

WORKERS

www.workers.org.uk

NOVEMBER 2000 £1

LIFE & SOUL

WESTMINSTER
RULES, OK?

14

Ford workers fight for Dagenham

03

Britain yes, euro no

19

Cuba globalises solidarity

12

'FREE' MOVEMENT OF LABOUR

JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY



IF YOU WANT TO REBUILD BRITAIN, READ ON

WORKERS

“ First thoughts

THE LABOUR PARTY leadership, and members, should note that the working class is increasingly likely to vote for any party that opposes the euro and the emerging European state.

As the euro, along with the whole ‘euro-project’, becomes more and more unpopular, the Labour leadership’s attachment to it jeopardises the longed-for second term. Their support for entering the euro is their most unpopular policy. The choice facing the Labour Party is this: dump the pound and lose the next election, or dump the euro and win.

But it certainly does not seem that Blair will dump the euro. In his speech in Warsaw on 6 October 2000 entitled ‘Europe — building a superpower, not a superstate’, Blair said:

“Whatever its origin, Europe today is no longer just about peace. It is about projecting collective power. Europe is a Europe of free, independent, sovereign nations who choose to pool that sovereignty in pursuit of their own interests and the common good, achieving more together than we can achieve alone. The EU will remain a unique combination of the intergovernmental and the supranational. Such a Europe can, in its economic and political strength, be a superpower — a superpower, not a superstate.”

This is a quite astonishing admission, that the EU is not now about peace, but about projecting power, force, into other countries, that the EU is about creating a superpower, a new empire, able and willing to bully other nations.

Second opinion

AS America goes to the polls to elect its President, the self-proclaimed leader of the free, democratic world, it is worth looking at a snapshot of the reality of US democracy.

Miami-Dade County, Florida, has a population of 2 million. Only 800,000, a little over half the adults, are registered to vote. Recently, they elected their mayor. Just 29% of those registered bothered to cast their votes. So the all-powerful mayor won with the declared

support of around 6% of the population!

Miami-Dade County is the area where the Cuban boy Elian Gonzalez was held captive. The mayoral “winner”, Alex Penelas, was backed by the Cuban American National Foundation which managed his kidnapping.

Were he a little older, Elian might reflect that in “undemocratic” Cuba no candidate can be elected without the support of at least 50% of the voters.



WORKERS is published by the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist),
78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB
ISSN 0266-8580

www.workers.org.uk
Issue 37, November 2000



Contents – November 2000

News

Ford workers fight for Dagenham, p3; Child poverty on the increase, p4; Campaigning for safe skies, p5; News Analysis: Invasions of e-privacy, p6

03

Features

Capitalism and the ‘free’ movement of labour, p6; Britain yes, euro no, p9; Cuba globalises solidarity, p12

06

Life & Soul

Westminster rules, OK?, p14

14



Rebuilding Britain

INDUSTRY	The fight for Dagenham
TEXTILES	Coats to sell up
EU	New pensions threat
POVERTY	Still on the increase
EDUCATION	Lecturers plan strike
TRANSPORT	Doing it in Exeter
AIR TRAFFIC	Campaign for safe skies
SHIPYARDS	Capacity threatened
COMING SOON	What's on
NEWS ANALYSIS	Invasions of e-privacy

Fighting to save Dagenham

FORD WORKERS in Dagenham are involved in a life-and-death struggle to maintain vehicle production in the east London plant. As WORKERS goes to press, they were due to ballot on industrial action to prevent Ford management shutting down the vehicle plants and moving production to Europe.

With Halewood now making Jaguars, Dagenham is the last of Ford's major car assembly plants in Britain. It currently produces the Fiesta — Ford's other "blue badge" vehicles, such as the Focus and Mondeo, are imported, along with most cars sold in Britain. Last year, only 28% of cars sold here were made here.

The plan is to close the Dagenham Body and Assembly Plants by spring 2002. The engine plant will continue, but car production as such will cease. The Fiesta will continue to be built there until then, but only for the British market, and only on one shift. After spring 2002, Ford wants to make all Fiestas in Cologne, Germany.

Ford imagines that by 2002 it will not produce a single car in Britain. Instead, it will import some 417,000 vehicles into what is still a larger market than that of any country on the Continent. Fortunately for Ford, import controls are banned by the European Union.

Production in Dagenham, say the unions, is not only cheaper than in Cologne, it is more efficient, too. But there is one crucial difference: in Britain, it is cheap and easy to close down a factory, and you can guarantee that there will be no problem with the government.

Car workers have been appalled by the silence from Labour Party, both locally and in government, on this issue. At stake is a vital part of our industry, yet the local council has just accepted the proposed closure as fact and refused to fight against it (washing its hands of the whole business, as it did with Rover). The local Labour MP has been silent. No minister has fought with them.

The unions — MSF, AEEU, TGWU and GMB — are determined to fight, and organising weekly campaign meetings. The result of the ballot is expected early in November.

- Michelin has said it wants 950 jobs to go at its factory in Stoke on Trent next year, when the French country moves production (but not sales) out of the country. Although the company will continue to make retreads, mould and steel cord production, it wants to move production outside Europe, where wage costs are lower. Michelin has been making tyres in Stoke for 74 years, turning out about 2 million tyres a year.

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

TEXTILES

Coats to sell up

HAVING JUST closed 4 factories in the East Midlands, with the loss of 2000 clothing workers' jobs, Coats Viyella is on the brink of selling its remaining clothing factories to Hong Kong firm Li & Fung.

In August, Coats said it was withdrawing from its deal to supply Marks & Spencers with lingerie, tights and sweaters., a strange decision as other British companies were fighting to retain their contracts with the giant retailer.

As neither the British government(our hands are tied by Europe) nor the American owners of Coats is prepared to back the factories, the interest shown by Li & Fung shows that there is some life in British clothing, even if the government cannot see it

TEXTILES

Europe-wide closures

REPORTS from the OETH, a French-based textile research group, show that consumption of textiles throughout the European Union fell by over 6% last year. Textile production also fell by 4.1% in 1999, while clothing production slumped by 10.1%. Jobs lost in textile production were 92,000: 700 textile firms were closed and 2,300 clothing companies lost.

There are 2.1 million people employed in the EU textile trade. Yet the European Commission has responded by removing all restrictions on the remaining 62 categories (18 % of total trade)of textile imports — mostly 'dumped', sweatshop goods — in spite of the continuing tariffs placed on EU countries' exports.

PENSIONS

Winter campaign

THE ANNUAL MEETING of the 70,000 strong Civil Service Pensioners' Alliance (CSPA) in October saw a sharp contrast between the slavish support shown by the TUC delegates of PCS, the largest civil service union, for John Monks (and Tony Blair) and the much more critical approach of pensioners.

In the October issue of the union's magazine the Joint General Secretaries crow over the "plenty achieved" by the Blair Government (though there is "plenty more... still to do"). By comparison, CSPA General Secretary Brian Sturtevant berated the Government's failure to keep its election pledge to let pensioners share in the nation's prosperity.

CSPA has launched a Winter Campaign to be carried out both nationally and by the 100-plus local groups throughout the country. This covers issues as varied as the restoration of the earnings link for pension increases and the right of spouses of post-retirement marriages to receive Civil Service widows' pensions.

On the CSPA's initiative, a joint deputation from the National Pensioners' Convention, the Public Service Pensioners' Council and the TUC is to meet Gordon Brown shortly to drive home the campaign for an adequate pension. "One more push may achieve our aim," he declared.

EU

New pensions threat

LAST MONTH the EU Commission agreed a framework to make the European pension systems sustainable in the future. It is clear from its statement that "sustainable" means cuts in pensions.

The Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs, Anna Diamantopoulou, said: "The ratio of pensioners to people of working age will double between 2000 and 2040. The additional pressure on public finance is clear."

Pension systems are supposed to be the responsibility of member states, but the European Union is justifying its move into this area under Article 2 of the EC Treaty, dealing with social protection. In March 2000 at Lisbon the European Council decided to "study the future of social protection giving particular attention to the sustainability of pension systems up to 2020 and beyond". The findings of the study could easily be used to undermine national sovereignty and attack pension levels.



Can vehicle manufacture be saved at Ford Dagenham? See story, page 3.

Child poverty on the increase

TWO MILLION CHILDREN in Britain, or more than one in six, are living in poverty, according to a survey from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. They go without two or more items regarded now as necessities, for example, adequate clothing, three meals a day, toys or a holiday.

The survey, carried out at the end of 1999, found that one in 50 children does not have properly fitted shoes, a warm waterproof coat or fresh fruit and vegetables at least once a day. One in 25 is deprived of celebrations; educational games; a meat, fish or vegetarian meal twice a day; and a garden to play in.

The situation had deteriorated since 1983. Between 1983 and 1990 the number of poor grew from 14% to 21%, and by 1999 this had reached 24%. Around 9.5 million people cannot heat or decorate their homes, or keep them free from damp. Around 8 million cannot afford an essential household good such as a fridge, telephone or carpets. Four million are not able to feed themselves properly and 6.5 million are unable to afford essential clothing, such as a warm, waterproof coat.

The authors highlight unemployment as the key factor, but also say that quality state support is a necessity. Professor Jonathan Bradshaw, a co-author, said: "Britain now stands at a crossroads in terms of adopting effective measures to stop and reverse damaging structural trends that have increased poverty and social exclusion in the past 20 years."

Another survey by the same organisation on how to reduce health inequalities in Britain concluded: "Redistribution of wealth would have the greatest effect (in terms of numbers of lives saved) because it would improve the lives of the greatest number of people. Eradication of child poverty has the greatest relative effect (in terms of the proportion of lives saved)."

Some 7,500 deaths a year among people under 65 could be prevented if inequalities in wealth just narrowed to their 1983 levels. Around 2,500 deaths a year in the same age group would be prevented if full employment were achieved. And 1,400 deaths among children under 15 (92% of all 'excess' child deaths) would be saved if child poverty were eradicated.

A case study of the Birmingham Ladywood constituency showed that just a modest redistribution of wealth and a full employment policy would have saved a third of all 'excess' deaths in the 1990s (when we saw the effects of the mass unemployment that began in the late 1970s).

Because the factors causing 'excess' death are so well known, as is the 'geography' of mortality, government policies could have a major impact on the inequalities of health.

• POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION IN BRITAIN is published by Joseph Rowntree Foundation. A free summary is available at www.jrf.org.uk.

EDUCATION**Lecturers plan strike**

LECTURERS at Hertfordshire University are planning strike action in protest at a decision to close the civil engineering department by 2002 — with many staff being made redundant from March next year.

The lecturers, who are members of NATFHE, are incensed at the lack of both consultation and, more importantly, financial justification for the decision. They know that the department is profitable.

Redundancies will leave the department with just four staff to cover classes for over 80 students. Students are backing the staff, aware that their education is being sacrificed at a time of known skills shortages in civil engineering.

Additional redundancies of up to 100 are also expected across various other departments in the university.

TRANSPORT**Exeter public meeting**

GET INVOLVED in planning the future of our transport systems. That was the plea heard at a packed public meeting on the subject held in October by Exeter Trades Union Council.

Speakers included the local MP, representatives of Transport 2000 and the RMT union. The common theme was that we had to be active to ensure things got better.

There are signs of hope. The government's ten-year transport plan has two virtues. First, it is based on an integrated approach, taking pedestrians, cyclists, buses, trains, coaches, freight and cars together. Secondly, it proposes major investment — reversing a trend of decline since the 1960s.

But a huge effort is needed and a number of issues were raised. Top of the list is the desperate need to sort out the mess left by rail privatisation. The setting up of a strategic rail authority was welcomed as a major step forward.

Rail and bus workers talked of the tens of thousands of jobs lost and the dangerously long hours they were expected to work. Health and safety was a constant worry. It was also pointed out that we no longer had a rail rolling stock manufacturing base in this country. So, if a corner was being turned then it was also true that we have a long way to go. Speakers urged everyone to get involved and help influence national, regional and local transport plans.

ENGINEERING**Sharing work**

DORSET County Council and Structural Engineering Consultant Buro Happold have formalised their work sharing agreement. The two parties will plan workloads jointly, with Buro Happold taking work from Dorset when the council workers are overstretched. In slack periods council engineers will take on work from Buro Happold on a fee-earning basis.

Many council engineers are looking with interest at these arrangements as they could provide the basis for recruitment and training of young engineers. Trainees have become a rarity and this has led to a serious skills shortage in engineering.

WHAT'S ON**Coming soon****NOVEMBER**

Wednesday 15 November
19.15 - 21.30

“Manufacturing and the Euro”

St. Laurence Pastoral Centre
173 Church Rd
Northfield
Birmingham

A meeting and debate for Rover workers and anyone interested. Speakers from the AUEEW, BFAWU, TASC, CYWU.

Campaigning for safe skies

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLERS have been continuing to campaign on the future of air traffic control over the summer. The TUC voted support to the campaign to maintain safety standards. The government named nine preferred bidders for a sell off. One of them withdrew quickly after breaking the bidding rules. Now the focus returns to Parliament.

The government wants to sell off National Air Traffic Control Services (NATS). They say that this the only way to secure investment for the future. The Institution of Professionals Managers & Specialists (IPMS) and other unions say that there are alternatives. They know that a sell off will cause conflict between profits and safety.

The Lords vote on the Transport Bill this autumn. IPMS may not be able to persuade them to defeat the government directly. But it hopes enough peers will support amendments promoting safety over profits.

The unions' "Safeskies" campaign argues for a non-profit making trust to run NATS. This ownership model works well in Canada. The government says that would not be accountable to Parliament, which misses the point. Accountability is irrelevant if profits come before safety. Workers want to avoid crashes, not run parliamentary enquiries into them.

SHIPYARDS**Military capacity threatened**

BRITAIN'S military shipbuilding and maintenance capacity is under threat. The government's Strategic Defence Review in 1998 said there was overcapacity, but had no plan for the long-term future of this industry. Workers in both public and private sectors are affected.

Vosper Thornycroft, based in Southampton and Portsmouth, will make 650 out of its 1,200 workers redundant early next year. The current Royal Navy contract for seven minesweepers is coming to an end at the company's Woolston yard. There is no replacement work available to fill the gap.

Vospers hopes to build three Type 45 frigates as part of £1 billion work awarded

to BAE by the Ministry of Defence. But the contract is not yet signed, and the work would not begin until 2002.

In another development, the MoD is being criticised for its plans to privatise repair and maintenance at Faslane and Portsmouth. The MoD wants to switch to "reliability-centred" maintenance instead of regular servicing. This means only mending things when they go wrong. The plan represents a lower level of service, and leaves no margin to respond to emergencies.

Unions representing dockyard workers have not been fully consulted about these changes, despite previous guarantees. The decision to outsource the work will threaten thousands of jobs, and is unnecessary. Ironically one reason for switching work from Portsmouth Naval Base is to make way for the Vospers Type 45 contract.

Invasions of e-privacy

BEFORE YOU have read this article, Britain's Security Services will have had the opportunity, a copy of the email text having been lodged automatically with their 'black boxes' linked to all internet service suppliers.

This was one result of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act, July 2000. Much was made in the media about snooping, privacy and intrusion to do with emails. The Act goes along way beyond mere emails.

The RIP Act brings Britain (and the rest of the EU) in line with the EU Convention on Mutual Assistance in criminal matters. This 'sharing' of data happens to mirror the EU — FBI telecommunications surveillance agreed in 1995. The latter mirrors the US Security Services 'Carnivore' system — the attempt to monitor everything in the US and the world.

Monitoring all communication

The other things which RIP introduced was to extend the powers of GCHQ, MI5, MI6 — they are now monitoring all communications, not just telephones or letters but all communication. As HANSARD infers, "it is not possible to intercept the external communications without intercepting internal ones as well".

Warped English enters the common parlance — "directed surveillance", "covert human intelligence sources", "intrusive surveillance". Directed surveillance is snooping by device — bug, camera etc, remotely. Intrusive surveillance is snooping by device or person in your home, premises, car, etc. Covert human intelligence is a modern day Oliver the Spy — police agent, informer, spy.

Who gets to snoop

The list of organisations authorised to use "covert human intelligence" are the H&S Executive, any Health Authority, any NHS Trust and the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (!). Organisations who can use all and any spying process, in addition to the above are: all Police Forces; all Police intelligence services — National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS), National Crime Squad, Serious Crime Squad; all intelligence services — GCHQ, MI5, MI6; the Armed Forces — all branches; all government ministries; all local authorities; the Environment Agency; the Financial Services Authority; and of course the Post Office plus Tom, Dick and Harry.

Massive resources and new computerised systems to monitor this surveillance are to be installed at the MI5 new headquarters at Thames House, Millbank, London SW1.

This surveillance drive derives from a foul combination of home grown security freaks, the EU as their convenient vehicle and years and years of US-UK 'intelligence' cooperation against the former USSR and socialist countries. This drive for a EU police state is not about world terrorism, drugs or crime. It is about how capitalism in the EU deals with us: the working class.

The mass migration of labour is balance of power between capital

Capitalism and the 'f'

MODERN CAPITALISM sees national boundaries as inconvenient irritants, restricting their right to do what they want. The "free" movement of global labour is part of the capitalist dream embodied in the EU. The ideal is a single market in goods and people in which capitalists can make and sell their goods wherever they want unconstrained by national governments. They can then take their pick from a rootless, unorganised workforce which moves at their behest, lacking the power to determine pay and the conditions of their work and lives.

This is the reality of the Global Market we are asked to revere, fear and accept as inevitable as the world of the future: a world in which the balance of power between capital and labour, which swung in our favour in Russia in 1917, swings back to the capitalist class.

A number of factors have driven the worldwide rise in mass migration. Wars and economic hardship, together with the deprivation and dislocation brought about by capitalism in eastern Europe, combine with the relative ease of travel

'Developed capitalist countries are poaching the skilled workers from the former colonies. The impact is potentially devastating'

and speed of global communications. This in turn enables movement from country to country to seem more desirable and become more possible. These movements have profound effects on the countries people move to and on those they leave behind.

In Britain, the movement of foreign labour into the country enables employers to keep wages low in professions such as teaching and nursing. The acute shortage of teachers of certain key subjects and in the more difficult schools is glossed over by the practice of employing teachers from abroad on supply (non-permanent) contracts, paid rates set by the agencies which employ them. Teaching in London, one of the most expensive of capital cities, is now officially classed as a shortage occupation for immigration purposes, meaning that schools applying for work permits for non-European teachers (Europeans are not so keen to come here) no longer need to show that they have been unable to employ a British teacher.

In nursing, some posts are extremely difficult to fill at present salaries in inner London hospitals because nurses would either need to have expensive inner London accommodation for their families or to travel to their shifts at difficult times for public transport. These jobs are often filled

part of the global capitalist dream — a world where the
 al and labour lurches towards capital

'free' movement of labour



Photo Peter Smith/TGWU

AS EXPOSED on the BBC's PANORAMA programme this summer, "gangmasters" employ teams of casual labour for hiring out at cheap rates. Illegal immigrants, often from eastern Europe, pay the gangmaster a fee to be taken on, plus another fee for forged Home Office papers stating the worker is seeking political asylum. The "illegals" are then organised into labour gangs to be transported in minibuses to the food packaging factories used by big supermarkets such as Asda or Aldi. Confronted by the programme makers, big supermarket chains claimed ignorance of these practices.

Out of their meagre wages, the immigrants pay rent to sleep in filthy overcrowded conditions. They work shifts at all times of the day or night, having to be ready to be bussed in to a packaging plant at short notice. One such worker, quoted in the programme, said: "With this sort of life one can hang himself." A Cambridgeshire policeman involved in investigating the use of illegal immigrants in the labour gangs commented "It's not far short of a modern day slave trade".

The Transport and General Workers Union has exposed the appalling wages and conditions suffered by the gangworkers, and campaigns to recruit them into the union. Where illegal migrant labour is used, this becomes very difficult. (Above: illegal gangworkers on a Suffolk farm — picture originally published in THE LANDWORKER, the TGWU agricultural workers' journal.)

by nurses from abroad, with women living in digs and sending money home to their families.

Indian stonemasons allowed into Britain under the new Home Office relaxation of regulations to work on a Hindu temple in north London are being paid £3 a day. The construction company

employing them has commented that this rate is twice what they earn in India. Margaret Hodge, minister for employment, interviewed on the BBC, said that this was not cheap labour. The stonemasons are not so sure — they are now demanding the British minimum wage, an increase of about 100%!

The high rate of exploitation of these legal workers is multiplied many times with illegal immigrants. As we reported in WORKERS last year, they form an important part of the labour force of agricultural gangworkers who pack supermarket

Continued on page 8

goods in the countryside of Scotland, East Anglia, Lincolnshire, Kent and Sussex. The TGWU Agricultural Workers trade group has exposed their plight: working long hours for tiny wages in often dangerous and unhygienic conditions. Their illegal status makes them unlikely to protest or join a union, and their low wages are used to intimidate other, legal, workers.

Lift all restrictions?

So, in Britain, is the answer to illegal immigration to lift all restrictions, to allow in anyone at all who wants to come and live here? Immigrant workers make it easier for employers to worsen pay and conditions for workers here, but what of the effects on the countries they leave?

The impact of emigration on the possibilities for growth in poor, developing countries is potentially devastating. Developed capitalist countries are poaching the skilled workers from their former colonies.

According to UN figures, almost one-third of skilled African workers had emigrated by the late 1980s — 60,000 high- and middle-ranking managers leaving for Europe and north America in five years by 1990. During that time, Sudan lost 45% of its surveyors, 30% of its engineers, 20% of its university

'Almost one-third of skilled African workers had emigrated...60,000 managers leaving for Europe and north America in five years by 1990'

lecturers, and 17% of its doctors and dentists. 60% of Ghanaian doctors practise abroad.

Germany has called for the immigration of 20,000 Indian IT specialists, and Ireland wants to import 200,000 skilled workers over the next seven years. Yet here in Britain some campaigners for immigration actually welcomed the Government's recent announcement that immigration controls on workers with shortage skills would be relaxed.

The member states of the EU which are the intended destination for these people have mass unemployment, yet the UN Commission on Population has said they need to take 75 million immigrants by 2050 — to keep up their populations or to maintain high levels of unemployment? What's wrong with

national long-term planning to ensure the supply of educated and skilled workers needed by a modern economy? All those who live and work (or want work) in Britain should be included in such a plan.

Those who like to call themselves British but prefer to live abroad should be counted out. The "free" market forces so favoured by capitalism clearly cannot supply the home-grown fully employed workforce this country needs.

Britain's social system of "benefits" and state support for individuals was created because workers who had fought fascism at tremendous cost were determined not to suffer again as they had in the years before the war. Today the welfare system is creaking and groaning with many problems because of the under-investment of the profit-makers.

The ruling class both creates situations in other countries which makes it difficult for the indigenous populations to stay, or actively encourages them to leave in the interests of profit. To these people Britain is attractive as many come from countries without state support.

Capitalism won't pay

But British workers who produce the wealth which pays for the system through taxation cannot support by their labour unlimited numbers of extra citizens who come here, wittingly or unwittingly, in the interest of the ruling class. Is capitalism offering to pay for the maintenance of people they have displaced from their own countries and lured to others? Of course not.

Eventually, nations have to grapple with their own problems, however difficult and painful. Here in Britain we have to deal with our capitalist class which wants to give up our sovereignty to Brussels. Every independent nation has a democratic right to determine what and who crosses its borders in either direction. If we allow capitalism to decide, you can be sure that workers will be the losers both here and in the developing countries.

Trafficking in human misery

HUGE PROFITS are also made out of the obscene trafficking of illegal immigrants. The 58 Chinese who died of suffocation in a dockside container in Calais this summer represented a tiny proportion of the total human misery involved in this modern slave trade. Those who succeed are prey to the gangs they paid to transport them or to new ones which know about their illegal status in their new country. Yet people will risk their own and their children's lives (remember Elian Gonzales?) in the feeling that it is better to leave than to stay. This summer, thousands of sub-Saharan Africans have tried to cross the treacherous currents and winds of the Gibraltar Strait to Algeciras in the south of Spain and the frontline for the EU Schengen Agreement. Smugglers charge £1000 a head for a ride in an inflatable dingy, and toss their "clients" overboard if a patrol boat approaches. Nobody knows how many have died.

As preparations continue for the Nice meeting of European Union member states, what is really on the agenda?

Britain yes, euro no



Laughing all the way to the Central Bank: left to right, the prime ministers of Portugal, France, Britain, Finland and Holland at Downing Street in April 1998, during the European Socialists meeting.

Photo Andrew Wiaard/www.reportphotos.com

NICE, SOUTH OF FRANCE. IT'S A nice place to go in November, sheltered from the cold winds of northern Europe. And sheltered, as well, from too many prying eyes. Because Nice is where the European Union intends to set in steel its plans for full-scale integration, allowing the European Commission to dictate policy on every major policy issue affecting every constituent state.

By the end of the process, if we allow it to proceed, there will no longer be any constituent states. Just one "superstate", though there will not be anything "super" about it.

Quite simply, the drive towards creating a single European state

motivates everything that the European Union's leaders do. These leaders, including Blair and Brown, have decided that Britain should join the euro and that Britain should become part of a single European state. "Monetary union is the motor of European integration," as Jean-Luc Dehaene, former Prime Minister of Belgium, said.

Their agenda is clear. And outside Britain they spell it out clearly. But inside Britain we are told only that monetary union is nothing to do with political sovereignty.

The EU's leaders aim to form a single state, with a single currency, a single government, a single frontier, a single

army, a single flag, a single system of criminal law, a single system of tax and spending, and a single citizenship. Every EU initiative follows a federalist agenda, moving ever towards merging Europe's independent states into a single European state. The goal is political unification, the unification of separate states into a single political entity.

A Nice state of affairs

Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission, last year commissioned a report called *THE INSTITUTIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF ENLARGEMENT*. Lord Simon, Blair's adviser on Europe, Richard Weizsäcker,

Straight talking abroad

DR OTMAR ISSING, CHIEF ECONOMIST OF THE EUROPEAN CENTRAL BANK

“There is no example in history of a lasting monetary union that was not linked to one state.”

ITALIAN PRESIDENT CARLO CIAMPI:

“It is unthinkable to have a European Central Bank but not a common leadership for the European economy. Monetary union is part of a supranational constitution. It is our task for the future to work with the appropriate means for the transfer of traditional elements of national sovereignty to the European level...it is therefore the duty of those countries which already belong to the EU to encourage the concept of supranationalism.”

GERMAN FOREIGN MINISTER JOSHKA FISCHER

“The introduction of the euro was not only the crowning-point of economic integration, it was also a profoundly political act, because a currency is not just another economic factor but also symbolises the power of the sovereign who guarantees it.”

And Fischer again: “At Maastricht, one of the three essential sovereign rights of the modern nation-state — currency, internal security and external security — was for the first time transferred to the sole responsibility of a European institution.”

IRISH FOREIGN MINISTER RUAIRI QUINN

“EMU is undoubtedly and fundamentally a political project.” Dominique Strauss-Kahn, France’s Finance Minister, agreed too: “The euro will lead to an economic government of Europe.”

GERHARD SCHRODER, THE GERMAN CHANCELLOR

“The introduction of the euro is probably the most important integrating step since the beginning of the unification process. It will have consequences that nobody can fully assess at present. It is certain that the times of individual national efforts regarding employment policies, social and tax policies are definitely over. The internal market and the common currency demand joint co-coordinating action. This will require us to bury finally some erroneous ideas of national sovereignty.” (Speech at The Hague, 19 January 1999)

EDDIE GEORGE, GOVERNOR OF THE BANK OF ENGLAND

“Monetary union is fundamentally a political project rather than an economic issue.” (Speech on 12 September 2000)

...and doublespeak at home

TONY BLAIR, BRITISH PRIME MINISTER

“We will fight for Britain’s interests and to keep our independence every inch of the way.” (In the Sun, just before the 1997 election)

former President of Germany, and Dehaene drafted it. On 24 January 2000, the European Commission formally adopted the plan. They advocated comprehensive reform of all EU institutions, to be achieved at the EU’s Intergovernmental Conference this December in Nice.

They aimed to renegotiate all the EU treaties, driving towards full economic and political union, that is, to form a single European state.

They wanted a new treaty. They wrote of the need for qualified majority voting to be the rule in an enlarged Union. They called for an end to national vetoes in the areas of home affairs and justice and for closer cooperation on a ‘Common Foreign and Security Policy’. They sought more powers for the President, for the Commission, and for the European Parliament. They wanted the EU to negotiate for its members at international economic conferences. They wanted a new European Constitution. And all these changes are on the agenda for the Nice Conference.

A United States of Europe?

The German Government is pushing to create a single European state. Joschka Fischer, the German Foreign Minister, recently called for a small number of EU members to create a confederation. He told the European Parliament’s Constitutional Affairs Committee that the European federation increasingly resembled a “United States of Europe”. He pointed out that the federation already existed in Frankfurt, in the European Central Bank. The euro, he said, was a first step towards the final objective. And the Nice Conference would be a first important step towards finalising this federation.

A new superpower?

Schröder also said: “Our standing in the world regarding foreign trade and international finance policies will sooner or later force a Common Foreign and Security Policy worthy of its name. National sovereignty in foreign and

security policy will soon prove itself to be a product of the imagination.”

The French Government rapidly endorsed these ideas. President Chirac said, “Developing a European Union foreign and defence policy is a fundamentally political project.” Prime Minister Lionel Jospin said, “By pooling its armies, Europe will be able to maintain internal security and to help prevent conflicts throughout the world. The successful deployment of the Eurocorps was a step in the right direction. But we need to go further. If we manage to achieve this in the second half of 2000, we will have passed a milestone towards the creation of a united political Europe.” Pierre Moscovici, France’s Minister for Europe, said, “We are saying that together we can build a new superpower, and its name will be Europe.”

Britain

The euro’s supporters across the Continent all openly support these policies of political integration. Only in Britain do they hide the obvious truth, fearing that if they admitted it, even more of us would oppose entering the euro. So they play ‘softly, softly, catchee monkey’ and claim that their decision to join the euro is solely an economic judgement.

Earlier they were less discreet. In 1994, the Labour Party said that it supported progress towards economic and monetary union. In January 1995, Blair said that the agenda set by Jacques Delors on economic development had to be pushed. In April 1995, he said Britain should consider extending qualified majority voting in “certain areas” — such as social, environmental, industrial and regional policy.

Blair backed a single currency and common foreign and defence policies. He also said: “If we want to maintain our global role now, we must be a leading player in Europe.” In December 1996, Blair said that Britain’s interests in areas such as the single market and reforming the Common Agricultural Policy could

best be served by giving up the veto.

But before the 1997 election, Blair changed his tune, in public anyway. He said, “The single currency is not just a question of economics. It’s about the sovereignty of Britain and constitutional issues too.” He wrote in the *SUN*, “New Labour will have no truck with a European superstate. We will fight for Britain’s interests and to keep our independence every inch of the way.” Labour’s manifesto promised, “Retention of the national veto over key matters of national interest such as taxation, defence and security, immigration, decisions over the budget and treaty changes.”

Farewell to the veto

Yet the Government recently said that at Nice it might surrender our veto over more areas of transport, the environment and the workings of the Luxembourg Court. After the election, Gordon Brown let the cat out of the bag when he boasted to Parliament, “We are the first British government to declare for the principle of monetary union, the first to state that there is no overriding constitutional bar to membership.”

Blair wrote in the December 1999 Memorandum leaked to the *THE GUARDIAN*, “We cannot avoid this debate on Europe. Either we expose the Tories’ posturing for what it is: a defeat of our national interest in the name of our national interest; or we just look weak. On the euro, we need to be firmer, more certain, clearer. The truth is the politics is [sic] overwhelmingly in favour: but the economics has to be right; and at present it is not. It would be far better to be open and up front about this.”

Avoiding debate

Yet he has avoided the debate, fearing the public response. He has overruled those EU supporters, like Sir Roy Denman, the former EU representative to the USA, and Hugo Young, the *GUARDIAN* columnist, who advise being open about EU integration. Sir Roy wrote in the *FINANCIAL TIMES* of 11 July: “Adopting the

euro would be a leap into the unknown. Many suspect that the Government has been less than frank about the political integration that will follow economic union. A referendum would be a very considerable risk.” Hugo Young wrote: “Integration is, of course, political.” “Greater integration of the European Union...is a political project.” “The euro is a massive shift to further integration.”

Blair has said that the decision whether or not to enter the euro is the most important question facing Britain today. Indeed it is: Britain’s democracy, our power to decide what goes on in our country, is at stake in this decision. If we become a province in a European state, we will lose at one fell swoop our sovereignty, our democracy and our identity.

Our trade unions, particularly those in manufacturing, have traditionally backed Britain’s manufacturing industry, recognising that it is vital to Britain’s future. How can they then argue for a policy that would mean dissolving and merging Britain into an EU state where there would be no power to defend and rebuild that industry?

Great Danes

The Danish people have voted to keep their national currency: that was their decision, as it would have been had they voted to end the krone and adopt the euro. It shows that where a people knows what it wants, even the combined power of a united press, political establishment, employers and trade union leaders cannot persuade them otherwise.

We must insist that any British Government rejects Economic and Monetary Union. We should call for a referendum now, to say NO to the euro and YES to a prosperous, independent Britain. Principally, we must get all our trade unions to make our voices heard in upholding sovereignty and opposing euro entry. We must begin the job of rebuilding our country: to do this we need to assert the power that is in our hands and brains.

Irony rules. The Pope's visit to Cuba was supposed to herald the country borrowed a phrase of his — 'global solidarity' — and is

Cuba's globalisation of solidarity

THE UNITED STATES is preparing to make the 21st century the 'American century' as it ratchets up the arms race with its 'Star Wars Mk 2' anti-missile system in an attempt at total world domination. Cuba, having successfully struggled to survive against both the US blockade and the collapse of the Soviet Union is preparing to make it a Revolutionary Century.

Cuba reminds us that Ernesto Che Guevara said at a critical point in the relations between the US and Cuba — "to the imperialists, one must not concede even a little bit".

The lesson of the safe return of Elian Gonzalez is testament to this. Every week in every Cuban city, demonstrations by young people or mothers or ordinary workers were held. A special tribunal facility was erected in record time

outside the US 'interests section' in Havana for non-stop demonstrations.

Hard work though this was for the Cubans, they won. The Miami Cuban mafia was exposed to the world, it was isolated, and despite the expected pressure and offers of unimaginable wealth made to Elian's father, Juan Gonzalez, US public opinion forced the return of Elian to Cuba.

But the huge challenge facing Cuba and workers everywhere is how to deal with US domination of the 21st century and to oppose globalisation of capital with its disastrous effect on workers throughout the world. Cuba has made a significant response to this challenge. The World Trade Organisation, of which Cuba is a founder member, faced uncoordinated challenges to their conference in Seattle from demonstrators

who suffered the effects of US pepper gas for their efforts.

But their demands were conflicting and, in the main, missed the point. To

'The huge challenge facing Cuba and workers everywhere is how to deal with US domination of the 21st century'

demand that the WTO acts as the world policeman for labour standards, as those in British government and trade union circles were demanding, was roundly condemned and defeated by the opposition of the Cuban and most Latin



Cuban children celebrate children's day in July. What is their future in a world threatened by capitalist globalisation. Cuban doctors in many Latin American and African countries are helping to bring child mortality rates down to Cuban levels which are amongst the lowest in the world. That's what globalisation of solidarity is all about.

the downfall of Cuban socialism. Instead, the putting it into practice.

American and other delegations.

Meanwhile, Cuba's developing foreign policy, is beginning to lay the foundations of the century of the revolutionary. In 1998, they used a new phrase to define their foreign policy objectives of opposing globalisation of capital — "globalisation of solidarity". Ironically, this phrase was borrowed from a speech that the Pope made during his visit to Cuba in that year.

While many predicted the collapse of socialism in Cuba following the Pope's visit, the Cubans actually used the visit to strengthen their revolution. His first two speeches, one on the evils of contraception and the other on family values, were politely listened to by millions of Cubans but both went down like lead balloons.

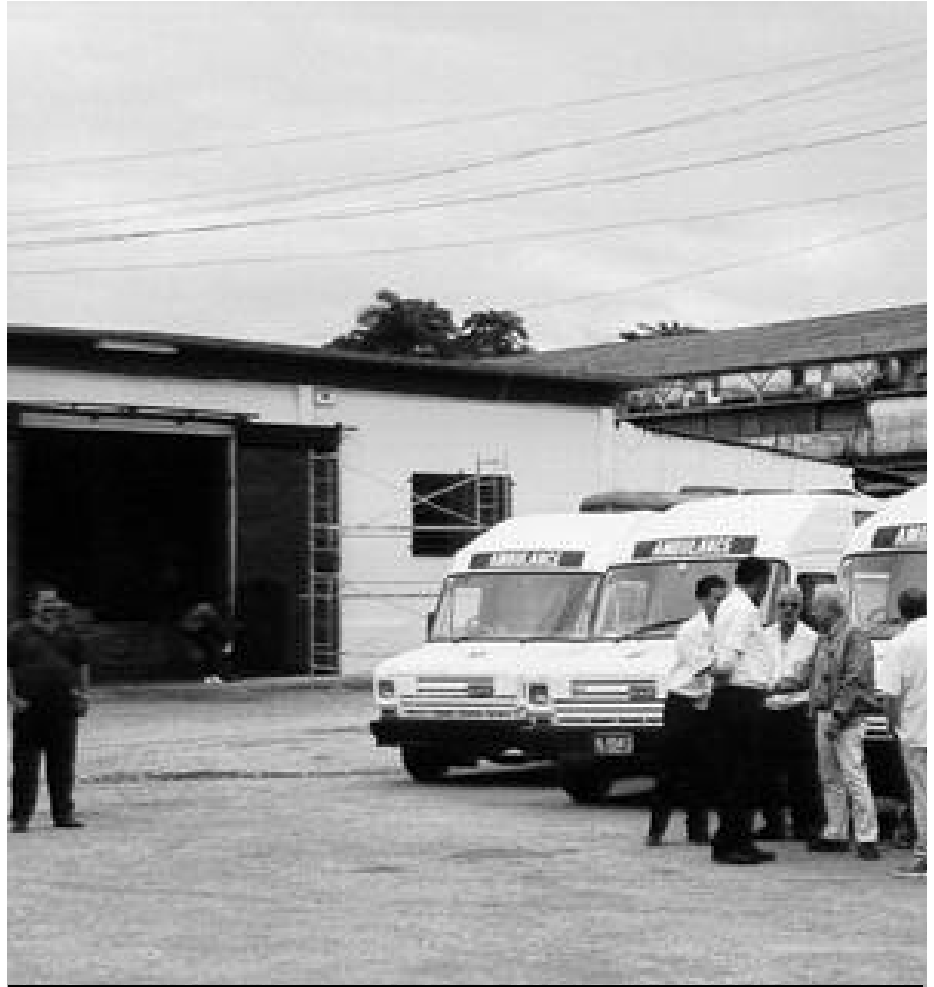
But the Pope's speech on globalisation was a different story. Condemning the US blockade of Cuba, the Pope called for the globalisation of solidarity as the only way to combat the effects of globalisation of capital.

Cuba is putting this into practice now by sending thousands of volunteer doctors to dozens of countries, at no cost to the host nations, to develop primary health care in poor areas. The objectives are simply to save lives by reducing infant mortality and to help eradicate the poverty of health care.

Doctors

With 4,000 doctors in dozens of Latin American and African countries, the Cubans then took steps to sustain this by training young men and women from poor areas in those countries to become doctors. The Cuban Naval Academy near Havana was converted into the Latin American Medical School. Some 4,000 students from most Latin American countries now study there free of charge. The only condition is that they return as doctors to the areas from which they came.

In Venezuela, for example, 500 Cuban doctors are working in rural areas with the active encouragement of the



An ambulance station in Havana. The Leyland Daf ambulances, in Cuban livery, were donated and sent by British trade unionists. Fifty more are on their way this month. Global solidarity by London ambulance workers who take pride in working with the Cuban Health Workers Union to help rebuild the Cuban ambulance service destroyed by the US blockade.

Venezuelan President Chavas. The General Secretary of the Cuban Health Workers Union, Dr Ramon Crespo, has volunteered to go to Venezuela to lead this medical mission personally as an example for others to follow.

Hundreds of Cuban doctors have been in Honduras, a country that has no diplomatic relations with Cuba, ever since the devastation of Hurricane Mitch in late 1998. A hundred more have just left for Paraguay and the number in Guatemala is expected to reach 500. All of these countries have their own students at the Latin American school. Zimbabwe, Guinea, Niger and Mali are just some of

the African countries receiving Cuban doctors.

The US has reacted predictably to this initiative by sending agents to these countries to offer money and high paid jobs to these doctors if they defect. However, the Cubans see this simply as a continuation of their revolutionary duty in a new era. They point to the example of Che Guevara who extolled the values of solidarity and self sacrifice to defend the revolution. This solidarity is about both combating globalisation of capital and also about defending the independence and sovereignty of Cuba and its revolution.

The Palace of Westminster is now inhabited by a bunch of legislators who would consign British independence to the history books

Westminster rules, OK?

AS THE POWERS of Westminster are transferred to Brussels, and talk of a 'British' parliament is declared to have 'racist overtones', it is ironic that the doors of architect Sir Charles Barry's

Cromwell mark the Lords and the Commons respectively. Suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst lurks in the bushes. But there is as yet nothing, inside or out, to show how workers shaped the 20th

class is meant only to 'parley' and lobby politely.

Inside, the visitor is led through a series of carved and gilded chambers, rich in heraldic motifs, designed chronologically to reflect the unfolding of the British Constitution from the Saxon witanagemot (assembly of the wise) which advised the king, to the constituencies of today. In 1215 Magna Carta heralded the separation of the judiciary from the administration of the country. It paved the way for the barons under Simon de Montfort and Edward I's 'Model Parliament' with its democratic writ of summons: "What touches all should be approved by all." By the mid-14th century, barons and ecclesiastics had banded together on one side, knights, citizens and burgesses on the other. Economic interests were established and the two Houses formed.

It was to be another 300 years before Parliament seized power, but when it did so the reverberations were to echo around Europe for two centuries more. Both monarchy and Lords were for a time abolished. The death warrant of Charles I, signed and sealed by the 59 regicides, is on display, and is one of the most thrilling of the three million original documents lodged with Parliament.

Hated

In the Royal Gallery King Alfred stands, ship in hand, a reminder that the sea was always Britain's defence. Visitors are invited to reflect on huge paintings of the two great 19th century battles for national independence — Trafalgar and Waterloo. Wellington was dismissive of the efforts of his men: "By God, I do not think it would have done if I had not been there!" He went on to become an arrogant and hated Prime Minister, opposed to universal franchise, typical of his class.

It has become unfashionable to examine the historical circumstances of



Westminster: workers maintain it. It is not unthinkable that workers could control it.

Victorian Gothic masterpiece, the Palace of Westminster, are to be thrown open to the world as never before. Not for the petitioning of MPs, however. This summer's opening, with continuous 75-minute guided tours, each spanning 1000 years of developing parliamentary democracy, was strictly during MPs' holiday time. Any idea that this was to do with 'open government' should be quickly dispelled.

The building itself symbolises the overthrow of feudal power by the bourgeoisie, the class struggle of a past age. From the Thames, the steps are still visible down which in 1642 MPs Hampden, Pym, Holles, Hazelrigge and Strode fled the army of Charles I to embark on a civil war that would end the power of monarchy forever. To the West, the statues of Coeur-de-Lion and Oliver

century.

It is a popular misconception that Commons means "the common people"; the word in fact refers to the communities of knights from the shires (counties) and burgesses from the boroughs, who from 1236 were summoned to 'parley' with the king and lend him money for foreign wars.

The real common people have always been feared, never welcomed. The building was designed, like the original medieval palace, to be impregnable on the river side. When the old palace burned down in 1834, William IV offered Buckingham Palace instead. Prime Minister Peel declined, saying it was too accessible to 'the mob'. Even today, laws prevent marches and vocal protests within a mile's radius of Parliament, and no legislation is passed that would damage the interest of capitalists. The working

lators who

WHERE'S THE PARTY?

his day: after all, one imperialist was as bad as another. But this should not detract from the significance of such battles for the people of Europe, both then and now. They were crucial in the struggle for independence of sovereign nations against one man's quest for empire on European soil. One hundred and thirty-five years later the same battle was being fought in the skies over England. The Commons chamber, centre of British decision-making, was destroyed by German bombs.

Beneath the Central Lobby — the bustling hub of the Palace — mosaics of the patron saints of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland adorn the vault above, designed in the days when capitalism needed a United Kingdom. In this Lobby and throughout the House of Lords, a high point of British craftsmanship was reached between 1840 and 1860, epitomised by the fireplaces and furniture of Augustus Pugin and John Webb, brass fittings by John Hardman of Birmingham, Minton tiles from the potteries of Stoke-on-Trent, wallpaper by J.G. Crace of London, and the clocks of Vulliamy. Britain was the 'workshop of the world'.

A national consciousness was evident; the idea took hold that legislation would be improved if politicians were surrounded by English works of art. How ironic then, that this place is now inhabited by a bunch of legislators who would consign British excellence to the history books.

Workers build the Palace. Workers maintain it. It is not unthinkable that workers could control it. Each year Black Rod endures ritual humiliation on behalf of the Crown, as the Commons' doors are slammed in his face. In a truly modernised Parliament workers would metaphorically slam the door in the face of the bourgeoisie — whether British or foreign. Unfinished business for the 21st century?

If you want to be a player in the political game, not a spectator, the politics of cynicism is not enough. But thinking about the mountain of work and the changes in attitude that will be needed to transform Britain is overwhelming if you are on your own. That's why there is a party. Only a party, and a special one at that, could bring together the people, ideas and effort needed to start the task of rebuilding Britain.

Who are we?

The Communist Party of Britain Marxist Leninist was founded in 1968 by Reg Birch and other leading engineers. They identified that there were only two classes in Britain and that only workers could make the change that was needed. Birch pulled together a diverse crew, all sorts of workers, and over some 20 years, turned them into a party with a difference.

The dozens of political parties formed in the 1960s and 70s have come and gone, while the CPBML has grown up, is alive, well, and welcoming new recruits. One reason for its success has been that there is no division between lofty thinkers and humble foot-soldiers. Every CPBML member must be a thinker and a do-er. There are no paid officials.

The party is made up of ordinary working people who are helped by their participation in it to develop as leaders and earn the respect of fellow workers. The party vows never to put itself above the class which created it, but to serve the interests of the class.

Those who join us know we are in for a long haul, and most of our members stay for good. We leave it to the political Moonies to grab anyone, exploit them and spit them out. We don't tolerate zealots on the one hand or armchair generals on the other. What about you? If you are interested, get in touch. In the long run, the only thing harder than being a communist is not being one.

How to get in touch

* The above description of the party is taken from our pamphlet WHERE'S THE PARTY. You can order one, and a list of other publications, by sending an A5 s.a.e. to the address below.

- Subscribe to WORKERS, our monthly magazine, by sending £12 (cheques payable to Workers) to the address below.
- Go along to meetings in your part of the country, or join in study to help push forward the thinking of our class. You can ask to be put in touch by writing or sending a fax to the address below.

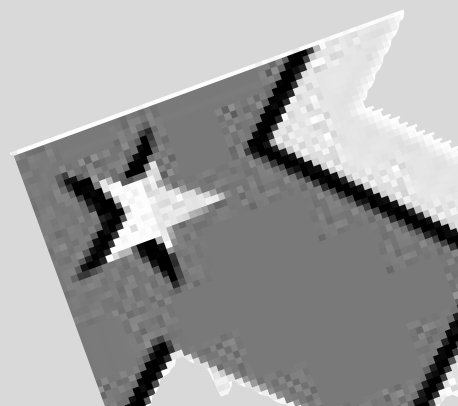
WORKERS

78 Seymour Avenue
London N17 9EB

www.workers.org.uk

phone/fax 020 8801 9543

e-mail info@www.workers.org.uk



Back to Front – It's not right

'There is no right to freedom from exploitation. If there were, there'd be no capitalism'

WITH A FANFARE worthy of the American election campaign in which we're all supposed to be so interested, the Human Rights Act was 'launched' on October 2nd. That a piece of legislation can be 'launched' tells us something — we don't launch ships any more so it must be our lawyers who are going to make us world-famous.

The Act is going to enable people to address wrongs more easily, the lawyers tell us. They claim it will enable British people to address wrongs here in Britain, and they won't have to go to Europe to do it. If so, perhaps this would mark a welcome turn away from the trend of recent years where to make case law everything has to go to Strasbourg or the Hague. We'll see what happens in practice. If you fail with your case, there's nothing in the HRA that will prevent you from complaining to the EU. People will fail, and they will complain, and so they'll go to Europe. What will have changed, apart from the fact that another layer of legal bureaucracy will have been added?

Working people in this (and every other country) have made legal progress without using the law. In fact they've only made progress when they've moved beyond the law, sometimes deliberately breaking it but more often simply by creating a state of affairs that then had to be legislated for in retrospect. This progress is sometimes called 'human rights', and

some human rights are legally protected. The most important ones are not.

There is no right to life, in spite of what the HRA says, protecting us from the threat of annihilation from nuclear weapons now almost exclusively in the hands of capitalist governments.

There is no right to work. If there were there'd be neither unemployment nor the need for most of the social services which are conjured into life because of it.

There is no right to freedom from exploitation. If there were, there'd be no capitalism.

The legislation continues the trend begun under Thatcher. This encouraged workers to be legally compliant, to use the law rather than break it or otherwise move beyond it, using trade unions as cheap sources of legal advice rather than as a vehicle for organisation, and using organisation for change.

Contrary to what lawyers will tell you, progress does not come through changing the law, and the deliberately created litigiousness of recent years, again imitating the Americans, is a sign of our weakness as a nation, not a sign of our strength and sophistication. It won't do anything to alleviate poverty, draw working people together, or redress the real wrongs, those inflicted by the owners and rulers of our country, who see no future here anyway.

What do WORKERS readers think? Do you agree? Let us know.

Subscriptions

Take a regular copy of WORKERS. The cost for a year's issues (no issue in August) delivered direct to you every month, including postage, is £12.

Name

Address

Postcode

Cheques payable to "WORKERS". Send along with completed subscriptions form (or photocopy) to WORKERS 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB

Publications

WHERE'S THE PARTY?

"If you have preconceived ideas of what a communist is, forget them and read this booklet. You may find yourself agreeing with our views." Free of jargon and instructions on how to think, this entertaining and thought-provoking pamphlet is an ideal introduction to communist politics. (send an A5 sae)

BRITAIN AND THE EU

Refutes some of the main arguments in favour of Britain's membership of the EU and proposes an independent future for our country. (50p plus an A5 sae)

To order...

Copies of these pamphlets and a fuller list of material can be obtained from CPBML PUBLICATIONS 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB. Prices include postage. Please make all cheques payable to "WORKERS".

Workers on the Web

• Highlights from this and other issues of Workers can be found on our website, www.workers.org.uk, as well as information about the CPBML, its policies, and how to contact us.