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EU threat to the Tube

03



The private path to chaos

06

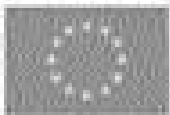


Ensuring the quality of care

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THE EURO AND EXPANSIONISM

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IF YOU WANT TO REBUILD BRITAIN, READ ON

WORKERS

“ First thoughts

AFTER A FOUR-WEEK campaign during which it appeared that political life and political thought had been suspended, politics in Britain began again when the polling stations closed on the night of 7 June.

That politics came back from the dead was due solely to a peculiar combination of the voting and the non-voting.

The non-voters hammered the first nail home. We have a government unable to claim authority to act in our name. Labour won just 24.2% of the electorate's votes in the lowest peacetime turnout since 1874. Overall, fewer than 60% voted. By refusing to press ahead with an immediate referendum on their most precious project, even Labour is admitting that it has no mandate to govern — though of course it will not say so in as many words.

Even if you count every vote for Labour as a vote for the euro — a ludicrously generous interpretation — just 36.6% of the electorate voted for parties supporting the common currency. In fact, opinion polls suggest that most of those who voted Labour did so despite its policy on the euro.

The voters also had their say. Where they had a real alternative and a real issue — that is to say, the 'downsizing' of Kidderminster Hospital in the Wyre Valley — they showed just

how much legitimacy this government has. In a landslide similar to that which ejected Michael Portillo from Enfield, retired consultant Richard Taylor turned a 6,000 majority for a Labour health minister into a 17,000 majority for a campaign for the National Health Service. (It is also, perhaps, no coincidence that Taylor opposes the euro.)

If voters throughout the country had voted so strongly in relation to the actual conditions of local services and manufacturing, and stood their own credible candidates from among those most able to pursue real, practical interests, Parliament might be a different place now.

So here we stand, a country not prepared to endorse New Labour with its Thatcherite vendetta against public services and its contempt for manufacturing and agriculture, but not prepared, either, to assert our own agenda.

Poll after poll has shown that the British people want monetary independence, full employment and social progress. These wishes will have to move from the sphere of hoping into the sphere of practical politics. We need more Dr Taylors to take charge in every sphere of life so that the people of Britain can take over the country for themselves.

There has been no endorsement. Blair has no mandate. His government must go.



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Rail companies in retreat

RAILWAY GUARDS have won a significant battle over safety. The dispute over a changed role for guards since Rail Safety, part of the Health and Safety Executive, introduced Rule Book changes a couple of years ago. They voted for strike action, but called it off as train companies started to agree to their demands.

The guards, members of Rail Maritime and Transport union (RMT), voted for two 24-hour strikes for two days. They felt that changes in the Rule Book demoted their status in protecting trains. The changes followed two incidents in 1995 which highlighted problems in safety procedures. Guards had a duty to protect the train, but the incidents showed concentrating on this to the exclusion of anything else could sometimes endanger passengers.

Primary responsibility for the safety of the train then was shifted to drivers. RMT did not see that as the answer, arguing that adding to drivers' duties compromised train safety. The Association of Train Operating Companies (ATOC) then refused to accept any review of the role of guards, on the pretext that they would not accept anything that was "less safe". RMT feared that guards, deprived of responsibility for train safety, would become no more than biscuit sellers. They felt that ATOC was cynically using the safety argument to push through other changes.

The guards voted for strike action in 20 companies, and despite the threat of court action were prepared to carry them through. The companies promptly began to crumble, and once a deal was struck with a couple of the most vulnerable companies, most of the others followed. RMT said it had achieved all of its demands. The deal guaranteed that guards would remain on their trains and that their safety role would be maintained.

Public support for the guards' action was high. This was not surprising. In the same week as the dispute was resolved, the report into the Ladbroke Grove crash revealed serious shortcomings in safety by Railtrack and the train operating companies involved. This coincided with the news that the former head of Railtrack, forced to resign in the wake of crash, received a payoff for leaving the company in excess of £1 million.

ISRAEL Propping up Sharon

AFTER THE APPALLING bombing which killed 21 Israeli teenagers on 31 May, the Chairman of the Palestine Authority, Yasser Arafat, called for a total and immediate ceasefire. This held until 10 June, when Israeli tanks killed three Palestinian women. The Israeli Prime minister, the war criminal Ariel Sharon, has refused to allow his foreign minister Shimon Peres even to talk to Arafat, jeopardising the renewed but fragile ceasefire.

Israel refuses to return to the peace process despite the urging of almost all governments in the world, confident of continuing support and sustenance from its supporters the USA and EU. More than 600 people have been killed since the Intifada began again last September, over 80% of them Palestinians or Israeli Arabs.

After Israel broke the Oslo Accords by sending its troops into the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the EU's foreign ministers denounced Israel's use of 'excessive force' against the Palestinian people. But in reality the EU is supporting the Israelis.

They threatened to agree sanctions against Israel by, for instance, imposing a duty on the goods produced in its settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, which it claims are Israeli products. However, the Israeli Ambassador in Brussels nobbled Chris Patten, the EU's external affairs commissioner, and no more has been heard of these threats. Meanwhile, the Commission is maintaining Israel's Association Agreement with the European Union, which gives it special trading privileges.

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

SCHOOL MEALS

Dirty tricks

LAST SUMMER 400 jobs of low-paid workers, predominantly women, were saved when Newham UNISON secured the school meals service in-house. It took a long campaign and a protracted competitive tendering exercise, but eventually the bid was accepted by the Council Cabinet and ratified for at least the next four years.

Now, senior officers of the borough are trying to introduce dirty tricks into the agreement. They argue that the Single Status Agreement, which has at its core the raising of terms and conditions of low paid manual workers, will price the schools meals service outside of the agreed competitive tender.

By trying to play one agreement off against another — In-House Schools Meals versus national Single Status Agreement — they are attempting to privatise the service by the back door. Naturally, none of private contractors' bids made any provision for Single Status, and so the £100,000 a year Chief Executive is now calling for an 'urgent and fundamental review' of school meals.

He is not interested in low-paid manual workers improving their working lives by benefiting from the limited improvements of the Single Status Agreement, but this tactic will drive low-paid workers into poverty-level wages.

Newham UNISON is continuing to resist this backdoor privatisation.

SOCIAL SERVICES

Strike ballot

IN A MASSIVE 80% ballot in favour of strike action, UNISON members in Newham Social Services moved towards a series of one-day strikes throughout June against a pay offer that would have left fewer than 20% of members with any kind of increase.

Last year the Social Services Inspectorate and the Audit Commission damned the provision of Social Services in Newham. With staff morale at rock bottom, it has been impossible to recruit, retain or train staff. Case loads are immense.

Newham UNISON has been trying for 8 months to negotiate improvements or even a framework for change, only to be met with obstruction, and finally with an offer of £3,000 a year to 7 managers and £1,000 a year to 12 staff in one social work team, Children in Need. That is 19 staff out of over 120 social workers.

DEFEND COUNCIL HOUSING

This campaign can win...

Voters want public, not private

LET'S MAKE AN ENERGY PLAN

STOP PRIVATISATION - WINNERS IN COUNCIL HOUSING

With the election now over, tenants know they need to map out a strategy over the coming months to defend council housing.

The Campaign Strategy and National Committee Meeting of the organisation Defend Council Housing met in Birmingham in the middle of June. It is clear that the government is intent on driving through a massive transfer programme.

The official list has still not been published but is expected to involve 33 councils with over 400,000 homes over the next two years, according to the campaign.

Many other councils are expected to apply for so-called Arms Length Company status — with little or no consultation with tenants.

Information is available from www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk

Nurses condemn depletion

FOR YEARS, THE GOVERNMENT'S response to the nursing shortage has been not to train more here, but to recruit actively in developing countries — despite outraged opposition from those countries themselves, and despite agreements with some of them (such as Zimbabwe) not to do it. Previously, the Royal College of Nurses has refused to condemn this depletion of skills in developing countries, talking instead of a "right" for nurses to choose which country to work in.

Now a one-sentence resolution carried at this year's RCN congress has changed all that. It read: "This meeting of RCN congress deplores the systematic depletion of other countries' nursing workforce to address UK shortage." The proposer of the motion opened the debate by saying that this subject should be debated no matter how 'difficult' or 'sensitive', reflecting an atmosphere where to raise the subject risks allegations of racism or political incorrectness. In the event so many delegates wanted to discuss the resolution that it was proposed and accepted that the debate be extended.

Several delegates outlined how the Government is ignoring its own guidelines and is allowing the "systematic depletion" in the Philippines, Africa and the West Indies and the subsequent exploitation of some of the individual nurses by the agencies involved.

Opposers of the motion were worried about "the message that the RCN would send out by the wording of the resolution", and one speaker against thought it was inappropriate as the RCN has just appointed an American as their General Secretary. But the majority of the contributors to the debate brought the focus back to Britain by arguing that proper salaries and conditions here would mean we retained NHS staff and wouldn't need to deplete other countries.

An attempt to reword the resolution to make it one about "ethical employment of nurses to the UK" (remember Robin Cook's ethical foreign policy!) was defeated.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Pay agreement

UNISON members in local government in England and Wales have voted decisively to accept a 3.5% or £380 whichever is the greater pay deal backdated to April 2001.

120,000 UNISON members took part

in the consultative exercise to determine acceptance or rejection. This represents approximately 20% of UNISON local government members, is on par for this type of exercise and is seen as a significant improvement on participation in 2000.

The TGWU and GMB, minority unions in local government, have likewise voted to accept the offer.

GOVERNMENT RESEARCH**Scientists in funding call**

GOVERNMENT RESEARCH scientists are calling for better funding for their work. They want a 10 per cent increase to enable long-term research and monitoring to take place. Years of neglect have undermined responses to health threats. And there are more cuts in the pipeline.

The scientists' union, IPMS, prepared a report in response to the BSE inquiry. They believe that plans to deal with the foot and mouth outbreak should have used experience from 1967. The scientists point out that a short-term view led to a lack of

continuity, and a loss of essential information. Work on vaccines, including foot and mouth, was switched to BSE research.

The union also argues that research should be started in new areas. For example the abolition of quarantine regulations means there is a danger from the introduction of exotic parasitic diseases.

At the moment Britain does not have the necessary expertise to deal with this. The Central Veterinary Laboratory has suffered the closure of its parasitology department and other cuts. These should be reversed, as a start to better public health.

EU plans threaten the Tube

London's Mayor, Ken Livingstone, has warned that new EU regulations could affect negotiations over the Government's plans to part-privatise the Tube. A European Commission proposal to tender out the Tube contracts every five years could compromise any agreement reached on the 30-year public-private partnership (PPP).

The proposal, entitled "The Regulation on Public Service Requirements in Passenger Transport", aims to improve public transport by bringing in increased levels of private expertise to systems. Critics comment that this is the way Railtrack has "improved" our rail network. They also note that it was the same EU, with its directive 91/440, that pushed through rail privatisation.

The EU's transport committee is currently considering this regulation. It will then pass it on to the European Parliament, then to the Council of Ministers, and it could become law by next year. Livingstone has announced a campaign to galvanise opposition to the proposal. "As currently drafted, the EU regulation would wreak havoc on London's transport system," he said. "I will seek the support of London's MEPs, all political parties and the Government to overrule this proposal."

Regular 'tendering out' of transport systems to the best bidder would create private sector monopolies dominating public transport. A source close to one of the private consortia bidding to take over Tube maintenance also voiced concern, saying, "We would be worried about anything that in any way altered the contract's terms outside of our negotiations with Bob Kiley. On this occasion there is complete agreement between us and the Mayor."

Perhaps the Mayor will now realise what his love affair with the euro means: unacceptable interference by the EU in the way we run our country.

CUBA**Energy self-sufficiency**

BY THE END of this year Cuba is planning to produce the material for 90% of its own electricity. The Cubans will use oil and gas extracted from national subsoil.

The Soviet Union was Cuba's main source of fuel. Following its demise Cubans suffered a major crisis, with power cuts of up to 12 hours a day. Despite all the other problems it faced, the Cuban government has invested US\$2 billion over the past eight years in providing power.

The minister told a business meeting,

"When a country controls its own electricity by using its own fuel, it has gained security for the future." The plan is that Cuba should be energy independent by 2005.

Cuba has developed much of its oil resources in partnership with foreign oil companies. But those agreements lead to ultimate ownership by Cuba. For example, he explained: "The Germans on the Isle of Youth provided 100% of the capital and are owners of a diesel-run electrical plant. They own 100% of the shares. They will recover the capital in five or six years and will return the plant to us once this period is over. They will also transfer 100% of the shares to the Cuban Electrical Union."

WHAT'S ON**Coming soon****JULY**

The **Sixth Congress for Democracy** will look at the new political situation after the general election and discuss how best to work together to achieve our goal of keeping an independent pound.
Friday 13 July, 9.30 am to 4.00 pm
Church House, Dean's Yard,
Westminster SW1. More information:
www.congressfordemocracy.org.uk

The annual festival and rally in honour of the **Tolpuddle Martyrs**. With speakers, entertainment, beer tent, food and childrens' attractions
Saturday 14, Sunday 15 July
Tolpuddle, Dorset. Further information from SWTUC, Tel/Fax 0117 947 0521/0523. www.tuc.org.uk/tolpuddle

Respect, the anti-racist festival for London — normally a great day out!
Saturday 21 July, 12 noon to 8.30pm.
Finsbury Park, London N7

ARCHAEOLOGY**Threat to buried heritage**

THE GOVERNMENT has recently signed up to the Valetta Convention of the Council of Europe. Article Three states that all archaeological investigation may only take place if licensed by the government. The Council of Europe is a body parallel to the EU that was set up in the Cold War mania of the late 1940s with the same "one size fits all" ideology as characterises the EU today.

In many European countries treasure hunters pillage their archaeological sites and sell off their national heritage with seemingly little public opposition. There perhaps the only recourse is to law. But in Britain this approach is wholly inappropriate.

Here the main threat to the buried heritage comes not from treasure seekers but from developers, and a framework of law already exists that allows an application for planning permission to be refused if the development poses a threat to the archaeological heritage. Unlike in Europe, Britain has a widely supported network of amateur archaeological societies that looks after the heritage and scares off the treasure seekers but will be stifled and killed if every field walk, every bit of geophysical prospecting and every excavation has to be done under government licence.

Focus on Northampton: a tale of two economies

IT'S NOT A LARGE town, and it has been hit by two large-scale closures in the last two months: Northampton is under the cosh, a Midlands example of what is happening around the country as manufacturing continues to be eliminated.

The engineering giant Timken is to close its plant with the loss of 950 jobs over the next 12 to 20 months. The company is sending in an 'implementation' team to shut down lines one by one. The company spokesman said the company had been considering its 'rationalisation' programme since last year, adding, "The changes are part of a fluidity we have in the company. We closed down four plants last year and one in 1998."

The unions were given no advance warning and many workers heard about the closure on the news. Fluidity or not, the closure will have a devastating effect on the local economy.

Thirty years ago British Timken was the biggest company in Northampton, employing 4,200 workers. The fortunes of the plant fluctuated, with job losses during the eighties and mergers in the nineties, but its future looked safe by 1998 when the company moved into a state-of-the-art £7.2 million plant in Duston and won a quality service and product award from the French railway company SNCF.

The leader of the Labour-controlled council said that he would like to see the site earmarked for industrial use and remain as land for employment. But local property developers say that the land would be worth £22 million if used for housing developments. The government has made no protest over the closure and instead has given a four-point pledge to help. This mainly consists of items like jobshops for employees, information and action by Investment UK to attract jobs to Northampton.

The local paper, THE CHRONICLE AND ECHO, laid into the firm and predicted the new Timken factories would be in countries where manufacturing is cheap and planning rules and safety regulations are less exacting than here.

Not long after the Timken announcement, more than 200 job losses were announced at the award-winning Speedibake factory in the Kings Heath area. Production is being moved to Bradford and Wakefield. The workers now have the choice of redundancy or relocation.

At the same time redundancies have been announced at People's Bank, which employs 220 people at its Northampton HQ. They are an American company with 250,000 credit card customers. Their excuse was cost savings through relocation.

While new jobs have been created, they hardly replace the lost manufacturing base. For example, a new call centre will employ 70 full-time and 42 part-time workers. An internet company is also hoping to bring more jobs with a deal secured from Microsoft. Safeways will also be creating more jobs in the county.

Manufacturing has provided a quarter of the jobs in the county, but the closure of Timken, and of Express Lifts five years ago, and the continuous job losses in the boot and shoe industry are eating away at this base, to be replaced by a low wage economy in service industries.

While Labour allows the European kind of safe and well-funded rail

Labour+Railtrack+EU

LABOUR'S COMMITMENT to the EU, despite strenuous denials to the contrary, is manifesting itself once again. On the eve of the General Election, Tony Blair refused even to contemplate returning Railtrack to public ownership.

When pressed on the issue by a caller in a phone-in programme, he said renationalisation 'would not be in the interests of the travelling public'. Rail users disagree. Hundreds of thousands signed the petition organised by the rail unions calling for renationalisation — part of the 'Take Back The Track' campaign. A recent BBC poll showed that renationalisation of Railtrack is support by 75% of the population. Over 100 MPs signed a motion supporting renationalisation. Blair knows this but his priorities lie elsewhere.

He knows that the EU is proposing to bring in new laws which would require contracts in the rail industry to be renewed every five years. This would include rail franchises and maintenance contracts. This provision runs counter to the current direction of the so-called Strategic Rail Authority, which is at least trying to inject some stability into the crazy world of the private railway by offering franchises of 20 years or more. But even without the new laws, the EU effectively already requires the breakup of national rail systems, and the involvement of the private sector.

Anything left to privatise?

Only within the context of the EU does Labour's stance on the railways make any sense. Any remaining commitment to public services will always be subordinated to the demands of the EU. Plans have been laid for a while now as the statements made by Blair just before the election show. He made it clear that the private sector was to be given a much bigger role in the provision of public services. Look at the way in which Prescott has refused to listen to Londoners opposed to privatisation of the London Underground. Business leaders haven't rushed to support and fund the Labour Party without there being something in it for them. The Tories must find the way things are going very galling — they won't have anything left to privatise if they get in again!

It is no coincidence that even after Railtrack's share price collapsed, even after Hatfield, even after having been forced to pay massive compensation to rail operators for the mess the system is in, the shareholders received a fat dividend. And then, the government promises to pay them £1.5 billion! Enough to purchase over 50% of Railtrack shares at their current value (Railtrack shares have dropped so low that it has been removed from the FTSE 100 index).

Blair says that the country can't afford to buy Railtrack back. He says that to do so would commit the industry to two years of uncertainty. The industry has been in a state of deep uncertainty ever since privatisation commenced back in 1994. It is not getting any better, and there is no end in sight. Users and workers alike would willingly put up with

an Union to drive the transport agenda, we will never have the railway system that we all want

=more train journeys to hell



Photo: Andrew Wiard/www.reportphotos.com

The Ladbroke Grove train crash: if you want safe railways, you have to be in favour of an independent Britain

two years' uncertainty if it meant getting things sorted out.

And with the new administration — plus ça change.

The SRA will continue to refuse to act in any way which could be described as 'strategic'. This is a body which has little idea of what the railway is actually about, and instead of attempting to set out how the railways could be better run, leaves such thinking to 'the market'. Watch out for the announcement shortly that Virgin have won the East Coast Main Line franchise ahead of Sea Containers, the current holders and one of the most successful train operators, who were given no idea of what to actually bid for.

Chaos will ensue as new franchises are set up, with staff and equipment transferred to a new franchisee, then another and another as things shake down. What chance is there that a reliable rail service will be run while things are chopped and changed?

Workers will continue to be transferred from one company to another as maintenance contracts are continually won and lost while Railtrack connives to prevent TUPE (regulations to protect workers transferring from one employer

to another) from being applied in some cases, thereby bringing costs down at the expense of the workforce.

Railtrack will continue to tighten the screws on the infrastructure contractors in a bid to save more money, learning nothing from the fact that it was the private sector ethos which led their contractor, Balfour Beatty, to take short cuts in maintaining the rails which resulted in 5 deaths at Hatfield. The Cullen Inquiry will make much of the loss of the managerial chain of command when it reports later this year.

Railtrack will continue to exhibit the incompetence that led to them having a new roof put on Leeds Station, and then realising that there was no way the old roof (underneath) could be removed!

Connex will be given another chance by being awarded the franchise to run Transpennine services despite its appalling record of industrial relations, and its inability to run a proper service and invest to replace its ancient trains.

On the steps of Number 10, Blair stated that he has been told by the British people to deliver in the second term. We have heard lots of fine words from this government about the need to

address the problems of rail privatisation, the need for integrated public transport, and the promise of investment. While Labour allows the EU to drive the agenda this will continue. Rail workers and rail users can look only to themselves for a change and the signs are that they know it. The rail unions have begun to flex their muscles over tube privatisation. RMT are balloting over the safety role of guards on trains. The unions are to continue the Take Back The Track campaign, backed by the TUC. More will follow.

Providing a reasoned alternative to the private mess that passes for a national railway system will be a good start in putting political pressure on Blair. But it will be action by rail workers, supported by those workers who use the system, which will be decisive in bringing about the necessary changes.

The opposition workers will face from this Labour government has to be seen in the light of its overriding commitment to the EU. To be in favour of an effective, safe public railway system, you have to be in favour of an independent Britain first, as the RMT have shown.

They call it the European ideal. But European Union enlargement nightmare for workers and the states they live in...

Their growth, our pain

TO JUDGE FROM the ambitions of the European Commission, Europe is a very flexible concept. At present, it stretches from Portugal to the border with Poland, from Norway to southern Spain. But its ambitions do not stop there.

In December 1999, the EU committed itself to adding twelve new members by the end of 2002. These were Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Further down the line, the EU is set to expand into Asia Minor, swallowing up Turkey, and perhaps Israel.

Politically the twelve current applicants for membership are quite different from the existing member states. This is recognised by the EU, and yet their entry is being used as an excuse to force a much closer political union upon all the states, new and old. Hence the Nice Treaty, which seeks to eradicate individual national vetos.

'Corruption, fraud and crime'

The European Commission's 2000 Enlargement Strategy Paper concluded, "corruption, fraud and economic crime are widespread in most candidate countries, leading to a lack of confidence by the citizens and discrediting the reforms". It deplored the increase in "trafficking in women and children" in a number of states. After this group, the next wave of would-be entrants included Turkey, where, the Report said, "torture and ill-treatment are far from being eradicated".

So the Commission admits that the applicant states are unlikely to be able at present to enforce EU laws, yet it is seizing upon their entry as a great opportunity to force more types of EU legislation upon existing member states by abolishing their veto.

EU leaders were worried that continuing in the current institutional framework, while bringing in a large number of new member states, would cause the aim of political union to be abandoned. The European project conceived at the end of the Second World

War was at risk. So they launched the Nice Treaty to try to keep it on the road. EU leaders claim that "the need for qualified majority voting to be the rule in an enlarged Union" is "self-evident".

Commission President Romano Prodi has said: "As long as the veto exists, the EU will be like a soldier trying to march around with a ball and chain around its leg." So they called for an end to national vetoes in 39 different areas, including Treaty changes and industrial policy. The EU would decide for us that we must do whatever the majority of its leaders decided.

The average income in the applicant countries is a third of that in the present EU. So the EU's Structural and Cohesion

'The next enlargement... will inevitably provoke a deterioration in the budgetary positions of all the current member states.'

Funds would no longer go to Greece, Ireland, Spain and Portugal, but to the new entrants.

The Central and Eastern European countries have four times as many agricultural workers as the rest of the EU. There are more in Poland alone, 2.2 million, than in the rest of the current EU. If they entered the EU, this would force a massive increase in the EU's budget, to pay for the necessary rises in the costs of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the regional funds.

Four independent reports commissioned by the EU estimated the cost for the CAP alone at between £10.5 billion and £25.3 billion every year, at least doubling its costs to members. Step forward, those volunteering to double their contributions! Another estimate was £30.5 billion a year. The reports

concluded that the CAP had to be reformed before these nations could join; the reports called for lower food prices and for repatriating to national governments the powers to support farms.

The Commission characteristically replied by saying that the reports would "be going straight into the bin." But it did admit that, "The next enlargement... will inevitably provoke a deterioration in the budgetary positions of all the current member states."

The EU's commitment to the free movement of labour, if applied in an enlarged EU, could mean that millions of economic migrants would flock into Western Europe's countries. After Spain and Portugal joined in 1986, the EU used their entry to force down wages, conditions and standards across the EU, and to force up the costs of the CAP, the Common Fisheries Policy and the Structural Funds.

Manufacture meltdown

Wages would not just fall. For many workers, wages could disappear altogether as industries such as automobile manufacture move their assembly plants from countries like Britain, on the geographical edge, to cheaper countries such as Poland in the geographical heart. This is why Volkswagen, for example, has been investing heavily in Skoda, in the Czech Republic.

If this is the capitalist dream, they know that the reality could be somewhat more complicated. Wilhelm Nolling, former council member of the Bundesbank, said, "The truth is that the enlargement of the EU is looking increasingly complex and risky, not least because of the establishment of Economic and Monetary Union. The potentially destabilising effects of the single currency beg the question both whether western Europe can cope with a batch of new members and, even more pertinently, whether western Europe is going to be a hospitable environment for the transition economies of central and

Continued on p 10

would be a

A Nice piece of work by the Irish people

THE IRISH PEOPLE, the only EU members allowed a say on the matter, rejected the Nice treaty on 7 June, by 54% to 46% on a poll of 34.8%. Blair didn't give us a chance to vote on it. The Irish No vote was achieved against the wishes of the entire political establishment, who with the Roman Catholic Church had campaigned for the treaty. So did the Irish Confederation of Trade Unions, with no mandate whatsoever from its constituent organisations. Yet it turned out that the strongest votes against the treaty were in the working class areas of Dublin; maybe the trade unions should listen to and respect their members' views in future.

The National Platform of Ireland, which campaigned so successfully against the Treaty, stated, "The Treaty of Nice is dead. It cannot be ratified without Ireland, and the verdict of the Irish people must be respected. Above all, that verdict must be respected by the Irish Government, who should now inform their EU partners that the Treaty of Nice cannot be ratified by Ireland. As all EU treaties must be ratified unanimously, Nice cannot come into force for some without coming into force for all. It therefore legally cannot be ratified by others. So the Treaty falls. For other EU States to continue, or to pretend to continue, with the Nice treaty ratification process after one country has rejected it, would be an insult to the people of this country, a violation of EU law and indeed of general international law regarding the ratification of treaties."

Romano Prodi, the EC's President, responded to the result, "we would fully respect the outcome of this democratic process. We know that the Irish Government and the Irish people are fully committed to the enlargement process. We trust that the Irish Government will make every effort to secure ratification within the agreed timeframe."

What Doublespeak! He means to 'respect the outcome of the democratic process' by immediately trying to overturn it. He maintains that 'the Irish people are fully committed to the enlargement process' when only 15% of them voted for the treaty. 'The Irish Government will make every effort to secure ratification': the Irish government had better do what it is told and produce the

right result next time.

The EU's Enlargement Commissioner, Gunter Verheugen, said, "Such a referendum in one country cannot block the biggest and most important project for the political and economic future of the united Europe."

On 11 June, the 15 EU Foreign Ministers, including new boy Jack Straw, issued a statement saying in effect that they rejected the Irish people's vote: "While respecting the will of the Irish people, the foreign ministers expressed their regrets at the outcome of the Irish referendum on the Nice treaty. They rule out any re-opening of the text signed at Nice. The process of ratification will be continued on the basis of this text and in accordance with the planned timetable."

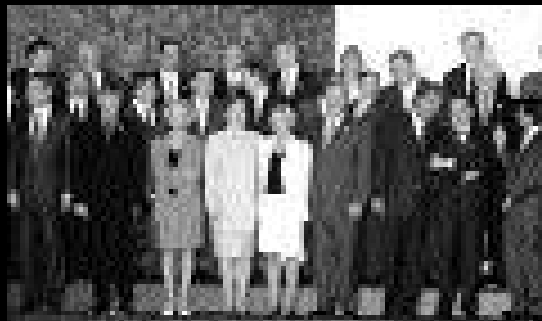
The EU leaders, including Blair, are treating the No vote as if it was a Yes vote. The EU leaders, including Blair, state that EU enlargement is irreversible, and that the Treaty will be ratified by the end of 2002. They appear to believe that they can ratify the treaty for us, if we the people won't.

So they will press the Irish people to vote the right way next time, on exactly the same treaty, and within eighteen months too, although Irish law forbids two votes in quick succession on the same subject. Still, a country's laws mean nothing to the EU.

Under the Vienna Convention of the Law of Treaties, which is the basis of international law on this matter, a treaty can come into force only when ratified by all its signatory states. If any one state decides not to ratify, then that is the end of the ratification process. The Irish referendum result is binding on the Irish government.

So Taoiseach Ahern should have told the EU Heads of State and Government that Ireland wished the Nice treaty ratification process to cease forthwith, in view of the Irish voters' decision.

Instead, the EU member governments are overruling the people, tearing up democracy and the rule of law. The labour movements in all EU member states, but particularly in Britain and Ireland, must consider their response.



They're not singing any more: EU leaders at their recent summit in Gothenburg have little to smile about now the Irish people have derailed their plans.

UNIFI, the banking and insurance union, ha euro. How could such a perverse decision h

How the finance union falls i

Continued from p9

eastern Europe.”

Former German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt said, “Within six months of joining the EU, Poland will be wiped out, because in the fields of marketing, productivity and so on, it is far from being able to compete.”

The EU imposed on the applicants agricultural quotas below existing levels, preventing us from buying their cheaper food. The applicants are industrially uncompetitive, except on the basis of low wages. Investment is totally inadequate and their trade deficits are growing. Their governments are still imposing deflation, cutting living standards and keeping unemployment high.

Living-in servants

All would provide cheap labour and raw materials; they would be living-in servants to the masters of the EU. This was why the German government, in particular, favoured enlargement.

Günter Verheugen, the European Commissioner for Enlargement, called for a referendum on the EU’s proposed expansion to the East and in so doing shattered a taboo in Germany. The German government has never put any question about the EU to the people in a referendum.

Partly as a result, Germans are turning against deeper political integration and expansion into Central Europe. If asked their opinion, they would vote against enlargement, just as they would vote against the euro. But the German government will not give the people a chance to vote in any referendum, either on enlargement or on the euro.

If and when any of the applicant countries do join the euro in later years, their entry would exacerbate the problem of divergent economies and increase the scope for political tension. The whole project of enlargement is mired in economic and political contradictions, and yet EU leaders are trying to force it through despite the Irish people’s veto. The real question for us in Britain is this: will we allow Blair to take us down with this increasingly leaky and unwieldy EU ship?

SINCE THE INAUGURAL conference that established UNIFI (the finance union) in 1999, there has been a desire that the union should take its place along with those other trade unions that have declared in favour of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), in John Monks’ words to become “the spearhead”.

That UNIFI as the finance union is by virtue of that fact knowledgeable on such matters is open to debate. But nonetheless the union is both respected and perceived as “sensible”, and as such wields influence.

Last year, the annual conference applied a brake to the headlong rush to sign up to the pro-lobby by demanding that the union debate the issue with the general membership, and then the membership declare its position before making any pro or anti statements on the euro.



To this end there have been letters and articles in the union’s journal *FUSION*, purporting to represent both sides of the argument. (Though when the main contributor to the debate from the anti side refers to some as ‘racist little islanders’ because they wish, on principle, to keep the pound, it does call into question the balance that has been applied).

There were no contributions from any organisation, let alone other trade unions, that had clearly declared its

opposition to the euro.

In addition, UNIFI produced an attractive, glossy document which it described as a balanced, objective analysis of the pros and cons of Britain joining the euro. In its introduction, the pamphlet dismisses the central reason for Britain not joining — that it would mean handing over sovereignty to the undemocratic institutions of the EU.

The booklet does this by stating that the issue of sovereignty has been debated before and by quoting a comment made by the “impartial” Britain in Europe organisation during the 1975 referendum.

‘Five tests’

Instead the pamphlet concentrates on economics, “the five tests”, the effect on the finance industry, industrial relations and the social implications. By the end, it concludes that the futures of these are unclear and it is not possible to say unequivocally whether EMU would be good or bad, only that it is a gamble. But the tenor of the document leans heavily toward the pro camp, liberally quoting pro-euro organisations and EU institutions.

By leaving out the issue of sovereignty, such inconveniences as the Treaty of Nice and its effects, both immediate and potential, on UNIFI’s members (covered in previous editions of *WORKERS*) are avoided. The debate is confined to social democracy’s position of “the choice is between US or European style capitalism”, with the hackneyed, almost cavalier “it’s the only game in town” sentiment.

The membership

Yet if opinion polls are to be given any credence then rejection of the euro has to be one of the most consistent polls ever, and this is undoubtedly reflected within UNIFI’s membership. There is a basic understanding about the idea of being ruled by a foreign power. It is against this background that this year’s conference was asked to take a stand, for or against the euro.

...s voted to campaign for entry into the ...have come to pass?

...nto the financiers' trap

Experience shows that when in debate the pro-euro camp must first reduce the argument to the economic, and failing this to scaremongering and then to crude attacks pertaining to petty nationalism, "little Englanders" etc (who incidentally were people who were against expansionism — but who cares about history?). UNIFI's conference proved no different.

From the balcony it appeared that a spread of for and against speakers were lining up to make for a good debate — sadly this was not the case. The motion being debated was to commit the union to campaigning in favour of entry to EMU, with an amendment calling for a ballot of all union members, a safety net. The amendment was defeated and the motion was carried.

Pragmatism

Ironically, perhaps the most honest contribution was what the trade union movement prides itself in most — being pragmatic. When employers say that what they want to do is good for us, they have to demonstrate it; the status quo remains. We do not just accept it. Similarly, it is for the pro-euro camp to show that being run by an unelected, unaccountable foreign power is worthwhile.

Appeals to reject EMU and maintain the status quo fell on deaf ears as delegates were challenged on whether they had even read the document and whether they were adequately equipped to commit scarce resources in campaigning either way.

The delegates hadn't and they weren't, but they wanted to be led. Generally, the way the whole debate over "Europe" has been conducted has been one big turn-off for most, deliberately so — all the better to move the European dream quietly on.

Telling the truth

If the words of European leaders were regularly relayed to the British people, rejection of the European project would rise even more, but telling the truth is not what this is about.

Conference accepted an artificial divorce between the economic and political and chose to believe the usual arguments that entry into the euro was somehow inevitable, that Britain should be "in there and not left behind", that the benefits/opportunities are there to be won, and that it is safe to trust the Labour Party because of the five tests. There is rarely any justification of these assertions, more a case just "trust me when I tell you", a call to the faithful.

'Research from the pro camp itself suggests the loss of some half a million finance jobs across the eurozone if EMU is introduced.'

A rather forlorn appeal to democracy by balloting the members fell flat in the face of the conference being flattered with talk about their responsibility/power to lead and that a union such as UNIFI must have a position now and besides a ballot would cost money the union doesn't have.

With a battery of speakers (including 'the big guns') lined up to say that there was no future save inside EMU and that the union had debated the issue widely enough and with only one speaker against, except for those appealing for the status quo, the motion was carried.

UNIFI is now committed to campaigning and issuing publicity stating the "reasons for support, while acknowledging any concerns our members may have".

The working class way

It is to be hoped that UNIFI does not get dragged into the courts over this (since the old law about political campaigning without a political fund has yet to be repealed). That is not the working class way and is cowardly.

Instead, members must get involved and overturn this self-defeating position. Research from the pro camp itself suggests the loss of some half a million finance jobs across the eurozone if EMU is introduced.

And yet it is now likely that UNIFI will be used as a stalking horse — who better to promote the euro than UNIFI, the finance union?



Shipman in Manchester, the Bristol Children's Heart Hospital — m standards is an issue at the core of the modern NHS

Ensuring the quality of patient care

AS THE ENQUIRY into how the former GP Harold Shipman murdered his patients unfolds over the coming weeks, the words "clinical governance" will be much discussed. The inquiry will address three questions — what happened, how did he get away with it for so long, and how do we prevent it ever happening again? The answer to the second and third questions is "lack of clinical governance".

Clinical governance is the umbrella term to describe all the activities of an NHS organisation which ensure the quality of patient care. It includes measures to ensure that the person treating you is skilled and up to date in practice, but it also addresses questions about the work process and the environment of care.

Many small steps

Superficially these look like errors of the individual practitioner. But clinical governance would look at how such errors are the end result of many minute steps and would consider details such as how the drug packaging could be more distinctive, how the equipment could have built in error checks, how many people should check such drugs prior to administration etc

Although the words "clinical governance" are new, many elements of it have been considered best practice for decades. It includes the processes of audit and risk management which workers in many different environments have used for some time.

In particular, Britain has a long tradition of medical audit which started originally among surgeons who systematically reviewed the outcomes of their surgery. They compared their own work over time and then compared it with surgeons in other environments. They looked at survival and infection rates, etc.

But the recent enquiry into the high death and complication rate at Bristol Children's Heart Hospital clearly demonstrates that not all institutions necessarily followed this model. Likewise the Harold Shipman inquiry is bound to

discover that a system which leaves scrutiny of individual practice down to the individual practitioner is fraught with danger.

It is quite inappropriate that the Department of Health has made Chief Executives of Trusts personally liable and accountable for the clinical work of their staff. The Department itself describes clinical governance as a "...system through which NHS organisations are accountable for continuously improving the quality of their services and safeguarding high standards of care by creating an environment in which excellence in clinical care will flourish".

It may be convenient to identify one head to roll but their own definition describes a process which can only be achieved collectively.

"A First Class Service" was the title of the government paper from 2000 which addressed the quality of care in the NHS, outlining measures aimed to achieve it. These included the National Service Frameworks (NSFs), already established in mental health, coronary heart disease and for the elderly and a National Cancer Plan. These were to be created for all disease conditions and population groups, to show how care provision should be shaped.

Also on the national stage is the work of the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE), which reports on the benefits, or otherwise, of medicines launched onto the market. Here it is important to distinguish between cases where the evidence base to support the introduction of a new medicine is too limited to enable it to be recommended, and cases where there is a risk of rationing, if a new medicine is unaffordable on the NHS.

To date, if anything, there is little or no evidence of NICE withholding useful therapies from patients.

Inspections of the Trusts

Other national work supporting clinical governance is to come from the Commission for Health Improvement (CHI). This body will inspect Trusts and

monitor NHS standards. Trusts will be colour-coded with a traffic-light system in operation. A green light signifies that the trust will be free to manage its own affairs; a yellow suggests that help to improve will be provided; and red means that a hit squad will be sent in to sort out the trust.

Locally there are four main components which form the framework for clinical governance in each trust. There must be clear lines of accountability for the overall quality of clinical care; a comprehensive programme of action to improve quality; clear policies aimed at managing risks; and procedures for all groups to identify and manage risk.

'Although the words "clinical governance" are new, many elements of it have been considered best practice for decades.'

Inspection brings a large burden of new work, but otherwise how could it produce quality in the service?

Self-regulation

Professional self-regulation is under significant review by government. The issue here is whether the professions can persuade government and the public that they can regulate their colleagues. Already the government has made clear that it insists on significant lay membership within the disciplinary machinery. From the autumn it will be mandatory for the professionals to have a majority of only one in such committees. Each profession will need to examine the scope of its code of conduct and ensure standards of service are clear and failure to meet them equally clear. Individual performance appraisal is key

Monitoring and raising

to assessing and managing individuals. Trusts have put in place 'whistleblowing' policies to enable staff to register concerns locally.

Continued professional development, another essential part of clinical governance will become mandatory within this government term of office. It is a staff right and appraisals should be sought by employees, and the training provided as identified but work pressures in the hospitals are a key determinant on how well this programme is achievable. Service to patients naturally takes precedence when there is too much work and insufficient staff. The long-term effects of this are disastrous, as staff become inefficient, or at worst unsafe and stressed.

Resources and capacity

Workers governing and controlling their work environments is a powerful concept. Many NHS workers are currently struggling to reconcile the concept of clinical governance with working in understaffed environments which they - using all the processes of clinical governance- assess and find unsafe! As outlined in the article in the ambulance service in last month's WORKERS (May 2001) the concept of governance must logically be extended into every aspect of work including questions of pay, conditions and staffing.

Staff must be protected from the pressure from a government committed to fixing the NHS without yet providing the resources to do this properly. The lag time to develop the staff numbers to enable recruitment of staff, to deliver the service we aspire to, will take a fair time, probably 5 to 10 years. Shortage of funds is often not the issue. Money is available but people are not.

The overriding issue in the NHS is one of a failure to manage capacity. Too much work, at too low a standard, to get through as many patient care episodes as possible, is the norm. We should apply some brakes until we are in a healthier position to deliver the service the patients have every right to expect.



Photo: Peter Arkell

Patient care: ensuring quality must be a collective practice

The new British Museum, with its spectacular courtyard, is full of buzzing with excitement

A new vision for the British Museum

THE YEAR 2003 will usher in the 250th anniversary of London's British Museum in Bloomsbury, founded in 1753 as a vast "storehouse of knowledge" and unique in the world in comprising both antiquities and books. Now, the tomes over which Marx and Lenin, and so many others pored, have settled into their own

state-of-the-art premises at St Pancras. The biggest move of books and library services the world has ever seen (12 million volumes to the British Library), coinciding with the millennium, was the catalyst for new vision in museum layout and civic space, epitomised by Norman Foster's Great Court and treatment of the old Reading Room.

When Marx became a reader of the Museum in 1850, he would have entered through a gleaming new Ionic portico. Over the years this gathered grime, but also a symbolic accretion of international learning. Inside, the front hall and staircase have been vividly re-painted in the ancient Greek style, as Marx would have seen it. But there the similarity ends.

Until 1857 the "shabby-genteel" readers described by Dickens worked in damp, dark, smelly, cramped conditions, surrounded by stuffed birds (the natural history collection did not move out until 1888). In 1823 the son of an Italian village chemist had been sentenced to death for his part in the struggle for

unification, and fled to England. Antonio Panizzi re-channelled his revolutionary zeal into the museum, enforcing the Copyright Act and squeezing money out of the Treasury to ensure the museum possessed a copy of every book published in this country. "I want a poor student to have the same means of indulging his learned curiosity... as the richest man in the kingdom," he said in 1836, "...and I contend that the Government is bound to give him the most liberal and unlimited assistance." By 1852, Panizzi had doubled the stock. It was time for a third, more spacious Reading Room.

Panizzi secured a public grant, and in 1857 Marx and his contemporaries moved in to the familiar drum-shaped, domed library, surrounded by a courtyard. Soon, however, the courtyard was lost from public view and forgotten under extra stacks totalling 25 miles of adjustable shelving for 8 million books, while the gold and azure interior, ruined by smog, was described as "dim, lurid, and somewhat ghastly". There were experiments with electricity to prevent closure on foggy days, but books were still fetched by lantern.

Today, however, all is light. As you enter the courtyard through the controversial white French stone south portico (the contract specified Portland), you are compelled to look up towards Foster's latticed roof with its 3,312 panes of tinted glass, floating like a fishnet veil to reveal sky and scudding clouds. Ahead is the Reading Room, clad fossil-like in white Spanish limestone, a focus of accumulated knowledge. Steps spiral upwards to embrace either side of the drum. A bridge leads north to Mesopotamia, west to Italy before the Roman Empire, east to Celtic Europe. By 2003, a complete south-north route through the museum, funded by Wellcome, will have opened it up as



Photo: Cherry Howes

Norman Foster's Great Court epitomises the new spirit

never before.

Archives revealed the original blue of the dome. Moving cracks in the surface, caused by shrinkage of papier-mache and the expansion and contraction of 2,000 tonnes of cast iron, were treated with the maritime 'caulking' method, using modern 'flexiweave', covered with over two tonnes of zero-tension Swiss oil-based paint, which is not absorbed. 25 kilometres of 24-carat gold leaf was also used to restore the decoration to that seen by Marx until deterioration set in.

Ideas about the purpose of museums have changed since Marx's day. Space, presentation, special exhibitions, educational facilities, retail and refreshment, are all considered essential in attracting not only academics and researchers, but also tourists, school groups, and the resident ethnic mix for which London is famous. The British Museum buzzes with excitement. Children scamper round the Great Court. Halfway down the stairs is the Ford Centre for Young Visitors, where teachers can supervise project work, and muster their charges.

The idea of a separate entrance from other visitors was resisted. Museum visiting should be a habit for life. Now 50,000 children a year are pre-booked to receive gallery talks by curators sensitive to their needs.

Marx would have approved. An inspiring teacher himself, surrounded at the museum by political refugees, he believed in education as a weapon to defeat the charlatans and traitors who pretended to socialism, but feared the working class. He knew that the "fake messiahs" calling for instant revolution were adventurers, who had not done their homework on the "economic shit". He put his faith in "English working men, the first-born sons of modern industry...not the last in aiding the social revolution produced by that industry".

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 British workers need their own political party, this party, to generate the ideas and effort to bring the changes we need.

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 of workers and turned them into a party with a difference.

In 1971, the Party's second Congress produced a piece of completely new communist thinking for Britain called THE BRITISH WORKING CLASS AND ITS PARTY. We call this our Party programme and it remains as fresh and important for today as it was then. You can find it on our website, www.workers.org.uk.

Dozens of political parties formed in the 1960s and 70s have come and gone, while the CPBML is alive, well, and welcoming new recruits. One reason for its success has been that every CPBML member must be a thinker and a do-er. There are no paid officials.

The party is made up of working people like you, 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

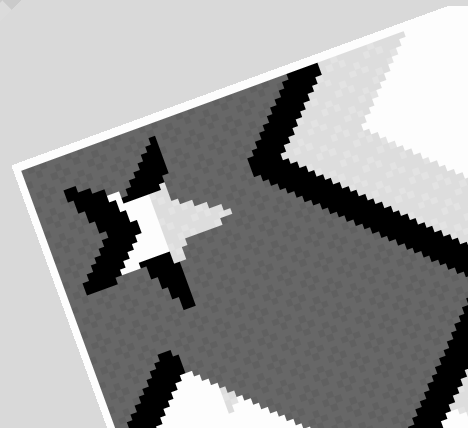
* The above description of the party is taken from our pamphlet WHERE'S THE PARTY. You can order one, and a list of other publications, by sending an A5 s.a.e. to the address below.

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Back to Front – It's a clear agenda

'What is the plan for a country losing more jobs in manufacture weekly than during the Thatcher reign of terror?'

NOBODY COULD HAVE DOUBTED the intentions of New Labour. They were confident enough to flag them up before the election. Developments confirm that this is a government intent on a Thatcherite free market, capitalist, anti-working class (ie European Union) agenda.

What is the plan for a country losing more jobs in manufacture weekly than during the Thatcher reign of terror? The Queen's Speech made no mention of making things here, the hallmark of a sovereign nation, but instead the Chancellor announced new measures to promote "enterprise". Business is to be freed up from more of the few civilising restraints still imposed by the state. Teachers will be expected to teach children the glories of capitalism, in Brown's words, every teacher should "communicate the virtues and potential of business and enterprise". This in the week of the Cullen report on the Ladbroke Grove train crash.

And how will they tackle unemployment? A new measure will force the partners of those claiming unemployment benefit to attend job interviews (along with new mothers).

A grim future is offered to those who work in agriculture, laid waste by foot and mouth disease. For the first time, Britain will have no dedicated ministry for agriculture or fisheries. The new department for the environment, food and rural affairs has a brief to switch attention to "alternative rural industries". Country shire populations are expendable in what could be the agricultural equivalent of Thatcher's pit

closure programme. The idea that Britain should produce its own food is to be abandoned (in line with Brussels plans). Henceforth the "rural economy" will refer mainly to tourism.

The drive to dismantle the powers of local authorities is to be quickened. The government is committed to a rapid increase in the selling off of council houses, 200,000 a year for the next five years. At this rate there would be none left anywhere by 2015 (Labour and Liberal councils are selling them off at a faster rate than the Tories).

In the name of "inclusion" the national system of education will be broken up, to be replaced by just individual schools competing for children in a market place. This is "choice and diversity". More religious schools, more "specialist" schools to divide children up at age 11 along the lines of specialist interest, race, parental income, their parents' religion, even colour if Ken Livingstone's race adviser has his way.

Yet this new government, with its huge majority, shows also its inherent weakness: it is unable to decide on the central issue of the euro. As Brown announced this week, the government has bottled out of going for a quick referendum in fear of certain defeat by the working class. The Irish vote against the Nice Treaty helped to concentrate their minds.

British workers have a government which intends a grim future for Britain, but which lacks courage. The opportunities are there for us to take charge. We need only to decide to act.

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