

WORKERS

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LIFE & SOUL

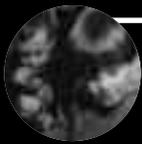
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GLASGOW: THE LIFE OF A CITY

JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY



IF YOU WANT TO REBUILD BRITAIN, READ ON

WORKERS

“ First thoughts

SWEDEN takes over the Presidency of the European Union in January 2001. The first priority for the Swedish foreign minister is apparently ‘the prevention of conflicts in Africa’. The arrogance and pretensions of EU ministers are beyond belief. Gunboat diplomacy is writ large and fits with the *realpolitik* on the continent of Africa.

France, Portugal, Belgium, Spain, Germany, Italy and Britain are still dabbling directly or covertly in post-colonial Africa. Britain is nakedly pursuing the diamond trade in Sierra Leone and attempting to stir matters in Zimbabwe. Belgium is still behind the scenes in the Congo (both republics).

France, meanwhile, is responsible for genocide in Rwanda. Spain, hanging on grimly to its colonial past, is still drip-feeding weapons into the Sahara. Angola was so devastated by Portugal that not only did they wreck the sewers in the capital Luanda, but also to prevent reconstruction they even stole the plans— these are still held back in Lisbon 25 years later!

The establishment of the European Union Army will justify the re-emergence of empire and colonial intervention in Africa.

There are immense contradictions racking Africa. There is the debt crisis created by international

capital, sucking out wealth. There is the AIDS crisis, creating an incredible death rate and depopulation (in four southern African countries, more than 20% of the population between the ages of 15 and 49 is infected). And there is the immense movement of people cutting across artificial borders created by competing 19th-century imperialists which will upend the borders of the Congo, Zaire, Uganda, Central Africa, Tanzania.

All these factors, plus pure naked greed, for example over the diamond fields, will see the scramble for Africa yet again, with even the Swedes wanting their place in the sun.

National independence and sovereignty, the withdrawal of foreign troops and the closing of military bases, might appear to have echoes of the national liberation movements of the 1950s and 1960s. And not without reason.

The European Union Army is about war. Whether with a Swedish accent or not, it is for intervention not only in any member state but anywhere in the world. Perhaps the rivalries of imperialism have been subsumed into one another but it is still imperialism, it is still intervention, it is still war and it still has to be resisted.

OUT OF THE EU, OUT OF NATO!

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Rebuilding Britain

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Save our skills

THE START of the 21st century in Coventry is worse than the start of the 1980s. At that time Thatcher's blitzkrieg on industry flattened Coventry's factories and picked off some of the most organised workplaces. Coventry became famously known in popular culture as 'the ghost town'. It had the highest street violence in the country and the social fabric frayed rapidly as the industrial heart was pulled out.

There was something systematic about the closures — they came for one organised group after another, the prize being Rolls Royce Parkside where old-style communist organisation had been in decline for years, but relative to other Coventry factories retained strong organisation.

This left the Rolls Royce Ansty site as the last remaining highly conscious and organised engineering factory in the city, with the most skilled trade unionists and a high concentration of the most skilled engineers and technicians. Sooner or later organisation at Ansty would be attacked. This came on 8 November last year, when the company announced proposals for restructuring and rationalisation with a loss of 1,300 of the 2,400 jobs there.

This figure includes 650 jobs from the operations group, to be moved to a risk and revenue partnership, and 600 from the energy group, with their work moving to Montreal and Bristol. Marine engine work is to be transferred to Bristol also. The staff concerned are mainly MSF members, technicians and support staff involved in high tech research.

The unions, with able leadership from the MSF lay officials, have led a campaign rooted in the truth that "the loss of high technology jobs from within the company, to bases abroad would be devastating to the future of the UK economy". This would not be because Rolls Royce would cease to make profits here, but because Britain would lose invaluable, irreplaceable advanced technical skills. In fact, the union campaign is being waged under the banner Save Our Skills.

The unions, backed by ballots confirming resolve for any necessary industrial action, have put a clear alternative plan to the company which has stunned them with its rationale and logic. The plan exploits the fact that Rolls Royce has a £14 billion order book and is well placed on the global market.

This campaign is vital for the future industrial strength of Britain and not just those workers immediately affected at Ansty. Messages of support should be flooding in to Amanda Richards, MSF, Rolls Royce Energy Business, Ansty, Coventry, CV7 9JR.

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

POST OFFICE New name, new closures

THE POST OFFICE, a name respected around the world for three centuries, is to be dropped for the meaningless Consignia, at a cost to us of £68 million. The new name is to be introduced on 26 March, the very day that the European Union has proclaimed should end the Post Office's national monopoly on postal deliveries.

Meanwhile, sub post offices are closing at the rate of two a week. The government says it wants to stop the decline, which affects both rural sites and local urban post offices, but it is hindering, not helping.

The latest threat is the direct payment of benefits to bank accounts, due in 2003. That will save the Treasury £400 million a year. Many offices could not stand the loss of income. EU proposals to open up competition for letter post in 2003 will add to the pressure.

The government says it wants to stop the decline, which affects both rural sites and local urban post offices. This summer it asked high street banks to set up a scheme to use post offices as their agents. Dubbed the "universal bank", this scheme would provide basic bank accounts for those who do not have them at the moment. It would restore possibly a third of the income lost from the move to direct payment to bank accounts.

It is unsurprising that the banks have been reluctant to take part, given their obsession with spending millions on hostile takeovers. The TSB Lloyds bid for Abbey National is only the latest of a number. The aim is to reduce running costs and competition, the opposite of supporting post offices as outlets.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Industrial action bites

THE INDUSTRIAL ACTION taking place in Britain's higher education is beginning to have significant effects. Focused mainly in the new universities and involving academic, administrative and technical staff, it began on 5 December, when the unions decided to go for "action short of a strike".

In practice this has meant that the main focus of this fight for pay has been on the assessment sanction: academic staff have marked students' work and given informal feedback, but have not formally processed the marks.

Many universities from Teesside to Oxford Brookes have already cancelled their assessment boards and many more are being cancelled at the end of January.

Nursing recruits have been particularly affected as they are recruited and graduate twice a year, next in March. No nursing student can qualify as a staff nurse until their final marks have been sent to the United Kingdom Central Council (UKCC) and they have been entered on the nursing register.

Pressure has built up on the employers as students are contacting vice chancellors and writing to Alan Milburn, the health secretary. The Royal College of Nursing and the National Union of Students are supporting the dispute.

The Department of Health has a particular problem in that it has just agreed much better pay and conditions for the small number of educational staff employed directly by NHS Trusts. This imbalance is leading staff to leave the higher education sector, which trains all the nurses that Milburn is relying on to deliver the NHS national plan targets (apart, that is, from the 5,000 that he wants to get from Spain).

The employers' body (UCEA) finally agreed to meet the unions on 11 January. The union side is aware that they have inched forward in this dispute, but the next few weeks will be critical as members come under pressure to submit marks for the "students' sake".

Those universities whose timetable has already forced the cancellation of assessment boards have given a lead which must be supported. The unions meet on 26 January in London at a mass meeting to decide whether to escalate the action.

The employers initially seemed to adopt a wait-and-see approach, believing that few staff would take action and that anyway they would allow students to progress to the next term even if marks were not processed.



"Victorious in the new millennium" — Havana on New Year's Eve 2000

Photo: Workers

Cuba parties into the new year

HAVANA and the whole of Cuba celebrated the 42nd anniversary of the revolution on 1 January 2001. The country has seen 42 years of independence from the US despite the blockade and the hardships created by the 'special period' brought about by the collapse of the socialist countries. Cuba also celebrated the continuation of the revolution into the new third millennium (starting, with true respect for mathematics, this January).

Parties and concerts greeted the New Year and new millennium as Cuba donned its holiday clothes. Refreshing billboards, posters and flags announcing quite clearly Cuba's continuing commitment to independence, socialism and dignity dominated the streets. Strategic lighting on high-rise flats and tower blocks spelt out a series of huge "42"s across Havana. A huge array of Cuban musicians graced the New Year party at the new Jose Marti Anti-Imperialist Tribunal. The Tribunal overlooks the US Special Interest building, just in case the CIA and State department officials had not got the message.

Cuba enters the third millennium seeing major economic improvements, especially in oil and natural gas extraction, moving towards 70% self-sufficiency in production. Health and education, the bedrock of the revolution, remain, with further improvements in housing.

Tourism has increased dramatically but economic stability has been achieved. In 1989 Cuba faced the collapse of something like 85% of its exports and the loss of 95% of its imports. Slowly food production is rising towards levels seen prior to the 'special period' with greater productivity, ingenuity of production and greater emphasis on organic rather than chemical fertilisation than ever before.

FISHERIES

On the record

FOUR FILES released at the start of January by the Public Records Office under the 30 year rule have revealed that the Common Fisheries Policy, accepted by Britain as a condition of entry into the Common Market, was illegal.

The Treaty of Rome never envisaged such a policy. Although it was consolidated into UK law under article 38 of the Treaty, legal opinion at the time pointed out that the paragraph referred to the consumption of marine products for food, and had nothing to do with treating territorial waters as a common resource.

Prime Minister Edward Heath was so

desperate to enter that Britain's fishing industry was expendable when set against the wider benefits that membership was said to bring (but never materialised).

The four new applicants for membership in 1970, Britain, Norway, Ireland and Denmark, controlled by far the greater share of European fishing within their sovereign waters. Extension of these to a 200-mile limit, under international law, would have left them with over 90% of western European fish stocks. The other six members wanted use of the waters as a common resource with equal access by all member states; a position now revealed to have no basis whatsoever in law.

The vast Spanish fishing fleet will be granted full access to all community territorial waters at the end of next year.

INDUSTRY**Job losses hit town**

IN ANOTHER BLOW to the Northants footwear industry, 29 jobs are to be axed from a 200-strong workforce at Barker Shoes and the Rutland Shoe Company, which share a factory in Earls Barton. This follows the 270 jobs lost at R. Griggs last year and 63 gone from Toetectors, which produces safety footwear. The company is moving its cutting and closing operations abroad to reduce labour costs.

In Daventry up to 30 employees of the District Council could face redundancy following a budget shortfall. To cover a massive deficit the Tory Council will also

need to raise council taxes and substantially increase charges for services such as searches.

In Northampton itself, workers at Scottish and Newcastle brewery, a major local employer, also face redundancy after the company announced plans to sell off almost 1,000 pubs. The brewery has had its headquarters in the town since 1985 and is building new £12.4 million premises at the moment — a move that was supposed to create new jobs for the town.

The company owns The Rat and Parrot, Chef and Brewer and John Barras pub chains and is selling 920 of its 2,373 outlets. The brewing industry has seen the loss of over 5,000 jobs in the past 10 years.

Kept in the dark

CABINET papers released in January 2001 under the 30-year rule showed that Prime Minister Edward Heath's Government suppressed evidence that British membership of the EEC could lead to political and monetary union. The papers showed that Tory ministers kept voters in the dark about long-term proposals to scrap the pound because they feared an adverse impact on exchange rates, inflation, and public opinion.

A Foreign Office document of 9 November 1970 stated: "The plan for economic and monetary union has revolutionary long-term political implications, both economic and political. It could imply the creation of a European federal state. With a single currency...it will arouse strong feelings about sovereignty."

A ministerial brief from November 1970, five months after the election reiterated the point. "If formally asked our views, we shall have to give them; until we are we do not want to give our reactions."

Baroness Castle of Blackburn said of the revelations, "We always knew Heath had been dishonest. He kept patronising us by telling us our fears were misplaced. But now the truth is out. If the British people had known this they would never have voted yes."

The former Labour MP Brian Walden said that if the public had known then, "the sorry 30 years history of our relations with Europe would have been wholly different".

POLICING**Doubts over 'stop and search'**

COMBATING crime, and the validity of government statistics, will figure highly in short-term government plans and its general election strategy. Government crime statistics have been flawed since the Tories fiddled and changed the data collection basis in the early 1990s, contributing to a crisis in confidence of anything the government says about crime.

Debate continues about whether Home Office figures about police tactics of 'stop and search' show a disproportionate number of black Britons being stopped or not. What is available are figures which show that 70% of such police actions are not recorded. Based upon what figures the police have, coupled with the 70% non-recorded, this equates to a figure of over

3 million 'stop and search' actions by the Police during 1998-99.

It is also emerging that the Home Office is arriving at figures that undermine any argument of racial bias by attempting to 'scientifically' advance a new data collection methodology. This has its root in the largest surveillance operation in policing history.

During a 36-hour period undercover police vehicles secretly filmed over 20,000 pedestrians and 50,000 drivers, using thumb-sized video cameras on either side of the vehicle. The subsequent data were approximated to age, gender and apparent ethnic appearance.

This gave the Metropolitan Police an argument that its 'stop and search' has nothing to do with race but availability in a certain place at a certain time. Critics say it all depends on how you select your time and place.

WHAT'S ON**Coming soon****JANUARY**

Major rally organised by the National Union of Teachers as a first step in the union's campaign for an increase in the London Allowances. Main speaker, Doug McAvoy, General Secretary, NUT.

Tuesday 30 January, 18.30.

Friends House, Euston Road, London NW1.

SERTUC CONFERENCE, LONDON

An Economic Development and Regeneration Strategy for London — developing a trade union response to the London Development Agency's consultation document.

Wednesday 31 January, 10.00 – 15.30.

Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1.

FEBRUARY

March as part of a day of action organised by construction unions and the Construction Safety Campaign to protest against the building industry's safety record. March ends at Embankment, then goes on to Westminster to lobby MPs. More information from the CSC at construction.safetycampaign.org.uk, or by phone at 077 477 95954.

Tuesday 27 February, 13.00.

Starting from Euston Station, NW1.

EDUCATION**Scottish teachers win**

SCOTTISH TEACHERS have achieved remarkable success in their fight for a pay structure designed to meet the individual needs of teachers and at the same time position the profession well in a real process of modernising the education service north of the border.

Their settlement gives a 23% increase in pay over three years; a reduction in working time; an expansion of in-service training; the accreditation of this training and pay increments in recognition of it; preparation and marking time to be provided in the school day for all teachers; and 4,000 extra teachers to be employed to make the system work.

Most of Scottish teachers (85%) are in a single union, the EIS. Teachers in England and Wales are in five competing unions. These are now developing a joint campaign for a new salary structure, similar to that won by their Scottish colleagues.

Teacher shortage

THE CRISIS in the availability of teachers continues and deepens — though Education Minister Estelle Morris says that “only a handful of schools” are affected.

What she means is that teachers have become used to papering over the cracks, and working themselves to death — sometimes literally — to continue children’s education despite the inability to fill teacher vacancies properly.

These shortages are causing additional work through people being asked to cover classes on a long term basis, to set work for supply teachers who often lack the training or expertise in the subject area, to teach outside of their own subject/Key Stage area, to “rotate” between classes, to “double up” classes etc. Not only are teachers even more overworked, but the quality of the education offered to children is also less than it should be. Nationally, the Infants class size limit of 30 is under threat. In some areas of the country, schools are now looking at moving to 4-day weeks.

The shortage of teachers around the country was no sooner recognised by the Government than they declared it solved! In one breath David Blunkett said that some schools had been near “melt-down”, and in the next he maintained that the system of “Golden Hellos” and bursaries for PGCE students had overcome this situation. The first part of his statement was true: the second was not.

Over the last five years there has been a growing shortfall in the recruitment of students to secondary teacher training courses. In 1995-96 the shortfall was 10.6%, in 1996-97 it was 16.2%, in 1997-98 it reached 18.2%, and in 1998-99 it was 24.6%. The shortfall declined to 19.9% in 1999-2000 — this being the result of the Government simply reducing the target figure by 9%! If the target had not been so artificially reduced the shortfall would have been 27.3%. Even with this reduced target, Government figures show a cumulative shortfall of 17,625 students applying for secondary training over this period.

Traditionally, recruitment to primary teacher training has exceeded targets — but this has seen a decline in recent years, and in 1999-2000 recruitment showed a shortfall. The Government answer to this is in line with that they chose for the secondary crisis: they reduced the target. Their original target for 2001-2 was 13,100 students. They have reduced this to 12,500. What is more they have declining targets for 2002-3 and 2003-4 of 12,300 and 12,100 respectively. Annual secondary targets are to be reduced over the next three years: 17,390, 17,235 and 16,995.

Dealing with shortfalls in recruitment by cynically reducing targets is not only politically dishonest, it is deliberately damaging to the service and children’s opportunities in order to maintain shallow political credibility.

And this is not the end of the story. It is suggested that a number of students attracted onto post-graduate teacher training courses by the minimum £6,000 bursary will not actually enter the profession. A number of others decide that teaching is not for them. Further, a recent NUT survey showed that between 5% and 7% of newly qualified teachers had left teaching by the end of the first year.

Now, the two largest teacher unions, the NAS/UWT and the NUT are to work together to demonstrate the real size of the teacher shortage problems, by encouraging teachers in schools across the country to refuse to take on the additional work caused by teacher shortage, unfilled vacancies and the lack of supply teachers.

The health of a city is shown in Glasgow today than any other

Glasgow: starting

MANY DELEGATES at the recent TUC Congress in Glasgow were impressed by the transformation of the city since their last visit during the Congress over a decade ago. While this rebuilding must receive the credit it deserves, for its innovation and creation of new jobs, this is not the whole picture. Delegates will not have had time to see or contemplate the nearby vast degenerating areas without amenities which are as dangerous to live in as anything seen in THE RATCATCHER.

The health of a city is shown in the health of its people. Glasgow has the highest heart

‘Shipbuilding — traditionally at Glasgow’s industrial heart — is hanging on, but by a thread’

disease death rates in the world (5573 annually) and hepatitis infections are up by a third in the past year. Dubbed “heroin capital of Britain”, it has a consistent annual toll of over 100 heroin-related deaths. A Glasgow University report estimated there were around 15,000 injecting drug users - five times the UK average and double that of New York. Alcohol abuse is also a factor in last year’s 20% increase in murder rates, mainly arising from stabbing incidents and predominantly involving young, unemployed males.

The editorial plea by the GLASGOW EVENING TIMES that “long-term investment in health education and support is the best and only way forward for Glasgow”, indicates that the fight to turn back this tide of misery must be taken to the national level.

Indeed Glasgow shares these ups and downs (and a common culture, urban humour and history of work) with the other great cities of Britain, notably Liverpool, Newcastle, Aberdeen to name but a few.

Collective civic pride can still be harnessed, and certainly Glasgow is no stranger to mass protest. The UCS and jobs

own in the health of its people. And that says more about
thing

g to save a city

marches of the 1970s were some of the biggest Britain has witnessed. Tories have long been ousted from the city government, but their slashing of boundaries and budgets still rebounds on the city.

And the Scottish Executive has recently announced a cut in Glasgow's share of council spending over the next three years. Elected representatives — working with the Scottish TUC and other bodies — have made valiant efforts to counter job, housing, and health problems.

Many ideas are thrust forward as solutions. A former Lord Provost (mayor) writes of "How to haul Glasgow out of the doldrums" with a "futuristic mix" of housing, leisure, commerce and retail, while the current Lord Provost, Alex Mosson, hopes the city will benefit from twinning agreements with Havana, following his delegation's visit to Cuba. Indeed, mutual benefits can flow from such initiatives: oil and gas industry contracts, marine engineering work, software products as well as cooperation in the rum processing industry are all under discussion.

The net has to be cast world-wide when looking for jobs for a city's survival, and certainly Glasgow at its peak had the whole world on its books. Today the Clyde may look prettier, but glance at any one of numerous memorabilia books now on sale and you will be taken back to the hustle and bustle of thriving shipyards, engineering plants and busy docks. Of course, it was not always like that — depressions and wartime bombing silenced them — and now newer technologies are employing many of a new generation of workers.

Shipbuilding

Shipbuilding — traditionally at Glasgow's industrial heart — is hanging on, but by a thread. The good news: Cunard is to begin a new generation of ocean liners — the new *QUEEN MARY* will be twice the size of her predecessor, 150,000 tonnes, 1200 feet long, capable of 30 knots at 140,000 horsepower, costing £538 million, and



Photo: Eric Thorburn

Two tales of a city: above, Paddy's Market, where workers' wages can go a long way, and below, Princes Square, where they won't go far at all.



Photo: Eric Thorburn

holding 2630 passengers.

The bad news: it will not be built on the Clyde or in Britain. A yard that has survived from the great era of shipbuilding, Alstom Chantiers of St Nazaire, will construct it. Still alive at the age of 99, the man who headed the design team that worked on the original Queen Mary, the Elizabeths and 400 other ships on the Clyde — Sir John Brown — expressed his disappointment at the news. He was adamant that great ships should once again be “Clyde built”, and recalled with affection the 50 years when he worked his way up from apprentice ship’s draughtsman.

When it was thriving, 40 companies engaged in shipbuilding on the Clyde. In 1914 a third of Britain’s tonnage was launched. This was 18% of the total world output and greater than the total tonnage from either the USA or Germany.

Today’s shadow of a shipbuilding industry clings on in a state of great uncertainty, pulling on the morale of those remaining. The UCS work-in in 1971 gave workers a spirit of resilience; but heavily subsidised foreign competition, poor management, government neglect, and EU pressure to remove them from Britain altogether, conspired to push yards such as Kvaerner’s down the slippery slope.

But Clyde Marine thrives. John Brown’s lives on as an oil rig construction yard. Fergusson’s make ferries and hope for cruise ships. Despite Ministry of Defence orders, the lethargy of Glasgow Govan’s owner BAe Systems has resulted in a sparse order book. But, as a recent correspondent to THE HERALD wrote: “The Clyde is far from dead and we should all be doing our best to raise its profile and assist it rather than taking part in another round of hand wringing, very old-fashioned Thatcherite Clyde-bashing.”

Another, pointing out that the new shipbuilding techniques of modularisation should make a revival easier, said: “Forget the past but look to the future, be brave, create — if we wish to build modern ships it requires modern

‘The more farsighted have recognised the need for training a new generation of skilled workers as one way to regenerate such a city’

thinking.”

Similar thinking should be applied to Trident, the nuclear submarine described as a “first strike system” and looming over Glasgow. The policy adopted at the STUC conference, will open a debate on the issue, calling for a properly resourced Defence Diversification Agency to convert Trident jobs for more productive work outside the defence industry. The policy incorporated estimates of savings from the system’s scrapping that would provide re-training and employment for Trident workers as well as cash towards education, housing and health.

The future

New town building and the decline of mass industrial work saw population drop by a third. But the city has put its strong backbone into meeting the new challenges. The more farsighted have recognised the need for training a new generation of skilled workers as one way to regenerate such a city, preventing an expected shortfall of 4000 skilled workers. For example, 14 companies have signed up to a City Council scheme entitled Commitment to Apprenticeship at its recent launch.

The initial focus is to be on ensuring skills are there to meet the projected surge in construction jobs. 2001 will see 1000 training places. A £2 billion reconstruction of many of the city’s schools is also being considered. The Glasgow Harbour project is estimated to

have created about 3000 jobs. A riverside Science Centre, a city centre research and development facility, a new broadcasting and film centre and a new music industry complex are other projects due to create thousands of permanent and high skill jobs.

Some in the labour movement conclude that the future for manufacturing here lies in changing the nature of the industry by deeper application of the “knowledge economy”. Engineering jobs in Scotland, for example, have declined by 10,000 last year alone. Roger Lyons of the MSF points out that the industry “needs to change to research and development and move away from assembly, but something needs to be done soon, because manufacturing is currently hanging by a thread”.

One innovative company doing that — and having success — is the leading edge music systems manufacturer based in Glasgow, Linn Products. Talking of integrated real-time computer systems, Ivor Tiefenbrun said: “We became the first manufacturer to work in this way, developing our own software in-house to do this, connecting all elements of the business, from manufacturing and design, through purchasing, accounting to order processing.”

Ivor Tiefenbrun has supported anti-EU campaigns and defended Britain’s sovereignty. Significantly, Linn’s custom-built factory was designed by Sir Richard Rogers, who was recently heard in a BBC radio interview talking of some of the worst housing conditions he had encountered in Europe — in Glasgow and Leeds. But he noted the fierce civic pride found in both cities as being the factor that had led to the beginning of regeneration.

One of the biggest growth areas in Glasgow’s current construction boom is the hotel sector, with the value of developments tripling over three years to £114 million.

Which brings us back to those TUC delegates. Maybe they have already booked their rooms for 2010?

Glasgow...where did it all begin?

A settlement noted since the 6th century, Glasgow's foundation as a city began in the 12th century with trades growing around the new cathedral, its Old Welsh name literally meaning green place. Its impact on the world of ideas grew after the founding of its university in 1451, the fourth oldest in Britain. The later Enlightenment and, for example, the ideas of Hume, Smith; the scientific ideas of Watt, Clark Maxwell and the architecture of "Greek" Thomson (see below), are products of the standards encouraged by this institution.

The city grew rapidly following the opening of the sea trade in the 18th century, and the ensuing Industrial Revolution, fuelled by wealth accrued from tobacco, slavery and intensive exploitation of workers. It became a thriving trading port, part of the network spanning the Baltic, France, Virginia, Carolina and the West Indies. The city had left feudalism so far behind that it totally rejected the Jacobites on their advance south in 1745, who had billeted in the newly built St Andrew's Church in the east end. They cursed Glasgow with a dagger in the church door on their departure. Only last month was this building reopened, totally refurbished as a splendid music and dance centre.

Rapid and merciless industrialisation produced cramped living conditions; causing cholera and typhus epidemics of the 1840s which killed over 4% of the city's inhabitants. This spurred Glasgow, like many British cities, to provide clean water and reliable sewage systems. Alexander Thomson, the great architect of the city, lost three of his children in the epidemics, but found inspiration to design spacious, noble buildings for the city.

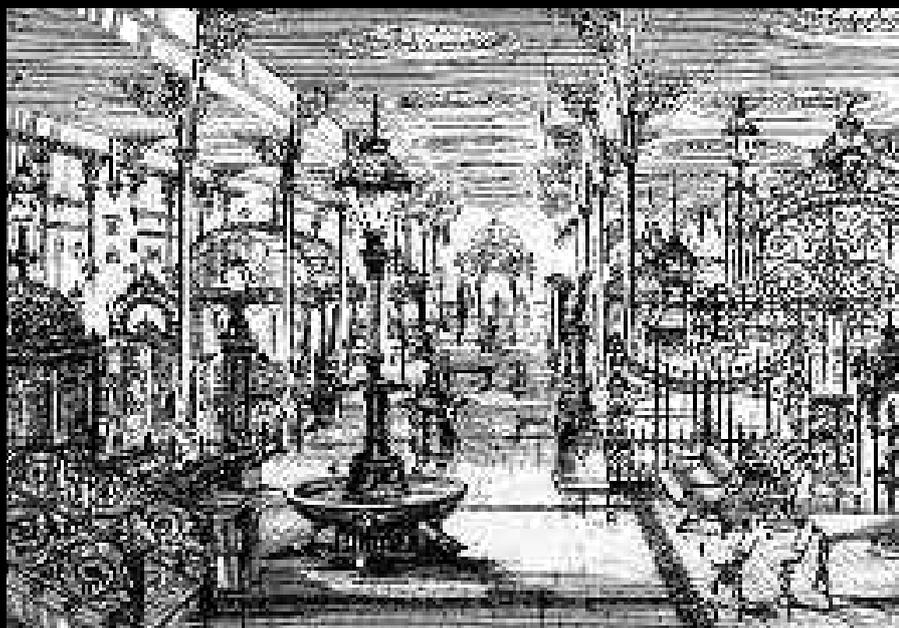
Resistance to exploitation grew in parallel with these developments. By 1787 the weavers of Calton in Glasgow were strong enough to engage in a bitter dispute over wage rates and basic human justice. It ended with six weavers slaughtered and a determined hunting down of many of the other strikers. The 1820 insurrection is regarded as the equivalent of Tolpuddle, and its martyrs are honoured every September in Sighthill Cemetery. The execution of two labourers in 1841 for allegedly murdering their overseer marked another period of increasing industrial unrest.

But it was in the period around the First World War that organised workers first became a power to be reckoned with, defying the Defence of the Realm Act in 1915 and coming under the influence of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. John Maclean and William Gallacher (leader of the Clyde Workers Committee and later Communist MP for West Fife in 1935) were among many imprisoned during these struggles. Fearing an insurrection, Churchill ordered tanks to occupy Glasgow city centre in 1919 when unrest over working hours and conditions was heightened by high expectations following the end of the war.

The population of the city boomed in the course of that century, from 84,000 in 1801 to peak at over a million in the 1920s. The first big expansion of manufacturing had come at the end of the 18th century: by the end of the 19th, the city was supplying the world. Apart from ships, Glasgow-made steam locomotives were sold widely (some still in use in Asia today) and the products of the engineering patternmakers Macfarlane can be spotted around the globe in the form of iron bridges, and wrought iron work of all descriptions.

Humour, sport, organisation and a determined civic pride kept morale up in difficult times — Glasgow was reputed to have more cinemas, more dance halls and

Left: Walter Macfarlane's showroom in the 1880s. Much of the world's ornamental cast-iron work was made in Glasgow at the time.



As education privatisation gathers pace, it's clear that there's no such thing as a free lunch

What price education?

HOW DO YOU LIKE your bad news — in the voice of the academic, in Euro-speak, or in the American drawl of the predatory capitalist?

However you prefer to hear it, the message is the same. The privatisation of education is accelerating, and is part of a much bigger strategy to bring Britain's economy and social fabric — and those of all other nations — into line with the demands of globalised capital.

"As the national state becomes a marginal force in the new world order so education becomes an individualised consumer good delivered in a global market and accessed through satellite and cable links. National education ceases to exist." Andy Green, Reader in Education, London University Institute of Education

"The next round of services negotiations should extend liberalisation world-wide, creating new trade and investment opportunities in all service sectors." European Commission "Info-Point" on 'World Trade In Services'

"You guys are in trouble...and we're gonna eat your lunch." Michael Milken, US finance capitalist, to Arthur Levine, President, Teachers College, Columbia University

You will remember Blair's TUC speech a couple of months after the 1997 election in which he described his "essential challenges of modernisation". Be fair — he gave proper warning of things to come. "The first is to create an economy fully attuned to a new global market. The second is to fashion a modern welfare state where the role of Government changes so it is not necessary to provide all social provision..." The process of the globalisation of capital he says is, "irresistible and irreversible".

The General Agreement on Trade In Services (GATS) is the engine behind education privatisation moves worldwide. GATS emerged in 1994/95, with Britain as a signatory, together with the establishment of the World Trade Organisation. In the words of the WTO, "GATS is the first ever set of multilateral, legally enforceable [their emphasis] rules covering international trade in services." It

makes it compulsory to open up the nation's services (they list 160) to international trade — that is, to the transnationals. Given that services account for almost two thirds of the activities carried out in the industrialised economies it was inevitable that the WTO would see privatisation of this area, and potential ownership of services by transnationals, as a priority.

Global public spending on education alone substantially exceeds one thousand billion dollars — and covers the employment of 50 million teachers, and the education of a billion students in hundreds of thousands of educational establishments.

As Education International (the international organisation of education unions) points out: "Some see this imm-

'You guys are in trouble...and we're gonna eat your lunch' – US venture capitalist to educationalist

ense bloc as a 'dream market' for future investment." And, obviously, as a source of immense profit. And so a "General Agreement" became necessary to force it being opened up to international capital — alongside all other national services, from health provision to water supply and prisons, from transport systems to telecommunications and postal services.

We are now nearing the end of the 'Millennium Round' with the 3rd Ministerial Conference of the WTO, and GATS 2000 conference in Brussels. British MEP Caroline Lucas warned that the European Summit in Nice could lead to even greater integration of Britain in the European Union, leading to a reduction in the power of the British Government — now and in the future — to determine what services it will open up to the world

market. That has happened. Also, the European Services Forum — a pressure group which does pressure — made up of 50 transnational companies and 36 trade federations is meeting to consider how to "lobby for greater liberalisation in services".

Excluded from the GATS regulations are services which are "provided under government authority and without a commercial purpose". Under this definition the Department of Trade and Industry currently has the position that, "the UK is not prepared to make commitments which call the NHS or state education into question". This is not how the WTO sees the matter. It interprets the exclusion of services to refer to those "completely financed and administered by the state and, moreover, not having any commercial purposes". Throughout WTO documents they refer not to "education services" but to "the education market".

After the years of both Tory and Labour Governments' commitment to creeping privatisation in education, it becomes increasingly difficult to argue that these are entirely financed and administered by the state and have no commercial purpose. And, perhaps Blair's commitment to "fashion a modern welfare state where the role of Government changes so it is not necessary to provide all social provision..." in order to "create an economy fully attuned to a new global market" is thrown into sharper focus by this.

Government initiatives in education constantly refer to the need to involve business expertise, private finance and commercial interests. The "spin" is varied — but has the same thread running throughout. Private sector good, public sector bad. Education Action Zones with private business involvement to meet the needs of disadvantaged children. "City Academies" under private business control to develop "Excellence In Cities". "Outsourcing" (ie privatisation) of LEA services to "combat failure". "Best Value" to force LEAs to compete with the private sector in the delivery of all central services. "Private Finance Initiative" to finance school buildings, and see their ownership pass into

the hands of the PFI business consortium. The “ground-breaking” private sector take-over of a “failing school” in Surrey.

Privatisation of education has been seen as a major threat by some for a decade. The “mainstream” thinking saw this as alarmist. Now it is conventional wisdom that this lies at the heart of Government policy. Even now there are some that cannot see the wood for the trees, who still believe that the Government’s commitment to the private sector has its roots in the incompetence, corruption and bureaucracy of individual LEAs and school managements. While these are all undeniable in some cases, and need to be dealt with, the Government is playing along to a much louder tune, and it’s a much bigger piper that is calling that tune.

Predatory interests

As Education International put the matter: “In the wake of other major public services which have been subject to extensive privatisation and deregulation, public education is increasingly being targeted by predatory and powerful entrepreneurial interests. The latter are aiming at nothing less than its dismantling by subjecting it to international competition.”

Any national regulations and standards imposed by national governments even on a privatised service would be seen to be counter to GATS “legally enforceable” rules. These might include the non-recognition of qualifications of teachers from other countries, any measures limiting the employment of overseas teachers or the movement of students, a refusal to allow a particular institution to issue qualifications, specified conditions for the use of resources etc. Thus, hand in hand with privatisation comes deregulation.

James Tooley of University of Newcastle has his fingers in many privatising pies, including the Institute of Economic Affairs, and ‘The Education Partnership’ — which proudly proclaims itself a “for-profit education provider”. “We mustn’t be tempted by the reassuring spin that the public sector can hope to match



Going to school...or going to market?

the incentives of the private sector for innovation and efficiency,” he said in his speech last year to the Business of Education Forum. “The way forward for education is to bring in the incentives that push forward quality and innovation in all other area of our lives. . . Education is far too important to be excluded from the virtues of the profit motive.”

Presumably, “the quality and innovation in all other areas of our lives” includes those we experienced after the rail and water were privatised.

British education is at the beginning of the privatisation road, but it is a steep and slippery downhill path unless challenged before the momentum builds up. Last year delegates to an NUT conference discussed the threat of privatisation. They heard a keynote speaker from the leading education union in the US, the National Education Association. Heidi Steffans of the NEA’s Office for Public Education Advocacy, left the teachers in no doubt about the nature of the privatisation process.

Ten years ago, only one privatised “Charter School” existed in one State of the USA. There was only one EMO — private business education provider. There were no students using “vouchers” provided out of the public purse to buy private education. Now, just ten years on, there are 2,300 Charter schools. There are 62,000 students using vouchers to buy education. There are 45 EMOs. The private sector are providing on-line courses and degree programs — for profit — to

schools and direct to students’ homes. As well as demographic and technological changes, she identified the “capital invasion” as the main factor in these changes. Education is the second largest US economic sector at \$740 billion a year, 9.5% of GDP. It has a larger turnover than the car industry. It was ripe for picking — and there is no shortage of pickers.

The process of fragmentation and competition between schools has long been bemoaned by teachers and educationalists here in Britain. Now the process is accelerating through the marketing of deregulation and privatisation. We are not going to be up to the job of preventing this process if we do not understand where it is coming from.

It is not really to do with concerns about effectiveness and standards — it merely uses them. It is everything to do with the predatory nature of globalised capital. The economic tools and political structures of that system — whether they be the World Trade Organisation and its “general agreements”, or the European Union and its Single Currency — are not “irresistible and irreversible” as Blair maintains. But we have to become as strategic, as organised and as radical as the protagonists of privatisation if we are to be effective.

In a future issue: have your say! What is your vision of the future? How could an advanced education system could be integrated with training and employment in an independent Britain, run to meet the needs of its people?

Can public services be made to work? We certainly know what v challenge is to make them do what we want

The meaning of public service

WITH THE SCANDAL of Railtrack, and nurse, teacher and police shortages making headlines, public services are again being debated. Should Railtrack be renationalised (defying EU law)? Why is it so difficult to recruit workers to key public services? Can we repeat history, or can we create something better this time?

Even to consider such questions intelligently we have to know where public services are coming from — why do we have them, who owns them, and more importantly, who controls them? We need to look back in order to look forward.

One of the first public services to be invented was the sewer. For centuries people had died of plagues that seemed to be ‘acts of God’. No one could understand, let alone combat them. But as the scientific knowledge which capitalism harnessed to unleash the industrial revolution was applied to other things, it became apparent that ways could be found to understand plagues, and other life-threatening, and life-shortening, health conditions. This in turn led to massive investment in municipal sewers, which was perhaps the biggest single step forward in eradicating Cholera as a regular killer.

Bitter fights

Then came other improvements, all bitterly fought for by our class, and just as bitterly resisted by the ruling class. Public hospitals began to appear, as did better schools and houses, and factory legislation. After the carnage of the First World War, wholesale nationalisation, and perhaps still more significantly municipalisation, became widespread aims.

After the destruction of fascism in the Second World War, capitalism had to accede to many working class aspirations. Thus the capitalist state took into its hands (not into the hands of the people) many industries that the profit motive had bled dry: coal, railways, and later steel and shipbuilding. They were owned by the state on behalf of capitalism — by demand of the working

class. What did all this represent? How was Thatcher able to hand so much of it back to capital? Does it matter? What would we do now?

First of all we must be clear that capital never gave us any level of civilisation — we created it ourselves. We saved ourselves (and saved

**‘We know that
capitalism doesn’t work.
We know that corrupt
municipal socialism
doesn’t work either’**

capitalism into the bargain, but that’s another article!). Sewers were built by local authorities, paid by taxes on more prosperous workers, then snatched, Mussolini-like over the last 20 years, and given, gratis, to foreign capitalists. (Look at Thames Water, built with our money, repaired by us after being ravaged by Hitler’s bombs, now in the hands of German capital. The quality of water was improved beyond that of any bottled water, yet still more than a third of it is wasted).

Then they realised that good money could be made from the services we’d created. Why invest in something as risky as industry when you could be given millions, sometimes billions of pounds worth of plant, machinery, and most profitable of all, workers? Sacking us wholesale to increase exploitation has made multi-millionaires out of many a foreign (and the odd British) capitalist. This is the World Trade Organisation agenda, let alone the European Union. How can we exercise some sort of authority in the face of such an onslaught?

Meanwhile, those services not so easily made profitable — education,

housing, social services — struggle on in municipal hands, mostly honourable hands, run by millions of workers in hard-working and messy jobs, usually on low pay. Sometimes, however, poor management (the unacceptable face of municipalism) grabs the headlines and a case is made for more privatisation. Seldom a case for good management.

Now a vital national service such as railways receives more subsidy than when BR ran it. The difference? The subsidy goes to capitalists. (Never mind that the single biggest argument in favour of privatisation was to end the drain on the public purse represented by subsidies!) And with the break-up of the industry into separate companies we’re back to the old problems of fragmentation, which led to railway nationalisation in the first place.

So we are getting increasingly expert in what doesn’t work. We know that capitalism, the profit motive, doesn’t work in public services. We know that corrupt municipal socialism doesn’t work either. The question for workers and for the services we need is this: What will work? Will we have to do it again ourselves, only make a better job of it than our forebears did? Here at WORKERS, we think so. What do you think? And more importantly, how will we do it?

Perhaps we have unwittingly already taken the first step; having given the railways to capitalism to run with a kind of “if-you-think-you’re-so-clever-you-have-a-go” panache, we have found the ultimate weapon. Kill capitalism with our deadly embrace; let THEM run education in Hackney!

The new privatisation is sophisticated, picking off the weakest local authorities first, in the name of partnership with the private sector. Privatisation equals fragmentation; it contradicts planning.

Privatisation is ideological, not economic; its purpose is to destroy a nation and a class able to act for itself (when it so wishes), to dissolve a national state, in order to destroy what control the working class has won over it.

won't work — we've had most things tried out on us. The



The question for workers and the services we need is this: What will work?

We need to take responsibility for industries and jobs, our utilities, our National Health Service, our national education service, our national civil service and our national system of local government. Privatisation leads to reorganisation, redundancy and damage to workers. But it is not the end of the matter: better that a service is transferred than ended. Privatisation presents an opportunity for workers to assert what they want.

EU-driven

Much privatisation is EU-driven, laid down in the Maastricht Treaty and a raft of secondary legislation. We reject the EU's quangos, riddled with patronage, clientism and corruption. Why shouldn't we decide to ignore what is not in our

interest, ignore EU rules and laws, and stick to our own rules? Then go on to consciously confront and defeat them, as we did the Industrial Relations Act. In fact where it is in our interest, EU rules are more assiduously applied in Britain than in the rest of Europe. British culture, as evidenced by our correct approach to Health and Safety legislation, applies.

The working class idea is that social labour achieves progress; the capitalist idea is that capital does. Hence the present policy of bringing private capital into the public services. To move forward, however, we workers will have to take control of every sector of work, through professionalism. A professional attitude in the class is one of taking responsibility and control. We should make our industries, utilities, services and local

government, do what we want. We do this by taking responsibility for improving and modernising what we do. Some changes, for example clinical governance in NHS or 'Best value' evaluation of providers, can be turned by workers to put them closer to control of services. Recently in the Midlands, workers secured increased control through 'best value'.

Workers in the private sector are equally doing a job, just like those who work in public service. And they, too, have a say in their sector. Doesn't the ethos of public service spread wider than just the public sector? Isn't it part of workers' culture? Has the lawyer's ticking clock model any place? Workers do not think in this way. Wherever workers are, we have the level of control that we have fought for.

Thomas McGrath wrote poems embedded in the struggles of the was paid to organise

American beauty

WHAT IS the life and soul of the United States of America ?

Many documentaries on American society follow people well out of the loop of any known terms of human reference, who are blessed or martyred in the name of just one man who shall be President regardless of counting problems or in the name of one who was crucified some 2,000 years ago.

For British people the United States seems well weird, and too powerful, with a military machine so dependent on computer technology as to be capable of more genocide and more crashes than any previous fascist regime. It seems weird to us because it is so proud of its nationalistic zeal and flag. This is its strength and weakness, just as our hate of the

The core of American society as in any other industrial country must be the organised working class movement.

This movement has a tender beauty, not so much influenced as in Britain by the suffering and exceptional

find a better life and work their guts out and build trade unions and then found themselves shot to bits by various capitalists for their presumption.

When US trade unions today look strange because of their evangelical zeal or their huge Conferences, unmanageable by our standards, we should reflect that we have not rebuilt so successfully as they have. Actually fewer in our trade unions have sacrificed such life and limb as our US brothers and sisters have recently. US trade unionists take on a system unsullied by social democracy and ready to hire killers. Our trade unions think they are brave if they boycott a particular social event. A

measure of our advance perhaps; but being prepared to sacrifice all for our trade unions would at least be a start to rebuilding the movement here.

Yet you can't compare our situation with the American scene. And one of the differences is that there emerged a great poet from the heart of the American working class, and not only that, from out of the small but crucial number of communist workers that the White House sought to massacre and destroy for years.

Thomas McGrath (1916-1990), so bowled over by the strangeness of the country into which he was born, formed the imaginary Ramshackle Socialist Victory Party to delight the odd moment, while producing a body of poems so reflective of his communist allegiances that he gave to the United States for the



Above: Thomas McGrath with his son, Tomasito, as photographed in 1974.

Left: the Vietnam War, which McGrath opposed, using poetry as a weapon.



Union Jack betrays our inability to assert a new national sense of pride.

Within the repulsive shell of Hollywood, massacres in Vietnam, Coca Cola and a new star wars, are a people drenched in struggle and trade unionism.

organisation of the mill girls and farm labourers as by the glancing reflections of 15 million native Americans slaughtered in the 19th century and the multilingual challenges of the various skilled workers who went to America to

WHERE'S THE PARTY?

first time an opportunity to engage with its past and future and its humour and power in a real human way. He wrote poems embedded in immediate struggles of the workers he was paid to organise, and poems for the workers who had gone before and would come after who he never knew. He therefore produced an exceptional body of work relating to otherwise unheard of struggles of ass kicking groups of workers prepared to die for their cause and all those who came before them in a land previously dominated by tribes.

For a British mind trained in the notion of gradual change from bourgeois revolution to industrial revolution to the absolute decline of capitalism many of his poems, particularly the long classic *LETTER TO AN IMAGINARY FRIEND*, will seem a bit mystical, even radical and jumpy. It certainly deals with historical problems we have not faced.

But each country to its own, and Thomas McGrath is the American poet, neither odd like Emily Dickinson, introspective like Robert Lowell, brazen like Whitman and Emerson, nor daft like Stevens.

He certainly wasn't a fascist like Eliot and Pound. Unlike many other American literati with dirty toe nails, he did not make his fame abroad. He stayed at home reflecting the spirit of the workers who would describe human history as an "immaculate chain of money" or question the meaning of life as "love and hunger, the secret is all there somewhere" or describe capitalism as run by "socially acceptable sadists" or the entire history of mankind as being "nightmare, nightmare, struggle, despair and dream."

McGrath needs a re-reading by workers in Britain now beginning to face the kind of genocidal intensity that destroyed the native American tribes, killed trade unionists and massacred nations throughout the world. A tough

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 British workers need their own political party, this party, to generate the ideas and effort to bring the changes we need.

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 of workers and turned them into a party with a difference.

In 1971, the Party's second Congress produced a piece of completely new communist thinking for Britain called *THE BRITISH WORKING CLASS AND ITS PARTY*. We call this our Party programme and it remains as fresh and important for today as it was then. You can find it on our website, www.workers.org.uk.

Dozens of political parties formed in the 1960s and 70s have come and gone, while the CPBML is alive, well, and welcoming new recruits. One reason for its success has been that every CPBML member must be a thinker and a do-er. There are no paid officials.

The party is made up of working people like you, 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.

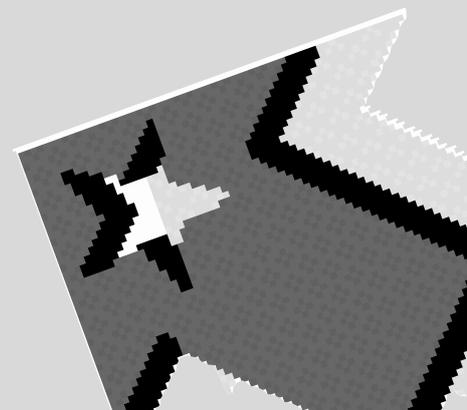
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Back to Front – The ordering of our lives

‘No return to Thatcherism, but no toleration of the pathetic social democracy which believes we can make no progress in Britain, only in Europe’

MAJOR CHANGES lie ahead. It may not be obvious, but the next few months, the next couple of years, could see more change in the way our country is run than during many of our lifetimes. Is this an overstatement? Well, let's have a look.

For over 200 years our prosperity as a people has been determined by our ability to produce. To produce enough to feed ourselves by being able to manufacture useful or not too useful things and selling them to other countries as well as using them here ourselves. For more than 100 years our ability to produce has been in decline compared with other manufacturing nations. It has become more apparent over the past quarter of a century that this decline is absolute, and that capitalism, despite some advances elsewhere, is dying on its feet in this country.

Successive British governments have failed to tackle this problem. And for the first time in history we had a government under Thatcher which embraced and exacerbated this decline. The Labour Government before Thatcher had tried various ruses to stall decline. In 1997 New Labour were given a mandate for change by the British electorate and could have transformed British industry. It could have imposed import controls to keep British profits in British industry; initiated a national debate on what we need to produce to thrive; invested in the R&D; basic and advanced education needed to build for the future. In other words, it could have had an industrial strategy.

Britain has not been successfully invaded for nearly 1,000 years. Since the Roman occupation of Britain we have not been ruled by a government issuing instructions from abroad. The ability to influence and ultimately control events in our own country has been taken for granted, except in times

of war. Yet, again for the past quarter of a century, more and more decisions crucial to Britain are being taken abroad, in the institutions of what was the Common Market, became the European Community, and is now the European Union.

In 1997 New Labour could have had real influence in Britain, the country in which it was elected. It has instead given over more and more power to those EU institutions over which we, or it, have no control whatsoever.

Two things have underpinned British life for longer than any of us have been alive; our ability to manufacture, and our national independence. These two things which will dramatically change in the coming months and years unless we act to stop them.

A peculiarly dangerous combination of political events lies ahead. A government with no industrial strategy is giving away our independence as a country and as a people. An election lies ahead in which no party standing wants to regenerate our industry and technological base, and despite Tory posturing, no party is prepared to gain the independence needed to carry out regeneration. What is to be done? There is no easy answer.

No return to Thatcherism, but no toleration of the pathetic social democracy which believes we can make no progress in Britain, only in Europe. Confidence that the country built by the generation that defeated fascism and rebuilt our homes and much of our industry, can be run by the children and grandchildren of that generation.

Globalisation, said to be inevitable and therefore good, is really Americanisation. Giving up more and more of our independence to the EU in reply is simply to say that we'd rather be ordered about from Brussels than from Washington or New York.

We can and must order our own lives.

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