

WORKERS

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THE FIGHT FOR PAY: WHAT'S GONE WRONG, AND HOW TO GET IT RIGHT



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WORKERS

“ How Greece really got into debt

THE EU likes to castigate Greece for being “profligate” and “living beyond its means”. Germany especially complains about Greek debt. Now, there’s no denying the scale of the debt, but how was it built up? In fact, the debt was incurred by buying goods from, mainly, Germany, with a good chunk from France.

To add insult to injury, many contracts were obtained through outright bribery. So much so that in April, for example, giant German manufacturer Siemens paid 270 million euros to Greece in compensation for corruptly obtained contracts – ranging from commuter trains to telephone systems.

Also in April, it was revealed that Greece’s military expenditure as a proportion of GDP is the highest in Europe. In 2010 it was 7.1 billion euros, with 58 per cent spent in Germany (Greece accounts for 15 per cent of

that country’s arms exports). With a population of just 11 million, Greece is the fifth largest importer of weaponry in the world.

Bribery is thought to have been involved in defence contracts as well: April also saw former defence minister Akis Tsochatzopoulos behind bars awaiting trial on charges of taking an 8 million euro bung from Ferrostaal, the Germany company overseeing the sale of four submarines to Greece in 2000. Only one submarine has been delivered, and that doesn’t work. The whole deal cost more than the extra pensions cuts in Greece’s last bail-out package.

It couldn’t happen here, could it? Well, not to Germany anyway: British governments prefer shipping billions upon billions to the US, for example to pay for Trident. ■

Funding failure

POLITICAL PARTIES are voluntary organisations. When their policies are deeply unpopular, people don’t want to give them money. So why should we as taxpayers be forced to fund these unpopular parties? What’s democratic about being legally obliged to pay for MPs to show us contempt?

We already give too much to parliamentary parties – including union handouts to the treacherous Labour Party. We subsidise failed banks, failing companies through PFI, low-paying employers through income support and landlords through housing benefit. We’re now supposed to subsidise failed parties too! ■



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Nuclear plans blocked

FOLLOWING THE handing over to foreign interests of Britain's power industry RWE npower and its partner E.ON, both German, announced on 29 March that they will not develop new nuclear power projects in this country. They were due to start building plants in Anglesey and at Oldbury near Bristol but now say that raising finance for power projects has become difficult because of the global financial crisis. Energy minister Charles Hendry described the decision, with its implications for Britain's looming energy gap, as "disappointing".

The announcement effectively left the market for commissioning new nuclear stations in the hands of just two French companies: EDF, which bought British Energy in 2008 and now provides power to a quarter of Britain's population; and GDF Suez, which was formed in 2008 from the merger of state-owned Gaz de France with water, waste and energy company Suez.

On 16 April GDF Suez joined the chorus of gloom, with its chairman calling for a guaranteed minimum price for any power produced from its proposed new plant in Cumbria. In effect, it is calling for the British taxpayer to guarantee its profits. The French state still holds a large chunk of the now-privatised combined company.

Four days later, Centrica – through a joint venture with EDF the only British company still involved in proposals for nuclear construction – said it might pull out of its partnership with EDF, citing lack of assurances about the future price of energy.

The government still maintains all is well and that there are plans for 16 gigawatts of new nuclear plant. But the bleak truth is that energy companies realise they have Britain over a barrel. They are prepared to hold us to ransom in order to ensure greater profits for their foreign owners. In the absence of any firm plans to build new nuclear stations, the lights will start going out in five or six years' time.

In a more positive endorsement of the country's future, British firm 2Co Energy, with minority partner Samsung, will be building a £5 billion power station and carbon capture and storage project in South Yorkshire. The Don Valley Power Project will supply low carbon electricity to one million homes from the end of 2016 and create 2,800 construction jobs, with another 500 when the plant is in operation. It will also secure the future of the adjacent Hatfield Colliery. ■

INVESTMENT**Hoarding cash**

BRITISH FIRMS are still refusing to invest: currently – and not counting the banks and other financial institutions – they have a £754 billion cash stockpile, forecasting group Item Club revealed in the middle of April. Item Club said the stockpile was "acting as a massive drag on the economy".

Meanwhile, construction output in February was 17 per cent down on November 2011 and 4.6 per cent down on the previous February. Britain's deficit on trade in goods and services rose to £3.4 billion in February 2012, from £2.5 billion in January. The deficit on trade in goods alone rose to £8.8 billion in February, up from £7.9 billion in January. ■

EUROPEAN UNION**Thurrock referendum**

A LOCAL referendum in Thurrock, Essex, at the beginning of April drew 14,590 responses on the subject of holding a national referendum on whether Britain should leave the European Union.

Turnout was fully 30 per cent of the electorate despite the fact that the poll lacked any official status. Of those voting, 89.9 per cent were in favour of a referendum.

The local Tory MP has a majority of 92, and neither she nor her Labour challenger were willing to engage with the referendum.

The poll was organised by the People's Pledge campaign, a broad grouping of individuals, parliamentarians and organisations campaigning for a national referendum on Britain's commitment to the European Union. ■

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

EUROBRIEFS

The latest from Brussels

Spanish freeze

THE SPANISH government is ordering ministries to cut their budgets by 16.9 per cent; it is raising taxes on electricity and gas and freezing civil servants' salaries. A new report by the Spanish Savings Banks Foundation (FUNCAS) warns that the Spanish government would have to cut its public deficit by 55 billion euros to meet its target of reducing that deficit to 5.3 per cent of GDP by the end of this year – far more than the figure put forward by the Spanish government. The newspaper EL PAÍS quotes Spanish economist Luis Garicano as saying, "If Spain wants to reduce its deficit from 8.51 per cent to 5.3 per cent [of GDP], it will not have to cut 32 billion euros, but between 53 billion euros and 64 billion euros – which is impossible."

Controls back in Switzerland

SWITZERLAND, a member of the Schengen agreement on free movement in the EU, has re-imposed restrictions on entry for workers from eastern Europe. The European Commission calls the move "discriminatory". But the Swiss justice minister said the decision was essential.

Coming in – just not going out

DESPITE THE injection of 1 trillion euros in long-term liquidity to eurozone banks, loans to non-financial firms fell by 3 billion euros during February. Corporate lending grew overall by just 0.4 per cent, lower than in the previous two months. Both Italian and Spanish banks continued using their extra liquidity to purchase sovereign debt (loans to governments), buying 23 billion and 15.7 billion euros respectively.

Dutch say no

IT'S NOT just the fringe countries like Ireland, Greece and Portugal that are having trouble meeting the European Union's demands for austerity. The Netherlands, too, has been told it is spending more than it should. Its budget deficit for 2012 is forecast to be 4.6 per cent, above the 3 per cent limit that Brussels is trying to impose on the ailing eurozone. Talks to reduce the budget (again) in April collapsed when the Freedom Party said it "would not accept that the elderly in the Netherlands have to pay for nonsensical demands from Brussels". ■



Teachers donned grey-haired wigs to make their point during the NUT strike on 28 March in London over changes to pensions and retirement age.

Photo: Workers

Health: debate over hours

THE ROYAL College of Nursing (RCN) Congress meets on 13-17 May in Harrogate, and its UK Safety Representatives committee has tabled a motion bringing the conference's attention to growing scientific evidence about the dangers of shift work.

The committee acknowledges that 24-hour health care means that nurses and other health workers must work shifts, and traditionally this was addressed by having three eight-hour shifts. Increasingly, the 12-hour shift is becoming the norm because managements see it as the most "cost effective". Some people think the EU working time directive offers protection to those who work 12-hour shifts – but that directive allows only for two 20-minute breaks in the 12 hours. Take a large London hospital like the Royal Free: by the time the lift has reached the staff canteen in Lower Ground from the 13th Floor it is nearly time to return to work. Just like others working 12-hour shifts in factories and call centres, health care staff are increasingly found to be deficient in vitamin D from lack of sunlight.

The safety effects of long shifts have long been known. For example, fatigue and shift working arrangements were cited as major contributory factors in disasters such as Bhopal, Clapham Junction and Chernobyl. More routinely RCN safety representatives know that fatigue is a recognised factor contributing to patient safety incidents, such as drug errors.

But in a year when the government is suggesting nurses should work until they are 68 before getting their pension, the new research on shift work is important. There is growing evidence to show the decreased tolerance to shift working in older workers. This means that older workers working 12-hour shifts are more likely to make errors (often experiencing this as professionally devastating) and also more likely to harm their own health. So the extra years of work is a win-win for the government: pay the pension later and the worker dies sooner.

Shift work can exacerbate long-term conditions such as diabetes or epilepsy, while the link between breast cancer and working long shifts is becoming increasingly clear after work by the Danish nursing association. Currently chronic ill health drives between 20 and 25 per cent of people to leave shift work and to leave early in their working lives. ■

LUDDITES

Yorkshire memorial

TWO HUNDRED years after the Luddite attack on Cartwright Mills, Rawfolds, on 12 April 1812, a memorial to the wool croppers involved (skilled cloth finishers) was unveiled near the Shears pub in Liversedge, West Yorkshire, where the Luddites planned their raids.

During the attack, two of the Luddites were mortally wounded by armed guards hired by the factory owner. A further 14

were hanged for taking part.

Commissioned by the Spen Valley Civic Society, the striking memorial depicts a cropper with his hand shears held aloft while a small child tugs at his leather apron.

The Luddite movement is often characterised as backward-thinking. In fact the Luddites tried to protect their skilled labour against the new machines that spelled penury and starvation for themselves and their families. Hounded by all the forces of the state, the Luddites were remarkable in that not one broke the oath of secrecy to which they were sworn. ■

FRANCE**Still obeying the EU**

AFTER A nine-week campaign, the French presidential hopefuls have moved to the second round of voting, with François Hollande of the Socialist Party and Nicolas Sarkozy, the incumbent, due to contest the final round in May. Yet all the hype and the stage-managed rallies cannot hide that the French people were unimpressed with the ten candidates placed before them.

Neither candidate persuaded much more than a quarter of the electorate that they can treat the current malaise afflicting France. Like others in Europe, the French have shaky banks, unemployment (over 2.85 million people), short time working (another 1.5 million), fears about the euro, attacks on pensions (initiated by Sarkozy) and much more.

Neither Hollande nor Sarkozy will

address the root of the problem: that France is subject to the directives of the EU. Total Oil plan to shut its main refinery; Peugeot aims to close major factories; France's premier foundry and casting plant is closing; agriculture is threatened by cheap imports from Morocco and Spain. Yet neither candidate can bring himself to break with the EU and support their own producers.

Hollande has been rattled by the anger expressed by French industrial workers and farmers. He talks vaguely about approaching Merkel to "re-negotiate" the latest EU fiscal treaty.

Sarkozy, so far denied an adventure in the former French colony of Syria, has suddenly discovered that Le Pen is gathering votes on unrestricted immigration. He now says France will withdraw from the Schengen Agreement on open borders if the Italians keep sending French-speaking African migrants straight to France. ■

Militarising London 2012

YOUNGSTERS IN Blackheath and Woolwich will have a different Olympics show to visit during the 2012 Olympic Games. Ground-to-air missiles are rumoured to be going to be deployed in Oxleas Woods at Shooters Hill and on an unspecified spot at Blackheath Common, Greenwich.

As the use of such missiles would cause extensive collateral damage across London, presumably they are further examples of tub-thumping by the Coalition over security and the Olympics. And the local kids will probably test the security services in ways they hadn't expected as precious metals thefts are at unprecedented levels in Woolwich, Lewisham and Greenwich.

An aircraft carrier is to be berthed in Greenwich and will be home to thousands of armed forces personnel providing security at the Games. Presumably it will be loaned from the French government and adequately insured.

Helicopter gunships hovering over London have been easily outclassed by the synchronised displays by the Special Boat Service zipping backwards and forwards around the Woolwich Ferry. Good job. The Thames is almost completely sterile of any freight trade, otherwise these glorified rubber dinghies would be scrap by now. Nelson would be proud of the deployment of Britain's finest in the wake of one Aussie swimmer's disruption of the Boat Race in April! ■

UCU**Independent victories**

IN THE recent University and College Union election for General Secretary, on a 12.7 per cent turnout, Sally Hunt got 73 per cent of the votes, against the ultra left candidate's 27 per cent. Do the maths: 27 per cent of 12.7 per cent equals 3.5 per cent – which the ultra left called a "big" vote. What would they call a small vote?

Candidates opposed to the ultra left won 26 of the 37 NEC places up for election, giving them a 39-30 majority.

In the March ballot on changes to the union, the turnout far exceeded that in

recent elections. The results were:

- 88.6 per cent voted to support reducing the size of the National Executive Committee and spending the savings to improve member services.
- 85.1 per cent voted to be balloted whenever the majority of negotiators believe a final offer is on the table and before a decision is taken to accept or reject.
- 82.4 per cent voted to elect the lay national negotiators by the system of one member one vote rather than by annual conference.

The overwhelming majority of branches in all sectors voted to support all three proposals. Support was also above 75 per cent in every UCU electoral region. ■

WHAT'S ON**Coming soon****April/May****CPBML/Workers May Day Meetings**

Destroy the European Union, Defeat War, Rebuild Britain

Saturday 28 April, 12 noon. The Pack Horse pub, 208 Woodhouse Road, Leeds LS2 9DX

Tuesday 1 May, 7.00pm. Word Power Books, 43 West Nicolson Street, Edinburgh EH8 9DB

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

Beyond the Frame

Monday 7 May to Sunday 13 May, The Lighthouse Gallery, Glasgow G1 3NU

An exhibition and sale of original works by 29 of Cuba's leading artists. See www.cubabeyondtheframe.com.

June

Thursday 14 June, 7.30pm. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL.

"Olympics: a city hijacked"

Come and discuss what the Games really mean for London. Everybody welcome.

JOE McCANN**Anniversary parade**

IN THE late 1960s and early 1970s Joe McCann tried to counter the divisions in the Belfast working class, attempting to bring all together through tenants associations and trades unions. He resisted the brutality of the British Army and Special Branch, especially following the Ballymurphy and Bloody Sunday massacres. Earmarked for this opposition to "divide and rule", he was shot dead – unarmed and in the back – by British paratroopers and Special Branch in Joy Street on 15 April 1972.

Last month the 40th anniversary of his death was marked by a dignified and well attended parade which filled the streets of the Markets area. With no placards and no slogans shouted and with the extended family members, four colour flags and a solitary piper leading, the march proceeded to the spot where he had fallen, aged 24.

The platform was confined to his two daughters and two sons, who welcomed the parade, gave an oration and a song and poem specially written in his memory. His widow then laid a wreath in tribute.

With much music, song and poetry inspired by his short life, it is a name that will be remembered as an Irish Che Guevara by a new generation. ■

NEWS ANALYSIS

The Bradford by-election

THE RE-EMERGENCE OF George Galloway as a member of Parliament for Bradford West after a by-election, has propelled him once again to the centre stage he so craves, with countless press articles, statements in the Commons, and an appearance on BBC's QUESTION TIME all within a matter of days of taking his seat.

This was no run-of-the-mill mid-term reproach for the government. It was a massive swing, overturning a safe Labour majority of 18,000 achieved as recently as 2010 in the general election. Then Galloway's party Respect gained 3 per cent of the vote. This time round it was 55 per cent.

The question has to be asked: Why such a seismic shift?

Certainly, if dissatisfaction with the present government were a factor, the Labour party might well expect to profit. Indeed there is some evidence that the Labour candidate expected to win comfortably, declining to take part in hustings before the election. In fact the Labour share of the vote crumbled from 18,000 to 8,000.

Much has been made of Galloway's celebrity (or notoriety, depending on your point of view), but this is to dismiss voters as mindless. The Monster Raving Loony Party would be in government if that explained people's preferences. And some point to Galloway's high profile opposition to war in Iraq and Afghanistan as the reason behind his success. Would that it were. There is scant evidence that the people of Bradford are any more or less opposed to wars than in any other part of Britain. Was it the Muslim card which Galloway plays? That wouldn't explain why the swing was not confined to predominantly Muslim wards. These are superficial attempts to analyse a phenomenon by looking in the wrong place.

Blighted

More pertinent is the air of decline and decay which has blighted industrial towns such as Bradford for decades. The city centre itself, with its hole in the ground where a new shopping complex has been promised for years, and over which the iconic but near derelict Odeon building now has to be wrapped in white sheeting, has become a place to rush through en route to elsewhere, and stands as a symbol of the failure of administrations of every hue over many years.

Against such a backdrop, the main parties in the by-election promised voters more of what they have already had. Galloway countered this with "...see what the other parties have done to Bradford, do you want more of the same?" And his call resonated. Not quite to the extent he asserts, since the overall vote fell from 40,000 to 32,000, but enough to make a difference.

It will be interesting to see whether the "Galloway effect" will extend to the local elections in May, when Respect are fielding a number of candidates. And of particular concern will be the referendum on an elected mayor, which takes place at the same time. Again, the question being asked is whether you want things to be as they always have been or something different. It's hollow, but has its own appeal.

Time will tell. Galloway himself is a man of promises. He will bring investment to the beleaguered football and rugby league teams. He will save the Odeon. And of course he will be judged by his achievements, as he has been in the past. But when Galloway is long gone, the people of Bradford will still need to look at each other and their city and say, "No one is going to come along and get us out of this mess, we'll have to do it for ourselves." ■

People seem to shy away from t
lack of it, is what unites us as w
one of our strengths...

There are no white k

PAY IS the proverbial elephant in the room for workers. We don't want to see, hear, think about or seriously consider the question of pay, wages, what we take home and its value. WORKERS started to address this in our previous issue (April 2012) through two articles: "Attack on national pay" and "Trade unions – dead or alive?". But we need greater application, organisation and engagement both within trade unions, to set the pace, and by non-unionised workers, to join or re-join organised labour.

The workforce of Britain comprises around 28 million people, the largest number of workers in the country's history. But it is a workforce split between part-time, casual, full-time, zero hours contract, agency, temporary employment and so on. Britain has probably the greatest level of so-called flexibility in its workforce outside of the USA. It has the lightest regulatory controls for protecting workers' employment rights, terms and conditions outside of the USA. It has the most draconian anti-union legislation anywhere in Europe.

The Coalition government wants to expand that "flexibility" by removing any restraint on employers so that they can do whatever they want, whenever they want, to whoever they want – all in the name of free trade. Likewise the government wants to remove any regulatory controls which protect workers at work. All the measures achieved over decades and centuries are to be challenged, swept away as red tape hindering "business" – which is code for capitalism. It is not the government's intention to further restrict trade unionism; it wants to destroy trade unionism.

Fragmentation

The fragmentation of Britain's labour force and the creation of ever greater divisions and competition among ourselves for jobs, training and employment stability is deliberate. There is unprecedented growth in employer strategies and their use of think tanks. These specialise in how to attack, undermine, fragment, outsource, divide, confuse and divert us from organising ourselves for ourselves. They have studied what makes us strong and are systematically fragmenting those processes.

This attack on our strength has intensified over the past 40 years. But the clarity of the employers and ruling class that they could only be defeated by our unity reaches back to the early days of the Industrial Revolution. From the first Combination Act (1799) to the present-day Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 and all the additional nasty European Court decisions, the attack has always been to stop our ability to "combine".

So what is the elephant in the room? Our ability, by combination, by joining the union, to make inroads into the value we create and to recoup part of that value in the form of wages. The employers' position is simple and diametrically opposite: they combine to maximise their rate of profit by splintering our ability to resist. This is the great challenge

talking about pay – and even more from fighting for it. Yet pay, or workers. It is currently a source of weakness, but it could become

Firefighters: we have to fight for pay ourselves



Firefighters on the picket line during their national pay dispute of 2002.

Photo: Workers

facing workers now.

It is not a matter of pursuing the populist slogan of “resisting the race to the bottom”; that race has always been capitalism’s strategy. It is about workers not having a victim mentality which bleats “Don’t do these terrible things to me”, but one that instead asserts an independence of mind and organisation and says “You are not going to do these things”. It is a view that says not only don’t do them but one which asserts a clear alternative class agenda.

The most important factor ignored in the decline of Britain’s trade unions from 1997 to date, let alone the campaign of industrial destruction launched against us through capitalism’s absolute decline, has been that lack of class consciousness and its decline in our own ranks. The

acceptance of defeat, fatalism that nothing can be done, withdrawal from collective identity and action, refusal to recognise that combination gives us strength and purpose, have all contributed to a turning away from what gives us hope, expectation, aspiration and strength. That is now the organising challenge – not new, but the reassertion of real organising – that the trade unions have to address.

Workers have to think about what is going to get us out of this mess. That’s the case whether we are in the private sector or public service, or in the privatised public service, whether in trade unions rooted in the private sector that grew into the public sector or in public sector unions now racing towards the private sector. What matters is not what divides us – the employers’ uniform, the type of contract, North vs

South, race, gender, migrant or born here, left or right, but what unifies us.

The low-wage economy is a reality for workers as average wages decline and real incomes drop to 2005 levels. The British people now have the lowest real disposable household income since 1945, with increases almost daily in food, fuel, mortgages, rents, travel, even postage stamps. How do we remedy this? The answer: organise for pay and struggle and press for wages as best we can.

What is the reality on wages? Pay figures are misrepresented – or, it could even be suggested, deliberately falsified, by government statistics (the Office for Budget Responsibility) or government mouthpieces (the TaxPayers’ Alliance). A

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pay freeze is presented as the norm, but in reality this applies only to around 5 per cent of workers or fewer in the private sector. Wage increases in the private sector are running at 2 to 3.5 per cent and in manufacturing industry 4 to 6 per cent. The only area where there is a sustained pay freeze is in the public sector: if not zero increases as for the last two to three years, then 1 per cent increases until 2015, wage cuts in real terms year in, year out.

The attack in every public sector arena is on terms and conditions in addition to wage freezes. Local government sees an attempt to break the national (NJC) agreement, in health with Agenda for Change, likewise in the universities, civil service, schools and colleges, police – the list includes all the public sector.

In the privatised sector providing public services – such as home care, residential homes and housing associations – government austerity measures cutting funding are instantly transferred from employers to the workforce. Pay cuts of 50 per cent and abolition of overtime and of enhanced rates are appearing across the sector.

It is said that wages are grossly inflated in the public sector, and that a knock-on effect of national public sector bargaining is to push up depressed regional pay in the private sector. So the government argues for pay in the public sector to be cut on a regional basis. But where is the evidence to support such claims? It doesn't exist.

“All economic forecasts speak of zero or minus growth and yet the capitalists increase their own wealth daily.”

Private sector pay in the regions tends to follow national company pay rates based upon skill requirements and equality proofed job evaluation, not localism or the whim of some local manager who has got out of the wrong side of the bed!

Two-edged sword

Most employers recognise that differentiated pay rates or differing rates within the same company are a two-edged sword. Claims for parity of wages, leapfrogging pay claims, permanent uncertainty in wages, poaching of staff – all were strengths of the trade unions in the 1970s and 1980s, and what the employers have tried to distance themselves from. Would they sacrifice job evaluation for a real fight over wages when job evaluation has so successfully weakened our bargaining position? And trade unions hiding behind job evaluation and legal claims to achieve equal pay have weakened our ability to organise at the workplace.

As privatisation eats into the public services, the Social Contract consensus politics of Britain from 1945 to 1979 will

finally be obliterated. From the class armistice embodied in joint worker/ employer councils from the industrial settlement after the 1914–18 World War and of all the associated national bargaining structures, we return to a naked conflict: the employers' profits and our ability to get them back for ourselves.

This is not revolutionary politics, neither was the idea of “socialism” through state nationalisation revolutionary, despite what some thought. But it is the return to British reality: class against class.

Capita Registrars – registrar for more than half of the companies listed on the London Stock Exchange – estimates that British companies paid £67.8 billion in dividends in 2011, an increase of 19.4 per cent over the previous year. Despite all the hype bank bonuses are at record levels.

Yet unemployment in Britain creeps towards officially 3 million. And the number of workers “economically inactive” – those on benefit, those underemployed, those on no register, creeps towards 5, 6, or even 7 million. All economic forecasts for Britain speak of zero or minus growth and yet the capitalists increase their own wealth daily.

What is to be done? From the moaning and whingeing about how dreadful things are there has to arise a determination to do something. From the individual struggling with his or her wage packet must arise a collective determination to do something.

That determination has to be one of taking responsibility for each workplace. The immediate period is going to be painful as realisation dawns that refocusing on the workplace, irrespective of the divisions fostered and created by the employers, will entail sacrifice and loss – nothing is guaranteed.

Workers are going to have to rediscover or even re-create that ability to organise against the odds, develop strategy and tactics to fight on new fronts but set in an old war, relearn our history and the weapons of unity, organisation and discipline. Nobody else is going to sort this out. There are no knights in white armour and there is no parliamentary party to go cap in hand to.

We may have been here before but the road forward is as dangerous as it was to our forebears. We fight for wages because that way we survive. We survive to challenge capitalism and destroy it. ■

BADGE OFFER – Out of the EU now!

CONTINUE the resistance to the European Union with a new campaigning badge – the new “Out of the EU” badge (actual size 1.5 inches).

The badge is available now from Bellman Books, 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB, price £1 each including postage or £3 for 5 including postage.

Please make cheques payable to “WORKERS”.



Not content with the outcome of its 2005 Directive on recognition of professional qualifications, the European Commission is back on the warpath...

EU seeks (again) to de-skill professions

THE LATEST ATTEMPT by Brussels to tamper with national standards and qualifications is contained in a new EU Green Paper. We should know by now that anything labelled “modernising” or “simplifying” is unlikely to be good for us. The EU Green Paper entitled “Modernising Professional Qualifications” is no exception.

More than ten years ago professional bodies wishing to maintain some control over their services opted to participate in drawing up a complicated system of equivalent occupations and training frameworks. A member state would be able to regulate professions on its territory (or not) while in principle recognising qualifications obtained in another EU state.

At the time the exercise was seen as providing partial protection against the destructive free movement of labour prescribed in the Treaty of Rome. In Britain some organisations worked with the British Standards Institute to ensure that national training standards were defined.

But the Commission and employers are miffed. The reason: the professions have succeeded in keeping less-qualified foreigners out, with some notable exceptions such as the case of the German agency doctor who killed his British patient (see February issue of WORKERS). They say that the existing directive does not offer sufficient opportunity for take-up of mobility. In its place they have launched a critique of professional qualifications, amounting to a comprehensive assault on the workers of Europe. They claim the Lisbon Treaty has given them added authority.

European employers want 16 million more skilled workers by 2020. There is a genuine need for growth, but the struggling eurozone also needs to massage unemployment figures. Construction currently accounts for 17 million jobs in the EU, education for 16 million. Then there are other industrial, trade, transport, tourism and cultural professions. All are under attack.

The Green Paper states: “Free movement of professionals can contribute to the answer to the labour shortages. It will help in satisfying the needs of



Photo: Workers

customers and patients as well as providing education for the youth.” The British government agrees that the mobility of professionals is “a key part of the Single Market agenda”.

New proposals to encourage and speed up mobility by 2013 include: introducing an electronic European Professional Card; online recognition procedures; partial access to a profession; relaxing minimum training requirements; facilitating temporary mobility for “professionals accompanying consumers”; and requiring member states to justify existing regulation of professions.

The European Card and online recognition procedures are open to abuse. A professional card has been tried in Britain, but was found to be an insecure way of establishing identity and qualifications. The proposed card or certificate would not be a smart card or any sort of physical card. Application would be in the originating language via a “European professional body”, with both countries checking together via the Internal Market Information System (IMI), which was set up to implement the 2006 Services Directive.

Employers’ organisations and the

British government are very keen on the card, but it shifts the balance of professional control away from the host country to the country of origin.

Some organisations are accepted in their home country as competent professional bodies when in fact their interests are entirely mercenary and their members have no qualifications whatsoever. They may authorise registration in another state based on their subjective interpretation of eligibility. In many cases mutual recognition is still open to question, particularly regarding language skill, which is checked only after recognition of primary qualification and then only if requested. It leaves the host country on the back foot, finding it hard to refuse admission in retrospect once a foreign national is on their soil.

Equally, there is uncertainty among host countries as to who should carry out the checking. Should it be a government body, the employers, or a professional standard-setting body? Should it be done on a case-by-case basis, or should blanket

Continued on page 10

Continued from page 9

approval be given for a whole profession or industry? The IMI includes an alert mechanism to enable authorities to inform each other if “serious specific acts or circumstances...could cause serious damage to the health or safety of persons or to the environment”. The case of the German doctor proves this does not work.

The British government has expressed some reservations about the card scheme. It says it wants a pilot study and assurance that the cards would be tailored for specific professions. The professions themselves should just say no.

There is widespread concern too about the principle of “partial access” to a regulated profession, which could override national standards. This was taken to the European Court of Justice (ECJ) in 2009 in the case of overlapping activities within engineering. The question was whether hydraulics specialists had the right to pass themselves off as engineers in general. It was found that the title engineer differs from country to country.

Ski instructors too questioned the right of snowboarding instructors to be included within their specialist field. The ECJ response as usual faced both ways. It concluded that these provisions “do preclude a member-state from not allowing...partial taking-up when...the differences between the fields of activity are so great that in reality a full programme of education and training is required, unless the refusal for that partial taking-up is justified by overriding reasons based on the general interest...”.

These two examples of occupations carrying high risk factors (and there are hundreds of others) show that health is by no means the only issue affecting public safety. A high profile has rightly been given to health practitioners, who have been at the forefront in highlighting the problem. But this has craftily been turned by the European Commission into a diversion away from the more general attack on all professions.

The issues with the European Card and partial access are mainly about relatively

“Will the government will collude with the EU by lowering British standards?”

permanent settlement in another member state, where credentials must be proven. But if the recommendations of the Green Paper are implemented, professionals would no longer have to show two years of professional experience or “regulated education and training” but would simply have to send a prior declaration if requested by the host state.

Moreover, the Commission points out that if a professional wants to work abroad on a temporary or occasional basis he or she does not have to prove qualifications at all under the 2005 directive. There are no reliable statistics on which professions use this temporary mobility rule, but they are likely to be mostly unregulated and therefore particularly vulnerable to substitution by cheaper labour. It is only the organised strength of professional associations and unions insisting on their own standards that prevent this from happening.

In the case of “temporary mobility with prior check of qualifications” member states are being asked to produce a list of professions with health and safety implications. This is not because the Commission wishes to defer to the nation state in any way, but because, as it bluntly admits, that would be cheaper than doing so itself.

Less rigorous

The Commission suggests that the qualifications for some of the professions “may be disproportionate or unnecessary for the achievement of public policy objectives”. They assert that barriers are created by qualifications which they say “lack consistency with the European Qualifications Framework”. They want to reduce the number of education levels, and replace “common platforms” for existing

professions with less rigorous tests.

Common platforms offered the possibility of avoiding coordination at European level of such things as aptitude tests and adaptation periods for migrant professionals provided certain criteria were met. They involved national bodies jumping through hoops measuring the length of training merely to arrive at minimum standards. They have been a waste of everyone’s time: not a single one has been completed. Now the Commission wants to abandon them altogether and instead extend automatic recognition to new professions without the need for any testing at all.

The British government “supports the move to competency-based qualifications... as this would be more in keeping with educational practices in the UK”. Will it collude with the EU by lowering British standards? It looks as though it will.

The pretext for all of this is consumer choice; or put another way, the right of the public to have their preference for high standards ignored. Quality of service, health and safety are considered only in relation to the medical and architectural professions. There is to be no universal consumer protection.

In the case of “professionals accompanying consumers”, Brussels wants to sweep away all national education and training standards. Qualifications pertaining to a specific country, region or city are treated as non-existent. There are occasions where for example a teacher, an events or sports organiser or a tour manager may accompany a group to another member state. Such a professional is said by the Commission to have been chosen by the consumer and under the new rules they would be totally exempt from all training requirements. In other words, anybody could do it. They would cease to be professionals.

Quite apart from depriving students and clients of specialist knowledge and skill, this is dangerous. Most professionals belong to an organisation providing them with public liability cover. This safety precaution could clearly be overlooked in the rush to deregulate.



Theatre staff at St George's Hospital, Tooting, voting in their pensions ballot last year. Health is a key battleground in the fight to ensure that services are maintained by qualified professionals.

The existing directive defines a regulated profession as one that requires the practitioner to have specific professional qualifications. Member states regulate access to nearly 5,000 professions based on qualification. Around 800 are regulated in Britain. With breathtaking arrogance the new EU directive requires states to better justify existing regulation within their borders, including language and other aptitude tests. The Commission will oversee this exercise, claiming further powers for itself in the process.

These demands are a prelude to sweeping away all controls and safeguards. This is an attack not only on regulated professionals, or those otherwise qualified, but on the whole working class. Those not yet qualified will find that regulated education and training courses will no longer be available. Those already seeking regulation as a trade or profession will find their path blocked.

In its response to the EU Green Paper, the British government noted the lack of a plan to reduce regulated professions. Cameron has taken the lead in calling for a reduction in their number on the grounds of cutting red tape, saying: "Outside of the health professions...the UK government would like a commitment...to remove regulations which cause unnecessary

restrictions to the free movement of skilled professionals, who are often small businesses".

That is the crux of the matter. Professionalism does not contribute to maximising business profits by lowering pay and conditions or endangering the public. Labour failed to support British workers, and signed us up to the Lisbon

treaty. Now, with the approaching spring and summer conference season, our unions and organisations must confront this government with the contradictions in its relationship with the EU.

Cameron boasts of his bravery in standing up to Europe. Let him now stand up for the professionals within his own borders. ■

Meet the Party

The Communist Party of Britain's current series of London public meetings began on 29 September 2011 and will finish on 14 June with a topical subject: the Olympics; except on May Day, all are held in the Bertrand Russell room, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1R 4RL, nearest Tube Holborn. Other meetings are held around Britain. All meetings will be advertised in What's On, see page 5.

M The next meeting is the Party's annual London May Day rally – always held on May Day itself, regardless of state bank holidays – on Tuesday 1 May, in Conway Hall, Holborn. There are May Day meetings in Edinburgh and Leeds.

M As well as our regular public meetings we hold informal discussions with interested workers and study sessions for those who want to take the discussion further. If you are interested we want to hear from you. Call us on 020 8801 9543 or e-mail to info@workers.org.uk



While the European Union set about destroying the independence of South America, a new debate was beginning. It centred on integration

Together, but sovereign: how Latin America and the Caribbean

ALL THE WRATH of the European Union is aimed at Argentina at the moment. As Argentine President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner announces plans to renationalise the Spanish owned oil company YPF, the Spanish parent company REPSOL threatens court action against Argentina around the globe. Unelected European Commission president Barroso threatens Argentina over investment agreements between the EU and Argentina, and Spain threatens industrial war against Argentina. And Catherine Ashton, the EU's unelected foreign policy chief, cancelled a meeting of the EU/Argentina Joint Committee.

Argentina shrugs off these threats as it did the threats from the IMF, US and EU in 2002/03 when the country defaulted on its debts and told these august bodies that they would be paid only when Argentina decided. As if Spain and the EU are in a position now to wage industrial war!

Standing up

It's not just Argentina. Many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have learned how to stand up to the imperialists. It all started with the US government's intention to set up the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and to include every country in the Americas except Cuba. Broadly speaking, the FTAA would have led to the effective annexation of nation states by the USA. Its predecessor, the North American Free Trade Area, covered Canada, the USA and Mexico. Most Latin American nations had seen the experience of this "Free Trade agreement" in destroying agriculture in Mexico due to a subsidised US agriculture sector.

On 1 May 2001, Cuba launched its own campaign against the FTAA based on the slogan "Plebicito si, anexo no", or "Referendum yes, annexation no". In other words, let the people in each country decide for themselves. That's the same as we wish for Britain and the EU. Cuban trade unions campaigned online, among other Latin American trade unions.

Venezuela was next to join the



Street scene, Haiti: cooperation across Latin America and the Caribbean is seen as the key to tackling

campaign against the FTAA and the debate deepened across the continent. Mercosur, the trading group of the southern cone representing Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Chile etc, and CARICOM, the Caribbean trading group, took up the debate.

The game changer was Venezuela's proposal to establish ALBA, the Bolivarian Alliance of our America, as a direct alternative to the FTAA. The concept was immediately supported by Cuba and Bolivia. ALBA would establish a host of cooperation projects in the field of energy, health, media, education, literacy and trade.

Originally, ALBA comprised only Venezuela and Cuba, but they were later joined by Bolivia, Nicaragua, Dominica, Antigua & Barbuda, Saint Vincent & the Grenadines, and Ecuador with Haiti and Paraguay indicating their intention to join.

ALBA established the ALBA Bank to assist its members and introduced a trading currency, the Sucre.

The southern cone countries decided to establish a Bank of the South as an alternative to the IMF with \$20 billion of assets. Venezuela, also one of the countries party to the decision to set up the Bank of the South, has proposed that members of the Bank of the South leave the IMF after the bank is established.

Sovereignty

Perhaps the most significant development was the opening of a debate across Latin America and the Caribbean about the concept of integration, not on the basis of the EU or FTAA, but based on Simón Bolívar's concept of a united Latin America with national sovereignty at its heart. This debate has included those countries outside of ALBA. There has

e of nations, and the US attempted to do the same in Central and
ation and cooperation – but on the basis of national sovereignty...

and the Caribbean are forging their own future



ling poverty both caused and ignored by the US.

Photos: Workers

been general agreement across Latin America and the Caribbean that they should become independent of the USA in terms of trade and finance.

This development led to a summit of the various interregional organisations held in Mexico in February 2011 which built on the experiences of all the those organisations and formally established the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) representing all countries on the continent with the explicit exclusion of the USA and Canada. CELAC's combined GDP puts it in third position in the world, and with a population of 600 million, the world's largest oil reserves and the first and third global producer of food and energy respectively, it is understandable that confidence levels are so high.

A first CELAC summit was held in Caracas in December 2011 and Cuba,

which had been excluded from the Organisation of American States since 1962, was selected to host the 2013 summit while being a member of the "troika" of Cuba, Venezuela and Chile that will lead the organisation. In fact, CELAC's President for 2013 will be Raul Castro.

Another summit was held in April 2012 in Cartagena, Colombia, scheduled to launch the FTAA. In fact this marked its death knell, with countries calling on Obama to support Argentina over the Malvinas Islands and condemning the USA for continuing to try to isolate Cuba. Oh! How times have changed!

This movement is wider than leaders and inter-regional trade groupings. Trade unions have been actively organising to be in advance of these developments. In February 2011 Cuba's trade union centre, the CTC, hosted the first "Train the Trainers" educational process for union members from across the continent at its trade union school in Havana. The objective was to raise political and working class awareness across the trade unions of Latin America and the Caribbean, particularly among trade unions in the ALBA countries.

Keeping pace

Some trade unions were not keeping pace with the social and political developments in the ALBA countries. The activists were trained to go back to their countries and organise similar programmes for their own trade union activists. Through this process more political training programmes were developed at events in Nicaragua, Brazil, Mexico and Chile, each with participation from across the continent.

All these developments seem to have passed Cameron by. They put his stand over Las Malvinas, or Falkland Islands as he prefers to call them, into a different perspective. He is not dealing with a tin pot military Argentinian dictator like Galtieri, but a president who won 54 per cent of the vote in the last election (which puts the Tory vote to shame). Cameron is dealing with a country that, like any other, wants sovereignty over its natural



One thing common to every country in the region – Cuban doctors.

resources including those offshore. Argentina is a country that is part of a group of 33 nations who have broken free from one country with imperial designs over the sub-continent and who will not tolerate another's challenge to their national and resource sovereignty.

Cameron sent HMS Dauntless to the area. This is the most powerful warship in the world, described by a boasting Royal Navy spokesman as capable of "destroying every plane at every Latin American airbase before they could get off the ground".

What did Cameron think the response would be? How would this be perceived across Latin America and the Caribbean? Speaking at a ceremony to mark the 30th anniversary of the war, Argentinian President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner said of Cameron's stance, "Every day that goes by it looks more ridiculous, more absurd in the eyes of the world. It is an injustice that in the 20th century there are still sixteen colonial enclaves around the world, and ten of those belong to the United Kingdom." ■

Britain was the first country to industrialise. That was before our
 against manufacture...

The Industrial Revolution and the transform

ASTONISHING, unprecedented changes occurred in 18th and 19th century Britain, which heralded an utterly different way of life. Britain was the first country to become an industrial nation and embrace a mechanical age. Its industrial revolution broke a tradition of economic life rooted in agriculture and commerce that had existed for centuries.

Britain was the first to industrialise because a conducive mix of internal circumstances cleared away hindrances: there was a national identity, the peasantry had disappeared, tenant farmers and labourers weren't so tied to the land, feudal regulations had gone, there was free trade across the country, a commercial revolution had taken place, the Civil War had ended royal monopolies, the aristocracy was involved in commerce and capitalist farming, our island was free of foreign armies with lots of natural resources, rivers and ports.

There was a leap forward in society. Previously the only sources of power available had been wind and water, human and animal strength. These were gradually displaced by machines and inanimate power. Industrialisation demanded new skills, especially in the precision engineering, machine tool and metal-working trades.

New expertise was needed to build and maintain machinery, operate boilers, drive locomotives, mine coal and tend spinning-mules and power-looms. Work grew more specialised, while the new type of worker could command high wages, belong to a trade union, maintain a family and aspire to education.

There was a spectacular transformation of the coal, iron and textile industries with the development of steam power to drive machinery, as in the cotton industry, which had an amazing effect on the productive energies of the nation. Factories no longer had to sit by rivers, and could run 24 hours a day with shifts.

The factory system developed fast in the textile areas of Lancashire, Yorkshire, the East Midlands and in certain parts of Scotland. Fresh sources of raw material were exploited. Capital increased in

volume and a banking system came into being.

Coal was the fuel of the industrial revolution. Production doubled between 1750 and 1800, then increased twenty-fold in the nineteenth century. Pig-iron production rose four times between 1740 and 1788, quadrupled again during the next twenty years and increased more than thirty fold in the nineteenth century.

The inventors of the new machines – people like James Watt, James Hargreaves, Richard Arkwright, Samuel Crompton, Edward Cartwright – were as much products as producers of the new conditions. As conditions grew ripe, the great technical inventions came. A combination of rapidly expanding markets, a supply of available wage labour and prospects of profitable production set many minds to work on the problem of increasing the output of commodities and making labour more productive.

Child labour

Child labour was widespread during industrialisation, particularly in textiles. In the early 18th century it is estimated that around 35 per cent of ten-year-old working class boys were in the labour force, rising to 55 per cent (1791 to 1820) and then almost 60 per cent (1821 to 1850). Factory owners were looking for a cheap, malleable, fast-learning labour force and found them among the children of the urban workhouses, who were only lodged and fed, not paid.

Industrialisation allowed the population to increase rapidly. In 1700 Manchester, Salford and suburbs had perhaps a population of 40,000; by 1831, it was nearly 238,000. Other great manufacturing centres underwent a similar swift expansion and often hamlets grew into populous towns. The estimated population of England and Wales in 1700 was about 5 million; in 1750, 6 million; in 1801, 9 million; in 1831, 14 million. In 1801, there were only 15 towns with a population of over 20,000 inhabitants; by 1891 there were 63.

Advances in farming such as an



Photo: Workers

Salt's Mill, Bradford: the textile mill was built in

increase in the acreage of land under cultivation, crop rotation, machines for planting seeds, selective breeding of animals and better use of fertiliser expanded food production. Forced enclosures of land concentrated it into the hands of bigger landowners. That was blatant robbery but the process produced enough food for those flocking to growing industrial cities and meant smallholders became either hired labourers or worked in industry.

The balance of population shifted from the south and east to the north and midlands. Men and women born and bred in the countryside came to live crowded together as members of the labour force in factories. Mass production demanded popular consumption. Average incomes rose though the rich benefited more than the poor. It brought higher standards of comfort and made a wide range of consumer goods available such as matches, steel pens, envelopes, etc.

The increasing demands of industry meant that good communications were of fundamental importance in order to

r rulers turned

ation of Britain



1851. Now it's a heritage centre...

transport things and people. The difficulty of travel that was typical of medieval times onwards was ended. Better surfaced roads, canals, steam packets at sea and eventually railways transformed the economy and people's lives. The village was no longer the world.

The transformation caused by the industrial revolution brought suffering as well as improvement, notably in the long working hours, overcrowded urban conditions and use of child labour. But life had been harsh in the preceding rural existence where individuals were left to fend largely for themselves. The industrial revolution concentrated attention on economic and social defects and brought collective solutions to the problems people faced whether through the formation of trade unions, a factory inspectorate or demands for health and urban planning.

Britain was for a while "the workshop of the world". Latterly its rulers have destructively turned against manufacture. Now, wanting a future, the people and manufacturers must press for its return. ■

More from our series on aspects of Marxist thinking

WAGING WARS ABROAD

Capitalism not only generates periodic world war (see February issue) but also on a regular basis unleashes war against individual nations. Unable to tolerate others' independence or accept restrictions on their influence, the leading capitalist powers deliberately embark on imperial wars against countries that irk and offend them. Since 1945, there have been 50 interventionist wars by powers such as the United States, Britain and France. These are warfare-gearred states, ever ready to bully weaker, less powerful, more vulnerable countries. This kind of war is calculated to coerce and intimidate, sending a brutal message to everyone in the world: don't upset our interests, or, if you do, face the consequences.

War abroad is the imperial reflex to war against workers at home. Hypocritically, these vengeful, destructive wars are always presented as "freedom-loving operations" to "topple nasty dictatorships" or "regime-change rogue states". In reality, each invasion brings death, economic dislocation, destruction of the social infrastructure and gross political interference. Misery and setback overwhelm the assaulted people while imperial plunder of the nation's assets is condoned by amenable, imposed placemen. Imperialism uses war to "adjust" the policies of states it disapproves of and to set the tone generally.

The real "axis of evil" today is the set of imperial powers which terrorise the world by aerial bombardments and blitzkrieg campaigns for the aggrandisement of profit and exploitation. The only "rogue states" are the ones that presume to take extraordinary measures to police the rest of the world and attack nations that pose no threat.

Wars are targeted against specific nations in order to control resources, minerals and trade and to dominate countries and regions. There is still the urge to empire but without the old-style colonial rule, except during bursts of direct military intervention.

War abroad damages and distorts the development of the invaded countries, but its costs are not limited to the peoples and countries violated: it also diminishes and impairs those at home who allow it to happen. The price comes in the form of distorted budgets, crude jingoism, the deaths of our young in foreign engagements, the distraction it allows from our real problems and the return of ex-soldiers to our society with severe physical and psychological damage.

War abroad can no longer be employed very easily. Since the defeat of the United States in Vietnam at the hands of a people's war, it is a stratagem fraught with danger. Imperial armed forces get bogged down in places like Afghanistan and Iraq while creating new forms of enmity to their rule. The financial costs of modern warfare are crippling.

More of us must take steps to end these vicious wars abroad. We must prevent attacks on Syria or Iran.

Interested in these ideas?

- Go along to meetings in your part of the country, or join in study to help push forward the thinking of our class. Get in touch to find out how to take part.
- Get a list of our publications by sending an A5 sae to the address below, or by email.

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Back to Front – Data and dictatorship

‘It would be a massive step towards the establishment of a fascist state in Britain...’

FOUR YEARS ago it was the Labour Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, who was proposing a central database of all mobile phone and Internet traffic (under cover of an EU Directive). The idea collapsed under a storm of protest. Now it is back, but with a twist.

This time the Home Office wants the power to see – without a warrant – the time, date, sender, recipient and (for emails) subject line of every electronic communication. And it wants to know – likewise without a warrant – the address of every website visited by every citizen.

Gone is the idea of a central database. In its place, Internet service providers and mobile phone companies will be required to store and hold this information and make it available to police and security services on demand.

That will raise costs for service providers, which of course they will recoup through higher charges. So we end up paying for the privilege of being spied on.

If implemented, it would be a massive step towards the establishment of – and let’s call a spade a spade here – a fascist state in Britain. A state where the guardians of the country complete their evolution into the jailers of the people.

So far (as WORKERS goes to press) there has been no official proposal from the government. In true anti-democratic style the news was not announced to parliament. Instead, it oozed out after the Home Office held private discussions with the Internet Service Providers’ Association. Presumably the government will make “concessions” when it finally

deigns to let MPs know what it’s doing.

On the one hand the proposals are ludicrous. The Internet is stupid enough to point anyone in the wrong direction: the top hit from a Google search for “electronic surveillance Home Office” is a link to go and buy it at Amazon! The plan would also be a blackmailer’s charter (something that is already keeping many MPs, with their unsavoury private lives, awake at night).

But the intent is deadly serious, and deadly for democracy. It is to hand all control and all information to the capitalist state.

What next? Given that the technology is around, how about compelling all citizens to record every conversation they make and stream it to GCHQ for analysis?

In April documents were released detailing the obscene crimes committed by British troops fighting colonial wars in Malaya and Kenya, and other countries. They indicate the lengths to which our rulers will go to preserve their power and their privileges.

Actually, the papers don’t show exactly how far they will go, since the most sensitive ones have apparently been destroyed. They want to know everything about us, but they don’t want us to know anything much about them.

We’ve said it before, and we’ll say it again: the real danger of fascism in this country comes not from thugs on the street who wrap themselves in Union Jacks, but from cabinet rooms and boardrooms. Our “parliamentary democracy” is in fact nothing of the kind. ■

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