

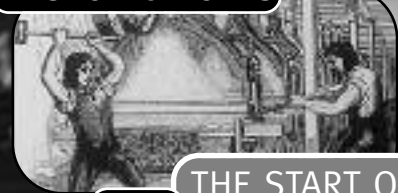
WORKERS

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HISTORIC NOTES



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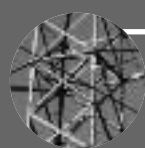
THE START OF NATIONAL ORGANISATION

TUC CONGRESS: ISSUES THAT CAN'T BE DODGED

JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY



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WORKERS

“ Neofascism in Westminster

WHEN THE TUC denounces something as “an outrageous attack on freedom of speech worthy of an authoritarian dictatorship”, you know things are bad. The TUC is referring to the ‘Transparency of Lobbying, non-party campaigning and Trade Union Administration Bill’, recently published. In particular, three clauses in that Bill draw the TUC’s fire:

First, the Bill changes the definition of what counts as campaigning. Current law only regulates activities designed with the intent of influencing an election result. The Bill will instead regulate activity that might be deemed to affect the result of an election. All sorts of organisations, not just unions, would be hit by this, as virtually any political activity on virtually any subject could be ruled unlawful in the year before a general election.

Second, it reduces the spending limit of third party campaigners to £390,000, more than halving the amount organisations can

spend on issues which may be under discussion at elections (not a short list, one might think).

Third, it includes staff time and office costs in expenditure limits, thereby hoping to eradicate support given, for example by unions, but which is hard to separate from election-related party-political support.

“[The Bill] has been drawn so widely that its chilling effect will be to shut down dissent for the year before an election,” said TUC General secretary Frances O’Grady.

If this Bill became law as it stands, not only would any trade union demonstration be illegal within 12 months of an election – but so would holding of a TUC Congress!

Those who have allowed union rights to be described as privileges are now reaping the whirlwind. This neofascist legislation must be eradicated before it gets to the statute books. ■

Hands off Syria!

VOICES IN the West demanding military aggression against Syria are growing louder and louder, as the “rebels”, including Al-Qaeda terrorists and foreign jihadists pouring across Syria’s borders, lose ground in the civil war.

Shamefully for Britain, the voice of William Hague is among the loudest calling for armed intervention in a country whose internal affairs should be none of our business. Hands off Syria! ■

Cover photo Andrew Wiard/www.andrew-wiard.info



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Now they're inspecting pay

SCHOOLS ARE told by the government they must have performance-based pay policies in place from September of this year and be activating the provisions by September 2014.

No surprise that the Department for Education should have decided the form of local and performance pay provisions. No shock either, that some school governing bodies – probably still a minority – are looking forward to exercising the additional powers this will afford them.

What is more unusual is that the school inspection service, Ofsted, has been given the responsibility for policing the application of performance and local school-based pay.

Inspectors will be required to judge the effectiveness of headteachers and governors in managing staff performance. They will demand evidence of appropriate differences between the pay of high and low performing teachers.

Using "anonymised" information, headteachers will have to demonstrate that there is a direct correlation between the performance of individual teachers and that of departments and the pay progression of the staff involved. There will be no increments, and mandatory pay points (national scales) for classroom teachers are being abolished.

There is nothing new about performance-related payments in teaching. What is new is the effective handing over of the role of pay arbiter to an organisation that ostensibly is assigned to the job of judging educational standards. If pay is to be determined at school level, then teachers should be asserting that the relationship is between them and their direct employers.

Teachers at various conferences this year have expressed their dissatisfaction with Ofsted, passing votes of no confidence in the Chief Inspector. But such gestures are no substitute for organising action against the rapidly burgeoning reach of this particular inspection regime. For instance, how to operate a campaign of non-co-operation with inspectors who demand access to pay records or those who criticise legitimately-negotiated local pay policies.

- London teachers, members of the NUT and NASUWT, are holding a Rally for Education on Saturday 14th September in London, 11am to 12.30pm at the Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre, Broad Sanctuary, SW1P 3EE. Teachers, parents, support staff and governors are all invited. Platform topics are: build enough schools for London; don't rank our children; no privatisation of schools; fair pay for teachers; kids need breaks – families need time; 68 is too late! ■

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

TAX

Salmond's doomed wheeze

SNP LEADER Alex Salmond wants to cut Scotland's rate of corporate tax to 3 per cent below that of the rest of Britain – which stands at 23 per cent but is due to fall to 20 per cent in 2015 – claiming that this will attract investment, boost growth and create 27,000 Scottish jobs over the next two decades. And there is no evidence that it would work.

Between 2006 and 2012, successive federal administrations in Canada slashed corporation tax from 21 per cent to 15 per cent claiming that companies would use the savings to hire more staff, invest in research and buy new equipment. Instead, they hoarded the cash and hiked pay for their executives, adding to the national deficit and paving the way for more cuts in spending.

Nobel-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz called corporation tax relief "just a gift to the corporations increasing inequality in our society".

ECONOMY

Recovery? What recovery?

DESPITE ALL the blather about recovery, green shoots and so on, Britain's GDP is still 3.9 per cent below what it was in 2008. The 2007-08 crisis caused a fall in GDP of 7.2 per cent. So we are years away from recovery, at the most optimistic.

Since 2010, the economy has only grown by 1.1 per cent. Industrial production is down almost 15 per cent from its 2008 level, construction output down almost 20 per cent, and private business investment down 9 per cent. ■

EUROBRIEFS

The latest from Brussels

Shovelling money into Brussels

BRITAIN'S OFFICIAL net contribution to the EU budget was £9.5 billion in 2012, against £2.9 billion in 2002. Other net contributions bring the current level to £12 billion. Our total net budgetary contribution since joining in 1973 is just under £240 billion (current value). The cumulative balance of payments deficit in trade with other EU members is almost £500 billion.

Eurozone jobless rate stays up

THE OVERALL unemployment rate in the EU dropped for the first time in two and a half years, falling from 11 per cent in May to 10.9 per cent in June. But in the eurozone, the unemployment rate is still 12.1 per cent. Youth unemployment rose by 0.1 per cent in both EU and eurozone, to 23.2 per cent and 23.9 per cent respectively.

Economies wrecked

THE BELGIAN government has adopted new measures to cut its deficit by a further 750 million euros this year and almost 2.4 billion euros next year in order to stick to its EU commitments. In Spain 5,069 companies declared themselves insolvent in the first half of 2013, up more than 22.5 per cent on the same period in 2012. The Irish economy contracted by 0.6 per cent in the first quarter of this year compared with the last quarter of 2012, with declines in household spending, investment and exports.

The exodus from Bulgaria

A SURVEY commissioned by the European Parliament has found that more than 80,000 Bulgarians are expected to leave their country permanently with a view to settling in Britain. Bulgarians are paid an average £3.15 per hour. Bulgaria, with just over seven million people, is the poorest country – and one of the most corrupt – in the EU.

About 100,000 Bulgarians already live in Britain – many more than the 30,000 in France or 75,000 in Germany – despite Britain being further away. The number of Romanian and Bulgarian workers in Britain increased by 15 per cent over the past year to a record 112,000. Some 14,000 extra people from Eastern Europe's states found jobs here last year. ■



July 2013: Unite continues its anti-blacklisting campaign at Edgware Road Crossrail site.

Photo: Workers

Blacklisting fight continues

UNITE HAS continued its protests at Crossrail sites in London against the illegal sacking of a shop steward for trade union activities. The protests began at the end of August 2012, and since they started subcontractor EIS has admitted it acted illegally.

It has also emerged that since 2009 BFK (BAM Ferrovial Kier) has paid £70,000 to a sinister anti-union organisation for 3,200 names of construction workers, and that eight major contractors, including the head of industrial relations at Crossrail, have been involved in blacklisting, with the connivance of London mayor Boris Johnson.

At the heart of the dispute is the issue of dangerous cabling and insufficient safety equipment for workers on board a tunnelling machine. Unite has taken its campaign to the HQ of BAM in Amsterdam and to Ferrovial in Barcelona. At least one shareholder withdrew from Ferrovial after hearing Unite's evidence. Unite will continue to target shareholders of BFK until they have a formal undertaking that the union can organise at Crossrail. ■

GREECE

Pay cuts, then the sack

ABOUT 25,000 Greek civil servants are to have their pay cut before being sacked or moved to other jobs, including 2,000 teachers and 3,500 local police, who are to become part of the national force.

About 4,000 state workers, including teachers and local government workers, are due to be cut by the end of the year. Greece's unemployment rate is already at 27.6 per cent, up from 23 per cent last year and including 65 per cent of 15-24s. A further 11,000 civil servants will have their pay cut next year pending redeployment – if jobs are available – or dismissal.

These new cuts are a condition of

receiving a further bailout loan of 6.8 billion euros. International creditors say the reform programme is too slow. Previous measures have already resulted in salaries and pensions being slashed.

Public sector union ADEDY has called a new strike for 28 August. This follows an earlier half-day strike in August when thousands of civil servants, municipal workers and teachers demonstrated in Athens, with even police members taking part, and a 24-hour strike, the fourth this year, which brought many hospitals, flights and trains to a standstill. Protests also took place in Thessaloniki.

Unions accuse the government of abolishing whole organisations such as the municipal police and the bodies which guard state schools. The Greek economy has dropped 25 per cent since 2007. ■

ZERO HOURS

Wigan bakers to strike

WORKERS AT the Hovis (Premier Foods) Bakery in Wigan have voted to strike after the management followed up pay and hours cuts, and eventually redundancies, with the introduction of zero-hours contracts for workers brought in to make up the shortfall.

Three sets of strikes have been set for August and September, and into the start of October, with more to come if the company

fails to reach an agreement.

The workers, members of the Bakers Food and Allied Workers Union, "are determined not to allow the company to set precedents, undermine current terms and conditions, create a two-tier workforce and leave a poor legacy for subsequent generations of people who may be employed at Hovis in the future", says the union.

- Figures collated by the House of Commons Library and released in August reveal that real wages (after inflation) in Britain fell by 5.5 per cent over the past three years. ■

What makes a cartel?

WHEN IS competition not competition? When ferry companies clash over market interests in crossing the Straits of Dover. Sea France Ferries, part of the nationalised French rail network, went into liquidation in 2012 after the EU decided its fuel subsidies were illegal state intervention. Eurotunnel then bought the French ferries.

Eurotunnel has now been instructed by the Competition Commission that the combination of the Chunnel plus three ferries is monopolistic. Eurotunnel and its ferries have 49 per cent of the market, P&O Ferries have the rest. The Competition Commission says having two competing ferry companies and a tunnel stitching up the market leads to price increases. Better to have only one ferry company and one tunnel. Supposedly capitalist competition brings prices down? Britain's Competition Commission and the French equivalent, using the same data, have arrived at exactly opposing conclusions? Who owns P&O Ferries? Dubai World investment interests.

If having differing providers in the ferry world is deemed uncompetitive, monopolistic and will increase prices, then the energy market provides another twist. Accountancy giant Ernst & Young advises that if the big six energy companies were reduced to the big four, then energy costs would come down— because company overheads would be reduced and the reduction would be passed on to us, the infamous "trickle down to consumers" savings.

Why stop at four? Why not have one publicly owned company supplying energy rather than the ethos of profit? Ernst & Young does not regard the big six or four as a cartel because if it did then all similar operations across every aspect of British industry would also be crying "cartel" from the rooftops. A mere handful of major multinational accountancy firms dominate accountancy and finance across the world – Ernst & Young, KPMG, PWC, Goldman Sachs etc. ■

HOUSING

Stay at home

HOUSE PRICES rose faster in July than any time since 2006, and lending to first-time buyers was at its highest since 2007 – prompting housing charity Shelter to estimate that on average a single Briton will have to save for more than 14 years (29.5 years in London) simply to get enough for a deposit of 20 per cent on a property. A young couple with children would need 12 years (20 years in London).

Even with help from the government's Help to Buy scheme, which can provide for a deposit of up to 5 per cent, a home is still out of the reach of most people.

The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors credited the government's Help to Buy scheme with sparking this new

market activity. London freesheet CITY A.M. crowed on 13 August, "The property market is steaming ahead of the rest of the economy, as mortgage lending and a surge of buyers in July drive the UK's emerging recovery." They still can't see a bubble growing, even after the last property bubble burst.

Many young people face the prospect of living with their parents until well into their thirties. Renting hardly seems a viable alternative either, with latest figures showing that rents rose 3.5 per cent in the past year to an average of £737 a month, the third highest level on record.

The country's largest letting agency, LSL, predicts rents could average £800 a month by 2015, which would represent a rise of 21 per cent since 2010. By 2015, it says, 20 per cent of the population could be living in the private rented sector. ■

WHAT'S ON

Coming soon

SEPTEMBER

Saturday 1 September, 11am to 3.30pm.
Burston, near Diss

Annual rally to celebrate time school children struck in 1914 to support their teachers, sacked by the rural squirarchy for organising agricultural workers.

Tuesday 24 September, 7.30pm. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL.

"EU Referendum Now!"

CPBML public meeting. Cameron is promising a referendum a few years from now. Miliband is being "firm" in his subservience to the European Union, just like Blair. The view of British workers is clear – but why is it not reflected in our unions' policies? Everybody welcome.

WATER

Price rises

THE CONSUMER organisation Which? says water bills have risen by 64 per cent in the past ten years, even before the average rise of 3.5 per cent in April this year – Thames Water leading the pack with a hike of 5.5 per cent. Wessex Water, owned by a Malaysian power company, had the biggest price rise over the decade – 83 per cent.

Only 38 per cent of the average bill is the cost of supplying water. About a third goes to replacing fixed assets such as pipes and sewers and associated finance costs. The rest is profit.

Which? has also found that increasingly our water companies are foreign-controlled. Anglian Water is owned by private equity firm 3i and Australian and Canadian pension and infrastructure funds; Southern Water by an Australian pension fund, a US infrastructure fund UBS and a Hong Kong investment fund.

Northumbrian Water is effectively owned by Hong Kong-based tycoon Li Ka-shing, who in October also bought gas supplier Wales and West Utilities, which provides gas for a quarter of Britain's homes. Thames Water's shareholders include an Australian bank and the sovereign investment funds of China Corporation and Abu Dhabi. Yorkshire Water is part owned by the Singapore Government Investment Corporation and Deutsche Bank.

In contrast Welsh water supplier Glas Cymru has no shareholders, and issues bonds and uses its profits to fund investment. ■

Why there's no plain cigarette packaging

THE PRESS have treated the government's failure to adopt plain cigarette packaging, as in, for example, Australia, as a national issue – but with the focus on how far political advisor Lynton Crosby influenced Cameron's decision. The much broader international trade context and the implications for future legislation remain hidden.

And yet a hidden trade agenda is central to the failure. The World Trade Organization (WTO) is backing multinational corporations which use free trade agreements to circumvent national legislation. Included in this free trade agenda are "investor protection" commitments designed to allow corporations to sue sovereign states directly.

Tobacco companies have a record of using international agreements to further their interests. In November 2011 British American Tobacco and Japanese Tobacco, supported by Philip Morris and various other tobacco corporations, tried to use intellectual property agreements to stop the Australian government introducing plain cigarette packaging. The case failed when the Australian High Court judged in favour of the Australian government.

Now the companies are back on the legal route, this time using WTO regulations. But since only states can take a dispute to the WTO, Australia's plain packaging has been challenged by a country which conveniently has Philip Morris subsidiaries (though almost no trade with Australia) – Ukraine. Australia has rejected the complaint once but will be forced to respond when Ukraine comes back a second time.

When the British government pulled back on plain packaging legislation, it was said to be waiting to "see what happens" with Australia. In fact, the discussion has been surprisingly drawn out, as anti-tobacco health groups have not let go. Still, conveniently for government, the discussion has been limited to the national level.

A trade issue

But this is definitively an international trade issue. The British government is utterly committed to so-called "free trade" on behalf of the City's transnational financial services. So is the EU. Neither wants anything that is counter to "free trade", especially when opposition to "free trade" would effectively be supporting Australia in this dispute.

And the corporations are planning to sidetrack even the WTO. One key weapon in their fight is a mechanism in free trade deals called Investor State Dispute Settlement (ISDS). These mechanisms allow "investors" (ie, corporations) to sue states directly for loss of all anticipated profits, and to do so in jurisdictions of their own choosing. So a tobacco company could go to Ukraine to sue Britain, for example. This means that once a free trade deal with ISDS has been signed, it stops states from exercising control over how it is implemented and prevents any backtracking.

The EU, on our behalf and behind closed doors, is incorporating ISDS in all its trade deals, including the big US/EU deal. This will make Britain far more vulnerable than Australia has been, because deposed Australian PM Julia Gillard refused to include ISDS in her country's trade deals.

Lynton Crosby's lobbying firm has a contract with Philip Morris International, though he is not saying how much for. But this is a bigger issue than simple lobbying. It is a question of whether we let our government and the EU hand over our health policy – or any other policy – to transnational corporations working with dodgy foreign jurisdictions. And it exposes the lie of "free trade". ■

Monitor, the Care Quality Commission, NHS Litigation Authority or the National Commissioning Board in all its iterations can't inspect

Only health service workers

AFTER THE Francis Report into North Staffordshire General Hospital was published WORKERS pointed out that only one group of people can put right the quality of care in hospitals – we who work in the NHS. We must take responsibility for this, not abrogate it as we have done with our pay and pensions. Monitor, the Care Quality Commission, NHS Litigation Authority or the National Commissioning Board in all its iterations can't inspect quality in the service at a distance. We are the custodians, and a good starting point would be to take ownership of the "8 Ambitions" that came out of the review into the quality of care provided by 14 hospital trusts in England led by the National Medical Director, Professor Bruce Keogh. It is an excellent report* and we commend it to you.

Pockets of good practice were found in all 14 of the trusts reviewed alongside major deficiencies to be addressed. Keogh has ensured the public are now not just informed participants in a particular process but active assessors and regulators of the NHS. This represents a turning point in our health system from which there must be no return.

He concluded that over 90 per cent of deaths in these hospitals happen when patients are admitted in an emergency. Workforce issues included high rates of sickness absence and a heavy reliance on agency staff to compensate for large numbers of vacant posts, particularly among doctors and nurses. Inadequate numbers of trained nursing staff were frequently cited in certain ward areas.

Pressures

The main challenge in A&E Units resulted from pressures generated by the large increases in the numbers of elderly patients with complex and multifactorial problems who have diminishing access to care in the community. One of the primary causes of high mortality rates in these 14 hospitals was related to the provision of urgent and emergency care for older people. Five of the organisations have had medical staff training removed from the organisation by the General Medical Council because they were unable to meet the required standards.

The 14 trusts were reviewed on the basis that for the past two consecutive years they were statistical outliers on either the Summary Hospital Level Mortality Index (SHMI) or the Hospital Standardised Mortality Ratio (HSMR). But as Robert Francis (the QC who chaired the public inquiry into the Stafford hospital deaths) said, the use of HSMR and SHMI measures to quantify actual numbers of avoidable deaths is "misleading and a potential misuse of figures to extrapolate from them a conclusion that any particular range of numbers of deaths were caused by inadequate care". A study has now been commissioned to determine the relationship between excess mortality rates and actual avoidable deaths. Jeremy Hunt, the Secretary of State for Health, should await the outcome of it.

It is time for a considered debate, not one fuelled by gratuitous assertions aimed at securing a Parliamentary majority in 2015. And not one led by the current Health Secretary, who for example in January this year authorised the sale of our 80 per cent stake in the blood products company Plasma Resources. This company, which supplies the NHS with treatments for haemophilia and immune deficiency, is now controlled by Bain Capital, a US private equity firm with no

*www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/bruce-keogh/review/Documents/outcomes/keogh-review-final-report.pdf

...ion, NHS Litigation Authority or the National Commissioning
 ...ect quality in the NHS at a distance...

Workers can be the custodians of quality

shareholders or public accountability.

Between 2000 and 2010 the NHS was rightly focused on rebuilding capacity and improving access after decades of Thatcherite neglect. The key issue then was not whether people were dying in our hospitals avoidably but dying while waiting for treatment.

Spending on the NHS more than doubled in revenue terms from £40 billion to over £100 billion a year. We witnessed the biggest capital modernisation and building programme ever seen in the history of the service – but PFI-driven, lining the pockets of private companies and leading to the huge unsustainable debts crippling the trusts today.

High performance

Waiting lists and waiting times fell dramatically across all disciplines, including A&E and Cancer treatment, with performance close to the OECD pinnacle. The service boasted the highest-paid doctors and nurses in Western Europe, and during the decade average mortality rates in NHS hospitals fell by about 30 per cent (including in the hospitals under review) – even more statistically significant taking into account the increasing complexity of treatment and diagnostic intervention.

Now we have a Secretary of State who



Photo: John Harris/reportdigital.co.uk

Only health workers can ensure good standards of care. Above: Unison general secretary Dave Prentis talking to union members at Mid-Staffordshire General Hospital.

attacks the service and the people in it, for whom he is accountable. Pay is frozen, pension contributions hiked out of all proportion, funding “flat-lined” in spite of a 3.5 per cent demographic pressure. Unachievable cost improvements are set to support public expenditure constraints in pursuit of mythical “austerity” targets all at

the expense of patients, their carers and relatives. He will realise his (and Blair’s) vision of health care as a network of privately owned providers but paid for by us through taxes if we permit it. Allow this to continue, and the NHS will be lost. And with it the great social achievement of the British working class. ■



CPBML/Workers

Public Meeting, London

Tuesday 24 September, 7.30 pm

“EU referendum Now!”

Bertrand Russell Room, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL. Nearest tube Holborn.

Cameron is promising a referendum a few years from now. Miliband is being “firm” in his subservience to the European Union, just like Blair. The view of British workers is clear – but why is it not reflected in our unions’ policies? Come and discuss. Everybody welcome.

As the TUC prepares for its 145th annual get-together, we look at a movement prefer not to talk about – real organisation, real democracy.

The issues that the TUC and the trade unions

A WHITE ELEPHANT is a possession that is useless or troublesome, especially one that is expensive to maintain or difficult to dispose of. And, oh joy – it's that time of year and the Trades Union Congress has many of these animals on display as it gathers at its annual congress in Bournemouth this month, 145 years young.

One that comes immediately to mind is the "industry" within trade unions that keeps them meeting notional concepts of democratic engagement by generating annual conferences and congresses with wordy motions addressing the woes of the world.

But the real challenge is not wordy motions but deeds; not analysis but change. It is worth pausing to consider what democratic engagement is when most unions' internal elections for national executive councils return pathetic voting figures of between 6 and 8 per cent.

Industrial action ballots vary but most feature only a minority vote, and then the membership army is not on the field.

Engagement

So what is democratic engagement? Not so much a white elephant – more an elephant in the room. There is a mind-set that drives too many TUC motions: concepts of decency, doing the right thing, do-gooding, fair play, fair pay, equality in an unequal world, rights guaranteed by the state, structures which do it for us not us doing things for ourselves, having a long list of injustices against the working class by employers and governments at home and abroad. Every other conceivable tick-box question-and-answer is included to send us home with a self-satisfied glow. Lots of white elephants there, then.

Only one motion up for discussion in Bournemouth actually pierces to the heart of the dangers from the European Union facing Britain, the British working class and our industrial future: number 16, "Referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union", moved by the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT). A handful of other motions try to address the future and the need for industrial, educational and



Voting at last year's TUC Congress in Brighton, 10 September 2012.

health planning by indicating the need for a new national plan for Britain around energy, for the NHS and for education.

The separation of the trade unions from their roots in the workplace has resulted in too many of them pretending they are promoting so-called progressive politics which represent no one but the cliques that have taken control of the fast-emptying house of trade unionism. The repeated call to organise in the "community" signals that we are not organising at work.

Organising at work means concentrating on the things that unite us and create collective issues: wages, safety, jobs, equality etc. But without the focal point of communality at work, you fall back on issues-based campaigning, which is here today but gone tomorrow. It's

epitomised by one London hospital that has six differing local campaigns to save it even though it is not really under threat!

Parallel organisations

The opening up of trade union membership to those not in work, without trade or workplace identity, effectively creates a parallel organisation to the traditional labour movement. Hence the creation, or re-creation, split and divide and then re-forming of phoney so-called people's political assemblies, people's charters, people's parliaments, citizens' organisations, self-styled community campaigns etc.

All this is based on ego, sectarianism and ultra-left politics that see the working class as sheep to be corralled by their betters into organisations generating much

at the real issues facing the Congress that many in the
 democracy, real strength, real challenges...

ns can no longer duck



Photo: Andrew Wiard/www.andrew-wiard.info

noise and hot air but avoiding the real job – to organise in the place of work. They are desperate to have a general strike under any name but “General Strike” because they all recognise that the last one in 1926 was lost. The working class have learnt that lesson, but the infantile left haven’t.

Organising at the place of work means changing workers’ thinking – it is a ceaseless struggle. It means remembering that class consciousness, dangerously weak at present, is the most important unifying factor in our lives. Not race, ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation but class. A class consciousness has been lost over the past 30 years by the conscious connivance of many in the trade unions looking for easy solutions, the quick fixes to declining membership, the stupidity of importing so-called organising models from

other countries and the deliberate importing of diversions into our ranks usually under the guise of so-called progressive thinking.

All the strands of working class power which made us strong – unity, workplace organisation, solidarity, collectivity – have been identified by the employers and targeted through their successive governments of the past 100 years. Fragmentation of the workplace and workforce, casualisation of employment, have taken us back to before the 1890s battles that defeated these measures. We have seen the establishing of unprecedented legal straitjackets on the trade unions, permanent assault on any conceived workplace strength with a diversion that somehow phoney assurances of legal rights protect us. Outsourcing and privatisation, division and competition among our own ranks create weakness that the employer exploits.

Illusion

The illusion that technology will replace organising, or that so-called social media will replace face to face organising, is demonstrated by two examples. Most trade unions now recruit more members purely online than face-to-face in the workplace. They do not know who these recruits are or where they are or why they’ve joined the union. Individualism not collective reasoning equates to online recruitment. The concept of trade unionism as a collective resolution of problems is replaced with an individualist approach to the union. It is easier for some to depress a keyboard character to vote in an election rather than to attend a meeting and take face-to-face responsibility for a decision.

The failure to fight for wages (see WORKERS, May 2012) is another nonsense. Not having had a coherent pay strategy across public and private sectors has reduced trade unions’ room for manoeuvre and led to gesture actions against the so-called austerity strategy of this government and every other government in the European Union.

Unless you have a strategy to destroy the European Union, not reform it, not

“Organising at work means concentrating on the things that unite us...”

recreate it on “socialist” principles but destroy it by withdrawal, then there is no strategy that will defeat the austerity programmes.

Likewise instead of creating a plethora of pay fights with employers, as has always been the tradition in Britain, we have been hooked on wretched US community campaigning tactics for “the living wage”, or the “London living wage” or “the living wage plus”.

This strategy is slowly undermining the achievements of national collective bargaining arrangements by assisting the employers to depress wages through setting not a new ceiling but an acceptable minimum like the national minimum wage. It also splits workers over some heart wrenching liberal appeal that distinguishes low-paid workers from fictional better-off or well-paid workers. Instead of unifying us it divides us.

If we want to achieve improvements in wages we have to bargain, negotiate and force the employer to cough up.

Another issue ignored at the TUC: if you want wages you have to fight for them. That involves struggle and involves loss. There is no point engaging in struggle that results in defeat but there is a growing fatalism that nothing can be done. Plenty can be done if we pick our time, place, issue and employer.

The other fatalism, which is growing, is that this government is here for good because the old false safety valve of the 2015 general election is already bust with Miliband and Labour. The truth is that capitalist government has always been with us and always will until we think and organise as a working class for total change.

So how many elephants are there sitting there in the room? ■

If Britain is to stay an advanced and industrialised country with with the planning to back it up. And it needs all the power source

Why nuclear has got to be part of Britain's



Photo: AnglianArt/shutterstock.com

Sizewell A (on left) and B (with dome) on the Suffolk Coast. Sizewell B is due to operate into the 2030s, but Sizewell A was taken out of service

BRITAIN NEEDS a broad and balanced electricity generation capability – including nuclear power – if it is to stand any chance of avoiding energy blackouts. But successive governments have ducked the issue for decades.

Earlier this year the government published a series of papers – “Nuclear Industry Vision Statement”, “Long-Term Nuclear Strategy”, “UK’s Nuclear Future” and so on – presenting its and the nuclear industry’s perspective on what should

happen. It’s a wish list for Britain’s nuclear industrial capacity over the next 40+ years.

Government thinking includes a series of proposals: safety; security of supply; a balanced energy supply mix; dealing with waste; exports and the market. The nuclear industry promises job creation, resurgent industrial exports and wealth creation.

All these issues need consideration. And yet the government is still avoiding

its core responsibility to provide energy for Britain. That’s no surprise, given that its mantra for nuclear power is, “affordable, deliverable, value for money...no public funding” – the same formula it applies to all public service infrastructure build.

Fiction

It sings the praises of the positive side of nuclear construction – being at the “top table” of nuclear nations, growth of high

any level of proper civilisation, it needs a proper energy policy, whatever it can find – including nuclear...

energy mix



... in 2006 and is being decommissioned.

quality manufacturing industrial supply chains, job creation, wealth creation, export-led recovery, and so on. But all it can offer is the pure fiction of competition. The cartel-dominated “market” is primary.

Its Energy Market Reform strategy is the latest in the government’s attempts to argue that the privatisation of energy supply works. It promises affordability, delivery, value for money, etc – but rules that the control of construction, supply

and distribution must stay in the hands of the energy cartels.

Every day that passes sees a sop here to wind farms, a sop there to renewables, a sop to decarbonisation, crocodile tears for consumer bills, science fiction-like solutions and so forth. Lip service is paid to clean coal technology, but coal is dead in Tory minds (and Labour’s too).

The gap widens

Every day that passes sees the gap between generating capacity and demand widening and the crunch getting nearer. The market is supposed to deliver investment running into hundreds of billions of pounds to build the new generation required but we never see it.

If the commitment to nuclear were real then it would be shown in practice. For years, though, government thinking – Labour and Conservative – was to manage nuclear’s rundown and closure, and then sort out waste management. Hence the conscious refusal to make a decision on renewal of nuclear stations during the past 20 years.

Now the government’s hand is being forced by the evidence of a generation shortfall between what we produce and what we can and must produce. It is being forced by the energy cartels knowing full well that public money will fund the construction, and that competition is effectively dead. There is no ‘market’ when those who build and run nuclear power stations are limited to half a dozen companies in the world.

The choices are stark: nuclear power currently produces 22 per cent of Britain’s energy. By 2023 all of our current nuclear stations will have been closed down. At the same time, as a result of the twinned madness of the EU’s Large Combustion Plant Directive and Britain’s Carbon Tax, coal-fired power stations will progressively be shut down, making us more and more dependent on gas-fired plants and the very intermittent power gained from renewable energy sources such as fantasy windmills, at just the time when the closure programme for ageing nuclear plants begins in earnest.

The politics of nuclear safety

THE GOVERNMENT and previous privatisations of the nuclear industry have seriously compromised safety – not in the technology or management of the industry but in the outsourcing and fragmentation of control. Profit is primary, rather than a joined-up coordinated industrial strategy. Research and design are fragmented, victims of competition between generators.

New bodies are proposed for regulating the nuclear industry in the future, but no regulatory body for any privatised industry has had teeth or has ever been able to deliver for the public. This has been the reality since the gas and water industries were privatised in the 1970s and 1980s. The Office of Nuclear Regulation will be as effective in managing the industry as Parliament is in rooting out corruption and sleaze in its own affairs.

The recent planning permission granted to extend Lydd airport in Kent shows how things work. Here, the government allowed the creation of Lydd International Airport, owned by Qatari business interests, with Dungeness nuclear power stations in the flight path – against all planning and safety advice. ■

Only reliable sources of energy allow a nation to enjoy the fruits of civilisation. Britain’s energy supply industry mix – gas, coal, oil, renewables, nuclear etc have been perverted by privatisation and market driven ideology since the 1980s; the mind set in the energy industries is profit, not power for the people.

Unless we produce power from the

Continued on page 12

Continued from page 11

full range of possibilities, including nuclear, the lights will go off. The posturing and pretence of the government and energy cartels is playing poker with the guarantee of energy supply in Britain. Now the people of Britain are going to have to force the issue.

Interrupt your power supply and everything will fall apart. No electricity – and vital aspects of everyday life immediately shut down including factories, hospitals, schools, trains, tubes, lifts, heating, treatment of sewage, television, street lighting – but much more as well. Power cuts will send us into a new dark age.

Emotion and facts

Very little discussion about nuclear power has been free of emotion. That's understandable, but not pardonable. So here are some facts.

First, Britain's nuclear industry in its sixth decade of operation has the best

safety record of any energy sector provider. Modern nuclear power stations are not just designed to be safe – they are very safe.

Much has been made about the explosions at the Fukushima power station in Japan following the earthquake and tsunami, forgetting that there were two nuclear stations at Fukushima.

Fukushima 1 was 40 years old when it was hit by the earthquake. But it had a sister station, a decade newer. This withstood the quake and the tsunami, and is still producing power.

Nuclear power is a mature technology and has proven reliability. It has been developed over 50 years and the latest reactors are reliable, clean and efficient. Generating electricity by nuclear power is a round-the-clock operation and is not subject to the vagaries of wind, sun or tides. It can be fine-tuned to meet peak demand and will not let us down in the depths of winter.

Generating electricity by nuclear reactors does not produce carbon dioxide,

the principal greenhouse gas. No wonder a number of keen environmentalists – such as George Monbiot and James Lovelock (inventor of the “Gaia” theory) – support nuclear power as part of the “green” solution to Britain's power needs.

Looking backwards

There is, of course, a hard core of “green” activists who believe that nuclear is anathema, and that anything is preferable to nuclear power – even rolling modern technological society back towards pre-industrial times. They will never be convinced by logic or facts, but they must be isolated and exposed. There is nothing progressive about opposing nuclear power in principle.

It will not be easy to create the nuclear generating industry that Britain requires. Decades of neglect have left devastating skill shortages. The workforce – for construction, engineering and management – is ageing. An estimated 70 per cent of those employed face retirement by 2025, a date very close to

Meet the Party

The Communist Party of Britain's new series of London public meetings begins on Tuesday 24 September, with another meeting on 12 November and further dates to be arranged; all are held in the Bertrand Russell room, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, London WC1R 4RL, nearest Tube Holborn, and start at 7.30 pm. Other meetings are held around Britain. All meetings are advertised in What's On, see page 5.

M The theme of the first meeting, on Tuesday 24 September, is: “EU Referendum Now!”. Details of further meetings will be announced in WORKERS and at www.workers.org.uk.

M The Party's annual London May Day rally is always held on May Day itself, regardless of state bank holidays – in 2014, Thursday 1 May, in Conway Hall, Holborn. There will also be May Day meetings elsewhere in the country.

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



A LEAFLET from the Communist Party spells out the links between membership of the EU and the drive to devolution. It provides sharp, reasoned argument why both are bad for Britain and bad for British workers.

For copies, send a self-addressed A4 envelope (with large stamp), to CPBML, 78 Seymour Avenue, London N17 9EB.



the present run-down date for the existing 16 ageing nuclear stations.

There is huge potential for new job creation. Along with associated industrial supply chains, there could be 40,000 to 60,000 new jobs on top of the estimated 40,000 employed in 2013. It is estimated that between 85 and 95 per cent of the supply chain provision could be sourced from British firms.

Yet nowhere in government rhetoric is there reference to these workers in the government's view of nuclear power – leave alone to planning their long-term skills training and development. Tens of thousands of skilled engineering workers do not appear by magic overnight but must be trained, replenished, developed over decades.

Exports

Nuclear could also be at the heart of a huge export industry for Britain. Globally, the value of the projected new build of nuclear reactors stands at £930 billion, and rising. Add to this a global decommissioning market of an estimated £250 billion. As Britain leads in decommissioning skills, and the nuclear

recycling industry is effectively based in Britain, a further raft of energy industry skills would open up huge opportunities for development.

So given the political will, there is abundant potential to provide the world with low carbon energy supply, release climate change threats and lift billions of people out of fuel and rural poverty.

Strategy

But the political will is not present. Crucially, workers have absented themselves from a key question they cannot afford to shun – the question of power generation and power supply. Now we are being haunted by our error as the stakes get higher and the power cuts draw closer. Fundamental decisions must be taken soon. We need a strategy to take us through the next few decades.

We can't spectate idly at our potential national demise. We live here, we are the nation, we must enforce – and speedily – the decisive actions to generate the levels of power necessary to sustain our economic and social life. The call to end the current lunacy must come from workers across the land. ■

Blackmail at Hinkley Point

FRENCH STATE energy company EDF has put on hold plans to build two reactors at Hinkley Point, Somerset, while it negotiates with the government on a contract for the price of the electricity that would be produced by the power station.

The company is negotiating a so-called Contract for Difference, which would set a "strike price": if the market price for electricity goes below the strike price, the government will make up the difference. If it goes above it, the company repays the government.

The government tried in June to sweeten the deal by offering cheap credit for £10 billion of the £14 billion project, but EDF is holding on for the best price it can get. The CEO said he was "in no hurry" to agree the strike price and was unconcerned if negotiations failed.

Press reports indicate a sizeable gap between the strike price offered by the government (£80 to £85 a megawatt-hour) and that demanded by the company (£95 to £100 a megawatt-hour). Energy secretary Ed Davey has said he is "not going to budge an inch" on strike price, and hinting that if EDF can't reach a deal the government will make one with Japanese reactor builder Hitachi.

Meanwhile, the project is stalled and EDF has cut spending on the plant, which has already cost about £1 billion. The company has said that there will be a "refocusing" of services to cut costs and a reduction in numbers working on the project. Originally about 25,000 jobs were to be created during the building phase, with 900 permanent jobs for the running of the plant. Now the GMB union has warned there may be no prospect of construction starting this year. And it will be 2020 at the earliest before Hinkley's new reactors start providing power for Britain. ■

Deemed not respectable enough by the labour movement's later dismissed "Luddites" from their accounts....

The early 1800s: national workers' organisation

IT WAS DURING the first half of the 1800s that a nationally organised working class first emerged throughout Britain with centres in for example Sheffield, Birmingham, Leeds, Nottingham, Glasgow and the West Country.

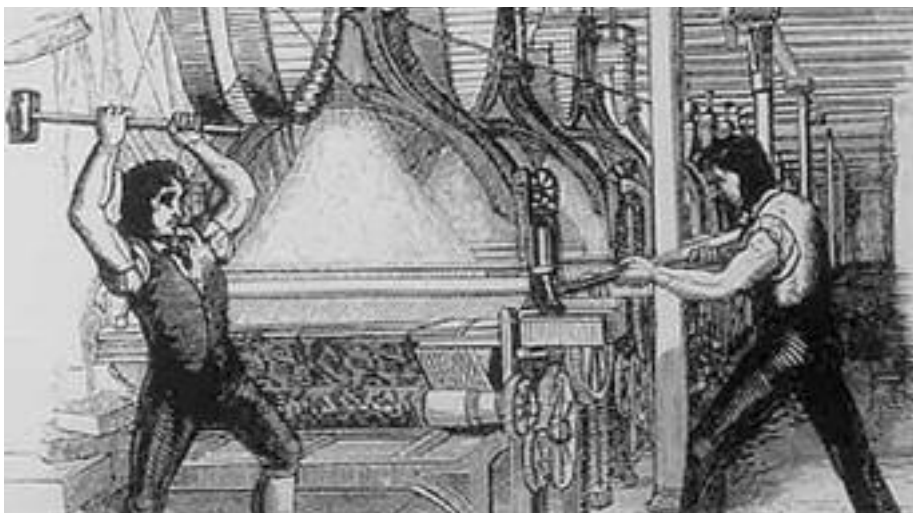
The early vanguard were the clothing workers, known as "croppers", who had become strong enough to enforce a closed shop in many of the workshops in Wiltshire and Yorkshire. Parliament by 1806 had been warned that a croppers system "exists more in general consent to the few simple rules of their union". Until then croppers had evaded all chance of conviction for "combination". They had formed themselves into a "club" and had accumulated over £1000 to provide for their members in the event of sickness preventing them from being able to work.

The croppers were also in correspondence with the cotton weavers, who through combination had formed an impressive nationwide union that existed from 1809 to 1812. With its centre in Glasgow it had strongholds nationally including Manchester and throughout Lancashire, Cumbria, Scotland, and Carlisle.

Strike

By 1811 the weavers could raise 40,000 signatures in Manchester, 30,000 in Scotland and 7,000 in Bolton. A disciplined and well supported weavers' strike from Aberdeen to Carlisle then took place in 1812 with the aim of securing a minimum wage. The strike was eventually broken when the Glasgow leaders were arrested and jailed, with sentences ranging from four to eighteen months. The ruling class feared Britain was on a direct road to an open insurrection, so unions had to be broken.

Responding to what had happened to the Glasgow weavers, Luddism, which had been first deployed in Wiltshire in 1802, then took up the baton. It moved out from the grievance of the croppers to more general revolutionary aims among weavers, colliers and cotton spinners. "It is a movement of the people's own" was how William Cobbett, a political commentator of the day, described it.



Contemporary portrayal of machine-breaking.

The Luddites are normally portrayed as a lunatic irresponsible fringe that stood in the way of progress by trying to wreck factory machinery. But Luddite opposition to machinery was far from unthinking. Along with machine breaking they made proposals for the gradual introduction of mechanisation, with alternative employment to be found for displaced workers, or by a tax of 6d. per yard upon cloth dressed by machinery, to be used as a fund for the unemployed seeking work. All of the proposals were rejected by the employers.

The focus in portraying Luddites simply as machine breakers was initially founded by Fabian historians (the Hammonds and the Webbs) writing in the late 1890s and early 1900s. The Fabians took it upon themselves to pioneer the written historical study of the early labour movement. Their aim was to portray the period 1800 to 1850 in the narrow context of the subsequent Parliamentary Reform Acts used to widen the vote from the 1860s onwards and to link this to the growth of the Labour Party during the early 1900s. They did not see Luddites as satisfactory forerunners of the "Labour movement". So Luddites merited neither sympathy nor close attention.

Liberal and conservative historians decided among themselves during the early 1900s that "history" would deal fairly with the Tolpuddle Martyrs but the men

executed for Luddism between 1812 to 1819 should be forgotten – or, if remembered, thought of as simpletons or people tainted with criminal folly. The Fabian view persists to this day in many quarters. But the facts tell a different story.

Politics

Rather than simpletons "Luddites and Politics were closely connected" shouted Thomas Savage in 1817 just before he and five other Luddites were executed at Leicester. In November 1816, 14 Luddites went to the scaffold in York defiantly singing "Behold the Saviour of Mankind". Asked whether the 14 should all be hung simultaneously on a single beam the presiding judge replied, "Well no, sir, I consider they would hang more comfortably on two." Their relatives were not allowed to bury the bodies.

A similar thing happened in Nottingham when 3,000 mourners went to the funeral after the hanging of Jem Towle, a leading Luddite – but magistrates prevented the funeral service being read. A friend later said, "It did not signify to Jem, for he wanted no Parsons about him."

The Luddites, from 1812 to 1819, were the first to launch the agitations which led to the 10-hour movement during the 1840s. It was they who said that if a new machine were to be introduced the extra value generated should mean workers do fewer

historians – they tion arrives

hours for the same or more pay or be redeployed. In particular they argued that child labour should be curtailed in factories as part of negotiating the introduction of new machinery. In “polite circles” at the time, factory child labour was considered “busy, industrious and useful”.

The employing class, its government and its snivelling apologists hated the Luddites so much because of their thought-through views on political economy. It was these ideas, not the cowardly gradualism encouraged by the Fabians, that eventually led to self-confident British trade unionism. In keeping with the recent victory over Napoleon and his designs on Europe, the call by workers in 1816 was “Ludds do your duty well. It’s a Waterloo job, by God.”

The Luddites were renowned for their organisational skills, and through their transition towards collective bargaining after 1819 applied those skills to developing the British trade union movement. Many of them for the rest of their lives were involved with the social movements that followed. It was Marx and Engels who keenly identified in the passing of the 10-hour bill in 1847 that “for the first time...in broad daylight” the political economy of the working class was in the ascendancy.

In 1834 the Whig Ministry, shortly after widening the vote to include the new factory owners, sanctioned the transportation of the labourers from Tolpuddle for the insolence of trade unionism, which by now was already firmly rooted elsewhere. The sour fruits of Parliamentary Reform had been anticipated by comments in the POOR MAN’S GUARDIAN by a worker from Macclesfield on 10 December 1831. He reckoned that “it mattered not to him whether he was governed by a boroughmonger, or a whoremonger, or a cheesemonger, if the system of monopoly and corruption was still to be upheld”. What is most revealing from this period is the way British working people in the teeth of a ruthless enemy created a political force without negative and petty regional division between the North and South of our country. ■

6 SIX CALLS TO ACTION

Worried about the future of Britain? Join the CPBML.

Our country is under attack. Every single institution is in decline. The only growth is in unemployment, poverty and war. There is a crisis – of thought, and of deed. The Communist Party of Britain Marxist-Leninist has recently held its 16th Congress, a coming together of the Party to consider the state of Britain and what needs to happen in the future. Here we set out briefly six Calls to Action for the British working class – for a deeper explanation, see www.workers.org.uk.

1: Out of the European Union, enemy to our survival

The European Union represents the dictatorship of finance capital, foreign domination. The British working class must declare our intention to leave the EU.

2: No to the breakup of Britain, defend our national sovereignty

Devolution, and now the threat of separation, are both products of only one thing: de-industrialisation. Any referendum on the break-up of Britain must be held throughout Britain.

3: Rebuild workplace trade union organisation

Unions exist as working members in real workplaces or they become something else entirely – something wholly negative. Take responsibility for your own unions.

4: Fight for pay, vital class battleground

The fight for pay is central to our survival as a class, and must be central to the agenda of our trade unions.

5: Regenerate industry, key to an independent future

The regeneration of industry in Britain is essential to the future of our nation. Our grandparents, and theirs, knew this. We must now reassert it at the centre of class thinking.

6: Build the Party

The task of the Party is singular: to change the ideology of the British working class in order that they make revolution here.

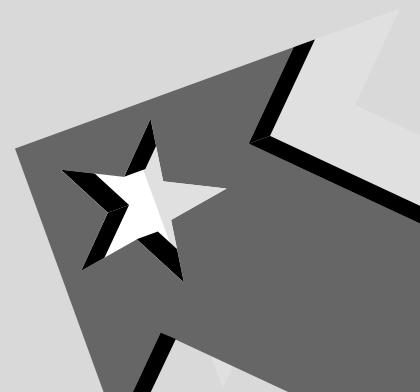
Interested in these ideas?

- 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.
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The absurd logic of 'Islamophobia'

'The definition presents Muslims as an undifferentiated mass, with no class divisions, no political divisions, no ideological differences...'

IN 1997 THE Runnymede Trust defined Islamophobia as the "dread or hatred of Islam and therefore, [the] fear and dislike of all Muslims". The logic is absurd. Dreading or hating religion is normal and progressive. Religions are hierarchical, organised forms of social control.

History, past and current, is littered with examples of the horrors perpetrated when religion becomes fused with government. Of course, all religions in opposition are for tolerance and peace. Look at the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. But to hate religions doesn't mean hating those who believe in them. Why on earth should it? Any more than liking one religion means liking all its adherents.

And yet the Runnymede formula, however ludicrous, has gained currency. After the Stockholm International Forum on Combating Intolerance, the EU took up the idea in 2001 – a sure indicator that it might be flawed.

Worse, the definition presents Muslims as an undifferentiated mass, with no class divisions, no political divisions, no ideological differences – a strange oversimplification. Ridiculous when you look at the nature of many present conflicts in the world.

Do we really accept this view here in Britain? We certainly too often allow trade union meetings to be diverted and derailed by the dreaded "Islamophobic" insult. Such name-calling is used by the ultra-left to stop discussion and inspire fear, and thus get us off what should be the business at hand.

Since our goal is to unite the working class we do not exclude or discriminate against anyone on grounds other than class; the only questions we ask are whether the person is worker or employer and, if worker, is he or she committed to the interest of our class? Any attempt to impede our common fight is pernicious to our class.

So when fascist Islamists killed 52 Londoners on July 7 2005, they were following the pernicious ideology of terrorist jihadism against British workers. Those who tried to blow up a march in Dewsbury last year had similar ideas. But the ultra-left said on both occasions that blaming their ideology was Islamophobic, refusing to distinguish between their terrorism and their religion. They want to identify Islamists with Muslims, conflating the two in an attempt to prevent any critique of Islamist terrorists.

Jihadists use the "Islamophobia" slur as cover for their jihadism, just as Zionists use the "anti-Semitism" slur as cover for their Zionism. Criticism of Zionism is not anti-Semitic; criticism of jihadism is not "Islamophobic". The terms are used to intimidate and close down critical thought.

We denounce all terrorism, "left" or "right", pro-Islamist or anti-Islamist. We must stop the use of insult to divide us. At work our fellow workers are class comrades. Arise ye starvelings from your slumbers (OK, smile, but look around: if you don't fight you too will soon be a starveling). Fight the class fight with all your might! No diversions! ■

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CHANGE BRITAIN, EMBRACE YOUR PARTY

This pamphlet brings together the statement from the Party's 2009 Congress with those from two former Congresses in 2003 and 2006. Also included is a statement on the European Union: "The fascist dream of a united Europe resurrected." (£2.75 including P&P).

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