

WORKERS

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G20: A GIANT WITH FEET OF CLAY

JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY



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IF YOU WANT TO REBUILD BRITAIN, READ ON

WORKERS

“ To be killed, not cured

SO MADOFF gets 150 years, the Financial Services Authority gets “tougher” on hedge funds and insider dealing, and stability returns to business and households, says Mandelson.

Messrs Branson, Gates and Buffet are suitably chastened having lost a third of their wealth, and the veil is lifted on the “fiscal paradises” [French for tax havens] of Liechtenstein and Luxembourg, Andorra and Aruba, Switzerland and Singapore, Monaco, Belgium, Hong Kong and the Channel Islands.

A miraculous cure is discovered for

addiction to risk as the inmates take over the casino. Capitalism has learned its lesson and collapse on such a scale can never, never happen again. So Marx got it wrong...? On the contrary: he got it so right.

The lives of the next generation and beyond have been irreparably blighted – not because of Madoff (he wasn't the first and won't be the last), but because of the system which permits a Madoff or a Goodwin (RBS) to operate.

Capitalism is like the many-headed hydra – it will recover unless we kill it off.

Who needs the membership?

THE ULTRA-LEFT in Unite, Britain's self-proclaimed biggest trade union, using anti-trade union legislation, appealed to the Certification Officer and forced a re-run of the General Secretary election. These were exactly the same tactics used by the present co-General Secretary, Derek Simpson, to unseat his predecessor Sir Mike Jackson.

The re-run election has returned Derek Simpson as co-General Secretary with Tony Woodley. Derek Simpson will retire shortly leaving Tony Woodley as the single General Secretary. But the tactics of the election

reflect the divorce of self-styled “left” politics from the membership. Two ultra-left sectarians run against each other, one gathers 39,000 votes, the other 28,000. An additional “left” stalking horse runs and pulls another 30,000 votes. Simpson cruises through the debris to win on 60,000 votes.

Out of a claimed membership of 1.5 million members a return of 10 per cent! So 90 per cent of the membership voted for Mr Nobody. Who speaks for whom? Leadership by absence? If this is a sign of a healthy trade union then best to call the funeral directors.



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Rebuilding Britain

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Rally against religious courts

ON 7 MARCH, the eve of International Women's Day, around 600 people joined a rally, march and public meeting in London to demand an end to religious courts in Britain.

Speakers at the rally in Trafalgar Square expressed astonishment that this advanced country appeases the political Islamic movement by acknowledging the right of Sharia law courts to exist. (see photo, p4)

The speakers included the philosopher A C Grayling, who said "Once you start fragmenting society, once you start allowing different groups in society to apply different standards, you get very profound injustices and it is almost always women who suffer these injustices. We have to fight hard to keep one law for everybody". The Iranian Secular Society was represented by Fariborz Pooya, who said "the introduction of Sharia is a betrayal of thousands of women and children and leaves them at the mercy of Islamist groups".

After the rally, people marched to Conway Hall for a meeting entitled "Sharia law, sexual apartheid and women's rights", where speakers warned against the dangerous thinking which has permitted religious courts to grow up here. From the platform, Kenan Malik pointed out that the Muslim Council of Britain had been afforded a privileged position by government to speak "on behalf of the Muslim community", yet polls show that only 3 per cent of British Muslims see it as representing their views. In fact there is no such thing as one "Muslim community" he said, but many differing views and lifestyles. He said that it is precisely because we have a plural society that we need one law for everyone, "because if every group is allowed to have its own laws and its own beliefs and its own lifestyle, what you have is an apartheid system. We might not call it apartheid, we might call it multiculturalism but that's just a fancy name for it."

Malik warned that this is not just a problem of religion. Secularists have promoted the idea that in a plural world we need multiculturalism, in effect separation and fragmentation. This has had the effect of squeezing secularism among British Asians, which at one time was a strong radical movement in this country.

Another speaker talked about how the Sharia tribunals work. Although their decisions are not legally binding in Britain, women often feel intimidated into accepting their rulings in family and inheritance disputes – this is true also for Orthodox Jewish family courts. One woman talked about how the Sharia court told her that the Koran says the man owns the woman, so she should go back to her violent husband.

7 March was seen as a warning. As Mariam Namazie said, "we should not stand idly by whilst the British government relegates a huge segment of our society to sham courts and regressive rules and appeases the Islamists here or elsewhere".

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

MINERS' STRIKE

Book launch

ON AN unusually balmy March evening in Leeds, the Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom held a public meeting to launch *SHAFTED*, a compilation of writings about the miners' strike of 83-84 by journalists who covered these events, and miners and their wives who were at the heart of them.

Veteran folk singer Roy Bailey ensured the mood of the meeting was as warm as the weather, and his brief set of mining related songs had the crowd surprising themselves at how well they could sing. (This after Bailey's prompting "... Sing up! It's only the defeated who don't sing.")

Speakers, including *SHAFTED* editor Granville Williams, regional industrial journalist Peter Lazenby, NUM secretary Chris Kitching and Anne Scargill reminded us all of the forces of the state that were deployed in that struggle, but, like the book, were positive about the capacity of workers to fight with courage when something they hold dear is threatened.

Go to www.cpbef.org.uk/shafted for more about the CPBF and this excellent contribution to our understanding of this seismic upheaval in our recent history.

BANKING

Killing off success

ON 12 MARCH, the government-owned Royal Bank of Scotland put Wrekin Construction Group, an engineering company employing more than 500 workers, into administration – on the same day that the company won £50 million in orders!

EUROBRIEFS

The latest from Brussels

Safe in whose hands?

LABOUR MEPs backed a European Parliament proposal for an 'integrated European Armed Force', to be known as SAFE: Synchronised Armed Forces Europe. Hans-Gert Pöttering, the European Parliament's President, said, "SAFE can broaden the debate on the right steps towards closer synchronisation, bringing in those people who cannot yet conceive of a European army." Yet Europe Minister Caroline Flint said in a letter to the *GUARDIAN* on 17 February, "Let me be clear – there are no plans for a European army."

Burden sharing

THE EUROPEAN Commission wants Britain to "share the burden" of the 70,000 asylum seekers who cross the Mediterranean into the EU each year. Its plans include harmonisation of asylum laws and transfer of asylum seekers to Britain from "hotspots" such as Italy.

Poll sense

AN FT/Harris poll found that 54 per cent of British adults oppose the right of EU citizens to work in Britain, stronger opposition than in any of the other four European countries polled: Germany, Italy, Spain and France. Both Dutch and German governments have put plans for further enlargement on hold, fearing a popular backlash over foreign workers and rising unemployment levels.

Wider still and wider

The EU is debating Montenegro's application for EU membership. Several member countries are worried Albania, Bosnia and Serbia would soon follow if Montenegro is considered for entry.

An EU official involved in the talks said, "The Dutch said that the Lindsey refinery dispute has proved that enlargement and free movement of workers can be difficult to sell to EU electorates ... the British defend free movement and enlargement but if even they cannot sell it to their own people, who else can?"

Running down the post

THE GOVERNMENT department for trade, known as BERR, reported in 2008 that the main cause of Royal Mail's losses was compliance with three EU postal services directives, designed to end national postal monopolies by 2010.



Speakers at the Trafalgar Square rally on 7 March against religious tribunals (see p3).

Photo: Workers

Last two recognise Cuba

COSTA RICA and El Salvador – the only two countries in Central and South America not to have diplomatic relations with Cuba – are to reverse their policies. The Salvadoran President-elect, Mauricio Funes, announced the impending change in his country's policy at a press conference after being elected on 15 March as the candidate of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front. His government will assume power on 1 June, putting an end to 20 years of government by the reactionary Nationalist Republican Alliance.

Following the election in El Salvador, in a surprise announcement, Costa Rican president Oscar Arias abandoned his country's 48-year subservience to US attempts to isolate Cuba. "I'm taking this step convinced that times change and Costa Rica must change, too," he said.

That leaves only one government on the American continent that doesn't recognise Cuba – the United States. The topic, as well as the half-century US blockade on Cuba, are sure to be brought up at the April 17-19 Americas Summit in Trinidad and Tobago, says the *HAVANA TIMES*. The meeting will be Obama's first with the continent's leaders.

Meanwhile, the US president met in Washington with Brazil's President Luis Inacio Lula da Silva, who reportedly made a pitch to the US leader to set a new, less aggressive, tone to US-Latin American relations and seek dialogue with countries such as Venezuela, Cuba and Bolivia.

UNEMPLOYMENT

Dire statistics

THE UNEMPLOYMENT figures published in March were expected to be really bad – but they were even worse than predicted. The additional number out of work and claiming benefit was 138,400, boosting the total to over 2 million for the first time in over a decade.

Hardest hit are the young, with 28.6 per cent of economically active 16- and

17-year-olds (ie, those not studying) on the dole. Among 18- to 24-year olds, 621,000 are out of work. By International Labour Organisation measures, the jobless total is 6.5 per cent of the working population.

The worse-than-expected news, coupled with dire reports about the slump in industrial production, led experts (self-proclaimed) to say that the government will have to consider new fiscal stimuli.

Meanwhile, the IMF predicts that the UK economy will slump by 3.8 per cent this year.

Strike against Ark academy

ON THURSDAY 19 March, there was a successful joint strike of 47 NUT and 9 NASUWT members at The Royal Docks Community School in the Newham, east London.

The action was in pursuance of the union's trade dispute with Newham Authority over its attempted imposition of an Ark academy by September 2010 and follows an equally effective NUT strike in December. The unions rarely take joint action, and it shows the strength of feeling against the imposition of academy status with a private sponsor.

There has been no consultation about whether an academy is the right way forward for the school. No debate to justify the alleged benefits of academy status. No satisfactory explanation why Ark is regarded by the Council as the best option.

Ark wishes to reorganise the school in three major ways. First, it does not want to continue the provision of the existing PMLD Unit (Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties), important to the successful continuation of inclusion in Newham's schools. Second, it seeks to reduce the current 8 forms of entry to 6, which would limit the number of pupils from the nearby community that could attend the school and put pressure on other secondary schools' admission policies. Third, it wants to develop a sixth form, thereby undermining the local sixth form college. In addition, there are strong rumours circulating to the effect Ark would like to either assume control of one or two local primary schools or include primary age children on its main site, in a 3-18 school.



Photo: Newham Teachers Association

On the strike day the school was closed and members and officials of both unions took part in a series of mutually supportive campaigning activities to bring home the message of what an Ark academy would mean. There was a joint picket line. Parents taking their children to 7 of the feeder primary schools were leafleted and the effects an Ark Academy would have on the primary sector clearly outlined. And in the nearby Royal Docks ward, where there is a forthcoming by-election, strikers conducted house-to-house distribution of a leaflet declaring that the major issue in the by-election must be "Sink The Ark Academy: Save The Royal Docks School" and asking voters to vote for anti-academy candidates. Although support has been slow developing in the community, there are signs that the tide of opinion is turning in favour of halting the academy.

The next four months are crucial. A borough "consultation" about the Ark academy is in the offing. The anti-academy campaign needs to influence this. The "consultation" needs to be transformed into a public referendum on the demerits of academies and the merits of retaining, while improving, state education. In particular, there needs to be a call demanding ballots of all those affected, with both sides of the case being presented beforehand to all parents, students, governors, teaching staff, of The Royal Docks School.

Let there be democracy. Let there be true consultation. But the issue does not just affect The Royal Docks School. All the primary feeder schools and their stakeholders need to demand participation in the consultation process too. They too should request ballots. Ultimately, every school in Newham will be affected if The Royal Docks School is closed and Ark academy is created, as other secondary and primary schools will then face the threat of academies in the future. The time to fight is now!

Because of the Authority's refusal to accept alternatives, NUT and NASUWT members have been left with no option but to take strike action, to raise the issues with the public and to bring pressure on the local elected representatives to carry out the views of the electors.

WHAT'S ON

Coming soon

MAY

Friday 1 May

CPBML London May Day Rally: Workers for Britain

7.30 pm, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1R 4R

A celebration of May Day with speeches, refreshments and plenty of good company.

Friday 1 May

CPBML Edinburgh May Day Rally: Workers for Britain

7.30 pm, Word-Power Books, 43 West Nicolson Street, Edinburgh EH8 9DB

A celebration of May Day with speakers, music, discussion.

ACADEMIES

Opposition grows

THE GOVERNMENT isn't having everything its own way. A report presented to Dudley Council's cabinet on Wednesday 18 March recommended that the authority does not proceed with the provision of two new academies in the borough.

At the end of February, Sheffield council decided to "actively discourage" schools from becoming academies. Councillor Andrew Sangar said: "... local authorities should have a key role in being accountable for education in the local area ... Sometimes local schools see the academy route as the only way to get the investment that they need. So although we will be actively discouraging schools going for academy status, our policy of carrying out a ballot with local parents on any academy proposal remains."

Back in 2000 the government launched the academies project claiming that the aim was to drive up standards by replacing "failing" schools by independent schools run by private sponsors – but funded by taxpayers (typically about £25 million) – outside of any local authority control. There have been a number of changes since the project's inception not least the waiving of the £2 million upfront sponsorship payment – the government now accepts "payment in kind" instead.

Under the Blair administration the original sponsors included many millionaires and city businessmen who won honours from the Prime Minister. Now it is religious groups, independent schools and universities who are the majority sponsors. Private schools include Wellington College, Dulwich College and Winchester.

What's happened to the billions?

LAST OCTOBER the government gave the banks £500 billion, supposedly to get them to start lending again. What happened? They cut their lending. In January, the government gave them another £50 billion. Again, they cut their lending. Then the government gave them £10 billion to lend to small businesses. They lent just £40 million. The banks are still hiding the full extent of their bad debts, saving their own skins and prolonging the crisis.

The Royal Bank of Scotland lost £24 billion last year, the worst loss in UK corporate history. We are giving it £25.5 billion. It has at least £325 billion bad debts, but will be liable for only £19.5 billion – we the taxpayers cop the rest. It is trying to sell £540 billion of 'troubled assets'. We have already given the banks £1.3 trillion, £36,000 from every man, woman and child.

Remember the South Sea bubble of 1720? Walpole's government arranged matters so that the people did not gain from the transfer of debt to the public, and the South Sea Company's owners and stockholders made great gains. Throughout, Walpole's government promoted the Company's interests. What progress we have made!

As Marx wrote, "By means of the banking system the distribution of capital as a special business, a social function, is taken out of the hands of the private capitalists and usurers. But at the same time, banking and credit has become the most potent means of driving capitalist production beyond its own limits, and one of the most effective vehicles of crises and swindle."

Light touch, heavy consequences

Lord Turner, the head of Brown's Financial Services Authority, said that the Treasury kept pressing the Authority, "Can't you make regulation a bit more light touch?" This hands-off approach increased the opportunities and incentives for speculation in real estate development, stock trading, privatisations and mergers, leading straight to the present disaster. The lighter the regulation, the easier it is for finance capitalists to profit at our expense. Yet Brown urges countries not to regulate their capital markets.

According to Brown and his advisers it is only finance capitalism that must be supported, so that is what they are doing, at great cost to the real economy. Reduced investment is the cost of ensuring the profitability of the financial sector – corporate financing has dried up: investment in 2008's last quarter was down 7.7 per cent from 2007.

Manufacturing output is down 15.7 per cent on last year. This is worse than the fall witnessed in the Great Depression, of 6.9 per cent between 1930 and 1931, and worse than the fall in Thatcher's first slump, of 10% between 1979 and 1980. Unemployment is over 2 million. The unemployment rate for 16- to 17-year olds not in full-time education is nearly 30 per cent!

After Japan's 1991 slump, its government tried zero interest rates, public works programmes, inflation, printing money, building up foreign exchange reserves, export drives, a \$500 billion bank bail out – nothing worked. There is no solution to capitalism's absolute decline within capitalism, unless you count war as a solution. No capitalist plan works: in each country, only the working class can build recovery.

What is happening to your local London which is proposing to re

The new strategy for c

THERE WAS A TIME when the term "local council" or "the Local Authority" was a well-understood term in Britain. It referred to a provider of local services which was overseen by locally elected councillors whose decisions were made in full council or committee mostly open to the public.

But does your locality now have the "mayoral system" with most decisions taken by one man (the Mayor, and it usually is a man) or a "cabinet system" where decisions are taken by small groups behind closed doors, or perhaps like Barnet Council in North London your local council is in the process of reducing itself to a "strategic hub"?

The proposal

In December 2008 the London Borough of Barnet, a Tory Council, promoting the Labour government policy of supposed sustainable local communities, produced a document called the "Future Shape of the Council". It announced that doing things as they had been done "will not be financially feasible utilising the current service delivery model". It went on to propose the outsourcing and privatisation of all services except a 'strategic hub'.

If the proposal is accepted 4,000 staff will be transferred to something called a joint venture/service delivery vehicle. This could be private sector, voluntary sector, other public sector – health trust, local university, local probation service, police. Using the language of forked tongues and double speak much is made of social enterprise and community interest when the reality is that service delivery will be by private companies and multinational interests. The council will abdicate all responsibility for public service provision, passing all service delivery issues to third parties.

The concept of shared services to save costs and duplication is being aggressively used to cut services, staffing and terms and conditions of staff. It will place billions of pounds into the hands of private capital. More recently, like other councils, it has formed something called a Local Strategic Partnership with membership from other public sector organisations.

At this stage it is not clear whether this will be used to give "respectability cover" to the proposals or a more strategic drive to encourage *all* the public sector organisations in the borough to outsource their services such as IT to the private sector in one grand "strategic partnership to boost private profit".

Why is the council so short of money?

When the December 2008 document was produced the local population knew that the way the council was going about things currently was not financially feasible but for rather different reasons than those in the document.

The launch of the proposals coincided with news that the Borough of Barnet had lost £27.4 million in two Icelandic banks. At the time the local population was told that the banks were on the government recommended list of institutions and the council was "not to blame".

council? **WORKERS** looks at Barnet Borough Council in North
duce itself to a “strategic hub” driving a “capacity vehicle”...

councils: everything must go!



Photo: Workers

A sign of things to come? This picture of Barnet Town Hall taken in March shows its historic Town Hall at Hendon (conveniently in the middle of the borough) boarded up for refurbishment. After the refurbishment the council chamber will become the only part of the building used by the council, as all other council offices at the Town Hall have been leased for Middlesex University staff offices. Most of the remaining council offices have been moved to leased premises in a business park on the extreme east of the borough – a very difficult point to access by public transport. The refurbishment will restore the historic glories of the council chamber – but will the council itself be history by then?

On 12 March it was revealed that the two banks were on no one’s recommended list – that the taxpayers of the borough had paid good money to a team of financial advisers who did not recommend them but this advice was ignored.

The borough treasurer resigned in a hurry when this all came to light but it is a good illustration of the total ineffectiveness of the supposed “overview and scrutiny” function of a cabinet council. Effectively the treasurer with whichever cabinet member’s

blessing had been allowed to play his own stocks and shares game.

So having lost £27.4 million against the advice of its own financial advisers what would be the next step of this council seeking metamorphosis to a “strategic hub”? Of course, a pay rise!

If you have not been studying the progress of your local council you may still believe that local councillors are people who serve out of civic pride and are paid small expenses. The basic allowance of councillors in Barnet is currently £9,735 and this will rise to

£9,974 on 1 April.

But the basic allowance is nothing compared with the sums paid to those who chair cabinet committees. The current leader of the council, Mike Frear, has an allowances total of £51,109 and his proposed pay rise was an extra £2,912. Mindful of his other role as prospective parliamentary candidate for Finchley and Golders Green, Thatcher’s old constituency, he has decided to

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decline his rise (presumably out of fear of losing votes).

New model or old idea?

The Barnet proposals are being mirrored across England – Essex County Council is proposing an eight-year £5.4 billion outsourcing contract, and several councils in the West Country are coming together to share services and outsource them to IBM – owned by the Chinese state. Wandsworth Council in London proposed a similar “enabling” council model 30 years ago with over a third of council staff and services privatised plus a continuing attack on the local trade unions. Westminster Council in London has implemented a 50 per cent outsourcing of services. Education services across many local authorities have been similarly hived off from mainstream local authority control.

The disintegration of local authority service provision, the destruction of democratic control over service provision, the introduction of service by tick box culture and key performance indicators are driven by government and seen as signs of the success of its cultural change for local councils.

The reality is that this strategic approach is simply about the transfer of

“The disintegration of local authority service provision is deemed by the government as a sign of success...”

public sector assets to private sector business. An indicator not promoted by the government is that the average pay of a council chief executive has risen 36 per cent in the past four years.

What next?

When the London Borough of Barnet’s proposals first came out there was a large demonstration of both local authority workers and residents against the proposal, but maintaining the momentum is key. In June 2009 a detailed set of proposals for the “strategic hub” model will be taken to Cabinet. But this has not stopped a week-by-week erosion of services and there are some immediate fights which need to be tackled.

One proposal in particular has resulted in local fury, the proposal to cut the post of wardens in sheltered housing and replace them with roving wardens.

Barnet already has “roving park keepers” who essentially spend their time in white vans driving between one park and another. The consultation makes no bones about the fact that the proposal to cut the resident wardens is “in order to make savings”. The consultation document states that “The council is responsible for the sound stewardship of its budget, and is obliged to ensure that any expenditure can be funded within the resources available.”

At a recent local meeting a resident who had just heard the news about the Icelandic banks read this sentence out loud and such was his fury and the force of his alliteration when he got to the words “sound stewardship”, that his false teeth jumped out. A literal case of spitting teeth.

A close reading of the December 2008 proposal indicates that June 2009 is the council’s preferred rubber stamping date and gives clear indications of threats to services. The section on Information Technology states that the council will need to decide whether to retain ownership of the IT infrastructure in a future model. It then helpfully points out that the council’s current managed IT service is due to expire in June 2009. So local trade unions not only know the overall aim of the attack but have been given clear warning of the early targets.

BADGE OFFER – Referendum now. No to the EU superstate!

DESPITE ALL THE promises, Labour is trying to take us into a European superstate without giving the people of Britain a chance to say what they think.

The so-called Constitutional Treaty is just the despised Constitution in another form, as even Giscard d’Estaing, author of the first attempt, has admitted. In backtracking on the referendum promise Gordon Brown is trying to wipe out a thousand years of independence and sovereignty using his tame party in Parliament.

The will of the British people has been clearly expressed in opinion poll after opinion poll. Now it is time for a poll of a different kind, a referendum. The TUC is already trying to renege on its September vote for a referendum. Don’t let power slide over to Brussels.

FIGHT BACK with a Referendum Now badge (actual size 25mm), available from Bellman Books, 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB, price 50p each, or £4 for 10. Please make cheques payable to “WORKERS”.



The leaders of the world's economies converge on London for the G20 summit. They have no answers. Their system has failed...

G20: a giant with feet of clay



Docklands: an essential part of the failed fabric of the City – and a suitable location for the G20 summit.

ANOTHER MONTH, another summit. This April it's the G20, hosted in London's Docklands by a man on his way out. Each week brings news that makes Gordon Brown's tenure as Prime Minister increasingly fragile. One of the triumvirate along with Blair and Mandelson who re-branded Labour for electoral purposes in the early 90s, Brown is suitably positioned to oversee its demise. As with Obama, Brown has no answers other than to shovel the cost of the massive debts incurred onto the working class in the form of the loans paid out to banks. Unemployment in Britain has now hit 2 million and is rising inexorably.

What we are experiencing is not an aberration. It is the consequence of trying to live with a moribund system. Finance

capital has come to dominate industrial capital and has become increasingly parasitic. In previous slumps we have witnessed industries collapse, and companies and banks go to the wall. Capitalism, British capitalism in particular, has always been adept enough to switch from industry to industry, from industry to finance, or to gold, fine art, food and minerals as commodities. Anywhere a buck could be still turned and workers exploited. Preferably with a war to fund because wars are particularly profitable.

Thatcher saw that privatisation could give the infusion that the markets needed, and Brown has taken asset-stripping to new levels, such as the Royal Mail privatisation currently mooted – something even Thatcher regarded as “a

privatisation too far”.

Crises are endemic to capitalism. Brown boasted, Canute-like, that he could hold back the inevitable, that he had “banished boom and bust”. At least Canute made his claim to demonstrate human frailty to his sycophantic thanes. Brown still believes in magic.

Hence we end up with economies being “fuelled” by debt (called credit), bundled up in ways in which no-one knows what's viable and what isn't. Speculation: gambling pure and simple. “Blatcherite” political economy, as one commentator labelled it on Radio 2.

Paeans to the gods of the City have rung in our ears from this government. It

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MAY DAY MEETINGS

WORKERS FOR BRITAIN...

...AND WORKERS FOR THE

WORLD

Friday 1 May, 7.30pm

Speakers and refreshments

**Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,
London WC1R 4RL (nearest tube: Holborn)**

Friday 1 May, 7.30 pm

Speakers, music and discussion

**Word-Power Books, 43 West Nicolson St
Edinburgh EH8 9DB**

All welcome

Britain as a nation is defined as a community of stable language – English; by community of territory – Britain itself; by community of economic life – our industries, skills, inventiveness, creativity; by community of culture and our unique character – which has resulted in the great class fissure throughout British society: those who create all wealth – workers, and those who exploit – capitalists.

If our language, territory, industry and economy, class culture and unique character are destroyed, then so is Britain. This is what is happening to Britain on a daily basis as the combination of the European Union, unfit government, corrupt parliamentary political parties, closing industries, devolution, and rampant swindlers and thieves associated with finance capital, threatens to destroy all the strengths and values which the British working class has created.

Workers need the nation state so as to physically survive and at a future date build socialism and communism in Britain. Workers are for Britain, workers are Britain.

Workers for Britain, on International Labour Day 1 May, calls upon workers worldwide to assert real workers' nationalism. That is every state led by the working class, a coming together in real internationalism based upon workers' power in every nation of the world. We want a different United Nations, not of economic states dominated by imperialism but of liberated homelands. We are for independence, sovereignty, self-sufficiency, self-reliance, non-intervention in sovereign states.

We are Workers for Britain and for internationalism based upon class unity.

We invite you to attend our forthcoming May Day meetings – London and Edinburgh – for one unified national working class.

What we need: ideas for renewal

WORKERS IN the G20 countries need to have our own meetings, take actions pursuing our own agendas, begin to take a lead. Here we should take a leaf from the Lindsey campaign. We have skills and talent right here in Britain. We have capital to deploy. We should demand that the two are brought together.

The only thing we hear from the Labour Government, from the EU and others is the mantra about globalisation and free trade. The finance ministers meeting in London in preparation for the full G20 summit could talk only of the need to foster free trade, eschew protection of industries and burden countries with more debt via International Monetary Fund loans. For workers everywhere, what we need is mutually beneficial trade on equal terms, not rapacious loans.

Alastair Darling calls for a further £25 billion to shore up the crumbling economies of Eastern Europe where riots and protests have taken place in Latvia,

Hungary and Bulgaria as workers lose their homes and jobs to western banks. Instead of shoring up the EU our money should be used here.

Some examples. New “super” trains are to be purchased with government funding to run on the West Coast route. They are to be built by Hitachi in Japan. The motors may be built here; they may be constructed in Europe. The wheels will be cast here. The £7.5 billion should only be used here. If Hitachi still want the contract they’ll agree. If they don’t like the terms other bidders based here can build the locos and carriages.

“Posted “ workers from other EU countries now number 971,000 compared to 221,000 British workers operating elsewhere in the EU. Cheap labour via the EU, in and out of Britain, helps workers nowhere.

Instead of throwing money at the banks for them to dispense loans abroad, loans for business should be ring-fenced and prioritised so that capital

is used here. US and Canadian steelworkers pushed for the “steel clause” in the US bank re-financing package only for Obama to have it removed at the last second.

We import 36 million tonnes of coal to run our power stations each year whilst we live on top of 300 years’ supplies. We have developed clean burn coal technology that could utilise Yorkshire coal in the power stations of the Trent and the Ouse. Yorkshire pits could be connected to the power stations. The power stations could be linked by pipeline and the extracted carbon dioxide gas pumped into the strata below the North Sea and “captured”. Some of the billions of pounds being thrown at the banks could be directed to what would be a massive civil engineering project that would indeed be a world leader.

We could start by cancelling this £19 million G20 stunt and move on to serious rebuilding of Britain.

Continued from page 9

is Brown who has consistently praised the City, the banks, the speculators and finance hucksters. No regard for industry, a total reliance on money chasing money that has resulted, as ever, in inflation, but inflation that was channelled into house prices and presented as “wealth”.

In one of the richest ironies of the past few weeks, a gang of pensioners in London face gaol for forging £5 million worth of £20 notes and 50 euro notes. Their activities were seen as damaging to the value of the currency at just the same time as the Bank of England devalues Sterling by “printing” the first tranche of £2 billion out of the £75 billion being created in the “quantitative easing” strategy. Given that this new money is to be used to buy “toxic”, i.e. worthless, bonds from the banks, no wonder the first allocation was 9 times oversubscribed: “money for old rope” it used to be called!

We have bought into this illusion, displaying a touching faith in the ability of capital to provide, when our class history

“...a touching faith in the ability of capital to provide...”

tells us the opposite is the case. Our class believed it didn’t need to fight for decent wages – just join the speculation by borrowing on 125 per cent mortgages and loans at 6 times the level of income (and conveniently ignoring the small print).

All of 170 years ago Charles Dickens wrote in NICHOLAS NICKLEBY of the effects of speculation: “Speculation is a round game: the players see little or nothing of their cards at first starting; gains may be great – and so may the losses. The run of luck went against Mr Nickleby; a mania prevailed, a bubble burst, four stockbrokers took villa residences at Florence, four hundred nobodies were ruined, and among them Mr Nickleby.” We can’t say we weren’t warned!

At the beginning of March the UK

National Defence Association (weapons industry) reported that In a surprising bout of private frankness, an unnamed government adviser had told it that manufacturing had no value. Furthermore, “Defence, aerospace, manufacturing and engineering have no real value to us. Only high-quality professional services, financial services and the City of London have any real value and they should be supported at all costs. The rest of the country can be turned over to tourism.”

If the British government ever talks of supporting industry it’s always in terms of “sexy” new technologies – information, bio and nano. These are seen as existing in a rarefied atmosphere disconnected from all that has gone before. But recent research by economists has shown that most technological innovation takes place when adjacent to the “old” industries that spawned the need for innovation in the first place. First, there’s not much that’s old-fashioned about these industries anyway. Do we manage without steel,

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A brilliantly organised campaign: the Lindsey workers have changed the political landscape in Britain.

Continued from page 11

coal, bricks, textiles, food? Of course not – we import instead. Secondly, British capitalism now sources half of its research and development overseas.

And therein lies the importance of the struggle at Lindsey, Staythorpe and other power stations and refineries. In a brilliantly organised campaign, workers in construction have stripped away all the myths about our lack of skills. They have shattered the idiotic notion that demanding jobs at home is somehow racist whereas taking jobs from others and in others' countries is somehow a righteous stance.

Further, their campaign has shown how toothless is the EU when confronted by resolute workers and how supine are parliamentarians who hide behind European laws to sell off their constituents' livelihoods. The construction workers and engineers involved have entered into a principled campaign against unemployment, low wages and forced migration and won at least 100

new jobs. The fight continues and should be joined by workers in every sphere.

The first few days of April will see the East End of London play host to the political Olympics referred to as the G20 summit. Obama, Brown and the rest will strut their stuff, playing to their own national audiences. Simultaneously, they will strive to convince the others that they have the answers to the financial crisis engulfing capitalist economies.

Back in the real economy

US president Barack Obama is already struggling to convince. Wall Street continues to slide. In the real economy, 600,000 US workers a month are being made unemployed. The automobile industry and construction are in dire straits and the US aerospace factories are struggling for orders. Frightened to upset finance moguls, Obama refused to endorse the so-called "steel clause" amendment that would have given favoured status to American and Canadian steel products. American workers already see their interests

ignored in favour of the banks they've just bailed out.

In Ireland and France, the response of the respective governments has been to attack public service workers' pensions; millions are out of work in Germany, Italy and Spain and young people in Greece are on the streets protesting against the lack of employment prospects.

60,000 enterprises have closed in China since the autumn; 20 million migrant workers are returning to the countryside as their jobs have gone. Exports have slumped by 25 per cent in the past year. Imports, likewise, have collapsed. There is a stagnant economy in Japan with millions out of work.

So, from all corners of the Earth the "Princes of the Universe" will gather in the heart of Docklands (no ships though) and come up with solutions that will offer us no succour whatsoever. And why should they? This is a national question – it is a class question – and we as workers have to step up to the mark and impose our solutions on a ruling class that's surviving on our weaknesses.

The decline in social workers has been accompanied by a slump in the numbers of health visitors – staff who play a vital role in the chain of child protection...

Where have all the health visitors gone?

THE DEATH of 'Baby P' in the London Borough of Haringey showed the inadequacy of various public bodies. Of course responsibility lay with the baby's mother, her partner and another man who were convicted of involvement in his death, but there are many other failings and inconsistencies which have been highlighted.

Some of these have taken the form of scapegoating social workers, and unions such as Unison have been called on to ensure that workers who were not at fault should not be blamed. One of the effects of the shrieking tabloid publicity on the case has been to produce a well documented collapse in the number of workers prepared to train to become social workers.

Another and less publicised dark side of Baby P's case is the poor state of health visiting.

Survey

Two months before the case came to public attention in November 2008 the union Unite and the Community Practitioners and Health Visitors Association (CPHVA) published a survey of health visitors in England. The survey found that case loads of more than 500 children per health visitor were commonplace for 40 per cent of health visitors and that one quarter of health visitors feared that "another Victoria Climbié" – the other high-profile child death in Haringey – could happen in their primary care trust (PCT)

If this is bad (and the government has accepted that there were shortages), then the situation has apparently become even worse. These 500 children per health visitor caseload is now seen as low in some areas, according to the UK Public Health Association.

Emergency cover

The Association's chief executive recently said, "There are many places especially in London and the South East with 800 to 1,200 pre-school children to one health visitor." She also said that a shortage of health visitors was forcing some PCTs to

"There is a growing view among health visitors, and indeed other health professionals, that this important service should be expanding and not contracting..."

implement what she called "emergency cover".

This includes Saturday clinics to which new mothers are being invited because there are too few health visitors for home visits, and in some places staff nurses are being substituted for health visitors to carry out new baby visits. "Unseen children and families are always at the highest risk; there is no way of predicting what would be found when they are visited, which is why this form of substitution is not safe practice," she added.

In February 2009 there were 131 health visitor vacancies on the NHS Jobs website, 25 of them within 20 miles of London, an area which is particularly struggling with heavy caseloads.

Since 1997 the number of health visitors has steadily declined. In the 10 years between 1997 and 2007 numbers dropped from 12,410 to 11,569, which was lower than the original 1997 figure. The number of whole time equivalent health visitors is even lower. In 1997 the figures were at 10,025. By 2007 this had dropped to 9,056. According to Unite and the CPHVA this represents a health visiting job lost every 27 hours in that ten-year period.

A recent review in the NURSING TIMES revealed that health visitors in the London Borough of Redbridge had the heaviest caseloads. On average, each health visitor had a load of more than 1000 children under five, more than ten times the number in Doncaster. Many

London boroughs have health visitors with caseloads over 600 (Enfield, Sutton and Merton) and others (Hackney, Camden and Newham) have far more than 500. Outside London, Warwickshire in general, and Coventry in particular, also appear in the top ten caseloads with 720 and 597 per health visitor respectively.

The situation could be considerably worse as many PCTS have not responded to the Unite/CPHVA survey. What can be determined from the figures that are available is that – with the odd exception of the West Midlands (odd in the light of the decline mentioned above in Warwickshire and Coventry) – there is universal depression of numbers (see Box).

There is a growing view among

Decline in health visitors since 1997

East of England	11 per cent
South West	9 per cent
Yorks and Humber	8 per cent
North West	8 per cent
North East	7 per cent
London	6 per cent
South Central	6 per cent
East Midlands	4 per cent
South East coast	1 per cent

health visitors, and indeed other health professionals, that this important service should be expanding and not contracting.

The birth rate in Britain is rising as is the number of children with difficulties and special needs. Instead of attacking social workers whenever there is a case of child mistreatment, we should invest in the training of future skilled health visiting nursing staff.

In spite of the efforts of health workers, these figures damn Labour's stewardship of health visiting as a profession and should be a warning to those complacent enough to think that a vote for Labour will secure health care in the future.

The English Revolution and Cromwell's campaign in Ireland are
This month, we review two books worth reading by anyone who
really happened...

The beginnings of a passage into enlighten

God's fury, England's fire: a new history of the English civil wars, by Michael Braddick, hardback, 758 pages, ISBN 978-0-7139-9632-6, Allen Lane, 2008, £30.

MICHAEL BRADDICK, professor of history at Sheffield University, has written a splendid new history of the civil wars in Britain in the 1640s. The book is in three parts: the crisis of the three kingdoms (1637-42), war (1642-46), and revolution (1646-49).

Part 1 describes the Scottish Prayer Book rebellion and the politics of reformation, politics and society in Charles's England, the English and the Bishops' Wars, the Long Parliament, the Irish rising, the struggle for the provinces and the slide into war. Part 2 studies the battle of Edgehill, the English war efforts in 1643, the Irish Cessation and the Solemn League and Covenant, the battle of Marston Moor, death and its meanings, the battle of Naseby and the New Model Army, the costs and benefits of civil war, and the politics of parishes at war. Part 3 describes postwar politics, attempts at settlement, the Putney debates, the Engagement and the vote of No Addresses, Charles's starting of the second civil war, his trial and execution, and England's freedom.

Popular opposition

The people opposed the king's party on the issues of royal powers, his religious policies, taxation, his foreign policy, and his Catholic advisers.

Charles sought to uphold his supreme power over the people. He refused to work with Parliament or to be subject to its authority. People noted that Charles tried to stay out of war in Europe against Catholics, but was ready to go to war against his own Protestant subjects.

Public opinion was such that, as Braddick writes, "Military mobilization by prerogative power in order to enforce Laudian ceremonialism [outlawing many Puritan practices] would have plenty of opponents."

Yet in 1649, the king was still



Propaganda art: Charles I portrayed as a martyr in this 1649 work by William Marshall, now in London's National Portrait Gallery.

unrepentant and uncompromising, and still bent on another war: defeated in England and Scotland, he was as yet unbeaten in Ireland.

Braddick recounts the organised, disciplined and popular assertions of traditional common rights - throwing down enclosures in forests and fens, tearing up hedges, and breaking open the Earl of Middlesex's deer park and killing his deer. Tactically astute, people gathered in groups of two, thus evading the legal definition of a riot.

More and more people became active citizens. People fought for the idea that "All power is originally and essentially in the whole body of the people of this Nation."

As Braddick writes, "What was really new and radical ... was that fundamental questions were being debated before a

public audience." It was "a decade of intense debate and spectacular intellectual creativity ... the beginnings of a passage from the world of reformation to the world of enlightenment".

Cromwell: an honourable enemy. The untold story of the Cromwellian invasion of Ireland, by Tom Reilly, paperback, 316 pages, ISBN 1-84212-080-8, Phoenix Press, 2000, £10.99.

HISTORIAN TOM Reilly was born in Drogheda, the site of one of Cromwell's most notorious alleged massacres. Showing remarkable independence of mind, he studies Cromwell's Ireland campaign of 1649-50. He finds that, contrary to myth, Cromwell did not indiscriminately massacre ordinary unarmed Irish people.

still hotly debated.
wants to know what

ment

Before he started the campaign, Cromwell issued a proclamation, "I do hereby warn ... all Officers, Soldiers and others under my command not to do any wrong or violence towards Country People or persons whatsoever, unless they be actually in arms or office with the enemy ... as they shall answer to the contrary at their utmost perils." This was no empty threat: before even reaching Drogheda, Cromwell ordered two of his soldiers to be hanged for stealing hens.

His forces killed the military defenders of Drogheda and Wexford, not the townspeople, acting according to standard 17th century military norms. Yet Jesuit Father Denis Murphy wrote, more than 200 years later, "to none was mercy shown; not to the women nor to the aged, nor to the young."

Murphy gave vivid descriptions of the killings of priests, but none of any killing of women or children. In fact, there are no eye-witness accounts of indiscriminate slaughter, or of the death of even one unarmed defender or of one woman or child.

Yet a leading historian, Professor Roy Foster, the Carroll Professor of Irish History at Oxford University, wrongly claims that the massacre of Drogheda's townspeople was "one of the few massacres in Irish history fully attested to on both sides".

After the Restoration, Cromwell was the main target of political and religious attack. The Royalists attacked him on everything, especially the Irish campaign. Irish nationalists, Catholic publicists and infantile leftists assisted with fabrications and propaganda. The Irish bishops lied that Cromwell's religious policies could not be 'effected without the massacring or banishment of the Catholic inhabitants', so the propagandists had to allege the massacres.

History is not a matter of opinion, or of repeating allegations without investigation. We are obliged to use evidence, primary sources, and eye-witness accounts, and we are duty-bound to stick to the verified facts, at whatever cost to our previous judgements.

Continuing our new series on
aspects of Marxist thinking

STAND AND FIGHT

In the 1980s capitalist crisis our party published a series of pamphlets about the destruction of the means of livelihood for our class. The third of these sold out almost immediately, and we reprint extracts from the beginning and end of it, highly relevant in the present crisis.

In the home of industrial capitalism a transformation is taking place. A shrunken distorted version of a once-powerful economy residing in a radically altered landscape is created, prey to the depredations of multinational and finance capital. A design appalling in its implications is pursued by the ruling class. To produce a climate fit for capitalism, capitalism as it has developed over the past 200 years must be destroyed. A counter-industrial revolution has been declared.

...Thatcher represents the thinking of the financial and multinational interests who see no place in the world for a Britain with a strong productive base and who hate and fear those productive and skilled workers who create the value which makes that financial parasitism possible. Her government has concentrated the long decline of Britain, accelerated it, and by so doing irrevocably changed the situation. A slump of unprecedented proportions grips the land out of which a Phoenix is supposed to rise. Yet only ashes are created.

...Many nations have died in the past. Famine, pestilence, invasion from without, civil strife from within, have been the instruments of destruction. Yet nothing like the decline of Britain has been witnessed in the modern world. By the hand of its own ruling class the country is being dismembered and laid to waste in the pursuit of the destruction of its opposing force – the working class. The "common ruin of the contending classes" has taken on a new and nightmarish possibility.

Capitalism has no loyalty to our country and moves its operations elsewhere. But workers cannot desert these shores en masse for we have nowhere to go. We face a callous policy of deliberate destruction and we have nowhere to run to. The longer we delay our revolutionary response, the greater the quandary we shall find ourselves in. We must stand and fight now and make a future for our class here, independent of capitalism. If we don't fight, we shall lose everything.

A photocopy of the complete text can be provided, for which please send £1 including postage.

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Back to Front – Fear and false unity

‘Visiting Nissan in Sunderland, Mandelson could only encourage reliance on EU loans...’

MARCH WAS a bad month for Britain. Unemployment steeped up to over 2 million – and that’s just the official figures. And Brown agreed to the EU setting up a European Systemic Risk Council with ultimate authority over all financial markets in the EU. Not content with handing over the real economy to Brussels, he’s now given them the City.

Not that it will do any good. The EU is as clueless as Brown. In their show of false unity on 19/20 March, ahead of the G20, EU heads of state pretended they have everything under control, so we can all go back to sleep. But behind the scenes they are in disarray and fear that nothing will really work. Most of all, they fear what the working class might do.

A renewed Franco-German understanding poses state support for the car industry (scrappage rewards of 2,500 euros a car in Germany, repatriation of 400 Renault jobs from Slovenia to France) against the feeble calls by Brown and Mandelson for a fiscal approach and dependence on EU aid.

France in particular forced the Commission to perform a laughable series of contortions to conclude that French state protection was not in fact “protectionism”, but rather in the interest of the whole European car industry. The Commission described itself as “shaken and put to the test”, adding, for the benefit of the G20, that “all signs of division have been erased”.

No such promises of domestic support have been forthcoming from Mandelson. Visiting Nissan in Sunderland, he could only encourage reliance on EU loans. With British car production down 60.6 per cent on last year, he knows there is a battle for survival and this is his big chance to portray the European Union as

universal provider.

Brown too has seen an opportunity to beat the anti-protectionist drum. But at the EU pre-G20 summit to agree common crisis exit strategies, the ideologies of anti-protectionism and of harmonisation look merely academic as the Commission is forced into case-by-case consideration of member states’ needs. So for example Hungary and Latvia will get emergency aid, countries like France, Spain, Portugal and Britain that have excessive deficits are eligible to apply, while Poland and Slovakia still enjoy growth. On that basis, Poland is proudly refusing EU aid.

As news comes in of a record fall in production in the factories and refineries of the euro zone, and as public contempt grows for having to ask Commission permission to implement national solutions, how is the working class of Europe responding? Demonstrating that internationalism begins at home, 200,000 marched against capitalism in Lisbon, 8,000 in Prague. In France, there was a national strike. Whatever the issue before, the failures of finance capitalism now dominate every agenda.

What was in France a two-month street protest against education cuts and “Mickey Mouse” university courses (“le bling-bling”) has inevitably taken on a more political complexion, and is forcing the government to back down.

Imaginative tactics have been a factor in the success of French teachers, research lecturers and students – as when they took over the tramway in Nice and delivered a lesson to astonished passengers on the siege of Malta by the Turks in 1565. There is no doubt that the public will respond positively to humour with a bit of national culture thrown in.

So come on, Britain!

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