

# WORKERS

www.workers.org.uk

JULY 2012 £1



## THE OLYMPICS: A CITY HIJACKED

JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY



**The euro** Just making things worse | 06



**Industry** For a national strategy | 12



**Historic Notes** The Hartley Pit Calamity | 15

IF YOU WANT TO REBUILD BRITAIN, READ ON

# WORKERS

## “ Migration and Labour

THE LABOUR Party is shifting ground on migration. Ed Miliband's latest speech certainly moves things on from Gordon Brown's "bigot" outburst at the last general election. But there's a long way to go before Labour – or many in the unions – get in line with the reality that most workers in Britain experience and know.

Bigots are people "intolerant of ideas other than their own" according to one dictionary. That's a perfect description of many on the so-called "left" who have been wilfully ignoring the evidence before their eyes.

The ultra-left have been clothing themselves in the rhetoric of neoliberal conservatives, wittering on about the "benefit to Britain". And there clearly are benefits to mass migration if you're an employer looking to sink pay rates below even the minimum wage. Or if you're one of the modern buy-to-let racketeers renting out houses where families huddle in one room.

Instead of speaking up and speaking openly about the recruitment agencies that advertise exclusively in eastern Europe, they have pretended it's not happening. Miliband at least is now talking about the agencies that exclude British workers from jobs by not even taking them on their books.

Instead of documenting and publicising the chaos and disruption to children and NHS patients from unplanned and unfinanced surges of demand for education and health, they talk about "vibrant" communities.

What's vibrant about turning sheds into multi-occupation slums, about rack rents pricing housing out of the reach of most workers, about primary schools with no room for local children?

Unfortunately, through his acceptance of the European Union, Miliband (like Cameron) has given up the battle before he has even started it. "We cannot set the numbers coming in from the rest of the EU," he said in his speech to the Institute of Public Policy Research in June. "So I'm not going to make promises I can't keep."

Coyly, Miliband makes no reference to "British jobs for British workers", a demand labelled as racist by ultra-left and establishment alike. Yet the EU promotes the immigration of workers from Eastern Europe, all of them white, taking jobs away from black, Asian-origin and white workers here. So one might argue that being for open migration from the EU is to be "pro white"! All this talk about race is utter nonsense, of course.

Unlimited migration is in no one's interests but capitalism's. ■



WORKERS is published by the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist)  
78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB.  
ISSN 0266-8580

www.workers.org.uk  
Issue 160, July 2012

”

## Contents – July 2012

### News

Ratcliffe workers halt attack, p3; Doctors start pensions fight, p4; Power market "won't deliver", p5; News Analysis: the European External Action Service, p6

03

### Features

The disaster zone – why the euro can only make things worse, p6; Scottish TUC: Separatism shunned, EU condemned, p8; The Olympics: a city hijacked, p9; A national industrial strategy – bring industry back to Britain, p12; Marxist Thinking: Twenty-five abnormal years, p15

06

### Historic Notes

1862: Hartley Pit Calamity – a disaster remembered, p14

14



<b>CONSTRUCTION</b>	Ratcliffe attack halted
<b>EDUCATION</b>	Over-funding academies
<b>EU</b>	An irrelevance?
<b>PENSIONS</b>	Doctors begin action
<b>PENSIONS</b>	Ford staff vote to strike
<b>OIL REFINING</b>	Coryton left to die
<b>ENERGY</b>	'The market won't deliver'
<b>NEWS ANALYSIS</b>	EU External Action Service
<b>EUROBRIEFS</b>	The latest from Brussels
<b>WHAT'S ON</b>	Coming soon

# Ratcliffe workers halt attack

Photo: Shutterstock.com/MW Richardson

AT THE END of May, upwards of 600 workers walked out at Ratcliffe power station in Nottinghamshire (pictured) to demand that a suspended Unite health and safety representative be reinstated.

The employer, Spie Matthew Hall, had suspended the rep based on an allegation of bullying a colleague – a charge outrightly denied. It later emerged that the individual who had made the allegation was sacked for urinating on the site.



In a move widely regarded as retaliation for leading the successful dispute against BESNA (Spie was one of the infamous 7 employers – see April 2012 issue of WORKERS), the employer suspended the rep in mid April. Still smarting from their enforced withdrawal, the employer had been ratcheting up their own bullying tactics; forcing workers out in the rain, introducing measurement sheets,

issuing petty verbal warnings and generally turning the screw.

It took until mid May for the disciplinary case to be heard, where it was stated that the rep had been accused of bullying because of his "ordering" the individual not to attempt to stop a mechanical saw with his hand. What a bully!

On 29 May, with still no resolution from the employer through the formal channels, workers decided enough was enough and walked off the job. Spie responded by offering to drop the disciplinary charges on condition that the rep agreed to be transferred to another site. This offer was rejected and with further action planned for the following Thursday (6 June) and increased pressure from the union Unite, Spie backed down and fully reinstated the rep on 4 June. It is unlikely that this will be the end of sniping by the "7" and their desire to break the agreements remains.

Construction workers are facing attacks on a number of fronts including the current offer of a three-year pay freeze. Unite and GMB negotiators are due to meet the employers again on 4 July, taking with them a rejection of the pay freeze. Shortly afterward there is the national shop stewards forum, and it is imperative that all sites have stewards in attendance, ready to plan for action in the event that there is nothing meaningful forthcoming from the talks. ■

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

## EDUCATION

### Over-funding academies

ACCORDING TO information obtained by the Anti-Academies Alliance from a chair of governors of a local primary school, a new free school, Stour Valley Community School, in Clare, Suffolk, received funding for all of its planned capacity regardless of the actual numbers of children it had. In education jargon it was fully funded to its PAN (Planned Admission Number).

All other schools are funded on the basis of the number of pupils they actually have on roll and this per pupil funding makes up the vast majority of all school budgets.

When Stour Valley School opened in September 2011, its capacity across the three years of entry was 324, though it actually had 190 pupils. Taking the average £5,325 that a Suffolk secondary school gets per place this means it received a total of £713,550 in additional funding for pupils that the school simply didn't have. Apparently this is to continue for two years, making over £1.4 million.

The chair of governors' blog is available at <http://shar.es/qvprq> ■

## EUROPEAN UNION

### An irrelevance?

KENNETH CLARKE, speaking in early June on Radio Four said, "A referendum on our membership of the EU is an irrelevance. It is the demand of a few right-wing journalists and a few extreme nationalist politicians. I cannot think of anything sillier to do than to hold a referendum." Opinion polls show that 70 per cent of the British people want a referendum on EU membership. ■

## EUROBRIEFS

## The latest from Brussels

**Outside intervention**

EU LEADERS have abandoned the convention of not intervening in elections in other countries, openly calling on the people of Greece to back pro-poverty parties. Tory MP David Davis said, "How the Greeks vote and what it means for the Greeks is a matter for the Greeks. Imagine how crass we would think it if Europe started making comments about British elections."

**New political union**

A GROUP of 10 EU Foreign Ministers propose to use the crisis as a stepping stone towards a "political union" by transferring more powers to the EU, including creating a European monetary fund, a European army and a European finance minister.

**Protection money?**

ACCORDING TO the DAILY TELEGRAPH "David Cameron promises to 'protect' Britain from German plans for a eurozone superstate with common banking and political systems." Yet Cameron has also called for a bigger bailout fund, shared eurozone bonds and a more active monetary policy from the ECB. Chancellor George Osborne said much the same: "We will not oppose greater political integration at a eurozone level... we hope to further integrate the single market."

In other words both Osborne and Cameron want the eurozone to integrate its members' economies into a German-led state. European Commission President Barroso called this "a very interesting development".

**Undermining national identity**

IN EVIDENCE to the House of Lords EU home affairs sub committee Peter Sutherland, Head of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, said the European Union should be doing its best to undermine the sense of homogeneity (single identity) of its member countries in favour of an open immigration policy.

Sutherland is also non-executive chairman of Goldman Sachs International and former chairman of BP, and has reportedly attended meetings of the Bilderberg Group. He admitted that the Global Forum on Migration and Development had received some funding from the British government. ■



Photo: Workers

Whymark Avenue near Turnpike Lane in north London is now home to Banksy's latest – a picture of a young boy crouched over a sewing machine making those lovely Jubilee flags. It's painted on the side of a Poundland shop. And? Well, Poundland severed its links with a supplier two years ago after it was revealed that a seven-year-old boy was working in excess of 100 hours a week in a sweatshop in India producing Poundland goods. Good for Banksy!

## Doctors start pensions fight

ON 21 JUNE doctors took industrial action in defence of their pensions. It was the first time they had taken action in nearly 40 years and the decision to proceed followed a huge turnout and an overwhelming "yes" vote in a ballot of members.

The timing of the doctors' action meant they were taking action nearly a year after other public sector unions. The government then used every tactic they could to isolate the doctors further and to turn public opinion against them including claiming that the doctors' action was "taking money from nurses", an attack which outraged both nurses and doctors.

The planned action entailed doctors being in the workplace but not undertaking any routine work such as planned surgery. The action required a lot of organisational detail and was very successful in that, as planned, a huge number of routine clinics, GP appointments and theatre sessions were cancelled.

Some doctors insisted on working normally, arguing that "morally" they could not "ask for more", as if their colleagues were a collective of Oliver Twists. This ill-informed position ignored the fact that the doctors had agreed to pay more into the scheme in 2008, when tiered contributions were introduced, with higher-paid NHS staff paying more – ensuring that lower paid staff were not subsidising the pensions of higher paid workers.

Specifically, doctors' contributions increased then from 6 per cent of their salary by almost half to up to 8.5 per cent. The scheme is in a strong funding position and currently provides a positive cash flow to the Treasury of around £2 billion a year. A Public Accounts Committee report in May 2011 found that the reforms to the scheme were bringing substantial savings to taxpayers, with costs set to continue to be sustainable well into the future.

As with the other public sector pensions, the issue is one of theft of workers' deferred wages – indeed, the higher the wage, the greater the theft. ■

## PENSIONS

### Fords white-collar battle

FORD WHITE-COLLAR staff have voted for a 24-hour strike affecting Dagenham in Essex, Bridgend in South Wales, Halewood on Merseyside and Southampton as Ford attempts to close its final salary pension

scheme to new starters and reduce benefits.

The action follows a similar attempt by Honda in the South West to change its pension scheme earlier in the year, which was defeated by Unite action. Unite sees the attempt by Ford as an attempt to prepare for the closure of the scheme as well as to create a two-tier workforce on pay and pensions. ■

**GREECE****Nothing solved by elections**

IN THE rerun of the Greek elections anti-bailout Syriza increased its share of the vote from 17 per cent to 27 per cent but that of pro-bailout New Democracy rose from 19 per cent to 28 per cent. Both parties support Greece remaining in the euro, and the result enabled New Democracy to cobble together a shaky coalition with other pro-bailout parties which is now going to try and ameliorate the worst aspects of the bailout deal.

The Greek Communist Party (KKE), which opposes the deal and Greece's

continued membership of the euro and the EU and is also calling for a full Greek default, saw its vote halve to 4 per cent.

The overall turnout at about 62 per cent was even lower than in the May election. In May a record 35 per cent did not vote, the figure reaching almost 60 per cent in some parts of northern Greece.

After the election results were declared German Chancellor Angela Merkel immediately telephoned New Democracy leader Antonis Samaras to congratulate him on his victory. Stock markets did not share her optimism, with bank shares falling across Europe. Nobody believes that Greece's problems and those of the euro have been solved. ■

# Power market 'won't deliver'

BRITAIN WILL remain increasingly dependent on foreign fossil fuel imports unless billions are invested in nuclear energy, former government chief scientist Professor Sir David King, has warned. King's comments followed the withdrawal of RWE and E.ON from contracts to build two new nuclear power stations, as reported in *WORKERS*.

King, now director of the Smith School of Enterprise and the Environment at Oxford University, said that the government assumes it is up to the market to deliver "but actually this isn't going to happen". He said we could not rely on the private sector to provide the huge sums needed to keep the lights on and that only strong state intervention could produce the investment in infrastructure on the scale necessary.

The government's Electricity Market Reforms will hasten a new dash to gas. Why? The time frame and cost for implementing clean coal technology and carbon capture and storage will present the energy companies with a choice. What is it to be? Massive infrastructure investment now – an estimated £110 billion by 2020 and then an estimated £16 billion every year until at least 2030 – or go for quick profits from burning gas?

Carbon capture and storage capacity by 2016 will equate to 1.6 gigawatts, probably 5 gigawatts by 2018, whereas present coal-fired stations account for 28 gigawatts of production. So another huge shortfall, another timeline flapping in the wind. The reliability, availability and deliverability of electricity supply we've come to expect in Britain for the last 80 years is looking to break down. ■

**OIL REFINING****Coryton left to die**

THE GOVERNMENT has refused any help to keep open the Coryton oil refinery in Essex, claiming overcapacity in the refining industry, after the Swiss multi-national company Petroplus became insolvent threatening 850 jobs and London's petrol supplies.

Coryton has been in administration since January, with 500 full-time workers and 350 contractors waiting to see if a rescue bid could be pulled off. The refinery provides about 20 per cent of the fuel needs of London and the South East, and local MPs have pointed out that the loss of such an important national infrastructure asset will increase reliance on foreign fuel imports.

The administrator, PwC, has announced 180 redundancies after the failure to find

another buyer. But the possible closure of Coryton, once part of Shell, follows on a long term plan by the multi-national oil companies and the European Union to reduce the number of oil refineries across Europe dating back to the late 1970s.

Coryton will be the last of the Thames estuary oil refineries in production. Supplies will shift from deliveries to Coryton to supplies by pipeline from Stanlow Refinery in the North West, another aspect of the UK oil pipeline which followed on the tanker drivers' dispute in 2000.

According to the workers' union, Unite, the closure "... will have a devastating impact on the local community and the wider economy, sucking out over £100m, and leading to the loss of hundreds of skilled jobs". Coryton workers are resisting the closure with demonstrations in the nearby town of Corringham and also outside the Leveson Inquiry when Cameron was giving evidence. ■

**WHAT'S ON****Coming soon****July**

Friday 13 July to Sunday 15 July.  
Tolpuddle, Dorset.

**Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival**

The biggest labour movement event in the south. A special focus will be on the 100th anniversary of the birth of folk legend Woody Guthrie. Stalls, speeches, and the annual march through the village to commemorate the struggle of the Tolpuddle Martyrs arrested in 1834 and transported to Australia for daring to form a union.

Saturday 14 July, 9 am to 5pm. The Racecourse Ground, Green Lane, Durham City, DH1 1JD

**Durham Miners' Gala**

The mines have gone, but the annual event, with its highlight the march of colliery bands and union banners, is still the premier labour movement event in the north. Speeches around 12.30 pm.

6 June to 28 July. Karamel, Chocolate Factory 2, 4 Coburg Road, Wood Green, London N22 6UJ

**Us and Them**

The Chocolate Factory hosts an exhibition tracing four decades of photographs by Andrew Wiard. Iconic shots of struggles industrial and social. Worth the trip up to Wood Green to see the keenly observed portrait of Simon Guttmann, 84 years old when Andrew first met him, alone. Guttmann, a pioneer of photojournalism in Berlin, left Germany in the 1930s and set up the Report agency in London. "I was privileged to be among the last generation of photographers to pass through Simon's hands. At Report we earned little, but I, for one, inherited from those times a deep and lasting sense of how important it is to record those significant encounters between 'Us' and 'Them', which I hope still inspires my photography today," writes Andrew.

24 July to 9 September. Science Museum, Exhibition Road, London SW7 2DD.

**Make it in Great Britain**

With all the focus on the finance industry and its alleged importance to Britain, a welcome look at the country's manufacturing champions, showcasing leading products and processes from a wide range of industries.

## The European External Action Service

**EVER HEARD** of the European External Action Service (EEAS)? Probably most people have not. But it exists, courtesy of the European Union's new constitution, smuggled in as the Lisbon Treaty of 2009.

This treaty created the post of EU President, and mysteriously, an unknown Belgian named Herman Van Rompuy appeared as EU President. Shortly after, an unknown (and never elected) Briton, Baroness Ashton of Upholland, was conjured out of a hat to be the EU's High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. Her appointment also brings with it the role of Vice President of the EU Commission. Her department was to become the European External Action Service, launched on 1 December 2010, and eventually to have a staggering annual budget of £5.8 billion. Its new headquarters in Brussels costs £10.5 million a year in rent alone.

It has an army of ambassadors across 137 embassies with up to 7,000 EU bureaucrats trained to pursue the EU's foreign policy objectives. It will dwarf Britain's diplomatic corps, which has 4,800 diplomats. The largest EU diplomatic mission is in Turkey with 132 staff and the second largest is in the US with 124 diplomats. Barbados has 46, Ukraine 95, Bosnia Herzegovina 92 and even the tiny island of Vanuatu with a population of 200,000 will have 6.

### Nowhere called home

Two-thirds of the diplomats are career EU bureaucrats trained to have no thought or consideration for their home country and taught to refer to their home nation simply as "the country I know best". One member of the staff of unelected EU Commission President José Manuel Barroso, was appointed EU Ambassador to the US and immediately told the US press that he was empowered to speak not only on behalf of the EU President and the EU Commission but also on behalf of member states.

The Foreign Affairs Council of the EU, comprising the foreign ministers of member states and chaired by Ashton, governs the EEAS on foreign policy. But the EEAS is considered unique and independent from other EU institutions. It also brings together intelligence and security services with information pooled across the EU.

The EEAS by its very nature, as well as that of the EU Presidency, suggests the creation of a single EU state with no role for national governments, nor even the vaguest form of bourgeois "democracy" for the working classes of member states. It is a further withdrawal of bourgeois democracy. At least British Foreign Secretary Hague has to go to Parliament to explain or justify his latest intervention.

No such mechanism exists with the EEAS. So it should matter to workers in Britain and the EU. And yet, it could be a folly that helps to bring the whole EU pack of cards down. Just imagine the sight of the EU throwing its weight around against Russia, China, Syria, Iran, Argentina or whoever, as its own member states are expelled from the eurozone or the EU itself collapses due to its own financial crisis – while the EEAS budget mushrooms to become bigger than the GDP of some nations. ■

# They can't say they weren't warned launched to predict how it would st

## The disaster zone: why

WHEN BRITAIN'S parliamentary parties, the CBI, the TUC and most of the media were pushing us to join the euro, some begged to differ. In 1996 the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development forecast that there would be zero economic growth under European Monetary Union.

The economist Susan Strange forecast in 1998, "it could very well be that German monetary hegemony in the EU will doom European economies to prolonged slow growth, high unemployment and low competitiveness."

So long as the euro exists, most members will have the wrong monetary policy. Like the gold standard, the euro forces changes in real prices and wages instead of exchange rates. And, like the gold standard, it pushes economies into slump and puts the pain of adjustment on weaker countries. Inside the euro, profits, dividends, bonuses, mergers, unemployment and emigration all rise; wages, living standards and investment fall.

The attempt to regain competitiveness and work down the debt burden through misnamed austerity – in reality, impoverishment – is bound to fail. Cutting public deficits cuts demand both at home and in other eurozone countries. Countries pedal ever harder to stay put. Cutting wages and prices increases the real value of debt, thereby further weakening the banks.

The EU calls for more poverty, yet public and private sectors can only decrease the percentage of debt on their balance sheets by creating large current account surpluses – not possible given most eurozone members' huge external debts and low exports. The current account deficits of Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain have been far worse since they joined the euro, and have worsened every year since. Their total net external debt is far more than any seen during the 1997 Asian crisis.

### Breakdown and collapse

When investors expect debts to rise forever, borrowing costs soar, and the face value of debt collapses. This breakdown in confidence and collapse in debt value happens very quickly, as with Greece and Spain. Greece and Portugal are insolvent and will never be able to pay back their debts, while Spain and Italy are "illiquid" – can't get hold of cash – and cannot meet their upcoming debt payments.

To fund their current account deficits, they have sold more assets to foreigners than they bought. For Portugal, Greece, Ireland and Spain, foreigners now own assets worth almost all their GDP. If countries default or leave the euro, the creditors will be French, German and British banks. EU members have a total exposure of £552 billion to the Greek economy. That exposure has just forced Cyprus into a bailout.

The European Central Bank is also now very vulnerable. It has a small capital base – 6.4 billion euros, which will rise to 10.7 billion euros by the end of 2012. But its last reported accounts showed liabilities of 163 billion euros. So the European Central Bank may already be insolvent. It is creditor to many fragile banks in the Eurozone, to the tune of about 850 billion euros. European banks are undercapitalised and insolvent, with uncontrolled exposure to risky sovereign bonds. Bank runs are already happening.

The euro is doomed. In the summer of 1993 a speculative attack

l. Any number of economists lined up before the euro was  
 arrange economic growth. And it has...

y the euro can only make things worse



Photo: Workers

**Doomed currency: leaving the euro is the best policy tool to create growth.**

ended the ERM experiment. The lesson (as of the 1971–73 collapse of the Bretton Woods system of fixed foreign exchange rates) is that if markets believe, with evidence, that they can break exchange rate systems, then they will.

### Defaults

Defaults, debt rescheduling and devaluations are inevitable and desirable. Countries should re-denominate sovereign debt in local currencies, recapitalise, restructure and shrink their banks, and force losses onto the bondholders.

During the past century, 69 countries successfully left currency areas. These countries then grew again quickly. For example, after their 1997 devaluation, Indonesia, South Korea, and Thailand suffered short, sharp downturns, but then grew quickly for the next decade and achieved pre-crisis GDP levels within two to three years.

**“The attempt to regain competitiveness and work down the debt burden through impoverishment is bound to fail ...”**

It would be best to announce the end of the euro on the first exit. Otherwise the markets will just line up to attack the next weakest link. The single currency was based on the impossibility of exit. Once there is an exit, then the euro project is over.

And once it becomes clear that a country needs to leave the eurozone, it should do so at once. Accepting more and more bail-outs before finally leaving would

cause far more damage. But the EU makes it hard for countries to leave, hurting them to try to prove that leaving is bad for them. EU treaties oblige eurozone members to have the euro as their currency, and the capital controls needed for an orderly exit are illegal under EU law.

Leaving the euro is the most powerful policy tool to create growth. In 2002 Argentina defaulted and devalued, imposing a 50 per cent loss on banking sector assets. The government drained the banks of capital (to the public's gain) and sent the banking system into insolvency (to be rescued by the government). The world's capitalists all screamed that its economy would crash because it would have no access to international credit or to international trade. But after just one quarter of contraction, Argentina's economy grew by more than 8 per cent a year, led by an export boom spurred by the much lower exchange rate. ■

## The Scottish TUC came alive with discussion on the European Union – despite attempts to avoid the debate...

# Separatism shunned, EU condemned

DELEGATES REPRESENTING nearly 651,000 workers met in April at the Scottish TUC annual conference in Inverness, with the theme “There is a Better Way”. The news that the government had sanctioned a further £10 billion to the IMF to be used to prop up the euro served to fuel a more determined will to oppose the European Union and its attacks on workers.

For the opening session a video had been prepared highlighting the various demonstrations and actions that had taken place in Scotland over the previous 12 months against government attacks. It was readily apparent that government attempts to get workers to accept absolute decline are failing. The word “growth” was used frequently; but much discussion is still needed on what is meant by growth and the politics and actions needed to bring it about. For example, the parliamentary argument over the merits of the Coalition’s “front-end loaded” monetarist attack, as opposed to Labour’s “back-end loaded” Keynesian approach, is sterile, keeping the discussion within the parameters of a failing capitalism. The challenge in 2012 is to break out from this sterility.

It was in this context that each speaker in the morning session described the difficult conditions that they face, and the problems affecting their particular trade. Each one studiously avoided making the connection between the apparent lack of resources at their workplace and the government’s seemingly boundless resources available to help prop up a currency that British workers have refused to join. There was certainly an initial reluctance by speakers to break from “orthodox” discussion – they were using just half their senses.

The conference went on to meander through various equality issues – only serving to negate what it means to be a member of the working class by substituting a vague concept of “fairness” – meaningless under capitalism. Balance was restored later by strong calls for revitalisation of manufacturing and apprentice skills schemes.

A low point was the foolish invitation to First Minister Alex Salmond to address conference. Giving the unions praise and



The Scottish TUC in session in Inverness.

Photo: Workers

promises, he attempted to put over his separatist agenda, which would split the working class of Britain. Speakers throughout the rest of the conference hit out at his attitude, pointing to the “deceptions and deceit at its heart”, his lack of action on manufacturing, unemployment, banks, agency workers and redundancies in shipping. The ferry services are in danger of privatisation and it was one of his MEPs who invoked an EU ruling in favour of this, as outlined in his New Draft Ferries Plan. A leaflet given out condemning separatism was well received by delegates.

### Running out of time

There then followed a session on the media, with reference to the plight of journalism in Scotland, the Murdoch press and the Leveson enquiry. Despite the topical interest, it became apparent the conference executive was dragging out proceedings. A glance at the last motion of this main day’s agenda was enough to see why – namely the question of Britain’s relationship with the European Union, due for discussion at 5.10 pm. The executive

saw every chance of this EU debate being timed out. But then at 5.15 pm, they were outdone by the proposer of the next motion, who agreed to withdraw discussion on the need for high speed broadband in rural areas.

The EU motion and debate was now on, and it was at this point that the conference came alive. Trades Council delegates – Clydebank, Dundee, Kilmarnock – were the ones pushing the issue forward. A solitary voice spoke in favour of the EU; the executive, fearing the outcome, nominated one of its own to be the “voice of reason”, but to no avail. The motion was passed almost unanimously, albeit as a composite with many contradictions. But in leaving the conference that evening, there were strong indications that most realised the significance of the vote as a step towards getting out of the EU. A fringe meeting reinforced that anti-EU feeling.

The day’s events also served as an example of the infuriating ambivalence that has resided within our labour movement for far too long – time we stopped avoiding the necessary tasks. ■



It was supposed to be London that won the Games. But the capital has been the biggest loser...

## The Olympics: a city hijacked



Photo: Workers

Spectators queue to enter the Olympic stadium for one of the test events held in the runup to the Games.

**The following is a speech delivered to a packed meeting organised by the CPBML in Conway Hall on 14 June.**

WELCOME TO a different meeting about the Olympics. You haven't had to pay to come in, you haven't had to buy the T-shirt or trinkets, you don't have to pay to leave though there will be a voluntary collection later. Why our meeting title? Because you cannot say "London Olympics 2012" as it is branded and you have to pay a fortune to the Olympic organisers to use the term.

My understanding of the Olympics was that they were originally amateur, for internationalism amongst people, for peace and friendship.

Are we at war? Woolwich Ferry over the last few months has had Royal Marines in the ever so Royal Borough of Greenwich zipping up and down the river in flash dinghies practising to stop the seaborne

invasion coming up the Thames. Last invasion up the Thames was 350 years ago and that was stuffed near the Isle of Grain!

If you manage to walk to work you run the risk of being hit by the fallout from ground-to-air missiles the Ministry of Defence intend hiding on roofs of flats in the East End and parks in South East London. The missiles are to deter flying suicide bombers, and are to be fired on the personal command of David Cameron, our own superman from Poshville, self-declared champion of the free world.

Missiles with a four-mile range, whatever they are fired at, are guaranteed to come down on Londoners – not on Whitehall, Downing Street or Buckingham Palace but on the likes of you and me. If not missiles, then special services death squads patrolling the streets hunting terrorists on a shoot first, ask questions later basis. We all know what happened

last summer in Tottenham in similar dodgy circumstances.

There will be snipers hanging out of army and navy helicopters to shoot down any flying bombs the rockets have missed in the no-fly zones and 10,000 service personnel based on a helicopter carrier in Greenwich. There will be landing craft and submarines patrolling the English Channel, fighter jets, attack helicopters, with billions spent on defence, not bad for a country supposedly bankrupt. And if not bombs then cyber-attacks and computer hacking on an unprecedented scale, probably aliens as well, you couldn't make all this hype up unless you were some posh public school boys with their heads stuck in their Boys Own comic books.

Why are the Olympics in Britain a

*Continued on page 10*

*Continued from page 9*

terrorist target? Not because of the founding principles of the Olympics but rather because of the behaviour of the British government, British commercial interests, British armed forces across innumerable parts of the world – Afghanistan, Iraq, etc. The billions being spent in so-called prevention of terrorism are really about trying to intimidate London. It is good therefore that people are saying no missiles on my block of flats, no missiles in my park, take your toys off my lawn.

Remember the cost of the opening ceremony doubled from £30 million to £60 million and was paid by Osborne without a murmur? But your housing benefit, now that's another story. What's gone wrong?

What do we have in London? A bill for over £9.5 billion to host the games. "Host" meaning the people of London will be repaying this debt for the next 30 years through their Council Tax. £9.5 billion would pay off all London's NHS debts, rebuild schools, pay off a great slice of building Crossrail and really catapult the quality and standard of City life into the 21st century.

But no, even before the first race has been run, the first medal lifted, in fact even before the stadiums had been completed, the so-called Legacy authority was mired in arguments and dispute as to who was going to asset strip the London sites.

### **A City hijacked? How?**

Every possible aspect associated with the Games has been commercialised, branded or sponsored. You cannot buy a British beer at the stadium because no British brewery won the sponsorship tendering exercise.

As a British resident, getting tickets has been a nightmare not because of supposed computer problems but because the vast majority of tickets have gone to commercial companies or targeted at tourists. Why the companies? Because it generates income, advertising and sales. Why tourists? Because it brings in money. The government have changed shopping hours

## **“Every trinket, souvenir, item of memorabilia or branded sportswear has been produced in sweatshops in the Far East.”**

for the eight Sundays involved because they reckon this will generate £750 million extra for the large supermarkets and high street brand stores. Cynically they refer to the Olympics as “Britain being open for business” and that “longer hours will reduce retail congestion and help tourists spend money”.

Some of the corporate tickets on offer range from £300 to £700. Go along for a prestige pavilion seat, full English breakfast, champagne reception, superb three course lunch with fine wines, complimentary bar, five-star cuisine, take in a couple of hours of sport – don't take my word for it just read the advertising blurb. An ordinary working class person would need a second mortgage or bank loan to pay for such things, but then again it's not the ordinary working-class person, is it, who's attending? It's just us paying for the jollies of the rich.

What you eat and drink has official sponsors – Coca-Cola, Heineken, McDonald's. Every trinket, souvenir, item of memorabilia or branded sportswear has been produced in sweatshops in the Far East. Everyone is aware of this but so powerful are these companies that the TUC, though running its Fair Play campaign against such rates of pay and working conditions, daren't call for a boycott of such goods. There is even an official sponsored sick bag in case you cannot stomach any more of the junk food or media hype associated with these circuses.

Hotels have inflated prices. Estate agents have been running an obscene scam to persuade people to hire their homes out. Thousands of people have been evicted by

unscrupulous landlords. House prices have been inflated yet again – for what? An eight-week orgy of money-grabbing once a century.

The media is in a feeding frenzy of hype, diversion and displacement activity to generate a feelgood factor for diverting attention from London's real problems and of course generate as much advertising revenue as possible. They even diverted the Olympic Torch run from Newham to Tower Hamlets because the organisers and media didn't want to show the world the real poverty of the East End.

The city has been hijacked over transport – millions of workers are now advised to walk to work, work from home, work extended hours, work unsocial hours, bring a camp bed into the office. London's public transport infrastructure is at best a miracle on a routine day. 3.5 million journeys on the Tube each day. Add an estimated 5.5 million day visitors and half a million staying visitors during the eight weeks of the Games and London will grind to a halt.

“We want to make sure people know they will be nicked,” is the friendly compassionate attitude towards parking, shown in the obscenely redefined “Royal” Borough of Greenwich in a message sent out to over 112,000 residents. Park in the wrong spot and cough up £130! 24 hour roving parking warden patrols, probably better density policing than the Metropolitan Police, more a city under occupation than celebrating.

But if you are an unaccountable Olympic VIP, official, celebrity nobody, groupie or corporate hanger-on then no worries – elite car lanes, 4000 sponsored BMW chauffeur-driven cars, all to speed you through a permanent rush hour lasting all day, from your five-star hotel to the venue of your choice.

London has been hijacked over its public services – only ambulances with blue lights can use the elite road lanes. But how do patients get to hospital if stuck in traffic jams, how do the routine and regular demands on the NHS survive in these circumstances? Leave for staff has been cancelled in the NHS, tough if you have

kids during the summer holidays. Extended shifts have been introduced for utilities staff. Gas, water and electricity workers have been told they must maintain supplies to the Olympic sites as the top priority, so everyone else. Staff in the immediate host boroughs have had leave refused. Transport and rail staff expected to work longer hours and handle incredibly higher demands have at least forced recompense from the private companies.

Vast swathes of the City are to be effectively no-go zones for cars and vehicles. Bad enough is driving on a routine day but now drivers are advised don't drive at all. Controlled parking zones are being introduced throughout all direct host boroughs and neighbouring boroughs of the sites. There are amusingly named Parking Protection Areas to protect residents and businesses, but backed up with 24-hour ticket-issuing parking wardens specially funded by Boris Johnson's office.

### Fines of £1000

Not only will parking tickets be hiked to a minimum of £130, but there are also proposals to introduce fines of £1000 for parking unofficially in one of these Olympic areas. Fines for unauthorised use of the elite lanes, fines probably for walking slowly or standing still – which is likely to be millions of us if you think about the forecast two-hour delays to get a train or tube at the wrong time of the day at the hot-spot stations. They've obviously missed a fund-raising trick there! Even the streets beneath our feet are being privatised.

London is hijacked in a frenzy of distraction and diversion from the real needs of the seven million people of London in the interests of greed, profit, sleaze and phoney prestige. Eight weeks of circuses will vanish as quickly as the 15 minutes of fame in the spotlight. And I'm still waiting to meet anyone who works or lives in London looking forward to this event.

What do we really want from the Games?

- Return them permanently to Greece. Why not?
- Sack the Olympic Federation and



Photo: Workers

**Heavy security: the fence alongside the Lea Navigation Canal. The towpath and canal alongside the Olympic Park will be closed throughout the Games.**

national equivalents.

- Take the sponsorship and so-called professionalism out of them.
- Take the greed and profiteering out of them.
- Make sport belong to the people not a plaything of the rich.
- Make sport part of society's development – make it voluntary and part of the community.
- Consider how we could really support athletes in both Olympics and Paralympics in the true spirit of the Games – people not profit.
- Promote internationalism, peace, friendship.
- Those principles work in Cuba, they can work elsewhere.

What do we really want for London?

The real regeneration of London and the East End, not circuses, distractions, diversions, putting sticking plaster over the problems and poverty of a city crying out for help. One simple action could be stopping the ceaseless flood of people into London overpowering our schools, NHS, housing and jobs market.

The creation of real value-generating jobs not the phoniness and non-jobs associated with the Olympic legacy park.

What happens to the legacy sites? They

will be sold off for vast profits, some will be demolished but none will be as were promised to the people of London. The buyers will be those who want to see London as an international sporting venue, flying in ever faster tours of intercontinental sporting leagues owned by the rich, for the rich and paid for by us.

We are for the regeneration of London not for eight weeks but for the next 80 years or more. Regeneration means homes, schools, health, transport, jobs – all the infrastructure society needs if we are to create real culture and sport.

We want a legacy worth remembering –

- Not cheap tat from the Far East
- Not the next generation burdened with debt
- Not London boroughs vying with each other for the title of the poorest borough in Britain surrounded by decaying Olympic one-offs
- But real wealth creation, real jobs, real values for people not parasites.

We are for the reclaiming of London, reclaiming it for the working class of London.

And as a final word, I saw an advert stating "THE GAMES MAY NOT COME TO LONDON AGAIN", all I can say is, "CAN WE HAVE IT IN WRITING PLEASE!" ■

## Current British governments are not prepared to defend or restore industrial policy for Britain...

# A national industrial strategy – bring industry back to Britain

IN MARCH the manufacturers' organisation EEF (formerly the Engineering Employers' Federation) called the first ever national manufacturing conference. Every seat was sold: over 500 delegates attended, accusing the government of having "no compelling vision for where the country is heading".

Looking at the management of our economy and lack of plans for expansion, the term "government" is a definite misnomer: current British governments are inactive. They are not prepared to defend or restore our manufacturing capacity. Instead of introducing measures to get people back to work and devising industrial strategies to rescue our country from economic depression, they just drift spinelessly and tolerate endless industrial closures.

Failure to act in this sphere has plagued a succession of governments – Labour, Conservative or Coalition. Each party in power has responded negatively to industry, reinforcing capitalism's absolute decline, as the bourgeois political parties are completely in awe of finance capital with its strong aversion to British industry.

### Unemployment

Unemployment is at unprecedented postwar levels (2.67 million), young and older job seekers are being hit disproportionately and the economy remains depressed with recovery nowhere on the horizon. The Institute for Public Policy Research predicts that unemployment is set to rise further and cannot see it falling in the next year and a half.

How is this desperate situation to be changed for the benefit of a people suffering in so many ways? How might capitalism be compelled to adapt?

If manufacturing capitalists can organise and make calls for supportive economic measures, then surely our industrial unions can combine their efforts too, put aside membership battles and conduct a protracted campaign to resurrect British industry.

Ideally, both manufacturing capital



Photo: Shutterstock.com/oriontrail

and industrial unions should campaign on the question of rebuilding industry and manufacture in the national interest, transform the political environment and isolate the non-interest of finance capital. Indeed, later in March, Cameron felt compelled to speak about rebuilding the infrastructure to the Institution of Civil Engineers, where he was high on rhetoric but thin on practical details.

A key step must be to devise an industrial policy for Britain, similar to those in other countries. An industrial audit of Britain needs to be undertaken, highlighting what has been lost, what needs to be restored and in which order, and what needs to be developed that is new.

The industrial policy must support British industry: there must be an end to defence procurement going to foreign

companies, letting the likes of Sheffield Forgemasters go under and dithering over the train-maker Bombardier. Government procurement must direct more manufacturing work to British industry. There will have to be protectionism and industrial intervention. If this brings Britain into conflict with the European Union, then we should behave as Germany and France do and protect our own interests. Cameron offers a National Infrastructure Plan; we shall see if it has teeth and substance.

### A bank that invests

Within the industrial policy a British Industrial Investment Bank must be created (as is the practice elsewhere) with the aim of improving the long-term prospects and growth of the British economy, by extending the range of our

re our manufacturing capacity. A key step must be to devise an

## Industry back to Britain

manufacturing capacity and by improving our nation's infrastructure facilities for energy, transportation, water supply, education and health.

State-directed, this bank should make funds available at low or negligible levels of interest, lending according to long-term national interests and investing either to build new industries, expand existing companies or update the infrastructure (Cameron made no reference to industrial expansion, only infrastructure renewal). This approach would counteract the contractionary effects of the current obsession with fiscal policy, which is over time proving to be ruinous.

### End short-termism

A public development bank would avoid the short-termist tendencies and market failures of private capital markets which result in a lack of funding for projects of long-term value to our national economy.

For instance, sometimes oil and gas industries work on a 25-year project cycle. Unlike a commercial bank, a National Industrial Investment Bank could appraise possible projects for financing not only on the basis of their profitability but also on the basis of their contribution to national policy objectives—say the promotion of exports or the repair and development of infrastructure, etc.

A National Investment Bank could address the deterioration of British infrastructure. Infrastructure is a prime example of a sector in which the benefits of a project to the broader economy are larger than the private financial return to the owner, with the result that private capital markets, left to their own devices, tend to fund less infrastructure investment than is needed for the economy as a whole. Investment in Britain's transport, energy, water and other systems has fallen to critical levels over the past four decades.

Capitalist economies find it difficult to stage spontaneous recoveries from major slumps because severe economic depression leads to a collapse in confidence and investment. Absurdly, banks and companies nowadays are

sitting on piles of cash or stashing them away in relatively riskless, unproductive places.

There will be no means of escape from prolonged depression except through state intervention to promote and subsidise new investment. Expenditures sponsored by government will substitute for the lost confidence of the private sector.

Worryingly, Cameron's speech was full of caveats about an unwillingness to commit the state to pay all the bills and how it was important to get private money and unlock the dynamism of the market. Back to square one then with the danger of no real movement. The nettle of utilising the state must be grasped.

### Examples

As for how national investment banks can operate, there is a wealth of successful examples from other capitalist countries such as the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau in Germany, the Korea

Development Bank and the Development Bank of Japan in Asia.

An interventionist approach organised by companies on an industry basis has worked for Britain's automotive sector. The car industry – once in a sorry state – established The Automotive Council to generate stronger supply chains, provide high level skills and apprentices, make the sector more attractive for investment and provide genuine collaboration. Now the sector has 3,000 companies employing 133,000 people, making a range of cars and buses.

Other sectors such as aerospace and the Marine Leaders Council have shown the model works elsewhere. This is despite government; imagine what could be achieved if industry was supported by state policies and investment strategies.

We need to set in train a series of measures that will produce a second industrial revolution in this country and put people back to work making a range of things that people and society need. ■

## Meet the Party

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

**M** The theme of the first meeting, on Thursday 27 September, is: "The European Union – War on Europe's Peoples". Details of further meetings will be announced in WORKERS and at [www.workers.org.uk](http://www.workers.org.uk).

**M** Catch our WORKERS sellers this month at the Durham Miners' Gala and the Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival (see What's On, p5).

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

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

A hundred and fifty years on, the accident at the Hester Pit, Hartley men and boys is not forgotten...

## 1862: The Hartley Calamity – a pit disaster

THE HARTLEY PIT Calamity is still remembered in the North East as one of the worst mining disasters in England: 204 men and boys lost their lives. A beam on the pumping engine failed, killing five miners on their way to the surface. The debris blocked the lift shaft, trapping those still underground.

As the first mining disaster of the Victorian period on such a scale, the Hartley Calamity continues to resonate, despite the widespread calamity enacted by the Thatcher government on mine workers. Pits can be closed, but memories remain open.

The Hester Pit, to give it its proper name, had only a single shaft, as was usual at the time. That served not only as the entrance and exit, but also for the pumping out of water by a beam engine next to the shaft.

At 10 am on Thursday 16 January 1862 a shift change was taking place underground when the heavy cast iron beam snapped without warning. A considerable tonnage dropped into the shaft as it killed those in the cage. A section of beam lodged like a bone in the throat of the mine, trapping the rest of the two shifts underground.

### No escape

With no other exit, there was no means of escape. Despite frantic rescue attempts involving workers from other mines, it took six days to reach the trapped miners. All 199, some as young as 10, had by then succumbed to the gas which had held up the rescuers.

It was well-known by 1862 that cast iron was brittle and prone to sudden breakage. But the great extent of the disaster was not directly due to the broken beam. Nearly all the dead perished for want of a second exit. A memorial in the grounds of the local church, St Alban's, Earsdon, provides a record in stone of each of their names.

The 150th anniversary of the Calamity has been marked by the community in a variety of ways. An evening of music and songs was held in the Memorial Hall and there was a dedicated church service at which "The Hartley Calamity" – a ballad



This newly made banner will get its first outing at the Durham Miners' Gala this month.

poem by the pitman poet Joseph Skipsey (1832 to 1903) was read. And a book entitled STILL THE SEA ROLLS ON – THE HARTLEY PIT CALAMITY OF 1862 has been compiled.

The village of New Hartley has produced two banners bearing the name of the Hester Pit to be carried in this year's procession at the Durham Miners' Gala in July. Until then, the banners have a place of honour in the Memorial Hall along with a series of cross-stitch pennants, hung proudly along the wall, recording the

names of those who died.

Local school children have made their contribution by producing fine fabric collages portraying scenes then and now with, in total, over two hundred birds in flight, one for each victim.

This is not just an event that happened 150 years ago, but a community still active on its own behalf, aware of its history and traditions while still fully engaged with the present world. Contained within the commemorations are thoughts about the

...tley, which killed 204

## ...remembered

2010 Chilean miners, trapped so long underground though ultimately rescued, and the Greymouth tragedy in New Zealand in the same year but with a different outcome.

A speaker at one of the events made mention that mining accidents continue to claim the lives of miners, only today it is in China rather than Northumberland.

Much is made in the media and by politicians about the need to reward entrepreneurs with bonuses – otherwise they are unwilling to do their jobs. But the working class will give of their creativity and labour freely for their community, as the commemorative book and all the other events demonstrate. No one here has earned a penny for themselves.

This book contains Skipsey's "The Hartley Calamity", which is doubly appropriate, this being the 180th anniversary of his birth in Percy Main North Shields where he became a colliery worker at the age of seven. A self-taught man, he demonstrated the potential within members of the working class by going on to become a librarian, custodian of Shakespeare's birthplace, and gain a Civil List pension for his literary work.

**STILL THE SEA ROLLS ON – THE HARTLEY PIT CALAMITY OF 1862 compiled by Keith Armstrong and Peter Dixon, 2012. Northern Voices Community Projects supported by North Tyneside Council. ISBN 978-1-871536-20-1**

**This publication combines a history of the event, illustrated with drawings, photographs and documentary evidence of the time, with present day poetry, stories, photographs and drawings by local people. The contents are varied, with each a fitting tribute to those being commemorated, their lives, however short, celebrated.**

**Copies can be obtained from, 93 Woodburn Square, Whitley Lodge, Whitley Bay, Tyne and Wear, NE26 3JD, priced £7.99.**

This item is an edited version of one that first appeared in [www.imarxman.wordpress.com](http://www.imarxman.wordpress.com)

More from our series on aspects of Marxist thinking

# TWENTY-FIVE ABNORMAL YEARS

**Normally we associate the workings of capitalism with certain undesirable, unpleasant attributes that are inescapably part of its nature such as mass unemployment and economic downturns. But the twenty-five years following the end of the Second World War were markedly different from all other capitalist periods.**

After the war, the British economy operated on changed lines, unlike what went before or what has happened since. For two and a half decades, the market was not allowed to dictate everything. Abnormally for capitalism, there was sustained full employment with relatively high economic growth. There was even a large state-run sector comprising not only essential services such as health and education but also industries like steel and railways. State monopoly capitalism ran huge parts of the economy. For a brief spell capitalism changed its spots and temporarily assumed new traits.

Why did this period not conform to the usual capitalist practice? What prompted this seemingly errant behaviour?

Look for the answer in the phenomenal change in the balance of power between the capitalist and working classes that took place during the Second World War, brought about largely by the Soviet Union's leading role in the victory over fascism. In particular, working class influence grew massively throughout western Europe and by 1945 the ruling classes were fearful that the end of the war might bring revolution.

Capitalism moved consciously to prevent this scenario and opportunistically ditched many of its preferred ways. It tactically retreated in the face of sudden working class advance to ensure its preservation. And so began its post-war aberration. Though a relatively short-term setting, it seems to have lulled many workers into dropping their seasoned guard and picking up disastrous misconceptions about the nature of capitalism, particularly that its extreme harshness had been consigned to the past. In those times our class's commitment to collective organisation lessened. Our instinct of keeping our defensive abilities in order, so as to repel the exploitative system, was often scorned. As we noted at our 1976 Congress, some trade unions became "a fast emptying house". Those uncharacteristic post-war years proved corrosive and damaging to our vitality, producing a serious decay in our class consciousness and a sorry lapse in class organisation. Our misreading of the system made us vulnerable and unprepared.

Inevitably with the passage of time and as fears dissipated, capitalism reverted to form. The first clear indication was the reappearance of mass unemployment in 1970. Progressively, the usual market approaches were resumed.

Recognising the true nature of the opposing beast still remains a problem. Rebuilding effective trade unionism will be a welcome sign of renewed class purpose.

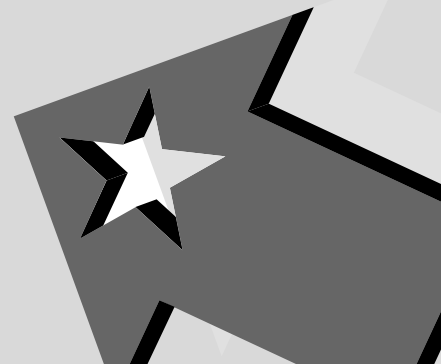
### Interested in these ideas?

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

### WORKERS

78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB

email [info@workers.org.uk](mailto:info@workers.org.uk)  
[www.workers.org.uk](http://www.workers.org.uk)  
phone 020 8801 9543



# Back to Front – It's not austerity

**'What we are living through now has nothing to do with austerity. It's not about shunning luxuries. Current policies are about the impoverishment of the people of Britain...'**

IT WOULD BE a good start if those in the unions, and elsewhere, opposed to the government's policies stopped talking about "austerity". What we are living through now has nothing to do with austerity. It's not about being self-disciplined, abstemious, grave and sober. It's not about shunning luxuries. Current policies are about the impoverishment of the people of Britain.

Take the unemployment figures released by the Office of National Statistics on 18 June. They tell us what we already know, but still make shocking reading. In an analysis prepared by the TUC, they show that in the 12 years since 2000, unemployment has risen by a staggering 42 per cent. That's not belt-tightening – it's strangulation.

What could be worse than a 42 per cent rise in unemployment? How about this: youth unemployment, that's the number of 18- to 24-year-olds out of work, has gone up by an almost unbelievable 78 per cent in the same period – in the years largely covered by Labour and its endless initiatives.

But, as if reading an extract from a cross between BRAVE NEW WORLD and the nightmarish film SOYLENT GREEN, the figures just tumble out...long-term unemployment, defined as being on the dole longer than a year, has gone up by 50 per cent since 2000, and those young people without work for between 6 and 12 months by an enormous 152 per cent.

The palm goes to another stat: the number of 18- to 24-year-olds unemployed for more than a year has exploded in the last 12 years. It has mushroomed by 874 (eight hundred and seventy-four) per cent. Indeed, it's gone up by 264 per cent in the last year alone.

So when TUC General Secretary

Brendan Barber says, "Now is certainly not the time to be young in the UK, with figures showing more than one million people under 24 unable to find work and the pay of those in work lagging behind inflation", one might say he's guilty of a certain understatement.

So perhaps the TUC might also consider why it is adopting the capitalist term "austerity" (popularised, if that's the word, by David Cameron in 2009). The TUC even set up a website called [www.afterausterity.com](http://www.afterausterity.com). Far better to have called it [afterdecimation.com](http://afterdecimation.com), or [afterimpoverishment.com](http://afterimpoverishment.com), or better still, [afterdestruction.com](http://afterdestruction.com).

Talking in terms of austerity is more than a slip of the tongue, more than another example of the debasement of language by a ruling class that has given us "collateral damage", "friendly fire", "tactical questioning" and "enhanced interrogation". It's symptomatic of an attitude among sections of the working class that really it's just a passing phase, a sort of business-as-usual approach that wilfully ignores the reality of the unfolding counterrevolution in Britain.

Why are we being impoverished? To feed the banks, yes. To prop up a moribund and corrupt financial system, yes. But there's another, deeper, reason: it's quite simply because they can.

Recognising our lack of resolve, the ruling class is using its state power to effect the most wide-ranging redistribution of wealth this country has seen in such a short period – from the working class to the rich.

That's what capitalism is. That's what it does. And that's what it will carry on doing until we put an end to it once and for all. ■

## Subscriptions

Take a regular copy of WORKERS. The cost for a year's issues (no issue in August) delivered direct to you every month, including postage, is £15.

Name

Address

Postcode

Cheques payable to "WORKERS". Send along with completed subscriptions form (or photocopy) to WORKERS 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB



## Workers on the Web

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

## Publications

CHANGE BRITAIN, EMBRACE YOUR PARTY

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

## To order...

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