

WORKERS

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JUNE 2011 £1



DON'T BREAK UP BRITAIN – REBUILD IT!



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WORKERS

“ Back to the roots

WITH THE conclusion of the Unite General Secretary election, we now see another round of proposed trade union mergers. Unite is courting PCS (the civil service union). PCS is playing the field, its romance with Unison now over. Various other strange bedfellows are courting the teaching unions. None of these proposed marriages has any proper root; none has anything to do with romance or even being arranged. More like fixed up, shotgun.

There is an attempt under way to create a “left” centre for the trade unions, marginalising the TUC through having only four or five politically linked “super unions”. The political link is mainly about money and proposals by the ultra-left to run their own MPs for parliament.

British trade unions were formed around workplaces, trades and skills – political affiliation was irrelevant. Unlike on the Continent, they are not tied to membership of particular parties or religions. Their tie to Labour has always been their Achilles heel. When our trade unions maintain the Labour Party link but replace its candidates with “left” robots or candidates from ultra-left political organisations, they deny their root once again. The result will be further alienation of workers from their own creation – the trade unions.

It’s time to take “big is beautiful” and “business managerialism” out of the trade unions and get back to the real world: workplace organisation – being organised and using our collective strength. ■

AV RIP, OK

LIFE IS GRIM, but now and then a shaft of light breaks through. Larger than expected numbers of voters turned out in the referendum to kick out the Alternative Vote, leaving Liberal Democrats with nothing from their coalition, except of course the pleasure of propping up the Conservatives.

In the event, turnout was 42 per cent. So the government needn’t have shown its lack of democracy by earlier voting down a move in

the Lords that sought to make the referendum result binding only if more than 40 per cent took part.

Clegg admitted he’d got a good kicking. But that should be just the start, a little taster: workers must now really put the boot in to this demoralised coalition. It won’t fall apart by itself, and gutless Labour certainly won’t topple it for us. It’s time for the working class to show its mettle. ■



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Battle on pensions

SCHOOL TEACHERS at their spring conferences have voted to hold a ballot on strike action over pensions. In an unprecedented display of anger, the Association of Teachers and Lecturers heckled schools minister Nick Gibb when he tried to tell them that they needed to accept huge rises in contributions and cuts in entitlements.

The ATL is now making common cause with the National Union of Teachers in balloting members for a joint strike day in the summer term and possible further action in the autumn. ATL members in selective and private schools, where the union is stronger, have been attending joint regional meetings with the NUT for the first time.

A teachers' pensions loss calculator on the NUT website is energising young teachers, who have the most to lose with the combined effect of increased contributions, the change from using the Retail Prices Index to the Consumer Prices Index as the measure for calculating the yearly uprating of pensions (CPI is consistently lower than RPI), the move to change from final salary to average salary pensions, and the increase in the retirement age. Taken together these constitute a massive attack on teachers, whose pension scheme is rated as sound by even the pensions hawks.

Unlike some areas of the public sector, teaching remains heavily unionised, and membership of the pension scheme is high. Clearly the government wants to put an end to this situation and wants a fight.

The planned teachers' strike is scheduled for 30 June. The NUT and the ATL will be joined by members of the University and College Union in adult, further and higher education, whose members have already voted in a ballot for rolling action. And now the civil service union PCS is to ballot to join in. In the autumn, the teachers' union NASUWT and the senior public servants' union FDA are likely to enter the pensions fray.

Careful and innovative thinking about strategy is desperately needed. At the NUT conference a motion was passed calling for a general public sector strike (walking straight into a government trap). Apart from the need to build the fight carefully, conducting it in a manner that will conserve and not fritter away our power, using our strengths and possibly taking in the second phase creative forms of action not necessarily just guerrilla forms of strike, the "general strike" strategy ignores the realities of patchy union organisation on the ground and the varying situations in different public sector unions.

We don't want to follow a recipe for failure with the "activists" who call for it then blaming everyone but themselves as usual. Rather we want to create a dish of well organised, tactically agile discontent that will force the government to retreat. ■

TRADE UNION LAWS

Market mania

A FURTHER raft of anti-trade union legislation is planned to effectively criminalise industrial action, primarily outlawing strike action in the public sector, rail and transport industries.

One result of the Tories' bizarre fixation with market economics and so-called competition sees them proposing to introduce competition into workplace organisation and enforce "choice" between trade unions. Trade unions would be forced to compete over subscription rates, services offered, and performance indicators paralleled with any other "business" would be enforced.

So just as Britain's supermarket sector is dominated by Asda, Tesco, Sainsbury and Morrisons, Britain's trade unions – Unite, GMB, Unison, the teaching unions – would have the same market principles applied. ■

BAILOUTS

Another package for Greece

THE IMF has suggested a new bailout package of between 80 billion and 100 billion euros to cover Greece's funding needs between 2011 and 2013.

Under the current 60 billion euros bailout, Britain is liable for up to 3.6 billion euros, due to commitments under the IMF and the European Financial Stability Mechanism. Chancellor George Osborne suggested that Britain could be a "reluctant partner" in any further bailout, that is, a partner nonetheless.

As usual, the Tories spout anti-EU rhetoric but in practice comply willingly with EU demands. ■

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

EUROBRIEFS

The latest from Brussels

Border controls come back

SEVERAL EU member states back attempts by France and Italy to make it easier for countries to reinstate border controls, following the huge influx of migrants from north Africa. Denmark is re-instating border checks at its ports and airports as well as along its land border with Germany and its bridge to Sweden. The German government reacted angrily. EU Commission chief Barroso has warned Denmark its decision is illegal. ■

Bow down to the market

YET ANOTHER example of the EU straitjacket: Belgian finance minister Didier Reynders wants capital controls on EU member states to prevent foreign investors rushing into peripheral eurozone economies causing inflation and "overheating". But his proposal breaches EU internal market rules, which ban the use of such controls. ■

Four-star risks

THE EUROPEAN Investment Bank, set up to aid development, has lent £11 million to revamp a four-star, beach-front complex in Morocco owned by wealthy foreign bankers. The loan is underwritten by member states. If it is not paid back, British taxpayers will be liable for 16 per cent; if the project succeeds, the repayments will go to the EIB. ■

Following orders

THE IMF last November outlined its policy prescriptions for each of the 17 eurozone states. Its orders for the two other eurozone recipients of a bail-out, Ireland and Greece, have already been carried out. Dublin has cut its minimum wage and unemployment benefits, while Athens has liberalised the rules governing a number of professions and privatised transport infrastructure. ■

Cutting deeper

MEMBERS OF the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the IMF visited Lisbon this spring, to impose the cuts programmes of the €78 billion bailout. They say that Portugal must accept further deep public spending cuts, privatisation, tax hikes, cuts in workers' rights, and wage bargaining at individual firms rather than industry-wide. Outgoing finance minister Teixeira dos Santos says the bail-out will push the country into a two-year recession. ■



Photo: Workers

Library users in Camden, north London, took advantage of the Royal Wedding to step up their campaign to save their local libraries from coalition cuts.

Rail report to hit jobs, safety

PROPOSALS TO get rid of guards and most station and administrative staff, close many ticket offices, replace full time staff with part timers and reduce pay and conditions for those railway workers still in a job, are at the heart of Sir Roy McNulty's long-awaited report on Britain's railways, delivered on 19 May. Commissioned by the government in June 2010 to look at "value for money", the report fails to mention the fact that private companies are siphoning huge profits from an industry that now receives nearly five times the subsidy in real terms that British Rail did.

The report acknowledges the problems created when British Rail was fragmented into literally hundreds of private companies, concedes that train operating companies take very short-term views in an industry that requires long-term planning, but then fails to draw the obvious conclusion that privatisation itself is at the heart of the railways' problems.

McNulty gives the game away when he says, "The severe constraints on Governments' finances will continue for some time, and there will be intense financial scrutiny as franchises come [sic] for renewal..."

He sees new technology not as a way to improve rail services, but as a way to get rid of jobs and save money. This comes at a time when passenger numbers are at the highest levels since the 1920s. Safety is also very clearly being targeted, and not only by removing staff such as guards and station staff that are seen as integral to ensuring the safety and security of train operations and passengers.

McNulty acknowledges the fact that the industry has a very high density of union membership, and says that the unions have been very effective in defending and advancing the interests of railway workers. So he knows that the government will have a real fight on if it tries to implement those parts of the report that attack the workers. ■

HEALTH

Trust's funding chasm

IMPERIAL HEALTHCARE, London, Britain's largest NHS Trust, is spiralling into financial meltdown as new rules introduced by the Department of Health shatter their financial standing.

With a turnover of £910 million and with planned £70 million savings (read cuts), a £40 million funding pothole has now opened beneath its feet. The Chief Executive, Chief Financial Officer,

Commercial and Strategy Directors and its Chief Information Officer all resigned.

Imperial faces being placed in NHS "turn round", which equates with receivership.

Many of Imperial's services are potentially not viable since Secretary of State Lansley's decision to roll back the pioneering work around "Healthcare for London", the blueprint for health provision for England under the last government. This was overseen by Professor Darzi, Head of Surgery at Imperial. Some see the current attack as payback for such radical and progressive proposals. ■

CHILDREN**“Cinderella” service**

CHILDREN'S HEALTH services in Britain are in danger, says a report from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health. It points to the financial crisis, large-scale workforce pressures in many inpatient paediatric units, poor health outcomes for children, and inadequate provision in many aspects of children and young people's healthcare. A UNICEF recent study of children's well-being placed Britain last out of 21 countries.

Report author Sir Ian Kennedy called children and young people's healthcare a “Cinderella” service. It is the College's view that unless this crisis in paediatric services is addressed the health of Britain's children and young people will continue to

suffer. But the College will not stand by and let that happen.

In its response to the Health and Social Care Bill, the College's President, Professor Terence Stephenson, said, “We have real concerns about the rationale for the reforms, in that they risk undermining partnership working across children's services and may fracture continuity of care, particularly for children with long term conditions or specialist or complex healthcare needs. ...

“Market-based competition in health without expert collaborative commissioning will undermine links between professionals, leach expertise, reduce service availability and increase waits. There must be safeguards in the Bill to ensure that services for children, which may not be lucrative enough for competitive market improvement, do not suffer.” ■

BA settles cabin staff dispute

BASSA, the British Airways cabin crew section of the union Unite, has reached what new General Secretary Len McCluskey called “an honourable settlement”.

What is meant by this is that after two gruelling years of enduring job and pay cuts, broken promises and bellicose litigation by BA, a series of ballots and strikes, intimidation and sackings, this group of workers new to struggle has emerged with many of its demands met, but more importantly, with its organisation intact and bolstered against future attacks by the employer. It can hold its head high, and in practical terms it has won a considerable breathing space.

For its part, BA (also under less entrenched leadership) has been forced to recognise the crucial contribution of its workforce to this “iconic” British sector of the airline industry.

Danger to the public has been averted: the hurried training for strike breakers bussed through picket lines posed a real threat to passengers and damaged the image of BA.

Many lessons will have been learned. The company now knows that negotiation not confrontation is in its interest. Litigation hampered this settlement – the two-year pay deal currently being recommended to the union membership could have been reached without the loss to BA of £150 million.

Staff travel concessions have been restored; they should never have been removed. Under the deal, changes to the airline's disciplinary procedure have been agreed – the result of bitter experience in this dispute.

Anti-union legislation with its time limits on balloting is costly to both sides; the averted strike which threatened Easter and the royal wedding was called at that time to avoid the expense of running yet another ballot.

Details of productivity changes are under discussion by the union up to 1 July, but it seems likely that the cost-saving changes in working practices forced through by former CEO Willie Walsh will be made permanent. While existing staff will be largely protected, the new “mixed fleet” (result of merged BA and Iberia) will come in at lower pay and conditions. But new contracts regarding the “variable earnings” element of cabin crew pay will for the first time offer a baseline guaranteed amount per annum.

Many other items under dispute have been settled favourably, including sickness pay during strikes. The principle of collective agreements has been reinforced, and new ideas for career training and job satisfaction introduced. New more unified branch structures at Heathrow and Gatwick are also under discussion.

BASSA will not get everything it wanted, but calls to prolong the dispute are infantile. Far from giving the green light to BA for further attacks, the union has provided the conditions for the vital job of increasing its membership among cabin crew and drawing confident new members into disciplined future struggle. ■

WHAT'S ON**Coming soon****June**

Saturday 11 June, 10.30am to 3.30pm

“Conference against academy schools: the fight for quality state education”

Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS. Organised by the Anti Academies Alliance and SERTUC. For more information, see antiacademiesalliance.org.uk

Thursday 23 June, 7.30pm. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL.

“EU and NATO: War at home, war abroad”

Public meeting organised by the CPBM-L. All welcome.

July

Saturday 9 July, all day

Durham Miners Gala

The 127th Durham Miners Gala takes place in the city centre. Celebrations included a funfair, stalls, brass bands and marches.

Friday 15 July to Sunday 17 July

2011 Tolpuddle Martyrs' Festival and Rally

Politics, music, theatre and poetry in the Dorset village from which in 1834 six labourers were transported to Australia for forming a union. For more info, see <http://www.tolpuddlemartyrs.org.uk/>

POLICE**Target practice**

THE ROYAL Wedding provided the police with another opportunity to practise their developing role in pre-emptive action and what they call “pre-crime” arrests. It is not clear how many people were arrested but the police numbers indicate up to 100 people.

In most instances those arrested were let off without charge but held for several hours or in some cases more than 24 hours until the end of the day. Three young women in fancy dress costumes en route to an event in Soho Square, London, were arrested while having a cup of coffee in a nearby Starbucks. Police said they were considering charging them under conspiracy law and the particular charge of “conspiracy to cause a public nuisance”.

In addition about 50 Facebook groups were removed from the internet for the duration of the wedding period. ■

NEWS ANALYSIS

Assault on local government

THE GOVERNMENT has started a public consultation on abolishing all of the several hundred local government statutory duties. The principle is to abolish all and only re-instate them if forced to.

Examples of what the government wishes to scrap are: all local government scrutiny and overview committees; all local authority responsibilities regarding health and safety, public safety, fire, building regulations etc; the requirement for local government cooperation across boroughs, city and county boundaries for public health (remember foot and mouth?); local authority duty to provide libraries; responsibilities to control gambling and licensing.

The list impacts on: housing, building, museums, libraries, social services, highways, environmental protection, children's services, public health, crime, coroners' services, provision of morgues and freedom of information requests. Local authorities are most keen to abolish the last of those, so that secrecy and dirty deals will become easier and more commonplace.

Local authorities' response is epitomised by that of the cross-party London Councils, which believes "that the general presumption should be that all duties be abolished unless there are compelling reasons not to remove them" and in "reducing avoidable costs". Let the market and small interest groups take control and by all means cut costs.

Hiding behind the talk of modernisation, reform, making services accountable to local communities, affordability and decentralisation are forces intent on destroying quality provision of longstanding, tested, safe and transparent public services.

Right to challenge?

A related proposal, the "Community Right to Challenge", sounds like some civic-minded dogooders' charter. In reality it's another facet of the Localism Bill being rapidly driven through Parliament. The Bill will map out extensive privatisation and outsourcing of local government services, in England only. This will allow any not-for-profit organisation or any two employees working in the public sector to demand that the service they have identified or work for should be market tested for privatisation. If the challenge is upheld, the public service will be privatised, effectively without opposition.

The fragmentation of public services provision, the loss of the present economies of scale and services provided on a city or county basis, along with the loss of democratic influence and control, will devastate historic English local government spanning centuries, with parish-pump councils challenging city and county structures.

Driven by the EU, this is one of the greatest asset-stripping exercises since the privatisation of Britain's nationalised utilities. All assets belonging to local authority services, if we allow it, will be distributed to private companies or local interest groups. It's a deliberate recipe for chaos and community disintegration. ■

SNP talk about independence masks the true aim: to sell out Scotland to the European Union

Don't break up Britain – rebuild it!

THE EUROPEAN UNION is hoping to grab Scotland, taking advantage of the Scottish National Party's election victory. What we need is a referendum on British independence from the EU. Instead Scotland is being promised one on Scottish independence from Britain. Surely the break-up of Britain is a matter for the whole of Britain to decide, not just Scotland, and it is a class issue.

You only need to look at the devolution programme over the past 14 years to identify the Labour, Tory and Liberal "string pullers" behind the plan to break up Britain. Through Westminster connivance the role of the SNP has been to capture the Scottish electoral dissent that feels it has nowhere else to go.

As "scene shifters" the idea is for the SNP to push at an open door arranged by Westminster with the aim of putting Scotland into a pre euro detention cell. If that happens Holyrood might just as well meet on a golf course in the future, with everything important decided in Brussels.

Committed euro team player as he is, Alex Salmond is on record as saying "I think the argument ... to expand the economy within a European euro context will prove to be a very strong one for the people of Scotland. He has also previously stated, "We need in my view to be in a framework for monetary policy, a European framework, which we're not in at the present moment, to have the best chances."

Those populations who are in the euro now deride the eurozone as the "Volker-Kerker" (Prison of Nations) -- a term that recalls the oppressive counter revolutionary period prior to the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Just look at the way the fight for Irish independence disappeared in a blink of an eye when their government recently went cap in hand to its European Union political masters.

The euro sickness

Begrudgingly it is acknowledged that Britain's current economic position would have been far worse had we joined the euro. The reason this did not happen is because of the unified strength of the British working people all saying no to the euro from Lands' End to John O'Groats – a unity that the SNP and many at Westminster despise. Of course British working people are not all the same, we don't want to be, nor are we on an equal footing everywhere. Some areas of Britain are poorer than others, but this is an issue for our class to deal with, Britain-wide. But the political and economic differences between British independence and the EU are irreconcilable.

None of these concepts was broached at all during the recent election campaign when the SNP swept into power at Holyrood while many of us only voted on how to vote. Instead the electoral play actors kept to their scripts. Yet the fact that Britain wants independence is a discussion that we can all join in and achieve within these shores. We can also examine what British unity and internationalism really means. It really is a class issue, where the interests of workers and the ruling class divide sharply.

With this backdrop any genuine desire for independence should be expressed a call for a referendum to get Britain out of the EU. But like their Westminster friends, the SNP will try steadfastly to refuse this. Rather they will look to hide behind a choreographed faux independence



Photo: Workers

Numbers were up for a revitalised May Day march through Glasgow city centre this year (above). The initiative by several unions to come together with Glasgow Trades Council to form Friends of May Day had provided more back-up for the organisational tasks involved. Here we see the brass players of the Unison Kinneil Band leading a section of the march. Founded in 1858 by the miners of Kinneil Pit and workers from Kinneil Iron Works, it is now sponsored by Unison. Mobilising began in earnest at the Scottish Trades Union Congress a month before in Ayr. At the conference resolutions were unanimously supported calling for the rebuilding of manufacturing, the tackling of youth unemployment, opposing the attack on pensions and condemning attempts to cut and privatise in health, transport and ferry services. However, the conference was overshadowed by the main invited guest speaker – Alex Salmond. Press coverage was thus dominated by his speech, full of promises (possessing an emptiness many delegates seemed to ignore) that ultimately proved to be to his electoral advantage and damaged British working class unity.

in the EU, while seeking a referendum on the break-up of Britain. This would be EU integration with a vengeance, on a par with the type of annexation organised by Hitler's allies in certain European countries during the 1930s. But this time it would be the expansion of "Lebensraum" (living space) under the banner of the EU.

This is not being alarmist. For example one week after the Holyrood election the EU announced a plan for a complete change to the corporation tax system (the tax on company profits) and the possible reform of the way revenues from the seas around the British coast are allocated. During the Holyrood election the SNP budgetary focus had been on income tax. But the day after the EU lure was quietly announced, Alex Salmond issued a series

of new demands in the British media including the devolution of corporation tax and changes to coastal revenue allocations.

The choreography gives the appearance of SNP strength, to the unwitting. But behind the stage it is no more than direct EU intervention, so that for domestic consumption Salmond can pretend that he is striking a blow for independence. Being quietly told what to do by the EU and then putting a domestic spin on it is not independence but emasculation.

By seeing the SNP in this clear light and then lifting them from their EU box they become a toy without a battery. Also how curious after years of EU plunder, the EU now talk of reforming the way revenue

is taken from British coastal fishing waters. Those who run the EU must be laughing behind their hands.

No other series of governments have behaved towards their own people in the way successive governments have here in Britain, allowing the country's industries to be decimated and then trying to wash their hands of it by seeking the country's break-up into mere regions of the EU. But using economic decline to push through unpopular measures is not an approach that is working for them anymore. Unified resistance, protests and marches need to build throughout Britain with the cry of "We won't pay for your crisis".

This is what true patriotism is about – taking the honest course of Rebuilding Britain and Out of the EU. ■

Libya is outside US–British influence, and does not obey their orders...

Why Libya is under attack

LIBYA IS Africa's largest oil economy, with 46.5 billion barrels of proven reserves, nearly 80 per cent of them in the Sirte Gulf basin of eastern Libya. Libya's oil, most of which was being sold to Europe, is valued for its light, low-sulphur quality. The market price of crude oil is well over \$100 a barrel, but Libya's oil is very cheap.

Before the war began, Libya was producing 1.6 million barrels a day, about 2 per cent of world output. The International Energy Agency said that by mid-March, Libyan oil production had "slowed to a trickle", and that exports could be off the market for many months.

All companies operating in Libya must have Libyan partners, entitled to 35 per cent of the profits. Trading is via the Libyan Central Bank, in the Libyan dinar, not in US dollars. Of course, freezing Libyan assets puts a stop on this activity. This Bank is outside the IMF and the World Bank. Only four other countries do not have a Rothschild-model central bank – Cuba, Sudan, Iran and North Korea. There were two others – Iraq and Afghanistan – but they were assimilated straight after the US-British invasions.

In 2009, Colonel Gaddafi proposed nationalising all the foreign oil companies operating in Libya, saying, "Oil should be owned by the state at this time, so we could better control prices by increasing or decreasing production." He was also planning to introduce a gold dinar – a new currency that African and Muslim nations would together create for their use to buy oil and other resources. Gaddafi's idea would have strengthened all of Africa.

However, pricing oil in something other than the dollar would weaken US power in the world. The current dollar reserve system, which benefits the USA, is based on a deal made with Saudi Arabia in 1971 in which the Saudis, the world's largest oil producers, agreed to accept only dollars for oil. This arrangement lets the USA print ever-increasing amounts of money, comparable to a central banking pyramid scheme.



Photo: US Navy

Cruise missile being launched against Libya from a US ship.

The attack on Libya serves the same corporate interests as did the 2003 attack on Iraq. The aim is to seize Libya's oil reserves and wreck its National Oil Corporation. The rebels have created a new Libyan Oil Company to replace the NOC. These and other corporate interests also want to reduce China's access to oil and raw materials throughout Africa, with the result that the US state is targeting China's allies there, Libya, Sudan and Zimbabwe.

International law

The most fundamental principle of international law is that no state shall use force against another state, as outlined in article 2, paragraph 4, of the United Nations Charter. No state can violate this principle of international law, nor can the UN Security Council: article 24(2) of the Charter requires that the Council "shall act in accordance with the Principles and Purposes of the United Nations".

NATO is directly interfering in Libya's internal affairs, in breach of article 2(7) of the Charter. It is also violating the terms of UN resolution number 1973 which it imposed, illegitimately, on the Security Council, on the pretext of protecting

civilian lives.

Obama, Cameron and Sarkozy together wrote on 15 April, "Our duty and our mandate under UN Security Council Resolution 1973 is to protect civilians, and we are doing that. It is not to remove Gaddafi by force." So when they went on to write, "Colonel Gaddafi must go, and go for good", they went beyond the resolution, which made no mention of regime change. The clear attempts to assassinate Gaddafi by bombing, to kill the head of a sovereign state that has posed no threat to another state, are flagrant criminal acts.

Also in April, the Libyan government accepted the African Union's peace proposal calling for "the immediate cessation of all hostilities, the

cooperation of the concerned Libyan authorities to facilitate the diligent delivery of humanitarian assistance to the needy populations, the protection of foreign nationals, including African migrant workers living in Libya, and dialogue between the Libyan parties and the establishment of an inclusive transition period." But the rebel Transitional National Council rejected the peace proposal and ruled out any solution short of regime change in Libya.

Reports from Benghazi suggest that the rebels are already getting arms and equipment, most likely from Britain and France, which are also deploying military advisers in Libya. French politicians are calling for the deployment of ground troops. Britain's military commitment to help the rebels is open-ended (a spokeswoman for Cameron said, "We must prepare for the long haul") and the cost is estimated to top £1 billion by the summer. The USA has already spent \$608 million on the war.

Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Affairs strongly condemned NATO's murders of one of Gaddafi's sons and three of his grandchildren, in the family home in a residential area of Tripoli. ■

The world's four biggest accountancy firms have each been fined millions of dollars in the US. In the EU, they do what they want...

When only capitalism counts...



Deloitte's offices in downtown Los Angeles (KPMG's are in the building behind).

SOME TWO-THIRDS of the world's cross-border trade actually happens within multinational enterprises. Through transfer pricing, these firms shift around where profits are generated to the most advantageous jurisdictions in order to slash or even wipe out their tax bill. Transfer pricing accounts for more than half the illicit capital flows around the world (an estimated \$1.26 trillion in 2008, the latest year for which there are figures), robbing countries of billions of pounds a year in lost revenues.

Google cut its taxes by \$3.1 billion from 2007 to 2010 by a trick known as the "Dutch Sandwich", in which the bulk of foreign profits go through Ireland and the Netherlands to Bermuda, slashing its overseas tax rate to 2.4 per cent.

Now the European Commission has set up an advisory group on transfer pricing. Every single one of the independent "non-governmental experts" on the panel comes from a multinational firm that engages in the practice, including Shell, BAE Systems and Unilever, or from the four biggest accounting firms in the world, KPMG,

Deloitte, Ernst & Young and PricewaterhouseCoopers, which advise these firms on how to do it.

KPMG had to pay a \$456 million fine in the USA after admitting criminal wrongdoing by "designing, marketing and implementing illegal tax shelters". It was the "largest tax case ever filed" in US history. Senator Carl Levin said, "Our investigations revealed a culture of deception inside KPMG's tax practice."

Deloitte paid \$50 million after the US Securities and Exchange Commission found it committed "improper professional conduct" by failing to spot a massive fraud perpetrated by a company it audited.

PricewaterhouseCoopers paid the US government \$41.9 million to "resolve allegations" that it defrauded numerous federal government agencies over a 13-year period.

Ernst & Young paid the US government \$15 million for failing to register tax shelters or properly maintain lists of people who bought them. In Britain, a Treasury spokesman called a tax scheme sold by Ernst & Young "one of the most

blatantly abusive avoidance scams of recent years". He added, "If unchecked, it would have cost our public services at least £300 million per year."

Shell in 2005 shifted its main tax-residence from Britain to the Netherlands, where companies can receive foreign dividends tax free, while shifting the ownership of its trademarks to a subsidiary in a village in the Swiss canton of Zug, where corporation tax is as low as 8 per cent. (The Alpine hamlet is also home to 18,000 other companies.) Unilever intends to redomicile in Switzerland.

In October last year, regulators in the Accountancy and Actuarial Discipline Board said they were investigating KPMG over audits performed for arms manufacturer BAE Systems, in particular commissions paid by the firm and "professional advice, consultancy and tax work".

European Commission spokesman David Boubilil rejected calls to expand representation beyond firms engaged in transfer pricing, saying: "Apart from multinationals and the accounting firms, the expertise in this area is very limited." ■

For those working in the NHS, our best chance of entering the field in our best shape is the battle for pay...

The NHS: fighting inside, fighting to win

HEALTH CARE is core to many things in the lives of workers. Will we die painful, drawn-out deaths, alone and poor, or will we be able to provide end-of-life care of such quality that we will be able to look forward to a happy and comfortable retirement? Health care is also crucial to Britain and its productive capacity – only healthy workers can produce the things we need as an independent nation.

But the enemy class running Britain, the capitalist class represented by this ragbag of losers known as the coalition, doesn't care about our health. They never have and they never will. They wouldn't have allowed us to build sewers in London if parliament hadn't had to be closed because of the stench of effluent in the river. Disraeli throwing up into his cambric hanky finally clinched it, at least as far as he was concerned.

We on the other hand, quite naturally care quite a bit about our health, which is why the British people are so proud of our health service, of our NHS. Proud hopefully because at least partly aware that improved health has been consciously fought for tooth & claw for hundreds of years, intensifying through time.

Some of the earliest of human organisations were attempts to ameliorate suffering, to heal injuries, to alleviate pain.

Often done under the aegis of religious houses (monasteries & convents) with of course all the obscurantist trappings that were associated, nonetheless those attempting to heal and minister to our health needs were brought together with those who needed grave assistance - often assistance to the grave. Even the religious word minister derives from an abbreviation of the verb to ad-minister to people's health.

These are older organisations even than the forerunners of trade unions, those craft guilds whose members built the cathedrals, after their forerunners the houses of care for the sick.

Being human

The inability of decent people to witness the suffering of others and not help is one of the characteristics of humans. It's what makes us in Hamlet's words, that "paragon of animals". And that's what helps mark us out from our enemy, the employing class, who will only do a thing if it's in their interests, if money can be made from it.

It was only with the explosion of productive and social forces that was the industrial revolution that we were really able to begin to move forward.

Anaesthesia, pharmacology, sterilisation, antiseptics and the steel industry all

helped transform our lives from the nasty, brutish and short existence that it was in pre-industrial times to the often nasty and brutish but longer life we currently enjoy.

But we had to find an organisational form that would enable these industrial developments to be applied to the health of the working people. Throughout the life history of modern trade unions, over 200 years, our forebears were calling for a health service. They were often vague as to what it would look like, how and by whom it would be run, and how much it would cost, but they knew what they wanted – free health for all. Access to a doctor without having to pay for the visit.

The organisational form was found, unsurprisingly, during the war – by the doctors of the Royal Army Medical Corps – by those treating the worst of military injuries under the harshest of conditions, who realised that change had to come: it might be said that this change truly did come from the barrel of a gun. A million men under arms in 1945 were not to be fobbed off with charity, blunt knives and leftover anaesthetics. They and their doctors wanted, and now knew how to provide, a proper, modern health service. One that would be free, comprehensive and national.

The NHS was born in adversity, out of



CPBML

Public Meeting, London

Thursday 23 June, 7.30 pm

EU and NATO –

War at home, war abroad

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

The EU and NATO both began as anti-Soviet blocs. Now they are turning their fire on any country – and any working class – that dares to stand up to imperialism.



Organising from the inside: theatre staff at St George's Hospital, Tooting, south London.

necessity and because we fought for it. It faces greater adversity, greater necessity, and will only survive if we continue to fight for it. Because of the explicitly political origins of the NHS it's always been in the forefront of political struggle, actual or potential. Those origins, and their wartime roots, are so well known that on many occasions the NHS has been described as being "Soviet-like".

A stand-off

For its first 30 years the power that led to its creation, organised labour, was such that a so-called consensus developed, which meant that all parliamentary parties supported the existence of the service on the basis of which it was established. "So-called" because a better word than consensus would be armistice. We had a stand-off without an agreement. We wanted the NHS and were strong enough to achieve it; they wanted no truck with it but weren't strong enough to take it from us.

Now, however, we face a frontal assault. (See article in the April issue of *WORKERS*.) We will face a plethora of fragmented defensive battles. An asylum-full of windbags is shouting at us to march from Bart's to the City, yelling from the

outside that those inside are cowards. We will have to do what we can to prevent the selling off of parts of the service, although it's worth noting that industrial action aimed explicitly at preventing privatisation is unlawful, like pretty much all other industrial action is rapidly becoming in Britain. We will pick our ground and inflict what defeats we can.

For those working in the NHS, our best chance of entering the field in our best shape is the battle for pay. This is what our array will look like.

There has already been announced a two-year pay freeze in the NHS for those earning more than £21,000 a year – a blatant attempt to divide health workers. This comes at the end of several multi-year pay deals, the last one of which was 2.25 per cent a year for three years, which in the end turned out to be above inflation. This together with the transition to the new NHS pay system, Agenda for Change, has seen most health workers better off financially than at any time before. This is now grinding to a halt. So no pay rises for two years at a time when inflation is over 5 per cent a year.

The NHS pay system provides for the majority of workers to also have an annual incremental increase on top of the annual

pay rise until they get to the top of their pay band. The government has already tried to entice workers into relinquishing this contractual right but this has so far been defeated. There will be myriad assaults on pay locally. When health workers realise that they are facing an almost permanent 5 per cent per year reduction in earnings they will have to decide whether to meekly acquiesce or to find a way to do what generations of workers before them have done, fight for pay.

Pay is of course only a start in the larger struggle for the survival of the NHS, but this matter is for the entire working class. There is now a concerted, directed and no doubt prolonged attempt to convert health care back into being available only at the whim of those who wish to make money out of people's illness and the charitable instincts of the religious.

That we will not accept.

We must take responsibility – and fight to defend what we have in order to move forward. We must all join that fight. ■

This article is an edited version of a speech given in March at a public meeting in London organised by the CPBML.

Benito Mussolini said, “Fascism should more properly be called power.” It’s that – rather than numbers of blackshirted thugs on

The rise and rise of the corporate state: the



The City of London: home to finance capital of all kinds – and the heart of reaction.

BACK IN 2006 the CPBML spoke about the sheer breathtaking speed of decay in Britain, warning “The ruling class has a horrifying future in mind for us: abandonment of Britain as a nation, which means abandonment of this working class.” Only now are we beginning to see exactly what this future means.

As we move seamlessly from Blair to Brown to Cameron and Clegg, what if anything has changed politically? Cameron models himself on Blair, Gove tries to accelerate Blair’s policy of privatising schools by turning them into academies and Osborne steals Darling’s public sector cuts policy and cranks it up a bit.

Former Labour Cabinet ministers John Hutton, now mysteriously metamorphosed as Lord Hutton, and Frank Field reappear as pensions (how to cut them) and poverty (how to cut benefits) tsars for Cameron, with Hutton already producing a report telling the government how to attack public sector pensions, while Alan Milburn, former

Blair health secretary, is Cameron’s “social mobility” tsar. They will be joined by billionaire Top Shop boss Sir Philip Green, advising Cameron on “efficiency savings” (cutting public expenditure). This is where politics in Britain is going – straight to the horse’s mouth.

But there’s more – what is changing in the media? The NEWS OF THE WORLD phone hacking scandal has let us have a glimpse of how British MPs live in fear of the Murdoch media empire in case one of his publications does a job on them. It is reckoned by those involved that at least 6,000 phones were hacked into, while Murdoch’s emissary and the man at the heart of the hacking scandal, Andy Coulson, was later employed as Cameron’s Director of Communications. This minor setback doesn’t detract from the fact that Murdoch wants total control of Sky TV and a slimmed-down, tame BBC. He wants control of Britain’s media to dictate what information we receive. So, an end to any

semblance of independent news media looks increasingly likely.

What of the future for trade unions? Organised workers are now about the only check on capitalism’s operations, if they choose to be. The CBI announced at the Tory conference in October its demands for more anti-union laws and was parroted by the Mayor of London. The CBI wants employers to be entitled to employ agency workers to break a strike and to be given 14 days’ notice to enable them to recruit agency scabs. It wants strikes to be illegal unless 40 per cent of the total of union members vote in favour. If they get their way, we will have an end to automatic union recognition, employers to determine who is a union member, steeper fines for unions and more power for the Certification Officer. The Cameron–Clegg Government act for the CBI and it will be impossible to have a legal strike. Why would they do this? It’s certainly not because capitalism has had a big strike problem recently. No,

corporatism because it is the merger of state and corporate the streets – that defined fascism then, and does so now...

The bankers' dream of eternal rule

it is solely to screw down further our ability to organise as a class.

A pattern is emerging. No political parties which are even ostensibly different from each other, no free news media, no freedom to organise in trade unions.

Fascism

Finance capitalism brought many things to the 20th century but the worst by far was fascism.

Today, many find it difficult to define fascism, preferring to point to the British National Party rather than look at a developing structure throughout society, including Parliament. The early 20th-century Italians, who invented the word "fascism", had a more descriptive term for the concept – "estato corporativo", the corporate state.

Benito Mussolini said, "Fascism should more properly be called corporatism because it is the merger of state and corporate power." Communists defined fascism as "the dictatorship of finance capitalism".

Of course the situation in the 1920s and 1930s was very different from today. In Italy there was the fascist march on Rome that effectively put Mussolini into power. And there was the revolutionary USSR. Terrified of this, and in the midst of the chaos and the widespread inspiration of revolutionary ideas following the First World War, finance capitalism would stop at nothing to control the working class. It had to lead to war.

Today, the ruling class tries to be much more sophisticated. But, try though it may, it cannot stop us seeing what is happening. We can see the coming together of corporate power and government, and we can see some of what they have in store for us. Having had the birth of trade unionism airbrushed out of the history syllabus, much of our history rewritten, academy schools run by businesses or religious institutions pushed on us, we can see how they want the young to become citizens with no knowledge of class struggle.

The National Minimum Wage will become the norm, especially those young

people who can find work. Higher education is to be all but destroyed, except for the privileged few. The NHS, for which many of us have fought so hard, is to be privatised by the back door by means of GP Commissioning. Wages are now being depressed in real terms and occupational pension schemes may become a thing of the past in many areas. Benefits are to be cut to try to force people back to nonexistent work whilst potential parents are told not to have children unless they can afford them. Volunteers will take over from paid workers in our "communities" in the "Big Society" – or this is what we are told.

All of this is happening to pay for the bailout of the banking system with our money. In other words, the finance capitalists have such a powerful hold over government that it will pauperise the British working class so that they can continue with the reckless financial gambling that is at the heart of finance capitalism.

But as – or maybe more – significant is

the European Union effect. The EU's purpose has always been to slow down the absolute decline of capitalism by organising capitalism on a continental scale. The Commissioners are handpicked from those who will protect capitalism, brutally if needed.

The EU directives and laws, such as "free" movement of labour, are intended to prop up capitalism by providing rootless low paid workers with no allegiance to any national working class. The EU plans to gobble up the Balkan mini states next and has its eyes on Ukraine, Turkey and Georgia, giving it a vast pool of much lower paid workers to let loose on the rest of us, depressing wages further and at the same time getting control of the Black Sea and confronting Russia.

That marriage between the European Union and the forces of finance capital is the lifeblood for the dark heart of fascism, Hitler's vision becoming a reality. It is in the boardrooms and stock exchanges – and, yes, parliaments – that our true enemy resides. ■

Meet the Party

The Communist Party of Britain's current series of London public meetings began in the autumn and continues into summer 2011; except on May Day, all are held in the Bertrand Russell room, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1R 4RL, nearest Tube Holborn. Other meetings are held around Britain. All meetings are advertised in "Coming Soon", see page 5.

M The next meeting will be on Thursday 23 June 2011, 7.30pm. The subject is "EU and NATO: War at home, war abroad". Interspersed with public meetings, the Party runs regular political study and discussion groups for interested workers across the country.

M The Party's annual London May Day rally is always held on May Day itself, regardless of state bank holidays – in 2012, Tuesday 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



The destruction of the old Highland society took with it not only the rise of the bourgeoisie – the feudal Scottish clan leaders – but also the rights and well-being of tenant farmers trying to eke out a living.

The Highland Clearances

THE HIGHLAND Clearances offer an example of the way class contradictions are resolved by the tyranny of capitalism. The ending of the clan system helped pave the way for the rising industrial bourgeoisie to focus its attention on developing industry rather than defending its internal borders. In the process of enclosing vast tracts of land for sheep, the tenant farmers were forcibly removed and thousands transported.

A significant event in this process was the clashing of two armies, representing contrasting economic systems, at Culloden Moor in the Scottish Highlands in 1746. The Duke of Cumberland's forces, acting for King George's government, routed Prince Edward's Jacobite army, last hope of the exiled Stuarts. In doing so they broke decisively the power of ancient, tribal clanship that had existed in Highland society, bringing into line the final area out of kilter with the rest of bourgeois Britain. After Culloden, the Highlands were refashioned and incorporated into a modern, capitalist environment.

The old order broken

Following Culloden, the ancient feudal rights and organisation of the clans were abolished. No exception was made: the Gordons, who had stayed loyal to King George, were treated no differently from the other clans. Even the most harmless symbols of clan loyalty were prohibited: wearing the kilt and playing the bagpipes were forbidden, a ban not lifted for 30 years. The intention that "a sheriff's writ should run" in the Highlands as certainly as it ran everywhere else was achieved. Subsequently, all the Highlands observed the laws of the bourgeois parliament in Whitehall and lived on the same system as the whole of Britain.

Almost immediately, roads were constructed that made the demise of the highland clans complete. Between 850 to 1500 miles of roads were hastily built; in effect military, strategic roads that split the block of Highland clans into fragments. This extinction of the older



The Battle of Culloden, painted by David Morier two years after the event.

society completed a process started long before, which alone made it possible for Britain in the next hundred years to become the workshop of the world. There were now no feudal lords to be conciliated or cajoled by the rising employing class.

Clearances and suppression

The Highland society, which had operated for generations, made no economic sense to modern bourgeois ways. Tenant farmers scratched a living off the rugged terrain, paying only small rents to chiefs whose wealth did not match that of their lowland contemporaries. By the end of the 18th century, the surviving chiefs and new landowners realised that serious profit could never be made that way.

In England the capitalist agrarian revolution was transforming agriculture. New farming techniques and mechanisation together with enclosure of formerly common land made farming more productive and profitable. These property upheavals had been going on in England since the 17th century in a much more gradual way. In the Highlands, however, these agrarian improvements had been delayed, partly because some landowners were too poor to put them

into practice, partly due to the complex clan system that regulated and restrained Highland society.

With sudden rapidity the Highlands were driven through a series of changes that had taken hundreds of years in England. After 1746 harsh suppression and legal measures undermined and destroyed what remained of the clan system. Realising that their old ways were over, the clan chiefs transformed themselves into landlords who saw their clan retainers as an unprofitable expense. Landowners began to view their territory as a source of economic revenue instead of military men. More became absentee landlords and sought to convert their acres into cash.

The cry of "sheep devour men" was heard again. Landlords slowly disengaged themselves of all their followers who could not be used as shepherds or compelled to rent small farms. A first big clearance took place on the Drummond estates in Perthshire in 1762. In 1782 the Glengarry estates, Inverness-shire, followed suit with the rent roll rising from £700 to £5,000 in 32 years. It is estimated that as many as 200,000 people were evicted in clearances by the turn of the century. These early

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clearances were for sheep; later ones were for deer. Between 1811 and 1821, some 15,000 tenants were removed from the 1.5 million acres of the Countess of Sutherland's estates. Buildings were set alight to force the tenants to leave; many were herded onto ships. Many thousands of Highlanders left their homes and were forced to make new lives on the Scottish coastal plains, in the Scottish lowlands or across the oceans. Some were drawn to the burgeoning industrial revolution: for instance, many went to work at the New Lanark Mills that opened in Lanarkshire in 1784. The clearances continued until the mid-19th century, when most farmers had been cleared.

Cheviot sheep, bred for toughness and able to thrive in difficult weather conditions, could generate large incomes, perhaps more than ten times as much as cattle on the same land. But the tenant farmers had to be removed. Many, who retained their loyalty to the chiefs, complied. Those who objected found they had limitations imposed upon them.

Landowner laws

The law strongly favoured the landowners: the farmers had no leases and were merely tenants at will who could be evicted from their homes with only minimal notice. There were incidents of resistance. In some cases brutal methods were used to evict tenants. The armed forces were called upon by landowners in times of trouble.

As it transpired, landowners needed funds to carry out the clearances and the returns from sheep farming were only temporary. Indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century that industry had collapsed and the Highlands were drastically depopulated. Its economy still does not thrive to this day. The callous land grabs in the Scottish Highlands were not accidental but flowed from capitalism's drive to displace and uproot all pre-existing economic forms, to remake everything in its own image, and crush everything getting in the way. We can learn from this and be warned! ■

SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

More from our series on aspects of Marxist thinking

We should reflect on the origins and history of social democracy and its debilitating consequences on our class.

By the year 1850 the Communist Manifesto had just appeared, written by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. It had shown at the level of theory that the working class could effect its own emancipation from wage slavery. At the same time, engineers and other skilled workers were showing for the first time anywhere in the world that organised workers could be a match for any employer. In Britain the Amalgamated Society of Engineers was formed as a national union in 1851. The conclusion should have been obvious: use the practical strength to achieve the theoretical goals.

Yet within a few decades, what had happened? The German workers' party – the largest Marxist party in the world – was bargaining away its principles in merger negotiations with another party at its congress in the town of Gotha in 1875. It united with the Lassallean faction, adopting a programme limited to obtaining concessions from the government. Meanwhile in Britain, it was being proclaimed that the future lay solely with "new unionism", the organisation of the unskilled. The skilled workers were described as corrupt "labour aristocrats". (See the article "Labour Aristocracy" in the May 2011 issue of WORKERS.)

The Communist Manifesto had presented workers as active, self-reliant, able to think, speak and act for themselves, and thus capable of changing the world. It was based on faith in the working class. Social democracy, including its British counterparts such as the Social Democratic Federation and successors including the Labour Party, saw workers as passive, an electorate, a force to be harnessed, "noble savages", uncorrupted because unlettered, whose lot on earth would be improved by politicians making reforms on their behalf. It was then, and is now, based on fear and hatred of the working class.

The skill, the sheer professionalism, the creative potential in workers is what social democracy most hates and fears, but that is just what must now be tapped if we are to draw up a programme for our class's survival. Just as the Amalgamated Society of Engineers started the movement for workers' emancipation, so now the most skilled sections, bringing everyone with them in their wake, must finish the job off.

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.
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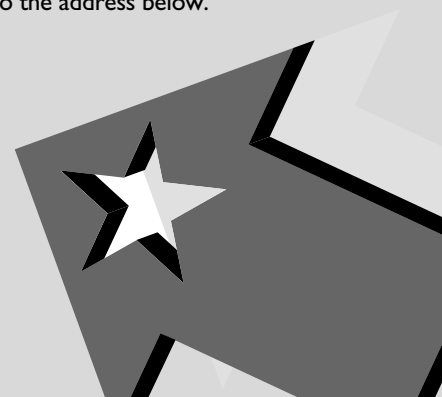
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Back to Front – The health business

‘Let’s have a real debate about why the wealth created by working people throughout their lives is syphoned off...’

THE COALITION’S mask has slipped further still regarding the future of the National Health Service if they get their way. Its statements on the NHS are lies. The NHS is not ringfenced and frontline posts are not safe. On the contrary, they are being destroyed.

In May Mark Britnell (part of the Prime Minister’s “kitchen cabinet”) addressed a seminar called ‘Reform Revolution’ at a conference for healthcare corporations, run by \$20 billion private equity firm Apax Partners. Delegates were told that the conference would cover “business opportunities post global healthcare reform”.

Britnell said, “In future, the NHS will be a state insurance provider not a state deliverer.” And, “The NHS will be shown no mercy and the best time to take advantage of this will be in the next couple of years.”

Under the proposed reforms, Primary Care Trusts have already been handed a list of 14 preferred organisations from which to commission services. Eight are US healthcare corporations. The list has been drawn up under the Framework for procuring External Support for Commissioners (FESC).

The conference took place in New York, a place where they must have thought it was safe to say openly that the privatisation of health in Britain is the strategy of this government, no matter how many crocodile tears are shed in support of public healthcare.

Many government advisers are jumped up graduates. Britnell is another

kind completely: a former Director General for Commissioning at the Department of Health, he is now Head of Healthcare for the UK and Europe at the accountancy giant KPMG, a global network of firms providing audit, tax and advisory services (see “When only capitalism counts...”, page 9). The combined revenues of firms belonging to this network was \$20.63 billion in September 2010. Industries covered by KPMG include Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals. No need to ask what firms, from what network, will bid for any NHS services that are privatised.

Britnell has also written in the HEALTH SERVICE JOURNAL along similar lines to his speech to the New York conference. He called for a more sophisticated discussion regarding public v private, but peppering his side of the debate with financial and private sector gobbledegook to confuse about his real message.

Boiled down, though, his argument is: “Because healthcare is free, people use it; and if this carries on, how will the private sector (which he represents) make their billions on the back of the sick?”

Let’s have a real debate about why the wealth created by working people throughout their lives is syphoned off to fill the deep pockets of those who patronise and exploit, instead of being used to fund homes, healthcare, pensions, education and a safe, peaceful country. That’s a debate that won’t confuse anyone. ■

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