

WORKERS

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BRITAIN FOR THE WORKERS!**



Nurses to act over pay

04



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WORKERS

“ The assault on pensions

THE RECENT unmasking of Brown and his part in the pensions attack is welcome. But his removal of advance corporation tax in 1997 has not been the only reason for the pensions problems. For example, no mention has been made in the popular press of the inflated actuarial assumptions that have been applied since the late 1990s to measure pensions liabilities.

The very low long-term interest rate assumptions applied have inevitably produced very high market-related actuarial deficits. These figures in turn have then been splattered across the media in the hope that such “shock and awe” hyperbole would cow working people into giving up final salary schemes.

Make no mistake, this has been a coordinated attack by the government, the employers and the EU, using phoney figures to allow our pension funds to be plundered.

Another aspect overlooked during the recent

Brown furore has been the past bleating that has made out that our pension problems are the result of people living longer. WORKERS has consistently maintained that mortality data showing people to be living on average a couple of years longer are not the cause of the pension problems so often portrayed in the media. Of course, if you include the employer “pension contribution holidays” that took place from the mid 1980s to the mid 1990s you get the complete picture of how this grand pensions larceny has occurred.

The response from working people must now be along the collective bargaining route: re-open final salary schemes to new employees and drop the proposal for retirement at age 68.

Our pension bargaining will need to be taken alongside our wage negotiations. Plenty of work, then, for our defensive trade unions to get their teeth into.

Apologise? What for?

THERE'S A lot of sanctimonious drivel talked about the slave trade and its so-called abolition (see *Abolition? What abolition?*, p11). And none more sanctimonious nor drivelling than London Mayor Livingstone, “apologising” for London's alleged role.

But it wasn't London, it was the ruling class.

And they started with London street children, then rebels, then the Irish, and when they had run out of them looked to Africa. Now open borders are allowing modern-day slavery in domestic service and prostitution in London.

London's workers have nothing to apologise for. Livingstone should apologise to them.



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NUJ eyes web challenge

IT WAS back to Birmingham for the National Union of Journalists on its hundredth anniversary – back to the city where the NUJ was founded in 1907. And it was in many ways back to basics, too, with most of the discussion on industrial issues such as the move to “integration”, with journalists increasingly being asked to write stories for both print and web while simultaneously taking photographs and video and preparing podcasts. Freedom of Information – or more accurately its absence – figured strongly as well.

Two events in the Middle East overshadowed the conference: the kidnapping of NUJ member and BBC reporter Alan Johnston in Gaza, and the unlawful killing of another NUJ member, ITN correspondent Terry Lloyd, by American forces during the invasion of Iraq. Delegates heard first-hand from his colleagues of the work going on to get Alan Johnston back. The issue has been taken up by the International Federation of Journalists as well as the Palestinian Journalists’ Syndicate and the American journalists’ union. On Terry Lloyd, the NUJ is calling for the extradition of those responsible to face trial in Britain.

The NUJ’s is a strange conference. Lasting a scant two-and-a-half-days, it debates (to varying degrees) around 200 motions, so there is often little time for discussion. But what discussion there was revealed some of the weaknesses that have dogged the NUJ and other unions for some time now. The NUJ went through a long spell of derecognition in the 1980s and early 1990s, and though many of the agreements have been won back and there have been fights over pay and cuts, confidence is still being built. More importantly, there is a disconnection between the membership and the people who represent them.

How else to explain the motion carried on outsourcing of jobs to India and other low-cost countries that said that the union should be against “protectionism”? What are unions for if not to protect members? We’d fight to stop work going down the road at cheaper wages...so why not to stop it going out of the country for even lower ones?

An example of the mess the union is in came with a debate on whether to ballot the membership on affiliation to the Stop the War Campaign. The motion fell, but not before opponents had argued that the NUJ already supports the campaign through the executive and had no need to affiliate – and that anyway the membership would vote against affiliation in a ballot. So it’s OK for the union to support something the membership opposes? The other side in the debate was equally blameworthy, arguing that it is the role of the executive to go out and politically educate the membership!

Like many unions, once you move out of the workplace the members are not in control of the NUJ, mainly because they are content to leave that to a tiny minority. That can’t be allowed to continue into the union’s next 100 years.

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

EU LAWS**Taking over**

BETWEEN 1998 and 2004, 23,167 legal acts were adopted in Germany. No fewer than 18,917 were of EU origin. Former German President Roman Herzog commented, “By far the largest part of the current laws in Germany are agreed by the Council of Ministers and not the German parliament ... therefore the question has to be asked whether Germany can still unreservedly call itself a parliamentary democracy.”

Jean-Claude Juncker, Luxemburg’s Prime Minister, described how the EU works: “We decide on something, put it out there and then wait for a while to see what happens. If no one kicks up a fuss – because most people don’t understand what has been decided – we continue step by step until there is no turning back.”

WATER**No drought for profits**

FURTHER SUMMER droughts are forecast by the water industry regulatory body for London and the South East. Almost at the same time Severn Trent Water announced nearly 600 redundancies.

Severn Trent Water is facing the possibility of huge fines from the regulatory body OFWAT for failures of supply, customer service, repairs etc. Yet over £580 million has been returned to shareholders – almost £1 million for every job lost! Droughts and job cuts, failing water mains and localised floods: the water industry managers and government are grossly incompetent.

EUOTRASH

The latest from Brussels

No limits

LUXEMBOURG Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker said recently, "We would be wrong to limit European construction to simple economic integration. The market and currency issues, useful and beneficial as they are in everyday life, have only ever been means, tools in the realisation of a larger objective."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has called for an EU army, saying, "We must move closer to a European army ... The European Commission would become more capable of acting, within clearly defined competencies."

Meanwhile, according to a Harris poll, 44 per cent of EU citizens think life has got worse since joining the bloc, while 25 per cent think it has got better. 52 per cent of Britons said things had got worse. 41 per cent of us said life would get better if we left the EU – just 25 per cent said it would get worse.

Don't wriggle out of a referendum

A TNS poll, the first independent survey on the EU's future to be carried out in all 27 EU member states, has revealed that three in four Europeans want a referendum on any new EU treaty that gives more power to the EU. In Britain, 83 per cent want a vote to be held. Opposition to euro membership in Britain is at its highest ever: 77 per cent against.

In June, EU leaders will agree on a new mandate for an Inter-Governmental Conference that will conclude in December 2007. Member states will then have 18 months to ratify the new treaty. One official said, "The euro is an example of the importance of establishing timetables. Once you have the timetable, you can really get moving."

Some partnership!

By the end of this year the EU is due to replace its preferential trade arrangements with African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries (ACP) with bilateral Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs). Developing countries will be given a fixed timetable to drop their barriers to imports from the EU. They are being asked to eliminate 80% of their trade barriers against the EU over the next decade.

ACP countries fear that European exporters will increase their share of ACP markets.



30 March: Home Office PCS workers on strike over pay. Another strike is due on 1 May.

Photo: Andrew Wiard/www.reportphotos.com

Nurses to act over pay

PAY WAS the main focus of the recent Royal College of Nursing congress in Harrogate. Members had already decided not to invite any government ministers, and the new general secretary of the RCN, Peter Carter, set the tone with a speech that focused on pay and employment.

There was anger at the low pay award and fury that the government was saving an extra £60 million by staging the award in England and Wales. The award has been paid in full in Scotland ahead of the Scottish assembly elections. The "saving" by means of robbing nurses was contrasted with the £600 million bill for management consultants in the NHS in 2006.

Delegates voted overwhelmingly in favour of an emergency resolution to reject the staged pay award and then took another emergency resolution from the floor which called for the RCN Council to investigate what form of industrial action would be appropriate in relation to the pay offer.

More than 97 per cent of the delegates voted to reject the pay award, and the same percentage supported the resolution to consider industrial action. The RCN council meets on 16 and 17 May to decide the next steps.

The other big issues at the congress were NHS reductions in service and poor staffing levels leading to student nurses being unsupervised with consequent risk to patients.

KOSOVO

A fully fledged EU colony?

THE UN MEDIATOR on Kosovo has called for Kosovo to be given "independence under international supervision", saying, "independence is the only viable option for Kosovo". He said it should be governed by an EU official who would have the power to veto laws and sack elected politicians. He said it should be occupied by substantial NATO military forces, which would be both its army and its police force. Strange independence!

Since the 1990s, the US and German states and the EU have schemed to achieve Kosovo's secession, against massive opposition from the peoples of Europe. Kosovo's previous German governor had decreed a new "independent" legal order

for Kosovo; Kosovo's present German governor sold off all the country's state enterprises to foreign buyers without even a nod to their rightful owner, the Serbian government in Belgrade. Strange independence!

The Bush government welcomed the idea, and the German presidency of the EU declared its "strong support". NATO demanded a solution "which is acceptable to the population of Kosovo", with no reference to the need for Serbia's consent.

A Basque separatist seized on the precedent: "On the day on which Catalonia and the Basque country raise their hands and say, 'We are going independent' ... the Spanish government ... will no longer be able to raise its finger and say 'Yes, but only with Spain's consent'." How soon before a Scottish separatist demands the same?

POWER**A comeback for coal**

A NEW huge 1600 megawatt coal fired power station has been announced for Tilbury in Essex, Hatfield Main pit has reopened with a 900 megawatt power station planned on-site and five new coal mines are being proposed for South Wales.

Why the expansion with coal? Partly due to energy supply fears but mainly because industry is recognising that clean coal technology, which has existed for decades, has finally come into its own – not because of the revolutionary

technology but because capitalism now recognises the vast productive value of Britain's 1,000 million tonnes of coal reserves. These reserves coupled with clean coal technology and the estimated £50 billion industry in carbon technologies are overcoming the ideological hatred of "King Coal" from the Thatcherites, Blairites and Green lobby.

A third of Britain's existing coal-fired generation will require replacement in the next 10 to 15 years. The answer rests in a clean coal solution pioneered by the National Union of Mineworkers for decades, which despite government hostility is making business sit up.

RMT fights privatisation

COMMUTERS USING the East London Line were presented with an urgent message from the RMT union on 12 April as part of its ongoing campaign against the privatisation of London Rail. Transport for London's proposals under the new franchise, which will extend to the East London Line, are too complex and compromise public safety to a frightening extent, says the RMT, accusing TfL of drifting blindly into fragmentation.

The existing line is part of the Underground network, with unified signalling, train and station operations under direct public control. Maintenance and renewals are sub-contracted to Metronet. Under the new plans at least eight players will be involved in running a hybrid tube and rail service on the line – two for signalling, two for infrastructure maintenance, two for infrastructure renewals, one for train and station operations and one for train maintenance.

Some track, stations and signals maintenance will go to a private contractor, and some to Network Rail. Some signalling operations will be the responsibility of London Underground and some will go to Network Rail. Train, stations and ticketing will go to a private contractor. Responsibility for building and maintaining trains will fall to the engineering firm Bombardier, although TfL will retain ownership. Arrangements for cleaning are still unclear.

"It seems that precious few lessons have been learned from the nightmare fragmentation of national rail privatisation or the disastrous part-privatisation of Tube infrastructure, because the same dangerous formula is being lined up for London Rail," warns General Secretary Bob Crow. Urging commuters to join the campaign, he said it was not too late to tell TfL to keep the line public and run as a unified part of the tube network.

WAGES**The cost of London living**

THE MAYOR of London, Ken Livingstone, has announced that the London Living Wage has risen from £7.05p to £7.20p.

This figure has no statutory clout but is being recognised by a number of leading companies and banks as the "real" minimum wage – nearly £1.70p higher than the figure set by the government and the Low Pay Commission.

Even at this level it still depresses wages but if applied would lift around 390,000 workers out of poverty conditions in London.

The Mayor's Office and Greater London Authority estimated that 40 per cent of London's children live in families

below the government's poverty line. They estimate this figure has risen by over 100,000 in the last 12 months.

The voices from the captains of industry supporting the Mayor's initiative are quite clear: it makes good business sense, reduces costs of absenteeism, sickness, staff turnover and salves the "social conscience" of do-gooders – churches, Samaritans, London Citizens Organisation and so on.

The questions for London's trade unions are do they organise London or not? Do they protect the higher rates in the organised workplace or just tail behind? Do they fight for wages? Over £9 billion was paid in bonuses last Christmas to fewer than 4,000 individuals. London – a living wage or a living excess?

WHAT'S ON**Coming soon****MAY**

Tuesday 1 May, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL, 7.30pm.

Workers for Britain – Britain for Workers: Out of the EU now!

May Day celebration organised by CPBML/WORKERS magazine. All welcome. Refreshments available.

Saturday 5 May, Upstairs, The Counting House, 38 West Nicolson Street, Edinburgh EH8 9DD, 2pm.

Workers for Britain – Britain for Workers: Out of the EU now!

May Day celebration organised by CPBML/WORKERS magazine. All welcome. Music and refreshments available.

Saturday 12 May, Golden Lion Hotel, Lower Briggate, Leeds, 12.30pm.

A better world is possible

Photographic exhibition by Tyneside photographer Ailie Hodgson (see above), with discussion about the significance of Cuba for Britain.

POVERTY**Britain's huge gap**

BRITAIN HAS the third biggest gap between the haves and the have-nots among the 24 OECD countries, according to a study in the Journal of Public Health. The USA has the biggest. We have the second highest child death rate; the USA has the highest.

The others in the bottom six are New Zealand, Australia, Ireland and Canada. All follow the "Anglo-Saxon" model of unfettered free markets.

Researchers from Dundee University point out the very strong association between income inequality and under-five mortality among the wealthier OECD countries.

"Within this group the highest child mortality figures are to be found in those 'Anglo-American' countries which attracted criticism in 1993 in a Unicef study on child neglect."

TRADE DEFICIT**On the way to a record**

BRITAIN'S trade gap widened from £4.1 billion in January to £4.3 billion in February. The deficit in goods grew from £6.4 billion to £6.8 billion, as exports fell to £18.4 billion and imports rose to £25.2 billion. It looks as if 2007 could beat even 2006's record deficit of £55.8 billion.

The government is indeed putting extra money into the NHS – but it is being used to fund decline...

Profit, greed and change in the NHS

CHANGE IS constant as they say, and just like the seasons and the rotation of the planets, change is vital to human life. Change within the National Health Service is a good thing. It is not new. It has been going on since its formation in 1948. Improved hospitals, better trained doctors, better trained nurses, modern medicines and continuous research all for the one aim of improving the quality of life for the British people.

The adage “from the cradle to the grave” meant something in the past and everyone knew its meaning. Whole families grew up and felt confident and safe in the knowledge the NHS was there if they fell ill or were injured. The NHS would look after you as a baby, a youth, a grown up, and eventually as an old age pensioner. You’d be seen by health service GPs, transported by health service ambulances, treated by health service nurses, moved around health service hospitals by health service porters, served by health service domestic staff, fed by health service chefs and sent home to be visited by health service district nurses. The NHS was a collective, state-run healthcare system that people contributed towards through their wages and those contributions were used for, and stayed within the service to preserve and improve it for future generations.

What happened? The present government has poured more money into the NHS than any previous administration ever. That is a fact. A fact, of course, they never miss a chance to remind us.

But facts don’t always tell the whole story. It is not the money going into the NHS that has brought it into crisis, but where that money has ended up. By rights the money that has gone into the NHS should make it the best in the world. But it hasn’t. Hospitals are closing down and staff are being made redundant. (Redundant! When the last known illness, in the last known person, in the last known part of the world is eradicated, that is the time when the terms health worker and redundancy should sit side by side.)

Jobs are being axed, services are being cut or “outsourced”, and private health

‘Because you don’t pay every time you go in or out of your front door doesn’t mean you live in your house for free!’

companies are taking a bigger and bigger share of resources. All this in the name of change, progress and modernisation. The view in government is that collectivism is old fashioned and ‘choice’ is the new way forward in health. Public is bad, private is good. Profit has been allowed to enter through the front window as professionalism, dedication and loyalty has been flung out the back.

Privatisation

The scourge of privatisation is creeping to every area within the NHS as the government continues down the American road of health provision. Health ministers persist with the sleight of hand deception of promising treatment “free at the point of delivery” while selling off the services, the buildings and the staff to the highest bidder.

This “free at the point of delivery” mantra is at best a false argument and at worst a disgraceful deception. As there are no false arguments in capitalism it must be a deception. Because you don’t pay every time you go in or out of your front door doesn’t mean you live in your house for free!

Private companies from around the world now run and own large sections of our health service and are creaming off massive profits. They are treating workers as surplus to requirements as they outsource jobs and skills: medical typing outsourced to India, Pakistan and South Africa, for instance. This makes no sense and is putting patients’ lives at risk. £25 billion has gone straight through the NHS and into their hands along with

accountants, management consultants, lawyers, finance companies and shareholders – money that could and should have been used for patient care and for proper change, proper progress and real modernisation.

People are not fooled by this deception or by the notion of ‘choice’ in healthcare. Choice works both ways. The NHS Together day of action on 3 March, supported by all of the NHS trade unions, showed exactly what choice people want. Thousands came out on the streets all over the UK to campaign against the cuts, closures and privatisation of their NHS. Their choice was local public services, local hospitals, local clinics, and local healthcare run by public workers. They want the public ethos back and the private greed out.

Thousands attended rallies, including friends and families of health workers, friends and families of patients, patients and ex-patients, patient groups and all interested bodies who have a stake in the future of our health service and our country.

That is real choice. Most people in our country perceive the NHS as local: our hospital, our clinic, our ambulance station, our GP practice, etc. We all have a stake in it; it should belong to us all.

How many times have we seen Members of Parliament scurry back to their constituency to get on the front page of the local paper ‘defending’ the local hospital after voting through the health budget and all its implications? Even Ministers who the day before have voted, supported or been privy to a decision in Cabinet on reforming the NHS, soon make haste to stand on a picket line against the closure of a hospital local to them! Not just sleight of hand in theory but sleight of hand in practice! Whose NHS did they think they were voting on? A virtual NHS?

There is nothing wrong with the NHS being reformed and modernised. British health workers have the intelligence, dedication and skill to do both. But health, people and love of life are the building blocks for a new cradle to the grave health service – not wealth, profit and greed.

EUROPEAN UNION

THE FASCIST DREAM OF A UNITED EUROPE RESURRECTED

A LEAFLET
FROM THE
COMMUNIST PARTY



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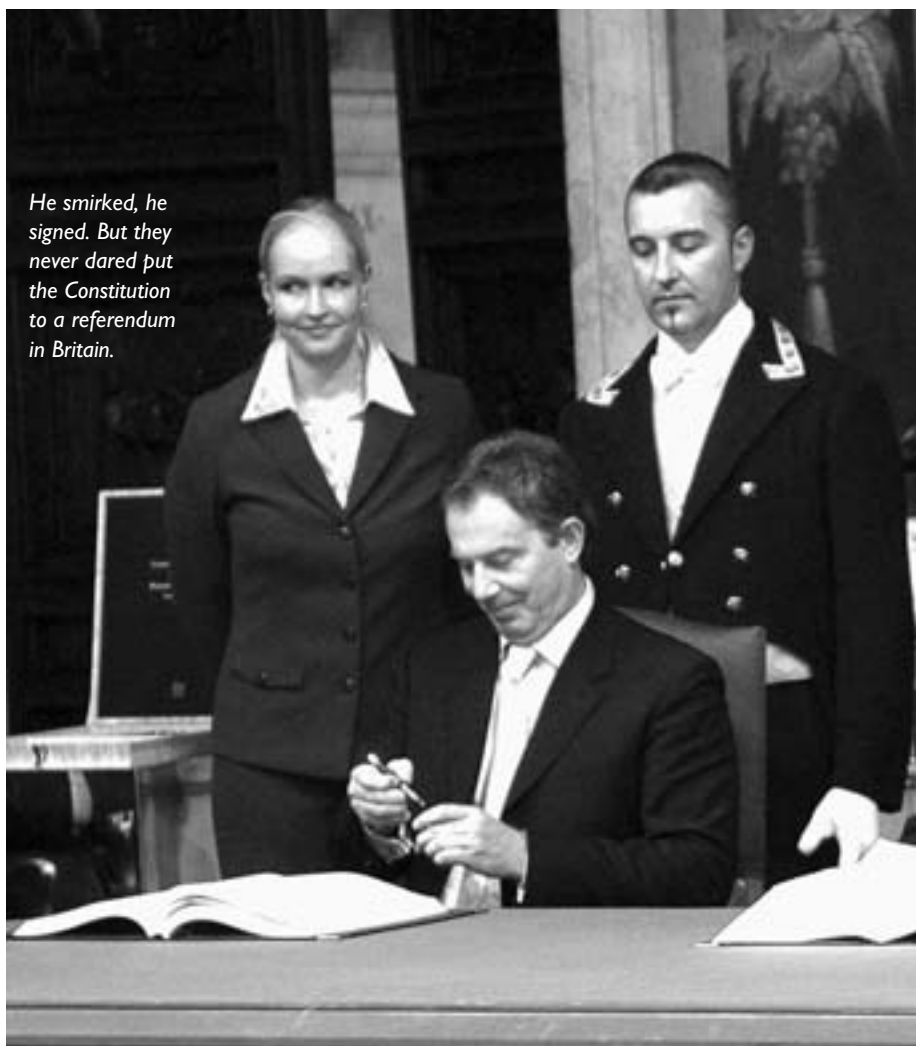
The European Union celebrates its 50th anniversary in 2007. What is there to celebrate for the British people?

Nothing. The past 50 years have seen an acceleration of EU economic initiatives and directives, aided and abetted since Britain joined by both Tory and Labour governments, to undermine our industrial base and to attack the working class and their trade unions.

Political union remains the central drive. The EU's March 2007 50th anniversary bash conveniently occurred during the German presidency and was held, of all places, in Berlin, presided over by the German Chancellor, Merkel. The resulting Berlin Declaration couldn't be signed by the 27 heads of state because of disagreements by some member states (one talked about "Orwellian eurospeak") and was initialled instead by Merkel, Barroso for the European Commission and Pöttering for the European Parliament. The Declaration makes clear Merkel's intentions to salvage the rejected Constitution.

Merkel said, "The founding fathers of Europe knew that in the long run the economic and the political could not be kept separate." She talked about the need for an EU president and foreign minister, a drastic reduction in the policy areas on which member states will have a veto, and a common European army.

Merkel's dream of an overarching European state mirrors one fought over in 1939-45. Consider the Italian fascist model then – don't destroy the organisations which might oppose you, just incorporate them into the state machine and get them to do your work for you.



He smirked, he signed. But they never dared put the Constitution to a referendum in Britain.

2 EUROPEAN UNION: THE FASCIST DREAM OF A UNITED EUROPE RESURRECTED

The treacherous parts being played in Britain by the TUC, which cheers on policies such as the free movement of labour, and by the European TUC, now led by ex-TUC general secretary John Monks, serve this goal. When Mussolini was in power we understood that the fight to maintain independent nations was an essential defence against fascism. Do we still understand this?

The intention is to get these central elements of the rejected Constitution agreed by not calling it a constitution and claiming there is therefore no need for referendums. They know that the longer they wait the more anti-EU the member states' populations become.

50 years of attack on the working class

Workers in Britain are increasingly seen as expendable. It has always been important for governments and employers to cut away at the base of our capacity to organise. What they couldn't have hoped for is the extent to which our organisations, the unions, have rushed, lemming-like, into the arms of the EU.

The corruption has been practical as well as ideological. The EU continues to provide a lucrative haven for the has-beens and never-has-beens, witness Mandelson, Monks, the Kinnocks et al.

The destruction of coal, steel, shipbuilding, textiles, fishing, agriculture, engineering in Britain are direct products of the EU industrial zoning strategy. Britain is to have no manufacture as such, and our agriculture is to be reduced to parkland and tourism.

Britain pressed for and was first to implement EU directives for privatisation – telecommunications, gas, water, electricity, transport – all the infrastructure needed to support an

independent manufacturing nation. Now the destruction of British manufacturing in the name of the free market is to be followed up by the forcing open of the social economy to private capital. There are huge profits being made and more to come with the privatising of health and education, social services and justice – witness the sharks circling in the form of the big private education and health companies. This is EU policy in practice – a welfare state is seen as anti-competitive.

Britain's EU membership

The EU attack on the working class is seen at its fiercest here, in Britain, led by a Labour government and connived at by a labour movement whose members turn a blind eye. Those Labour MPs or party members who declare themselves shocked by government policy or call it “misguided” miss the point. The policy is deliberate, and derives from European directives, many of which originated here in Thatcherism.

That Britain was first to implement fully the directive on movement of labour and allowed migrants from new accession states open access to jobs here was no accident. The resulting huge influx of eastern European labour, both legal and black market, has driven down wages for semi- and unskilled jobs and led to a rise in unemployment, as well as a rise in property prices and rents in cities – especially London. This is seen by ministers and the TUC as a benefit which has led to a “buoyant economy”.

Buoyant for whom? The outcome is a widening gap between the highest and lowest earners, a rise in child poverty, housing in cities becoming unaffordable, and a growth in “Neets” – young people *not* in education, employment or training (see box).

The government presents itself as taking a tougher stand on immigration for refugees and asylum seekers, provoking much wringing of hands among the left, yet the real situation goes unmentioned – that the vast majority of migrants are legal, from EU member countries, and that the British government threw open the doors as soon as it could. That was a deliberate act, to drive down wages and weaken class organisation.

New regulations affecting the English-speaking Commonwealth teachers who prop up schools in many of our big cities, especially London, mean they can no longer work if they have not studied to gain British Qualified Teacher Status. But any teacher who has gained a teaching qualification in an EU member state now counts as having British QTS, regardless of the fact that many European qualifications are much less rigorous, and that they often speak poor English.

Trade unions

Analyse the eurospeak now being used by Merkel, Blair, Brown and the rest. For “social cohesion” read unregulated movement of labour, a roving, rootless and unorganised group of migrants. For “economic cohesion” read the euro, and taxation and spending determined by the commissioners in Brussels. For “territorial cohesion” read the melting of national and local

YOUNG PEOPLE ON THE SCRAPHEAP

The government justifies migration on the basis that we have a shortage of labour. Yet a report issued in April this year by the London School of Economics and the Prince's Trust identified 1.2 million “Neets” – young people not in education, employment or training – more than double that in Germany or France and still growing. In 2005 18% of 16- to 24-year-olds were classed as Neets, a group likely to get involved in crime and suffer from poor physical and mental health. The trend is upwards – now at least one in five of Britain's young people are living on benefits with no prospects.

Critically, “Neets” are at child-bearing age – and children born into families where nobody works are highly likely to do badly at school, live in poor housing, and have physical and mental health problems. British workers are paying a price for this: youth unemployment costs £90 million a week. But the cost to Britain and its future as our young people are thrown on the scrap heap is appalling.



On the march in Denmark against EU attacks on collective bargaining

boundaries to be governed from the EU centre.

This new European empire abhors any talk of society or collective rights – these are seen as oppressive to the individual. Merkel’s Berlin speech was a paean to the individual: “When we count on the power of freedom, we are counting on the individual. The individual is paramount. His dignity is inviolable”. What she means is that individual “rights” will be set, legally, against collective rights fought for and won by people acting together. The aim is disintegration in society coupled with rule from Brussels.

To realise Merkel’s vision of 21st century capitalism, the European Commission is calling for an all-out assault on trade union rights in a Green Paper called “Modernising labour law to meet the challenges of the 21st century”. This proposed legislation, welcomed by Blair and the TUC, clamours for “flexible working practices”. Employment protection is a drag on the labour market, it asserts, and is an obstacle to the free market in services (where businesses bothered by unions can simply bring in unorganised cheaper workers from another member state). This is all proposed in the name of “individual rights” – rights designed to effectively outlaw strikes or any kind of real collective bargaining.

They’re watching us...

The attacks on civil liberties in Britain multiply almost by the day: ID cards, national databases of personal information, dispersal orders, the privatising of the Probation Service, the relentless increase in the numbers of people sent to prison, attempts to control the judiciary, weakening of the legal aid system, increases in police powers, stringent controls over the right to demonstrate, new extradition arrangements for British citizens, coupled with the monitoring of our movements through CCTV cameras and travel systems such as Oyster cards in London and congestion charges are an integral part of the move to a corporate state. All the information being gathered about us is to be shared among all 27 member states. It is no accident that the Home Office has been split along the lines of the European model. We are being prepared for an EU-wide police and justice system.

Panic over climate change – “we’re all doomed!” – is leading to EU environmental targets which are excuses to cut services and increase taxes. We are told individual acts of sacrifice are the answer, when in fact government could act if it chose. Why not nationalise water and create a national water grid? Why not regulate house building on flood plains? Why not ban the concreting over of gardens and development of open land which at present soak up and save the rain? Because the EU doesn’t allow it. In the name of recycling councils are stopping rubbish collection. We are to be taxed just for moving around our country on privatised toll roads. And remember it was Thatcher who agreed to end the national veto over EU environmental policy.

“Global problems require global solutions” – this mantra is utterly false, and only encourages an attitude of helplessness. In fact, it is only as nations that we can hope to deal with problems. The solutions are in our hands.

No future unless we leave

A poll released to coincide with the ‘celebrations’ showed that half of the people in countries which gave up their currencies hate the euro. In a UN survey of the quality of life in Europe the top scorers were dominated by non-EU nations, with independent Norway and Iceland coming first and second.

The EU’s ludicrous 50th birthday party fed Berliners on pastries nominated by member states – Britain sent Eccles cakes and hot cross buns. As the delegates wined and dined to the strains of Beethoven’s Ode to Joy, demonstrators outside burned down the “Europe Information” caravan. The spectre at the EU capitalist feast is the European working classes. The future of their countries is in their hands. For us in Britain, there will be no future unless we leave the EU.

Separatism and war

Disintegration and break-up with ever more centralised control is the EU model. Moves to separate Scotland from Britain are an integral part of this strategy, served by the likes of the SNP’s Alex Salmond, who prattles about joining the euro and adopting a different time zone from the rest of Britain. Imagine crossing the border into Scotland, while stopping to change currency and altering your watch!

This would be a prize indeed for Brussels – the first real possibility in the Eurozone for a member country to split. Already government refers to “the nations and regions” when they mean Britain. Almost half the 27 EU nations have populations smaller than Scotland’s 5 million, say proponents of separatism, so why not? Salmond casts envious eyes at the EU money it could pull in – looking across the water to Ireland.

Fools on the left see Scottish independence as a way of escaping from British government policies. But those policies emanate from the EU (policies which in turn were largely written by successive British governments). So-called “independence” would actually mean Thatcherism from Brussels.

4 EUROPEAN UNION: THE FASCIST DREAM OF A UNITED EUROPE RESURRECTED

The idea that there could be referendum in one part of a country to determine whether it should secede assumes that the secession has already taken place. Who would be first to recognise Scottish independence? Remember how Germany's premature recognition of Croatia fanned the flames in Yugoslavia.

Anybody who doubts the EU's aggressive intentions should think again. The EU represents the interests of rampant capitalism, and capitalism inevitably leads to war. Merkel and Blair are pushing the EU to support US interventionism in Cuba. Merkel's Berlin speech contained threatening references to Belarus and Zimbabwe, two countries that have in common that they remain obstinately independent of western capitalism. From the end of this year, the EU will impose Economic Partnership Agreements on trading partner countries desperate for development. These agreements will require those countries to drop barriers to EU imports, forcing open their markets. Already, EU imperialism requires large-scale privatisation of national services such as water and power as a condition of bilateral trade.

Blair's government pursues separatist policies – many of the worst government initiatives in education and health apply only in England. England is the test bed. Notice how London is now referred to, by government and Livingstone its Mayor, as a "world city", never using the term "capital". The concept of Britain as a separate country with its own capital is being quietly dropped.

Out of the EU!

It must never be forgotten that the concept of a United Europe was a dream of fascists from the 1920s-1940s – Franco, Mussolini, Moseley, Hitler. It had one purpose: to stop the working class of Europe from seizing power like in the Soviet Union. The EU's creation in 1957 was the coming together of the crippled regimes of western Europe, funded by US imperialism to oppose socialism. That is why the British trade unions were so clear in resisting European integrationists – led then by Edward Heath and the Tories.

The EU wants total free movement of capital, trade and labour.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Resurrect and re-affirm opposition to the EU in our trade unions.

Resist in the workplace any attempt to lower professional standards or health and safety requirements.

Promote opposition to the EU in all social and civil organisations of society as the EU attacks them all.

Fan the flames of opposition across nations now constituted as the EU. They should become myriad fronts of resistance.

Support those nations threatened by the EU for resisting their dictat: Russia, Belarus, Cuba, China.

Assert that Britain can solve its problems, and discuss how this could be done.

Argue and fight for workers' nationalism for an independent, sovereign, non-aligned Britain – for the destruction of the EU.

These three freedoms are fatal blows to any nation, working class, or people wishing to assert their independence. From these three freedoms already flows one EU foreign policy, one EU army, one EU judiciary, one EU legislation, one EU state – with all the hallmarks of a police state.

Opposition to the EU is mounting across Europe. It starts with countries like Britain who have resisted being drawn into the Euro. It starts with those countries that rejected the Constitution. The language of modernisation, liberalisation, freedom, democracy and "social model" is the language of distortion and bastardising of meaning: it is the language of capitalist counter-revolution.

The only possible future for our country lies outside the European empire. Out of the EU!



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The British Empire, still so often praised for its shaping of world history over the last few centuries, was at root a slave empire...

Abolition? What abolition?

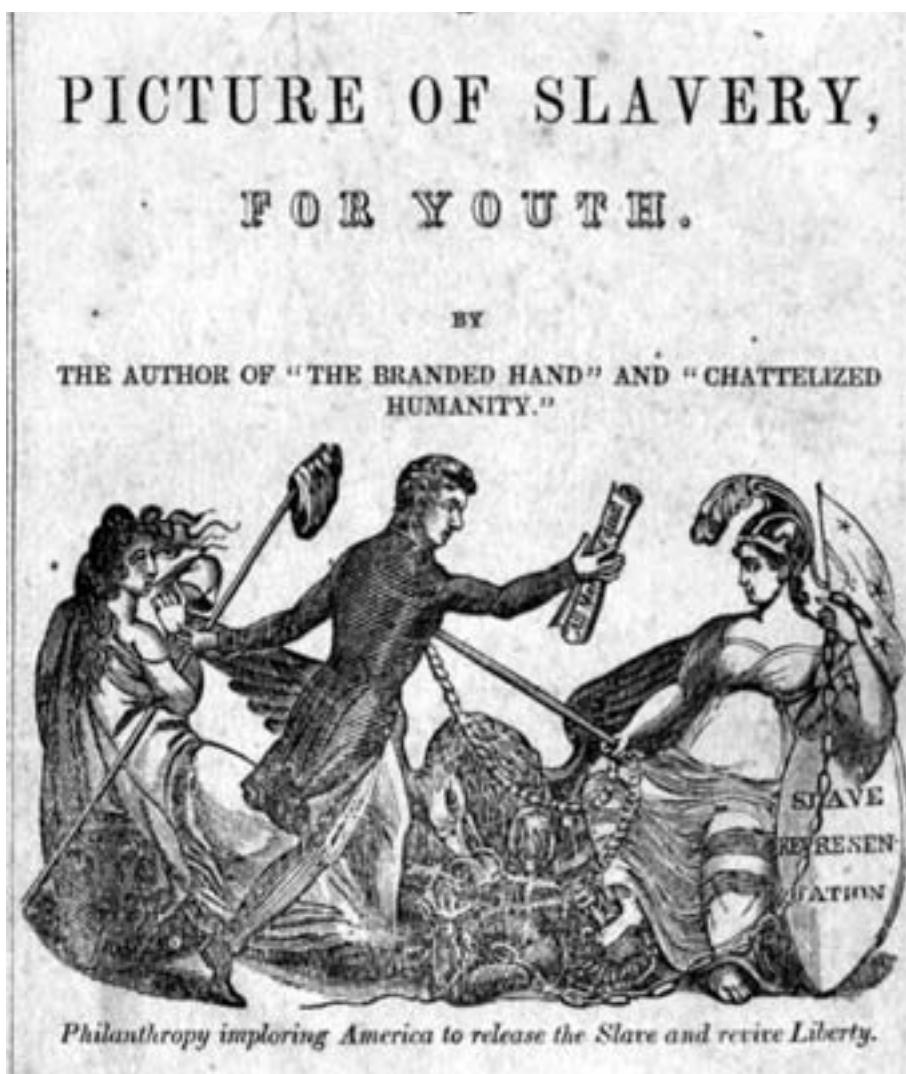
THE BRITISH Empire, still so often praised for its shaping of world history over the last few centuries, was at root a slave empire, held together by slave-trading between slave colonies, a world system mirroring only more grotesquely its domestic system of wage slavery. Between 1660 and 1807, British-owned ships carried 3.5 million Africans, 40,000 a year, across the Atlantic – more than any other country. British property owners were the world's chief slavers.

A part of Britain's ruling class, not the nation, owned the slave ships, the slaves and the plantations. British workers did not control their own labour power, never mind own other people. William Cobbett noted that in 1832, "white men are sold, by the week and the month all over England. Do you call such men free, on account of the colour of their skin?" Black chattel slavery and white wage slavery were parts of the same system.

Wage slaves at home

By the 19th century the more powerful part of Britain's ruling class were those who exploited wage slaves at home. They led the abolitionist movement, ignoring the eighteen-hour days worked by children in Bradford's mills. They backed the laws that attacked trade unions and suspended Habeas Corpus. They funded their foreign philanthropy by increasing the exploitation of their white slaves at home. The trade unionist Oates said, "The great emancipators of negro slaves were the great drivers of white slaves. The reason was obvious. The labour of the black slaves was the property of others. The labour of the white slaves they considered their own." As the DERBYSHIRE COURIER noted, "We make laws to provide protection to the Negro: let us not be less just to the children of England."

Bronterre O'Brien wrote, "What are called the working classes are the slave populations of the civilized countries." From birth, workers were mortgaged to the owners of capital and land, forced into wage slavery. Britain's property owners gained far more profit from their 16 million wage slaves than from their million chattel



Fine words, but the truth is that abolition began to serve the employers better than slavery.

slaves. O'Brien again, "We pronounce there to be more slavery in England than in the West Indies ... because there is more unrequited labour in England."

The empire was based on exploiting wage slaves and used the free movement of goods, capital and labour to extend its exploitation. The wars of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries were fought to keep, or add to, Britain's imperial and slave-trading conquests. For example, in the 1790s, British slave owners united with French slave owners to try to defeat Haiti's revolution. The government sent more soldiers to the

West Indies, and lost more, than it had when trying to crush America's independence. Of the 89,000 sent, 45,000 died, as did 19,000 sailors. France lost 50,000 dead. Haiti's freed slaves defeated the armies of the two greatest slaver powers, but the British forces laid waste to the island, destroying almost all its sugar plantations.

By 1807 the slave trade was becoming less profitable: it employed only one in 24 of Liverpool's trading ships and the West

Continued on page 12

Continued from page 11

Indies sugar industry was dying. All the plantations were running at a loss; many had been abandoned. Two-thirds of the slaves carried in British ships were bought by Britain's imperial rivals France and Spain, to grow sugar which undercut West Indies-grown sugar on the vital Continental market. All these factors opened the way to the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act; from 1 May 1807, no more slave ships sailed from Britain.

But the government let the British Army and the Royal Navy force slaves into unpaid military service and buy and sell slaves until 1812, breaking its own law. The office of Jamaica's Governor General wrote in August 1811, "I am commanded by the Commander of the Forces to direct that you will go on purchasing Negroes for the Kings Service after you have completed your own regiment. The men so purchased are only to receive rations and slop clothing, no pay is to be issued to them until they are further disposed of."

Further, in 1814, Foreign Secretary Lord Castlereagh agreed that Bourbon France could resume slave trading to restock her colonies and to resupply Britain's West Indies plantations. As Lord Grenville said, "We receive a partial contract at the Congress of Vienna by which the British

Crown has sanctioned and guaranteed the slave trade."

Slavery lost its former importance to the metropolitan economy. The slave colonies took an ever-smaller share of Britain's exports. From 1820 the slump in the West Indies grew worse and worse. In 1832, an official wrote that the West Indies system "is becoming so unprofitable when compared with the expense that for this reason only it must at no distant time be nearly abandoned."

Revolts at home

The years 1830-32 also saw the Swing Rising in Britain, revolution in France, a major slave revolt in Jamaica and the parliamentary Reform Act. All led to the 1833 Slave Emancipation Act, which freed the 540,000 slaves in the British West Indies. Parliament gave the planters £20 million (£1 billion in today's money) as compensation for the loss of their slaves. The working class paid the money in tax, though they pointed out that the Church should have paid, as it owned so many slaves itself and as its priests justified the slavery of both black and white, at home and abroad. The Empire then imposed another form of servitude on the "freed" slaves of the West Indies – compulsory six-year "apprenticeships". Later in the century, it used indentured labour, with workers forcibly imported from India.

Slavery had been profitable in the 18th century; abolition was even more profitable in the 19th. The effort to "stop the foreign slave trade" was designed to damage rival empires and to protect the West Indies planters, now denied annual slave imports, from competition by sugar producers Cuba and Brazil, still reliant on buying slaves. The suppression of the slave trade on Africa's West and East coasts brought ever-closer control of West and East Africa, at first by private companies like the British East Africa Company, later by the Empire itself. Abolition was a weapon to expand the empire.

Throughout the century, the Empire continued to steal people, land and resources from Africa, reinforcing slavery there and killing millions of African people. The Empire continued to contribute to and profit from the slave trade well into the twentieth century. As Marx wrote, slavery is "what the bourgeoisie makes of itself and of the labourer, wherever it can without restraint model the world after its own image."

Abolitionism was an early form of the fake internationalism we see today – LiveAid, Live Earth, Blairite calls to intervene everywhere, Oxfam's delusions about Britain being "a force for good on the world stage". We would be satisfied if Britain was a force for good in Britain, and the world better served.

BADGE OFFER – Nationalise water. Reclaim our most vital resource!

BRITISH WATER supplies are in the hands of foreign owned monopoly companies who are enjoying a cash bonanza while our infrastructure crumbles. If the ridiculously high profits made by these companies in the last few years had been channelled into developing a national water grid and other infrastructure projects we would no longer be facing a water shortage.

As it stands, if the winter of 06/07 has the same low rainfall in the South East as it did last year, then by next summer much of South East England will be using standpipes.

Severn Water, for example, has seen an 18 per cent rise in profits as complaints against the company rose by 55 per cent and it was investigated for providing false data to OFWAT. And since it acquired Thames Water in 2000, RWE (its German parent company) has extracted around £1 billion in dividends to shareholders!

FIGHT BACK with a Nationalise Water! badge, available from Bellman Books, 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 8EB, price 50p each, or £4 for 10. Please make cheques payable to "WORKERS".



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Will Podmore

Three book reviews: Lessons from the 1975 referendum, a look at institutionalised torture, and a useful corrective to the books that glorify the Union's role in the Second World War

Lessons from the referendum on Europe

The 1975 Referendum on Europe. Volume 1: Reflections of the Participants, edited by Mark Baimbridge, paperback, 253 pages, ISBN 1-845400-34-8, Imprint Academic, 2007, £17.95; Volume 2: Current Analysis and Lessons for the Future, by Mark Baimbridge, Philip Whyman and Andrew Mullen; paperback, 222 pages, ISBN 1-845400-35-6, Imprint Academic, 2007, £17.95.

THESE EXTREMELY useful books examine the 1975 referendum and look at the EU's economic and political effects. They are not written in EU jargon, unlike most books on the EU, usually semi-official.

The first volume studies the early history of the EU, the referendum itself, and the Labour government's manipulation of public opinion in the referendum campaign – with reflections from sixteen participants in the Yes and No campaigns, and also copies of the two Yes pamphlets and the one No.

Various contributors point out that the EU is a machine for eliminating popular influences on policy, reversing all our democratic gains over the last two centuries. They show that the European Commission acts for, not against, capitalist "globalisation". They note that Thatcher forced through the 1986 Single Europe Act, which removed many vetoes and gave the EU powers over environment policy, letting the EU use the issue of climate change to add to its powers.

The second volume looks at the role and implications of referendums, and at the EU's effects on the Labour and Conservative parties, on the trade unions and on public opinion. The authors show how the trade unions are becoming incorporated into the EU capitalist state, and how the fraud of a 'social Europe' has not saved one British industry or job from destruction.

The authors argue that the alternative to the EU is "the pursuit of Britain's wider global interests". But the real alternative to the EU's embrace of global capitalism is not to embrace non-EU global capitalism, but to advance the British people's interests - not EU first, not world first, but Britain first.

The authors remind us that in November 2004, 77.9 per cent voted against the EU/Government scheme for an assembly for the North-East region. This was hugely significant, the first time a part of the British people rejected an EU policy.

Last December, Blair pledged to back the German government's effort to resurrect the Constitution, which would destroy our democracy, self-rule and sovereignty. The working class is increasingly anti-EU, and the ruling class is increasingly pro-EU – a growing conflict.

American methods: Torture and the Logic of Domination, by Kristian Williams, paperback, 279 pages, ISBN 0-89608-753-0, South End Press, 2006, £9.16.

IN THIS important book American journalist Kristian Williams shows how the US state has institutionalised torture. President Bush asserted in February 2002, "None of the provisions of Geneva apply to our conflict with al-Qaeda in Afghanistan or elsewhere throughout the world." As the Schlesinger Report concluded, this Presidential ruling allowed US forces to increase their use of illegal interrogation techniques.

So US police, military and prison guards routinely treat detainees brutally. The repulsive abuses at Abu Ghraib are typical, not aberrant. There have been more than 400 reports of abuse in US detention camps in Afghanistan, Guantanamo and Iraq, and a hundred inquiries have been launched. There were 13 officially acknowledged murders at detention camps between January 2002 and March 2005.



The US state, with Labour's connivance, has consistently used 'extraordinary rendition', kidnapping people and then transferring them to other states for torture. For example, the CIA illegally sent suspected al-Qaeda trainer Ibn al-Libi to Cairo for torture, where he apparently confessed that Iraq had trained al-Qaeda members to make bombs. Bush then publicised this confession, as did Colin Powell to the UN, even though the Defense Intelligence Agency had already warned them that the confession was unreliable.

Williams details torture by the US military and the US police, by US allies overseas, and in US prisons, jails and detention facilities in the USA and abroad. The US state uses torture methods like stun guns, stun belts, pepper sprays, restraints, rape and the threat of rape, "supermax facilities" and solitary confinement. The US state promotes torture in its training programmes, for example in the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, formerly called the School of the Americas.

Williams reveals the US state as a machine of coercion, of organised violence – represented by armed bodies of men, the police, armed services, prisons – designed to subjugate the will of others by force. Williams proves that "The product of torture is not truth, but terror. Its strategy is not that of objective investigation, but of political intimidation."

Stalin's Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939-1953, by Geoffrey Roberts, hardback, 468 pages, ISBN-10 0-300-11204-1, Yale University Press, 2006, £25.

STALIN'S WARS is a necessary corrective to myths about the Second World War and the Cold War. It shows how the Soviet Union played a key role in winning the World War, defeating more than 75% of Hitler's divisions. As President Roosevelt said, "The Russian armies are killing more Axis personnel and destroying more Axis material than all the other twenty-five United Nations put together."

Roberts concludes, "Stalin was a very effective and highly successful war leader

at how the US has at ignore the Soviet



... [who] was indispensable to the Soviet victory over Nazi Germany.” Churchill continually promised to help the Soviet war effort. For example, in August 1942, he told Stalin that by spring 1943 a million British and US troops would have opened a second front in Western Europe. But Churchill delayed the second front until June 1944.

Roberts argues, “Stalin worked hard to make the Grand Alliance a success and wanted to see it continue after the war.” The postwar Attlee government, on the other hand, worked hard to break up the Alliance, being more concerned to save the Empire than to keep the peace. Stalin said the Labour government was more conservative than the Conservatives in their defence of the British ruling class’s imperial interests.

In 1947, President Truman adopted Labour’s hostility to the Soviet Union and peaceful coexistence and launched the Marshall Plan. “For Stalin the Marshall Plan was the breaking point in postwar relations with the United States.” The Plan put Western European countries under US control, enabling the US state to interfere in their internal affairs. It led straight to the formation of the anti-Soviet Western bloc, which started the Cold War and split the world into two camps.

Stalin’s policy of peaceful coexistence did not mean accepting whatever the imperialists did. Two years after US forces intervened in Korea, he said, “One must be firm when dealing with America ... It’s been already two years. And the USA has still not subdued little Korea. ... They want to subjugate the whole world, yet they cannot subdue little Korea.”

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 – No threat to us

‘The Blair government is trying to draw us into supporting, or joining, an attack on Iran...’

IRAN IS NO threat, it is not about to attack anybody. And so any attack on Iran would be illegal and a breach of the UN Charter, which prohibits the use of force. But there are threats to attack Iran, coming from both sides of the Atlantic.

Not content with having lost the war in Iraq – as leading senators and representatives are now saying – Bush refuses to rule out attacking Iran. It’s the imperialist motto down the ages: when in a hole, keep digging.

The US’s Iran Democracy Act funds opposition and terrorist groups in Iran, breaking its 1981 pledge not to interfere in Iran’s affairs. Its National Security Strategy singled out Iran as the USA’s greatest ‘challenge’ and threatens a first strike. Israel’s Prime Minister Ariel Sharon called on the US and British governments “to attack Iran once they are finished with Iraq”.

US forces – in Afghanistan, Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan and Azerbaijan – surround Iran. The US Navy has been conducting a series of exercises in the Gulf, the biggest war games in the area since the invasion of Iraq four years ago. In January, the US military kidnapped five junior Iranian diplomats in Iraq. No charges have been brought against them; nobody knows where they are being kept and under what conditions.

It now appears that that kidnapping was a botched attempt to net two senior Iranian generals on an official visit to the Kurdish part of Iraq – an attempt that might not be unconnected to the recent incident involving the Royal Navy.

The Blair government is trying to draw us into supporting, or joining, an attack on Iran. It is trying to secure a UN resolution allowing punitive sanctions

and the use of force if Iran refuses to halt its nuclear programme. Have we learnt nothing from the way Blair drew us into the war on Iraq?

The British presence in Iraq is no more than an illegal belligerent occupation; British forces have no right to operate in Iraqi, never mind in Iranian, waters. Even if one accepts the British coordinates for the position of both HMS Cornwall and the incident, both were closer to Iran’s coast than to Iraq’s, and the Royal Navy has no UN mandate to search ships entering Iran’s ports. Iraq and Iran have not yet agreed their maritime boundary. The boundary shown on the map reproduced in all the newspapers was drawn up, unilaterally, by the Blair government. It is a fake with no legal force, just another imperial attempt to draw other countries’ national boundaries for them.

If, when we had nationalised our basic energy industry in 1947, the Iranian government had intervened and overthrown our democratically elected government, imposing a dictator for 26 years, would we be happy for their armed forces to invade and occupy France and for their warships to search our merchant ships in the English Channel? We should not treat other nations in ways we would not like to be treated.

Blair and Bush are desperate to win support for an attack on Iran, by Israel or the USA or Britain, or any combination of the three. That’s the reason why the Ministry of Defence decided to allow naval personnel to sell their stories – to whip up hate against Iran. The belated, bungled reversal of this decision proves yet again how incompetent this government is.

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