

# WORKERS

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## TUC: CLASS AND CONTROL

JOURNAL OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY



IF YOU WANT TO REBUILD BRITAIN, READ ON

# WORKERS

## “ First thoughts

A YEAR AGO, John Monks stood up in front of the TUC in an attempt to force Blair's hand on the euro. It was the speech of a man who had given up on Britain. You would never have thought we had the fourth largest economy in the world. Even the defeat of Thatcher, he said, was brought about by Jacques Santer.

And how did he start his charge into Euroland? "EMU is here. On January 1, it starts in 11 countries and its impact on us will be profound. Already, the Euro area is a bulwark of stability in a world in economic turmoil. Without it, the lira, peseta and other traditionally weaker currencies would have been in trouble."

History is a cruel judge. Ever since its launch the euro has skidded and slid to the bottom of the league. It's the currency no one wants.

Monks was trying to push Blair into an open

campaign for the euro. And now, a year on, he has his wish. Worried by slumping support, the Labour Party is trying to make converts.

A leaked document outlines four main advantages of the euro. The first, incredibly, is the elimination of transaction costs for holidaymakers and travellers, as if that were a reason for abandoning control over your country's finances. (And if we had joined the euro on January 1, the pound would now be worth something like 20% less, transaction costs or no.)

This year, Monks should stand up in Glasgow and say he was wrong, on fact and on principle. He should say that without control over our economy we are lost — already, being in the EU means the Government is banned from supporting Rover, for example. Monks is unlikely to say this — so others must.

## Second thoughts

QUESTIONS ARE being asked. What were British troops doing wandering off secure roads, way out into the Sierra Leone bush? The real question is not why they were off the road, but what British troops were doing in Sierra Leone in the first place. The Royal Irish Regiment, if it should be

anywhere, should be in Ireland, where it comes from. Instead, it is getting captured by kids.

Blair and Cook are meddling where they shouldn't. And each time they come a cropper. Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone. Wherever next? Britain should be out of Africa.



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## Not so Nice

THE EUROPEAN UNION is creating a new Treaty for signature at its December meeting in Nice. But the proposed new Treaty would have far-reaching implications. It would, for example, allow the EU to outlaw political parties of which it does not approve. This could mean that parties opposing British membership of the EU could be banned. Corpus Juris, a Europe-wide system of law, would be implemented. This would mean the end of Common Law and of habeas corpus, trial by jury and no double jeopardy.

In addition, qualified majority voting would become the general rule for decision-making in the legislative sphere; the unanimity requirement giving each nation a right of veto would be abolished.

Under Section 19.2 of the proposed treaty, qualified majority voting would be extended to those legislative areas still excluded from it, asylum, immigration, agriculture and fisheries policy, budgetary, fiscal, economic and monetary policy. So the EU could abolish the pound and impose the euro, and cheat us out of the promised referendum.

And the European Court of Justice would be given unlimited power, meaning that our own courts would be essentially powerless. Section 35.2 of the planned Treaty says that no restrictions shall be placed on the Court's jurisdiction. This would enable the EU rulers to suppress all opposition through 'legal' means.

If we do not stop them, these will be our laws this time next year. What Philip II of Spain, Louis XIV of France and Hitler failed to do, will have been done by our failure to address the treachery of our own political class. One of the most ancient of the nation states of Europe will cease to exist, our culture will be suppressed and our people will lose their sovereignty. The creation of the European Army, which continues apace under the 'Common Foreign and Security Policy', is designed to ensure that, if we wish to resist this fate, military force will soon be available to try to stop us.

- The most recent EU survey will have given pro-Euro apologists food for thought over the summer. The INRA poll shows that the perception that EU membership is a good thing is slipping, with pro and anti votes at 25% and 24% respectively. More significantly, support for the euro has slumped lower than ever, with 22% in favour and 61% against. Despite every effort being made to pin the blame the strength of sterling against the euro for the continuing demise of manufacturing capacity, it seems that people in Britain are just not buying it.

**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@hotmail.com](mailto:rebuilding@hotmail.com)**

### STAR WARS

#### A system to be stopped

THE US GOVERNMENT is pushing for a Missile Defence System, commonly known as Star Wars II. This is enormously costly, quite unnecessary, and a danger to peace.

So far, the US Government has spent an estimated \$60 billion on developing the system, money that could have been spent on investing in US industry and public services.

It is not needed, because the USA is not at risk from a surprise missile attack. It endangers peaceful coexistence between states because it breaches the Anti Ballistic Missile Treaty of 1972, which has been a keystone in maintaining peaceful relations for nearly three decades.

Fortunately, the British Government is in a position to stop the whole nonsense in its tracks.

The System depends on foreign bases, particularly on the US base at Fylingdales in Yorkshire, so Blair can just say 'No, you can't use it for this purpose', and the US Government would have to pull back.

### DIRECTORS

#### Up and up

DIRECTORS' PAY rose by 21% last year, according to the magazine LABOUR RESEARCH. This figure is double their increase in 1998. The magazine also reports that no fewer than 138 directors received more than £1 million in income last year.

Thatcher has gone, but her mentality of 'greed is good' is still allowed to remain.

**EURO****Another interest rate rise**

THE EURO fell to a new low on 31 August, at 88.40 cents against the dollar, after the European Central Bank raised interest rates to 4.5%, the sixth rise in ten months. The euro has fallen 25% against the dollar since it was launched in January 1999.

Heinz Putzhammer of the German Federation of Trade Unions said: "It's bad for business, dangerous for growth and recovery, and will not fight inflation." Miguel Angel Garcia, a Spanish trade unionist, said: "Spanish inflation and that of Ireland are punishing other countries."

Clearly, a single interest rate does not suit all (or indeed any) euro-members. The rise is too small to curb Irish and Spanish inflation, and adds to the difficulties faced by those trying to drag themselves out of recession, like Germany and France.

Ireland's inflation is now 6% and rising and Spain's inflation is high too. Spain's unemployment rate is still more than 20% — so much for the claim that euro membership somehow curbs the excesses of unregulated capitalism. France's industrial production fell in June, while unemployment rose to 9.7%.

**MINING****An asset-stripper's dream**

ANOTHER SUITOR now shuffles into the spotlight to woo RJB Mining. Gone are Anglo-American, gone are Peabody Coal and the Drummond Group — all US conglomerates. Now the Renco Group, another US company appears. The 49th wealthiest private company in the US, Renco follows the rest: a predator seeking to snap up the ailing RJB company.

During the last three years RJB has staggered from crisis to crisis, surviving on government and EU grants and subsidies. All that is left of Britain's mining assets under RJB's control are 13 deep mines, 13 open-cast mines, with only 8,000 miners employed. At least two of the deep mines — Ellington and Clipstone — are under threat. None would be safe from a predator raid.

£100 million is RJB's market value for its 13 deep mines; £75 million is its market value for the 50,000 acres of land it holds across Britain. An asset-strippers' dream.

In 1947, there were 718,000 miners in Britain. In 1999, only 13,000 miners and only 17 deep mine pits.



Photo: Workers

**Remembering the martyrs: the march in Tolpuddle this summer, where 2,000 people gathered to commemorate the struggle to free the Dorset farmworkers. Speeches from John Monks and Tony Benn, among others, followed the theme that the Government should be doing better for workers.**

## Government bans Rover

THE DEPARTMENT of Social Security and the Inland Revenue, two of the Government's largest vehicle buyers, have signed three-year contracts to buy all their cars (about 12,000 cars in all) from Nissan, Peugeot, Fiat, Citroen, Ford and Vauxhall. These Government Departments have not signed such a contract with Rover, our last remaining mass production national car manufacturer. They have excluded Rover from the arrangements.

These are not isolated 'mistakes'. The Inland Revenue is accountable to the Treasury, and the DSS has said that the programme is also open to other government departments. Further, the Cabinet Office has not put the award-winning Rover 75 (1999's Car of the Year) on its approved list of ministerial cars. So the Cabinet Office told Alan Johnson, the minister responsible for the car industry, he could not have a 75. The S-class Jaguar, another British-built car, is also excluded from the ministerial list.

The Departments replied that their car purchasing was in line with European Union procurement guidelines. So much for the claims that joining the euro will boost our manufacturing industry. Bill Morris, general secretary of the TGWU said: "Buying British is not just an economic consideration, it is a patriotic duty and our Government should set the lead." All the TGWU's cars are Rovers.

**MINING****Durham Gala**

THE 116th annual Durham Miners Gala took place in early July. One pit, Ellington, still survives and struggles to survive in the North East. Every other pit has been destroyed as part of the Thatcherite heritage from the mid-1980s.

Nevertheless more than 50,000 people rallied, marched and thoroughly enjoyed themselves in this demonstration of working class power. The pits may have been closed but the coal remains, the working class spirit remains. The Gala shows how it refuses to die.

Led by the Durham Area President and

Secretary a tenacious campaign has taken place during the last 6 years to raise money, sponsorship and pride in maintaining the Gala. The community spirit, the hallmark of the miners, the pits and villagers in fighting the employers for wages, the right to life and dignity, epitomised in the Gala, is now being galvanised to raise afresh the banners and spirit of the North East. The battle now is against unemployment, drug abuse, poverty and slum houses.

This, the biggest labour movement event of the year, has seen the leadership of Parliamentary Labour Party decline an invitation to provide speakers every year since the 1984-85 Miners Strike.

## PENSIONS

### Some modest proposals

EVIDENCE SUBMITTED by the British Steel, post office and civil service pensioners' organisations to the House of Commons Social Security Select Committee shows that many of their members exist on little more than the means-tested Minimum Income Guarantee. Over 40% of all civil service pensions and 75% of all civil service widows' pensions are less than £3000 a year before tax.

The three organisations have made some modest proposals to improve the lot of their members. Most importantly, they

back the Age Concern recommendation that the National Insurance pension for a single person should be raised to a minimum of £90 a week, linked in future to the Earnings Index. But these efforts need to be seen in the context of the far-reaching changes to our pensions arrangements that are about to hit our pay packets.

- The next issue of WORKERS will feature an article on how the much-publicised stakeholder arrangements will affect workers, and the importance of working through our trade unions to take the offensive in countering this latest attack on our pay and conditions.

# A plan for the NHS

THE GOVERNMENT has produced the first ever National Plan for the NHS. It includes a number of bold claims such as that long waits in Accident and Emergency will be abolished and that by 2004 all patients will be able to have a GP appointment within 24 hours. It does promise definite investment in extra beds and new hospital and GP premises. It specifically highlights investment in new staff without whom none of the bold claims will be realised.

It promises:

- 7,500 more consultants and 2,000 more GPs
- 20,000 extra nurses and 6,500 extra therapists
- 1,000 more medical school places
- childcare support for NHS staff with 100 on-site nurseries

The National Plan carefully omits mention of the pay of NHS staff, and the response of many front-line staff has been, "Oh great, more staff, but where are they coming from?" But staff side unions have however seized the initiative and welcomed the proposed staffing targets and put forward a submission for this year's pay claim, pointing out that pay levels will be the key to success in staff recruitment.

A police constable earns £21,609 after 5 years service, while a nurse typically earns £16,445. A modest increase of 31 per cent would be required to bring such nurses into line with police officers with similar experience.

## WATER

### Mutuality down the drain

Kelda PLC, the company that owns Yorkshire Water, has lost the first round of an attempt to put a further squeeze on its already disgruntled three million water consumers. The government's Environment Agency has rubbished the company's so-called mutualisation plan (see page 10), pointing out that it is "playing games with the company structure but hasn't made the case for why mutualisation is good for customers. The customer will end up with £1.4 billion debt — where is the big benefit for the customer?"

In early summer the company floated proposals to sell off its pipes, reservoirs and treatment plants to a new company which would borrow £2 billion to pay for its acquisitions, and Kelda shareholders would

pocket the loot. Laughingly, Kelda described the new company as a mutual company owned by its customers, but stipulated that it, Kelda, would supply both chairman and managing director, and would also draw up the terms of the services contract.

With Kelda having bought these assets at knockdown prices thanks to privatisation, and failed, farcically, to deal with water shortages, so it is little wonder that opposition to the proposals was swift and powerful. A host of water consumer and community groups, led by the Bishop of Leeds, mounted a campaign which obliged the then water regulator, Sir Ian Byatt, to veto the proposals.

This success is a warning to other companies, principally Hyder and Anglian, which were known to be keen to sell off the operation of their water assets while retaining ownership.

## WHAT'S ON

### Coming soon

#### SEPTEMBER

TUC CONFERENCE, GLASGOW

Tuesday 12 September

Fringe Meeting: "No to the Euro"

Speakers include Doug Nichols, General Secretary, CWYU Boardroom, Moat House Hotel (adjoining the conference centre) 1pm (buffet from 12.30)

WORKERS Social and Ceilidh

Renfrew Ferry (opposite bank of River Clyde) featuring Whistlebinkies and Fresh Rock Ceilidh Band

9pm — All WORKERS readers welcome.

## AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL

### The sky's the limit

THE EUROPEAN Parliament has approved a plan to create a 'single European sky', or more prosaically, a single European air-space. The Tory MEP Sir Robert Atkins introduced a report urging "the Council of Ministers to take the political decision that the Commission should develop a single sky over a single market ... run by a single European air traffic control".

The idea is that all EU members should privatise their air traffic control agencies, and that these should work under the direction of a new agency, Eurocontrol.

Here in Britain, the Government's privatisation scheme proposes cost cuts of up to 36%. Directors of the National Air Traffic Services (Nats) have told the Government that these cuts would pose an unacceptable threat to safety. They point out that in the air traffic industry, "manning levels are absolutely critical to safety and service delivery".

Further, the Civil Aviation Authority regulator expects cuts of between 16 and 29% in capital spending over the first five years of the privatised regime. Ministers have often claimed that the sale's main advantage would be increased investment!

The air traffic controllers' union, the Institution of Professionals, Managers and Specialists (IPMS), said, "At a stroke, these proposals blow away the Government's rationale for this privatisation. Even Nats managers acknowledge that cuts on this scale would impact on safety. These proposals would be devastating to Nats and dangerous to travellers. The Government should drop its plans immediately."

On May Day 1997 the British working class swept away the hated the political power we had vested in Thatcher. As the TUC debated the euro, we consider where have we come since then...and where

## Think class, think country...think control

IT HAS OFTEN BEEN SAID, but not much repeated in the lifetime of those under 30, that British workers more than once in modern times brought down a government. In 1970 and 1974 industrial organisation, used in political opposition, made it impossible for a government to govern. We were effective and proud of the fact that we could defend ourselves against governments that threatened us and our unions. But could we create a government and make sure it acted in the interests of the British people?

The fact that we could not is the story of the last quarter of the 20th century; it must not be the story of the next.

In the seventies to remove the class-riddled Tories we elected similarly class-riddled Labour; one career politician for another. A social contract was drawn up to try to pretend the conflict between the interests of capital and those of workers did not exist. This created a political life so suffocating that even the Prime Minister Harold Wilson got bored and packed it in.

In a high-water mark of our control of the parliamentary process, class-conscious British workers saw off 'Sunny' Jim Callaghan, Labour's farming Prime Minister in the late 1970s. It was not weakness, craven self-interest or stupidity, as has been argued since. Spectres of the so-called winter of discontent are raised to prove how irresponsible trade unionists can be. The opposite was the case. Trade unionists had to oppose pay restraint and the beginnings of the serious anti-union legislation under Labour, and the start of large-scale deindustrialisation as the effects of Britain's entry into the Common Market in 1975 began to be felt. If it was a winter of discontent it was because workers were being frozen out in a new way.

That element of our class acting for itself in a conscious way — Ford workers, transport and public sector workers, engineers and teachers, often under Communist leadership — advanced by destroying a version of social democracy that said we could live with capitalism. This attitude was not imposed from without, it was invented by British

workers, and led to wage and investment freezes, near-hyper inflation and paralytically thin parliamentary majorities. The Labour government had to beg for loans from the International Monetary Fund to keep going.

That element of our class acting in itself, that is timid of our potential and reluctant to take control, became worried: What if we won? Could we govern? The age-old question got an age-old answer: "Better to lose than to win." Better to live with capital than without it, better to civilise capitalism (as if!) than to take capitalism out of civilisation.

From their experience in the postwar period and particularly the 1960s and 1970s the leading sections of our class knew how to defeat employers and governments. But they did not know what to do next. It was all very well winning a pay rise, but then the problem became how to save a whole industry from closure. Many leading trade unionists acted to warn and resist. The rest of our class seemingly didn't care. The result was inevitable — Thatcher.

That Thatcher could be electorally sustained only by the votes of so many British workers is a matter of shame. So many trade unionists voted for someone whose sole aim was to destroy unions. Why did we have to suffer so much before realising that her removal was the number one priority? A crushing man-made blight on industrial workers, their lives, children and towns was masterminded.

The effects of this economic blitzkrieg we will suffer for a generation. We did not join the miners in decisive battle in the 1980s, and allowed printers, teachers and others to fight alone. We let Thatcher make a crime of that class solidarity which would have destroyed her had we used it.

That her removal was so shambolic produced a further six Tory years, with her anointed successor Major fumbling on in a minor key. It also led to much confusion. Far too many believed it was the Tories who decided to remove her, not seeing that this was forced on them by a people

no longer prepared to suffer her. Far better a backstairs back-stabbing than defeat by the hated trade unions which would surely have come with the 1992 final solution pit-closure programme and the great resistance to it that was organised throughout the country.

What had workers been up to in the meantime? Had they been assiduously caring for threatened organisation? Had

**'We can impose a policy on Blair. The question is, have we got one?'**

they been considering what to do with the breathing space a Tory departure would bring? In the main, no.

But while the best in our class had been picked off, sacked, intimidated into seeming passivity, those who had connived at the coming of Thatcher had not been idle. A new generation of social democrats was gaining the confidence to do what their forebears always aspired to. They reinvented in a new form the old idea that social democracy should go from living with capitalism to running capitalism, with little enthusiasm even for social reform in the interests of trade unions and workers. A very Christian group of Labour leaders reformulated the ancient Christian teachings for the modern world — help the poor, but turn the other cheek to the source of their misery.

These 'communitarians' led by Smith, Brown and Blair (in that order) realised they could do a better job of running the country than Major (not saying a great deal!) Result? By 2000 an increasing gulf between those who have a lot and those who have little. Because workers were so desperate, they had a free run. "Suppress all dissent, all desire for fundamental change, and vote for us." The result was inevitable. A new government became subservient to the latest plans of global

# And Tories, uprooting as manufacturing and re are we going?

capital and the transnational corporations.

What became distinctive of New Labour was its insistence that the democratic structures and traditions that made Britain's independent democracy would be ignored. Just as Thatcher's first act had been to remove exchange controls on capital, so Brown's non-manifesto act was to make the Bank of England independent, to pave the way for Britain's economy to be run by unelected bankers in Frankfurt. A single currency requires initially independent national banks.

**M**uch of the time since the 1997 General Election has been wasted in deciding irrelevant questions: Are they any good? Have they betrayed us? Do we like Blair? They can hardly have betrayed us when they didn't say they'd do very much in the first place! You can only be betrayed by those you trust.

The point is that they're here, like the Tories in power, a product of the British working class. Unlike the Tories, though, they come from the working class. Trade union money funds their victory. So we can seek to impose on this government a line for national survival, to oppose the increasingly loud call for the elimination of the nation state and our democratic structures in the European Union.

The working class which feeds new Labour is now synonymous with the British people, the British nation. Workers' interests in full employment, fulfilling work, peace, industry, public services and environmental sustainability and better education and healthcare are now indistinguishable from the national interest.

We can impose a policy on Blair. The question is, have we got one? More to the point, what do we need, what's in our class, national interests?

We cannot impose our own interests without leaving the EU. Coming out of the EU would not mean we could not catch a train to Paris, drink Italian wine or holiday in Greece, as the scaremongers say. But it would mean we could build our own trains, grow our own food, and control,

*Continued on page 8*



**Left to fight alone: the firefighters against the Social Contract**



**...and alone again: the miners against Thatcher**



**...and again, though this time successful, at Rover**

# An agenda for Britain

## We need to put all our people to work

This can be done with the political will. It may cost £100,000 to create a job, but how much does it cost not to? To keep five million workers unemployed and underemployed? We have the money anyway: if we can auction off mobile phone licences once, we can do it again. Come to that, why auction them off at all? Let's run the thing ourselves, and keep and use all the revenue that would bring!

## We need to invest in the future.

We can show that American, Japanese and German companies are not the only ones who can develop new industries and rebuild old ones. With the same investment in research and development we can match their achievements. We are already the fourth largest economy on the planet with a diverse range of trading arrangements throughout the world and with most of our Gross Domestic Product involved in supplying the domestic or world markets. Our scientists, technicians and engineers remain at the forefront of many of the most leading new industries and technologies whether they be bio-genetics or e-commerce. We have a dearth of opportunities to apply our discoveries and too many unskilled workers living in poverty.

## We need to get our hands on our own money

And we need to control its investment. Pensions are deferred wages, and pension funds alone are sufficient to rebuild substantial sections of British industry. Add to that our collective savings and ability to generate far more, and dead capital can be brought to life.

## We need to stop them running away with the family silver

Thatcher's first act was to end exchange controls, allow capital to be freely removed from Britain (using the argument that this would allow it freely to flow in too). We can re-impose these controls and ensure that profits made in Britain stay in Britain. Likewise with the monetarist brief given to the Bank of England and the consequent high rate of the pound. Such things can and must be altered. We could even stop the sale of the irresponsible speculation with our gold reserves which Brown has started, and, by refusing to sign up to the euro we could retain our gold reserves rather than give them all away. We could re-impose import controls and stop the undercutting and devastation of our most staple industries.

## And we need to leave the EU

Except of course we couldn't re-impose these controls, or do a lot of other things we need to do, while we remain members of the European Union. See how close we've come to losing our motor industry because the EU wouldn't let us take over from BMW, and to losing our fishing and farming industries because of the EU.

crucially, our own currency. Crucially because what is being planned now will make Thatcher's anti-British onslaught seem tame by comparison.

The plan for the EU to have a single currency is a plan for the EU to become a single government, with nations broken down into regions. Three super-regions (Wales, Scotland, England) are to replace Britain. And the rest, the English regions, each with its own 'Development' Agency, are to become the basic governmental units of the EU.

This is why we have regional elections, city mayors and all the related 'constitutional reforms'. All this is to make us cantons — but with far less power than the Swiss originals — in a European federal superstate. One tax system, one common (foreign) security policy, one currency, one interest rate, one exchange rate, one legal system — all controlled by the unelected commissioners and bankers who by virtue of the treaties are unable to respond to pressures from former 'countries'.

**L**osing control of our currency would mean losing control of our country. As we can never accept the latter, we must not allow the former.

And we'd have a great deal more money if we left the EU: between £6 billion and £8 billion a year at 2000 prices. (These are the subsidies we pay net to the EU, without our consent.) So the next time you hear a communitarian say we cannot afford industrial investment, or to build a hospital, remind them that we could if we left this particular European Community!

Thatcher in her scorched-earth blitzkrieg against manufacture in Britain cost 4,000 jobs a month 20 years ago. Now, to meet the EU's convergence criteria in preparation for a single currency, lightning war is destroying 6,500 manufacturing jobs every month!

They raise interest rates not to keep inflation down but to keep wages and investment down. As a result, Britain has a huge and growing deficit in trade in manufactured goods.



## **'Just as there was an alternative to Thatcher, so there is an alternative to Blair'**

So to stop the decline we must say to Blair, under no circumstances a single currency! We must make Brown's hesitations permanent. To move forward, we must give notice of our withdrawal from the EU.

Workers must say these things when they go to union meetings, and go they must. There is still no better way to bring workers together to have political impact and create strong organisation than through trade unions.

It is significant, and dangerous, that some of our unions are running ahead of the government in pressing for the euro. Those hit hardest by the EU's deindustrialising policies look to it to save them! The truth is that to undo the damage of the Tory years we need a high degree of national self determination, not more of the monetarism we suffered from 1979 but this time in new EU-stamped bottles.

Thatcher's T.I.N.A. is replaced by Blair's: There Is No Alternative. But just as there was an alternative to Thatcher, so there is an alternative to Blair.

British workers created trade unions where none existed, in conditions of privation that mock our difficulties. These unions created a social democracy, a Labour Party, where none existed. Have we convinced ourselves that this is the limit of our achievement? Living with a capitalism that couldn't care less about us, unless to destroy our power to oppose?

We have wrung from Blair more money than ever before for our Health Service, and we have prevented headlong rush into the euro, both steps forward. But just as workers run the NHS and most other parts of our economy, so we can run the country. The precise organisational forms have not yet been found, nor has the way to wrest power from an evil and

treacherous enemy class, daily selling up and moving out.

Many have looked to the experience of other countries in the past or currently in completely different circumstances as if the model of socialism lay somewhere off stage. For us in a country with such a heritage of working class socialism and organisation and collective action, we have always believed that we must focus on Britain and what its workers can contribute to the international cause of progressing beyond capitalism and imperialism. We've got to sort it without much of a guide book, and in sorting it workers throughout the world would surely be influenced.

**R**ecognition that we can and should end the profit motive is as old as the capitalism itself, but it has always been a minority view in practice in Britain. Computer chips, the Internet and deep-sea oil drilling are not produced by the profit motive, or by the capitalist relations of production of private ownership. They are produced by workers. Workers making these things create the surplus value from which the small class of owners profit. We understand enough to see we can be independent politically and economically of those who currently run the place.

We should stop believing that politics is what happens at General Elections. Politics happens in the workplace, when people consciously advance their own needs and wishes. And also outside the workplace when people come together to further a special social interest, or protect their neighbourhood, or improve their community and their environment.

There has been a centuries-long campaign to turn politics into Parliament, (literally, a 'talking place'). This they call democracy, played by their rules. No parliamentary democrat ever asked the only important democratic question, "Do you want to be exploited?" No true democracy can be based on wage slavery, any more than the USA had a democracy when half the country was based on plantation slavery.

We have our own democracy, based on our overwhelming superiority in numbers and concepts of accountability and representation completely different from theirs. Democracy after all means rule of the people. All but a few thousand in Britain have to work for a living, or are forced by illness or unemployment to depend on the 'benefits' created by others' work. Democracy would be any action by a government in the interests of those overwhelming millions who make Britain, and whose future is here.

Most of us want to keep the pound and want import controls to protect our economy. Most of us believe that Britain not the EU should decide our policies on taxes, health, welfare and education, culture and the law, the level of immigration, defence, rights at work, and the level of agricultural production. In June 1999, 77% of us abstained in Euro-elections. Most of us want to keep Britain united and oppose separatism and chauvinism.

The Labour Party never was about the people having power. It was about the people living with capitalism. So let's not worry too much on its behalf. Let's remember, though, that the British working class will only destroy its own creation, social democracy, when it has something better to put in its place.

In the run-up to yet more elections, and with a far more important referendum to follow, let working people set their sights higher than the not-very-confident, 'Things can only get better', by adding, 'Only if we make them.'

We will need also to be prepared to follow through the consequences of our own considerable power and our identification with the future of the nation. At the next General Election we will be faced with the choice of New Labour and the Liberal Democrats seeking to give Britain up to the European Union. The Tories will argue that we should keep the pound but sign up to the North Atlantic Free Trade Area to give the US a great stranglehold over us. The real choice for workers is whether they are prepared to dictate the future of an independent Britain.

What's in a name? A profiteer by any other name smells just as bad, as Yorkshire Water consumers discovered.

## Mutuality muddies the waters

KELDA may be a strange name to some. It is the multinational utilities company, which owns Yorkshire Water, valued at £2.4 billion. And it is the outfit that has failed in its bid to turn itself into a supposed 'mutual company' (see "Mutuality down the drain", p5). Since others may try to succeed where Kelda has failed, it is worth looking at what the move was all about.

Kelda is an example of a company with a redesigned label. A name change to get away from the 'unpopular' image of the once publicly owned water authority.

It is also a name change away from Yorkshire Water's drought image of the early 1990s when the City of Leeds was kept watered and washed only by tankering millions of gallons from the Kielder Reservoir in Northumbria.

Wasn't the nationalised water board a mutual? Perhaps, but in a different world. Kelda's proposed mutuality was 21st century born-again capitalism.

And what was Kelda offering? To you, the customer and consumer of water in every Yorkshire home, workplace, school, office, you were to become the owners of Kelda, née Yorkshire Water. Hooray! Capitalism socialises itself out of existence. Not quite. You would have got 140 reservoirs, good. And 90,000 acres of beautiful moorland, good. And 600 sewage works: necessary so good. And £3.9 billion in debt.

A new twist to your water rates! Every household in Yorkshire would have received an average £2,300 bill. How a £2.4 billion company could equate to £3.9 billion in debts shows the pain Kelda and its shareholders were willing to go through to escape plummeting share prices and returns. You also have got a board of directors to run your mutual, with 5 out of 7 appointed by Kelda.

The Chairman of OFWAT, Sir Ian Byatt, had been trying to square the circle of low water prices to the consumer and an attraction to shareholders to keep investment in the industry. Throughout 1998 and 1999 his attempt to resolve this conundrum was met with a simple response from the water (utilities)

companies. For every added regulation trying to tie the privateer capital down: sack the work force, contract out the operation, duck and dive away from regulatory requirements.

Now the ultimate wheeze — give the company away, or rather the assets and debts, and just manage the operation. Byatt has now ruled such moves out of order, but at the time, Kelda's share price, after dropping by nearly 50% during the last 12 months started to climb. And the Stock Exchange expectation was that what Kelda did would be followed by other utilities companies, giving an estimated £20 billion payout to shareholders. Similar shares in other water companies were beginning to rise — Anglian, Severn

### 'Pass the debt to the customer, pass the dividends to the shareholder'

Trent, and Pennon. Shareholders thought they could bail out of their liabilities, recoup their losses, free up their capital. The money merry-go-round of looting public assets would be off again.

So you make a fortune asset-stripping the nationalised water industry. You then make a fortune handing the industry back to Joe Public because Joe Public pays the bill again.

And how was this version of mutuality expected to work? Simple: it is cheaper for capital to borrow and repay against its debt than borrow and repay against its equity stocks and shares. The planned company, 'Registered Community Asset Mutual', was to employ about 160 staff, as opposed to the 4,400 Yorkshire Water Authority employees employed in 1989. It would contract back to Kelda for the day-to-day running of the water company. Or theoretically any other contractor who takes over the operation. Customer' bills would pay the debt and management costs for the running of the service.

The concept is simple: pass the debt to the customer, pass the dividends to the shareholder, let the mutual owners (customers) pick up the liabilities, and so the shareholders avoid regulation and billions are released for capital to regurgitate. The Regulator sets the price, the public pays, the shareholder admittedly with vast ill-gotten gains, moves into the background.

What this idea also means is that the concept of a privatised utility — water — is a total failure. Some 80% of the world's water supply and distribution companies are, after a fashion, in public hands. Kelda was saying it wanted to throw in the towel: it would manage but did not want to own — a fundamental change. An admission that the Thatcher 1980s counter-revolution had failed.

When the utilities were privatised the trade unions fell for the line of no regulation. The pipe dream was that monopoly would rapidly emerge from the new companies and that a private monopoly was as acceptable as a state monopoly. This rapidly faded with the wholesale butchering of jobs, terms and conditions and take-overs. Those seduced by becoming worker shareholders had the pleasure of making themselves redundant.

The line then became one of rigid and ever-tightening regulation: 're-nationalisation' by bureaucracy. Tighter regulation led to ever-greater job losses. So what does mutualisation offer? Theoretically a service for a community, little or no direct employment, employment by rolling contracts of a service nature — the left hand pretending not to know what the right hand is doing. More of the contractor-client mumbo jumbo of compulsory competitive tendering /best value tosh.

Is the establishing of mutuals a step towards publicly accountable utilities (something which has never existed)? The trade unions should link with the community to produce genuine control of immense and vital local assets. A linking which could be mirrored across the country and all the potential mutuals, so re-shaping the industry's landscape.

## Teacher shortages, attacks on teacher trainers...the Government won't take responsibility, so professionals must.

# But who will educate the educators?

NOTHING IN THE world of education stands still for very long. Education has been treated as a test-bed of political ideas for many years. Margaret Thatcher accelerated that process, both as Secretary of State in the early 1970s and later as Prime Minister. She destroyed the Inner London Education Authority, and in 1988 produced the Education Reform Act which in turn gave us the National Curriculum, now in its fourth incarnation. OFSTED and the press have frequently put teachers on trial with simplistic statistics about the number of 'bad teachers' or 'failing schools'.

These attacks on the profession have, of course, been coupled with a deluge of paper work. Teachers must be accountable for everything they do and must be able to produce evidence for every breath they take. Any argument for relief from this onslaught is interpreted by a hungry and unthinking press as a call for lower standards or as evidence of failure — and so for the justification for the attacks in the first place.

All this turmoil has impacted profoundly upon schools. A year ago, the Government claimed that recruitment problems were easing with the number of empty teaching posts falling by 134 to 2,458 at the beginning of 1999. Less than 12 months later it was forced to admit that vacancies had risen to 2,660 by January 2000 in nurseries, primaries and secondaries, and to 240 in special schools. By mid-March there were 1,000 fewer applications for secondary initial teacher-training courses than at the same time last year, and 20 per cent fewer than in 1998.

### 'Too late'

David Hart, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said: "What the Government is doing has come too late. It must improve resources available to schools, cut bureaucracy, improve pay." Government statistics, produced for MPs, show that 224,000 qualified teachers left the service between 1993 and 1998, but only 77,100 of these retired. Shortages seem to be

increasing in spite of a huge take-up of the Government's £2,000 performance pay offer with 197,000 — or 78% of those eligible — applying for the cash.

Maths teacher vacancies have risen by a massive 66% in the past 12 months and many schools will be forced to start the new academic year without vital staff. With large numbers retiring or deserting the profession, the number of vacancies will far exceed the 1,200 newly qualified maths teachers expected to leave training colleges this term. The TIMES EDUCATION SUPPLEMENT has carried more than 5,000 adverts for maths teachers since September, compared with 3,000 last year. More than 2,000 of these appeared during the spring term. Maths and science have traditionally been difficult subjects to staff but recruitment analyst Professor John Howson said: "The problem is getting worse. At both the top end and middle of people's careers, they are leaving maths and going into other things."

### 'Demand is tremendous'

TimePlan, Britain's largest teacher recruitment agency, told the TES it was experiencing unprecedented demand for teachers of all subjects. A spokeswoman said: "Demand across the curriculum is tremendous. For secondary teachers, we are experiencing the usual shortage of maths, science and language specialists but, more surprisingly, we also have 111 English teaching posts on our books. Half of all the long-term vacancies we have dealt with for September have been filled with teachers from Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa."

The Government's own figures show the depth of the crisis (see Box, p 13) and its seriousness is highlighted by the findings of the The Education Management Information Exchange at the National Foundation for Educational Research. It warns in a new report that some regions will be hit particularly hard by recruitment problems.

The report, by Peter Birks, says the Department for Education and Employment has failed to take local



**The Government must learn to attack the problem, not the professionals**

Photograph: Andrew Ward/www.reportphotos.com

recruitment difficulties into account in calculating the total number of teachers needed nationally. The DfEE says that the number of teachers needed, minus the number in post and those known to be returning to teaching, will give the number to be trained nationally. But, says the report, this assumes that teachers will want to move to wherever the vacancies are. "Such a view seems to assume that those trained teachers will fill automatically the teaching vacancies wherever they appear. The regional data suggest otherwise," it says.

The scale of the problem of teacher recruitment is then beyond question but is further complicated by government policy on the training and education of teachers themselves. If you are engaged in the training of teachers you often hear variations on the well-worn adage, "Those who can't do, teach — and those who can't teach, teach teachers." This, of course, is an insult to the whole profession but runs easily off the lips of those who cannot be bothered to

*Continued on page 12*

examine the truth. Since the early 1970s, this country has been training an all-graduate profession. To produce a highly skilled teaching force has required an even more skilled training force.

Today a typical applicant for a post in teacher training will have behind them a successful teaching career, successful management experience, advisory and consultancy work, a growing record of publications and conferences and most probably, a higher degree. This list of demands has lowered the application rate to work in teacher training over the past few years and it is not unusual for posts to be re-advertised because of lack of applications, or for interviews to proceed with only two applicants. Many of those with the qualifications are already earning far more elsewhere and many people take a pay cut on entering the profession.

### Rooting out 'radicals'

So, is the output from our teacher training institutions getting better? This question is always difficult to answer. OFSTED answered it indirectly a few years ago. They were charged by the previous government with rooting out the 'trendies' and 'radicals' from teacher training, and thus to the raising of standards.

A wave of inspections followed, using a framework published so quickly that few institutions inspected had any time to ensure that their courses met the guidelines. Nevertheless, the results upset many politicians since it showed that the overwhelming majority were providing the training needs of their students using techniques based on professional experience and good research. Indeed, few of the 'failing teachers' which OFSTED had identified and publicised had actually been trained recently. Nevertheless, new waves of inspections followed with more stringent criteria.

Now it is not uncommon for institutions to be inspected every year, causing a huge drain on resources. A great deal hinges on the reports of

## 'The Government and its agencies must respect the evidence before them'

inspectors, since being graded as 'satisfactory' will lead to a cut of funding and numbers. This process is sharply at odds with that which takes place in other professions where there is mutual respect that the process is fair and honourable. Bizarrely, in teacher training it is possible for an institution to be damned by inspectors who have only recently been trained and who have never met or inspected the trainers in person at all — they have only met their students in school.

Adequate funding is critical for all courses. But those based in higher education institutions are subject to the vagaries of a funding regime which insists on pinpoint accuracy when trying to predict the numbers who will be accepted onto a course. This is despite the fact that once an interview has taken place and an offer is made the institution has no control over the destination of a candidate.

The whole process is carried out in good faith but slight deviations from the numbers set by the Teacher Training Agency are harshly penalised with withdrawal of places and funding. Hence, an institution might be penalised for over recruiting candidates in a shortage subject where there is a national recruitment campaign in operation.

What of the future? Can Britain look forward to a well trained teaching profession? Of course. The last few years have seen teacher trainers help to implement the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and support government initiatives to increase recruitment. There is a great deal of professional pride in the work done to raise the achievement of children through the training of effective teachers.

This March, recruits onto post graduate courses have been offered a 'salary' of £6,000 and up to £10,000 for those in shortage subjects. Sadly, though, this is another example of a political move. The salary is not available to those on undergraduate teaching courses and we can, therefore, expect to see the loss of places and some courses threatened with closure. This runs counter to the statements made by most education pundits who talk of the need for a number of different routes into teaching.

But if some of these routes are more favoured than others it should come as no surprise if courses close. Already, most trainees for secondary teaching are only trained for one year after their degree, and will receive a salary for their efforts, whereas most trainees for primary are on an undergraduate routes on three- or four-year courses, with no salary attached. This particularly discriminates against mature entrants to the profession, who often train on undergraduate courses at their local institution.

### Distrust

There are some who see this discrimination as intentional. The government and its agencies distrust teacher trainers. By ensuring that students only remain in an institution for one year (with two thirds of that time spent in school) there is no time for any 'trendy' or 'radical' influence to work. Indeed, students have to meet some 800 Standards during this time so there is actually hardly time to breathe.

A further development which has affected traditional teacher training routes is the development of School-based courses or SCITTS. There is nothing wrong with so called 'on the job training' and indeed all students spend considerable time in the classroom. The problem lies in the relationship such courses have within the framework of training nationally and the generous funding which often accompanies such trainees. In addition, many of these

school-centred courses stress their practical, as opposed to the so called 'theoretical', approach adopted by traditional courses. This is ironic given the fact that a high proportion of these course have been failed or found wanting by OFSTED inspections.

### Professionals

For a secure future for teacher training government and its agencies must respect the evidence before them; that a great deal of good work is being done to improve the quality of teachers; that teacher trainers are also concerned to raise the achievement of children; that teacher trainers are highly qualified professionals.

This trust might start with a review of its appointments to the General Teaching Council. This council is a long overdue body set up to be the gatekeeper and guardian of the profession. But even in this act the government showed its contempt for those who train teachers.

No mention of teacher training appears in the consultation document which helped to establish the GTC until towards the end where there is an acknowledgement that the three main higher education bodies involved in teacher training might be represented at senior level. This is inadequate. Nowhere is there provision for teacher trainers to be elected from the ground floor in the same way as the 25 practising teachers have been elected.

There is a strong and growing partnership between schools and teacher trainers which must be recognised and acknowledged by government. This partnership is being built and strengthened despite the interference from outside and should be allowed to form the basis for future development of the teaching force.

Professionals in all phases of education will need to debate the role of training and the structures needed to produce a teaching force with secure grounding in subject knowledge, the theory of how children learn and practical teaching skills.



## Where will they come from?

Target and actual recruitment to initial teacher training courses in England, 1998-99

	Target	Actual	Difference
<b>Primary</b>	<b>11,500</b>	<b>11,545</b>	<b>+45</b>
<b>Mathematics</b>	<b>2,150</b>	<b>1,120</b>	<b>-1,030</b>
<b>English</b>	<b>2,200</b>	<b>1,970</b>	<b>-230</b>
<b>Science</b>	<b>3,050</b>	<b>2,286</b>	<b>-764</b>
<b>Modern foreign languages</b>	<b>2,300</b>	<b>1,657</b>	<b>-643</b>
<b>Technology</b>	<b>3,000</b>	<b>1,682</b>	<b>-1,318</b>
<b>History</b>	<b>900</b>	<b>898</b>	<b>-2</b>
<b>Geography</b>	<b>1,000</b>	<b>747</b>	<b>-253</b>
<b>Physical education</b>	<b>1,450</b>	<b>1,491</b>	<b>+41</b>
<b>Art</b>	<b>1,100</b>	<b>904</b>	<b>-196</b>
<b>Music</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>493</b>	<b>-107</b>
<b>Religious education</b>	<b>750</b>	<b>606</b>	<b>-144</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>600</b>	<b>523</b>	<b>-77</b>
<b>Total secondary</b>	<b>19,100</b>	<b>14,377</b>	<b>-4,723</b>

Source: Recruitment. TTA Survey of ITT Providers 1998-99

Scientific method is what has advanced archaeology so far, so fast. It is no surprise, then, to unearth just how closely it is linked to Marxism.

## Dig for history

“LIFE AND SOUL” usually features music or football, so it came as a surprise when an archaeologist was asked to make a contribution. Then again, Channel 4’s TIME TEAM seems to have struck a responsive chord, sparking imitators such as BBC2’s excellent MEET THE ANCESTORS. So perhaps archaeology really is this month’s rock & roll.

### Progress

Does it deserve to be? Most other branches of social science made little progress, if any, in the 20th century; despite all the university departments of Economics or Sociology and all the doctorates awarded, there was no real advance in understanding of the economy or society.

But in this period archaeology has made huge discoveries — by making its own methods more exact, by adopting techniques from natural science wherever they are applicable, and by being unembarrassed about its own (very close) relationship to Marxism.

### Trajectory

Karl Marx knew that history has a trajectory — that to interpret today’s events you need to know what happened yesterday, and that to plan for the distant future you need a good grasp of the distant past.

But how can you find out about the truly distant past before written records were kept? In Marx’s day the answer

was to look at primitive peoples who had not themselves developed a written language and to assume that their current life patterns were a late and fragmentary reflection of those of all human beings at an earlier time. His

that each new generation lives, almost literally, on top of the remains of the last, it discovered ways of peeling back the surface to reveal successive layers of existence underneath. With this approach to supplement and correct the conclusions from anthropology, the great Marxist archaeologist Gordon Childe was able to present a far fuller picture than Morgan’s.

Childe’s book, WHAT HAPPENED IN HISTORY, published as a Pelican paperback in the dark days of the last war, deepened people’s understanding of what they were fighting against (and for). His assessment, made in the late 1930s, of Marx’s interpretation of the distant past was that, while almost all the evidence (from Morgan) had turned out to be wrong in detail, the conclusions Marx drew had turned out to be right.

### Accurate dating

Sixty years later much the same can be said of Childe. Further developments in archaeology have enabled many of the layers to be dated, not just in relation to each other but absolutely. Marx would have been delighted to know that the layers are dated by measuring the degree of decay of unstable isotopes (carbon-14 the best known) contained

within them, whose rate of decay over time is known to laboratory chemists. With this technique the archaeologist today uses the state of something existing now to infer its



immediate source was the American anthropologist Lewis Morgan.

After Marx’s death archaeology tackled the problem in a different way. Basing itself on the fundamental truth

# WHERE'S THE PARTY?

state in the distant past.

So far, rather like Morgan. But whereas the Morgan approach assumed that there was no change between, say, hunter-gatherers in North America in 1850 and hunter-gatherers all over the world of 10,000 years ago, the scientific approach has to make no assumption but uses a known rate of change to draw a conclusion about the past. The scientifically based dates have undermined much of the detail in Childe's picture of the human past but have not challenged the general drift of his argument.

## Materialism

How did Marx and Childe reach good conclusions from fallible evidence? The answer seems to lie in historical materialism. For instance, writing at a time when it was clear from Darwin that apes and men had a common ancestor but there was no evidence about stages in the development of Homo sapiens since that divide, Marx and Engels argued that an upright posture had to come first, followed by use of the hands in production, and then expansion of the brain and the origin of language to cope with the development of manual dexterity and social production. All this has subsequently been confirmed by archaeology.

Materialism is the common ground between the research method used by archaeologists and the interpretative scheme supplied by Marxism. Archaeology is inherently materialist — all it has to go on is the material record as discovered by ground survey and excavation.

As such it is inherently scientific and, as in any branch of science, the research findings of today will be superseded by those of tomorrow. But the insights of the great scientists (Newton, Darwin, Marx) have an enduring quality.

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

## Who are we?

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

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

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

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

## How to get in touch

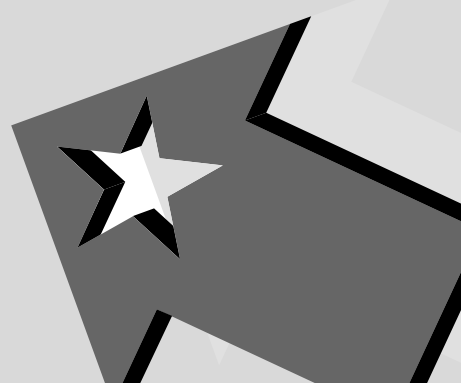
\* The above description of the party is taken from our pamphlet WHERE'S THE PARTY. You can order one, and a list of other publications, by sending an A5 s.a.e. to the address below.

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# Back to Front – Talking our language

**‘British capitalism now finds that the cheapest solution to labour shortages is not to plan, but to ponce off the rest of the world’**

SOMETIMES THE SIMPLE solution seems to escape people. To varying degrees, the Government and the Opposition are concerned, they say, about doctors in British hospitals with inadequate English. So, like our long-suffering school population, they are to be set tests.

Given the option, most people would want to be treated by a doctor who spoke their own language. But then, given the option, most people would also want to be seen by a doctor without having to wait for months. And be operated on without a further wait, in a well equipped hospital that’s not a million miles away from where they live. The solution is not language tests, but planning for what this country needs.

The simple solution would be to train more British doctors. The competition to get into medical school is legendary — even four As at A-level are not enough, to go by recent high-profile examples. So if there is a shortage of doctors, why not plan an expansion of training?

That is the sort of language workers want to hear, but we will have to start talking it ourselves. And don’t be surprised if the Government and the employers claim they cannot understand what we are saying.

Of course, British capitalism now finds that the cheapest solution to labour shortages is not to plan, but to

ponce off the rest of the world. Let other countries train doctors, take the best of them — and then berate them for not speaking English as if they were born here. As if the countries these doctors leave do not need them!

And it seems that Britain is not alone with its shortage of skilled workers, though how that could be so in a country as literate as ours is testimony to the havoc wrought by Thatcher and her various successors.

It’s all terribly confusing. First we are told that rising populations will swamp the world with people, and that we should all procreate far less. And then we are told that falling birth rates will bring economic Armageddon.

The focus is not actually on doctors, but software engineers and computer designers. Hints are made, laws are planned (these days, almost the only sort of planning we have), to relax immigration policies to admit these digital wizards from the developing world. This, according to some, is progress.

But it is an odd kind of progress, this policy of stripping the developing world of its home-grown talent. It’s not something to be applauded as some kind of step against racism. It’s not nice. It’s plain imperialism, a global looting of intellectual wealth, and it’s not in our interests or in those of the countries from which these specialists come.

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