

WORKERS

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MAY 2004 £1



WOULD YOU BUY A CONSTITUTION FROM THESE TWO?



Pills, profit and health

08



Professionalism and skill

06



When all strikes were illegal

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WORKERS

“ First thoughts

WHEN IT COMES to ditching Britain Labour has been creative in its tactics. Blair is doing the splits. One foot is in the United States and one in Europe. The two are pulling further apart and the nation of Britain is about to be torn apart. He has made the country beholden one minute to the war-mongering rantings of the United States, the next gripped by the privatising feeding frenzy of the EU.

There are three elements to Blair's attempt to remove Britain's sovereignty into the European Union superstate. Firstly there was the euro. Consistent campaigning against this, particularly in the trade union movement, which moved from gung ho to sceptical in its attitude, led the Chancellor to shelve the matter for a good few years.

Immediately Blair switched to the other two arms of the holy trinity of European

tactics. Firstly he tried to push through the European constitution without a referendum. The overwhelming demand for a referendum has stopped this — no thanks this time to the trade unions. And on his second front, he has accelerated work to break Britain into regions.

Confusion within the TUC has been the key to this European Trojan horse, although Brown has had to concede that no break up of national collective bargaining is intended.

At a time of intense debate about the future of trade unionism one thing is for sure — if trade unions are identified with regionalisation and the constitution as the government wants them to be, they will continue to decline. Workers want the trade unions to fight for a united, independent Britain and government for this country: and they will have to make the unions take up the fight.

Second opinion

BLAIR DECIDED about a referendum on the EU's new constitution all on his own, on holiday, in Bermuda. He did not talk to the cabinet, his party, parliament or his allies, the Europhiles and the EU's leaders. God knows who he did consult! So, to nobody's surprise, he has annoyed them all.

But on 30 June, long before any referendum, the EU's leaders want to sign

their constitution, which would, if enforced, end member countries' independence and sovereignty. 30 June is also the day the USA "gives" Iraq its independence and sovereignty — with 130,000 US troops still there. Jack Straw described this as "so-called occupation". They will be telling us next that the constitution is only a "so-called constitution"!

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Safety at stake

AMBULANCE WORKERS IN particular and health workers in general do not have a monopoly in saving lives, and the more people trained to do cardiac resuscitation the better. Unions such as Unison welcome the introduction of defibrillators on railway stations and in shopping centres. Ambulance Services in rural areas such as Devon, Lincolnshire and parts of Wales, which are under enormous pressure to meet national targets on response times, rightly enter into agreements with the local police or fire service to allow them to be the first to respond. This means police or firefighters can be sent to a life-threatening emergency call to render first aid until the ambulance arrives, which in some areas can take half an hour or longer.

But the organisation of healthcare in London has to be in dire straits when the London Ambulance Service also wants to enter into agreements with the Fire Service and even the St John Ambulance Brigade to play a similar role. A proposed pilot scheme in Tower Hamlets, east London, is at the centre of deep concerns expressed by Unison and the Fire Brigades Union. Currently First Responder schemes in London use trained paramedics attending in cars. Tower Hamlets is one of the busiest areas of the London Ambulance Service.

Funding is at the hub of this proposal (or more to the point — the lack of funding) and a desire by some to have an American-style rescue service. All staff will be jack of all trades, and master of none. The high-quality training and disciplined focus of the traditional British emergency services could be diluted into a confusion of roles, with a lower quality of service.

The Fire Brigades Union is currently fighting the proposals. It is its view that "co-responding" is not a core service and that such schemes cannot be compulsory and could indeed raise questions of liability and legality. As the union says in its London newsletter, "The proposed scheme is badly thought out and would not lead to significant improvements in services to casualties in Tower Hamlets. What would do so is improved funding for the ambulance service."

The emergency services are for emergencies, not for playing games with. It is our safety that is at stake.

ENERGY

Cost of EU requirements

NEW ENVIRONMENTAL requirements by the European Union to reduce carbon emissions or pay others who can do so through 'carbon trading' will put up the cost of manufacturing. This will particularly affect costs for high energy users such as steel, cement, brick and many other materials manufacturers.

This requirement however will only be placed on countries in the EU. At the same time no provision has been made to impose tariffs on materials manufactured in countries with no 'carbon trading' costs. It is widely thought that this will result in an increase in imports from those countries. The predictable result will be loss of manufacture with no environmental gain.

CONTRACTING OUT

The gravy train

THIS GOVERNMENT is good for some. It is the biggest single buyer of management consultants' services. Their income from the public sector doubled last year to £1.3 billion. Ministers spend public money to hire private outside "experts" to tell public sector workers how to do their jobs.

Since 1997, this government has signed 570 PFI deals worth £36 billion. The chief executive of project management group Amec, for example, has benefited hugely from PFI: he got a 42% pay rise last year, taking his income to over £1 million. Amec's head of British and US operations got £426,000 for four months' work. Clearly, PFI is working.

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

NURSERY NURSES

Taking stock

AFTER NEARLY TWO MONTHS on all-out strike representatives of Scottish nursery nurses met on 20 April to take stock of the situation. In 12 of the 32 authorities branches have made local agreements with their employers. The agreements differ from employer to employer and, although they improve current pay and conditions, they are not close to the pay claim.

This has left nursery nurses in 20 branches still on strike. They will be considering with their members whether to also reach local agreements or persevere with the Scotland-wide claim. Local unions and the public have been supportive, sending donations to supplement the strike pay funded nationally. In England and Wales many branches have sent donations but, given the amount in branch reserves, much more might still be sent.

Delegates will meet in Glasgow at the end of the month to decide on tactics for the next phase of struggle.

EMPLOYMENT

Manufacturing jobs fall

RECENT FIGURES have shown a further fall in manufacturing employment — down 100,000 over the past year. A key reason for this lies in the poor investment record of British companies. It is far easier to invest in short-term low-pay service sector jobs than to take a long view to rebuild Britain's manufacturing base.

In May 2002, the government launched its Manufacturing Strategy with the aim of showing it did take manufacturing seriously and that the sector was crucial to the continuing prosperity of Britain. But since the strategy was set up, spending by manufacturing industry on capital equipment (a key indicator of long-term intentions) has fallen.

In 2003 this investment was 8% lower than in 2002, which in turn was 12% lower than in 2001 — a decline of nearly one-fifth over two years.

The Manufacturing Strategy Review is an analysis by the Manufacturing Technologies Association and is written as a response to the Government's Manufacturing Strategy. In his contribution to this review, Brendan Barber, General Secretary of the TUC, argues that "...UK economic growth depends on a genuine manufacturing



Blood on the coal

OVER 100,000 MINERS have been killed in the British mining industry between 1850 and 2004, according to recent research. It is impossible to quantify the number who have been injured, maimed or crippled, but it is estimated to run into hundreds of thousands, as is the number who have suffered and died from respiratory diseases.

Miners and ex-miners have lodged over 516,000 claims for compensation arising from mining respiratory illnesses in response to a government deadline.

It has also been calculated that the cost of the politically motivated pit closure programme from 1984 to 2004 is over £28 billion, equivalent to nearly half the tax revenue generated from North Sea oil and gas reserves during the same period. By 2020 three-quarters of our energy needs will be imported, so from being self-sustaining and independent in energy Britain will become dependent on Russia, Asia, the Middle East and Algeria. Meeting our daily energy requirements could bring a new and ominous meaning to the phrase "blood on the coal" if fuel comes from Iraq, potentially one of the world's greatest centres of oil reserves.

The 2003 Energy White Paper promises wind farms and tidal barriers — all totally inadequate to meet Britain's energy needs. It promises imports from the most unstable parts of the globe. There are no plans for the next generation of nuclear power stations. There are no plans to build clean coal power stations which could access the 1,000 years of coal reserves in Britain. The reality is that there is no forward planning.

The thousands of miners dead, crippled or blighted with lung disease, who freed the coal to feed British industry, will come to haunt this wretched government, which presides over the decline in our ability to provide the light, heat and energy we need.

recovery".

To show that its support is genuine, the TUC has called on the government to:

- match the business support government gives to that offered in the rest of Europe;
- use public procurement to support British-based manufacturing jobs;
- boost regional support and development.

It is clear that the government is failing to support British industry with crucial buying decisions. Ministers rarely give speeches talking up manufacture, and senior government figures are thin on the

ground at important trade fairs. But most importantly, where other European countries fight to support their manufacture, our government does little. Yet, ironically, it is European law which is being used as a scapegoat for the attacks on British industry.

If we are to believe that it is already 'illegal' to offer government support to save manufacturing jobs then what control could we expect to have if we signed up to the euro and the European constitution?

Youth workers decide

THE COMMUNITY and Youth Workers Union (CYWU) will be holding its annual conference in the city of Derry between 29 April and 2 May, the first time it has been held in a venue outside mainland Britain.

The conference will be held only two days after the union takes strike action for the first time in its long history. Union members on Joint Negotiating Committee terms and conditions (conditions that determine the pay and conditions of community and youth workers and link them to qualifications) will be holding a national one-day strike on 27 April after a long and protracted dispute with their employers. The union is calling for a significant pay rise above 3% for its members, the introduction of a new pay scale for advanced practitioners, and is opposing the employers' proposals to set the level of professional qualification at NVQ Level 2, equivalent to a GCSE.

CYWU General Secretary Doug Nicholls said, "Three percent for most of our members means about 30p an hour rise and for the highest paid 47p an hour. Many of our members work with young people who earn more than them. We have seen a 30% increase in our workloads and also a welcome 5.9% increase in this year's youth and community service government funding to local authorities."

Nicholls continued: "But local authorities are not spending the full amounts. They have enough underspent money to build new centres and give all staff a 10% pay rise. With 191,000 young people still not in education, training or employment, youth work skills are in great demand, as are community work skills with so many neighbourhood renewal schemes. Yet our members, who used to be on a salary par with teachers, now start work on £4,000 a year less than their teaching colleagues. In addition, the country needs 4,000 more youth workers to meet the government's staffing ratio targets."

The union was disappointed when in October the employers' side dissolved in order to form a reconstituted committee. This led to a lack of any negotiation until March this year. The disappointment was compounded when after months without negotiation the majority of the staff side were exactly the same as in the previous group.

Although the conference is likely to be dominated by issues around the pay dispute, delegates, who include play workers, learning mentors and personal advisors as well as youth and community workers, will be debating a range of issues including the government's "Every Child Matters" green paper, working conditions within the sector, the future of the union and the proposed EU constitution.

WHAT'S ON

Coming soon

MAY

Saturday 1 May

CPBML May Day Meeting and Celebration: For Peace and Independence, No to War and Capitalism!

7.30pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1 (nearest tube Holborn. All welcome.

This is the danger facing Britain today. Subsumed into the economic and political huddling together of the failed capitalist states of Europe — leaving us borderless, directionless, without identity, without hope. Subsumed into the warmongering of the United States as they bring war, oppression, terror and suffering to the people of the world.

British workers expect, need and demand basic class rights. The right to work and create in Britain. The right to health, education and housing. The right to sovereignty and control over our island, the right to non-interference by anyone in our internal affairs.

None of this can be achieved without peace and independence. None of this can be achieved if Capitalism continues to rule. May Day — International Workers' Day — must see the chains broken and a re-assertion of our class demands.

MANUFACTURE

The cars keep on coming

FOR THE PAST thirty years the debate in the vehicle manufacturing companies of Europe and worldwide has been about merger, cooperation and takeover. All the big vehicle manufacturers have been linked — Ford, Jaguar, Rover, Fiat, Renault, Citroen, Honda, Nissan, BMW, Mazda, Audi and so on.

It is almost impossible to identify who really makes what, with which supplier, be it kit construction or genuine manufacture. There are many labels, but few chassis.

What is emerging is that Britain will soon have the highest per capita concentration of car ownership anywhere in Europe. It is estimated that annual new car sales will top 3 million by 2005. Actual car production in Britain, including kit construction and direct manufacture, is running at the 2 million mark, although not everything produced is sold, as Rover

has discovered. The gap between the estimated 3 million sales and 2 million produced is creating an imbalance of mega-proportions, which will result in imports being sucked into the country at an increasing rate.

Questions have to be posed: how soon before Britain is gridlocked? Three million new car sales a year means roads and car parking are being exhausted. The competition involved in producing cars is an absolute waste of raw materials, human skill and endeavour. It's time for a rational debate on how we preserve manufacturing industry, what it should be used for and who it serves.

FOOD

Terry's moves out

THE DECISION BY Terry's of York, famed confectioner and chocolate maker for over 250 years, to abandon production

in its home city of York, has brought swift opposition from the GMB, and has to be opposed throughout the country. The decision of the real owners, US Kraft Foods, associated with the Swiss Suchard Company, to stop production and flee abroad must be met with a consumer boycott.

The loss of 316 jobs in York is bad enough but the major market for Terry's products, which include the famed chocolate oranges and Terry's All Gold, is Britain. With Poland and Slovakia about to join the European Union as full members, Suchard is moving production there (and to Belgium) and will import back to Britain without having to pay duty.

If it's not good enough to make here then it's not good enough to be purchased here. Nothing other than cheap labour in Poland and Slovakia can explain Suchard's decision. And all those who welcome the expansion of the European Union should remember each lost British job and where it has been taken to.

Teachers and the workload agreement

JUST OVER A YEAR ago teacher unions were united. Teachers' workload was unsustainable. The profession was struggling to recruit. Trained teachers were leaving in droves — unwilling to work unacceptable hours for inadequate pay. This crisis could no longer be denied by the government.

As the two largest teacher unions began this year's conference season all of the above remained true — apart from the first statement. The NUT and the NASUWT have each distributed literature to their members' home addresses castigating the other union. Charles Clarke and the employers must be rubbing their hands in glee.

The main reason for this bitter division is the government's workforce reform agreement with the teacher unions (apart from the NUT) and UNISON.

The key concern of the NUT is that elements of the workforce reform agreement will seriously undermine the professionalism of teachers and the quality of education, by requiring unqualified staff to take sole charge of classes — 30 or so pupils — while under the notional supervision of a qualified teacher who may not even be in the building. The NUT believes that the government's response to the recruitment and retention crisis is to use agreement as a vehicle for providing a cheap and low-quality education service employing even fewer qualified teachers.

The other unions see the agreement as a means of reducing teacher workload, and thereby the recruitment crisis, while providing an improved career structure for classroom assistants and other support staff. Hence the bitter division.

Unqualified

So what now needs to be done? The use of unqualified staff to supervise classes is happening — and the government refuses to regulate their conditions or pay, saying instead that these are matters for schools or local authorities. At the moment these workers are mainly "cover managers" or "learning supervisors", employed largely to cover classes of absent teachers — at about one-quarter of the daily cost of agency supply teachers. This has been met by some resistance from NUT members — but we need to recognise that this resistance has been patchy.

Take the example of one local authority, Oldham. The area has 14 secondary schools, 3 of which have recruited cover managers since September. One of the schools has seen its NUT members take action and another's NUT members are considering this, while negotiations with the headteacher continue.

But members do recognise the benefits of reduced workload through not having to cover so much for absent colleagues, and so the key issue has become reducing the number of days a cover manager is used before a qualified supply teacher is employed. The great danger is that the employment of such support staff is happening piecemeal, school by school, with no regulation of their conditions or pay.

The NUT's opposition to the government's plans for education has been principled. Its attacks on other unions have not been tactically astute. All teachers need to guard against the dilution of their professionalism — the first step is of course recognising the attack. We have not succeeded in preventing unqualified workers teaching whole classes — the imperative now must be to regulate their pay, conditions of service, training and skill.

It is not just a consolidation plus a few minor reforms...

The constitution con

THE BRITISH PEOPLE have won an important victory by forcing Blair to allow a referendum on the European Union constitution. This is not, as described by its advocates, merely a treaty of consolidation and minor reforms designed to make the enlarged union work better. It certainly does consolidate a large number of power seizures from member states by the EU which we never had a chance to vote on — such as those in the Maastricht, Amsterdam and Nice treaties. But also it adds a whole set of completely new and radical changes, and gives a new status to the EU by simply being a constitution.

A constitution is not an inter-governmental agreement like an ordinary treaty but a body of rules for an organisation, in this case a supranational body that is giving itself new powers and a new "single legal personality", which EU President Romano Prodi describes as a gigantic leap forward. Any member country that signed the treaty would be accepting it as the Constitution of the European Union. The treaty's Article IV-9 says, "The treaty establishing the constitution is concluded for an unlimited period."

The constitution would give the EU sweeping new powers. Article I-24.4 gives the European Council new powers to change the treaty without recourse to national governments — the so-called passerelle or escalator clause — so the EU could end national vetoes with no reference to national governments. Title 15 Article 17, the constitution's new flexibility clause, allows the EU to take appropriate measures to achieve its aims even where the constitution does not provide the necessary powers.

The end of vetoes

The constitution would remove national vetoes from 36 policy areas. Under the Maastricht treaty, the three-pillar system safeguarded the national veto in each of the three areas, Justice and Home Affairs (JHA), Common Security and Foreign Policy (CSFP) and Economy. The new constitution would abolish this system, merging JHA with CSFP. The veto would, for now, remain in the CSFP (although Signor Berlusconi has already proposed abolishing it), but would vanish almost completely from JHA.

The constitution would create a new, permanent President of the European Council, elected by members for a two-year term, who would be either a head of government or a head of state. It would also create the new post of EU Foreign Minister, and a new European Public Prosecutors Office.

The constitution would create new common policies, where no country would have a veto. Article I-40 creates a common EU defence policy. Article III-158 frames a common policy on asylum. Article III-168 creates a common immigration policy. Article III-171 sets out the details of legal harmonisation. Articles III-45-49 enshrine the free movement of capital, Articles III-69-79 an open market economy with free competition.

Almost everybody agrees that this constitution is of extraordinary importance. German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer said that the treaty was anything but minimalist — it creates the prerequisites for the completion of the unity of Europe, and, "This is the most important treaty since the



One shady character to another, 18 July 2003: Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, president of the European Convention having just presented the draft EU constitution to the scandal-wreathed President of the European Council, Silvio Berlusconi. D'Estaing achieved notoriety in France when it was discovered that in 1973, as Finance Minister, he had received \$250,000 worth of diamonds from emperor Bokassa of the Central African Republic; so shunned was he in his own country that he became known as Monsieur X in French political circles until Brussels rescued him from obscurity to lead the body drawing up plans for a federal superstate.

formation of the European Economic Community.” He also said, “Currency, security and constitution, those are the three essential components of the sovereignty of modern nation states.” Prodi said, “The single market was the theme of the 80s; the single currency was the theme of the 90s; we must now face the difficult task of moving towards a single economy and political unity.”

Legal revolution

Former Italian PM Lamberto Dini said, “The constitution is not just an intellectual exercise. It will quickly change people’s lives.” Former Spanish Foreign Minister Ana Palace said, “This is a legal revolution without precedent.” Italian Foreign Minister Franco Frattini said that the constitution is a historic step in the integration process.

French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin said it created a new political age.

Peter Hain said on 22 March 2003, “Our task is nothing less than the creation of a new constitutional order for a new united Europe.” And on 1 April 2003, “I am not saying it has no substantial constitutional significance, of course it will have.”

Hain also reported that Blair had said, “The outcome of the convention is absolutely fundamental. It will define the relationship between Britain and the rest of Europe, the prospects for the euro, and it would last for generations.” He said it was more important than Iraq. But by May 2003, Hain had been told what he should say: “This is more of a tidying-up exercise.”

Blair has promised the EU that Britain would reach agreement on the treaty by

June. But he has no mandate for signing a treaty establishing a constitution for Europe. None of the proposed changes appeared in any party’s manifesto. No MP has any right to vote for this treaty. For parliament to pass a bill ratifying the constitution, authorising the government to sign this treaty on our behalf, would be ultra vires. Our sovereign national rights are not parliament’s to give away.

The vast majority of the British working class have consistently demanded a referendum on the EU constitution so that we can vote against it. By standing firm we have gradually isolated Blair, and won a signal victory by forcing him to concede a referendum. We will win again when we vote down this EU constitution and keep our national sovereignty and independence.

Investing £9 million every day in R&D, and with £150,000 in exp employed, the pharmaceutical industry is central to Britain's mar

Pills, profit, and the health of the nation

THE PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY makes a valuable contribution to our national wellbeing – to both our health and our economy. The majority of its staff are scientists and clinical trials experts whose mission is research and public benefit. It is regrettable that the profit motive puts an unacceptable gloss on the industry, alienating many who only see the competitive nature, the marketing gambits and the acquisition costs.

The pharmaceutical industry can and often does get a bad press, its contribution hidden. Even in the healthcare sector, marketing to doctors, nurses and pharmacists focuses on sales rather than science. The frontline contacts with healthcare workers present the science with a spin, and that is recognised.

However suspicious we may be of the profit motive in this industry, it is not quite unbridled capitalism. The price paid for medicines in Britain is managed within government strategies to control overall

costs. A balance is necessary to assure the UK of a healthy and growing industry that delivers to the national balance sheet, but within affordable limits. Mechanisms are in place to limit profit levels on sales of branded medicines and separately to govern the maximum price that will be paid for generic, unbranded drugs.

Regulation

The Pharmaceutical Price Regulation Scheme (PPRS) caps the profits that pharmaceutical companies can make on sales of branded prescription medicines to the NHS.

The current PPRS runs until at least September 2004, and the Department of Health is undertaking a public consultation exercise on its future format. Over the next three years patents will expire on 20 per cent of brand medicines worth over £1.5 billion a year, leading to significant savings in NHS medicine costs as generic copies enter the market.

Fixed repayments are offered by government for dispensed generic products. The repayment figure has historically been determined by the prices offered in the marketplace but recent plans will fix these, to limit cost rises.

Proper medicine management strategies operated by all who have an interest in procurement and use of pharmaceuticals are largely in place in Britain. Some are implemented at a national level, some local. An approach based on evidence is best. Long-term planning for securing supply channels and new technologies is required. Transparent contracting from the NHS perspective and strategic partnership with industry are required to avoid shortages and counteract ploys to prolong the life of patents.

Spending on medicines

Britain spends around £8 billion a year on drugs. Most of this is via the NHS, for patients at home and those in hospital.

Leading UK pharmaceutical corporations, 2002

sales	Corporation	nat	primary care*	primary care	hospital	hospital	total sales	total
			sales £M	% share	sales £M	% share	£M	% share
1	GlaxoSmithKline	UK	969.44	11.8	189.79	8.8	1,159.24	11.2
2	Pfizer	USA	721.40	8.8	117.99	5.5	839.39	8.1
3	Astrazeneca	UK	582.77	7.1	74.73	3.5	657.49	6.3
4	Merck & Co	USA	557.28	6.8	27.70	1.3	584.98	5.6
5	Wyeth	USA	432.73	5.3	65.33	3.0	498.06	4.8
6	Novartis	SWI	318.74	3.9	115.02	5.3	433.76	4.2
7	Aventis Pharma	FRA	275.88	3.4	119.92	5.6	395.79	3.8
8	Pharmacia Ltd	USA	309.43	3.8	0.00	0.00	309.43	3.0
9	Roche	SWI	192.62	2.3	112.99	5.3	305.61	2.9
10	Lilly	USA	199.34	2.4	73.58	3.4	272.93	2.6
11	Sanofi-Synthelabo	FRA	236.91	2.9	31.34	1.5	268.25	2.6
12	Bristol - Myers	USA	174.71	2.1	72.27	3.4	246.98	2.4
13	Johnson & Johnson	USA	174.08	2.1	46.87	2.2	220.94	2.1
14	Boehringer Inge	GER	119.54	1.5	39.59	1.8	159.12	1.5
15	Novo Nordisk	DEN	135.04	1.6	15.52	0.7	150.56	1.5
16	Abbott	USA	82.34	1.0	61.22	2.8	143.56	1.4
17	Bayer	GER	101.21	1.2	38.36	1.8	139.57	1.3
18	Schering Plough	USA	73.58	0.9	50.75	2.4	124.33	1.2
19	Schering Ag	GER	72.50	0.9	36.94	1.7	109.44	1.1

*Primary care includes prescriptions and over-the-counter sales

orts per worker nufacturing base...

‘The pharmaceutical industry can and often does get a bad press, its contribution hidden. Marketing focuses on sales rather than science...’

Some is spent by private hospitals, and about 15% by the public themselves on self care.

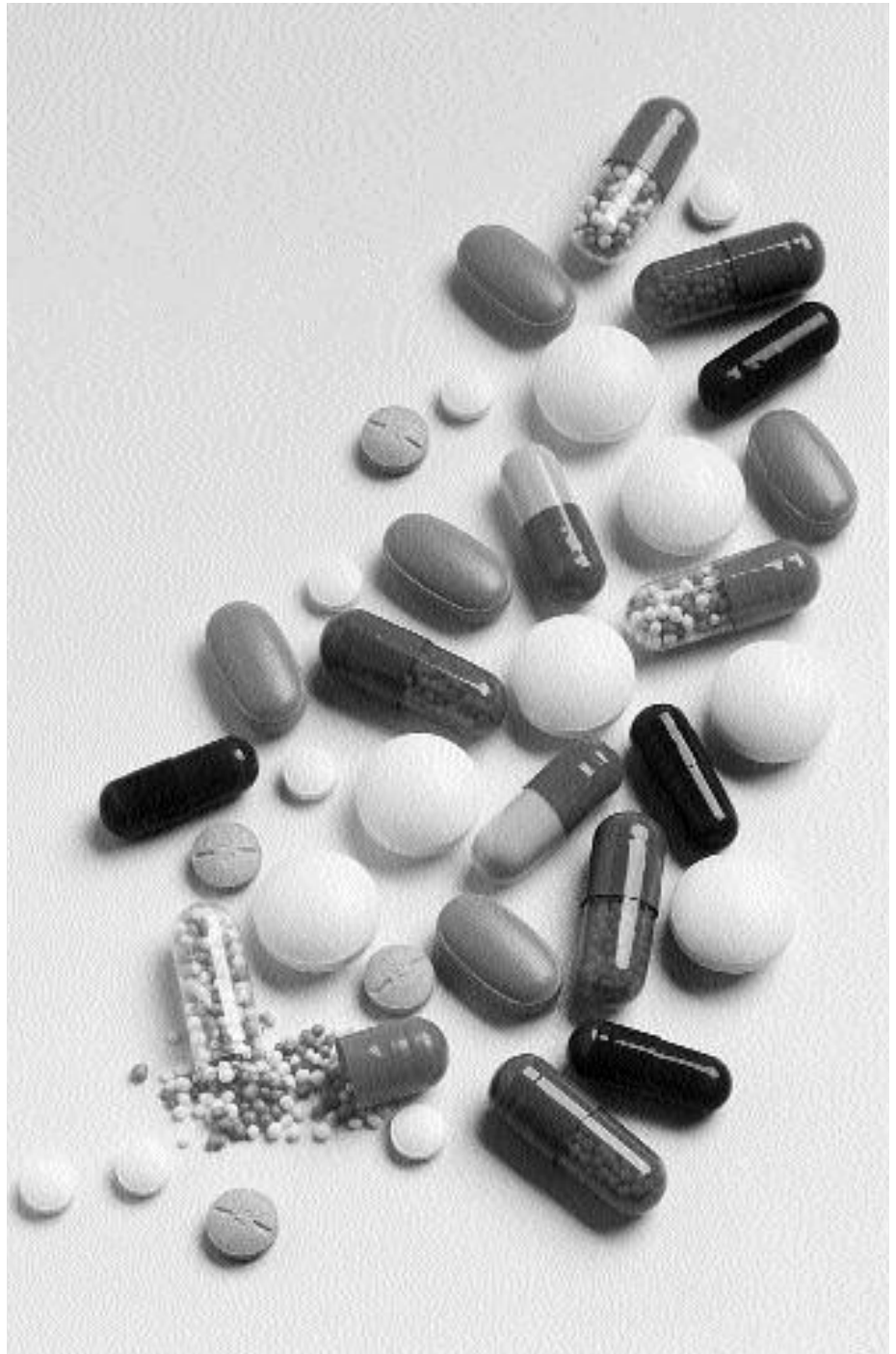
Contrary to expectations, the impact of the National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) has largely been to increase total spend, as it publishes guidance on use of medicines. Uptake of the guidance is monitored and use of the recommended drugs has become less of a battlefield. Health chiefs are expected to adopt the guidance and fund treatments. This is helping to get rid of postcode prescribing and is good news.

Lost days

Not spending money on medicines can impact on the overall economy in terms of lost days at work, admission to hospital, or increased length of stay in hospital. The economic analysis of drug spending is complex and can be unconvincing to a nation that budgets without reference to costs which may arise when we do not spend on a particular item. This is true in local health spending as well as at a national level.

Linked to NICE guidance is the publication of the National Service Frameworks (NSF). These detail expected practice by doctors for different diseases. Again these are promoting the increased use of medicines as they describe standards and targets to be met. One success story is in coronary heart disease. This was the subject of one of the earliest NSFs to be published and a report on outcomes is now available.

The report, “Winning the War on Heart



Disease”, reveals that deaths from cardiovascular disease fell by more than 23% between 1995/97 and 2000/02; and eight in ten heart attack patients received life-saving thrombolysis treatment within thirty minutes of hospital arrival in 2003, compared with less than four in ten in 2000. Over 3% per cent of the population are now receiving a drug, from the statin class of medicines, which lower cholesterol levels. It is estimated that this is saving between 6,000 and 7,000 lives a year, as well as reducing the number and severity of heart attacks. Treatments to support people who wish to stop smoking and the payment of services to run

support frameworks are contributing to results.

The percentage of Britain’s gross domestic profit (national income effectively) spent on medicines, is relatively low compared with other countries — France and Japan, for example, spend over 50% more, and the US more than twice as much.

The pharmaceutical industry’s interpretation of this type of data is that British doctors are cautious in their use of medicines. This is difficult either to

Continued on page 10

Employment in the UK pharmaceutical industry

	Employees (1,000s)	R&D employees (1,000s)	R&D (% of total employed)	Gross output per employee (£)
1975	66.5	10.0	15	12,077
1980	73.3	12.3	17	33,315
1985	66.9	14.9	22	60,239
1990	71.1	18.4	26	90,549
1991	72.8	19.1	26	96,552
1992	73.8	19.9	27	108,686
1993	68.8	20.7	30	119,709
1994	69.4	20.0	29	134,323
1995	61.9	17.0	27	160,242
1996	58.8	19.0	32	163,622
1997	54.7	20.0	37	192,980
1998	59	21.0	36	156,831
1999	63	21.0	33	170,349
2000	59	25	42	190,492
2001	65	27	42	198,862

Continued from page 9

challenge or agree with in the absence of research. However, the total spend is increasing as government health targets are addressed.

The government has targets to increase the number of doctors trained in this country (though see Tomorrow's doctors, p11). Perhaps if we do have more doctors, they will prescribe more medicines. There is likely to be a relationship between the drugs bill and improved and increased interventions by a larger healthcare workforce.

Industrial exports

The pharmaceutical industry is now a global enterprise. All companies market across the western world, and two of the top three companies are based in Britain. They are looking forward to the possibility of expansion into China and other largely untapped countries in the far east.

Pharmaceuticals are one of Britain's leading manufacturing sectors, bringing in a trade surplus of £2.6 billion in 2002. The value of British pharmaceutical exports in 2001 was £10.03 billion. On the world stage, after the USA, British



pharmaceutical companies' market share of the top 100 medicines is easily more than all its European competitors combined.

The industry is a major employer, with

nearly 65,000 people employed directly and many more in feeder industries. The value added per employee is rising year by year as shown in the table left— more than doubling between 1991 and 2001.

The increased emphasis on education spending by the government, announced in the budget, will be welcome if it becomes a reality. Science graduates are required to feed the pharmaceutical industry's current contribution to healthcare and the British economy.

Science and research

Research and development lies at the heart of the pharmaceutical industry. It invests 30 per cent of its sales in research, and a quarter of the entire research expenditure by Britain's manufacturing sector is funded or carried out by the pharmaceutical sector.

Research and development expenditure by the pharmaceutical industry in Britain amounts to more than £3 billion, or more than £9 million a day. The cost of research is now approximately £500 million per new medicine. Three in ten new chemical formulations go on to return more than their costs of development.

The government made a step towards recognising the importance of science to the economy in the recent announcement of increased allocations of £100 million per year by 2008 for research. This is to be targeted on the treatment and cure of Alzheimer's, stroke, diabetes and mental health, as well as developing new medicines for children.

The government has also announced the creation of the UK Clinical Research Collaboration (UKCRC), which aims to bring together the NHS, Medical Research Council, medical charities and industry to speed up the development of new medicines and treatments. This is the latest in a series of initiatives over recent decades, and the situation gets more urgent every year.

Clearly this is a British industry which is strong enough to carry all before it, an industry of which the working class should be proud.

While student numbers have expanded, the number of teaching staff to educate these new doctors has declined...

Tomorrow's doctors

THERE HAVE NEVER been so many undergraduates in British universities studying medicine – a 40% increase since 1998. Yet at the same time, there has never been such a sharp decline in the number of teaching staff in medical schools. Medicine is one of the most highly competitive subjects for university entrants, and medical schools are able to attract the brightest, most academically gifted and committed young people, in spite of an increasingly expensive and demanding degree course which lasts for five or often six years.

Britain needs more doctors, both to cope with the changing and increasing needs of the country's population, to meet new challenges of, for example, emerging infectious diseases, advances in treatments, doctors' changing career patterns, and the wastage among qualified doctors (itself a product of disillusionment with the realities of practising medicine in an under-funded NHS that staggers from one reorganisation to the next).

Expansion

The government has been forced to expand medical education, and they spin this as a measure to bring 'down' waiting lists, though the new doctors would not be working on wards for at least five years. But medical manpower planning is fraught with difficulty: the hackneyed metaphor frequently but justly employed is that of turning oil tankers.

So while the government has expanded student numbers, not only by boosting numbers at existing medical schools, but also by establishing new schools in England, the number of teaching staff to educate these new doctors has declined.

Over three years the number of lecturer posts has fallen by a third and there has been an overall reduction of academic staff of 12%, according to the British Medical Association (BMA).

The Council of Heads of Medical Schools (CHMS) agrees that the number of lecturer posts has fallen by 33% and readers and senior lecturers by 10%.

Students are concerned about the quality of the education they receive at medical school.

Top-up fees will also have a detrimental effect on medical schools. The BMA estimates that medical students could leave medical school with a debt of £64,000, equivalent to three times the annual salary a newly qualified doctor will earn.

Medical students not only study for longer (the basic five year course is, for a third of students, now a six year course, as students take intercalated degrees and so on) but also incur higher expenses, through costs of equipment, travel, and textbooks. In addition, the medical students' ability to pay their way through medical school is more limited than that of students of other subjects because, from the time that they start their clinical studies, they lose the long holidays that students of other subjects can use to earn.

A further problem that doctors and medical students need to confront is how to balance the priorities of clinical work, research and teaching. There is great concern about the effects of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), which requires university departments, including medical schools, to throw the future of their funding into the balance of a highly bureaucratic, flawed, ridiculous and time-consuming process. A new RAE exercise looms, and medical schools are concentrating all their efforts and resources at securing the best possible rating.

Exaggerated

Research has therefore assumed a position of exaggerated importance compared to the other parts of the triad, clinical work and teaching. And medical academics have to face an almost impossible task in balancing the three. The BMA has evidence that pure research posts are increasing at the expense of teaching posts, while more and more of the teaching workload is devolved to hospital consultants and GPs.

Some foresee the extinction of the

clinical academic as a breed. In this area, determined campaigning by the BMA has borne fruit. A new contract for clinical academics has been forced through which admits the need to balance these activities, and in recognition of this has won an average 15% increase in career earnings.

The pressure on universities to balance their books leads to increasing pressure to take lucrative overseas students. So far the government has been forced to acknowledge that, since the expansion of medical education has to produce more doctors for Britain's needs, that overseas applicants would not be admitted. But parent universities will put increasing pressure on medical schools to fall into line with other departments, schools and faculties and bring in their share of overseas fee income.

The General Medical Council, too much on the defensive after the Bristol paediatric heart surgery and Shipman affairs, has sold the pass, and seems to have abandoned its job as a regulator and maintainer of standards in medical education. Instead it chases the hare of each new government initiative and buzzword: "widening participation", "access courses" and "civic engagement" are all one hears.

The medical profession is one of the most advanced sections of the working class, precisely because of its professionalism, and is hated by the government for that same reason. It, more than any other group of workers, displays the paradigmatic qualities of a profession: a group of workers who, in the teeth of opposition from the employers, combine to practise their craft to the highest possible level, to set standards that members must follow, to advance the state of knowledge, and to teach new entrants to the profession. Some seek a panacea, hoping with astonishing naïveté that if responsibility for medical education shifts from the funding councils to the Department of Health, all will be well. But it is to its professional traditions that doctors must look if medical education is to survive.

Employers need skill but always try to get it without paying for dangerous trend toward deskilling...

Public service and the birthright of skill

OUR PUBLIC SERVICES see increasing struggles on a whole range of issues, in higher education, the civil service and in youth work. These sections of the working class have some of the largest concentrations of trade union members. What direction are we going in? How should our class be acting? Clearly the struggle on pay going on around us is vital. For this we need national negotiating machinery — regionalised pay is lower pay. Moves towards devolution and regionalisation inside the unions and outside undermine them, make unity more difficult, and promote the EU.

Along with pay, the other area of our

strength is skill. Not so much is happening here, yet pay and skill are inseparable. With capitalism in absolute decline, the ruling class does not want to fund industry or services. Health, education, apprenticeships, higher education, all are seen as support services for industry: in its decline, capitalism no longer needs them. But we do — how do we save them?

Obviously it is no good relying on the Labour left. Their tuition fees rebellion failed, as predicted, like their vote against the war. Our class has to act in a new way to survive, a revolutionary way. We are not going anywhere, despite the so-called

mobility of labour advocated by the EU. We know what it is that we require to live, and that we as a class can create it. So we have to assert our right collectively to do that, and then take steps to do it.

Future

The great pool of skills existing within our class is our birthright and our hope for a future as a class. There is plenty of scope for developing struggle on skills, which we cannot afford to neglect. Our class must define our members' skills — we must not let our employer or the government do so. It is vital that we control our skill at work. Consultants control their skill at work, so



Winning ways: ward staff at Bury St Edmunds Hospital celebrate victory in their 2002 fight to stop cuts in wages and conditions

it. With the decline in effective trade unionism has come a

the government attacks what it calls the consultants' cartel, and tries to impose a contract that is a dog's dinner for consultants, a banquet for lawyers. Diagnosis and treatment centres are far more of a threat to our NHS than foundation hospitals; they are worse than the Tory health reforms.

For too long, successive governments have told teachers who is to teach, what they are to teach and how they are to teach it. Teachers must gain control over their work, their profession.

Promoting, raising, and controlling the level of skill needed to do any job in the workplace is a traditional role of trade unions. But training on the job alone is isolating, not adequate to true professional education. Employers need skill but always try to get it without recognising or paying for it. With the decline in effective trade unionism has come a dangerous trend toward deskilling, and we must address the problem. Even relatively well-organised professions like teaching are under attack through the introduction of various new routes into the profession that do not require the same level of training. This can be divisive, and a threat to professional standards. Teachers must ensure that all teachers are similarly qualified.

It is certainly difficult for general unions such as those in local government services to get a grip on the wide range of skills needed by members, but we shirk this duty at our peril. Employers will try to recruit unskilled workers, or recruit abroad rather than pay for skills development. We find that new recruits lack essential skills which mean we have to carry them, or which cause danger to ourselves or the public. No one will tackle this problem but us. There is no job which is really unskilled, but only those doing it can say exactly what the skills are and should be.

Significant areas of public service have no pay or skills structure, and these are areas most likely to be geographically scattered, not organised in trade unions, and often contracted out, for example, home care workers, residential care

'It is certainly difficult for general unions such as those in local government services to get a grip on the wide range of skills needed by members, but we shirk this duty at our peril....'

workers and cleaners in public service. This cannot be taken to mean that the workers there are demoralised, lack public service ethos, or are unorganisable. But given the problems public service unions face on recruitment and participation, many feel that priority must be given to the mainstream workforce - it is just too difficult to reach this scattered group.

Yet many of these are highly motivated people doing essential work, who just want training opportunities they have never been able to take advantage of. If these opportunities were provided and actively promoted by the unions among them, they would certainly be potential members. Similarly, training would be a way of bringing them together to overcome their geographical isolation. It would then be possible to build an argument for further training and a pay structure. This is the ABC of trade union work, found everywhere in the pages of trade union history.

Trend

There is increasingly a trend toward reassigning tasks from more highly paid workers to the lower paid, which destabilises the workforce and potentially puts worker against worker, for example, using classroom assistants to cover lessons when the qualified teacher is absent. Homecare workers used to be paid to give personal care to the elderly - now they have tasks such as giving out medication and planning a more active

role in the care and well-being of their clients (unpaid or underpaid social work). There is also a move to incorporate tasks traditionally dealt with by medically trained workers such as taking blood. This is proposed without the benefit of pay increases to reflect the additional responsibilities and without the appropriate training required.

Many of these low-paid workers would have formerly been members of NUPE, but after the formation of Unison they felt increasingly marginalised or ignored at branch level, especially in services that have been contracted out. General national campaigns on low pay have not been effective against their employers. Some have dropped out of the union and others have been recruited or poached by unions such as GMB and T&GWU.

None of these unions has given much attention to the urgent need for training among this large group of workers, though any of us receiving their services can see that appropriate training is needed. Are we happy in old age to be cared for by a succession of untrained people on the minimum wage who leave as soon as they possibly can to get a living wage elsewhere? Of course not! The way we live now as workers, with women and men in the workplace, means that we need skilled, organised workers to provide care for the elderly.

It is common knowledge that training can be the basis for union networking, and can increase participation in the union. But how can unions get people in to train, given that they work for many different employers? A good place to start is Health and Safety. Employers would find it hard to refuse anyone making the case for training in this area once union members were involved. Organised on a regional or national basis, such training could be economical, spanning a number of contractors and local authorities.

We must get a grip on our workplaces: workplace organisation is the root if we are not changing our workplaces, we are not changing Britain or the world. We need to discuss these matters in our workplaces and resolve the problems there.

For the employing class the outbreak of the Second World War was usual — with the added bonus of the infamous Order Number 13

The Second World War: when all strikes were

FOR NINE MONTHS the employing class waged a phoney war against Hitler. When he invaded Poland in September 1939, the British government responded as Foreign Secretary Samuel Hoare recommended: it should 'fulfil the letter of a declaration without going all out'. The 110 French and British divisions on Germany's western border made no move against the five German divisions there, allowing Hitler's forces to conquer Poland. The British and French governments wanted Hitler to keep going East as he had promised them he would, against the Soviet Union, rather than West, against Britain and France.

For the employing class, the war meant business as usual. As one representative of big business explained, 'War or no war, all we are interested in is dividends from our present investments.' Later in the war, British banks did good business in Paris under the Nazi occupation, and throughout the war the British government allowed Standard Oil to ship oil to Franco's Spain, which forwarded it to Germany.

Domination

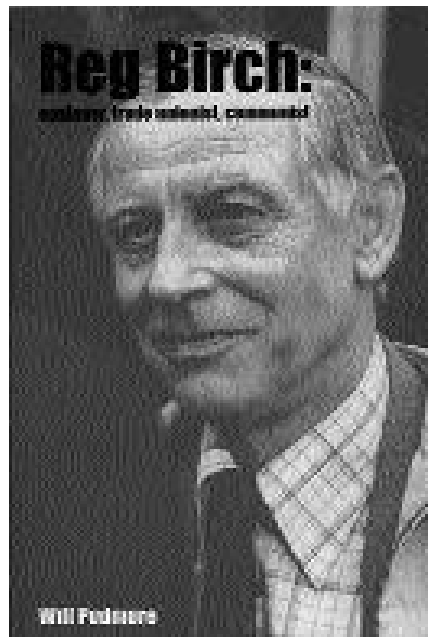
The war at this point was between rival villains, fighting to dominate Europe. Any support for war would have meant supporting whatever Chamberlain did, which could well have meant supporting a Hitler attack on the Soviet Union, since it was clear that for Chamberlain the main enemy was the Soviet Union, not Hitler Germany. Chamberlain's efforts to arm and support Nazi-backed Finland's 1939-40 war against the Soviet Union proved how real this danger was. In November 1939, the London North District Committee of the AEU debated and carried a motion from their branches that condemned the war as imperialist: they did not believe in the Tories' promises to fight their closest friends, the German ruling class.

In 1940 the engineering employers rejected the AEU's claim for an extra penny farthing an hour. So the claim was referred to the National Arbitration Tribunal, which in February 1941 awarded

an increase of 17 and a half pence a week on the national bonus, way below the soaring cost of living. This pattern was repeated throughout the war.

The employers were ready to take advantage of events: they fought far harder against the working class than against Hitler. They had an ally in the person of Ernest Bevin, formerly General Secretary of the TGWU, then Minister of Labour in the coalition government. He was determined to put the workers firmly in their place. The government had

appears to have left something to be desired." Reg Birch said later that they had concentrated on winding up one of the management negotiators, who had a double-barrelled name, by always referring to one half of it at a time. In 1939, the toolroom workers had held a successful one-week strike to win the hourly wage rate prescribed by the District Committee. Next year, the employer dismissed the convenor, a Jamaican. The workers struck, demanding his reinstatement. On 17 April 1941, they



This article is an excerpt from **REG BIRCH: ENGINEER, TRADE UNIONIST, COMMUNIST**, by Will Podmore, published by Bellman Books (78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB) in May 2004, price £10.

Steeped in the industrial battleground of Park Royal, the largest concentration of engineering workers in the country, for half a century Reg Birch led the struggles of the industrial working class and founded Britain's first genuine Communist Party.

This is a story to provoke reflection about the tactics and strategy of struggle, about working class morality, about the place of communism in a modern Britain — and about the very future of our nation.

already, on 18 July 1940, rushed through the Conditions of Employment and National Arbitration Order, Number 1305, which banned all strikes and lockouts, and imposed binding arbitration.

In the spring of 1941, Bevin thought he had found his opportunity in Swift Scale, a factory in Park Royal. The factory, employing 130 workers, had seen continual strife between the employer and the workers, due to what the Ministry of Supply called the employer's deficient and bungling management. As G. J. Nash of the Ministry of Labour and National Service observed dryly, "In this particular instance, the management of the firm

resolved, "That we, the workforce of Swift Scale Company, declare our intention of taking a complete holiday until such time as we secure the reinstatement of our Convenor Bro. [Brother] Leslie." Signed E. W. Edwards (Chairman of Committee), E. O'Driscoll (Capstans), Reg Birch (Acting Steward), G. Whale, J. Higgins (Acting Steward), Cox, E. Day.

They refused to report the dispute under Order Number 1305 and refused to return to work to await the outcome of official procedure. The shop stewards in the area handed a message for Bevin: "Because of the chaotic state of production in other factories, together

meant business as
305...

ere illegal

with the move against trade union organisation and democratic rights, we support and wholeheartedly endorse this action of resistance.”

Bevin took the case to the Old Bailey, and the seven shop stewards, six men and one woman, were charged. In this celebrated trial, Reg defended himself. The guilty verdict was a foregone conclusion, however, and the government at first wanted a long prison sentence. But Bevin realised how much damage this would have done to the war effort. Sir Frederic Leggett of the Ministry of Labour wrote on 9 June 1941, “The Minister feels that ... there is good cause for leniency. ... the Minister would be glad if Counsel could be instructed to say that, while he had felt bound to enforce a law which was made in the general interests of the country and to make clear the seriousness of the offence in the circumstances in which the country was placed, he recognises that these workers were probably led astray by others and that they had no desire to impede the prosecution of the war.”

Victory

This was a great victory for the working class. After this encounter, employers feared yet respected Reg. He had been blacklisted early in his working life, but nevertheless he found work in “anti-union ratshops” and organised them. Reg’s method of work was to work with everybody, with no false divisions of right and left, moderate and militant— as he said, “I’ve never met a militant.” In this way he built huge workplace party branches, particularly in the war years, as part of the class struggle that caused the wartime government to concede plans for a post-war welfare state. The Labour Party claimed the credit, just as the pre-war CPGB claimed the glory for the anti-fascist fight. But it was always the struggle and sacrifice of the organised working class, not of a political party, that delivered those victories. Reg knew that the working class made history, and he was loyal throughout his life to the interests of that force alone.

WHAT'S THE PARTY?

We in the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist), and others who want to see a change in the social system we live under, aspire to a society run in such a way as to provide for the needs, and the desires, of working people, not the needs and desires of those who live by the work of others. These latter people we call capitalists and the system they have created we call capitalism. We don't just aspire to change it, we work to achieve that change.

We object to capitalism not because it is unfair and unkind, although it has taken those vices and made virtues out of them. We object because it does not work. It cannot feed everyone, or house them, or provide work for them. We need, and will work to create a system that can.

We object to capitalism not because it is opposed to terrorism; in fact it helped create it. We object because it cannot, or will not, get rid of it. To destroy terrorism you'd have to destroy capitalism, the supporter of the anti-progress forces which lean on terror to survive. We'd have to wait a long time for that.

We object to capitalism not because it says it opposes division in society; it creates both. We object because it has assiduously created immigration to divide workers here, and now wants to take that a dangerous step further, by institutionalising religious difference into division via ‘faith’ schools (actually a contradiction in terms).

Capitalism may be all the nasty things well-meaning citizens say it is. But that's not why we workers must destroy it. We must destroy it because it cannot provide for our futures, our children's futures. We must build our own future, and stop complaining about the mess created in our name.

Time will pass, and just as certainly, change will come. The only constant thing in life is change. Just as new growth replaces decay in the natural world, this foreign body in our lives, the foreign body we call capitalism, will have to be replaced by the new, by the forces of the future, building for themselves and theirs, and not for the few. We can work together to make the time for that oh-so-overdue change come all the closer, all the quicker.

Step aside capital. It's our turn now.

How to get in touch

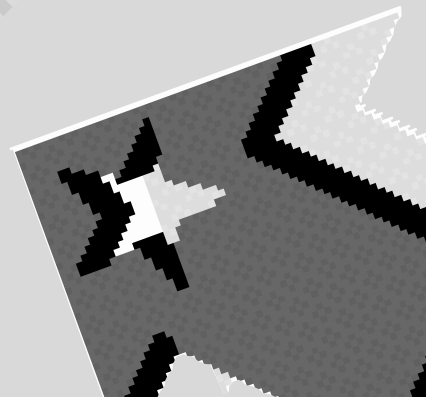
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Back to Front – Blair’s Iraq conspiracy

‘Rumsfeld’s deputy, Paul Wolfowitz, April 2001: “No, no, no, we don’t have to deal with al-Qaeda. Why are we talking about that little guy?” ...’

REVELATIONS in the American Congressional hearings, and now being published elsewhere, are piling up to prove that the Bush and Blair governments are not really interested in fighting terrorism. Both the Clinton and Bush administrations continually refused Sudan’s offer to share their files on Osama bin Laden, because the files showed his links to the Saudi government and the Bush family. The last US Ambassador to Sudan called this US refusal worse than a crime.

Director of the CIA George Tenet warned in February 2001, “Osama bin Laden and his global network of lieutenants and associates are the most immediate and serious threat.” But Rumsfeld’s deputy Paul Wolfowitz said in April 2001: “No, no, no, we don’t have to deal with al-Qaeda. Why are we talking about that little guy? We have to talk about Iraqi terrorism against the United States.”

Bush claimed, “The principal threat today is ... the use of long-range missiles by rogue states for purposes of terror, coercion, and aggression.” So Bush and Blair asserted, even after UN inspections and sanctions had disarmed Iraq, that Iraq was still a threat. The former British Ambassador to Washington has revealed that at a White House dinner just nine days after 9/11, Blair was encouraging Bush to attack Iraq.

Five days before US forces attacked Iraq, the President’s special assistant for

combating terrorism resigned, saying, “The administration wasn’t matching its deeds to its words in the war against terrorism. They’re making us less secure, not more secure.”

Dick Cheney had predicted that after the war, “We will be greeted as liberators.” Not quite — most of the deployable US army is now occupying Iraq and they have killed thousands of civilians, including about 800 people in Fallujah, where a US colonel boasted that his troops were in the killing business.

Such an attitude is reminiscent of General Westmoreland, who used to justify killing civilians in Vietnam: “It does deprive the enemy of the population, doesn’t it?” A British officer described how the US forces treated Iraqi people as Untermenschen.

Blair promised Labour MPs that if they backed his attack on Iraq, he would deliver US support for the peace process in the Middle East. Now Bush and Blair back Sharon as he tears up every UN resolution and peace plan.

The 30 June handover is a charade. The US state wants permanent control of Iraq: it is building 14 huge military bases there. The commander of British forces in Basra warns that they may be there for ten years.

The war against Iraq is not against terror, not for disarmament, not for democracy — it is a US war for Iraqi oil. For the Iraqi people, it is a war against the foreign occupier.

FINANCIAL APPEAL: June 2004 is the 10th anniversary of the death of Reg Birch, founding Chairman of the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist). In commemoration of Reg’s life, the first political life of this engineer and communist has been published.

Drawing upon speeches, articles, previous unpublished photographs and family reminiscences this is a major

contribution to the history of working class struggle during the 20th century.

WORKERS is inviting its readers to assist in this major publishing event by making a donation to the Reg Birch book. Cheques/donations should be made payable to WORKERS, and sent to WORKERS, 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB. All donations are welcome.

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