices between government and the industry the patient was certainly the casualty over the last year, when the supply of generic medicines broke down and prices then rose dramatically, some by up to 600%. Generic, or non-branded medicines, are used by all hospitals and by GPs for 69% of the time. Successive governments have promoted the prescribing of drugs by generic rather than proprietary name to retain clinical quality whilst minimising costs.

The government has a price



regulation scheme which limits profits on branded medicines, but generics have been exempt because the government believed that market forces would keep prices down. For reasons that are not entirely clear, over the last year this approach has broken down.

The effect has been shortages of medicines and steep price rises thought to have cost the NHS around £200million. This reduces patients' access to treatment as the budget runs out. The government has responded by announcing it does now intend to regulate this market in the community setting, but not in hospitals. Prices of generics in the community are to be set at a ceiling which matches those in place 18 months ago.

Many believe the industry has artificially raised the prices of generics to recover losses on the branded side of the market, which was subject to a profit clampdown earlier in 1999 (4.5% reduced profit margin permitted). The worry now is that in hospitals the commonly discounted price of generic medicines will rise to the government new ceiling set for the community. If so the cost in hospitals will be significant. It seems the drug companies always have a new trick up their sleeve whenever government regulation threatens profit.

Task force

In an initiative to increase the development of medicines in the UK, the government has announced a task force

on the pharmaceutical industry in Britain. Lord Hunt, Health Minister, will chair the task force. It will investigate areas such as the role of the NHS in research and development of new products, foster partnerships between industry, academia and government, review intellectual property right protection and the criteria for maintaining and developing competitiveness of the UK in the international pharmaceuticals marketplace.

It is an irony that on the one hand the government puts a ceiling on prices, yet on the other sets up a task force to support industrial research and development of pharmaceuticals. But this might be a key factor in the success of our industry. The pharmaceutical industry employs 60,000 skilled workers and creates an annual trade surplus of £2 billion. It is a leading investor in research and development in the UK. The intent of the review is also to ensure that the industry is supported in producing medicines the NHS truly needs, which are cost effective and efficient.

The government is determined to get the best value for its money yet wishes to provide an environment where good research can prosper. In fact this is a legitimate position and should be the best approach to maximising patient access to medicines. If the industry takes a responsible approach to its research portfolio then NICE will support its developments and the industry will gain profit from its new valuable medicines.

Thirty years of commercialism and neglect have left a new generation of cricketers with a game to rebuild

Over and out?

THE DEATH OF England fast bowling legend Brian Statham while the 'Cronjgate' match fixing inquiry was taking place in South Africa had a rich symbolism about it. For 'Gentleman George' Statham, who played his cricket in the 1950s and 60s stood for all that was upright and respected in the game.

The transformation since his heyday has been remarkable. Cricket is now a world apart with its rampant commercialism, sponsorship deals, corporate hospitality, multicoloured kits, American-style nicknames and merchandising.

Allegations pour in

The game is in deep crisis, currently occupying front rather than back pages as result tampering and betting allegations pour in. Like many other

popular sports it has in essence simply become another capitalist commodity with all the corrupt values that go with this condition.

Cricket has a tradition as the quintessential English game. And on many a village green you would still be hard pressed to notice the changes seen so dramatically on the national stage. But that would be to belie a decline that has in fact affected the sport from top to bottom. Many, for example, point to the lack of opportunity for young cricketers as a key factor.

There are many reasons for this, but some are certainly rooted in aspects of contemporary political life. Of continuing concern is the massive sell-off of school grounds which has literally robbed recent generations of the chance to play.

Add to that the exacerbation caused by the narrowing of the education curriculum and the unrelenting pressure on teachers' time and morale. Cricket like many other sports and pastimes has been squeezed out. And for those that still are determined to play, the prospect of the local council pitch can be a final turn off. Years of local authority cutbacks have left many strips too dangerous for skills to develop or enjoyment to be had.

One-day madness

At the other end of the spectrum the game at test match level has been on a spiral of upsets for years. The big turning point, as so often in modern sport, stemmed from the big business television moguls. The Kerry Packer breakaway World Series Cricket competition in the 1970s changed the international set up for ever. Disarray was further nurtured by a breakaway of a different kind — the so-called rebel tours of South Africa aimed at shoring up the ailing Apartheid regime.

Again big money talking. Money sloshed around and so did those keen to make a killing. As the players were put on a treadmill of year round endless and too often meaningless one-day internationals, so the opportunity and breeding ground for match-fixing emerged.

The shocking revelations surrounding the former South African captain Hansie Cronje are just the latest in a series of allegations involving test players. But all is not gloom. The game at grass roots level is fighting back particularly in local clubs who have in the absence of schools cricket taken up responsibility for youth development. Colts sections are thriving and so local communities enriched.

At first class level the downward slide has not gone unchallenged. Players



The way it was: test match at Lords in the 1960s



Above: village cricket in Devon, circa 2000. Below, 1960s cricket hero Gary Sobers



have organised themselves and supporters are increasingly having their say too. And on a global scale the game continues to grow. New test nations Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe have made good progress and others like Bangladesh and Kenya aspire to follow them.

Cricket is now at a crossroads. The days of the Statham are gone forever but the best of the sport can still be salvaged. The challenge for everyone involved is: either help take responsibility for its future or stand by as it is smashed for six.

WHERE'S THE PARTY?

If you want to be a player in the political game, not a spectator, the politics of cynicism is not enough. But thinking about the mountain of work and the changes in attitude that will be needed to transform Britain is overwhelming if you are on your own. That's why there is a party. Only a party, and a special one at that, could bring together the people, ideas and effort needed to start the task of rebuilding Britain.

Who are we?

The Communist Party of Britain Marxist Leninist was founded in 1968 by Reg Birch and other leading engineers. They identified that there were only two classes in Britain and that only workers could make the change that was needed. Birch pulled together a diverse crew, all sorts of workers, and over some 20 years, turned them into a party with a difference.

The dozens of political parties formed in the 1960s and 70s have come and gone, while the CPBML has grown up, is alive, well, and welcoming new recruits. One reason for its success has been that there is no division between lofty thinkers and humble foot-soldiers. Every CPBML member must be a thinker and a do-er. There are no paid officials.

The party is made up of ordinary working people who are helped by their participation in it to develop as leaders and earn the respect of fellow workers. The party vows never to put itself above the class which created it, but to serve the interests of the class.

Those who join us know we are in for a long haul, and most of our members stay for good. We leave it to the political Moonies to grab anyone, exploit them and spit them out. We don't tolerate zealots on the one hand or armchair generals on the other. What about you? If you are interested, get in touch. In the long run, the only thing harder than being a communist is not being one.

How to get in touch

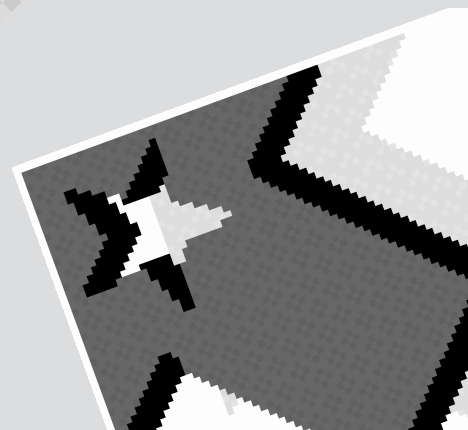
* The above description of the party is taken from our pamphlet WHERE'S THE PARTY. You can order one, and a list of other publications, by sending an A5 s.a.e. to the address below.

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Back to Front – Peace within grasp

All those who signed the Agreement should support it. All sides have now to move forwards...

PROSPECTS FOR PEACE and progress in Northern Ireland are the best not just for thirty years, but for centuries. Efforts by successive British and Irish Governments, and by the domestic parties concerned, have brought peace within the people's grasp.

Most of Northern Ireland's people support the Good Friday 1998 peace Agreement – 71% of them voted for it – and so do most British people. It was a step towards the peoples of the two islands living in peace and cooperation, with mutual respect and non-interference in each other's affairs.

We should support the Agreement as a milestone on the road to peace and the withdrawal of the 14,000 remaining British troops. The IRA cease-fire is, thankfully, still in effect, as are the ceasefires with loyalist armed groups. This has ended the military conflict in Ireland, and almost all the cruel and cowardly attacks on innocent civilians in Ireland and Britain. Martin McGuinness, the Minister of Education for Northern Ireland, said that Sinn Fein "totally and absolutely opposed" the bombing of Hammersmith Bridge, and called on dissident republicans not to launch a new wave of attacks on Britain.

All those who signed the Agreement should support it. All sides have now to move forwards. How can Republicans object when the Unionists accept power sharing? Would they prefer a return to one-party rule? How can Unionists object when Sinn Fein disavows methods of war? Would they

prefer a return to war? The Agreement did not make decommissioning a precondition of establishing the new Northern Ireland Executive. The previous head of the RUC, Sir John Hermon, said that decommissioning did not worry the RUC, and that it was a red herring.

Unfortunately, hard-line Unionists contravened the agreement by demanding that the IRA decommission four months before the agreed date. They bounced Mandelson into the gross mistake of reimposing direct rule in February. Now David Trimble is trying his best to move the peace process forward.

In early May, the IRA offered to open up its arsenals to independent, international inspection, and also offered to put their arms "beyond use". The Ulster Unionists' deputy leader John Taylor rightly described this as a breakthrough. On Saturday 27 May, the Ulster Unionist Council decided by 459 votes to 403 to return to the Northern Ireland Assembly in a renewed power-sharing agreement. The Stormont Executive met on Thursday 1 June, the Assembly on Monday 5 June. Movement, at last.

But we must do more than just support the Agreement. We must make the Government set an early date for withdrawing all the British troops from Ireland. Then all who live and work there, free at last from the foreign occupier, will be able to build their future together.

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In the September issue

- The challenge facing the TUC
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- The Holocaust exhibition

Please note that there will be no issue of WORKERS in August.