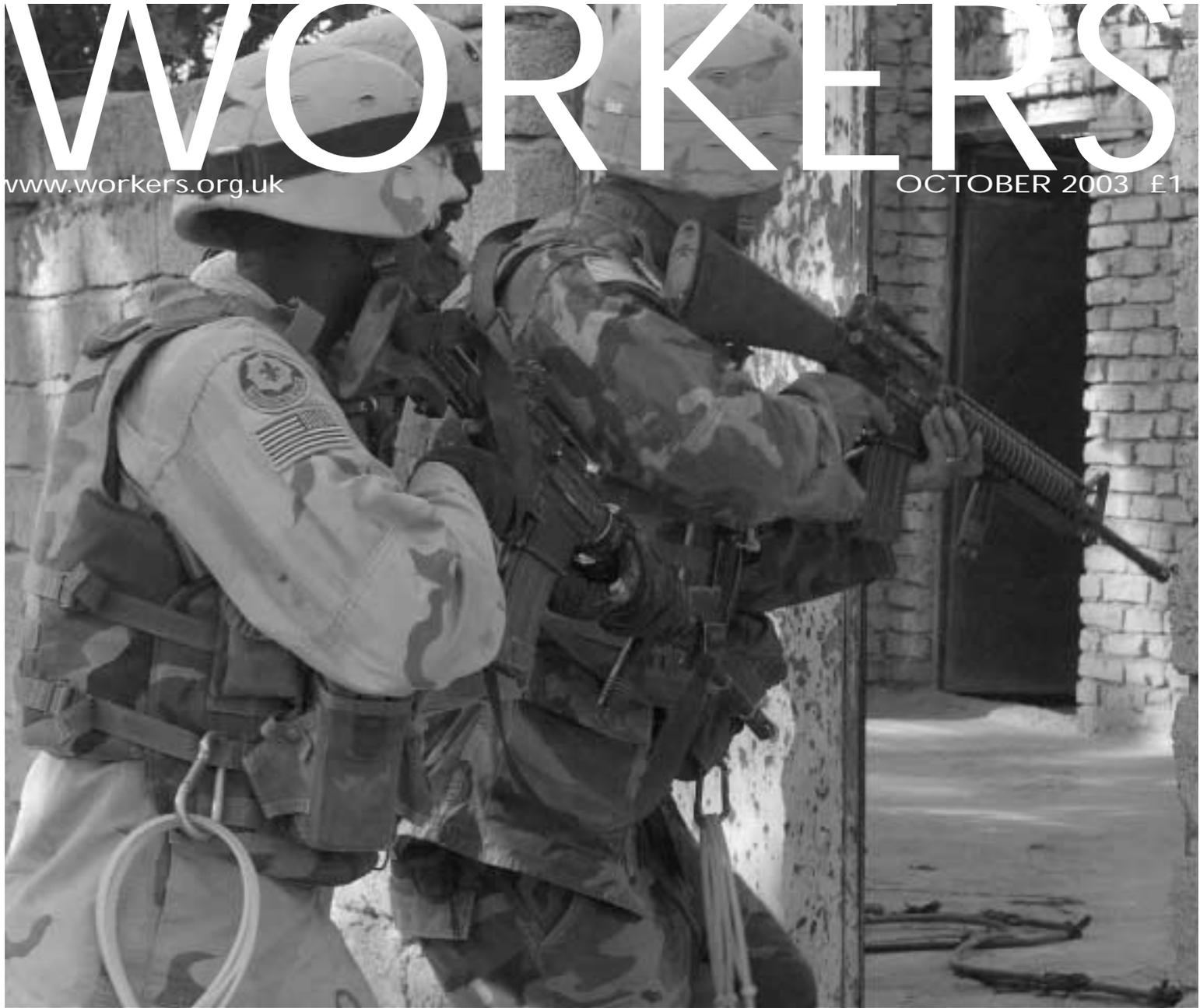


WORKERS

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GET THE TROOPS OUT OF IRAQ!



Swedes say Nej

02



Return of the unions

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Blackout Britain

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IF YOU WANT TO REBUILD BRITAIN, READ ON

WORKERS

“ Nej means nej

IN SWEDEN'S hard-fought euro campaign, the government and big business (Volvo, Scania, Ericsson and Sweden's main newspapers) and, shamefully, most of Sweden's trade unions, backed entry.

THE ECONOMIST estimated that the yes side probably outspent the no side by five to one. Other estimates in Sweden put the figure at seven to one. The Economist reported that the Yes side used the large resources they had at their disposal to produce 'endless billboards, pages of newspaper adverts and streams of leaflets'.

The opinion polling companies also did what they could to help the Yes cause:

Gallup's opinion poll just before polling put the Yes side ahead by 1%; Ruab's poll put the Yes side ahead by 0.2%.

Yet on 14 September, on an 81% turnout, 56% of Swedes voted against joining the euro, 42% for. Even the foul murder of Foreign Minister Anna Lindh did not sway the Swedish people from the patriotic choice. No European nation has ever yet voted for the euro.

In Britain, workers are 2 to 1 against. Blair's 'Britain in Europe' campaign was already falling apart: his man Simon Buckby is leaving it next month. Now a British Yes in a referendum looks even more unlikely, and Blair looks even more isolated.

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 biography of this Engineer and Communist is to be published.

Drawing upon speeches, articles, previous unpublished photographs and family

reminiscences this will be 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 donating to the Reg Birch biography.

Cheques/donations should be made payable to WORKERS. All donations are welcome.



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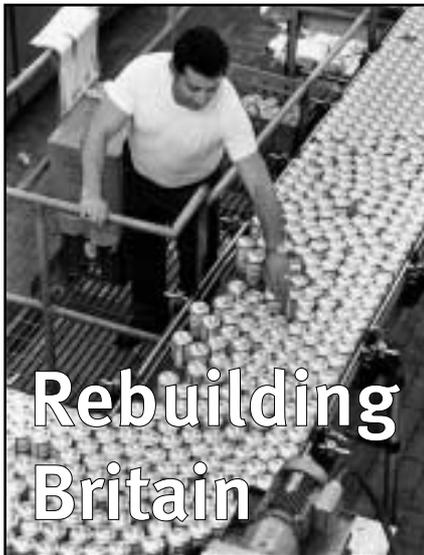
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**EU****BRUSSELS****NHS****WORLD TRADE****RACING****ECONOMY****POST OFFICE****ENGINEERING****SPECIAL BRANCH****WHAT'S ON**

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Coming soon

Wake-up call to Britain

TWO FRINGE meetings at this year's TUC in Brighton began the wake-up call to workers to demand a referendum on the EU Constitution and to demand a no vote in it.

The euro has not passed its five tests, nor the sixth test — the trade union movement! Following the excellent Swedish vote it now seems unlikely that the euro will be put to the people of Britain in a referendum. But the focus now shifts to the EU constitution which could smuggle the euro in through the back door as well as take away all of our national democratic control.

Undemocratic proposals originate in undemocratic processes. The proposed EU Constitution is largely the drafting of EU federalist Valery Giscard d'Estaing. He is so proud of his work that he told the current President of the EU— workers' friend Silvio Berlusconi — not to accept any amendments to the draft at the October 4th Inter Governmental Conference. The plan of the furtive convention is to get the constitution signed by governments on 9 May 2004.

Parliamentarians here think that Labour will seek to get the Constitution through parliament by spring 2005. We demand a referendum to stop them, despite the fact that the government has already ruled this out. The government says that the Constitution is no more than a tidying-up exercise and wants to lose the fundamental democratic and political questions in an obscure fog of technicalities designed to bore people to death.

But the proposed constitution is simple and profound. Its purpose is to create a new legal entity whose powers will override all national governments and which will stand above all previous European Treaties. The European Union will control the economic policies of former independent countries through the euro and a single tax system. There will be a European army and police force and a common foreign and security policy. National courts and the European Court of Justice itself will be overridden completely by EU set laws. Under an EU constitution our parliament becomes no more than a captive town hall, its agenda set by those we do not elect.

This will throw into sharp relief all of the elements of rights and relationships and common law precedents that have shaped Britain's form of parliamentary and trade union democracy hitherto. Why bother for example having a trade union link to a parliamentary party in Britain if the big cheeses are in Brussels and Frankfurt? Why vote in any parliamentary election if the winning candidate will have to beg permission for their government policies from unelected commissioners running the show in Europe?

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

BRUSSELS**Goodbye to the veto...**

ON 17 SEPTEMBER the European Commission announced that it is time to abandon the existing national vetoes on budgetary matters — that is, on all decisions about taxing and spending. It wants instead to install a system of majority voting.

Even the new, draft EU Constitution had not proposed so drastic a step, but as usual the EU is in a constant process of tearing up its previous commitments and promises. Consequently, all Blair's claims that budgetary matters would always be safe in his hands are so much worthless verbiage.

The Commission also wants unanimity to be ended for any future changes to EU treaties. So all member nations would be tied into legally binding arrangements over which they had no control.

After all this, how can anyone believe that the EU is about internationalism? Its clear intent is the destruction of nations' independence.

REFERENDUM**The mood in Sedgefield**

AN OPINION POLL published by ICM concludes that just 10% of prime minister Tony Blair's Sedgefield constituents agree with him when he says that there is no need for the British people to vote in a referendum on the proposed European constitution. And 87% of them want a referendum on this matter.

This reflects nationwide opinion. Whatever happened to 'listening to the people'?

WORLD TRADE**Talks collapse**

THE COLLAPSE of the international trade negotiations has been seen as a massive defeat for the European Union — and has left many wondering if the World Trade Organisation (WTO) has any real future. The negotiating strategy of Pascal Lamy, the European commissar for trade, was to try to divide the Southern countries, who in fact stayed united on key issues, despite differences between larger and smaller states. The Southern countries regard the WTO as dominated by Europe and the US and even more so by their corporations.

The EU had in fact made some small shifts on the Common Agricultural Policy to try to win concessions on matters like investment and competition policy, but the US would not budge, and the American Farm Bill remains firmly intact. This bill will substantially increase price guarantees for American crops such as corn and wheat and will increase new subsidies for others such as soybeans. American agriculture is dependent on exports and effectively forces its goods onto other countries.

The damage done to countries the USA trades with is enormous. For example, as a condition of entry to the WTO, China has to open its markets and is now facing a flood of American imports at the expense of its own farmers. Not surprisingly, the Chinese are growing increasingly anxious, as the knock-on effects could have implications for internal stability.

ECONOMY**Feet of clay**

THE 'COALITION' partners in Iraq have feet of clay: the US has an all-time record budget deficit, while manufacturing contributes the least amount to economic activity in Britain's history.

Elsewhere, Japan, whose economy is in free-fall, makes threatening noises about its neighbour North Korea. Meanwhile, military expenditure is £25 billion a year — 25% larger than Britain's. Defence minister Ishiba thinks Japan should have an offensive capability, which would overturn its 50-year-old pacifist constitution. Japan's close neighbours remember the atrocities it committed in colonising the peoples of the region in the last century.

In Europe, Germany faces serious economic problems. It is the most powerful European nation with the largest population. With France also breaking EU law on public spending, and universal disenchantment with political parties, what does the future hold nearer home?



Homerton Hospital, Hackney...one of the hospitals heading the list for foundation status

Photo: Workers

Green light for foundation trusts

DESPITE RESISTANCE, the green light has gone on to permit the implementation of foundation trusts in the NHS. Health care workers in those trusts and in the NHS in England (foundation trusts are not Scottish or Welsh policy) now have to decide what to do. In the trusts themselves the view is to see what benefit can be achieved for patients and to allow improved income generating opportunities to be translated into a healthy thriving organisation. Nowhere is there any suggestion that funds generated will escape from healthcare delivery.

Government intent is to move all trusts in England into this framework in due course. What does it mean and will it cause two-tier healthcare? The answers are probably not yet clear. Trusts may act with more freedom from central control or Strategic Health Authority approval, at least to some extent. All monitoring requirements to assure performance in relation to waiting lists etc remain unchanged.

The real changes will be in the ability to pursue projects costing over £1million without loads of hoops to navigate. Of course the worry of many is that foundation trusts borrow money, and then implement changes that are better arrangements/provision than in other hospitals. Much will depend on how workers in non foundation hospitals react. If it provokes demands for improvements then a divisive policy can become a progressive one.

The same response will be required if (and it is a big if) foundation trusts are so successful that they feel they can pay staff more money or fund more treatments than the 'poor' relation down the road. If foundation hospitals by paying staff more attract the best, and cause closures of beds elsewhere, then the public is not well served. All the health trade unions are currently beginning the implementation of a new national grading structure. In trade union terms attempts to introduce differential pay rates can be viewed negatively and passively or it can become an argument for negotiating better pay for all.

HORSE RACING**Mobile warfare**

HORSE RACING — the 'Sport of Kings' — has seen a fascinating dispute emerge over the use of mobile phones by jockeys. Racing at Sandown Park was recently boycotted and abandoned.

Negotiations between the Jockey Club — the ultimate employers' closed shop — and the Jockeys Association appear to

have reached stalemate.

The dispute over where and when a jockey can use a mobile phone, before or in a race meeting, strikes at the integrity and honesty of jockeys. Obviously irked by the employers' suggestion, jockeys have resorted to direct action — hence the Sandown stoppage.

As the matter wings its way to the tribunals and the courts for resolution it is noted that no ballot for industrial action was undertaken.

ENGINEERING**Investing in Britain**

THE ENGINEERING firm Bamfords are taking on 200 extra workers in Staffordshire. They will be working on new diesel engines, 4 and 6-litre power plants for the famous JCB diggers.

This will be the first time that Bamfords have produced their own engines, and they will be some of the first new engines designed and built in Britain since Jaguar's AJ26 in the mid-1990s.

They will be developed in partnership with engine specialists Ricardo, AVL, Cosworth Technology and Krause.

Bentley is to employ 350 more workers in Crewe producing the Continental GT. The firm has invested £500 million in overhauling the factory and aims to produce 4,000 cars next year, up from 1,400 this year.

The company says Crewe workers' craftsmanship is "the best in the world" and that Bentley policy is to "invest in people not robots". Why don't more companies invest in British skill?

WHAT'S ON**Coming soon****OCTOBER**

Sunday 26 October

March against tuition fees, London

Organised by the National Union of Students, details to be announced later.

See www.nusonline.org.uk

NHS**Private treatment**

UNISON and other healthcare unions have slammed the government's decision to set up new diagnostic and treatment centres. While it is tempting to see this as a positive move to reduce waiting lists, the long-term effects on the NHS could be devastating.

The contracts will go to overseas private companies who will be guaranteed five-year contracts. Primary Care Trusts will be forced to pay more than NHS rates per operation.

In the NHS the routine operations such as those on hips, knees and cataracts help to subsidise the more complex long stay procedures. Without these 'bread and butter' operations, NHS wards may have to close and more complicated treatments will be cut back.

The companies involved are purely out for easy profit and many have little or no experience of delivering healthcare. The real cost of this privatisation will be a weakened NHS and worsening care for patients.

'No' vote in Post Office ballot

POST OFFICE workers voted by the narrow margin of less than 1% against taking national action over pay on a high turnout. Meanwhile, London postal workers did vote convincingly to take action over the London Weighting allowance.

Communication Workers Union (CWU) leaders have voiced disappointment at the national result, which was widely tipped to be a 'yes' vote, even by employers, who threatened huge job losses if private firms moved in during a strike. Union leaders will be considering whether it was this threat that dissuaded some members, or whether there were other reasons. On a positive note, given that few unions are taking or considering taking national action, the yes vote was in fact very high. But the difficulties experienced by the firefighters, despite a high level of public support, and the possibility of a prolonged dispute may have had members thinking twice.

The CWU faces huge challenges in the near future, with 30,000 jobs under threat. In these hostile times creative strategies will undoubtedly be needed over the coming months, but with the key objectives of defending the union and protecting the public postal service.

- The CWU is campaigning to protect Scottish post offices, over 40% of which are under threat of closure. The introduction of direct payments and the phased abolition of pension books could force hundreds more to shut.

The CWU's campaign, "Banking on You", aims to reassure the public that they can still use Post Offices to collect pensions and benefits. The union is also going to put pressure on three groups of high street banks, Halifax and the Bank of Scotland, Royal Bank of Scotland/Nat West, and HSBC, which are refusing to let their customers use post offices for banking transactions.

By 2005 all benefits and pension recipients will have to withdraw their money from a current account, basic bank account or Post Office Card Account (POCA). But many people are finding the application process for POCAs very complicated. Andy Furey, a CWU national officer, says, "There are more hurdles to jump in the application process than in the Olympic Games. Thousands of elderly people in Scotland don't have bank accounts and want to carry on using their local post office. It is a travesty the government has put so many obstacles in the way of that and the consequences for jobs and services could be disastrous."

SPECIAL BRANCH**Spooks surge**

GOVERNMENT FIGURES show that the number of Special Branch officers has increased from 2,200 in 1990 to over 4,247 in 2003. This doubling is set against the end of the Cold War and the Northern Ireland Peace Process. Though the US 'war on terrorism' has given the excuse for the government to increase spying and

snooping, it also reflects EU initiatives to develop Europe-wide policing.

The figure does not include other security (secret police) forces like MI5, MI6 or civilian staff. Nor does it include the various specialist agencies — National Criminal Intelligence Service, National Public Order Intelligence Unit, National Terrorist Financial Investigation Unit, Communications Intelligence Unit, European Liaison Section, and so on.

Job for life? Join the spooks!

FORENSIC SCIENCE**Up for sale**

THE TRADE UNIONS Prospect and PCS are resisting Home Office proposals to privatise the forensic science service. The 1300 scientists and staff are to be 'put on the market for sale', not because the service is inefficient or financially unsound, but because the government is obsessed with meeting EU private finance initiatives.

To raise £30 million to modernise facilities, up to 75% of the service is to be privatised. Forensic work, which provides invaluable assistance to those engaged in the criminal justice system — be they prosecution or defence — will now have its priorities determined by profit.

Britain will be the only country in the world to have a privately owned forensic science service.

Manufacture in London

MANUFACTURERS AND unions in London have joined together to put manufacturing back on the government's agenda by publishing THE CASE FOR MANUFACTURING IN LONDON: A BLUEPRINT FOR ACTION.

The report, by Made in London, a business organisation, and the South East Region of the TUC, shows the importance of manufacturing to the London economy and makes recommendations for action.

Manufacturing in London employs some 287,000 workers and produces almost 10% of Britain's entire manufacturing output. There are around 16,000 firms and 27,000 manufacturing units, including Nestle, Pirelli, Gillette, Tate and Lyle, Fords Dagenham, Coca Cola, Visteon in Enfield and West Ferry Printers on the Isle of Dogs. Printing and publishing is now the biggest sector, followed by food and metal goods.

Much London manufacture is high performance, high skill and high value — the sort that economists say Britain needs. At present Britain faces poor investment levels and skills shortages. London has particular problems such as spiralling property prices, problems with transport infrastructure and a lack of a strong regional policy on manufacturing.

Frances O'Grady, deputy general secretary of the TUC, criticised the government's "hands-off" approach to industrial strategy and called for a new strategy "for a new industrial age". As the report points out, manufacturing remains the key driver for economic growth.

Vulnerable

Assertions that Britain can survive on a service-based economy are not credible. London, in particular, would be highly vulnerable if it depended on financial and other service sectors. The capital lost 432,000 manufacturing jobs between 1978 and 2000, a reduction of 63%. Decline was particularly steep in engineering. But manufacturing still has an output of £15 billion a year, representing 9% of London's GDP and remaining the second-largest sector after financial and business services.

Some strategies suggested include assistance for London-based manufacturers to bid competitively for elements of public procurement contracts (such as the Tube and Crossrail), reform of the planning process to prioritise manufacturing on suitable sites over building houses on them, increases in skills training and more government support for research and development.

There should also be investment in new river crossings to aid the development of the Thames Gateway.

The report highlights the close connection between the service sector and manufacturing. According to the CBI, 2.4 million service sector jobs depend on manufacturing nationally. More gloomy statistics show that manufacture in London is set to decline, with predictions of a decline of between 21% and 40% of jobs up to 2016.

• The report is available online at www.tuc.org.uk

The trade union motions passed at to that of any parliamentary party,

TUC 2003: The return o

THIS YEAR'S TUC delegates, clear that the outlawing of solidarity action is at the heart of anti-trade union legislation, have committed their union members to a campaign to legalise it. Not so clear, however, is TUC policy on the financial and political link between unions and the Labour Party. In order to engage in 'politics', trade unions theoretically have to have a political fund, from which they can pay to affiliate to the Labour Party. The effectiveness of this link and the relationship with the Labour Party are always over-exaggerated considerations at the TUC Congress. — especially seeing that the TUC is not itself affiliated to the Labour Party. But the trade union connection with the Labour Party has significantly diminished over recent years. The affiliated unions provide only 20% of party funds and have only 50% of votes at the party's highly stage-managed conference.

Independent unions

Many in the Labour Party want to introduce European-style state funding for political parties and break the link with the unions. This is hardly surprising because TUC policy invariably runs counter to that of the Labour Party and government. The trade unions still have considerable pulling power and influence at election time so the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and legions of other MPs and Cabinet members were at the TUC Congress grovelling in the private sessions for union support with the line that union-friendly Labour has never had 6 years in power before and things could be worse under the anti-union Tories. In fact, this Congress, more than any before, showed that the aspirations of workers organised in their unions find no echo in any parliamentary party.

Independent economy

The trade union motions passed at Congress offer a workers' vision of Britain's future. At the heart of that vision is a vibrant manufacturing-based economy with national plans for the growth and protection of key industries and utilities.

Unions want an end to the piracy of privatisation so that education and public services can be stabilised by democratic control directed by the professionalism of workers involved. They want to see the whole balance of the law tipped in favour of workers' rights and collective organisation in the workplace.

Above all, they want to see a developing national economy enhanced by foreign policies based on peace and mutual co-operation between nations. Congress resoundingly opposed the warmongering of the government, its involvement in the war and continuing occupation of Iraq and unanimously warned the government to take its hands off Cuba and to break its link with the USA's imperialist jihad throughout the world.

Power over capital

But trade unions at the TUC, unlike trade unionists generally, still fail to see that a securing of their collective aspirations cannot be achieved unless the free flow of labour and capital constitutionally enshrined in the Amsterdam Treaty and government policy is stopped.

Power over capital and control of the wealth we created is key both to advancing our national economy and to all central trade union concerns like pensions and poverty and democratic power. Capital will squander our pension funds and reduce their value as long as they are

Congress offer a vision of Britain's future completely different and a different spirit, as well...

the unions



Photo © John Harris (reportdigital.co.uk)

Know your friends, know your enemies: delegates in the Brighton TUC conference

in charge and can gamble with the money on the markets. The poor will be poor, not because the fat cats are awarding themselves obscene pay rises and pay-offs for running down production, but because the capitalist labour market needs them.

But this year's Congress was marked also by a growing recognition of these issues. A gung ho proposal to join the euro via a referendum was prevented before Congress in the compositing of motions and a General Council statement accepting the principle of joining if the tests were met was only just passed on a card vote.

Interestingly this General Council statement would have been defeated if large unions like the NUT had not abstained and others such as the PCS had not voted for it on the false premise that the euro will bring the fourth international unity of workers in Europe.

'This Congress, more than any before, showed that the aspirations of workers organised in their unions find no echo in any parliamentary party...'

The same euro debate also recognised for the first time the potential dangers to democracy of the EU constitution, and a successful fringe meeting organised by Vote 2004 woke delegates up to the need to campaign for a referendum on the most profound potential changes to our political democracy since the Act of Union.

Trade unions still face an uphill struggle. Only a third of the workforce is

organised in a union. It was squarely put to Congress in the EU debate that the appeal to future generations of trade unionists will depend very largely on the extent to which workers see unions fighting for Britain and its interests rather than melting down in the new global order, one minute beholden to Bush's warmongering, the next to the EU's diktats and military aspirations. To appeal to the young, to represent their members properly and to be able to influence and extend the democratic franchise, trade unions need a new commitment to manufacturing, nationalised industries and services and utilities, to protected investment in Britain, and peace and socialism.

At this year's Congress some of these virtues were evident. Where they are, the independence of political thinking required by workers' representatives will be a force to be reckoned with.

Every Blair war leaves British troops occupying yet more countries. Now he has promised Bush thousands more for Iraq...

Get the troops out of Iraq!



Occupation, occupation, occupation: US troops prepare to enter a building in a village on the outskirts of Baqubah

THE BUSH/BLAIR ATTACK on Iraq ended, officially, on 1 May, with 30,000 Iraqi soldiers, 10,000 Iraqi civilians, 39 British and 138 US soldiers killed. But the US government has 140,000 troops there and is sending another 20,000 troops.

Blair is sending another 3,000. Some US Senators and British establishment figures want 500,000 troops to police Iraq. Blair has told Bush that he will

provide an extra 10,000 British troops and more money.

If the war is over, why more troops? Since 1 May, uncounted numbers, probably thousands, of Iraqi civilians, 141 US soldiers, and 23 UN personnel have been killed. 50 British soldiers have been killed, more than in the 1991 war.

Paul Bremer, the US's civilian

administrator, runs the Coalition Provisional Authority, which Bush controls. Bremer handpicked the 25-member Iraqi governing council, and can overrule their decisions.

Costs

The occupation costs the USA £2.4 billion a month. Our war bill so far is £5 billion, theirs £15 billion. Bush wants another

5, backing US rule.

£55 billion. The US soldiers were promised that they would be home by May, then by September, now they are told they will be there 'for decades'.

Straw says that the occupation forces are only facing 'remnants of the Baathist regime and criminals' – no: they are told they will be there 'for decades'.

Every Blair war leaves British troops occupying yet more countries, backing US rule. There are 1,900 British troops in Bosnia, 400 in Kosovo and 400 in Macedonia, among the 40,000 NATO troops in the Balkans. And 300 British troops in the 4,500-strong International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.

Britain still has troops in Cyprus, Kenya, Kuwait, Georgia, Congo, the Falkland Islands and East Timor, leftovers from previous colonial wars. To fund all these occupations, Blair ordered the biggest increase in military spending since 1983: from £29 billion in 2002-03, to £30.9 billion in 2003-04, to £31.7 billion in 2004-05, to £32.8 billion in 2005-06.

Government lies

Spain's CNI intelligence service said that Iraq had no WMD, no way to use them, and was no threat to anyone. NATO's intelligence division agreed. So did MI6, Mossad, the CIA, the International Atomic Energy Association, the State Department and the Foreign Office.

So Britain's Joint Intelligence Committee entitled its draft dossier, "Iraq's programmes for weapons of mass destruction". A week before publication, Blair changed the title to "Iraq's weapons of mass destruction".

So WMD programmes alone were not enough to justify war. Alastair Campbell was "bombarding" John Scarlett, the JIC chief, with e-mails demanding 15 changes to the dossier, for example, to add "nuclear bomb in 1-2 years", which Scarlett did. Campbell once said that a Freedom of Information Act would be passed "over my dead body".

The dossier claimed that Iraq could deploy WMD in 45 minutes. This claim was based on a single, second-hand



Transformation: adapting a poster in Bristol to better uses

'The sentence, "Saddam was not considered a current or imminent threat to mainland UK" was taken out of the dossier...'

source. As Air Marshal Sir John Walker, Chief of Defence Intelligence 1991-94, wrote, "It was the immediacy of the WMD threat that convinced some MPs to vote with the Government on the crucial division on taking the country to war...I cannot credit that an assessment on which such an awesome decision rested should be based on a single source. I find that inconceivable. I also find it unacceptable."

The claim referred to "battlefield mortar shells or small-calibre weaponry", not the long-range missiles carrying WMD that Blair warned us about.

On 4 September, two intelligence officers said that they had expressed concern over the claim, which proves that Blair lied when he told the House of

Commons, "the allegation that the 45-minute claim provoked disquiet among the intelligence community is... completely and totally untrue."

Jonathan Powell, Blair's chief of staff, advised Blair, "You need to make it clear that Saddam could not attack us at the moment... We will need to make it clear in launching the document that we do not claim that we have evidence that he is an imminent threat."

Yet Blair's Foreword claimed that Iraq's WMD were a "current and serious threat". This is not spin: it is a lie. The later draft cut from Blair's Foreword the words, "the case I make is not that Saddam could launch a nuclear attack on London or another part of the UK (he could not)". The sentence, "Saddam was not considered a current or imminent threat to mainland UK" was taken out of the dossier.

Illegal

For the sake of the US alliance, Blair committed us to an illegal and unnecessary war that resulted, as the intelligence service warned it would, in

Continued on page 10



Left: lobbying Tony Blair's appearance at the Hutton Inquiry in London, 28 August.

Continued from page 9

worsening the terrorist threat. The attack increased the real threat from Al Qa'ida that Blair claimed it would reduce: the US alliance made us less safe.

Another key claim in the dossier was that Iraq had bought uranium from Niger. On 7 July, the US government admitted that the claim was based on British information "that did not turn out to be accurate": the documentary 'proof' was forged. The CIA warned Blair not to use this claim, but he did, in the dossier and in Parliament.

Yet Blair on 8 July could not face the truth, referring to "these so-called forged

"Now I want you to take your balloon and blow everyt

TWELVE YEARS ago Iraq's education system was one of the best in the Arab world. Education for all children was given a high priority, reflected in the fact that there was 100% enrolment of eligible children in primary education. Illiteracy had been eradicated by 1982 — Baghdad won a Unesco prize for its achievements in literacy levels.

Now the picture is one of devastation. Attendance at school, according to UN figures, is 53%, with a third of girls no longer in education. The schools which survived the war are in a state of disrepair, with few resources or teachers, and overcrowded classrooms. This is still the situation five months after the end of the war. The US has made lots of noise about the huge sums to be invested and great improvements to come, but their true agenda is revealed by the facts.

The first act of the occupying regime was to award lucrative education contracts to private US companies. The first contract, awarded in April, went to

Washington-based Creative International Associates to implement the Revitalisation of Iraqi Schools and Stabilisation of Education (RISE) project. They received \$62 million to get schools ready for children to start the new school year this month. Individuals like Jim Nelson, senior vice president of Voyager Expanded Learning, a Dallas education company, received phone calls from the White House inviting them, in his words, to "help Iraq's school system get back on its feet".

Nelson is now back in the US, quoting family reasons for his early return. And many of Iraq's schools are still struggling to open at all, with wrecked or damaged buildings, unpaid teachers, no paper or pencils, or textbooks.

One of the first education improvement acts of the optimistically-named RISE was to sack people who actually knew how to run Iraqi schools. Over half of the ministry of education

officials were summarily dismissed - apparently because they had been identified as having links with the Ba'ath party (a necessity if you were a government official). Jamal Nasser Hassune, director of over 30 Baghdad schools and with 35 years of working in education, arrived at work a few days after the war to be turned away at the door by a US soldier. Then RISE started on the teachers. Fuad Hussein, an Iraqi exile and political consultant who had lived in Amsterdam for 28 years, was flown in to compile lists of teachers to sack — currently about 12,000 are targeted, although he has admitted that "more thorough housecleaning would leave too many classrooms empty".

The Lal Al-Suoff primary school in Baghdad has lost many of its staff in this way. The head teacher, Khalod Al-Azaway, despairs of being able to replace them "all of them very good and experienced teachers". In her school, children traumatised by war are starting

documents". On 17 July, he claimed that it was "known for certain" that Iraq had bought 270 tons of uranium from Niger in the 1980s. But the IAEA, the French government and Niger's Minister of Mines and Energy all say that this never happened.

The full JIC did not meet after 18 September, so it never saw the last three drafts of the dossier, and never signed off the final version, contrary to Blair's claim.

Kelly honourably volunteered that he had talked to the BBC's Andrew Gilligan. Ministry of Defence officials then subjected him to a "brutal" four-day interrogation, threatening to fire him and charge him under the Official Secrets Act (a virtual admission that the dossier had indeed been 'sexed up').

The ministry promised Kelly that he would not be named. But on 7 July, after four meetings about naming Kelly, meetings chaired by Blair at No. 10, a

government official named him. That month, Blair "categorically" denied that he had played any part in naming Kelly. Kelly loyally served the government — it betrayed him.

Oil

Blair told Parliament that "people falsely claim that we want to seize" Iraq's oil revenues, that they should be put in a UN trust for the Iraqi people, and that Britain should seek a UN Resolution affirming "the use of all oil revenues for the benefit of the Iraqi people". (He knew this would not happen, so he said "should" not "would".)

What has really happened? Blair sponsored UN Resolution 1483 that gave the Bush and Blair governments complete control of Iraq's oil revenues for an indefinite period. There is no UN trust fund for the Iraqi people. Some of Iraq's oil revenues are being used to

compensate Kuwait for its occupation.

On 23 July, Shell, BP, ChevronTexaco, ConocoPhillips and six other companies signed long-term contracts to export 20 million barrels of Iraqi crude oil a month. These companies will put the benefit of their shareholders before 'the benefit of the Iraqi people'.

Threats

Bush and Blair are now threatening Cuba, North Korea and Iran. Countries have every right to build nuclear weapons to deter US attacks. The mere bluff of having WMD is not enough to defend your country — ask Saddam Hussein!

After the Soviet Union's collapse, some dreamed of a 'peace dividend'. We got no peace and no dividend. With the Soviet Union gone, only capitalism can be responsible for the endless succession of wars. We cannot end war without we end capitalism.

ing that makes you sad into the the balloon..."

the new term crammed 60 to a class, in sweltering heat (electricity supply is still only running at 40% of pre-war capacity). There are no paper or pencils, and teachers who have not been "housecleaned" are still waiting for regular salaries. The headteacher has received only \$20 since the end of the war.

Texas education consultant Leslye Arsht is advising on the "cleansing" of



Hitting education: bomb damage to an Iraqi school

Iraqi school textbooks. Years of war and sanctions had left schools with outdated and worn out books before the latest Gulf war, but Arsht sees the priority as removing references to the old regime and praise for Iraq's achievements. This is from a representative of a country where children salute the flag daily and schools are free to ban sex education and teach in science lessons the theory that God created the world.

Many Iraqi textbooks have been removed as propaganda, and others are having offending pages torn out. \$82 million has been set aside to reprint 75 million "cleansed" books. The US authority will play a major role in revising texts. Iraqi educators are asking how new history books will describe the US, and the history of Iraq. As Dr Thaer Shammari, who teaches at the Islamic College in Baghdad, said "The Iraqi people should decide what is taught in their schools, not Americans. Would President Bush allow me to decide what

is taught in US schools?"

Three dozen Iraqi teachers and guidance counsellors came recently to a Unicef-sponsored seminar in a Baghdad hotel hoping to discuss how to improve the nation's schools. Instead, they were given balloons and told soothingly, "Now I want you to take your balloon and blow everything that makes you sad and everything that makes you mad into the balloon." This technique was recommended as a way to help traumatised children cope with their experiences. They were then given magic markers and asked to write on their balloons a list of the things that made them most mad and sad.

So, incompetence or deliberate sabotage? Occupiers are not known for their enthusiasm for education among the occupied. People who think are a threat to them. But, unfortunately for the US, thought is not that easily suppressed. The Iraqi people are unlikely to be satisfied with balloons.

While privatised power companies are making money out of mothballed power stations, Britain faces a winter of power cuts...

Could we be heading for Blackout Britain?

THE RECENT POWER failure, throwing much of central London into darkness, is a taste of what is to come across the length and breadth of Britain. This country's creaking and under funded electrical supply network is rapidly becoming unable to cope with the demands placed upon it. Blackouts this winter are now being widely predicted throughout the electricity supply industry.

Ofgem and the government have been hiding behind a fiction — that Britain has an overcapacity in generation of 25%, but at last it has now been acknowledged that the figure is closer to 16% or it could be even lower! Consequently, it would only take an unscheduled outage (breakdown) at one or two power stations, or a cold snap in the weather, as took place in December 2002, for a shortage in electricity to occur and cause untold misery for thousands.

Mothballed

A number of electricity companies have mothballed parts of their generating capacity in the interest of profits, reducing capacity. Powergen are in the process of bringing one of their mothballed plants, Killingholme, back onto supply but this station will not be available until 2004 at the earliest. As it takes many months to bring a mothballed plant back into service, decisions have to be taken now if they are to be on stream for this coming winter. With the signs in the market being far from encouraging, producers have little reason to invest in refurbishing mothballed plant.

The situation shows the utter failure of the capitalist electricity market. Many people will be without light and heating this winter; old people could die of hypothermia; hospitals, airports, railways and factories will be unable to function. All because of a system that aims to benefit the few and not the many.

So what has been the government's response to the situation facing Britain? In July Patricia Hewitt, Energy Minister,

announced the construction of a series of new wind turbines around the coasts of Britain. On the face of it an excellent policy but like many of this government's proposals, it fails to match the reality with its rhetoric. It fails to tackle Britain's current problems and creates new ones for the future.

The government's aim is to create 6,000 MW of electricity at a cost of £6 billion, resulting in the creation of 20,000 jobs in the engineering and construction sectors. The basis for this investment is

'With 800 years of coal reserves and the skills and ability to provide for its people's needs, Britain is now in danger of declining to the position of an underdeveloped nation...'

to generate 10% of the nation's electricity from greenhouse gas-free means by 2010.

The green lobby has welcomed the move, Friends of the Earth's campaigner Bryony Worthington said of the announcement, "Hopefully this marks the start of a massive programme to harness the opportunities offered by wind, tides and waves. Renewable energy has the potential to provide all our needs and is a clean, safe and affordable alternative to nuclear energy and inefficient coal fired power stations."

Unfortunately, both the government and the green lobby have been fooled by their own rhetoric. While the expansion of renewables is a laudable aim the reality is that it will leave Britain perpetually at the mercy of energy shortages.

A recent report, "State of the Nation" by the Institution of Civil Engineers (ICE),

highlighted the dangers of the government's current plans for future energy provision. The ICE also welcomed the government's announcement on renewables, commenting that "This investment is great news and will provide a major boost to Britain's renewable energy capability." But they held a more realistic view of renewables than the green lobby, adding that wind power "...cannot ever be expected to supply the major proportion of the nation's energy requirement".

They warned that Britain would be without heat and light for long periods by 2020, resulting in the imposition of power cuts by rota. A recent conference by the energy workers' union Prospect led many of those present to state that ICE were being "overoptimistic" in their warnings and that power cuts were much closer than 2020, as the predictions for this winter now confirm. Energy companies such as Powergen also back these assertions and have confirmed the conclusions of the ICE report.

The downbeat report by the ICE stated that Britain's reliance on imported gas, accounting for 80% of Britain's energy needs by 2020 from "politically unstable countries thousands of miles away" would "due to mechanical failure, sabotage, and terrorist attack...lead to power cuts within days".

Insecurity

The insecurity of gas supply is further compounded because Britain only retains a 48-hour supply for emergencies. Compare this to Germany and France who both have gas reserves for 70 days. Even Ofgem have belatedly become interested in the security of gas supply. They have recently initiated their own enquiry into gas after the supply was interrupted 152 times in a single week.

ICE without much conviction hoped that the government's announcement was "...a start of a concerted effort to provide diversity and security for Britain's future energy demands." Unfortunately, the hope of ICE brings no reality to the government's proposals.

ballad power

They are placing all our futures in gas-powered generation and renewable energy. Whilst renewable energy and gas should rightly form part of the energy mix, the over-reliance on these two forms of energy production will be at the heart of future problems facing Britain.

Reliable

At present the only reliable technology that can provide regular energy and enable Britain to meet its CO₂ emission targets is nuclear energy. But the government in its white paper has all but written off nuclear power.

The main issue with producing electricity by this form is the waste products. This is a major issue and unfortunately nuclear energy has an even bigger PR problem, mostly of its own making, but aggravated and exaggerated by the green lobby. Other nation states have had wide public debates and have found methods of dealing with nuclear waste that are non-controversial. Britain must follow their lead and begin the debate in an open and honest form or the confidence of the people will never be gained.

Clean

Coal also has a viable and clean future if resources are put into the development of clean burning. A minor improvement in the burning of coal produces a much greater return in efficiency. Coal-fired and nuclear plants are required to provide the base load electricity that Britain requires. Both nuclear and coal have the greatly added benefit of secure supply, but the current predictions are that all coal-fired plants will close by 2016 and four years later only one nuclear power plant will remain operational. Wind power can never provide electricity on the same basis as wind only blows for a third of the time.

The current mix of electricity is around 32% coal, 23% nuclear, 38% gas, 4% oil and other (hydroelectricity, wind and tidal) 3%. By 2020 gas will account for 80% of generation, with all the problems associated with security of



Nuclear technology: Oldbury-on-Severn, one of Britain's Magnox stations

supply — a factor the white paper blandly dismisses. The government is being the proverbial ostrich by ignoring all the advice and concerns of those involved in the electricity supply industry.

Ironic

It is ironic that the government anti-nuclear/pro-wind stance will make it more likely that Britain will soon be increasing the amount of electricity that comes through the inter-connector from France, where the bulk of it is produced by nuclear power! Or is this the real reasoning behind the government's policy? That Britain loses its capacity to generate and instead becomes a part of EU-wide electricity infrastructure, simply importing our energy as required?

It is a sad day when Britain, a world leader in all forms of energy generation, self-reliant on electricity generation for the past 100 years, with 800 years of coal reserves and the skills and ability to provide for its people's needs, is now in danger of declining to the position of an underdeveloped nation.

Sooner rather than later, action needs to be taken. The government and the energy producers have failed, so it is for the workers to take up the challenge. Many of the unions involved in the industry are reluctant to do this, and their hesitancy must be overcome. Workers must take the lead and begin to build an energy policy that benefits Britain, supports its industry, its skill base and its future.

As we count the bill for the invasion of Iraq, history reminds us introduced for medieval invasions of the Middle East...

Paying for the crusades

THINKING ABOUT the enormous cost of the Iraq war to Britain's workers, it is interesting to look back at how the cost of the Crusades led to sustained and effective opposition. It actually contributed to the defeat of the Papal system, which was using the wars in an attempt to gain universal dominion over all nations and all classes at that time.

The First Crusade was started in 1095 by Pope Urban II on a wave of religious hysteria after the Byzantine Emperor pleaded for help to free the "Christian" lands of Syria and Palestine from the Muslims who lived there. Later crusades relied less on voluntary donation and more on extorted subsidy. Henry II's tithe for the crusades laid the foundations for income tax. Ralph Niger, the historian and theologian, warned that God would not favour a crusade financed by the spoliation of the poor. Henry later exiled him for his efforts. Many of the clergy

preached the crusades but refused to be taxed for them. The church exploited crusader-vow redemptions, whereby you could buy back your promise to crusade.

In Scotland, opposition to the tithe made it impossible to collect. The government therefore, more sensible than Thatcher's, withdrew it. In 1222, Henry III authorised a compulsory poll tax for the crusade. Opposition was so strong that he had to change it into a voluntary tax. The papacy also taxed England, more than anywhere else, levying crusade taxes every six years in the 13th century.

Jerusalem

The stated aim of the First Crusade was to take Jerusalem, which the Count of Blois predicted could be done in five weeks. Two years later they finally reached the Holy City, and sacked it. All the Muslims and Jews of the city — men, women and children — were killed,

70,000 altogether. The Jews fled into the chief synagogue: it was burned and them with it. Jerusalem's capture and sacking was the zenith of crusading, followed by a long decline, of bloodletting and disaster. Its capture was to the Arabs conclusive proof of the bloodthirsty fanaticism of the invading Christians, and so of the necessity, if the Arabs were to survive, of the Christians being driven out and back to their own lands.

Ally attacked

During the Fourth Crusade, 1201-4, the crusaders attacked their ally, the Byzantine Empire, and sacked its capital Constantinople. This outrageous action, which Steven Runciman, the historian of the crusades, called one of the greatest of all crimes against humanity, showed how completely the crusades had become campaigns of pillage not pilgrimage.

A contemporary wrote of the wealth of Constantinople: "No one could imagine its amount or value. It included gold and silver, table services and precious stones, samite and silk, mantles of squirrel fur, ermine and miniver. So much booty had never been gained in any city since the creation of the world." The slaughter and destruction weakened the Empire, a bulwark against Islam, and so strengthened the crusaders' enemy. In 1262 the Greeks retook the city from its Christian defilers.

Cynical

The crusading spirit was also cynically invoked against the Pope's enemies in Europe, leading to massacres of the Albigensians, the Beziers and Cathars, for example. In Britain it led to massacres of Jews in London and York.

The Ninth Crusade, 1365-66, was launched against Egypt, which had been at peace for the previous fifty years. It ended in the holocaust of Alexandria.

Runciman summed up: "The Crusades were launched to save Eastern



Christendom from the Moslems. When they ended the whole of Eastern Christendom was under Moslem rule." By 1291 the crusaders had been expelled from Syria and Palestine. "The whole crusading movement was a vast fiasco."

The Papacy, which had initiated this movement at the height of its powers, had been defeated too. Saving the Holy Land had been one of its greatest ambitions, part of the pope's claim to universal dominion. But by the late 13th century the crusading movement, offspring of the papal theocratic movement, had been defeated. The Arab defeat of the crusades assisted the defeat of the Papacy.

Opposition

Popular opposition in Europe, especially in Britain, also helped to defeat the Papacy and its crusading warmongering. In 1187-9 Ralph Niger opposed the crusade, saying against the Pope's "Deus vult" (God wishes it) that "Deus non vult". More than a hint there of an attack on Papal authority! The Lollards spoke up for peace. In 1268 Roger Bacon wrote against crusading, as did the poets Langland and John Gower a century later. Wycliffe did also, and criticised those who used the Old Testament to justify wars.

Princes and nobles were still, as late as the 14th century, eager to crusade, but other classes — merchants, artisans and peasants — opposed them successfully. It became too difficult to organise and finance these expeditions in the face of popular resistance to the taxation and waste involved. Henry IV, as recounted by Shakespeare, was unable to bring off his own crusade and had to make do with dying in a room called "Jerusalem".

The brawling nobles of France, Italy, England and Germany, full of greed, cruelty, hatred and vicious self-righteousness had, like the Pied Piper of Hamelin, led the Crusades to oblivion.

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.

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Back to Front – Anywhere won't do

'Things are not helped by those who think denuding Britain of jobs in order to transfer them to India is some kind of justified settlement of a post-colonial debt..'

BETWEEN 1978 and 2000, London lost 432,000 manufacturing jobs. And according to a new report (see News Analysis, p6), the decline is set to continue. With just over a quarter of a million now employed in manufacturing in the capital, numbers are expected to fall between 21% and 40% by the year 2016.

The figures show up starkly the manufacturing murder sweeping Britain, a growing crime wave committed by successive governments. British workers remain the most productive in the world, but still employers look to move work overseas, and still governments refuse to protect British industry against often subsidised imports.

These days, it seems, almost any work can be stripped out of Britain and set up abroad. Indian call centres and Dyson vacuum cleaners are among the most publicised, but other industries, too, are finding that now literally anywhere can do. So insurance back offices, typesetting, web document preparation, draughtsmanship and technical drawing are joining the growing number making the one-way trip to Madras or Bangalore.

If logic were all that mattered, you'd have to wonder why Parliament is still sitting at Westminster. Surely the government can find 600-odd people somewhere in the world to do the job cheaper. After all, they only have to follow a very simple set of instructions, and these days don't even have to show familiarity with local circumstances and culture.

Jobs in manufacturing are now disappearing faster than they were during the great Thatcher-inspired depressions of the late 1970s and early 1980s. At the current rate of loss, it is calculated, there will be no manufacturing jobs at all by the year 2040.

It is not as if there's no demand for manufactured goods. Just that they are not being made in Britain.

The neglect from governments shows up in their disregard for the jobs exodus, their refusal to use import controls or purchasing policies to protect our industry, the dereliction of the transport infrastructure. We see the results in unemployment, loss of self-respect, the undermining of our ability to remain independent as a country.

But who is holding them to account? Not Parliament. Not the press (itself increasingly foreign-owned). Certainly not the European Union, for which the "free movement" of goods and labour is its key article of faith.

Things are not helped by a strand of thought in the labour movement that says denuding Britain of jobs in order to transfer them to developing countries is some kind of justified settlement of a post-colonial debt. Some even think (with true colonial mentality) that along with the transfer of jobs, they can transfer their negotiating skills and teach the poor benighted Indian workers about industrial relations. You have to pray they don't try to teach them how to defend jobs.

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