

# WORKERS

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## HISTORIC NOTES



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STALINGRAD – THE  
BATTLE THAT SAVED  
THE WORLD

# CLIMATE CHANGE: NO FUTURE WITHOUT POWER



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# WORKERS

## “Worse than the thirties

THE 1930s hold a special place in labour movement history: a dark period, full of slump and unemployment. Well, the Labour government has contrived to trump the 1930s, producing a fall in GDP worse than in any year of that decade: 4.75 per cent.

This is what the Blair-Brown project has led to. It started in 1997 with giving independence to the Bank of England, and it's ending with Britain teetering on the edge of being declared bankrupt. Our industries are decimated, our mines museums, our lives dictated by self-seeking and unelected quangos, our powers given away to the

European Union, and one million people under the age of 25 officially seeking work. Along the way, they have led us to illegal war in Iraq, countless violent adventures elsewhere in the world, and now the quagmire in Afghanistan. All we have, it seems, is a parcel of debt-ridden banks, and for the privilege of owning them we must pay and pay again even unto our children's children.

As workers we have sat on the sidelines too long, observed the slide and hoped it would stop. Or worse still, borrowed instead of fighting for more pay (see page 6). What masochist would say Vote Labour now?

## They made him

AS THE Iraq inquiry under Sir John Chilcot gets into its stride, some interesting things are coming to light. The inquiry, of course, is intended as a whitewash, and what's more set to report next year after the latest date for an election. But the knives are out for Blair.

The article by ex-Director of Public Prosecutions Ken Macdonald in The Times on 14 December might be a harbinger of things to come. Blair's fundamental flaw was his "sycophancy towards power", says Macdonald, leading to "warriors thrust

carelessly into death's way by a Prime Minister lost in self-aggrandisement". More may come out, or not. In any case, the people know the truth: Blair lied, and Labour MPs knew he lied even as they trooped faithfully into the lobbies to vote for war.

Sycophancy towards parliamentary power is not a fault unique to Blair. It characterises the modern Labour Party, and its supporters in the TUC and the unions. Blair was their creature. Turning on him now won't save them, nor should it.



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# Bill maintains poverty wages

A LOOPHOLE in the law allows ferry operators between British ports to ignore minimum wage legislation and pay non-British seafarers as little as £2 an hour. With the Equality Bill reaching its final report stage on 1 December 2009, the Foreign Office under David Miliband ignored specialist maritime legal opinion in order to block an amendment which would have closed the loophole, by claiming that applying the minimum wage on ferries trading solely between British ports could mean that Britain is in breach of the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea. Any excuse to maintain poverty wages and undercut British workers...

It is a ruling that would have pleased the European Court of Justice. When the Finnish ferry company Viking Line attempted to reflag one of its ships to Estonia and replace Finnish seafarers with cheaper Estonian labour, Finnish workers decided to strike to stop this undercutting. Viking began legal proceedings and the European Court of Justice ruled that the company's "freedom of establishment" took precedence over the Finnish workers' right to strike, a ruling which, especially since being enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty, British unions now have no choice but to flout. Reform is out of the question.

Also up for privatisation, putting security and thousands of jobs at risk, is the Royal Fleet Auxiliary – the navy's lifeline delivering fuel, food stores and ammunition. Under pressure from the Treasury (itself obedient to the European Union), the MoD would lose direct control of the most essential element of the Royal Navy's support structure. This is despite the fact that just two years ago a review concluded that the service was first-rate and that there was no need to review it again until 2020.

- No corner of Britain is safe from EU privatisation, which increasingly is seen to favour Berlin. The Tyne & Wear Metro – Britain's most successful railway, run by public body NEXUS serving 40 million people a year – is under threat, with only one company – German-owned DB Regio – short-listed to compete with the in-house team for control in April next year. Unions are fighting alongside the high-profile Keep Metro Public campaign. Over £1 million has been wasted on the privatisation drive, which local people are overwhelmingly against. This is money that could have been invested back into the service.

## CLIMATE Control for World Bank

THE COPENHAGEN climate change talks were in chaos as WORKERS went to press after the leak of a draft final agreement, drawn up by representatives of the British, US and other governments, which would give more power to the advanced industrial countries and would also sideline the United Nations.

The plan would give the World Bank control of all climate change funds, and rejects the proposal that the advanced industrial nations should commit to cutting greenhouse gases. Poorer countries, though, would have to curb emissions by 2020, in return for aid.

## MIGRATION Poll shows opposition

THE HIGH HUMAN cost of the EU's free movement of labour policy is becoming apparent as winter begins to bite. In Goole, Yorkshire, penniless migrant workers are pitching tents and sleeping rough in freezing temperatures, unable to afford accommodation after being laid off from their casual jobs.

A shanty town has grown up in the back gardens of a row of derelict houses scheduled for demolition. One hungry migrant was caught stealing food after her agency failed to find her any work.

Local people worried about their welfare have called for money to be provided to get the migrants back to their own countries – however, employers who have earlier profited from the influx of cheap labour have not been asked to provide 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@workers.org.uk](mailto:rebuilding@workers.org.uk)**

## EUROBRIEFS

## The latest from Brussels

**The emissions racket**

THE VAT fraud from the EU's Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS), which allows polluting companies to buy the right to pollute from less polluting ones, has caused the loss of about 5 billion euros in the past 18 months. In some countries up to 90 per cent of the whole market is estimated to be fraudulent. Still, it's good business.

The ETS may have played a role in the closure of the Corus Redcar steel plant, part of Tata Group Europe. Closing the plant will "save" over 6 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, worth up to £200 million a year at expected ETS market levels. In fact, it will save none. By taking production to India and cutting emissions there to the level currently produced by Redcar, Tata will make another £200 million a year from the UN's Clean Development Mechanism. That's £400 million a year up to 2012 on top of extra profits from India's lower production costs.

**Keep controls here**

BRITONS are uniquely opposed to European Union powers over immigration according to a recent poll. Asked at what level immigration policy should be decided, 53 per cent of Britons answered "national", rather than regional or EU. The European average was 28 per cent.

**They decide**

THE EU Charter of Fundamental Rights became legally binding on 1 December, as the Lisbon Treaty came into force. Article 52 says, "Subject to the principle of proportionality, limitations may be made only if they are necessary and genuinely meet objectives of general interest recognised by the Union." The EU can now limit our freedoms in the "general interest", if the European Court of Justice decides it is "necessary".

**Not wanted**

EUROPEAN foreign ministers have found they no longer get to take part in EU summits of heads of state and government. The new EU Foreign Minister, Cathy Ashton, goes in their place. Since the Lisbon Treaty came into force, relations between member states are now considered "domestic policy".



The entrance to Vickers, Newcastle: manufacturing there is set to end.

Photo: Workers

## Historic factory to close

A HISTORIC factory is being culled by government ministers as the destruction of British industry continues – ending manufacture at a site founded 160 years ago.

In 1847, William George Armstrong founded the Elswick works at Newcastle for the production of hydraulic machinery. Cranes and bridges followed and then artillery, notably the Armstrong breech loading gun, which re-equipped the British Army after the Crimean War. After merger with the shipbuilding firm Charles Mitchell in 1882, the works extended for over a mile along the banks of the Tyne. There followed a merger with the engineering firm of Joseph Whitworth and the company expanded into manufacture of cars, trucks, locomotives and subsequently aircraft when the subsidiary of Armstrong Whitworth Aircraft was created. The Elswick Ordnance Company, founded in 1859, was the armaments branch of Armstrong Whitworth and became part of Vickers-Armstrong in 1927 following another merger. It was one of the major British companies producing fighting vehicles and munitions during World War II.

Now, its new owner, BAE Systems Global Combat Systems, has announced 217 redundancies at the Tyneside Scotswood Road Heavy Armoured Fighting Vehicles site (the old Vickers Armstrong site). This will mean the end of manufacturing on the site with the remaining 413 jobs covering procurement, design, research etc in doubt.

The workforce and unions are campaigning against the redundancies, while lobbying ministers to award future MoD contracts for the Fress Scout and Warrior armoured fighting vehicles to secure the future of the site. These efforts have met with little success from ministers responsible for the MoD. Quentin Davies, the minister famous for claiming £20,000 from the taxpayer to have the bell tower at his mansion rebuilt, told the unions that he did not care where future armoured vehicles were built – anywhere, Sweden, Singapore, USA or Australia – as long they supported British troops. There are two bidders for the new contracts, BAE Systems and Lockheed. BAE Systems in this case is based in Sweden and reports to Global Combat Systems which is based in the US, but who finally report to the main company in Britain.

The loss of Vickers Scotswood Road manufacturing would mean that Britain has no manufacturing capacity of its own to produce heavy armoured fighting vehicles. Government ministers appear not to have any strategic interest to make these vehicles in Britain and so another British industry goes to the wall, making us dependent on foreign manufacturing. This follows another recent announcement by BAE Systems relating to fighter aircraft capacity cuts, which also means site closures and redundancies. This will result in there being no capacity to build a fighter aircraft from start to finish in Britain leading, again, to dependence on foreign manufacturing.

The government, while demanding loyalty to British troops in Afghanistan where these vehicles would be destined, shows no loyalty whatsoever to British workers.

**STEEL**

**Corus workers take the field**

TEESSIDE steelworkers took their campaign to keep open the Redcar plant to the terraces on 12 December as 100 of them paraded around the ground before Middlesbrough's match against Cardiff City. They were supported by the players, who appeared before the match all wearing Save Our Steel T-shirts.

Around 1,700 jobs are under threat. Middlesbrough chairman Steve Gibson said the job losses would "rip the heart of the community", adding he had not faith in

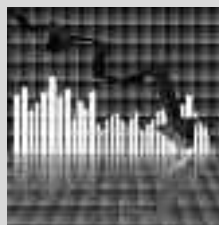
industry secretary Peter Mandelson, whom he slammed as "unelected" and "untrustworthy".

The Corus plant is owned by Tata Steel of India, which is set to make hundreds of millions of pounds out of the European Union's Emissions Trading Scheme by closing the Teesside plant and moving production to India (see Eurobriefs, page 4). A blast furnace, steelmaking facilities and coke oven are to be mothballed.

The plant used to be part of British Steel, which was sold to the Anglo-Dutch group Corus before Tata took over. Tata announced on 14 December that it was ditching the Corus brand.

# Stagnation rules

**MANUFACTURING** OUTPUT stagnated once again in October, confounding economists' expectations. Total GDP fell by 0.3 per cent between July and September, worse than in any other G20 country. Darling forecast in March that the economy would shrink by 3.5 per cent, but the total is closer to 4.75 per cent.



That figure of 4.75 per cent, now confirmed in Chancellor Darling's Pre-Budget Report is significant: it is the worst decline in GDP since 1921 – yes, worse than in any year since the Great Depression. "No return to the 30s"? It's even worse.

Wages are static, and the government is freezing public sector pay, encouraging the private sector (except bankers) to follow suit.

We've given the banks £850 billion so far, and now they threaten to leave unless we let them pay themselves the huge bonuses to which they have become accustomed. They want to carry on running banks as casinos. They refuse to do what they are supposed to do – help people invest in businesses. The government admits that investment will fall yet again this year. It also says that it will do less to stimulate recovery. How can we recover, with investment falling?

Will a future government imitate Brown's 1997 coup of privatising the Bank of England, without ever mentioning it, and abolish the pound after the election?

**TRANSPORT**

**Signallers strike**

RMT SIGNALLING staff in South Wales started a six-day strike on 14 December over the imposition of 8-hour rosters at the new South Wales Control Centre due to open in January 2010. The strike follows a ballot that delivered a 2:1 majority for action by signalling staff in the Wales and the Marches Operations area.

The new rosters unilaterally rip up tried and tested existing agreements on 12-hour rosters. More money for Network Rail, more disruption for workers...

Meanwhile, the RMT has started a "Keep The Guard on My Train" campaign against First ScotRail's plans for driver-only train operation. The campaign, which puts passengers before profits, aims to turn

the spotlight on the increased safety risks of removing guards across the network, including on the new ScotRail service between Glasgow and Edinburgh.

The risks of operating trains without guards were highlighted in the Cullen Inquiry following the Ladbroke Grove rail crash. Guards are fully trained in operational safety and emergency procedures including dealing with derailments.

**THE TROUGH**

**Big bills are back**

THE LONDON freesheet CITY AM, recently praised by Brown, boasted on its "The Capitalist" page of the latest City boys' extravagance – a bill for £25,756.88 for a meal at Buddha Bar in the City.

**WHAT'S ON**

**Coming soon**

**FEBRUARY**

Tuesday 23 February, 7.30pm

"Britain's Finances – Treachery in the City"

Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1R 4RL

This public meeting, organised by the CPBML and WORKERS magazine, will look at the role the City plays in Britain's economy. Why are we pouring billions into banks that are ruining the country? All welcome.

**ALBA**

**Coup, attempted assassination**

THE RECENT news of the coup in Honduras had special significance because it was the first against an ALBA country. ALBA stands for Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América – the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America. It also means dawn in Spanish.

ALBA is the Bolivarian alternative for the Americas and grew out of discussions between Cuba and Venezuela (in fact, Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez). It was born in opposition to the US-led Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), and its membership is growing.

Before the creation of ALBA, several of its member countries had been subject to deliberate and vicious, usually American-inspired, destabilisation, including a coup attempt against Chavez in Venezuela in 2002, and more recently an attempt on the life of Evo Morales, President of Bolivia since 2006. The first representative of an indigenous people to be elected in Latin America, Morales (a trade union leader) received a resounding democratic mandate by being re-elected. So he is an obvious target for the fascist opposition in Bolivia.

Eduardo Flores, the Hungarian leader of the conspiracy to assassinate Morales, was born in Bolivia and belonged to circles in Hungarian society close to the Jobbik neo-Nazi party. Flores had joined the Croatian army in the early 1990s and taken part in various battles.

Flores left Croatia when he was accused of trafficking arms and drugs, and returned to Hungary in 1994 where he collaborated with neo-Nazi groups. Two of the other conspirators in the attempt to assassinate Morales have similar biographies. One of them was killed in the assault, whilst the other is currently in detention. Both are members of paramilitary organisations that plan commando attacks.

## Vetting, barring, and our schools

THE GOVERNMENT has finally caved in, in the face of the growing chorus of protest against its “Vetting and Barring” scheme, which was recommended by the inquiry into the murders of two schoolgirls by school caretaker Ian Huntley in Soham, Cambridgeshire, in 2002. The scheme was launched in October this year and was set to become statutory in October 2010. It would have stood alongside the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) as the public face of the government’s pledge to enhance the safety of children.

The final straw came when representatives of head teachers joined the clamour against the plan. They stood back and looked at how the scheme would impact on society, and saw negative consequences greatly outweighing any supposed advantage. One example: there had been a steady reduction in the number of parents volunteering to work on school plays and fundraising events. The scheme will now be dropped for volunteers and occasional visitors.

**Guilty until proven innocent**

It would have been a small price to pay, some might argue, if the safety of children would be enhanced. Well, it would have been a big if – based on the assumption that all adults who seek to volunteer to work in some capacity with children have dark ulterior motives. Guilty until proven innocent. It sought to criminalise what should be instinctive and natural relationships between adults and young people purely on the basis that there do exist abusive adults in society.

Would a CRB check have prevented Ian Huntley from killing two girls in Soham? Probably not. Did convicted paedophile Vanessa George have an enhanced CRB check in relation to her work in that nursery? Yes, she did. Would the V and B scheme have prevented the tragic abuse and death of Baby Peter in Haringey earlier this year? Certainly not. Most abuse takes place in families, where there are no CRB checks.

Determined people with criminal intentions will get past barriers such as these. Fortunately, though they are headline news, they are very rare. Far more young people commit suicide every year than are killed or abused by strangers. Why not put the spotlight on what it is about our society which drives so many to despair?

Earlier this year, a number of authors and illustrators of children’s literature set this ball rolling by saying they would refuse to continue going into schools to talk about their work if they had to register with the V and B scheme. Philip Pullman, author of the trilogy *His Dark Materials* said on Radio 4, “...It’s actually rather dispiriting and sinister. Why should I [ask] a Government agency to give me a little certificate to say I’m not a paedophile? Children are abused in the home, not in classes of 30 or groups of 200 in the assembly hall with teachers looking on.”

Schemes such as this encourage a passive, box-ticking approach to child protection. Have you got a CRB check? Job done! Child protection should be a matter of monitoring the behaviour of those in contact with children, and acting swiftly when suspicions are aroused. Instead we have an entire industry grinding out meaningless certificates, and then looking away.

## Instead of fighting for pay and industry, we’ve been queuing up for loans...

# The wages of credit

WHAT HAPPENS when trade unions that were geared to fight wage struggles in 1979 find that many members are able to enhance or maintain their consumption, not through winning higher wages but instead by access to credit? During this 30-year span the economic consequence of Britain’s reliance on credit rather than production has become increasingly apparent.

What is less obvious is that from a political perspective credit has tended to negate the collective bargaining power of trade unions. It has also served to mask capitalist decline and has allowed the apologists to talk as though globalisation (imperialism) is something new and exciting.

It is collective bargaining power that makes the workplace strong. But the largely deflationary environment of the past 30 years has seen mostly uncontested wage increases linked to inflation year on year.

The average British wage is currently around £25,000. Thirty years ago it was around £8,000. This represents annual wage increases of broadly £560 (or around 4 per cent a year). Compare this series of tiny wage increases to the bloated price of credit-backed assets such as housing and suddenly the delusional gap between ever rising credit and a preparedness to accept low wages becomes clear – rather than a fight for wages there has been a queue for credit.

This is not to suggest that credit has been the only instrument to undermine collective bargaining, but the early period (1979 to 1981) saw:

- the mass introduction of credit cards (Barclaycard was among the first);
- the weakening of bank balance sheets so that banks were no longer obliged to keep as much capital in reserve;
- the removal of capital export controls;
- the relaxation of mortgage criteria.

All of this and more set the path to where we have ended up now. How often during this period have we heard questions such as, How can we as a nation afford this? Where is the money coming from, as we no longer make anything to pay our way?

**Don’t ask**

Rather than ask questions, many people have preferred the insecurity of credit to the stability of production. One particularly irritating example has been where bodies such as the TUC have stated that Britain, on the basis of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), is the 4th largest economy in the world. Well, dig a little deeper and you find that in Britain’s instance GDP is measured by consumption per head of population. Many other countries measure their GDP on the basis of production per head of population. Spot the difference.

What these points do is to remove some of the theatrical stage props that have masked the past 30 years, during which time trade unions have been deemed unnecessary. The line of least resistance has been advocated as the best approach.

We are not alone in taking this view. Recently the Chairman of Rolls Royce said that “until the financial crisis hit, the view over the years has been that other less fortunate countries could get on with



Photo: Andrew Ward / www.reportphotos.com

**22 October 2009: 100 years after the introduction of old age pensions, pensioners demonstrate in London in protest against poverty, and the clearing of bank but not private debts, and demand rise in pensions and the restoration of the link between pensions and earnings.**

the business of making things". He went on to say that we "must stop hiding behind the myth that Britain is a post industrial economy as if that was a praiseworthy ambition".

What of the facilitators of this dream? For example, how did a couple of provincial banks in the late 1980s – the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS) and the Bank of Scotland – suddenly become capitalised to the extent that they could embark upon breakneck expansion... leading to implosion? It would be interesting to find out how each bank's capital was initially sourced (probably through international banking syndicates).

But undoubtedly the political result was that the inflated Scottish banks provided the Euro quislings with an image of independence that gave them the opportunity to promote the separation of Scotland from the rest of Britain.

Among the many questions concerning RBS is the role it played in the acquisition of the Dutch bank ABN Amro in 2007. The purchase of ABN was fronted by Santander (Spain), Fortis (Belgium) and RBS. Even at 2007 values, the purchase price of ABN was considered ludicrously inflated.

The question that now arises is how much of what was a Dutch bank's liability is now lodged via RBS as British public debt, and why did Santander as a bank come out of the deal so strong?

That leads to the next question: How much of the financial collapse has been

choreographed? Certainly at the end of 2006 it was generally expected that 2009 and 2010 were going to be difficult years because of the amount of short-term debt that was either up for renegotiation or due for repayment.

Mervyn King, the Governor of the Bank of England, used the term "toxic debt" as early as 2006 and at the same time his US counterpart Ben Bernanke was quoted as saying that if necessary he would get into a helicopter and chuck out sacks of dollars (in other words, the printing of money by quantitative easing). Twelve months later, at the time of the collapse, both "toxic debt" and "quantitative easing" had already become common parlance within the "credit crunch" waffle.

### Carrying the can

The working class is expected to carry the can for all of this. Why? We should kick it straight back: "Can't Pay! Won't Pay!" and instead begin to address what Britain needs to rebuild itself.

We hear much of the emerging economies of China, India, Brazil and so on. Paradoxically, the trade surplus that China in particular has built up from its exports has for some time been recycled back as credit to Britain and the USA. The effect of this is that China's trade surplus becomes the very source of credit that along with deindustrialisation has led to our demise.

Meanwhile, China and Japan are the biggest holders of the trillions of dollars of

US government debt held as US Treasury Bonds. Remember Japan? Up until 1990 books on Japan's economic success were being devoured and we were told that the USA was getting ready to play second fiddle to the Japanese. It all sounds fairly familiar, but now it is China and not Japan that is put up as the rising economic star.

### The devaluation game

What is not spoken about is that the USA is trying to play the same dollar devaluation trick on the Chinese currency as it did to the Japanese yen in the early 1990s. China's current trade surplus is held in 2 trillion US dollars, and China's own currency, the renminbi, is pegged to the dollar at a fixed rate. Both the US and the EU currently want China to revalue its currency – but China has refused.

The reason for this is because revaluation of the renminbi would result in China's dollar surplus becoming effectively devalued when measured against its own then revalued currency. Not only China's trade surplus but also a number of its other assets would have to be repriced downwards, as happened during Japan's deflationary experience of the 1990s.

Curiously it has recently been suggested that Britain is facing a similar deflationary experience to Japan's. Daydreaming again. Japan still has an industrial infrastructure together with a strong savings culture. In Britain, we have neither – which is why the slump is so deep, and set to last for so long.

Using the excuse of global warming, the European Union is trying to stop new ones being built. But the evidence is not as hard as it is related to power than to the environment?

## The Earth's climate changes. It always has

THE POLITICIANS in Copenhagen debated how they propose to slow or reverse climate change, but we need to dig a bit deeper into what is known about this. We know we can't trust them: they have their own agenda – to increase their power and rule us. We must have our own agenda.

The key questions are not whether the Earth is warming, but what causes it, what are its likely effects, and how best can we cope? Climate change is the only constant, the only certainty.

We may well be into long-term warming. We have had eight of the ten warmest years in the last 150 years since 1997. The recent slight cooling proves nothing (all records of global temperature show small cooling periods in long-term uplifts). But this warming is not unprecedented. The Holocene Maximum of 7000–3000 BC, the Roman Warming of 200 BC–540 AD, and the Medieval Warming of 900–1300 were all warmer than now, yet the planet survived.

If CO<sub>2</sub> alone drives warming, then higher CO<sub>2</sub> must mean higher temperatures. Yet the earth cooled by 0.2 °C between 1945 and 1976, when CO<sub>2</sub> levels rose sharply. Again it has cooled by 0.10 °C since 1998, despite a 5 per cent rise in CO<sub>2</sub> levels. (450 million years ago, CO<sub>2</sub> levels were twelve times today's. Was it hotter? No, it was an ice age.)

186 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> enter the atmosphere every year: just 3.3 per cent comes from human activities; 57 per cent is given off by the oceans; and 38 per cent is exhaled by animals (including us). Direct real-time measurements of CO<sub>2</sub> since 1800 show that its concentration in the atmosphere has fluctuated greatly and has several times been above today's levels.

Every hour, the Sun delivers to the earth as much energy as humans use in a year. The 2004 Symposium of the International Astronomical Union (IAU) concluded that the Sun caused most of the recent episodes of warming. Last century, the Sun's magnetic field doubled in strength, reducing the cosmic rays and so the clouds, thus warming the Earth. The IAU forecast that sunspot activity would



Antarctic pack ice: there appear to be no "statistically significant average trends" in the extent

soon lessen, increasing cosmic radiation, creating more cloud and cooling the Earth. There has indeed been less sunspot activity and the Earth has cooled since 1998.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change admitted in its 2001 report, "In climate research and modelling, we should recognize that we are dealing with a coupled non-linear chaotic system, and therefore that the long-term prediction of future climate states is not possible." Yet it consistently predicts more warming than actually happens. For example, they forecast continuous warming between 1990 and 2008; in reality we had eight years of warming followed by ten of cooling. It forecast in 2000 that the earth would warm by 0.4 °C by 2008: actually, it cooled by 0.1 °C.

Using the same computer model that gave the IPCC its forecasts for 2100, the Met Office forecast that 2007 would be the world's "warmest year on record", with Britain "set to enjoy another sizzling summer", that 2008 would be one of the

"top ten warmest years" ever, and that it would be followed by a winter "milder than average". All wrong: in February it admitted that 2008-9 was "the coldest winter for 13 years".

### Open to doubt

The Met Office's Hadley Centre for Climate Prediction and Research provides data for the IPCC. But its methods are open to doubt. It has rejected Freedom of Information requests for data on the weather stations it used. Professor Phil Jones (head of the Climatic Research Unit at the University of East Anglia, who has now stepped aside pending an inquiry into the response to the requests) claimed in 1990 that its stations had "few, if any, changes in instrumentation, location or observation times" – on the basis of a US Department of Energy report on just 35 of the 84 stations, which had found that fully half of the 35 had been moved!

Jones, in a recently leaked email, appeared to propose that emails subject to Freedom of Information requests be



ng to shut down many of Britain's coal-fired power stations, and seems. Could it be that politicians have their own agenda, more

done. But there's no future without power...



of Antarctic sea ice.

deleted, a potentially criminal act. He has stepped down as head of the unit temporarily while an investigation takes place.

The IPCC's 2007 report says, "Globally, the potential for food production is projected to increase with increases in local average temperature over a range of 1 to 3 °C, but above this it is projected to decrease." So, on the IPCC's projected 1.8 °C rise, the world, including Britain, would steadily produce more food over the next 90 years.

The same IPCC report says that global warming's one "virtually certain" impact on human health is "reduced human mortality from decreased cold exposure". Fewer people die as winters get warmer.

We are told that every extreme weather event is due to global warming and that there are more of them. Yet hurricane activity was lower from 2001 to 2009 than in the 1930s, 1940s or 1950s. The IPCC's 2007 report confirmed, "There is no clear trend in the annual numbers of tropical cyclones." There were seven major

droughts between 1900 and 1920, seven between 1921 and 1940, eight between 1941 and 1960, five between 1961 and 1980, but three between 1981 and 2000.

The same IPCC report said, "Antarctic sea ice extent continues to show inter-annual variability and localised changes but no statistically significant average trends, consistent with the lack of warming reflected in atmospheric temperatures averaged across the region... Current global model studies project that the Antarctic Ice Sheet will remain too cold for widespread surface melting and is expected to gain in mass due to increased snowfall."

The Antarctic holds 90 per cent of the Earth's ice. Its temperature averages 46 °C below zero. So a 1.80 °C rise would not make it melt. Icebergs don't break off from Antarctica's glaciers because of warming: there are active sub-glacial volcanoes in Antarctica, and parts of it are rising.

Coal and nuclear power stations produce 55 per cent of our electricity, wind turbines just 0.5 per cent. Many of these

power stations are to be closed down under EU orders, causing a 40 per cent energy shortfall. EU rules allow subsidies for wind farms, but not for nuclear power stations. The government's 2003 White Paper said, "We do not propose new nuclear build."

The Climate Change Act of 2008 committed the state "to ensure that the net UK carbon account for 2050 is at least 80 per cent lower than the 1990 baseline." The Act's aims could only be achieved by closing down the rest of our industry. As Energy Minister John Hutton said in September 2008, "No coal and no nuclear means no power, no future." Brown sacked him two weeks later.

This April, the government said no new coal-fired power stations would be allowed unless they used carbon capture – a technology that has not yet been developed. The government aims to build 10,000 wind turbines (made abroad), 4,000 offshore and 6,000 onshore, at a cost of £100 billion. The USA's 10,000 wind turbines produce just 3.9 gigawatts, the same as one large coal-fired power station.

Yet Friends of the Earth claims, "Renewable energy has the potential to provide all our needs." Not so – even "green" journalist George Monbiot admits that there are "good reasons for questioning the claim that our electricity could be supplied wholly or even largely by renewable power". Every renewable "needs to be supported by other forms of power". Then he calls for a 90 per cent cut in greenhouse gases by 2030. Environmentalist Meyer Hillman said that even an 80 per cent cut would make Britain "a very poor third-world country".

Under the EU's Emissions Trading Scam, sorry, Scheme, EU emissions still rise every year, enriching people like Lakshmi Mittal, Britain's richest man, who stands to get £1 billion from it. Carbon taxes too would harm the economy and add to government powers.

Whatever the future holds, we need to be able to grow our own food, use our energy resources effectively and carefully, and make here the goods we need.

**As European railways are broken up under EU diktat and parcelled out to greedy privateers, in Britain there are faint signs that the reverse is beginning to happen...**

## Rail: the failure of privatisation

ON 14 NOVEMBER the National Express East Coast Main Line, successor to the failed GNER, was taken back into public ownership – not through any conviction on the part of government, but under pressure from exploited rail users and the dogged campaigning action of rail unions. According to polls, this was supported by over 70 per cent of the public.

This does not signify that the government has belatedly discovered a unified rail strategy for Britain. Even with privatisation collapsing around its ears, it is as compliant as ever to its EU masters, and is looking to engage another private operator in 18 months time. But a window of opportunity has opened up for unions to step up their campaign for the whole of British rail to be run as a public service again.

National Express East Anglia's contract will now be terminated in 2011 (after the date set for full liberalisation of passenger

services). There is also pressure for its sister company C2C to be recalled, and for the London Midland franchise to be taken back from its parent Govia group after continuing poor performance.

London Midland has been put under the special measures of a Remedial Notice for "exceeding the franchise agreement threshold on cancellations". The company cancelled 7,558 services in 2008/2009, the second worst performance on the network after Southern. Its public subsidy had cost £114.2 million. In an effort to make railway staff pay for their crisis, London Midland is also involved in two long-standing separate disputes over pay and Sunday working (excluding conductors and drivers).

Contrary to agreements across the rest of the rail network, Southern Railway similarly refused any extra payments or additional leave for working on bank holiday Monday 28 December, provoking

**"A window of opportunity has opened up for unions to step up their campaign for the whole of British rail to be run as a public service again..."**

another strike ballot.

Rail infrastructure and maintenance is also under attack from multi-billion pound cuts, with 1,500 posts under threat. The implications of that for public safety are obvious following a succession of major incidents from the King's Cross fire onwards.

Despite assurances that there were no plans for compulsory job losses, Network

## London: private path leads to fall in safety levels

ON LONDON Underground too, where the failure of private company Metronet resulted in the loss of its franchise to Tube Lines, safety standards are being slashed to dangerous levels, and unions want Transport for London (TfL), which faces a £5 billion deficit, to pull the plug on privatisation. Mayor Boris Johnson promised that passengers and front-line services would not be affected by the financial turmoil – caused partly by overruns on the Jubilee Line upgrade, but largely as a result of political failure. But Tube Lines has applied to be released from the agreed safety procedures laid out for the whole of the Underground.

In addition to cutting back track patrols, the company is driving through a reduction in the twice-weekly inspection of escalators to just once a week and the 12-week frequency of signal maintenance on the Jubilee Line to a 16-week cycle. Londoners do not forget that one of the causes of the King's Cross fire was a lack of regular escalator inspections.

Tube cleaners fighting for the London Living Wage demonstrated against privatisation on 18 November, as it emerged that senior TfL management received a 50 per cent increase in bonuses from £3.6 million in 2007 to £5.3 million in 2009. The cleaners' union RMT is calling for all tube cleaning services to be brought in-house and for these workers, who do the dirtiest jobs, to receive decent pay. They also point out commuters on Southern rail face travelling in filthy trains as the private company Advance is slashing cleaning staff levels.

The tube cleaners' action follows a rock-solid 48-hour strike in September, failed arbitration at ACAS, then a successful series of 24-hour strikes in October and November against redundancies and for a living wage by a multi-ethnic group of British Eurostar cleaners employed by Carlisle Group at St Pancras International terminal. Carlisle was denying them sick pay and pensions,

there was intimidation and racist overtones, which Frank Dobson MP described as "more akin to the Victorian age". They received 3000 emails from 75 countries in support.

Eurostar meanwhile had declared "transnational privatisation", whereby the state picks up the historic debt of the enterprise (e.g. Eurotunnel), while private companies, publicly subsidised, fail to invest for the public good yet reap the profits. What does that remind us of?

Also bad news for Londoners – Tube fares are due to increase above inflation by 3.9 per cent from 2010 and bus fares by over 12 per cent – another example of the working class being made to pay for the recession.

Station renewals, which were to have been completed by Metronet, including work to upgrade one of the Tube's busiest stations – Victoria – will not now be completed until 2018, step-free access has been scrapped, and there will be bus and tube service reductions.



The Labour government may be finished, but it has not given up democratic control. Any price is worth paying, it reckons, to create state-funded schools over to religious fundamentalists...

## Who will be running our schools? The acad



Photo: Andrew Wiard/www.reportphotos.com

Brent teachers in their 2008 "tent city" occupation of Wembley Park sports ground, site of a planned privately run academy school.

SEVERAL SOUTH London local authorities met in Brixton recently to discuss the present and future forms of school leadership. Called "Future Forms of Leadership", the conference could have been better-titled "Future Forms of School Ownership" for what was on display was the full panoply of present and presently-to-be-in-place types of school invented by this dying government. We now have federated schools, foundation schools, trust schools, academies and soon ASGs, or Accredited School Groups.

Ironic, really, that local authorities should promote these forms of school, as they are mostly designed precisely to remove local authority control of local schools, federations excepted.

Foundation schools control their own admissions and can exercise enormous controls over development plans. One South London school, for example, wants to be able to expand from being a primary to running its own boarding secondary provision. It's likely that later next year it will be free to do just that. Other foundations are cleverly combining primaries and secondaries in order to "ring fence" admissions and transfer to secondary school.

In similar vein, trust schools are governed by a combination of local authority, sponsor, staff and parental representatives with the local authority having a diminished role. At least they have the merit of potentially allowing a

degree of local control.

It is the academies programme, however, that is the Government's "flagship" programme. Academies are largely controlled by their "sponsors" with one local authority governor if the LA has co-sponsored. The aim is for there to be 400 academies in secondary education. Fewer than 200 have so far been inaugurated but sponsorship has become so loose a term more are sure to follow.

When academies were started by Blair, the expectation was that each "sponsor" would come up with £2 million of the capital required with the government forking out the other £20 million or so. In exchange, the sponsors got their own state-funded school: the property was

on its drive to strip Britain's schools of all semblance of  
 its new academies. Even handing the control of the new

## Academies – another lethal legacy of Labour

theirs, they could appoint the maintenance contract and so on.

Typically, fundamentalist Christians with deep pockets and deeper and darker medievalist outlooks grabbed the chance to mould children's thoughts – a bit like non-Catholic Jesuits. An associate of Blair, Vardy from Sunderland, put money into some North-Eastern academies. However, these schools then tried to impose their mores onto staff transferred over from former schools and change the science curriculum to introduce "Creationism" as a scientific concept. A singular feature of these schools has been the very un-Christian high rate of exclusions and unimpressive rate of improvement in standards.

We now have 12 United Learning Trust Christian academies. These have cost the working class around £300 million to build and equip. ULT promised just over £20 million towards the costs; they have paid £10.7 million. Oasis Community Learning, another Christian group with three academies in London and Grimsby have paid a miserly £308,000 out of the £6 million promised.

### God and Mammon

It looks as though the recession has zapped God more than Mammon. Harris academies, sponsored by Lord Harris (of Carpetright), run a chain of nine schools in South London. Seven of these have received £3.7 million out of £8.5 million expected. The R.C. Diocese of Southwark leapt at the opportunity to establish St. Paul's Academy in Greenwich. Since 2005, they've stumped up about £200,000 out of the £2 million expected.

Harefield in West London, sponsored by the owner of a cosmetics company, has still not received the £1.5 million expected. So, the government announces that instead of money, sponsors just have to prove they're fit and proper people to run a school and they can have a school without having to find any up-front cash. That's a bit like the takeover talk around the purchases of some of our football clubs and their results don't look good either!

Even though there has been a serial relaxing of the financial rules since 2005, academies set up by August 2008 had only received 40 per cent of the sponsorship money that had been promised. Of course, there are no penalty clauses. The sponsors have kept their schools.

The government has since entered into "side agreements" with some sponsors whereby we provide extra funding to help sponsors meet their financial commitments. A bit like the banks. Repayment is deferred and taken from future funding so the children pay, in effect.

### Added ideology

At present, some reports indicate that the Government has taken over ULT's commitments. So, we end up paying for a bunch of crazed Christians to force their added ideology upon our children. They get the school property, dish out the cleaning, IT, maintenance and procurement contracts, choose their children to the potential detriment of neighbouring schools' intakes and significantly, take the school away from any form of democratic control. They also operate their own pay structures, breaking up national pay scales and conditions for teaching and other staff.

In some London Boroughs, Southwark being the most significant, it is difficult to send your child to a secondary school that isn't either a denominational school, a foundation school or an academy. ARK (American finance capital) and Harris academies have taken over a number of struggling local schools in the past five years.

Of course, workers faced with the prospect of sending their child to a struggling local school are going to be tempted by the prospect of a brand new building and blandishments of a bright new future. For cash-strapped local authorities the prospect of getting a new school often where the former school has been plagued by poor results and systemic collapse is too great an incentive.

**"Typically, fundamentalist Christians with deep pockets and deeper and darker medievalist outlooks grabbed the chance to mould children's thoughts..."**

In spite of the paeans of praise heaped upon academies by schools minister Vernon Coaker and his opposite number Gibb, the results for academies are as mixed as they are for other schools. Coaker boasted in December of the 6% rise in results for academies this year. But other local schools in comparable areas often did as well or better. He trumpets Ofsted's findings but two academies in Sheffield this year have been found to be inadequate. Handing over the problem is no guarantee of solving it.

Following the successful fight at against an academy in Docklands, London, at the Royal Docks School – establishing a local trust instead – other groups of parents and communities are trying to resist academies taking over their schools.

The fight continues in Northamptonshire, where in spite of 97 per cent of respondents opposing the academy, the council appears to want to continue the changeover. In Hastings, where the proposal to close three secondaries and create two academies has received a mixed reaction, the debate is in full flow.

But what we can see happening is a train of thought that will rapidly move secondary schooling away from local control, diminish the accountability of those who run our schools and break up local authorities. Additionally and key is the ability of workers in the sector to create a core of resistance with parents to defend their schools. Not easy unless the school is held in high esteem in the first place. We have to have the highest regard for our children's future.

At the end of January 1943, the German armies that had tried to take the Soviet Union's third-largest industrial centre surrendered in ignominy.

## Stalingrad: the battle that saved the world

SIXTY-SEVEN years ago, the most momentous battle in modern history was fought out in a city on the Volga River – Stalingrad. On its outcome rested the fate of the world.

It was not the first time the city had been the site of a pivotal battle. In June 1918, during the intervention following the Russian Revolution, the city, known as Tsaritsyn, formed a wedge between anti-Bolshevik forces in the east and the south. After these forces, the greatest threat to the young revolution was hunger. Beyond Tsaritsyn lay the grain to feed Moscow. Stalin was despatched to organise its defence, and the rest is history.

Along with Kliment Voroshilov, Stalin rallied the local workers' organisations, forged the first regular units of the Red Army and, by August, despite great odds, had crushed the advancing force of General Denikin. The Soviet Republic was saved from starvation and collapse. Those who had defended Tsaritsyn renamed it Stalingrad.

By 1940, Stalingrad was the third-largest industrial centre in the Soviet Union, with a rapidly growing population of over half a million. It had become a "showpiece" city, the largest port on the Volga with the biggest tractor factory in the world.

### Spirit of the people

Any city is more than just brick and cement, steel and glass. A city is and as with Madrid in 1936, it was the people who gave the city of Stalingrad its particular political complexion.

Adolf Hitler's Nazis knew this well. In 20th century warfare, with its emphasis on mechanisation and speed, a siege was already something of an anachronism. Yet that was the tactic they opted for when attacking both Stalingrad and Leningrad. They could not afford to bypass either city and leave its spirit intact.

And so a siege was laid with the aim of starving and bombarding the defenders into submission, thereby dealing a blow to the morale of a whole nation.

With the outbreak of war between



10 January 1943: the battle for Stalingrad rages, but the Nazi army is doomed.

Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union in June 1941, Stalingrad – as in 1918 – assumed a special strategic importance. Launching an attack on 23 August, the armies of Von Bock and Von Paulus knew they had four months in which to take the city before winter set in. Through a combination of guerrilla raids, of fortifications manned by a workers' militia

and a simple refusal to give ground, the Germans were kept at bay.

The workers were always having to stop work to bolster the regular units. Once in mid-September the Nazis broke through to the tractor repair shop. The workers there, in what has become a well documented act of bravery, jumped straight into the tanks they had just

## smash the Soviet

finished repairing and took them into battle.

They were joined by a battalion of workers' infantry commanded by a dean of the Mechanics Institute in one of the city's five universities. This particular battle lasted for two days, until the Nazis were pushed back. Such events contributed to what became known as the spirit of Stalingrad.

Despite the deliberate pessimism of such newspapers as the Daily Mail, every factory canteen and every pub in Britain was the centre of a discussion of the tide of battle, workers everywhere showing their support for the Red Army.

By October the time of the major battle was approaching. Hitler had ordered the capture of Stalingrad "regardless of cost". Stalin ordered "not a step back". The city was fought for street by street, house by house.

### Encircling

With winter setting in, the armies of Soviet generals Zhukov and Rokossovsky began an encircling manoeuvre which formed the basis of a general offensive on 15 November, an attack that turned the tables. The lengthy defence of the city had bought important time for the Soviet Union to bring in fresh, crack troops, skilled in winter combat.

More than 330,000 German prisoners were taken as successive battalions of Nazi troops were caught in pincer movements. The last battle of the campaign was fought, ironically, under the heights of Mamaer Kurgan – the same spot where the Bolsheviks had secured Tsaritsyn in 1918.

By 31 January 1943 Von Paulus, along with the armies of 15 other Nazi generals, surrendered.

Two years and three months later, the Red Army entered Berlin. It was because of that momentous battle, which workers worldwide now acclaimed as the decisive victory over Hitler, that Red Army soldiers could carve with pride on the central column of the Reichstag, Germany's wrecked parliament, "We come here from Stalingrad."

Continuing our series on aspects of Marxist thinking

# WHY BE A COMMUNIST?

There is no inevitability about the course of human progress. As Marx and Engels so pointedly put it to us in the opening chapter of the "Manifesto of the Communist Party" just over 160 years ago: "The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles."

"Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes."

For the capitalist class, common ruination of society is preferable to the dictatorship of the proletariat – Britain run by the working class. Hence, the original Cold War speech by Churchill at Fulton, an Iron Curtain coming down across Europe and all that followed.

As workers, we do have choices, however. We can believe that we can maintain the status quo; that this is as good as it gets. So we vote for Thatcher and acquiesce until we are sick of her and then believe Major might not be a version of the same thing. Then we believe Blair when he says, "I'll be different."

But if we are serious about changing this world for the better rather than willingly putting our faces in the mud or waiting for the afterlife, we have to take a different route. First we have to decide who we are; then what we need and then how we're going to change the world. For us as workers, Britain is where our fight must be.

If you are a worker who believes in skill, industry and self-reliance then you should be a communist.

If you are a worker who values national independence and sovereignty – the right to deal with our own capitalists first – then you should be a communist.

If you're against interference in the affairs of others and against the pursuit of unjust wars then you should be a communist.

If you see yourself working in an honest way, not as an expert or guru but as a worker rooted in the class not somehow levitating above it, then you should be a communist.

In our document *THE BRITISH WORKING CLASS AND ITS PARTY*, published in 1971, we said: "The unmistakable conclusion is that our task is nothing less than to change the ideology of our class." We in the Communist Party are open about our aims and never set ourselves above the class and separate from it. If you think you can live with that, you should be a communist.

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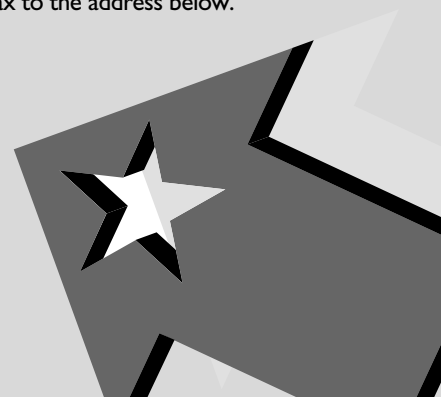
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# Back to Front – Destroy the destroyers

**‘We have allowed Britain to become a breeding ground for the ideology of globalisation and a base for the rotten edifice of finance capitalism.’**

**THE SEVENTIES** changed everything. Working class struggles at that time ensured that the ruling class could not rule in the old way, so they created the monster Thatcher to destroy our class by destroying our industry and causing mass unemployment – absolute decline.

Every government since Thatcher has been a variation on her destructive theme. Every capitalist government to come will be a variation on the same destructive theme, if we permit it.

Since Thatcher, there can be no return to the 1940s, or to the 1950s, the 1960s or the 1970s. The decline is new, different, and ever more dangerous.

But what to do? Next year’s general election offers us only a choice of the next monkey to the EU organ grinder, but a choice of monkeys is no choice. The state machine we have does not represent the vast majority of the British people, the working class, and so is not democratic. Whose interests does it serve? It serves only the interests of the tiny, increasingly foreign-oriented ruling class whose interests are wholly opposed to ours.

We are now ruled under the EU Constitution/Lisbon Treaty, although we have never voted on it. The EU can take whatever new powers it wants, without ever risking another treaty or referendum. All the parliamentary parties connive at this. They don’t mention it, never mind oppose it.

The Labour Party comes of course from a different place than the Tories and the Liberals, because it was created by the working class, but by living with capitalism, as social democracy, it has ended up in the same place – in the embrace of finance capital.

The “left” wants us to unite behind a reborn, reformed Labour Party. This

reactionary idea would take us back into the swamp of social democracy, of muddle and confusion of thought. Let the “left” try to unify the “left”. The task is not only impossible, it is pointless as well, and has no connection with the unity of our class.

The answer lies with us. We the working class must take control.

The British ruling class has always been one of capitalism’s commanding heights. It has played a key role ever since the Bolshevik victory in 1917, when it took the lead in waging unceasing, relentless class war on the revolution.

This war took every form: the War of Intervention of 1917-22 waged by 14 armies, killing millions of people; the criminal, illegal economic blockade (defined correctly in international law as aggression), designed to cause hunger and unemployment in the Soviet Union; the endless cranking out of lies against socialism.

The ruling class in Britain took the lead, too, with Thatcher, in promoting the primacy of the free market: look to her role in the Maastricht treaty for the origin of the free movement of labour and capital in Europe that is devastating employment not just in Britain but around the Continent.

In our refusal to make revolution here, we have permitted reaction to be deployed around the world. We have allowed Britain to become a breeding ground for the ideology of globalisation and a base for the rotten edifice of finance capitalism. Yet when the British working class seizes power here, it will change the world.

So if you really want to save the world, save Britain. Take responsibility, take control.

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