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THE CASE FOR PALESTINE



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WORKERS

First thoughts

WHAT IS HAPPENING in the war against terrorism? It appears that Bin Laden's al-Qa'ida network in Afghanistan will be destroyed. If so, good, for it has made war on the people of that country and on workers abroad.

For Afghanistan, to be rid of foreign armed gangs is a step forward: to be rid of all outside interference would be the next. Destroying the home-grown warlords and their drug-dealing thugs, and building a peace where there is the possibility for progress, are tasks only the Afghan people themselves can achieve, for foreign "friends" come with their own agendas. The huge number of Afghans who left to live abroad, many of them the skilled and educated workers needed there, should now return to help rebuild their shattered country.

For the worldwide fight against terrorism, Bush must be told to go home. As yet, the US has been constrained in its desire to settle old scores in Somalia and Iraq, by voices within and without (including Britain's). Now the Pentagon is itching for a remote control bombing war against the real enemies: the peoples of

those countries which stubbornly refuse to give up their independence in the greater interest of US capital and domination.

If worldwide terrorism is to be tackled, the question of Israel cannot be ignored. The US could take immediate action by cutting off funds to the war criminal Sharon if he continues to attack the Palestinian Authority and refuses moves towards peace in the region.

As it is, Sharon took the commencement of hostilities in Afghanistan as the green light to invade Palestinian areas and conduct a reign of terror on civilians and security personnel alike. Blair has spoken up for an independent Palestinian state – such support has been muted in recent weeks, when in fact it must increase.

Meanwhile the US has shown what it thinks of allies. They are there to line up support, but they are not to be involved in any real decisions. That goes for NATO, and for Britain and Germany. Most of all it goes for the European Union, whose pretensions at a common foreign policy and common defence forces have been rightly shattered. Britain must have its own independent policy, or we will have no voice at all.



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Death knell for British coal

THE ANNOUNCEMENT that UK Coal was issuing a severe profit warning has been a disaster for the remaining pits in this country in terms of further job losses and closures.

The severe profit warning comes from managerial incompetence at Daw Mill Colliery in Warwickshire. Substantial investment put the wrong equipment in the wrong place, with anticipated productivity down by 1 million tonnes. Someone has to pay for it: the miners.

Immediately the profit warning had been posted, 200 jobs were axed at Longannet, Scotland's only surviving pit. At the Prince of Wales pit in Pontefract West Yorkshire, 150 jobs were scrapped. These men had been working on an £18 million pound underground development to open up the Went Edge reserves which would have guaranteed the pit for at least 10 years. Now they are sacked and scrapped.

The 600 miners at the Prince of Wales have been told that because of 'geological' difficulties the pit's life expectancy is now January 2002. Miners say this is a lie, and that the 'geological' difficulties arise from the profit return dropping through the floor and have nothing to do with coal.

Ellington pit in Northumberland and Clipstone in Derbyshire are also under threat, while the Selby complex in North Yorkshire is on a two-year period of notice.

All the coal unions, NUM, NACODS, BACM (and even the UDM) are appalled and have been protesting loudly. They are strongly united around a strategy for coal. There are still 1,000 years of reserves in the coalfields, if clean coal technology is used. This is ignored by government and employers and crushed by EU directives. Profit, not coal, is the order of the day.

Britain enters the New Year with the possibility of a future with no coal pits. This would turn the clock in this key British industry back to medieval times.

- The government has awarded £4 million in compensation to hundreds of miners unfairly sacked during the 1984-1985 miners' strike. The payments, primarily in pension enhancements, belatedly right a great injustice done to hundreds of miners who are now pensioners — at least to those lucky enough to still be alive 16 years after the strike ended.

The payment pales into insignificance when measured against the billions spent by the Thatcher government during the strike, such as the £2 billion spent on importing oil and coal — or when measured against the deliberate closing of economically viable pits and the subsequent vandalism of their demolition and destruction through the length and breadth of Britain.

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

ISRAEL Green light for Sharon

THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT killed the military leader of Hamas in the West Bank at the end of November, just after Hamas had suspended suicide bombings in Israel.

This deliberate provocation brought, as predicted, a violent response from Hamas militants. Their appalling bomb attacks led, predictably, to yet more reprisals from Sharon.

The European Union and the US government have lined up with Israel to try to force Arafat to intern suspected Islamic nationalists. This would destabilise the Palestinian Authority.

Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon has met Bush at the White House, and Bush gave Sharon the green light for his attacks on the Palestinian Authority. Many suspect the agreement was, 'you destroy Palestine, and we'll destroy Iraq'. This would transform the 'war against terrorism' into a war against any country Bush chooses to target.

MANUFACTURE Nine months of decline

MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY in the UK declined for the ninth successive month, according to government statistics published in early December. The rate of decline was the fastest for almost three years, and at its steepest for almost ten years — since the slump caused by Britain's entry into the Exchange Rate Mechanism. Output, orders and prices remain static while employment has plummeted.

INDUSTRY**Calculated lockout**

FERODO, WHOSE WORKERS for years have produced automotive parts and other industrial equipment on many sites in Britain, is a familiar name. Except that Ferodo no longer exists. Four years ago it was bought by an American capitalist and renamed Friction Dynamics.

A major factory in the Friction Dynamics group in north-west Wales quickly became a focus for the struggle between workers and the new foreign employer.

In an attempt to divide the unions, the company refused to deduct union subscriptions from wages at source for the largest one, the TGWU (but not the MSF or AEEU), despite the fact that such an arrangement had been operating for over 35 years.

The continuing erosion of terms and conditions, and the threat of many more to come, such as a 15% reduction in wages and an end to all shift payments, led to a strike ballot in April 2001. A startling 99% of the TGWU's members voted, and an even more startling 98% voted to strike.

The law at present, changed following Labour's election in 1997, says that it is unlawful to dismiss workers on strike, but only for the first eight weeks of the strike. Clearly the social democrats in the Labour Party believed workers could never again engage in disputes of any great duration.

During this eight-week period "meaningful negotiations" are supposed to take place. In Wales the employer spent this period prevaricating, and immediately sacked all the strikers, perfectly legally, once the eight weeks were up.

The T&G organised a lobby of Parliament on this important issue on 22 November 2001, the 30th week of the strike, which in practice is now a lock out.

As Tom Jones, the T&G Industrial Organiser said, "strike action against an employer such as this is a dangerous thing to do. Not taking action to defend workers' terms and conditions is an even more dangerous thing."

Whether this and other lobbies will affect the amendment to the Employment Rights Act currently being drafted is a moot point. The defeat of this aggressive American employer, and others launching similar attacks on workers, will send a more powerful message.

Support, material and spiritual, should be sent to WORKERS — we'll forward it on. In particular, keep your eyes peeled for the fund-raising CD!



Photo: Unison Greater London Region

On 4 December public service workers reminded MPs, the government, as well as their fellow workers, how important they are to the economy. Ambulance workers and nurses joined forces with porters and other public service workers in the TUC-sponsored, UNISON-organised 'Positively Public' event that culminated in a rally at Westminster Hall. Featured in the photograph is UNISON General Secretary Dave Prentis and President Veronica Dunn.

Benefits staff strike over safety

CIVIL SERVANTS working in 1,500 Benefits Agency offices are involved in a long-running campaign to protect their safety at work. About 2,500 people in selected offices are on indefinite strike. Others are taking occasional action, including a 2-day strike in mid-December. There is no sign yet that the dispute will be resolved.

Members of the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) working in new-style offices, designated Jobcentre Plus, objected to the removal of protective screens. Their union claims screens are needed in the face of regular threats to safety. On average there are three serious violent incidents a week.

Management have firmly resisted the claims that screens are necessary. They believe that changes to the working environment are needed to carry out the government's agenda of reforming the benefits regime. Ministers have also spoken out against the action in uncompromising terms.

But those working in jobcentres are unconvinced that change is needed. Although the selective strikers are receiving strike pay, those on occasional action are not. PCS estimates about 40,000 of them supported the December action.

Further action is contemplated for the New Year.

POVERTY**It's the wages that do it**

THE ANNUAL MONITORING report by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the New Policy Institute has found that, although progress is being made, there are still serious problems with regard to income poverty.

The government's commitment to eradicate child poverty in a generation has got off to a very slow start, despite dubious claims that 1.2 million were taken out of poverty in the last parliament.

The number of children living in poverty still stands at more than four million, nearly one in three. More than half of all

lone parents were living below the poverty threshold as defined by government. Almost half had no paid work.

While the number of claimants of Income Support and other means-tested benefits declined, the level of support paid has also fallen from 30% to 20% of average earnings.

The National Minimum Wage has had a positive impact on earnings. But 1.5 million employees aged 22 and over were still earning less than half the median level of male earnings (around £4 an hour) in 2000, compared with 2 million in 1998.

Around 1.25 million pensioners have no income other than their state pension and benefits and around 20% remain in the bottom fifth of income distribution.

AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

Profit-crazy

A CONSORTIUM of seven airlines, including Virgin Atlantic and British Airways, now runs the National Air Traffic Service (NATS) which was privatised in June 2001. Its first estimated 6 months operating profit was supposed to be £60 million but in fact this has become a £50 million loss.

The consortium has not paid up the selling price as agreed with the government and is trying to re-negotiate the terms of the sale whilst holding back over £35 million. It has also made proposals for the shedding of 2,000 of the 5,000 air traffic controllers.

Evidence is emerging of attempts to circumvent the costs of NATS by the use of smaller planes. The 30% decline in passenger traffic since the events of 11 September has slashed profitability. The Central Aviation Authority is going to add to the madness by introducing increased airport charges from 2003.

Events are unravelling far more quickly than at Railtrack, and the safety implications are far more deadly and dramatic. Government intervention into this latest privatisation will have to be sooner rather than later. The skies over Heathrow are congested with the greatest number of flights and passengers carried to and from any British airport. You do not need a suicide bomber to generate disaster, just a service dominated by profit.

Newham staff defend branch

FOLLOWING the successful dispute in Social Services earlier in the year, industrial relations between Newham Council and UNISON have moved from sparring to heavy fighting. An orchestrated smear campaign in the local and national press against the leading branch officials has seen the branch defend itself with humour and vigorous counter-arguments. Elected members, local 'Cabinet' members and various wheelers and dealers in the London Labour Party promised an improvement in industrial relations. This has not stopped Newham Council renegeing yet again on its promises. It now intends pressing ahead with an attempt to sack four out of the six leading branch officials.

Despite current employment law, there is no real protection against being sacked for breaking a contract of employment and taking industrial action. Rather than getting trapped in the employer's disciplinary procedures and placing your hopes in an Employment Tribunal, a better solution is to turn to the membership. Newham employers will either have to climb down or risk the biggest dispute in a decade.

The response from the membership has been staggering. Early indications from the consultative ballot about taking industrial action have been overwhelming. The branch office has been submerged in letters, phone calls, emails and messages of support. One UNISON member writing to the branch officials said that for the first time since the 1984 miners' strike she was participating in the branch. She was so incensed that she sent the four threatened officials a lottery ticket each!

The last thing Newham's would-be mayors want is a major dispute they cannot win. Neither does Newham Council, which has just failed a recent review of its social services. After clearing out years of corruption and malpractice, the Newham UNISON branch feels truly rooted in its membership, and confident that they will rally to the support of its organisation and see off the employer.

UNIVERSITIES

Lecturers fight redundancies

UNIVERSITY LECTURERS at Middlesex University in North London have voted to take industrial action against compulsory redundancies. Since May 2001 the university has axed 80 lecturing posts by voluntary redundancy and is now proceeding to make a further 10.5 staff redundant by compulsory redundancy.

This is the first time in the university's history that it has made academic staff

compulsorily redundant. Staff student ratios are already worse than in comparable institutions.

The action began with a one-day strike on 5 December which effectively led to the cancellation of teaching on most of the university sites.

The procedure employed by the university is described by the lecturers' union (Natfhe) as being more akin to a dismissal process. In subject areas targeted for staff reduction all staff are placed in a "redundancy pool" and then their "performance" is graded in order to

WHAT'S ON

Coming soon

JANUARY

Saturday 26 January
National Stop the War demonstration in London, jointly organised by Stop the War and CND. Details to be confirmed. With the US making noises about war against Iraq, Somalia and Yemen, this could be the most important demonstration yet.

FEBRUARY

Saturday 9 February
Defend Council Housing national conference, Birmingham. £12.50 trade unionists, £5 tenants. For details, see www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk

FAST FOOD

Fish, chips, and struggle

HARRY RAMSDEN'S, the world famous Yorkshire fish and chip shop which originally opened in 1928 and is now part of a world-wide fast food chain, made history again in November by being the first fish and chip restaurant to go into industrial dispute.

TGWU members at the original restaurant in Guiseley, near Leeds, staged demonstrations and protests over weekend rates, sick pay, working hours and the refusal to recognise the union.

The restaurant chain adorns its restaurant walls with photos of traditional northern working class crowds bedecked in flat caps and surrounded by stark industrial imagery of an era long gone.

It is good for the employer to be pulled up sharply by what was a fine tradition of good trade union organisation in the district — the old Dyers and Bleachers Union that was absorbed into the Transport and General Workers Union in the 1980s.

determine the unlucky 10.5.

Natfhe intends to continue the action in the New Year, which may take the form of further strikes or "actions short of a strike". On 3 December the university governors announced that the seven schools which make up the university are to be reduced to four. It is anticipated that this process will further affect academic staff but will also affect administrative and technical staff. The new year picket lines may be jointly staffed by academic staff and UNISON members who represent the admin and technical staffs.

British Airways cuts back

AS MANY AS 10,000 jobs are under threat as British Airways, "the world's favourite airline", attempts to introduce a massive cost cutting exercise. Jobs ranging across the entire 57,000-work force — pilots, cabin crews, cleaners — are to be axed. Routes are to be reduced or left to competing low-cost airlines. The events of 11 September will be the justification for BA's actions.

BA is trying to achieve its re-structuring, first mooted in 1997, but beaten off by three days of industrial dispute is now trying to climb on the bandwagon of global downturn.

The emphasis will be on shorter internal flights - money-spinners to and from London. Dumping various European flights or leaving them to the rivals — Go, Ryan, Virgin or other EU competitors. Closer working with the US airlines — the 'open skies' policy — will effectively create a cartel.

150,000 airline and aviation jobs have been axed in the US since September. Aer Lingus (Ireland), Olympic (Greece), Alitalia (Italy), Iberia (Spain) and Sabena (Belgium), have juddered to a halt, or towards bankruptcy and closure. Non-EU airlines like Swiss Air and US carriers have likewise gone into financial liquidation.

BA has cut routes so now there are only a limited number of flights to that oldest of British colonies, Northern Ireland. Smaller British companies such as Gill Air have closed down. Lines like Go and Ryan are desperately trying to seize the market with innumerable cheap seats aimed at attracting greater numbers of passengers.

EU attack

The US government has supported its aviation sector to the tune of \$15 billion in cash, loans, subsidies etc. The response from the EU? The vice-president for transport and energy says that "having 14 national flag carriers is not sustainable".

Any alliance between US and UK airlines may be open to anti-trust investigation or legislation. In other words, 14 airlines become one, with an EU logo. The market will decide how that one carrier is arrived at. If thirteen go to the wall, the survivor will pick up the pieces. But if it is BA or American Airlines, the two strongest airlines in the world, then anti-trust legislation will be rolled out!

Britain's airports transport over 118 million passengers annually. Heathrow alone directly employs over 68,000 workers, with a further 250,000 jobs dependent on it, and generates over £5 billion a year towards the national economy. EU intervention into aviation and aerospace, riding on the back of 11 September, is about re-shaping and re-structuring huge investments and tracts of employment with one goal in mind: greater political and economic unification.

Textile production needs research and and it needs a government prepared**Textiles: adapt or die**

THE CONTINUING CLOSURES within the British (and European) textiles and clothing industries prompt the question: where to next?

The wholesale closure and demolition of the former Courtaulds factories in the East Midlands last year prompted the KFAT (Knitting, Footwear and Allied Trades) union to call a radical rethink on the direction of British textiles and for the implementation of the "Plan for Textiles". This had been formulated by the unions, employers and the DTI (now defunct along with Agriculture) and had served as a catalyst in producing £15 million from the government to fund new developments in textiles. It had and has, however, with the exception of a few notable small-scale initiatives, been allowed to lie fallow.

The discourse around "The Plan" in 1999 had at least had the merit of throwing up detailed analyses of the state of the industries in Britain and charted some tentative directions into which new resources might be placed.

Some of the key factors to remember about our textile industry is that we have:

- World-class plant existing cheek-by-jowl with the antiquated
- Unparalleled designers and fashion designers
- High quality training institutions
- We export £8 billion worth of textile and clothing products each year
- We still have 300,000 people involved in the production of textiles and clothing.

So, there is a lot at stake and a good base to work from if changes are made now. Change there will have to be because on the other side of the coin we have:

- A home market saturated by cheap imports, especially in clothing and footwear
- A large but shallow retail sector dominated by four companies
- Massive out-sourcing by retailers and producers
- Very little in the way of government support and initiative (see US and Japan feature)
- Poor investment and product replacement record
- Poor co-operation amongst the main players within the industry for research and marketing.

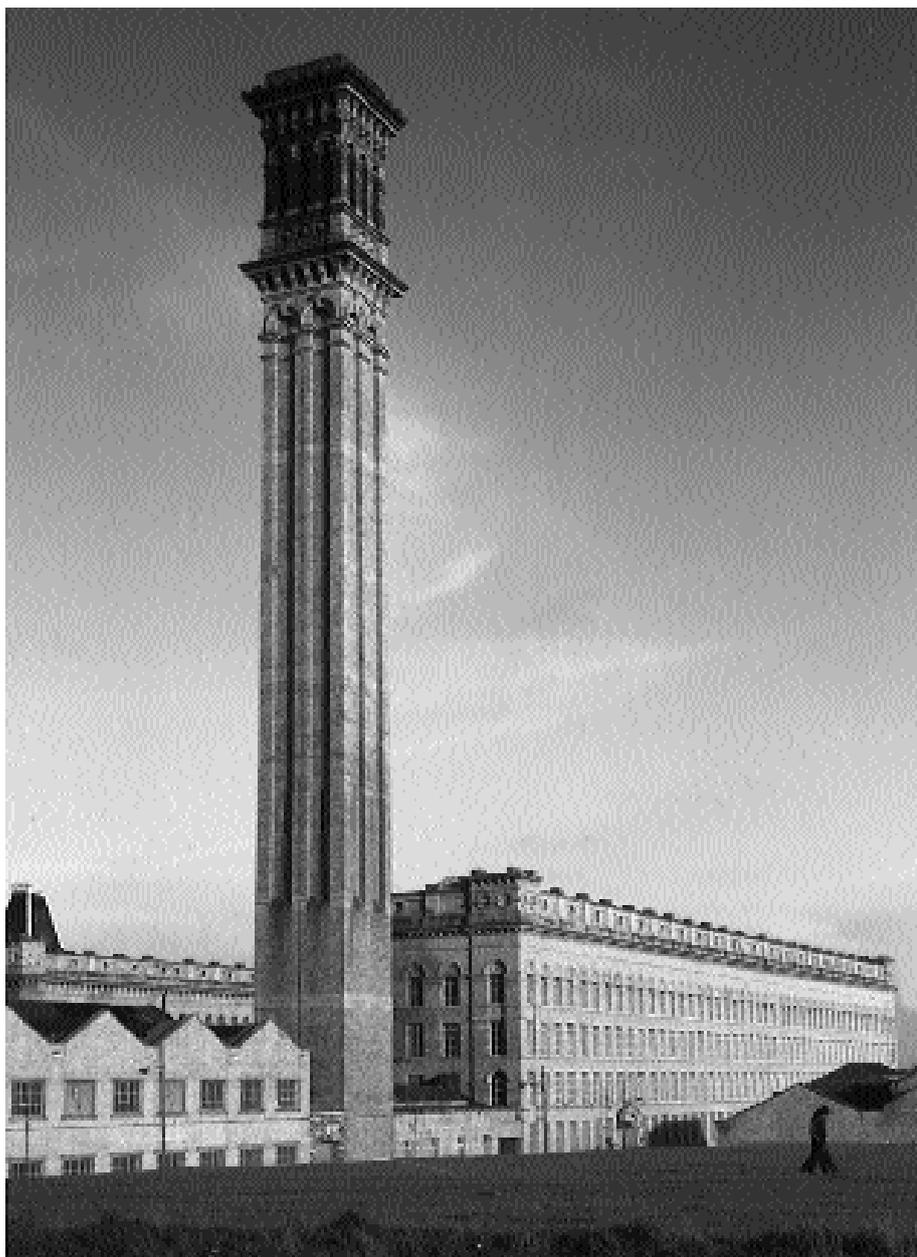
Given this state of affairs, workers in the industry face the stark alternative of continuing to sink and shrink or to take up the lead given by KFAT and the TGWU in seeking changes of direction.

In a recent article, "Textiles and Clothing in the Next Millennium: Quo Vadis?", Paul Kiekens of Ghent University reached the conclusion that the textile and clothing industries of western Europe must adapt or die. Similar conclusions have been reached in reports of the Textile Institute, Manchester, on technical textiles and in the "Plan For Textiles". But how can this be achieved in a capitalist economy?

Niche markets

We have always argued for workers to retain the capacity to produce what we need in Britain — clothes and footwear not the least among them. But capital, while having national roots, has no such requirement. Unless we can successfully challenge the export of capital — as with Rover at Longbridge — then we have to ensure our nation's skills are engaged in new forms of textile production: what Kiekens and others have recognised is that import controls will not protect our textile industries, even if our

d development to allow it to go after specialised markets —
to shoulder its responsibilities to the nation...



government could be weaned off its preferred diet of free trade. We have to move into the production of “speciality” or “technical/industrial” textiles and their application.

The manufacturing section of the TGWU has long called for the development of a skilled, properly educated and well-trained workforce. This

is echoed by Kiekens in Belgium. We need improved funding and provision for research and development as this gives the technological wherewithal for advanced applications of textiles in niche markets (see section on Japan and USA).

For textile production to continue in Western Europe it is essential that cross-fertilisation be promoted between textile

Investment elsewhere — but not in Britain

Of all industries in the EU textiles invests the least. Only 0.5% of the industry's turnover is re-invested in research and development. What signal does that give to the young?

We cannot move into new possibilities for production with such a cavalier disregard for investment. Other economies have managed a successful combination of private venture capital and government funding of co-operative ventures between companies, universities and state agencies. We need good training and well-remunerated jobs to make the breakthroughs that will give a sustained future for textiles here.

In the USA, 1999 saw the start of a government-funded programme of intense co-operation between employers and research institutes based on universities. Within the programme, individual companies have been linked with specific universities to further research into new products and into enhancing existing ones.

Similarly, Japan has launched schemes whereby employers and universities plus state research facilities are enhancing textile production techniques. In this instance MITI, the Ministry for International Trade and Industry, has helped co-operation but funding comes from regional and municipal sources.

and other technologies e.g. chemistry, polymer and materials science and engineering. Such combinations will throw up new processes, products and applications. In short, goods and services with a future which will attract the application of capital and creation of work.

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As the "Plan for Textiles" envisaged, this would create a fundamental, not to say seismic, shift away from the current mix of an industry with a bleak future, low-tech outlook, low wage jobs interspersed with a few bright spots.

The Textile Institute, the pre-eminent world textile forum based in Manchester, has similarly called for a concerted change of emphasis to be placed on the production and development of technical/industrial textiles rather than mass clothing and fabrics. This already applies to many sectors including autos and safety apparel but there is no cohesive, national policy to give effective direction to the shift.

Responsibilities

The British government needs to be forcibly reminded that it has responsibilities to this nation. When it trumpets the effectiveness of PFI and Public/Private Partnerships it should be reminded that these can work both ways, as they did when Benn was Minister for Technology. If our money can be invested in the new capitalisms of Eastern Europe it can be better spent here! Furthermore, government should be giving incentives to invest in management, marketing and production techniques. Our management style and knowledge often lags behind the most

effective in the world. The sorts of co-operation found between Japanese textile companies and their training institutions could be replicated and surpassed here with our equally prestigious schools of management.

The practical impetus behind the need to change is to be given added force in 2005, when all quotas are to be lifted from imports into Britain and the rest of the EU. With textile production being one of the economic engines integral to every developing economy, it is one of the truly globalised industries.

The 2 million Western European workers currently employed in the industry will have their jobs wiped out

unless the necessary changes to the predominant areas of production are made. Changing the nature and character of production won't ensure all those jobs but it will preserve a future for textile production.

The fact that textile activity is largely based on workers' costs and is vulnerable to rapid decampment to low-wage economies means that by 2010, 90% of EU textile products will be produced in other continents. Recent years have seen the massive shift of capital from British companies to China and even Taiwan and Malaysia are now losing out to Vietnam.

There's still plenty to go at where companies such as Burberry have made the effort to sort out production and marketing strategies. But we should be moving into medical applications; specialised clothing and apparel; special finishes; bio-medical textiles; electronics and so much more. All these are areas where the quality and skills of the workforce can make a difference.

We should be able to encourage the young to come to work in textiles. We have brilliant student designers and technicians at our training institutions but what kind of industry are they offered? It's not enough to have a burgeoning retail sector. We have to produce to create new wealth in order to underpin our services.

Bradford firm under the hammer

The passing of Woodhead's into receivership this summer was a signal blow to the woollen textile trade in Bradford and throughout the country. Woodhead's was one of only two remaining woolcombing companies in the country.

Woolcombers are traditionally the source of tops and noils — the types of fibres obtained from sheep's wool. Tops go into making yarn for worsteds (suits) while noils, being short fibres, go into making lower quality cloth and non-wovens.

The failure of Woodhead's has led to the loss of 600 jobs in Bradford. Furthermore, it meant that the high quality niche worsted market traditionally based in Huddersfield has come under increasing pressure when sourcing its staple materials.

Woodhead's was formed from mergers in recent years and has invested heavily in new plant Its loss is a major blow to textiles in Britain.

The meaning of EU 'expansion'

The news this summer that one of the major Italian textile companies is heading for the Czech Republic is a major warning to all workers in the EU as to what "expansion" means for us. Of all the European textile industries, the Italians have been in the vanguard for innovative ideas for the past two decades and have been a model of how to flourish under difficult conditions. Now EU ambitions to expand eastwards (now who thought that one up?) are likely to dismember a success story through subsidies. This is more than a little ironic as subsidies are refused to Italian companies in Italy but can be provided if they up sticks and head beyond Prague! The EU gives "seeding money" to encourage privatisation in the East and this is the big attraction along with low-paid workers, good existing textile knowledge and low peripheral costs.

The weakness at the heart of the Middle East is what is not there: a Palestinian state. Here we look at the history of courage and betrayal...

The case for Palestine



Photo: Workers

Israel troops in Manger Square, Bethlehem, December 1993

IN 1918 THE BRITISH government sought to impose on Palestine the Balfour Declaration, although Britain had no sovereign rights there. This promised the Jews a 'national home' in Palestine: Lloyd George and Balfour assured the Zionists this meant a 'Jewish state', ignoring the fact that 93% of Palestine's population was Arab. At the same time, the British government was promising to recognise and support the independence of the Arabs. The government broke these promises and violated the rights of the Palestinian people by forcing on them a foreign settler regime. Churchill wrote that the Zionists "take it for granted that the local population will be cleared out to suit their convenience."

Balfour's secret memorandum to the Cabinet cynically summed up British government policy: "In Palestine we do

not propose even to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country...The Four Great Powers are committed to Zionism. And Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profounder import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land. In my opinion that is right... so far as Palestine is concerned, the Powers have made no statement of fact which is not admittedly wrong, and no declaration of policy which, at least in the letter, they have not always intended to violate."

Churchill admitted to the House of Commons, "The cause of unrest in Palestine, and the only cause, arises from the Zionist movement, and from our promises and pledges to it." British

governments encouraged Jewish settlers into Palestine, who took more and more Arab land. When the Palestinians rebelled, the British Army killed more than 5,000 and wounded more than 14,000. British forces organised, led and armed the Zionists, encouraging them to create what the Governor of Jerusalem called, 'a little loyal Jewish Ulster'. George Bernard Shaw commented, "Another Ulster. As if one were not enough."

The Zionists soon became unwilling to serve Britain's imperial interests. Like the Palestinians, they sought to create a state. Their national liberation struggles broke British power in the Middle East. In 1948, Zionist forces seized 80% of

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A tale of broken commitments

IT IS AS IF September 11 and its aftermath have been used to cancel the entire peace process that was under way in Palestine.

Tony Blair said on 15 October that his aim was "a viable Palestinian state as part of a negotiated and agreed settlement, which guarantees peace and security for Israel." On 31 October, he said that the peace process "should be on the basis that there is security for Israel, and justice and equality of treatment for Palestinians and the Palestinian state."

Foreign Secretary Jack Straw said to the UN General Assembly on 11 November that the peace process "must deliver security for Israel within recognised borders, whilst at the same time creating a viable Palestinian state."

President George W. Bush told the UN General Assembly on 10 November, "The American government also stands by its commitment to a just peace in the Middle East. We are working toward a day when two states, Israel and Palestine, live peacefully together within secure and recognised borders as called for by the Security Council resolutions. We will do all in our power to bring both parties back into negotiations. But peace will only come when all have sworn off, forever, incitement, violence and terror."

Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres told the UN General Assembly on 15 November, "Yesterday, you would hardly find ... support for a Palestinian state. Today, there is broad agreement that the creation of an independent Palestinian state - non-military and economically viable - is the best bet."

US Secretary for Defense Colin Powell said on 19 November, "We have a vision of a region where two states, Israel and Palestine, live side by side within secure and recognised borders." He said, "Israel must be willing to end its occupation, consistent with the principles embodied in Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, and accept a viable Palestinian State in which Palestinians can determine their own future on their own land and live in dignity and security."

He called on Israel to end its settlement-building: "Israeli settlement activity has severely undermined Palestinian trust and hope. It pre-empted and prejudices the outcome of negotiations and, in doing so, cripples chances for real peace and security. The United States has long opposed settlement activity. Consistent with the report of the committee headed by Senator George Mitchell, settlement activity must stop."

He called on Israel to put "an end to closures in order to bring tangible improvement in the daily lives of Palestinians and the rapid restoration of economic hope into every Palestinian home."

He called on Israel to end its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza: "At the same time, Palestinians must also be secure and in control of their individual lives and collective security. In the absence of peace, Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza has been the defining reality of Palestinians' lives there for over three decades, longer than most of the Palestinians living there have been alive. The overwhelming majority of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza have grown up with checkpoints and raids and indignities. Too often they have seen their schools shuttered and their parents humiliated. Palestinians need security as well. Too many innocent Palestinians, including children, have been killed and wounded. This, too, must stop."

'In November 1974, the UN reaffirmed the inalienable right of the Palestinians to return to their homes and property'

Continued from page 9

Palestine, including half the land allotted by the UN to the Arabs. Following a premeditated and systematic plan, Plan Dalet, they expelled 750,000 people, two-thirds of Palestine's people, from their homes. Ben Gurion said, "I support compulsory transfer."

In June 1967, Israel gained lands from Egypt, Jordan and Syria by conquest and occupied the rest of Palestine. In November 1967, the UN adopted Resolution 242 demanding that Israel withdraw from occupied Arab lands and calling for international guarantees of the independence of all the states in the region.

In the October 1973 war, the NATO powers backed and supplied Israel, and accused the Arab countries of aggression against Israel. But, as the French Foreign Minister asked, "Does the fact of trying to get back into your own house really constitute an unforeseen act of aggression?" The EEC continued to favour Israel economically. (Israel, alone of Middle Eastern countries, is an associate member of the EEC, benefiting from preferential trade tariffs).

In November 1974, the UN "reaffirmed also the inalienable right of the Palestinians to return to their homes and property from which they have been displaced and uprooted." In January 1976, the US government alone vetoed a UN resolution proposing the 'Two States' solution, of Israel and Palestine peacefully coexisting side by side.

The Intifada, against Israeli occupation and repression, started on 9 December 1987. Israel responded with deportations, mass arrests, assassinations, closures of schools and universities. In December 1988, the PLO said, "We totally and absolutely renounce all forms of terrorism." It also affirmed Israel's right to exist, accepted all the UN Resolutions on the conflict, going back to 29 November 1947, and adopted the principle of a two-state solution. It also declared the independence of a state in the West Bank and Gaza, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Ignored

Between 1948 and 1998, British and US governments consistently ignored Israel's 50 violations of Security Council Resolutions, including Resolutions 194 of 1948 and 89 of 1950, which called on Israel to allow the return of the Palestinians expelled in 1948, Resolution 287 of 1967, which instructed Israel to allow the return of the Palestinian refugees from the 1967 war, Resolution 267 of 1969, which stated that "acquisition of territory by military force is inadmissible", and Resolution 452 of 1979, which called on "the government and people of Israel to cease, on an urgent basis, the establishment, construction and planning of settlements in the Arab territories occupied since 1967." The British government consistently maintained that "all settlements in the occupied territories, including East Jerusalem, are illegal."

In September 1993, Israel and Palestine agreed on mutual recognition. On 25 September 1995, Israel and the PLO signed an historic agreement by which the Palestinians of the West Bank won both the right and the means to rule themselves. In January 1996, Israeli troops withdrew from Jericho and Gaza. The Palestinians elected their own national Council. On 26 April 1996, the Israeli government accepted the Palestinian state's right to exist. But the Netanyahu and Barak governments

reneged on the withdrawal agreements that Israel had signed.

Israel continues to build settlements on stolen Palestinian land — there are now 145 — in defiance of international law banning the movement of settlers into lands seized by war. It continues to blockade the West Bank and Gaza and to cut off their oil and gas whenever it chooses. It refuses to pay tax revenues to the Authority. Palestine suffers 40% unemployment, appalling conditions in the refugee camps, food and water shortages, Israeli curfews and border closures, house demolitions, and the imposition of a military network of roads and barricades.

The Mitchell Committee called for Israel to freeze settlement construction and for all sides to halt the violence and resume security cooperation and peace talks. The Israeli government rejected the call to halt settlement construction. The Palestine Authority endorsed the entire Report, and called for international observers to monitor the situation; the Israeli and US governments rejected this proposal. The US government gives Israel \$3 billion a year, which affords Bush enormous leverage over Sharon which he could use to help solve the problem.

The Palestinians are willing to accept that Israel keeps 78% of historic Palestine, but they want their full 22%. Barak said that Israel wanted a final settlement, but his proposed final settlement offered Palestine just 84% of that 22%, incorporated most of the Zionist settlements into Israel, gave Israel control of the land in between Jerusalem and Jericho, cutting the Palestinian state in two, and gave Israel control of Palestine's borders with Egypt and Jordan.

A genuine final settlement must resolve the problems of the Israeli annexation of Jerusalem, allow the Palestinian refugees to return to Palestine, establish Palestine's territorial integrity with secure borders, end Israel's military occupation and illegal settlements, and respect Palestine's self-determination and sovereignty.

Mad dog Sharon

Ariel Sharon is not just, as Bush calls him, a democratically elected head of state. He has a well-known history of brutality and massacre, which helps to explain his behaviour in the present crisis, which he himself has done a great deal to create.

1953: Sharon led the raid on Qibya in Jordan, which killed 69 civilians, mostly women and children: he ordered 'destruction and maximum killing'.

1955: Sharon led the raid on Gaza, which killed 37 Egyptian soldiers and wounded 31.

1955: Sharon led the raid on Kinneret in Syria, another unprovoked act of aggression, which killed 50 people.

1956: Sharon disobeyed orders by sending a battalion-size combat team into the Mitla Pass: 38 Israeli soldiers were killed and 120 wounded, in a totally unnecessary action.

1971: Sharon 'cleansed' the Gaza Strip of PLO, killing 100, including prisoners, and using death squads.

1982, April: Sharon ordered the destruction of the town of Yamit in Sinai, although the peace agreement obliged Israel to hand it over intact to Egypt.

1982, June: Sharon, now Israel's Defence Minister, was the chief architect of the invasion of Lebanon, in which 19,000 people were killed and 30,000 injured.

1982, 10 August: Sharon ordered the saturation bombing of Beirut, killing 300 people.

1982, 15-18 September: After the war was over, on 15 September, Sharon spoke to the Lebanese Falangist commander of killing the 'terrorists', i.e. the Palestinian refugees, saying, "I don't want a single one of them left." He ordered the Israeli Army to let the Falangists enter the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Chatila. The Falangists then massacred more than 2000 of the camps' inhabitants. The MacBride and Kahan Commissions both found Sharon 'personally responsible' for the massacres.

1991: Sharon called for Israel to attack Iraq.

2,000, 28 September: Sharon visited the Temple Mount, sparking the second Intifada.

2001, February: Sharon elected Prime Minister.

An exhibition on the Spanish Civil War at the Imperial War Museum shows how the 1930s responded to fascism and terror...

The struggle of the Spanish Republic

AT A MAJOR special exhibition (and at last open free), the 65th anniversary of the arrival in Spain of the International Brigades is celebrated by the Imperial War Museum in London.

Spain, a byword for reaction and obscurantism in Europe since the days of the Armada and the counter reformation, had elected a democratic government in 1936. When that democracy was threatened by a fascist uprising, the Spanish people fought back, along with volunteers from France, Germany, Italy, Britain, the United States and many other countries who flocked to support the Republican government in its struggle against rebels under General Franco and their German Nazi and Italian fascist allies.

Artistic variety

The exhibition uses a wide variety of artistic forms and types of exhibit to show the war, focusing on the personal experiences of soldiers and civilians, and the impact of the war on artists, writers and musicians. Exhibits have been assembled from museums, archives and private collections in the United Kingdom, the United States, Germany, France and Spain.

They include works by a wide range of artists: Joan Miro, Henry Moore, Rene Magritte, Pablo Picasso, Salvador Dali, Alexander Calder, Edward Burra, Robert Motherwell, Cesar Manrique and W S Hayter. The exhibition also contains International Brigades memorabilia — letters, medals, memorials and ephemera — and Spanish artefacts: a coin salvaged from the ruins of Guernica; a campaign map used by Franco; the shirt worn by a Basque soldier who was killed in the war; fragments of masonry and a bread ration from the siege of Alcazar; and drawings of the conflict by Spanish children.

There are many Republican and

Nationalist posters, photographs by Robert Capa, David Seymour, Agusti Centelles and Gerda Taro, Capa's girlfriend, who was killed in the Battle of Brunete. To illustrate the response of musicians to the war there is a baton used by Pablo Casals; and scores by Benjamin Britten and Samuel Barber.

On the literary front there are Letters by George Orwell, John Cornford and Julian Bell; news dispatches written by Ernest Hemingway; Laurie Lee's passport; the manuscript of *THE HOUSE OF BERNADA*

‘There is a parallel between the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers and the US bombing of Afghanistan...and the fascist destruction of Guernica’

ALBA, which Lorca was working on shortly before his murder at the hands of the Nationalists in 1936; a milk churn used by the wife of Miguel Hernandez to smuggle out his poems while he was in prison; and the typescript of Bertolt Brecht's play *SEÑORA CARRARA'S RIFLES*.

The exhibition is a vivid reminder of the struggle of the Spanish republic for survival, unaided by any country but the Soviet Union, while the fascist rebels drew active support from fascist Germany and Italy, and tacit support from the non-interventionists of other capitalist countries.

But there are many aspects that make the visitor think about the issues of 2001. With the Islamicist terrorist threat in mind, there is a parallel in the aggressively Catholic Franco's use of the

savage Army of Africa, made up of ferocious Moorish irregulars; and the terrorist attack on the twin Towers and the Pentagon, as well as the US's bombing of Afghanistan, reminded many of the first use of fascism's terror tactic of massive bombing from the air which destroyed Guernica.

It is not a surprise that they focus on the names that have become part of the mythology of the Spanish Civil War, and as is sadly frequent, the Trotskyite sympathiser and later police spy George Orwell (Eric Blair) is treated as if he were an objective witness. But taken as a whole it is a timely reminder of the struggles fought in the past against terror.

There is also an online exhibition Spanish Civil War — a selection of interviews with International Brigade veterans at <http://www.iwm.org.uk/>

The Imperial War Museum is at Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ. Open daily, 10.00am – 6.00pm

- Admission to the museum is now free, as it is at all the national museums. The ticket barriers went down all over London on 1 December as the much-reviled charges were withdrawn.

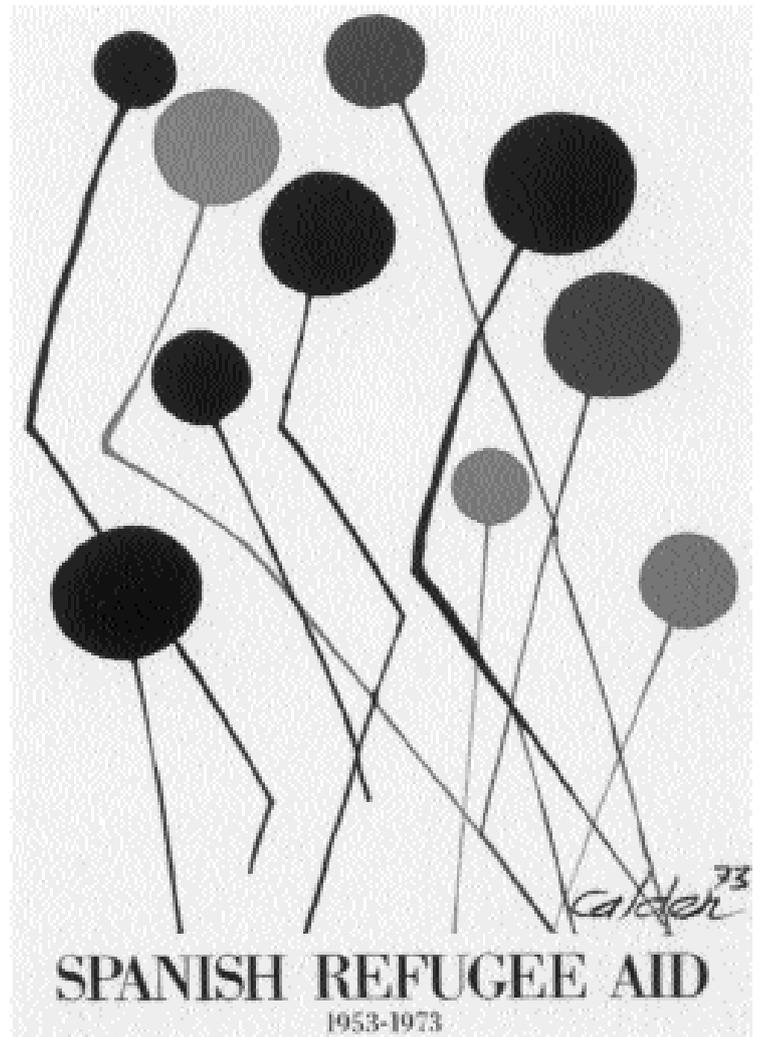
Many museums, such as the Science Museum in South Kensington, were already offering free entry for children and pensioners, but had faced financial meltdown due to Treasury regulations on VAT. Once that issue was sorted out, free entry for all could be introduced.

The museums are now delighted, and bracing themselves for a large increase in visitors. Visitor numbers, especially from Britain, had fallen dramatically across all the charging museums.

The end of charging is a major victory for all those who fought for it demise — and have now seen it implemented by a tardy government nearly 5 years after a manifesto promise to eliminate entry charges.



Contemporary images abound at the exhibition. Above: Robert Capa's famous "Falling Soldier", taken in 1936 in Andalusia, on the Cordoba front (© Robert Capra/Magnum Photos). Below: a poster supporting the Republican cause by the Spanish artist Joan Miró. Right, poster by Alexander Calder for an exhibition in 1973.



A Glasgow-based project reminds us of the important role songs can play in recording and learning from our life experiences in the world of work...

Warmed by worksongs



Fisher Lassie, lino cut print (1994), by Mary Louise Coulouris

THE RECENTLY LAUNCHED Women's Voices project in Glasgow is the first part of a series bringing together through song the life experience of workers throughout Britain past and present. It aims to make an enduring art form that will be both enjoyable and thought-provoking.

Poet, composer and artist worked closely together and harnessed the skills of more than a dozen singers and instrumentalists. The ensemble — a mixture of staff and students — presented the first performance of this 40-minute music drama to a very appreciative audience at the Royal Society of Arts, Music and Drama college.

The poet and playwright Marianne Carey wrote two new original poems on present-day themes ('Sidesteps' and 'Women's Work'); Eddie McGuire composed original music and arranged the traditional songs, while artist Mary Louise Coulouris created a large litho-graphic artwork illustrating the subject, which acted as a stage backdrop.

The project began in 1997 when traditional singers Jo Miller, Judith Peacock, Kathy Costello and Sheena Wellington collaborated in compiling a sequence of songs that could represent some of the best known from several centuries.

The earliest — the old ballad "The Cruel Mother" — deals movingly with that most fundamental subject, bringing new life into the world, but into a society where being a single mother was taboo.

Gaelic songs of milking, weaving and pounding tweed brought us through the pre-industrial period to songs of the mill workers, the fishing industry, on unemployment and the "means test". "The Fisherman's Wife" sums up her existence:

It's nae the kind o' life that a gentle
quine can thole

Wi' her fingers red raw wi' the
scrubbin' out a yole

A little'n on her hip, she's away tae
carry coal

She'll be ca'ael sair deen in the

WHERE'S THE PARTY?

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.

How to get in touch

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

- Subscribe to *WORKERS*, our monthly magazine, by sending £12 (cheques payable to Workers) to the address below.

- Go along to meetings in your part of the country, or join in study to help push forward the thinking of our class. You can ask to be put in touch by writing or sending a fax to the address below.

WORKERS

78 Seymour Avenue
London N17 9EB

www.workers.org.uk

phone/fax 020 8801 9543

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

mornin'.

The songs often pinpoint the class divide, as in Mary Brooksbank's Jute Mill Song.

Oh, dear me, the world's ill divided;
And them that work the hardest are
the least provided.

There's no' much pleasure living affen
ten and nine.

Sheena Wellington's words sum up her mother's and grandmother's experiences of industrial Dundee:

Now the rhythm o' their livin' was the
clacking o' the laims,

Their youth and health an' strength
was lost to jait

But the weavers an' the spinners and
the winders o' Dundee

Had a spirit that the hard times never
bait.

Based on experiences of industry in the 1930s, Mary Brooksbank wrote many fine poems and lyrics, often containing a thrust of humour and optimism:

The shifters they're a' dancin'

The spinners singing tae;

The gaffer's standing watching

But there's nothin' he can dae.

Marianne Carey's recent lyrics for the second last song in the performance focus on the desire to escape the isolation of the individual in today's society:

There was dancing going on,

Too late for her.

The tumble drier whirled a

Sad slow shuffle.

It was the last song of the evening, to a poem written specially for the occasion by Marianne Carey, that brought a positive ending and gave all the singers a chance to join together and sum up the whole event in the final choruses:

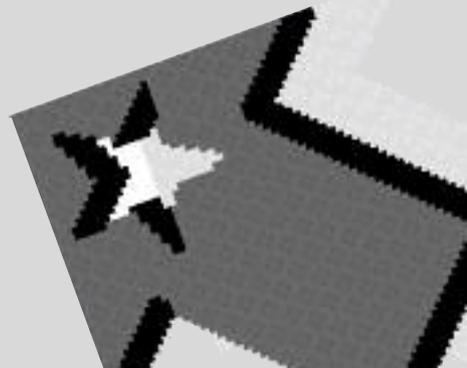
The world turns

Warmed by labour,

Lightened by laughter.

Who will work if we will not?

Next month: An intriguing collaboration between music and medicine.



Back to Front – Why we object

‘Capitalism may be all the nasty things well-meaning citizens say it is. But that’s not why we workers must destroy it. We must destroy it because it cannot provide for our futures’

WE COMMUNISTS, and others who want to see a change in the social system we live under, aspire to a society run in such a way as to provide for the needs, and the desires, of working people, not the needs and desires of those who live by the work of others. These latter people we call capitalists and the system they have created we call capitalism. We don’t just aspire to change it, we work to achieve that change.

We object to capitalism not because it is unfair and unkind, although it has taken those vices and made virtues out of them. We object because it does not work. It cannot feed everyone, or house them, or provide work for them. We need, and will work to create a system that can.

We object to capitalism not because it is opposed to terrorism; in fact it helped create it. We object because it cannot, or will not, get rid of it. At the end of the current ‘war’ (really too one-sided to have such a name) terrorism will be no more rooted out than fascism (a kind of terrorism) was by Britain and north America at the end of the last world war. To destroy terrorism you’d have to destroy capitalism, the supporter of the anti-progress forces which lean on terror to survive. We’d

have to wait a long time for that.

We object to capitalism not because it says it opposes racism and division in society; it creates both. We object because it has assiduously created immigration to divide workers here, and now wants to take that a dangerous step further, by institutionalising religious difference into division via ‘faith’ schools (actually a contradiction in terms).

Capitalism may be all the nasty things well-meaning citizens say it is. But that’s not why we workers must destroy it. We must destroy it because it cannot provide for our futures, our children’s futures. We must build our own future, and stop complaining about the mess created in our name.

Time will pass, and just as certainly, change will come. The only constant thing in life is change. Just as new growth replaces decay in the natural world, this foreign body in our lives, the foreign body we call capitalism, will have to be replaced by the new, by the forces of the future, building for themselves and theirs, and not for the few. We can work together to make the time for that oh-so-overdue change come all the closer, all the quicker. Let that be our Resolution.

Step aside capital. It’s our turn now.

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